



Table of Content

Acknowledgements	2
Executive Summary	2
Year 2016 in Nepal	2
Our Programs	3
Theory of Change	3
Workshop	6
Results	7
Mentorship Program	7
Community Projects	8
Advocacy	10
Symposium	10
Early Marriage Comic Book	11
Online Presence	12
In media	12
Registration	13
Way Forward	14
Programs	14
Organization	15
Challenges and Lessons Learned	15
Finances	16



Acknowledgements

Year 2016 was the biggest in our history. We would not be able to grow and learn without the generosity, advice, trust, and commitment of all our individual and organizational supporters and collaborators. We would like to thank People in Need, Stars Foundation, and other organizations involved in With and For Girls Award, MATCH International Women's Fund, Present Purpose Network, Apeiron, PaxWorks, DFID, and CARE Nepal for their continued support. We hope to continue these partnerships into the future. Special thanks to Girls Support Committees' members and their mentors who tirelessly work with girls and boys in their villages for the betterment of their schools and communities. This work would not be possible without any one of you.

Executive Summary

Hamro Palo's (previously Her Turn program) mission is to empower adolescent 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 programs that advance adolescents' health, safety, confidence, and leadership skills and help protect them from harmful practices, such as early marriage and human trafficking. We envision Nepali girls having access to education and information and having an equal say in decisions that affect their lives in their schools, in their families, in their communities, and in their country. We want girls to live in a world where they realize their potential as community members and change makers.

Year 2016 was the biggest year for us so far. While we continued our programs with girls, we moved from being a Her Turn program to being Hamro Palo (Our Turn), a not-for profit registered non-governmental organization. We have reached more girls and communities than ever before – including the ones affected by the 2015 earthquakes, and a remote Jumla district in the mid-western region of Nepal. We have developed new partnerships and continued existing ones. Since our beginning in 2012, we have worked with 3,380 girls. Nearly half of this number, 1,558 girls, represent participants in 2016 programs. In our mentorship program, 21 mentors worked with 326 adolescent Girl Support Committee members and guided them through problem solving processes. These groups address various issues in their communities, such as boys and girls dropping out of school, early marriages, and others, and refer them to appropriate resources when needed. The mentors also met in Kathmandu 4 times.

On top of these ongoing programs, we engage in advocacy efforts – in 2016 we organized a Girls Support Committee Symposium, where over 100 adolescent girls, their mentors and teachers met, exchanged experiences, discussed ways forward, and met other organizations and service providers. The participants discussed needs in their communities, planned how to address them, and issued a set of recommendations and a declaration that included their recognition of various challenges adolescent girls face and their commitments to address them. We hosted special guests, including Ms. Mohna Ansari – the first female Muslim lawyer in the country, who shared her personal story and encouraged the girls to advocate for positive change in their communities. We also developed a comic book about early marriage in an earthquake affected area of Nepal. Adolescents in our working areas participated in the creation process. The comic book was printed in 5,000 copies and it is distributed among the girls we work with to complement related content from our workshops. In October 2016, we received a chance to use the advocacy platform of With and For Girls Award Week to present the challenges and successes of our work in an international forum.

But our work is not about numbers. It's about impact. The adolescent girls we work with continue to inspire us and lead the change in their communities. So do the trainers and mentors we work with who engage in discussions in their communities on adolescents' potential and challenges they face, including harmful traditions and practices, who prevent early marriages, who help girls and boys who are victims of bullying, and who encourage students who have dropped out of school to re-enroll. You can learn more about their work in 2016 from this report.

Year 2016 in Nepal

At the end of 2016, more than 18 months after earthquakes in April and May 2015, reconstruction and recovery was slow and progress was still very much anticipated. Political instability following the Nepal [border blockade of 2015](#) - the impact of which was estimated to be higher than the earthquakes - also resulted in a number of crises: shortages of fuel and medicines, and slowing of reconstruction efforts.



The situation that year was still difficult for many adolescents from affected communities – the girls we worked with told us of their various sources of insecurity in the post disaster context. Some of the challenges they face include living in temporary shelters with little privacy or protection, and no place to comfortably change clothes or manage their menstruation; some communities displaced by the earthquakes faced insufficient access to water which affects their sanitation, hygiene, and health. Additionally, after a disaster, when many families lose their homes and livelihoods and face tough choices, some turn to negative coping mechanisms. The rates of early marriage typically rise after emergencies, when a girl or her family believes that being married will protect her from harms and risks exacerbated by the natural disaster. Human trafficking is another risk that was present in Nepal before and likely increased after the 2015 earthquakes.

By the end of 2016, many schools still have not rebuilt; more still lack adequate, gender segregated toilets with locks. The lack of girl-friendly toilets may lead to absences of girl students or dropping out of school altogether, which then increases the risks of early marriage and trafficking.

While our work focuses on providing opportunities for girls to create more girl friendly environments and reducing these risks, we recognize that the needs are immense. But we also recognize that by empowering girls to know their rights, and make their own decisions, we can continue to work towards safer

and healthier futures for more girls.

Our Programs

Theory of Change

Her Turn workshop is an interactive education and empowerment workshop for rural adolescent girls. We understand empowerment as building on three pillars: access to information, agency, and self-value. With our approach, we envision communities and schools where girls have the knowledge, the skills, and the agency to see themselves, and have others see them, as equal members of their communities. Our theory of change below illustrates the logic of the Her Turn program.

