

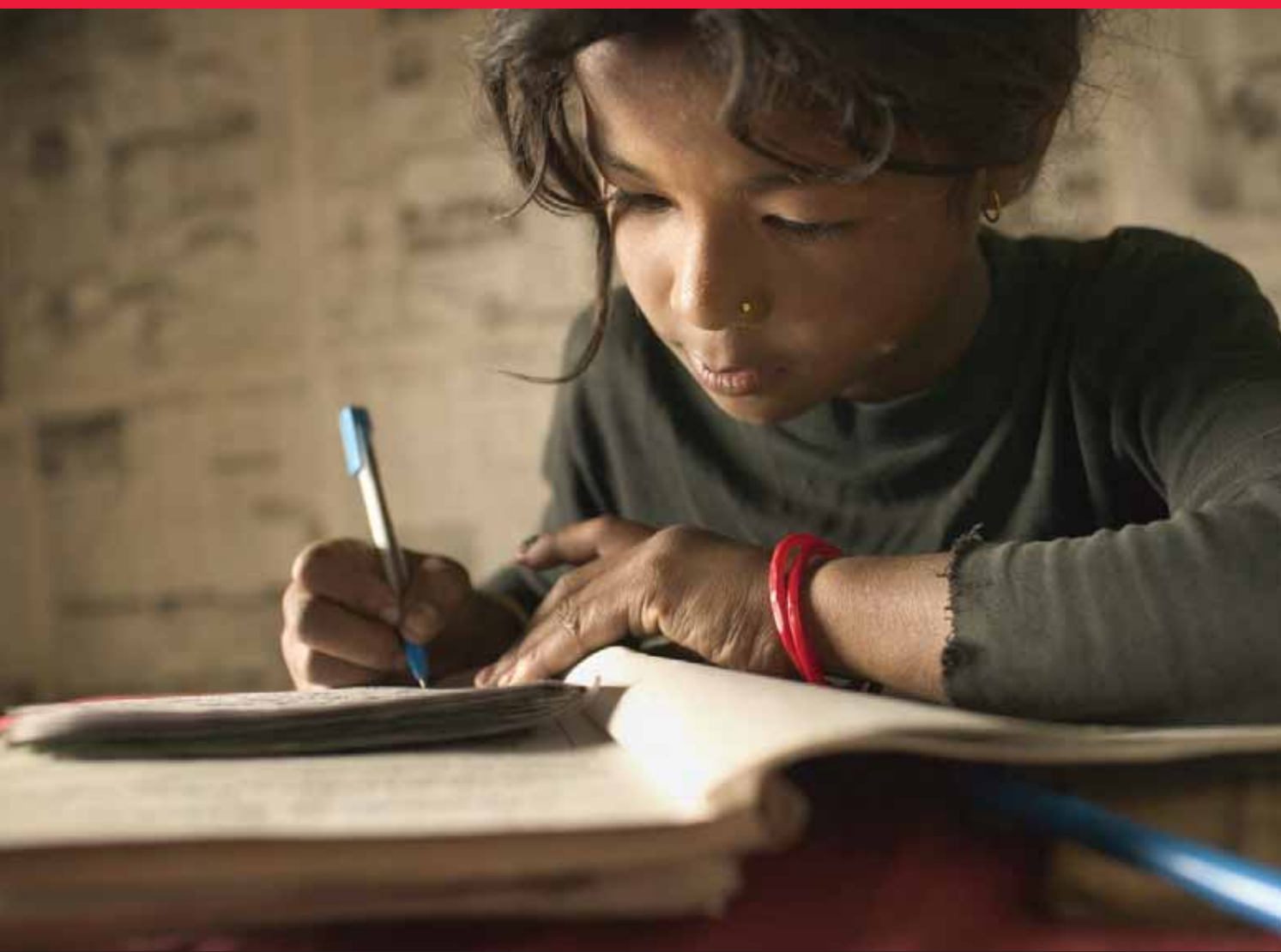
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF DENMARK
Danida



JOINT EVALUATION OF
THE SECONDARY EDUCATION
SUPPORT PROGRAMME

evaluation

2009.06



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**Joint Evaluation of
the Secondary Education
Support Programme**

COWI

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations and Acronyms	6
Executive summary	8
1 Introduction	15
1.1 Background	15
1.2 Programme Profile	15
1.3 Structure of the Report	19
2 Evaluation Approach and Methodology	20
2.1 Purpose and Objective of the Joint Evaluation	20
2.2 Approach	20
2.3 Methods	21
2.4 Challenges and Limitations	24
3 Context	26
3.1 The Insurgency and Ensuing Tensions	26
3.2 Socio-Economic Trends	26
3.3 Reform of the Education System	27
4 Programme Relevance	29
5 Programme Management	30
5.1 Coordination and Management	30
5.2 Financial and Physical Implementation	32
5.3 Financial Management	33
5.4 Ownership	34
5.5 Assessment	35
5.6 Specific Recommendations	35
6 Access and Equity	37
6.1 Relevance	37
6.2 Progress Towards Target	38
6.3 Physical Learning Environment	42
6.4 Scholarships	45
6.5 Assessment	48
6.6 Specific Recommendations	49
7 Quality	50
7.1 Relevance	50
7.2 Progress Towards Target	50
7.3 Curriculum	56
7.4 Student Assessment and Examination	58
7.5 Teacher Education and Development	59
7.6 Teacher Recruitment	61
7.7 Assessment	62
7.8 Specific Recommendations	65

8 Institutional Capacity	67
8.1 Relevance	67
8.2 Progress Towards Target	67
8.3 Capacity Development	69
8.4 Monitoring and Evaluation	73
8.5 Assessment	74
8.6 Specific Recommendations	75
9 Early Signs of Impact	77
9.1 Education for the Need of National Development	77
9.2 Vision 2012	78
10 Conclusions and Recommendations	81
10.1 Main Conclusions	81
10.2 Strategic Recommendations	83
Appendices	
Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference	85

All other appendices to the evaluation report can be found on the attached CD-ROM or viewed on the website: www.evaluation.dk

The additional appendices include:

- Appendix 2: Evaluation Matrix
- Appendix 3: Literature
- Appendix 4a: Sampling of Districts and Approach to District Visits
- Appendix 4b: Introduction Letter to DEOs
- Appendix 5a: Consultations
- Appendix 5b: District and School Level Consultations
- Appendix 6: Interview Guides
- Appendix 7: Charts for Focused Comparisons

Abbreviations and Acronyms

<i>ADB</i>	Asian Development Bank
<i>AIN</i>	Association of International NGOs
<i>ASIP</i>	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan
<i>BPEP</i>	Basic and Primary Education Programme
<i>CDC</i>	Curriculum Development Centre
<i>Danida</i>	Danish International Development Assistance
<i>DDC</i>	District Development Committee
<i>DEO</i>	District Education Office
<i>DEP</i>	District Education Plan
<i>DoE</i>	Department of Education
<i>EFA</i>	Education for All
<i>EIRR</i>	Economic Internal Rate of Return
<i>ESAT</i>	Education Sector Advisory Team
<i>ETC</i>	Education Training Centre
<i>FACS</i>	Foreign Aid Coordination Section
<i>FCGO</i>	Financial Comptroller General Office
<i>FEDO</i>	Feminist Dalit Organization
<i>FY</i>	Financial Year
<i>GER</i>	Gross Enrolment Rate
<i>GoN</i>	Government of Nepal
<i>GPI</i>	Gender Parity Index
<i>HDI</i>	Human Development Index
<i>HRD</i>	Human Resources Development
<i>HT</i>	Head Teacher
<i>I/NGO</i>	International/ Non-Governmental Organisation
<i>JEMC</i>	Janak Educational Materials Centre
<i>LRC</i>	Lead Resource Centre
<i>LSGA</i>	Local Self-Governance Act
<i>M&E</i>	Monitoring and evaluation
<i>MoE</i>	Ministry of Education
<i>MoF</i>	Ministry of Finance
<i>MSC</i>	Most Significant Change
<i>MTEF</i>	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
<i>MTR</i>	Medium Term Review
<i>NCED</i>	National Centre for Education Development
<i>NCF</i>	National Curriculum Framework
<i>NER</i>	Net Enrolment Rate
<i>NFDN</i>	National Federation of the Disabled Nepal
<i>NGO</i>	Non-Government Organisation
<i>Norad</i>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<i>NPC</i>	National Planning Commission
<i>OAG</i>	Office of the Auditor General
<i>OCE</i>	Office of the Controller of Examinations
<i>OECD/DAC</i>	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development/ Development Assistance Committee
<i>PABSON</i>	Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation Nepal
<i>PID</i>	Programme Intensive Districts

<i>PRSP</i>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
<i>PTA</i>	Parent Teacher Association
<i>RC</i>	Resource Centre
<i>RED</i>	Regional Education Directorate
<i>REMIS</i>	Research Educational Management Information System
<i>RP</i>	Resource Person
<i>SEDP</i>	Secondary Education Development Programme
<i>SESP</i>	Secondary Education Support Programme
<i>SIP</i>	School Improvement Plan
<i>SLC</i>	Secondary Leaving Certificate
<i>SMC</i>	School Management Committee
<i>SSR</i>	School Sector Reform
<i>STR</i>	Student Teacher Ratio
<i>TA</i>	Technical Assistance
<i>TEP</i>	Teacher Education Programme
<i>ToR</i>	Terms of Reference
<i>TUN</i>	Teachers' Union Nepal
<i>VDC</i>	Village Development Committee
<i>VEC</i>	Village Education Committee

Executive Summary

The Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP) came into effect in 2003 with a total basket of USD 74.8 million. The seven-year programme is implemented by the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Nepal and supported by the Asian Development Bank and Danida.

The SESP policy objective is to expand quality secondary education suitable for the need of national development. In addition, the three main intermediate objectives of SESP are to i) improve the quality and relevance of public secondary schooling; ii) improve access to public secondary schooling with a particular emphasis on girls and students from poor and disadvantaged groups and districts; and iii) develop the institutional capacity and management of central and district educational institutions and public secondary schools based upon a decentralised system of planning and management. The programme has four components, each with a separate output:

1. Increased equitable access to an improved learning environment, especially for educationally disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities and girls;
2. An improved and more relevant curriculum, technically improved assessment and accessible instructional materials;
3. An integrated system supporting teacher education, development and management; and
4. Improved institutional capacity in the school sector based on a system of decentralised planning and management.

Some of the activities under component 1, notably construction of new classrooms and provision of scholarships, were to be implemented with greater intensity in ten so-called Programme Intensive Districts (PID) where the need was assessed to be the greatest.

During the May 2008 technical review it was agreed between the MoE and its development partners to conduct a joint evaluation of the SESP in its final year of implementation before it is going to be integrated into the framework of the School Sector Reform from 2009 onwards. The overall purpose of the evaluation is to provide information about the outcomes and document early signs of impact of the SESP that Ministry of Education, the development partners and other education stakeholders can use for improving the policy framework and further the design of the on-going School Sector Reform (SSR).

This report is the main output delivered by the evaluation team contracted by Danida to carry out the joint evaluation. The team includes experts from COWI A/S in Denmark and sector experts from Nepal. The joint evaluation relied on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In addition to data analysis, document review and interviews with key stakeholders in Kathmandu the joint evaluation involved fieldwork, including participatory focus group discussions based on the Most Significant Change approach. To evaluate whether the programme intensive activities in the ten PID districts in the western part of Nepal have made a significant contribution compared to similar districts with no programme intensive activities, three sets of PID and non-PID districts

were selected. The selection was made to ensure comparability in as many ways as possible except for the districts' inclusion or exclusion from the programme's intensive activities. In each district, the team had detailed interactions with schools, district administration and other key stakeholders. A summary of the key findings of the joint evaluation are presented in the following.

Relevance of the SESP is evident at a policy level given that the SESP objectives are basically a rewording of four objectives from the Secondary Education Development Plan. Moreover, education is one of the four priority areas of Nepal's poverty reduction strategy paper and is an important recipient of government funding. The original motive of SESP to be implemented in closer collaboration with local authorities is also in tandem with the Government of Nepal's (GoN) overall decentralisation strategy. Moreover, the three intermediate objectives are all accepted by interviewed stakeholders as relevant and the specific benefits delivered at the district level have been appreciated and utilised by the beneficiaries.

There is coherence with programmes such as Education for All and its predecessor with their primary focus on improving the access and equity, quality and relevance, and institutional efficiency of the primary education sub-sector. Moreover, given the tendency of the majority of development partners and organisations in Nepal to focus on primary education, the choice of Danida and ADB to focus on secondary education is highly relevant, especially in view of the sub-sector's importance for strengthening productivity and private sector development through the education of young people with skills relevant for the needs of the market.

After a slow start, the *efficiency* of the programme and the performance of the GoN improved. Outputs have largely been delivered according to plan which is a remarkable achievement given the conflict and ensuing tensions in Nepal. The performance of the donors is largely satisfactory in terms of making resources available on time and development partners have demonstrated commitment by agreeing to align programme management more closely to national procedures.

The *effectiveness* of the programme is satisfactory in terms of improving secondary enrolment and in institutionalising a bottom-up planning modality. In some cases progress has even been impressive such as increases in lower secondary enrolment, in girls' enrolment and in Secondary Leaving Certificate (SLC) pass rates. Progress in enhancing access and equity in enrolment has improved significantly especially for lower secondary. The evidence suggests that scholarships have been instrumental in boosting enrolment for girls and marginalised groups. The schools constructed in the PIDs can also explain part of the increase in enrolment. Moreover, the construction and rehabilitation of school buildings and other infrastructure is, despite concerns about quality, consistently quoted by stakeholders in the districts as one of the most significant changes created by SESP.

