

Her Turn 2014 Annual Report



Table of Content

Acknowledgements	2
2014 Highlights	3
Our Year	4
The Girls and Their Context	5
Workshops – Model	6
Evaluation Methodology	8
Impact: Security and Resilience to Violence	8
Impact: Health	9
Impact: Empowerment and Education	11
Feedback from Girls and Communities	12
Mentorship – Model	13
Impact: Girl Leaders and Change Makers	13
Impact: Policy and Advocacy	16
Challenges	17
Lesson Learned and Plans	17
Recommendations	19
Finances	20

Acknowledgements

At Her Turn we would like to express our gratitude to people and organizations who made our work possible this year. We would like to thank the Coyle family who continued to generously support our programs. We are also grateful to Ursula Daniels and PaxWorks, Dining for Women, PHASE Nepal, Children of the Mountain, Present Purpose Network, Child Protection Centers and Services, and Danielle Preiss who donates her time to increase our online presence and participate in our advocacy work. In 2014 many other people have supported us, wrote about Her Turn in the media, shared our advocacy materials and helped us in other ways; this work would not have been possible without these contributions. Thank you.



Workshop participants

Reach



1,086 girls reached

97% attendance in workshops

43 trainers

29,051 meals

12 schools

6 mentors

SECURITY AND VIOLENCE RESILIENCE

- 64%** more girls know GBV and VAWG laws
- 44%** more girls know how to respond to violence
- 34%** more girls know the legal age of marriage
- 40%** more girls know trafficking response

33% more girls know about puberty

27% more girls know about menstruation

HEALTH

more girls know about puberty hygiene

33%

more girls know about menstrual hygiene

30%

KEY IMPACTS



EMPOWERMENT

- 22%** more girls feel strong
- 28%** more girls feel powerful

ADVOCACY

- 11** Community Ceremonies
- 3,619** community members
- 30** days #PointPeriod campaign

31.89

USD per girl

1.33

USD per girl per day

96%

program expenses

Budget

Our Year

In 2014 we have worked with 1,086 girls who participated in our education and empowerment workshops. We continued to work in two districts: Sindhupalchok and Gorkha, and during the summer when rural schools are closed, we delivered our workshop to a group of adolescent girls from a hostel for street children ran in Kathmandu by Child Protection Centers and Services.

The average attendance rate exceeded 97%. The workshops were delivered by 43 women who completed our trainings of trainers (TOT); the majority of whom were from low caste or indigenous ethnic groups. Other 43 women, of which some also completed our TOT, served as trainers' assistants. Over the course of the year we supplied a total of 29,051 meals from local providers: 25,432 meals during each workshop session to all participating girls, trainers and assistants, and 3,619 during community ceremonies to guests who included girls' families, community members and leaders, teachers, local organizations' officers, and local government officials.



Song at a community ceremony

As the number of our participants grew in 2014, we expanded our programming to better ensure its sustainability. We designed and launched a mentorship program that provides long term support in our field sites. Mentors are recruited from our most successful past trainers in each Village Development Committee (VDC) to provide guidance and support to Girls Support Committees. The mentors meet with the Committees and other girls monthly in order to address problems that affect children in their school and community; this includes girls and boys who have not participated in our workshops or aren't attending school. More information on our mentorship program is included later in this report.

The changes after the workshop are: girls speak confidently without fear, they feel proud and don't regret being a girl, they can move forward in any work, they are not worried about the changes during puberty, they focus more on hygiene during menstruation and they can say "no" when there is violence or bullying in their life.

Her Turn trainer

Based on suggestions from our trainers, we have increased the target age group of our participants. Many trainers reported that while girls aged 10-11 are too young to fully participate in the workshops, older girls might benefit greatly from them. While previously we were working with girls aged 10-14, in the summer of 2014 we have changed the target age group to 12-16. This has increased girls' participation in the workshop sessions and the older girls have a higher level of understanding of the issues covered in our program.

We have streamlined our administrative and implementation processes by developing and formalizing monitoring tools for trainers' observation and feedback. Other procedures, such as reporting and lessons learned analysis, improved our efficiency in the field. In addition, we have increased our communication with girls' parents through organized meetings. Lastly, we formalized our Code of Conduct that emphasizes our commitment to effectiveness, transparency, and non-discrimination in hiring and contracting with local service providers.

In July 2014 we signed an agreement with FJC – A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds. FJC serves as our fiscal sponsor in the USA, which allows us to accept tax deductible donations (as a 501(c)(3) registered organization) and provides an additional financial oversight mechanism through regularly required financial reporting. Prior to signing the agreement, we shared a fiscal sponsorship account at FJC with Nepal Teacher Training Innovations, and we jointly decided that setting up a separate account would facilitate our respective programs' financial reporting.

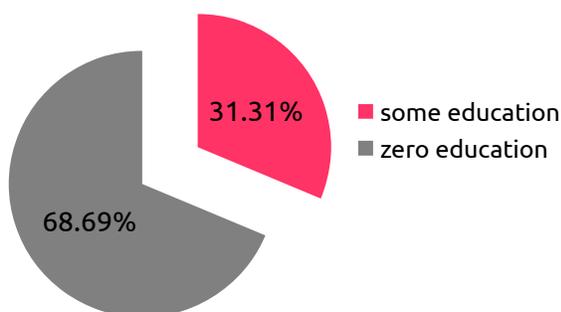
Our personnel needs grew alongside our programs. Our Field Coordinator became our Program Coordinator, and currently works exclusively in Kathmandu in coordination, administration and program support. In the spring of 2015 we have hired Yachin Sherpa as a Master Trainer and Field Coordinator. Yachin has extensive teaching experience, is a member of Yolmo Women Association and is dedicated to working with Nepali girls to reach their potential.

The Girls and Their Context

As illustrated below, the girls we work with represent some of the most vulnerable populations in Nepal. Many of them come from low caste and historically marginalized ethnic groups, such as Tamang or Dalit. Low levels of their parents' education mean that many of their households are affected by poverty, and that schooling, especially girls', is often not a priority in their families. These factors contribute to girls' lower access to education, high drop-out rates, lower access to health care, and higher vulnerability to various forms of violence, such as early marriage, caste based discrimination, sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), and human trafficking. While access to education is important for every girl and boy, in this regard the girls we work with have more needs than urban, high caste girls whose parents are more educated.

The majority of girls we worked with this year belong to the Tamang ethnic group, with the rest from the following ethnic and caste groups: Sherpa, Bahun, Chetri, Dalit, Thami, Magar, Bhujel, and Newar. While currently our target age group is 12-16, in the beginning of the year it was 10-14. We have also worked with some older girls if they are in the class level of our target age group. Because children in Nepal start their school at varying ages, in many cases the age does not reflect their class level. Our participants were on average 12.84 years old. While the majority of our participants (almost 90%) are in Classes 4-10, there were also girls who had just started primary school (3 girls in Class 1) and one of our older participants was from Class 12.

