

# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT



**her turn**  
educated. empowered. equal.

## Her Turn 2015 Annual Report

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# her turn

educated. empowered. equal.

Her Turn works with rural adolescent girls in Nepal's Sindhupalchok and Gorkha districts.

Our mission is to empower girls and equip them with skills and knowledge that allow them to create their own safe and healthy futures.



## Our impact in 2015

Her Kits distributed

1,802



Girls reached through workshops

622



During Workshops the girls learn:

HEALTH   
SAFETY   
LEADERSHIP   
THEIR RIGHTS

After the Workshops in 2015, more girls:



SAY NO TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

75%

KNOW FEMALE LEADERS

52%

KNOW ABOUT HUMAN TRAFFICKING

49%

KNOW HYGIENE AT PUBERTY

48%

FEEL CONFIDENT

40%

## Acknowledgements

This year was by far the hardest since we started Her Turn. Nepal was struck by two major earthquakes and hundreds of aftershocks that took lives, destroyed property and wrecked livelihoods. In this incredibly difficult time, we would not be able to continue our efforts without the help, trust, flexibility and understanding of our many friends, partners, supporters and donors. We would like to express our gratitude to individuals and organizations that made our work this year possible: MATCH Fund, Present Purpose Network, People in Need, Oxfam Nepal, many individual donors and last but not least, all the girls, trainers and mentors that accompanied us or joined us this year. We truly thank you all.

## Introduction

We are happy to present to you this report which provides an overview of our work in 2015. Her Turn is a program that works with Nepal's rural adolescent girls. Since 2013, Her Turn has reached 2,112 adolescent girls, of which 622 were girls we worked with in 2015. In 2014, we introduced our mentorship program which provides long term links with and support to the girls we work with.

Our normal work conducting workshops and mentoring was disrupted this year by two massive earthquakes that struck the country in April and May. The two districts where we worked prior to the disaster - Sindhupalchok and Gorkha - were the epicenters of the earthquakes and some of the hardest hit. This has severely affected our staff, our work and the lives of communities we work with. We stayed committed and focused on adolescent girls and their needs in the aftermath of the earthquakes, supporting them with needed menstrual hygiene materials.

At the end of the year we resumed our workshops while continuing working with the other mentors and girls we worked with in the past. While Nepal worked to recover from the tragedy, with our partners' and donors' support, we were able to resume work in two Village Development Committees (VDCs) in Sindhupalchok district. This report presents the details of our work before, during and after the emergency in 2015.



Her Turn Workshop Participants



## Her Turn's Mission and Vision

Her Turn's mission is to empower girls and equip them with skills and knowledge that allow them to create their own safe and healthy futures. We do so by delivering culturally sensitive, girl-centered services that advance girls' health, safety, confidence, and leadership skills.

Her Turn's vision is that girls all over the world should be educated, empowered and equal. Her Turn wants girls to be safe and have access to education and information. Her Turn wants girls to make informed decisions about their own lives. Her Turn wants Nepali girls to have an equal say in their schools, in their families, in their communities, and in their country. Her Turn wants the girls to live in the world where they realize their potential as community members and change makers.

## Year 2015 in Nepal

On April 25<sup>th</sup> 2015, a massive 7.8 magnitude earthquake - the biggest to hit the area in 80 years - struck Nepal, with the epicenter in Gorkha district. It was followed by another, 7.3 magnitude earthquake on May 12<sup>th</sup>, centered in Sindhupalchok district, and a series of aftershocks that lasted for over a year. Both earthquakes and aftershocks triggered avalanches and landslides, and caused further damage to already weakened buildings. The earthquakes cost over 8,800 lives in Nepal, and over a hundred in India, Tibet and Bangladesh, injured over 22,000 and affected close to eight million people. Over 500,000 houses collapsed during the earthquakes, and 270,000 more were damaged.

Hundreds of villages were affected in districts in the Western, Central and Eastern Development Regions. Dozens of international organizations and many individuals came to Nepal following the disaster. The monsoon, starting in June, slowed down the response as the roads became impassable and made access to many remote areas difficult, if not impossible. The needs were, and remain, immense in affected communities in the areas of shelter, health, water and sanitation, food security, education and livelihoods.

