

ENDLINE EVALUATION REPORT

Challenging Gender Norms: Enhancing Opportunities for Marginalised Youth through Financial Literacy and Non-Traditional Skill Development

Implementing Organisation:

Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR)

Khoda, Ghaziabad (Uttar Pradesh) - National Capital Region, India

Programme Period: 2024 - 2026 | Evaluation Period: January - February 2026

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

| Abbreviation | Full Form |
|--------------|--|
| CBO | Community-Based Organisation |
| CFAR | Centre for Advocacy and Research |
| DLSA | District Legal Services Authority |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| GBV | Gender-Based Violence |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| MEL | Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning |
| MIS | Management Information System |
| NCR | National Capital Region |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NIESBUD | National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development |
| ToC | Theory of Change |
| UP | Uttar Pradesh |

1. Executive Summary

Programme Overview

The Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) implemented the project "Challenging Gender Norms: Enhancing Opportunities for Marginalised Youth through Financial Literacy and Non-Traditional Skill Development" in Khoda, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, between 2024 and 2026. The programme targeted adolescents aged 14-24 from marginalised communities in one of the largest unauthorised settlements within the National Capital Region (NCR). Recognising that youth empowerment in such settings demands more than technical training, the intervention was designed around three interconnected pillars: gender empowerment and life skills education; employability skills development including digital and financial literacy; and exposure to non-traditional livelihood pathways that challenge gender-segregated labour markets.

The programme adopted a multi-dimensional approach that combined individual capacity-building with community-level engagement, involving parents, caregivers, local institutions, and civil society stakeholders in dialogue around gender norms, youth aspirations, and the importance of skill development. Through this integrated strategy, the initiative aimed to address both the structural constraints limiting adolescents' opportunities and the social norms that shape their participation in education, training, and employment.

Evaluation Purpose and Approach

This endline evaluation was undertaken to assess the programme's contributions to its stated objectives, examine implementation experience, identify contextual factors influencing outcomes, and generate learning for future programming. The evaluation employed a qualitative, evidence-informed approach, drawing on primary data from 52 interviews and focus group discussions conducted with adolescents, parents, community members, programme staff, youth leaders, and institutional stakeholders between January and February 2026. The analysis has been triangulated with programme monitoring data and further reviewed against inputs shared by CFAR during the draft validation stage to ensure factual consistency.

Given the complexity of the socio-economic environment in which the programme operated, the evaluation does not seek to establish causal attribution. Instead, it assesses the programme's contribution to observed changes in adolescents' aspirations, skills development pathways, and community attitudes, while recognising the influence of broader structural and social factors.

Key Findings

The evaluation identified five principal findings, summarised below.

Programme Reach and Implementation

The programme substantially exceeded its initial targets, engaging 1,171 adolescents through direct programme activities against an original target of approximately 500. Of these participants, 872 were girls and 299 were boys, reflecting the programme's deliberate focus on expanding opportunities for adolescent girls. A further 803 parents and caregivers participated in community discussions, and awareness activities reached more than 3,000 community members. Training engagement spanned three major components: gender and life skills education (1,023 adolescents), digital and financial literacy training (186 adolescents), and non-traditional livelihood skill training (279 adolescents).

Expanding Aspirations and Strengthening Agency

Participation in programme activities is associated with meaningful shifts in adolescents' awareness of career possibilities and their confidence in exploring non-traditional pathways. For many participants, particularly girls, programme sessions represented the first structured opportunity to reflect on career options beyond tailoring, beauty services, and domestic work, which are the occupational pathways most commonly visible within the community. Exposure to non-traditional skill training areas such as driving, warehouse operations, and mobile repair helped challenge existing assumptions about gender and occupational roles. In addition, gender-transformative life skills sessions and self-defence training were frequently referenced by participants as important contributors to developing voice, self-expression, and the ability to negotiate public spaces more confidently. These components appear to have further strengthened adolescents' confidence in public settings and their motivation to pursue further education.

Gender Norms and Household Dynamics

The programme has contributed to opening spaces for dialogue around gender roles within families and communities. Parents increasingly recognise the value of skill development for daughters. However, deeply embedded social norms, particularly expectations related to marriage, mobility restrictions, and domestic responsibilities, continue to shape how families approach long-term employment decisions for girls. The evaluation found that gender norm transformation is a gradual process requiring sustained engagement, and that shifts in attitudes are more likely to be consolidated when both adolescents and their family members are actively

engaged in programme activities. Insights from master trainer discussions further highlight that sustained and structured engagement with parents, caregivers, boys, men, and frontline workers is critical to building a broader consciousness around gender equality within the community. This is emerging as an important learning for the next phase of programming.

Youth Leadership and Community Ownership

The formation of youth groups and the training of adolescent peer facilitators emerged as a particularly effective strategy for mobilising participation and strengthening community ownership of the programme. Youth leaders demonstrated increased confidence and a stronger sense of social responsibility. Peer-led interactions created safe spaces for adolescents to share experiences, discuss aspirations, and encourage one another's participation. These dynamics suggest that youth leadership components can play an important role in sustaining engagement and building community capital beyond the life of specific project phases.

Skills Development and Employment Pathways

Programme monitoring data indicates that 101 adolescents secured employment in private sector positions following participation in skill training, with approximately 49 percent of employed participants earning between INR 10,000 and INR 15,000 per month. While these employment outcomes represent a meaningful achievement within the local labour market context, they remain modest relative to total participation; they demonstrate the programme's capacity to support entry-level livelihood transitions for a segment of trained adolescents. Participants consistently noted that obtaining training certificates played an important role in securing initial employment, particularly in a labour market characterised by limited formal credentialing pathways. Given that a significant proportion of participants are still completing their education, employment outcomes are expected to continue evolving.

At the same time, the programme design recognised that immediate employment transitions would be limited for a large proportion of adolescents who are still in education. The intervention was therefore positioned not only to facilitate job placement, but also to expand awareness of livelihood options and challenge the perception that marriage or low-skilled local employment represent the default pathways. In this sense, the programme aimed to build aspirations, exposure, and informed decision-making among adolescents as a foundation for longer-term livelihood outcomes.

Principal Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that the programme has made substantive contributions to expanding adolescents' exposure to skills development opportunities, strengthening confidence and agency particularly among girls and fostering dialogue around gender norms within families and the broader community. These findings represent early signals of longer-term social and economic transformation within the community where structural constraints and social norms significantly shape young people's opportunities.

The programme's most significant contribution lies in providing adolescents with expanded agency, confidence, and mobility in a social environment where opportunities for public participation have historically been limited. Combined with emerging employment pathways for trained participants, the programme has created an early-stage transformation for longer-term change. However, translating aspirations into sustained livelihood outcomes will require continued engagement, stronger linkages to employment markets, and sustained community dialogue on gender equality.

Overall, the evaluation finds that the programme has made meaningful contributions to expanding adolescents' aspirations, confidence, and exposure to livelihood opportunities in Khoda. While employment outcomes remain early-stage for many participants who are still pursuing education, the programme has successfully created new spaces for youth engagement, gender dialogue, and skills exposure within the community. These contributions represent important foundational steps toward longer-term social and economic change in a context where structural barriers and gender norms have historically constrained young people's opportunities.

Strategic Recommendations

The evaluation identifies six strategic priorities for future programme phases:

- Strengthen community and institutional partnerships by deepening collaboration with local government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and civil society organisations.
- Sustain community engagement on gender and youth development through ongoing community dialogues, awareness campaigns, and participatory activities, with particular emphasis on engaging fathers and male community influencers.
- The programme's strong focus on empowering girls reflects an appropriate response to the specific barriers they face within the community. At the same time, evaluation findings including reflections from adolescent participants highlight the need for more structured engagement with boys, men, and parents to support sustained shifts in gender norms. Adolescents themselves articulated that broader involvement of male

family members and community influencers is critical to enabling girls' continued participation in education and employment. Strengthening engagement with these groups therefore represents a key strategic priority for deepening programme impact. This approach aligns with emerging programme learning and provides a foundation for strengthening gender-transformative outcomes in subsequent programme phases.

- Develop tiered advanced skill pathways for participants showing strong interest in specific sectors, enabling progression from introductory exposure to specialised training and professional certification.
- An important enabling outcome of the programme has been the development of a cadre of 55 master trainers across thematic areas including gender, financial literacy, self-defence, mobile repairing, screen printing, street theatre (nukkad natak), menstrual health management, and jewellery design. These master trainers represent a cross-cutting capacity that can be strategically leveraged in the next phase to deepen community engagement, expand training outreach, and sustain programme interventions across thematic pillars. Strengthening their role through structured engagement, refresher training, and defined facilitation responsibilities could significantly enhance programme scalability and sustainability.
- Strengthen the transition from skills training to employment by expanding partnerships with vocational institutions, industry networks, and government skill development schemes, and providing structured career guidance for participants.

2. Background and Context

2.1 Urban Informal Settlements and Youth Development in India

Urban informal settlements across India present a complex and multi-layered set of social, economic, and institutional challenges that significantly influence the life trajectories of adolescents and young people. In these environments, limited access to quality education, constrained livelihood opportunities, inadequate public infrastructure, and entrenched gender norms often combine to restrict young people's ability to successfully transition into stable and dignified employment. These challenges are particularly acute for adolescent girls and young women, whose mobility, career choices, and economic participation are frequently shaped by deeply embedded social expectations, safety concerns, and household responsibilities.

India's rapid urbanisation has brought millions of rural households into cities and metropolitan areas, many of whom settle in unauthorised or informal colonies on the urban periphery. These settlements are often characterised by overcrowding, inadequate access to government services, informally structured economies, and limited social safety nets. For adolescents growing up in such environments, navigating the transition from education to employment presents unique challenges that are often insufficiently addressed by standard vocational training or educational interventions.

Adolescent girls in particular face compounding barriers to opportunity. In many informal settlements, entrenched gender norms restrict girls' mobility, limit their access to educational institutions and training centres, and channel their aspirations toward a narrow set of traditionally feminine occupations. Early marriage, domestic responsibilities, and safety concerns related to travel often serve as structural constraints that, if unaddressed, continue to limit women's economic participation across generations. At the same time, adolescent boys face their own set of pressures, including economic expectations around early labour market entry, limited access to career guidance, and insufficient pathways to secure employment that matches their aspirations.

