Joint Evaluation of Nepal's School Sector Reform Plan Programme 2009-16

Contract N° 2014/357774

Final Report (Draft 2/16)

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AGO	Auditor General's Office
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASIP	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan
AusAID	Australian Aid
AWPB	Annual Work Plan and Budget
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Project
CARTA	Citizen Actions for Results, Transparency and Accountability
CAS	Continuous Assessment System
CB-EGRA	Classroom Based Early Grade Reading Assessment
CB-EGRA	Classroom Based Early Grade Reading Assessment
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CERID	Centre for Educational Research, Innovation and Development
CES	Consolidated Equity Strategy
CGAS	Central Accounting System
CLA	Central Level Agencies
CLC	Community Learning Centres
CMS	Community Managed Schools
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSSP	Community School Support Project
CTVET	Council for Technical Education and Vocational Training
CWD	Children with Disabilities
D to D	Door to Door
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DaLA	Damage and Loss Assessment
DDC	District Development Committee
DEC	District Education Committee
DEO	District Education Office
DEP	District Education Plans
DF	Direct Fund
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DoE	Department of Education
DPs	Development Partners
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECED	Early Childhood Education and Development
EFA	Education for All
EGRP	Early Grade Reading Programme

EGRS	Early Grade Reading Skills
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPC	Education Policy Committee
EPSO	Education Programme Support Office
ERO	Education Review Office
ESAT	Education Sector Advisory Team
ETC	Education Training Centres
EU	European Union
FCBE	Free and Compulsory Basic Education
FCGO	Financial Controller General's Office
FMIAP	Financial Management Improvement Action Plan
FMIS	Financial Management Information System
FMR	Financial Monitoring Report
FTI	Fast Track Initiative
FY	Fiscal Year
GAAP	Governance Accountability and Action Plan
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GIS	Geographical Information System
GNP	Gross National Product
GoN	Government of Nepal
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GS	General Secretary
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HR	Human Resource
HSEB	Higher Secondary Education Board
HT	Head Teacher
I/NGO	International/Non-Governmental Organization
IACD	Institutional Assessment Capacity Development
IANS	Indo-Asian News Service
ICAN	Institute of Chartered Accountants of Nepal
IDCJ	International Development Center of Japan
IDP	Internally Displaced People
JAR	Joint Annual Review
JCM	Joint Consultative Meetings
JEMC	Janak Education Material Centre
JFA	Joint Financing Agreement
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JQM	Joint Quarterly Meetings
K-8	Kindergarten to grade 8

KPI	Key Performance Indicators
K-S	Kindergarten to Secondary education (school)
LBFC	Local Bodies Finance Commission
LoI	Language of Instruction
LSGA	Local Self Governance Act
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MEC	Minimum Enabling Conditions
MEP	Municipality Education Plan
MGML	Multi-Grade Multi Level
MILE	Medium of Instruction and Languages for Education
MLE	Multi Language Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MT-MLE	Mother Tongue - Multilingual Education
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NASA	National Assessment of Student Achievement
NCE	National Campaign for Education
NCED	National Centre for Educational Development
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NDHS	National Demographic Health Survey
NEB	National Examination Board
NEGRP	National Early Grade Reading Programme
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NESP	National Education System Plan
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NFEC	Non-Formal Education Centre
NPC	National Planning Commission
NPR	Nepalese Rupees
OAG	Office of Auditor General
OCE	Office of Controller of Examinations
ODEC	Open and Distance Education Centre
ODL	Open and Distance Learning
OECD	Economic Cooperation and Development
OOSC	Out-of-school children
PCF	Per Capita Funding
PEP	Primary Education Project
PETS	Public Expenditure Tracking Survey
PFM	Public Financial Management
PMEC	Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions
PMEC	Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions
PPC	Pre-primary Classes

PPP	Public Private Partnership
PPR	Programme Progress Report
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RC	Resource Centre
RC	Resource Centres
RED	Regional Education Directorate
RP	Resource Person
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SESP	Secondary Education Support Programme
SIP	School Improvement Plans
SISM (2)	Project for Support for Improvement of School Management (Phase 2)
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
SSDP	School Sector Development Programme
SSR	School Sector Reform
SSRP	School Sector Reform Programme
STR	Student Teacher Ratio
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
TA	Technical Assistance
TEP	Teacher Education Project
TVET	Technical Education and Vocational Training
TLC	Teacher Learning Centre
TLC	Temporary Learning Centre
TOR	Terms of References
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TPDP	Textbook Printing and Distribution Process
TRSE	The Technical Review of School Education
TSA	Treasury Single Account
TSC	Teacher Service Commission
TU	Tribhuvan University
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
VEP	Village Education Plan
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) implemented in Nepal since 2009 aims to expand access and equity, improve quality and relevance, and strengthen the institutional capacity of the entire school system. Funded through a pool of Development Partners (DPs)[1] together with the Government of Nepal (GoN) and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE), the SSRP programme has tackled long-lasting challenges in the field of education in Nepal.

The programme was developed within the framework of wider poverty concerns and has been aligned to poverty reduction strategies, both nationally and internationally. As such, the SSRP objectives are relevant to the development plans, and reflect the Education For All (EFA) goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). The SSRP programme is expected to end in July 2016 and the key implementing actor is the Ministry of Education (MoE), using a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp).

The evaluation at hand presents an independent assessment of the achievements, strengths and weaknesses of the different components of the programme, against the SSRP result framework. The methodology used is based on the OECD Development Assistance Committee evaluation criteria, namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. These criteria were used to assess the scope of action against the declared objectives. The SSRP key performance indicators (KPI) also served as a reference point. Next to reviewing relevant publications - selective study reports, aid memoires, visit reports, as well as audit and monitoring reports - field visits and interviews with key stakeholders and civil society organisations were conducted.

The declared objectives of the SSRP are the following:

- Ensure equitable access of quality basic education for all children (aged 5-12 years);

- Expand access to Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) services for children of 4 years to facilitate their holistic development and to prepare them for basic education;

- Enhance functional literacy and competencies among young people and adults;

- Increase access to, as well as equity, quality and relevance of secondary education;

- Equip secondary level students with soft skills based technical and vocational education;

- Improve the performance of the MoE service delivery system and develop capacity to implement critical reforms;

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[1] In the first 5 years, School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) was supported by Australia, ADB, Denmark, DFID, EU, Finland, Norway, WB and UNICEF. For the two-year extension programme, Denmark and DFID have withdrawn, while JICA joined the pool.

- Enhance teacher qualifications and professional competencies to facilitate student learning;
- Monitor programme inputs, processes, and outputs and evaluate the impact of education interventions;
- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid available for the SSRP.

Relevance

With regard to relevance, the analysis revealed that the SSRP helped address existing disparities linked to caste, ethnicity, religion and geography, but also helped avert potential conflicts and political divisions. This is explained through the programme's commitment to equity; one of the most prominent aspects of the SSRP. General awareness about the importance of education has increased during the SSRP period, which in turn has increased overall expectations. The planned budget of USD 4.4 billion for the SSRP gives an indication of the political relevance of the programme.

Most strategies aimed at improving access proved to be adequate. Implementation, especially at local level, still shows substantial problems, mostly due to lacking management capacity. Additional efforts on capacity building and management are required to secure a lasting impact.

One of the most important innovations of the SSRP is the restructuration of the basic education which now comprises grade 1 to 8. The longer basic education cycle also helps incorporate literacy and lifelong learning programmes in District Education Plans (DEP) and Village Education Plans (VEP) through Community Learning Centres (CLC).

Recommendations linked to relevance mostly address the need to secure and adopt the 8th Amendment of the Education Act, while continuing to align the programme strategies to the changing development plans. Enhancing the dialogue between central level actors and local governance structures will help increase accountability.

Effectiveness

The evaluation found that access and equity have increased in most levels of education, notably in ECED, primary, basic, secondary and non-formal education. Gender parity for students has been reached in primary, basic and secondary education. The percentage of female teachers decreases in the higher levels of education.

Though access has increased across the board, disparities still exist. This is especially true for certain geographical areas, children with disabilities and children from specific castes or ethnic groups. Learning outcomes and student-teacher ratio have improved considerably, though there again, large disparities persist.

A set of minimum enabling conditions have been designed to provide school communities with a benchmark for their operational planning. Being often too complex, they have later been reduced to 5 prioritised minimum enabling conditions.

Specific projects undertaken to strengthen specific components/areas of the SSRP have had varying effects on outcome variables:

- **The Early Grade Reading Programme has potential to reduce drop-out rates**. This programme helped provide input in the curriculum development and in the elaboration of learning material for the first years of primary education, which in turn helped secure better learning outcomes and success in higher education levels.

- **Programmes fostering mother tongue education have not yet shown impact on learning outcomes.** As such and given the recognised potential of mother tongue education in multilingual countries, additional efforts in advocacy campaigns will be necessary to raise awareness among educational stakeholders and communities.

- **Non-formal education and literacy programmes have been successful and have produced high numbers of neo-literates.** These neo-literates now need supporting actions and material to avoid falling back into illiteracy. In parallel, special programmes need to be design and implemented for hard to reach groups not enrolled in school. The study found that the quality and scale of alternative non-formal education strongly varies between districts and depends on the implementing body or NGO.

Next to questions related to access and equity, quality of education is another complex field. **Although teacher trainings in content and method were provided under SSRP, new learning methods have not been transferred to the classrooms.** Additionally to teacher training, competency-based curricula were developed and soft skills programmes were piloted. The didactical material produced by different projects still has to be documented and categorised in view of its integration into the curricula and its large-scale distribution.

The timely distribution of textbooks also has a direct impact on learning achievements. **To reduce delays in textbook distribution, the production process was decentralised and private companies were involved**. Delays have been partially reduced, the inclusion of timely delivery of textbooks as a performance indicator of the SSRP is a positive development but tracking mechanisms to allow addressing remaining problems in the delivery need further strengthening.

Relevant assessment programmes are essential to the quality development. **The SSRP introduced the national assessment for student achievements (NASA) under the Education Review Office (ERO), to provide data on learning outcomes, repetition rates and drop-outs.** While it did lead to important discussions on the weak impact of teacher trainings and measures for quality improvement, the District Education Offices (DEO) and the Regional Education Directorates only recently started follow-up actions.

The formative evaluation instrument, on the other hand, is not yet fully understood by stakeholders, which has compromised its implementation. This approach known as the continuous assessment system (CAS) intends to replace summative evaluations by a formative evaluation approach, but the current educational environment lacks the required capacity to run such a complex approach.

With regards to capacity building and governance, the evaluation found that **weak teacher development and lack of intrinsic motivation due to the low social value of the teacher profession has led to high absenteeism, low performance and strong political interference.** The national shortage of teachers is not addressed properly, partly due to the institutional division of labour. A proposed strategy for effectively responding to the problem is decentralising the recruitment process for temporary teachers away from the Teacher Service Commission. Currently, while schools follow rules and regulations closely, recruitment at local level is still met by substantial problems, including political interference.

Supervision is quite weak within the school management system, not only in terms of the low frequency of the resource persons' (RP) school visits, but also due to the lack of pedagogical advice given to teachers. SSRP introduced decentralised planning strategies which enabled the local stakeholders to prepare plans for the individual schools. These strategies have been useful in bringing local education stakeholders together for planning and monitoring, however, they did not succeed in linking funding to content. The introduction of School Management Committees and Parents Teacher Associations at local level, as well as the creation of the Education Policy Committee (EPC) and the ERO at central level were innovations for Nepal. In practice however, the new institutional setting still faces challenges in its implementation.

Finally, the earth-quake of March/April 2015 brought new challenges, as teachers now have to teach several grades in one classroom in an environment that is still affected by infrastructural damage. Furthermore, the psychological consequences also play a role, with the disaster creating post-traumata situations in the classroom.

Recommendations to increase effectiveness of the SSRP are related to transparency, tracking mechanisms, and performance-monitoring aspects. The focus away from access to equity and quality is recommended to reach better learning outcomes.

Efficiency

Education has become a priority sector for the GoN, for which investments have steady increased. It represents around 14% of the government budget and public investments in education have increased from 2.9% of GDP in 1999 to 4,2% in 2014. DPs' funding share has decreased from 22% to 13% in that period.

Since the SSRP was launched, public financial management (PFM) has been considered as one of the priority areas for improvement. As such, a number of measures to mitigate fiduciary risks have been taken and initiated, namely the review of the financial management improvement action plan, the fund flow tracking mechanism, the teacher development plan, the database of student and school facilities, as well as the transfer of teacher salaries to their bank accounts. These measures helped reduce ineligible expenses, such as double payment of salaries and incorrect per capital funding to schools.

Unfortunately, financial record keeping has not yet been computerised across the board and this hampers the quality and timeliness of financial reports at both

central and district level. However, the financial management information system (FMIS) is being developed since 2014/15 for the central level and is now continuously updated.

Social audit processes have become more of a ritual rather than a true monitoring exercise and the fact that budget is being channelled through the Department of Education (DoE) has shown repercussions on the smooth implementation. Adjustments are required for a more equitable resource allocation. Schools in remote rural areas such as in the Terai generally lack sufficient funds because funding is still based on enrolment rates rather than needs. This has repercussions on teacher quotas and infrastructural facilities.

The educational management information system (EMIS), especially the Flash System, has continued to improve in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness. It provides reliable and open data and has contributed to accessing information on the progress of SSRP objectives. The development of an equity index[2] will provide additional information on disparities in access across districts. The NASA undertaking is the first step in the institutionalisation of a system for ongoing and disaggregated monitoring of learning achievements at different stages, across different geographic areas and along school types. NASA will allow improved targeting of resources and a more effective performance management.

Recommendations for efficiency are mostly systemic, concerning, for example, the databases, the institutionalised planning processes, the education budget and its management. Simplified, harmonised and systematic financial reporting will help increase financial accountability and transparency.

Impact

In spite of good results in access and equity, the poor quality of education still produces school-leavers who have not acquired the necessary competencies to improve their economic situation. While key performance indicators show considerable progress, unless the necessary investments are made in the quality of teaching and learning, lasting impacts on learning outcomes will not be visible. Focus should be put on equity rather than access only, so that disadvantage groups and children with disabilities are more systematically included.

In the field of quality and relevance, actions such as the timely distribution of textbooks, the implementation of minimum enabling conditions, as well as the NASA and CAS evaluations showed considerable immediate effects. These effects have however not yet materialised in overall improved teaching and learning quality.

Innovative procedures and organisational set-ups have been created to increase the good governance and capacity building of institutions. However, the processes do not always work well and closer coordination with local institutions and actors is needed. At local level, an operational dialogue between governance structures and

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[2] The equity index is currently being developed and will be implemented in FY 2016/17.

educational institutions has to be fostered, with a special attention to include religious and ethnic institutions. While school management committees and parent teacher associations have raised local power in decision-making, their impact on student achievement is not yet visible.

Recommendations for ensuring a higher impact concern decision-making structures and responsibilities, so as to make changes and programmes more accountable to all. Improving equity and quality management through defined strategies over longer periods of time can enhance long-term impacts.

Sustainability

The GoN progressively took over more of the funding responsibilities, but it will not be able to take over the whole funding of the SSRP once donors have withdrawn. The government will not be able to ensure free and compulsory basic education for all. Scholarships and the annual textbook distribution in a blanket approach are not financially sustainable. Next to current funding responsibilities, additional funding is still needed to guarantee some of SSRP's objectives. For instance, more investments are required to reach out to out-of-school children and pupils with disabilities, as well as to extend ECED to geographically and socially marginalised groups. Investments in teacher training, material and infrastructure are also required to increase the quality of education.

Although central level structures and procedures have the potential to become sustainable, there is a considerable risk of institutional memory disappearing with the transfer of personnel. The 8th Amendment of the Education Act intends to address some of these risks by backing up many of the institutional changes. It is recommended to compensate any delays in the act's adoption by formal agreements between the MoE and the concerned institutions to grant the necessary authority and independence.

The NASA has a high potential for social sustainability, as it triggers important analysis about learning outcomes, whereas the CAS does not show potential for sustainability, as its implementation is heavily compromised. A more systematic NASA follow-up programme to all schools in the country would be recommendable. To become sustainable, the CAS would require strong linkage with school level planning, capacity development and practical material. The CAS approach also requires a low teacher-student ratio, which is unlikely to be reached within the next years.

The community's involvement has been a key approach to ensure sustainability. The new local structures have helped make SSRP activities more visible to the community and create greater acceptance. The basis for local ownership is the school improvement plan (SIP), an instrument that links planning and budgeting to funding. In practice, real ownership is still weak, partly due to the fact that teachers and their unions are politicised. This may jeopardise the socio-cultural sustainability of SSRP initiatives and undermine discussions on real needs of communities.

The golden handshake programme for the temporary teachers has the potential to respond effectively to the lack of teachers. The success of this intervention however depends on the recruitment process at local level, whether it is well managed by DEO and whether political interferences in the decision-making processes are minimised.

Producing didactical material is essential to ensure longevity of projects' impact. The national early grade reading programme, for instance, developed a classroom based early grade reading assessment tool which is based on defined reading skills. Prepared formats for monitoring and evaluation or formats for planning have proven to be helpful in implementation.

The major factors which influence the achievement of sustainability seem to be the lack of institutional and individual capacity to ensure the 5 prioritised minimum enabling conditions. The earthquake demonstrated that there is a strong and urgent need for safe and disaster-resilient school construction and school retrofitting, combined with disaster risk reduction measures. Many community ECED centres and primary schools have been destroyed.

Recommendations related to sustainability focus on institutional capacity building and memory, as well as on the continuous assessment of needs and relevance of programmes. Reaching out to excluded groups, and ensuring local ownership will increase sustainability of the SSRP.

1   B A C K G R O U N D   A N D   C O N T E X T

1.1   Context and Objectives of the SSRP

The Government of Nepal has embarked on several multi-sector reforms, not least in the education sector. Despite several points of divergence in outlook and agendas, the political parties share a common ground on the need to improve the education system. Furthermore, this commitment is reflected in the Interim Constitution of 2007, which declares free education to secondary level as a basic right for citizens. This declaration has enabled consistently high levels of investment in the education sector and has given the needed support for several reforms in the sector.

Education is the largest employer of public servants, has the highest budgetary allocation of any sector (12% in 2015) and has an elaborate vertical and horizontal institutional structure. Systematic management of the education development programmes began when the MoE introduced planning tools and techniques during the 1999-2004 Basic and Primary Education Project II (BPEP II). During this time, the MoE also created the Department of Education (DoE) and concentrated authority and responsibility of key staff in central organisations - MoE, DoE, the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), the National Centre for Education Development (NCED), and Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC).

At lower levels, roles and responsibilities were assigned to Regional Education Directors (RED), District Education Officers (DEO), and School Management Committees (SMC). Schools were asked to prepare school improvement plans (SIP), five-year plans, yearly plans of operation, yearly instructional plans and annual budgets and programmes. The major innovation envisaged in the governing system was the devolution of authority to schools.

The Government, with support from Development Partners (DPs) has undertaken a series of national level programmes and projects in the school sector during the past two decades with the objective of enhancing equitable access to and improving the quality of education. The reform process started in the mid-seventies with the Lahachok project.[3] The major follow-up programmes in this series include: the Basic Primary Education Projects (BPEP I, 1992-1998 and BPEP II, 1999-2004), the Teacher Education Project (TEP, 2002-2007), the Community School Support Project (CSSP, 2003-2008), the Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP, 2003-2009), Education For All Programme (EFA, 2004-2009), and the ongoing School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP, 2009-2016).

The SSRP is a seven-year programme running from 2009 to 2016 that covers the entire school education sector (grades 1-12) as well as early childhood education and development (ECED) and non-formal education (NFE).[4] It caters to the needs of

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[3] This project was carried out in Kaski. The Centre for Educational Research, Innovation and Development (CERID) took the lead. MoE was also involved in it. UNESCO supported it; in the late seventies CERID launched the integrated non-formal education project.

[4] World Bank, (2014). Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS).

approximately 7.3 million students in 28,748 community and religious schools across the country.

SSRP is a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) programme, with funding from both the Government of Nepal (GoN) as well as from a pool of eight DPs and four non-pooling donors.[5] The SSRP is a complex, multi-component plan that builds on earlier reform efforts, which date back over 20 years.

The pooling partners for sector budget support provided under the Joint Financing Agreement (JFA) approximately USD 640 million for the period 2010-2014 and a further USD 168 million for the period 2014-2016. Non-pooling DPs are funding a further USD 25 million in the extension phase. All pooling and non-pooling DPs are part of the DP education group and participate in well-established mechanisms of Joint Annual Review (JAR), Joint Consultative Meetings (JCM) and Joint Quarterly Meetings (JQM).

The SSRP aims to (i) expand access and equity; (ii) improve quality and relevance; and (iii) strengthen the institutional capacity of the entire school education system to improve system performance.

The major objectives of the SSRP are:

- Ensure equitable access of quality basic education for all children (aged 5-12 yrs.);

- Expand access to Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) services for children of 4 years to facilitate their holistic development and to prepare them for basic education;

- Enhance functional literacy and competencies among the youth and adults;

- Increase access to, and equity, quality and relevance of secondary education;

- Equip secondary level students with soft skills based technical and vocational education;

- Improve the performance of the MoE service delivery system and develop capacity to implement critical reforms;

- Enhance teacher qualifications and professional competencies to facilitate student learning;

- Monitor programme inputs, processes, and outputs and evaluate the impact of education interventions;

- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid available for the SSRP.

The SSRP is broadly described under three major components:

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[5] Initially, there were 9 pooling DPs for the first 5 years: Australian Embassy, ADB, Denmark, DFID, EU, Finland, Norway, World Bank and UNICEF. For the SSRP Extension period, there are 8 Pooling DPs as Denmark and DFID have not continued and JICA has joined as a pooling DP. Non-pooling DPs are: JICA, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, WFP and I/NGOs through the AIN platform.

1. Structural and functional reform: the programme is concerned with, among others, the integration of schools/grades, curricular integration, school management and governance functions, and the examination structure and its functions;

2. Strengthening policy functions: the programme attempts to harmonise differently administered policy practices into a one-door system through the MoE;

3. Capacity development: the plan attempts to improve systemic capacity to make the system responsive to deliver both administrative and technical functions. A comprehensive National Framework for Capacity Development was also prepared during the SSRP period for implementing a nation-wide capacity development programme in the education sector.[6]

The SSRP implements both core and non-core programmes to achieve its objectives. The core programmes are identified each year during the Joint Annual Review (JAR) and the non-core programmes are regarded as the experimental and innovative programmes. Analysis of the JAR reports of 2014 and 2015 shows that quality was the major issue in the previous year. For this year, the major issue has been the reconstruction of school buildings and emergency relief. The changes of the emphasis each year show SSRP's flexibility. At the same time, this can also be a risk to derail from the major reform agenda.

Most of the changes stipulated in the SSRP required changes of the existing Nepalese regulatory frameworks, as well as changes in the existing Education Act and regulations.[7] According to the MoE, the amended Bill is in the process of being tabled to parliament after cabinet approval.

1.2   Purpose and Scope of the Evaluation

The overall objective of the evaluation was to provide a comprehensive overall independent view on the achievements, strengths and weaknesses of all components of the SSRP against the SSRP results framework.

The main focus of the evaluation was to assess effectiveness as well as efficiency. The evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the SSRP in achieving the intended outcomes in (i) expansion of access and equity, (ii) improvement of quality and relevance, and (iii) strengthening of institutional capacity of the school system. These were measured against the SSRP key performance indicators (KPI). The efficiency was assessed by reviewing the strengths and weaknesses of the programme's governing structure and its division of labour (intra and inter agency cooperation, including the Government and donors) and the adequacy of the Joint Financing Agreement (JFA) for reaching the intended objectives.

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[6] Farrukh, Moriani, Bhuban, Brajacharya, Pramod, Bhatta, Sreyasa, Mainali, (2013). Institutional Analysis and Capacity Development Plan, School Sector Reform Plan, Nepal.

[7] Ministry of Education, (2014).School Sector Reform SWAp Extension Plan 2014/2015-2015/2016, Kathmandu.

Additionally, it was required that the evaluation also look into the effectiveness and efficiency of internal governing structures, roles, responsibilities, community mobilisation, service delivery and public financial management (PFM). Moreover, the evaluation should also focus on government systems, fund flow, capacity building and institutional analysis of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. These were reported to be weak and needed further analysis. Due to the high amount of available data, systematic field visits were not foreseen. Some schools and districts were still visited.

The recently released report on *Evaluation of the current EU budget support and formulation of the next EU budget support programme to the education sector in Nepal* served as basis for this evaluation. Information in this document was validated by primary and secondary data. Other important documents are the JFA, the SSRP MTR, and the SSRP 2009-2015.

The assignment started on 20 April 2015 and was interrupted by the earthquake on 25 April 2015. The team resumed their work on 27 July 2015 with five days desk review. A second short briefing meeting was held in Kathmandu on 3 August 2015. A new time schedule was agreed for meetings and the submission of deliverables.

2 M E T H O D O L O G Y

The team followed a three-stage approach in concluding the evaluation assignment:

1. An inception phase that included preparation of evaluation questions and timeline (reviewed after the earthquake);
2. An assessment phase that included i) interviewing relevant and key stakeholders, notably civil society organisations, ii) reviewing selective study reports, aid memoires, joint field visit reports, audit and monitoring reports, as well as publications;
3. A consolidating phase which included final analysis and report writing.

2.1 Evaluation Questions

The evaluation questions presented in the evaluation matrix of the inception report were guiding questions and should not been considered as exhaustive. The evaluation questions were intended to give the direction to semi-open interviews with individuals and groups of stakeholders. Closed questions trigger follow-up questions which are of two types. On the on hand, follow-up questions that have a branching format in which questions vary automatically as a function of responses in earlier questions. On the other hand, free format that attempts to clarify and dig deeper into the meaning of responses.

The evaluation followed the five Development Assistance Committee Criteria, which are the following:

Relevance is the extent to which the aid activity is suited to the priorities and policies of the target group, recipient and donor. In evaluating the relevance of a programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent are the objectives of the programme still valid?

- Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the overall goal and the attainment of its objectives?

- Are the activities and outputs of the programme consistent with the intended impacts and effects?

Effectiveness is a measure of the extent to which an aid activity attains its objectives. In evaluating the effectiveness of a programme or a project, it is useful to consider the following questions:

- To what extent were the objectives achieved or are likely to be achieved?

- What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives?

Efficiency measures the outputs – qualitative and quantitative – in relation to the inputs. It is an economic term, which signifies that the aid uses the least costly resources possible in order to achieve the desired results. This generally requires comparing

alternative approaches to achieving the same outputs, to see whether the most efficient process has been adopted. When evaluating the efficiency of a programme or a project, we used the following questions:

- Were activities cost-efficient?

- Were objectives achieved on time?

- Was the programme or project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?

Impact describes the positive and negative changes produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended. This involves the main impacts and effects resulting from the activity on the local social, economic, environmental and other development indicators. In doing so, we were concerned with both intended and unintended results as well as including the positive and negative impact of external factors, such as changes in terms of trade and financial conditions. When evaluating the impact of a programme or a project, we considered the following questions:

- What has happened as a result of the programme or project?

- What real difference has the activity made to the beneficiaries?

- How many people have been affected?

Sustainability is concerned with measuring whether the benefits of an activity are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn. In this case we will examine issues related to institutional as well as financial sustainability. When evaluating the sustainability of a programme or a project, we took into account the following questions:

- To what extent will the benefits of a programme or project continue after donor funding ceases?

- What are the major factors that influence the achievement or non-achievement of sustainability of the programme or project?

2.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The data was collected through extensive analysis of the earlier evaluations and reviews of the SSRP. The findings are crosschecked with the data of the recent flash reports. In this sense, this evaluation used methodological triangulation to obtain a holistic picture of the achievements, challenges and opportunities and evidence-based answers to the specific questions outlined in the TOR. Data was also gathered from primary sources. Information was double-checked where possible. Quantitative methods were used to track progress objectively towards the attainment of a set of (numerical) targets while qualitative methods were used to find out why the observed patterns and trends are occurring.

Systematic review of relevant documents (including, inter alia, programme documents, progress reports, annual review reports minutes of meetings and budgets), key informant

interviews, focus group discussions and direct observations built around specific objectives in the TOR and DAC criteria constituted the main methods of data collection.

The evaluation team interviewed central, district, as well as grassroots level stakeholders of education. In the community, the evaluation team visited selected schools of Kathmandu. In the district, the team consulted DEO, RP, SMC/PTA members, and teachers of Gulmi and Dolakha districts. The rationale for the choice of schools and districts was the short distance to the schools and, at the time of the mission, the ongoing teacher training and participation of teachers in trainings in these districts. In the centre, the team visited the MoE, the DoE, the NCED, the CDC, the OCE and the NFEC officials. Among the DPs, the team contacted Finnish, Danish and Norwegian Embassies, ADB, World Bank, UNICEF, JICA staff and UNESCO. The team also consulted the Confederation of Nepalese Teachers, Parents' Associations, the Student Union and the NCE.

2.3   Data Analysis and Validation

The literature was analysed under the themes of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, impact, and sustainability. The field data were analysed simultaneously during data collection. For shared learning and validation of the findings, a PowerPoint presentation of the interim report findings was given on 21 August 2015. The presentation and the comments can be found in Annex 9.

3   RELEVANCE OF THE SSRP

3.1   National and International Strategies

The recent peace and relative political stability in Nepal, combined with a growing awareness of the value of education, have contributed to an increased demand for public educational services, alongside with higher expectations. In spite of significant improvements in access to education and enrolment rates over the last 20 years, many children and young people still leave school without having acquired the basic skills. This prevents them from raising their standards of living, and from integrating effectively into society.[8]

It is thus important to assess whether the SSRP has been appropriately embedded into poverty reduction strategies. In fact, SSRP is aligned with the National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of the period 2007-10 and other development plans thereafter which follow the same lines[9]. Earlier studies[10] also confirm that SSRP has been aligned to the national priorities, and follows recommendations of the different education commissions.

Concerning the actual development plans, the assessment shows that SSRP objectives are compatible with the national plans, as well as with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially goal 2 and 3[11]. The uncertainty surrounding the plans of a future federal state suggests the need to prioritise a flexible arrangement and ensure capacity development at community level as much as possible.

Relevant themes identified during the evaluation are the following:

- Management needs assessment;
- Methods in teaching and learning;
- Quality measurement;
- Continuous assessment;
- Recruiting;
- Financial planning and monitoring;

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[8] Ministry of Education, (2009). School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015, Nepal.

[9] Ministry of Education, (2008), School Sector Reform Policies and Strategies Core Document.

[10] Seel, A. and B. Bajracharya, (2015). Evaluation of the current education budget support and formulation of the next EU budget support programme to education sector in Nepal. Final Report. Submitted to European Union.

[11] MDG 1 eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; 2 achieve universal primary education; 3 promote gender equality and empower women; 4 reduce child mortality; 5 improve maternal health; 6 combat, HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; 7 ensure environmental sustainability; 8 global partnership for development.

- Implementation and monitoring;

- Institutional development;

- Internal and external networking;

- Communication and information management.

With regard to the education sector, SSRP supports all six of the EFA goals[12]; expanding early childhood development, ensuring access to all children, meeting the learning needs of all children (including the indigenous peoples and minorities), reducing adult illiteracy, eliminating gender disparity, and improving all aspects of quality in education.

The contribution to the EFA goals has a long history of national plans and legislation: the 7th Amendment to the Education Act (2001) for school-based management, the 8th Amendment to the Education Act (2015) for the change in school structure (which is not yet in place), the National Education System Plan, which had a considerable impact on the school structure and the whole education system[13], and the Interim Constitution (2007) for free and compulsory education.

We can therefore conclude that, at programmatic level, there is evidence of high relevance of SSRP on national and international level.

3.2   SSRP and National Educational Programmes

Looking further into the relevance of the educational programs in Nepal, we can state some major positive changes in the different stages of the education system. Taking into account the integral role of caste, ethnic, religious and geographic disparities in conflict and political division, the SSPS's commitment to equity is both important and relevant.

The ECED programme is a relevant instrument for reaching equity goals as it provides comprehensive childhood care and education to all, which in turn improves performance in primary grades[14] and retention in primary school.[15] It ensures physical and cognitive development of infants and young children[16] and increases access of Dalit, Janajati children and girls to schools.[17]

SSRP proposes to define a 1-8th grade cycle as basic education. Such a structural change was found relevant to ensure equitable access to quality education for

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[12] Education for All (EFA) programme for 2004-2009 is based on the EFA National Plan of Action 2001-2015.

[13] National Education System Plan (NESP), (1971).

[14] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015). Education in the post 2015 development agenda: voices of stakeholders of Nepal.

[15] UNICEF, Annual Report, (2011).

[16] UNICEF, Annual Report, (2012).

[17] Government of Nepal, (2012).

marginalised children[18], refocus on the available resources[19], increase gender parity, and improve Dalit and ethnic children's engagement in education[20], and scale up programmes to strengthen the basic reading and math skills among students[21]. International surveys show that pupils in a 1-8 grade level configuration are kept longer in elementary school than pupils in shorter cycles. When the change from an elementary education programme to a secondary education programme happens later, the pupil is better prepared to cope with the rupture.[22] The extended time in the elementary environment also gives room for physical, social, and academic development of lower graders.

The incorporation of literacy and lifelong learning programmes in District Education Plans (DEPs) and Village Education Plans (VEPs) through Community Learning Centres (CLCs)[23] was very relevant for the preparation of the 2012 TVET policy. This strategy ensured the access of poor and marginalised students by providing them with three months free (or at reasonable low cost) skills training under PPP management.[24] Roles of school communities have been specified in different guidelines, but they are not categorically mentioned.

SSRP is indeed the continuation of earlier programmes. It has applied the lessons learned from the Lahachok project, Seti Project, PEP, BPEP I, BPEP II, and EFA. Moreover, SSRP introduced programmes to improve quality, such as the Continuous Assessment System (CAS), Teacher Professional Development (TPD), Mother Tongue-Multi Lingual Education (MT-MLE), support for Minimum Enabling Conditions (MEC), supervision by PTA/SMC.

Quality service delivery was improved and planning processes were institutionalised, notably under the Annual Strategic Implementation Plan (ASIP), in the DEPs, in the VEPs, in the School Improvement Plans (SIPs), and in Education Management Information System (EMIS).[25] Lastly, free textbooks were distributed by involving the private sector publishers.

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[18] Ministry of Education, (2012).

[19] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015).

[20] Ministry of Education, (2014), Consolidated equity strategy for the school education sector in Nepal. Ministry of Education, Nepal.

[21] Winthrop, Rebecca and McGivney, Eileen, (2014). Raising the global ambition for girls' education. The Brookings Instruction 1775 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC.

[22] Dr. PH and Blanchard, J., (2009). The teen years explained. John Hopkins University.

[23] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015).

[24] Khanal, Gopal, (2013). TVET Policy; Sinha, Ramswarup, (2013). TVET policies in developing countries, TVET Development Journal, Kathmandu, Nepal.

[25] Ministry of Education, (2013).

3.3   Financial Support to SSRP

The cost of the SSRP in its current form is estimated at USD 4.04 billion over the seven year period. The estimated funding available from the Government of Nepal (GoN) amounts to USD 3.148 billion, or 78% of the total budget – i.e. leaving a funding gap of USD 892 million.[26]

At the design stage, the total estimated cost of the SSRP were USD 2.62 billion for the first 5 years and USD 4.04 billion for the total 7 years.[27] However, the extension document states that the two-year extension would cost around USD 1.8 billion which would make the total estimation equal to USD 4.42 billion for the 7 years.

The DPs' share in the total budget was USD 500 million (5 years) and USD 700 million (7 years).[28] However, there was insufficient analysis on the size and composition of the budget versus the available resources. As of the end of FY 2014/15, over the previous 6 years of the SSRP, GoN had received USD 704.58 million from DPs in its foreign currency account. The increase in DPs' contribution was due to several factors, manly a) Australia's additional support to school safety (USD 3.3 million), b) higher committed disbursement by ADB (USD 7.1 million), and c) and some overlapping of the additional funding pledged by the World Bank, of USD 100 million for the period 2013-2016.

Tables 1 and 2 provide information on pooling partners' contributions and current commitments.

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[26] Ministry of Education, School Sector Reform Plan (2009), p. 3.

[27] Annex 7: Budget Share of GoN and DPs in the SSRP 2009-2015, (2015).

[28] Evaluation of the current EU budget support and formulation of the next EU budget support programme to Education sector in Nepal, (2015).