Natural disasters like these pose challenges to all, but particularly to women, girls, children, the elderly and people living with disabilities. The rates of gender-based violence typically rise after disasters, and some of the affected areas were already struggling with issues like human trafficking and early marriage before. The earthquakes exacerbated these risks. While reliable data does not exist, hundreds of children were prevented from being trafficked in the months following the disaster through the efforts of Nepal Police and anti-trafficking NGOs monitoring the border and checkpoints in the districts. Data regarding early marriage is equally difficult to collect, but from our mentors and conversations we had with adolescents in the earthquake affected areas we assume it is likely that the rates temporarily spiked. This was attributed to high levels of insecurity while people stayed in temporary shelters that lack privacy, schools and villages lacked gender segregated and safe toilets, and thousands of families lost their assets and livelihoods. These factors combined with a common social norm that adolescents girls are safer from harm when they are married meant that some adolescents and their families are more likely to resort to early marriages and other negative coping strategies.

## Her Turn Earthquake Response

Though Her Turn is not an emergency relief organization, we knew that the scope of the devastation to the everyday lives of girls, women, and families in our work areas meant we could not immediately return to business as usual. Sindhupalchok and Gorkha, the two districts in which Her Turn runs its programs, were the districts at the epicenter of the two earthquakes in April and May 2015 and sites of some of the worst destruction. Girls from the many families who lost their homes, possessions, and agricultural fields would not be able to meaningfully participate in the Her Turn workshop until their



Her Kit distribution

immediate survival needs were met. Her Turn also worried that the unique needs of women and girls might be overlooked in light of the massive emergency needs.

Shortly after the first earthquake we tried to assess its impact on the communities we worked with before. It was a challenging task when the communication lines were broken, dissemination of information was chaotic, and our staff's families were also affected. Our team traveled to one of the field sites in Sindhupalchok on May 12<sup>th</sup> to provide emergency humanitarian assistance in communities in which Her Turn had run programs in the past. As soon as we reached the village, the second earthquake struck; its epicenter was very close to the village. As a result, the roads were impassable and the team was stranded for a night under tarpaulins, spending the night as many earthquake-affected families had been doing since April 25<sup>th</sup>. The team took this opportunity to talk with Her Turn alumna about their most pressing needs to inform a future response.

Our donor, the MATCH Fund had asked how they could best support Her Turn girls in the emergency phase. Through a telephone conversation, MATCH Fund and Her Turn agreed that funds previously allocated for running empowerment workshops, would instead be used to address an extraordinarily basic and intimate need often missed in the wake of disasters (and one proposed by the girls themselves): menstrual hygiene management. Her Turn was well positioned to address this with funds from MATCH Fund and distributed "Her Kits" containing: four reusable menstrual pads, one towel, one pair of underwear, and one bar each of bathing and laundry soap. Her Turn distributed Her Kits to girls from 14 schools across the two districts (previous Her Turn workshop participants and girls in the community in the same age range who are not enrolled in school) and to women in three camps for people displaced by the earthquake. Between the 30<sup>th</sup> of May and 7<sup>th</sup> of November, a total of 1,802 Her Kits were distributed with the help of MATCH International, individuals' donations and People in Need's in kind support. The majority of the kits were distributed between May and July; one school was inaccessible during monsoon and 76 kits were distributed there only in November. Landslides and dangerous road conditions during the monsoon season prevented Her Turn from distributing these kits earlier.

## Workshops

In 2015, between February and March, we worked with 272 girls who participated in our education and empowerment workshops. We operated programs in four schools in in one of the VDCs of Sindhupalchok district, an area known for high rates of girls trafficking. The average attendance rate was 91%. This rate is low in comparison with last year's programs; the major reason for this is that several girls who were not attending school joined the program at the beginning but stopped attending partway through. At the same time, we met a group of 17 participants so eager to participate that they stayed at the school for three weeks to be able to attend. Their homes were too far away for them to travel back and forth each day, so after a discussion with the school, parents and participants, they stayed at the school accompanied by a chaperon. These girls cooked their own meals with food purchased by Her Turn.