2.2 The Khoda Settlement Context

Khoda, Ghaziabad, located within the National Capital Region, represents one of the most significant contexts for understanding the challenges of adolescent development in urban informal India. The settlement is estimated to house a population exceeding one million residents, making

it one of the largest unauthorised colonies in the NCR. A substantial proportion of Khoda's population comprises migrant households from neighbouring states, including Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal, many of whom have settled in the area over the past two to three decades in search of economic opportunities in the metropolitan economy.

The local economy is predominantly informal in character. Households depend on a range of low-wage activities, including daily wage labour, factory work in nearby industrial areas, small-scale retail and vending, domestic work, and informal transport services. These occupational structures provide income but offer limited pathways for skill progression, professional development, or economic mobility, particularly for young people entering the labour market without formal qualifications or professional networks.

Khoda faces persistent gaps in basic public infrastructure and services. Access to government schools, healthcare facilities, and formal skill development centres within the settlement is limited, creating conditions where adolescents often rely on informal networks, private tuition, and non-governmental organisations for education and career support. Water supply, sanitation, and housing conditions also present ongoing challenges for residents, contributing to a broader environment of vulnerability and constrained opportunity.

A government healthcare provider interviewed during the evaluation additionally highlighted the prevalence of chronic anaemia among adolescent girls in the community, reflecting broader nutritional and health challenges affecting young women in the settlement. Such health issues carry important implications for educational participation, cognitive development, physical energy, and overall well-being among adolescent girls.

2.3 Gender Dynamics and Youth Opportunities

Within Khoda, gender norms play a central role in shaping adolescents' educational and livelihood pathways. For girls, expectations related to domestic responsibilities, safety in public spaces, and early marriage frequently influence decisions about participation in education and employment. Many families view marriage as the primary life transition milestone for daughters, and this perception shapes the extent to which parents invest in girls' long-term skill development or career planning.

Mobility restrictions represent a particularly significant constraint for adolescent girls. Cultural expectations regarding appropriate spaces for women's activities, combined with genuine safety concerns related to travel in urban informal settings, often limit girls' ability to access training centres, educational institutions, and employment opportunities outside their immediate

neighbourhood. These constraints have historically contributed to the concentration of women's employment in home-based activities or community-level informal work.

For adolescent boys, different but equally significant pressures shape their trajectories. Many young men in Khoda face strong expectations to contribute financially to household income from an early age, which may lead to early school dropout, entry into informal labour markets, and limited access to structured skill development or career guidance. The lack of aspirational role models or visible career pathways in non-traditional fields further constrains boys' awareness of their own professional possibilities.

This socio-economic and gender landscape informed the design of the CFAR intervention. Recognising that individual skill development, in isolation, is insufficient to transform youth trajectories in such complex settings, the programme combined targeted training with community-level engagement and gender dialogue. Understanding this context is essential for interpreting the programme's outcomes and situating its contributions within the broader challenges of adolescent development in urban informal India.

2.4 Rationale for CFAR's Intervention

The Centre for Advocacy and Research identified Khoda as a priority setting for youth empowerment intervention based on a combination of needs assessment findings, community consultations, and scoping studies. These investigations revealed a significant gap between adolescents' aspirations and the opportunities available within the community, particularly for girls. The absence of locally accessible vocational training, limited career guidance, and the reinforcing effect of gender norms on family decision-making created conditions that the programme sought to actively address.

CFAR's intervention was premised on the understanding that durable improvements in youth outcomes require simultaneous action at multiple levels: building individual skills, confidence, and aspirations among adolescents; shifting perceptions and enabling support within families; and fostering a more supportive institutional and community ecosystem for youth development. The following section describes the programme's design and implementation approach in detail.

3. Project Overview

3.1 Programme Design and Objectives

The project "Challenging Gender Norms: Enhancing Opportunities for Marginalised Youth through Financial Literacy and Non-Traditional Skill Development" was implemented by CFAR in Khoda, Ghaziabad, between 2024 and 2026. The intervention was designed to respond to the socio-economic realities of adolescents living in urban informal settlements, where limited access to skill development opportunities, early labour market entry, and restrictive gender expectations frequently constrain youth trajectories.

The programme aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- Expand adolescents' access to skills development and livelihood opportunities, including both traditional and non-traditional employment pathways.
- Promote financial literacy and digital awareness among young people to enhance their employability and economic decision-making.
- Challenge restrictive gender norms affecting girls' education and employment through structured dialogue, awareness activities, and community engagement.
- Encourage youth leadership and peer engagement within the community to foster a supportive environment for adolescent empowerment.
- Strengthen dialogue between adolescents, families, and community stakeholders regarding gender equality, career aspirations, and youth economic participation.

3.2 Programme Pillars

The intervention was structured around three interconnected pillars, each designed to address specific dimensions of the barriers adolescents face in Khoda.

Pillar 1: Gender Empowerment and Life Skills Education

This component focused on strengthening adolescents' self-confidence, decision-making abilities, and awareness of gender equality. Through structured group sessions and peer discussions, the programme encouraged participants to critically reflect on prevailing gender norms, articulate their aspirations, and develop communication and interpersonal skills. Sessions covered topics including gender roles and rights, menstrual health and hygiene management, personal safety, communication skills, and life planning. The programme also incorporated street

theatre and community awareness activities, which helped adolescents engage with social issues in an accessible and participatory format.

Pillar 2: Employability Skills Development

The second pillar introduced adolescents to foundational employability competencies, including digital literacy, financial management, and workplace readiness. Recognising that many young people in Khoda lack access to formal career guidance or employability training, these sessions were designed to build participants' awareness of workplace expectations, basic financial planning, and digital platforms. The programme sought to improve adolescents' readiness for employment or further vocational training, particularly for young people who had not had previous exposure to professional development activities.

Pillar 3: Non-Traditional Livelihood Skill Training

A core and distinctive element of the programme was its explicit focus on exposing adolescents particularly girls to non-traditional livelihood pathways that challenge gender-segregated labour markets. Training opportunities were offered in the following sectors:

- Driving
- Warehouse operations
- Mobile phone repair
- Screen printing
- Jewellery design

These sectors were deliberately selected to introduce participants to occupational categories not commonly associated with women's employment in the local context, thereby expanding adolescents' awareness of diverse livelihood possibilities and challenging assumptions about gender-appropriate occupations. These pillars collectively reflect an integrated approach combining skills, agency, and social norm engagement.

3.3 Target Population

The programme targeted adolescents aged 14–24 years from marginalised communities in Khoda. This age range reflects a critical transitional phase spanning early adolescence through young adulthood, encompassing young people who are still in secondary education as well as those who are beginning to navigate the transition into employment or further training. The

programme maintained a deliberate focus on girls and young women, given the particular barriers they face within the community, while also engaging boys and young men in gender dialogue activities.

3.4 Implementation Approach and Partnerships

The programme was implemented through a network of institutional and community-based partnerships. Key institutional collaborations included engagement with skilling organisations such as the Learning Links Foundation, Lighthouse and Magic Bus, training support linked with the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA), and national skill development institutions such as NIESBUD (National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development) in Noida, which supported training initiatives aimed at strengthening adolescents' exposure to livelihood pathways. These partnerships enabled the programme to combine gender empowerment efforts with practical exposure to employability and entrepreneurship pathways.

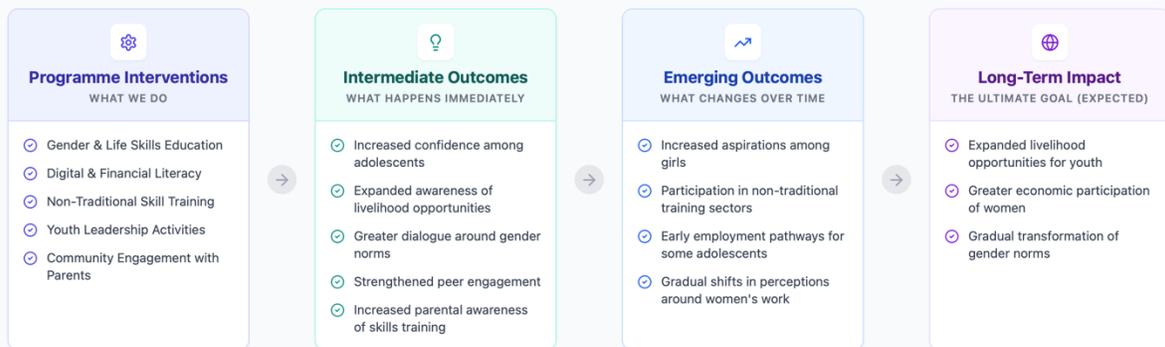
At the community level, programme implementation was guided through an advisory structure involving community-based organisations, frontline workers, and skill training partners. This structure helped connect programme activities with local stakeholders and ensured that training and youth engagement initiatives remained responsive to the needs of adolescents and their families within the settlement. Youth leaders trained as peer facilitators also played an active role in mobilising participation and sustaining community engagement throughout the programme.

| | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Programme Title | Challenging Gender Norms: Enhancing Opportunities for Marginalised Youth through Financial Literacy and Non-Traditional Skill Development |
| Implementing Organisation | Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) |
| Location | Khoda, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh — National Capital Region |
| Programme Duration | 2024–2026 |
| Target Group | Adolescents aged 14–24 from marginalised communities in Khoda |
| Total Adolescents Reached | 1,171 (872 girls; 299 boys) |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Parents/Caregivers Engaged | 803 |
| Community Members Reached | 3,016+ |
| Private Sector Placements | 101 adolescents |

Programme Theory of Change

A strategic roadmap detailing the progression from ground-level interventions to transformative, long-term systemic impact.



4. Evaluation Objectives and Scope

4.1 Purpose of the Evaluation

This endline evaluation was commissioned to assess the outcomes and implementation experience of the CFAR programme in Khoda, Ghaziabad. The evaluation builds upon the framework outlined in the project's inception report and examines the programme's performance in relation to its intended objectives, implementation strategies, and contextual constraints. The primary purpose is to generate evidence on the programme's contributions toward expanding livelihood opportunities for adolescents particularly girls while also examining the extent to which the intervention engaged with and influenced the gender norms that shape young people's participation in education, training, and employment.

