




■ Discourse with the Local Government regarding safe learning environment for girls

Executive Summary

Civil Society Spotlight Report on Sustainable Development Goal 4

Reclaiming the promises for equitable, inclusive quality and lifelong learning opportunities for all

COUNTRY FACTS AND FIGURES		
TOTAL POPULATION:	29.305 million (UNESCO, 2017)	
POPULATION AGED 14 YEARS AND YOUNGER:	9.054 million (30.89%) (UNESCO, 2017)	
GNI PER CAPITA:	US\$ 800 (World Bank, 2017)	
INCOME GROUP:	Low Income Status (World Bank, 2018)	
HDI VALUE AND RANK:	0.574, 149 out of 189 (UNDP, 2017)	
OUT OF SCHOOL RATE:	13.83% (UNESCO, 2019)	
OUT OF SCHOOL:	159,211 children- 99,251 female and 59,960 male (UNESCO, 2017) 222,237 adolescents- 77,722 female and 144,515 male (UNESCO, 2017)	
LITERACY RATE (15-24 YEARS):	84.76%; Female 80.21%; Male 89.88% (UNESCO, 2011)	
LITERACY RATE (15 YEARS AND OLDER):	59.63%; Female 48.84%; Male 71.71% (UNESCO, 2011)	
EDUCATION EXPENDITURE:	4.62% of the GDP and 10.20% of the total budget (Ministry of Finance, Fiscal Year 2018/19)	

Country Context and SDG Rollout

Nepal, a multi-caste/ethnic, multilingual, multi-religious country, is under the phase of implementing the new Constitution of Nepal (2015), which explicitly promotes gender equality. With 25 per cent of the population living under poverty, Nepal is ranked 149th in the Human Development Index according to the Human Development Report in 2017. The large fluctuations in the GDP growth of the country reflect the fragility of the economy.

The Constitution of Nepal 2072 (2015) has identified education as a fundamental right. Under this, every citizen shall have the right of access to free and compulsory education up to basic level and free education up to secondary level. In line with the Constitution of Nepal, the Free and Compulsory Education Act 2018 (2075) has been formulated, while the Federal Education Act is in the process of preparation at the federal level.

In 2015, Nepal is among the countries that adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The National Planning Commission (NPC) is an apex body under the Federal Government. Tasked to lead the SDG rollout process, the NPC has made significant progress- from preparing baseline study of the SDG targets and indicators to contextualising them, identifying institutional arrangements, implementation strategies, budget forecasting, and monitoring mechanisms of the SDGs, including SDG 4. More importantly, the government has started to allocate budgets as per the SDG targets. However, much more needs to be done to harmonise the SDG targets and indicators with the policies and plans of the provincial and local governments in the context of the federalisation in Nepal. The SDGs have been integrated in the 14th (three-year plan) periodic plan (current), that has been in effect (2016/17- 2018/19) from the mid-July 2016.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) is responsible and accountable for the rollout of the SDG 4/Education 2030. In coordination with the National Planning Commission, the MoEST takes the role of coordinating and facilitating the SDG 4 implementation in Nepal. It has allocated one Joint Secretary of its planning division as the SDG 4 Coordinator. In addition, the National Education Commission for UNESCO, under MoEST, is preparing the Education 2030 National Framework for Action, which includes the Framework for Action of all the seven targets and three means of implementation of SDG 4.

However, there have been fewer consultations with stakeholders, including civil society organisations (CSOs), in this process.

The MoEST has prepared the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) as the country's education sector plan and the provision of SDG 4 has been integrated into this plan, which is considered an important vessel to enable Nepal to achieve SDG 4 and its targets (2016-2030).

