Breakthrough ACTION Nepal Project
Local Systems Strengthening to Reduce Child, Early, and Forced Marriage

Outcome Harvesting Evaluation Report

Submitted to: USAID

Submitted by: Breakthrough ACTION Nepal

September 2024

Report Contents

00

Page 3

01

Introduction to the Project
Page 6

02

Outcome Harvesting Evaluation Methodology
Page 9

03

Evaluation Findings
Page 14

04

Conclusions & Annexes
Page 33

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

CCP	Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs
CEFM	Child, early, and forced marriage
HCD	Human-centered design
IR	Intermediate results
LCRC	Local child rights committee
OH	Outcome harvesting
R-CEFM	Reducing child, early, and forced marriage
SBC	Social and behavior change
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WCRC	Ward child rights committee
WCSC	Women, Children, and Senior Citizens

Executive Summary of Findings

Project Overview: The Breakthrough ACTION Nepal's Reducing Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (R-CEFM) project (2020–2024) aimed to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the local government in Madhesh Province to design, implement, monitor, evaluate, and coordinate effective social and behavior change (SBC) activities and strengthen child protection systems for reducing child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), using a community-based, multi-sectoral, and data-driven approach. The project worked in six municipalities across two districts in Madhesh Province and engaged stakeholders at the ward, municipal, and provincial levels.

Evaluation Methodology: Outcome harvesting (OH) is a participatory, qualitative, and complexity-aware methodology used to identify project outcomes and link them to project activities by describing the project's contributions to each outcome. **Within the evaluation, outcomes are demonstrated changes in the behaviors of an institution, system, organization, or key individual, as influenced by one or more activities—in this case, capacity strengthening and technical assistance activities by the R-CEFM project.** The evaluation engaged the internal project team and external informants (stakeholders) and combined their input with a review of project documentation to harvest and verify the outcomes.

Key Findings: The evaluation harvested a total of 65 outcomes, verified both internally and externally. The final list of outcomes were then analyzed to answer the evaluation questions. Each outcome then was analyzed thematically to illustrate its **type of demonstrated shift in capacity**. Capacity shifts included improving coordination amongst key actors; improving capacity to do the job; identifying gaps and opportunities; introducing new or improved procedures or tools; using or sharing of data and evidence; and changing practice, policy, or structure to support CEFM work. The project outcomes were also analyzed within the SBC Capacity Ecosystem™ framework to identify where capacity changes occurred: 15 were **system-level** outcomes, highlighting changes in procedures, policies, structures, and systematized practices; 34 were at the **organizational level**, representing changes in the functioning of committees, institutions, sections, offices, and groups of stakeholders; and 16 others highlighted demonstrated shifts in capacity of **individual stakeholders** within or outside their roles. The outcomes were analyzed against the project's objectives, also known as intermediate results (IRs): 23 outcomes reflected changes due to IR1; seven were due to IR2; and 32 overlapped both IR1 and IR2. In addition, outcomes were analyzed to consider sustainability beyond the project. Overall, 40 out of 65 outcomes were considered **sustainable**, with 26 representing sustainable capacity shifts in **behavior or practices** of stakeholders and 14 representing shifts in **policy or systemized procedures**.

Conclusion: The robust distributions of outcomes included capacity shifts, formalized processes, and implemented policies. This diversity underscores the R-CEFM project's accomplishments in strengthening local stakeholders and systems for reducing CEFM in their communities. The sustainability of the capacity built and of the systems now in place reflects on an enabling environment to reduce CEFM in Madhesh Province that the Breakthrough ACTION R-CEFM project leaves behind.

1. Introduction to the Project

1.1 The Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM Project

Project Overview

The Breakthrough ACTION Nepal Local Systems Strengthening to Reduce Child, Early, and Forced Marriage (R-CEFM) project (2020–2024), led by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP), aimed to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the local government in Madhesh Province to design, implement, monitor, evaluate, and coordinate effective SBC activities and strengthen child protection systems for R-CEFM using a community-based, multi-sectoral, and data-driven approach. The project planned to achieve these goals through three key IRs (listed at right). The project worked in six municipalities across two districts in Madhesh Province and engaged stakeholders at the ward, municipal, and provincial levels.

> **Madhesh Province Project Sites**
> Mahottari District: Jaleshwar, Loharpatti, Matihani, Pipra
> Rautahat District: Durga Bhagwati, Rajpur

In 2021–2022, the R-CEFM project worked with local stakeholders to implement a human-centered design (HCD) process in six focal municipalities in Madhesh Province to understand reasons for child marriage and to identify and refine potential SBC activities to address CEFM. The HCD process provided municipal leadership the opportunity to gain empathy for those affected by CEFM, including girls, boys, and parents. The leadership and community have demonstrated their commitment to reducing CEFM by investing municipality resources, including all funding needed to jointly develop, test, implement, and monitor 11–14 prioritized activities. The project also worked with local governments to strengthen their systems for CEFM data collection and use, fostering a common understanding of how to track progress and measure success. The municipalities funded their own CEFM census in 2022 and now have functioning child protection structures linking ward and municipal child rights committees with a government monitoring system to track progress. In 2022 and 2023, the municipalities led the pilot testing, then refined the prioritized activities and implementation in 2024. The municipalities and wards now lead local CEFM activity planning and implementation, use evidence to update their current CEFM status, track progress, and collaborate and partner extensively among themselves.

Project Objectives

IR1: Build the capacity of newly elected ward, municipal, and provincial civil servants and other community actors to advocate, design, and budget for local activities to reduce CEFM.

IR2: Support the implementation of municipal- and provincial-level activities and initiatives to reduce CEFM.

IR3: Increase learning outcomes for adolescent girls through non-formal education interventions.*
*Activities for IR3 ended in 2022 and were not included in this evaluation.

Breakthrough ACTION R-CEFM Project: Key Stakeholders and Implementing Partners

Municipality Level

Women, Children, and Senior Citizens Section Chiefs

Municipality Officials
(e.g., Mayor, Deputy Mayor)

Local Child Rights Committees

Ward Level

Ward Officials (e.g., Ward Chair, Secretary)

Other Local Government Officials

Ward Child Rights Committees

Child Clubs

Partners

Save the Children (2020–2022)

Aasaman Nepal (2023–2024)

R-CEFM Project-led and -supported Activities
(Full description of activities provided in Annex I)

- Human Centered Design process
- Capacity self-assessment and stakeholder mapping
- SBC Capacity Strengthening training for reducing CEFM
- Secondary data analysis and CEFM data exercise – national census, NDHS, HMIS, EMIS
- Message design workshop on advocating against CEFM
- Co-development of the Sahayogi Pushtika job aid
- Co-development of Procedures to Declare CEFM-free Areas
- Advocacy for CEFM data collection, community activities and budget allocation
- Formation and mobilization of the Local Child Rights Committees (LCRCs) and Ward Child Rights Committees (WCRCs)
- Local CEFM Census for Rautahat and Mahottari districts
- Mentoring sessions and technical assistance to Women, Children and Senior Citizen (WCSC) section chiefs, Affluent and Influential People's committee, WCRCs, LCRCs, Child Clubs.
- Seven-step annual planning process for CEFM activities each fiscal year between 2021-2024
- Routine CEFM data collection by WCRCs
- Supervision and monitoring visits for learnings during implementation of CEFM activities
- Child Right Promotion and Protection Procedures
- Quarterly review meetings of WCRCs and LCRCs – process and output indicators, and composite proxy indicators from health, education, police, WCRCs, surveys.
- Stakeholders' Coordination meetings
- Monitoring of process and output indicators for local CEFM
- Collaborative monitoring of activities – Interviews, Rapid Reaction Survey, Pre- and Post-Intervention Assessment
- Feedback on the SBC component of the Madhesh Province 10-year Strategy on addressing child marriage.

2. Outcome Harvesting Evaluation Methodology

2.1 What is Outcome Harvesting?

Outcome harvesting (OH) is a post-hoc, participatory, qualitative, and complexity-aware evaluation methodology used to identify project outcomes and link them to project activities by describing the project's contribution to each outcome. OH involves collecting evidence on what has changed since the project implementation and working backwards to assess how the project contributed to those changes. This methodology uses project documentation as the primary source of evidence to harvest outcomes and justify connections between project activities and specific outcomes. OH can identify both intended and unintended outcomes of the project. It is particularly useful when evaluating projects with complex theories of change (e.g., those working to strengthen capacity) implemented in settings categorized by uncertainty (e.g., the COVID-19 pandemic, election cycles).

Once initial outcomes are harvested and drafted, each one is internally and externally verified to confirm that the outcome has occurred and that the project contributed to it. **Outcomes must be verified both internally and externally to be considered credible.** This verification process also helps identify other actors and factors unrelated to the project that have contributed to the outcomes. The evaluation engages the internal project team and external informants (stakeholders) and combines their input with a review of project and external documentation to harvest and verify outcomes.

Outcome Harvesting outcomes are demonstrated changes in the behavior of an institution, system, organization, or key individual influenced by one or more activities—in this case, the capacity strengthening and technical assistance activities of the R-CEFM project.

The outcomes under the OH evaluation must be specific, verifiable, and relevant; must have occurred since the beginning of the project; and *cannot have been under the direct control of the project*.

Project Contributions → Outcomes

Internal and External Verification
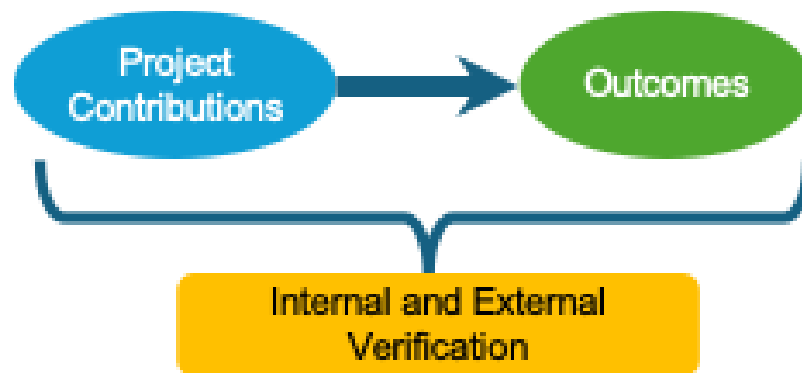
2.2 Outcome Harvesting Evaluation Steps

Harvested Outcomes

These outcomes included the following key information:

Outcome Description: Who did what, when, and where that was qualitatively different than before the project?

