

Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in  
Schools Building on What Children Value and Aspire  
to Do and Be

## Scaling Child Clubs in Rural Community Schools: Opportunities and Challenges in Bhojpur District, Nepal



## Disclaimers

The project 'Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Schools, Building on What Children Want to Do and Be' is being implemented by LIKE Lab, Kathmandu University School of Arts, with support from the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of IDRC or its Board of Governors.

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# List of Abbreviations

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<b>BoD</b>	Board of Directors
<b>CFLG</b>	Child Friendly Local Governance
<b>CVEC</b>	Children’s Valued Educational Capabilities
<b>CWIN</b>	Child Workers in Nepal Concerned Centre
<b>GESI</b>	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
<b>GPE KIX</b>	Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange
<b>IDRC</b>	International Development Research Center
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Governmental Organization
<b>KU</b>	Kathmandu University
<b>LIKE</b>	Learning, Innovation, and Knowledge Exchange
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>PTA</b>	Parents' Teacher Association
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SMC</b>	School Management Committee
<b>UNICEF</b>	United Nations Children's Fund

# Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>Contents</b> .....	<b>iv</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>Section 1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background.....	1
1.2 Setting the Context .....	2
1.3 LIKE Club: A Capability-Driven Child Club Model .....	2
1.4 Objectives of the Report.....	3
<b>Section 2 Scaling Framework: Insights from the Literature</b> .....	<b>4</b>
2.1 Scaling Child Clubs for Impact.....	4
2.2 Importance of Scaling: Factors Creating Opportunities and Challenges in Scaling Child Clubs in Rural Community Schools .....	5
<b>Section 3 Methodology</b> .....	<b>6</b>
3.1 Description of Study Site .....	6
3.2 Data Collection and Analysis .....	7
3.3 Ethical Considerations.....	7
3.4 Data Availability Statement .....	8
3.5 Limitations.....	8
<b>Section 4 Opportunities and Challenges for Scaling Child Clubs</b> .....	<b>9</b>
4.1 Opportunities for Scaling Child Clubs.....	9
4.1.1 Students’ Enthusiasm and Willingness to Participate in the Child Clubs.....	9
4.1.2 Students' Level of Awareness of the Child Clubs.....	9
4.1.3 Skill Development of Students.....	10
4.2 Challenges for Consideration in Scaling Child Clubs .....	10
4.2.1 Capacity-Building Training Required for Sustainable Club Operations.....	10
4.2.2 Inadequate Parental Support .....	11
4.2.3 Shortage of Adequate Resources to Support Club Activities .....	11
<b>Section 5 Recommendations</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>Section 6 Conclusion</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Annex</b> .....	<b>16</b>

# Executive Summary

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Child clubs in Nepal have long been recognized as key platforms for promoting children’s participation, leadership, and child rights within schools and communities. National policies, legal frameworks, and development initiatives have supported its establishment nationwide. However, although the number of child clubs has grown significantly, this expansion has often been largely numerical, raising concerns about how these initiatives can be sustained and expanded in ways that guarantee the meaningful participation of children, institutional support, and sustained impact.

This report examines the opportunities and challenges associated with establishing and scaling student-led child clubs in rural community schools in Bhojpur District, Nepal. The findings presented are based on field-based insights gathered through surveys, structured interviews, stakeholder interactions, and school-based observations. These insights have been synthesized to capture lessons emerging from the early stages of implementation of the research-for-development project *“Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Schools, Building on What Children Want to Do and Be.”* As part of this project, the LIKE club has been established in 13 community schools across Bhojpur, Nepal. LIKE club is a student-led child club that focuses on promoting children’s valued educational capabilities, strengthening the values of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), and creating an inclusive learning environment in community schools. Perspectives from students, headteachers, and GESI focal persons within the schools were reviewed to understand the opportunities and operational challenges that influence the sustainable scaling of child clubs in rural community schools.

## Methodology

- The study was conducted in 13 rural community schools from different wards in Bhojpur Municipality, Nepal, where the LIKE Club (a student-led child club) is operational, to examine context-specific opportunities and implementation/operational challenges in scaling child clubs.
- Data were collected through a mixed-methods approach, including key informant interviews with 13 headteachers and 13 Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) focal persons, student surveys and interactions with 26 students, and field observations of school environments and club activities.
- Data from these sources were triangulated to generate reliable and comprehensive insights into the opportunities and challenges for scaling child clubs.
- The study adhered to ethical standards, including informed consent, voluntary participation, child safeguarding, confidentiality and anonymity, and responsible use of data.

