CONSOLIDATED EQUITY STRATEGY
FOR THE SCHOOL EDUCATION SECTOR IN NEPAL
The Consolidated Equity Strategy for the education sector in Nepal recognizes equity both as a means and an end to enable people’s capabilities and for them to become active participants in a cohesive society that value its diversity. As such, it provides a framework for the Government of Nepal to strengthen equitable access and participation in education, leading to equitable learning outcomes.
Equity as a crosscutting theme can be found within all respects and components of the education system. Nepal is a country with high diversity in terms of its people and their living context and needs. Even though Nepal has gained significant achievements within the education sector over the last decade under the sector wide programs that have been implemented under the Education for All National Plan of Action, these achievements have not been celebrated by all equally. Disparities leaving certain groups of children behind in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes remain, and the development of this consolidated equity strategy therefore comes at a crucial junction with the finish line for the 2015 MDG/EFA goals in sight.

The need for this strategy was jointly identified by the Government and the SSRP Development Partners during the 2012 SSRP Mid Term Review. The development of the strategy has been supported by the Access and Equity Thematic Working Group (AETWG), reconfirming the relevance of the establishment of these thematic joint platforms.

This strategy has been developed as a result of the vision and commitment of the involved Ministry’s team, stakeholders, line agencies and development partners. The development of the Consolidated Equity Strategy for the education sector has been a remarkable outcome. It provides a guiding framework for implementing educational programmes with targeted interventions across the education sector.

I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate Government’s commitment for implementing the equity strategy based on the recommendations and action steps suggested. I would appreciate the support and cooperation from all development partners as well as stakeholders to ensure children’s equitable access to quality education. Finally, I highly appreciate the engagement and commitment of all agencies and individuals in the pursuit of attaining our educational goals.
# Acronyms

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<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>AIN</td>
<td>Association of INGOS in Nepal</td>
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<td>ASIP</td>
<td>Annual Strategic Implementation Plan</td>
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<td>AWPB</td>
<td>Annual Work Plan and Budget</td>
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<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organizations</td>
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<td>CBS</td>
<td>Central Bureau for Statistics</td>
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<td>CCLP</td>
<td>Child Centred Learning Practices</td>
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<td>CCWB</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Curriculum Development Centre</td>
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<td>CDI</td>
<td>Child Deprivation Index</td>
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<td>CFS</td>
<td>Child Friendly School</td>
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<td>CLC</td>
<td>Community Learning Centre</td>
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<td>DDC</td>
<td>District Development Committee</td>
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<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education For All</td>
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<td>EGRA</td>
<td>Early Grade Reading Assessment</td>
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<td>EGRS</td>
<td>Early Grade Reading Skills</td>
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<td>FY</td>
<td>Fiscal Year</td>
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<td>GBV</td>
<td>Gender Based Violence</td>
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<td>HDI</td>
<td>Human Development index</td>
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<td>IG</td>
<td>Income Generation</td>
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<td>INGOs</td>
<td>International Non Governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>LSGA</td>
<td>Local Self Governance Act</td>
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<td>LWF</td>
<td>Learning Without Fear</td>
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<td>MECs</td>
<td>Minimum Enabling Conditions</td>
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<td>MLE</td>
<td>Multi Lingual Education</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MOFALD</td>
<td>Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development</td>
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<td>MOHP</td>
<td>Ministry of Health and Population</td>
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<td>MOI</td>
<td>Medium Of Instructions</td>
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<td>MOWCSW</td>
<td>Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare</td>
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<td>MTBC</td>
<td>Mother Tongue Based Curriculum</td>
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<tr>
<td>NASA</td>
<td>National Assessment of Student Achievements</td>
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<td>Out Of School Children</td>
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<td>PPTS</td>
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<td>PMECs</td>
<td>Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions</td>
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<td>Resource Person</td>
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<td>SLC</td>
<td>School Leaving Certificate</td>
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<td>SMCs</td>
<td>School Management Committees</td>
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<td>SS</td>
<td>School Supervisor</td>
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<td>SWAp</td>
<td>Sector Wide Approach</td>
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<td>SZOP</td>
<td>Schools as a Zone Of Peace</td>
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<td>TWG</td>
<td>Thematic Working Group</td>
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<td>UOSP</td>
<td>Urban Out of School Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village Development Committee</td>
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<td>WASH</td>
<td>Water, Sanitation and Health</td>
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The Education For All (EFA) agenda brought about a global movement to ensure the opportunities that are provided through good education could become accessible for all and that schools become inclusive learning environments, providing quality education. This is all the more relevant with the realisation that education has a strong correlation with life outcomes such as health and socio-economic status. Education is key for countries to reach their Millennium Development Goals, including the EFA goals by 2015.

Nepal is a country of great diversity in terms of its geography and its people. The 2011 Population Census recorded 26.5 million people of 126 different caste/ethnic groups who speak 123 different languages. Nepal has come a long way in exposing and addressing inequalities within its society, by developing legislations to address discrimination based on caste and religion and to help ensure equality and universal access. However, Nepal’s historical and structural past continues to influence the hierarchic structure of the society which has resulted in continued differential access to economic, political and socio-cultural resources and the marginalization of some groups and the continuing inequity in the society. It is crucial to intensify efforts to strengthen equity and education is a powerful and enabling medium as it has been widely recognised as one of the main strategies to enable and empower people in achieving quality of life outcomes.

Equity in education has been a key concept both globally and in Nepal. Nepal’s Education for All National Plan of Action (2001-2015) stated that social equity is one of the key strategic objectives for the country. Many of socio-cultural and political traditions in Nepal are largely discriminatory and exclusionary and are expressed in different dimensions including: gender; socio-economic status; location; health and nutrition status; disabilities; caste and ethnicity; language; and certain vulnerable groups such as working children. Given the tradition that large numbers of people in the country have been and continue to be deprived of their educational rights, they have remained unable to make their lives better and more secure. While interventions to achieve equity in education have gone some way to addressing these inequalities, equity in education remains a constant challenge for education in Nepal. Nepal has seen significant achievements within the education sector over the last decade, with the sector wide programmes that have been implemented under the Education for All National Plan of Action however these achievements have not been celebrated by all equally. Disparities leaving certain groups of children behind in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes remain. The development of this consolidated equity strategy, identified by the Government and the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) Development Partners during the 2012 SSRP Mid-Term Review comes at a crucial junction with the finish line for the 2015 MDG/EFA goals in sight. The resulting strategy paper objectives include how to best integrate the out-of-school children into school, while improving the learning process and outcomes of children that are already enrolled in school and to prevent drop-out, using the analysis of Census 2011 data. Existing interventions were found and it was agreed to: (i) develop a consolidated and comprehensive equity strategy with a focus on pro-poor targeting, and consolidate and align existing interventions in order to strengthen effectiveness; (ii) strengthen the EMIS and research on equity and a safe and child friendly learning environment; and (iii) develop equity indicators and measures to effectively and equitably allocate monetary incentives. With regards to strengthening equity, the strategic framework focuses on three equity areas; (i) equity in meaningful access, (ii) equity in meaningful/functional participation and (iii) equity in meaningful learning outcomes.
A core tool of the strategy will be the development of the Education Deprivation Index (EDI), which is based on the capability approach and is structured according to its components, areas and dimensions that affect capabilities. It specifies the different grades of severity within these with regard to deprivation of access, participation and learning outcomes and the correlations that these levels have with each other and those within other equity dimensions. The focal dimensions of inequity that have been identified include: gender, socio-economic status, geographic location, health and nutritional status, disabilities, caste and ethnicity, language and children from vulnerable groups. When selecting the indicators and scales relevant indexes will be used including the Human Development Index (HDI), the Poverty Index (PI) and the Child Deprivation Index (CDI). The aim is to incorporate and align the index, wherever possible, with the Education Management Information System (EMIS) in order to strengthen the alignment and sustainability in data management. A need analysis will used as a starting point for the development of a more holistic index showing prevalence and severity of deprivation.

The strategy objectives include: 1. Achieving equity in access, identifying the most marginalized groups of learners that have so far remained unable to access education, through utilising desegregated data, monitoring and initiatives - to ensure they are supported on a need base and thereby able to overcome their barriers in accessing education; 2. Strengthening of equity in participation, retention and inclusion. Identifying learners that are currently dropping out of education or at risk of doing so and addressing their specific barriers, both school and non-school based barriers by addressing the knowledge gaps with regards to these barriers. There will be an alignment of efforts and initiatives to strengthen their educational survival rate; and 3. Strengthening of equity in learning outcomes, reducing inequitable learning outcomes and addressing root causes of these discrepancies through targeted interventions focused on removal of barriers for learners and catering specific needs, with regards to the relevance of education to skills that translate into quality life outcomes in the context of the learner and labour market.

The strategy will identify and develop a series of interventions and programmes to best ensure the overall objective of increasing equity in education for Nepal. These include: Designing, implementing and increased working with communities, schools and parents in order to strengthen the access and retention of students amongst disadvantaged groups, girls, disadvantaged ethnic and religious groups, children with disabilities and vulnerable children; To strengthen the provision of Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMECs) – including providing safe and enabling environments for girls to learn, provide basic education in remote and difficult locations and support and enable children with disabilities; To strengthen the awareness of the importance and far reaching benefits of girls’ education; Implement schemes to increase and encourage higher female representation amongst teachers and management; To target and support ECED, nutrition and health programmes in order to promote better health and reduce health risks in order to retain students, increase their attendance and assist in food and nutritional deficiencies; To increase and enhance programmes providing education in mother tongue languages; To increase access to secondary education and the provision of relevant life skills and appropriate non formal skills to assist with entry into the labour market; To remove barriers and provide programmes that cater to the specific needs and increased protection of vulnerable children – including orphans, street children, children with long term illnesses and children at risk of violence; and To explore ways to use technological solutions in order to reach children in difficult circumstances or geographic locations. The strategy will work closely with Development Partners to use their expertise and ensure the sustainability of the strategy and that equity remains a key feature in all future education sector plans.
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Section I: Context and Conceptualization

1. Introduction

Education has been widely recognized as one of the main strategies to enable and empower people in achieving quality of life outcomes. The Education For All (EFA) agenda brought about a global movement to ensure the opportunities that are provided through good education could become accessible for all and that schools become inclusive learning environments, providing quality education. This is all the more relevant with the realization that education has a strong correlation with life outcomes such as health and socio economic status. As such, education is the key for countries to reach their Millennium Development Goals.¹

With less than two years left to accomplish the EFA goals in 2015, significant achievements have been observed in terms of physical access to formal education. At the same time, goals on the quality of education and learning outcomes have been to lagging behind. Overall, none of the 6 MDG goals regarding EFA will be met by 2015 and the people that have been the most deprived have benefitted the least from the global EFA agenda. Progress can largely be described as having been a top down process, for example in the case where high numbers of children have been enrolled, the children that would need and benefit the most from education have remained unreached. In other words, the gap between ‘those that have and can’ and ‘those that don’t’ continues to widen.²

In the case of Nepal, there has been significant progress in strengthening equity, yet equally there is much ground left to be covered. National averages show strong progress in educational access and gender parity at the basic and secondary education level, a second look reveals that large differences remain - between children of different gender, social economic status, children with different abilities, castes and ethnicities. Certain groups remain highly marginalized in term of their access and participation in education and their learning and life outcomes as a result of this.

Educational successes and ‘failures are not evenly distributed amongst the society, when looking at who is not accessing, not participating and not sufficiently learning, certain groups are disproportionally represented. As such, the need for a consolidated equity strategy for the education sector emerged.

