

Changing Lives

The Impacts of RHEST's Scholarship Program on Girls in
Nepali Rural Communities



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Executive Summary

Background

Nepal is one of the poorest countries worldwide, and the poorest in South Asia, with a ranking of 144 on the Human Development Index (HDI), out of 182 nations. It has come a long way in its strives to improve education in the last 50 years, yet not nearly far enough to meet the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals which deal directly with universal provision of education and gender equality. Schools, especially in rural areas, lack capacity, proper training for teachers, and up to date curriculum, in addition to poor implementation capacity and centralized management of the education system. Estimates show that the current primary enrollment rate is somewhere between 72% and 83%. These rates are however ambiguous since they do not account for many factors such as drop outs, attendance rates, children repeating classes, and those who are in essence barred from receiving and education. Those most disadvantaged are girls, especially those from marginalized and indigenous communities living in the rural regions of the country.

Currently, illiteracy rates are nearly twice as high in rural areas than urban ones, and the literacy rate for women is at only 35%. World Vision Nepal estimates that three out of five girls do not ever enroll in secondary school, and of those enrolled many drop out early due to marriage. Poverty and the general low value of girls in families also leads them to be at a higher risk for human trafficking, especially if they are not enrolled in school. In many cases families think that sending their kids away to work, is in fact helping provide them with a better life, and often allow themselves to be tricked by brokers to let their girls go to the cities or abroad for work.

There are many educational interventions in Nepal. These range from incentive programs provided by the government to initiatives run by the UN and Save the Children. The Rural Health and Education Service Trust (RHEST) is one such organization, which has initiated a scholarship for girls program, with the goal to increase girls' capacities, reduce cases of human trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual abuse. They do this by supporting the most vulnerable girls throughout their primary and secondary education.

RHEST is a small NGO, based in Kathmandu and focusing its programs on education and health. The education program supports girls from classes 1 to 10 via monetary and materials support provided directly to the students. After class 10 and successful completion of their School Leaving Exam (SLC), girls can enroll in RHEST's sister organization, Amar Project, which supports girls for higher secondary and bachelors programs. The scholarship program has been active since 1996 and currently spans across 18 rural areas in 16 districts and supports girls by covering the cost of school fees, books, stationeries, uniforms, sweaters, and other school related accessories.

Currently the program is supporting 6,266 girls from 365 schools in rural Nepal with funding from The American Himalayan Foundation (AHF) as the major donor, and the Australian Himalayan Foundation (AusHF) as a secondary donor. RHEST is run by a seven member Executive Committee and employs 15 full-time and part-time staff. In addition, RHEST cooperates with six NGOs and 50 volunteers (field workers) working in the districts of Nepal.

They work closely with school staff and SMCs in advertising and collecting applications for each school year. SMCs are also in charge of identifying and selecting the new scholarship recipients based on criteria given to them by RHEST and then forwarding their selection to RHEST for final approval.

Girls are kept in the scholarship program until the completion of their SLC exam no matter if they fail a class or are poor in attendance. In addition RHEST runs interaction programs for RHEST students and parents once per year in order to educate them on the value of education, human trafficking, personal hygiene and women's rights. RHEST encounters a number of external and internal challenges in its daily operation including: ambiguous government policy, escalating costs because of the high inflation rates, poor rural infrastructure (especially poor or no roads), little skilled technical assistance and the general political unrest of Nepal. These frustrate sound budgeting of the costs of the program, and restrict the number of field trips to the districts where RHEST is active.

Since the start of its operation 14 years ago, the program has never been evaluated and an impact study was much needed in order to understand and assess the successes, shortcomings, and implementation of the RHEST scholarship program.

Research Design

The impact study of RHEST's education program took three theoretical premises in order to better understand and guide the research. The first premise was that it is aimed at pro-poor growth via the assumption that poverty reduces school participation and that educational attainment closes the inequality gap and leads to income growth. The second premise is that it employs a participatory approach by being dependant on the dedication of school officials and other community members. And third, the intervention aligns with Sen's Capability Approach by empowering girls via education by increasing their capabilities and capacity to make choices. These three approaches are closely related to each other and incorporated in the scheme of RHEST's intervention.

The main research question behind this study was to identify the impacts of RHEST's scholarship program on girls and young women in Nepali rural communities and the results were to be reached by evaluating and identifying:

- Trafficking realities in communities in which RHEST is active
- Perceptions on education
- Effects on community schools
- Access and selection to the scholarship program
- Opportunities for girls post-education

The study was commenced in III Phases:

- Phase I – Identify the characteristics of RHEST via interviews with staff and board members;
- Phase II – Gather background Information on educational interventions via interviews with other NGOs;

- Phase III – The most important phase, interviewing and surveying the immediate stakeholders from four districts.

The districts visited for the study were quite different from each other. **Makwanpur** district is a hill district in the central part of Nepal known as one of the districts most impacted by human trafficking. **Syangja** and **Kaski** districts are the first two districts where the program began and includes schools which have had the scholarship for nearly 14 years. The two districts are in close proximity to Pokhara, the second largest city of Nepal, but schools are often hard to reach due to bad or no roads in the mountain. The **Kathmandu Valley** is located in the hills surrounding Kathmandu, which gives better opportunities to families in terms of employment, however many indigenous and Dalit groups reside there, and many cannot afford to go to school.

Summary of Results

Out of 45 student households, students' families were compromised mostly of illiterate mothers with 77% never having attended school and 53% being illiterate. A significant number of the men in the families were also illiterate but fared better than the women, as they have more opportunities available to them in the context of Nepal's patriarchal society. Most students came from families who survived on day-to-day farming activities which brought in occasional income of some 100-200 Rupees (1-2 Euros) per day. Students with families in proximity to cities had a slightly higher income due to a larger availability of jobs. Most families were feeding and supporting at least four family members, with 91% of families having 4-8 mouths to feed. From all of the students and families surveyed 69% were from indigenous or Dalit households, and 31% were either Brahmin or Chettri (high caste).

Even though some girls had repeated classes, most were interested in education and wanted to continue and pursue careers apart from farming and household work. They all benefitted from the materials received and according to school officials out-performed girls without scholarships. A lot of the schools visited were clearly in poverty stricken areas and attending students would often come unprepared, due to lack of materials. The control group analysis showed that non-RHEST students often come from similar family situations though they are more prevalently from a higher caste than RHEST students. Many wait a long time to get new school materials such as uniform and school bag, and have to share scarce materials with their siblings.

In all schools visited the selection process and criteria used by school management committees were ambiguous, with school officials following self-imposed criteria in addition to the one given by RHEST. The criteria set for selection by RHEST includes preference for girls of Dalit/Indigenous status, those in risk of trafficking, bonded laborers, HIV in the family, and economic condition. Additional factors used by school officials to select new members included: performance in school, discipline, interest in education, and orphaned children. Although RHEST has defined criteria for schools to use, the vast number of applications of students of similar background makes it difficult for SMCs to select new scholars. The advertisement of the RHEST application process also differs from community to community. Methods vary and include: a public announcement that the application process is open, teachers informing students of need in person, or school officials pre-selecting families directly. Additionally, all the newly selected students seemed to be

already enrolled when they apply for the scholarship, with one school admitting that they do not allow students to apply unless they have been enrolled in school for at least one year, showing that though RHEST would like to encourage new enrollment, the retention of girl students is more of a reality.

There are a number of girls who have completed their SLC exam and are currently supported by RHEST's sister organization, In Honour of Amar. Last year there were 175 girls in higher secondary schools (grades 11-12), 13 girls in nursing schools and 43 in bachelors programs. In Makwanpur district, 17 girls in higher secondary schools were supported. In Syangja, 17 girls in higher secondary and one bachelor student were supported. In Kaski, 16 higher secondary, 10 bachelors, and one nursing students were supported. There is one graduated student from Syangja who is currently a RHEST field worker, as well as a teacher in her community school. She recently received her bachelor degree in social studies with funds from Amar Project. In her community she was the first RHEST graduate and further her education to university. There is little information on graduated students who have not continued their education, and graduates who drop out or choose not to continue their education are seldom heard of or kept track on.

Conclusion

RHEST's educational intervention is one of many in Nepal, and quite small scale in comparison to other initiatives. Their approach is clearly aimed at the poorest and by helping them increase their capabilities can be deemed as a pro-poor oriented approach. In terms of participatory development, it was concluded that although the approach is grass-roots by involving the locals, it is not truly representative due to amount of direct beneficiaries present in the process. Regardless, RHEST pride in the fact that once selected for a scholarship, a girl gets support through the end of the education, and that they employ the help of locals in order to implement major aspects of the program.

The number of girls RHEST supports in schools is still small in comparison to the total number of students attending, but the benefits for these girls are clearly seen in their performance and interest in receiving an education. Their drop-out rates are low and the number of girls who pass the SLC is higher than the national average (RHEST statistic). This is one of the major differences between RHEST and other incentive programs which pay for tuition or give food in exchange for enrollment, RHEST which provides girls with a dialogue on the importance of education, rather than just providing the goods and expecting them to want to stay in school.

The study also strengthened existing theoretical knowledge on Social Capital by showing how it can have negative and adverse effects. Social networks and relationships are the basis of why some groups may be excluded from community decisions and how conformity may be at the underbelly of issues such as trafficking and gender discrimination. This is illustrated by parents easily letting their daughters into the hand of traffickers and why favoritism in the selection process is used. Social networks, though key to the development of a community, can also be restrictive, exclusive, and shaping of community expectations.

With a few improvements in the implementation of the program, RHEST could become an exemplary NGO, whose strategies could be a model to others with the same aims.

Based on analysis of the results the following recommendations were provided

- Spread the word to the donor community by building a website
- Attract volunteers to counter lack of resources and qualified staff
- Attract more donors in order to diversify activities and expand the program
- Empower older RHEST girls and graduates by putting them in positions of responsibility in regard to the program within their school
- Ensure that the girls who are currently in the program are really motivated and not taking up the spot of someone who is in the same situation but do better
- Update the selection process as well as material distribution

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Abbreviations

AHF	American Himalayan Foundation
AusHF	Australian Himalayan Foundation
BPEP	Basic Primary Education Plan
CBO	Community Based Organization
CSSP	Community School Support Project
EFA	Education For All
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HDI	Human Development Index
HR	Human Rights
iNGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NNEPC	National Education Planning Commission
NPR	Nepalese Rupees
NYOF	Nepalese Youth Opportunity Fund
PABSON	Private and Boarding Schools Organization of Nepal
PEDP	Primary Education Development Plan
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
RHEST	Rural Health and Education Service Trust
SLC	School Leaving Exam
SMC	School Management Committee
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UN.GIFT	United Nations Global Initiative to Fight Human Trafficking
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

Chapter 1: Introduction

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world and the poorest one in South Asia. A large proportion of the population lives below the poverty line, with a third of all people living on \$1 per day. Until 2006 the country was involved in 10 years of civil war (CIA 2009). The civil war, initiated by Maoist insurgents, further destabilized the already weak state and infringed on people's universal rights, as well as ongoing development interventions. Education was one of the attempted reforms heavily impacted by the insurgency, as rural schools were often used to spread Maoist values and as recruiting sites.

Though improvements in the area of education have been observed in terms of enrollment and gender parity, education still remains a challenge in terms of achieving the Education For All and Millennium Development Goals (World Bank 2010). People living in rural areas are the poorest, illiteracy rates there are the highest, and traditional values persist. Women, especially those of Dalit and indigenous status, are particularly disadvantaged and lack precious human and social capital, which keeps them from escaping poverty. Increasing access to education will increase people's capacities which are essential for poor communities and overall pro-poor growth (ibid). The government has taken steps to improve access and enrollment via incentive programs, such as scholarships for Dalits and girls, which pay for school and exam fees. In addition there are numerous interventions from such organizations as the UN, the World Bank, Save The Children, World Vision, and World Education among others who in turn work with numerous local NGOs aiming their programs at supporting children in their education.

There are many negative effects of a lack of an education which plague rural communities and particularly girls. The dangers facing young women are countless and include forced early marriage, abuse, and human trafficking due to the general low value of girls within the family. NGOs estimate that between 10,000-15,000 Nepalese girls and women are being trafficked every year and are forced to work in Indian brothels (NHRC 2005: 14-15). Nepal is ranked Tier 2 by the 'US Trafficking in Persons Report – 2009', meaning that the Nepalese government makes efforts to comply with the minimal standards for the elimination of trafficking. According to the Council Framework of the European Union, lack of education and professional opportunities is the key cause for trafficking of girls and women (Richardson 2009: 264). Nepal has been working hard since the 1950s to reform its educational system, but even though enrollment for girls and boys has increased significantly in the last 50 years, the gender gap in attainment remains very big and human trafficking persists in the districts of Nepal.

This research takes the issue of education within the scope of a development intervention run by the Rural Health and Education Service Trust (RHEST). They are a small NGO based out of Kathmandu which firmly believes that a way to protect girls from human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual abuse is via education. Due to this, they initiated a scholarship program covering the costs of elementary and secondary education for poverty-line girls who are usually of ethnic minorities or low castes. The program has been active for nearly 14 years and currently supports some of the poorest girls in 18 rural areas of 16 districts of Nepal. They are currently providing scholarships to some 6,000+ girls throughout the

country. RHEST's approach is unique among such interventions in the sense that they make locals an integral part of the program, and without whom the program would not be able to commence. Local schools and SMC's are responsible for the identification and selection of scholarship recipients, as well as monitoring and evaluation, which is done with the help of RHEST fieldworkers and staff on their routine visits.

The research takes the premise that RHEST's scholarship program is rooted in participatory development via involving local stakeholders and social networks, and the Capability Approach, which sees education as key to increasing the future capabilities and the ability to make valued choices. The aim of the research was to study the impacts of the intervention in relation to the girls its supports and the community schools who take part. Such research is important due to the fact that RHEST has been implementing this intervention since 1996 and an assessment of this scale has never been done. The main objectives of the evaluation were to assess the relevance, successes, and shortcomings of the program in relation to their beneficiaries and their future capabilities. This objective was achieved by assessing the following points:

- Trafficking realities in communities in which RHEST is active
- Perceptions on education
- Effects on community schools
- Access and selection to the scholarship program
- Opportunities for girls post-education

The research results are based on a household survey analysis, comparisons against a control group, and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders. In addition background information was collected via interviews with leading iNGO's in Nepal, and characteristics of RHEST were understood via interviews with staff and board members. The study's result aim to place an intervention of this scale into the grand scheme of educational interventions in Nepal via their achievements and shortcomings as well as provide recommendations to RHEST for future improvements.

The thesis is organized in the following way:

1. Regional Framework;
2. Thematic/Theoretic Framework;
3. Methodology;
- 4 – 5. Results of the Study;
6. Discussion of the Findings;
7. Conclusion;
8. Recommendations; followed by the references used and annexes.

Chapter 2: Regional Framework

This section will present the general country context of Nepal, including a brief country profile, information on selected regions, education aspects, human trafficking, as well as the mission and objectives of the RHEST and its scholarship program.

Country Profile



Figure 2.1

Source: Magelan Maps 1999

Nepal is a country at a brink of a new age and a hope for a new beginning through which it can work towards significantly improving the lives of its people. Today Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world, with an HDI ranking of 144 out of 182. It has an ethnically diverse population (See Box 2.1) amounting to just under 29 million people, the majority of which make a living in a rural setting (CIA 2010). Even though some progress has been made in the reduction of poverty and the general strive towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, the 10-year civil war, which ended in 2006 has significantly impeded that process.

Nepal's population is predominantly Hindu (80.6%) and has a population growth of about 2% annually (CIA 2010). Poverty is still a huge challenge for the country, in which there are significantly wide discrepancies in terms of geographic location, gender, caste, and ethnicity. Currently one quarter of the population lives under the poverty line and agriculture is still the main economic activity of the nation. In order for these to be addressed the country needs to accelerate economic growth which is currently expected to be less than 4% for fiscal year 2010 (World Bank 2010).

Throughout its history Nepal has been ruled by monarchs or a ruling family, until 2008 when the monarchy was officially abolished (BBC 2009). Previous to that the first steps towards a democratic system were made in 1951 when a cabinet system of government briefly ended the monarchy. Another attempt was made in 1990 when a multiparty democracy was established under a constitutional form of monarchy. That also proved unsuccessful and due to the many failures of the government, a Civil War fueled by Maoist insurgents erupted.

The war divided the country into the rural regions, where the Maoists were most active, and the urban areas, which were the government strong holds. The insurgency further gave the king absolute power, who said that providing safety to his people is more important than democracy. The insurgency, which was rooted in the lack of social progress, plagued the country with over 10,000 deaths, negative rates of growth, and widening gaps between urban élites and the rural majority. (Carney 2007: 613) The unrest ended in 2006 with the formation of an interim constitution. In early 2008, the country was officially declared a federal republic abolishing the monarchy and later that year electing a president and a prime minister under a Maoist coalition government (CIA 2010).

The current president of Nepal is Ram Baran Yadav, who had previously served as Health Minister. The presidential position in Nepal is largely ceremonial and holds little actual power. The Prime Minister of Nepal is Madhav Kumar Nepal who was elected in May 2009 as a result of the resignation of Maoist leader Prachanda who stepped down after failing at his agenda to fire the army chief (BBC 2009). The recent deadline to create a constitution by May, 2010 was extended for one year as the government and its opposition could not come to terms. Tensions between the government and Maoists persist.

Selected Districts

Nepal is made up of five developmental regions, which are divided into 14 administrative zones which in turn are made up of 75 districts. The research undertaken was focused on rural areas in four districts of Nepal, which are indicated in Figure 2.2. This section will briefly overview the districts of Makwanpur, Syangja, Kaski, and the Kathmandu Valley with basic details on the local situations there and the major issues they deal with.

Box 2.1

Caste and Ethnicity in Nepal

It was in 1769 when high caste Hindus became politically dominant in Nepal. They imposed a hierarchy on the many local residential ethnic groups, prescribing them a certain role in society. Some 64 caste groups (See Annex 2) were established and absolved the many indigenous people of Nepal. It was not until 1963 when Hindu rules and caste considerations were removed from law, though not from practice (Stash 2001: 357). Currently the Hindu caste system is still de-facto in place. Power continues to be held largely by Brahmin and Chettri (high-caste) males, as well as the generally educated Newars, who are a Kathmandu based indigenous group. Those most marginalized in Nepali society are the formally 'untouchable' caste who now call themselves Dalits ('oppressed,' 'broken,' 'crushed'), and the Advasi Janjati (indigenous nationalities) (Bennet 2005, 5).



Figure 2.2 – Districts of Nepal

Source: Arnaoudova, 2010

Makwanpur District

Makwanpur district has a population of approximately 376,000 and consists of both hill and plain areas. Its district headquarters is the city of Hetauda, and though fairly modern, does not reflect the situation of the many villages around it. The district is home to vast ethnic, religious and economic diversity and is rich in natural resources, which at this point remain untouched. There are at least 15 indigenous groups living in the district with the majority of them being Tamang (a Buddhist Tibeto-Burman group).