Table 1: DPs' SSRP Commitment versus Disbursement (until 16/07/2016)

	Agreement Currency	Commitment, in Agreement Currency	Commitment, in USD	Disbursement, in USD	Percentage of Disbursement
ADB	SDR	16,092,000	25,345,221		
	USD	70,000,000	70,000,000		
	USD	3,299,982	3.299.982		
	USD	65,000,000	65,000,000		
	Total		**163,645,203**	**163,645,203**	
AusAid[29]	AUD	19,000,000	18,742,000		
	Total	**19,000,000**	**18,742,000**	**21,791,956**	**116**
Denmark	DKK	220,000,000	38,796,900		
	DKK	125,000,000	22,043,700		
	DKK	30,000,000	5,290,000		
	DKK	9,260,000	1,633,000		
	Total	**324,260,000**	**58,682,922**	**58,682,92**	**100**
EU/DFID[30]	EUR	26,000,000	31,980,000		
	EUR	31,600,000	37,920,000		
	EUR	31,200,000	37,440,000		
	Total		**107,340,000**	**68,833,968**	**98**
FTI-Catalytic	USD	20,000,00	120,000,000		
	Total	**120,000,000**	**120,000,000**	**117,814,492**	**98**
Finland[31]	EUR	16,000,000			
	Total	16,000,000		28,758,549	
Norway[32]	NOK	219,000,000	37,953,693		
	Total	**219,000,000**	**37,953,693**	**43,814,260**	**115**
UNICEF	USD	1,500,000	1,500,000		
	Total	**1,500,000**	**1,500,000**	**1,308,487**	**87**
World Bank	SDR	46,100,000	71,500,000		
	SDR	37,700,000	58,500,000		
	USD	45,000,000	45,000,000		
	USD	55,000,000	55,000,000		
	Total		**230,000,000**	**199,455,429**	**86**
DPs Total			***763,063,776***	***704,105,270***	***92***

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[29] There may be an additional agreement.
[30] There may be an additional agreement. No documents available on EU vs. DFID shares.
[31] There may be an additional agreement.
[32] Until January 2015.

Table 2: DPs' Commitments for 2014 - 2016[33]

	DPs' Tentative Commitment 2014/2015, in National Currency (million)	DPs' Tentative Commitment 2014/2015, in USD (million)	DPs' Tentative Commitment 2015/16, in USD (million)	SSRP Extension Period, in USD (million)
SSRP Pooling Development Partners				
ADB	USD10.00	10.00	20.00	30.00
Australia	AUS 2.00	1.86	1.5	3.36
Denmark	DKK 0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
EU	EUR 12.10	16.57	11.4	27.97
GPE	USD 2.3	2.30	41.5	43.80
Finland	EUR 5.00	6.81	2.3	9.11
Norway	NOK 60.00	10.20	5.2	15.40
UNICEF	USD 0.50	0.50	0.50	1.00
World Bank	USD 45.00	45.00	22.00	67.00
JICA	YEN 300.00	2.94	2.4	5.34
Sub Total		**96.18**	**106.8**	**202.98**
SSRP Non-Pooling Development Partners				
JICA	Yen 310.00	3.04	0.4	3.44
WFP	USD 6.00	6.00	7.6	13.6
USAID	USD 1.10	1.10	1.40	2.50
UNICEF	USD1 1.7	1.70	1.6	2.30
UNESCO	n/a	n/a	0.7	0.7
Sub total		**11.84**	**11.7**	**22.54**
Total		**108.02**	**118.5**	**226.52**

There have been shifts in the balance of contributions to the pool fund since the outset of the SSRP, with DPs entering, leaving, increasing or reducing their support at various points. The data and information on commitment versus disbursement collected by the evaluation team are tabulated in Annex 7. DPs' fulfilment of their commitments, together with some additional amounts on budget support, have contributed to the implementation of the SSRP reforms and capacity enhancement of the implementing national institutions. The analysis of available data about commitment versus disbursed amount shows that DPs have met their initial commitments to the SSRP implementation.

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33 Joint Annual Review (JAR), (2015), Aide Memoire.

Even though DPs have fulfilled their commitments, the percentage of their financial support over the years has been decreasing while the total amount has continuously increased. This difference between the increasing total amount and the decreasing percentage is due to an overall increasing budget of the national education sector. This seems to be a positive indication for financial sustainability.

Table 3: GoN and DPs' Shares in SSRP

Nepali FY	Gregorian FY	SSRP Budget, NPR billion	GoN's share, NPR billion	DPs' share, NPR billion	Percentage of GoN's share in SSRP	Percentage of DPs' share in SSRP
2066/67	2009/10	30.28	23.42	6.86	77.34%	22.66%
2067/68	2010/11	46.87	36.27	10.6	77.39%	22.61%
2068/69	2011/12	51.92	38.47	13.45	74.10%	25.90%
2069/70	2012/13	51.98	37.76	14.22	72.65%	27.35%
2070/71	2013/14	67.09	56.43	10.66	84.10%	15.90%
2071/72	2014/15	69.43	60.89	8.54	87.70%	12.30%

Figure 1: Trend in share GoN and Development Partners per year
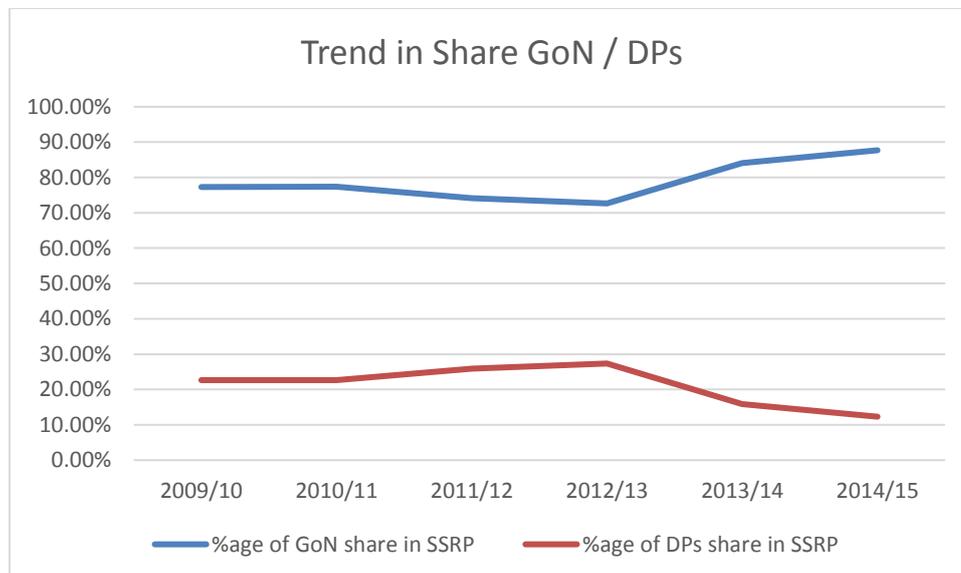
4   EFFECTIVENESS OF SSRP

SSRP is the latest in a series of increasingly ambitious school reform programmes. SSRP is by design ambitious; it has initiated changes at the legislative level, but also addressed questions related to quality through equity in enrolment. Considerable achievements have been made during the six-year review period.

In line with the constitution, in the SSRP rationale, education is considered as a basic human right. It is fee-free and textbooks are provided free of cost. Thus compulsory basic education is viewed as an entitlement for children and strategies have been developed to capture out-of-school kids and kids who are at risk of dropping out. These strategies were designed by category and by location through diverse action programmes.[34] Even though the free and compulsory education policy has de jure been implemented, de facto it has not yet fully materialised.[35]

The main change in the SSRP from the former EFA programme was the shift from primary (grades 1-5) to basic education (grades 1-8) with the aim to achieve universal access under the fee and compulsory basic education (FCBE) policy.

The focus of SSRP lays in the primary grades, including early childhood education and development (ECED). The programme intended to generalise one year of pre-primary education among all children, therewith reaching out to all 4-5-year old children, which would increase equity in access through targeted support.

To allow for targeted support, SSRP's core document gives a comprehensive list of the categories for disadvantaged and excluded children. Towards the end of the programme in December 2014, a consolidated equity strategy with further programmes and interventions has been designed.[36]

Next to the above mentioned interventions, SSRP implemented many additional programmes. These are: the minimum enabling conditions, the continuous assessment system (CAS), the early grade reading programme (EGRP), national assessment of student achievement (NASA), multi language education (MLE), enforcement of soft skills, scholarship support, teacher management and redeployment, school mergers and school safety.

SSRP also introduced a governance reform, community mobilisation, social audit and service delivery programmes. With regards to the teacher professional development

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[34] Action programmes run for longer periods and show tangible change.

[35] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015).

[36] Consolidated Equity Strategy, Ministry of Education, Department of Education, (2014).

(TPD), a cascade model[37] was introduced where the resource centres (RC) were used as training institutes, where teachers were listed as potential trainers.

4.1   Achievement in Main Indicators

The evaluation team assessed the SSRP achievement against the key SSRP indicators, which are the base-year status and the 2015/16 targets.[38] Driven by the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) agenda as well as the EFA goal for ECED, the results of the SSRP in ECED and primary education are a continuation of trends already established through the EFA programme. Gains for the entire basic level (grades 1-8) have increased more markedly during the SSRP phase, alongside with those for lower secondary education. These trends suggest a positive effect of the expansion of attention to the entire school sector.

During the SSRP period, an increase in access especially in ECED and basic education are found, accompanied by attainment of gender parity and the narrowing of social disparities.[39] Survival rates and participation increased, including among marginalised caste and ethnic groups, such as Dalits. The number of out-of-school children (OOSC) also decreased.[40]

The indicators also show remarkable progress in the literacy rate, in the student-teacher ratio, in an increased number of trained teachers, an improved systemic efficiency to deliver goods and services to schools, as well as in the reduction of repetition rates and in higher NER at different grades.[41] The NER for basic education of 87,5% is already over the SSRP intended target of 85%. Given the difficult political context[42], progress on these indicators represents a significant achievement.[43]

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[37] A cascade training model means master trainers are trained, they train teacher trainers and the teacher trainers in turn train teachers.

[38] Ministry of Education, School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2015).

[39] Seel, Amanda and Bajracharya, Bhuban, (2015). Evaluation of the current education budget support and formulation of the next EU budget support programme to education sector in Nepal. Final Report. Submitted to European Union, Nepal.

[40] National Campaign for Education (NCE), 2015.

[41] National Campaign for Education (NCE), 2015.

[42] In this report, difficult political context refers to the political uncertainty surrounding the writing of the new constitution which left the political scene without consensus. There were Madhesi strikes and Indian blockades.

[43] Ministry of Education, (2014); GoN (2012).

Table 4: Progress in Access Indicators over the SSRP Period[44]

	(Start of SSRP) 2009/10	2013/14	2014/15	SSRP Target	(Start of SSRP) 2009/10
Primary (grades 1-5) NER	93.7%	95.6%	96.2%	99%	93.7%
Basic (grades 1-8) NER	83,2%	86.3%	87.6%	85%	83,2%
Secondary (grades 9-12) NER	23.9%	33.2%	34.7%	40%	23.9%
Primary (grade 5) Survival Rate	77,9%	85.4%	86.8%	90%	77,9%
Basic (grade 8) Survival Rate	62%	72.2%	74.6%	76%	62%
Percentage of OOSC in 5-12yr. Age Group	21%	11%	Na	Not SSRTarget	21%
ECED NER	63%	76.7%	87.6%	93	96
Percentage of grade 1 children with ECED experience	11%	35%	56.9%	59.6	64%
	(Start of EFA) 2004	(Start of SSRP) 2009/10	2013/14	2014/15	SSRP Target
Primary (grades 1-5) NER	83.5	91.9%	95.6%	96.2%	99%
Basic (grades 1-8) NER		75%	86.6%	87.6%	85%
Secondary (grades 9-12) NER		23.9%	33.2%	34.6%	40%
Primary (grade 5) Survival Rate		58%	85.4%	86.8%	90%
Basic (grade 8) Survival Rate		41%	72.1%	74.6%	76%
Percentage of OOSC in 5-12yr. Age Group		21%	11%	NA	NA
ECED NER	63%	76.7%	87.6%	93	96
Percentage of grade 1 children with ECED experience	11%	35%	56.9%	59.6	64%

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44 School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) extension document.

Table 5: NER at Primary, Lower Secondary and Basic Level[45], 2010-2014

School Year	School Level	Net Enrolment Rate		
		Girls	Boys	Total
2010	Primary	93.6	95.3	94.5
	Lower secondary	68.5	70	69.3
	Basic	85.1	86.8	86
2011	Primary	94.5	95.6	95.1
	Lower secondary	69.5	70.5	70
	Basic	86.1	87	86.6
2012	Primary	94.7	95.9	95.3
	Lower secondary	71.8	72.6	72.2
	Basic	87	87.9	87.5
2013	Primary	95	96.2	95.6
	Lower secondary	73.5	71.7	72.6
	Basic	86.3	86.4	86.3
2014	Primary	95.7	96.6	96.2
	Lower secondary	75.5	73.8	74.6
	Basic	87.6	87.7	87.6

While the NER have been continuously rising, not all SSRP indicators show equal developments. The percentage of the education budget channelled to primary education, for instance, has been decreasing. While this finding must not lead to the conclusion that the focus on primary education has lost some of its importance, the figures indeed show that, having secured equal access in primary education, the government has diverted some of its attention towards secondary and higher education.

Another finding is the decrease from 98,4% to 54,3% in the percentage of teachers with required qualification and training between 2012 and 2014/15 - a figure which needs further analysis. Furthermore, the pupil-teacher ratio has also risen from 26.9 to 28.5, a trend which would also require further analysis.

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[45] Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 41. At basic level, the numbers of lower secondary age children enrolled at primary level are not considered in the calculation of GER and NER indicators.

Table 6: SSRP Achievements in the Education Sector[46]

	Indicator	Achievements (in years)				Targets 2015
		2001	2006	2012	2014/ 2015	
1	GER of ECD/ Pre-primary education	12.8	41.4	73.7	77.7	80
2	Percentage of new entrants at Grade 1 with ECD/PPE experiences	7.8	18.3	55.6	59.6	80
3	Gross Intake Rate at Grade 1	122.9	148	137.7	137	102
4	Net Intake Rate at Grade 1		86	91.2	93	98
5	Gross Enrolment Rate of primary level	124.7	138.8	130.1	134.4	105
6	Net Enrolment Rate of primary level	81.1	87.4	95.3	96.2	100
7	Percentage GNP channelled to primary education	1.8	2.0	2.0	4,2	2.5
8	Percentage of education budget to basic education			64.53	54.3	
9	Percentage of teachers with required qualification and training	15	60	98.4	89.3	100
10	Percentage of teachers with required certification or license		100	100	100	100
11	Pupil-teacher ratio	39.9	46.0	26.9	28.5	30
12	Repetition Rate					
	Grade 1	38.7	29.8	19.9	15.2	10
	Grade 5	9	10.4	5.3	5.3	8
13	Survival Rate to Grade 5	65.8	80.3	84.1	86.8	90
14	Coefficient of efficiency	60.0			0.73	80
15	Percentage of Learning Achievement at Grade 3: Mathematics, Nepali			59.4, 62.6 (47)	54.1, 55.2 (48)	
16	Percentage of Learning Achievement at Grade 5: Mathematics, Nepali, English	40		53.3, 59.7, 53.6 (49)	52.1, 55.1, 51.4, (50)	80

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46 Department of Education, (2014).

47 Ministry of Education, (2012), National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA).

48 Government of Nepal, Flash Report II.

49 Ministry of Education, (2012), National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA).

50 Government of Nepal, Flash Report II.

Indicator		Achievements (in years)				Targets 2015
		2001	2006	2012	2014/ 2015	
17	Percentage of Learning Achievement at Grade 8, 2011 and 2013 Mathematics, Nepali, Social Studies			43, 49, 47 [51] 35, 48, 41 [52]	49.6, 55.6, 57.3 [53]	
18	Literacy Rate					
	Age Group 15-24	70		84.7	91	95
	Age Group 6+ years	54		67.2	65.9	90
19	Literacy Gender Parity Index (15+ years)	0.6		0.7	0.76	1.0

Both the NASA and the Flash reports show developments of learning achievements in different educational stages. Note, however, that the NASA and Flash report data should not be compared, as they are derive from different assessment studies with different methodologies.

Between 2011 and 2013, the achievements have decreased for grade 8. Unfortunately, the NASA report could not provide reasons behind such downfall and referred to the necessity to enquire additional data to fully understand the causes of such as trend. In the report of 2011, the achievement level of the students has been found to be decreasing gradually between knowledge levels in the cognitive domain.[54]

The first objective of SSRP to increase access and equity has been achieved in most areas. Access to ECED, primary, basic and secondary education, as well as to non-formal education (NFE) has improved substantially. Equity in gender parity has also been fairly achieved, yet still noting significant disparities for disabled children and children from specific castes.

The following sub-chapters will outline SSRP achievements by domains of intervention.[55]

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[51] Ministry of Education, (2012), National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA).

[52] Ministry of Education, (2012), National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA).

[53] Government of Nepal, Flash Report II.

[54] From knowledge level to comprehension level, to application level and finally to higher ability level

[55] Ministry of Education, (2014).School Sector Reform SWAp Extension Plan, p. 3 ff.; and Government of Nepal, (2014). Flash Report I 2014-2015; and Ministry of Education, (2013). Annual educational status report FY (2013-2014); and Government of Nepal, (2013). Flash Report II 2013-14; and Ministry of Education, (2013). The Consolidated Report 2013-2014.

4.2 Access and Equity

4.3 Geographical Equity

Despite the SSRP interventions, there is still a regional disparity in students' enrolments and their learning achievements. There is also a disparity in the student-teacher ratio (STR). For instance, in 2014, the average STR in community schools was 26:1 at primary level, 42:1 at lower secondary level, and 29:1 at basic level (based on approved teachers' position).[56] The Terai belt shows strong deviations from this average, with an STR of 41:1 at primary level, 60:1 at lower secondary level, and 45:1 at basic level. The lowest STR is found in the Kathmandu Valley, with 15:1 at primary level, 20:1 at lower secondary level, and 17:1 at basic level.[57] While the overall STR has reduced over the years in all regions, the regional disparities have not varied substantially.

1. To address the disparity, a consolidated equity strategy for the school education sector has been developed. The main objectives of this strategy are to reduce the current disparities in (i) access & participation and (ii) learning outcomes for children in basic and secondary public education in Nepal. This is envisioned to be achieved through a two-fold approach, by (i) the Development of an Equity in Education Index at national, district and local level, using both school sector data and population data, and (ii) by consolidation and further targeting of current strategies deployed by the Government and Development Partners (including I/NGOs and CSOs) to strengthen an equity/need based approach.

4.3.1 Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED)

SSRP promoted both school-based and community-based ECED programmes of one year for 4-5 year-old children. All centres are managed through a community-based approach and funded through local governments, which is intended to ensure close inter-sector support to different aspects of young children development. District education offices are responsible for the provision and training of facilitators, as well as the material and technical support. Where local governments are not fully functional, local schools channel the funds and act as the cost centres for ECED. Overall, the ECED programme contributed substantially to improve comprehensive early childhood care and education.[58] In order to underpin this statement, the following facts should be considered:

- Over 11,500 ECED/PPC have been established during the SSRP period covering over 73% of the population. This corresponds to 44% more ECED/PPC centres than at the beginning of the period and to a 20% increase in student enrolment. Out of the total 35.121 ECD/PPC, 5.087 (14.5%) are established as pre-primary classes in primary schools and the remaining 30.034 (85.5%) are functioning in community schools and community based ECDs.

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[56] Government of Nepal, Flash Report I.

[57] Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 67.

[58] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015), and UNICEF, (2011).

- Successful expansion of ECED/PPC in the country has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of students entering grade 1 with ECED/PPC background, from 36% in 2008 to 59.6%, with 60.5% for girls and 59.1% for boys in 2014.

- The GER of ECD/PPC has increased from 63% in the base year 2008/09 to 77.7% in the target year 2013-2014. The ECD/PPC facilities have been expanded to achieve the target of 79% GER in ECD/PPCs and 59% of children with ECD/PPC experience in grade 1 as the new enrolment for the school year 2013-14.[59]

- On average one ECD/PPC is serving 29 children. The highest ECD/PPC to child ratio is in the Terai (40:1) followed by the Valley (36:1) and the lowest is in the Hill (26:1). There are 28 districts with more than a 25:1 ECD/PPC to child ratio.[60]

Considering this impressive expansion, one should note that the expansion has taken place with insufficient attention to quality. Many ECED centres face issues of identification, training, support and salary of suitable ECED facilitators as well as issues with the quality of the physical environment and provision of basic equipment and play material.[61]

4.3.2   Free and Compulsory Primary Education

The full implementation of free and compulsory primary education has not been realised yet. Free and compulsory education has been practiced in selected Village Development Committees (VDC) only[62]. For example in Hatiya, VDC of the Makawanpur district, only six out-of-school children could be integrated into the school system. The SSRP MTR observed that the approach to equity was "piecemeal and fragmented"[63], and it recommended the development of a comprehensive strategy, including addressing gender beyond numerical parity, as per the recommendations of a gender audit undertaken for the MTR. In response, a consolidated equity strategy (CES), starting from a needs analysis, was developed. The CES includes a further categorisation of educational disadvantaged children, the specific barriers that are faced by these defined groups and a matching of potential strategies. For example, the CES developed a comprehensive strategy for inclusion of children with disabilities, prioritising mainstreaming within regular classrooms as far as possible. The CES also gives the possibility of district ranking according pre-defined criteria and to measure equity-related progress and challenges.

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[59] Government of Nepal, (2014). Flash Report I 2014-2015.

[60] Government of Nepal, (2014). Flash Report I 2014-2015.

[61] Journal of Early Childhood Development Volume VI, (2013), Tribhuvan University, Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID) Kathmandu, Nepal.

[62] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015)

[63] Ministry of Education, (2012).School Sector Reform Programme Review.

Some specific strategies to increase access and equity during SSRP were, among others:

- Scholarships;
- School meal or snack;
- Construction of primary and basic education classrooms;
- An annual Welcome to School campaign at the beginning of the school year.

Whilst scholarships and other incentives are likely to have a positive effect, the funding schemes could be made more effective. The scholarship distribution programmes follow a blanket approach and hence do not ensure the access of the children at risk.[64] UNESCO[65] and two Formative Research Studies[66] on scholarships recommend that other very poor and disadvantaged children need equally be considered. The most challenging issue would seem to be one of achieving effective targeting, given the very complex socio-economic environment. Recommendations in the EFA Final Evaluation of streamlining the scholarships were not taken up, and instead the number of types of funding schemes has increased to 12. Most scholarships are exclusively for Dalits, while one scholarship programme is targeted at girls. The remaining scholarships are dedicated to disadvantaged Janajati groups, poor students, and students with disabilities. Flash and EMIS data are used to guide distribution and the DoE has recently developed integrated scholarship guidelines to guide districts and schools in the use of the different kinds of scholarship.[67]

The Public Expenditure Tracking Survey[68] finds that at the basic level, the poorest 20% of students receive 35% of education expenditure, due to scholarships and their concentration in community schools. There is international evidence that direct subsidies to the poorest can be necessary and effective in reaching the last 5% and inculcating a habit of educational participation in first generation learners. The PETS[69] found good compliance: 98% of Dalits received scholarships and 76% of girls. This approach ensures better distribution among all eligible students. At the school level, it would also be necessary to share out available scholarship funds to all eligible children.

Providing a school meal or snack also has positive effects on access. Studies suggest that strategies such as free uniform, stationery and snacks are particularly effective, easier to manage than scholarships, and have the advantage to be less easily misused.[70]

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64 Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

65 UNESCO, (2006).

66 Formative research was undertaken by CERID in collaboration with MoE with Norwegian support.

67 Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

68 World Bank, (2014). Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS).

69 World Bank, (2014). Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS).

70 UNESCO, (2009). Education for All (EFA) mid decade assessment South Asia.

The SSRP increased access by encouraging the setting up of small feeder multi-grade schools (covering grades 1-3) to serve areas of sparse population or difficult terrain[71]. There has also been refurbishment and new construction of primary and basic education classrooms, targeting areas such as in the Terai. This construction, using a co-funding modality of district construction grants combined with community contributions, has contributed to the improved enrolment rates, as well as increasing community motivation. However, note that the burden of co-funding seems to fall more heavily on the rural poor.[72]

There is also considerable variation in the quality of construction, the government trying to build lots of new spaces, emphasising quantity instead of quality.[73] Although understandable, this practice has to be seriously discouraged. The latest earthquake caused considerable damage to schools and ECED centres, and demonstrates the necessity to construct safe and strong schools. The SSRP MTR also reported some concerns over procurement irregularities and overall costs.[74] Some of these concerns have been addressed through the WB-led support aimed at improving public financial management.

An annual Welcome to School campaign at the beginning of the school year has been institutionalised across the country. This has seemingly helped to bring children in, but with variable success in increasing retention, depending on local factors. Additional intensive advocacy activities to encourage enrolment and seeking to overcome attitudinal barriers to education have been implemented in specific districts or communities. The government has also established partnerships with national and local media to advocate on educational rights and values. Many NGOs and CSOs support these initiatives at the district and community level.[75] While these interventions have had considerable impact on enrolment, the main problem seems to be keeping children in school over longer periods of time. Once they are in school, the quality of teaching and learning has to convince them to continue.

There is still a considerable group of out-of-school children (OOSC) of which 4% is considered to be extreme cases and difficult to reach, as well as an unknown percentage of children with disabilities (CWD). For this reason, the data needs to be produced for an evidence based strategy for integrating OOSC and CWD in the context of the new equity strategy. In order to reach the OOSC, the following strategies can be useful:

- Design effective open and distance learning programme with the help of available media. At least one capable school of each VDC/Municipality might initiate this programme.

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[71] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

[72] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

[73] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

[74] Ministry of Education, (2012).School Sector Reform Programme Mid Term Review.

[75] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

- Employ mobile teachers who will be accountable to create a learning culture for these OOSC. Create volunteer mobile groups from among the teachers, parents, and students.

- Implement the dual mode in education that enrols the children in one mode and in the next mode the school runs its regular programme. This programme can be expanded according to the needs and interests of the people concerned.

- Support and create awareness on the value of education amongst the parents.

- Make more funding available for further education of neo-literates.

- Design a coherent and comprehensive approach to wider inclusive education in practice.

All strategies and programmes should be as tailor made as possible and based upon the identified needs of the OOSC.

4.3.3 Gender Parity

Gender parity in school education has significantly increased, with gender parity having already been reached in all three levels – primary, basic and secondary.[76] The number of girls in SLC exam is even surpassing that of boys. Gender parity index (GPI) in GER by level is 1.09 at primary level, 1.05 at lower secondary level and 1.08 at basic level. Likewise, the GPI in NER by level is 0.99 at primary level, 1.02 at lower secondary level and 1.00 at basic level.

The female teacher ratio at primary level has also increased from 35% in 2008 to 41.5% in 2012. Nevertheless, the proportion of female teachers decreased in the higher levels of education. At the beginning of the school year 2014-2015 it was 41.9% at primary level, 27.6% at lower secondary level and 38.8% at basic level.[77]

4.3.4 Inclusion of Children with Disabilities

The consolidated equity strategy (CES) states a lack of data on children with disabilities. The Flash Report for the year 2014/15 shows that children with variable disabilities are represented in school. According to available documents and interviews, children with disabilities are over-represented amongst the out-of-school children (OOSC). Additionally, it has been pointed out that many children with hidden difficulties remain unsupported within the school system, at high risk of dropout. Unfortunately, no targets have yet been set for improving the enrolment of disabled children.[78]

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[76] Government of Nepal, (2014). Flash Reports I and II 2014-2015.

[77] Government of Nepal, (2014). Flash Reports I and II 2014-2015.

[78] Various UNICEF/UNESCO studies, EFA Global Monitoring Report 2015.

Findings from the Joint Evaluation of Nepal's Education for All 2004-2009 Report in eight study districts reveal considerable variation in special provision for disabled children through resource units. Jhapa has over 100 disabled students (blind, deaf and physically handicapped) in 17 classes in 11 schools, Surkhet and Mahottori have nine classes each (also for blind, deaf and physically handicapped), Siraha has just two classes (both for deaf students) whilst Mugu has only one class, with just seven students.[79] Progress on integrating disabled children directly into mainstream education has been slow, mainly due to capacity constraints. Studies showed that, of the disabled children enrolled in education, only 17% are in secondary level, while mainly in rural areas.[80] Furthermore, there is a range of programmes, often NGO-supported programmes to facilitate the access of more disadvantaged children, notably street children, those affected by trafficking or HIV/AIDS and conflict-affected/IDP children. Nonetheless, Nepal still lacks a coherent and comprehensive practical approach to a wider inclusive education.

Flash I report 2014-15 shows that pupils with major disabilities represent 1,1% of the total enrolment at primary level, 0,9% at lower secondary, 1.04% at basic level and 0,77% in lower secondary schools. Rather than identify changes from year to year, action-oriented questions should provide the basis for intervention: What level of disability can be catered for in the school? Is special equipment needed and what are the costs? Is special training of teachers needed and what are the costs? How would a disabled child-friendly infrastructure look like? What kind of educational material is needed?

4.3.5   Mainstreaming of Religious Schools

Some progress has been made in enabling religious schools (i.e. Madrasa, Gumba/ Vihar and Gurukuls/ Ashrams) to register with DEO and obtain government funding and access to the national curriculum and textbooks.[81] This approach has helped identify religious schools, and integrate children visiting these schools more systematically into the system (including, by collecting data on these schools). This has been an important step as these children often appear to come from very poor backgrounds. However there remain important practical challenges in terms of the registration process and the extent to which the national curriculum can be integrated within the schools' own curriculum and ethos. A key challenge is to ensure sufficient additional funding and support as to make registering as a school worthwhile.

Challenges vary across different religious schools. For Madrasa, the students are supposed to learn 4-5 languages simultaneously, i.e. Arabic as Koran language, Urdu as their mother tongue, Hindi as Molvi's language (in many cases because they are from

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[79] This data is probably outdated but it gives an idea of the situation.

[80] Ministry of Education, (2014).

[81] 475 Muslim Madrasas; 78 Buddhist Gumbas, and 72 Hindu Ashrams have been registered so far.

India), a local language, Nepali as main national language, and English as international language. This is true also for scripts, which are in Urdu, Devangari, and English. Next to facing various languages, Muslim students also face the difficulty of bridging religious learning with textbook learning, which can sometimes be contradictory. This problem is not yet fully acknowledged by authorities.[82]

4.3.6 Alternative, Non-formal and Literacy Programmes

The non-formal education programme is being implemented through a campaign helping to identify illiterates and to recruit facilitators. The strategy has already yielded results, reducing the number of targeted illiterates from 57.000 down to 17.000.[83] According to NFEC there are currently 390.000 illiterates to be made literate in Nepal. Another consequence of this campaign was an improved regularity of students in the programmes and an increased interest of adults for learning. Data about illiteracy is reasonably reliable, as it can be double checked against national data on non-literate individuals per household. The scale of implementation has varied across districts, depending on perceived needs and demand but also on the availability of NGOs to cover facilitator salaries and technical assistance.

There have been district competitions to make all the non-literate adults (15-60) literate and declare the district as a literate district. The SSRP fund is supposed to provide further education and skills for the neo-literates. The availability of provisions and funding is very limited, as the starting point is almost zero, especially considering the high number which these programmes have to address.

The MoE argued in favour of such programme, by stating that "developing life skills and enhancing functional literacy, focusing on the female and disadvantaged population is a need of the day".[84] This, however, demands a well-coordinated effort with local governments which has yet to take place.[85]

4.4 Quality and Relevance

International experience shows that investments in educational quality do not lead as directly to visible results as compared to investments in access and equity. [86] This can partially be explained by that fact that the indicators for access are easier to measure

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[82] Interview Dr. Bidya, Nath.

[83] National Campaign for Education (NCED), (2015).

[84] Ministry of Education, (2013).

[85] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015).

[86] UNESCO, (2015). Education for All Report, 2000-2015: Achievements and Challenges, Global Monitoring Report, states e.g.: A third of countries have achieved all of the measurable EFA goals, just over half of countries achieved Universal Primary Enrolment.

than indicators for quality. The impact relations between actions (e.g. teacher training) and expected results (e.g. improved economic situation after leaving school, better health and social skills) are no straight cause-effect lines.

Attitude changes of teachers as well as process orientation in teaching and learning, are necessary in order to pave the way for in-depth, locally owned quality development.[87] Quality is a complex field which does not only concern the core teaching-learning process and the quality of the material, but also includes competencies and ethos of teachers, a safe and child-friendly school environment, absence of emergency situations such as earthquakes or other natural catastrophes, absence of sickness, diseases and hunger, absence of severe psychological problems and burdens, as well as absence of extreme political conflict situations.[88]

As was concluded in the BPEP II evaluation, enhancing quality of learning and teaching remains a challenge. Without further considerable improvements in teachers' confidence and competence to use a range of appropriate methods, it will be difficult to make meaningful impact on students. This is especially true for children with disabilities, children from linguistic minorities, or disadvantaged children. Important components to improve the quality of education are, among others, teacher training, curriculum development, adapted textbooks, and improved learning environments. The relative lack of progress observed during the SSRP in quality education can be related to insufficient conceptualisation, prioritisation and resourcing for quality.[89]

4.4.1   Minimum Enabling Conditions

The School Sector Reform Plan stated that there will be a provision of minimum enabling condition in all schools.[90] In this regard, a framework for minimum enabling conditions was provided, which gives the local authorities a benchmark to determine their own norms. Guidelines for the 25 different components of enabling conditions are provided. These components include among others:

- Physical environment,
- Number of students in a school,
- Furniture,
- Educational environment,
- Teacher-student ratio,
- Minimum number of teachers,

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[87]   Data show that, e.g., that China, Bangladesh and India progressed more in quality education than Nepal. Annex 10.

[88]   OECD, (2005). School factors related to quality and equity.

[89]   Government of Nepal, (2009). Flash Reports 2009-2015; and Ministry of Education, (2013), National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA). Results of Student achievement in Mathematics, Nepali and Social Studies in the Year 2011.

[90]   Ministry of Education, (2009). School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015, Nepal, p. 79.

- Instructional Provisions (e.g. the Medium of Instruction),

- Teacher preparation,

- Child friendly approach,

- Continuous Assessment System (CAS),

- Multi-grade teaching, curriculum and textbook,

- Educational material,

- Local curriculum,

- Teacher professional development,

- Head Teacher Management and Development,

- Certification and Examination System,

- School Management and Operation (including e.g. minimum school/class days, minimum teacher days/time in school/classroom).

To ensure implementation, the DoE has agreed on 5 Prioritised Minimum Enabling Condition Indicators (PMEC) to be implemented in all community schools.[91] These include the condition of school buildings, provision of adequate classrooms, separate toilets for girls and boys a playground, whereas the learning environment include availability of qualified and trained teachers, curriculum and textbook, teacher's time for their tasks and extra-curricular activities.

4.4.2   Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED)

Although it is proved that ECED contributes to success and retention in primary education, it has not yet been attributed the respective importance as an integral part of the formal education system. It is still underfunded and has not yet been taken up by everyone. Many ECED centres face problems of identification, training, support and salary of suitable ECED facilitators. Also the quality of the facilities is low, while basic equipment and play material are not provided.

Expanding access ahead of quality is particularly risky at the ECED stage since inappropriate provision can be detrimental to the children's development and deter kids from school before they have barely begun.[92] The issues surrounding ECED have been discussed in detail in the EFA Final Evaluation and in the SSRP MTR. Whilst some shortfalls in provision might have been inevitable at the early stages of the ECED expansion, there is now an urgent need to focus on ensuring quality. While continuing to expand, additional attention should be provided to equity question, prioritising remote

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[91] Republica, (12 Dec 2012). http://www.educatenepal.com/news/detail/minimum-priorities-for-public-schools-scaled-back, 9.1.2016.

[92] Belsky, J., (2004). Child Care and Its Impact on Young Children (0-2). In: Tremblay, R.E., R.G. Barr and R.; DeV. Peters (Eds.) Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development [online]. Montreal, Quebec: Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development.

areas and marginalised groups. Unless political will and extra funding are provided, it will be difficult to address these challenges.

