



राष्ट्रिय अपाङ्ग महासंघ नेपाल
NFD-N

Nepal Inclusive Education Consortium

Participatory Action Research on Examining the access to education for Learners with Disabilities in Nepal (2021)

Infographic

Background:

Nepal has made substantial progress in literacy over the last two decades. However, persons with disabilities have lagged behind.

The constitution (2015) enshrines education as a fundamental right and commits to make education people-centered by ending discrimination relating to all forms of race including gender, language, and disability. As per the constitution, the provision and management of the education of children with disabilities is the sole jurisdiction of local governments however, how such provision will affect inclusion in education is unclear. All the political and administrative system including education system of the country has been transferred to local Government.

Students with disabilities as well as those from low income group, remote, deprived caste families or from disadvantaged ethnicities are disproportionately affected by the access to education gap.

The School Sector Plan call for education to be a vehicle for national development and the advancement of national education reform imperatives which is even more essential for learners with disabilities.

In Nepal, as elsewhere, the Covid pandemic left learners with disabilities out of school for an extended period, they also remained deprived in accessing an online platform of education. In some cases, for over a year. The daily lives of people with disabilities has been severely affected, particularly accessing educational opportunity and employment prospects.

Advocates for the rights of persons with disabilities realized there was a need to examine the challenges in access to education for learners with disabilities in Nepal and recommend mitigation measures to improve the situation. It would be crucial to explore how to ensure children with disabilities' access education during the implementation of the school sector plan (2021-2030). In this backdrop, Action on Disability Rights And Development-Nepal (ADRAD-Nepal) in collaboration with Nepal Inclusive Education Consortium (NIEC) conducted Participatory Action Research (PAR) examining the challenges in access to education. The PAR focused on the implementation status of existing educational policy and practice at the national and local level covering both in Kathmandu and Banke and Dang districts to assess the implementation of educational programs of the Government of Nepal. The National and International Legislation and Human Rights Instruments were reviewed and their implementation was assessed in practice at the local levels. The students with disabilities listed within the Educational Management Information System (EMIS) by local municipalities following Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) were considered as the whole population and the sample was drawn randomly within the list as key informant interviewees. The evaluation covered Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolitan, Baijanath and Kohalpur

Municipalities along with Kathmandu and Lalitpur metropolitan. Based on the findings of the assessment, it is recommended that the federal, provincial and the local government adopt practical milestones to follow an inclusive Education system in the post-Covid situation bringing all children with disabilities into the education system.

The aim of PAR was to evaluate the challenges that exist in access to education for children with disabilities, assess the effectiveness of the educational program for meeting commitments of the Government to promote inclusive education particularly in compliance with article 24 of CRPD and the concluding observation of CRPD committee and to provide the first hand empirical evidence of implementation status of existing educational programs of the government in order to find out whether such programs have been effective in meeting disability targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 and constitutional provisions of rights to education of children with disabilities.

Following the scope of PAR, both qualitative and quantitative analysis has been carried out under the evaluation. In-depth interviews of specific cases were conducted, particularly to understand the impact of Covid-19 on the learning opportunities of students with disabilities.

Analysis of the status of access to Education to learners with disabilities:

Among those learners with disabilities enrolled in educational institutions, 57% are boys and 43% are girls.

Persons with disabilities in Nepal often experience the violation of their basic human rights as the consequence of myths, negative attitudes, and pejorative language, social, legal and environmental barriers

The National Education Policy 2019 (BS 2076) mentioned contradictory provisions which is in contrast to the Inclusive Education Policy (2017) and is superseded by the current National Education Policy. The current policy in its policy number (G) covered both Inclusive and special education. The Policy 10.28 mentions “To provide inclusive education and special education opportunities to meet the learning needs of children with disabilities and to adapt curricula and textbooks for the development of life skills and vocational skills...”. Here the special education and inclusive education both are mentioned without distinction which is entirely noncompliant the article 24 of CRPD.