Project Contribution: How and when did Breakthrough ACTION's capacity strengthening activities contribute to the change, whether unintended or partial?

Others Who Contributed: Apart from Breakthrough ACTION, what other actors or factors contributed to the outcome?

Internal Source of Verification: Documentation or key informant

External Source of Verification: Documentation or key informant

The OH evaluation comprises six interactive steps (shown above). Information gathered at later steps can influence results from previous steps (e.g., new information in steps 3 and 4 can lead to new outcomes, new key informants, or removal of outcomes that could not be verified).

Internal verification validates the accuracy and reliability of identified outcomes from the project's context by reviewing project documentation and engaging the project team. **External verification** validates the drafted outcomes' credibility and provides an objective perspective, minimizing biases and potential conflicts of interest by engaging key informants external to the project and review of external documents. This process allows for a comprehensive understanding of the achieved outcomes both from the perspective of the project staff as well as the stakeholders and actors who are demonstrating or witnessing these changes.

2.3 Outcome Harvesting Evaluation Process

Before the harvesting of outcomes, the Breakthrough ACTION Nepal team articulated the relevant evaluation questions and designed the evaluation (step 1). The OH evaluation sought to answer three key questions (bottom right). The project team developed the evaluation timeline and planned an internal workshop for the initial harvesting of outcomes through document review and engaging internal key informants (steps 2 & 3). A three-day workshop was held in Janakpur, Madhesh Province, from June 4th to 6th, 2024, and included the in-country CCP staff, project coordinators, and implementing partner Asaman Nepal's key members (photo below). Workshop participants drafted a potential list of outcomes during this process and identified key documents and key informants (internal and external to the project) to help verify the outcomes. To be considered credible, one internal source of information (e.g., document, video, photograph, or Breakthrough ACTION team member) and one external source of information (e.g., document, video, photograph, or person) had to verify each outcome and Breakthrough ACTION's contribution to that outcome. If an external source of documentation was not available, an external individual independent of Breakthrough ACTION was required to verify the outcome.

Evaluation Questions

1. In what ways have the project stakeholders demonstrated important changes in their capacity at the ward, municipal, and provincial levels, since being a part of the Breakthrough ACTION R-CEFM project?

2. To what extent did the harvested R-CEFM project outcomes contribute towards the project's intended objectives?

3. How sustainable are the outcomes of capacity shifts and changes to which the R-CEFM project contributed?

When the outcomes were finalized, an independent local consultant hired for the verification process engaged key informants for short verification interviews (steps 3 & 4). After completing the internal and external verification process, the final list of outcomes and project contributions were thematically analyzed to answer the evaluation questions (steps 5 & 6).

2.4 Outcome Harvesting Evaluation Framework

SBC Capacity Ecosystem

Level of Intervention Where?	Interventions How?	Competencies What?	Results Why?	Outcomes So What?	Impact

SYSTEM — Strengthen the connections and coordination among individuals and organizations

SYSTEM — Coordinates, harmonizes and provides opportunities for exchange and advancement of high quality SBC programming

SYSTEM — Systems that support effective SBC

ORGANIZATION — Strengthen programmatic, institutional and financial domains of SBC organizations

ORGANIZATION — Operates sustainably as an SBC center of excellence by following institutionalized processes and creating new generations of competent staff

ORGANIZATION — Organizations that support effective SBC intervention

INDIVIDUAL — Strengthen the capacity of individuals within organizations through a blend of learning strategies

INDIVIDUAL — Implements following all stages of the SBC strategic design process and provides leadership for SBC

INDIVIDUAL — Individuals with skills and confidence to undertake effective SBC

National / Sub-National / Community

ASSESS CAPACITY

DETERMINE NECESSARY COMPETANCIES

SUSTAINABLE CAPACITY TO DESIGN, IMPLEMENT, AND EVALUATE STATE-OF-THE-ART SBC PROGRAMS

Reduction in Child, Early, and Forced Marriages

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING/ INSTITUTIONAL/ COMPLEXITY THEORY

The Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM project aimed to strengthen the institutional and technical capacity of the local government in Madhesh Province towards reducing CEFM. The OH evaluation utilized the SBC Capacity Ecosystem™ framework (above) to analyze the capacity strengthening efforts of the project across ecosystem levels to note how and where capacity shifts occurred in key actors and stakeholders. The evaluation assessed if and how the R-CEFM project contributed to improvements in an enabling system, capable organizational units, and skilled individuals that have as a result designed, implemented, and coordinated towards the intended impact of reducing CEFM.

3. Evaluation Findings

Evaluation Findings: Overview

The OH evaluation harvested **65 verified outcomes** (see Annex II for the complete set of outcomes.) The figure below highlights the number of outcomes captured and when the outcomes or changes occurred over the project timeline. The Breakthrough ACTION R-CEFM project started in February 2020. In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and restrictions began. The R-CEFM project adapted by implementing virtual or hybrid implementation of activities, when permitted, such as the stakeholder/partner mapping, desk review, child protection materials review, rapid assessment for CEFM prevalence, capacity self-assessments at the provincial level, and provincial net(work) mapping. The R-CEFM project continued implementation of the activities into 2021, building and discussing CEFM evidence in project municipalities and assessing the capacity of key stakeholders at the municipality and ward levels. Starting in late 2021, the project resumed in-person activities, such as the HCD process, local CEFM census data collection, and SBC training.

OH revealed the first set of outcomes started or had occurred by mid-2021, with eight outcomes between mid- to end of 2021, 10 in 2022, 26 in 2023, and 21 in 2024 until June, when the evaluation was conducted (see figure below). The lag between the start of the project and the first set of outcomes represents the initial setup and implementation periods. This lag in observing outcomes in capacity strengthening projects is expected as it takes time for stakeholders to demonstrate shifts in their capacity and functioning since engaging with the project. Outcomes were examined by the levels of government where they occurred, as shown below, and were mostly at the municipality and ward levels, where the R-CEFM project had primary focus.

Province Level: 6 Outcomes

District Level: 1 Outcome

Municipality Level: 26 Outcomes

Municipality & Ward Levels: 9 Outcomes

Ward Level: 18 Outcomes

Number of Outcomes by Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM Project Years (N=65)

Outcome Harvesting Evaluation June 2024

Project Begins February 2020

2020 — 2021: 8 — 2022: 10 — 2023: 26 — 2024: 21

Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

In this section, we explore the findings for the **first** evaluation question:

