

Baseline Study of Sisters for Sisters Education Project

A Verification Report

Prepared by

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BSBP	Baikalpic Sikshya tatha Bikas Pratisthan
CM	Community Mobilizer
DC	District Coordinator
DFID	Department for International Development
DoE	Department of Education
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EGMA	Early Grade Mathematics Assessment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GEC	Girls' Education Challenge
GAN	Global Action Nepal
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
PTA	Parents Teacher Association
RC	Resource Center
SMC	School Management Committee
SSEP	Sisters for Sisters Education Project
SSRP	School Sector Reform Program
VSO	Volunteers Service Overseas

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

CONTEXT

Interim constitution of Nepal 2063 B.S. (2007 A.D) assures equal opportunity for both women and men in sectors of development. Regarding education, Nepal government is committed to promoting policies and programs for maximum participation of women in education. It has also announced special provisions of educational programs/facilities for the minorities, landless, squatters, bonded laborers, disabled, backward communities and victims of the conflict. In international forums as well, for instance, “the world conference organized in Darkar held in 2000”, Nepal government has committed to ensure equal access of its citizens to education (DOE, 2007). Gender mainstreaming strategy and Strategic Implementation Plan for Girl's Education and Gender Equality which are stated in “Education for All” and “Millennium Development Goals” have already been rectified by Nepal government. All the national educational strategies and plans are being implemented by the government of Nepal along with other interventions.

A provision of monetary incentive for girls (children) enrolled in schools is also being implemented following the development of Education Act and Regulations 1972. Similarly, Education Act and Regulations 1972 also made a provision of free education to students living below the poverty line including those from ethnic groups, Dalits, and women. Recently developed School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) has also set special educational programs for girls. Because of these provisions, the major programs have been implemented with aim of fostering gender equality, and social inclusion, ensuring the inclusion of children from disadvantaged group of people (Women, Dalits, ethnic minorities, Madhesis, differently capacitated persons, poor, marginalized population, and conflict affected etc.). Besides, in order to increase the number of girls from disadvantaged people and conflict affected groups. The SSRP has also adopted affirmative action policy in education for the disadvantaged section of the population.

Scholarship is one of the activities related to affirmative action policy. However, scholarship for all girls studying in basic level has already been an integral part of national educational policy for last few decades. Besides, there were other programs such as residential scholarship (feeder hostel scholarship) for those girls who were studying in secondary level as well as residing in remote areas of the country. In the country's 16 districts, cooking oil was distributed by Food for Education Program to the families of those girls who were studying at primary level (DoE, 2012). There was also a scholarship program for liberated Kamlahari. The program aimed at ensuring access of liberated Kamlahari to education. Under the scholarship provision, the liberated Kamlaharis were given not merely scholarship facilities but also the residential facilities and vocational trainings (those who were interested in skill development rather than taking formal education) so that they could earn their living. The program basically aimed at capacitating the rescued Kamlahari.

The educational policy of Nepal mentioned above shows that Nepal government is focusing highly on girls' education right from the first educational development policy of 1956. Notwithstanding the efforts of Nepal government, the pace of enrollment ratio of girl students is remarkably low even at the primary level. By 2012-2013, the total national school enrollment ratio of girls is around 84.9% (Flash Report I, 2012-2013). Appendix 1 shows the figure of national status of school enrollment of girls at primary, lower secondary and basic levels. As the appendix 1 indicates, there is very little progress in girls' enrollment ratio at lower secondary level. The school enrollment ratio of girls at lower secondary level has increased only by 0.4%. On the flipside, enrollment ratio at basic level has decreased by 0.1%. The slightly increased ratio in lower secondary level cannot be referred as "remarkable progress". Moreover, not all the girls, who complete primary level, have progressed to secondary or tertiary levels (Acharya, 2009). This reality questions the gender equality in education at the primary, secondary and basic levels of education system.

On account of the persistence of gender inequality at the primary, secondary and basic levels of education system notwithstanding government's efforts, VSO Nepal Sisters for Sisters Education Project was introduced in the targeted districts of Nepal from July, 2013 under the project entitled "Girls Education Challenge (GEC) Innovation Window" of DFID. The GEC was open to competitive bids from non-state organizations to fund programs that are particularly committed to ensuring and improving girls' enrollment in primary and lower secondary education, their attendance, sustenance and achievements. This fund targets at benefitting at least 660,000 marginalized girls of different countries to complete a full six-year cycle of primary school or 1 million marginalized girls to complete three years of junior secondary school. Of total expected beneficiaries among the marginalized girls, VSO Nepal Sisters for Sisters Education Project (SSEP) aims at enabling 10,582 marginalized girls from Nepal to complete a full cycle of education to grade 8 along with substantial learning achievements. Among 10,582 marginalized girls, SSEP aims at enabling 1,159 extremely marginalized girls to fulfill their right to quality education and complete their basic education. Collaborating with different partner organizations and mobilizing concerned individuals and groups, VSO Nepal expects to mobilize residents of 48 catchment areas of targeted districts to actively take responsibility in ensuring the marginalized girls' right to quality education. During the project, VSO Nepal aims at establishing gender-friendly school environment in altogether 48 schools benefitting 5,131 marginalized girls. Via capacity building programs SSEP aims at achieving increased capacity of education managers to plan, implement and monitor progress of gender sensitive education management.

