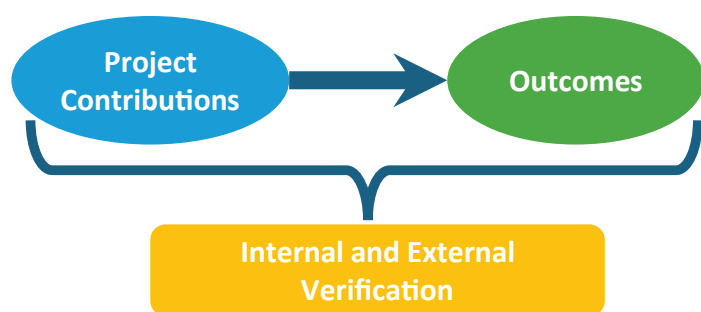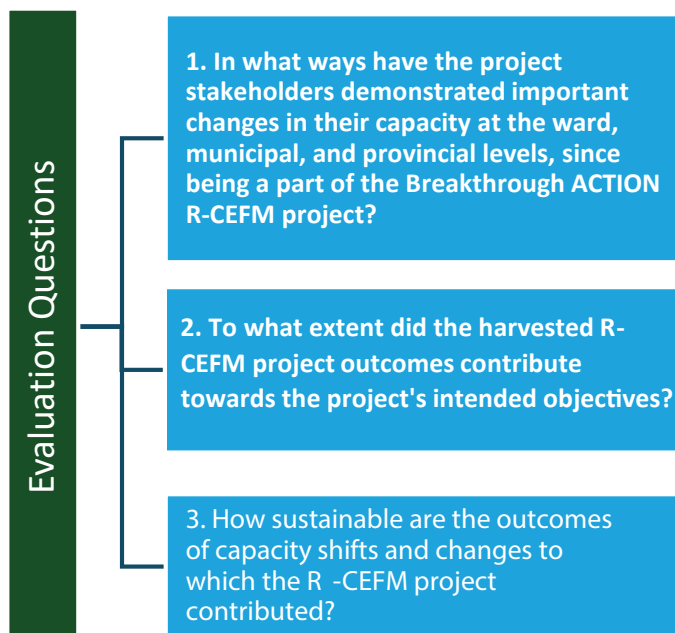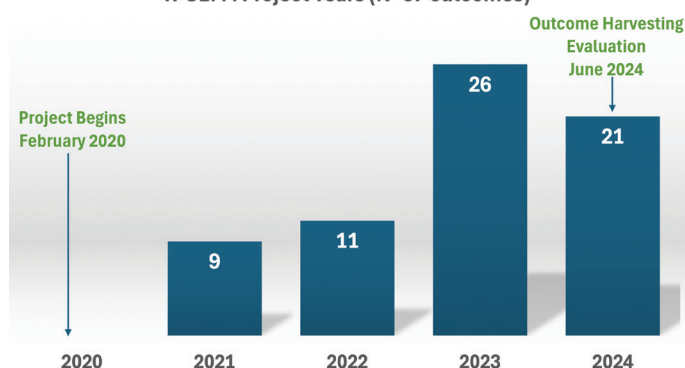# Outcome Harvesting Evaluation of the Breakthrough ACTION Nepal Local Systems Strengthening to Reduce Child, Early, and Forced Marriage Project: A Results Brief

The Breakthrough ACTION Nepal Reduce 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.

