

# Gender Responsive School and Community Safety Initiatives (GRSCSI) Project

(July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2024)



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# The Gender Responsive School and Community Safety Initiatives (GRSCSI) Project: Final Evaluation Report

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## Abbreviations

APAC	Asia Pacific
BDT	Bangladeshi Taka
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CDMC	Community Disaster Management Committee
CO	Country Office
CP	Contingency Plan
CSAP	Comprehensive School Safety Action Plan
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSSF	Comprehensive School Safety Framework
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECD	Early Childhood Development Centre
ESDO	Eco-Social Development Organization
EWS	Early Warning Systems
FGD	Focused Group Discussion
FPP	Family Preparedness Plan
FPP	Family Prepared Plan
GEDSI	Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion
GESI	Gender Equality & Social Inclusion
GPA	Grade Point Average
GRSCSI	Gender Responsive School and Community Safety Initiatives
GTA	Gender Transformative Approach
HH	Households
IDI	In-depth Interviews
KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Behaviour
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LCP	Learning Continuity Plan
LISA	Local Government Institutional Capacity Self-Awareness
MERL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Research & Learning
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
NABP	Nepal Anushandhan Tatha Bikash Pratisthan
NPR	Nepali Rupee
OECD DAC	OECD-Development Assistance Committee
PIO	Project Implementation Officer
PwD	Person with Disabilities
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SSC	School Safety Champion
SSC	Secondary School Certificate (Bangladesh)
SSP	School Safety Plan
SSTF	Safe School Task Force
STF	Student's Task Force
TLC	Temporary Learning Centres
UDMC	Union Disaster Management Committee
UDMC	Upazila Disaster Management Committee
UNO	Upazila Nirbahi Officer/Sub-district Executive Officer
WASH	Water, Sanitation & Hygiene
WDMC	Ward Disaster Management Committee

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## Executive Summary

The Gender Responsive School and Community Safety Initiatives (GRSCSI) project, implemented by **Plan International** in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, aimed to create safer, gender-responsive educational environments to address the challenges posed by climate-induced disasters. From 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024, this three-year initiative targeted 13,302 beneficiaries across both countries. The project was active in 12 schools and madrasahs in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, including a regional component through strengthening the Asia Pacific School Safety Task Force (APAC-SSTF). Funding for the project was provided by **Plan International Japan (JNO)**, with technical support and management from **Plan International APAC**.

**Evaluation Objectives and Methods:** The primary objective of the evaluation was to assess the performance of GRSCSI project against six **OECD-Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC)** evaluation criteria **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability**, alongside **gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GESDI)**. The evaluation was guided by a comprehensive framework that included evaluation questions and methods to collect verify and analyse the information.

The evaluation employed a **mixed-method approach**, incorporating **qualitative** and **quantitative** data collection and analysis. Two research agencies in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** collected quantitative end-line data, while the Nepal Anushandhan Tatha Bikas Pratisthan (NABP) collected qualitative data in both countries, and conducted the final evaluation. Both qualitative and quantitative, took place from April to May 2024.

As the evaluation included consultations with children below the age of 15, the evaluation framework, methodology, and tools underwent a rigorous ethical review and were approved by **Plan International Global Hub**. The evaluation team members were provided with safeguarding orientation, and comprehensive safeguarding risk and mitigation measures were developed to ensure the protection of children during field consultations. A total of 299 individuals (169 females), including 234 children (143 girls and young women) were consulted for the final evaluation. Similarly, case studies were conducted including review of the previous case conducted by the project teams. The evaluation was led by an international team leader with contributions from country evaluators in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

**Data Analysis and Rating:** The evaluation findings, analysis and lessons learned of the GRSCSI project are based on both qualitative and quantitative sources of information. Baseline and end-line data from **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** were analysed to determine whether the reported changes were statistically significant. The qualitative analysis validated the general trends reported by the quantitative analysis, and analyses how and why specific changes took place or not as the result of project implementation.

The evaluation team employed a colour-code to assess the project's implementation against OECD-DAC and GESDI indicators. Following the final analysis of the country evaluations, the team rated the project on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 represented **Dark Green (Fully Met)** and 5 represented **Dark Red (Unmet/Does Harm)**.

**Limitations of the Evaluation:** The evaluation team encountered systematic challenges in achieving gender balance among respondents in **Bangladesh**, where female chairpersons of School Management Committees (SMCs), head teachers, and Students' Task Force (STF) guide teachers were absent in sampled schools. In **Nepal**, consultation with persons with disabilities (PWD) was unsuccessful. A female student selected for consultation remained silent to talk to the evaluation team, reflecting a to fear of speaking to outsiders. Additionally, limitations in the baseline and end-line datasets, such as sample size and the nature of the data collected necessitated an aggregated data analysis for both countries using non-parametric tests. Consequently, this precluded a country-specific analysis of the test results.



## Following are the summary findings of the final evaluation.

The GRSCSI Project has **"Fully Met"** the **Relevance** evaluation criterion and is rated **"Dark Green"**. The evaluation concluded that the project successfully addressed the needs of girls, PwDs and intersex children for gender and sex responsive WASH and Mensural Hygiene Management (MHM) and supported women in taking active roles in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) at their communities. Additionally, it met the needs of local governments in developing and implementing gender-responsive school safety and community initiatives. The project supported for the child centric feedback mechanism which the children could use without the fear of being reprimanded.

The GRSCSI project has **"Mostly Met"** the **Coherence** criterion and rated **"Light Green"**. The project aligned with the plans and priorities of the governments of **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** and those of **Plan International's** country offices in **both nations**. The evaluation team concluded that the various elements of the results chain, interventions, outputs, and outcomes were largely compatible with each other and the proposed logical framework. However, some activities, such as private sector engagement, needed clearer pathways to outcomes. Additionally, in one instance similar indicator was overlapping at both output and outcome levels, and defining qualitative changes— such as the change in DRR roles of female teachers and women in society proved challenging. The evaluation team concluded that indicators for assessing **Outcome 3** needed to be more comprehensive to evaluate policy-level changes effectively (**especially indicators 1 and 2**).

The GRSCSI project received a **"Light Green"** rating for **"Mostly Meeting"** its **Effectiveness** criterion. The project successfully implemented **Outcome 1** by adopting the Comprehensive School Safety Framework (CSSF) in project schools and a madrasah. It effectively addressed the needs of girls, PwDs, and intersex children. The project supported the schools for the construction/maintenance of gender and age responsive WASH and MHM facilities, and trained girls and young women in gender-responsive DRR management, encouraging their active participation in school DRR activities.

**Outcome 2** was successfully implemented, focusing on community-level DRR. The project collaborated with community-based DRR groups and networks, providing necessary training for DRR planning, which resulted in the formation of community DRR plans, and their implementation. It encouraged women's' and youths' participation in drills and supplied essential equipment and tools for emergency response. However, the evaluation team identified two following gaps that hindered a proper assessment of the effectiveness of the community DRR plans and their testing.

- Data on family participation in community DRR plans was available for **both countries**. However, information on subsequent drills, the number of participants, and the inclusivity of these drills concerning gender, disability, age, and the representation of marginalised and vulnerable communities was lacking (**Outcome indicator 2.1**).
- **Both countries** had information on the number of community plans prepared and the people involved. However, data on how these plans were tested, including the effectiveness of drills and the various committees involved- such as early warning, search and rescue, and first aid was missing (**Outcome indicator 2.2**).

In terms of **Outcome 3** (policy influencing), the project engaged more extensively with local governments to influence policy in **Nepal** than in **Bangladesh**. As a result, **Nepal** has made progress on policy influencing at the local government level. However, it is essential to note that local governments in **Nepal** have more significant roles, responsibilities, authorities, and accountabilities than Unions, Sub-Districts and Districts in **Bangladesh**. The project has mobilised additional funds from the governments (**Bangladesh** and **Nepal**) and supported them to develop their DRR Plans (**Nepal**). Project teams in **both countries** primarily focused



on implementing activities in schools and communities. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were engaged in policy influencing at the local level, but they did not receive dedicated support for their institutional strengthening and mobilisation. The evaluation team has identified this lack of support as a constraint on the effectiveness of policy-influencing activities.

Similarly, the Regional Safe School Task Force (SSTF) facilitated by **Plan International APAC** was instrumental in capacity building and technical backstopping of the project staff and upscaling the CSSF framework at the regional level by mainstreaming the learnings to other COs. The evaluation team consider the regional component of the project facilitated by **Plan APAC** fully effective.

The project has "**Mostly Met**" the **Efficiency** criterion, and hence, rated "**Light Green**". The project demonstrated notable cost-effectiveness through strategic resource allocation and effective budgeting in both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. Efficient reporting mechanisms, regular updates, and progress tracking, along with leveraging local government resources for improving schools' infrastructure, monitoring visits, all contributed to cost-efficiency. However, budget constraints necessitated modifications to activities, indicating that while the project was cost-efficient, certain activities such as mock drills, early warning, first aid, and CSO mobilisation were scaled back to stay within budget limits. On the other hand, a few ad hoc activities were also planned and implemented, draining resources from the more important activities. Nonetheless, the activities were mostly completed on time.

The GRSCSI project achieved a "**Fully Met**" status for the **Impact** criterion and earned a "**Dark Green**" rating. Significant changes in the Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practice (KAP) of students, teachers, and community members were observed while analysing before and after the project interventions, surpassing baseline values. These changes were statistically significant.

However, there are a few gaps observed by the evaluation team as follow:

- Knowledge and implementation of risk and vulnerability assessments for students still need to be improved, with over 50 per cent of children unaware of this critical aspect.
- The need for increased household engagement in DRR and CCA activities at the community level still need to be improved, with over 60 per cent of households currently not participating in project activities.
- Teachers' perception on gender responsibility and safety is an area to be prioritised, as not all teachers view these aspects as critical.
- While evaluation teams have established and validated child-friendly monitoring and feedback mechanisms, the end-line values remain unreported.
- The means to assess the indicator related to improvements in gender roles (which is qualitative in nature) within DRR have not been adequately defined.

In terms of unintended impacts observed in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, the evaluation team noted an increase in girls' and women's confidence in participating in school and community DRR activities. A notable unintended impact was the change in the attitudes and practice of sending daughters to school during menstruation. This change is influenced by improvements in WASH and MHM facilities in the schools. This change is significant in South Asia, where women often face seclusion and social stigma during menstruation. The girls and young women trained by project have become DRR and CCA champions in their communities.

The GRSCSI project has "**Mostly Met**" the **Sustainability** criterion, and scored "**Light Green**" rating. The project has demonstrated the viability of a CSSF in terms of implementation. But the schools would require additional financing for implementing the CSSF in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. The collaboration with local governments, schools, and development agencies must be strengthened to secure additional funding for schools in both countries.

The GRSCSI project achieved a "**Mostly Met**" status for the **GEDSI** criterion, resulting in a "**Light Green**" rating. The project successfully implemented the six dimensions of the Gender Transformative Approach (GTA). It enhanced the capacity of staff and partners on GEDSI issues through periodic monitoring, and capacity building events conducted by both **Plan International Bangladesh and Nepal**. The evaluation team has identified the adoption of the GTA, along with emphasising the involvement of boys, men, and traditional power elites by GRSCSI project as a driver facilitating girls' and women's participation and leadership of DRR and CCA at schools and their communities. Despite these achievements, challenges persist due to social conservatism, which continues to marginalise women and girls and restrict their agency.

### Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The evaluation team has identified **eight** major learnings from the GRSCSI project implementation along with recommendations for future project design.

