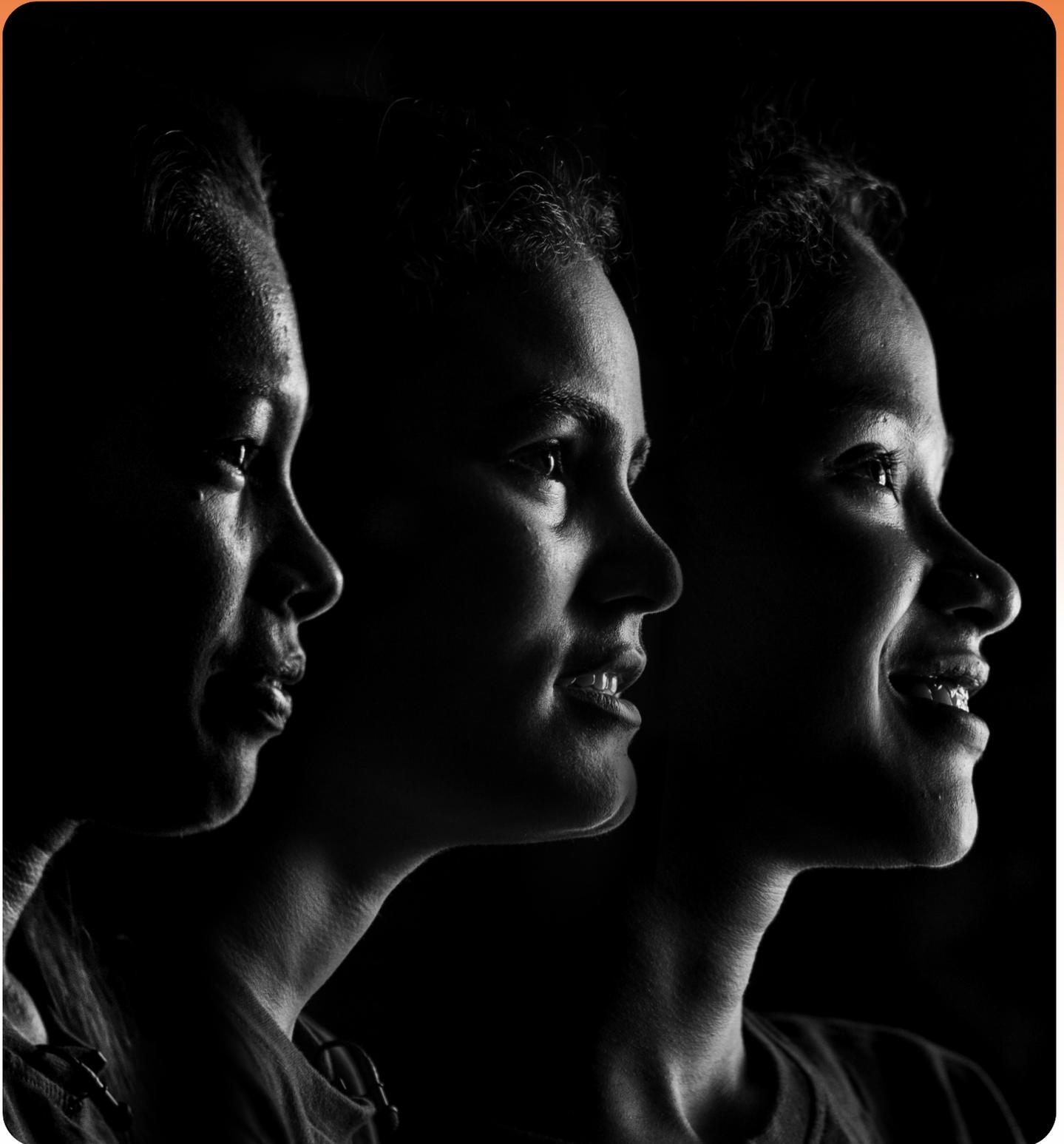


Tech Age Girls: Preparing Nepal's New Generation of Female Leaders





We at READ Global are excited to share with you the impact of the first round of the Tech Age Girls (TAG) program in Nepal. We've long been fans of the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX) methodology and looked forward to launching TAG in Nepal three years ago. Today, TAG is running in 10 READ Centers across Nepal, with plans to expand it to new locations. TAG improves girls' technical skills and leadership abilities while expanding opportunities for girls in the areas of education, career, and life. We knew that by implementing this program in trusted community institutions that offer a range of complementary services for the girls and their families, we could change not only the lives of the participants but the community as a whole!

