



Inclusive education for inclusive development

The major problems hindering the access to quality public education is the irregularity of the children attending school, increase in the children dropping out of school, class repetitions and the deprivation of the vulnerable and marginalised section of the society.



Students after receiving school bags, dress and stationeries from the project

The context

'Education for all' is not the same thing as 'quality education for all'. It is now widely agreed upon that, it is not enough only to put children into school, they should also be able to learn something relevant and should want to stay in school. What we are concerned about when we talk about the term 'quality education' is, a concept that covers everything from the physical facilities of schools to better trained teachers, from the availability of textbooks to increased parental involvement and concerns in school education. Thus, the term quality education does not encompass only the provision of trained teachers and teaching materials, but it further encompasses a quality and attitude to impart knowledge and skills to every student in an atmosphere which is conducive to a proper learning environment. Children need to be healthy, well-nourished and ready to learn. Peace and harmony in the school also plays a vital role in promoting the inclusive education.

In Nepal, about 33 thousand public/government schools have been educating about 7.5 million children across the country, while nearly 5,000 private schools/institutions have claimed quality education for 20 percent children. The SLC result is regarded as a major indicator among others for quality education. Majority (54%) of students from public schools

failed in the recent (2011) SLC examinations, which indicates the poor performance of public schools. The gap between public and private education in terms of delivery of quality education has been visibly widened. The tendency is such that it seems that the private schools are only for children from the 'haves' families and the public schools are those for the 'haves not.'

Lack of effective monitoring mechanism, lack of motivation and proper training to create a child-friendly teaching-learning environment, insufficient educational facilities along with the lack of awareness among parents equally resulted in the existing situation of public education. The major problems hindering the access to quality public education is the irregularity of the children attending school, increase in the children dropping out of school, class repetitions and the deprivation of the vulnerable and marginalized section of the society.

Similarly, the local authority and civil society organisations have also not been paying enough attention towards promoting access to quality education in public schools.

Considering the above situation prevalent in the sphere of public education, the current issue of 'RRN Briefing Paper' intends to draw a glimpse of the challenges and lessons



Educational reference books supported to school library

RRN's education project targets mostly the poverty stricken and vulnerable rural communities. It has been implementing a four-year long project funded by European Union with the aim to promote quality inclusive education .

learnt during the process of implementation of 'Education Project for Vulnerable and Marginalised Children in Nepal'. The information for this paper comes from the review of project documents, baseline report, relevant publications, the feedback of students, teachers and school members through interviews as well as field observation and focus group discussions.

Promoting inclusive education

People have a fundamental right to education, particularly basic education for children envisioned in the Interim Constitution 2006, besides the vital necessities of life like food, clothing and shelter. Moreover, the global and national goal of 'Education for all' along with 'School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP)' have been focused upon to enhance the public education. RRN's education project targets mostly the poverty stricken and vulnerable rural communities. It has been implementing a four-year long project funded by European Union with the aim to promote quality inclusive education in three hill and mountain districts - Ramechhap, Sindhupalchowk and Dolakha since March 2010. The project

School education in Nepal

- Enrolment Rate: 96 % (as per PCF policy-funds and post based in student number). Data are even pessimistic as the over-reporting of student numbers.
- Just 77.2% of kids enrolled in grade-1 reach grade-5, while 1/3rd of them quit before reaching lower secondary level.
- Around 10% drop outs after the first year while 52.2 % are out of education system by the time they reach grade-10
- Class repetition rate is 26.5% for grade-1, 10.4% for grade-2 and 9.0, 8.6 and 6.6 percentages in grades 3, 4, and 5 respectively.
- Report says, there has not been an expected increment in the student promotion rate.

Source: Department of Education (DOE) Flash Report, 2010

districts are characterised by remote areas and are largely inhabited by the marginalised section of populations like Dalits, Tamang (Janajati) and other excluded communities. The project has covered 15 VDCs from three districts based on their socio economic deprivations in access to quality and improved educational facilities.

The project therefore, is contributing towards achieving the goal of inclusive education for closing the access gap of the most vulnerable communities and population groups. Specifically, the project is focused on increasing access of children to education by strengthening the capacities of public schools and local communities to manage school environment and by enhancing the level of commitments of Civil Society Organisations and local authorities (DEO, DDC, VDC) towards improving the access of children to quality education and promoting peace in the society and school community.