## Key Opportunities and Challenges for Scaling Child Clubs

- High levels of student enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the club provide a strong foundation for establishing and scaling child clubs.
- Students demonstrate a clear understanding of the club’s role in promoting child rights, well-being, and active participation.
- Participation in LIKE Club activities helps students develop key skills such as leadership, communication, teamwork, and confidence.
- Limited capacity among students and teacher facilitators, particularly in understanding and carrying out their designated leadership roles and documentation responsibilities, poses operational challenges for running the club effectively.
- Inadequate parental support can affect students’ ability to participate in the club and disrupt continuity of activities.
- Shortages of essential materials and resources constrain effective implementation and long-term

sustainability of the club.

- Targeted interventions that strengthen capacity, foster parental involvement, and ensure adequate resources are essential for sustaining and scaling the club's impact.

# Section 1

## Introduction

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### 1.1 Background

Child clubs in Nepal have emerged as important platforms for promoting children’s participation, leadership, and rights within both school and community settings. These clubs provide structured spaces where children can interact with peers, express their views, and engage in activities that contribute to their personal development and social responsibility. Typically supported by adult facilitators, child clubs function as child-led groups that enable children to exercise their right to participation and association, as recognized under Article 15 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (GC, [2018](#); Singh, [2012](#)).

Over the past three decades, Nepal has demonstrated strong policy and institutional commitment to promoting child participation. This commitment was formalized when Nepal ratified the UNCRC in 1990 and has since been strengthened through national legal and policy frameworks. For instance, Article 39 of the Constitution of Nepal ([2015](#)) guarantees children’s rights to education, health, protection, and participation, while the Children’s Act (2018) explicitly recognizes children’s rights to form and participate in child clubs and related institutions (Government of Nepal, National Child Rights Council, [2018](#)). In addition, the National Strategy on Child-Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) framework introduced in 2011 further institutionalized child participation by integrating child rights into local governance systems (World Vision International, [2018](#); UNICEF, [2019](#)).

Supported by government bodies as well as national and international organizations such as UNICEF, Save the Children, Plan International, ActionAid, and CWIN, child clubs have expanded significantly across the country over time (Singh, [2012](#)). This expansion reflects a growing understanding that child clubs play an important role in promoting inclusive education, encouraging children’s participation in civic activities, and helping children learn about their rights and how to exercise them responsibly. This growing recognition prompted the Supreme Court of Nepal to allow child clubs to be officially registered, leading to the establishment of Jagriti Child Club Nepal (JCCN), which became the first registered child club in the country on August 9, 2001 (Jagriti Child and Youth Concern Nepal, [2012](#)). According to the Government of Nepal, there are currently over 23,000 child clubs with approximately 435,000 members operating across both school and community settings (National Child Rights Council, [2018](#)).

Despite this substantial growth, existing evidence suggests that the expansion of child clubs has largely been quantitative rather than qualitative (GC, [2018](#), p. 5). While the number of clubs has increased, their effectiveness, sustainability, and level of meaningful participation vary significantly across contexts. In many cases, child clubs face challenges related to the following:

- Limited institutional integration within schools and local governance systems
- Inadequate capacity among students and facilitators to manage club activities
- Insufficient resources to support regular and impactful engagement
- Low or inconsistent parental and community support
- Limited awareness among students regarding the purpose and benefits of participation (Ratna, Shrestha, & Maharjan, [2011–2012](#)).

These challenges are particularly pronounced in rural community schools, where resource constraints and socio-cultural factors further influence implementation. From a strategic perspective, this highlights a critical gap:

***“The expansion of child clubs has not consistently translated into sustained or meaningful impact.”***

As a result, there is increasing recognition that simply increasing the number of child clubs is insufficient. Ensuring effectiveness requires a stronger focus on quality, inclusion, institutional support, and long-term sustainability. This includes fostering student ownership, strengthening facilitation mechanisms, ensuring resource availability, and integrating clubs into school and community systems. In this context, understanding the opportunities and challenges associated with scaling child clubs becomes essential. A more strategic approach to scaling must move beyond numerical growth and instead focus on creating conditions that enable child clubs to function effectively and deliver lasting benefits for children.

## 1.2 Setting the Context

This report is one of the outputs of the research-for-development project *‘Promoting Gender Equality and Social Inclusion in Schools, Building on What Children Want to Do and Be,’* funded by the Global Partnership for Education Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (GPE KIX) and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). This project is a collaborative initiative involving Kathmandu University School of Arts (KUSoA) in Nepal, RDRS in Bangladesh, and Samtse College of Education in Bhutan. This initiative draws on the Capability Approach, as articulated by Sen (1999) and Walker (2007), emphasizing the importance of equipping students with the opportunities and resources necessary to lead lives they value, thereby promoting GESI in schools. By focusing on children’s well-being, this framework emphasizes the autonomy, resources, and support students need to lead lives they value. It centers on their aspirations and aims to strengthen their ability to shape futures aligned with their values and aspirations.

