

Case study

Sisters for Sisters' Education

Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)
NEPAL

MAY 2021



Girls'
Education
Challenge



Project summary (pre and during Covid-19)

Part of the VSO Sisters for Sisters' Education Project in Nepal, the English and Digital for Girls' Education (EDGE) programme supports 1,350 adolescent girls through girls' clubs which had used radio as a key modality. In responding to Covid-19, the project expanded and further developed the radio component which has resulted in much wider engagement and reach. The distance teaching and learning (DTL) approach involves the weekly broadcast of radio and television programmes centred around gender equality, social issues and English language development. Now embedded into the government system, the resource is accessible to 7.3 million students and 147,000 teachers across Nepal.

Domain 1: Local context and educational system

1: Local context

VSO/British Council's approach

DTL approach facilitates access to a government (or other) platform

Both the broadcast "EDGE" radio programme – Obla Air" and the Udaan radio programme follow a functional approach to language learning. The topics map well with the national curriculum for grade 6 and above and discussions are underway with the Centre for Education and Human Resource CEHRD and the Curriculum Development Centre who plan to the Udaan material as a national education resource. A government taskforce has been set up to review all the Udaan radio resources for future use.

Whether the DTL approach will support future education delivery

The learning materials support self-directed and therefore flexible learning options some of which can continue to be used in the future, even when schools re-open. For example, the self-access resources will be useful, supportive materials for classroom learning. Radio resources can be used as extra practice in English for in-school and out-of school students. Radio drama has widespread appeal and is relevant as an awareness raising/ educational resource on the topic of social issues impacting adolescent girls in Nepal.

Domain 2: Distance teaching and learning modality

2: Modality

VSO/British Council's approach

Identifying what DTL facilitation modalities are best to use (listening to radio individually, in small groups, set tasks/worksheets, WhatsApp, discussing SMS content etc.)

While the content was broadcast weekly, additional resources and means of support were important to facilitate girls' regular and meaningful engagement. For example, the self access resources, like SD cards and worksheets, allowed girls to access and engage with the material at their own pace and in their own time. The SD card was also helpful for those where there was bad connection, for those who had limited time. It enabled more flexible access. A weekly conversation with the peer group leader enabled girls to share their views about the stories they had listened to and some girls and boys expressed views about the social issues in the stories through SMS messaging.

Telephone follow up was also key to spreading information about timings, getting permissions from parents and to provide an opportunity for girls to discuss the topics raised in the radio programmes.

Important messages (PSA) were also broadcast on the radio. TV was also used and effective for some although there were more issues with access given that only 40% of EDGE participants have access to a TV.

The implications that the DTL approach has for scale /sustainability (e.g. will it continue after the project closes)

The radio show was broadcast nationally and this enabled the project to have far greater reach than only the girls supported by the EDGE project. The CEHRD /government also plans to use and scale up the resource and this is expected to contribute towards greater sustainability. The British Council also plans to make the radio sessions available through Youtube – as is the Meena TV resource.

Domain 3: Content and curriculum

3: Content and curriculum VSO/British Council's approach

Gender equity and social inclusion (GESI) criteria is incorporated into the curriculum

Each of the Udaan radio sessions were written to support girls in understanding and also expressing their views about social issues that are rooted in gender inequality and inequity in Nepal. Drawing on project data, including findings from GESI analysis a mapping, informed the themes that would be covered in the radio shows. These included child marriage, awareness of menstruation, bullying and sexual abuse.

Content has been created, curated and reviewed and the cost implications considered

Building upon existing resources, and despite time sensitivity, the development of the radio programmes and the associated materials followed a rigorous process. This led to the development of a high quality, relevant resource. For example, the team drew upon the skills of an expert in radio production who worked closely with a local Nepalese writer along with the British Council team, including curriculum specialists. They created an innovative resource, new to Nepal, bringing together radio drama and structured learning around important social issues for the first time.

The content for the distance learning was guided by content from previous radio programmes, with further input from the local Nepalese writer on the development of the story lines and characters. The production company paid particular attention to the quality of voice artists who were carefully selected and the quality of the final production.

Domain 4: Pedagogy and assessment

4: Pedagogy and assessment VSO/British Council's approach

Assess the advantages and disadvantages of using formal and non-formal educators/facilitators

The girls were supported by master trainers and peer group learners. With a background in formal education, the master trainers played a key role in supporting and tracking girls' wellbeing and learning as well as communicating overall progress of the girls to the project. Peer group learners were selected from the cohort of girls, and each provided direct support by phone for up to ten girls. In the occasional case where peer group learners were unable to provide the level of support girls needed, master trainers were able to step in and provide the support.

Combining both formal and informal support has helped facilitate a close relationship with the girls. This has helped foster an understanding of their needs and for the peer group learners and master trainers to be responsive to them. Girls have been able to speak freely about challenging topics and issues – which has meant the project has learned quickly about them – and where possible, adapted the resources.

The frequency, rate and quality of feedback that learners receive from educators and/or DTL modalities

A 'telephone tree' was used for communication with the learners where master trainers called the peer group learners, who were then in direct touch with each of their girls by phone. Each girl was called twice a week at a planned time when she would be able to talk about the programme she had listened to, what she had learned, her views on the stories and the issues played out.

As support was remote (through phone calls), the peer group learners did not collect written work but talked to the girls about the story they had listened to, how they had approached the task, and any challenges the girls had faced. Peer group learners used a monitoring form to record each girls' progress and this was shared with the master trainer who could step in to support girls if additional support was needed.

Domain 5: Monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaptation and impact

5: Monitoring, evaluation, learning and adaption

VSO/British Council's approach

The extent to which the DTL approach generated – or is expected to generate – significant positive or negative, intended or unintended, higher-level effects

The DTL has shown that even though girls were the target audience, boys are also keen to engage with gender equality issues as boys have also communicated views through SMS. Boys believe that learning more about the issues will better equip them to support the girls in challenging the issues.

The project demonstrated the power of combining the right experts with different disciplines and skills (such the local writer with deep contextual knowledge, curriculum development expert and a radio producer). With this combination of experts the project was able to develop a highly interactive, relevant resource – that is able to probe thinking, encourage girls and boys to engage, voice their opinion.

The project/radio programmes have had far greater audience than expected. For example, CEHRD accepted the EDGE materials for use on government platforms. Now embedded into the government system the resource is accessible to 7.3 million students and 147,000 teachers across Nepal.

Engagement with materials (paper based, radio programmes, TV etc) are monitored

Using the the 'telephone tree' mechanism, master trainers were able to follow how each peer group learners were engaging with their groups, and how their groups were engaging with the learning. This support gives peer group learners confidence to potentially continue supporting girls in their groups beyond the lifespan of the project.

Master trainers are continuously reviewing the data looking to see if girls are struggling, if materials need adapting and if any patterns are occurring in girls' learning.



Find out more: www.girlseducationchallenge.org | uk_girls_education_challenge@pwc.com

The Girls' Education Challenge is a project funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office ("FCDO"), formerly the Department for International Development ("DFID"), and is led and administered by PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Mott MacDonald (trading as Cambridge Education), working with organisations including Nathan Associates London Ltd. and Social Development Direct Ltd. This publication has been prepared for general guidance on matters of interest only and does not constitute professional advice. You should not act upon the information contained in this publication without obtaining specific professional advice. No representation or warranty (express or implied) is given as to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained in this publication, and, to the extent permitted by law, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and the other entities managing the Girls' Education Challenge (as listed above) do not accept or assume any liability, responsibility or duty of care for any consequences of you or anyone else acting, or refraining to act, in reliance on the information contained in this publication or for any decision based on it.

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