

Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in Nepal

This country profile on Nepal was developed as part of the regional mapping study on disability-inclusive education commissioned by the UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia. It aims to provide a snapshot of the key policies, practices and strategies implemented from 2010 to 2020 to ensure children with disabilities learn in inclusive settings in Nepal. This profile focuses on the country's progress in four domains of an inclusive education system: (1) Enabling Environment, (2) Demand, (3) Service Delivery, and (4) Monitoring and Measuring Quality. Cross-cutting issues such as gender and humanitarian situations are also addressed in this document, although not in great depth. More information on the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the mapping study can be found in the full report, *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CEHRD	Centre for Education and Human Resource Development
CFM	Washington Group/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSO	civil society organization
CSS	Comprehensive School Safety
DRR	disaster risk reduction
ECCE	early childhood care and education
ECD	early childhood development
ESA	Education Sector Analysis
ETC	Education Training Centre
HI	Humanity & Inclusion
ICF	International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health
ICT	information and communication technology
ID	identification [card]
IE	Inclusive Education
IEMIS	Integrated Educational Management Information System
IE TWG	Inclusive Education Thematic Working Group
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoWCSW	Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NGO	non-governmental organization
NLSS	Nepal Living Standards Survey
NMICS	Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
NPHC	National Population and Housing Census
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disabilities
PTA	parent-teacher association
RCRD	Resource Centre for Rehabilitation and Development
SHRUTI	National Association of Hard of Hearing and Deafened Nepal
SMC	school management committee
SRGBV	school-related gender-based violence
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNICEF ROSA	UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
WG	Washington Group on Disability Statistics



Inclusion is anchored on the fundamental human right to education for all promulgated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

1

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion is anchored on the fundamental human right to education for all promulgated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹ The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), specifically Article 24, strengthened the global shift towards inclusion by mandating States parties to improve education systems and undertake measures to fulfil the rights of persons with disabilities to quality inclusive education.²

Despite overall progress in education attainment globally, children with disabilities remain one of the most marginalized groups. They are less likely to participate in and complete their education compared to their peers without disabilities.³

In South Asia, an estimated 29 million children – 12.5 million at primary level and 16.5 million at lower secondary level – were out of school in 2018.⁴ Of these, a considerable proportion was estimated to be children with disabilities. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it is not possible to generate statistics that

are regionally or globally representative of the status of persons with disabilities with regard to education because of the scarcity of national data.⁵ This is true for the South Asia region as well.

The lack of disaggregated education data poses a significant challenge for policy and programme development and implementation. In this regard, the United Nations Children’s Fund Regional Office for South Asia (UNICEF ROSA) commissioned a study to:

- map inclusive education policies, strategies and practices implemented at all levels of the education system in the South Asia region that are effective, or promise to be effective, in increasing access and/or learning outcomes of children with disabilities in education and have the potential for scaling up; and
- inform the development and strengthening of regional and country-level advocacy and programming for advancing disability-inclusive education across South Asia.

¹ United Nations, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.

² United Nations, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol, 2006.

³ World Health Organization and The World Bank, *World Report on Disability*, World Health Organization, Geneva, 2011.

⁴ UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, ‘Out-of-School rates and numbers by SDG region, 2018’, n.d.

⁵ UNESCO Institute for Statistics, ‘Education and Disability: Analysis of Data from 49 Countries’, Information Paper No. 49, 2018, <http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/ip49-education-disability-2018-en.pdf>, accessed 18 December 2020.

The mapping covered interventions towards establishing disability-inclusive education initiated at all levels of the education system in eight countries in the region: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

A theoretical framework was developed to guide the mapping exercise. The framework conceptualized inclusive education through four main domains: (1) Enabling Environment, (2) Demand, (3) Service Delivery, and (4) Measuring and Monitoring Quality. Cross-cutting issues, albeit brief, were included in the review to provide an overview of the intersectionality

between disability and gender, and disability and humanitarian issues.

This country profile on Nepal was developed as part of this regional mapping study on disability-inclusive education. It aims to provide a snapshot of the key policies, practices and strategies implemented from 2010 to 2020 to ensure children with disabilities learn in inclusive settings in Nepal. More information on the methodology and theoretical framework underpinning the mapping survey can be found in the full report, *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*.⁶

⁶ Grimes, P., et al., *Mapping of Disability-Inclusive Education Practices in South Asia*, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2021.



Nepal's commitment to fully realize the right of all citizens to quality education has resulted in the expansion of learning opportunities for children and adults.

2

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Following the promulgation of the 2015 Constitution of Nepal, a decentralized federal structure was introduced in the country, which instituted the government's three main tiers, i.e., federal, provincial and local. It also empowered the local government bodies to exercise their executive, legislative and judicial powers by providing opportunities to involve citizens in developing plans and actions contextualized to their experiences.⁷

Decentralization also paved the way to shift the mandates of different government functions, including the country's educational system, because of the emergence of local and provincial government levels.⁸

Enshrined in Nepal's new federal constitution is the reaffirmation of education as a fundamental

right, which states that "every citizen shall have the right to free and compulsory basic education, and free education up to the secondary level".⁹ The country's commitment to fully realize the right of all citizens to quality education has resulted in the expansion of learning opportunities for children and adults.

However, several challenges were still reported, particularly on the lack of learning resources, teachers' capacity, low secondary school completion rates and insufficient support provided at home, which have prevented children from obtaining foundational skills for life.¹⁰ Specific attention needs to be given to children who are part of marginalized groups, including children with disabilities whose enrolment and participation in regular classrooms remain low.¹¹

⁷ Asian Development Bank, *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Diagnostics on Selected Sectors in Nepal*, 2020, dx.doi.org/10.22617/TCS200291-2.

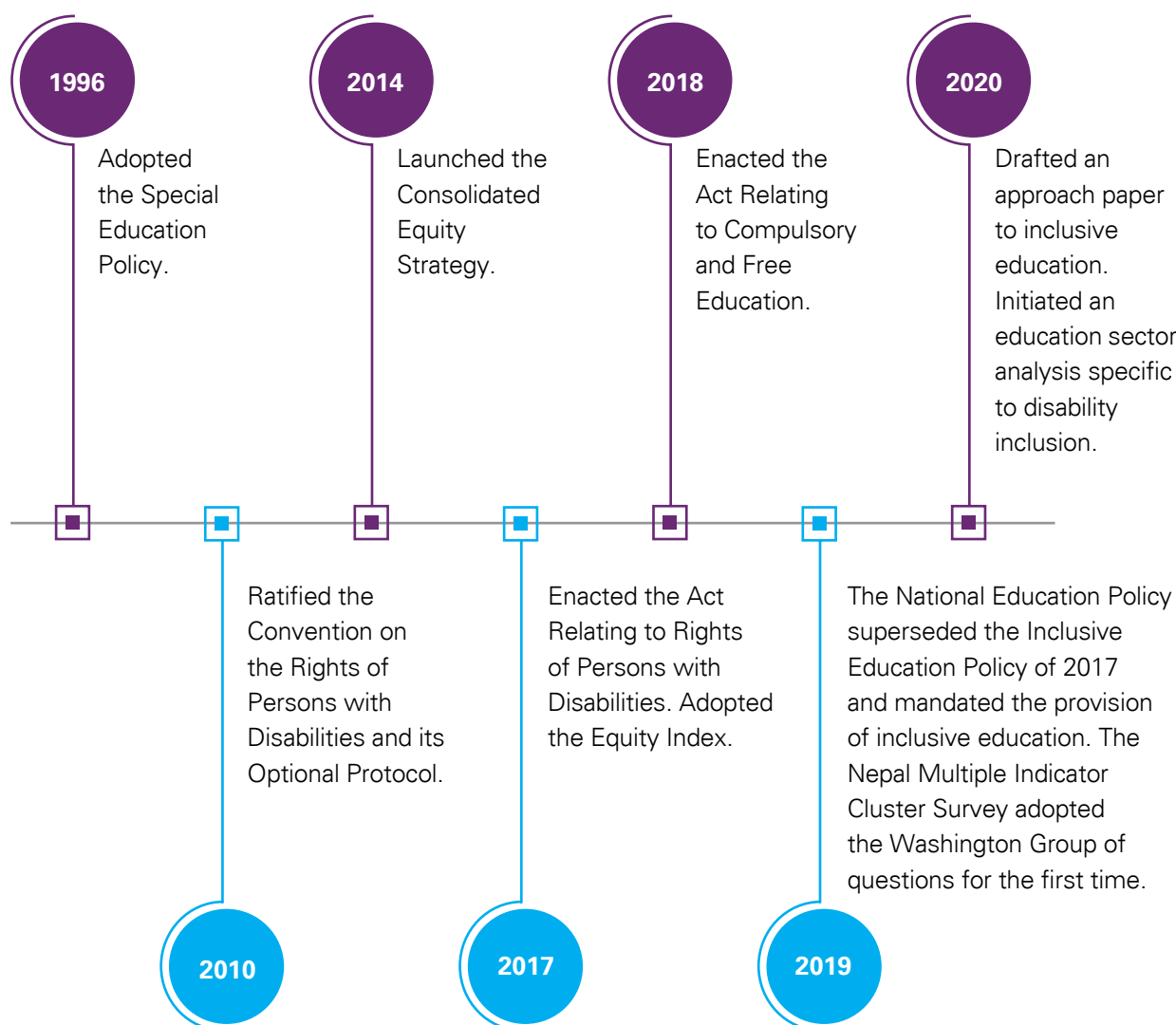
⁸ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, *School Sector Development Plan, 2016/17–2020/21*, approved August 2016, updated March 2020, Kathmandu, 2020.

⁹ Nepal, *Constitution of Nepal* (2015), www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/en/np/np029en.pdf.

¹⁰ *School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2020/21*, approved August 2016, updated March 2020.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Milestones in disability-inclusive education





HRDC

The Consolidated Equity Strategy provides an overarching framework for inclusion and equity in education that is focused on establishing equitable access, participation and learning outcomes and in which disability is given particular attention.

3

ENABLING ENVIRONMENT

The enabling environment includes interrelated conditions that enable or facilitate the development of a disability-inclusive education system, including policies, disability data, plans, leadership, coordination and financing.

3.1 POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

Nepal is committed to realizing the right to basic education for all learners.

Article 31 of the 2015 Constitution ensures compulsory and free education up to the secondary level. Citizens with visual impairments are afforded the right to obtain free education through the Braille script and through sign language for those with hearing impairments.¹²

As a State party to the goals of Education for All,¹³ the School Sector Reform Programme 2009–2015 was put in place, mandating the creation of enabling environments in every school

and the expansion of scholarship programmes specifically for children with disabilities.¹⁴ To this end, the National Plan of Action for Education for All (2001–2015) was implemented in parallel.

The National Child Policy 2014 guarantees an inclusive education system, responsive to the needs of children with special learning needs. An effort to operationalize CRPD in the country, the Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2074 (2017) furthers the rights of children with disabilities to non-discrimination (Article 21.5), learning support such as Braille, sign language and technological devices (Article 21.6) and provision of appropriate teaching and learning materials (Article 21.11).¹⁵

¹² Constitution of Nepal.

¹³ UNESCO, World Declaration on Education for All and Framework for Action to Meet the Basic Learning Needs, adopted by the World Conference on Education For All, Meeting Basic Learning Needs, Jomtien 5–9 March, 1990, www.right-to-education.org/sites/right-to-education.org/files/resource-attachments/UNESCO_World_Declaration_For_All_1990_En.pdf.

