

Spotlight On Sustainable Development Goal 4

(CSOs voices for equitable, inclusive, quality education for all in Nepal)



National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE Nepal)

Spotlight On Sustainable Development Goal 4

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Preface

National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE Nepal) a national network of different 364 member organizations, since 2003 has been majorly engaged in the campaigning, lobby and advocacy activities for ensuring the educational rights, promoting child rights and for strengthening the public education. NCE Nepal is working as one of the active CSOs since the initiation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), defining its country context target, dissemination at the local levels and also monitoring of the progress against the target set. Every year, NCE Nepal makes the CSOs monitoring for the review of progress against the SDG 4 and School Sector Development Plan (SSDP). Based on the monitoring report, NCE Nepal provides critical and constructive feedback to the government regarding the implementation of SSDP.

A part from this, in collaboration with its mother organization, Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Organization (ASPBAE), NCE Nepal shares CSOs voices regarding SDG 4 in the collective CSOs statement to be presented in High Level Political Forum (HLPF) every year. This year's HLPF has committed for the effective implementation of the 2030 agenda or the Sustainable Development Goal (SDGs). Nepal has initially presented the first Voluntary National Report (VNR) on 2017. NCE Nepal on 2017 had also monitored the progress of SDG 4 and shared the CSOs spotlight report together with the VNR report of the government. This year, the second VNR report was submitted on July 2020, which includes the Nepal's achievements and plan across the fulfillment of targets and goals of SDG 2030 with the collaborative efforts. NCE Nepal this year too, reviewed the progress against the SDG target based on the HLPF theme so as to showcase the SDG 4 status from the CSOs evidence and monitoring. This research book is the outcome of the monitoring made by NCE Nepal. The report was also submitted to National Planning Commission before submission to the HLPF.

Coordination and support from National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education, Science and technology, Central Bureau of Statistics and other Civil Society Organizations was highly crucial for this research work. Furthermore, the coordination and consultation with the member organizations, network and partner organizations also provided guidance in shaping the overall report. I would like to thank ASPBAE for providing guidance in shaping the overall report. I would like to express my gratitude to the government agencies, member organizations and district coordination committees of NCE Nepal, advisors, past presidents, executive committee members and publication team of NCE Nepal for their contribution in this research work. I would also like to thank Mr. Indra Mani Rai for his dedicated work in the preparation of this report. Appreciation also goes to the secretariat team for their efforts in the overall research and publication of this report.

Regards,
Dilli Ram Subedi
President

Acronyms

AWPB:	Annual Work Plan and Budget
BRM:	Budget Review Meeting
CBS:	Central Bureau of Statistics
CIC:	Coordination and Information Committee
CLCs:	Community Learning Centers
COVID:	Corona Virus Disease
CSO:	Civil Society Organization
ECD:	Early Childhood Development Centre
ECED:	Early Childhood Education and Development
EDPs:	Development Partners in Education
ESC:	Education Service Commission
FM:	Fiduciary Management
F.Y.:	Fiscal Year
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
GER:	Gross Enrollment Ratio
GON:	Government of Nepal
GPE:	Global Partnership for Education
GSDR:	Global Sustainable Development Report
HDI:	Human Development Index
HLPF:	High Level Political Forum
ICT:	Information and Communication Technology
IMF:	International Monetary Fund
LEG:	Local Education Group
MoEST:	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoF:	Ministry of Finance
NCE Nepal:	National Campaign for Education Nepal
NDAC:	National Development Action Committee
NER:	Net Enrollment Ratio
NPC:	National Planning Commission
NRS:	Nepalese Rupee
ODL:	Online and Distance Learning
PCR:	Polymerase Chain Reaction
PERF:	President Education Reform Fund
PFM:	Public Financial Management
REO:	Education Review Office
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goal
SSDP:	School Sector Development Plan
SWAp:	Sector Wide Approach
TVET:	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNFPA:	United Nation Population Fund
VNR:	Voluntary National Review
WHO:	World Health Organization

Table of Contents

Preface	3
Country context overview	6
Purpose and Scope of the Study	9
Research Methodology	10
Limitations of the study	10
SDG Implementation Analysis	11
Achievement Status Analysis on Goal 4 (Quality Education)	11
Strategies to achieve Equity and Inclusion in Education	14
Key Gaps Analysis	17
Challenges of Achieving Equitable Quality Education	18
Inter-Sectoral Linkages and Institutional Partnerships to Achieve SDG 4	20
Youths in SDG4	23
Case of Institutional Partnerships	24
Reflection and Learning	26
Conclusion and Recommendations	27
Recommendations	28

COUNTRY CONTEXT OVERVIEW

Nepal is a diversified country in terms of culture, language, religion and geographical locations. There are 26.5 million people with 126 caste/ethnic groups speaking 123 different languages (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS]. 2012). The distribution of the population shows an ever declining share of the mountain and hill population compared to the Terai population. Among the caste/ethnic groups, *Dalits*, *Janajatis*, and *Muslim* (a religious group) occupying 13.6% (3.6 million), 37.8% (8.5 million), and 4.2% (1.25 million) respectively are marginalized and deprived groups (CBS, 2012). These groups historically segmented with less opportunities on economic resources and educational access. They often face caste based discrimination, economic exploitation, and domination which are against the spirits of Constitution of Nepal 2015 and National Civil Code 2019¹. The women, children, and disables within these groups are more vulnerable as it is more difficult for them to cope with such social and economic adversities. The groups are underrepresented in political sphere, state mechanisms, and mainstreaming development processes. On the other hand, topographical division (Mountain, Hill, and Terai) of country has placed a large number of those population under exclusion of development. In other words, the marginalized and deprived communities are facing multiple exclusions due to poverty in geographically difficult regions (Karnali) and even in Terai regions. For example, Karnali region is the remotest region with widespread poverty, unemployment, food scarcity and insecurity, malnutrition, starvation, inequality, exploitation of children especially girls, high child and maternal mortality. The literacy rate in the region stands at 62.77 per cent and human development index (HDI) is low at 0.469².

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has paved the ways for multidimensional development of Nepal. The prime focus lies on promoting socio-economic development through federalization. The state has been re-structured in to three tiered governments (a federal, 7 provincial, and 753 local) with the promulgation of the constitution delegating power to exercise in the context of local people of their own. It has envisaged to lead the nation towards socialism promoting equitable and inclusive development processes. It has given emphasis on ensuring the rights of marginalized and deprived communities. The constitutional spirit seems to promote good governance, social justice, economic equality, peace and prosperity. '*Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali*' as buzz words proclaimed by the latest government indicate efforts given to promoting well-being and prosperity of people. However, the changes have less been realized visibly at the practical level. For example, the state seems less successful for creating employment opportunities in home country as annual outmigration of youths of age group 18 to

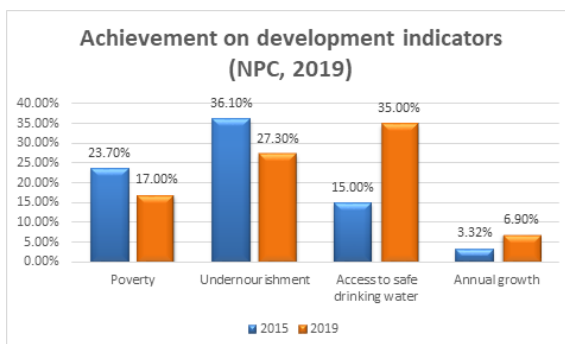
1 <https://www.equalrightstrust.org/sites/default/files/ertdocs//muluki-ain.pdf>

2 <http://therisingnepal.org.np/news/34067>

35 is still 236, 208 in 2019 (that was 519, 638 in 2014)³. Most of the youths are from marginalized and deprived communities working in Malaysia and gulf countries. One-quarter of total national GDP has been contributed by the remittance of those labor migrants. As per the analysis by the Asian Development

Bank, the outbreak of COVID 19 will hit almost every sector of the Nepali economy, shaving up to 0.13 per cent off the gross domestic product and rendering up to 15,880 people jobless. Since a large proportion of the households are clustered just above the absolute poverty line, an income shock due to the Covid-19 will push many of them below the poverty line. It will also potentially widen inequality because the poorest households are disproportionately affected as over 62 percent of the employed workforce is in the informal sector and about 85 percent of them are employed informally.

