



NEPAL

Every Child Learns

UNICEF Education Strategy 2019–2030

Equity and inclusion; girls' education; data and evidence; system strengthening

Non-formal education and the use of data and evidence to help marginalized girls learn in Nepal

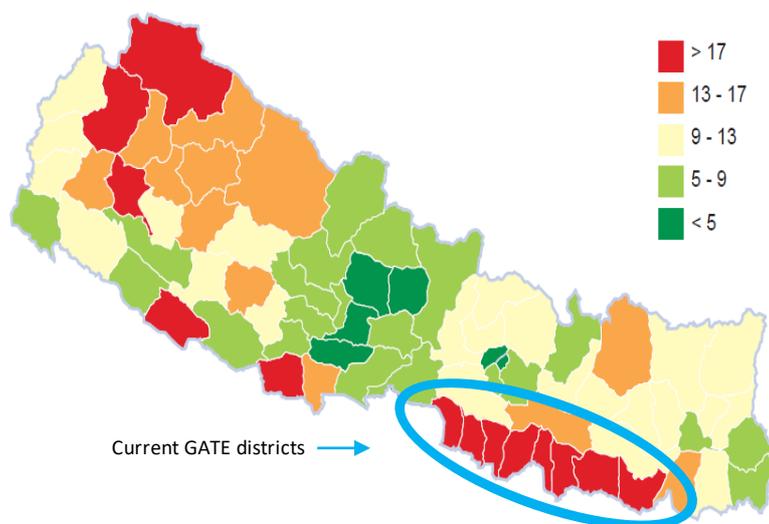
Problem: Although more and more children enter primary school in Nepal, overlapping barriers related to geography, poverty, social exclusion, disability, social norms and gender biases, migration, child labor and mother tongue instruction are prevalent, keeping 11.3 per cent of children out of school. Girls are more likely to be and stay out of school than boys, and this gender gap widens for the poor and disadvantaged castes and ethnic groups. With recent decentralization, local governments are now tasked with bringing all children into the formal school system, but they often still have limited capacity to realise this goal.

Solution: Through the *Girls' Access to Education (GATE)* non-formal education initiative funded by [Let Us Learn](#), UNICEF supports local governments and communities in Nepal's Province 2 to identify over-age out-of-school girls and help them build the foundational literacy, numeracy and life skills they need to enrol in formal education. Improved use of data and evidence is providing important lessons that can heighten GATE's effectiveness and provide insight to address the challenges marginalized girls face to continue their schooling. As a result, UNICEF is now considering an adapted model for reaching more geographically scattered out-of-school children and is increasing its support to school retention strategies.

Multiple barriers keep girls out of school.

In 2015, net primary school enrollment in Nepal was 96 per cent. Yet behind these statistics lie significant disparities. The eight circled districts which comprise Province 2, for example, have out-of-school rates significantly higher than the national average of 11.3 per cent. Children from marginalized caste/ethnic groups and the poorest families are more likely to be out of school, as are girls. The gender gap widens at lower secondary age, when 10.4 per cent of girls (versus 7.7 per cent of boys) are out of school, and 52.2 per cent of those out-of-school girls are expected to never go to school (compared to 32.7 per cent of the out-of-school boys).

Figure 1: Percentage of out-of-school children aged 5-12 years by district, 2011



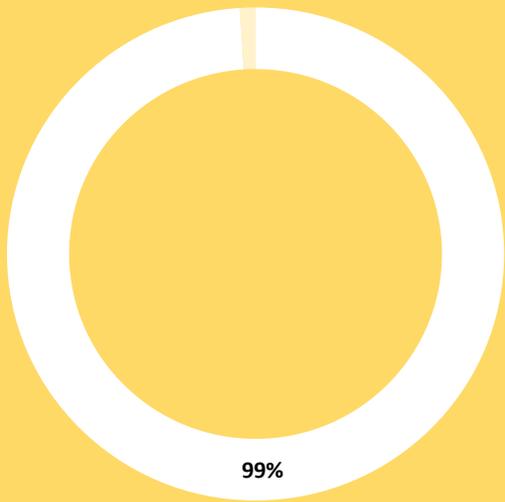
Source: Graph replicated from *All Children in School: Nepal Country Study Report*, Out of School Children Initiative, 2016.