After Nepal's federalisation, education up to the secondary level is the responsibility of the local governments. It is thus essential for the local governments to enhance their ownership and ensure their accountability in order to localise SDG 4 and SSDP. However, many representatives of the local government, as well as the provincial government, are neither sensitised nor aware about these global and national goals, targets, and indicators. CSOs, such as the National Campaign for Education (NCE-Nepal), played a crucial role in localising the SDGs through community consultations, training, and workshops. Organisations have also contributed to the translation of SDGs into local languages and dissemination. In addition, CSOs are actively monitoring the SDG implementation and are lobbying with the government based on research findings on education and equity. Inclusion in and quality of education is important key advocacy of the CSOs in their lobby and engagements with the government. CSOs also lobby on gender issues, focusing more on providing sex and reproductive health education to the adolescent children, gender-friendly infrastructure, and combating sexual abuse and emotional neglect of children and adolescents.

CSOs' Role in the SDG Implementation

In Nepal, the participation and representation of CSOs has not been institutionalised and well acknowledged. Since the federalisation of Nepal, the scope of civil society has widened, but their spaces have been limited. In some cases, the participation of CSOs in the policy process depends on the mindset of the people who have decision making authority. In the same light, the participation of CSOs in the processes of contextualising and nationalising the SDG 4 targets and indicators, and in the development of harmonised national plans is not also institutionalised. Government consultations were merely tokenistic. There were fewer consultations with the CSOs while preparing the SDG 4 framework and action plans. CSOs then took the initiative to conduct consultations with marginalised groups of people to listen to their perspectives and raise their awareness on SDG 4 and SSDP. They also raised the agenda of people who are deemed voiceless, such as women, dalits, janajatis, and the youth, and made their voices heard in the different discussions and interaction programmes with the government and other decision-makers. Particularly, NCE-Nepal led consultations with marginalised and deprived communities, specifically with girls/women, dalits, and janajatis in the process of SSDP formulation. The organisation also advocated the collective voices of CSOs in the different thematic committees.

In 2017, the Government of Nepal reported its progress in the SDGs through the Voluntary National Review (VNR). During this VNR process, it did not consult with the larger CSOs groups prior to the submission of the VNR to the UN HLPF. Thus, the participation of CSOs has not widespread and institutionalised from the government side, but they have played a proactive role in forming the CSO positions on education sector plan, localising the SDGs, and creating campaigns for the people's awareness at the national and local levels.

SDG Status and Progress

Nepal has nearly achieved universal enrolment in primary education and has made significant improvements in gender parity in primary and secondary level education. However, much remains to be done. In term of education access, the net enrolment at the basic level is 91 per cent and 38.9 per cent at the secondary level. Basic education remains inaccessible to many children who comprise 8.7 per cent

of the children of 5-12 age groups (MoEST, 2018). Moreover, at the national level, 9.1 per cent of the students either repeat or drop out of schools by grades one to two. The dropout rate is higher in the higher levels of education (MoEST, 2018).

The NPC (2017) has claimed that gender parity has been achieved in the schools, but disparity exists at tertiary education where there are only 71 girls compared to 100 boys in colleges or universities. The country has to accelerate its efforts to achieve the government's target of eliminating gender disparity at tertiary level by 2030. To boost efforts towards gender equality in education, the government has enacted policies on recruiting female teachers in schools, providing scholarships for girls, constructing separate toilets for boys and girls, and making sanitary pads available for girls. The current budget announcement of the government 2019/20 included budget item for free sanitary pads for girls studying in the public schools. However, schools in the remote areas of Nepal, especially in the Terai region, still lack gender-friendly infrastructure, such as separate toilet facilities, clean water, and sanitary pad disposal facilities, among others.

The increasing cases of sexual abuse, murder, violence, and harassment for girls show that adolescent girls are still not safe in the schools and society. Cases of sexual abuse by teachers, friends, and even relatives have increased. This hinders girls' access to quality education and a safe and enabling learning environment. Although sex education has been included in the school curriculum, it is rarely taught to the students. This has limited the children's and adolescents' understanding of menstrual and adolescent hygiene, sex education, sanitation, and puberty changes.