Mothers' education level

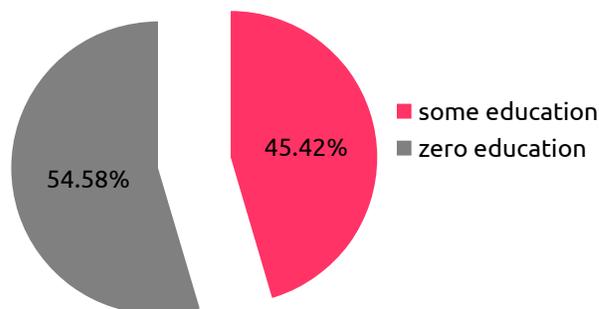


Mothers of our participants had on average only 1.87 years of schooling completed. Almost 7 in 10 of the mothers had never attended any formal education. Fifteen percent had some level of primary level education (between one and five years of schooling), and 15.28% had attended secondary school (between six and ten years of schooling.) Mothers with higher secondary level accounted for 1.25% – only one

mother was reported to have completed 15 years of education.

Fathers' levels of education were higher. Over 45% of fathers had zero education, while almost 31% had some level of primary education and 20.35% some level of secondary. Fathers who finished 11 or more years of schooling accounted for only 3.5% of the target demographic.

Fathers' education level



Our participants had 3.64 siblings on average. Thirty one percent reported having 2 or less siblings, almost 53% between 3 and 5 siblings, and over 16% had more than six brothers and sisters. In many cases the number of siblings affects the house work load girls have to perform because they have to take care of their younger brothers and sisters. This, in turn, may decrease the amount of time they have to study, do homework, and attend school. When asked how much time daily they spend working at home or in the field, girls reported working a little over two hours a day on average. Only 4.6% of our participants reported working 15 minutes or less per day and one third said they worked between 15 minutes and one hour. A



Workshop participants

further 31.5% said they worked between one and two hours every day, and 30.6% spend three or more hours each day performing tasks such as cooking, washing, doing laundry, working in the field and taking care of their younger siblings.

Child marriage, although illegal, is still prevalent in Nepal. Many child brides drop out of school, and are pressured by their husbands' families to immediately bear a child, preferably a son. Early pregnancy puts them at risk of severe health problems, such as obstetric fistula and uterine prolapse. Child brides are also more likely to experience domestic and sexual violence, and less likely to lift themselves from poverty. The current estimations are that 29% of girls in Nepal below the age of 18 are already married. Some of these unions are "arranged marriages," where bride's and groom's family agree on a wedding, while others are known as "love marriages," where the couple of adolescents themselves decides to tie the knot. Social norms, prevalent especially in rural Nepal, prevent young people from dating. If a couple is interested in each other, they elope, often against their parents' wishes. When they get back to their village after several days, they are considered married. Growing prevalence of this type of marriage points to the need of educating young people about legal provisions, health and social consequences of early marriage. Among the girls we worked with in 2014, 1%

were already married, but 78% knew a friend of a similar age who had already been married.

Regarding traditional restrictions around menstruation, various Nepali communities exercise different practices. For example in many Dalit and Bahun communities girls and women are not allowed to enter the kitchen, sometimes are separated for several days during their first menstruation, and are not allowed to look at any males. Of all our participants, 57.5% reported following some form of restriction during menstruation.

Dowry is a tradition practiced in many communities in India and Nepal, where a bride's family provides the groom's family with money, estates or material goods. Dowry is one of the reasons why many families prefer to have sons as opposed to daughters. Sadly, it is also an incentive to marry girls young, because the younger the bride, the lower requested dowry amount. While it is banned by several legal provisions in Nepal, the practice is still prevalent in many parts of the country. Dowry related violence is not uncommon, and usually happens when the groom's family requests more goods or the bride's family is too poor to meet requests. When this happens and the girl already lives in the household of her husband, she can be subjected to violence that can even lead to death. Twenty nine percent of girls who participated in our workshops this year reported that dowry is still practiced in their communities.

Workshops – Model

Her Turn education and empowerment workshops were designed after extended field and desk research. Initial field research was conducted in 2012 in Sindhupalchowk district, and it has been continued alongside the implementation of the pilot program. The needs assessment included focus group discussions and interviews with rural adolescent girls,

women, parents, teachers, and with a number of women's organizations. The program was developed based off of international best practices and research on girls from South Asia and other developing countries. Research on child marriage prevention, girl centered programs, violence resilience and response, and menstrual hygiene management were all incorporated into the design of the workshop.

This process resulted in a curriculum designed for girls aged 12-16 from rural Nepal. The program lasts four weeks and is delivered in groups of 20 girls in schools, usually before school starts. Girls in that age group who are not in school are also invited to attend. The curriculum is girl centered, interactive, relevant and culturally sensitive.

The first week of the program is dedicated to health issues, such as safe water handling, nutrition, puberty, and menstruation. While some of these topics should be covered in national curriculum, many teachers are unprepared to teach about menstruation and menstrual hygiene, and the girls are left with no access to knowledge about this important issue. During the



Girl Support Committee members

second week, the girls discuss safety issues: bullying, child marriage, human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual abuse. They learn laws related to sexual and gender based violence and in each school they elect a group of their peers to form a Girl Support Committee. These Committees are equipped with additional resources that cover legal provisions, and they work to resolve various issues that pertain to the wellbeing of girls in their school and community.

Following week, the trainers work with the girls on developing their confidence and leadership skills. This is done by various activities like practicing public speaking or working in groups to discuss aspects of gender equality. During that week the girls invite a guest female leader from their community to speak to them about leadership. This gives them an opportunity to meet a woman who is successful in her work and ask her questions. The fourth week is dedicated to a community project that is designed and implemented by the girls through consensus. Each group of 20 girls receives the same amount of cash and decides how to spend it. The emphasis here is on girls' own decisions and through consensus each participant's voice must be included. We try to ensure that principals, teachers or other adults do not interfere with their decision. The girls often chose to upgrade their classrooms and toilets, buy sanitary pads for the school, cultural dresses used in school ceremonies, or sound systems. In order to ensure that the girls are comfortable and get answers to all their questions, each group has a Secret Box. They can anonymously submit their questions that they prefer not to share publicly and the trainer answers them at the following session. The

information covered in the curriculum, from physiology and hygiene of menstruation to laws pertaining to various forms of violence against women and girls, is included in Girl Guidebook that each participant receives. The Guidebook also contains contact information to various resources available locally like women and children police cells, safe houses, anti-trafficking organizations, groups that provide psychosocial and legal support, and scholarship opportunities.