Nepal committed to the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action for the implementation of SDG 4 issued by the meeting of the World Education Forum organized by UNESCO in Incheon, South Korea. Against this context, the Government of Nepal has incorporated it policy priorities for educational development in its Fifteenth Plan. The Sustainable Development Goals has explicitly the targets of quality and equitable education of learners with disabilities.

Key findings of PAR:

The present PAR on IE interviewed to 125 students with disabilities who enrolled in the educational setting and found that 10% were enrolled in Madrassa, 31% in RC and 59% enrolled in public schools. Total accessibility was not found in most of the settings.

“... The school is not ready to accept me because of my physical disabilities. the school may not have enough resources, the classrooms are not accessible, as it developed in my house, and the teachers may not be capable enough to teach students like us...”, said a boy (11), using wheelchair.

The constitution grants every child the right to education but the boy in the rural community is deprived of accessing education only because of his disabilities.

“I was not expecting to go to school because I would be totally stigmatized and my family would not want me to go to school, but it is the staff of DECN who persuaded my parents to enroll me in the school...”. said a boy with cerebral Palsy in the “Educational Transition Center “(ET Center) established by DECN.

A significant number of schools do not have the identified priority minimum enabling conditions for children with disabilities.

In rural municipalities, children with disabilities do not receive an education nor are they taught vocational or independent living skills that will benefit them as adults. Participants from FGD described the low quality of education observed in resource classes (RC) for children with disabilities in their respective municipalities. *“Unfortunately, the special schools that I’ve observed are not really that helpful in progressing children with disabilities, forward as the family have expected. It is more like a daycare arrangement in the RC particularly to the children with intellectual disability...”*. said a social mobilizer of DECN.

It was found that many RC facilities lack enough ventilation, adequate lighting, accessible structures, toilets, clean water and proper sanitation.

“Because of the inaccessible and narrow pathway in the school buildings, and having lots of stairs, I am facing continuous challenges. As the toilet is not accessible for my wheelchair, I limit drinking water while going to school” said a girl using wheelchair in Baijanath Municipality.

The Learning and upgrading Standards are not enforced in RC. This makes it difficult to ensure minimum enabling conditions across the classes.

“There are questions concerning the quality of online education due to low attainment, lack of ICT trained educators, and lack of suitable online platform for learners who use sign-language.

“I usually visit a family in rural village where a young daughter who has hearing disability is kept at home without sending her to school, who has hearing disability, who was always banging her feet on the floor which I tried to understand, finally I came to know that the girl wanted to continue her education in school with her friends and learn sign-language for communication...”. said a social mobilizer of DECN. *“Because of less access to sign language communication in families, children with hearing disabilities tied with the deaf community in the belief that school stay will little benefit them...”*. Expressed a girl with hearing disability from Dang.

“Inclusive education allows students to learn one of the most important basic lessons of life having strength because of diversity. *By learning to get along with others from different backgrounds, Deaf students can learn how differences can strengthen the Deaf individual and the Deaf culture as a whole ...*” Said the president of National Deaf Federation (NDFN)....”. The major challenge for inclusive Education for Deaf students are lack of vocabulary in sign language as well as listening and speaking test that allocate 20 marks in Secondary Education Examination (SEE).

Due to lack of accessible teaching learning materials including textbooks in Braille and in DAISY format, the students with visual disabilities have low attendance in online classes. The accessible ICT help retention and continuous learning opportunity for learners with disabilities. Another challenge in the examination system is the issue of writers for blind students. Some blind students are under pressure to find the writers by themselves, even if they find a writer, there have been instances of writers failing to keep up the necessary speed while writing exam papers.

In almost every part of the country, schools have been temporarily closed and remote education programmes initiated which was rather challenging to children with visual disabilities who face high barriers in accessing adequate learning materials and participating in learning exercise. The Obstacles to providing remote education to children with Autism Spectrum Condition and Intellectual disability include a lack of personalized education plans, absence of resources provided in schools (such as trained teachers, educators and structured learning environments), and a lack of assistive technology for online classes including computers, Android devices and Internet for students with learning disabilities in their homes.