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 behavior of an institution, system, organization, or key individual that were influenced by one or more activities—in this case, capacity strengthening and technical assistance activities by the R-CEFM project.** The outcomes 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. This OH evaluation sought to answer three key questions (on the right). 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.
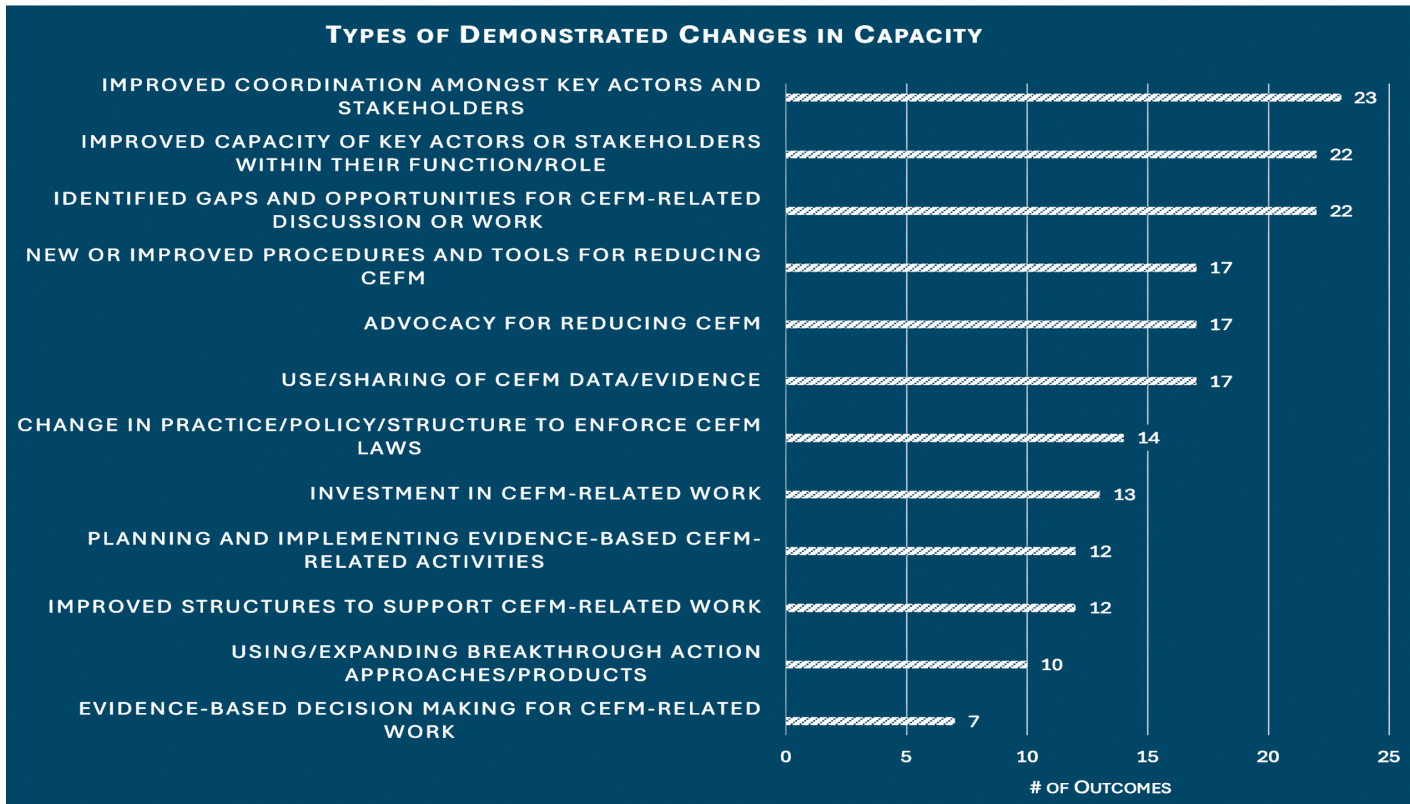
Evaluation Questions

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?

Project Contributions → Outcomes

Internal and External Verification

Number of Outcomes by Break through ACTION Nepal R-CEFM Project Years (N=67 outcomes)

Outcome Harvesting Evaluation June 2024

Project Begins February 2020

Year	Outcomes
2020	
2021	9
2022	11
2023	26
2024	21

A total of 67 outcomes were harvested and both internally and externally verified. The final list of outcomes were then analyzed to answer the evaluation questions. the course of the project, nine outcomes happened in 2021, 11 in 2022, 26 in 2023, and 21 in 2024 until June of the year when the evaluation was conducted.