4.4.3   Curriculum, Textbooks and Educational Material

A first national curriculum framework has been adopted in 2007. Though some teachers have attended orientation sessions for the new curriculum, the majority of teachers have not been provided the comprehensive training required to understand how to implement the new curriculum. Furthermore, the design of SSRP did not propose a system of regular monitoring of the changes in teaching and learning practices. Lastly, inadequate attention was given to measuring the quality of the curriculum.

In addition to the curriculum for primary grades, during the BPEP period the curriculum development centre (CDC) developed competency-based curricula for grade 6-12.[93] More recently the CDC developed early grade reading material with the help of non-pooling DPs. According to the CDC staff, the SWAp approach to funding created problems in receiving money on time and hence the programmes were delayed. Presentation of the financial monitoring report (FMR) per 13 SSRP budget headings were not directly linked to programme activities, which has caused problems in assessing value for money.

The primary education project[94] introduced a new competency-based curriculum for grade 8, which is being implemented throughout the nation, while the curriculum for grade 9 is being piloted. Soft skills of grade 6-8 students have been piloted in 100 schools. Accordingly, the curricula of these grades have been updated and the new grade 6 curricula are already in implementation. For grade 9-10, soft skills are now incorporated in the curriculum of six compulsory subjects; currently being piloted in 80 schools. Piloting of the vocational stream of secondary education started in FY 2012/13 in 99 schools of 71 districts.[95] According to the DEO, more curricular revisions are in process.[96]

The design of SSRP paid inadequate attention to the measurement of quality and to the curriculum.[97] Based on the results of NASA, the curriculum should have been improved but this was not done. CDC personnel mentioned that inadequate attention was given to the assessment of the quality of the curriculum.

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[93] Schools are to be considered as 6-12 grades. The education amendment Bill has been submitted to the parliamentary committee for their final approval. Once it is done then this provision will be legalised. However, the informal groundwork has been done to link the curricula of higher secondary and school education.

[94] Primary Education Project (PEP), (1987-92).

[95] Annual Education Status Report, FY 2013-2014.

[96] Department of Education, Dr. Bidya Nath. It could not be made clear which curricula this statement refers to.

[97] Ministry of Education, (2012).School Sector Reform Programme Review.

Regarding textbooks and educational materiel, respondents mentioned that there is only slow improvement in the timely arrival of textbooks since the change in the distribution, which include the change from central procurement to local procurement, the mixed of government and private providers', as well as the use of SIP funding.[98] It was envisaged that the involvement of private providers in the printing and distribution of textbooks would speed up the process. While textbooks are still distributed with delays, there have been improvements and it is assumed that efficiency will gradually increase. Textbook availability strongly enhances teaching effectiveness. The schools which received the books in time have increased between 2010 and 2014 by more or less 20 percentage points from 72,5% to 76,1%.[99]

Textbook shortage is a recurring problem throughout the country, especially at the start of every academic year. There is no well-developed monitoring system which can track gaps in the printing and distribution process (TPDP). Janak Educational Material Centre (JEMC) and private printers are responsible for both textbook production and distribution. JEMC prints 60% of the total textbooks, while private printers produce the remaining 40%. JEMC has legal authority to distribute textbooks for grades 1 to 10 throughout the country, while private printers are limited to certain regions, districts, and classes. 19 private printers were assigned to print and distribute textbooks for the academic year 2013/14. Due to the lack of available data for monitoring, the quantity of printed textbooks and reporting on the actual number of textbooks received by students could not be monitored.[100] Furthermore, many schools say that SIP funds barely cover the cost of the basic textbooks, but certainly do not cover necessary additional material and resources. Schools in remote and poor areas, which mostly host a small number of students, are therefore more likely to be under-resourced, unless supported by an NGO or local donor.

Under various projects, such as the Seti Project, PEP, BPEP I, BPEP II, EFA, Nepal produced a number of educational material. However, the MoE and DoE do not have record of this material and regular distribution to the students has not been registered. This shows that there is: (a) a lack of documentation of available didactical material in the country (b) a lack of registration and categorisation of this material, (c) no insurance that after the end of a project the respective material will continue to be produced and distributed.

The Early Grade Reading Programme (EGRP) is an effective initiative to ensure quality education. Discussions about essential reading benchmarks and Early Grade Reading Skills (EGRS) orientation have taken place with the curriculum development centre (CDC) and the national centre for educational development (NCED). Out of the total 16 programme districts, 6 districts have been selected as high intensity intervention districts. Discussions on setting essential reading benchmarks and EGRS orientation with the CDC and NCED have taken place. The next step will be a wider consultation for developing benchmarks and for the Classroom Based Early Grade Reading Assessment

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[98] Timely delivery of textbooks should be within two weeks of the start of the academic year.

[99] Foundation For Educational Change Assessing, (2013). The scope for improving the process, quality and timelines of school textbook printing and distribution, Maitidevi, Kathmandu.

[100] Citizen Action for Results (CARTA), Transparency and Accountability, Nepal SSRP factsheet, (2014).

(CB-EGRA) tools. There will be follow-up orientations on EGRS for Central Level Agencies (CLA), NGO/CBOs and wider consultation of NEGRP for School Sector Development Programme (SSDP). Progress can be noted in the annual planning for standardised instructional design and material production.

4.4.4   Medium of Instruction

Many teachers do not struggle only with using effective methods and teaching strategies in a general way, but especially with the fact that they teach children who do not have Nepali as a mother tongue. This situation is even more critical when children from different language groups are in the same school and pupils with different mother tongues are in one class. Pupils from smaller language groups not spoken by the teachers have difficulties to understand the lessons and to get access to the written language.[101]

In earlier decades, the purpose of English in Nepal was to give students a foreign language competence that may be used to listen to the radio, to understand dialogues in the movies or to use the language for communication.[102] In recent days, however, English has taken a new dimension in the higher learning institutions. Private schools and universities have begun offering several courses in English. This is in contrast to state-owned higher education schools and colleges which continue to deliver education in Nepali. Private schools have altered the debate and made English an attractive alternative medium of instruction in Nepal.[103]

Research shows that multilingualism can have many advantages, often making students perform better in general topics, and more specifically in acquiring new languages.[104]

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[101] Acharya, Sushan, (2009). Report on MLE policy and strategy: based on the analysis of mother tongue speaking children's learning environment in Kanchanpur, Palpa, Rasuwa.; Acharya, S. et. al., (2009). Report on MLE policy and strategy based on the Analysis of Mother Tongue Speaking Children's Learning Environment in Kanchanpur, Palpa, Rasuwa, Dhankuta, Sunsari and Jhapa. A report submitted to DOE Sanothimi, Nepal; Acharya, Sushan with Giri, Dhiray, (2009). Measuring achieve-ment of Nepali and non-Nepali speaking students of Dang district, unpublished report; Arkansas State University, (2011). Krishna Bista, Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language in Nepal: Past and Present, English for Specific Purposes World, Issue 32 Volume 11, Nepal; AUSAID, (May 2012). Schooling in a language other than mother tongue, ERF10454 desk review; AUSAID Education Resource Facility, (November 2011). Review of the international literature on language issues in education.

[102] Krishna Bista, (2011). Teaching English as a Foreign/Second Language in Nepal: Past and Present.

[103] Komarek: Universal Primary Education In Multilingual Societies - Supporting its Implementation in Sub-Saharan Africa and beyond. 25 years of experience in German Technical Cooperation. ADEA Biennial Meeting 2003 (Grand Baie, Mauritius, December 3-6, 2003; Malone, S., (2001), Expanding Educational Opportunities in Linguistically Diverse Societies. Center for Applied Linguistics, Washington DC.; Bamgbose, A. (2000), Language and Exclusion. Hamburg; Châtry-Komarek, M., (2003), Literacy at Stake, GTZ, Eschborn; Cummins, J., (2000), Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire, Multilingual Matters, Clevedon.

[104] AusAID Education Resource Facility, Review of the international literature on language issues in education 30 November 2011.

Flash I Report showed that in grade 1-5, 6,081 schools used one local language; 422 schools used two local languages; 62 schools used three local languages; 23 schools used four local languages and 10 schools used five local languages.[105]

Mother tongue-based MLE was piloted in primary schools and showed that teachers face difficulties in teaching students of different language groups simultaneously.[106] Past MLE approaches have not been successful in effectively reaching out to children of different language groups. The DoE piloted MT-MLE approaches with one specific language group.[107] Various studies found that the experiment with MT-MLE performed by DoE is not using the right method for MLE.[108] Respondents and stakeholders have pointed out their wish to teach in the medium of English from Grade 1, regardless of practical considerations such as the lack of English-speaking teachers. Some of the respondents pointed out that parents preference was English, while other studies also confirmed that addressing pupils in their mother tongue (MLE concept) was not welcomed by the communities.[109] The advantages of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction is not well understood and advocacy campaigns will be necessary to promote MLE.

4.4.5   Assessment Programmes

The quality of education can be defined in terms of the quality of inputs, processes and outcomes. The information available on student outcomes from the recently completed National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) indicates that the quality of educational outcomes in Nepal is low.

National Assessment of Student Achievement and School Leaving Certificates

The MOE has established the National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) Unit within the regular structure of the Ministry of Education. This unit is set up as the most essential part of the Ministry of Education to fulfil the absence of school level educational quality research functions. The NASA is a research-based effort to assess

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[105] Government of Nepal (2014). Flash Report I 2014-2015.

[106] Seel, Amanda; Yadava, Yogendra and Kadel, Sadananda, (2015). Medium of instruction and language for education: ways forward for education policy, planning, and practice in Nepal. A report submitted to AASSO, Nepal.

[107] Dhiraj, Giri, (2009). Measuring achievement of Nepali and non-Nepali speaking students of Dang district. Unpublished report. Author.

[108] Acharya, Sushan,(2009). Report on MLE policy and strategy: based on the analysis of mother tongue speaking children's learning environment in Kanchanpur, Palpa, Rasuwa, Dhankuta, Sunsari, and Jhapa. A report submitted to MLE Programme Inclusive Education Section, Department of Education, Sanothimi Bhaktapur. Acharya, Sushan with Dhiraj Giri (2009). Measuring achievement of Nepali and non-Nepali speaking students of Dang district. Unpublished report. Author.

[109] Phyak, Prem (nd). Language issues in educational policies and practices in Nepal: A critical review. 2012. A report submitted to Asian Development Bank, Kathmandu.

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students' subject-wise learning achievements through a sample selection. The NASA is the most extensive and standard study carried out by the MoE. The aim of NASA is to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges of the system.[110]

According to interviewed staff which implemented the NASA assessments, there is no independent authority which is responsible for this programme and it does not receive any budget or human resources to conduct studies on a regular base. The envisioned amendment of the Education Act is needed for the institutionalisation of NASA under the Education Review Office (ERO). The ERO would receive functional autonomy, its own resources and a separate budget head.

For grade 8, the first and second rounds of NASA assessments have been carried out in 2011 and 2013, and the assessment reports for the first round of grades 3 and 5 assessments in 2012 are available. The 2011 grade 8 study report reveals that the achievement level of students with non-Nepali mother language is comparatively lower in reading and writing skills. The average achievement of institutional schools is 63%, whereas that of the community schools is 44%, mostly due to the higher socio-economic status of the students in the institutional schools.[111] This result was confirmed in the 2013 study. Average student achievements have not improved over the period. In 2011 the average achievement was 49% for Nepali, whereas in 2013 it was 48%. In Mathematics, the achievement score has gone down further by almost 8 percentage points from 2011 to 2013 (from 43% in 2011 to 35% in 2013).

The 2013 report presents a series of variables that influence student achievements and explain existing disparities. The most important ones are i) the mother tongue, ii) the difference in caste/ethnicity, iii) the region (rural versus urban) and, iv) the timeliness in textbook availability.

For grades 3 and 5, the 2012 NASA shows similar results. Beside the well known differences between districts (the Terai disadvantaged, Kathmandu best, Hill regions in-between), types of schools (institutional and community), and rural/urban backgrounds, educational inequalities between language groups and socioeconomic status have strong impacts on learning achievements.[112]

DEOs, such as those of Bhaktapur, Morang, and Udayapur have started to follow up on the NASA results. Similarly, Regional Education Directorates (RED) have also used the NASA tool for the assessment of the student achievements. NASA results have been recently taken up by the Consolidated Report 2014/2015.

At lower secondary level, all students who want to continue in higher secondary education are required to pass the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) at the end of grade 10. Average SLC pass rates have generally ranged between 30% and 60%; with only

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[110]Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 48.

[111]Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 49.

[112]Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 51.

43.92% of the students passing the exams in 2013/14. Similarly, board exams are mandatory for students in grades 11 and 12. Although there are big disparities between different streams in higher secondary education, the average pass rate was only 44.29% in 2013/14.[113] These low pass rates raise questions about the quality of classroom processes. While more teachers have been trained in recent years, it appears that training is not translated into better classroom practices. This could be potentially improved by linking the career paths of teachers with student performance.[114]

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[113]The Flash Report 2014/15 gives targets for SLC and higher secondary education pass rates, for 2014/2015, not actual.

[114]World Bank, (2013). Nepal Report on Human Development - access, equity, and quality in the education, health and social protection sectors.

Continuous Assessment System (CAS)

Nepal has developed a Continuous Assessment System (CAS) that is intended to support quality education. CAS is supposed to replace the traditionally administered summative tests. Initially CAS was implemented in grade 1-3, then extended to grade 4-5, and recently also implemented in grade 6-7. Formative evaluation, as compared to summative evaluation, better supports quality as there is more room for differentiation (more evaluation approaches can be applied and contents can be evaluated under different perspectives). Also, practical aspects can be better included in formative than in summative evaluation. However attractive, this kind of evaluation requires more skills and capacities from the teachers' side. Because of this, the CAS has faced challenges in its implementation. Various stakeholders perceive the CAS as confusing, cumbersome and difficult to implement. Also, it appears that the CAS focuses too much attention on monitoring to manage liberal grade promotion (e.g. by giving remedial classes), which can serve to mask poor quality rather than addressing it.

Stakeholders have reported negatively on the perceived effects of the CAS, often referring to the poor quality outcome of the evaluation and the perceived interests of DPs, as well as the role of the still awaited amendment of the Education Act. Like teachers, parents do not seem to trust the CAS and have more faith in the summative examinations which are applied in the private schools. Studies conducted in Nepal however, show that classical summative evaluations based on a few hours examination could not properly evaluate students' overall performance[115] and that the level reached as a result of enrolment is not yet to be considered sufficient.[116]

The CAS system of testing students in a formative way is intended to support quality education in a good way, but the problems encountered during its implementation has made it not credible to many teachers and parents.

4.4.6 Alternative, Non-formal Education and Literacy Programmes

As was already outlined in the chapter on relevance, the scale of implementation of NFE programmes has varied across districts, depending on perceived needs and demand but also on the availability of NGOs to cover facilitator salaries and technical assistance. The quality and relevance of the programmes show big variations and heavily depend on the quality of the local body or NGO providing technical assistance. Some have been excellent, whilst others have struggled to find and support good facilitators or even to operate classes.[117] NGOs need to be selected and appraised carefully, while facilitators need to be trained and supported.

Earlier reports indicate the large economic benefits of literacy programmes, but also less measurable positive effects, such as health awareness, sense of confidence or access

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[115]National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015).

[116] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

[117] Ministry of Education, (2014-2015). NFEC, Non Formal Education in Nepal; and Interview NFEC August 2015. A cascade training model means master trainers are trained, they train teacher trainers and the teacher trainers in turn train teachers.

to networks (e.g. forest user groups). The evaluation team could not find coherent national data indicating overall provision of NFE and adult literacy programmes, and unfortunately, the existing data is not related to the data for out-of-school children and non-literate adults.

4.4.7   Teacher Development

SSRP implemented a cascade model for teacher development[118] where the resource centres (RC) are used as teacher training institutes and the teachers were listed as potential trainers. Teacher training and Teacher Professional Development (TPD) have not yet resulted in an improvement of quality of education. Teacher training alone does not lead to improved quality in the teaching-learning process if it is not followed by ongoing support, encouragement, revision and deepening of the content. For an effective application of improved teaching and learning techniques, it is important that the image and status of the teacher profession improves in society. Appreciative and economic incentives need to be provided. A change of teacher ethos, motivation and attitude has to take place in the whole conception in which teaching and learning are conceptualised and practised. This change cannot only be triggered by theoretical teacher trainings, but by giving practical examples.

TPD are designed so as to be needs-based and provide for teachers' demands. Faced with the material demands of teachers for additional equipment, material, and facilities, the TPD has struggled to remain needs-based. As soon as the supposed needs are set by the implementers and not shared with the target group, ownership is threatened.[119] This comes along other factors such as political influence, low estimation of teaching profession, low salaries, bad living conditions and remote areas, which equally contribute negatively to the teachers motivation.

The interview with the National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) revealed that the TPD training is only effective in the first stage of the cascade, where master teachers from the central level in lead RC implemented the trainings. The stakeholders in the NCED have outlined different reasons for the failure of effectiveness in the following stages of the cascade, notably that teachers are not able to articulate their needs for training, that TPD packages are not developed properly, and that teacher trainers from the roster do not have the pedagogical skills and are not capacitated enough to deliver the content.[120] Moreover, the motivation of teachers to participate in TPD is mostly extrinsic. Given the difficult economic situation and the low ownership for the teaching profession, it can be noted that teachers are more interested in their score

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[119] According to the NCED persons interviewed the teachers were not able to articulate their needs for training. The instant training package developed therefore could not respond to teachers' needs and concerns. The RPs and roster teacher could not address the problems encountered by the teachers.

[120] Roster teachers and ETCs do not have the same competences to prepare a demand-based curriculum, develop material to deliver training, and finally give training to the teachers roster teachers and ETCs do not have the same competences to prepare a demand-based curriculum, develop material to deliver training, and finally give training to the teachers.

for a possible promotion than to obtain knowledge and skills for improving their teaching quality.

At school level, it has been noted that teachers have failed to implement the newly learnt content in the classroom. Head teachers were of the opinion that SSRP has helped on many fronts, such as to systematise data, to prepare SIP, to construct schools and toilets. However, they note that teachers have failed to bring the content of their training to the classrooms.

The concern of SMC/PTA, on the other hand, was more directed towards the ethos of the teachers in performing their job. Teachers are seen as being irregular, miss school a lot, and strongly attached to political interests. DEO, supervisors and RP recognise that they did not perform their supervision and counselling job as they should have. Nonetheless, they pointed out that this is partly due to the fact that they are overloaded with administrative duties and the trainings, which prevents them from visiting school and provide advice. They perceived that their advices were not welcomed by head teachers.

The problems of teacher absenteeism and unprofessional practices are difficult to tackle. Indeed, teachers are heavily protected by their political patronisation, which prevents corrective measures to be effectively implemented. The political division of teachers by parties has affected many processes in schools.[121] Many SSRP initiatives have been affected by this political interference, taking away the focus from pedagogical issues.

Additionally to the usual development skills provided to teachers, in post-disaster contexts, such as in Nepal, teachers require special skills to teach in limited settings. Because of space constraint, teachers will need to be able to teach in Temporary Learning Centres (TLC) and to address children of different grades at the same time (multi-grade teaching). Furthermore, teachers will need to be sensitive to the special psychological situation of students and they will need to be able to address everyday life problems (e.g. the provision of goods and shelter). All this, while teachers are themselves affected by the disaster and have to overcome their own trauma and that of their families.

4.5   Governance and Capacity Building

The SSRP made efforts to reform school governance to bring it closer to the people. Management has been decentralised, school-communities have been mobilised, and service delivery, especially regarding funding, material supply and training, have been reorganised from the centre level to the school level. Other key institutional innovations under the SSRP are the introduction of the Education Policy Committee (EPC) and the Education Review Office (ERO) at the central level, and the introduction of School Management Committees (SMC) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTA) at the school level. Therewith, individual capacity has been increased.

With the steady leakage of children into private education, there is an urgency to make the public sector more trustworthy and credible. The focus on quality and effective

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[121] Shakya, Dipu, (2012). School Sector Reform Plan mid-term evaluation, teacher development and management.

education in public schools, enhancing literacy, numeracy, critical thinking, confidence, and organisational skills of pupils, will help support long-term development of a more participative and democratically accountable society.

4.5.1   Institutional Capacity of the School System

Nepal has a generally well established administrative system. The MoE and the DoE are reasonably well staffed and have many highly experienced and committed employees, also at senior level. There are relatively robust planning mechanisms linking all levels and the Education Management Information System (EMIS) compares well with those of comparable countries. The high public interest and expectations in education creates a strong platform for demand-side accountability.[122] The introduction of the EPC and the ERO at central level, and SMC and PTA at school level are key institutional innovations under the SSRP. Capacity at individual level has been increased.

Nonetheless, ERO still lacks autonomy, especially regarding financial, functional and procurement authority. The ERO staff is not capacitated to institutionalise the NASA and to propose educational improvements based on the findings of the Flash reports. While individual capacity has been enhanced, there is still a lack of institutional capacity and memory, due to frequent staff transfers. In contrast to weak institutional capacity, note that Nepal has a strong history of self-reliance and has established a range of CSOs to support disadvantaged groups. Participation in the democratic process has therewith been increased amongst diverse communities.

There has been progress in the implementation of the Governance Accountability and Action Plan (GAAP), such as teacher redeployment within 65 districts or the installation of the Per Child Fund (PCF). However, challenges remain in timely submission of Financial Monitoring Report (FMR) and audit reports. These delays cause ineligible expenditure plans, postpone refunds with DPs, and prevent the independent verification of flash data. Finally, there are significant weaknesses in the Public Finance Management (PFM) system, which makes it difficult to address fiduciary risk.

4.5.2   Decentralised and School-based Management

Decentralised Institutions

The SSRP incorporated efforts to reform school governance through decentralised management, school-based community mobilisation, and service delivery from centre to the school level in funding, material supply and training.

The programme introduced decentralised planning strategies which enabled the local stakeholders to prepare plans for individual schools. SMC and PTA are entrusted to perform academic, administrative, and monitoring roles. Student clubs were activated to

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[122]World Bank, (2014). Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS).

be functional supervisors and supporters of school teachers. These student clubs initially started as NGOs, and are now registered within schools.

At district level, the first process of decentralisation can be observed, where DEO, District Development Committees (DDC) and I/NGOs have coordinated in the implementation of the educational reform. One of the remaining challenges is the lack of defined responsibilities for the DEO staff, preventing it to draft accurate planning documents such as the SIP and the District Education Plans (DEP). In their interviews, DPs noted that to strengthen community managed schools, it is essential to still address the lack of a leading school concept and the politicised election system of SMC.

The Education Act, 2028[123], art. 12(6) explicitly defines authority of the SMC, yet in practice the central level has still maintained main authority, leaving the SMC and PTA in a supportive role only (i.e. appointing temporary teachers). Schools still mainly depend on traditional grants from the MoE, complemented by small grants from Village Development Committees (VDC).[124] The idea of having both the SMC and the PTA at the school level represented a bold move to involve parents and communities in school management. In practice however, the PTA have proven to be of minor contribution, as most of the attention was given to SMC. Missing analysis on children attending private school prevents from drawing useful conclusions on the impact of the new governing structure on enrolments in private versus public schools.

The analysis of the documents and the responses of local, national and international stakeholders show that the school level management did not take ownership of the programme, which hampers the effective implementation of the SSRP. It is not clear whether parents and SMC have been involved in the SSRP preparation as of the start, and local governments have not been consulted sufficiently during the SSRP implementation.

One of the main reasons for the lack of ownership at local level is the overly politicised teacher associations. The teacher confederations' point of view and resentment against some of the SSRP initiatives (e.g. the handover of schools to the community) have not been taken into consideration. Teacher confederations have a great impact on teachers' motivation and willingness to appropriate some of the new educational policies. When consulted it is unclear whether the representatives of the teacher confederations have shared the content of their discussions with their community. Such institutional gaps in consultations seem to be widespread.

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[123] Nepali calender.

[124] Awasthi, G. D., (2012), has studied and questioned this arrangement by suggesting having SMC/PTA linkage with the local political unit called VDC/Municipality.

Nonetheless, the report of the Formative Research Project[125] notes that, while gradual, changes in the balance of power in favour of local actors are becoming visible.

School Improvement Plans

School Improvement Plans (SIP) are regarded as tools for "improving access, quality and management of educational processes at the school and community levels".[126] The SIP process is also "a planning mechanism to prioritise the schools' human, material and financial resources to achieve the optimum possible outcomes".[127] It was envisaged that the SIP would be the basis for the Village and/or Municipal Education Plans (VEP and MEP) and District Education Plans (DEP) as well.

The EFA Joint Evaluation District Studies[128], implemented before the SSRP, noted that, because attending the annual SIP is a mandatory requirement for releasing funds to the schools, the SIP process became a ritualised and mechanical exercise. The Community Managed Schools (CMS), on the other hand, reported that the process has become more participatory over time, such as in the schools' needs assessment. Respondents from the DEO claimed that the SIP provides a functional overview of different indicators and budgets. In practice, however, it appears that local stakeholders do not understand how to properly establish the SIP. The SSRP MTR reported that "the strategy for development of SIP has not yet been effective in addressing the aims of decentralisation".[129] Though SIP are prepared by almost all schools, their use for planning and budgeting is still very limited.

While the SIP process may not yet fulfil its full planning and monitoring purpose as envisaged in the SSRP Core Document, it does bring important stakeholders together. In fact, head teachers, chairpersons of the SMC and the wider school community come together during the formulation of the SIP. This gives them the opportunity to reflect on the status of their school. Unfortunately parents are not involved sufficiently in the process.

The SIP concept is based on the needs of a school and designed according to the planned activities. Yet, the funds available for SIP depend on the enrolment rate of each school, rather than on planned activities. Not only is this a design flaw as the number of registered students cannot be verified[130], but also this contradiction in its design

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[125] Education for All 2004-2009 Formative Research Project: Community managed school: an innovative approach to school management, June 2009. This Formative Research has been continued under SSRP. The CERID was responsible for this study, which is now finalised.

[126] Ministry of Education, (2012), School Improvement Plan Formulation Guidebook.

[127] Ministry of Education, (2012). School Improvement Plan Formulation Guidebook.

[128] The eight district studies are part of the Joint EFA evaluation 2009- 2013.

[129] Ministry of Education, (2012).School Sector Reform Programme Mid Term Review.

[130] Ministry of Education, (2012).School Sector Reform Programme Mid Term Review; and Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015). Evaluation of the current education budget support and formulation of the next

contributes to the SIP process being mechanised. In fact, there is a risk of disillusion that can occur when a time-consuming process produces only a wish list that can often not be implemented. One respondent outlined that to increase the schools sense of initiative in the SIP process, the funds have to be increased significantly.

The Project for Support for Improvement of School Management (SISM) is charged with the mission to develop stakeholders' capacity in school-based management through verifying, updating and disseminating the SISM Model. This process shall contribute to the improvement of access and quality of basic education in Nepal. Based on the output and outcome of the SISM Phase 1[131], GoN is now implementing Phase 2 since June 2013, with technical assistance from JICA. The following positive changes are reported for SISM 2:[132]

- The purpose and use of SIP and roles of SMC/PTA is better understood.
- More SIPs are realistic and implementable.
- SMC/PTA initiated various SIP activities which require no or a low budget.
- SMC/PTA held meetings regularly.
- SMC/PTA and guardians are more interested in the school and visit the school more often.
- SSs and RPs are confident about their facilitation, guiding and monitoring.
- More schools submit proposals to DDC/VDCs for resource mobilisation.

In the context of a stronger involvement through the PTA, parents should also be oriented how to support their children's education. Some schools in Nepal show various levels of parent involvement in various forms, such as i) parenting at home ii) communicating between teachers and students iii) volunteering in school iv) teaching and supporting at home v) decision-making on school interventions through SMC/PTA and vi) collaborating with the community for school improvement.[133]

4.5.3   Teacher Management and Supervision

Teacher Deployment

EU budget support programme to education sector in Nepal. Final Report. Submitted to European Union.

[131] Project for Support of Improvement of School Management (SISM), Phase 1, (2008 - 2011).

[132] Project for Improvement of School Management, Phase II, (2015), 2nd year progress report. Supported by International Development Centre of Japan.

[133] Epstein, (2011); and Kreider, (2000) cited in Munankarmi, Rupa, (2015). Parental involvement in school: A case study of Kavre district. Unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation submitted to Kathmandu University, Nepal.

There are four types of teacher contracts in primary schools – permanent, temporary, SIP funded, and *Rahat* quota teachers.[134] Although around 13.000 permanent teachers have been appointed by the Teacher Service Commission (TSC) in 2013-14, and a high number of lower secondary and secondary teachers have been recruited this year, there is still a teacher shortage and the student/teacher ratio does not correspond to the Government norm.[135] Besides the insufficient coverage, one can observe an unbalanced distribution of teachers between and within districts. The TSC at central level is responsible for the selection and recruitment of permanent teachers. However, until recently, it has not announced publicly the vacancies for permanent posts.

In order to address the teacher shortage, the 7th Amendment of the Education Act has made provisions for recruiting teachers on a contract basis through the SMC. In community schools[136], this teacher recruitment approach for temporary, Rahat and PCF teachers has evolved into a transparent and impartial procedure. On the one hand, all schools follow the rules and regulations in a transparent process of subject assessment, advertisement, written tests, trial tests and interview for selection. The process is planned and systematic and teachers are appointed immediately after the interview. On the other hand, teachers are under strong political influence, and do not have the necessary management capacities and the required pedagogical knowledge. Different stakeholders pointed out that one major threat for teacher management at schools is the incapacity of SMC members to handle overall management tasks, the low self-discipline of teachers and the strong political intervention in decision-making.

The golden handshake programme for the temporary teachers[137] gives flexibility to recruit teachers and fill existing gaps without too much bureaucratic burden. While this allows to effectively address shortages, the lack of framework remains a challenge.

The Asian Development Bank[138] commissioned a study on teacher management and development which provides several recommendations. The 18 recommendations are grouped in three strategic areas:

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[134] Rahat or "relief" quota for teacher recruitment, managed by the District Education Offices in order to cover gaps in the teaching force in a fast and locally adapted procedure.

[135] Government of Nepal, (2014). Flash Report 2014-2015: the student-teacher ratios (based on the approved positions of teachers) in community schools are 36:1 (37:1 in the last school year) at primary level, 60:1 (60:1 in the last school year) at lower secondary level and 30:1, (31:1 in the last school year) at secondary level. The norm for primary schools in Nepal was 24:1 in 2014 (World Bank).

[136] "Community schools" does not refer to all public schools.

[137] It is the special benefit for the temporary teachers. If these teachers want to quit they will get an envelope from the MoE. The rules and regulations are yet to be passed in the parliament which is now in motion.

[138] Fawad Shams with Deependra Thapa and Tirtha Parajuli ADB consultants, (2013). Teacher management and development in Nepal, School Sector Reform Plan (2010-2017).

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1. Teacher management, including: i) teacher recruitment, ii) teacher mainstreaming, iii) teacher transfer and re-deployment, iv) teacher equity, v) Teacher Management Information System;

2. Teacher career development and retirement, including: vi) teacher job description, vii) teacher performance appraisal, viii) teacher course completion, ix) teacher promotion, x) teacher retirement and post-retirement schemes;

3. Teacher qualification and professional development: xi) teacher qualifications upgrading, xii) teacher professional standards, xiii) teacher education accreditation standards, xiv) in-take criteria for pre-service programmes[139,] xv) certification requirements for pre-service teachers, xvi) licensing mechanisms, xvii) induction level training programmes, and xviii) teacher professional development including mentoring, follow-up and monitoring.

The MoE has approved a phase-wise teacher management and development strategy based on the study in June 2013. The strategy contains 30 actions and its implementation is ongoing.

Some research[140] shows that there has been a gradual improvement in teacher management. For instance, in some districts teachers have been redeployed and schools have been merged. Very recently the TSC recruited additional 12.000 teachers.

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[139] A serious problem is the low qualification and level of education of students.

[140] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

Supervision

As respondents acknowledged, supervision is one of the weakest links in the school management system in Nepal.[141] The average visit of RP to schools is less than once a month.[142] The District Case Reports (EFA Joint evaluation) also revealed that there are districts like Danusha where the RP stay at the District HQ since they feel insecure in their assigned duty station. Most of the RP focus is on teacher and student attendance and on tangible characteristics of the school, such as the furniture, toilets, textbooks and data collection. District Case Reports do not describe head teachers, RP or school supervisors as undertaking regular classroom observation or monitoring of student learning. The low effectiveness of RP and school supervisors in supporting pedagogy can be partly ascribed to the fact that school supervisors have little or no teaching experience, and none at primary level. RP are usually former head teachers rather than subject teachers.

RPs and school supervisors complain that they do not have appropriate tools and techniques to supervise classroom teaching. Even with sufficient pedagogical knowledge to advise teachers, they would not be able to make visible impact due to the low frequency of their school visits. During interviews, RP also highlighted their role in conducting instructions from the DEO to schools, as for instance during flash reports.

4.5.4   Institutional Development

There are considerable challenges in the governance and institutional strengthening structure. Regular transfer of functionaries has become increasingly politicised and biased. The frequent transfer of the capacitated personnel to areas where their newly acquired capacities cannot be applied considerably reduces the impact of investments in capacity building. At the same time, capacity building has to be repeated with the new person replacing the departed personnel. The lack of efficiency in capacity building reduces sustainable institutional development.

Line ministries still tend to be geared towards delivery of inputs; the shift towards a focus on strategy, performance, result and value for money is still at an early stage. Many citizens, with limited literacy skills and overburdened by everyday survival needs, are not yet empowered to demand their basic rights and participate in the monitoring of service delivery.[143]

However, schools who invest in capacity building and enhanced financial management should be encouraged. To reward schools which make this effort, a financial incentive could be given to these schools in the form of a grant top-up, based on a review carried out by the DEO and RED.

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[141] The Technical Review of School Education (TRSE) Report, (2009).

[142] Santwona Memorial Academy and Education Research and Consultancy Centre, (2011).Role of Resource Centre for Improving Quality Education in Schools, Final Report.

[143] Farrukh, Moriani, Bhuban, Brajacharya, Pramod, Bhatta, Sreyasa, Mainali, (2013). Institutional Analysis and Capacity Development Plan, School Sector Reform Plan, Nepal.

Recent SSRP coordination meetings have focused on the need for stronger analysis of flash data and triangulation through qualitative checking, to help obtain a better picture of what are the causes of the various patterns and trends identified. To enhance educational management, linking different data bases, such as the Social Audit, GIS school mapping and data for out-of-school children under EMIS should be encouraged.

Head teachers have very few opportunities for professional development and for acquiring competences which are useful in primary school classrooms. Overall, it was reported[144] that head teachers are weak in taking the leadership role for change and development. Exceptions are head teachers who, through their personal drive and motivation, deserve recognition for their good leadership and management. Where such a head teacher is employed, the school quality is improved.[145]

Part of SSRP's design was to institutionalise the planning processes. However, SIP, VEP, MEP, and DEP have not yet been linked to the funding system, though they are based on the Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMEC).

The role of the newly created EPC and ERO is hampered by institutional constructs. On the one hand, the EPC is not involved in the SSRP implementation strategies discussion while it is one of the main implementing agencies, and on the other hand, the ERO continues to operate as a wing under the MoE instead of being an independent entity.[146]

Also the status of institutions is not yet clear and sometimes contradictory. For example, the Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC), as a technical organization, has more authority than the Education Review Office (ERO), but both suffer from unclear and overlapping institutional arrangements. The MoE has failed to conduct an open education programme from one door, which resulted in overlapping programmes between the National Centre for Educational Development (NCED), the Open and Distance Education Centre (ODEC) and the NFEC. These coinciding programmes mean that resources have been diverted away from one coherent targeted programme towards a number of inadequately financed programmes.

Although NCED holds the same hierarchical position as the DoE, funds flow from the DoE to the NCED, which in practice restricts NCED's independence and autonomy. As a consequence, NCED respondents perceive the SWAp mechanisms for fund management as inadequate.

The Institutional Analysis and Capacity Development Report provide clear recommendations for addressing capacity and governance issues.[147] They recommend a tailor made approach to capacity building at district level. Some districts need more institutional support than others, while some first need to be enabled to receive this

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[144] As related by different informants the team met before, during and after the evaluation.

[145] Site: http://tcmd.org

[146] Institutional Analysis and Capacity Development Plan (IACDP); School Sector Reform Programme SSRP, (2013).

[147] Ministry of Education, (2013).School Sector Reform Plan Institutional Analysis and Capacity Development Report.

support and some are institutionally so weak that they need continuous support over a long period.