In what ways have project stakeholders demonstrated important changes in their capacity at the ward, municipal, and provincial levels since being a part of the Breakthrough ACTION R-CEFM project?
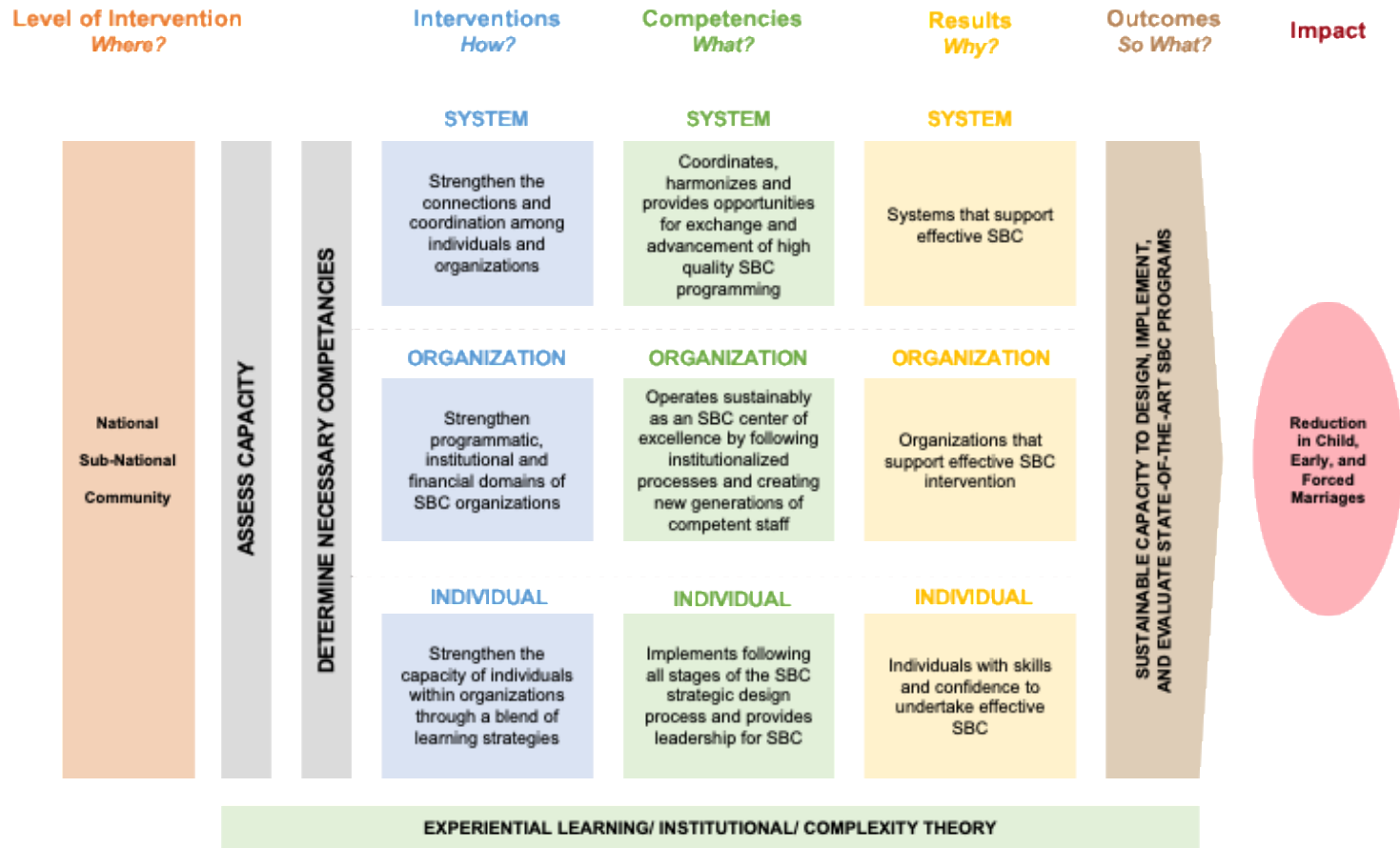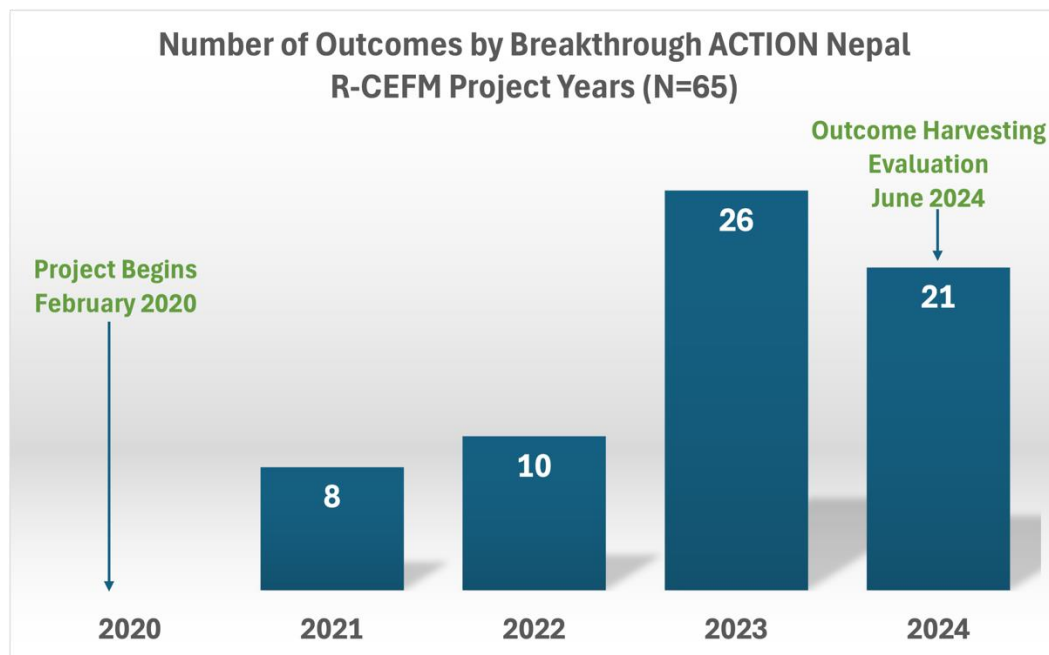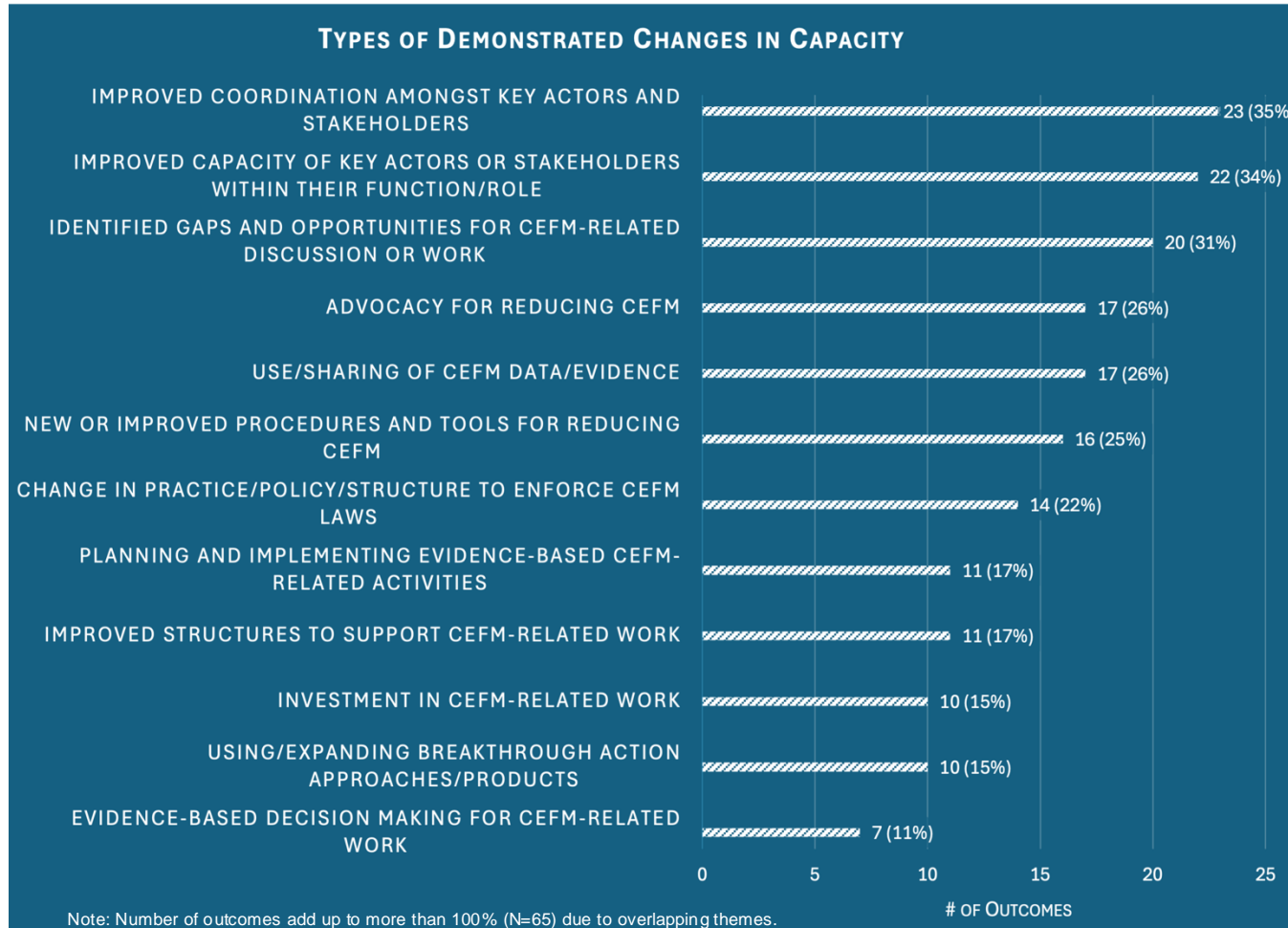
TYPES OF DEMONSTRATED CHANGES IN CAPACITY

Type of Change	# of Outcomes
IMPROVED COORDINATION AMONGST KEY ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS	23 (35%)
IMPROVED CAPACITY OF KEY ACTORS OR STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THEIR FUNCTION/ROLE	22 (34%)
IDENTIFIED GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CEFM-RELATED DISCUSSION OR WORK	20 (31%)
ADVOCACY FOR REDUCING CEFM	17 (26%)
USE/SHARING OF CEFM DATA/EVIDENCE	17 (26%)
NEW OR IMPROVED PROCEDURES AND TOOLS FOR REDUCING CEFM	16 (25%)
CHANGE IN PRACTICE/POLICY/STRUCTURE TO ENFORCE CEFM LAWS	14 (22%)
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-BASED CEFM-RELATED ACTIVITIES	11 (17%)
IMPROVED STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT CEFM-RELATED WORK	11 (17%)
INVESTMENT IN CEFM-RELATED WORK	10 (15%)
USING/EXPANDING BREAKTHROUGH ACTION APPROACHES/PRODUCTS	10 (15%)
EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING FOR CEFM-RELATED WORK	7 (11%)

OF OUTCOMES

Note: Number of outcomes add up to more than 100% (N=65) due to overlapping themes.

An iterative thematic analysis of verified outcomes identified 12 themes (see chart on left), each representing a type of demonstrated change in capacity. Themes were not mutually exclusive: a single outcome often corresponded to multiple themes.

Capacity shifts included, among others, improved coordination among key actors; improved capacity to do the job; identifying gaps and opportunities for reducing CEFM; introducing new or improved procedures or tools; using or sharing data and evidence; changing practice, policy, or structure; investing in CEFM work and advocacy for reducing CEFM.

These diverse types of capacity shifts informed how key stakeholders illustrated their improved capacity towards reducing CEFM in their communities.

3.2 Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

A third of the outcomes (n=23) highlighted the thematic area of **Improved Coordination amongst Key Actors and Stakeholders**. For example, Matihani and Loharpatti municipalities independently organized quarterly stakeholders' coordination meetings, which served as platforms for government units and local and international nongovernmental organizations working in the municipalities to share their progress, seek suggestions for addressing challenges, and find opportunities for collaborative work on reducing CEFM. Another example is multiple sectors such as health, education, law enforcement, elected officials, etc., working together through their engagement with the LCRCs and WCRCs and sharing CEFM-related local data and their expertise to identify cross-sectoral focal areas to reduce CEFM in their communities.

Twenty-two outcomes noted the **Improved Capacity of Key Actors or Stakeholders within their Function/Role**. Some noteworthy demonstrated capacity changes occurred among WCSC section chiefs, who after engaging with the R-CEFM project, have led the strategic planning, implementation, adaptive management, and learning development around CEFM-related activities. The section chiefs have also been regularly organizing and sharing updated CEFM data from their communities, leading discussions on the efficacy and improvements of community-level activities, analyzing budgets, contributing to annual planning of CEFM activities, and coordinating with local stakeholders. Because of the initiatives and demonstrated competence of the WCSC section chiefs, the provincial ministry of Madhesh Province has continued to allocate budget to maintain the section chiefs' CEFM-related roles and work since 2022. Other key actors illustrating improved capacity were the municipal- and ward-level officials and committees, such as the LCRC and WCRC. An important outcome involved the local government's own system for assessing institutional capacity. Since 2023, all six project municipalities have scored better in the Local Government Institutional Capacity Self-Assessment (LISA), documenting improved capacity scores in indicators of structures strengthening, annual planning and budgeting, social inclusion programming, and coordination and collaboration.