¹⁴ Plan International, *Include Us in Education: A qualitative research study on barriers and enablers to education for children with disabilities in Nepal*, 2014.

¹⁵ UNESCO, Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER): Nepal, 2020, <https://education-profiles.org/central-and-southern-asia/nepal/~inclusion>.

Table 1. Main laws and policies on disability and education

Government's action on international policies	Ratification
Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)	1990
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006)	2010
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol (2006)	2010
Domestic laws and policies related to disability-inclusive education	Adoption
Education Act	1971
Children's Act	1992
Special Education Policy	1996
National Policy and Plan of Action on Disability	2006
Consolidated Equity Strategy	2014
National Child Policy	2014
The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2074 (2017)	2017
The Act Relating to Children, 2075 (2018)	2018
The Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2075 (2018)	2018
National Education Policy	2019

'Education as a right of every child'¹⁶ was reaffirmed by the Inclusive Education (IE) Policy 2017, which was superseded by the National Education Policy 2019. The new education policy mandates the provision of inclusive and special education based on the degree of disability.¹⁷ It endorses the operation of special schools with residential units for children who are not able to move. Furthermore, the policy calls for the provision of disability-friendly infrastructure, diversification of curriculum, instruction and assessment methods, textbooks and assistive materials.

Despite the good intentions in the new policy, it lacks a strong non-discrimination clause on the grounds of disability. Provisions that

remain conditional on the nature and severity of disability may be interpreted as a justification for exclusion. Additionally, the policy contains language that could be offensive or discriminating (e.g., referring to children without disabilities as 'children of normal state', suggesting those with disabilities are the opposite).

At the Global Disability Summit in 2018, Nepal committed to 50 concrete action points in advancing disability inclusion. Following through with these commitments, the Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education was passed in 2018. The law prohibits the rejection of children with disabilities in general education and holds the government accountable for ensuring children with disabilities learn in mainstream schools.¹⁸

¹⁶ Hunt, P.F., and N. Poudyal, *Education of Children with Disabilities in Nepal: Baseline data 2019*, International Disability Alliance, 2019.

¹⁷ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, *National Education Policy 2076*, Kathmandu, 2019.

¹⁸ Equal International, *Global Disability Summit: One Year On Accountability Report*, International Disability Alliance, UKaid and United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, 2019, www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/gds18-one-year-on-report.pdf.

Another significant development in Nepal is the ongoing development of an inclusive education approach paper led by the Inclusive Education Thematic Working Group (IE TWG). The approach paper aims to provide a conceptual framework and guidance for the implementation of disability-inclusive education.¹⁹ It is being informed by the current Education Sector Analysis (ESA) process leading to the next education sector plan, for which a specific disability-inclusive ESA is being undertaken in line with global guidance. The ESA including the disability-inclusive education chapter is expected to be finalized in 2021.²⁰

Nepal's conceptualization of disability and inclusive schools could be improved by aligning it with international conventions.

CRPD conceptualizes disability from a rights-based perspective. Similarly, the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) defines functioning and disability in a similar way as “a dynamic interaction between health conditions and contextual factors, both personal and environmental”.²¹ Both definitions consider the barriers in the environment that are disabling, shifting the focus from categorizations of impairments towards a broader view that emphasizes the person behind the labels.²²

Nepal, in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, acknowledges that disability is the result of interaction between individual difficulties and barriers in the environment. The law classifies disabilities into 10 categories (see Table 2). This needs to be reviewed and aligned with the principles set out by ICF, considering areas of functioning rather than categorizing impairments.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology's (MoEST) concept of inclusive schools also needs to be expanded from a disability-focused notion to the principle that inclusion encompasses all learners.

3.2 DISABILITY-INCLUSIVE SECTOR PLAN

The Consolidated Equity Strategy is an innovative approach to addressing inequities in education.

Recognizing the remaining disparities in education that continue to exclude the most marginalized groups of children from education, Nepal created the Consolidated Equity Strategy in 2014. The strategy provides an overarching framework for inclusion and equity in education, focused on establishing equitable access, participation and learning outcomes. Disability is given particular attention, along with other drivers of inequity, such as social-economic status, gender, geographic location, caste and ethnicity, health and nutritional status, and language, and certain vulnerable groups.²³

The strategy aims to, among other priorities, strengthen assessment and referral mechanisms for children with disabilities, increase awareness and efficiency of existing support services and invest in the professional development of specialist teachers on inclusive classroom approaches.²⁴ The strategy is operationalized by the Equity Index, which measures inequities in learning opportunities. (See also section 6.2 Monitoring and quality assurance)

¹⁹ Nepal Inclusive Education Thematic Working Group, 'An approach paper and roadmap for the implementation of inclusive education in Nepal', Working document, 2020.

²⁰ Poudyal, N., and N. Graham, *Disability Inclusive Education Analysis in Nepal*, Inception report, 2020.

²¹ *World Report on Disability*, p. 4.

²² UNICEF, *Definition and Classification of Disability*, Webinar 2 – Companion Technical Booklet, United Nations Children's Fund, New York, 2014.

²³ Such as children exposed to violence, exploitation and abuse, cultural practices and child labour.

²⁴ Ministry of Education, Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal, Kathmandu, 2014, www.doe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/47441f6a3f1e62dedb7bb91655b8df92.pdf.

Table 2. Definitions related to disability inclusion based on national laws and policies and international definitions

Terminology	Definition based on national laws and policies	International definition
Disability	<p>Disability is defined as the condition of difficulty in carrying out daily activities normally and in taking part in social life due to problems in parts of the body and the physical system as well as obstacles created by physical, social and cultural environments, and by communication.</p> <p>There are 10 classifications of disability:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Physical disability 2. Disability related to vision (blindness, low vision, total absence of sight) 3. Disability related to hearing (deaf, hard of hearing) 4. Deaf-blind 5. Disability related to voice and speech 6. Mental or psycho-social disability 7. Intellectual disability 8. Disability associated with haemophilia 9. Disability associated with autism 10. Multiple disabilities <p>– The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2074 (2017)</p>	<p>Persons with disabilities are “those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”</p> <p>– Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006</p>
Inclusive education	<p>Inclusive education is the ‘process of developing an educational system that ensures the opportunity for receiving education in a non-discriminatory environment in their community by respecting the multicultural differences’.</p> <p>– Department of Education*</p> <p>Inclusive schools are defined as settings in which children with disabilities receive education in regular schools with their peers.</p> <p>– School Sector Development Plan, Nepal, 2016/17–2022/23, 2016</p>	<p>“Inclusive education is the result of a process of continuing and proactive commitment to eliminate barriers impeding the right to education, together with changes to culture, policy and practice of regular schools to accommodate and effectively include all students.”</p> <p>– General Comment No. 4 (2016) to Article 24, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities</p>

*As cited in UNESCO, Profiles Enhancing Education Reviews (PEER): Nepal, 2020, <https://education-profiles.org/central-and-southern-asia/nepal/~inclusion>.

The School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016/17–2022/23 aims to provide an inclusive, equitable and quality education for all.²⁵

SSDP was developed based on ESA 2016 and reiterates the goal to transform the country's education sector into an equitable and inclusive system. In line with the Consolidated Equity Strategy, ESA and SSDP highlight disability inclusion as a vital building block to achieving this goal.

The challenges in collecting reliable data on children with disabilities are made apparent in both ESA and SSDP. ESA notes that the current disability classification system of the government is restrictive and not on par with international standards. It further notes the need to strengthen the Integrated Educational Management Information System (IEMIS), disaggregate demographics and capture disability data of in-school and out-of-school children.

SSDP prioritizes creating child-friendly learning environments, including building conducive conditions in schools, increasing access to and use of information and communication technology (ICT)-based teaching and learning approaches, and quality standards for early childhood education development and pre-primary education to ensure accessibility for children with disabilities. The establishment of more integrated schools and special and residential schools, however, is also targeted in SSDP implementation.

ESA 2016 included an analysis of disability inclusion, but a more detailed analysis of disability-inclusive education in Nepal would be beneficial for subsequent sector plans. This is addressed by MoEST in setting out terms of reference for the development of the 2021–2030 sector plan. An in-depth disability-inclusive education analysis will be undertaken as part of the gender and social inclusion review, which will feed into the ESA informing the next sector plan.

3.3 DATA ON CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Alignment of identification and data collection methods is crucial in establishing reliable and comparable data.

Collecting reliable and standardized data on children with disabilities and their access to and participation and achievement in education is one of the biggest challenges in the shift towards a more disability-inclusive education system. SSDP endeavours to strengthen diagnostic and referral mechanisms as well as the collection and analysis of disaggregated data in IEMIS.

The government is establishing a more robust IEMIS through integrating data from various sources, engaging the public in consultations and tracking individual schools to enable the generation of accurate information on the learning needs of children with disabilities. Similarly, the 'Data Must Speak' initiative that kicked-off in 2015 aimed to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in and out of school in IEMIS.

While great strides have been made in making children with disabilities more visible, challenges remain as statistics often vary widely. The national censuses, household surveys and administrative data collection systems, such as IEMIS, use different approaches to identifying and measuring disability (see Table 3).

The National Population and Housing Census (NPHC) in 2011 found that about 2 per cent (513,321 persons) of the population had a disability. In the same year, the Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) reported a higher prevalence rate at 3.6 per cent (see Table 4). Neither NPHC nor NLSS adopted tools to measure disability aligned with ICF.

MoEST conducts a school census twice a year and produces three kinds of reports: (1) Flash I Report, which presents the intake data at the beginning

²⁵ Ministry of Education, School Sector Development Plan, Nepal, 2016/17–2022/23, Kathmandu, 2016, www.moe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/SSDP_Book_English_Final_July_5_20171.pdf.

Table 3. Main sources of child disability data

Method/Data type	Data collection activity/system	Responsible agency	Frequency	Latest report available	Includes data on children with disabilities	Adopted CFM or WG Questions
Administrative data	Integrated Education Management System	Centre for Education and Human Resources Development, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology	Biannual ^a	Flash I Report (2018/19)	Yes	At the pilot stage
Census	National Population and Housing Census (NPHC)	Central Bureau of Statistics	Every 10 years	NPHC 2011 ^b	Yes	No
Survey	Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS)	Central Bureau of Statistics and World Bank	No information available	NLSS 2010/11	Yes	No
	Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 6 (NMICS6)	Central Bureau of Statistics and UNICEF	No information available	NMICS6 2019	Yes	Yes

a The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology conducts a school census twice a year and produces 3 kinds of reports: (1) Flash I Report, which presents the intake data at the beginning of the academic year, (2) Flash II Report, which shows output data at the end of the academic year, and (3) Consolidated Flash Report, which presents a five-year trend of intake and output data. **Source:** Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, *Flash I Report 2075 (2018/19)*, Kathmandu, 2018.

b NPHC 2021 was ongoing at the time of writing this report.

Table 4. Proportion of the population with a disability (%)

Disability	National Population and Housing Census 2011 (%)	Nepal Living Standards Survey 2010–2011 (%)
Physical disability	36.3	29.2
Blindness/low vision	18.5	22.3
Deaf/hard of hearing	15.4	23.4
Speech problem	11.5	8.6
Multiple disabilities	7.5	7.3
Mental	6.0	6.8
Intellectual	2.9	Not applicable*
Deaf-blind	1.8	2.4
Prevalence rate among the population	1.9	3.6

* Intellectual disability was not included in the survey questionnaire.

of the academic year, (2) Flash II Report, which shows output data at the end of the academic year, and (3) Consolidated Flash Report, which presents a five-year trend of intake and output data. Flash data reporting is done through IEMIS, which includes data on children with disabilities, albeit limited to enrolment (see Table 5).

