



**AWASAR  
IMPACT  
REPORT**

**2016  
TO  
2020**

# AWASAR IMPACT REPORT

2016  
TO  
2020

This is an Impact report of program “AWASAR” initiated by SAATH. The thorough field assesement and documentation of this report is being made possible with the help of Cartias Espanola.



 **Cáritas  
Española**



## MESSAGE FROM SAATH

Resilience alone is not enough. Correspondingly in the process of flipping back and getting up every time we fall, we also have to invest our time and resources in building something that may prevent us from falling in the first place. As a result, with our journey of more than 6 years working in livelihood has assured the significance of “Economic Empowerment” in times fold. The tale of “teaching how to fish rather than giving them a fish” never grows old and which has become more noteworthy in today’s time and context. Unquestionably, an economically empowered woman can settle her own decisions, she is able to create her life choices, she will better put resource in her family’s future, she becomes an agent of change and in the event that she does ever fall, she will rise up again. Certainly these are few examples which is just a tip of an iceberg that we can imagine.

Admittedly, with the bolster of like-minded organizations like Caritas Spain and Caritas Canada, Ongd Fnel we could reach out to 222 beneficiaries since 2015 through our program Awasar. This Impact Assessment which is funded by Caritas Spain has assisted us to better comprehend and learn of our good practices and our set challenges which will decidedly help us to reanalyze our program strategies for more adequacy, effectiveness and sustainability of our impacts.

Thank you.

SAATH Team



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>FINDINGS &amp; ANALYSIS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
• <b>Relevance</b> .....	<b>6</b>
• <b>Efficiency</b> .....	<b>10</b>
• <b>Effectiveness &amp; Impact</b> .....	<b>13</b>
• <b>Coherence</b> .....	<b>18</b>
• <b>Sustainability</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>PICTURES</b> .....	<b>24</b>

# LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1: Respondents and Number of Consultations</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Table 2: Areas of inquiry under each domain</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Table 3: Criteria guiding the analysis and evaluative conclusions for given domains</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Table 4: Rubric of analysis for ‘Relevance’</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Table 5: Rubric of analysis for ‘Efficiency’</b> .....	<b>10</b>
<b>Table 6: Rubric of analysis for ‘Effectiveness and Impact’</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>Table 7: Rubric of analysis for ‘Coherence’</b> .....	<b>18</b>
<b>Table 8: Rubric of analysis for ‘Sustainability’</b> .....	<b>20</b>



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the SAATH team for their support from the preparatory stages of the assessment. Additionally, I also wish to express my gratitude to the programme team, tailoring trainers and beneficiaries who contributed in the initial stage of research design by identifying the relevant themes for further inquiry.

Most importantly, I wish to express my gratitude to all the respondents who agreed to be a part of the study and share their opinions and experiences with the researcher. I hope that the information presented in this report can be used to address the key issues and concerns they highlighted.

Ankit Babu Adhikari  
.....  
( Principal Investigator )

Impact Assessment of AWASAR Program





## BACKGROUND

AWASAR is a livelihood program designed for the young women from Sindhupalchowk and Kavrepalanchowk districts, severely affected by the 2015 earthquake. Under the program, AWASAR rolled out several interventions to improve the livelihood outcomes of the girls through basic tailoring training. The tailoring training was topped up with empowerment of the beneficiaries through increased awareness about several socio-cultural issues pertinent in the local context. While the direct impacts of the earthquake were observed in the widespread losses of lives and properties, its indirect impacts involved devastation of social resilience, support systems, economic opportunities, among many others. In light of the pre-existing history of socio-cultural and economic marginalization of women, who were already at the brunt of multiple exclusion, the earthquake resulted in a categorical breakdown of women's access to opportunities and resources, further exasperating their level of confidence, self-awareness and a sense of self-worth.

In this context, with the support of Caritas Spain and Development and Peace Caritas Canada, SAATH came up with the livelihood support program

targeting the vulnerable young women of the areas that were worst affected by the disaster. The program design included a six-month-long basic tailoring training that was rounded with other soft-skills development schemes through awareness about social issues, gender norms, sexual and reproductive health rights, basic education attainment, among others. From 2016 to 2020, the project trained 25 to 30 girls each in all of the batches grouped annually.

Now that the project has come to an end, SAATH commissioned this impact assessment study with the support of Caritas Spain to gauge the effectiveness of activities undertaken and document any evidence of impact generated by the project. Another key objective of the study is to document lessons learned throughout the implementation of the project, pertinent gaps and opportunities for future intervention.

The study undertook a qualitative approach, interacting with several stakeholders associated with the project. Young women trained by the project in different batches between 2016 and 2020 were engaged in in-depth consultations. Apart from that, the study also interacted with the members of the project intervention team from SAATH and the tailoring trainers who were involved with all of the batches.



# METHODOLOGY

## APPROACH AND EVALUATION PLAN

The study involved a qualitative design, where a number of evaluation domains prescribed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria for development program evaluation, were assessed. The domains analyzed are Relevance, Efficiency, Effectiveness and Impact, Coherence and Sustainability.

Data collection for this study was conducted through physical interactions with beneficiaries representing different batches of the training from 2016 to 2020.

Based on the evaluation questions from ToR, the sources of information were identified for data needed to answer the evaluation questions. A detailed plan was made regarding data collection methods, which are through document reviews and interviews.

### A. Document reviews

The principal investigator was provided with all relevant project and background documents, which included

- Annual reports
- Monitoring reports
- Periodic impact analysis reports
- Project's logical framework

### B. Interviews and consultations

Interviews and consultations were deliberated at different stages of the assessment. At the research design stage, the program team and a couple of beneficiaries were interacted with. These initial consultations helped the researcher to identify the key outcome areas and themes to explore within the study.