The district is considered to have some of the poorest and most remote villages in the country and residents are mostly engaged in agricultural activities (Makwanpur DDC, 2010). Makwanpur is known as one of the districts most impacted by trafficking. Girls there are routinely sold, or sent to India to work in the circus where they seldom get paid and often get sexually abused (World Education, 2009). As 90% of the girls who get trafficked annually are Tamang, and 75% are Buddhist, Makwanpur's multi ethnic and poverty stricken communities are perfect targets for traffickers (Lama 2000, 3).

Syangja District

Syangja is a mountainous district with a population of 317,320 people living there. In 1994 it received millions of dollars under UNDP's South Asia Poverty Alleviation Programme and it became a model for development in the country. The district is populated by a mix of Brahmin and Chettri (high caste) people, as well as indigenous groups such as Gurung and Magar, and low-caste Dalits. The district has some 569 schools, educating 107,988 students. It is considered a highly literate district in Nepal, due to the fact that 67.4% of women are literate in comparison to the national average of 34.9% (Gurung 2008).

Kaski Districts

Kaski district is home to one of the most popular tourist destinations in Nepal, the Annapurna Range, and sees a large volume of tourists annually. It has a population of 380,527 people, the majority of which live in or around the district headquarters, Pokhara. Pokhara is a fairly developed city and also the country's second largest urban center (Nepal Population Report 2002).

The Kathmandu Valley

The Kathmandu Valley has a population of 1,645,091, the majority of which reside in the capital (Nepal Population Report 2002). It consists of three small districts including: Kathmandu District, Lalitpur District, and Bhaktapur District. It is home to Nepal's major urban center, including the country's capital, which is made up of Kathmandu and Lalitpur. In addition, it is also the home of most of the country's NGO's and iNGO's. The Valley became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1970 and has an additional 130 important monuments which are frequented by tourists. The hills around the city are populated by many Dalits and indigenous groups and are at times hard to reach due to lack of paved roads and monsoon rains.

Education in Nepal

Nepal's educational indicators, in terms of measuring the country's ability to ensure primary schooling by 2015 in relation to the 2nd MDG and EFA goals show slow progress and a high improbability of reaching the target¹. Data varies across sources and different numbers show a primary enrolment rate between 72% and 89% (UNDP 2006: 20-22). These numbers are misleading due to the fact that enrollment rates do not account for dropouts and children barred from getting an education such as some minorities, castes, and many girls.

Schools, especially in rural areas, lack capacity, proper training, and up to date curriculum, in addition to poor implementation capacity and centralized management of the educational system. Furthermore there are wide gaps between the educational status of men and women. In addition, many girls, ethnic minorities, and low-caste children do not have equal access to education (ibid). Currently the literacy rate for persons over 15 is 48.6% for the total population, 62.7% for males, and 34.9% for females, which illustrates the severity of the gender gap (CIA 2010).

The current educational system is set up in the following way:

- Primary schools: Class 1-5
- Lower-secondary schools: Class 6-8
- Secondary schools: Class 9-10
- Higher-secondary (intermediate) schools: Class 11-12

A student receives their School Leaving Certificate (SLC) after a successful completion of class 10 and an additional SLC examination. Currently, the government is preparing for a restructuring via the School Sector Reform (2009-2012), which will deem classes 1-8 as basic education, and classes 9-12 as secondary education (UNESCO 2010). To date the country has some 34,000 primary schools; 12,000 lower secondary schools; 4,000 secondary schools; and 1,500 higher secondary schools. Latest figures show net enrollment in primary schools as 89%, with a drop out rate in class 1 alone as 21% (ibid). Currently, 91% of households have access to primary education within half an hour walk from their house (ibid).

Educational Policy and Reforms

Nepal's educational policies for the past 50 years have been targeting the provision of universal education. Reforms began in the 1950's due to the fact that public education was

¹ See Annex 1- Map 1 for educational indicators by district

close to non-existent in that time period. The first step was taken in 1955 when the Nepal National Education Planning Commission (NNEPC) advised the government to make education free and compulsory with a suggestion that 25% (600,000) of all children should be enrolled in primary schools by 1965. By 1961 a UNESCO study assessed that some 176,701 students were enrolled in primary schools, out of which 38% were girls (Graner 2006). That was considered an astonishing achievement having in mind that in 1951 there were only 10,000 students enrolled (ibid). In 1971 a comprehensive Education Plan was introduced through which the number of primary schools increased from some 10,600 schools to 27,268 in 2003 (Carney 2007: 612). By the 1990s, progress had been made but net enrollment was just around 80%, which was way below standard, and only 37% of those enrolled were girls. Furthermore, there were large regional enrollment discrepancies, low primary school completion rates, outdated materials, and little teacher training and supervision. Due to these aspects the Nepali government launched two initiatives: The Basic and Primary Education Plan (BPEP) and the Primary Education Development Project (PEDP) which had strong roots in the EFA goals (Khaniya 2004: 317).

The two initiatives focused on different aspects of the education system, but failed to coordinate with each other. BPEP was introduced in two phases: phase 1 from 1992 to 2000; and phase 2 from 2000 to 2003. It focused on creating new primary school curriculum, textbooks, rehabilitations of classrooms, and teacher supervision. BPEP also had provisions for expanding non-formal activities for girls and women as well as to increase the number of female teachers (Graner 2006). PEDP on the other hand focused more on training and establishing resource centers for teachers, as well as building new facilities. Even though both projects had similar goals and objectives their failure to work with each other led to inadequacies in the sense that the teacher training initiatives of PEDP were not linked to the new curriculum created by BPEP (Khaniya 2004: 317).

Regardless, the two programs were deemed a success by the Ministry of Education and contributed to an increase in quality of the primary education sector. There were general improvements in enrollment rates, promotion, retention, literacy and dropouts. Even though this was the case these changes were minimal and specifically between 1997 and 2000, little change in literacy was recorded. Furthermore there were discrepancies between geographic areas and urban areas in particular scored significantly higher on standardized tests (Khaniya 2004: 319-324). The two programs also aimed to decentralize the system and delegate responsibilities to the districts, however this effort proved nothing more than a data collection technique, with decisions still coming from the top and ignoring local stakeholders. Via this data collecting and recording, the central government has been aiming to show improvement in its stride to achieve the EFA and MDG goals. Due to reported progress schools can secure more funding, even if the figures they send in are not truly representative.

Currently, the country is implementing an EFA Plan via its National Plan of Action 2001 – 2015, which is directly related to the Tenth Plan of the Nepal Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). The goals in terms of education are to increase access, especially of disadvantaged groups, focus on decentralization of schools, and ensure gender equality. Since the implementation of the Tenth Plan in 2003, there have been some positive indicators in terms of increased enrollment in class 1, with an increase of 4% between 2004,

and 2005, and more so for girls than boys. Overall however, gross enrollment in secondary schools has decreased for girls, proving that there are still major issues that are not adequately addressed (IMF 2007: 45). Further aspects on the efficacy of primary education have been raised due to a stagnated growth rate from 2004 to 2006 where the enrollment rate remained at 78% (IMF 2007: 46).

Decentralization of the Education System

One of the goals of the PRSPs is related to decentralization in education, and so far that has been a slow process in Nepal. This is largely as a result of the 1971 Education Plan which started an era of state intervention in the whole system and further weakened the community's stake in the process (IMF 2007: 48). The government has initiated a transfer of power to willing schools and expects to improve the quality of education through monitoring and supervision by beneficiaries and local School Management Committees (SMCs). The decentralization process has been met with a general distrust, in a sense that school officials have no faith that the government will provide continuous support over the years (ibid).

The World Bank has been in support of the government's decentralization efforts and has funded a major community managed schooling scheme called the Community School Support Project (CSSP). This was initiated in 2003, aiming at extending community management to the countries 26,000+ schools (Carney 2007: 612). The premise behind the project was that community management would bring back the schools to its actual owners, increase accountability and share the cost of schooling (Carney 2008: 73). This was in response to inadequate administration, poor service delivery and low levels of accountability which was the result of the centralized education system. The project aims at giving incentive grants to government funded schools in an attempt to assist the communities in taking over school management and influence them to improve local learning environments (Carney 2007: 616-618). Currently some 2,500 schools are participating in the projects in 56 of the 75 districts, 50% of which are located in the Eastern Region.

The main criticism behind this project is that it was imposed on Nepal by its donor organizations and it has failed to decentralize schools since devolution of the system has not been achieved. The government still controls the decentralized provision via the designed management structure. Decisions within SMCs are heavily influenced by select officials such as the district educational officer of the district appointed 'focal person' (Carney 2008: 75). Furthermore, the process of opting out of the centralized system was not clearly explained to the schools and a lot were left uninformed on how to handle the new system of management and the funds received.

Effects of the Maoist Insurgency

The Maoists of Nepal had educational reform and vast inclusion of Dalits and indigenous groups, in terms of educational attainment, as one of their main goals. However even though they wanted to support and strengthen community education systems, like any conflict, the Maoist Insurgency severely impeded educational efforts in Nepal.

Since its beginning in 1996, the struggle largely affected the delivery of education due to attacks on district education offices, damage to school buildings, school closures and displacement of students and teachers². To further this, Maoist nationwide strikes often led to school closings, and postponement of examinations which also took its toll on the system. Schools, teachers, and students became major targets of the insurgents, especially in rural areas, due to which many were abducted and even killed, in order to become soldiers or spies. Government schools were seen as sites for gaining support and also as a symbol of the state and their abuse of its power, and were naturally deemed as informal military bases in many rural areas of Nepal (UNESCO 2010: 117). In 2006, the National Teachers Association estimated that at least 160 teachers were killed and 3,000 were displaced by the conflict and in need of shelter (Graner 2006). Furthermore in areas of Maoist control, many teachers had to pay 5-10% of their salary to the Maoists and also attend education sessions promoting Maoist curriculum (Vaux 2006: 20). The Western regions in particular suffered the most damage and the effects of educational reforms were impeded (Khaniya 2004: 325-326).

The Maoists also targeted private schools, calling for the “commercialization of education” to stop (Graner 2006). At the time there were some 8,500 private schools serving some 1.5 million students throughout Nepal. Most of these schools were located in urban centers, mostly concentrated in Kathmandu as well as other cities in the Terai. The schools aimed at increasing the quality of Nepalese education, yet charged high rates for students to attend. These schools were threatened by the insurgents resulting in closures and further abductions of students and teachers. In December 2002, strikes initiated by student organizations of Maoist origin pressured the Private and Boarding Schools Organization of Nepal (PABSON) to reduce private school fees by 10-30%. The strikes continued for a full month until January 2003 when the issue was resolved (Graner 2006).

Due to the reported violence in schools, abductions, Maoist ‘taxation’ and forcible school closures, the declaration of schools as “Zones of Peace” by major international agencies was initiated. The campaign was largely run by UNICEF and Save the Children with the main goal being to ensure that children play no part in the ongoing crisis. Though the campaign touched upon keeping children away from the violence, Maoists continued to post their slogans in schools in order to gain support for their campaign (Vaux 2006).

Although the conflict is now officially over, tensions over the acceptance and ratification of a new constitution have emerged. In the process a weeklong strike in early May 2010, cancelled the Higher Secondary Examinations which students spend months preparing for, and therefore illustrating that the Maoists are still affecting the education system.

Human Trafficking

Human Trafficking is recognized by the United National Protocol on Trafficking in Persons as a modern form of slavery which largely involves coercion, fraud, or abduction. The definition of trafficking as accepted by the UN states that trafficking is:

² See Annex 1: Map 2 for visual information on the Maoist Influence

“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of threat, force, or coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or position of vulnerability or of giving or receiving payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person or having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.” (UN ESCAP, 2010)

Trafficking in persons is an internationally recognized human rights concern which has also become a central concern to many iNGOs and NGOs worldwide. Though solid statistics are hard to obtain, UN.GIFT estimates that around 2.5 million people are in forced labor as a result of trafficking with the largest number of 1.4 million people being in Asia and the Pacific. Furthermore some 1.2 million children are being trafficked each year, and out of the 43% trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation, 98% are women and girls (UN GIFT 2007) Asia is considered as the region most affected by trafficking not only because of its large population but also due to the surge of urbanization grown, lack of jobs, and stagnant poverty (Simkhada 2008: 235).

Trafficking of Nepalese girls and women into sex-work has been part of Nepalese history for many years. Poverty, gender-based discrimination, lack of judicial support and law enforcement, in addition to persistent corruption among officials, has facilitated human trade. NGOs estimate that between 10,000-15,000 Nepalese girls and women are being trafficked each year primarily for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation. (NHRC, 2005: 14- 15). Out of those, most are taken to India and work mainly in Red Light Area brothels where they become debt bonded and virtually enslaved. Furthermore some 7,500 children are trafficked domestically for the ever-growing Nepali adult industry and sent to work, in massage parlors, dance bars and local bars.

The National Center for AIDS and STD control estimates that more than 32,000 women work in the sex industry in Nepal, with girls under 18 comprising around half of all women involved (World Education 2009). What is even more disturbing is that there are around 5,000 girls aged less than 16 involved in the industry and the fact that over half of trafficked girls are aged 15 to 18 when they leave their families (UNICEF, 2007: 19).

There are certain communities in Nepal (i.e. Badi and Deuki) whereas sex work has become ingrained in local culture. In addition traditions of sending girls from Nuwakot and Sindhupalchowk to service in Kathmandu, which at times includes sex work, are still in practice. Districts like Makwanpur also experience high instances of human trafficking especially of girls, sometimes as young as 8, whose families are coerced to send them to work in Indian circuses. Human Trafficking is thus a severe problem in the country, leaving some villages with few women between the ages of 15-40 (Apne Aap, 2009). In addition, many girls feel compelled to enter sex work, due to poverty and social inequality and while some enter sex work voluntarily, most are forced or tricked into doing so. Trafficked girls are usually unmarried, non-literate, and between the ages of 12 and 25 (Simkhada 2008: 238). Returnees and trafficking survivors remain some of the most stigmatized groups in Nepal, lacking access to livelihoods and encountering numerous institutional barriers in obtaining income-sufficient employment and even acquiring citizenship papers.

Trafficking of humans and its prevention has been a main issue in Nepal since the 1990s with numerous NGOs, CBOs, and government ministries focusing their programs on it. Due to lack of communication, however, they have had limited success in achieving their goals. Nepal is ranked Tier 2 by the 'US Trafficking in Persons Report – 2009', meaning that the Nepalese government makes significant efforts to comply with the minimal standards for the elimination of trafficking. Nevertheless, implementation of policies and law enforcement are still lagging behind.

Profile of RHEST

The Rural Health and Education Service Trust (RHEST) is a small NGO, based out of Kathmandu and focusing its programs on education and health. It was started by Dr. Aruna Uprety in 1993 as an HIV/AIDS awareness program and expanded to the field education some three years later. At the time, there were many NGOs working on education, but most dealt with policy and the bureaucracy with very few grass-root initiatives. Her vision was to provide a safe place for girls near their homes, where they will learn about rights and learn how to decide for themselves. She chose to keep girls in public schools, near their homes, so they do not get a false sense of reality if removed from their community in order to attend private schools elsewhere.

The program supports girls from classes 1 to 10 via monetary and materials support as well as awareness raising. After class 10 and successful completion of their SLC exam, girls can enroll in RHEST's sister organization, In Honor of Amar Project, which supports girls for higher secondary and bachelors programs. The scholarship program was started in the district of Syangja with one school and 25 girls from a largely Dalit community and currently spans across 18 rural areas of 16 districts and supports girls by covering the cost of school fees, books, stationeries, uniforms, sweaters, and other school related accessories. In 2009, the scholarship program supported 6,266 girls from 365 schools of rural Nepal with funding from The American Himalayan Foundation (AHF) as the major donor, and the Australian Himalayan Foundation as a secondary donor³.

RHEST is run by a seven member Executive Committee and employs 15 full-time and part-time staff. In addition, RHEST cooperates with six NGOs and 50 volunteers working in the districts of Nepal. New schools and districts added to the program are determined by both RHEST and AHF, and the number of scholarships per school is decided by RHEST based on letters written by the schools and community assessments made by the field workers and RHEST staff. It is the responsibility of the field workers and SMCs to advertise and collect applications for each year. SMCs are also in charge of selecting the new scholarship recipients based on criteria given to them by the RHEST Board of Directors and then forward their selection to RHEST for final approval. Throughout the year RHEST visits a few newly selected households at random in order to verify the need of the girls. Girls are kept in the scholarship program until the completion of their SLC exam no matter if they fail a class or are poor in attendance. Materials and fees are distributed twice per year, once in the spring and once in the fall. Girls can apply only up to class 8, with a few exceptions of extraordinary cases.

³ See Annex 3 for totals on schools and students per district

In addition, RHEST runs interaction programs for RHEST students once per year in order to educate them and their families on the value of education, human trafficking, personal hygiene and women's rights. The newest policy added has been to include a small interaction for students during each material distribution and distribute a special publication to secondary school girls called Women's Voice which includes information on all the above listed issues and requires them to answer questions on the text. RHEST encounters a number of external and internal challenges in its daily operation including: ambiguous government policy, inflation rates, bad or no roads, little skilled technical assistance and the general political unrest of Nepal. These harm budgeting, as well as planned field trips to the districts where RHEST is active.

Currently 95% of the recipients attend school regularly and 82% passed their School Leaving Exam (SLC)⁴. Like other NGOs in developing countries RHEST faces many challenges in order to achieve its goals. The general political unrest, staunch traditional values of early marriage, and extreme poverty are just some of the reasons girls receiving scholarships have dropped out or been unable to attend schools. Ambiguous government policy, inflation rates and little skilled technical assistance further taint budgeting and access in terms of RHEST's functionality (RHEST 2009: 4-11). RHEST strives to achieve its mission statement of reducing human trafficking, domestic violence and sexual abuse via supporting the most vulnerable girls throughout their education, through partnerships with other NGOs and volunteers (see Figure 1.3). Their successes are indicated by drop out and attendance rates, the number of girls passing their School Leaving Exam, supporting minorities and the poorest of the poor.