4.6   Impact of the 2015 Earthquake

Educational services in the affected areas were severely disrupted by the earthquake on 25 April 2015. It is expected that the disaster will have a negative impact on enrolment, attendance and internal efficiency, most likely leading to an increase in the number of out-of-school children. The earthquake had a magnitude of 7.8 on the Richter scale with several aftershocks, including a 7.3 Richter-scale-shock on 12 May that caused further causalities and damage. The Government has reported more than 8,700 deaths and over 22,200 people injured. In the affected districts, approximately 505,577 houses and over 7,000 schools/ 31,000 classrooms have been destroyed, directly affecting over 1 million children.[148] In addition, Government infrastructure at the central level has also been affected. The destruction of educational infrastructure and physical assets is estimated at NPR 28 billion (ca. USD 239.000.000), and the losses are estimated to be NPR 3.2 billion (ca. USD 27.302.100). About 92% of the total damage and losses are public schools: Early Childhood Development Centres (ECDC) and school education subsectors accounted for 90.2% of the total damage and losses, followed by 7.9% in higher education and 1.6% in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutes. Community learning centres and public libraries were affected to the same extend.[149]

The earthquake caused serious injuries and permanent handicaps so that more children are excluded from education. With an increase in the demand for additional labour at home and in the markets, coupled with longer ways to schools, absenteeism and drop-out rates are steadily rising. These changes brought by the emergency situation are likely to lead to a decline in the learning outcomes of children in the short- and medium-term. The funding for some planned programmes in the education sector may be re-channelled to respond to the emergency situation, which at medium-term might affect the regular implementation of other projects and programmes.

There was an urgent need to prioritise education interventions, rehabilitate schools and reopen them as soon as safely possible. Indeed evidence shows that children who are out of school for long periods following emergencies face high risk of child labour, violence and exploitation, which often leads to them not returning to school.[150]

The Nepal Education Cluster was activated the day after the first earthquake on 25 April 2015. A cluster desk was established within the DoE and focal points were assigned for each of the 14 most affected districts at central and district level. Furthermore, a tool for rapid structural assessment was developed in addition to temporary camps to provide

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[148] Ministry of Education, (2015). Post-Disaster-Needs-assessment for education sector, Kathmandu, Nepal. For more information see Annex 8, damage assessment data.

[149] Ministry of Education, (2015). For more information see Annex 8, damage assessment data.

[150] UNICEF (2015). Education in emergencies and post crisis transition; and International Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), (2014). Education in emergencies.

child-friendly spaces. During the school closure period following the earthquake, teams from the Education Cluster, the DoE and the SMC were mobilised to categorise school in affected districts as safe or unsafe based on the data collected on destroyed and damaged classrooms.

The DoE released funds for the affected schools to make the necessary arrangements for the clearance of debris as well as the resuming of teaching and learning activities. Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities were installed and school equipment, such as textbooks, uniforms, stationery and bags for children in the most affected districts were also provided. Short-term trainings in construction-oriented trades were conducted. Psychosocial support was given where possible. There has been concerns raised on the quality assurance of the establishment of TLCs as they are being done by a wide variety of actors and stakeholders. As such, it was raised that some TLC were not build as they should be and the distributed tents did not fulfil the standards of hygiene, though the swift and adequate response of the government has also been praised.[151]

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[151] Field visits findings School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) Review mission April - August 2015.

5   EFFICIENCY OF SSRP

Education has been a priority sector for the Government of Nepal and investment in education has increased in recent years to around 14% of the total government budget. Measured as a fraction of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), investment in education has increased from less than 2.9% in 1999 to 4.2% in 2014. More than 80% of the government's education budget is allocated to school education, and within that about 60% goes to basic education. Development partners have accounted for more than 22% of the total education budget during that period, but it decreased to 13% in FY 2015.[152] The percentage of the overall education budget for investments in basic education has, nonetheless, decreased between 2012 and 2014/15 by more than 10 percentage points. In terms of efficiency, the decrease in the budget contribution to basic education should not be seen in an isolated way, as necessary investments were needed in lower secondary education, TVET, non-formal and life-long learning. It is therefore important to consider questions of prioritisation to address most urgent needs, in terms of minimum enabling conditions for everyone, as well as the need for a qualified working force.

Table 7: Development of National Budget for Education and Percentage of Budget for Basic Education (extract from Table 3)[153]

Indicator	Achievements				Targets 2015
	2001	2006	2012	2014/ 2015	
Percentage of GNP channelled to primary education	1.8	2.0	2.0		2.5
Percentage of education budget to basic education			64.53	54.3	

The MoE has initiated reforms regarding the financial planning, education information systems, monitoring and evaluation, public financial management, and capacity development to increase accountability and efficiency.

Under SSRP, the following efficiency mechanisms have been established:

- A database right from school to centre;

- Institutionalisation of planning from school to the centre;

- Programmes to measure progress in students' achievements;

- A decentralised teacher training programme;

- JFA under SWAp for systematic funding;

- Capacitating human resources at different levels of education.

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[152] UNICEF, (2015). Post-Disaster Needs Assessment for the Education Sector.
[153] Department of Education, (2014).

Although these mechanisms are appropriate tools to support efficiency, all educational stakeholders noted that the results are not yet visible at school level and only marginally visible at district and central levels.

5.1 Planning and Budgeting

5.1.1 Budgeting for Access and Equity in the Context of Free and Compulsory Basic Education

As a core part of the SSRP intervention, a policy of free basic education up to grade 8 has been implemented, and provisions are in place for gradual implementation of compulsory primary education. Although basic education and textbooks are free, students are charged different kinds of fees, such as school charges, laboratory fees, and sports fees. Educational policies require equitable financing strategies including the needy regions and schools.

Every school receives a minimum amount of money. It receives additional money on the basis of the number of students through the Per Child Funding (PCF) scheme. There are two types of salary funding: PCF salary and PCF non-salary. PCF salary funding is to meet the cost of additional teachers based on a standard number of students, whereas PCF non-salary funding is for other educational activities that can be decided by the school's management. Through the DEO, both the salaried and non-salaried fund goes to the school's account. Only some DEO have started to transfer the teachers' salary to the teachers' bank accounts.[154] The non-salaried fund can be used for quality education with the consent of the head teacher and SMC chair.[155] Discussions with school representatives confirm that the funds are used for the financing of improved learning environment and quality of teaching. However, there is no reporting and monitoring tool in place to track these funds and ensure they are adequately spent.

Funding based on the number of students only, may not provide adequate funding for the schools because other factors also matter, such as the topographic conditions, the economic conditions of guardians and students, and the uniqueness of the school's environment. Administering funds based on fixed formula such as enrolment rate is easier to administer, but unfortunately does not provide margin for addressing deep-rooted problems of schools. It is therefore necessary to provide funding based on composite indicators linked to performance.

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[154] District Education Offices (DEOs) of Bhaktapur.

[155] This is DEO's regulation that was practiced in Dang and can be practiced in other districts as well. No research report available, but discussion with the school representatives confirms that they are using the fund available for improving learning environment and quality of teaching.

Remote rural schools generally lack sufficient scholarship quotas and infrastructural facilities. This is especially true in the Terai[156], though it has improved over the time period.[157] Flash reports have noted that affirmative interventions have positive effects on access and retention of children in school. However, the allocation of budget during SSRP has not been sufficient to systematically engage in affirmative intervention funding schemes.

Although the needs-based funding has been envisioned in SSRP documents and some affirmative action has been implemented, the regional disparity is still an important negative factor. While the SSRP has underscored the need for performance-based funding, the therefore necessary performance indicators and criteria are not specifically mentioned. Equitable budgeting also requires the identification of the schools that require more financial support and the schools' students who belong to economically weak communities. The SSRP has stressed the importance for mechanisms of funding based on the School Improvement Plan (SIP), but this approach is not yet implemented efficiently and effectively, because central policies and district mechanisms are not enabled to coach and assess the elaboration of SIP and fund them accordingly.

The system of overall ceiling prescription by the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the MoF has nullified the benefits of bottom-up approach, because SIP are not included for formulating ASIP and AWPB. Beside this fact, the NPC and the MoF are adjusting the budget unilaterally which is against the principle of a bottom-up planning and funding structure.

School funding based on the school deciles system as implemented in other countries could be a good example for drawing lessons in addressing the equity problem in Nepal.[158] Schools could be categorised by deciles 1 to 10, based on the need of the school community, and a respective percentage of the funding would therewith be based on social and economic factors.

While scholarship provisions directed particularly at Dalit, Janajati and girls have been mentioned as a key equity intervention in SSRP, these provisions have affected the poorest people from higher caste communities. In this context, GCE – Nepal suggests that the so-called higher caste communities are, through their economic status, extremely poor. The fact that scholarships are distributed on quota basis to certain students belonging to certain sectors only, prevents indigenous nationalities to access funding.[159]

In terms of funding the implementation of educational programmes, such as SSRP, the GoN shows remarkable difficulties in linking budget and expenditure directly with programme outputs/outcomes. The ASIP/AWPB activities have been designed on a

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[156] Student to teacher ratio in 2010 in basic education: 42:1 in the Terai, 27:1 in the Mountain and Hill areas and 18:1 in Kathmandu. Student to teacher ratio in 2014: 36:1 in the Terai, 21:1 in Mountain and Hill areas and 17:1 in Kathmandu Valley 2010.

[157] Government of Nepal, (2014). Flash Reports I and II 2014-2015, p. 66.

[158] see for instance school categorisation in New Zealand.

[159] General Certificate of Education (GCE), Nepal, 2009.

programme basis, whereas SSRP pro-doc activities have been prepared on a project background with a different structure of activities and financial headings. Progress review is done based on periodic Financial Monitoring Reports (FMR), which are based on economic heads. The evaluation team reconciled the FMR figures with the Programme Progress Report (PPR) and the following differences were noted:

Table 8: Progress in Expenditures

Budget Headings	As per FMR (In NPR)	As per PPR (In NPR)
FY 2011/12		
3501213	203,974,990.39	188,073,000.00
3501214	32,389,357.75	32,291,130.00
3508033	16,073,188,248.07	15,940,661,780.00
3508034	47,879,472.10	45,881,440.00
FY 2013/14		
3501213	228,973,780.34	218,567,000.00
3501214	51,176,054.50	51,713,000.00
3508033	17,966,277,689.73	17,515,380,000.00
3508034	51,401,956.99	44,973,000.00

5.1.2 Budgeting for Teaching and Learning

While the core theme of SSRP is to ensure access, quality and relevance of school education, a large amount of the education budget - nearly 65% - has been spent on salaries and other recurrent costs. From a regional perspective, this is not unusual; India spends around 80% on teacher salaries.[160] From an efficiency perspective however, the remaining share of the budget does not leave much room for improving classroom conditions and learning activities.[161] It is unlikely that the GoN will be able to finance projects and activities to ensure sustainability of the SSRP, and more likely that DPs will have to continue their support – a recurring scheme in developing countries.

5.2 Public Finance Management

Public finance management (PFM) has been considered as one of the priority areas since the beginning of SSRP. Slow but gradual improvement has been noted and various interventions have been introduced to improve the governance of SSRP. Some of the

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[160] New Delhi, May 19, (IANS/IndiaSpend): Up to 80% of India's public expenditure on education is spent on teachers' salaries, training and learning material, according to a new six-state report.

[161] National Campaign for Education (NCE), Nepal, (2014).

key actions taken to improve the existing PFM system are, among others: the Treasury Single Account (TSA) at the national level and payment of salaries to teachers' bank accounts, the development and continuous monitoring of the Financial Management Improvement Action Plan (FMIAP), the introduction of fund flow tracking system, linking to FCGO data system for FMR preparations and social auditing.[162] However, the implementation of these reforms has not yet been able to deliver the expected results, especially because the financing is not based on the local needs. Most of the FMIAP activities have not been implemented within the deadline and there was no continuity of the already implemented activities, such as fund flow tracking. At this stage, it is unclear whether issues like excess payment or delayed payment of teachers' salaries have been addressed by the reform, as the effects are yet to be seen.

In the education sector, to be efficient, PRM planning and budgeting procedures need to be bottom up, participatory, and time-bound. In the context of SWAp procedures, ASIP and AWPB have been shared with the donors. The school-based SIP are meant to form the basis for the formulation of District Education Plan (DEP) and District ASIP/AWPB, while at regional level, consolidated ASIP/AWPB have been elaborated.

In the context of the Financial Management Improvement Action Plan (FMIAP), GoN and DPs have identified problems and have elaborated activities to address these weaknesses, by enhancing the targeted use of funds. However, none of the activities have been completed within the indicated dates, and 44 out of 58 activities, though reported as implemented, cannot be considered as fully completed.

5.2.1   Fund Disbursement

Fund Releases from the GoN

As the government releases the budgets to schools on a trimester basis, teachers and staff do not get their payment every month. The teachers who have to rely on their monthly salary face difficulties to manage their regular expenditure. A report from the National Planning Commission (NPC) describes this situation as follows, "teachers usually receive their salary either in September or in October – three or four months after the beginning of the new fiscal year ... [i]n between, teachers will have to survive either on their parental property or on borrowing money from the school's fund ... [c]onsidering this situation, it would not be surprising to find that the quality of teaching in the school did not improve in spite of huge government investment in teacher training". [163]

This suggests that some corrective measures are necessary, and as NCE – Nepal pinpoints, the institutional ladder is one of the obstructions to the timely release of budgets.[164] The government needs to simplify the process in some budget lines.

The existing system of preparing ASIP and AWPB does not include the complete planning and budgeting of the education sector .This is because a number of activities

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[162] Interview with DPs and DoE representatives.

[163] National Planning Commission (NPC), (2012).

[164] National Campaign for Education (NCE), Nepal (2014).

are financed from the school' internal funds or from other sources not captured in the existing GoN financial reporting system. There are currently no data available to determine the volume of these funding resources.

There have been considerable delays in getting pro-rata sharing and approval for release of DPs fund from the pooled account, which has caused delays in sending release letters to the respective cost centres and source-wise reporting. The main reasons for such delays were attributed to the non-fulfilment of pre-requisites for tranche release and/or delayed submission of reports with the required quality. DPs perceive that government procedures could be rationalised and made more efficient. As far as the pooled funds are concerned, central agencies argue that DPs' conditionalities for pooled funding create problems and result in funds not being received in time.

Table 9: Pro-Rata Sharing Date

FY	Pro-Rata Shared Date	Starting of FY	Delayed by (days)
2009/10	8-Jun-10	16-Jul-09	327
2010/11	30-Dec-10	16-Jul-10	167
2011/12	20-Dec-11	16-Jul-11	157
2012/13	6-Mar-13	16-Jul-12	233
2013/14	21-Jan-14	16-Jul-13	189

During the SSRP implementation, regular amendments were made to the annual budget, mainly due to inappropriate government's policies and standards – though this has improved in the recent years. Although in the past, there was little variation in the overall budget and the MoF could finance additional budget from its un-allocated heads, there are concerns about variations in the different heads, as detailed in the tables below:

Table 10: Budget Variations between 2009 and 2014: SSRP Budget Virement (in million NPR)[165]

Year	Initial Budget	Virement	Final Budget	Virement in percentage of initial budget
2009/10	30.286	2.140	32.426	7.07%
2010/11	46.876	965	47.840	2.06%
2011/12	51.926	715	52.642	1.38%
2012/13	51.984	1.033	53.017	1.99%
2013/14	67.098	756	67.854	1.13%

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[165] Data collected from Periodic Financial Monitoring Reports, DoE internal reports and during various interviews with DoE staff.

| Total | 248.170 | 5.609 | 253.779 | 2.26% |

Table 11: Budget Head-Wise variations:
Cumulative from 2009 to 2014 (in million NPR)[166]

SN	SSRP Budget Heading	Initial Budget	Virement	Final Budget	Virement in percentage of initial Budget
1	Primary School Teachers' Salary	93.613	3.715	97.328	3,97%
2	Secondary and Lower Secondary Teachers' Salary	50.350	1.298	51.648	2,58%
3	Non-Formal Education	40	2	42	4,86%
4	Non-Formal Education	3	0	4	5,28%
5	Teachers' Documentation	4.397	943	5,341	21,46%
6	Special Education Programme	349	33	382	9,51%
7	Teachers' Pensions	11.564	1.750	13.314	15,13%
8	Community School Capacity Development – Recurrent	848	-14	834	-1,63%
9	Community School Capacity Development – Capital	1	-	1	0%
10	School Sector Reform Programme Centre – Recurrent	1.728	-60	1.668	-3,46%
11	School Sector Reform Programme Centre-Capital	267	23	290	8,69%
12	School Sector Reform Programme District-Recurrent	76.617	-2.443	74.173	-3,19%
13	School Sector Reform Programme District-Capital	8,393	360	8.753	4,29%
	Total	**248.170**	**5.609**	**253.779**	**2,26%**

The table above shows that there were big variations in terms of absolute amount in teachers' salaries and pensions, teachers' documentation, recurrent budgets and capital budget in the districts. Since these heads accumulate to more than 80% of the total budget, to reduce fiduciary risks and sustainability threats, it is important that tight planning and budgeting is realised.

Fund Disbursement from Centre to Cost Units

The table below shows that, in the initial 3 years of the programme, fund disbursement to cost centres accumulated to over 50 % in the last trimester. In the years that followed, a more equal distribution of disbursements over all trimesters is observed. This shows that there has been improvement in the timely release of funds to cost units from the

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[166] Data collected from Periodic Financial Monitoring Reports, DoE internal reports and during various interviews with DoE staff.

centre. Disbursement in the last month of the year, however, still constitutes a higher percentage of total disbursement, thereby causing incomplete constructions and non-compliances with set rules and procedures.

Table 12: Final Disbursement to Cost Centres per Trimester/Year[167]

Year	Budget	1st Tri-mester	Percen-tage	2nd Tri-mester	Percen-tage	3rd Tri-mester	Percen-tage	Total	Percen-tage of budget
2009/10	32,426	1,847	5.70	11,636	35.88	19,545	60.28	33,029	101.86
2010/11	47,840	2,194	4.59	17,197	35.95	26,186	54.74	45,578	95.27
2011/12	52,642	11,753	22.33	10,753	20.43	28,332	53.82	50,839	96.58
2012/13	53,017	11,969	22.58	17,636	33.26	21,761	41.05	51,366	96.89
2013/14	67,854	21,507	31.70	17,873	26.34	23,685	34.91	63,064	92.94
Total	**253,779**	**49,271**	**19.41**	**75,096**	**29.59**	**119,510**	**47.09**	**243,876**	**96.10**

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[167] Data collected from Periodic Financial Monitoring Reports, DoE internal reports and during various interviews with DoE staff.

Figure 2: Final Disbursement to Cost Centres per Trimester/Year
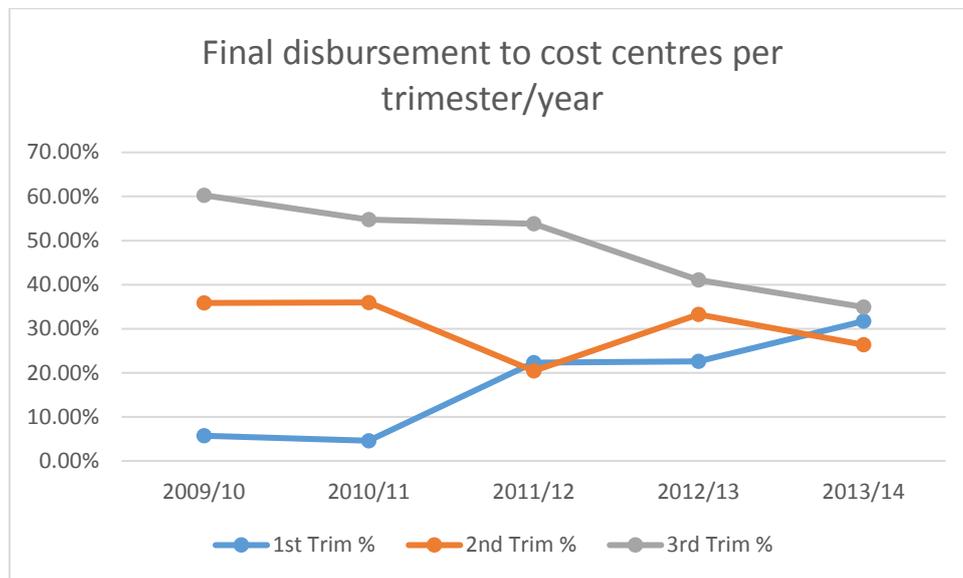
There are no data available for the actual expenditure patterns at school level as there is no tracking and consolidation of real expenses. However, the analysis of the OAG reports for 3 recent years showed the reported incomplete constructions as follows:

Table 13: Incomplete Constructions as per OAG Audit Reports (in billion NPR)

FY	Allocation	Released	Incomplete	Percentage of incomplete work
2011/12	4.99	4.97	1.74	35.03%
2012/13	2.59	2.58	1.77	68.49%
2013/14	6.49	5.52	3.17	57.43%

Fund Disbursement from Donors

The finance section of the DoE has been facing difficulties to reconcile the Financial Controller General's Office (FCGO) record with that of the DoE at the time of preparation of the Financial Monitoring Reports and Project Accounts. These inconsistencies emerged because of differences in Red Book Allocation under DPs' Share and Real Commitment/Deposit. During 2013/14, programme activities were further prioritized in order to ensure there was o budget gap.

Table 14: Differences in DPs' Sources in Red Book and in Commitment[168]

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[168] Data collected from Periodic Financial Monitoring Reports, DoE internal reports and during various interviews with DoE staff.

| FY	Allocation in Red Book	Real Commitment by DPs	Difference, NPR million
2009/10	10,618.26	6,860.00	3,758.26
2010/11	10,424.04	10,598.00	-173.96
2011/12	12,348.79	13,446.00	-1,097.21
2012/13	10,205.65	14,218.42	-4,012.78
2013/14	14,816.28	10,664.00	4,152.28
2014/45	9,282.76	8,539.90	742.87
2015/16	11,991.62		
Total	79,687.40	64,326.32	3,369.46

The causes of these variations can be attributed to the fact that:

- The estimations in the Red Book are based on indicative commitment by DPs, whereas actual commitment are based on concrete planning;

- Exchange rate differences between the date of the Red Book and the disbursement dates;

- Pressure on the GoN to allocate budgets from different sources;

- Reconciliation difference between FCGO Record and DoE Record: FCGO records reimbursable expenses as per release of funds, whereas DoE maintains records as per authorizations based on Red Book Allocation.

Table 15: Reconciliation Difference of Reimbursable Expenses (in million NPR)[169]

FY	As per FCGO	As per DoE	Difference
2009/10	8,425.31	6,865.31	1,560.00
2010/11	9,556.84	10,300.52	-743.68
2011/12	11,123.40	13,164.56	-2,041.16
2012/13	9,629.18	14,049.43	-4,420.25
2013/14	9,395.00	9,936.73	-541.73
Total	39,704.42	47,451.24	-7,746.82

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[169] Data collected from Periodic Financial Monitoring Reports, DoE internal reports and during various interviews with DoE staff.

5.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

An Education Management Information System (EMIS) is in place and forms the basis for observing and promoting internal efficiency. The use of EMIS and the flash system has continued to improve in terms of quantity, quality and timeliness of available data. The development of an Equity Index[170] will provide additional information and analysis on disparities across the districts.

The undertaking of the first cycle of the NASA[171] is the first step in the institutionalisation of a system for ongoing, disaggregated monitoring of learning achievement at different stages and across geographic areas and school types. NASA will enable much more effective targeting of resources as well as more effective performance management.

The World Bank PETS study[172] noted that there is still further work to be done on tracking individual teachers, the teaching-learning process and school management practices. Nepal has recently joined a regional GPE-UNICEF initiative that will aim to improve participatory monitoring at school level through the use of School Report Cards.

Whilst great efforts are put into data collection, many challenges remain in analysis and efficient use of the data. Feedback from EMIS for policy and decision-makers are not yet systematic or institutionalised. Recent SSRP coordination meetings have focused on the need for stronger analysis of flash data and triangulation through qualitative validation of data. This systematic analysis would help understand better the causes for various patterns and identified trends.

The mandatory social audit function still needs to be strengthen and better linked to the EMIS, while also incorporating relevant Disaster Risk Reduction measures. Similarly, the output of the GIS school mapping exercises need to be linked to EMIS, such as to inform school merging and reconstruction activities. Finally, out-of-school children (OOSC) and children with disabilities (CWD) need to be included in EMIS data. Activities related to the further development of the EMIS need to be accelerated.

5.3.1 Social Auditing

Social audits are considered as an important instrument to ensure the correct and targeted use of funds. Past school audits have been considered as ineffective. This has been mainly due to three reasons, i) lack of proper financial record keeping at school, ii) lack of monitoring skills of the school auditors, and iii) low fee provisions for carrying out

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[170] The Equity Index is currently being developed and will be implemented in FY 2016/17.

[171] Ministry of Education, (2012), National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA). Assessment of grade 8 in 2011 and 2013, and grade 5 and 3 in 2012.

[172] World Bank, (2014). Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS).

school audits. No evaluation has been performed on the use of the school audit guidelines prepared in 2005/6 by the school auditors.

The NCE study conducted in Saptari and Kathmandu districts mentions that a majority of Sepate schools have failed to conduct the mandatory social audits at the end of the fiscal year.[173] Consequently no social audit report was included in the school audit report. Due to the resulting lack of accountability in primary and secondary levels, these schools faced difficulties keeping track of the voucher system.

Despite these implementation challenges, ineligible expenses have started to reduce over the programme implementation period.[174] However, the OAG reports for the past few years have categorically mentioned that the issues are being repeated without further action to prevent them from recurrence. The MoE and the DoE take the initiative to determine irregular expenses following the OAG report submission, which is on a yearly basis. OAG audits have been more focussed on transactions verification rather than on providing insights into systemic lapses. A risk-based approach has not been fully implemented by OAG.

Being mandatory, social audits have tended to become a ritual exercise to unblock funds rather than a monitoring exercise. The MoE and the DoE have focused too much on the number of social audits being conducted rather than on their actual results.[175] The revised social audit guidelines, supported by SISM/JICA are expected to make the required change. Their outreach could be expanded to cover all schools and follow-up on the status of the pilot districts. The outputs of social audits can be used for policy dialogue and enhanced public financial accountability.

5.3.2   Financial Record Keeping and Monitoring Reports

Financial record keeping has not yet been computerised and is done in hand-writing. This procedure delays the preparation of the financial reports at all levels and is prone to mistakes.[176] Since 2014/15, the Financial Management Information System (FMIS) is being developed for the central level and updated regularly. A software to prepare FMR has been developed to be able to link these to the FCGO FMIS. At the MoE and DoE level, FMIS has just started and only one authority release module has been under implementation this year (2015/16). This software relates to the disbursements only, while parts related to planning and budgeting, accounting for disbursement, variance analysis, and report generating, all still are planned to be developed in the remaining timeframe of the SSRP programme.

At the centre, except for the maintenance of records for its own expenses, no records are maintained for the districts disbursements. FMR are developed based on records

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[173] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2014).

[174] Ministry of Education, (2015). School Sector Reform Programme EU Evaluation Report.

[175] Ministry of Education, (2012).School Sector Reform Programme Mid Term Review. Lessons Learned under Programme Governance.

[176] World Bank, (2012). Fiduciary Review Report.

extracted from Financial Controller General's Office (FCGO). The need for simplification in record keeping is widely acknowledged and has regularly been pointed at in various reports. While revisions of the manual have been undertaken by the DoE, capacity deficits to follow the prescribed procedures at school level have not been properly addressed.

There have been considerable delays in preparing and submitting FMR to the DPs. As per the JFA[177], FMR are to be prepared and submitted to the DPs' focal point within 45 calendar days by the end of each trimester. Un-audited consolidated annual financial statements need to be submitted before 15 October and OAG audit reports before 15 January of the following year. The information received from the World Bank shows the following status:

Table 16: Reporting per Fiscal Year

Reporting per FY	Received Date	WB Commented Date	WB Approved Date
FISCAL YEAR 2012/13			
1st FMR	March 21, 2013	April 26, 2013	May 24, 2013
2nd FMR	May 17, 2013	May 24, 2013	October 4, 2013
3rd FMR	January 20, 2014	January 14, 2014	January 22, 2014
Unaudited	December 13, 2013	January 14, 2014	January 14, 2014
Audited	March 24, 2014	March 28, 2014	March 28, 2014
FISCAL YEAR 2013/14			
1st FMR	February 7, 2014	April 16, 2014	May 26, 2014
2nd FMR	May 28, 2014	August 4, 2014	September 29, 2014
3rd FMR	March 4, 2015	March 31, 2015	March 31, 2015
Unaudited	March 26, 2015	June 9, 2015	June 9, 2015
Audited	Not submitted	n/a	n/a
FISCAL YEAR 2014/15			
1st FMR	May 27, 2015	June 10, 2015	June 10, 2015
2nd FMR	Not submitted	n/a	n/a
3rd FMR	Not due	n/a	n/a
Unaudited	Not due	n/a	n/a
Audited	Not due	n/a	n/a

The quality of the FMR is still questioned and the main issues outlined by donors were:

- Mismatch between audited account figures with the corresponding figures in the FMR, with FCGO records (1st Trimester – 2013/14);

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[177] Joint Annual Review (JAR), (2015). Aide Memoire, paragraph 50, 51, Section: IX-Reporting; and paragraph 61, Section: XI - Audit.

- Funds received from DPs not reconciled (1st Trimester – 2012/13);

- Prior-review contract lists not attached (1st Trimester – 2012/13);

- Cash projection not in line with pro-rata ratio (3rd Trimester – 2012/13);

- Share of DPs of the transferred figure not calculated correctly as per pro-rata ratio (1st Trimester – 2013/14).

The evaluation team also noticed that the FMR constitutes mixed data, notably actual expenses at the central level agencies and disbursement data related to school financing. Thus, there is a disconnection between FMR and programme progress monitoring.

5.3.3   Accountability and Transparency, Financial Risk Management

Despite significant improvements in PFM, the mentioned problems have not yet been resolved.[178] Although the absolute amount and percentage of ineligible expenses has been decreasing progressively in recent years[179], various studies and OAG reports identified possible leakages and misuse of funds:

- Non-compliances of the Programme Implementation Manual, of Financial Administration Regulations, Procurement Laws, and status quo in resolving audit recommendations;[180]

- Excess or double payments of teachers' salaries[181], payments to ghost schools[182] and teachers;[183]

- Ghost enrolments of students;[184]

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[178] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

[179] Joint Annual Review (JAR), (2015). Aide Memoire; World Bank, (2014). Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS): 7.4% in 2010/11, 5.20% in 2011/12 and 4.2% in 2012/13.

[180] Office of Auditor General (OAG) Report, 2012/13 and World Bank Comments on Audited Accounts for the year.

[181] Office of Auditor General (OAG) Audit Reports.

[182] CIAA – Annual Report 2013/14: The highest numbers of complaints of 2300 were received from the Ministry of Education (13%) - 24th Annual Report of CIAA - Jan 2015. As per the annual report, there were cases where teachers have been appointed against the regulations and "ghost schools" (Jhole Bidyalaya) established to embezzle annual subsidy granted by the government in the form of teachers' salaries and allowances, administrative expenses, student scholarships and physical construction works. District education officers, school supervisor, resource person, head teachers including chairperson of the school management committee have all been found to be involved in the operation of ghost schools. The lack of regular auditing of books of accounts and irregularities in teachers' appointments were also observed during inquiry and investigation.

[183] World Bank, (2014). Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS).

[184] Office of Auditor General (OAG) Reports; World Bank, (2014). Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS); ADB Fund Flow Tracking, (2013).

- Inconsistencies in distribution of scholarship funds;[185]

- Delay in construction of physical facilities, non-availability of work completion certificates;[186]

- Fragmentation of accountability, central government-centric, gap between process/mechanism and responsibilities/authority;[187]

- Inbuilt conflict of interest across all tiers in the institutional arrangement for accountability (involvement in implementation and monitoring);[188]

- Ineffective assurance mechanism.[189]

There is considerable emphasis laid on enhancing public accountability and transparency. Despite efforts by the MoE and the DoE to improve monitoring and evaluation, institutional mechanisms remain weak, and legislative oversight is close to non-existent. Furthermore, information sharing, such as access to EMIS data, is difficult between government officials as well as with the public.[190] There is no institutional public grievance redress system, although some rudimentary form of complaint handling takes place at DEO level. Budgets and expenditures are opaque in that they do not provide detailed disaggregated data, such as for capacity building allocations by district. Decisions taken in meetings, especially at the district level are not made public. District websites, which were supposed to be used for information sharing, are not updated and contain none or little information on expenditures and project progress. In addition, GoN's eagerness to disclose a number of data and information has not been streamlined due to the absence of firmed communication strategy and process and the periodicity of the public disclosures.

Reporting requirements are burdensome, duplicative and with weak links to results. There are at least 32 reports generated overall and 19 at the district level on a regular basis. As an institutional measure, the reporting system in place is thus process- and input-oriented but does not serve as the basis for accountability. It plays only a peripheral role in planning and budgeting and does not facilitate district and school-based operations. Reporting is not linked to planning and financing and it seems to be reporting for the sake of reporting. Complying with reporting requirements detracts managerial attention from issues related to efficiency, equity and innovation in service delivery.

Various SSRP studies and audit reports have identified relatively high fiduciary risks in its implementation and the need for effective and concentrated effort. Major policies and regulations contributing to fiduciary risks are:

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[185] ADB Fund Flow Tracking, (2013).

[186] Office of Auditor General (OAG) Reports; World Bank, (2012). Fiduciary Review.

[187] School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP), (2012).

[188] School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP), (2012).

[189] ADB Funds Flow Tracking, (2013).

[190] Ministry of Education, (2013).School Sector Reform Plan Institutional Analysis and Capacity Development Report.

- The PCF funding mechanism currently leads to a vulnerability of overreporting on number of students;

- The Blanket approach for scholarships and textbooks, which loads on available resources and forces accommodation and prevents to fund other important themes;

- The capacity development initiatives are scattered and without sustainability plan;

- The priority for PFM reform agendas and cross-cutting impact, are always considered secondary and there is a slow progress in the overall PFM strengthening, which is not under the control of the MoE and the DoE;

- Further strengthening of actions to perpetrators and in cases of non-compliance with follow up actions is needed, to ensure prevention.

- The devolution of authorities without adequate capacity assessment and enhancement plan.

The fiduciary risks are particularly high at the district and school levels[191], where more than 80% of the SSRP fund is spent. These risks result from inadequate design and insufficient investment in capacity building, both at central and field level. The fact that the SSRP financing falls under the Local Bodies Finance Commission (LBFC) increases the difficulties for streamlining the financial management at district and school level.[192]

Measures to mitigate these fiduciary risks have already been undertaken during the SSRP implementation. These include the development and status review of the financial management improvement action plan, the fund flow tracking, the development of teachers and physical facilities, the development of databases about students and schools, the transfer of teacher salaries to their bank accounts, and the development of specialised monitoring of reported cases. There are, however, concerns about the continuation of these reforms and the timely completion of the initiated activities.[193]

5.4   Internal Efficiency

Internal efficiency has improved continuously over the SSRP period. The coefficient of internal efficiency gives a first overview:

Table 17: Trend on Coefficient of Internal Efficiency at Primary and Basic Level[194], by Gender, 2010-2014

Students	Primary level			Basic level		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total

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[191] Ministry of Education, . School Sector Reform Programme. Comments on Financial Actions.

[192] Ministry of Education, . School Sector Reform Programme. Comments and Recommendations under Financial Actions.

[193] Ministry of Education, (2015). School Sector Reform Programme EU Evaluation Report.

[194] Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 54.

2010	0.74	0.73	0.73	0.65	0.64	0.65
2011	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.67	0.66	0.67
2012	0.77	0.77	0.77	0.69	0.68	0.68
2013	0.80	0.78	0.79	0.71	0.70	0.71
2014	0.82	0.81	0.81	0.74	0.72	0.73

A similar tendency is observed in the cohort graduation rate for this period. For both indicators, the gender differences are insignificant.

