

# AAWAAJ - ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Web site: [www.aawaaj.org.np](http://www.aawaaj.org.np)



## *Foreword from Founder President*

Over the 26 years, we have delivered essential support to marginalized children and women who have a bold vision for equality for all. The achievements outlined in this report provide multiple examples of the true value of partnership in our work. As Founder President of the organization, I would like to see continued investment in the sustainability of our efforts to ensure that we have the resources and capacity to meet the needs of the target population, both in normal times and in crisis. I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to each one of you for your continued support, solidarity, trust, and collaboration. Your support throughout the year has been a source of strength and encouragement. It has made our collective efforts toward justice, equality, and the rights of survivors, women and children possible. We deeply value the solidarity we share and the commitment to grow together. We are also pleased to share our Annual Report 2025 for your review and appreciate your time for reading and welcome any reflections or feedback. We look forward to continued collaborations and collective impact in the year ahead.

We have 54 full-time and 104 part-time staff, demonstrating our institutional capacity for social change. Our staff are highly competent in building and maintaining networks and collaborating with provincial, federal and local government and communities. Aawaaj has always prioritized gender equality and social inclusion in its programs while keeping gender-disaggregated data on our beneficiaries and stakeholders. Aawaaj team is led by women, accounting for 80%, while we have 20% male staff.

I believe deeply in our vision of a violence-free society where movements for gender justice have transformed power and equality for all. Despite the good work in the social field, many challenges remain and the increasing demand to provide services with limited resources. We urge all developmental partners to allocate more resources to access justice that program results will be sustained and aligned with our long-term strategy for the organization till 2028.

Thank you once again to all development partners for your generosity support in Karnali. I'm very grateful for your trust and support. Your small support allow us to reach more and create a better and safer future. I hope we learn to grow in strength, resilience, and collectivism in the year ahead. Once again thankful to all staff who have immensely contributed to complete this annual report. It is crucial to acknowledge and express gratitude to Executive Board members, management team members, government authorities, volunteers, all dedicated staff, and general members who have supported Aawaaj from the beginning and stood for our solidarity. There are interesting success stories pages from 67 – 82.

Over the past 26 years, Aawaaj has worked tirelessly to shift attitudes, foster respect, and engaging boys and men. We renew our commitment for strengthening our impact, and together, we've made a difference and will continue to create a safer, more just world for all. May the upcoming year bring renewed hope, strength, and opportunities to further strengthen our collective work, solidarity and shared vision for transformative society. Thank you once again for standing together to end violence in Karnali .

*Cheers to Hope. Cheers to Resilience. Cheers to Empowerment!* Irada Gautam , Founder President





## 1. Organization Background

### 1.1 Who We Are

Aawaaj was founded in 1999 along with joint initiatives of professionals with strong hope to demonstrate capacity against violence and discrimination of women in Mid-West, Nepal. We have a strong regional presence and are officially registered with the district administration office in Surkhet under registration number 180-056-057 (PAN number: 301819051). Additionally, we are affiliated with the Social Welfare Council under registration number 13616. Aawaaj actively addresses all forms of gender-based violence through various initiatives such as social mobilization, campaigns, community support mechanisms, lobbying, advocacy efforts, networking activities, training programs, income generation, psychological counseling services, educational support measures, and temporary crisis shelters for victims of severe gender-based violence.

We are working with boys and men along with girls and women to prepare better manhood and socialize against such wrong behavior as problems of violence that mostly come from boys and men at large. It focused on three important aspects of human rights “Safe, Strong and Free.” Everyone has these rights and they are indispensable for human life. The basic and the most effective tricky ways of protecting rights are “Say No”; “Go Away” and “Talk to someone”. CRC and CEDAW are the guiding principles of Aawaaj for the policies, practices, and programs related to fight against the violence.

We collaborate with boys, men, girls, and women to foster positive masculinity and counteract harmful behaviors such as violence, which predominantly stem from boys and men. The initiative emphasizes the three fundamental human rights of "Safe, Strong, and Free," Everyone has these rights and they are indispensable for human life. The basic and the most effective ways of protecting such rights are “Say No”; “Go Away” and “Talk to someone”. Aawaaj draws guidance from the CRC and CEDAW in shaping its policies, practices, and programs aimed at combating violence.

We represent the marginalized women and children who are experiencing violence and vulnerability and lack access to social and legal justice. We aim to empower them by employing the concept of resilience to prevent and address discrimination and violence. Our work is rooted in the question of how we can develop the inner capacity of girls and women so that they can develop their strength harmoniously and positively despite facing trauma. We support rural communities in combating violence and discrimination against women and children. Despite all the adversities, these individuals have not lost hope but instead are actively fighting against abuse, exploitation, and discrimination, with over 500 change agents currently engaged in supporting their communities.

For the past 24 years, we have established a strong rapport with local stakeholders. We prioritize active engagement, collaboration, and consensus of local groups, stakeholders, and communities in making decisions about our programs. Our approach involves empowering these groups and respecting their interests to ensure that our programs run smoothly. We are especially attentive to supporting vulnerable groups and emphasizing the significance of their participation throughout the process while also highlighting the benefits for them. Our primary focus is on promoting a peaceful society free from violence where children, girls, and women experience tranquillity through constructive dialogues with provincial and local government authorities, police authorities, National Child Welfare Council members,



healthcare professionals, legal authorities, municipal bodies, officials, political leaders and teachers using non-violent methods.

We can drive social change. Our staff members are equipped to establish and maintain networks, as well as collaborate with government authorities, local groups, and communities. Gender equality and social inclusion have always been integrated into our programs, where we collect gender-disaggregated data from our beneficiaries and stakeholders. Women represent 90% of our organizational team while men comprise 10%. In Karnali Province, we coordinated women human rights defenders and played a secretarial role in the second constitutional assembly election in Surkhet. Additionally, we are active members of various human rights alliances at both national and local levels

At the national level, we are members of the National Child Protection Alliance, AATWIN, and Women Security Pressure Group. We participate in various campaigns in South Asia and globally. Aawaaj is also a member of the Global Alliance Against Trafficking, The Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, and a network member of Child Sexual Abuse. Our strategy and program development decisions are informed by input from beneficiaries and stakeholders, which are then verified through social audits, general assemblies, monitoring visits, and program evaluations. Aawaaj acts merely as a facilitator in the project implementation process, with an emphasis on capacity development at all levels to effectively monitor and manage violence (not limited to identifying cases). We believe that every community member can actively contribute as a change agent in this process, so we keep encouraging them to fulfill their responsibilities regarding social issues.

We have been focusing on education, health, child rights, women's rights, child protection, and livelihoods through community empowerment, strengthening systems and mechanisms at the community level, district, province level, and advocating for better policies and programs. Aawaaj mobilizes communities to ensure access to justice and quality services.

## **1.2 Our Values**

AAWAAJ believes that continual innovations should be sought and that failure should not be feared. Our prime focus throughout the project cycle is on:

- Empathy - with the poor, marginalized children and women to foster social justice and equity.
- Active Participation - of children, women, men, parents, and concerned adults is the Prime focus of AAWAAJ throughout the project cycle.
- Respect - dignity and worth of every person regardless of caste, ethnicity, ability, or gender.
- Provide Value - to diversify culture, complexity, and multiple perspectives of each person and their environment. We affirm the dignity, potential, and contribution of communities, children and women, staff and donors.
- Integrity - act consistently with AAWAAJ's mission, be honest and transparent in what we do and say, and accept responsibility for our collective and individual actions.
- Responsible - to transfer knowledge, and skills as a chain effect to other members of society and foster energy, responsibility, volunteerism, and ownership of all community members to support sufferers of violence in society and establish good community support mechanisms.
- Accountable - to communities with whom we work together; and to those organizations that supported us to start this work.



- Commitment and Excellence - work together effectively to serve the larger community and constantly challenge the issue of violence against children and women by ourselves to the highest levels of learning and performance.

### 1.3 Programming Principles

#### 1. Promote Empowerment

We stand in solidarity with poor and marginalized children and women and support their efforts to take control of their lives and fulfill their rights, responsibilities, and aspirations. We ensure that key participants and organizations representing affected children and women are partners in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of our programs.

#### 2. Work with Partners

We work with others to maximize the impact of our programs, building alliances and partnerships with those who offer complementary approaches, can adopt effective programming approaches on a larger scale, and or have the responsibility to fulfill rights and reduce violence and poverty through policy change and enforcement.

#### 3. Ensure Accountability and Promote Responsibility

We seek ways to be accountable to poor and marginalized children and women whose rights are denied. We identify individuals and institutions with an obligation toward poor and marginalized children and women and support and encourage their efforts to fulfill their responsibilities.

#### 4. Address Discrimination

In our programs and offices, we address discrimination and the denial of rights based on sex, caste, race, ethnicity, class, religion, age, education, physical disability, and victims of violence.

#### 5. Promote Non-Violent Conflict Resolution

We promote just and non-violent means for preventing and resolving conflicts at all levels, noting that such conflicts contribute to poverty and the denial of rights.

#### 6. Seek Sustainable Results

As we address underlying causes of violence, rights denial, and poverty, we develop and use approaches that ensure our programs result in lasting and fundamental improvements in the lives of the poor and marginalized children and women with whom we work.

#### 7. DO NO-HARM: To understand the situation and reduce the debatable situation.

### 1.4 Our Approaches

The suffering experienced by individuals, especially women and children who face violence, often goes unheard. AAWAAJ listens to these voices and assists them in living with dignity in society.

AAWAAJ aims to organize and unite people through a rights-based approach, focusing on increasing the participation of boys and men from various professions alongside girls and women. By doing a collective analysis of the causes of violence at the local level we aim to improve the environment in society and fight together for stronger solidarity. Creating community support mechanisms plays a crucial role in amplifying voices against all forms of violence - breaking the silence prevalent in every society to uphold human rights throughout one's life.

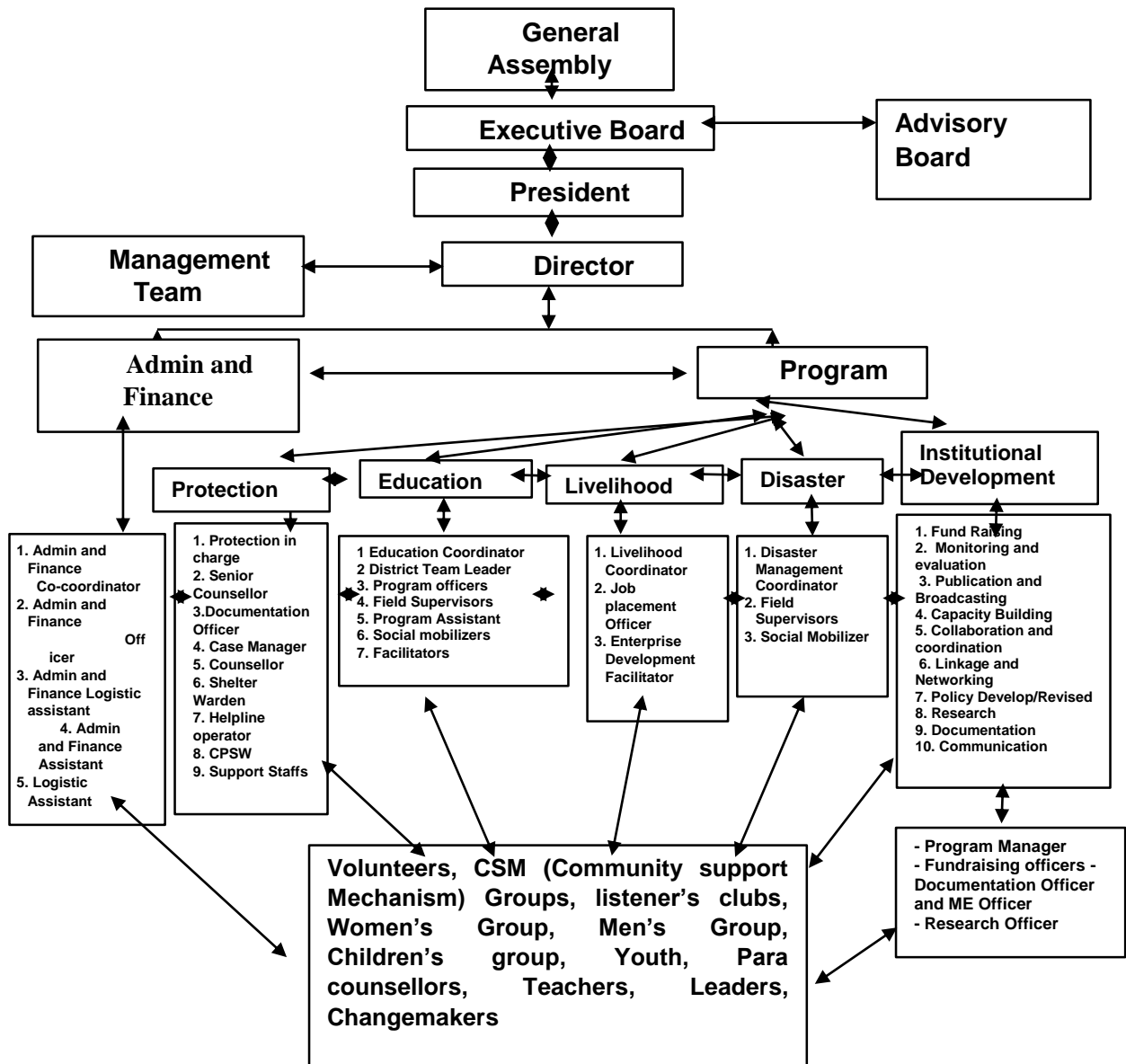
The approach taken by AAWAAJ involves listening to victims of violence in society and providing emotional support. Actively engaging with those who suffer, exploring

alternatives, and facilitating solutions that restore their sense of worth- this process has empowered communities to take charge of their development. Additionally, it has enhanced the capacity of local institutions to provide social services against violence.

In summary, we use the following approaches while working in the community;

- Participation and empowerment of communities in the development process
- Working with private sectors and encouraging their responsibility on social issues
- Advocacy, Lobbying, and pressurize for prompt action
- Establishing community safety support mechanisms against violence
- Making allies, and collaborating with various agencies, groups, and I/or NGOs
- Linkages and Networking with Government sectors (Police, Doctors, Lawyers, Nurses, district and appellate court)
- The campaign, mass mobilization, mobilizing various existing stakeholders, children’s groups/ networks, youth groups, women groups, men groups, and school
- Counselling, community mediation, and social integration

### 1.5 Organizational Structure



### Senior Staff Management Team of Aawaaj in organization

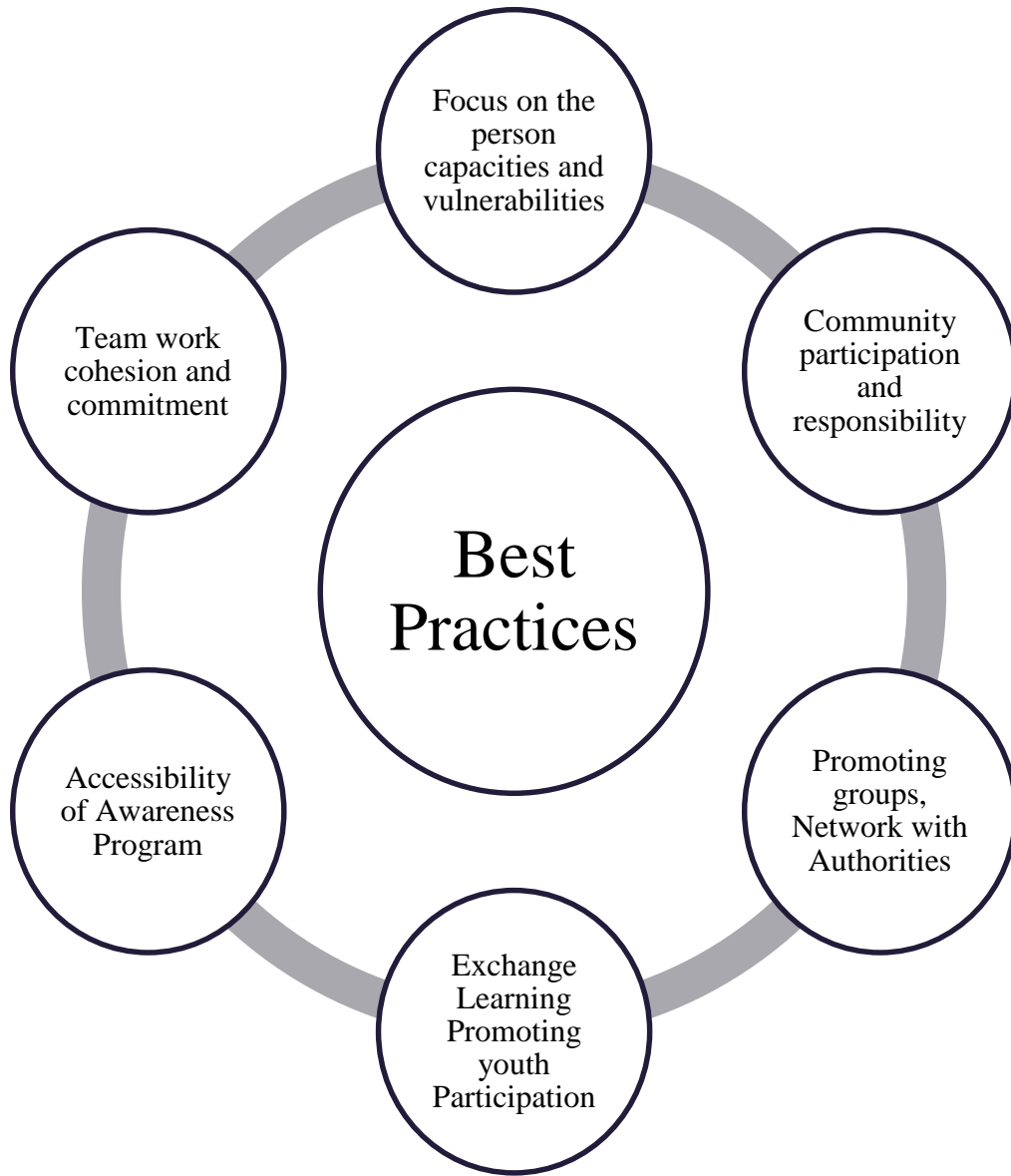
SN	Name	Position
1	Pabitra Shahi	Executive Director
2	Sushil Karki	Deputy Director
3	Nisha Poudel	Protection In charge
4	Chakra Raj Giri	Senior Program Manager
5	Rima Devkota	Head of the Admin and Finance

### 1.6 Priority Areas

# Priority Areas



### 1.7 Key Aspects for Best Practices in Programming



# Aawaaj Working Modality/Strategy

## Holistic approach

(Prevention, response, and access to justice for GBV)





## 2. Services provided by Aawaaj

**1. Legal, Medical and Economic Aid**

**2. Community Support Mechanisms**

**3. Livelihood Support**

**4. Participatory Platforms**

**5. Psychosocial Support**

**6. Protection and Reintegration**

**7. Educational Support for Needy**

**8. Child Helpline ( 1098 )**

**9. Shelter Support**

**10. Linkages and Referral**



### 3. Our Target Beneficiaries

S.N	BENEFICIARIES
1	Single women (widows) affected by GBV or in living a difficult situation.
2	Vulnerable to Child Marriage, Trafficking, Sexual Abuse, Exploitation, natural disasters and Violence
3	Children, girls and women who are prone to vulnerability and are in need
4	Very poor Dalit, marginalized community, Ethnic, youth
5	Girls Out of School, Working / Living Away from Biological Parents, Illiterate
6	Women/children Isolated in Family / Community (lacks social/protection network)
7	Women and children facing extreme poverty/unemployment

#### 4. Our Program Focus

### Aawaaj Focused Program

- Breaking the silence on sexual abuse and exploitation through social mobilization (working with children, youth and women network)
- Establish community support mechanism (CSM) against gender based violence of children and women, working with community groups
- Vocational Training, economic empowerment and Micro enterprenureship program for marginalised community
- Child Protection- Child help line, Child friendly space (Interim Care, fostering, Social Integration of Children, Play acitvities with children, access health and education)
- Temporary emergency shelter support and social integration for women and children that faced violence, abuse and exploitation
- Community and family mediation for the minor degree of violence
- Counseling, Care and Emergency shelter support (psychosocial, legal, medical, education and economic support)
- Advocacy and Campaigning against gender based violence, corporal punishment, child marriage and trafficking
- Facilitation of local governance - Municipality and VDCs

## 5. Major Achievements of 2025

### 5.1 Reported Forms of Violence in Aawaaj in 2025

SN	Forms of Violence	No of Cases
1	Rape	48
2	Marital Rape	2
3	Domestic Violence /Evicted Negligence	120
4	Sexual assault/ Attempt to Rape/sexual abuse	14
5	Denial of resources/ services /opportunity / mobility control economic violence	54
6	Psychological/emotional abuse/ Scolding and mental touchers /Psychosocial problem	38
7	Polygamy	16
8	Early child marriage	68
9	Human trafficking/Internal Human Trafficking	25
10	Cyber Crime	8
11	Negligence by parents / separated from parents	56
12	Beating	88
13	Misbehavior	3
14	Attempt to Murder	2
15	Social Violence / Blame	2
16	Issue by Living together	5
17	Accompanied by Parents/Relatives	40
18	Child Labor	1
19	Parents lost	3
20	Missing and stranded	50
21	Health issue	15
22	Parents Jailed	3
23	Others: cyberbullying, online or internet-related abuse, specify if any other	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>663</b>

## 5.2 Types of services provided in 2025

SN	Support	Women	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Psychosocial counseling Face to face	286	12	74	372
2	Family Counseling	99	34	88	221
3	Mediation	50	0	0	50
4	Medical support	20	3	25	48
5	Transportation support	7	3	12	22
6	Hospital Transportation	5	0	5	10
7	Legal Support	35	0	34	69
8	Shelter Support	154	43	112	309
9	Case preparation ( Application writing )	40	51	107	198
10	Referral to Aawaaj	79	32	76	187
11	Cloths Support	26	16	43	85
12	Health kit support	95	14	53	162
13	Reintegration	152	43	111	306
14	Economic Support	7	0	0	7
15	Relief Package support ( Food and Nutrition )	7	0	3	10
<b>Total</b>		<b>1062</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>743</b>	<b>2056</b>

### 5.3 Services provided through 1098 helpline in 2025.

S.N	Services	Boys	Girls	Total
1	Personal Profile prepared of Children's	118	259	377
2	Call by children and parents for service	595	1097	1692
3	Telephone counseling to children	140	84	224
4	Family consultation service to parents	181	470	651
5	Legal Counseling	24	139	163
6	Primary Health service	3	25	28
7	Emergency of children hazardous situation	1	1	2
8	Aid provided for emergency rescue during hazardous situation	1	1	2
9	Family reunion, reintegration and re-habitation after emergency rescue from hazardous situation	1	1	2
10	Family reunion, reintegration and re-habitation of lost	19	12	31
11	Family reunion, reintegration and re-habitation of children found unaided	2	1	3
12	Conservation of emergency shelter home	43	112	155
13	Case follow-up by phone	25	74	99
14	Education support	10	17	27
15	Rescue and restoration of street children+	0	0	0
16	Rescue and restoration of child labors	0	0	0
17	Restoration of trafficked children (Internal)	0	9	9
<b>Total</b>		<b>1163</b>	<b>2302</b>	<b>3465</b>

## 6. Brief Summary of Various Development Partners in 2025

SN	Project's Name	Funding Partner
1	Girl Empowerment Program: Empowering Children to Access Their Rights and Services.	Care Nepal
2	Empowering Stakeholders, Raising Awareness, and Protecting Children from Early and Forced Marriage in (mid-west) Nepal (SANKALPA)	ECPAT Luxembourg
3	Preventing and Responding to Child Marriage and Early Unions	Girls first fund
4	Combating Against Child Marriage in Karnali Province (CACMA )	Fasten Action
5	Empowering Marginalized Women/Girls to Access Justice and Rights in BNNP 1	KFB Austria
6	Empowering women and children, especially girls to secure their rights and access services in 11 wards of Surkhet of Nepal	TDH-Germany
7	Promotion of Positive Gender Norms, Prevention of Gender-based Violence, and Increasing Access to Services	UNICEF
8	Strengthening child helpline and safe house	Ministry of women, children and senior citizen
9	Hamro Sahans	UN Women

### Contextual Description:

In Sept 8–9, 2025, Nepal witnessed a historic youth-led Gen-Z protest demanding “No corruption” and “Sustainable Governments”. Initially small, the movement grew rapidly through social media mobilization, despite the government banning 28 platforms. Protesters, mostly students, rallied across major cities like Kathmandu, Pokhara, and Butwal, Surkhet confronting entrenched corruption, poor governance, and restrictions on digital freedoms. During the protests, clashes with security forces led to dozens of deaths and hundreds of injuries, marking one of the most intense uprisings in Nepal’s recent political history.

