

Livelihood Opportunities for Girls



Assessment of Post-School Livelihood Opportunities
for Girls in Nepal, Bangladesh and India
For the British Council

THE RESEARCH  BASE

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1. Key Messages

Access to career guidance is likely to be necessary for girls to get access to reliable information about opportunities in their community, as well as to identify realistic livelihood pathways.

It is important to create initiatives that raise awareness among parents and community members, especially initiatives that focus on addressing negative perceptions towards girls migrating to other villages and towns to seek work.

Mapping livelihood and training opportunities in the vicinity of EDGE clubs, including vocational training centres is seen as necessary to help girls fulfil their aspirations to get salaried jobs; this may involve identifying some common centres or hubs of business and training activity within the areas that the EDGE programme is operating.

Ways to improve clarity and understanding of the EDGE programme is needed to contribute to clearer outcome pathways for participants, such as placements and access to further study or funding opportunities; this could be achieved through a clear programme of promotional activity and engagement.

Evidence suggests that the greatest impact can be achieved through partnership working with national and local government officials, including contributing to national education policy developments and scaling up programme delivery using existing educational infrastructure across larger geographic areas.

It is recommended to explore the potential to invest in low-cost technology solutions to broaden access to digital technology for the girls involved in the EDGE programme, especially if solar power could be used to charge technological devices, such as tablets.

2. Executive Summary

This summary contains a brief summary of the research objectives, key findings and recommendations.

2.1 Research Overview

The British Council commissioned The Research Base to carry out an assessment of post-school opportunities for the English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) programme in South Asia. The EDGE programme involves the development of English, ICT and social skills in peer-led after-school clubs for marginalised adolescent girls in India, Bangladesh and Nepal to improve their life prospects.

The key objectives of the current research have been:

- To assess post-school opportunities available to girls in the project countries, including training, further and higher education, employment and other livelihood opportunities such as social and micro enterprises and self-employment.
 - To identify recommendations to inform the future delivery of the EDGE programme, including skills-focused club activities or resources which could support girls in accessing these opportunities. While the study looks at opportunities for girls, it should be noted that EDGE participants include adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 14 and 19.
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2.2 Key Findings

Nepal

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

- The main aspiration amongst girls was to continue education and find a job. More than a third of focus group participants mentioned aspirations towards careers in health, either as nurses or doctors.
- The primary livelihood opportunity for girls was perceived to be in agriculture and work for cooperatives; other opportunities mentioned included teaching, accounting, social work, police services and service jobs. Interviewees acknowledged the limited livelihood opportunities available due to the rural nature of the area.
- Suggestions made by interviewees for improving girls' awareness of livelihood opportunities included the provision of career counselling; the establishment of peer discussion groups; setting up awareness programmes; provision of scholarships and funding; and the provision of greater security for girls to pursue their own plans.

Skills Requirements

- Girls may not have defined career plans due to a lack of knowledge of available options; focus group participants were also unable to define the skills needed to work in their desired careers.
- Almost all interviewees felt that English and digital skills were needed to access livelihood opportunities. English skills were noted as being important for many teaching and service jobs, as well as for general confidence levels; and digital skills were noted as being important for accounting work within

cooperatives and in other professional jobs.

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

- 🌀 The main sources of information available to the girls about post-school livelihood opportunities include personal contacts and networks; other sources include cooperatives, NGOs, office notice boards and the public service commission.
- 🌀 There was a perception that recruitment processes for cooperatives in the community were discriminatory in terms of nepotism; it was also noted by one interviewee that government-run training opportunities were not available in some communities.
- 🌀 Challenges in accessing livelihood opportunities included the limited mobility of women and girls; a lack of bargaining power in the household and community; families' preferential treatment of sons; early marriage; local practices and customs; a lack of resources, including finance; and discriminatory business environments.
- 🌀 Ways to mitigate barriers for girls' access to livelihood opportunities included raising awareness within families; the inclusion of practical and employment skills within the school curriculum; positive discrimination in employment; raising awareness amongst girls of their rights; and better enforcement of government policies in this area.

Livelihood Policies and Initiatives

- 🌀 Programmes and interventions mentioned by interviewees to support girls in accessing livelihood opportunities included an adolescent development programme by SAC Nepal; local initiatives within cooperatives; Sisters for Sisters and other local government programmes. Interviewees were not aware of any initiatives or programmes involving local employers aside from local cooperatives and SAC Nepal.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

- 🌀 Almost all the interviewees and focus group participants felt that the EDGE programme was effective in expanding opportunities for girls; it was noted as having engaged girls who did not normally take an interest in school-based education.
- 🌀 Improvements to the club that were suggested included: equipping the peer group leaders with better ICT and English skills; increasing the frequency of club activities to a daily basis; engaging the community and local employers more effectively; providing more laptops and better training material; improved facilities in the club venue; and support for girls at risk of dropping out of the programme.

Comparable Programmes

- 🌀 Comparable programme employed a number of strategies to provide effective support for marginal girls and women. These include the use of mentoring and peer-support groups; home visits for girls at risk of leaving education; provision material resources needed to access educational opportunities; and skills training focused particularly on the technical and entrepreneurial skills needed to pursue a sustainable livelihood within the local, predominantly agricultural, economy.

Bangladesh

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

- Future plans of participants included further education and eventual careers in areas including policing, business, engineering and teaching. Two interviewees noted a shift in girls' aspirations in recent years towards more realistic employment opportunities (e.g. teaching and NGO work) and an increasing number aiming for non-traditional female professions (e.g. the military).
- Participants generally reported feeling realistic about their livelihood opportunities; further ways in which girls' awareness can be raised included fostering skills such as critical and creative thinking within the school curriculum; social enterprise skills were also noted as being potentially useful. Leadership and management skills were also noted as being important.
- The main livelihood opportunities mentioned by interviewees included agriculture, handicrafts, teaching and work in NGOs. Participants noted the opportunities available to take out loans to support self-employment/entrepreneurship, and the challenges of developing businesses (e.g. in garment work) in rural areas. BRAC, with more than 5,000 offices in Bangladesh, was also noted as a key source of opportunities.

Skills Requirements

- Participants were able to articulate the skills needed to move into their chosen career path. English and digital skills were consistently raised as being important for securing jobs; vocational skills including mechanical, driving and dressmaking skills were also noted as being important.
- The need for English and digital skills was noted by the majority of research participants; English was thought to be key for many of the livelihood opportunities to which participants aspire, while digital skills were felt to be important for job security.

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

- Sources of information for job opportunities include job websites; union digital centres and programmes including 'Info Lady' and BRAC. The union digital centres were also noted as being useful for girls' information as they provide internet access and printing services.
- The primary means of accessing information about livelihood opportunities includes talking to experts and obtaining advice; finding information in newspapers, noticeboards and online job portals; schools and NGOs such as BRAC.
- Barriers to accessing livelihood opportunities included cultural and family objections; insecurities related to gender perceptions; differing opportunities between rural and urban areas; a lack of skills, especially in rural areas; and lack of access to technology.
- Mitigating barriers to accessing opportunities included obtaining support from families and the community; having sufficient financial resources; and developing confidence and self-reliance skills.

Livelihood Policies and Initiatives

- BRAC was mentioned by PGLs as offering valuable programmes in communities to facilitate post-school livelihood opportunities; it was perceived, however, that BRAC tends to focus on urban areas rather than rural. Apprenticeships were also noted as being useful community initiatives, as is an organisation called Yussef, which offers training for girls in areas such as nursing, motor mechanics and electrical mechanics.
- Other programmes similar to EDGE noted by participants include an adolescent development programme currently run in EDGE centres; a BRAC training course on social awareness, early marriage

and sexual abuse were also mentioned.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

- There was a generally positive view of the programme's effectiveness and outcomes amongst participants; it is worth noting, however, that there was a generally low level of understanding of the EDGE programme amongst stakeholder interviewees.
- Recommended programme adjustments included removing the attendance fee; ensuring clearer presentation of material (i.e. not solely in English); expanding the programme to other locations; introducing a focus on entrepreneurship skills; and signposting livelihood opportunities.

Comparable Programmes

- Comparable programmes in Bangladesh included a strong focus on reducing rates of child marriage. Techniques included traditional approaches focused on education support, lifeskill training, and livelihoods training that led to a reduction in child marriages of up to a third, as well as innovative techniques including the use of theatre performed by local girls to raise community awareness.

India

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

- Several girls who participated in the research have ambitions to help or care for other people. Around a third had professional ambitions to be a doctor, lawyer or engineer. According to interviewees, the most popular career aspirations for girls were in similar areas: doctor, teacher and engineer. There was felt to be a disconnect between what girls want to do, and the reality they can expect.
- Livelihood opportunities tend to centre around teaching, NGOs and informal sector employment (e.g. the cotton garment industry).
- This view by interviewees around a disconnect was later challenged when they were asked whether girls' plans were realistic and achievable, which, in general, they thought these were; this may, however, have been related to the phrasing of the question as interviewees also said that there were limitations linked to poor financial resources, a lack of family support and a lack of awareness around career entry.
- Gender stereotypes are being challenged, according to participants, but often in a way which complies with these potentially unrealistic expectations. It is now expected that girls can have non-traditional careers which play into societal norms of social standing and financial independence, but these do not necessarily match reality.

Skills Requirements

- The girls showed varied understanding of the skills they need to develop both in life and to follow their desired career paths to the extent that there was almost no commonality. This suggests either that they have very different senses of what they need to achieve their ambitions, or that they have not yet been supported to develop an understanding of what is needed for common careers and/or life skills.
- Interviewees' opinions of the skills that girls are likely to need coalesced around communication, digital, interpersonal and English skills; when asked particularly about English and digital skills, participants said that they were both necessary and important.

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

- Barriers to girls accessing information include their background (such as socioeconomic status) and

their local area. There is generally no clear, formal way in which girls can access information. Increasing girls' awareness of realistic opportunities in their communities can be achieved through better parental engagement, exposure to workplace settings and better provision of information about careers advice.

- Most girls suggested that family is a barrier to them getting jobs, particularly linked to the expectation that girls must marry young. Less time in education than boys, a lack of financial education, sexual harassment and a lack of information about opportunities all feed into some complex livelihood barriers.
- Mitigation of these barriers can come through better education, better careers advice and guidance, better access to business finance and education of families in girls' safety, early marriage and the importance of education.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

- EDGE helps to build girls' confidence; the girls have fun while learning and they like it. Interviewees saw the EDGE programme as being effective in terms of personal development and skills development, and equipping them for jobs. It was also perceived as relevant. Peer group leaders were also highly positive about the programme and its design.
- The EDGE programme team is considering what improvements can be made in its next iteration. Improvements suggested by girls included an increased focus on computing skills, the use of more sophisticated material, a greater use of digital learning platforms, the use of real life examples and more societal awareness.

Comparable Programmes

- Comparable programmes in India focus heavily on digital skills development and the use of low-cost technology to support learning. In one case, partnership working with national and state government has also allowed effective interventions to be scaled up and delivered state-wide.
- A further model that supports girls and women to access sustainable livelihood opportunities centres on the use of social enterprises that provide goods and services for women (e.g. feminine hygiene products), as well as training and developing female staff.

2.3 Recommendations

Cross-Country Recommendations

- Provide career guidance:** Access to career guidance (which appeared to be virtually non-existent) is likely to be necessary for girls to get access to reliable information about opportunities in their community, as well as to identify realistic livelihood pathways.
- Initiatives for raising community awareness:** Initiatives to raise awareness among parents and community members is likely to be beneficial, especially initiatives focusing on addressing negative perceptions towards girls migrating to other villages and towns seeking work.
- Map local livelihood and training opportunities:** Although the main livelihood opportunities appear to centre on self-employment, it is clear that many girls have aspirations to get salaried jobs. The British Council could therefore map livelihood and training opportunities in the vicinity of EDGE clubs, including vocational training centres; this may involve identifying some common centres or hubs of business and training activity within the areas that the EDGE programme is operating.
- Raise awareness with stakeholders:** A minority of employers and stakeholders interviewed

understand the EDGE programme; a clear programme of promotional activity and engagement with these groups could result in clearer outcome pathways for participants, including placements and access to further study or funding opportunities.

- 🌀 **Deepen engagement with national and local government:** Evidence from comparable programmes indicates that the greatest impact can be achieved through partnership working with national and local government officials, including contributing to national education policy developments and scaling up programme delivery using existing educational infrastructure across larger geographic areas.
- 🌀 **Explore low-cost technology solutions:** In comparable programmes, the use of low-cost technology, such as tablets preloaded with software packages designed to support self-directed learning, has enabled more children to develop digital skills and increased access to digital technology. Exploring the potential to invest in this kind of low-cost technology may broaden access to digital technology for the girls participating in the programme, especially if solar power could be used to charge these devices.

Country-Specific Recommendations

Nepal

- 🌀 **Include training for enterprise skills:** It is recommended that the British Council consider providing training to teach girls enterprise skills for self-employment, which appeared to be the main livelihood opportunity available to girls. Enterprise skills should be tailored to the local context and needs; for most areas, this is likely to include agribusiness skills, while areas with greater infrastructure may hold opportunities for other forms of enterprises, such as shop keeping or mobile repairs.
- 🌀 **Business training and support:** Girls establishing enterprises are likely to benefit from training in business skills, including guidance on registering their business formally, as well as training and support in how to navigate and succeed in a male-dominated market place.
- 🌀 **Consider partnering with local cooperatives:** The British Council should consider partnering with local cooperatives in areas where the EDGE programme is running to enable girls to access more established livelihood pathways, as well as benefit from the presence of supportive networks and training opportunities.
- 🌀 **Provide access to role models:** Access to role models, such as women from the community that have gone on to become successful businesswomen or accessed formal employment, is likely to be beneficial for both girls as well as parents and other community members to tackle negative attitudes towards girls' potential.

Bangladesh

- 🌀 **Include business and entrepreneurship skills:** It is recommended that future programme modules include business and entrepreneurship skills, including creative and critical skills, and leadership skills; these will assist girls not only in understanding how to establish their own enterprise, but how to develop the required personal skills to make it a success.
- 🌀 **Provide access to business tools:** By working in partnership with local centres (e.g. union digital centres) and signposting access to internet and printing services, the EDGE programme could ensure that girls can have increased access to critical tools for livelihood opportunities and support.

- 🌀 **Provide tailored information:** Signposting livelihood opportunities and information on challenges specific to rural areas would help girls to maximise their chances of accessing and succeeding in livelihood opportunities; this could include business training and advice around establishing and marketing businesses in rural areas.
 - 🌀 **Consider partnering with skills providers:** By forming linkages with local initiatives offering apprenticeships and vocational skills to provide an opportunity pathway for girls; this could include Yussef, India.
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India



- 🌀 **Provide knowledge of job specifications:** Due to the disconnect that girls feel between what they want to do and the reality they can expect, along with the lack of support they have in developing an understanding of what is needed for common careers; it might be beneficial for the British Council to consider incorporating more information on different careers and job specifications within their EDGE programme.
- 🌀 **Encourage family engagement:** It is recommended that future programme content addresses ways that programme participants and leaders can engage parents and improve awareness of the importance of supporting girls in their future aspirations.
- 🌀 **Partner co-ordination:** We recommend that the British Council looks to the Naandi Foundation's N-Star programme, which is being run concurrently in the centres, to ensure greater coordination of content and pedagogy.
- 🌀 **Create higher levels of English language learning:** The current English language abilities of the participants is very good, and they have a strong desire to speak and practice English further. It may be beneficial to develop more advanced levels of English language training in the next module.

3. Introduction

3.1 Research Overview

The British Council commissioned this assessment of post-school opportunities for the English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) programme in South Asia. The EDGE programme involves the development of English, ICT and social skills in peer-led after-school clubs for marginalised adolescent girls in India, Bangladesh and Nepal to improve their life prospects.

The key objectives of the current research have been:


-  To assess post-school opportunities available to girls in the project countries, including training, further and higher education, employment and other livelihood opportunities such as social and micro enterprises and self-employment.
-  To identify recommendations to inform the future delivery of the EDGE programme, including skills-focused club activities or resources which could support girls in accessing these opportunities. While the study looks at opportunities for girls, it should be noted that EDGE participants include adolescent girls and young women between the ages of 14 and 19.