Throughout the workshops we provide snacks for each participant and trainer. The snacks are prepared by local providers, and serve several purposes. They are an opportunity for the girls to form healthy habits of washing their hands before and after meals. They also serve as an informal space for girls to form friendships and discuss issues covered during workshop sessions. Lastly, they help to address caste divisions and discrimination many of these girls experience and witness from young ages. In many communities, people from high castes do not share meals, or plates, with people from low castes. Throughout our program the girls take turns distributing meals to their peers, meaning that girls from high caste groups accept food from low caste participants and vice versa. Some of our trainers report that this decreases inter-caste tensions between the participants and helps break down the taboo of inter-caste relationships between women, a necessary step in addressing community wide gender and caste issues.

The workshops are delivered by young women from the same communities the girls come from. One of the priorities is that these women represent similar ethnic and caste backgrounds as the girls, so that it is easy for participants to relate to them. Prior to the workshops, the trainers complete a five day training delivered by our Master Trainer. During the first two days, they discuss various issues related to gender dynamics in their communities, discrimination, equality, and they learn presentation and facilitation techniques. In the next three days, the trainers practice activities from our curriculum and receive feedback in order to help them successfully deliver its content. They are also sensitized to corporal punishment, an acceptable form of discipline in many Nepali schools, and taught about how it negatively impacts learning and the creation of safe spaces. Any threats or physical penalty are strictly banned in our workshops; instead the trainers are taught nonviolent methods of controlling the classroom.



Workshop trainers

Evaluation Methodology

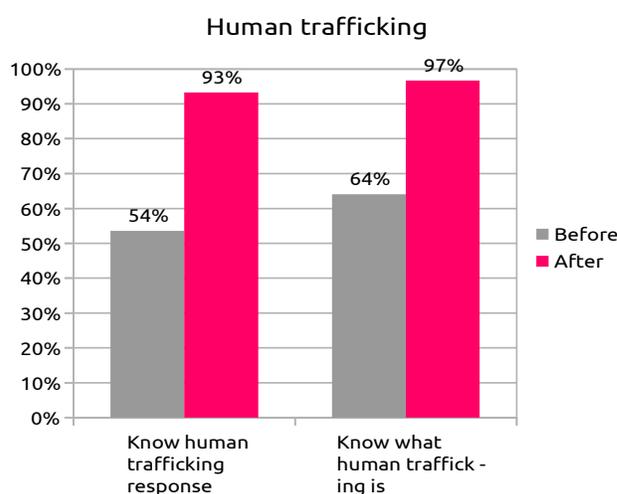
In 2014 we continued to rigorously evaluate our program. As before, we used both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the impact it had on girls, their families, and schools. For quantitative assessments we used a questionnaire that the girls filled out twice: before and after the workshop. This tool measured their knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) that relate to health, hygiene, safety, self-perception, and confidence levels. The survey girls filled out before the workshops also contained questions about their family situation, such as information about their siblings, how much time they spend working in their households and the field, or parents' levels of education. The survey after the workshop had some additional questions regarding the importance and relevance of what the girls had learned. The surveys were conducted by our Master

Trainer in Nepali, on paper, with every girl filling out an answer sheet. This data was later translated into English and typed into spreadsheets, which allowed us to compare the before and after results.

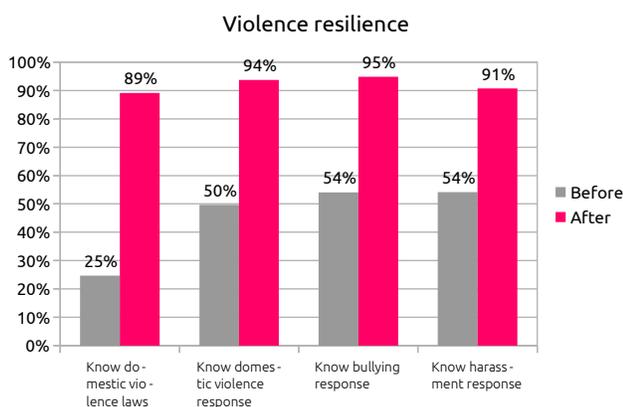
For qualitative assessment, we conducted semi-structured interviews with the girls, their trainers, teachers and parents. These allowed us to explore the changes reported in girls' surveys in regard to their knowledge, attitudes and practices. These interviews provided us with case studies on what has worked about the trainings, ideas for how to improve upon the workshops' delivery, and further confirmation of the program's impact. The interviews were conducted and recorded by our Master Trainer in Nepali, and later translated and transcribed by our Master Trainer and Program Coordinator.

Impact: Security and Resilience to Violence

Overall, improving girls' resilience to violence, their ability to respond to it, their knowledge of laws and response mechanisms was where Her Turn's workshops had the greatest impact. Girls' knowledge of laws relating to domestic violence was the area where we have seen the greatest change (64% growth.) After the program, 44% more girls stated that they know how to respond to situations of domestic violence. The number of girls who knew how to respond to bullying increased by 41% and knowledge of harassment response went from 54% to 91%. Increased violence resilience was also evident in our interviews. Many girls declared that the way they would use what they learned in their daily lives, would be to respond to and report various forms of violence, while others wanted to raise their communities' awareness of security issues. Some examples of girls' declarations include: "I will increase awareness about girl trafficking," "I'll try to control violence in society,"



"if anyone bullies me, I'll raise voice against it," or "I will stop child marriage."



Knowledge of human trafficking, an important and often neglected issue, grew from 64% to 97% and the number of girls who declared they knew how to respond to risk of trafficking increased by 39%. During our interviews, we asked some girls about certain security and safety related scenarios involving trafficking. For example, we asked a 12 years old girl after the workshop what she would do if someone told her they would send her abroad, where she would earn a lot of money and wouldn't have to study. She replied "I have taken Her Turn training and I am aware about it. I will say 'I have to study. I'm not old enough to go abroad and earn money. I'll study and I have to achieve something.' If someone tries to pressure us by

saying 'I'll take you abroad, give you money or give good job,' we won't go with them and will immediately complain to whoever will help us or report to police station.'

Early marriage is an important security issue for girls. It is often related to higher vulnerability to domestic violence, including sexual violence. Girl brides are also at risk of many devastating health conditions related to early pregnancy, such as obstetric fistula and uterine prolapse – both common in Nepal. Thirty four percent more participants knew the legal age of marriage in Nepal. Each girl who has participated in the workshops reported knowledge of child marriage and related issues, an increase of 27%. In interviews, all girls declared they first want to become independent before getting married. Please see below (section Impact: Education and Empowerment) for declared best age at marriage and first child. Almost one third more girls declared that they know a trusted person they can go to when they are afraid. We consider this shift another important aspect of increased violence resilience, because a trusted adult can be a helpful resource in a risk situation.