“Most students, enrolled with hostel facilities in RC running for the students with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities stay in residential facilities where there is one government-paid

caretaker. This low paid and unskilled care-taker has to look after 10 or more students with disabilities which is not only insufficient but also impractical...” said a visual impaired teacher. The RC, which was initially following integration principle and later adopted by Inclusive ideology though now driven from segregation practice. There is no adaptations or support to bring learners with disabilities in the regular classrooms following inclusive principles.

The assessment centers established in the districts are functioning without sufficient skill and the unclear roles of the coordinators. They argued that there is inadequate resources to coordinate for bringing learners with disabilities in the schools or lead advocacy efforts to sensitize parents in sending their children with disabilities in the school.

After passing completing basic education, the location of schools for secondary education are not equally accessible to learners with disabilities. Therefore, a low transition of students to secondary schools is observed. When the student’s achievement is low and when there are high dropout rates, secondary schools have little capacity to graduate students with disabilities resulting in inadequate career advancement options or higher educational attainment.

Key challenges observed were sub-standard learning environments, lack of teachers' capacity and motivation, and the inadequate continuous support system for teachers to make schools child-friendly and quality-oriented.

“The schools deny admission to children with disabilities, particularly those with psychosocial and intellectual disabilities, because the school management think that the curriculum or trained teachers is lacking for an inclusive education environment...”. Increasing the number of skilled teachers is foremost essential to promote inclusive education in regular schools. Without trained teachers, it's impossible to handle individual need of students with diverse disabilities, socio-cultural circumstances and other affecting factors like medium of language used...”.

The government provides minimal special education training only to teachers working in special schools or RC. Teachers in mainstream schools do not receive adequate training on the way how to adopt children with disabilities in their regular classrooms, thereby undermining the principle of inclusive education. There is lack of training provided by the local Government for staffs at learning centers run by NGOs or OPDs such as ET Center operated by DECN...”.

There is inadequate supervision, monitoring and follow-up by the municipalities in schools, both RC and the inclusive schools.

90 per cent of the parents of children with intellectual disability argue that Schools do not want to include children with intellectual disabilities in the regular classroom in the school.

“My fear for sending my son to school was more associated with the doubt that my daughter who have no disability would be unnecessarily ridiculed or blamed, may affect her marriage chances. Besides, my son may not be experiencing meaningful benefits from school because he has no means of proper communication...” expressed the mother of a boy with CP. The parents’ wrong understanding is that the targets of inclusion can’t be understood by members of their community, which often leads to the practice of keeping their child protected at home.

The most important concern on children with intellectual disability and the Autism spectrum condition is the way they are addressed in government policies and programmes for developing the individual learning plans and the appropriate teaching method for such children with learning disabilities. The participants amongst parents of learners with intellectual Disabilities and Autism, argue that the lack of standard curriculum is a challenge. At present there is not any specific curriculum for children with cognitive disability thus the concept of education needs to be redefined on the basis of experience of such children. “The basic daily skills learnt by them such as using toilet, washing, dressing, eating and turning on or off the radio and television should be considered as learning skills. Though the argument of parents strive for a special curriculum. However, that is not consistent within inclusive education principles. In an inclusive system, there should be one curriculum which is adapted to the needs of different learners.