Our ongoing programs include two major components: four-week long Her Turn workshops for in- and out-of-school rural adolescent girls and an ongoing mentorship program. The workshops cover health issues (nutrition, safe water handling, puberty, menstrual hygiene management), safety issues (bullying, domestic violence, human trafficking, early marriage, sexual harassment) and leadership skills development (public speaking, confidence building, problem solving). The participants also meet a local female leader – a member of a local women's network, a social worker, or a local activist. Each group of girls receives a cash grant to use to address a health or safety related issue in their school or community. These usually include toilet upgrades, purchase of emergency sanitary pads, and other water and sanitation needs at schools. The workshops are delivered by trained young local women from the same communities. This ensures that trainers speak the mother tongues of the girls and understand particular practices of their communities that pertain to adolescents' health and safety. The workshops conclude with ceremonies prepared and conducted by the girls themselves. They invite their parents, community leaders and members, and teachers, and use these events as an advocacy platform to engage the guests in discussions about issues that pertain to their health and safety. While they often present drama plays on early marriage and domestic violence, each particular ceremony is different as it designed by the girls and reflects their priorities within their particular contexts. During the workshops, the girls form a Girls Support Committee, which consists of 5-10 active girls from the school.

Girls Support Committees remain active through a mentorship program after the completion of the workshop. Each village has one appointed mentor selected from the trainers who delivered Her Turn workshops. The Committees meet their mentors each month, or more frequently if needed. The mentors serve as role models and they guide the Committees in the

problem solving processes. Girls and boys from their communities bring to them various issues that they collectively try to solve. They generally vary from encouraging children who have dropped out of school to re-enroll, to early marriage prevention, to responding to bullying. Mentors meet in Kathmandu several times a year to exchange their experiences, receive additional trainings, and strengthen their support network.

Village girls have lots of domestic work. In our school one girl was supposed to leave school after class 5. After participating in our workshop she has managed to continue going to school regularly even though the school is quite far. She is now studying in class 8. She is a little older than other [girls in her class] but this workshop has convinced girls to continue their study, age doesn't make any difference. It is done by her own belief and confidence.

HT Participant, Sindhupalchok



IMPACT

Girls are equal contributors in their schools, communities and families, and become educated, empowered and equal women.

RESULT

SYSTEMIC OUTCOME

Girls have greater leadership opportunities and participate in school, family, and community decisions.

Communities, families and schools perceive girls as equal.

Schools, community members, girls and other stakeholders are informed to provide space for girls to make educated life decisions.

Girls and their issues are systemically addressed and included in schools, communities, and families.

PERSONAL OUTCOME

Girls have skills and agency to take on leadership roles and address issues.

Girls feel that they are equal members of their communities, schools and families.

Girls have knowledge to make informed life decisions.

Girls are empowered to negotiate their life circumstances and challenge harmful social norms and practices.

ACTIVITY

Leadership skill development, mentoring, school project, girl-led community event.

Confidence building and gender transformative activities.

Information about girls' health, safety, rights, and resources.

Gender transformative programming that equips girls with knowledge, leadership opportunities and avenues for issues based dialogue and action.

FACTOR

Girls lack the skills and capacity to act in their interests.

Girls don't feel they are equal members of their communities, schools, and families.

Girls lack information about their bodies, their rights, consequences of decisions, and resources.

Girls do not have the knowledge, confidence or skills to exercise their rights and make informed decisions.

ROOT CAUSE

Low social status of girls and women perpetuates violence, discrimination, and gender inequality

Systemic marginalization of girls, SGBV, trafficking, early school drop outs, early marriage.

VALUES

Programs that are girl-centred, school based, inter-sectoral, pragmatically oriented, interactive, inclusive and context specific.

Workshop

In 2016, we continued to deliver Her Turn workshop in Sindhupalchok and Gorkha districts and for the first time delivered it in Ghode Mahadev Village Development Committee (VDC) in the geographically remote Jumla district. This year's overall average workshops attendance rate was 95%.

Jumla was heavily affected by Nepal's civil war that ended in 2006 and suffers from high rates of poverty – in 2011 it ranked seventh highest of 75 districts of Nepal on poverty gap, 6th highest on poverty incidence, seventh lowest on poverty severity, and second highest on Standard Error of Poverty Incidence.¹ Many communities have no access to health services, and 60% of children under 5 are malnourished.² More than 80% of women and girls in the district married before they turned 18.³ Jumla is also one of the districts where many women and girls follow one of the strictest forms of menstrual restrictions – chhaupadi. This tradition forces menstruating women and girls to stay in an outside hut or a cow shed – a practice that puts them at risk from animals, exposure, and violent attacks. Cases of women and girls dying from risks while practicing chhaupadi are occasionally reported, but likely happen more often.

We conducted our workshop in Jumla between April and June with two trained local trainers and 40 participants – students of classes 7 to 10 of a local school. The workshop concluded on June 6th with a community ceremony.

My parents used to send me to a shed during my periods. My mentors told me about healthy habits and cleanliness. Because my parents are uneducated, it was difficult to convince them. It took time but they finally agreed to my demands. Now they let me sleep in a clean room and they take good care of me. I am now more confident to speak up about my rights.

HT Participant, Jumla

We have many child marriage cases because of the increasing population, poverty, and lack of education. Women are also facing problems like early pregnancy, uterine prolapse, and other health issues. Education and awareness for all is the best way to end these problems. I learned these things in the workshop and I am committed to stopping these problems at my level.