The major project components are scholarship package to poor and vulnerable children, improved education facilities for schools and Community Learning Centres, enhancing the facilities and services of Early Childhood Development

Increased children in the ECD Center

Raitheshwor ECDC was a school based center, established in 2064 BS in Thanpalkot, Sindhupalchowk district. In the beginning, combined classes were conducted for grade and ECDC together due to the limited class rooms. There were 30-35 children in the center, but slowly the number of children tended to drop out upto 50 percent till the end of the year.

ECD Facilitator, Ms. Dipika Basnet stated "After the support of RRN in providing playing materials in the centers, the children's enrollment ratio has doubled. After we received training on 'child friendly early childhood development', it has been easier for us to take care of the kids." Ms. Subi Tamang, a parent said "Now, ECDC has made it a lot easier for us to utilize the spare day time for other household chores".

The School principal, Mr. Dharma Narayan Shah said that the children enjoy staying at the center till 4:00 pm as a result of RRN's provision of playing materials, educational materials, carpets, kitchen utensils, cushions, etc. After receiving the training, the facilitators have made different low cost playing materials from locally available resources. More importantly, he further added that, the mothers have started to provide snacks to the ECDC children on a rotation basis and have been collecting NRs. 30 per month for strengthening the center.

Centers (ECDCs), mainstreaming the out of school children through Out of School Programme (OSP), vocational training for income generation to older children, strengthening and capacity building to school teachers, facilitators, School Management Committee (SMC) members, Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members, local authorities and civil society members through various trainings and exposure visits. Besides this, the other components include teachers training on child friendly teaching-learning and skill development, intensive focus to manage school as model building perspective and strengthen and capacitate for access and quality education promotion by monitoring and evaluation system in communities. Project is mobilising and coordinating the child and youth clubs to materialise the notion of 'Children and School as Zone of Peace' and create harmony in the community through organising various cultural activities, sports, essay, poem and public speech competitions in the project VDCs.

Achievements so far

Project baseline report shows that, there are 103 public schools in 15 project VDCs with the enrollment of 19,585 students (51% girls) in 2010, having 669 teachers (female 30%) among them 90% of whom are trained. However, there seems to be a lack in child friendly teaching-learning and skill development training and intensive teacher's training received by the teachers. To address this lacking, the education project has conducted various trainings to 237 school teachers on child friendly teaching learning and skill development so far. The trainings were facilitated by Ms. Safala Rajbhandari, Rato Bangala School, Mr. Yek Raj Joshi ex-trainer of REED and Room to Read.

The project has provided the scholarship package comprising school bag, school dress and stationeries to 1137 children from poor and vulnerable families, among whom 70% were girls. This scholarship package was intended to ensure that the students continue and complete their schooling. Similarly, 404 children are learning and playing in 15 ECDCs in project VDCs so far. According to District Education Office records there are 60 ECDCs in project VDCs. Most of the ECDCs are running together with grade one due to lack of awareness and to some extent insufficient class rooms. As a result of project intervention, teachers and SMC members separated the grade one from ECDCs. Mere provision of ECDC itself cannot quench the central thirst of early childhood development. Therefore, collaborative work among local stakeholders to translate the policies and provisions into actions is a must.

The project has intensively supported 25 out of 103 public schools in project VDCs for their overall institutional development and technical support for capacity enhancement of the concerned stakeholders. The educational materials including computers and child-friendly software for 6 out of 10 higher/secondary schools and science laboratory equipments for six secondary schools have been provided so far. In addition, 15 Community Learning Centres (CLCs) have

Training and exposure visit taught a lot

Mr. Raj Kumar Bohora, Head teacher of Kalidevi HS School, Phulasi, Ramechhap has realised that locally available materials could also be used for making educational materials to enhance the quality of teaching. He was highly impressed with the ways that had been adopted by the schools that they visited, such as the Janauddar Primary School, Keraghari and Navajagriti LS School in Kathmandu. In these schools, he was impressed with the methods adopted in management policy, implementation of class room management, educational materials arrangement, role play of the Community/CSOs / Clubs and SMC/PTA.



Members of school community during exposure visit

Mr. Bhim Bdr. Shrestha, Head teacher of Buddha S School has realised that the ECD and grade one classes needed separate rooms after participating in the RRN training and exposure visit. He expressed his commitment to work together with the SMC and PTA towards enhancing a child friendly environment in the school and Early Childhood Development Centre. He was also highly impressed with the scheme of scholarship being provided as kind instead of cash by the RRN Education project, which has been more useful for school children. Earlier the cash scholarship provided by DEO support used to be utilised for other purposes. He also shared that, the school has now started to convert the cash scholarship received from DEO to kinds by which students are directly benefited and encouraged to go to schools regularly.