About sixty years of planned development processes brought significant changes in some of the aspects such as in social security, inclusion, environmental protection, and but the changes are not as desired in other aspects. For example, still, there are a large number of people (18.7%) are under poverty (who earns less than US\$ 1.25 per day)⁴. Nepal succeeded to reduce the prevalence of undernourishment (27.3%)⁵ and increase access to safe drinking water (35%)⁶. The facts mark that the people in Nepal are gradually accessing the resources for improving their well-being and capabilities. The average annual growth rate of last three years was 6.9 percent but still huge trade deficit and there is less contribution of industries⁷. However, Nepal's growth rate is to be dropped to 1.5 to 2.7 percent in post COVID -19 context as estimated by WHO, IMF, and CBS⁸ Nepal. A large number of labor migrants are returning to the country threatening to have further unemployment, poverty, and hence health adversities. However, the recent budget (of FY 2020/21) has given focus on agriculture (30%), education (11.64%), and health (Rs. 90.96 billion)⁹ allocating significantly enhanced amount that has created a hope of resilience.



3 Nepal Labor Migration Report 2020 (Government of Nepal) accessible at <https://moless.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Migration-Report-2020-English.pdf>

4 <http://sdg.npc.gov.np/data/?request&secid=19,subsecid=40,indid=215,subindid=1191>

5 <http://sdg.npc.gov.np/data/?request&secid=19,subsecid=70,indid=257,subindid=1566>

6 <http://sdg.npc.gov.np/data/?request&secid=19,subsecid=74,indid=276,subindid=1648>

7 Fifteenth five-year plan, National Planning Commission, Nepal

8 Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal

9 <https://www.nepalisansar.com/business/live-updates-nepal-to-present-federal-budget-for-fy-2020-21-today/>

The constitutional spirit lies on overall development of Nepal through providing education to all identifying education as a fundamental right of people. The constitution envisages that every citizen shall have the right of access to basic education and every citizen shall have the right to get free and compulsory education up to the basic level and free education up to the secondary level from the state. For that, the governments are under operation with Local Government Operation Act 2017 that includes the educational rights of local governments. As an act of fundamental right of the constitution, The Act Relating to Free and Compulsory Education 2018 and National Education Policy 2019 as newly formed policies are under implementation. In addition, the government of Nepal has already developed a roadmap of education 2030 demonstrating commitments and aligning with the goals and targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the sectoral plan for achieving SDG 4, School Sector Development Plan (2015-2023) has been developed in order to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education for all. Particularly, the focus has been given to 40 percent of the population under age of 18 years and 32.8% is of young people (aged 10-24 years)¹⁰. This is because a large proportion children including girls, *Dalits*, and extremely marginalized ethnic communities (*Chepang*, *Majhi*, and so on), religious minorities are still out of school.

Similarly, National Campaign for Education (NCE)-Nepal conducted a research in two districts (Kapilvastu and Rupandehi) and found that a significant number adolescent girls (11.2% out of 200 sample units) were found to have been dropped out from schools due to physical and emotional violence. The adolescent girls were from marginalized and deprived communities. They are excluded groups who have been discriminated and thus denied their development opportunities. They are deprived of their basic human rights such as right to education, health, protection, development and so on. They are facing scarcities of learning materials such as text-books and stationeries. These aspects play significant roles of poor learning outcomes of children. Child marriage, poverty, gender stereotype, and health and nutrition are the major barrier for many of them for accessing the education. For example, the sex-selective abortion practice appears to be increasingly evident in some parts of Nepal as 12 of Nepal's 75 districts, which comprise over 25 percent of the total population, show sex ratio at birth over 110 (per 100 females) (UNFPA, 2017). The case is much more increased in the current situation of COVID.

Amidst the ongoing COVID-19 crisis and the accompanying nationwide lockdown, the education sector of Nepal has experienced a drastic downturn of events. The schools and colleges as well as all other academic institutions in the country has started to feel a wave of uncertainty. It has been felt better to ensure prevention by shutting schools and colleges until the virus subsided. About 9 million students have been locked at

¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/children-nepal>

homes and 27000 schools have been converted in to quarantines. Thus, it has not become possible to rebound the situation. The government has initiated to engage students in learning through Online and distance mode using television, radio and Internet as the means to the extent of possible with a newly developed guideline. However, in response to this, many others have raised the question about the digital divide that exists and will be further created by the implementation of digital learning. The Internet penetration in Nepal is 72 percent and out of this, 55 percent have access to wireless services, 17 percent to wireless Internet, and 96 percent of the households have access to smartphones¹¹. However, many students and teachers lack technical knowledge on how to engage in teaching and learning on Online platforms. Additionally, rural and urban divide has become apparent as the reach of wireless broadband is limited. Online classes require at least 3G broadband accesses but much of rural Nepal lacks this. In addition, it is apparent that COVID-19 leaves multi-dimensional impacts in social, economic, and educational sphere. Thousands of labor migrants are returning from Gulf countries, Malaysia, India, and other countries that has created a threat of unemployment, poverty and hunger, and other social threats such as anti-social activities of multiple forms of violence. The number of suicide cases are increasing. These all will have adverse impacts on equitable and inclusive educational access of children and adults.

Purpose and Scope of the Study

The 2020 HLPF sets the theme of “Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development.” This is in line with the findings of the 2019 Global Sustainable Development Report (GSDR) which identified six entry points¹² and four levers to leverage the inter linkages and accelerate progress across the 17 SDGs. This will “allow for an integrated examination of synergies and trade-offs among the SDGs most closely associated with the theme of each session as well as of their inter linkages will all other SDGs.” In this context, while taking lead on SDG 4, National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE-Nepal) attempted to review the status of SDG 4 implementation in line of global and national targets and indicators especially during the current context of COVID. The report aims to put the spot light on the major critical issue of education that is to be taken into the immediate consideration. The specific objectives of the study are:

1. To explore the strategies to accelerate efforts to overcome all barriers towards

¹¹ <https://nepaleconomicforum.org/neftake/budget-2020-21-and-covid-19-a-look-at-the-education-sector/>

¹² The six entry points for transformative action are: (1) Human well-being and capabilities; (2) Sustainable and just economies; (3) Food systems and nutrition patterns; (4) Energy de carbonization with universal access; (5) Urban and peri-urban development; and (6) Global environmental commons. As one of the identified entry points, ‘Human well-being and capabilities’ collectively looks at key SDG well-being and capabilities goals, one of them being Goal 4 on quality education, alongside Goals 1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger), 3 (health and well-being), 5 (gender equality), 6 (clean water and sanitation), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 15 (life on land), and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

achieving equity and inclusion in education, ensuring that no one is left behind

2. to showcase country-level examples of practices in the education sector of how inter-sectoral linkages and institutional partnerships and engagements can accelerate actions for delivering the SDGs, particularly SDG 4.
3. to articulate the importance of education as the core of transformative and accelerated actions for the SDGs and discuss the ways in which education contributes to driving progress towards the four levers- better governance, sustainable economic growth, individual and collective action, and science and technology.
4. to present the gaps and challenges in the SDG implementation, insights of from the perspective of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and recommendations.

