

Formative Research Project for EFA 2004-09
Synthesis of the Reports
Year 2009

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Preface

Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID), Tribhuvan University is undertaking the Formative Research Project (FRP) for the Education for All (2004-09) program of the Ministry of Education, Government of Nepal. The project is being conducted with the financial and technical support of the Royal Norwegian Government.

In the fifth year (2008-09) of the implementation of the Education for All (EFA) program, along with the Longitudinal System Indicators Study (LongSIS), seven case studies were successfully completed. This report presents a synthesis of the major findings and recommendations of the researches completed in the year 2008-09. This report provides a quick reference of the major findings and recommendations made by the researches conducted under FRP in the final year of FRP for EFA 2004-09. I believe, as usual, this report will be interesting and useful for all those who are concerned with the development of education, especially those who are directly involved in the implementation of EFA programs in Nepal.

On behalf of CERID, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to all those who were involved in successfully completing the researches as well as those who have provided valuable support in maintaining the quality of the research work. In this regard, I would like to thank all the researchers, resource persons, experts, report reviewers, research associates and research assistants. I would also like to thank Prof. Hridaya Ratna Bajracharya, Technical Expert to FRP and Prof. Kishor Shrestha, Coordinator of FRP for preparing this synthesis report. I would also like to thank Prof. Basu Dev Kafle for editing the language of this report. Thanks also go to all the members of the CERID family for their logistic support in undertaking the researches. Thanks are also due to Mr. Gautam Manandhar for cover design and page lay-out and Mr. Bhakta Bahadur Shrestha for the printing of this report.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ASIP	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan
ASP	Alternative Schooling Program
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Program
CBOs	Community Based Organizations
CERID	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
CMS	Community Managed Schools SIP
DDC	District Development Committee
DEO	District Education Office
DEP	District Education Plan
DOE	Department of Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
FRAG	Formative Research Advisory Group
FRP	Formative Research Project
FSP	Flexible Schooling Program
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GPS	Global Positioning System
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOER	Ministry of Education and Research
MS	Mother School
NCED	National Centre for Educational Development
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NFEC	Non-Formal Education Centre
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PIG	Program Implementation Guidelines
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RP	Resource Persons
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SM	School Mapping
SMC	School Management Committee
SOP	School Outreach Program
SSR	School Sector Reform
SSRP	School Sector Reform Program
STR	Student Teacher Ratio
VDC	Village Development Committee
VEP	Village Education Plan

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Introduction

Prologue

This is the last year of the implementation of Education for All (EFA) national program 2004-09, and also the last year of the second phase of the Formative Research Project (FRP) for EFA. FRP has been a Technical Assistance of the Government of Norway to the Government of Nepal since 2001 for effective implementation of Basic and Primary Education Program (BPEP) 2001-04 and EFA 2004-09. The BPEP and EFA are successful programs in Nepal in that they have been able to bring significant achievements in terms of the spirit as well as indicators of EFA campaign. The achievements are more pronounced in student enrolment, gender equity in enrolment, and establishing as well as rapidly expanding the provisions of ECD in the country. There have also been efforts to improve the quality of education in terms of measurable indicators. FRP has been recognized as an important measure in ensuring the success of the BPEP and EFA programs in the country.

A reform program needs supportive research activities, which are strategically designed to generate knowledge for footing the steps of actions as well as for assuring that the steps are leading towards the envisaged reform outcomes, i.e. progress monitoring. A research institution was needed to coordinate such activities. Ministry of Education (MOE), which is the main responsible body for EFA program as well as FRP, has entrusted CERID for this. Ministry of Education and Research, Norway has been supporting MOE and CERID in undertaking FRP. It has earlier devised FRP for successful reform of secondary school education in Norway. The success of the FRP for EFA lies in its broad based approaches. Participation of stakeholders, in-depth and critical understanding of the contexts and issues, research based action, sharing and interactions are important aspects of the broad based approaches.

FRP Objectives, Modalities and Activities

The main objectives of FRP are:

1. To generate research based information and critical understanding of the process of implementation of the national EFA program.
2. To assist capacity building of MOE for utilization of Formative Research as an instrument for program monitoring and adjustment.
3. To assist a process based institutional development of MOE and underlying agencies based on working experience and available knowledge and skills

In order to fulfil the objectives, FRP has provisioned the following activities:

1. System indicator based longitudinal study
2. Case studies on the issues and core topics considered important for the implementation of EFA program and policy reforms
3. Interactions and disseminations through different committee meetings, workshops, seminars and publications.

In implementing FRP, the Ministry of Education and Research (MOER) Norway has provided technical support to MOE and CERID. It has provided professional and technical support as peer group institution to MOE and as professional and technical advisers to CERID. The support has ensured success of FRP in all three phases of its implementation – in the initial phase of conceptualization, during the main phase of brisk research activities for generating research based action steps, and in the concluding phase of BPEP and EFA, each time opening new avenues for better and wider reform.

Formative Research Advisory Group (FRAG), a stakeholders' group, is another important entity for the success of FRP. FRAG supervises FRP activities and also mediates in ensuring effective implementation of the research outcomes. The Advisory Group is a stakeholders' committee composed of senior researchers, head teachers, policy makers, District Education Officers and educationists including specialists in the areas of gender, ethnicity and pedagogy. FRAG was constituted to ensure that the stakeholders are made aware of the reform activities, ensure monitoring of progress of the reform and provide inputs and thrust to the implementation of FRP outcomes.

The main research outcomes and information including the research reports and the recommendations are presented to FRAG which then discusses the research findings and suggests action steps to MOE. The suggestions may cover actions to be taken in the areas of policies, programmes and implementation processes. The research activities and the outcomes are also shared with MOE and DOE through thematic discussions and formal dissemination programs.

Synchronizing FRP activities such as research, reporting, and preparation of action steps with the key annual schedule of MOE for EFA program including planning meeting for ASIP and Budget, review meeting of donors, and government reporting schedule have been the key strategies for ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of FRP.

CERID has mobilized many researchers, experts and professionals in undertaking FRP activities. Research and related activities are undertaken with the help of individual researchers contracted on the basis of competition. Technical advisers and resource persons have been mobilized for ensuring quality, relevance and effectiveness of FRP.

Identification of Key Issues and Core Research Topics

Longitudinal study as the major basis of identifying the issues

System indicators have been identified to follow the progress of EFA program implementation. Longitudinal study has been designed with 43 indicators collected from 62 schools strategically placed in 16 districts from 5 development regions and Kathmandu valley. The indicators included brief student profile listing name, gender, age, social group, enrolment, promotion, and dropout. The longitudinal study provides statistical data and works as a basis for trend analysis. FRP has been conducting cohort analysis of the students enrolled at grade one since BS 2059 (AD 2002) using this data. Longitudinal study has also been providing cross variable analyses of indicators such as gender and social groups relating them with major EFA program interventions. Longitudinal system indicators based analyses outlined key issues that needed an in-depth investigation i.e. case studies.

Interactions with the Stakeholders: FRP Dissemination and Feed Back

Interaction with the stakeholders during dissemination of the research outcomes and publications helped to focus on the issues. The inputs from the dissemination of the FRP activities including regional level workshops, district levels interactions and feedback from the RCs at the school cluster levels are also taken into account in the identification of issues and core topics for further research.