The key respondents among young boys and girls with disabilities consistently described lack of teaching learning materials and reproductive health services for adolescents with disabilities; where few services for children with disabilities existed, services for adults were often overlooked. As a result, when school education is over, young adults are often left with no career options, so they remain isolated at home with limited gainful activities. It creates new troubles for the parents of children with cognitive disabilities who in many cases must adjust their schedules to look after their adolescent boys and girls full time. The problem is even more exacerbated when the adolescent girls with intellectual disabilities facing a high risk of sexual violence even at home and within the family. The women and girls with disabilities who are not only routinely denied of education, but are often hidden at home and at much higher risk of abuse and neglect. The study revealed that 72% of participants of FGD agreed that many children with profound disabilities are not sent to school. Further, 60% of respondents indicated that girls with disabilities are excluded from school more than boys with disabilities, while 85% also agreed that girls with disabilities are excluded from school more than girls without disabilities.

I am often bound to stay at home, my physical movement and social participation is confined within the boundary of the house, I can't continue the school since my parents are not willing to put me at risk of violence" said a girl with visual impairment. "The family is very overprotective of daughters because they don't want to take any risk that she is sexually violated...". Said a mother of girl with Intellectual disability.

"Social stigma is differently affecting men and women in our Muslim community because of the religious beliefs. Girls and women, particularly in the rural municipalities are confined within four walls because of our religion and are deprived from educational opportunities...". said a girl with physical disability.

"In the southern part of Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolitan, we have a large Muslim community and we send our children in Madrassa for formal education. Girls have limited experiences than boys in Madrassa because girls are restricted for social participation in our community" said a parent of girl with Psychosocial disability.

In line with the SDGs, equitable access is a key result area in Nepal's school education sector and as such, GoN should prioritize access, participation and retention of children with disabilities to reduce disparities in learning outcomes.

Evaluating impact of Covid-19 in education of learners with disabilities:

COVID-19 has disrupted life in every corner of the country. While the impacts are far-reaching, the Covid-19 infection and the safety protocol adopted by the government to mitigate its spread have hit the most vulnerable children and families, including the majority of Learners with disabilities and those from low income group, due to the closing of schools intended to curb COVID-19 transmission. This left three hundred thousand pre-primaries, primary and secondary level children with disabilities and those from low income group out of school for an extended period, in some cases for over a year particularly in the hard hit area like Kathmandu valley.

The purpose of evaluating the impact of Covid-19 in the education of learners with disabilities is to raise awareness of the specific challenges faced by learners with disabilities and their return to school as well as their access to alternative learning during full or partial closing of the schools in Nepal. The observation also offers recommendations for Municipalities, schools and governments on how to address the specific challenges faced by children with disabilities in their access to inclusive education during lockdown.

There is limited knowledge of health risks and disability. Many parents/caregivers of children with disabilities have limited knowledge of whether their child's disability makes them more vulnerable due to coronavirus and when their child's health would be at greater risk because of their disability if they come in contact with the virus.

The learners with disabilities reported of receiving Covid-19 related information through TV (65.6 %), radio (81.2 %), phone messages (8 %), and neighbors (81.8 %). In average, (80%) learners with disabilities mentioned having received information either through the media or from friends and family members. Participants whose children had hearing impairment and intellectual disabilities received information either in sign language or through simplified messages for communicating to their children.

Closing and reopening of schools in Nepal: UNICEF is calling on governments to Reopen Schools as soon as possible and get education back on track since many learners with disabilities are facing education crisis.

“It’s a challenging task in my family to keep my daughter at home without attendant, because of threat of Covid and lockdown declared, the school is closed and my daughter is staying at home, she demands my time, I am compelled to close my small shop which has limited my income. I tried to bring my daughter together in the shop but even the regular consumers didn’t enter to the shop, they are reluctant to face my daughter’s gesture...” expressed the worry by a mother of a girl with Intellectual disability.

There is still the alternate mode of education both virtual and face-to-face going on however children with disabilities have not been prioritized in bringing them back to face-to-face learning. For example, in Kathmandu where a two-shift learning system in primary schools was instituted, the pre-school age children with disabilities remained at home.