Girl Support Committee member

Girl Support Committees seem to play an important role in school life. They helped to solve conflict situations, such as bullying or harassment. One trainer reported, "If somebody bullies girls, they come and report the problem to Girl Support Committee. We solved two or three such cases when somebody had

teased or touched a girl. All the members of Girl Support Committee and teachers went to that perpetrator and advised him not to do it again. In class if some boys teased them or bullied them they were able to talk about it without any hesitation." For more information on the Committees' work in security, please see below section Impact: Girl Leaders and Change Makers.

Many girls and trainers reported growth in their confidence, which allows them to address security threats and negotiate life decisions, such as going abroad for work or being married off. Almost 30% more girls declared after the workshop that they can decide (as opposed to their families and community members) who and when they will marry. One 14 years old Dalit girl from Gorkha district told us, "now that we know all these things, no-one can bully us. If we are being bullied we can talk about it openly, with confidence and without being afraid. Because of Her Turn workshop I have become more active, confident and speak in front of other people. I wasn't confident before." Many other girls share similar accounts of being able to speak publicly and being less shy and afraid of voicing their opinions. We believe the growth in girls' confidence is vital in preparing them to respond to potential violence.

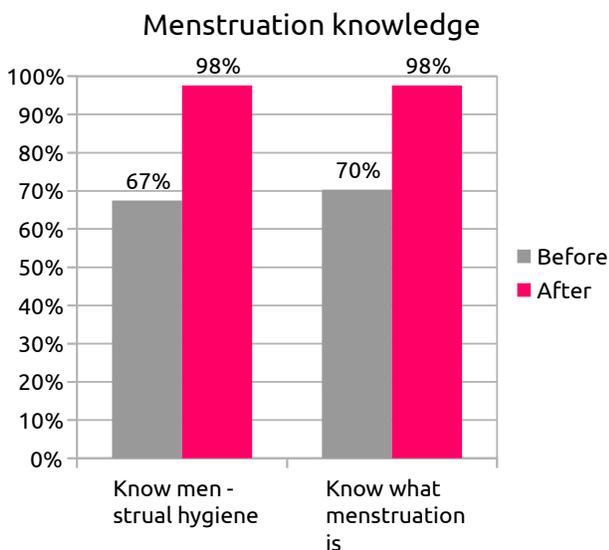
Girls pass their knowledge of violence and security onto their families. One 14 years old interviewee told us she spoke with her friends and family about the workshop and she told them "about domestic violence and its causes, results and prevention." Another 13 years old girl told us she spoke about the workshop with her whole family, including her grandparents: "Grandmother is not educated, so she was curious to know what was written and told me to read out the Girl Guidebook." Another participant recalled, "I told my mother about how to maintain hygiene, what is sexual harassment, experiences of menstruation and methods of menstrual hygiene." Over and over girls were telling us how they raise their mothers' awareness, often about hygiene and menstruation, but also about domestic violence and sexual harassment. We hope the tremendous growth in girls' knowledge of gender and sexual violence laws will help them become strong advocates within their homes and communities.

Impact: Health

Another area where girls' knowledge, attitudes and practices grew significantly was health. The percentage of girls who reported knowledge of puberty increased by 34%, and the knowledge of hygiene by 33%. Girls also learned about how germs

spread (an increase of 19%), and about healthy eating and nutrition (an increase of 18%). Many families' practices that affect their health are influenced by the girls after they participate in our program. For example, a mother from Sindhupalchok district told us

they started filtering water before drinking. Other parents, trainers and girls also report an increase in hygienic behaviors such as hand washing and regular showers. We think these changes not only affect the health of a family, they also put girls in the position of power within their households. Parents listen to and respect the health related knowledge the girls bring and that changes the family dynamics. Perhaps nowhere is this shift more visible than in the narratives around menstruation.



Knowledge of menstrual hygiene grew by 31% and menstruation physiology by 28%. Girls' perspective on menstruation might be one of the biggest changes in terms of their attitudes. Traditionally in many communities there is stigma around it, accompanied by little information on physiology and menstrual hygiene management. Menstruating girls and women are often considered impure and polluting, which leads to various forms of restrictions they have to follow. In some cases, our workshops are the first time that the trainers, the girls, and their mothers learn the correct Nepali word for menstruation – in the past the word used commonly was *nachunne*, meaning “untouchable.” Throughout the workshops the girls discussed both the cultural norms around menstruation, and what is happening with their bodies when they have their periods. One of the trainers reported, “before, they used to think menstruation is horrible and during menstruation girls used to feel afraid, shy and like they made a huge mistake. But now they think it is normal and natural.”

When asked how girls used what they learned in their daily lives, many of their answers related to menstruation. They said they would “see menstruation as normal” and “raise awareness in the community about menstruation.” Our interviews showed that in

some cases after the workshops the girls successfully changed discriminatory practices – they discussed them within their households and changed the traditions that their mothers and grandmothers used to exercise. One 12 years old girl from Gorkha told us,

“We must be open about menstruation. During menstruation we must not be restricted. We must be allowed to enter the house... We used to have to clean the sleeping area with a tree leaf and we were not even allowed to comb our hair. But after Her Turn workshop this concept has changed. After the training, there are no restrictions. We can sleep inside the house. The practice of cleaning with a leaf has also vanished. We are now allowed to sleep on mattresses. In the past, girls had to carry heavy loads and work a lot during menstruation, but now we ask [our families] for rest. We talked about menstruation with parents and parents also tells us they will not do these things again in the future.”

With their newly acquired knowledge, our participants tackled the stigma related to menstruation and discussed changes that occurred in the past few decades. One student told us, “during my grandmother's period she was separated for 22 days, my mother was separated for 18 days and I was separated for 11 days. So there is change in time. During grandmother's period she was not allowed to see the house or touch plants, but I am not restricted like this. I am only not allowed to enter the kitchen and touch *puja* [religious ceremonial] items.”



Audience at a community ceremony

No girl interviewed by us saw any benefits of these restrictions and they all declared that they wanted to change the practices. One 14 years old interviewee told us how she was afraid the first time she got her period and had to stay at somebody else's house. This participant declared she would not impose the practice on her future daughter: “I am aware and

capable myself now. So in the future I will not restrict my daughter. I will make her comfortable and motivate her. I will tell her to go to school, to go out to play with

her friends, tell her she can enter the kitchen and cook food.”

Impact: Empowerment and Education

Participants' attitudes and self-perceptions that relate to their sense of agency and empowerment are another area where we recorded a significant change. Most girls reported increased confidence and ability to speak in front of others. Thirty three percent more girls reported that they knew about female leaders. The number of girls who declared feeling powerful or empowered rose from 63% to 91%, and the number of girls who felt they are strong rose by 21%. One student from Sindhupalchok when we asked about whether she saw any changes in herself, replied, “after attending this workshop I feel I can do anything in life.” Numerous researches and best practices show that when girls feel confident and strong they are more resilient to violence, more capable of caring for their own and their families' health, and have a greater capacity to respond to gender and caste based discrimination.

