

**Appraisal of**

**School Sector Development Plan 2016/17-2022/23 of Nepal**

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## Abbreviations

ASIP	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan
AWPB	Annual Work Plan and Budget
CDC	Curriculum Development Centre
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DEO	District Education Office
DoE	Department of Education
ECED	Early Childhood Education Development
EFA	Education for All
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EMIS	Educational Management Information System
ERO	Education Review Office
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GESI	Gender Equity and Social Inclusion
GIR	Gross Intake Rate
GoN	Government of Nepal
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
HSE	Higher Secondary Education
I/NGO	International NGO and NGO
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
JFA	Joint Financing Arrangement
LDC	Least Developed Country
MEC	Minimum Enabling Conditions
MoE	Ministry of Education
NASA	National Assessment for Student Achievements
NCED	National Centre for Education Development
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
NFE	Non-formal Education
NGO	Non-government Organisation
NIR	Net Intake Rate
NPC	National Planning Commission
PMEC	Priority Minimum Enabling Condition
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
STR	Student-Teacher Ratio
TEVT	Technical Education and Vocational Training
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization,
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

# 1 Introduction

*Every citizen shall have the right to compulsory and free basic education, and free education up to the secondary level.*

*The Constitution of Nepal (2015)*

The National Planning Commission (NPC) has declared the vision for Nepal to elevate Nepal's status from a least developed country by 2022. Guided by the above constitutional mandate, and the development vision for 2022, education sector in Nepal is now tasked to prepare human resources that 1) protect and promote human rights and democracy; 2) are committed towards continuous education; 3) have a positive perception of manual labour and vocational trades; 4) are oriented towards commercial agro-business, self-employment and to an extent industrialisation; 5) have an agency and ability to be active and healthy citizens of their communities and the country; and 6) contribute to solving the emerging challenges faced by people, society and the nation in the twenty-first century. The importance of the sector for national development goals is emphasised in shared understanding that:

- Education is a human resource investment that is as important if not more important than capital investments; and
- Sustainable achievement of the national development goals is contingent on qualified human resources.

Despite remarkable progress in many areas, especially in access to education, quality education for all is still an unfinished agenda in Nepal. Now, the Government of Nepal (GoN) is preparing School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) for 2016/17 – 2022/23 to continue and consolidate the reforms of previous education sector plans and programmes, of which the School Sector Reform Programme (SSRP) (2009-2016) is the latest.

The SSDP has been prepared in anticipation of two major changes in the education sector: passing of the Education Amendment Act and transition to federal structure as per the constitutional mandate. Both of these will have a major influence on education sector management responsibilities. While the Education Amendment Act is expected to be passed in near future, transition to federal system is likely to take place in two to three years' time. As a result of these changes, the SSDP will have to be carefully reviewed and necessary changes made. However, while management responsibilities in the education sector may change drastically, many of the challenges are likely to remain.

## 1.1 SSDP Objectives

The goal of the SSDP is “to contribute to socio-economic development and reduce disparities within the country through a continuous and inclusive development of its human resources capacity by facilitating all citizens with the opportunity to become functionally literate, numerate, and develop the basic life skills and knowledge to enjoy a productive life, taking into account the diversity of context and needs and with regards to the forthcoming federalisation of the country.”

More specifically, the purpose of the SSDP is “*to improve the equity, quality, efficiency, and governance and management of the sector*” under which there are four cross cutting and interlinked objectives:

1. Ensure that the education system is **inclusive and equitable** in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes with a special focus on disparities among and between the disadvantaged groups;
2. Increase students' learning through enhancement of the **relevance and quality** of the learning environment, the curriculum, teaching and learning materials including textbooks, teaching methods, assessment and examinations;

3. Strengthen and reorient **governance and management** systems to make them robust and accountable to local government and to assure agreed overall minimum standards in teaching and learning process and the learning environment; and
4. Accommodate the **political and administrative restructuring** of the sector in line with the identified needs and the federal context, ensure sustainable financing and strong financial management by introducing a cost-sharing modality between central, provincial and local governments, and to develop a disaster resilient system.

To achieve the objectives, it is necessary to address the quality challenges in education and learning competencies, and to balance the limited capacity and available resources in the system between safeguarding and completing the agenda of the SSRP and the EFA while having a vision and a plan towards the envisioned quality transformation.

## 1.2 Challenges

The following are the major challenges identified in the SSDP:

1. **Quality of basic education.** National Assessments of Learning Achievements (NASA) revealed disappointing learning outcomes. Despite increased access to ECED, early grade reading and math competencies are still low, which is later reflected in low learning outcomes at higher grades. There is a need to ensure improved quality of inputs in terms of 1) teachers, 2) teacher-learning resources, and 3) the enabling education environment. Teachers' management and distribution is yet to be rationalised also to ensure required teaching – learning days. There is also a need to revamp teachers' professional development to improve teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogical practices. Most schools do not meet the Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMEC) of: 1) student-teacher ratio; 2) classroom space; 3) set of textbooks per child per year; 4) separate girls and boys toilets plus water; and 5) book/learning corner in all classrooms.
2. **Quality of secondary education:** The system focuses on memorisation and knowledge recall in preparation for board exams that are not standardised and subject to irregular evaluation with very high fail rates. There is a great need to nurture more critical thinking, analysis and creativity skills. There is a need for more teachers with better subject knowledge in math, science and English. The quality and consistency of textbooks needs to be improved and they have to be available on time. The MECS for secondary education are yet to be defined, but their enforcement will be challenging under the federal administrative setting.
3. **Equity and access:** Nepal is a very diverse country with diverse learning needs, challenges in access and in the appropriateness of content. The remarkable overall progress has resulted in increasing disparity between the disadvantaged and marginalised communities and the rest of the school-aged population. There is a large and persistent number of out-of-school children facing multi-dimensional barriers requiring targeted programmes. A full fledged implementation of the Consolidated Equity Strategy is called for, including incorporation of the Equity Index within the Education Management Information System (EMIS) as well as information on children with disabilities.

There is a need to improve quality of the ECED programmes and to strengthen equitable access. Low enrolment at secondary level continues to be a problem. A strong correlation between household economic status and participation in schooling and learning outcomes at secondary and higher secondary levels has been documented. Karnali Zone and Central Tarai have been identified as pockets of marginalised communities in terms of learning outcomes. There is a need for a strong evidence and need-based resource

allocation formula to reduce disparities within access, participation and learning outcomes.

4. **Efficiency:** Enforcement of government rules and regulations continue to be slow and the envisioned reforms in the institutional structure of the education system are not fully accomplished. School Management Committees (SMC) are yet to institutionalise their role in needs based planning and quality assurance of education. High drop out rates especially in grades 1 and 8 reduce internal efficiency. External efficiency (socioeconomic rates of return on education) continues to be low as opportunities for translating educational achievements into employment opportunities remain low, and the biggest employment opportunity is for unskilled workers abroad. Frequent changes of civil servants and duty bearers remains one of the main efficiency challenges.
5. **Governance and Accountability:** Late release of funds, ineligible expenditure, reporting delays and lapses in financial record keeping by schools persist. Social and financial audits have been conducted but they have not led to the desired improvement in schools' financial management. The quality, accessibility and use of EMIS need to be strengthened and to prevent inclusion of inflated student numbers. The availability of textbooks remains a key issue in terms of timely printing and distribution. Position of head teachers needs to be addressed as their role in teacher performance evaluations and authority to take action against teachers. Effective implementation of SIP is missing along with mechanism for allocating district budgets to schools according to these plans.
6. **Financing:** Number of children in basic education decreasing and more children are moving to secondary education. This will allow to increase per student investment. SSDP aims to ensure standardised minimum quality standards nationally while allowing flexible approaches to cater to diverse context and needs.

### 1.3 Strategic focus areas

Following the challenges, the SSDP outlines strategic cross cutting focus areas, which will greatly influence implementation of the SSDP.

- **Federalism and decentralisation** while being a major accomplishment will pose some practical challenges on the functioning of the education sector requiring structural and functional reforms as well as necessary policy and regulatory frameworks. These will have to worked out during the first years of SSDP implementation. Decentralised planning and local level capacity development during SSRP lays a good foundation for further decentralisation and further local level capacity building. There will be a comprehensive review on the third year of the SSDP to make necessary adjustments as per the needs of the federal state.
- **Quality and effective pedagogy for improved learning outcomes** is needed in order to improve the learning outcomes. Despite teachers being “fully trained”, old lecturing methods prevail, but now these challenges have been acknowledged. SSDP will try to ensure that teachers have both a firm grasp of their subjects and a solid understanding and confidence in child-centred active learning methods.
- **Curriculum** will be reviewed and a revised comprehensive national curriculum framework will be prepared to encompass the requisite skills, aptitudes, knowledge, understanding and values that should be acquired from ECED to grade 12. Based on the revised curriculum framework, **textbooks and other learning materials** will be revised over the first five years of the SSDP.
- **Assessments and examinations** will require a reform to shift away from the summative tests that emphasise rote memorisation. SSDP will make formative and summative assessments more skills and learner-focused, standardise exams to ensure they assess the

competencies. A National Examination Board will be established, EGRA and NASA will continue to be part of the system, and efficient and effective use of formative and summative assessments will be incorporated into changes in the curriculum and teacher professional development courses.