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?

TYPES OF DEMONSTRATED CHANGES IN CAPACITY

Type	# of Outcomes
IMPROVED COORDINATION AMONGST KEY ACTORS AND STAKEHOLDERS	23
IMPROVED CAPACITY OF KEY ACTORS OR STAKEHOLDERS WITHIN THEIR FUNCTION/ROLE	22
IDENTIFIED GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CEFM-RELATED DISCUSSION OR WORK	22
NEW OR IMPROVED PROCEDURES AND TOOLS FOR REDUCING CEFM	17
ADVOCACY FOR REDUCING CEFM	17
USE/SHARING OF CEFM DATA/EVIDENCE	17
CHANGE IN PRACTICE/POLICY/STRUCTURE TO ENFORCE CEFM LAWS	14
INVESTMENT IN CEFM-RELATED WORK	13
PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-BASED CEFM-RELATED ACTIVITIES	12
IMPROVED STRUCTURES TO SUPPORT CEFM-RELATED WORK	12
USING/EXPANDING BREAKTHROUGH ACTION APPROACHES/PRODUCTS	10
EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING FOR CEFM-RELATED WORK	7

OF OUTCOMES

The outcomes were analyzed thematically to illustrate the type of demonstrated shift in capacity that each reflected. Most outcomes represented more than one type of capacity shift. Capacity shifts included, among others, improved coordination amongst key actors; improved capacity to do the job; identified gaps and opportunities for reducing CEFM; introduced new or improved procedures or tools; implemented use or sharing of data and evidence; changed practice, policy, or structure; invested in work to reduce CEFM; and advocated for reducing CEFM. These diverse types of capacity shifts inform the ways in which the project met its objectives.
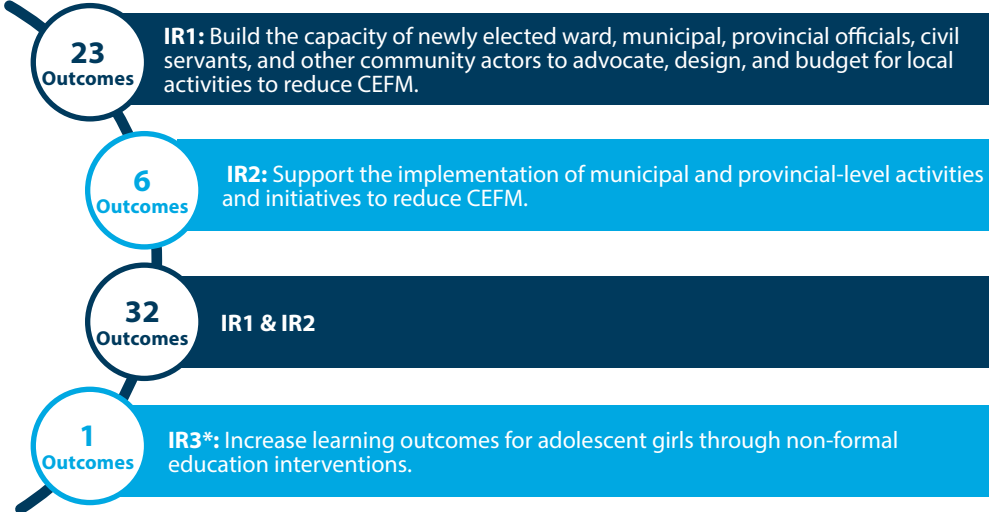
The project outcomes were also analyzed within the framework of the SBC Capacity Ecosystem™ to identify where the capacity changes occurred. Sixteen of the outcomes were system-level outcomes, highlighting changes in procedures, policies, structures, and systematized practices; 35 were at the organizational 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.