An important step in improving IEMIS is the pilot project by the government in collaboration with IE TWG and the EMIS Working Group, which aims to integrate the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (WG) questions into the system. Results of the pilot will inform the establishment of an improved, more disability-inclusive EMIS.

The *Flash I Report 2018/19* revealed that less than 1 per cent of children enrolled in pre-primary (0.34 per cent), primary (0.94 per cent) and secondary (0.88) education had a disability. At the primary level, only about one third of the students transitioned from lower to upper basic level (Grades 5–6).

Across education levels, physical disabilities were the most common type of disability. However, this does not necessarily translate to reality as intellectual and learning disabilities are more difficult to identify. The common concept of disability is also often associated with physical disabilities.²⁶ The report did not include information on children with disabilities who were out of school, but NLSS 2011 found that 3.4 per cent of the population never attended school due to disability.

The Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (NMICS) adopted the WG/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning (CFM) for the first time.

Among other notable developments in disability data collection, the 2019 round of NMICS included CFM for the first time for children aged 2–4 years and 5–17 years. The survey report showed that 10.7 per cent of children aged 2–17 years had a functional difficulty in at least one domain,²⁷ a significantly higher prevalence rate than the 3 per cent prevalence rate among children aged 0–14 years found in NLSS.

²⁶ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, *Flash 1 Report 2075 (2018/19)*, Kathmandu, 2018, www.doe.gov.np/assets/uploads/files/cbe2b2b1ae68bb5bdaa93299343e5c28.pdf.

²⁷ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2019, Survey Findings Report*, Central Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children's Fund Nepal, Kathmandu, 2020.

Table 5. Disability data in the Integrated Educational Management Information System (IEMIS)

Criteria ^a	Included in IEMIS
Contains data on students with disabilities	Yes
Approach to identifying disability	
Use of Washington Group set of questions to identify disability	No ^b
Identified only by 'disability' or 'special needs'	Yes
Level of data collection	
Pre-primary	Yes
Primary	Yes
Secondary	Yes
Data collected	
Participation (enrolment, dropout, completion)	Yes
Learning outcomes	No
Type of disability/functional difficulty	No
Degree of disability/functional difficulty	No
Barriers to education at the school level	No
Children with disabilities who are not in school	No
Disaggregation available	
Sex	Yes
By definition of disability/functional difficulty	No
Geographical location	Yes
Type of institution (government/private)	Yes

Source: Data from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'The use of UIS data and education management information systems to monitor inclusive education', Information Paper No. 60, 2019, and validated with UNICEF Nepal and Ministry of Education.

^a Criteria adapted from UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2019.

^b A pilot project integrating the Washington Group questions into IEMIS was being conducted at the time of writing this report.

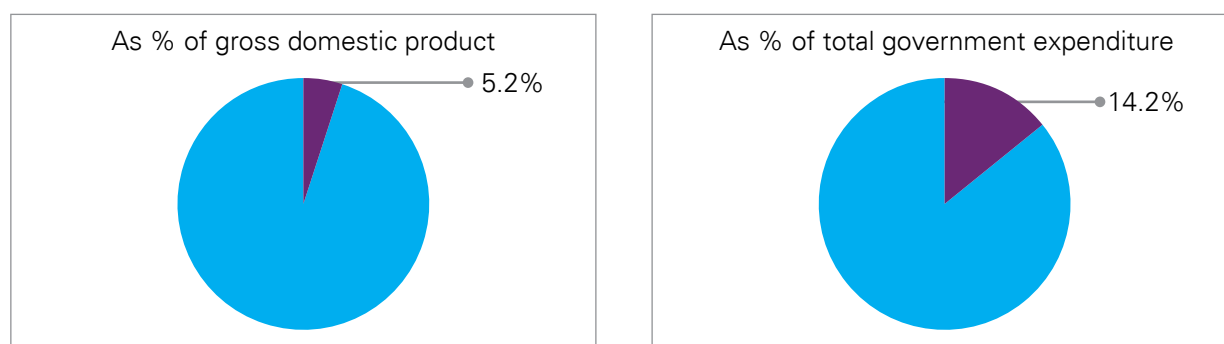
Linking existing databases and identification schemes of persons with disabilities can help ensure all children with disabilities are counted, identified and catered to.

The Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare (MoWCSW) disability identification (ID) card scheme identifies and classifies persons with disabilities according to the degree of their disability (i.e., 'complete' and 'severe').

A person with a disability bearing a disability ID is eligible to receive social security allowances and ensured access to specialized services. In 2017, about 200,000 citizens were issued a disability ID, although an estimated 83 per cent of persons with disabilities nationwide remained excluded, while 30 per cent of those who held an ID did not receive their disability allowances.²⁸

²⁸ Holmes, R., F. Samuels and A. Ghimire, 'Nepal's Cash Allowances for Children with Disabilities', Briefing note, Overseas Development Institute and United Nations Children's Fund, 2018, <https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/12414.pdf>.

Figure 1. Government expenditure on education (%), 2018



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 'Sustainable Development Goal 4 Country Profile: Nepal', n.d.

Although many challenges exist in the implementation of the disability ID scheme, it presents an opportunity for the government to assure all persons, especially children with disabilities, that they are counted, identified and receiving the necessary support services. MoEST and the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens²⁹ can explore how IEMIS can be linked with the disability ID scheme to integrate data on children with disabilities.

Low estimates of disability prevalence point to the need to strengthen identification systems.

Across all data collection initiatives, the number of persons with disabilities is underestimated compared to the global estimate of 15 per cent of a population and 5.1 per cent of children³⁰ having a disability.³¹

The introduction of WG questions in NMICS and IEMIS signals a gradual shift towards adopting methodologies that are more aligned with CRPD. Integrating the WG questions in future censuses, surveys and the disability ID scheme can enable the generation of more reliable and comparable data sets for policy development and programming. Improving the capacity of the sectors involved in the identification of disability (e.g., education, health, social welfare, Central Bureau of Statistics), especially teachers, needs increased attention.

3.4 FUNDING AND FINANCING

Investments earmarked for the education of children with disabilities are often difficult to extract from sector budgets. The budget allocated for disability-specific interventions may be subsumed or clustered within other line-item budgets.

Nevertheless, SSDP foresees a gradual increase in the share of education of the gross domestic product to reach 5.5 per cent by 2022,³² meeting the recommended percentage by the Incheon Declaration (4–5 per cent).³³ Expenditure on education against total government expenditure was at 14.2 per cent in 2018 (see Figure 1). The country needs to aim to hit the upper limits (15–20 per cent) of the benchmark set out in the Incheon Declaration to ensure the multiple disadvantages experienced by children with disabilities are addressed.

A macroeconomic and public finance analysis and projection was conducted as part of ESA 2016. However, an analysis of financing specific to children with disabilities was not found. As part of the ESA for the upcoming sector plan, financial and costing models will be developed, including a detailed review of disability-inclusion financing.

²⁹ MoWCSW was renamed the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens in 2018.

³⁰ Only including moderate and severe disability.

³¹ *World Report on Disability*.

³² School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23.

³³ UNESCO, Education 2030 Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2015, http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf.

3.5 LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Policy documents provide an impetus for education leaders to support disability-inclusive education.

SSDP provides a set of guidelines on school practices that can support disability-inclusive education. In particular, it recommends:³⁴

- strengthening the school improvement planning process and linking it with local resource allocation mechanisms;
- reviewing and aligning local and school policies to strengthen the capacity of local government, school management committees (SMCs), parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and headteachers in school governance and their roles in education quality improvement;
- promoting communities of practice in schools;
- developing a system for performance-based management; and
- enhancing the capacity of headteachers in instructional leadership and evaluating teachers' performance.

Structures for cross-sectoral and vertical coordination for improving education service delivery for children with disabilities are in place.

A Disability National Steering Committee is in place and composed of representatives from:³⁵

- Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare as chairperson;
- National Planning Commission;
- Ministry of Finance;
- Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs;
- Ministry of Home;
- Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration;

- Ministry of Health and Population;
- Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security;
- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology;
- Ministry of Physical Infrastructure and Transportation;
- Social Welfare Council;
- Federation of Nepal Chamber of Commerce and Industry;
- National Federation of Persons with Disabilities; and
- Community-based Rehabilitation Network.

It is unclear from the literature whether the committee is currently functional.³⁶ Addressing the capacity of key decision-makers in the government is vital to the progressive realization of inclusive education.

UNICEF provided a forum for key stakeholders in the disability sector to discuss the needs of children with disabilities in 2018, in which representatives from the federal and local governments and civil society organizations (CSOs) participated.³⁷

A vertical mechanism for coordination of service delivery and policy implementation from the federal level to the school level is in place (see Table 6). However, the effectiveness of both the horizontal and vertical coordination systems in advancing disability-inclusive education needs to be researched further.

The Inclusive Education Thematic Working Group was established under the SSDP framework.

IE TWG is a sub-working group under the Equity and Inclusion Thematic Working Group within the SSDP framework. The goal of the TWGs is to support the implementation of SSDP objectives. It is an advisory and knowledge-sharing

³⁴ School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ UNICEF Nepal, *Country Office Annual Report 2018, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2018, www.unicef.org/about/annualreport.

platform that allows experts to review, discuss and scrutinize possible solutions to identified obstacles and knowledge gaps within SSDP implementation.

IE TWG is co-led by MoEST and UNICEF, with representatives from the Centre for Education

and Human Resource Development (CEHRD), United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Norway, World Bank, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO)/ Association of International NGOs in Nepal, Humanity & Inclusion (HI) and World Education.

Table 6. Government units responsible for disability-inclusive education

Sector	Government unit/organization and responsibility
Disability (across sectors)	Disability National Steering Committee Cross-sectoral coordination committee responsible for monitoring, coordinating and promoting activities upholding the rights of persons with disabilities as stated in the Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2074 (2017).
Education	National Education Council Reviews education policies and provides recommendations to the government. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) Responsible for overall development of education in the country. Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, MoEST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for implementing the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) at the federal level. Responsible for teacher training. Researches the quality of education, teacher development and management practices in Nepal. Non-Formal Education Centre Responsible for non-formal education for out-of-school children and youth who drop out of school. Education Training Centres Develops and delivers professional development packages to in-service teachers. Local Government Responsible for school education and implementation of SSDP at the local level. School management committees and parent-teacher associations School committees participating in decision-making and school governance through the school improvement planning process. Inclusive Education Thematic Working Group Supports the implementation of SSDP.

Source: Ministry of Education, School Sector Development Plan, Nepal, 2016/17–2022/23, Kathmandu, 2016; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, ‘Research Reports’, Kathmandu, 2020.



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Policies and plans promote improved participation of children with disabilities and their representatives in the policy process.

4

DEMAND

This domain focuses on initiatives supporting children with disabilities and their families to improve knowledge on their rights, demand for inclusive services, encourage changes in attitudes and behaviour and increase participation in education. It includes involving the wider community, forging partnerships and putting in place systems and structures to facilitate meaningful engagement.

4.1 FAMILY, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIPS

Policies and plans promote improved participation of children with disabilities and their representatives in the policy process.

Several plans and policies endorse the participation of parents and the community in the planning and implementation of policies and programmes that involve the welfare of children with disabilities. However, operationalization of strategies mentioned in these plans and policies remains difficult due to a complex combination of factors, such as institutional limitations, attitudinal barriers and technical capacity.