Table 18: Trend on Cohort Graduation Rate at Primary and Basic Levels,[195] by Gender, 2010-2014 (in percentages)

Students	Primary level			Basic level		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
2010	81.8	71	71.3	57.4	56.3	56.8
2011	75.8	72.6	73.6	60.2	57.7	58.8
2012	76	74.5	75	62.0	60.5	60.8
2013	78.4	76.3	77.6	64.4	62.3	63.8
2014	80.4	79.6	79.7	67.9	65.6	66.7

Although indicators show continuous improvements in internal efficiency at both primary and basic level, outputs still indicate that there is room for improvement. Note that efficiency rates can be misleading with regard to drop-out rates. Compared to dropouts from higher grades, drop-outs from lower grades produce higher internal efficiency rates as the investment is positively correlated to the time spent in school before the drop-out. The longer the child stays in school, the higher the investment, and reversely, the earlier the child drops out of school, the lower the investment has been. This economic consideration is however in contradiction with educational objectives to retain children as long as possible in school.

In Nepal, the highest drop-out rates are found in grade 1, which from an economic point of view, means that there is no wasted investment. Yet, findings also show that chances to stay in school increase significantly after the first grade. This indicates that investing in retaining children in school after the first grade should be a priority. The table below shows that there is still a high number of drop-outs, yet steadily decreasing over the years.

Table 19: Internal Efficiency at Primary and Lower Secondary Levels,[196] 2010-2014

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[195] Government of Nepal, (2010). Consolidated Flash Report 2010-2014; and Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 54.

[196] Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 46.

Grades	PRD	2010			2011			2012			2013			2014		
		G	B	T	G	B	T	G	B	T	G	B	T	G	B	T
1	Promotion	69.3	68.9	69.1	71.5	70	70.8	73.1	71.9	72.5	75.7	75.1	75.4	78.3	78.4	78.4
	Repetition	22.3	22.8	22.6	21.2	21.5	21.3	19.7	20	19.9	17.3	17.7	17.5	15.0	15.4	15.2
	Dropout	8.3	8.2	8.3	7.3	8.5	7.9	7.2	8.1	7.6	7.0	7.2	7.1	6.7	6.2	6.5
2	Promotion	86.6	85.8	86.2	87.6	87.3	87.4	88.1	87.6	87.8	88.5	88.0	88.3	89.0	88.4	88.7
	Repetition	8.5	8.7	8.6	8.4	8.2	8.3	7.9	7.8	7.9	8.1	7.9	8.0	8.3	8.0	8.1
	Dropout	4.9	5.6	5.2	4	4.5	4.3	4	4.6	4.3	3.4	4.1	3.7	2.8	3.6	3.2
3	Promotion	87.3	87.9	87.6	89.1	88.9	89	89.6	89.2	89.4	89.9	89.3	89.6	90.2	89.4	89.8
	Repetition	8	7.7	7.9	7.5	7.4	7.4	7	7.2	7.1	6.9	7.0	7.0	6.8	6.8	6.8
	Dropout	4.6	4.4	4.5	3.4	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.6	3.5	3.2	3.7	3.4	3.0	3.7	3.3
4	Promotion	88.7	88.2	88.4	88.9	88.5	88.8	89.4	89.3	89.4	89.7	89.3	89.5	90.0	89.3	89.6
	Repetition	7.7	7.9	7.8	7.5	7.6	7.5	7.1	7.2	7.1	6.7	6.9	6.8	6.4	6.7	6.5
	Dropout	3.6	3.9	3.8	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.8	3.7	3.6	4.1	3.9
5	Promotion	87.9	87.6	87.8	88.5	88.3	88.4	88.9	88.5	88.7	90.3	90.0	90.2	91.7	91.5	91.6
	Repetition	5.9	5.6	5.7	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.2	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.3	5.4	5.3
	Dropout	6.2	6.8	6.5	6.1	6.2	6.2	5.9	6.2	6	4.4	4.6	4.5	3.0	3.1	3.1
1-5	Promotion	82.1	81.8	81.9	83.4	82.8	83.1	84.5	83.9	84.2	85.7	85.2	85.5	86.9	86.5	86.7
	Repetition	12	12.2	12.1	11.4	11.5	11.5	10.5	10.6	10.6	9.7	9.9	9.8	9.0	9.2	9.1
	Dropout	5.9	6.1	6	5.2	5.7	5.4	5	5.5	5.2	4.5	4.9	4.7	4.1	4.3	4.2
6	Promotion	87.4	87.3	87.4	88.3	88.2	88.3	89	88.5	88.7	90.2	88.9	89.6	91.5	89.3	90.4
	Repetition	7	6.7	6.8	5.6	5.2	5.4	5.3	5.4	5.4	4.8	5.2	5.0	4.3	5.1	4.7
	Dropout	5.6	6	5.8	6.1	6.6	6.3	5.7	6.1	5.9	4.9	5.9	5.4	4.2	5.7	4.9
7	Promotion	88.6	88.3	88.4	88.8	89	88.9	89.7	89.9	89.8	90.1	90.1	90.1	90.5	90.3	90.4
	Repetition	5.7	5.3	5.5	5.3	4.9	5.1	4.8	4.5	4.6	4.7	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.4	4.5
	Dropout	5.7	6.4	6.1	5.9	6.1	6	5.6	5.7	5.6	5.2	5.5	5.4	4.9	5.3	5.1
8	Promotion	85.6	86.4	86	86.7	87.2	86.9	87.1	88.1	87.6	88.2	88.8	88.5	89.3	89.6	89.5
	Repetition	7.1	6.2	6.6	6.3	5.6	6	6.2	5.2	5.7	5.4	4.8	5.1	4.6	4.5	4.5
	Dropout	7.3	7.4	7.4	7	7.2	7.1	6.7	6.7	6.7	6.4	6.3	6.4	6.1	5.9	6.0
6-8	Promotion	87.2	87.3	87.3	88	88.1	88.1	88.6	88.8	88.7	89.5	89.3	89.4	90.4	89.7	90.1
	Repetition	6.6	6.1	6.3	5.7	5.2	5.5	5.4	5	5.2	5.0	4.8	4.9	4.5	4.7	4.6
	Dropout	6.2	6.6	6.4	6.3	6.6	6.5	6	6.2	6.1	5.5	5.9	5.7	5.0	5.6	5.3

The introduction of a single subject certification and introduction of a letter grading system and the liberal promotion approach might represent a possible measure to improve internal efficiency. The differentiation of pupils according to their progress with specified pedagogical attention, leads to a reduction of dropouts and increases the chances for slow learners to stay in the learning process. Moreover, the pedagogical

value of repeating a school year is questionable.[197] Free promotion from one school year to the next is now being piloted in many countries. This approach has shown positive results whenever remedial activities can be offered for the weakest pupils. This would need to be ensured for the Nepalese context, with a progressive introduction of CAS and sufficient support.

Table 20: Extract from the Summary of the SSRP Key Performance Indicators (base year status, progress status and targets)[198]

Indicators	Base years		Achievements (in years)						
	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Pupil-teacher ratio for all schools based on reported teachers positions									
Primary Education ratio		33.3	32	30	28	26	24	23	
Basic Education, ratio			34	31	30	30	26	26	
Grade 9-10, ratio		27	27	24	24	24	23	23	
Secondary Education, ratio			25	23	23	23	23	23	

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[197] Interviews with stakeholders, April-August 2015.

[198] Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 8.

5.5   Technical Assistance, SWAp and Aid Effectiveness

Some of the significant achievements made during the SSRP implementation are exemplary in many instances. The most important achievement of the SSRP is the Joint Financing Agreement (JFA) among DPs within a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp). This has not only introduced a holistic perspective on the school sector, but has also consolidated DPs' sub-sectoral interest. DPs have formulated a coherent and sector-wide development policy, including a draft amendment to the Education Act, which is at the final stage of its endorsement.

The SSRP envisaged mechanisms for fund pooling or direct funding by different DPs. Denmark, for instance, has used the direct funding modality and allocated a share of its funds to certain SSRP areas and activities. Denmark had previously supported an Education Sector Advisory Team (ESAT) as a separate unit for implementing technical assistance, which was converted into the Education Programme Support Office (EPSO). EPSO took up many projects for capacity building within the MoE, the DoE and other sector institutions. EPSO also implemented studies to address emerging issues, and piloted new approaches, such as the development of the CAS, multi-grade multilevel (MGML) learning and mapping of out-of-school children (OOSC). Flexible disbursement procedures allowed to respond in time to emerging issues and helped to reduce micromanagement by DPs. It also helped to fill some gaps with small trainings and equipment delivery, which, without these mechanisms, would not have been possible under existing budget ceilings. [199]

The provision of direct funding (DF) and bilateral technical assistance (TA) in addition to the pooled funding under JFA, allowed flexibility to meet certain immediate needs that could not be addressed by following SWAp procedures. At the same time, these complementary approaches have raised questions about the intended harmonisation and streamlining of funds under JFA.[200] The implementation arrangements for DF and TA envisaged in the SSRP could not be institutionalised and was therefore mostly managed on an ad hoc basis. The MoE and the DoE felt that it was necessary to concentrate and channel DF and TA through a Technical Cooperation Pool. This pool is commonly managed by the GoN and the DPs under a strong administrative set up within the MoE jurisdiction.

Considering that procurement is still a challenging field for the MoE, direct procurement by DPs can have advantages, such as i) timeliness, ii) sourcing from a broad pool, iii) quality assurance, and iv) meaningful TA. Nevertheless, direct procurement by DPs has the risk to weaken the competency of regular procurement officers. International consultants should be aware that any new ideas, changes in systems, or approaches should be introduced in narrow cooperation with the existing institutions and their staff in view of skills transfer by on-the-job training, while ensuring full ownership by the system of this process at all times.

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[199] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

[200] School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP), Aid Management.

The ADB and WB have regularly provided technical and financial assistance, while DPs have sponsored international and national consultants for a wide range of missions, including mentoring or on-the-job support, research or analytical support, and introduction of new systems (e.g. during data collection, PFM, reporting, supporting the development of NASA, integrating soft skills in the grade 9 and 10 curriculum).

During interviews with DPs, it was noted that the SSRP already represents an improvement to earlier modalities. Yet DPs are aware of the need to create a joined-up and systematic approach – especially to avoid repeating mistakes as encountered with the EPSO modality.

Although SSRP MTR states that effective reforms are driven by incentives, high increases in funding have created some inadequate incentives, which have partially led to unintended consequences. In the field visits, it could be observed that the provided incentives were no inspiration for the teachers to improve their performance and commitment. In the light of bringing schools closer to the community, the DoE gave additional incentives of 100.000 to the primary level, 200.000 to the lower secondary level 300.000 to the high school level, as well as additional Rahat quota.[201]

Table 21: Strength-Weaknesses Analysis for Efficiency

	Efficiency: strengths	Efficiency: weaknesses
Governing structure of the programme	- Decentralising efforts implemented, also financially (budget channelled through DoE - Introduction of the EPC, ERO at the central level and SMCs and PTA at the school level - Individual capacity has been increased.	- CLA were satisfied with the budget being channelled through DoE - TA support not being coherent but scattered on a case to case basis - TA support cannot be done following GoN procedures - No real capacity enhancement except with SISM/JICA - No concrete results of ESAT/Danida
Division of labour: intra- and inter agency cooperation, including the Government and donors	- Good cooperation structure within DPs, and between DPs and GoN - Direct TA is flexible and has fast implementation mechanisms - Good strategic harmonisation between pooling partners	- SWAp mechanisms sometimes slow and bureaucratic, so bilateral TA has to back up fast actions needed - Fund release depends on timely reception and good quality of reports and planning documents, if this doesn't happen, the target group (teachers and pupils) carry the consequences
Adequacy of the Joint Financing Agreement (JFA)	Capacity enhancement, like SISM/JICA	- Put certain activities that cannot be done following GoN procedures - No concrete results of ESAT/Danida
Other aspects for efficiency assessment	SIP will be able to include budgeting in planning.	- Funding not based on SIP - High personnel flow weakens all institutions - High influence of politics on teachers and other stakeholders bias processes and results.

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[201] Information from Nanda Kishor Sharma.

6   IMPACT OF SSRP

The main impacts and effects of the SSRP on local social, economic, and environmental indicators are examined. We based the impact analysis on the indicators given by SSRP areas: access and equity, quality and relevance, governance and capacity building. External factors have been considered such as the earthquake, the political situation, or the scarcity of fuel due to the blockade at the border to India.

Based on the gap between the level of priority of education policy at national level and the actual impact on the quality of teaching and learning, the TOR selected specific areas for impact analysis (i-vii) which had high priority during the implementation of SSRP. In line with SSRP objectives, we re-organised these areas as follows:

-   Access and equity: (i) improved access to ECD and early grades (1-3);
-   Quality and relevance: (ii) establishment of the Education Review Office and undertaking NASA, (iii) implementation of continuous assessment, (iv) timely and efficient delivery of textbooks, (v) ensuring Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions;
-   Governance and capacity development: (vii) implementation of financial and social audits at school level.

Key performance indicators are taken into account for the assessment of the impact where relevant. Note that it was not always possible to separate access and equity from quality or changes in the system.

6.1   Access and Equity

6.1.1   Early Childhood Development and Early Grades of Primary Education

The analysis of the key performance indicators shows very good progress.[202] First, starting from a 2008-09 baseline of 73%, the net enrolment rate (NER) for basic education has increased in 2013/14 to 87.6 %, surpassing the target of 85%. The NER for primary education is 96.2%, and is approaching the target of 99%. Second, the completion rates for primary and basic education, 79.7% and 66.7%, respectively, are on track to reach the end of program targets. Third, gender parity in NER for primary, basic and secondary education has been achieved. And finally, an equity strategy has been finalised. As part of the equity strategy, GoN is in the process of developing an equity index that will be used to identify disadvantaged districts for targeted support.

Additionally to what has been presented in the chapter on effectiveness, the TORs require to focus specially on ECED and the first 3 years of primary education. The data

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[202]Key Performance Indicators (KPI); and World Bank, (2015). Implementation Status and Results Report: School Sector Reform Program (P113441), ISR19974, Nepal.

related to ECED and early primary education can help understand the impact of the programme.

The National Campaign for Education states that ECED graduates performed better in primary grades.[203] The new entrants in primary grade with ECED experience raised continuously from 49,9% in 2009/10 to 59,9% in 2014/15.[204]

Table 22: New Entrants in Primary Grade with ECED Experience[205]

Indicators	Base years		Targets and achievements (in years)												
	07/08	08/09	09/10		10/11		11/12		12/13		13/14		14/15		15/16	
			T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A
Grade 1																
New entrants with ECED experience, in %	33	36	41	49.9	45	52.1	51	54.3	57	55.6	59	56.9	62	59.6	64	

Focusing especially on the primary education NET and survival rate in 2004 (start of EFA), in 2009/10 (start of SSRP) and in the latest available data for 2014/15, and comparing it to the SSRP target, it becomes evident that access and efficiency (survival rate) have increased due to the programme. It is also likely that all targets will be reached.

Table 23: SSRP Achievements in the Education Sector[206]

	Start of EFA 2004	Start of SSRP 2009/10	2013/14	2014/15	SSRP Target
Primary NER (grades 1-5)	83.5	91.9%	95.6%	96.2%	99%
Primary Survival Rate (grade 5)	NA	58%	85.4%	86.8%	90%

The progress in access indicators, presented in more details in the chapter on effectiveness, shows some specific achievements for primary education and includes also data about learning achievement. In Table 24, we selected relevant data for lower primary education. The data confirms that GER of EDC increased and will soon reach the target. The percentage of new entrants with ECD experience increased as well, but

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[203] National Campaign for Education (NCE), (2015).

[204] Note that in the baseline year 2007/08, it was 33%.

[205] Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015.

[206] Department of Education, (2014).

is still almost 20% points behind the target. The NER increased continuously and is likely to reach the target. Repetition rates in grade 1 but are still behind target, whilst in grade 5 repetition rates are already lower than target. Survival rates increased and will probably reach the SSRP targets. Unfortunately, the learning achievement in grade 3 cannot be compared between 2012 and 2014/15 because the results are from different sources.

Table 24: Progress in Selected Indicators over the SSRP Period[207]

Indicator	Achievements (in years)				Targets2015
	2001	2006	2012	2014/ 2015	
GER of ECD/ pre-primary education	12.8	41.4	73.7	77.7	80
Percentage of new entrants in grade 1 with ECD/PPE experiences	7.8	18.3	55.6	59.6	80
Net intake rate in grade 1		86	91.2	93	98
Net enrolment rate of primary Level	81.1	87.4	95.3	96.2	100
Repetition rate:					
Grade 1	38.7	29.8	19.9	15.2	10
Grade 5	9	10.4	5.3	5.3	8
Survival rate in grade 5	65.8	80.3	84.1	86.8	90
Percentage of Learning Achievement in grade 3, (NASA): Mathematics, Nepali			59.4, 62.6 ([208])	54.1, 55.2 ([209])	
Learning achievement in grade 5			63	53, 60, 54	70
Literacy rate for age group 6+ years	54		67.2	65.9	90

More detailed data can be drawn from the consolidated Flash I and Flash II report. All data show a continuous improvement, i.e. net intake rate, net enrolment rate in primary education, gender parity index, the share of female teachers, the pupil-teacher ratio, survival and completion rates, learning achievements in grade 5, school leaving certificate results and literacy rates.

Table 25: Summary of the SSRP Key Performance Indicators[210]

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[207] Ministry of Education, (2014).School Sector Reform SWAp Extension Plan.

[208] Ministry of Education, (2012), National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA).

[209] Government of Nepal, (2014). Flash Report II 2014-2015.

[210] Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015.

Indicators	07/08	08/09	09/10 T	09/10 A	10/11 T	10/11 A	11/12 T	11/12 A	12/13 T	12/13 A	13/14 T	13/14 A	14/15 T	14/15 A	15/16 T	15/16 A
Net Intake Rat, in percentages	78	81	83	86.4	86	89	88	90.7	91	91.2	94	91.6	95	93	96	
Net Enrolment Rate																
Primary education, in percentages	89	92	94	93.7	96	94.5	97	95.1	98	95.3	96	95.6	98	96.2	100	
Gender Parity Index																
Primary based on NER				0.98		0.98		0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	0.99	1.00	
Primary education, in percentages		35		39.6, 34.5		42.2, 37.5		42.2, 37.5		41.5, 37.8	43	41, 37.9	43	41.9, 38.2	45, 39	
Pupil-teacher ratio in community schools based on approved teacher positions																
Primary	43.8			42		43			40	38	37	37	36	36	35	
Pupil-teacher ratio in community schools based on reported teacher positions																
Primary		39.5		37		34		31		29		27		26		
Pupil-teacher ratio in all schools based on reported teachers positions																
Primary		33.3		32		30		28		26		24		23		
Repetition Rate																
Grade 1, in percentages	28	18	12	26.5	8	22.6	5	21.3	3	19.9	16	17.5	13	15.2	10	
Grade 5, in percentages	7			6.7		5.7		5.4	5	5.3	4.5	5.3	3.5	5.3	2.5	
Survival Rate by Re-Constructive Cohort Method																
Grade 5, in percentages	54	58	61	77.9	65	80.6	70	82.8	74	84.1	86	85.4	88	86.8	90	
Completion rate in primary and basic levels																
Grade 5, in percentages									75	78		77.6	79	79.7	81	

Indicators	Base years		Targets and Achievements (in years)													
	07/08	08/09	09/10		10/11		11/12		12/13		13/14		14/15		15/16	
			T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A	T	A
Learning Achievement (average score of students in core subjects)																
Grade 5, in percentages	50	53	56		60		63		67		68	53, 60, 54	69	53, 60, 54	70	
SLC (211), in percentages	60	62	64	64.3	65	55.5	67	47.6	69	41.5	45	43.9	51		55	
Literacy Rate																
Age Group 6+ years, in percentages		69	76**	63	78	61	80	65.9	83	65.9	84	65.9	85	65.9	85	

From these data, on can conclude that the results of SSRP in ECED and in early primary education are very positive and continuously improving, while most of the targets are likely to be met. These findings point to the fact that SSRP outreach was successful, reaching a majority of the population. Through targeted action in the next phase, it will be possible to reach out to the remaining groups.

In terms of access and equity, these findings point to the fact that more people are now attending schools and inequalities have been addressed. Whether or not this will have an impact on the successful transition to the labour market cannot be answered at this stage. Also, impact on livelihood strongly depends on quality and relevance of education.

6.2   Quality and Relevance

With regards to the quality and relevance of education, there are some gaps in the implementation of SSRP initiatives. For instance, the Education Policy Committee (EPC) has been constituted, but it has not been very effective.[212] One of the reasons is that actors at the school level do not possess the relevant information about policy provisions[213]. Studies have pointed to a "learning crisis", where learning outcomes and the quality of learning remain un-tackled, often leaving children without basic reading and math skills after four years of attending school.[214] Even teacher training has not

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[211] School Leaving Certificate

[212] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

[213] Parajuli et. al., (2012).

[214] Winthrop, R., and McGivney, E., (2014).

helped to improve learning achievements.[215] Studies also showed that there are no significant differences in student achievements between students taught by trained or untrained teachers[216].

The MoE structure was not considered as supportive in raising the level of student achievements. The report of the International Development Centre of Japan[217] states that unfortunately, the annual monitoring reports submitted by the DEO to the MoE have not yet proven helpful to increase intervention quality. It seems that outcome and output, rather than input and process, should be emphasised more.[218]

SSR Core Document[219] has defined quality education as having two main functions: quality improvement and quality assurance. Both these aspects require setting national standards and measures. For quality improvement, targets and strategies can vary between localities. For quality assurance, national standards and targets are set centrally, but the strategies for reaching and maintaining those standards may vary. One aspect of quality assurance is setting the lower limits, or minimums, under each set of standards; these describe the enabling conditions which the government is obliged to provide.

Under the SSR, the following are considered key elements of quality improvement: enabling conditions, curriculum and textbooks, and instructional process. While for quality assurance, the following elements apply: teacher management and development, head-teacher management and development, as well as certification and examinations.

6.2.1 The Education Review Office and the National Assessment of Student Achievements

The national assessment of student achievements (NASA) only started in 2013, and in 2015, three rounds were conducted. NASA does not have independent authority and no budget or human resources are specifically dedicated for conducting the studies on a regular basis. The amendment of the Education Act will bring about the institutionalisation of NASA under the education review office (ERO), which practically means that the MoE will delegate its authority, and resources will be provided under a separate budget head.

It is important that the NASA findings are made visible, and that follow-up programmes at school level are established to respond to some of the identified challenges. This would also encourage greater commitment from participants during the NASA process, as improvements in the quality of education are directly linked to NASA outcomes. Only recently have some of the regional education directorates (RED) and DEOs started to

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[215] Shakya, D., (2012).

[216] Government of Nepal, (2012), on SLC Grade 10 results for 2010.

[217] International Development Center of Japan (IDCJ), (2015).

[218] Ministry of Education, (2013).

[219] Quoted in the School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP), p. 79.

![HDC Heritage Destination Consulting] ![THE CENTRE FOR EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVES] ![ösb CONSULTING™] ![Gesellschaft für Versicherungswissenschaft und -gestaltung e.V. GVG] ![GFA Consulting Group]

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use NASA for follow-up programmes; hence there is no available data on the success of this mechanism yet.

To comment on some of the NASA findings, the second round of the NASA 2013 study for grade 8 report revealed that, compared with 2011, achievements have not improved. The report did not identify the causes of the stagnating achievements. Some of the findings were:

- Students' average achievement score in institutional schools is higher than that in the community.

- There are wide differences in student achievement in terms of mother tongue, difference in caste/ethnicity.

- The other important variances in the student achievement are the rural/urban and the status of timely availability of the textbooks.

- It reveals that there is a strong association regarding the timeliness in textbook availability and student achievement. The key findings of the study reports of the NASA 2012 for grades 3 and 5 are quite similar.[220]

To conclude, one can say that the NASA process has resulted in i) teachers, head-teachers and DEO being more committed to learning outcomes; ii) influencing factions being identified; iii) development of outcomes being traced; iv) and finally, capacity building about assessment instruments and methods being strengthened.

6.2.2   The Continuous Assessment System

The continuous assessment system (CAS) has been integrated in the SSRP as a tool to improve internal efficiency, as it is thought to help avoid grade repetition. The CAS thus involves rigorous remedial measures. So far it was implemented in grade 1-3, then extended to grade 4-5, and recently scheduled to be implemented in grade 6-7.

The CAS being a formative assessment system means it focuses on the learning process rather than on learning results. This would require an individual approach; which is hard to conceive in the current Nepalese context. Formative evaluation systems are difficult to implement, even in contexts which have the required institutional and pedagogical capacities. The success of the approach strongly relies on complementary support for pupils, rather than restrictive and selective measures.

As was already outlined in the chapter on effectiveness, in its current form, the CAS has counterproductive effects. First, teachers and parents do not trust the CAS and have more faith in the summative examinations as applied in private schools. Second, the advantages are not visible and it creates a lot of confusion. Finally, it might be more effective to complement the existing summative evaluation system with a formative system. However, due to its requirement for individual pedagogical care, the CAS would require investing significantly in teacher training and ensure lower teacher-student ratios.

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[220] Government of Nepal, (2014). Consolidated Flash Report 2014-2015, p. 50.

In sum, while the CAS has created awareness about different assessment approaches, including process-oriented approaches, it has spread confusion about the application of such formative assessments, as well as about their benefits.

6.2.3   Delivery of Textbooks

Textbook shortage is a recurring problem throughout the country, especially at the start of every academic year. There is no well-developed monitoring system which can track gaps in the printing and distribution process (TPDP). Many schools say that SIP funds barely cover the cost of basic textbooks and do not contain funding for additional material and resources.

As noted in the various NASA evaluations, the timely availability of textbooks has a direct effect on learning outcomes. As a consequence, investing in securing the timely delivery of textbooks increases the impact of investments in quality educational quality. Currently, a multiple textbook policy is being piloted, where CDC produces lists of textbooks for each grade and level on an annual basis. Within the guidelines set by the NCF, the DEC in collaboration with DEO can also help determine appropriate textbooks in the respective district. Once the list of textbooks is agreed upon, an approval of CDC must be acquired. The DEO in consultation with DEC can encourage local producers to print such textbooks locally or can initiate local purchase. The DOE in consultation with DEC can also determine whether to purchase locally or through the national producers. Making textbooks available in all schools within the district is the joint responsibility of the DEC and the DEO.

As was outlined in the chapter on effectiveness, though not complete yet, the timely delivery of textbooks has greatly increased between 2010 and 2014. Whether or not this is the result of the mixed delivery mechanisms set under the SSRP remains an open question, as it is not possible to find a causality at this stage. However, as the policy has not led to a worse outcome, and considering that it promotes a decentralised textbook policy involving local producers, this policy should be supported. Additional factors that can ensure the timely and complete textbook-distribution need to be identified. These are hindering factors such as transportation issues or problems in communication.

As such, one can say that while the timely delivery of textbooks is improving, visible inequities remain visible. Yet, under the new delivery policy, local stakeholders have been empowered and decision-making has been strengthened at district level. Chances that children receiving textbooks on time perform better are high. Timely and complete delivery of textbooks indeed became part of the minimum enabling conditions set under the SSRP and is thus a priority for further actions.

6.3   Governance and Capacity Building

6.3.1   Management at National and Local Level

Education stakeholders at central and local level noted that one important impact of SSRP is the creation of a data generation system and planning processes. For instance,

DPs claim that SSRP had a visible impact on the implementation of a decentralised management and a local governance system, fostered through social auditing, SMC/PTA empowerment, and parents' control over teachers. Note that PTA disagree with this view, as they feel that SSRP processes are too bureaucratic and have no tangible effects on the ground.

The evaluation has led to conclude that the SSRP in fact had a major impact on the macro level, now providing reliable and regular data, offering a functioning training system, introduced planning and funding procedures, and increased transparency. At the micro level, i.e. at the school level, the new processes under SSRP still have to prove their effects.

The institutions at district and central level are generally in measure to deliver services in time, but there is evidence about delays in important processes which trigger a chain of further delays. The timely and quantity of textbooks, scholarship funds, and other kinds of deliveries like sports material, furniture, and material for maintenance is necessary in order to improve impact and therewith give the foundation for sustainability. Identified problems in the implementation of the SSRP are mostly due to the political and economic situation, such as political interference in teacher management.

6.3.2 Local Management of Teacher Recruitment

Although the management of the recruitment of temporary teachers has brought a flexible mechanism to fill the lack of teachers, there are still many challenges to address the local management of teacher recruitment:

- Tension between some DEO and SMC for the distribution of limited *Rahat* quotas;
- SMC' tasks and responsibilities are limited to temporary recruitment of teachers, so this approach is not replacing the national teacher recruitment and deployment on a long-term perspective. Also the teacher unions are still pleading for a wider range of recruitment at national level;
- SMC do not have the necessary management capacities, neither the educational knowledge, nor the know-how about recruiting processes;
- Political pressure, interventions, and interferences, nepotism and favouritism are present during recruitment phases;
- Low social and academic responsibility bearing of teachers;
- Weak status of the Teacher Service Commission (TSC);
- Limited number of approved teacher quotas;
- Insecurity of teacher tenure;

Additionally, other problems still need to be addressed by involving the national level:

- Lack of performance evaluation;
- Management of promotions and deployments;

- Teacher deployment according to the needs, management of teacher transfer;

- Academic qualification and specialisation;

- Remedial actions for teachers who do not perform their jobs;

- Difficulty in attracting and retaining qualified young teachers in school.[221]

6.3.3   Financial and Social Audits at School Level

The fact that in the past, school audits have been considered ineffective and that in many districts they have not even been carried out, leads to the conclusion that impact has been low. Considering that many audits have been implemented only as a mandatory procedure to receiving funds, questions the impact potential of the measure. Nevertheless, ineligible expenses have steadily reduced over the period of implementation of the SSRP[222], which can be partially attributed to the performed, even though there are no evidences to prove this link. The revised social audit guidelines, supported by SISM and JICA, are expected to make the required change.

It can be stated that while audits are performed and ineligible expenses have reduced, correct bookkeeping and financial reporting is still not found in practice. While capacity building for teachers, head teachers and SMC is taking place (to some extent also DEO and OAG), but the quality is low, especially regarding financial planning.

6.3.4   Key Performance Indicators

As was outlined in detail in the effectiveness chapter, the program has made good progress across all key performance indicators (KPI).[223] This refers to the increased net enrolment rate, the completion rate, the gender parity index, the national assessments of student achievements (NASA) performed for grade 3 and 5 and published online, as well as the equity strategy, including the soon to be developed equity index to identify disadvantaged districts for targeted support.[224]

Key performance indicators have become the standard indicators to measure progress of the SSRP. This helps educational stakeholders to have a clear picture on what still has to be delivered.

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[221] Santwona Memorial Academy and the Educational Research and Consultancy Centre, (2012). Study on the status of teacher management in community schools in Nepal.

[222] Ministry of Education, (2015). School Sector Reform Programme EU Evaluation Report.

[223] World Bank, (2015). Implementation Status and Results Report: School Sector Reform Program (P113441), ISR19974, Nepal.

[224] For further details on these indicators please refer to the chapter on effectiveness.

7   SUSTAINABILITY OF SSRP

According to the TOR, sustainability should be assessed in terms of the level of institutionalisation of the reforms and the reflection in future policy making and service delivery. The areas requested by the TOR to be analysed specifically under the aspect of sustainability are re-organized under the SSRP objectives as follows:

- Access and Equity: (ii) strengthening access through free and compulsory basic education and population data based strategies to enrol out-of-school children, as well as access to ECED, (ix) strengthening of resilience to disasters and geographical challenges;

- Quality and Relevance: (iii) establishment of child friendly and enabling learning environments, including (priority) minimum enabling conditions; (v) national assessment of student achievements (NASA) and continuous assessment system (CAS);

- Governance and Capacity Building: (i) policy reform and school sector restructuring, (iv) strengthening of teacher professional development, management and (re)deployment to improve quality education, (vi) strengthening of decentralized school management and planning, and the level of community participation in this, (vii) extent to which data informs planning at all levels and validation by education stakeholders.

7.1   Financial Sustainability

The financial sustainability of scholarships is discussed intensively. The literature argues[225] that because scholarships are a financial incentive, the beneficiaries should be identified according to their economic situation, and not their ethnic identity. Eligible conditions for scholarships according to economic considerations would channel funding to more disadvantaged children and very poor areas. For these groups, the current blanket approach does not offset opportunity costs. The SSRP Extension Document has planned to introduce poverty cards which would favour a one door system. These would be distributed regardless of gender or ethnicity. It is however questionable whether this new policy will be implemented anytime soon, as withdrawing existing support is politically very costly. Free and basic education has not managed to bring opportunity costs down, due to informal charges which are still in place.

Moreover, the basic blanket approach for scholarships and textbook distribution is not financially sustainable. The GoN would not be able to pay these amounts from the national budget after donors have withdrawn their support. An alternative would be to implement a strategy to provide books to only needy students. Distribution of new textbooks every year should be avoided by calling back used books and redistribute them, so that savings can be made which can be invested in needy areas.

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[225] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

Nevertheless, a good sign for growing financial sustainability is the fact that over the years, DPs' financial support has decreased and government allocation to education has increased.

Table 26: Trend Analysis of the Annual Work Plan and Budget Allocation and Actual Expenditure on Scholarship Funding (in NPR)[226]

FY	Allocation	Increase / decrease	Percentage increase
2009/10	1,173,275,000.00		
2010/11	1,955,703,000.00	782,428,000.00	66.7%
2011/12	2,127,275,000.00	171,572,000.00	8.8%
2012/13	1,886,814,000.00	240,461,000.00	-11.3%
2013/14	1,887,364,000.00	550,000.00	0.0%
2014/15	2,154,695,000.00	267,331,000.00	14.2%
2015/16	2,274,304,000.00	119,609,000.00	5.6%

7.2   Access and Equity

7.2.1   Free and Compulsory Basic Education, Early Childhood Education and Development, and Out-Of-School Children

The first question for analysing sustainability concerns the major factors which influenced the achievement or non-achievement in terms of access and equity. These factors are a mix of providing basic conditions (buildings, teachers, and material) and increasing awareness. While the SIP might still have many inconsistencies and the mismatch between planning and funding did not allow full potential of local ownership, the switch from a central to a decentralised planning and implementation system did increase awareness and expectations for education. Shared responsibilities between the MoE, DEO, SMC, head teachers, and PTA under a decentralised system help improve access and equity. Awareness campaigns for an education for all should be continued, together with a strengthening of the new institutional set up.

Targeted actions are needed to integrate those who are still not in the system. To that end, the EMIS needs to include all groups, especially out-of-school children, disabled children, and ethnically or geographically excluded groups. Funding for free and compulsory basic education for all is unlikely to be covered by the GoN after donors withdrew.

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[226] Data collected from Periodic Financial Monitoring Reports, DoE internal reports and during various interviews with DoE staff.

7.2.2   Resilience to Disasters and Geographical Challenges

The earthquake demonstrated that there is a strong need for safe and disaster-resilient school construction and school retrofitting, combined with disaster risk reduction measures in education. Many schools, mainly community ECED centres and primary schools, have been destroyed. A school disaster risk reduction report submitted to ADB in 2013, observes some key issues below (not exhaustive).[227]

- If construction quality is not achieved in construction and retrofitting work, disaster resilience cannot be ensured;

- The efforts of the different agencies which are working on disaster resilience and risk reduction in various types of buildings (hospitals, schools, and other public or private buildings) need to be coordinated;

- The reporting has to be improved. The use of IT and other proper project management tools need to be increased to improve project management;

- Community members may be given roles or tasks that can be completed without affecting the core safety of the structure of the school;

- The cost and level of intervention for foundation strengthening and retrofitting is generally very high, requiring specialist involvement in the construction process. Buildings with weak or questionable foundations should not be selected for retrofitting.

Building and retrofitting are expensive, but necessary investments. Nepal does not have the national budget available which will ensure the financing of these measures. The only aspects which can contribute for sustainability are contributions from the community, educational aspects for disaster prevention and behaviour in case of an earthquake, and the possibility to build more disaster resistant structures at present. These factors will help mitigate some of the impacts of another disaster.

7.3   Quality and Relevance

Education stakeholders agree that quality, including in ECD is the most important unfinished agenda item. Key activities in this area should consequently receive the due attention considering potential sustainability.

7.3.1   Didactical Material and Monitoring and Evaluation

In most of the quality related fields, some didactical material is produced. Well elaborated didactical material can ensure sustainability, as it is a tangible output of a quality process. Sustainable didactical material should be prepared in a way that the method of application is clear, that it is easy to understand in a step-by-step approach, and

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[227] A School Disaster Risk Reduction – Capacity Development for School Sector Programme Implementation, first summary submitted to ADB 6 August 2013.

embedded in an adequate and motivating lay-out. The target group (educational planners, teachers, or pupils) should also be evident from the material, and the material should be elaborated in a way involving the participation of the target group. Therefore, the produced material should be an integral part of the curricula and formalised into the system. When introduced in new groups or regions, the distribution of the material should be accompanied by public relation campaigns which show the value of this material in improving the quality of education.