- **Teacher management and professional development** must be given a top priority to improve classroom practices and learning outcomes. Teacher Service Commission will start licencing teachers based on professional standards framework, which will also serve as a basis for pre-service and in-service professional development courses. National Centre for Educational Development (NCED) will prepare a suite of courses to aid teacher professional development. SSDP will also continue redeployment of teachers to ensure that the needs of each school are met.
- **Languages of education** are critical and the Constitution provides that every Nepali community shall have the right to acquire education in its mother tongue up to secondary level. A draft Languages of Education has been prepared and it is envisaged that it will be finalised and endorsed within the first year of SSDP. Schools are divided into three categories depending on the languages spoken by the students.
- **Equity and inclusion** are enshrined in the constitution, and are to be ensured with the help of the Consolidated Equity Strategy (2014) that will be implemented in phases including incorporation of equity index within the EMIS, scholarships, resource allocation through disparity based formula emphasising communities and groups with low levels of access, participation and learning outcomes.
- **Enabling environment** will seek to ensure availability of the Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions in all primary schools. Guidelines for these standards will be extended to ECED and secondary schools, and increase access and use of ICT in learning, as well as access to segregated toilets and water and sanitation facilities.
- **Infrastructure development and school safety** are of paramount importance after the earthquakes in 2015.
- **Capacity development** in the system, especially at the local level, will be a major challenge when transitioning to the federal system, and consequently all capacity development activities in SSDP are in preparation for and eventual implementation of a decentralisation federal system of governance. This will include developing a national framework to support local governments, a costed capacity development plan, increasing awareness of parents and communities and the capacity of school management personnel, including the head teachers.

The SSDP also identifies key assumptions or risks for the successful implementation of plan. Within the overall framework of reforming existing rules and regulations, the challenge of the plan during transition is to propose policies that are 1) politically viable, reflect the public aspirations about equitable and quality education, 2) that the strategies to meet the constitutional equity aspirations have tolerable costs to ensure support from politicians, interest groups and other stakeholders; 3) are technically feasible reflecting the ground realities of implementation mechanisms and available human resources, ensuring that the strategies have been tested and there is evidence that the proposed strategies will be successful; and finally 4) are palatable to the value system(s), where critical and contentious issues could included e.g. through strategies for language(s) of instruction, role of government(s) in education, type of school governance, efficiency versus equity, public versus private, student assessments and school to career pathways.

#### 1.4 Key performance indicators

The SSDP includes a list of 30 key performance indicators against which the progress of the implementation will be measured. The indicators are presented for:

- Early childhood education and development; enrolment and % of grade 1 new entrants with ECED experience;

- Basic education: enrolment, out-of-school children and student learning achievement scores in grade 5 and 8;
- Secondary education: enrolment and a number of model schools;
- Non-formal education and lifelong learning: literacy rate;
- Teacher management and professional development: % of female teachers in basic level; and
- Sector finance: education budget as % of national budget.

It is noteworthy that the key performance indicators do not include indicators to measure e.g. equity at any level, quality at secondary level or priority minimum enabling conditions.

## 1.5 Structure of the SSDP

The SSDP is structured along the level-wise components of

- Early childhood education and development (ECED);
- Basic education (grades 1-8);
- Secondary education (grades 9-12);
- Technical and vocational education (offered at secondary level);
- Literacy and lifelong learning (non-formal education);

and seven cross cutting priorities of

- Teacher management and professional development;
- Governance and management;
- Institutional capacity development;
- Disaster risk reduction and school safety;
- Monitoring, evaluation and assessment;
- Examination and accreditation; and
- International economic cooperation and coordination.

Presentation of each component includes the objective, strategies, outcomes, results and major interventions. Physical physical targets and beneficiaries and key performance indicators are defined for some of the results and interventions but typically there are many more results and interventions than targets or indicators. In addition, the plan document includes a logical framework and SSDP programme and results framework in annex. These three presentations of the plan are not fully consistent with each other, though it is understood that the SSDP document is still a draft.

There is some inconsistency also in terms of differences in the total cost of the SSDP that is mentioned to be USD 11.03 billion in Chapter 1.5, USD 11.1 billion and USD 12.14 billion in Chapter 8.

A component-wise budget of the SSDP is presented in the table below. It shows that basic education will receive half of the budget, secondary education with technical and vocational education approximately 1/3 and ECED 5%. The remaining 15% is allocated to the cross cutting priorities, mostly teacher management and professional development, which is over 90% pensions.

Table 1. SSDP budget (USD million)

	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22/	22/23	TOTAL
<b>ECED</b>	66,73	73,45	81,19	89,67	98,6	108,6	118,39	636,08
<b>% of total</b>	4,9	4,7	4,7	5,2	5,6	5,7	5,7	5,2
<b>Basic education</b>	759,65	844,33	929,53	779,75	842,21	926,75	988,57	6070,8
<b>% of total</b>	56,3	54,2	53,6	44,9	48,1	48,7	47,9	50,0



<b>Secondary education</b>	316,72	405,96	476,2	566,71	500,56	494,82	537,43	3298,39
<b>% of total</b>	23,5	26,1	27,5	32,7	28,6	26,0	26,1	27,2
<b>Technical education</b>	8,03	12,46	33,68	28,52	38,77	49,52	55,85	226,84
<b>% of total</b>	0,6	0,8	1,9	1,6	2,2	2,6	2,7	1,9
<b>LLL and NFE</b>	30,67	34,36	38,14	41,89	46,07	50,68	55,75	297,57
<b>% of total</b>	2,3	2,2	2,2	2,4	2,6	2,7	2,7	2,5
<b>Teacher management</b>	93,67	106,91	118,95	131,39	141,32	151,32	168,09	911,67
<b>% of total</b>	6,9	6,9	6,9	7,6	8,1	7,9	8,1	7,5
<b>Governance and management</b>	16,22	17,73	19,48	21,43	23,57	29,53	28,52	152,89
<b>% of total</b>	1,2	1,1	1,1	1,2	1,3	1,6	1,4	1,3
<b>Capacity development</b>	6,95	7,65	8,41	9,25	10,18	11,19	21,31	65,95
<b>% of total</b>	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,5	0,6	0,6	1,0	0,5
<b>M&amp;E</b>	4,64	5,23	5,76	6,33	6,94	7,64	8,4	44,94
<b>% of total</b>	0,3	0,3	0,3	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,4	0,4
<b>Central organisational management</b>	45,55	50,11	55,12	60,63	66,69	73,36	80,7	432,15
<b>% of total</b>	3,4	3,2	3,2	3,5	3,8	3,9	3,9	3,6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1348,83</b>	<b>1558,19</b>	<b>1732,78</b>	<b>1735,57</b>	<b>1751,34</b>	<b>1903,41</b>	<b>2063,01</b>	<b>12137,28</b>

## 2 About the appraisal

### 2.1 Objectives

The Terms of Reference (Annex 1) for the appraisal inform that an appraisal of the SSD Plan is needed to ensure need-based and relevant design of the SSDP and hence to enable the Local Education Group (LEG) to endorse the Plan. In addition to the appraisal of the Plan (16/17-22/23), there will be an appraisal of the SSD Programme covering the first five years of the Plan.

Following the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) guidelines for education sector plan appraisals, the purpose of this appraisal is to assess the soundness, relevance, and coherence that form the credibility of the SSDP. More specifically, the objectives include:

- *Assessment of leadership and participation*; to which extend has the development of the SSD Plan been country-led, participatory, and transparent?
- *Assessment of soundness and relevance*; to what extend does the plan constitute a solid corpus of strategies and actions addressing the key challenges of the education sector?
- *Assessment of equity, efficiency and learning*; to which extend are issues of equity, efficiency, and learning soundly addressed to increase sector performance?
- *Assessment of coherence*; to which extend is there consistency between the various components of the SSDP?
- *Assessment of feasibility, implementability and monitorability*; to which extend do the financing, implementation, and monitoring arrangements offer a good perspective for achievement?

The guidelines contain a list of over 100 questions, and the findings and recommendations are to be presented by answering 24 questions that represent critical elements of a credible education sector plan (ESP). This table is in annex 2.

## 2.2 Methods

The main methods in the appraisal were desk study review of available documentation and interviews with main stakeholders in Nepal between 14 and 24 April. Due to breadth of issues to be covered and different background of the informants, no specific questionnaire was used when conducting the interviews. The main appraisal issues were addressed, with the help of the detailed questions in GPE guidelines, in a less structured way leaving room for the respondents to raise issues that they deemed important. Towards the end of the mission a presentation was given to the local education group together with a brief end-of-mission note that included tentative assessments and answers to the 24 questions representing critical elements of a credible ESP. Meetings were also held with the GoN counterparts and members of the SSDP preparation team to validate the initial findings and to communicate the tentative recommendations.

In analysing the data, the appraisal has sought to triangulate the findings with information from several sources, including background documentation and interviews. School Level Educational Statistics, draft Consolidated Report of 2014/2015 (DOE, 2015) has been used as a reference point for statistical information.

