

Role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Promoting Girls' Education in Rural Nepal

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Abstract

Rural Nepali girls face ongoing educational challenges because their communities maintain existing structural barriers and socio-cultural norms and economic obstacles. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have historically filled critical service delivery gaps in this space, yet systematic, multi-district evidence on the effectiveness and sustainability of their interventions remains limited. Hence, the research investigates how non-governmental organizations (NGOs) function to support girls' educational initiatives throughout three rural districts of Nepal which include Doti and Rolpa and Dolakha between 2020 and 2024. The study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design to collect quantitative data through structured questionnaires which 150 female students from NGO supported schools completed and qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with 10 key informants comprising NGO programme officers, school principals, a district education officer, and a community schools federation officer. The study used SPSS and uses reflexive thematic analysis to analyze the interview data. The study shows that girls strongly support NGO programs which use scholarships and financial assistance. Similarly, Girls' clubs were the most commonly accessed intervention (44.7%), while scholarships reached only 23.3% of respondents. The two strongest obstacles represent household poverty which people assessed at 3.52% and travel distance which people assessed at 3.29. The study reveals that better government cooperation and longer running times and more active involvement from beneficiaries to establish fair educational access for rural girls.

Keywords: NGOs, Girls' Education, Rural Nepal, Mixed Methods, Educational Equity

1. Introduction

Education has been broadly acknowledged as a major contributor to human development, poverty alleviation, as well as long-term economic growth and development (Cremin & Nakabugo, 2012; Omoniyi, 2013; Zhang, 2024). Girls' education brings out miraculous benefits on an individual and societal level, and the benefits extend over generations and communities (Rihani, 2006). Elnakib et al. (2024) demonstrates that when girls are educated, their marriage age is delayed, maternal and child health is improved, and the economic sustainability of the household is enhanced. Inclusive, equitable and quality education of girls is a right and an essential prerequisite for sustainable development (United Nations Sustainable Development, 2015). Maternal education is also identified as one of the most powerful influences on child survival and school participation, and thus has transformative intergenerational effects (UNICEF, 2022). The empirical research shows that multi-component NGO programs which maintain long-term operation improve girl enrolment and attendance and retention rates when their programs work with local communities to solve specific regional challenges (Rose, 2009; Psaki et al., 2022).

In South and Southeast Asia, quality education for girls continues to be highly inequitable due to a combination of entrenched socio-cultural norms, geographic isolation, and economic disadvantage (Gul et al., 2025). Although the gender gap in primary education has been narrowed in several countries in the region, in secondary education, girls' participation and completion rates are still significantly lower than those of males, especially in rural and mountainous areas (Bhat & Khan, 2021). Early marriage, family responsibilities, long distances to school, and the lack of female role models in the classroom all detract from girls' desire to stay in school (Jones et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2012). Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) are increasingly playing a significant role throughout the region, providing services to complement the services available from governments that have failed to meet their service delivery targets, and running scholarships, mentoring programmes, girls' clubs, and community awareness initiatives to help ensure sustained female enrolment and retention (Lopes et al., 2017).

The role of NGO in the promotion of education for girls is a particularly interesting case study in the context of Nepal (Chhetri, 2005). Over the last 20 years, the country has made commendable progress, with almost gender parity at the primary level at the national level. This headline success, however, conceals significant disparities at the secondary level of education between districts, however, and within each district between different communities, and even between different households within the community, especially in the remote hill and mountain areas (Martin, 2021). In certain districts like Doti, Rolpa, Dolakha, girls' completion rates are significantly below the national average and the literacy rate among women is significantly lower in rural areas compared to urban areas, and Dalit and Janajati women facing acute poverty in rural areas in particular (CBS, 2021).

Although there are a number of organizations operating in Nepal like Room to Read Nepal, Plan International Nepal, World Vision Nepal, Save the Children Nepal, and CARE Nepal, the educational participation and completion of rural girls are still faced with formidable obstacles (Belbase, 2025). The issue of girls' inequalities to access secondary education is exacerbated by structural barriers such as household poverty, early marriage, domestic labour burdens, and geographic distance from schools, alongside deeply entrenched socio-cultural norms that exclude girls from school (Plessis, 2025; Singh, 2025). Although NGOs have been filling gaps in the state's provision, evidence indicates that many

girls, particularly from the most marginalised communities, are still not reached by existing programmes and questions the equity and coverage of existing interventions (Baxter et al., 2022).