⁴ See Annex 4 for drop-out reasons

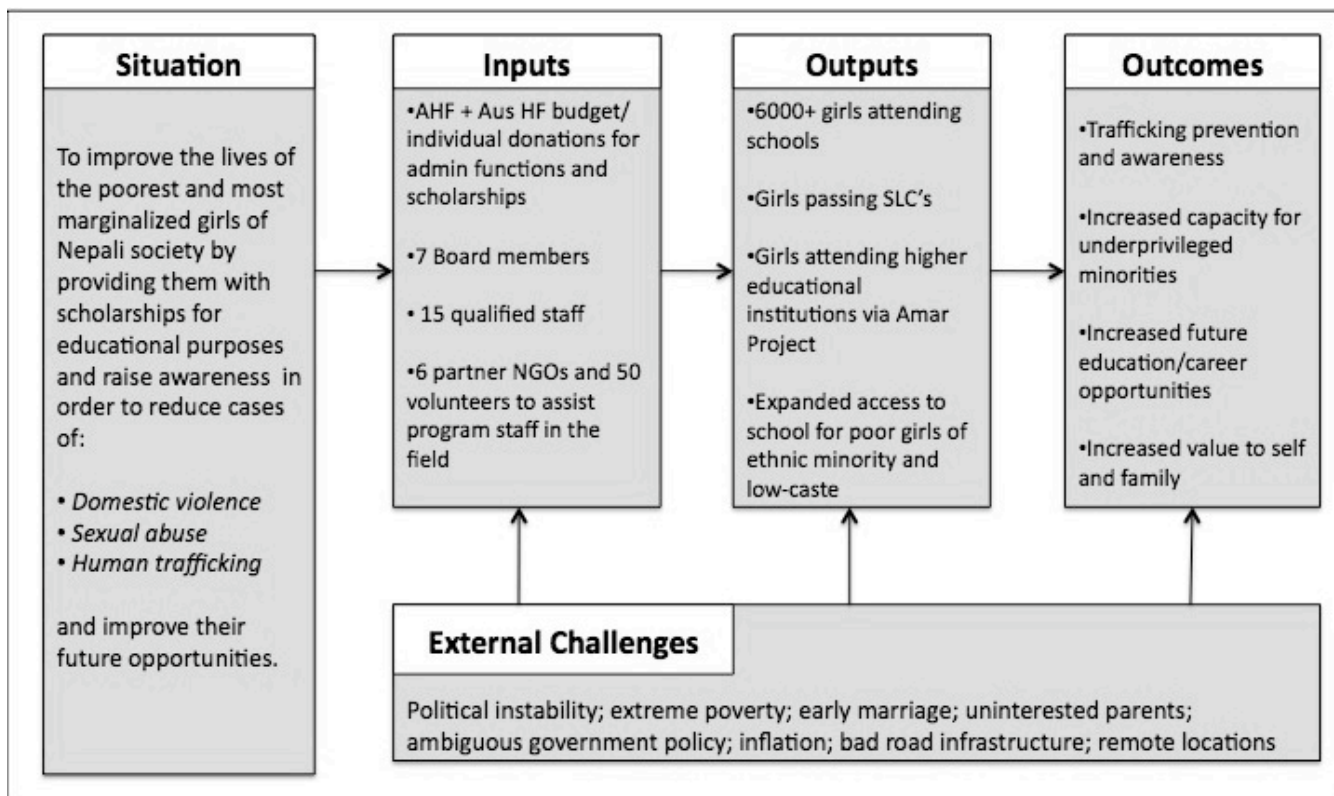


Figure 1.3 – Causal Pathways

The Model was created by the author of the thesis using annual reports, information gained from interviews with staff and board members and was approved by RHEST.

Chapter 3: Thematic/Theoretical Background

Numerous treaties, conventions, and international organizations have recognized the value of education for all and have enshrined it as the right of every child. These include important doctrines such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and The Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), in addition to which education was even included as an internationally guaranteed relief service. These treaties aim at ensuring free and compulsory education for all children as well as to promote personal development, increased respect for human rights and enable them to become effective members of a free society.

This chapter will discuss the world's commitment to providing universal primary education, promoting gender equality and general educational standards as well as the main approaches associated with these points and the research topic. Following, the theoretical framework of the research will be discussed

Global Initiatives and Major Theories Related to Education

This section will summarize the major concepts and initiatives related to education and referred to throughout the text.

Millennium Development Goals

In 2000, during the Millennium Summit, world leaders signed the Millennium Declaration, joining together in a global partnership to reduce extreme poverty. Quantified targets to address the world's main development challenges were set to be met by the year 2015, and those were accepted by 189 nations, and signed by 147 heads of state. This translated to the Eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which nations are working towards achieving today. The goals are:

1. To eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. To achieve universal primary education
3. To promote gender equality and empower women
4. To reduce child mortality
5. To improve maternal health
6. To combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. To ensure environmental sustainability
8. To develop a Global Partnership for Development (UNDP 2009)

These goals present a holistic approach, which incorporates inclusive, pro-poor, and sustainable economic growth methods as the main way to achieving the goals. This requires countries to aim their policies towards shared growth, equitable social development, pro-poor environmental management and good governance in order for progress to be made (ADB 2008). Critics of the MDGs say that the relationship of the goals is poorly theorized, there is an absence of structural analysis, and an absence of viewing people as individuals, which is making the goals close to impossible to reach by 2015 (Bradbury 2005: 391-392). The reality of the matter is that progress towards achieving the goals is far from uniform and there are major disparities between countries.

The right to universal education is the 2nd of the MDGs with a goal to achieve free, quality and compulsory primary education by the year 2015, and achieving gender equality is the premise of the 3rd MDG (UNICEF 2007:1).

Currently there are major barriers to achieving MDG 2 due to that fact there are still inequalities in terms of access to education in many countries. Current projections estimate that out of the 86 countries that do not have universal primary education, only 28 will be able to achieve the 2015 goal. Rural areas have the most children out of school with an estimated 25% (compared to 16% in cities), out of which most are girls (Fact Sheet 2008: 1). In terms of MDG 3, successes have been had, especially between 2000 and 2006 when girls' enrollment increased more than boys' in developing regions. However gender disparities in Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, and Western Asia still have the largest gender gaps in primary enrollment and the 2015 goal remains far out of sight (Fact Sheet 2008: 1).

Education for All

The Education For All (EFA) is an initiative first launched in 1990 during the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. There, representatives from 155 countries, as well as NGOs, adopted the Declaration on Education for All, reaffirming education as a fundamental human right with a set target to achieve its goals by 2000. The goals however failed to be met and so the Dakar Framework for Action was adopted during the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal. The commitments of the original EFA plan were reaffirmed and a vow to achieve the goals was set for 2015. The six EFA goals are:

1. To improve early childhood care and education especially for the most disadvantaged
2. Ensure that by 2015, girls and minorities have access to free and compulsory primary education
3. Equitable access to appropriate programs for both young people and adults
4. Achieving a 50% improvement of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women
5. Eliminate gender disparities by 2005 and achieve gender equality in education by 2015
6. To improve all aspects of the quality of education (UNESCO 2009)

The EFA initiative takes a rights-based approach and its goals are directly related to MDGs 2 and 3. Without achieving the EFA goals it is highly unlikely that the eight MDG goals will be reached, since the need for education encompasses them all. To date, there has been progress towards achieving the EFA goals. However there are still roughly 77 million children, out of which 44 million are girls, who are not in school due to financial, social, and physical challenges. Girls tend to be at a bigger disadvantage in terms of access as well as completion especially in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia (World Bank 2009).

Currently the EFA seems to be focusing primarily on universal primary education, seemingly ignoring the early childhood and adult education goals, and critics say that it is set to an 'impossible timeframe.' So far the EFA agenda has proven useful in underlining the under-financing of public institutions and inadequate aid support and distribution (Dyer 2008: 437).

Human-Rights Based Approach

The Human Rights Based Approach emerged as a main development strategy in the mid 1990s, consists of a holistic framework methodology, and aims at equitable development. Its premise is that it is grounded in the human rights of the Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. It calls for existing resources to be shared more equally and to empower marginalized people to assert their right over resources. Human rights are based on legal and ethical obligations and the approach recognizes that states and the international community, including donors, intergovernmental organizations, NGOs and Transnational Corporations, need to be held accountable for their provision (Cornwall 2004: 1415-1417).

The Human Rights Based Approach is based on the fact that human rights are universal, inalienable and indivisible for all and the realization that rights are inter-connected and the fulfillment of one is related to all the others. This approach is specifically sensitive to the poor and the most marginalized and it aims at empowering governments as well as other relevant institutions to come together and protect and support their constituents and their human rights (UNICEF 2007: 9-10).

This approach was adopted into UN activities during the UN Program for Reform in 1997 in an attempt to link all of its agencies together making human rights the core value driving them. Via this approach separate agencies are meant to interact and self-monitor' each other. UNICEF and UNDP in particular have had the most success in implementing rights-based approach initiatives within their agendas (Cornwall 2004: 1428). The MDGs and the EFA, which were discussed previously in this section, are both rooted in this approach. Taking a Human Rights stand on education basically translates to "assuring every child a quality education that respects and promotes her or his right to dignity and optimum development" (UNICEF 2007:1). In this framework the right to access, quality, and respect for human rights in educations must be addressed. It further involves a commitment to ensuring universal access, with a special effort to include those most marginalized (UNICEF 2007: 27).

Capability Approach

The Capability Approach (or Human Development Approach, as accepted by the UNDP) came about mainly from Amartya Sen's work and it "focuses on the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value and to enhance the substantive choices they have" (Sen 1997: 1950). This is done via the 'functionings' and 'capabilities' of people, which are mutually related being that 'functionings' are people's achievements and 'capabilities' are the abilities needed to achieve these functionings (Saito 2003: 19).

This approach is the main premise of the UNDP kept Human Development Index (HDI). It analyzes the comparative status of socio-economic development based upon the capabilities of different countries, with a focus on the ends rather than the means of development (Saito 2003: 22). The index was developed in 1990 and inspired by Sen's work, who says that even though a crude measure, the HDI is a better human development indicator than GDP or GNP measures. The HDI has in time become the primary framework for discussing equality of opportunity especially in terms of gender.

The value of education is key in terms of having the capabilities needed to achieve one's valued functionings. This approach evaluates human well-being in terms of the capability for functioning rather than resources, and says that education is a pre-condition to functionings (Wigley 2006: 289-293). Furthermore the education of women is an important aspect within this approach. It is proven that educating women leads to lower fertility and higher rates of children's schooling and health while enhancing their well-being, agency and power. Some of the capabilities women achieve via education include: living a longer life; enjoying bodily health; developing one's sense and practical reason; and having control over one's environment (Arends-Kuenning 2001: 125-128).

Theoretical Framework of the Research

There are a many theories which aim at explaining why and how an education can help a population. At a glance, RHEST's framework of operation can be seen to encompass a number of approaches in a sense that its vision is improvement via education of a certain group within a population. There are many factors that are addressed via their scholarship program and the framework of this research needs to be correctly established in order to know what aspects are to be looked at. RHEST's main goals are grouped in three areas which are all addressed as part of their scholarship program. They are: access to education, awareness raising, and empowerment for girls with a special focus on poverty. Due to the fact poverty is so central to the program, one can assume that their approach is aimed at pro-poor growth.

Pro-Poor Growth and Education

Pro-poor growth (Box 3.1) has been a central issue for policy makers, especially since the establishment of the MDGs. That is because of the recognized phenomena that if the income share of the poor increases then overall growth will also be increased (Lopez 2005: 4). Many researchers and organizations have recognized the fact that equality is a central aspect in pro-poor growth, and that growth cannot be achieved without the proper combination of education, macro-economic stability and infrastructure (Lopez 2005, 14). Only recently has it come out that non-income indicators should be used in order to assess pro-poor growth. Leading researchers speculate that existing poverty and inequality may be worsened through poor education, which coincides with the fact that poverty reduces the likelihood of school participation (Harttgen 2010: 2).

Box 3.1

What is Pro-Poor Growth?

Pro-poor growth considers the income of those who are under a pre-defined poverty line saying that when the income share of the poor increases then growth is achieved. There are two approaches when it comes to pro-poor growth. The first (absolute approach) one only considers growth when the income of the poor is rising as a result of growth, while the second (relative approach) one says that growth is pro-poor when the income of the poor grows faster than those of the population as a whole. Different organizations may function under either approach.

-UNDP (Kakwani, 2004)

There are many aspects that make official pro-poor growth schemes biased. Not only do they not take social (non-income) indicators into play, but also inequality is not always taken into account, because it can tip the scale of growth and if ignored can provide false growth results. Growth should be considered pro-poor not only when its based on income increases as a whole, but also in relation to overall poverty reduction as well as the decline

of inequalities (Lopez, 2005, 5). If you include equality in the pro-poor equation, education becomes essential for pro-poor growth. Though this is the case some cross-country regression studies have suggested that only primary and secondary education reduce inequality while higher education causes greater inequality (Lopez 2005: 12). That may be the case because in many developing countries it is mostly the rich and less traditional people who can afford higher education and therefore achieving it can be seen as further increasing the income gap, while providing basic education to the poor can increase their capabilities and therefore start closing the gap by having more opportunities available. Since pro-poor growth has been accepted as central to achieving the MDGs, the official definition should be re-examined to include non-income indicators in order to address those MDG's that deal with non-income aspects of well being, such as education (Grosse 2007, 1021). As poverty and its roots are multi-dimensional, the definition used for this research is one that considers education as an investment to raise the capabilities of the poor which in turn will increase their income share (Ehrenpreis, 2007: 27). Furthermore this definition takes into account gender inequality, which in a country like Nepal, is evident in education and employment patterns and in the overall picture can have a negative impact on economic growth (Ehrenpreis 2007: 5).

Participation in Development Interventions

Participation in rural development became an established concept after the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (WCARRD) in 1979. There it was declared that participation in governing institutions is an essential human right (Guimareas 2009: 5). Participation approaches started to become widely accepted in the 1980s and 1990s though a diversity of what participation actually means did emerge (ibid). The view taken in regard to this research is that people should be given a central position in interventions both as sources of need and actors of development (Guimareas 2009: 12). This kind of view identifies citizens and local social networks as responsible for their development by giving them the tools to enhance their own capabilities (Jennings 2000: 1). The UN Agenda for development lists participation as essential to successful development because it contributes to equity by involving people living in poverty. This way marginalized groups have a say in the planning and implementation of development activities (United Nations 2005). This in a sense empowers people and cuts reliance on outside agents. This move towards participation has been accepted as superior to holistic approaches and is key in leftist (neo-liberal, neo-Marxist) conceptualizations of development (Mohan 2000: 249). Criticism to this concept is vast saying that participation approaches romanticize the local. Regardless, the research's premise is that RHEST's intervention is a bottom-up approach, in place to remedy the government's shortcomings in regard to education. It has a focus on qualitative improvements over quantitative measures and involvement of the local stakeholders (JICA 2010).

More specifically RHEST's initiative fits the framework because it allows local schools and SMC's to identify and select the recipients of the scholarship themselves. In addition they are governed and assisted by RHEST volunteers (or field-workers) who are from the area and guide SMCs through the process, especially when the program is new. It is these efforts that make the program grass-roots with a special focus on community participation. As the founder of the NGO, Aruna Uprety says:

“One of the biggest challenges is when school officials are uninterested in helping with proper selection and assisting RHEST, because then the program does not function as it was intended as local input is key to success.”

This participation of locals, when done properly and by interested individuals, employs local social networks in the process. This is valuable as it uses already established social links, which can reach out and actually include those who may need it most. The Social Capital Theory (See Box 3.2) deems that as an essential aspect of development. These local

Box 3.2 – Social Capital

Social Capital are any kind of social network such as family, friends, work associates which are considered as an asset. They can have both costs and benefits, and enable people to act collectively (Woolcock, 2000). In other words, “social capital is the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures” (Portes 1998)

networks are key for improving local situations via their intimate knowledge of local livelihoods (Woolcock 2000). By employing SMCs that are made up of both school officials and community members, RHEST is in fact strengthening poor community members by enabling them to connect to higher up social networks, such as school officials. As it is the common view that social networks are not homogeneous and do not lead to a benefit of the whole community (ibid), by including SMCs in the selection process, they are in fact building bridges among social networks, in addition to enhancing community development.

Human Rights Approach vs. Capabilities Approach

The Human Rights (HR) and Capabilities Approaches both have strong stances on education and its importance for development. The RHEST scholarship framework however does not fit them both though at first glance this may be the case. As the HR Approach’s main premise is that education is a human right that should be extended to every child, and RHEST is targeting those that may not always have the chance, it is easily seen why it seems to fit this framework. In terms of the Capabilities Approach, RHEST is aiming at the increase of future opportunities for marginalized girls, and these capabilities are essential for the functionings required for girls to make their own choices. I argue that RHEST’s framework of operation is related and in tact with the Capability Approach and though the HR Approach also seems relevant, RHEST’s work does not fully support the HR Concept

In order for the scholarship program to be in line with the HR Approach, RHEST would need to do a lot more than their current activities. The HR Approach says that Education is an economic, social and cultural right (Tomasevski 2001: 8) and it has three aspects which need to be addressed in respect to education: access to, quality of, and respect in the learning environment (UNICEF 2007: 29). At this stage RHEST’s work fully fits only one of these aspects, that of Access. The HR framework says that in order to provide access to education, availability and accessibility need to be addressed as well as equality of opportunity, and education through all stages of childhood. By providing the means for marginalized girls to attend school, the RHEST scholarship program alleviates a monetary burden from the family, giving girls an opportunity of a lifetime, and supports them until they are finished with their secondary education. This is the core of their work which is fully in line with the HR Approach’s Right to Access premise. It can also be argued that RHEST plays some part in providing respect in the learning environment via their interaction programs by raising

awareness on gender issues and legal rights among others. However, to be truly be an HR centered approach the issue of quality of education would need to be addressed as well and currently that is not a goal of the program. A Right to Quality means that school curriculum would have to be made a priority, as well as the implementation of a rights based learning and assessment, in addition to a child friendly study environment (UNICEF 2007: 29).

The provision of education, as a part of the HR approach, should be provided by the government as it is states who are responsible for ensuring people's human rights. Education should be free of charge and everybody should be entitled to it. Government intervention is also needed concerning access to girls as parents are less likely to send their daughters to school if they are poor due to economic rationale (Tomasevski 2001: 8). The government needs to ensure that those marginalized have an access and compensation for extra materials like uniforms, textbooks, and exam fees should be included (Patel 2009: 42). Furthermore as a lot of children perform domestic labor, combining the school schedule with should be considered in schedule planning (i.e. farming season). At this stage the Nepali government has taken some measures in that direction in the sense that it has created incentive programs for Dalits and girls and also instituted 'cooking oil for families of girls' program to encourage enrollment (UNESCO 2010: 1). These however are not enough, as they only cover school fees, which do not include the numerous additional materials needed for a quality education.

The Capability Approach has often been applied to education as well as gender. Sen himself did research on gender in India (1985) and found vast discrimination and women lacking on

Box 3.3

Human Capital Theory

The Human Capital theory has been the most influential theory in creating educational policy in Western Nations. It has its roots in Adam Smith's work 'The Wealth of Nations'. This theory states that human capital are investments that people make in themselves to enhance their economic productivity. In relation to education the theory holds that "formal education is highly instrumental to improve the production capacity of a population." In other words the more educated a population, the more productive it is. Provision of formal education is viewed as an investment in human capital and an increase of investment in human capital leads to growth.