The protests forced the collapse of Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli’s government, leading to the formation of an interim government and commitments to anti-corruption and governance reforms. While some established political parties and elites accused Gen-Z activists of being foreign agents or NGO-backed, the movement highlighted deep-seated frustrations among youth over unemployment, inequality, and political instability. Its legacy lies in amplifying youth voices, digital activism, and systemic reform demands, though long-term change depends on sustained political follow-through and inclusive governance.

Following the Gen-Z protests, the Nepalese government is now preparing for elections of the lower house of Parliament. In this period, more than a dozen new political parties have been formed, reflecting the shifting political landscape and the impact of youth-led mobilization on traditional politics. These new parties are largely driven by young leaders and reform-oriented agendas, seeking to capitalize on the momentum of the Gen-Z movement and public demand for transparent and accountable governance. All our working districts were no exception after this Gen-Z protest. The local representatives became demotivated to carry out the planned activities, the work of NGOs was repeatedly questioned, and staffs had to explain frequently about the objectives of the activities.

The Gen-Z protests, while historic in pushing for political reform, also caused economic disruptions. Many private companies suffered damage, leading to job losses for thousands of people, particularly in service and small business sectors.

## **7. Project Descriptions of Year 2025**

### **7.1. Project Name: Girl Empowerment Program: Empowering Children to Access Their Rights and Services.**

**Funding Partner:** Care Nepal

#### **Main Objectives:**

- ❖ Support for re-enrollment of out-of-school girls aged 10 to 14 through the Udaan Center based on the integrated curriculum of the Center for Education and Human Resource Development for non-formal education.
- ❖ Support for remedial classes and educational materials for girls at risk of dropping out of school.
- ❖ Training and programs on gender-responsive behavior for schools and school teachers.
- ❖ Support and facilitation for local governments in formulating and implementing municipal education plans.

#### **Working Area:**

- ❖ Chaukune Rural Municipality, and Panchapuri, Bheriganaga, and Gurbhakot Municipality in Surkhet District, Karnali Province.
- ❖ Sudhodhan Rural Municipality in Kapilvastu and Sammarimai and Marchawari Rural Municipality in Rupandehi.

#### **Major Achievements:**

- Out of the 14 UDAAN centers operating in Surkhet of Karnali Province and in the Kapilvastu and Rupandehi districts of Lumbini Province, 125 learners from Levels 1, 2 and 3.
- A 3-day self-defense skills development training was conducted for 232 girl's students from 5 schools in Surkhet. They learned how to identify risks analysis and how to learn avoid them.
- We have supported and facilitated 2 Palika the updating of the education plans of Panchapari Municipality and Sammarimai Rural Municipality. This will help ensure effective implementation of the plans and the provision of quality education for all.
- Capacity-building workshops, along with support and facilitation for plan development to update the School Improvement Plans of two schools, Shree Suryajyoti Madhyamik Vidyalaya, Mehlakuna, and Shree Vidyajyoti Madhyamik Vidyalaya, Babiyachaur, have been completed.
- Adolescent's girls have been speaking out about child marriage, the Chhaupadi practice and other harmful traditions in their homes, neighbourhoods and communities.

- Parents recognized and openly discussed socio cultural and economic barriers affecting girls' education.
  - The Creative child club at Shree Nepal Rastriya secondary Bhattesera has been organizing various awareness program every Friday at the school, such as cleanliness campaigns and street drama plays on reducing child marriage.
  - The participatory workshops ensured that students, parents, teachers, and community representatives actively contributed to the planning process, thereby enhancing ownership and commitment to the School Improvement Plans (SIPs).
  - Both schools are developing School Improvement Plans that are practical, actionable, and aligned with the broader educational policies and frameworks.
  - The SIPs integrated gender and social inclusion considerations, reflecting the voices of marginalized groups, particularly adolescent girls. The incorporation of disaster risk reduction and safety measures further strengthened the resilience of the schools. The formation of SIP drafting committees in both institutions created a mechanism for sustained follow-up and accountability.
- 
- Participants have good knowledge of gender roles, sexuality, and reproductive health.
  - Women and girls reported greater confidence in discussing gender inequality, reproductive health, and child marriage risks.
  - Sessions raised awareness of gender disparities and challenged traditional norms like the division of labor and patriarchy.
  - Boys and men developed increased gender sensitivity, promoting gender equality in schools and communities.
  - Participants learned about the risks of child marriage, and committing to its prevention in their communities.
  - Respect, consent, and communication were emphasized, fostering healthy relationships and a culture of mutual respect and nonviolence among peers.
  - Child clubs became active platforms for peer education, spreading knowledge on gender, sexuality, and reproductive health across their schools and local communities.
  - Improved communication between the Local Government and the CLC was identified as essential for effective program implementation.
  - The meeting fostered a shared commitment to enhance the CLC's impact and ensure its long-term sustainability. The local government plans to allocate budgets and programs to support CLCs based on these discussions.

### Major Learnings:

- ❖ Moving forward, while implementing Level 3, collaboration with relevant schools will be essential to ensure that Udaan Center students receive education in English, Mathe, and Science from subject teachers of those schools.
- ❖ Effectiveness can be further enhanced by prioritizing the improvement of educational standards for girls from economically disadvantaged communities and by supporting parents in both education and income-generating activities.
- ❖ We have learned that implementing activities with local government policies and programs, and grounded in established policy frameworks, enables us to gain support and cooperation from both the local community and the government.
- ❖ By supporting on capacity building of community learning centers, will ensure that the program has a lasting impact and sustainable even after implementation at the community level through coordination and collaboration.
- ❖ After capacity enhancement of local stakeholders on education plan monitoring, local government realized and updated plan and improve their monitoring mechanism

- including initiation to reach out-of-school children through mapping in the communities by themselves.
- ❖ Mothers Schools Principal regular visited Udaan center and encourage to Udan girls for re-enrolled school in coming session. Mentorship approach to reach low number of girls in communities along with recruitment of mentors/facilitators from Udan graduates and GRF girls
- ❖ Insurance of goats before distribution along with distribution of written insurance policy and claim procedure
- ❖ Collaboration with community learning centers and local governments at the community level increases program sustainability and effectiveness.
- ❖ Programs targeting economically disadvantaged girls should also include components of parental education and income-generating activities for greater impact.
- ❖ Direct involvement of parents in parental education initiatives proves more effective, as empowering the target group enhances accountability and program success.
- ❖ Involving local governments and diverse stakeholders in the planning process makes implementation more seamless.
- ❖ By strengthening the capacity of the Community Learning Center and encouraging participation in the program, its sustainability and effectiveness have increased.

### 7.1.2 Overall Challenges

- Low involvement of community members in school activities and teacher with parent's dialogue for education issues.
- At the request of the Education Department and schools, and in response to the needs of schoolgirls, sanitary pad vending and disposal machines were provided in schools. However, the sanitary pad, procurement process was not sufficiently effective to ensure their regular use across all locations.
- The project faces a significant challenge in meeting its timelines and budgetary constraints due to a limited number of staff, the extensive geographical coverage of the program, and the high volume of small scale activities involved.
- Due to household responsibilities ensuring regular attendance of girls at Udaan Centers remains a challenge.
- Limited human resources and an extensive number of activities caused delays in program execution and posed challenges in regular monitoring.
- Some girls attending the center come from disadvantaged family situations, where they are responsible for earning and taking care of their families.

### 7.1.3 Efforts to Address Challenges

- Conducted regular monthly meetings with parents and door-to-door visits to ensure girls' participation in Udaan Centers.
- Anticipated potential challenges through pre-assessments and discussions, and implemented alternative plans accordingly.
- A meeting between the Local Government and the Community Learning Center (CLC) management committee was held at all working area and discussed their roles, responsibilities, and strategies to sustain CLC intervention

### Some Photos of Activity based



Fig- Remediless class selected girls provide education materials support



Fig- Child club mentors capacity building Training

## 7.2 Project Name: SANKALPA

The project is working to empower stakeholders and protect children from early and forced marriage in Dullu Municipality, Dailekh, and Badhaiyataal Rural Municipality Bardiya.

The project has made good progress during this period. In this phase, we focused more on developing guidelines for child clubs and adolescent girls' groups, capacity-building for these groups, conducting regular meetings, mobilizing members, providing educational support to children in need, and tutoring 180 children from temporary learning centers. Additionally, the provincial governments have ratified the strategic plan to end early child marriage (ECM). This year, both Palikas have programs and budgets allocated to address children's issues as well as child marriage.

**Funding Partner:** ECPAT Luxembourg

**Working Area:** Bardiya (Badhaiyataal Rural Municipality) and Dailekh (Dullu Rural municipality) **Project Goal:** To reduce the incidences of Early and Forced Marriage in rural and marginalized communities in Dailkeh and Bardiya districts (Karnali and Lumbini province) Nepal.

### Objective of the Project

Preventing and protecting children from early and forced marriage by fostering responsible government action, community empowerment, and strengthening services/referral systems in Lumbini and Karnali Provinces of Nepal

#### 7.2.1 Major Achievements as per objectives

**Result 1: Increased adoption and implementation of comprehensive legal, policy and regulatory frameworks to address the sexual exploitation of children, including its new forms**

- a) A province governments have strategy plan to end ECM where child centered policy developed. Where clearly mentioned in agency need to develop to each children. Major are highlighted bellow:
- Effective implementation of the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and existing laws
  - Adoption of a zero-tolerance policy toward child marriage practices
  - Prevention of child marriage through social norms change initiatives
  - Support for girls' education and empowerment
  - Provision of access to adolescent-friendly health services
  - Strengthening child protection committees at provincial, district, and local levels
  - Establishment and operationalization of safe houses and referral services for survivors
  - Implementation of a case management system for prevention, rescue, rehabilitation, and reintegration
  - Allocation of dedicated budgets to end child marriage
  - Strengthening multi-sectoral coordination
- b) In Bardiya, Badhaiyataal Rural Municipality has developed a strategy plan, policies, programs, and budget to address child marriage. As part of these efforts, the Balbalika Saga Upamiyar Program was conducted in 12 schools, building on best practices from previous projects. The Palika is actively taking action to prevent child marriage.
- c) In Dailekh, Dullu Municipality has implemented programs to overcome child marriage, with major initiatives and budgets focused on:
- a. Empowering girls
  - b. Conducting community-level awareness programs
  - c. Providing services through the Niyak Committee
  - d. scholarship support
  - e. Supporting income-generating activities for marginalized communities
- d) Badhaiyataal Rural Municipality has developed procedures to establish and operate an emergency safe home. The municipality has also allocated NPR 2,000,000 and collaborates with Helping Hands to implement this initiative.

The Ministry of Social Development, honorable Ghanashyam Bhandari, stated that *child marriage is a major issue in Karnali Province. The Ministry committed to jointly working with local governments through policies and programs, with increased focus on strengthening girls' agency and supporting vulnerable families through income-generating activities.*

The Government of Karnali Province has ratified the Strategy Plan to End Early and Child Marriage (ECM). This is a significant achievement of the project. We contributed to the development of this document by ensuring that the voices of project areas, survivors, adolescent girls, and religious leaders were incorporated.

## **Result 2: Strengthened capacity of law enforcement agencies, courts and accompanying lawyers to investigate, prosecute and prevent SEC.**

- Local governments and ward offices have become well-informed about Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS), the activities conducted there, and the situation of children attending them. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and ward chiefs are now fully aware of the CFS and its services.

- Ward members frequently monitor the CFS, enhancing accountability and encouraging the management committee and facilitators to perform their duties effectively.
- The Yuwa Gochal Club, Bardiya contributed NPR 9,880 toward the CFS's stationery costs.

### **Result 3: Mobilization of local child protection mechanisms - growing involvement of the community and local authorities; and increased allocation of local resources to child protection.**

- Groups became more active in schools by conducting extracurricular activities and participating in competitions.
- Adolescent girls' groups are making demands to the ward office and schools for sanitary pads as well as budget allocation to enhance their capacity.
- An increasing number of cases are being reported by the groups to the ward office and the Justice (Nyayik) Committee.
- Sanitary pads are available in schools.
- Members of the adolescent girls' groups are supportive in conducting school events. This helps to develop their resilience.
- Teamwork among group members has increased.
- Members of the adolescent girls' groups became aware of the importance of such groups.
- They understood why it is important to listen to the voices of girls and how to advocate for them.
- They also understood their own roles and responsibilities within the groups.
- The adolescent group has successfully developed the capacity to divide role and tasks within the group and lead program implementation. Their efforts in conducting school-based programs have appreciated by teachers and demonstrated their ability to manage additional activities. In future; school initiatives the adolescent group will not only take on leadership roles but will also have increased opportunities to actively participate in other activities.

### **Result 4: Increased access to quality, child-friendly and effective protection, response and support systems and services for children at risk and survivors of child sexual exploitation.**

- Out of the 66 cases, 42 received psychosocial counselling, 1 received emergency support, 6 were rescued, 10 were successfully reintegrated, and 5 benefited from legal counselling services.
- Girls who received child marriage support are regularly attending school and have been rescued from vulnerable situations. This assistance has helped them move out of dangerous environments.
- Thirty needy children received educational support, including school uniforms, notebooks, pens, calculators, tiffin boxes, geometry boxes, school bags, and other study materials. This support makes attending school more comfortable and helps the children feel equipped to learn. It also contributes to building their resilience and confidence in their education.

#### *Few success stories;*

**Anjila Tharu**, 15, from Badhaiyataal Ward 3, was forcibly married to a 26-year-old man. Her mother informed the counselors, who coordinated with ward representatives and the Child Welfare Officer. With the support of the Nepal Police and Maiti Nepal, Anjila was successfully rescued and returned to her family. However, due to pressure from neighbors

and an unsafe home environment, she was later sent to live with her uncle in Bar Bardiya Ward 7 to continue her schooling. She is now studying in grade 8.

**Kulmila Sunar**, 17, from Badhaiyataal Ward 9, married a 19-year-old man and fled to India. Upon receiving the report, the organization attempted to locate her but discovered the couple had already crossed the border. Initially, her mother was reluctant to pursue the case due to fear and discouragement. However, repeated home counseling and coordination with the police enabled her active participation in locating her daughter. Kulmila was successfully rescued after a month and is now back with her family. Due to missed registration for grade 9, she will resume her studies next year. The family's attitude toward her has become more supportive, and the mother-daughter relationship has improved significantly.

**Bishna Chunara**, 13, from Dullu Ward 13, was studying in grade 6 at Kalikadevi Secondary School. Although she was attending the Ujjal Child-Friendly Space (CFS), her elder sister forced her into marriage with an 18-year-old boy. The case was reported by CFS facilitators. Counselors immediately visited her home, and her mother reported the case to the police, who rescued her and returned her home. Our counselors provided family counseling, psychosocial support, and career guidance. She now attends CFS regularly and is focusing on her education.

**Result 5: Increased awareness, help-seeking and freedom from stigma and shame around sexual exploitation among children, survivors, caregivers and vulnerable communities, through preventive education and public information.**

- a. ) All clubs successfully restructured office-bearers and established a regular monthly meeting schedule.
- b. ) Codes of Conduct were implemented to ensure:
  - Discipline and respectful behavior.
  - Avoidance of substance abuse and improper activities.
  - Timely problem-solving for peers and prevention of underage marriage.
  - Maintaining peace in schools and active participation in meetings and activities.
  - Responsible use of mobile phones and social media.
- c. ) Preventive measures against child marriage, domestic violence, and other risky behaviors were discussed and implemented.
- d. ) Capacity-building trainings for club officials were planned and conducted with Aawaaj's support.
- e. ) Children actively participated in school events, community improvement activities, and awareness programs.
- f. ) Social media was used to disseminate decisions, announcements, and awareness messages, with discussions on strengths and weaknesses.
- g. ) Reporting mechanisms were established to ensure prompt communication of incidents affecting children and women.

*Sita, a member of a child club, was abused by senior boys at her school. She initially reported the incident to a male teacher, but her complaint was not taken seriously. After learning about the child case reporting mechanism during the training, she directly reported the case to the Deputy Mayor. The Deputy Mayor handled the case with confidentiality and questioned the teacher for failing to take action against the abuse. Now, Sita is receiving protection and support, and she is once again enjoying school life and focusing on her studies. Its true success stories of the training.*

h.) The children’s clubs successfully divided roles and responsibilities for the events. They were able to lead and conduct the programs independently. The teachers appreciated the members of the clubs, and their teamwork significantly improved as a result.

**Result 6: Increased visibility and awareness of the problem, informed and contextually appropriate action from ongoing research into the phenomenon**

- Local governments got the opportunity to update what services are available and identify what needs to be addressed through collaboration and coordination.
- The Palika has full information about the departments, agencies, organizations, and offices that provide services, making collaboration and coordination easier.
- The project team also knows about the multiple services and programs of the Palika and ward offices, which strengthens coordination between service providers.
- In Bardiya, the Palika had the same budget as last year. Previously, some individuals were not interested in establishing an emergency safe house, but this program has increased interest in establishing and operating a safe house.
- In Dullu municipality and Badhaiyataal Rural Municipalities, annual programs and budgets are allocated to address child marriage. In Bardiya, the Palika actively collaborates to conduct community sensitization programs, led by the Deputy Mayor and ward chiefs, demonstrating the Palika’s responsibility in responding to child marriage.
- In Bardiya, the Palika has an operational guideline for running an emergency safe house and has allocated NPR 500,000 to establish and operate Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS).
- Through the project, we have capacitated 240 adolescents (girls and boys) who are aware of child protection issues and actively work to prevent child marriage and child sexual abuse.
- The project contributed to the development of the ratified strategy plan to end child marriage (ECM) in Karnali Province. During the document’s development, children, survivors, child protection officers, religious leaders, and other stakeholders participated, sharing challenges, learnings, and recommendations for the way forward. The strategy emphasizes the development of children’s agency, strengthening local government systems, and improving services for children in need. The provincial government plans to collaborate with local governments to further reduce child marriage.
- Currently, 180 children are receiving services from Temporary Learning Centers, which have improved their education levels, reduced incidents of child marriage and sexual abuse, and provided safe spaces for learning and growth.

**Challenges to interventions**

SN	Challenges	Mitigation Measures
1.	Since the members of the child clubs and adolescent girls’ groups are school students, the school did not allow the	The case was reported to the Education Department of the Palika, which directed the school to organize a schedule for extracurricular

	implementation of awareness programs, dialogues, or competitions. This also prevented the conduct of training sessions for the child clubs.	activities. Consequently, the learning environment has improved, enabling children to actively participate in events, supplementary learning, and other activities.
2.	During the group mobilization period in Dailekh, adolescent girls and child club members were engaged in their examinations.	The activities have been postponed and will be conducted in the next semester.
3.	Members of child clubs, adolescent girls' groups (Champions), and CFS students have been threatened by community members and teachers for reporting cases of sexual abuse and child marriage.	In Bardiya, the project team regularly reports cases to Deputy Mayor Ms. Laxmi Adhikari, who is supporting enhanced child protection and advocating for children's voices to be heard. She is further mobilizing the Niyek Committee and the Child Protection Committee to respond to cases and engage directly with children. Also, she is raising voices for girls protections. For this confidentiality of the cases has been maintained and reporting is done.
4	Due to poor academic results across all grades at Badhaiyatal Public School, the school management committee decided to organize extra classes for all students from Grade 5 to Grade 10 and those who were interested to enroll CFS classes could not join because of time unavailability.	We have been engaging with schools, placing greater emphasis on learning outcomes, the school curriculum, and organizing competitive activities within the CFS.
5	One girl from the CFS became a survivor of child marriage, negatively affecting the aspirations of other girls regarding their education and growth.	Our project team, in collaboration with the Child Protection Committee, rescued two girls. We also conducted family counseling and spoke individually with each child at the CFS to reassure them and help them feel safe. As we had just started our work in the area, these initial interventions were crucial.
6	An incident related to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and power shows was reported within the project team.	The staff member reported the case to the district response focal person, who immediately informed the Head of Project. The issue was then shared with the Management Committee, which assigned the case to the Response Committee. The Response Committee reviewed the case and shared its findings with the Management Committee and the Executive Board. Based on these findings, the Board took action and decided to remove the staff member from the project. Prior to this, the staff member was dissatisfied with her work and was also experiencing pressure and mistreatment from her husband to leave the job. Our counselors provided psychosocial support and listened to her concerns. Following the decision and counseling support, her well-being, happiness, and level of engagement have improved.

7	The current child marriage law undermines children's rights, as certain legal provisions classify survivors of child marriage as perpetrators.	Aawaaj, together with other civil society organizations, is advocating for legal reforms to protect and uphold the rights of all children. We need big voices all over the Nepal. We will share it in national forum too.
8	Currently, no standard guideline exists for forming, reforming, or mobilizing adolescent girls' groups.	We developed a new Standard Operating Guideline to form and mobilize adolescent girls' groups, based on the policies of the Government of Nepal. This guideline could also be useful for adolescent girls' groups in other Palikas.
9	The changes in executive members of child club has hampered in conducting child club meetings timely.	This has been addressed by making new executive members of child club.
10	At Dailekh due to inconvenience of roads and lack of transportation facilities, staffs have to go through foot sometimes has to pass through forests at night, which risks from wild animals and other individuals.	To address this, action plan has been made before planning the activities; still safety of the staffs is at risk.
11	After the Gen-Z protest, political leaders and parties blamed NGOs and INGOs for allegedly being behind the movement, creating a situation that risked exposing organizational names and activities.	We have paused our field activities and are now focusing on organizational structure development, document preparation, and staff capacity building.
12	There is a limited budget allocated for the mobilization of adolescent girls' groups/child clubs and for activities aimed at enhancing their capacity.	During this period, the project team provided trainings in collaboration with the ward office, and efforts will be made to encourage local governments to allocate a dedicated budget.
13	Our community does not fully support the development of girls and women and is heavily influenced by patriarchal norms.	We should empower adolescent girls and raise voices in support of girls' and women's rights.

## **Major Learnings**

- a. Empowering children and adolescents helps them recognize their rights, raise awareness within their communities, and confidently report cases of child marriage and other related abuses.
- b. In Nepal, child marriage issues receive low priority because children are often unable to raise their own voices, and human rights defenders are not speaking out as they should. We should hold human rights defenders accountable, enhance children's agency, and provide platforms for them to share their voices.
- c. Sharing more information about the project with local governments and stakeholders can be supportive and positive for the project and can reduce potential risks.
- d. During project implementation, it is important to first review relevant policies, laws, and procedures, identify gaps, and advocate for necessary changes. At times, existing laws, policies, or procedures can produce negative outcomes if their implementation is forced without proper context.
- e. If the voices of the voiceless are not incorporated into government documents, they may be overlooked. Currently, Nepal's revised strategy plan to end child marriage does not focus on the development of children's agency. However, the strategy plan to end child marriage in

Karnali Province is more effective, as it incorporates children's voices and emphasizes the development of their agency.