Core topics and key questions for case studies are finalized by MOE and DOE on the basis of the FRP outcomes, feedback from the stakeholders, experiences of implementation of the EFA programs, and also on the basis of other emergent issues. MOE and DOE are supported by the academia and professional researchers in the task.

Core Topics and Key Issues Considered for In-Depth Studies for 2009

Nepal is now in the process of finalizing the constitution as the finale episode of the great social and political transformation – from a unitary kingdom to a federal republic. There has been great anticipation of new Nepal where all good things would gradually unfold with the new constitution. One good aspect of such unfolding is better education. Nepal has already achieved over 90% of net enrolment at primary level, unthinkable in the previous decade. Now the questions raised relate to better management and sustenance, focused program to address the needs of ensuring effective and relevant basic education for the marginalized/disadvantaged groups, measures to achieve better quality education including development of teacher professionalism, quality and environment of schooling where gender equality would be ensured.

In this line the effort of the Ministry of Education has resulted into many important actions which have further opened up several avenues to explore some hard core issues or riddles to solve. Accordingly, MOE chose the following themes for FRP to critically study and come up with tangible solutions:

1. *Ensuring Free and Compulsory Basic Education for Disadvantaged Groups in the Context of Education for All*
2. *Alternative Schooling: Addressing the Un-served School Age Children*
3. *Linking School Mapping with Educational Planning*
4. *Community Managed School: An Innovative Approach To School Management*
5. *Gender Issues in School Education*
6. *Quality of Education in the Madrasas of Nepal*
7. *Exploring the Opportunities for Professional Development of Primary School Teachers in Nepal*

Overview of the Research Activities and Their Outcomes

This overview of the FRP studies lists the key outcomes of the system indicator based longitudinal study and 7 case studies on the themes listed above. Major issues and rationale of the study, brief observations and analysis of the data/information, major findings and suggestions from each of the studies including the longitudinal study and the case studies are summarised with a synthesis.

Longitudinal Study on System Indicator (LongSIS)

The longitudinal system indicator study continued to focus on two main aspects: 1) Time series analysis of EFA reform program implementation and 2) Cohort analysis of the students enrolled in grade 1 from 2002.

Time series analysis of EFA reform program implementation mainly analyzed various factors and variables in terms of data indicators to monitor the progress, and analyze the trends. The study shows that there is a continuation of the increasing trend in the percentage of new entrants at grade one with ECD education: 11.1%; 18.3%; 33.1%; 36.2% in the years 2005; 2006; 2007 and 2008 respectively, registering an annual average incremental rate of about 8.2% over the period. Though the annual incremental rate is remarkable, there is still a need for expediting the rate in order to meet the EFA goal of achieving 80% or over by 2015.

Net enrolment rate at primary level education continued to expand with an average of over 1% per year. Currently, Nepal has NER of about 92% bringing it nearer to achieving the EFA goal of universal access to primary school. The challenges of fully attaining the universal access lie in ensuring the enrolment of disadvantaged groups of children. There is a need to further specify the enrolment issues and accordingly, focus the policy and programs.

Gender parity in school enrolment is another remarkable achievement at primary level. The trend shows a steady growth since 1999 surpassing the GPI value of 1.0 since 2004. It is generally considered a good achievement that girls are increasingly enrolled in school. The analysis is based on the public school data so question is raised whether the accelerated GPI values relate to discrimination – whether boys are increasingly enrolled in private schools where high fees are said to be paid by the parents for better quality education and school environment. There is therefore a scope for critical analysis of the trend with the data from the private schools included in the analysis.

In the case of the primary teachers, the GPI value is about .63. In the FRP sample schools, on the average, the GPI of primary teachers is 0.99.

Gender parity is just a measure of equity in terms of the ratio of the female to male participation; this does not relate overall gender equality. Besides equity, gender equality also relates to sensitivity, quality of the environment, gender friendly facilities, and nondiscrimination. Thus equality goes beyond statistics. Besides, the average national statistical values do not tell about the variations, for example, there are many schools with only female teachers and there are many schools that lacked female teachers. There is therefore a need for examining the situation critically and specifically. There is also a need for gender policy and programs that address the issues specifically.

Improvements in terms of national educational budget and facilities at the schools are notable, for example, the number of schools with facilities like toilets, drinking water and library facilities has been increasing gradually particularly since 2002. The increase in library facility is over 20% since 2002. However, it has to be noted that the expansion of the facilities is not taking place as it should be, for example, the development of libraries is not taking place in a way which is child friendly in terms of children's access, kinds of books holding as well in terms of the layout and services available for the students.

The average student teacher ratio (STR) in Nepal is 33:1 which is below the national norm of 50:1. In the case of FRP sample school the STR value is even lower: 25:1. The average STR however embodies wide variations in terms of situations in the individual schools. The low STR relates to skewed distribution of the teachers, there is increasing trend of lower STR in urban areas and there has been continued pressure to recruit teachers where there is high STR. Teacher management remains a challenge in Nepal. The skewed distribution also relates to flawed teacher transfer policy and practices.

The average classroom space per child in the FRP sample schools continues to be less than the national norm. This issue perhaps relates to lack of adequate expansion of infrastructure in line with the enrolment expansion. The budget available for per child expenditure has not improved since the last several years.

Almost all of the teachers in the FRP sample school meet the minimum qualification requirements of being SLC graduates. A majority of them have qualifications above SLC and are fully trained (about 60% of the teachers have Teacher Training Certificate). Many of the remaining teachers are in the process of completing the teacher training course. Although the minimum qualification requirements are met, there is a need to upgrade the minimum criteria for qualification as well as training in order to enhance the quality of school education.

The cohort analyses of the students enrolled in the 62 FRP sample schools continued to show that grade repetition and dropout are persisting problems. Only about 20% of the children enrolled at grade one could make up to grade 5 in straight cohort of 5 years for the 2002 batch as well as the subsequent batches. Nearly 50% of the students either repeated or dropped out from the school at the end of grade 1. There are no significant improvements in the cohort flow in the successive years of 2003, 2004 and 2005. This has given rise to serious question regarding poor quality and efficiency of schools – why could the EFA program not address quality aspect of school education?

The cohort analysis has established the fact that students with ECD experiences have better chance of completing the primary cycle in straight cohort. They are less likely to drop out or need to repeat the grade due to failure. Similarly, those children who have received incentives have higher chance of primary cycle completion in straight cohort.

Cohort analyses also showed that the cycle completion rate for the Dalits and Muslims remained lower than the national average and that the average number of years required for the completion has been found higher. Similarly, the cohort analyses indicated that there are regional disparities: Eastern region seemed ahead in terms of grade promotion of the students whereas Mid-western region remained significantly behind the national average in this aspect. The rest are near the national average of 26%. Similarly, there is a significant and consistent difference between the grade promotion of urban and rural students, (18 and 24 respectively in the case of 2002 cohort). The gap is narrowing gradually (21 and 23 in the case of 2004 cohort).

The presence of underage and overage children in the classrooms remained persistent. The underage children in the primary schools persistently remained around 20%. Similarly the percentage of overage children in the primary schools remained about 45%. The presence of a very high proportion of under age children highly contributes to the low promotion rate. The straight cohort promotion of the

under age children from grade 1 to 5 ranged between 11-12 % among the three cohort groups of 2002, 2003 and 2004. For the overage it varied from 25-33%.