Barriers and Enablers to access education for learners with disabilities in Covid-19:

There are many reasons behind the exclusion of Learners with disabilities from educational opportunities. The PAR revealed that stigma and discrimination, lack of available and accessible transportation to schools, lack of accessible school premises, limited capacity of teachers and school staff to support all learners with disabilities and limited accessible teaching materials, and lack of assistive devices create barriers for access to education for children with disabilities.

A girl with visual impairment who returned back home in Dialect from Magel Prasad High School in Nepalgunj couldn’t continue online classes because of not having broadband connection, smart phone or computers in her village.

A participant of webinar on Language justice expressed that *“Providing online education can be costly for having devices and computers, particularly for a post-Covid situation but with the right set of circumstances and management of Government’s resources, it is possible. for learners with disabilities providing inclusive education through regular classroom set-up addressing individual needs.”*

There are 35 % of the Learners with disabilities who were deprived of the cash support scheme of the Government for those who are living in hardship condition in lockdown situation. *“I was refused to get the relief package distributed by the Municipality to those having low economic status only because I am getting scholarship of second grade which is only NPR. 500 monthly however I missed the food package of about NPR. 2000.”* Said a learner with physical disability.

In general, there is lack of data on the situation of children with disabilities in most of Municipalities, and on the number of children with disabilities who are not enrolled in school or who have dropped out of school. Existing data indicates that many children with disabilities were not enrolled in school before the onset of the pandemic and many children with disabilities who were enrolled, have not gone back to school for various reasons.

DECN was barely able to continue The ET Center with minimal staff facilities during lockdown. This has meant that children with disabilities have been kept isolated in the center. Stigma and discrimination play a role in parent’s/caregivers’ decision to send children with disabilities to school during Covid-19 pandemic.

The protective measures put in place to combat the pandemic are creating barriers for children with disabilities to learn on an equal basis with their peers. For example, the use of face masks creates additional barriers for children who are deaf and are hard of hearing. Many rely on lip-reading and facial expression. Subsequently, face coverings make it impossible to read lips, resulting in communication barriers.

For many children, it is difficult to wear a mask. Children with intellectual disabilities particularly, might not easily understand why is it essential to wear a mask, what is the correct way and how to be fully protected by not touching it, and on how to dispose of used masks or to clean the reusable mask. Children with autism spectrum condition might face difficulties to the change of routine to having to wear masks as well as all the other changes following the pandemic.

The new routine of frequent handwashing might raise issues for children with intellectual disabilities who in many instances have learned that handwashing is connected to safe hygiene. Information about how to wash hands, or the handwashing facilities, might not be accessible. The use of hand sanitizer is another difficult task for those having single arm or those without arms. They have their legs used for several works thus are continuously facing challenges applying protective measures. Besides that, the Blind and Deafblind persons faced difficulties to identify where the sanitizer is placed properly or not.

Physical distancing creates challenges for children who rely on personal assistance and support for daily life. For example, children with physical disabilities and children with visual impairments might need personal assistance to support with practical tasks such as getting in and out of the school, using sanitation facilities, especially if the school premises are not accessible. Children who are blind, deafblind children as well as those with visual impairments might need tactile learning support through touch to be able to learn on an equal basis with their peers.

It is also important to note that children with disabilities returning to school might be at a disadvantage as many have not had sufficient support to continue their learning at home. This can be due to lack of digital devices or insufficient digital skills of the children, their parents/caregivers or teachers. This can also be as a result of lessons provided in one format, e.g. lessons on TV or radio excluding deaf children, the graphic interpretation without audio description exclude to those who are blind and low vision, without having real time caption, that exclude those who are hard of hearing or because teachers' lack capacity to adopt their lessons and materials to support children with disabilities learning at home.

Children with intellectual disabilities, children with Autism spectrum condition, children with deafblindness and psycho-social disabilities may be more at risk of forgetting the skills and knowledge acquired before the pandemic. The longer schools remain closed, the more critical the loss of learning will occur.