VSO Nepal in collaboration with its partner organizations (Global Action Nepal, Lamjung and Surkhet, and, Aasman Nepal, Parsa and Dhading) started its baseline study on the 2nd week of January, 2014 with an aim to exploring ground reality in the SSEP target districts prior to SSEP intervention. The baseline study basically focused at finding current status of girls' school attendance, their learning performance (via conduction of EGRA and EGMA), parents'/community's attitudes towards their children's learning and finally teachers' skill in teaching/school's gender sensitivity.

VERIFICATION OBJECTIVES

In general, this verification study has been conducted by BSBP with a viewpoint to evaluate the process and the outcomes of SSEP Baseline study conducted by VSO Nepal and its partner organizations in its targeted districts. In particular, this verification study aims at meeting following objectives:

- To review the field practice of data collection by carrying out on-site inspections of the baseline survey process and its outcomes.
- To determine whether the information provided is in accord with the requirements stipulated by the VSO Nepal's SSEP design document.
- To comment and suggest the field enumerators
- To recommend VSO Nepal and partner organizations about the changes or the rectifications to be carried out immediately on their data collection approaches.
- To provide a verification report to VSO Nepal and the partner organizations

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND VERIFICATION ACTIVITY

Project Parties	VSO Nepal and its partner organizations viz., Global Action Nepal, Lamjung for Lamjung District and Aasman Nepal, Parsa for Parsa district
Project Activity	SSEP Baseline Study
Districts of Project Activity	Lamjung and Parsa
Verification Party	Baikalpic Sikshya tatha Bikas Pratisthan (BSBP)
Verification Period	For Lamjung District: 11 th of January 2014 – 14 th of January 2014 For Parsa District: 18 th of February 2014 – 21 st of February 2014

VERIFICATION METHODOLOGY

Study process

To begin with, the verification teams were oriented by the BSBP chairperson (also the team leader of SSEP evaluation team) Prof. Bidya Nath Koirala. The orientation basically focused on the areas to be verified and tools to be employed for the verification of baseline study. Documents (especially the research tools to be employed in Baseline Study by VSO Nepal) were reviewed. Based on the research tools prepared by VSO Nepal for its baseline study, verification team prepared the verification tools.

Sample size

The verification team selected district sample based upon three key criteria (a) First, representation of the region, wherein Lamjung district represented Hilly region and Parsa district represented Tarai region. (b) Second, representation of demographic composition. Settlements of both districts reflected different castes and ethnic compositions. (c) Third, representation of

Partner organization, wherein Global Action Nepal was conducting SSEP baseline study in Lamjung and Surkhet, and Aasman Nepal was conducting SSEP baseline study in Parsa and Dhading.

Verification tools

Sets of evaluation tools employed by the verification teams for their respective districts are depicted as follows:

Table 1: Sets of Evaluation Tools

Sets of Evaluation Tools Employed for Lamjung	Sets of Evaluation Tools Employed for Parsa
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first set of verification tool involved scanning of filled up GEC Baseline Survey forms by the enumerators. • The second set of verification tool viz., observation was applied to monitor and evaluate the process adopted by the enumerators to draw in information from the targeted respondents. • The third set of verification involved observation of FGD. • The fourth set of verification tool involved providing feedbacks and suggestions to the enumerators/professional mentors in persons, and monitoring their reactions to the feedbacks given. • Finally, the set of verification tool involved providing feedback and suggestions to the district coordinator and enumerators/professional mentors in group. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The first set of verification tool involved drawing in information from the district coordinator and the professional mentor about the baseline study process, outcomes, problems confronted and the resolutions considered (its efficiency and effectiveness). • The second set of verification tool (crosschecking) was applied to inspect the already filled up GEC Baseline survey forms (including EGRA and EGMA) and their entry process. • The third set of verification tool (observation) was applied to inspect the process by which enumerators collected the baseline data. • The fourth set of verification tool was applied to inspect how district coordinator and the professional mentor accrued information from FGD with SMC and PTA members. • And ultimately, the fifth set of verification tool employed “discussion session” with the district coordinator, community mobilizers, volunteers, office assistant, professional mentor and the enumerators about their field experiences. The discussion session however focused upon the verification findings by the verification team, their feedbacks to Aasman Nepal, Parsa, the enumerators and the personnel involved in the baseline study.