Overall, there has been improvement in primary school level education. This could be related to the comprehensive reform measures taken by EFA. Increasingly, communities are taking interest in participation in school management, almost one third of the schools are now managed by communities with the support of government. The information system has improved at all levels including MOE, DOE, DEO and school along with the interests and concerns of the people regarding school education. Nevertheless, challenges remain – in ensuring that the needs of the disadvantaged are met; that the schools become fully inclusive and child friendly without any forms of discriminations against girls or disadvantaged; and most importantly, the quality of teaching and learning and the general environment need to be enhanced to ensure meaningful and relevant learning for all children. The drop out and repetition rates, though in decreasing trend, are still very high.

It could be said that the EFA program has positive impacts, however, the need for more specific and focused policies and the programs is still there.

In-depth Case Studies

The following are the overviews of the 7 in-depth studies listed above:

Ensuring Free and Compulsory Basic Education for Disadvantaged Groups in the Context of Education for All

Ensuring free and compulsory basic education for disadvantaged groups has been the core objective of EFA. The government policy and programs in Nepal have focused on these objectives since Jomtien and even earlier since the realization that Nepal needs to ensure basic education for all children in order to catch up with the rest of the countries striding in the direction of modernity. The efforts have already helped people in general to ensure basic education for their children. However, in Nepal, there are many communities who have been disadvantaged in a multitude of ways – caste, language, ethnicity, geographical location, poverty, social exclusion etc. It has often been perceived that in Nepal the challenges of achieving universal access to primary education, which is the first step towards free and compulsory education, lie with the inabilities on the part of the disadvantaged communities to access school education. Questions therefore arise:

1. What is the existing educational status of children among disadvantaged groups?
2. What provisions are required for educating children from disadvantaged groups?
3. What preventing measures should be undertaken to ensure the rights to disadvantaged groups?
4. How can basic/ free/ compulsory/ right based education for disadvantaged groups be ensured?

This study was undertaken with a focus on these questions. The study was conducted in the villages with highly disadvantaged groups like Chamar, Tamata, and Lohar and with disadvantaged communities of Chepang and Tamang. The following is a brief listing of the study findings and suggestions to address the issues.

Major Findings

The enrolment status of most of the disadvantaged groups has improved satisfactorily except in the case of some communities like Chamar. Apparently, the EFA program and its strategies including the welcome to school program has effectively contributed to increasing the school enrollment in most of the communities. School dropout rate however persisted very high among the children from all the disadvantaged communities, especially Chamar, Lohar and Tamata.

One of the reasons of such high drop out could be related to lack of appropriate child friendly environment. The general as well as educational environments of the schools in disadvantaged communities were found remarkably poor. The schools in such area even lacked class rooms, play ground, sports materials and toilets. Lack of pedagogic skills with sensitivity towards mother tongues could be another reason. In none of the sample schools except in the cases of the schools in the villages where Tamang and Chamar are in majority, instructions in mother tongue have never been delivered. In most of the schools, there were absences of teachers from the disadvantaged communities. The students have felt the absence uncomfortable, and have demanded for the teachers from their own communities.

School cost was another important hurdle for the disadvantaged children. Even the primary schools were found charging examination fees and other annual fees. Also, students were asked to buy extra sets of text books. This has discouraged the children and the parents from the disadvantaged communities. Although provisions of scholarships have been made for *Dalits*, girls (50%), and *Chepang* students, the provisions did not cover other disadvantaged groups. Also, the amount of scholarship was very small, not sufficient to cover basic needs such as dress, books, copies and pencils. NGOs were found involved in all of the sample communities, but they were able to create positive impact only in limited communities (only in the case of *Danuwar* and *Chamar* communities).

Early marriage and child labor are other hurdles for the children of disadvantaged communities towards successful completion of school education. Unfortunately, both these social malpractices still exist among the disadvantaged communities, especially among *Dalits* communities. The practice of child labor was more pronounced than early marriage.

Many of the efforts of the government to address the issue could not bring desired effects simply because of the lack of strategic planning. Lack of explicit policies to bring the stakeholders in a concerted way made many of the efforts less effective. For example, there were inadequate roles for DDC and VDC in the framework for decentralization of school management. DDC simply allocated funds to schools without any particular norms and role for monitoring. There was no functional coordination between DDC and DEO.

Suggestions

There should be schemes that guarantee enrollment and completion of primary students at the district level, preferably at the VDC level. Programs like "Welcome to School" with added special strategy focused on disadvantaged communities like *Chamar* would help to ensure bring all children to schools.

For meaningful and effective participation of children in school and their completion of school education, there is a need for setting minimum norms and standards to

ensure child friendly environment, at least at the pre-primary and primary level. This should include teachers who are trained and sensitized to local contexts. Education in mother tongue, especially at early primary level, is essential. Teachers should be able to teach in the local language; also it is important there is the presence of the teachers from the local disadvantaged community in the school.

There is a need to ensure that all school-related fees, in any form, are eliminated particularly in the case of the disadvantaged communities. There is also a need to extend the provisions of scholarship to cover all the disadvantaged groups. The scholarship amount needs to be reviewed and increased to cover the cost of educational participation.

The roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders like DDC and VDC should be clearly defined in ensuring provision and delivery of basic education in their respective areas. A framework of decentralized school management should be developed for this purpose whereby active participation of the stakeholders including the disadvantaged groups, local NGOs and CBOs is sought effectively to address the issues and the needs.

Alternative Schooling: Addressing the Un-served School Age Children

In order to achieve the EFA goal of ensuring children's equitable access to quality basic and primary education, the government of Nepal through Non-Formal Education Centre (NFEC) has launched the Alternative Schooling Program (ASP) in two forms namely, School Outreach program (SOP) and Flexible Schooling Program (FSP). SOP provides opportunity of three year education for school age children who cannot go to school and the FSP offers a five-year primary school curriculum condensed into a three-year program by scheduling flexible time and choosing a location at their convenience. Towards providing literacy alternative models, the SOP and FSP need to be further developed, piloted, and expanded in order to address different leaning needs of children according to their age groups, social and economic conditions as well as geographical diversities. In this line, this study has been conducted to analyze the status and provision of ASP and explore the ways for strengthening the program. Specifically the study focused on the following questions:

What are the provisions of alternative schooling?

- What is the status of alternative schooling?
- How does alternative schooling contribute to educational access and quality of children from disadvantaged group?
- What alternative mechanisms could be designed and implemented in order to address the issues of under-age and over-age children?

Major Findings

School outreach program (SOP) and flexible schooling program (FSP) are provisioned to address the needs of those children who are unable to join or continue formal school education for various reasons as unavailability of school in their area, need to work with parents, need to migrate with their parents for livelihood etc. Currently, SOP/FSP are being operated with the funding support from DEO. The funding is in terms of only a minimum basic operating support. In some cases,

donation funds are collected from VDC, community forest, and local people; local communities have contributed free labor for construction of classroom.