“The Covid pandemic excludes girls, and children with disabilities from receiving their basic educational rights, especially those in rural areas, who need to attend virtual classes.” In lack of support to learners with disabilities in assessment, the online method may not evaluate their learning achievement, if teachers are untrained and couldn't support and to follow the process of online assessment, learners with disabilities may be left back from opportunity of improvement learning from mistake. It is the true support if caregivers are trained and supported the children to correct the mistake from their learning.

Roles of stakeholders to promote educational opportunities to learners with disabilities”

Local governments should ensure an inclusive response to the pandemic, e.g. ensure WASH facilities are built with accessibility in mind, ensure risk communication and community engagement is inclusive and accessible, provide children learning at home with necessary digital equipment or additional teacher support, promote continuation of services for children with disabilities and their families, and design additional services such as cash assistance for families in need.

Schools need to collect data and track children with disabilities who have not returned to school after COVID-19, including through rapid assessments, and identify their learning needs by screening for their return, that help planning and budgeting meeting their individual need.

When planning return to school, the school should collaborate with the parents/caregivers and the child about the need of any additional support required, including support to children who have not received sufficient support to continue their learning at home, or any accommodation needed to ensure the child can access learning and other activities at the school while respecting protective measures. The school should consider how to support children who need personal assistance and support, including tactile learning, accessible ICT, accessible digital books and WASH services.

Federal and Provincial Government need to ensure the continuity of support services for families with children with disabilities, including child protection services, rehabilitation services and access to assistive devices.

Governments should establish different temporary schemes like cash transfer for schooling children with disabilities and their families to alleviate economic burdens due to the pandemic, be it additional transport cost, protective equipment, or loss of income of families of children with disabilities. It is also important to strengthen collaboration between Ministry of Education, Science and technology and Ministry of Women, Children and Elder Citizen for social protection support in schools.

Conclusion and recommendation:

The Consortium believes that the National Education Policy 2019 has covered contradictory provision of both Inclusive Education and special education. Since the Policy 10.28 mentions "To provide inclusive education and special education opportunities" which cannot meet the learning needs of children with disabilities without adopting a comprehensive IE plan. The policy, though inspired to adapt curricula and textbooks for the development of life skills and vocational skills, is silent in the adoption of synchronized curriculum for bringing all children in the regular classroom setting. Besides, if both special education and inclusive education are mentioned without distinction, this can be taken the acts of state party against the CRPD compliances and challenge the state commitments under the provision of article 24 of CRPD.

It is strongly realized that the Inclusive education support to overcome the barriers of mainstreaming in social activities and ensure Learners with disabilities to enable them learning from their own experience. Inclusive education fosters a child-centred approach to education that ensures that all teaching and learning resources, the curriculum, the physical school environment and location as well as all support services are adapted to the need of each children and learning circumstances. An inclusive approach to learning is beneficial to all, but particularly to Learners with disabilities who are often excluded from learning within mainstream education systems. In the context of using inclusive approaches in pre schooling, mitigating and responding to public health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic is every government's duty. Representative data are key to enabling local bodies to transition through the pandemic's various stages and to ensure that nobody is left out in present and future interventions. It is therefore essential that Nepal continue to work towards mainstreaming support for Learners with disabilities within its core education policy and programs.

The country is heading towards achieving the targets of SDG goal 4 to quality education and article 24 of CRPD for advancing Inclusive Education through mainstreaming school structure. Thus, it desirable to start training to the regular teachers so that the access to education to LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES is fulfilling its objectives.

There is no proper screening mechanism while enrolment of the children in early classrooms, resulting less prevalence of Learners with disabilities.

The concept of Inclusive Education in Nepal has been largely adopted by persons with visual disability, those who are Hard of hearing and have physical disabilities whereas a commitment

to traditional special educational is deeply rooted amongst the Deaf community, and families of persons with Intellectual disabilities, Deafblindness and Autism spectrum condition. It is observed that there remain barriers to inclusive education in most part of the country including teacher preparation, resources, acceptance by duty bearers, accessibility both infrastructure to all areas in school buildings, and accessible ICT and misconception towards inclusive education.