At the research implementation stage, a series of consultations were undertaken with the beneficiaries in respective project areas in Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk districts. These interactions built upon the themes and outcome areas identified during the initial interactions.

Lastly, after preliminary analysis of findings generated following the fieldwork, a consultation workshop was organized with the program team members. The consultation workshop was used as an opportunity to share the preliminary and emerging findings with the program team, while also to gather their feedback on the findings and seek missing gaps in the analysis. The feedback from the program team not only contributed to validate and triangulate the findings but also expand on the arguments presented.

Given below is the number of consultations conducted in the course of this study.

TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS AND NUMBER OF CONSULTATIONS

STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED	NUMBER OF CONSULTATIONS
Beneficiaries (Young women representing different training batches)	20
Preliminary consultation with program team	2
Debriefing of preliminary findings with program team and additional data collection (validation and triangulation workshop)	1
Trainers	2
Total	25

## CONSTRAINTS AND CHALLENGES

The study was initially planned for March-April, 2021. However, an outbreak of the second wave of COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a lockdown. As a result, travel to the respective study locations was restricted and there was a delay in commissioning this study. Travel restrictions started to ease around June-July. However, as the monsoon had already started, and several locations in Sindhupalchowk were affected by the flood, data collection was further delayed. Despite all the constraints and challenges faced due to the pandemic and monsoon, the study design was kept intact, and there were no alterations made to the consultations planned and the areas visited.

## REPORTING AND ANALYSIS

The presentation of findings and analysis in this report follows the evaluation domains prescribed by OECD's DAC criteria – relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, coherence and sustainability. The impact of COVID-19 has also been discussed in all the themes presented as a cross-cutting issue.



In order to clearly outline the evaluative conclusions around each of the domains of OECD-DAC's evaluation criteria, the study devised an analysis rubric as follows. The rubric contains key areas of inquiry under each of the given domains. Based on the qualitative evidence generated during evaluation, the researcher rated each of these areas of inquiry and came up with a broad evaluative conclusion for each of the domains, labeling them as 'Highly Successful', 'Reasonably Successful' or 'Fairly Successful.'

TABLE 2: AREAS OF INQUIRY UNDER EACH DOMAIN

DOMAIN	AREA OF INQUIRY
Relevance	Targeting
	Coverage
	Need-based interventions
Efficiency	Value for Money
	Coordination
	Delivery of outputs
Effectiveness & Impact	Livelihood skills enhancement
	Holistic empowerment
Coherence	Alignment with national priorities
	Alignment with national priorities
Sustainability	Sustainability ingrained in project design
	Sustainability of changes
	Sustainability of activities

TABLE 3: CRITERIA GUIDING THE ANALYSIS AND EVALUATIVE CONCLUSIONS FOR GIVEN DOMAINS

If the majority areas of inquiry under each of the given themes have green box, the domain will be considered <b>'HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL'</b>
If the majority of areas of inquiry under each of the given themes have a blue box, the domain will be considered <b>'REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL'</b>
If majority areas of inquiry under each of the given themes have orange box then the domain will be considered <b>'FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL'</b>

## FINDINGS & ANALYSIS

### RELEVANCE

TABLE 4: RUBRIC OF ANALYSIS FOR 'RELEVANCE'

KEY AREAS OF INQUIRY	EVIDENCE-BASED RANKING	INTERPRETATION OF DOMAIN
Targeting		<b>HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL</b>
Coverage		
Need-based Interventions		

The study analyzed the ‘relevance’ of the project in terms of three key domains – targeting, coverage and need-based interventions. In the account of arguments presented in this section, the study deems targeting highly relevant as the project reached out to the young girls from the communities that were largely affected by the 2015 earthquake. Likewise, the project accommodated vulnerable girls from the remote villages of Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk districts, where the earthquake had significantly affected the girls’ livelihood options. Acknowledging the communities’ need for expansion of livelihood opportunities in the context of earthquakes and their impact, the project rolled out a well-rounded approach training the vulnerable girls in tailoring and also enhancing their social awareness, self-confidence and holistic empowerment. However, in light of the project’s blanket treatment of all the vulnerable girls through similar efforts undertaken for training and empowerment, the project design had limited scope incorporating the girls’ specific needs pertinent in their respective communities.

The 2015 earthquake disproportionately affected communities from Sindhupalchowk and Kavrepalanchowk, among other districts of the country. Losses of lives and properties were some of the direct effects of the disaster. Other indirect impacts came in the form of psycho-social challenges, losses of livelihood options and assets of resilience. Owing to the historical marginalization of women and girls, the effects of the disaster were evidently higher in these groups. For instance, while the entire communities grappled to cope against the direct impacts of the earthquake, women and girls bearing the brunt of pre-existing multiple exclusion stemming from harmful social and cultural norms, were further marginalized in terms of their access to resources and life choices. For instance, due to widespread economic challenges, a number of girls in the affected regions were prone to school drop-out, threats of girls trafficking in the context of disaster were increasing and there was a significant reduction in girls’ life chances for employment and other transition pathways towards seeking an empowered life. In this context, SAATH identified women’s multidimensional challenges at the face of the disaster. As a result, the AWASAR program was designed to particularly accommodate vulnerable women whose social support systems had largely fallen apart as a result of the earthquake. The project categorically targeted the women and girls from the most affected regions and sought to empower their self-awareness, confidence, a sense of self-worth and an employable income generation skill, i.e., tailoring.