The very significant increase in SLC pass rates is encouraging and an indication of improvements in the quality of secondary education. However, a more comprehensive assessment of progress towards targets reveals a number of areas where progress has been more modest. Given the validity and reliability problems related to SLC pass rates and the fact that other quality indicators do not mirror the positive developments in SLC data, the overall assessment is that quality has improved less dramatically than suggested by the SLC rates. For example, an assessment of grade 8 students carried out in 2008 does not support the notion of a dramatic increase in quality. Hence, while part of the increase in the SLC rate is likely to reflect real improvements to the curriculum, to

teacher education programmes, to student assessment and to the learning environment, the very significant increase in SLC rates can arguably also be explained by poor reliability of data, continued cheating and pressurising of teachers by parents in district and national examinations, and the adoption of a more liberal assessment and promotion policy. The overall trend is positive nevertheless: An improvement in the quality of education can be detected at the school level as further documented by the district field visits undertaken by the evaluation team.

The improvement in quality is notable since the significant increase in access has clearly put additional strains on a school system that was already struggling at the outset to deliver quality education relevant to the needs of the nation. Despite the positive trend, the overall effectiveness of the teacher education component has been reduced by a number of factors including lack of resource material at the schools, inadequate teacher allocations and a marked mismatch between the training situation and the actual conditions in most classrooms (e.g. introduction of teaching methods that do not take into account the very high number of students in classrooms). Teachers have been faced with increased workloads and are left with little time to prepare for and organise classroom activities encouraged in the training. A key outstanding challenge is the need to increase the proportion of female teachers and teachers from minority groups especially in secondary school.

The programme has not had an adequate vision and strategy for building the capacity of the implementing partners, but different entities have still received relevant and much appreciated inputs. The overall impression remains however that progress in capacity development is limited and that many of the interventions are either too limited in scope or the effectiveness is being diluted by high staff turnover – especially at district level.

The *sustainability* of the gains made in access will need to be carefully monitored in the coming years. A key issue to follow is the retention rates and achievements of girls and students from disadvantaged groups. A key outstanding challenge is the need to increase the proportion of female teachers and teachers from minority groups, especially in secondary school. Sustainability also depends on the capacity of the education management system to deliver. Hence, a key lesson learned is that a programme with the scope and ambition of SESP needs to be supported by a strong capacity development plan. At the school level, School Management Committees (SMC) are an interesting platform on which increased participation and accountability can be built. Current capacity development efforts need to be enhanced to enable the SMC to fulfil its envisaged role and take full ownership of the various outputs created by SESP. A notable sign of this commitment would be the development of maintenance plans for the works constructed through SESP. Currently such maintenance plans exist in very limited numbers, which may be an indication of limited local level ownership to the programme.

Finally, at the *impact* level, it is notable that quality appears to be improving although not at the rate suggested by the increase in SLC pass rates. As the assessment against Vision 2012 shows, it is unlikely that the current rate of progress will allow Nepal to arrive at the Vision by 2012. There is need for increased focus on monitoring of quality of education, further revision of curriculum, a more coherent teacher education programme and an improved system for deployment and management of teachers. Moreover, measures for capacity development at all levels of the system need to be designed and rolled out in a more coherent and informed way. However, the Vision remains relevant as an ambitious target that may inspire future reform efforts in the Nepalese education sector.

The assessment of the SESP against the evaluation criteria is summarised in the table below. Given that only early signs of impact can be detected at present, impact assessments have not been included in the table.

Summary of the SESP Joint Evaluation

Objective	Access and Equity	Quality and Relevance	Institutional Capacity
Components	Learning Environment	Curriculum Development, Assessment and Instructional Materials; Teacher Education and Development	Institutional Management and Capacity Building
Relevance of Objectives	•••••	•••••	•••••
Efficiency	•••	•••	•••
Effectiveness	••••	•••	•••
Sustainability	••	•••	••

Legend: ••••• very high; •••• high; ••• medium; •• low; • very low

The joint evaluation has identified a number of strategic *recommendations*, which could contribute to policy development in view of the on-going School Sector Reform. The primary responsibility for taking these recommendations forward lies with the GoN through the MoE and its various implementing entities notably the Department of Education (DoE), the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC), the National Centre for Education Development (NCED), the Office of the Controller of Examinations (OCE) and the Janak Educational Materials Centre (JEMC). However, Nepal's development partners and the civil society also have a key responsibility in engaging in dialogue with the GoN on how best to sequence the reform and prioritise the external funding being made available to the sector.

1. The strategies and methods employed to increase quality further need to be adjusted to better cope with the increasing student population in secondary education. There is a need to develop a better and more nuanced understanding of quality and its components. It is important that such a definition is fully owned by the GoN, and there is consequently a need to encourage the work already going on under the leaderships of the MoE to come up with a definition of quality in education in consultation with key stakeholders. Similarly, the MoE needs to define strategies to roll this out to schools and classrooms. The GoN needs to factor in processes such as student and teacher performance incentives and the actual conditions facing teachers in the classrooms when rolling out some of the specific recommendations mentioned in this report, such as further revision of the curriculum and the development of a more coherent teacher education programme.

2. In terms of the actual strategies, there is, in coherence with the decentralisation process, a need for a more contextualised approach with greater utilisation of local resources and increased flexibility in design of buildings and classrooms so that designs from DoE can be adapted to local conditions. Another important aspect is to strengthen the capacity at local level for increased accountability for school performance. The school-mapping exercise is critical in this context.
3. Strategies for promoting equity and inclusion of disadvantaged groups need to go beyond the access issue and, in the case of children with disabilities, the physical access within the school area has to be strongly enforced. The strategy should focus on developing a learning environment which is free of discrimination and which facilitates the retention and performance of students from disadvantaged groups.
4. The potential for collaboration with NGOs, international NGOs and the private sector should be better utilised. As a starting point, representatives could participate more fully in implementation of the recently launched School Sector Reform programme as well as in the forthcoming reviews.
5. Finally, as a crosscutting recommendation, future reforms and their underlying rationale need to be more clearly communicated to key stakeholders in the school system (e.g. teachers) to have a real effect and impact at district and school levels.

In addition more specific recommendations are summarised in the table below. The recommendations argue *inter alia* for the continued investment in infrastructure, scholarships, recruitment of new teachers, teacher follow-up training and increased focus on improvement in school management. All of these interventions are needed to sustain the gains of current investments.

For the bulk of the specific recommendations, the primary responsibility lies, as for the strategic recommendations GoN but again development partners have a key role to play as do representatives from the civil society. The onus is on the GoN to facilitate this process.

Some of the specific recommendations can be implemented immediately, while others require a long-term approach. Moreover, some of the issues may be outside the direct control of the education system, but require immediate action such as the need to reactivate the teacher deployment system. The lack of teachers has been identified as one of the main stumbling blocks for making further progress in terms of improving quality. Secondly, it seems important that the effect of reducing scholarship amounts be assessed as a matter of priority. Significant funds are spent on scholarships and it will be important to ensure early on in SSR implementation whether this practice needs to be corrected in order to maximise the value added of the programme. Similarly, the DoE should follow up immediately on the quality issues identified by the evaluation team to ensure that funds are spent as efficiently and effectively as possible at the district and school levels.

Summary of the SESP Joint Evaluation

	Key recommendations	Responsible	Timing
Programme management	Increase attention towards following up on review decisions	MoE, development partners	Immediate
	Take ownership for management of TA to improve aid coordination and effectiveness	MoE	SSR
	Move towards a situation in which all of the TA funds are managed on-budget including TA funds currently managed by the ESAT Office	MoE	Long term
	Track efficiency of fund flows all the way down through the system to identify and deal with the “blockages” of the system	MoE	SSR
Physical learning environment	Continue the construction of school blocks with due consideration for schools with high student-classroom ratios	DoE	SSR
	Follow national procurement regulations and manage the process through yearly procurement plans to decrease delays	DoE	SSR
	Include provisions for setting up a maintenance programme and for increased involvement of SMCs in the procurement and supervision of works	DoE	Immediate
Scholarships	Continue the scholarship programme but refrain from practice of reducing per capita amounts until it is proven that effectiveness is not reduced as a result of this practice	DoE	SSR
Monitoring of quality	Collection of quantitative and qualitative longitudinal data on student achievement	DoE	Long term
Curriculum development	Further revision of the secondary curriculum to address more fully social inclusion issues and make students aware of their rights and obligations as students	CDC	SSR
Assessment	Ensure efficient usage of the secure printing press	JEMC	Immediate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

	Key recommendations	Responsible	Timing
Teacher education	Improve the character and quality of existing teacher education according to the principles of i) modelling good teaching, ii) strengthening the relation between the academic content in teacher education with the content as taught by prospective teachers upon graduation, and iii) discussing students' work and classroom interaction	NCED	Long term
Teacher recruitment and management	Reactivate the teacher deployment system with a particular focus on recruiting more female teachers and teachers from disadvantaged groups and promote a performance based culture to give teachers an incentive to perform and apply new techniques in the classroom	MoE, Teacher Service Commission	SSR
Planning	Increase monitoring and guidance to districts and schools on how best to undertake the ASIP process	DoE	
DEO	SSR		
	Increase the capacity of Resource Centres so that they can effectively advise schools on preparation and implementation of the ASIP planning modality	DoE	
DEO	SSR		
Capacity development	Develop a capacity development plan in an open and transparent way	MoE	SSR
	Provide additional training and orientation to SMC members	DoE	SSR

1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP) came into effect in 2003 with a total basket of USD 74.8 million. The seven-year programme is implemented by the Ministry of Education in Nepal and supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Danida.

The programme is described in the SESP Core Document (hereinafter referred to as the Core Document) and targets lower secondary (grades 6-8) and secondary (grades 9-10) schooling. SESP is organised into four components:

1. The Learning Environment;
2. Curriculum Development, Assessment and Instructional Materials;
3. Teacher Education and Development; and
4. Institutional Management and Capacity Building.

SESP has been reviewed twice a year by the Government of Nepal (GoN) and its development partners and a mid-term review was carried out in March 2006. During the May 2008 technical review it was agreed by the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Danida and ADB (hereinafter referred to as the development partners) to conduct a joint evaluation of the SESP in its final year of implementation before it is going to be integrated into the framework of the School Sector Reform from 2009 and onwards.

This report is the main output delivered by the evaluation team contracted by Danida to carry out the joint evaluation. The report reflects constructive comments and suggestions made to a previous draft presented on 23 June 2009 at a seminar in Kathmandu, Nepal. The team includes experts from COWI A/S of Denmark and sector experts from Nepal.¹

The joint evaluation was carried out from March to July 2009. During this period the evaluation team has been continuously in dialogue with a reference group appointed by the Client. The evaluation team would like to express its gratitude to the reference group as well as to those who have volunteered their time to share information and documentation with the team.

1.2 Programme Profile

SESP builds on the Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP), which was implemented from 1993-99 with support from the ADB and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom. SEDP was successful in establishing 25 training centres providing institutional support to the Office of the Controller of Examinations (OCE) and to the Curriculum Development Centre (CDC) and in training

1) *The team was led by Niels E. Olesen and furthermore includes Thomas Nikolaj Hansen, Knud Olander, Basudha Gurung, Pramod Bhatta, Jeppe Skott and Rolf Kromand.*

more than 10,000 lower secondary and secondary teachers. It can be seen that SESP seeks to strengthen the gains made by SEDP and there is continuity in funding from ADB and Danida for the same.

Nepal's 10th five-year plan outlines SESP's broader priority development objective of poverty reduction and human development. The SESP policy objective is to expand quality secondary education suitable for the need of national development.

According to the SESP Core Document the three main intermediate objectives of SESP are:

1. To improve the quality and relevance of public secondary schooling;
2. To improve access to public secondary schooling with particular emphasis on girls and students from poor and disadvantaged groups and districts; and
3. To develop the institutional capacity and management of central and district education institutions and public secondary schools based upon a decentralised system of planning and management.

The main outcomes aimed for, according to the SESP Core Document, are listed below.