While Nepal has come a long way in exposing and addressing inequalities within its society, stark discrepancies remain with regards to the effect that people’s socio economic status, gender, caste, ethnicity, language, geographical location and ability on their life and learning opportunities. As Nepal’s population is in several ways highly diverse and is still in the transition phase from a country

¹ World Bank 2012; Sectoral perspectives on gender and social inclusion
² UNESCO 2014; Education For All Global Monitoring Report 2013/14
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with deeply rooted foundations for inequitable participation of its citizens to public life to a democracy that values and embraces this diversity, it seems crucial to intensify efforts to strengthen equity with education being the obvious medium for this.

The population census 2011 reported 26.5 million people of 126 different caste/ethnic groups who speak 123 different languages. This diversity could be a developmental resource but because of historical and structural reasons has resulted in a highly hierarchic structure of the society with differential access to economic, political, and socio-cultural resources. This situation has resulted in marginalization of some groups of people creating high inequity in the society. Nepal's Gini Coefficient of 0.33 as reported for the country also illustrates the intensity of inequity in Nepal. Furthermore, the 2011 Human Development report of Nepal illustrated the impact of this inequality stating that if the return on economic progress made over the previous years had been equally spread across the Nepalese society, the country's HDI would have currently been one third higher than it is.

Equity in education has been a key concept globally and in Nepal. Education for All National Plan of Action (2001-2015) added social equity as one of the key strategic objectives for Nepal. The Plan noted that the ‘socio-cultural-construct of the society’ and ‘less transformative political system’ are largely responsible for a situation of inequity in education. Many of socio-cultural and political traditions in Nepal are largely discriminatory and exclusionary and are expressed in different dimensions like gender, socio economic status, location, health and nutrition status, disabilities, caste and ethnicity, language and certain vulnerable groups such as working children. Given such traditions large numbers of people in the country are deprived of their educational rights and thus have remained unable to make their life better and secured. Interventions to achieve equity in education have gone some way to addressing inequalities. However, equity in education remains a constant challenge in education in Nepal.

2. Strategy formulation process

Rationale and mandate for the strategy

The progress that has been observed with regards to access and quality of the education system has been disproportionally distributed across the population. Certain groups of children from disadvantaged groups remain unable to access or participate in education in a way that enables them educational attainment that is meaningful for them to achieving quality life outcomes and establishing

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3 The Human Development Report 2014 estimates Nepal’s population currently at 27 million
4 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
5 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
6 United Nations Development Program (UNDP), 2011
7 Ministry of Education (MOE), 2002
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an acceptable level of well-being. In line with the recommendations from the joint reviews and consultations undertaken as part of the SSRP Sector Wide Approach (SWAp), and recognizing the opportunity to access extensive data on children’s educational status from the 2011 National Living Standard Survey (NLSS), the Government of Nepal, with the support of the Access and Equity Thematic Working Group (TWG), initiated the development of a consolidated equity strategy for the school education sector in Nepal.

Under the guidance of the Access and Equity TWG, an Equity Strategy Paper Preparation Team was formed and prepared the strategy paper in order to integrate the out-of-school children into school, while improving the learning process and outcomes of children that are already enrolled in school to prevent drop out, using the analysis of Census 2011 data. Existing interventions were found. As such, it was agreed to (i) develop a consolidated and comprehensive equity strategy with a focus on pro-poor targeting, consolidating and aligning existing interventions to strengthen effectiveness, (ii) strengthen EMIS and research on equity and a safe and child friendly learning environment, and (iii) develop equity indicators and measures to effectively and equitably allocate monetary incentives.

**Methodology**

In order to meet these objectives, a situational analysis was undertaken, including identification of the population to be served by the strategy, equity in the context of the education sector in Nepal and lessons learnt in the region and stakeholder consultations. Subsequently, a need analysis was performed to establish prevalence, incidence and severity of priority equity issues. The need analysis presented in section II will be used as a starting point for the development of a more holistic index showing prevalence and severity of deprivation. Based on the developed equity indicators, targets have been set for the short term strategy implementation (SSRP Extension period 2014-16). During 2014-15, options for addressing equity issues in education, such as: technical, administrative and legal feasibility; financial and resource availability; long-term sustainability; acceptability; knock-on effects; equity and distributional effects will be considered where relevant.

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8 Government of Nepal, 2012; SSRP joint Mid Term review
9 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
10 Team leader Professor Mahesh Parajuli and team members Ram Krishna Rijal and Ms. Bishwa Bala Thapa
11 Government of Nepal, 2012; SSRP joint Mid Term review
12 out of school children, children at risk of dropping out and children that are in school but not learning
3. **Framework for the equity strategy**

**Theoretical framework**

The SSRP aims to strengthen equity in the education sector, and through that within the Nepalese society, as ‘**the reform will focus on girls and women and children from educationally deprived groups so that they will participate equally and attain equitable results**’ [13]. Thereby there is a need for developing a broader framework of equity and inclusion in the education. In order to ‘participate equally’ and ‘attain equitable results’ all children should have equitable access to education, equitable participation in education, leading to equitable attainments. As such, education is taken both as a **means** in terms of education enabling children to develop capabilities in order to achieve quality life outcomes and overall well-being, as well as an **end** in terms of producing people that have been educated through meaningful access, participation and learning outcomes, who will be equipped with skills to engage in a cohesive and inclusive society. Education as such is seen as the main enabler in providing children with sufficient agency for developing these capabilities and the school should function as a mini society in terms of addressing social and cultural norms and perceptions that could foster future segregation and instead prepare children to be an active part of a society that values diversity. Education is a process that reaches beyond the school premises into the household and communities that children live in terms of providing a supportive and enabling learning environment. As such, in order to strengthen equal quality of life outcomes, differential treatment may need to be provided, to address the differential circumstances that children experience.

The theoretical foundation of the Education equity strategy is based on the capability approach. This approach advocates that we focus on people’s capabilities when making evaluations, such as those involving poverty measurements, cost-benefit analyses, efficiency evaluations, social justice issues, development ethics, and inequality analyses. What are these capabilities? Capabilities are people’s potential functionings. Functionings are beings and doings. Examples are being well fed, taking part in the community, being sheltered, relating to other people, working in the labour market, caring for others, and being healthy. The difference between a functioning and a capability is similar to the difference between an achievement and the freedom to achieve something, or between an outcome and an opportunity. All capabilities together correspond to the overall freedom to lead the life that a person has reason to value.[14]

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Deprivation Index

A core tool of the strategy will be the development of the Deprivation Index, which will be structured according to the components, areas and dimensions outlined below as well as specify prevalence, severity within these with regard to deprivation of access, participation and learning outcomes. Both school-based and household-based census data will be used along with other data available to supply the index with regards to incidence, prevalence and severity of deprivation in education. The Equity in Education Index is expected to be finalized within the short term strategy time frame (FY 2014-15), in order to inform decision making during prioritization and resource allocation. When selecting the indicators and scales within the Index, relevant Indexes will be used to inform these, such as the Human Development Index (HDI), the Poverty Index (PI) and the Child Deprivation Index (CDI)\(^{15}\) and the Human Opportunity Index (HOI). As the conceptual framework of the equity strategy is based on the capability approach, the index will be envisioned to be developed in a way that it presents several levels of severity within each equity dimension, as well as correlations that these levels have with each other and those within the other equity dimensions. The index will have the following structure.

Equity areas

In regards to strengthening equity, the strategic framework focuses on three equity areas; (i) equity in meaningful access, (ii) equity in meaningful/functional participation and (iii) equity in meaningful learning outcomes. Meaningful has been added to avoid confusion that the strategy’s focus areas are seen in a superficial and physical sense. Access within the strategic framework does not mean merely enrolment, which specified an administrative action, but a child entering education (both basic and secondary level) and being welcomed in doing so. Participation goes beyond for example retention or attendance, it specifying a child physically being within the school, being engaged in the social and educational processes within the education system and feeling safe and accepted while doing so. Finally, learning outcomes, not just in the sense of being sufficient to pass tests, but aligned with the potential and the needs and context of the child’s livelihood and life skills.

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\(^{15}\) The Nepal UNDAF/UNICEF Child Deprivation Index consists of 10 indicators measurable at district and municipality level drawn from Government and UN data sources: food security phase; net enrolment rate (primary); working children 10-14 years; sanitation coverage; per capita development budget expenditure; DPT 3 immunization under 1 year of age; expected frequencies of outbreaks; ratio of girls to boys in secondary education; the MOFALD’s Minimum Condition Performance Measures; and NDHS 2011 stunting prevalence rates.
Equity dimensions

In order to strengthen equity within the education system and at the three levels as specified above, the strategic framework identifies 8 dimensions of (in) equity, these being (i) gender, (ii) socio economic status (SES), (iii) geographical location, (iv) health and nutrition status, (v) disabilities, (vi) caste & ethnicity, (vii) language and (viii) children of vulnerable groups. The status that children and their families have within these dimensions (for example urban or rural, rich or poor, boy or girl, etc.) has a direct link to their life outcomes in terms of physical health, mental well being, nutrition, bodily integrity, safety, social relations, political empowerment and participation, etc. Education is seen both as end and means, in relation to enabling children to strengthen these life outcomes, and as an end with regard to meaningful access, participation and learning outcomes being one of these outcomes.

**Gender** refers to the socially constructed differences between girls, boys, women, men and others in ECED, basic education and secondary education level age (3–16 years). Due to the socially and culturally defined roles and perceptions towards them, inequalities in education exist in term of meaningful access, meaningful participation and meaningful learning outcomes. This includes the perception that people in particular and society as a whole have from the purpose of education in fulfilling these roles. Gender equality focus is at times confused with a strategy to support girls and women, them not being a vulnerable or disadvantaged group; they are 50% of the school going population with constituted gendered rights and needs. Hence, this strategy considers gender inequities in cases of children from all gender that face barriers in access, participation and learning outcomes based on their specific needs.

The **Socio Economic Status** equity dimension considers poverty beyond merely income but rather an overall absence of access to fulfilment of basic needs (including education) such as health, housing, empowerment, employment, personal security, etc. Limitations of available data in this regard will however narrow the focus to children that belong to the lowest wealth quintile, as data shows that the educational outcomes of this group shows a large disparity in education outcomes in comparison with children from the other socio economic quintiles.

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16 Such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual and intersex (LGBTI). In Nepal, these categories are commonly jointly referred to as ‘third gender’.

17 Definition of Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)

**Health and Nutrition Status** in the equity strategy takes into account the multiple barriers children face for survival, development and learning. Growth faltering is associated with a range of problems later in life including reduced mental ability. Under nutrition during early childhood represents a critical obstacle for the long-term learning capacity of individuals. From conception up to age two, the brain develops, both in terms of structure and size: without adequate nutrition, the development can be irreversible damaged with regards to obtaining learning outcomes at a later age. In Nepal, it is estimated that around 40% of children under five, almost half of the total number of future citizens, are stunted: their physical and mental development is impaired with long life irreversible effects. For school aged children, under nutrition hinders the ability to learn, causing a negative impacts on school attendance and attention spans. Furthermore, nutrition has a strong correlation with socio economic status; when economic resources are limited, dietary diversity declines, leaving children with a lack of sufficient nutrition. However, other dimensions, such as gender, also have strong correlations as a result of cultural restrictions. Besides this, health of children, for example in case of communicable diseases or HIV infection, is disproportionally affecting children with low socio-economic status or those in remote locations in terms of access to healthcare.