*“The earthquake in 2015 destroyed our house and for several months to come, my family’s farming practices came to a complete standstill. It was clear that my parents would no longer be able to fund my education. After getting training and other support from SAATH, I was not just able to contribute to my family’s economy, but also fund my own education as well as my younger siblings.”*

**- A beneficiary respondent from Chautara, Sindhupalchowk**

In the subsequent years following the earthquake, the project’s efforts to continue intervening in the livelihood challenges of women and girls from the same communities also reflect the organization’s dedicated focus on its targeting of beneficiaries.

The discussion of how the project aptly targeted the most vulnerable sections of the society brings the study to an analysis of how widely the project was able to cover the affected locations.

To begin with, the project's coverage of the earthquake-affected districts is one of the factors highlighting its relevance. Beyond that, in the geographical context, the project selected its beneficiaries from the remote villages within Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk districts, which are still not accessible by motorable road especially during monsoon. Following the earthquake, these remote villages were even more affected as the process of response and recovery interventions were largely challenged due to geographical difficulties.

Despite wide geographic coverage of the project in the given districts, coverage in terms of the people benefitted by the project is somewhat limited, especially as the project design included a six-month residential training in Kathmandu organized in several batches annually accommodating about 25 beneficiaries each. In that sense, the project, by the virtue of its design, was not able to benefit all the women and girls of the targeted locations. Nevertheless, despite a narrow coverage in terms of the number of beneficiaries, the project's dedicated approach, working with the same group of girls for a prolonged period of six months, followed by continuous after-training support in employment and income generation, has resulted in significant achievements, which have been discussed in detail in the 'effectiveness and impact' and 'sustainability' sections of this report.

The third domain of analysis under 'relevance' – need-based interventions – has been viewed by this study through two different angles. First, a macro-level analysis takes into account the pressing needs of the communities for economic recovery in the context of widespread losses of lives and properties following the earthquake. From a macro perspective, therefore, the study deems the project largely relevant in contributing to the economic recovery through empowerment and income-generating skills imparted to the beneficiaries. Second, a micro-level outlook into the interventions received by the girls demonstrates a relatively inadequate design, where the project seems to have assumed that the same set of training would be relevant to address the needs of all the beneficiaries representing different contexts and backgrounds. For instance, the chances of training translating into viable economic opportunities could be different for girls coming from a semi-urban location with easy market accessibility than for the girls coming from remote locations without a proper market connection. As a result of this difference, girls from remote villages with restricted access to the market, who were interacted with during the course of this study, demonstrated limited effectiveness in comparison to girls in relatively accessible locations. In this regard, a need-based project design catering to different contexts and the availability of resources is advisable.

Lastly, in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the study comes across some interesting insights into how the project designed in the context of the earthquake once again stands before a similar crisis that somehow resembles the economic and socio-cultural challenges from 2015.

Just as in the case of an earthquake, the ongoing pandemic and subsequent series of lockdowns have affected the economic activity of the project locations. Small businesses initiated by a number of beneficiaries after the training have remained passive for nearly a year already since the beginning of the pandemic in Nepal in 2020. Moreover, the last batch of trainees in 2020 was affected by the lockdown imposed after the outbreak of the pandemic. As the training had to be halted in the middle, all of the beneficiaries were not able to complete their training. Nevertheless, when the situation was a bit under control, the project regrouped the beneficiaries in small batches and delivered

the remaining course. The beneficiaries were grouped in small batches to complete the training, and supported with home-based work opportunities from SAATH. However, the process of re-organizing the remaining training was challenging as the beneficiaries were not easily accessible and their households feared the transmission of COVID-19. This was an unprecedented challenge for the project to relevantly intervene against the impact of COVID-19 and retain its achievements made throughout the project's lifetime.

Nevertheless, this also brings forth an opportunity for the project to stand up before the challenge and face it with a new set of COVID-19-specific interventions. The study identifies the relevance of COVID-19-specific interventions as an opportunity, particularly because the project's beneficiaries have already come a long way from being women without any livelihood skills, confidence and awareness, to their current state of multidimensional empowerment, a result of the project's efforts.

*"The ongoing pandemic has significantly affected my tailoring business. Before COVID-19, the business was doing pretty well, and I was also getting regular orders from Kathmandu. Everything stopped for a while now. Nevertheless, as I am skilled in my work, I am sure the business can be revived whenever the situation comes back to normal. Even if I don't get orders from Kathmandu, I can seek to find and expand my business in the local market."*

*- A beneficiary respondent from Jalbire, Sindhupalchowk*

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM RELEVANCY

- Beneficiary targeting done in line with the relevant context of socio-cultural and economic impacts of the 2015 earthquake
- Interventions relevant to address to an extent the girls' increased vulnerability after the earthquake and their history of multiple exclusion
- Affirmative and relevant actions taken to ensure the project reached the most remote parts of the earthquake affected districts - Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk
- At macro-level, the tailoring training topped up with several empowerment schemes through soft skills that were in line with the pertinent needs of the respective communities
- However, a micro-level examination of the need-based relevancy of the interventions shows there might have been possibilities of other more relevant livelihood trainings apart from tailoring, especially for girls belonging to areas that have limited scope of tailoring skills translating into income generation for the girls



## EFFICIENCY

TABLE 5: RUBRIC OF ANALYSIS FOR 'EFFICIENCY'

KEY AREAS OF INQUIRY	EVIDENCE-BASED RANKING	INTERPRETATION OF DOMAIN
Value for Money		<b>REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL</b>
Coordination		
Delivery of outputs		

With regards to the evaluation questions set for this assignment, the domain of efficiency was explored in terms of the project's performance and timeliness in delivering the planned activities. Based on the findings around the delivery of outputs, the research draws a commentary on the general value for money generated by the project. Any comments on the value for money should be caveated, especially as this study did not look into the technical aspects of it while relying on all the related analysis to the delivery of outputs and efficiency observed in the project's performance. The third domain under efficiency is 'coordination', where the study comments on any coordination efforts undertaken by SAATH, involving and engaging other stakeholders from the government, community and/ or similar CBOs working in the project locations.