3.2 EDGE Programme

The EDGE programme was initially set up in Bangladesh in 2012 as the English and ICT for Adolescent Girls (EITA) programme, before developing into the EDGE programme in 2014 and subsequently expanding to India and Nepal. Recent research has documented the significant gender disparities faced by adolescent girls in these three countries, including reduced access to education and skills training compared with their male peers and high rates of early marriage constraining girls' ability to make long-term choices related to all aspects of their lives, including their education and livelihoods.¹

The overarching goal of the EDGE programme is to ensure that '*...adolescent girls from marginalised communities can make more informed and independent life choices, as is their right, in order to contribute more fully to the family, the economy and society*'. This is achieved through a series of activities, primarily comprising EDGE club sessions designed to develop girls' language, digital and 21st century skills and support through a peer leadership training programme; career guidance, mentoring and job fairs; and community fairs and club performances at community events. Active engagement with community leaders, community members and parents is also seen as essential to achieving its overarching goal of empowering adolescent girls and improving their long-term livelihood prospects.²

The programme comprises three phases: foundation, consolidation and extension. The foundation phase comprise 90 hours of learning, while the consolidation and extension phases comprise 120 hours each. Each phase builds on learning completed in the subsequent phase.³ The EDGE programme is in different stages of delivery in the three countries and involves different delivery partners:⁴

-  **Bangladesh:** The British Council partnered with BRAC to deliver the programme in Bangladesh. Since 2012, the programme has been implemented in 364 clubs in nine different districts: Manikgonj, Tangail,

¹ EDGE SNAPSHOT REVIEW Report Final 2017 Caroline Manion.

² EDGE SA_Theory of Change and Logic framework.

³ https://www.britishcouncil.in/sites/default/files/edge_-_programme_faqs.pdf

⁴ Please note that programme documentation specific to Bangladesh and Nepal was limited.

Gaibandga, Bogra, Khulna, Chittagong, Mymensingh, Narshindi and Sylhet.⁵

- 🌀 **India:** The principal partner for the EDGE programme in India is the Naandi Foundation. The programme was first introduced in 2015-2016 in 13 centres and has since expanded to a total of 75 centres in rural, urban and peri-urban locations across the country.⁶ The foundation phase of the programme was completed in May 2017, while a consolidation phase pilot was conducted in March 2018 across 15 centres in Hyderabad.⁷
- 🌀 **Nepal:** Since 2017, the programme in Nepal is delivered as part of the wider Sisters for Sisters' Education II programme by VSO Nepal, which aims to improve the life prospects of adolescent girls in socio-economically marginalised communities. Local implementing partners include Global Action Nepal and Aasaman Nepal. The programme will be delivered in 48 schools across four districts.⁸

3.3 Methodology

Overview

The following research questions were developed to inform the girls' livelihood assessment:

- 🌀 What are the existing mechanisms for the target group to access post-school opportunities in EDGE countries?
- 🌀 What are the target group's plans and aspirations for post-school opportunities? To what extent do they relate to English and digital skills?
- 🌀 What are the realistic, immediate livelihood opportunities and sectors for this group, including self-employment (including as entrepreneurs), currently and in the foreseeable future, in EDGE countries? To what extent are English and digital skills represented here?
- 🌀 What are some of the existing constraints for job-seeking in terms of informal and cultural norms (such as attitudes towards gender)?
- 🌀 What active initiatives, policies or practices currently enable the target group to access broader post-school opportunities? To what extent can linkages be made with EDGE clubs?
- 🌀 How do similar livelihood-focused programmes link their input to local employers and opportunities? What adjustments can we make to the EDGE programme to better prepare the participants for their future?

Desk Review

A desk review of existing programme documentation and research was carried out in June 2018. Given that the EDGE programme team have already commissioned a number of external research papers within recent years, including data and literature reviews, the scope of the current desk review was limited to existing data sources.

⁵ https://www.britishcouncil.org.bd/en/edge?_ga=2.187437870.765554481.1531730762-1658346542.1530711803

⁶ https://www.britishcouncil.in/english-and-digital-girls-education-india?_ga=2.144397747.765554481.1531730762-1658346542.1530711803

⁷ EDGE_Consolidation Phase_pilot_report.

⁸ <https://www.britishcouncil.org.np/EDGE>

As such, the desk review focused on extracting relevant data and context for the current research project mapped against the key research questions; as well as identifying areas of success and scope for improvement from previous evaluations of the EDGE programme to assess the distance travelled since programme inception.

Primary Research

Primary research was conducted in June 2018 in three locations to provide the evidence base from which to conduct a livelihoods and labour market assessment:

- Narsingdi, Bangladesh.
- Hyderabad, India.
- Surkhet, Nepal.

The research involved focus groups with current and potential EDGE participants, as well as interviews with a range of relevant stakeholders: champions and peer group leaders (PGLs); programme officers; headteachers; local employers; ministry representatives; implementing partners and EDGE programme team members.

Fieldwork logistics were organised by EDGE programme teams in each country. The research was then conducted in-person by a member of The Research Base with the support of a local translator where required. A briefing session was held with the translators prior to the research commencing, covering translation and research approach, as well as research ethics. A researcher guide was also sent to the translators prior to the fieldwork containing key guidelines for the research.

Focus groups and interviews lasted around one hour each. Participants' responses were recorded and then transcribed. For focus groups and interviews involving participants under the age of 18, written parental consent was obtained prior to the research. Interviews with the ministry representative and the implementation partner in Bangladesh were also accompanied by the EDGE programme team.

Sample numbers for each country have been outlined below:

Type		Nepal	Bangladesh	India
Focus Groups	Current EDGE participants	2	1	0
	Former EDGE participants	0	0	
	Potential participants	0	1	0
Interviews	Champions and PGLs	2	1*	4
	Programme Officers	1	0	3
	Headteachers	2	2	1
	Local employers	2	1	0
	Implementing partners and EDGE programme team	2	2	2

Type		Nepal	Bangladesh	India
	Ministry and other stakeholders	0	1	0

* In Bangladesh, a focus group with eight current peer group leaders was conducted instead of interviews.

Analysis and Reporting

The analysis method included the integration and triangulation of all the research elements: desk review, interviews and focus groups. Data gathered from the research was entered into an analysis matrix outlining all the interview and focus group questions alongside the key research questions. Interviews with different stakeholder groups were analysed together where the questions were similar.

Interviews and focus groups were analysed separately for each country, as the context was considered too different for cross-country comparisons to be made, both in terms of the delivery of the EDGE programme, and the economic and social situation of the communities. The analysis sought to assess the weight of responses per theme or issue. A high level review was also undertaken to identify the key livelihood pathways for each country, requirements in terms of education and skills, and potential barriers and challenges. The final analysis sought to identify recommendations for future delivery in each country, along with overarching recommendations that apply to the context in all of the countries.

Research Challenges and Limitations

Desk Research

While analysis of comparable programmes identified key practices adopted by these programmes, it was beyond the scope of the desk review to develop a best practice model against which to assess these comparable programmes. It should also be noted that in many instances, there was insufficient programme information available to carry out this kind of detailed best practice assessment.

Fieldwork

Some challenges were encountered during the research in terms of the translation approach and the translators recruited for the research. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with subsequent transcription (as opposed to live transcription with responses translated in real-time) which meant that the discussions proceeded slowly and there were more limited opportunities for participants' input. Limited prior translation experience (and in some cases, limited English ability) also meant that the translation took considerable time. Other issues included translators asking their own follow-up questions to clarify responses, as well as summarising responses instead of providing verbatim translation. These issues were largely rectified following feedback, but may have affected the reliability of some responses and meant that direct quotes could not be used for certain focus groups and interviews.

3.4 Country Contexts

Workforce Participation

Gender Gap

The Global Gender Gap uses four key measures to assess gender parity in countries worldwide: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Out of 144 countries, Bangladesh was ranked as 47th, the highest ranking for any South East Asian country, while India was ranked 108th and Nepal 111th.⁹

In terms of economic participation and opportunity, Bangladesh ranks far lower at 129th compared with India at 139th and Nepal at 110th. Likewise, Bangladesh ranks 111th for educational attainment, while India ranks 112th and Nepal at 116th. This more detailed breakdown suggests that successes in reducing gender inequality in political representation (where Bangladesh ranks 7th) have not yet produced a corresponding impact in education and employment.¹⁰

Female Labour Force Participation

Of the three countries, Nepal has the highest female labour force participation rate in those aged 15 and over (79.9%, compared with 86.8% of males). Bangladesh has a female participation rate of 57.4% (compared with 79.4% of males). India has the lowest rate of 27% (compared with 79.1% of males).¹¹ Female participation in the labour market has increased in both Nepal and Bangladesh since 1961. Nepal's levels have increased by 20% from 59.6% to 79.7%, whilst Bangladesh's levels have increased by 15.1% from 18.1% to 33.2%. However, female participation in the labour force has decreased in India with levels declining from 42.9% to 23.4%.¹²

Employment distribution by sector: female and total (%), 2018

Country	Type	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Bangladesh	Female	59%	16%	24%
	Total	38%	21%	41%
India	Female	55%	18%	27%
	Total	42%	24%	35%
Nepal	Female	83%	7%	11%
	Total	71%	8%	21%

⁹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf

¹⁰ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf

¹¹ Sources: The World Bank, [Labor force participation rate, female \(% of female population ages 15+\) \(national estimate\)](#); The World Bank, [Labor force participation rate, male \(% of female population ages 15+\) \(national estimate\)](#). Figures based on most recent data: Nepal:2014, Bangladesh: 2016, India: 2012.

¹² Sources: The World Bank, [Labor force participation rate, female \(% of female population ages 15+\) \(national estimate\)](#); The World Bank, [Labor force participation rate, male \(% of female population ages 15+\) \(national estimate\)](#). Figures based on most recent data: Nepal:2014, Bangladesh: 2016, India: 2012.

Source: International Labour Organization

According to ILO Employment by Sector estimates for all three countries, a disproportionate number of females work in agriculture, compared to the national distribution figure. In Bangladesh, 59% of female employees work in this sector compared with a national distribution of 38%. In India, 55% of female employees work in the sector, compared with 42% nationally, and in Nepal, 83% of female employees work in agriculture compared with 71% of all workers nationally. Consequently, female employees are underrepresented in industry and service sectors when compared with national distribution patterns.

Female employment distribution by sector: 2018, 2021

Country	Year	Agriculture	Industry	Services
Bangladesh	2018	59%	17%	24%
	2021	56%	17%	27%
India	2018	55%	18%	27%
	2021	52%	18%	30%
Nepal	2018	83%	7%	11%
	2021	82%	7%	12%

Source: International Labour Organization

The ILO's estimate for 2021 shows a decline in the proportion of female employees working in agriculture in all three countries (3% in Bangladesh, 3% in India and 1% in Nepal). In all cases, this decrease is mirrored by a corresponding increase in the proportion working in the service sector, with the industrial sector remaining relatively stable.

Self-Employment and Employers

The percentage of self-employed females varies across the three countries. In Bangladesh, 71% of females employed are self-employed – this is a decrease of 14% since 1991. The self-employment rate has also fallen in India, from 92% in 1991 to 82% in 2017. Nepal has seen a slight increase in the percentage of self-employed females from 89% of female workers in 1991 to 90% in 2017.¹³

The proportion of female employers in all three countries is lower than the total proportion for that country. In Bangladesh, 0.4% of female workers are employers, compared to a total country proportion of 2.8%. In India, the female proportion is 0.5% compared with a country total proportion of 1.6%. In Nepal, the proportion of female workers who are employers is 0.4%, compared with 1.3% for the country as a whole. ILO estimates show that these figures are expected to stay the same through to 2022.¹⁴

¹³ Source: ILO: Self Employed, female (% of female employment) (modeled ILO estimate).

¹⁴ Source: International Labour Organisation: Employment Distribution by status in employment (by sex) ILO modelled estimates May 2018.

Livelihood Opportunities and Sectors

Nepal

Girls in Nepal are more likely to be working in household and subsistence work; they are also more likely to be engaged in household child labour and work in hazardous conditions than boys.¹⁵ Boys are also reported to receive higher remuneration than girls in all child labour occupations, except craftwork. Girls are more likely to work in the carpet-weaving industry than boys, which poses further risks besides working in hazardous conditions that could lead to arthritis, long-term spinal injuries and damage to respiratory systems and sight; other risks include sexual exploitation and trafficking, as well as pay exploitation.¹⁶

Bonded labour contracts, commonly accepted by children, exist in Nepal; under these contracts work in agriculture, brick-kilns or other domestic work is remunerated through a share of produce instead of monetary payment. Girls tend to work in bonded labour contracts than boys and are more susceptible to other risks including: early marriage, less likelihood of being in education and sexual abuse from their working landlord. Bonded labour is also more common for children of differing castes such as There and Dalits.¹⁷

Nepal has seen an increase in informal sector employment, especially with regards to increased numbers of entertainment businesses in urban areas, which have resulted in an increasing number of women and girls working in massage parlours, dance bars, *dohori* and cabin restaurants. These working conditions often provide an unsafe environment for girls and a lack of physical or financial security (by way of access to sick leave, annual leave and others social security contributions). Growth in this sector has been attributed to the closure of carpet-weaving factories over the past 20 years, which has made girls vulnerable to working in this industry; with higher risks of exposure to work in the sex trade and human trafficking.¹⁸

The expected careers of boys that were deemed suitable by family members were in the civil service or medical profession (high-skilled medical jobs such as doctors), whereas for girls it was in teaching, civil service, nursing and other lower level health service jobs. There is also some evidence to suggest that teaching is considered as a job of low social standing, where girls will engage in this work where there are no other available options of employment: *'The teaching profession carries a low social status in the society. Those not able to get in to other professions take the option to become teachers.'*¹⁹

Migrating for further livelihood opportunities is a common practice, particularly amongst young girls; 44% of girls aged 15-19 (compared to 21% of boys aged 15-19) had done so, according to a 2016 survey from the Ministry of Health and Population. Migrating for girls however, comes with severe risks: *'The livelihood opportunities associated with migration are not equally available to male and female adolescents, and female migration is associated with increased vulnerability to trafficking for exploitative purposes such as commercial sex work, domestic work or organ transplantation.'* There are a range of reasons attributed to migration amongst girls, which include marriage, work and study opportunities, family reasons and security, with marriage being the most common. The majority of girls would travel within Nepal, with the remainder migrating to surrounding countries like India, or further afield.²⁰

¹⁵ <https://www.gage.odi.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Nepal%20Capabilities%20Report.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.gage.odi.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Nepal%20Capabilities%20Report.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://www.gage.odi.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Nepal%20Capabilities%20Report.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002335/233521e.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002335/233521e.pdf>

²⁰ <https://www.gage.odi.org/sites/default/files/2018-02/Nepal%20Capabilities%20Report.pdf>

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, girls are underrepresented in child labour statistics because they are more likely than males to engage in unpaid work like household chores or childcare. Older adolescent girls are most likely to work in agriculture (70%), followed by manufacturing (20%) and services (4%).²¹ Despite having qualifications, many girls are employed in low-skilled jobs because that is where the majority of employment opportunities lie.²² Youth workers are most likely to work in the least desirable jobs in Bangladesh, which may also be the least productive, for example agriculture, where most youth are employed.²³

Economic background is influential in girls' work opportunities. Girls from poorer backgrounds are more likely to migrate for work so that they can save for their dowries. Women and girls who are the poorest or the wealthiest are the most likely to be in employment, rather than those in the middle income bracket. This is a result of economic pressures for girls from the poorest backgrounds who need to work, and the social expectation for women from wealthier backgrounds to work in certain jobs.²⁴ For those from the poorest, most vulnerable backgrounds, it is not possible for them to afford to be unemployed, meaning that they take jobs in low-productivity, low-paying sectors.²⁵

Education is also influential in the opportunities that girls have for employment. Less educated girls are more likely to work in agriculture, and educated girls are more likely to work in the education sector, as teachers or tutors.²⁶ Girls in urban slum areas are more likely to not be at school by age 16 than their male counterparts, or girls and boys in rural areas. Boys and girls in rural areas are more likely to be un school from age five also.²⁷ Those who have a higher education level are more likely to have a higher unemployment rate, as a result of the amount of time that they take to seek jobs that are suitable to their skill level.²⁸ Although there has been an improvement in the number of girls enrolling in school, girls are less likely to take part in TVET skills learning because of the perception of lower social value of women in these areas of work.²⁹

The number of women working and earning in the labour market implies that there is growing opportunity to see change in the sectors that women are working in. The pharmaceutical industry, for example, has been highlighted as a potential option for growth for women, as a currently male dominated industry, and could contribute to diversifying options for women.³⁰ The textile industry is also suggested to have the potential for growth, as women currently make up nearly 30% of the workforce;³¹ within the garment industry in particular, women make up 80% of the workforce.³² The information technology and finance sectors are also employing an increasing number of women and education in these areas is high in demand for women in education. As rapidly growing industries, such as in India, the role of women as a workforce in these

²¹ ILO (2013). Youth Employment Policy Brief: Bangladesh.