Although much work has been done on the literature of development in girls' education in Nepal, there is a surprising lack of systematic and multi-district evidence to show how effectively, widely and sustainably these NGO interventions are working. Most of the prevailing assessments focus on quantitative outputs over short periods of time, including enrolment and attendance data, and neglect to assess the sustainability of programmes or the equity of coverage or the voices of girl beneficiaries. Moreover, the views of institutional actors, such as school principals, District Education Officers (DEOs) and NGO programme officers, are not always captured in one study and there is a lack of focus on salient implementation learnings. The limits imposed by this discrepancy between programme investment and sound, contextually specific evidence that is not very strong either affect the design of future interventions or the formulation of appropriate education policy.

These gaps are tackled in this study by systematically evaluating NGO programmes that promote girls' education in three rural districts of Nepal in 2020–2024 using mixed methods. The research studies on the of kind of interventions that NGOs employs, the extent of the interventions' reach to intended beneficiaries, the perceived effectiveness of the interventions for girls and institutional stakeholders, the barriers which remains despite NGO interventions. Similarly this study provides the evidence-based recommendations which are possible to bolster future interventions and policy.

2. Literature Review

Global Evidence on Girls' Education and NGO Roles

Learning for girls is supported by a strong interdisciplinary evidence base, which provided the case for investing in girls' education at the global level. Psacharopoulos and Patrinos (2018) reports that for the low and lower-middle income countries, the private returns to schooling for women are higher than the private returns to schooling for men, 8.9% compared with 7.0%. And social returns are even higher because of the health and nutrition benefits, and intergenerational human capital spillovers. According to UNICEF (2022), maternal education is the most important determinant of child survival and school enrollment, and girls' education has inter-generational impacts across successive generations.

In the 1980s, non-governmental organizations began to work in education and eventually became partners in the construction of education systems. Considering the opportunity costs for girls at secondary school, Sperling and Winthrop (2015) show that scholarship and financial aid lead to the best evidence-based results for secondary retention. Community mobilization that incorporates girls' clubs and parent sensitization and community dialogue has mixed results as it relies on male community participation and multi-year implementation as well as cultural-based facilitation (Psaki et al., 2022). Using women teachers in remote schools via supply side interventions has proven to have positive outcomes in the field of education such as enrolment of girls in schools and better academic performance. Enabling girls to acquire life skills, mentoring programmes address two aspects, namely: material support of their needs, and empowering girls to develop agency and aspiration, and to overcome social norms (Kabeer, 2020).

Barriers to Girls' Education in Rural Nepal

Education is considered a fundamental human right and a key factor in social and economic development. However, girls in rural Nepal continue to face significant barriers to accessing quality education. There are several educational challenges in rural districts of Nepal that particularly affect girls' participation and access to schooling. One of the major demand side barriers is household poverty, which has been worsened by reconstruction debt following the earthquake, agricultural losses caused by climate change, and limited social protection systems (Department of Education, Nepal, 2023; National Planning Commission, 2023).

In addition, geographical barriers remain a serious challenge. According to Plan International Nepal (2022), many girls in remote western districts must walk more than two hours to reach secondary schools, often through unsafe trails that become especially dangerous during the monsoon season. Social discrimination and traditional gender norms also contribute to unequal educational opportunities. Research by Subedi (2022) found that in many Dalit and Janajati communities, families often prioritize boys' education over girls', reflecting deep-rooted gender bias in schooling decisions.

Furthermore, inadequate sanitation facilities and the lack of menstrual hygiene materials in schools create additional obstacles for girls, affecting their attendance and participation. Girls' dropout rates are also increased by the high prevalence of early marriage in some districts, where nearly 40% of girls in certain hill areas marry at a young age (UNICEF, 2022). Therefore, these economic, geographical, social, and cultural barriers continue to limit girls' educational opportunities in rural Nepal. Other challenges girls face are inadequate sanitation and menstrual hygiene materials in schools that create an immediate barrier for students. Moreover, girls' educational dropout is compounded by the high prevalence of early marriage in some districts as estimated at 40% of girls in certain hill districts (UNICEF, 2022).

