A Country Report

for

11th Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators
18-20 November 2010
Bangkok, Thailand

Submitted to:
UNESCO Bangkok

By
Mr Mahashram Sharma
Joint Secretary
Government of Nepal
Ministry of Education
Nepal
October 25, 2010
Context

The Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal is characterized as land of diversities in terms of geography, culture, languages, ethnicity, religion, natural resources and living creatures. Nepal is a landlocked country, broadly divided into three geographical areas: the Himalayas, the high mountain range with snow-covered peaks; the hill areas with lush high hills and valleys; and the Terai, a strip of fertile plains. All three regions are parallel to each other, from east to west, as continuous ecological belts. The population of Nepal is estimated at 27.5 million (NPC, 2010), and about 31.8 percent of the population (i.e. 7.2 million) belongs to the official school going age group of 5-16 years. The 2001 census shows that there are 101 different castes/ethnic groups and altogether 92 different languages and a number of dialects have been registered as a mother tongue.

Education for All (EFA)

After the introduction of the modern education system in the country in 1951, Nepal almost took 23 years to declare free primary education. The Government of Nepal declared free primary education in 1974 and the concept of basic education emerged as a fundamental human rights after the 1990 Constitution. In line with the international movements and commitments on Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Nepal has adopted and implemented the concept of education for all irrespective of diversities and differences prevailing in the country. These commitments are reflected in national periodic plans, legislations, policies and annual programs.

From the fiscal year 2009/10, the government has extended free primary education of five years to free basic education of eight years duration under the broader framework of School Sector Reform Program 2009/10-2015/16, a jointly funded program of the government and nine development partners. Several interventions are planned for implementation during the program period, with an aim to bring all out-of-school children and retain them in school by 2015.
Section - I

Summary of overall progress in meeting the EFA goals

A significant achievement in terms of access to primary education has been achieved through the implementation of several incentives schemes such as; free primary education, availability of schools in accessible places in terms of physical proximity\(^1\) (flexible schooling, alternative schooling and formal schools), incentives for targeted children in terms of remoteness, girls, ethnicity, Dalit, disability and other forms of disadvantages. Likewise, the development of national curriculum framework, revision of national curriculum, provision of local curriculum within the national framework, expansion of training facilities to teachers, improvement of school physical facilities and promoting community to take the management responsibility are some other important inputs for enhancing quality of education.

There has also been observed a strong political support on the policy reform agenda on decentralization in educational management. Voluntary transfer of school management to local communities is an important thrust towards better school management. Providing School Improvement Plan (SIP) based block grants and the provision of teacher grants through the per capita financing and shift in budget allocation to districts are other remarkable changes observed in the delivery process.

As a result of the past initiatives, Nepal has achieved remarkable achievements in schooling outcomes reflected in the table below. The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at the primary level (Grades 1-5) has reached 93.7 percent in 2010, an increase from 80.4 percent in 2000. Gender Parity in 2010 has been achieved at the primary (Grades 1-5) and basic education (Grades 1-8) with a Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.98 and 0.97 in the NER respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary - Net enrolment rate (NER), %</td>
<td>80.4</td>
<td>91.9</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary - Survival Rate to Grade 5, %</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>73.4</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary - Gender Parity Index (GPI)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic - Net enrolment rate (NER), %</td>
<td>83.2</td>
<td>90</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic - Gross Enrolment Rate (GER), %</td>
<td>123.3</td>
<td>131</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic - Survival Rate to Grade 8, %</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic - Gender Parity Index (GPI)</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary - Student Teacher Ratio (STR)</td>
<td>44:1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these quantitative achievements, some critical reforms during periods include: (i) devolution of decision making powers to communities and school management; (ii) the expansion of demand-side intervention schemes to bring children from marginalized groups to the schooling process, including per child financing and scholarships; (iii) the decentralization of teacher hiring through the provision of teacher salary grants; (iv) opening up of the textbook printing and distribution system to private sector players, and (v) harmonizing support from across many Development Partners (DPs) behind a set of coherent and common objectives in education. The Government has committed itself to policy continuity.

\(^1\) The Nepal Living Standards Survey II, 2003-04 reported 91.4 percent of households in Nepal to have access to a primary school within 30 minutes.
Despite the substantial progress in the provision of schooling services, considerable challenges remain in quality improvement and internal efficiency. Though the government has made considerable progress towards achieving EFA targets, and has met some key MDG goals, the country still faces significant challenges. First, nearly 6 percent of primary-school aged children do not participate in schooling and these shares increase sharply for higher levels of schooling. In the primary school cycle, internal efficiency continues to be poor with nearly 10 percent of children dropping out after Grade 1 and 27 percent repeating the grade. Grade 5 survival rate, by cohort method, is less than 60 percent and many who complete grade 5 do not transit to grade 6. Secondly, direct measures of quality, reflected through student learning assessments show only modest improvements in learning outcomes conducted in Grades 3 and 5. More importantly, a systematic measurement of learning achievements is still absent. With the closing of EFA program in 2009, the SSRP, while consolidating the gains made under EFA, aims to address the remaining challenges described above.