Research Methodology

This report is largely based on desk review of literature. The focus was given to the secondary data collected from different authentic sources such as Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), National Planning Commission (NPC), Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), and other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) particularly focusing on the data base of National Campaign for Education (NCE)-Nepal and also report of Nepal SDG forum. In addition, the reports of Government of Nepal (GoN), UN agencies, national and international journals as well as the previous report of NCE were reviewed in order to enrich discussion and analysis of SDG status and implementation process. The recent reports of the government of Nepal and other CSOs were reviewed and analyzed critically in order to inform the realities in regard to demonstrate educational progress in Nepal particularly focusing on key indicators of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A part from this, NCE Nepal conducted a series of meetings and consultations among its members, partners, networks and other educational stakeholders in order to collect the collective views and perspectives as first hand data on SDG implementation. The workshops and conference notes of NCE-Nepal were also used as the sources of information for developing this report. In addition, the newspapers, television, documentary, and websites were also used as the key sources of information. In some cases, telephone interviews with key educational actors were also conducted for confirming and disconfirming the ideas.

Limitations of the study

The report is not based on first hand or primitive data collected from the field rather the analysis is based on secondary information collected from different sources. Thus, it is largely based document analysis particularly of the government and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Besides, the report also limits its study in terms of focus on equity and human capabilities. Thus, larger scenario of educational status has not been reflected in all.

SDG IMPLEMENTATION ANALYSIS

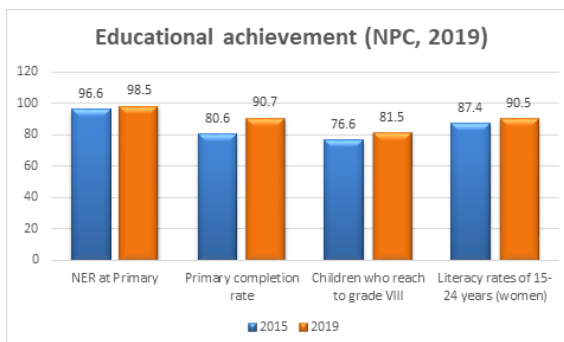
This section discusses the key status and achievements on particular indicators and targets of SDG 4 and major barriers of achieving it based on the latest available data. It then presents the interlinkages of SDG 4 to other SDGs particularly in line of importance and contribution to meeting other goals. It discusses the strategies used to achieve the progress on indicators. The section further analyzes the gaps and challenges of achieving SDGs particularly focusing on SDG 4.

Achievement Status Analysis on Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Linkages to Other SDGs

Nepal has been achieving slow progress on promoting equitable access to education. There are 30,097 school and community based Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) classes and centers in which 973,900 children in 2019 are studying which is an increase of about 2% of number of previous year¹³. The Gross Enrollment

Ratio (GER) in ECED is 84.7 in 2019 (that was 84.1 in 2018) and the percentage of Grade 1 students with ECED experiences is 66.9 in 2019 (that was 66.1 in 2018)¹⁴. The facts show that there are still a large number of children who do not have access to ECED classes and centers and about one third children in grade one do not have ECED experiences. Most ECED teachers (94.5%) have required qualification but very few of them (10.4%) have one-month training¹⁵. Another issue is the underpayment of ECED teachers which has not been addressed by the current budget of 2020/21. This shows that it is difficult to maintain quality learning engagement of the children in ECED classes and centers.

The graph below shows that Net Enrollment Rate (NER) at primary level education is closer to the target (98.5) but it is a little bit far (92.7%¹⁶) to reach the target at basic level in 2019. However, the gender parity at all levels of school education has claimed to be achieved (0.97 to 1) but *Dalit* children account for 20% at lower basic level, 15%



13 Center for Education and Human Resource Development (2019). Flash I Report 2075 (2018/2019). Bhaktapur: Auhtor.

14 Center for Education and Human Resource Development (2019). Flash I Report 2075 (2018/2019). Bhaktapur: Auhtor.

15 Center for Education and Human Resource Development (2019). Flash I Report 2075 (2018/2019). Bhaktapur: Auhtor.

16 Center For Education and Human Resource Development (2019)

at upper basic level, and 7% at secondary level¹⁷. Further, the graph depicts primary education completion and the proportion rates are under improvement. However, still, there is serious concern of retention of students in schools of which about one million children are enrolled in Grade I and only one third of the children remain at Grade X¹⁸. Government's each year's school enrollment campaign is less effective for entering and retaining the children from under poverty groups in school.

Constitution of Nepal 2015 states that education is fundamental right and all citizens have right to access free and compulsory education up to the basic level and free education up to secondary level. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2018¹⁹ owns it and makes local governments to manage free day breakfast, tuition fees, stationary, and text-books up to basic or secondary level. But, the public schools, in one or other ways, are collecting fees from the parents²⁰. The act, on the other hand, attempts to make private schools service oriented with reservation of 10 to 15 percent seats of student to provide free education which has not been translated in practice. Most private schools operate like profit-oriented business firms collecting fees in different headings without the consent of parents and violating the processes of fee determining policy²¹ of governments.²² Providing free and compulsory education is contradictory with the policy of promoting profit-oriented private schools. Besides, the financial gap of more than double in the school education also limits the attainment of free and compulsory education. This situation is further challenged by the situation of COVID whereby due to the pandemic situation created by COVID 19, around 2 .1 million children²³ will drop out from the school and this would also result to funding gap of USD 14,469, 598²⁴ if the school remains closed till Mid-July. With the increase in the school closure period, the funding gap is likely to be increased. This, seriously raises a concern that the progress made by Nepal in terms of school education and especially gender and social-inclusion related parity over the decade could be reversed in a year.

The literacy rate for age 15-24 years of women is 90.5 % but, the literacy rate of age group above fifteen years is only 58%²⁵. This shows that decades of long campaign to wipe out adult illiteracy from the country has not been succeeded yet.²⁶ The literacy

17 Center for Education and Human Resource Development (2019). Flash I Report 2075 (2018/2019). Bhaktapur: Auhtor.

18 Draft report of High Level Commission on Education, Nepal, 2019

19 <http://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Act-Relating-to-Compulsory-and-Free-Education-2075-2018.pdf>

20 Center for Education and Human Resource Development (2019). A study on public financial management practices at school level 074-75. Bhaktapur: Author.

21 Institutional School's Fee Fixation Guidelines 2016

22 Adhikari, R. (2019) Published on The Hmalyan Times in May 10, 2019. Available at: <https://thehimalayantimes.com/opinion/private-vs-public-schools/>

23 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2020). Education Cluster Contingency Plan. Kathmandu: Author.

24 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2020). Education Cluster Contingency Plan. Kathmandu: Author.