**Geographical location** should be seen within this strategy as the presence/access to services that address basic needs (schools, health facilities, employment, etc.) or the geographical features of the children's livelihood and physical surroundings. Furthermore, location also includes specific characteristics of urban versus non-urban/rural/remote areas and the effect they have on the equity areas, such as availability or distance to public services and level of potential utilization of the surroundings for sustaining livelihoods, for example through agriculture or forestry. As Nepal's geographical features vary from snow-capped mountains to subtropical areas in the Terai, the livelihood educational opportunities for people living in different parts of the country vary widely as well.

**Disabilities** is a diverse equity dimension when it comes to the effect on access, participation and learning outcomes, as in encompasses a broad range of physical and mental limitations and needs. Recognizing this diversity, disabilities in this strategy is recognized as resulting from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal base with others. Within the Nepal education sector, the following categories are adapted with regard to disabilities: physical (affecting mobility), intellectually impaired, hearing impaired, visually impaired, low vision, hearing & visually impaired, vocal and speech related disabilities. In addition to these more technical definitions, the conceptual framework of the strategy specifies disabilities both as the barriers that children experience with regard to meaningful access, participation and learning outcomes in education caused by their physical,

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19 UNCRPD
20 Department of Education, Education Management Information System (EMIS)
sensory and/ or cognitive limitations\textsuperscript{21}, as well as by the social/cultural perceptions and stigmas that are present within their family/ household/ community and school related to those limitations.

**Ethnic group and or caste** is the sixth equity dimension, which focuses on the inequities that children experience with regard to their interactions with others that are influenced by the societal, cultural and social norms, values and habits, relating to the group to which they belong and their mother tongue language. This includes both interactions with people or groups from other ethnic groups or castes, as well as interactions with people within their own ethnic group or caste. In Nepal there are over a 100 castes and ethnic groups. As religious groups have similar structure and face similar interactions and classifications as castes, they are considered under this dimension as well, including religious minorities, such as the Muslim communities, that face high levels of deprivation in terms of education and broader life outcomes.

**Language** as an equity dimension can be directly linked with specific ethnic group. In this regard, sign language needs to be recognized under this dimension as it is the first language for people with hearing impairments. Language presents specific barriers with regards to access, participation and learning outcomes based on the presence or absence of mother tongue education and the perception of the value of these languages with regard to the child’s development and learning outcomes by its parents.

**Children of vulnerable groups** refer to various groups of children that are exposed to specific treats, which increases their vulnerability and can hinder access to school. Protection concerns includes: violence, exploitation and abuse, cultural practices and child labour. Children separated from their biological parents or unaccompanied as well as children affected by (seasonal) migration and children living and working in the streets present higher levels of vulnerability with reduced opportunities for learning. Children affected by HIV, thereby considering the wider range of social, cultural and environmental barriers that these children face, are also considered to be part of this dimension.

It is recognized that caste is a socially constructed classification to categorize people and ethnicity is a biological/genetic classification. However, the large overlap in ethnic groups being identified as different castes, as well as the similarities in terms of social economic and cultural implications this classification are taken as a justification for combining these two means of identification under a common indicator.

\textsuperscript{21} Including children with learning disabilities
As such, the Education Deprivation Index will incorporate these components, areas and dimensions, displaying correlations between the dimensions and the different levels of severity and the relation that these levels have with children’s access, participation and learning outcomes.

**Operational framework**

The implementation plan within the strategic framework consists of costed implementation plans for the academic year 2014-15 and 2015-16, which will be reflected in the Annual Strategic Implementation Plans (ASIP) and Annual Work Plans and Budgets (AWPB). As such, the implementation of the equity strategy will strengthen the focus of achieving the equity related objectives and targets, as outlined under the SSRP. The Government has reviewed the proposed strategies and activities that have been developed by the Equity and Access Thematic Working Group (TWG) based on needs assessments, gap analysis and other relevant reviews and studies and have been validated through stakeholder consultations at the national, regional, district and local level. The monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the short term strategy (2014-16) and its impact will allow the Access and Equity TWG to function as a think-tank on equity in the post 2015 education sector scenario, identifying remaining challenges and priorities based on good and innovative practices and lessons learnt. Thus, the current strategy document includes a costed implementation plan for the academic year 2014-15, detailed strategic actions and activities for the academic year 2015-16 and post 2015 strategies within

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22 The dimension of ‘health and nutrition’ is absent in the strategic framework, however health and nutrition is observed to be directly linked to the SES and geographic location dimensions and has been considered in the development of the different levels of severity.
its operation plan. During the FY 2014-15, the TWG will support the Government in developing a prevalence and severity index of inequitable access, participation and learning outcomes. This index will present the correlations between the equity dimensions and their combined impact on access, participation and learning outcomes (severity), as well as the actual number of children that represent the different combinations (prevalence). Additionally, the TWG will use in house expertise to project the cost of removing barriers for these children in order to provide the Government with a policy and planning tool to prioritize funding allocation in order to reach the biggest impact.

Alignment with other strategies and action plans

The Equity strategy is based on the principles of social inclusion and equity embedded in the goals of the country’s Education For All National Plan of Action (2001-2015). As such, it aims to consolidate agreed actions and strategies and ensures that there will be a uniform approach towards strengthening equity in and through education in Nepal. With regards to aligning the efforts to strengthen equity in access, the strategy builds on agreed actions and frameworks of the action plan to enrol out of school children, including the district wise targets that have been developed by the Government of Nepal.\(^\text{23}\) With regards to strengthening equity in participation and learning outcomes, the strategy is based on strategies and action plans that have been developed with a focus on improving the child friendly and enabling quality learning environment and the overall well-being of children and the household based barriers to education that they face, such as the Strategic implementation plan for gender equality in girls’ education.\(^\text{24}\) The issues, recommendations and list of candidate actions that was assembled from this and put up for consideration for becoming short and medium term strategies have been captured in the strategic framework of the consolidated equity strategy in Section III.

\(^\text{23}\) Strategy and Action Plan on bringing OOSC into basic education (DOE, 2013)
Section II: Analysis and Assessment of Equity in Nepal’s Education System

1. **Overall**

Consultations with different stakeholders at the national and local level, indicates that the concept of equity in education is not well understood, and is often seen as synonymous with equality. It furthermore lacks clarity at a policy, planning and implementation level as different literature and agencies provide different definitions of equity. The second main input from the stakeholder consultations is that when equity is discussed, people in most cases focus on access to education.

Social and cultural norms and practices have been identified as the main causes of inequity, together with the prioritization of education by parents, due to lack of awareness. Addressing social and cultural norms that disproportionally affect certain groups of children within the Nepalese society with regards to their access and participation in education needs both activism and advocacy from within the civil society and political will.

2. **Policy context**

By ratifying the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 and subsequent treaties to establish the right to education and to non discrimination through specific provisions from state interventions, the Government of Nepal committed to ensuring that all citizens get an opportunity to succeed in life, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, living area, social economic status, ability, religion, etc. However, it took up to the 1990 constitution for Nepal to mainstream equity and social inclusion cross sectorally as key concepts in reform agendas and development plans. The 2007 interim constitution further strengthened the rights based approach in declaring the social protection, rights and empowerment of specific groups that were recognized as marginalized. As a result, legislation was put in place, such as the Gender Equality Act of 2006, and institutions were created to strengthen the agency of specific disadvantaged groups in the Nepalese society such as the national commissions for women, Dalits and indigenous people. EFA/NPA social equity as one of the key strategic objectives (MOE 2002), in line with this plan, the national five year development plans by the National Planning Commission specifically outlined the need for strengthening equitable and inclusive education.

SSRP adopted the goal of ensuring equitable access to quality education (for all children between 4 and 16 years) through a right based approach and promotion of a child friendly environment in schools.

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25 UNESCO, 2010
Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal
together with the objective of creating ‘equitable participation in basic education’. Under the SSRP, several frameworks, directives and action plans have been endorsed by the Ministry of Education since 2009 that either strengthen equitable access and participation in certain components of the education system or entail an equity dimension. The Strategy for Gender Equality in Girl’s Education (2007), Multi Lingual Education Implementation Directive (2009), National Child Friendly School Framework (2010), Schools as a Zone Of Peace Directive (2011), Child Friendly Local Governance Procedures (2011), Guideline for Free and Compulsory Education, Making Teaching Profession Inclusive (Teacher Service Commission Regulation 2002, Fifth Amendment 2010), the School Health and Nutrition Strategy (2006) and School Enrolment Campaign guideline (2011) are examples of this. In addition, cross sector strategies that are currently being developed such as the Multi-Sector Nutrition Strategy and the strategy to reduce child/early marriages have been considered, as well as reviews and research that was undertaken under the implementation of the first 5 years of the SSRP.26

This strategy builds on the efforts made by the Government of Nepal, Development Partners under the SSRP and previous sector wide programs in the education sector, I/NGOs and CBOs with regard to the strengthening of equity in education. In doing so, the strategy aligns with the overall SSRP goals and objectives, as well as with action plans and strategies that have been developed and approved by the Ministry of Education or other Ministries. Despite the several existing policies, strategies and frameworks, such as the ‘Action plan to enrol children into basic education’, the ‘National Framework for Child Friendly Schools’ and the Teacher Professional Development and Management Strategy, there is need for a clear policy focusing on out of school children and children in school that are at risk of dropping out or obtaining insufficient learning outcomes, that is supported by an equity strategy.27 As observed in the Child Friendly School (CFS) review ‘all children have an opportunity to survive, develop, and reach their full potential, without discrimination, bias or favouritism’28, and in doing so ‘guaranteeing the fundamental rights of every child, regardless of gender, race, religious beliefs, income, physical attributes, geographical location, or other status.’29

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26 National Assessment of Student Achievements - where are we now? (ERO, 2013), Futures Stolen (Human Right Watch 2011),
Situational analysis of OOSC in 15 districts (UNICEF 2014), Preliminary EGRA findings (RTI & New ERA 2014)
27 Situational analysis of OOSC in 15 priority districts, UNICEF 2014
28 UNICEF
29 CRC
3. Equity measures, programs and plans

Under the SSRP, a number of noteworthy measures are being undertaken to strengthen equity in the education sector. These measures can broadly be categorized in the following themes:

**Incentive schemes**

The largest program is **scholarships** that are currently provided for girls, Dalit, children from remote and deprived areas (the Karnali zone) and children with disabilities. The relative importance and effect of these is not fully understood, but several studies indicate that they have a significant impact on enrolment in particular. Currently, the Government has adopted a ‘blanket approach’ for the dissemination of these incentives, which often causes them to be insufficient for the poorest and most needy children. In reality often be undermined by indirect costs, such as finding the money for notebooks, still causing poor families to not enrol (22.1% of children never attended school because they had to ‘help at home’) or take their children out of school.

**Health and Nutrition programs**

Another important incentive programme is the midday meals program supported by the Government which has demonstrated significant success in contributing to increased and sustained enrolment. The midday meal programme has shown to be particularly effective among disadvantaged groups living in highly food insecure areas of Nepal, mainly in the far and mid-western hills and mountains of the country. Currently, the midday meal programme is implemented through a dual modality: a food-based modality approach (in 10 districts) according to which food is cooked on-site and served at mid-day and cash-based modality (in 19 districts) where cash is directly provided to the schools to provide a midday meal for children.

**Advocacy and Campaigns**

The ‘Welcome to school Campaign’ has been institutionalized as a annual reoccurring event in which schools join hands with community members and local organizations to perform household visits in order to convince parents in enrolling their children and ensure that children come to school from the start of the academic year. In addition to the nationwide campaign, intensive campaigns are deployed amongst severely marginalized communities, such as Satar, Chepang, Majhi, Bote, Danuwar, Dhami and Thami communities, and in priority districts. In addition, the Government has established partnerships with national and local media to ensure transparency and accountability as well as advocacy and awareness on the value of and right to education.