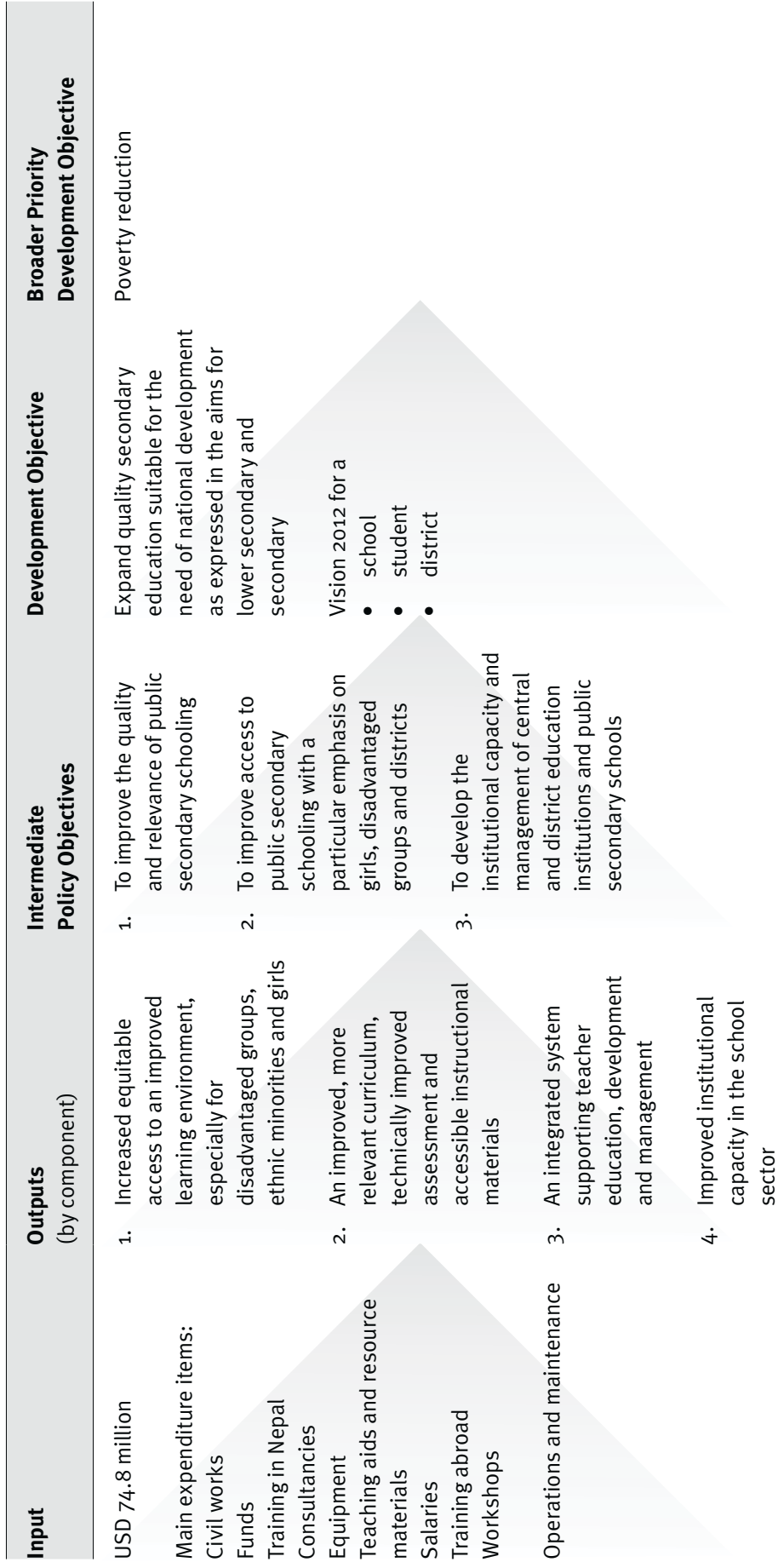
1. To raise the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in lower secondary from 55 per cent to 65 per cent and in secondary from 35 per cent to 55 per cent by 2007;
2. To raise the participation of girls from 40 per cent to 50 per cent in both lower secondary and secondary school and to similarly increase the percentage of school participation by disadvantaged groups by 2007; and
3. To raise and sustain measurable improvements in educational outcomes as evidenced by grade 8 and Secondary Leaving Certificate (SLC) examinations. The numbers passing grade 8 should increase and so should those passing SLC and similar increases should be achieved for girls and students from traditionally disadvantaged groups.

These outcomes are, according to the SESP log frame, "performance targets" for the above-mentioned intermediate objectives. To ensure consistency with the log frame the outcomes will consequently be treated as such in the joint evaluation.

The outputs of the programme, one for each component, are outlined below as they appear in the logical framework of the Core Document: It should be noted that the logical framework does not include indicators at the output level. The outputs are:

1. Increased equitable access to an improved learning environment, especially for educationally disadvantaged groups, ethnic minorities and girls;
2. An improved and more relevant curriculum, technically improved assessment and accessible instructional materials;
3. An integrated system supporting teacher education, development and management; and

Chart 1.1 – SESP Logical Model



4. Improved institutional capacity in the school sector based on a system of decentralised planning and management.

The logic of the SESP, as described in the Core Document, is summarised in Chart 1.1 on the previous page.

The SESP total budget of USD 74.8 million is distributed on the main budget lines listed in Table 1.1 below. Roughly 80 per cent of the budget is implemented at district level (GoN, 2008d: 59). The SESP is financed through a USD 30 million grant from Danida, a USD 30 million loan from ADB, and USD 14.83 million provided by the Gover for mainly recurrent expenditure.

Table 1.1. Summary of the SESP Joint Evaluation

Budget Items	USD million
Civil works	22.4
Funds	14.5
Training in Nepal	9.2
Consultancies	5.4
Equipment	2.6
Teaching aids and resource materials	1.7
Salaries	1.4
Training abroad	1.2
Workshops	1
Operations and maintenance	1.2
Contingencies	14.2
Total	74.8

SESP involved a combination of interventions aimed at strengthening the framework for secondary education and provision of specific inputs to districts and schools. The framework-type interventions included an overhaul of curriculum and development of teacher education programmes. It also aimed at providing support to the MoE and the Department of Education (DoE) to improve the overall capacity of the system to plan for the educational sector. Specific inputs to district and school levels included provision of school infrastructure and scholarships. Some of the activities under the learning environment, notably the construction of new classrooms and provision of scholarships, were to be implemented with greater intensity in ten so-called Programme Intensive Districts (PID) where the need was assessed to be the greatest. The districts were selected according to their Human Development Index ranking.² The PID effort was introduced in three phases in the western part of Nepal.

2) *Phase I involved the districts of Humla and Doti; Phase II the districts of Baitadi, Jumla, Kailali and Rupandehi; and Phase III involved Bajhang, Acham, Mugu, and Pyuthan.*

SESP has been implemented through existing organisations and structures under the responsibility of the MoE. The responsibility for implementing the programme has been delegated to the DoE along with key educational agencies such as the National Centre for Education Development (NCED), CDC, OCE and Janak Education Materials Centre (JEMC). A major part of the activities has been carried out at district level through the District Education Offices (DEO) and at school level.

SESP will be transformed into a sectoral frame within the School Sector Reform (SSR) from 2009 onwards. Although the SESP interventions are expected to continue, they will be part of the holistic school sector reform with focus on grades 1-12 school structure, comprising grades 1-8 as basic education and grades 9-12 as secondary education.

1.3 Structure of the Report

The report is structured as follows:

- Chapter 2 describes the approach and methods used by the evaluation.
- Chapter 3 sets the scene by describing key changes in the context of the Nepalese educational sector.
- Chapter 4 assesses the overall relevance of the programme.
- Chapter 5 evaluates the efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the management of the programme, including the performance of the GoN and the development partners.
- Chapters 6, 7 and 8 constitute the main part of the report and evaluate relevance, overall effectiveness (progress towards performance targets) and the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme components. Chapter 6 focuses on the objective of access and equity and evaluates in detail the learning environment component. Chapter 7 deals with quality and relevance and assesses in detail the components curriculum & assessment and teacher education and development. Finally, Chapter 8 evaluates the progress with respect to institutional capacity and planning. Each of the chapters includes a summary assessment, considerations of sustainability and a number of specific recommendations.
- Chapter 9 presents evidence on early signs of impact of the programme.
- Finally, Chapter 10 summarises the main conclusions and puts forward strategic recommendations to be considered by the GoN and its partners.

2 Evaluation Approach and Methodology

This chapter builds on an inception report submitted by the evaluation team in April 2009. The inception report, which outlines the evaluation team's understanding of the assignment and approach to the assignment, was discussed with a range of stakeholders in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 16 April 2009.

2.1 Purpose and Objective of the Joint Evaluation

As pointed out in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the joint evaluation (attached as Appendix 1) “the overall purpose of the evaluation is to provide information about the outcomes and document early signs of impact of the SESP that MoE, the development partners and other education stakeholders can use for improving the policy framework and further the design of the on-going SSR”.

The immediate objectives of the joint evaluation are to:

- Assess the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of each of the four components of the SESP as well as the SESP as a whole.
- Evaluate the strategies, approaches and methods adopted by the SESP in achieving the three main objectives.
- Assess the performance of (1) the implementing partners in the implementation of the respective components/activities and (2) the schools in the use of goods and services provided.
- Analyze the anticipated and unanticipated, positive and negative impact of the SESP on the target groups.
- Enlist the lessons learned and best practices developed by the SESP, and elaborate forward-looking recommendations, which could contribute to policy development and future development of the secondary education in the view of the on-going SSR.

2.2 Approach

The joint evaluation focuses primarily on the key evaluation criteria of relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability. In addition, early signs of impact are assessed. The criteria have been used as defined in the 2006 version of the Danida Evaluation Guidelines which in turn are based on the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria. They are captured in Box 2.1 for easy reference. The criteria are operationalised in the evaluation matrix in Appendix 2.

The approach to the joint evaluation involves a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods. The purpose of this approach is to provide complementary perspectives and, where possible, validate observations derived from the quantitative analysis by probing the assumed reasons behind the changes through qualitative interviews (triangulation). In addition, qualitative research methods such as stakeholder assessment of

most significant changes were adopted as the most appropriate and efficient data collection method to measure change and its underlying reasons at school level.

Box 2.1	Evaluation Criteria
Relevance	Extent to which objectives of a development intervention are consistent with the beneficiaries' requirement, country needs, global priorities, and partners' and donors' policies.
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.
Effectiveness	Extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking their relative importance into account.
Impact	The positive and negative, primary and secondary, long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.
Sustainability	The continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed.

2.3 Methods

The evaluation matrix has been developed to structure the development of specific evaluation questions. For each of the questions, the evaluation matrix includes specific indicators, methods and data sources. This matrix constitutes the overall analytical framework for the joint evaluation from which the use of various methodologies has been identified.

As the matrix shows, some of the subjects to be evaluated can be measured in a valid and reliable way through specific quantitative indicators adopted by SESP such as access to education, which is measured by gross and net enrolment rates. In some cases, SESP indicators are in place but may not necessarily be fully valid or reliable. Quality of education is an illustrative example where the evaluation has decided to supplement the indicator adopted by the GoN, exam pass rates, by data of a more qualitative nature such as changes in stakeholder perceptions. Finally, for aspects such as learning environment and capacity development, no easily identifiable indicators are in place and the evaluation relies therefore largely on data collected through interviews and focus group discussions with stakeholders.

The joint evaluation relied on the following five main methodologies, elaborated briefly below (the inception report contains further details):

- 1 Document review;
- 2 Explorative interviews and seminars;
- 3 Semi-structured interviews;
- 4 Data analysis; and
- 5 Qualitative fieldwork including participatory focus group discussions based on the Most Significant Change (MSC) approach.

Document Review

The desk study component of the joint evaluation has been carried out to make maximum use of the evaluative research already carried out during SESP and in preparation for the SSR.

Secondly, the document review has informed the development of the evaluation matrix and the detailed planning carried out for the field mission.

The documents reviewed by the evaluation team are listed in Appendix 3 and involve official programme documents, inception documents, M&E reports from the GoN, review reports, aide memoires and evaluations.

In addition, a number of research reports have been utilised notably “Government of Nepal 2006”, “–2008b” and “– 2009”. These reports have been prepared for the GoN and are generally assessed to be of high quality because of their comprehensive methods and the calibre and reputation of the researchers. Moreover, it is notable that despite several critical findings the GoN has accepted the studies as valid representations of the state of affairs in the secondary education sector in Nepal.

Explorative Interviews and Seminars

Explorative interviews and consultations were carried out with different stakeholders in SESP during the inception phase of the assignment. The purpose was to refine the evaluation questions and to adjust expectations with regard to the scope of the joint evaluation. In addition to an interview carried out at the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an inception seminar was held in Kathmandu. Moreover, separate interviews were conducted in Kathmandu with representatives from the MoE, Education Sector Advisory Team (ESAT), DoE, NCED, and with officials from ADB and the Embassy of Denmark.

Finally, to corroborate the findings and check factual accuracy, a seminar was held in Kathmandu to present the draft report and solicit comments from key stakeholders on the draft report.

Semi-Structured Interviews

To properly assess whether the relevant outcomes and policy objectives have materialised, semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives from entities responsible for secondary education at different organisational levels as well as involved development partners and researchers/experts on secondary education. The interviewees are listed in Appendix 5a. The interactions were based on interview guides, which are available in Appendix 6.

Focused Comparisons

To evaluate whether the programme intensive activities in the ten PID districts in the western part of Nepal have made a significant contribution compared to similar districts with no programme intensive activities, three sets of PID and non-PID districts have been selected. The selection was made to ensure comparability in as many ways as possible except for the districts’ inclusion or exclusion from the programme’s intensive activities. This approach is also referred to as ‘focused comparisons’ or a ‘most-similar’ approach (Hague, Harrop and Breslin, 1992) . Such focused comparisons have been known to work well compared to individual case studies – and are a cost-effective alternative to large-scale data collection. They have proven particularly effective when two units are compared over time.

District case studies were carried out in six districts, evenly divided between PID and non-PID districts. A structured sample was selected with a view to keeping eco-zone, location, population composition, Human Development Index (HDI) Rank, and educational indicators as similar as possible across each of the focused comparisons. Through this selection, Kailali (PID) was compared with Bardiya (non-PID) as both are in the lowlands ('the Terai') with high Tharu (ethnic) population. Similarly, Doti (PID) was compared with Dadeladhura (both are hilly districts with an overwhelming Brahmin-Chettri population). The original intention was to compare Jumla (PID) with Kalikot (non-PID) (both mountain districts with a majority Khas-Chettri population). However, due to a strike in the Terai and the related logistical issues Rasuwa (non-PID), a mountainous district in Central Region (with Tamang as majority population), was selected instead. Table 2.1 lists the characteristics of the districts used for focused comparisons. Reference is made to Appendix 4a for further details on the sampling criteria and the approach to the district visits.