Her Turn Workshop Participant

The workshops were delivered by 11 women who completed our trainings of trainers (TOT); the majority of them are from low caste or indigenous ethnic groups. Over the course of the workshops we provided a total of 6,573 meals from local providers. This includes 5,738 meals served to all participating girls, trainers and assistants during each workshop session, and 835 meals served during community ceremonies to guests who included girls' families, community members and leaders, teachers, local organizations' officers, and local government officials.

In the last week of December, with the support from People in Need, we started working with 350 adolescent girls in two VDCs of Sindhupalchok district. The results of this work will be disseminated in our next annual report.

### *Workshop Participants*

In 2015, Her Turn continued to work with girls from traditionally marginalized and vulnerable groups in Nepal, such as the Tamang ethnic group and the members of the “lower-caste” Dalit group. These girls often come from families that struggle with low levels of education and poverty, pushing girls’ education further down the priority list. As a result, these girls are more likely to drop out of school, lack access to adequate healthcare, and be vulnerable to abuses such as trafficking, child marriage, caste discrimination, and sexual and gender-based violence.

The majority of the girls we worked with this year were from the Tamang ethnic group. Girls participating in this year’s workshops ranged between 11 and 18 in age and attended primary and lower secondary school (classes 2 - 9). The average age of participants was 13.4 and nearly one third (32%) were aged 12. At the ends of the range, 3% of the participants were 11 years old, and one girl was 18. Most of the girls (68%) were studying in classes 5 - 8. Though all girls were 11 years of age or older, two girls each studied in class 2 and 3. Ages don’t necessarily correspond with class level in Nepal; girls who started school late or missed years were in lower classes with younger students.

One 16-year-old participant was already married. 31% of the girls said their families practiced various forms of menstrual restrictions. These restrictions can vary from forbidding touching of sacred and religious objects during menstruation, to girls having to spend several nights in another home during their first period. Though illegal in Nepal, 81% of girls reported the dowry system being practiced in their communities. Girls also reported spending a long time on household chores and cooking, two and a half hours on average. Around a quarter of the girls (26%) also spend more than half an hour walking to school. The average time a girl spent walking to school was 35 minutes.

The girls mostly came from large families; 42% of participants had five or more siblings. The vast majority (84%) of the girls’ mothers never attended school; just 4% received any secondary education (classes 6 - 10), and just 1% completed secondary schooling. The girls’ fathers also had low levels of education with nearly half the sample (48%) receiving no formal education; 17% of the girls’ fathers have some secondary education and 7% completed secondary education.

### *Workshop Model*

The model: The Her Turn workshop model has been developed through a continuing process of desk and field research. The model is regularly updated with inputs from field staff, communities, families and the girls themselves. The result is a dynamic program that is girl-centered, interactive, culturally sensitive and relevant to current needs. The four-week program is delivered to rural Nepali girls aged 12-16. The program is run in schools for groups of 20 girls, typically before the school day begins. Girls who are in the age group, but not enrolled in school, are encouraged to attend. The program covers a different overarching topic each week: health, safety, leadership skills and collaborative planning.

“There are many changes in our school after workshop. Recently girls actively organized quiz competition in our school. They prepared questions themselves. In the past the girls did not like to participate in competitions. Girls who were very quiet and passive are now very active and they are able to speak to the Girl Support Committee.”  
School Principal

Reaching the community: During the final week of the program, the girls plan and implement a community project, based on an issue they collectively decide to address. Each group of 20 girls gets a grant of the same amount of money with the onus on them to decide how it should be used. Teachers, parents and other adults are strongly encouraged to take a back seat and let the girls practice making their own decisions, and using consensus to make sure every girl’s voice is heard. Groups have upgraded classrooms and toilets, bought menstrual materials for the school, and decided to buy cultural dress or sound systems for school ceremonies.