We hope this report gives you a glimpse of how TAG is impacting rural Nepal and helping pave the way for the country's future female leaders.

—
Sanjana Shrestha, READ Global Executive Director
and Megan Volk, READ Global Deputy Director



Tech Age Girls (TAG) is a girls' empowerment and leadership program developed by IREX, a global development and education organization.

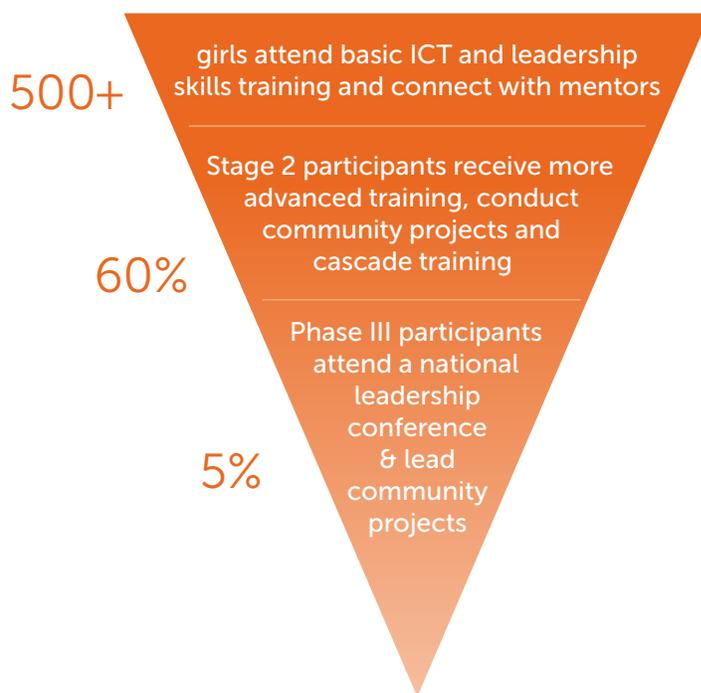
TAG is an intensive training, mentoring, and networking program that develops young female leaders who work toward national development. TAG Nepal aims to give girls the skills and confidence they need to succeed in school, pursue ambitious educational and professional goals, and become leaders who create positive change in their families and communities.

The three core objectives of TAG are:

- 1) to build ICT, academic, and 21st-century skills of young women, helping them craft development plans that lead to gainful employment and leadership roles;
- 2) to shift limiting gender norms, helping families and entire communities realize that women and girls can excel at ICT, pursue higher education, and succeed in professions that are still male-dominated; and
- 3) to have teachers improve their teaching of ICT, leadership, and life skills to secondary school students while shifting their own attitudes about the ability of girls to pursue Science, Technology, Engineering, Math (STEM) education.

To join TAG, applicants and their parents must show commitment to the program. In the first round of the program, READ Centers selected 500 girls aged 14-22 across 10 READ Centers in Kailali, Bardiya, Rupandehi, Nawalparasi, Nawalpur, and Chitwan districts. These are rural communities with high levels of poverty and few opportunities for girls.

The TAG Proven Model



Starting with a cohort of 500 girls, the most promising participants progress to later phases. The most motivated and high-performing 25 girls then receive further opportunities to grow their leadership potential. These future leaders share what they've learned through cascade training with family and peers, broadening TAG's impact and sustaining the work long beyond the end of the program. To date, TAG participants in Nepal have shared their learnings with approximately 23,000 of their peers.



[Watch Ganga's Journey here ▶](#)

Meet Ganga Chaudhary

Like in most of the world, schools in Nepal were shut during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Watching little girls and boys playing in the streets, TAG graduate Ganga Chaudhary—who was studying to become a teacher—saw an opportunity to start her career as an educator.

Ganga began teaching the younger ones in her neighborhood. Soon, her informal lessons became more regular and she started giving assignments using lesson plans that she was able to find online due to TAG technology training. The students did their part and started studying. Parents and guardians in Ganga's neighborhood were happy and remarked, "Miss, please make them exactly like you."