Table 2.1 – Various Socio-economic Indicators for the Districts selected for Focused Comparisons

District	Location and Eco-zone	Population	HDI	Adult Literacy	Mean Years of Schooling	NER in Lower Secondary			NER in Secondary		
						T	F	M	T	F	M
Bardiya	Mid-Western Terai	382,649	0.429 (50)	39.4	2.13	34.3	28.8	39.3	17.8	14.4	21.2
Kailali	Far-Western Terai	616,697	0.442 (46)	46.5	2.13	38.1	33.1	42.8	22.4	19.0	25.8
Dadeladhura	Far-Western Hill	126,162	0.434 (49)	43.4	2.40	43.5	35.8	50.5	21.4	15.1	28.0
Doti	Far-Western Hill	207,066	0.402 (60)	35.4	1.68	28.5	15.5	41.1	13.6	5.3	21.3
Rasuwa	Central Mountain	44,731	0.394 (62)	25.4	1.56	36.4	32.2	40.4	12.1	11.2	12.9
Jumla	Mid-Western Mountain	89,427	0.348 (70)	26.6	1.55	27.6	16.8	37.0	13.6	6.0	21.0
Nepal		23,151,423	0.471	48.6	2.75	42.9	38.7	46.8	29.5	26.3	32.7

Source: Column 3: Census 2001; Columns 4, 5&6: Nepal Human Development Report 2004 (The data are for 2001); for the remaining columns: School Level Educational Statistics of Nepal 2003.

Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the HDI rank of the 75 districts. NER=Net Enrolment Rate; T=Total; F=Female; M=Male

In each of the six districts, a high and a low-performing school were visited (measured by SLC pass rate). In each of these 12 different schools, separate interviews and focus group discussions were held with the School Management Committee, the head teacher, lower secondary and secondary teachers, lower secondary and secondary students, and parents. Moreover, semi-structured interviews were carried out in each district with the District Education Office (DEO) staff, Resource Persons (RPs), Education Training Centres (ETC), representatives from the Private and Boarding Schools' Organisation Nepal (PABSON) and other key stakeholders. Accordingly, a total of six DEO offices were visited and resource persons were interviewed in each district. The criteria used to select stakeholders at the district and school levels are described in the sample letter attached as Appendix 4b. Appendix 5b lists the actual stakeholders consulted in the districts and Appendix 6 includes the interview guides used at district and school level.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Descriptive data have been used to show trends for key educational outcomes (enrolment, student performance) and to compare key educational outcomes between PIDs and their neighbouring districts.

Efficiency of the SESP programme has been analysed at overall level by drawing on existing analyses such as the Review Aide Memoires and financial tables from implementing partners. The analysis has also been enriched by feedback from interviews with key informants.

2.4 Challenges and Limitations

The joint evaluation has been faced with the following limitations and challenges:

- The absence of a solid baseline study reduces the ability to assess change over the SESP period;
- Classroom observations could provide valuable evidence of the nature of the interaction between teachers and pupils and of the enactment of the reformed curriculum, but due to resource constraints they were limited;
- It is not the intention that the sample of PID and non-PID districts should be representative for Nepal as such. The relevance of the findings is, however, assessed to be reasonably high for the PIDs, as the data were obtained in districts that vary considerably and between them cover a wide range of different social and geographical conditions;
- While the focused comparisons were chosen to check for the influence of the PID interventions, it has not been possible to uncover the overall influence of SESP, which was implemented nationwide. Moreover, the focused comparisons rest on the premise that a substantial difference exists in the inputs provided by SESP to PIDs and non-PIDs. It has subsequently been learned during the fieldwork that the distinction between PIDs and non-PIDs has to some extent been blurred by decisions to increase volume of scholarships to and construction and rehabilitation of school blocks in non-PIDs. This implies that the expected difference in educational outcomes between PIDs and non-PIDs is likely to be smaller than originally expected;
-

- As mentioned, it was the intention to include Kalikot district in the focused comparison against Jumla district, but this was not possible due to a combination of road blockages in Banke district and bad weather conditions for the flight to Jumla and onwards to Kalikot. Instead, Rasuwa district was selected as a non-PID Mountain district. Rasuwa is situated in the Central Development Region, but despite its proximity to the Kathmandu Valley, its HDI is only 0.394, placing the district in the same category of poorly developed districts as Kalikot. Even so, it is clear that Rasuwa has a different point of departure than Jumla. For example, Rasuwa's enrolment rates were higher at the time of the SESP launch, which needs to be taken into account when comparing the two districts as further elaborated in the following chapters.
- The assessment of SESP attribution is complicated by the fact that other programmes run in parallel in the educational sector such as the Education for All (EFA) programme and the Teacher Education Programme (TEP). It depends largely on stakeholders' knowledge of and ability to distinguish SESP outputs from other programmes' outputs;
- The evaluation had a fixed standard schedule in each district and for interactions with stakeholders in Kathmandu. This schedule was largely completed but on some occasions at district level, the groups selected for focus group discussions had a slightly different composition than detailed in Appendix 4b. Moreover, the DEO him/herself was not always available for interviews and the evaluation team instead interviewed school supervisors or other officials from the DEO. None of these deviations are however expected to impact on the nature of the findings in any significant way;
- The evaluation team did not have a chance to interact with the Regional Education Directorates. The meeting scheduled at Surkhet district (upon return from Kalikot) was cancelled for the reasons mentioned above while no qualified representatives were available for interaction with the evaluation team at the Regional Education Directorate (RED) in Doti. The inclusion of the regional perspective would arguably have added further richness to the analysis but at the same time it should be noted that the REDs did not play a major part in implementing SESP; and
- Analyses of educational data (enrolment, drop-out, etc.) indicated sudden drops and increases in data that suggest reliability problems rather than substantial changes. In such cases, the evaluation consulted with the relevant authorities to ascertain whether the data reflected real changes or measurement errors.

3 Context

This chapter provides an overview of the socio-political contexts and related developments that have had an impact (both positive and negative) on SESP, but were outside its direct spheres of influence.

3.1 The Insurgency and Ensuing Tensions

Nepal has witnessed dramatic political events since the inception of SESP in 2002. The Maoist insurgency that began in 1996 reached its peak in the period 2002-06. The conflict affected the educational system, as schools became the frontline in the ideological and military battles between the state forces and the Maoist insurgents. Many public school teachers were killed, the majority were forced to pay levies on their salary and lower secondary and secondary level students were abducted into joining the Maoist army or prosecuted and threatened by state forces. It has been reported that students were forcefully taken on long marches or campaigns. As a result schools remained closed for many days and teachers and students were absent for substantial periods.

The insurgency also seriously jeopardized the democratisation process that had begun after 1990, resulting in the then king usurping all political powers. However, this also paved the way for the development of a strategic alliance between the then seven parliamentary parties and the Maoists, which in April 2006 signalled the end of the Monarchy and installation of a new system of parliamentary governance.

Despite the formal cessation of the Maoist insurgency after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in November 2006, there have been incidences of new violent political uprisings such as the Madhesh and the Tharuhut Movements and increased political polarisations. Strikes and shutdowns (bandhs) have also occurred frequently after 2006. This has affected the number of days schools are formally open, thus increasing the pressure on teachers to finish the course on time and on students to sit for the examinations without adequate preparation. Increased political polarization has also led to increased politicisation at local level, which has influenced the selection of SMCs, the recruitment of teachers, and attendance of students as evidence collected in the districts shows (O'Malley, 2007; Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre 2007; Prakash, 2006; and Asian Centre for Human Rights, 2005).

3.2 Socio-Economic Trends

According to the 2001 Census, about 86 per cent of Nepal's total population resided in the rural areas. However, the urban population growth rate was 13.9 per cent compared to the national average growth rate of 2.25 per cent. Just prior to the implementation of SESP the HDI for Nepal was 0.471 in 2001 up from 0.403 in 1996. It was particularly low for the mid-western region (0.402) and the far-western region (0.404). In 2007, Nepal's HDI increased to 0.534. Although this is an improvement, Nepal ranks at the bottom among the seven members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Nepal's average annual economic growth rate during the period 2002-07 was 3.4 per cent – approximately 1 point below the anticipated growth rate. In the fiscal years 2007-08, growth increased to 5.6 per cent, the highest in the past seven years. The literacy rate increased from 54.1 per cent in 2001 to 56.5 per cent in 2007.

3.3 Reform of the Education System

During the period of SESP implementation, the administrative structure of the education system has undergone important changes. The Department of Education, set up in 2000, has now assumed most of the implementation-related functions of the MoE in school education, and the MoE is gradually evolving into an apex policy-making and coordination body. At school level the school clustering model (with the Resource Centre and Satellite School system), institutionalised in primary education by the Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP) (1992-2004), is now being applied to the lower secondary and secondary sub-sectors as well. Similarly new institutional arrangements in the form of the ETCs are now in place for teacher development.

Public annual allocation to the sector has increased throughout the SESP period from 8.8 per cent of the total education budget in 1990/91 to 16.5 per cent in 2008/09. In absolute figures, the GoN development budget for secondary education has, as illustrated by Table 3.1, increased fivefold since 2002/03, thus outperforming the growth in contributions from development partners. The GoN has in other words taken increased responsibility for secondary education.

Table 3.1. Summary of the SESP Joint Evaluation

USD million	GoN contribution	DP contribution	Total
2004/05	1.7	16	17.7
2007/08	6.7	14	20.7

Source: NPC

In the period, the total number of schools increased from 26,277 in 2004 to 31,156 in 2008. The number of lower secondary schools increased by more than 40 per cent from 7,436 to 10,636, and the number of secondary level schools also increased by more than 40 per cent from 4,547 in 2004 to 6,516 in 2008 (GoN, 2008a).

Public schools in Nepal are referred to as community schools. There are various types of community schools depending on the degree to which they are financed by the central government and the degree to which they are managed by the local communities. Nepal is gradually moving towards site or school-based management, with enhanced roles and responsibilities for the local communities (school management committees, parents and locally elected bodies). In addition Nepal displays a large number of private schools (referred to as institutional schools). In parallel to these are a number of religious schools.

SESP was formulated under the assumption that decentralisation would move ahead and management of all public schools would be transferred to the communities. A number of policy changes and reforms have guided this transition towards educational decentralization. These include, among others, the Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) of 1999, and the 7th Amendment to the Education Act in 2002. The World Bank supported Community School Support Program has provided important incentives for the local communities to assume responsibilities for school management. While these policy changes and legal reforms represent a step forward for the decentralisation process, it should be noted that elections to local level bodies are yet to be held.

Nepal has received support from various projects and programmes supported by bilateral and multilateral development partners. The sector has witnessed, especially after 1990, multi-phased large-scale reform programmes such as the BPEP and the EFA Programme. Several of these programmes have also benefited lower secondary and secondary, or similar. For example, the EFA programme has provided infrastructure to secondary schools as evidenced by visits to Bardiya and to Dadeldhura where EFA-financed classrooms are utilised by secondary students.

Most of the programmes have been implemented through joint financing arrangements as introduced by the BPEP model in which a joint programming and financing approach (basket funding) is taken on the basis of an agreed Core Document with greater coherence and harmonisation among the various development partners involved.

4 Programme Relevance

This chapter examines the degree to which SESP objectives are consistent with partners' and donors' policies, country needs, and beneficiary requirements.

Relevance of the SESP is evident at a policy level given that the SESP objectives are basically a rewording of four objectives from the Secondary Education Development Plan. Education is one of the four priority areas of Nepal's poverty reduction strategy paper and is an important recipient of government funding. The key SESP objectives for example are given due priority in the Tenth Plan (2002-07) and the Three-Year Interim Plan (2008-10). The original motive of SESP to be implemented in closer collaboration with local authorities is also in tandem with the GoN's overall decentralisation strategy, which is to give a greater role to elected local governments and communities in the provision and management of education-related services.

There is coherence with programmes such as Education for All and its predecessor with their primary focus on improving the access and equity, quality and relevance, and institutional efficiency of the primary education sub-sector. These programmes have led to significant improvements especially in access to primary schooling and have increased the number of primary education graduates significantly. Without an expanded lower secondary and secondary level education in place, it would have been very difficult for the primary graduates to continue to the next, higher levels of education.

Moreover, given the tendency of the majority of development partners and organisations in Nepal to focus on primary education, the choice of Danida and ADB to focus on secondary education is highly relevant, especially in view of the sub-sector's importance for strengthening productivity and private sector development through the education of young people with skills relevant for the needs of the market.

With respect to country needs and beneficiary requirements, it is notable that visits to the districts, education training centres and to the schools confirmed that all of the interventions provided through the project are responding to a strong need at the local level.

These impressions are confirmed by the national indicators especially for the districts in which the bulk of the investment were made: the ten PIDs located in the Western part of the country. Hence, the overall assessment is that SESP is a highly relevant programme. A more detailed assessment of the relevance of each of the three objectives of the programme is made in Chapters 6, 7 and 8.

5 Programme Management

This chapter evaluates the performance of the main implementing partners in terms of managing SESP implementation in the most efficient and effective way (Sections 5.1 to 5.3) as well as the ownership of the main implementing partners to the programme (Section 5.4). The assessment is summarised in Section 5.5 and Section 5.6 includes specific recommendations for the consideration of the GoN and its partners.