²² ILO (2013). Youth Employment Policy Brief: Bangladesh.

²³ UNICEF (2017). From Education to Employability: A Case Study of Bangladesh.

²⁴ Stavropoulou, M., Marcus, R., Rezel, E., Gupta-Archer, N., Noland, C. (2017). Adolescent Girls' Capabilities in Bangladesh: The State of the Evidence. GAGE.

²⁵ UNICEF (2017). From Education to Employability: A Case Study of Bangladesh.

²⁶ Stavropoulou, M., Marcus, R., Rezel, E., Gupta-Archer, N., Noland, C. (2017). Adolescent Girls' Capabilities in Bangladesh: The State of the Evidence. GAGE.

²⁷ UNICEF (2017). From Education to Employability: A Case Study of Bangladesh.

²⁸ UNICEF (2017). From Education to Employability: A Case Study of Bangladesh.

²⁹ UNICEF (2017). From Education to Employability: A Case Study of Bangladesh.

³⁰ Asian Development Banks & International Labour Organisation Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2016). ADB Briefs: Women at Work.

³¹ Asian Development Banks & International Labour Organisation Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2016). ADB Briefs: Women at Work.

³² <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2017/02/07/in-bangladesh-empowering-and-employing-women-in-the-garments-sector>

services could be important.³³

India

There are challenges in mapping the livelihood pathways for girls in India. For the most part this is due to a very low and continually falling participation of women in the workforce - India in fact has one of the lowest rates of female labour force participation (FLFP) in the world.³⁴ One study concludes that the most significant factor in explaining India's declining FLFP is the increasing stability of Indian family income, of which a decline in casual labour is a part. This is a disincentive for female household members to join the labour force.³⁵ As such, available opportunities remain comparatively few, as do studies mapping them.

The proportion of workers in the communications sector that are young women is increasing in India and this is almost all at a professional level, despite this being a non-traditional sector for Indian women.³⁶ In the financial service sector, the global move towards greater automation has meant much back-office work has been outsourced to developed countries. However, the decline in the overall cost of banking and financial services has facilitated expansion: in India large banks are rapidly expanding their presence in rural areas bringing job opportunities for young people with them.³⁷ This represents a key opportunity for rural girls at the semi-skilled, skilled and professional level.

It is particularly challenging to identify the formal opportunities available to rural girls as their participation in the workforce is in particular decline and so the set of available opportunities, and the pathways to those opportunities, are shrinking. A recent World Bank working paper concludes that India's overall declining FLFP is mainly due to the withdrawal of rural women from the workforce. Most pertinently, 53% of the total female labour force withdrawal between 2004/5 and 2011/2 occurred in young rural women aged 15 to 24. However, using a combined participation rates analysis, the paper also concludes that within this age group, the drop in FLFP can be fully accounted for a rise in educational participation, whereas for working women as a whole (age 15+), educational participation only partially accounts for the decline in FLFP.³⁸

In relation to the effects of marriage, the paper also reveals that FLFP is higher among married females than unmarried ones, irrespective of whether they are members of protected scheduled castes or tribes or not. However the relationship between marital status and FLFP is different across contexts: a higher proportion of young, married, rural women have dropped out of the labour force than urban ones. There is no such differential among unmarried women.³⁹

³³ Asian Development Banks & International Labour Organisation Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (2016). ADB Briefs: Women at Work.

³⁴ www.ilo.org/newdelhi/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_568701/lang--en/index.htm

³⁵ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/559511491319990632/pdf/WPS8024.pdf>

³⁶ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_598669.pdf (p. 45)

³⁷ http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_598669.pdf

³⁸ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/559511491319990632/pdf/WPS8024.pdf>

³⁹ <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/559511491319990632/pdf/WPS8024.pdf>

4. Nepal

4.1 Overview

Fieldwork was conducted in two rural villages in Surkhet. Findings from the research suggest that the main livelihood opportunities available to girls include agriculture and working in cooperatives. In terms of formal employment opportunities, the main options included working for NGOs or INGOs, as well as teaching.

Aspirations among girls were not considered to be very realistic, with some girls not making any plans for their future due to limited options and access to information; focus group participants also seemed to have limited awareness of the knowledge and skills needed to pursue their future ambitions.

Other key barriers to girls finding appropriate livelihood opportunities include a lack of resources and access to finances, limited mobility of women and girls, weak bargaining power and decision making, and high rates of early marriage. Initiatives to raise community awareness, including among parents as well as village elders and other community members, were highlighted as being particularly important in mitigating barriers to girls' livelihood.

Comparable Livelihood Programmes

A number of comparable livelihood improvement programmes delivered in Nepal were identified through desk research.⁴⁰ There were a number of key features and practices across these programmes, including:

- 🌀 **Mentoring and peer-group support:** Comparable programmes use both mentoring and peer-group support to provide programme participants with a sustainable support network as they develop the skills and opportunities needed to improve their livelihood prospects.
- 🌀 **Home visits:** The Room to Read programme includes home visits by mentors for girls at risk of dropping out of school. These visits offer an additional link to ensure that girls have the support that they need to remain engaged in education, as well as offering the opportunity to engage with girls' families and thereby strengthen awareness of the value of girls' educational opportunities.
- 🌀 **Resource provision:** A number of comparable programmes provide participants with the materials and resources that they need to benefit from the programme; this may include textbooks and uniforms to attend school through to access to cooperative lending schemes.
- 🌀 **Skills training:** The majority of skill training programmes identified in Nepal focus on developing the agricultural and/or business skills needed for women to improve their livelihood prospects through work in the traditional agricultural sector. The focus of these programmes is to improve levels of self-reliance through sustainable agricultural practices.

It is notable that none of these programmes appear to include employer engagement as part of the programme design or delivery. The programmes identified above that focus on creating employment opportunities typically concentrate on skills development for self-employment within the agricultural sector.

⁴⁰ A summary of the relevant programmes can be found in the Appendix.

4.2 Primary Research Findings

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

Future Plans and Aspirations

If given the option to do anything in the world after finishing their education, more than a third of the focus group participants mentioned taking up careers in health, either as nurses⁴¹ or doctors⁴². Two participants mentioned wanting to become teachers, while others wanted to work in engineering, policing or in an office. Two students also mentioned that they wanted to continue studying, including learning English.

Similarly, interviewees mentioned a wide range of plans and aspirations for girls in their community when leaving school. However, some interviewees were unsure about any plans that girls may have, as it was seen to be very personal and individual, and focused instead on what girls in their community tended to do once they finished their education.

The main aspiration among girls appeared to be continuing vocational or higher education and obtaining a job: *'The preferred job for most of the girls that have some basic education is to search for an opportunity for a salaried job.'* Popular employment opportunities mentioned by the interviewees included working for NGOs or INGOs, as well as teaching. Less common livelihood opportunities mentioned included civil service or public service commission jobs, service and social jobs, working for private organisations and enterprise opportunities, such as opening a photo studio or computer institute.

One interviewee suggested that girls may not have well defined plans post-school due to a lack of knowledge of available options and pathways: *'Girls don't know what leads where... They only concentrate on passing their classes.'* Financial constraints and the pressures of early marriage also appeared to limit their ability to make plans for their own future: *'The financial condition of girls' family isn't good... Many of them couldn't continue their further study because of lack of money and some of them got married.'* One interviewee also said the proportion of girls wanting to continue education was lower in rural areas compared with urban ones: *'...we have girls who want to continue education but the percentage isn't that high, especially in rural settings.'*

Awareness of Realistic and Immediate Livelihood Opportunities

Focus group participants mentioned being inspired by people they knew working in their desired careers, such as community organisers. The participants said that they knew of or were related to people who had worked as teachers, doctors, or in the police, and two participants said that they knew women who worked in these jobs.

Only one interviewee, a peer group leader, considered the plans and aspirations among girls in the community to be realistic, while others said that some girls did not make realistic plans, or simply did not plan for their future at all: *'Only a few make realistic plans but most of them do not have plans.'* Key challenges for making realistic plans included girls not sharing their dreams with their parents, child marriage and poverty. One interviewee also suggested that girls in the community were pursuing opportunities that, while achievable, did not provide a stable enough income; the example mentioned included teaching, which was seen to be low paid and meant acquiring a loan for their studies: *'They [the teachers] are low paid and desperate.'*

⁴¹ Five participants.

⁴² One participant.

Suggestions mentioned by the interviewees for improving girls' awareness of realistic and immediate livelihood opportunities in their community included:

- Providing career counselling on available livelihood pathways.
- Establishing adolescent groups for girls to discuss and make plans for their future with their peers.
- Setting up awareness programmes to encourage community support for girls' aspirations.
- Supporting girls financially, for example through scholarships.
- Poverty alleviation through self-employment initiatives.
- Providing greater security for girls to pursue their own plans.

Existing Livelihood Opportunities

The main livelihood opportunity for girls mentioned by the interviewees included agriculture and working for cooperatives. Most opportunities in agriculture appeared to be informal or for self-consumption, with one interviewee mentioning that there was an absence of agribusinesses in the area: *'It is for livelihood. I haven't seen for business purpose.'* One peer group leader suggested that agriculture was a more realistic livelihood option for girls in the community: *'Nowadays I think I should have studied agriculture... If I had studied agriculture, I would teach other people the business viewpoint of agriculture. The farmers in this village don't know the techniques of farming, they just sow rice and feed themselves.'*

Two interviewees mentioned working for NGOs or INGOs, as well as teaching. Other livelihood opportunities mentioned by fewer individuals included banking or accounting; police; social work; working in maternal health or as community mobilisers; service jobs such as plumbing, bartending and cooking; and enterprise opportunities, such as shop keeping, mobile repairs or driving auto rickshaws. One interviewee also mentioned the potential for domestic service jobs in the Middle East.

Interviewees observed that livelihood opportunities were more limited due to it being a rural area: *'There are no government or organisational jobs in this community. They have to rear pigs, poultry farming and labour.'* Self-employment or enterprise opportunities were also seen as being more limited in rural areas due to a potential lack of customers: *'As you go to more remote... there are limited number of customers.'*

The following table summarises the key employment pathways, role requirements and principal challenges and barriers. This table is based on findings from the primary research:

Type	Description	Requirements	Challenges and Barriers
Formal Employment	Civil service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education. • Public Service Commission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to funds or scholarship. • Limited mobility for education or jobs.
	Professional jobs: teacher, nurse, police, army	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education. • Professional skills. • English skills. • Digital skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to funds or scholarship. • Limited mobility for education or jobs. • Community perceptions towards traditional 'male' jobs (police).

Type	Description	Requirements	Challenges and Barriers
	Service and social jobs: NGOs and INGOs; community mobilisers, banking, bartending, cooking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training. • English skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to funds or scholarship. • Limited mobility for education or jobs.
Informal Employment	Agriculture cooperative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health. • Accounting and mathematical skills. • Digital skills. • Social skills. • English skills (for higher level positions). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferential recruitment process. • Seasonal work.
Self-Employment	Enterprise: computer institute, photo studio, knitting, tailoring, plumbing, shop keeping, mobile repairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training. • Business and enterprise skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited bargaining power in the market place. • Challenges surrounding business registration.
Other	Subsistence farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical health. • Digital skills to get access to information for growing income. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal work. • Modest livelihood potential.
	Domestic service (Gulf countries)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited mobility.

Skills Requirements

Awareness of Livelihood Skills

Necessary skills for progressing to their desired careers mentioned by the focus group participants included social skills, digital skills, English language and training related to the subject. In general, participants were unable to detail the skill sets required other than some limited and generic skills, suggesting that they did not have a sufficient understanding of these careers; participants were able to show some understanding of the basic tasks carried out by nurses, however.

Overall, focus group participants demonstrated limited knowledge of the skills needed to pursue their future ambitions, and would likely benefit from future career guidance alongside the EDGE programme. Participants interested in nursing spoke about reading and focusing on the subject, but did not offer any further detail, indicating that they may not be aware of the necessary paths to becoming a qualified nurse. Similarly, one focus group participant mentioned wanting to work in an office, but offered no detail as to the kind of work they would be interested in, instead saying they would study what was necessary for the office job.

Half the interviewees mentioned the importance of girls having the right qualifications or professional skills for realising their plans, such as pedagogical skills for teaching or mathematical skills for working in a bank.

Other skills mentioned by fewer participants included English skills, computer skills, agriculture skills and skills required for enterprise activities, such as knitting and sewing.

One interviewee also said girls needed greater business skills and knowledge in order to access livelihood opportunities: *'They don't have any business idea. They need some business planning and business development service.'* Several interviewees reiterated that job opportunities were very limited, however, with one participant suggesting that access to information was more important for livelihood than having the right skills set: *'It is very difficult to get a job because there is no fair selection. The talented ones also don't get a job... Many of the vacancies are not made known.'*

Need for English and Digital Skills

Almost all the interviewees felt that English and digital skills were needed for girls to access livelihood opportunities: *'It is very essential to have English and digital skills to get any kind of opportunities.'* These skills were also seen as relevant for a wide range of different livelihood opportunities.

One interviewee working for a cooperative said English skills were needed to understand business proposals written in English. Other jobs requiring some level of English include teaching, and service jobs such as bartending. English skills were also seen as essential for girls to be able to leave their local community and access livelihood options elsewhere. Finally, one interviewee said English skills were valuable due to the confidence that these skills can bring.

Both the employers interviewed felt that digital skills were necessary for working at their cooperative for accounting purposes: *'Formulas are used in the computer to calculate interest. This work is slow if we do it manually.'* Digital skills were also seen as relevant for professional jobs, such as teaching, as well as for self-employment opportunities; two interviewees mentioned the potential in accessing information online about modern technologies.

Some interviewees offered very general reasons for the relevance of these skills, such as English being the third language in Nepal and digital skills being required due to the current digital era: *'It's much necessary because this time is digital time.'* Only one interviewee, an individual working for a local cooperative, did not think English skills were needed, as the software used was in the local language: *'In my cooperative, English is not necessary. People with a low level of English can also work here.'*

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

Access to Information

Many interviewees did not give a direct answer to how girls in their community found out about post-school livelihood opportunities, suggesting that access to information is a significant barrier: *'The girls do not have particular opportunities but they work in the house.'* The main source of information about available opportunities appeared to include personal contacts and networks, such as family members or meetings with community members: *'There is no newspaper in the community. They mostly know from discussions that we organise monthly.'* Other sources included cooperatives, NGOs, office notice boards and the public service commission. Only one interviewee mentioned newspapers or the internet as a potential source of information, although this mainly appeared to be for 'educated' individuals.⁴³

⁴³ The level of education was not specified by the interviewee although this term was used in contrast to referencing *'...those who are living only in the community'*.





