



# UTTHAN ("UPLIFT")

*Supporting children, adolescents, and youth at risk of and survivors of exploitation in Nepal*

## Overview

The UTTHAN project targeted adolescent girls working in the adult entertainment sector (AES), including both those who were already being exploited for commercial sex and those at high risk of exploitation and abuse.

- Funder: UNICEF
- Duration: Sept. 2021 to Dec. 2022
- Geography: Kathmandu Valley, Pokhara
- Partners: Children Women and Empowerment Society, Biswas Nepal, Saathi

## Strategic Approaches

- **Identify and Engage Girls**  
Outreach workers visited adult entertainment businesses and built rapport with children, then encouraged them to visit a drop-in-center. Once girls visited, staff began the case management process for those willing to engage and referred them to counseling and medical and/or legal support.
- **Protect, Support, and Empower Girls**  
World Education and partners developed the UTTHAN ("uplift") curriculum, building on the framework of UNICEF's existing UPSHIFT Social Innovation Curriculum, but tailored to the unique needs of adolescents in the adult entertainment sector. Upon completion of the nine-module program, girls could choose to return to education, pursue vocational training, or return to their families with reintegration support.
- **Coordinate with Government and Business**  
World Education and partners coordinated with six local governments to improve child protection, reduce exploitation, and facilitate coordination on case management and service provision. Outreach events targeted owners and employees of adult entertainment venues and raised awareness on children's rights. In addition, NGOs linked with local businesses to create job placement opportunities for girls seeking safer employment after leaving the adult entertainment sector.

## Achievements

- 350** adult entertainment establishments mapped
- 514** adolescent girls in the adult entertainment sector participated in transferable and life skills training (137% of project target)
- 391** girls provided with psychosocial counseling
- 979** potential participants identified through direct and snowball outreach
- 30** mentors, including former AES workers, trained and engaged in mentoring
- 30** local businesses identified by NGOs committed to support NGOs' withdrawal strategies as avenues for alternative, non-exploitative employment
- 6** local governments participating in case management training and referral coordination

## Insights & Recommendations

- A recent trend is girls entering adult entertainment with higher levels of literacy and education.
- With higher levels of education and the experience of earning money, girls desire to be independent and keenly evaluate career options.
- A creative, participatory curriculum built on principles of adult learning and behavior change proved effective for empowering the target population and better suited to their needs than past content-focused programs.
- Need outstrips resources. Significant numbers of adolescents are exploited or at risk for exploitation in adult entertainment. The project identified 979 girls - nearly three times the targeted number for service provision.
- Long-term support to NGOs running drop-in centers, local governments, and girls themselves is necessary.