In the context of the 2015 earthquake, the project's beneficiaries included vulnerable young women, who came from the remote areas of Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk. As per the project design, the selected beneficiaries were brought to Kathmandu for a six-month-long intensive training on basic tailoring skills, including other aspects of social empowerment through awareness about issues including harmful social norms, gender roles, early marriage, sexual and reproductive health rights, among many others. Upon the completion of the training of the first batch of trainees, the project continued selecting a fresh batch of 25 to 30 girls annually and repeated subsequent cycles of intervention with them. While the component of hard skill on basic tailoring remained constant for all the batches, some of the components that comprised empowerment efforts were altered from one batch to the other. For instance, some of the batches received training on self-defense skills instead of street drama training. The beneficiaries were also provided with skills on business development, financial literacy and theatre performance.

Alongside the interventions that aimed at supporting holistic empowerment of the girls through both income-generating skills as well as enhancing their self-confidence through awareness about pertinent socio-cultural issues, the project design also incorporated the principle of adaptive management. For instance, with a view to maximizing the results of the interventions and resources invested, the project revised slightly its criteria for the selection of beneficiaries after the initial few batches. As the beneficiaries who came from extremely remote areas with no market accessibilities were less likely to translate their skills into income-generating opportunities, some of the later beneficiaries were selected from areas that had a wider scope for the same. This somehow limited the project's outreach and coverage, but ensured that the actions undertaken had possibilities of maximum benefits at the community level.

*“Strengthening market accessibilities of rural locations was beyond the scope and expertise of our planned intervention. Therefore, in order to make sure that our interventions generated maximum results in the communities, we revised our beneficiary selection criteria and rather focused on areas that offered more prospects of effectiveness and impact, not compromising on the selection criteria.”*

**- A project representative from SAATH**

In terms of the implementation of activities, the project's delivery of outputs was found to be generally efficient. From the project's inception in 2016 to 2020, fresh batches of 25 to 30 beneficiaries each continued to receive the intervention annually. Although the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic hampered the delivery of training to the last batch, the project made continued efforts to regroup the beneficiaries and complete the remaining training. As a part of this effort, a number of beneficiaries have completed their training, after being regrouped into smaller units while also engaging as home-based workers for the project. .

*“We contacted the trainees from the last batch after the situation of COVID-19 came a bit under control. As regrouping all the members at the same time was going to be difficult due to risks related to the pandemic, we organized the trainees in a group of about five individuals each, and continued the training. Most of the girls have already completed the training, while others have switched to home-based work.”*

**- A project representative from SAATH**

As the intervention involved exposure of trainees to a dedicated six-month-long residential training in Kathmandu, SAATH was able to efficiently deliver planned outputs among the target beneficiaries. Beyond the training, the organization also topped up its efforts with regular follow-up with the young women after they returned to their respective villages after completing the course. Regular follow-up and additional work support and on-the-job training opportunities provided to some selected girls contributed to sustaining the projects' efforts and achievements. The evidence of change that the project was able to generate in the communities with efficient delivery of outputs has been elaborated in the 'effectiveness and impact' section of this report.

Drawing from the efficient delivery of outputs, evidence of adaptive management and changes visible at the communities among the project's target beneficiaries, the study observes a fair value for money generated by the project throughout the course of its implementation. Such an analysis, however, aligns only with the specific objectives ingrained in the project's design.

Taking this analysis, a little beyond the project design, the study observes certain gaps, pertaining to local-level coordination involving government and other community stakeholders, by including which in its design, the project could have generated a greater value for money. For instance, some of the early challenges encountered by the project were related to the absence of market accessibility of some girls coming from remote villages of the project districts. As a result of this, the project had to redirect some of its efforts towards identifying beneficiaries from relatively accessible locations. Similarly, in some cases, a number of girls were not able to utilize their skills and empowerment in absence of adequate support systems within the family and the community.

*“Due to geographical difficulties, my village has limited access to the market. Therefore, I had limited scope to utilize my tailoring skills in the village. I wanted to go to Chautara and start working at a tailoring shop, but my parents did not allow it.”*

**- A trainee from Selang**

On that account, some dedicated efforts on the part of the project to coordinate with the local authorities and facilitate the process of market linkage could have proven helpful for the girls to utilize their training skills. Moreover, an extensive engagement with the communities, spreading awareness about the importance of girls' exposure to income-generating activities and its benefits could have created a conducive social support system, eventually maximizing the project's value for money.

In light of these arguments, the study observes a highly efficient delivery of planned activities and outputs. However, despite encouraging evidence of how the interventions have resulted in the socio-economic transformation of the trainees in most of the cases, there still exist gaps in terms of local coordination and engagement with community-level stakeholders. This has somehow affected the maximization of the project's benefits, and at the same time, offers an area to consider for future program designing and interventions.