In adoption of both Special and Inclusive Education system within the same policy, the intention of the GON may be bringing all children with disabilities within the school system but clearly segregated education doesn't fulfill the National objectives of education policy to develop a citizen equally contributing to the Nation building process. Furthermore, when children with disabilities are sent to special residential schools they are deprived of their right, as outlined in the CRPD and CRC to remain with their family and community.

Another benefit of Inclusive education is that both the children with disabilities and those without disabilities will have opportunity to learn from each other, the different walks of life, being together in the same classrooms. This learning leads the children without disabilities experience ng a successful pathway towards humanity and socialization.

In context of children with intellectual disability, lack of standard curriculum is the major problem. There is strong need of curriculum adjustment according to the learning needs of those with intellectual disability and Autism spectrum condition.

Local Government should urgently address the problem of teacher's license among deaf teachers. Government should introduce deaf friendly teacher's license examination system to enable deaf teachers to obtain teaching license.

"Inclusive education is a strategic approach that addresses equal learning and reading environments for all children. The Kohalpur municipality has brought the local policy for inclusive education which follows the principle that regular schools with inclusive education are the most effective method for elimination of discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society, and achieving education for all...".

The local government should be accountable for sustaining the education programs based on the poverty and ignorance of the parents. Sensitizing the parents to develop them an obligation about their children education through initiation of funding partners in the post-Covid context.

Best practice of Local actors:

Kohalpur Municipality has adopted the "Inclusive Education Policy" in the local level which is considered as an exemplary initiative. Following the constitutional provision of granting authority to local bodies to adopt the locally compatible policy and laws, the local Inclusive Education Policy of Kohalpur municipality has been adopted. *"The local inclusive education policy has been adopted based on the state commitments towards CRPD and International Human Rights instruments as well as the local disability context..."*. As mentioned by the chief of educational unit of Kohalpur Municipality.

DECN has established ET Center to bring children with cognitive disabilities who are deprived in educational opportunity in Baijanath Municipality. The Center has collaborated with International knowledge experts on alternate communication tools and building capacity of the teachers for facilitating children with cognitive disabilities to enjoy rights to communication by the alternative communication tools and access to education. *"The ET Center is providing opportunity to children with Cerebral Palsy to learn basic skills of communication and help identification of learning need so that these children can be included in the regular classroom..."* said the Executive Director of DECN.

Recommendations:

Recommendation to Local Actors:

- The local bodies and OPDs should establish a role to support learners with disabilities, bringing them in the regular school,
- Local bodies should initiate and develop a mechanism to establish a Database of school age Learners with disabilities to help policy makers and planners plan for the inclusion of Learners with disabilities in regular education.
- The Local bodies, collaboration with OPDs, should make parents aware that they should be bringing Learners with disabilities into school during school enrollment campaigns.
- The policy for personal attendant service for ensuring Reasonable Accommodation to Learners with disabilities should be taken by the schools in support of local Government.
- The ability of parents of children with cognitive disabilities should be supported to adapt their knowledge and skills to the needs of the local labor market at community which has been significantly impacted by the travel restriction and closure of RC due to Covid pandemic since they are bound to loose gainful jobs and continued the cycle of economic vulnerability.
- There should be coordination with experienced OPDs such as DECN to transfer the best practice of the adoption of inclusive education, alternate communication tools and transferring resource centers into the transitional centers to build platform for mainstreaming learners with cognitive disabilities into the regular classroom settings.

Recommendation to province Actors:

- Carry out learning need assessments in the province for those who have learning disabilities including Deafblind, have an intellectual disability, or Autism Spectrum condition and profound disability and adopt the alternate communication method based on available resources of the province.
- Conduct orientation of school management committees (SMC) regular teachers and staff of concerned schools for generating “disability Friendly and Barrier Free Environment” by provincial government and coordinate with OPDs.
- Reform the curriculum and textbooks to better align local context, create multiple pathways for students learning, provide sufficient and relevant textbooks to support the vocational stream, and identify solutions to the low efficiency for the academic attainment and employment prospects.