More specifically, EFA goal wise major achievements are given below:

**Goal 1: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children:** The GER at pre-primary level has increased from 11.7% in 2000 to 66.2% in 2010 with 64.8% for girls and 67.5% for boys against the average target of 60% for 2012 and 80% for 2015 in the EFA/NPA 2001-2015. The intake rate at grade 1 with ECD exposure has increased from 9.6% in 2002 to 49.9% (girls-50%, boys-49.8%) in 2010. Likewise, the share of Dalit and Janajati children has also increased both in the case of GER and grade 1 enrolment with ECD/PPC experience. In 2010, percentage share of Dalit and Janajati children reached to 17.4% and 38.8% respectively and GPI in ECED/pre primary level reached to 0.91. Development of strategic paper on ECD, implementation guidelines, National ECD curriculum, minimum standards on ECD, implementation of capacity building program for the stakeholders and assessment tools for ECD centres are some of the important quality and equity concerns. Partnership with INGOs and NGOs has proved successful in effective implementation of ECD programs, making ECD services accessible to children living in rural isolated pockets.

**Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to a complete free and compulsory education of good quality:** There has been a positive and significant development regarding student enrolment at primary level. Significant expansion in the number of schools in Nepal during 1990-2005 helped to ensure access to primary schools within 30 minutes walking distance, as specified by the policy, to a large number of households in the country. The NER for primary level increased to 87.4% in 2005 against the target of 88% set by the EFA NPA. In 2010, the net enrolment of primary education stands 93.7% with GPI of 0.98. However, the GER of 146.1% remains a major concern to all. In 2010, the percentage share of Dalit and Janajati children in primary level is 20% and 38.6% respectively while, the percentage share in population is 12% and 40% respectively. Similarly, the GPI in NER in primary level reached 0.98. From the trend analysis, it is seen that the net enrolment rate is increasing and, with some additional effort, the target could be met.

**Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs:** Emphasizing and strengthening the policy of school-based management provided a basis for addressing learning needs. Significant progress is observed in mainstreaming Madrasa, Gumba and Gurukul with flexibility in the curricular materials to respond to the needs of specific religious groups. The provision has been made in the national curriculum for the inclusion of 20% contents from the local context in three subjects: social study, creative art and physical education at the primary
level. Text books were prepared in 18 local languages for supporting the learning of students with different mother languages. Multi-lingual education program is being piloted in selected schools. Likewise, there has been a special focus on women in adult literacy initiatives. Community Learning Centres are an innovation within the EFA Program. They aim to increase literacy, increase community access to functional and useful knowledge, and establish a link between development activities and education. Between 1995/96 and 2003/04, overall adult literacy rate has increased by 12 percentage points.

Goal 4: Achieving a 50% improvement in the level of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults:

In the national development plan, the NFE has been considered as the strong means for poverty reduction and creating social awareness. Literacy is designed to ensure that it is targeted to and prioritized according to the needs of disadvantaged groups – particularly the needs of poor, Dalits, disadvantaged ethnic minorities, women and those in the remote areas. Development of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) at the local level for institutionalized provisions of literacy and post literacy activities is one of the significant achievements during this period. Partnership with NGOs/INGOs at the local level and the preparation of village education plans (VEPs) are remarkable. The EFA literacy target for the adults (15+ years) is to achieve 75% by 2015. According to the census 2001 the percentage of adult literacy in the country was 48% (Male - 63%; female 35%). The literacy rate for 6+ age population was 54% and for the youth (15 to 24 years) it was 70%. The Nepal Labour Force Survey II, 2008 reported that total adult literacy rate in the country has increased to 55.6% (Male - 70.7% versus Female - 43.3%). In the case of youth literacy rate, the achievement is more significant as in 2008, the total youth literacy rate in Nepal reached to 80.8% (male 86.2% versus female 75.0%), according to the Global Education Digest 2010, a recently published report by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS).

Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls’ full and equal access to and achievement in, basic education of good quality:

Gender equality in education has improved substantially over the years, and the 2015 target regarding equal access of girls and boys to primary education has already been achieved. It is likely to be achieved for secondary education as well. In this way, gender issues are gradually addressed at the school level particularly regarding enrollment. Both school census data as well as the NLSS data show remarkable positive changes taking place in terms of gender parity in school enrolment, adult literacy, school attendance and completion. The composition of the girls in the school enrolment is steadily increasing. In 2010, out of the total enrolment in primary school, almost 50% are girls. This ratio was 44% in 2002. The data available in the Ministry of Education shows a long term growth of primary level enrolment of 3% per annum since 1990. Annual growth rate of girl students is higher at 5%. It has resulted into increasing the proportion of girls’ enrolment from 36% in 1990 to 50% in 2010. The gender parity in ECD (GER) and primary level (NER) improved to 0.96 and 0.98 respectively. Regarding gender parity there is no visible differences among the Dalit, and Janjatis from the national average.

Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills:

The overall promotion, repetition and dropout rate of primary level shows an improving trend. Girls’ share of promotion has also increased. Repetition and dropout rates of boys and girls decreased in primary level grades. Teaching license is made as a mandatory practice in the school system. Policy provisions on teacher training have been formulated. Certification training for head teachers on school management has been introduced. In 2010, it is observed that 73.7% teachers are fully trained in primary level, which was earlier recorded as 16.23 in 2002 in the Joint Government–Donor Evaluation of BPEP II. To enhance efficiency in
the management of education, management of 11,410 schools has been handed over to the community (Primary- 7412, Lower Secondary - 2440 and Secondary- 1189). The results achieved in this endeavour are annexed as a case. Self evaluation of school and ranking process has been introduced. Block grant system in funding school education has been implemented in all schools since 2004.