Theoretical Frameworks

The study uses four different theoretical frameworks which work together to support its research objectives. Sen's (1999) Capability Approach is the theoretical framework that centers on girls' education as a primary capability. This can help researchers determine whether NGOs' programs are improving or restricting girls' real choices in life. Human Capital Theory (1961 by Schultz and 1989 by Becker) gives an economic rationale for the investment in education; this theory can therefore be used to assess the effectiveness of scholarships and the financial benefits and drawbacks of NGO education programs. Moser (1993) and Kabeer (2020) have conceptualized gender need and gender interest, identifying interventions that will meet girls' practical gender needs (materials, access and facilities) and gender interests (agency, aspiration, and norm change). UNESCO (2023) in its Social Inclusion Framework explains the many factors that led to a person's exclusion from education, including gender, caste, ethnicity, geographical location, and poverty. The framework illustrates the issues of double disadvantage faced by the Dalit and Janajati girls in the study districts due to their identity.

The Capability Approach developed by Amartya Sen through his 1999 book *Development as Freedom* and Martha Nussbaum's 2011 book *Creating Capabilities* serves as the main theoretical framework for this research. The framework defines a person's functioning as their actual accomplishments in both being and doing while it defines their capabilities as the actual opportunities they possess to reach their desired functioning at any moment. According to Sen development involves two main components

which include development of human freedoms and elimination of all forms of unfreedom that restrict human possibilities.

3. Research Methods

Study Area, Population and Sampling

The study was conducted in the Doti (Sudurpashchim Province), Rolpa (Lumbini Province) and Dolakha (Bagmati Province) study sites due to their geographical characteristics and different program activities. Research participants for both parts of the research were selected by purposive sampling techniques. The quantitative survey was conducted among girls, belonging to the age group of 12-19 years, studying in Grades 6 to 12 in NGO-supported schools, in three districts. Research team chose 2 to 3 community supported schools and community sites in each district for studying easy to reach and difficult to reach areas and lower and higher secondary education. The sample comprised 150 girls using the Cochran's Formula: $n_0 = Z^2 Pq / e^2$, where, n_0 = sample size, Z = z-value (e.g., 1.96 for 95% confidence), $q=1-p$, $p=1-0.5=0.5$, e = margin of error (which is 8% used in the Study). Hence, the sample size for the study is $n_0 = (1.96)^2 * (0.5) * (0.5) / 0.08^2 \approx 150$. Similarly, the study uses 10 key informants from the districts and institutional types with different roles.

Data Collection

The structured questionnaire included 8 background questions, 30 five-point Likert-style questions about the effectiveness of the intervention, how it affected participant's personal development, the severity of the barriers, and an overall assessment across five substantive sections, along with three open-ended questions. The instrument was constructed systematically in four steps: review of validated instrument used in previous studies; items were adapted to the Nepalese rural context; new items were developed to capture the level of underexplored areas; and a pilot test was conducted with 15 non-study respondents. The questionnaire was professionally translated in Nepali language by bilingual expert (professionally trained) with back translation verification by another independent bilingual expert. Face-to-face assessments were completed by female enumerators who had completed the training procedures. The Key informants were interviewed for 40-55 minutes, in their preferred language (Nepali or English) using semi-structured interview schedule.

Data Analysis and Ethics

SPSS Version 26 was used to examine quantitative data which resulted in the calculation of frequencies and percentage distributions and means and standard deviations for every Likert-scale item and composite measurement. Qualitative interview data were analyzed by manually coding all 10 transcripts, following the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022), while ensuring intercoder reliability between the research team by assessing a 20% sub-sample of all transcripts, and keeping a reflexivity journal to make the analytical process transparent. This study was approved by APU's Research Ethics Committee, the district education offices and the partner NGOs. Parents/guardians were asked to sign a written consent and the girls were asked to sign a written consent if they were under 18 years of age. No information was gathered in the study that could identify participants. The research team keeps data in encrypted files which will be deleted securely after five years from the date of submission.

4. Result of the Study

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The questionnaire was completed by 150 girls from three districts and the demographic information of the sample population appears in Table 1.