#### **KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM EFFICIENCY**

- In terms of activities conducted and planned beneficiaries reached with the given resource and time, the evaluation deems delivery of outputs highly efficient
- Efficiency of the intervention can also be observed in the evidence of change discussed throughout this report, especially in the following section - 'effectiveness and impact'
- From the project's efficiency in delivering the outputs and realizing the desired change in the communities to an extent, the evaluation concludes that the program has been successful in generating a good value for money overall
- However, the value for money aspect witnessed certain challenges in light of COVID-19, as all girls have not been able to transform their skills into income generation
- In terms of coordination, there is a significant opportunity that lies ahead for the program. As the program was largely based upon the training in Kathmandu, there were limited coordination efforts at the local level with local authorities, communities and other stakeholders, an area for future interventions



## EFFECTIVENESS & IMPACT

TABLE 6: RUBRIC OF ANALYSIS FOR 'EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT'

KEY AREAS OF INQUIRY	EVIDENCE-BASED RANKING	INTERPRETATION OF DOMAIN
Livelihood Skills enhancement		<b>REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL</b>
Sociocultural Empowerment		

The main objective of the AWASAR program was to enhance the resilience of the vulnerable young women of earthquake-affected areas of Sindhupalchowk and Kavrepalanchowk districts. Towards the achievement of this objective, the project designed an intervention to support the young women with livelihood-oriented skills, while at the same time, also empowering them through increased social awareness, self-confidence and a sense of self-worth. In that light, the study identified two primary outcome areas of the project, namely – livelihood skills enhancement through expansion of economic opportunities, and holistic empowerment through sociocultural awareness. This section of the evaluation report examines the project's effectiveness against the given two outcome areas and visible impacts and changes in the beneficiaries' lives and thereby the communities they belong from.

### Livelihood skills enhancement

In line with the project's objective to enhance the livelihood options of young women beneficiaries, the study came across an array of evidence reflecting upon the effectiveness of interventions. The livelihood support scheme of the project included an extensive six-month-long basic tailoring training for the young women belonging to different batches between 2016 and 2020. In that regard, upon the completion of the training, a number of beneficiaries were found to have transitioned successfully into employment or a tailoring business of their own.

*“Upon returning home after completing the training, I started exploring options within my village. With the training in Kathmandu, I found that my skills were better than some of the other traditional tailors in the village. This landed me tailoring jobs in the village, and I was able to utilize the skills I learned in the training.”*

*- A beneficiary respondent in Kavrepalanchowk*

*“After returning from the training, I partnered with one of my friends and started a business of my own. We faced challenges attracting customers in the beginning, but slowly, people started recognizing our skills. The business is doing fairly good now, despite the blow of COVID-19.”*

**- A beneficiary respondent in Chautara**

The effectiveness of livelihood skills enhancement training can also be attributed to the project’s efforts beyond just training the girls. After the completion of the training, the project provided the beneficiaries from each batch with a set of tailoring machines and logistic support to the girls willing to start their own tailoring shop in their respective villages. While stretching the project’s activities to the extent of effectiveness, this support also boosted the morale and confidence of the girls to transform their skills into income-generating activities.

Apart from that, the project also provided on-the-job training opportunities to some of the girls from all the batches. As a part of this scheme, some of the girls got employment at Danfe Works Enterprises Nepal (DWEN), a social enterprise initiated by SAATH and now working as a sustainability partner for SAATH, and honed their skills at the commercial production workshop of the organization.

*“Although I learned only the basic tailoring skills in the training, the on-the-job training opportunity gave me exposure to advanced designs as well. I plan on seeking employment in tailoring after completing this scheme.”*

**- A beneficiary respondent in an on-the-job training scheme, interviewed at DWEN production outlet in Kathmandu**

The study also consulted with trainers to gauge the level of effectiveness of the skills imparted to the girls. The trainers reflected how a number of girls with absolutely no prior experience in tailoring emerged as promising professionals during the training.

*“Some of the beneficiaries had prior experience in tailoring. They were fast in catching up with the skills, and even self-initiated their learning in some of the advanced designs. For most of the girls, the training was their first exposure to tailoring. Through their six months of engagement, we can say for sure that all the trainees got adequate skills to produce clothes with basic design, which are mostly in demand especially in the villages.”*

**- A trainer interviewed in Kathmandu**

In terms of the impact generated by all these changes and effective delivery of project outcomes, the study encountered several community-based evidence. For instance, the girls who either got employed or started their own business with the support of SAATH after completing the training, demonstrated economic confidence, not just in their individual capacity, but also in their respective families. The households of most of the beneficiaries were entirely dependent on subsistence agricultural practices in the communities. As a result of this, their economic activity was largely limited, with little liquid to fund for quality life with adequate respect to the rights to education, health, sanitation, among others. In this regard, girls’ exposure to the training program, and subsequent engagement in tailoring employment, expanded their families’ livelihood options. At the early age of below 25, a number of girls were found to have taken up the family’s economic responsibility, especially in supporting their own as well as siblings’ education.

*“The earthquake had largely disturbed my family’s economic condition. All our savings had gone into the reconstruction of our house destroyed by the disaster. I was starting to believe that I would not get to attend school again. After I got this training opportunity, I came back to the village and started generating income with my tailoring skills. Now, I am able to support my family’s financial needs. I am currently pursuing my bachelor’s degree and also funding my siblings’ school education. This is a huge transformation that could not have been possible without the support I received from the organization.”*

**- A beneficiary respondent in Chautara**

Despite all the encouraging evidence of how the project was able to deliver effective results, which even demonstrate the impact-level changes on the economic front, the process of change has not been uniform among all girls across all the project locations. As already mentioned above, a number of girls coming from remote areas have not been able to seek an income-generating action in the absence of proper market connectivity in their villages. Moreover, limited parental support in allowing them to seek employment in nearby market areas further exacerbates their prospects of economic development. Towards addressing this barrier, there isn’t any solid support system from the local government organizations and CBOs.