Given the complex socio-economic environment in which the programme operates, the evaluation does not seek to establish causal attribution. Instead, it focuses on understanding the programme's contribution to observed changes in adolescents' aspirations, skills development pathways, and community perceptions, while recognising the influence of broader structural and social factors within the community.

4.2 Evaluation Objectives

In alignment with the evaluation framework established in the inception report, the evaluation pursued seven specific objectives:

1. Assess programme implementation and reach: To analyse the scale and coverage of programme activities, including the participation of adolescents, parents, and community stakeholders across different intervention components.
2. Assess adolescents' exposure to and engagement with skills development initiatives: To understand the extent to which programme participants accessed training opportunities related to life skills, financial and digital literacy, and non-traditional livelihood skills.
3. Examine changes in adolescents' aspirations, confidence, and employability readiness: To explore how participation in programme activities may have influenced adolescents' self-confidence, career aspirations, and awareness of livelihood pathways.
4. Assess shifts in perceptions related to gender norms and women's economic participation: To understand whether and how programme engagement contributed to evolving attitudes among adolescents, parents, and community members regarding gender roles, employment, and non-traditional occupations.

5. Assess livelihood outcomes and employment pathways: To evaluate the extent to which programme participants transitioned into employment, income-generating activities, or further training opportunities.
6. Identify implementation challenges and contextual constraints: To document barriers encountered during programme implementation, including structural limitations within the local labour market and socio-cultural factors influencing youth participation.
7. Generate lessons and recommendations for future programming: To identify operational insights and strategic considerations that may inform the design, adaptation, or scaling of similar youth empowerment initiatives in comparable urban contexts.

4.3 Key Evaluation Questions

The evaluation examined the programme in relation to the following key questions:

1. To what extent did the programme contribute to shifts in perceptions related to gender roles and women's economic participation within families and the community?
2. How did participation in programme activities influence adolescents' aspirations, confidence, and awareness of potential career pathways?
3. To what extent did the programme expand adolescents' access to skills development and livelihood exposure opportunities?
4. What livelihood pathways have emerged for adolescents who participated in non-traditional skills training and employability initiatives?
5. What contextual and implementation factors influenced programme outcomes, and what lessons can inform future youth empowerment initiatives?

4.4 Scope of the Evaluation

The evaluation focuses on adolescents who participated in the programme between 2024 and 2026 across selected settlements in Khoda. It examines the programme's outcomes across three key dimensions corresponding to the project's intervention pillars: gender empowerment and life skills development; employability skills including digital and financial literacy; and exposure to non-traditional livelihood opportunities.

In addition to adolescent participants, the evaluation considers perspectives from parents, community members, programme staff, and institutional stakeholders who interacted with or supported the programme. These perspectives provide critical insights into community dynamics, programme implementation processes, and contextual factors influencing outcomes.

4.5 Analytical Framework

The findings presented in this report are organised around an analytical framework that reflects the programme's theory of change. This framework examines the progression from programme activities to observed outcomes through three interconnected stages:

- Programme Exposure and Participation: Assessment of programme reach, training participation, and engagement across different intervention components.
- Intermediate Outcomes: Changes in adolescents' awareness, aspirations, confidence, and perceptions regarding gender roles and livelihood possibilities.
- Livelihood Pathways and Community-Level Influences: Evidence of employment transitions, skill utilisation, and shifts in community attitudes toward adolescents' education and economic participation.

This analytical structure allows the evaluation to examine not only immediate programme outputs but also the broader social and institutional dynamics that influence adolescents' ability to translate skills and aspirations into meaningful livelihood opportunities. This framework ensures that findings are interpreted not only as outputs, but as part of a broader developmental trajectory.

5. Evaluation Methodology

5.1 Overall Methodological Approach

This evaluation employed a qualitative and evidence-informed approach to assess the outcomes and implementation experience of the CFAR programme in Khoda, Ghaziabad. The methodology was designed to capture diverse perspectives from programme participants and stakeholders while contextualising programme outcomes within the broader socio-economic environment of the settlement. The evaluation combined primary qualitative data collected through field interviews and focus group discussions with a systematic review of programme monitoring data and project documentation. This multi-evidence approach enabled the assessment of both implementation processes and emerging outcomes related to adolescents' aspirations, skills development, and livelihood pathways.

The analysis interprets findings in relation to key evaluation criteria outlined in the inception report, including programme relevance, effectiveness of implementation, equity in participation, emerging outcomes for adolescents, and prospects for sustainability. These criteria provide an analytical lens through which to assess how programme activities contributed to expanding opportunities for adolescents within the broader socio-economic environment of Khoda.

5.2 Sample Selection

The evaluation adopted a purposive sampling strategy to ensure representation of key stakeholder groups involved in or affected by the programme. Participants were selected based on their level of engagement with programme activities and their ability to provide insights into different dimensions of the intervention, including adolescent participation, family perspectives, programme implementation, and institutional linkages.

The sampling approach prioritised diversity across gender, age groups, and stakeholder roles in order to capture a broad range of experiences and perceptions. The sample included adolescents who had participated in programme activities, parents and caregivers, programme staff, youth leaders, and representatives from local institutions interacting with programme participants.

5.3 Primary Data Collection

In total, the evaluation incorporated insights from 52 participants across key stakeholder groups through a combination of focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIIs).

These participants represented multiple stakeholder categories relevant to programme implementation and outcomes.

| Stakeholder Group | Number of Participants |
|--|------------------------|
| Master Trainers | 12 |
| Parents of Adolescent Participants | 7 |
| Youth Resource Group Members and Youth Participants | 17 |
| Boys and Employed Youth Participants | 9 |
| Institutional Stakeholders (Counsellors and Medical Officer) | 3 |
| CFAR Programme Staff | 4 |
| TOTAL PARTICIPANTS | 52 |

These included FGDs with adolescent participants and KIIs with programme staff, parents, youth leaders, and institutional stakeholders.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions were conducted with adolescents and community members to explore shared experiences, perceptions, and attitudes related to gender norms, livelihood aspirations, and participation in programme activities. FGDs were particularly valuable for understanding community-level dynamics and social norms influencing adolescents' choices and opportunities. Discussions were conducted with the following groups:

- Adolescent girls participating in programme activities
- Adolescent boys and young men from the community

These discussions provided nuanced insights into the evolving perceptions of gender roles, the barriers adolescents face in accessing education and employment opportunities, and community responses to the programme's interventions.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key informant interviews were conducted with programme implementers and institutional stakeholders to gain deeper insights into programme design, implementation processes, and

institutional collaboration. KIIs were conducted with CFAR programme staff involved in implementation, trained master facilitators and youth leaders, and counsellors and a medical officer associated with local government services. These interviews helped contextualise programme activities, identify operational challenges, and capture institutional perspectives on youth engagement and livelihood pathways.

5.4 Secondary Data Review

In addition to primary qualitative data, the evaluation drew upon a review of programme monitoring data, management information system (MIS) records, project documentation, and internal reporting covering the 2024-2025 implementation period. These records provided quantitative information on programme reach, training participation, gender distribution, and employment outcomes, which served as an important complement to field interview findings.

5.5 Data Triangulation

To strengthen the credibility and reliability of findings, the evaluation adopted a data triangulation approach, integrating insights from three primary evidence streams: (i) primary qualitative data collected through FGDs and KIIs with programme participants and stakeholders; (ii) programme monitoring data and administrative records, including participation statistics and training outcomes; and (iii) project documentation and contextual studies, including needs assessments, scoping studies, and field recce reports. Triangulating these sources enabled cross-validation of findings and strengthened analytical reliability.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Participation in all interviews and discussions was entirely voluntary. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the evaluation prior to interviews, and explicit consent was obtained before discussions commenced. Efforts were made to ensure that participants felt comfortable sharing their experiences and views, particularly when discussing sensitive topics such as gender norms, employment aspirations, and community expectations. No personally identifying information is included in this report. Participant voices are shared in the form of direct quotations, attributed only by general characteristics such as role (e.g., "adolescent participant" or "parent") to preserve anonymity.

6. Limitations of the Evaluation

As with all qualitative programme evaluations conducted in complex community settings, certain limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings of this evaluation. These limitations do not undermine the analytical value of the evidence base, but they do define boundaries within which conclusions should be drawn.

6.1 Primarily Qualitative Evidence Base

The evaluation relied primarily on qualitative data collected through interviews and group discussions. While this approach enables deeper insights into perceptions, experiences, and community dynamics, it does not permit statistical measurement of programme outcomes across the entire beneficiary population. The findings therefore reflect observed patterns and experiences rather than generalisable frequencies or effect sizes. Quantitative monitoring data has been incorporated where available to complement qualitative insights, but the evaluation cannot make statistically representative claims about the proportion of participants who experienced specific changes.

6.2 Evolving Programme Outcomes

A significant proportion of programme participants were still completing their education or had only recently acquired skills through programme activities at the time of the evaluation. Many adolescents in Khoda are still in the process of navigating the transition from education to employment, meaning that the livelihood outcomes associated with training interventions are likely to continue evolving beyond the timeframe captured by this evaluation. Employment outcomes should therefore be understood as early indicators of trajectory rather than definitive measures of programme impact.

An additional emerging outcome relates to the cohort of master trainers developed through the programme. These individuals appear to be taking on roles that extend beyond training participation, including influencing peers and engaging with their households and communities in new ways. They can be interpreted as early positive deviants within the programme context, demonstrating alternative pathways for adolescents particularly girls in navigating education, skill development, and public engagement. As such, they represent a potential bridge between individual-level change and broader community-level norm shifts, and may serve as important anchors for future programming.

6.3 External Structural Influences

Adolescents' livelihood trajectories are shaped by a range of structural factors within the local labour market that operate independently of programme interventions, including the availability of employment opportunities, seasonal labour market fluctuations, migration patterns, and broader economic conditions. The evaluation cannot disentangle the specific contribution of programme activities from these contextual influences on employment outcomes. The analysis therefore focuses on contribution and plausible attribution rather than causal claims.

6.4 Strengths of the Evidence Base

Despite these limitations, the evaluation draws on a robust multi-source evidence base. The combination of multiple data sources including qualitative interviews spanning six distinct stakeholder groups, programme monitoring records, and secondary documentation provides a triangulated and internally consistent picture of programme experience and emerging outcomes. The consistency of findings across different stakeholder groups and evidence streams strengthens confidence in the analytical conclusions presented in this report.