Today, Ganga continues to tutor more than 12 children after school hours and on holidays. She attributes a lot of her success to TAG, which developed her knowledge, skills, and confidence.

While TAG provides direct programming exclusively for girls, it also engages their families and peers—including men and boys—through community activities such as information campaigns and knowledge sharing sessions. We believe engaging the whole community on gender and social inclusion is critical to create sustainable change. Through this approach, TAG is building allies for girls in their pursuit of changing local gender norms.

Program Overview

500 girls enrolled in TAG across 10 READ Centers, of which:

- **32.6%** have already completed secondary education, with half of them going on to higher education. Of those, **14%** are pursuing a STEM-related degree
- **31.8%** have already found employment, internships, or volunteer or consultant roles
- **254** teachers trained on gender-inclusive and interactive teaching methodologies

In addition, TAG participants have:

- reached **2,169** additional youth through cascade training
- collaborated with **75** local organizations
- reached approximately **70** local/influential leaders
- spoken and/or participated **436** times at local and international development forums
- created **50** community projects that reached **1,850** people

Demonstrating adaptability and resilience

With the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic, TAG and READ Centers in Nepal had to suspend face-to-face activities and focus on urgent community needs.

In March 2020, the TAG program shifted to educate participants on how to keep themselves, their families, and their communities safe. TAG participants:

- developed **669** materials on COVID-19 prevention and response, including audio-visual materials for the illiterate
- collected and answered **8,246** queries on COVID-19
- worked with trained mental health professionals to reach and provide psychosocial support for **1,031** people through online channels
- tutored **286** children and curated **189** online educational resources for children
- produced **282** radio shows on COVID, gender-based violence and education-related topics
- reached **234** households in need with direct relief support

These initiatives helped participants feel more connected and supported, alleviating their feelings of stress, boredom, and grief, while also showcasing the leadership skills of these young women during a time of crisis.

Quantifying and qualifying outcomes

To assess the outcomes and impact of TAG, READ undertook a hybrid qualitative analysis through ripple effects mapping (REM), focus group discussions (FGDs), and key informant interviews (KIIs). A set of baseline and endline surveys was also conducted to gather insights from various stakeholders.



Baseline and endline surveys

TAG participants, their parents, their teacher-mentors



Focus group discussion

TAG trainers and teacher-mentors



Key informant interviews

Local stakeholders in the community



Ripple effects mapping

TAG participants, their parents

The evaluation process was designed to specifically identify:

- what has changed for the participants because of their participation in TAG, including in their school and at home
- what has changed within families and the broader community as a result of TAG

“My daughter is a TAG participant at Janata Center. Since she has been involved in TAG, my daughter’s attitude has changed in a positive way. I thought my daughter could get misled if she uses social media. When I saw her making videos on COVID-19 safety precautions and sharing this with everyone in the community, I felt immensely proud of her. I am really happy to see her achieving much and becoming outspoken. This is the impact of the TAG project on my daughter. I am very proud that my daughter helps in raising awareness on important issues. I am involved in her activities these days. I am grateful to Janata Community Library.”

— Rajkumar Agrawal (Father of Shivani Agrawal)

Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) is a way of cataloging the impact of complex programs and collaborative processes through participatory, community-driven data collection. REM engages a representative group of project participants in identifying outcomes, analyzing data, and discerning key takeaways. Impacts of efforts or ‘chain of effects’ are mapped out two-dimensionally, sometimes along a timeline to understand the temporal dimension of systems change efforts. REM helps provide stakeholders a broader view of what has been achieved by a program, and what the logical next steps would be.

Demonstrating gains through baseline and endline surveys

Baseline and endline surveys were conducted through semi-structured questionnaires administered in the 10 READ Centers that implemented TAG. The team randomly selected 249 out of 500 TAG participants and 52 parents as respondents. Of TAG participants, there were 74 respondents for Phase I, 150 for Phase II, and 25 for Phase III, in proportion to the TAG participants per phase. For the parents or guardians, we surveyed and interviewed 13 respondents for Phase I, 11 for Phase II, and 28 for Phase III. The surveys asked a variety of questions, from knowledge and skills to personal aspirations to family and community relationships.