25 National Planning Commission (2019). Fifteenth Five Year Plan. Kathmandu: Author.

26 National Human Right Commission of Nepal, Annual Report 2018/2019 available at: https://www.nhrcnepal.org/nhrc_new/doc/newsletter/Annual_Report_2076_English_min.pdf

and poverty are interrelated as only 12 per cent of children of the poorest quintile are developmentally on track in literacy and numeracy compared with 65 per cent from the richest quintile²⁷. The inaccessibility of many adults including women in mainstreaming education including in literacy programs has complex interconnectedness with other agendas of SDGs particularly poverty and unemployment. Studies carried out in Nepal and elsewhere claim that the low level of adult literacy prevents people from reaping the full benefit of or contributing to the country's socio-economic development. Studies have shown that while a farmer with some schooling is more productive than a farmer with no schooling, his level of productivity is even higher if most farmers in the community have had at least some primary schooling²⁸. Nepali youths have opportunities of higher education in Nepal. But, Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) in higher education is just 12% in 2019²⁹. Most of them do have less hope of employment and hence about 70 thousand youths as students migrate to foreign countries for higher education and most of them are working students³⁰. The higher education itself is less effective to provide usable education in their lives so that they could engage in their own entrepreneurship. The current annual student intake capacity of both long-term and short-term TVET courses in Nepal is limited to 130,000 which is fewer than the 512,000 young people entering the labor market every year³¹. However, there are youths and adults with technical and vocational education is 165000 in 2019 that was 50000 in 2015³². The scenario of the country that the large young populations are without life skills and access to mainstreaming education which is painful to the county. On the other hand, most youths migrated abroad for wage laboring (236, 208 in 2019) do not have specific hard or soft skills³³ by which they are earning minimum wages contributing less on remittance as key source of country's income.

Realizing these, implementation of technical and vocational education in public schools has been furthered under the program of SSDP. It was piloted five streams of TVE in 100 different secondary schools approving any one stream to one school before five years and at present there are 240 schools implementing TVE³⁴. Majority of schools were found to fulfil the quota of 48 allocated to each grade of each stream but majority of the schools in the Terai region have not fulfilled the student enrolment quota. This shows that the access of target group to TVE streams in this area yet to be gained and the access of the target group to this stream is still questionable as most of the schools have entrance-based enrolment procedure. The schools have found it very difficult to manage TVE teachers and sound physical infrastructures including well-managed

27 VNR Report, National Campaign for Education (NCE)-Nepal, 2019

28 http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/ebhr/pdf/EBHR_31_04.pdf

29 National Planning Commission (2019). Fifteenth five year plan. Kathmandu: Author.

30 <https://www.nepalitimes.com/banner/migration-certificate/>

31 NCE-Nepal, VNR Report, 2019

32 National Planning Commission, 2019

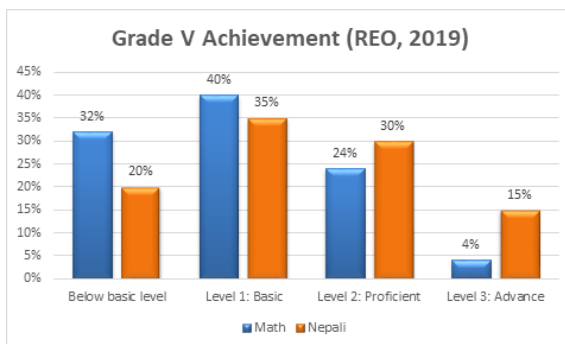
33 Nepal Labor Migration Report 2020 (Government of Nepal) accessible at <https://moless.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Migration-Report-2020-English.pdf>

34 Center of Education and Human Resource Development (2017). A study on technical and vocational education in secondary school as a separate stream-2017. Bhaktapur: Author

laboratories. There is lack of investments that has been hindering quality technical and vocational education in schools.

The quality education as elusive concept has become another key concerns in education. Education Review Office (2019) highlights that overwhelming majority (72%)

of grade five children are unable to achieve the mathematical knowledge and skills as aimed by the curriculum. Similarly, the office claims that majority (55%) of grade five children do not have adequate language skills. The facts demonstrate that providing quality education to all is a central challenge in Nepal. The knowledge and skills via formal education could not be usable for generating employment and achieving well-being thereby reducing poverty. On the other hand, poverty and multiple forms of violence (social, physical, and emotional) are the key causes of hindering quality education particularly in public schools of Nepal³⁵. There are other several associated factors that have been hindering the equitable and inclusive quality education for all. Health and nutrition of mothers affect the physical and mental growth of children and nutritional deficiencies in children can directly affect the educational attainment³⁶. But, National Campaign for Education (2019) notes that there are too many underweight children particularly in rural areas and the concern of nutrition is still a prime concern. The problems are more severe in marginalized and deprived communities such as *Dalits*, *Janajatis*, and others who are under poverty. Further, there are problems of alcohol dependence, non-communicable diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, and susceptibility of new diseases among students as there is lack of awareness regarding the communicable diseases and also lack of sex and reproductive health education. It has become difficult for the government to overcome from these structural barriers for bringing children (from marginalized and deprived communities) in mainstreaming education.



Strategies to Achieve Equity and Inclusion in Education

The constitutional delegation of power (Annex 8 of the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has allocated 22 rights to the local government) to local governments as absolute rights for management of school education is one landmark departure for exercising the autonomy of local people. Local Government Operation Act 2017 has further defined and clarified the 23 education related responsibilities for the local government under

³⁵ National Campaign for Education-Nepal (2019)

³⁶ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/252059240_What_is_the_relationship_between_child_nutrition_and_school_outcomes

its jurisdiction to oversee the primary and secondary level education but it has curtailed the specific rights related to educational curriculum and teacher's management³⁷. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2018³⁸ owns the constitutional right to access free and compulsory education up to the basic level and makes local governments to manage free day breakfast, tuition fees, stationary, and text-books up to basic or secondary level. But, the public schools, in one or other ways, are collecting fees from the parents. The act, on the other hand, attempts to make private schools service oriented with reservation of 10 to 15 percent seats of student to provide free education which has not been.

There are several initiations taken by the local governments for ensuring the equitable quality education in their contexts. Scholarships to girls and children from marginalized and deprived communities in public schools are supportive to many of them but in many cases the amount is misused by their parents. Day meal in 48 districts (proposed to provide in all the districts by the budget of 2020/21), health care facilities in school, recruitment of female teachers, distribution of sanitary pads, and annual allocation of budget in developing learning materials (e.g. braille) of disable children are some of the key examples of equity measures. A part from this, there are a number of context specific programs initiated by the local governments in order to promote gender equality such as *Beti Padhao Beti Bachao Abhiyan (Educate Daughter, Save Daughter)*, a campaign in Province level and distribution of free cycle to the girls to motivate them to come school. In addition, Province 5 has managed transportation facilities (Bus) and other infrastructure facilities for deaf children to support them in accessing schools.

Further, the government introduced Equity Strategy and Equity Index that identified gender inequality, socio-cultural stereotypes, language, child labor, poverty, geographical locations, health and nutrition, caste/ethnicity, and disability as key equity barriers in education³⁹. In addition to this, mother tongue language policy has been introduced, however it seems less effective due to lack of mother tongue based trained teachers and resources. Inclusive Policy, National Education Policy 2019 as newly formed policy and School Sector Development Plan (2015-2023) stressed to ensure equitable and inclusive quality education for all. The plan focuses on to encouraging parents and community to engage in schools in order to enroll their children in basic education. The education policies and programs developed by local governments intend to promote equitable and inclusive education. However, still, it has become difficult to translate the notion of policies in reality due to the complexity of social, economic, geographical, and political barriers including the dispute in the responsibility between three tiered governments.

The SDGs have been integrated in the 15th (five-year plan) periodic plan which is

37 <https://www.edukhabar.com/news/10830>

38 <http://www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Act-Relating-to-Compulsory-and-Free-Education-2018-2018.pdf>

39 Consolidated Equity Strategies, Department of Education, Nepal

currently in implementation. It has been set several strategies and priorities for the next 5 years to ensure that long-term planning which is consistent with SDGs.