Prepared formats for M&E, such as strategic planning, operational planning or lesson planning, are proven to be helpful in implementation.[228] They need to be piloted and agreed before launched on a big scale. Many times, user requests show which format is really helpful and which is considered a burden in the daily work.

7.3.2   Socio-Cultural Sustainability

Socio-cultural factors such as peace and human security, enforcement of human rights, participatory decision-making, gender equality and cultural diversity are core to the sustainable development goals (SDG). The SSRP policy addressed these challenges by promoting capacity building and establishing partnerships. This is important in order to develop abilities to achieve the goals and actions required for sustainable development and to create ownership. SSRP reflects MDG and EFA goals, which promote education for sustainable development and global citizenship. SSRP develops skills critical to the SDG, such as critical thinking, the ability to argue effectively, showing the ability to respect and promote human rights and gender equality, promoting a culture of peace, non-violence, and cultural diversity.[229]

Because of SSRP's orientation, through training and other inputs, teachers, PTA and SMC members are aware of newly introduced programmes such as SIP, CAS, TPD and CMS. However, real ownership of these programmes and their consequent sustainability is weak. Part of this problem is the fact that teachers and their unions are overly politicised, which challenges the socio-cultural sustainability of the SSRP initiatives. On the other hand, teachers and their unions perceive that their demands were not taken up enough under the SSRP, which also impedes the long-term acceptance of the programme.

Yet, head teacher are socially and culturally perceived as an important authority; this leadership function can act as a motivating factor for teachers. For this reason, they are key actors for promoting ownership and continuation of programmes.

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[228] Lassek, R. (2008). Leistung und Wirkung in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit: Effekte in der Schulpraxis. S.219; and Pawson and Tiley (2010). Realistic evaluation. Sage Publications.

[229] Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4.7 : By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to   sustainable development. https:// sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg4

In a context of poverty such as in Nepal, experience shows that extrinsic motivation led by financial aspects or other external support is predominant. For example, schools will only receive the necessary amount of money if they have developed their SIPs. This approach does not promote real understanding for the sense of participatory elaboration of SIP. Moreover, after the cease of the incentive package, no more school has applied to become a community managed school. TPD, on the other hand, could not be implemented without training allowances or scores for teacher promotion.

7.3.3 Child Friendly and Enabling Learning Environments and (Priority) Minimum Enabling Conditions

After the government's failure to ensure 25 child-friendly minimum enabling condition (MEC) indicators due to weak institutional and individual capacity, the DoE has introduced five priority minimum enabling condition (PMEC) to be implemented in all community schools.[230] SSRP has now implemented the priority based enabling conditions for the effective implementation of quality education programme. These conditions have been extensively outlined in the chapter of effectiveness. What is important for sustainability is that concepts of priority and minimum conditions are fulfilled to ensure quality education.

7.3.4 The National Assessment of Student Achievements and the Continuous Assessment System

NASA has a high potential for social sustainability, as it triggered important analysis about learning outcomes. It is now necessary to maintain uniformity in high quality test administration in the coming rounds to ensure the quality of future assessments. A post-NASA follow-up programme to all schools in the country would be recommendable but the responsible Education Review Office still lacks financial and procurement authority, capacitated staff, and functional authority. The NASA programme has no budget, nor independent authority or human resource to conduct studies on a regular basis. They also lack a follow-up mechanism to apply the results in the NASA report for educational improvement. Therefore, the sustainability of NASA is threatened. The envisioned amendment of the Education Act is needed to ensure the institutionalisation of NASA under ERO.

Until the formalisation of the amendment of the Education Act is implemented, the ERO needs to be formally charged with the next NASA studies and adequate budget needs to be foreseen. The MoE would have to sign a contract which gives the necessary authority and independence to ERO to carry out the next assessment rounds.

CAS does not show potential for sustainability, as its implementation has been compromised. As explained in the chapter on efficiency, programmes of formative evaluation need very strong capacity development, a change of mind set and practical

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[230] Republica, (12 Dec 2012). http://www.educatenepal.com/news/detail/minimum-priorities-for-public-schools-scaled-back, 9.1.2016.

material. At the same time, this approach needs a low teacher-student rate, which cannot be reached within the next years. Formative assessment in contexts such as the one in Nepal can only be a complementary approach, but should not be designed to substitute summative evaluations.

7.3.5   The National Early Grade Reading Programme

The national early grade reading programme (NEGRP) is developing classroom based early grade reading assessment tools, based on defined reading skills. The produced material has the potential to represent a tool for sustainability if the conditions for didactical material mentioned in the previous point can be met. With a coherent strategy of distribution and introduction in the classrooms this programme might contribute substantially to the improvement of reading skills in the early grades and may lay an important cornerstone for the later learning outcomes.

7.4   Governance and Capacity Building

SSRP has been gradually moving towards procedural reforms. The Education Act is in parliament and soon to be passed. The reform has an EMIS system in place, a letter grading system to be introduced to increase internal efficiency of the education system, P1 programmes are set and implemented under the minimum enabling conditions and individual's capacity increased.

At central level, institutional capacity building has also taken place. However staff transfers affect the institutional memory and reduce the impact of capacity building measures. Consequently, mechanisms should be installed which keep the institutional memory in the organisation when staff leaves, such as basic capacity building activities for new entering staff with practical on-the-job trainings, in-house mentoring schemes, and internal communication networks.

The community involvement has been a key approach for sustainability and certainly contains much potential, but involvement is still too weak to have lead to measurable outcomes at school level, especially in schools and communities from remote and poor areas. Local participation in school planning and budgeting particularly in poorer communities has been neglected.[231] In consequence, a capacity development plan has been proposed.

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[231] Two team members, Dr Bidya Nath and Dr. Prem, have visited many schools during the SSRP period, so this observation is based on years of experience in the education sector in Nepal.

7.4.1 Policy Reform and Central Level Agencies Performance

In absence of education policy committees, school level actors have little information about different policy provisions.[232] At central level, there are good personal working relationship and commitments, but the MoE is overloaded, there are duplication of effort and delays in fulfilling the criteria for funds release of DPS, resulting in a stop and start effect. Technical assistance is implemented case by case on an ad hoc basis.[233]

There are massive gaps in the timely delivery of textbooks, of scholarship funds, and other kinds of deliveries like sports material, furniture, and material for maintenance. These threaten sustainability and have to be addressed by analysing the parts in the procedures which cause delays. Additionally, the social auditing report is not shared at the DOE levels.[234]

7.4.2 Teacher Professional Development, Management and Deployment

It is evident that the impact and sustainability of teacher training and management depends strongly on the personal commitments of the teachers. Head teachers stated that only those teachers who have demonstrated willingness have performed well. As was already mentioned in many instanced, teachers are highly politicised and many are de-motivated to do their assigned tasks. Teacher organisations have openly opposed community managed schools which represented decentralised management of education.

At the same time, head teachers also stated that the SSRP helped them train teachers but that the newly acquired skills are not transferred in the classroom. Unless teachers' commitment becomes an integral part of the selection criteria for further career development, teacher professional development, management, and deployment will not be sustainable in the long term. The critical point is, of course, how to measure the level of commitment. It might be in the shape of a list of merits which a teacher can acquire in his school life. They would be part of discussions about the professional development of the teachers between head teachers and DEO staff. To ensure that the decision is as objective as possible, political interference has to be tackled and reduce to a maximum. Furthermore, the capacities of head teachers to discuss in a fair way with teachers about merits and commitments need to be introduced.

If the recruitment process at local level can be monitored closely by DEO and political interference is tackled, then sustainability can be promoted through flexible programmes such as the golden handshake programme. Ratings, visualisation of best performing schools and teachers can be helpful to create awareness about good job performance. These measures can be supported by the media. However, these measures need to be

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[232] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015); and Parajuli et. al., (2012).

[233] Seel, A. and Bajracharya, B., (2015).

[234] Awasthi, G. et al., (2012).

introduced carefully as competitive approaches always carry a high risk of conflicts, especially in a politicised context.

7.4.3 Decentralised School Management and Planning, and Community Participation

Strong accountability and transparency are indispensable for decentralised management and participation of communities. As a consequence, enhanced public disclosure of budgets and performance is necessary to ensure sustainability in transparency and accountability. Further consolidation of decentralised planning and financing can be reached by giving the responsibility of fiscal transfers to the local bodies finance commissions and by linking financing to performance. When school financing is linked to SIP and the fiscal envelopes cover a longer period (e.g. 3 years), improved management at decentralised level might have more chances to succeed.

The basis for ownership of the educational process by SMC is that the SIP need to be the basic instrument for planning, budgeting, funding and improving the physical environment at schools. The monitoring of school performance should be based on the progress on SIP implementation. For ensuring sustainability, a support system at the RED and DEO levels need to be created, which assists the SMC in elaborating and monitoring their SIP, with special focus on data for quality.

The community's involvement in the planning and in the execution of the educational programme, in line with broader policy frameworks, has been a key sustainability approach set forth in the SSRP. This has been particularly targeted at poorer schools and communities, where a capacity development plan has been proposed. Despite this provision, local participation in school planning and budgeting particularly in poorer communities has been a somehow neglected issue at the implementation level.[235] This gap is threatening sustainability in equity of the community-based approach.

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[235] Two team members, Dr Bidya Nath and Dr. Prem, have visited many schools during the SSRP period so this observation is based on years of experience in the education sector in Nepal.

8 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Conclusion and Recommendations for Relevance

While many children and young people still leave schools without having acquired the basic skills for raising their living standards, the demand for public educational services has increased and expectations are higher.

The SSRP is fully compatible with national needs and international commitments, as it has been aligned to the national priority and recommendations of the earlier education commissions and the development plans of the country. This is in line with the GoN's commitment to fund quality education. Most DPs have fulfilled their financial commitment, and the percentage of their financial support has decreased over years. This is due to an overall increase in the share of national budget dedicated to education.

The strategies for improving equal access and quality in education proved to be adequate, but implementation, especially at local level, shows many substantial problems, mostly due to lacking management capacity. Nepal is a multicultural society where children from minority groups of children, children with disabilities and girls have fewer education opportunities. The early childhood education has proven to increase basic education outcomes and has helped reduce drop-out rates. However, it is not yet accessible to all children. The decision to extend basic education to grade 1-8 was a very relevant change and has helped create links to life-long learning and TVET programmes.

The roles of the community, the MoE, and the local government in the planning and implementation process are not always clear to all. The roles of school communities have been specified in different guidelines, but they are not categorically mentioned.

To increase the relevance and ownership of the SSRP, it is recommended to:

1. Create and promote awareness of the importance of planning and monitoring: this means linking finance to plans and build capacity and understanding of SSRP to enhance accountability;
2. Consider prioritising, revising and phasing out of programmes, in light of making them more relevant to local stakeholders;
3. Link all funding to the SIP, VEP, MEP, and DEP by reviewing the basis and process of allocating funds to these plans;
4. In line with the recommendations in the ASIP, ensure that each plan contains a capacity building component for improving the quality of teachers, quality of teaching, adequate quality of material, and a good learning environment;
5. Implement SIP, VEP, MEP, and DEP in close coordination, monitoring, mentoring and supervision of local governance, community, and the MOE structure;
6. Specify roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in developing and implementing SIP, VEP, MEP, and DEP;
7. Specify roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in monitoring and supervising SIP, VEP, MEP, and DEP activities;
8. Assess the progress, and plan and implement remedial and complementary activities according to the needs which appear in the assessment.

8.2 Conclusion and Recommendations for Effectiveness

The first objective of SSRP to increase **access and equity** has been achieved in most areas. The ECED programme contributed substantially to raise the number of pupils entering grade one with the basis for better learning outcomes and a lower risk of drop-out. However, there are high teacher-student ratios and the remote areas are still underserved. Also, the quality of ECED services heavily depends on the quality of the implementing NGO.

Access to primary, basic and secondary schools and the NFE has improved substantially, while equity in terms of gender parity has been fully achieved. With regards to teacher, the percentage of females decreased continuously in the higher levels of education, which has an impact on women involvement in management and decision making, as teachers from lower grades have generally less influence on processes and on decisions.

There remain large disparities for disabled children or children from specific castes and ethnicities. The focused actions for disadvantaged groups have not yet shown enough effect and need to be continued and specified for the different target groups. The recently published integrated scholarship guidelines will be a helpful tool. Children with disabilities are more prone to stay out of school than other children. Unfortunately, there is no reliable data on children with disabilities and therefore no targets are set for their inclusion in education. Their integration into school strongly varies between districts depending on the existence or not of NGOs.

Even though scholarships and other financial incentives have had a positive effect, the funding schemes still need to be reviewed and better differentiated for the existing disadvantaged groups. Other strategies such as free uniforms, stationery and snacks proved to be effective and easier to manage. There is less risk of misuse than with scholarships. Co-funding by districts in infrastructure raises ownership and responsibility for maintenance, but it is a high burden for very poor communities. Awareness raising campaigns and advocacy for education are successful for improving NER, but professional development and better quality in learning will help reduce the drop-out rate.

The registration process of religious schools has been simplified but is still burdensome. Contrary world views between religious and non religious schools are not discussed enough between stakeholders, making it difficult for religious schools to integrate the national curriculum.

The NFE and literacy programmes have been successful in reaching high numbers of illiterates and turning a big majority into neo-literates. Data about illiteracy are quite reliable.

To increase effectiveness in access and equity, it is recommended to:

1. Further focus action on disadvantaged groups and remote areas;
2. Hand over infrastructure issues to the MoE;
3. Ensure community ownership through a participatory approach;

4. Expand ECED to remote and rural areas and to improve the quality of ECED by providing well trained educators and adequate didactical material;

5. Improve gender parity in the teaching force to motivate girls and women to engage in teaching. This demands special recruitment and training of female teachers in the vacant positions, and support their upgrading to higher grades;

6. Use the household data obtained from the recent census survey to distribute scholarship and upcoming poverty cards to impoverished households;

7. Publish and distribute the recently published integrated scholarship guidelines;

8. Favour other financial incentives such as free uniforms, stationery and snacks;

9. Carry out a nation-wide needs analysis and develop adequate measures with appropriate planning and budgeting;

10. Smoothen the registration process for religious schools. A feasible language concept should be developed where necessary. It is recommendable to present different world views in a comparative way without imposing any values;

11. Develop supporting actions and material for neo-literates to avoid having them fall back into illiteracy.

With regards to **quality and relevance**, not all factors of influence can be addressed with the programme. The teacher is a central actor for quality of teaching and learning, so teacher training in content and attitude is the main entry point to improve quality and relevance. Additional factors are curriculum development, provision of textbooks, and improved learning environment.

Competency-based curricula have been developed and partly implemented, while soft skills programmes have been piloted. The development of material for these curricula has been delayed due to SWAp regulations and due funds not being released on time.

Concerning the provision of textbooks, the involvement of private companies has been helpful, but the remaining delays in distribution need to be analysed and remedial actions taken. This can only be ensured by establishing a fully functional monitoring system which has to be developed and piloted, combined with adequate funding of SIP.

The didactical material produced by different projects has not been documented and categorised as integral part of curricula. Discussions on setting essential reading benchmarks and early grade reading skills (EGRS) orientation with the curriculum development centre (CDC) and NCED have taken place. The next steps will be a wider consultation for developing benchmarks and a classroom based early grade reading assessment (CB-EGRA) tools.

The internationally proved advantages of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction are not well understood and advocacy campaigns will be necessary to promote MLE. The piloting in Nepal could not yet show that the acquisition of basic concepts in the mother tongue leads to improved learning outcomes in general, even in English. The method which complements learning in the mother tongue and in foreign language has not yet been introduced. Additionally, the existence of different mother tongues in one classroom needs special attention.

The results of the national assessment of student achievements (NASA) led to important discussions about inputs and outcomes in education. The second cycle of NASA for

grade 8 has been completed and analysis shows a downward trend in learning outcomes in Mathematics and Nepali. The NASA accomplished its role to explore the situation of inputs, i.e. teacher qualifications and training, classroom and school situation, and to generate recommendations for policy making to improve educational quality as well as for other stakeholders of education. However, the NASA reports could not always explain variations in student achievements.

The continuous assessment system (CAS) is a good intention to focus more on the learning process by introducing formative evaluations. But the complexity is still too demanding for the Nepalese context, so that the approach is not well understood and accepted by stakeholders.

Non-formal education courses have showed good success in producing a high number of literates and have brought useful life skills to many participants. It has observed that the quality depends mainly on the implementing NGOs.

One of the biggest challenges in improving quality in teaching and learning is to ensure that teacher training shows impact in the classrooms and in learning outcomes. As teacher training is implemented in cascade system, the practice showed that the impact of training diminishes with each level of the cascade. Beside, teachers lack intrinsic motivation due to the low social and economic value of their job. As a consequence, teachers show low professional ethos in their performance and the absenteeism rates are high. Political interference in teacher association is another aspect undermining teacher performance and ethics.

The Earthquake of April/ May 2015 further affected educational quality, as teachers now have to face multi-grade teaching and some pupils and teachers have to deal with a post-trauma situation. Additionally, the facilities have been heavily affected.

To increase effectiveness in quality and relevance, it is recommended to:

1. Implement remedial actions at the weak points of the SWAp procedures for fund requests and release;
2. Analyse the causes of delays in textbooks delivery propose remedial actions. This can only be ensured by establishing a fully functional monitoring system which has to be developed and piloted, combined with adequate funding of SIP;
3. Document the didactical material available in the country and categorise it in the curricula, by target group. Ensure that reading material will be produced and distributed to the students regularly;
4. Run campaigns to show the advantages of using the mother tongue as medium of instruction. A convincing demonstration effect of MLE in subsequent achievements in Nepali, English would be helpful in this context;
5. Discuss controversial questions about material development, methods and advocacy for MTE with countries in a similar linguistic situation;
6. Develop a national language policy, including training and material. The existing national and international research should be reviewed to help find out how to link the four language groups of Nepal together, i.e. Indio-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Dravid,

and Agneya. The links should focus on word to word linkage, grammar to grammar linkage, structure to structure linkage;

7. Develop a post-NASA follow-up programme to all schools in the country. The NASA could extend to examine different factors related to learning achievements, to portray school resources and to compare the student learning achievements with some of the international studies like PISA and TIMSS;

8. Favour a progressive approach in formative evaluations (CAS) by introducing only some elements of it. This would help reach out to teachers with little training and increase the general understanding for formative evaluations.

9. Carefully select and support NGOs implementing non-formal education programmes, especially in the training of facilitators and monitoring of the programmes;

10. Encourage teachers to teach under different approaches, and introduce these approaches into a reviewed TDP programme. This involves:

   - Helping teachers learn new skills on a daily basis through different strategies, notably through their cell phones, during peer-learning or supporting events, while organizing a brief review and reflection meeting on Fridays where one or more teachers can be requested to present their pedagogical innovations in, or by providing feedback.

   - Expand NCED's Open and Distance Learning (ODL) to a 24-hour educational radio and expand it as 24-hour television programmes to generate peoples' learning. and also educate them in different forms of knowledge and skills.

   - Reward top districts and schools based on composite ratings: ratings of students, rating of parents, rating of the RP and supervisors, rating of the steering committee, and rating of the teacher confederations. This would entail developing a rating system. Instruments such as school report cards could also be used. Districts and schools that show improvement in key criteria and whose ratings surpass a threshold performance level would be given unconditional grants for use as per need and defined use. To incentivise efforts and recognise teacher contribution, a portion of these grants could be used to give a performance bonus to teachers/head teachers.

   - Reward Schools of Distinction. Education achievement on specific skills or factors, as measured through national testing parameters or other measures, could also form the basis for an incentive system. Head teachers and teachers would be eligible for performance bonuses.

   - As incentive measure, reward schools who invest in capacity building and enhance their sound financial management. A matching grant to top up allocations proposed in the SIP could be given to schools, based on a review carried out by DEO and RED.

   - Create visibility of best performing schools and teachers and make this visual as a monthly profile available on DEO's website. Also consider presenting worst performing schools and teachers as a disciplinary measure.

   - Prepare all teachers to diagnose their students' score and give immediate remedial measures.

- Equip teachers to bridge topographical achievement differences of the students. These measures should change the culture of teachers' fear of criticism and competition and make schools open and collaborative learning places.

11. Help foster an institutional set-up where head teachers take up a leadership role. Factors contributing to this are:

   - Make head teacher a separate cadre for 5 years. The head teacher can then start prepared for his term period and be asked to draft an action plan, with corresponding TORs. Head teachers should therfore receive the necessary training.
   - Strengthen the power of the head teacher in school management by giving them the autority to organize in-house programmes, enforce disciplinary actions, provide pedagogical support, monitor teacher performance regularly, and develop and implement community support as well as action research programmes.
   - Capacitate head teachers as academic manager as well as leader. Head Teachers need to be trained to perform both academic and managerial roles as well as leading the team. The current head teacher Training programme should be reviewed to meet these needs.

12. Provide special care and training programmes in emergency and disaster management for all educational stakeholders.

Finally, on the **governance and capacity building** aspects, the evaluation found that, a decentralised and school-based management system has been implemented through the DEO, the PTA and the CBO. While the school improvement plan (SIP) is a useful instrument to get all the local education stakeholders together, the funding mechanisms have tended to become a ritual rather than reflect SIP's content. In the support for improvement of school management (SISM) project, some of the critical issues have been taken up and resulting better understanding and ownership can be stated. However, as long as funding will not be based on planned activities, real ownership of this process at local level cannot be expected. PTA have offered a new platform for parent involvement, but have had little impact in practice.

SMC are actually empowered to recruit temporary and voluntary teachers and they fulfil this role by respecting procedures, rules and regulations. On the other hand, they are under strong political influence, and do not have the necessary management capacities and pedagogical knowledge. Hence, the recruitment at local level is still marked by substantial problems, especially when considering that SMC members have neither a pedagogical background, nor are they trained on recruitment procedures.

Supervision by resource persons (RP) of teachers' performance and quality of teaching is weak and irregular. Schools need to be supported in their efforts on capacity building and improving their management by providing complementary grants to top up the attributed allocations.

Institutional development at all levels is negatively affected by the frequent transfer of personnel. Political interference is another major problem in personnel transfer.

Whenever structures in institutions are changing, possible overlaps and double structures need to be checked and discarded.

It has been observed that when the teacher confederations do not participate in SSRP programme preparation, in JAR meetings, in MTR and in other relevant events, problems of unpredictable influence arise. Networking between institutions suffers from the fact that representatives do not always share the results from meetings within their organization.

The April and May 2015 earthquake has thrown back many of the achievements in infrastructure and worsened the conditions for teaching and learning not only in the pedagogical dimension, but also in a social and psychological view.

To increase effectiveness in governance and capacity building, it is recommended to:

1. Base funding on the elaborated SIP;
2. Encourage and orient parents on how to support their children's education, by creating monthly interface programmes among teachers, students and parents, and by making PTA meeting mandatory after each term tests. Intensify the orientation through involving the local educationists including senior parents, through head teacher, and through RP;
3. In light of ensuring national coverage, encourage SMC to proposed determine temporary teacher recruitment needs as part of the SIP, and to monitor the performance of teachers through a transparent process, based on agreed and defined criteria. This would enable the SMCs to focus on qualitative aspects of teacher performance that leads to better learning prospects for students and de-politicising the SMC functioning;
4. Make sure permanent teacher recruiting is transparently performed by the teacher service commission at national level;
5. The arrangements for managing this process could include the establishment of Regional and District Selection Committees and also the discussion with Confederation of Nepalese Teachers;
6. Shift the teachers' licensing function away from the teacher service commission and assign it to the teacher council to increase teacher management - a forum recognised under the Education Act. The principal reason is that it would allow the teacher service commission to focus on teacher recruitment and thus create a firewall between the agency responsible for recruitment and for licensing. Moreover, it would allow the teacher unions (now confederation) to play a positive and direct role in improving teacher qualifications through the teacher council;
7. Encourage the MoE to continue develop and implement the phase-wise teacher management and development strategy based on the ADB study in June 2013;
8. Include teacher confederations in important decision-making and oversight forums at all levels, ranging from the citizen's advisory committee for education at district level, to the EPC at central level. This also means the confederation needs to have one voice and not express individual opinions;
9. Change the focus of supervision away from accounting issues (quantitative data) towards RP which are enabled to function as pedagogical coaches. At the same time, implement a regular interface programme for students, teachers, parents, SMC

and VDC/Municipalities (e.g. during the SIP phase). In this interface programme, each group of stakeholders can discuss issues, figure out the problems, and find solutions. The culture of outward criticism will be reduced and the culture of inward criticism will be promoted.

8.3   Conclusion and Recommendations for Efficiency

Looking at efficiency in **access and equity**, the evaluation found that access and gender equity has increased in ECED. The remaining challenge identified is access for the socially and geographically disadvantaged groups. The budget provisions for scholarships and for ensuring free textbooks, infrastructure and educational material are not sufficient and differentiated enough to ensure access and equity for all. Also hidden costs can be the decisive point for poor families not to send their children to school or taking them out.

Teacher-student rations, repetition rates and drop-outs are higher in remote areas and for marginalised groups. These imbalances could be reverted by adequately implemented SIP, if these were really the basis for funding. As this is not the case, the intended bottom-up approach does not lead to the expected improved equitable access.

To increase efficiency in access and equity, it is recommended to:

1. Base planning and budgeting of SIP on strong qualitative support for their elaboration and adequate monitoring and capacity building of all involved stakeholders. Experiences abroad of socio-economic categorisations of schools, such as a decile system, should inform policy makers for the elaboration of a new needs-based funding mechanism. These mechanisms should ensure flexibility in funding, as the needs might change (e.g. through natural disasters, political unrest, or improvements in infrastructure), and as budgetary decision are based on the actual situation.
2. Eliminate counter-productive mechanisms such as funding based only on enrolment rates or limited by rigid budget ceilings. Identify hidden costs for students and families, and introduce measures to cover these costs, either for the whole country or for the neediest groups, depending on the available budget.
3. Ensure flexible and timely disbursement of funds according to the approved SIP/categorisation of schools. It might be helpful to assist schools in medium-term budgeting and planning by giving them a 3-year resource envelope. This would follow a chain whereby the MoE would determine its medium term development framework and its medium term expenditure framework. Once the funds available for distribution to schools are determined, a formula-based allocation for schools, using need, performance and incentives as the defining criteria would enable a calculation of the amount available for schools. The schools would then develop their SIP on the basis of this 3-year envelope, rather than on an ad-hoc, annual basis.

Regarding **quality and relevance**, the evaluation found that internal efficiency has improved. The student-teacher ratio went down, transition rates went up and survival

rates have increased. The majority of students complete the basic education cycle within 9 years (instead of 8years), which can be considered as a good internal efficiency standard in the Nepalese context. Nonetheless, this does not imply that students have reached the desired learning outcomes. In fact, there are still persistently high failure rates in the national school leaving certificate (SLC) examinations (typically over 68% in public school).

Internal efficiency cannot be considered only under financial aspects as this can lead to counterproductive measures. Earlier drop-outs are financially more efficient than later drop-outs, however from an pedagogical perspective, one aims at retaining the children the longest possible in school. The social audit process has become ritualised due to weak monitoring of its quality, but the revised social audit guidelines, supported by SISM/JICA, are expected to make the required change.

Flexible promotion from one grade to the next can lead to better performance and improve at the same time internal efficiency. Special pedagogical attention for weak students would be required, which means more and well qualified teachers.

The suggestion of the World Bank to link career paths of teachers with student performance is questionable. It would be very difficult to monitor and the criterions which would decide on salaries are prone to factors which are out of the reach of teachers: individual pre-conditions of the pupils, access to material, teacher-student ratio, learning environment, and social back-ground. Performance-linked salaries are risky in a politicised environment like the one in Nepal. The persons who decide on the categorization of the salaries of individual teachers (probably DPs) would be subject of pressure for corruption.

To increase efficiency in quality and relevance, it is recommended to;

1. Implement the revised guidelines for the social audit process nationwide. The output of the social audit should be used for policy dialogue and enhance public financial accountability.
2. Enhance assurance mechanisms and prepare and monitor an audit follow-up action plan. A mechanism to ensure timely action taken on the audit findings should be the core part of this plan, focusing on the following elements:

    - Proper planning is done with OAG for programme audit and moving towards risk-based approach.
    - ICAN is involved in revising the school audit guidelines, providing trainings to school auditors on the revised school audit guidelines and ensuring the quality of reports produced.
    - The social audit function is expanded with adequate trainings to the stakeholders in its conduct, sharing of results and in establishing a mechanism of post-audit consultations on the outcomes with the involvement of DEO. This would help to develop a strong linkage between the community feedback and the school's efforts and plans to improve performance through the SIP.

On **governance and capacity building** aspects, the evaluation found that he budget share of the MoE in SSRP has risen over the years, which reflects ownership for the

reform process. Remarkable difficulties in linking budget and expenditure directly with programme outputs/outcomes have affected all the SSRP objectives. The reform in the PFM has not yet been able to deliver the expected results. The financial management improvement action plan (FMIAP) is far behind in implementation and there is no structured monitoring system to ensure timely implementation, good quality and impact measurement.

Delays in fund release on all levels are due to delays and low quality of requests and reports. Support is needed at local level as well as in the context of the JFA for fund release. There are quite big variations in the different SSRP budget heads due to frequent amendments. The distribution of fund disbursement has faced difficulties in the first 3 years, causing incomplete constructions and non-compliances with set rules and procedures. More than 50% of the disbursements were accumulated in the last trimester. In the last years, the distribution has become more equal.

The difficulties in reconciling the financial controller general's office (FCGO) record with the DoE record during the preparation of the financial monitoring reports and project accounts are due to differences between red book allocation under DPs' share and the real commitment/deposit. This has led to some activities not being implemented.

Financial record keeping has not yet been computerised, and an FMIS system has been developed, not in connection with the EMIS. The programme audit by OAG, the school audit by private sector auditors, and the social audits have all remained weak.

Under the SSRP, the JFA is working remarkably well in complement to direct funding by certain DPs. However, the two funding mechanisms to implement technical assistance have made harmonisation difficult. The flexibility of direct funding is an advantage in many situations and the JFA processes can be reviewed to include some sort of flexible mechanisms.

To increase efficiency in governance and capacity building, it is recommended to:

1. Encourage the MoE to continue increase the budget share going to the education sector, i.e. under the SSRP. The existing ownership should be maintained and anchored further by underpinning the positive results, accompanied by positive public relation events. At the same time, the highlighting of positive results gives way for identifying successful tools and interventions;
2. Address existing difficulties in linking budget and expenditure directly with programme outputs/outcomes;
3. Provide financial and technical support to help the required internal harmonisation of planning and financing formats of projects. A harmonised SWAp should result in one consolidated matrix of agreed actions, policies, and results which is to be used by all stakeholders to monitor progress;
4. Encourage to increase the budget share on education so as to be able to cover teacher salaries while having a significant budget to cover additional measures in the areas of quality and governance/capacity building;
5. Pay the teacher salaries on a monthly basis, instead of a trimester basis.

6. Provide technical assistance for capacity building on all levels, to ensure that documents necessary for a timely release of the necessary funds are prepared and handed in;

7. Review existing procedures for fund release form DPs and from the GoN, to identify reasons for delays and re-structure procedures where necessary and possible;

8. Analyse existing variations in SSRP budget heads due to frequent amendments. Include foreseeable amendments in the next budget estimation in order to diminish the variations and fiduciary risks;

9. Present more realistic estimations based on last years' experiences in DPs' real commitments, to help reconcile FCGO record with the DoE record;

10. Implement a monitoring tool which relies on real expenditure, so the FCGO records gives a better basis for control of invested funds. The difference between authorized and released funds needs to be tracked as well;

11. Ensure technical assistance for the timely implementation of the FMIAP in good quality, and trace its impact. This would include some mechanisms for a simplification and automation of financial management system, such as:

    - Encourage the GoN to develope and implemente the central government accounting system (CGAS) and adopt the national public sector accounting standards, while ensuring linkages with the FCGO FMIS system;
    - The MoE and the DoE should take appropriate decisions about the types and nature of FMIS requirements. The current software developed for budget release tracking should be further enhanced and made capable of generating "Pay Order" as well as recording and reporting transactions while show programmatic as well as economic heads and budget monitoring. This may further be developed and linked with EMIS for planning and budgeting and for consolidating reports from all cost centres. The software should be gradually rolled over to other central level agencies, DEO, and schools. This can also ensure a more equitable allocation of resources.

12. Amend Schedule 23 of the Education Rules and prescribe a simplified version of school financial recording and a reporting system;

13. Run an analysis about existing other sources for school based funding and hamonise funding across all schools;

14. Boost a further analysis of data obtained through EMIS, analysis of flash data and triangulation through qualitative validation. This would help policy and decision-makers obtain a better picture about the causes for the various patterns and trends identified;

15. Link results of social audits to EMIS, as well as relevant data such as Disaster Risk Reduction. GIS school mapping data should also be part of EMIS data. Data for out-of-school children and children with disabilities need to be included as well. Generally, the further development of EMIS needs to be accelerated;

16. Link the FMIS system to other central level agencies, to RED and DEO;

17. Monitor the compliances of the programme implementation manual, financial administration regulations, procurement laws, and status quo in resolving audit recommendations;

18. Control for excess or double payments of teachers' salaries, payments to ghost schools, teachers and ghost enrolments of students;
19. Control for inconsistencies in the distribution of scholarship funds and textbooks;
20. Simplify and harmonize reporting requirements and reduce the amount and content of reports to increase efficiency and accountability. All reports should be consolidated into three reporting categories: financial, school performance and managerial. For each of these, a single format, containing key metrics could be used;
21. Develop a coherent capacity development plan with regard to sustainability; avoid non-relevant trainings or trainings without potential for application and sustainability. This can be achieved through the following variables:

    - A technical assistance team at central level comprising of experts for PFM, programme, capacity development, procurement, M&E and communication;
    - An appropriate information system is developed and introduced gradually in all units, including schools;
    - Head teachers, SMC members, are PTA members are provided with adequate training related to PFM and supported with simple guidelines for executing financial transactions;
    - Adequate actions against perpetrators of corruption and fraud;
    - Devolution of authorities to SMC and head teachers with an adequate capacity assessment and enhancement plan;

22. Enhance the public disclosure on budgets and performance. Transparency being a function of information, it is important to enhance public disclosure of budgets in an accessible, simplified form, as well as for performance and progress reports to be shared widely. This requires updating the School Sector Communication Strategy, in line with the changing context;
23. Budget and implement a capacity development plan as a major theme of the sector plan, rather than provisioning the capacity development activities in each of the themes.

8.4   Conclusion and Recommendations for Impact

The progress of key performance indicators shows good results for **access and equity**. The successful expansion of ECED/PPC in the country has resulted in a significant increase in the proportion of students entering grade one with ECED/PPC background. SSRP being a sector programme, the measured progress can be considered as an effect of its efforts. In this case, no comparative investigation design can be established, so the progress directly resulting from SSRP inputs cannot be measured in numbers.

Nonetheless, the poor quality of education produced school-leavers who do not have the necessary competencies to improve their economic situation. School level actors have little information about different policy provisions. If the necessary improvement in quality does not follow the good results in access, there will be no impact in improved learning.

To increase the impact in access and equity, it is recommended to:

1. Increase the focus on equity rather than on general access, especially in ECED provisions, and in the inclusion of children with disabilities.

In the field of **quality and relevance**, actions showed some direct effect. For instance, more pupils received their textbooks on time. However, while direct effects can be observed, the impacts on learning outcomes are still weak. Other intervention fields, such as the implementation of minimum enabling conditions, the NASA assessment or the CAS evaluations, created some impact on the level of intervention, but did not bring the expected effect on the level of improved teaching and learning quality.

NASA also showed that teacher training has not contributed to improve learning achievements, so the focus needs to be enhanced further. Currently, due to poor skills in their adoption, formative assessment techniques (e.g. CAS) have had little or no impact on teaching and learning quality.

While textbook distribution has been improved, there remain gaps, especially for geographically disadvantaged regions. Local stakeholders have been empowered; the decision about textbook production and distribution are now at district level. Pupils receiving their textbooks on time have good chances to perform better at school.