HT Participant, Jumla

¹Central Bureau of Statistics, National Population and Housing Census 2011

²District Profile – Jumla, UNFCO, 2012

³Central Bureau of Statistics, National Population and Housing Census 2011

Parents, girls, women's networks, community members, and representatives from the Village Development Committee and the District Education Office (DEO) attended the event. The girls gave speeches on various issues they considered important – violence, chhaupadi, and early marriage. The chief guests from the DEO made a speech on the need for commitment from the grassroots level to high-level agencies and networks to address girls' issues.

Apart from Jumla, we continued our work with girls and young women in earthquake affected districts of Sindhupalchok and Gorkha. These two districts were severely affected by the 2015 earthquakes – Gorkha was the epicenter of the April 25th earthquake, and Sindhupalchok of the biggest following aftershock on May 12th. The earthquakes killed almost 8,800 people in Nepal and injured almost 22,000. Over half a million houses were destroyed and over 219,000 damaged – many in these two districts.

In Gorkha, we have worked in villages at the epicenter with 620 girls in four schools of three VDCs. The workshops were delivered by 26 local women from the same ethnic backgrounds as the participating girls, primarily Gurung. Most girls still lived in temporary shelters as their homes were destroyed during the



disaster; this poses a number of challenges in the areas of security, hygiene, privacy, and health. In Sindhupalchok we have worked with 890 girls from 17 schools in six VDCs. Forty nine of these girls had already dropped out of school, mostly because they were already married. Some had children whom they brought to the workshop sessions. In one VDC, out of 93 participants, 25 were girls who had dropped out of school.

It is particularly important for us to reach out-of-school adolescent girls. They are typically more at risk than in-school girls – they are more likely to be married and experience early pregnancy and childbirth - which pose a number of health risks – and to engage in child labor, and be at risk of human trafficking.

Results

We measure the changes in participants' knowledge, attitudes and practice through a baseline and endline survey administered before and after the workshop. Each participant fills out her questionnaire anonymously. These are then entered into a file and the differences between girls' responses before and after the program are assessed.

Some of the results from 2016:

- Safety: 48% more girls knew the legal provisions regarding domestic violence in Nepal (from 41% before to 89% after), 36% more knew how to respond to the risk of trafficking (from 53% to 89%), 33% more knew how to respond to bullying (from 57% to 90%), 33% more knew how to respond to domestic violence (from 58% to 91%), 29% more knew how to respond to sexual harassment (from 54% to 83%), and 25% more knew what constitutes human trafficking (from 71% to 96%).
- Health: 23% more girls knew what menstruation was (from 74% to 97%), 21% more girls knew the ways germs spread (from 75% to 96%), and 20% more knew how to take care of their bodies during puberty (from 75% to 95%).
- Empowerment: 33% more girls reported feeling strong (from 46% to 79%), 23% more knew female leaders (from 42% to 65%), and 23% more thought they would make a good leader (from 67% to 89%).

Additionally, we conduct interviews with girls, parents, trainers, and teachers. These qualitative evaluations give us a more in-depth understanding of the

impacts of our programs. The interviews typically confirm the self-reported changes in girls' behaviors from baseline and endline surveys – they often mention how girls gain motivation to study, become more active in the classroom, practice more hygienic behaviors, and pass these behaviors on to their family members.

One of the biggest changes that trainers and the girls report is in girls' knowledge and understanding of menstruation. In many communities this is a taboo topic and culturally associated with impurity and pollution, which results in various forms of menstrual restrictions. These can include banning menstruating girls and women from entering the kitchen, going to school, touching a book, or interacting with their male family members. The trainers and girls often report how the workshops changed their perceptions and after participating, they start seeing periods as a natural body function. We find the fact that the girls are able to talk about menstruation, and cut the connection to shame and impurity, a meaningful impact on girls' lives. This change in perception can affect their families' practices, and contribute to overall decrease of perceptions of menstruation as polluting.

Mentorship Program

At the end of 2016, Hamro Palo had 21 mentors working with 326 Girls Support committee members in Sindhupalchok, Gorkha and Jumla. This year the mentors conducted 207 meetings with Girls Support Committees in 34 schools – both new schools, and ones where we worked in years prior. They intervened in 41 cases: early marriage (10), children's school drop outs (12), bullying (5), menstrual restrictions (1) and other cases related to safety, education, and their peers' well-being. Four of these interventions were referred to the police, three were linked with scholarship providers, and two were referred to their schools.

The mentors met in Kathmandu four times: in March, July, November, and December. They also participated in a Symposium in August.

We used to be careless about health and sanitation, and didn't go to school during menstruation. But after the workshop we have become careful about sanitation. Now we use pads or cloth reusable pads which we received in the Her Turn workshop kit, and we change it every three hours. We are able to go school regularly and we will also teach other community girls and women about this.

HT Participant, Sindhupalchok



The March meeting of mentors in Kathmandu hosted four new and five existing mentors from Sindhupalchok and two mentors from Gorkha – a total of 11 mentors – for two days. The new and existing mentors discussed the role of a mentor, methods of effective communication, confidentiality, building relationships, problem solving, and girls’ empowerment. The mentors also visited an NGO called Early Childhood Development Centre (ECDC) to learn about its work. This organization was founded and is led by Ms. Pushpa Basnet, CNN Hero 2012. The visit was organized to inspire and encourage mentors to continue working in their communities. Following the visit, all the mentors and HP staff worked on the action plan for the way forward for the mentorship program. The three day training ended with an evaluation by the

My classmate dropped out of school in grade 6. A year later she got married. I had taken a workshop on girl empowerment, so I kept on telling my friend to go back to school. At first she was angry, but later I was able to convince her about the importance of education. Now she has joined school and I am happy. We have a social club where we discuss our problems in school. This has not only made us confident but also has empowered us to solve our problems ourselves.

