

# SPRING Cohort 4 Summary

Coffey is the independent evaluator of SPRING, a business accelerator programme funded by DFID, USAID and DFAT. It works with businesses to impact girls' lives in 9 countries in East Africa and South Asia by helping them learn, earn, stay safe and stay healthy.



## What is SPRING?

SPRING offers assistance to businesses in a range of areas including financial support, business support in strategy and marketing, and support in understanding and meeting girls' needs. SPRING uses Human Centred Design (HCD) as its core methodology to help businesses understand the needs of their girl market and to develop products and services to meet those needs.

In the fourth cohort of the programme, SPRING worked with 19 businesses in South Asia. Coffey conducted in-depth case studies with **six** of them: **Khalti, LearnOBots, Maya, Pan Ka Lay, Rizq** and **Doh Eain**. Our findings are summarised in this document<sup>1</sup>.

“ *SPRING, in a very unique way, has the ability to literally tear apart your business and then put it back.* — Business 2 ”

## How did businesses become involved with SPRING?

The Country Manager introduced SPRING to half of the businesses. The others had heard of SPRING through their networks and approached SPRING to explore opportunities for their participation.

## What did the businesses do?

Three businesses focused on health initiatives, and the remaining three focused on learning (LearnOBots), earning (Khalti) and staying safe (Doh Eain).

The SPRING prototypes were very diverse. Four of the six businesses produced apps or online systems (in one case also producing hardware), while one business developed an advocacy campaign and another involved girls in its design process for public spaces.

## How was HCD used?

None of these businesses had experience of applying HCD prior to SPRING, but five of them were already aware of some of its concepts.

HCD was recognised by all businesses as bringing added value and as being a valuable tool in prototype development. HCD allowed businesses to refine their proposed products to better reflect user needs. For two businesses, HCD research showed that their initial prototype concept was not likely to succeed in their respective markets, and provided an opportunity to develop new products and services.

“ *The HCD process helped us realise a number of features that we added to our product which we may have not given importance [to] otherwise.* — Business 1 ”

Given their HCD SPRING experiences, it is likely that all six businesses will continue to use this methodology to support their businesses beyond prototype development. This includes supporting market research, improving staff interactions, building client data and developing their branding.

“ *[HCD] has actually helped us identify what are the key elements that we might need to grow our business (...) now, whenever we try to bring in new changes, we always keep in mind that we have to go back to the users.* — Business 2 ”

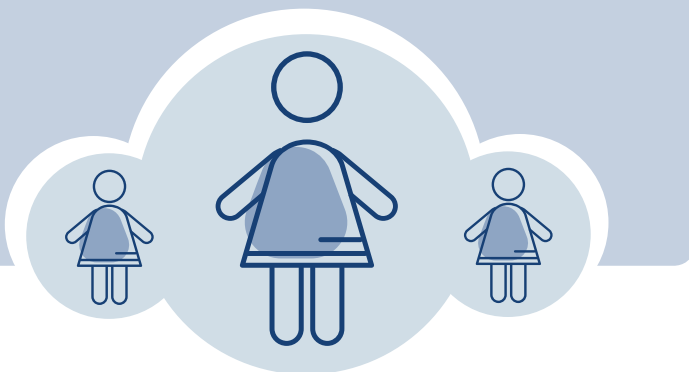
## Did the businesses reach girls?

SPRING helped firms better understand girls and develop evidence-based strategies to reach them. Rather than developing girl-focused products, three businesses sought to increase their overall reach, believing this would also increase their reach among girl users. Of these three, one assumed that girls would be reached by addressing household needs, while two targeted young people, including girls.

The other three businesses developed prototypes with a specific girl focus, of which two targeted urban girls. SPRING provided critical support to design girl-focused products, which may otherwise not have been developed. However, one business decreased its initial girl user target after discovering that it would have needed to invest more in girl-specific marketing activities.

“ [Today], if you can make a digital payment, tomorrow you can do anything else. So, it's not just limited to digital payments, it's about mindset. ”  
— Business 3

In terms of ages reached, two businesses have successfully developed a product which targets adolescent girls, and another developed a girl-specific prototype that was largely used only by older girls. Two other businesses found that it was primarily women above the age of 20 that used their product. Another business started to think more systematically about reaching adolescent girls through its SPRING participation.



<sup>1</sup> Each of these businesses has a standalone infographic and case study, for more specific information.

## What was funding used for?

In a competitive process, businesses bid for funding to help them develop their SPRING prototypes. Prototype development funding (PDF) for the six businesses ranged from £16,240 to £70,000.

Two businesses used these funds to increase internal capacity to develop their prototypes, while two other businesses used them to develop their apps. One business used the funding to gain a better understanding of its customers, and the final business used the funding across a range of diverse activities.

## Challenges faced in Cohort 4

Most businesses felt that the timeline for SPRING support was too short. They also reported a delay in receiving PDF funding. For one business, HCD research started too late to impact its prototype design.

One business would have preferred more girl-focused content in the HCD trainings, as well as more specific support to make the prototype girl-focused. Three of the businesses would have required more SPRING support after the design of the prototype itself. Areas identified as needing more support include marketing and attracting future investors.

## Remaining challenges faced in reaching girls

For four businesses there was often a missing link between marketing to and engaging with girls. While their prototypes offer potential benefits for girls, they might not be specifically engaging with this market. Additionally, legal restrictions mean that two businesses cannot engage with girls under the age of 16.

Two businesses felt they needed more funding from SPRING to develop girl-focused prototypes. Going forward, businesses will need to attract further financial support to expand and scale. In two cases, donors could prove a more likely source of funding than private investment. Others felt their product would not be of interest to donors due to their thematic areas of focus. Another business mentioned that its for-profit status limits its ability to attract donor funding.