From the available scenario, however, it is obvious that the quality of education and learning achievement has still to go a long way. The national level study indicates that the learning achievements of grade 5 and grade 8 students are still less than 50% except in few subjects (Social Studies and Science). In order to get full picture, it needs to be further analyzed and strengthened. Likewise, drop out is still high in early grades of schooling, resulting in low survival rate in grade 5.

Goal 7: Ensuring the rights of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through mother tongue: The provision of 20% local curriculum in the national curriculum has been introduced to address the local needs and this could be study of local language, customs, culture and/or the topics chosen by the local community. Regarding bi- and multi-lingual teaching learning situation, in addition to the national Nepali language curriculum, textbooks have been developed in 18 other local languages and some supplementary readers are developed in mother tongues. Textbook has been developed for teaching mother tongues as an optional subject for primary level. The average percentage of students who received the full sets of textbooks within the second week of the academic session 2009-010 was 57.6% at primary level. At the primary level Maithili, Tamang, Tharu, Bhojpuri, Doteli, Awadhi, Magar, and Limbu languages are the most widely used as local languages of the total 19 different languages reported. The total number of primary grades using local languages is 16,064.

In order to safeguard the interest of the targeted group, Vulnerable Community Development Plan (VCDF) has been implemented. The VCDF is prepared as a safeguard document to ensure that education for all related plan is implemented with sufficient attention to issue related with access, equity, quality and sustainability of education services for the vulnerable groups and that these groups are in no way affected adversely due to program interventions. Similarly, multilingual education program has also been piloted. Some schools have been established that deliver education in mother tongue, particularly in languages like Sherpa, Limbu, Newari, Maithili and Bhojpuri. Bilingual/multilingual method is also used in the literacy program for ethnic minorities.

Improvement in EFA coordination structure: Ministry of Education, in close collaboration with the national and international non-governmental organizations, has been implementing several interventions for achieving the goals of Education for All and education related Millennium Development Goals. The Education for All, now School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) is an umbrella framework for all actors involved in the education, especially basic education sub-sector. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is in place between the government and non-governmental agencies. Periodic meetings between/among government and non-governmental agencies review the progress, strategies and set direction for the future. The process of joint process for planning, implementing and monitoring has been initiated and results have been achieved. In order to ensure the participation of the non-governmental agencies and actors of civil society in the movement of Education for All, different committees have been established and made functional. At the highest level, national level coordination committee is formed whereas at the local level district/village education committees act as EFA forums. But these committees are yet to be made fully functional.
Strengthening donor coordination: Nepal has experienced both the practices of pooled and non-pooled mechanism of donor support in education, especially in the school education sector. In order to provide support to the school education sector, nine* donors put their money in pooled funding and are bound in a consortium of Joint Financing Agreement (JFA). The signatories of the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) are bound by the framework of the Joint Financing Arrangement (JFA). It also provides space for non-pooling development partners. Hence, the JFA sets forth the joint provisions and procedures for financial support to the SSRP and serves as a co-ordination framework for consultation among the Signatories for SSRP and decision-making, joint reviews of performance, common procedures on financial management, including disbursement, accounting, procurement, reporting and audits. In this way, better coordination between government and development partners is found in the SSRP. The Pooling Donors have established bilateral agreements/arrangements that are compatible with the spirit and provisions of the JFA and will avoid doing, as far as possible, from setting conditions in the bilateral agreements/arrangements that contradict or diverge from the spirit of this JFA. During the review and consultative meeting in a year, the participation has been ensured from the Pooling Donors, National Planning Commission (NPC), MOF, Financial Comptroller General Office (FCGO), MOE/DOE, Ministry of Local Development (MOLD) and the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), representatives of the Association of INGOS (AIN), non Pooling Donors and other key stakeholders.

Education/EFA data collection systems and the use and analysis of data, in particular focusing on disadvantaged and unreached groups in education: The EMIS system of the Ministry of Education has been taken as the main tools for capturing, analyzing and reporting data on EFA progress. Most of the information on EFA indicators are captured from Flash Report- a system of school level data collection, compilation and reporting through school census twice (in the beginning and end of school academic year) a year on outcomes and processes. The main purpose of the flash reporting system is to provide school level information on EFA progress, gauge the capacity of the education system and monitor the performance of the school education system. In this way, flash reporting system consists of two different kinds of information through flash I and flash II. Hence, EMIS and Flash report system has contributed in the educational planning and decision making significantly. It has informed the school as well as District Education Offices for evidence based planning and decision making.

In addition to the flash data/EMIS data, the census as well as survey data are also used to measure the progress of EFA. The Nepal Living Standards Survey, Nepal Demographic Health Survey, Nepal Labour Force Survey and other research reports are also seen equally useful in this context.

---

* Pooling partners: ADB, AusAID, Denmark, DFID, EU, Finland, Norway, UNICEF and World Bank
Non-pooling partners: India, Japan/JICA, UNESCO, USAID, WFP and (I)NGOs.
Section - II

Key/major challenges in meeting the EFA goals and addressing marginalization in education

One of the crucial challenges at present is how to reach the unreached groups. The first requirement to reach the unreached is to identify exactly the population, their whereabouts, and their needs. Disaggregated data showing marginalization with respect to school education, literacy, life skills provisions and other support provisions are still missing.