There are demands for SOPs, the implementation achievement of SOPs in terms of the target and distribution of SOP provisions has been found remarkable. However, there is no data system or surveys that establish what provisions are needed and where they are needed. In order to run a SOP an interested facilitator prepares a list of unschooled school age children and applies for SOP quota. The quota is provided if there are 20 or more unschooled children. This provision of 20 students per class has, on the one hand, restricted the opening of SOP/FSP classes in the remote areas and on the other, it has indirectly encouraged the facilitators to enroll schooling children or underage children in the SOP/FSP class. Due to limited quota and lack of priority management, SOP/FSP distribution did not take place rationally whereas many remote parts could not get such quota. Some formal schools have somehow obtained the SOP/FSP provisions and have enrolled school children in the name of SOP/FSP. Similarly, it was found that some proposed primary schools have also obtained SOP provisions which were simply used as a means to obtain the SOP quota to add more teachers in school. Some RPs and Head Teachers have recommended for such inappropriate distribution of quota ignoring the Program Implementation Guide. Apparently, dissemination about SOP/FSP and provision of NFEC guideline, which is the responsibility of District Education Office (DEO), has not taken place at the district and the community level.

Selection of appropriate facilitator is another issue. The minimum qualification required to become a facilitator is high school graduate, SLC pass. Priorities are given to female facilitator from local community. Local community and SOP management committee and often mother school (MS) are involved in the selection of facilitator. It was however felt that minimum qualification of SLC is not adequate for the condensed curriculum of grade 1 to 5. However, finding and retaining a better qualified facilitator is rather difficult because of low pay, minimum provision of Rs. 2000 per month. Many SOP have suffered because the facilitators left the program in the middle of the session for better job; in many cases the facilitators continued to work only in the hope that they will be appointed as a primary school teacher in future.

SOP/FSP provisions lacked quality and effort for improvements at the local level and systemwise as well. The general environment in SOP/FSP was found to be very poor, it lacked even basic facilities like toilets, playground, and drinking water etc. In most of the SOP/FSP, teachers were found using just drill and chorus method for class delivery. Also there was lack of appropriate resource materials for the teachers and the students. SOP/FSP textbooks are not so useful to bilingual children, they lacked instruction for teachers, illustrations, and are unattractive. There were problems of underage children in both SOP and FSP class. Because of the lack of appropriate quality environment student drop out was very high and in many cases, the programs were closed because of the high dropouts.

Suggestions

There is a need for good awareness and orientation among the stakeholders. Program Implementation Guidelines (PIG), compulsory orientation for the facilitators, RPs, as well as head teachers on the use of PIG, and provision for ensuring minimum norms and standards are essential for meaningful and effective

SOP provisions. SOP/FSP resource materials should be improved to an appropriate level so as to make them supportive to the facilitators and motivating to the children. A single facilitator to teach all subjects and care every child individually seems impracticable. Provision of two facilitators should be made. The student incentive available in formal schools like scholarship, snacks, dress, and regular supply of learning materials and copies should also be provided to SOP/FSP students.

A framework for ensuring basic education to all should be in place with clear outlining of the responsibilities and authorities of DDC and VDCs. There should be DEP and VEP with clear indications of need for SOP/FSP. There is a need to develop a data system for establishing verifiable SOP/FSP quotas at DDC and VDC. The data should be available to DEO and the MS. (The data indicators should include school age children, enrollment, dropouts and promotion, as well as data on facilitators' background). There should be a system of effective supervision and technical support for SOP/FSP.

Linking School Mapping with Educational Planning

School mapping has been one of the important aspects of piloting School Sector Reform (SSR) program in selected districts in order to prepare comprehensive planning based development of school education. A cycle of the piloting has been accomplished and it is time to draw lessons for moving ahead with the implementation of SSR. This case study has been designed to draw the lessons using the following questions:

- What are the contributions of school mapping (SM) in the three model building districts of SSR?
- What processes have been employed to complete the school mapping task in the 3 districts?
- What strategies have been adopted in school mapping in order to support educational planning?
- How will school mapping contribute to further educational planning and programs in SSR phase?

Major Findings

School mapping exercises were accomplished in three pilot districts. The process adopted in all districts in completing the school mapping included a) district level orientation, b)GPS recording, c) school survey, d) household survey and e) data entry.

The exercises were accomplished with varying degrees of outcomes. SM data (including the household survey information) have been preserved in almost all schools of Rasuwa, and the link between SM and SIP was established very closely. But the task of making the link was found little in most schools of the other two sample districts. Similarly, RC level data bank has been established in all of the Resource Centres of Rasuwa district, but it was not done in the other two sample districts.

Similarly, school mapping use was found successful in Rasuwa where it has been directly used for preparing VEP and DEP. Flaws were noted in data processing in the other two districts. Most importantly, there was a lack of linking SIP with VEP

and DEP in the two districts. The involvement of VDCs and DDCs was found rather low and casual in the preparation of SIP in the two districts. Apparently, the orientation programs conducted for RPs and some Head Teachers were not much effective in the two districts in bringing awareness and participation of the stakeholders in the school mapping exercise; most parents and other local level stakeholders were unaware of School Mapping (SM) exercise and its use for educational planning. The data was, however, used to some extent in the district planning.

It was also noted that taking action based on data also remains challenging. In one of the districts, though the data indicated need for merging schools, action could not be taken due to lack of sufficient budget for such merging. Such lack of action on the other hand raised the issue of public credibility.

Suggestions

Before undertaking school mapping and planning there should be extensive activities to ensure better awareness and commitment of the stakeholders including the head teachers, teachers, parents, and other local stakeholders regarding the exercise as well as the use of the data for school mapping and planning. A clear guideline should be prepared, circulated and used to ensure coordination among schools, VDC and DDC and DEO regarding school reform and SIP preparation and for preparation of VEP and DEP reflecting the needs of SIPs. A guideline should also be developed to strictly ensure that all data are generated, recorded and the accuracy maintained.

Adequate training and technical support including the required human resource and equipments (computer, GPS machine and others) to the RCs is important for successful undertaking of school mapping and planning exercises. It was noted that teachers with appropriate training for school mapping are better than using other people for this purpose. The stakeholders also suggested that it is equally important to ensure the release of budget and other facilities to the concerned schools in time for ensuring effective implementation of SSR activities as planned.

Community Managed School: An Innovative Approach to School Management

Community management of school in Nepal is not a new innovation rather it is revisiting and reinvigoration of the experiences during the earlier stage of modern school development in the country. Traditionally, schools in the form of *Gumba*, *Gurukul*, and *Madrassa* have been supported by communities in terms of resources and management. The government policy of community management of school was adopted to enhance the involvement of the parents and community in ensuring quality of school environment and teaching learning as well as better efficiency and effectiveness of school operation and development. Questions arise whether the ownership, responsibility, and proactive role that the communities exhibited in the past can also be drawn in the present contexts by the government remains to be a question. This study has been conducted with this question in view. Specifically it focused on the following questions:

- What stimulated communities to takeover the managerial responsibility of community schools?

- What changes occurred in the schools after the takeover of managerial responsibility?
- How do teachers and parents, Teacher Union respond to changed policy?
- Why did the system encourage these schools to move from dependency to autonomy for school functioning?
- Why do teachers resist change in school-based practices?
- What are the good practices of these schools and how can they be sustained and extended?