- a) The CSSF approach has significantly impacted the project schools in **Bangladesh and Nepal**, as evidenced by the notable changes in KAP of boys and girls, teachers, and community members regarding gender responsive school safety and DRR and CCA. The evaluation team strongly recommends the expansion of this successful approach to other regions within Asia Pacific.
- b) The project's emphasis on safe school infrastructure has brought about substantial benefits, particularly for girls, young women, PwDs, and young children. The improvement of WASH and MHM facilities has not only facilitated girls' education during menstruation and disasters but also enhanced their self-esteem and dignity. The evaluation team recommends further investment in safe school infrastructure and staff training on gender-sensitive approaches, based on the significant benefits observed.
- c) The involvement of traditional power elites, men, and boys in project activities has been instrumental in garnering their support. This has created an enabling environment for women's and girls' participation and leadership in DRR and CCA activities at schools and communities. The evaluation team recommends the introduction of focused training programmes for traditional power elites, men, and boys in future initiatives. These will further promote gender equality and enhance the impact of the projects.
- d) Supporting CSOs and their networks is crucial for sustained policy-influencing activities. However, the evaluation team found that the GRSCSI project could have made significant progress in policy influencing. An analysis of constraining factors points to the need for more mobilisation support for CSOs, resulting in less optimal policy influencing outcomes. The evaluation team suggests that **Plan International COs** allocate resources for CSOs' mobilisation and institutional capacity building in similar future initiatives.
- e) The evaluation found that despite the cascading model being developed and implemented in **Bangladesh and Nepal**, most of the students who did not participate in project activities were unaware of the risk and vulnerability assessment by the end of the project. The evaluation team suggest **Plan International Bangladesh and Nepal COs** review their knowledge cascading model, ensure that adequate funds are allocated for the entire cascading cycle (rather than budgets for a few events), and explore the role of traditional and social media for disseminating information on DRR and CCA targeted at students and community members.
- f) The GRSCSI project's management structure is a feasible working model, with **Plan International APAC** taking the lead over management at the regional level and leadership over regional advocacy and country programs focusing on implementation. The evaluation suggests that **Plan International APAC** explores the potential for multi-country projects to upscale the good practices of the GRSCSI.

- g) To optimise project management efficiency and the effectiveness of future initiatives, the evaluation team recommends enhancing the staff capacity of **both COs** and partner NGOs in programme cycle management, especially the monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning.
- h) The evaluation team advises the entire **Plan International federation** to focus on completing quantitative data collection, analysis, and reporting first and then apply the qualitative method to make **mixed-methods evaluations** more effective and meaningful in the future. This approach will enable final evaluators to pinpoint areas requiring qualitative validation, thereby enriching the overall discussion and analysis, and drawing inferences.

## 1. Introduction

The Gender Responsive School and Community Safety Initiatives (GRSCSI) project, implemented by **Plan International APAC, Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, aimed to create safer, gender-responsive educational environments in both countries to address climate-induced disaster challenges. The project was operational from 1 June 2021 to 31 July 2024.

The project targeted three schools, including one madrasah and four communities in **Bangladesh**, reaching 3,362 girls and 4,986 boys, alongside 2,012 women and 2,942 men. The implementation areas included four wards of three Unions: Kachakatha, Kedar, and Ballaverkhash within the Nageshwari Sub-District of Kurigram District. The project was implemented in partnership with NGO partner, **Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO)**.

In **Nepal**, the project was implemented in eight schools across Dudhauri Municipality and Marin Rural Municipality in Sindhuli District. It reached out to 7,080 individuals including 1,171 girls, 1,125 boys, 2,389 females and 2,395 males from 8 schools and 24 communities surrounding the schools. The project was implemented in partnership with a NGO partner, **HANDS Nepal**.

**Plan International APAC** coordinated the regional component implementation and supported knowledge management, strengthening school safety programming in the Asia Pacific through the APAC Safe School Task Force (SSTF). At the same time, the **Plan International Bangladesh** and **Nepal** country offices were responsible for the project implementation. **Plan International Japan** funded the project.

**Plan International Bangladesh** and **Nepal** COs are both highly susceptible to climate-induced disasters, which impose a significant strain on public resources and exacerbate hardships for historically marginalised groups. The entrenched patriarchal social structure in both countries further compounds the vulnerability of specific segments of society, particularly girls, women, boys, PwDs and intersex individuals, making them disproportionately affected by the frequent occurrence of such disasters.

In this connection, the project aimed to **achieve a gender-transformative, safer educational environment at both school and community levels, addressing multiple hazards** through three following primary outcomes:

- **Outcome 1:** Enhancing the safety and gender responsiveness of school environments in alignment with the Comprehensive School Safety framework (CSSF).
- **Outcome 2:** Strengthening community disaster risk management capacities in a gender-responsive, inclusive manner integrated with school preparedness initiatives.
- **Outcome 3:** Promoting gender-responsive safe school initiatives at various levels of governance, collaborating with government and civil society partners.

This report documents the findings of the final evaluation of the GRSCSI project. The final evaluation was conducted over the period of **April-June 2024** in selected project supported schools and their surrounding areas in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

## 1.1 Objectives of the Evaluation

The evaluation aimed to accomplish **four** primary objectives:

- a) Assess the performance of the project based on six OECD Development Assistance Committee (OECD-DAC) evaluation criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, and Sustainability, as well as Gender and Inclusion criteria.
- b) Evaluate the strengths, weaknesses, constraints, challenges, lessons learned, and best practices throughout the project cycle management, focusing on planning and implementation.
- c) Create evidence-based case studies showcasing the success and critical achievements of the project in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, including at least three case stories from each country.
- d) Produce concrete conclusions and practical recommendations to enhance gender-transformative comprehensive school safety and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) interventions at school and community levels.

## 1.2 Evaluation Framework

This assessment was guided by an evaluation framework encompassing key evaluation questions and methods to collect and verify information for evaluating each question. The evaluation adopted a **mixed evaluation method**, using both qualitative and quantitative data.

Two research agencies in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** collected quantitative end-line data. Nepal Anushandhan Thatha Bikash Pratisthan (NABP) gathered qualitative data in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. Data collection, both qualitative and quantitative, was conducted from April to May 2024. NABP was responsible for qualitative and quantitative analysis and the final evaluation.

**The methodology detailed in section 1.2 pertains to the qualitative data collection;** where relevant, the quantitative analysis is explicitly noted within this section. **Table 1** provides the final evaluation framework for the project.

Table 1: Final Evaluation Framework

Evaluation Objective 1: Assess the project's performance based on OECD-DAC's evaluation criteria, including Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Impact, Sustainability, and Gender and Inclusion.	
Evaluation Criteria	Key Evaluation Questions
<b>1. Relevance:</b> The extent to which the project interventions and outcomes address the needs of target individuals and communities regarding comprehensive school safety and gender transformative DRR & CCA interventions in schools. Analyse how well the project aligns with national and local policies and plans for safe schools and education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What was the perceived need to initiate the project in the specific locations?</li> <li>a) To what extent, the project was relevant to address the needs and priorities of the target groups in the project location?</li> <li>b) To what extent the project has contributed and added value to advocate the need/requirement of local context to local to national policies, priorities, strategies, and plan on education, DRR and CCA?</li> </ul>
<b>2. Coherence:</b> The compatibility of project interventions and outcomes with other interventions and the resulting framework, considering anticipatory risks, risk management, and assumptions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To what extent does the project align with Plan's Country Strategies of <b>Bangladesh</b> and <b>Nepal</b> COs, and aligns with other initiatives in the project working areas?</li> <li>b) To what extent is the project interventions, outputs, outcomes and impact being in line with the proposed M&amp;E frameworks?</li> </ul>
<b>3. Effectiveness:</b> The extent to which the project has achieved its objectives and expected results, including any unintended societal outcomes resulting from project interventions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To what extent have the planned project outcomes been achieved?</li> <li>b) To what extent have the planned project outputs been achieved?</li> <li>c) What were the factors that contributed or lack thereof for the effectiveness of the project?</li> <li>d) How effective has the regional advocacy work been at the Asia Pacific level, and what are the criteria for success?</li> </ul>
<b>4. Efficiency:</b> The cost-effectiveness, budget burn rate, timeliness, flexibility, and adaptability of project interventions, as well as the efficiency of project implementation modality and management structure, partnership management, and decision-making processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To what extent were the project interventions cost-efficient in different areas of the project? Why?</li> <li>b) To what extent the project activities were completed on time?</li> <li>c) How effective was the project management structure (given the multi-country engagement), human resources management, and partnership modality?</li> <li>d) How flexible were the Plan International APAC and Plan International Japan to incorporate changes in the work plan?</li> </ul>
<b>5. Impact:</b> The project's significant positive or negative consequences, both intended and unintended, focusing on higher-level effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) How has the project intervention impacted the target participants, both intended and unintended or positive and negative impacts?</li> <li>b) What are the impacts of this project in terms of mainstreaming the disaster risk reduction and in communities, schools, and local governments in the different project locations?</li> <li>c) How have the communities and schools made resources available to these institutions to address multi-hazard risk? If not, what are the reasons?</li> </ul>
<b>6. Sustainability:</b> The long-term changes to society resulting from the project, including changes in attitude/behaviour and social, financial, physical,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What are the significant gender-responsive issues that influenced the exit strategy?</li> <li>b) In what ways the project lessons on gender transformative changes have been upscaled?</li> </ul>
<b>7. GEDSI:</b> The project applies gender and inclusion-sensitive approaches and aims for results that improve children's and young people's rights and promote gender equality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) To what extent did the project incorporate six elements of gender transformative and inclusive work i.e., 1. gender norms, 2. agency of girls/women, 3. working with boys and men, 4. conditions and positions of girls/women, 5. diversity and 6. enabling environment)? Do all six elements contribute equally to advancing gender transformation, or some are more effective than others?</li> <li>b) To what extent the project internalised gender transformative and inclusion work in terms of capacity of Plan and partner, technical expertise, monitoring data with gender lens, strategies to ensure participation and leadership of girls/women and people with disability, project resources and accountability?</li> </ul>

## 1.2.1 Documents Review

The evaluation team reviewed the project documents, including project implementation guidelines, quarterly and annual reports, monitoring framework, baseline reports, and other relevant documents as agreed with the **Plan International APAC** to understand the project activities and to develop a detailed evaluation framework. Additionally, relevant government policies of **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** on education and DRR were reviewed as per need of this evaluation.

## 1.2.2 Data Collection and Case Studies

The evaluation has adopted **mixed methods** encompassing qualitative and quantitative analysis. For the **qualitative information collection**, a purposive sampling method was adopted for selecting schools and madrasah. Out of 12 schools and madrasah receiving support from the project in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, the sampling included eight educational institutions - comprising seven schools and one madrasah - collectively representing approximately 66 per cent of the overall educational institutions supported by the project. In **Bangladesh**, the evaluation team visited all four schools supported by the project. In **Nepal**, four schools representing 50 per cent of the project-supported schools were sampled. **Box 1** provides the criteria for selecting schools for sampling in **Nepal**.

### Box 1: Sampling Criteria for School Selection (Nepal)

- Equal representation of schools from both rural and urban municipalities where the project was implemented.
- Equal representation of basic level and secondary level schools.
- Schools with a high number of indigenous and marginalised communities in their catchment areas (e.g., Tamang, Majhi, Danuwar, and Dalit communities).
- Balanced representation of schools that received extensive and minimal support for physical infrastructure improvement.