- f. To form or reform community groups, we should first review relevant government policies. In Nepal, the formation and mobilization of child clubs and adolescent girls' groups is mandatory at both the Palika and ward levels. Our project contributes by forming these groups, enhancing their capacity, and mobilizing them. This supports the Palika's action plan, and after the project phase-out, other projects and local governments can continue the work with the groups we have established.
- g. To overcome child marriage we have to develop agency of children and provided services and making children friendly environments where they can learnt and developed and more focus on own carrier.
- h. According to legal provisions, if a child marriage occurs, the parents should be made accountable. In Nepal, parents are often indirectly supporting or influencing such child marriages.

### ***Strengths of the program:***

#### **Social Strengthen**

The project provided mediation, rescue, psycho-social and family counseling, business support, and reintegration services, strengthening families, enhancing children's well-being, and reducing violence in the community. These interventions promoted social harmony and supported children to focus on education and career development.

A Dalit woman delivering snacks to CFS children became a powerful example of reducing caste discrimination, as children now happily accept meals from her, promoting inclusion and respect. Some girls have begun speaking out against violence and discrimination, contributing to a society that values equality and children's voices.

The project also ensured accountability, taking action against staff accused of PSEA violations, setting a precedent for fair treatment and reinforcing justice. By developing community-level groups and enhancing children's and adolescents' agency, the project fosters long-term social change and the emergence of an empowered, equitable new generation.

#### **Economical Strengthen**

Under this project, snacks for CFS children are provided by 6 local women who have experienced violence and have no source of income. This initiative helps them earn some money and boosts their confidence. They are also learning basic business skills. Additionally, we conducted a CFS management and operation training at a homestay operated by 25 women from the Dalit community. This supports them in earning income, which they can use to cover expenses, including their children's education.

#### **Other Strengths**

Our project contributed to the development of the province-level strategy plan to end child marriage (ECM) in Karnali Province. It also strengthened the capacity of Aawaaj, which now leads the province-level CACMA, This was the first project, initiated in 2016, aimed at addressing child marriage. Building on this foundation, Aawaaj is now expanding its work to other Palikas in Karnali Province, applying the project's concepts and approaches.

## **Incorporate sustainability considerations.**

### **1. Community Ownership**

The project established and strengthened child clubs and adolescent girls' groups at the ward levels, ensuring local ownership. After project phase-out, these groups can continue their activities with support from local governments and other initiatives.

### **2. Capacity Building**

We conducted capacity-building activities for adolescent girls and child club members. They became aware of their own issues, agendas, and responsibilities. We will continue to focus on enhancing the capacity of community groups, so that after the project phase-out, they can effectively advocate and lobby at the local level.

### **3. Policy and Institutional Integration**

Contributions to the province-level strategy plan to end child marriage and engagement with CACMA and GNB Nepal ensure that project concepts and approaches are embedded within institutional frameworks, increasing the likelihood of continuation and replication.

### **4. Social Norms and Inclusion**

Initiatives addressing caste-based discrimination, gender inequality, and violence against children fostered community-level social change. These behavioural and attitudinal shifts are durable, promoting ongoing social harmony and equity beyond the project timeline.

### **5. Economic Sustainability:** Income-generating activities for local women, such as providing snacks to CFS children and running homestays, create financial self-reliance and demonstrate the feasibility of community-led initiatives that continue after project support ends.

### **6. Accountability Mechanisms:** Actions taken to address PSEA violations and strengthen children's agency create a culture of responsibility and justice that can be maintained by local institutions and community structures.

## **7.4 Project Name: Promotion of Positive Gender Norms, Prevention of Gender-based Violence and Increasing Access to Services**

**Funding Partner:** UNICEF

**Working Area:** Karnali Province ( Kalikot, Dailkeh, West Rukum and Surkhet)

Aawaaj in partnership with UNICEF is implementing the project entitled “Promotion of positive gender norms, prevention of gender-based violence and increasing access to services” under EWP (Empower Women Prosperous Nepal) in Karnali Province. The baseline of the project is the Narayan Municipality of Dailekh, Birendranagar Municipality of Surkhet, Subhakalika Rural Municipality of Kalikot, and SaniBheri Rural Municipality of Rukum (West) districts.

The objective of the project is to prevent and promote child protection and gender-based violence response (GBV) services, ensuring the services are child-sensitive and gender-responsive. This includes advocating for child protection systems strengthening at the local level to enhance the capacity of the child protection mechanisms for the promotion of positive social and gender norms.

To achieve the above objectives, the following key activities are implementing within the project:

- Psychosocial counseling for individuals and GBV survivors including those experiencing fear, stress, and anxiety.
- Safehouse services for women and child helpline (1098) services for children.
- Advocacy interactions, dialogues, and meetings with provincial and local government officials, parliament members, and the social development committee.
- Adolescent girls’ empowerment, protection, and promotion of child rights, gender, and leadership including promoting adolescent participation in local-level planning processes for strengthening child protection and GBV services.
- Implementation of the 16 Rupantaran classes for adolescent girls and parents.
- Intergenerational dialogues with men and boys on harmful gender norms.
- Engaging in community-level sensitization to speak out against gender discrimination and GBV.
- Celebration of various days to raise awareness on child protection and GBV.

Survivors of violence have received gender-responsive services such as medical treatment support, legal aid, counseling, clothes, health kits, cash support, transportation, sanitary pads, reintegration, and safe house services against different violence faced by them.

### **7.4.1 Key Achievements**

Services Provided by the Child Helpline-1098 : Please see detail number in 5. 2

- Emergency rescue services,
- Facilitation of access to health services and medical treatment,
- Immediate protection and placement in safe shelters,
- Psychosocial counseling services,
- Identification of children at risk and affected by violence, Care plan
- Coordination with relevant government and non-government stakeholders,
- Support for legal assistance and access to justice,
- Family reunification and reintegration, Need based support,
- Information, counseling, and referral services related to child protection,
- Monitoring and follow-up services

Services provided by the Safe House for the survivors – pls see details in section 5.

- Medical Support, Utilities kit,
- Psychosocial Counseling,
- Management of food, snacks,
- Family counseling, Mediation,
- Legal Services Support,
- Case Registrations,
- Need based support,
- Coordination for the referral services
- Re-integrations and Case follow up.

Coordination and Collaboration for the above services

- Nepal Police, Women, Children and Senior Citizen Service Center (Women Cell)
- One Stop Crisis Management Center (OCMC), Health Institutions
- Child Search and Rescue Center (104)
- National Child Rights Council
- Constitutional Commissions (Women, Human Rights)
- Courts, Government Lawyers Office
- Local and Provincial Governments
- District Administration Office
- Child Care Homes (Approved by the Government of Nepal)
- Ministry of Social Development, Karnali Province
- Journalists, Schools, Civil Society

#### a) Teachers training on complaint response mechanisms

The training focused on an introduction to the complaint box mechanism in school to address GBV.

##### **Training to school teachers, suggestion box management committee, gender focal point on gender/GBV & suggestion box mechanism.**

Aawaaj, in collaboration with local Palikas, conducted 3-days teachers training in Sanibheri RM, Narayan municipality, Shubhakali RM and Birendranagar municipality to identify and mitigate the risks of gender-based violence (GBV) in school through complaint response mechanism and safe referral to appropriate services. A total of 107 people (15 Dalits, 11 Janjati and 80 others) from 13 schools in 4 municipalities were provided with 3-day school complaint hearing and management training. (As per the previous quarter)

##### **Review and refresher meeting to school teachers, suggestion box management committee, gender focal point on gender/GBV & suggestion box mechanism.**

Aawaaj, in collaboration with local Palikas, conducted 3-days teachers training in Sanibheri RM, Narayan municipality, Shubhakali RM and Birendranagar municipality to identify and mitigate the risks of gender-based violence (GBV) in school through complaint response mechanism and safe referral to appropriate services. A total of **107 people** (15 Dalits, 11 Janjati and 80 others) from 13 schools in 4 municipalities were provided with 3-day school complaint hearing and management training. (July to Sep. 2024)

Refresher training was conducted for the members of School complaint hearing committees in Shubhakalika Rural Municipality, Kalikot, and in Birendranagar Municipality, Surkhet (in 2 events). A total of 47 participants took part in the training, 12 from two schools in Shubhakalika and 35 from

five schools in Birendranagar. Among the participants were 7 boys, 7 girls, 16 women, and 17 men. (Two Event refresher trainings were completed in May, 2025).

In the month of July, refresher training was conducted for the members of School complaint hearing committee's in Sanibher RM Rukum West and Narayan Municipality, Dailekha (in 2 events) A total of 40 participants took part in the training, 20 from three schools in Sanibheri RM and 20 from three schools in Narayan Municipality. Among the participants were 4 boys, 7 girls, 13 women, and 16 men. (Two Event refresher trainings were completed in July, 2025).

### **Regular Meeting in schools (13 schools 6 time per school)**

A total of 11 School Complaint Hearing and Management Committee meetings have been conducted three times. in all 13 schools across 4 municipalities, complain hearing and management committee meetings are being held to address complaints. Most of the complaint received through the complaint boxes are related to issues such as the teaching and learning process, discomfort with sanitary pads, boys teasing girls by calling out their names, male teachers giving more priority to boys in teaching, and dirty toilets. Efforts have been made to counsel boys who cause distress to girls, remind teachers to provide effective and regular teaching, advise office assistants on maintaining toilet cleanliness, coordinate with the management committee to advertise for subjects without teachers, and coordinate with the ward for water supply in the toilets.

- In 2025, a total of 130 complaints were received, of which 124 have been addressed while 6 remain unresolved. The unresolved complaints include cases where the concerned girl did not attend school, the school was unable to appoint a nurse, and it was not possible to provide ID cards for all children.
- In Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West, since the establishment of the School Complaint Hearing and Management Committee, incidents of corporal punishment, verbal abuse, emotional mistreatment, and other forms of violence against children have significantly decreased, as reported by the children themselves.
- Students have been given opportunities to submit their problems and complaints in a confidential, safe, and child-friendly manner. This has allowed issues raised within the school community to be discussed and resolved internally, fostering a culture of dialogue, mutual understanding, and problem-solving, according to the committee officials.
- At Balachaur School in Ward No. 2, Shubhakalika Rural Municipality, adolescent girls were reported to have issues related to Mass Conversion Disorder. The complaint committee was requested to resolve the matter. In coordination with TPO, the committee called a counsellor to identify the girls experiencing fainting first and provide counselling. However, the problem has not yet been fully resolved.
- At Shiv Secondary School in Ward No. 9, Birendranagar Municipality, following complaints, the boy who had been teasing others was counselled. Students reported improvements such as the provision of a playground at the school and access to filtered drinking water.

- At Shiv Secondary School in Dhuliyabit, Surkhet, many complaints were received regarding sports equipment. With the support of the Education Section, the school received mats worth NPR 324,000 for the playground, enabling children to engage in sports activities.

### Project orientation and planning workshop to project staff

All the project related staffs from Dailekh, Kalikot, Rukum and Surkhet were present. Projection of the theme, objective and project budget was discussed. There was 21 staffs and volunteers from different projects of Aawaaj. Legal provisions on GBV case, related office/agency, child welfare and child protection system at the local level were discussed.

### Output 1.2 Advocate for Child-Sensitive Gender Responsive services/systems

#### 1.2.1 Activity: Advocacy meeting with provincial female parliamentarian members/social development committee members.

#### Indicators: 2 (two) advocacy meeting with provincial female parliamentarian members /social development committee members

An interaction program on the role of stakeholders in prevention and reduction of gender-based violence was organized by Karnali Province Social Development Committee in collaboration with UNICEF Nepal and Aawaaj to discuss strategies for preventing gender-based violence, reform strong policies and laws and allocating budget resources towards gender responsive services that support survivors and work towards prevention. who are at risk and need special protection and alternative care. In total 64 (Male 40 and Female 24) municipal representatives and officials participated in the advocacy meeting (June-9,2024).

Karnali Provincial Government has been working through its own initiatives and in collaboration with partners in regards to child protection and reduce gender based violence. In this context, interactive meeting was conducted to review the status of child protection, previous efforts and discuss future priorities in relation to the policy formulation and budget allocation for the fiscal year 2082/83 and develop a common understanding and collect feedback and commitments through



discussions with members of relevant thematic committees, ministries and women parliamentarians of Karnali Province. A total of 59 participants were present at the interaction meeting. The presentations were delivered by Mr. Kunga Lama (UNICEF) on status of child protection in Karnali Province, Hon.Purna Bahadur Khatri Chalise, Chairperson, Social Development Committee on child

protection issues in Karnali province and Hon. Ghanshyam Bhandari, Minister, Ministry of Social Development on efforts made by Karnali province in child protection. In formulation of the plan and budget for the fiscal year 2082/83, discussions were held among the Social Development Committee, Ministry of Social Development, Deputy Speaker, Honorable Members, Secretaries of the relevant ministries, and the Planning Commission regarding the situation of children in Karnali Province, including relevant policies, regulations, programs and plans along with the responsibilities, accountability for actions when timely information is available. All the stakeholders committed to fulfill their respective roles in bringing about policy reforms, ensuring effective policy implantation and allocating budgets in the area of child protection. (Two events were completed-one in the first quarter of June-9,2024 and another in 10-May, 2025).

- This activity has already been completed in the previous quarters.

### **1.1.2 Activity: Advocacy meeting with social development committee members and women representatives of local governments**

During this reporting period, a total of 8 advocacy meetings were held with mayors, deputy mayors, department heads, women representatives, and members of the Social Development Committee. Altogether, 192 individuals participated in these 8 meetings, including 71 women, 106 men, 13 girls, and 2 boys.

A program was conducted in Narayan Municipality, Dailekh and Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West, involving local government mayors, deputy mayors, heads of thematic branches, public representatives, and EWPN partners to share information about the activities of the program and to coordinate and collaborate in the program.

A coordination and interaction program was held with Khadachakra Municipality, Kalikot and Dullu Municipality, Dailekh regarding the formulation of the municipality's Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Strategy Implementation Plan. Within the EWPN program, in four municipalities (Shubhkhalka, Kalikot, Narayan Dailekh, Birendranagar Surkhet, and Sanibheri Rukum West), an interaction program was organized for budget allocation in the local-level planning process on managing incidents of gender-based violence, capacity building of women and children, skill development training, day celebration programe and educational support for children. After the discussion with the local level for allocating the child and gender sensitive budget, four local level have committed for allocating the minimum required budget and program aligning with GESI CIP. (As per the previous month, April-2025).

- This activity has been completed.

### **1.2.3 Activity: Identify or form adolescent girls' network for advocating child protection issues at Ward and Palika level**

#### **1.2.3.2 Regular meeting (Palika level Adolescent Girls network)**

In the meeting of the Municipal Level Adolescent Network of four municipalities, a total of 72 adolescent girls were present (20 from Shubhakali, 20 from Sanibheri, 13 from Narayan, and 19 from Birendranagar). (As per the previous quarter)

In the month of August (2025), a municipality-level adolescent girls' network meeting was organized across all four municipalities, with a total of 65 girls participating. The Birendranagar Municipality-level adolescent girls' network meeting was held on August 2, 2025, at the Aawaaj Organization hall. During this meeting, with the presence of the UNICEF team, discussions and interactions were conducted with the girls' network regarding their questions, as well as the learning and challenges they have experienced so far.

#### 1.2.4 Two days' capacity building training adolescent girls' network on child rights, gender, and leadership, including local-level planning processes.

**Progress:** A two-day capacity-building training was provided to the representatives of the Municipal-level Adolescent Networks in Shubkalika Rural Municipality, **Kalikot**, and Sanibheri Rural Municipality, **Rukum West**. A total of 40 participants (20 from Shubkalika and 20 from Sanibheri) attended the two-day capacity-building training for the Municipal-level Adolescent Network officials held in Shubkalika Rural Municipality, Kalikot, and Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West. (As per the previous quarter-2 Event)

**Progress:** A two-day capacity-building training was provided to the representatives of the Municipal-level Adolescent Networks in Narayan Municipality, **Dailekh**, and Birendranagar Municipality, **Surkhet**. The training was facilitated by the Women's and Children's Branch Head and the Child Welfare Officer of the municipality. During the training, the adolescents were provided information on child rights, child abuse and exploitation, the seven steps of planning process and the organizations to report to in case of GBV. A total of 40 adolescent girls participated in the two-day capacity-building training for the executive members of the adolescent girls' network-20 from Dailekh and 20 from Surkhet. (2 events were completed in the month of May-2025).

**Progress:** A two-day capacity-building training for adolescent girls' network leaders was conducted in two locations-Shubhakhalka Rural Municipality, **Kalikot**, and Sanibheri Rural Municipality, **Rukum West**-in July 2025. A total of 40 adolescent girls had the opportunity to participate in the training. Through the training, the girls gained knowledge and skills on child rights, the rights and responsibilities of adolescent girls, gender and sexuality, ways to protect themselves from child sexual abuse and exploitation, good touch and bad touch, leadership development, online and internet-related violence, the proper use of the internet, equality, and inclusion. Participants also shared that they plan to pass on the knowledge they gained to child clubs in their respective wards. (2 Event, July-2025)

**Progress:** A two-day capacity-building training for adolescent girls' network leaders was conducted in two Locations-Narayan Municipality, **Dailekha**, and Birendrangarl Municipality, **Surkhet**-in Nov.-Dec., 2025. A total of 41 adolescent girls had the opportunity to participate in the training.

- In November 2025, 20 adolescent girls from the Birendranagar Municipality-level Girls' Network participated in a two-day self-defence training. During the training, the girls were provided with information on sexual exploitation, abuse, inappropriate touching, legal provisions, mental health, and ways to protect themselves from physical assault. The training equipped the girls with important knowledge and skills related to self-defence. After the training, the participants reported a significant increase in their morale and self-confidence.
- Following the training, the girls stated that they had developed skills in stress management, building self-confidence, and coping with social pressures.
- Participants also reported that gaining knowledge about physical safety measures, crisis management strategies, and protective precautions to adopt in emergencies further enhanced their self-confidence.
- While practicing 16 stages of self-defence in the group, the adolescent girls learned skills to resist attacks. They also understood that self-defence is not only about physical strength but also about staying safe through awareness and alert behavior.
- The girls reported that they developed both theoretical knowledge and practical skills in various self-defence techniques, including awareness-based self-defence, verbal self-defence, diplomatic, physical, and legal self-defence. They also learned how to apply these skills in high-risk, medium-risk, and low-risk situations.

- Adolescent girl Srishti Mahat shared that when she was in Grade 7, a teacher had hugged her from behind, and she had tearfully asked the teacher not to behave that way. She stated that now, if such a situation occurs, she will apply the self-defense skills she has learned here to protect herself.
- Adolescent girl Bhimsara Sharma, a participant of the training, shared that previously she used to feel afraid and unsafe when going anywhere alone in the community. However, after learning the knowledge and skills on how to protect herself physically and mentally, she reported that her confidence has significantly increased.
- It was reported that participants in Narayan Municipality, Dailekh received information on promoting mental well-being, skills for managing stress and anger, and mechanisms for reporting incidents of gender-based violence and sexual violence.

Currently, in all 13 schools across 4 municipalities, complaint hearings, and management committee meetings are being held to address complaints. Most of the complaints received through the complaint boxes are related to issues such as the teaching and learning process, discomfort with sanitary pads, boys teasing girls by calling out their names, male teachers giving more priority to boys in teaching, and dirty toilets.

The committee has also sought support from the management committee to address the complaint. Efforts have been made to counsel boys who cause distress to girls, remind teachers to provide effective and regular teaching, advise office assistants on maintaining toilet cleanliness, coordinate with the management committee to advertise for subjects without teachers, and coordinate with the ward for water supply in the toilets.

### 1.2.5 Conduct Safety audit & safety walk by adolescent Girls network members to advocate for program on child focused GBV in palika



In the program conducted across four municipalities for **child-centered, gender-based violence identification through safety assessments and ground-level mapping**, a total of 107 participants were involved (0 boys, 45 girls, 23 men, and 39 women). The municipalities were oriented on **child-centered, gender-based violence identification and safety mapping**, and information collection was completed.

A **social safety assessment** was conducted in the four municipalities with the participation of adolescent girls, local women leaders, community representatives, heads of relevant sections, police,

heads of the women and children's section, child welfare officers, teachers, and municipal heads and deputy heads. In this program, each ward of the municipalities mapped incidents of **gender-based violence** affecting women and children, identified unsafe locations, analyzed the reasons for these unsafe areas, documented the types of violent incidents that had occurred, and determined the actions needed by responsible parties to prevent such incidents in the future.

## **Output 2.1: Support for Positive Social & Gender Norms and GBV Prevention and Promote Adolescent Girls' and Boys' Leadership**

### **2.1.1 Activity: 12 Days Rupantaran TOT for Rupantaran facilitators.**

Aawaaj conducted Rupantaran TOT in Hotel Cental Plaza. A total of 27 people participated in the training, including 25 Rupantaran facilitators and 2 training facilitators. The training commenced with formal opening of the training in presence of UNICEF representative, Aawaaj board member, staffs and CDC staffs from Sudur Paschim. The objective of the training is to train the selected peer facilitators from Aawaaj and CDC on Rupantaran full package. The trained facilitators will be delivering the life skills sessions in the communities. After the training, the peer facilitators have to conduct 42 social and financial skills training to targeted numbers of adolescent girls and boys. Additionally, they have to conduct 7 sessions with parents of the adolescent girls and boys. (July to Sep. 2024) **Organized by Aawaaj.**

A total of 14 participants (12 facilitators and 2 social mobilizers) from Aawaaj have received 12-day Rupantaran class trainer training. From April 6 to 17, 2025, a 12-day Rupantaran Facilitator Training was conducted in Nepalgunj, attended by 12 Rupantaran facilitators. Among the participants, 9 were aged between 16 and 24, and 5 were between 25 and 54 years old. All 14 participants actively engaged in the training and reported increased confidence as a result of gaining clarity on the methods, processes, and content needed to conduct classes for adolescents and parents in their communities. (As per the previous month, April, 6 to 17-2025) **Organized by CDC**

- This activity has been completed.

### **2.1.2 Activity: Vulnerability assessment to identify at risk adolescent girls.**

In coordination with Subhakarika Rural Municipality and Narayan Municipality, 15 volunteers were selected from the localities. The volunteers are using the UNICEF vulnerability assessment Kobo tools. The assessment is being conducted in ward no. 1 and 2 in Subhakarika, Rural Municipality, Kalikot and ward no. 5, 6 and 10 in Narayan Municipality, Dialekh. (April to June-2024).

To implement the second phase of the Rupantaran Classes, facilitators in 17 locations across 4 municipalities have been collecting data using the Kobo tools to identify at-risk adolescents. Data entry is being carried out for 50 individuals per location, totaling information collection for 850 adolescents.

- This activity has been completed.

### **2.1.3 Activity: Roll out "Rupantaran" social and financial skills package for vulnerable boys and girl.**

5 Rupantaran classes have been conducted in Birendranagar, 3 in Shubhakarika, 5 in Narayan and 3 in Sanibheri, totalling 16 classes. In 16 Rupantaran classes, 160 boys and 283 girls, totalling **443 adolescents** (Dalit 175, Janjati 81 and Other 187) have participated in regular classes. Adolescents (girls and boys) have received 12 to 16 sessions in the months of August and September. The

participants from the 16 Rupantaran classes included 10 school dropouts (6 boys and 4 girls), 5 child brides (all girls), 28 children who had lost their fathers (11 boys and 17 girls), 20 children who had lost their mothers (8 boys and 12 girls), 12 orphans without both parents (3 boys and 9 girls), and 18 children with disabilities (8 boys and 10 girls). Here are some examples from adolescent participants in Rupantaran classes -First Round

In Shubhakalika Rural Municipality, Kalikot, 3 Rupantaran Classes; in Narayan Municipality, Dailekh, 5 Classes; in Birendranagar, Surkhet, 6 Classes; and in Sani Bheri Rural Municipality, West Rukum, 3 Classes, a total of 17 Rupantaran Classes have been implemented since the month of April, 2025, Second round. In the second phase, a total of **463 adolescents** (430 girls and 33 boys) have participated in 17 Rupantran Classes. Among the 463 participants, 17 have disabilities, 88 were married as children, 101 had dropped out of school, 33 attend school occasionally, and 14 only go to school to take exams.