To increase the impact in quality and relevance, it is recommended to:

1. Ensure that the school curriculum and methodology provide the needed skills to ensure a successful transition to the labour market. To that end, make sure that all efforts in access and equity are accompanied by measures for improving quality. For instance, make sure no schools are built if the provision of textbooks is not ensured, if the teachers are not available or not trained enough and if the minimum enabling conditions are not fulfilled;
2. Carry out assessments in good quality for all schools, and ensure that social audits become a measure for quality management rather than for budget management;
3. Assess the lessons learnt from textbook delivery mechanisms and develop a distribution strategy at the beginning of the academic year.

Concerning **governance and capacity building**, it can be stated that many procedures and organisational set-ups are installed, but are not working well.

Existing capacity at central, district and school level did not have impact on student achievements. At local level, the existence of SMC and PTA have raised local power on educational decision-making and the cooperation between communities and schools. Commitment has increased, but learning conditions and better quality in teaching and learning have not improved as expected.

Operational dialogue among governance structures and the educational institutions at local level have to be created, including religious and ethnic institutions as well. The lowest units of political organisation are the village development committees (VDC) and municipalities, whilst the MoE has its own system of which the resource centres are the lowest units. The school management committees (SMC) and Parent Teacher

Associations (PTA) represent school governing units. Some studies[236] suggest creating operational dialogue among these parallel systems for effective implementation of SSRP initiatives on local level.

There is a chain of delays in important processes such as budget transfers, textbook delivery, scholarship funds deployment, and deliveries like sports material, furniture or material for maintenance. Annual monitoring reports submitted by DEO to the MoE do not help the DEO and schools to improve their intervention quality. Monitoring from different levels focuses mainly on input and process, but output and outcome do not get enough attention.

Although ineligible expenses have reduced, audits are implemented for receiving the funds for schools, but they do not lead to correct book-keeping and financial reporting. While capacity building in this area is taking place, it is questionable whether it is impacting quality.

A copious volume of data is generated in the school sector, yet it is not clear how this data is used to inform public policy, sharpen implementation or enhance transparency and coordination. While the flash reports generated through the EMIS are extremely detailed and valuable, the details may be overwhelming quick and responsive decision-making. The fact that the flash reports are produced twice annually means that managerial decisions during the interim periods may not necessarily be benefiting from the data being collected. This also suggests that with the government not having direct access to data prior to the flash reports, there is no chance of the public or other stakeholders learning of the progress and performance in the education sector.

SSRP's impact is measured against the key performance indicators, which have become the single most important indicators to measure progress. This has provided educational stakeholders with a clear picture and deliverables. This has enhanced the structure in planning and monitoring in a positive way.

To increase the impact in governance and capacity building, it is recommended to:

1. Ensure the timely delivery of textbooks, scholarship funds, and other kinds of deliveries like sports material, furniture, and material for maintenance;
2. Create operational dialogues among governance structures and the educational institutions at local level, including religions and ethnic institutions;
3. Effectively implement SIP with a long-term perspective, e.g. by allocating a 3-year envelope to schools;
4. Develop a performance monitoring dashboard, a decision-making and monitoring tool, making real-time status on key metrics available, e.g. on enrolment, learning achievements, and teacher attendance.

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[236] National Campaign for Education (NCE), 2014; Awasthi, G., (2011).

8.5   Conclusion and Recommendations for Sustainability

A good sign for growing financial sustainability is the fact that over the years, the DPs' financial support has decreased and government allocation to education increased. Nonetheless, scholarships are not financially sustainable, nor do they help to address inequalities. They are not addressing the different types of disadvantaged groups and the amounts are not enough to offset lost opportunity costs for the poorest. Secondly, the state of Nepal would not be able to pay these amounts from national budget after the donors have withdrawn their support.

With regard to **access and equity**, the basic conditions for sustainability are given, namely infrastructure, teachers, and material. Awareness about the importance of primary education has grown and the concept of education as a human right is understood. Even though SIP shows problems in implementation, it did initiate the switch from centralised to decentralised and participatory planning. Marginalised groups started to raise their voices.

The implementation of the 8th Amendment of the Education Act is necessary to ensure the institutionalisation of all new structures. Considering that the education act might be facing delays, provisional agreements could be signed to give institutional back-up for the introduced innovations. It is very unlikely that the GoN will be able to take over the funding of the activities related to free and compulsory basic education.

The earthquake has destroyed many ECED centres and schools. More physical sustainability can be expected through the application of the school disaster risk reduction report submitted to ADB in 2013. It contains aspects about ensuring quality in construction, about necessary coordination of agencies working in disaster resilience and risk reduction, improving reporting and use of IT, clear roles to community members, using retrofitting as a tool (retrofitting). The GoN does not have the national budget to finance the measures for physical sustainability. DPs continuation in funding support is required.

To increase sustainability in access and equity, it is recommended to:

1. Focus actions disadvantaged groups, e.g. out-of-school children, children with disabilities or geographically or ethnically marginalised pupils;

2. Apply the 5 selected minimum enabling conditions correctly. These 5 conditions being fundamental for access and quality (but also on quality and capacity building), all efforts must focus on implementing these and ensuring ownership at all levels.

Regarding **quality and relevance**, good quality material ensures sustainability, as it cannot be changed. It should include guiding formats, either for lessons (i.e. lesson plans, evaluation formats, and ready-made lessons for implementation) or for planning and monitoring purposes (i.e. planning and monitoring matrix, and evaluation sheets).

Socio-cultural sustainability needs to be assessed, such as the contribution of the interventions to the different development goals (i.e. EFA, MDG, now SDG). Ownership of the communities is still weak, partially because of the strong politicisation of teachers

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in their unions. Low ownership can undermine the real needs orientation of programmes, and head teachers do not yet play enough of a leverage role.

A hindering aspect for sustainability is that most interventions are carried out by extrinsic motivation, mostly by financial incentives (e.g. SIP, converting schools into community managed schools, or allowances for TPD measures).

Assessment programmes are good promoters for sustainability, as this is the only way to identify success in access, equity and quality. NASA has revealed many aspects related to gender, geographical differences, ethnical differences, rural-urban disparities, school subjects, and the development over the years. Once these aspects identified, new interventions can be designed. The continuous NASA reports will help ensure sustainability.

The CAS is not yet ready to take on an important role in ensuring sustainability, mainly due to its poor acceptance and understanding among teachers, pupils, parents and decision-makers. On the other hand, NEGRP are useful assessment tools for early grade reading, which lays the basis for further success in the educational career. Considering that this programme also produces didactical material, it can be considered as a good promoter for sustainability.

To increase sustainability in quality and relevance, it is recommended to:

1. Include guiding formats for lessons for planning and for monitoring and evaluation purposes in the learning material;
2. Continuously assess the socio-cultural sustainability, such as the contribution of the interventions to the different development goals and the ownership of communities;
3. Introduce elements to initiate understanding and ownership of the CAS by developing ready-to use tools of formative assessment.

Finally, sustainability in **governance and capacity building** is mixed. At central level, institutional capacity building has taken place, but staff transfers still affect institutional memory and reduce the impact of the capacity building measures. Remedial measures to mitigate these effects, such as up-dating and actualising measures within an institution, internal communication and training of new-comers, have not been implemented yet. Such measures would contribute to institutional strengthening.

The community's involvement in planning and execution of the educational programme has been backed up by a capacity development plan. However, this plan seems not strong enough to fulfill its purpose in poorer communities. The lack of participation of local stakeholders would threaten sustainability of SSRP at this level.

To increase sustainability in governance and capacity building, it is recommended to:

1. Identify overlaps and double structures and define the functions and limits of each institution;
2. Consider provisional agreements to give institutional back-up for the introduced innovations until the Education Act is fully implemented;

3. Implement remedial measures to mitigate the effects of frequent staff transfer and lost of institutional memory;
4. Further analysis should be carried out to address factors which hinder the adequate implementation of the capacity development plan.

ANNEXES

SPECIFIC TERMS OF REFERENCE

Joint Evaluation of Nepal's School Sector Reform Plan Programme 2009-16

FWC BENEFICIARIES 2013 - LOT 9: Culture, Education, Employment and Social

EuropeAid/132633/C/SER/multi

1. BACKGROUND

Education is a priority sector for the Government of Nepal (GON). This is reflected in the large share of the government budget allocated to the sector and the rising public investment in education. The education sector has received the largest share (around 16%) of the government budget over the last 6 years, although this has decreased in the last Financial Year (FY). The School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP), jointly funded by the GON, eight pooling1 Development Partners2 (DPs), the Global Partnership for Education3 (GPE) and non-pooling partners4, has been implemented by the Ministry of Education (MoE) through a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp)5 since 2009 and will finish in July 2016. The Joint Financing Arrangement (JFA) signed between the GON and the Pooling DPs has a requirement to conduct a joint independent final evaluation of the SSRP.

The SSRP aims to (i) expand access and equity, (ii) improve quality and relevance, and (iii) strengthen the institutional capacity of the entire school system. The major objectives of the SSRP are to:

- •Ensure equitable access of quality basic education for all children (aged 5-12yrs);

- Expand access to Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) services for children of 4 years to facilitate their holistic development and to prepare them for basic education;

- Enhance functional literacy and competencies among youth and adults;

- Increase access to, and equity, quality and relevance of secondary education;

- Equip secondary level students with soft skill based technical and vocational education;

- Improve the performance of the MoE service delivery system and develop capacity to implement critical reforms;

- Enhance teacher qualifications and professional competencies to facilitate student learning;

- Monitor programme inputs, processes, and outputs and evaluate the impact of education interventions;

- Improve the efficiency and effectiveness of aid available for the SSRP.

The major components of the SSRP are i) ECED, ii) Basic Education (grades 1-8), iii) Secondary Education (grades 9-12), iv) literacy and lifelong learning, v) institutional capacity strengthening for delivery and monitoring of educational services and products,

including teacher professional development. The SSRP is composed of the following reform areas: a) School structure: An integrated school system with grades 1-12 to be in operation with two levels – Basic Education, grades 1-8 and Secondary Education, grades 9-12.

b) Governance and management: focusing on decentralized governance and management the SSRP to make provisions to empower school management committees and the local governments.

c) Access and quality: to enable rightful access to basic education, the SSRP envisioned that basic education would be free and compulsory with statutory provisions, opening ways to universal access to school education. The SSRP has developed mechanisms for quality control, comprising a national framework for setting norms and standards. To ensure quality, the emphasis has been placed on the enabling environment for learning including curricula and textbooks, learner responsive classroom pedagogy, teacher and head teacher management and development, and examination, certification and accreditation.

d) Gender and inclusion: one of the major thrusts of the SSRP is to make schools gender, Dalit and disadvantaged group responsive. Major strategies for inclusion in the SSRP consist of multi-lingual education, targeted interventions for extremely marginalised groups and communities, and flexible as well as decentralised approaches and differentiated treatments employed to facilitate and integrate the populations with diversity needs.

1 Providing funds to the treasury for the SSRP

2 Initially there were nine Pooling DPs for the first 5 years: Australian Embassy, ADB, Denmark, DfID, EU, Finland, Norway, World Bank, and UNICEF. For the SSRP Extension period, there are eight Pooling DPs as Denmark and DfID have not continued and JICA has joined as a Pooling DP.

3 Formerly known as the Fast Track Initiative (FTI)

4 Non-pooling DPs: JICA, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, WFP and I/NGOs

5 A SWAp is a process in which funding for the sector – whether internal or from donors – supports a single policy and expenditure programme, under government leadership, and adopting common approaches across the sector. It is

generally accompanied by efforts to strengthen government procedures for disbursement and accountability.

e) Monitoring and evaluation: compliance monitoring, progress monitoring, and impact evaluation constitute major M&E functions in the SSRP. M&E should be guided by the key indictors to assess performance results in the sector. The SSRP has included three M&E functions: i) assessing compliance with acts and regulations, ii) measuring progress against milestones and targets, and iii) evaluating the impact of polices and strategies on sector goals and objectives.

f) Capacity development: capacity development has been employed as an overarching framework in the SSRP that crosscuts at institutional, organizational and individual levels for the governance, management and delivery of services in the entire system. As an

overarching component of the SSRP, capacity development emphasises addressing both readiness requirements and systemic capacity for SSRP implementation, with focus on enhancing capacity of schools, communities and local governments.

g)   Institutional arrangement: in addition to the existing support system, the SSRP envisaged introducing a set of new institutions to underpin the implementation of the reform, including:

i. Education Policy Committee (EPC) aimed at policy harmonisation and coordination

ii. Technical Board aimed at integrating technical functions and granting approval to norms and standards in the MOE system

iii. National Examinations Board (NEB) aimed at integrating school level examination functions, certification and accreditation.

iv. Education Review Office (ERO) aimed at systemic auditing against the national norms and standards.

h) Financing: the JFA provides a framework for resource sharing, mobilisation, harmonisation and TA management.

Nepal has made impressive gains in the schooling sector in terms of access, equity and completion during the past 15 years. Administrative data from the government's Education Management Information System (EMIS) indicate that the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) for primary education has increased from 71% in 1998 to 96% in 2013 (NER among girls has increased from 61% to 95% in the same period). Primary cycle completion rate has increased from 58% in 2004 to 78% in 2013; and the percentage of Out-of-School Children among the 5-12 year age group has decreased from 21% to 11% during the same time period (DOE, 2013). Gender parity in primary, basic and secondary NER has already been achieved. Similarly, disparities in education access across income groups and ethnic/caste groups have decreased significantly during this period and are to be addressed through the recently launched Consolidated Equity Strategy for the school education sector by the GON, being the first of its kind in the region. The current SSRP is the latest and final programme in the 15 year EFA National Programme of Action (EFA-NPA).

The JFA includes the agreement between Government and the DPs to jointly conduct both a Mid Term Review (MTR) and an External Evaluation of the SSRP. These Terms of References (TOR) provide the objectives, scope of work and expected outputs and outcomes of the SSRP External Evaluation. They also outline the overall process of the evaluation, including the alignment with background studies and information, composition of the consultant Evaluation team, arrangements for joint MOE/DP review and support to the evaluation, an indicative timeline and methodology, and reporting requirements. During the 2012 SSRP MTR, SSRP progress in: (i) meeting programme outcomes; (ii) legislative and financial actions; (iii) the use of programme funds; and (iv) capacity development measures were reviewed.

Key stakeholders such as MoE and the DPs have been actively involved in the planning process of this evaluation, including in the drafting of the TOR. At the overall level the GoN and the pooling DPs have jointly developed the TOR, agreeing that the evaluation

process will be funded and managed by the Delegation of the European Union to Nepal (EU) on behalf of the MoE and the Pooling DPs. The MoE and a selection of the SSRP Pooling DPs will be involved in aspects of the evaluation process and the management of this Specific Contract as seen relevant by the MoE and following EU procedures. The Evaluation Inception Report and the draft SSRP Evaluation Report with the key findings and recommendations will be shared with the MoE and the SSRP Pooling and non-Pooling DPs, as per the timeline specified in this TOR.

The Evaluation will be supported through an SSRP Evaluation Working Group (SSRP EWG), consisting of the EU (SSRP consortium lead for the Joint Evaluation), MOE/DOE, UNICEF (as DP focal point,), and ADB6. The SSRP EWG is responsible for:

- Agreeing the relative weights of the technical evaluation criteria for the evaluation grid that form part of the Request for Services.

- Designating 2 evaluators from the SSRP EWG in addition to the EU to evaluate the offers received in response to the Request for Services, in line with the EU regulations on confidentiality and impartiality.

- Provide input and guidance to the selected Evaluation Team with regard to the proposed methods, data collection plan and process of the Evaluation.

- Provide input and guidance on the SSRP Evaluation Inception report.

- Provide input and guidance on the SSRP Evaluation draft report and presentation.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

The purpose of this evaluation is to assess whether, and how, the SSRP inputs and activities contributed to achieving outputs, outcomes and (likely) impact targets, informing MoE, DPsand other education stakeholders for policy work and in the design of the post SSRP Education Sector Plan (ESP). Evaluation findings and recommendations shall be provided for improving policy and service delivery, considering the challenge of improving quality and learning in particular. At the overall level, the evaluation is expected to identify and document lessons learned and provide practical recommendations of relevance to education sector policy and future plan preparations, facilitating a smooth transition from the current SSRP to the post SSRP ESP.

2.1. Global Objective

The Global Objective is to provide a comprehensive overall independent view on the achievements, strengths and weaknesses of all components of the SSRP against the SSRP results framework.

2.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the evaluation are to:

- assess the effectiveness of the SSRP in achieving the intended outcomes in (i) expansion of access and equity, (ii) improvement of quality and relevance, and (iii)

strengthening of institutional capacity of the school system and against the SSRP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs);

- assess the efficiency through review of strengths and weaknesses of the programme's governing structure and division of labour (intra- and inter agency cooperation, including the Government and donors) and the adequacy of the JFA to achieve the intended objectives;

- assess the relevance, as in to what extent the SSRP's objectives were consistent with beneficiary needs, country requirements, GoN priorities and DPs' policies.

- assess the impact of the SSRP against the SSRP KPIs;

- assess the sustainability in terms of the level of institutionalization of the reforms and the reflection in future policy making and service delivery.

2.3. Requested Services

The main focus of the evaluation will be to assess effectiveness, i.e. the extent to which the objectives of the intervention have been achieved taking into account their relative importance, as well as to assess efficiency in terms of how economic resources and inputs have been converted to results through the strategies and interventions that have been carried out under the SSRP to achieve the intended outcomes in the main reform areas.

The evaluation will also look into the effectiveness and efficiency of internal governing structures, in terms of roles, responsibilities and ability to deliver services, and to what extent community mobilisation has been successful. The evaluation shall assess Public Financial Management (PFM) and fiduciary aspects of SSRP implementation, including the use of GoN systems, fiduciary arrangements and oversight activities, formulation of and follow-up on the Financial Management Integrated Action Plan (FMIAP), and the overall trajectory of PFM reform/improvements in the education sector (as related to the SSRP). In doing so, the focus will be on the extent to which the envisaged programme governance structures/institutional arrangements that relate to flow and use of funds, control and compliance mechanisms, distribution and adherence to accountability, M&E mechanisms have facilitated the full implementation, or lack thereof, of the SSRP, as per the original design.

The evaluation shall also assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the main mechanisms for ensuring financial accountability and promoting transparency at the school, district and national levels. For the assessment of internal governmental management structures of the programme (MoE/ Department of Education (DoE)/ District Education Offices (DEO)/)/ School Management Committees (SMC), etc.) Focus will be on assessing the system's effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery, including the flow of funds and their adequacy, as well as associated capacity development issues.

In addition, the evaluation will assess the SWAp approach to the extent to which it has been an efficient modality for delivering the envisioned results with the available resources. On aid-effectiveness the identification and documentation of lessons learned and the provision of recommendations should also cover the implementation of the Paris Declaration in general and the efforts to harmonize technical assistance and streamline fund flow mechanisms through the JFA and other instruments, as well as their adequacy.

It should further assess the efforts and strategies of DPs in supporting the MoE in selecting, monitoring the effectiveness of and subsequently in adjusting strategies in the different reform areas and how DPs have supported prioritization of needs and subsequently in obtaining an effective allocation of scarce resources, as well as the support from DPs in identification and addressing capacity constraints within the education sector.

The evaluation will look into the relevance of the programme in assessing the relative flexibility of the design of interventions, and to what extent these have been appropriate and responsive enough for the diverse needs of the beneficiaries, the country requirements, the GoN priorities and the DPs policies, including how adjustments in strategies and interventions have been made to respond adequately to the changing and emerging needs as well as the barriers to address those needs throughout implementation. The evaluation will assess the relevance and type of school level grants, and accessibility, timeliness and transparency of distribution of these grants, as well as the relevance and use of data in school level evaluation and planning processes.

The SSRP is yet to be fully implemented, and the long-term impact of the programme cannot be assessed. It is believed, however, that it should be possible to explore the programme's impact to a certain extent and to focus on selected areas, owing to the fact that some baseline studies have been undertaken and considerable research data has been gathered, including extensive education statistics on a regular basis. The evaluation team will assess to what extent the achievements of the SSRP have supported the improvement in the quality of education and expanded equity and access and the progress made against the 2012 SSRP MTR findings and recommendations.

The evaluation shall thus consider impact in selected areas that have been given high priority during implementation, such as (i) improved access to ECD and early grades (1-3); (ii) establishment of the Education Review Office and undertaking NASA; (iii) implementation of continuous assessment; (iv) timely and efficient delivery of textbooks; (v) ensuring Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (vi) restructuring and school mapping; and (vii) implementation of financial and social audits at school level. The progress made against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) of the SSRP will be taken into account for the assessment of the impact in these areas where relevant.

The evaluation will look at sustainability of the most significant benefits produced by the SSRP, in the areas of (i) policy reform and school sector restructuring, (ii) strengthening access through Free and Compulsory Basic Education and population data based strategies to enrol out of school children, as well as access to ECED, (iii) establishment of child friendly and enabling learning environments, including (Priority) Minimum Enabling Conditions, (iv) strengthening of teacher professional development, management and (re)deployment to improve quality education, (v) National Assessment of Student Achievements (NASA) and Continuous Assessment System (CAS), (vi) strengthening of decentralized school management and planning, and the level of community participation in this, (vii) extent to which data informs planning at all levels and validation by education stakeholders and (ix) strengthening of resilience to disasters and geographical challenges. The sustainability of key benefits identified under these areas will be assessed in particular considering a scenario where the Education Act Amendment process will not be completed by the end of the programme and

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recommendations will be formulated regarding the minimum requirements to safeguard the sustainability of these benefits beyond the SSRP. The issue of financial sustainability should also be looked at coordinating closely with the background study that will be undertaken in the area of education financing.

The Framework Contractors should submit an Organisation and Methodology (O&M) as part of their offer and are encouraged to suggest an appropriate research design for this evaluation, adhering to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Guidelines for Quality Evaluations. The Framework Contractors in their O&M should outline mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative) in order to assess programme results, depending on what kind of data is available. In this regard, the O&M should indicate how the potential utility of relevant secondary sources will be assessed and used.

Due to the strict time constraints of this evaluation coupled with the vast amount of research and studies already conducted on this programme, the evaluation should primarily be based upon existing documentation in addition to consultations with different stakeholders and line ministries and agencies in the centre as well as with the development partners and education representatives and networks. Research triangulation should be employed to enhance the authenticity of the information. In this regard, a SSRP beneficiary satisfaction survey, through which, national representative bodies of the end users of the programme (i.e. school children, teachers, parents etc.) could be employed for consultations among their members, guided by the evaluation questions and indicators provided in the inception report and share the outcomes of these consultations with the Evaluation Team.

The evaluation will draw on the following sources of documentation (amongst others):

(a) Policy documents;

(b) MoE Implementation Documentation;

(c) Joint documentation, including JAR and JCM joint field visit reports; (d) Research Reports and National Surveys;

(e) International Declarations;

(f) Other relevant studies carried out.

The findings of the SSRP Evaluation will feed into the Education Sector Analysis and the initial findings will be presented to the Local Education Group (LEG) at the 2015 Joint Annual Review (JAR) of the SSRP. The final SSRP Evaluation report and findings will be presented to the LEG at the end of the assignment (by end of June 2015).

2.4   Required Outputs

1. **Inception report:** a concise report in English is to be submitted to the EU Delegation within 5 days of the start of the assignment, which will include: a detailed methodology including an evaluation matrix with evaluation questions and select indicators, based on the priorities detailed above; a plan for data collection and a programme of work; and a suggested structure for the final report. The evaluation questions can be expanded on as and when necessary during the evaluation. The Inception Report will be discussed with the GON and the DPs before approval by the EU.

2. **Aide Memoire on Initial Findings:** a brief Aide Memoire on initial key findings with an analysis is to be presented to the Stakeholders and a discussion facilitated by the Evaluation team at an ad hoc meeting for this purpose around the middle of the assignment (such a meeting is to be taken in to account in the O&M and the actual date confirmed on approval of the Inception Report).

3. **PowerPoint presentation** on Initial Findings: a presentation of the Aide Memoire on initial key findings with the feedback and further analysis from the stakeholder discussion incorporated will be presented at the Joint Annual Review in May 2015 by the Evaluation Team and a discussion with the SSRP SWAp consortium will be facilitated by the Ministry of Education.

4. **Draft Final Report:** by the first week in June (date to be agreed at stage of Inception Report approval) the draft final report should be submitted to the EU Delegation, who will gather and consolidate the comments / feedback from GON and the DP group. The EU Delegation will provide the consolidated comments not later than 10 calendar days after the submission of the draft report.

5. **Final Report:** after receipt of the comments the consultant will finalise and submit the Final Report by the end of

June 2015 (date to be confirmed at the stage of the Inception Report approval).

6. **The Final Report** should include in annex a PowerPoint Presentation, summarizing the methodology, key findings, conclusions and recommendations, to be presented to MoE, DPs and other stakeholders at an ad hoc meeting organized by the SSRP EWG at the end of the assignment.

All reports are to be submitted in electronic form with corresponding PowerPoint presentations in accordance with the deadlines agreed to at the Inception Report phase. Ten hard copies of all the reports as well as a soft copy are to be submitted.

2.5   Language of the Specific Contract

The language of the Specific Contract is English.

2.6   Subcontracting

Subcontracting is not foreseen.

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3. EXPERT PROFILE OR EXPERTISE REQUIRED

3.1. Number of requested experts per category and number of man-days per expert or per category

The evaluation team shall consist of one (1) Category I Expert, who will act as team leader, and three (3) Category II

Experts with relevant experience and background for this evaluation as outlined below. The total number of man-days for the team leader, including travel, will not exceed 40 days (see 4.3 Planning). The total number of days for the Category II Experts will not exceed 35 days (see 4.3 Planning).

The Framework Contractor is responsible for reporting to the EU Delegation as soon as possible any possible conflict of interest.

Members of the evaluation team should have substantial knowledge of Nepal and its education sector and ample experience from working in Nepal. The evaluation team should include expertise in the fields of development evaluation, education, education equity and quality issues, financial tracking and public administration. The composition of the evaluation team should as far as possible be gender balanced.

The evaluation team will be headed by a team leader who will be responsible for the day-today management of the evaluation team as well as quality control of activities and outputs delivered by the evaluation team and who carries the final responsibility of completing the evaluation. The team leader should document a proven record of leading successful evaluations and familiarity with the DAC Evaluation Quality Standards.

In addition to the core evaluation team that is specified in this TOR, the SSRP DPs will support background studies where deemed needed in a number of the priority areas that have been identified after the SSRP MTR in the regular SSRP SWAp consultations and reviews. These areas will be shared with the evaluation team and the team leader will bear the responsibility of ensuring these studies are adequately reflected in the SSRP Evaluation report.

3.2. Profile per expert or expertise required

Category I Expert: Team Leader

Education

- At least a Master's degree in a discipline relevant to the scope of the assignment (or equivalent work experience). Specialised courses in educational studies, social economics or development economics issues will be considered as valuable assets.

General Professional Experience

- Minimum 12 years of general professional experience in the analysis or/and delivery of development programmes.

- Specific Professional Experience

- Experience in formulation, implementation or assessment of policies in Education sector.

- Experience as a team leader in development programmes.

- Previous experience in large sectoral/thematic/policy evaluations.

- Strong working knowledge of education indicators

- Previous experience in Education sector in Nepal will be an asset.

- Language skills: English

Category II Expert: Quality Education Expert

Education

- At least a Master's degree in a discipline relevant to the scope of the assignment (or equivalent work experience). Specialised courses in educational studies, social economics or development economics issues will be considered as valuable assets.

General Professional Experience

- Minimum 6 years' experience in the analysis, design and/or delivery of cooperation programmes in the field of

Education.

Specific Professional Experience

- In depth knowledge of Nepali Education Sector.

- Experience and knowledge on measurement of quality of education outcomes within Education Sector Plans.

- Experience and knowledge on equity and gender in Education sector.

- Professional experience related to the design and/or implementation and / or evaluation of Education policies in

- Nepal.

- Language skills: English and Nepali

Category II Expert: Public Financial Management and Governance Expert

Education

- At least a Master's degree in a discipline relevant to the scope of the assignment (or equivalent work experience). Specialised courses in educational studies, social economics or development economics issues will be considered as valuable assets.

General Professional Experience

- Minimum 6 years' experience in PFM, macroeconomics, compliance, budget transparency, oversight and accountability, and budget support in developing countries.

Specific Professional Experience

- In depth knowledge of design and/or delivery of cooperation programmes - preferably in the field of Education - and different aid modalities including basket funding through a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) modality.

- Experience and knowledge of PFM, CD and institutional development in the public sector, preferably in the Education sector

- Professional experience related to the design and/or implementation and / or evaluation of Education policies in

- Nepal would be an advantage.

- Language skills: English. Knowledge of Nepali would be considered an asset.

Category II Expert: Education Economist

Education

- At least a Master's degree in a discipline relevant to the scope of the assignment (or equivalent work experience). Specialised courses in educational studies, social economics or development economics issues will be considered as valuable assets.

General Professional Experience

- Minimum 6 years' experience in the analysis, design and/or delivery of cooperation programmes in the field of

Education

Specific Professional Experience

- In depth knowledge of Nepali Education sector.

- Professional experience related to the design and/or implementation and / or evaluation of Education policies in Nepal.

- Language skills: English and Nepali

4. LOCATION AND DURATION

4.1. Starting period: The indicative starting date of the assignment is mid-April 2015.

4.2. Foreseen finishing period or duration: The assignment is expected to end by end of June 2015.

4.3. Planning

Activities	Team Leader	Quality Education Expert	PFM and Governance Expert	Edu-cation Economis
Briefing with EUD and SSRP Evaluation	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Inception report development	5	5	5	5
Document review / initial Stakeholder interviews / Aide Memoire preparation	15	14	14	14

Initial findings presentation to key Stakeholders	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
Further literature / document review, interviews and research triangulation as necessary and drafting of final report	14	12	12	12
Finalisation of the final report	5	3	3	3
Total Working days	**40**	**35**	**35**	**35**

4.4. Location of Assignment

The assignment will be located in Kathmandu, Nepal.

5. REPORTING

As described under 2.4

6. ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

6.1 Budget

The maximum budget for this assignment is Euro 155,000.

In addition and outside of this TOR, SSRP DPs will provide Technical Assistance (TA) for supplementary background studies in priority areas.

6.2 Other authorized items to foresee under 'Reimbursable'

The daily fee rates are all-inclusive, the only exception being the defined incidental expenditure items in the Budget

Breakdown: (1) travel costs; (2) per diems; (3) other reimbursable costs identified in the Budget Breakdown.

The experts are responsible for their own working tools and space such as laptop, printing and internet connection. The experts must note that the EU cannot offer any computer equipment for the purposes of this assignment. Further to this, the EU cannot facilitate logistics like transportation or accommodation.

No equipment may be purchased in the context of the FWC or in the context of individual assignments.

The Framework Contractor will be responsible for all security arrangements while the experts are in the country, as this is already calculated in the experts' fees.

Prior to the commencement of the mission, the experts should obtain, where necessary, visas for entering Nepal. The Framework Contractor is fully responsible for any visa arrangements. The EU cannot issue invitation letters to facilitate the visa process. The administrative burden securing visas is already calculated in the experts' fees.

6.3 Tax arrangements:

The Contractor shall have sole responsibility for compliance with the tax laws which apply to him. Failure to comply shall make the relevant invoices invalid. The Contractor recognises that the Contracting authorities are, as a rule, exempt from all taxes and duties, including value added tax (VAT), pursuant to the provisions of Articles 3 and 4 of the Protocol on the Privileges and Immunities of the European Communities. The Contractor

shall accordingly complete the necessary formalities with the relevant authorities to ensure that the goods and services required for performance of the Contract are exempt from taxes and duties, including VAT. Invoices presented by the Contractor shall indicate his place of taxation for VAT purposes and shall specify separately the amounts not including VAT and the amounts including VAT.

7.   OTHER INFORMATION

During all contacts with the Government of Nepal, or any other institution, the consultants will clearly identify themselves as independent consultants and not as official representatives of the European Union. All reports shall clearly contain the following disclaimer: "This report was prepared with the financial support of the European Union. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the European Union." All document, reports, or other material acquired during the mission and relevant to EU-Nepal relations will be submitted to the Delegation at the end of the mission, and will remain available for further missions and/or projects.

The Framework Contractor must take the necessary measures to ensure the visibility of the EU. Please consult the

Europe Aid website at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/visibility/index_en.htm

These terms of reference may be elaborated further by the EU Delegation during briefings in Kathmandu. Attention is drawn to the fact that the EU Delegation reserves the right to have the reports redrafted by the consultant as many times as necessary to achieve an acceptable final report.