The eight schools identified for the community consultations served an estimated population of nearly over 100,000, and had 3,267 students. The details of the schools, their locations, number of students and catchment population is given in **Table 2**.

Similarly, the evaluation team, based on the consultations with Plan International COs and implementing partners, identified cases for detailed study and were validated.



**Table 2: List of Educational Institutions Selected for Sampling**

SN	School	Location	Student	Catchment Population
1	Kachakatha High School	Kachakatha, Bangladesh	878	20,627
2	Madarganj High School	Ballaverkhash, Bangladesh	744	26,443
3	Subalpar High School	Kedar, Bangladesh	393	29,804
4	Nayokerhat Dakhil Madrasa	Kachakatha, Bangladesh	448	20,627
5	Shree Kamala Basic School Bhatahi	Dudhauri, Sindhuli, Nepal	189	882 (210 HHs) *
6	Shree Shivashakti Basic School	Dudhauri, Sindhuli, Nepal	166	1,655 (395 HHs) *
7	Shree Basic School, Deurali	Marin, Sindhuli, Nepal	196	1,121 (267 HHs) *
8	Shree Secondary School, Thulidamar	Marin, Sindhuli, Nepal	253	1,693 (403 HHs) *
	<b>Total</b>		<b>3,267</b>	<b>102,852</b>

**Note:**

\* The catchment population is estimated using the national average household size reported in the **Population Census of Nepal** (2021). The number of households was assessed during community consultations conducted before the project inception in July-August 2021.

Besides field-based consultations in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, the evaluators consulted **Plan International APAC** team responsible for the project management and technical backstopping. Furthermore, the regional SSTF, facilitated by the **Plan International APAC**, was also consulted for the evaluation. A total of nine individuals from the project management team, the SSTF and Plan International Japan were consulted for the evaluation.

**1.2.3 Respondents Selection for Consultation**

In the next stage, the evaluation team adopted purposive sampling to select respondents in the target schools for consultation. The sampling process was coordinated with the project implementing partners in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. **Box-2** provides a detailed selection criteria of respondents in the sampled schools.

The consultations with respondents were conducted using participatory social research tools. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with those who had a good understanding of the project activities, in-depth interviews (IDIs) with those who had participated in the project activities and focus group discussions (FGDs) with primary beneficiaries (namely students and community members). Additionally, a detailed school observation sheet was used to record observations of the physical infrastructure supported by the project. Details on the evaluation tools are given in the Inception Report in **Appendix-1**.

## 1.2.4 Safeguarding and Risk Mitigation

The evaluation framework, methods and tools had undergone an ethical review by the **Plan International Global Hub** before the field-based consultations as the consultation involved below 15 age vulnerable children such as PwD). **Plan International** oriented the evaluation team on their safeguarding policies, safeguarding risk and mitigation measures. A detailed children and gender responsive evaluation protocols adopted by the evaluation is provided in the Inception Report.

### Box 2: Respondents Selection Criteria

#### Selection of Adult Respondents

- **Government Officials:** Must have had at least six months in their current role to provide informed inputs to the evaluators.
- **Elected Officials:** Included Union/Sub-district chairs and deputies in **Bangladesh** and mayor/deputy mayor of urban municipality and chairperson/deputy chairperson of rural municipality in **Nepal**, emphasising female representatives.
- **Plan International Staff and Partners in COs of Bangladesh and Nepal:** Included those directly involved in project implementation (e.g., project coordinators and officers) and those providing input for implementation.
- **Plan International Safe School Task Force (SSTF) Members:** All members of the SSTF, who joined the virtual meeting or in person meetings (SSTF members who were based in the **Plan International Bangladesh and Nepal COs**).
- **Plan International APAC Head of DRM:** The lead for the project in the APAC region.
- **Plan International Japan Programme Officer:** Responsible for the project implementation.
- **School and Madrasah Staff:** At least one Student's Task Force Teacher (STF)- **Bangladesh**; Gender Equality Disability & Social Inclusion (GESDI) and DRR focal teacher from **Nepal**.
- **Head Teachers:** Head teachers of schools/Madrasah supported by the project.
- **Female SMC Members:** Active female members (target of reaching out to at least 40 per cent of female respondents in this category).
- **Union Disaster Management Committee (UDMC)/Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC) Members/Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMC) Nepal:** An active female member from each project catchment area was identified for consultation to gain insights into the functioning of their networks/groups.
- **Community-Level FGDs:** Participants were selected in consultation with the head or deputy head of community groups and implementing partners ESDO in **Bangladesh** and HANDS in **Nepal**.

#### Selection of Children/Students Respondents

- **Coordination with Schools and Madrasah:** Selection done in consultation with the head teacher, GESDI, or STF teacher for selecting students for the mixed-group FGDs.
- **Diverse and Inclusive Representation:** Students who had participated in at least one project activity or training/refresher course were considered for the FGDs.
- **Inter-sex and Children with Disabilities:** These students were selected in consultation with the project implementing partners, the project focal person, and the teachers of the target schools or Madrasah.

### 1.2.5 Total Respondents Consulted

299 individuals, including 169 females, were consulted for the final evaluation across **Bangladesh, Nepal and Plan International APAC and Japan**. Of these, 234 were children under the age of 18, with 143 of them being female.

In Bangladesh, 123 individuals were consulted, including 64 females. Among these, 68 were children under the age of 18, with 54 being girls and young women. In Nepal, 167 individuals were consulted, comprising 98 females. Of these, 133 were children under the age of 18, with 87 being female. The detailed sex and age-disaggregated information of the individuals, as per **Plan International's** data collection guidelines, is provided in **Appendix 2**.

**Table 3: Respondents' Age and Sex Disaggregated Information**

	Female			Male			Total		
	Under 18	above 18	Total	Under 18	Above 18	Total	Female	Male	Total
Bangladesh	56	8	64	47	12	59	64	59	123
Nepal	87	11	98	44	25	69	98	69	167
APAC (including Plan Japan)	0	7	7	0	2	9	7	2	9
Total	143	26	162	91	39	137	169	130	299

### 1.2.6 Data Collection and Analysis

The **qualitative data** underwent a rigorous cross-checking process to validate the respondents' responses. The responses were meticulously reviewed against an evaluation checklist to ensure logical coherence and relevance. Responses were clustered based on similarities to identify common themes, and any unusually ideal or extreme responses were flagged for further validation. The evaluation teams in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** reported no such cases.

Regarding the **quantitative data**, the baseline and end-line data provided by **Plan International Bangladesh** and **Nepal** was reviewed, and analysed. Any errors or discrepancies in the quantitative data were addressed through consultation with **Plan International APAC** and **COs**, fostering a sense of shared responsibility to rectify and eliminate such issues. Non-parametric test was carried out to assess the changes reported over baseline values of selected indicators were statistically significant.

## 1.3 Rating Scheme

The evaluation team employed a colour-coded rating, to assess project implementation against the OECD-DAC plus GEDSI criteria. Upon completing the final analysis of the country evaluation, the country evaluation teams rated the project using this scheme, ranging from

**Dark Green (Fully Met)** to **Dark Red (Unmet/Does Harm)**. The colour-coded evaluation scheme of the evaluation indicators is given in **Table 4**.

**Table 4: Colour Coded Rating Scheme of the Evaluation Criteria**

Evaluation Criteria	1= Fully Met (Dark Green)	2= Mostly Met (Light Green)	3= Partially Met (Amber)	4= 4= Not Met (Light Red)	5= Does Harm/Un Met (Dark Red)
1. Relevance					
2. Coherence					
3. Effectiveness					
4. Efficiency					
5. Impact					
6. Sustainability					
7. Gender and Inclusion					

## 1.4 Limitations/Challenges

The evaluation team in **Bangladesh** faced systematic challenges in achieving gender balance among respondents. These obstacles included the lack of female chairpersons in the SMC, head teachers, and STF guide teachers in the sampled schools.

In **Nepal**, despite the evaluation team's efforts, they were unable to consult with PwD. A female PwD student identified for consultation remained silent despite encouragement from the principal and teachers. Her reluctance to speak highlighted the "**fear of speaking to outsiders**" and conveyed a strategic message that she requires special efforts for her empowerment.

Regarding the quantitative analysis, the nature and size of the baseline and end-line datasets provided by **Plan International Bangladesh** and **Nepal COs** hindered country-specific analysis. Consequently, aggregated data for **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** were used to facilitate non-parametric analysis and derive meaningful insights and decisions. Hence, the statistical tests do not have country level disaggregate findings.

## 2. Evaluation Findings, Discussions and Analysis

This chapter presents the detailed findings of the final evaluation, based on both qualitative and quantitative analysis, against six OECD-DAC and GEDSI criteria. The findings for each evaluation criterion are presented, discussed, and analysed comprehensively.

In brief, the project achieved "**Dark Green**" rating for **relevance** and **impact**, and a "**Light Green**" rating for **coherence**, **effectiveness**, **efficiency**, **sustainability**, and **GEDSI** criteria. **Table 5** provides a summary of the colour ranking of the overall and country colour rating for **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

**Table 5: Evaluation Summary Using Colour Coded Rating Scheme**

Evaluation Criteria	Overall Project	Bangladesh	Nepal
1. Relevance	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green
2. Coherence	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
3. Effectiveness	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
4. Efficiency	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
5. Impact	Dark Green	Dark Green	Dark Green
6. Sustainability	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green
7. Gender and Inclusion	Light Green	Light Green	Light Green

### 2.1 Relevance

The GRSCSI Project "**Fully Met**" the **Relevance** evaluation criterion, hence, rated "**Dark Green**". The project was well aligned with the needs of the primary target groups – girls, boys and PwDs, school authorities and the communities in the schools /madrasah catchment areas. The project was rated "**Dark Green**" ratings for **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** respectively.

#### Evaluation Question:

##### a) What was the perceived need to initiate the project in the specific locations?

The perceived need to initiate the project stemmed from critical gaps in disaster preparedness, school infrastructure, and gender inclusivity in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** and particularly in the project locations. Both countries and the project locations are highly vulnerable to various disasters each year.

**Bangladesh** is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Its proximity to the Bay of Bengal exposes it to tropical cyclones that form over the Indian Ocean before moving northward and landfall in South Asia. Cyclones are the most frequent disasters in the country. **Bangladesh's** river delta terrain and monsoon climate also pose a considerable flood hazard, compounded by storm surges. Floods are the second most frequent disaster. Other significant risks include landslides (often associated with storms and floods), earthquakes, extreme temperature events, and epidemics.

Kurigram District is not excluded from these effects, and the main hazards experienced in the district are floods, drought, river erosion, extreme temperatures, and storms. The local people of Kachakatha, Kedar, and Ballaverkhash Unions in the Nageshwari Sub-District of Kurigram face extreme weather conditions. This area becomes over-flooded with river water during the rainy season, and face droughts mainly during the dry season. Additionally, extreme heat makes life miserable of the poor, girls, women, and marginalised groups. Transportation and communication systems are lacking in these Unions which are low-lying areas, affecting the livelihoods, local infrastructure, and administrative systems in the district.

In Kachakatha, Kedar, and Ballaverkhash Unions, students have to use boats or banana rafts to attend school as there are no bridges over several canals and rivers. During floods, it becomes even more difficult for students to reach their schools, leading to increased school dropouts, child labour, child marriage, and gender-based violence. Sanitation practices in the schools were substandard, with no separate toilets for boys and girls and adequate drinking water facilities. The communities have had faced the impact of climate change in crop failures, increased frequencies, and intensities of disasters, exacerbating their suffering and losses. Furthermore, the Union Disaster Management Committees (UDMCs)/Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC) level authorities have not received knowledge and expertise to manage the DRR and CCA effectively and efficiently.

