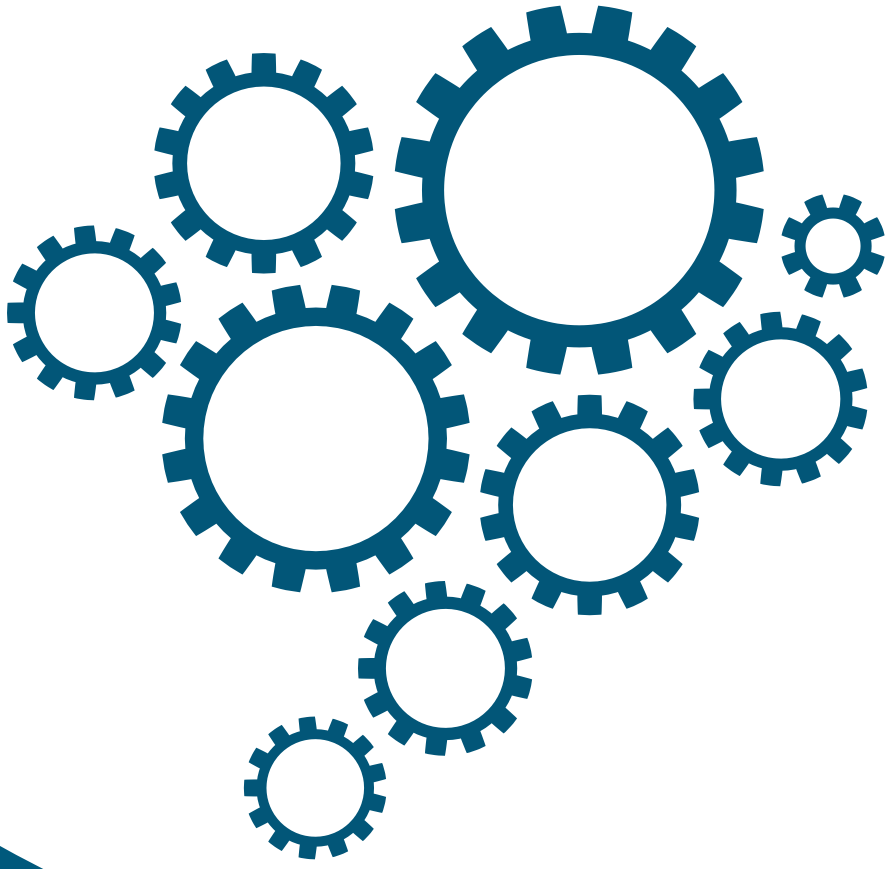
AWASAR PROGRAM STRATEGY



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INTRODUCTION TO AWASAR

Awasar(meaning "opportunities'') is SAATH's flagship evidence-based sustainable livelihood development program. It is designed to create an enabling environment for economic empowerment and resilience of marginalised, disadvantaged and vulnerable women and young girls. AWASAR identifies and nurtures women and young girls' unexplored economic potential and provides them with market relevant skills, financial services (including financial literacy, access to finance and business support) and enterprise development skills to cement their role as change makers within the family and community at large. AWASAR is based on the belief that economically empowered women hold the potential to enhance their access to economic resources, grow economies, reduce poverty and build sustainable communities.

Awasar positions economic empowerment of marginalized, disadvantaged and vulnerable women and young girls at the core of its interventions. The approach ensures that our primary target rights-holders/beneficiaries secure and benefit from increased access to resources and decision making within the local value chain process, in the economy and within their households. The program aims to identify, diversify and secure livelihoods within areas especially vulnerable to disasters and climate change, contributing to a more resilient and inclusive economy that values the concealed potential of women and young girls.