Many cultural norms persist that hinder young women and adolescent girls' access, participation and completion of good quality education. Female students tend to drop out of school as they reach higher grades. Among the many socio-cultural, economic and other factors preventing adolescent girls and young women from accessing education are child marriage and early pregnancy, gender-based violence, and the lack of knowledge or provision of proper hygiene facilities. According to the Nepal Living Standards Survey (2010/11), Nepal has an adult literacy rate of 56.6 per cent. However, the male and female literacy rates stand at 71.6 per cent and 44.5 per cent respectively, pointing to a huge disparity between the two genders. The National Census 2011 states that the literacy rates of men and women in Nepal differ by 17.7 per cent. It is then no surprise that women have less education, information, and opportunities.

Nepal has seen a decreasing trend in the financing of education. This year's education budget stands at 10.20 per cent of the total national budget and around 4 per cent of the GDP. There are also issues of weak education governance, budget leakage, and the misutilisation and freezing of the allocated funds. The current financing gap in the education sector is nearly double of the current educational funds allocated. NCE-Nepal's research conducted in 2018 found that public schools lack 76,708 teachers. There are also challenges in the proportional deployment of teachers across schools in the country. As a result, the quality of public schools is deteriorating, while private schools continue to thrive, even attracting students from marginalised families and communities. There are some policies and guidelines to regulate private actors of education. However, many private actors fail to comply with the rules and regulations made by the government.

Only a small share of students is taking the vocational stream. This could be attributed partly to the low number of schools that provide technical and vocational education. This indicates that technical and vocational education and training or TVET is given less priority in the country. As a result, the middle-level workforce that is considered the backbone of national development remains underdeveloped. Gender disparities also exist in TVET as female participation is lower than male participation. The government has planned to establish at least one TVET school in one local government with the aim of increasing the participation of learners in TVET.

Youth Perspectives on SDG 4 in Nepal

Youth Policies

The National Youth Policy of Nepal 2010 progressively defines the youth as women, men, and third gender within the age group of 16 to 40. According to the Population and Housing Census Report (2011), the youth comprises 40.3 per cent of the total population of Nepal, with 46 per cent male and 54 per cent female. The Ministry of Youth and Sports reported in 2014 that the literacy rate for youth ages 16 to 25 years is at 80 per cent while that for the age group of 26 to 40 is at 61.3 per cent. The Ministry further claims that the proportion of male population aged 16 to 25 years engaged in the study is 50.06 per cent whereas 37.21 per cent of those in the 26 to 40 years age group are engaged in waged/salaried work. However, the highest proportion of the female youth of 16-25 years and 26-40 years age group are engaged in studying (37.53%) and household chores (39.2%). The Ministry highlighted that the highest proportion of the youth population, i.e. around 40 per cent males aged 16-25 years as well as 26 to 40 years, and 70 per cent of the female populations from both age groups, are engaged in agricultural, forestry, and fishery-related work.

The National Youth Policy envisages building youth capacity to contribute to a prosperous, modern, and just Nepal, and integrating young people in national development through meaningful participation and leadership. Furthermore, the Constitution emphasises the creation and provision of opportunities for young people in the fields of education, health, and employment, aimed at boosting their personal development and empowerment.

The Constitution and the youth policy have been translated into long-term plans that inform the government programmes of implementation. The **Youth Vision 2025** focuses on areas of education, employment, health, social security, and leadership development for the youth, while the **14th Development Plan** recognises the role of young people as major contributors to socio-economic development and sustainable peace, and the need to provide them opportunities to exercise their potential.

Consultations with the Youth on the SDGs and SDG 4

The National Campaign for Education- Nepal (NCE-Nepal) recognises that the youth is a major force in the country. The coalition thus held dialogues and conducted in-depth discussions on the SDGs and SDG 4 with young people and youth groups. These consultations prepared NCE-Nepal and the youth in their participation during the CSO People's Forum and the 6th Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD). More importantly, NCE-Nepal presented the youth agenda for SDG 4 in ASPBAE's Youth Meeting in the run-up to the APFSD and 2019 HLPF.

Where are the youth in Nepal?