**Nepal**, located in the central Himalayas, is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world due to its topography and climatic conditions. Earthquakes, landslides, floods, fires, and thunderstorms are major causes of disasters that have caused significant damage, weakening the fragile ecosystem of the country. Economic vulnerability analysis shows that **Nepal** experiences substantial losses due to extensive exposure to risk and high levels of hazards. These phenomena cause loss of lives and properties, pose severe threats to physical infrastructure, and disrupt economic development. Climate change is already exacerbating **Nepal's** exposure to climate hazards.

The project locations of Marin Rural Municipality and Dudhauri Municipality in Sindhuli District, **Nepal** face frequent natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and extreme weather conditions, exacerbating the vulnerabilities of schools and communities. They relied on traditional methods to cope with these disasters, but limited knowledge and resources hindered their ability to mitigate them effectively. While incidents of drowning or loss of life are rare, agricultural land is regularly inundated by floodwaters during the monsoon season. The sanitation and menstrual hygiene practices in schools were below standard. The schools did not have separate toilets for girls and boys and age specific access to young students. During the menstrual cycle girls used to be absent from the schools.

#### Evaluation Question:

**b) To what extent the project has been relevant to addressing the needs and priorities of the target groups in the project location?**

The GRSCSI project addressed the needs of girls, disabled and intersex children, school authorities and local governments through different but inter-related activities. Girls and women were at the centre of the project interventions.

#### Addressing the Needs of Girls, Disabled, and Intersex Children

The project schools in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** lacked WASH and mensural hygiene facilities for girls and age specific toilets and drinking water supply for small age children, and easy access to WASH and mensural hygiene facilities for PwDs. During the evaluation, girls and young women from both countries unanimously described the situation before the project interventions to the evaluation team as:

*"We used to be absent from school for three days every month during menstruation as there was no separate toilet for us. We also used clothes as pads which were very unhygienic and harmful to our health. Since we were not regular at school, our academic results were not good."*

Even when schools had separate WASH facilities, sanitary products were not available. School authorities had yet to fully recognise menstrual hygiene as a right for girls and young women. The girls and young women could not voice their grievances to teachers and head teachers, fearing reprimand. There were no mechanisms for girls and boys to make their voices heard on issues that mattered most in schools.

The project addressed the needs of girls, boys, disabled, and intersex children by establishing mechanisms for them to make school authorities aware of their concerns, such as feedback mechanisms. It created an environment that promoted girls and young women in DRR and CCA activities, fostered their leadership, and improved or constructed essential school infrastructure to enhance WASH and menstrual hygiene standards, and keeping students safe from stray dogs and large cattle. See case study 1 on how an improvement in WASH and MHM ensured educational continuity of a girl with disability in Bangladesh.

### **Case Study 1 : Improved School WASH Facilities Transform Samia's Life**

Saima (pseudonym), 16, is a PwD from the Kachakatha Union, Nageshwari Sub-District in Bangladesh. She has been a student of Nayokerhat Dakhil Madrasah. She has down syndrome and could not walk or talk properly. She has been studying there since she was in grade 6. She used to be absent from the classes very often. She and her parents were not interested in her educational continuity. During her menstruation cycle, she used to miss her classes for at least three consecutive days. Furthermore, she had no ambition, used to being bullied by her classmates resulting into her limited interest in education.

The GRSCSI project initiated various inclusive activities in Saima's school. The programmes were designed to enforce behavioural changes among the school authorities, students as well as the communities on gender responsive school and community safety. They arranged different types of training programmes, awareness raising sessions, mock drills etc. which helped the students to become confident of their ability as well as leadership quality through being involved in different voluntary groups. As a part of these initiatives, Saima has been also a member of STF group.

Although a PwD, Samia has now become more confident to get along with her peers and travel alone in her neighbourhood. It is crucial to mention here that she has been also utilising her learnings from this project in her real life. For instance, she informed that "Since I am aware of the rescue operations being an STF member, I informed local people to rescue a person who was drowning in a pond of our neighbourhood in 2023. I suggested them to provide initial first aid treatment once the person was rescued and followed by that we arranged little cheer-up activities for psychological support of the drowning victim to get over from her trauma."

After the provisions of WASH block (separate toilet for female students), sanitary pad shop, and being involved in the STF group, Samia has become more interested in her study. Moreover, she has also become regular in her classes. She secured GPA 4.19 out of GPA 5.00 in her Dakhil exam 2024. The Dakhil examination, which is controlled by Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board, holds a status equivalent to the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) exam in general education.



## Addressing the Needs of School Authorities

Targeted schools and madrasah in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** lacked adequate infrastructure, including classrooms, separate toilets for girls and boys, availability of sanitary pads, and ramps to make WASH facilities accessible to PwDs. School infrastructure was unsafe, and the school authorities needed to gain the knowledge and skills to plan for school DRR. Minor infrastructure improvements, such as constructing and maintaining boundary walls, were also required to protect children from large cattle and stray dogs. However, the schools needed more funds, and the local governments were required to allocate resources for these physical facilities. The local governments have been resource constrained.

One headteacher in a project school in **Bangladesh**, representing the collective voice of all the teachers consulted by the evaluation team, explained how the GRSCSI project helped them address their needs in a collaborative manner, said:

*"We had several meetings with the project team, students, and teachers. We identified our schools' needs through the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and Contingency Plan. Based on the identified factors, the project has prioritised its interventions as much as possible within its budget. Although not all our requirements were fulfilled, we are satisfied with the support we received."*

Given that the project schools are in disaster-prone areas, access to schools during flooding seasons remains a significant barrier to the educational continuity of children. It affects both girls and boys. Besides, there are several factors such as poverty in the project locations which made retention of students from the poor groups a major issue, besides school safety.

## Addressing the Needs of Women in DRR

Traditionally, women bear the differential impact of any disaster. However, their roles in DRR planning and decision-making at the household or community levels have been minimal across the communities supported by the project in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. Community DRR groups formed by various agencies at different times were often inactive and needed more knowledge, skills, and resources to plan for influencing community and household-level DRR. Furthermore, gender stereotypical biases against women hindered their leadership roles in community DRR, even if they were keen to be involved. The project addressed women's needs to engage in and lead community and household-level DRR by providing them with the necessary knowledge and skills on DRR and CCA and promoting their agency in community disaster management groups and networks.

## Addressing the Needs of the Local Governments

The local governments in both countries are responsible for disaster preparedness and humanitarian relief. However, they often need more knowledge and skills to develop and implement gender-sensitive DRR and education policies. Through the lobbying efforts of the CSOs, local representatives gained knowledge and insight into DRR and CCA issues and how to integrate them into their educational plans and resource allocation decisions.

## 2.2 Coherence

The GRSCSI project has "**Mostly Met**" the Coherence criterion and is, therefore, rated "**Light Green**" overall. The project also received a "**Light Green**" rating in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** separately.

### Evaluation Question:

**a) To what extent does the project align with Plan International's Country Strategies of Bangladesh and Nepal, and aligns with other initiatives in the project working areas?**

**Bangladesh** and **Nepal** have adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is integrated in the CSSF. The GRSCSI project aligned with the principles of these internationally recognised frameworks, ensuring coherence with the needs and priorities of both governments.

The GRSCSI project has embraced all critical elements of **Plan International's** programming and influencing framework<sup>1</sup>, which aims to create a lasting change on the life of girls and young women. **Plan International Japan**, the funding affiliate, has a special focus on supporting communities across Asia to enhance their disaster preparedness and humanitarian relief capacities communicated by the **Plan International Japan** Programme Officer to the evaluation team.

At the level of **Plan International COs**, the project significantly contributed to **Plan International Bangladesh's Country Strategy (2030)** and **Plan International Nepal's Country Strategy (2023-2028)**, which aligns with **Plan International's** vision of putting girls at the centre of their interventions, adopts gender-transformative agenda and contribute towards the goal of respective COs of become leading development and humanitarian organisation.

### Evaluation Question:

**b) To what extent are the project interventions, outputs, outcomes, and impact in line with the proposed M&E framework?**

In terms of the coherence of different elements of the results chain, interventions, outputs, and outcomes are largely compatible with each other and the proposed logical framework.

### Alignment of Activities and Outputs

The proposed activities are well-aligned with achieving the proposed outputs. For example, conducting gender-responsive structural vulnerability assessments in targeted schools (**Activity 1.1**) directly supported the development or improvement of gender-responsive safe school improvement plans (**Output 1.1**). Additionally, activities such as providing training to school teachers on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction (**Activity 1.10**) built their capacity to implement these plans effectively (**Output 1.3**).

However, there were few activities with not fully aligned with the overall objectives of the project for instance,

<sup>1</sup> <https://plan-international.org/how-we-work/programmes-and-influencing/>.

- a) Four types of DRR planning were conducted at the school, community, and household levels. These plans often overlapped, leading to inefficient resource use.
- b) Activities related to private sector engagement needed stronger connections to the project's outputs and outcomes. These activities were implemented in ad hoc and needed more follow-up.
- c) Resources were not duly allocated for the activities related to detailed assessment and follow-up of actions, as a result the contribution of activities to achieve outputs could not be fully realised.

### Alignment of Outputs and Outcomes

The proposed outputs are generally aligned with achieving the proposed outcomes. Outputs such as safer and gender-responsive infrastructure in schools (**Output 1.1**) and strengthened capacity of school management on gender-responsive school disaster risk management (**Output 1.2**) contributed to creating a safer and gender-responsive school environment (**Outcome 1**). Similarly, community-based DRM mechanisms developed through project activities (**Output 2.1**) contributed to improved community DRM capacities (**Outcome 2**).

### Alignment of Outcomes and Overall Objective

The proposed outcomes aligned well with contributing to the overall objectives of achieving a gender-transformative safer education and learning environment. Outcomes such as a safer and gender-responsive school environment (**Outcome 1**), improved community DRM capacities (**Outcome 2**), and the policy influencing (**Outcome 3**) directly supported the overall objective.

In terms of the indicators, there was an instance where similar indicators were designed for assessing outputs and outcomes results (**Box-3**).

#### Box 3: Similar Indicator for Different Levels of Results Chain

Logical flow from activities, outputs to outcomes and ultimately to impact is a sign of a good result chain. Avoiding similar indicators at different levels of the project logic is essential for robust monitoring and evaluation.

In the case of GRSCI project, it had one similar indicator for both output and outcome monitoring. The project had "***number and per cent of family disaster preparedness plan developed that are inclusive and gender transformative***" as an outcome indicator and "***per cent of family disaster preparedness plan developed***" as an **Output Indicator (2.2.3)**. With nearly identical indicators for both outputs and outcome indicators could weaken the project's ability to demonstrate meaningful progress.

## 2.3 Effectiveness

The GRSCSI project has "**Mostly Met**" **Effectiveness** criterion by achieving its objectives and expected results in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, and hence coded "**Light Green**". The **Outcomes 1 - adopting CSSF** - and **Outcome 2 - Community level DRR** – are found effective. The effectiveness of the **Outcome 3 - Ppolicy influencing** - had the scope for further improvement.

**Evaluation Question:****a) To what extent have the planned project outcomes been achieved? To what extent did the project generate unintended outcomes**

In the terms of creating safer and gender-responsive school environments, the project excelled in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. In terms of progress against the **Outcome Indicator 1.1**, nearly 92 per cent of target schools now have environments that align with the CSSF, slightly under the 100 per cent target but still a notable achievement from the zero-baseline value.