The Vulnerable Community Development Plan formulated in 2005 recommends increasing the participation of parents and the community,³⁸ especially of women and children, through incentivizing formal partnerships between SMCs and community groups.³⁹

Whereas the IE Policy 2017 for children with disabilities falls short of filling the gaps in parent and community participation in the education of their children with disabilities,⁴⁰ the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2017 attempts to address such participation. The preamble of the act states that efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in policy and development processes.⁴¹ The act explicitly states the right of children with

³⁸ 'Approach paper and roadmap for implementation of inclusive education in Nepal'.

³⁹ Bhatia, K., and M. Turin, 'Executive Summary of Vulnerable Community Development Plan for Nepal Education for All Programme (2004–2009)', The World Bank, 2005, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/756771468775774721/pdf/IPP107.pdf>.

⁴⁰ 'Approach paper and roadmap for implementation of inclusive education in Nepal'.

⁴¹ Nepal, The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2074 (2017), www.lawcommission.gov.np/en/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/The-Act-Relating-to-Rights-of-Persons-with-Disabilities-2074-2017.pdf.

disabilities to express their views on matters that affect them.

While the act does not clearly outline the process of consultation and participation of children with disabilities and their families, it requires the formation of a steering committee at the national level and a coordination committee at the community level. In each committee, there is a focus on bringing in more female participation and contributions from disability specialists and organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs). Consistent with the government's decentralization plan, these committees are responsible for proposing policies and programmes – as well as overseeing implementation, monitoring and evaluation – that will benefit children with disabilities.

The updated implementation programme for SSDP for the period 2016–2021 complements strategies to strengthen the participation of children with disabilities.⁴² The strategies highlight institutional capacity building by way of raising awareness of parents and the community that enable better participation in educational management and leadership in SMCs and PTAs.⁴³

Child-friendly local governance keeps children involved.

UNICEF's efforts on child-friendly local governance in Nepal include support for the annual child consultations called Bal Bhela, where children from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities, put forward the issues and needs that they wish endorsed by the local councils for consideration in planning and resource allocation.

These children are part of a child club that is represented in the Village Child-Friendly Local Governance Committee and are regularly involved

in local-level dialogues, annual reviews and public audits.⁴⁴ The degree of participation of children with disabilities in the Bal Bhela and its impact on the implementation of disability-related projects, however, needs to be further researched.

UNICEF works towards building partnerships that facilitate the participation of children with disabilities and their families.

UNICEF has consistently advocated for the meaningful participation of families and communities of children with disabilities in disability-related policy and programming. Most of these partnerships focus on health awareness to prevent disability; obtaining the buy-in of parents and children with disabilities to advocate for greater equity and social inclusion; facilitating the participation of children with disabilities to influence plans and policies; supporting inclusive education, screening, and early detection; and teacher training and capacity building for schools and local governments, with direct involvement with parents and children with disabilities.

The initiatives include:

- The UNICEF Nutrition and Education team partnered with the National Planning Commission to develop an early childhood development (ECD) and nutrition parental education package as part of a multisectoral nutrition plan to encourage more parents to bring their young children to school.⁴⁵
- UNICEF partnered with the Hospital and Rehabilitation Centre for Disabled Children in enhancing screening for disabilities, referral systems and monitoring progress and services, and implementing nutrition and health awareness-raising activities to help prevent disability.⁴⁶
- UNICEF took part in organizing a youth conference and helped identify youth icons

⁴² School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2020/21, approved August 2016, updated March 2020.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ UNICEF Nepal, *UNICEF Annual Report 2014, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2014, www.unicef.org/about/annualreport.

⁴⁵ UNICEF Nepal, 'Executive Summary', *Annual Report 2011 for Nepal, ROSA*, Kathmandu, 2011, https://sites.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Nepal_COAR_2011.pdf.

⁴⁶ UNICEF Nepal, *UNICEF Annual Report 2013, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2013, www.unicef.org/about/annualreport.

to advocate for gender and social equity for children with disabilities in education policy development.⁴⁷

- UNICEF supported multi-year periodic planning that allowed children to express their views on issues that affect them, such as social inclusion, disability, gender and disaster risk reduction.⁴⁸
- UNICEF, UNESCO, the National Campaign for Education and VSO worked together on the government's review of its Education for All agenda. This partnership conducted consultations to discuss gender equity and social inclusion during the post-2015 Education Agenda.⁴⁹
- UNICEF supported the participation of CSOs and legislators in the Asia Region Network on Early Childhood, a multisectoral caucus to discuss issues in ECD services, which resulted in improved provisions in the Education Act.⁵⁰
- To promote civic engagement and participation, the UNICEF Adolescent Development and Participation programme collaborated with MoWCSW to develop the National Guidelines for Ensuring Meaningful and Ethical Participation of Children/Adolescents. The guidelines set forth strategies to ensure meaningful participation of marginalized groups, such as children with disabilities, in diverse settings, such as in schools and local organizations.⁵¹
- UNICEF is partnering with World Education in coordination with MoEST, CEHRD and local government bodies in 22 municipalities to model inclusive education for children with disabilities/functional limitations, with a

particular emphasis on supporting early grade learning. Over 400 schools are being targeted through this modelling, which includes contexts ranging from large urban schools to small rural communities with multigrade, multilevel classrooms.

The project follows a pilot from 2017 with UNICEF, World Education and HI that targeted 40 schools to support inclusive education and early detection activities.⁵² The objectives of the current partnership are to demonstrate realistic models for inclusive education approaches that could work in a variety of settings in Nepal.

4.2 AWARENESS, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES

Efforts to raise awareness are changing mindsets.

Attitudes and practices on the inclusion of children with disabilities are evolving in Nepal. There are prevailing negative attitudes, but initiatives to raise awareness are shifting mindsets and behaviours.

Research findings on barriers to the education of children with disabilities released in 2014 showed that stigma and discrimination were common across caregiver and child interviews; derogatory language was used to refer to children with disabilities at home and in the community; violence, bullying and prejudice against children with disabilities were committed by peers and teachers; and there was a misconception that children with disabilities were uneducable and liabilities to families and the society.⁵³

A 2019 study⁵⁴ on the knowledge, attitude and practices of disability-inclusive education of

⁴⁷ UNICEF Annual Report 2013.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Annual Report 2011.

⁵¹ UNICEF Nepal, *UNICEF Annual Report 2015, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2015, www.unicef.org/about/annualreport.

⁵² Handicap International Nepal, *Early Detection of Functional Limitations and Disabilities for Better Learning Outcomes: Report on early detection in Mugu, Kalikot, Bajura and Achham districts of Nepal*, 2017.

⁵³ Plan International, *Include Us in Education: A qualitative research study on barriers and enablers to education for children with disabilities in Nepal*, 2014.

⁵⁴ Khatiwada, C., and N. Maharjan, *A Study Report on Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) on Disability Inclusive Education of Nepali Children*, Institute for Legal Research and Consultancy, 2019.

Nepali children reported that only 15.8 per cent of the headteachers surveyed preferred inclusive schools and 52.6 per cent preferred special schools for children with disabilities, even when 90.5 per cent of them were aware of the rights of children with disabilities to free education as mandated by the government.⁵⁵

The majority of teachers (88.1%) and parents (80.3%) were also aware of the same rights. Moreover, the majority of the headteachers (85%) and teachers (73%) believed that children with hearing/visual impairments had the potential to succeed in education, but the aspiration for children with intellectual disabilities was lower.

The preference of headteachers for special schools, even when they recognized the value of inclusion, was linked to two important factors: the capacity of the school and its teachers to deliver more inclusive learning experiences and the misconception that children with disabilities needed a different or special curriculum to be able to address their learning needs.

An earlier report from the Human Rights Watch in 2011 revealed that special education teachers lacked motivation due to society's low regard of and discrimination against them,⁵⁶ stemming from the low teacher education standards that the government requires of them and the limited budget on building their capacity.

Despite these barriers, many parents recognize the importance of education for their children with disabilities to have a better chance at life.⁵⁷

Many families believe that children with disabilities learn better in boarding schools or specialized institutions than in their care or in regular schools due to their limited capacity to provide proper support.⁵⁸

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2017 upholds the rights of children with disabilities to education and access to social services, against discrimination and to protection against any kind of violence and undignified treatment.

The updated implementation programme for SSDP maintains the rights of children with disabilities and encourages the development of child-friendly and accessible learning environments for children with disabilities.⁵⁹ To encourage more parents to enrol young children with and without disabilities in school, SSDP recommends the creation of a communication strategy on early childhood education and health for parents and the community to raise their awareness and obtain their support.⁶⁰

UNICEF works with the government to advocate for the equitable rights of children with disabilities and to promote positive attitudes and behaviours towards them. In 2013, UNICEF built strong partnerships that led to a year-long series of awareness-raising initiatives in disability rights.⁶¹ UNICEF also supported the Department of Education in improving a parental education kit to include early identification of disabilities, improving referral mechanisms and encouraging more parents to enrol their children in pre-primary school.⁶²

⁵⁵ Data collection involved 6 districts (out of 16): Banke, Bhaktapur, Dadeldhura, Kaski, Parsa and Surkhet. A total of 319 respondents were surveyed: children with disabilities (80), children without disabilities (59), parents of children with disabilities (61), teachers (59), headteachers (21), local level government officials (21), Education Development and Coordination Unit officials (12), officials from the Social Development Ministry of 2 provincial governments (3), Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) officials (1), and officials from the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (2). The survey covered 21 schools using the CDC-designed curriculum: 6 schools had resource classes for the visually impaired, 6 schools had resource classes for the hearing impaired, 7 schools had students with intellectual disabilities and 2 schools were considered 'mainstream' schools. Of the 21 schools, 13 were residential schools and 8 non-residential schools.

⁵⁶ Hunt and Poudyal, *Education of Children with Disabilities in Nepal*.

⁵⁷ UNICEF ROSA mapping survey 2020.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2020/21, approved August 2016, updated March 2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ *UNICEF Annual Report 2013*.

⁶² Ibid.

In 2014, UNICEF partnered with high profile personalities to mainstream issues around child protection, investing in children and early childhood care.⁶³ It also engaged children to produce short films that featured their views on issues that affected them, such as education and child-friendly spaces. This initiative was part of The One Minutes Jr. project by The One Minutes Foundation⁶⁴ supported by UNICEF to empower youth to participate in meaningful social transformation.

One of the key initiatives to changing mindsets about disability is the hiring of teachers with disabilities in mainstream schools. MoEST actively recruits qualified persons with visual impairments to teach in mainstream schools. About 400 out of around 1,000 persons with visual impairments and university degrees were hired as teachers in Nepal.⁶⁵ This sends a strong message that there are career opportunities for children with disabilities and it is possible for them to succeed in life.

According to a survey, teachers with disabilities were received positively by students and principals. However, challenges in the classroom continue to persist for teachers with disabilities, such as lack of accessible teaching and learning materials, classroom management support, ICT training, among others.⁶⁶

Studies on disability contribute to evidence-based programming.

There are limited disaggregated data on children with disabilities in Nepal and the capacity to analyse data for planning needs to be strengthened. A paper on disability reported challenges in gathering accurate data on disability

prevalence due to diverse cultural practices and beliefs and lack of understanding and common definition of disability.⁶⁷

With UNICEF support, the Disability Research Center at the School of Arts in Kathmandu University conducted a study on the situation of persons or children with disabilities, which underscored a high exclusion rate that requires assessing and strengthening existing social protection systems.