To operationalize this approach, the project employs a Participatory Action Research (PAR) framework, which includes the development and implementation of a GESI diagnosis tool to identify barriers related to gender, socio-economic status, disability, and other forms of marginalization. Based on these insights, the project supports schools in adapting strategies that promote safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environments. A central focus of the project is also scaling for impact, ensuring that successful practices are not only implemented but strengthened, adapted, and institutionalized within school systems through capacity building of students, teachers, and key stakeholders.

## 1.3 LIKE Club: A Capability-Driven Child Club Model

As an extension of the project’s efforts, the LIKE club has been established in 13 community schools in Bhojpur Municipality, Nepal, with plans to scale to 30 additional schools by the end of the project in February 2027 (a total of 43 schools). Rather than functioning as a standard extracurricular program, the club operates as a structured, safe, and student-led platform where children engage in dialogue, collective action, and decision-making to promote gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) through capability-based activities. Its implementation is supported by the Bhojpur Municipality education officer, school headteachers, and designated GESI focal persons, who are typically social studies teachers serving as supportive mentors for LIKE club members within the school system.

Emphasizing student ownership and leadership, the club’s activities are aligned with key well-being domains such as mental health, social relationships, and autonomy, enabling students to build capabilities that support what they value and aspire to in life. By grounding activities in children’s valued experiences, these domains were identified through prior LIKE Lab research conducted in Bhojpur. In this way, the LIKE club ensures that GESI principles are meaningfully embedded in school practices, fostering inclusive and respectful learning environments while translating the project’s conceptual framework into practical action.

**Note:** The 16 key well-being domains that the LIKE club seeks to promote and strengthen among students, along with their definitions, are provided in the Annex. Please refer to it for further details.

## 1.4 Objectives of the Report

The objectives of this report are as follows:

### 1. To inform key opportunities and operational challenges in scaling child clubs

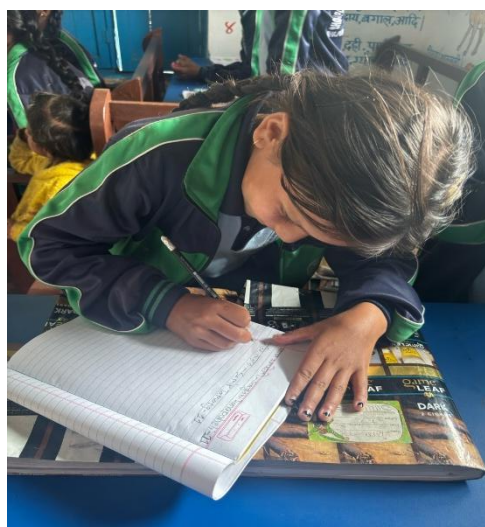
Based on field experiences, observations, and interactions with stakeholders, including students, headteachers, and GESI focal persons, the report aims to contribute to a grounded understanding of both opportunities and implementation or operational challenges that affect the scalability of child clubs in the context of rural community schools.

### 2. To share lessons learned for scaling child clubs for impact

Drawing from field-based insights, the report emphasizes that scaling goes beyond numerical expansion and instead involves strengthening quality, inclusion, institutional integration, and adaptability across diverse contexts.

### 3. To contribute recommendations for sustainable scaling

The report aims to provide actionable recommendations to guide the sustainable scaling of child clubs or similar interventions for educators, school leaders, project implementers, researchers, donors, and policymakers.



## Section 2

# Scaling Framework: Insights from the Literature

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## 2.1 Scaling Child Clubs for Impact

According to Wyss et al. (2023), "scaling" refers to the deliberate process of expanding and strengthening an initiative to produce sustained, meaningful improvements in people's lives. In this context, rather than focusing solely on replication or numerical expansion of children's clubs, scaling involves multiple pathways, such as intentional expansion, organic diffusion, and institutional integration, all aimed at creating long-term benefits for children, schools, and the broader education system. As per Gargani and McLean (2017), scaling impact is not synonymous with growth, and expansion alone does not always equate to better outcomes. They explain scaling impact as follows:

*"A coordinated effort to achieve a collection of impacts at optimal scale that is only undertaken if it is both morally justified and warranted by the dynamic evaluation of evidence."*

– Gargani and McLean (2017)

Scaling child clubs for impact thus requires that evidence-based educational initiatives must not only reach more schools but also deepen their influence to improve learning outcomes with special consideration for the most vulnerable learners (World Vision Canada, 2023). Achieving sustainable scaling of impact also requires adaptation of the initiative to the local context so that it can function effectively within the existing education system. It also depends on collaboration with policymakers, school leaders, such as headteachers, and teachers, to foster ownership of the initiative and ensure institutional integration. For achieving long-lasting impact, this collaborative approach assists in going beyond just replication and focuses on integrating new initiatives into the educational ecosystem so that it can help establish the initiative as the "new normal" (Woltering et al. 2019). According to Stringfield et al. (1998), as cited in Fulgence (2024), scaling an educational innovation involves the purposeful expansion of an externally generated design that was effective in one or a limited number of school settings to several settings.