In terms of **Outcome Indicator 1.2**, key stakeholders, including teachers, students, and parents, reported a 100 per cent satisfaction rate regarding the safety and gender responsiveness of school environments, surpassing the target of 83 per cent. Additionally, 84 per cent of students recognised their schools as resilient and friendly, slightly exceeding the target of 81 per cent, indicating successful engagement and perception shifts among students.

The gender responsive infrastructure supported by the project immediately benefited the students, especially girls, PwDs, and small age children. The girls and young women who could not voice their grievances to teachers and head teachers, fearing reprimand since there were no mechanisms for them to make their voices heard on issues that mattered most in schools. The project supported to develop and implement feedback mechanisms and provided girls, PwDs and inter-sex children with different trainings to improve their knowledge and skills on different aspects of DRR and climate change. (**See Case 2: Maya Champions DRR and CCA in Rural Nepal**)

The project orientated and build capacities of school stakeholders which led to a comprehensive vulnerability analysis of the school infrastructure and environment. It led to the implementation of DRR activities and safety measures. These activities contributed to the change in perception of the key stakeholders on school environment and infrastructure being and gender responsive. See **box 4** for an overview of the activities conducted under **Outcome-1**.

**Box 4: An Overview of the Activities Conducted Under Outcome-1****1. Pillar 1: Safer Learning Facilities**

- The project supported the construction of robust boundary walls, refurbishment of deteriorating classrooms, ceiling repairs, and establishment of WASH facilities.
- Inclusive ramps were built to assist PwDs, enhancing accessibility and safety for all students.
- Efforts were made to foster gender-responsive behavioural changes and practices within the educational environment through various initiatives and support services. These included:
  - Formation of different groups (girl, youth, STF, SCC groups).
  - Establishment of WASH facilities.
  - Implementation of feedback mechanisms.
  - Provision of training and organisation of awareness-raising activities.
  - Financial assistance for constructing, reconstructing, and maintaining school infrastructure across four schools.

**2. School Safety and Educational Continuity Management**

- School Disaster Management Committees (SDMC) and their task forces were established, and training sessions conducted to raise awareness among SMCs, teachers, students, and

local government bodies. These trainings were on disaster responsiveness, CCA, DRR, resilience, CSSF, gender, and social inclusion.

- Continuous monitoring through follow-up sessions ensured that progress and outcomes are effectively tracked.
- The project equipped schools with essential disaster response materials such as stretchers, ropes, torches, and first aid kits.
- Development of SSP, FPP, and CP which were integral to the project.

### 3. **Risk Reduction and Resilience Education:**

- Organised capacity building initiatives
- Developed different IEC materials and disseminating these materials
- Different awareness campaigns and extracurricular activities
- Conducted mock drills
- Conducted DRR & CCA classes
- Supported school to develop it as DRR & CCA learning centre

## Case Study 2: Maya Champions DRR and CCA in Rural Nepal

Maya is a 15-year-old girl from a marginalised community in Sindhuli, Nepal. She is Plan International's sponsored child. She faces numerous challenges in her pursuit of education. Living with her mother and a brother, she studies in grade nine at a public school. However, the pathway from her village to the school is frequently damaged by floods, windstorms, and lightning, hindering her access to school.



**Maya delivering a presentation on school safety to her peers © Plan International**

Maya was selected for a three-day training on Basic First Aid supported by her teachers. The training was conducted with the support from GRSCSI project. Now she proudly serves as a member of the School Disaster Management Committee (SDMC) and the first-aid task force.

Maya also actively contributed to her school's Learning Continuity Plan (LCP) and Comprehensive School Safety Action Plan (CSAP) development workshops. She gained valuable insights into the essentials of preparedness measures for ensuring education continuity during emergencies. She emphasized the importance of student involvement, advocating for their voices to be heard in the development of inclusive and effective plans and activities related to children's concerns.

Maya expressed, "Through diverse trainings and workshops, with interactive sessions, games, and role-plays, I have gained the confidence to disseminate information about disasters, their impacts, and preventive measures to my community and loved ones. I feel empowered to take a leading role in promoting climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and comprehensive school safety."

In addition, Maya is actively involved in various initiatives within, and beyond her school. As a member of the Kishori Club, (girls' club), she takes on the responsibility of educating her peers about disaster preparedness and shares her knowledge generously. She also jointly worked with other School Safety Champions (SSC) to develop household-level preparedness plans and handed them over to concerned households.

"I'm honored to be chosen as a sponsored girl, which supported my education. My passion for learning and leadership has guided me on this path toward becoming a SSC," Maya proudly explained.

**Source:** Plan International Website, Link: [Case Story \(Edited by the evaluation team\)](#)

## Outcome 2: Improved community DRM capacities that are gender responsive, inclusive, and integrated with school preparedness initiatives

In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, targeted communities developed inclusive and gender-responsive disaster contingency plans, achieving the 100 per cent target. Moreover, the project supported to develop 2,847 inclusive and gender transformative family disaster preparedness plans, hitting the mark with 100 per cent success, directly contributing to **Outcome indicator 2.1**.

The project has successfully met **Outcome Indicator 2.2** in both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. In **Bangladesh**, building on the foundation of the previous phase of the GRSCSI project, inclusive community disaster contingency plans were developed, considering gender, physical abilities, and other conditions. In **Nepal**, Community Disaster Management Committees (CDMCs) were involved in awareness-raising activities, leading to the formulation of community contingency plans. In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, community members participated in mock drills on search and rescue operations, first aid usage, and hazard-specific drills. These activities were highly valued, significantly enhancing participants' knowledge and efficiency in vulnerability reduction.

However, the evaluation team identified following gaps to conduct proper assessment on the effectiveness of the community level DRR plans and their testing as follows.

- a) Although data on family participation during the community DRR plans was available, information on subsequent drills, participants' number, and the inclusivity of these drills regarding gender, disability, age, and representation of marginalised and vulnerable communities was lacking (**Outcome indicator 2.1**).
- b) While information on community DRR plan preparedness was available in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, the information on how these plans were tested, including the execution of drills and the efficacy of different committees (such as early warning, search and rescue, and first aid) during these drills were missing, to ascertain the effectiveness of the DRR plans during the drills (**Outcome indicator 2.2**).

## Outcome 3: Promotion of gender-responsive safe school initiatives at local, provincial,



### national, and regional levels

- **Indicator 3.1: number of events and/or publications reported for promotion**
- **indicator 3.2: number of promotions result reported**
- **Indicator 3.3: per cent increase in budget allocation by local government for gender responsive safe school initiatives compared to the previous year**

In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, the project has met the outcome level indicators in terms of planned versus achieved results for **Outcome-3**. However, the impact of these activities on influencing local governments to mainstream gender-responsive safe school initiatives at local, provincial, national, and regional levels varies by country.

**Nepal** had more policy influencing activities and successes, and extensive engagement with the two municipalities of the project locations. This difference arises because local governments in **Nepal** are autonomous entities. In **Bangladesh**, the Unions, the lowest level of political unit engaged by the project, has limited roles and resource allocation capacities. Both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** mobilised CSOs to promote gender-responsive safe school initiatives at the local level. They engaged local elected representatives in project activities to raise awareness about the importance of gender-responsive DRR and educational policies.

In **Bangladesh**, the engagement was limited to the Sub-District level. An ad-hoc budget allocation of BDT one million (approximately USD 8,459) was made by the Nageshwari Sub-District vice-chairman for the improvement of infrastructure at Madarganj High School due to the result of policy influencing.

In **Nepal**, the project worked closely with local governments to develop gender-sensitive DRR and education policies and plans as well as overall DRR planning. Consequently, Marin Rural Municipality and Dudhuli Municipality developed their DRR plans, which improved their DRR scoring in the Local Government Institutional Capacity Self-Assessment (LISA). Both municipalities previously scored low in the DRR aspect of LISA before the project supported them in developing their respective DRR plans. The local governments have used their DRR plans to secure additional resources from the provincial governments. The project's end-line report for **Nepal** has highlighted that both local governments have allocated resources for DRR and environmental protections in **Nepal's** fiscal year 2023/2024. **Case 3** highlights how a collaborative effort among the GRSCSI project, school authorities and the local governments helped to make the school environment and infrastructure gender responsive.

### Case Study 3: Tripartite Partnership to Transform A School in Nepal

Shree Basic School Deurali is in Ward No. 3 of Marin Rural Municipality in the Sindhuli District of Nepal. The school predominantly caters to students from the indigenous communities.

With a total 196 students in the 2023 academic session, Shree Basic School Deurali confronts substantial geographical challenges. It is highly susceptible to hazards such as landslides and storms. The GRSCSI project partnered with the school and local municipality to demonstrate how CSSF initiatives could be implemented through a collaborative approach.

Darja Man Gole, the head teacher, reflects: "Our students, primarily from the Janajati community, frequently miss classes due to seasonal migration driven by their household's poverty. The existing facilities are inadequate, outdated, and unsafe, presenting a significant challenge in reducing the school dropout rate. Following the 2015 earthquake, two Temporary



Learning Centres (TLC) were constructed at our school. However, we still lacked safe infrastructure, disaster preparedness measures, and a proper evacuation plan."

He further adds, "With the support of the GRSCSI project, we constructed user-friendly toilets for students, with separate facilities for boys and girls, including a vending machine and an incinerator for the proper disposal of sanitary pads. Additionally, we developed a comprehensive evacuation plan and received extensive training on DRR and CCA from the project."

Sita B.K., an executive committee member of Marin Rural Municipality, shared that project supported them on gaining knowledge and skills on with various DRR and CCA activities (such as workshops on learning continuity planning, Community-level Adaptation Plans of Action (CAPA), CDPRP, mock drills, and an Early Warning System (EWS). She said these activities combinedly help them understand gender-responsive school safety. "But we did not have the required knowledge on how to implement the gender-responsive school safety in practice, hence we approached GRSCSI project for support," she said.

A consensus was reached between the project team, municipality, and Shree Basic School to prioritise the maintenance of classrooms to provide for the Early Child Development (ECD) to improve learning environment for the early graders. The project agreed to allocate NPR 300,000, requesting that municipality to contribute the remaining NPR 200,000, which they did it without any delay. This funding was enough to plaster and paint a class room while refurbishing it.

Sita reckons further: "We realised the importance of achieving a complete arrangement of classrooms for better teaching and learning. Consequently, we planned wall paintings for the rooms that were refurbished to enhance the learning environment. The local government allocated an additional NPR 400,000 to maintain proper seating arrangements and wall paintings in the four repaired classrooms.," says Sita.

The students conduct mock drills based on their evacuation plan and the hazard calendar. With this improved learning environment and repaired infrastructure facilities, Marin Rural Municipality has authorised Basic School Deurali to upgrade to grade nine. The enrolment of new students in this fiscal year has reached a total of 204 students (93 girls) enrolled this year.

The evaluation team has observed following gaps in terms of **Outcome 3**:

- The project partnered with CSO to conduct community campaigns on multi-hazard awareness, and gender responsive community DRR practices. However, the focus was primarily on organising learning visits without any budget allocated to regularly mobilise the CSOs and their networks in both countries. The resources for mobilisation and insitustional strengthening of the CSOs were not alloacted, impacting the CSO moobisation.
- The outcome indicators, while providing some insight, were not comprehensive enough to fully assess the changes resulting from policy engagement. A more robust set of indicators could have better captured the project's impact and informed future policy engagement strategies.