The Fifteenth Five Year Plan has focused on educational access of children and adults. Further, it paves the ways to provide technical and vocational training to the youths for generating employment. In this sense, the plan seems in line of School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) that aims to strengthen the school education sector in its core dimensions. Further, through a number of key result areas within and across these dimensions, SSDP has 11 programs which is considered as an important vessel to enable Nepal to achieve the SDG 4 (2016-2030)⁴⁰. SSDP has aims to develop physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and moral potential for all 4-12-year-old children by ensuring school readiness and universal access to quality basic education, and to promote life skills and value-based education. It aims to make students of secondary education ready for work by developing skilled human resources, provide options between technical and general secondary education, strengthen institutional links and facilitate the transition to higher education. In addition, it concerns on enhancing functional literacy and cultivate reading and learning habits among youths and adults. However, the SSDP's programs are less aligned with the budget of 2020/21. The following table shows the budget allocation in key areas of education.

Budget heading	Amount
Scholarships	Rs. 2.70 billion
Sanitary pads	Rs. 1.82 billion
Day meal	Rs. 7.52 million
Color text-books	Rs. 2. 76 million
Voluntary teachers	Rs. 2.23 million
President Education Reform Fund	Rs. 6.00 billion

Source: Budget of Fiscal Year 2020/21

The annual budgets of government of Nepal are less likely to achieve the SDGs targeted through SSDP programs. Particularly, the government has allocated Rs. 171.71 billion (11.64%) budget in education in the Fiscal Year 2020/21 increasing Rs. 7.96 billion in the last year's budget of Rs 165.76 billion. The increment of the budget seems supportive to some extent to promote equitable quality education. It has been declared that Rs. 2.70 billion is provided scholarships to 2.6 million people including children of deprived and disabled citizens, children of martyrs and hardworking students. Rs. 1.82 billion financial transfer is made through local level grant to provide sanitary pads free of cost to 1.34 million female students studying in community schools. Further, Rs. 7.52 million amount has been allocated for day meal to be provided to children of all schools of Nepal. Rs. 2. 76 million amount is allocated for providing colored text-books to the children of basic level. However, there remains the problems of leakage,

40 MoEST (2016). "School Sector Development Plan 2016-2022". Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Government of Nepal.

mis-utilization or the freezing of the allocated fund. This is because the last year's gap in the education sector was nearly double of the funds allocated.

The country's annual health budget has increased by around Rs 22 billion (budget was Rs 68.78 billion whereas this year's is Rs 90.69 billion) with a target of improving the healthcare system and making it capable of addressing the Covid-19 crisis and similar crises in the future⁴¹. The emphasis given to health sector is likely to support the health of families and children supporting to access the education. The government has come up with a procedures for facilitating learning in the context of COVID-19 pandemic situation as about 9 million children and adult learners are being deprived of formal education due to government's lockdown policy. The guideline envisages to identify the students who have or have not access to radio, television, and internet facilities. It encourages to local governments and schools to facilitate learning of children in small groups maintaining physical distance who have no access to electronic media and internet facilities. Education and Human Resource Development Centre is responsible for providing e-learning materials and provincial and local governments facilitate to learning mobilizing volunteers and teachers. But, it seems difficult to implement the provision of guidelines as there are lack of human resources with ICT knowledge and skills and financial deficiencies.

Key Gaps Analysis

It is apparent that there are still a significant number of children (as discussed above) from different social segments (child labors, disables, girls, children from under poverty groups, *Dalits*, and *Janajatis*) who have not been enrolled in school. On the other hand, a large number of children drop out from the schools without completing a particular level. Quality of education is lowering (as discussed above) due to inadequate number of trained and qualified teachers. There is less focus on professional development of teachers and schools are less equipped in terms of learning materials and other infrastructures. There is a tendency of parents sending children in private schools as these schools have earned goodwill of quality education and hence there are very less children in most of the public schools even in rural areas. The public schools have become the schools of economically poorest families.

Decades of long effort to wipe out illiteracy from the country could not have been translated in reality. There are still large number of adults are illiterate. Women or girls in the poorest families and adults with disability occupy the largest portion of illiterate people. The campaigns and programs of adult and women literacy are still unreached to these groups. Community Learning Centers (CLCs) are less effective in terms of learning engagement of adults due to lack of resources and inadequate budgets allocation. The education/training/empowerment of adults from other line ministries and CSOs could not have focused to strengthen these educational institutions due to lack of coordination.

41 <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/nepal-budget-2020-21-seven-things-you-should-know.html>

The total volume of budget (11.64%) is still very less compared to the international practices and commitment made to have at least 20 percent of annual budget in education sector. The budget is less likely to make 9 million children and a large number of adults to cope with the multidimensional educational adversities created by COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal. The budget is less focused on strengthening public education (that was in Policy and Program of current fiscal year announced by the government) and recruiting teachers as there are only fulfilled quotas of teachers in 700 schools out of about 7000 public schools. Further, the budget is silent for increasing salaries of Early Childhood Development Center (ECD) teachers and staff who are underpaid. Sidelineing the role of Education Service Commission (ESC)⁴², the budget has envisaged to mobilize six thousand volunteer teachers of Math, English, and Science allocating Rs. 2.23 million amount. However, there are no any plan of training and recruitment procedures yet. The budget (Rs. 6.0 billion) allocated in President Education Reform Fund (PERF) has higher possibility of misuse due to lack of specific and scientific procedure making expenditure. The budget seems inadequate in psychosocial counselling of students and parenting education in and post COVID -19 situation. In addition, the budget is silent on promoting educational activities online or offline through the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for which the Ministry of Education has developed a guideline. Similarly, there is no explicit provision of reducing unsafety and insecurity of girls in schools and communities as the multiple forms of violence is one of the key barriers for girls to access equitable quality education.

Challenges of Achieving Equitable Quality Education

Promoting well-being and capabilities of people and families who are under income and non-income poverty for making access of their children in education is a major challenge as it may need a huge amount of resources. Similarly, identifying, participating, and addressing the living and learning needs of all children and adults with multiple disabilities is another challenge. Third challenge is that it is difficult to remove multiple forms of violence against children and adults particularly the girls as some of the violence (gender based violence) that occur in school or family or in community are structurally rooted. Many of the children are facing these multiple challenges or exclusion including geographical difficulty as their barriers for meaningful school participation.

By these structural barriers, the country is encountering the challenge of making access and retention of students in formal schools. For example, access to secondary education (grades 9–12) remains disturbingly low with a net enrollment rate of 24 per cent and hence more than half of students leaving primary school do not enter secondary school, and only half of those who do begin secondary schooling complete

42 Education Service Commission is as state mechanism that recruits permanent teachers through specific selection procedures.

it⁴³. Similarly, the literacy programs for adults are supply driven and not responsive to the local needs of learners, our several Five-Year Plans have failed to achieve their literacy targets. Many literacy-program graduates give up due to the limited availability of reading material and of post-literacy programs where new literates might practice their literacy skills. The low adult literacy rate, particularly among females and underprivileged groups is a factor involved in the continuing lack of participation in the education system on the part of girls and children from underprivileged communities.

Inadequate budget (11.64% in fiscal year 2020/21) in education, in a context of multiple educational adversities created by COVID-19, for providing equitable quality education is one of the major challenges as the budget has focused less on developing conducting learning environments in schools through child friendly infrastructure and learning materials. However, the budgets of local and provincial governments (which are yet to be announced) may be to some extent supportive to combat with the educational vulnerability of children and adults. But, the most of the governments have tradition of focusing on to allocate the budget in infrastructure development. The education falls under less priority. There are Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) which are financing in education which could be important source but the question of sustainability comes along with the less ownership of the programs by the government and local communities in many cases.