5.1 Coordination and Management

One of the key questions to be answered is the extent to which MoE's coordination, management and oversight functions facilitated the timely identification and assessment of implementation problems as well as timeliness and appropriateness of the corrective measures taken. As pointed out in the Core Document, the MoE is the executing agency for the programme. The responsibility for implementing the programme was delegated by MoE to the Department of Education, which along with NCED, CDC, JEMC and OCE was overall responsible for implementing the programme. The ESAT Office in turn was responsible for supporting the daily management of SESP.

The Core Document foresaw the establishment of the SESP Management Committee for programme coordination and the Secondary Education Programme Execution Board for overall strategic management. These bodies were not formally established but coordination did take place regularly through monthly coordination meetings of a more informal nature led by DoE with participation from, among others, NCED, CDC, OCE and JEMC.

Most implementing partners interviewed by the evaluation team have expressed satisfaction with the coordination role played by DoE. This is a noticeable achievement given that none of the implementing partners normally report to DoE. In fact, all of the entities normally report to MoE in the same way that DoE does. Some of the interviews did however reveal some degree of dissatisfaction with the way DoE has planned and allocated funds for capacity development interventions. The actual allocation appears to have been a result of bilateral negotiations rather than an analysis of needs and performance gaps. Accordingly, although DoE has played a satisfactory role more could arguably have been done to involve all partners early on in developing a coherent framework or strategy for capacity development interventions.

All stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team have expressed satisfaction with the role played by ESAT in terms of serving the interests of the programme and providing funding for specific technical assistance (TA) needs. It further emerges from consultations in Kathmandu that the ESAT set-up has been well institutionalised into the MoE.

More strategic management was provided through joint annual reviews conducted by GoN and development partners. According to DoE, the relation to Development Partners has been good and constructive despite difficulties at the beginning. The same applies to the relation between the two donors. Towards the second half of the programme reviews of SESP were carried out in tandem with EFA reviews. However, this has not necessarily improved coordination between the two programmes as only very few

EFA donors other than Danida and ADB would be present during the SESP part of the reviews. Only towards the end of SESP when SSR was being formulated and appraised have other development partners taken an interest in the programme.

The annual reviews were instrumental in re-designing the programme in connection with the 2006 Mid-Term Review (MTR). The MTR demonstrated responsiveness to poor implementation rates in the first years of the programme and agreed on a number of recommendations that were designed to provide for more efficient implementation. As the section below demonstrates this clearly led to more satisfactory implementation rates in the months and years following the MTR. However, not all of the recommendations agreed at the MTR have subsequently been followed-up. The agreement to put in place a coherent capacity development plan was for example not acted on in the years following the MTR. Moreover, it was not clearly indicated in the Aide Memoire from the MTR who should be responsible for following up this and many other recommendations made after the MTR.

Overall, the annual reviews are assessed to have played an important role in taking stock of programme progress and fine-tuning SESP interventions. It can however be argued that the DoE and the annual reviews were somewhat late in reacting to the low implementation rates in the first years. Some stakeholders have indicated to the evaluation team that the MoE/DoE could have done more to base its management decisions on data and information (evidence-based policy) rather than on other criteria. As an example, it has been reported that the Ministry and the Department have been late in responding to reports of late transfer of scholarships and salaries to teachers. Stakeholders have also shared information with the evaluation team that the various sections of the DoE could do more to exchange information and coordinate with each other. A more detailed analysis of DoE and its internal processes would be required to confirm or reject these views. However, it is clearly important that the decision-making bodies within DoE are closely linked to the sections responsible for collecting and analysing data on educational outputs and outcomes. There is clearly a lot of data being collected by the system, so it is important for the system to make the most of this data.

No changes were made to the indicators and/or target in the life of SESP despite major changes in context that could have justified this. The Aide Memoire for the November Joint Consultations notes for example that the need to revise targets was acknowledged. It is clear from the ToR to the MTR that such a review was anticipated, but the final documentation from the MTR does not address the need for revising indicators and targets.

One of the key SESP implementation strategies is, according to the Core Document, policy coherence and phasing to ensure smooth and effective implementation. The evaluation team has asked for evidence of this in its interactions. The key example given to the team is the decision to let the CDC develop curriculum before educational activities were initiated. This example is well in line with the aspirations of the Core Document in which it is stated that the teacher education activities were supposed to be linked and timed to the revision of the curriculum and the provision of new instructional materials. However, in practice the effectiveness of these strategies have been reduced by the delays in fielding TA inputs to these processes. Moreover, feedback from the various implementing entities suggests that the entities are mostly concerned with own mandates and responsibilities rather than with maximising collaboration between agencies.

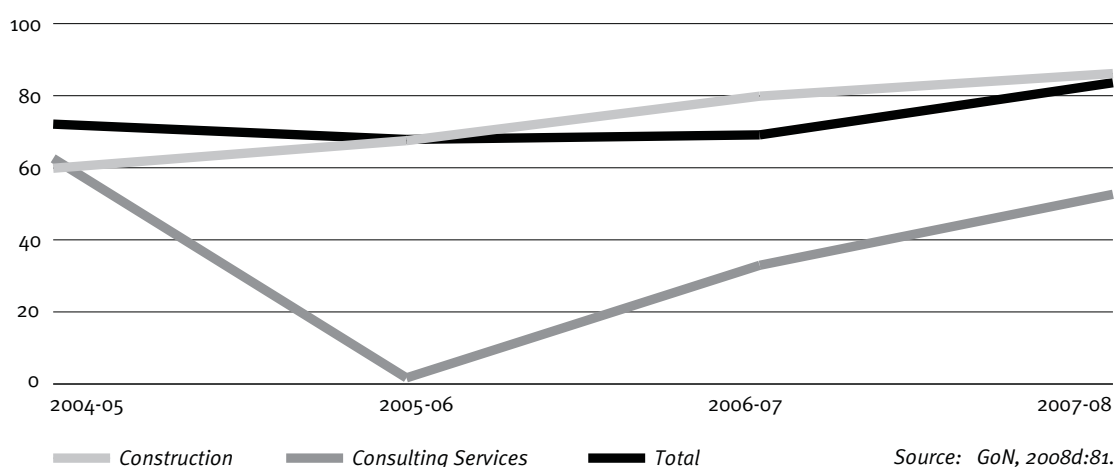
Stakeholders point out that GoN has been relatively hesitant to take the lead in coordinating technical assistance. A more effective use of these TA inputs could possibly have been ensured if the inputs provided under the ESAT and the SESP consultancy, one of the major TA packages financed by the programme, had been more closely coordinated. The lack of effectiveness is further aggravated by the fact that the SESP consultancy was fielded with a delay of almost two years. This in turn implied that many of the tasks envisaged in the ToR were either irrelevant or left with inadequate time for meaningful implementation. The team was given a 10-month period to implement a programme originally designed for 30 months of implementation.

5.2 Financial and Physical Implementation

Interviews with MoE, DoE and the donors and review of Aide Memoires and financial reports indicate that development partners have generally complied with their agreements and have committed funds on time and according to budget. However, the development partners report that the large budget for TA is not likely to be fully utilised despite the fact that some of the TA funds have been diverted into construction purposes after the MTR.

Efficiency in the management of the programme can also be measured by the financial and physical implementation rates. SESP has generally lagged behind EFA in terms of budget utilisation, especially in the first years of the programme as illustrated by Chart 4.1. Especially expenditure related to construction and consulting services were behind budget in the beginning. The delays observed in the initial years of SESP mainly reflected delays in launching some of the most costly activities of the programme: Late initiation of civil works (mainly school buildings) and delay in procurement of the secure printing press. Provision of TA has similarly not been on target in all cases; especially the SESP Consultancy was awarded with significant delay. Moreover, the conflict, which peaked in 2004-06, is also believed to have had a negative impact on implementation rates. The low implementation rates have most likely implied that some of the wider effects and impacts of the programme such as increased schooling and improved student performance will materialise later than originally anticipated.

Chart 5.1 – Expenditure against budget



The financial implementation rate has picked up in recent years as Chart 5.1 illustrates. Budget utilisation reached 83.2 per cent in FY 2007/08 compared to 69.1 per cent in the preceding year. As further elaborated in the section below, the MTR played a key role in facilitating a more efficient fund flow. Moreover, the cessation of the insurgency in 2006 clearly had a positive impact on efficiency. In summary, programme implementation is believed to have been relatively efficient, especially in view of the fact that the programme was implemented during some of the most intense years of the conflict.

5.3 Financial Management

Financial management issues have also had a negative impact on physical implementation rates. Interaction with districts, schools and the Office of the Auditor General all suggest that fund flows from central level and all the way down to the individual school have been marked by delays. This is also confirmed by a 2008 Action Plan for Financial Management Improvement adopted by DoE (GoN, 2008i), which acknowledges delayed (first trimester) fund release, delayed submission of financial monitoring reports and implementation progress reports, late submission of audited financial statements from schools, poor performance in performing social audits and, more generally, capacity constraints at all levels of the system to undertake financial management in accordance with the established procedures.

The Office of the Auditor General (OAG) cites examples of incomplete amounts being released to districts and examples of DEOs being late in releasing funds to schools. The OAG further reports that DEOs may have been hesitant to release funds to schools due to a perception that money will be misused at school level. DEOs interviewed by the evaluation team further report that the reports required from schools on previous activity and spending are often submitted late. Without these reports, the DEO cannot release funds for the new financial year. This however does not seem to be clearly communicated and/or well understood by some of the interviewed School Management Committees.

Late preparation of reporting at central level has been another cause for fund release delay. At first donor-specific reporting formats were imposed placing substantial transaction costs on the DoE, according to DoE Physical Section. The original donor-imposed format had 22 headings. A simpler GoN format with only six headings was subsequently agreed. Reporting in the beginning of the project further had to pay particular attention to the exact share financed by Danida, ADB and GoN as it had been agreed that the relative contribution of each partner would vary by the type of activity being financed. However, the 2006 MTR introduced a single common percentage across all loan categories, relieving the DoE of yet another administrative burden.

The start of the school year varies across the country and is not coherent with the mid July start of the fiscal year, which adds further delays to programme implementation including delays in disbursing scholarships.

According to the abovementioned action plan (GoN, 2008i) several initiatives have been launched to speed up fund release efficiency and improve financial management in general. This includes negotiation of agreements on modalities with the National Planning Commission (NPC) and the Ministry of Finance and provision of audit guides together with one-day orientations to school auditors in the five development regions. While the action plan is laudable and the follow-up taken as a sign of commitment, the

plan could be further strengthened by including clear indicators with targets to better allow for an assessment of progress in terms of how much delay has been reduced, how many schools are subject to audits etc.

While the bulk of funds under SESP has been transferred through the normal GoN system as described above, ESAT has played a much-appreciated role in facilitating and making short-term TA available through a so-called direct funding facility managed by ESAT. As reported by CDC, it has been good for efficiency to have access to the ESAT-managed direct funding facility, which allows agencies to obtain funding outside the normal GoN budget. This however is not in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness, which prescribe the use of national financial management systems to the extent possible.

As pointed out by the DoE Programme and Budget Section, challenges were encountered by the DoE in terms of procurement. Most procurement was local and followed national rules, but major procurements exceeding USD 100,000 followed ADB rules and required no-objection from ADB Headquarters. The above-mentioned delay in procurement of the SESP consultancy, for example, was a result of the need for DoE to exchange the tender dossier 5-6 times with the ADB headquarters in Manila. For many officers in the DoE, it was the first time to procure a substantial service contract according to ADB guidelines and it is therefore not surprising that delays occurred. Moreover, given that the service contract involved several agencies (DoE, NCED, OCE and CDC) the preparation and agreement of the ToR took longer than expected.

5.4 Ownership

The SESP was largely drafted by external consultants. According to some DoE officials, the drafters of the programme document did not consult properly with Nepalese education officials and organisations. Similarly, a MoE official interviewed by the evaluation team pointed out that there were incompatibilities in the original SESP programme between the programme side and the corresponding budget. The reported lack of consultation and incompatibilities are to some extent confirmed by the fact that several major changes were made to the programme at the MTR. For example, several activities had to be fine-tuned to better match with the available financing.

Despite a difficult beginning including what seems to be inadequate involvement of key stakeholders, the feedback from the interviews clearly suggests that the GoN has demonstrated increasing commitment to the SESP over the period of implementation. The overall commitment to the education sector is evident by Nepal's commitment to the global EFA targets reflected in the Jomtien and Dakar conferences and the Millennium Development Goals. It is also notable that SESP has been implemented within existing institutions with most of the funds being managed "on budget".

All schools visited by the evaluation team expressed that the SESP investments responded to a strong interest and need at the local level. However, only few of the schools interviewed by the evaluation have prepared maintenance plans. However, despite the absence of a plan and limited access to specific maintenance funds, all schools were convinced that they would be able to provide the required amount if necessary: Some schools expected that a budget would be set aside by DoE/DEO for this, while some also expected to be able to contribute with minor, inexpensive maintenance works.

On balance, ownership to the programme is assessed to be high at central level. A similar conclusion can be made for the district/ school level especially if the schools prepare and implement maintenance plans for the various infrastructure investments provided by SESP.

5.5 Assessment

The overall assessment is that DoE has done a satisfactory job to secure that the various outputs of SESP have been delivered despite delays in the beginning of the program. Hence, efficiency is overall assessed to have been satisfactory. Management of TA has however not been satisfactory as evidenced by the delayed fielding of the SESP consultancy. The ESAT facility on the other hand has been welcomed by the GoN and has been well institutionalised into the MoE. Financial management has largely been efficient but there are indications that the fund flow mechanisms need to be improved, especially with respect to the DEO transfer to school level. To this end, it is positive that DoE has adopted an action plan to improve financial management performance. Overall efficiency has also been hampered by the requirement to use external procurement guidelines with which the relevant officials were not familiar. It is assessed that the annual review has acted appropriately, although with some delay, to revise the programme in a way that allowed for more efficient implementation.