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30 Stakeholder consultations
31 Stakeholder consultations
32 Such as Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Parsa, Kailali, Kanchanpur, Manang, Mustang, Tanahun and Kapilbastu
Enabling learning environment

The Government has adopted the National Framework for Child Friendly Schools and subsequently the Child Friendly School Framework in 2010. This a broad framework that outlines the establishment of a child friendly learning environment against a number of dimensions such as Teaching and Learning, Inclusion and Gender, School Health, Safety and Security, Children's, Family and Community Participation, School Governance & Management and M & E.

The Government has also formulated Minimum Enabling Conditions (MECs), which are based on the Child Friendly School Framework. In order to provide schools and district level educational management with a tool to prioritize implementing these conditions, 5 Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMECs) were condensed from these MECs (teacher, classroom, separate girls’ toilet with water and sanitations, textbooks and a separate book corner in every class). The Government is also in the process of adopting MECs for ECED and secondary education, as well as develop MECs for children with disabilities. Girls’ toilets have been found a strong indicators for retention of girls in education as mixed toilets can create a potential harassment hazard and it allows girls to attend school during their menstruation period, which is still faces a strong stigma in Nepal.33

In addition, the Government is initiating a National Early Grade Reading Programme in order to strengthen the reading and comprehension skills in the early grades, particularly focusing on children from marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

Affirmative action policies and legislation

Linking with the enabling environment, Nepal has adopted affirmative action oriented policies with regard to establishing a balanced representation of the population within the teacher force and the public service sector as a whole. Currently 45% of all teacher positions are reserved by policy for under-represented groups, out of which 33% are reserved for female teachers and School Management Committees (SMC) need to have at least 1 female member. Similarly, quotas are in place for other currently under-represented groups, based on caste, ethnicity, geographical location and disability. Despite policies in place to enforce the fulfillment of these quotas, it remains challenging to ensure need based recruitment of teachers across different regions and grade levels. Preparing women as professional teachers and addressing the socio-cultural barriers, specific targeted program for women teachers are essential. However, these are not well recognized and addressed. In addition to reservation quotas, the Government has endorsed a policy for hiring teachers in the early grades (1-3) of basic education that speak local languages, as well as developed teacher training and educational resource in 22 mother tongue languages.

33 Department of Education, 2014
Alternative education

In order to address the needs of those who have remained outside the formal education sector, the government has established a number of non-formal education and skill development programs. The School Outreach Program (SOP) is a 3 years program for 6 to 8 years age groups children who are not able to attend schools due to geographic remoteness and various socio-economic reasons. The Flexible School Program (FSP) is a program that enables out of school children of 8 to 14 years to complete primary education in three years through condensed courses. The Open Schooling Programme (OSP) targets children that drop out of school and neo-literates with an objective of providing lower secondary level education through a two year programme.

Besides this there are several non-formal education programmes developed for targeting adults, such as the National Literacy Campaign under which classes are conducted two hours a day over a period of three months. Besides this the Post literacy program aims at sustaining literacy and imparts functional skills to the neo-literates through continuing education. In addition to literacy courses, the Government also provides Income Generation programs that are designed to help the poor segment of the population that have completed the Post Literacy Course through government sponsored literacy programs. Finally, the concept of Community Learning Centers (CLCs) has been established to provide various learning opportunities for community development and improvement of people's quality of life in each village development committee and municipality of Nepal. Overall, non formal education programs have proven to be needed and effective, however strengthening of overall coordination and alignment, as well as setting up a strong monitoring system is required to ensure quality and equitable distribution of these services.

Once out of school children have joined school either directly or after completing non formal education many experience barriers entering age appropriate or skill appropriate grades and find themselves in lower grades than are appropriate to their age ability. New policies requiring attendance to sit School Leaving Examinations prevent working children that re-join formal education from completing high school. Flexible policies exist but access to special night schools or open schools are inadequate. In addition to the Government’s efforts in this regard, I/NGOs run extra support programs especially for working children and dropouts returning to school to improve learning outcomes.

Inclusion of Children with disabilities

The Government has undertaken efforts to strengthen access, participation and learning outcomes for children with disabilities. Although the Government in this regard uses the term ‘inclusive education’ it actually provides integrated education from a technical perspective, as ‘resource classes’ are separate classes set up for children with disabilities and special curriculum has been developed for schools that only cater children with disabilities. Further desegregation of data on children with disabilities is being complicated by the dearth of information available. Developing educational materials for children...
with disabilities is currently done within a limited scope and scale. Also, in the absence of adequate diagnostic services available, children with so-called mild impairments are likely to go unnoticed and yet are likely to experience deprivation on their participation and learning outcomes as a result of these impairments. Thus, a holistic framework for children with disabilities is needed. The Government lays out a clear road map with regard to the diagnostic and referral system for children with disabilities, the concepts of mainstreaming versus special education, taking international best practices in account and the minimum enabling learning environment and support needed to provide equal opportunities and outcomes for children with disabilities.

Partnerships and networks

I/NGOs; Over the last decades, there has been a strong presence of I/NGOs in the education sector in Nepal. Under the SSRP, this presence has been further aligned with the priorities identified by the Government in the education sector through collaboration with educational I/NGO networks and platforms, such as the Association of INGOs in Nepal (AIN), the National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE-N) and the National Federation of NGOs in Nepal. Currently, there are 29 INGOs working together under the AIN’s Education Working Group (AIN-EWG), which is present in all joint meetings and reviews of the SSRP, as well as in the different joint Thematic Working Groups. INGOs also participate in several national level advocacy platforms. In addition, district education offices and I/NGOs have jointly established district level education networks. Besides this, collaboration with the private sector and with Community Based organizations have been observed to be increasing. There are good practices with regards to community participation in education, for example ……awareness.

4. Equity in the Nepal education sector

Equity in Access

During the EFA period (2001-2015), particularly within the first five years of the SSRP implementation, the education sector has seen a significant increase in access. However, both Flash data and Census data show that certain students are still unreached, and that these are disproportionately students from poor, remote, low caste, families or of disadvantaged ethnicities, as well as children with disabilities.

Efforts to strengthen equal opportunities for girls and boys have led to gender parity in enrolment in basic education at the national level. However, gender disparities persist if one looks at enrolment in institutional schools at secondary level. Girls from the lowest economic quintile and from Madhesi and Muslim communities are under-represented in terms of enrollment in secondary education.

Studies on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in the education sector show that access to secondary education for girls from marginalized groups, remains an issue. Girls are expected to fulfil
roles within the household after marriage and therefore which could lead to a decreased sense of relevance for them to complete secondary education and it may be given low priority. Furthermore, harmful cultural practices such as isolation of girls and women during menstruation (chaupadhi), a lack of female friendly environment in schools, and being married at an early age to avoid high dowry fees causes severe marginalization for girls and young women. These factors increase their likelihood of exposure to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and their educational outcomes and school attendance suffer.

Access to education decreases when girls come from low castes or disadvantaged ethnic groups. Getting married at an early age significantly decreases access to education. Those girls who are likely to marry young are also those who are less likely to have access to education in the first place (Figure 3). Of the girls that get married young, 33.4% have had no access to education at all, versus 12.8% of the girls that do not get married before completing secondary education. There is a positive correlation between female age at marriage and years in education/highest educational attainment. National data shows that the median age of marriage for women between 15 and 49 years with no education was 16.6 years old, whereas the median age for women to be married that had passed their SLC exam was 21.4 in 2006.

Family economics and willingness to send to school play help to explain the differences between retention of boys and girls in basic education and access to secondary level. National data shows that 31% of women in the richest quintile against 53% of women in the poorest quintile have never have accessed education. This also shows the significant changes that have happened under the SSRP and the EFA/NPA with regard to this. Data demonstrate a disconnect between education and parents which is much stronger in the poorest quintile.

Figure 3: Correlation between marriage and access to education

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34 UNICEF Analysis of 15 sample districts based on NLSS 2010/11
35 NDHS 2006 and 2011
36 MTR equity analysis 2012
37 NDHS 2011
The poorest and second poorest quintiles have twice as many children out of school compared to the average number out of school children.\textsuperscript{38} 25\% of the out of school population are below the poverty line.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Figure 4: Geographical distribution of out of school children in absolute numbers}
  \item The National Living Standard Survey (NLSS) that is conducted since 1996 show a consistent correlation with an increase in socio-economic status being equal to an increase in access and participation in education. The concentration of out of school children is higher in the districts that have been identified as the most deprived in terms of poverty (Figure 5). This demonstrates the strong relation between socio economic status and access to education.
\end{itemize}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Figure 5: Nepal’s Poverty Index (HDR 2014)}
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{38} Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
\textsuperscript{39} Ministry of Finance, 2013
Parents’ education strongly affects children’s access to education. Children with illiterate parents have 10% less access to education than those who have literate parents\(^\text{40}\), which further decreases access and participation of children that come from households from the bottom consumption quintile, as literacy in this quintile is half (38.4%) that of the highest consumption quintile in Nepal (74.3%).\(^\text{41}\)

84.5% of poorest consumption quintile has access to ECED within 30 minutes walking distance against 94.9% of richest consumption quintile. At secondary level, 65% of all students can access education within 30 minute walking distance in rural areas versus the national average of 72%.\(^\text{42}\) However, the correlation between the distance to school and access to education is relatively weak.\(^\text{43}\) A much stronger correlation that presents itself through Census data is that of the perceived relevance and value of education amongst parents, as a relative large part (26.1%) of children that never attended school did this because the ‘parents did not want’ this.

Access to lower secondary education grades has regional disparities and caste ethnicity disparities, which indicate high dropout and less emphasis on access to secondary education. Children that are currently not accessing education are mainly concentrated in three areas. The Central Terai, with the exception of Chitwan, and the addition of Saptari and Sarlahi in the Eastern Terai, has the highest numbers in absolute terms with 5 districts representing over 25% of the total population of out of school children, or 300,000 children between 5 and 16 years that remain out of school. The concentration of out of school children is shown in Figure 4. A situational analysis of districts with high levels of deprivation has indicated that only a small percentage of these out of school children have never been enrolled and that the rest have dropped out of school.\(^\text{44}\)

Children from Dalit communities have the lowest access amongst the different caste categories to basic education with 88%, whereas in comparison Brahmins have around 99% access to education.\(^\text{45}\) The participation of Dalit students at primary level (20.3%) and lower secondary level (14.6%) is proportionately higher in respect to their share in the total population in the relevant age groups. Yet a stark decline occurs during the transition from basic to secondary education with an enrolment of only 10.6% against a population share of 13.1%. Furthermore, the proportion of Dalit teachers at primary (4.5%), lower secondary (3.1%) and secondary (3.6%) level is very low in comparison to the percentage of the population that they make up.

Diseases such as diarrhoea, parasitic worm infections, skin and trachoma reduce children’s ability to access education. Available data (School Health and Nutrition) indicates a high prevalence of anaemia

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\(^{40}\) UNICEF Situational Analysis of 15 sample districts based on NLSS 2010/11, access here is defined as all persons between 5 and 14 years who have ever attended school/college.