Table 1: *Demographic and Background Profile of Questionnaire Respondents (N = 150)*

Characteristic	Category	Percentage(%)
Age Group	12-13 years	17.3
	14-15 years	39.3
	16-17 years	26.7
	18 years or above	16.7
District	Doti	33.3
	Rolpa	33.3
	Dolakha	33.3
Type of School	Community / Government School	87.3
	Institutional / Private School	12.7
Current Attendance	Attending Regularly	55.3
	Sometimes / Irregularly	40.0
	Stopped or Paused Schooling	4.7
Distance to School	Less than 30 minutes	17.3
	30-60 minutes	30.7
	1-2 hours	34.7
	More than 2 hours	17.3

The study measured age distribution to determine its primary focus on lower secondary students and upper secondary students. 16.7 percent of students who reached 18 years or older demonstrates a typical pattern of overage enrollment which occurs in rural Nepal because educational interruptions cause students to lose their academic progression according to the Department of Education Nepal 2023 report. The study found that 87.3 percent of participants attended community schools because the research focused on government schools that received NGO support through which they experienced the most severe resource shortages. The study districts exhibit high educational dropout rates because only 55.3 percent of students attend school regularly while 40 percent of students attend school irregularly and 4.7 percent of students have dropped out of school. The travel distance data are particularly significant: 52% of respondents must travel more than one hour to school with 17.3% travelling more than two hours which creates geographic isolation that produces well-documented negative effects on girls' attendance and safety. The family's willingness to continue supporting their daughters' education (Plan International Nepal, 2022).

NGO Programme Reach and Coverage

The composite mean for NGO programme reach and coverage was 4.42 (SD = 0.54), indicating strong agreement that NGOs had made their programmes accessible and relevant. The most highly rated item showed that people perceived support received as essential to their needs (M = 4.51), but

programme frequency received the lowest score ($M = 4.35$) which still remained above the midpoint of the scale. Table 2 presents full descriptive statistics.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics of NGO Programme Reach and Coverage (N = 150)*

Statement	M (SD)
NGOs have brought their educational programmes to my school and community.	4.47 (0.66)
NGOs have helped reach girls who require assistance the most.	4.38 (0.67)
NGO activities extend beyond periodic events and occur on a regular basis.	4.35 (0.73)
I understand the types of NGO support available for girls' education in my area.	4.40 (0.67)
The NGO support I have received has been relevant and useful to my education.	4.51 (0.66)
Programme Reach and Coverage	4.42 (0.54)

Note: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD)

Perceived Effectiveness of NGO Interventions

The intervention effectiveness section recorded the highest composite mean in the questionnaire at 4.63 (SD = 0.41), reflecting near-unanimous endorsement of all six intervention types. Scholarships and financial support received the highest individual item score ($M = 4.71$), which supports global research findings that direct financial assistance serves as the most effective solution to household poverty, which causes students to drop out of school (Sperling & Winthrop, 2015; Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2018). The assessment of mentoring and counselling ($M = 4.67$) and life skills training ($M = 4.64$) showed that people valued material assistance nearly as much as they did motivational and aspirational support. Kabeer's (2020) argument shows that transformative programming needs to meet both practical requirements and strategic objectives. Table 3 provides full descriptive statistics.

Table 3: *Descriptive Statistics of Perceived Effectiveness of NGO Interventions (N = 150)*

Statement	M (SD)
Scholarships and financial support help girls from poor families continue education.	4.71 (0.50)
Receiving school supplies (books, uniforms, stationery) makes it easier to attend.	4.61 (0.53)
Girls' clubs and group activities help girls feel more confident in school.	4.56 (0.58)
Life skills training helps girls make better decisions about their education.	4.64 (0.55)
Mentoring and counselling support encourages girls to continue their studies.	4.67 (0.50)
NGO support for school sanitation and hygiene has made school more comfortable.	4.58 (0.56)
Perceived Effectiveness	4.63 (0.41)

Note: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD)

Personal Development and Motivational Outcomes

The personal development and motivational outcomes section recorded a composite mean of 4.32 (SD = 0.52), which shows a lower value than the intervention effectiveness composite the measurement reached. The gap shows analytical significance because it demonstrates that girls who believe in the effectiveness of NGO programs their personal development progress depends on home and community elements which exist outside program reach. The belief that education improves future opportunities registered the highest score (M = 4.50), which shows how life skills and mentoring programs create aspirational goals for their students. The section recorded its lowest safety score through school safety measures which included safe commuting and safe school environments (M = 4.16 SD = 0.71) and showed the most variable safety experiences through different district locations. Classroom confidence (M = 4.21, SD = 0.73) also showed high variability which demonstrated how social confidence development occurs through gradual progress.

