



January 2014 Interim Report to Dining for Women



"I am on the Girls Support Committee at Sansari Mai School. The skills I learned at Her Turn gave me confidence to speak up. I am so proud to be on the Girls Support Committee to help others. We raised money for sports materials, a white board, and pads. We are proud to be a resource for our friends and take care of the equipment so everyone can enjoy it."

Her Turn Participant, age 12

Abstract

In March 2013, Nepal Teacher Training Innovations' Her Turn program was featured at Dining for Women (DFW) dinner giving circle. In August that year, we received a USD 24,184.50 grant from DFW, aimed at conducting Her Turn – Girls' Education and Empowerment Workshops in rural schools of Nepal.

Since then, we have worked with six schools from two districts, which had over 400 girl students, many from historically marginalized groups. They all participated in Her Turn workshops and learned essential life skills that pertain to their health and safety, developed leadership skills, organized community ceremonies and implemented small projects. We are thrilled to report that the attendance rates exceeded 96 per cent. The girls, school staff and communities report girls' increased confidence levels, leadership skills, and initiative. A principal told us after Her Turn workshop the girls successfully “shifted the culture” of their school and community.

Accomplishments, goals and objectives

Her Turn's objective has not changed – it is to help Nepali girls become educated, empowered and equal through a process that emphasizes team building, sisterhood, inclusion and consensus. The outputs include: increased awareness in girls, their schools and communities of girl specific health and safety issues (puberty, menstruation hygiene management, nutrition, bullying, girl trafficking, child marriage, domestic violence); enhanced confidence, public speaking and leadership skills of the girls; establishment of Girls' Support Committees in each of the schools; dialogue on girl specific issues between girls from different ethnic and caste backgrounds; community projects planned and implemented by the girls and community ceremonies directed and led by the girls. The ceremonies serve as a space to raise communities' awareness on girl specific issues.



Our accomplishments thanks to Dining for Women's support until the end of December are as follows:

- We have conducted workshops at four schools in Sindhupalchok district, with the number of girl participants over 260 (details in the table below.) The attendance rates exceeded 99 per cent. In this district, we have worked with 10 local female trainers, some of which come from historically marginalized communities, such as Dalit, Tamang or Sherpa. Mothers of only 23 per cent of girls we worked with ever went to school and many of them are illiterate.

School	Village	Girls
Shree Sansari Mai Secondary School	Thulopakar	74
Shree Devi Secondary School	Petku	56
Shree Thamigau Primary School	Thamigaun	22
Tatopani Secondary School	Tatopani	110
TOTAL:		262

- The community projects girls implemented in these schools included: purchasing white boards, cleaning products, sports equipment for the school, sanitary pads for the students, microphone and speaker for the school, sound system for school, girls' bathroom door locks and dustbins for bathroom. Some of the findings of our impact assessment include: increase in the knowledge of menstruation by 49 per cent, knowledge of legal age of marriage by 43 per cent, shift in attitude towards domestic violence (non acceptance) by 43 per cent, decrease in feeling shy and insecure around others by 53 per cent.
- Her Turn workshops also impacted wider communities. The changes included “shifting the culture of our school” as one Principal put it. Our trainers reported girls demonstrating less caste discrimination after the workshop, due to the meals girls from different caste background shared – something unheard of in traditional, caste divided communities, but practiced during our workshops. In-depth interviews with the teachers from the schools where we worked revealed that girls have become more active, more confident, they play sports with the boys and demonstrate more initiative in classrooms. They also report parents being very satisfied with the changes in their daughters' attitudes and behaviors. A principal from one of the schools told us:

“In my 24 years, bullying, sexual harassment, and menstruation were never talked about formally with the students. Her Turn has made me and my staff realize just how important talking about these things are. We will continue to talk about these issues moving forward as a school. I see Her Turn as necessary, not optional.”