### **Achievements:**

The adolescents participating in the Rupantran classes stated that they gained knowledge about preventive measures to protect themselves in case of any incidents of violence against children and women. They also learned about the relevant reporting mechanisms and institutions where such incidents should be reported or information should be shared, including the Child Helpline 1098, the municipal Child Welfare Officer, the Ward Office, the Police (100), the Child Search and Rescue Center (104), the National Women Commission (1145), and Aawaaj.

- The adolescent girls shared that during menstruation they often do not receive regular sanitary pads at school, lack money to purchase pads from the market, and learned about the harmful effects of low-quality colored pads. After gaining this information, they had the opportunity in the Rupantran classes to learn the skill of making clean white cotton sanitary pads on their own. As a result, the girls reported that they prepared sanitary pads themselves and provided them to their sisters, sisters-in-law, and mothers at home.
- Niruta Malla Thakuri, an adolescent participant from the Rupantaran Class of Birendranagar Municipality Ward No. 9, shared that before joining the Rupantran class, she used to argue with her family members to fulfill all her needs and desires. However, after attending the Rupantaran classes, she has begun to understand her family's problems and now asks her family only for what is truly necessary.
- During the monitoring program of the Rupantran Classes in Narayan Municipality Ward No. 10, the adolescent girls shared that the Rupantran classes have helped them stop consuming junk food, avoid unnecessary expenses, and start saving the money they receive. They also reported learning to stay away from harmful habits and understanding the need to bring change at home and in the community by addressing issues such as child marriage, chhaupadi, and domestic violence, and by raising their voices against violence. They emphasized that for this change to happen, one must first transform oneself, then inform friends, and gradually share these messages with family members and neighbors. Municipality Mayor Loman Sharma stated during the program that he was highly impressed by these positive changes and messages shared by the adolescent girls.
- During the monitoring program in Ward No. 1 of Shubhakalika Rural Municipality, Kalikot, parents shared that practices have changed such that girls now stay in their own rooms at home during menstruation. They also mentioned that they have learned the importance of investing in their daughters' education, understood that caste-based discrimination is not acceptable, and observed increased self-confidence among adolescent girls. Parents further reported that the girls have become more open and able to express their thoughts and concerns freely with their guardians.
- The Chief Administrative Officer of Sanobheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West, requested adolescents and parents to practically apply the life skills learned through the 42 sessions in their daily lives to bring positive transformation in their lives. He also expressed his gratitude to the facilitating organization for its support.

- Laxmi Thapa, an adolescent participant from the Rupantaran Class of Birendranagar Municipality Ward No. 10, shared that before joining the Rupantaran classes, she used to cry whenever she faced problems. However, after learning stress management skills through the Rupantran classes, she now copes with stress by listening to music, writing her thoughts in a notebook, leaving stressful environments, and taking a bath. She also shared that earlier she felt worried and afraid because she was weak in her studies. After attending the Rupantaran classes, her self-confidence and morale have increased, and she now studies with a competitive and motivated mindset.

#### **Few statements from the Rupantaran adolescent**

- Samriddhi Aryal, an adolescent participant from the Rupantaran Class of Birendranagar Municipality Ward No. 8, shared that after learning about waste management in the Rupantaran classes, she applied the practices at home as well. She also supported teachers and class captains in waste management activities at school and raised awareness about proper waste management in her neighborhood.
- Basanti B.K., an adolescent from Walachaur, Ward No. 2 of Shubhkalika Rural Municipality, shared that after learning that her uncle's daughter living nearby was about to be married at the age of 14 during Dashain, she informed the family about the risks, impacts, and consequences of child marriage. Through counseling and awareness, she was able to successfully stop the child marriage.
- Deepa Bista, a 15-year-old adolescent participant from the Rupantaran Class of Sanibheri Rural Municipality Ward No. 9, shared that previously she used to spend excessive time on social media on her mobile phone, which led to wasted time. However, she now uses the internet only to search for and view content that supports her studies, along with her younger sister, and has also improved her personal habits and behavior.

#### **2.1.4 Activity: Roll out "Rupantaran" parenting package with parents/caregivers of girls/boys participating in the program.**

In the first round of Rupantaran Parent Education, sessions were conducted in 16 locations across 4 municipalities. A total of **443 parents** successfully completed the Rupantaran Parent Education program. (First Round).

Since May 2025, Parent Education Classes have been conducted for the parents of Rupantaran Class participants in 17 locations across all four palika. In the month of May, Parent Education Classes were conducted in all four districts with the parents of adolescents from all 17 Rupantaran Classes. In the first session of the Parent Education Class, participants were introduced to each other and provided with an overview of the *Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal* program, the objectives of the Rupantaran Classes, and the topics to be discussed in the Parent Education sessions. Information was also shared about mechanisms for reporting and responding to incidents of gender-based violence in the community. In the second phase of the Rupantran Parent Education Classes, a total of 463 parents participated (57 male and 406 female parents). Among the 463 participants, 14 parents were persons with disabilities. (Second Round)

- After attending the Rupantaran class, parents reported that they learned about the needs and desires of children. They realized that parents are responsible for fulfilling the **needs** of their children, while the children themselves should earn or work for their **wants**, and they shared this understanding with others. Currently, they are making time for children to do homework rather than household chores and encouraging them to attend school regularly.
- After discussions and information sessions on **gender-based violence**, parents shared that, once they informed their families-especially daughters-male family members began avoiding conflicts, reduced alcohol consumption, and exhibited less violent behavior. Women's voices and

participation in household decision-making have also increased compared to before, according to Tripura B.K., a parent from Shubhakalik Rural Municipality, Ward No. 2, Kalikot.

- Parents from Sani Bheri Rural Municipality-9, Rukum West, including Jamuna Bist, mentioned that they have started visiting schools to understand their children's condition, education, and behavior. They have also begun practicing equality between sons and daughters and improving family communication.
- Dipa Regmi, a parent from Narayan Municipality, Ward No. 6, stated that before attending the Rupantaran class, they did not sit together with Dalits and indigenous people and would not eat food touched by them. Now, they sit together and share meals with everyone.
- Parents reported that after participating in the Rupantaran class, they have started listening carefully to their children, being patient, avoiding physical punishment, and treating daughters-in-law positively. They also began respecting all family members, including daughters and daughters-in-law, according to Bhimsara Sunar from Shubhakalik Rural Municipality-3.
- Muga Rana, a parent from Sani Bheri Rural Municipality-1, Bhandarban, Rukum West, shared that they gained knowledge on many topics in the Rupantran class. They learned that taking care of children is like nurturing a plant, that children need parental attention, and that they now understand child rights and parental responsibilities.
- Lila Thapa, a parent from Birendranagar-10, Surkhet, shared that, previously, women had to stay outside the home during menstruation and were not allowed to drink milk. After attending the Rupantaran class, they learned that menstruation is a natural process and that such practices negatively affect women's health. As a result, these discriminatory practices have now stopped in their family.
- In Sani Bheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West, in coordination with the Five-Star Youth Protection Forum, five Rupantaran class parents have been linked to vegetable farming and one female parent affected by violence has been supported for poultry farming. They are now preparing to manage their businesses successfully.

### **Two-days Micro Enterprise Development Training for Rupantaran facilitators and the program team.**

A two-day Micro Enterprise Development Training was conducted for the project team in Birendranagar, Surkhet, on December 7 and 8, 2025, for 10 participants. The training aimed to build the capacity of out-of-school rupantaran adolescent girls on short enterprise development under Section 15 and link them to businesses for economic empowerment.

- On December 8 and 9, 2025, ten members of the project teams from four municipalities (including coordinators, social facilitators, and project coordinators) attended a two-day training in Surkhet on small enterprise development. The training covered topics such as local resources, tools, market demand identification, business opportunity recognition, business plan development, risk management, and marketing.
- The participants reported that the training increased their confidence to provide professional knowledge and skill-building support to adolescent girls who had dropped out of school at the local level.
- According to Module 15 of the Rupantran Classroom's Small Enterprise Development Practice Manual, participants stated that they had developed the capacity to facilitate adolescent girls effectively.
- After the training, facilitators and social facilitators have identified 45 adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 from the Rupantaran Classroom who had dropped out of school across four municipalities and are preparing to conduct small enterprise development classes for them.
- Participants have developed the capacity to analyze business opportunities and draft complete business plans to become entrepreneurs.

### 2.1.5. Activity: Conduct Intergenerational dialogues with men and boys on harmful gender norms.

A total of 5 sessions on harmful gender norms reduction and gender equality were held, with 3 locations in Narayan Municipality (Wards 5, 6, and 10) and 2 locations in Shubkalika Rural Municipality (Wards 1 and 2). The sessions involved adolescents and adult men related to the Rupantaran classes. A total of **258 participants** (119 adolescents and 139 adult men) participated in these programs. (As per the previous quarter)

Intergenerational dialogue programs between adolescent boys and adult men were conducted in a total of five events across Wards 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13 of Birendranagar Municipality. Altogether, **261 participants** took part in these events, including 111 adolescents and 150 adult men. Among them, two male participants were persons with disabilities. At the end of the program, Nar Bahadur Rawal, a 50-year-old participant from Ward No. 10 of Birendranagar Municipality, shared that he came to understand how patriarchal thinking also exists within men themselves, and how such thinking can create difficulties for men as well. He expressed that the program helped him realize the need to first change his own mindset. Ravindra Nepali, a 16-year-old adolescent from Ward No. 9 of Birendranagar Municipality, shared that it was the first time he had heard about the topics discussed in the intergenerational dialogue program. He said he enjoyed having discussions with men from both generations at the same time and particularly liked the "agree and disagree" game. He also expressed that he came to understand the important role men play in ending gender-based violence. (May, 2025)

In this reporting quarter (July to September, 2025), intergenerational dialogue programs were conducted in a total of 19 events: 9 events in 5 wards of Birendranagar Municipality, Surkhet; 6 events in 3 wards of Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West; and 4 events in 2 wards of Shubhakalikā Rural Municipality, Kalikot. A total of **506 men participated** in these events, including 232 adolescents and 274 adult men. Among the participants, 3 were men with disabilities.

### 2.1.6 Activity: Community level sensitization to speak up against gender discrimination/GBV

Adolescents from the Rupantaran Classes performed street dramas twice in Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West, once in Birendranagar Municipality, Surkhet, and once in Narayan Municipality, Dailekh, after preparing the plays and staging them in different wards. The street dramas addressed issues such as child marriage, the impact of harmful social practices, gender-based violence, the related legal provisions, and organizations that support survivors. The adolescents involved in the performances shared that through writing scripts, rehearsing, and performing in front of the community, they developed the confidence to speak publicly, overcame fear and shyness, and felt a boost in their self-confidence. Although they were already aware that child marriage should not be practiced and the Chhaupadi tradition should not be followed, by enacting the roles of individuals experiencing the pain of child marriage, they realized even more strongly that child marriage is a serious crime. The street drama was successful in providing information and awareness to many people in the community.

1. Sanibheri RM, Rukum west 6 Event (2004 person) (July to Sep. 2024).
2. Birendranagar, Surkhet 8 Event (1582 person) (Jan. to Mach, 2025).
3. Sanibheri RM Rukm West 4 Event (834 person) (Jan. to March, 2025)

In this reporting period (July to September, 2025), In Narayan Municipality, Dailekh, children from the Rupantaran Classes prepared and rehearsed a drama titled “Regret of Hasty Decisions” and performed it in 5 locations of the municipality. A total of 435 people (74 boys, 207 girls, 51 men, and 103 women) participated in the events.

- The children of the Rupantaran Class in Narayan Municipality, Dailekh, created a street drama titled *Hatar Ko Nirnaya le Pachtai* (Regret of Hasty Decisions) and performed it at six locations in Narayan Municipality: Ward No. 3 Khursanibari, Ward No. 4 Bisuna, Ward No. 5 Sot, Ward No. 6 Red Cross School, and Ward No. 10 Bhawani Ward Office.
- Manju Nepali, a viewer from Ward No. 6, Narayan Municipality, shared that after watching the street drama, she realized that incidents of gender-based violence and child marriage do occur in the community, but the drama clearly showed how violence leads to more violence and how child marriage forces children to experience physical, mental, social, and economic harm all at once. She also learned about the mechanisms available for women and children to seek support when facing violence.
- Krishna Prasad Upadhyay, a ward representative of Ward No. 6, Narayan Municipality, shared that despite awareness campaigns and discussion programs in the community, child marriages are still occurring. He noted that the street drama effectively highlighted the causes of child marriage—such as traditional thinking, imitation of others, misuse of social media, and parents working abroad—and showed the complex problems children face during their early years. This approach has had a positive impact on the community.
- After observing the street drama, Bhadkala Jaisi, a parent from the Rupantaran Class of Ward No. 10, Narayan Municipality, shared that according to the message delivered by the children through the performance, everyone should take responsibility to prevent child marriage and gender-based violence. She emphasized that this responsibility begins within families and extends to parents, teachers, youth, community leaders, and even ward and municipal authorities.
- Ratna Bahadur Katuwal, an audience member from Ward No. 4, Narayan Municipality, shared that although he was aware that child marriage is a legal crime, he learned from today’s drama that not only those who marry underage but also those who arrange or are involved in it are subject to legal action.
- It was not planned to carry out that activity in this quarter.

### 2.1.7 Activity: International & National Day celebration

On the occasion of the 60th National Children's Day, events were conducted in all 13 wards of the 4 project municipalities. While municipalities held programs at the central level, there was a gap at the ward level. To address this, the project collaborated with the local women and children’s branch, schools, community representatives, and Rupantaran participants to organize ward-level celebrations. Activities included speeches, songs, dances, quizzes, sports, and educational games, creating a child-friendly environment. A total of **934 people** (274 Dalits, 136 Janajatis, and 524 others) participated and enjoyed the events. (13 event, July to Sep. 2024)

The 16-day campaign against gender-based violence was celebrated in 13 wards of 4 municipalities with the theme "We are all committed, solidarity to end gender violence." Activities included rallies, street dramas, speech, art, song, and dance competitions, organized in coordination with local schools, wards, and stakeholders. A total of **1,703 people** (boys 528, girls 761, women 228 and men 186), including 9 persons with disabilities, participated directly. (13 event, Oct. to Dec.-2024).

Various programs such as message-oriented song and dance competitions, speech competitions, experience-sharing sessions, and street drama play performances were organized in 13 wards of four municipalities to celebrate International Women's Day. A total of **1,583 participants** (335 boys, 579

girls, 495 women, and 174 men) attended the events organized across the 13 wards of the four municipalities. (13 event, Jan. to March, 2025)

On May 28, 2025, Safe Menstruation Day was celebrated in four municipalities through coordination with various bodies (municipality, health section, organizations). The event included interactions on the roles of adolescent girls, families, communities, schools, and municipalities in ensuring safe menstruation, along with organizing an attendance and quiz competition. A total of **208 participants** (29 boys, 76 girls, 29 women, and 74 men) (4 event, May-28, 2025).

The 16-day campaign against gender-based violence was celebrated in 13 wards of 4 municipalities with the theme "Let's use technology responsibly and put an end to gender-based violence". Activities included rallies, street dramas, speech competitions, quiz competitions, song, and dance competitions, organized in coordination with local schools, wards, and stakeholders. A total of **1288 people** (boys 295, girls 526, women 354 and men 113), including 16 persons (boy 0, girl 1, women 13 and men 2) with disabilities, participated directly. (13 event, Oct. to Dec.-2025).

- During the 16-Day Campaign, through interactive programs, street dramas, and message-based songs, information was provided to the community on the impacts of gender-based violence such as child marriage, untouchability, sexual violence, and domestic violence, as well as legal penalties and the agencies that provide support.
- In Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Wards No. 1 and 4, participants reported that the program was particularly effective when the police provided information about the legal penalties for offenses such as domestic violence and child marriage.
- During the 16-Day Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence, when the entire community gathered and programs were conducted in the presence of the police, public representatives, civil society, teachers, and journalists, it had a positive impact on everyone regarding the rights and safety of women and girls. It also conveyed a strong message that the agencies supporting victims of gender-based violence are sensitive and responsive.
- On the occasion of the 16-Day Campaign Against Gender-Based Violence, adolescent girl Sapana Sarki from Ward No. 6, Narayan Municipality, stated that the program provided information on the impacts of improper use of technology, including various incidents that may occur due to misuse (such as blackmailing, trafficking, sexual violence, and falling into temptation). She also highlighted that proper use of technology can help develop knowledge and skills.

### **EEPM.3 Activity: Planning, monitoring, evaluation and communication**

#### **EEPM.3.2 Joint monitoring - 2 Event (Sanibheri RM- Rukum West and Narayan Municipality, Dailekha) + 4 Event Rupantaran class joint monitoring (Oct. to Dec. 2025) + 4 palika Rupantaran Class Joint monitoring.**

**1. Sanibheri RM-Rukum West:** On April 29 and 30, a joint meeting was held in Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West, with the Executive Director of Aawaaj organization, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the municipality, the Head of the Women and Children Section, the Child Welfare Officer, and the Social Mobilizer to review the activities implemented by the project in the municipality. (April 29 and 30, 2025).

**2. Narayan Municipality, Dailekha:** On May 12 and 13, 2025, a meeting was held in Narayan Municipality involving the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer, Chief of the Women and Children's Section, Child Welfare Officer, heads of relevant departments, focal person of the Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal program, members of the Aawaaj organization's executive committee, the executive director, and program staff. The meeting provided information about the activities, achievements, and challenges of the Empowered

Women, Prosperous Nepal program being implemented in the municipality. (May 12 and 13, 2025).

**3. Joint monitoring (4 Event Rupantaran class joint monitoring (Oct. to Dec. 2025):** In October, during the second phase, Rupantaran classes were conducted in four municipalities. A total of 463 adolescents (57 boys and 406 girls) successfully completed 42 sessions.

- After the completion of the 42 sessions of the Rupantaran classes, monitoring of the classes was carried out by ward chairpersons, municipal heads, deputy heads, heads of the education and women and children's sections, child welfare officers, representatives of EWPN partner organizations, and members of the Aawaaj board committee. During the monitoring program, the municipal heads and deputy heads noted that the Rupantaran classes had brought positive behavioral changes among adolescents and were effective in Rupantaran harmful social norms into positive values.

During the monitoring of the Rupantaran classes, Kamala Roka Pun, Deputy Chairperson of Sani Bheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West, expressed her happiness at hearing about the learning outcomes of the participating adolescents and parents. She also stated that the Rupantaran classes should be conducted in other wards.



## Learning

- When coordination and collaboration with EWPN partners for the economic empowerment of Rupantaran Class adolescent girls and their parents could not be carried out due to ward mismatches, coordination and collaboration with other development partners were pursued instead. As a result, in Rukum West, one person was supported with poultry farming and six people were supported with vegetable farming by providing training, materials, and seed capital. This intervention created a positive impact in the community and also encouraged and motivated the participants.
- When two organizations implementing similar types of programs conduct joint activities, it creates an opportunity to share good practices and problem-solving approaches with each other. This sharing process brings new ideas and energy to the staff, boosts their motivation, and helps create an environment where learning can be effectively applied in the field.
- Linking at-risk adolescents and parents to need-based support, counseling services, and economic empowerment opportunities through the identification and connection with wards, municipalities,

enterprise development units, and other development partner organizations has proven effective in building trust and cooperation among the target groups in the community.

## **7.5 Project Name: Empowering Women and Children, Especially Girls, to Secure Their Rights and Access Services**

**Funding Partner: TDH- Germany**

**Working Area:** all Wards of Panchapuri Municipality of Surkhet of Nepal

### **Background**

The project area, Panchapuri Municipality, is predominantly inhabited by marginalized communities, particularly Dalits (so-called lower caste groups). The municipality has a high population of people who have migrated from different districts, resulting in a socially and culturally mixed community. Due to this diversity and underlying social dynamics, issues such as gender-based violence, caste-based discrimination, and harmful traditional practices—including child marriage, the *Chhaupadi* practice, and discrimination between sons and daughters—have remained deeply rooted in the area. As a result, Panchapuri Municipality had been known as the area with the highest number of gender-based violence cases in Surkhet District. However, following the implementation of the project, coordinated efforts by the local government, police, ward offices, and the project team—through the formation of community groups and networks, capacity-building initiatives, and active mobilization at the community level—have successfully achieved the overall objectives set by the project.

- Before implementing the project in the field, the project focal person from TDH Germany, Kathmandu, visited the field and met with relevant government stakeholders (police, municipal mayor and deputy mayor, branch heads) as well as local women, children, and youth groups and networks. During these meetings, discussions were held on the situation of gender-based violence incidents (causes and impacts) and effective measures for their reduction.
- During the program, a team from the Social Welfare Council, Kathmandu—including the Executive Director, directors from the Ministry of Women, Children, and Youth, and the coordinator of the evaluation committee—visited the field to monitor the project. They selected samples to ensure that no activity was missed and interacted with groups and networks, participants involved in income-generating activities, women affected by violence who had received services, the municipal-level Gender-Based Violence Case Management Committee, police, ward offices, and municipal leaders. The team discussed the project's effectiveness and the government's involvement. After the field monitoring, the team reported that the project had performed well in the field and that the program was highly effective.
- The organization's Executive Director and Executive Committee also visited the field to meet with beneficiaries, groups, and stakeholders. They identified the program's strengths and areas needing improvement and provided feedback to the project team based on their field observations.
- At the conclusion of the project, Mr. Dhurendra, Head of Accounts from TDH Kathmandu, visited the organization, reviewed the project's financial statements, and provided guidance and recommendations to the project team.

Following monitoring and evaluations conducted at various levels, the project team seriously considered the advice and suggestions received and made improvements for future implementation. The project's outcomes and impacts were evaluated based on participatory and quantitative data. Information was regularly collected through discussions with child, youth, and women's groups,

networks, and the municipal-level Gender-Based Violence Case Management Committee. Data collected included the number and types of reported gender-based violence cases within these groups and networks, as well as details of the services provided.

In addition, analyses were conducted on the number of gender-based violence cases reported to the municipal judicial committee, police offices, and incidents received through the Child Helpline.

Among the incidents reported by groups and networks, it was observed that cases in the community have decreased as the project provided counseling services, safe house services, and legal support, ensuring access to justice. Increased awareness and greater activity of groups and networks in each community have also led to a higher rate of reporting whenever incidents of gender-based violence occur.

Currently, local ward offices, police, judicial committees, and civil society have shown increased sensitivity in responding to incidents of gender-based violence in the community.

Project data were collected at three-month intervals. During this period, incidents of sexual abuse and rape against girls were reported. In coordination and collaboration with the local police, these cases were pursued through legal processes, resulting in the perpetrators being successfully brought to justice.

Among incidents of gender-based violence, cases of sexual exploitation, abuse, and rape may go unreported due to fear and stigma. To address this, information and data were collected in an environment that ensured confidentiality and trust, while support was provided. Regular monitoring and review of these issues were also conducted.

The project is implemented in 11 wards of Panchpuri Municipality which western part of Surkhet District aiming to empower single women, survivors of domestic violence, abuse, violence, girls and women suffering from ill reproductive health and issues such as Uterine Prolapse (UT), survivors of trafficking, rape, school girls and female entrepreneurs.

