

# Assessment of Implementation of Policies for Ensuring the Right to Education



**NCE  
NEPAL**

**National Campaign For Education Nepal (NCE Nepal)**

# Assessment of Implementation of Policies for Ensuring the Right to Education

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## PREFACE

National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE Nepal) is a national level network working towards ensuring the right to education and lifelong learning of children and adults in Nepal through advocacy, lobby and campaign activities. Established in 2003 as a Nepal Chapter of Global Campaign for Education (GCE), NCE Nepal also holds the status of UN ECOSOC. Along with capacity enhancement of civil society organizations, advocacy through research and evidence is one of the priority works of NCE Nepal.

NCE Nepal has conducted various research works to analyze and assess the situation of implementation of policies in Nepal that contribute to ensuring the right to education. These kinds of research works are conducted to generate evidences for better policy implementation through identifying the existing gaps and make the government accountable for it. This research has presented the implementation status of ambitious policies like SDG 4, SSDP, Compulsory and Free Education Act 2018 at the national, province and local level focusing on equity and inclusion.

I highly appreciate the contribution and effort of Dr. Indra Mani Rai for this research work. I also express my gratitude towards the partner organizations Open Society Foundation (OSF), Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) for its support in carrying out the research work. I am also grateful to NCE Nepal's advisors, board members, and all the member organizations for their valuable suggestions and guidance in the research and analysis works initiated by NCE Nepal. I would like to thank the secretariat team of NCE Nepal for the coordination in this research work.

Regards,  
**Dilli Ram Subedi**  
President

## ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ASPBAE	Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CEHRD	Center for Education and Human Resource Development
CLC	Community Learning Centre
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019
CTEVT	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
ECED	Early Childhood Education and Development
EFA	Education for All
ERO	Education Review Office
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FY	Fiscal Year
GoN	Government of Nepal
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GER	Gross Enrollment Rate
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
INEE	Inter Agency Network for Education in Emergencies
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MOCIT	Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MOCIT)
NCE Nepal	National Campaign for Education Nepal
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
I/NGO	International/ Non- Governmental Organization
NPC	National Planning Commission
PPE	Pre Primary Education
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TSC	Teacher Service Commission
TVET	Technical & Vocational Education and Training
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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## Section I: Background

Nepal is dedicated to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 in the continuum of past global campaigns of achieving Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The provisions on right to education in the Constitution of Nepal 2015, main legislative framework, align with these international commitments. The Constitution has ensured free education up to the secondary level and free and compulsory basic education as fundamental right of people. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education 2018 has been developed to safeguard constitutional right to education. It reiterates the right to compulsory and free education of the children from marginalized and deprived communities. The legislation obliges the local, provincial, and federal government as well to adopt every measure to implement the provisions of the act in letter and spirit both. The act details the commitment of the state in ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education by promoting the learning opportunities to all.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 entails the key roles of local governments for the governance and management of school education. Local Government Operation Act 2074 is about ensuring the constitutional rights delegated to the local governments. The act has stipulated 23 educational roles of local governments such as formulating educational policies, rules, and standards of non-formal education, open and alternative continuous learning, and community learning programs. In addition, the local governments work to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate the programs of adult education and learning related program. Besides, this Act has provisioned the rights to local governments to open and manage the community libraries.

School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), a comprehensive sectoral plan of SDG 4, has been developed in order to ensure the equitable access to quality education and lifelong learning of all. The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) is a long-term strategic plan of the Government of Nepal which is being implemented from FY 2016/17 to FY 2020/21. The plan has aimed to increase participation of all children in quality school education by focusing on strategic interventions and new reform initiatives to improve equitable access, quality education, efficiency, governance, management and resilience of the education system. The tacit intent of the plan is to mainstream the students from vulnerable groups in Nepal as well.

Explicitly, the SSDP aims to a) ensure inclusive and equitable education in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes, with a special focus on reducing disparities among and between groups having the lowest levels of access, participation and learning outcomes, b) increase students' learning through enhancing the relevance and quality of the learning environment, the curriculum, teaching and learning materials

(including textbooks), teaching methods, assessment and examinations, c) strengthen and reorient governance and management systems in the education sector to make them robust and accountable to local governments while assuring agreed overall minimum standards in teaching and learning processes and the learning environment, d) accommodate the political and administrative restructuring of the education sector in line with the identified needs and the federal context and to ensure sustainable financing and strong financial management by introducing a cost-sharing modality between central, provincial, and local governments, and d) mainstream comprehensive school safety and disaster risk reduction in the education sector by strengthening school-level disaster management and resilience amongst schools, students and communities and to ensure that schools are protected from conflict.

The SDGs have been integrated in the 15th (five-year plan) periodic plan which is currently in implementation. It has set several strategies and priorities for the next 5 years to ensure that long-term planning which is consistent with the SDGs. Nepal has completed five years of SDG plan implementation with necessary efforts on multiple cross-cutting issues such as financing, teacher management and professional development, infrastructure, equity measures, and so on and so forth. There are remarkable achievements on many of the indicators as of National Framework of Action over the last five years. However, it has been argued that these achievements have not been celebrated by all social groups equally, and disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes remain, leaving certain groups of children behind. Decentralization of power at the local level has been identified as one of the ways to include those excluded groups into the education sector. Further, this educational gain has been challenged by the COVID-19 crisis since 2020 in Nepal leaving behind the huge question of attainment of right to education for all as envisioned by the Constitution of Nepal.

In this context, National Campaign for Education (NCE) Nepal intends to review the status of achievement on SDG 4, School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2015/16, and The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free-2018 with respect to some critical educational issues such as equitable access to quality basic and secondary education, equitable access to quality non-formal and life-long learning, technical and vocational education and training, financing in education, and teacher management and professional development. The report aims to put emphasis on to assess the progress spot light on the major critical areas of education that is to be taken into the immediate consideration. More specifically the study aims:

- To identify the implementation status of SDG4, SSDP and The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education 2018 at the national, province and local level focusing on equity and inclusion.
- To compare the current status of each SSDP indicators with baseline set by the MoEST and identification of the gap on whereby extra attention is to be paid.

## Section II: Methodology

Desk review is the key approach in this study. The recent education policies such as Constitution of Nepal 2015, School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education-2018, Local Government Operation Act 2019, and National Education Policy 2019 were reviewed as analytical framework from the perspective of equity and inclusion of children and adults from marginalized and deprived communities. Moreover, authentic documents (policies and research reports) of National Planning Commission (NPC) such as National Review of Sustainable Development Goals 2020, Fifteenth Plan, Nepal Human Development Report 2020, National Framework of Action, and other reports available online were reviewed to identify the latest progress status on different indicators of SDG 4.

Reports of Education Review Office (ERO), Nepal was used to spot the status of quality in basic and secondary education. In so doing, National Assessment of Student Achievement in Mathematics and Nepali in Grade V, National Assessment of Student Achievement in Mathematics, Science, Nepali and English for Grade X, and National Assessment of Reading and Numeracy for Grade III were reviewed from the perspective of gender and caste/ethnicity in order to identify the status of equitable quality education. The reports of the Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) were also equally important for analyzing the situation of implementation of policies and plans of right to education of the excluded groups. The Education Sector Plan (Draft) 2021 and Nepal School Sector Development Program: Joint Review Meeting Aide Memoire 2020 were the key literature reviewed. In addition, the empirical research reports of National Campaign for Education (NCE) Nepal such as Review of Voluntary National Review 2020 and Spotlight Report on Sustainable Development Goals were the key sources of information. In addition, the voices of citizens in regard to implementation of policies on right to education were used as evidences. In so doing, the documentaries and videos collected from NCE Nepal were used as the sources.

Based on review of the literature, the study focused on spotting the gaps of the achievement on key performance indicators of access, equity, quality education in basic, secondary, and non-formal and lifelong learning. The attempt was made on to analyze the trends on the basis of baseline and target predicted by the SSDP 2015/16-2022/23. Specifically, the results of 2020/21 were compared with the baseline data of 2015/16 and targeted to achieve in 2020/21 and 2022/23. The gaps of achievements were figured out and predicted the achievement of SDG 4 by 2030 highlighting the challenges magnified by the lowered financing in education and COVID -19 pandemic situation in Nepal. The study has come up with specific findings and recommendations of crucial measures to redefine the strategies and interventions in education through the upcoming Education Sector Plan (ESP).

## Section III: Implementation of Policies

This section provides an analysis of implementation of key policy provisions of SDG4, SSDP and The Act Relating to Free and Compulsory-2018 at the national, province and local level focusing on equity and inclusion. In so doing, it deals with the status of free and compulsory education, access, equity, inclusion, quality and non-formal and lifelong learning.

### 3. Equity in Education

Equity is a broader policy concern particularly envisaged by SDG 4 and SSDP. There are several measures provided by the Government of Nepal in order to promote equity in education. The implementation of key policy measures such as Compulsory and Free Education, Scholarships and Incentives, Health and Nutrition, and Safety and Security, and Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education are discussed below.