From participant's essay on empowerment:
We shouldn't think that we are weak and can't do this work. As much as possible we should think that we are capable in any field. We should try and if we fail then again we should try again and again. Capable person should be healthy, strong and confident. We have to have self-respect. Self-respect means always being true to self. If a person is true or always speaks truth, they will be successful in any work and will not fail. A person should be confident. We can help our friends to be strong and confident.

One of the important factors that affect girl's access to education is early marriage and what age she has her first child. We have recorded differences before and after the workshop in the declared best age to marry and become pregnant. For tying the knot, before the workshops the girls reported on average 21.76 years, after the workshop this figure grew to 22.33. A much larger difference was evident in the age that girls believed was best to have their first child: before the workshop girls declared that on average 24.02 was the best age to give birth, while after they said it was 27.4. This is an important change, because early childbirth (which often happens in cases of early marriage when girl brides are pressured to become pregnant and bear a son) can and often does have devastating health consequences.

Many teachers and principals reported girls' greater levels of confidence and more participation in school activities. In the spring of 2014, one trainer shared a story of a class on child development that happened

shortly after our program's completion. Although menstruation is included in the national curriculum, the lesson is rarely delivered because health teachers who are mostly male are unqualified and struggle with shame and stigma around the issue. During our workshops, girls gain the knowledge of physiology and the of menstruation hygiene management. The trainer reported, “One of the boys asked [the male teacher] what menstruation is and how it happens. He felt awkward, so one of the girls said 'I'll answer this.' She explained what menstruation is and why only girls have it. The teacher was very happy and felt it was very helpful.”

Other trainers shared similar accounts. One trainer from Sindhupalchok recalled, “at first when I taught these girls they were shy. I told them about aim of this program and along with the workshop their speaking skills developed. I taught them about leadership. In this, I asked everyone who thinks they can be a leader, to raise their hands. Almost everyone raised their hand to volunteer to be a leader.” Principals confirm increased girls' participation in school activities. For example, “girls who used to be shy in class or not speak are now actively participating.”



Stage play at a community ceremony

To understand the longer term impact of our programs, this year we've reached out to the trainers and teachers who worked with us in 2013 and asked them whether the changes they reported immediately after the workshops were upheld. The workshops seemed to serve as a jump start for conversations about gender equality in school, in communities, and

at home. One trainer who conducted workshops in 2013 reported, “before, girls and boys were not treated equally. Now girls are loved by parents equally. A daughter is also given importance equal to a son.” This change is reflected in another trainer's report, “before, girls were very shy, afraid and didn't participate in school activities. These days they are active and participating. They demand activities for girls, so at our school we started football games for girls. In youth clubs they participate more and they demand leadership positions.” One girl said, “we want to be the next president [of the club]. We can also do it.”

Some girls changed their plans and remained in school after participating in the workshops. A trainer from Sindhupalchok district who had worked with us in the

fall of 2013 reported, “in our school one girl was planning to drop out after Class 5. After participating in our program, she has managed to continue school regularly even though the school is quite far. Now she is studying in Class 8. She is a little older than others but this workshop motivated girls to continue to study – age doesn't make any difference. She did this because of her own conviction and confidence.” This trainer, who is also a young Principal of a small school, also told us that in her school “now both boys and girls are not shy to speak about menstruation. In the school curriculum up to Class 5 there is no subject about puberty and menstruation, but some girls menstruate while there are in Class 4 or 5. In our school we are planning to teach about girls' health issues like menstruation or puberty earlier.”

Feedback from Girls and Communities

At the end of the workshop we ask our participants for feedback on the curriculum, what were the most relevant things they learned and what they would like to know more about. This helps us ensure that the curriculum is relevant and add topics requested by the girls. Over 28% of participants reported that menstruation was the most relevant topic discussed and another 20% pointed to human trafficking. Almost eighteen percent said violence, including domestic violence, was the most relevant issue taught and an additional 12% of girls listed bullying. Topics related to health, such as puberty and hygiene, were the most important to over 11%, and were listed as a favorite subject by over 20% of participants. One girl in ten said child marriage was the most relevant, and 4% said all topics were useful. Thirteen percent said they would like to know more about violence, 12% wish they knew more about menstruation and 13% health and puberty. We also asked the girls how they will use

what they learned in their daily lives. They gave varied answers, from declaring they would inform someone when harassed, to raising awareness in their communities, increasing their confidence levels and speaking up without fear, maintaining hygiene – washing hands before meals, stopping bullying and raising voice against violence. Many of these declarations are confirmed by our interviews with teachers and trainers. We think that these numbers and voices represent that no single aspect of the program is of greater necessity than others. Indeed, the differences between the topics ranked by importance and relevance demonstrate the need for integrated programming that covers the wide range of issues that girls face.

We witnessed a number encouraging acts of support from community members. Changing social norms is impossible without cooperation and support from the community and our field staff have seen how many people recognize the need for girls' empowerment and gender equality in schools and villages before and especially after our program. One local community leader said during a completion ceremony, “This workshop is like a miracle. I have noticed so many changes in my daughter, she is more confident and she shares whatever she learned in the workshop with us. She asked us questions. This workshop is very simple and very effective. There were so many things that we could not teach her or share with her. She knows now how to take care of herself during menstruation, disadvantages of early marriage and advantages of achieving higher education. I am very thankful. In this district there are so many projects, NGOs and INGOs, but I find your project most effective for girls.” At another ceremony a local social worker shared with us: “I am not lucky enough as I was born too early and I did



Audience at a community ceremony

not get an opportunity to attend a workshop like this. I would like to ask all of the girls to use whatever they have learned in workshop and bring changes in their life and community.” We also received an encouraging note from a member of School Management Committee: “On behalf of School Management Committee and from my personal side I would like to say tons and tons of thanks to Her Turn for organizing

this workshop in our school. Sindhupalchok is infamous for human trafficking. This workshop made the girls aware at young ages. Girls being aware means they are less likely to become victims. I have a big hope that this workshop will reach each and every corner of our country. I would request you all to introduce this workshop from Mountain to Terai and from Mechi zone to Mahakali zone.”

Mentorship – Model

Our mentorship program was designed to provide long term support structure to the girls we work with. The mentors work with Girl Support Committees established in each school, providing guidance and assistance to Committees' members in solving problems they identify in school and community. The mentors also monitor the girls' situation and report any issues to our staff.

From an essay on equality:

Men and women are the two sides of one coin. Without one another life can't live. Women and girls are the strong pillar of our country. Without women and girls our country's development can't move forward. Girls can take their life decision themselves. To develop our country, girls' participation is necessary. In a developing country like ours there is still discrimination between boys and girls. Boys go to school and girls are limited to housework. In any kind of development work boys are ahead. That's why girls are backward. Girls should be sent to school. After getting education from school girls can do development work.