Recommendation to Federal Actors:

- Develop uniformity for Disaggregating Education Management Information System (EMIS) data which has to be utilized across the country for better understanding the demographics and disability status of school and out-of-school children with disabilities.
- Since the present service provisions don't cover all the categories of Learners with disabilities, the Federal Government, MOEST cover all group of disabilities as per the definition adopted by the government and reform policy to develop individual learning plan and follow engaging capacitated teachers.
- Sensitize government actors, policy makers, engineers, school management and teachers about the necessity and mechanism of making school physically accessible following “school Infrastructure Accessibility Guideline” that support inclusion of children with disability enrolled in the schools.
- In order to improve the management of higher educational attainment by deaf children and youth, adopt inclusive education along with enhancing sign-language vocabulary and provision of sign language facilitation embracing deaf culture in education of all levels including higher education.
- To help speed up ICT application in education, the Accessible ICT needs to be integrated within the National Information Communication Technology policy.

General Recommendation for all levels:

- Transformation of Best practice: Kohalpur Municipality has adopted the “Inclusive Education Policy” in the local level which is considered as an exemplary initiative. It is

strongly recommended to the rest of other local bodies to transfer the practice of adoption of local level inclusive education policy as the constitution has granted authority to local bodies to adopt the locally compatible policy and laws.

- In recognition that women and girls with disabilities are particularly vulnerable thus it is strongly recommended to make appropriate efforts to include them in educational opportunities and elimination of any forms of violence to them.
- It is recommended to bring the Girls with Disabilities in educational program to promote their enrollment as envisaged by SSP since they are in multiple discrimination and exploitation in family, society, schools and in public places including those from muslim community.
- In order to advancing implementation of Inclusive educational Programme, it is essential that the children from under-representative groups such as those having language barriers, LGBTIQ, Dalits, disability, marginality and remoteness to be prioritized based on their learning need. In addition, religious group, low income families and geographical remoteness should also be targeted as the factors for providing EDUCATIONAL opportunities to such children in the post-Covid situation.
- It is recommended to analyze the reason of disparity and its evidence in both in school system and the community levels which is particularly required in the groups having learning disabilities, ensuring minimum enabling conditions and child friendly environment.
- It is recommended to recognize the potential of children with disabilities by offering accessible ICT and effective educational opportunities, and ensuring learning outcomes that prepare children with disabilities for independent and productive adult lives in their communities.
- The education reform should be a humanitarian aspect because the failure to build back better schools is likely to exacerbate having remarkable numbers of out-of-school children particularly those having disabilities. It is essential improved structural design that ensures accessibility for and the safety of all children including those with disabilities. It also means resilient teachers, students, and communities who will take steps to ensure that disasters cause as little affect as possible that should also be applicable in the cases of pandemic like Covid-19.
- The Government should establish mechanism to receive reports of children being denied access to education because of lack of online educational method. The alternate communication method and accessible books to access schools to be developed without delay. The possibilities of enrollment in closure of schools during lockdown in Covid-19 pandemic and similar pandemic may result in continuing of an effective access to education thus the online education should be covered within regular educational plan.
- There is urgent need for coordination with technical organizations such as ADRAD to coordinate with the Government to identify effective strategy and program to ensure blind students have textbooks in digital accessible format and through online library. At the same time, The Marrakesh treaty should be ratified by Nepal without delay so that the copy rights exemption is available for the production of accessible books to persons with visual and print disabilities.
- There is need of further research in the area to explore how children with disabilities can have increased access to education within inclusive education system.

For detailed Report, please access to: http://adrad.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Report-PAR-Inclusive_education-Uploaded-Eng.pdf