DoE's style of management could arguably have been more strategic with a view to increasing *effectiveness*. Specific allocation decisions could have benefited, particularly with respect to capacity development, from being guided by a strategic framework rather than being the result of a series of bilateral negotiations. Likewise, it is somewhat surprising that no decision was made to revise the key performance targets for the programme although several of these were achieved already at an early stage of the programme.

The programme has been improved along the way by aligning to national reporting requirements and removing other donor specific requirement. This has brought SESP better in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. This in turn bodes well for sustainability and demonstrates commitment from the development partners.

Finally, it is positive from a *sustainability* point of view that SESP has largely been implemented through existing, national structures. Accordingly, the lessons learned, good practices and experience generated from implementing SESP will be available to draw on for the design, implementation and fine-tuning of the SSR.

5.6 Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed for consideration by the GoN and its partners:

- 1. Increase attention towards following up on review decisions.**
As a minimum, Aide Memoires should specify who will be responsible for driving forward the various decisions adopted, specifying the deadline. Decisions on recommendations should take into account the resources and capacity of the entity proposed to carry out the proposed activities.

2. **MoE should take ownership for management of TA in the interest of improved coordination and effectiveness.**

The MoE should take ownership for the process beginning from the initial needs identification to the actual procurement and management. The evaluation has learned that under SSR it is envisaged that the Foreign Aid Coordination Section (FACS) will act as the only access point for government entities in the educational sector to request TA and it will then be for FACS to liaise with the various donors who have pledged to make such funds available. This structure is a notable step in the right direction.

3. **The GoN should move towards a situation in which all of the TA funds are managed on-budget, including those funds currently managed by the direct funding facility.**

To bring management of TA in line with the principles of the Paris Declaration it will be necessary to do away with separate flows of TA funds. Such flows are foreseen to continue under SSR but it is recommended that MoE through FACS gradually seeks to engage its partners in a dialogue as to how and when TA funds can be managed according to Government priorities and procedures.

4. **Define and consistently measure performance against specific indicators to track efficiency of fund flows all the way down through the system.**

It is necessary for the GoN more quickly and more precisely to identify and deal with the potential “blockages” in the system. As mentioned the Action Plan on Financial Management Improvement signals the GoN’s commitment towards sound financial management. By including specific indicators, targets and baseline data in such a plan, the GoN will be able to assess more precisely the progress made. One key indicator to be included is the processing time to channel funds from central level to the accounts of the individual schools. It may furthermore add value to undertake detailed expenditure tracking surveys to identify the actual bottlenecks in the system – and estimate the scope of the delays and improve on these.

6 Access and Equity

One of the intermediate objectives of the SESP was to improve access to public secondary schooling with a particular emphasis on girls and students from poor and disadvantaged groups and districts. To achieve this objective, SESP provides funds for rehabilitation and construction of school buildings, other types of education-related infrastructure and provision of scholarships to girls and children from disadvantaged groups. It was initially the intention that these interventions would mainly be implemented in the PIDs, but it was subsequently decided to increase the scope of these activities to include the non-PIDs.

This chapter evaluates the relevance of the intermediate objective (Section 6.1), the overall effectiveness measured as progress towards the intermediate objective (Section 6.2), and efficiency and effectiveness of the various strategies launched under SESP to increase access and equity (Sections 6.3 and 6.4). The assessment is summarised in Section 6.5 including an overall assessment of the sustainability of the benefits produced. Finally, Section 6.6 includes specific recommendations for the consideration of the GoN and its partners.

6.1 Relevance

The focus on creating access to secondary education through the construction of school blocks and provision of scholarships is overall assessed to be a highly relevant intervention. At the time of SESP implementation, widespread disparities existed in access to lower secondary and secondary education by region, gender, caste and ethnicity, economic status and degree of urbanisation. Similarly, the relevance of the equity aspect is confirmed by the EFA joint evaluation, which concludes that socio-economic gaps widen considerably from the lower secondary level (Norad 2008).

As the disparities were particularly conspicuous in the mid-western mountains and the far-western region, the approach of targeting specific assistance to the so-called PIDs also seems relevant, although such a targeting strategy was not part of the policy of the MoE. This, in turn, questions whether the subsequent decision to reallocate a larger part of the funds to non-PIDs was relevant from a needs-based point of view. There are indications that this decision was made to accommodate concerns that SESP was seen as favouring some districts over others. DoE has pointed out to the evaluation team that several districts reacted strongly when they learned that they were not on the PID priority list.

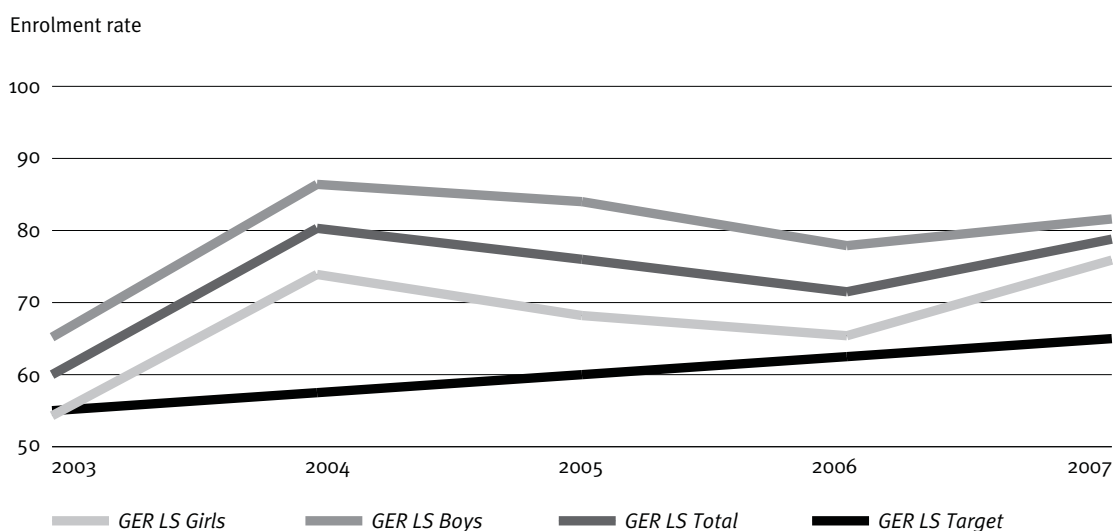
While the overall concept of targeting poor districts is seen as relevant, the relevance of the ten specific districts selected could arguably have been further improved if education specific indicators had been guiding the selection. Instead the selection was guided by the districts' score on the HDI. The joint evaluation has shown that HDI and enrolment rates are not necessarily correlated. Hence, districts can have substantially different enrolment rates despite having largely similar HDI scores, as the Jumla vs. Rasuwa comparison has revealed. The targeting could also have been guided by the size of the class, which vary considerably across the country with particularly large classes being observed in the Terai districts.

Finally, the SESP interventions related to access and equity are seen as relevant in relation to beneficiary needs and priorities. During school visits, students, parents and teachers interviewed in the PID schools indicated that among the various SESP interventions, the construction and improvement of school buildings was the most relevant investment followed by scholarships.

6.2 Progress Towards Target

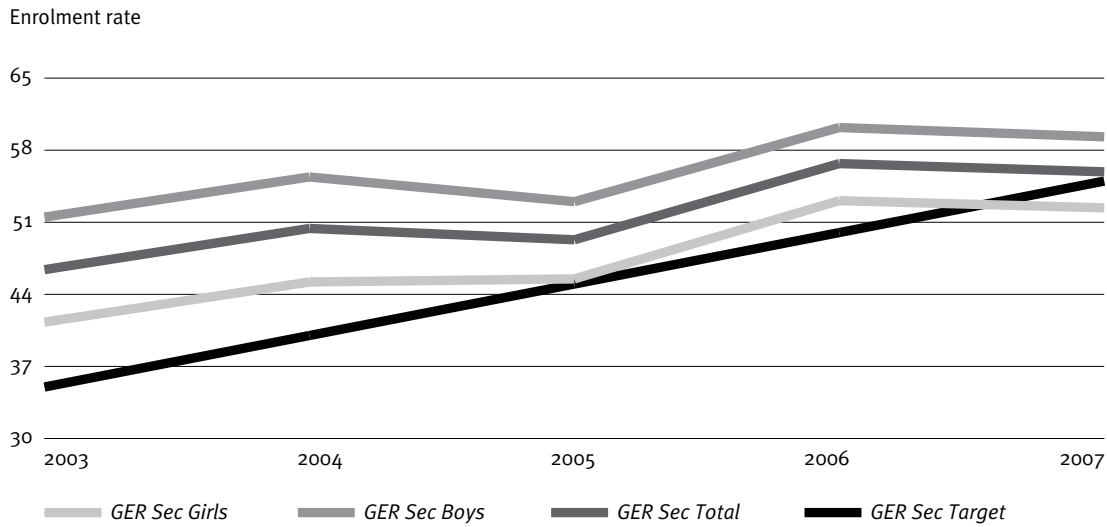
The SESP has performed well in terms of creating access to secondary education when assessing performance against the main outcome targets. As Chart 6.1 shows, gross enrolment rates (GER) for lower secondary (grades 6-8) increased from 60 per cent in 2003 to 78.8 per cent in 2007. Accordingly, the 2007 target of 65 per cent has been surpassed by a wide margin for lower secondary school. Net enrolment rates (NER) for lower secondary also increased during the period, although, as it would be expected, by a smaller rate, up from 42.9 per cent in 2003 to 52.9 per cent in 2007 (GoN 2008d: 60). It can furthermore be seen that the gap between girls and boys has decreased from roughly 10 percentage points to 5 percentage points over the period. Hence, whereas GER for girls has increased by 40 per cent over the period, GER for boys has only increased by 25 per cent.

Chart 6.1 – GER, Lower Secondary, 2003-07



Source: GoN, 2007.

The target has also been achieved for secondary school (grades 8-10), although the performance has been less impressive: As shown in Chart 6.2, GER for secondary went up from 46.4 per cent in 2003 to 55.9 per cent in 2007. This is just above the target of 55 per cent for 2007. In relative terms, NER for secondary has increased slightly from 29.5 per cent in 2003 to 35.3 per cent in 2007 (GoN, 2008d: 60). Girls' GER has increased by 27 per cent compared to 15 per cent for boys.

Chart 6.2 – GER, Secondary, 2003-07

Source: GoN, 2007.

The increase in the GER has not been linear over the period. In fact a very significant increase from 2003-04 was followed by a decrease in the period 2004-06 for lower secondary, and only in the last year can a positive development be seen. Similarly, a “bump” in the curve can be detected for secondary, although it is less significant than for lower secondary. As mentioned, the insurgency was at its peak in the period 2004-06, which provides a plausible explanation for the registered drop.

The increase in enrolment coincides with only a marginal change in dropout rates, while repetition rates have decreased significantly for grade 8 and grade 10. Particularly for grade 10, the possibility of re-examination one month later if failed in up to two subjects can explain this change. Hence, there is some evidence that schools have been able to handle the increase in access without jeopardising internal efficiency. Even so, as pointed out by Association of International NGOs (AIN), dropout continues to be a challenge among girls, who are often taken out of school to do domestic work at the age of 13-14 years.

Considerable improvements in access had already been registered at the time of SESP launch, and the question is to what degree the PID intervention has contributed to sustaining the momentum in enrolment. The results of comparing PIDs to non-PIDs are shown in Table 6.1 (p. 41). The table summarises the charts available in Appendix 7 by showing the results of comparing the relative change in GER over the period 2003-07 for PIDs to the relative change in non-PIDs at national and regional levels, and for the focused comparisons. The table assesses the difference in percentage points between PIDs and non-PIDs by the final year of the comparisons (i.e. 2007). The number of pluses or minuses indicates the scope of the difference. If the difference between the two scores is less than 5 percentage points, the difference is not treated as substantial.

The table shows that the GER in the PIDs has, in relative terms, increased considerably more than the nation as such, especially at the secondary level. This is also the case when the comparison is limited to the two regions with sizable number of PIDs: mid-western and far-western. Again, these results are clearest at the secondary level. In the western region, by contrast, the increase in PID enrolment has not outperformed the increase in

the non-PID districts. However, the western region includes only one PID, which makes the PID observation more vulnerable to district specific factors. In summary, the results aggregated at national and regional levels largely confirm that PIDs have performed relatively better than the non-PIDs. This is, however, to some extent expected, as the PIDs start from a nominally lower point of departure. Still, the fact remains that positive changes have been created in the PIDs, which in itself is a notable achievement, given that PIDs have been selected because of their poor point of departure. More analytical strength could have been added to the analysis by comparing trends in the PIDs over time with the period preceding the PID intervention, but reliable enrolment time series data are not available for this period.

The results are less clear at the level of focused comparisons. The non-PID of Bardiya outperforms Kailali, while the PID of Doti outperforms Dadeldhura, and the PID of Jumla outperforms Rasuwa.

The mixed picture emerging from the focused comparisons may be explained by the fact that many factors other than the PID intervention explain changes in enrolment. These factors include

- After the MTR revisions of SESP, an increasing amount of infrastructure and especially scholarships were also provided to non-PID districts
- The effect of the school buildings and scholarships have not yet fully materialised due to delays in the first years of SESP implementation
- The effect may be diluted by the performance of non-PID schools in PIDs
- The focused comparisons are influenced by the fact that the PID of Kailali comes from a higher nominal point of departure than its comparator Bardiya, while the PIDs of Jumla and Doti at the outset displayed enrolment levels inferior to those observed in the districts they are compared to. Hence, a small nominal change in Jumla and Doti would lead to a large relative change, while the opposite is the case in Kailali. This may be part of the reason why Kailali as the only PID is outperformed in relative terms by its comparator.