- Olaniyan, 2008

a number of functionings such as malnutrition and age specific mortality rates (Robeyns 2008: 5). Furthermore he has deemed education as one of the ways that humans can expand their capacity to make choices. As opposed to the HR Approach, the Capability Approach fits RHEST's scholarship program almost entirely, as their mission is to protect and empower girls via an education. Empowerment can be equated with the expansion of girls' capabilities, which are needed to achieve functioning, which in turn makes up the well-being of a person. This theory also reflects the major scrutiny of current EFA and MDG indicators which measure participation in education without taking into account content, the experience of the student, and gender equality (Unterhalter 2007). It also underlines the limitations of other theories such as the Human Capital Theory (Box 3.3), which evaluates the value of education by income measures (rate of return) and does not evaluate the actual capabilities people gained (ibid). This means that capacities may be other things than income-generating activities, such as being able to

make choices as a result of accumulated capabilities. These do not deal with enrollment, test scores, or income, but rather the ability to choose your life path even if it may be to

remain in a traditional society (ibid). The core capabilities that education is essential for are those of being autonomous, making valued choices, and equalizing capabilities while remaining sensitive to a diverse social setting.

In conclusion, the premise of this research is that RHEST aims at increasing girls' capabilities, by providing them with the means to receive an education via employing local participation. With the combination of these aspects, RHEST gives girls the opportunity to make choices about their education and opens their eyes to possibilities available after SLC completion. In addition to alignment with the Capability Theory and participatory development, RHEST's program is also aimed at pro-poor growth, by helping those most in need to gain an education. This is the case because an education is one of the few ways available to get a better job, which in turn leads to a higher income, resulting in growth. This growth is not possible without some investment in education, which is usually unavailable to the poor who prefer to keep their kids at home in order to supplement to household income, which is essential for basic necessities such as putting food on the table.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This section will present the main research question, conceptual framework and then the procedures and measures taken to complete the study.

Research Objective and Questions

RHEST's scholarship program is directly related to the Capability Approach, participatory development, and pro-poor growth via education. Their work encompasses the educational aspect of all of these approaches by trying to provide education to disadvantaged girls who are often from indigenous or marginalized communities and lack access to education due to finances. Furthermore, via education, RHEST, directly influences the participants' future opportunities by opening the door to pursue prospects which, without an education, would be unattainable. In order to better understand the aspects and functionality of this educational intervention, evaluative research was conducted with the main objectives being to assess the relevance, successes, and shortcomings of the program as well as provide recommendations for better operationalization of RHEST's activities. These objectives were achieved via evaluating the following points:

- Trafficking realities in communities in which RHEST is active
- Perceptions on education
- Effects on community schools
- Access and selection to the scholarship program
- Opportunities for girls post-education

In order to achieve the objectives of this study, a central research question was formulated:

What is the impact of RHEST's scholarship program on girls and young women in Nepali rural communities in relation to their future capabilities and perceived self worth?

In addition, a number of sub-questions were created in order to further understand and supplement to the central research question:

- What are the characteristics of and local attitudes towards girls' education and trafficking?
- How has RHEST's scholarship program impacted community schools and beneficiary households?
- What is the involvement of the program's stakeholders in the selection and identification of scholarship recipients?
- What activities have scholarship alumni undertaken after finishing their secondary education and what are the opportunities available to them?

Conceptual Framework

The objectives and research questions listed above were guided by a preconceived notion of concepts aiming to explain RHEST's goals. The main purpose of RHEST's scholarship program

is to make disadvantaged girls from marginalized and indigenous rural communities more valuable to their family as well as themselves by sending them to school. Scholarship recipients are selected by SMCs and the application process is advertised by local schools, making them an integral part of the selection process. RHEST argues that not only will girls benefit from schooling by becoming valuable assets to themselves and their families, but also that this is an effective anti-trafficking technique for rural Nepal. Furthermore, via educational attainment and trainings conducted by RHEST, girls in the program will have better knowledge of their rights and an increase in future opportunities available to them, giving them a chance to better construct their livelihoods. By providing the means for increased future capabilities, and additional value to family and self through educational scholarships, RHEST contributes towards the empowerment of women, human trafficking prevention and the achievement of the MDG and EFA goals which deal with gender equality and education. This relationship is illustrated in the following Conceptual Model (Figure 4.1) and was used to identify the research design.

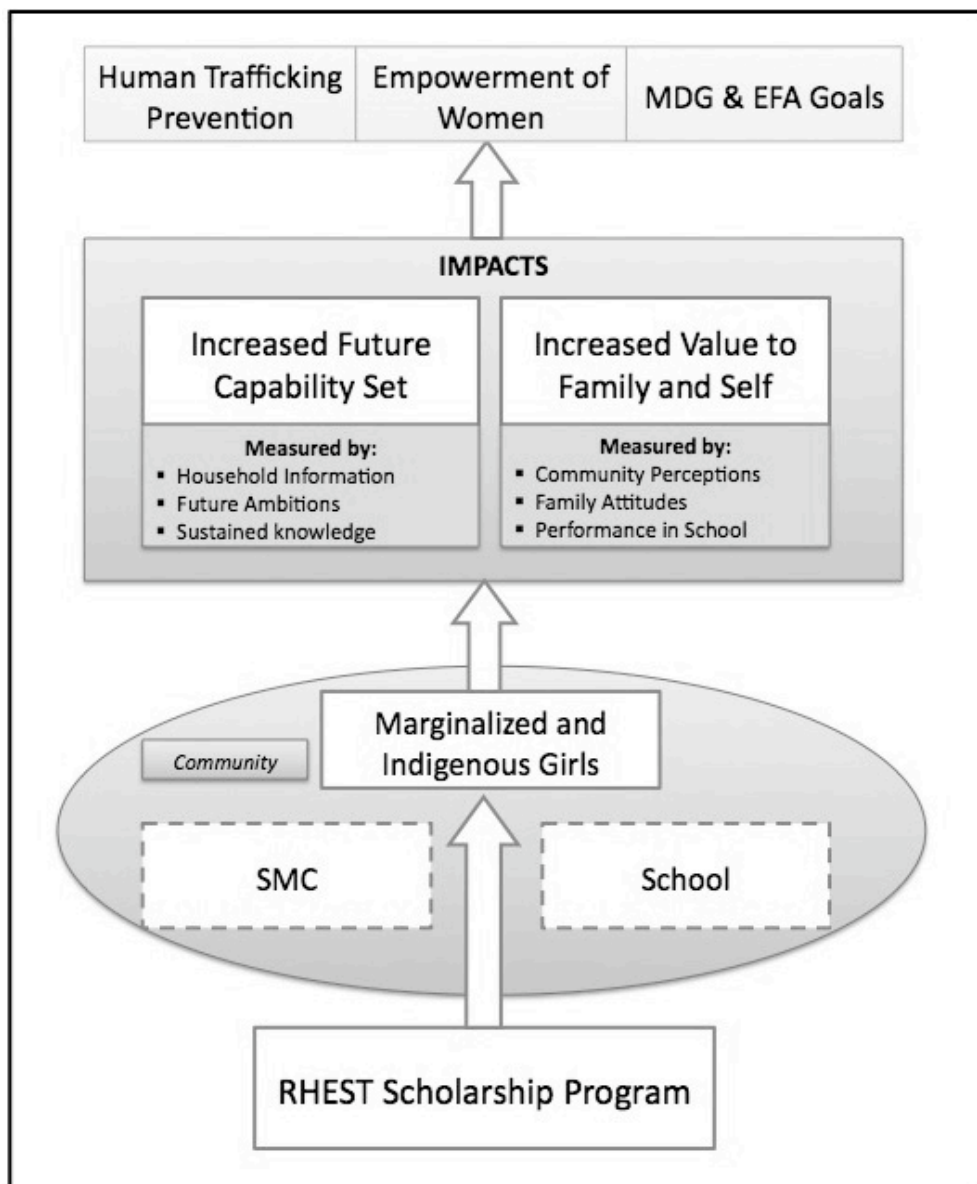


Figure 4.1 - Conceptual Model

Procedures and Measures

In order to assess the characteristics of RHEST and the impacts on stakeholders, quantitative and qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews and household surveys of the program's beneficiaries was used⁵. The research was conducted in three phases:

- Phase I – Identify the characteristics of RHEST
- Phase II – Gather background Information on educational interventions
- Phase III – Learn from the immediate stakeholders

In Phase I, key staff members and board members were interviewed in order to attain a better understanding of what the characteristics of RHEST are. Furthermore, field workers, assisting RHEST in Nepali rural communities with the implementation of the scholarship program were also interviewed in order to gather their opinions on the program and better understand their responsibilities. Additionally background information and an interview was conducted with the Program Manager of the RHEST's sister organization, In Honour of Amar Project, which takes over for RHEST after the students pass the SLC exam in order to attain information on their activities.

Phase II was necessary in order to assess what NGOs with similar objectives are doing, I interviewed and obtained background documents on completed and ongoing projects from the Nepalese Youth Opportunity Foundation (NYOF), World Vision Nepal, World Education, and The Little Sisters Fund, who all work towards achieving the EFA goals via education, child protection and/or anti-human trafficking programs. Furthermore, I obtained information about internal and external trafficking of girls from World Education's Thematic Officer as well as background documents from Maiti Nepal, and the United Nations local offices.

Phase III, took me into the field and was in place in order to assess the impacts of the program, as well as gather opinions of its implementation including challenges and successes. For the purpose, I visited Makwanpur, Syangja and Kaski districts, as well as various schools from the Kathmandu Valley⁶. Each of the districts has a different amounts of students and schools supported as well as RHEST involvement for a different length of time (See Table 4.1).

Districts	Schools	Students	Years in district
Makwanpur	25	417	5
Syangja	21	274	13
Kaski	18	253	12
Kathmandu Valley	29	483	9

Table 4.1
RHEST involvement per district

In Makwanpur, five schools were visited, all in different stages of their involvement with RHEST, and key stakeholders were interviewed including: 14 RHEST students, four parents, four headmasters⁷, two community members, and two teachers. Also three Focus Group

⁵ See Annexes 5-6 for sample questionnaire and survey

⁶ Refer back to Figure 2.2

⁷ All of the headmasters are always members of the SMCs, as well as the community members interviewed

Discussions (FGDs) were held including two with 20 parents and one with 12 students and teachers from a remote area school, in order to get a better grasp of community opinions about local situations dealing with education, trafficking, and poverty. Following, Syangja and Kaski districts were visited, where I observed material distribution, participated in an interaction programs and conducted interviews and surveys with key stakeholders. Syangja is the first district where RHEST began to implement its scholarship program in 1996, and Kaski was the next district added. The Syangja material distribution took five days and distributed materials to all 22 schools. Six students, two teachers, three parents, and five principals were interviewed from eight schools of Syangja district. In Kaski district, one suburban school was visited where three RHEST students were interviewed, as well as the principal, three parents, and three non-RHEST students. Due to a nationwide strike the Kaski program was almost entirely cut out, thus why only one school was visited. Finally, two days were allotted for researching the Kathmandu Valley where four RHEST schools were visited. There, six students, five parents, and three principals were interviewed. The interviews conducted in these districts helped asses local values towards education, reasons why youth stay out of school, trafficking risks, selection process, student’s households and the quality and impacts of RHEST’s scholarship program on the schools and communities visited. In total 30 students, 19 parents, and 19 school officials were interviewed from 18 schools of four districts of Nepal, compromising a total of 69 interviews (See Table 4.2).

District	Schools	Students	School Staff	Parents
Makwanpur	5	14	8	4
Syangja/Kaski	10	10	8	6
Kathmandu Valley	4	6	4	5
TOTAL	19	30	20	15

Table 4.2
Total Stakeholder Interviews

For the purpose of a control group a number of non-RHEST students, school staff and parents were interviewed from Makwanpur, Kaski, and Kathmandu Valley schools. In Makwanpur, one school was visited and there three girls, two staff, and one parent were interviewed and surveyed. In Kaski three non-RHEST students were interviewed and in the Kathmandu Valley, nine students were surveyed and interviewed as well as the principal. These interviews and surveys were aimed at providing a comparison picture between RHEST and non-RHEST schools for the study.

Chapters five and six report on the results of the research, while chapter seven provides a discussion and interpretation of the results. All figures and tables in these chapters were created by the author according to the methodology.

Note: A number of limitations were encountered during the research which intervned with the study and affected the number of interviews and surveys which were conducted. These are explained in detail in Annex 7 on page 75.

Chapter 5: Rural Realities and Attitudes Towards Education and Trafficking

To better understand where and whom RHEST works with, it is essential to describe the findings of the research on a community level and describe the socioeconomic status of RHEST beneficiaries. Furthermore this section describes local perception on trafficking and education as they are at the essence of the scholarship program.

Characteristics of RHEST Beneficiaries

Though the districts and communities visited varied in geographical location they still shared a number of similarities. This was the case especially in terms of the families benefiting from the RHEST scholarship program and their proximity to roads and bigger towns. In terms of access, almost all of the communities were at least a two-hour walk from a main road, which for Nepal is not remote. Respondents from one remote community had come to Hetauda, Makwanpur to pick up RHEST supplies and therefore could be interviewed as well. Their community was the most isolated, being a days walk from the nearest road and another few hours to Hetauda. They were also the poorest as the only work available there is seasonal agricultural work.

Almost all schools visited were secondary schools with only two higher secondary ones, meaning that students can complete their secondary education without having to leave their home. Only five students from Makwanpur district had left their families and were sharing basic rented rooms near their secondary school. This was the case due to the fact their home communities only offered primary education. Their villages of origin were a daylong bus ride and the girls went home 1-2 times a month or whenever they could afford it.

Households of the families benefiting from the scholarship consisted of at least three and as many as eleven household members. Out of 45 households, 91% had between four and eight people living in the same house (See Figure 5.1).

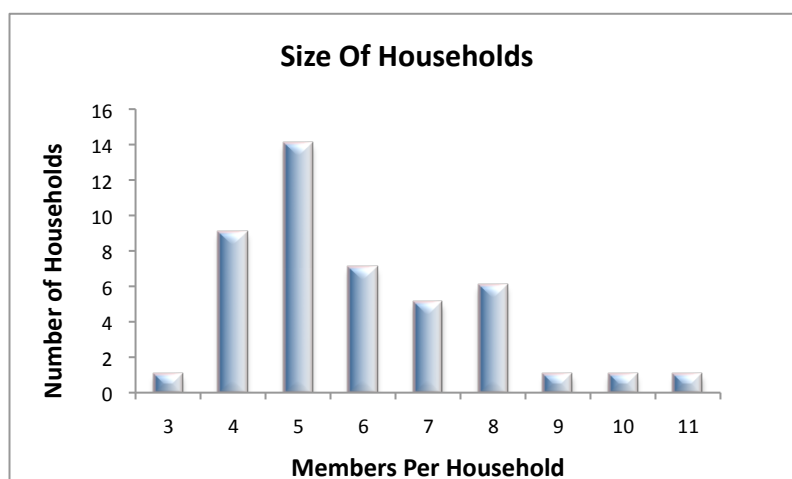


Figure 5.1
The figure is based on 45 RHEST households

The average income of these families varied from district to district but remained low throughout as indicated by Figure 5.3. The average income was 3,341 NPR per month (35€) for RHEST beneficiaries. In interviews, when asked about their economic condition, all respondents identified themselves and their communities as poor. In all of the communities the predominant occupation of family members was related to farming, both on their own land as well as on others for additional wages (See Figure 5.2). Out of all adults over the age of 18 who were not currently a part of the RHEST scholarship program, 50% were farmers, 11% were wage laborers (including construction work, farming, delivery, etc) and 14% were unemployed. There were more women farmers than men and only women were involved in household activities as local value systems deem women as the ones responsible for such tasks (Yabiku 2009: 546).

Families living close to big cities showed to have more opportunities available to them in terms of work. These opportunities included such occupations as driver, guard, and local government positions, as is seen in Kaski and the Kathmandu Valley. Even though none of these occupations are very lucrative, out of the four districts visited those communities with the most farming jobs were the poorest ones. This is indicated by the significantly lower average monthly income of 1,559 NPR (16€) of Makwanpur District where 59% of adults were farmers and 28% were housewives or unemployed.

Respondents from the Kathmandu Valley which made double of what Makwanpur respondents did, still had a very low monthly average of 3,479 NPR (36€). They were also mostly farmers (50%), however less were unemployed or housewives (15%), which contributed to the higher average income. The highest earners by far were respondents from Kaski district, out of which only 29% of adults were farmers and 21% were unemployed or housewives. RHEST beneficiaries there have more jobs available to them as they are quite near Pokhara, a major city and touristic center, but also the results there are based on only 14 households as opposed to more than double that for the other districts included in the study. Syangja, which falls somewhere in the middle in terms of monthly income is a district where NGOs and aid have been for years. Although still having a high percentage of farmers, respondents there (44%) fared better than Makwanpur and Kathmandu Valley and had an average monthly income of roughly 50 Euros per month.

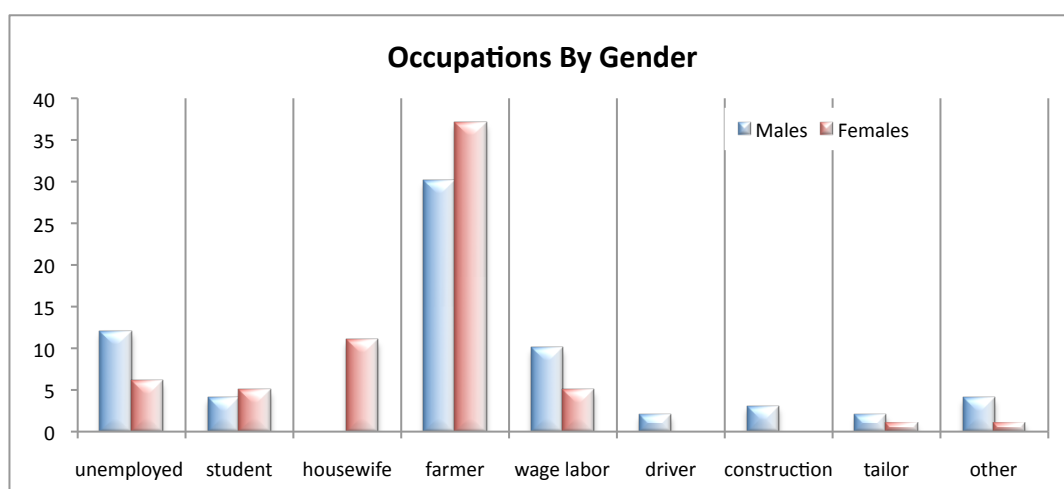


Figure 5.2 – Occupations

The table is derived from 133 adults (67 males, 66 females) over the age of 18 who are not currently receiving the RHEST scholarship

The Control group analysis proved that situations for non-RHEST households in the same communities are better than those supported by the scholarship. Some occupations varied between the two groups, especially in the communities near the cities and included a number of skilled laborers, and higher percentage of drivers and civil servants, for non-RHEST respondents. One family owned a business which brought the Kathmandu Valley average income significantly up, but even without it the situations of the Control Group was unquestionably better those of RHEST benefactors.