Secret tools: Throughout the program, the girls have an opportunity to ask anonymous questions through a “Secret Box.” The trainer answers the questions the next day. Each girl also gets a “Girls Guidebook,” that covers all the information in the curriculum and has contact information



for resources like women and children police cells, safe houses, anti-trafficking organizations, organizations offering psychosocial and legal support, and even scholarship opportunities.

**Girls take charge:** Over the course of the workshops, the girls also elect a Girl Support Committee in their schools. The members are active participants who commit to working with mentors, other students and school staff to ensure schools are safe for girls, and prevent students of both genders from dropping out. These Committees serve as a resource for girls at risk and they, together with their mentors, are our long-term link with the schools. See below for more about the Girl Support Committees' work with mentors in 2015.

**The power of food:** Each day of the workshop, the girls and trainer share a snack purchased by Her Turn through local providers. While a seemingly minor detail, the snack provides the chance to practice much of what the girls are learning: it helps them form the habit of washing their hands before and after meals, gives them downtime to chat and reinforce topics discussed during the program, and provides a space to dismantle caste discrimination. In many of the communities Her Turn works in, caste divisions manifest strict rules about who can eat with whom, dividing higher and lower caste people at mealtimes. While attending the Her Turn program, girls take turns serving one another food, meaning high caste girls accept food from low caste girls, which may not usually be done. Trainers have reported incidences of this activity easing caste discrimination and breaking taboos about inter-caste relationships.

**Training the trainers:** Her Turn believes women from the same communities as the girls themselves can best understand how the curriculum topics impact them. We strive to hire trainers who are from similar ethnic and caste backgrounds so the girls can best relate to them and feel comfortable discussing and asking questions about sensitive topics. Women are recruited through discussions between field staff and school staff, who suggest young women who are particularly active and engaged in their communities. These women are invited to participate in the five day Training of Trainers, delivered by a Her Turn Master Trainer. The first two days of the training cover issues related to gender,



Community Ceremony

discrimination, and equality in their communities and presentation and facilitation skills. The trainers then practice activities from the actual curriculum, with the Master Trainer providing feedback on how to most effectively present the content. The trainers also discuss negative impacts of corporal punishment, which is a common practice in many Nepali schools. The trainers are instructed about Her Turn's policy forbidding threats of physical punishments, and are guided on nonviolent methods of discipline instead.

### *Monitoring and Evaluation*

In 2015, we continued to rigorously monitor and evaluate the impacts of each of our workshops. Our Master Trainers visit each school shortly after the Training of Trainers, as well as later in the program, and observe each of the local trainers using a trainer observation sheet. In this tool she records details such as familiarity of the trainer with the curriculum, and her facilitation and presentation skills. The Master Trainer then sits with each trainer to provide one-on-one feedback.



For evaluation, we use both quantitative and qualitative methods to measure the impacts of Her Turn programming on girls, their families, and their schools. Our quantitative assessment uses a baseline and follow-up questionnaire, which the girls complete before the workshop and again at the conclusion of the program. The questionnaire measures knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) related to health, hygiene, safety, feelings towards oneself and confidence. The baseline survey also includes demographic information about girls' family lives, such as their parents' levels of education, the amount of time they spend on housework, and the number of siblings they have. The follow up survey contains additional questions to further elaborate the impact of what the girls learned during the workshop. The data is then translated into English and entered into spreadsheets to allow before and after analyses.



Girl Advocates during a Community Ceremony

Qualitative assessment is conducted via semi-structured interviews with girls, trainers, teachers, and parents. Through these interviews, we are able to ask more in-depth questions about the changes girls demonstrated in their knowledge, attitudes and practices through their survey responses. The interviews also inform our understanding of what was effective in the workshops, and feedback on what areas can be improved and how.

### *Impact*

Evaluation of Her Turn workshops in early 2015 showed that girls significantly improved their knowledge of their own health and bodies, improved their knowledge of laws to protect them and ways to stay safe, and showed increases in feelings of empowerment and leadership ability. By the end of the program, all the girls reported knowledge of puberty (100%), nearly all the girls reported knowing what menstruation is (98%), how to care for their bodies during puberty (97%) and menstruation (95%), what human trafficking is (99%) and what to do if they or someone they know are at risk of trafficking (96%). Nearly all of the girls also reported knowing a person they can go to when afraid (95%).