Recruitment Processes

Interviewees gave limited details in terms of how girls in their community would go about accessing available livelihood opportunities apart from going to relevant offices and asking for information, as well as taking suggestions from friends and seniors. One peer group leader said the recruitment process for cooperatives in the community was discriminatory: *'The vacancies are not made open. They take interviews but they give the job to the people of their favour.'* One interviewee highlighted government-run training programmes as a potential pathway for individuals wanting to establish their own enterprises, but said these opportunities were not available in some communities: *'...the girls from our area don't get such opportunities. They have to pay training fees on their own and establish tailoring in the community.'*

The two employers interviewed said their recruitment process did not differ for male and female workers; one employer also said priority was given to female applicants. Recruitment approaches mentioned by the employers included written examinations and interviews, although one interviewee said applicants were required to be members of the cooperative to apply for upcoming positions. The other interviewee said the cooperative had attempted to recruit a female employee for his position, but that no one applied due to the risks surrounding the role: *'...girls didn't apply so I got that opportunity as a male... Geographically this place is dangerous... We have to walk for three hours to go from one village to another so girls are afraid of that.'*

Barriers to Accessing Livelihood Opportunities

Barriers to girls finding appropriate livelihood opportunities post-school mentioned by focus group participants and/or interviewees included:

-  **Limited mobility of women and girls:** Most of the interviewees mentioned barriers surrounding limited mobility of women and girls compared with men, including movement to other villages or towns for education or work. One interviewee said reports of incidents in the media or in newspapers had heightened concerns for girls' safety. A peer group leader also said she feared leaving the village due to perceptions around leaving one's immediate community to seek employment: *'Local people talk about girls coming and working in our community, how these girls could have come leaving home.'*
-  **Bargaining power in the household and community:** Women's lack of bargaining power and decision making was seen as a key barrier and several interviewees said the absence of parental support limited girls' ability to make their own choices for their future. Multiple focus group participants also mentioned the difficulties they faced with their families, naming family background to be a constraint, as well as the matter of family approval: *'Sometimes family members don't agree. Family members don't understand.'* One interviewee also said that lack of bargaining power affected women's ability to establish and run businesses, for example, when selling products in the market place to traders or wholesalers who are predominately male.
-  **Lack of resources:** Lack of financial resources was highlighted as another factor limiting girls' access to relevant training and knowledge. One of the main barriers to accessing livelihood opportunities mentioned by the focus group participants was finances, as they would have to be able to afford to study and purchase books, as well as cover expenses for living costs like food, clothes and accommodation. One interviewee said that there were few government-run vocational training programmes, whereas private training institutes were considerably more expensive: *'...girls do not have money to invest in private VET institutes so there are missed opportunities.'*
-  **'Son preference':** Some interviewees said families' preference for sons affected girls' access to opportunities. Girls' education tended to be much poorer compared with boys, with sons typically being sent to private boarding schools and daughters going to community government schools. One interviewee said preference for sons could also limit girls' access to information and technology; for example, if households could only afford one mobile phone, it tended to be purchased for the son.

- 🌀 **Early marriage:** Interviewees highlighted challenges surrounding early marriage, with many girls being married at 15 or 16 after finishing their school level education. One employer said his cooperative had previously employed two female field workers but that they had to leave after two years when they got married and moved to another village. Child marriage was also said to be an issue in one area which had a large proportion of individuals from the Janajati caste.
- 🌀 **Local practices and customs:** Traditional practices and customs hindered girls' access to livelihood opportunities, such as the importance of village elders for girls' decision making. Two interviewees also mentioned the practice of girls living separately during menstruation as a barrier to livelihood: *'If you look at the number of school days that girls miss because of menstrual health then that must pass over into employment as well.'*
- 🌀 **Discriminatory job or business environment:** One individual said that where women had access to livelihood opportunities, their income tended to be much lower compared with men: *'They can't earn as much money as the sons can.'* Business registration is another challenge for women setting up their own businesses, as many businesses are registered in the name of their father or husband, while the loan is under the women's name. Formally registering a business also requires proof of citizenship, which can only be obtained after the age of 16; while the procedure for obtaining citizenship is intended to be gender neutral, government officials usually require proof of the father's (as opposed to the mother's) citizenship to then issue citizenship for the child.

Mitigating Barriers

Focus group participants felt that if they continued to study and work hard, this would help them to carry out their plans. Others mentioned the importance of being financially sound, as well as support from parents or organisations. Parental support was also raised in terms of gaining the approval of families so that participants could do the courses they wanted. Focus group participants also felt that people in their community could help to support them to carry out their plans, for example through helping them convince family members, running programmes and helping to solve problems.

The main suggestion from the interviewees to mitigate barriers for girls also focused on raising awareness among parents and community members. One interviewee said that community meetings should be held to discuss local practices and customs which prevent girls' opportunities. Another interviewee suggested using role play to change traditional ways of thinking, such as acting out girls working in different types of jobs.

Other suggestions mentioned by the interviewees included:

- The inclusion of practical and job-oriented skills within the school curriculum.
- Prioritising female applicants for recruitment.
- Providing training for girls to build their self-confidence in accessing opportunities.
- Raising awareness among girls of their rights, as well as where to seek help and support.
- Better enforcement of government policies and greater accountability at the local level.

4.3 Programme Development

Livelihood Policies and Initiatives

Focus group participants did not mention any specific initiatives or programmes that were supporting them in realising their plans, although they referred to a range of activities that they were doing in order to try to

help their development after school or college. These included working hard, reading books and watching relevant videos, taking part in physical exercise and focusing on the relevant areas of the curriculum.

Specific programmes and interventions mentioned by interviewees to support girls in accessing livelihood opportunities included an adolescent development programme by SAC Nepal which aims to raise awareness of child marriage and girls' rights. Some interviewees mentioned initiatives introduced by cooperatives in the area, including loans for women to keep goats, as well as free training courses to teach sewing, knitting, vegetable growing and marketing skills. Other initiatives include a local government programme to teach adult women sewing skills which appeared to have ended, as well as other activities surrounding the wider Sisters for Sisters programme that EDGE is part of. Some of the initiatives did not appear to be specific to adolescent girls, however; for example, loans to purchase goats were focused on the whole family.

The initiatives were considered to be somewhat helpful among interviewees. One individual said the initiatives were helpful for a certain time only. Another said loans were not targeted at individuals who were most in need, whereas some did not utilise loans in the right ways and therefore struggled to pay them back: *'...they don't utilise [the loan] and it becomes hard to pay back the loan... a few spend [the loan] on their clothes, giving facilities to children and eating delicious food.'*

At the national level, initiatives mentioned by interviews included Mercy Corps programmes working with micro-finance institutions, cooperatives and commercial banks to give opportunities to women and girls. Other initiatives included an EU-funded British Council programme teaching vocational skills to women in order for them to set up their own income generation activities; as well as a programme by Helvetas for young women moving into domestic service abroad which focuses on safety and rights education. One interviewee also mentioned the existence of gender quotas for women in government as an example of initiatives supporting women's livelihoods.

Employer Engagement

Interviewees were not aware of any initiatives or programmes involving local employers except for initiatives by local cooperatives, as well as the programme by SAC Nepal, which is also delivered in partnership with local cooperatives. The SAC Nepal programme runs for nine months, during which girls join cooperatives and access loans. One local cooperative employer said the loans provided came with low interest rates; the interviewee also said the cooperative provides training for women on demand around once or twice a year, but had not provided any in the last couple of months.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

Almost all the interviewees felt that the EDGE programme was effective in expanding opportunities for girls, while one individual said it would be beneficial if it was run for a long time. Focus group participants were also positive in terms of their experience of the programme and referred to skills they had developed and how the programme had expanded their knowledge.

Two interviewees said English and digital skills were fundamental for accessing job opportunities. One peer group leader said community members were positive as the programme was provided free of charge, while another said the programme had engaged girls that were not normally engaged in school-based education: *'The little girls who were not excited in classroom learning seemed to be excited in our clubs.'*

Focus group participants and some interviewees said that peer group leaders lacked computer skills and English speaking skills. Focus group participants also suggested that peer group leaders should give equal

opportunities within the club, and should focus on helping those who are struggling to understand the content or struggling with their English.

One interviewee felt that the programme could be more effective if sessions were delivered on a daily basis. Another interviewees also mentioned the importance of involving the whole community, as well as delivering sessions to explain why the programme is running and why it is targeted at select groups: *'When we go in particular communities there is not much difference between the targeted people and the un-targeted people.'* Similarly, a local employer felt that the EDGE programme should be more open and transparent: *'The club venue is not in an appropriate place. I wish it could be in an open place so everyone can see what the girls are learning. It encourages others to learn.'*

Other possible amendments to the programme mentioned by focus group participants and interviewees included:

- Providing more laptops so club members have more time to practice their digital skills.
- Allowing peer group leaders to take laptops home in order to prepare their sessions.
- Better training material, including more markers, larger whiteboards and laminated club folders so pages cannot come loose.
- Enabling backup peer group leaders to attend sessions either as leaders or members so they can also develop their skills.
- Support for club members at risk of dropping out; for example, one interviewee said one club member had stopped attending the club after a fire broke out in her home.
- Better facilities in the club venue, including tables and chairs, fans and solar power to charge laptops (none of the club venues visited had electricity access).
- Greater support for peer leaders to balance their EDGE commitments with other household responsibilities.
- Greater financial support for peer group leaders, as the current remuneration was not seen to be sufficient.

5. Bangladesh

5.1 Overview

Fieldwork was carried out in Narsingdi, Bangladesh. Findings from the research indicate that there is a realistic sense of the livelihood opportunities available to girls, and that girls have the ability to articulate the skills required to attain their intended future livelihood objectives.

Livelihood opportunities primarily focus on agriculture, handicrafts, teaching and NGOs, although there are also local opportunities to access vocational training in more technical areas through local providers.

Key barriers to accessing livelihood opportunities include cultural and family objections, and levels of confidence amongst girls. While participants feel very positive about the EDGE programme, it is worth noting that employers and other stakeholders had limited awareness.

Comparable Livelihood Programmes

There were only two comparable programmes identified within the current desk research.⁴⁴ Key features and practices from these programmes include:

- **Child marriages:** Using a control group, the Balika programme found that its interventions reduced the likelihood of child marriage by one third. These interventions were delivered as separate strands comprising education support, lifeskill training; and livelihoods training. In contrast, the Room to Read programme employed the innovative technique of encouraging girls participating in the programme to use theatre productions to raise awareness within the local community of the need to prioritise girls' education and reduce child marriages.
- **Policy development:** Another strength of the Room to Read programme was developing a close working relationship with the national government, which led to their inclusion with the restructuring of the national curriculum in 2010.

As in Nepal, neither of these programmes appear to work directly with employers to improve livelihood prospects; however, the Balika programme reported improved employment rates for participants.

5.2 Primary Research Findings

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

Future Plans and Aspirations

Focus group participants spoke about their hopes to continue studying at college or university⁴⁵ and their hopes for careers in the police, in business, as engineers or teachers. One participant specifically mentioned wanting to work for BRAC, an international development organisation based in Bangladesh that is a partner

⁴⁴ Further programmes may be identified if more extensive desk research were commissioned. Further information on the two programmes can be found in the Appendix.

⁴⁵ Three participants.

in the programme; and another mentioned their aspirations to learn computer skills. Multiple participants reported wanting to work in a good job.

Three participants commented that they wanted to learn English, two of which were interested in then teaching English to others: *'We would like to join an English course and learn English and we would apply to be a good English teacher.'* Similarly, three participants mentioned that they wanted to learn some computer skills, one of whom wanted to then teach these to others, such as their sister: *'We get a break after finishing our school. I would like to learn computer and teach computer to others as well.'* One participant explained that they wanted to do something for their parents: *'Our parents are really doing hard work to make us educated so if we do not do anything for them, it will be like ungrateful.'*

A range of responses were given by interviewees in relation to girls' plans and aspirations for the future where no strong trends were identifiable. Participants in the PGL focus group discussed the imposition of marriage, parental constraints and the need to pay bribes in order to secure jobs. These factors seem to have limited the specific plans and aspirations the participants in the group were able to articulate, though several indicated in a general way that they wanted to continue studying and to get jobs. More specifically, one participant described the possibility of getting a part-time job alongside her studies in order to placate other family members and avoid questions as to the value of studying.

Multiple interview participants identified teaching as a career plan shared by girls, as well as NGO and development work. Beyond this, a wide range of plans were identified including going to medical or engineering college, vegetable and poultry farming, government jobs, and marriage: *'...some go to university, some go to medical, some go to BUET [Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology]. Then they try to get jobs... since this is the countryside, there are some who get married.'* Two participants also noted changes in the kinds of plans they hear girls making: the first noted that the plans seem to have shifted away from certain professions like engineering and medicine and towards more realistic goals like teaching and NGO sector work. The second noted an expansion, over the past twelve years, of the girls' plans in relation to the gendered nature of job roles. This participant reported finding an increasing number of girls who will identify the police force or military as possible career paths, despite these jobs not being traditionally allocated to women.

Awareness of Realistic and Immediate Livelihood Opportunities

The PGL focus group reported feeling that their plans for future livelihood are more realistic thanks to the opportunity provided to them by the British Council: *'...we all think this is realistic and [with] the support we are getting we think we can make it.'* Several suggestions about how further to increase girls' awareness of realistic opportunities were made by interviewees, with suggestions focusing on skills and training. One participant felt that girls needed to develop skills that were missing from the curriculum of the Bangladeshi education system, notably critical thinking and creative thinking because this will help girls to think outside the box and to be resourceful. Similarly, another participant identified social enterprise skills and other skills aimed at self-dependency as important.

A further participant thought leadership skills for the girls from urban areas would benefit them in preparing for jobs in this context, such as in supermarkets and businesses. This participant felt that girls from rural areas would benefit more from vocational skills including sewing training and agricultural skills, though in this case it is less clear how this would relate to awareness of opportunities rather than suitability for them. Finally, one interviewee identified the parents as key to increasing awareness of realistic opportunities. Particularly, this participant felt that making parents aware of ongoing cultural changes in relation to women's modesty and the appropriate age for marriage would free girls to act more on their own: *'... parents think when they get a proposal they might not get a good proposal again so they think of getting their daughter married even if they are not eighteen.'*

Finally, four sources of information about realistic opportunities were raised by participants. Firstly, job websites were referred to, these included bangla.com and BDjobs.com. Secondly, union digital centres were identified as important places for both information, because they have internet access; and for help facilitating the recruitment process, because they provide services like printing and scanning forms, CVs and so on. Both of these sources are dependent upon girls' access to the internet. One participant referred to the 'Info Lady' programme developed by D.Net for disseminating information about government programmes, and health advice to rural areas. Women are trained in basic computer skills and provided with a loan to buy bicycles; they then cycle out to remote areas providing information. The internet connectivity these women bring with them could be used to help rural girls gain access to information about realistic opportunities. Lastly, BRAC was raised as a key source of information because of its presence across the country and connection to local communities.

Existing Livelihood Opportunities

The main livelihood opportunities for girls mentioned by the interviewees were spread across agriculture, handicrafts, teaching and the NGO sector. In agriculture, the opportunities available were described as home-based and small scale. Domestic vegetable gardening, poultry and fish farming were all mentioned by several participants and cow-breeding was referred to by one. Participants emphasised that these were self-employment opportunities: *'...there are some who create their own opportunity owning vegetable garden, animal farming, by their own initiative'*.

Similarly, in relation to handicraft, participants identified sewing and *'threading'*, the manufacture of local hand loom products and in one instance dyeing as available opportunities for girls. The participants described these opportunities as both self-employment (*'...they can easily do it in their home, in their domestic area, in their local area...'*) and as a part of the formalised readymade garment sector, working in clothes mills. Where this livelihood opportunity is for home-based self-employment, two participants described the possibility of getting supporting loans: *'...you can get a loan from a bank or from an NGO and start a business, mostly making garments, you can take these products to different hubs, you can get seed funding'*. One participant also elaborated on the variation in these opportunities between rural and urban areas. The participant explained that garment work is easier in urban areas because of the networks that exist for selling products; in rural areas marketing is harder but girls can still make the products.

Thirdly, participants described teaching opportunities available to girls. These most commonly included working in kindergartens and primary schools; one participant specifically identified school cooking departments. Tuition was mentioned by participants in addition to teaching, with the implication that more informal and self-employment opportunities are also available within the broad umbrella of teaching: *'...tuition to other students, sometimes then primary school teachers and the cooking department'*.

Working for development organisations was referred to as an opportunity by a number of participants. The community health worker roles and customer service assistant roles within BRAC⁴⁶ as well as short-term consultancy contracts available in the sector at large were specifically identified. BRAC, with more than 5,000 offices in Bangladesh, was repeatedly identified as a source of opportunities. One interviewee referred to the recent and massive influx of Rohingya refugees as expanding the employment opportunities in this sector: *'...all of a sudden one million people came from Myanmar... an immediate demand has been created for employment'*. The participant explained, however, that these opportunities are for educated and 'professional' people.

Lastly, one participant identified an opportunity, which overlaps teaching and the NGO sector. The participant reported, again in relation to BRAC, that it is possible to become a 'trainer' in a number of fields, including parenting, self-defence and sports. This opportunity is part-time and usually temporary, creating a source of income for girls alongside their studies.