### **7.5.1 Major Achievements:**

Since the project activities were designed based on the interests and needs of the target groups, the achievements of the program have genuinely and significantly benefited the intended beneficiaries. As the project has strengthened the capacity of the target groups, individuals from these groups are now taking on leadership roles in local committees, networks, and mechanisms (such as School Management Committees, Forest User Committees, Consumer Committees, and development and construction projects), where they are demonstrating their effective leadership and capabilities.

While leading groups and networks, members have developed greater self-esteem and self-confidence. As a result, they are now advocating against harmful values and norms, drawing the attention of local governments, participating in local government planning processes, and preparing to run as candidates in upcoming local government elections.

The project has also increased the confidence of the target groups to identify violence, raise their voices against it, seek support if affected by gender-based violence, support survivors, identify available support mechanisms, and claim their rights. Survivors of violence from marginalized communities, people living with HIV, economically disadvantaged women, and single women have become capable of running businesses after receiving vocational and skills-based training. Through these businesses, they are able to support their children's education and manage household expenses, which they say has greatly helped them live a dignified life within their communities.

- The project is highly relevant to local needs, and the implementing partner, based on its expertise and experience, appears to be well-suited to implement the project.
- Most of the project activities are highly relevant to the contextual needs in Karnali Province in general and Panchapuri Municipality in particular. However, three indicators (radio

program, video documentation, and menstrual hygiene materials), though relevant, appear to be somewhat less competitive in terms of outcomes and context.

- The project demonstrated high coherence with international commitments, national policies, and local priorities.
- The implementing partner was found to be an active member of various international, national, provincial, and local thematic networks.
- The project successfully brought together community members (especially children, youth, and women), local police, and municipality officials to work collaboratively on addressing social issues such as early marriage, chhaupadi, and sexual and domestic violence against women and children.
- Most project activities were achieved during the project period. Only two indicators were partially achieved by the time of the final evaluation, while all other indicators were fully achieved, with many even exceeding the targets.
- There was good coordination with the municipality and local police during the implementation of project activities. However, one specific activity (the production of menstrual hygiene materials) was not implemented.
- The programmatic progress of the project has been fully satisfactory, with the successful achievement of its purpose.
- Project staff were well-trained, and their performance was highly recognized by local government officials, media workers, local police, and community members.
- The financial aspects of the project (administration vs. program weightage and expenditure progress) were satisfactory. However, the late or slow release of program funds by the donor had a slight impact on the timely execution of some activities.
- The project exhibited effective coordination with multiple stakeholders and successfully mobilized its diverse networks. It demonstrated a highly positive outlook on GESI dimensions, and the overall social image of the project was both positive and impactful.
- The project unfolded a compelling narrative of positive change at a small scale, amplifying the voices of vulnerable women and children.
- The formation and mobilization of 93 community groups significantly contributed to raising community awareness of various social issues, including child rights, early marriage, chhaupadi, sexual and domestic violence, and legal provisions related to these issues.
- Project impacts were also felt at the socio-political level. Twelve members were elected as people's representatives in the local election. Women's participation in local-level school management committees, toll development committees, forest management committees, consumer committees, and sister organizations of political parties has increased. Trust and confidence in the women's groups have grown, with ward and police offices frequently calling upon women's groups and network members to facilitate when SGBV cases occur.
- Panchapuri Municipality has created procedures related to child rights protection, promotion, and gender violence prevention fund operation. Local social mobilizers appeared to be fully devoted, often working beyond office hours, and they garnered significant respect.
- Wards and municipality offices have accepted plans from different groups and networks. Project teams, groups, and networks have gained knowledge and skills for advocacy and raising their voices, with their empowerment expected to have lasting effects. Wards and thematic units within the municipality offices are actively collaborating with these groups when organizing programs at the ward or municipality level.

## **Sustainability :**

Following the project's initiatives to increase access to services for survivors of gender-based violence, safe house services for affected women and children have been established at the municipal level. As a result, the police and judicial committees have become more sensitive and have begun providing support. Awareness of gender-based violence has increased among youth, women, and children's networks, teachers, health workers, journalists, police, and community representatives, creating an environment that provides moral support and assistance to survivors.

Knowledge about reporting mechanisms for supporting survivors has also improved. Coordination and collaboration between local government and the community have increased for organizing women, children, and youth events, meetings, and community-level interventions. Additionally, mechanisms have been established to improve access to legal and support services when incidents of violence occur. These achievements have been realized through the project's interventions.

By forming and mobilizing groups in each community, the project has contributed to a reduction in harmful practices, behaviors, and gender-based violence, including child marriage, Chhaupadi, and domestic violence. Women and adolescent girls have become capable of raising their voices regarding their rights and safety, developing confidence, self-reliance, and leadership skills.

Stakeholders and the community have also gained an understanding of the importance of protecting the rights and safety of women and children. In Panchapuri Municipality, the networks established, along with ward offices, police, judicial committees, health workers, and social facilitators, have shown increased gender sensitivity, effective coordination, and collaboration, resulting in a strong service system to support survivors of violence.

Positive changes in social attitudes and behaviors within the community, along with a decreasing rate of violence, have contributed to creating an environment against social violence. The municipality's development of policies against gender-based violence, the operation of safe houses for survivors, and the local government's own growing interest in violence reduction indicate that the project's practices are likely to have a sustainable impact.

To make the achievements of the project sustainable and consistent, it is necessary to conduct continuous observation, monitoring, and evaluation over time, while increasing the active participation of concern stakeholders.

Groups and networks have been holding meetings and discussions on their own initiative and conducting programs at the community level. They coordinate with ward offices to secure budget allocations, carry out door-to-door awareness activities in the community, and adolescent girls organize awareness programs for their peers in schools. Ward offices and municipalities have also ensured the representation of group and network members in various programs. At the same time, these groups and networks monitor incidents of gender-based violence in the community, provide support and counseling to survivors, and take initiatives to facilitate access to relevant authorities and services based on the needs of the survivors.

Even without the project's direct intervention, representatives of groups and networks have continued to provide support and coordination for survivors of violence. Similarly, ward offices, police, and judicial committees have been fulfilling their responsibilities by responding promptly and providing assistance to survivors.

Groups and networks have been holding meetings and discussions on their own initiative and conducting programs at the community level. They coordinate with ward offices to secure budget allocations, carry out door-to-door awareness activities in the community, and adolescent girls organize awareness programs for their peers in schools. Ward offices and municipalities have also

ensured the representation of group and network members in various programs. At the same time, these groups and networks monitor incidents of gender-based violence in the community, provide support and counselling to survivors, and take initiatives to facilitate access to relevant authorities and services based on the needs of the survivors.

Even without the project's direct intervention, representatives of groups and networks have continued to provide support and coordination for survivors of violence. Similarly, ward offices, police, and judicial committees have been fulfilling their responsibilities by responding promptly and providing assistance to survivors.

The details of the child, youth, and women's groups formed in the community have been shared with the ward offices and the municipality's Women and Children Section. This has created an enabling environment for providing and receiving support as needed.

Previously, ward offices and police stations often did not pay attention even when general cases of gender-based violence were reported. However, at present, when information is received from groups and networks, they promptly reach the incident site and initiate the necessary legal procedures.

Awareness within the community has also increased regarding reporting gender-based violence and understanding legal processes. The municipality itself has started operating safe house services for survivors of gender-based violence.

The networks will coordinate with the wards and municipality to organize day-to-day programs, provide support and assistance to survivors of gender-based violence, and take initiatives to help them seek justice through the relevant authorities. The wards will also coordinate with local groups and networks to carry out awareness-raising programs at the ward level. Groups involved in economic activities will conduct regular monitoring and continue to provide encouragement to help expand their businesses.

### **Regarding financial sustainability;**

After the completion of the project, the municipality can allocate and mobilize a limited amount of funds for conducting short-term programs aimed at reducing gender-based violence. There is also a possibility for the Judicial Committee to support services such as safe shelter homes for survivors of gender-based violence. So far, the municipality has been providing financial support for short-term programs and for individuals affected by gender-based violence. In addition, some survivors have received assistance from the municipality's Gender-Based Violence Prevention Fund. However, there is still a need for financial support to widely raise awareness at the community level and to build the capacity of groups so that they can be mobilized in a sustainable manner

Compared to the past, there has been increased awareness within the community and visible positive change. Elected representatives and local residents have acknowledged and expressed that meaningful improvements have taken place. The project area, Panchapuri Municipality, is predominantly inhabited by marginalized communities, particularly Dalits (so-called lower caste groups). The municipality has a high population of people who have migrated from different districts, resulting in a socially and culturally mixed community. Due to this diversity and underlying social dynamics, issues such as gender-based violence, caste-based discrimination, and harmful traditional practices—including child marriage, the *Chhaupadi* practice, and discrimination between sons and daughters—have remained deeply rooted in the area.

As a result, Panchapuri Municipality had been known as the area with the highest number of gender-based violence cases in Surkhet District. However, following the implementation of the project, coordinated efforts by the local government, police, ward offices, and the project team—through the formation of community groups and networks, capacity-building initiatives, and active mobilization at the community level—have successfully achieved the overall objectives set by the project.

Compared to the past, there has been increased awareness within the community and visible positive change. Elected representatives and local residents have acknowledged and expressed that meaningful improvements have taken place.

Members of the community groups and networks have been providing moral support and assistance to survivors of gender-based violence within their communities. They are facilitating community mediation in minor cases and supporting survivors in pursuing legal action in more complex cases. Network leaders have also begun monitoring incidents of gender-based violence and advocating for justice whenever such cases arise.

At the municipal level, thematic branches, the Judicial Committee, ward police offices, child protection committees, and the police have created a more supportive and sensitive environment for handling gender-based violence cases.

Young women engaged in income-generating activities have been utilizing their vocational skills to run small businesses and sustain their daily livelihoods. This has inspired other women in the community, demonstrating that self-employment opportunities are available locally. As a result, instead of migrating to India for work, many women have started poultry farming, goat rearing, vegetable farming, and small retail shops within their own communities

Members of the community groups and networks have been providing moral support and assistance to survivors of gender-based violence within their communities. They are facilitating community mediation in minor cases and supporting survivors in pursuing legal action in more complex cases. Network leaders

## **Overall lessons learn from implementing the project in Panchapuri**

### **1. Reduction of Gender-Based Violence and Access to Justice**

- Activating women, adolescent girls, and children's groups and networks in the community created an environment where incidents of violence were more likely to be reported.
- Victims found it easier to access justice and support.
- Harmful practices such as domestic violence, child marriage, and *Chhaupadi* were reduced.
- Gender sensitivity increased among judicial and police bodies.

### **2. Community Empowerment**

- Leadership, meeting facilitation, decision-making, problem-solving, and participation in legal processes were developed among women, young women, and adolescent groups.
- Group members were able to start businesses, generate income, and contribute to savings and economic empowerment.
- Groups and networks successfully fostered trust and cooperation within the community.

### **3. Educational and Awareness Learning**

- Children learned about menstruation, safe menstruation, child marriage, sexual abuse, and the risks of violence.
- Youth gained knowledge on human trafficking, cybercrime, HIV/AIDS, environmental protection, sexual and reproductive health, self-defense, and stress management.
- Women increased their capacity to raise awareness in families and communities about sexual violence, domestic violence, *Chhaupadi*, human rights, and safe menstruation.

### **4. Economic Empowerment**

- 30 women started businesses, including tailoring, beauty parlors, noodle production, and raw material production.
- Income generation led to increased self-esteem, confidence, and family security.
- Group members understood the importance of savings and collective economic activities.

### **5. Collaboration, Coordination, and Networking**

- Groups collaborated with local government, police, judicial committees, and other stakeholders to play a role in problem-solving.

- Gained experience in operating emergency service homes and managing budgets successfully.
- Project experience developed the capacity to scale similar programs to other districts.

### **6. Social and Political Learning**

- Women began to play active roles in local development, school management, forest committees, and political organizations.
- Open discussions and awareness about violence and harmful social practices increased in the community.
- Participation in public programs enhanced children's and youth's confidence and social responsibility.

### **7. Operational and Managerial Lessons**

- Gained proficiency in case management, data collection, reporting, and record-keeping practices.
- Training, capacity development, and strategies for disseminating learning from participants proved effective.

#### **7.6 Project Name: Combating Against Child Marriage in Karnali Province (CACMA )**

**Funding Partner:** Fasten Action

**Working Area:** Karnali Province

**Primary Objective** is to prevent and address child marriage in Karnali through advocacy and lobbying, as well as to enhance the capacity of civil society organization alliances working on this critical issue.

**Impact: Substantial reduction of child marriage in Karnali by 2030 through awareness and responsive and accountable provincial and local government interventions.**

There is increased engagement from provincial and local governments in Karnali Province in formulating policies, strategic plans and programs and allocating budgets to end child marriage. The provincial government's strategic plan is ratified and functional. Similarly, an increasing number of municipalities are formulating policies, programs, and allocating budgets to address child marriage. Out of 79 municipalities in Karnali, 33 have developed strategic plans, and the provincial government has adopted a policy of working in collaboration with local governments. In addition, two municipalities and some wards have been declared child marriage-free, Stakeholders, including local governments, as key actors working to end child marriage in the province, increasingly recognize CACMA provincial and district alliances.

#### **Background:**

During this period, the Provincial Strategic Plan 2082 to end child marriage was ratified and has been implemented. This document focuses on developing the agency and protection of each child and is child-centered. The Ministry of Social Development in Karnali has already begun implementing the plan. UNICEF provided 6 million NPR to the Ministry of Social Development, Karnali, to enhance the capacity of adolescent girls through the Transformation Session Package in Karnali Province. However, a detailed action plan still needs to be prepared to fully implement the strategy to end child marriage. From the initial stages until the final day of ratifying the strategy plan to end child marriage in Karnali Province, CACMA has consistently supported the government with technical and financial assistance and has conducted delegation programs.

Similarly, the National Strategic Plan 2081 to End Child Marriage has been ratified and is under implementation. However, the plan remains broad and does not adequately address child

development and protection components. This gap may limit effective implementation and create challenges for municipal and provincial governments when developing aligned plans and programs. Therefore, it is essential to inform the new government of these gaps and encourage the refinement of the existing strategy or the adoption of appropriate action plans.

The delay in the recommendation process for the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizens under the new civil society framework reflects the broader challenges in prioritizing social issues in Nepal. Recent discussions with government officials and civil society in Karnali revealed that legal and administrative processes to end child marriage are not sufficiently child-friendly. This underlines the need for thematic and agenda-based discussions in the future, which will strengthen advocacy among institutions and activists in Karnali.

The project has initiated coordination with relevant stakeholders, including governmental authorities, media outlets, public and private companies, and associated community-based organizations and international non-governmental organizations, to foster a collective response against child marriage in Karnali. Aawaaj, a non-governmental organization dedicated to preventing violence against children and women, serves as the secretariat for CACMA. Through Aawaaj, funds are allocated to CACMA to support the implementation of project activities in Karnali.

CACMA, comprises an alliance of 107 like-minded organizations and a loose network that recognized the necessity of collective efforts among civil society organizations (CSOs) in Karnali to combat child marriage and operates at both the provincial and district levels within Karnali province.

CACMA facilitates a collaborative approach, engages at provincial and local levels, advocates for policy changes, develops capacities, and raises awareness through campaigns to address child marriage in Karnali. CACMA is a volunteer-based mission with a broader network comprising provincial and district chapters, member CSOs, key stakeholders, as well as provincial and local government authorities.

### **Achievements:**

#### **(1) Process facilitation to make common understanding on child marriage and its issue to CACMA members.**

To conduct this process facilitation, we prepared a Terms of Reference (ToR) for consultancy in collaboration with CACMA members and Fastenaktion. After finalizing the ToR, we initiated the consultancy hiring process. Trio Research and Development Consultancy was selected for this task. Following the selection, we conducted two meetings and reached an agreement on the planned actions. Trio Research and Development Consultancy developed a questionnaire and checklist for province-level consultancy, including IDI (In-Depth Interviews) and FGD (Focus Group Discussions). The CACMA Secretariat provided feedback on these tools. Afterward, we planned to conduct the province-level consultation workshop virtually. In total, we conducted eight consultation workshops: three at the province level and five at the district level. Seven were conducted in person, and one was virtual. During the initial virtual province-level consultation, we discussed child marriage issues, including what actions work or do not work and the priorities to address child marriage. This was followed by an in-person province-level consultation workshop in Surkhet on October 8–9, 2025. Facilitators guided the sessions, discussing current issues and challenges related to child marriage.

At the district level, group work was conducted to analyze case studies. District alliance members were also oriented to conduct district-level consultation workshops, including FGDs with

adolescents, KIIs, and IDIs. A total of 32 participants (24 male and 8 female) from 10 districts attended the consultation workshops.

Following this, representatives conducted a total of 20 KIIs and 10 IDIs, and 10 case studies were collected.

The five district-level consultation workshops were held in Surkhet, Humla, Mugu, West Rukum, and Jajarkot. A total of 90 participants attended (57 male and 33 female), with the following distribution: 27 participants from Surkhet, 16 from Jajarkot, 17 from West Rukum, 17 from West Rukum, and 13 from Mugu.

We recognized the need for greater involvement of province-level mainstream stakeholders and Palika-level stakeholders. With financial support from UN Women and ECPAT Luxembourg, a consultation to make common understanding on child marriage to governments bodies in Surkhet, attended by 47 participants. Following these consultations, the consultancy compiled the process facilitation report, which highlights key areas of common understanding and identifies CACMA's key advocacy agendas. The document is attached.

### **(2) Enhancing capacity of CACMA secretariat to become more professional and responsive:**

During this reporting period, Ms. Nikita Kathayat participated in a three-day training on the Gender Transformative Approach, conducted by Aawaaj and supported by UN Women. This training enhanced her understanding of harmful social norms and strengthened her skills in data analysis. The CACMA Secretariat also issued a call for membership, which resulted in an increase in individual members. In addition, meetings were held with the provincial government to follow up on their actions and commitments. During this period, we identified two champions from Jumla who are actively engaged in community-level interventions and local-level advocacy: Ms. Anuradha Chaulagain from Tatopani and Mr. Gokarna Sudhar from Chandannath Municipality, Jumla. Their stories were covered by the media.

### **(3) Developing operational guideline, strategic plan, and advocacy plan for CACMA alliances.**

During this reporting period, CACMA Mugu revised and approved its operational guideline. This contributed to strengthening the functionality of the CACMA Mugu chapter. Additionally, the CACMA provincial operational guideline was revised to include provisions for individual membership and to reduce membership fees.

### **(4) Conducting regular meeting of provincial and district of CACMA**

The CACMA provincial alliance conducted two meetings during this period—one physical and one virtual.

At the provincial physical meeting, 13 out of 15 CACMA members participated. In the virtual meeting, 14 out of 15 members participated. At the district level, CACMA chapters conducted 24 physical meetings and 8 virtual meetings. On average, 10 participants attended each physical district meeting, with participation comprising 66% men and 34% women.

### **(5) Meetings with key stakeholders of province and local governments**

During this period, a provincial-level consultation meeting was conducted with parliament members, ministers, secretariat officials, and other mainstreaming stakeholders. A total of 47 participants attended the meeting (27 male and 20 female). Additionally, two interaction meetings were conducted with private sector representatives and other donors, with a total of 53 participants (29 male and 24 female). Furthermore, 25 advocacy campaigns were conducted across 10 districts.

**CACMA members have** a document on the common understanding and advocacy agenda of CACMA-Karnali has been developed, which includes the following key areas: Children Are Not

Criminals, Best Interest of the Child and a Protection-Oriented Approach, Reference to International Practices and Romeo & Juliet Laws and Collective Commitment and a Holistic Approach to Ending Child Marriage.

**CACMA conducted 150 provincial- and local-level dialogues** on child marriage across its alliances—Kalikot (14), Surkhet (40), Dailekh (18), Jajarkot (14), Jumla (15), Dolpa (9), Mugu (14), Salyan (11), West Rukum (10), Humla (2), and 2 at the provincial level—enhancing the responsiveness of provincial and local governments to child marriage issues. It contribute to be more responsible to local governments, in this reporting period total 25 out of 30 Palika allocated budget to overcome child marriage.

**Nine (9) policy dialogue** processes were completed with active civil society participation—1 provincial and 8 district-level—comprising 33 dialogue events across districts including CACMA Province (2), Surkhet (1), Mugu (1), Dolpa (2), Jumla (3), Jajarkot (3), Salyan (3), Humla (3), and West Rukum (2), addressing child marriage, gender-based violence, education, child rights, and protection, and promoting their integration into annual plans, budgets, and strategic programs, though Dailekh and Kalikot were unable to conduct dialogues. As a result, the budgets of Palika and other government bodies increased, and institutions such as the child helpline 1098, Nepal Police, and OCMC became more accountable.

**7 district alliances have nine joint-action agendas** to address child marriage, including Surkhet’s interaction program in Bheriganga Municipality and advocacy for provincial ECM strategy ratification, Humla’s development of Namkha’s strategy plan, Salyan’s stakeholder sensitization, Jajarkot’s dialogue with Bheri Municipality and CACMA ownership promotion, and Jumla’s data collection, analysis, and advocacy, facilitating dialogues, delegations, and ratification of Karnali Province’s ECM strategy.

**CACMA members carried out five joint actions**, including Surkhet’s interaction with Bheriganga Municipality on ECM strategy, Jajarkot’s collaboration with Bheri Municipality, Jumla’s data collection and analysis on girls under 20 shared with local authorities, Humla’s interaction with Namkha Rural Municipality with UNICEF-supported budgets, and Salyan’s stakeholder engagement, contributing to targeted interventions and strategic planning to prevent child marriage.

**Fund worth NPR 360,000 from four number of municipalities were mobilized by CACMA for 18 (eighteen) activities**, including two interaction programs with single women in Lekbesi (NRs 10,000), nine awareness programs in Musikot (NRs 100,000), five school programs in Bhahekot (NRs 50,000), and two interaction programs with mainstream stakeholders in Tribeni (NRs 200,000), effectively raising awareness and mobilizing local action against child marriage.

**20 Strategic Plans and 25 Budget Allocation by Local Governments:** Out of 30 local governments in the project area, 20 developed strategic plans to end ECM—with CACMA supporting 17—and 25 allocated a total budget of NRs 8,120,000 to implement child marriage interventions, with CACMA facilitating dialogues and follow-up activities to ensure effective planning and resource utilization.

**The Karnali Province Ministry of Social Development** ratified a comprehensive ECM strategy featuring zero-tolerance policies, social norms change initiatives, girls’ education and empowerment, adolescent-friendly health services, strengthened child protection committees, operational safe houses, case management systems, dedicated budgets, and multi-sectoral coordination to end early and child marriage.

**Partnerships with Private Sector,** The CACMA Secretariat engaged private companies and banks, including the Bank Association of Surkhet, to secure CSR support for awareness programs and educational initiatives. Partnerships were established between district chapters and local bank branches to strengthen efforts to prevent early and child marriage (ECM). As agreed, we have developed and submitted a proposal to the bank office for their support.

**Capacity Building of CACMA Secretariat Staff.** Ms. Nikita Kathayat participated in a three-day Gender Transformative Approach (GTA) training organized by Aawaaj, which enhanced her ability to identify harmful social norms, analyze activities for effectiveness, and design interventions to transform practices contributing to child marriage. Similarly, Chetan Giri participated in a training on harmful social norms conducted by GNB Global in Kathmandu, Nepal. This training also strengthened his capacity to design and implement projects through a GTA lens and supported Aawaaj in analyzing activities from a gender perspective.

**Implementation of Evaluation Report Recommendations.** CACMA alliances implemented approximately 60% of evaluation report action plans, including operational guidelines for 10 district alliances, review of provincial guidelines, secretariat infrastructure improvements, creation of monitoring tools, reporting formats, partnership templates, increased membership, collection of success case studies, and consultation workshops and research activities to strengthen organizational performance.