Specific sub-themes of this improved capacity included **Identifying Gaps and Opportunities for CEFM-related Discussion or Work** (20 outcomes), **Advocacy for Reducing CEFM** (17 outcomes), and **Planning and Implementing Evidence-based CEFM-related Activities** (11 outcomes).

Improved Coordination amongst Key Actors: Outcomes which illustrated that stakeholders improved their collaboration and communication with one another around key areas of design, implementation and budgeting of CEFM-related activities.

Improved Capacity of Key Actors or Stakeholders within their Function/Role: Outcomes that showcased stakeholders applying their new skills, utilizing new approaches, or using improved capacity with their roles to address CEFM in their communities.

Identified Gaps and Opportunities for CEFM-related Discussion or Work: Outcomes highlighted improved ability of key stakeholders to identify gaps and opportunities for implementation of CEFM activities or advocacy.

Advocacy for Reducing CEFM: Stakeholders advocated in official and unofficial forums for new or continuation of CEFM activities and funding or spoke up against CEFM at the community level.

3.2 Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

In their implementation of the 11–14 prioritized CEFM activities, the municipalities and wards showed numerous examples of planning, implementing, and adapting community-level activities based on local evidence. Key stakeholders in the seven-step annual planning process have applied the "P"-process™ to prioritize and budget for R-CEFM activities in each fiscal year since 2022. The WCSC section chiefs, child rights committees, and other government officials (e.g., mayor, deputy mayor) advocated to reduce CEFM in their communities and to plan and budget for CEFM activities through their various interactions in review and coordination meetings, annual planning processes, and community events and activities. Local committees such as the Influential Civil Society Members Committees and All Political Party Committees coordinated at the community and ward levels to advocate against child marriage and independently identified areas to focus CEFM-related work or discussions, such as local festivals, government and private schools, and marginalized communities.

Within the R-CEFM project's objective to build local capacity, improving the use and sharing of CEFM data was a key component. Seventeen of the outcomes captured key actors' work in **Using/Sharing CEFM Data/Evidence** towards reducing CEFM. This thematic area tied into **Evidence-based Decision Making**, with key government stakeholders utilizing relevant data to inform strategic planning and budgeting of community-level activities. Seven outcomes indicated stakeholders made decisions around CEFM activities' planning and implementation based on locally gathered and context-relevant data. Throughout the project, data use and sharing was emphasized at nearly all CEFM-related activities and meetings. Stakeholders such as WCSC section chiefs, child rights committees, and local government officials included it in agendas and started meetings and local events by discussing current local CEFM data and highlighting their ongoing efforts and activities to achieve the goal of being CEFM-free. The evidence generated by the local CEFM census and the HCD process contextualizing CEFM work informed several education-related activities and policies in Durga Bhagwati municipality, including free tuition for 11th and 12th graders and reactivation of the 13th and 14th levels of education within their communities. In fact, the 11–14 prioritized community-level activities implemented by municipalities and wards during the R-CEFM project were informed directly from locally generated evidence.

Planning and Implementing Evidence-based CEFM-related Activities: Outcomes which illustrated stakeholders' demonstrated use of evidence and learnings in strategic design and implementation of CEFM activities.

Using/Sharing CEFM Data/Evidence: Outcomes that highlighted stakeholders' collection, use, and sharing of current local data to monitor and inform CEFM activities in their communities.

Evidence-based Decision Making for CEFM-related Work: Outcomes that noted stakeholders' use of locally collected and current evidence in strategic planning, programming, adapting, and budgeting of CEFM activities at the community level.

Investment in CEFM-related Work: Outcomes that documented budget allocations and spending for staffing and community-level activities for reducing CEFM.

3.2 Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

Evidence-based decision making also led to **Investment in CEFM-related Work** (10 outcomes), with budget allocations for specific staff positions and committees (WCSC section chiefs, LCRCs, WCRCs) and community-level CEFM activities.

The thematic areas of **New or Improved Procedures and Tools** (16 outcomes) and **Using/Expanding Breakthrough ACTION Approaches or Products** (10 outcomes) showcased the adoption of specific systematic approaches by key stakeholders towards addressing CEFM. Some examples related to the use of tools and approaches included monitoring progress of community activities through joint monitoring visits and checklists, tracking community CEFM status using a four-color indicator system in the Procedures to Declare Areas CEFM Free, using the job aid Sahayogi Pushtika for strategic planning and implementation of CEFM activities, and the collecting of local CEFM prevalence data by WCRCs. The R-CEFM project led the co-development of the checklists, procedures, local monitoring system, and job aid. The Sahayogi Pushtika job aid for reducing CEFM was highly informed by the previous Breakthrough ACTION Nepal project's SBC Palika Package that focused on the health sector.

Fourteen outcomes highlighted **Change in Practice, Policy, or Structure to Enforce CEFM Laws**. These outcomes complemented Nepal's existing laws around child and early marriage. The Child Rights Promotion and Protection procedures, the Sahayogi Pushtika job aid, the Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage, and the municipality- and provincial-level CEFM-Free Strategies are some examples of shifts in key structures that incorporate how local CEFM laws that can be operationalized, supported and enforced through the roles and functions of key stakeholders working to reduce child marriage. Several of these outcomes overlapped with the thematic area of **Improved Structures to Support CEFM-related Work** and have the potential to foster future work around reducing CEFM in Madhesh Province.

New or Improved Procedures and Tools: Outcomes that highlighted stakeholders' integration of new processes or tools co-developed with the R-CEFM project for CEFM-related activities' tracking, monitoring, and implementation.

Using/Expanding Breakthrough ACTION Approaches or Products: Outcomes that noted stakeholders' adoption, endorsement, and/or expanded use of Breakthrough ACTION-led or co-developed approaches, materials, or tools towards reducing CEFM.

Change in Practice, Policy or Structure to Enforce CEFM Laws: Outcomes that illustrated shifts in roles, processes, or behaviors by key stakeholders or noted policy or structural enactments supporting Nepal's laws against child marriage.

Improved Structures to Support CEFM-related Work: Outcomes that documented the creation of an enabling environment through improved institutionalized practices or policies supporting CEFM work.

3.2 Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

Project outcomes were analyzed within the framework of the SBC Capacity Ecosystem™ to identify *where* capacity changes occurred. Fifteen outcomes were **system-level** outcomes highlighting changes in procedures, policies, structures, and systematized practices. More than half (34) were at the **organizational level,** representing changes in the functioning of committees, institutions, sections, and groups of stakeholders working together. Sixteen described demonstrated shifts in capacity of **individual stakeholders** within or outside their roles and responsibilities, but still towards the goal of reducing CEFM in their communities.

As expected (below), demonstrated changes in capacity across these levels occurred gradually over the course of the project, and the number of outcomes increased with the number of years of project engagement. System-level outcomes took longer to show up as they required higher-level changes (e.g., shifts in policies and procedures), requiring the coordination of multiple stakeholders.
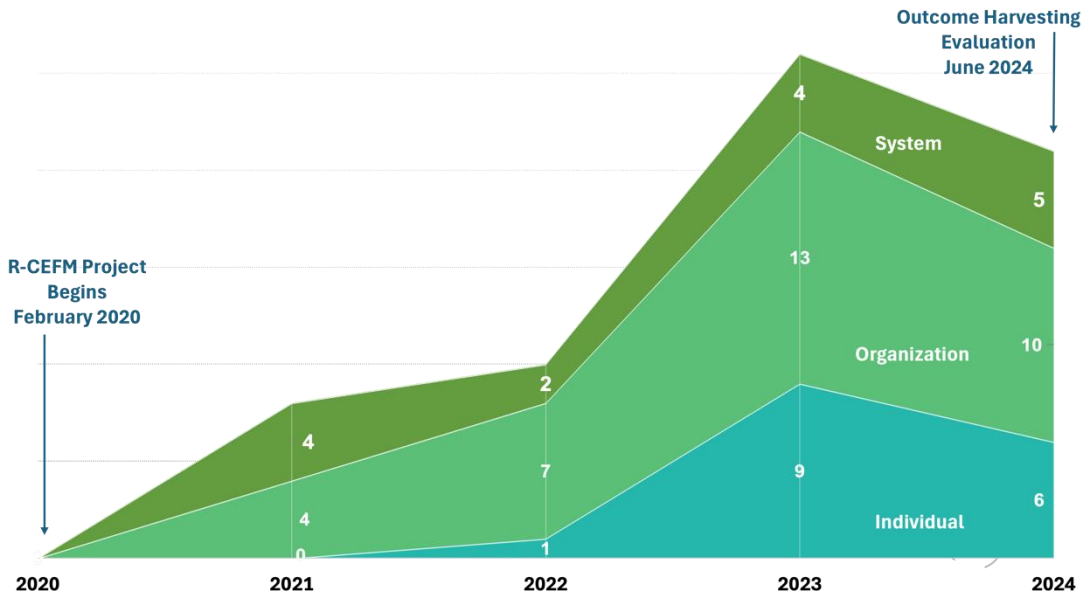
System Level
15 Outcomes
(23%)