Nepal is a country inhabited by people of diverse social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds. 28.5% of the population are Brahmins/Chhetri, 13% are Dalit, 4.3% are Muslim. Nepal has fifty-nine officially-recognized indigenous groups, which make up 38% of the population. A total of 92 languages have been recorded in 2001 by the national census. In this context, while Nepal has made important progress in fulfilling children’s right to education, 6% of the current school going aged population in primary (age 5-9) remains out of school. While there are no national statistics to show what the progress has been in the enrolment of children facing specific difficult circumstances, a range of studies suggest that children from vulnerable groups constitute the vast majority of those who still do not have access. Moreover, the challenge is not only to ensure enrolment of children from vulnerable groups but also to ensure that they are retained and able to complete a basic education cycle of good quality. Children from vulnerable groups tend to repeat more and drop out more than average. Discrimination based on caste and ethnicity, although illegal, affects children’s education and children from socially excluded groups are more likely to drop out of school because of discriminatory classroom attitudes. Regional differences in education outcomes are also recognized. Social inclusion issues are not limited to students, but also affect teachers and School Management Committees (SMCs). It is found that vulnerable groups are underrepresented in both categories.

Socio-economic factors still remain major challenge for ensuring participation of all children in school and meaningful completion of even the primary education cycle. This is also a big challenge in the development of quality provisions for literacy and life skills education at the community level. Social and cultural values, beliefs and practices are, in many instances, relating and contributing to gender inequity and for the creation of discrimination such as discrimination against Dalit and ethnic minorities. Nepal is a country of geographical diversities where mountains and hills constitute over 70% of its land. Transportation is a major challenge for ensuring safe and easy access to educational institutions, particularly for children in hill and remote mountain areas.

More specifically, EFA goal wise major challenges are given below:

Goal 1: Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children: The issues and challenges of ECD mainly relate to the parental awareness and involvement, qualification and training of the facilitators, adequate funding to ECD centres, and capacity of the system. The available data reveals that the coverage of ECD/PPC is still very low. More importantly, there are sharp shortages of resources in poverty focused areas in the country. Similarly, the debate with regard to the inclusion of ECED in school structure is also going on at the moment. Now ECED is running as a program based manner and being funded accordingly.
Goal 2: Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to a complete free and compulsory education of good quality: The major challenges towards meeting the goal of universal access to schooling relate to the following questions: how to reach the disadvantaged and deprived children, who remain unreached by the current school system? how to remove gender disparities in schooling?; how to address the needs of the various special needs children (such as Kamaiyas, physically disabled, street children, orphans, child workers, etc.)? how to make school and classroom responsive and sensitive to the needs and circumstances of the disadvantaged children? how to make the school and classroom truly inclusive on the basis of equality? etc. In spite of high achievement in the NER of primary education, critics point out that rigorous efforts are required to reduce the drop out and repetition rates and increase the internal efficiency of the system.

Goal 3: Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programs: It is difficult to estimate the progress towards EFA goal of life skill education due to the lack of proper information system and data. The current provision for life skill education is rather very small compared to the needs. Properly addressing the learning needs of children and youth from disadvantaged groups and vulnerable communities, children with disabilities, children in difficult situation require huge financial resources where current programs and resource envelope have not been sufficient to meet the needs. Greater access to relevant technical education and vocational training is critical for the numerous young school leavers who try to search job market locally and abroad. A school dropout problem of children from poor family, especially of the Dalits from rural and remote community has remained a challenge. Children from the ultra-poor section of the society are even unable to buy school uniform, copies, pens, etc. Some efforts to create the environment of reconciliation among students from different situations have also been initiated. In this context, some cooperatives models have also been adopted.

Goal 4: Achieving a 50% improvement in the level of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adult: The most important aspect indicated by NLSS 2003/4 is that economy is the critical factor regarding almost every problem, including illiteracy. The disparities can be clearly seen among the development regions and the ecological zones. Community Learning Centers' (CLCs) numbers are too small and their expansion is equally challenging. Literacy programs, materials and contents are still driven by providers' perceptions and provisions due to lack of localized system. Proper information system is lacking for the regular progress reporting. Literacy campaign has also been implemented since two years. But the implementation efforts have not produced expected results.

Goal 5: Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in, basic education of good quality: Multiple factors are contributing to gender and social disparity in education. Incidence of poverty, violence and natural disasters has added to social exclusion and compounded the challenges of addressing equity in education. Children with disability have a limited access to education. The gender disparity also exists in terms of teacher population. Challenge is also perceived in the absence of systematic approach to collect data of out-of-school children and those who are multiply vulnerable. Hard to reach children are scattered throughout the country and are difficult to locate. Updated and accurate information about working children or child labor, HIV affected children, children affected by natural and human-made disaster and children with disability are still lacking.
Goal 6: Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills: Quality of education is much sought for in general and little understood and practiced. The concept of child-friendly schooling has been introduced. But a comprehensive definition of quality of education is the desired need but contextual variation makes it so difficult to arrive at a common concept. Specific and measurable indicators of quality education are yet to be developed. The transition rates from primary to lower secondary and from lower secondary to secondary are rather very low. School management practice is yet to be institutionalized. Deployment and distribution of qualified teachers in schools as per their need and demand from females, disadvantaged groups, disabled, ethnicity, and local language groups has remained to be a difficult task. Formulation and implementation of local curriculum, transaction of curriculum through local language, classroom based realities feeding into the design and transactions of curriculum are much desired for the promotion of quality education. Improving learning achievements in primary education has remained a pedagogic challenge.