**CACMA Operational Guidelines Development,** During the reporting period, operational guidelines for 10 district alliances of CACMA—namely Salyan, Kalikot, Surkhet, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Jumla, Dolpa, Mugu, and West Rukum—were developed, and the operational guideline of the provincial CACMA alliance was revised. These guidelines have been ratified by the respective district and provincial alliances. They outline provisions such as types of membership, the number of committee members, and the roles, responsibilities, and authority of both the district alliances and their committees. In each district, a local facilitator was recruited to support the process, and the operational guidelines were developed with the active participation of member organizations. The CACMA Secretariat provided a template and an example of the provincial operational guideline. Facilitators guided discussions among CACMA members based on these templates and assisted in incorporating their ideas into the final operational guidelines. As a result, each district chapter is now more actionable and actively engaged in dialogue with local governments.

#### **(6) Follow up of Paliks's Commitment/Action**

During this reporting period, a total of 30 follow-up actions were conducted on Palikas' commitments, led by CACMA district chapters. A standardized follow-up form was used to track allocated budgets, activity details, actions taken, and response mechanisms of the Palikas.

### **7.7 16 Days Activism against Gender-Based Violence**

The 16-day campaign against gender-based violence was celebrated by Aawaaj across selected districts and palikas in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, schools, ward offices, municipalities, stakeholders, and the Women and Children's Branch. The campaign featured public awareness activities such as street drama performances, speech contests, message-based song and dance competitions, discussions on gender equality, and painting contests in each ward.

Participants highlighted the importance of creating homes free from gender-based violence, emphasizing that change starts with personal transformation. They encouraged speaking out against

violence, supporting survivors, and sharing information about agencies that help those affected. This was the core message of the campaign.

For many, this was the first time the 16-day campaign was observed at the ward and community levels. Through the Empowered Women, Prosperous Nepal program, participants were able to join these events and competitions for the first time. Contestants expressed that these activities allowed them to showcase their talents and share their thoughts, creating positive impacts in their communities.

The events saw active participation from teachers, local leaders, social workers, teenagers, and parents. Community leaders praised the program for raising awareness about critical issues such as domestic violence, child marriage, polygamy, and chhaupadi practices.

During the discussions, participants shared emotional reflections about the loss of daughters and sisters to gender-based violence, urging that such tragedies should never happen again. To encourage young talents, the Vice President of Sanibheri Rural Municipality, Rukum West, presented a cash reward to a young girl who performed a song during the program.

This campaign not only raised awareness but also brought communities together in the fight against gender-based violence, inspiring collective action and hope for a safer future.

## **Challenges:**

### **1. Disruption due to the Gen Z Movement**

The Gen Z movement in Nepal lasted for two days and led to the dismissal of the central government. This created uncertainty at both local and provincial government levels. Additionally, the burning of certain provincial assembly offices and other government facilities forced the provincial government to suspend its work. These events directly affected project activities, and during this period, all activities were temporarily put on hold.

### **2. Challenges in District Secretariat Transitions**

Refusal to relocate district secretariats caused prolonged conflicts among district-level organizations. According to the 2024 project evaluation report and CACMA's revised operational procedures: No single organization should hold dual roles at both district and provincial levels and provincial members should only serve as general members at the district level.

Following this guideline, network officials who previously held dual roles now serve in only one position. Members have been selected through elections at both provincial and district assemblies. In Dailekh, Jajarkot, Mugu, and Dolpa, new organizations assumed the role of district secretariats. In other districts, secretariats were successfully transferred post-election; however, in Mugu, the secretariat documents have not yet been handed over. This unresolved issue has caused prolonged disputes among local civil society organizations. Despite three virtual and physical meetings, the matter remains unresolved.

### **3. Effective participation challenges due to government employees in the network.**

The involvement of government employees in the network reduced campaign effectiveness. Government employees differ from civil society actors: while they provide services, civil society organizations are responsible for bringing community issues to government attention. In Jajarkot and Mugu, the presence of government employees led to low participation in meetings and activities,

which caused disputes within district networks rather than positive results. To address this, CACMA Karnali developed a Code of Conduct stipulating that government employees are not eligible to be network members. Following this decision, all government employees have vacated their positions within CACMA.

### Lessons Learned

- **If a strategic plan is formulated, the municipality itself will carry out the work.**

Supporting the development of local-level strategic plans to end child marriage appears to have a significant impact. It encourages municipalities to formulate relevant policies, allocate budgets based on those policies, and implement programs accordingly, thereby strengthening efforts to reduce child marriage. Within CAAC's working area, 22 out of 30 municipalities have already developed such strategic plans. Out of 22 municipalities, 20 local governments have budgets for child marriage reduction have been allocated independently this fiscal year. This, combined with CAAC's regular follow-up, has proven effective. It is progressive.

- **To make this campaign more effective, membership should be distributed individually.**

Girls are at higher risk of child marriage than boys, with rates particularly high among girls from the Dalit community. Previously, the network's membership consisted of 80% men and 20% women. Because leadership roles were predominantly held by men within institutions, and youth leadership was limited, increasing the representation of youth and women was challenging. Of the 15 new CAAC members recently added, 80% are youth, 90% are women, and 20% are from the Dalit community. This individual-based approach to membership distribution appears to increase the participation of targeted groups and communities.

- **A detailed analysis of child marriage and its associated issues raises the prominence of the problem.**

In Nepal, the issue of child marriage has been raised for over two decades, yet it has struggled to become firmly established as a policy priority. The CACMA facilitated detailed discussions on various aspects of child marriage at both district and provincial levels, which helped its members better understand and analyze the issue. This process has made CACMA members more aware and active. As a result, discussions on child marriage are now being integrated into various programs, thereby increasing the issue's visibility and importance.

- **Regular dialogue and discussions with private companies on relevant topics can help identify resources.**

We held regular meetings and discussions with private companies. Following the first round of discussions, we engaged specifically with the banking sector. Representatives have agreed to invest funds under CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) initiatives for child marriage reduction. To institutionalize this further, collaboration with Nepal Rastra Bank could encourage all banks to invest similarly. Additionally, banks in 10 districts could work in collaboration with various civil society organizations. Other private companies have also expressed willingness to support children by providing items like school uniforms, notebooks, and books according to their needs.

- **If CACMA prioritizes its advocacy agendas, the impact of its work would likely be significantly enhanced.**

CACMA focuses on the rights and welfare of children, with particular emphasis on reducing child marriage. A core part of its mission is to hold the government accountable in these areas. However, advocacy must be both evidence-based and policy-oriented to be credible and effective. Failing to ground advocacy in evidence risks eroding trust and undermining outcomes. Additionally, without clearly identifying priority issues, efforts can become misdirected or diluted. Therefore, by developing focused advocacy agendas and implementing them strategically and in order of priority, CACMA can strengthen its effectiveness and maximize its positive influence on policy and practice.

### **Sustainability:**

From the very beginning of the project, programs have been designed and implemented with sustainability in mind. During the first phase, the focus was on capacity development and the operationalization of CACMA. In the second phase, the project is being implemented based on the lessons learned and the recommendations from the first-phase evaluation report. During this period, special attention has been given to empowering CACMA members with defined roles, responsibilities, and authority, as well as ensuring their active participation in developing district-level operating procedures. This has enabled district network members to better understand how to manage their networks, organize the secretariat, and ensure transparency in information sharing. Additionally, priority has been also to the following aspects:

*Democratizing the Network:* We facilitated all 10 district networks to develop their own operational procedures and form committees accordingly. As a result, all 10 district networks were reconstituted. This process has instilled a greater sense of responsibility and ownership among members toward the network.

*Holding the Government Accountable:* During this period, we conducted formal and informal meetings and dialogues on child marriage. As a result, strategic plans were developed in two additional municipalities, and both municipal and provincial governments have implemented programs and allocated budgets to end child marriage. This has strengthened the government's understanding that child marriage is a key issue.

*Increasing the Network Fund:* Funds collected through membership fees have been deposited in CACMA's Secretariat fund. This fund can be effectively utilized to carry out activities in the future. Secretariat Management: During this period, we focused on strengthening the management of CACMA's Secretariat. Profiles of all members have been documented, along with records and information related to child marriage and children. Meeting rooms have been organized, creating an environment conducive to meetings, dialogues, and discussions on child marriage. Secretariat staff now have a functional and supportive workspace to perform their duties effectively.

*Common Understanding among CACMA Members:* During this project period, we conducted district- and province-level consultation workshops to build a common understanding among CACMA members on issues related to child marriage. These consultations enhanced members' understanding of child marriage and its impacts, and encouraged CACMA members to work collectively against child marriage. The process also strengthened members' commitment and responsibility to address early and child marriage (ECM).

*Identification of CACMA Advocacy Agenda:* In this project phase, the project focused on identifying and clarifying CACMA's advocacy agenda. The agenda also supports champions in conducting advocacy campaigns, which will contribute to addressing early and child marriage among CACMA members.

## **7.7 Project Name: Empowering Marginalized Women/Girls to Access Justice and Rights in BNNP 1**

**Funding partner:** KFB Austria

**Working Area:** Surkhet District, Karnali Province

The main objective of this project is to strengthen the capacity of women and girls to meaningfully engage in social and economic issues that affect their daily lives, and to enhance the capacities of marginalized, extremely poor, and gender-based violence affected women through social and economic empowerment. The project will be implemented across all 14 settlements of Birendranagar Municipality, Ward No. The project's primary target groups consist of 6 women's groups, 6 adolescent girls' groups, and 3 adolescent boys' groups, covering 350 households. The project is expected to reach 2,500 direct beneficiaries and 7,000 indirect beneficiaries, including women, men, girls, and boys. Targeting women and children from economically poor and marginalized backgrounds, including women with disabilities, LGBTIQ community members, Dalit and other ethnic groups, violence-affected individuals, children with low educational attainment, mothers of street-connected children, single women, and daily wage labor households with limited capacity to support children's education.

### **Context :**

The most significant national-level change in 2025 was the countrywide Gen-Z Movement that took place on 8–9 September 2025. This movement had a profound impact on the political, administrative, and economic sectors of Nepal. During the movement, the national government collapsed, 71 children lost their lives, and extensive damage occurred to historical, physical, and administrative infrastructures across the country due to vandalism and arson. The direct and indirect effects of this movement were also strongly felt in the project area, particularly in Birendranagar Municipality, Ward No. 1.

As a result of the movement, the Ward No. 1 office building was set on fire, and all administrative documents and equipment were destroyed. In addition, the residences of several elected representatives were damaged, and 12 ward offices across the municipality were affected, resulting in the loss of administrative records and equipment. The destruction of physical infrastructure and official documents severely disrupted regular administrative service delivery. Fear and insecurity among elected representatives and staff further hindered the working environment. This instability within administrative structures and systems posed additional challenges to project implementation. Due to political changes, project activities were suspended for nearly one month, which increased workload pressure during the final implementation period. However, through strong coordination and communication with the ward office, municipality, community groups, and tole development committees, planned activities were ultimately completed.

From an economic perspective, inflation increased significantly in 2025, leading to higher costs for food, education, health care, and other basic necessities. This placed additional pressure on low-income households dependent on daily wage labor. Although foreign employment remained a major source of income, job insecurity, rising unemployment, and increased living expenses further weakened household economic stability. With many men migrating to India, Qatar, Malaysia, Korea, and Japan for work, women experienced an increased burden of both household management and income generation.

At the local level, even when women accessed employment opportunities, they often received low wages, faced business instability, and had limited access to technology-driven livelihoods. As a result, local employment opportunities gradually declined. Additionally, increasing family fragmentation, a rising number of households, and limited land availability contributed to a growing **informal settlement (sukumbasi) problem** in Ward No. 1.

Migration trends continued throughout 2025, with families moving from hill districts such as Dailekh, Kalikot, Jumla, Humla, and Achham to Birendranagar Municipality, Ward No. 1, in search of better education, health services, and employment opportunities. This increased migration accelerated unplanned urbanization, expanded informal settlements, and placed additional pressure on limited local resources. Newly migrated households were predominantly Dalit, Janajati, economically poor, and other marginalized groups, making access to basic services and social protection increasingly challenging.

Due to the Gen-Z Movement, administrative services were almost completely disrupted for approximately one month. During this period, essential public services such as birth registration, citizenship issuance, social security allowances, and official recommendations were not delivered on time, creating additional hardships for target households. Although services have gradually resumed, ongoing political transitions, the formation of an interim government, and the upcoming election process have caused delays in policy implementation, planning, and budget execution. These challenges have particularly increased service-access risks for women, children, and marginalized communities.

At the household and gender level, rising inflation, economic stress, and imbalanced responsibilities contributed to increased domestic conflict, risks of child marriage, and the likelihood of adolescents engaging in harmful activities. Despite this challenging environment, project interventions supported women's increased engagement in income-generating activities. Women contributed to household income through small businesses, group savings, and reinvestment practices. In addition, women enhanced their daily earnings through skills development such as auto-rickshaw driving, agriculture, and livestock farming, while ensuring continuity and prioritization of their children's education.

One of the most positive contextual changes observed in 2025 was the significant improvement in women's leadership, decision-making capacity, and social acceptance. Women actively served as chairpersons, secretaries, and treasurers and participated in ward-level program discussions and budget allocation processes. Engagement in income-generating activities increased trust and support from families and communities. Furthermore, an emerging shift was observed among men, with some expressing interest in pursuing local livelihood options rather than migrating abroad, indicating a positive step toward the project's long-term sustainability.

Overall, while the 2025 project context remained highly volatile due to political and economic instability, the project's adaptive strategies and strong community engagement helped mitigate risks and sustain progress toward women's empowerment, livelihood resilience, and social inclusion.

## Achievements:

In 2025, Aawaaj implemented **22 project activities**, directly reaching **1,734 participants**, including **951 Dalit (152 men, 799 women)**, **144 Janajati (44 men, 100 women)**, **639 Brahmin/Chhetri (211 men, 428 women)**, 23 disable person and **693 children** through group formation, meetings, trainings, orientations, interactions, rallies, and community dialogues. During the year, **7 new groups** (2 women's, 2 girls', and 3 boys') were formed, and a total of **15 groups** (6 women's, 6 girls', and 3 boys') were actively mobilized, covering **350 households**. Women's groups conducted **12 meetings**, girls' groups **9 meetings**, and boys' group's **6–9 meetings**, focusing on eliminating harmful practices, improving behavior and attitudes, strengthening access to services, and promoting children's regular school attendance.

The project strengthened **economic and social empowerment** through livelihood skills training, entrepreneurship support, group savings, and awareness-led collective action. **350 women and children** participated in life-skills and transformation sessions, resulting in an estimated **80% Improvement** in knowledge, confidence, and leadership capacity, awareness of rights, reporting mechanisms, protection systems, and access to justice and protection services through coordinated case facilitation. For economic empowerment, **20 women** received livelihood training with **NPR 15,000 each** to start new businesses, while **56 women** received institutional support and **22 women** received group-level support for income-generating activities such as poultry, goat rearing, mushroom farming, tailoring, retail and food businesses. To date, **NPR 840,000** has been provided as seed capital, with group savings of **NPR 347,234**, interest of **NPR 82,559**, and a total revolving fund of **NPR 1,267,796**, contributing to reduced harmful practices, improved family well-being, increased use of public services (including Women and Children Service Centers, local governments, health facilities, OCMC, Judicial Committees, Child Helpline 1098, and Women Helpline 1145), and better education and health outcomes for children.

The project resulted in positive behavioral, family, and community-level changes among women and adolescents. Through group savings, livelihood support, and regular meetings, women started small businesses (e.g., poultry, tailoring), leading to improved household income, shared decision-making, and better care for children, including regular school attendance and health services. At the community level, dialogues and awareness activities increased rejection of harmful practices such as child marriage, gender-based violence, and discrimination, while access to public services (Women and Children Service Centers, health facilities, OCMC, Judicial Committees, Child Helpline 1098 and Women Helpline 1145) improved, contributing to a safer, child-friendly, and more inclusive social environment.

During project implementation, major challenges included managing time, as many targeted women and adolescents relied on daily wage labor, limiting their availability for meetings and activities. Financial constraints affected the sustainability of income-generating activities, as families could not invest due to high operational costs. Adolescent groups could only meet on Saturdays due to school attendance, and recent local protests disrupted services, damaged municipal offices, and created fear among local representatives, delaying regular activities.

Despite these challenges, forming and mobilizing community groups proved crucial for social change. Active groups conducting awareness campaigns, savings, and livelihood activities helped reduce domestic and gender-based violence, with around **60%** of harmful incidents prevented. Groups facilitated early problem identification, improved access to services, and fostered economic empowerment, positive behavioral changes, and a sense of responsibility among members, contributing to sustainable family and community-level transformation.

Overall, the project has contributed to increased awareness, strengthened group structures, improved access to services, and enhanced participation of marginalized women and girls in social, economic, and decision-making processes within the community.

## **7.8 Preventing and Responding to Child Marriage and Early Unions**

**Project Partner:** Girls First Fund (GFF)

**Working Area:** Birendranagar Municipality, Ward Number 2, Surkhet

### **7.9.1 Background**

Aawaaj is implementing the "Preventing and Responding to Early Child Marriage Project" in Birendranagar Municipality, Ward Number 2, Surkhet, Karnali Province, Nepal, with the support of Girls First Fund. The project is being implemented in an area with 38 colonies, each consisting of 40 to 100 households. Among these colonies, 20 communities are vulnerable as they are inhabited by Dalit, Migrant Families, and Ethnic Communities. Domestic violence in these households leads to children leaving their homes, dropping out of school, and getting married early, which increases the risk of sexual abuse and internal trafficking.

The main objective of the project is to strengthen the capacities of young girls to take leadership and put an end to child marriage through educational, social, and economic empowerment. The project aims to provide capacity-building, training, empowerment, and income-generating support events in the project area.

#### **Achievements:**

The Ward Child Rights Committee meetings in Birendranagar-2 have effectively implementing child protection at ward level, ensuring that child protection issues are managed at the community level. By establishing a clear consensus on the definition of child marriage, the committee has played a vital role in child protection as well early marriages often excused as traditional or self-initiated unions. This process has fostered a significant shift in power, allowing adolescent boys and girls to directly influence the policies and practices that affect their lives, thereby ensuring that the committee's decisions remain child-centered. Furthermore, by identifying and adopting successful interventions, the committee has implemented procedures for handling cases, contributing to prevent of child marriages and the enforcement of alcohol and tobacco bans near schools, compulsory enrollment of children at school, referral child protection related cases to related concerned.

Ultimately, these efforts have solidified the referral pathways between the community, grouping from facebook messenger between chair of 38 tolls, and law enforcement agencies like the Bal Helpline, police leading to a remarkable increase in official case filings and improved protection mechanisms. After the Gen-z protest the committee regular coordinated with the Gen-Z of ward 2 for the participating in supportive roles in child protection cases. The committee also facilitated and stopped the Gen-Z groups moving toward the further protest. The CRC committee started organizing their meetings as per the needed and they coordinating with ward with plan for the child protection related activities to implement like vital registration, campaign for stopping child marriage, reporting and responding cases related to child protection.

Girls of sagarmatha tole informed that a man from the neighborhood abused, insulted, and threatened them while their parents had gone to India, leaving them (two girls age of 13 and 14) at home. They reported this case in Child Right Committee and the committee called the perpetrator and the victim

to a meeting of the committee, held a mutual discussion as per the girls prospective, and the perpetrator apologized and committed not to repeat the mistake again.

Child members of the Child Rights Committee, Ganesh Khadka and Srijana Thakuranthi, have participated in various programs related to child concern in reducing child marriage, discussions on the demands of the Gen-Z Movement, provincial level workshop on reducing child marriage, orientation programs on the rights and duties of the Child Rights Committee in municipality, and have played the role of announcers in every program held in schools. Through this increased access of the committee in community and schools. The mobilization and meetings of girls' and boys' groups have led to increase awareness regarding the harmful effects of child marriage on health, chhaupadi, caste discrimination, HIV/AIDs, important of education, human trafficking, abuse. They have also increase confidence on speaking their voices, transferring learnings to family and friends as well.

12 Facilitators(Graduated Champions from different old groups) are conducting monthly meeting in 4 schools of the ne group with different topics like; drug abuse, the impact of dowry system, child marriage and its consequences, child rights, sexually transmitted diseases, HIV and AIDS, violence against women, human trafficking, cybercrime and online abuse, domestic violence, witchcraft accusations, the importance of discipline in children, reproductive health, adolescence, socially harmful practices and their effects on society, child labor, human rights.

As part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, a street drama titled 'Bikriti' was performed at various locations, including Ghantaghar, Fun Park (fair), and Tempo Park Chowk, reaching an audience of approximately 3,500 people. This drama was presented by contract basis between different organizations. The drama group has consists of 13 members. The boys and Girls group ( 12 core members) from this project have created a video documentary to raise awareness through digital media on drug abuse & its effects and broadcasted it on YouTube to provide message to adolescents. Other awareness related videos are also broadcasting from their Youtube channel. Additionally, Boys from the groups secured first place in the Under-20 Men's Football Tournament held in Birendranagar Ward No. 8 and have been actively participating in various football competitions across Surkhet and other districts. After playing the Deusi Bhailo cultural program, they visited to Pokhara, Manakamana, and Butwal Phulbari.

Furthermore, they participated in a workshop organized by Birendranagar Municipality focused on the Institutional Capacity Analysis of Youth Clubs and the formulation of CCDRR (Child-Centered Disaster Risk Reduction) plans, where they actively voiced their perspectives. 9 children (7 girls and 2 boys) have studying Diploma in Civil Engineering through the full scholarship program from Social Development Ministry, Karnali Province. The mobilization of survivors groups in Ward 2 of Birendranagar Municipality has led to several transformative outcomes that address the root causes and consequences of child marriage.

By providing awareness and orientations on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), increased the self confidence of survivors, enabling them to understand the physical and mental illness of early child marriage and access essential referral services like the One stop Crisis Management Centre (OCMC). About to 30 survivors are involving in different income generating activities (monthly income in average 20 to 50 thousands) like; grocery shop, poultry farming, goat rearing, thela, doko sell for linkage and connect to social and economic activities along with financial empowerment. They also started regular savings after household expenses in Toll Development Sanstha and Cooperatives monthly basis. The survivor groups organized meeting by themselves for different ceremonial days like; Teej, Women Day, Human Trafficking Day, 16 days campaigns.

During the events they share experiences, knowledges and voiced on transforming social values for gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence. They also providing support to writing application (7 cases) and referring the cases in Hospital, Ward, Aawaaj, Police Station.

They also Participated in series of activities like; submitting memorandum letter to the District Administration and Police Offices and creating pressure on the prevention of violence and killed women and girls in Karnali Province. They successfully demonstrated collective public voices toward domestic violence and murdered wife incidents in demonstration rally.

One day Interaction program with Mayor has been organized with the 94 participants (Dalit-40, Janajati-9 & Others-45). The main objective of the event was to share their problems with Palika Mayor and account for their services. Mayor and the palika representatives shared their program related to awareness raising events, women and children targeted activities and budget. The survivors shared their experiences and voiced to plan and budget to support in gender based violence, income generating activities by asking questions to the Mayor. They also participated in Public Hearing program at Birendranagar Municipality Ward No. 2 and placed their voices regarding the Income Generation Activities, Vocational training .

Sita Budha, a 22-year-old survivor of domestic violence, contacted Aawaaj and received psychosocial & legal counseling with staying 5 days in shelter. After supporting family mediation, now she is back to home with her husband. She says that now her husband do not beat her and her husband is raising awareness on domestic violences, relation of husband wife to community and his friends are good.