Scaling child clubs to achieve sustainable positive impact is widely understood to be a complex and challenging process. Expanding such an initiative is not simply about introducing it to more schools, communities, or learners, but the broader aim is to ensure quality and sustained impact through systematic improvements in both the education system and the learning outcomes of children (Sabelli and Harris, 2015). A study by McLean and Gargani (2019) explains that simply identifying successful initiatives and replicating them at scale is insufficient; accordingly, simply copying a child club model that worked elsewhere will likely not be enough for achieving sustained impact. It requires strategic engagement, strong partnership, adaptability, and a collective vision for sustainable and inclusive education reform.

Building upon this, it is important to remember that scaling child clubs should be considered a process of maximizing sustainable impact instead of just increasing their quantity or geographic reach. By focusing on sustainable impact, scaling can contribute not only to expanding the reach of child clubs across diverse schools and communities but also to creating improvement in children's participation and learning, and children being able to influence policymaking bodies in relation to children's rights (Singh, 2012).

## 2.2 Importance of Scaling: Factors Creating Opportunities and Challenges in Scaling Child Clubs in Rural Community Schools

A study by Fulgence (2024) states that scaling plays an essential role in the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4), which focuses on delivering inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. Scaling educational or child-centered interventions has therefore become a key issue in global development discourse, especially in attempts to



shift from small pilot programs to sustained impact. However, as Woltering et al. (2019) explain in their study, many development initiatives test potential solutions, but most never scale up sufficiently, which limits their contribution to significantly promoting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the context of child clubs, the motive of scaling should ensure that the numerical growth translates into institutionalization (becoming a permanent part of the education system) and produces a sustained positive impact on children's participation, empowerment, and overall skill development.

As part of the social fabric, community schools in rural areas are shaped by diverse factors, including ethnicity, religion, culture, caste, gender, disability status, and other individual and community factors (Sherpa & Baraily, 2021). Recognizing this complexity is important to ensure that scaling strategies are context-sensitive and responsive to the realities of rural community schools. Krainer et al. (2019) stress that scaling up is a complex process that often fails or is only effective to a limited extent. Thus, more knowledge is required to understand the factors that contribute to sustainable scaling and to address the challenges that present themselves in the process. Cobb and Smith (2008) state that networks, shared vision, and reciprocal responsibility are among the factors that might promote the scaling up of educational innovations. These factors that support the scaling up of educational innovations depend on the level where innovations are anticipated, at the individual level of educators, the local level of schools, or the regional or national level.

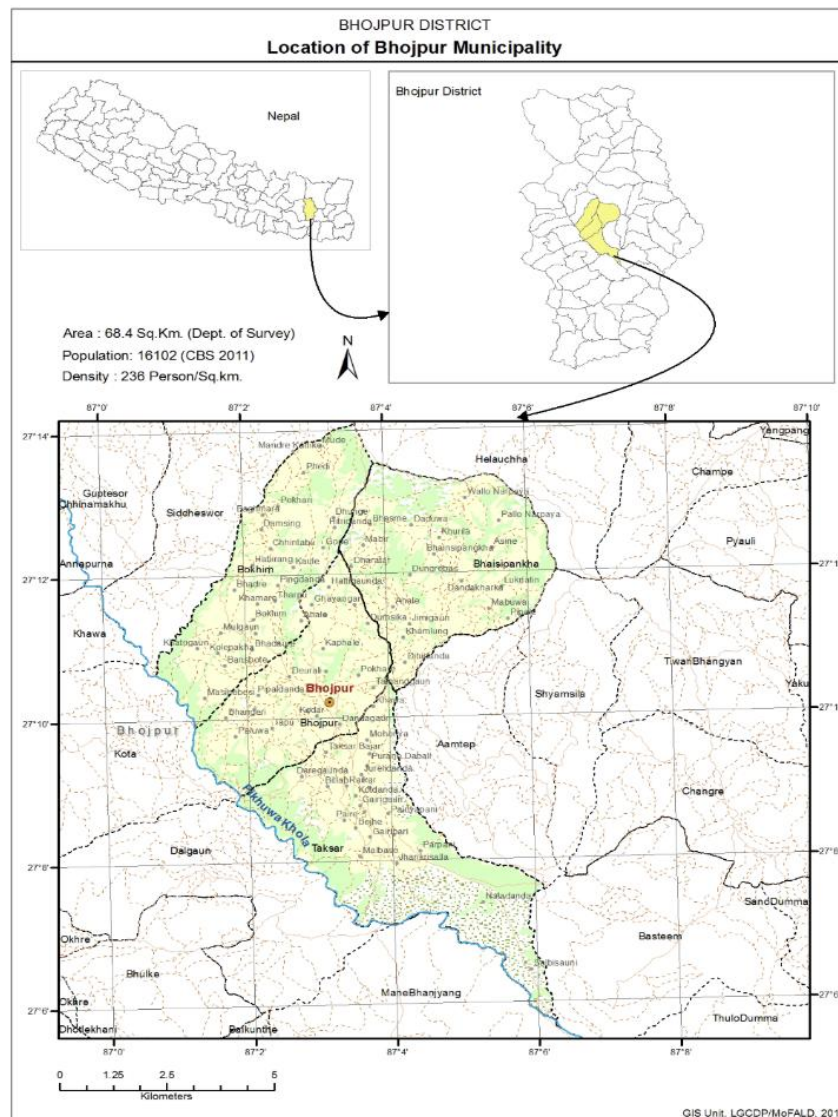
In their study on scaling education innovations in Tanzania, Kenya, and Zambia, Fulgence (2024) identifies important factors of successful scaling, such as the participation of higher education institutions as researchers, teacher education institutions as mentors, and the capacity building of educators and education leaders, such as the headteachers or school principals. It also emphasizes the significance of government involvement and structured pedagogy across the countries. In line with this finding, scaling child clubs in rural community schools may similarly depend on institutional support, leadership commitment, and structured guidance to ensure sustainability and integration within the existing education system. The involvement of educational authorities and capacity-building mechanisms can strengthen the institutionalization of such initiatives, especially in resource-constrained rural contexts. These findings from the study suggest that successful scaling requires coordinated support across different levels of the educational system.