With these reservations in mind, it is still the overall assessment that the scholarships and infrastructure provided under SESP have contributed to boosting enrolment in the PIDs as the national and regional level comparisons suggest.

In addition, SESP set out to increase the participation of girls from 40 per cent to 50 per cent in both lower secondary and secondary. As already noted, GER for girls has increased relatively more than for boys, which was expected due to the lower point of departure for girls' GER. As Chart 6.3 illustrates, the Gender Parity Index (GPI) has increased rather consistently in the period 2003-08 and is close to one, especially for lower secondary, but the SESP target of equal participation has not yet been achieved.

Table 6.1 further shows that girls' enrolment has increased considerably in the PIDs compared to the rest of the nation. This difference also applies when the PIDs in the mid-western and far-western regions are compared to the non-PIDs in their region.

Table 6.1 Indexed Enrolment Rates, 2003-07: Trends for PIDs Compared to non-PIDs

		Total			Region		Focused Comparisons		
Trend in indexed PID enrolment rate compared to non-PID			Western (1 PID of 16 Districts)	Mid-western (4 PID of 15)	Far-western (5 PID of 8)	Jumla (PID) vs Rasuwa	Kailali (PID) vs Bardiya	Doti (PID) vs. Dadel-dhura	
Total	LSS	+	+	++	=	--	-	+	
	SS	++	-	++	+	++	--	+	
Girls	LSS	++	=	++	++	--	--	+	
	SS	++	-	++	++	++	--	++	

Source: Charts in Appendix 7

Legend: LSS Lower secondary school; SS Secondary school; ++ PIDs scoring >15 percentage points higher than non-PIDs by 2007; + PIDs scoring 6-15 percentage points higher than non-PIDs by 2007; = Difference between PIDs and non-PID no greater the 5 percentage points by 2007; - non-PIDs scoring 6-15 percentage points higher than PIDs by 2007; -- non-PIDs scoring >15 percentage points higher than PIDs by 2007;

The SESP also set out to similarly increase the access of disadvantaged groups by 2007. “Similarly” in this context is understood as an increase of 25 per cent in GER, and disadvantaged groups are understood as Dalits, Janajati and the disabled. Chart 6.4 below tracks the development in Dalit enrolment at lower secondary in absolute numbers. Over the period, total Dalit enrolment has increased by 36 per cent, while enrolment for Dalit girls has increased by almost 73 per cent. A similar trend applies to secondary school, where the absolute number of Dalits has increased by 52 per cent over the period, while enrolment for girls has increased by 65 per cent. Although the absolute enrolment numbers need to be related to the increase in the Dalit population over the programme period, it seems safe to conclude that the very significant increase in Dalit enrolment represents an increase also in relative terms.

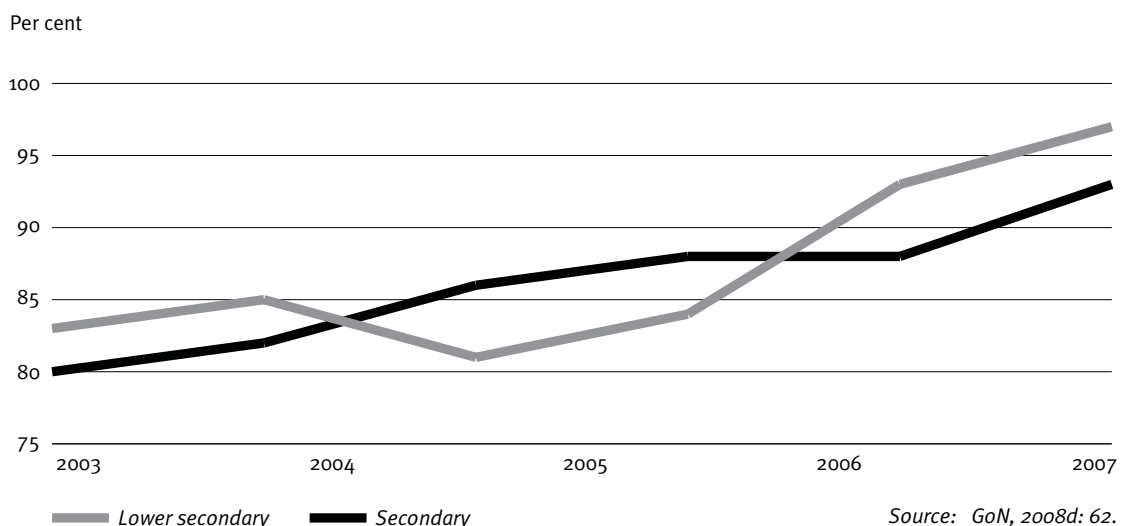
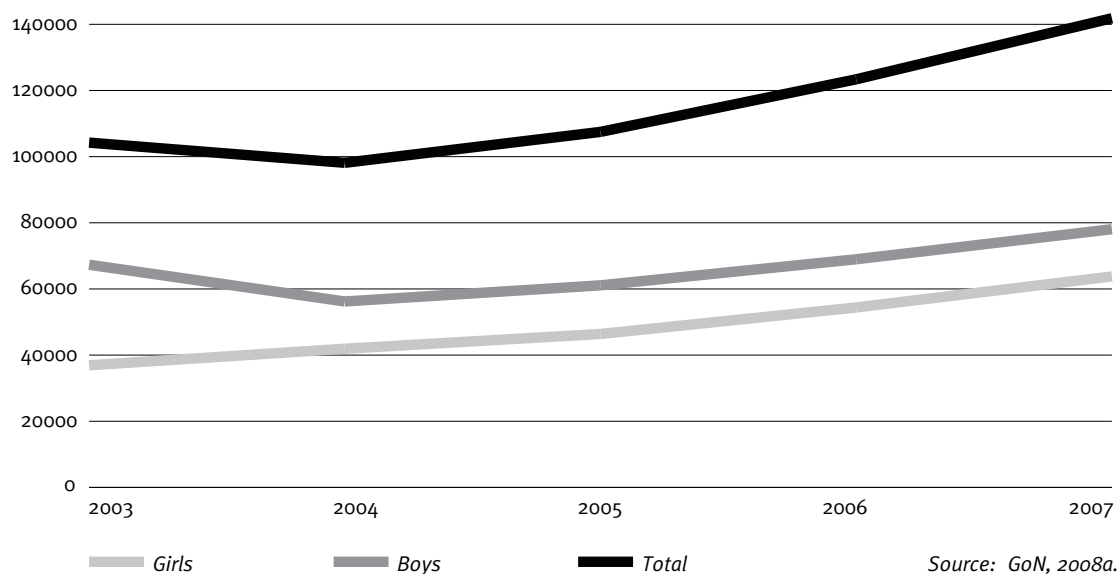
Chart 6.3 – GPI for Gross Enrolment Rates

Chart 6.4 – Dalit Enrolment at Lower Secondary, 2003-08

Enrolment for the Janajati population has also increased throughout 2004-07. Enrolment in lower secondary and secondary has, measured in absolute numbers, increased by approximately 40 per cent over the period. The increase in Janajati enrolment for girls was slightly higher, at approximately 45 per cent for both levels. As above, it is expected that these very significant increases in absolute enrolment numbers also represent an increase in relative terms.

As pointed out by the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal (NFDN) and the MoE, enrolment rates for children with disabilities are also reported to have increased significantly during the period of SESP implementation. However, the EFA joint evaluation pointed out that a substantial group of children with disabilities are not enrolled in school. Again, proportionate enrolment figures are not available, since the size of the total population is unknown.

All the districts and schools visited by the evaluation have, as the national level data shows, experienced an increase in the enrolment of students. They have also stated that there are now more Dalits (in the case of Doti, Dadeldhura and Jumla) and Janajatis (in the case of Bardiya and Kailali) at the lower secondary and secondary levels. Awareness of the importance of continuing to lower secondary and secondary education has increased, also among Dalits, Janajatis and girls, leading to increased enrolment. However, only a few reach secondary level, as reported through the district case studies.

6.3 Physical Learning Environment

Efficiency

As pointed out in the EFA joint evaluation, there are no standardised indicators to assess the school learning environment in Nepal. In the absence of such indicators, the joint evaluation makes use of a two-fold definition comprising a hard and a soft aspect. The hard aspects, covered in this section, mainly concern the quality and appearance of classrooms, including lighting, furniture and availability of features such as separate toilets for girls and

boys, libraries, science labs, sport facilities etc. As fully acknowledged by the SESP, such hardware needs to be coupled with interventions aimed at improving the “softer” aspects of the learning environment, such as the behaviour of the teachers and their approach to teaching and inclusion. The “soft” aspects are covered in the following chapter on quality (refer to the subsection on didactic and teaching methods in Section 7.2 (p. 54).

According to the SESP Core Document, one of the key activities of the programme is the rehabilitation and improvement of public secondary schools in poor communities and districts. The work mainly involves construction of school blocks, but also construction of mountain hostels/feeder hostels for students from disadvantaged communities, provision of girls’ toilets and installation of IT equipment.

The initial target of building 150 schools in PIDs was revised upwards to 190 by the November 2005 Review Mission. It was also decided in the course of the programme to use funds for 400 additional classrooms outside the PIDs. A provision of female teachers’ accommodation was also included in the Core Document. This was, however, subsequently decided against, since the proposed location for these centres was assessed to be inappropriate and no budget was available for purchasing alternative plots of land. Similarly, as pointed out by an MoE official, it was initially planned to develop master plans for the all schools based on existing infrastructure, but this could not be done due to budget constraints.

In the PID districts visited by the evaluation team, the DEOs informed the team that a field survey had been carried out by an engineer to identify the schools that required support for classroom construction. Based on the survey, the DEO forwarded a list of eligible schools to the DoE, and the DoE had decided the allocation of blocks. This was done to avoid unnecessary politicisation. In Doti, for example, the schools had been selected according to physical infrastructure and size of the student population. In the case of Jumla, a “re-selection” took place to select schools closer to district headquarters. Mainly due to the insurgency, it was not possible to carry out the proposed works in the original selection.

The budget for construction was reduced to USD 55,000 per school from originally 78,000 by the MTR. As reported by the DoE, dollar inflation and price increases affected the budget in some districts, but negative and positive cost variations more or less evened it out. Hence, only a 5-10 per cent increase in the total budget for civil works was expected, as reported by the DoE Physical Section.

The construction of the school blocks was delayed for the first two years. As pointed out by the DoE, original cost estimates were in many cases too high for some items, while too low for others. Secondly, there was no provision in the original budget for a design/engineering consultant to provide a master plan for the schools. Procurement modalities also constituted a challenge. Under EFA and BPEP II, procurement was done through the community, but for SESP it was to be done by the DEO. In order to facilitate this, a three-day procurement training course was delivered, but several districts still faced capacity constraints in carrying out the procurement. In some cases, it was difficult for the DEOs to locate a qualified contractor in the area.

The School Management Committees (SMC) and local community representatives interviewed by the evaluation team further complained that they were not sufficiently involved in the procurement and supervision of the works and contracts and that the

design of the buildings, centrally determined by DoE, did not allow for local adaptation where relevant. This in turn has led to a situation where the visited schools and the SMCs have felt somewhat ignored, and it is likely that local level ownership to the works could have been stronger if the SMCs had been more involved in the procurement process from the beginning.

The location of the PIDs further added to the implementation delays as pointed out by DoE. Some of the PIDs are not easily accessible, making it difficult to bring materials to the districts. It seems that this could have been foreseen at the outset of SESP so as to allow for realistic planning.

Effectiveness

To assess the quality of the buildings, several visits were carried out during SESP implementation by DoE Physical Section, especially in the PIDs. Based on DoE Physical Section's own experience, quality has not been a major issue, and it is reported that the regular supervision of consulting engineers has played a key role in ensuring adequate quality. Based on evidence from the district case studies, the picture is more blurred. The evaluation visited six schools which had received SESP school blocks. There were complaints about the quality in almost all of the schools visited. The complaints included a roof which was not suited to the local weather conditions, water seeping into the classrooms during the rainy season, cracked walls and stairs, doors and windows which could not be shut properly, as well as defective and insufficient electrical installations among others. Because of such perceived construction defects, the SESP blocks had not yet been transferred from the contractor to the school in five of the 12 schools visited.

Moreover, according to the National Federation of the Disabled, new school buildings are more accommodating to the needs of disabled students. However, none of the schools visited were disabled-friendly in terms of access to the school buildings and the individual classrooms. The district case studies and reports from the NFDN also indicated that disabled students face problems accessing toilets.

As pointed out by the DoE Physical Section, the awareness of the need for maintenance is generally very low. In keeping with this observation, the evaluation did not find any evidence of school maintenance plans, and it was the impression that SMC members and HT found it too early to consider maintenance, as the buildings were new. However, good practice from one school visited in a non-PID suggests that there may be scope for involving secondary students in the actual maintenance work as part of their practical orientation.