As with most qualitative evaluations, participation in interviews and discussions was voluntary. Individuals who chose to participate may represent those more actively engaged in programme activities, and their perspectives may not fully capture the experiences of all programme beneficiaries.

7. Profile of the Study Area and Beneficiaries

7.1 Khoda Settlement: Socio-Economic Profile

Khoda, Ghaziabad, is situated within the National Capital Region and is characterised as one of the largest unauthorised colonies in the region. With an estimated population exceeding one million residents, the settlement functions as a significant urban node within the metropolitan fringe, absorbing large numbers of migrants who have relocated to the NCR in search of economic opportunities. The settlement's physical character is typical of large-scale informal urbanisation: high population density, irregularly planned residential areas, limited public green spaces, and variable quality of housing stock ranging from semi-permanent structures to more consolidated brick construction.

The economic base of Khoda is dominated by informal sector employment. A large proportion of households depend on daily wage labour in nearby industrial and commercial zones, factory work in surrounding areas, small-scale retail and street vending, domestic work in wealthier households in adjacent formal neighbourhoods, and informal transport services. These occupational structures provide income but offer limited pathways for skill progression, professional development, or economic mobility particularly for young people entering the labour market without formal qualifications or established professional networks.

Access to public services and infrastructure remains a persistent challenge within the settlement. Government schools serving the area are often overcrowded and under-resourced, while healthcare facilities are limited in number and capacity. Formal vocational training centres or government-recognised skill development institutions are largely absent from within the settlement itself, requiring residents to travel to other parts of Ghaziabad or the NCR to access such services. Water supply, sanitation infrastructure, and waste management represent ongoing challenges contributing to health risks and quality of life constraints for residents.

7.2 Adolescent Population and Youth Development Context

The adolescent population in Khoda faces a distinctive set of challenges arising from the intersection of poverty, informality, and deeply embedded gender norms. Many adolescents are the children of first-generation migrants and first generation learners, growing up with limited connection to the educational or professional networks that their parents' home communities

might have offered, yet also facing barriers to full integration into the metropolitan economy surrounding them.

Educational participation among adolescents in Khoda is uneven. While primary school enrolment rates are relatively high, dropout rates increase significantly at the secondary and higher secondary levels, particularly for girls. Contributing factors include the cost of private tuition, the perceived low relevance of formal education to local labour market opportunities, household economic pressures that push adolescents especially boys toward early entry into the workforce, and safety concerns and domestic responsibilities that limit girls' continued participation in education.

Livelihood pathways available to adolescents within the community are largely limited to those visible within the immediate social environment. For girls, these have historically been concentrated in home-based activities such as stitching and embroidery, beauty services, and domestic work. For boys, factory labour, construction work, and small retail businesses represent the most common occupational entry points. Both sets of pathways offer limited prospects for long-term career development or economic advancement.

7.3 Gender Norms and Their Impact on Adolescent Opportunities

Gender norms within Khoda operate as a significant structural force shaping adolescents' educational and livelihood trajectories. For girls, expectations related to modesty, safety, and domestic roles frequently translate into practical constraints on their mobility, participation in public activities, and access to training or employment opportunities outside the home. Early marriage remains a significant social expectation, and the prospect of marriage often shapes parental investment in daughters' education and skill development.

These norms are not static but are contested and negotiating within households and communities. Younger generations particularly adolescent girls frequently express aspirations that differ from their parents' expectations, and there is evidence of gradual attitudinal shifts within some households. However, the pace of change is slow, and individual aspirations often collide with family expectations and community norms in ways that constrain the realisation of those aspirations.

7.4 Profile of Programme Beneficiaries

The programme engaged adolescents across multiple settlements in Khoda. The beneficiary population was predominantly female, with girls accounting for approximately 74 percent of total

adolescent participants. The age range of participants (14–24 years) encompassed both school-going adolescents and young adults in the early stages of their working lives, creating a diverse group with varying levels of educational attainment and different proximities to the labour market. Parents and caregivers of participants were also engaged through community discussions and awareness activities, with 803 parents participating in programme events. This parental engagement was an intentional element of the programme's strategy to create enabling conditions for adolescents' participation in training and their pursuit of career aspirations. The community-wide reach of awareness activities exceeding 3,000 individuals further expanded the programme's footprint within the settlement's social ecosystem.

8. Programme Reach and Implementation Overview

8.1 Overview

This section examines programme implementation through available monitoring data and administrative records covering the period from 2024 to the end of 2026. Rather than presenting a narrative of activities, the analysis focuses on programme reach, participation patterns, and exposure to different intervention components, which together provide an evidence base for interpreting the outcomes discussed in subsequent sections.

Overall participation figures suggest that the programme achieved a scale of engagement significantly higher than originally planned. The breadth of participation across adolescents, parents, and community stakeholders indicates that the intervention extended beyond individual training activities to influence the broader social environment in which adolescents make educational and livelihood decisions.

8.2 Programme Coverage Relative to Targets

The project initially aimed to directly engage approximately 500 adolescents aged 14–24 through activities related to gender awareness, employability skills, and exposure to non-traditional livelihoods. Programme monitoring data indicates that the intervention significantly exceeded this initial target, reaching 1,171 adolescents through direct programme participation more than double the original target. This result reflects both the strength of CFAR's community mobilisation approach and the responsiveness of adolescents and families to programme activities.

| Total Adolescents | Girls | Boys | Parents/Caregivers | Community Members |
|-------------------|-------|------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1,171 | 872 | 299 | 803 | 3,016+ |

Beyond direct adolescent engagement, the programme involved 803 parents and caregivers in activities, creating opportunities for dialogue around gender norms, youth aspirations, and livelihood opportunities. Community-level awareness initiatives further extended programme outreach, engaging more than 3,000 individuals through advocacy activities. These engagements were intended to strengthen community acceptance of adolescent skill development and women's

economic participation. This level of overachievement indicates both high community demand and effective mobilisation strategies.

8.3 Training Participation Across Programme Components

The programme provided adolescents with exposure to a range of capacity-building activities aligned with its three intervention pillars. Gender and life skills education formed the largest component of adolescent engagement, with 1,023 adolescents participating in structured sessions on gender equality, personal development, and life skills. These sessions were designed to build adolescents' confidence, decision-making skills, and awareness of social norms affecting their educational and career choices.

| Training Component | Participation / Outcome |
|---|-------------------------|
| Gender and Life Skills Education | 1,023 adolescents |
| Digital and Financial Literacy Training | 186 adolescents |
| Non-Traditional Livelihood Skills Training | 279 adolescents |
| Private Sector Employment Placements | 101 adolescents |
| Employed Participants Earning INR 10,000–15,000/month | ~49% |

The distribution of participation highlights the programme's emphasis on foundational capability building over specialised training. Some adolescents participated in more than one training component; therefore participation figures across components exceed the total number of individual adolescents reached.

In addition to life skills programming, the intervention introduced adolescents to employability-oriented competencies through digital and financial literacy training, engaging 186 participants. Non-traditional livelihood training engaged 279 adolescents across sectors including driving, warehouse operations, mobile repair, screen printing, and jewellery design sectors selected to broaden participants' awareness of livelihood options beyond traditionally gendered occupations.

8.4 Gender Participation Patterns

An important dimension of programme implementation relates to the gender distribution of participants across activities. Monitoring data indicates that girls constituted a substantial majority of direct adolescent participants, accounting for approximately three-quarters of total adolescent engagement. This participation pattern reflects the programme's explicit focus on expanding opportunities for girls in a context where gender norms often limit their educational and economic mobility.

The inclusion of boys and young men within programme activities was intended to encourage dialogue around gender norms and foster more supportive attitudes toward women's participation in education and employment. However, participation patterns across training components suggest that boys' overall engagement was comparatively lower than girls'. This pattern reflects both the programme's design priorities and broader community dynamics influencing participation in youth empowerment initiatives, and represents an area for strengthened focus in future programme phases.

8.5 Employment Linkages and Early Livelihood Outcomes

Beyond training participation, the programme sought to facilitate pathways into employment for adolescents who completed skill development activities. Programme monitoring data indicates that 101 adolescents who participated in skills training secured employment in private sector positions. Reported earnings data suggests that approximately 49 percent of employed participants were earning between INR 10,000 and INR 15,000 per month, indicating that participation in skill development activities contributed to access to income-generating opportunities for this segment of programme beneficiaries.

While employment outcomes remain modest relative to the total number of adolescents engaged, these early placements indicate that participation in skills training can contribute to income-generating opportunities for a portion of participants. It is important to contextualise these figures: a significant proportion of adolescent participants were still completing their education at the time of the evaluation, and the longer-term employment outcomes associated with training participation are expected to evolve beyond the current evaluation timeframe.

9. Key Findings by Thematic Area

The findings presented in this section integrate three sources of evidence: programme monitoring data, qualitative insights from field interviews with 52 respondents, and focus group discussions with adolescents and community stakeholders. Triangulating these evidence sources enables the evaluation to identify patterns that emerge consistently across programme records and participant experiences.

Rather than examining programme activities in isolation, the analysis considers the interaction between programme interventions and the broader socio-economic environment of Khoda, where structural constraints and social norms continue to shape adolescents' educational and employment pathways. The findings are organised around five key thematic areas corresponding to the programme's theory of change.

A core intention of the programme was to strengthen girls' agency and mobility within a context where gender norms often restrict their access to education, public spaces, and employment opportunities. Rather than pursuing rapid economic outcomes, the programme emphasised incremental social change, focusing on building confidence, life skills, and awareness among adolescent girls. This approach reflects an understanding that in socially restrictive environments, strengthening agency and mobility often represents an important first step toward longer-term livelihood outcomes.

9.1 Adolescent Aspirations and Exposure to Opportunities

One of the most visible outcomes of the programme relates to adolescents' expanded exposure to new ideas about education, careers, and livelihood possibilities. Field discussions with adolescent participants suggest that the programme created spaces where young people could reflect on their aspirations and explore opportunities beyond those traditionally available within the community.

Focus group discussions with adolescent girls revealed a wide range of career aspirations, including interests in healthcare, digital professions, entrepreneurship, and public sector employment. Several participants expressed interest in developing skills such as driving, computer-based work, and professional services occupations that are not commonly associated with women's employment within the local context. These aspirations represent an important shift from the limited set of livelihood options typically available to girls in Khoda, where training

opportunities have historically been concentrated in traditional sectors such as stitching or beauty services.