The proposed educational structure of Grade 1-8 basic education demands an improvement in the qualification of teachers on the one hand and entry of qualified workforce in teaching profession is a challenge on the other. Similarly, recruitment of teachers from local communities is also challenging which is also equally difficult to manage. It is associated with the effectiveness of the medium of instruction. Capacity building of both the institutions and individuals, linking outcomes of educational research to further educational plans and programs, strengthening professional support mechanism, devolution of educational authorities and services to the school level are some other challenges related to the quality issues. Improvement of quality is also associated with the cost. It is also hard to increase the allocation to school from the existing resource envelope. Therefore, increasing budget to school education is another challenge.

Goal 7: Ensuring the rights of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through mother tongue: From the experiences gained, it is learnt that comprehensive policy to provide primary education to the children through their mother tongue is a need in the country. The existing policy provides rooms for the mother tongue education in primary education but such policy documents remain silent about teacher recruitment and teacher deployment to support primary education through mother tongue, production and distribution of reading-materials in mother tongues education, etc. Population distribution shows that the towns and villages are rather mixed in terms of different language groups. Hence, there are implementation related questions like how to identify a school for education in mother tongue; how to deal with prevailing bilingual and multilingual situation and so on. There is no data keeping system of the teachers and students on the basis of their mother tongue to help produce reading materials, teacher deployment and teacher training. Curriculum Development Center (CDC) has initiated the translation of textbooks in mother tongues but there is need to do more to make them more relevant in the context of the mother tongue students.

In addition, other major challenges are listed as below:

- Accurate information base on out-of-school children and illiterate population
- Constant poverty
- Hard geographical topography
- Poor resource bases
- Capacity to develop an appropriate curriculum, curricular materials, learning materials
- Ability to prepare the competent and trained inclusive teaching force
- Creating inclusive school/classroom environment
- Coordination between/among government and non-governmental organizations
- Political stability, presence of elected local bodies
- Strengthening community-based organizations
• Allocating resources to school for meeting the challenge of equity and quality in education

Measures taken to address the disparities in education by 2015:

The government of Nepal has begun the implementation of School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009/10-2015/16 from the fiscal year 2009/10. This program is prepared partly based on the lessons learned from the implementation of the previous major activities (basically drawn from the implementation of Education for All) and mostly on the key reforms agenda in the changed context. Several strategic measures are introduced in SSRP to address the issues of disparities. Mainly it includes restructuring of the school education system (Grades 1-8 as basic education and Grade 9-12 as secondary education), designing incentives to the targeted students, improving the quality of education, institutionalizing the performance accountability and transparency in the allocation of financial resources and their distribution, and developing the capacity of the school managers. Adoption of a decentralized framework through the devolution of educational services at the local level, coordination and partnership at the local levels, strengthening the teaching license system, training to teachers, amendment in education act and regulations, involvement of private sector in the production and distribution of textbooks, strengthening of continuous assessment system, emphasizing the implementation of the local curriculum and continuation of the management transfer of the school to the community are the other measures.

The thrust of the SSR plan is to strengthen school based management. The provision for free and compulsory basic education has been made in the SSR plan to ensure access of the targeted groups. It also aims to develop gender and culturally responsive environment at the school and in the classroom. As a safeguard measures for the targeted groups, the Vulnerable Community Development Plan (VCDP) is prepared with special measures for the children of disadvantaged communities and girls to help them join and complete primary school cycle. Several incentives programs are continued and further expanded in the SSRP.

National literacy campaign is launched by aiming to eliminate adult literacy within two years period and to meet the appropriate learning needs of young people and adults to enhance their life-skill. Developing functional literacy and post-literacy programs with skill training components for adults, developing the system of life-long continuous learning through more intensive involvement of Community Learning Centres are other reform agenda taken during the years.

The local authority or the school management committee is given the responsibility to decide the language of medium of instruction at primary level. They can decide their schools as the mother tongue schools or bilingual schools or Nepali medium schools.

More specifically, the specific measures taken in this regard so far are as follows:
• Improve education of children living under difficult circumstances through different incentives
• Introduce the scheme of reconciliation in education system through the implementation of different strategic interventions
• Education for children with special education needs
• Education for street children through non formal schemes
• Reduce incidence of child labour
Section - III

Key policies and/or good practices targeted at unreached, underserved, marginalized groups implemented as a result of the EFA Mid-Decade Assessment and the Mid-Term Policy Review, or after the Regional Meeting of National EFA Coordinators in May 2009

According to the EFA evaluation report jointly carried out by the Government and Development Partners through independent evaluators, there has been considerable progress on a number of indicators regarding access and equity and substantial growth in the system as a whole. The major lesson drawn is pertinent to inclusion of marginalized and disadvantaged communities in the education system.

Effective and reliable education policies and legislations are the basic foundation to reach the unreached population groups to ensure their right to education for all children, youth and adults, in particular girls and women. Some significant policy provisions and legal arrangement can be seen in Nepal during a two decade program for Universal Primary Education (UPE).

Through various international instruments, the Government of Nepal is committed to ensuring the rights of all children to education. Some recent International Conventions and policies mentioning the right to education and language, to which Nepal as a member state has committed to are: i) the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ratified by Nepal in 1990, ii) the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All (EFA), iii) the Dakar Framework of Action (2000), iv) the Millennium Development Goals (2000), and v) the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007. The GoN has also ratified the ILO Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal peoples.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) guarantees that every citizen will have right to get free education from the state up to secondary level and that each community shall have the right to get basic education in their mother tongue. The Three year Interim Plan (2007/08-2009/10) of the GoN lays emphasis on the expansion and consolidation of ECED programs across the country and on increased equity and inclusion in education through the provision of literacy programs for excluded groups (women, Dalit, Adivasi, Janajati, Madeshi and people with disability) and through the provision of scholarships.