## 2.3 Limitations

This is the appraisal of the draft School Sector Development Plan 2016/17 – 2022/23 dated March 2016, shared 4 April 2016. This document is essentially a draft, and the appraisal is also informed by a later, May version of the SSDP.

The appraisal has taken place in the middle of a hectic finalisation process of the SSDP. Certain key information regarding e.g. financing, results framework with indicators has not been available. The Plan includes over 100 key results and strategies whose appraisal is beyond the scope and resources of this appraisal even if there was sufficient background material, which is not the case for most results. Therefore, this appraisal concentrates on issues for which there is sufficient information in the plan and are deemed strategically important for the implementation of the SSDP, these are usually included in the list of Key Performance Indicators. The information presented in the SSDP plan was complemented with data available through the EMIS system and presented in the Education Statistics consolidated report. Unfortunately, many major interventions, especially those to improve quality of education could not be properly appraised in the absence of sufficiently detailed information.

The second limitation is due to the wealth of background documentation and the number of stakeholders who participated in the process. Not all documents could be analysed and not all stakeholders could be interviewed.

Nevertheless, with the above limitations, the findings and conclusions in the report are believed to be valid, and the recommendations hopefully feasible.

## 3 Key findings, conclusions and recommendations

This section presents the key findings, conclusions and recommendations of the appraisal. These are presented following the structure of the SSDP document, but starting with a brief discussion on the preparation process.

### 3.1 Process

The SSDP has been prepared through a very analytical and participatory process with strong leadership from the Ministry of Education in Nepal. The organisational set up for the SSDP preparation consisted of:

- SSDP Steering Committee chaired by Secretary
- SSDP Technical Committee chaired by Joint Secretary Planning division
- SSDP Secretariat, including
  - Foreign aid coordination, Planning and Human resources sections
  - Support from institutional consultancy (NIRT)
  - SSDP secretariat room in MOE
  - Team leader, sector analysis expert and core writers team
- 14 Joint Thematic Working Groups

Expanding on the seven thematic working groups that were formed during the SSRP implementation, 14 thematic working groups were established under GoN leadership and with participation from various stakeholders' groups, including:

- 1) ECED (access and equity)
- 2) Basic Education (access and equity)
- 3) Secondary education (access and equity)
- 4) Literacy and life long learning
- 5) TVET and soft skills
- 6) Teacher management and professional development (quality)
- 7) Curriculum (quality)
- 8) Minimum enabling conditions (quality)
- 9) Capacity building (quality)
- 10) Student assessment and examination
- 11) Disaster risk reduction and school safety
- 12) Public financial management and governance
- 13) Information Communication Technology
- 14) Monitoring and evaluation.

The thematic working groups were established to ensure broad consultation and participatory approach in the development of the SSDP. More specifically they were to:

- Provide a broad platform for GoN, DPs and (I)NGOs and CSO representatives for technical discussion in the respective thematic areas;
- Review the achievements, opportunities and issues that have been observed under the SSRP implementation;
- Develop a common understanding on the priorities and scope of the respective education subsectors based on, and validated by stakeholder consultations;
- Identify main strategies and activities for the SSDP Technical Committee and Secretariat to be considered.

The groups were expected to produce the following outcomes: 1) thematic background papers, 2) thematic concept paper; and 3) Thematic action plan.

A SSDP Concept Note was shared in November 2015 and consultation guidelines were prepared as an implementation plan for consultation and validation of strategic directions in the Concept Note with various stakeholders. The guidelines aimed to ensure that 1) direct and indirect beneficiaries at

all levels have been consulted to reflect on the relevance and prioritisation of strategies within the SSDP concept note; 2) grassroots consultation have been undertaken with disadvantaged communities for prioritisation of equity strategies; 3) implementers and duty bearers at all levels have been consulted for implementability of the strategies; 4) experts have been consulted on the quality and soundness of the strategies; and 5) policy and decision makers consulted on commitment and compatibility of strategies in the Concept note.

Based on the guidelines, several consultations were held:

- A high level consultation was held with members of parliament and policy makers under the Parliamentary taskforce for women, children and social welfare.
- Regional education secretariats organised five regional consultations for government officials, parents, head teachers and teachers, NGOs, civil society, SMCs and resource persons;
- The Confederation of Nepalese Teachers held three consultations;
- Consultation with private sector and private schools conducted by education journalist network;
- National Campaign for Education (NCE) Nepal and Association of INGOs (AIN) in partnership with Ministry of Education and UNICEF organized 17 consultation meetings with various marginalized group and 10 consultation meetings with district level stakeholders regarding the SSDP. In addition to this, one national consultation meeting was organized for leaders of civil society from more than 36 districts representing different groups of people. NCE also undertook online consultations.
- Federation for Disabled Nepal (NFDN) undertook one central level consultations with stakeholders and non-state service providers
- In addition, there have been consultations with other ministries and certainly with the development partners (DPs), both pooling and non-pooling.

The analytical and consultative process has been assisted with a consulting company providing technical and drafting assistance throughout the process. Following the background papers prepared by the thematic working groups and stakeholder consultations, SSDP Concept Note was shared in November 2015, followed by thematic option papers and draft results framework, SSDP approach paper was shared in December 2015. After stakeholder validation, SSDP zero draft was prepared in March, with subsequent versions in April and May. The preparation also benefited from a Sector Analysis that was presented in February 2016.

**Considering the very difficult environment caused by earthquakes and economic blockage in 2015, the preparation process must be seen as very commendable and far better than the preparation process for e.g. SSRP. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, the consultative preparation process paves way for participatory approach and processes in the SSDP implementation.**

### 3.2 Early childhood education and development/pre-primary education

The SSDP document highlights significant gains that have been made in improving access to ECED. In 2002 about 10% of first graders had ECED experience, in 2014 their share had increased to 60% and is increasing as the average enrolment rate for 4-years old is 78% and the number of ECED/PPE centres has increased to over 35 000 in 2014. However, quality and equity remain as major challenges.

The SSDP goal for ECED/PPE is to promote a comprehensive approach to ECED/PPE programmes to safeguard the rights and fully develop the physical, socio-emotional, cognitive, spiritual and moral potential of children below 5 years. The specific objectives are: to foster early childhood development and to ensure children's school readiness at an appropriate age upon entering grade 1.

The envisaged budget for ECED is USD 636.1 million representing approximately 5% of the total SSDP budget. Of the ECED budget 95% is allocated for salary and remuneration of the ECED facilitators.

The SSDP identifies altogether 11 policy directions and 20 implementation strategies under equity, quality, efficiency and relevance to achieve the objectives and 31 key results. For most of these, there are no specific targets or indicators. The analysis below concentrates on the identified key indicators and targets as presented in the draft SSDP.

Indicators and targets	Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of grade 1 new entrants with ECED experience. Baseline 62.4, targets from 68% to 90% in seven years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This has increased from 49.9% in 09/10 to 59.6 in 14/15 with GPI 1 or very close to it. With the current trend this target seems attainable if due attention is paid to regional disparities, which are not sufficiently discussed in the draft SSDP. Out of the 75 districts, there are 12 districts with over 80% of grade 1 new entrants with ECED experience in 2014/2015, but also 12 districts where their share is below 40%. Targeting these districts should be mentioned more explicitly in the SSDP and operationalised in the Annual Strategic Implementation Plans and Work plans and budgets.</li> <li>The indicator and targets should be sex disaggregated.</li> </ul>
<p>Gross Enrolment Rate in ECED/PPE, baseline 81%, target from 84% (year one) to 96% (year seven).</p> <p>3.6 million children by age of four receive at least one year ECED learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ECED/PPE GER has increased steadily from 70% in 2010/11 to current 81%. The GPI stands at very close to 1. The draft SSDP should, however, discuss and present more information on regional disparities. There are 17 districts where the GER is already above 95%, but there are also 20 districts where it is below 20. These districts should be explicitly prioritised in the SSDP and be targeted in the ASIPs/AWPBs.</li> <li>There are 624 576 children enrolled in community based (public) ECED/PPE. Even with declining age groups, in seven years the total number of children receiving at least one year of ECED learning will be over 4 million.</li> </ul>
32 000 school/community based ECED centres established.	<p>The SSDP aims at establishing one-year school based ECED programme in all basic education schools. There are already 30 500 community based ECED centres and the target of 32 000 is not very ambitious, but it is important that their establishment is based on needs to increase GER in ECED and the % of grade 1 new entrants in districts that are lagging behind the national average.</p> <p>There is no budgetary provision for construction of new centres.</p>
32 000 ECED facilitator positions filled and all given basic (one month) training.	<p>There is no information on the current number of ECED facilitators, but it is understood that the number will not be increased, rather the existing facilitators will be given one month training. There is, however, no budgetary provision for this training.</p>