### **Lessons Learned:**

- Strengthening government mechanisms makes it easier to act against child marriage and gender discrimination within the community.
- Providing training and support to group members together helps convince them and supports the achievement of project goals.
- Conducting various programs involving community members and groups appears to be more effective.
- Regular group meetings at specified times, as decided by the community, enhance project effectiveness.
- Regular monitoring by group members is effective for entrepreneurs' businesses and increases ownership.
- Combined groups (boys and girls) are ideal for discussing and raising awareness about sexual education, family planning, and reproductive health.
- Integrating insurance policies for goats and pigs in the project site mitigates risk.
- Educational materials support vulnerable girls, ensuring regular school attendance and improving their learning attitude.
- Establishing links with local government livestock units and securing livestock insurance are necessary.

### **7.9 Project Name: Hamro Sahaas, “Transforming Social Norms for GBV Prevention and Gender Equality”**

**Funding Partner:** FCDO and UN Women

### **Objectives:**

- Promote Access to Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Protection and GBV Services

- Advocate for Gender-Sensitive and Responsive Services/Systems
- Address Discriminatory Gender and Social Norms
- Support Positive Social & Gender Norms and GBV Prevention, and Promote Youth Leadership

#### **Consortium partners:**

- Disabled Women Society,
- Women for Human Rights Single Women Group

#### **Working Area:**

- Birendranagar Municipality (Wards 9 and 10) – Implemented by Disabled Women Society
- Lekhabesi Municipality (Wards 2, 6, and 8) – Implemented by Women for Human Rights (Single Women Group)
- Barahatal Rural Municipality (Wards 6, 8, and 9) – Implemented by Aawaaj

#### **Achievements**

**Output 1.1: Community people (women/girls, men/boys and LGBTIQ+) especially those from marginalized groups have adequate capacities to challenge/address gender discriminatory social norms and harmful practices.**

- A total of 423 people (363 female, 59 male, and 1 LGBTIQ)—including 49 children, 314 youths, and 60 elderly—participated in awareness-raising and day-celebration events conducted in Birendranagar Municipality, Lekhabeshi Municipality, and Barahatal Rural Municipality. Participants included 174 Janajati, 74 Dalits, 64 Muslims, and 111 Brahmin/Chhetri, with 16 persons with disabilities. Through 10 events—including Single Women Day, Human Trafficking Day, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, and Disability Day—participants improved their knowledge on menstrual hygiene management (such as changing pads every 4–6 hours and drying reusable cloth pads in direct sunlight), anti-human trafficking, citizenship and marriage rights, and the rights of persons with disabilities. The events also emphasized the need to establish a Single Women Protection Fund (SWPF), as none of the municipalities have yet created one, encouraging local stakeholders to prioritize support for single women and persons with disabilities.
- A total of 33 women and girls (15 children, 17 adults, and 1 elderly) received legal aid and emergency support. Among them, (8) were Janajati, (13) Dalit, (2) Muslim, and (10) Brahmin/Chhetri, including (6) persons with disabilities. Of the total, 20 received legal aid support, while 13 received emergency support, including medical support (9), food assistance (2), and education support (2).
- A total of 261 women and girls received face-to-face psychosocial counseling, including 41 children, 206 adults, and 14 elderly. Among them, 124 were Brahmin/Chhetri, 94 Dalits, 32 Janajati, and 11 Muslims. Out of the total, 213 were successfully reintegrated with their families.
- 13 females including 8 Brahmin/Chhetri, 3 Dalit, 2 Muslim and 1 people with disability had received IGA support. Most of them were involved in Goat Farming (7), Micro Business (3), Pig Farming (1), Sewing (1) and Waving (1) .
- Community members’ understanding of legal rights, gender equality, and harmful practices improved, with key issues such as child marriage, caste-based discrimination, Chhaupadi, and gender-based violence were identified as priority concerns.

- Positive changes in parenting behavior were observed, with parents adopting non-punishable and child-friendly approaches; this was evidenced by an increase in knowledge scores from 33% (pre-test) to 66% (post-test).
- Students, teachers, and parents enhanced their awareness of children’s rights and violence prevention, including gender discrimination, domestic violence, good and bad touch.
- Intergenerational dialogues helped bridge understanding between elders and youth on sensitive issues such as child marriage, Chhaupadi, and alcohol-related harm.
- Men and boys’ engagement sessions encouraged positive masculinity, shared household responsibilities, and rejection of discriminatory social norms.
- Group meetings and 7-step planning orientations further empowered women, adolescents, and marginalized groups to participate meaningfully in local decision-making processes, where the group have prioritized to demand for IGA (Duna Tapari) to government in Barahatal Rural Municipality.
- Community Structures have been strengthened through active leadership engagement. School teachers, SMC members and local leaders were oriented on child protection roles, procedures, and different forms of violence, leading to case reporting and timely response and legal support by Aawaaj.

**Output 1.2 : Diverse women’s/feminist organisations and networks led by, and representing intersecting identities have strengthened capacity, including resources, knowledge and tools (organisational capacities) to promote and implement strategies for advocacy and leadership for positive social norms change in Karnali Province**

- Organizational Capacity Assessments strengthened feminist organizations. As a result, Women for Human Rights (Single Women Group) are in the process of developing three key policies—GEDSI, Financial & Administrative, and HR—to improve governance. Aawaaj and the Disabled Women Society are also reviewing and updating their Child Safeguarding and HR policies.
- Additionally, board and staff members from Aawaaj, Women for Human Rights (Single Women Group), and Disabled Women Society were capacitated through six training events on social norms, psychosocial first aid, safety and security, report writing, organizational development, and social mobilization. In total, 92 individuals participated (56 Brahmin/Chhetri, 19 Janajati, 15 Dalit, and 2 Muslim), including 17 persons with disabilities, 81 adults, and 11 elderly.

**Output 1.3: Local governments have increased capacity to meaningfully engage with the feminist movement and WROs in governance processes to advance gender-responsive and inclusive government in Karnali province.**

- Orientation on Protection Information Management System (PIMS) in all three local levels Birendranagar Municipality, Barahatal Rural Municipality, Lekhbesi Municipality resulted on finalizing a uniform data format for collection and protection and a standardized tool was developed and agreed upon for the reported cases of Gender Based Violence.
- Provincial level Advocacy and reflecting meeting helped in recognizing the importance of safeguarding adolescents, improving legal clarity, and advancing coordinated action to end

child marriage without criminalizing affected children. Together, these commitments signal a promising policy environment for progressive reforms on child marriage in Nepal.

### Lesson Learnt

Source	Subject	Situation	Recommendation / comments
Municipality induction meeting	Delayed participation	During the municipality-level induction meeting, ward chairpersons and other participants arrived an hour later than scheduled. The meeting was planned for 7: but started at 8 AM	Follow up with participants beforehand and allow for a flexible buffer of at least one hour.
Women's group formation	High interest among	One Women's group was planned per ward, comprising 25-30 members. However, a high number of women expressed interest in joining. In some wards, women had to walk 3-4 hours to attend a one-hour meeting.	Increase the number of women's group in hard to reach areas to improve accessibility.
SDC meeting and Province level meeting	Stakeholder Coordination	Scheduling events with local and provincial stakeholders was challenging due to conflicting priorities and availability.	Plan events well in advance and engage stakeholders early to identify suitable dates and ensure participation.
Province level meeting	Political Commitment	Engagement with local and provincial leaders was essential to implement social norms change effectively.	Continue advocacy, secure commitments, and maintain collaboration with government bodies to institutionalize gender-responsive and inclusive interventions.
Field level activities	Flexibility in Implementation	Unforeseen challenges, such as timing conflicts, monsoon and road blockages or resource limitations, affected event delivery.	Maintain flexibility in planning, adapt schedules and methods, and prepare contingency plans to ensure objectives are met.

### Challenges

- Due to the busy schedules of local representatives, ensuring their timely participation in the event remained a challenge.
- A larger number of participants than anticipated attended the group formation process, leading to some financial constraints. Although it had been clearly communicated to the respective ward chairpersons to prioritize inclusive groups—with a focus on adults rather than the elderly—community members were enthusiastic and eager to participate, resulting in a higher turnout.
- External challenges also emerged, including the unavailability of local vehicles, which required the use of alternative transportation such as auto-rickshaws—significantly increasing costs. Furthermore, navigating through jungle areas to reach the site posed safety and security concerns, adding to the logistical difficulties.

- Due to the monsoon, rising river levels and road blockages caused delays in participants arriving on time.
- Scheduling the event was difficult due to the conflicting priorities of local government officials and provincial-level stakeholders, which made it challenging to find a suitable time for all participants.
- Discriminatory and unsupportive behaviour towards the organization led by persons with disabilities at the school level affected program quality and participation.
- Challenges in facilitating dialogues on male engagement and with religious leaders due to limited understanding of gender equality concepts and the need for more trained facilitators.
- Parents' fear for their children's wellbeing is influencing early acceptance of child marriage, making prevention efforts more difficult.

### Way Forward

- Clearly communicate the type and number of participants and frequent follow-ups with program participants to ensure timely arrival.
- Schedule the event considering the availability of local participants.
- Communicate and share the location details when traveling through jungle areas to ensure staff safety and security.
- Adjusted the program schedule and postponed activities when necessary due to monsoon disruptions.
- Dates were proposed well in advance to accommodate stakeholders' schedules.
- Strengthen inclusion efforts: Advocate with schools and local governments to ensure respectful, supportive, and inclusive behaviour toward organizations led by persons with disabilities. Provide orientation on disability inclusion for teachers and SMC members.
- Build facilitator capacity: Organize Training of Trainers (ToT) on male engagement, social norms change, and working with religious leaders. Develop facilitation guidelines and provide mentoring support.
- Enhance child protection and counselling support: Work closely with parents, schools, and local child protection bodies to promote safe and supportive environments for adolescents. Increase awareness on the negative impacts of child marriage and provide parents with information about positive alternatives and available support systems.
- Engage community influencers: Strengthen collaboration with religious leaders, elders, and community groups to address harmful practices and promote supportive norms.

## Annex - Human Interest Stories:

### Journey to Healing and Justice

Change Name Sunita was born as the first child of her parents at Panchapuri Municipality Surkhet District. Her family member includes her father, mother, herself, and a younger brother. Her father works at a radio station, while her mother is engaged in household work. Sunita is currently studying in grade 11.

#### Incident Background

On 23 October-2025 (2082/07/06 B.S.), on the occasion of Dipawoli festival Sunita joined her friends to play Deusi –Bhailo in the village. On the same day, an unknown person from Jumla had come to the Village to receive Bhaitika at his relative’s house and later he also joined others group in playing Deusi-Bhailo at night.

While Playing Deusi Sunita felt hungry and asked going to a shop with her friends to buy some food. However, while walking behind the group when an unknown person came up behind her, telling her that he was also heading in the same direction. While talking, he took her hand, forcefully took her towards the river side fields, covered her mouth, and sexually assaulted (raped) her. After the incident, the perpetrator threatened to kill her if she disclosed the incident to anyone and **ran away and left her there.**

#### Situation After the Incident

Traumatized and fearful, Sunita went to her maternal uncle’s house and stayed there overnight. The next morning, when she returned home, her mother noticed her in the upset and quiet condition and asked what happened. Sunita then disclosed the entire incident to her mother, also asked about the threats she had faced.

#### Action and Legal Process

Immediately after knowing about the incident, Sunita’s mother went to the Area police Office in Babiyachaur, and reported the case. With Police intervention, the perpetrator was arrested. With the support of Aawaaj’s field staffs, Sunita was referred to Aawaaj organization for legal and psychosocial support.

#### Support by Aawaaj

After arriving at Aawaaj, Sunita’s case was carefully documented. Considering her psychosocial and emotional needs, provided to her Emergency shelter home services. While in a secure environment, Sunita received ongoing psychosocial counselling, which helped her cope with the trauma and emotional stability.

Aawaaj Coordinated with police and legal service providers for the formal legal process. After the coordination and action by Aawaaj organization Sunita received legal counselling and legal aid support. Additionally, Sunita received emotional support, protection support as well as her family members were provided with counselling to reduce post-incident stress and strengthen the family support system.

#### Change and progress

Initially, Sunita experienced intense fear, anxiety, and frequent crying. After receiving regular psychosocial counselling services from Aawaaj, she reported experiencing positive changes, including reduced fear and improved emotional wellbeing. Access to legal support also helped reduce her feeling of hopelessness.

Now, Sunita was able to continue her studies without interruption. Once her condition improved and with her family's support, she **was reintegrated into her home**. Her case has also moved forward legally, and her court statement has already been recorded.

### Conclusion/ Key Learning

This case highlights the importance of timely reporting, family support, and coordinated action among law enforcement, judicial bodies, and organization like Aawaaj, the provision of Safe Shelter, psychosocial counselling, and legal assistance played an important role in sunita's recovery and empowerment. With appropriate protection and support, adolescent survivors of sexual violence can rebuild confidence and continue their education and lives with dignity.

### From Dropout to Leadership: Sharada's Journey Back to School

Sharada Giri, a 13-year-old girl from Badaiyatal Rural Municipality-4, Bardiya district is the eldest among her siblings. After her father remarried and neglected the family, sharada moved to her maternal uncle's home. Despite her strong interest in continuing her education, the long distance to school caused frequent lateness, which eventually lead her to drop out. During this period, she was socially isolated.

Ward member Uma Gandarwa who referred Sharada to Psychosocial counselor Yamuna BK. Yamuna visited her home and sharada was provided psychosocial counseling identified her situation. Though regular counseling support she regained confidence and resumed her school regularly. However, she faced language related challenges, for which she was enrolled in Srijanshil Bal Sulav Kendra.

With continued support, Sharada began actively participating in Aawaaj's programs where she learned about child marriage, human trafficking, and online abuse. Besides this, she also took part in extracurricular activities including singing and poetry. These activities regained her self-confidence and awareness regarding risks of her family situation particularly from her father, which eventually empowered her to raise for her safety and rights.

This led to Sharada's involvement in the ward level adolescent club, where she developed a strong interest and was later elected as president of the Adolescent Club. She also participated in capacity building training of adolescent club, which enhanced her confidence and motivation to challenge and prevent harmful social practices. Currently Sharada actively engages in discussions on the issues faced by adolescent's girls and openly share her concerns with herschool's focal teacher. The positive changes in her made her mother happy now. At school, she is performing well in her studies and is performing well. The school head teacher has also expressed satisfaction with her progress and thanked Aawaaj team of Bardiya for their support in bringing about these positive changes.



### **Learning, Hygiene and Hope, Ritu's Journey at CFS**

Ritu Bishowkarma is 10 years old currently studying in Grade 6. She is a permanent resident of Dullu Municipality, ward 13. She comes from a low-income family with a total of 12 family members. Due to family's poor economic condition and large household size, they mainly depend on agriculture, where the food is sufficient only for 3 months of the year. To meet their daily needs, they also work as daily wage laborers, earning enough for subsistence. Because of these financial constraints, the family is unable to afford basic educational materials for her. The family even could not managed learning supplies such as copies, pencils and other school materials. This affected her regular school attendance, where she could go to school only three to four days in a week while her classmates attend regularly. Despite these challenges, she managed to pass Grade 5.

Her name was listed at the Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) center of ward 13, which is run by the organization Aawaaj under Sankalpa project. At the center, she was guided in her weak subjects and she received positive support including the educational materials. The center also taught her the importance of maintaining personal hygiene. During home visits, discussions were held with her family about her education, which helped them realized the importance of investing more in her studies. At the CFS center, she also identified her interest in drawing.

As a result, of these supports, she has shown significant improvement in her academic performance. She now attends the CFS center regularly, where she continues to receive guidance in her weak subjects. In addition to her studies, she actively participates in extracurricular activities at school. She has also become conscious about maintaining personal hygiene at home and at school. These positive changes made her more disciplined and self-confidence. She shares what she has learned with her peers and express gratitude to CFS center for providing educational materials, which has enabled her to attend school regularly. She aspires to be a teacher in the future. She said “ *I have received guidance in my weak subjects from this CFS center. Now I go to school regularly and focus on maintaining personal hygiene. I have learned these things from this center*”.

### **Yan Kumari: Becoming Free from Violence through Group Mobilization and Helping Others Become Violence-Free**

**Name:** Yan Kumari B.K.

**Address:** Panchapuri Municipality, Ward No. 8, Dulalthai, Surkhet.

**Group Name:** Yakata Youth Group (Chairperson)

Yan Kumari B.K., a 26-year-old woman residing in Panchapuri Municipality, Ward No. 8, Surkhet District, was married at a young age nine years ago. At present, she lives in a family of four, including her husband, one son, and one daughter.

Due to her child marriage at a very young age, she had to face many problems and hardships. In addition to this,

she also experienced domestic violence. Because of the violence inflicted by her family and husband, she endured severe suffering. Bearing all kinds of abuse and difficulties, she spent her days engaged in household chores and continued her life with patience and resilience.

In her community, Aawaaj Organization organized a meeting to form a youth group, and she also attended the gathering. After the objectives of forming the youth group and the activities it would



carry out were explained, she became interested in joining and became a member of the Yakata Youth Group. She began attending the group's monthly meetings regularly. As discussions were held on topics such as youth rights, gender-based violence, the impacts of violence, and the role of groups in reducing violence, she gradually shared her own problems openly during the meetings. In the beginning, she used to sit at the back during meetings, felt hesitant to introduce herself, and spoke very little. Initially, her family members did not allow her to attend the meetings. After she shared this issue with the social mobilizer, the mobilizer visited her home and counseled her family. Following this, she started attending the meetings regularly. Through continuous practices during the monthly meetings-such as giving detailed self-introductions and sharing information about the situation of gender-based violence in the community-she gradually developed confidence and improved her public speaking skills.

She began sharing at home what she learned in each meeting and also started informing her neighbors. She explained what violence is, what harmful practices exist in the community, and how these practices affect and impact women. She started educating others and raising awareness. In the community, she began speaking out against issues such as *chhaupadi* practice, child marriage, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, and abuse. She also started providing information about legal processes and about the mechanisms and structures available to support survivors of violence. Gradually, women and adolescent girls in the community began to recognize the violence they were experiencing and started sharing their problems with her. As she continued to raise her voice against violence in the community, the violence she herself had been facing also gradually decreased. By spreading the message that violence should neither be committed nor tolerated, her self-confidence and courage continued to grow.

Seeing her active involvement in the community, all members of the youth group encouraged her to take on the role of Chairperson of the Yakata Youth Group. Accepting everyone's request, she was later selected as the Chairperson. After becoming chairperson, she began conducting door-to-door visits in the community with the support of group members, advocating for homes free from *chhaupadi* practice, child marriage, and domestic violence. Previously, in her community, it was common for all women to stay in *chhau huts* far away from their homes during menstruation. She strongly advocated that while idols and symbols of gods and goddesses are carefully cleaned and kept outside, living goddesses-women and adolescent girls-must be kept safe inside the home. She emphasized that during menstruation, staying safely at home, eating nutritious food, and maintaining hygiene are extremely important. As a result of her advocacy, the *chhaupadi huts* in the community have now been dismantled, and arrangements have been made for women to stay safely inside their homes during menstruation.

After joining the group, she also gained opportunities to participate in capacity-building trainings on various topics such as women's rights, legal literacy classes, the planning process, and leadership development. As a result, whenever she receives information about an incident of gender-based violence, she actively goes to the incident site along with group members to mediate, counsel the parties involved, and understand the complexity of the case. She assists by drafting and submitting applications to the police office, ward office, Judicial Committee, and the municipal-level Gender-Based Violence Case Management Committee, thereby facilitating solutions to the problems. At present, whenever incidents of domestic violence or child marriage occur in the community, people call on her for support. She visits the incident site, conducts discussions and facilitation, and, if the case is complex, accompanies survivors to legal institutions and provides continuous assistance and support.

She has been participating in ward-level planning formulation meetings, where she prepares and submits proposals requesting skill-based training for women and awareness-raising programs. With the allocated budget received through these plans, the group has been actively implementing various community awareness programs.

She regularly conducts discussion classes with the community's child groups, using her own experience of child marriage as a strong example to explain the problems she faced. She teaches that

there are four gradual steps to a successful life: the first step is completing education at least up to the bachelor's level, the second step is employment or self-employment, the third step is building healthy relationships based on mutual understanding, respect, and dignity, and the fourth step is marriage. She facilitates meaningful discussions on the problems and challenges that arise in life when child marriage occurs by jumping directly to the fourth step at a very young age. Upon receiving any information about a potential child marriage, she also takes action by counseling and convincing both parties involved and actively works to prevent child marriage.

She coordinated with the ward office to initiate the construction of an irrigation canal and, as the Chairperson of the Dulalthai Irrigation Canal Planning Committee, successfully completed the work with quality and efficiency. Following this, she was appointed as the Secretary of the community's Shiv Temple Planning Committee, through which she oversaw and successfully completed the construction of the temple.

She is now able to manage programs organized by the ward and clearly express her own ideas. Believing that young people should stand on their own feet, she has even started a small retail shop and encourages others to become economically empowered as well. Today, Yan Kumari is herself free from violence, actively helps others to avoid violence, and has become an exemplary figure in her community. In the future, she aims to participate in the local government election process as a candidate, moving forward with the goal of serving society.



### A Teen Who Escaped the Risks of Child Marriage, Guiding Other Adolescents Toward a Successful Life

**Name:** Shobha Ban

**Address:** Panchapuri Municipality, Ward No. 8, Majhigaun, Surkhet

**Group Name:** Jagarup Youth Group (Chairperson)

Shobha Ban, a resident of Majhigaun, Panchapuri Municipality, Ward No. 8, Surkhet District, is now 16 years old. She is currently studying in grade 9. She lives in a family of four. The family's economic condition is weak, and her father currently earns a living by driving a vehicle to cover household expenses.

Her mother did not give her time to study, forced her to do household chores, did not show her love, and often got angry with her. Because of this, Shobha was married at a very young age. As soon as the marriage was known, the Jagarup Youth Group and the Utkrisht Child Group in her community informed the local representative and created an environment where both sets of parents, as well as the bride and groom, could be present. The local representative and group members discussed the matter with both families and counseled them. After Shobha explained that her mother did not show love, did not respect her opinions, and only expected her to do household work, everyone also counseled and made her mother understand.





She explained that she got married because of her family's neglect and lack of a loving environment, but she also said that if her family had shown love and created an environment for study, she would have stayed at home to continue her education. Later, she was enrolled as a member of the Utkrisht Child Group in her community. She began attending the group's meetings regularly and started sharing her opinions during discussions. She also began sharing what she learned in the meetings with her school friends and family members. She had the opportunity to

participate in a 10-day essential Rupantaran training, which she says increased her self-confidence, morale, knowledge, and skills. During the 10-day training, she received information on topics such as reproductive health, nutrition, hygiene, child rights, identifying trustworthy individuals, harmful practices, disasters and climate change, gender-based violence, and understanding the difference between needs and wants. She has been teaching these topics to other members in her group every month. Shobha says that the transformation training has brought positive changes in her habits and behavior.

She actively helps the community by writing applications and submitting them to the police office, Judicial Committee, and ward office whenever child marriage or domestic violence incidents occur. She also reports cases to Child Helpline 1098 and raises her voice to support survivors of violence. In addition, she educates the community about the impacts of child marriage, the *chhaupadi* practice, and domestic violence. She coordinates with the ward office to celebrate Child, Youth, and Women's Days, assisting in organizing awareness-raising programs such as wall writings, rallies, and competitions.

Seeing her increased activity, positive changes, hard work, and dedication, her father and mother are happy, and a harmonious environment has been created within the family. She educates the group and her peers about what sexual exploitation and abuse against adolescent girls are, ways to protect themselves from inappropriate touching, and the mechanisms and institutions that can provide support in case of violence. She also shares that after completing grade 12, she plans to prepare for the public service exams and intends to get married only after securing a job.