\(^{41}\) Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012

\(^{42}\) SSRP MTR 2012, equity analysis

\(^{43}\) UNICEF Analysis of 15 sample districts based on NLSS 2010/11

\(^{44}\) UNICEF Situational Analysis of 15 sample districts based on NLSS 2010/11

\(^{45}\) Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
- reaching 78% in pre-school children - Goiter Rate (40% in school children), helminthes infestations (66%), Vitamin A deficiency with sub-clinical Vitamin A deficiency (32%) among children. Poor health indicators among school children in Nepal profoundly limit their ability to attend school regularly.\textsuperscript{46}

Children of Chepang ethnicity are the most severely marginalized ethnic/linguistic group, only securing 50% enrollment against groups like Sherpa that have 100% enrollment and Newar having 97% enrollment. The Government of Nepal has identified 22\textsuperscript{47} indigenous (ethnic) groups as marginalized within the education sector. Children within Muslim communities have the lowest overall access of all religious groups, around 80\%\textsuperscript{48}, thereby significantly lower than children from Dalit communities. In regards to language several ethnic groups do not speak Nepali as their first language, which may also explain low enrollment of some groups.

National data identifies between 1.94\%\textsuperscript{49} of the total population of Nepal (around 514,000 people) as having some form of disability. This estimate is likely to exclude certain types of disability, such as milder autism, dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and other learning disabilities as this is much lower than global estimates, which put disability prevalence around 15\%.\textsuperscript{50} Children with disabilities are by far the most marginalized in terms of access and participation to education. Government data shows that they are only 1\% of the total enrollment at primary level and 0.6\% at secondary level, indicating that their enrollment at these levels is between 28\% and 17\% respectively.\textsuperscript{51} The last three years have shown a declining trend of enrollment of children with disabilities. Furthermore, access for children with disabilities is much less if they live in rural areas than in urban areas. There is a significant difference between disabled boys and girls, with boys accessing education to a greater extent than girls. There are greater inequalities in access to education between genders in rural compared with urban areas.\textsuperscript{52} Figure 6 also shows the correlation between the location (urban versus rural) in which children with disabilities live and the effect this has on their access to education.

\textsuperscript{46} School Health and Nutrition Strategy, Department of Education 2007
\textsuperscript{47} Bankaria, Baramu, Bote, Chepang, Danuwar, Dhanuk, Hayu, Jhagad, Kisan, Kusanda, Lepcha, Majhi, Meche, Mushibadiya, Raji, Raute, Satar, Singsa, Siyar, Suren, Thami and Thunam.
\textsuperscript{49} UNICEF Analysis of 15 sample districts based on NLSS 2010/11
\textsuperscript{49} Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
\textsuperscript{50} World Disabilities Report, 2012
\textsuperscript{51} Department of Education FLASH report, 2013
\textsuperscript{52} UNICEF Analysis of 15 sample districts based on NLSS 2010/11
The most recent national labour survey (2008) showed that 54% of the children attending school are not working in paid or forced circumstances. 5.6% of the children surveyed were neither working nor attending school and 40.4% were working and disregarding school attendance. Of these 79% of children are working and attending school and 21% are working and not attending school, see Figure 7. This dismantles the perception that working children are out of school children. However, although these children are in school, their employed status does have a negative impact on their participation and learning outcomes.

**Figure 6: Access to basic education for children with disabilities**

**Figure 7: Status of working children in Nepal**

Equity in participation

Whereas Nepal has noted remarkable achievements with regards to increasing access, most children that are currently out of school have been enrolled at a certain point but dropped out. The public education system continues to see high repetition in grade one and low transition from basic to secondary level affects marginalized groups disproportionately.\(^{53}\)

Retention can be measured by survival rate, an indication of the percentage of students who remain at the school at measured levels out of the total students who enrolled in grade one. Over the past few years, the survival rate has been steadily on the upward trend and this has been in favour of girls as to boys. Between 2008 and 2012, the survival rate in grade 5 went up from 54% to 84.1% and in grade 8 from 37% to 69.4%. This is in part the result of the investment in education along with policy interventions, such as the Continuous Assessment System (CAS), as well as various scholarship packages.

Women’s representation in administrative and management levels within the education system has not improved much under SSRP and among teacher population, improvements have mainly been observed at primary level for women and marginalized groups. Despite gender parity at both basic and secondary level in education, participation (attendance) among girls is much lower than boys, particularly at higher grades. Gender and poverty are strongly related in terms of fostering inequitable access and participation. Girls from poor families marry younger. Also there is a strong link with ethnicity and caste as prevalence of child marriage is high among Ethnic groups in the Terai.\(^{54}\)

There is only a marginal difference in average income of women that have no education versus women that have completed primary education (annually Nrs. 15,000 versus Nrs. 17,000 respectively). However, women that have completed lower secondary to SLC level are seen to double their annual income. One of the major challenges to equitable participation is that the supply side is increasing inputs but the demand side is gradually shrinking.\(^{55}\)

A situation analysis of out of school children conducted in 15 districts showed that the main reason for not being able to retain in school is poor academic progress, suggesting limited participation and insufficient learning outcomes (24.5%), followed by children stop participating at home as they have to help out at home (21.5%).\(^{56}\) This both suggests that SES plays the biggest role in participation with gender coming second as girls will be first considered to have to perform household chores.\(^{57}\)

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53 Ministry of Education 2012; SSRP Mid Term Evaluation equity analysis
54 National Women’s Commission, 2014 (Mohna Ansari)
55 Ministry of Education 2012; SSRP Mid Term Evaluation equity analysis, p.4
56 UNICEF Analysis based on NLSS 2010/11
57 UNICEF Analysis based on NLSS 2010/11
background plays a major role when it comes to equity in participation, geographical distance seems
the least crucial factor.

In Nepal, students go to school for 6 years on average, with the richest part of the students going for 8 years and the poorest 3 years. In the richest quintile urban areas have longer participation than rural whereas in the lowest quintile rural areas have longer participation than urban, with urban poor girls being the most deprived in terms of years of schooling, scoring below averages of countries like Chad and nearing extreme education poverty international standard. Young women who have never been married remain in school longer than women who married at an early age. Similarly, unmarried women attain higher levels of education. Persons speaking Newari attain the highest level overall, followed by Hindi and Nepali.

Many of the times, reasons for discontinuing education are beyond the scope of school and hence are not readily fixable with school level interventions. According to NLSS III, about 22.0% of the students dropped out of the school to support families with household chores, 6.5% because of economic reasons, 17.2% due to early marriage and 7.4% due to limited support from family. In the mountains and rural hills of mid and far-west region, the percentage of children dropping out of school to do household chores exceeds 33% each. Thus, directly or indirectly, poverty or economic reasons are one prominent factor in causing dropping out of students from the school.

Individuals belonging to the lowest income quintile spend four years less at school than those belonging to the richest quintile. Likewise, urban dwellers spend about two more years at school than their rural counterparts. The low level of the mean years of schooling suggests that the capacity of our school system to retain students in school that should ideally be above 15 years is not adequate and equitable. Between 2003/04 and 2010/11, mean years at school have increased notably for students from two lowest income quintiles and the residents of the mountains. Targeted financial support at secondary level could enable completion of secondary education and an associate increase in the mean years of school.

Participation does however not only focus on retention but also on engagement during the child’s time in schools, which links directly with the absence of an enabling learning environment. The net attendance rate is lowest for households in the poorest and the second poorest quintile but increases substantially for those in or above the third quintile for primary level. A similar scenario is observed at secondary level with regards to the distribution of low attendance across the SES quintiles. The overall net attendance in secondary level is at a much lower level than that of the basic education level.

58 UNICEF Analysis based on NLSS 2010/11
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60 UNICEF Analysis based on NLSS 2010/11
61 UNICEF Analysis based on NLSS 2010/11
Due to very limited support from the government, the poorest groups continue to suffer from high
costs, evident in the fact that between 2003/04 and 2010/11 the net attendance rate at secondary
level increased only by 5.6 and remains low at 7.6%. This is in sharp contrast to a 25% increase at
basic education level and the fact that the disparity at this level between the SES quintiles has been
reduced. Still, Nepalese with the lowest SES have an average of 3 years education compared with the
highest SES have an average participation of 8 years. 62

A disproportional amount of the primary schools is located in the hill region (57% against 43% of the
population living in this area) in comparison with the Terai (31% serving 50% of the population).63
Consequently, student teacher ratios are much higher (on average over 35%) in the Terai at primary
(55:1 versus 38:1), lower secondary (78:1 versus 60:1) and secondary (42:1 versus 31:1). Although
the Student Teacher Ratio in the Terai has improved over the last years, there is still a concentrated
prevalence of students dropping out of schools.

There is not much disparity among ecological zones but significant inequities exist in the mean years
of schooling among different income groups and locations. Net attendance rate in general is lower
in Terai in comparison to the hills and the mountains. Similarly, Terai region has the lowest literacy
(54.4%) in the age group of six and above and the region has the largest proportion of out of school
children (11.2%).64 All these data show that educationally Terai is a deprived region and this is the
result of local social, cultural and economic factors. The other prominent reason for dropping out of
school (about a quarter) is related to poor academic progress. Improvements in the quality of teaching
learning, strengthening of physical facilities at school, provision of extra support for weaker students,
and targeted financial assistance to the poor can potentially play a role in reducing dropout rates.

Lack of sufficient health and nutrition status has said to be a major factor affecting regular attendance
and meaningful participation in education. Malnutrition rates in Nepal are among the highest in
the world, with 41% of children under five stunted, 29% underweight and 11% wasted.65 Anaemia
among children under-five stands at 46%. Micronutrient deficiencies represent a largely invisible but
devastating form of malnutrition and are a prominent health issue in Nepal. Hygiene habits are poor
and skin diseases, acute respiratory infections (ARI), and diarrheal diseases prevalent.

In addition, there is a lack of adequate diagnostic services and referral mechanisms to assess and identify
children with different types of disabilities. As the current categories of disabilities used for classification
of students do not include certain types of cognitive impairments such as attention disorders, many
children remain undiagnosed while experiencing learning or attention problems, which lead to irregular

62 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
63 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
64 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
65 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2011; National Demographic Household Survey (NDHS)
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attendance and drop out of these children. Minimum enabling learning conditions, as established by the Government, currently do not include sufficient provisions to accommodate children with certain impairments or children infected with HIV, which additionally face social stigmatization.

Lack of mother tongue teaching in the lower grades can be a significant barrier to learning, and may be aggravated as more schools opting for English medium, without sufficient human resources to do so. 66 67

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic groups</th>
<th>Primary (%)</th>
<th>Ethnic groups</th>
<th>Lower secondary (%)</th>
<th>Ethnic groups</th>
<th>Secondary (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terai Brahman</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>Hill Brahman</td>
<td>68.4</td>
<td>Hill Brahman</td>
<td>49.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>87.7</td>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>Newar</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Dalit</td>
<td>85.6</td>
<td>Hill Chhetri</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>Hill Chhetri</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Brahman</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Janajati</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>Terai Brahman</td>
<td>40.1</td>
<td>Terai Brahman</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Chhetri</td>
<td>82.8</td>
<td>Terai Janajati</td>
<td>39.6</td>
<td>Terai Janajati</td>
<td>22.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>Hill Janajati</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Hill Janajati</td>
<td>22.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terai Janajati</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>Terai Middle Caste</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>Terai Middle Caste</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>Hill Dalit</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>Hill Dalit</td>
<td>14.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terai Middle Caste</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>Terai Dalit</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>Terai Dalit</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Terai Dalit</td>
<td>64.2</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 8: Net Attendance Rate by Ethnic Groups by Level of Education, (CBS 2010/11)

Closely related to the dimension of caste and ethnicity are the issues related to language and how they affect learning outcomes. Currently 123 languages have been recognized within Nepal, with 55% of the total population reporting to have a first language other than Nepali. 68 Although the National Curriculum Framework from 2007 provides a supportive framework for the adoption of mother tongue and multi-lingual education to be determined at local level, (human) resources available in terms of teachers and textbooks restrict the implementation of this framework significantly.