### Evaluation Question:

**b) To what extent have the planned project outputs been achieved?**

At the output level, the project maintained high efficiency across various activities and achieved all its outputs for **Outcomes 1, 2, and 3**. Schools conducted vulnerability assessments and developed SIPs, reaching 92 per cent and 100 per cent of their targets. Additionally, training sessions for teachers, students, and parents on disaster risk reduction and gender equality surpassed the target by 103 per cent. Two hundred ninety-five awareness-raising events were conducted against a target of 268, reflecting a 110 per cent achievement. These results indicate robust operational execution and practical capacity-building efforts across the project's scope. **Appendix- 3** provides the logical framework with targets and achievements over baseline and end-line values.

#### Evaluation Question:

#### c) What were the factors that contributed or lack thereof for the effectiveness of the project?

Based on extensive discussions with the primary target groups and stakeholders and a review of the project documents, the evaluation team has identified several factors contributing to the effectiveness of the GRSCSI project in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. A notable enabling factor for effective implementation was the participatory needs assessment of the schools, involving SMC members, headteachers, and teachers in project activities, and involving existing power elites, boys, and men in project implementations at the community level.

School stakeholders highlighted two major constraints limiting the effectiveness of the project interventions:

- Downward revision of project activities and budget due to the depreciation of the Japanese Yen against the BTB and NPR.
- Movement restrictions imposed until the first half of 2021, and the COVID-19 pandemic related health and safety concern through-out 2022, posed a significant challenge in completing the project activities on time in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

#### Evaluation Question:

#### d) How effective has the regional advocacy work been at the Asia Pacific level, and what are the criteria for success?

The effectiveness of regional advocacy work at the Asia Pacific level was a success. Critical success criteria include increased awareness and adoption of gender-responsive safe school initiatives and regional disaster risk management practices, encompassing the promotion of the CSSF across **Plan Country Offices in the APAC region**.

At the regional level, **Plan International APAC** organised several capacity building activities such as mentoring programmes and webinars to make the SSTF members aware of different aspects of the CSSF and share the project outcomes with each other. The exposure visits to the project location was one of the widely appreciated initiatives of the project. The project supported the documentation of the various success cases and its dissemination amongst the SSTF members. As a result, the CSSF has been adopted by different country offices in the region.

## 2.4 Efficiency

The project has "**Mostly Met**" the **Efficiency** criteria, and hence rated "**Light Green**" for the overall project and separately for **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. This criterion encompasses cost-effectiveness, budget burn rate, timeliness, flexibility, adaptability of project interventions, efficiency of the implementation modality, management structure, partnership management, and decision-making processes. Despite these achievements, significant challenges, particularly the high turnover of project managers in Plan International **Bangladesh**, strained project implementation.

### Evaluation Questions:

- a) To what extent were the project interventions cost-efficient in different areas of project? Why?
- b) To what extent the project activities were completed on time?

The project demonstrated notable cost-effectiveness through strategic resource allocation and effective budgeting in both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. Efficient reporting mechanisms, regular updates, and progress tracking, along with leveraging local government resources for monitoring visits, all contributed to cost-efficiency. However, budget constraints necessitated modifications to activities, indicating that while the project was cost-efficient, certain activities such as mock drills, early warning, first aid, and CSO mobilisation were scaled back to stay within budget limits. On the other hand, a few ad hoc activities were also planned and implemented, draining resources from the more important activities. Nonetheless, the activities were mostly completed on time. The frequent turnover of project staff at **Plan International Bangladesh** to some extent affected the implementation of project activities as discussed in the **case study 4**.

### Evaluation Questions:

- c) How effective was the project management structure (given the multi-country engagement), human resources management, and partnership modality?
- d) How flexible were the Plan International APAC and Plan International Japan to incorporate changes in the work plan?

A lean team managed the GRSCSI project in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** in partnership with local NGOs. At the CO level, a project coordinator (**Nepal**) and a project manager (**Bangladesh**) were supported by CO's ongoing specialists in DRR and CCA, MEAL, and GEDSI. Partner organisations were provided a project manager and a project officer. All the necessary staff were positioned within the partner organisations. Balancing implementation and reporting took a lot of work for project teams in both countries due to the number of activities to complete on time. The analysis of the project's logical framework indicated that a dedicated MERL personnel could have added value to the ongoing management of the results framework and reporting while freeing up the **Plan International CO's** project lead for quality assurance and strategic work on policy influencing.

## Case Study 4: Failure in Localising Early Warning Systems

### 'Localizing Early Warning Systems at the Community Level': Why Did We Fail to Implement?

#### What was the initial idea?

The idea was to enhance disaster responsiveness via a digital platform providing early warnings, particularly for floods. Intended to empower communities by making weather forecasts and disaster alerts readily accessible, the project faced significant hurdles that impeded its success.

#### What were the challenges?

A major obstacle was the high turnover rate of project managers, resulting in a lack of consistent leadership and direction. This frequent change in management disrupted the strategic continuity necessary for the project's success, preventing the development of a cohesive implementation strategy.

Additionally, the project required extensive collaboration, time, and resources that were scarce. Concerns about the sustainability of the digital system post-project contributed to a reluctance to continue its development. Stakeholders feared that without adequate



Girls of EWRC leading flood preparedness message dissemination. ©Plan International Bangladesh

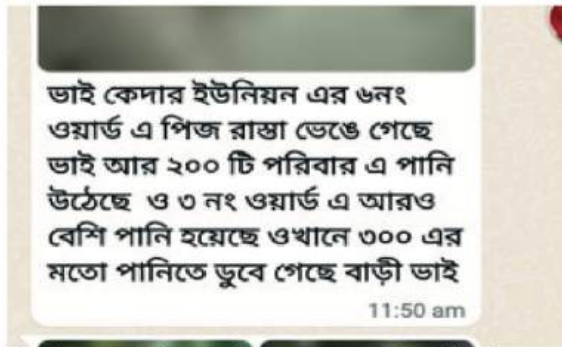
management and maintenance structures, the system would collapse after the project's conclusion.

#### So then, what did we do?

As challenges mounted, the project pivoted towards a simpler, more traditional approach. This involved providing basic early warning materials and equipment like megaphones and sirens in three different unions, utilized by Ward Disaster Management Committee (WDMC) members and youth groups during flood events. Although this shift did not fulfill the project's original digital ambitions, it marked a significant step towards improving local disaster preparedness.

#### What did we learn?

The project's experience highlights the critical need for clear planning, stable management, and locating context-specific sustainable practices in designing community-level early warning systems initiatives.



Youth group members sending text message using their phones to disseminate flood warning. ©Plan International Bangladesh

**Source:** Plan International APAC, GRSCSI Project Team.

## 2.5 Impact

The GRSCSI Project has "Fully Met" the impact evaluation criteria for its interventions and outcomes, rated "Dark Green" rating. This section analyses both the intended and unintended impacts of the project in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.



**Evaluation question:**

**a. How has the project intervention impacted the target participants, both intended and unintended and positive and negative?**

According to the updated logical framework, the project achieved a remarkable 100 per cent of its targets for both schools and communities related indicators in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. It indicates that the students, teachers, and communities have better knowledge and skills on multi-hazard risk assessment and the DRR after the project implementation. **Table 6** provides the updated values for **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** of the project logical framework from baseline to end-line.

**Table 6: Updated Impact Indicators (Target vs Achievement)**

Indicators	Baseline ( per cent)			Target ( per cent)			End-line ( per cent)			Achieved against target ( per cent)		
	Nep	BD	Tot	NEP	BD	Tot	NEP	BD	Tot	NEP	BD	Tot
per cent of target schools that achieved a gender transformative, safer education and learning environment that responds to and prepare for multi-hazards risks	38	0	25	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
per cent target communities that achieved a gender transformative and safer environment that responds to and prepare for multi-hazards risks	38	0 per cent	25	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**Note:** BD = **Bangladesh**, NEP = **Nepal**, Tot = Total

The findings from the statistical test on key indicators between baseline and end-line values is presented in this section. However, a disaggregated statistical analysis by country could not be performed due to sample size limitations and the nature of the collected data. Consequently, the statistical analysis presented here represents aggregated values for both countries.

**Impact Indicator 1: per cent of target schools that achieved a gender transformative, safer education and learning environment that responds to and prepare for multi-hazards risks:**

The project substantially improved school environments (**Impact Indicator 1**) in both **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**. Initially, none of the target schools had gender-transformative and safer education environments. By the end of the project, this figure reached 100 per cent, far exceeding the interim target of 25 per cent. A statistical analysis was conducted to determine

if the changes in students' and teachers' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours regarding DRR were statistically significant.

**Table 7: Students' Perception on School Safety (Aggregate for Both Countries)**

Questions	Baseline ( per cent)			End-line ( per cent)			Significance
	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total	
Are school environment and infrastructure being safer and gender responsive?	34	66	100	92	8	100	$\chi^2= 34.54$ . df=1, p<0.05
Do you know where the safe/unsafe zone is from any risks are in your school?	61	39	100	85	15	100	$\chi^2= 30.94$ . df=1, p<0.05
Do you know what risk and vulnerability assessment is?	14	86	100	48	52	100	$\chi^2= 57.53$ . df=1, p<0.05
Has your household undertaken any activities regarding DRR & CCA?	0	100	100	40	60	100	$\chi^2= 102.25$ . df=1, p<0.05

**Students' Perception on Safety, Risk and Vulnerability Assessment:** Over the project implementation period, there was a significant improvement in students' perceptions of school environments and infrastructure as safer and more gender-responsive. At baseline, only 34 per cent of students perceived their schools as secure, which rose to 92 per cent by the end-line. Similarly, there was a marked increase in their ability to identify safe and unsafe zones, from 61 per cent to 85 per cent, and in their knowledge about risk and vulnerability assessments, from 14 per cent to 48 per cent. The statistically significant chi-square test results affirm these improvements, indicating that the interventions positively impacted students' perceptions of safety and their knowledge about risk management. **Table 7** provides the changes in the perception of students on school safety.

**Changes in Safety Practices:** The project achieved significant behavioural changes among students in response to disasters at their schools. The percentage of students who evacuated to a safe place by themselves increased from 46 per cent at baseline to 64 per cent at the end-line. Similarly, those who helped evacuate a family member to a safer zone rose from 0 per cent to 11 per cent. Conversely, the project also significantly reduced negative behaviours. The percentage of students who panicked and ran decreased dramatically from 27 per cent at baseline to 1 per cent at the end-line indicating a significant reduction in panic-driven responses among the students. The chi-square test results confirm that these improvements are statistically significant. The test result indicates that the interventions had a positive impact safety practice among the students. **Table 8** provides the changes in DRR practices of students over the project implementation period.

**Table 8: Students' Perception on Safety Practices (Aggregate for Both Countries)**

What did you do when the Disaster happened at your school	Baseline ( per cent)	End-line ( per cent)	Chi-square test
I evacuated to a safe place by myself	46	64	$\chi^2=31.633$ , df=1, P<0.005
I panicked and ran	27	1	$\chi^2=14.694$ , df=1, P<0.005
I went home to my family	6	0	$\chi^2=38.308$ , df=1, P<0.005
Help to evacuate family member to safer zone	0	11	$\chi^2=63.053$ , df=1 P<0.005

**Teachers' Perception on Safety:** The percentage of teachers who agreed that the school environment was safe increased from 30 per cent to 100 per cent following the project interventions. Initially, only 30 per cent of teachers believed the school infrastructure was safe; this figure rose to 95 per cent post-intervention. Similarly, the percentage of teachers who felt the school was secure regarding gender responsibilities increased from 30 per cent to 95 per cent, reflecting the successful promotion of gender-sensitive policies and practices. Additionally, the percentage of teachers reporting safe zones in the school increased from 70 per cent to 100 per cent. Teacher involvement in hazard and risk map preparation rose significantly from 10 per cent to 86 per cent, indicating their engagement in disaster risk reduction activities and the development of a more resilient school environment. **Table 9** details teachers' perception on school safety and DRR before and after project implementation.