Organizational Level
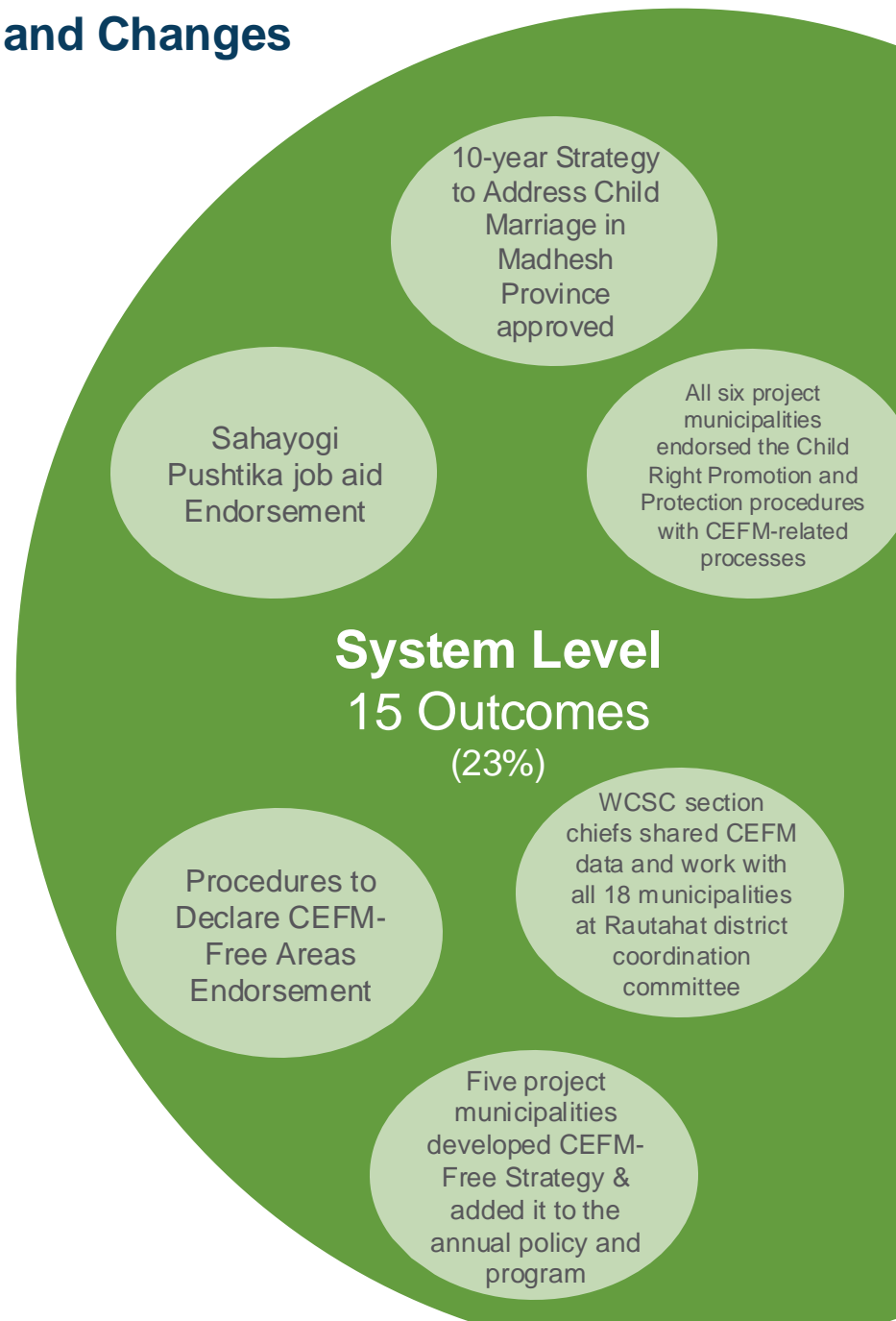34 Outcomes
(52%)

Individual Level
16 Outcomes
(25%)

Outcome Harvesting Evaluation June 2024

R-CEFM Project Begins February 2020

System

Organization

Individual

4

5

13

10

2

9

7

6

4

4

0

1

2020   2021   2022   2023   2024

3.2 Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

System-level Outcomes

Fifteen outcomes illustrated shifts in the systemic functions and processes in the landscape of CEFM-related work in Madhesh Province (see full list in Annex II). System-level outcomes speak to the enabling environment for reducing CEFM that is created by improved connections and collaborations and shifts in policies and institutionalized practices. The project aimed to strengthen the linkages and coordination between key stakeholders in the project municipalities and advocated for staffing, budgets, and continuation of activities. The project also provided technical expertise and support in the development of several key procedures and strategies that have since been systemized. In 2021, the R-CEFM project supported the drafting of the **Child Rights Promotion and Protection procedures** and advocated for CEFM-related work and formal and informal structures (e.g., LCRCs and WCRCs) to be included in the procedures. By December 2021, all six project municipalities had endorsed the procedures, laying the path for the formations and mobilizations of the LCRCs, WCRCs, and child clubs to address CEFM in their communities.

The R-CEFM project also conducted an SBC capacity strengthening training for reducing CEFM that included stakeholders from the province, municipal, and ward levels and helped provincial stakeholders recognize SBC as one of the approaches to address child marriage in their communities. As a result, in 2022 the R-CEFM project was requested to review, provide feedback, and add SBC-related components to **the 10-year Strategy to address child marriage in Madhesh Province**. The Chief Minister of Madhesh Province approved this Strategy in 2023. By June 2024, with technical assistance from the R-CEFM project, five project municipalities had developed their **local CEFM-Free Strategies** and added them to the 2024/2025 fiscal year annual policy and program, setting concrete goals, indicators, and plans to be CEFM-free within a three- to four-year timeline.

10-year Strategy to Address Child Marriage in Madhesh Province approved

All six project municipalities endorsed the Child Right Promotion and Protection procedures with CEFM-related processes

Sahayogi Pushtika job aid Endorsement

System Level
15 Outcomes
(23%)

Procedures to Declare CEFM-Free Areas Endorsement

WCSC section chiefs shared CEFM data and work with all 18 municipalities at Rautahat district coordination committee

Five project municipalities developed CEFM-Free Strategy & added it to the annual policy and program

System-level Outcomes (cont.)

A key component of the CEFM-free Strategies is the **Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage in Madhesh Province**. Since 2022, the R-CEFM project has collaborated with key government and non-governmental stakeholders to develop the CEFM measurement guidelines and indicators to help wards and municipalities track their status and progress in becoming CEFM-free. The guidelines included indicators requiring tracking data from various sources (e.g., health, education, legal sectors) and collating them with locally collected CEFM data to identify their community CEFM prevalence and gaps where more work might be needed. The R-CEFM project coordinated various consultative sessions with key stakeholders to gather feedback and direction for these guidelines. The Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage in Madhesh Province was endorsed in June 2024.

In addition, the provincial- and local-level CEFM-free strategies leveraged another Breakthrough ACTION-supported tool, **the Sahayogi Pushtika job aid**. Since 2021, the R-CEFM project has engaged stakeholders in Madhesh Province to co-develop a job aid for local governments to design, implement, and monitor CEFM activities in their annual policy and programs. The job aid followed the Nepal government's seven-step planning process and outlined a step-by-step guide to formulate a strategic SBC approach for reducing CEFM at the community level. With support and feedback from various ministries at the provincial level, the Sahayogi Pushtika was finalized and endorsed in June 2024. Since the endorsements, the Ministry of Sports and Social Welfare of Madhesh Province has called the remaining 130 municipalities of their eight districts for an orientation to the Sahayogi Pushtika and the Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage. The R-CEFM project supported organizing the orientation. These locally-led guides, based on the learnings of the R-CEFM project municipalities, will facilitate the scale-up of activities to reduce CEFM across Madhesh Province.

Sahayogi Pushtika job aid endorsed
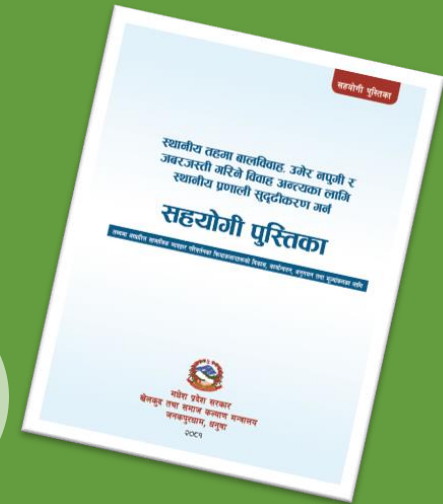
System Level
15 Outcomes
(23%)

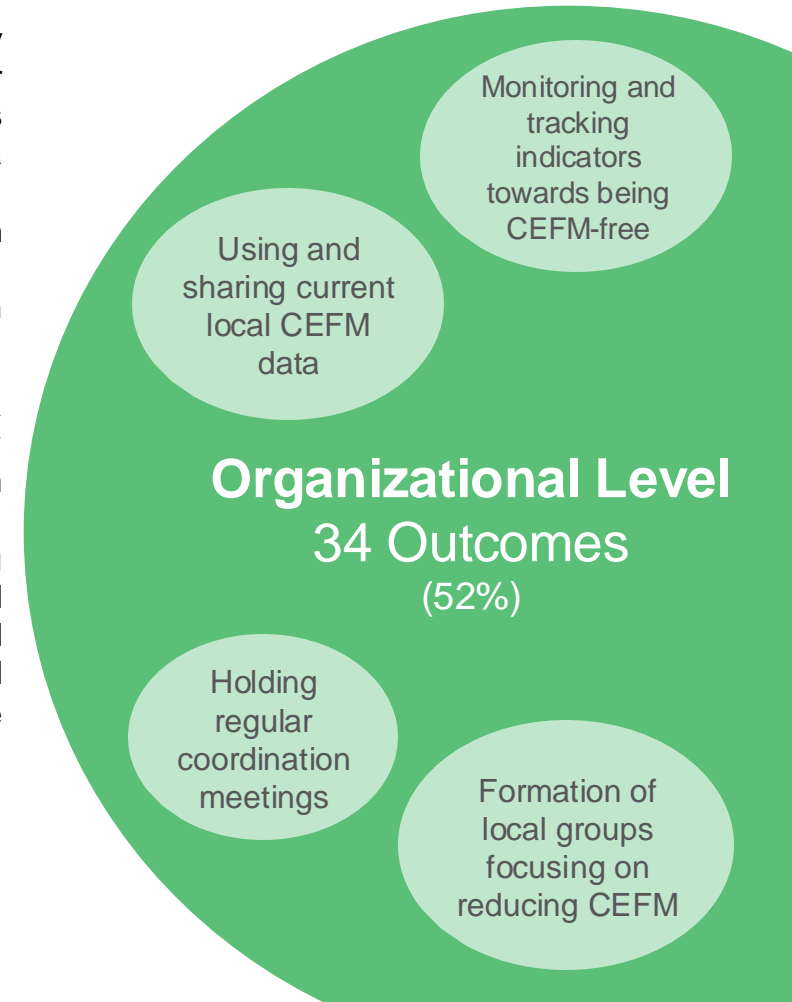Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage endorsed
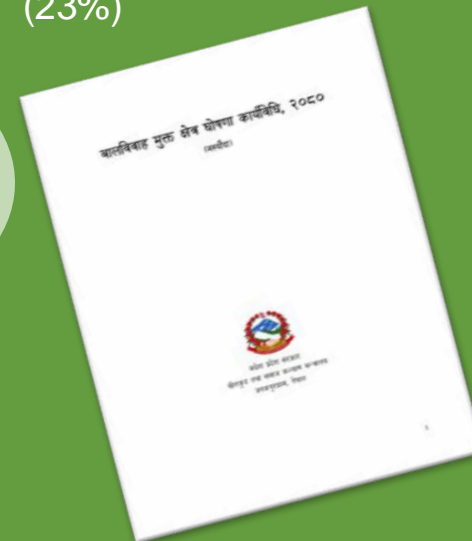
3.2 Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

Organizational-Level Outcomes

The 34 outcomes at the organizational level highlighted various partners and stakeholders contributing to improved and effective implementation of CEFM activities. The outcomes demonstrate how stakeholders planned, implemented, budgeted, and engaged in strategic evidence-based programming. Some outcomes also showed stakeholders coordinating better to reduce CEFM in their communities. What makes these organization-level outcomes is the shift in the functioning of these "organizational" processes involving various stakeholders, and the stakeholders acting as a unit or in representation of that unit to influence these changes.