The majority of non-RHEST respondents were still engaged in low-income earning activities and out of all adults:

- 10% were still in school
- 48% were housewives or unemployed
- 19% were farmers or wage laborers
- 12% were drivers
- 8% worked for local government structures
- 3% held other miscellaneous jobs

Though the average non-RHEST household was engaged in similar occupations as RHEST households, the average income of non-RHEST families was higher than RHEST families, while the number of family members per family was similar with an average of six persons per family living in one household.

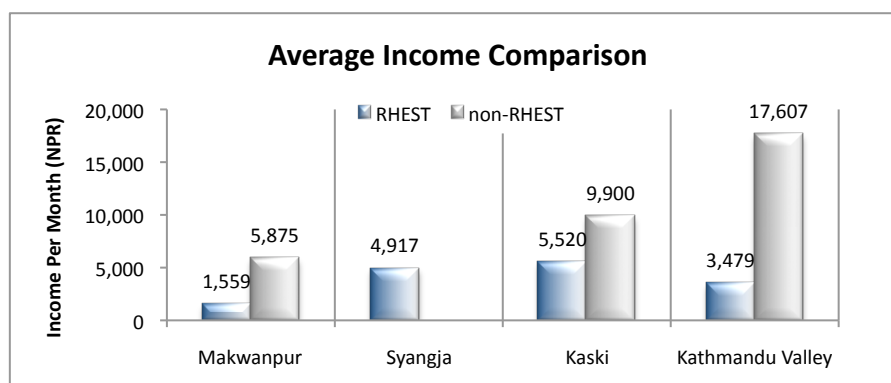


Figure 5.3 – Average Income for RHEST and non-RHEST households
The data is an average of the income of all 45 RHEST households and 16 non-RHEST households surveyed

Perceptions on Education

Understanding what local attitudes towards education are is key to understanding why education is not always a priority in many households. According to school officials in the districts, if a child does not go to school, they are most likely working, getting married early, or contributing to household activities. In addition, RHEST field workers said that traditional beliefs and distance from school also deters parents from sending their children to school.

The most common statement from parents uninterested in sending their children to schools is that “education does not put food on the table” as indicated by RHEST field workers at their RHEST annual meeting. Coincidentally those are the children who are also most likely to

be trafficked for sexual commercial exploitation. It was said that both boys and girls in communities are often not in school, however there are usually more girls who stay out as families do not see a benefit in sending them to school because they will eventually get married and leave the household. In all surveyed Makwanpur schools, the head masters said that there are many children who are not enrolled in school, many of them being girls, and a lot more who drop out early. The main issue, they agreed, were the parents and their lack of understanding of what an education can do.

Out of the districts visited Makwanpur had the biggest problem with out of school children, where every student and school official interviewed indicated that this is the case. In Kaski and Syangja, though there seems to be a higher interest in education, two school officials still expressed that in their communities some children do not attend. In contrast all students interviewed said that all kids they know are in school.

The main reasons for children staying out of school are the family’s economic condition and the perceived value education has. Out of the districts visited, most parents as well as other adults living in the households had received no education. Out of a total 133 adults in all districts, 73% had never gone to school and only 7% had an education past class 10 (See Figure 5.5). Out of all districts Makwanpur had the most uneducated adults, followed by the Kathmandu Valley (Table 4.1). Coincidentally those are also the communities housing the most indigenous and Dalit groups who are usually the most marginalized within the country.

Level of Education	Makwanpur	Syangja	Kaski	KTM Valley	TOTAL
Illiterate	28	7	2	17	54
Literate	21	11	5	6	43
Primary	5	2	0	3	10
Secondary	4	6	3	4	17
Higher Secondary+	0	3	4	2	9
TOTAL	58	29	14	32	133

Table 5.1
Education Level of Adults out of 45 households

Even though they did not have the chance to attend school, all parents of RHEST recipients, agreed that there are benefits which come along with an education. Some of these included: increased future opportunity, independence, and equality. In two FGDs in Makwanpur, parents could not elaborate more and listed the fact that they did not go to school as the reason. As most of the parents interviewed were mothers it is important to make the distinction that significantly more adult women never went to school than men. In addition, out of those who never attended school, illiteracy rates of women almost doubled that of men (See Figure 5.4). Furthermore since families marry into like situations the number of secondary and higher secondary graduates is almost the same for men and women. Most of them also come from the more developed districts as indicated by Table 5.1 where Makwanpur, the poorest district had only four adults with some secondary education and none who had gone to higher secondary school.

As the interviews and FGDs were conducted with groups of 90% women most of which were uneducated, their views were very limited in the sense that most could not really see an immediate benefit of an education. All of the parents from Makwanpur and Syangja expressed that there are no jobs other than agricultural work in their communities and that

is why it is hard to see a further benefit of going to school, since most wage labor and agricultural jobs do not require an education.

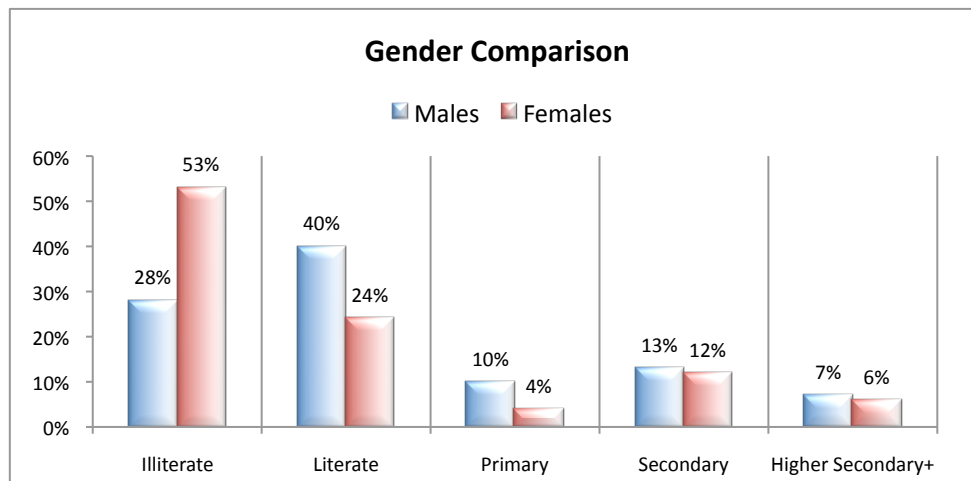


Figure 5.4 – Gender Comparison

Percentages are derived from 67 males and 66 females over the age of 18 who are not currently receiving the RHEST scholarship. Higher Secondary + also includes 2 Bachelor students who are females

Responses from students and parents were uniform in the fact that an education will give the girls give an asset for their future. All girls wanted to at least get their SLC, and many more wanted to get their Higher Secondary, Bachelor or Master Degrees. The reasons why they found education useful were uniform in the fact that girls realized an education will provide them with a better future and 18% included that and education will have a benefit for their entire family. As far as future employment, no girls expressed interest in working far from their community and 60% of respondents wanted to become either teachers or nurses.

Perceptions on Trafficking

As trafficking prevention is one of RHEST’s main goals and the girls they are supporting are those at the highest risk for trafficking, the local situations and attitudes towards trafficking were evaluated. Out of the four districts visited, Makwanpur was the one that stood out as it is known as a place where many marginalized groups live and a lot of girls get trafficked, especially to India. There, all students and officials interviewed knew about trafficking and some students even shared stories of women returning from foreign countries with HIV/AIDS due to alleged sex work. In Makwanpur there is a scarcity of jobs within rural communities and migration is a fact of life for many families. Men and women migrate for work and all girls interviewed knew of people from their community who had left to look for better opportunities elsewhere. The destinations which they listed coincided with the popular trafficking destinations for Nepali women including: India, Malaysia, and the Gulf Countries.

Students said that community members are aware of trafficking as a phenomenon. School officials agreed that it is a an everyday reality and those affected are the poorest of the poor and the uneducated who often get tricked into sending their children abroad. In addition, the Trafficking Specialist of World Education, Ms Shrinkhala Shrestha, added that often

families believe that by sending their children abroad, they are in fact providing a better life for them, as well as taking in an advance payment from the middlemen.

In Syangja district none of the respondents, except for staff from one Dalit School, said that trafficking was a problem in their communities. Though it has happened in the past, it seems that their proximity to a city and constant involvement of NGOs throughout the years has affected the situation and trafficking is not as evident as it is in Makwanpur. Respondents in Syangja and Kaski also reported that very few youth are out of school. School officials reported high enrollment and low drop out rates. This corresponds with the hypothesis that keeping girls in school makes them safer, and unlike Makwanpur where many girls are out of school and trafficking persists, Syangja and Kaski are doing better due to high enrollment rates.

To contrast this the situation, the schools in Kathmandu Valley were unlike any of the others visited. Though they were near Kathmandu, many of the supported schools were still hard to reach with no paved roads and on high hills. Many indigenous and marginalized communities reside there and are consequently affected by lower enrollment rates and trafficking. Though the average income and enrollment rates were higher than that of Makwanpur, respondents were familiar with trafficking cases, which seem to be few these days. Regardless migration to Gulf Countries is still high and what women do when they leave remains a mystery. The majority of girls interviewed knew a lot about trafficking as they had participated in RHEST interaction programs, yet there are still many who do not go to school and do not know the reality behind it.

Findings

The RHEST scholarship recipients come from large, low-income families, where adult women have a low rate of education. Families survive mostly on agrarian work and wage labor, which is also often related to farming. The community with the highest amount of farming jobs, Makwanpur, also had the lowest monthly income. It was followed by the Kathmandu Valley, Syangja and then Kaski. The education level of adults in the households was low with 73% having never attended school, out of which 41% were fully illiterate (Figure 5.5).

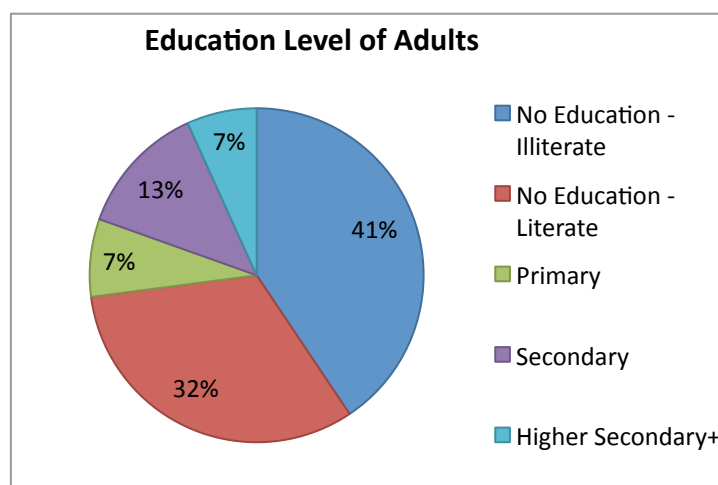


Figure 5.5

Percentages derived from 133 adults from all surveyed districts

The low education of parents and adults in the communities was identified as one of the major reasons why youth stay out of school. Traditional values and the inability to see an immediate benefit from an education were the main reasons why youth and especially girls are not enrolled or drop out early. Since value systems discourage women to take jobs outside of the community (Yabiku 2009: 546), and the communities visited survive mainly on farming, positions requiring an education are scarce and girls are kept at home to contribute to household activities. Furthermore, as households count on these activities and almost all own land which must be tended to, poor households choose this option for their daughters who are bound to leave the household upon marriage anyway. This coincides with the fact that world wide in developing countries it is mainly the women who do farm work. In Nepal, the gender-based division in society has allotted most non-farm work to males (Stash 2001: 357) and therefore leaving women no choice but to tend land.

Attitudes towards education by the scholarship recipients themselves indicated the trend of women not often migrating by expressing that they want to stay in the community after they complete their education. None of the students nor parents were able to express immediate benefits of receiving an education, with the most common answer being that it provides for a better future.

Though women are not encouraged to leave the community, lack of education and employment, combined with poverty, has led some women no choice but to migrate. They are leaving and seek employment in factories and as servants in larger cities, as well as abroad where they can become maids or nannies (World Education 2009). Trafficking is also involved in this migration since often families believe that they are providing their daughters with a better life by sending them away. Cases of sex work, HIV/AIDS, and women returning from exploitative time abroad was evident in the Makwanpur communities visited and somewhat in the Kathmandu Valley, which is close to the capital and houses the country's largest prostitution center (ibid). These two also housed the poorest households and the most indigenous communities. Syangja and Kaski communities, though poor, were less affected by trafficking and have higher enrollment rates than the former.

Summary of Results:

- RHEST girls come from families with at least 3 members and as many as 11
- Households survive largely on farming activities and wage labor
- The average household makes approximately 3341, though the poorest communities in Makwanpur make only half that
- Majority of adults in the households never went to school (73%), and illiteracy rates for females are almost twice as high as that for males
- Youth are out of school due to ignorance of the parents and having to supplement to household activities
- Girls are less likely to go to school as investing in them is seen as pointless since after marriage they will leave the household
- The number one reason for trafficking of girls was reported as ignorance of the parents
- Trafficking was evident especially in Makwanpur, the poorest of all communities with most youth out of school.

Chapter 6: RHEST's Influence on Rural Communities

Respondents from the selected communities are both direct and indirect beneficiaries of the RHEST scholarship program. By providing assistance to girls to attend schools, RHEST is changing both the demographic within schools as well as families' attitudes and financial situation. This section discusses the changes schools and families have seen since the scholarship program has been present, the access and selection to the program, as well as what happens after RHEST.

Impacts on Families

As previously discussed the communities and recipients of the scholarship are mostly poor and agrarian. Adults tend to be uneducated and girls are more likely to be kept at home to supplement to household activities than go to school. The most disadvantaged people in terms of access to education are indigenous and marginalized groups, as they are the poorest in society and the most uneducated. RHEST has made it a priority to support these groups. Out of the surveyed households 69% were either of Indigenous or Dalit status. In Makwanpur, which is the poorest district with the most Indigenous population, RHEST supports 89% of Indigenous and Dalits. In the Kathmandu Valley 66% were of marginalized status. Kaski and Syangja had the lowest number of marginalized people supported with 46%. This shows evidence that RHEST's goal of supporting marginalized groups is in effect, and that the majority of beneficiaries are in fact of marginalized groups (Figure 6.1).

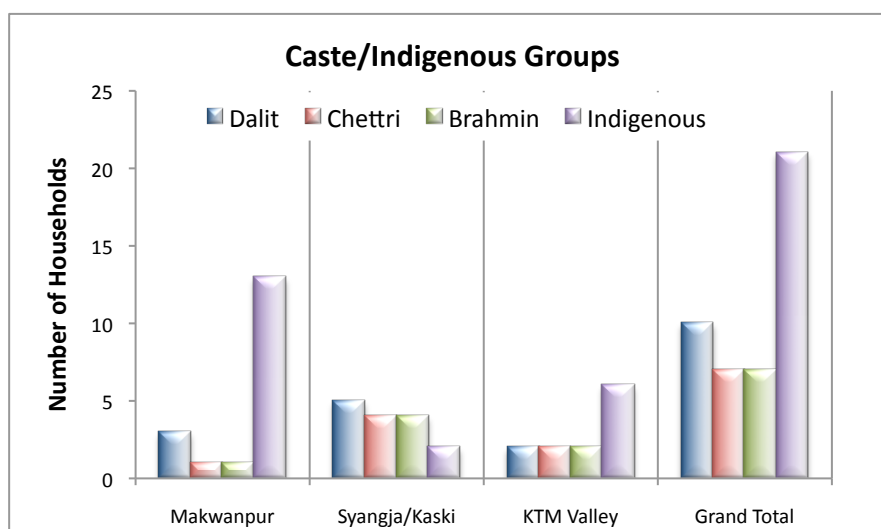


Figure 6.1

The numbers are based on the 45 RHEST households surveyed

Since RHEST supports some of the poorest families in already poor communities, it is important to understand the support they provide and how it contributes to the financial situation of the family. RHEST provides essential school materials every year, as well as pays school and book fees for secondary school students. Primary students, which were not interviewed, get materials only as the government has taken over the responsibility to pay the school fees. When interviewed about the quality of the materials, respondents from all districts expressed gratitude and were generally happy with everything. They were satisfied

with the quality of materials they receive, except for one girl in Makwanpur who wanted better quality pens and uniform cloth (See Figure 6.2).

Though satisfied, almost half of the girls said they need additional materials in the packages. From Makwanpur most girls focused on the fact they need more pens and additional books such as atlases, dictionaries and SLC materials. In Syangja, girls requested shoes and socks and in the Kathmandu Valley girls wanted additional day to day materials such as copybooks and pencils. A reason why there are some differences among the districts is perhaps due to geographical variances, as Syangja is a more mountainous region with high hills and colder winters, and shoes and socks are essential for that climate. It wasn't only students who expressed need for additional materials. RHEST field workers thought that shoes and warm clothes need to be added to the package, as well as materials for extracurricular activities as that is additional money coming out of the families' pockets.

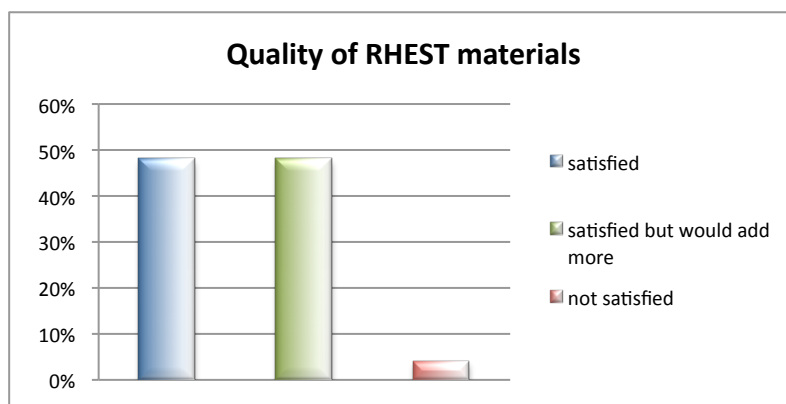


Figure 6.2
Percentages based on 29 respondents

All of the materials RHEST provides have to be paid for by the household for their other children, and non-RHEST respondents reported that each year their families pay approximately 3000-5000 NPR per year for education related materials and fees (30-50€). All but one of non-RHEST respondents thought materials were expensive. Students said that they wait a couple of years before receiving new uniforms and school bags as opposed to RHEST students who get a new set each year and can share them with siblings. In Makwanpur, all 13 of the 14 respondents said that they would not be able to stay in school if there was no scholarship. An 8th grader from Makwanpur shared:

“My family does not know the value of an education and that is why my six older sisters did not go to school. If it was not for the RHEST scholarship I too would be staying at home and marrying early.”

Out of the other districts surveyed where the enrollment rates for girls are higher, few girls said that they would not go to school if there were no RHEST. However they did all that how long they would stay in school would be uncertain and that it would be difficult to afford the costs.