Based on research and on the dialogues with the youth, the youth are either studying, employed in the country or abroad, doing household work, or engaging in politics.

There is an increasing number of young people seeking employment outside the country. According to the Nepal Labor Data as of 2019, 5.5 million youth sought authorisation letters to work abroad.¹ In fact, over 1,750 young Nepali leave the country every day, resulting in 28 per cent of the country's workforce working abroad. This trend is understandable considering the unemployment rate of 19.20 per cent for youth aged 15 to 29 years old. The overseas workers also bring in remittances for their families and the overall remittances amount to 28 per cent of the GDP of Nepal.

Youth Issues

Aside from unemployment, the Nepali youth faces a myriad of challenges. The participants discussed the following challenges in education:

- The formal education system stifles the creativity of the youth.
- Parents do not prefer non-formal and skill-based education, depriving youth of education that can provide opportunities for work in the labour market.
- Double and triple degrees in education do not yield benefits for the youth.
- The opportunity cost of education is high.
- Teachers fail to be role models for students.

Widening Social and Economic Gap

The youth participants expressed that education has ceased to be an equaliser as it has become less effective in addressing inequity.

1 <https://www.nepalisansar.com/immigration/nepal-employment-overview-more-than-5-5-mn-mi>

They also noted that the gap between social and economic groups continues to widen. In comparison to students from wealthy families, students from poor families are at a disadvantage as they have less access to quality education and opportunities in life. There are also feelings of uncertainty among the youth participants who remarked on the following issues:

- Heavy demands on labour to support their family due to poverty
- Challenges in achieving economic freedom
- Alarmingly, Nepal is witnessing an increasing rate in suicide cases. Nepal ranks 7th in the world for suicide and has the 3rd highest rate for female suicide. The National Suicide rate is 24.9 per 100,000 (ages of 15 to 49 years).

Youth Participation

The youth participants said that they have become disillusioned with political leadership. The patronage politics and rampant corruption in the government remain major obstacles to the country's development, which even political leaders cannot solve. At the same time, the youth are excluded from policy development and decision-making institutions. Therefore, policies and interventions aimed at supporting youth development often do not reflect the relevant and effective strategies that can reach and benefit the youth.

Demands of the Youth

The in-depth discussions allowed the youth to identify key demands that they can lobby to government authorities and political parties. For education, young people urge the government to:

- Have a vision on quality education and clarity on the kind of education it wants to promote for development of the country and nation building
- Conduct parental awareness on the importance of education and the need to secure the right to education of children, youth, and adults;
- Ensure a holistic education that includes liberal education, philosophy, and the arts to develop the full potential of the youth;
- Support and invest in quality provision of skills development and apprenticeship, and provide cutting edge technical and vocational education;
- Provide safety nets and financial support as well as income generation for marginalised learners so they can continue their education;
- Ensure the accountability and the role of local governments in ensuring the provision of quality education;
- End all forms of discrimination in the education system; and
- Motivate the youth wherever they are and wherever they choose to be.

What should the youth do?

The consultation ended on a high and hopeful note. The young people agreed to:

- Start asking questions to the authorities.
- Apply the knowledge to daily life through healthy living and positive thinking.
- Unite together to ensure that the next generation receives a better education system.



Schools also face infrastructure challenges. In fact, only 11 per cent of school buildings are earthquake-resistant and most schools in Nepal lack disability- friendly learning environment. A Flash Report by MoEST (2018) shows that out of 893,138 children that are enrolled in ECED/PPCs, 2,983 (0.34%) have been identified as children with disabilities and they are facing disability stigma and discrimination from their parents, peers, and teachers. Several cases of abuse of mentally disabled children have also been noticed in society. Moreover, schools are less likely to formulate a participatory policy and plan and decision making process.