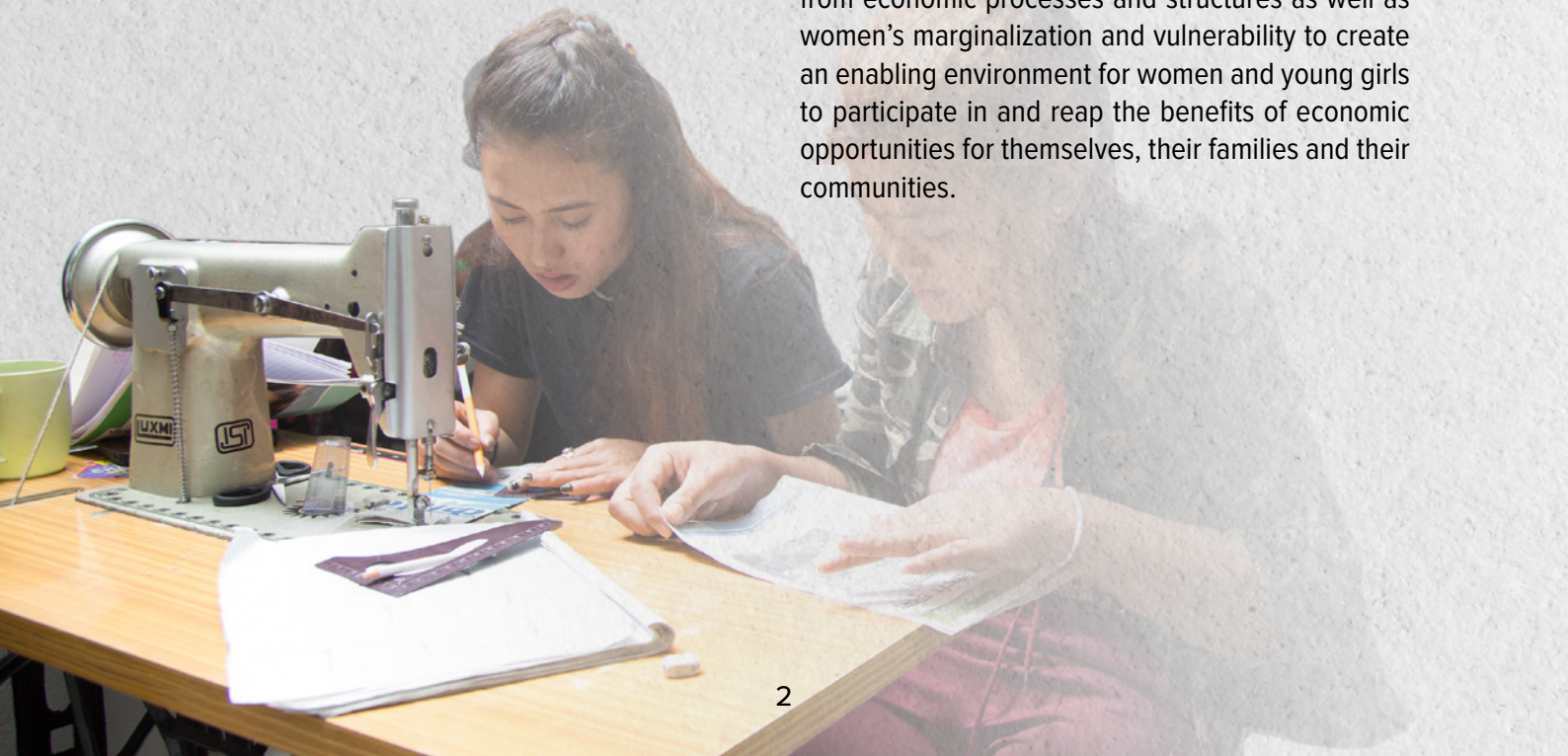
Awasar's distinctiveness lies in its multidimensional approach in addressing various systemic challenges in promoting social and economic empowerment of women over the long-term. The program acknowledges and understands that women and young girls' economic empowerment, not just in an economic sense but, aims to identify the barriers that have prevented them from enjoying their economic rights and living a life of dignity and respect. By recognizing economic empowerment as a basic right, the program works on supporting women and young girls to rebalance the market power to their benefit. This program employs an intersectional approach and widens the target rights-holders/ beneficiaries to include men and boys, people belonging to marginalized castes and other social groups. Correspondingly, the program aims to challenge embedded social norms around women's roles both inside and outside of the household which bars them from engaging in economically productive activities, and the gender roles and norms that affect the employment practices, options and preferences. The program introduces women-friendly and gender-appropriate tools and technology, makes the market system gender-friendly and inclusive, introduces the positive masculinity approach and targets employment for women and young girls in non-traditional sectors of employment.