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Verification teams and their work

Initially two teams (comprising of two members each) were assigned to conduct verification of baseline study for Lamjung and Parsa districts respectively. Although both the teams were supposed to leave Kathmandu the same day for the field visit, the team assigned for Parsa district had to postpone their visit on account of the closure of schools in Parsa rendered by its weather constraints.

Lamjung verification team and their work

Regarding Lamjung district, a verification team comprising two members left Kathmandu on 11th January of 2014. On the very day, the team met with the Global Action Nepal appointed enumerators in Bhotewadar, Lamjung. The team checked their filled forms and interviewed them on how they conducted the baseline study. On 12th of January, 2014, the verification team for Lamjung met, interviewed, and checked filled forms by the remaining enumerators. The team also met Global Action Nepal's office district coordinator, professional mentor, and other enumerators. After finishing the meeting, the team observed FGD at Jana Jagriti Secondary School, Bajhakhet, Khasurbesi. After having returned from the field, the team asked the district coordinator to arrange a meeting at GAN office, Besishahar. In the meeting, the team gave instant feedback to the FGD conductors and enumerators. On the 13th of January 2014, the team checked the forms filled by an enumerator at Baglungpani, interviewed her on the process of her study and observed the interview conducted by her with a student. The team also interviewed Head Teacher of Janajyoti Secondary School, Baglungapni about the significance of SSEP in Lamjung district. On 14th of January 2014, the team checked the filled-up forms of an enumerator, interviewed her on the process of her study, and observed the interview conducted by her with a student at Amarjyoti Higher Secondary School, Khudibesi. During the same day, the team checked the filled forms of another enumerator, interviewed her on the process of her study at GAN office, Besisahar. The team conducted meeting at GAN office with district coordinator, professional mentors, and enumerators and gave overall feedback to them.

Overall, the team reviewed Baseline survey forms including *child In- school* students and *Parents-In school* of children from 7 schools. The team reviewed those forms in front of the enumerators and gave them feedbacks instantly in group as well as in person. The team interviewed the enumerators directly somewhere individually and somewhere in a group. The team visited some enumerators in the GAN Lamjung Office where they had been interviewed on their processes of form filling. They were also given feedbacks instantly. The team observed one FGD in a school. The team also gave feedbacks to the FGD moderators and District coordinator focusing basically on FGD methodology. The team then interviewed three School head teachers about the proceeding of the program in their respected schools. The team observed four enumerators' form filling process with school children directly in four schools. The team had developed monitoring checklists before going to the field and, keeping those in mind, they evaluated the activities of the enumerators.

Parsa verification team and their work

Since the Lamjung team left Kathmandu and completed their field visit earlier, BSBP wanted the experienced personnel of Lamjung team to accompany the Parsa verification team. The verification team assigned for Parsa district planned to leave Kathmandu on 18th of February 2014 as soon as the district coordinator of Parsa informed them that the schools would be opening from 17th of February in Parsa. As planned, verification team for Parsa district left Parsa on 18th of February and carried out its field visit for the next two days. The team returned to Kathmandu on 21st of February 2014. Prior to field visit, the team arranged a meeting with the district coordinator and professional mentor on 18th of February 2014. The district coordinator and the professional mentor briefed the team about the baseline study process and its outcomes till date. District coordinator and the professional mentor accompanied the study team throughout their field visit. The first task carried out by the verification team was crosschecking the information that the field enumerators obtained through different data collection tools. On the first day of field visit, the team visited Aasman Nepal's office and crosschecked the survey forms filled up by the enumerators. The team also talked with the office assistant appointed by VSO Nepal for the data entry. After crosschecking the survey forms, the team headed on to the community where enumerators were assigned for data collection. On the 20th of February, the verification team visited control school and monitored the work of enumerators. The verification team also monitored the FGD. At the end of the day, the verification team asked the district coordinator to arrange a discussion session so that the verification team could share their experiences with the enumerators, volunteers, professional mentor and the district coordinator.

Analysis and interpretation

The verification finding were thematically analyzed, interpreted and presented. Based upon the findings drawn from the verification of baseline study of Lamjung and Parsa district respectively, general recommendations have been provided to VSO Nepal and its partner organizations.