In addition to the immediate benefits of supporting girls for an education, RHEST's interaction program's, which are held at the schools, further raise awareness on education, both to the students and the parents. They are required to participate in the programs

when they reach secondary school, and through them learn essential information on a range of topics such as the importance of education and human trafficking. Out of the students surveyed more than half had participated in the program and all of them found it beneficial. Since this interaction is aimed not only to the students, but also the parents, ideally whole households and extended families benefit from this information. Since the program is oral, illiterate parents can participate and benefit from the information on education, hygiene and trafficking which in turn benefits the entire household.

Impacts on Schools

As indicated before, the communities visited were poor and sometimes hard to reach by vehicle. Needless to say the schools visited were often in poor shape with few resources and facilities. Schools varied in size with schools near cities having the most students. The two biggest schools were higher secondary ones and had between 850 and 1300 students, and two of the secondary schools had between 600 and 800 students. The rest of the schools were small with anywhere between 200 to 350 students. In more than 50% of the schools, there were more girls enrolled than boys. At all the others the ratio was about equal, which does not correspond with the national averages. All of the schools shared the fact that they had a library and only three schools had newly built or renovated classrooms. In addition, 30% of school officials said that their schools are in imminent need of facility upgrade including lavatories, library, in need of additional books and sports materials. They said they get little government support and requested further help from RHEST. Lack of facilities is a definite factor, which brings the quality of an education down according to these respondents.

All of the school officials interviewed talked about the performance level of RHEST students as better than that of non-RHEST. They argued that this was mainly as a result of the fact they have free materials. One principal from a Syangja secondary school shared:

“Because RHEST girls have materials, they can practice more at home and do their work in class on a regular basis. This gives them an advantage over other children who lack the proper school materials, and due to these materials they are motivated to do better.”

All principals also said that RHEST girls are less likely to drop out than their counterparts deeming them more likely to finish their secondary education. Though drop-outs of RHEST girls are less likely than that of other girls, it still happens with the number one reason being that of marriage. Regardless, it is the relief from having to pay for the materials themselves that encourages girls to do better. Another principal from a Makwanpur school said:

“The fact that RHEST girls are free from the monetary burden of being in school, they are more disciplined and motivated, pass their exams with higher marks and seldom have to work outside of the home.”

All of the RHEST field workers interviewed supported this view saying that many girls have to go in for wage labor in order to receive new materials and very few RHEST girls do since that burden is taken off. Out of RHEST students, 29% did wage labor on their days off as opposed to 38% of the non-RHEST respondents. This means that RHEST girls have more

time to focus on their studies if they are part of the program. This is directly related to the fact that out of 192 working school days, the average student attends 97. That is the case because many have to work and further a reason why many repeat classes (UNESCO 2010: 114). Out of all of the RHEST respondents, most had not repeated since receiving the scholarship, and only 25% had repeated a class while having it, which is less than the 30% national average (Save The Children 2006).

Furthermore, school officials agreed on the importance of the interaction program and said that this further interests the girls in their education, and therefore makes the school retain more female students. It was mentioned by field workers that an aspect the interaction lacks is the involvement of local teachers who are involved with RHEST, as their experiences would provide local perspective (RHEST Annual Meeting 2010).

Access and Selection

The access and selection to the program is an essential component of RHEST. Understanding this process leads to a better understanding of who has access to the scholarship and how the recipients are selected. In the schools visited it seems that access to the program is restricted to current students. The majority of households learned about the scholarship from school teachers who had informed their kids of the opportunity (Figure 6.3).

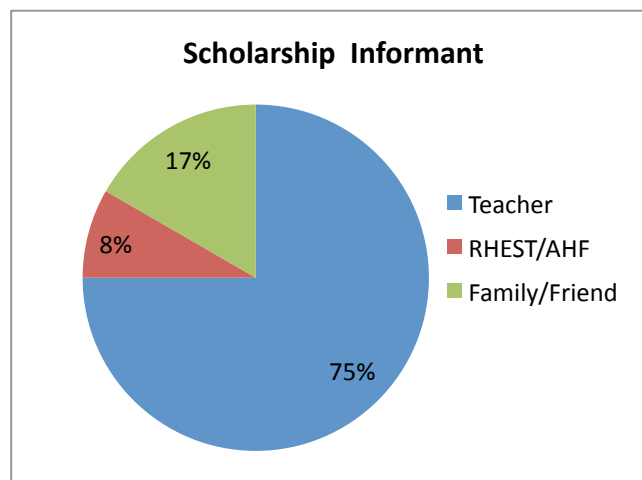


Figure 6.3
Percentages are based on 36 respondents

In all districts and schools the selection process and criteria were ambiguous, with school officials following self imposed criteria in addition to the one given by RHEST. Selection is typically in the hands of SMC's, who make the final selection but due to ambiguity, it is often the case that only a few school officials make the decision. One principal from the Kathmandu Valley shared:

“Due to Maoist pressure, our SMC has not functioned properly for the past two years and that is why I select the final recipients with the help of one or two teachers who are familiar with the process and criteria.”

The guidelines on selection provided by RHEST include:

- Girls at risk of trafficking
- Dalit/Indigenous Status

- Economic condition
- HIV in the family
- Past or current bonded laborers

In addition to these criteria, in Makwanpur criteria added were daughters of uneducated parents and girls at risk of dropping out. Information on selection was ambiguous while one key SMC member (and school principal) could not identify any aspect of the selection process. SMCs there usually notified families about the opportunity via school meeting or household visits to poor families. All of the students who had applied in the previous year were ones that were already enrolled and no new students were added as a result of the scholarship.

In Syangja, each school used additional criteria and most of them involved the performance of the student. Only two out of seven SMC members said they use Dalit or Indigenous status as a criterion. Half of the officials said that they do not hold a special announcement for when the application process opens because the community knows about the scholarship. Only one school reported that its scholarship recipients were newly enrolled; the school was a Dalit school supporting the poorest and most marginalized children in the village.

In the Kathmandu Valley, one principal said that since they give only 2 – 3 scholarships per year, they pre-select the most needy families and encourage them to fill out the forms. In another school they did not make a general announcement, but rather called the families they think deserve to apply.

All schools visited were allotted between 3-15 scholarship positions per year, and for those who had an open application process the quantity of applications was vast making selection difficult. In relation to this a RHEST field worker from Makwanpur commented:

“The selection process poses challenges to SMC’s, because many girls apply and they are all poor and of need. The problem is that some are of the exact same condition, while others though extremely poor, may not fit the RHEST criteria due to their caste or ethnic background.”

When asked how they deal with that issue, 1/4 of respondents said that they evaluate the academic performance of the students, others did not respond, and only one said that they work on first come first serve basis. In Makwanpur a school official requested that RHEST add performance in school as an official criteria for selection as it would make the process easier, while others had added the criteria themselves. All school officials interviewed said that a higher number of scholarships would alleviate the process.

Ambiguity was met in the selection process, as some students did not seem appropriate for the scholarship. One student from Makwanpur had an expensive mobile phone, while another in Kaski had applied immediately after attending private school for four years showing that some favoritism may be used. Combined with that, the majority of respondents stated the fact that it is school officials who know what families are most in need as a justification on how they decide who to inform about the scholarship. In a secondary school in Syangja district, the scholarship application was open only to current

students. The principal of the school said that a student is only eligible if they are enrolled for at least one year so they can observe their performance level. This specific policy, does not stimulate the enrollment and motivation of families who may want to send their kids to school but do not have the means.

Another ambiguous issue is that some schools have imposed their own policy on how many students per family can enjoy the scholarship. RHEST as an organization has not imposed a per-family quota or instructed the SMC's on this matter. Out of the 29 students, only one had a sibling in the program. The sisters of three other students had applied for the scholarship, but had not received it. And eight said that their sisters will not apply for unknown to them reasons. The others did not have any younger sisters or did not know the answer. Two students reported that a teacher had told them that only one girl per family was allowed to have the scholarship and a girl from Syangja said that her sister will not be selected if she applied due to the fact a teacher had discouraged her.

Selection was the number one issue listed by RHEST field workers in need of improvement. They said that communication between themselves and the schools was not always clear. An example given was that sometimes a girl will drop out and instead of notifying RHEST, teachers would fill her spot without taking the proper steps. They also said that there are not enough ways to measure which students need the scholarship the most, which further complicates selection (RHEST Annual Meeting 2010). Teachers on the other hand wanted more scholarships, a few even requesting that the program be extended to boys as well. In contrast RHEST staff, indicated that every one would like more scholarships, but without more funding numbers cannot be significantly increased.

Life After RHEST

After they complete their SLC, RHEST girls are encouraged to apply for the Amar scholarship, which in turn provides funds for higher secondary, nursing, and bachelors degrees. In Honour of Amar Project was started by AHF to supplement RHEST, and the two have been partnered since 2002. Unlike RHEST the Amar program only gives monetary support and requires girls to manage the money themselves. Girls receive instruction on how the money should be spent and must submit all applicable bills including lodging, transportation, materials, etc. In addition to money management, scholars must write letters to the organization and send all of their school progress reports. Students are dismissed from the program if they fail to submit this information. Currently all students who pass the SLC, and apply for Amar receive the scholarship, but there is speculation that with more graduates Amar will not be able to support all. In such a case a first come/first serve policy will be installed.

Up to date, Amar supports:

- 175 girls in higher secondary schools
- 13 girls in nursing schools
- 43 in bachelors programs.

In Makwanpur district, 17 girls in higher secondary schools are supported. In Syangja, 17 girls in higher secondary and one bachelor student are supported. In Kaski, 16 higher secondary, 10 bachelors, and one nursing students are supported. There is one pass out student from Syangja who is currently a RHEST field worker, as well as a teacher in her

community school. She recently received her bachelor degree in social studies with the Amar Scholarship. She says on the experience:

“If it wasn’t for RHEST and Amar Project, I cannot imagine what my life would be right now: early marriage, bone breaking work, who knows. My parents would have pulled me out of school after class four and I would have had to work. After seeing what I have achieved, my parents now know the value of an education but money is still a problem, and though my brothers and sisters want to complete their education, they don’t know if they can afford it.”

In her community she was the first pass-out student, and says there are others who are now in higher secondary school. She also admitted that a lot of girls do not continue their education past their SLC in order to get married.

Many girls who are in Amar have helping their home community as a top priority. Whether it is nurses or teachers, they would like to teach people from their community of the importance of education and show of how beneficial it can be. Sharmila who is studying education with a focus on health says:

“ I would like to help the people from my village with all of the things that I know. I already do as much as I can. We do not have a health post and if anything is wrong the nearest one is a two-hour bus ride away. Without this scholarship I would have quit my education years ago like my sister did, and not have had the opportunity to do good things for my community. “

Findings

It is evident by Figure 6.4, that RHEST supports mostly students from Indigenous or Dalit status, which is consistent with their mission. The Chettri and Brahmin students, though from higher caste, are still of a low economic condition which is a secondary characteristic for selection.

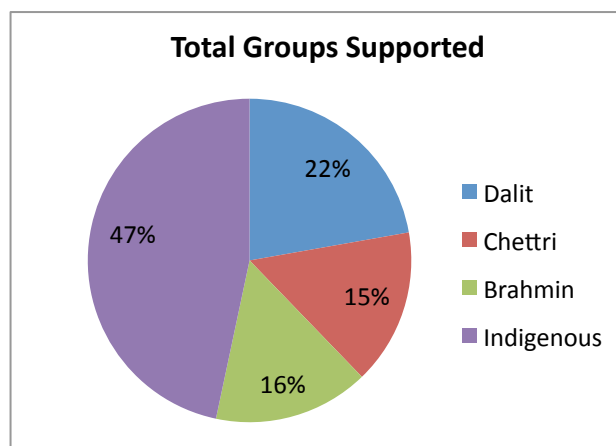


Figure 6.4

Figure is based on details illustrated previously in figure 6.1. Percentages are derived from the 45 RHEST households

Families benefit from the RHEST scholarship in many ways. First off, it alleviates their financial burden by paying for school fees and providing materials. Even if only one child has the scholarship, a household can benefit from the new materials they receive each year, which can be shared with siblings of the RHEST scholar. Furthermore, households benefit from the RHEST interaction programs which raises awareness on important issues which can be shared with family and friends. This also benefits the schools, because as illiterate parents understand what an education can do, there are more likely to encourage their children and others to continue their education. In addition, according to headmasters, RHEST girls are less likely to drop out, get married early, or do wage labor. Only 29% of student's interviewed said that they do wage labor, and if so they do it seldom. Due to these reasons it is often quite a competitive process to receive a scholarship, which raises the question of whether every girl of need has access to the opportunity, and furthermore how do they get chosen.

Though RHEST has defined criteria for schools to use, sometimes the vast amount of applications of students from similar standing makes it difficult for SMCs to select new scholars. Different schools use different ways to decide which students to pick, making the process not uniform and sometimes not fully open. Methods of notifying community members vary among:

- a public announcement
- teachers informing students of need directly
- school officials pre-selecting girls without a formal application

Furthermore most newly selected students seem to be already enrolled in school when they apply for the scholarship, as was the case with all students interviewed. Out of families with more than one daughter only three had applied for the scholarship for a second child and only one had received it. Some teachers and schools seem to have a self-imposed one per family scholarship quota.

Though girls that get selected are less likely to drop out, and often finish their education, after RHEST some choose to continue their education with the help of Amar Project, which is RHEST's sister organization. Currently they support 231 girls in Higher Secondary, nursing and bachelor institutions, which is a relatively low number in relation to the amount of girls who go through RHEST. For this opportunity students must re-apply after the SLC completion, and often commit to live outside of their community, which often does not have Higher Education Institutions. A reason why many girls quit after their secondary education is due to marriage.

Summary of Results:

- Majority of households supported are of indigenous or Dalit status (69%).
- Via the materials received, the scholarship program can indirectly support the education of more than one child.
- Materials are of good quality but not enough as indicated by students, teachers, and field workers
- The interaction program has valuable lessons for students but could use updating as to include the parents more

- Increased performance level of RHEST girls over non-RHEST girls due to materials and motivation via the interaction program.
- RHEST girls are less likely to drop out early than non-RHEST girls
- Access and selection process is ambiguous needs to be updated and monitored
- There is provision of an opportunity to get support for higher education via Amar Project
- Many girls do not continue their education after the SLC due to marriage.
- The number of girls enrolled via Amar is relatively small in comparison to RHEST

Chapter 7: Discussion of Findings

The results of this study are based on and specific to the districts in which the study was undertaken. Being a largely diverse country, communities visited in each district were not only of different topography and people, but also have different impacts and issues which its inhabitants face. The following sections discuss the findings of the research in light of current literature on similar topics and a SWOT analysis which was created based on the results of this study. The chapter ends with a link between the knowledge gained to the existing body of knowledge on social capital and how the undertaken research supports it.

Education and Trafficking

From a district heavily impacted by trafficking to a district with large inflows of foreign aid, the communities visited had one commonality which was hard to ignore. The staunch poverty of rural communities and lack of opportunities stuck out in every district visited. Large households, living on a euro per day or less, uneducated, agrarian, marginalized, were just some of the commonalities among the communities visited. It is exactly these characteristics that make young girls vulnerable to trafficking. Although this topic is taboo to talk about and largely ignored by locals trafficking realities were hard to miss. Girls in these villages fit the profile described by Dr. Padam Simkhada in his study on trafficking in Nepal, where he describes the profile of a trafficked girl as one who is trafficked due to:

- poverty
- lack of education of parents and self
- local ignorance about trafficking
- lack of jobs in the community
- marginalization of particular social groups (Simkhada 2008: 244).

Furthermore, it is the generally low value of the girl child that makes them even more vulnerable to trafficking especially since the trafficker is often someone already in the social network of the family (ibid).

Girls are considered less valuable than boys in the family unit and therefore are generally easy to send away. In his study on sibling differences in child labor, Eric Edmonds discovered not only that girls work more than boys, but also that when a boy is born in a family it is both boys and girls who take care of him and as a result have an increased work load. In contrast, when a girl child is born, Edmonds found that it is only girl's workload that increases (Edmonds 2006: 819). This further strengthens the premise that girls are there to support household activities such as childcare, rather than get educated. This may also be a reason as to why if a household is big, the first person to get released in the custody of others (traffickers) would be the girl.

The research confirmed that trafficking is a reality for communities in Makwanpur, and not as big of an issue in Kaski, Syangja and the Kathmandu Valley. The gravity of the situation was hard to discern, due to the fact locals have a low-trust level of outsiders and the respondents were never comfortable talking about the topic. No respondents reported trafficking cases within their family, but some knew about local cases from the families of

trafficked returnees or by word of mouth. As the main cause of this is ignorance and lack of education, the assumption that a girl is safer when in school stands strong. This is further strengthened by a program like RHEST's which ensures that a family pays nothing for their daughter's education.

Women and Education

The severely disadvantaged position of women in terms of education is evident not only in literature and previous studies, but also when looking at the profiles of RHEST beneficiaries. In the households surveyed, women were obviously less educated than men. Out of the 77% of women who never went to school only 24% were literate. In contrast, out of the 68% of men with no formal education 40% were literate. To further this, UNESCO estimates that to date, out of the 78% of children who reach class 5 less than half are girls. These rates go down respectively as the level of education increases with only 11% of all kids making it to higher secondary schools (UNESCO 2010). The reasons why girls do not go to school are numerous but the main ones indicated by the respondents were:

- uneducated parents
- Household responsibilities
- Traditional values

Keeping girls at home for work is quite normal for Nepal as it is usually females who are more invested in farm work than men. Since it is usually men who are the ones employed outside the house, women work just as hard if not harder on their own land and sometimes do wage labor in the community (Williams 2009: 893). In a rural setting, this work does not require an education and therefore may contribute to why some families do not see a benefit of an education for their daughter. As it is quite normal for men to seek for jobs, abroad or in bigger cities, they are the ones who in the eyes of families have more to gain from going to school. Women who are enrolled in schools are less likely to marry early, meaning that their family will have to support them longer. In a situation where a family is really poor, having even one more mouth to feed can cost a lot (ibid). The research undertaken aligns with previous literature in the sense that the majority of women from the survey analysis were either housewives or farmers, and though the majority of men were also farmers, they had a wider array of possibilities available to them such as drivers, guards, civil servants.

Many girls, especially from Makwanpur and the Kathmandu Valley reported that if there was no scholarship they would not be in school right now. This is because their family can not afford the cost of school and instead would marry them off early or make them work. Research on education and employment conducted by Yabiku/Schlabach supports this claim. They concluded that when women pursue education, not only do they get married later but also there is initial loss of home production activities. This loss consists of time spent at school instead of at work, while materials and school fees further take away from the household income (Yabiku 2009: 546). Women's work around the house is essential for survival when a family is poor which explains why educational enrolment and attainment are lower for women than men (ibid).

The benefit of the RHEST scholarship was clear for all of the respondents and their households. Even if the monetary burden is lifted from one girl child, then the whole family

benefits in the sense that she can share materials with her siblings and the school fees could go toward another child's education. In addition, through the RHEST interaction program, awareness of the importance of an education is raised to the household. In comparison to non-RHEST girls who cannot afford new uniforms or school bags each year, RHEST girls get a pair at the beginning of every year, meaning that the ones they grow out of can then go to siblings.