Cited in Seden (2025), Foote et al. (2016) identified several key enablers of institutional reform: leveraging evidence of local achievements, securing administrative support, engaging external stakeholders for scale-up, and acquiring adequate financial resources. Conversely, challenges were mostly linked to the lack of these enabling factors, such as difficulties in securing funding, limited resources, and insufficient support from administrators and faculty for the reform.

## Section 3

# Methodology

### 3.1 Description of Study Site



**Figure 1** Map of Bhojpur District

Source: LGCDP/Moraga, [2014](#)

The study was conducted in Bhojpur Municipality, Bhojpur District, Koshi Province, Nepal, located approximately 400 km east of Kathmandu, which is the national capital. This study centers on community schools in the Bhojpur municipality, where policy-practice gaps in regard to child clubs are most pronounced. The selected rural community schools represent diverse social, cultural, and economic realities, such as multiple ethnic groups and diverse caste and class backgrounds, and

resource constraints, in which child clubs face practical challenges in participation and sustainability. Studying these schools helps in identifying context-specific opportunities and challenges. It also provides insights for sustainably scaling the child club to boost students' participation, leadership, and inclusion in school activities

## 3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The report is based on field data collected from 13 community schools from different wards in the Bhojपुरi Municipality, Nepal, involving headteachers, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) focal persons (supportive teacher mentors, usually social studies teachers), and students.

The following methods were used:

- **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** Conducted with 13 headteachers and 13 GESI focal persons from each of the 13 community schools. These interviews aimed to understand school-level governance, implementation practices, and administrative challenges related to child clubs.
- **Student Surveys and Interactions:** Conducted with 26 students, comprising one male and one female LIKE club member from each of the 13 community schools. These surveys and interactions captured students' experiences, participation levels, and perspectives on the relevance and functioning of child clubs.
- **Field Observation:** Field visits were conducted to observe school environments, existing club practices, and available infrastructure supporting children's club activities.
- **Data Synthesis and Triangulation:** Although data were originally collected for separate reports, this synthesis combines key informant interviews (KIIs), student surveys, and observational findings. Triangulation of data sources and methods was applied to generate new insights into opportunities, challenges, and recommendations for scaling the impact of child clubs in rural community schools.

## 3.3 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the process of data collection and reporting, the study adhered to ethical standards and safeguarding measures to protect participants.

1. **Informed Consent:** Consent was obtained from school authorities and all participants before data collection. The purpose of the study, how data would be used, and participants' rights were clearly communicated.
2. **Voluntary Participation:** Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents could decline or withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences.
3. **Child Safeguarding:** As the study involved school students, all interactions were conducted in a safe, respectful, and age-appropriate manner. Particular care was taken to uphold dignity, respect, and non-discrimination throughout the study. The survey avoided sensitive or intrusive questions, focusing instead on their perspectives and experiences.
4. **Confidentiality and Anonymity:** All data have been anonymized. Personal identifiers such as students' names or school names have not been used in the report to ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the respondents.
5. **Do No Harm:** The study was conducted in a way that minimized any potential risk or discomfort to participants.

