



**AUSTRALIAN
HIMALAYAN
FOUNDATION**

AHF Education Sector Strategy

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Introduction

Inspired by the humanitarian work of Sir Edmund Hillary and our passion for the Himalayan region and its people, AHF was founded in 2002 with a mission to improve the quality of life for those most in need in remote Himalayan communities. Working in partnership with local non-government organisations, communities and governments in hard-to-reach areas of Nepal, India and Bhutan, our work focuses on supporting four foundational aspects of development: health, education, climate adaptation and conservation, and arts and culture. In addition, safeguarding vulnerable groups and promoting gender equality, as well as strengthening the capacity of our partners to implement best practice and sustainable development programs (and to respond to crisis) are key components of our strategic objectives.

Improving access to quality and inclusive education in the Himalaya has been a key goal for AHF since our establishment. This Education Strategy highlights why education remains a critical issue today, and outlines our specific approach to strengthening education.

Why education?

The power of education

Education has the potential to transform individual lives and the wellbeing of communities. The benefits extend well beyond the students and teachers involved directly in each project; the impact transcends to reach broader communities, whole families, and future generations.

Research clearly indicates that longer-term schooling has profound positive impacts on individuals' (and their families') health, livelihoods and opportunities. Some of the compelling statistics ([GPE, 2020](#)¹) include:

- One additional year of schooling can **increase a woman's earnings by 10%-20%**.
- Each year of secondary education **reduces the likelihood of marrying as a child** before the age of 18 by 5% or more.
- Each additional year of schooling **raises average annual gross domestic product (GDP)** growth by 0.37%.
- Educating girls averted more than **30 million deaths of children under five years old** and **100 million deaths in adults 15 to 60 years old**.
- Women with primary education (partial or complete) **earn 14% to 19%** more than those with no education at all. Women with secondary education may expect to make **almost twice as much**, and women with tertiary education **almost three times** as much as those with no education.
- A dollar invested in an additional year of schooling, particularly for girls, generates earnings and health benefits of **US\$10 in low-income countries** and close to US\$4 in lower-middle income countries.
- Each extra year of a mother's schooling **reduces the probability of infant mortality by 5% to 10%**.
- Universal secondary education could virtually **end child marriage**.

¹Global Partnership for Education (GPE) website cited March 2021. See: Benefits of Education (<https://www.globalpartnership.org/education/the-benefits-of-education>) and Education Data Highlights (<https://www.globalpartnership.org/results/education-data-highlights>)

The state of global education

Ensuring access to education has long been a central focus within the development community, as reflected within numerous global frameworks. In 1989, [The Convention of the Rights of the Child](#) (CRC) recognised education as human right, placing an emphasis on free and compulsory primary education (CRC, Article 28, 1989). The Millennium Development Goals (2000-2015) set the specific goal to “Achieve universal primary education” (MDG2). The focus on education was further expanded within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015. The 2030 Agenda emphasised inclusive education and the importance of life-long learning. Specifically, Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4) calls the global community to “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (see Annex 2). Among other issues, the SDG4 targets highlight the importance of pre-primary education, primary and secondary education, vocational education, equal access to education for girls and boys (also SDG 5), increased inclusion of people living with disability, vulnerable groups and indigenous peoples, and the provision of enhanced teacher training support.



Over the past decades, major progress has been made towards increasing access to education and school enrollment rates at all levels, particularly for girls. Nevertheless, about 260 million children were still out of school in 2018 – nearly one fifth of the global population in that age group ([UN, 2020](#)). And more than half of all children and adolescents worldwide are not meeting minimum proficiency standards in reading and mathematics. Further, the quantity and quality of education remains hugely inequitable between high-income countries and low-income countries. In low-income countries, children attend five fewer years of school in their lifetime and the average student also performs worse than 95% of the students in high-income countries ([Centre for Global Development, 2020](#)). The inequality in learning achievements is indisputable.

And this was the context before the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-).

Education gains at risk - COVID-19 pandemic

In 2020, COVID-19 tore our world apart, pushing millions into uncertainty and fear. The pandemic has been widely acknowledged as threatening to undo some of the critical education, health and environmental gains achieved over the last two decades.