- We have also talked to many parents. They were not only pleased with the changes they observed in their daughters, but also reported knowledge transfer from the girls to parents. They told us about changing some of their behaviors in their households. In particular, mothers reported adapting safe water handling techniques which they learned from the girls, and changes in their diets. Information related to health also seemed to be important, as one mother told us:



“To be honest, I knew little about my own body before my daughter took the workshop. She taught me a lot about proper hygiene and what is normal during menstruation. I used to worry a lot about the quantity of blood I lost during my period. My daughter came home with handouts provided by Her Turn explaining what is normal and what is not normal. She showed me that I had nothing to worry about.”

- In December we have also conducted workshops in two schools in Gorkha district (please see below for details.) While we are still processing the numerical data from our impact assessment (which will be included in our annual report), we have also conducted numerous interviews with the participants. The issue where Her Turn had particular impact was child marriage: all the interviewed girls reported increased knowledge of legal and health implications of this practice

and decided they will not marry young. The child marriages that are popular in this community are not arranged marriages, and parents are often against them. This is a significant shift from traditional understanding of child marriage – it used to be commonly known as forced marriage – and requires a shift in development programming. Her Turn, which addresses and educates the girls themselves, seems to be particularly important in the prevention of this harmful practice. One participant who was already married at the age of 14 admitted that if she was to make the decision about her marriage now, after taking the workshop, she wouldn't have gotten married. Others reported that they would try to stop their peers from getting married and would even involve police if it was necessary.



School	Village	Girls
Shree Bhawani Higher Secondary School	Manbu	116
Shree Narabuddhi Primary School	Manbu	24
TOTAL:		140

- Another area of our work is advocacy. We are thrilled to see the increasing presence of girls' issues such as child marriage or access to education on a global agenda. More and more media and organizations raise awareness of these critical issues and there seems to be a higher level of understanding of how girls can be protected and the value of their education. Our contribution to these debates included:
 - Two posts on Girls' Globe blog: "[Educated, Empowered and Equal: Her Turn Program, Nepal](#)" and "[Combating Child Marriage in Nepali Villages](#)".
 - Our blog post titled "[Child marriage in Nepal: what about girls?](#)" was featured on Girls Not Brides page.
 - Two papers submitted to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights: "Submission of Her Turn to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Study on preventing and eliminating child, early and forced marriage" (not yet published on OHCHR website) and "[Child Marriage as a Health Issue – Nepal Case Study](#)".
 - In August, we participated in a live Q&A session at [the Guardian's Global Development Professionals Network](#). The session focused on finding strategies to end harmful behaviors and beliefs that prevent girls from reaching their potential. Full session can be read [here](#), and a round up of the expert advice from the live chat panel can be found [here](#).
 - On October 11th 2013, we have celebrated the second International Day of the Girl. Many media outlets and organizations covered this new and important holiday. Her

Turn has celebrated in a variety of ways. We have been one of the selected programs featured at The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative (UNGEI) website. On the same occasion we published a piece in Nepali Times, the biggest English national weekly in Nepal: "Let's talk about girls". Finally, to celebrate this important day, in a collaboration with other organizations and individuals, we have created an advocacy video called "Her Day" which has been widely shared on social media by groups like Girls' Globe and Girls Not Brides.

Success Stories

- One of the biggest challenges that adolescent girls face in rural Nepal is the culture of silence. Even health teachers report low level of their knowledge of puberty, and sensitive issues like menstruation hygiene or sexual harassment are not talked about openly in schools, nor are they discussed at homes. Her Turn provides information and teaches skills that enable the girls to stay healthy and safe. One example from Her Turn trainer where we conducted the workshops in September:



"The most significant example of Her Turn's impact occurred with a grade six girl. A boy had been sexually harassing her — touching her inappropriately and against her will. It had been occurring for three months consistently. The girl did not know what to do or who to tell. Then she took a Her Turn workshop and learned that she should go to a trusted person. The girl went to the principal of our school and confided in her what had been happening. The harassment stopped immediately. The boy was removed from class with other students and put in isolation for a short time as punishment. We are keeping our eye on him to make sure he does not do this to any other girls. The girl's school work significantly improved once the harassment stopped."