Materials for education are additional costs that the government is not necessarily thinking about when creating incentive programs for disadvantaged girls and minorities. What they provide is mostly the yearly and exam fees, while the burden of paying for materials is still there (Patel 2009: 42). Although this burden is lifted via the RHEST scholarship, it was evident that the materials, though good quality, were sometimes insufficient. The biggest demand for an addition was that of shoes, which would be especially beneficial in colder climates and school is a long distance away.

Community Schools and Reform

School officials reported positive impacts via the scholarship in terms of higher retention of girl students and increased interest in education. The RHEST interaction program was reported very useful for raising awareness by school officials and students, who said they learned about trafficking, health, and legal rights. The results of the interaction, however, were not as evident with parents, who could not elaborate on why education is important to their kids. This could indicate that the program needs to be diversified and include parents as much as students in the debate. The inability of parents to see the benefits of education could also be allotted to the fact that these largely agrarian communities do not have high skilled jobs available. Furthermore this is true especially for women and therefore immediate benefits of an education cannot be properly placed in local contexts.

Socially conservative attitudes on gender are strong in rural communities and they further deter women from going out for employment outside of the community or even the house (Stash 2001: 376). This was also reflected by student informants who did not have a wide array of aspirations with most sharing that they would want to be either teachers or nurses, the few visible opportunities available to women in villages. This inability to see immediate benefits in combination with the parents lack of education are areas which have not been included in the numerous reform policies enacted by Nepal's policymakers.

Though access to primary education has improved, reform agendas have not taken into account the educational level of the parents, household nutrition, health, and the overall economy of the families (Khaniya 2004: 324). These aspects severely impact whether children, especially girls, will attend school. These factors have a greater impact on enrollment and retention rates than do school inputs such as improved facility or more teachers (ibid).

Education reform policy has been focused on target agendas in relation to the MDG and EFA goals, which take quantitative over qualitative data into account (Caddell 2005: 467). There has been such strong focus to show improvement schools are indirectly 'encouraged' to misreport enrollment, attainment and drop-out rates in order to show progress, and therefore secure more funding (ibid). This may be why so many of the schools visited had

either the same amount of girls as boys enrolled or even more girls than boys. If an incentive program is present, sometimes parents enroll children solely because of the benefits. This was the case with one of the Control Schools which had the Girls for Oil incentive program a few years back and had a 70/30 girl to boy ratio. Such incentive programs are less selective and could severely increase the number of girls enrolled yet not reflect this increase in completion rates. The RHEST scholarship program is different in this aspect, because instead of giving other commodities to the families in return for enrollment, they provide solely school related materials as well as counseling in order to assure that girls do not drop out.

Identification and Selection of Girls

The RHEST selection process is quite more restrictive than other incentive programs, as only a few spots are available each year, and often the competition is fierce. Schools and SMC's are the ones responsible for informing families about the scholarship opportunity and for selecting the actual scholars. Selection methods vary with many employing criteria they have selected themselves and others solely pre-selecting the actual scholars.

In many cases the number of applications is vast while the spots are few for applicants of similar situations. It seemed that in such cases, as well as when students are pre-selected, some amount of favoritism is used. In such communities this is accepted as normal behavior due to the already accepted bureaucratic representativeness and power structures where who you know defines what you can do (Jamil 2009: 195). There is a strong hierarchical tradition in Nepal with unequal distributions of privileges based on family and social background. Citizens in such a country are more likely to search their personal connections and use bribery in order to connect to bureaucrats, which is ingrained in Nepali society (Jamil 2009: 208) and a reason why even scholarship selection may be unfair.

To illustrate this two of the student respondents did not seem like the typical RHEST girls, with one showing off an expensive mobile phone and another talking about her past in private school. In addition, RHEST's criteria for selection is not nearly detailed enough to provide for guidance on how to solve issues related to selection. That is perhaps why often SMC's have added their own criteria such as setting requiring a student to be enrolled before they can apply, or taking into account their academic performance. This may not be a good indicator because a girl maybe underperforming due to a lack of materials or household obligations. In addition to lack of criteria, RHEST and field workers provide little guidance to the numerous SMC's on how to make the selection and identification of recipients more open and fair.

Once selected for the program, students are enrolled until the completion of their education. Unless they drop out, the number of times they fail a class does not matter and there is no danger that they will be dropped. This could retain students who are not interested in education and only take advantage of the free materials. Other than new policy to reprimand repeat students by not giving them a new bag and umbrella, a more thorough review on why students failed a class should be implemented.

After the completion of their SLC, students can submit documents and enroll in the Amar scholarship which provides funds for higher education. Currently there are only 231 girls in

the Amar program, a relatively low number in comparison to the 6000+ girls enrolled through RHEST. Awareness must be raised among families and the community in general about the importance of an education past the SLC, in order to increase these numbers. This is especially important because when a girl gets married while still in school, they marry into a different family which may not share the same value of education. The husband may not allow her to further her schooling and rather have her contribute to the household production of the family instead. Such aspects could be included in the interaction which would have to be run more like workshop than a lecture in order to get on the same level as parents who may be skeptical or shy to participate.

It is important to note the research’s limitations, and mention that nationwide strikes and a rushed agenda impacted the number of interviews and surveys conducted. This was the case especially in Kaski and Syangja where the program was cut in half. Furthermore the lack of time to carefully select respondents was an issue, and students interviewed were the ones which were in attendance at the schools that day and called up by the principal.

SWOT Analysis

There are various internal and external factors that impact RHEST’s activities in terms of their scholarship program. Based on background information gathered from RHEST staff, assessment of the local climate , and the results from the field visits, the following SWOT analysis was created. This can be used in order to develop future objectives, strategies and tactics for the scholarship program by taking advantages of **Strengths** and **Opportunities** while working on the **Weaknesses** and dealing with the **Threats**.

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dedicated staff and field workers -Involvement of stakeholders -Interaction program -Strong partnership with AHF -Partnership with Amar Project -Well-known and able Executive Committee working free of charge -Years of experience in rural regions 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tight Budget constrains activities and number of scholarship spots -Lack of donor diversity -Lack of qualified staff -Poor monitoring and evaluation -No reputation and/or partnerships within the local development community and other actors in the field
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Availability of grants and funding for Nepali NGOs -An array of foreign and local actors working with education and trafficking -Increase in government intervention in the field of education -Interest from foreign youth to volunteer in Nepal 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poor national infrastructure -Political instability (strikes) -Unstable inflation rates -Competitive nature of local NGOs -Local values on education (i.e. work over education) -Illiteracy of parents (difficulty in understanding aspects of interaction program)

Figure 7.1
SWOT Analysis of RHEST's scholarship Program

Contribution to Development Theories

The research undertaken dove into areas far more diverse than just education. It also explored gender, trafficking, and the family dynamic. The outcomes of the research were salient and painted an excellent picture of local situations. Even though none of the information was strikingly new it still reiterated and strengthened current knowledge on some of the effects of social capital. Though it does not give a new perspective, this impact study further sheds understanding on how certain aspects of trafficking and the scholarship program are related to social networks. It is a general fact that social networks create a sense of identity, can provide valuable services and expand people's capacities. However it is also true that they can be restricting and negative (Woolcock 2000). In that sense social capital can peer pressure people into doing things such as pulling out a girl from school (ibid), or releasing her into someone else's custody. This can be attributed to a sense of obligation which parents might have to the community and its norms. Social networks can also isolate certain people such as, ethnic groups, castes, and women from group activity and further marginalize them.

From the background research and study findings it has been observed that women are at a general disadvantage. They are the ones who work the most, are the first to be pulled out of school, and usually the ones who become victims of human trafficking. This is the case due to preconceived notions of rural communities that women are less valuable than men. It is such concepts that get passed down in uneducated and poverty ridden social networks. This aspect contributes to the knowledge base of the downside of social capital, or 'perverse social capital' (Woolcock 2000). This kind of capital hinders development and can cause inequality and further marginalization of groups. Human trafficking also fits into this notion, as the ignorance of a local group can identify sending your girls away as a normal life choice which would provide more money to the family. As it is the case that in Nepal trafficking is often done via middlemen who directly take the girls from the parents, it is safe to assume that it is social norms that permit this kind of behavior. In the case of Makwanpur, where there is a known plethora of trafficking cases, which keep occurring could supports this notion. There, many girls are trafficked to Indian circuses, and many girls get released by their families for a small payment by the trafficker. As indicated by a World Education study, parents often think that by doing so they are providing a better life for their daughter (World Education 2009), In contrast, in Syangja and Kaski no one reported known cases of trafficking, as perhaps social norms do not consider that as a safe choice.

Furthermore social capital can be used to gain advantage in a situation (Portes 1998: 15). It is perhaps due to this that favoritism plays such a big part in the selection of RHEST girls. When some families are not a part of local networks, not only will they not get selected, but they may not even find out about the scholarship. This is also an example of how social capital can be restrictive and show how "bonds may constrain rather than facilitate" (Portes 1998: 17) access to the RHEST scholarship. This reiterates the basis of social capital and it shows how it can be restrictive to community members who have little access to social capital. Even though RHEST's intervention was guided by a different set of theories, the study provided a deeper understand of the concept of social capital and its restrictive and adverse effects.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The impact study of RHEST's education program took three theoretical premises in order to better understand and guide the research. The first premise was that it is aimed at pro-poor growth, via the assumption that poverty reduces school participation and that educational attainment closes the inequality gap and leads to income growth. The second premise is that it employs a participatory approach by being dependant on the dedication of school officials and other community members. And third, I have argued that the intervention aligns with Sen's Capability Approach by empowering girls via education which increases their capabilities and capacity to make choices. These three approaches are closely related to each other and incorporated in the scheme of RHEST's scholarship program. They guided the creation of the research questions as well as operationalization of the objectives.

Analysis of the accumulated data led to the following answers of the research's main questions:

What are the characteristics of and local attitudes towards girls' education and trafficking?

RHEST girls come from large households, run by largely uneducated parents. Parents are mostly farmers and wage laborers and have an average income of 3, 479 NPR per month. Adult females are less educated than men and have higher illiteracy rates. Parents of RHEST girls believe that an education is a sound choice for the future, and the students themselves had high future aspirations. Lack of education of the parents, in addition to their low economic standing, is the number one reason why parents do not send their children to school in rural communities. As it is seen that education does not put food on the table, often poor families put the children to work in and outside of the household. It is due to this that parents can get easily lured by traffickers to release their children into their custody. Cases of trafficking were evident in Makwanpur, and somewhat in the Kathmandu Valley. Girls are most at risk for this, since they are less valuable in a family than boys, and are often seen as an empty investment since they will go off to another family once they marry.

How has RHEST's scholarship program impacted community schools and beneficiary households?

There were observable impacts to households and schools via the RHEST scholarship. Families supported were not only poor and uneducated, but they were also from the most marginalized groups (69% of respondents were Dalit or Indigenous). The impacts observed were largely attributed to the materials provided by RHEST. They encouraged parents to keep their daughters in school as other siblings could indirectly benefit from the materials too. At times however it seemed that the materials were not enough as there were numerous stakeholders expressing that were expressing the need for shoes and additional school supplies. An additional family impact is attributed to the RHEST interaction programs which raise awareness. Through it many girls reported learning and sharing information on trafficking, the value of education and legal rights. Schools benefited in the sense that RHEST girls performed better than others, as a result of the free materials which allow them to practice more.

What is the involvement of the program's stakeholders in the selection and identification of scholarship recipients?

The selection program is run by schools and SMCs and in many aspects is confusing and disorderly. Schools follow different criteria on informing communities about the opportunity, as well as selecting the new scholars. They select based on self devised schemes which are not always in tact with RHEST policy, such as creating rules on pre-enrollment and setting sibling quotas. Favoritism by school official is also at play, which can lead to the scholarship not actually reaching the most needy. Students and parents were not really involved in the selection process, and all scholars were already enrolled when they received the scholarship.

What activities have scholarship alumni undertaken after finishing their secondary education and what are the opportunities available to them?

Scholarship recipients have the opportunity to continue their education past the SLC with the support of RHEST's sister organization, In Honour of Amar Project. Currently 231 are enrolled in higher secondary, nursing, and bachelors programs under their assistance. Though this opportunity is available it seems that post-graduation most students get married and do not continue their education. RHEST does not keep a record of them and they are often difficult to track.

The sub-questions painted a clear picture of RHEST's impacts and helped answer the central research question. The main aim of the research was to assess the impacts of the program on girls in rural communities in relation to their capabilities and perceived self worth. This aim drew the following conclusions:

- Via its support, RHEST encourages families to allow their girls to attend school for longer as they cover the costs.
- RHEST raises awareness about the value of education and important issues such as trafficking to scholarship recipients and their parents.
- RHEST affects retention rates of girls by encouraging the girls to stay in school.
- Via its partnership with Amar, RHEST provides an opportunity for girls to continue their education past class 10.
- RHEST girls have high future aspirations and are interested in continuing their education though it may not be their choice if their family decides to marry them off or send them to work.

A re-evaluation of the theoretical framework concluded that RHEST's target group is indeed some of the poorest families in Nepal. Therefore the scholarship program indirectly aims at pro-poor growth of the next generation (or the girls their putting through school). In turn, their income share will increase as a result of increased capabilities through education which fully supports the Capability Approach. This was observed via the household survey analysis, which showed a low income and level of education among RHEST supported households.

As far as the premise that the approach is a participatory one, the stakeholder involvement is not fully significant as the RHEST beneficiaries are not directly involved in any aspect other than the receiving end. Though grass-roots, and initiating the help of locals via the selection

process, research found that the program lacks important input from those that it is serving. For this to be an approach centered in participatory development, the girls and their families would need a bigger stake in program implementation and only in that way could consider themselves the true owners of the program. The fact that Access and Selection includes only schoolteachers and SMC's, the majority of which are males, makes the process ambiguous via excluding input from local women. The participation of locals also supports theory about how social capital can be both a positive and a negative by illustrating how it can attribute to both favoritism and trafficking.

In conclusion RHEST's achievements lay in the fact they hit their target group by supporting the rural poor, with a focus on Dalit and indigenous communities, which are the most disadvantaged in Nepali society. Being a part of the program further educates RHEST girls on social issues such as trafficking, value of education, legal rights and health, which opens their eyes to future possibilities. They tend to perform better in school than other students due to the fact they have materials and can practice at home, and are less likely to drop out, especially in the earlier years of study. The materials they receive from RHEST, though aimed at keeping one child in school, can encourage the other kids in the family, since siblings usually share the goods. After completion of the SLC, graduates are informed of the Amar Project Scholarship which they automatically get accepted to if they want to continue their education. Via these opportunities uneducated parents are also learning the value of education, especially if they attend the interaction programs where they meet empowered Nepali women who share their experiences and raise awareness to them.

The weaknesses of the program lie in the access and selection process, which needs to be improved by RHEST's executive committee and monitored more closely especially in schools where many people apply for only a few positions. SMCs sometimes do not function properly, and RHEST should consider adding more women to the selection panel. The interaction program, though useful, could integrate the students and parents into dialogue more so than just lecturing them and include local teachers to speak to the girls and their parents. Finally, the materials provided, though good quality, could be updated. Many of the students, teachers, and field workers said that there are essential items which could improve the situation for recipients.

RHEST's educational intervention is one of many in Nepal, and quite small scale in comparison to other initiatives. They pride themselves in the fact that once selected for a scholarship, a girl gets support through the end of her education, and that they employ the help of locals in order to implement major aspects of the program. The number of girls they support in schools is still minor in comparison to the total amount of students attending, but the benefits for these girls are clearly seen in their performance and interest in receiving an education. Their drop-out rates are low and more girls pass the SLC than the national average (RHEST statistic). This is one of the major differences between RHEST and other incentive programs which pay for tuition or give food in exchange for enrollment. In contrast RHEST engages girls in a dialogue on the importance of education, rather than just supplying goods and expecting them to want to stay in school. With a few improvements in the operationalization of the program, RHEST could become an exemplary NGO, whose strategies could be model to others attempting the same.

Chapter 9: Recommendations

Based on the research undertaken and general observations on the functionality of RHEST, the following recommendations were formulated:

Spread the Word

Currently there is little to no information about RHEST on the Internet. Many organizations have taken the World Wide Web as their main tool to inform people about what they do, and also to attract donors. A website will increase the information flow from RHEST to individuals as well as other organizations, and let them know about their mission, activities, future goals and results. Currently the information flow is restricted to annual reports written for the benefit of their donor organization. If a website was present, these reports could be posted for the benefit of a larger audience which may get further parties interested in getting involved and raise awareness on the issues of education, trafficking and awareness raising.

A website should be easy to navigate and have the essential information easy to find for web surfers. Hiring a web developer and training staff to manage the website would be a one time investment which in turn will have many returns (See Box 9.1). Key to RHEST, the Internet can attract volunteers; create partnerships with local NGOs; run awareness campaigns; and help raise funding.

Box 9.1

Why a website?

- **Promote your good work:** A website allows you not only to profile your good work but also promote it across several channels like search engines, social networking sites, emailing and blogging. People around the world will be aware of your work within seconds of publishing.
- **Build Transparency:** Most times, the credibility of an NGO is determined by how transparent it is. Publish your financials and/or annual reports for everyone's scrutiny and gain credibility
- **Raise Funds:** Fund raising through website gives immense leverage not only in establishing the credibility but also enables an easy method of donating for the donors. Web-technology is the only method to raise funds from all over the world all at the same time.
- **Reduce your spending:** Promotional material and fundraising can be quite expensive. Website offers a cheaper source of promoting your work through continuous announcements on your website.
- **Organize your knowledge assets:** Documents, pictures, videos – are some of your knowledge assets. Store these knowledge assets and share those with your team or with the community or with the donors.
- **Create a professional identity for your NGO:** Do not send professional emails from public domains such as yahoo.com or gmail.com. They look untidy and talk unprofessional of you. Have an email ID on your own NGO's name and then see how it makes a difference in the way people approach you.

Source: <http://www.digitalngo.com>

Attract Volunteers

RHEST is tapped out for resources and always in need of physical assistance in the form of more staff. An easy solution to this would be to attract volunteers who can come for months at a time and assist RHEST staff. There are numerous organizations and web portals who promote volunteer work in Nepal, and there are many students and recent graduates who are interested in donating their time. Currently, a tourist visa allows a foreigner to stay in Nepal for five months every year. That would be a sufficient time period for a volunteer to get to know RHEST and assist with day-to-day activities, while diving head first into Nepali culture. There are relatively few inputs that RHEST would have to provide them with, other than the cost of field trips into the districts and a work space. This could also serve as a possibility for cultural exchange and can even include the volunteer into RHEST interaction programs by enabling them to provide a world perspective on education and women's rights.

In order for this to suffice RHEST should build partnerships with organizations coordinating volunteers, educational institutions (both at home and abroad), or advertise for positions on their own. This is an easy and cheap solution to find people who are dedicated to development and would assist RHEST without a loss of resources.