- At the peak of the crisis, over **1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries were out of school** because of the COVID19 pandemic. ([UNESCO 2021](#)). As of February 18, 2021, nearly 222 million children were still out of school worldwide due to nationwide school closures linked to COVID19 ([GPE, 2020](#)).
- UNESCO estimates **at least \$210 billion will be cut from education budgets from 2021** ([UNESCO 2020](#)).
- The Global Partnership for Education state: “Although data on girls’ learning loss and dropout rates stemming from COVID-19 school closures remains limited, we know that girls are likely to be disproportionately affected. With higher burdens of unpaid care and domestic work, and lower access to technology, girls may have fewer opportunities to engage in remote learning. They also face an increased risk of pregnancy and early marriage, reducing their chances to return to school as they reopen.” ([GPE 2020](#))
- [UNICEF](#) has highlighted that the digital divide, including uneven access to digital learning resources, and parental support is further amplifying inequalities among young people.
- UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that the COVID pandemic has created the most severe disruption in the world’s education systems in history and is threatening a loss of learning that may stretch beyond one generation of students ([UNESCO 2020](#)).

For remote and already vulnerable families in Bhutan, Nepal and the Indian Himalayas, the impact of COVID-19 is profound and deep-seated. In 2020, Nepal, Bhutan and India experienced prolonged and unpredictable lockdowns due to the COVID pandemic. All AHF-funded programs and partners were impacted. Schools in Nepal were closed from March to October 2020, and the context continues to evolve.



The state of education in Nepal

Nepal is among the least developed countries in the world, with about one-quarter of its population living below the poverty line. Nepal is ranked **142nd out of 177 countries in the UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI)** in 2020. Across Nepal:

- The national literacy rate for the population aged 15 years and older is at 68%, with men achieving significantly higher rates of literacy (77%) than women (60%) ([UNESCO UIS, 2018](#)).
- While enrollment in primary school education has improved significantly in past years (now sitting at 96.6%), 18% of children still do not complete year five. The net enrollment rate in secondary education (grades 9-12) is also far lower - at only 46.4%. ([Nepal National Framework, 2019](#))
- Children from disadvantaged groups experience disproportionately low access and high drop out rates (MoE, NIRT & AIR 2016, in [SSDP 2016](#))

The 2015 Nepal Earthquake had a significant impact on the education sector and progress toward national goals. This impact is extensively documented and addressed within the national School Sector Development Plan 2016-2023 ([SSDP 2016](#)), which highlighted that: the earthquake had destroyed 9,353 schools and damaged many more, 35,000 classrooms were mostly or entirely damaged by the earthquake, and 45,000 classrooms needed repair or reconstruction ([SSDP 2016](#)). This left more than one million children lacking access to safe permanent places to learn ([NIRT & AIR 2017](#)).

As the country was mobilizing a response to the immediate needs after the earthquakes, it was hit again by a severe fuel and commodity crisis that has significantly undermined post-earthquake reconstruction ([NIRT & AIR 2017](#)). UNESCO and the GoN have noted that these two crises disrupted some of the positive education trends ([SSDP 2016](#)).



Challenges in accessing basic, quality education in Nepal are particularly pressing in the remote mountain areas of the country such as Solukhumbu, where AHF primarily works. Physical distance and lack of infrastructure such as limited motorable roads connecting remote regions mean that children in Solukhumbu have to walk up to 1.5 hours to go to their nearest school. There are gaps between rural and urban children, males and females, and between ethnic and social groups regarding participation in education. While significant progress has been made to strengthen gender parity during the last two decades, “many differences remain with children receiving inequitable access to quality education, due to gender, socioeconomic status, language, ethnicity, caste, geographical location and differing abilities.” ([SSDP 2016](#) p28). People living in remote rural areas, women, ethnic minorities, Dalits, girls, children with disabilities, and the poor are the most disadvantaged in terms of educational attainment ([SSDP 2016](#), [Dhakal 2018](#), [NIRT & AIR 2017](#), [Government of Nepal DOE 2018](#)). Those facing multiple barriers to inclusion are the most excluded. Girls find it more difficult to attend and participate in school when they are menstruating, particularly if the school does not meet their water, sanitation and hygiene needs. These challenges affect the regular school attendance of the children ([UNICEF 2016](#)) which undoubtedly impacts retention and educational outcomes.



Teachers face difficulties accessing appropriate/designated and quality teaching materials, particularly ICT and STEM resources, and also monitoring student's educational outcomes. In remote regions, including the lower Solukhumbu, schools are severely under-resourced, teachers are poorly trained and overworked, and at times not present throughout the school year. For children in particularly remote areas or experiencing additional obstacles (such as disability or extreme poverty) school attendance is low.