RATIONALE

Women in Nepal have long experienced high levels of poverty, social exclusion, and marginalization because of their gender. The issues faced by Nepalese women, and their social and economic situations, vary greatly depending on geographical region, caste, class, religion, ethnicity and where they live. For women from ethnic minorities and groups considered low caste, these disadvantages are greatly compounded. Since women are typically more vulnerable than men in patriarchal societies of Nepal due to issues of discriminatory social norms, practices that bar them from access to resources. Therefore, when a disaster strikes, the situation is accentuated. While the impacts of natural disasters are unevenly distributed, pre-existing discriminatory practices and inequalities along the lines of gender, age, caste, class, ethnicity and disability are exacerbated and further reinforced. Global pandemic COVID-19 has weakened the already fragile value chain fabric and caused severe income shock.

In Nepal, women's access to education, economic, and political resources is severely limited. The Global Gender Gap Index 2020 ranks Nepal 101 amongst 153 countries in terms of economic participation and opportunities. In Nepal's patriarchal society, women's work is most often subjugated to the lowest point of the value chain. Their involvement is concentrated at the production level and is more likely home based and informal when compared to the work of men. In Nepal, working women face different kinds of violence, unequal pay, and social discrimination in the workplace despite laws ensuring equal rights, fair wages, and social protection. According to the 2017-18 Nepal Labour Force Survey, only 22.5 percent of working-age women are employed in the formal sector (both waged workers and self-employed). With a large number of men migrating to foreign countries for jobs, women's employment in the formal industrial sector was expected to go up. However, there has not been any significant jump in the number of women getting employed in formal jobs because of the lack of necessary skills needed in the sector as well as their social responsibilities at home. Moreover, women-owned rural businesses tend to face many more constraints and receive far fewer services and support than those owned by men, limiting their ability to up-scale and expand. Lack of formal employment or alternative livelihood opportunities restrain women's participation in the country's economic growth, as well as discounting their contributions to it.

Awasar firmly believes that while women and young girls' contributions have great potential for sustaining economies, women still face many obstacles including limited access to markets, business finance, business skills training, networks and information, as well as legal and policy constraints. This is precisely where the existence of Awasar comes into light. Awasar sees the importance of supporting economic empowerment of women as a key contributing factor to overall empowerment of women and thereby contribute towards equality between men and women. Awasar seeks to address their exclusion from economic processes and structures as well as women's marginalization and vulnerability to create an enabling environment for women and young girls to participate in and reap the benefits of economic opportunities for themselves, their families and their communities.



GOALS AND PRIORITIES

Awasar started in the aftermath of the massive earthquake of 2015 with the aim of empowering women and young girls to identify, build and secure their livelihoods and has been since then alongside the same approach. The total number of women and young girls reached till date under Awasar program is 222 direct beneficiaries and 1110 indirect beneficiaries (counting per Household with average family member of 5). The residing communities of the beneficiaries are indirect beneficiaries at large who benefit from the services provided by the trained women and young girls.