The mentorship program was designed in 2014 and we began its implementation in November. Six mentors were and currently are employed, one from each VDC. Their responsibilities include organizing and facilitating monthly meetings of Girl Support Committees to guide them in solving problems in their communities, serving as a resource to girls at risk or girls who are experiencing any form of violence, directing them to appropriate resources if needed, monitoring girls' and women's situation in the area, identifying issues in school or community that pertain to girls' health or safety, raising awareness of women's issues, and networking with local women's groups. Each mentor is in regular contact with our staff to communicate all of the above and they have served as



Workshop participants

a key source for information on what happens after programs have been implemented – allowing our staff to coordinate resources and provide advice and support.

From each VDC where we conducted our workshops, we selected the most qualified trainer who completed our 5 days long training of mentors in Kathmandu in October 2014. During the training, we discussed issues that affect girls in their communities, gender social norms and stereotypes, problem solving techniques, the issues of confidentiality and referral system. The emphasis was on understanding the role of a mentor and what she can do to support gender equality. The mentors were also equipped with additional relevant materials such as legal provisions regarding gender based violence in Nepal and the basics of menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Each mentor works with two to three schools in her VDC. Every month she meets with Girl Support Committees and other girls and they discuss issues that affect girls in their school.

Impact: Girl Leaders and Change Makers

Until the end of December, the mentors facilitated 22 meetings with girls in their schools. After each meeting, they reported the meeting minutes to our

Program Coordinator, including what the Girl Support Committees were planning to address, how, and plans for future meetings. Their interventions varied in

scope and offered a unique perspective on what the girls find important and relevant to their peers' health, safety, and wellbeing.

In several villages, the girls discussed with parents or grandparents that girls and boys who had dropped out should return to school and continue their education. Many of these interventions have led to children being allowed to return to school. In one case, where a girl attended school irregularly because of heavy house work load, the Committee started helping her with the work so that she was able to attend more regularly. The most common reasons for dropping out are poverty and the fact that children's families, themselves having received no education, don't see the value in schooling. Instead, they prefer the children work at home and in the fields because from the families' perspective this labor has a more direct benefit to their wellbeing.

Another example of Girl Support Committee's work can be seen in Sindhupalchok district, where one Committee members were able to address a sensitive family issue. A man already had three daughters but insisted that his wife had another child, because, in accordance with a sociocultural preference, he wanted a son. His wife however was not well and another pregnancy might become a significant health risk. The girls talked to the father of the household about gender equality and explained that daughters have as much value as sons. The wife later reported that he stopped insisting on having a son.

From participant's essay on gender equality:
A community without boys and girls is not possible, like it is not possible to clap with one hand. That way all boys and girls are important. In our community people see girls as weaker than boys and that's the reason there is inequality between boys and girls. If a girl gets an opportunity to get education then she can succeed just like boys. Boys have a lot of freedom in our community, they can do whatever they like. But for girls there are lots of rules and regulations which we have to follow. Because of these roles and social norms girls can't move forward in their lives. In developed countries we can see nowadays girls are also very active. Girls are now doctors, mountaineers, astronomers, scientists. In every field there are girls.

In some cases, the Committees and mentors address issues that affect whole schools. In one case, they discussed with the principal the need for a lock on toilet doors; in another, they caused the school to fix a broken water filter. Committee members often worked to improve the safety of schools by solving conflicts and addressing bullying – either by reporting them to teachers or by directly speaking to the people

involved. Bullying in school and on the way to school is perhaps the most common problem that girls solve. In one school, the Committee spoke with the principal about a teacher who used corporal punishment in their classroom and afterwards the teacher stopped using physical punishment. We think that encouraging girls to speak out and address violence that affects themselves and others is an important step towards building the personal skills they will need to respond to these issues later in their adult lives.

Lastly, the girls referred women and girls to the appropriate resources if they knew of cases of abuse, violence or sexual harassment. One example of such intervention included a situation where the Girl Support Committee and the mentor jointly reported an abusive father who was also addicted to substances to the police. Another Committee member from Sindhupalchok reported a case of child sexual abuse she had witnessed to the police and as a result the perpetrator was arrested and imprisoned. We think that by referring their problems to appropriate public services, the girls advance and promote the responsiveness and sensitivity of state security mechanisms to girls' and women's safety needs and promote good governance.



Workshop completion

We believe these stories are beneficial not only to individuals directly involved – throughout these interventions the Girl Support Committees take initiative, exercise leadership roles and create real changes in their communities. In the process, people start to perceive them as change makers who have made a positive impact on school and village life. Where traditionally girls were perceived as passive, shy and without any decision power, we believe their actions challenge these stereotypes and create a new understanding of girls' role in their communities.



Girl Support Committee

Case study – Girl Support Committee addresses a case of child marriage

Sushila* is 13 years old, lives in a village in Gorkha district and had participated in our workshops in the spring of 2014. She is a Dalit (an “untouchable caste,” with lowest indicators of literacy, access to education, security and poverty), whose father passed away – she now lives with her mothers and several siblings. The family has very little land and struggles financially to send her to school.

In November 2014, Sushila's older sister, who lives with her husband's family in a village four hours away, arranged her marriage. Sushila had not met the 18 years old groom, who works as a driver and in a shop, but he had seen her for the first time several weeks earlier at a holiday celebration.

When the Girl Support Committee found out about the planned marriage, they visited the girl's mother to inform her of the legal age of marriage in Nepal, 20 years old. They encouraged the family to arrange the marriage later, after Sushila was older and had finished school. The mother was resistant and told them to not interfere with their family decisions. The mentor and Committee informed the school's Vice Principal and asked him to also intervene. Together they mobilized local resources and the next afternoon the school Principal, a local government official and eight other community members went to talk with the mother. Concerned with the girl's future education and the family's financial situation, the Principal told her the community would support the family as much as they could if they didn't marry their daughter early and the VDC secretary said the VDC would cut financial aid that the family was receiving if the family went ahead with the wedding. The mother and girl's older sister were still pushing for marriage, and argued that they couldn't afford having the girl live with the mother. Furthermore, they said that calling the wedding off would mean that Sushila would have a hard time finding a husband in the future. Some local community members also expressed opinions that early marriages were a part of Dalit culture, and that for that reason even if police were involved, nothing would happen.

Our program staff in Kathmandu were informed of these developments through our local mentor. We reached out to Children of the Mountain (COTM), an organization that works with schools in this area, whose staff went to the village to negotiate with the family. We also contacted another organization that provides scholarships to Dalit children, and they agreed to sponsor the girl through Class 10 if the wedding was called off.