However, despite these challenges, the regions in Nepal which make significant investment in literacy and education demonstrate rapidly improved HDI scores (UNDP Nepal HDI Report, 2014). As such, the Nepal government has identified an urgent need to provide quality, child friendly, inclusive education in the remote mountain districts of Nepal. Overarching goals, approaches and specific targets are set out in both the [Education Sector Plan \(2016-2023\)](#) (called the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP)) and the [Nepal National Framework for SDG 4 \(2019\)](#).

SDG4 Education 2030 - Nepal National Framework (2019)

The objectives of this Framework are to:

- a) ensure inclusive and equitable access to quality education and promote lifelong learning for all,
- b) promote the culture of peace, civic awareness, sustainable behaviour, social harmony and shared values,
- c) promote skills learning and entrepreneurship to contribute to improved and sustained livelihoods, employability and economic development,
- d) strengthen Information, Communication and Technologies (ICT) application, scientific orientation, innovation and knowledge creation to foster the development of a knowledge-based economy, and
- e) strengthen the institutional capacity to enhance the delivery of the education sector."

The framework also includes core targets, which include provision of free, equitable access to primary and secondary education, access to early childhood care, and affordable vocational and tertiary education, elimination of gender disparities in education, as well as literacy and numeracy outcomes.

([https://moe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/SDG_4_Nepal_National_Framework_\(Final_Print_Ready_Copy\)_July_2020.pdf](https://moe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/SDG_4_Nepal_National_Framework_(Final_Print_Ready_Copy)_July_2020.pdf))

The state of education in Bhutan

Bhutan was one of the first countries in the world to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. The country's constitution provides specific provisions for children's rights and the Royal Government provides free education up to Grade 10 for all children. However, despite Bhutan's significant progress in expanding access to education, especially primary education, there is still inequality in access to education based on wealth, gender and geographic location. The quality of education in Bhutan also remains a priority.

Some of the key challenges in accessing basic, quality education in Bhutan include the high drop-out rates as students reach their teenage years. Only 29% of girls who complete Class X move to Class XI (UNICEF 2017). By age 15, 21% of girls and 22% of boys in Bhutan are out of school ([FHI360 2010](#)). Bhutan has an adult literacy rate of 66.6% and a youth (15-24 years) literacy rate of 93.1% (94.8% for males and 91.6% for females) ([UNESCO UIS 2015 data](#), and UNESCO 2019 via [World Bank Data](#)). However, these figures vary widely by geographical location with the total literacy rate in rural areas standing at just 58.3% compared to 81.7% in rural areas ([National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan 2017](#)). Children in remote areas face difficulty accessing school, since many local schools only go up to Class VI. According to the Bhutan Living Standards Report, 25% of students reside in boarding facilities ([National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan 2017](#)). Children from remote and rural areas thus often move away from home to attend secondary education, making it difficult for girls to continue their education due to parents fears of being vulnerable and having to live alone (UNICEF 2017).

Education Provisions in 'The Constitution of The Kingdom of Bhutan'.

Article 9: Principles of State Policy

15. The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing knowledge, values and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality.

16. The State shall provide free education to all children of school going age up to tenth standard and ensure that technical and professional education is made generally available and that higher education is equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

([http://www.education.gov.bt/wp-content/downloads/publications/publication/National%20Education%20Policy%202019%20\(Draft\).pdf](http://www.education.gov.bt/wp-content/downloads/publications/publication/National%20Education%20Policy%202019%20(Draft).pdf))

Socio-economic differences present a major challenge to achieving equitable educational outcomes. UNICEF have highlighted the issue of inequity in education, noting the significantly greater percentage of children from the wealthiest quintile completing primary education, compared to those from the poorest quintile (86% vs 27%) ([UNICEF 2020](#)) Children with disabilities are particularly disadvantaged, given the weak mainstreaming of disability in sectoral programmes and continued stigma and norms associated with disability. Indeed, in one study children identified poverty (48%) and disability (11%) as the two main factors underlying school drop out ([RENEW and Save the Children 2015](#)). 43% of children living with a disability are out of school (National Disability Assessment, Government of Bhutan, 2015).