### **A Purposeful Path to Success** – The Journey of

**Kalpna Raskoti Magar** 17-year-old Kalpna Raskoti Magar, living in Birendranagar-2, Ram Mandir of Surkhet, has become a source of inspiration for her community and her friends today. Sixteen years ago (when Kalpna was 1 year old), her family migrated from Bisalla of Dailekh to Surkhet in search of a better life. Among one brother and five sisters, Kalpna, the fourth daughter, comes from a family background that is not only humble but also challenging. Page 9 of 12 GFF-2024-2026-Nepal-2714 Progress Report Kalpna was very diligent in her studies since childhood. After coming in second in Class 1, she never had to be second again. Having continuously achieved first position until Class 9, she increased the pride of her school by achieving a 3.21 GPA from Prabhat Secondary School in the 2081 BS SEE examination. Currently, she is studying in Class 11 at the Jana Namuna Secondary School, Birendranagar 6, Surkhet. To support a large family of eight, her father Rang Bahadur Magar and mother Padma Raskoti had been doing daily wage labor. After problems in the children's education due to their

poor economic condition, Kalpana's mother became associated with a group, Rammandir Mothers Group formed by the Aawaaj in 2023, and similarly Kalpana in girls group. Although she thought of starting goat farming, due to a lack of money, she started a retail shop with 20,000 rupees obtained from Aawaaj through her group recommendation. Although the shop helped cover household expenses for some time, the business eventually slowed down as they were unable to reinvest in more goods. Without giving up, the mother sold the remaining goods of the shop, bought a mother goat, and started goat farming. Currently, there are 4 goats and about 8 chickens in her house, which has raised hope for the family's future. Aawaaj did a great favor by supporting Kalpana—who was at risk of dropping out due to weak financial situation and supported educational materials, uniforms, and a bag. Associated with the 'Nayabasti Thulo Kishori Group' since she was in Class 7, she continued to sharpen her leadership skills and knowledges.

Upon reaching Class 10, by activeness, learning attitude and supporting roles she was honored as a 'Champion.' Now, she even serves as a trainer facilitating new groups in the school. With the money received for facilitation, she has not only managed her own education expenses but, after obtaining her citizenship, has even saved 6,000 rupees by opening a bank account. In Kalpana's society, there is still a tendency to desire a son and consider a daughter a burden. Some of her classmates have already gotten married at 15–17 years of age due to financial lack and family pressure. Kalpana says, "Sometimes I also felt like getting married to reduce the burden on my parents, but after becoming associated with Aawaaj and the group, after receiving trainings like; life skill, goal setting and self defense, regular meeting attendance my thinking changed. I understood that education is what truly makes a person self-reliant." She says, "Rather than marriage, I want to be like a son to my parents and bring them happiness. I am determined to complete my studies and do something meaningful here in own country. Furthermore, after my parents, Aawaaj became like a family to me. By involving my family and me in groups, providing income generating (IGA) support, educational assistance, and giving me opportunities to serve as a 'Champion' and a Facilitator. I have participated in many training sessions that have greatly boosted my confidence. I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Aawaaj for all of this."



### **Seed Capital for Women's Self-Reliance** *(Seed Capital Support to Women's Groups for Business Start-up)*

Ward No. 1 of Birendranagar Municipality, one of the 16 wards of the municipality, has its own unique characteristics. People from diverse ethnic groups, religions, cultures, traditions, arts, and lifestyles reside in this ward. Out of the total population of 10,208 from 2,124 households, approximately 60% belong to Dalit communities, while the remaining 40% are from other communities such as Brahmin, Chhetri, Guru, and Magar. Women in this ward were affected by multiple and interrelated problems including poverty, limited income-generating opportunities, social discrimination, domestic and gender-based violence, child marriage, Chhaupadi practice, landlessness, polygamy, single-woman status, sexual abuse, and chronic illness. These challenges had made women economically and socially dependent, unable to invest in their

children’s education and health, and largely excluded from community-level decision-making processes.

Aawaaj implemented the project titled “Empowerment Project for Access to Justice and Rights of Marginalized Women and Girls” with the main objective of economically empowering marginalized, violence-affected, and economically vulnerable women through collective action. The project aimed to enhance social empowerment, awareness, participation, leadership capacity, violence prevention, and decision-making ability among women. Under this project, social and economic empowerment activities have been continuously implemented in Ward No. 1 for the past three years. As part of this effort, six women’s groups, each consisting of 25 members, were formed,



*Aapkholi women's group monthly meeting*



organizing a total of 150 women. The groups include 111 Dalit women, 5 Janajati women, and 28 women from other communities. Priority was given to socially excluded women, child-married women, survivors of sexual abuse or domestic violence, and women suffering from chronic illnesses.

***Discussion about social harmful practices within the Pragatishil women's group***



The women’s groups hold monthly meetings where they discussed women’s rights, domestic violence, harmful social practices, and savings, credit, and income-generation activities. To promote social empowerment, women participated in inter-group interactions, experience-sharing sessions, awareness campaigns, rallies, street dramas, and observance of important social days. Capacity-building programs such as entrepreneurship development training, savings and credit management training, business start-up training, and market management training were conducted by Aawaaj to strengthen women’s skills and confidence.



For economic empowerment, 3-4 members from each group received individual income-generation support of NPR 15,000 per year. Group members save NPR 50-100 monthly, and the seed capital support provided by Aawaaj was invested in income-generating activities, with profits reinvested back into the group. During the reporting period, continuous support was provided to four existing groups, and two new groups were formed to expand project coverage. Each group received NPR 50,000 as collective

seed capital, and all funds were disbursed through bank accounts to ensure transparency.

***Goat forming by Khagisara Sarki***

As a result of group savings, investments, and income-generation activities, significant economic progress has been observed. To date, total group savings have reached NPR 347,237, total income-

generation support amounts to NPR 840,000, and interest income stands at NPR 82,559. This has resulted in a total investment of NPR 1,236,060. A total of 78 women has taken loans for business operations, health treatment, and their children's education. Women are engaged in goat rearing, poultry and pig farming, grocery shops, tailoring, mushroom farming, vegetable trading, and small canteen businesses. Through these enterprises, women have started earning between NPR 300 and NPR 1,000 per day. Due to the proximity of forest areas, goat rearing has emerged as the most popular income-generating activity.

Along with economic empowerment, notable social changes have also been observed. Women's self-confidence, dignity, and leadership capacity have increased significantly. Group members have become actively involved in community forest user groups and local tole committees. Incidents of domestic violence, gender-based violence, and family conflicts have decreased. Women now support and advise each other in business operations. Increased income has enabled families to send children regularly to school, invest in education and health, and has fostered greater respect for women within households. During this year, 32 cases were reported and supported through Child Helpline 1098 and the Aawaaj office from Ward No. 1.

The women's groups successfully advocated for resources and constructed a group meeting house with a budget of NPR 100,000. Aawaaj continues to link women's groups with its own programs as well as with other organizations' initiatives, ensuring sustained participation and continuous capacity development of women.

### ***Voice of an Adolescent Girl against Violence (Pseudonym: Nisha Nepali)***

Nisha Nepali was born on 18th Mangsir 2063 BS in Naule Katuwal, Ward No. 8 of Dullu Municipality, Dailekh District, as the eldest daughter of Mahesh Nepali and Bindu Nepali. Before Nisha turned one year old, her father remarried, which led to the separation of her parents. Her mother then took Nisha to her maternal home, where she was raised under difficult circumstances with the support of her maternal relatives. Tragically, before Nisha reached the age of ten, her mother also passed away, leaving her orphaned at a very young age. Deprived of parental care and protection, she continued to live at her maternal uncle's home while pursuing her education.



Approximately 10 years after her mother's death, Nisha's father brought her to Surkhet with the intention of continuing her education. She was enrolled in Grade 8 at Tripureshwor Secondary School. In Surkhet, Nisha lived with her stepmother and her step-siblings. However, she was burdened with excessive household responsibilities, including childcare, cooking, washing dishes, doing laundry, and managing all domestic chores. As a result, her studies, social life, and personal time were severely affected.

While studying in Grade 12, Nisha became a member of the **Srijansheel Adolescent Girls' Group**, formed under Aawaaj's ***Empowerment Project for Access to Justice and Rights for Marginalized Women and Girls***. Although she could not participate regularly due to household workload, she attended monthly group meetings where she learned about life skills, child rights, gender-based violence, domestic violence, sexual abuse, good and bad touch, identifying trusted persons, positive and negative thinking, child marriage and its consequences, the impact of violence on children,

menstrual hygiene management, online abuse, identification of risky places, and ways to stay safe. Through these sessions facilitated by Aawaaj, she also gained knowledge about reporting mechanisms and where and how to seek support in case of violence.



Sometime later, Nisha experienced online sexual harassment through video calls from a close relative (uncle). Based on the knowledge she gained from the adolescent group, she recognized the behavior as sexual abuse. She first shared the issue with her stepmother, but it was ignored. She then informed her father; however, initially, no one believed her and she was discouraged from speaking about the incident. Despite this, Nisha realized that she should not tolerate violence and decided to raise her voice for her own safety and future. She reported the incident to **Aawaaj**, and with the organization's support, the case process was initiated.

With facilitation from Aawaaj, a family discussion was organized where the perpetrator acknowledged the wrongdoing and the family collectively committed to ensuring that such behavior would not be repeated. As Nisha did not feel safe, she decided to live separately for some time. Later, after her stepmother committed to sharing household responsibilities, treating her like a daughter, and supporting her during difficulties, Nisha returned to live with her family.



Considering Nisha's vulnerability, educational challenges, and risk of violence, the adolescent group recommended Aawaaj to support her with skill development for income generation. Based on this recommendation, under the same empowerment project, Aawaaj provided Nisha with a three-month basic Montessori training along with financial support of NPR 15,000.

Currently, Nisha is 19 years old and is working as a teacher at **Baby Zone Montessori**, utilizing the skills she gained through the training. She is on the path to self-reliance and earns between NPR 10,000 to 12,000 per month, which has significantly reduced her financial hardship and boosted her confidence to move forward in life.

Nisha shares that if she had not been part of the adolescent group and learned about violence, rights, and self-confidence, she would not have been able to raise her voice against the abuse she experienced and might still be living in fear and hardship. She now encourages her peers not to tolerate violence and to speak up for themselves against injustice. Nisha expresses her sincere gratitude to **Aawaaj** for supporting her and many other adolescent girls through this program.

## **Policy Changes in Karnali Province to end Child Marriage**

Child marriage is one of the major forms of violence against children in Nepal and remains highly prevalent. According to Girls Not Brides, Nepal ranks second among SAARC countries in terms of child marriage, having previously ranked third. Despite numerous programs implemented over the years, efforts to eliminate child marriage have not been fully institutionalized at the government level, as the Government of Nepal has not consistently allocated sufficient budgets nor implemented strong nationwide programs. Nepal's three-tier governance system—federal, provincial, and local—means that the prevalence and drivers of child marriage differ across regions, making province-specific policies more effective than a uniform national approach.

Karnali Province has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the country. It ranks second among girls and first among boys, resulting in the highest combined prevalence for both genders. While other provinces had developed policies, programs, and allocated budgets to address child marriage, Karnali Province lacked a clear strategy and dedicated financial support, and was considered slow in policy development. Recognizing this gap, the Campaign Against Child Marriage Alliance (CACMA) initiated advocacy efforts to support the provincial government in formulating a strategic response to end early and child marriage (ECM).

On March 22, 2022, CACMA and the Ministry of Social Development - Karnali jointly organized a preliminary province-level consultation workshop to begin developing a strategic plan to end child marriage. Following the workshop, consultations were conducted with stakeholders at provincial, district, and local levels across all ten districts of Karnali Province. In Mugu, Jumla, Salyan, and Dolpa districts, consultations were facilitated jointly by the Ministry and CACMA, while the provincial government led discussions in the remaining districts. These consultations ensured broad-based participation, ownership, and contextual understanding of the challenges and potential interventions to address child marriage.



CACMA continuously provided technical support, suggestions, and advocacy to the provincial government; however, frequent changes in provincial ministers slowed the drafting and approval of the strategic plan. The process gained momentum when Honorable Minister Ghanshyam Bhandari assumed office as Minister for Social Development for a longer, stable period. Regular

coordination meetings and discussions between CACMA, the Ministry, and other stakeholders facilitated steady progress.



After the Government of Nepal issued the revised National Strategy to End Child Marriage and Action Plan 2081, Karnali Province aligned its strategy with the national framework, with CACMA providing technical support throughout the drafting process. The Chairperson and Project Coordinator of CACMA worked closely with ministry officials to finalize the document. Following approval by the Ministry of Social Development, the draft strategy was sent to the Ministry of Law and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and

Planning. While the Ministry of Law returned the document with comments for revision, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning initially rejected it, citing financial constraints.

In response, CACMA conducted meetings and advocacy with the Chief Minister, the Minister of Economic Affairs and Planning, the Minister of Social Development, Provincial Assembly Members, and senior officials, highlighting the serious impact of child marriage and the provincial government's responsibility. By presenting examples from other provinces that had successfully implemented similar strategies, CACMA secured agreement from both ministries, allowing the process to move forward. The final draft, revised based on feedback, was submitted to the Office of the Chief Minister. With strong civil society support and active leadership from the Minister of Social Development, the strategy was ultimately approved by the Council of Ministers of Karnali Province.

The Provincial Strategic Plan to End Child Marriage 2081 was officially endorsed on November 23, 2025, and uploaded to the ministry's official website. Following its endorsement, the provincial government initiated orientation programs and began implementation in partnership with civil society organizations. In collaboration with UNICEF, a Girls' Transformation Program valued at NPR 6 million was launched. The provincial strategy is notably more child-focused than other provincial and federal strategies, with clearly defined goals, objectives, and activities related to child protection and development. This process also strengthened collaboration between civil society and the provincial government, establishing a sustainable partnership model.

Moving forward, priority should be given to effective implementation of the strategy, including ensuring adequate budget allocation, strengthening monitoring mechanisms, building the capacity of local governments, and continuing technical engagement. CACMA's ongoing support remains critical to ensure that the Provincial Strategic Plan translates into measurable outcomes, contributing significantly to ending early and child marriage in Karnali Province



## Journey Against Domestic violence

Devi (changed name), aged 48, is a resident of Panchapuri Municipality, Surkhet District. She was third child of her parents, she had an arranged marriage at the age of 20. It has been about 30 years since her marriage. She has two sons and one daughter, her daughter is intellectually disabled. Devi spent most of her time at home taking care of her children and managing household responsibilities, while her husband used to travel to India frequently for work.

In the early years of their marriage, they spent peaceful relationship. However, over time, her husband's behaviour began to change. Whenever he returned from India, he would come home late at night, engaged in relationships with other women, and often physically assaulted devi minors' issues. Because of her daughter's disability, Devi endured the physical and mental violence for years, hoping to keep peace in the family. When the violence became unbearable, she sometimes went to her maternal home for Shelter. Her family members tried to managed conflict, but her husband behaviour did not change permanently.

The continuous abuse severely affected on Devi's mental health. She began to experience fear, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, and constant anxiety. As her situation detreated, she finally reached out to Aawaaj for help. When she reached the Aawaaj organization. The organization recorded her case detail and provided her with necessary support services. She received psychosocial counselling, emergency shelter support, as well as legal counselling. The organization also contacted her husband and provided him telephone counselling services. After regular follow-up with her husband he was invited to the organization for a family counselling. The Aawaaj provided family counselling and mediation services. During the session, both parties were heard carefully, and her husband agreed not to commit violence anymore and to live happily with his wife. Following this mutual understand they returned home. For some time, their relationship improved and the home environment seemed normal again.

However, as time passed, her husband repeated his old habits. He married another woman then conflicts started again. This caused Devi deep emotional distressed, and once again approached Aawaaj organization to report her situation. The organization provided her further legal counselling and also coordinated with police and legal service provider to help file a polygamy case. Her case is currently under legal process, and both her husband and Second wife is in police custody now. The organization recently followed up on this case. During the follow-up in court, her husband and second wife were released on bail, and the case is currently under legal process.

Now, Devi has chosen the legal path to fight for her rights. She has gathered the courage to speak out against violence and seek justice. With continuous support and legal guidance from the organization her confidence and self-esteem have grown stronger. Devi's Story reflects that when women survivors of violence break their silence and seek institutional support, the path toward justice and positive change begins to open. This case highlights the importance of accessible psycho-social and legal services in helping survivors rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

## The business made it easier to earn a living with dignity in the community

Tulsi Nepali, a resident of Lower Biju, Ward No. 9 of Panchapuri Municipality, Surkhet District, eloped and got married in Achham District at the age of 19. After marriage, she gave birth to one daughter. Soon after the marriage, she began experiencing domestic violence. Her husband started mistreating and abusing her, and eventually other members of the household also began to subject her to domestic violence. Her husband became involved with another woman, neglected her, and continued the abuse.



Ultimately, he married a second wife. After enduring severe abuse and suffering from her marital family, Tulsi returned to her maternal home and began living there.

A meeting was organized in her community to form a women's group, and she also attended the meeting. During the meeting, the social facilitator explained that the purpose of forming a women's group was to address harmful social norms in the community and to reduce gender-based violence by engaging women actively in the community. Afterwards, Tulsi expressed her willingness to join the group, sharing that she had been affected by domestic violence. In the group's first meeting, when discussions were held about the types of violence experienced by women and children in the community, she shared with everyone the injustices and violence she had personally experienced. Following this, the group informed her about the Child Helpline (1098) to report her issues and about the services provided by the Aawaaj organization. Subsequently, she approached Aawaaj and shared her problems. The organization coordinated with her husband to register the birth of her daughter. When her husband refused, the registration was completed only after pressure was applied. However, her husband did not agree to acknowledge the allegations that he had entered into another marriage. Tulsi continued living at her maternal home. Later, the women's group she was affiliated with selected and recommended her to participate in a skills development training program. She decided to take training as a beautician with the goal of running a beauty parlor in her community. Along with six other friends, she completed a three-month beautician training. After the training, the organization provided seed money, and her brother also contributed some funds, which enabled Tulsi to establish a beauty parlor in the nearby Vidyapur market. She mentioned that during the major Nepali festivals of Dashain and Tihar, her monthly business could reach around 40,000 to 50,000 NPR. She also stated that her monthly profit ranges from 12,000 to 15,000 NPR. Running the business has made it easier for her to cover her daughter's education expenses and her household needs. With improved financial stability, she experiences less worry and stress, and she feels happy that the community now views her positively. She also expressed heartfelt gratitude to all the supporting organizations.

## Domestic violence can be addressed when there are women's groups within the community

Nirmala B.K., 23 years old, resident of Jamu, Ward No. 10, Panchpuri Municipality, Surkhet District, was a 10 years old when her mother left her and remarried. After her mother left, her father brought another woman as her stepmother. At home, her stepmother did not show her love and only assigned her household work, which caused Nirmala a lot of suffering during her childhood. When

she was supposed to be studying at school, she had to spend her days doing household chores because of her stepmother she could not attend school.

After sometime, her stepmother gave birth to brothers and sisters, and after that, Nirmala faced even more neglected and mistreatment. While working in the grass and thatch fields, her father fell from a tree and fractured his back. After her father's injury, Nirmala's difficulties increased, and their financial situation became even more fragile. Subsequently, she went to India to work with a village uncle in search of employment.

Upon reaching Punjab, India, her uncle got her a job in a company that made plastic pots. She was provided with food and lodging and received a monthly salary of twelve thousand. During this time, a 23-year-old man named Gajendra B.K., from the same community, also worked nearby. Being from the same community, they got to know each other and communicated regularly. Their relationship grew closer, and they decided to get married. Nirmala and Gajendra got married in India, after which Nirmala informed her family about the marriage. However, her stepmother did not accept the marriage and verbally abused her. Subsequently, Nirmala and her husband lived together in India for six months before moving to Nepal to stay at the husband's family home. After some time, her husband left for India, leaving Nirmala at home. After he left, her husband's family verbally and physically abused her. As she continued to endure the violence, the family members began to abuse her even more. The situation became unbearable. Nirmala called her husband in India to inform him, but he paid no attention and even told her not to come to India. When she sought help from her own family, no one was able to support her, and she felt extremely distressed. After experiencing such severe violence and having no one to talk to or turn to, she decided to commit suicide in the Bheri River. On her way to the river, she met Tuli B.K., a senior woman from her village. Tuli asked her where she was going, and Nirmala tearfully explained everything.

Tuli then took Nirmala to the house of Pushpa Nyaupane, the secretary of the Milan Chowk women's group in the community. The secretary called the chairperson and all the nearby group members to inform them about Nirmala's situation. Everyone then went to Nirmala's home to discuss her problems. They explained the effects of domestic violence, the legal procedures available, and reminded all family members about proper behavior. The family members realized their mistakes and collectively committed not to repeat the violence.

Currently, Nirmala reports that her family no longer abuses her and that their relationships have improved. She stated that the women's group in the community was extremely helpful through discussion and mediation, which allowed her to live a life free from violence. She also expressed her gratitude to all the members of the women's group.

**Due to my business, self-confidence increased, and violence stopped** Kalpana Sunar, a resident of Dulalthai, Ward No. 8, Panchpuri Municipality, Surkhet District, was married at the age of 16. She is currently 34 years old. Her family consists of four members in total: herself, her husband, and two sons.

Many years ago, she faced numerous problems due to her child marriage and poor health condition. After giving birth, her reproductive health was affected. Because of her weak health, she was not treated well within her family. Her husband began to behave badly—drinking alcohol, having relationships with other women, bringing other women into the house, and even physically abusing her. At that time, the *Aawaaj* organized a meeting for women to form a women’s group in her community. She also attended that meeting. After



the social facilitator explained that the women’s group was being formed to prevent gender-based violence in the community and to support those affected by violence, she shared her own experiences of abuse and expressed her desire to join the group. Following this, she became involved in the women’s group.

After joining the group, she had the opportunity to learn about the different forms of gender-based violence, their impacts and effects, efforts that can be made for prevention, and the legal procedures involved. One day, after her husband physically assaulted her, she called the women’s group leaders and informed them about the incident. Following this, 4-5 women’s group leaders and local representatives visited her home and explained the situation to her husband. They educated him about the effects of domestic violence on children, the person committing violence, and society as a whole. Her husband listened to everything and admitted that he had acted wrongly. Afterward, both of them reconciled publicly, with a commitment from him not to engage in violence in the future.

The women’s group she joined selected women affected by violence and those with weak economic conditions for a development training program, and she was also selected. She expressed her desire to learn how to make woolen products, produce them, and sell or distribute them. Following this, along with seven other young women participants, she completed a 45-day training on woolen product production (including woolen caps, hair ties, handkerchiefs, mufflers, bags, sweaters, decorative items, and lace). During the training, she was able to produce the fastest and best-quality products.

After the training, the organization supported her in purchasing wool, and she also contributed some of her own money to buy various types of wool. Once the materials arrived, she started producing sweaters, mufflers, caps, socks, and hair ties at home during the cold season and selling them within the community and in nearby markets. Seeing her success, local residents and fancy shops in the market also began placing orders for her products. She reports earning a profit of 10,000 to 12,000 NPR per month. With this income, she has been able to manage her personal expenses, her children’s expenses, and household costs more easily.

After she started earning money, her husband also began to treat her with more care. He now runs a small snack shop near the community school. Today, both of them work together in their respective businesses and serve as a positive example in the community. Kalpana says that after starting her business, the behavior of her family and neighbors has become more positive, and she herself has gained self-confidence and belief in her abilities. She hopes to further expand this business as a source of income.



**Few Pictures:**



Positive parenting session at Barahtaal Bhatteghari



Women's group formation at Barahatal ward no 8 Surkhet

Legal orientation to Community people



समुह र सञ्जालका किशोरीहरु ५ दिनको आत्मरक्षा तालिममा अभ्यास गर्दै



तालिममा सिकेका आत्मरक्षा तालिमका सीपह किशोरीहरु आ आफ्नो समूहमा सिकाउदै