Results of the study informed the IE-focused partnership framework of UNICEF and the Government of Norway.⁶⁸ Part of this partnership is building the resources for research on disability prevalence, initiatives for greater participation of children with disabilities in education, implementation of inclusive education practices and integration of accessible water, sanitation and hygiene interventions in schools.⁶⁹

Knowledge-sharing initiatives contribute to raising awareness on disability.

A national disability conference was organized by UNICEF Nepal together with key partners in the government and community. Representatives from all levels of the government, CSOs and development partners participated in the 'Disability in Nepal: Working Together for an Inclusive Society' conference, helping push forward the need for inclusion of children with disabilities.⁷⁰

At the local level, UNICEF supported the Avivawak Mela, a parental education fair, that highlights early childhood care and education, early screening and identification of disabilities, maternal and child health and child protection.⁷¹

⁶³ UNICEF Annual Report 2014.

⁶⁴ The One Minutes Jr., 'The One Minutes Jr: About', n.d., www.theoneminutesjr.org/about.

⁶⁵ UNESCO, Global Education Monitoring Report, *Inclusion and Education: All means all*, 3rd ed., United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Paris, 2020, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000373718>.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Thapaliya, M., *A Report on Disability in Nepal*, Australian Himalayan Foundation, 2016.

⁶⁸ UNICEF Nepal, *Country Office Annual Report 2018, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2018, www.unicef.org/about/annualreport.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ UNICEF Nepal, *UNICEF Annual Report 2017, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2017, www.unicef.org/about/annualreport.



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Non-formal education and other social support mechanisms give more educational opportunities to children with disabilities.

5

SERVICE DELIVERY

This domain deals with the availability and access to various services for children with disabilities and initiatives to strengthen different aspects of the education system.

5.1 APPROACHES TO EDUCATING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Evolving approaches to educating children with disabilities facilitate access and participation.

The right to education of children with disabilities is enshrined in the constitution of Nepal and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2017. Policies and plans have consistently upheld this right through provisions seeking improved access to education.

SSDP gives focus on closing the gap to access in education for vulnerable learners, especially girls and children with disabilities.⁷² The IE Policy 2016 also espouses a rights-based quality education and outlines education provisions for children with disabilities, such as special schools,

community learning centres and residential institutions.⁷³

There are currently three well-established education provisions for children with disabilities in Nepal: non-formal education, special schools and integrated schools or resource classes. Mainstream schools do not commonly cater to children with disabilities as the technical and infrastructural capacity to support them is limited, although there are such that follow an inclusive education model with support from development partners.

There are reportedly 33 special schools in the country, 380 integrated schools and a planned additional seven special schools and seven inclusive model schools to be established in every province.⁷⁴ Moreover, there are around 300 schools in hard-to-reach areas practising disability-inclusive education contextualized to the

⁷² School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23.

⁷³ Hunt and Poudyal, *Education of Children with Disabilities in Nepal*.

⁷⁴ 'Approach paper and roadmap for implementation of inclusive education in Nepal'.

Table 7. Approaches to educating children with disabilities

Approach	Examples
Special schools	Special schools offer disability-specific instruction to children with specific types of disabilities. Examples are schools for learners who have visual and hearing impairments, where they learn sign language. These children do not integrate with children in mainstream classes and are not expected to do so. Those who have milder hearing impairments are not required to learn sign language as they can communicate verbally and rely on lip-reading.
Integrated schools or resource classes	<p>Located within mainstream schools, separate resource classes provide specialized instruction for children with disabilities. After 2–3 years of instruction in these classes, they are expected to integrate into the general mainstream student population.</p> <p>Feedback from the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey noted that in some integrated schools, children with disabilities spend the majority of class time in mainstream settings and attend only additional classes in the specialized unit.</p>
Mainstream schools	General education schools that do not offer any special support or resources to children with disabilities.
Non-formal schools	Alternative education for children who are not able to access the formal education system. These are managed and supported by communities, non-governmental organizations, community learning centres and education institutes.
Inclusive model schools	<p>The Centre for Education and Human Resource Development reported 23 schools following an inclusive education model for children with visual and hearing impairments.</p> <p>Inclusive education pilot programmes are supported by UNICEF, World Education and Humanity & Inclusion in 40 schools, while inclusive education modelling is ongoing in over 400 schools around the country.</p>
Vocational training	Vocational skills training is offered as a technical and vocational pilot programme at the secondary school level (Grades 9–12) to make education relevant and improve retention of students in school. The programme, however, lacks an approach targeting children and youth with disabilities to access vocational and skills training.

Source: Plan International, *Include Us in Education: A qualitative research study on barriers and enablers to education for children with disabilities in Nepal*, 2014; Ministry of Education and Sports, Non-Formal Education Centre, Non-Formal Education Policy 2063 (2007AD), Kathmandu, 2007; Nepal Inclusive Education Thematic Working Group, 'An approach paper and roadmap for the implementation of inclusive education in Nepal', Working document, 2020; Handicap International Nepal, *Early Detection of Functional Limitations and Disabilities for Better Learning Outcomes: Report on early detection in Mugu, Kalikot, Bajura and Achham districts of Nepal*, 2017; Ministry of Education, School Sector Development Plan, Nepal, 2016/17–2022/23, Kathmandu, 2016.

community's needs.⁷⁵ In an integrated school, a resource class facilitated by a teacher trained in special needs education is arranged for children with only one type of disability.⁷⁶

With Nepal's commitment to education for all, schools and teachers are increasingly encouraged to practise inclusion. As such, general schools also cater to children with mild to moderate physical disabilities. A continuous evaluation of how inclusive education is implemented should be in place to enable the actors and policymakers to identify bottlenecks that can be addressed and highlight good practices that can be modelled and scaled up.

According to the MoEST *Flash I Report 2018/19*, there were 52,366 students with disabilities enrolled in the primary level, 13,515 in the secondary level and 1,074 in the higher secondary level for the school year 2018–2019.⁷⁷

For children with disabilities and other vulnerable children and youth who are not able to access formal education systems, the government provides alternative learning pathways in the form of non-formal education centres. Non-formal education was put in place through the Non-formal Education Policy 2007,⁷⁸ which required the state to provide continuous alternative education to vulnerable children, including children with disabilities.

Non-formal education centres conduct literacy, technical and skill training, and awareness-raising activities for children and youth who are not able to access formal education due to various barriers, such as ethnicity, language, gender, geographical limitations, poverty and physical disabilities.⁷⁹ The centres are run by communities and development partners, such as CSOs, education institutes and community learning centres, following a set of operational

standards and local education plans. Education acquired through these centres is equivalent to formal education according to the Non-formal Education Policy.

5.2 EDUCATION WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND TEACHER TRAINING

Policy documents aim to improve workforce capacity to respond to the learning needs of children with disabilities.

ESA reviewed the capacity of teachers to cater to diverse learners and found that only resource teachers in integrated schools are required to undergo a 45-day training in working with children with specific types of disabilities.

Aligned with the Consolidated Equity Strategy, SSDP aims to improve institutional capacity in implementing inclusive education and forging partnerships with universities, non-governmental stakeholders and ministries to be able to respond to the diverse needs of children with complex disabilities.

Strategic interventions pertaining to teacher development include the development of needs-based teacher training courses with an emphasis on learner-centred pedagogies and active learning, inclusive education, inclusive assessment through a continuous assessment system and upgrading the process for licensing teachers to include appropriate academic qualifications based on the professional standards.

The establishment of various modalities for the continuous professional development of teachers through school-based professional development in primary and secondary schools, online and mobile phone-based self-learning modules and

⁷⁵ 'Approach paper and roadmap for implementation of inclusive education in Nepal'.

⁷⁶ Regmi, N.P., *Inclusive Education in Nepal: From theory to practice*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilians-University, 2017.

⁷⁷ *Flash 1 Report 2075 (2018/19)*.

⁷⁸ Ministry of Education and Sports, Non-Formal Education Centre, Non-Formal Education Policy 2063 (2007AD), Kathmandu, 2007.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

modular courses were also identified as support mechanisms for teachers.⁸⁰

A system for contextualized and continuous in-service training is in place through Education Training Centres (ETCs) and short-term refresher courses. ETCs develop contextualized training packages, approved by the federal government, for in-service teachers. They provide in-service and refresher training to teachers aimed at enhancing teacher quality in schools.⁸¹ Refresher trainings are held on inclusive education and learner-centred pedagogy.⁸² The extent to which disability-inclusive education is currently integrated into in-service programmes provided by ETCs would still need to be researched.⁸³

A teacher competency framework and a standardized teacher professional development framework have been developed.⁸⁴ Furthermore, a teacher management and development strategy is in place.⁸⁵ According to IE TWG, inclusive education is included as a key development area in the national teacher professional competency standards.

SSDP aims to institutionalize a compulsory module on inclusive education in pre-service teacher training. The inclusion of children with disabilities is not yet part of the compulsory curriculum for all trainee teachers.

Government and development partners continue to support capacity building for teachers on disability-inclusive education.

The government provides a training programme that runs for 1 to 1.5 months on special education for special education teachers, which is meant

to support them in teaching children with disabilities.⁸⁶

Through the assistance of Plan International, inclusive education plans were developed in 286 schools. Capacity development was provided for local government officials, including local government education officers, which enabled them to support local government education planning and resource allocation.⁸⁷

UNICEF provides capacity building programmes for CEHRD and municipalities on inclusive education. In 2020, two teams from the Government of Nepal completed an online course on disability-inclusive sector planning supported by the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning and UNICEF. The course provided participants with foundational knowledge on disability inclusion and strategies in including a focus on children with disabilities in education sector analysis and planning.⁸⁸

5.3 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Education development plans and frameworks ensure the provision of inclusive and accessible learning environments, but disaster risk reduction (DRR) lacks focus on disability inclusion.

SSDP and the curriculum framework⁸⁹ give priority to building accessible school infrastructure and strengthening capacity in child-centred learning environments. There is also interest in the use of communication technology to improve the access and participation of children with disabilities.

⁸⁰ Non-Formal Education Policy 2063 (2007AD).

⁸¹ School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23.

⁸² Thapaliya, *Report on Disability in Nepal*.

⁸³ School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hunt and Poudyal, *Education of Children with Disabilities in Nepal*.

⁸⁷ Plan International Nepal, *Country Annual Highlights 2018*, 2019.

⁸⁸ UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning, 'Planning for disability-inclusive education: Training course expands to new regions', 19 October 2020, www.iiep.unesco.org/en/planning-disability-inclusive-education-training-course-expands-new-regions-13510.

⁸⁹ Ministry of Education and Sports, National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal, Curriculum Development Centre, Kathmandu, 2007.

Moreover, with Nepal's risk of earthquakes,⁹⁰ efforts for short-, medium- and long-term disaster risk response, preparation and recovery at the school level are outlined in SSDP.

SSDP includes the concept of safe schools with a focus on DRR and recovery in its plan. Three pillars for safe schools were identified:⁹¹ (1) Safe infrastructure, (2) Strengthened disaster risk management, and (3) Strengthened resilience in communities and among stakeholders. The focus of DRR aims for safe construction, repair and retro-maintenance of schools in earthquake-affected areas, and the safe construction and retrofitting of schools in non-affected areas. However, there is no mention of a disability-inclusive approach in DRR.

Legislation needs a stronger focus on prevention of violence against children with disabilities in school, while CSOs and development partners support government efforts to curb school-based violence.