⁴⁶ It is clear from interviews that these roles are office-based and not 'customer service' in the sense of 'shop-worker'.

The following table summarises the key formal and self-employment pathways, role requirements, challenges and barriers. This table is based on findings from the primary research:

Type	Description	Requirements	Challenges and Barriers
Formal Employment	Professional jobs: teacher, health worker, government jobs, engineer, defence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher education. • Professional skills. • Physical health (defence). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited mobility for education or jobs. • Access to funds or scholarship.
	Service jobs: banking, sporting instructor, customer service assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training. • English skills. • Digital skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult recruitment process for some higher level jobs. • Limited mobility for education or jobs. • Access to funds or scholarship.
	Industrial jobs: garment industry, light engineering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training. • English skills (for higher level positions). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited mobility for education or jobs.
Self-Employment	Enterprise: handicraft, dress making, beautician,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocational training. • Business and enterprise skills. • Digital skills. • English skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing products in rural areas.
	Online work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital skills. • English skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds for purchasing laptops. • Limited connectivity.
Other	Subsistence farming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Life skills. 	

Skills Requirements

Awareness of Livelihood Skills

The skills considered by focus group participants to be necessary to pursue their careers were broad and tailored to their interests and specific career path. Two participants felt that continued general education would be useful: *'We need to have some basic knowledge on every subject... Maths, biology, physics.'* One participant specified that to be a doctor, they would need to learn science subjects, and one other, aspiring to be an engineer, said that they would need to gain a diploma in engineering.

A key skill that was highlighted by four focus group participants was English language skills: *'Since English is an international language... it has been prioritised everywhere.'* Similarly, three participants mentioned computer skills as important, as digital skills can open up opportunities for employment. This suggests that these two skills are considered to be amongst the most important for the participant to develop: *'If we have computer knowledge we can apply for online jobs... If I need to deal with a client, I may have to use English or even in a conference I need to speak in English. If I have computer knowledge, I can work from my home.'*

In the focus group held with PGLs, both English and digital skills were consistently raised as important for jobs in the modern economy: *'...[a]t this time, if we do not know English and the knowledge of ICT, we are not able to get job'*. There was a consensus across the group, with one participant also particularly emphasising the closely related value of those who can *'...speak fluently, those who are confident, [and] can communicate with others'*. Digital skills that were highlighted included competency in MS Office packages and typing skills for office jobs and for informal IT jobs done from home.

Vocational skills were also emphasised by multiple participants, with mechanical and electrical skills, computer skills, driving skills and dress-making and sewing skills all being raised as important within their respective fields.

Need for English and Digital Skills

Participants were strongly of the opinion that English and digital skills were important for accessing available opportunities and also for succeeding within them. Several participants described these skills as absolutely indispensable, including the PGL focus group: *'...100% they are necessary'*. Several more stressed that they were important: *'English learning is very needed'*.

The reasons given for the importance of English skills included that it was necessary or helpful for many of the specific livelihood opportunities to which participants aspire. Some English was described as necessary for accessing teaching and customer service jobs as well as to work at the certain positions in the NGO sector: *'...those who work for the community, they actually need Bangla rather than English because the community hardly understands English. There are some... higher positions... [that] need both Bangla and English. It actually depends on different positions.'* With respect to jobs in sewing and handicraft, participants explained that English skills, though not necessary, will allow girls to improve the business by allowing them an understanding of product names, how they can write those down and negotiate for better prices. Additionally English was described as underpinning digital skills: *'If someone wants to work in computers without knowing English, it's not possible.'*

The utility of digital skills within the modern economy and the fact that they help improve job security were reasons given suggesting the importance of digital skills, though participants generally offered less detailed responses. It is possible that since digital skills are required for office and IT jobs, they can help with job security by facilitating access to the formal sector.

One participant was less forthright in their assessment of the importance of these skills, though this participant did point to ways in which they were helpful. This interviewee commented that English and digital skills were necessary for jobs in foreign companies that involved interactions with foreign buyers and so on, but not for *'normal'* employment. When asked to clarify, the interviewee said that public sector jobs in government organisations did not require these skills, though they might be an advantage.

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

Access to Information

Focus group participants spoke about the ways in which they could pursue their career paths after school, including talking to experts and people within those careers, and gathering information through conversations with them. They mentioned finding information about jobs in newspapers and online.

Participants in the interviews reported a variety of means by which girls and young women find out about post-school opportunities, though a divergence between what was possible between urban and rural areas

was noted.⁴⁷ Newspapers, noticeboards and word-of-mouth were commonly identified as means of accessing this information for both urban and rural areas. Online job portals, and the smartphones and computers used to access them, were identified as being more common in urban areas. *'[I]n urban areas there's a bit more scope.'* Information centres like the BRAC library and UPI centres, and websites like BDjobs.com were also referred to here.

Further, the PGL focus group reported that the school administrators are aware of the EDGE club and the skills the girls are developing so they are able to assist with connecting the girls to suitable opportunities. The role of school authorities was also echoed by another participant. BRAC was also commonly referred to by participants, both as a source of its own vacancies and information on others. As noted already this includes the BRAC library but also its centres more generally. For BRAC vacancies, the BRAC noticeboard was identified as a source of information by one participant.

Recruitment Processes

Only one participant provided detailed information about recruitment processes. This participant described advertising vacancies in newspapers, locally or nationally depending on the job requirements. A written test, interview ('viva') and orientation follow. Depending on the demands of the post, a practical test may also be implemented. The participant stated the recruitment process was the same for male and female workers.

Barriers to Accessing Livelihood Opportunities

Focus group participants and/or interviewees also noted a number of societal and financial barriers that girls face when finding appropriate livelihood opportunities post-school, including:

- 🌀 **Family resistance and son preference:** A lack of family aspirations for their daughters was noted by one interviewee: *'Parents don't necessarily have aspirations for their daughters. They might have aspirations for their sons to go and do something so if there is any income it will be invested in potentially setting up the boy.'* The tendency towards male preference within families was also noted by another participant. Another stated that although parents won't allow girls to engage in the job market in case it interferes with their studies, unofficially, they are instead undertaking a lot of household activities. There are also barriers in families, when parents do not agree with their children's wishes to work or leave home.
- 🌀 **Cultural pressures:** Focus group participants discussed that cultural traditions in Bangladesh dictate that women stay at home or get married, and not take outside jobs. Other people in the community also put pressure on families, according to participants: *'Neighbours criticise women studying and they say "what will you do by studying? It's better to get married. Don't waste your parents' money".'* It is suggested by interviewees that there is a general social barrier to the acceptance of girls going outside to work.
- 🌀 **Perceptions of gender and security:** Although one PGL noted gender discrimination in the form of teasing, another interviewee noted that gender norms were not a major problem nowadays, but that challenges lay more in a sense of insecurity. This was also noted by three other interview participants: *'Girls, there's a perception that girls need to be protected and it's a big bad world out there and ill will befall girls if they head out there on their own.'*
- 🌀 **Early marriage:** A trend towards early marriage was mentioned by both the Peer Group Leaders and by one other participant: *'After finishing school, parents want to get their daughters married.'*
- 🌀 **Sexual harassment:** Other focus group participants also mentioned that there is the fear of sexual

⁴⁷ One participant noted that there was not much difference between the urban and rural girls in this regard but then went on to identify a similar divergence to other participants. This participant's views have been included in the weight given to the overall trend: that there is a difference between urban and rural.

harassment ('eve teasing') for girls, especially when they are travelling to a city.

- 🌀 **Rural/urban divide:** The differing opportunities offered to those in urban areas compared with those in rural areas was noted as a barrier. Specifically, this included: the lack of job opportunities in rural areas and the numbers of skilled, unemployed people in urban areas, parents not allowing their daughters to go to urban areas, and the differing education standards: *'If they are completing their undergrad in a rural college then it's difficult in the future for them to get into a very good job like any other person who has finished their education from an urban university.'*
- 🌀 **Lack of skills:** A number of participants mentioned a lack of skills, particularly English language skills. One reported that although the education system was theoretically good, in practice, those in rural areas were not reaching a high standard: *'Even those who have completed secondary school, they cannot speak a single line of English... they are not able to practice regularly speaking English or communicating English in the class.'*

Other barriers mentioned by participants included a lack of access to technology and a lack of self-confidence amongst women.

Mitigating the Barriers

Participants mentioned ways of mitigating these barriers: five participants felt that support from their parents and family would help them to carry out their plans; similarly, two participants commented on the need for societal change and support: *'If society stops criticising us, we can go outside for work.'* Three participants referred to money being influential in their education or in job applications, and a further three participants felt that education was important in helping them to achieve their goals. Two interviewees emphasised the importance of girls being taught self-reliance and confidence in themselves: one thought that it is important that it be demonstrated *'...that they can stand on their own two feet, that they can also earn their own income and that they can be a viable financial member of the community'*.

5.3 Programme Development

Livelihood Policies and Initiatives

BRAC was reported by PGLs as running programmes in their communities which enable post-school opportunities; they felt that these programmes enabled them to take the initiative and help their parents to understand the value of them working outside the home. A headteacher also mentioned BRAC as being the only initiative available locally, and offering IT training, English language teaching and self-defence. Another interviewee referenced accessing computing and beautician skills training through BRAC. BRAC tends to focus on urban areas, however, suggesting that rural areas may be under-served in terms of community initiatives.

Two interviewees mentioned apprenticeships as relevant community initiatives. Two interviewees also referenced Yusef, an organisation which offers girls training in areas such as nursing, motor mechanics and electrical mechanics. Other organisations provide training in fish farming, animal husbandry and vegetable cultivation. There was an older programme relating to economic empowerment for children's rights; Government-run adolescent clubs also support children to find out what they can do when they leave school, and there are programmes for street children which support them with education and training. It was notable, however, that none of these initiatives were referenced by the girls.

One headteacher said that there were no active initiatives. Another interviewee suggested that there was a gap in small business skills: girls do not know how to start them. While BRAC is able to offer financial

training, seed money is another area which is lacking.

One interviewee noted an adolescent development programme currently run in EDGE centres, with more than 5,000 adolescent clubs in existence. Another interviewee commented on training currently being offered by BRAC on social awareness, early marriage and sexual abuse; it is felt by the British Council that training in these areas complements the aims of the EDGE programme and the information being given to the participants. The local programme team has noted that additional training is being provided through the Active Citizens programme and the social enterprise strands, which equips young people with the skills to design and obtain funding for a relevant local social action project; this programme also aims to change community perceptions about what young people can achieve. In terms of linkages with the EDGE programme, it is envisaged that the clubs could run the social enterprise project, potentially with some seed funding from the British Council.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

In the focus group held with PGLs, participants noted that the programme had been effective in improving their communication skills: *'What the British Council did is to develop our English skills as well as our computer skills so now we, the peer leaders, are not afraid to communicate.'* One focus group participant spoke positively about the club and how it had helped the girls to learn English and that they can speak the language better now. Other participants said that they were grateful for the opportunity to take part in the programme, and that the programme had everything it needed. Only one interviewee knew of the EDGE programme in detail and was able to describe it as incorporating training in English, mathematics and ICT, with an element of mentoring. The other interviewees did not know of the programme.

Ways in which the programme could be adjusted, as noted by research participants, included:

- 🌀 **Removing the attendance fee:** It was mentioned by three focus group participants that the club could be improved if there was no cost, as this would mean that many more girls would be able to attend the club: *'We have to pay monthly 20 taka. For this reason, other girls of this region do not come forward to join... if the club could not take money then the girls of our countryside would get the opportunity more.'*
- 🌀 **Clearer presentation of material:** They felt that the club could make improvements in the presentation of information; while the first module had material presented in Bangla, the second module had information only in English: *'We didn't understand how to answer and there were no guidelines.'* For future iterations of the programme PGLs would be interested in progressing to higher levels of leadership.
- 🌀 **Programme expansion:** Expanding the programme to more schools across Bangladesh was recommended by two participants; one indicated that it could be worthwhile making programmes like EDGE mandatory. The other participant felt that the in-built limitations of the programme, whereby it is only available in particular areas, could lead to discrimination as only small groups of girls would be able to take part.
- 🌀 **Focus on entrepreneurship skills:** The programme's focus on livelihood attracted some criticism from one participant as being insufficient to have a real impact: *'...what we are providing them is not enough for getting a livelihood'*. This participant recommended that the focus should expand to include entrepreneurship and skills training, so that it would have a direct impact on the girls' ability to pursue sustainable opportunities. As another participant noted, there are fewer direct employment opportunities in Bangladesh, especially in rural areas, meaning that entrepreneurial skills would need to feed back into common livelihood sectors such as agriculture.
- 🌀 **Signposting opportunities:** Another participant felt that one of the weaknesses of the current

programme is that it can provide girls with the tools for new opportunities in terms of livelihood, but it does not provide the actual opportunities themselves: *'If there's a criticism of the current programme, it's that it provides a window and an open pathway but there is no pathway from that window. So they can see out, to use the metaphor, but they don't know where to go and how to get there.'*

6. India

6.1 Overview





Fieldwork was carried out in Hyderabad, India. Findings from the research suggest that work opportunities in the formal sector are popular career aspirations for girls, with the most frequently mentioned careers including a doctor, teacher and engineer.

Girls show varied understanding of the skills that they need to achieve their desired careers as well as to develop personally. Current livelihood opportunities appear to be focused on teaching, NGOs and informal sector employment, with existing barriers that limit girls' access to these opportunities.

The main barriers that affect girls' livelihood opportunities include their socioeconomic status and local area, a lack of access to information, a lack of support from their families, financial limitations, early marriage and sexual harassment. Better education, careers advice and guidance, and family engagement were considered as important ways of mitigating barrier to girls' livelihood.

Comparable Livelihood Programmes

There are a considerable number of comparable livelihood improvement programmes delivered across India, the most relevant of which are included within the current research.⁴⁸ There were a number of key features and practices across these programmes, including:

-  **Digital skills:** There is a much greater focus on developing digital skills within programmes delivered in India compared with those in Nepal and Bangladesh. Relevant examples include developing tablet-based software to provide a low-cost means to support young people's digital and literacy skills through self-directed learning; training teachers in the necessary skills for integrating technology into their classroom teaching; and establishing digital centres to provide local access to digital technology for girls that may not have the freedom to travel.
-  **Learning centres:** Both school-based and community-based learning centres have been used by programmes in India to improve girls' access to skills-based educational opportunities. The Taleemshalas programme is notable for focusing on providing learning without assessments at a pace that is determined by the girls themselves.
-  **Government partnership:** Partnership working with national and local government has allowed the Room to Read programme the scope to take an initial pilot programme to become a statewide intervention within two states.
-  **Targeted skills development:** While most programmes focus on general skills development to improve livelihood opportunities, the Women on Wheels initiative supports women to develop the skills needed to provide women's only chauffeur services, as well as offering practical and business support to transition into sustainable employment.

In addition to education and livelihood programmes, desk research also identified a further example of how social enterprise can offer girls and women access to employment opportunities through a female-focused model. Ayzh is a social enterprise developed for women to create hygiene products for themselves and

⁴⁸ A summary of the relevant programmes can be found in the Appendix.

other women in their communities. The products produced, such as clean birth kits and sanitary towels, improve women's health as well as reducing the morbidity and mortality rates of child birth. Originally based in India and now operating worldwide, Ayzh employs Indian women to package and assemble the products, as well as providing them with training and development opportunities.⁴⁹

6.2 Primary Research Findings

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

Future Plans and Aspirations

The focus group participants listed a range of careers that they were interested in pursuing after school or college. There were several participants who said that they wanted to help other people in their careers; two participants said that they wanted to help poor people and children; and one participant said they wanted to support families through social work. One other participant commented that they wanted to be a Champion, suggesting that they had been inspired by the programme and the programme leaders, and the help that they had received. Others wanted to be doctors⁵⁰ and lawyers⁵¹, to save people's lives and to help support people. Three focus group participants mentioned continuing their education, one of whom aspires to complete a degree in fashion design and hopes to open a shop. Other participants wanted to be software engineers,⁵² karate trainers,⁵³ a pilot,⁵⁴ or a fighter.⁵⁵

Similarly, interviewees gave a variety of responses when they were asked what girls' plans and aspirations are for when they leave school. Some of the interviewees said that girls have more options available to them in terms of the type of professions that they can pursue, whilst other interviewees felt that issues hindered girls' plans and aspirations such as societal conditioning, surrounding environment and family issues.