#### 3.1.1 Free and Compulsory Education

The portrayal of free and compulsory education appears in major policy standards of Nepal. Constitution of Nepal 2015 states that all citizens have right to access on free and compulsory education up to the basic level and free education up to secondary level. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2018 enacted for ensuring the constitutional spirit makes local governments to manage free text-books, mid-day meal, tuition fees, stationary in basic education. The budget of 2020/21 highlighted to ensure free and compulsory basic education for reaching a 100 percent enrollment rate at the basic level.

In so doing, the current budget of 2021/22 has allocated Rs. 2.76 billion (out of 180.04 billion) or 0.015% of the total budget of MoEST for providing colored text-books to the children of basic level. The amount for each student reaches to Rs. 673 as there are about 4.1 million students (as of Flash I Report 2018/19) in basic level. Further, the budget is committed to distribute the text-books free of cost to the children studying up to class twelve which benefits about 5277152 students (as reported in the Flash I Report 2018/19) of public schools. The commitment of government on timely distribution of free text-books was satisfactory in the last year as the study<sup>1</sup> conducted by National Campaign of Education (NCE) Nepal in 2020 found the free text-books were available to most of the students in four representative districts of Nepal even in the first wave of COVID-19 pandemic situation. Even though, there were significant number of students in remote areas who did not get complete books on time (National Campaign for Education [NCE], 2020).

In addition, the budget of 2021/22 has allocated Rs. 8.73 billion (which is 0.048% of

1 <https://ncenepal.org.np/2021/01/1768/>

total education budget of Rs. 180.04 billion) amount for mid-day meal to be provided to the children up to grade 5 of public schools of Nepal. The Flash I Report 2018/19 shows that there are 2734695 students in lower basic level (Grades 1-5). If so, Rs. 3192 is spent for each student if the mid-day meal is provided to the lower basic level students. Accordingly, each student is fed of the meal of Rs. 13 each day if there are 250 school days. This shows that the amount allocated for the mid-day meal is very minimum. However, the local governments are made responsible for providing mid-day meal to the children. The program has reached to about 2.7 million school children in basic education. A study conducted in 4000 children of 30 schools of Sindhupalchok and Bardiya districts shows that home-grown school feeding strengthened operations of the school meals program and led to a significantly higher meal provision and quality of school meals<sup>2</sup>.

But, in regard to free tuition fees, the public schools mostly the schools running secondary level, in one or other ways, are collecting fees from the parents. In many cases, schools have managed the local teachers in order to fulfill the inadequacy of subject-wise teachers collecting the fees from parents. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2018 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 policy<sup>3</sup> of governments.<sup>4</sup> Providing free and compulsory education is contradictory with the policy of promoting profit-oriented private schools.

### 3.1.2 Scholarships and Incentives

In the fiscal year 2020/21, Rs. 2.70 billion (of Rs. 171.71 billion) which is 1.57 percent of the total education budget was allocated for providing scholarships to 2.6 million people including children of deprived and disabled citizens, children of martyrs and hardworking students. In so doing, each recipient gets Rs. 1038 if divided equally which is very small amount that is unlikely to contribute in their education much. Similarly, the budget of 2021/22, has reiterated to provide scholarships for the children of martyrs and people who died due to COVID-19 or HIV. The purpose of providing scholarships is to protect the right to education of economically and socially marginalized and endangered communities including *Chepang, Raute, Badi, Majhi, Musahar*, persons with disabilities, *Dalits, Muslims*, families of martyrs, conflict victims, families of COVID-19 victims, and HIV / AIDS infected children. However, there remains the problems of leakage, misutilization 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. In many

2 <https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-019-8143-9>

3 Institutional School's Fee Fixation Guidelines 2016

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

cases, the amount of scholarships are misused by the parents and meager amount of scholarships is less likely to support the students in learning<sup>5</sup>. There is dissatisfaction of parents and students on the amount provided for them as scholarships.

### 3.1.3 Health and Nutrition

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 provides free basic health services, emergency health services, and proper sanitation in schools that has been translated in School Sector Development Plan (2016-2023). The Act Relating to Free and Compulsory Education 2018 has a provision for managing free health treatment in schools. However, health and nutrition has become one of the key barriers for promoting equity in education in Nepal. Education Sector Plan 2021-2030 claims that there are 85.9% schools that have first aid facilities. The budget of fiscal year 2021/22 has adopted a policy of providing one school, one health worker and checking the health of all students. The budget has allocated Rs. 4.79 billion to distribute free textbooks to students up to class 12 and free sanitary pads to female students. According to Flash I Report of 2018/19, there are 5277152 students in total enrolled in the basic and secondary education. Thus, the approximate expenditure for each student on text book and sanitary pads (in combination) accounts about Rs. 908 which seems inadequate.

The province governments are also contributing to promote health of students in schools. For example, the budget of fiscal year 2020/21 of Bagmati Province allocated 19 crores 80 lakhs for managing one nurse in each of schools of each local level<sup>6</sup>. These provisions are likely to materialize the constitutional spirits of providing health facilities to all citizens. But, NCE-Nepal (2019) conducted a research in Nepal found that there were majority of girls responded that there were no regular health check-up facilities in schools and no pads in toilets. Many girls were deprived of particular facilities such as first aid, clean drinking water, and basic sanitation facilities.

Nepal has made significant progress in terms of child mortality and improving the maternal health. However, the country still has many health challenges. Further, programs to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutritional plans have been developed. But 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.

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5 <http://www.doe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/0abf8e73c50b2cca90dc2b43e2eeb848.pdf>

6 Budget speech 2020/21, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning, Bagmati Province

### 3.1.4 Safety and Security

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 safeguards the children from different forms of violence such as physical, social, sexual, and mental abuses. The provisions are translated in other national policies<sup>7</sup>. However, a study conducted (in two districts-Rupandehi and Kapilvastu) by NCE-Nepal in 2019 shows that most of the adolescent girls from marginalized and deprived communities were facing multiple forms of violence such as physical punishments, bullying, labelling, touching in sensitive organs, and so on from the teachers, friends in schools, and relatives in the community<sup>8</sup>. Further, the study found that half of the girls were facing gender-based discrimination in public and private schools and about 30% of girls in public schools were facing caste-based discrimination. Thus, the abuses or violence against girls are rampant in public and private schools. It is important to note that many cases of sexual abuses might be unreported or under-reported due to the fear of repercussions.

### 3.1.5 Child Marriage and Child Labor

The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education 2018 prohibits the child marriage as the Article 39 (5) of the Constitution of Nepal 2015 stipulates 'no child shall be subjected to child marriage' (p. 23). Despite several efforts made on barring child marriage, it has still become one of key problems affecting millions of people in Nepal. It is customary practice in some indigenous communities, *Dalits* and other economically weaker rural people who are illiterate. A Youth Led Action Research on child marriage and alcohol use conducted by NCE-Nepal in *Danuwar* community in Dukuchhap, Lalitpur found that 88 (57.5%) respondents expressed that they got marriage at the age between 16 to 20 either due to deep rooted culture and tradition or poor economic conditions and illiteracy of parents. The study reveals 45.3% males and 54.7% females left the school soon after their marriage.

There are several national<sup>9</sup> and international legal frameworks<sup>10</sup> mostly focusing on the rights of child laborers working in the formal premises like factories or industries, mines, construction works, restaurants or hotels, and so on. The child workers are in the position of denial of enjoying even the fundamental rights envisaged by these legislations<sup>11</sup>. However, mostly the child laborers are vulnerable to unequal, unfair and often abusive treatment. They are facing maltreatment, abuses, exploitation, and

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7 National Framework of Child-friendly School (2010), School Sector Development Plan (2016-2023), Policy on Learning Environment without Fear (2010), School as Zone of Peace Directive (2011), Education Act 1971, Education Regulation 2003, and Children Act 1992.

8 A study conducted by NCE-Nepal in 2018 on 185 marginalized girls of Rupandehi and Kapilvastu districts

9 The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007, Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2000, Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Rules, 2006, Labor Act, 1992, Children's Act, 1992, Labor Rules, 1993, Local Self-Governance Act, 1999, National Policy on Children, 2012, Violation (Prevention) Act, 2007, and so on

10 United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (CRC), 1990, International Labor Organization (ILO) Worst Form of Child Labor Convention (No. 182), 1999, ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138), 1973, SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia, 2002.

11 Children-Women In Social Service and Human Rights (2011). Gharelu shrum: Sammanit shrum. Kathmandu: Author.

violence particularly those who are live-in workers<sup>12</sup>. They are often sent by their families to better-off households and to access better education as forced labor and abuse. Due to their young age, isolation and separation from their family, they are inherently easier to coerce and control and have less ability than an adult to object to a given task or situation. They are facing the worst forms of child labor. They are unpaid or underpaid and unprotected.

### **3.1.6 Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education**

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 safeguards the linguistic right of the children from minority groups allowing them to get a basic education through their mother tongue.<sup>13</sup> The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education 2018 and School Sector Development Plan (2017-23) pave the way to use mother tongue in education as medium of instruction and subject of instruction. Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) has already developed the curricula of 24 local languages and the minority languages (Bantawa, Tamang, Doteli, Bajika, Newar, Tharu, Awadhi, and so on) are used as medium of instruction in about 3000 public schools. UNICEF (2018) has reported that over 2 million children are estimated to speak so little Nepali and they are unable to learn effectively<sup>14</sup>. The government seems insensitive in managing adequate trained teachers, learning materials, and making aware to the stakeholders in the significance of multilingual education. Enforcement of English as medium of instruction in private schools as well as in public schools in recent years has violated the linguistic right of Nepali speaking as well as other minority/indigenous language speaking children.