In that regard, the efforts made by the project to enhance the livelihood options of the beneficiaries have not been able to bear fruits uniformly across all the different contexts, despite some of the highly encouraging evidence of change. This brings this study to the understanding that there still exists some room for improvement in ensuring maximum effectiveness of the project’s efforts, ultimately generating desired economic impact on the communities.

## **Sociocultural empowerment**

Alongside livelihood skills enhancement, a major and equally important aspect of the project design was the socio-cultural empowerment of the beneficiaries. Prior to project inception, SAATH conducted a rapid needs assessment, identifying some of the key areas of sociocultural empowerment of the girls, which included enhancement of beneficiaries’ self-confidence through a well-rounded intervention approach covering awareness about harmful social norms and practices like child-marriage and gender-based discrimination and violence, safe use of social media, awareness about sexual and reproductive health rights, among others. Similarly, the project also incorporated education support with a dedicated course on the basic English and mathematics skills of the girls.

As a result of the project’s well-rounded interventions focused on enhancing beneficiaries’ social empowerment, the study came across several pieces of evidence of beneficiaries’ increased self-confidence, awareness about socio-cultural norms and practices, among others. For instance, beneficiaries who interacted within the course of this study demonstrated sound awareness about the disadvantages of child marriage, its effects on girls’ health as well as their social standing, education, and life opportunities. In an interesting example of how a girl was able to delay her marriage after the training, a beneficiary respondent from Chautara shares how her exposure to the training resulted in her better life backed by a continuation of education and employment.

*“Right before I enrolled in the training program of SAATH, my parents had started planning for my marriage. I was only 17-years-old back then. After my exposure to the training, I realized that I was still immature for marriage in many terms. When I came back, I convinced my parents to delay my marriage at least until I reached the age of 21. Then I continued my education, engaged in tailoring employment, which resulted in a number of benefits for not just me but also my family as I was able to support them financially with my income. I recently got married at the age of 22. With the support of my husband, I am also planning to start my own tailoring business.”*

**- A beneficiary respondent in Chautara**

Apart from awareness and confidence against child marriage, the beneficiaries were also provided with a number of other life skills, which included sexual and reproductive health rights, business development training, financial literacy, among others. Increased awareness about the importance of savings and personal financial management helped the beneficiaries to organize their income from tailoring employment or business and plan expenses wisely. This directly benefited not just the girls, but also the economic activities of their respective families. Similarly, with the basic ideas about business development and management, some of the girls forged partnerships and initiated tailoring businesses. A beneficiary from Sindhupalchowk shared an example of her business partnership with a fellow trainee from the village.

An important component of the empowerment scheme of the project was also found ingrained in the education support initiatives through basic English and mathematical skills. This ensured that they did not completely lose interest in education. Apart from that, according to a range of beneficiaries from both Kavrepalanchowk and Sindhupalchowk, they are now able to look for English-language training materials on YouTube and learn new designs, topping up the skills they acquired in the training. Similarly, enhancement of mathematical skills has supported them in the daily calculation of income, expenses and profit analysis in their respective businesses. In that regard, the study gathers that the livelihood skills enhancement alone would not have been as beneficial, had the project not incorporated these components of holistic development and empowerment of the beneficiaries.

Confidence stemming from such holistic empowerment of the beneficiaries is another key component of the project's outcome to discuss. Examples of how a number of beneficiaries have been able to engage in employment or start their own business and delay their marriage at the behest of their own better life, among others, all can be attributed to their increased confidence as a result of their exposure to SAATH's training. Moreover, even the beneficiaries coming from remote locations who have not been able to directly engage in employment or a business due to geographical difficulties and limited access to the market, demonstrate an increase in their confidence. As a result of this, in some places, the beneficiaries were found to have emerged as agents of change, transmitting their knowledge and awareness about social issues to other members of their communities. For example, a beneficiary from a remote village in Sindhupalchowk has been regularly attending ward-level programs and awareness events, imparting her knowledge about sexual and reproductive rights to other members of the community. A beneficiary, also from Sindhupalchowk, has trained two other girls from the village in basic tailoring. Likewise, a beneficiary from Kavrepalanchowk shared that she has been able to impart her knowledge about the safe use of social media and the possibilities of online harassment with other younger girls of her village.

*“After attending the training, I got to realize how naïve we are about the use of social media. There is a general practice of sharing social media passwords among friends in the villages and accepting friend requests from random unknown people. This results in occasional harassment from unknown individuals, and we don’t even know that we are being harassed. Learning about sessions on cyber crime was a key takeaway for me from the training. I make it a point to regularly share about the use of social media with my friends in the village, and they really appreciate my effort.”*

**- A beneficiary respondent from Kavrepalanchowk**

To sum up, the beneficiaries’ holistic empowerment and a well-rounded exposure to both livelihood skills as well as social awareness have increased their resilience and opened avenues in multiple fronts of life. All of the girls who were consulted during this study have continued their education after returning from the training. While some beneficiaries are currently employed in local NGOs, others are pursuing a college education and are employed in different sectors in Kathmandu. Despite the project’s extensive focus on tailoring, the social empowerment component of the training has helped the girls explore life in broader terms, which this study considers as a major footprint of success left behind by SAATH.