In line with the spirit of the constitution and the Interim Plan, the Education Act (2001 Seventh Amendment) and Regulations (2002) have also articulated the need of ECED interventions, ensuring access and quality. Education Regulations (2002) stipulate that at least one woman teacher has to be in every school and at least one female member in the School Management Committee, and in the district education committee. It also stipulates the provisions for scholarships for students, for female teachers, for inclusive education, etc. The Girl’s education strategy and implementation plan for gender equity development (2006) includes a comprehensive implementation plan ranging from the provision of incentives for girl students to parental awareness activities.

Nepal has also witnessed the gradual emergence of a number of ethnic and civil society organizations. As a response, the Government has formed various commissions and national federations like the Dalit Commission, the Women Commission and the National Foundation for Development of Indigenous Nationalities. In addition, the government has recently formed a
Commission for Social Inclusion.

The School Sector Reform (SSR) Plan which is designed for implementation during 2009-2015, to a great extent, marks the continuation of the ongoing EFA under its broader National Plan of Action (2001-2015), which stipulates the need to form an integrated school system from grade 1 to 12. The SSRP aims to use a rights-based approach to mainstream social inclusion across most of the program components. A key policy to minimise the threshold of access to education is the provision of free basic education, including cost-free services for admission, textbooks, tuition and examinations. Scholarships are provided for some of the identified vulnerable groups. Free alternative programs will be provided for students who cannot attend formal schools. Special provisions will be made to cater to the needs of public school students in the Karnali Zone, one of the poorest areas, in the country.

The SSRP also provides for the recognition and support of traditional modes of education (cultural and religious-based such as Gumbas, Vihar, Madrasas, Ashrams, and Gurukul), which contribute to the education of children not enrolled in the current formal education system. Social inclusion and equity prevail as major concerns across all levels of the education sector, particularly regarding the out-of-school children. The hardest group to reach is expected to be the children facing multiple exclusions due to geographical, social, ethnic, physical and economic disadvantages. These multiple exclusions require multiple efforts of inclusion. A further challenge is to ensure that interventions not only address the needs of the vulnerable groups, but also address attitudes, behavior and practices that tend to reinforce exclusion at all levels in the mainstream society.

SSRP includes the rights based approach to quality education that means the provision for free and compulsory basic education has been made in the SSR plan to ensure access of the target groups. It also focuses on inclusive classrooms, culturally and gender responsive school and classroom environment, provisions for primary education in mother tongue, incentives to targeted groups, ensuring the representation of the targeted people in the school management committee, enhancing their capacity, decentralised school management with the focus on school based management, strengthening school improvement plan, and partnership with the I/NGOs for expanding resource base and ensuring equitable access of disadvantaged to quality school education. A Vulnerable Community Development Framework (VCDF) under the framework of SSRP has been prepared and implemented to drive and guide the implementation of programs targeted at marginalized children and groups. The VCDF is developed based on the national policies/strategies and the SSRP with the primary aim of meeting need of the marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

Recently, the approach paper of Three Year Plan (2010-12) has articulated policy direction, set priorities and identified program interventions to address the emerging needs for ensuring access and quality, and enhance systematic capacity at institutional, organizational and individual levels. The plan has a pro-poor focus for activities and approaches. It has a strong focus on marginalized groups and females in planning and implementation of educational activities. Gender mainstreaming and social inclusion are also taken primary approaches in the revision of curricular and teacher training materials. Likewise, good governance, ownership, equity, transparency, accountability, participation and efficiency are considered as the indispensable elements while developing and implementing the educational activities.

In terms of program, level, the following are the major interventions in this context.
The ECED programs are expanded to the areas where disadvantaged populations, including ethnic minorities, women, Madhesis, endangered groups and Dalit are located to ensure their access to the program.

The free education is expanded up to the grade 8 with the expansion of incentives to the targeted groups. The initiation to pilot compulsory basic education is also in the process. School based management is further strengthened by considering school management as a shared responsibility between school, community and local government. The process of revision in the education legislations has already been started to ensure the participation of representatives of the targeted groups in the school management process. Similarly, the reservation scheme to teachers from targeted groups is also proposed in the legislation. Improvements in school physical facilities are continuously implemented. Mid day meals are being expanded to targeted groups of students in basic education (Grade 1-8).

The annual interventions are targeted to create appropriate learning environment in the classrooms. Curriculum and curricular materials are revised to meet the needs of the targeted groups. The life skill education includes the curricular reform to include important aspects of life skills such as health, sanitation, general knowledge and skills as primary.

The literacy campaign is implemented since two year by aiming to eradicate illiteracy from the country. Now the campaign is linked with the skill development to meet the needs of disadvantaged groups – particularly the needs of poor, Dalit, disadvantaged ethnic minorities, women and those in the remote areas. The focus of literacy campaign programs is to support enhancing quality of life by linking literacy with health, sanitation, income generation, and social empowerment. The expansion of community learning centers and continuing education is also in place.

The expansion of incentives to girls and targeted groups, school construction and rehabilitation, alternative/flexible schooling, free school education including the textbooks, school feeding and scholarship incentive, curriculum improvement, teacher training, increasing the number of female teachers, enhancing school autonomy, improvement of school environment, reform in school exam are also in place over the years.