Mr. Kabindra Tamang, Head teacher of Kakling HS School, Doramba, Ramechhap summarised the overall experience of the exposure visit as "the systematic class rooms, transparency, coordination and participation among SMC, PTA, CSOs, and systemic track in communication within the teachers and students is very important to improve teaching and learning environment."

Ms. Sunita Sharma, Teacher of Kalidevi S. School, Thulopatal, Dolakha is pretty inspired to see the committed and creative teachers, aware parents and active school management in the visited schools. "It was really beneficial to us to learn from them to improve the educational environment in our context", she said.

been strengthened with reference educational materials including 10 CLCs which have been equipped with modern information and communication facilities i.e. computers, printers with internet access.

Project baseline report revealed, that a total of 1620 children of school going age were out of school including the current



Toddlers enjoying with the play materials at an ECD Centre

Project has been gaining positive trends towards increase in the access to education for vulnerable and marginalised children by giving primary focus on capacity building; improving education facilities and enhancing monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the education system in community levels in project VDCs.

drop outs in 2010, which constitutes 8.26% of total enrolled students (19,585) in the same period. There is an alarming figure of irregular students in project VDCs. More than 18 % of total enrolled children have been irregular in classes and the serious issue here is that such children are prone to drop outs.

To address this problem, a total of 229 out of school children have been motivated for to rejoin the formal education. Consequently, about 50% children retained to formal education through 9 OSP centers in project VDCs till now.

Sustaining outcomes and way forward

The project intervention itself has genuinely intended to complement the School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) implemented by Government of Nepal. Educational units, such as, DEOs/RCS, public schools, Village Education Committees (VECs) etc. have already been set up. In addition, there are local civil society organisations (child/youth clubs and CBOs) in the community as other stakeholders to work with such educational units. Thus, the project has especially focused on the capacity enhancement and strengthening of the educational units and stakeholders so as to be able to work themselves to deliver quality services in regards of access and quality education. The project assumes that, this is

the only pragmatic strategy for ensuring the sustainability of the project outcomes after the completion of the project.

However, it is common phenomenon that, public educational institutions are severely affected by the excessive political interventions. It has been an immense challenge to make people aware and obliged to political forces on provision of 'Children/School as Zone of Peace', which has been alleged as one of the major contributing factors to the decrease in the quality of public school education. Similarly, prevailing gender and other socio-cultural discriminations and biases are also the key challenges, which need to be addressed for the promotion of inclusive education for inclusive development in the long run. Thus, the project has given an emphasis on enhancement of monitoring and evaluation mechanism, utilisation of local resources/ materials, creating environment for translating learning into practice for sustaining project outcomes.

Consequently, the project has been gaining positive trends towards increase in the access to education for vulnerable and marginalised children by giving primary focus on capacity building; improving education facilities and enhancing monitoring and evaluation mechanism of the education system in community levels in project VDCs.

Synchronising policy and practice

RRN Education Project has set up its strategy to build synergy in SSRP's main objective to increase access to and improve quality of school education to ensure effective delivery and monitoring of educational services in the project VDCs.

The government grant policy i.e. per capita fund (PCF) for public schools and handing over the schools to the communities have good intentions to provide access to all the children to school education and promoting active community participation in the school management. However, there are diverse perceptions amongst stakeholders towards synchronisation of policy and practice in implementation level. Thus, it is high time to enforce existing, monitoring and evaluation mechanism in real practice from centre to local level.

Contributing authors

: Bhanu Parajuli and Som Rai

Layout design

: Som Rai, RRN

Published by

: Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN)

P. O.Box: 8130, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Street Address: 288 Gairidhara Marg, Gairidhara, Kathmandu, Nepal.

Tel: +977 1 4004976, 4004985 Fax: 977-1-4004508 & 4443494 , Email: rrn@rrn.org.np, Website: www.rrn.org.np

Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN), established in 1989, is a Nepali non-government, social development organisation involved in rural development, action-oriented research and policy advocacy focusing on peasants, poor women, dalits and indigenous nationalities, and other vulnerable communities through the process of facilitation, social mobilisation, empowerment and self-organisation. RRN's work is based on the four-fold approach to rural reconstruction covering: education to combat illiteracy and empower people to access their rights; sustainable livelihood to fight poverty; health to prevent disease, and self-government to overcome civic inertia.



The publication of this issue of RRN Briefing Paper is supported by European Union (EU)