	<p>94% of the budget is allocated for facilitators salaries and remuneration.</p> <p>There is no plan to ensure the minimum enabling learning conditions in ECEDs</p>
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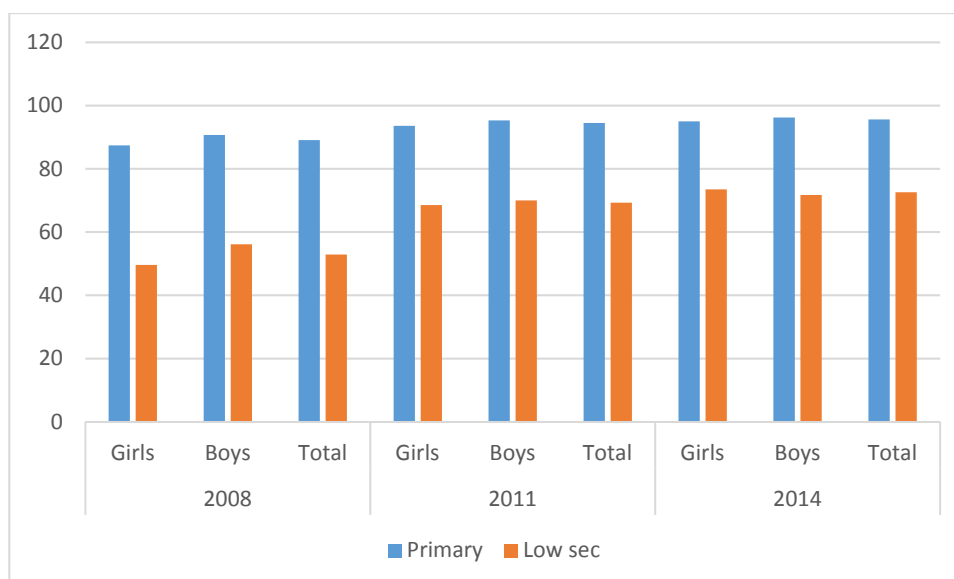
**In terms of increasing enrolment, the strategy for ECED/PPE is not very ambitious, rather keeping up with the current trend. The main strategy to improve quality is to ensure training and professional development to the ECED facilitators and increasing their minimum wage. The SSDP mentions equity to be among the main challenges and suggests that annual equity strategy implementation plans will be developed as a part of ASIPs and AWPBs. However, the strategies to address equity could be more elaborate and explicit in the document. For example, the important issues of increasing access and participation in ECED/PPE in the currently deprived districts is not discussed in the draft PD, though information about these districts is readily available through EMIS. A key quality improvement component of defining and ensuring the PMECs could be highlighted in the Plan. The ECED indicators should be disaggregated and include an equity dimension.**

### 3.3 Basic education

For many decades, education in Nepal was accessible to very few men and even fewer women. This is still reflected in e.g. literacy rates, average years of schooling and population with secondary education, where the overall rates are low and much in favour of men. According to Census 2011, the average literacy rate of persons of five years and above is 65.9% (male – 75.1% and female – 57.4%). The progress compared to 2001 when adult literacy rate was just 54.1% is, however, significant. While 39.9 per cent of the male Nepalese population have attained some secondary education, only 17.9 per cent of Nepalese women have received some secondary education.

In the past 15 years Nepal has made very impressive strides in improving enrolment, including girls' enrolment in education. Net enrolment rate in primary education (grades 1-5) has increased from 89.1% (2008) to 95.6% (2014) and girls are only marginally behind boys. Even more impressive gains have been made in lower secondary education (grades 6-8), where girls net enrolment rate has increased from 49.6% to 73.5% during the same period and now exceeds boys' enrolment.

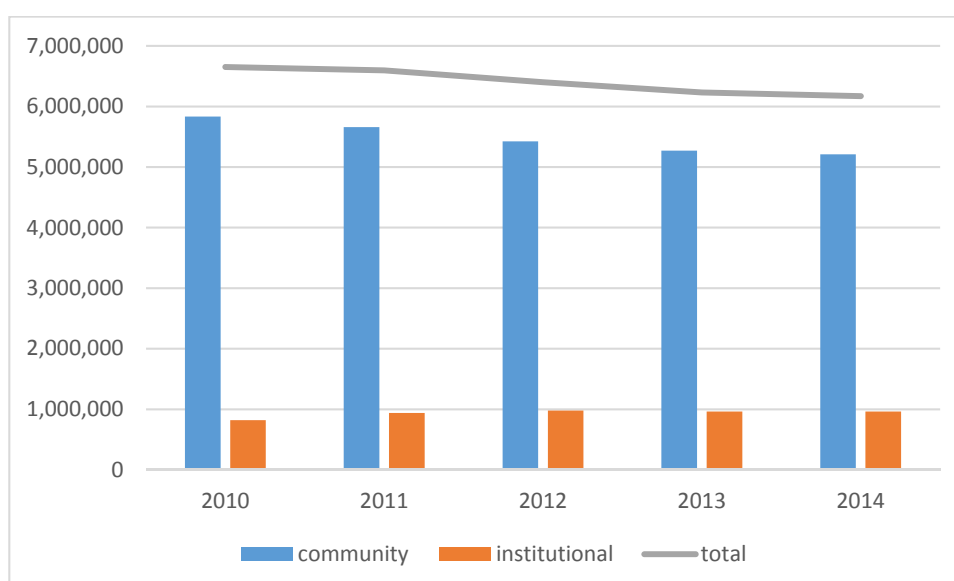
Graph1. Net enrolment rate at primary and lower secondary (upper basic) levels.



Source: School level educational statistics of Nepal, 2014

However, the total basic level enrolment has been in decline since 2010, especially in community schools where the number of primary students has decreased by 11% from 5.8 million to 5.2 million. Especially primary level enrolment in community schools is decreasing rapidly. At the same time basic education enrolment in institutional schools has increased by 17% from 820 000 to 960 000 in five years. These enrolment trends are presented in Graph 2 below.

Graph 2. Basic education enrolment in Nepal 2010-2014.



Source: Nepal Education Statistics 2014. (DOE)

The SSDP discusses continued challenges in access, especially for certain groups, issues of internal and external efficiency, and quality. Under basic education, the SSDP strives at “universal access to quality education through rights-based approach to all 5-12 year olds”. Under that over all goal, the objectives include: 1) ensure student readiness for secondary education with required learning competencies; 2) foster foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy and promote life skills and value-based education; and 3) impart early orientation on the national economy and harmony in socio-cultural diversity.



The draft includes numerous strategies and key results whose assessment is beyond the scope of this appraisal. The key strategies, results/targets and indicators related to access, quality and equity are discussed below.

The total budget for basic education is USD 6 070.8 million, representing 50% of the total SSDP budget. Of this amount 2/3 is reserved for teacher salaries (USD 4 010 million) and 19% for construction (USD 1 127.5 million). Development, production and distribution of textbooks and other learning materials and scholarships are both allocated USD 220 million over seven years.

Targets and key performance indicators	Comments
<b>ACCESS</b>	
36 million 5-12-year age children have been enrolled in basic education GIR and NIR in grade 1 GER and NER in basic education (1-8) GER and NER for lower basic education (1-5) GPI in NER in basic education (1-8)	<p>In 2014 there were a total of 5.2 million basic (grades 1-8) education students in community schools. Of these 3.7 million in primary grades (1-5) and 1.5 million in previous lower secondary grades (6-8). Keeping with the current trend, and even with gradually declining age-groups, the SSDP physical target of 36 million 5-12 year age children enrolled in basic education is realistic. The SSDP would, however, benefit from a presentation (table) of population and enrolment projections.</p> <p>In past 15 years, Nepal has made tremendous progress in improving access, especially to primary (grades 1-5) and lately to lower secondary (now upper basic, grades 6-8). The main challenge lies in gradually decreasing the gross enrolment rates while increasing net enrolment rates. With the exception of six districts in eastern and central Tarai and Manang, all districts have basic level GER over 100%. The national NER at basic level stands at 87.6%. In eight districts, mostly high population tarai<sup>1</sup> the basic level NER is still below 80%, though remarkable progress has been made. It is evident that achievement of the enrolment targets will depend on successful implementation of SSDP in these districts. However, the SSDP does not include a specific target for these districts. This should be attempted without compromising the progress in other districts.<sup>2</sup></p> <p>Nepal has achieved gender parity in basic education in practically all districts but high repetition rates (especially grade 1, 15%) continues to be a problem and decreases internal efficiency of the education system.</p> <p>There is no discussion on the role of scholarships and incentives to increase equitable access. Interestingly, enrolment of dalit children who are among the main beneficiaries of the scholarship system, has decreased by 20% between 2010 and</p>

<sup>1</sup>Saptari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Parsa and Kabilbastu. Also included is Manang from western mountain region.

<sup>2</sup>There are e.g. 11 hill districts with basic level NER over 95%.