- 6. Responsible Use of Data:** The data have been used solely for research purposes, aimed at contributing to academic knowledge and promoting gender equality and social inclusion, with no personal or financial gain involved.

### 3.4 Data Availability Statement

The data collected and analyzed during this study are not publicly available due to ethical considerations and confidentiality agreements with the participating schools and teachers. However, anonymized data may be made available upon reasonable request to LIKE Lab via email (like@kusoa.edu.np), provided that the request complies with ethical guidelines and institutional policies.

### 3.5 Limitations

While this report offers valuable insights into the opportunities and challenges in scaling the impact of child clubs in rural community schools, the following limitations should be considered when interpreting the analysis of this report.

1. The analysis only focuses on the community schools of Bhojपुरi Municipality, Nepal, which limits its applicability to other contexts, such as private schools or other geographic regions.
2. The scaling insights garnered are based on early-stage implementation (since our project began in March of 2024); therefore, verification regarding the theory about institutional integration in terms of prolonged sustainability may require a longer observation period.
3. Since the data collected relies on self-reported interviews with the GESI focal person and the headteachers, the possibility of 'self-reporting bias,' where the respondents may 'overreport' positive changes and outcomes, must be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.



## Section 4

# Opportunities and Challenges for Scaling Child Clubs

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### 4.1 Opportunities for Scaling Child Clubs

#### 4.1.1 Students' Enthusiasm and Willingness to Participate in the Child Clubs

It was noted through the responses collected by the students that they demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm for the establishment of a child club specifically aimed at promoting the values of GESI through various club activities within their school. All respondents (100%) supported the idea of forming the club, with 93.8% indicating their willingness to join and 96.9% expressing interest in participating in training to operate and sustain the club. The students also shared their preferred activities for the child club, such as football, volleyball, kabaddi, badminton, dance, speech, debate, poetry, singing, storytelling contests, relay races, and "taato-aalu" (a traditional ancient game in Nepal).

This high level of students' enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the child clubs represents a favorable opportunity for the sustainable scaling of the impact of the child clubs in the rural community schools. A study by Dahal (2014) states that students who are actively involved in the creation of the initiatives are more likely to understand their purpose, recognize their value, and stay committed to their success. In the same vein, Hartmann and Linn (2008), in their study, emphasize that scaling initiatives prematurely without evidence of impact or institutional support can lead to failure, disappointment, and wasted resources. Scaling up effectively requires institutions willing and able to support change. By leveraging the students' high enthusiasm and combining it with the support of the school administration, the child clubs can be scaled effectively.

#### 4.1.2 Students' Level of Awareness of the Child Clubs

It was found that the level of awareness of child clubs among the students was high, 71.9%, demonstrating that they were familiar with the concept of child clubs. Students described child clubs as *"groups formed to protect children's rights and promote their well-being"*. Many students also explained that child clubs help children build several skills, such as leadership and confidence, and achieve their goals. Students had used terms such as "child rights," "protection," and "groups formed for children" to describe child clubs.

This level of awareness among the students about the child clubs presents an opportunity for the sustainable expansion of the child clubs, because since the students already have some level of awareness about the concept of child clubs and recognize them as protectors of their rights, there is less likely to be resistant. Woltering et al. (2019), in their paper *"Scaling—from 'reaching many' to sustainable systems change at scale: A critical shift in mindset,"* emphasize the need for local ownership and integration into existing systems. Similarly, McLean and Gargani (2019) state that projects are more successful when stakeholders understand their objectives and advantages.

### 4.1.3 Skill Development of Students

It was reported by the survey administered to headteachers that 7 (53.8%) out of 13 students scored 3 on skill development indicators, showing that participation in LIKE club activities helped students develop key skills such as confidence, communication, teamwork, leadership, public speaking, and problem solving. Students were observed taking initiative, collaborating effectively with peers, and showing greater self-expression and responsibility. This demonstrates that the LIKE club provides a practical environment for students to learn and apply important life and leadership skills while participating in school-based activities.

The development of these skills presents a strong opportunity for sustainable scaling of child clubs in rural schools because skilled and capable students can act as peer leaders, mentors, and advocates for the club, reducing dependency on external facilitators. McLean and Gargani (2019) emphasize that initiatives are more likely to be sustained and scaled when local actors understand and value the innovation. Woltering et al. (2019) also highlight that scaling is not just about reaching more beneficiaries but embedding programs into systems through local ownership and capacity building. Similarly, Krainer et al. (2019) and Sabelli & Harris (2015) note that when participants acquire the necessary skills to lead and manage activities, initiatives are more likely to be replicated and adapted successfully in new contexts. Therefore, the skills students gain through the LIKE club's activities provide both the human capital and leadership capacity needed to expand and sustain child clubs across rural community schools.