SECTION TWO: MAJOR FINDINGS

INFORMATION VIS-A-VIS BASELINE SURVEY PROCESS OF PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Based on the initial conversation with the district coordinators of the respective districts i.e Lamjung and Parsa, Global Action Nepal for Lamjung and Aasman Nepal for Parsa has been mentioned as follows:

Overview of Baseline Survey Process of Aasman Nepal for Parsa District

Selection of Schools

Total 16 schools including both the lower secondary and higher secondary schools were selected by Aasman Nepal. 12 schools including both the secondary (7 schools) and higher secondary schools (5 schools) were subsumed into the category of “treatment schools”. Treatment schools are the schools where VSO Nepal SSEP’s programs would be introduced. However, regarding the treatment schools, focus was entirely laid upon students not exceeding grade 8. 4 schools including only lower secondary schools were subsumed into the category of “control schools”. Control schools were taken as a benchmark to measure the progress of SSEP. Regarding control schools, 4 extremely marginalized girls (two each from grades 5 and 6 respectively) were tested EGRA and EGMA.

Identification of Respondents including Marginalized Girls and their Parents

All together there were 191 sets (girls and parents) who were supposed to be interviewed. Out of 191 sets, only 65 sets were taken as a sampled for the baseline study. Regarding the marginalized girls, 25 extremely marginalized girls (in-school-children only) and their parents were identified for 16 schools from 3 VDCs of Parsa district. However, these extremely marginalized girls overlap with the identified marginalized girls. Regarding the selection process of extremely marginalized girls, Dalits, ethnic groups, children coming from families who could not afford to feed themselves for 3 months etc were prioritized.

Selection of Cluster Areas for Survey

Initially although Aasman Nepal planned to develop three clusters in the community to carry out baseline survey, five clusters were developed for the data collection from the three VDCs of Parsa district. 7 enumerators were assigned for 5 different clusters. However, enumerators who completed their data collection in one cluster were assigned to join hand with the enumerators working in the other clusters.

Selection of Respondents for FGDs

As per VSO Nepal's recommendation, Aasman Nepal planned to conduct FGDs with school stakeholders in all 16 schools (including both the treatment and the control schools). District Coordinator and professional mentor of Asman Nepal were involved in collecting information through FGD method. FGD was monitored by a central level staff and survey was monitored by district level staff especially district coordinator and professional mentor of Aasman Nepal.

Recruitment of Personnel for Baseline Study

Five community mobilizers (aka social mobilizers), three volunteers (from VSO Nepal), an office assistant (VSO Nepal), one professional mentor (Aasman Nepal), one district coordinator (Aasman Nepal) and 7 enumerators (appointed by Aasman Nepal) were recruited for the Baseline Study. Data entry was done every day by Mr. Bijay Budhathoki (VSO appointed data entry personnel).

Planning, Review and Discussion

Planning, review and discussion session took place every three days. The session basically focused on the data collection experiences of enumerators, key errors found during data entry process and discussion about the measures to be taken to minimize key errors confronted during data collection as well as entry process. During the fieldwork for verification, two time reviews of the field work had already been done.

Overview of Baseline Survey Process of Global Action Nepal for Lamjung District

Selection of Respondents

As informed by the district coordinator there were some technical mistakes on the process of child selection, as he shared with the verification team that the children whom GAN Lamjung had referred to VSO were not selected from the beginning of pre base line-survey. Later on, they reviewed and finalized according to the selection criteria and methodology of VSO. Now, GAN lamjung is doing baseline survey to those selected children. On the basis of pre-baseline household survey in 17 different schools of this program, GAN Lamjung got girls' (respondents) name list for baseline in those schools from centre. In that list, there were different names of the children from different schools. Respondents' name list didn't match with school girls. Respondents' classes also did not match with school girls' classes. Some girls (respondents) were from other schools beside their program schools.

Overcoming the challenges

GAN Lamjung discussed with VSO about the challenges they were facing .Then, following the decisions from VSO, they decided to select school girls (respondents) randomly form those schools. So, they went to those schools and discussed with teachers and made list again according to the sample number for baseline survey. They selected respondents according to the list which they had got form the centre. GAN Lamjung chose girls (respondents) form the same classes which were in the list. In case of out-of-schools children, they chose girls from the same class form program schools. They did not have enough number of marginalized girls of class

four in their program schools. Especially in the case of control schools, GAN, Lamjung conducted survey on all the girls studying in class four from all their control schools.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF DATA ENTRY PROCESS

For data entry, VSO had appointed one office assistant for each SSEP district. Regarding data entry process, some of its strengths and weaknesses in each respective district has been mentioned as follows:

Table 2: Data Entry Process, Strengths and Weaknesses

Data Entry Process in Lamjung		Data Entry Process in Parsa	
Strengths	Weaknesses	Strengths	Weaknesses
Not Available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Action Nepal did not verify or cross check the data before going through data entry process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aasman Nepal verified data before going through data entry process to minimize the errors vis-à-vis data entry. Reviews and immediate rectifications were done every three days to prevent potential errors in data entry. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Error in data entry caused by same surnames used by variety of caste/ethnic groups. For instance, lack of knowledge about “Raut” representing both Brahmin of Hill region and Madhesi ethnic group had caused problem pertinent to entry of respondents based on caste/ethnic composition. As informed by the district coordinator, children who were supposed to be in Early Child Development (ECD) were subsumed into class one category.