CORE VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES
• Awasar values women and young girls' potential and contribution as a change maker, • Awasar commits to promote women and young girls' full and equal access to economic opportunities to recognize their rights and entitlements, • Awasar strives for gender equality and empowerment of women and young girls for their full participation in economic, social and political life
STRATEGIC GOAL
To create enabling environment for socio-economic empowerment and resilience of marginalised, disadvantaged and vulnerable women and young girls
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
• Strategic Priority 1: Market Based Skill Training for Capacity Development • Strategic Priority 2: Business Management and Financial Literacy for fostering entrepreneurship and employment opportunities • Strategic Priority 3: Women's Collective for Self-reliance and Socio-economic Empowerment
PRIORITY GEOGRAPHIC AREA: Bagmati Province and Province 2
PRIORITY GROUP
Women and young girls from disadvantaged groups/communities and areas (Dalit, Janjati/Indigenous, Madheshi, Muslim and Economically and/or geographically excluded districts)
TARGET GROUP: 18-35 years

PROGRAM STRATEGY

To advance the strategic goal, over the next three years, Awasar will seek three mutually reinforcing outcomes. This strategy proposes that Awasar focuses on three interrelated and key pathways to socio-economic empowerment based on a combination of women's core economic roles as producers, workers and entrepreneurs and SAATH's more than decade long experience.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: MARKET BASED VOCATIONAL SKILL TRAINING FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

- Skill level: Unskilled or Semi skilled
- Focus Skills: Technical and Vocational
- Training duration: 6 months basic with opportunity for 3 months' advance course
- Training Curriculum: Comprehensive and updated training module with additional resources based on CTEVT curriculum
- Training evaluation: Certified skill test from CTEVT
- Trainer: Only CTEVT certified trainer

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Business modelling and setup;
- Financial Literacy and management;
- Networking;
- Mentoring and coaching;
- Interpersonal Skills development;
- Customer Service;
- Market identification;
- Branding and Marketing
- Human resource management

CROSS- CUTTING ISSUES

SUSTAINABILITY . LIFE SKILLS . WOMEN RIGHTS

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

- Support informal groups as a platform to hone leadership and networking skills
- Support the social development of women
- Awareness and Sensitization programs on SRH/RR
- Women as community leaders for social change
- Savings and Credit group
- Advocacy and Lobbying
- Income Generating Activity

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 1: MARKET BASED VOCATIONAL SKILL TRAINING FOR CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Investing in women and young girls' economic empowerment spurs sustainable and inclusive economic growth and development. However, women and young girls' economic potential has been severely impeded due to unequal access to education and skills development and hence they face barriers to securing decent employment and opportunities to thrive economically empowered and resilient. Moreover, women and young girls are lagging behind their male counterparts due to cultural and societal barriers thus widening the labour force participation gap.

Strategic Priority 1 focuses on promoting and securing livelihoods of marginalized, disadvantaged and vulnerable women and young girls by undertaking market relevant skill-based training. The program includes a six-month basic course with an opportunity for 3 months' advance course. SAATH's strength lies in delivering market relevant tailoring skills for capacity development. This comes as an indispensable outcome of SAATH's more than half a decade long experience in this sector in which 222 women and young girls from different geographical reaches have unlocked their economic potential as producers, workers and entrepreneurs and have cemented their role as change agent in their families and communities.

Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training (CTEVT) is the national autonomous apex body of technical education and vocational training in Nepal. It has been mandated to formulate CTEVT policies and coordinate with TEVT providers to or facilitate the implementation of all types CTEVT programs to produce a skilled workforce required by different industries for overall economic growth. Awasar will work collaboratively with CTEVT to develop a comprehensive and updated training module to address evolving and emerging new market relevant skill training. The training will be conducted by CTEVT certified trainers to assure that AWASAR meets CTEVT quality and standards. Upon completion of a six-month basic course, participants will appear for CTEVT exams for accreditation. Accreditation is particularly important for wider recognition and acceptance in the job market as well as value addition for the training women and young girls have undergone in Awasar program.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 2: BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND FINANCIAL LITERACY FOR FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Despite clear economic and social benefits, several challenges impede gender-inclusive economic growth and development. Women and young girls face cultural and systemic barriers to accessing even basic education systems. Layered on top of this, women continue to face barriers outside of formal training in the form of information restriction, lack of financial literacy, and basic project and business management skills. Awasar firmly believes that investing in women's financial literacy is the key to achieving economic and social equality. Hence, it's vital to ensure that they have access to a robust and meaningful financial education. With greater economic self-sufficiency and empowerment, there are no limits to what women and young girls can accomplish.