Several organizational-level outcomes highlighted changes and improved capacity and coordination of specific groups or committees addressing CEFM in their communities. For example, since March 2023, the Dalit caste women's group has been actively coordinating with the WCRC in Pipra Ward 3, even helping to stop a case of child marriage in their Dalit community. Also in 2023, in Loharpatti Ward 7, the WCSC section chief conducted an orientation on addressing child marriage with the *Sohakari Samuha* (women's cooperative group) that is under the deputy mayor. The *Sohakari Samuha* has since created a sub-group of 12 people focused on reducing child marriage in that ward.

The local committees and key stakeholders have also demonstrated strategic data use and evidence-based planning. Since 2023, WCRCs have been systematically and regularly collecting, tracking, maintaining, and reporting local CEFM data from their communities and coordinating with health, law enforcement, and education sectors. Data collected through these local WCRCs and child clubs is also being compiled, analyzed, and shared by project municipalities' LCRCs, WCRCs, and WCSC section chiefs at their review and coordination meetings to track budgets and implementation status of planned activities and to discuss challenges, solutions, and lessons learned, including progress on the indicators of the Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage.
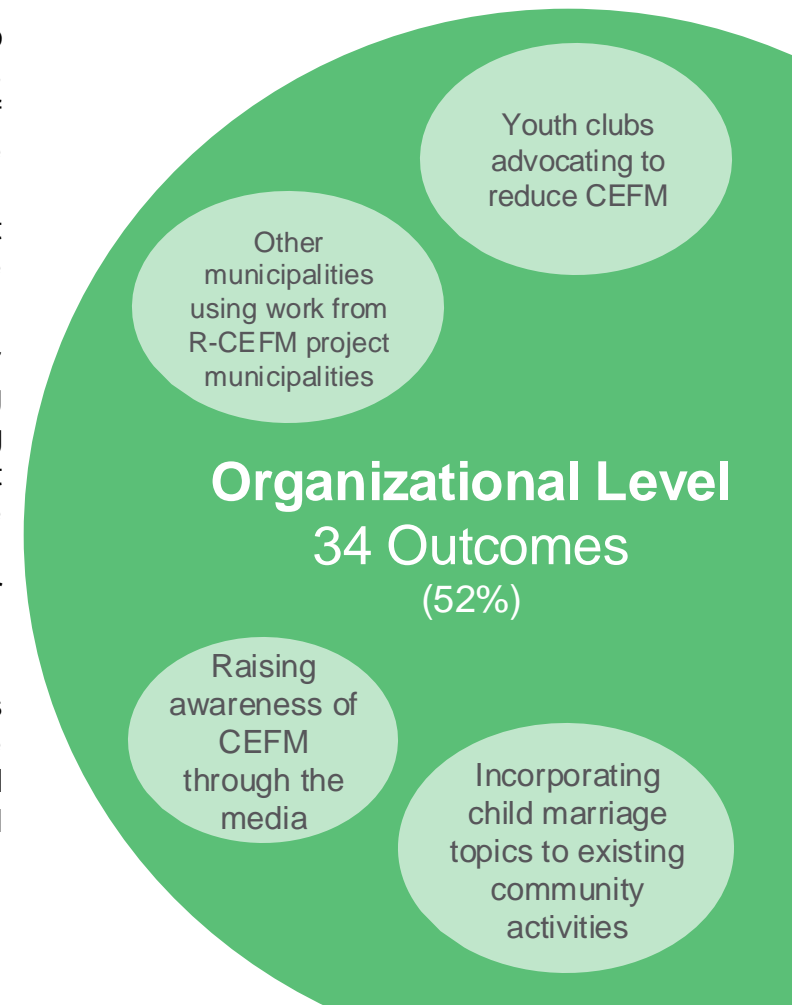
Monitoring and tracking indicators towards being CEFM-free

Using and sharing current local CEFM data

Organizational Level
34 Outcomes
(52%)

Holding regular coordination meetings

Formation of local groups focusing on reducing CEFM

3.2 Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

Organizational-Level Outcomes (cont.)

A few outcomes at the organizational level showed expanded use of learnings, products, or tools outside the project municipalities. For example, since 2023, the Ending Child Marriage program implemented by Aasaman Nepal has used the HCD and census findings, as well as local WCRC-collected CEFM data, to inform their own programming. In addition, Aasaman Nepal has reported using the R-CEFM project-supported child protection and promotion procedures to develop similar procedures for Yamunamai and Paroha municipalities in Rautahat district.

In early 2024, Paroha and Yamunamai municipalities drafted an action plan to declare their municipalities free of child marriage by using the R-CEFM project's HCD findings to inform their strategy and the Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage to define the indicators. These municipalities did so before the provincial endorsement of the Procedures. Another example is Durga Bhagwati revitalized their youth (18–24-year- olds) clubs in certain wards to advocate against child marriage, modeling their learnings from the success of the child clubs under the R-CEFM project.

Several outcomes also illustrated improved coordination between stakeholders for CEFM programming, such as governmental stakeholders and the media working together to increase awareness of community-level CEFM status and ongoing activities. For example, Matihani coordinated with Nepal TV to regularly broadcast about their CEFM activities. Also, Durga Bhagwati and Rajpur organized the *Tathyanka Sarbajanikaran Karyekram* to share updated CEFM-related data with local media outlets. And Loharpatti developed a video documentary about their community-level work and efforts to be CEFM-free. Other coordination included expanding the scope of CEFM work. For instance, certain wards in Pipra, Jaleshwar, Durga Bhagwati, and Rajpur allocated budget to incorporate child marriage topics into their existing community street theaters and dramas. In another example, the WCSC section chief from Matihani has coordinated with other sections and nongovernmental organizations since the beginning of 2024 to incorporate child marriage as a cross-cutting topic in health and other programmatic areas.

Youth clubs advocating to reduce CEFM

Other municipalities using work from R-CEFM project municipalities

Organizational Level
34 Outcomes
(52%)

Raising awareness of CEFM through the media

Incorporating child marriage topics to existing community activities

3.2 Findings: Demonstrated Capacity Shifts and Changes

Individual-Level Outcomes:

The OH evaluation harvested 16 outcomes that described capacity changes among key individuals and stakeholders within their role/function towards reducing CEFM. A few outcomes illustrated how key stakeholders translated their improved capacity to then providing technical assistance to various other stakeholders and units. For example, **the WCSC section chiefs** from Durga Bhagwati, Loharpatti and Pipra are providing technical assistance to other non-project municipalities in developing their child protection and promotion procedures. In addition, the WCSC section chiefs and IT staff in project municipalities also started independently providing technical assistance to ward secretaries and computer operators on reporting CEFM data into the Online Program Management Information System (OPMIS). Since working with the R-CEFM project, the WCSC section chief for Durga Bhagwati has provided an orientation on child marriage to select Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV) discussing existing data, health consequences, and what they can do to help reduce CEFM in their communities for another project by UNICEF. This outcome was also the result of the health coordinator and WCSC working together to find ways of incorporating child marriage into health-related topics. Since 2024, the WCSC section chiefs and ward secretaries in five project municipalities have also conducted 12 capacity strengthening trainings on CEFM, engaging over 700 individuals across the youth clubs, child clubs and networks, Influential Civil Society Committee members, and All Political Party Committee members. The section chiefs and ward secretaries had previously done these trainings with the support of the R-CEFM project but are independently continuing this work since the beginning of 2024.

Some other key individual-level outcomes included the work of **religious leaders** who had received an orientation on advocating against child marriage and recognition as part of the activities implemented by the project wards and municipalities. Since then, not only are these religious leaders preaching against child marriage in their communities, but a few Maulvi in Durga Bhagwati and Rajpur are also preaching against child marriage outside their own communities and municipalities, emphasizing that the Quran does not support child marriage. Pandits and Maulanas of certain wards in Loharpatti, Jaleshwar and Rajpur have also started checking birth certificates, astrological charts, or citizenship papers to assess legal age before agreeing to officiate any weddings and refusing any marriages involving those below 20 years of age. In addition, the Maulanas in Loharpatti Wards 3 and 4 who work in the Madhrasas (Muslim Schools), and the Pandits in Matihani who work at the Sanskrit School are now discussing child marriage with their students and teaching them how to preach against child marriage.

Individual Level
16 Outcomes
(25%)

Findings: Achievement of the R-CEFM Project Objectives

This section discusses the results for the **second** evaluation question:

> **To what extent did the harvested R-CEFM project outcomes contribute to the project's intended objectives?**

23 outcomes — **IR1**: Build the capacity of newly elected ward, municipal, provincial officials, civil servants, and other community actors to advocate, design, and budget for local activities to reduce CEFM.

7 outcomes — **IR2**: Support the implementation of municipal and provincial-level activities and initiatives to reduce CEFM.

32 outcomes — **IR1 & IR2**

1 outcome — **IR3***: Increase learning outcomes for adolescent girls through non-formal education interventions.

*IR3 of the project was active between 2020 and 2022 and had its own previous evaluation. This OH evaluation did not include IR3, but one outcome was noted by the project team and can be found in Annex II, Outcome S.7.