Several studies have reported violence against children in education settings, including religious schools, in the form of corporal punishment, sexual violence, verbal and emotional violence, and discrimination based on ethnicity and religious belief.⁹² However, little is known about attacks made against children with disabilities in school. General legislation provisions ensure the protection of minors from physical and emotional violence, but there is no explicit mention of school-based violence.⁹³

Partnerships with CSOs have been built to carry out programmes aiming to curb violence against children in schools, although there is no explicit focus on children with disabilities. The UNiTE Orange Campaign of Y-PEER partnered with

parents and teachers for grassroots advocacy to end school-related gender-based violence (SRGBV).⁹⁴

The UNiTE Campaign Secretariat together with UNiTE Youth Network regional members developed a toolkit for 'Ending Violence against Women and Girls'.⁹⁵ The toolkit was used by female peer educators in educating boys and young men on creating safe learning and living communities, and enabling discourse on healthy relationships, gender equality and positive activism.

UNICEF has supported the development of the government's Comprehensive School Safety (CSS) masterplan and standards that cover safe learning environments, DRR and management, and resilience education.⁹⁶ The CSS masterplan demonstrates that school safety goes beyond physical infrastructure and DRR by its focus on inclusive learning environments and embedding cross-cutting issues, such as disability and gender. UNICEF partners with communities, SMCs and PTAs in raising awareness on CSS and strengthening the capacity of school safety networks.

While child protection systems are in place, there is a need to include a strong focus on addressing SRGBV against children with disabilities. Data collection and research on the drivers of violence against children with disabilities in schools should be conducted to guide the development of reporting mechanisms and response protocols.

Measures to ensure accessibility and availability of support mechanisms for children with disabilities should also be embedded in SRGBV

⁹⁰ UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, Communication for Development Strategic Framework 2018–2021, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2018.

⁹¹ School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23.

⁹² UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, *Violence against Children in Education Settings in South Asia*, United Nations Children's Fund Regional Office for South Asia, Kathmandu, 2016.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ UNICEF Nepal, 'Education Programme Strategy Note', August 2020 revision, Kathmandu, 2020.

reporting and response protocols. A confidential and accessible reporting mechanism is essential in providing an immediate and appropriate response. Moreover, research on the root causes of violence against children with disabilities will provide critical input on interventions aimed at nurturing a safe learning environment.

5.4 CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY AND ASSESSMENT

An inclusive curricular approach is being adapted and curricular reform is underway.

Nepal faces several challenges including limited educational opportunities for children, women, marginalized groups, persons with disabilities and geographically disadvantaged people.⁹⁷ The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2007 acknowledges the need to make special provisions for “women, helpless and senior citizens, orphans with disabilities, and economically and socially backward communities”,⁹⁸ also including sexually exploited and abused children. NCF recognizes that these groups should be prioritized, hence stating the importance of making the curriculum inclusive, child centred and child friendly to be able to provide equal opportunity to all children.⁹⁹

SSDP calls for the review and revision of NCF 2007. The theory of change provided in SSDP identified dimensions that need to be strengthened, including the enhancement of curriculum, learning environment, teaching and learning materials, teaching methods, assessments and examinations.

SSDP has identified strategic initiatives for curriculum and assessment. Initiatives for curriculum include a comprehensive review of NCF and consideration of the use of experiential

learning and child-centred active learning methods, while initiatives for assessment aim to make formative and summative assessments more skills- and learner-focused than content-focused.¹⁰⁰

5.5 LEARNING MATERIALS

Education plans and frameworks include a focus on inclusive teaching and learning materials, but their development and use remain limited.

NCF 2007 outlines action points and guidelines for textbook development and distribution:

- (1) Emphasis should be given to the development of student-centred textbooks to systematize school education.
- (2) A policy on the development and use of multiple textbooks to be adopted by taking into account students' interests, ability, pace of learning and availability of textbooks, keeping within the frame of NCF.
- (3) A camera-ready copy of national models of textbooks following NCF to be developed by the Curriculum Development Centre.
- (4) A policy to involve the private sector based on open competition to be adopted in developing, producing and distributing textbooks.

Despite consideration of the principles of inclusion in the curriculum, NCF guidance on producing and using teaching and learning materials shows limited direction and provision on the use and production of assistive devices and learning materials for children with disabilities.

SSDP has reiterated the lack of relevant learning materials and the high dependence of teachers on textbooks. It includes strategic interventions for the development of learning materials that will support the new curriculum.

⁹⁷ National Curriculum Framework for School Education.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 19.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23.

Table 8. Disability-inclusive approaches and practices in the National Curriculum Framework for School Education in Nepal 2007

Features		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aims to adopt an integrated approach and a child-centred approach to curriculum development. Recognizes the principle of inclusion in the curriculum design. Incorporates local needs in teaching and learning. Considers a child-centred approach in the development of the curriculum, emphasizing various groups, such as disadvantaged ethnic groups, women and those below the poverty line, children speaking minority languages and children with disabilities. 		
Content	Pedagogy	Assessment
<p>Major areas of learning include:</p> <p>Grades 1–8</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Language (mother tongues, Nepali, English) (2) Mathematics (3) Science (4) Social studies (5) Creative arts (6) Local needs-based education <p>Grades 9–12</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) General stream: language, mathematics, social studies, local subject (2) Vocational stream: agriculture, forestry science, medical science, engineering 	<p>Emphasizes instructional activities, which make teaching and learning activities research-oriented, interactive</p>	<p>Two types of assessment are adopted:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Formative assessment: The emphasis is on scrutinizing the qualitative aspects of students' specified behaviour, skills and attitudes in addition to academic achievement. (2) Summative assessment: The emphasis is on promotion from one grade or level to another.

Accommodations for children with disabilities

- Basic education (Grades 1–8) aims to develop a strong sense of non-discrimination towards others with regard to their caste, ethnicity, religion, language, gender, class and disability.
- Secondary education (Grades 9–12) aims to develop respect for individual differences in terms of gender, disabilities, and social, economic, geographical, ethnic and cultural variations and be active in building an inclusive society by being aware of personal prejudices.

Development partners support the government in addressing gaps in accessibility.

CSOs, development partners and NGOs continuously support the government in addressing the gaps in accessibility affecting the participation of children with disabilities

in education. The draft Inclusive Education Approach Paper and Roadmap includes an emphasis on accessibility in infrastructure and adaptive tools and learning materials, strengthening teacher capacity on learner-centred pedagogy and the development of a flexible and adaptable curriculum.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Approach paper and roadmap for implementation of inclusive education in Nepal.

HI and the Resource Centre for Rehabilitation and Development (RCRD), together with MoEST and supported by World Education and UNICEF, implemented an early detection programme that included supporting schools to develop adaptive learning environments and teaching and learning materials.¹⁰² The pilot programme benefited children in early education to Grade 3 in 40 public schools. This included children attending 10 resource classes across Achham, Bajura, Kalikot and Mugu districts.

The objective was to address the needs of children with disabilities through early detection, provide support for referrals and assistive devices and build capacity amongst schools and government counterparts. This pilot was included within the broader early grade learning project, which benefited 400 schools in the same districts and provided 400 sets of adaptable learning materials.¹⁰³

HI facilitated the development of these prototype accessible and adaptable teaching and learning materials and guidelines. The prototype materials were developed by teachers, parents, school administrators, OPDs, development partners and ministry representatives, enabling a deeper understanding of the needs of children with disabilities. Teachers and administrators came from mainstream schools, special schools and resource classes.

5.6 SUPPORT SERVICES FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND TEACHERS

Development partners support the government in establishing screening and identification systems.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2017 reiterates the right of children with disabilities

to access basic and essential services, such as education, training, health care and rehabilitation, among others, to be able to participate fully in society.

The Government of Nepal has made continuous efforts to improve disability-related services to reach children with disabilities. With the support of several development partners, such as UNICEF, HI, World Education and RCRD, a pilot screening programme was conducted to screen, identify and initiate interventions for young children with functional impairments.¹⁰⁴ Data gathered from the programme informed the government's screening and rehabilitation initiatives that would help reduce barriers to learning of children with disabilities and increase their chances of getting into mainstream classes later on.¹⁰⁵

Based on information gathered during the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey, scaling up of the pilot screening to districts under the Reading for All project is underway, in which an EMIS subsystem adapting the WG/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning will be piloted.

The USAID-funded Reading for All project¹⁰⁶ enjoins several national development partners: HI, World Education, Nepal Association for the Welfare of the Blind, National Federation of the Deaf Nepal and the Disabled Empowerment and Communication Center. The project benefits 6,775 schools from 16 National Early Grade Reading Program focus districts: Banke, Bardiya, Bhattapur, Dadeldhura, Dang, Dhankuta, Dolpa, Kailaki, Kanchaput, Kaski, Manang, Mustang, Parasa, Rupandehi, Saptari and Surkhet.

Among the project goals are improving the quality of data on children with disabilities, strengthening institutional and technical capacity at the federal, provincial and local levels, and pilot inclusive

¹⁰² *Early Detection of Functional Limitations and Disabilities.*

¹⁰³ World Education, *Equity in Education Final Report (2016–2018)*, 2018.

¹⁰⁴ *Early Detection of Functional Limitations and Disabilities.*

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ United States Agency for International Development, 'Nepal fact sheet: Reading for all', 2019, www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/NEPAL_FACT_SHEET_READING_FOR_ALL_020819.pdf.

reading instruction models in mainstream schools and resource classes for children with vision, hearing and cognitive disabilities. A central component of the project is early screening for children in pre-primary up to Grade 3.

There are 40 assessment centres¹⁰⁷ across 62 districts¹⁰⁸ in the country that support early identification of disabilities. Access to screening services and links to health care and rehabilitation services are limited, especially for children with disabilities in remote areas.

UNICEF supports early childhood development and education.

UNICEF continues to provide technical inputs and national-level advocacy to improve quality and access to ECD programmes.

- UNICEF provided technical inputs to the new Nepal Constitution and the draft amendment of the Education Act, resulting in the inclusion of early childhood education and development rights.¹⁰⁹
- Technical support was provided to strengthen the subnational ECD programme through awareness-raising activities and capacity building of ECD committees at district and village levels. The ECD committees were capacitated on multisectoral ECD planning and budgeting.¹¹⁰
- UNICEF partnered with Seto Gurans and the Department of Education to enhance the capacity of 300 ECD centres in marginalized areas across the country. ECD facilitators were trained and ECD kits were developed and distributed to increase technical capacity on child development and improve school readiness for 7,500 young children, including the most marginalized children.¹¹¹
- The UNICEF Country Programme Action Plan identifies priorities, including strengthening mechanisms for early detection of developmental delays, impairments and disabilities among high-risk newborns through collaboration and partnerships with the health service network and other sectors working on early childhood care and rehabilitation.¹¹²
- UNICEF developed a parenting education package that includes early detection of disabilities, referral to health services and sessions on raising awareness on the inclusion of children with disabilities in ECD. A complementary ECD facilitator training package on teaching strategies for children with learning disabilities was also developed.¹¹³
- UNICEF's advocacy and partnership with the government and other development partners benefited children with disabilities, Dalit children and various schools in early learning and reading comprehension initiatives.¹¹⁴

Non-formal education and other social support mechanisms give more educational opportunities to children with disabilities.

To ensure that children with disabilities complete their education, the government put forth the Non-formal Education Policy 2007, requiring the state to provide continuous alternative education to vulnerable children, including children with disabilities. Non-formal education centres available in Community Learning Centres, education institutes and provided by some CSOs conduct literacy programmes equivalent to formal education for out-of-school children with and without disabilities.¹¹⁵

Financial support to disadvantaged children with disabilities is also available to help children who have completed free compulsory primary

¹⁰⁷ UNICEF ROSA mapping survey 2020

¹⁰⁸ Hunt and Poudyal, *Education of Children with Disabilities in Nepal*.