## 4.2 Challenges for Consideration in Scaling Child Clubs

While there are notable opportunities for scaling child clubs, the data also revealed some operational challenges that need to be addressed to ensure their effective and sustainable expansion. Some of the identified challenges include:

### 4.2.1 Capacity-Building Training Required for Sustainable Club Operations

A primary challenge identified through the stakeholder survey was a gap in "know-how" for effectively operating the child club. The field data revealed that although there exists a high enthusiasm among the students to participate in a child club, a considerable number of students lack a clear understanding and awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the club's board of directors (BODs), such as confidently taking on the roles of club president, vice president, treasurer, and secretary. Furthermore, some students, as well as the GESI focal person, also demonstrated limited capacity in maintaining proper records of the club's meeting minutes and activities. Headteachers and the GESI focal person also expressed the need for periodic capacity-building support to strengthen both their and the students' understanding of the leadership responsibilities and maintenance of the proper documentation of club activities. The sustainable scaling of child clubs to other schools also depends on students' readiness to take on leadership roles and manage the child clubs independently. In the absence of it, replicating the initiative in other schools would be difficult without substantial external support. Capacity-building programs help students develop their leadership skills with the help of hands-on workshops, mentorship opportunities, and training tailored to their specific roles (Aquino & San Luis, 2025), therefore emphasizing the need for targeted capacity-building support.

This lack of awareness and understanding directly affects local ownership, which poses a significant challenge to the sustainable scaling of child clubs in rural community schools, as such scaling requires local ownership. The more buy-in and ownership an idea gets from local stakeholders, the greater its prospects of success (Kovalchuk & Gilchrist, 2022). In the same vein, Fulgence (2024), citing Fullan (2016) and Snilstveit et al. (2016) in their study, has stated that to successfully scale up educational

initiatives, attention should be focused on the capacity building of education leaders, such as teachers. When the students and teacher facilitators lack awareness and understanding of their leadership responsibilities as well as the documentation practices, then the club may struggle to function effectively, and its operation may become dependent on external support. Due to this, the intended impact of the clubs can risk being weakened when they are expanded to new schools. Targeted capacity-building workshops can help to equip the teacher facilitators and the students with the necessary skills, knowledge, and confidence required to sustain and spread the positive impact of child clubs across schools independently.

#### 4.2.2 Inadequate Parental Support

Parental support is essential for child clubs to function effectively and expand to new schools. Inadequate parental support poses a significant challenge to the sustainability and expansion of child clubs in rural community schools. Some students reported that “*parents are unsupportive*,” which discourages them from participating in the club activities. Dahal (2014) mentions in their study that parents and teachers sometimes feel that children’s involvement in the child clubs may interfere with their studies, as students miss their classes while taking part in the club’s activities. Without parental encouragement, the regular participation of students in the club may be affected, which threatens the long-term sustainability and scaling of these clubs to other schools.

McLean and Gargani (2019) state that scaling requires coordination across multiple actors, which also includes families and the broader community. When parents do not support the participation of their children in these clubs, then the replication of these clubs to new schools may face resistance, which can limit their sustainability. Therefore, addressing parental resistance is important for both the continuity of the club’s activities and its sustainable scaling to other rural schools.

#### 4.2.3 Shortage of Adequate Resources to Support Club Activities

Another challenge raised by headteachers, GESI focal persons, and students was the shortage of basic supplies required to carry out club activities effectively, such as dustbins for cleanliness campaigns, chart papers, markers, sports equipment, and other related materials. The absence of these resources makes it difficult to implement planned activities consistently and limits the overall functionality and impact of the clubs. Over time, this can affect student engagement and hinder the sustainability of the clubs. The GESI focal person also reported that the provision of small rewards or recognition for high-performing students could serve as an incentive to increase participation and motivation. Such incentives may encourage active involvement, foster healthy competition, and strengthen students’ commitment to club activities. Addressing these resource constraints can therefore play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness and long-term sustainability of child clubs.

Dahal (2014), in their study, states that community schools lack enough materials and opportunities for extracurricular activities when compared to private schools. This limitation has an impact on both the depth and the quality of student participation, and without adequate resources, participation risks becoming symbolic rather than real. Similarly, McLean and Gargani (2019, pg. 49) state that scaling efforts can be disrupted by urgency, time constraints, limited resources, or unforeseen events such as economic downturns or outbreaks of violence, which may change the planned course of expansion.

## Section 5

# Recommendations

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Based on the analysis presented above, the following recommendations are proposed to strengthen and scale child clubs in rural community schools:

### 1. **Provide Biannual Capacity-Building Workshops:**

It is recommended to provide biannual capacity-building workshops for club members and teacher facilitators. The training should focus on developing students' leadership skills and providing practical experience in Board of Directors (BoD) roles. This includes helping students understand how to serve as the club's president, secretary, treasurer, and other positions, as well as how to conduct club elections effectively. These sessions can help both students and facilitators gain confidence, manage clubs independently, and replicate them in other schools with minimal external support.