ANNEX 2 W O R K   P R O G R A M M E

DATE	ACTION	PERSONS TO MEET	VENUE
July 27-31, 2015	Documents review	Evaluation team	Home based
Mon 3 August	Short briefing	Evaluation Working Group	UNICEF
	Team meeting	Bidya Nath Koirala (BK) Prem Aryal (PM) Nanda Sharma (NS) Gita Poyck (GP)	Team office
Tue 4 August	Preparation	BK, PM, NS, OP	
	Teamwork	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
Wed 5 August	Meeting	Meeting at ERO: 10.30 AM to 11.30 A.M (To be confirmed with Lekhnath Sir) 2. Meeting at NFEC: 11.30 AM to 12.15 PM 3. Meeting at OCE: 12.15 PM to 1.00 PM 4. Meeting at NCED: 1.00 PM to 2.00 PM 5. Meeting at DOE: 2.00 PM to 3.30 PM 6. Meeting at CDC: 3.30 PM to 4.30 PM 7. Meeting at HSEb: 4.30 PM to 5.00 PM (To be confirmed with Member Secretary)	Sanothimi, Bhaktapur
Thu 6 August	Research	NS, BK, PM, GP	Home
	Field	Panga ECD- Primary - Secondary School	Field
Fri. 7 August	Meeting	Office of Auditor General / Ministry of Finance	NS
		Kuleswar Secondary School, Kuleswar near Kalimati	GP, PM
Sat 8 August	Weekend		
Sun 9 August	Meeting	10.30: Foreign Aid coordination Unit	1st floor Foreign

DATE	ACTION	PERSONS TO MEET	VENUE
		NS, GP, BK	Coordination section MoE
		12: 00 Office of the Auditor General	Deputy Auditor General/ NS
	Meeting	14.00 Dr. Tirth Raj Parajuli, Development of Curriculum Framework	BK, PM, GP
		14:00 DoE Finance Section	NS
		16.00 Team meeting	BK, NS, PM, GP
Mon 10 August	Interview/Meeting	11.00 WB Ram K Rijal	World Bank Yak & Yeti
	Interview	14.30 Indra Gurung	Embassy of Finland Bishalnagar chowk
Tue 11 August	Interview	09.30 UNICEF	UN house
	Interview	13.00 Kamla Bisht	Embassy of Norway
		16.00 Wendy Fisher	EU Delegation
Wed 12 August	Interview	08.45 ADB	ADB office at Uttardhoka, Lazimpat
	Interview	11.00 Nepal Teachers' Federation/ Teachers' Commission	
		15.00 Manju Lama	Embassy of Denmark
		17.00 Dr. Vishnu Karki Room to Read, Architect of SSRP	Hotel
Thu 13 August	meeting	Dr. Sushan Acharya Faculty of Education TU Reviewer of SSRP	Team office
	Research		Team office
Fri 14 August	Research	11.00 Hari Lamsal, Joint secretary of MOE Surya Gautam and Tek Narayan Pandey	MoE
	Research	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
Sat 15 August	Weekend		
Sun 16 August	Interview	Dir. Planning DeO	Sanothimi, Bhaktapur
	Research	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office

DATE	ACTION	PERSONS TO MEET	VENUE
Mon 17 August	Interview	NCED	Sanothimi, Bhaktapur
	Interview	ERO	Sanothimi, Bhaktapur
Tue 18 August	Interview	10.00 SMIS2 JICA	Sanothimi, Bhaktapur
	Interview	CDC	Sanothimi, Bhaktapur
Wed 19 August			TbD
	Research	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
Thur 20 August	Interview	Parents' Associations Nepal (2)/ Association of INGOs Nepal	TbD
	Preparation AM/PPP	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
Fri 21 August	**Presentation PPP**		
		BK, PM, NS, GP	
Sat 22 August	Weekend		
Sun 23 August	Meeting	Dr. Tirtha Khaniya, Former Education Person at NPC	TbD
	Research	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
Mon 24 August			TbD
	Research	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
Tue 25 August	Research	BK, PM, NS, GP	TbD
	Research	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
Wed 26 August			TbD
		BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
Thu 27 August	Writing	BK, PM, NS, GP	Team office
		United Students' Union/ SMC Federation	
Fri May 28 August	Submission/presentation draft final report		TbD
Sat May 29 August	Weekend		
Mon 14 Sept.		Receive comments on draft report	
Mon 28 Sept.		Submission final report	

ANNEX 3   PERSONS / INSTITUTIONS MET

Persons / Institutions met

- Lava Deo Awasthi, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education
- Deepak Sharma, MoE, Undersecretary
- Dr. Dilli Ram Rimal, Director General, MoE
- Ms. Dev Kumari Guragain, Director/Planning MoE
- Dr. Tulasi Prasad Thapaliya, Director/NCED, MoE
- Mr. Gopal Prasad Bhattarai, Under Secretary/ERO, MoE
- Mr. Narayan Kumar Shrestha, Dy Director/Planning, MoE
- Ms. Renuka Pandey, Dy Director/NFEC, MoE
- Ms. Padma Sharma, Section Officer/CDC, MoE
- Wendy Fisher, EUD, Education
- Ekaterina Yakovleva, EUD PFM
- Indra Gurung Embassy of Finland
- Lena Hasle, Norwegian Embassy
- Marilyn Hoar, chief of education UNICEF
- Jimi Oostrum, UNICEF
- Margrethe Lena Hasle, Norwegian Embassy
- Pramod Bhatta, the World Bank
- Smita Gyawali, ADB

Institutions

- Nepal Teachers' Federation
- Parents' Associations Nepal (2)
- United Students' Union
- SMC Federation
- Association of INGOS Nepal
- NGO Federations Nepal
- DPs' Consortium
- MOE Authorities
- DOE Authorities
- NPC personnel
- Office of Auditor General
- Ministry of Finance

- Higher Secondary Education Board
- CTVET
- Curriculum Development Centre
- Non-Formal Education Centre
- National Centre for Educational Development
- Teachers' Commission
- Office of the Controller of Examination
- Education Review Office
- World Bank Consulting Team for School/WORLD BANK (PETS), 2014 Survey

Key Persons/Institutions

- Dr. Vishnu Karki Room to Read, Architect of SSRP
- Mr. Janardan Nepal, Former D. G.
- Dr. Sushan Acharya Faculty of Education TU Reviewer of SSRP
- Dr. Tirth Raj Parajuli, Development of Curriculum Framework
- Dr. Tirtha Khaniya, Former Education Person at NPC

Development Partners

- UNICEF
- EU
- World Bank
- ADB
- Norwegian Embassy
- Finnish Embassy
- Danish Embassy
- JICAAustralia, Ms Sarah Boddington

ANNEX 4   R E F E R E N C E S   A N D   S E L E C T I O N   O F   D O C U M E N T S   R E V I E W E D

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ANNEX 5   S S R P   I N   T H E   L I T E R A T U R E

Relevance of the SSRP	Level of learning is not sufficient (Seel & Bajracharya, 2015)
Effectiveness of SSRP	Blanket approach to scholarship distribution that does not ensure the access of children at risk (Seel & Bajracharya, 2015); gradual improvement in teacher management (Seel & Bajracharya, 2015); MLE practice is not owned by community and MOE is not committed for it (Phyak, nd); the voice of the students and the guardians are not well reflected to the school management (IDCJ, 2015); to assuring quality of vocational training programmes still exists as a challenge(Sinha,2013).
Efficiency of SSRP	Prioritization of the activities is required (Seel & Bajracharya, 2015); systematic orientation about accounting and auditing is missing (Awasthi, 2012); social auditing report is not shared at the DEO and DOE levels (Awasthi, 2012); lack of teaching aids; low remuneration to ECD facilitator (NCE, 2015); result based planning for ECD is limited (UNICEF, 2011) ; effectiveness of collaboration between stakeholders varies substantially by district as possibly by VDC/municipality(UNICEF, 2011); annual monitoring report submitted by DEOs to DoE does not help the DEOs/schools improvement their intervention quality (IDCJ, 2015).
Impact of SSRP	Absence of education policy committee (Seel & Bajracharya, 2015); school level actors have little information about different policy provisions (Parajuli et. al., 2012); gender parity index among dalit and janajati improved significantly (NG, 2012); repetition in class one fallen, though not in parallel to ECED enrolments; children performed better in primary level.(NCE, 2015); enrolment of children at basic level has been significantly increased(NEC, 2015); gender parity has been achieved (MOE, 2014); quality of schooling and improved learning outcomes still remain a critical challenge, many of the children who have been in school for four years, do not have basic reading and maths skill, there is a learning crisis (Winthrop & Mcgivney, 2014).
Sustainability of SSRP	Note: none of the studies discussed about the sustained SSRP activities.
DPs support for SSRP	Good working relationship and commitments; overloaded MOE; duplication of effort and delay in fulfilling the criteria resulting in a "stop and start effect'; case by case TA at ad hoc level; (Seel & Bajracharya, 2015).

Relevance of the SSRP	Level of learning is not sufficient (Seel & Bajracharya, 2015)
Conclusion and recommendation	Develop a shared vision and model of quality education; twin tracking approach to equity and gender; develop MLE and EGRP framework; joint financing; overall TA support scheme (Seel & Bajracharya, 2015); establish effective cross verification system of the data and information, and link financial and physical reports with budget; prepare joint resource projection before the development of SIP including that of capacity development plan at the local level (Awasthi, 2012); link local bodies with the structure of school government (Awasthi, 2012); review the mother tongue based (MTB) MLE practice of India, Ethiopia, and Burkina Faso to implement it in Nepal up to grade 8 (Phyak, nd); restructure the current system; give high priority to basic education; ensure equitable access to quality basic education(MOE, 2013); TVET policy 2069 has identified expansion of TVET programmes as an instrument to increase the access of all interested groups of the society. And to achieve this public investment, private investment and PPP model are suggested (Khanal, 2013); include indigenous skills and knowledge in the curriculum (NCE, 2015); establish an effective mechanism for coordination between MOE and Ministry of Federal Affair and Local development (NCE, 2015); local bodies (VDC , municipality and DDC)should be activated in school monitoring(NCE, 2014).

Community and district level stakeholders' perception and recommendation for SSDP

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
Teachers	SIP is prepared but of not much use; CAS form is not user friendly; TPD is there but very few of us are able to use this training into classroom because it does not address our problem easily; DEO, Supervisors and RPs hardly visit schools, do not give demonstration class or give feedback to us; we have two catch words *chalchha*, and *gothalo chahinx* to make us perform our duty.	Prepare teachers at their workplace; address teachers' problems that are voiced in different movements.
Head Teachers	Only those teachers and Head Teachers have performed well who have *will power* and the others are not contributing to SSRP initiatives; SSRP helped us systematize data, prepare SIP, construct schools, schools, and toilets; it has trained teachers but the teachers are not applying their skills in the classroom.	Figure out the teachers who have will power to transform school education and prepare them as special cadre for specified period as Head Teacher.
Confederations of Teachers' association	Confederation of teachers' association (umbrella organization of 17 teachers' organizations under 3 unions) works in three areas viz., democracy, education and member benefits and rights. They are politicized to restore democracy; they do movements to give benefits and rights to their fee paying members. Because of these reasons education was kept aside. But now democracy has been restored and hence the political role of the teachers has been reduced and hence they are unified under a confederation to act on what Education International (EI) suggests for (a) quality teachers (b) quality material and, (c) quality environment. But the	address teachers' problems that have been raised through different movements and petitions to motivate teachers; help teachers' confederation to implement EI objectives under SSDP; develop Head Teacher as school leader with his/her plan for a specified period; provide the same facilities to all

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
	SSRP implementers ignored teachers' concerns and voices. So they opposed the so called school reform programme. For them, school transfer/community handover/managed programme curtailed teachers' rights and benefits; TPD did not help them grow professionally; they looked for institutional representation but the SSRP developers always picked up the individual on the name of its "stakeholders' consultation"; SSRP did not work with VDC and municipality, the political governance but enforced the role of SMC and PTA as controlling agency against teachers.	teachers regardless of their recruitment types.
SMC/PTA members	Many teachers are not regular in school; they do not perform their duties as they should do; teachers are obliged to the political parties than to their classroom duty.	Make teachers regular by expanding supervision and monitoring services from RPs, supervisors, and DEO; help teachers to make use of the strength of the political parties or depoliticize them for their professional development.
DEO/Supervisor and RP	We are overloaded with the administrative and training jobs; we realize that there is less time to us to visit school; though we give feedback and suggestions to the Head Teachers and teachers they ignore it.	Provide additional support to the RPs and supervisors to make them innovators and collaborative action researchers.
Parents' Association	Parents do not know how to support their children educationally. So they need orientation time and again. But SSRP has not taken this into account.	Parents must be oriented to help their children thorough different models. school model, RP model,

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
		NGO model, media model, or any other models can be fine with parents' organization.
Educationists	Curriculum as document is good, as implementation there is gap because CDC used it fragmentally, as assessment (CAS system)and learning achievement it is failed; TPD did not work well; structural change is possible after passing the bill which is in the parliament; quality parameter is in place; DPs have particular interest that hampered the SSRP progress.	Provide TOR to the teachers, and the Head Teachers; introduce dialogue with the political parties and the sister and the brother organizations to change the attitude of the teachers; link community and school through the use of life-lessons; take school to the community to address the social issues of the community.

DPs' perception and recommendation for SSDP

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
Finnish Embassy	MLE programme was tested and discontinued; curricula have been revised by introducing soft skill and life skills; vocational skills programmes have been expanded; SSRP could not achieve the quality related target; social auditing has been implemented though there are some weaknesses as in some schools it has been simply a ritual.	Increase teachers' and Head Teachers' accountability; improve school governance system.

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
Norwegian Embassy	redeployment of teachers have been put into effect; teachers' and scholarship receiving students' individual back account has been initiated to control financial fraud; presence of poor children in school; de-motivated and highly politicized teachers; parents inability to help their children for learning; mismatched teachers' training; MLE has not been that much effective because parents preferred English as medium of instruction; DPs try to push their agendas with the little money that they have.	Introduce life studies to make students' learning relevant to their livelihood.
World Bank	SSRP has been gradually moving towards procedural reform. The bill is in the parliament to be passed; it has EMIS system in place; letter grading system has been introduced to increase internal efficiency of the education system; P1 programmes are set and implemented under the minimum enabling conditions; individual's capacity increased but there is a lack of institutional capacity including that the transfer of institutional memory.\n\nGovernment is always delay in delivering things on time; teachers are highly politicized and de-motivated to do their assigned tasks; they as organizations opposed community managed schools which was the decentralized action; programme on early grade reading material have been implemented. Both the government and I/NGOs have been involved in it.	Implement area and target specific programme for increased access to never schooled children and ensure efficiency in education ; support targeted parents for income generation; produce and make available the quality reading material to the early grade children; promote result based funding; strengthen public private partnership in education; support secondary school; reform exam.
ADB	Focus went to policy reform in a hope that it can help increase students' achievement implying that there is incremental progress; but there has	Train PT and SMC on how to teach children; improve in-service teachers'

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
	been no significant progress in CAS implementation and teacher management; SSRP turned to be too ambitious plan; SSRP has now prepared minimum enabling conditions and implemented priority based enabling conditions for the effective implementation of quality education programme. Governance is the problem; the change of general and booster funding to PCF is the next problem; both control and contract mechanisms i.e. SMC, PTA and social auditing system and some others did not work well; ERO focused only in NASA; golden handshake programme is in the process of implementation. use of para teachers (more than 17 types as claimed by teachers' organizations), failure of lead school concept, politicized SMC election system, teachers' inadequate capacity and de-motivated attitude, absence of institutional memory are the problems to achieve the desired SSRP result.	quality at universities level; prepare and make available of the early grade reading material (through the programmes like school buy books, develop library, and engage students in learning); equip RC with necessary fund for the effective implementation of the SSRP initiatives; develop strong reward and punishment system.
UNICEF	In the meeting with UNICEF of PFM not much new information was obtained on PFM. Some further meetings on ECED, girls, OOSC	Findings are in the report.
JICA	The JICA meeting was with the team working on SIP and capacity enhancement of SMC, and the information is in the report.	Findings and recommendations are in the report.

Central level stakeholders' perception on SSRP and recommendation for SSDP

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
ERO	National assessment system is in place despite the ERO's ad hoc position. Out of the two entrusted activities (periodic assessment of the DEOs and performance audit) it has been able only to conduct national assessment of grade 3, 5, and 8 students. DEOs of Bhaktapur, Morang, and Udayapur have started to implement the NASA result. Similarly RED has also used the NASA tool for the assessment of the students' achievement. Despite this achievement ERO lacks financial and procurement authority, own capacitated staff, and functional authority; it also lacks its own follow up mechanism to use the NASA report.	Need of financial and procurement authority, own capacitated staff as well as roster person, and functional authority for the institutionalization of ERO.
NFEC Officials	SSRP supported NFEC's regular programmes like alternative education, flexible schooling, open school, literacy and lifelong learning. Some CLCs are self sustained as well. As technical organization it has suffered from the same problem as that of the ERO though it has its own staff. Implementation of open school from different institutes of the same ministry is also the problem.	Requires coordination of the SSRP funded programmes and government funded literacy campaign; needs financial and procurement authority; implement open school from a single institute.
NCED Officials	NCED receives SSRP support for planning, human resource development, and distance/open learning programmes. Under SSRP, NCED has implemented TPD programme. But its time taking process to prepare instant curriculum and training very few ETCs including LRC are found effective in delivering the training. The reason is that all the roster teachers and ETCs are not equally competent. As technical institute it has the same problem as that of ERO in terms of financial	Needs separate delivery mechanism for curse design, recording, appraisal and programme delivery; expand TPD as school based teacher training programme for all teachers of a particular school at one stroke; develop RC level network for sharing and innovation right after the direct

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
	authority and procurement which delays as by-product of SWAP arrangement and/or the hierarchical mindset of the officials as DG and ED are of equal status. TPD implementation and its follow-up initiatives.	training of the teachers; hike the position of DG as Secretary to retain bureaucratic line relations and/or develop strong coordination among NCED, NFEC, CDC, and ERO.
CDC Officials	CDC develops curriculum, textbooks, teaching manuals, CAS form, rolling curriculum framework and also prepares co and extracurricular material. It has also published textbooks in 22 different languages of Nepal. Out of them textbooks in Limbu, Newar, Bhojpuri, Tamang, and Chamgling Rai are in use; But from quality point of view they are yet weak. Hence it invited private publishers to publish books and also promoted multi textbook policy in place so that students will have boos on time. CDC has also developed competency based curriculum for grade 6-12 which was already in place for primary grades during BPEP period. Now it has been developing early grade reading material with the help of non-pulling DPs; SWAP approach to funding has created problems in receiving money on time and hence the programmes are delayed; under SWAP there are 13 budget headings which do not match with SSRP budget headings causing the problem to mention the value of money; implementation of CAS is the DEO's problem.	Make CDC as autonomous institute; promote the policy for performance contract because CDC has dedicated person but they lack required capacity to deliver the things on time.
DOE Officials	Ideally SSRP institutionalized the planning process but the SIP and DEP did not get adequate funding that de-motivates stakeholders to make these plans; data verification system is in place and the data have been used to analyze trend, and develop general as well as target	Improve the management system to deliver things on time; make Head

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
	programme; political agendas sometimes derailed DOE from its plan. scholarship for Tarai Dalit girls is an example which was started and discontinued now; quality parameters have been developed but the students' achievement has not been increased; HR problem is the district is always there; SWAP has been very helpful to DOE to focus on the specified tasks; weak capacity of the time bound promoted officials known as 24 gha has been the problem to implement DOE activities; the absence of Head Teacher as accountable leader to their schools has also created another problem.	Teachers as separate cadre for school improvement.
OEC Officials	SSRP supported for question bank and capacity building initiatives. But OEC can do both activities with its own resource and achieve SSRP objectives.	Need to develop focused programme to support SSRP initiative.
MOE Officials	Approximately 90% of the money goes to the school; there is single reporting format with different conditionality of the DPs; problem in reporting to the DPs on time because MOE itself gets report from the districts lately. 87% money goes from government treasury but we discuss less on this investment and talk more on the DPs concerns that keep the officials busy all the time. There are visible changes at the macro level. These changes can be observed in the systematization of the data, institutionalized planning process; timely delivery of the textbooks and other material, scholarship distribution, DPs' resource management, increased technical and operational capacities of the MOE officials through exposures, training,	Make the line and staff relations smooth and/or prepare the staff personnel to know the fundamental difference between the line and staff functions and accountability; capacitate the working personnel as per their expectation level; identify the areas of TA's; make list of these TAs who are available in the country and then ask for the outside support if needed; develop politically negotiated national vision and recast SSRP like tool to achieve it.

Stakeholders	Perception	Recommendation
	and further education; increased student enrolment and participation of girls, disables, and other marginal groups. But the SSRP as a tool to education reform did not get political ownership; there is absence of governance coordination as well.	

DPs	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		Total	
	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement
ADB	26.110.000,00	45.000.000,00	25.000.000,00	-	40.000.000,00	60.345.221,84	31.450.000,00	3.225.905,00	24.000.000,00	35.000.000,00	10.000.000,00	20.074.077,00	156.560.000,00	163.645.203,84
AusAid	3.240.000,00	3.503.600,00	2.900.000,00	4.208.800,00	7.400.000,00	3.231.600,00	4.080.000,00	4.190.000,00	3.200.000,00	3.608.000,00	1.870.000,00	3.049.956,18	22.690.000,00	21.791.956,18
DENMARK	22.130.000,00	24.902.681,23	2.000.000,00	-	25.000.000,00	12.952.074,92	18.850.000,00	15.667.027,71	-	5.161.138,35		-	67.980.000,00	58.682.922,21
EU/DFID	-	-	21.200.000,00	19.158.573,35	13.000.000,00	10.776.929,93	19.590.000,00	-	21.800.000,00	25.419.477,03	17.060.000,00	13.478.988,60	92.650.000,00	68.833.968,91
FINLAND	-	-	5.300.000,00	6.123.614,99	4.500.000,00	3.883.444,51	3.750.000,00	3.742.853,26	9.100.000,00	9.440.858,01	6.770.000,00	5.567.778,64	29.420.000,00	28.758.549,41
FTI	-	-	50.000.000,00	30.015.982,00	50.000.000,00	37.999.999,79	32.000.000,00	34.905.422,06	7.000.000,00	14.893.088,71	2.220.000,00	-	141.220.000,00	117.814.492,56
JICA											2.950.000,00	458.896,01	2.950.000,00	458.896,01
NORWAY	14.800.000,00	8.527.216,17	8.000.000,00	8.405.085,80	9.000.000,00	8.817.397,39	10.000.000,00	10.116.872,88	-	2.087.121,41	9.680.000,00	5.860.566,41	51.480.000,00	43.814.260,06

DPs	2009/10		2010/11		2011/12		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		Total	
	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement	Commitment	Disbursement
UNICEF	250.000,00	-	300.000,00	248.787,20	350.000,00	383.112,51	500.000,00	503.646,71	500.000,00	172.940,90	500.000,00	-	2.400.000,00	1.308.487,32
UNICEF (after 16th of July)	250.000,00	248.747,20	300.000,00		350.000,00	383.112,51	500.000,00	503.646,71	500.000,00	172.940,90	500.000,00	458.896,01	2.400.000,00	1.767.343,33
World Bank	25.000.000,00	-	32.500.000,00	44.411.834,40	37.500.000,00	35.565.725,91	41.500.000,00	42.410.659,73	45.000.000,00	43.358.918,26	38.000.000,00	33.708.291,37	219.500.000,00	199.455.429,67
Total	91.780.000,00	82.182.244,60	147.500.000,00	112.572.677,74	187.100.000,00	174.338.619,31	162.220.000,00	115.266.034,06	111.100.000,00	139.314.483,57	89.550.000,00	82.657.450,22	789.250.000,00	706.331.509,50

In FMR the sum of expenditure is the total of the expenditure held on the economic codes while in PPR it is the total of activities of ASIP

ANNEX 8 FINANCIAL PROGRESS REPORT: FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT VS THE PHYSICAL PROGRESS REPORT (SAMPLE)

		Progress (Expenditure in NPR)	
	Budget Headings	As per FMR	As per PPR
FY 2011/12	3501213	203.974.990,39	188.073.000,00
	3501214	32.389.357,75	32.291.130,00
	3508033	16.073.188.248,07	15.940.661.780,00
	3508034	47.879.472,10	45.881.440,00
FY 2013/14	Budget Headings	As per FMR	As per PPR
	3501213	228.973.780,34	218.567.000,00
	3501214	51.176.054,50	51.713.000,00
	3508033	17.966.277.689,73	17.515.380.000,00
	3508034	51.401.956,99	44.973.000,00
		18.297.829.481,56	17.830.633.000,00

ANNEX 9 FINAL PRELIMINARY DAMAGE ASSESSMENT DATA RECEIVED FROM DISTRICTS (UPDATED ON JULY 17 2015)

Document is provided as a separate file.

JOINT REVIEW SSRP

JOINT REVIEW OF THE SCHOOL SECTOR REFORM PROGRAMME (2009-2014)

Interim findings 21 August 2015

The team:
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Government of Nepal
Ministry of Education

SCHOOL SECTOR REFORM PLAN (SSRP)

The SSRP aims to:

- Expand access and equity;
- Improve quality and relevance, and
- Strengthen the institutional capacity of the entire school education system.

The SSRP is jointly funded by the Government of Nepal, eight (initially nine) Pooling Development Partners (DPs), the Global partnership for Education (GPE) and non-pooling partners and implemented by the Ministry of Education (MoE) through Sector-wide Approach (SWAp).

(Australian Embassy, ADB, Denmark, DfID, EU, Finland, Norway, World Bank and UNICEF. For the SSRP Extension period, there are 8 Pooling DPs as Denmark and DfID have not continued and JICA has joined as Pooling DP.
Non Pooling DPs are: JICA, UNESCO, UNICEF, USAID, WFP and I/NGOs).

2

SSRP

- Under the Joint Financing Agreement approximately $642 million from 2010-2014;
- $168.24 million was committed for the period 2014-2016;
- Non-pooling DPs are funding a further $25 million in the extension phase.

DP's share in SSRP funding in 2009/10 was 23% whereas it was 12% in 2014/15. SSRP ProDoc estimated 19% for first 5 years and 17% till 7th year.

3

PURPOSE OF THE JOINT REVIEW

The overall objective: provide a comprehensive independent view on the achievements, strengths and weaknesses of all components of the SSRP against the SSRP results framework

The evaluation follows the 5 development assistance criteria (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co operation and Development (OECD):

- Relevance and Design
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact
- Sustainability

Conclusions and recommendations

[4]

APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

- Documents and reports review and analysis;
- Interviews with Government officials, DPs, Teacher Union;
- Interaction with student unions;
- School visits: head teachers and teachers;
- District visits (Gulmi and Dolakha).

[5]

RELEVANCE

- The objectives of the SSRP are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, global priorities as well as development partners policies;
- Appropriate response to needs and problems in the Nepal education sector;
- Design consistent with – and supportive of- government development and sector policies;
- Key stakeholders and target groups involved in the design in a transparent and participatory way;
- Building on a 20 year involvement/experience in education sector programmes;
- SSRP is relevant in eyes of DPs at central level but it seems not at school level.

6

DESIGN

- Design suffered from gaps in prioritisation, sequencing, and linkages;
- Reform: however no progress in passing Education Act (core design);?
- not much attention for improving and measuring quality.

7

EFFECTIVENESS

Overall achievements on access and equity:

- Gains in the expansion of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) facilities and access
- Primary level: Net enrolment has increased by over 3% from 92% in 2008 to 95.3% in 2012;
- Gender parity has been reached in all three levels – primary, basic and secondary.
- Female teacher ratio at primary level has increased from 35 percent in 2008 to 41.5 percent in 2012;
- Pupil teacher ratio at the primary level down from 44:1 in 2008 to 38:1 in 2012;
- Survival rate in both grade 5 and grade 8 has increased from 58% and 41% to 84% and 69%;

8

EFFECTIVENESS

Access and equity continued:

- No readily available national level data on the total numbers of children with specific disabilities or their enrolments in school. No targets have as yet been set for improving the enrolment of disabled children.
- Educational services severely disrupted by the earthquake. Impact on enrolment, attendance and internal efficiency, leading to an increase in the number of out-of-school children;
- SSRP core document commits to access and equity, gives a comprehensive list of the categories of educational disadvantage and exclusion but there is no overarching strategy;

9

EFFECTIVENESS

On quality and relevance:

- Insufficient attention to quality ECED (training, support , salary ECED facilitators, materials, physical environment)
- Improvement in the timely arrival of textbooks since the change from central procurement to local procurement and the use of SIP funding.
- Continuous Assessment System (CAS) intended to support quality education: problems with implementing (confusing and cumbersome, difficult to implement, parents do not want it)
- Teacher Professional Development: no better teaching in school yet

10

EFFECTIVENESS

On quality and relevance continued:

- Medium of Instruction and Languages for Education (MILE) study preliminary findings help formulate the MILE framework and inform the formulation of the SSDP;
- Piloting of soft skills in 100 schools has been done in grade 6 and 7. For grade 8 and 9, piloting is now underway;
- NASA for grade 8 downward trend in learning outcomes from 2011 in Mathematics and Nepali;
- School Leaving Examinations (SLC) stay low;
- Alternative, non-formal and literacy programmes: quality varies, depends on the provider (NGO).

11

EFFECTIVENESS

Capacity and Governance:

- Ministry of Education (MoE) and Department of Education (DoE) are reasonably well staffed;
- Many highly experienced and committed staff;
- Robust planning mechanism: Education Management Information System (EMIS);
- Political fragility and a still low level of economic development: challenges of governance;
- Regular transfer of functionaries;
- Decision-making politicised;
- EPC, ERO at the central level and SMCs and PTAs at the school key institutional innovations under the SSRP. However, not active or unclear structure.

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EFFECTIVENESS

Capacity and Governance continued:

- SIPs are prepared by almost all the schools. The process of formulating SIPs brings together Head Teachers, chairpersons of SMCs and the wider school community: empowerment, awareness, ownership.
- Use for planning and budgeting is very limited;
- Need to increase overall SIP funds if schools to take initiative;
- Huge gap between local level planning and central level planning;
- Not eenough supervision and monitoring visits by the resource persons and school supervisors;

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EFFICIENCY

1. Annual SIP / Annual WPB

- GoN allocation to Education Budget decreasing, so does the DP's share, whereas "blanket approach" and "additional activities" are followed/added;
- There is disconnect between SSRP/ProDoc Activities, ASIP/AWPB Activities, SIP activities and FMRs, weakening results monitoring and value for money, administrative burden;
- Is SSRP considered real SWAp, does not cater whole spending/investment in Education Sector, different projected conditionality's delaying release of funds, delayed completion of activities and quality is suffered;
- SWAp is okay with line agency but questionable to staff agency.

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EFFICIENCY

2. Risk Management

- High number of task force/teams/meetings, concrete results not clear, the intensive meeting system is not efficient for day to day management;
- Issues related to continuity of reform activities and making use of the related output;
- High turnover of staff (at central and district level), overload to field staff (RPs and School Supervisors);
- Devolution of authorities without adequate capacities.

15

EFFICIENCY

3. Public Finance Management

- Always kept on top most priority for improvement, but no urgency seen in implementation;
- Though 44 out of 58 activities are reported as completed in FMIAP, none of the activities accomplished within the deadline and no follow-up on status after completion;
- Financial Management Report preparation on mixed basis (actual at centre and disbursement to school), avoidance of freezing of funds;

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EFFICIENCY

3. Public Finance Management cont'd

- Initially delays in budget approval and disbursement, leading to skewed spending in last trimester, concerns raised about the commitment reporting, completion of activities and quality;
- Delays in preparation and submission of FMRs, concerns over their quality;
- Financial record keeping continued to be manual, grossly lacking at primary schools;
- Auditing (financial and social) not effective, ritual in nature.

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IMPACT

- Systematized database through EMIS from school to the centre available.
- Institutionalized planning process in place;
- Increased access to and equity in education of the marginalized groups (Dalits and girls) realised;
- The implications of inclusion in terms of defining a 'quality' learning environment are being more clearly articulated.
- Impact at students achievement, teacher's performance and school governance is questionable;
- Language awareness increased but how to deal with students of different language groups in one class is yet questionable.
- Sharing culture among teachers developed.
- Achievement of the SSRP is the Joint Financing Agreement among DPs for a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) to education financing.

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SUSTAINABILITY

- Ensuring long term financial, technical and qualitative sustainably of quality in education requires further and continued institutional strengthening;
- EMIS offers the prospects of a continued Information based planning for the education system however wider integration is desired. (with financial management and monitoring
- Awarenesss of quality education is raised and accepted in School Management Committees and among parents;
- Decreased DP support over the years and an increased government education budget contributes to financial sustainability;
- Sustainability of the 'blanket approach' of scholarships and textbooks and ever increasing teacher salary is questionable.

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CONCLUSIONS

- The SSRP is the latest in a series of increasingly ambitious school reform programmes. Achievements have been made during the five year period. Challenges still are:
  - Legislation and organisational restructuring are not yet in place to fully support the SSRP;
  - Capacity building within the SSRP is getting inadequate attention and is fragmeneted;
  - Quality of education is getting inadequate attention;
  - Access gains stronger than quality gains, especially access at ECED and primary levels;
  - Challenge is improve access at secondary levels;
  - Improvement of quality is now top priority;
  - SIPs are not used for planning;
  - Big gap between central level and local level, at school level there is little knowledge of SSRP;

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CONCLUSIONS

- SSRP is relevant at policy and programmatic level but needs an effective translation to measures at school and community level:
  - General school management
  - Managing scholarships
  - Textbooks, and
  - Other kinds of support to the school and communities;
- SSRP is useful to show its impact at the limited area with the intense support;
- Questionable at the larger areas with thinly support from the government.

21

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Are PTA's really necessary or do they add an extra administrative layer? (Is SMC not enough?)
- Empower and further build capacity of head teachers (relation with SMC not clear, role in teacher management, manager of the school);
- Parents could be more oriented/motivated to take care of their children's education;
- Withdraw teacher recruitment powers from SMCs (teacher recruitment through SMCs has led to politicisation of the process);
- Teacher recruitment should be the institutional responsibility of the Teacher Service Commission;
- Include Teachers Union in all important forums.

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RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

Encourage and motivate teachers

- Visualize the best performing schools and the teachers and make this visual as profile available in DEO's website.
- Make arrangement to help teachers learn pedagogical skills;
- Organize exhibitions of best and worst performing schools in each Resource Centre;
- Start educational radio and television programmes to generate peoples' learning and also educate them in different forms of knowledge and skills;

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RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

Ensure Ownership of SIP by SMC

- The School Improvement Plan (SIP) needs to be the basic instrument for planning, budgeting, funding and bringing about improvements in school physical environment, processes and learning outcomes;
- All funding to schools should be linked to the SIP;
- Monitoring of school performance should include monitoring progress on SIP implementation;
- Build SMC and HT capacity in terms of developing and improving the SIP;
- Ensure that each SIP contains a capacity building component, based on school needs;
- Create a support system at the RED and DEO levels, to assist schools in developing better quality SIPs and to put in place better implementation monitoring systems;
- RPs' M&E not be limited to data collection but include the quality of teaching and the classroom environment.

[24]

RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

Improve fiscal flows and financing mechanisms

- Link school financing to SIP;
- Give 3 Year Fiscal Envelopes to Schools;
- Fiscal transfers to schools under the Local Bodies Finance Commission;
- Link financing to performance Fiscal incentives drive better performance;
- Reward top districts and schools based on composite ratings: ratings of the students, rating of the parents, and rating of the RP and supervisors, rating of the Steering Committee, and rating of the teachers' confederation.

[25]

RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

Enhance Accountability and Transparency

- Strong accountability and transparency are the bedrocks of any institutional arrangement;
- Enhance public disclosure on budgets and performance. Transparency is a function of information. It is important to enhance public disclosure for budgets in an accessible, simplified form, as well as performance and progress reports shared widely (communication and knowledge management);
- Consolidation of reporting. The large and diverse nature of reporting requirements means that there is multiplicity and redundancy in reporting, automation and simplification;
- Develop a Performance Monitoring Dashboard showing relevant managing information and trends to be noticed. The copious volume of data generated in the education sector in Nepal is extremely detailed and valuable, however the details may be overwhelming and hampering quick and responsive decision making.

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RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

One Program, one Policy Matrix

- SWAp: to ensure there is an agreement between government and development partners on the nature, scope, objectives, investments, policies and actions. This should result in one, consolidated matrix of agreed actions, policies and a results framework;
- Consider a more joined and systematic approach to TA, increase ownership, pooling of non-pooling funds;
- Conduct timely and regular Monitoring and Reporting, including independent verification/monitoring;
- Rethink the approach to mother tongue teaching.

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RECOMMENDATIONS CONT'D

Mother tongue learning in classroom

- Undertake national research that helps to find out the clues to link four language groups of Nepal i.e. Indio-Aryan, Tibeto Burman, Dravid, and Agneya. The researchers should find out (a) words to word linkage (b) grammar to grammar linkage (c) structure to structure linkage etc.
- Encourage and also make arrangement to the teachers to learn students' languages through them and talk to them in their languages in the multilingual classes;
- Help students to develop "talking books" or students' word / sentence / and grammar dictionary in each class every year. Also use them as "big books" as reading materials;
- Develop ways to link scripts of different language to learn each others' alphabets;
- Create learning corners in each class to help students discuss in their languages;
- Encourage students to speak on Nepali language as link language of all the languages of Nepal.

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THANK YOU

May you please provide us with your comments and suggestions!

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- The analysis and the recommendations must be **evidence-based**. If a causal statement (i.e., cause ==> effect statement) is made anywhere, it must be backed up by data, documented experience from other countries, other projects in Nepal etc. and/or theoretical logic. Opinions gathered during the study should be presented as opinions, and not as evidence per se since some opinions may reflect the interests of the group they are representing rather than opinions formed from past findings/experience and research.

- **Recommendations** should not stand alone but instead be well **connected to the discussion** on progress, challenges, and shortcoming, and their potential causes, as well as being backed by logic, theory and **evidence-based** research findings (national/international). Recommendations for the future should be **concise**, but properly linked to the other discussions in the report and should distinguish if possible between a) activities that are already in place and need to be continued and/or strengthened, and b) new proposals, if any (but backed by logic and literature findings).

- This is a review first and foremost. So the bulk of the report must focus on how **SSRP has performed, the strengths and shortcomings** of the programme reflected in the evidence and potential reasons for those strengths and weaknesses. The key areas on which the SSRP focuses, like any other major national level education programme, are:

  - ✓ quality
  - ✓ access
  - ✓ equity (in access as well as quality)
  - ✓ efficiency (not just financial, but also education system efficiency)
  - ✓ governance and accountability

  The report should show in a logical way for each key area:

  a) progress status in the area
  b) analysis of the progress including the positive aspects as well as the shortcomings and challenges
  c) potential forward linkages (i.e. potential effects backed by logic, international/national evidence) of the outcomes
  d) potential backward linkages (i.e. potential reasons/causes backed by logic, international/national evidence)
  e) recommendations backed by logic and international/national evidence or learning

- Discussion on **different topics should be proportional to the focus of, and amount of time/energy/resources spent** on, the programme. For example,

mother tongue education is a small part of what SSRP focuses on and should be mentioned as one of the smaller quality interventions (the presentation gave the impression that this was a major focus of the SSRP). The five key areas mentioned above should be given adequate attention. Within this context, given that all agree that quality is the most important unfinished agenda item, it would be logical to ensure that the key activities in this area receive due attention (including ECD, national assessments, promotion of early reading skills after the MTR, prioritized minimum enabling conditions, teacher preparation and development, and key policy changes related to quality (e.g. change in SLC certification approach).

- Apart from discussing **governance and accountability** in the area of PFM, it is important to also discuss accountability in terms of **service delivery**. In other words, accountability at the school and classroom level - e.g. teacher accountability and from the perspective of whether or not quality services are being delivered to the beneficiaries (students and parents). Within this context it will be important to talk about the theoretical merits and shortcoming of decentralized school-based management from the perspective of accountability (as this was an important element of the SSRP), as well as the progress, challenges, and recommendations to strengthen accountability whilst also ensuring quality of service delivery. Other key areas of discussion in the area of governance and accountability would be textbook delivery, PMF, scholarships (how they are distributed; what has been the progress in preparing a database of scholarship recipients), etc.