"Earlier we thought girls could only learn stitching or beauty work. Through the sessions we came to know that there are many other skills and careers we can explore."

— Adolescent participant

One of the most visible yet often underrecognized contributions of the programme relates to the expansion of girls' mobility and agency within the community. For many participants, programme activities represented one of the first regular opportunities to engage in structured activities outside the home. Participation in training sessions, youth group discussions, and community awareness events enabled girls to travel beyond their immediate household environment, interact with peers, and engage with new ideas and opportunities. Training activities such as driving lessons and community street theatre performances contributed further to expanding girls' sense of independence and public engagement.

For adolescent boys, aspirations were often shaped by economic responsibilities and pressure to contribute to household income. Discussions with boys revealed a strong focus on financial stability and employment security, with several expressing interest in government employment, small business ventures, or technical professions. While the programme helped expand their awareness of potential career pathways, translating these aspirations into tangible opportunities will depend on continued access to education, skill development, and labour market opportunities.

"Before these sessions, we never discussed topics like gender roles or future careers. These conversations made us think differently about our possibilities."

— Adolescent participant

9.2 Gender Norms and Household Dynamics

Gender norms continue to play a central role in shaping adolescents' opportunities and decision-making within the community. Field interviews and discussions with parents, adolescents, and community members indicate that while attitudes toward girls' education and employment are

evolving, traditional expectations related to marriage, mobility, and household responsibilities remain influential.

Many parents expressed support for their daughters' education and skill development, particularly when these activities were seen as contributing to future financial stability. However, marriage continues to be viewed as a key milestone in girls' lives, often shaping parental decisions regarding long-term education and employment. As one parent noted:

"It is good for girls to learn skills, but ultimately their life will depend on their future family. Marriage will happen, and after that they will decide what they want to continue."

— Parent

Several parents indicated that while they were supportive of their daughters acquiring skills, long-term employment decisions would ultimately depend on the expectations of their daughters' future marital households. This reflects the continued influence of marriage-related social norms on girls' economic participation, and underscores the importance of sustained engagement with families particularly fathers and male community influencers in any effort to expand girls' opportunities.

Conversations with adolescent girls indicated a growing desire for greater independence and economic participation. Many participants expressed interest in continuing education or employment after marriage, highlighting a gradual shift in aspirations among younger generations that reflects the impact of programme engagement on their thinking. This intergenerational tension between adolescent aspirations and family expectations emerged as a defining dynamic within the community.

Discussions with adolescent boys also revealed complex attitudes toward women's employment. While several boys acknowledged the economic benefits of women contributing to household income, some expressed the view that women should work primarily when families face financial difficulties. These perspectives reflect the ongoing negotiation between traditional gender expectations and changing economic realities within the community.

The evaluation also found that while many adolescent girls reported gaining confidence and awareness regarding gender equality, household responsibilities continue to shape their daily lives in significant ways. A number of participants indicated that they play significant roles in caring for younger siblings and supporting domestic work within the household. Deeper discussions revealed that these responsibilities often limit the time available for education, skill development,

and participation in programme activities, a constraint that was frequently underreported in initial conversations due to social desirability dynamics.

9.3 Skills Development and Employability Pathways

A central objective of the programme was to expand adolescents' access to skills development opportunities that could enhance their employability and livelihood prospects. Participation in life skills sessions contributed to increased confidence and self-expression among adolescents, with several participants reporting feeling more comfortable speaking in group discussions, interacting with peers, and considering career options beyond those traditionally available in their communities.

A recurring theme across field discussions was the increase in confidence and self-expression among adolescent girls following participation in programme sessions. Participants reported feeling more comfortable speaking openly in group discussions, expressing their views within their families, and reflecting on their future aspirations. Several mothers reported increased confidence in their daughters' abilities and expressed greater willingness to support their continued participation in training activities.

"Before attending these sessions, many of us would hesitate to speak in front of others. Now we feel more confident sharing our opinions and discussing our plans for the future not only at home but more importantly outside."

— Adolescent participant

Among the different components, adolescents frequently highlighted communication skills training as one of the most practically useful elements. These sessions helped participants articulate their thoughts more clearly, interact with confidence among peers and adults, and participate actively in group settings. Adolescent girls also emphasised the significance of Menstrual Hygiene Management sessions, noting that these discussions provided health information not typically available through other channels an indication of the breadth of programme content and its resonance with participants' lived experiences.

Street theatre and community awareness activities were identified as particularly engaging by participants. These activities helped adolescents understand social issues affecting their

community while also providing opportunities to perform and interact with audiences outside their immediate neighbourhood, further building confidence and public speaking skills.

Digital and financial literacy training introduced adolescents to practical skills related to financial management and digital technologies. While the number of participants engaged in these trainings was smaller compared to life skills sessions, discussions indicate that sessions helped build awareness of financial planning, digital platforms, and workplace expectations foundational competencies for navigating the contemporary labour market.

Non-traditional skill development represented one of the programme's most distinctive components. Training in driving, warehouse operations, and mobile repair exposed adolescents particularly girls to occupations that challenge traditional gender divisions in the labour market. However, translating these skills into employment opportunities remains influenced by broader labour market dynamics, and many participants are still in the process of completing their education or exploring further training.

For participants who transitioned into employment, obtaining certification emerged as an important enabling factor. Several respondents indicated that certificates received upon completing training helped establish credibility when applying for first jobs. In labour markets dominated by informal employment and limited professional networks, such certification can play a significant role in signalling skills to potential employers, particularly for young people without prior work experience.

9.4 Youth Leadership and Peer Engagement

An important aspect of the programme involved encouraging adolescents to take on leadership roles within the community. Through the formation of youth groups and the training of adolescent facilitators, the programme created peer networks that could sustain dialogue around gender equality and youth empowerment beyond the direct activities of programme staff.

Youth leaders played a critical role in supporting programme activities, mobilising peers to participate in training sessions, and facilitating discussions on topics such as gender equality and livelihood opportunities. These peer-led interactions helped create spaces where adolescents could share experiences, discuss challenges, and support each other's aspirations in an environment of trust and mutual understanding.

"When we talk to other young people in the community, they listen more because we are from the same area and understand their situation."

— Youth resource group participant

Participants involved in leadership roles reported increased confidence and a stronger sense of responsibility toward their peers and community. In several cases, youth leaders also served as intermediaries between programme staff and community members, helping build trust and encourage participation from adolescents who might not otherwise have engaged. This bridging function proved particularly valuable in reaching young people from more conservative households or those hesitant to participate in organised group activities.

"When young people speak to other young people, the message spreads faster. They feel that someone like them has already taken the first step."

— Youth leader

9.5 Community Perceptions and Institutional Engagement

The programme also sought to engage community members and institutional stakeholders in discussions related to gender norms and youth development. Interviews with parents, community members, and institutional stakeholders suggest that the programme contributed to increasing awareness about the importance of skill development and livelihood opportunities for adolescents. Parents participating in programme discussions frequently emphasised the importance of training programmes linked directly to employment opportunities. While skill development activities provided valuable exposure and learning experiences, families consistently prioritised training pathways that lead to stable livelihoods.

"Young people in this area often do not have many spaces where they can discuss their concerns openly. Programmes like this help them talk about issues that are usually not discussed."

— Institutional stakeholder

At the institutional level, engagement with local service providers including counsellors, frontline workers and healthcare professionals helped connect programme activities with broader community support systems. While these linkages remain limited in scale, they represent potential pathways for strengthening institutional collaboration in future programming.

The evaluation also found that field discussions surfaced increased awareness of gender-based violence within the community. Incidents of gender-based discrimination and violence have historically been present within the settlement but were rarely discussed openly. Programme sessions addressing gender equality and rights helped initiate conversations around these issues among adolescents and community members. While these discussions remain early-stage, participants noted that people are increasingly recognising forms of gender-based violence that were previously normalised or ignored representing an early but important shift in community discourse.

"Many young people want to work, but the problem is not just skills, it is also about finding the right opportunities nearby – especially for girls"

— **Councillor, Ward No. 1**

10. Cross-Cutting Findings and Challenges

The observations presented in this section should be interpreted as strategic insights emerging from programme implementation within a complex urban informal settlement context. Rather than indicating programme shortcomings, these findings highlight structural and social dynamics that influence how adolescents translate skills exposure into long-term educational and livelihood outcomes. They are presented here to inform future programme design and to situate the findings in their appropriate contextual frame.

10.1 Gender Norm Transformation as a Gradual Process

The programme explicitly aimed to challenge restrictive gender norms influencing girls' access to education and employment. Field discussions indicate that the programme has created opportunities for dialogue on gender roles among adolescents and their families. However, the evaluation also highlights that gender norms within the community remain deeply embedded and continue to shape family decision-making. Parents often expressed support for daughters acquiring skills, yet many indicated that long-term employment decisions may depend on circumstances after marriage.

Discussions with adolescent boys suggest that while economic realities are increasing acceptance of women's employment, some traditional attitudes regarding gender roles continue to persist. These findings collectively indicate that gender norm transformation is likely to occur gradually, particularly in communities where social expectations around marriage and family responsibilities remain strong. Sustained engagement with adolescents, families, and community stakeholders will therefore be necessary to reinforce and deepen the shifts in attitudes observed during the programme.

10.2 Engagement of Boys in Gender Dialogue

The programme's primary focus on expanding opportunities for girls resulted in strong female participation. At the same time, field discussions suggest that engaging boys more systematically in discussions on gender equality represents an important opportunity for further strengthening programme impact. Boys and young men play a critical role in shaping household dynamics, peer attitudes, and community perceptions related to women's education and employment. Discussions with male adolescents revealed a mixture of supportive and traditional perspectives,

and the evaluation identified significant potential for more structured engagement with boys in gender-transformative activities.

Expanding opportunities for boys to engage in structured dialogue around gender norms, economic participation, and shared household responsibilities may help reinforce the programme's objectives and contribute to more sustained shifts in community attitudes toward women's employment and education.