Expand the Donor Base

The RHEST scholarship program functions almost exclusively from funds provided by AHF, which has been a constant donor for almost 13 years. There is also support from AusHF, but to a much smaller effect. As indicated from staff interviews, AHF dictates to what districts the program should expand to, as well as what schools should be phased out. There is little freedom for budget flexibility in terms of unanticipated expenditures and assisting schools which may not be on the AHF agenda.

RHEST's goal is to constantly expand the program, which it has been steadily doing since its start. Currently the donor situation is restrictive, and expanding the donor base via better visibility in the NGO community is a must. Attracting more donors is essential, because with the current situation if, for whatever reason, AHF pulls out, the program will have no means to continue. By having a more diverse donor base, there will be a greater flexibility of funds, which will provide more security in the long run.

More funding can also solve a lot of the current problems RHEST faces such as few qualified staff, better monitoring and evaluation, and ability to provide support to more students, which was listed as the number one change school officials would like to see. Currently, the Executive Director of RHEST works on a volunteer basis, while the few staff are overstretched in keeping tabs on the districts and the 365 schools that are supported. Often, one fieldworker is in charge of monitoring students in all of the supported schools in one district, which can result in them being in charge of over 20 schools and 300 students.

Funding could allow for more qualified staff to be hired, better support for fieldworkers in the districts, provide for more field visits by RHEST staff, and allow for additional materials to be included in the student package among others. Without funding, few changes can be implemented in an already stretched budget of a very busy NGO.

There are numerous of grants available via UN agencies and USAID. There are also donors such as World Vision, World Education, NYOF, and Save the Children who are all present in Nepal. Furthermore with the creation of a website, individuals can be encouraged to donate online, and further create a program where one donor supports one girl. This could expand the scholarship program to districts and schools where the current funding cannot stretch to. There are many such programs all over the world, which connect a student from a developing country with an individual in a developed one, encouraging communication and opening the door for a unique cultural exchange.

RHEST Graduates as Leaders

Currently RHEST supports over 6000 girls, and with its 13 years of operation many more girls have passed through the scholarship program and received their SLC. In contrast there are approximately 200 girls who are part of the Amar Scholarship program, which is too few relative to RHEST's numbers. In retrospect many girls do finish their education and do not continue further, but currently RHEST does not keep up with them.

A good strategy for RHEST would be to include these graduates in their local activities by involving them in awareness raising, mentoring, selection, and material distribution. Such activities do not include a full-time commitment, but would promote the girls to positions of leadership within their old school, as well as the community. This will make a fulfilling part-time activity, which could also include compensation, and would further empower others in the community by allowing them to see a local success story.

Another Kathmandu based NGO, the Underprivileged Girls Education Support Program (UGESP), which is better known under its iNGO name, The Little Sisters Fund (<http://www.littlesistersfund.org/>) has employed this technique and has had great success with it. After completion of their SLC, graduates become mentors or Big Sisters to current scholarship recipients. They encourage young girls to do well in school, help them with writing letters to the NGO and meet every month to discuss and report on current issues or problems within the school or with the program. NGO staff select and train the girls for this position. These mentors are locals and have a chance to go on regular household visits, especially to girls repeating classes or dropping out, and mentor families on the importance of education.

RHEST can benefit from such a program and provide recent graduates with an opportunity to get involved and assist RHEST and local field workers. Their involvement would be relevant because they are the true beneficiaries of the program and can spread the word in the community. As this is a part-time activity, they would not have to abandon their household duties or take away from their higher-education if they are still in school. Young girls could really benefit from meeting local graduates and have local role-models with true success stories. Further more the RHEST interaction program will become more relevant with the experiences and the knowledge of local girls as opposed to only hearing from adults who are not part of the community.

Quality Over Quantity

The RHEST scholarship is a highly desired commodity in rural communities, especially ones that have had the program for some years and it has become popular among local families.

It is often the case that many girls apply for just a few positions, which in turn poses the question which are the best girls to pick. RHEST aims at assisting girls from marginalized and indigenous groups who are poor by supporting them throughout their education. At the same time, it is often the case that they will go to an exclusively Dalit school or an entirely indigenous community. When that is the case, it is possible that the entire community of girls may be eligible for the scholarship. In such circumstance RHEST should make an effort to focus more on the girls performance in school in order to retain the students who are truly interested in an education. The current policy that a girl will stay in the program no matter how many times she fails a class does not support this, and may in fact be taking the chance away from someone interested in an education over someone who is not encouraged by their family or has decided that education is not a priority.

Unlike RHEST, other NGO's with a similar mission do take into account this aspect and it has proven to further motivate girls and their families about education, knowing that the scholarship is not a right but a privilege. UGESP, which supports over a 1000 girls has a case by case review of girls who fail a class more than once. They take into account that family circumstances may have contributed to this, and evaluate the situations of those repeating via household visit and an interview with the girl and her parents.

Programs run by the NYOF also do not allow for continuous failing of a class and evaluate each student's commitment if they have to repeat. Such a strategy would be useful for RHEST in order to wean out students who continuously fail even after counseling and motivation, and replace them with ones who are more committed. Having devoted girls be a part of the program would increase their chance to finish their education and get higher degrees, while unmotivated girls are more likely to drop-out before their SLC.

Selection Process and Material Distribution

It is without a doubt that the selection process needs to be improved as indicated by RHEST field workers in their annual meeting, as well as some school officials who were interviewed. The first thing that needs to be done is for RHEST to update the criteria needed in order to be selected for the program. The current criteria is straight forward and clear, but not nearly enough for selection with many girls have applied. More aspects need to be included in order to deal with schools where there is a large volume of applicants and the positions are few. These aspects should provide tools for 'what if' situations and encourage SMCs to make the process open, as opposed to having them pre-select scholars which is the case in some schools.

A Selection Toolbox with exact steps needs to be created so the criteria and process become uniform throughout the schools. A good place to create this would be at the Annual Meeting of Fieldworkers, since they know first hand the different modes of selection within their districts. Major aspects to discuss should include but not be restrained to:

- A fair and uniform way to inform the community about the scholarship
- Ranking and creating new criteria in terms of importance
- Defining who is eligible to apply (siblings of scholars, non-enrolled students, etc.)
- Selection Committee members (in addition to SMCs)
- Replacement process for drop-out students

- Monitoring of the selection process for each school/community

RHEST should include in its national policy, lessons learned from Mr. Bagawan Karki, a school principal and RHEST volunteer from Ramechaap, who has taken a personal initiative to make the selection process fair and representative. In addition to the SMC, he has included senior RHEST girls in the selection process. By doing so, he is not only empowering female students by giving them leadership power, but also making the process more open and fair by including peer evaluation on the selection board. As it is RHEST's mission to include stakeholders in its activities, SMC's should still be included in the process, but since the program is for girls, secondary and higher secondary RHEST/Amar students need to be included as well.

In terms of materials, it was clear through the research that students, though satisfied with the quality and quantity of the materials, need of additional things such as shoes, dictionaries, and SLC materials. In order to get a more accurate picture of weather what is provided is adequate, RHEST could create a survey which could be sent to the field-workers who in turn could deliver them to the schools in order to find out what exactly are the needs of students throughout the regions.

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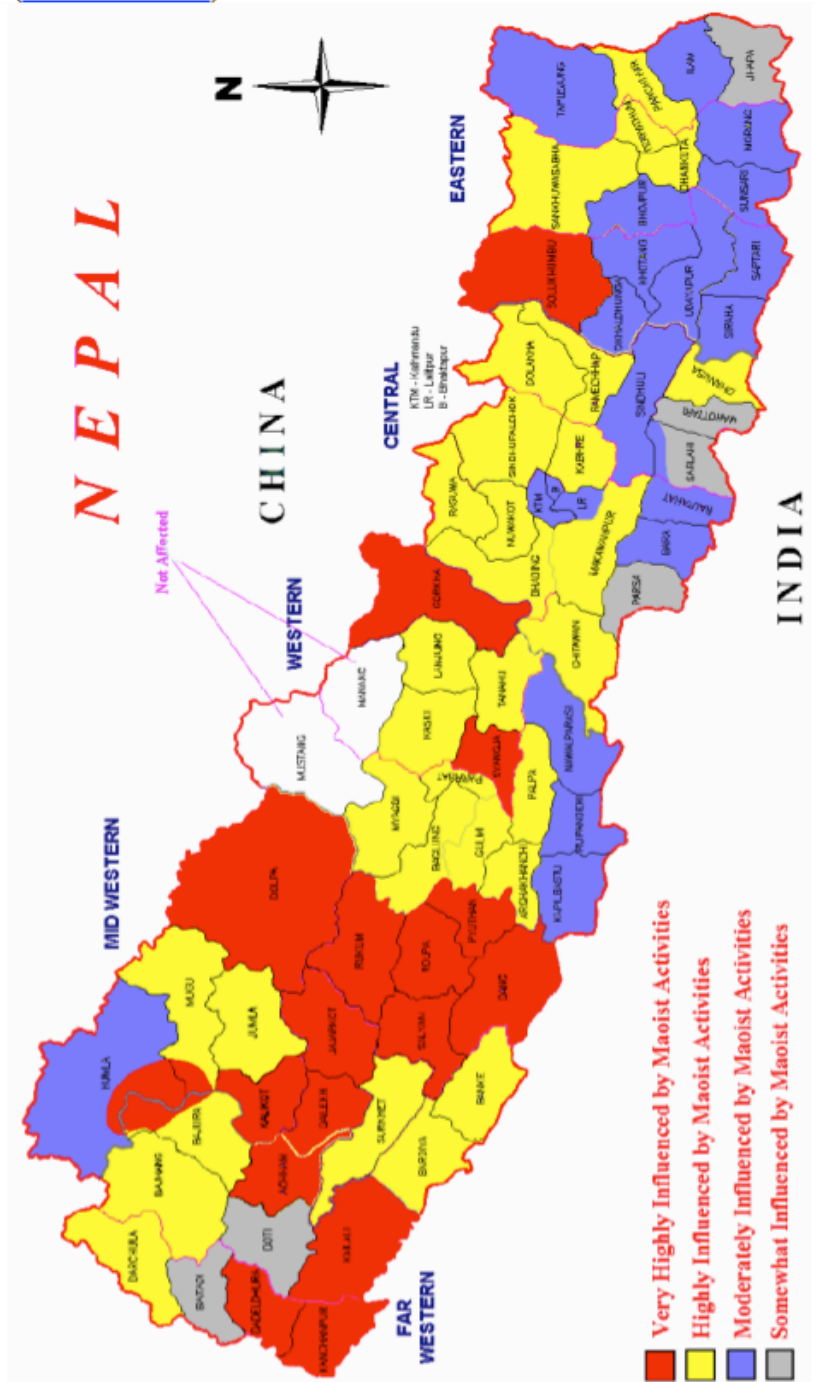
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Map 2: Maoist Influence by District

Maoist Influence by District

(www.reliefweb.int)



Source: Vaux 2007

Annex 2 - Caste Hierarchy in Nepal

Hierarchy	Habitat	Belief/religion
A) WATER ACCEPTABLE (PURE)		
1. Wearers of the sacred thread/tagadhari "Upper caste" Brahmans and Chhetris (Parbatiya)	Hills	Hinduism
"Upper caste" (Madhesi)	Tarai	Hinduism
"Upper caste" (Newar)	Kathmandu Valley	Hinduism
2. Matwali Alcohol drinkers (non-enslavable) Gurung, Magar, Sunuwar, Thakali, Rai, Limbu Newar	Hills Kathmandu Valley	Tribal/Shamanism Buddhism
3. Matawali Alcohol drinkers (enslavable) Bhote (including Tamang) Chepang, Gharti, Hayu Kumal, Tharu	Mountain/Hills Hills Inner Tarai	Buddhism Animism
B) WATER UN-ACCEPTABLE/Pani Nachalne (IMPURE)		
4. Touchable Dhobi, Kasai, Kusale, Kulu Musalman Miechha (foreigner)	Kathmandu Valley Tarai Europe	Hinduism Islam Christianity, etc.
5. Untouchable (achut) Badi, Damai, Gaine, Kadara, Kami, Sarki (Parbatiya) Chyame, Poda (Newar)	Hill Kathmandu Valley	Hinduism Hinduism

Source: Adapted from Gurung (2002).

Source: Bennett 2006

Annex 3 – RHEST schools and students

Number of Schools Per School Type

S.No.	Level	Number of Schools
1	Primary	159
2	Lower Secondary	94
3	Secondary	52
4	Higher Secondary	59
Total		364

Number of Students per District

S.No.	Districts	District Code	Number of Students
1	Syangja	A	284
2	Kaski	B	253
3	Kailali (Khailad)	C	45
4	Kailali (Dhangadi)	D	447
5	Lalitpur	E	457
6	Chitwan (Patiyani)	F	280
7	Chitwan (Meghauli)	G	187
8	Sindhupalchowk	H	529
9	Kathmandu	I	487
10	Kavre	J	365
11	Banke	K	342
12	Bhaktapur	L	286
13	Makwanpur	M	417
14	Tanahu	N	404
15	Udaypur	O	135
16	Rammechhap	P	261
17	Siraha	Q	704
18	Surkhet	R	99
Total			5982

Source: RHEST Annual Report 2009-2010

Annex 4 – RHEST Dropouts 2009-2010

	School Code	School Name	Student Name	Class	Age	Reason
1	A-16	Shree Tri- ... Sahid Higher Secondary School	Tara Tiwari	5	12	Got married
2	A -15	Shree Dahare Deurali Primary School	Sabina Adhikari	3	8	Migrated to Pokhara
3	B- 6	Shree Chandika Primary School	Goma pariyar	5	12	Got married
4	B-7	Shree Binda basini Higher Secondary School	Kamala gayek	7	15	Left study
5	C-2	Shree Rastriya Secondary School	Bidhya Ratna Chaudhary	9	18	Got married
6	D-8	Shree Janata Lower Secondary School	Kalpna thapa	6	14	Migrated to east Nepal
7	D-14	Shree Saraswoti Primary School	Kalimata koli	4	15	Got married
8	D-15	Shree Saileswori Secondary School	Sita kami	9	17	Left study
9	A- 1	Shree Saraswoti Secondary School	Anisha pokharel	10	16	Got married
10	E-7	Shree kitini Higher secondary School	Dilu basnet	10	16	Left study
11	E-19	Shree kali Devi Secondary School	Manju lo	7	13	Got married
12	E-14	Shree Champa Devi Secondary School	Sunita purpuri	5	14	Left study
13	K-10	Shree Laxmi Higher Secondary school	Dhana maya Neupane	8	19	Left study
14	K-8	Shree ghyan Jyoti Higher Secondary School	Ganga neupane	8	15	Migrated
15	K-4	Shree saraswoti secondary school	Gayetri basishya	10	17	Got married
16	N-17	Shree kumari Primary School	Madhu lamichhane	3	11	Migrated to India
17	O-4	Shree Higher Secondary School	Laxmi kumari Kamari	9	14	Left study
18	R-5	Shree Jeevan Jyoti Secondary School	Manisha khadka	10	16	Got married (3 rd time)

Source: RHEST Annual Report 2009-2010

Annex 5 - Example Questionnaire

RHEST PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE RPII1

Name: _____

Age: _____

Class: _____

School: _____

District/Community: _____

Interview Date: _____

Supported by RHEST for: _____

Started school at Age: _____

1. Why do you think going to school is important?
2. How far do you want to go in your education?
3. What do you want to do after you finish school?
4. What does your family think about you receiving an education?
5. How did you first learn of the RHEST scholarship?
6. Did you fill the application yourself? Who helped you?
7. Are any of your sisters supported by RHEST?
8. Will your sisters apply for the RHEST scholarship? Why/Why not?
9. Do you know girls of school age who do not go to school? Now? Some time back? Why not?
10. Do you know of girls who have recently or some time back left to go work elsewhere (other district, city, country)? What do they do?
11. What household activities do you do outside of school?
12. Do you share materials with friends or siblings?
13. What do you think of the materials you are receiving? Is it sufficient? What do you spend money on in addition?
14. What would you be doing if there was no RHEST scholarship?
15. Have you repeated any classes?

Annex 6 - Household Survey

First name of all members in household	Gender	Age	Relationship to Head of Household	Highest Level of Education	Dwelling tenure	Main Occupation(s)	Place of Occupation	Type of Income	Total Income
Caste/Minority Group:	1 Male 2 Female		1 Head 2 Husband/Wife 3 Son/Daughter 4 Daughter-in-law 5 Brother/Sister 6 Grand son/daughter 7 Servant 8 Relative 9 Other	1-9 Passed Level 10 SLC Passed 12 Intermediate 14 Bachelor 16 Master 17 Above Master 18 Can read and Write 19 Cannot read and write 20 Pre-primary 21 Adult Education	1 Owned 2 Rented 3 Other 4 No housing unit			1 Permanent 2 Occasional	
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									

Annex 7 - Limitations of The Study

There were a number of, mostly external factors that were obstructive to the research process. Time, funding, and resources were the biggest limitations observed as I was a volunteer and my host organization is a grass-roots local NGO with few staff. If more time and money were available, more districts could have been visited, and assistants could have been hired in order to assess local situations better via a bigger sample.

The time on hand for the current field visits was also insufficient due to the fact that only one school could be visited per day, which did not allow for the proper selection of interviewees and the planning of FGDs. Furthermore, some of my program was combined with the RHEST material distribution, which further cut out time for interviews and observation. External stresses such as Maoist run strikes obstructed one of the field trips which led us to return early, cutting out the interviews from three schools in Kaski district.

Another important limitation of my research was language and appearance. As a white woman who does not speak the local language, I was often not given a sincere answer by the respondents. Sometimes school officials would assume that I am with an NGO willing to provide more funds, and would feed me information which was clearly not true. For example, a principal of a school which had the RHEST program for only one year, told me that as a result of the scholarship more teachers are becoming employed due to the larger amount of students attending. This could not be true since the first year of the RHEST program within the school was barely as its end and less than 20 girls were receiving the scholarship.

Parents, also, would not tell me the true situations of their community. In Makwanpur in particular, students would more easily open up about women leaving the community for work or due to trafficking, while parents would not easily admit that anyone was leaving other than a few who went to be maids in hotels in Hetauda or Pokhara. The language barrier was further intensified by the fact my assistant was not a trained translator, and though her English was good, could not always translate the exact questions and answers properly.

A further issue was the unavailability of Honour of Amar project staff, who are run by two project managers. They were largely unavailable during the internship period as they are also stretched for time. Due to this I was unable to get sufficient information on RHEST's graduated students in the districts I visited, or to get their contact information in order to schedule interviews. Due to this my background study on girls who were once part of the program was close to non-existent and I had to settle for enrollment figures and testimony of one pass out student I could interview.

Finally a source of bias might have been the fact that my assistant was a RHEST staff member, and even though she was a new employee of RHEST and interested in this research, a neutral assistant would have been a better option.