INSPECTION AND EVALUATION OF ALREADY FILLED-UP SURVEY FORMS

In consultation with district coordinators and professional mentors, BSBP verification teams in both the districts viz., Lamjung and Parsa scanned the already filled up GEC survey questionnaires of their targeted respondents i.e., girl respondents and their parents.

However in context of Parsa, Parent-in-School’s responses and Child-in-School’s responses were only collected. As informed by the district coordinator, Aasman Nepal, Parsa was not conducting baseline survey on children-out-of-school as well as parents of children-out-of-school. Hereby, in Parsa district, EGRA and EGMA were conducted in all 16 schools but the tests were carried

out only with the children who were in school. “Out-of-school-children” were not selected for EGRA and EGMA. 65 set of EGRA and EGMA forms were already filled up when the verification team reached the field site.

Table 3: Process and Product of the Filled Up forms in the Sampled Districts

Lamjung		Parsa	
Strengths	Errors	Strengths	Errors
Some filled up survey forms were absolutely devoid of errors indicating sincerity and commitment from the part of enumerators	<p><i>Lack of clarity about the questions</i> Most of the enumerators were themselves unclear about the questions. For instance, they misunderstood and conflated the respondents’ “marital status” (married or unmarried) as indicated in the survey form as the “nature of marriage” (love marriage, arranged marriage, good marriage, bad marriage etc).</p> <p><i>Technical errors</i> In most of the GEC survey forms, lots of technical errors were found. Such technical errors negatively impacted upon the credibility of the data entry. For instance, though the students read only 26 items the enumerators gave bracket at 44 items.</p>	<p>There were also some survey forms which had minimum or no errors.</p>	<p><i>Lack of full responses</i> One of the consistent and common errors in the filled up forms was that the enumerators usually forgot to note down the responses of subsequent questions attached with the main question. For instance, in a question, “<i>bektigat kura bhannu parda tapai kaslai bhetnu hunchha? Kina?</i>”, enumerators usually noted down the answer of the first half of the question but left out the other half. Enumerators would write “Mother” as a response to the first half of the question but would seldom bring the answer regarding why the respondent would share her personal stuffs with her mother but not other persons.</p> <p><i>Review Problem</i> Most of the forms were not completely filled up which indicates that the enumerators failed to review their work once they completed filling up their survey forms. Enumerators should re-observe the forms to maintain unity among the information accrued, test the validity and reliability of the information.</p> <p><i>Technical Errors</i> Errors like, absence of age of the respondents, survey fill up starting time and completion time, writing “am” for “pm”, leaving one or two questions unanswered etc were quite common in most of the survey forms.</p>

			<p><i>Duplication of answers</i> In context of the survey forms filled up by some enumerators, duplication of responses was found in the same question derived from different respondents. Such duplication of answers may indicate that the two respondents were put together while filling up the forms, and the later respondent must have learned what to respond in certain questions from the respondent who had already been interviewed.</p>
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MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF INTERVIEW PROCESS

In context of Lamjung District, enumerators were selected and assigned for the same communities where they were from. Thus, enumerators did not find any kinds of difficulties in the field. Some enumerators working especially in the Gurung or Dura Communities shared that they were rather welcomed with hospitality in schools as well as in home. Enumerators requested the head teacher to let the students come out of their classes (one student at a time per enumerator so that the entire class does not get distracted). Once the enumerators had completed the assessment for all of the grade 1 students, they repeated the same procedure as above for grades 2 and 3. All interviews had been taken within the school days as much as possible. Even the school head teacher supported the enumerators by prior-informing the respondents' parents. In context of EGRA and EGMA, many of the enumerators shared with the team that their work demanded organizational skills to handle several tasks at one time, including listening to the student, scoring the results, and operating a stopwatch or timer

In context of Parsa district, enumerators were selected and assigned for the communities by Aasman Nepal, Parsa. Although in the beginning, most of the enumerators were new to the environment of the communities they were assigned to, they however seemed to acclimatize easily to the community culture later on. However, some of the enumerators assigned to work in the clusters of Biruwaguthi, Harpur and Bahuarwabhatha VDC shared that they faced difficulty in finding out respondents for interview. According to them, some of the parents were skeptic about their intentions. Parents of children-in-school hereby did not tell the enumerators that they were the "respondents" enumerators were looking for. Enumerators had hard time earning the trust of the parents of children-in-school. Parents were convinced to give the interviews only after the enumerators publicly cleared about their intentions to visit the community. After earning the trust of the local people, the enumerators organized interview at respondents' preferred and convenient places. Enumerators interviewed some respondents in their own home premise whereas others outside their home premise. The enumerators then filled up all the forms such as parents of children-in-school, child-in-school, EGRA and EGMA.