Major Findings

Community managed schools (CMS) are found more effectively and efficiently engaged in development work than other government aided schools. The management transfer policy empowering the community to take the responsibility and authority to manage schools has contributed in increasing community based social capital considered important for effective and efficient school improvement.

Some highlights of good practices in community managed schools included quality focused instruction, parental monitoring, school networking, school transparency, social connection and mutual trust. After the management transfer, all CMS were found making efforts to establish school transparency and enhance accountability of school authorities.

The current Act and Regulations regarding CMS however needed some changes to include explicit provision for accountability. There have also been persistent feelings that the government needs to recognize community initiatives and ensure its commitment and support for ensuring operation and development of school. In order to address this issue, the government has provisioned incentives to the schools managed by community in the form of lump sum grants and relief grants for operating additional classes and grades. However, confusions and consequently, hesitations on the part of DEO officials and the school management regarding disbursement and use of the money remained as a hindering factor in the process of implementing the provisions.

The provisions of community management of school envisage that the school authority and community members should take responsibility, be accountable for the school activities, process and the outcomes of the school. However this has been not always the case: the officials as well as the community members often tended to work traditionally. Many officials tended to encroach on the authority of school management particularly in teacher recruitment and transfer. Subsequently, the community members often tended to retract from the responsibilities and accountabilities.

In the current provisions of community management of schools, SMCs do not have proper authority regarding teacher recruitment and transfer; the community members involved in the management felt it useless to take full managerial responsibility without this as they would not be able to ensure the accountability and respect of the teachers towards management.

Continued traditional practices of teacher recruitment by the government officials using the influence of their administrative roles and authorities against the spirit and the provisions of community management of schools have frustrating negative

impact on the part of community perceptions and initiatives. Consequently, teacher management has become a matter of political and system's interference as well.

Teacher community, especially Teacher Union, has adverse reactions to the policy regarding management transfer to school community. Individually, teachers felt good about policy contribution in involving parents in school reform, they felt bad because they thought their job would be insecure. Also, for those who have been using the government provision of placement transfer to their advantage, localized management of teacher recruitment would be a threat. Management of teacher recruitment and placement has been a very difficult issue of school reform program in the country.

The other challenge regarding management transfer to community relates to apprehensions among community members as well as teachers that it could be the government intention to relinquish its responsibility and that community would be made solely responsible to bear the financial burden of school operation.

Suggestions

There is a need for consolidating the community based school management policy and the program and take necessary steps towards sustaining the approach of community participation in school governance. One of the important aspects for consolidating CMS policy is to develop a system of tracking good practices and performances and providing incentives as well as technical support. The system could be developed by reforming and mobilizing the existing structures including DEO, RC, DDC and VDC and provisions of DEP, VEP, and SIP. Defining roles, explicitly listing the responsibilities and accountability established with the system of performance audit are key strategic aspects for ensuring effective functioning of the system. For this, there is a need for revising the existing act and the regulations, or at least to prepare guidelines with exclusive mention of accountability. The revisions of the acts or preparation of the guidelines should ensure that school receive incentive and relief grants including other grants timely and that school should be empowered for adding new grades and upper levels in community schools. There is also a need for explicit regulations to stop interference of the government administration or officials in teacher appointment, transfer and in disciplinary actions by schools. Effective system and regulations requires compliance of the stakeholders with this; there is a need for opening avenues for involving stakeholders in policy process. There is a need for open and public dialogue by the government with the Teacher Unions honoring what were agreed and support the Unions to prevail in professional activities. There is also a need for the government with an explicit policy statement through public announcements regarding state's commitment and the support provisions.

Gender Issues in School Education

One of the goals of EFA is gender equality in education. In order to achieve this goal, various efforts have been made. One of the important outcomes of the efforts is improvement in terms of gender parity in school enrollment. However, the problem of gender equality remains in terms of achieving gender friendly environment in the schools and educational organizations; there is still lack of female teachers and lack of provisions to address the physical needs of the girls. This study tried to analyze

the issues so as to generate suggestions in formulating gender policies with a focus on the following research questions:

- What are the major gender issues in school education?
- What constitutes gender friendliness in school? How can the school be made gender friendly?
- Why are more female teachers required in school?
- What are the major gender issues faced by female teachers and girl students in school?
- How could female teachers be encouraged to hold the position of head teachers?
- What is the status, role and leadership of female head teachers in schools?
- How can female head teachers be empowered to run the schools effectively and efficiently?
- What policy options are to be developed in order to ensure the participation of female teachers in the position of head teachers?
- What is the overall impact of gender issues on school-level activities and performance?

Major Findings

The case study indicated that the feeder hostel program and the provision of scholarship helped increase girls' enrollment in the secondary schools of a remote district like Humla. However, provisioning and maintaining basic provisions such as toilet and water facility in schools remained a lacking adversely affecting girls' regular attendance.

Lack of female teachers remained a persistent problem particularly in the lower secondary and secondary level schools. Some of the schools have no female teachers at all, in the whole district there was only one secondary level female teacher and two lower secondary female teachers. Obviously, the provision of recruitment of female teachers in primary level has not been fully implemented in the district. It was noted that all of the Head teachers were over burdened with their responsibilities since they had to teach in the classes as well as look after the management of the school and also attend the meetings organized in and outside the district. Because of the challenging responsibilities, even those female teachers who were getting chance to become head teacher did not take the chance. Female participation/representation in SMC and PTA was also found very low. Such low female participation in teaching and management could be related to lack of gender issues being considered for discussion in the planning and program development meetings as well as in the school provisions.

A traditional gender perspective of soft female and tough guys was found as a general perception as well as practice in the school. Discrimination was made in giving corporal punishment to girls and boys. For example, it was noted that the boys got more corporal punishment than girls.

In a rural district, lack of money is a general problem; it is also a problem for hesitation on the part of the community to send their children to school. Since

scholarship was focused on girls only, many disadvantaged and poor boys could not receive the support crucial for their participation in and completion of school education.

Suggestions

Feeder hostels should be built in all the remote districts to help increase girls' participation at secondary level. There is a need for orienting the head teachers and SMC members regarding the importance of gender friendly environment in school with general utilities including toilet and water supply provisions for girls. There is a need to ensure that all the schools have female teachers as per declared government policy. There is also a need to motivate females in the district to become teachers at Lower secondary and secondary level schools. Provisions should also be made for the primary school female teachers to upgrade their qualification so that they would be eligible to be the teachers of lower secondary and secondary teachers.

There is also a need to bring and strengthen gender balanced perspectives in the remote districts. Teacher training packages (pre-service, 10-months or short-term) need to include gender component in order to sensitize the teachers regarding gender issues and the need for gender equality. In remote districts, both boys and girls need scholarship support.