66 Equity strategy need analysis stakeholder consultations
67 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
68 Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 2012
Equity in learning outcomes

National Assessment of Students Achievements (NASA), carried out in 2011, results provide the means to assess learning outcomes especially in Nepali, Mathematics and Social studies in the mean years at school. According to the NASA report, achievement in reading and writing is low in absolute terms and below that of international levels. According to Metsämuuronen and Kafle (2013), an average 8th grader reader of Nepali cannot read and understand newspapers independently and cannot write lecture notes or brief summaries independently. Likewise, students perform satisfactorily in areas of lowest cognitive level requiring only recalling and memorization but do poorly in domains requiring the use of higher abilities such as reasoning. This reflects low cognitive abilities and also in part the emphasis of Nepalese education on rote learning and memorization.

There does not seem to be any major difference in achievements between males and females. Except in mathematics, the achievements in Nepali and social studies are almost the same. Moreover, income and geographic bases do not seem to bear any effect on the gender level differences in the scores.

Adult literacy rate, an index of number of people above the age of 15 who can both read and write, is a reflection of participation and retention in basic education. According to NLSS III, only 56.5 % of people are literate in Nepal. There has been a decent progress from 2003 when adult literacy rate was only about 48%, but significant inequities are still pervasive across various cohorts of population.

The distinction in adult literacy becomes clear when viewed from the purview of gender and location, as female literacy is about 27 percentage point lower than that of male, reflecting a general lack of socio-cultural concern for women's education, and that urban literacy is 24-percentage point higher than rural literacy reflecting the importance of quality of access and facilities and services.

However, the level of achievement is affected by socio-economic status. Students from the lowest socio-economic group obtained 41%, about 23% less than students belonging to the highest socio-economic group. It was found that students whose parents are both literate average 64%, indicating that education status of the parents have a very strong relationship with the achievement level of the students. On the other hand, when one of the parents is illiterate, particularly the father, the probability of being among the top performing students is low (only 39%).

Poor health and poor nutrition among school-age children diminish their cognitive performance either through physiological changes or by reducing their ability to participate in learning experiences, or both. Short-term hunger impairs concentration and overall quality of learning, even if the child is otherwise well nourished. Data for ECED children are alarming: in some areas of the country, stunting reaches almost 60% (Western mountains) while wasting rates in some pockets of the country are above the international emergency thresholds (Western Terai).

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69 Department of Education, 2014; Education Management Information System (EMIS)
EFA/NPA noted that ‘socio cultural construct of society’ and ‘less transformative political system’ are largely responsible for a situation of inequity in education. Among the ethnic groups, Muslims fare the lowest in literacy, closely followed by Dalits. This is not particularly surprising given the high number of out of school children, and historically low participation in education of these groups. On the other hand, Brahmins and Newars have high literacy rates.

From the perspective of equity, achievements seem to vary with differences between schools, districts and the development regions. Institutional schools perform significantly better than the community schools. Consequently districts and regions with high concentration of institutional schools posit higher level of achievement. The lowest performing districts have average scores below 40% while highest performing district all in Kathmandu valley average above 55%. The achievement level of the students from the Eastern (41%), Far-Western (42%) and Mid-Western (43%) development regions is far behind than that of the students in the Kathmandu Valley.70

Among the ethnic groups, Dalit perform the worst in all 3 subjects, followed by Madhesi students. With regard to the Nepali language, the proportions of students who can only write simple messages related to everyday needs but not generate notes on events or past actions are most widely prevalent among the Madhesi population (about 42%), much higher than other castes, most of which have about 21-28% of students belonging to this category. Similarly Limbus, Tharus, Magar and Gurungs are also among the low performing groups in reading and writing.

5. Prevalence, Incidence and Severity of Equity Barriers

During the FY 2014/15, the Government will develop a Deprivation scale which links the prevalence of the different drivers of inequity to the severity of the deprivation of children with regards to their access, participation and retention to education. For this, the relevant dimensions of equity will be considered to formulate indicators for this deprivation scale. This will also provide a rationale for prioritizing and weighing of the equity barriers and the projection of returns to education, as well as the cost of inaction.

6. Resourcing of strategic actions

After finalization of the short term strategic actions (FY 2014-15), the Government will bear the main responsibility of implementing the strategy through adequate reflection within the ASIP/AWPB FY 2014-15 & FY 2015-16. The Ministry of Education will initiate dialogue with relevant line ministries.

70 Metsämuuronen & Kafle, 2013; National Assessment for Student Achievements (NASA)
(MOWCSW, MOFALD, MOHP and MOTL) to explore which strategic actions that have relevant sector overlap can be covered from their respective budgets. Simultaneously, there will be dialogue initiated with district and local level bodies to explore available resourcing at these levels from provisions that have been made available for the social sector, as provisioned under the Local Self Governance Act (LSGA). In order to ensure alignment and effective utilization of available resources, I/NGOs working in the field of education will be mobilized in terms of aligning their ongoing and planned resource allocations in line with the priorities identified within the short and medium term strategic actions and the Education Deprivation Index values relating to the prevalence and severity of deprivation within education. Costing the strategy, both in term of action and inaction, will be essential in order to be able to prioritize actions in constraint budget scenarios, using the education deprivation index to make informed decisions.