### 2. **Strengthen Parental Engagement and Support:**

It is recommended to increase parental awareness of the benefits of children's participation in clubs by inviting them to attend activities, such as debates, speeches, or performances, where students demonstrate leadership and public speaking skills. Parental support can also be encouraged through Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) and School Management Committee (SMC) meetings that explain the objectives and value of the clubs. Enhanced parental awareness will reduce resistance and foster a supportive environment for sustaining and expanding child clubs.

### 3. **Formalize the "School-to-Municipality" Link:**

It is recommended that the Bhojpur Municipality formally recognize the LIKE clubs within the existing Child-Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) framework. Municipal recognition can help secure small annual budget allocations for club activities, integrate club activities into the official school calendar, and provide official support that encourages school administrations and local stakeholders to sustain and replicate the clubs in other schools, strengthening long-term viability and scaling efforts.



## Section 6

# Conclusion

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This synthesis report assessed the opportunities and challenges associated with scaling the impact of child clubs in rural community schools, drawing on implementation experience from the LIKE club model across 13 community schools in Bhojpur Municipality, Nepal. The analysis identifies key opportunities that support the potential for scaling child clubs in rural community schools. Notably, there is a high level of student enthusiasm and willingness to participate in child club activities. Students also demonstrate a growing understanding of the role and benefits of child clubs. In addition, school leadership (headteachers and GESI focal persons) has observed tangible benefits from participation, particularly in the development of students' leadership, teamwork, and interpersonal skills. These factors indicate a strong foundation for expanding the model. At the same time, the findings highlight a set of implementation/operational challenges that constrain the sustainable scaling of impact. A key limitation is the need for structured capacity building for both students and teacher facilitators. This includes strengthening understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as developing the leadership and organizational skills required to manage club activities effectively, particularly for students serving in leadership roles such as the club's Board of Directors (BoDs).

Further constraints include limited parental support, which affects student participation and continuity of engagement, as well as resource limitations that restrict the planning and implementation of club activities. These challenges directly affect both the quality of implementation and the long-term sustainability of the model. Overall, child clubs are well aligned with Nepal's national policy framework on child participation and inclusive education. However, translating this alignment into sustained impact requires a more deliberate focus on strengthening capacity, ensuring resource support, and building community ownership.

To conclude, scaling the impact of child clubs in rural community schools will depend on the ability to leverage existing student engagement while systematically addressing institutional, capacity, and resource-related constraints. A balanced approach that combines expansion with system strengthening, particularly through stronger municipal linkages and formal integration of LIKE clubs within the Child-Friendly Local Governance (CFLG) framework at the municipal level, will be critical for achieving sustainable and meaningful outcomes. This is especially relevant given that the National CFLG Strategy (2011) already provides a policy basis for mainstreaming child rights within local governance structures, systems, and processes.

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# Annex

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## The 16 Well-being Domains of the LIKE club

The activities of the LIKE clubs are aligned with 16 capability domains, which were identified as being essential for ensuring a meaningful and equitable education for children. These domains were identified through earlier research in Bhojpur, Nepal, based on an assessment of children's valued well-being capabilities. The selected domains and their meaning are included below:

1. **Love, Care & Respect:** Being able to love those who love and care for us and to grieve at their absence.
2. **Education:** Being able to be educated.
3. **Nutrition & Well-being:** Being adequately nourished
4. **Aspiration:** Self-respect and aspiration, positive freedom, autonomy, and self-determination
5. **Physical Health:** Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely.
6. **Bodily Integrity:** Being able to move freely and being secure against assault, including sexual assault.
7. **Understand/Interpret, Plan, Imagine & Think:** Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason to form a conception of the good, and to engage in critical reflection.
8. **Religion & Identity:** Being able to search for the ultimate meaning of life in one's own way.
9. **Shelter & Environment:** Being able to be sheltered and to live in a healthy, safe, and pleasant environment.
10. **Mental Well-being:** Being able to be mentally healthy.
11. **Social Relations:** Being able to live with and toward others and engage in various forms of social interaction.
12. **Autonomy:** Being able to exercise autonomy in allocating one's time.
13. **Freedom from Exploitation:** Being able to be protected from economic and non-economic exploitation.
14. **Participation:** Being able to participate in political choices that govern one's life
15. **Mobility:** Being able to move freely from place to place.
16. **Gender Equality & Inclusive Curriculum:** Being able to access education that actively expands the real freedoms, agency, and life possibilities of learners of all genders by addressing structural inequalities and valuing diverse identities and knowledge.

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