Quality of Education in the Madrasas of Nepal

Traditionally, *Madrasas* provide Muslim religious and cultural education to children. Some *Madrasas* have also been providing some basic education. Recently, government has implemented a policy to recognize and support *Madrasas* that provide basic education as community educational institution. Many *Madrasas* have now been registered as formal primary schools and are providing mainstream basic education along with religious education under the same roof. Now that the *Madrasas* have registered as primary education providers there is an emerging concern of ensuring that they provide quality education and are sustainable. This study has been conducted in view of this concern. The study specifically focuses on the following research questions:

- What is the situation of input indicators, such as fiscal and other resources, teachers' qualities, and students' enrollment, process indicators in terms of curricular framework and classroom instruction and outcome indicators in terms of change in enrollment in the registered *Madrasas*, and change in aspiration and attitude of Muslim community?
- How do the stakeholders perceive about the indicators of quality education in these registered *Madrasas*?
- What may be the suitable policy framework for enhancing quality of education in registered *Madrasas* and making registration sustainable?
- How can *Madrasa* system be developed to meet the diversified needs of Muslim community?

Major Findings

Traditionally *Madrasas* are run by Maulavis who are trained Muslim teachers to teach religious studies and culture. They are however not trained to teach mainstream

school education subjects. Also the additional task of teaching mainstream subjects requires extra teachers. As *Madrasas* are established to deliver *Madrasa* curriculum they are likely to be not fully prepared to deliver mainstream basic education. Also they are run with limited individual donations on the basis of faith, therefore, they do not have fund to recruit extra teachers to teach mainstream school education, or to manage additional Maulavis and their training for teaching formal school education subjects.

Madrasa curriculum and practices do not come with well defined structure and outline. Maulavis are prepared to teach in the approach of preaching therefore teaching-learning activities in *Madrasa* are teacher-centered. There is still a need for orienting Maulavis in understanding as well as practically experiencing learner centered pedagogical approaches.

The study found that *Madrasas* are teaching basic education subjects -- Nepali, English and Math without guideline or curriculum framework. Besides, *Madrasas* are also bearing the traditional responsibility of religious and cultural education, balancing the mainstream curriculum and *Madrasa* teaching, however on ad hoc basis. It has to be noted that both *Madrasa* and mainstream school courses are rather fully loaded each requiring full time. Managing of *Madrasa* education and school education at the same time gives rise to quality issue.

The *Madrasa* stake holders are of the view that there should be proper financial support for the *Madrasas* to ensure fulfillment of infrastructure required for quality education such as classroom, building, extra subject teachers, furniture etc. The stakeholders are also concerned regarding sustainability of the *Madrasas* operating mainstream education: sustainability of curriculum activities and financing in terms of state's systemic support.

Suggestions

There should be policy and programs to provide qualified and properly trained teachers to teach main stream education in *Madrasas*, provide training for the *Madrasa* teachers in learner centered pedagogy and use of instructional materials.

Madrasa curriculum framework needs to be defined and developed incorporating mainstream education and A *Madrasa* education as a single curriculum should be recognized as basic education through *Madrasa*. Policy and program need to be developed with explicit government commitments and provision for basic education through *Madrasa* should include provision of block grants for *Madrasas* for operation as well as development of physical infrastructure of the registered *Madrasas*.

Exploring the Opportunities for Professional Development of Primary School Teachers in Nepal

In Nepal poor teacher professional support has been identified as one of the major issues hindering better teaching and learning practices. School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP 2009-15) has also explicitly pointed out the need for developing opportunity for Continuous Professional Development in view of the current provision which is basically limited to addressing needs of the large number of the untrained teachers in the system. The task of providing basic training to the untrained teachers was so big that it almost prevented other opportunities of teacher professional development. This study has been proposed based on this need. The study has been undertaken

with the main objectives of exploring the opportunities for professional development for primary school teachers in Nepal, and generating ideas to develop primary school teachers within the framework of SSRP.

Specifically, the study was focused on the following questions:

- I. How can primary level teachers be supported through various opportunities directed to the context specific instructional problems?
- II. In what ways primary level teachers' professional development activities can be ensured at institutional, organizational and individual levels?
- III. What could be the options/strategies for transforming primary level teachers' professional skills in facilitating student learning process and the product as well?
- IV. What kind of challenges/problems will have to be catered to make professional development of primary level teachers continuous and functional?
- V. What should be the policies, strategies and the implementation mechanism for the professional development of primary teachers of Nepal?

Major Findings

The problems that primary level teachers are facing relate to content/subject specific issues – lack of appropriate classroom, fixed desk and bench or absence of desk and bench, lack of appropriate blackboard, instructional material, lack of teachers with appropriate subject area training etc. Because of the lack of viable support in their work, there is little they could do to address many of these problems.

Existing teacher training programs of NCED have contributed in clearing the 98% backlog of untrained teachers through provision of basic training requirements for certifying teachers. However, there is a no provision for teachers' professional development support mechanism. Existing primary level teacher education opportunities are limited to pre-service and in-service training focused on teacher certification and teaching skills in some areas. Opportunities for further professional development are rare, almost non-existent. Existing teacher education system does not have any provision for continuous professional development of teachers. The concerned agencies including policy level bodies and government teacher training institutions have limited concept of professional development of teachers, limited to one time provision.

School Sector Reform Program has proposed three service layers to describe the functions of each institutional, organizational and individual levels as crosscutting factors, which are (a) service delivery, (b) service management, (c) service governance. Obviously, there is a very high scope and need for professional development opportunities to address the functional needs. Ensuring professional development at the three levels will require a series of sequential steps from policy formulation, framing of rules/regulations, fixing governance bodies with their role, setting performance standards to development of service delivery systems.

It is not that the professional development issues are new or that there was total lack of effort to address them. However, the efforts to understand them as well the efforts to address the issues have so far remained superficial and fragmented in terms of time and task undertakings. There has been very small or insignificant inputs drawn or lessons learned from previous teacher education and real classroom

situation. There has been little effort to understand the needs of subject area specific professional development needs, even in the core areas. Consequently, even in the core areas there has been no transformation in teaching learning practices employing continuous assessment, implementing individualized learning methods, diagnosing learning needs, teaching in multilingual and multicultural situations, etc. The reason for such lack of drawing of lessons from the past relates to the indifference of school management, unfair practices of teachers evaluation for promotion, overloaded classes, lack of motivations, lack of technical and logistic support, etc.

Suggestions

National policy and implementation program for a comprehensive teacher professional development is a must. There is also a need to develop a system of professional development provisions with serious engagement of the universities and institutions of higher education, linking them with the government system. RCs and ETCs should also be strengthened and mobilized for teacher professional development. Head teachers and SMC members should be supportive in planning, organizing, and generating local level resources to address the needs of continuous professional development. A timely study on teachers' content/subject specific problems, needs and difficulties is necessary particularly in the core subjects.

Reflection on the FRP Studies and Their Outcomes

Formative Research: Research Instrument for Educational Reform

The second phase of FRP has come to a concluding stage along with Education for All (EFA) national program 2004-09, which it has supported. The first phase of FRP supported successful implementation of Basic and Primary Education Program (BPEP II) 2001-04. Ministry of Education (MOE) has successfully accomplished EFA, as it did in the case of BPEP II. FRP has contributed to the success with professional and technical involvement of CERID and the advisory support of Ministry of Education and Research (MOER), Norway. CERID has long experiences of contributing to most of the reform undertakings in the country and has been credited with many innovative programs and approaches; MOER has long experience of devising formative research for successful undertaking of educational reform in Norway.