## **3.2 Access and Quality in Education**

The intent of The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2018 is to make availability and accessibility of education for all. The access of children in formal education has been claimed to have increased significantly (the discussion is made in the next section) in basic education in the latest years. The gender parity has been claimed to have already achieved. But, again, there is growing concern about the 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 X (NCE, 2020). This shows that the survival of the students in basic and secondary level are challenging as millions of them enrolled in grade one dropout without completing the cycle of particular level. On the other hand, there are still a significant number of school aged children who are unenrolled in schools. Campaigns of Education for All (EFA) with its different plans including the government's each year's school enrollment campaign could be successful to the extent of enrolling significant number of children in school but not

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12 The World Lutheran Federation Nepal (2013). Shadowed domestic workers: Problems, policies, and practices in Lalitpur Sub-Metropolitan city. Kathmandu: Author.

13 Constitution of Nepal 2072 ibid..

14 UNICEF, 2018 UNICEF Nepal Education Programs (2018-2022). Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/nepal/media/3331/file/UNICEF%20Nepal%20education%20programme%20.pdf>

all the children. The children are from those groups (*Dalits* and highly marginalized Janajatis) who have been facing extreme poverty in Nepal. The scenario questions the access in participation of educational activities.

The constitutional provision paves the way to focus on quality education through local governments. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education 2018, and The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) aligned with the SDG (Sustainable Development Goal 4) ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all the students. However, providing quality education to all is a central challenge in Nepal. Education Review Office (2020) shows unwelcoming achievements of competencies of the students of basic and secondary level in Mathematics, Nepali, Science and English (detail analysis is presented in the next section). Further, the Office (2020) reveals that the level of competencies is decreasing year by year. The competencies of the children from marginalized and deprived communities are lower than the children from other privilege groups.

### 3.3 Inclusive Education

The Constitution of Nepal (2015) has given special attention to the differently able children and their educational access. Education Act 1971 (Ninth Amendment) has made arrangements that can be made in curriculum, textbook and teaching learning and assessment system for children with visually impaired, low vision, full blind, dull hearing, autism, intellectual disability, and hearing-impaired children<sup>15</sup>. The budget of 2021/22 has attempted to make arrangements for visually impaired children to get an education with the help of Braille textbooks and modern technology. The budget has envisaged to establish one special school in each state with residential facilities for the students with intellectual disabilities. Nepal has a strong legal and policy framework to support inclusive education and made significant steps to institute these policy commitments. Even though the effective implementation of policies and laws to date has been challenging due to inadequate data and evidence to support impactful inclusive education programming; limited institutional and technical capacity; and entrenched discriminatory practices such as gender, disability, and caste/ethnicity.<sup>16</sup>

In Nepal, disability is viewed as reparation for sins committed by the individual in previous lives, and people with disabilities are often marginalized by family and society. This is especially the case for women with disabilities, who face multiple barriers to education and other services. Sadly, the mothers of people with disabilities are blamed as bringers of bad luck (UNDP, 2004). According to Panthi (2004), more than 70% of people with disabilities in Nepal live with this stigma and find it extremely difficult to maintain their dignity. However, the data are not consistent and vary according to source (UNDP, 2004).

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15 Education Act, *ibid*....

16 USAID, 2017, Reading for All: Disability Inclusive Education for Nepali Children. Available at: [https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/RFA\\_Disability\\_Inclusive\\_Education\\_for\\_Nepali\\_Citizen\\_Oct.pdf](https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/RFA_Disability_Inclusive_Education_for_Nepali_Citizen_Oct.pdf)

The local actors of education are less sensitive towards inclusive education particularly on addressing the needs and interest of differently able children (NCE, 2020). One of the head teachers of Kusukkhola Secondary School of Palpa said that the schools and municipalities had no data of differently able children. He further said that he was less aware of the number and types of disabilities that the children had in the school premises. He further thought that it was difficult for them to provide education to disabled due to lack of resources for managing teachers and learning resources such as Braille.

The head teacher noted that the representatives of local governments were not so much active in promoting learning of students in COVID-19 pandemic situation. He stressed that the school took initiatives on engaging students in learning at homes through door-to-door visits of the teachers. This was because the children from marginalized and deprived communities had no access to radio, television, and internet and computer facilities. At this situation, the teachers of the schools of Mathagadi rural and Nisdi rural municipalities of Palpa became more attentive to establishing community learning centers and providing learning materials in the learning centers. The schools and teachers attempted to include the students who were left in online classes through alternative community learning centers (Tole Education). They provided learning materials and project works or any other assignments to the students and provided feedback time and again through door-to-door campaigns.

### **3.4 Life-long Learning and Literacy**

For long, focus has been given to make literate Nepal through adult and women literacy programs in order to contribute to the quality of lives of people. However, 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. The full and effective implementation of policies are impeded by shortage of financial, material and human resources. For instance, around 1% of total budget of education goes to non-formal and lifelong learning<sup>17</sup>. The human resources of literacy compromise the quality as most are secondary school graduates who are therefore technically ill-equipped for such a huge task.

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17 <https://uil.unesco.org/case-study/effective-practices-database-litbase-0/national-literacy-campaign-nepal>

## Section IV: Status on Achievement of Equitable Access to Quality Education

This section presents the analysis of gaps between the targets made by SSDP on SDG indicators and actual achievement made. In so doing, the focus is given to identify the lapses equitable access on quality basic, secondary, non-formal and TVET education.

### 4. Access and Quality in Basic Education

School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2015-2023 gives emphasis on providing equitable access on quality basic education for all children of age group 5 to 12 years. This entails to bring and retain all children from marginalized and deprived communities. It aims to prepare the pre-school aged children through ECED/PPE for basic education. The targets and achievements on performance indicators are presented below.

#### 4.1.1 Access in Basic Education

The following table presents the progress achieved on key performance indicators identified by SSDP (2016). Gross Enrollment Rate (GER), Net Enrollment Rate (NER), Gender Parity Index (GPI), Survival Rate, Intake Rate, and Cycle Completion Rate were taken as the key indicators. The status/numeric figures for baseline of 2015/16, target in 2020/21 and target in 2022/23 were taken from SSDP (2016). The status of progress/achievement figures of 2020/21 were taken from the Education Sector Plan 2020/21 (draft) of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST).

**Table 1: Targets and achievements on access in basic education by 2020/21.**

Indicators	Baseline (2015/16) (SSDP, 2016)	Target in 2020/21 (SSDP, 2016)	Achievement in 2020/21 (ESP, 2021)	Target in 2022/23 (SSDP, 2016)
GER in ECED/PPE	81.0	89.5	86.2	94.0
% of ECED/PPE teachers with required qualification	93.7	97.0	95.7	100.0
% of grade 1 new entrants with ECED/PPE experience	62.4	73.0	68.6	85.0
Gross intake rate in grade 1	136.7	127.0	121.9	115.0
Net intake rate in grade 1	93.9	96.0	96.9	100.0
GER in Grades 1- 5	135.4	125.5	119.2	115.0
NER in Grades 1-5	96.6	98.5	97.1	100.0
GER in Grades 1- 8	120.1	115.0	110.4	112.0
NER in Grades 1-8	89.4	97.0	93.4	100.0
GPI in NER in Grades 1-8	1.0	1.0	1.01	1.0
Survival rate to grade 8	76.6	92.0	79.3	97.0
Completion rate of basic level	69.6	85.0	72.7	90.0
% of out of school children at basic level (age 5-12)	10.6	5.0	6.6	0.0

Source: SSDP (2016) and ESP (2021)

The table shows that the most of the performance indicators were unmet as targeted in to achieve in 2020/21. The enrollment rate, number of teachers/facilitators with required qualification and enrollment of children with ECED/PPE experience could not be achieved as targeted for 2020/21. Recent budget of 2021/22 has increased the salary of ECED/PPE teachers and school staff to Rs 15,000 (unless otherwise it was just Rs. 6000 to Rs. 8000 from the GoN, and the rest is expected from local government) which perhaps contributes to encourage those teachers for meaningful engagement their professional activities. However, the salary is still almost half less than the salary of primary teachers. This shows that the facilitating work in ECED/PPE could not be made decent so that the teachers have little attraction on it.