The majority of interviewees reported that girls have plans and aspirations to seek higher education after they leave school and become independent: '*...they want to own their rights*'. One interviewee noted that the three most popular career aspirations for girls are: doctor, teacher and engineer. Other professions that were mentioned by interviewees included: lawyers, nurses, lecturers, police officers, journalists, fashion designers and tailors, and chartered accountants; with aspirations to move into various other sectors which are considered less traditional such as hotel management and the commerce industry.

There are however, some limitations to girls' future plans and aspirations that have been reported by a number of interviewees. Two interviewees said that girls are unaware of the full extent of their future prospects, reporting that '*...90% [of girls] they don't have any vision, they don't know their future*'; whilst another interviewee said that '*...they [girls] aren't really introduced to the idea of career options that are available, that they could take up*'.

Marriage also poses a challenge to girls' plans and aspirations where some girls are getting married at the age of 11 or 12. These decisions are usually instigated by their parents: '*Some don't want to get married but their parents are forcing them to get married*'. Broader personal family issues were also seen by interviewees as a hindrance to girls' aspirations, where girls may have plans to pursue a career in a particular field, which are

⁴⁹ United Nations Global Compact. *A Pioneer for Safe and Healthy Birth*.

⁵⁰ Two participants.

⁵¹ Two participants.

⁵² Two participants.

⁵³ Two participants.

⁵⁴ One participant.

⁵⁵ One participant.

limited by their parents decisions: *'They want to do some kinds of jobs... but the parents don't let them go outside.'*

A girls' environment and exposure to 'eve-teasing' is another issue raised by interviewees that can affect girls' plans and aspirations. One interviewee said that some girls will not go to college due to their fear of sexual harassment, and another interviewee felt that the environment in which a girl is exposed to has an impact on their career prospects: *'In rural [areas], it would be different and even for aspirations at times, it's limited to the environment.'*

Two interviewees suggested that girls' future plans and aspirations are contingent on how they measure societal values of success and expectations. An example was given of the aspiration to become a doctor, as this is seen as a successful career that holds social standing and can lead to financial independence: *'...it's about girls being able to see other opportunities as successful and also monetising their talents and skills in a way that perhaps is unprecedented'*. The gender stereotypes that are associated with particular careers in India affects girls' future aspirations according to two interviewees, however, this is improving: *'...there is now in India more of a receptiveness in terms of accepting women in these roles that were traditionally reserved for men'*.

A number of interviewees commented on the positive influences that can encourage girls to have future plans and aspirations, which include social media, TV, radio, female friendship and other prominent female figures in the public: *'...they are hearing the different accomplishments of women in India and outside also so they are somewhat exploring that'*.

Focus group participants also referred to things that would help them to realise their plans. Several mentioned that support from members of their family would help them, with others noting that while society would not be supportive, families could be. Some responses suggest that there is some existing support in their family networks: *'...my mother and father will help me get my ambitions'*. Other participants mentioned that support from friends and extended family would help them.

Two focus group participants mentioned that their teachers might help by providing knowledge and encouragement where needed: *'They help us in studies and each and every thing.'* Several participants mentioned that organisations can help them, naming the Naandi Foundation. One participant explained that organisations representing minorities would help them, particularly in relation to support for girls. Several other participants mentioned that part-time jobs would help them, if it allowed them to do work outside of studying.

Awareness of Realistic and Immediate Livelihood Opportunities

Six interviewees believed that girls' plans are realistic and achievable. It is important to note that they may, however, have understood this within a broader context as opposed to considering specific existing factors that can hinder girls' future achievability.

Two interviewees commented that girls' plans are realistic because they are driven to learn and have careers: *'...if they think that is what they want to do that, they can'*. Some of these interviewees felt that girls' plans are realistic, but that they are subject to limitations due to a lack of financial resources, a lack of support from their family and a lack of awareness of career entry. One interviewee noted that some parents did not like their daughters studying far away from their home, which is problematic when there are limited, over-subscribed colleges in Hyderabad which might require further travel. Another interviewee had observed that parents do not want their daughters to study as it hinders their marriage prospects: *'...one thing is that if a girl has a higher qualification, they don't find a groom'*.

One interviewee suggested that some girls were confused about their careers, and due to limited knowledge, are attracted to the idea of types of jobs without fully understanding the day-to-day tasks that would be required of them.

Some interviewees gave examples of ways to increase girls' awareness of realistic opportunities in their community, which include the following:

- 🌀 **Parent engagement:** One interviewee said that organising meetings with parents is a good way of telling them about existing opportunities for their daughters, with the hope of encouraging parental support for learning and the right for girls to have a career.
- 🌀 **Exposure to workplace settings:** One interviewee mentioned that they had started taking girls to workplaces so they can see what a workplace is and what is expected of them in this environment. For example, they would bring girls' awareness to workplace responsibilities such as arriving on time, and annual leave. This was seen as an important way of increasing awareness of the different types of work girls can do, particularly for girls who, *'...in their immediate circle they don't know anyone in the formal sector'*.
- 🌀 **Information sharing:** Two interviewees spoke about the importance of spreading awareness of career prospects for girls by circulating information around clubs, centres and communities. One interviewee reported that they teach girls about different career pathways, for example, how to progress from a law degree to a lawyer.

Existing Livelihood Opportunities

The majority of interviewees reported teaching as the main livelihood opportunity for girls in their area. One interviewee noted that although these are considered as jobs in the formal sector, the salaries were quite low in their community. NGOs were referred to as a livelihood opportunity for girls according to two interviewees; one of these said that the NGOs run social enterprise programmes that girls can take part in. The same interviewee also mentioned similar social enterprise schemes that are available via the government for women and girls. Other opportunities stated by fewer interviewees included informal sector jobs in the cotton garment industry, construction, retail, tobacco industry, packaging industry; and additional formal sector jobs in business administration, call centres and IT companies: *'The city of Hyderabad and Bangalore have been the birth places of the entire IT world so that has opened up a lot of job opportunities even at the lowest level, so you can do data entry, working in call centres.'* Self-defence classes was mentioned by one participant as a livelihood opportunity for girls within their area.

One interviewee said that there were more opportunities 8-10km outside of their community, for girls who are able to travel this distance. Limitations around financial resources and access to education were referenced by one interviewee, who felt that it is harder for girls to improve their skill set when they cannot access a higher quality of teaching at private colleges.

The following table summarises the key employment pathways which include formal, informal and self-employment, role requirements, challenges and barriers. This table is based on findings from the primary research:

Type	Description	Requirements	Challenges and Barriers
Formal Employment	IT sector (from data entry through to call centres and tech support) and other roles at MNCs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In general, education up to at least college. Up to university for higher levels. • Permission to and means of travel. • Digital skills and English skills increasing in ability with level of position. • Interview skills. • Sufficient work clothing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission to travel often hard to obtain. • Means of travel can be unfamiliar and intimidating. • Higher levels of education inaccessible for financial reasons. • Basic familiarity with formal sector working, such as expectations of punctuality, dress code etc often lacking. • Five sets of distinct clothes can be financial strain.
	Retail: supermarkets and large shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission to and means of travel. • Interview skills. • Personality skills, e.g. confidence and ability to interact with male customers. • Sufficient work clothing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission to travel often hard to obtain. • Means of travel can be unfamiliar and intimidating. • Basic familiarity with formal sector working, such as expectations of punctuality, dress code etc often lacking. • Five sets of distinct clothes can be financial strain.
	Formal RMG industry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permissions to and means of travel. • English, especially at higher levels; for job itself as well as navigating the recruitment process. • Interview skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission to travel often hard to obtain. • Means of travel can be unfamiliar and intimidating. • Basic familiarity with formal sector working, such as expectations of punctuality, dress code etc often lacking. • Five sets of distinct clothes can be financial strain.

Type	Description	Requirements	Challenges and Barriers
	Teaching (often part-time)	<p>Depending on the sector/ level of teaching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education up to highest level attainable. • Good level of English. • Interview skills. • Permission to and means of travel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission to travel often hard to obtain. • Means of travel can be unfamiliar and intimidating. • Basic familiarity with formal sector working, such as expectations of punctuality, dress code etc often lacking. • Five sets of distinct clothes can be financial strain.
	Other traditional professions: doctor, engineer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acceptance to specialist universities. • Strong academic performance. • Financial position to cover costs of tuition. • Permission to and means of travelling to university. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited number of seats on courses. • Permission to travel often hard to obtain. • Means of travel can be unfamiliar and intimidating. • Higher levels of education inaccessible for financial reasons. • Basic familiarity with formal sector working, such as expectations of punctuality, dress code etc often lacking.
Informal Employment	“Job-work”: beedi rolling, sewing, bindi manufacture, domestic labour, helping out in shops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quite low: access to existing informal networks and job-specific skills, e.g. sewing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much lower, though access to existing networks harder in rural areas and may need permission and means for travel.
Self-employment	Various. Mainly in securing micro financial loans to expand upon work in the informal sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence. • Sufficient English to navigate process of acquiring seed capital. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of and capacity to apply for seed capital.

Skills Requirements

Awareness of Livelihood Skills

Focus group participants mentioned the skills that they felt were most important for them to develop, both for life and in order to follow their desired career paths. One mentioned computer skills, one the English language, and another, communication skills. Other skills that were mentioned included design and

innovation skills, karate skills, and overcoming fear.

Interviewees felt that communication, digital, interpersonal and English skills are required of girls to fulfil their aspirations. It was also noted that self-confidence is an important asset in promoting girls' talents: *'I need to have that self-awareness of what I'm good at. And development of internal confidence in my abilities and that ability to monetise those talents.'* Other skills mentioned by fewer participants included entrepreneurial and creativity skills so that girls could use these to build social enterprises of their own: *'It could be something simple as... baby-sitting, how can they make that into a social enterprise.'* Two interviewees commented on skills that can help girls progress in different working environments, such as the value of social skills in a corporate, mixed-gender environment. It was also suggested by one interviewee that planning skills would be important as *'...they [girls] should have the knowledge of how to handle themselves in problematic situations'*.

Hygiene was mentioned by one participant who felt that further education on menstruation and gynaecological health would be important for girls, as often girls struggle to express what they need in this regard.

Need for English and Digital Skills

All of the participants said that English and digital skills are necessary and important for girls to access opportunities. Two interviewees felt that both of these skills are vital for globalisation by opening up broader communication channels with different people, and keeping abreast of global technological advances. One interviewee reported that these skills are important in accessing critical information that is disseminated via government or agency schemes, as multiple digital platforms are used and websites are often multi-lingual. The interaction of English and digital skills in today's society was mentioned by two interviewees to be important skills: *'I think in India digital skills are definitely important today. And digital skills are not possible without English. So English really is the vehicle to digital skills.'*

Interviewees highlighted the importance of English skills for girls as English is commonly used throughout India and in particular, in office environments. Three interviewees also reported that both English and digital skills are necessary to bolster career prospects inside and outside of their communities.

More specifically, one participant suggested that having digital skills would be a large advantage for global career prospects: *'...digital is a platform that is almost universal now so if you had someone who didn't know how to handle it, it would be a big handicap'*.

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

Access to Information

There were mixed responses given by interviewees about the ways girls in their communities can find out about post-school employment and other informal labour, business or self employment opportunities. This suggests that there is no clear, formal way that girls access information, in some contexts. One interviewee said that most of the girls access opportunities through word of mouth, however this is restricted to formal sector jobs: *'...it's very hard for girls to access opportunities in the non-formal sector on their own'*. Another interviewee suggested that in larger cities, there is greater information sharing where girls can access portals that publish online information about prospective jobs. Websites, newspaper publications and job apps were referenced by two interviewees as ways that girls can access information, with NGOs also playing a role in disseminating information about job opportunities.

A majority of participants, however, have suggested that there are barriers to accessing information which is based on a girl's background and local area: *'...the challenge is India as a country has a lot of opportunities for*

women and girls but the dissemination of that information is not systematic and it isn't country-wide'. One interviewee felt that access to information, in particular, was determined by a girl's background and socio-economic conditions, where under-privileged girls have two main sources of information: their immediate friends and family, and their school teachers: *'[A] number of schools have a number of teachers who are actually quite attached to the students and would like to give them some guidance on what they could be doing after this.'* Another interviewee said that in some areas, girls do not have access to the internet or newspapers.

A number of interviewees spoke about access to information through the EDGE programme and N-Star centres which have helped girls become aware of job opportunities. Engaging the community by house-calling and sharing information in person is a method that one interviewee uses (alongside N-Star resources) to give girls information on job vacancies and skills-learning.

There is an issue, however, that those who do not engage with the programmes or centres do not have a way of accessing sources of information in this regard. Outside of the programme, two interviewees expressed uncertainty as to how girls access information.

Recruitment Processes



Interviewees did not offer much detail on how girls in their communities access livelihood opportunities and engage in the recruitment processes. One interviewee said that girls can access roles via newspapers, advertisements and tv channels. A small number of participants said that through the EDGE programmes, N-Star centres and Naandi Foundation, there are people who offer guidance and support to girls who may be invited for interviews: *'...you have to undergo one month's training'*. Another interviewee said that centre Champions will disseminate information about job opportunities and then select girls to apply for the roles themselves.

There are job placement processes in place according to one interviewee, who said that third party organisations will help female graduates with the recruitment process, such as multi-national cooperations (MNCs): *'...they'll come and interact with the learners, so they will also engage them in the job placement process'*.

There is a bigger challenge with the lack of support from girls' families and additional barriers from fathers and brothers who prevent their daughters/sisters from pursuing livelihood opportunities, according to two interviewees: *'...it's an issue from the girls that their families are not allowing the girls to go anywhere'*.

Barriers to Accessing Livelihood Opportunities

Interviewees and focus group participants mentioned a range of barriers to girls finding appropriate livelihood opportunities post-school:

-  **Gender inequality:** Society places more importance on boys. This can be seen in the varying levels of education for girls, meaning that they are less likely to be as well qualified as boys of the same age. Several focus group participants said that society was constraining, explaining that it is hard for girls, and that it can be hard to get permission to study and go out. One interviewee mentioned that in some marriages, even when women are able to work, men sometimes do not like them to because it threatens their pride: *'If they are able to earn enough to look after the family, they [men] are not happy with the woman going to work.'* This suggests that even girls who are well educated and financially independent, may face problems trying to get work. Furthermore, one interviewee mentioned how women face health problems and a societal stigma around menstruation, which can be limiting: *'They face like health issues sometimes... they can't move because of their health... They have gynaecological problems like periods.'*
-  **Safety/independence:** Fears for girls' safety arise from sexual harassment, or 'eve teasing', and is considered to be a huge barrier to girls' independence. Interviewees spoke about how it influences decision making around jobs, as well as which schools girls should study at, whether they are co-ed, and

how far away they are. The problem has been raised as a discussion point in recent years, and, although this problem is serious, one participant felt that the problem is exaggerated in parents' fears. This suggests that if girls were given some level of knowledge about how to cope in potentially dangerous situations, particularly when out on their own, there would be less fear and greater opportunity for girls to have some independence. One interviewee mentioned that girls are keen to be independent, but it is their parents that are scared for them: *'It's not that the parents don't want nice things to happen to them, it's just that parents feel it's much safer not to take a chance.'*

- 🌀 **Financial stability:** Girls are not taught at school how to be financially independent, or how to open a bank account. This can be a catalyst for independence: *'Once you're financially independent in a small area you can develop and grow.'* Financial difficulties can also impact girls' confidence in getting a job, for example being able to afford to buy clothes to wear to work: *'A receptionist needs to have decent clothes to wear because she's right there in front and she can't be repeating her clothes. That becomes a huge stress.'* Financial issues can also limit how and where girls are able to study. There are also conflicting problems around expecting women to earn enough money to not be a financial burden, but also to be present at home, taking care of the family: *'So we say that now the trend has been changed so the girls they have to be financially independent.'* Two focus group participants reported more generally that getting financial support was a problem that they face, where one explained that their family did not have enough money to allow them to study.
- 🌀 **Not knowing the opportunities they have:** The girls are not aware of the opportunities that are available to them as career opportunities: *'They just don't know about what opportunities are available and they might not see them as viable opportunities.'* This may be because it is not necessarily considered by schools to teach girls about their options. One participant said that there are not events such as careers fairs, and that sometimes the only way girls find out about their opportunities is through the work of an NGO. This comes hand in hand with limited access to information that girls have, particularly in rural areas.
- 🌀 **Family expectations:** The majority of focus group participants mentioned family as a barrier to their job-seeking. When questioned further about this, they spoke about how families are keen to have girls married young. Families put pressure on girls to follow a certain path, with further pressure from societal norms. This can mean that families disregard the wishes of girls: *'Family demands are something quite different from what the girls actually want.'* Participants commented on the lack of support from parents for their daughters, and that they can lack faith in their abilities: *'Parents say they don't want to send their girls but once they are giving their salary to their mother or to their brother, parents they started believing in them.'* Early and arranged marriages are a problem for many girls: *'Parents start thinking about marriage, this is a major barrier for the girls because they want to continue post-graduation.'* Many girls do not want to be married at such young ages but their parents think it is the most responsible thing to do.