Table 4: *Descriptive Statistics of Personal Development and Motivational Outcomes of NGO Interventions (N = 150)*

Statement	M (SD)
I feel encouraged and motivated to continue my education.	4.37 (0.66)
I feel more confident speaking in class or participating in school activities than I did before.	4.21 (0.73)
I believe that completing my education will provide better opportunities for my future life.	4.50 (0.64)
My teachers provide sufficient support which enables me to continue my educational journey.	4.32 (0.67)
My parents or guardians provide their support for my educational path.	4.28 (0.66)
I feel safe during my school commute and throughout my time at school.	4.16 (0.71)
My participation in NGO activities has increased my future aspirations and my plans for what I want to achieve.	4.37 (0.68)
NGO programs have created a beneficial impact on my academic experience as a student.	4.34 (0.71)
Personal Development Outcomes	4.32 (0.52)

Note: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD)

Persistent Barriers to Girls' Educational Participation

The table number 5 shows statistical data which describes obstacles that prevent girls from attending school. The overall composite mean of barrier severity was 2.83 (SD = 0.28), indicating a moderate level of barriers experienced by the respondents. Among the listed barriers, school costs and household poverty recorded the highest mean (M = 3.52, SD = 0.90), showing that financial difficulty remains the most serious challenge to girls' continued education. The first barrier occurred when students had to travel to their school through long distances or unsafe pathways which resulted in (M = 3.29, SD = 0.74) while the second barrier happened when students did not have enough facilities for sanitation and menstrual hygiene needs which resulted in (M = 3.06, SD = 0.68). The female educational support system showed its lowest mean value which reached (M = 2.21, SD = 0.63) because people considered this barrier to be less severe than other obstacles. The research results demonstrate that economic difficulties, access-related problems, and school infrastructure deficiencies continue to be the primary factors which hinder girls from attending school.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics of Barrier Severity, Ranked by Mean Score (N = 150)

Barrier	M (SD)
School costs and household poverty	3.52 (0.90)
Long distance to school or difficult travel routes	3.29 (0.74)
Lack of adequate sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities	3.06 (0.68)
Too many household chores and care responsibilities	2.81 (0.68)
Poor teaching quality or weak learning environment	2.65 (0.58)
Pressure for early marriage from family or community	2.57 (0.66)
Unsafe environment, harassment, or fear on way to school	2.54 (0.64)
Lack of family support or encouragement for girls' education	2.21 (0.63)
Barrier Severity	2.83 (0.28)

Note: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD)

NGO Interventions Received

Table 6 shows results from multiple response analysis which evaluated received interventions through 336 total mentions that 150 respondents made (the average number of interventions per girl was 2.24). The analysis shows its main result that girls' clubs, which 44.7% of people participate in, do not provide the most effective results, while scholarships, which received the highest effectiveness rating (M = 4.71), reached only 23.3% of respondents. The study identifies its most important policy finding through the structural coverage gap which exists between the most effective and most accessible interventions because this gap shows how program resources get distributed in comparison to their actual results.

Table 6: NGO Interventions Received by Girls

Type of Intervention	Mentions (n)	Girls Reached (%)	% of All Mentions
Girls' club or group activities	67	44.7	19.9
Community awareness programme	61	40.7	18.2
School supplies (books, uniform, stationery)	55	36.7	16.4
Life skills training	47	31.3	14.0
Scholarship or financial support	35	23.3	10.4
Mentoring or counselling	33	22.0	9.8
Sanitation or menstrual hygiene support	31	20.7	9.2
Extra classes or tutoring support	4	2.7	1.2
Total	336	150	100.0

Note. N = 150 respondents; total mentions exceed N because multiple responses were permitted.

Overall Assessment of NGO Roles

The overall assessment section yielded the highest composite mean across the entire questionnaire (M = 4.77, SD = 0.37), with the narrowest standard deviation across all sections, showing that almost all respondents approved of the roles of NGOs. Every respondent scored at least 3 on all items, confirming that even the least positive participants acknowledged the importance of NGO support.

The single highest-rated statement was girls' desire for greater involvement in programme planning ($M = 4.80$), with every respondent registering at least partial agreement. The result showed that beneficiaries highly value NGO support but also demand the ability to participate in co-design processes which directly supports the GAD Framework claim that genuine beneficiary involvement functions as the core element of gender-transformative programming (Kabeer, 2020) and the Capability Approach which states that people should actively control their own development. (Sen, 1999).