On educational and career options

PARENTS

98% of parents have changed their perception of girls' potential as leaders in the community, agreeing that girls should have expanded opportunities in higher education and professional positions.

Do you think your daughter will be able to improve her education and career options as a result of the things she learned in TAG?

(N = 52)

Topics	N	Responses
Able to choose her career after having access to information from the internet and computer	30	57.7%
Now she is competent to get a job easily	28	53.8%
Supported her to do better in her education	30	57.7%
Changed her plans for future education	25	48.1%

PARTICIPANTS

93.2% of surveyed participants report that their educational goals have changed since joining TAG; 95.0% of surveyed participants want to attend higher education, and 93.3% of those already discussed the possibility with their parents; 73.4% of surveyed participants report that their career goals have changed since joining TAG; and 96.79% of surveyed participants said that the project helped to shape their career ambitions.



Meet Ashrani

Ashrani, a TAG graduate from the Kalika READ Center, comes from a poor family. Her five sisters are all married, which leaves Ashrani with the responsibility of supporting her parents in the future.

Having never used a computer and having no professional skills, Ashrani was worried about her ability to support her family. Through TAG, Ashrani learned how to use Excel and Word, and built confidence by practicing job interviews and speaking about herself and her goals. With her increased confidence, Ashrani began speaking in public and engaging with her community, including local government representatives who were very impressed with her.

Upon her graduation, Ashrani became a data entry clerk at the civil registration department of Badhaiyatal Rural Municipality. Now, she supports her family with her salary and plans to pursue her bachelor's degree. "I wouldn't have even been able to give an interview if I was not properly trained by TAG," Ashrani shares. "Getting a job was an unachievable dream before. I am much thankful to READ Nepal and Kalika READ Center."



On knowledge and skills gained

PARENTS

90.3% of surveyed parents have learned technology tools from their TAG participant and 92.3% found the knowledge, skills, and information that the TAG participants shared with them useful.

PARTICIPANTS

94.8% of surveyed participants find the knowledge and skills gained from the TAG project helpful; and 88.1% of those who found TAG useful shared their knowledge and skills with others.

On gender issues

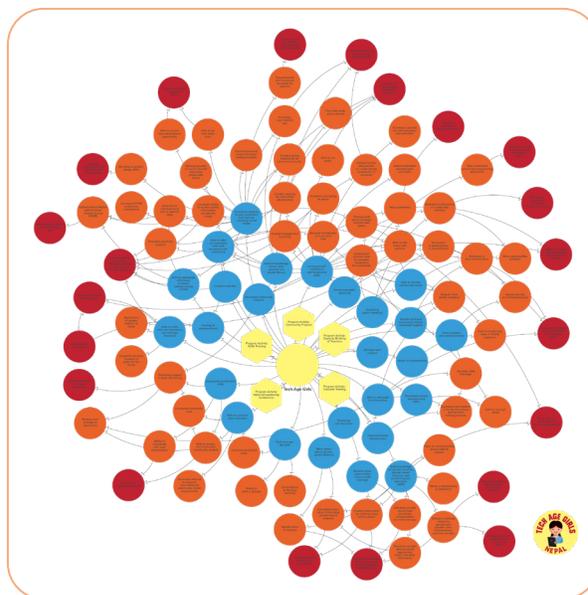
98% of parents now say that their daughter should wait for a longer time to marry; 84.7% of TAG participants said that TAG increased their knowledge and understanding of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI); and 76% of TAG participants played a leadership role against gender-based discrimination at the family / school / community level.

Hybrid qualitative evaluation

READ partnered with IREX to design the hybrid qualitative evaluation, which centered on the Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) methodological principles of appreciative inquiry and utilized interactive, participatory data collection methods.

In addition to the REM sessions, READ held focus group discussions (FGD) with teachers, school administrators, and TAG Coordinators from across all sites. In-person and/or phone-based key informant interviews (KIIs) were also conducted with key stakeholders. This approach enabled us to better understand program outcomes in the schools and community, and to triangulate self-reported data.

In-person REM sessions with TAG participants, and separate sessions with their parents or guardians, were conducted across four sites. Virtual FGDs were conducted with stakeholders from all 10 sites, one with TAG Coordinators and one with Teachers/Mentors via teleconferencing. This methodology enabled us to see two layers of impact across the 10 locations in which TAG was implemented.