### Health

Despite being part of school curricula, many teachers feel uncomfortable discussing issues like menstruation or puberty, or do not have adequate knowledge of the topics themselves. The stigma and taboos surrounding discussing these important health concepts mean girls may not understand what's happening to their bodies or know how to keep themselves healthy. It also means girls might be left to fill in the blanks themselves with incorrect information that leaves them vulnerable to belief in unhealthy superstitions or unsafe customs, especially in relation to menstruation. Accurate knowledge of these bodily processes empowers girls to understand their own bodies and advocate for their own rights, and many of them go on to share the health related knowledge with their families. The program places a heavy focus on knowledge of menstruation hygiene management and unpacking the stigma that often surrounds menstruation in Nepal. As a result, one of the biggest changes observed are girls' perspectives on menstruation. In 2015, after completing the program, the number of girls who reported knowledge of menstruation and puberty each increased by 36%, to 100% reporting knowledge of puberty and 98% reporting knowledge of menstruation. The number of girls reporting knowledge of how to care for their bodies during menstruation rose by 37%, while the number of girls reporting knowledge of proper hygiene during puberty rose by 48%, to 97%. Menstruation is also one of the issues that comes up most often in discussions with the girls regarding the effects of

the workshops on their lives. Many of them say they now see periods as “natural” and a sign of health, and some go on to negotiate menstrual restrictions with their families, for example gaining permission to enter the kitchen when menstruating. While we need a more systemic assessment of these changes and their scale, there is promising evidence that at least some of the girls are capable of changing practices surrounding menstruation in their families.



Her Turn Workshop Participants

### Safety and Resilience to Violence

By the end of the program, the number of girls we worked with in 2015 reporting knowledge of human trafficking rose by 49%, while girls reporting that they knew what to do in case of human trafficking increased by 41%. Girls also demonstrated significant increases in knowledge of response to being bullied or harassed by boys or men. The number of girls who said they knew what to do when bullied at school rose by 38%, while the number of girls who said they knew what to do if they were harassed by boys or men increased by 43%. During the baseline survey, girls had reported low knowledge of laws regarding domestic violence in Nepal; only 19% of girls said they knew domestic violence laws. After the program, 75% of girls reported knowledge of these laws. The number of girls reporting knowledge of what wives can do if abused by their husbands also rose by 44%. The number of girls who knew the legal age of marriage in Nepal increased by 36%.

**“I wouldn’t be able to fight against it if I hadn’t taken Her Turn’s workshop.”**  
Sexual assault survivor, 15 age old

One of the Girl Support Committees established in 2015 had a chance to practice their knowledge of resilience to violence. In June, the members of the GSC learned that two other girls from their community were about to travel to India. They recognized the warning signs of trafficking and turned to their mentor. The mentor and Her Turn staff alerted anti-trafficking organizations and one of them found the girls before they reached their destination.

In another case, the girls reached out to Her Turn staff to inform them about a planned early marriage in their community. The staff contacted the police who asked the families to sign a statement that the adolescents will not be married until they reach the age of 18. After several days however the parents and adolescents traveled to the district headquarters to produce false documentation that stated higher ages of the young people involved. Despite the girls' intervention, the marriage happened and this case illustrates the difficulties of early marriage prevention efforts. In cases like this, parents are often concerned that if a marriage is postponed their daughter will not find a husband in the future; these concerns combined with high social acceptability of early marriage puts many adolescents at risk. The girl involved returned to school and is currently enrolled.

### Education and Empowerment

Girls also demonstrated significant increases in feelings of empowerment and leadership ability. While just 17% of girls said they knew a female leader before the program, 69% said they did after. The number of girls reporting they knew someone to turn to if they felt afraid rose from 42% to 95%. The number of girls reporting feeling powerful and who said they can decide when and who they will marry each increased by 40%, and the number of girls who felt they would make a good leader rose by 38%. The number of girls who said they speak up at school went up by 30% and the number of girls who speak up at social or family events went up by 29%. These changes were corroborated by the teachers who noticed girls being more active in classrooms.

