

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION NEPAL (NCE NEPAL)

CSO SPOTLIGHT KEY MESSAGES ON SDG 4

Accelerating actions for transformative and resilient education amidst COVID-19



NEPAL

Population:
28.09 million
(UNESCO, 2018)

2020 Global Index Score:
65.9

2020 Global Index Rank:
96

SDG 4 Dashboard:
Challenges remain

SDG 4 Trend:
Moderately increasing

SDG 10 Dashboard:
Challenges remain

HDI Value/Rank:
0.579, 147 (UNDP, 2019)

GNI per Capita:
USD 1,090 (WB, 2019)

Secondary Net Enrolment:
61.87% (UNESCO, 2019)

**Literacy Rate
(15 years & older):**
Total: 67.91%
Female: 59.72%
Male: 78.59%
(UNESCO, 2018)

Education Expenditure:
5.16% of GDP
(UNESCO, 2018)
11.6% of total
government expenditure
(MoF, 2020)

The National Campaign for Education Nepal (NCE Nepal) is a network of 364 organisations that advocates for equitable, inclusive, free, compulsory and quality education for children, youth, and adults. This year, it has once again prepared a civil society report that highlights the progress, challenges, and recommendations on the SDGs, especially SDG 4. NCE Nepal takes the preparatory works and institutional set up for SDG implementation at the federal level as satisfactory, but the localisation and political ownership at subnational levels are still inadequate.

Nepal has achieved remarkable progress in promoting equitable access to education but much more needs to be done. The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at primary level education has increased to 92.7% in 2019 but fell short of the target of 98.5%. Gender parity in education has been achieved, with girls constituting half of the total enrolment at the basic level. Survival rate to grade 10 is 61.6% for girls and 59.1% for boys. However, the quality of education remains a key concern as a majority of grade-five students performed poorly in mathematics and language skills (MoEST, 2019).

The Constitution of Nepal stipulates free education as a fundamental right. However, this is not respected and fulfilled. Parents and children have to shoulder the tuition and other school fees. There are several policies in place that addresses the learning needs of marginalised groups. Unfortunately, huge gaps between policies and implementation remain. About 30.6% of children with disabilities aged 5-12 years are out of school.² Nepal still accounts for 1.6 million working children of ages 5-17 years and only about 11.8% of Dalit girls are in secondary school.³ It is evident that poverty, child labour, and discrimination based on gender, caste, ethnicity, disability are major barriers to quality education and learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated age-old challenges and created new ones. The government responded by providing education through virtual online distance learning which may risk widening the digital divide as less than half of the population have internet access, while around 2.5 million students and youth do not have access to any technological devices. Students and teachers also lack the technical knowledge and capacity to learn and teach through online platforms. The wide financing gap in education also limits the attainment of free and compulsory education and is further challenged by COVID-19, which put around 2.1 million children⁴ at risk of dropping out of school.

Considering all these challenges in public education, the government must significantly increase the education budget in line with its commitment to allocate 20% of the national budget and 6% of the GDP for education. However, the current allocation of 11.6% of the national budget for education is clearly insufficient. NCE Nepal, therefore, calls on the government to allocate an additional 4% from the national budget to address persisting gaps and cope with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. We further urge the government to ensure efficient use of existing resources, broaden the tax base, and adopt measures to stop tax evasion.

The linkages between SDG 4 and the other SDGs demand inter-governmental, inter-ministerial and inter-sectoral collaboration to ensure that the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, including SDG 4, is achieved in full. Along this line, we call for greater spaces for meaningful participation and engagement of civil society in decision-making processes, bringing the voices of those left behind and, thus, fulfil the mandate of the SDGs. NCE Nepal further calls for improved data systems with disaggregation by age, sex, gender, location, caste, ethnicity, disability, and economic status to better monitor and track the progress towards SDG 4. The impact of COVID-19 and the persisting issues of equity and quality of education may best be met by putting in place effective and well-targeted programmes, plans, and strategies that reach the furthest behind.

¹ Center For Education and Human Resource Development (2019)

² See: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/13/nepal-barriers-inclusive-education>

³ See: <https://borgenproject.org/top-10-facts-about-girls-education-in-nepal/>

⁴ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2020). Education Cluster Contingency Plan. Kathmandu.



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