	2014 despite distribution of scholarships. The reasons for this are not discussed in the SSDP.
<p>32 000 additional safe classrooms established in earthquake affected districts.</p> <p>21 000 additional safe schools with at least four rooms established.</p> <p>Maintenance and retrofitting in 19 500 schools.</p>	<p>The consolidated report of school year 2014/15 informs that there were approximately 30 000 community schools in Nepal at basic and secondary levels. These schools included 326 000 classrooms, of which 90 000 (28%) were deemed “weak” or unusable. In April and May 2015, Nepal was hit by devastating earthquakes and the Post Disaster Needs Assessment and Recovery Framework identified over 45 000 classrooms to be in need of repair or reconstruction, along with toilets, school wall, water supply and sanitation facilities. Consequently, the SSDP aims at constructing 38 000 additional safe classrooms in earthquake affected districts, 21 000 additional safe schools with at least four rooms established, and maintenance and retrofitting in 19 500 schools. The budget includes a total of USD 1 127.5 million for construction, of which USD 805 million (71.5% of the construction budget) during the first three years of SSDP implementation. Without questioning the necessity of the construction, the SSDP would benefit from clearly articulating what is the planned stock of (safe) school buildings and classrooms after the SSDP implementation and compare it to the pre-earthquake information.</p>
<p>365 integrated schools with resource classes for children with disabilities;</p> <p>34 special schools and eight residential schools for students with hearing impairments</p> <p>350 000 children receiving mid-day meals in 24 target districts</p> <p>10 mobile schools in operation in remote areas</p> <p>165 000 children in basic education will receive flexible education programme</p>	<p>These are all important programmes but in the absence of necessary background information, their appraisal is not possible. The SSDP would benefit if it explained the increase of these services from the SSRP. This information would help to understand how much more services there will be for children with disabilities and for children living in remote areas.</p>
<b>QUALITY</b>	
<p>Students’ learning achievement (NASA) scores in grade 5 and 8 in math, English and Nepali.</p>	<p>This represents a major outcome level indicator for quality, and potentially for equity in the SSDP. The draft SSDP explains that NASA was introduced during SSRP and there are detailed reports prepared by the Education Review Office. The SSDP would benefit from a more detailed analysis of the results as presented in the ERO reports. This information would be readily available from e.g. the 2014/15 draft Consolidated Report.</p> <p>The reports explain that in general the learning achievements are low compared to international standards. Institutional schools outperform community schools and there are great differences between districts, but also very positive results from districts with low number of institutional schools.<sup>3</sup> Differences between girls and boys are small as well as between castes though dalits usually have</p>

<sup>3</sup> E.g. Parsa, Humla, Solukhumbu

	<p>lower scores, but there are certain language groups that consistently have lower scores. Native nepali-speakers get average scores.</p> <p>The biggest explanatory factors are students' socio-economic background, parents education and excessive (over 2 hours) work after school. These are beyond the scope of SSDP, but there are also important factors that could be addressed such as availability of text books and bullying. Support to the lowest performing students in early grades will raise the standard in higher grades and also the national scores.</p> <p>The reports also represent a useful source of topics for further qualitative studies to find out the reasons for discrepancies in learning achievement, and therefore for better targeting of efforts and resources.</p>
1000 schools equipped with and ICT package (internet, e-library, digital learning material)	<p>In 2014/15 there were 1520 schools with internet facilities and 3530 schools with a computer for teaching purposes. The plan to equip further 1000 schools with an ICT package therefore represents a major increase. The SSDP does not explain how and with what criteria the schools will be selected, but it would be important to include different schools from all districts and regions and to monitor the impact of the ICT package in learning achievements. This information should be presented in the ASIPs and AWPBs.</p>
Early grade reading programme is implemented nationally, 28 000 schools provided with library corners and supplementary reading materials in grades 1-3, and 25 000 schools implement classroom based early grade reading assessment.	<p>Early grade reading programme has been piloted by USAID, but the SSDP does not inform about the scope of the pilot or its (preliminary) results. If possible, more information could be included in the draft SSDP as this represents a major quality improvement undertaking, and is an important area that has been raised in e.g. the NASA reports and is linked to the PMECs. The planned scope of 28 000 school provided with library corners and supplementary reading material in grades 1-3, and 25 000 that implement classroom based early grade reading assessment is very ambitious and will cover almost all of the 29 133 community schools in Nepal. There appears to be a discrepancy in targets as presented in the main text and in the annexed results framework where the target is far more modest: 1.766 million primary students and 1.544 million upper basic level students have access to supplementary reading materials and book corners, and this should be clarified.</p>
Over 5 million children annually have access to a full set of textbooks and supplementary reading materials within two weeks of the academic year.	<p>This is a commendable target as timely availability of textbooks has been one of the key challenges in the education sector in Nepal. Non-availability of textbooks has resulted in significantly lower learning achievements, as documented by ERO in the NASA reports for approximately 5% of the student population. In 2014/15 there were a total of 5.26 million students in grades 1-8 and the target of over 5 million children represents approximately</p>

	95% of the total, but 5% (250 000 children) would not receive textbooks in time. Against the overall objective of quality education for all, the target should be ALL children. Another challenge is that the track record of ensuring full set of textbooks on time is not supportive to the aim. Though there has been a marked improvement from 66% in 2010, only 81% of students received their textbooks on time in 2014. The SSDP informs that private printers will be used for technical backstopping to ensure timely distribution of textbooks.
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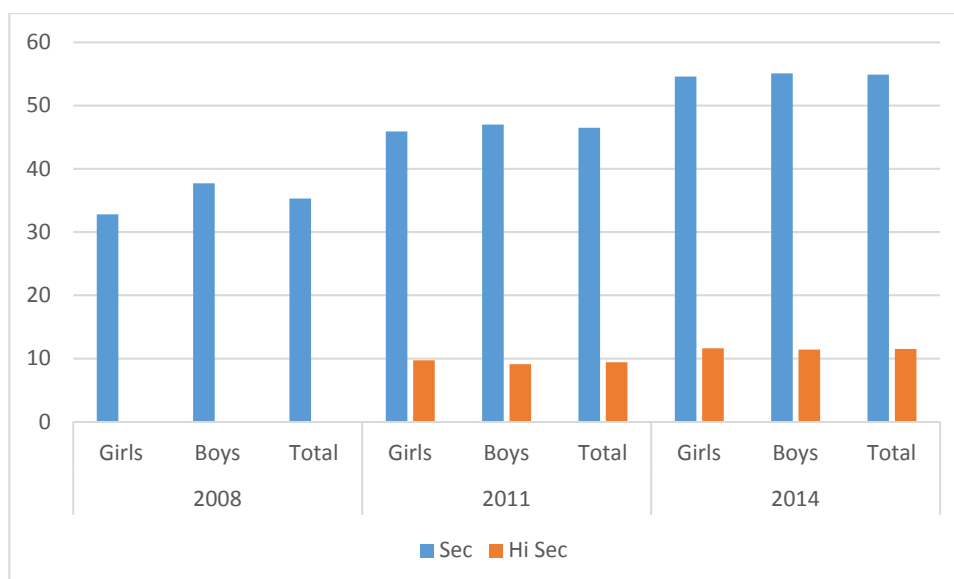
In addition to the above, there are many major interventions, such as teacher deployment based on revised norms, integrated curriculum and textbooks for early grades and curriculum revision and revised and additional training packages for teacher professional development that are not further elaborated in the draft SSDP and therefore not included in this appraisal.

**Overall, the targets related to access are not very ambitious and the important targeting of the districts where enrolment is lagging behind is not fully explained in the Plan (left to annual ASIPs and AWPBs). It is understood that many of these districts will be specifically targeted under the equity strategy. The available version of the plan does not specify targeting of scholarships and incentives though these are included in the budget (USD 360 million over seven years). It is understood that these are incorporated in the the SSD Programme. The early grade reading programme and timely distribution of text books represent ambitious undertakings to ensure two of the PMECs are ensured in almost all schools. Both should be monitored carefully to allow corrective measures to be taken if implementation does not appear satisfactory. In the current SSDP, there are no annual targets.**

### 3.4 Secondary education

Enrolment at secondary level has increased in the past years, but is still quite low, especially at the higher secondary level.

Graph 2. Net enrolment rate at secondary and higher secondary levels



Source: School level statistics of Nepal 2014

The SSDP informs that Nepal has made great improvements in increasing access, retention and gender parity in secondary education, though girls from the lowest wealth quintile and from Madhesi and Muslim communities are still under-represented. In terms of learning achievement, School Leaving Certificate (SLC) after grade 10, graduation rates have been below 50% nation wide. Therefore, the main strategy for secondary education in SSDP is to increase equitable access, participation and outcomes, while paying increasing attention to the overall quality improvement through teacher training in core subjects (math, science and English) and ensuring minimum enabling conditions.

Employability of secondary students remains a huge challenge and the SSDP plans to increase and strengthen technical and vocational education in secondary schools through a technical vocational curricula and to introduce a broad National Vocational Qualifications Framework.

The specific objectives for secondary education include:

- Make students ready for the world of work by developing skilled human resources;
- Focus on access to education without compromising quality;
- Provide options and accredited learning pathways for students between technical and general secondary education;
- Strengthen institutional links and facilitate the transition to higher education;
- Prepare students to uphold and fulfil their civic duties;
- Ensure the acquisition of foundation skills through the technical secondary stream that will enable adolescents to develop skill sets that meet the needs for semi-skilled and skilled labour in market and thereby reduce employment.

SSDP includes 36 strategies to improve equity, quality and efficiency of secondary education. This appraisal concentrates on the objectives and results with targets and key performance indicators.