**Table 9: Teachers' Perception on School Safety (Aggregate for Both Countries)**

Perception	Baseline ( per cent)			End-line ( per cent)		
	Agree	Disagree	Total	Agree	Disagree	Total
Perception of teachers - school environment is safe	30	70	100	100	0	100
Perception of teachers - school infrastructure is safe	30	70	100	95	5	100
Perception of teachers - school is safer for gender responsibilities	30	70	100	95	5	100
Do you have safe zone in your school?	30	70	100	100	0	100
Do you involve on preparation - Make hazard and risk maps?	10	90	100	86	14	100

### Impact Indicator 2 (Community Preparedness)

Beginning from a baseline aggregate of 0 per cent, in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, 100 per cent of the target communities achieved a gender-transformative and safer environment, aligning with the final target. Regarding households engaging in DRR and CCA activities, statistical analysis indicates a significant association between the time periods (baseline vs. end-line), with values increasing from zero percent (baseline) to 95 percent (end-line). The high chi-square value underscores a substantial departure from expected household activity levels in the absence of change.

### Gaps in Impact Indicators

Despite the significant changes there few gaps observed by the evaluation team as follows:

- a) While there was a significant increase in the awareness of risk and vulnerability assessments among students—from 14 per cent at baseline to 48 per cent at end-line—more than half of the students (52 per cent) still lack this critical knowledge. This indicates a gap in fully understanding and implementing these assessments, which are vital for CSSF implementation.

The evaluation team noted that the GRSCSI project in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** developed and implemented knowledge-cascading models to inform students who did not participate in the orientation/training sessions organised by the project. While several cascading sessions were held, both countries needed to implement the cascading cycle fully. In **Bangladesh**, schools shared information during morning assemblies. However, the end-line survey analysis indicates a need to prioritise information sharing with students and



children who do not participate in the project activities and explore various alternatives including the traditional and social media for this.

- b) Despite notable progress, with 40 per cent of households engaging in DRR & CCA activities by the end-line, a majority (60 per cent) still do not participate in these critical activities. This indicates a gap in extending the project's impact from school to home, which is essential for building community-wide resilience.
- c) Although there was a substantial improvement in the perception of teachers of gender responsibility safety—from 30 per cent at baseline to 95 per cent at end-line—there is a need to ensure these perceptions translate into consistent and practical applications within the school environment. The remaining 5 per cent disagreement indicates a gap that could impact the overall gender responsiveness and inclusivity.
- d) The project aimed to establish and function child-friendly monitoring and feedback mechanisms in six schools. The evaluation team validated this during the school visits. However, there was no specific end-line data provided for this indicator.
- e) The means to measure the change in qualitative indicator such as change in DRR roles was not well defined.

### 2.5.1 Unintended impacts

In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, girls who participated in the project activities have reported that their self-confidence to speak-out has improved. For instance, in **Bangladesh**, girls feel comfortable riding bicycles to schools and have improved their public speaking skills, breaking barriers of shyness. The formation of various groups, including girls' groups, youth groups, STF, has encouraged girls' involvement in decision-making in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

**Majority of girls with whom the evaluation team consulted expressed that** they are now more actively involved in school events and discuss about menstruation frequently and openly with their peers and family members. They reported that the families in general and mothers in particular are very supportive of their participation in different DRR related activities at schools and communities. While some mothers reported that they now feel safe to send their daughters to school during their mensural period as the schools have improved their WASH and mensural hygiene facilities.

#### Some anecdotal unintended impacts that the evaluation team came across were:

- a) In **Bangladesh**, despite religious sensitivities, the project has fostered inclusivity in madrasah. Initiatives like building a Shahid Minner inside madrasah premises symbolise belongingness to the general education system. This inclusive approach has inspired projects like constructing WASH blocks for boys in Nayokerhat Madrasah by their own fund.
- b) At Madarganj High School (**Bangladesh**) students requested a canteen through their feedback box as they come to school from distant areas. To address this request, the school authorities established the '**Durgom Jatri School Canteen**' within the school premises, providing snacks and lunch, with free food for PwD students and subsidised for others. The practices of school canteen to provide food on subsidised price is also practised in Subalpar High School of Kedar U, Nageshwari Upazila, Kurigram District, Bangladesh (**See Case study 5**).

- c) WASH block maintenances by communities in **Bangladesh** highlighting the importance of hygiene and sanitation—a lesson imparted by children attending project schools, as observed by the evaluation team during could be one unintended impact of the project.
- d) **In Nepal** one unintended impact observed by the evaluation team goes beyond interpersonal development and indirect impact on educational activities of the students involved in project activities. In some instances, sharing of knowledge has led to widespread adoption of sustainable practices like installing improved cooking stoves and implementing tunnel farming techniques for growing off-season vegetables in the communities. Additionally, communities creatively utilised local resources for various purposes, such as using bamboo for *Doko* (Bamboo basket) weaving, being used as dustbins in schools.

### Case Study 5: School Saving Group Supports Kabir

Kabir (pseudonym), 13 has been studying in the Subalpar High School of Kedar Union, Nageshwari Sub-District in Bangladesh. He has been studying at the school since he was six years old. Though he was regular to attend his classes, he often had to leave school during the tiffin break as he had to help his father in farming. Kabir shared that ***“My father will need BDT 300- 400 per day if he has to hire any external day labour for such tasks. Besides, I also become very hungry by the tiffin time.”***

Like Kabir, several other students of this school must leave their classes as they feel extremely hungry during tiffin time. Since their parents are neither able to prepare food before they start for school nor there was any canteen to buy snacks, the students had no other choice but to leave during the tiffin break.

In order to address this issue, the Kabir’s teachers arranged several parents meeting to raise their awareness about the education continuity. However, without establishing any canteen within the school premises, there was no permanent solution to ensure educational continuity of Kabir and others like him.

Followed by this common issue, Kabir was also struggling to pay his half-yearly session fee of BDT 400 [**Note: Subalpar High School does not charge any monthly fees for its students but students need to pay BDT 800 as yearly session fee in two six month’s terms**].

However, the students of Subalpar High School in Kedar could come forward with their savings group where the students from comparatively better economic backgrounds save money. This savings process is being monitored and tracked by their STF guide teacher. The fund of this savings group is being used to buy tiffin, monthly pay school fees, session charge, registration and board examination fees. When the Kabir’s peers learned about his struggles to pay his session fee, they extended their hands and paid it from their savings fund.

This is a crucial example where the project interventions and the knowledge gained from this project has helped Kabir to continue his education. There are several students who are getting support from their school’s savings group like Kabir and this initiative is very appreciated by the students who are involved in the saving process.

#### Evaluation Question:

**b) What are the impacts of this project in terms of mainstreaming the disaster risk reduction and in communities, schools, and local governments in the different project locations?**

In **Bangladesh**, the youth groups have emerged as pivotal actors for the successful implementation of the project. These groups have actively spread awareness on DRR. Youth groups played a significant role in facilitating vaccine registration and distributing face masks during COVID-19 pandemic. Similarly, the SMCs reported that nearly 600 families learned about gender-responsive DRM practices through parent meetings organised by them. The project has re/formed various groups, including SMCs, STFs, youth groups, and WDMCs, contributing to increased community engagement and preparedness.

In **Nepal**, the project has impacted mainstreaming DRR across communities, schools, and local governments. Community preparedness plans and training sessions have equipped communities with the necessary knowledge and skills to respond effectively to future disasters, fostering a culture of readiness. In schools, the integration of DRR into management practices, the development of DRM plans, and the execution of mock drills have significantly raised awareness and preparedness among students and teachers.

In **Nepal** project schools like Kamala Basic School and Shivashakti School have incorporated mock drills into their weekly curriculum. Marin Rural Municipality and Dudhauri Municipalities in **Nepal** have developed and implemented DRR plans to support gender-responsive safe school initiatives which is a first step for allocating DRR budgets for sustained support beyond the project phases over. Currently, there are no dedicated budgets for implementing DRM plans in some schools, such as those in Dudhauri (**Nepal**), which rely on DRR funds established by teachers and students

#### Evaluation Question:

**c) How has the communities, schools and made resources available to these institutions to address multi-hazard risk? If not, why?**

The allocation of resources by communities and schools to address multi-hazard risk is not commonly practiced in the project areas. The activities are dependent on the resources made available by the project. Few anecdotes of communities providing resources for DRR and CCA activities in the project locations that the evaluation team came across as follows.

- In **Nepal** schools have established emergency funds with voluntary the donations of teachers and students, which is very small in amount.
- In **Bangladesh** Union Parishad member dedicated a room in his house as the WDMC office, allowing members to plan disaster management activities and share knowledge.
- In **Bangladesh**, few youth groups reported that they purchased first aid kit for replenishment of the kits provided by the project.

## 2.6 Sustainability

The GRSCSI project has "**Mostly Met**" the **Sustainability** criterion, and rated "**Light Green.**" The criteria assess the compatibility of project interventions and outcomes with other interventions and the resulting framework, considering anticipatory risks, risk management, and assumptions. The project has demonstrated the viability of a comprehensive school safety initiative in terms of implementation. However, schools would require additional financing for implementing the CSSF in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

### Evaluation Questions:

#### a) In what ways the project lessons on gender transformative changes have been upscaled?

In **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**, the project successfully fostered a gender-responsive approach among secondary school students, teachers, community members, CSOs, and local government authorities, with the change in their KAP. This will ensure a safer education system and enhance disaster preparedness activities at schools and communities after the project phases over.

In **Bangladesh**, the role of the CSO members, who have been involved since the inception of the SCRSSI project, cannot be overstated, to upscale the impact of the project. The head of a CSO highlighted the sustainability of the feedback mechanism introduced by the project at both school and community levels, stating:

*"Several other schools in the community have adopted the feedback mechanism process after observing its benefits in the GRSCSI and SCRSSI project schools."*

The project encouraged school authorities and students to form various groups to manage responsibilities for the DRR and gender-responsive schools in **Bangladesh**. The groups include STF groups, safeguard focal groups, youths' group, and girls' group, each with distinct roles and responsibilities guided by their teachers and SMCs. One notable example is the sanitary pad outlet started by the STF group, which signifies the project's long-term impact and sustainability in promoting gender-responsive practices in **Bangladesh**.

#### Box 5: Sanitary Pad Outlets in Schools in Bangladesh

The sanitary pad shop established through the project support is poised for long-term sustainability, operating on a cost-recovery model managed by the STF group. Initially funded by the students with assistance from the school, the shop sells sanitary pads at minimal profit. Additionally, it provides free sanitary pads to PwD. The profit generated is meticulously documented and reinvested to restock the shop, eliminating the need for further external funding. A guide teacher oversees the entire process, assisting the student group in managing funds. This student-led initiative was established with minimal guidance from the project.

The success of the pad shop has inspired other schools in the project area to adopt similar cost-recovery models, setting up their own pad shops and stationery stores selling items such as papers, notebooks, and pens. The profits from these ventures are used to provide free pads and essential educational tools to students from poor socio-economic backgrounds and those with disabilities.

In **Nepal**, implementation duration of the project compared to **Bangladesh** was shorter. Hence there has not much activities in terms of upscaling the gender lessons learned from the GRSCSI implementation to other schools and communities in the project location. The project location is in **Plan International Nepal's** long term sponsorship programme area.