The core principle of FRP has been the understanding that a reform program needs supportive research activities strategically designed to generate knowledge for footing the steps of actions as well as for assuring that the steps are leading towards the envisaged reform outcomes. This requires that FRP supports the reform as an instrument to monitor the progress and also to generate research based information as well as critical understanding that lead to appropriate action steps. Also, there was a need to use and ingrain the knowledge and experience of FRP and the reform undertaking in the institutional development. These three aspects have been adopted as the main objectives of FRP.

The success of the FRP in Nepal lies in its broad based approach involving all major stakeholders and a dynamic approach to address the reform needs and the issues. Formative Research Advisory Group (FRAG), a stakeholders' group composed of senior researchers, head teachers, policy makers, District Education Officers and educationists including specialists in the areas of gender, ethnicity and pedagogy is another important entity in the success of FRP. FRAG supervises FRP activities and also mediates in ensuring effective implementation of the research outcomes. FRAG was constituted to ensure that the stakeholders are made aware of the reform activities, ensure monitoring of progress of the reform and provide inputs and thrust to the implementation of FRP outcomes.

Mobilization of researchers, experts, and professionals has been the core strength of CERID. Research and related activities are undertaken with the help of individual researchers contracted on the basis of competition. Technical advisers and resource persons have been mobilized for ensuring quality, relevance and effectiveness of FRP.

One of the strategies of FRP research activities was to continuously monitor the implementation of the reform program. System indicator based longitudinal study was devised for this purpose. The second strategy consisted of case studies conducted on the issues and core topics considered important by MOE and DOE; this was to critically understand the implementation issues and to address the problems and dilemmas faced by MOE and DOE. The third strategy was to support MOE and DOE in preparing research based action steps to address the issues.

Synchronizing FRP activities such as research, reporting, and preparation of action steps with the key annual schedule of MOE for EFA program including planning

meeting for ASIP and Budget, review meeting of donors, and government reporting schedule was another major strategy for ensuring efficiency and effectiveness of FRP.

In order to insure wider dissemination of the FRP outcomes as well as to draw feed back from the various concerned groups including the teachers, head teachers, RPs, Supervisors, district as well as central level government officials, interactions and disseminations sessions were held periodically through different committee meetings, workshops, seminars and publications.

Obviously, with these provisions and strategies, FRP is a composite instrument -- composed of a spectrum of research activities that included system indicator based longitudinal study, in-depth case studies, critical appraisals, preparation of research based action steps, using the research outcomes in the reform process, and conducting dissemination and feed back. This synthesizing exercise is an attempt to present a brief summary of the researches with their outcomes.

Research Activities and Major Outcomes

Longitudinal system indicator based study is the main premise of FRP designed to monitor progress of EFA program and to analyze the trend. In-depth case studies follow the outcomes of the longitudinal study as well as the issues and core topics identified by MOE/DOE in the process of implementation of EFA.

Longitudinal system indicator based trend analysis has confirmed that EFA implementation brought progressive changes in enrollment in pre-primary and primary schools. Similarly, the trend analyses confirm that the schools are becoming more inclusive and gender balanced. Nepal is now nearing EFA goals in terms of student enrollment in primary school (NER of 92%) and student gender parity being slightly over 1; also the classes are becoming more inclusive with the increasing proportion of the children from different social groups including disadvantaged *Janajatis* and *Dalits*.

True Cohort analysis as a part of the longitudinal system indicator based study that helped to analyze effectiveness of program interventions like scholarship, nutrition program, ECD program, presence/choice of flexible curriculum, textbook distribution. The longitudinal system analysis has established positive evidence of the impact of ECD on student enrolment, retention and achievement. Similarly, the study shows positive correlation of incentives with student enrollment, retention, and promotion.

The cohort study emerged as a very effective tool to analyze the quality and efficiency of the EFA program as well as to pin point the difficult issues. It has indicated that the problems of drop out and repetitions lie mainly with disadvantaged groups. It also showed that the internal efficiency of the school system remained difficult to improve, the issue of a very large section of the children dropping out or repeating the grades continues, particularly at grade one. The straight cohort remained very low, about 20% since 2002/2003.

The system indicator based longitudinal study, particularly the cohort study, was a very effective instrument for tracking not only the reform progress but also for tracking the children and their performance, and following the issues and dilemmas of quality and relevance of education delivered by school. Moreover, the exercise and the data system in the school for cohort study has helped the schools to engage in the formative assessment of the students and the self performance assessment.

There is therefore a scope as well as need to continue the longitudinal study, particularly the cohort study. This could be a model for all schools to adopt for better performance.

The case studies this year focused on generating in-depth and critical understanding regarding - i) whether the current provisions address the scope and issues of disadvantaged children's access to school education; ii) whether provisions of alternative schooling are better options for the children who could not be served by formal school provisions; iii) whether gender parity shown by the longitudinal study really mean attaining gender equality as well; iv) whether *Madrassa* schools are able to deliver quality primary education; v) whether successful community managed schools present a scope for building a model for better school management; vi) whether the widely reported need for teachers' professional capacity, responsiveness and sensitivity to local contexts in order to address the issue of poor quality and relevance of teaching and learning are addressed in the current provision for teacher professional development; vii) whether the SSR piloting on school mapping based educational planning gives a viable approach for comprehensive school sector reform.

The Interim Constitution of Nepal (2007) decrees rights to free basic and primary education for all. The school sector reform program envisions gradual steps towards compulsory basic and primary education. With the provisions and important programs like welcome to school campaign, incentives programs for the *dalits* and disadvantaged community children, primary school enrolment is improving. However, it is still challenging for the disadvantaged children to enroll, complete and be successful in school education. The challenge relates to unfamiliar and deterrent environment where they have to deal differently with the language they are brought up and is used in daily life, poor sensitivity of the school that looks down on the social, economic and cultural background of the children, and most importantly, the cost involved - dress, food, books, copies, pencils and the cost of having to join school instead of helping the parents in income generating activities. These are also the reasons why many of the children drop out without completing the primary cycle.

For meaningful and effective participation of children in school and their completion of school education there is a need for setting minimum norms and standards to ensure child friendly environment, at least at the pre-primary and primary level. This should include teachers trained and sensitized to local contexts. Education in mother tongue, especially at early primary level, is essential. Teachers should be able to teach in the local language; also it is important that there is presence of the teachers from the local disadvantaged community in the school. The system including DEO, DDC, VDC, school and NGOs need to work in a concerted way to ensure that at least the disadvantaged children do not have to bear the cost of education in any form and that they receive the government support in time. Most importantly, there should be schemes based on detailed information of the households, children and the parents at the district level, preferably at the VDC level, that guarantee enrollment and completion of primary education.

The provision of SOP/FSP is a strategic approach to address the needs of disadvantaged children, particularly in rural areas. However, making the provision effective and ensuring its rational implementation remained rather challenging. It requires well trained facilitator and support of the local stakeholders for its successful implementation. Lack of a mechanism and system to ensure such

requirements lead to failure to bring the provision to those who are in real need, and as seen from the study, it even leads to misuse of the provisions.

There is scope and need for ensuring effective SOP/FSP for which there is a need to prepare all concerned with a simple but effective guidelines and directives that ensure use of the provisions strictly for the disadvantaged children. Also there is a need of a system to ensure basic quality of the provision. The provisions should be planned along with school education in DEP and VEP.