The total budget for secondary education, including technical and vocational education in general education schools, amounts to USD 3 525.2 million, equivalent of 29% of the total SSDP budget. The biggest expenditure items include teacher salaries (USD 2 257,5 million, 64%). Textbook and other learning material development, production and distribution is budgeted USD 200 million (6%), construction USD 160 million, equipment and other fixtures USD 166 million and scholarships USD 135 million.

Targets and key performance indicators	Comments
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<p>7.6 million children receive four years of secondary education</p> <p>GER and NER in grades 9-12,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GER baseline 56.7 targeting 90 in seven years.</li> <li>• NER baseline 37.7 targeting 60%.</li> </ul> <p>GER and NER in grades 9-10.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GER baseline 75.1, targeting 98.</li> <li>• NER baseline 57.9, targeting 95.</li> </ul> <p>GPI in grades 9-12 – 1 and to keep it.</p> <p>Transition rate from 8 to 9. Baseline 93, targeting 100.</p> <p>Survival rate in Grade 10, no baseline or targets.</p>	<p>In 2014/15 there were a bit over 1 million secondary students in community schools – 725 000 in grades 9-10 and 300 000 in higher secondary grades 11-12. Girls were in clear majority as more boys tend to go institutional schools. In fact, the number of students in community secondary schools has decreased since 2011 as more and more secondary students choose private schools where enrolment has increased by 70% since 2010. So while the enrolment targets are likely to be met, the increase is more likely to take place in private schools. This stagnated enrolment and community secondary schools is not discussed in the SSDP.</p> <p>There are certain districts especially in central tarai<sup>4</sup> where enrolment is still low (NER below 25) and much in favour of boys. These districts will be targeted by increased number of scholarships but it should be closely monitored how well this strategy works.</p>
<p>540 schools offering five specific technical and vocational subjects.</p> <p>263 250 (or 300 000) students have been enrolled in technical education</p> <p>14 634 teachers receive tailored TVE professional development as part of their pre-service and in-service training.</p>	<p>This is an important initiative, but unfortunately the SSDP does not inform how many general education schools offered technical and vocational education under SSRP for how many students and with how many teachers. This information should be included in the SSDP document.</p>
<p>Improvement of NASA results in grade 10.</p> <p>Number of secondary education schools having qualified and trained subject teachers for English, science and maths.</p>	<p>Improvement of NASA results is the only outcome level quality indicator for secondary education included in the SSDP. While this is useful, it could be complemented with improved results in the School Leaving Certificate. In 2014, the number of students sitting in the SLC examination held at the end of grade 10 was 394 933<sup>5</sup>. This is about half of the comparable age cohort. Of these who took the exam, only 44% passed the exam. This means that only about ¼ of the respective age group finish education with a pass in SLC. Half dropped before making it to the exam and another 25% failed the exam. An alarming feature is that in the community (public) schools, the overall pass rate is very low 29.7% and even more alarming is that there is a wide gap between boys and girls: boys pass rate is 34.4% whereas girls' pass rate is 25.3%! Furthermore, there are considerable regional disparities and in the Far Western region girls' pass rate is paltry 15.1%<sup>6</sup>. The reasons for these differences are not fully researched and the gender gap is much wider than the achievement difference between boys and girls at 8<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades.<sup>7</sup> The community school pass rates are in stark difference with those in the institutional (private) schools where the overall pass rate is 89.4% and the girls' pass rate is higher than</p>

<sup>4</sup>Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara, Parsa

<sup>5</sup>This number includes students from private schools.

<sup>6</sup>Nepal Education in Figures 2014 At-a-Glance, Ministry of Education.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

	that of boys'. There is an urgent quality improvement imperative in secondary education, and while the SSDP lists a number of potentially relevant and useful interventions, these are not elaborated in more detail to allow for their assessment. It would be very important to strengthen the section on quality of secondary education in the SSDP document.
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The document includes a long list of major interventions that are potentially very relevant for the realisation of the secondary education objectives. Unfortunately, there is no information about their implementation, targets, indicators, budget which makes it impossible to assess their feasibility. These major interventions include:

- New school buildings and additional classrooms;
- Development of a National Curriculum Framework and National Qualifications Framework, reorientation of secondary curricula;
- Enforce minimum enabling conditions (MECs);
- Placement of subject teachers;
- Separate head teacher positions created and filled;
- Establishment of National Education Board;
- Revised teacher professional development modalities; and many others

**The targets related to access are likely to be achieved simply by pull factor from private sector. There is a serious need to increase quality in secondary education in community schools for the secondary education fulfil its objectives to provide skilled labour force and human resource, and to ensure that the society is not divided between well performing institutional school graduates and poorly performing community school graduates. Unfortunately the SSDP contains little information on how this quality imperative will be met. This should be operationalised in the ASIPs and AWPBs. The provision of TEVT in secondary schools would benefit from tracer studies to monitor if students from these streams find employment easier than students from general stream.**

### 3.5 Cross-cutting priorities

The SSDP includes sections on cross cutting priorities that are critical for all education levels. These include: 1) Teacher management and professional development; 2) Governance and management; 3) Institutional capacity development; 4) Disaster risk reduction and school safety; 5) Monitoring, evaluation and assessment; 6) Examination and accreditation; and 7) International economic cooperation and coordination.

Below is a discussion on the cross cutting issues/interventions that are deemed most important and for which there is sufficient information or for which more information should be presented.

Targets/Key Performance Indicators	Comments
<b>Teacher management and professional development</b>	
Strengthened quality education through improved teacher management and professional development, including enforced minimum qualifications and competencies, strengthened school based teacher management, efficient distribution of teacher positions, improved	Based on schools' reporting in 2015, there are 215 938 teachers in community schools of whom vast majority in basic education (140 000 primary and 37 000 upper basic) level. A bit over 70% of teachers work on government approved position, the rest are hired under various local arrangements. Teachers in community schools are predominantly men and



<p>professional development, and increased time on task.</p> <p>The specific targets include: certification training for 76 000 basic and secondary teachers; head teacher management training for 18 000 teachers; EGRP training for 56 000 primary school teachers; intensive and refresher training to 63 000 ECED facilitators.</p>	<p>over 90% are “fully trained”. The SSDP plan to offer certification training to 76 000 basic and secondary teachers is an ambitious one, as it will cover approximately half of all approved teachers. The SSDP does not include information on the current or planned number of head teachers, but 18 000 would cover over 60% of the number of community schools (29 000). Similarly EGRP training for 56 000 primary would cover 60% of teachers. There is no information on the number of ECED facilitators, but refresher training for 63 000 ECED facilitators seem substantial addition to the training for 32 000 facilitators offered under the ECED component.</p> <p>It is worrisome that almost all teachers are “fully trained” but according to the NCED less than 50% of the training gets translated into actual classroom teaching. There is hardly any follow up and “in-service training programmes have been reduced to training halls that leave no impact on the teachers to change their practices in classrooms”.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Therefore, before embarking on full scale in-service training for over half of the teaching force, it would be necessary to critically evaluate whether, and under what conditions, the training is useful and applicable.</p> <p>The SSDP discusses efficient distribution of teacher positions or rationalisation of teacher allocations without explaining properly what is meant by this. It is understood to refer to the very uneven allocation of teachers between districts (and schools) which has led to unequal student-teacher ratios and contributed to uneven and disappointing learning outcomes. Overcrowded classrooms are considered to be one of key reasons for low learning achievements and it can also be a demotivating factor for teachers. While the overall STRs have come significantly in recent years, especially at upper basic level (6-8) classrooms are crowded. The situation is most difficult in the central tarai districts where STRs continue to be twice the national average. Credible plans to make teacher allocations more equal should be presented in the ASIPs and AWPBs.</p> <p>Finally, 95% of the teacher management and development budget is reserved for teacher pensions, amounting to total USD 867 million over seven years and annual amount increasing by 100 % from USD 88 million in the first year to USD 166 million in the last year. It is not understood why teachers pensions should be paid from the SSDP budget.</p>
<b>Governance and management</b>	
<p>Federalism will result in revision of responsibilities for national, provincial and local level in terms of</p>	<p>Through this component the future education system in Nepal will be defined. largely define the</p>

<sup>8</sup>Shams et al (2013): Teacher management and development in Nepal.