Non-formal education puts out-of-school girls on

a learning pathway. GATE is a 9-month community-based non-formal education programme that imparts basic literacy, numeracy and life skills to out-of-school adolescent girls, with the aim of preparing them to transition into the formal school system. Over-age out-of-school girls (ages 10-18) are identified by the community. Local facilitators are trained to deliver a specially designed curriculum to girls six days a week, two and a half hours per day. UNICEF adopted GATE in 2011 in coordination with non-governmental organization (NGO) partner World Education in Province 2. Since 2013, UNICEF has supported local governments in the same province to implement GATE alongside local NGOs that provide technical support. Working through local governments has resulted in strong local ownership of the programme; local governments and communities contribute space and time for the GATE classes and, in four of the eight current districts, contribute financially to facilitator and supervisor remuneration and supplies.

Data and evidence to inform programming and learning. A 2014 evaluation recommended improving monitoring and information collection to generate stronger evidence about the programme's effectiveness and sustainability. UNICEF and its partners have responded with the following improvements:

- collecting data in a simple Excel spreadsheet that everyone can use;
- tracking information on participating girls, such as background characteristics and programme outcomes to better understand what contributes to learning, programme completion and school enrollment;
- identifying monitoring gaps and improving indicators to generate easy-to-interpret results;
- training government, local NGO and UNICEF staff on data management, analysis and dissemination of results so that data is used effectively and transparently;
- strengthening monitoring tools and databases to improve their quality and analysability, including automatizing analysis and developing dashboards to present key results to users;
- improving the measurement of learning by tracking subject-level test data to identify challenges for pedagogical improvement;
- assessing girls' longer-term outcomes by piloting a rapid assessment of retention in formal school for graduates of the two most recent GATE cohorts; and
- strengthening the capacity of district governments to develop strategies to keep girls in school.

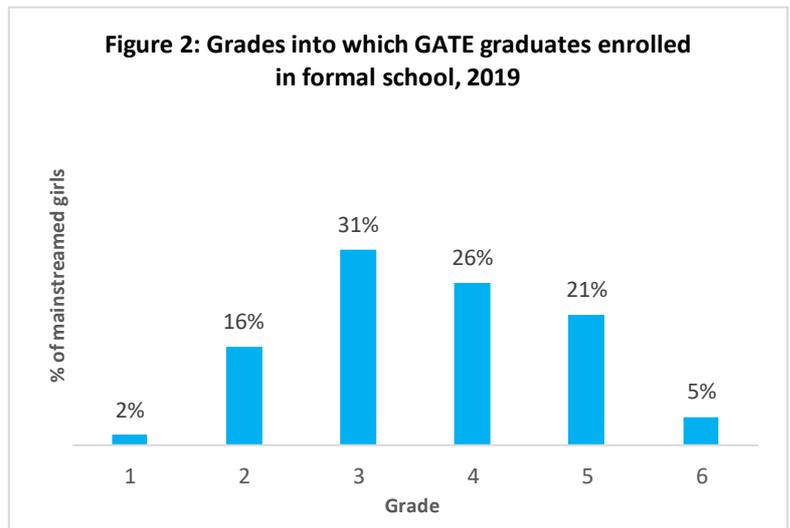


99% OF PARTICIPATING GIRLS ARE FROM DISADVANTAGED CASTES AND ETHNICITIES

Reaching the most marginalized girls. Since 2011, UNICEF’s GATE programme has reached 45,850 girls in Nepal. The last cohort of girls to complete the programme in 2018-19 included 7,394 girls who accessed 300 GATE centers run in partnership with 30 local governments in five districts in Nepal’s disadvantaged Province 2. The overwhelming majority of these girls were within the 10- to 14-year age group, for which enrollment in formal school is a feasible option. 88 per cent had never attended school. Additionally, the vast majority – 99 per cent – were from disadvantaged castes or ethnic groups. In 2019-20, the programme expanded to all eight districts of Province 2.