HT Participant, Sindhupalchok

mentors.

In July, nine mentors and two social mobilizers met again in Kathmandu for two days. During this meeting they exchanged updates about their respective Girls Support Committees’ progress, discussed some of the cases reported by the girls, and discussed the most effective ways of coordination (often difficult with lack of mobile network coverage in remote areas). During the meeting, mentors discussed the need for strong coordination among organizations working in their communities.

In September, two of our social mobilizers participated in a two-day long training organized by CARE Nepal. The training covered gender based violence prevention, case management, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, and including men and boys in violence prevention efforts.

In November, we had another two-day meeting of mentors with 11 mentors, two social mobilisers, and two GSC members. During the meeting, apart from mentors and 10 staff members, we hosted five board members and six partner organizations’ representatives – a total of 34 participants on the first day and 26 participants on the second day. This meeting was dedicated to sharing updates, celebrating the With and For Girls Award and the start of the discussions with mentors around the upcoming Strategic Plan.

The last Meeting of Mentors took place at the end of December for three days and hosted nine mentors, of which two were new mentors from Gorkha district. During the three-day meeting, the mentors met each other and the HP team, and learned and practiced various tools and mechanisms to work with girls, and to coordinate this work with schools and community members.

Community Projects

At the meetings with mentors we often hear success stories, but also challenges they face in their communities because of their work with Girls

I am the president of the Girls Support Committee and my team has stopped a child marriage. A 10-year-old girl and 11-year-old boy had fallen in love and they were ready to marry. When we learned about this, we called a meeting and discussed how to stop this child marriage: what to say to them, how to convince them, what types of examples to share with them to convince them to stop marrying, and what consequences could happen to them in the future if they go ahead. All these issues were discussed in the group because to succeed in any issue, one’s leadership does not work, but group’s leadership can succeed. We feel very proud that as women we were able to stop that child marriage.

GSC President

Support Committees. Their attempts to stop early marriages or intervene in other cases are at times met with backlash from some community members who question their challenging traditions or social norms that result in discriminatory practices. These difficulties and the way to mitigate them were discussed at the August Symposium (see below) where mentors and Girls Support Committees had a chance to exchange their experiences and discuss ways forward for their respective schools, with the support from Hamro Palo.

To foster communities' support for mentors and Girls Support Committees and strengthen their linkages with existing local networks, we organized 29 workshops with mentors, GSCs, Mothers' Groups, school staff, VDC officers, youth clubs, and other community members – in total 713 persons, of which 272 were Girls Support Committee members. During the two-day long workshops the participants discussed the health and safety related needs of girls and boys in their schools and communities and decided how to address them. The mentors and Girls Support Committees then received cash grants to implement the solutions they agreed on. These were monitored and evaluated by our teams to ensure transparency and accountability, and to help the groups learn good practices for participatory community work.

In total, the groups implemented 39 projects in 33 schools. The majority (27) of the projects covered water and sanitation needs – construction or upgrades to temporary school toilets, water pipelines and taps in schools, sanitary pad disposal systems; eight covered needs in the classroom or school compounds – fences around the compound or classroom equipment; and four covered

One of the most successful community projects was implemented in Baruwa. In November and December we worked with 24 participants. Of this group of girls, only five were students; the rest were out-of-school girls, mostly married and with children. The school staff wanted to use the community project funds for a water tap for the school, but the girls decided there was a more pressing need. Until then, a nurse visited the village once a week and patients used to get check-ups in the open with no privacy. The girls decided to spend the money building a temporary health post equipped with a bed, table and a chair. This decision gained support of the School Management Committee, several pregnant women and others in the community. The SMC helped implement the project and villagers contributed labor. Another NGO, PHASE Nepal, deployed nurses and provides basic medicines. The health post is functioning and all villagers now enjoy better access to health care in their village.

health needs - included first aid kits for schools, stretchers, and one group decided to support another local NGO's health post in their village with temporary construction and furniture.

The Girls Support Committee has brought a lot of change in my VDC. Before the GSC [was formed], menstruation was a big taboo in our society. When a girl was menstruating, she was put in a cow shed away from her family. She was not allowed to touch anyone or any living being. She was not even allowed to touch plants. She was considered impure. Due to the 24-day workshop, the GSC along with the locals have become aware about the natural process of menstruation. The awareness programs have taught people about dos and don'ts during menstruation. Since then, the restrictions during menstruation have decreased.

GSC member



Advocacy

Symposium

On top of our programs in the villages, we consider advocacy to be an important part of our work. On August 1-3, 2016, we hosted a Girls Support Committee Symposium. Attendees (79 GSC members, 15 mentors and 10 school teachers) traveled all the way from Sindhupalchok, Gorkha and Jumla to Kathmandu to participate in the event. The Symposium served as a platform for the girls and mentors to meet each other and various organizations, learn from each other, share their experiences, plan future work and enjoy some fun in the capital.