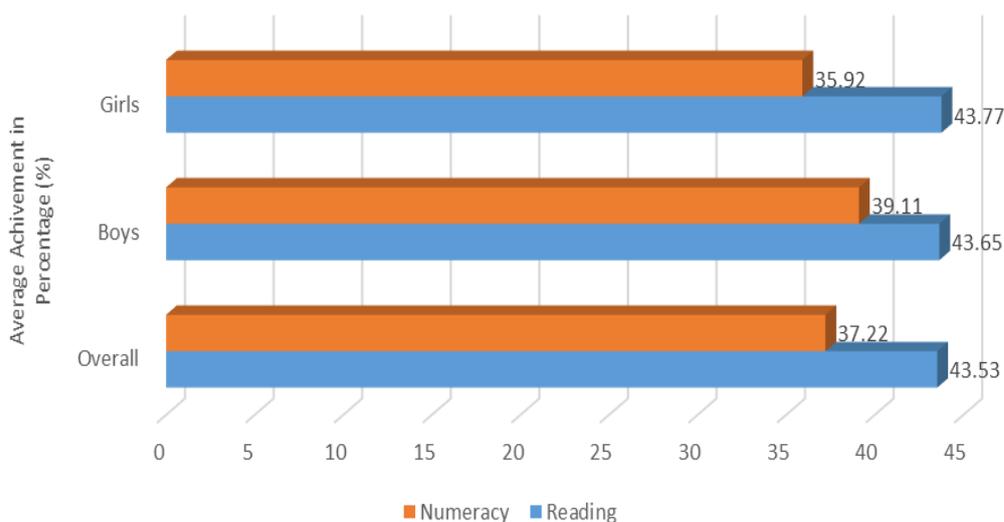
From the above table, it is noticeable that still 2.9% of school age children of grades 1-5 and 6.6% basic level children from grades 1-8 are out of school. However, the gender parity seems to be achieved in basic level. Both boys and girls have access in basic education. It is evident that there are alarming gaps of achieving survival and completion rates in basic level. These are far below from the targeted achievement in 2020/21 and in 2022/23. The “children being out of school or out-of-learning is often the result of individual and family circumstances that structures and systems are unable to respond to or address timely and appropriately” (UNESCO, 2020, p. 4). It has been predicted that the drop outs of the children are increased due to accelerated low economic status of those who were under poverty as there is almost stagnant state of economic activities in COVID-19 pandemic situation for more than a year.

#### **4.1.2 Quality in Basic Education**

Quality in basic education is another serious concern as the recent studies of Education Review Office has shown decreasing achievements of the students. The consistently weak performance of students in the recent past years indicate a low return to the investment, Rs. 18000 per student in basic level (MoEST, 2021), made by the government in education. The study conducted by Education Review Office (2021) shows that the reading and numerical competency of grade 3 students is below average level. The following table presents the competencies in overall and by gender.

Figure 1: Achievement in reading and numeracy in overall and by gender of grade 3 students.

### Achievement in reading and numeracy in overall and by gender of grade 3 students

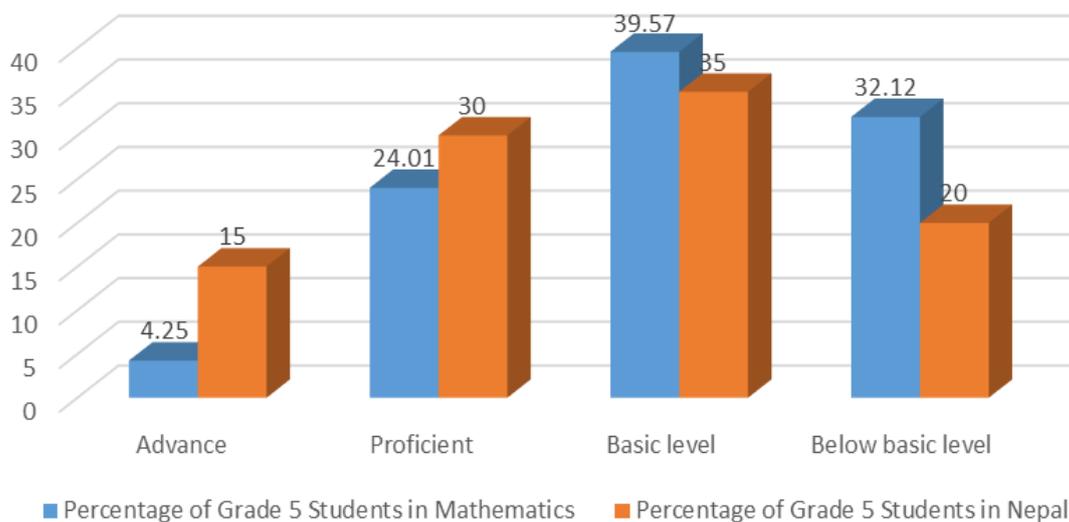


Source: Education Review Office (2021)

Figure 1 shows the overall reading and numeracy scores in the average percentage. On average, each student was able to solve about 43.5% of the reading-related problems whereas the achievement in numeracy is about six percent point less than that of reading achievement i.e. 37.22%. The achievement of the students disaggregated by sex clarifies that it is not statistically significant in the difference in achieving in reading for boys and girls. However, in numeracy, the boys are better than the girls with average scores of 39.11% and 35.92% respectively.

Figure 2: Competencies of Grade 5 Students in Mathematics and Nepali

### Competency of Grade 5 Students in Maths and Nepali

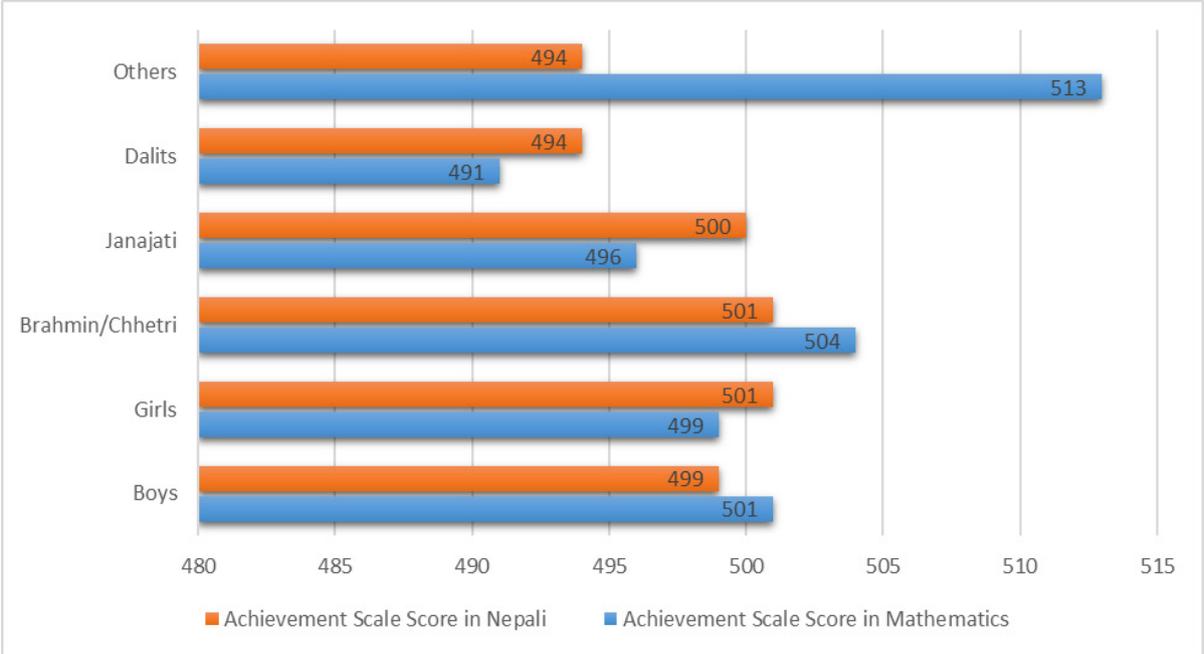


Source: Education Review Office (2021)

The figure 2 above shows that 32% of the grade 5 students in mathematics fall in below basic level, about 40% in basic level, 24% in proficient level and 4.25% in advance level. This indicates that majority of students lower level of competencies in mathematics. Noticeably, about one third (32%) students cannot even write numbers and do mathematical basic operation and about 40% students cannot perform mathematical calculations independently. Thus, majority of the students have no grade level minimum ability as expected by curriculum. Only one fourth (24%) are in proficient level who have adequate knowledge and skills in their grade level and very few students (4%) have advance level of mathematical ability who could logically solve mathematical problems and find relationship between two quantities and think critically. From total number of students, 28.26% of them have adequate mathematical knowledge and skills and more than 70% of the students are below the level of competencies expected by the curriculum.

In Nepali, 20% of the students are in below basic level and hence can only pick some direct information from very short text but cannot understand the meaning of the text well. 35% are in basic level who have minimum level (below average) of understanding required to grasp the knowledge and skills taught in the classroom. 30% in proficiency level and 15% in advance level have achieved the competencies as expected by the curriculum. Thus, majority of the students are incompetent in Nepali language subject. Millions complete primary education without acquiring basic competencies for further learning. Children from poor households are far more likely than those from wealthier homes to leave school without acquiring basic skills.