Quality improvement initiatives aim at meeting the threshold of minimum enabling conditions in all schools and ensuring equitable supports, adopting National Curriculum Framework (NCF) as the basis for core curricula and local curricula, introducing mother tongue as a medium of instruction, employing flexible learning approach to respond to diversity needs and to address learners’ individual pace of learning, implementing continuous assessment and providing remedial support to needy students.

The major initiatives taken by the government under the SSRP are: use of mother tongue as a subject of study and the medium of instruction, implementation of bilingual education program in selected schools, teacher recruitment, training and deployment, and special programs for endangered languages and cultures.

Impact of the policy and good practices

- Development and implementation of safe measures under the framework of SSRP
- Availability of disaggregated data twice a year
- Increased participation of targeted groups in school education – improvement in enrolment rates, participation and graduation rates
Increased participation of targeted groups in the school management process
Increased number of schools under the community managed scheme
Partnerships in inclusive education seem possible with increasing roles and responsibilities borne by Village Development Committees (VDCs), School Management Committees (SMCs)/Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other agencies supporting for inclusive education. VDCs in many places have supported the implementation of ECD centres whereas the SMCs are taking more management responsibilities.
Section - IV

Foreseen challenges in education beyond 2015

Despite contextual difficulties and constraints, Nepal is on track to achieve most of its EFA targets and MDG goals, with a few exceptions, if prevailing trends persist and efforts are continued or improved (NPC, 2010). However, the aggregate findings in indicators should be viewed with caution. There is a need to look beyond the aggregate figures. Studies should be conducted to dig deeper into the structural disparities across ethnicities, social and economic backgrounds, geography and gender to address the hidden social issues.

Data indicate that potentially Nepal will be able to achieve most of its EFA targets by 2015, except for internal efficiency of the education system and quality improvement which will require stronger efforts and an appropriate environment. However, there are deeply rooted multiple and compound causes of exclusion and barriers to education for disadvantaged/unreached groups. These causes of exclusion and barriers to education for such type of disadvantaged/unreached groups may remain beyond 2015, which can be broadly listed as follows:

- Poverty and economic barriers - need for day to day subsistence earning- low income of ultra poor, and socially excluded groups e.g. Dalit and endangered
- Social barriers - differences in terms of gender, caste, ethnic and culture related environmental factors related with diverse socio-economic conditions
- Geographical barriers - people living in remote hill and mountain areas are mainly excluded because of pattern of settlement in remote village areas, poor rural infrastructure, difficulty in transportation and communication, and no electricity facility.
- Religious causes - religious groups do not take the mainstream schools as safe, convenient and reliable.
- Language barrier - language dimension has been a major determinant of schooling for many children with non-Nepali (official language) mother tongue.
- Relevance of education and learning environment- relevance for their day to day life and poor quality of environment in the classrooms and the schools in the disadvantaged areas. Low sensitivity of teachers and school managers on gender and cultural aspects, traditional and cultural level awareness among teachers, managers and administrators towards the physically disabled and mentally retarded children.
- Natural disasters - basically flood and fire in Terai and landslide in hill and mountain areas push the children at risk.
- Poor resource base - schools do not receive adequate funding for educational materials, infrastructure development and quality related materials.

Though Nepal has huge financial and resource constraints, education sector has been receiving the highest allocation of public budget. Almost 16-17% of the public budget is allocated to the education sector, and nearly 76% of the education budget goes to the basic education sub-sector. In spite of such allocation, it is still insufficient to meet the goal of universal primary education, and the Government has to rely on the private and NGO sector to fill the gap. Achieving universal basic education up to eighth grade by 2015 will require huge resources. Soliciting huge resources to education, especially basic education sub-sector, may be ambitious because of the competing demands of other sectors' development.

Ministry of Education has been acting as a national coordination body for implementation of
EFA goals. Local communities are coming with active roles to mobilize the resources that already exist in schools and to generate alternative potential resources at the local levels. One time cost such as infrastructure development, human resources development and education/learning materials are policy priority to ensure the effective learning environment at the school level. NGOs, including community-based organizations, have also been providing their support regularly but considered inadequate in the present context.
Section – V

Annex (es)

Nepal adopted decentralization as a key strategy to achieve the goal of UPE and some policy reform measures along with the program interventions were started. There have been clear policy thrusts towards decentralization, greater community participation and more responsive to linguistic diversity and cultural diversity and ethnic minorities. Due to the continuous commitment of the government, political parties, DPs and other stakeholders towards the policy reform agenda and targeted program, Nepal has made some significant achievements. EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009 also highlights the achievement in the following way:

1. Nepal has sustained progress towards UPE since 2000 despite a violent civil conflict in the country, which ended in 2006. Between 2001 and 2006, the NER increased from 81% to 87%. Retention levels improved. Survival to grade 5 increased to 79% in 2005 from 58% in 1999. The number of out-of-school children declined from 1 million before Dakar to 700,000 in 2006. Nepal’s experience demonstrates the power of public policy reforms to yield rapid returns. Key factors include strengthened local accountability, improved equity via scholarship programmes for disadvantaged children, infrastructure expansion and a focus on quality and effective donor support.

GON has partnered with development partners in a series of national programs such as the first and the second Basic Primary Education Projects (BPEP I 1992-1998, and BPEP II 1999-2004) and the Education for All (EFA 2004-2009) SWAp program. Despite the decade-long conflict, the Government had undertaken significant reforms in the education sector that have helped achieve impressive results in enrolments and gender parity. These reforms include: the transfer of public schools to community management; government financing for unaided community schools; introduction of per capita financing of schools; opening of textbook printing and distribution to the private sector.