### **Mentorship Program**

Starting in 2014, we introduced a mentorship program. The mentors serve as a long lasting link and provide long-term support to the girls we work with, and are one of the most important elements of our programs. Mentors are selected from the most successful local trainers and receive additional training. Each of them works with two to four Girl Support Committees formed during the workshops. The mentors meet with the Committees once a month or more frequently if needed. Together they solve problems that arise in their schools and communities that typically relate to health, safety and access to education. For example the GSCs and mentors speak with families of children who had dropped out of school and advocate for them to go back to school. In a number of cases, the mentors refer girls and boys to other service providers. It is important to note that the mentors face a number of difficulties in their work when they challenge harmful traditions; they, together with Girl Support Committees, are at the front lines of social transformation.

#### *Mentors' Meetings*

In 2015 we had three mentors' meetings in Kathmandu - one before and two after the earthquakes. During these events the mentors share their experiences, challenges, lessons learned and good practices, develop strategies and tools that allow them to work better within their communities, map and analyze resources available in the field and receive additional skills trainings. All the information we receive from the mentors in person helps us develop programs, provide better support for them and the girls they work with and inform our advocacy efforts. These meetings are also an opportunity for new mentors to meet the other mentors and learn the program principles.

The first meeting of mentors in 2015 was held on April 9-10<sup>th</sup> and hosted six participants from Sindhupalchok and Gorkha districts. Three months later, in June, we had a three day meeting with six participants. Lastly, in November we had a meeting with seven participants.

#### *Impact*

Over the year, the mentors conducted 81 meetings with their respective Girl Support Committees. Early after the earthquakes, the schools were closed and communities' lives disrupted and some mentors were unable to conduct the meetings in the first month. The mentors reported 25 cases that they intervened in which included 3 cases of early marriage, 5 cases of bullying, 3



cases of sexual assault and 2 cases of girls dropping out of school. In 9 of these cases, the mentors provided referrals to various service providers, including law enforcement.



Mentors' Meeting, April 2015

## Advocacy

### *Radio Shows*

Her Turn believes the best way to combat child marriage is through education about the risks of marrying early, and about the benefits of staying in school longer. Our workshops help girls understand these risks and benefits. They then share what they learn with their families and communities through community ceremonies. But in the post-disaster situation, we wanted to reach as many people as possible with this safety message. Four months after the earthquakes, we teamed up with People in Need and Oxfam to produce a radio drama about two young girls navigating these issues in an earthquake struck village and coming up with their own solutions. The drama aired on Radio Sindhu, a community radio station with a long history of broadcasting public health and other critical information to Sindhupalchok. Radio is an incredibly powerful tool in the hills and one of the communication resources people continue to turn to after the earthquake. The radio show (in Nepali) is [available online](#). We also co-created another episode about menstrual hygiene management in the emergency setting. Following successful collaboration, we are exploring possibilities of creating other materials about early marriage in 2016.

### *Assessment of Girls Attending Schools*

In August and September 2015 we teamed up with People in Need to conduct an assessment of adolescent girls after the earthquake in the earthquake affected district of Sindhupalchok. The aim was to assess adolescent girls' needs and challenges in the post-earthquake context and share this information with a range of agencies to inform their humanitarian relief programs and increase sensitivity to those needs. The assessment was completed through an anonymous survey of 1,002 girls in 11 schools across seven VDCs, 13 focus group discussions with a total of 122 girls, 33 key informant interviews and attendance data from before and after the earthquake. Nearly half (43%), of the respondents participated in our workshops prior to the earthquake; this allowed us to compare results of Her Turn alumna and other girls who have not participated in our programs.

There were noticeable differences in several areas; for example girls' attendance was on average much higher in schools where Her Turn workshops had been delivered. In primary level schools,

there were on average 2.2 fewer girls after the earthquake compared to before in Her Turn schools, compared to 7.8 fewer girls in non Her Turn schools. In secondary schools, these numbers were 2 and 7.8 respectively. The girls were also asked why they were missing school; only 1% of Her Turn girls compared to 22% of non Her Turn girls reported that they were afraid to attend school. When asked how safe they felt in various situations, Her Turn girls reported feeling unsafe at lower rates in all situations except while changing their clothes and during menstruation. This lack of privacy was identified as a major source of insecurity during focus groups discussions, when most of respondents lived in temporary shelters and many still under tarpaulins.