- During our workshop, it is not only girls who receive the information on the issues pertaining to their health and safety. Each group led by Her Turn trainer is also observed by a teacher observer from the school, who also learns and passes the acquired knowledge to other school staff. One of these observers at our workshop in Petku village prevented an arranged marriage of an 18 years old girl. This is what she told us:

"Her parents wanted her to get married as soon as possible. For weeks, the family argued about what the girl would do. She came to me for help. Having observed the Her Turn workshop, I knew that marriage before the age of 20 is illegal in Nepal. I went to the parents with this information and convinced the family to allow the girl to go earn an income in Kathmandu. Though reluctant at first, they finally agreed. Now the girl is working in Kathmandu."

Changes in regard to the original program goals and objectives

The goals and objectives of the program have not changed. The biggest and most exciting change is that we were able to double our target of the number of girls we reach with funding from DFW. The target in the proposal was 200 girls in 2013, and by the end of the year, we have already reached 402 girls. There are two main reasons for this:

- The biggest expense in our budget is food – we provide meals every day to each of our participating girls, trainers and observers. For example, in a school where there is one hundred girls, and each receives a full meal for 24 days, we provide 2,400 meals. With these amounts, even a small change in the price of an individual meal results in a big saving. With the high numbers of orders, we have been able to get reduced prices from the local providers, which allowed us to save money and enabled us to reach more girls with our workshops.
- The exchange rate between USD and Nepali rupee has changed significantly between the time of our application and now. When we submitted our proposal last year, it was about 1 USD / 80 NPR, today it exceeds 100 NPR. This works in our favor and enables us to reach more girls with the amount granted by DFW.

Another change is that we have expanded our geographical focus: on top of Sindhupalchok district, we have worked in Gorkha district. The reason to move to that area was the reports of particularly high rates of child marriage in the Manbu Village Development Committee (VDC.) While reliable statistic is unavailable, out of 140 of the girls we have worked with, 5 were already married at the age of 14 (but still in school.) How many of their peers were married and dropped out, we were unable to determine with certainty, but both the school staff and the community admitted the issue was a problem. For this reason, we were asked by the schools to include older girls, which are at highest risk of child marriage – among our 140 participants we had girls between the ages of 10 and 16. Since all these marriages are “love marriages” (as opposed to “arranged marriages”), it was crucial to raise awareness of the girls of the consequences of marriage. One of the married girl participants told us, she didn't know what child marriage was before the workshop; today she knows and would not have gotten married if she was to decide now.



Significant challenges or obstacles

The major challenge over the past few months was political instability in Nepal. The November 2013 Constituent Assembly election was preceded by country-wide strikes which paralyzed public transportation and other services. For several weeks our work was impeded by the protests, as field trips were unsafe and we could not conduct any field activities. This unexpected development caused a delay in the schedule. Today, we are back on track and working with schools in Gorkha district.

Changes in the timeline

The timeline has extended as with the funds received we were able to reach more girls than originally anticipated, due to the reasons discussed above. We project to finish the funding received from DFW in April. We are currently coordinating with principals possible dates (between schools' scheduled holidays and exams) to continue the work.

There have been no changes in funding.

How much of the original DFW restricted funds have been disbursed and how much remain?

As per the end of December, USD 19,464.45 (NPR 1,965,919) has been disbursed out of 24,185.5 USD (2,442,645.90 NPR) received from DFW. The average exchange rate USD to Nepali Rupees (NPR) for the period covered is 101 NPR/USD. The remaining sum of USD 4,720.05 (NPR 476,727) will be spent on continuing the workshops with other schools. A detailed financial report will be included in our annual report.

There have been no significant changes in our program since the approved proposal.

Personal experiences from people involved in the program

Below please find some of the accounts of participants and community members regarding Her Turn workshops:

My name is Bipana Tamang and I'm 12 years old. I got to take Her Turn at Sansari Mai. I used to feel scared to do the things I love like poetry. I now participate fearlessly in school activities. I just did a poetry workshop and read my poems in front of everyone.