1. Started in 2002, the transfer of aided primary schools to community management has been a radical reform. Community ownership empowers the school management committee, consisting of parents and influential local citizens, with various staffing and fiscal decisions. Community School Support Project (CSSP) was designed to support this initiative of the government. Subsequently, the transfer of schools to community management was mainstreamed into EFA SWAp as well as in SSRP. To date, more than 11,000 schools have been transferred to community management. Because community transfer is a completely voluntary choice, the extraordinary speed at which this has happened was not anticipated when the reform started. Recently completed EFA evaluation report has independently verified that the transfer of schools to community management has been a successful initiative and has already led to positive outcomes. The SSRP will continue to encourage communities to take over management of schools through advocacy programs and one time incentive grants of Rs. 100,000 (approximately US$1200) per school level. Government has already announced in the FY10 budget speech a target to transfer 4,000 schools to community management this year. All schools are expected to be transferred to community management by the end of the SSR program. While all community schools have the authority to appoint teachers on a non-permanent basis, community managed schools can appoint permanent teachers as well.

2. Salary grants are provided to schools to recruit community teachers. Empowering communities to hire and fire their own teachers – as opposed to government supplying them with centrally recruited teachers- increases teacher accountability and therefore school quality. First introduced in 2003/04 in unaided schools through project support, it was mainstreamed into the EFA SWAp program in 2004/05. This funding modality was spread to aided schools from 2005/06. Already very popular among the communities, this reform has proven to be highly effective. In FY09 EFA disbursed salary grants equivalent to salaries of [22,000] teachers.
3. Per capita funding (PCF) is a student enrolment based funding (as opposed to teacher–based funding) that is expected to enhance quality and efficiency through increased school choice (for children), competition among schools, and efficient teacher deployment. GON introduced PCF as a pilot in FY07/08 and provided 4,000 PCF-based salary grants to unaided schools. Scaled up from FY08/09, the PCF instrument will continue to be the primary funding modality to provide non-salary grants to schools to finance free textbooks and other quality interventions in the school improvement plan. Moreover, all additional teachers’ salary grants for un-served students under SSRP will be channeled through PCF. PCF provides a major shift in funding formula and avoids political influence in resource allocation to schools.

4. Since the beginning of the supply of free primary textbooks in 1984, timely delivery of textbooks to schools has been a problem. A number of experiments aimed at ensuring the timely delivery of textbooks through Janak Education Materials Center (JEMC), a state-owned enterprise, did not produce desired results. At the beginning of EFA in 2004, schools were provided with per capita based textbook grants, ending the system where Department of Education contracted JEMC for printing and supply of primary textbooks. This paved the way for opening textbook supply to the private sector. In FY06/07, the government opened to the private sector the supply of Grade 5 textbooks in the eastern development region, which led to more timely availability of textbooks. In FY 08/09 the textbook supply for grades 1 to 8 to eastern and western regions was opened to the private sector. By the end of the SSRP period the government aims to have the private sector with full access to textbooks market at all levels of school and throughout the country. GON will drop the current provision of short listing of textbook suppliers and replace ex-ante quality control of textbooks with ex-post.

Important lessons have been learnt from the implementation of community managed schools. Taking responsibility and ownership of the school management by the local community has positive effects at the grass-roots level. Emphasizing and strengthening the policy of school-based management has provided a basis for addressing learning needs by using the local cultural and linguistic potentials as resources with a view to celebrating the diversity. School community relationships, involvement of the local community in the SIP process and capacity of the HT largely determine the student teacher attendance as well as the quality of learning environment of the schools serving the most disadvantaged, marginalized and vulnerable communities.
In 2001, after adoption of the Seventh Amendment of the Education Act, all public schools were renamed as community schools. Public schools had School Cooperation Committees appointed by the government. But they had no meaningful authority. Therefore, these schools were in fact managed by the government. Following the 7th Amendment, the responsibility for management of community schools was given to school management committees (SMC) which unlike school cooperation committees were elected by parents. Parents’ Assembly became the supreme authority for schools. SMCs were given wide ranging powers – such as appointment of teachers, resource generation, formulating, approving and executing the school budget. In principle, all community schools are community managed as all schools are managed by SMCs formed by the parents’ assembly.

Community management of schools was a radical move and the government did not have the political will and the technical understanding to implement the 7th Amendment. Though the Act deemed the creation of SMCs, these were not formed in the first few years following the enactment. This is why the strategy of supporting the implementation through a voluntary approach was adopted. Those schools which signed an agreement with the government to take over management of schools were referred to as Community Managed Schools (CMS). This agreement on the one hand gave communities the confidence to exercise the powers vested in them by the 7th Amendment, and on the other hand further pushed the government to concede the powers they exercised before the 7th Amendment to communities. The conditions to be fulfilled for this transfer were: (a) formation of SMC; (b) decision by SMC to get transferred to community management; and (c) endorsement of the SMC decision by the Parent’s Assembly.

Now every community school has formed an SMC. In this sense all of them are community managed. The only additional authorities that CMSs have in comparison to regular community schools, includes the authority to appoint head-teachers and permanent teachers in government teacher positions. The second provision is yet to be implemented successfully. Though schools formally transferred and non-transferred schools are in principle community-managed, the former are distinctly different from the latter in terms of the learning they have already experienced as managers of their schools, and hence in the confidence and morale they demonstrate.