Outcomes by SBC Capacity Ecosystem™ Level
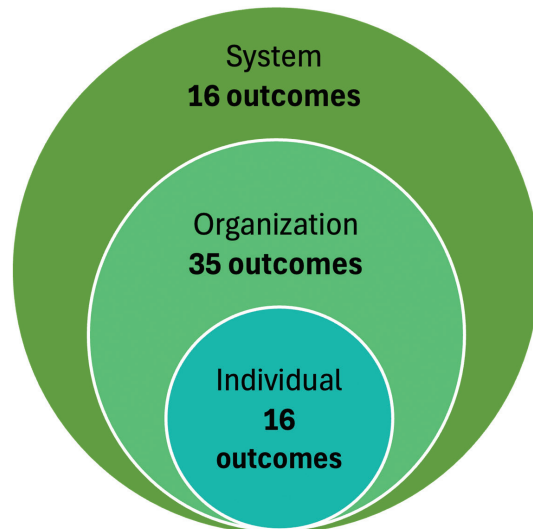
System
16 outcomes

Organization
35 outcomes
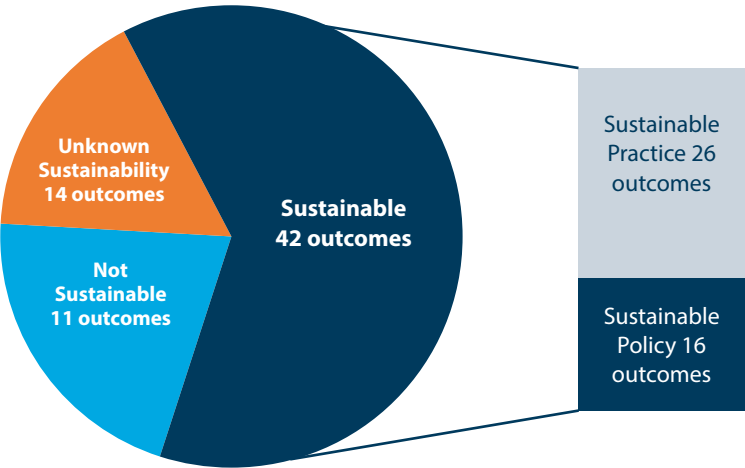
Individual
16 outcomes

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

The outcomes were analyzed against the project's objectives (Intermediate Results, IR). Of the 67 outcomes, 23 reflected changes that happened due to the IR1 project objective; six were due to IR2; 32 outcomes overlapped between IR1 and IR2; and one was due to IR3*. The robust distribution of outcomes underscores the extent of the project objectives' achievements.

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.

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

32 Outcomes — **IR1 & IR2**

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

*IR3 of the project was only active between 2020 and 2022 and had its own evaluation earlier in the project. This OH evaluation did not include IR3 as part of its inquiry, but one outcome was noted and contributed by the project team. IR = intermediate result.

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

Unknown Sustainability 14 outcomes

Not Sustainable 11 outcomes

Sustainable 42 outcomes

Sustainable Practice 26 outcomes

Sustainable Policy 16 outcomes

Sustainable – Practice: Outcome reflects a systematic behavior change in an individual, organization, or system that occurred either repeatedly over the course of the project or for at least six months before the evaluation.

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

Unknown: Difficult to assess sustainability with the information in the outcome 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 how sustainable the changes or capacity shifts are based on the criteria provided below. These criteria analyze the potential for capacity shifts to be sustained beyond the project. Overall, 42 outcomes were considered Sustainable, with 26 representing sustainable capacity shifts illustrated in behavior or practices of stakeholders and 16 representing systematized shifts in policy or procedures. Eleven outcomes were noted to be Not Sustainable and represented outcomes that were a one-time occurrence or did not quality by the criteria of sustainability. Fourteen outcomes could not be assessed for sustainability through this evaluation.

Noteworthy* Outcomes by Level of Government

*For the entire list of outcomes, please refer to the full Outcome Harvesting Evaluation Report.