2 outcomes — **None**

We examined how the outcomes harvested fit within the project IRs. Outcomes were classified based on the explicit wording and goal of each IR.

Of the 65 verified outcomes, 23 reflected changes due to IR1; seven were due to IR2; and 32 overlapped between IR1 and IR2. One notable outcome was included for IR3*.

Outcome harvesting allows the capture of both intended and unintended outcomes. Two outcomes did not fit within the intended project objectives as they did not align with any IR and involved actors not directly involved with the project but still influenced by it.
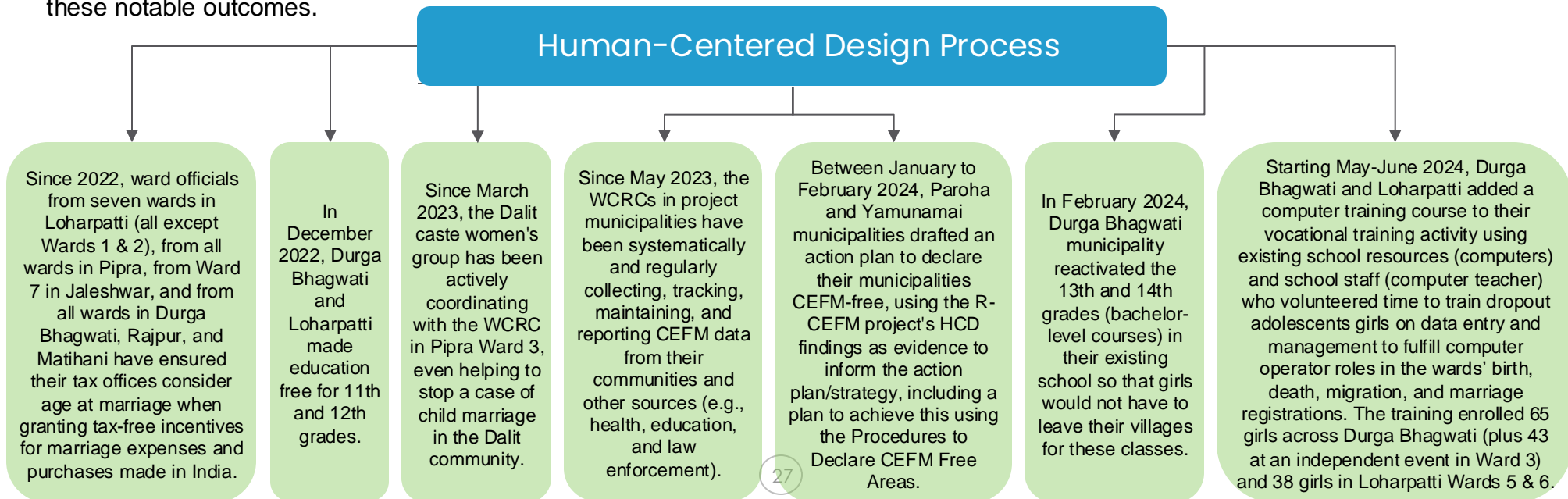
The robust distribution of outcomes underscores the extent of the project objectives' achievements, detailed in the next slide.

3.3 Findings: Achievement of the R-CEFM Project Objectives

Noteworthy Project Contributions

A capacity strengthening project is complex, in part because capacity strengthening is not a clearly delineated activity or intervention to which an evaluation can trace accomplishments directly. In an effective capacity strengthening project, every interaction of the project team with stakeholders—conversation, advocacy, technical assistance, as well as structured engagement within a training—are all meant to contribute to overall capacity shifts and changes in key stakeholders and processes. The OH evaluation cannot capture every nuance of those contributions, but it allows stakeholders to recognize the most influential project contributions towards the harvested outcomes..

Under IR1, the R-CEFM project-led **Human Centered Design (HCD) process** between October 2021 and April 2022 engaged project stakeholders from the ward, municipality, and province levels. As the most influential activity of the project, the HCD process contributed to 41 (63%) of the 65 verified outcomes. Using the co-design approach to engage stakeholders with the relevant CEFM audiences, the HCD process generated empathy for the audiences and their situations and facilitated use of evidence to plan and prioritize community-level CEFM activities. The HCD process increased CEFM situational awareness among stakeholders, helped them identify gaps where activities and processes could be implemented, and led to the design of the 11–14 community-level activities prioritized and implemented by municipalities and wards over the course of the R-CEFM project. The figure below highlights some of these notable outcomes.

Human-Centered Design Process

Since 2022, ward officials from seven wards in Loharpatti (all except Wards 1 & 2), from all wards in Pipra, from Ward 7 in Jaleshwar, and from all wards in Durga Bhagwati, Rajpur, and Matihani have ensured their tax offices consider age at marriage when granting tax-free incentives for marriage expenses and purchases made in India.

In December 2022, Durga Bhagwati and Loharpatti made education free for 11th and 12th grades.

Since March 2023, the Dalit caste women's group has been actively coordinating with the WCRC in Pipra Ward 3, even helping to stop a case of child marriage in the Dalit community.

Since May 2023, the WCRCs in project municipalities have been systematically and regularly collecting, tracking, maintaining, and reporting CEFM data from their communities and other sources (e.g., health, education, and law enforcement).

Between January to February 2024, Paroha and Yamunamai municipalities drafted an action plan to declare their municipalities CEFM-free, using the R-CEFM project's HCD findings as evidence to inform the action plan/strategy, including a plan to achieve this using the Procedures to Declare CEFM Free Areas.

In February 2024, Durga Bhagwati municipality reactivated the 13th and 14th grades (bachelor-level courses) in their existing school so that girls would not have to leave their villages for these classes.

Starting May-June 2024, Durga Bhagwati and Loharpatti added a computer training course to their vocational training activity using existing school resources (computers) and school staff (computer teacher) who volunteered time to train dropout adolescents girls on data entry and management to fulfill computer operator roles in the wards' birth, death, migration, and marriage registrations. The training enrolled 65 girls across Durga Bhagwati (plus 43 at an independent event in Ward 3) and 38 girls in Loharpatti Wards 5 & 6.

3.3 Findings: Achievement of the R-CEFM Project Objectives

Noteworthy Project Contributions (contd.)

Another important R-CEFM project contribution was the 4-day CEFM-related **SBC capacity strengthening workshop** held between August and September 2021 at the province, municipality, and ward levels. Participants included municipality executive members (e.g., mayor, deputy mayor, chair, deputy chair, ward chairs, representatives of women and Dalit community), WCSC section chiefs, health coordinators, planning officers, IT officers, and social development committee chairs. The objective was to strengthen the capacity of local key stakeholders on data-informed SBC for CEFM-related program planning and on the "P" Process™ to design, develop, implement, monitor, and evaluate programs. Participants developed a vision, strategic objectives, and illustrative activities for municipalities to use in developing CEFM-related programs and budgets for their fiscal year annual plans. This SBC capacity strengthening workshop contributed to 23 of the harvested outcomes illustrating strategic planning and implementation by stakeholders. It is the second-most influential activity noted for the R-CEFM project.

From the Data Exercise and HCD process, the project municipalities in Rautahat and Mahottari districts identified the need for updated data on prevalence of CEFM. They decided to conduct a **local census** of marriages, and between 2021 and 2022, the R-CEFM project team provided **technical support** to the project municipalities for questionnaire development, training of census supervisors and data collectors, data analysis, and development of findings and data presentation materials. From the local census activity and technical assistance, 22 outcomes have subsequently furthered the use and sharing of current data in informed decision making around local CEFM activities.

Other noteworthy project contributions included the **Procedures to Declare CEFM-Free Areas** (contributed to 14 outcomes), **formation and mobilization of LCRCs and WCRCs** (12 outcomes), **technical assistance for annual planning and budgeting** (10 outcomes), and **mentoring sessions with WCSC section chiefs** (8 outcomes).

SBC Capacity Strengthening Workshop

CEFM Local Census Technical Assistance

Procedures to Declare Areas CEFM-Free

Formation and Mobilization of LCRCs and WCRCs

Annual Planning and Budgeting Technical Assistance

WCSC Section Chief Mentoring Sessions

3.4 Findings: Sustainability of R-CEFM Project Outcomes

This section discusses the findings for the **third** evaluation question:

> **How sustainable are the outcomes of capacity shifts and changes to which the R-CEFM project contributed?**

Sustainable – Practice:
Outcome reflects a systematic behavior change in an individual, organization, or system, occurring either repeatedly throughout the project or at least six months before the evaluation.

Sustainable – Policy:
Outcome describes a change in strategic planning or budgeting, institutionalized procedures, or implemented policy.

Unknown Sustainability:
Outcome sustainability is difficult to assess with given information or at the time the evaluation was conducted.

Not Sustainable:
Outcome not likely to reoccur or be sustained beyond the project.
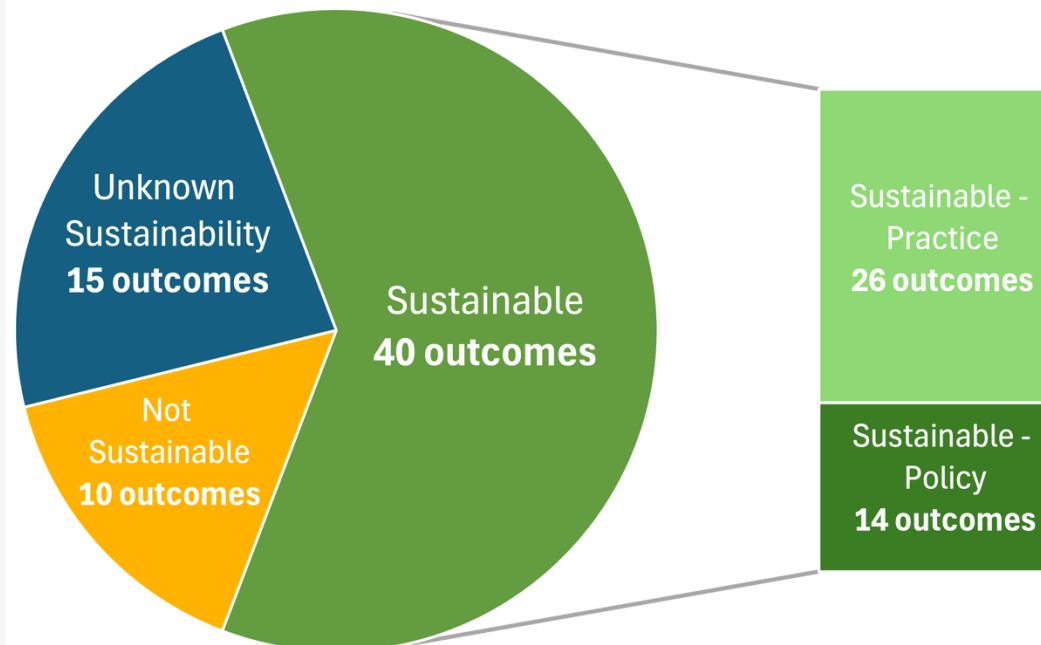
The OH evaluation also assessed the sustainability of changes or capacity shifts based on the criteria provided in the box on the left. These criteria analyzed the potential for capacity shifts to be sustained beyond the project.