Some of the strengths and the areas of improvement in the process of interviews in the respective sample districts have been mentioned as follows:

Table 4: Overview of Interview Processes and Outcomes in the Sampled Districts

Lamjung		Parsa	
Strengths	Areas to be improved	Strengths	Areas to be improved
<p>Language skill One of the remarkable strengths of the enumerators was that they understood the community scenario and language very well.</p> <p>Politeness Since quality and accuracy of the data depends largely on the ability of the enumerator to interact in a polite manner with young children with the right approach, the team found very positive elements in most of the enumerators.</p>	<p>Rapport build up Rapport building should start before starting interview with interviewees. One of the performance criteria for selection and retention of enumerators is their ability to interact in a friendly and respectful way with students. Enumerators must smile, introduce themselves, and make sure that the child is comfortable and responsive from the outset of the assessment. Most enumerators who were already experienced in teaching or other social work had good style of approaching but some who were fresh ones were found nervous and lacked confidence..</p> <p>Enumerators should not be judgmental Some enumerators were found being very judgemental while filling up the survey forms. For instance, when respondents told them that they did not have TV at home, the enumerators pre-assumed that the respondents must not have other expensive items like refrigerators at home. Hence, they thought it was insignificant to further ask the respondents about whether they have refrigerator at home.</p>	<p>Language skill In case of interview process, the enumerators were so fluent in Vojpuri that the verification team took the enumerators for being the native of the community.</p> <p>Compatibility and Rapport Build up Since the respondents were mostly girls, the respondents shared great compatibility with the female enumerators. Due to enumerators' friendly behavior, parents especially, mothers and their daughters were answering the enumerators' questions with great comfort.</p> <p>Use of techniques to derive answer from the respondents One among the three enumerators observed by the verification team encouraged her respondent to use different techniques like "finger counting", "drawing lines" to drawn in answers for EGMA, when the girl child could not say answer orally in math. Such ability of enumerator shows that he/she is knowledgeable in seeking answers from the targeted respondents.</p>	<p>Maintaining clarity While asking questions to the respondents, enumerators should ask them clearly so that the respondents are not left with confusion about the questions. Enumerators should use simple language to make the respondents comprehend the questions being asked.</p> <p>Need to create sound ambiance for the respondents During the interview observation, verification team found that some of the respondents felt intimidated by their parents who time and again pressurized their children to answer the enumerators smartly. One of the respondents' mothers threatened her girl that she would give her a beating if she would not answer enumerators' questions smilingly and smartly. On account of the pressure from the parents and surveillance from other members of the family, the respondent was unable to provide proper responses. Instances as such clearly suggest that students are</p>