During the opening ceremony, the event hosted a special guest: Ms. Mohna Ansari, a commissioner at Nepal Human Rights Commission and the first female Muslim lawyer in Nepal. Ms. Ansari shared her personal story of the challenges she faced when trying to get education, and encouraged girls to stay in schools and implement learnings from the Symposium back in their villages. The next session was an introduction of all the girls and their Girls Support Committees. They shared news about their work in their villages and



schools highlighting achievements and major challenges. GSCs shared that many girls are active in their schools and communities through Girls Support Committees and have been working on issues such as early marriage, bullying, girls and boys dropping out of school, and caste based discrimination. They also agreed that sometimes it is difficult to work in their communities as they do not always get support from community members or their teachers in schools – an issue that was somewhat addressed by the Community Projects implemented jointly by the GSCs and community networks. The next session was a discussion with Ms. Radha Poudel from the NGO Action Works Nepal. Ms. Poudel is an activist, an anesthetic nurse, and a writer who tackles harmful menstrual restrictions in remote areas of Nepal.

The second day of symposium included a panel discussion titled, “Violence against women, existing laws in Nepal and effective practice.” The panel invited Her Turn workshop graduate Ms. Ambika Nagarkoti, mentor Ms. Hasina Tamang, advocate Ms. Meera Dhungana (president of a national NGO Forum for Women, Law and Development), Ms. Nani Maya Thapa (Executive Director of a Sindhupalchok based NGO Gramin Mahila Shrijanshil Pariwar), and Ms. Sarada Thapa (Senior Superintendent of Nepal Police, Women Cell, Nepal Police Headquarters). During the discussion, girls and participants shared the challenges they face when attempting to prevent early marriages and what can be done to overcome them. The participants emphasized the need of collaboration of NGOs, police, and community members and highlighted that girls can be important agents of change in their own communities. Following the panel discussion, Ms. Nani Maya Thapa and Mr. Raju Lama from People in Need led a session on “Advocacy against social evils.” The facilitators talked about the methods of advocacy and the best ways to be active social advocates. After discussing the ideas and tools, the girls divided themselves into five groups to develop drama plays for advocacy on issues involving caste and gender based discrimination, forced migration, early marriage, violence against women, and human trafficking.

Toilets used to be filthy and never had water. During menstruation, some of us used to go home just to change pads. Throughout the 24 days of Her Turn workshop we learned many things. I realized that we need to maintain hygiene and we cannot expect someone else to come and clean the toilet for us. With the initiation of the Girl Support Committee and support from our Mentor, we clean the toilet daily in a rotation. Class 10 does it on Sunday, class 9 on Monday and likewise. My class girls’ turn is on Thursday.

HT Participant, Sindhupalchok



On the third day, the participants divided into six thematic groups and discussed related challenges and solutions. The themes were: early marriage, education, livelihoods, safety, health, and violence against women and men. These discussions resulted in a set of recommendations for organizations working in various sectors and aimed at strengthening future programming, and policies and strategies of Hamro Palo and others who work with rural adolescent girls. The participants also developed a declaration in which they identified major challenges in their communities and expressed their commitments to help tackle them.

The next session was facilitated by HP's Executive Director Ms. Anita Thapa. Ms. Thapa discussed the way forward – how to stay connected beyond the three-day Symposium and to continue the work in the villages. The GSC members and their mentors developed plans for their villages, which included involving other networks and community members in future workshops and community projects following the Symposium.

77% of the participants reported that they made a lot of new friends during the event, 97% learned a lot of new things, and 99% liked the symposium a lot. The Symposium was covered in a daily newspaper My Republica. We also had a video created during the Symposium, where the participants talk about their advocacy work in the villages.

Early Marriage Comic Book

In the aftermath of the 2015 earthquakes, many girls and boys from earthquake affected areas found themselves at higher risk of early marriage than before. Some families worry they won't have enough money or food or that their adolescent daughters may be at risk of trafficking, sexual violence, or rape. The post-earthquake conditions in many communities that persisted throughout 2016 – temporary shelters with little privacy, and a lack of adequate and sufficient toilets – leave women and girls more vulnerable to sexual violence than before. Going to the toilet can be a terrifying and risky experience when toilets are far away, not gender segregated, and lack door locks, and lights when one has to visit them at night.

Despite clear laws against child marriage (the legal age to marry in Nepal is 20), a desperate family may see marriage as the best option to keep their daughter safe and fed by her husband's family. Even girls who choose to marry, may do so because of the weight of burdening her family, and the desire to avoid risking a marriage to someone she doesn't like if she doesn't elope on her own first.

In reality, underage brides are less safe than their single counterparts. Young brides often lack the agency with their husbands and power in their in-laws' families to speak up against domestic and sexual violence. A daughter-in-law typically occupies the lowest status in a family – she may not get as much food as other family members and may be made to do exhausting physical labor. Girls rarely stay in school after marriage, cutting off their friendships and potential to earn income and be self-sufficient later in life. Married girls are expected to start families shortly after tying the knot, even if their young bodies are not yet ready for the enormous task. Girls with underdeveloped bodies are at high risk for complications during childbirth and their children are less likely to survive childhood.

In 2015, four months after the earthquake, we collaborated with Oxfam Nepal and People in Need to develop a radio drama that talks about two young girls navigating the risks of early marriage in their communities. In 2016, we continued this collaboration, and together with People in Need, Oxfam Nepal, and Women for Human Rights, developed a comic book on early marriage in an

Not only the girls but I have also learned many things about hygiene and leadership myself. Throughout these 24 days I developed self confidence and was able to present myself in front of a crowd.