<p>education planning, management, budgeting, and possibly financing. Implementing these reforms is foreseen to occupy the sector in the early years of the SSDP, after which there is likely to be a mid-term review that will lead to changes in the SSDP, emanating from the new federal structure.</p> <p>MoE will develop and implement a performance-based management and resourcing at school level where schools will be ranked on several indicators of education achievement, school governance and available facilities.</p> <p>A three-year road map will be prepared for the reform and restructuring of institutional arrangements to accommodate the federal system whereby responsibility for school governance and management is gradually transferred to local governments.</p> <p>Key results and major interventions are linked to strengthening financial management.</p>	<p>future education system, but there is still very little information available</p>
<p><b>Institutional capacity development</b></p>	
<p>Institutional capacity development aims to prepare human and institutional resources within the education sector for the forthcoming federalisation and to improve the quality and efficiency of service delivery. Especially capacity at the local and school level will have to be augmented. SSDP emphasises that capacity development does not mean training but requires a more holistic and results-based approach.</p> <p>Costed capacity development plan will be prepared and implemented at all levels. District education committee, education managers and schools trained in their new responsibilities.</p>	<p>This is probably among the most relevant interventions in the SSDP though it is not possible to assess its feasibility with the limited information available – the capacity development plan will be developed prepared during the SSDP. Care should be taken that the capacity development activities are targeted to school and local level stakeholders who will bear increasing responsibilities, and whose capacities probably most in need of development.</p>

## 4 Summary

This section aims to summarise the key findings, conclusions and recommendations with regard to the key appraisal questions:

- To which extend has the development of the SSD Plan been country-led, participatory, and transparent?
- To which extend does the plan constitute a solid and consistent corpus of components, strategies and actions addressing the key challenges of the education sector and
- To which extend are issues of equity, efficiency, and learning soundly addressed to increase sector performance?
- To what extend do the financing, implementation, and monitoring arrangements offer a good perspective for achievement?

Overall, the draft SSDP (dated March 2016) presents a credible, yet an unfinished plan to take forward the reforms started earlier, and to add some initiatives to strengthen quality and equity in sector where secondary education is gaining more prominence. As such, the draft SSDP is



consolidative in nature. This is understandable and prudent under the current circumstances and uncertainties especially in relation to the transition to the federal system and its effects.

Development and preparation of the School Sector Development Plan has been strongly led by the Ministry of Education, and especially the role of the Technical Committee has been very important. During the preparation process, the MoE has managed to engage with a large variety of different stakeholders, including other ministries, regional and local level administration, civil society organisations, including teachers' unions and (I)NGOs, and the development partners. The consultation process was well structured, and a number of civil society organisations was given an important convening role in consultations and in sharing the draft document with their constituencies. Consultations have been documented, and all background documents have been uploaded to a common drop-box account.

Considering that the consultations took place in the aftermath of the April and May 2015 earthquakes and during economic blockade that drastically reduced e.g. availability of gas or diesel, the process has been very commendable. Furthermore, the process laid strong foundation for further consultations during the implementation of the SSDP, and for preparing for the forthcoming federal structure in education.

The key identified and discussed challenges in the education sector were: 1) quality of basic and secondary education; 2) equity and access, especially for certain districts marginalised communities; 3) efficiency and enforcement of government rules and regulations; 5) governance and accountability, especially local level financial management; 6) financing.

To a large extent, SSDP will continue and consolidate the developments and achievements made under SSRP and its predecessors. The SSDP has been prepared while waiting for two major reforms to take place in education sector through passing of the Education Amendment Act and implementation of the federal system. These reforms are likely to change the planning, management, budgeting, and possibly financing of education sector, and will have to be reflected in the SSDP. It is possible that the SSDP will be significantly revised in three years' time. The uncertainty in the overall management framework notwithstanding, the challenges in schools will remain the same and will need to be addressed.

The SSDP would benefit from a more descriptive and quantitative presentation of the great achievements made in the past 15 years and also on the continued challenges. For better understanding of the targets, there should also be important baseline information on population and enrolment projections that would present and highlight the decreasing enrolment at various levels and especially in community schools.

The SSDP places increasing emphasis on improving the quality of education and learning achievements. This will be addressed by revisiting curricula, textbooks and the examination system. Early grade reading programme will be extended to nation wide and 95% of students will receive their textbooks in time. These are both very important interventions and are foreseen to greatly improve the learning achievements. A large number of teachers will be trained at ECED, primary and upper basic and secondary levels to strengthen their subject knowledge especially in math, science and English and to improve their pedagogical skills and classroom practices to become more child-centred.

A more detailed presentation of these plans is left to ASIPs and AWPBs. It would be very important to ensure close monitoring of these key interventions, as they are the ones addressing the most pertinent challenges in the education sector in Nepal, and there is limited qualitative and quantitative information on these in the SSDP, especially with regard to targets and indicators. The close monitoring and follow-up would also be important as some of the above interventions have not been very successful in the past (imparting new knowledge and changing teachers' classroom practices through training, distribution of textbooks).

Also left to ASIPs and AWPBs, under governance and management and institutional capacity development component, the SSDP foresees preparation of two key documents that will potentially shape the future of education sector in Nepal: a three-year road map to reform and restructure the institutional arrangements for the upcoming federal system and transferring responsibilities to the local level; and a costed capacity development plan to prepare for the federal system at all levels. It would be very important to follow-up preparation of these documents and to understand their implications on the education sector and on the SSDP.

The education system in Nepal is characterised by large disparities between districts in terms of access and participation in education, and learning achievements. Despite remarkable progress in the past 15 years especially in access and participation and in gender parity, there continues to be “pockets of marginalised communities” in Karnali Zone but especially in central tarai. These six tarai districts Dhanusha, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara and Parsa<sup>9</sup> are home to over 20% of the primary level students in Nepal but only 11% of secondary level students. These districts lag behind in many of the SSDP key performance indicators and the achievement of many of the SSDP enrolment but also quality related targets will depend on how successfully SSDP can address the needs in these districts. These districts lag behind in enrolment, have the highest student teacher ratios and are far from the national averages in meeting the PMECs. While the challenges with the central tarai districts are acknowledged, there is no specific strategy to address these issues in the SSDP. The document refers to equity implementation plans to be included in the ASIPs and AWPBs but the transparency and relevance of the SSDP document could be strengthened by more explicit explanation on the challenges.

At the time of the appraisal the final budget and financing plan was not yet available. In SSDP bulk of the expenditure is based on the number of teachers and their salaries. These in turn are based on a decreasing number of students. For the sake of transparency, it would be useful to include the unit costs and enrolment and teacher position projections in the SSDP.

Education sector in Nepal and the SSDP benefit from a robust Education Management Information System (EMIS) that produced school level information twice a year. Problems have been documented in the EMIS data with regard e.g. to exaggerated enrolment numbers, but the system still gives a very good overview of the system. SSDP includes a plan to further strengthen EMIS by incorporating Equity Index into it. Together with detailed analyses of early grade reading assessments in early grades and National Assessments of Student Achievements (NASA) at grades 5, 8 and 10 will avail the education policy decision makers (duty bearers) a sufficient body of information to allow for efficient and effective allocation for education resources. It would be of utmost importance to share and use that information for educational planning and management at all levels of the future federal state.

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<sup>9</sup>Also Sunsari, Saptari and Siraha in east and Kapilvastu in west to some extent.

### **UNICEF Nepal Country Office**

#### **Terms of Reference (ToR)**

#### **Appraisal of the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) for Nepal's Local Education Group (LEG)**

##### **Duty Station: Kathmandu (Home Based)**

##### **1. Background and Justification for Consultant / Individual Contractor Contract**

At the World Education Forum, in Dakar in 2000, the international community pledged that no country with a credible plan to achieve the Education for All goals would be thwarted by a lack of resources. Since then, the development of an education sector plan (ESP) has become a priority in many countries. ESPs present the policies and strategies for national education reform, and are a powerful tool for coordinating partners and for mobilizing additional domestic and external resources. They have become a critical instrument for governments to signal to all potential investors that their education policies are credible, sustainable, and worthy of investment.

The Government of Nepal (the government) has implemented the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) since 2009. The SSRP—jointly supported by a number of development partners (DPs) using a sector-wide approach (SWAp)—built upon the earlier reforms in the school education sector and sought to improve access and equity and quality of the entire school education system (grades 1–12). It also envisaged to consolidate the existing four-tier structure of school education (comprising of 5 years of primary, three years of lower secondary, two years of secondary, and two years of higher secondary education) into eight years of basic (grades 1–8) and four years of secondary (grades 9–12) education. The SSRP is scheduled to complete in FY2016.

The government is preparing the next School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), which aims to consolidate gains from previous reform programs and continue crucial reforms needed in the school education sector. The SSDP will be implemented from July 2016. It is proposed that the government and DPs will continue financing the SSDP through the SWAp modality. The first draft has been shared by the government to the DPs. To ensure need based and relevant design of the SSDP, translating in further strengthening of access, participation and learning outcomes across the education sector, the Development Partners (including (I)NGOs and CSOs) have agreed to jointly undertake the appraisal of both the SSD Plan (2016-2023) and the SSD Program (SSDP) of the first five years of this Plan (2016- 2021), in order to enable the Local Education Group (LEG) to endorse the SSD Plan and the Pooling and Non Pooling DPs to endorse the SSDP Program in line with their internal requirements.

The consultancy will conduct an external appraisal of the SSDP on behalf of Nepal's Local Education Group (LEG) in line with the GPE guidelines. UNICEF NCO is currently the focal point on behalf of the SSRP Development Partners, and as such, has been endorsed by the SSRP SWAP consortium as GPE Managing Entity for applying and implementing an Education Sector Program Development Grant (ESPDG).

A joint appraisal of the Program to implement the School Sector Development Plan will also be conducted by a separate team to enable agreement to be reached between the government and DPs, in program design, implementation arrangement and risk mitigation measures for various due diligences (in line with World Bank and ADB procedures). A pre-appraisal was conducted in March 2016.