While school education is free until Grade 10, some school fees do need to be paid at every school, along with other essentials such as meals, uniforms, stationery, toiletries and bedding for boarding school students. Providing for those items is often out of reach for vulnerable families, such as survivors of domestic violence or abuse, resulting in the discontinuance of children's education.

Bhutan National Education Policy (Draft, 2019)

This policy 'aspires to provide overarching directions for building and nurturing an education system that prepares citizens who are nationally rooted and globally competent.'

It includes numerous and broad ranging policy statement on themes including, but not limited to:

- Early Childhood Care and Development
- School Education
- Monastic Education
- Curriculum, Assessment and Examinations
- Tertiary Education
- Literacy and Lifelong Learning
- Health and wellbeing of children and young people

([http://www.education.gov.bt/wp-content/downloads/publications/publication/National%20Education%20Policy%202019%20\(Draft\).pdf](http://www.education.gov.bt/wp-content/downloads/publications/publication/National%20Education%20Policy%202019%20(Draft).pdf))

AHF response

AHF experience and achievements

Improving education in the Himalaya was the reason AHF was formed. Since then, we have amassed nearly two decades of experience in supporting families, schools and teachers and in working closely with local organisations and government. Education remains central to AHF's Strategy (2020-2025).

Our approach to supporting education has evolved and scaled over the years.

Over the past 5 years (2015-2020), some key achievements include:

- 300 schools strengthened with improved facilities, trained teachers, and child- friendly resources and materials, benefiting over 29,000 students in the Lower Solukhumbu;
- 87 earthquake resistant classrooms rebuilt in 26 schools in the Everest region following the 2015 earthquake - including a large multipurpose school and community hall;
- Averaged over 5 years, more than 1,000 teachers a year empowered with knowledge, skills and strategies to include and engage students and improve learning outcomes in Nepali literacy, English, Maths and Science;
- Each year, up to 750 vulnerable students in Bhutan and Nepal were supported to attend school with uniforms, books, stationery and other educational materials, toiletries and meals;
- Over 90 young women in Bhutan and Nepal participated in training to help them develop technical skills for employment;
- Increased school attendance and retention rates, and also increased the attendance of girls as a percentage of the school population in Nepal;
- Recognition of our Nepal education program as an example of best practice by the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD). Our local partner REED Nepal is the only Nepalese NGO with a teachers' professional development program accredited by CEHRD; and
- In 2020 alone, provided a distance education program by radio following schools in lockdown due to COVID-19. The program included lessons in Maths, Science, English, Nepali literacy and Social Studies for grades 1-8 to over 23,000 households in the Solukhumbu (over 13,800 TTQE students), reaching an estimated 1.2 million school children in 25 districts².

²Calculated from Census data for each District with reference to student age group and % audience reach of radio lessons as measured through sample surveys of students and parents in the project area

AHF program delivery approach

Signature elements of our approach include:

- **Strong collaboration with and capacity strengthening of local partners**

AHF works exclusively with local organisations that have strong links with the communities they serve and share our vision, purpose and goals in a spirit of mutual respect and trust. Since 2005, AHF has worked in close partnership with [REED Nepal](#) to build, implement and grow our flagship “Teacher Training and Quality Education” (TTQE) Program and in Bhutan has been collaborating with [Respect, Educate, Nurture and Empower Women \(RENEW\)](#) for ten years to support the education of children survivors of violence and abuse. AHF also works with both partners to strengthen their capacity in a range of areas, leverage local resources and ensure its programs are in line with government priorities and coordinate effectively with local authorities.

- **A commitment to long term engagement**

AHF holds a predominant place as one of the leading development aid agencies in areas such as the Lower Solukhumbu in Nepal, where we have provided sustained, practical assistance for many years. We have a long term commitment to our local partners and the communities they work with to ensure solid education outcomes.

- **Responsive adaption**

We adapt our response to challenges such as the Nepal Earthquakes and COVID-19 to honour our commitments, support partners and communities at times of crisis, and ensure our education programs are delivered and have impact.

- **Safeguarding, Inclusion and Equality**

We actively mainstream gender, child safeguarding and disability inclusion approaches within our education programs, as well as the inclusion of other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups³, reflecting development sector best practices as outlined in the ACFID Code of Conduct. Our programs promote gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly through supporting girls' access to education and women's leadership. We work closely with our partners to strengthen their capacity to safeguard children, as well as to prevent discrimination and sexual abuse and exploitation. We are committed to providing disability-specific initiatives to support the empowerment of persons with disabilities, as well as integrating disability-sensitive measures into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of AHF policies and programs.