Another challenge lies on the lack of coordination of education actors and structures. Deficiency and misallocation of budget in addressing the educational adversities in Nepal in and post-COVID-19 period is an example of lack of co-ordination of line ministries. Education is conceived as the sole responsibility of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). It has not been visualized that the targets of making access of all in equitable quality education is possible through collective effort with stronger networks and coordination among different bodies of government. More specifically, the lack of coordination is clearly visible in federal, provincial, and local governments. A part from this, there is also lack of inter-ministrial coordination. Similar nature of activities are in different ministries and there is duplication of works in many cases such as women empowerment, skills for marginalized communities etc. The government has less meaningful coordination and collaboration with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

The COVID 19 pandemic has created further challenges to maintain equity in education. The government has started to provide education through Online and Distance Learning (ODL) mode which has brought the possibility of risk of digital divide as only 46% population, this rather more in rural area, access internet and digital connectivity. The budget of 2020/21 is silent on promoting ODL teaching learning activities. However, the Ministry of Education has announced for the support of all the stakeholders and CSOs in order to promote equitable quality education in the context of vulnerability caused by COVID-19.

43 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/family-literacy-programme-nepal>

Constitutionally, the local governments have responsibility of managing education up to secondary level. However, the elected representatives are less capable to understand the complexities of SDG agendas and harmonize in their policies, programs, and plans. This has been shown by their less effective delivery of services on executive, judicial and legislative aspects⁴⁴. Thus, less empowering local governments and education actors is another challenge to achieve the targets of making access to equitable and inclusive quality education of all. On the other hand, the local governments have no clear data base collected and managed in order to identify the number of children under vulnerable (economic, physical, and social) condition without access to quality education.

INTER-SECTORAL LINKAGES AND INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS TO ACHIEVE SDG 4

It is evident that the education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of economic development reducing poverty and hunger. A country can achieve economic development with substantial investment in education making people knowledgeable and skilled thereby improving the quality of lives. Education raises people's productivity and income promoting entrepreneurship and other employability. It is apparent that the return of investment on all education is considerable in highly-educated countries. The returns to education make it possible for poor countries like Nepal to grow very rapidly if they make a major commitment to provide quality education to all children and adults. On the other hand, education as human capital can be convertible to social development thereby promoting just society. It supports to achieve social capital promoting social cohesion and harmony generating collective force to use to economic development. It supports to reduce discrimination, violence and abuses, and other human rights of people which facilitate to build connected and respectful society. It facilitates to enhance equality by providing equal opportunities to all from marginalized and deprived communities including women and girls. The facts indicate that providing equitable and inclusive quality education (SDG4) is not only the sole concern of education actors and structures rather it should be promoted through the collective and coordinated efforts of all state mechanisms including the line ministries of Nepal.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) is aware on the inter-sectoral linkages of SDGs that has been articulated in its fifteenth plan of development. The plan has identified that the gender based violence and disempowerment as the hindering factors of promoting social and economic equality in the society. It has envisaged the

women's contribution in developing prosperous Nepal. For that the government has Sexual Offences Act 2003 that protects the women and girls from violence against them. The government has put its effort on implementing technical and vocational education through TVET programs and public schools in order to create employment opportunities in the country thereby reducing poverty. However, there are 85 percent male and 15 percent female vocational training graduates in rural areas and there were 91 percent males and 9 percent females in both public and private technical schools in urban areas⁴⁵. Thus, there is no gender equality in terms of access in TVET programs. In addition, the government has initiated to provide employment through Prime Minister Employment Program and Social Security Fund. Similarly, the focus has been given to wipe out illiteracy and adult learning practices through literacy programs and Community Learning Centers (CLCs). The efforts have been expected to improve the health and nutrition of children and build capacity in their income generating activities.

It is less visible the cooperation and collaboration among different layers of governments (federal, provincial, and local). However, it seems better in the process of combating with the COVID-19 crisis. It is argued that the provincial governments have less role in different development interventions. The federal government is in attempt of curtailing the rights of provincial and local governments. For example, the teacher recruitments and curriculum development processes in education sector have been placed as the role of federal government by the National Education Policy 2019. However, the government has emphasized private sectors to involve in other economic development interventions such as in energy sector, enterprises, and industries. For example, the government has announced to provide a subsidized loan for the entrepreneurs starting new businesses at a two per cent interest rate and for that the government has allocated Rs. 500 million to cover the subsidized interest in this scheme in the budget of 2020/21⁴⁶. Similarly, the government has announced to take sole responsibility on providing health and education to the people but it has not been denied the involvement of private sector in these sectors.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) is an apex body of development in Nepal which has attempted to set up institutional arrangements for effective implementation of the SDGs. High-level National Steering Committee chaired by the Prime Minister is responsible to provide policy directives, conducive policy environment and building partnership for achieving the SDG. Coordination and Implementation Committee (CIC) chaired by the Vice-Chair of the NPC has roles for guiding the line ministries on mainstreaming SDGs into national, provincial and the local level by proper management of the financial, human, and technical resources. This mechanism is also responsible for effective and efficient mobilization of the internal resources, coordination between the public and private actors and the development partners including Civil Society

45 <https://www.cpsctech.org/2014/07/hindering-factors-of-female.html#:~:text=There%20were%2085%20percent%20male,more%20than%20in%20other%20schools.>

46 <https://english.onlinekhabar.com/nepal-budget-2020-21-seven-things-you-should-know.html>

Organizations (CSOs). Moreover, under the CIC, there are different thematic committees led by members of NPC. Goal 4 is under jurisdiction of the thematic committee, Social Development Committee (SDC) which has roles to provide oversight and political direction, implementation and coordination of SDGs related works and aligning SDGs into the plans, policies and budgets and consolidating outcomes respectively. However, with so much of the SDGs dependent on the initiatives of provincial and local governments, these institutional arrangements have less been replicated at these sub-national levels.

Nepal has an Integrated Evaluation Action Plan for 2016- 2020 that incorporates the activities of government agencies, Voluntary Organizations of Professional Evaluators (VOPEs) and UN agencies under the leadership of NPC. This equity-focused and gender-responsive evaluation action plan aims to generate, share and use evaluation-based evidence in policy processes and to help build capacity of evaluation commissioners, evaluators and evaluation users. These efforts aim to track SDGs. The high level National Development Action Committee (NDAC) is the apex body of M&E in the government that seeks to relieve coordination bottlenecks and redress problems that cannot be solved at the ministerial level. The committee is chaired by the Prime Minister with ministers, the NPC Vice Chairman and members, and the Chief Secretary of the government as members and the Secretary of the NPC as member-secretary. NDAC is responsible to review the implementation of programs and projects. It also establishes inter-ministerial coordination on development related issues. NDACs are preceded by the Ministerial Development Action Committee (MDAC) in each line ministry. These committees are chaired by the Minister with membership of the relevant NPC member, the secretary of the concerned ministry, representatives of the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of General Administration. These committees organize meetings every trimester to review the implementation status of programs and projects. However, the M&E mechanisms have not been replicated at the provincial and local levels.