## 2.7 Gender and Inclusion (GEDSI)

The GRSCSI project has “**Mostly met**” the Gender & Inclusion criterion, and is rated “**Light Green**” in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

### Evaluation Questions:

- a) To what extent did the project incorporate six elements of gender transformative and inclusive work - 1. gender norms, 2. agency of girls/women, 3. working with boys and men, 4. conditions and positions of girls/women, 5. diversity and 6. enabling environment)? Do all six elements contribute equally to advancing gender transformation, or some are more effective than others?
- b) To what extent the project internalised gender transformative and inclusion work in terms of capacity of Plan and partner, technical expertise, monitoring data with gender lens, strategies to ensure participation and leadership of girls/women and people with disability, project resources and accountability?

The project has successfully adopted the GTA championed by **Plan International**. The evaluation team has observed that the project has made conscious effort to mainstream six dimensions of GTA across the project cycle management. This section discusses and analyses the application of GTA in project cycle management and capacity of the partners and staff on gender and inclusion monitoring and planning. These analyses are applicable equally to **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

### Application of the Gender Transformative Approach

- a) **Challenging Harmful Gender Norms:** The project interventions were designed, considering social stigmas and beliefs. The community used to believe that girls should remain inside the house, involve in household chores, should not participate in outside activities, and need to practice seclusion during the time of menstruation (more so in **Nepal**). Sometimes guardians did not accept the participation of their daughters being involved in the project activities. However, recognising how the project has addressed their daughters' WASH and menstrual hygiene needs, family members now support their involvement in DRR activities and encourage school attendance during their menstrual periods.
- b) Encouraging daughters to attend schools during the mensural period is a big achievement in terms of challenging harmful gender norms in South Asia. It is because girls and women are kept in isolation and subject to stigma during the mensural period.
- c) **Agency of Rural Women and Girls:** The agency of women and girls was promoted through their participation in various clubs at the schools and women in supporting them to become champions for DRR and CCA at the community level. As a result, agency of rural women who champions their cause is evident in Bangladesh and Nepal. **See case study 6** on how a Dalit woman in Nepal champions the issue of community based DRR and CCA.

- d) **Fostering Positive Masculinity:** The project adopted an inclusive working process by engaging boys to advocate for gender-sensitive school environments and promote positive masculinity. This approach encourages boys to actively participate in creating a supportive and inclusive school culture.
- e) **Condition and Position of Girls and Women:** The project has contributed towards changing the position of the girls by encouraging their leadership roles in school DRR activities and women in community DRR planning. In **Nepal** more than 50 per cent of women. In the schools in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** equal representation of girls and boys were encouraged. As a result, girls and women feel that their condition has changed at schools, households and community level decision making from a “*meek bystander*” to that of an active participants and leaders.
- f) **Ensuring Diversity and Inclusion:** The project ensured enabling environment at school for physically disabled and inter-sex children through the provision of user-friendly physical infrastructure, and providing orientation to students and teachers on the importance of diversity and inclusion. This inclusive approach creates an environment where all students feel valued and respected.
- g) **Enabling Environment:** The project has largely encouraged the participation of girls and women in disaster response mechanism as well as in leadership and community services. Besides, the project has largely prioritised the needs of the PwDs and hence, arranged PwD friendly entrance, WASH facilities in the schools, and sensitised the stakeholders regarding the needs of girls, women, PwDs and inter-sex children during any disaster and for safer education facilities. Adolescent girls have been utilising the WASH block as their private place to discuss their concerns as at this age they are quite sensitive and need guidance (**Bangladesh**) Before this project girls would never talk about such sensitive topics with strangers but now it's has changed remarkably.

### GEDSI Capacity & Monitoring

To ensure the successful implementation of GEDSI within the project, Plan International **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** have taken proactive steps. This includes involving a GEDSI Advisor to oversee project planning, activity design, and implementation strategies, integrating a gender transformative and inclusive approach.

The project has effectively internalised gender transformative and inclusive practices by:

- a) Conducting detailed gender and workload analysis from a gender perspective before the project's inception.
- b) Plan International **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** Country Offices monitored project progress using gender marker tools at regular intervals.
- c) Collecting and analysing sex- and age-disaggregated data to monitor girls' and women's participation throughout the project cycle.

### Case Study 6: Yashoda: A Young Rural Women Climate Leader

Yashoda is a 20-year-old woman from Sindhuli District in Nepal. She is the part of the Dalit community, which faces many social and economic challenges. Her village often deals with wild animal attacks, snake bites, and yearly floods from nearby streams. In her community, cultural norms often prevent girls from taking on leadership roles.



Yashoda says, "In my community, traditions often hold girls back from taking leadership roles, and many people don't understand the impacts of climate change."

Despite traditional beliefs, Yashoda has always wanted to be a leader. She participated in many training sessions and workshops and stayed informed by listening to the radio and watching TV news.

After graduating the high school, Yashoda started leading a community-based organisation. She says, " GRSCSI project was a turning point for me. The three-day training on climate-smart safe schools was crucial."



*Image: Yashoda is facilitating session on Climate-Smart Safe Schools. ©Plan International Nepal*

Yashoda shares, "Through the training, I learned that climate-smart safe schools can protect children and ensure their education continues even during disasters. I realized that climate-smart safe schools are essential for keeping students safe and prepared for any emergency."

Yashoda shares, "Working on the CAPA taught me how to develop strategies to protect our community from climate impacts and disasters. Preparing the LAPA made me realize the importance of involving the whole community in planning for climate adaptation."

She further adds, "Through creating the CDPRP, helped me see the critical steps needed to ensure our community's safety during disasters. I learned that CAPA and LAPA are essential for making long-term plans to adapt to climate change and reduce disaster risks. The training on CDPRP emphasized the need for clear roles and communication during emergencies, which is vital for our community's preparedness," shares her learnings.

Now, Yasodha educates others about climate change and disaster risk reduction. She leads 12 sessions using a climate-smart safe school manual and shared her knowledge with peers, family, and the community during meetings and events.

### 3. Conclusions and Recommendations

The project has effectively catered to the needs of students, school authorities, community members, and government officials concerning gender-responsive school and community safety. One of the project's strengths lies in its participatory needs assessment and collaborative planning with school authorities. Most activities, with a few exceptions, were well-aligned with the results chain. Additionally, the partnership with local NGOs, which have a long-term commitment to the project area, was a notable strength. There has been a statistically significant change in the perception of risk and vulnerability among students and teachers, as well as changes in their practices before and after the project implementation.

The evaluation team has identified **eight** major learnings from the GRSCI project implementation along with recommendations for future project design.

- a) The CSSF is practical and adaptable to locations with varying social, economic, and religious practices, class and caste contexts, and different levels of gender-based discrimination. The similarity of results, in terms of changes in the KAP of boys and girls, teachers, and community members on DRR and CCA in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** before and after the project intervention, attests to the effectiveness of the CSSF.

**Recommendation:** Expand the implementation of the CSSF model to additional regions and integrate it into broader educational and community development programmes to enhance its impact on reducing gender-based disparities at schools and communities in **Bangladesh, Nepal** and elsewhere in the **Asia-Pacific**.

- b) The project's priority is to support schools in making their infrastructure safe, immediately benefiting girls, young women, PwDs, and young children. This initiative has enabled girls to continue their education during menstruation and disasters, ensuring their self-esteem and dignity. In South Asian societies, where girls and women are often forced to live in isolation during their menstrual periods and are subject to stigma, the project addressed this norm by improving WASH and MHM facilities at schools. These improvements have encouraged mothers to send their daughters to school during menstruation. These safe and gender-responsive infrastructures will continue to serve multiple generations of girls and young women in the future.

**Recommendation:** The project should invest in safe school infrastructure and train staff on gender-sensitive approaches to ensure a supportive environment for young girls and marginalised children's educational continuity. This will foster an inclusive culture that respects and responds to the unique needs of all students, enhancing their sense of security and belonging.

- c) Involving traditional power elites, men, and boys (one of the six dimensions of GTA) in project activities increased their support for the initiative. It created an enabling environment that enhanced the participation and leadership of women and girls in DRR activities at schools and communities. The evaluation team reported no conflicts with power elites while prioritising girls' and women's participation in project activities in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal**.

**Recommendation:** The evaluation team recommends that **Plan International APAC** implement targeted training programmes for traditional power elites, men, and boys to enhance further their understanding of gender equality and the importance of women's participation in DRR activities.

- d) Policy influencing is a long-term process, necessitating comprehensive indicators to measure change over the project's duration. The role of the project in policy influencing primarily involves developing and supporting networks and platforms for CSOs to connect with governments at all levels. Therefore, supporting CSOs and their networks is crucial for sustained policy-influencing activities. The GRSCSI project could not make significant progress in policy influencing. An analysis of constraining factors points to the need for more mobilisation support for CSOs.

**Recommendation:** The evaluation team suggests that **Plan International COs** focus on working with CSOs and their networks to ensure continuous policy influence at all levels. This requires strategically allocating knowledge, skills, and resources to strengthen and mobilise these organisations.

- e) The baseline and end-line data analysis indicates that knowledge cascading model developed and implemented in **Bangladesh** and **Nepal** could have been more effective in disseminating information and knowledge to those who did not participate in the project activities. There remains a significant knowledge gap on vulnerability assessment and planning among non-participating students and community members by the time the project phases over.

**Recommendation:** The evaluation team suggests that **Plan International Bangladesh** and **Nepal** COs review their knowledge cascading model, and ensure that adequate funds are allocated for the entire cascading cycle (rather than budgets for a few events). The evaluation team suggest to explore the potential of using of traditional and social media for information dissemination in the future programme design.

- f) The management structure of the GRSCSI project, with **Plan International APAC** taking the lead over project management at the regional level and leadership over regional advocacy and country programmes focusing on the implementation, is a feasible working model. The regional component led by **Plan International APAC** has been instrumental in mainstreaming good practices of the GRSCI project across Asia and the Pacific region through the deployment of experts and backstopping of the COs, facilitating information sharing platforms and capacity building initiatives (such as webinars), and conducting case studies on good practices and challenges.

**Recommendation:** Explore the potential for multi-country projects to upscale the good practices of the GRSCI project, with a component focusing on influencing Asia-based bilateral and multilateral donor agencies to adopt CSSF in their grant and lending in the education and DRR sector.

- g) To optimise project management efficiency and the effectiveness of future initiatives, the evaluation team recommends enhancing the staff capacity of **both COs** and partner NGOs in programme cycle management, especially the monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning.
- h) **Lastly**, the evaluation team recommends that the entire **Plan International** federation initially prioritise completing quantitative data collection, analysis, and reporting for future mixed methods evaluation. The sequencing of the quantitative analysis to succeed the the quantitative analysis will allow final evaluators to identify specific areas that need qualitative validation, with the flexibility to design the process accordingly, enriching the overall discussions and analysis.

## Appendix

**Appendix-1: Final Inception Report**

**Appendix-2: Sex, Age and Gender Disaggregated Data of Respondents  
(Qualitative Data Collection)**

**Appendix-3: Logical framework Update with Baselines & End-line  
Comparison (Targets vs Achievements)**

**Appendix -4: Photographs**

**Appendix-5 Transcripts of the Consultation in English (Bangladesh)**

**Appendix-6: Transcripts of Consultations English (Nepal)**

**Appendix-7: List of People Consulted (Bangladesh)**

**Appendix-8: List of People Consulted (Nepal)**