

USAID and Breakthrough ACTION R-CEFM Remedial Education Program

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Breakthrough ACTION Nepal's Reducing Child Early Forced Marriage (R-CEFM) Program is an initiative implemented in Madhesh Province. The project is designed to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the Government of Nepal to design, implement, monitor, evaluate, and coordinate effective social and behavior change and child protection system strengthening activities for R-CEFM. The project aims to address barriers related to Child Early and Forced Marriage (CEFM) through a community-based, multi-sectoral and data-driven lens.

School closures in 2020/21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal resulted in the loss of educational opportunities for adolescent girls and boys. Adolescent girls, particularly from marginalized populations, were more likely to drop out of school permanently and be at an increased risk for CEFM.

The R-CEFM Project implemented a remedial education program in 2022 that engaged students, parents, and teachers to increase learning outcomes (academic performance) for adolescent girls as well as boys so they would stay in school after long school closures due to COVID-19 restrictions.



APPROACH

The remedial education program was implemented over four months (December 2021 – April 2022) in 83 schools from two districts in Madhesh Province (48 schools in Mahottari and 35 schools in Rautahat) covering 7800 students. The program focused on underperforming students from grades six, seven, and eight who were deemed likely to drop out of school in the near future.

Prior to starting remedial classes, the project gained buy-in and support from municipality leadership and staff, and commitments from teachers to ensure their responsibility and accountability to implement the program as planned. Similarly, parents were asked to provide consent to enroll their children in remedial classes and students were encouraged to participate actively in the learning process.

The classes were conducted by trained teachers each day before regular school hours. Students attended 112 sessions: 25 sessions per each subject (Math, Science, English and Nepali), 10 for life skills, and 2 for psychosocial support.

Municipality leadership and staff were engaged from the initiation and throughout the activity. With support from municipality education staff, the R-CEFM project visited the schools, helped **develop schedules of classes and examinations**, and helped teachers, administration, and others to monitor and supervise the remedial classes, **identify problems and solve them quickly**.



"When the remedial classes were going on our headmaster would also motivate us. The project used to come for monitoring. They designed, implemented, and coordinated the program very well."

- Teacher, 18 years of experience, Mahottari

PROGRAM ACTIVITIES INCLUDED:

Remedial Education

Remedial classes covered four subjects: English, Nepali, Math, and Science, and were prioritized based on a rapid baseline qualitative assessment. **Completed remedial sessions benefitting 7,800 students (Girls: 4,694, Boys: 3,106) in grades 6–8 from 83 schools.**

"Remedial activities were very effective in improving our learning outcomes. We did not even know how to read or write before. But now we can. We used to be scared to talk to our teachers, but now we can ask questions without hesitation."

- Girls, Rautahat

Non-formal

Project-trained facilitators conducted non-formal activities, as follows:

- **Counseling, Psycho-social First Aid and Life Skills Sessions**

The project conducted need-based counseling support and psycho-social first aid and life skills sessions for students. The life skill sessions covered self-awareness, effective communication, relationships, critical and creative thinking, emotional and stress management, decision making,

and problem-solving. **Completed 540 psychosocial first-aid counseling sessions and 2,700 life skills sessions benefiting 7,800 students attending remedial education sessions.**

“Activities have helped us understand the social norms which lead to CEFM, such as dowry, family prestige in society, societal pressure, talking about daughters as someone else’s asset, among others. We told our parents about the same.”

- Girls, Rautahat

- **Parent-teacher Interactions and Positive Parenting Sessions**

The project sensitized and encouraged parents to allow their daughters to continue their education. Parent-teacher interactions were held regularly to consult and communicate with parents. Positive parenting sessions were conducted to help parents manage stress, identify ways to care for themselves and develop relationships with children based on cooperation, communication and mutual respect. **Completed parenting session for 6,522 parents of students in grades 6-8 from 83 schools.**

“This program changed the parents’ perspectives on the importance of children going to school and the importance of education in the prevention of early marriage. Now, parents have started providing opportunities for their children to go to school and focus on their studies.”

- Student, Manara Siswa Municipality

Bursary Support

The R-CEFM project provided bursary support for the 7,800 students, which included a bag, school dress, books, study materials, and stationery (e.g., exercise books, drawing books, pencils, sharpeners, ball pens, erasers, geometry box).

RESULTS

The project was evaluated through both a quantitative endline assessment as well as a qualitative Most Significant Change assessment.

A set of baseline questions to assess students’ knowledge in Nepali, English, math, and science were designed and used. The tests were graded by teachers at participating schools. The same sets of questions were administered to students as an endline assessment after they completed the remedial classes. The data entered from the baseline and endline assessments were analyzed to generate aggregate scores as well as subject-specific scores. The scores were based on the grading system administered by the Government of Nepal (GoN) for secondary schools.