It is evident that the education plays pivotal role to attain other SDGs. It is difficult to achieve the goals without collective institutional efforts. However, there is lack of coordination and collaboration of line ministries in terms of providing collective effort on achieving different goals. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is conceived as an apex body of government for development of formal schooling and particular aspects of non-formal education such as literacy, Community Learning Centers (CLCs), Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). Educational funds and training programs especially for the technical and vocational education, skills and development trainings are also provided by other line ministries. Moreover, in many cases, coordination and collaboration between government and CSOs seems weaker as there exists duplication of the work done by line Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), other ministries, and CSOs. The partnership as a form of meaningful participation with all the related stakeholders including the Civil

Society Organizations (CSOs), private sectors, and the general public as envisaged by institutional policy of National Planning Commission (NPC) (as discussed above) and other human rights instruments is less visible which has been hindering accountability and service delivery. However, there is good collaboration and partnership between government and CSOs. The collaboration of government with the CSOs is somehow satisfactory in terms of the Voluntary National Review (VNR) as the government provides space for the CSOs organizing the consultations and even the NPC VNR focal person participates in the discourse and debates organized by CSOs regarding VNR. There is a separate person designated in NPC to coordinate with the CSOs in this manner. Moreover, CSOs also collaborate with NPC in the preparation of the annual plans and programs of the government along with the long term educational vision. However, this CSOs government partnership depends upon the nature of the person from NPC as CSOs participation is not institutional one.

Youths in SDG4

Nepal has a demographic divided with 40.3%⁴⁷ youth population (54.5% female and 45.8% male). SDG 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7 have basically focused to ensure the access of youths from marginalized and deprived communities in quality education with no gender discrimination in order to promote their quality lives with decent employment opportunities. However, the feeling of uncertainty among marginalized young people influenced by family poverty, heavy demands on their labor to support their families, lack of parental care, alcoholism, violence, changing cultural and social norms, landlessness and lack of access to public services have affected directly in quality lives of marginalized young people⁴⁸. Youths are under compulsion of engaging in works thereby either ignoring or giving less priority to participate in education. Besides, young people in the street are very vulnerable in terms of violence, sexual abuse, falling into serious drug abuse and even trafficking of young girls.

Most Nepali youths have opportunities of higher education in Nepal. But, they do have less hope of employment and hence about 70 thousand youths as students migrate to foreign countries for higher education. The higher education itself is less effective to provide usable education in their lives so that they could engage in their own entrepreneurship. The current annual student intake capacity of both long-term and short-term TVET courses in Nepal is limited to 130,000 which is fewer than the 512,000 young people entering the labor market every year⁴⁹. However, there are youths and adults with technical and vocational education is 165000 in 2019 that was 50000 in 2015⁵⁰. The scenario of the country that the large young populations are without life skills and access to mainstreaming education which is painful to the

47 Central Bureau of Statistics, Nepal

48 NCE Nepal, Civil Society Education Report, 2018

49 NCE-Nepal, VNR Report, 2019

50 NPC, 2019

county. Prime Minister Self- Employment Program was made effective since 2019 to provide employment to the youths. Similarly, provision of loan for youths against their academic certificate was made to attract youths in entrepreneurship.

However, notable progress of the program has not been seen so far. It is believed that healthy, educated, employed and empowered young people improve not only their own prospects but the prospects of their community as well. However, access of marginalized young people in policy formulation and becoming the partner of development rather than beneficiaries is yet to be achieved in case of Nepal. Several young people have very limited information and knowledge about lifelong learning and are not getting benefit of this provision. Young people have enthusiasm to be active citizenship. However, due to limited public opportunities and spaces, they have not been able to utilize their full potential. As a result, their roles and functions have not been recognized, accredited as expected and not enough enabling environments. However, Due to weak governance, low investment for youth development, capacity development, decentralized structures, youth issues, concerns and aspirations have not been addressed.

CASE OF INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

Nepal is implementing its sector plan through a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp). Since 2009 SWAp is in place which has been later facilitated by Local Education Group (LEG) as envisioned by Global Partnership for Education (GPE). The LEG is led by Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST), but represented by Development Partners in Education (EDPs), Civil Society Organization, Teachers and other government agencies. LEG is a platform to prepare the plans and policies, review them, and reflect on the areas of improvement in implementation and also share best practices and learning among each other. This is a unique platform that brings all education related stakeholder from government to civil society together and learn from each other. Hence, LEG has supported to strengthen partnership in education policy development to implementation in inclusive, transparent and participatory manner. Also, it has strengthened the two way communication among government, CSOs and development partners to boost up partnership in the different issues of public education.

Hence, LEG acknowledges the strength of the SWAp consortium in terms of informing, reviewing and supporting policy, planning and implementation processes, as well to further institutionalize and formalize its membership through information sharing, inviting to the forums and call for participation. So, diversity in the participation and partnership has been strengthening to support further in aid effectiveness and strengthen coordination.

Civil Society organizations especially National Campaign for Education (NCE Nepal)

through this forum has been able to influence its voices and positions through policy review and monitoring, policy debate dialogues, evidence generation and sharing best practices which have been meaningful and effective to the development, implementation and monitoring of the plans and policies including sector plan. Basically, CSOs in the forums are to hold government and development partners accountable. So, for CSO this is good platform to lobby and advocate to both government and development partners simultaneously especially on the issues of education financing, aid effectiveness, resource generation and mobilization. NCE Nepal was also able to monitor the governance and accountability in education in post-earthquake period through community mobilization and share through LEG for preparing disaster preparedness plan in education. Stakeholder consultation by NCE Nepal in Education for All assessment and setting post 2030 education agenda and in preparing School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) were an exemplary initiatives in the partnership with government to ensure voices of citizen in the policy formulation. Besides, partnership and collaboration in LEG has also widen area of intervention by NCE Nepal especially during the COVID context to be a part in government's funding application appraisal and provide CSO insights to make GPE's support inclusive, participatory, transparent and ask for implementation where CSO's participation is ensured.

LEG members meet annually and bi-annually in general and other sub-forums under this including technical committees and working committees meet as per need. Especially the Budget Review Meeting (BRM) held annually is effective to review the annual work plan and budget (AWPB), specifically on the provisions and implementation plans to meet the SSDP, assess and confirm the achievements, review progress against the set indicators and targets, agree on the action to be taken and review the Public Financial Management (PFM) and Fiduciary Management (FM) strategies. This has supported to see the financing status for sector plan implementation and also support government also to navigate the strategies to be taken for financing public education. NCE Nepal, as a CSOs representative in this forum share/present its voices positioned from research and analysis by NCE in terms of education financing gap, inefficiency in the education sector, monitoring of SDG 4 implementation. Hence, this also provides the lens to the government to pay attention especially in financing for marginalized and poor communities, youth, children with disabilities and remote areas.

Partnership of NCE Nepal in LEG has supported to enhance its credibility and it has boosted the relation and coordination with other government agencies like National Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, province and local governments. However, localization of LEG has been issue for NCE Nepal for lobby and advocacy. Since, local government are responsible for education related rights and responsibilities, such LEG mechanisms are to be set in the local government level and partnership is enhanced among government, support agencies at local levels, CSOs, teachers and other stakeholders. This ensures that local issues are discussed in the local forums and they are reflected in local education policies for the ownership building and transparency.

REFLECTION AND LEARNING

The political transition that appeared after the radical departure of second peoples' movement through promulgation of new Constitution of Nepal 2015 was a factor that pushed back to Nepal to achieve the educational targets in slower pace. State restructuring process and nation-wide election of representatives of Federal and Provincial Parliaments and Local Governments were not so friendly to speedy educational development. The significant amount of time for formulating new educational policies and programs at different layers of governments compatible to the constitutional spirit was chaotic particularly for newly elected representatives. Still, the institutional arrangements and intergovernmental coordination and cooperation remains weaker in order to smooth governance and effective implementation of policies, programs and plans of educational development. In some of the cases, it is yet to localize formally the SDGs in policies and programs of local governments. On the other hand, despite the effort of federal government, most of the elected representatives of local governments are less aware on SDGs. However, slower pace of progress on key indicators of SDG 4 are visible (as discussed above).

