

Programmatic approaches to the gender-related impacts of COVID-19 on education: Lessons from 2020

Case study: Street Child -
Marginalised No more

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Girls'
Education
Challenge



Case Study: Street Child - Marginalised No more

Freedom from bondage through
education and economic
empowerment for girls in Nepal.

About the programme

The Musahar community is one of the most marginalised groups in Nepal. Girls bear the brunt of caste, class and gender discrimination: 6% of Musahar girls are enrolled in education, but 100% are out of school at age 10. Less than 4% of Musahar girls are literate, and 85% cannot read or recognise letters or numbers¹. Marginalised No More is a multi-partner, multi-province, multi-year programme providing an integrated intervention for 7,000 out of school Musahar girls aged 10-18 to transition into education and entrepreneurship.

The Learning Intervention offers a free, immediate and intensive intervention to achieve functional literacies and numeracies; the Education Transition Intervention supports 4,000 girls aged 10 to 14 to transition into further formal education. Finally, the Employment Transition Intervention supports 3,000 girls aged 15 to 18 to establish enterprises. A Life Skills Intervention improves awareness of gendered norms and increases autonomy over marital and reproductive decisions to address high rates of child marriage and motherhood among the Musahar community.

¹ <https://nada.cbs.gov.np/index.php/catalog/42> (2001) Central Bureau of Statistics

COVID-19 Context

From 24 March - 15 June 2020, the Government of Nepal enforced a national lockdown, triggering three months of restrictions on movement. This has had a disproportionate impact on the Musahar community, with disruptions to learning and livelihoods forcing families to adopt adverse coping strategies against the risk of starvation. In April 2020, Street Child conducted a rapid assessment to ascertain the impact of the COVID-19 crisis across the country. The assessment involved 1,090 respondents and revealed the greatest gaps in Province 2. 56% of respondents reported loss of livelihoods and 70% reported hunger or starvation as key risks². The survey also showed that 68% of respondents had borrowed cash from friends or relatives, signaling severe risk of forced labour and forced marriage including debt bondage for girls³.

Programme response to the gender-related impacts of COVID-19 on education

In response, Street Child has pivoted the Marginalised No More programme to prevent, prepare and protect against the impact of the pandemic. During the national lockdown, the programme prioritised the provision of interactive resources, radios and recorded instruction, allowing Musahar girls to access remote-learning and reduce risk of permanent disengagement or dropout from education.

As regular monitoring mechanisms were affected by community restrictions, Marginalised No More also pivoted to remote monitoring mechanisms, recognising the high susceptibility of Musahar girls to protection risks – including sexual abuse and violence. The programme worked with community management committees to conduct check-in calls to understand and respond to girls' needs, and to support girls to access remote counselling and case- management.



2 [COVID-19 Crisis Response: Rapid Assessment Report \(2020\)](#) Street Child

3 [COVID-19 Crisis Response: Rapid Assessment Report \(2020\)](#) Street Child

Programme outcomes

In the pandemic context, immediate losses of income and livelihoods exaggerated girls' exposure to adverse coping strategies. In-time investment in cash to close the gap between increasing costs and curtailed income is essential to protect girls' safety and learning.

As such, Street Child distributed food and hygiene relief to over 1,500 Musahar households at risk of starvation to support their survival. This was achieved through additional fundraising and repurposing as relief distribution is outside the remit of the Marginalised No More programme. The relief has encouraged girls to continue participating in the programme, preventing potential disengagement from learning or dropout, and deepened trust and ties in the communities.

Since March, Street Child has been conducting "wellbeing checks", reaching 87.4% of participating girls. 150 girls who reported being ill, sad or stressed due to shortages of food were referred to the Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) for counselling, case management and psychosocial support. Together, this is enabling an effective, coordinated response to address the adoption of adverse coping strategies.



Learnings and challenges

Working within relevant emergency response cluster architecture has shown to be extremely effective for coordinated action to ensure girls' continued learning during the COVID-19 crisis.

Street Child is in active coordination with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) cluster structure at the global, national and sub-national levels. This has allowed for enhanced response coordination and collaboration, leveraging the reach and resources from the Marginalised No More programme. Additionally, as an active partner of the national and regional Protection Cluster, Street Child has been able to access both state and non-state protection and psychosocial support services, which were cascaded to programme participants through intricate referral mechanisms.

Looking beyond the immediate COVID-19 crisis

Street Child is focusing on increasing the rigour and robustness of the Remote Teaching and Learning programme, piloted with 560 girls from July 2020 to August 2020. The programme offers interactive audio instruction and resources, made available through pre-recorded lessons on MP3 players provided by the project and targeted assistance from tutors on the phone. This approach prioritizes the provision of a safe, secure and stable routine that offers immediate psychological protection, prevents disengagement or dropout and protects the learning gains girls have made to date. Results from the pilot demonstrate impressive learning gains after five weeks of distance teaching and learning. Some of the findings include 27% of girls able to read stories fluently, compared to 8% at baseline; 94% of girls able to perform addition, compared to 70% at baseline; and 87% able to perform division, compared to 4% at baseline.

Looking ahead, Street Child will seek to incrementally increase the support offered by the programme. In addition, Marginalised No More has secured further funding to scale up its interventions for 15,000 girls from the Das, Dom, Halkhor and Mestar communities, ensuring essential support to girls from multiple marginalised communities. Street Child is also committed to ensuring that all approaches and project activities are transformative for gender equality and social inclusion. As such, Street Child is seeking to ensure learning content is gender-responsive and safeguards girls against further risk. Street Child will incorporate feedback loops into the learning intervention and integrate relief, response and recovery considerations into programme planning and implementation.



Explore more resources:

[Nepal — Street Child](#) learn more about the Marginalised No More project

[Silent Hero Against Child Marriage](#) learn more about efforts in limiting child marriages in Musahar communities during lockdown

[COVID-19 Crisis for the Musahars](#) learn more about the initial days of COVID-19 and the impact of the pandemic on the Musahars

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Page 6: © Lalita, Das/Street Child. A group literacy lesson using audio assisted learning and printed worksheets in Mahottari.



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