Figure 3: Achievement scores in Mathematics and Nepali by gender and caste/ethnicity



Source: Education Review Office (2021)

Figure 3 demonstrates that boys' achievement score (501) in mathematics was higher than the mean score of girls (499) by 2. The achievement of boys was 1 score more and the achievement of girls was 1 score lower than the national mean (500). Although the difference of scores between boys and girls was found statistically significant. In addition, the achievement of the students in mathematics from *Brahman/Chhetri* caste was higher (504 score) than the national mean (500 score). However, the students from *Dalit* and *Janajati* achieved lower than the national mean. Figure 3 depicts that girls' mean achievement in Nepali (501) was slightly higher than the mean score of boys (499). The scores were not so much higher or lower than national average (500). Further, the mean score achieved by *Brahmin/Chhetri* students was found to be slightly higher than the score achieved by the students belonging to other ethnic groups. There was a slight difference in mean score of *Brahmin/Chhetri* students (501) and *Janajati* students (500). The mean achievement score of *Dalit* students was 494 only. The students from *Janajati* performed as equal to national mean and it was just 1 score below the *Brahman/Chhetri* students. In addition, in overall, Education Review Office (2021) has noted that the performance of the students in basic level is consistently decreasing. The Office further shows widespread disparities in learning outcomes in basic education by province, school type and socioeconomic status of parents

This shows the waste of heavy investment of the Government of Nepal and parents in education. Many parents spend considerable amounts on the education of their children even when they go to government schools. Out of total expenses at the pre-primary and basic level, households bear 59.4 and 43.6 percent, respectively (Education Review Office [ERO], 2020). When all public and private out-of-pocket spending on education is taken into account, spending in Nepal is much higher. Factors such as a high dropout ratio and repetition rate, and low pass rate and retention rate have contributed greatly to the rising costs of public education, which are now comparable to those of private schools.

## **4.2 Access and Quality in Secondary Education**

The secondary education (Grades 9-12) in Nepal envisages to make students able to engage in their living activities. On the one hand, this level of education aims to provide quality life-affirming skills to the students through technical and vocational education so that the human resources so produced generate decent earnings. On the other hand, it provides space for them to prepare for higher education with eminence learning trails. For this, the SSDP aims to put more emphasis on ensuring access to and the quality and relevance of secondary education. In addition, it envisages to reduce any forms of disparities of gender, caste and ethnicity, minorities, disables and others who are under marginalized and deprived positions. It also prioritizes to manage

subject specific qualified and trained teachers who can promote meaningful learning and quality education. For that, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) committed to provide adequate investment in creating opportunities for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

#### 4.2.1 Access in Secondary Education

The SSDP targeted to reach the results in different years with the base line achievement of 2015/16 on the defined key indicators. The following table demonstrates the targets marked in 2020/21 and in 2022/23 and the the factual achievement on the indicators in 2020/21. In so doing, it has been attempted to locate the achievements on enrollment rate, survival and gender parity index in secondary level (Grades 9-12).

**Table 2: Access in secondary education**

Indicators	Baseline (2015/16) (SSDP, 2016)	Target in 2020/21 (SSDP, 2016)	Achievement in 2020/21 (ESP, 2021)	Target in 2022/23 (SSDP, 2016)
GER in Gradse 9-12	56.7	85.0 (28.3)	71.4 (14.7)	90.0
NER in Grades 9-12	37.7	53.0 (15.3)	47.6 (9.9)	60.0
Survival Rate to Grade 10	37.9	65.0 (27.1)	60.3 (22.4)	75.0
Survival Rate to Grade 12	11.5	25.0 (13.5)	24.0 (12.5)	31.0
GPI in NER in Grades 9-12	0.99	01.0 (0.01)	1.02 (0.03)	01.0

*Source: SSDP (2016) and ESP (2021)*

Table 2 demonstrates that the key performance indicators on access in secondary education are unreached as targeted in 2020/21. GER in grades 9-12 seems to have increased to 71.4 by 14.7 from the baseline achievement of 2015/16 (56.7) but it is far below the target (85.0). The NER is also not satisfactory as the actual achievement (47.6) is approximately less than by 5. The attainments on survival rate to grade 10 and 12 are nearer to the targets but these indicators are also unmet exactly. However, the gender parity index has already been achieved from the baseline. It is distressing that majority of students (52.4%) with age of secondary education are out of schools and there is huge gap of retention of those from grade 10 (60.3 to 24) to 12. In other words, about 40% of students do not reach to grade 10 and about 76% students do not complete grade 12.

## 4.2.2 Quality in Secondary Education

Education Review Office (2019) conducted a comprehensive study on assessing the learning outcomes of students of grade 10 in Mathematics, Science, Nepali, and English subjects. This national assessment is assumed as the means of measuring quality secondary education. The findings shows that the majority of the students have mastered less than 50% of the curriculum in all the subjects. Most of the students could not solve the higher order thinking items.

**Table 3: Distribution of number of students (%) in different levels of competencies by subjects of grade 10.**

Level of competency	Mathematics			Science			Nepali			English		
	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T	B	G	T
Advance	6	3	5	4	2	2	6	6	5	12	10	9
Proficient 3	12	8	10	7	5	5	16	16	13	11	9	9
Proficient 2	19	14	16	13	10	11	18	18	21	14	11	12
Proficient 1	25	22	23	19	16	19	19	20	24	16	15	19
Basic level	24	30	27	27	26	26	15	15	17	22	23	21
Below basic	13	23	19	31	42	37	24	25	20	26	33	30

Source: Education Review Office (2021)

The table 3 reveals that majority of girls (23%+30%=53%) are below basic and basic level of competency whereas there are (13%+24%) 37% of the boys who are below basic and basic level. Thus, the girls are more disadvantaged in term of mathematical abilities. They could not learn any one of the content matter adequately in mathematics. About similar number of girls (22%) and boys (25%) are at the proficient 1 and hence they are considered to have achieved minimum expected level for grade 10 mathematics. Very few boys and girls are at the higher levels of proficiency. Similar pattern of competency can be observed in total students.

In comparison to mathematics, the students including boys and girls are less competent in science as higher number of students have achieved below basic and basic level of abilities. Further, the above table shows that higher number (42%) of girls than boys (31%) remained at the bottom level (lowest basic level) and in contrast, higher number of boys (13 + 7 + 4 = 24%) reached adequate level of proficiency than girls (10+5+2 = 17%) reaching at these levels. There are 16% of girls and 19% of boys who are at the proficient 1 level with minimum competency of grade 10 science.

In Nepali, the competencies of the students are better than other subjects. Majority (proficient 1-20%, proficient 2 - 18%, proficient 3-16% and advance – 6%) of girls have acquired a level of grade 10 Nepali. But, each of total 40% girls and boys reached at upper adequate level (proficient 2, proficient 3 and advance). However, still, significant number of girls (basic level-15% and below basic level-25%) are incompetent in Nepali. Exactly similar pattern can be observed in the abilities of boys. And, combining the Below basic and Basic levels of proficiency, (basic-17% and below basic -20%) 37 percent students have poor level competence in Nepali while the others have some acceptable level of proficiency. A small number of students (5%) have the highest level of proficiency and these students can even cross the grade level in Nepali.

The table 3 demonstrates that majority of the students (21% + 30% = 51%) have poor level competence in English; while the others have some acceptable level of proficiency. A small number of students (9%) have the highest level of proficiency. It is noticeable that majority of girls (23% + 33% = 56%) are incompetent in English whereas (22%+26%) 48% boys are in this group. This proves that very large number of students are not able to learn in grade 10 English. However, 10% girls and 12% boys are able to achieve advance level and significant number of girls (proficient 3 – 9% and proficient 2- 11%) and boys (proficient 3 – 11% and proficient 2- 14%) achieved grade 10 level skills in English.

In overall, majority of students are at below grade level and alarming gap exists between intended curriculum and achieved curriculum. The achievement of a large number of students in Mathematics, Science, Nepali and English at basic and below basic levels indicate their poor competency level. Only a small number of students have the higher level of proficiency. This evidence indicates an alarming gap between intended and achieved curriculum. There is a visible gap in the learning achievement between boys and girls. The big gaps are demonstrable in Mathematics, Science, and English but there is no gap in Nepali. The competencies in Nepali and English by Caste/Ethnicity are presented below.

**Table 4: Distribution of number of students (%) in different levels competency in Nepali and English by Caste/Ethnicity of grade 10.**

Level of competency	Nepali				English			
	Brahman/Chhetri	Janajati	Dalit	Other	Brahman/Chhetri	Janajati	Dalit	Other
Advance	8	5	5	4	13	10	5	10
Proficient 3	18	16	15	13	11	9	6	9

Proficient 2	19	18	16	17	13	12	11	9
Proficient 1	20	21	20	18	16	16	15	14
Basic level	14	16	17	17	21	23	28	23
Below basic	21	25	27	31	25	31	36	33

Source: Education Review Office (2021)

Above table shows that Brahman/Chhetri lie lowest (21%) in below basic level in Grade 10 Nepali where Dalit (25%), Janajati (27%), and other category (31%) and in the same way, at the advance level, Brahman/Chhetri are at the highest proportion whereas others are less than Brahman/Chhetri. Similar patterns are found in competency of Mathematics. Noticeably, majorities of Janajati students (23%+31%=54%) and Dalit students (28%+36%=64%) were at basic and below basic levels of competencies in mathematics. This indicates the poor performance of those students in comparison to high caste groups (Brahman/Chhetri). Thus, ethnicity has influence in the performance of the students in Grade 10 Nepali and English. The scenario has questioned the equity in learning performances of the students from marginalized and deprived communities as envisaged by the SSDP 2016 to 2022/23.