After attending remedial classes, the average score of all students increased from 19.8 marks (out of a possible 100 marks) at baseline to 50.9 marks (out of 100) at endline.

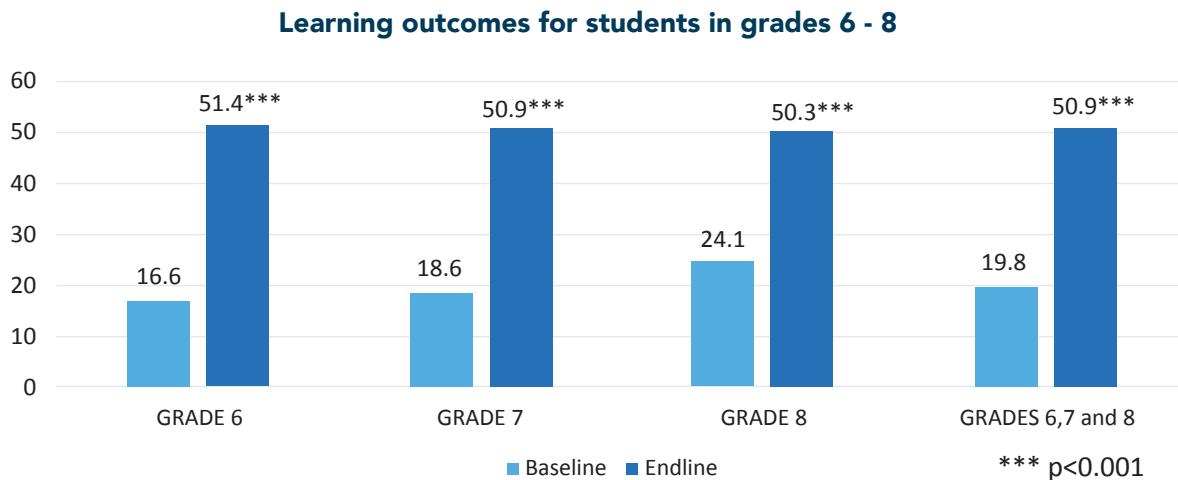


Figure 1: Aggregated average score obtained by students in baseline and endline in all four subjects, per grade

Analysis by gender showed similar improved learning outcomes for boys and girls. While the average score of boys increased from 20.1 to 50, girls' scores increased from 19.6 to 51.4 out of 100 full marks after attending the remedial classes.

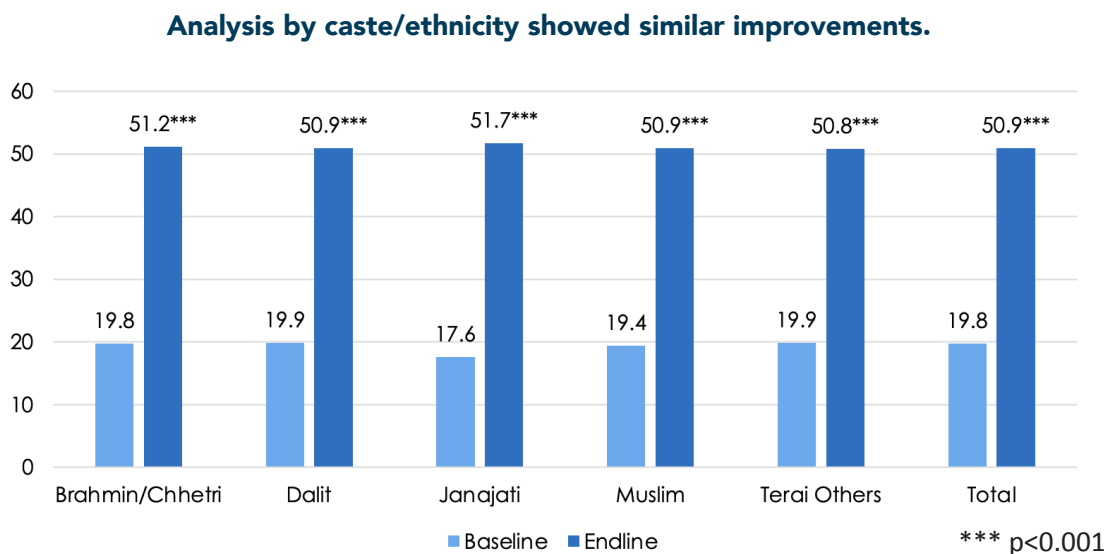


Figure 2: Average baseline and endline score of Grade 6 to 8 students in all four subjects