## **Impact of COVID-19 on effectiveness and impact**

Lastly, the study also explored the effectiveness and impact of the project in terms of the emerging threats in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. While it is clear that the project has been successful in leaving behind some major impacts in the girls’ lives, the achievements made so far are under the threat of the pandemic. For instance, due to the pandemic’s impact on existing market systems, the girls have been facing difficulties in finding businesses. Immediate prospects for market accessibilities are particularly bleak for the girls in remote villages with geographic challenges. As also highlighted above, the challenges put forth by the COVID-19, therefore, warrant some immediate actions to further strengthen their resilience and retain the achievements made by the project so far.

### **KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT**

- Encouraging evidence of effective transformation of livelihood skills into income generation among a number of respondents
- However, some girls have not been able to utilize their tailoring skills for income generation, mainly due to geographical difficulties and challenges related to COVID-19
- Empowerment in terms of socio-cultural and economic awareness, as a result of project’s soft-skills delivery uniform across all the beneficiaries
- Effectiveness of soft-skills alongside basic tailoring skills a major factor leading to project’s overall success, empowering girls and their decision-making skills in large

## COHERENCE

TABLE 7: RUBRIC OF ANALYSIS FOR 'COHERENCE'

KEY AREAS OF INQUIRY	EVIDENCE-BASED RANKING	INTERPRETATION OF DOMAIN
Alignment with National Priorities		<b>HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL</b>
Alignment with International Priorities		

The impact assessment of the AWASAR program analyzes 'coherence' in terms of the project's alignment with national and international development priorities in place.

As already highlighted above under the 'relevance' section, the project's identification of its primary beneficiaries takes into account the context of young women's vulnerabilities exacerbated by the 2015 earthquake. In that regard, the project addressed the pertinent issues and challenges of young women, with a specific focus on building their resilience through livelihood skills and holistic empowerment.

Therefore, the project directly addressed the disaster-response priorities of the government by engaging with young women and contributing towards their outlook for a better life through enhanced income-generating skills as well as confidence. The empowerment of girls also trickles down to the wider benefits available at the community scale, as this study highlights several examples of how the girls were able to support the financial needs of their families, especially in the context of the disaster. Apart from that, the project has contributed towards addressing the fundamental and other development rights of young women as spelled out in the Constitution of Nepal.

As the project design inherently included girls' exposure to dedicated training based in Kathmandu, there were few opportunities for the project to meet the national priorities in terms of seeking collaboration and building ownership of the local government for sustainability. In terms of coherence, this is an area that the study deems relevant to focus on for further program designs in the future.

Similarly, the study highlights encouraging alignment of the project with international development priorities, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The project directly touched upon SDG 1 – No Poverty, by enhancing the girls' livelihood options with the income-generating opportunities created through tailoring skills. In the same light, the project also meets SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth, by contributing not just to the economic growth, but by also ensuring a decent work milieu,

free of child labor by abiding by the International Labor Organization (ILO) Minimum Age for Employment Convention No. 138 and Nepal's Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation Act 2006/2062. The project was also found to be committed to following Nepal's Labor Act 2017/ 2074, by constituting to ensure a safe working environment according to Section 74 of the Act and working hours according to Section 28.

Apart from that, by incorporating the components of sexual and reproductive health rights in its training, and exposing the girls to different aspects of sanitation, mental health and wellbeing through dedicated workshops, the project also aligns with the SDG 3 – Good Health and Wellbeing. Similarly, AWASAR also contributed towards the spirit of SDG 4 – Quality Education, by improving the beneficiaries' basic education, life skill development workshops, enhancing their confidence and strengthening their communication skills. Last but not the least, the project's conscious efforts to empower the vulnerable girls bearing the brunt of multiple social exclusion also directly addressed the goals set in SDG 5 – Gender Equality.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM COHERENCE

- Program largely aligned with national policies and priorities on disaster response
- National priorities on gender mainstreaming and ensuring rights of marginalized women addressed by the program
- AWASAR program successful in addressing the global development agendas of Sustainable Development Goals
- SDGs met by the program: SDG 1 - End Poverty, SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth, SDG 3 - Good Health and Wellbeing, SDG 4 - Quality Education and, SDG 5 - Gender Equality
- Other national and international development priorities addressed - ILO Minimum Age for Employment Convention No. 138, Nepal's Child Labor Prohibition and Regulation ACT 2006/ 2062, and Nepal's Labor Act 2017/ 2074



## SUSTAINABILITY

TABLE 8: RUBRIC OF ANALYSIS FOR 'SUSTAINABILITY'

KEY AREAS OF INQUIRY	EVIDENCE-BASED RANKING	INTERPRETATION OF DOMAIN
Sustainability Ingrained in the Project Design		<b>REASONABLY SUCCESSFUL</b>
Sustainability of Changes		
Sustainability of Activities		

The achievements made by the project in knowledge, awareness and behavioral change aspects of the beneficiaries in the given study locations are the lasting impacts that are generally sustainable. Especially as the increase in awareness about different social aspects including child marriage, gender norms, gender-based discrimination, life skills among others, have led to some changes among the beneficiaries, the impact level transformations hold the likelihood of sustainability in the longer run. The program's efforts in delivering business management skills among the girls, as one of the soft-skills components of the training, has also enhanced the sustainability of the overall program. The training on business development has imparted important knowledge and awareness about different aspects of business development and management, hence, the beneficiaries willing to initiate their own business in tailoring demonstrated confidence largely attributable to the business skills they obtained from the training.

Delving deeper into conscious efforts made by the project to ensure the sustainability of livelihood skills training, the study found some initiatives ingrained within the project design. For example, all of the trainees were provided with a tailoring machine so that they could pursue tailoring businesses after returning from the training. Likewise, the project design also included regular follow-up actions in order to examine and monitor the after-training activities of the beneficiaries. The project also issued orders for clothes production to some of its trainees, which helped them retain their skills while also managing to leverage some income generation.