There are several causes of low performance of the students such as low economic status of parents, abuses against students, lack of feedback and comments of students on students' task, lack of teaching learning materials, and so on. In addition, low teaching/learning quality, a lack of timely distribution of textbooks, poor minimum enabling conditions in public schools, and weak evaluation and accountability are major problems in enhancing education quality (National Planning Commission [NPC], 2020). On the one hand, the low performance of the students demonstrates the low return of the investment for each student (Rs.18000 per year) from the government and other sources. On the other hand, the right to equal access on quality education of all students irrespective of the caste/ethnicity and gender as envisaged by The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education 2018, SDG 4, and SSDP seems to have become rhetorical in the context of Nepal.

Though there are substantial variability in investments and results in education, a large chunk of public spending is not leading to quality learning outcomes. On the other hand, the budget of federal government has been skewed continuously even in latest COVID years accounting 11.64 percent in fiscal year 2020/21 and 10.92 percent in the year 2021/22 of the total budget in addition with a significant proportion of the provincial and local government budget.

### **4.3 Access and Quality of Non-Formal Education and Lifelong Learning**

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has implicit notion of adult learning as it stipulates (Clause 51) to develop competent and competitive human resources providing employable, behavioral, and value-based education. The 15th plan, SDG framework and education policy 2076 all have reiterated the education for adults. The term lifelong learning appears in association with literacy: 'literacy enables adults to engage in lifelong learning and helps to develop capabilities to sustain their livelihoods and participate fully in society'. The non-formal education policy 2007 that talks about implementing 'programs related to lifelong and continuous education, skill development and income generation' is under implementation. Further, Education Policy 2076 is a replacement of non-formal education policy. However, adult education is conceived in a narrow term, basically literacy: 'the ability to read and write with understanding and to perform simple arithmetic calculations'. The lifelong learning is understood and linked with income generation as well as with occupational and vocational skills. Thus, it seems that there is no explicit policy that explains the nuanced understanding of lifelong learning rather it is conceived vaguely as a strategy of 'improving literacy' and then livelihoods of people. Although we have very nominal number of community learning centers and libraries, these are still in operation in the country.

#### **Access in Non-formal and Lifelong Learning**

The national framework of action for SDG4 attempted to promote the learning needs of all women, young people and adults that were emphasized to meet through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs. Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) has launched Literate Nepal campaign from the fiscal year 2065/66 in order to eradicate illiteracy in Nepal mostly catering adult literacy and adult education to adults including women and out-of-school children. The objective with regard to literacy is to enhance functional literacy and cultivate reading and learning habits among youths and adults. Current literacy initiatives comprise programs for basic, post-literacy and income generating activities, with a focus on women. Community Learning Centers (CLCs) help to deliver not only literacy programs rather technical and vocational trainings.

'National Education Policy 2076' gives emphasis on to make 'Literate Nepal' through expanding the programs of lifelong learning in the country. The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education 2018 ensures that all Nepali citizens have right to become literate or every illiterate citizen shall have the right to become literate. Local Government Operation Act 2074 is about the constitutional rights delegated to the local governments. In regard to adult literacy and lifelong learning, the local governments are allowed to formulate policies, rules, and standards of non-formal education, open and

alternative continuous learning, and community learning programs. The governments have right to plan, implement, monitor, and evaluate the programs. Thus, the local governments are not only managing the formal schools rather the governments are responsible for managing adult literacy and technical education and vocational training at local level.

**Table 5: Literacy rates targeted by SSDP and achievement.**

Indicators	Baseline (2015/16) (SSDP, 2016)	Target in 2020/21 (SSDP, 2016)	Achievement in 2020/21 (ESP, 2021)	Target in 2022/23 (SSDP, 2016)
Literacy rate of 6 years+	78.0	87.0	82.0	90.0
Literacy rate of 15-24 years	88.6	95.0	92.0	98.0
Litarcy rate of 15+ years	57.0	75.0	58.0	80.0

*Source: SSDP (2016) and ESP (2021)*

Above table shows the progress made on the targets predicted by the SSDP on literacy of different age groups. The literacy rate of age 6 years and above was targeted to achieve 87% in 2020/21 but it has achieved only 4 percent more than the baseline of 2015/16 standing at 82 percent. Similarly, the achieved literacy rate of age group 15-24 years in 2020/21 is 92 percent which was targeted to achieve 95 percent. Noticeably, the literacy rate of age 15 years and above is just increased by 1 percent (from 57 % baseline in 2015/16 to 58% in 2020/21). It seems very far to achieve the target of 2020/21 and 2022/23.

The facts in the table above shows that the large proportion of children and youths are still not literate in Nepal. 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 quintile (Koirala, 2019). For long, focus has also been given to strengthen public education and make literate Nepal through adult and women literacy programs in order to contribute to the quality of lives of people. However, 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.

The facts demonstrate that it is very difficult to make literate Nepal through lifelong learning programs as envisaged by National Education Policy 2076 and ensuring the right to be literate of all citizens as imagined by The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2075 (2018). The COVID-19 pandemic and the consequences of lockdowns have magnified Nepal’s existing literacy challenges. The crisis disrupted the education of all with tremendous cost to bear in the future. The adult literacy programs were almost under suspension with just the informal learning through media such as television and radio. Thus, it needs to have rapid expedite to achieve the goal of achieving literate Nepal in the days to come.

### **4.3.1 Quality in Non-formal Education and Life Long Learning**

The adult literacy programs as key non-formal education practices in Nepal are less adopting the concept of community literacy that emphasizes on fostering local meaning of local people so that they could solve their day to day problems and needs. The existing literacy programs that has been attempting to promote reading Nepali language and basic numeracy are not embeded with the diverse social practices in local contexts and institutions. The learning strategies are rarely situated in real social setting that they can use their skills in real life situations. However, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2021) notes that 72% of 15 years and above age group who participated in literacy programs have language and mathematical literacy skills. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) in literacy of age group 15 years and above is 0.65 (MoEST, 2020). This indicates the lower participation of women in litearcy programs in comparison to men. Amid lower participation of women, only 63.4 % of women of age group 15 years and above have language and mathematical literacy skills. Thus, quality in non-formal education is less satisfactory. Though literacy and lifelong learning have a large role to play in education reform in Nepal in the light of the large number of low skilled workers, and the poor fit between tertiary education and labor market needs.

### **4.4 Technical and Vocational Education and Training**

After Nepal's commitment on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, it has set the target to ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university. It has been further targeted that a larger percent of women, youth and adults having relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. It has further been targeted for the elimination of gender disparities in education and equal access to all levels of education for vulnerable people, poor and other disadvantaged groups. National Education Policy 2019 envisages to promote inclusive education for all those from disadvantaged and marginalized communities providing life-skills and vocational education through affirmative actions and reservations. It has come up with the vision of making 'educated, civilized, healthy, and capable human resources for promoting social justice and transformation and prosperity of Nepal'. Further, it aims to make all levels of education competitive, technology friendly, employable, and productive that meets the needs of the state.

In addition, National Education Policy 2019 is aware on maintaining equivalence and permeability of qualifications of formal, non-formal, technical and vocational education through developing national qualification framework. It highlights the credit banking and transfer on the basis of testing and evaluation of knowledge, skills, and capability



of students from formal and non-formal education as envisaged by national vocational qualification framework. Local Government Operation Act 2074 delegates power to local governments making responsible for managing technical education and vocational training at local level.

The situation at the practical level aligns less with what the policies envisage to change in the real-world contexts. With the education system largely unable to provide youth with foundational skills needed to succeed in employment, many cannot transition from school to work, and leave the country for foreign employment. Realizing the fact of generating employment in the home country, the government has offered a conditional loan of Rs. 2.5 million to the students who have completed bachelor's level at a five percent interest rate against their certificates as collateral.

The Government of Nepal has initiated to technical and vocational education and training in 384 community secondary schools. There are several programs under the CTEVT about TVET. Both academic courses for developing middle level human resources and short-term training for developing skills are being implemented. In addition, skill development efforts are also being implemented by other ministries than the MOEST. However, an equipped and technical teacher training institute is not in place to provide training to the technical teachers at the local level. The local governments are less capable and competent to undertake their responsibility as entrusted to them by the constitution. The provision of TVET education in schools has given rise to several confusions and ambiguities in both the policy and operational realm as The Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (CTVET) is the only apex government institute responsible for designing, developing and monitoring TVET.

However, the current limited involvement of employers has left TVET courses with limited relevance to labor force needs. The technical and vocational education and training programs are less responding the market demands with necessary skilled human resources. The Government has announced a policy of establishing at least one TVET stream school at each local level. TVET has long been commonly viewed as a path of second choice, however, only 2 percent of secondary and higher secondary students choose it (NPC, 2020).

Given the vast pool of Nepali youths entering the labor market every year without attaining secondary education, and with less than one-quarter of those participating in any kind of TVET, there is huge potential to utilize them in development. The current demand-supply mismatch in skills is a clear manifestation of education policy failure. However, with the changed context of three tiers of government, the federal government needs to further review the Nepal Education Policy 2019 and aim at strengthening

TEVT. Still, the main challenges ahead entail more funding, more up-to-date curricula, skills mapping and information systems to track supply and demand, better teacher training, and more vocational choices relevant to the job market. This is because this area of education receives little more than 2 percent of the national education budget (NPC, 2020). GoN has also announced 30:70 concepts in general and technical vocation education the policy provisions.