10.3 Balancing Skills Training with Employment Linkages

Parents and adolescents consistently emphasised the importance of connecting training initiatives with practical employment opportunities. While skill development activities provided valuable exposure and learning experiences, families often prioritise training pathways that lead to tangible livelihoods. This highlights the importance of strengthening the connection between skills training and employment outcomes through partnerships with local employers, vocational institutions, and government skill development schemes.

At the same time, the programme's emphasis on confidence-building, awareness, and aspiration development should be recognised as an important foundational investment in adolescents' long-term career trajectories that may not be immediately visible in employment statistics.

10.4 Structural Constraints within the Local Labour Market

One of the most significant factors shaping adolescents' livelihood outcomes relates to the structure of the local labour market. Khoda's economy is largely characterised by informal employment concentrated in nearby industrial areas and service sectors, including factory work, daily wage labour, small retail businesses, and informal transport services. While these sectors provide employment for many residents, they offer limited pathways for skill progression or long-term career development. As a result, adolescents who acquire new skills through training programmes may still encounter challenges in identifying employment opportunities that align with their newly acquired competencies.

Field interviews suggest that many participants continue to explore education or additional training opportunities before entering the workforce, indicating that livelihood outcomes associated with the programme may continue to evolve over a longer time horizon. For future programming, strengthening linkages with training institutions, employers, and industry partners could further enhance the transition from skill development to sustainable employment pathways.

10.5 Timing of Skill Development Relative to Educational Pathways

Another important factor influencing livelihood outcomes relates to the stage of life at which adolescents engage with skill development activities. A significant proportion of programme participants are still enrolled in school or pursuing further education. While early exposure to skills training can help adolescents explore career possibilities and build confidence, many have not yet reached the stage where they are actively seeking full-time employment. The immediate employment outcomes associated with the programme may therefore appear modest relative to the scale of training participation.

However, early exposure to skills development may play an important role in shaping long-term educational and career decisions. Participants who engaged in training activities often reported increased awareness of career pathways and greater motivation to continue their education. Many participants are still in school or exploring further training, meaning employment outcomes will likely evolve over time. This demonstrates that programmes targeting adolescents can have meaningful developmental impacts even when immediate employment outcomes are not yet fully visible, a finding with important implications for how programme success is measured and interpreted over time.

10.6 Institutional Ecosystem and Service Access

The evaluation also highlights broader institutional constraints affecting youth development in Khoda. Limited access to public infrastructure, government schools, healthcare facilities, and formal skill development centres creates an environment where adolescents often rely on informal networks for education and employment support. Multiple organisations and training partners are active in the area, but stakeholders indicated that many initiatives operate independently, with limited coordination across programmes. This fragmented service delivery landscape reduces opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and referral pathways for adolescents seeking training or employment support.

Strengthening coordination among community organisations, training institutions, and public service providers could help create a more integrated ecosystem supporting youth development. Within this context, programmes such as the CFAR initiative play an important bridging role in connecting adolescents to information, skills training, and career guidance that is not otherwise accessible within the settlement.

10.7 Operational Challenges in Programme Delivery

Programme implementation also faced operational challenges. Field staff reported that the intensive nature of community engagement activities placed significant demands on frontline teams responsible for coordinating training sessions, mobilising participants, and maintaining relationships with community stakeholders. The wide age range of participants spanning 14 to 24 years presented challenges in tailoring activities to the diverse developmental needs of early adolescents versus young adults approaching the labour market. These factors highlight the importance of carefully balancing programme scope, staffing capacity, and participant diversity in future phases.

11. Outcome and Impact Assessment

11.1 Overview of Observed Programme Outcomes

Drawing on the triangulated evidence base described in the methodology section, the evaluation identifies a set of outcomes at the individual, household, and community levels that can be plausibly attributed to programme participation. These are presented below, organised by level of analysis. It is important to note that the assessment is contribution-based rather than attribution-based, reflecting the qualitative nature of the evidence and the complexity of the socio-economic environment in which the programme operated.

11.2 Individual-Level Outcomes

At the individual level, the evaluation identified several consistent patterns of change among adolescent participants. The most widely reported outcome was an increase in confidence and self-expression, particularly among adolescent girls. Participants across multiple discussion groups described feeling more comfortable speaking in group settings, articulating their aspirations, and engaging in conversations about gender, health, and career choices. This growth in personal agency and communication competence represents a meaningful developmental outcome for young people who often lack platforms for self-expression within their home environments.

Alongside confidence, the evaluation found strong evidence of expanded career awareness and aspiration among participants. Exposure to non-traditional skill training, career guidance sessions, and discussions about diverse livelihood possibilities broadened adolescents' understanding of potential occupational pathways, particularly in sectors not previously visible within the community. While aspirations do not automatically translate into outcomes, the expansion of adolescents' sense of possibility represents an important precursor to future career engagement and educational decision-making.

A smaller but significant group of participants 101 in total achieved an immediate employment transition following participation in skill training activities. These placements, primarily in private sector positions within the mobile phone repair and related service sectors, represent tangible evidence of the programme's capacity to facilitate labour market entry for trained adolescents. The income levels achieved approximately INR 10,000–15,000 per month for roughly half of employed participants provide evidence of meaningful earnings generation, even at an entry level.

11.3 Household-Level Outcomes

At the household level, the evaluation found evidence of evolving attitudes among parents toward girls' education and skill development. While deep-seated norms related to marriage and women's roles within the family continue to shape long-term decision-making, there is discernible movement in parents' recognition of the value of skill development for daughters. Several parents who participated in programme discussions indicated a greater willingness to support their daughters' continued participation in training activities and, in some cases, to consider employment as a viable pathway for daughters before or alongside marriage.

The programme's engagement with parents through community meetings and awareness activities played a critical role in facilitating these household-level shifts. Parents who had direct exposure to programme discussions were more likely to report supportive attitudes toward their daughters' aspirations, suggesting that community engagement components are an important mechanism for achieving household-level change.

11.4 Community-Level Outcomes

At the community level, the evaluation identified growing awareness around gender equality, women's economic participation, and the importance of skill development for adolescents. Community dialogues, street theatre, and awareness activities contributed to a gradual broadening of community discourse on these issues. Institutional stakeholders noted that the programme provided a platform for discussions on topics including gender-based violence and women's employment rights that had not previously been addressed in organised community forums.

Youth leadership development had a visible community-level impact. Adolescents trained as peer facilitators mobilised peers, facilitated discussions, and acted as visible advocates within their communities for the value of education and career exploration. This peer mobilisation effect helped sustain programme participation and created social proof that young people from within the community could aspire to and access new opportunities.

11.5 Interpreting the Programme's Overall Impact

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that the programme's most significant contribution lies not in producing immediate economic outcomes for the majority of participants, many of whom are still in education but in expanding girls' agency, confidence, and mobility within a social

environment where opportunities for public participation have historically been limited. The programme has functioned as an early-stage platform for expanding adolescents' horizons, initiating gender dialogue within households, and demonstrating that young women in Khoda can access and benefit from non-traditional skills and career pathways.

These contributions are consistent with a theory of change that views youth empowerment as a long-term, multi-stage process rather than a series of discrete, measurable outputs. In communities where structural barriers and social norms significantly constrain young people's opportunities, programmes that shift aspirations, strengthen agency, and build community support for gender equality play a critical foundational role in enabling longer-term social and economic change.

12. Sustainability and Institutional Strengthening

12.1 Sustainability of Programme Outcomes

The sustainability of youth empowerment outcomes in contexts such as Khoda depends on a combination of factors: the durability of individual-level changes in participants' confidence, aspirations, and skills; the extent to which household and community attitudes have shifted in ways that continue to enable adolescents' participation in education and employment; and the degree to which institutional structures and partnerships are in place to continue supporting youth development beyond the duration of the project.

At the individual level, the confidence and aspiration changes observed among participants are likely to represent relatively durable outcomes, as they reflect internal shifts in self-concept and career awareness rather than externally dependent behaviour changes. Adolescents who have expanded their sense of possibility and developed communication skills through programme participation carry these gains with them into their future educational and professional experiences.

At the household level, the shifts in parental attitudes observed during the evaluation are more contingent and depend on continued reinforcement through community engagement, peer influence, and visible positive outcomes from other families in the community. Without sustained dialogue and community-level engagement, household attitudes may revert to more conservative norms under the influence of broader social pressures. This underscores the importance of continued community engagement as a cornerstone of any future programme phase.

12.2 Institutional Dimensions of Sustainability

The programme's partnerships with skilling organisations such as Learning Links Foundation, Magic Bus, Lighthouse and NIESBUD represent potential anchors for sustaining training opportunities beyond the project period. However, the evaluation found that the institutional ecosystem supporting youth development in Khoda remains fragmented, with limited coordination among organisations operating in the area. Strengthening these institutional linkages and building more formalised collaboration pathways will be essential for sustaining and scaling the programme's impact.

The formation of youth groups and the training of peer facilitators represent an important investment in community-level sustainability. Youth leaders who have been trained through the

programme carry both skills and motivation to continue engaging peers in discussions on gender equality and livelihood development. Supporting and formalising these youth networks could provide a community-owned platform for continued youth empowerment activities.

12.3 Risks to Sustainability

Several risks to the sustainability of programme outcomes were identified through the evaluation. First, the departure of trained programme staff from the community creates risks of loss of institutional memory and community relationships that took significant time and effort to establish. Second, the absence of strong linkages between skills training and employment opportunities means that adolescents who complete training without accessing jobs may experience declining motivation and family support for continued participation. Third, economic pressures on households may prioritise immediate income generation over long-term skill development, particularly in a labour market characterised by precarious employment conditions.

Addressing these risks in future programme design through investments in staff continuity, employment linkages, and economic support for training participants will be important for protecting the gains achieved through the current phase.

13. Lessons Learned

The evaluation provides several insights into the factors that supported programme implementation and influenced its outcomes. These lessons are particularly relevant for organisations working in urban informal settlements where adolescents' opportunities are shaped by structural constraints, social norms, and limited institutional support systems. Rather than focusing solely on programme outputs, the lessons presented here highlight broader strategic considerations that should inform the design and strengthening of future youth empowerment initiatives in comparable contexts.