- **Continuous improvement and learning**

In addition to strong collaboration and frequent communication, AHF and our local partners share a commitment to evidence-informed programming and ongoing learning arising from research, monitoring and evaluation.

AHF has the **relationships, knowledge and skills** to continue to deliver and develop **impactful education programs** and further expand our work in this sector to **address the education needs of other communities in the region**.



³Women, children, female or child-headed households, people with disabilities, the poor, the elderly, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, religious and linguistic minorities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex people, people dependent upon the land of others for livelihood or residence.

AHF strategy and education program model

We understand that children in the Himalaya face a range of challenges in accessing a quality and inclusive education, as do the teachers and school leaders tasked with providing it. To help address some of these challenges, AHF and our partners work with multiple stakeholders in the school education community - we support children and families, particularly the most vulnerable; we support teachers, and we support school leaders. When required, and to ensure a safe and effective education environment, AHF may also help to enhance school facilities and infrastructure in schools that are part of existing programs. We support the growth and systems development of our local partners, so they can continue to deliver effective education programs and continuously embed new approaches to inclusion, safeguarding and gender equity.




We ensure our programs respond to local and national government and community priorities and strategies.

Many of our program components have been developed over time, in collaboration with partners and with the support of a range of stakeholders, including volunteer teachers from Australia and New Zealand, and draw on learnings from previous evaluations.

Education is fundamental to personal growth, lifelong learning, and a quality life. Education has the power to change an individual, strengthen a family, transform a community and build a more equitable society. Given our extensive experience and passion for education, and the extent of educational needs, education will remain a core part of AHF's work into the future. COVID-19 and its disruptions to education has reinforced that commitment.

Under the current AHF Strategy (2020-2025), education forms our largest program sector. During this time, we plan to continue working with our existing education partners, strengthen our research base, periodically evaluate our programs, sharpen program design and assess impact. We do this with a view to both consolidate our results, and position ourselves to scale and expand into new communities. In light of COVID, the modalities of our program delivery might need to be amended to cater for the field realities.

Figure 1: AHF Education Program Model Overview

Program Goal	AHF Strategic Goal 1: Improve access to education and develop quality and inclusive education programs.		
Pillars	 <p>Supporting Schools, School Leaders and Decision-Makers</p>	 <p>Supporting Teachers</p>	 <p>Supporting Students and Families</p>
Program components	School Governance & Facilities	Teacher Training & support for child-friendly classroom practice	Literacy & core subject programs Parental Involvement Going to School Support
Specific objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen schools and education activities to be child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, inclusive and effective learning environments for all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower teachers with child-friendly and effective teaching strategies. Improve the quality of child friendly education in the poorest districts of Nepal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase children's levels of learning achievements and literacy in Nepal and Bhutan and improve parental participation. Ensure disadvantaged children in Bhutan and Nepal access early childhood education and complete primary and secondary education. Support disadvantaged youth to access technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

1. Safeguarding vulnerable groups and promoting inclusion and gender equality

Specific Objectives:

- Promote equitable access to education and health care for girls, children with disabilities and children in vulnerable situations.
- Take action to end discrimination and violence against women and girls.
- Strengthen women's leadership and participation in governance and decision making.
- Include and safeguard children, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in projects, partner organisations and AHF.

2. Strengthen capacity of partners to implement best practice and sustainable development programs, and to respond to crises.

Specific Objectives:

- Strengthen partners' governance and management.
- Develop key partnerships with stakeholders in Australia and in the countries we work to support AHF operations, projects and partners.
- Support partners to ensure the sustainability of their operations.
- Strengthen partner capacity to respond to crises, including COVID.

Strong partnerships with local partners and ongoing capacity strengthening. Relationships based on trust and mutual respect. Long term commitment. Adaptive programming. Safeguarding, inclusion and equality. Continuous improvement and learning.



AHF Education Program Model Overview

As illustrated in the diagram above, to support different stakeholder groups our education program draws on a suite of 'program components' aligned with each of the three pillars. Components include; School Governance and Facilities, Teacher Training & support for Child-Friendly Classroom Practice, Literacy and Core Subject Programs, Parental Involvement Programs, and Going to School Support. Each component has a different purpose and rationale, as described further below.