##### **Plan Appraisal**

Initial discussions on the Program appraisal Presentation of Draft Plan Appraisal Program Appraisal mission

April 7 – May 7 April 18 – 24 April 24  
April 25-29

## 2. Goal / Objective - Programme Group Result/Intermediate Result (PCR/IR) relevance

**Purpose:** the purpose and objectives of the SSD appraisal are based upon the GPE guidelines for appraisal of Education Sector Plans (ESPs) by the LEG. The purpose of the SSDP appraisal is to appraise the soundness, relevance, and coherence that form the credibility of SSDP.

**Objectives:** the primary objective of the appraisal is to support the finalization of a credible SSDP, through a review of the strengths and areas in need of improvement before the endorsement by the Nepal LEG, which signifies their commitment to support the implementation of the ESP. As such, the SSDP appraisal is undertaken to establish a consensus within the LEG on the priorities and objectives in the SSD Plan and the reform agenda to achieve these presented in the SSD Program. The objectives of the SSD Plan appraisal are:

- Assessment of leadership and participation; to which extend has the development of the SSD Plan been country-led, participatory, and transparent?
- Assessment of soundness and relevance; to which extend does the plan constitute a solid corpus of strategies and actions addressing the key challenges of the education sector?
- Assessment of equity, efficiency and learning; to which extend are issues of equity, efficiency, and learning soundly addressed to increase sector performance?
- Assessment of coherence; to which extend is there consistency between the various components of the SSDP?
- Assessment of feasibility, implementability and monitorability; to which extend do the financing, implementation, and monitoring arrangements offer a good perspective for achievement?

## 3. Specific tasks

Specific task is to conduct an appraisal of the School Sector Development Plan on behalf of the LEG.

## 4. Duration of the contract

This consultancy will be for one month. Tentative date 07 April till 07 May 2016.

A mission to Nepal, 14 April to 24 April is required to conduct interviews and present draft report.

## 5.

a.

### Proposed Schedule for Deliverables:

Schedule of Output Submissions:

Deliverables	Target Delivery Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Completed GPE Appraisal pre-check matrix</li><li>• Draft SSPD Appraisal report and powerpoint presentation</li><li>• Final SSDP Appraisal report</li></ul>	14 April 2016 24 April 2016 7 May 2016

b.

Estimated Travel (List travel required for the assignment):

Destination	Dates / No. of Days
Air fare (International)	Round Trip
Kathmandu	10 Days

### Working conditions

Admin Requirements		
Location	Office space reqd. Y/N	Others
Home Based - except from 14 to 24 April consultant will be required to travel to Nepal to conduct interviews and present draft report.	NO	
IT Requirements		
Laptop reqd. Y/N	Email Access Y/N	Others
NO	NO	

## 6. Minimum Qualification Required

The consultant will meet the following requirements:

### Education:

Advanced University degree in Education, Monitoring & Evaluation or related discipline

### Work Experience

At least 12 years' of experience in development cooperation policies and implementation, including appraisal of education sector plans, SWAP modalities and situational and context analyses, impact analysis and project design in a developing country context.

### Special Skill

- In-depth knowledge of service delivery and reforms within education sectors in developing country context and development partners' supporting role through a SWAp mechanism.
- Previous experience in conducting an appraisal based on GPE guidelines is an asset.
- Previous experience with the education sector in Nepal is an asset.

## 7. Contract Supervision

The consultant will work under the direct supervision of the Education Section Chief, Dr. Marilyn Hoar



QUESTIONS	YES	NO	COMMENTS
<u>Sector-wide:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the plan cover all subsectors including non-formal education, literacy and higher education?</li> </ul>		X	Higher education and technical and vocational education under the Council of Technical and Vocational Education are excluded. SSDP is a school sector development plan.
<u>Based on sector analysis:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the ESP summarise key results of the sector analysis and identify key challenges based on those results?</li> </ul>	X		This presentation could be significantly strengthened by a quantitative analysis that could illustrate the achievements as well as the persistent challenges. There should be population and enrolment data with projections, teacher data and school data at minimum. The NASA and SLC result should also be presented in tables or graphics. The quantitative analysis should use disaggregated data to the extent possible.
<u>Coherent and consistent strategies</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do the general objectives, specific objectives, and activities address the key challenges and their underlying causes?</li> <li>Are there any major inconsistencies in the presentation of general objectives, specific objectives, and activities across different sections of the ESP (e.g. narrative, logframe, action plan)?</li> </ul>	X		This section could also be greatly strengthened. Currently there are too many strategies and key results presented resulting in unclarity regarding the priorities. Objectives, results and indicators are presented in three different parts of the document and there is some inconsistency between the three. It would be important to be very specific about the key strategies and indicators, and to link them transparently to the budget allocations.
<u>Sound cost framework:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has the plan been costed?</li> <li>Are the data presented by education level?</li> <li>Are the data presented by year?</li> <li>Does the cost framework specify the capital and recurrent expenditures as well as the staff salaries share?</li> </ul>	X		The Plan has been costed and information is presented except for staff salaries. Management and administration costs amount to 17.9% of the total costs. The costing could be further improved by more transparent specification of the unit costs and the underlying assumptions regarding projected number of students and teachers. It is understood that this work will be continued during the Programme appraisal.
<u>Sound financial framework:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the financial framework based on official macro-economic assumptions?</li> <li>Does the financial framework specify the domestic and external resources allocated to the education sector?</li> <li>Does the financial framework specify the financial gap?</li> <li>What is the level of the funding gap as a percentage of the total resources available (including external aid)?</li> </ul>	X		This work will be further developed during the Programme appraisal. There are uncertainties regarding domestic and external resources, and hence the financing gap. The GoN next three-year plan, the 14 <sup>th</sup> Plan is not yet available.

<u>Simulation model:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Was a simulation model used for testing the policy targets and informing the policy dialogue?</li> <li>Was a simulation model used for devising the financial framework?</li> </ul>	X		The simulation may need to retest the policy targets and re-engage in policy dialogue after the financing envelope is more firmed up.
<u>Sound action plan:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the action plan contain a precise timeline for each activity?</li> <li>Does the action plan contain a responsible authority for each activity?</li> <li>Does the action plan contain the total cost and source of funding for each activity?</li> </ul>		X	The SSDP is a 7-year plan to be implemented in an uncertain operating environment. It is not possible or even desirable to present detailed action plans in the SSDP. Rather these would be presented in the Annual Strategic Implementation Plans and Annual Work Plans and Budgets.
<u>Monitoring tools and mechanisms:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the ESP contain a description of the monitoring tools and mechanisms that will be used to monitor progress, or mention a plan to develop them?</li> </ul>	X		Education sector in Nepal benefits from a fairly strong monitoring mechanism. The Plan envisages continuation and further strengthening of the Education Management Information System (EMIS). There will be a very important mid-term review, probably at the time when the federal structure has been decided that will significantly change education management and responsibilities in Nepal. Furthermore, there is a plan to develop and launch Equity Index, which will be very important in highlighting inequalities in education access and achievements. The plan includes strengthening of the Education Review Office and closer monitoring of financial management. There is a great need to show results, not just activities, in effort to improve quality, equity and financial management. For this additional qualitative assessments may be required to explain WHY something has worked or not, as this is not available from the monitoring system.
<u>Clear roles and responsibilities:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there clear roles and responsibilities defined for the implementation and monitoring of the ESP?</li> </ul>		X	This is not presented in the SSDP, and may be of little value as it will be affected by the Education Amendment Act (regarding teacher management and the role of private schools) and the decision on the functions under the federal structure.
<u>Sound indicators:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are most of the indicators well defined, meaning they contain a target, a timeframe, and are measurable? (baseline?)</li> <li>Do most objectives have corresponding outcomes, and do most activities have corresponding outputs?</li> </ul>	X		<p>The indicators that continue from the SSRP are well defined but would benefit from inclusion of both % and absolute number to better highlight the level of ambition in the targets.</p> <p>Most of the new indicators are still draft to be discussed in the Programme appraisal. Especially for quality and equity objectives, it would be important to highlight results, not just inputs to be able to show progress.</p> <p>For all indicators disaggregation should be added when ever possible (sex, geographical area).</p>



<u>Capacity development:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the ESP contain a programme on capacity development that is based on an assessment of capacities?</li> </ul>		X	The SSDP states that a capacity development plan needs to be prepared. In preparing the plan, enhancement of local level capacity would be very important in preparation for the federal structure.
<u>Strong government leadership:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the ESP's preparation process demonstrate strong leadership of the government?</li> </ul>	X		There has been strong government leadership especially at the Joint Secretary level.
<u>Broader stakeholder participation:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Did the preparation of the ESP involve a participatory process that included a broad range of stakeholders; central government, decentralised levels of government, civil society, teacher unions, non-governmental organisations, and development partners?</li> </ul>	X		The preparation process can be deemed remarkably participatory, especially considering the difficult operating environment caused by earthquakes and economic embargo. Obviously, there is always room for improvement, but the preparation process offers a great opportunity for participation also during the SSDP implementation.