Mitigating Barriers

A range of suggestions were given by interviewees on how to mitigate barriers to girls accessing livelihood opportunities:

- 🌀 **Educating girls:** Increasing access to information for girls through strengthening education and raising awareness of jobs that are not considered to be traditional is seen as a way to mitigate barriers: *'One of the things that needs to happen is strengthening the links between formal and non-formal education, strengthening the information girls might get at school which might be restricted to jobs in the traditional sense and also being to provide them with information on what is out there.'*
- 🌀 **Careers advice:** Offering some level of careers advice before girls finish school has been noted by one interviewee as beneficial to help girls achieve further opportunities: *'That's something that should be done in the schools itself... providing them with the various career options or even further education opportunities'*

that are out there.'

- **Financial support:** Alongside the mention of education funding schemes, another interviewee felt that girls might benefit from financial support early on in their working life, while they settle: *'A loan for the first two, three moths until she stabilises... that helps her work work out her commute, expenses, her clothes.'* One interviewee mentioned that there are funding schemes available for girls' further education, but that people are not aware of the schemes.
- **Educating families:** Several of the interviewees spoke about educating parents as a way to mitigate some of the barriers that girls are facing. Interviewees gave examples of changing the mindset of various parents that they had engaged in conversation with about these issues:
 - Education around girls' safety is important, as one interviewee explained that parents had more faith when they saw that their daughters were learning about how to be independent and safe when they are on their own.
 - Equally for early and arranged marriages, another interviewee spoke about how they had been educating parents on the consequences of early marriages and had seen some parents changing their views. This suggests that opening conversations with parents about their daughters can lead to small changes towards girls' independence.
 - Speaking to parents about why girls should be attending college, accessing further education and learning how to be independent, financially and otherwise: *'...we have to make them understand what is the need of education...we have to make them understand why we want them to be financially independent.'*

6.3 Programme Development

Livelihood Policies and Initiatives

One of the focus group participants said that she is currently attending fashion college, and when she is at home, sews dresses for people. Four others talk about going to college, as well as attending karate classes once a week on a Sunday. Other girls spoke about learning English, trying to be fluent and practising their grammar. Two others mentioned computer skills and learning about technologies.

Interviewees mentioned a range of NGOs that run projects for women and girls. Those mentioned included the Naandi Foundation, the Pratham Foundation and some government schemes. One interviewee specified that the Naandi programme has no real input from employers, however. It was mentioned that there are a number of organisations running in Hyderabad that work with girls under the age of 15. One participant felt that the EDGE programme was unique because of its approach: *'...what is unique about EDGE, however, is that it has these three strands intertwined and that is the strength of EDGE: it is English, digital and social issues'*. Interviewees thought that some of these schemes helped to build girls' confidence.

Also mentioned was a tailoring centre which teaches girls how to sew and how to apply this skill to earning money: *'They are making them aware of stitching so that they can also earn from stitching by sitting at home.'* This is an interesting way to show girls how they can directly apply a skill that they have learned, by using it to earn money.

One participant mentioned an organisation to which the EDGE and Naandi programmes are connected, namely the My Choice Foundation. This foundation is working with married women who suffer from domestic abuse and violence, and has had good feedback from women experiencing difficulties: *'Many girls they say we are finding centre a happy place'*.

Two participants mentioned the role that people working in ‘Anganwadis’ (government-run child care facilities) play towards motivating girls to work and develop themselves. They mentioned that the Anganwadi teachers will take part in encouraging girls to attend school and are very interested in the girls’ lives. This is an example of how communities can help women and girls positively, as opposed to the more negative stances of society that have been mentioned previously.

One participant questioned the effectiveness of some of the programmes that are being run in India in recent years: *‘I would say ten yers ago there was nothing, now... lots of opportunities have come. However, how effective they are in actually connecting the dot and getting that trained person a job that is satisfying in a real way, that is a big question.’*

Other programmes that were mentioned were the N-Star programme and the Mahindra Pride School, both run by The Naandi Foundation. The Mahindra Pride School runs a programme at its centres, aimed at giving young boys and girls vocational skills and finding them work placements. Alongside their vocational skills, they are also taught about interview skills, etiquette and looking smart for work. One interviewee struggled to define the difference between the N-Star programme and the EDGE programme, but explained that they are using the content from the EDGE programme which correlates with the aims of N-Star programme.

Interviewees felt that the other programmes helped to support EDGE because they complemented EDGE’s soft skills (raising social awareness around human rights, gender, bullying and similar) with harder skills, such as financial literacy and vocational skills. The view was that these programmes worked together to cover a range of skills that programme participants would be lacking or needed help in, covering English, digital skills, social awareness, financial literacy and vocational skills.

Employer Engagement

Three interviewees felt that there has been a degree of employer engagement as a result of the programme; it is worth noting that there were no responses indicating that employers had been engaged through specifically targeted programme activities, however. The specific examples of engagement included:

- 🌀 A group of participants employed in a supermarket chain which has led to other participants being recruited in other localities, as the supermarket was impressed with their performance and asked them for recommendations when new workers were needed.
- 🌀 One of the schools involved in the programme sends young people on job placements.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

Perceptions of Effectiveness

Several of the girls speak about enjoying the EDGE club, mentioning that they have fun whilst learning. The girls say that they like learning social skills, digital skills and how to use laptops, as well as using creative thinking, playing games and doing art. Two of the girls said that they enjoyed learning English at the club, along with communication and grammar skills.

One focus group participant said that the course gives them a foundation. This suggests that the structure of the club and its activities are beneficial to the participant, and that it may provide a base of knowledge that they otherwise might not have access to.

Another participant spoke about how the club had improved their confidence and independence. They also reported that they had improved their understanding of social issues, such as child rights and child

marriages. She also said that she is now encouraging other girls to attend the club.

The general perception from interviewees is that the programme has been effective overall and has contributed to positive outcomes for the students in terms of personal and skills development, and outcomes: *'...some students have joined the teachers, some are receptionists and tele-calling. Some students have accounting jobs.'* One participant felt that the programme could be usefully expanded: *'...this kind of programme we have to implement in every school and every college and area, community'*. The approach of the programme was also noted by one interviewee as being highly relevant for the target group: *'This is an excellent life skills project: English and how to face interviews, how to work the computer system, the modern things they learn and the modern technology.'*

Interviews with PGLs indicated a strong level of positive feeling about the programme and its design; both PGLs felt that the programme's emphasis on developing conversational skills and confidence has been highly beneficial: *'...they are not focusing on the grammar only but the way of talking'*. One PGL also felt that these benefits had been experienced by the programme participants: *'...they are now much confident to speak in English and they can also share their views'*.





The outcomes in terms of digital capabilities were also noted by three interviewees as being particularly positive; one interviewee described the girls as being unable to open laptops at the start of the programme, and progressing towards being able to prepare and present a digital project: *'...thanks to EDGE now if you ask "prepare a small project", they will open their laptop, with different colours they will... apply colours, they will give a good title, they will do lots of research on google and they will come with a good presentation'*.

According to the programme team, while they can see positive outcomes from the programme, they are also looking to the next module to incorporate any improvements; there are likely to be further subject areas, in further education and careers, that they can add to the existing suite of topics.

Adjustments

The girls from the focus groups mentioned things that could be done to improve the club. Two participants felt that they needed more from the club, which might mean that they would like more frequent club sessions, a broader range of activities or skills to develop. One participant said that they would like the club to involve learning more information about the world.

Interviewees suggested a range of ways in which the programme could be improved for the forthcoming module, including:

-  **Increased computing skills:** PGL interviewees indicated that while they are happy with the level of digital skills they are acquiring, they would welcome further opportunities to learn about computers in the next module.
-  **Using more sophisticated material:** One interviewee felt that the level of content was not always advanced enough for the participants: *'I felt that given that these girls are teenage girls, it was bit infantilised, you know... the English conversation examples.'*
-  **Using digital platforms:** Three interviewees indicated that a greater use of digital learning platforms could be beneficial. One felt that if there were more laptops available to participants, there could be significant advances in what could be achieved: *'...where you have wifi and laptops... the sky is the limit in terms of what you can do in terms of teaching and learning'*. Two other interviewees recommended increasing the use of audio-visual learning materials as well, as they are more engaging for the participants.
-  **Using real life examples:** Two interviewees felt that it could be beneficial to include more real life examples within the module; this is particularly the case where the content is focusing on breaking

down gender stereotypes and increasing girls' confidence: *'We need to be able to bring in real life stories, real life content and we need to develop the skills of the girls, both in terms of discrete skills but also skills like resourcefulness and curiosity.'* Another interviewee also felt that more opportunity for participants to have practical sessions or excursions would be valuable; for example, this could include visits to a court or a police station if they were learning about social issues.

- 🌀 **More social awareness:** One of the PGLs interviewed noted that while the girls enjoy learning new social skills, they also would like more awareness of what is going on in society.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1 Key Findings

Nepal

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

- 🌀 The main aspiration amongst girls was to continue education and find a job. More than a third of focus group participants mentioned aspirations towards careers in health, either as nurses or doctors.
- 🌀 The primary livelihood opportunity for girls was perceived to be in agriculture and work for cooperatives; other opportunities mentioned included teaching, accounting, social work, police services and service jobs. Interviewees acknowledged the limited livelihood opportunities available due to the rural nature of the area.
- 🌀 Suggestions made by interviewees for improving girls' awareness of livelihood opportunities included the provision of career counselling; the establishment of peer discussion groups; setting up awareness programmes; provision of scholarships and funding; and the provision of greater security for girls to pursue their own plans.

Skills Requirements

- 🌀 Girls may not have defined career plans due to a lack of knowledge of available options; focus group participants were also unable to define the skills needed to work in their desired careers.
- 🌀 Almost all interviewees felt that English and digital skills were needed to access livelihood opportunities. English skills were noted as being important for many teaching and service jobs, as well as for general confidence levels; and digital skills were noted as being important for accounting work within cooperatives and in other professional jobs.

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

- 🌀 The main sources of information available to the girls about post-school livelihood opportunities include personal contacts and networks; other sources include cooperatives, NGOs, office notice boards and the public service commission.
- 🌀 There was a perception that recruitment processes for cooperatives in the community were discriminatory in terms of nepotism; it was also noted by one interviewee that government-run training opportunities were not available in some communities.
- 🌀 Challenges in accessing livelihood opportunities included the limited mobility of women and girls; a lack of bargaining power in the household and community; families' preferential treatment of sons; early marriage; local practices and customs; a lack of resources, including finance; and discriminatory business environments.
- 🌀 Ways to mitigate barriers for girls' access to livelihood opportunities included raising awareness within families; the inclusion of practical and employment skills within the school curriculum; positive discrimination in employment; raising awareness amongst girls of their rights; and better enforcement of government policies in this area.

Livelihood Policies and Initiatives

- Programmes and interventions mentioned by interviewees to support girls in accessing livelihood opportunities included an adolescent development programme by SAC Nepal; local initiatives within cooperatives; Sisters for Sisters and other local government programmes. Interviewees were not aware of any initiatives or programmes involving local employers aside from local cooperatives and SAC Nepal.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

- Almost all the interviewees and focus group participants felt that the EDGE programme was effective in expanding opportunities for girls; it was noted as having engaged girls who did not normally take an interest in school-based education.
- Improvements to the club that were suggested included: equipping the peer group leaders with better ICT and English skills; increasing the frequency of club activities to a daily basis; engaging the community and local employers more effectively; providing more laptops and better training material; improved facilities in the club venue; and support for girls at risk of dropping out of the programme.

Comparable Programmes

- Comparable programme employed a number of strategies to provide effective support for marginal girls and women. These include the use of mentoring and peer-support groups; home visits for girls at risk of leaving education; provision material resources needed to access educational opportunities; and skills training focused particularly on the technical and entrepreneurial skills needed to pursue a sustainable livelihood within the local, predominantly agricultural, economy.

Bangladesh

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

- Future plans of participants included further education and eventual careers in areas including policing, business, engineering and teaching. Two interviewees noted a shift in girls' aspirations in recent years towards more realistic employment opportunities (e.g. teaching and NGO work) and an increasing number aiming for non-traditional female professions (e.g. the military).
- Participants generally reported feeling realistic about their livelihood opportunities; further ways in which girls' awareness can be raised included fostering skills such as critical and creative thinking within the school curriculum; social enterprise skills were also noted as being potentially useful. Leadership and management skills were also noted as being important.
- The main livelihood opportunities mentioned by interviewees included agriculture, handicrafts, teaching and work in NGOs. Participants noted the opportunities available to take out loans to support self-employment/entrepreneurship, and the challenges of developing businesses (e.g. in garment work) in rural areas. BRAC, with more than 5,000 offices in Bangladesh, was also noted as a key source of opportunities.

Skills Requirements

- Participants were able to articulate the skills needed to move into their chosen career path. English and digital skills were consistently raised as being important for securing jobs; vocational skills including mechanical, driving and dressmaking skills were also noted as being important.

- 🌀 The need for English and digital skills was noted by the majority of research participants; English was thought to be key for many of the livelihood opportunities to which participants aspire, while digital skills were felt to be important for job security.

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

- 🌀 Sources of information for job opportunities include job websites; union digital centres and programmes including 'Info Lady' and BRAC. The union digital centres were also noted as being useful for girls' information as they provide internet access and printing services.
- 🌀 The primary means of accessing information about livelihood opportunities includes talking to experts and obtaining advice; finding information in newspapers, noticeboards and online job portals; schools and NGOs such as BRAC.
- 🌀 Barriers to accessing livelihood opportunities included cultural and family objections; insecurities related to gender perceptions; differing opportunities between rural and urban areas; a lack of skills, especially in rural areas; and lack of access to technology.
- 🌀 Mitigating barriers to accessing opportunities included obtaining support from families and the community; having sufficient financial resources; and developing confidence and self-reliance skills.

Livelihood Policies and Initiatives

- 🌀 BRAC was mentioned by PGLs as offering valuable programmes in communities to facilitate post-school livelihood opportunities; it was perceived, however, that BRAC tends to focus on urban areas rather than rural. Apprenticeships were also noted as being useful community initiatives, as is an organisation called Yussef, which offers training for girls in areas such as nursing, motor mechanics and electrical mechanics.
- 🌀 Other programmes similar to EDGE noted by participants include an adolescent development programme currently run in EDGE centres; a BRAC training course on social awareness, early marriage and sexual abuse were also mentioned.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

- 🌀 There was a generally positive view of the programme's effectiveness and outcomes amongst participants; it is worth noting, however, that there was a generally low level of understanding of the EDGE programme amongst stakeholder interviewees.
- 🌀 Recommended programme adjustments included removing the attendance fee; ensuring clearer presentation of material (i.e. not solely in English); expanding the programme to other locations; introducing a focus on entrepreneurship skills; and signposting livelihood opportunities.

Comparable Programmes

- 🌀 Comparable programmes in Bangladesh included a strong focus on reducing rates of child marriage. Techniques included traditional approaches focused on education support, lifeskill training, and livelihoods training that led to a reduction in child marriages of up to a third, as well as innovative techniques including the use of theatre performed by local girls to raise community awareness.