In 2020-2025, AHF will implement the following program components:

Supporting Schools, School Leaders and Decision Makers:

- **School Governance and facilities**

We aim for AHF supported schools to: have strong governance systems, have adequate & safe facilities, deliver child-friendly education, be disability and gender-sensitive, and provide safe, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.

To help support this, we will work to build the capacity of School Management Committees (SMCs), teachers and parent-teacher associations to develop school improvement plans that integrate these aspects. School management and teacher capacity in safeguarding and gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) is increased through orientation and implementation of improved procedures, and participation and empowerment of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups are encouraged. In addition, our partners, with AHF support, work to build the strategic and skills capacity of local government bodies to better govern, support and sustain school-based initiatives.

We will continue to support the development of school facilities when required so that students can effectively and safely attend schooling. We support improved water and sanitation facilities; increased school safety measures including first aid and disaster risk reduction training and planning; increased access to appropriate learning resources and spaces including book corners and library spaces, and the integration of climate change information and training in schools in our school-based environment projects.

Supporting Teachers:

- **Teacher Training and support for child-friendly classroom practice**

Many teachers in remote areas have received limited teacher training. Building upon nearly two decades of experience, AHF will provide training and mentoring programs to teachers, including through Volunteer Teacher trainers, in: child-friendly, effective and positive teaching practices; the core subjects of English, Maths, Science and Nepali literacy; early childhood education, and safeguarding. Child-friendly approaches recognise, encourage and support children's growing capacities as learners by providing a school culture, teaching behaviours and curriculum content that are focused on learning and the learner. AHF will look at ways to expand the program to other vulnerable communities.

Supporting Students & Families:

- **Literacy Program**

Drawing lessons from previous phases, the Literacy Program will support students & teachers in early grades of AHF-supported schools to improve Nepali literacy outcomes (measured against government benchmarks) through teacher and student access to appropriate teaching and learning materials and strengthened teacher capacity.

- **Parental engagement**

The program will continue to involve parents/carers in reading groups that promote their engagement in their child's learning process. Parents/carers are recruited and trained as volunteers working alongside teachers to improve children's literacy in Nepali. Additionally, mothers' groups are oriented on the importance of early childhood education and starting children in age-appropriate learning from an early age.

- **Going to School Support (GSS)**

AHF will also continue to provide school materials, small cash support and other essentials to ensure the most vulnerable children in Nepal and Bhutan, including survivors of abuse and violence, can access and remain in schools. Girls will be the main recipients of that support and increasingly those particularly disadvantaged students at risk of dropping out. Counselling for students and/or families will be provided by dedicated, locally-based staff and AHF will continue to look at ways to enhance the quality of the support provided, through training of the counsellors and other key stakeholders. AHF will also support disadvantaged youth to access technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

These various components will be delivered collectively, sequentially or independently, depending on the identified and changing needs of the school or community in question. Importantly, gender and disability inclusion, and child safeguarding approaches and principles will continue to be mainstreamed across all program modalities and activities.

The ongoing impact of COVID-19 will be monitored regularly and project activities pivoted accordingly to, as much as possible, meet strategic objectives. With partner and community input, AHF would seek to use remote delivery modalities to undertake activities that support the implementation of program components - such as delivering literacy classes by radio or online teacher training.

On the basis of our learnings in Nepal, AHF will also look at further developing our education program in Bhutan.



Risks

- **COVID-19** poses a significant risk for the implementation of the education program strategy, particularly regarding disruption to students' learning and impact on families. As mentioned above, AHF will closely follow up the situation in the countries we work and adapt its programming accordingly to strive to meet strategic objectives. When not possible, alternative programming will be discussed in close liaison with partners and to support stakeholders', including governmental efforts.
- **Child safeguarding and PSEAH** risks will be assessed for all programs undertaken by AHF and relevant mitigation strategies identified and implemented.
- **Fraud, corruption, terrorism and other risks** relating to compliance with AHF policies and specific to each project will also be assessed and relevant mitigation strategies also identified and implemented.
- **AHF funding cycle** relies on fundraising during the year for project implemented in the same year, thereby posing a risk to projects' continuity. AHF is working at more predictable, reliable and diverse sources of multi-year funding commitments, as well as progressing to a budgeting cycle of committing following raising a base portion of the funding required.
- Strategy implementation relies on a **small number of partners and key individuals**. AHF is working with partners on all parts of project management and sustainability to assist with business (project) continuity should a key stakeholder become unavailable.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning

The delivery and outcomes of AHF education programs are closely monitored, and programs are regularly evaluated. While each education project generally has its own bespoke and detailed monitoring and evaluation framework, the AHF Strategy (2020-2025) provides the overarching framework outlining specific goals and outcomes for our work in education, together with relevant indicators and means of verification. Results against those will be used as learning for new phases of the education program and shared with AHF stakeholders through annual reports and other communication.