The efforts of supporting girls' participation in school in rural districts including girls' hostel facility and scholarship have positive impact in increasing girls' enrolment in school. Today, participation of girls in school education has improved significantly in Nepal in terms of gender parity index. However, participation of females in teaching, management and governance of education is still very low. Moreover, gender equality in terms of general environment is still very poor: gender balanced provisions and practices in school such as gender friendly provision of toilets and water supply, and provision for teachers who are nursing mothers are not only lacking but also not much considered in school development discourses. Traditional gender biased perceptions and practices are still visible in classroom and the school.

In order to address the gender bias issues, there is a need for continuation of the programs for enhancing gender equality: feeder hostels should be built in all the remote districts to help increase girls' participation at secondary level and tertiary level; preferential recruitment of female teachers should continue. There should be provisions for professional development of female teachers. There is also a need for orienting the head teachers and SMC members regarding the importance of gender friendly environment in school.

Low participation of Muslim children in school has been one of the major issues and challenges regarding universal access to basic and primary education. In this line *Madrasas* have been considered a very potential and viable option for mobilization to provide basic and primary education. Government has made provisions to pave ways for the development of *Madrasas* to provide basic and primary education by recognizing them as community based educational institutions and also providing grant support. Many *Madrasas* have been registered as per the government provision and started to provide basic mainstream school education to Muslim children. However, concerns are raised whether the *Madrasas* meet basic quality requirements to provide primary school education in appropriate environment.

Three issues stand as challenging to the basic quality requirements – firstly, *Madrasas* are made for religious and cultural education, therefore, they need to be developed to address mainstream school education; secondly teaching mainstream basic education adds further work loads to *Madrasas*, they need additional teachers; and thirdly, for the development and additional teachers there is a need for additional fund, for this there is a need for government commitment and support. Thus, *Madrasas* are potential for providing education, however, there should be policy and programs to train *Madrasa* teachers or provide qualified teachers trained in learner centered pedagogy and use of instructional materials. *Madrasa* also need a curriculum framework that incorporates both mainstream education and *Madrasa* education. And most importantly, they need explicit government commitments and provision for regular funding support.

Community managed school has been one of the major strategies of EFA program to make schools responsive to the local contexts and needs and to ensure better governance and management. The main policy thrust of community managed schools has been to address the concerns of improving school-community relations, improving school affairs, events and quality of instruction with the involvement of parents, and enhancing organizational transparency, effectiveness and efficiency. FRP study helped to establish the fact that the policy implementation of management transfer of schools did improve the school governance at the local level, it contributed in promoting grassroots democracy, and it improved quality of school leadership - HT and SMC chairperson's involvement.

The study also helped to understand the difficulties faced by the school communities to fully attain/realise the status of empowerment. Several factors have been noted hindering attainment of such situation. Inappropriate intrusion and interference particularly relating to teacher recruitment, transfer, and management from some government personnel as well as local influential people remained one of the challenging factors. Inadequate management experience and training on the part of the school community remained another challenging factor. Lack of financial confidence of school management due to processes involved in the provision of block grant release is also a hindering factor. Lack of guidelines with clear and explicit listing of roles, responsibilities and scope of the SMC as well as DEO regarding how to address the prevailing issues is another important hindering factor. Consequently, in most of the cases, the management committee roles were found confined to the development of physical facility only.

There is definitely a very high scope for community management of schools in Nepal, however, there is a need to ensure that this is taking place as anticipated with provisions of an explicit legal provisions to empower community in school management, a clear guideline to follow by all concerned, and orientation that helps practice the guidelines with confidence. There should be a transparent monitoring system and technical support system in place.

In almost all the program interventions, one overriding issue has been the capacity, attitude and sensitivity of the teachers. Professional development is central to all these issues. In Nepal, educational planning and program development have taken place to some extent, however, teacher professional development has remained as an issue not much addressed. It has not even come to policy and program conception in a comprehensive way. Consequently, the current provisions of teacher education and training do not address the long-term professional development needs as well as specific subject area needs of delivering quality and effective teaching and learning. There is, therefore, a need for a comprehensive teacher professional development policy and program. There is scope and need to develop a system of professional development with the involvement of the universities and institutions of higher education, linking them with the government system. The professional development efforts should be focused on teachers' content/subject specific problems, needs and difficulties.

School sector reform program (SSRP) follows EFA towards ensuring a comprehensive improvement in school education sector. School mapping and reform planning is a step undertaken by SSRP towards information based and need based development. Success of this approach however depended on several factors. Ensuring participation of stakeholders from the initial period to the reform actions is one of the factors; the need for orientation and training is another factor; the third

factor relates to the need for clear and workable strategy of data based actions starting from grass roots to upward level in the system in preparing and provisioning for SIP, VEP; and DEP, and fourthly the need for government commitment to support the implementation of the reform plans. There is, therefore, a need for good preparation before undertaking the school mapping and planning steps. The preparatory activities include preparing a clear guideline, ensuring awareness, commitment and participation of the stakeholders, ensuring a functional coordination among school, VDC and DDC and DEO regarding school reform and preparation of SIP, VEP and DEP. Adequate training and technical support are important for successful undertaking of school mapping and planning exercises.

In brief

FRP longitudinal system indicator based study shows that EFA program has contributed to visible increase in school enrolment, increasing the enrolment trend of *dalits* and disadvantaged in school education. It, however, also indicated the persistent issue of drop out and repetition and difficulty in promoting completion rate.

The FRP case studies in the year 2009 have indicated that the focus and strategies of EFA are generally in good direction and that they have produced consistent outcomes towards ensuring access of basic and primary education for all children and enhancing the quality of education. The studies show that EFA program has opened community participation in school management bringing innovations and resources at the local level for school development and management; brought government and local efforts, and resources closer to disadvantaged communities, raised gender parity level and enhanced the understanding and provisions regarding gender equality in school education, mobilized traditional institutions like *madrassa*, *gumba* and *gurukuls* for addressing school education, helped raise the issue of quality concerns and critical understanding of how they need/could be addressed, and also analyzed the scope and tasks ahead for better and effective planning in order to achieve comprehensive reform in school education sector.

All FRP activities and outcomes including the research based recommendations emphasized that success of a reform program depends on awareness, committed participation, sensitivity and mindfulness on the part of all the stakeholders including government, community, NGOs and schools at organization level as well as individual level i.e., teachers, head teachers, educational personnel, and the parents. One recommendation that stood common to all research outcomes is the need for preparing and circulating simple but practical guidelines listing the roles, responsibilities, and tasks of the actors. The other common recommendation was to regularly conduct orientation to the stakeholders to ensure that the guidelines are well understood and used.

FRP has contributed in the realization of the scope, limitation and factors that affected achievement of EFA goals. The FRP studies and outcomes have also helped to realize emergent trends of new issues. Most importantly, from the EFA implementation point of view, FRP studies generated action steps based on critical understanding of contemporary issues of school education. FRP approach for EFA has ensured participation of stakeholders in the process of research and dissemination that helped share the research experiences and outcomes at various stages -- in the identification of the issues and research questions, analysis of the

information and in the formulation of action steps. The approach ensured quality and relevance of the research activities as well as outcomes and expanded the scope of analysis.

The FRP reports and the action steps published by CERID are available in its website (www.cerid.org).