After lengthy discussions between the girl's family, the Committee, COTM staff, the Principal and the community members, the girl's sister decided to call the wedding off. She was made aware of the laws and risks associated with early marriage. The groom's family however was not happy as they have already invested some funds in the planned ceremony.

Unfortunately, after a week, Sushila stopped coming to school and it turned out that she was eventually married off, despite family's earlier decision. The girl later told us that after the wedding was called off, the groom's family started to blackmail her. Sushila recalls, “My brother-in-law called me and asked me to pay back NPR 180,000 to the boy for jewelry and clothes that he had already bought. My brother-in-law gave me two options: either get married or pay the bill. I said that I cannot pay that large of an amount and that in return I was ready to get married.” Through blackmail, she was forced into marriage and left for the groom's family village.

After finding out, we decided to speak with the groom's family in order to encourage him to allow Sushila to stay at her mother's house, where she could attend school until she turned 18. Our main priorities were that she stayed in school and didn't become pregnant early – a significant health risk for a person her age. When our Field Coordinator, along with a Dalit organization member, went to her village, it turned out that she has already returned to her mother's house and school.

Sushila says: “I knew that I was too young to get married and I wanted to study up to Class 10. I said 'no' but my sister and brother-in-law kept pressuring me to accept the proposal. I was aware of the consequences of early marriage – I learned them in Her Turn workshop. I was upset and afraid during that time, but I was happy when my friends canceled the wedding.

After the marriage, I was not comfortable so I went to my cousin's sister's house, an hour walk. I stayed there for 5 days and then I came

back home and told my husband and father-in-law that I wanted to go home. My mother-in-law said I was 'rotten grass.' She said that she can get better than me. My husband said I cannot go back.

When I told him I wanted to go back, he accused me of stealing gold and also of being characterless. My mother-in-law said I did not have good habits and that I don't do work properly. She also said he brought me to help his mother in work. She said he cannot afford to send me to school, so I did not feel like staying there. My husband said if I wanted a divorce, then I have to pay him 800,000 rupees to him or he would file case against me. After some time, my brother in law said I can go home and they will re-marry him with another girl."

Today Sushila is happily back in school, and her story illustrates well the complexities of child marriage, as well as the many difficulties in ending these practices. It is encouraging to see how many people from the community, school, and local government were mobilized and came to Sushila's support. It is equally important to note how the ignorance of the law (in this instance divorce law), however, can easily be used against girls and women through blackmail and coercion. The crucial factors at play were poverty and persisting social norms, where girls' opinions are not valued and they are devoid a voice in important life decisions. Even though the Girl Support Committee acted and went to significant lengths to prevent the marriage, it was not enough. As girls and women are empowered to act and demand their legal and social rights, it is likely that conflicts of this sort are also likely to become more commonplace, as part of the current larger social transformations.

* name changed to protect privacy

Impact: Policy and Advocacy

To complement our work in the field, we have continued to engage in advocacy and policy development locally, nationally, and internationally. We participated in the process of developing the National Strategy to End Child Marriage in Nepal – a much needed effort undertaken by UNICEF, the South Asia Initiative to End Violence Against Children (SAIEVAC) and the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare. The Strategy will be finalized in the beginning of 2015.

In terms of international advocacy, 2014 was a productive year for us. In May, we were one of the partners of the first Menstrual Hygiene Day: a platform for individuals, organizations, social businesses and the media to break the silence around menstrual hygiene management. Studies from the developing countries show that lack of menstrual hygiene and girl friendly toilets in schools drastically limit girls' access to education.

In the fall, we continued with the theme of menstruation and education. In October we published a post on Girls' Globe, entitled "[Why Does Menstruation Matter?](#)" Later that month we published a piece on the Guardian Global Development Professionals Network titled "[Not just a girls' problem: the economic impact of menstrual shame.](#)" The latter article was widely shared and disseminated by many online.

Through this workshop a lot of changes occur in a girl's life. When I came on the first day, some girls were so shy they were not able to say her name. After 24 days they speak with confidence and with smiles on their faces. Most changes are in their confidence levels. Some girls didn't even know what menstruation was, and through this workshop they learned about it.

Her Turn trainer



Speech at a community ceremony

In November, we continued our work by designing and leading a Month of Action with the International Day of the Girl Summit (IDG). The [#PointPeriod campaign](#) was dedicated to raising awareness on how menstruation is a significant barrier to education for millions of girls in the developing world. To that end we created three infographics that explained the relation between periods and schooling: one with general facts about menstruation, one with details how and why menstruation affects girls' attendance and performance in schools, and one for World Toilet Day which explained what girl friendly toilets are and why they are crucial. We also developed a comic strip with a story of a fictional Nepali girl, in which she explains traditions surrounding menstruation in her community and how they are changing – we plan to translate this into Nepali and disseminate it locally. All these materials were also widely shared by partners of IDG and many other organizations. On November 11th, we hosted a [twitter chat](#) about how menstruation affects girls' access to education. Many fantastic individuals and organizations participated and

provided insights from their own work on causes of menstrual stigma, how can the stigma be reduced, or how we can improve menstrual hygiene for girls in the developing world. The #PointPeriod campaign was featured in Huffington Post article "[Menstruation Matters: How Periods Are Keeping Girls Out of School in Nepal.](#)"

In addition to our [Facebook page](#), in 2014 we started Her Turn Twitter account at www.twitter.com/HerTurnNepal. Through these two channels we disseminate the news of our and others' work and raise awareness on girls' and women's issues globally. At the end of 2014, we had over 500 followers on Facebook and 120 on Twitter.

Challenges

Child marriage, as illustrated by Sushila's story, remains a big challenge for Nepali girls. It is not uncommon to hear an opinion that early marriage is just a part of Dalit culture or even for local police officers to participate in child marriage ceremonies along with other community members. Lack of awareness and the social norms remain a big obstacle to our work and point to a need of more accountability, stronger law enforcement and greater awareness among local leaders, police and government officials on the existing laws. While we were glad that Girl Support Committee and mentor pointed the community's attention to the issue, the challenge remains how to prevent an immediate child marriage when it is planned within the community. This is a point that we will be discussing with local stakeholders to determine the best approach to these situations.

The health and safety issues covered during our workshop are relevant to all girls, but perhaps more so to girls who for various reasons don't attend school. The reasons for dropping out vary and can include early marriage, or a plan for a girl to go to work abroad (mostly in Gulf countries). Early drop out is also related to the low prioritization of education (usually when a mother never attended a school either), heavy house chores resulting in less time to study, and poverty. In 2014, we started to pro-actively invite girls who had left school early to our workshops so they too can be equipped with skills and knowledge that will promote their wellbeing. Getting them to attend the workshop, however, is one of the biggest challenges we have faced this year. Many of them are already working abroad or married. The ones that remain in villages don't have a connection to the school and are often burdened with time consuming work. We currently

engage school principals and teachers to help us identify dropped out girls and convince them to attend, which in 2014 resulted in a number of these girls completing our workshops.