13.1 Combining Skills Development with Gender Dialogue Strengthens Programme Relevance

One of the most significant insights emerging from the programme relates to the integration of skills development with discussions on gender norms and life skills. In many community-based training initiatives, technical skill development is implemented in isolation from the broader social dynamics that influence adolescents' educational and employment decisions. The CFAR programme's design recognised that career opportunities are shaped not only by access to skills but also by household expectations, community perceptions, and gender norms.

By combining livelihood-oriented training with life skills education and discussions on gender equality, the programme created a more holistic learning environment. Field discussions suggest that this integrated approach helped adolescents reflect on their aspirations, gain confidence in expressing their ideas, and engage more openly in conversations about education and employment. Programmes operating in similar contexts should therefore resist the temptation to separate technical training from gender dialogue, as the two reinforce each other in important ways.

13.2 Early Exposure to Diverse Career Pathways Expands Aspirations

A second important lesson relates to the value of exposing adolescents to a wider range of livelihood possibilities at an early stage. Many adolescents in Khoda have limited access to career guidance and may not be aware of professional opportunities beyond those visible within their immediate community. Programme sessions introducing participants to non-traditional skills and emerging employment sectors played an important role in broadening adolescents' awareness of potential career pathways.

Even in cases where participants did not immediately pursue employment in these sectors, exposure to diverse possibilities appeared to influence how adolescents think about their future expanding the horizon of what they consider possible and motivating continued engagement with education and training. This lesson suggests that the investment in aspiration-building and career awareness activities delivers meaningful developmental returns even in the absence of immediate employment transitions.

13.3 Engagement with Parents and Community Members Is Critical for Durable Change

The evaluation highlights the central role that families and community members play in shaping adolescents' decisions regarding education, skill development, and employment. In many households, parents remain the primary decision-makers regarding girls' mobility, training participation, and career choices. Programmes that work exclusively with adolescents, without engaging the broader household environment, are likely to encounter limitations in the durability of individual-level changes.

The CFAR programme's engagement with parents and caregivers through community meetings and awareness activities created important opportunities for dialogue around gender norms and youth aspirations. Parents who participated in these discussions often expressed greater openness toward skill development opportunities for their daughters. This experience reinforces the lesson that youth empowerment initiatives are more likely to achieve sustained outcomes when they actively engage not only adolescents but also the broader community ecosystem that influences their opportunities.

13.4 Youth Leadership Builds Community Ownership and Programme Sustainability

The formation of youth groups and the involvement of adolescents as peer facilitators emerged as a highly effective component of the programme's engagement strategy. Adolescents who took on leadership roles reported increased confidence and a stronger sense of responsibility toward their peers and community. Peer engagement proved effective in encouraging participation among adolescents who might otherwise have hesitated to engage in programme activities, and youth leaders played a critical bridging role between programme staff and community members. This experience reflects that investing in youth leadership is not merely a programme delivery mechanism but a meaningful development outcome in its own right. Youth leadership initiatives

strengthen programme sustainability by fostering a sense of ownership among participants, creating peer networks that continue to function beyond specific project phases, and building community-level advocacy capacity for youth development and gender equality.

13.5 Linking Training with Employment Opportunities Enhances Credibility and Impact

While skill development activities provided valuable exposure and learning opportunities, discussions with adolescents and parents consistently highlighted the importance of connecting training programmes with clear employment pathways. Families often prioritise training initiatives that lead to tangible livelihood outcomes, and the perceived relevance of training activities is significantly strengthened when participants can see clear connections to employment opportunities.

Strengthening linkages with employers, vocational training institutions, and government skill development programmes is therefore an important priority for future programme phases. The programme's emphasis on confidence-building and aspiration development remains an important foundation, but these investments need to be complemented by structured pathways that help adolescents translate their expanded awareness into tangible livelihood transitions.

13.6 Community Context Must Continuously Inform Programme Design

Finally, the evaluation underscores the importance of designing youth empowerment programmes that are genuinely responsive to the specific socio-economic realities of the communities in which they operate. In Khoda, structural factors such as informal employment patterns, limited public infrastructure, constrained access to training institutions, and deeply embedded gender norms significantly influence adolescents' opportunities in ways that cannot be fully addressed through standardised programme models.

Programmes operating in such environments must combine individual capacity-building with efforts to strengthen community awareness and institutional linkages and must continuously adapt their approaches based on emerging evidence from implementation. Regular learning reviews, community consultations, and adaptive management practices are essential for ensuring that youth empowerment initiatives remain relevant and responsive to the communities they serve.

14. Conclusions

This evaluation examined the outcomes and implementation experience of the project "Challenging Gender Norms: Enhancing Opportunities for Marginalised Youth through Financial Literacy and Non-Traditional Skill Development" implemented by the Centre for Advocacy and Research (CFAR) in Khoda, Ghaziabad. The analysis drew on programme monitoring data, field interviews with 52 participants, focus group discussions with adolescents and community members, and a review of project documentation. The evaluation period spanned January to February 2026, with the programme having been implemented between 2024 and 2026.

The findings indicate that the programme has made meaningful and multi-dimensional contributions to expanding adolescents' exposure to skills development opportunities, strengthening confidence and agency particularly among girls and fostering dialogue within families and the broader community around gender roles, youth aspirations, and economic participation.

14.1 Programme Reach and Implementation

The programme achieved substantial reach relative to its initial design, engaging more than double its target number of adolescents and reaching a broad network of community stakeholders. The programme's ability to mobilise 1,171 adolescents, 803 parents, and more than 3,000 community members reflects both the relevance of the intervention to community needs and the effectiveness of CFAR's community engagement approach. This scale of engagement is particularly notable in an urban informal context where trust-building and community mobilisation can present significant challenges.

14.2 Adolescent Empowerment and Aspiration Development

Participation in life skills and gender awareness sessions appears to have contributed to increased confidence among adolescents and created spaces for young people to express their aspirations and explore new career possibilities. Exposure to non-traditional livelihood training introduced participants to occupational pathways that are rarely visible within the local context, expanding adolescents' understanding of possible careers and challenging gender-segregated assumptions about appropriate occupations. For many participants, particularly girls, the programme represented the first sustained opportunity for structured public engagement outside the home, with important implications for their sense of agency, mobility, and identity.

14.3 Gender Norms and Social Change

The evaluation highlights both the progress achieved and the ongoing challenges in addressing gender norms. While the programme has contributed to opening spaces for dialogue and shifting parental perceptions toward greater acceptance of daughters' skill development and employment aspirations, deeply embedded social norms around marriage, domestic roles, and women's mobility continue to shape family decision-making. These contextual realities reinforce the finding that gender norm transformation is a gradual, multi-generational process that requires sustained engagement over time. The programme's contribution in this dimension is best understood as laying important social and attitudinal foundations rather than achieving complete normative change within a single project cycle.

14.4 Employment Outcomes and Livelihood Pathways

Early employment transitions for a segment of trained participants 101 adolescents placed in private sector positions demonstrate the programme's capacity to support labour market entry when training is linked to relevant employment opportunities. The earnings levels achieved suggest that even entry-level positions accessed through the programme provide meaningful income contributions to households. At the same time, the evaluation acknowledges that the majority of participants are still on earlier stages of their educational and career trajectories, and that employment outcomes are likely to continue developing as participants complete their education and access the labour market.

14.5 The Programme's Foundational Role

The evaluation concludes that the programme functions not only as a skills development initiative but also as an early-stage platform for expanding adolescents' aspirations and initiating dialogue around gender equality and youth livelihoods. In contexts such as Khoda where labour market constraints and social norms significantly shape young people's opportunities such programmes play a critical role in laying the foundation for longer-term social and economic change. The experience from Khoda demonstrates that youth empowerment programmes combining skills exposure, gender dialogue, youth leadership, and community engagement can make important contributions to expanding opportunities for adolescents in urban informal settlements, even within a single programme cycle.

Looking ahead, the findings suggest several strategic opportunities for strengthening future programming: expanding linkages between skills training and employment pathways; deepening

engagement with boys and young men on gender norms; strengthening partnerships with training institutions, employers, and government schemes; and sustaining community dialogue on gender equality and youth economic participation. Building on the foundations established during this programme phase, a future intervention that incorporates these strategic directions has significant potential to deepen and extend the outcomes observed in this evaluation.

15. Recommendations: Strategic Roadmap for the Next Phase

The evaluation adopts a qualitative approach, triangulated with programme MIS data to strengthen evidentiary grounding. Participation levels, training exposure, and employment outcomes provide a quantitative anchor that supports and contextualises the qualitative insights presented in the report. Rather than relying on isolated perceptions, the analysis draws on consistent patterns observed across multiple stakeholder groups and data sources, ensuring coherence and analytical robustness.

The recommendations presented below are derived from converging evidence across programme data, field interviews, and stakeholder discussions. They are intended as a strategic roadmap to guide the next phase of CFAR's programming in Khoda, while also offering transferable insights for similar youth empowerment initiatives in urban informal settlement contexts. The recommendations are presented in order of strategic priority; however, their effectiveness will depend on integrated and mutually reinforcing implementation. These recommendations reflect consistent patterns observed across stakeholder groups and programme data.

Recommendation 1: Strengthen the Transition from Skills Training to Employment Pathways

One of the most consistently identified opportunities for programme strengthening relates to building stronger connections between skills training and employment outcomes. While the programme successfully introduced adolescents to diverse skill areas, translating these skills into sustainable livelihoods requires stronger engagement with the labour market ecosystem surrounding Khoda.

Specific actions recommended include:

- Expand partnerships with vocational training institutes, industry networks, and local employers to create structured placement pathways for trained participants.
- Engage with government skill development programmes and certification bodies to enhance the recognition and portability of skills acquired by participants, ensuring that certificates from programme training are credentialled with national bodies wherever possible.

- Provide structured career guidance and mentorship for adolescents, helping participants navigate training options, identify suitable career pathways, and prepare for employment transitions.
- Establish alumni networks for programme graduates who have entered employment, creating peer mentorship opportunities and enabling successful participants to serve as inspirational role models for current programme cohorts.

Recommendation 2: Expand Engagement with Boys and Young Men in Gender Dialogue

The programme's strong focus on empowering girls reflects an appropriate response to the specific barriers they face within the community. However, the evaluation demonstrates that deeper and more structured engagement with boys and young men could significantly strengthen the programme's overall impact on gender norms and community attitudes.