### 4.5 Teacher Management and Professional Development

SSDP focuses on improving the relevance, quality and equity in teacher management and professional development in terms of core competencies. There is lack of qualified and trained teachers particularly in teaching core subjects such as English, Math and Science in public schools of Nepal. The unbalanced distribution of teachers between urban and remote rural areas is another challenge of teacher management. But there are more than enough teachers in some of the locations. The number of students in public/community schools are decreasing continuously even in remote villages due to the propensity of parents to enroll their children in private/institutional schools. The government has a policy of merging schools. Thus, there are excess of teachers in many such schools.

On the other hand, there are mainly 11 different types of teachers working in schools such as permanent, temporary, resource person, special school teachers, *Rahat*, PCF quota, substitute, female, community funded, I/NGO funded, and voluntary teachers. The professional development of those different types of schools is another challenge. School Management Committees (SMCs) are authorized for the management of teachers following rule and regulation. But SMCs have many deficiencies including political influence and low competencies of management of schools. The following table demonstrates the achievement on female teacher management in schools as envisaged by SSDP.

**Table 6: Achievement on recruiting female teacher**

Indicators	Baseline (2015/16) (SSDP, 2016)	Target in 2020/21 (SSDP, 2016)	Achievement in 2020/21 (ESP, 2021)	Target in 2022/23 (SSDP, 2016)
% of female teachers in basic level	38.8	45	43.7	50
% of female teachers in secondary level	15.1	20	20.6	22

Source: SSDP (2016) and ESP (2021)

The table above reveals that the number of female teachers were increased substantially at the basic and secondary level. The targets of 2020/21 were almost met on the indicators of female teachers. However, still, there are only fulfilled quotas of teachers in 700 schools out of about 7000 public schools. Teacher Service Commission that has a role of recruiting and promoting teachers is almost non-functional for about a year due to inability of the government to appoint the chair. This has stopped to recruit 15000 teachers in schools of Nepal. The processes of promoting the teachers are also delayed due to the vacant position of the chair. However, provincial governments are contributing to the management of teachers. For example, Bagmati province provided Teacher Professional Development (TPD) training for 2826 teachers and head teachers and grants equal to the amount (18 crore and 79 lakhs) of a year of a secondary level teacher in 262 secondary public schools where there were no permanent teacher quotas<sup>18</sup>.

The educational budget 2020/21 envisaged to mobilize six thousand volunteer teachers of Math, English, and Science allocating Rs. 2.23 million amount sidelining the role of Teachers Service Commission (TSC). In addition, the recent budget of 2021/22 has attempted to make decent jobs of ECED/PPE teachers with increased salary (as mentioned earlier) The increment in remuneration perhaps contributes to encourage those teachers for meaningful engagement in their professional activities. The budget of 2021/22 highlights that the teacher availability is matched on the basis of the teacher-student ratio. The budget has allocated Rs. 2.66 billion to increase quotas to provide teachers in science, mathematics, and English subjects in proportion to the number of students in secondary level schools.

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2021) claims that 98% of the teachers are trained. The teacher competency framework has been developed by National Center for Educational Development and the different models of training have been providing for teachers of basic and secondary education. The training of teachers has been shifted to provincial government under Ministry of Social Development. The training centers under Ministry of Social Development are developing teacher competency frameworks and trainings to the teachers of the province level in line with the framework developed by the MoEST at the national level. However, the teachers are not being able to translate the knowledge and skills in classroom contexts. They are not being able to adopt student friendly teaching learning activities. There is domination of teacher centric lecture methods and the text-books as the only source of learning. Rote memorization of the concepts and testing through rigid and structured examinations are pervasive practices of learning and assessments. However, thousands of students have no access and participation in such education (as discussed above) and thousands drop out without completing particular level.

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### 4.6 Financing in Education

The inadequate budget that has been apportioned for achieving SDG 4 shows the less priority of the government in education. The SSDP aims to strengthen the school education sector through continuous increment in annual budgets of the government of Nepal. The federal budget allocation alone does not represent an increase from the previous fiscal year but excludes resources allocated to education from the resources of provincial and local governments. When included these allocations at provincial and local level, the percentage is estimated to increase. The following figure demonstrates the budget allocation trends from 2015/16, baseline year to 2021/22.

Figure 4: Budget allocation trend of federal government in education

**Education sector budget as % of national budget**



The above figure reveals that the budget in educational sector has fluctuated trend with little raise and fall. The amount is very less than that of international commitment made to allocate 20% of national budget in education sector. Further, the budget is minimum for the combined ministries of Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science and Technology unless otherwise these were separate ministries before in 2016/17. On the other hand, there remains the problems of leakage, mis-utilization or the freezing of the allocated fund. The current gap in the education sector is nearly double of the current educational funds allocated. The following table presents the targets and achievement on budget allocation.

Table 7: Education budget targets and actual allocation

Indicators	Baseline (2015/16) (SSDP, 2016)	Target in 2018/19 (SSDP, 2016)	Target in 2020/21 (SSDP, 2016)	Achievement in 2020/21 (ESP, 2021)	Achievement in 2021/2219	Target in 2022/23 (SSDP, 2016)
Education sector budget as % of national budget (%)	12.04	15	17	11.64	10.92	20

Source: SSDP (2016) and ESP (2021)

The above table shows that the SSDP envisaged to have gradual increment of education sector budget 12.04% in 2015/16, 15% in 3-year target (to 2018/19), 17% in 5-year target (to 2020/21), and 20% in 7-year target (to 2022/23). However, only 11.64% in 2020/21 and 10.92% in 2021/22 of total national budgets were allocated in education sector which were far below the targets of SSDP. This shows that the SSDP remained underfunded and below the national and international targets. The agenda to meet Nepal's constitutional commitments and SDG 4, to increase access to quality education seems difficult in such budget constraints. The situation demands prompt strengthening of the new system, and intense mitigation efforts, which needs further investment.

Since, COVID-19 pandemic has hit the education sector hard, the SSDP budgets were transferred to local governments in order to combat with the pandemic and manage and promote alternative modes of learning (Joint Review Meeting - Aide Memoire November 23 -26, 2020). Further, there were low expenditure on some budget lines was a consequence of the disruption of activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, most of the key performance indicators are unlikely to be fully achieved at the end of the SSDP. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic even risks that in some areas progress obtained in previous years will be reverted in the years to come.

According to a journalist in Palpa, Education Development and Coordination Unit under local government is less committed to promote alternative modes of learning. He said that the representatives of local government are not committed to allocate enough budget in education. He added that the budget, in many cases, are very less in managing ECED/PPE classes. According to him, teachers who had critical role were inactive for promoting learning of children in COVID-19 pandemic situation. Similarly, the network of youths of Nisdi rural municipality, Palpa, raised the issue of corruption

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in education particularly in school construction works and ineffectiveness of the online and radio programs in learning of the students. But the youths appreciated the active role of local government to bring and distribute text-books to the students.

## **4.7 Resilience**

### **4.7.1 Access to ICTs and Education in COVID-19**

Current 'National Education Policy 2076', aims to make all levels of education technology friendly. However, Education Sector Plan 2021-2030 of Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2021) notes that there are only 58% economically active people who can use internet. Among more than 35 thousands schools in Nepal there are only 34.7% of schools that have access to electricity and very few (12.7%) schools have internet facility. The situation supports to make prediction of the exclusion of students from marginalized and deprived communities from alternative mode of learning in COVID-19 pandemic context. The budget of 2021/22 announced that the government has decided to give concessional loans of Rs. 80 thousand at a one percent interest rate for two years to purchase laptops to support alternative education.

The budget of 2021/22 has stressed on providing free broadband internet service to all community schools within the next two years and the service will be expanded to 60 percent of schools across the country by the end of the next Fiscal Year. It has focused on promoting alternative teaching-learning effectively allocating Rs. 1200 million. Arrangements have been made for the development of learning portals and the operation of educational channels through Nepal Television targeting the students who could not go to school. The effective implementation of this provision is likely to support students in learning even in such emergency situation. The budget seems silent on psychosocial counselling of students and parenting education in and post COVID -19 situation. In addition, the budget is quiet 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.

The government has come up with a guideline of promoting online remote learning in COVID-19 pandemic situation as about 9 million children and adult learners are being deprived of formal face to face learning due to government's lockdown policy for several months in two waves. The guideline envisages to identify the students who have or have not got access to radio, television, and internet facilities. It encourages 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. Center

of Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) is responsible for providing e-learning materials and provincial and local governments facilitate to learning by 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.

In addition, the study of National Campaign for Education (NCE) Nepal (2020) identified that weaker preparedness of schools for continuing learning in COVID -19 pandemic situation. The study identified that majority (68%) of children were not being involved in alternative modes of learning due to unavailability of learning resources and ICTs as means of learning. Further, the study found that majorities (50% to 75%) of children in different districts were engaging in self-learning activities under the guidance and encouragement of parents at homes. Most of the students did not have access in digital learning materials and the door-to-door campaigns of teachers for those students who had no digital access were limited to provide assignments without offering feedback to the students. Particularly, the students from marginalized and deprived communities were more vulnerable in terms of learning in COVID-19 pandemic situation.