Table 7: Overall Assessment of NGO Roles

Statement	M (SD)
NGOs are playing an important role in helping girls continue their education in this area.	4.76 (0.47)
Without NGO support, more girls in my community would be at risk of leaving school.	4.77 (0.44)
NGO programs should continue or expand in this district.	4.75 (0.48)
Girls should be more involved in planning and deciding the types of support NGOs provide.	4.80 (0.40)
Overall Assessment of NGO Programme	4.77 (0.37)

Note: Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD)

Thematic Findings from Key Informant Interviews

The 10 key informant interviews conducted with participants who had between 5 and 20 years' experience in girls' education programming across the three study districts produced eight main themes through reflexive thematic analysis. The following section presents the most important analytical themes of this study.

The standard program design needs real local modifications for successful results according to all research participants. The district programme officer in Doti reported that "The original plan did not include sanitation support but every school visit showed it to be a vital obstacle. The headquarters listened and adjustments were made" (KII-01). The Kham-Magar community needs different engagement strategies according to a school principal in Rolpa because their girls' mobility practices and male authority structures differ from Brahmin community practices (KII-04). Community-embedded facilitation was consistently identified as a quality multiplier, not a compromise, with a community volunteer confirming that local facilitators achieved better attitudinal outcomes than external trainers delivering identical content (KII-08).

The research demonstrated that scholarships functioned as the most effective method for preventing student dropouts during times of financial difficulties. The key informants identified dependency risk because it exists as a permanent danger to the system according to their assessment. The sustainable outcomes depend on the family transformation process which generates permanent results from their new perspective in addition to receiving the scholarship on time (KII-01). The 18-year school principal observed that infrastructure improvements create lasting advantages because scholarships need ongoing funding while girls' clubs deliver retention benefits that only show up in extended completion data which makes their actual effect undervalued by regular evaluation methods (KII-02).

The process of shifting from conditional aspirations to unqualified aspirations functions as a complete transformation from one system to another. The most important personal growth achievement that

emerged from the interviews showed a major transformation in girls' aspirational towards their future goals. The 18-month life skills program showed that girls who completed the mentoring program demonstrate complete development from needing permission to expressing their planned actions (KII-03, Education Coordinator, Rolpa). The mentoring program officer witnessed that initial vague future descriptions from girls evolved into detailed future plans which included specific dates and preparatory steps (KII-10). The school principal recognized a second-generation aspect because program graduates now choose different academic paths for their daughters compared to their mothers' educational decisions from the past (KII-04).

District-Specific Barrier Profiles

People who provided information about rural Nepal showed persistent unwillingness to recognize it as a single geographic classification. The Doti area displays a duality between poverty and geographic location which results in complete financial limitations throughout its most isolated territories. The KII-03 respondent described Rolpa as having structured invisibility which enables girls to appear in enrollment records while domestic tasks and transportation challenges stop them from participating in academic activities. The Dolakha area experienced post-earthquake reconstruction activities which resulted in a debt trap situation together with an existing shortfall of 47 upper secondary teaching positions. The absence of a teacher in a Grade 12 science classroom cannot be offset by any NGO scholarship or girls' club activities according to KII-09 who serves as the District Education Officer in Dolakha. The teacher vacancy problem needs direct government intervention because it exists completely beyond the operational reach of NGOs, which Muralidharan and Sheth (2016) demonstrated through their research on female teacher assignment in rural areas as a key factor for educational fairness.

The study identified three systemic failures which affected all districts through three main issues: short funding cycles from donors created problems because they did not match the time needed for communities to achieve their goals ('We are funded in two to three year cycles but the change we want to see takes eight to ten years', KII-01); organizations lost their community trust when their facilitators left after two years of trust building because project cycles ended ('I lose facilitators who have built two years of community trust when a project cycle ends. The community resets', KII-03); and organizations used measurement systems which calculated the number of attended sessions instead of evaluating the actual results from those sessions. The activity level of NGO coordination functioned well but strategic coordination between organizations remained inactive because 'All the NGOs tell me what activities they are running. None of them sits with me to review which girls are most at risk and discuss who does what for those specific girls' (KII-02, School Principal, Doti). No district had a common list to identify and support girls who needed protection from danger.