HT Trainer

earthquake affected community. The development process involved Focus Group Discussions with 55 adolescent boys and 59 girls before the comic book design to ensure the characters are relatable and tell a realistic story. We organized another series of Focus Group Discussions to test the comic book with 44 adolescent girls and 39 boys. After incorporating the feedback from the adolescents, the comic book was finalized and 5,000 copies printed. It was then disseminated in eight VDCs in Sindhupalchok and Gorkha to adolescent boys, girls, and other stakeholders. The remaining copies are being distributed at Her Turn workshops.

In August, the comic book was presented at a national level dissemination workshop at the Department of Women and Children. The workshop hosted a representative from the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, who presented the National Strategy to End Child Marriage and a representative from Girls Not Brides Nepal and the Center for Research on Environment, Health and Population Activities (CREHPA) who presented research findings on early marriage from six districts of Nepal.

The comic book tells a story of two adolescents who like one another and are considering a marriage. They discuss it with their friends who seek help from adults in the community – Female Community Health Volunteers and teachers. These adults help the adolescents make an informed decision by educating them and their families on the harmful consequences of early marriage.

The comic book received a mention on the [Girls Not Brides website](#).

In our community, menstruation is taken very seriously and considered something that defiles girls and women. People don't talk about it openly. It was a very confusing topic for young girls. After this 24-day workshop, we are aware of all the processes and reasons for menstruation. This workshop has removed the most terrible nightmare from girls' lives.

HT Participant, Sindhupalchok

Online Presence

We launched our new website in October 2016, available at www.her-turn.org and www.hamropalo.org. As we grew, we created new accounts on LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com/company/her-turn) and Instagram (www.instagram.com/herturnnepal/). We also continued our online presence on other social media: at the end of 2016, we had 1,117 followers on

Facebook (www.facebook.com/herturn) and 503 on Twitter (www.twitter.com/herturnnepal/).

In Media

Our work was featured in several media outlets. In April, Huffington Post Canada published a post from one of our partner organizations, MATCH International Women's Fund titled, [Working To Make Women's Rights The New Normal In Nepal](#). The post tells the story of a visit by MATCH representatives to one of the villages where we work and the challenges the girls face in their villages.

Our school is very thankful to Hamro Palo for I have seen changes in HT participants; even in today's closing ceremony I could see their confidence level. Before they would feel nervous but now they come forward for anything, be it any performance or hosting any program.

School Principal, Sindhupalchok

Our August Girls Support Committee Symposium was featured in the daily newspaper My Republica in a piece titled [Young girls fight against stigma surrounding menstruation](#). In the piece, girls, mentors and social mobilisers share their experiences of navigating social norms and health issues related to menstrual hygiene.

Another one of our partner organizations, People in Need, featured our work on their website in December. In a post titled [Arming girls with tools to stay safe in post-earthquake Nepal](#), PIN presented the workshops we conducted, with support from PIN and the European Union Humanitarian Aid Department, in displacement sites in Gorkha district.

In October, along with two other organizations from Nepal (Shakti Samuha and Women LEAD), and [19 others from around the world](#), we won With and For Girls Award given to locally-led girl-centred organizations by a group of eight organizations: Comic Relief, EMpower, Mama Cash, NoVo Foundation, Plan UK International, The Global Fund for Children, Nike Foundation, and Stars Foundation. Ms. Anita Thapa, our Executive Director, traveled to London in to receive the Award. Ms. Thapa was also invited to participate in a [panel discussion](#) during With and For Girls Award week about experiences of working with adolescent girls, related challenges and lessons, and involving boys. The Award gained high press coverage in Nepali media, including [The Kathmandu Post](#), [Nepali Times](#), [Glocal Khabar](#), and [Nepali Sajha](#).



In November, Executive Director Ms. Thapa was invited to Kathmandu based Radio Rajdhani, to speak about our work.

In December, our mentors were nominated as 2016 NGO heroes at the Guardian Witness. While they did not receive first place, it was a great platform to talk about their grassroots advocacy for girls' rights in remote villages in Nepal.

Registration

In the spring of 2016, we moved from being a Her Turn program implemented under the auspices of other organizations to becoming our own organization – Hamro Palo (Our Turn). As Hamro Palo, we have seven board members who come from diverse backgrounds and bring varied perspectives to the table.

Ms. Shovana Chhetri, President, has been working in the education sector since 1987. She is also actively engaged in the area of literature.

Ms. Dolma Kumari Sherpa, Treasurer, is a masters' graduate is also involved in the education sector. She is also engaged with other organizations: at Hyolmo Samaj Kendra as a Secretary and at Nepal Hyolmo Social Service Association as a Treasurer.

Ms. Indu Nepal, Vice-President, has extensive experience in journalism and media development, with leadership roles in new media and technology programs in South and Southeast Asia. A graduate of Columbia University's

Graduate School of Journalism in the US and The London School of Economics, she has worked as a reporter and editor in Nepal and the US, leading participatory media programs with Internews, and worked at Engage Media as a Regional Director.

Mr. Bharat Shrestha, Secretary, has experience working on gender, sexuality, and human rights, particularly in Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) issues in Nepal and the Asia-Pacific region. A young activist and a public health graduate from Northumbria University in the UK, he has served as Core Working Group member for Youth Voices Count and as LGBT representative for the U.S. Embassy's Youth Council Nepal (2014-15).