India

Aspirations and Livelihood Opportunities

- Several girls who participated in the research have ambitions to help or care for other people. Around a third had professional ambitions to be a doctor, lawyer or engineer. According to interviewees, the most popular career aspirations for girls were in similar areas: doctor, teacher and engineer. There was felt to be a disconnect between what girls want to do, and the reality they can expect.
- Livelihood opportunities tend to centre around teaching, NGOs and informal sector employment (e.g. the cotton garment industry).
- This view by interviewees around a disconnect was later challenged when they were asked whether girls' plans were realistic and achievable, which, in general, they thought these were; this may, however, have been related to the phrasing of the question as interviewees also said that there were limitations linked to poor financial resources, a lack of family support and a lack of awareness around career entry.
- Gender stereotypes are being challenged, according to participants, but often in a way which complies with these potentially unrealistic expectations. It is now expected that girls can have non-traditional careers which play into societal norms of social standing and financial independence, but these do not necessarily match reality.

Skills Requirements

- The girls showed varied understanding of the skills they need to develop both in life and to follow their desired career paths to the extent that there was almost no commonality. This suggests either that they have very different senses of what they need to achieve their ambitions, or that they have not yet been supported to develop an understanding of what is needed for common careers and/or life skills.
- Interviewees' opinions of the skills that girls are likely to need coalesced around communication, digital, interpersonal and English skills; when asked particularly about English and digital skills, participants said that they were both necessary and important.

Post-School Opportunities and Challenges

- Barriers to girls accessing information include their background (such as socioeconomic status) and their local area. There is generally no clear, formal way in which girls can access information. Increasing girls' awareness of realistic opportunities in their communities can be achieved through better parental engagement, exposure to workplace settings and better provision of information about careers advice.
- Most girls suggested that family is a barrier to them getting jobs, particularly linked to the expectation that girls must marry young. Less time in education than boys, a lack of financial education, sexual harassment and a lack of information about opportunities all feed into some complex livelihood barriers.
- Mitigation of these barriers can come through better education, better careers advice and guidance, better access to business finance and education of families in girls' safety, early marriage and the importance of education.

EDGE Programme Adjustments

- EDGE helps to build girls' confidence; the girls have fun while learning and they like it. Interviewees saw the EDGE programme as being effective in terms of personal development and skills development, and equipping them for jobs. It was also perceived as relevant. Peer group leaders were also highly positive about the programme and its design.
- The EDGE programme team is considering what improvements can be made in its next iteration. Improvements suggested by girls included an increased focus on computing skills, the use of more

sophisticated material, a greater use of digital learning platforms, the use of real life examples and more societal awareness.

Comparable Programmes

- 🌀 Comparable programmes in India focus heavily on digital skills development and the use of low-cost technology to support learning. In one case, partnership working with national and state government has also allowed effective interventions to be scaled up and delivered state-wide.
- 🌀 A further model that supports girls and women to access sustainable livelihood opportunities centres on the use of social enterprises that provide goods and services for women (e.g. feminine hygiene products), as well as training and developing female staff.

7.2 Cross-Country Recommendations

- 🌀 **Provide career guidance:** Access to career guidance (which appeared to be virtually non-existent) is likely to be necessary for girls to get access to reliable information about opportunities in their community, as well as to identify realistic livelihood pathways.
- 🌀 **Initiatives for raising community awareness:** Initiatives to raise awareness among parents and community members is likely to be beneficial, especially initiatives focusing on addressing negative perceptions towards girls migrating to other villages and towns seeking work.
- 🌀 **Map local livelihood and training opportunities:** Although the main livelihood opportunities appear to centre on self-employment, it is clear that many girls have aspirations to get salaried jobs. The British Council could therefore map livelihood and training opportunities in the vicinity of EDGE clubs, including vocational training centres; this may involve identifying some common centres or hubs of business and training activity within the areas that the EDGE programme is operating.
- 🌀 **Raise awareness with stakeholders:** A minority of employers and stakeholders interviewed understand the EDGE programme; a clear programme of promotional activity and engagement with these groups could result in clearer outcome pathways for participants, including placements and access to further study or funding opportunities.
- 🌀 **Deepen engagement with national and local government:** Evidence from comparable programmes indicates that the greatest impact can be achieved through partnership working with national and local government officials, including contributing to national education policy developments and scaling up programme delivery using existing educational infrastructure across larger geographic areas.
- 🌀 **Explore low-cost technology solutions:** In comparable programmes, the use of low-cost technology, such as tablets preloaded with software packages designed to support self-directed learning, has enabled more children to develop digital skills and increased access to digital technology. Exploring the potential to invest in this kind of low-cost technology may broaden access to digital technology for the girls participating in the programme, especially if solar power could be used to charge these devices.

7.3 Country-Specific Recommendations

Nepal

- 🌀 **Include training for enterprise skills:** It is recommended that the British Council consider providing

training to teach girls enterprise skills for self-employment, which appeared to be the main livelihood opportunity available to girls. Enterprise skills should be tailored to the local context and needs; for most areas, this is likely to include agribusiness skills, while areas with greater infrastructure may hold opportunities for other forms of enterprises, such as shop keeping or mobile repairs.

- 🌀 **Business training and support:** Girls establishing enterprises are likely to benefit from training in business skills, including guidance on registering their business formally, as well as training and support in how to navigate and succeed in a male-dominated market place.
- 🌀 **Consider partnering with local cooperatives:** The British Council should consider partnering with local cooperatives in areas where the EDGE programme is running to enable girls to access more established livelihood pathways, as well as benefit from the presence of supportive networks and training opportunities.
- 🌀 **Provide access to role models:** Access to role models, such as women from the community that have gone on to become successful businesswomen or accessed formal employment, is likely to be beneficial for both girls as well as parents and other community members to tackle negative attitudes towards girls' potential.

Bangladesh

- 🌀 **Include business and entrepreneurship skills:** It is recommended that future programme modules include business and entrepreneurship skills, including creative and critical skills, and leadership skills; these will assist girls not only in understanding how to establish their own enterprise, but how to develop the required personal skills to make it a success.
- 🌀 **Provide access to business tools:** By working in partnership with local centres (e.g. union digital centres) and signposting access to internet and printing services, the EDGE programme could ensure that girls can have increased access to critical tools for livelihood opportunities and support.
- 🌀 **Provide tailored information:** Signposting livelihood opportunities and information on challenges specific to rural areas would help girls to maximise their chances of accessing and succeeding in livelihood opportunities; this could include business training and advice around establishing and marketing businesses in rural areas.
- 🌀 **Consider partnering with skills providers:** By forming linkages with local initiatives offering apprenticeships and vocational skills to provide an opportunity pathway for girls; this could include Yussef, India.

India

- 🌀 **Provide knowledge of job specifications:** Due to the disconnect that girls feel between what they want to do and the reality they can expect, along with the lack of support they have in developing an understanding of what is needed for common careers; it might be beneficial for the British Council to consider incorporating more information on different careers and job specifications within their EDGE programme.
- 🌀 **Encourage family engagement:** It is recommended that future programme content addresses ways that programme participants and leaders can engage parents and improve awareness of the importance of supporting girls in their future aspirations.

- 🌀 **Partner co-ordination:** We recommend that the British Council looks to the Naandi Foundation's N-Star programme, which is being run concurrently in the centres, to ensure greater coordination of content and pedagogy.
- 🌀 **Create higher levels of English language learning:** The current English language abilities of the participants is very good, and they have a strong desire to speak and practice English further. It may be beneficial to develop more advanced levels of English language training in the next module.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Comparable Livelihood Programmes

Nepal

Girls' Education Program delivered by Room to Read

The Room to Read is a worldwide programme focused on improving girls' literacy and gender equality to support them to complete secondary education. In Nepal, the programme is delivered in government schools with the support of the Ministry of Education and the National Curriculum and Development Board and includes literacy training for teachers, as well as literacy support for girls.⁵⁶ The four core components of the programme are: life skills, mentors, material support and community engagement. Key features of the programme include its focus on long-term delivery to support girls from the transition to secondary school through to completing secondary education; including home visits to girls at risk of dropping out of school.⁵⁷

Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (RWEE) Joint Programme

The RWEE programme is delivered in partnership through UN Women, the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). While not specifically focusing on girls and adolescent women, the programme aims to support rural women's livelihood strategies and women-led entrepreneurship, as well as promote their linkages to high value markets.⁵⁸ Women participating in the programme were supported in kitchen gardening and commercial fresh vegetable production; forming women's groups to establish group saving schemes; and knowledge and skills on nursery establishment and crop cultivation practices. 93 of the 158 women's groups registered themselves at the District Agriculture Development Offices (DADO) and benefited from material support and technical advice with agriculture production.⁵⁹ Key features of the programme include its focus on developing leadership skills and networking/organisational capacity.

Women's Empowerment through Community-Based Sustainable Livelihood Enhancement Project

Delivered by Rural Reconstruction Nepal, the three-year programme seeks to empower rural women through strengthening women's self-help groups and providing training in improved cultivation practices. The WEP III project builds on previous iterations of the programme and was designed to respond to the needs of marginalised Janajati women affected by earthquakes. Key features of the programme include engaging women in self-help groups and local cooperatives, registering with DADO and establishing agro-enterprises to increase their income.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ <http://www.roomtoread.org/countries/nepal/>

⁵⁷ <http://www.roomtoread.org/countries/nepal/?tab=program%20highlights>

⁵⁸ <https://www.empowerwomen.org/en/who-we-are/initiatives/rural-women-economic-empowerment>

⁵⁹ <http://mptf.undp.org/document/download/19396>

⁶⁰ <http://www.rrn.org.np/index.php/programmes-projects/ongoing-development-projects/223-women-s-empowerment-through-community-based-sustainable-livelihood-enhancement-project-wep-iii>

Rights-Based Education to Empower Dalit and Marginalized Adolescent Girls and Children in Nepal (Girls SAMVAD Programme)

Another programme delivered by Rural Reconstruction Nepal, The Girls SAMVAD Programme is delivered in the local districts Bara and Parsa in partnership with local partners, Protection Nepal and Child Nepal. The programme expects to reduce the proportion of out of school and drop-out adolescent girls and children from marginalised groups through advocacy campaigns and economic opportunities. Specific objectives include reducing the vulnerability of adolescent girls, such as child marriage and violence, as well as promoting a child-friendly environment.⁶¹

Social Entrepreneurship Programme, CCD Nepal

CCD Nepal's Social Entrepreneurship Programme aims to empower youths in the Kavre district (Thuloparsel, Narayansthan and Chapakhori) to act as a catalyst for social transformation within their own communities. While not targeted exclusively at girls, participants are supported financially and technically to engage in small scale income generating professions, such as goat farming, tailoring, knitting and vegetable production. Through developing self-reliance, the programme aims to discourage youth from leaving their communities in pursuit of livelihood opportunities.⁶²

Bangladesh

Girls' Education Program delivered by Room to Read

As noted in the analysis for Nepal, this is a worldwide programme focused on improving girls' literacy and gender equality to support them to complete secondary education. In Bangladesh, the programme predominantly focuses its activities in rural areas, particularly the sandbar islands of the Sirajganj District, the low-lying terrain of the Brahmanbaria District, and the remote plains of the Natore District expanding the programme to Dhaka in 2015. Key programme activities include using theatre performance by girls within local communities to advocate for girls' education as a priority over early marriage, and involvement in the 2010 national curriculum review led by the Bangladesh government.

Balika (Bangladeshi Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents) led by the Population Council

The BALIKA project involves four controlled trial approaches to empowering girls in an attempt to delay the age that girls in Bangladesh marry. Communities took part in one of three approaches, and one group acted as a control group where no services were provided. All training took place in BALIKA centres, which were considered to be safe spaces for women and girls. The three approaches trialled involved: education support, lifeskill training and livelihoods training.⁶³ Results from the project suggest that these approaches taught girls essential skills which could help to reduce the likelihood of child marriage by up to one third. Participants in the programme also reported higher employment rates, as well as higher social mobility after the programme, with an increase in girls reporting that they had permission to go to the market, to visit friends, or to go to the playground.⁶⁴

⁶¹ <http://www.rrn.org.np/index.php/programmes-projects/ongoing-development-projects/260-right-based-education-to-empower-dalit-marginalized-adolescent-girls-and-children-in-nepal-girls-samvad-programme>

⁶² <http://ccdnepal.org/livelihood>

⁶³ Population Council. BALIKA (Bangladesh Association for Life Skills, Income, and Knowledge for Adolescents).

⁶⁴ Population Council (2016). *Delaying Child Marriage Through Community-Based Skills-Development Programs for Girls: Results from Randomized Controlled Study in Rural Bangladesh*.

India

Girls' Education Program delivered by Room to Read

As noted above, this worldwide programme aims to improve literacy and gender equality in order to increase participation and completion rates for girls' secondary education. India represents the largest operational programme partnering with government schools in Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Telangana. Improved literacy rates for children in participating schools has led to the organisation partnering with national and local governments in two states to expand the project statewide.⁶⁵

Team4Tech Education Programmes

Team4Tech runs a number of programmes in India that address the digital skills needs of women and girls. These include the Digital Education Initiative in Pratham that focuses on the use of low-cost technology to support literacy development through self-directed learning. The tablet-based programme provides children with the ability to determine both learning content and approach for themselves to give young people greater autonomy in the learning process.⁶⁶ Another programme delivered in partnership with Care India offers residential education courses for girls who have dropped out of primary school to re-integrate into the education system. The programme uses innovative technological learning techniques, as well as providing training for teachers in how to integrate technology into their classroom teaching.⁶⁷

Girls' Digital Learning Centre delivered by Plan International

Plan India and Ericsson have established digital learning centres in twelve locations around Delhi. These centres provide access to ICT for over 15,000 young women and girls in Delhi's most marginalised communities for the next three years.⁶⁸ The project hopes to help girls and young women who may have restricted access to education because of what might be considered unsafe distances to travel in order to get to school or college, by providing them with a safe environment to develop their digital skills. Parents in the communities are also being educated in the benefits of helping and allowing their daughters to study.⁶⁹

CINI's Girls' Learning Center Program delivered by Children In Need Institute

The CINI programme is providing access to education for girls in 100 villages in some of the most vulnerable areas of West Bengal.⁷⁰ Since its inception in 2010-2011, the programme has grown and is now providing 4,000 girls with education, whilst helping to keep them separated from child labour, trafficking and child marriage.⁷¹ The learning centres are school-based and help provide girls with the knowledge and tools to fill their skills gaps. There has been a knock-on effect of helping these girls, as their parents have then also given their siblings the opportunity to have an education.⁷²

Taleemshalas - Girl Child Education led by Ibtada

Ibtada, a NGO established in 1997 has created community-based education centres, which prioritise human

⁶⁵ <http://www.roomtoread.org/countries/india/?tab=program%20highlights>

⁶⁶ <https://www.team4tech.org/content/digital-education-initiative-pratham>

⁶⁷ <https://www.team4tech.org/content/teacher-training-care-india-1>

⁶⁸ Plan International. *Digital Education For Girls In India*.

⁶⁹ Plan International. *Digital Education For Girls In India*.

⁷⁰ Center for Education Innovations. *CINI: Learning Centre Program*.

⁷¹ Center for Education Innovations. *CINI: Learning Centre Program*.

⁷² Center for Education Innovations. *CINI: Learning Centre Program*.

rights, child happiness, democracy within the school and a good relationship between students and teachers. The learning centres take a modern approach to teaching, and allow girls to learn at their own pace, with no assessments and no class systems. Priorities lie in the quality of the educational content and the time available, and the needs of the children in the class; it is worth noting, however, that information on this programme is not recent.⁷³

Sakha - Women on Wheels Initiative

The Women on Wheels initiative allows women from poor backgrounds to train and earn a livelihood in a dignified way through women's only chauffeur services.⁷⁴ The programme gives the women the training that they need to be able to gain their license, as well as educating the women about their rights and helping them gain independence and confidence.⁷⁵ The Azad Foundation works with several government, business and non-governmental partners to offer their training scheme. Women in the programme can also receive help in acquiring their citizenship, obtaining accident insurance, opening a bank account, getting a work uniform and a mobile phone. Where it is necessary, the programme will also ensure that family members are engaged, so that they support women throughout their training and careers.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibtada. Taleemshalas: Girl Child Education.

⁷⁴ Azad Foundation. Women on Wheels.

⁷⁵ Azad Foundation. Women on Wheels.

⁷⁶ Azad Foundation. Women on Wheels.