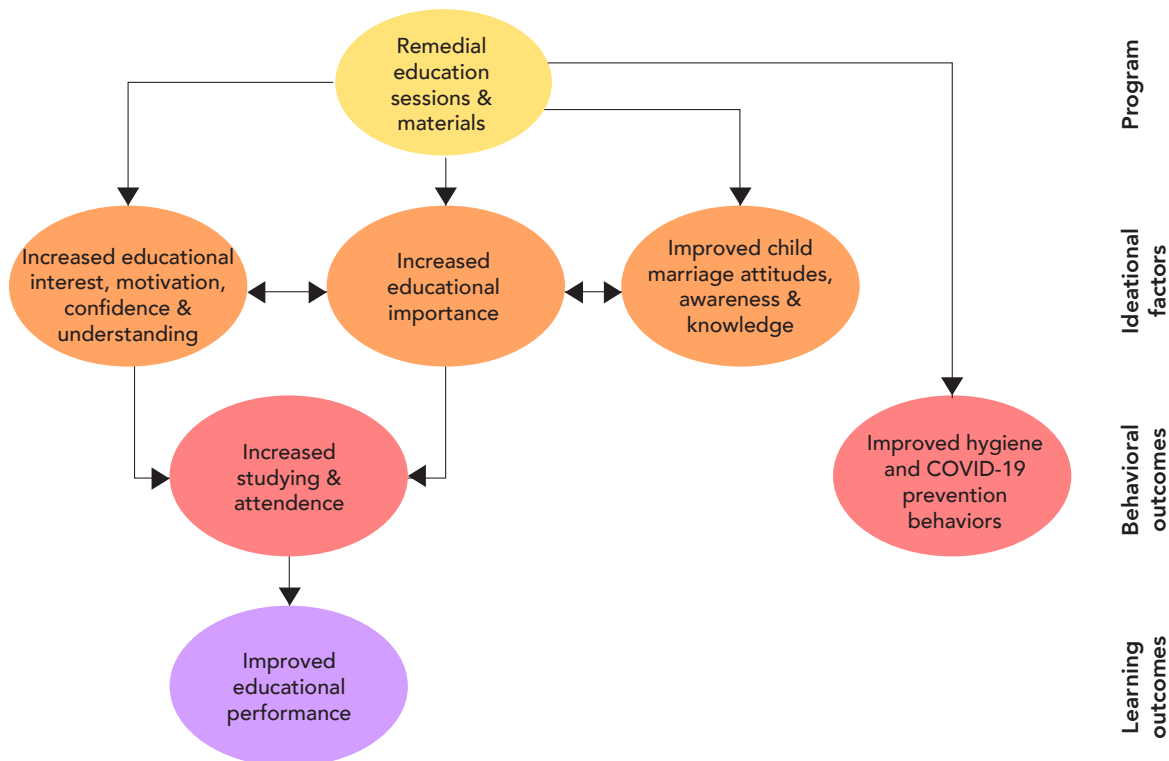
What factors contributed to the success of the remedial education program?

The Most Significant Change approach was used to understand local perspectives on changes that took place in communities following the implementation of remedial education activities. Ten Most Significant stories of change were identified and prioritized by community members and key stakeholders from a total of 36 stories collected. Thematic analysis guided by the ideational model of behavior identifies cross-cutting themes related to the changes.

Changes following the remedial education activities were related to both education and the prevention of child marriage. Following remedial education activities, MSC participants identified the importance of how people think or feel about education as being influential to changing their behavior, also called ideation. **Key Ideational changes** included increased interest, motivation, and self-confidence in school; improved understanding in school; increased importance placed on education; and improved attitudes, awareness, and knowledge related to preventing child marriage. These changes were noteworthy for both students and parents. According to participants, these changes led to **behavioral changes** such as more studying and improved school attendance and, ultimately, to improvements in students' educational performance.

How did the program impact parents to promote school retention, which reduces CEFM?

Anecdotal evidence suggests progress.



Visual representation of program activities (yellow) and associated changes in ideational factors (orange), behaviors (red), and learning outcomes (purple)

OVERALL LEARNINGS

- Remedial programs plus non-formal education and bursary support led to better learning outcomes for Grades 6-8 students regardless of gender, grade, and ethnicity.
- Four months of these sessions and bursary support seemed effective to strengthen the minimum learning outcomes of struggling students.
- Engaging both parents and children in the remedial education activities was critical for the success of the remedial education program.
- Increased interest, motivation, self confidence in school, increased importance placed on education, and improved attitudes, awareness, and knowledge related to preventing child marriage - all known as ideation factors, were critical in the success of this program.
- Remedial classes at the end of the traditional academic session are more effective as they contribute to final terminal examination preparation.
- On-site coaching and mentoring support to teachers results in improved instruction.



For more information, contact:

Shreejana KC
Chief of Party
R-CEFM Project
skc5@jhu.edu

Scan to learn more about
the program and its
findings in the full reports.



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