The program needs funding to maintain its operations after completion. The assessment found that physical infrastructure could endure for an extended period after the program ended. The assessment found that community attitude changes would last between two to three years after program completion under ideal circumstances. The study identified scholarship-dependent retention as the least stable outcome because 'If our support ended tomorrow, the poorest girls would feel it within one academic month' (KII-01). The most enduring investment exists as school governance reform because it establishes educational responsibilities for girls within institutional frameworks according to KII-07 (Community Schools Federation Officer, Rolpa). This investment continues beyond specific projects and funding periods which financial backers allocated to initiatives.

5. Discussion

The combination of quantitative data and qualitative data shows that NGO programs which beneficiaries highly value achieve successful results by removing particular obstacles but face operational limitations which prevent them from creating permanent fair development results throughout their entire organization. Three important insights should receive special attention.

The study's main finding which has the highest policy significance shows that needed services do not match existing available services. The most effective intervention, scholarships and financial support ($M = 4.71$), reaches only 23.3% of respondents, while the most widely accessed intervention, girls' clubs (44.7%), generates softer, longer-term outcomes. Organizations face challenges when they try to keep their expensive and impactful programs active because their funding cycles force them to make financial decisions for their programs.

The unanimous endorsement of girls' desire for co-design agency ($M = 4.80$, minimum score = 4) challenges the predominantly supply-driven design logic of current NGO programming. The GAD Framework requires that organizations provide authentic transformation through their programs by establishing shared decision-making power with beneficiaries instead of using consultation methods (Kabeer, 2020). The present research establishes that girls demonstrate readiness to adopt this change which they view as the main weakness of the program. Program designers who enable girls to shape their support programs actively will create better long-term results than those who view girls as defenders of their programs.

The asymmetrical relationship between girls' current program support and their professional sustainability assessment creates two different time frames for evaluation. Girls evaluate the present program benefits while practitioners evaluate the future program benefits which will last after program termination. The program effectiveness assessment requires both viewpoints because their combination delivers better results than either viewpoint does by itself. The Capability Approach shows that the highest-rated items group together because their interventions eliminate specific types of unfreedom financial exclusion physical discomfort social invisibility while delivering educational content through their programming. Girls need education as their capability to pursue their own understanding of a good life through educational development. The open-ended responses show that educational support from NGOs creates major educational transformations when it removes a particular barrier which makes educational selection impossible to choose. These outcomes belong to the Capability Approach which requires specific measurement frameworks to assess them, while Human Capital Theory outputs need different assessment methods.

The GAD Framework establishes two methods which show how practical gender needs and strategic gender demands create an analytical framework that detects the coverage gap. Broad-reach interventions use affordable, accessible methods to meet actual needs. The development of strategic gender interests requires intensive work which includes building agency, developing aspirations, and challenging existing norms.

6. Conclusion

The research study has identified three main findings about how NGOs support girls education in three rural districts of Nepal. First, NGOs run their work via broad programs, these offer low-cost services because they lean on girls clubs and community education programs plus school supply distribution as their core operational tools. Second, girls show strong approval for all kinds of NGO support, but they rate financial help and transformative life skills training as the highest. Third, the most persistent barriers are household poverty and the far away geographic remoteness, though there are also district level structural problems like Rolpa's "structured invisibility" and Dolakha's teacher

vacancy crisis. Those basically need focused responses that go beyond the usual NGO operational playbook. Fourth, keeping programs going is not just about money alone, it depends on intervention type, for instance scholarship-based retention brings weaker outcomes while changes in school governance create longer term benefits.

The study recommends that NGOs and programme implementers should move toward multiyear designs, at least five years, and use multi component programme structures. They should also invest in formal stable work arrangements for community facilitators, rather than temporary arrangements. Routine home visit protocols should be put in place for girls with three or more unexplained absences, and sustainability handover planning needs to be built right into the design from Year 1, not as an afterthought. For the Government of Nepal's MoEST, teacher shortages at the upper secondary level in rural districts should be treated as an educational equity emergency, meaning immediate action with adequate resourcing. Lastly, they should create a scholarship transition protocol to prevent cover. The study faces three main challenges, starting with this intention-based selection procedure for choosing sites and participants, which limits what it can really claim in terms of statistically valid results. Then there is the cross-sectional design too because it only looks at things at one time, it can't really test long-term effects or whether anything sticks after the program ends. Going forward, future research should priorities longitudinal cohort studies that track program alumni from secondary completion and then into early adulthood; it should also use community-based samples that actually include out-of-school girls; and it needs systematic comparative studies on school governance reform as a sustainability mechanism over the long run.

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