	<p><i>Rechecking the Survey forms</i> Enumerators should review or recheck the already filled-up survey forms seriously.</p> <p><i>Enumerators should Facilitate</i> The study team found that the enumerator didn't help, when child could not understand the questions asked. In such situation, it is enumerators' responsibility to help the child by asking additional questions.</p> <p><i>Altering interview setting</i> Enumerators should change the interview setting when any kind of disturbance occurs during the interview session.</p> <p><i>Enumerators should facilitate not intervene</i> Enumerators are not supposed to pronounce the words even if the child felt difficulty in reading Nepali alphabets during EGMA. Rather, they need to say "go ahead".</p> <p><i>Provision of paper and pencil</i> Enumerators should provide paper and pencil to child while doing EGMA.</p> <p><i>Enumerator should be clear about the terms used in the Survey Questionnaire</i> Enumerators considered that guardian means only the father so they mentioned father's name and also took interviews with father only. But they should understand that guardian means anybody who takes the responsibility</p>		<p>prone to providing answers in comfortable environment and it is the responsibility of the enumerators to create such environment for the respondents.</p> <p><i>Use of euphemism rather than falsely encouraging students for providing incorrect answers</i> Although all perspectives/information provided by the informants should be taken as rich information and should not be judged as right or wrong, enumerators should be careful about not encouraging students to repeat the same mistakes in future in some instances. For e.g., every time respondent provided a wrong answer during EGMA, the respondents were falsely praised by the enumerators saying that the "respondents had given the correct answers". Students had the impression that they were providing all the right answers every time they answered. Although enumerators were right to encourage the students when they gave wrong answers, it would have been much better, if the enumerators said, 'wow, good try' rather than saying "you gave absolutely the right answer" every time students gave a wrong answer. Caution has to be taken so that the students do not repeat the same</p>
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	<p>of a child.</p> <p><i>One interview at a time</i> Enumerators should take interview with a child one at a time but the enumerators put two students together and did EGRA.</p> <p><i>Enumerator Training Application</i> One important focus for EGRA reliability is the consistency and accuracy of enumerator performance. During the enumerators form filling process, the verification team found that 90% of forms filled up were good. However, enumerators have to be more clearer in relation to variables in assessment administration including; 1) correct use of stopwatch, 2) standardized instruction to students, and 3) proper and timely marking of the forms.</p>	<p>mistake during their school exams.</p> <p><i>Use of alternative approaches to make students more clear about the questions</i> In context of some of the enumerators observed, they simply read the questions to the students and demanded that they gave the answers to the questions in the stipulated time frame. Verification team felt that a certain clarity in question from the part of enumerators could have derived right answers from the students during conduction of EGMA.</p> <p><i>Ambivalence in students' answers</i> During the conduction of EGMA, those students who were initially unable to identify and pronounce the simple numbers lie 4, 5, 6, 7 etc were able to not only able to identify bigger numbers but were also able to calculate difficult summations. In such cases, enumerators should realize that students who are able to do well in calculation may succumb to failure, when discouraged or intimidated.</p> <p><i>Providing many options for the students for EGMA</i> While conducting EGMA, respondents were asked to give answers imagining the numbers in mind. Since every child</p>
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			<p>has his/her own way of solving mathematical problems, enumerators should inquire the respondents regarding their convenient or usual ways of calculation. It would have also been much better, if enumerators could at least provide the students paper and pencil to solve the problem.</p> <p><i>Enumerators shouldn't intervene the informants until necessary</i> Enumerators were found time and again stopping the parents from providing the qualitative information useful for the SSEP.</p> <p><i>Field Notes</i> Verification teams noticed that most of the enumerators did not maintain field notes despite getting directions from VSO-Nepal that they strictly maintain field notes.</p> <p><i>Enumerators should maintain patience while filling up the forms</i> During the observation of EGRA and EGMA being conducted with the girls of grade 5 and 6 of control school, the verification team found the enumerator rushing while asking questions to the students. While rushing, enumerators</p>
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			were found not paying attention to or noting down the errors made by his respondents.
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MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF FGD

The verification teams monitored the processes and outcomes of FGD in one school each in sample SSEP districts. On account of time constraint caused by the distance of schools and lack of any kind of transportation services, the district coordinators of both the districts weren't able to take BSBP teams to monitor and evaluate more than one FGD in each district.

In context of Lamjung, the district coordinator and the professional mentor arranged FGD in Jana Jagriti Secondary School, Bhajhaket, Khasurbesi whereas in context of Parsa, the district coordinator and the professional mentor arranged FGD in Shree Nepal Rastriya Lower Secondary School, Parsurampur, and Katibaluwa.

Some of the strengths and the areas of improvement while taking FGD in the respective districts have been mentioned as follows.

Table 5: Strengths of Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion in Lamjung	Focus Group Discussion in Parsa
<p><i>Group selection</i> Group selection for FGD was good with dynamic representation of members of PTA and SMC, teachers and Parents. There were also equal representation of FGD participants in terms of Gender, Caste and Ethnicity.</p> <p><i>Active participation</i> All the participants were encouraged by the FGD facilitator to share their ideas and views on topic.</p> <p><i>Seating arrangements</i> FGD facilitator made a semicircular seating arrangement for FGD in an ECD class. The seating arrangement along with the peaceful ambiance and sufficient space made FGD more lively and interactive.</p>	<p><i>Group Selection</i> Members of the SMC and PTA participated in FGD. Representation of male female was equal.</p> <p><i>Interactive discussion</i> Two members of Aasman Nepal facilitated the FGD. In the FGD, there were nine participants including both males and females. Most of the males and females actively participated because the moderator used Bhojpuri language. The moderator gave opportunities to all the participants to express their opinions. Participants expressed that they were happy because at least they got the opportunity to know what is happening in the school.</p> <p><i>The product</i> One of the major achievements of the FGD was</p>