One of the head teachers of a school of Nisdi rural municipality of Palpa said, "The local government is focusing on allocating budget in infrastructure development such as road construction but the elected members are reluctant on allocating budget in education sector". He said that the municipality had no any information of availability and accessibility of students in online learning in COVID-19 pandemic situation. He further noted that Shree Radhakrishna secondary school of Nisdi rural municipality initiated to combat with learning adversities of students. The head teacher called teachers for the discussion and debate of education. The teachers then developed educational plan in emergency situation. This shows that the local governments are not so proactive in terms of promoting education rights of students in COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Thus, COVID-19 has had serious impacts on students' learning and well-being, and is widening gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged children in access to quality education. Nearly 9 million students have been affected by school/university closures. With no certainty around how long the pandemic will last, moving classes online has emerged as an alternative to sustain education. Poor Internet connectivity in remote and hilly areas, however, together with the lack of affordable high-end devices like iPads or smart phones will limit prospects for online classes for most rural schools. Only 73 percent of people can access the Internet, and only 13 percent of schools might be

able to run online classes (though 35 percent have access to the Internet) (NPC, 2020). Digital and other forms of remote learning approaches could not be scaled up by strengthening the capacity of schools, while ensuring equitable access to the Internet and technology.

Ministry of Communication and Information technology (MOCIT) has a plan to establish the computer lab with internet and expand broadband connectivity. The Ministry of Social Development, particularly in Bagmati Province, established computer labs in 50 public schools<sup>20</sup>. These attempts are likely to promote the learning of the students even in emergency period as in COVID-19 pandemic.

## Infrastructure

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 guarantees the access to clean drinking water. But, Education Sector Plan 2021-2030 (draft) claims that there are 85.9% schools that have access drinking water and toilets facilities. In addition, there are only 18.0% of schools that are disable friendly. The budget of 2020/21 allocated Rs. 1.82 billion to make financial transfer through local level grant to provide sanitary pads free of cost to 1.34 million female students studying in community schools. The provincial governments are also contributing to develop child-friendly infrastructures in the schools of province area. For example, Ministry of Social Development established subject-wise laboratories in 33 public schools, fenced the school premises of 55 public schools, provided grants for safe drinking water in 57 schools, constructed playgrounds in 30 schools, and strengthened the infrastructure in 43 schools<sup>21</sup>.

But the school facilities are not sufficiently girl-friendly to meet privacy and safety needs. In most schools, for instance, there are still no separate latrine arrangements for girls, which discourage many girls from attending school. Although the government has prioritized school water, sanitation, and health facilities, but the girls' toilets are not suitable for menstrual hygiene management. For that reason, many secondary-level girls do not attend school during their menstrual period (CERID, 2020).

Current budget of 2021/22 has allocated Rs. 10 billion (it was Rs. 6 billion in the last fiscal year) for the President Educational Reform Program to build well-equipped classrooms, computer labs, teacher training, playgrounds, laboratories, and other educational infrastructure. The budget further highlights that the construction of physical infrastructure of 1,500 community schools and campuses will be started next

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year on a priority basis. It is believed that the implementation of this program will bring a positive change in the construction of educational infrastructure thereby contributing to quality education. Nevertheless, there is higher possibility of misuse of this fund due to lack of specific and scientific procedure of monitoring. Similarly, the budget of 2021/22 has emphasized on making access to residential schools in 13 Himalayan districts including Taplejung, Rasuwa, Mustang, Mugu, and Darchula for the children of at-risk, minorities, endangered, marginalized communities, and deprived classes. However, the questions of effective implementation of these budgetary provisions have been raising in the sphere of education.

## Section V: Major Findings

### A. Findings on implementation of policies

- a. Against the policy principle of providing free and compulsory education to all, there are situational practices of collecting fees particularly overtly in private schools and covertly and indirectly in public education.
- b. The scholarships and incentives supposed as a key equity measure seems unsatisfactory to the students and parents from marginalized and deprived communities as the meager amounts are unlikely to support in learning of students. In many cases, the amounts are misused by the parents and in other cases the needy students are not getting the scholarships.
- c. Undernourishment, lack of first aid and health services in schools, lack of separate toilets for girls and sanitary pads, lack of clean drinking water and so on are still rampant in public schools. These are the barriers for making access to quality education of children from economically poor, marginalized and deprived segments of the society.
- d. Girls and children from lower caste groups are facing multiple forms of abuses such as discrimination, sexual, physical and emotional violence even from the teachers, other students and community members.
- e. The practices of child marriage and child labor are still in existence in many of the communities. Economic poverty is the major force that has compelled many parents to engage their children in such illegal activities.
- f. On the one hand, still thousands of school aged children are either unenrolled in schools or drop out from the schools without completing the particular level of education. On the other hand, the learning performance of the students in different levels are degrading year by year. The competencies of the girls and children from Janajatis and *Dalits* are further worse.
- g. Local governments are less sensitive towards the education of differently able children. They are not being able to allocate adequate budget for the authentic identification and management of the education with adequate learning resources and materials of those children in their contexts.
- h. Non-formal education particularly the adult learning and literacy programs are less matched with the needs and interest of those who involved in and women are either less engaged in or drop out from such programs due to their hectic work burdens at homes.

## B. Findings on achievement on SDG 4

- a. Participation of children in ECED/PPE is lower than the target envisaged by SSDP and the teachers with required qualification in this level are still unfulfilled. The government is trying to make the job of ECED/PPE teachers more decent increasing their salary (Rs. 15000) in the current budget (FY 2021/22). But, still, the remuneration is very less than that of primary school teachers.
- b. The government is still unable to make entrance of thousands of children in formal schools and millions drop out from the schools of particular levels. Very less students complete secondary education. The target set to achieve in 2020/21 in participation and survival of the students are not only unmet but very far below the targets. The long threat and impact of COVID-19 pandemic has further magnified the possibility of unschooling of the children from marginalized and deprived communities in the post-COVID educational context. In this sense, there is strong possibility of reverting the status of achievement on many of the key performance indicators of SDG 4 and it is difficult to make significant progress on other indicators.
- c. The quality education is worsening year by year at all levels of school education as majority of students have performance lower than the level of competency envisaged by the curricula. The COVID-19 pandemic has advanced the disengagement of the students in meaningful learning processes thereby lowering the performance.
- d. The state's vision of making literate Nepal seems difficult to achieve by 2030 if the pace of progress slows as of recent years. The quality that concerns on promoting contextual and relevant knowledge and skills that support to affirm the lives of people is also questionable. The literacy programs that emphasize on acquisition of basic skills of language and numeracy are less supportive to build the lives easier.
- e. The current limited involvement of employers has left Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) courses with limited relevance to labor force needs. The TVET programs are less responding the market demands with necessary skilled human resources. There is less participation of women due to the emphasis given to male dominated trainings and gender stereotypes of not to engage in male controlled works.
- f. There are only fulfilled quotas of teachers in 700 schools out of about 7000 public schools. Teacher Service Commission that has a role of recruiting and upgrading teachers is almost non-functional for several years due to inability of the government to appoint the administrative chief. This has stopped to recruiting 15000 teachers and upgrading the positions of several teachers in schools of Nepal for three years.

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- g. 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 challenges for local governments.
  - h. 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 ECED/PPE participation, are key challenges to promote inclusive and equitable quality education.
  - i. 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 to encourage to work in line of policies and plan of achieving SDGs.

## Recommendations

- a. Compulsory and free education is still a rhetoric and need to address as envisaged by the educational policies and programs. The local government should develop a plan and implement with close monitoring of the schools.
- b. Inclusive education, equal access to education, women education campaigns, participation, community ownership, equity in education, and quality education as the buzz concepts should be translated in reality through formulating effective local education acts and policies.
- c. Increasing the amount of the national budget as committed in the international forums, the state should provide free and compulsory education with special focus on marginalized and deprived communities. Adequate budget should be allocated for teacher management and professional development of teaching and non-teaching human resources.
- d. The schools should be equipped with child-friendly infrastructures and learning materials for enhancing quality education.
- e. Children with disabilities and those from poor, remote, low caste families, and from disadvantaged caste/ethnic groups are mostly affected by the access gap. So, they should be taught by alternative strategies as per their abilities. For this, the local government should manage skilled human resources collaborating with the NGOs and INGOs working in the field of inclusive education.
- f. Immediate actions should be taken for promoting safe and secured learning environment in schools, homes, and communities particularly for the adolescent/girls from marginalized and deprived communities.
- g. Health risks for the children should be reduced in collaboration with the local health institutions.
- h. Child labor and child marriage are other problems in Nepal. Thus, the local governments should be made more responsible with specific programs with time bound plans for eradicating the worst forms of child labor and inhuman child marriage.
- i. Community Learning Centers and literacy programs should be made more effective for wiping out the illiteracy and promoting life-long learning. The focus should be given to promote contextual knowledge and life-affirming skills through literacy programs.

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- j. It is crucial to have inter-governmental coordination and 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 such barriers in newer post-COVID-19 context.
  - k. It is essential to reduce different forms of violence (social, emotional, physical) against children so as to create conducive learning environments for them in schools, at homes, and in communities.
  - l. 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.

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## 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 409 member organizations including 48 General members and 361 affiliated members ranging from international and national non-government 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 30 districts covering 7 provinces 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.

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