See our detailed indicator matrix in Annex 1 .

References and further reading

The Global Education Context, including Global Education Goals & Frameworks

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The Impact of COVID-19 on Education

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Annex 1 - Education Sector Program MEL Indicator Framework

GOAL 1: Improve access to education and develop quality and inclusive education programs.		
REF	Outcomes	Indicators
1-1	Ensure disadvantaged children in Bhutan and Nepal access early childhood education and complete primary and secondary education.	# of children have accessed education (early childhood to secondary) # of scholarship students having completed primary and secondary schools
1-2	Increase children's levels of learning achievements and literacy in Nepal and Bhutan and improve parental participation.	% increase in learning achievements in English, Maths and Science and Nepali literacy of students in schools supported by AHF # of parents engaged as TTQE volunteers (children's literacy program; School Committees)
1-3	Empower teachers with child-friendly and effective teaching strategies.	# of teachers trained in # of schools Quality of teaching and teacher training (assessed at evaluation)
1-4	Support disadvantaged youth to access technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.	# of youth supported with technical/vocational scholarship Activities for transition to tertiary education and/or vocational training appraised for potential integration into existing education projects
1-5	Strengthen schools and education activities to be child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, inclusive and effective learning environments for all.	# of schools supported to become model (Namuna) schools and achieve agreed milestones # of feeder schools that have integrated some of the Namuna schools' milestones into their school improvement plans
1-6	Improve the quality of child friendly education in the poorest districts of Nepal.	Indicators are the same as above.

Annex 1 - cont.

GOAL 5: Intensify our work to safeguard vulnerable groups and promote inclusion and gender equality		
REF	Outcomes	Indicators
5-1	Promote equitable access to education and health care for girls, children with disabilities and children in vulnerable situations.	# of girls # of children with disability # of children from indigenous groups accessing education and healthcare in AHF projects % retention and enrolment rates of girls, children with disability # of girls and children with disability receiving scholarship support
5-2	Take action to end discrimination and violence against women and girls.	# of people trained in gender and social inclusion # of people trained in child safeguarding and PSEAH # of people trained in providing effective counselling for children survivors of abuse and violence Gender and disability inclusive strategies implemented in all projects # of partners with policies and procedures on gender, PSEAH, child safeguarding
5-3	Strengthen women's leadership and participation in governance and decision-making.	% women in leadership positions in governance committees (eg. health committees, school management committees...) # women and girls participating in decision-making process for design, monitoring, implementation and evaluation of projects
5-4	Include and safeguard children, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups in projects, partner organisations and AHF.	# children, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups included in projects # of incidents against children, women, people with disabilities and other vulnerable groups

Annex 1 - cont.

GOAL 6: Deepen partnerships and strengthen capacity of our development partners to implement best practice and sustainable development programs, and to respond to crises		
REF	Outcomes	Indicators
6-1	Strengthen partners' governance and management	Capacity strengthening plan developed and implemented with all partners; High partner satisfaction through survey and feedback
6-3	Support partners to ensure the sustainability of their operations	AHF partners have successfully reached sustainability for part of their operations and reduced reliance on AHF # grants applied for jointly; \$ partners obtain from other sources to reduce AHF support/ increase their reach
6-4	Strengthen partner capacity to respond to crises, including COVID	#, type and size of responses provided in crises, including COVID

Annex 2 - Sustainable Development Goal 4

SDG 4: Education - Our Global Targets for Education

- Target 4.1. By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes
- Target 4.2. By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education
- Target 4.3. By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university
- Target 4.4. By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship
- Target 4.5. By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations
- Target 4.6. By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy
- Target 4.7. By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
- Target 4.a. Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all
- Target 4.b. By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrollment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programs, in developed countries and other developing countries
- Target 4.c. By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

(<https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4>)