Major Challenges in Implementing SDG 4

Nepal has a good record of initiatives to implement the SDGs since the country adopted them in 2015. The frameworks, action plans, and baseline surveys were already prepared in early 2016. The seven-year School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) is also aligned towards the implementation of SDG 4. Looking into the overall indicator of SSDP, some of the targets, such as gross enrolment rate, net enrolment rate, gender parity index, and percentage of female teachers, seems progressive but are not equal in all geographical areas and communities.

Research by NCE-Nepal indicates the high variance of these targets from one province to another, such as the GER of 2017 in ECED for girls in Gandaki Province is 96.8 per cent whereas it is only 61.6 per cent in Province no. 2 and 64.1 per cent in Karnali Province. The case is similar for other indicators. There are major problems in terms of the education financing, governance, and localisation of SDG 4. Out of the total estimated sources of financing of the overall nation's budget for this fiscal year, 63.21 per cent is financed through revenue mobilisation, while the rest comes from grants, loans, and borrowings. It is unfortunate to note that donors' commitment and funds for the education sector have also declined. Generating funds, overcoming from huge deficit, proper utilisation of available resources, and budget deviation are the challenges in achieving SDG 4.

Transparency and weak governance are urgent concerns for the education sector. The report submitted by the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (2018) shows that out of the total complaints, the highest number (i.e. 18.32%) were complaints concerning the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Moreover, the localisation of SDG 4 and SSDP is absolutely essential as the constitution has devolved the responsibility of school education to local governments. On the other hand, the provincial and local education actors, including the policy makers and implementers, have not yet been well empowered and educated on SDG 4 agenda. This might slow down the pace of the meaningful localisation, harmonisation, and implementation of the agenda.

Concluding Statement

For the effective implementation of SDG 4, the federal, provincial, and local governments need to prioritise the SDG 4 targets, as well as integrate education as a key strategy in achieving the other SDGs. In addition, good governance should be prime concern of all levels of governments. This will not only increase the internal efficiency but also accelerate progress towards the targets set in SDG 4/Education 2030. There should also be strong public-public partnership. This would mean improving the capacity as well as the coordination and partnership of all governments with other public institutions. Since achieving the SDGs is a collective commitment of the government, development partners, CSOs, private actors, and other educational stakeholders, it is the responsibility of each and every stakeholder to be accountable to fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities. It is equally important for the government to establish sound partnerships with CSOs in implementing and monitoring the SDGs. The government should also recognise and acknowledge the contributions of CSOs in their policy documents or the forums. Moreover, particular focus must also be given to the civil society's capacity-building to enable them to better contribute in the data collection, monitoring, production of alternatives, and community mobilisation. This will create a synergy effect in the attainment of the sustainable development goals in Nepal. •



NATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR EDUCATION (NCE-NEPAL)

P.O. Box: 14421, Babarmahal Kathmandu, Nepal
 Tel: +977-01-4223420, +977-01-6203009
 Email: info@ncenepal.org.np
 Website: www.ncenepal.org.np

The National Campaign for Education-Nepal (NCE-Nepal) is a national level network of 339 members working for rights to education in Nepal. Its members include I/NGOs, teacher organisations, education journalists, and community-based organisations. It was established as a national chapter of Global Campaign for Education Nepal (GCE Nepal) in 2003 and it was registered as National Campaign for Education Nepal in 2009. It focuses on evidence-based policy advocacy to ensure the equitable quality inclusive education for all children. NCE-Nepal is a member organisation of ASPBAE.



Asia South Pacific Association
 for Basic and Adult Education
 Learning Beyond Boundaries

ASIA SOUTH PACIFIC ASSOCIATION FOR BASIC AND ADULT
 EDUCATION (ASPBAE) is a regional association of more than 200
 organisations and individuals working towards promoting
 quality education for all and transformative and liberating,
 lifelong adult education and learning.

Unit 106 Sterten Place Condominium
 116 Maginhawa Street, Teachers Village East, Diliman
 Quezon City 1101, Philippines

Tel/Fax: 63 2 441 4594
 Email: aspbae@gmail.com | Website: www.aspbae.org

ISBN: 978-621-95859-0-3