Specific actions recommended include:

- Create dedicated programme spaces where boys and young men can engage in discussions on gender roles, economic participation, shared household responsibilities, and healthy relationships.
- Train male youth facilitators alongside female facilitators to enable peer-led gender dialogue with male adolescents in settings where boys are most receptive.
- Engage fathers, uncles, and other male community influencers in awareness activities related to girls' education and employment, recognising that male community members often hold significant influence over household decisions affecting daughters.
- Document and share positive examples of male community members who actively support girls' education and career development as a norm-shifting communication strategy.

Recommendation 3: Develop Advanced Skill Pathways for High-Potential Participants

Introductory training sessions provide valuable exposure to new skill areas, but participants who demonstrate strong interest in particular sectors need pathways to progress toward specialised training and professional certification. Without such pathways, highly motivated adolescents may find their development trajectories cut short by the limits of introductory-level training.

Specific actions recommended include:

- Develop tiered training pathways that allow participants to progress from introductory exposure to specialised skill development and professional certification in areas such as digital technology, healthcare, accounting, and trades.
- Establish partnerships with technical training institutes and digital learning platforms to provide access to advanced training opportunities aligned with emerging labour market demands.
- Create a scholarship or training support fund to enable highly motivated adolescents from low-income households to pursue advanced skill development that would otherwise be financially inaccessible.
- Identify high-performing participants early in the programme cycle and provide tailored guidance and additional support to maximise their development trajectories.

Recommendation 4: Leverage Master Trainers as a Strategic Community

Resource

An important enabling outcome of the programme has been the development of a cadre of 55 master trainers across thematic areas including gender, financial literacy, self-defence, mobile repairing, screen printing, street theatre (nukkad natak), menstrual health management, and jewellery design.

Evaluation findings suggest that these individuals are beginning to function beyond training participants, emerging as early role models and positive deviants who influence peer behaviour, household perceptions, and community engagement.

Specific actions recommended include:

- Formalise the role of master trainers as community facilitators and peer educators, enabling them to take on structured responsibilities in programme implementation and community engagement.
- Provide advanced training, periodic refresher modules, and clearly defined engagement roles to strengthen the capacity and effectiveness of master trainers over time.
- Integrate master trainers into programme delivery, mobilisation efforts, and mentoring functions, leveraging their proximity to the community and lived experience.
- Position master trainers as local anchors for sustaining programme outcomes across thematic areas, supporting continuity of engagement and reinforcing community-level change processes.

Recommendation 5: Strengthen Youth Leadership Structures and Peer Networks

The evaluation strongly affirms the value of youth leadership as both a programme delivery mechanism and a development outcome in its own right. Future programme phases should invest significantly in formalising and strengthening youth leadership structures within the community.

Specific actions recommended include:

- Establish structured youth networks or adolescent forums that provide a platform for young people to share experiences, organise community initiatives, and advocate collectively for youth development issues.
- Train youth leaders in facilitation, communication, community engagement, and basic project management skills to strengthen their capacity to support programme activities and engage local stakeholders.
- Support youth-led community initiatives such as awareness campaigns, peer study groups, or community service activities that can sustain engagement and build community ownership beyond the duration of specific project phases.
- Create clear pathways for youth leaders to progress into roles as master trainers or programme staff in subsequent project cycles, providing a career development incentive alongside their community service role.

Recommendation 6: Strengthen Community and Institutional Partnerships

Addressing the structural challenges faced by adolescents in Khoda requires collaboration with a wider network of institutional stakeholders than any single programme can engage alone. Building a more integrated support ecosystem for youth development in the settlement should be a strategic priority.

Specific actions recommended include:

- Strengthen partnerships with local government agencies, educational institutions, healthcare providers, and civil society organisations to expand the range of services and opportunities accessible to young people in the community.
- Engage more actively with local governance structures, including ward representatives and community councils, to advocate for improved access to education, training facilities, and youth development services within the settlement.
- Facilitate coordination among organisations operating in Khoda to reduce fragmentation and create referral pathways that can help adolescents access a broader range of support services.

- Explore the potential for establishing a community-level youth development committee that brings together representatives from CBOs, NGOs, government agencies, and community members to coordinate youth development activities in the settlement.

Recommendation 7: Sustain Community Engagement on Gender Equality and Youth Development

The shifts in attitudes and norms observed during the programme are fragile and require continued reinforcement to consolidate into durable change. Sustained community engagement should be viewed not as an ancillary activity but as a core strategic investment in the programme's long-term impact.

Specific actions recommended include:

- Continue regular community dialogues, awareness campaigns, and participatory activities around gender equality, youth aspirations, and the importance of skill development.
- Develop targeted engagement strategies for fathers and male community influencers, recognising that sustained change in household decision-making regarding girls' education requires the active support of male family members.
- Integrate health and nutrition awareness into youth development programming, responding to the prevalence of adolescent health challenges such as anaemia that affect girls' educational participation and overall well-being.
- Document and disseminate positive community stories of girls who have pursued non-traditional careers or continued education after marriage, providing concrete evidence of changing norms and aspirational role models for other families in the community.

Recommendation 8: Deepen Gender Norm Change through Targeted Behaviour Change Strategies

While broad-based community engagement has been effective in initiating shifts in attitudes toward gender equality, sustaining and deepening these changes requires more intentional, targeted behaviour change strategies. Evidence from the evaluation suggests that deeply embedded norms particularly those influencing household decision-making are most effectively addressed through focused engagement with key influencers and structured behaviour change approaches.

Specific actions recommended include:

- Design targeted behaviour change interventions for key decision-makers particularly fathers, male caregivers, and elder family members focusing on practical shifts in attitudes related to girls' education, mobility, and employment.
- Adopt structured Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) approaches, including facilitated small-group discussions, storytelling, and reflective exercises that move beyond awareness to influence attitudes and practices.
- Segment audiences within the community (e.g., adolescent boys, fathers, mothers, community leaders) and tailor messaging and engagement strategies to address the specific beliefs, motivations, and barriers relevant to each group.
- Introduce tools to track shifts in attitudes and behaviours over time, enabling the programme to measure progress in norm change and refine strategies based on evidence.
- Leverage positive deviants and early adopters particularly male champions and supportive families as visible examples to reinforce emerging norms and encourage wider community uptake.

16. Alignment with CFAR's Strategic Vision and Organisational Priorities

The findings of this evaluation are best understood within the context of CFAR's broader organisational vision, which is anchored in advancing women-led development, gender equity, and systemic social transformation. CFAR's approach emphasises enabling individuals particularly women and young people to act as agents of change within their communities, while simultaneously addressing structural constraints that limit access to opportunities, resources, and decision-making spaces.

Within this framework, the present programme on non-traditional skills, financial literacy, and gender-transformative engagement represents a strategically aligned intervention rather than a standalone initiative. The programme translates CFAR's core principles into practice by combining individual capacity building (skills, confidence, agency) with community-level engagement (norm change, dialogue, awareness), thereby addressing both the demand and supply dimensions of gender inequality.

Positioning of the Programme within CFAR's Approach

The evaluation highlights that the programme contributes to CFAR's strategic priorities in three key ways:

1. Advancing Women's Economic Agency through Non-Traditional Pathways

By introducing adolescent girls to non-traditional skills such as driving, mobile repair, and warehouse operations, the programme challenges conventional occupational segregation and expands the scope of women's economic participation. This aligns directly with CFAR's emphasis on creating pathways for women to enter and sustain livelihoods beyond traditional roles, thereby contributing to long-term economic empowerment.

2. Embedding Gender Transformation within Skill Development

The integration of gender-transformative life skills, self-defence training, and community dialogue reflects CFAR's approach of linking economic empowerment with social norm change. The

evaluation indicates that these components play a critical role in building voice, confidence, and the ability of adolescents particularly girls to navigate public and professional spaces.

This dual focus ensures that skill development is not treated as a technical intervention alone, but as part of a broader process of enabling agency and shifting gender relations.

3. Strengthening Community-Level Systems and Local Leadership

The development of master trainers, youth groups, and peer-led engagement platforms demonstrates the programme's contribution to building local leadership and community ownership. These actors function as intermediaries between programme interventions and the wider community, supporting the diffusion of new ideas, behaviours, and aspirations.

From a strategic perspective, this aligns with CFAR's emphasis on institutionalising change through community-based structures, rather than relying solely on external programme delivery.

Strategic Value of Programme Learning

Although the programme operates at a relatively focused scale, it generates high-value learning for CFAR's broader portfolio, particularly in urban informal settlement contexts.

The evaluation identifies the following strategic insights:

- **Aspirational exposure as a precursor to economic outcomes:** Early-stage interventions that expand awareness and challenge default life pathways are critical, especially where adolescents are still in education.
- **Household and community engagement as a necessary condition for gender transformation:** Sustained change requires structured engagement not only with girls, but also with parents, boys, men, and frontline actors.
- **Non-linear transitions to employment:** Skill development programmes in such contexts must account for delayed or phased livelihood outcomes, rather than immediate placement expectations.
- **Role of positive deviants and local champions:** Master trainers and youth leaders can serve as catalysts for scaling impact through peer influence and community engagement.

Implications for CFAR's Strategic Direction

The programme offers a replicable model that can inform CFAR's future investments in youth and gender programming. In particular, it demonstrates how integrated interventions combining:

- skill development
- gender-transformative approaches
- community engagement
- youth leadership

can contribute to sustainable and scalable pathways for empowerment.

The insights from this evaluation suggest that future programming can further strengthen impact by:

- deepening ecosystem linkages for livelihoods
- expanding engagement with male stakeholders
- leveraging trained cohorts (such as master trainers) for scale
- building longitudinal pathways from aspiration to employment

Positioning for Partnerships and Scale

Situating this programme within CFAR's broader strategic framework enhances its relevance for donor engagement and partnership development. The intervention provides a practical example of how gender equity, youth empowerment, and livelihood development can be addressed through an integrated and context-sensitive approach.

By demonstrating both early outcomes and clear pathways for scale, the programme can serve as a foundation for:

- multi-year programme expansion
- cross-sector partnerships
- replication in similar urban contexts

Overall, the evaluation indicates that this programme is not an isolated initiative, but a strategically aligned component of CFAR's broader mission to advance gender-equitable development. Its value lies not only in the outcomes achieved at the community level, but also in the insights it generates for designing future interventions that are more inclusive, systemic, and sustainable.