PROVINCE LEVEL: 6 OUTCOMES

In April 2023, the chief minister of Madhesh Province approved the 10-year strategy on addressing child marriage, which includes SBC components.

On June 7, 2024, Madhesh Province endorsed the Sahayogi Pushtika.

On June 7, 2024, Madhesh Province endorsed the Procedures to Declare CEFM-Free Areas document at the secretary level.

DISTRICT LEVEL: 1 OUTCOME

Since April 2024, the Rautahat district coordination committee has started organizing coordinating meetings once a month inviting all the 18 municipalities where the Women, Children, and Senior Citizens (WCSC) section chiefs advocate for CEFM-related work by sharing their work and the CEFM data collected from the Census and Ward Child Rights Committees (WCRCs).

MUNICIPALITY LEVEL: 29 OUTCOMES

- By December 2021, all six project municipalities endorsed the Child Right Promotion and Protection procedure by executive committee.
- Since December 2021, after working on the Child Rights Promotion and Protection Procedure with the R-CEFM project, Jaleshwar municipality has developed other guidelines such as the Child Club Formation and Facilitation Guidelines, Child Fund Guidelines, and Child Safeguarding Policy, which also include information for CEFM-related work.
- Since April 2023, Durga Bhagwati, Loharpatti, and Pipra WCSC section chiefs have been providing technical assistance and support to other municipalities (Rajdevi, Yamunamai, Boudhimai, Garuda, Ekdara, Batteshwar) in developing their child protection and promotion procedures.
- Since May 2023, the WCRCs in project municipalities have been systematically and regularly collecting, tracking, maintaining, and reporting CEFM data from their communities and from various sources such as health, education, and law enforcement sectors.

- In December 2022, Durga Bhagwati and Loharpatti municipalities made education free for 11th and 12th grades.
- Since June–July 2023, for all six project municipalities, the Local Government Institutional Capacity Self-Assessment (LISA) scores improved due to better documentation and upload from the WCSC section into the LISA system, highlighting improvements in indicators of strengthening of structures, annual planning and budgeting, social inclusion, and coordination and collaboration.
- In February 2024, Durga Bhagwati municipality reactivated 13th and 14th grades (bachelor-level courses) in their existing school so girls do not have to leave the village to go for bachelor's classes.
- By June 2024, five project municipalities (all except Pipra) developed their CEFM-Free Strategy and added it to the 2024–2025 fiscal year annual policy and program.

MUNICIPALITY AND WARD LEVELS: 9 OUTCOMES

Since December 2021, from engaging with the Local Child Rights Committees (LCRCs) and WCRCs, the health, education, and WCSC sections, the police, and elected officials (municipality and ward) are now coordinating amongst themselves, sharing data, knowledge, and expertise, and identifying intersectional/cross-cutting measures of focus that can improve their specific indicators and the indicators for reducing CEFM.

Since May 2023, the LCRCs, WCRCs, and WCSC section chiefs in all project municipalities have been compiling and analyzing routine CEFM data. During review meetings and coordination meetings, they review the findings to analyze budget trends and implementation status of planned activities and to discuss challenges faced, solutions to challenges, and lessons learned in each quarter.

WARD LEVEL: 18 OUTCOMES

Since March 2024, pandits (Hindu priests) in Loharpatti (Wards 3, 4, 7, and 9) and Jaleshwar (Wards 1 and 9) and maulanas (Muslim priests) in Loharpatti (Wards 3 and 4) and Rajpur (Wards 1 and 6) have been checking birth certificates, astrological charts, or citizenship papers to assess individuals' age before agreeing to officiate weddings. They refuse to participate in weddings if either the bride or groom is under 20 years old.

Starting in May–June 2024, specific wards in Durga Bhagwati and Loharpatti municipalities added a computer training course to their vocational training activity. They have been using existing school resources and school staff volunteers to train adolescents girls who have dropped out on computer skills (data entry and management) needed within the wards' system for birth, death, migration, and marriage registrations.

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