In the FY 2014/15, the Government will proceed to update and cost the medium and long term strategic actions and reflect these against the expected available resources under the last year of the SSRP in the light of the constraint funding scenario. This will also provide a base for ensuring equity is at the core of the next education sector plan that is to be developed in Nepal for following up on the SSRP after July 2016.
# Section III: Framework of the Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>Strengthening of equity across all levels and subsectors within the school education sector in Nepal, having children achieving opportunities through education that enable them to realize quality of life outcomes and contribute to establishing an equitable and inclusive society that values its diversities.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Objectives | I. Achieving equity in access, identifying the most marginalized groups of learners that have so far remained unable to access education, through utilizing desegregated data, and monitoring and initiatives with regards to these groups to ensure they are supported on a need base and thereby able to overcome their barriers in accessing education.  
II. Strengthening of equity in participation, retention and inclusion, identifying learners that are currently dropping out of education or at risk of doing so and addressing their specific barriers both school and non-school based barriers through addressing the knowledge gaps with regards to these barriers and alignment of efforts and initiatives to strengthen their educational survival rate.  
III. Strengthening of equity in learning outcomes, reducing inequitable learning outcomes and addressing root causes of these discrepancies through targeted interventions focused on removal of barriers for learners and catering specific needs, as well as with regards to relevance of education to skills that translate into quality life outcomes in the context of the learner and labour market. |
| Monitoring & Evaluation Framework | ➢ Developing equity profiles at district level for all districts that have specific disaggregated analysis on the district context against the equity dimensions and areas as well as district wise targets against national equity indicators within the education sector.  
➢ Institutionalizing of the Education Review Office and strengthen its capacity to monitor equitable access, participation and learning outcomes on an annual basis, linking with the findings and recommendations of NASA and EGRA.  
➢ Ensuring programmes from the Government and from I/NGOs rely on the same baselines and data sets generated through the NFE-MIS.  
➢ Ensuring Child clubs at all schools that participate in the annual social mapping of the school catchment areas to and in the monitoring of (P) MECs and a child friendly learning environment within their schools.  
➢ Conducting further research to deepen understanding on specific challenges that certain groups within the society face with regards to equitable access, participation and quality learning outcomes.  
➢ Establishing a technical committee to evaluate equity in all policies and plans that have been adopted by the education sector to inform the Government on how to ensure equity as one of the pillars in the new school sector education programme after 2015.  
➢ Conducting periodic review of the education sector through surveys in collaboration with CBS.  
➢ Undertaking an impact evaluation on the effect of scholarships and redefine distribution and allocation by using the severity/prevalence scale developed by the TWG.  
➢ Carrying out research activities focusing on developing disabilities friendly modes of teaching learning and assessment system as per the type and the intensity of the disabilities and the possibilities within the context and the available resources.  
➢ Reviewing and update indicators collected through the Flash reports and IEMS to be in line with the equity strategy  
➢ Undertaking an in depth analysis of root causes of low passing rates and disparities within the SLC examination and undertake SLC examination revision and standardization based on the outcomes of this analysis. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equity Dimension</th>
<th>Access</th>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Learning Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>Targeting expansion and redistribution of ECED services based on prevalence and severity of deprivation of access to education.</td>
<td>Strengthening of institutional capacity on monitoring and analysis of deprivation of access, participation and learning outcomes at ECED, basic, secondary level and non-formal education.</td>
<td>Targeted strengthening of ECED facilitators to support children’s development in all domains (physical, social, emotional and cognitive).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening capacity of VECs for enrolment of out of school children through social mapping using CBS data.</td>
<td>Targeting and strengthening of Minimum Enabling Conditions (MECs), aligning efforts of I/NGOs within the education sector on this.</td>
<td>Strengthening CFS concept in teacher training to strengthen pedagogical skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Targeted strengthening of Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMECs).</td>
<td>Creating a mechanism to involve community groups in providing technical and financial resources in ensuring schools within their community.</td>
<td>Targeting provision of targeted interventions, psycho-social support and remedial programmes.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aligning efforts of I/NGOs within the education sector on PMEC support.</td>
<td>Providing training to teachers on how to establish a child friendly quality learning environment, in line with the dimensions specified within the CFS national framework.</td>
<td>Conducting analysis of SLC results from the equity dimensions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening PTAs and child clubs in monitoring presence and quality of PMECs.</td>
<td>Building the capacity of SMCs to reflect CFS need adequately in their SIPs and PTAs and child clubs to monitor the CFS status of schools.</td>
<td>Supporting of health development of children and adolescent girls for improved learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reducing disparities in access to education through targeted upscaling of the Free and Compulsory Basic Education (FCBE) program.</td>
<td>Targeted strengthening of SMCs to reflect appropriate strategies within their SIP to identify and address causes for drop out.</td>
<td>Developing early grade reading skills of early graders by utilizing good practices.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Strengthening of the CFS concept at school level.</td>
<td>Strengthening linkage between education and life skills and outcomes through curriculum with local relevance and mainstreaming of enabling (soft) skills and pre vocational curriculum.</td>
<td>Enhancing of peer learning among teachers through establishment of peer support networks of teachers at VDC/municipalities/RC/district level in areas with low learning outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strengthening the capacity of targeted SMC to reflect appropriate strategies within their SIP to enrol out of school children.</td>
<td>Scaling up peer and mentor schemes to support strengthening of educational engagement of marginalized groups, using role models and media to strengthen self-esteem and motivation.</td>
<td>Setting out clear guidance with regard to aligning efforts for NFE linking with formal education using CLCs.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Establishing an out of school and working children network with relevant sections of MOE/DOE/CLAs and I/NGO to analyse impact of support programs on equitable access and participation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Gender          | Strengthening awareness and mobilization of communities on the importance of access of girls in education.  
|                | Strengthening of gender sensitive and safe learning environment to improve access for girls at basic and secondary education.  
|                | Strengthening of school health and nutrition initiatives for adolescent girls.  
|                | Strengthening and aligning incentives to address cultural and societal barriers for girls to access secondary education.  
|                | Provisioning of customized non-formal education and skill development programs for girls that remain outside formal education.  
|                | Strengthening of protection mechanisms in school, home and community to address barriers due to sexual and reproductive health issues, gender based violence, including child marriage.  
|                | Strengthening safe travel for girls from and to school.  
|                | Strengthening of national gender network support system at all levels, especially focal points at school level.  
|                | Strengthening awareness on gender sensitive enabling learning environment amongst VECs / municipalities, SMCs and parents.  
|                | Targeted strengthening of sanitary facilities to create a gender sensitive and safe learning environment.  
|                | Strengthening of engagement of girls through extra-curricular activities and peer support programmes especially in secondary education.  
|                | Targeting provision of alternative education and life skill programmes, supporting girls in re-entering formal education and accessing relevant life skills.  
|                | Implementing of professional development schemes to encourage and prepare more female representation across the teacher force and within educational management at all levels  
|                | Ensuring Provisions that accommodate the need of female teachers and managers with regards to their maternal and new-born related needs.  
|                | Strengthening the awareness of SMCs, PTAs and communities inducted on the importance of equal participation and protection of girls.  
|                | Strengthening sexual and reproductive awareness amongst boys and girls and advocacy amongst parents, communities and with religious leaders on delaying the age for girls to marry.  
|                | Establishing of safe place to learn for girls outside class through the establishment of school based peer learning and support groups.  
|                | Monitoring of learning outcome with focus on the development and implementation of the programs for girls.  
|                | Gaining of deeper understanding to address causes of disparities in learning outcomes for girls and boys.  
|                | Strengthening counselling support for girls to address gender based issues experienced in school, in their community and at home.  
|                | Linking with Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare to implement programmes that address specific barriers created by cultural and social norms.  
|                | Establishing a school and community network to support the specific needs of adolescent girls within education, addressing school based and non-school based barriers.  
| Disability     | Strengthening and expansion of existing mechanism for assessment and referral services at district level, ensuring nation-wide coverage.  
|                | Strengthening of awareness and efficiency of available services and minimum enabling conditions for children with specific types of disabilities.  
|                | Strengthening of professional development for specialist teachers on inclusive techniques so that teachers could help students with disabilities to attain learning achievement.  
|                | Strengthening and expansion of existing specialist teachers on inclusive techniques so that teachers could help students with disabilities to attain learning achievement.  
|                | Strengthening linkage between education and life skills and outcomes through curriculum with girls.  
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|                | Strengthening and aligning incentives to address cultural and societal barriers for girls to access secondary education.  
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|                | Linking with Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare to implement programmes that address specific barriers created by cultural and social norms.  
|                | Establishing a school and community network to support the specific needs of adolescent girls within education, addressing school based and non-school based barriers.
| Caste, ethnicity and language | Strengthening of service seeking behaviour by parents/guardians of children with disabilities through awareness and availability of access to assessment and referral services.  
Strengthening targeted services for supporting children with disabilities in urban areas for extreme vulnerable group (i.e. street children, child labourers).  
Developing of specific strategies for inclusion of children with specific types of disabilities through intensive consultation with expert organizations. | Developing and enforcing the minimum enabling conditions for children with disabilities in education through a participatory approach based on prevalence and severity of deprivation in meaningful participation in education.  
Strengthening of engagement of parents/guardians of children with disabilities in their children's educational attainment.  
Ensuring participation in national and district level consultation and review processes of expert organizations with regards to inclusion, mainstreaming and participation of children with disabilities. | Strengthening the capacity of school based staff to recognise and understand the nature and range of disability.  
Developing of appropriate assessment mechanisms for children with intellectual and or developmental disabilities.  
Developing life skills programmes to children with disabilities assessing their capabilities and needs.  
Provisioning of initiatives to strengthen parents' awareness on supporting their children's learning at home. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Targeting interventions to strengthen access amongst disadvantaged groups, such as Dalit children, marginalized group and Muslim girls at VDC level using CBS disaggregated data.  
Ensuring grants/scholarships are available at district level for VECs and schools to implement strategies to enrol out of school children.  
Mainstreaming enabling (soft) skills (including financial and life skills) and pre vocational education to strengthening the linkage between education and livelihood.  
Providing education in first language of majority of students in catchment area at the primary level. | Developing of a Medium Of Instruction (MOI) policy for addressing the linguistic diversity in the context of Nepal.  
Increasing recruitment of ECED facilitators that speak the local language besides Nepali in areas where a majority of people speak a certain first language.  
Promoting non-discriminatory approaches within schools promoted through implementation of the CFSNF, including pre and in service teacher professional development.  
Ensuring a supportive environment through awareness at school and VEC level to ensure children from Dalit and ethnic minority groups are encouraged to remain in school. | Strengthening school management and PTA to provide school based support programs (e.g. homework clubs) for children from disadvantaged communities, such as Dalit communities, Muslim communities, etc.  
Strengthening parental engagement within communities with students having low learning outcomes to establish a genuine inclusive learning environment at school and supportive environment at home.  
Improving communication within and beyond the school supporting the achievement of Dalit girls and boys and others for their better learning outcomes.  
Collaborating with professional volunteer sending agencies to ensure long term follow up of TPD at a classroom level in targeted districts.  
Collaborating with universities to initiate higher level academic programs on Multi Lingual Education. |
### Poverty & Health and Nutrition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Targeting of enrolment programmes and incentive and support schemes in districts/VDCs with high prevalence and severity of deprivation in access due to poverty.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targeting expansion of ECED services in food deficit areas linked with health and nutrition schemes in order to prevent stunting of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening of awareness on available support and support seeking behaviour amongst families that do not enrol their children due to poverty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening of knowledge base on lifting barriers for Urban out of school and extremely poor children accessing non-formal or formal education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reducing disparities in access due to poverty barriers based on existing prevalence and severity of these by providing holistic support to their needs by including health and nutrition programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making available adequate and aligned support programs for learners that face barriers to access secondary education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening of awareness and service seeking behaviour of adolescents from groups that show low transition rates from basic to secondary education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing the access to secondary education and skills development programs through non formal mode.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening the provision of relevant learning outcomes and life skills to the context and labour market for learners from socio economically deprived background.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring that ECED facilitators and Teachers are aware and skilled to implement school health and nutrition guidelines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring the participation of extremely poor girls and boys by strengthening relevance of education for these groups through mainstreaming enabling (soft) and life skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthening outreach and inclusion programmes, reading camps based on prevalence of deprivation in access and participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deepening understanding on causes of urban out of school children and strengthening appropriate provisions such as literacy and numeracy programmes and learning clubs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening and encouraging the participation of extremely poor children by making their families aware of the livelihood implications and linking to income generation activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring school health and nutrition initiatives such as de-worming, Vitamin A supplements and midday meals etc. For extremely poor children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring safe drinking water and sanitation facilities including toilet with water facilities within all schools through phase wise implementation prioritizing districts with low participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linking with PAF to ensure that households of children from poor SES are receiving holistic support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthening holistic development within ECED services in line with the Multi Sectoral Nutrition Strategy (MSNS), prioritizing areas that have a high prevalence of deprivation in access, participation and learning outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Districts VDCs and schools to record and share their best practices in improving learning outcomes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improving communication within and beyond the school to support the achievement of extremely poor students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expanding targeted school feeding programmes in collaboration with community and prioritizing the introduction of low cost community supported schemes such as kitchen gardening.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strengthening knowledge of communities on the importance of healthy diet and nutrition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addressing barriers related with social norms and behaviours to improve nutritional status and health of children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geographical location</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Vulnerable groups</strong></td>
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Annex 1: Strategy and action plan on bringing out of school children into basic education

A. Preface

The Government of Nepal developed and approved this action plan as a follow up from the SSRP Mid Term Review in 2012 to utilize the 2011 Census data for strengthening the evidence and need based approach on identification and enrolment of out of school children. After the approval of the Consolidated Equity strategy for the school education sector in Nepal in 2014, it was decided that this action plan will serve as a foundation for the identification of prevalence and severity of out of school children. As such, the data presented in this action plan on out of school children has been used as a starting point and is validated through recent studies and validation at the district, sub district and school catchment area.

The strategic actions in the matrix in this action plan have been reviewed and updated by the Access and Equity Thematic Working Groups and included in the short term strategic framework of the Strategy.

B. Background

The Government of Nepal is committed to providing universal primary and basic education in accordance with the goals set out in the Dakar Declaration on Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. The Interim Constitution of Nepal, 2007 has declared education as a fundamental right and guaranteed state provision of free education up to secondary level. Nepal has implemented a series of large scale reform programs in the school education sector since the 1990s, with the twin objectives of enhancing access and equity, and improving the quality of education. Building on the success of these reforms, the Government has implemented a 7-year School Sector Reform Plan in FY2009/10 (SSRP; FY2010–FY2016/2017). The SSRP has been implemented under a sector-wide approach with support from 9 pooling development partners, and a number of non-pooling partners who support it under the overall SSRP framework. Its overall objectives are to (i) expand access and equity, (ii) improve quality and relevance, and (iii) strengthen the institutional capacity of the entire school education system. The SSRP goal for basic education is “to ensure equitable access to quality education through a rights-based approach and promotion of a child-friendly environment in schools” and the objective is “to ensure equitable access to quality basic education for all children in the 5-12 age group.”
In line with the stated objectives of the SSRP, significant progress has been made in increasing enrollments in primary and basic education\(^1\). Specific targets have been set out district wise for bringing out of school children into school in a phase wise manner (see table 2). As the Department currently is analyzing the data that was collected on the status and background of children through the Nepal National Living Standard Survey, the expectation is that the annual strategies will be strengthened with a targeted focus on specific marginalized children (particularly Dalits, Janajatis, children with disabilities, and girls from all these categories) in the overall student population has also been proportional according to the share of these groups in the overall population.

Various studies have revealed that the progress made against these targets has largely been enabled by to the provision of policies, various scholarships, incentives and other types of affirmative action that have been outlined in the SSRP and incorporated in the Annual Strategic Implementation Plans (ASIPs) and Annual Work Plan and Budgets (AWPB). These include, among others, the provision of free textbooks for all students up to grade 10 and targeted groups of children of grades 11 and 12, abolition of all forms of school fees, targeted scholarships for all girls, Dalits, highly marginalized and endangered Janajatis, students with various disabilities, students from the Karnali Region, provision of mid-day meals in food deficit districts, special incentives for former bonded laborers, and special provisions for remote area students. However, Flash report data of the DOE shows that more than 4% of the relevant age group of children in primary and more than 12% in basic education continue to remain out of school. These are children who have never been enrolled, or who have been enrolled but dropped out before completing the basic education cycle. Therefore, it was jointly agreed between the MOE and education development partners that a comprehensive analysis of the national Census 2011 data, provided by the Central Bureau for Statistics (CBS) has been carried out to conduct geographical mapping of out-of-school children (OOSC) and further strengthen and align strategies and actions with these findings to bring them into schools in a phased manner starting from FY2012/13. This has resulted in the development of this action plan to bring all OOSC into schools. This plan will be implemented in a phased manner starting from FY2012/13, in close coordination with other sector ministries and their line agencies, local government bodies, non-governmental organizations and the media.

C. **Major Findings from Census 2011**

The CBS data shows that 6562148 students 5 to 16 aged are studying in schools. And a total of 1188001 (Male 558925, Female 629076) children are out of schools. Among them 1092342 are from rural areas and rest from urban areas. According to CBS data, 36% of 5 years, 21% of 6 year, 13% of 7 year, 12% of 8 year, 7% of 9 year, 10% of 10 year, 7% of 11 year, 10% of 12 years, 8% of 13 year, 12% of 14 year, 18% of 15 year, and 25% of 16 year age population are found out of school. The data indicates that the top 15 districts with high number of out of school children are Rautahat, Sarlahi, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Bara, Siraha, Parsa, Saptari, Kapilbastu, Rupendehi, Sunsari, Morang, Banke, Kailali and Kathmandu.