The results of the REM are available to view online and can be explored interactively. The map is enriched with quotes from participants and parents, photos, and other nuanced details that paint a fuller picture of how TAG has impacted local Nepali communities.

[Click on the image to see the REM in action.](#)

Fig. 1 An overview of the Ripple Effects Map, illustrating how TAG developed specific skills in participants, and how these changes affected those around them.

Key outcomes and learnings

A majority of TAG participants (94%) feel that they have gained useful ICT skills through the program. Moreover, 77% of surveyed participants reported that their problem-solving skills have been enhanced through the TAG project. Non-tech education and training like public speaking and knowledge around gender and social inclusion were also highly valued. Both the quantitative and qualitative data highlight the importance of developing both soft and hard skills within the program, to give the girls the confidence and skills to change their lives.



What topics covered in the program did you find most useful?

(N = 236)

Topics	N	Responses
Public speaking skills	177	75.0%
Social media skills	164	69.5%
Gender and sex knowledge	142	60.2%
Basic graphic design skills	60	25.4%
Gender division of work knowledge	55	23.3%
Legal policy regarding child marriage	54	22.9%
Use of digital storytelling skills	53	22.5%

One key metric traced in this evaluation was the change in perspective on girls' roles, and the opportunities made available to them. Within the community, 100% of those surveyed changed their view of girls' education due to TAG. In the endline survey, 69% strongly agree and 31% agree that girls should have expanded opportunities in ICT and STEM.

More than providing girls opportunities, TAG helped shift traditional thinking and build supportive communities where girls can thrive and actively participate in society. In fact, 54.6% of participants report playing a greater role in family decision-making after joining TAG. During the REM sessions, there are also multiple mentions by both parents and participants of this change in attitude. This cultural shift is important, as it opens new doors for girls in their education, career options, and life choices.

When it comes to social issues, 75.9% of participants have discussed, been involved in, or played a leadership role in their family, community, or school to solve gender inequality and social inclusivity. This is a more than a twofold increase from the start of the program, where only 29.6% of participants were actively engaged in gender issues. This change is not only in participants—100% of teachers involved in TAG report applying gender-inclusive teaching methods. Tracing impact down the line, 42% of these teachers' students report a shift in their view of traditional gender roles.

General education in Nepal has also seen improvements: TAG mentors shared their learning with 254 teachers, and 100% of teachers trained report applying active methods and integrating more technology into their teaching. Moreover, the number of trained teachers that use the internet for reliable references of information or to find other teaching materials has doubled since the start of the program (100% increase). These results show that the investment into communities trickles down beyond individual TAG participants and reaches more students than the 500 enrolled in TAG.



Meet Puja

Puja is a TAG participant at the Tribhuvan READ Center. Her family struggles to meet its daily needs. Prior to TAG, Puja's parents were worried about her deteriorating performance in school. Puja often hid in the corner of the classroom to avoid being called on and had little interest in engaging in activities outside home.

When she heard about TAG, Puja got excited and enrolled in the program. She soon developed social skills, found a growing interest in the community, and began to participate more actively in her classes. "After attending TAG sessions, my speaking, leadership, group work, and computer skills were very developed," Puja shares. "With my newfound confidence, I applied for a job at the Bansgadhi Municipality for a hygiene and cleanliness project. I was selected out of 10 applicants."

"In addition to gaining IT skills, I started to become active in community work and advocate for community issues. This would not be possible if I did not join TAG," she adds.

Sustainability of TAG through READ Centers

READ Centers implementing the TAG program have seen the impact it has had not only on the participants, but on the community as a whole. Each READ Center has created a Girls Leadership Committee composed of TAG participants that will help the Centers continue to organize programs for youth, and continue to conduct TAG cascade training.

In all 10 communities where TAG is being run, local governments have pledged funds to support additional TAG training. Other READ Centers are also keen to launch TAG programs of their own such as Moti READ Center, which was able to raise funds from the Nepali diaspora and launched TAG in February 2021. These initiatives demonstrate how communities find the TAG model valuable. We believe that investment in the program can lead to sustained, scalable activities for the long term.