My name is Ahana Tamang and I'm 13 years old. I am proud to have been elected to the Girls Support Committee. I am very happy to represent the girls in my community and I think that it is very important to help the girls in my school. I think that Her Turn is important because it taught me not to be afraid of my period, and that menstruation is a perfectly natural part of growing up. I also think that it is very important for us to have learned about how to recognize sex traffickers. Before Her Turn I think it would have been easy to be lured by a trafficker.



My name is Nani Maya Gurung. I am a Her Turn teacher observer from Devi Secondary School in Petku. Her Turn has completely changed the culture of my school. Before the workshop, boys and girls played separately and girls were hesitant to play football. After the workshop, the girls fearlessly played with the boys and the boys welcomed the girls in their games and sports. The girls carry themselves with confidence when they used to shy away from voicing opinions or volunteering in class. Before Dasai the girls organized a ceremony with the whole school and put on a play about child marriage. We at the school have received consistent feedback from parents telling us how pleased they are with the changes in their daughters.

My name is Ribon Bahadur Basnet and I am the principal of the Devi Secondary School. I have taught here for 24 years running. In 24 years I have been unable to provide menstruation materials. I did not realize how important it was. I thank Her Turn for shifting the culture in my school. Also in my 24 years, bullying, sexual harassment, and menstruation were never talked about formally with the students. Her Turn has made me and my staff realize just how important talking about these things are. We will continue to talk about these issues moving forward as a school. I see Her Turn as necessary, not optional. The girls here now are confident and carry themselves with the knowledge that they are equal to boys and can accomplish what they commit themselves to.

I am the mother of 12 year old Her Turn participant Putali Tamang, and her brother. After the workshop, I have noticed a marked difference in her ability to control her anger. She also is much more helpful and responsible. We have started to cover our water and make sure not to drink unboiled water. My daughter also expressed concern about our diet, explaining the importance of a balanced diet for good health.

A blog-style summary of impact to be used in our communications (2-3 sentences).

Her Turn program offers education and empowerment workshops to adolescent girls from rural government schools of Nepal. In 2013 the program doubled its target and reached over 400 girls, and the attendance rates have exceeded 96 per cent. Girls report significant growth in their knowledge of the issues of health (menstruation management by 49 per cent), safety (knowledge of legal age of marriage by 43 per cent, which is 84 per cent growth, no acceptance of domestic violence by 43 per cent – 77 per cent growth) and their confidence levels, with 53 per cent less girls reporting feeling shy and insecure. The mothers of the girls also benefit from their daughters newly acquired knowledge: they learn about hygiene and start using safe water handling techniques.



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Any message you would like us to convey to our membership and donors about the impact our grant is having on those being served and/or your organization and its mission.

We are incredibly grateful to all the members of Dining for Women. Without your support we would not be able to conduct this important work, which impacts not only the girls, but also their schools and communities. Teachers frequently tell us about the changes they see in girls – as they grow more confident, they participate more in classes and advocate for their rights. The mothers learn about hygiene and nutrition from their daughters and they change their practices at home accordingly. Girls realize the negative consequences of child marriage and they decide to marry in their twenties or later. This is particularly important in the context of Nepal, where child marriage rates are at staggering 41%. Our trainers tell us about the shifts in girls' behaviors. In the beginning, many girls follow the traditional caste divisions, and discriminate others based on caste status. After sharing so many meals together, participating in so many activities and practicing team work, they stop the discrimination and start helping each other. They pledge publicly, during community ceremonies, that they will stop discriminating others. We are thrilled to see how these girls' leadership skills continue to impact and impress their whole communities.

Perhaps from half the world away it is difficult to understand the impact on these girls' lives. Thanks to your support, we are lucky to witness it in our work. "I will get married after I finish my education and become independent" - our participants tell us over and over again. We believe these girls will contribute to the larger social shifts, will help to combat harmful traditional practices and some of them will become leaders of tomorrow. Big thank you.