Local politics remained a significant challenge in our field work and that is unlikely to change. During our trainer hiring process, various influential locals attempt to pressure our field staff into selecting young women they have connections to. While our process is transparent and entirely merit based, many people oppose it and insist on hiring within local patron-client networks. Caste divisions also play a role, as influential and wealthier people are often high caste, and according to our model, the trainers must represent caste diversity similar to that of the girls they work with. For example, if the majority of the girls in the school are from low caste and indigenous groups, we invite women from similar backgrounds to our training of trainers. A case in point of how local politics interferes with our processes is a school in Sindhupalchok district. During our initial talks with the Principal, he failed to inform us that he no longer holds the position in school and that we should in fact coordinate with the new principal. While the reasons for his actions are unclear, it is possible that he was motivated financially hoping that he would receive a compensation for his help with coordination (not a part of our model, as we do not pay school principals). While recommending young women for trainers, he selected a number of candidates from his village instead of the village we were to work in. This resulted in certain tensions with local community. The situation was resolved when our Field Coordinator explained that we were misled in the process, and the workshop was successfully conducted.

Lessons Learned and Plans

- There is a growing evidence of how including boys and men in gender based violence prevention increases effectiveness. Boys and men are both perpetrators of SGBV and VAWG and also victims of it, and hence are a crucial

part in the process of social transformation. We often hear from teachers and the boys themselves that we should include them in our programs. Two of our trainers said, "this workshop is necessary for boys too."

Intentionally or unintentionally, they are the perpetrators. They should learn to respect girls and women. They are just following their ancestors. Awareness is needed to both girls and boys.” Another one gave us similar feedback: “I think the fact that the workshop is only for girls is not right because the people who do harassment upon girls are boys and those who do harass don't get such education. I think it would be more effective if boys also get such education.” While in 2014 we were unable to develop boys' workshop curriculum, we hope in the coming year we will design and pilot a program for boys and young men.

- The story of Sushila's planned arranged marriage, even though the ceremony took place, was an example of a successful and active Girl Support Committee that serves as a protective network for girls in the community. It also pointed to the need of an action plan for the Committees, mothers groups and other community members that they can turn to in a similar case of planned early marriage. To this end we plan to develop an immediate child marriage prevention toolkit that will contain laws and basic steps that teachers,

students or social workers can take when they hear of a planned child marriage. The toolkit will be distributed to all Girl Support Committees, school principals, and will be available online to other actors who work in child marriage prevention.

- Schools can play an important role in raising awareness on issues that affect girls' safety. Teachers know the communities they work in, principals often have connections to local leaders and government officials, and they enjoy high level of respect from parents. In the future, we plan to engage school staff in more prevention work by providing short awareness raising workshops for them alongside our pre-existing programming. The workshops would cover child marriage, human trafficking, and corporal punishment. Other actors will also be invited to participate, such as members of mothers' groups and Female Community Health Volunteers. We eventually plan to design whole-school interventions that aim to transform gender dynamics within schools, families, and communities.



Audience at a community ceremony

Recommendations

- We are looking forward to finalized National Strategy to End Child Marriage and hope that it will help combat this practice from community to national level. As illustrated by Sushila's story, there is a tremendous need for increased awareness of community members and police of laws regarding child marriage (and other forms of violence against women and girls). It is not unheard of that teachers and police officers in fact participate in child marriage ceremonies instead of preventing them. Our recommendation is to educate community and religious officials, schools' staff, and law enforcement on the legal provisions and social and health consequences child marriage has on girls, and to strengthen the state's accountability in this area.
- When planning community projects, many girls' groups decide to buy sanitary pads for their school. Some even come up with saving plans so that they can make the purchase also in the future. Lack of menstrual materials is one of the factors that prevent girls from attending school during their periods and results in unequal access to education. We recommend a policy that every school has a budget for sanitary pads. These would be stored in school and provided to girl students in need in a gender sensitive, private and appropriate manner.
- Many girls in our program talk about inequality at home. In rural Nepal, the norm is that a daughter participates in household chores and a son should not be burdened with them. We recommend that gender equality in access to education is prioritized both in schools and on household level by raising awareness of parents.
- We think that a change is needed in the cultures of government schools. As mentioned before, corporal punishment, although legally banned, is still widely practiced. Our workshops' staggering attendance rates might be related not only to the content of the curriculum, but also to the fact that the girls are not afraid to be inquisitive. In government schools students are often beaten, threatened and humiliated, and they are afraid to ask questions. Moreover, these socially acceptable forms of violence may affect low caste, impoverished, and girl students disproportionately. It is hard to learn or develop critical thinking skills when asking a question could result in violence. We see there is an unmet need for teacher trainings on nonviolent classroom management techniques in both government and private schools. We also recommend that the schools are held accountable for breaking the existing law, and promote a culture of respect rather than intimidation.

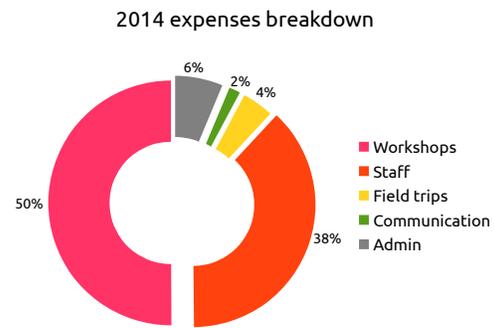


Speech at a community ceremony

Finances

The total sum of expenses in 2014 was NPR 3,339,595 (USD 34,631). Of that sum half was spent on our workshops. The expenses include training of trainers, meals, workshop supplies and monitoring. Further 38% was spent on core staff salaries, which include management and coordination personnel. Field trips accounted for 4% and communication for 2%. The remaining 6% were administrative expenses.

The per girl cost of the program was USD 31.89, with USD 1.33 cost per girl per day.



Yachin Sherpa, Field Coordinator and Master Trainer

My journey with Her Turn started in April 2014. Since then I visited many villages and came across many noble people. The most interesting part of the work is to see the changes and confidence in girls during a community ceremony. They get a platform to show their hidden talents. They perform as if they are professional performers or poets. They compose many beautiful songs and poems.

It is difficult sometimes when we have to walk through forests, sometimes it's very steep, sometimes downhill, until our legs shiver. During the rainy season our problems increase. In the village usually toilet and water taps are outside of a house. When we need to go to the toilet at night, leeches wait at the door and when we go bed, fleas wait.

The most interesting part is traveling and meeting different people. And the happiest part is I am contributing to uplifting women empowerment through Her Turn program.



Police officers in a stage play