¹⁰⁹ UNICEF Annual Report 2015.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² UNICEF Nepal, Country Programme Action Plan between the Government of Nepal and UNICEF 2018–2022, Kathmandu, 2018.

¹¹³ UNICEF Annual Report 2013.

¹¹⁴ Plan International Nepal, *Country Annual Highlights 2018*.

¹¹⁵ Non-Formal Education Policy 2063 (2007AD).

education to continue secondary education.¹¹⁶ Access to financial support schemes, however, is reportedly limited.¹¹⁷

Coordination mechanisms were established to facilitate access to disability-related services.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2017 requires the formation of a national level inter-ministerial steering committee and a community-level local coordination committee. The inter-ministerial steering committee functions as a coordinating group to monitor and promote initiatives related to disability rights and services.

The local coordination committee, on the other hand, is formed in every rural municipality to coordinate disability-related concerns and initiatives at the community level. The committee is headed by a coordinator who is a vice-chairperson of the village executive or deputy mayor of the municipality executive. Members include women representatives, representatives from education and health sectors, police, persons with disabilities and institutions advocating for the rights of persons with disabilities. The committee's central role is to plan, develop, implement, monitor and evaluate disability-related programmes and projects at the local level.

Table 9. Available support services

Support service	Examples
Early identification and intervention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A pilot screening programme for young children with functional impairments conducted by UNICEF, Humanity & Inclusion, World Education and Resource Centre for Rehabilitation and Development. A pilot screening programme for pre-primary to Grade 3 under the Reading for All project funded by the United States Agency for International Development. 40 assessment centres across 62 districts in the country.
Early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood care and education (ECCE)	<p>UNICEF initiatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Piloting the development and use of disabled-friendly learning materials in schools and a tool for early detection of functional learning difficulties. The UNICEF Country Programme Action Plan identifies priorities, including "early detection of developmental delays, impairments and disabilities among high-risk newborn babies will be strengthened through the health service network and collaboration with other sectors for care and rehabilitation". Providing technical inputs to the new Nepal Constitution and the draft amendment of the Education Act, resulting in the inclusion of early childhood education and development rights. Strengthening the subnational ECD programme through awareness-raising and capacity building of ECD committees at district and village levels. Supporting capacity building of 300 ECD centres through ECD facilitator training and provision of ECD kits.

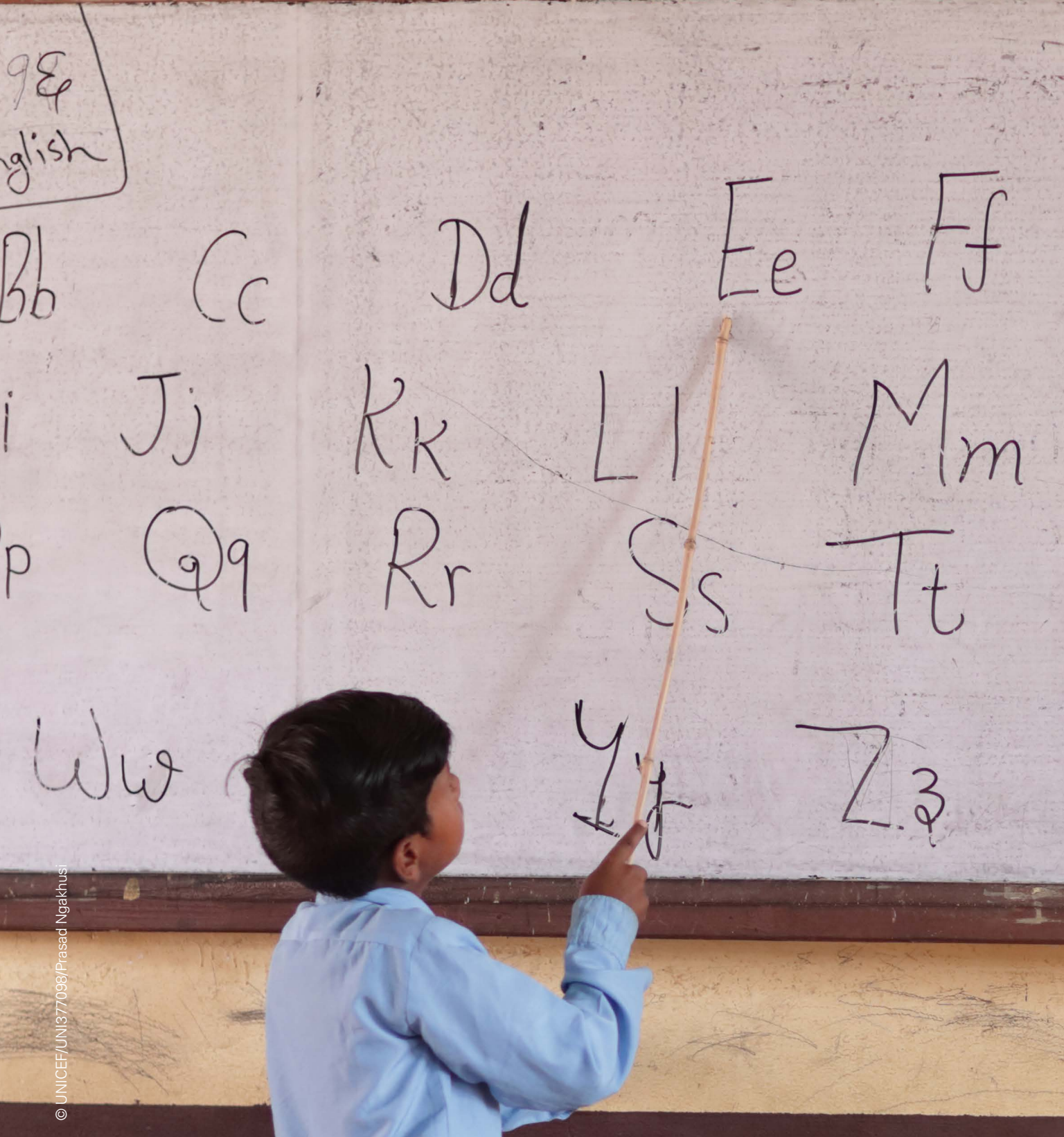
¹¹⁶ *Include Us in Education*.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*.

Table 9 (continued)

Support service	Examples
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a parenting education package and awareness-raising on inclusion and participation of young girls and boys with disabilities in ECD; and an ECD facilitators' training package that includes strategies for teaching children with learning disabilities. Advocating and partnering with government and other partners to benefit children with disabilities and Dalit children from 253 schools through early childhood education and reading comprehension initiatives.
Transition services from ECCE to primary to secondary education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-formal education offers alternative pathways to education managed and supported by communities, civil society organizations and other educational institutions. Financial support for disadvantaged children to be able to continue secondary education after completion of free primary education.
Community-based rehabilitation programmes	Community learning centres are hubs for alternative non-formal education and initial sources of health care services for children with disabilities.
Collaboration mechanism and referral system between teachers and providers of specialized services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An inter-ministerial task force has been formed to review and align overlapping support schemes for girls, Dalits and children with disabilities. Training workshops were conducted to link social protection, such as disability services and grants, with civil registration in 2015. UNICEF supported improved ECD service delivery through integrated district ECD plans, capacitating early childhood education and parenting education.
Referral systems	The Reading for All project includes the establishment of a school-based referral system, creating an education response mechanism that links screening, identification and referral to appropriate intervention services.
Multidisciplinary monitoring and review	Carried out through the inter-ministerial steering committee and local coordination committee.
Financial support	The government provides financial support to disadvantaged students, including children with disabilities.

Source: UNICEF Nepal, *Early Detection of Functional Limitations for Better Learning Outcomes*, Kathmandu, 2017; United States Agency for International Development, 'Nepal fact sheet: Reading for all', 2019; UNICEF ROSA mapping survey 2020; Hunt, P.F., and N. Poudyal, *Education of Children with Disabilities in Nepal: Baseline data 2019*, International Disability Alliance, 2019; UNICEF Nepal, *UNICEF Annual Report 2017, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2017; UNICEF Nepal, Country Programme Action Plan between the Government of Nepal and UNICEF 2018–2022, Kathmandu, 2018; UNICEF Nepal, *UNICEF Annual Report 2015, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2015; *UNICEF Nepal, UNICEF Annual Report 2013, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2013; Plan International Nepal, *Country Annual Highlights 2018*, 2019; Ministry of Education and Sports, Non-Formal Education Centre, Non-Formal Education Policy 2063 (2007AD), Kathmandu, 2007; UNICEF Nepal, *UNICEF Annual Report 2016, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2016; Nepal, The Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2074 (2017), Plan International, *Include Us in Education: A qualitative research study on barriers and enablers to education for children with disabilities in Nepal*, 2014.



Data collected for the Equity Index are used for evidence-based planning and activity implementation to address the barriers children from marginalized backgrounds experience.

6

MEASURING AND MONITORING QUALITY

This domain includes measures to ensure the quality of education and support services for children with disabilities.

6.1 STANDARDS AND INDICATORS FOR INCLUSION

The National Framework of Child-friendly School for Quality Education was developed by the Department of Education, Ministry of Education.

The standards describe the expectations of schools in developing a learner-friendly environment for all learners, including children with disabilities. The roles of school management and teachers in inclusive education are articulated in the standards, including:

- teachers should have knowledge and skills on inclusive principles and practices;
- teachers should be aware of learners' unique, individual needs; and

- SMCs and principals should monitor how teachers provide support to all learners in the classroom.

Minimum indicators for inclusion are articulated, including disability indicators on access to school, teacher training on inclusion, learning environment and the participation of children with disabilities in extracurricular activities. The framework is used for self-evaluation, planning and formulation of a child-friendly school development plan by SMCs, PTAs and schoolteachers.

Standards for child-friendly learning centres were developed with UNICEF support.¹¹⁸

The National Minimum Standards for ECD were developed with the support of UNICEF. They were distributed in ECD centres in 15 priority districts by the Department of Education.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ UNICEF Annual Report 2017.

¹¹⁹ UNICEF Annual Report 2015.

6.2 MONITORING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Equity Index 2017 measures deprivations in education experienced by marginalized children, including those with disabilities.¹²⁰

The Equity Index, integrated into IEMIS, is used to collect data on disparities children are vulnerable to due to their context. The data are used for evidence-based planning and activity implementation to address the barriers children from marginalized backgrounds experience. It was developed by the Ministry of Education, UNICEF ROSA, UNICEF Nepal, World Bank and Global Partnership for Education.

Data are gathered from household and school-based censuses and used to generate an equity score for each district. The information is used by education leaders and policymakers from national to school level to develop strategies and plans to address inequities and funnel resources to districts that most need them.¹²¹

SSDP has a monitoring and evaluation framework and system in place, which utilizes existing IEMIS data.

SSDP, which has targets for improving the quality of education for all children including children with disabilities, has a monitoring and evaluation strategy that makes use of IEMIS to:¹²²

- monitor “programme inputs, processes and outputs and evaluate the impact of the programmes”;

- provide information to policymakers on the implementation status of the programme and education system, and provide feedback to implementing agencies; and
- share data with stakeholders for evidence-based planning and response at the local government.