Despite the positive aspects surrounding the sustainability of the project, the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis has placed a number of challenges. The livelihood options created by the project through skills-based training, currently face sustainability challenges, as economic activities have been severely affected due to the ongoing pandemic. Particularly for the girls belonging to remote locations without proper market connectivity, in absence of adequate opportunities to translate the livelihood skills



obtained from the project into practical actions, there is a possibility that the skills might turn unexploited. In that regard, the project needs to follow up on the skills through refresher training and updates towards establishing viable market options in the next phase of implementation.

Also due to COVID-19, the project was not able to complete the training course for the last batch of beneficiaries from 2020 as per the initial modality. As a result, girls from the last batch of the training, who were consulted during this study, did not demonstrate any concrete evidence of the training-induced livelihood activities. The project delivered the remaining course of the training to some of the girls organized in smaller groups later on. Some of the girls who were not able to join the training due to threats related to COVID-19 were supported with home-based training and work opportunities. However, as the threat of the pandemic persists, this initiative has yet to translate into concrete results.

By virtue of the project design, which exclusively focused on training the girls in Kathmandu, the project had limited opportunity to engage with other local stakeholders including the government, communities and local CBOs, among others. This has largely limited the sustainability of the project's activities, as there is no solid evidence of the project's ownership at the local level. In order to mitigate the outstanding sustainability challenges, the project should seek collaboration with local CBOs, government agencies, communities, among other stakeholders. This argument has been further elaborated in the 'recommendation' section below.

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM SUSTAINABILITY

- A number of sustainability strategies ingrained in the program design, for example - distribution of tailoring machines, on-the-job training opportunities, work-flow support to beneficiaries, regular follow-up, among others
- Evidence of beneficiaries emerging as agents of change in their respective communities for example - girls delivering the training and knowledge on various social issues to other members of the communities
- Sustainability of changes realized throughout the program under long-term threat of economic challenges related to COVID-19
- Limited opportunities for sustainability of activities as no evidence of ownership from local government and other community-based stakeholders, an area to intervene in the next phase of this program

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As highlighted in the ‘findings and analysis’ section above, the evaluation came across compelling evidence of the project’s overall success. Out of the five domains used to examine the project’s performance, the project was deemed ‘highly successful’ in two domains, namely – relevance and coherence. For the other domains – efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability – the study deems the project ‘reasonably successful’, especially in light of the new challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. Apart from the challenges related to the pandemic, the study has also highlighted some pertinent gaps in the project design, especially limited efforts undertaken to engage with community-level stakeholders. Learning from the successes and gaps, the study identifies some outstanding opportunities for the project to continue its engagement with its direct beneficiaries and expand interventions with community-level stakeholders. Drawing from these conclusive statements, the study would like to present the following recommendations before the project:

### RELEVANCE

- The program should continue to replicate its targeting strategy, reaching out to the most marginalized sections of the society
- In order to ensure that the program strategies adequately meet the most relevant needs of the communities, SAATH should explore other areas of the most relevant needs alongside training on tailoring

### EFFICIENCY

In order to ensure broader ownership in breaking harmful social norms like child marriage, gender-based discrimination and discrimination based on caste and ethnicity, the project should accommodate the community-based stakeholders, engaging local community members, local government and other local CBOs sharing similar interests as SAATH. Some of the engagement strategies could be following:

- Engagement of local community members through community groups, such as youth groups, women’s groups, among others
- Dialogue and collaboration with local government authorities, lobbying for the government ownership of project’s activities. Through government ownership, the project can leverage government policies and funds to expand the effectiveness and impact of the project
- Partnership and collaboration with local CBOs for local-level activities, such as mobilization of community groups, dialogues with the government, among others
- Effectiveness and impact
- In order to ensure maximum effectiveness of the livelihood skills imparted among girls, the project should seek to establish market linkage of the communities, especially those remotely located and with limited geographical access to nearby marketplaces
- Alongside dedicated engagement strategies to engage with the communities and local governments in the second phase, the project should also identify the beneficiaries from the first phase who will be interested to undertake the training of advanced tailoring skills. This will enhance their income-generating scope and ensure the sustainability of the impact generated by the project in the first phase

## COHERENCE

- The project should replicate its efforts to align with the national and international development priorities
- An opportunity to align with local development priorities of the respective local governments exists through efforts of coordination with local authorities and communities

## SUSTAINABILITY

- In the first phase of implementation, the project was able to impart some important knowledge and awareness about financial literacy and business development. Taking this approach, a step further, the project should also explore possibilities to connect the girls with local financial institutions like banks, cooperatives and microfinance, enhancing the possibilities for business development and expansion
- Design and implement a more advanced short-term refresher training, accommodating all the program's beneficiaries. Such a refresher training can be organized in the local context, either in the respective communities, or in the respective district headquarters, Chautara for Sindhupalchowk and Banepa or Dhulikhel for Kavrepalanchowk

# SOME PICTURES OF OUR BENEFICIARIES



# PICTURES FROM NEED ASSESSMENTS



## SOME PICTURES FROM FOLLOW-UP



# PICTURES DURING TRAINING CLASSES



# PICTURES FROM SRHR AND LIFE SKILL TRAININGS





# SOME HAPPY CANDID MOMENTS AT TRAINING



# OUTINGS AND PICNICS





 **SAATH**  
Mitramarg, Lalitpur  
Nepal

 + 977 9801800985  
 [info@saath.org.np](mailto:info@saath.org.np)  
 [www.saath.org.np](http://www.saath.org.np)