Completion of GATE and enrollment in formal school. 95 per cent of girls who enrolled in the 2018-19 GATE cohort completed the 9-month programme. Of those who completed, 94 per cent transitioned into formal schooling, meaning 89 per cent of all participants enrolled in formal schooling.

As depicted in Figure 2, most of the girls who completed GATE enrolled in Grade 3 or higher, with Grade 3 being the highest level of content that the GATE curriculum covered. The main reason for girls not completing GATE or enrolling in school was the need for employment or earning wages (73 per cent).



Learning. Pre- and post-tests are administered as part of the programme. This includes reading in Nepali and English, math and basic knowledge about Nepal. The average pre-test score among the 2018-19 cohort was 12 per cent. Remarkably, girls’ scores increased 52 percentage points to an average post-test score of 64 per cent after the 9-month programme. Though the test is not directly mapped to the school curriculum, UNICEF is working with the Nepali government to develop an equivalency framework with standard competencies to operationalize a government policy that calls for the recognition and certification of children from non-formal education pathways.

The impact on girls:

7,394

Out-of-school girls

accessed non-formal education through GATE in 2018-2019

52

Percentage-point increase

in girls’ average score from pre- to post-test (9 months’ difference)

89%

Of participating girls

enrolled in formal schooling after GATE

Retention in formal school. In 2019, the first rapid assessment of GATE graduates' longer-term outcomes found that, within a small sample of the 2017-18 GATE cohort, 53 per cent of girls in formal school remained enrolled 1.5 years after completing GATE. Meanwhile, 63 per cent of similarly sampled graduates from the 2018-19 cohort remained enrolled in school 6 months post-GATE. Reasons for dropping out of school included financial and economic constraints, attending purely religious lessons, household chores, age, marriage and others. Further research is planned to understand GATE graduates' retention in school on a more representative scale and how to overcome the barriers to keep more of them in school.



Key factors contributing to programme success include:

- outreach to the most marginalized out-of-school children;
- contextualization of the non-formal education curriculum content to include the knowledge and skills relevant for girls in the Terai region, such as reproductive health, consequences of child marriage and life skills;
- government ownership of programme implementation and budget, complemented by technical support;
- strong community engagement, including provision of learning spaces for the classes and establishment of management committees to oversee the classes; and
- class timing aligned to girls' availability and child friendly pedagogy to ensure girls enjoy the classes.

Next steps: UNICEF is increasingly focused on ensuring that girls stay in formal schools, including working closely with the local governments to improve the quality of education and develop context-appropriate strategies for reducing girls' dropout. A positive step towards sustainability is that some municipalities are allocating funds to GATE to prioritize the issue of out-of-school children. In the new UNICEF country education programme, GATE will be expanded to Province 5, a region with many out-of-school children. To adjust to an increasing spread of out-of-school children, UNICEF will also explore alternate modalities to provide the remaining harder-to-reach girls with access to education. This could include opening GATE to boys, supporting governments to expand other existing non-formal education programmes or modalities that include aspects of distance education. Working to strengthen government capacity, UNICEF will focus financial support on training and learning materials, while local governments will increasingly cover teacher salaries and other costs. UNICEF continues to rely on data and evidence to inform programming.

Cost effectiveness: For the 2019-20 cohort, the cost of implementing GATE is \$76.20 per girl. For 60 GATE classes, which cover 18 per cent of the cohort, local governments are contributing 52 per cent of the programme budget from their own funds.

Non-formal education is an essential bridge to learning for marginalized out-of-school children in Nepal, including girls. Contextualized community-based approaches like GATE address multiple, diverse barriers to education and support mainstreaming children into formal education. Local government ownership, community support, and the effective use of data are important enablers – so that “**Every Child Learns**”.

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