Ms. Sanchita Upreti, Executive Member, works as a Youth Development Officer (YDO) at Raleigh International Nepal. Previously she was involved with organizations Youth Initiative and Sambhawana. Ms. Upreti has a master's degree in social work from St. Xavier's College.

Mr. Suyog Neupane, Executive Member, is an NGO-sector professional with solid work experience in the field of adult education, counselling, advisory services, and programme planning, coordination and delivery. A graduate in business studies from Pashupati Multiple Campus, Kathmandu, Suyog has robust experience in research design, execution and monitoring and evaluation.

Ms. Iswori Thapa, Executive Member, works at Rakshya Nepal, an organization working for sexually exploited girls, women and their children. She holds a master's degree in public administration from Tribhuvan University.

Our core staff team also grew in 2016, and at the end of 2016 Hamro Palo has 21 mentors, one social mobilizer, and 12 Kathmandu based staff members.

My village had a very high number of child marriage cases. There was case of child marriage of adolescent girl who started to miss her classes in school after marriage. Her husband was very poor and she felt ashamed to attend class. The GSC had a meeting with the husband and their parents, after which the girl was able to rejoin school.

HT Participant, Sindhupalchok

We also have an Advisory Board with three members.

Ola Perczynska, who founded Her Turn, first visited Nepal in 2008, shortly after completing her Master's degree at the University of Lancaster. After learning about the importance of girls' education and empowerment and their situation in Nepal, in 2012 she founded Her Turn. She currently works with People in Need in Nepal.

Daniel Coyle has over seven years' experience conducting program research in different parts of Nepal. Prior to the 2015 earthquake, he researched gender and the successes and failures of various development interventions in both rural and urban settings, and has extensively worked with Nepal's marginalized populations in remote and earthquake affected districts.

Danielle Preiss first visited Nepal in 2008 through a Fulbright research grant. She has since worked with various non-profit agencies in Nepal and the US on projects related to agriculture, health, and refugee resettlement. In 2013, she completed master's degrees in environmental science at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, and journalism at Syracuse University. Danielle has reported for various media outlets from Nepal. She worked closely with Her Turn in Nepal after the 2015 earthquake.



Way Forward

As we develop, it becomes more important to have a strategic direction for our programs and the organization. There are several areas that we consider important going forward.

Programs

Our partner People in Need supports us in mid-term impact evaluations of our program. The independent evaluation team will visit four of our previous field sites (including two where the workshop was implemented in 2013) and talk to GSC members, teachers, parents and other community members to establish what impacts – both intended and unintended –our program has had on girls and their communities. The evaluation is ongoing and the report will be shared with partners, donors, and supporters in the first quarter of 2017.

We have for several years heard voices from the girls we work with, and their schools, families, and communities on the importance of involving boys and men in our work. There is also an extensive body of evidence on involving boys and men in violence prevention efforts. At the end of 2016, we are excited to report that we will start working with boys in 2017 under the SAFE Justice program with People in Need (PIN) and CARE Nepal, funded by the Department for International Development (DFID). Our partner PIN conducted an assessment in August 2016 and is currently conducting desk research on effective strategies to involve boys. In 2017, we plan to work with at least 800 adolescent boys in workshops similar to Her Turn for girls.

We also plan to involve schools more in our work. Education is the best measure to prevent early marriage and increase adolescents' chances to have better jobs in the future. We are currently working with PIN under the SAFE Justice project on developing a training for school staff and community members. The trainings will focus on creating gender sensitive and child friendly environments in schools. Specifically, we plan to engage schools and communities in discussions about girls' and boys' safety in schools. The trainings will focus on corporal punishment – a common phenomenon in Nepali schools – and school related gender based violence – an issue we often hear about from our Girls Support Committees. By involving School Management Committees, Parent-Teacher Associations, and other community members, we hope to raise awareness on these issues and increase mutual accountability in the area of children's safety.



We recognize the unique needs of married adolescents, a majority of whom drop out of school and are at increased risk of health problems related to early pregnancy and childbirth, various forms of violence and discrimination, and living in poverty. To address some of these issues, we are exploring the idea of developing a program specifically for married adolescent girls. It would be based on a similar theory of change but would include cognitive and non-cognitive skills development particularly relevant to this marginalized group, such as sexual and reproductive health and rights knowledge and related available resources, negotiation skills, and livelihoods.

Organization

As we grow as an organization, we increasingly need a strategic direction. We plan to develop a strategic plan for Hamro Palo in the coming year. The consultations with Girls Support Committees and mentors have already started, and in 2017 we plan to continue discussions with staff and Boards and formulate a plan that will include programmatic goals, a fundraising strategy, a capacity development plan, and an action plan.

We also recognize the need for stronger organizational structure. While we currently have child protection and financial policies, we will be developing more organizational documents such as human resources, sexual harassment, whistle blowing, and conflict of interest policies. We hope these documents, which will be developed next year and approved by the Board, will improve

and streamline our operations and help us build a strong, transparent and accountable organization.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

Some of the challenges from 2015 continued in 2016 and beyond. The effects of the earthquakes on the communities where we worked were still prominent; many communities still live in temporary shelters, are displaced, and many schools operate in Temporary Learning Centers constructed of corrugated iron sheets. Additionally, the political crisis of the Indian border blockade of 2015 caused fuel shortages which lasted until spring 2016 and significantly limited our ability to travel to field sites. Power cuts, which affected our work in prior years, continued to limit our working capacity in 2016 too.

