






Empowering Women Across South Asia Through the SAWER Life Skills Training Programme

Close to 40,000 women and men across South Asia have enhanced their confidence, leadership capacities, financial literacy, and decision-making skills through the South Asian Women's Empowerment Reach (SAWER) Programme. Implemented by the BEES Network and its member organizations, SAWER is helping women become more active leaders in their households, workplaces, and communities.

Designed as a practical, module-based training programme, SAWER equips participants with skills in communication, decision-making, problem-solving, financial literacy, leadership, confidence building, and time and stress management. Through partnerships across Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, and Nepal, the programme has strengthened individual capacities while promoting women's participation in economic activities, leadership roles, and community development.

As a regional programme with lasting impact, SAWER exceeded its original target of 35,000 participants, reaching nearly 40,000 women and men across South Asia. The programme was implemented through member organizations including BRAC Aarong, Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), Tarayana Foundation, BPW Nepal, Sabah Nepal, SEWA, and Udyogini.

SAWER at a Glance

-  4 South Asian countries reached
-  Nearly 40,000 women and men trained
-  21 Master Trainers developed
-  154 trainers equipped to deliver life skills education
-  Training modules translated into local languages, including Dzongkha and Nepali

A significant milestone was the translation of SAWER training modules into local languages. These translations improved trainer confidence, strengthened contextual understanding, and increased participant engagement, making learning more accessible and effective.

Transforming Lives and Communities

Across the region, participants reported meaningful improvements in:

- Communication and interpersonal skills
- Confidence and self-expression
- Leadership and decision-making
- Financial literacy and savings behaviour
- Time and stress management

- Awareness of gender equality and rights
- Participation in household and community decision-making

Women increasingly reported greater confidence in expressing their views, managing finances, pursuing livelihood opportunities, and taking on leadership responsibilities. The programme also strengthened peer networks and encouraged collective action, enabling participants to support one another while addressing common social and economic challenges.

Country-Level Impact

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, more than 16,000 participants strengthened their communication, leadership, and decision-making skills through SAWER. Women reported improved family relationships, greater confidence in financial management, and stronger workplace communication. Many described being better equipped to resolve conflicts, balance responsibilities, and make informed decisions for their households.

One participant shared how improved communication within her family enabled her and her husband to make joint financial decisions and secure a loan to support their child's education and mobility. Others highlighted stronger workplace relationships, improved conflict management, and a healthier balance between work and family responsibilities.

Bhutan

In Bhutan, SAWER reached more than 6,000 participants across 18 of the country's 20 districts, exceeding its original target and expanding access to life skills training in both rural and urban communities. Participants reported gains in financial literacy, communication, leadership, personal well-being, and awareness of gender equality.

The programme also fostered positive changes in financial planning, sanitation, time management, and community engagement. Several groups initiated local actions to improve environmental cleanliness and public health, demonstrating how individual learning translated into collective community action.

A notable outcome was the growing participation of men, including Buddhist monks, who joined the programme in response to community demand. This expansion highlighted the adaptability of the SAWER approach and reinforced the importance of engaging entire communities in advancing gender equality and social development.

India

Through Udyogini and SEWA, SAWER reached more than 14,000 women across several Indian states, equipping them with the confidence and skills to participate more actively in economic and community life. Women strengthened their communication, leadership, and decision-making

abilities while increasing their engagement in producer organizations, community groups, and livelihood initiatives.

Participants reported greater entrepreneurial confidence, improved problem-solving skills, and stronger leadership capacities. Many also described increased participation in collective economic activities, demonstrating how life skills training can support both individual empowerment and broader economic inclusion.

Nepal

In Nepal, SAWER supported nearly 2,000 participants across multiple districts, helping women build confidence, strengthen communication skills, and enhance their personal and professional development. Participants reported improved family relationships, greater self-awareness, and increased confidence in expressing their views and aspirations.

Women also highlighted practical benefits, including improved stress management, goal setting, and prioritization of responsibilities. Many described feeling better equipped to navigate personal and professional challenges, while others reported increased participation in community activities and leadership roles.

Strengthening Women's Leadership and Agency

Across South Asia, SAWER has enabled women to become more confident communicators, decision-makers, and leaders, strengthening their participation in household, workplace, and community life. Participants reported increased influence in decision-making, improved financial management, stronger interpersonal relationships, and enhanced self-confidence.

Beyond individual change, the programme has strengthened peer networks and fostered collective action, enabling women to share knowledge, address common challenges, and engage more actively in community development. These changes have contributed to improved household well-being, stronger social cohesion, and greater civic participation.

Looking Ahead

As demand for life skills education continues to grow across South Asia, SAWER demonstrates the transformative impact of investing in women's confidence, leadership, and agency. Building on its success, the programme offers a proven approach to strengthening women's participation in economic and community life while contributing to more inclusive, resilient, and equitable societies across the region.