Noteworthy gaps appear in terms of accessibility and retention of children and adults in schools, TVET sector, and in higher education. It is far to achieve quality education for millions of children as they either do not enroll in school or drop out without completing a particular level of education. Most children are from hard core groups-extremely marginalized and deprived communities and families from under poverty groups. A large number of adults and women are illiterate and many drop out from the programs as the education they get are prevalent in their day to day lives. Most youths are untrained with particular hard or soft skills and hence the unemployment is unescapable. This situation compels them to drop out from their education and go to abroad for wage laboring with minimum earning. It can easily be claimed that the government could not invest significantly in education sector. Consequently, the lack of teachers and poor infrastructure and learning materials are always there. The current budget (2020/21) has given less emphasis on the program of strengthening public education (as said by Ministry of Education, Science and Technology) which indicates the lack of coordination among the ministries in Nepal. The coordination with the provincial and local governments are also weaker that has created challenge to achieve SDGs.

There are several barriers for not making access to equitable and inclusive quality education for children and adults in Nepal. Harsh topographical situation, gender, caste/ethnicity, language, child labor, poverty, disability, lack of safety and security are some of the challenges. COVID-19 crisis has brought further adversities in multidimensional aspects of society such as in health, economy, culture, and so on. A large number of labor migrants are returning to home country creating a possibility

of massive unemployment situation that may have multiplier effects on education of the children and adults. The protective measures of the governments such as management of quarantines, PCR testing, and other hospital facilities and counselling practices are weaker. The number of suicide cases, hunger, and death cases are increasing day by day. However, the government has come up with specific primitive measures through current budget of 2020/21 focusing on employment generation in agriculture sector with increased amount of providing soft loans, improving health and education facilities. Particularly, it is claimed that the budget is still inadequate in different sectors of education such as in remuneration of underpaid ECED teachers and staff, professional development of teachers, and ICT and disable children friendly infrastructure and so on. On the other hand, the effective implementation budget is always questioned. Thus, it is difficult to claim that the government will be successful for promoting equitable and inclusive quality education to all in Nepal.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Nepal has achieved slow progress on targets and indicators set for SDGs. The localization of SDGs including SDG 4 through policies and programs seems to have challenged due to less empowered elected representative of local governments. Further, institutional arrangements for implementation and monitoring of the programs of SDGs are yet to be reflected in local level as local governments have responsibility of managing school level education. On the other hand, still, the indicators developed thus far cannot measure major dimensions of inclusive education such as multilingual education practices and use of local curriculum in the context of Nepal. The CSOs have been raising the voices of marginalized and deprived communities and children but they were less participated meaningfully in the decision making processes.

Inadequate budget, rhetorical free education, drop out of large number of children, poor learning environment in schools, low achievement of the students, gender disparity in TVET, insufficient teachers, slow progress in ECD participation, unavailability of disintegrated data of disable children and adults are key challenges to promote inclusive and equitable quality education. Very slow progress on the key indicators indicate that it is difficult to achieve the SDG 4 by 2030 if remains the pace same or similar. Thus, the government should develop strategy of meaningful participation and partnership among the stakeholders encourage to work in line of policies and plan of achieving SDGs. More so, the federal government has to take lead of empowering provincial and local governments in regard to development of policies, plans, implementation strategies, monitoring and evaluation, and so on in line with the SDG 4 and SSDP. Institutional arrangements of implementation and monitoring should be replicated in the provincial and local governments.

Recommendations

1. It is crucial to have collaborative work of different layers of governments with special focus on empowering local governments and identifying contextual equity barriers. It is better to formulate effective programs, plans, and strategies in order to overcome from such barriers in newer post-COVID-19 context.
2. National Education Act is yet to be prepared at the federal level. As a result, most of the local governments are waiting for this. So, promulgation of this Act is very urgent to smoothen the education sector from local to federal level.
3. Institutionalized mechanism for CSOs participation in the government forums and LEG must be ensured so that the CSOs voices are not neglected because CSOs contribute to empower marginalized and deprived communities in order to eradicate poverty and unleash children from domestic work burdens and hence accessing school education with sufficient learning materials. It is also essential to build stronger ties with other education actors which will be instrumental to generate positive outcomes.
4. It is important to work on data gathering and analysis so that disaggregated data by age, gender, geography, disability are made available.
5. Government should increase the investment in education especially in the basic and secondary education as per the commitment at the national and international forums; allocate at least 20% budget to education from national budget and 6% from GDP. The current context of COVID demands further 4% budget for education sector to ensure the human well-being in long run.
6. Promotion of inter-governmental and inter-ministerial collaboration and collective effort is to be made for ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education (SDG4) as there exists interconnectedness of it with other SDGs.
7. SDG 4 is to be visualized in a holistic way rather than simply a sole goal as many targets of other SDGs are linked with this target including the promotion of human capabilities and well-being. For that, there needs to be integrated approaches of development activities considering the educational access at the core.
8. Post-COVID-19 educational situation seems to be more vulnerable due to economic decline and pervasive unemployment. Considering the situation, the financing in the education sector should be significantly enhanced for meeting the educational needs of the children particularly from underprivileged groups. In so doing, primarily, focus should to be given to identify the needs through comprehensive assessment.
9. Ensure conducive environment to increase the meaningful participation of young people, particularly from marginalized and vulnerable sections, in the governance and inclusive development process at all levels.

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION NEPAL (NCE- NEPAL)

National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE- Nepal) in UN ECOSOC special consultative status is a civil society movement with mandates to lobby and advocacy for ensuring quality education for all. The history of NCE-Nepal traced back in April 2003, after obtaining membership from the international network, Global Campaign for Education (GCE). As GCE Nepal network decided to broaden its spectrum on advocacy, all coalition members felt a need of it legal identity. As a result, NCE-Nepal was formally established on 2010 as civil society movement to ensure the right to equitable, inclusive quality education for all.

NCE-Nepal is a campaign for undertaking collective efforts and coordinating among individuals/organizations engaged in promoting the human rights to quality education in Nepal. It works as a watchdog to ensure everyone's rights to education and advocates for the same. It focuses on strategic interventions related to policy advocacy, networking, lobbying, and campaigning at the district, regional, national and international levels. Currently, it has 364 member organizations including 48 General members and 316 affiliated members ranging from international and national nongovernment organizations, federation, education media organizations, and teachers' community to grassroots institutions working in the field of education and child rights. Besides, it has district coalition in 19 districts covering 5 development regions of Nepal. NCE-Nepal is also a member of Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) and Global Campaign for Education (GCE). In addition to this it has recently registered as a member of Inter Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). Being a member of GCE and ASPBAE, NCE-Nepal has access to engage to debates on education issues at local, regional and international forums. It is one of the recognized CSO network to contribute in the national policy making process for education in Nepal as acknowledged by the Government.

Vision

Equitable inclusive quality public education for all in Nepal.

Mission

Lead the creative campaigning to hold the government accountable and to ensure right to quality public education in Nepal with civil society organizations, social justice movements progressive academia and marginalized communities.

Goal

To ensure equitable, inclusive, free, compulsory and quality education for children, youth and adult as their fundamental right to education in Nepal.

For More Details:



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