SSDP outlines strategies for monitoring, evaluation and assessment of the implementation of the policy, building capacity at school and local level for monitoring and evaluation, and engaging different departments at various levels for monitoring and evaluation. The strategies also ensure that disaggregated data on children with disabilities are collected regularly in alignment with international instruments.¹²³

The National Association of Hard of Hearing and Deafened Nepal (SHRUTI) participates in monitoring data on persons with disabilities, including the status of children with disabilities in education.

SHRUTI has attended capacity building activities on monitoring human rights issues of persons with disabilities and they have also trained their partners on disability-inclusive education practices.¹²⁴ The OPD also engages in monitoring the educational progress of children with disabilities and providing assistance to teachers to better implement disability-inclusive education.

¹²⁰ Price, W., and J. Oostrum, ‘Nepal’s Equity Index: Innovations in financing to reach the children most in need, Global Partnership for Education and United Nations Children’s Fund Nepal, 21 June 2018, www.globalpartnership.org/blog/nepals-equity-index-innovations-financing-reach-children-most-need#:~:text=Nepal's%20equity%20index%20is%20an,%2C%20participation%20and%20learning%20outcomes.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Hunt and Poudyal, *Education of Children with Disabilities in Nepal*.



There are efforts to increase girls' participation in school, but challenges, such as child marriage and menstruation taboos, remain and limit their access to education, especially for girls with disabilities.

7

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

7.1 GENDER

There are efforts to increase participation of girls in school, but challenges, such as child marriage and menstruation taboos, remain and limit their access to education, especially for girls with disabilities.

UNICEF advocates increased focus on girls with disabilities in government policies and programmes.¹²⁵ Through efforts made over the years, girls' and women's participation in community planning and national consultations has improved considerably, such that policies and plans, such as the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2017 and SSDP,¹²⁶ articulate women's active involvement in national and local coordination groups.¹²⁷

Despite these improvements, many girls, including those with disabilities, still experience barriers to education. Respondents from the UNICEF ROSA mapping survey revealed that

deeply rooted practices and beliefs, such as taboos surrounding menstrual period and child marriage,¹²⁸ common in many rural areas in Nepal, as well as low regard for Dalit women,¹²⁹ contribute to limit girls' participation in education.

The rate of child marriage in Nepal is one of the highest in South Asia with 48.5 per cent of women aged 20–49 years having married before the age of 18 and 18 per cent of the same age group having married before they turned 15 years old.¹³⁰ Moreover, Dalit women experience multiple discriminations and are considered the most disadvantaged women in the country with only a 12 per cent literacy rate.¹³¹

Geography is also considered a major barrier to education with the country's mountainous terrain. In 2013, only 69 per cent of girls with disabilities aged 5 to 14 years in rural areas were recorded to have enrolled in school.¹³²

¹²⁵ UNICEF Annual Report 2013.

¹²⁶ School Sector Development Plan 2016–2023: Updated March 2020.

¹²⁷ Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2074 (2017).

¹²⁸ UNICEF ROSA mapping survey 2020.

¹²⁹ Bhatia and Turin, 'Executive Summary of Vulnerable Community Development Plan'.

¹³⁰ School Sector Development Plan 2016–2023: Updated March 2020.

¹³¹ Nepal Education Sector Analysis.

¹³² UNICEF Annual Report 2013.

Results of NMICS5 showed that most women surveyed experienced some form of (severe to mild) discrimination during their menstrual period.¹³³ Severe forms of discrimination were experienced by more women in the Mid-Western Development Region, where 71 per cent experience *chhaupadi*, or the practice of staying in a separate mud house during their menstrual period.¹³⁴

There are no data, however, for girls with disabilities in the survey. The taboo around menstruation bars girls from accessing education, proper nutrition and clean water and sanitation, and poses a great risk to their health and safety.¹³⁵ The practice continues as it is deeply rooted in centuries-old tradition and local belief and woven into daily life. However, efforts are being made to end *chhaupadi* and raise awareness about women's rights.¹³⁶

There are initiatives to raise awareness of gender equity and increase access to education for girls.

- Empowering a 'New Generation of Adolescent Girls through Education in Nepal' is funded by the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office¹³⁷ Girls' Education Challenge initiative. Together with VSO and HI, out-of-school girls with disabilities and other marginalized girls are empowered and their access to education and disability and social services are improved.¹³⁸ This is done through the provision of personalized social support to help develop life skills, skills for learning and job skills and self-care, supplemental classes (such as developing Braille or sign language skills) and bridge classes to prepare them for transition to formal schools.¹³⁹
- Initiatives to build awareness of gender and sexuality exist. The curriculum for health and physical education for Grades 6–9 includes discussions on the health and wellness of gender-diverse learners, highlighting a transgender and intersex group called hijras.¹⁴⁰ In addition, a gender awareness module was integrated into the National Centre for Educational Development's teacher professional development programme,¹⁴¹ strengthening teachers' capacity to deliver gender-responsive curriculum and pedagogy.
- Better gender and ECD equity provisions in the Education Act and new Constitution were successfully advocated by UNICEF together with the Parliamentarians' Caucus on gender/ girls and ECD.¹⁴²
- UNICEF advocacy led to a greater budget allocation for the construction of girls' latrines, which improved sanitation and water supply in primary schools from 34 per cent to 45 per cent in 2011.¹⁴³ There is no information, however, whether schools that benefited included special and integrated schools.
- The UNICEF Girls' Access to Education programme supports non-formal education classes and has facilitated the transition of girls to formal education.¹⁴⁴

¹³³ Central Bureau of Statistics, *Nepal Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2014, Final Report*, Central Bureau of Statistics and United Nations Children's Fund Nepal, Kathmandu, 2015.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ ActionAid, 'Chhaupadi and menstruation taboos', n.d., www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/period-poverty/chhaupadi-and-menstruation-taboos.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Formerly known as the Department for International Development.

¹³⁸ Sigdel, S., P. Adhikari and S.M. Dhital, *Baseline Evaluation: Empowering a new generation of adolescent girls through education in Nepal (ENGAGE)*, Foundation for Development Management, 2020.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Global Education Monitoring Report, *Inclusion and Education*.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² *Annual Report 2011 for Nepal*.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ UNICEF Nepal, *Country Office Annual Report 2019, Nepal*, Kathmandu, 2019, www.unicef.org/about/annualreport.

7.2 HUMANITARIAN ISSUES

The Education Cluster contingency plan was created in response to COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic has largely impacted the education sector in Nepal. Given the prolonged school closures and disruption of various activities and projects, the Education Cluster of Nepal developed a contingency plan wherein strategies for different possible scenarios are articulated.

One of the objectives of the contingency plan is focused on supporting continuity of learning for all children from marginalized backgrounds, including children with disabilities, through the development, adaptation and dissemination of distance and virtual learning materials.¹⁴⁵

Inclusive home-based lessons help learners with disabilities.

The Disabled Empowerment and Communication Center Nepal supports the Baijanath Rural Municipality in Banke District to radio broadcast

home-based lessons for Grades 1 to 10. The NGO helps ensure community volunteers encourage students with disabilities to listen to the lessons and ensure accessibility of the lessons by incorporating inclusive teaching strategies (e.g., speaking at a slow and steady pace, use of repetition).¹⁴⁶

A radio education programme was established to ensure the learning continuity of students during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With school closures in Nepal extended,¹⁴⁷ UNESCO, in collaboration with the Education Development Directorate, Bagmati province, and Prime FM radio launched Radio Paathshala – a radio education programme that covers 13 districts of Bagmati province to provide access to lessons for secondary-level students.¹⁴⁸ This initiative is expected to equally benefit children with disabilities as they continue to participate in learning activities remotely.

¹⁴⁵ Nepal Education Cluster, Education Cluster Contingency Plan, 2020, 2020.

¹⁴⁶ The World Bank, *Pivoting to Inclusion, Leveraging Lessons from the Covid-19 Crisis for Learners with Disabilities*, The World Bank Group and Inclusive Education Initiative, Washington, D.C., 2020.

¹⁴⁷ Menon, S., 'Coronavirus: How the lockdown has changed schooling in South Asia', *BBC*, 21 September 2020, www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-54009306.

¹⁴⁸ UNESCO Nepal, 'COVID-19 Educational Disruption and Response: Radio Paathshala for students in Nepal's Bagmati province', Kathmandu, 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/news/covid-19-educational-disruption-and-response-radio-paathshala-students-nepals-bagmati-province>, accessed 27 September 2020.



Develop and integrate inclusive education standards into the school quality standards to better respond to the needs of all children, including children with disabilities.

8

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT

1. **Prioritize the adoption of the Washington Group of questions into data collection systems.**

This would include IEMIS, the disability ID scheme, censuses and national household surveys. Data on barriers children experience in learning as well as the progress and achievement of children with disabilities need to be integrated into the periodic school census. Assess the monitoring and evaluation systems in place of how disability data is collected and utilized to influence planning of programmes and policy development for disability-inclusive education.

2. **Strengthen school-based professional development support.**

Strengthen support for teachers and school leaders on disability-inclusive education by developing policies and structures for continuous professional development at the school level. Incentivize school-based professional development and sharing knowledge between teachers and special educators.

3. **Enhance the implementation of legislation on disability inclusion.**

Enhance the implementation of legislation on disability inclusion through multisectoral planning. Clarify the roles of the different departments across and within ministries to support and promote inclusive education and integrate disability-inclusive education into their budget and programmes.

4. **Develop and integrate inclusive education standards into the school quality standards.**

The standards must articulate implementation guidelines that will provide the school community with a method to assess infrastructure, curriculum, pedagogy, learning equipment and materials, teacher development and support services, and to plan and act to better respond to the needs of all children, including children with disabilities.

5. **Develop national legislation and school-level processes to prevent school-based violence.**

Develop legislation and school-level processes that comprehensively address

prevention of and intervention and response to school-based violence against children with disabilities.

6. Expand provisions for ECD.

Expand provisions for developmental screening, early identification, intervention and rehabilitation services to improve access of children with disabilities and their families. Existing first contact centres, such as schools, community-based rehabilitation centres and rural health centres, can be capacitated to deliver these services.

8.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS

1. Strengthen capacity of stakeholders to monitor and evaluate disability-inclusive activities.

Strengthen the capacity of OPDs and parents and caregivers of children with disabilities to engage in monitoring and evaluation of disability and inclusion projects and activities.

2. Give greater focus to promoting disability-inclusive education and a rights-based approach to disability.

Advocacy and awareness campaigns should include a stronger focus on disability-inclusive education and clear messages on a rights-based approach to disability.

3. Support the government to expand disability-related services.

Support the government in expanding disability-related services, developmental screening, and early identification and intervention, especially in first contact centres.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1. Conduct further research on the practice of inclusive leadership.

Conduct further research on the practice of inclusive leadership within the education system to identify challenges, successes and recommendations that can strengthen inclusive leadership in the system. Review available professional development programmes for school leaders against the competencies they must have to be able to support the development of inclusive learning environments for all learners.

2. Assess gaps in skills and competencies in teacher education.

Assess the gaps in skills and competencies in teacher education institutions in relation to teaching inclusive education across all subjects and develop a strategic plan to address the gaps identified.

3. Review pre-service and in-service teacher education and training.

Review the pre-service teacher education curriculum and in-service teacher training programmes to include competencies key to teaching all subjects in diverse environments in alignment with the social model of disability.

4. Conduct research on school-based violence against children with disabilities.

Conduct research around issues of school-based violence against children with disabilities, such as prevalence, risk factors, effective prevention and response mechanisms, gender and impact of the interventions, among others.

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