While these results indicate certain interesting variances between Her Turn girls and other girls, it's important to note that these differences cannot be completely attributed to the Her Turn program. In the weeks and months following the earthquake, there was a high level of chaos and many relief organizations acting simultaneously. The girls' situation also depended largely on their schools and communities. The context of each VDC is different, with various distances to school, severity of landslides, availability of toilets in schools and other factors which all can affect girls' attendance. While there certainly seems to be correlation between participation in Her Turn programming and improved outcomes, we cannot determine whether the program, or the program alone, caused these results.

"Three most important changes I noticed in my school are: girls are not scared or frightened, they are more confident. If a problem arises, they are able to respond. If somebody bullies someone else, girls are ready to talk to the bully. How is this possible? These are possible after Her Turn workshop, changes in community and through education."  
He Turn School Teacher

The report resulting from the research was presented in Kathmandu to a number of organizations (UN Agencies, NGOs and INGOs) and we hope it will inform their future programs.

#### *Women's Committee Conference*

In December 2015, a women's organization from Sindhupalchok district, Gramin Mahila Srijansil Pariwar (GMSP), organized a two day Women's Committees Conference in the district headquarters of Chautara. The conference was a part of the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence Campaign. They hosted 84 women and 13 men from remote VDCs of the district. While our Girl Support Committees did not attend because we were unable to ensure their safe travel, we supported GMSP in organizing focus group discussions that aimed at identifying the biggest challenges the women face across various sectors and their proposed solutions. This activity resulted in a set of recommendations that were published and shared widely with the donor community ([soft copy available here](#)).

#### *Media*

In 2015 we continued our presence on social media to spread the message about girls' and women's rights globally and in South Asia such as child marriage, human trafficking and gender based violence, as well as our own activities. On our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts, we highlight issues facing girls and women and solutions of many organizations that challenge the status quo.

While in 2015 field work was a priority and consumed most of our efforts, we conducted two online fundraising campaigns. During the first campaign, held shortly after the earthquakes, our supporters donated 5 USD for the purchase of a Her Kit - a menstrual hygiene kit that we delivered to adolescent girls after the earthquakes. Each kit contained a body soap, four pieces of reusable sanitary pads, a towel, a pair of underwear and a laundry soap. For the second campaign, supporters also funded Her Kits purchase and distribution, but in relation to the 2015 FIFA Women's World Cup: in June we rolled out the "Goals for Girls" campaign in which we encouraged supporters to donate 5 USD to Her Turn for each goal their favorite teams scored as a sort of "carbon offset" [unethical practices that accompany FIFA's work](#). We would like to thank everyone who joined us, shared and donated - your contributions helped us reach over 1,800 girls.

# Goals for Girls



In August, we were featured in Innovate Development's post "[It's Time for Her Turn](#)". Innovate Development is a "growing online community for sharing and discussing creative ideas and solutions to some of the world's most pressing issues." The piece describes our workshop model and the challenges that were exacerbated by the earthquake. In November, our work was featured in [El Pais](#) - the highest circulation daily in Spain. The Spanish language piece explained the risk of human trafficking after the earthquake and featured Her Turn along with Shakti Samuha, a local NGO that works in trafficking prevention and response.