On a smaller scale, planning and coordination with schools has sometimes been a challenge this year. Even when we attempt to plan ahead, schools' schedules can change and there are sometimes gaps in communication. This is not a new issue and we are working to strengthening our coordination mechanisms. Our work with schools is also sometimes adversely affected by local dynamics. As we train and hire young local women, who in some cases have graduated from the same schools only few years ago, some teachers and principals are not open to perceiving them as capacitated to lead our workshops and seem to not appreciate their work as trainers. This also affects



coordination efforts if the trainers are anxious to speak to school staff.

Trainer selection can also sometimes pose a problem. Entering a community with its own political and social dynamics, our staff sometimes faces pressure from influential community members to hire particular people as trainers. These recommendations do not always reflect our merit based hiring approach by which we select young women with potential for presentation and facilitation. This, again, is not a new challenge and we continue to learn to navigate these delicate dynamics in sensitive and appropriate ways.

We sometimes hear from the mentors and Girls Support Committees the difficulties they face in their communities when they challenge harmful traditions and practices such as early marriage. They are at the forefront of the work around social norms that affect adolescent boys and girls and as they go on with their work, we continue to support them by developing their capacities, training them in various relevant skills and techniques, and linking with other organizations and resources. We find these linkages and support an important part of sustainability of our work, which ultimately aims at communities realizing girls' potential and value.

Lastly, we recognize that cooperation with other local organizations is crucial

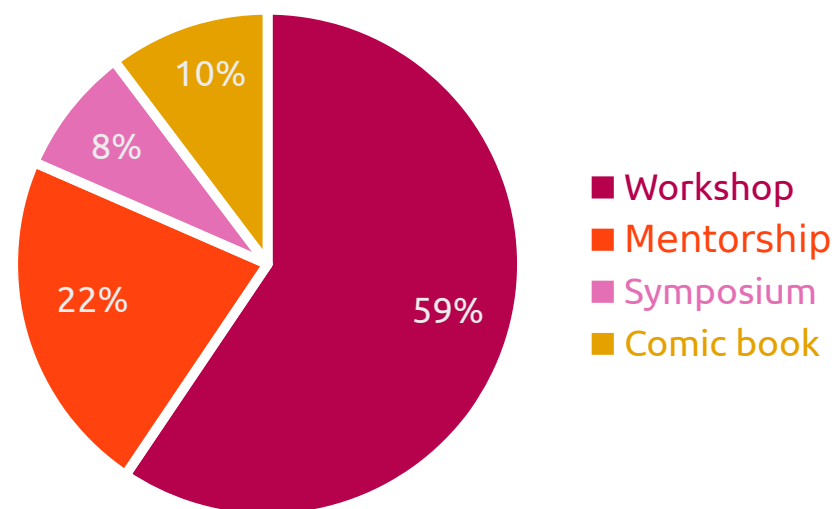


to our success. While our mentors and staff do refer certain cases to various service providers, we plan to further strengthen these networks. We invited local and national NGOs' representatives to our August 2016 Symposium and we will continue to collaborate with these and other agencies on issues related to our work. We are also exploring the idea of involving them more in our advocacy work in the future.

Finances

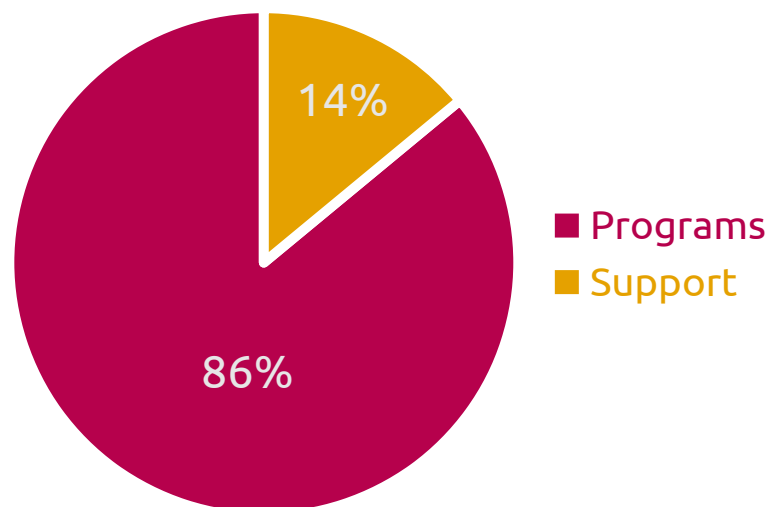
In 2016, our expenditures amounted to NPR 17,152,031 (USD 160,015) with 86% spent on direct program costs. These included Her Turn workshops (59% of programs expenses), mentorship program (22%), and our advocacy work: Symposium (8%) and the comic book (10%). Cost per girl of Her Turn workshop participant was NPR 5,648 or USD 53.

Programs cost breakdown



The remaining 14% was spent on support and administrative costs – office rent, equipment and supplies, registration and audit costs, logistics, and communications.

Programs-support cost breakdown



The workshop has been very useful in bringing positive changes among participating girls. This program understands the endurance of Nepali women and guides girls and women accordingly to overcome the problems they might face in future.

School Principal, Sindhupalchok



Hamro Palo 2016 Annual Report

Photos: Uma Bista / Stars Foundation, Jenisha Twanabasu / People in Need