<p><i>Clear notification of the codes of conduct to be adhered by the FGD participants</i> FGD facilitator noted down the codes of conduct on the newsprint paper and pegged it against the wall, where all could see it easily. Some points were for example, no one is allowed to go away leaving FGD without any permission. No one is allowed to blame each other in the name of caste, gender, language or religion etc.</p> <p><i>Confidence on the part of facilitator</i> FGD facilitator seemed tactful, confident, and fearless and moreover had good knowledge and fluency in community language. Facilitator concluded the FGD by expressing her gratitude to the participants for their presence and active participation in FGD.</p>	<p>that the participants shared their understanding/expectations about their girls' education. For most of the parents, their daughters' education is important for their bright future and sound marriage.</p> <p><i>Good Note Taking</i> Without disturbance to the participants, note taking was going smoothly because among the two facilitators, one was actively participating in discussion and the other facilitator was engaged in noting down the information given by the participants.</p> <p><i>Good Debriefing and recapitulation</i> At the end of FGD, FGD facilitator recapitulated and reconfirmed her understanding about the SMC and PTA members' perception on girls' education that was shared by the participants.</p> <p><i>Courtesy maintained</i> The FGD facilitators made sure that the participants did not regret coming to the discussion. They not only thanked the participants for being the part of discussion but also provided lunch to them.</p>
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Table 6: Areas of Improvement in Focus Group Discussion

Focus Group Discussion in Lamjung District	Focus Group Discussion in Parsa District
<p><i>Pre-information of participation</i> It would have been better if FGD facilitators had inquired about the basic information (gender, caste, ethnicity, religion, and culture) of the participants' background before conducting FGD. This would have enabled facilitators to adjust and mould questioning style and patterns according to participants' level of understanding.</p> <p><i>Participants' selection</i> While selecting participants, it would have been better if the FGD facilitators had chosen participants who would justify baseline study objectives.</p> <p><i>Time management</i> The timing of the meeting should be convenient to all the participants. On the other hand, participants also seemed bored and yawning during FGD</p>	<p><i>Selection of the participants</i> The majority of the female participants spoke and expressed their thoughts. Nonetheless, females who came along with their small children were not paying much attention to the matters being discussed. Focus Group Discussion moderators should be more cautious prior to choosing participants for the FGD.</p> <p><i>Creating lively FGD environment</i> During the discussion session, some participants looked disinterested. Moderators should take care that the participants are not disinterested when the FGD is going on.</p>

session. To minimize boredom, focus group discussions should not be stretched beyond two hours. It should be basically completed within 1:00 to 1:30 hrs.

Use of language (word selection)

FGD facilitator should be using very clear and concise language. FGD facilitator was found using English words time and again although she was very fluent in the community language.

Develop clarity about the topics to be discussed

To keep the session on track while allowing respondents to talk freely and spontaneously, the facilitator should have used a discussion guide or checklist that clearly mentioned about the key topics or themes to be covered in the session.

Assigning a key and an assistant moderator

A key moderator is responsible for facilitating the discussion, prompting members to speak, requesting overly talkative members' to let others talk, and encouraging all the members to participate. The verification team noticed that some participants of FGD were relatively silent (e.g., members who were too shy to speak about this issue; members who did not think this issue to be worth discussing; members who would not have their own viewpoint, for example a SMC member did not like to talk anything in any questions). A key moderator needs to discourage dominant participants through verbal and nonverbal clues. The following may be said as soon as the situation permits: Politely intervene by saying, "Maybe we can discuss that in another occasion..." Besides key moderator, the assistant moderator's responsibilities include recording or note taking of the key interactions, creating an environment that is conducive for group discussion (e.g., dealing with latecomers, being sure everyone has a seat, arranging for refreshments etc).

Note taking and Recapitulating at the end of FGD

FGD assistant have to make the note of the responses clearly. Note taking is compulsory. Participants had raised some important issues and experiences in the discussion session but there was absence of note taking to record the valuable inputs given by the FGD participants. Capable and efficient note taker is must while conducting FGD. Finally, it is also important to recapitulate the notes

to the participants before ending the discussion. If some participants disagree to some points facilitators noted, facilitators need to rectify them immediately.	
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CONCLUSION

Based upon the findings of baseline study verification in the sample SSEP districts viz., Lamjung and Parsa, it can be concluded that there are both strengths as well as scope for improvements in the baseline study carried out by VSO. Regarding the strengths, verification team found VSO's "collaborative approach to baseline study" as its strength. The personnel and staffs appointed/recruited by the partner organizations were already familiar with "the community people and their environment" resulting in generation of reliable data. However, on account of the methodological limitations of tools prepared by VSO-Nepal, enumerators had faced some difficulty to bring in in-depth information from the field useful for SSEP intervention. But the discussion with all the enumerators in debriefing sessions of the baseline study verification districts was helpful to solve the encountered difficulties that they had faced. The word of the district coordinators of Lamjung and Parsa to re-mentor the enumerators with the new inputs was also another hope for the generation of trustworthy field data.

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Source : Flash Report I, 2012-2013