Overall, 40 outcomes were considered **Sustainable**, with 26 representing sustainable capacity shifts illustrated in **behavior or practices** of stakeholders and 14 representing shifts in **policy or systemized procedures**. Ten outcomes were **Not Sustainable** and represented outcomes that were a one-time occurrence or did not meet the criteria used in this evaluation. Fifteen outcomes could not be assessed for sustainability (**Unknown**).

As more than 60% of outcomes were considered sustainable, the capacity shifts noted might continue to yield outcomes towards reducing CEFM, even after project completion.

3.4 Findings: Sustainability of R-CEFM Project Outcomes

The Breakthrough ACTION R-CEFM project influenced sustainable change across all three levels of the SBC Capacity Ecosystem™ and the province, municipality, and ward levels. When looking at sustainability of outcomes in a capacity strengthening project involving government and non-governmental stakeholders, it is important to note that capacity shifts and resulting impact are highly affected by staff turnover – whether by election or new hiring, and by whether new skills, processes and capacity are transferred through these turnovers. System-level changes such as implementing CEFM-free strategies and institutionalizing the use of Sahayogi Pushtika and the Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage will continue to provide the framework for continuity in efforts to reduce CEFM in Madhesh Province.

Sustainable – Practice: Twenty-six outcomes showed a systematic behavior change in an individual, organization, or system. These behaviors had either been sustained recurringly over the course of the project or for at least six months, or they are supported by existing Nepal child marriage laws and hence, likely to continue. For example, at the ward and community levels, religious leaders have started checking birth certificates or other documents to verify legal marriage age before officiating a wedding, a behavior change supported by Nepal's laws. Another example is how municipalities and wards have actively monitored progress on CEFM indicators since 2023, a procedural shift since the beginning of the R-CEFM project sustained by Madhesh Province's official endorsement of the Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage. While most system-level outcomes are qualified as sustainable policies, an example of a sustainable practice has been the multisectoral collaboration and coordination among health, education, law enforcement, and government around the functioning of LCRCs and WCRCs, sharing data and technical expertise to identify cross-sectoral opportunities to reduce child marriage since 2021.

3.4 Findings: Sustainability of R-CEFM Project Outcomes

Sustainable – Policy: Changes in policy, institutionalized procedures or strategic planning or budgeting highlighted 14 outcomes as sustainable policy shifts. Unsurprisingly, twelve of the 14 sustainable policy shifts happened at the system level of the SBC Capacity Ecosystem^{TM}. The ward level initiatives such as checking age at marriage before provision of wedding items import tax incentive, municipality level implementation of the Child Rights Promotion and Protection procedures, budgeting for WCSC section chiefs to continue CEFM work, and making school education free and accessible to girls, as well as provincial enactment of the 10-year strategy to address child marriage, endorsement of key guiding documents for CEFM work like Sahayogi Pushtika and Procedures to Declare Areas Free of Child Marriage, and declaration of 29th April as the Day Against Child Marriage—all work together to create an enabling environment for continued work to reduce CEFM in Madhesh Province.

Unknown: Sustainability of 15 outcomes could not be assessed with the information in the outcome or at the time of the evaluation. This could be because the change in behavior or process had not been sustained long enough (at least six months before the evaluation) for the evaluation to deem the outcome has become a routine function that could be sustained beyond the project. The system level outcome of the Rautahat district coordination committee organizing monthly meetings with all municipalities where CEFM data and advocacy happens, for example, only started in April 2024 and the evaluation was conducted in June. While there is no obvious reason to suspect that these coordination committee meetings will not continue, the evaluation just had not observed this activity to have happened long enough to clearly consider that it will continue, especially with the agenda item of CEFM discussions and data sharing, after the R-CEFM project ends. Ward 3 in Durga Bhagwati providing cash prices to high performing girls in school is another example from the ward level where sustainability could not be clearly assessed beyond the project. While this is an activity the ward has been doing since 2022, this outcome and others involving specific budgeted activities are embedded in the fiscal year budgetary cycles and election processes at the ward and municipality levels where turnover and reprioritization happen year after year. It is important to note that while the activities themselves may or may not be sustained as there are too many influencing factors, the capacity for municipality and wards to conduct such evidence-driven CEFM activities can be considered sustainable since they have done strategic planning and implementation with such activities for at least two years.

Not Sustainable: Outcomes defined as "Not Sustainable" were considered not likely to reoccur or be sustained beyond the project based on the previously defined measure of sustainability. Ten outcomes were deemed unsustainable, most of which were considered a one-time occurrence. These outcomes included a June 2024 video documentary highlighting Loharpatti's efforts to reduce CEFM and the Ratauli Yuwa Club hiring enumerators who worked on the local 2021–2022 CEFM census to do its data collection activities. In the latter example, Ratauli Yuwa Club recognized the capacity of these enumerators, but the outcome was too specific and occurred only once, with only a few enumerators, and without any documentation of a trend showing the club or any other entity hired additional former census staff or a trend showing enumerators were hired because of their work on the CEFM census.

3.5 Findings: Limitations

OH as an evaluation methodology is well-suited for capacity strengthening projects because it captures robust and diverse outcomes that speak to the project's achievements. However, two key limitations of the OH evaluation as implemented for this Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM project should be noted.

Recall and Selection Bias

Since the OH evaluation was conducted at the end of the R-CEFM project and involved looking back at the past four years of the project, recall and selection bias may have occurred during the harvesting of the outcomes at the workshop and through key informant interviews. Project team members and key stakeholders thus may not have recalled events from four years ago as easily as those in the past year or two of the project. Ideally, OH as an evaluative process would happen throughout the course of the project, with the project team noting outcomes as they occur and securing documentation for outcomes. Indeed, carefully written project reports from the past four years were used in the documentation review of this evaluation and likely helped identify some outcomes that may have otherwise been forgotten. To further reduce bias in OH evaluations, future projects should integrate OH into their routine tracking starting early in the project.

Timing of the Evaluation

The harvesting of outcomes took place in June 2024. Several outcomes were captured less than six months before the evaluation and illustrated major capacity shifts and process changes by stakeholders. Some outcomes could not be assessed for sustainability because of the timing of the evaluation and the criteria defined for sustainable outcomes. Notable outcomes from early 2024 may reflect the potential of many future outcomes, including those occurring after the project ends. For example, the institutionalization of the Sahayogi Pushtika and Procedures to Declare CEFM Free Areas will result in outcomes from the scale-up to the remaining 130 municipalities in Madhesh Province. Still, this evaluation yielded an impressive number and diversity of outcomes across different stakeholders in the CEFM landscape and within the project municipalities and wards.

4. Conclusions & Annexes

4.1 Conclusions

The Breakthrough ACTION Nepal R-CEFM project operationalized a rigorous, multistep OH evaluation to harvest and validate all project outcomes. Only outcomes verified both internally and externally were retained in the final list of 65 outcomes. As a result, the project can attest to the credibility of every outcome in the final set. The OH evaluation also allowed for an expansive view of the entire R-CEFM project and its contribution to the proliferation of the harvested outcomes. This evaluation identified how key stakeholders demonstrated shifts in capacity, how those outcomes fell within the project's objectives, and whether those changes in capacity were sustainable.

The thematic analysis of outcomes by the type of demonstrated shift in capacity noted capacity shifts towards improved coordination amongst key actors; improved capacity of stakeholders within their roles; stakeholders identifying gaps and opportunities for reducing CEFM, using new or improved procedures or tools, and using or sharing data and evidence to implement activities. The framework of the SBC Capacity Ecosystem™ helped identify where the R-CEFM project influenced key capacity changes. Fifteen of the outcomes were system-level outcomes, highlighting changes in procedures, policies, structures, and systematized practices; 34 were at the organizational level, representing changes in the functioning of committees, institutions, sections, offices, and groups of stakeholders; and 16 others highlighted demonstrated shifts in capacity of individual stakeholders within or outside their roles. The distribution of the outcomes across all levels speaks to the intentional strategic and multifaceted approach the project took to treat capacity strengthening as a whole ecosystem. The outcomes also reflected on the achievements within the project's objectives, with 23 reflected changes due to project's IR1; seven due to IR2; and 32 outcomes overlapping between IR1 and IR2. The outcomes were also considered for sustainability beyond the project and 40 outcomes out of the 65 were considered sustainable. Twenty-six outcomes represented sustainable capacity shifts illustrated in behavior or practices of stakeholders and 14 represented shifts in policy or systemized procedures.

Based on these findings and the noteworthy project contributions, this evaluation highlights the R-CEFM project's success in meeting its goals. The project influenced stakeholders to develop skills and abilities to implement effective, strategic, and evidence-driven programming to address child marriage. The robust distributions of diverse outcomes in demonstrated capacity shifts, formalized processes, and implemented policies underscore the project's accomplishments in strengthening local stakeholders' capacity and systems for reducing CEFM in their communities. The sustainability of the capacity built and of the systems now in place reflects an enabling environment capable of reducing CEFM in Madhesh Province even after the Breakthrough ACTION R-CEFM project concludes. The evaluation also highlights how investment in strengthening the local system and the capacity of government and nongovernmental stakeholders to address complex social issues like child marriage can have verifiable, sustainable, and positive impacts in development contexts.

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