Under Strategic Priority 2, Awasar will pave the way for the sustainable use of learned skills under strategic priority 1. In-depth business management training and linkages programs will be developed and delivered to empower women and young girls to make well informed financial decisions. The program aims to teach women and young cash-flow, income and expenditure budgeting, savings options, and debt management along with approaching and negotiating their debt, understand the mechanics of loans/EMI components, and the use of bank account facilities such as ATMs, SMS alerts and cheque books. It also aims to enable them to have access to the wide range of financial products and services that are available in their local market.

Awasar will support its beneficiaries by counselling, mentoring and giving them access to jobs and training that could change their lives forever. In the latter weeks of the business management training, Awasar will deliver a broad range of advisory services: advice; networking; coaching; mentoring; skills development (e.g., ideation, selling, pitching, financial and human resource management); business modeling; export promotion; human resources and customer relationship management. Awasar will network and partner with organizations after extensive research and due diligence to ensure that the companies and organizations not only give beneficiaries the opportunity and provide quality training but also understand their unique and different backgrounds. Simultaneously, Awasar will provide life skills training including women's sexual and reproductive rights, gender equality and zero waste management.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY 3: WOMEN'S COLLECTIVE FOR SELF-RELIANCE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Awasar firmly believes and continues to work in investing in women's socio-economic empowerment. Women and young girls' socio-economic empowerment is the strongest means to achieve gender equality. Promoting gender equality and empowering women and girls is the most effective approach to achieving the sustainable development goals. Strategic Priority 3 aims to create an enabling environment for women to unlock potentials of group participation and create opportunities for women and young girls to enhance their access to socio-economic opportunities.

Under this priority, formation of Women's Collectives is one of the major activities contributing to sustainable improvement in the socio-economic status and well-being of the women who are its members. Members of the Collective voluntarily come together to form groups. Membership to the Collectives are open to other women and young girls from identical social and economic backgrounds. Members are required to participate in bi-weekly meetings, workshops and training on women's issues, leadership, networking, team building and strive to become changemakers of their community. These women and young girls will be the drivers of the Collectives.

Awasar builds women's confidence and develops social support networks. The Collective will act as the support group where women will engage in a judgement free environment to identify themselves and their needs. The group will be a safe space for its members where they can thrive both emotionally and socially. Social well-being through well-being of self and the peers will be nurtured through active participation in team building and networking activities. In the process of coming together, the women and young girls will also be aware of their rights and responsibilities, their roles and their potential in strengthening the community and society as a whole. The group will also act as a pool of advocates of social change and lobby for their socio-economic rights at local level. The activities will equally nurture the process of Self Awareness for the women and girls.

The group members through coaching and mentoring will eventually use skills they have developed through various training under strategic priority 1 &2 and start a savings and credit group with enough knowledge and institutional support in place. The savings pool will completely be managed and mobilized by the group. The leadership skills learnt can be actualized in this process. This will allow for adoption of money saving-culture, mobilization of finance, developed awareness, self-reliance and solidarity for collective voice among the group members.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring takes place through continuous and timely reviews of program implementation. The team handling the day-to-day direction and management are divided into two groups. The Management team which comprises the Executive Director, Project Coordinator, Operation Manager, Marketing Coordinator and Finance officer. The Execution team comprises the trainers, support staffs and rights-holders. Nominated members of the Management team and the Executing team will coordinate all activities on M&E. This team will assess delivery, identify challenges and explore practical solutions of program activities. Rapid Needs Assessment will be held in the inception phase. Mid-Term Review will be held during the second year of program implementation that will include a detailed assessment of the progress and achievements. The team will periodically monitor progress against agreed indicators. As part of M&E, Awasar generates regular quarterly reports including financial reports as well as reports providing periodic updates on implementation progress with all activities.

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