## Challenges

- By far, the biggest challenge to the whole country this year, which also severely impacted our work, were the earthquakes. All the girls we have worked with in the past were affected to various degrees: their houses collapsed or were damaged, many lost family members, and many of their families lost livelihoods as a result of the disaster. The tragedy was overwhelming and Her Turn attempted to respond on a manageable scale and in the area we are familiar with - menstrual hygiene management.
- During our conversations with the mentors who are based in villages, we sometimes hear about how challenging their work is. Some of them faced backlash in their communities when they attempted to prevent an early marriage or when they helped survivors to report crimes. Sometimes the schools are reluctant to support survivors and bring incidents of violence in the open for the fear that, in the words of one of our mentors, the "school's name would become infamous." In the future, we need to strengthen our links with the communities and schools so that mentors' work is appreciated and that schools strive towards violence-free communities.
- Our mentors also face difficulties when they help to report various issues to the law enforcement. While Nepal has laws against early marriage, domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence, the police forces are not always aware or trained to respond adequately. Our mentors often face inaction from law enforcement, especially in cases of elopement early marriage. Marriages in Nepal occur either as "arranged marriage" where the families arrange spouses for their children, or "love marriages" where adolescents elope. They leave the village typically for a few days and when they get back, they are considered married, the adolescent bride moves into her husband's household and usually drops out of school. In the future, it would be beneficial to integrate working with police into our wider programming strategy.
- While no reliable data exists, qualitative information that we receive from the field suggests that early marriages in some earthquake affected areas increased. This can be attributed to the many families' loss of livelihoods (poverty is one of the major drivers of early marriage) and many layers of insecurity adolescent girls and their families experience in the aftermath of the disaster. Lack of safe shelters, lack of locks, lights, lack of safe, adequate and sufficient toilets in schools and households, and lack of privacy to change clothes all exacerbate the feeling of insecurity. Early marriage - especially "love



marriages” – is incredibly difficult to address in a constructive manner. As our mentors put a lot of efforts into prevention, we need a pragmatic and feasible strategy that would not push involved adolescents further into vulnerability and stigma, and would involve district and local authorities, and Community Based Organizations. Before the earthquake, Nepal was on its way to eradicating early marriage and made strong commitments in the international arena. In the face of the emergency these commitments lost their strength somewhat; we hope they will be picked up again as soon as possible.

## Lessons Learned

- Perhaps at no other time is coordination more important than during a disaster response. Coordination with other organizations and authorities helps to save resources, avoid duplication, inform each other’s work and ensure gaps are filled. For many organizations in Nepal, the earthquake response was a learning curve and as we move forward we plan to improve our coordination mechanisms with schools and other organizations.
- After the earthquakes we learned of the unique needs of women, girls, boys and men in the emergency. For example, in an assessment we helped conduct in a camp for communities displaced by the earthquakes in Bhaktapur, we learned that women often reported the need for contraception. Before the disaster this need was met by Female Community Health Volunteers, but since the community was displaced and infrastructure destroyed, women were concerned with lack of available contraception. At this camp, this need was met by Family Planning Nepal who conducted a reproductive health camp to the site.

## Going Forward

- As we move forward and our programs grow, we will improve our networks with local organizations. Our mentors sometimes need support from various service providers, from organizations providing scholarships, to psychosocial or legal support for gender-based violence survivors. In order to be able to efficiently connect with these agencies, we will map various district-based organizations and strengthen our links with them.
- Equally important is coordination and collaboration with schools. They are the main sites of our workshops and they can potentially play an important role in social transformation, prevention of various harmful practices such as early marriage, and monitoring the security situation of children and adolescents in their communities. In the future, we plan to work with them more closely and involve them in our work.
- Both voices from the field and research confirm the need to involve adolescent boys in our work. There is a growing body of evidence that boys need to be reached with gender-based violence prevention programs. While we planned to develop boys’ programming in 2015, these plans were disrupted by the earthquakes. We hope to start working with the boys in 2016.
- All these developments call for a more defined direction. To this end we plan to work on a strategic plan for our organization, which will be based on voices of the girls, the mentors, our staff and advisors. We hope the strategy will help us define goals and resources needed to achieve them and will guide us as we grow into the future.

## Finances

In 2015 our budget amounted to NPR 3,113,138 (USD 30,338). Forty one percent of this sum was spent on workshops, including one fifth of the total expenses on meals for the workshops. We spent 18% on mentorship program and 27% for staff salaries. Her Kits distribution cost 9% of the total budget. Additionally 3% was spent on administrative costs, 1% for office supplies and another 1% for communication.