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\(^1\) SSRP Mid Term review 2012
D. Strategic Interventions

1. Reaching and Providing Educational Opportunities for OOSC

a. The MOE has already shared the Census 2011 data on OOSC by age, gender, caste/ethnicity and VDC to all the District Education Offices (DEOs) and directed the DEOs to prepare district level action plans for bringing 5–12 age group OOSC into basic education schools. The MOE will launch special enrollment drives from the academic year of 2013/14 in districts with high proportion of OOSC. This programme will be built around the ‘Welcome to School’ Program (which is held at the beginning of every academic year) to conduct household visits by mobilizing teachers, school management committee (SMC) and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) members, child clubs, women's groups, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs), resource persons and other community members. The household visits will be used to encourage parents to send their children to schools regularly and to also disseminate information about the various incentive and scholarship schemes in place for various categories of children. This program will also be used to address inconsistencies, if any, in the data on OOSC obtained from the Census 2011 and the records maintained by the school, resource centers (RCs) and DEOs. Both national and local media will be extensively mobilized to this effect. Apart from identifying and encouraging OOSC to enroll in schools, this programme will also be used to maintain a database of OOSC and monitor progress on the same at the school, RC and district levels. For this purpose, schools will be directed to implement an action plan for OOSC in their school improvement plans and DEOs will be directed to do the same in the district education plans.

b. The DOE will establish a special support scheme to provide targeted support to OOSC. This scheme will be mobilized on the basis of proposals submitted by DEOs to bring OOSC into schools. The DEO will submit the proposal to the RED by consulting with concerning stakeholders to bring the OOSC to schools or alternative education centres. Proposals to access funding through this support scheme can be submitted by I/NGOs through the respective DEO.

c. A free and compulsory basic education program will be implemented as a pilot based in 500 VDCs throughout the country. This program will be used to primarily bring never enrolled students to schools, identify and stop potential dropout of students at risk, and increase retention of these children. Approximately 100,000 NRP per VDC will be allocated; to implement this programme and the detail breakdown will be mentioned in the programme implementation guideline.

d. Flexible schooling and outreach school activities: The MOE has adopted flexible schooling and school outreach programs to provide education provision to children not reached by existing school facilities. Under the flexible school programme and informal adult
school programme, a condensed 3-year program is provided in lieu of 5-year primary and condensed 2-year program in lieu of 3-year lower secondary respectively after which non-formal adult school graduates can enroll in grade 9 of secondary education. These centers will be established in various parts of the country based on demand, including for OOSC in urban areas. I/NGOs will be actively encouraged to set up and operate such centers with support from the DEOs.

e. Expansion of Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) Centers: The MOE will facilitate the Municipality/VDC opening of new ECED centers on a needs basis of ECD Mapping (especially in areas with a high proportion of OOSC) and strengthen existing ones. For this purpose, a memorandum of understanding will be signed with local government bodies (Municipalities and VDCs) whereby the MOE will provide incentives for ECED facilitators, management costs for the operation of such centers, and learning materials.

f. Targeted scholarships and incentives: MOE will continue to provide scholarships for all girls in basic education, all Dalits, all children with disabilities, marginalized and endangered Janajatis, all children in the Karnali region in grades 1–8, freed bonded laborers, and children affected by armed conflict. Directives will be issued and monitoring mechanisms instituted to ensure that all targeted students receive the full amount in the form originally envisaged. In the districts with a high proportion of OOSC, initiatives will be launched to provide additional incentives in the form of pro-poor targeted stipends to the most marginalized groups within these categories (such as Terai Dalits, Gaine, Badi). For this purpose, such districts will be provided with additional grants as proposed by the DEO on the basis of actual need to develop and implement special, contextually relevant schemes in broad consultations with the various local stakeholders.

g. Establishment of flexible education centers for OOSC in urban areas: In urban areas, DEOs will be directed to establish flexible education centers for OOSC such as street children, children working in factories, children working in the public transport sector and domestic child laborers. These centers will be equipped with the provision for imparting basic literacy and numeracy skills, extra-curricular and sports activities, meals and basic health and hygiene facilities. These centers will be established and operated in collaboration with local government bodies and I/NGOs.

h. Establishment of contingency provisions in areas prone to natural calamities, such as flooding, landslides and earthquakes: DEOs will be directed to maintain adequate stock of used textbooks and other provisions to swiftly address disruptions to regular schooling in times of emergencies.

i. A separate strategy for bringing OOSC with disabilities will be developed and approved in FY2014. This strategy will focus on: the strengthening and mainstreaming of existing
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resource classes and provision of additional classes based on need; development of different learning materials; hostel facilities; improvement in the overall school environment to make it disabled-friendly; teacher training and management; and specialized student evaluation schemes.

2. **Providing Entitlements and Opportunities**

   a. Many countries have used various forms of conditional cash transfers (CCT) to provide targeted stipends to households that are unable to enroll and regularly send their children to schools because of extreme poverty. Bearing in mind that such cash transfers may be necessary in Nepal to bring those children who are out of school due to poverty, the MOE will form a technical committee that will provide strategic recommendations as to the cash transfer strategy that could be one of the relevant initiatives in the Nepal too.

   b. Access to income generation (IG) activities for poor parents of OOSC will be designed and implemented to send their children to schools regularly. Currently, the Non-Formal Education Center has been implementing various kinds of IG activities for graduates of non-formal education and adult literacy classes. This model will also be used to target parents of OOSC who are willing to send their children to schools on a regular basis. In the first phase, the districts with the highest proportion of OOSC will be targeted.

3. **Making the School Attractive and Safe for Children**

   The government has approved the national Child-Friendly School (CFS) framework and is committed to implementing the framework to make the school attractive for children. As a part of this, the DOE will:

   a. Use the list of schools not meeting at least 3 out of 5 priority minimum enabling conditions (PMECs) to support the most-needy and disadvantaged schools so as to improve the overall learning environment of the schools. In FY2014, at least 20% of the schools failing to meet the PMECs will be provided with targeted support. In addition, schools will also be supported to improve their external environment, such as provision of drinking water facilities and fencing.

   b. Circulate to all schools to develop and implement a code of conduct that will minimize various kinds of discriminatory practices on the basis of caste/ethnicity, gender, HIV/AIDS, Disability), sexual harassment and bullying in the school premises. The head teacher, teachers, SMC and student clubs will be made responsible for monitoring the implementation of such code of conduct.

   c. Provide mid-day meal facilities in the Karnali Region and other districts that have been identified as food deficit areas to encourage regular attendance and retention of children. VDCs and municipalities will be encouraged to provide such facilities in ECED centers.
d. Scale up the School Health and Nutrition Program: In close collaboration with the Ministry of Health, the following initiatives will be implemented: (1) distribution of first Aid kit boxes in 32 districts (2) De-worming tablet distribution to students and, (3) conduct of an annual physical student check-up. The MOE will facilitate the provision of free health check-ups and national immunization campaigns in the school premises.

e. Integrate extra-curricular and sports activities into the regular curriculum to provide joyful learning opportunities for children. For this purpose, schools will be asked to incorporate a period each day for these activities for every class into the daily routine.

f. Scale up the provision of multilingual education as per the need and demand of the districts

g. Scale up multi-grade and multi level schools in 750 schools by 2015/16 based on district level demand

h. The current mechanisms will be further strengthened to ensure that all children receive the full set of textbooks within 2 weeks of the start of the academic year.

i. Recruitment of teachers from marginalized groups will be in accordance with the TSC regulations.

4. Partnering with Local Government bodies

Local government bodies have been an important source of financial resources for public and community education institutions. The Local Self Governance Act 1999 has mandated local governments (VDCs and Municipalities) to spend at least 10% of their total grant received from the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) in education and social sectors. The Education Act and Regulations have also made provisions for involvement of local bodies through the Village, Municipal and District Education Committees. To further strengthen the partnership with local government bodies:

a. The MOE/DOE will enter into MOU with selected municipalities in Kathmandu Valley and other parts of the country. This MOU will primarily focus on ensuring universal access, support quality improvement, school management and mapping, and planning, supervision and M&E. A partnership modality will be initiated whereby MOE will provide incentives to municipalities.

b. Through dialogue with the MOFALD, MOE will encourage VDCs to spend 10% of their total annual grant on education (including ensuring universal access) through the VECs.

5. Partnering with non-governmental and community based organizations

a. MOE/DOE will enter into a MOU with the Association for International NGOs in Nepal (AIN) to encourage AIN member NGOs to implement various programs targeted at OOSC. MOE
will, on the occasion of the National Education Day, publicly felicitate NGOs who have made good contributions in this area.

b. MOE/DOE will encourage I/NGOs design and implement innovative activities to bring OOSC into various education networks. For this purpose, DEOs will coordinate with I/NGOs/NGOs for joint planning, implementation and monitoring of OOSC (focusing on street children, domestic workers, children working in factories and public transport sector) related activities too.

6. **Partnering with the private and corporate sector**

a. MOE will initiate efforts to establish a national trust fund for enhancing educational access, retention and quality by mobilizing resources from various private and corporate organizations as part of the corporate social responsibility of those organizations.

b. Foster partnerships between institutional and community schools to enhance the physical and learning environment of those community schools that are in dire need of such support.

c. All institutional schools will be directed to provide up to 10% of their available student seats as scholarships to the most marginalized and deprived groups in consultation with the DEO.

7. **Partnering with the Media**

Various forms of media will be actively mobilized to:

a. Conduct information dissemination on various incentives that are available upon entry into schools, and report on transparency in the distribution of such incentives.

b. Identify OOSC in pocket areas, the various challenges they face in coming to schools, and mechanisms to bring them to schools.

c. Report on good practices and progress in reducing the OOSC population.

8. **Coordination with other ministries and their line agencies at all levels**

The MOE will initiate efforts to develop functional collaborations with other sectoral ministries as follows:

a. Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP): School health and hygiene activities; school level health checkups; vaccination and immunization campaigns; involvement of private hospitals in the same. The DEO will coordinate with health institutions in their localities to this effect.
b. Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local development (MOFALD): Local government bodies involvement in schools will be sought in educational activities. As mentioned earlier, local government bodies have been an important source of financial resources for public and community education institutions and the DOE will support the district and local education stakeholders to unleash the minimum committed 10% of the grant received from the MoFALD in education and social sectors. The DOE will also see to it that there will be active efforts made at district and local level for increased awareness on the Education Act and in particular the provisions for involvement of local bodies through the Village, Municipal and District Education Committees.

c. The MOE/DOE will enter into MOU with selected municipalities in Kathmandu Valley and other parts of the country. This MOU will primarily focus on ensuring universal access, support quality improvement, school management and mapping, and planning, supervision and M&E. A partnership modality will be initiated whereby MOE will provide incentives to municipalities.

d. Through dialogue with the MOFALD, MOE will encourage VDCs to spend 10% of their total annual grant on education (including ensuring universal access) through the VECs.

e. Ministry of Agriculture (MOA): Income Generating (IG) activities for parents of OOSC.


9. **Provision of Incentives (will be linked with approved Incentive Scheme of MOE)**

a. Incentives for DEOs

b. Incentives for VDCs and Municipalities

c. Incentives for Schools

d. Incentives for the Media/Journalists that actively report on educational issues
Annex 2:

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