The concerns about quality notwithstanding, the overall impression is positive. The new and refurbished classroom blocks provided through SESP have clearly led to an improvement in the physical learning environment, and the new buildings are consistently cited by stakeholders as being among the most significant and also visible changes created by SESP. The classrooms inspected during the district case studies were generally spacious, well lit, had ventilation and were, by most measures, significantly different from old buildings. This is confirmed by evidence from various stakeholders such as the Teachers' Union. Moreover, students unanimously mentioned during the focus group discussions in the districts that the new classrooms have improved the learning environment considerably, making them feel more comfortable. The main issues are the need for greater involvement of the school/SMC in the procurement and supervision process. A closer involvement and greater role for the school could possibly lead to closer supervision of

the contractor, possibly avoiding some of the quality issues that were observed by the evaluation team. Similarly, a stronger role for the school management early on in the process will make it more likely that the school feels responsible for thinking about maintenance measures early on.

6.4 Scholarships

Efficiency

The SESP Core Document proposed to provide 36,100 scholarships within the programme period of the following different types:

- Full scholarships of NRP 1,700 annually, benefiting 31,070 students from marginalised communities
- Support for 120 students from ethnic minority groups
- Grants for schools to support 11,000 Dalit and marginalised students
- Grants for support to 558 students with disabilities (GoN 2005).

Five thousand of the full scholarships were earmarked for the ten PIDs, equivalent to 16 per cent. The numbers of the full scholarships were subsequently revised upwards by the 2006 mid-term review to 60,000 annually, two thirds of which were for girls. According to DoE, 6,819 of the scholarships were provided to the PIDs, which make up 11 per cent of the total quota.

Similarly, regarding the Dalit scholarships for last year (2007/08), out of the total quotas of 119,686, the ten PIDs received 12,756, which again is 11 per cent of the total quota.³ SESP's scholarship programme focus was thus considerably expanded from 2006/07, while at the same time shifting focus towards the non-PIDs. Accordingly, the scholarship programme has also had a significant and increasing focus outside the PIDs.

The demand for scholarships has been far greater than the supply, although the evaluation has seen examples of international non-government organisations (INGOs) and municipalities providing scholarships to lower secondary and secondary students. Local provisions of scholarships are, however, mostly targeted at primary level students.

For disabled students it can be noted that whereas 1,200 requested scholarship five years ago, the number has now increased to roughly 5,000. This in turn has led to a heavy pressure from communities in deciding the allocations of scholarships. District case studies show that head teachers and SMC members are often under pressure from parents when deciding on scholarships. In some places, the DEO has intervened; in others, SMC and teachers have worked together to make the list of recipients public in the interest of transparency and to avoid conflicts.

The mismatch between demand and supply has caused many schools to develop innovative approaches. In some districts (the extent of this practice is not known), the fixed amount has been reduced to be able to allocate scholarships to a greater number of children. This practice has also been observed by the OAG and most of the DEOs interviewed by the evaluation team.

3) No data are available for this year.

In some districts, there is also confusion about the difference between the various scholarships available, which may further increase the risk that they are not managed and allocated according to transparent guidelines and principles. Similarly, the EFA Joint Evaluation and AIN have indicated to the evaluation team that districts and schools have found it difficult to cope with the many different types of scholarships, and to identify the right and needy children and ensure transparency. This is confirmed by the Nepal-based INGOs and national NGOs, who also administer scholarships.

Effectiveness

DoE strongly believes that scholarships have led to greater access to education. As one official says: “If we stop scholarships, then they cannot continue”. Similarly, scholarships are believed to have a significant impact on the enrolment of disabled students. According to the NFDN, almost all disabled children in schools receive a scholarship.

Research supports the above-mentioned view. A “Review and Design of the Incentive and Scholarship Programmes for Primary and Secondary Education” was carried out for DoE by the Institute for Integrated Development Studies (IIDS) in April 2004. The study found that among the Dalit students, provision of scholarship is a major attraction to go to school and that failure at examination is a major cause of dropout.

The study further revealed that a number of other factors, including the realisation of the value of education, affected children’s schooling. An important lesson from this is that if scholarship programmes are run in isolation without emphasising the need for parental education, eliminating the traditional negative values that discourage the education of girls and Dalits, and bringing about major reforms in the delivery of educational services, their mainstreaming could be slow and the overall effect less than optimal (IIDS, 2004: 35-36). Moreover, the national Dalit organisations point out to the evaluation that information on scholarships does not reach to the poorest Dalit families, which may also reduce the overall effectiveness of the scholarship scheme in the sense that it does not reach the most relevant beneficiaries. In view of the fact that scholarships represent a very significant investment in SESP it seems pertinent to undertake further studies on the utilisation, results and impact of the scholarship programmes including tracer-studies to assess the medium and long term behavioural changes in the target population. The purpose of such studies would be to give directions as to how the effectiveness and targeting of the scholarships could be improved.

Limited research has been carried out to track the performance of those receiving scholarships. An assessment of SESP’s impact on girls’ education was carried out in the beginning of 2009 (GoN 2009). The assessment analysed girls’ overall access to general secondary education, their SLC performance and a focused, in-depth analysis of their achievements in the ten PID districts. Five districts were selected for in-depth analysis, including Kailali and Doti. The assessment concluded that SESP has positively impacted enrolment indicators, and particularly the results of girls’ education had been encouraging in the PID districts. The stakeholders interviewed by the assessment team perceived scholarships for girls to be among the key reasons for the increase in access.

Moreover, head teachers (HTs), teachers, and SMC members were positive towards the effect of scholarships on Dalit enrolment rates. However, they also explained that many dropped out at a later stage. In some of the schools visited, the SMC waited to transfer the amount to the parents until the second quarter of the school year, mainly to avoid a situation where parents enrol their children only to cash in the scholarship amount.

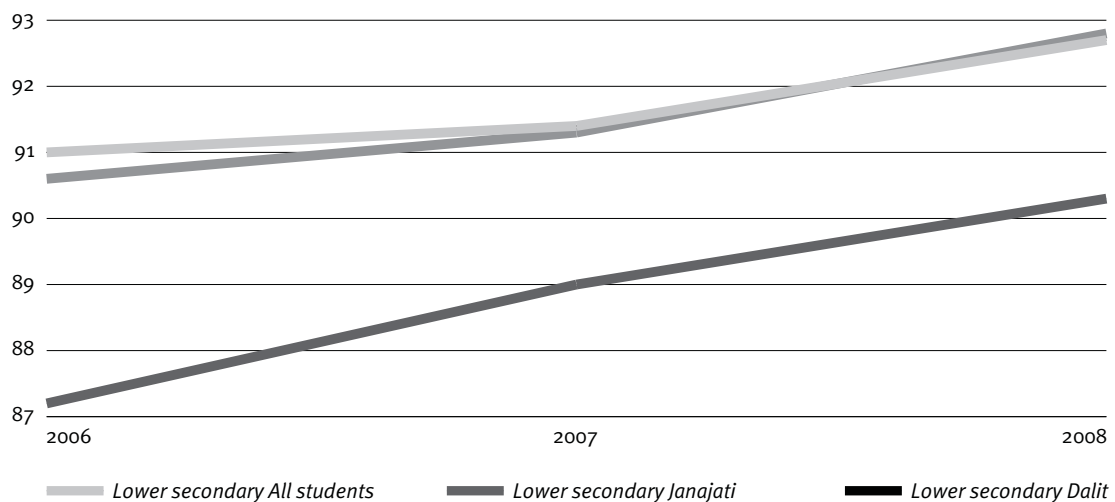
The question remains whether the practice observed in several districts to reduce the amount of scholarships to reach more students leads to a situation where the combined effect of the scholarships is reduced. For example, representatives of the Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO), also from Doti, reported that the practice of reducing the Dalit scholarship amount from Rs 500 to Rs 250 per year has made it very difficult for Dalit families to keep their children in school, as they also have to pay fees for admission, tuition, examination and other expenses for clothing and stationery. Similarly, the Dalit NGO Federation pointed out that the drop-out rate continues to be high among Dalit girls, reportedly because the scholarships are seen as inadequate.

These observations are to some extent confirmed by the 2009 assessment (GoN 2009), which reports that insufficient scholarship quotas leading to reduced amounts and delayed delivery have created frustration among students and have eventually led to them dropping out of school. Accordingly, while the scholarships have clearly been effective in boosting enrolment, the retention and performance of the scholarship recipients may be negatively influenced by the decision in many districts to reduce the approved scholarship amount. Charts 6.5 and 6.6 below show the retention rates for all Janajati and Dalit students in the lower secondary and secondary levels of all of Nepal.

While Janajati students basically match the curve for all students, Dalits have a lower rate of retention. It is notable that the increase in Dalit retention has been able to keep up with the performance of the general population. Retention rates for Dalits have even surpassed the levels of the other groups for the secondary level in 2008. A comparison at regional level of average retention rates for Dalit students in PIDs compared to non-PIDs reveals no major differences.

Chart 6.5 Student Retention Rate by Groups, Lower Secondary Education, 2006-08

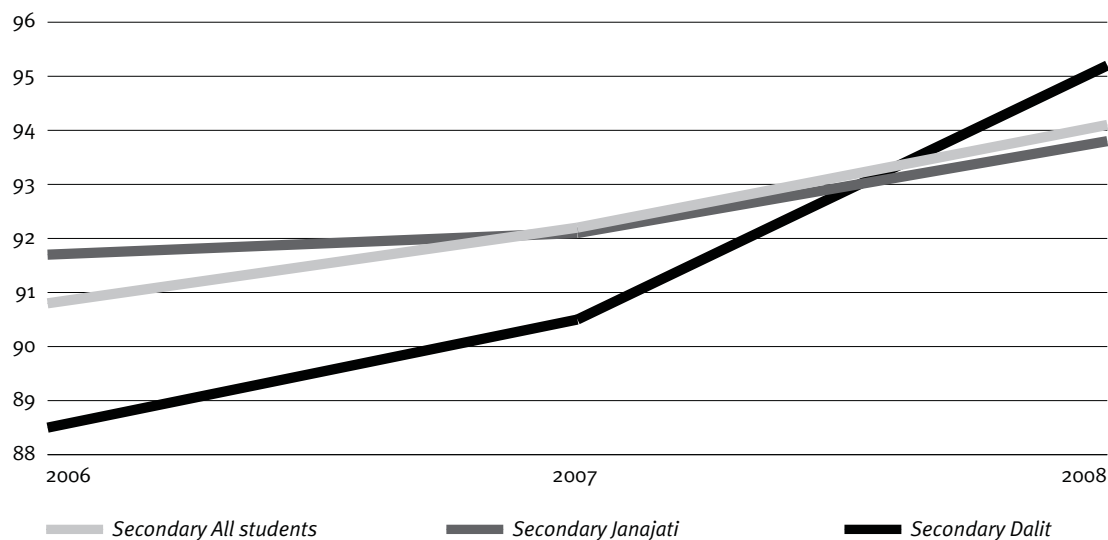
Student retention rate, by ethnic groups



Source: DoE Flash Reports, various years, CD-ROM

Chart 6.6 Student Retention Rate by Groups, Secondary Education, 2006-08

Student retention rate, by ethnic groups



Source: DoE Flash Reports, various years, CD-ROM

6.5 Assessment

The objectives of access and equity are assessed to be highly *relevant* and the related outputs, provision of school blocks and scholarships, have met a high demand.

There are indications that outputs could have been delivered in a more *efficient* way. Greater involvement by the schools in the procurement process and a greater reliance on national procurement regulations could have increased efficiency and ensured closer supervision of the construction works.

The fact that SESP targets for GER, NER and GPI have been reached suggests that the programme has been reasonably *effective*. The significant increase in enrolment coincides with SESP implementation, and performance has been particularly impressive in the PIDs, if comparisons are limited to the national and regional levels. This in turn strengthens the argument that SESP has had contributed positively to creating access to secondary education.

The more spacious classrooms and better ventilation have markedly improved the physical learning environment, which in turn is believed to have contributed to increased access. Moreover, the scholarship scheme has been implemented efficiently, but through various modalities that may have reduced the overall effectiveness of the scheme in cases where the amount per individual has been significantly reduced from the initial target.

The development and implementation of maintenance plans do not seem to be a priority in the visited districts. This in turn questions the long-term sustainability of the investments put into the various constructions provided.

Moreover, from a *sustainability* point of view, scholarships are not in themselves a viable solution. However, it is possible that by making scholarships available, SESP has contributed to a gradual acceptance of girls and disadvantaged groups.

6.6 Specific Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed for consideration of the GoN and its partners:

1. **The construction of school blocks at the lower secondary and secondary levels should be continued**
 The recommendation is made in view of the large class-size observed in parts of the country, notably in the Terai districts. Identification of the schools with additional classroom needs should be guided by the student/classroom ratio, which is already available in the EMIS data. School blocks will provide a highly necessary basis for expanding enrolment and improving the physical aspects of the learning environment. All school construction, including toilets, must be accessible for children with disabilities. Furthermore, sufficient toilets should be integral in any school construction activity.
2. **Procurement should follow national regulations**
 The recommendation presupposes that the national legal framework and regulations satisfy minimum criteria as defined by the OECD/DAC. Secondly, to improve overall procurement management, a procurement plan for the entire programme should be prepared at the outset and updated annually as part of the ASIP exercise.
3. **The construction of school blocks should be combined with specific provision for setting up a maintenance programme**
 A deeper involvement of the SMCs in the procurement and supervision of the centrally funded classroom construction works may increase the likelihood that the quality of the works is monitored more closely, and that the school and community will take ownership of maintenance early on. First, a matching fund principle can be applied for maintenance, whereby the local school community and the central government share the costs of maintenance on an equitable basis. Second, the practice of involving secondary students in the actual maintenance work may be replicated more widely to institutionalise the culture of maintenance.
4. **The scholarship programme should be continued**
 Scholarships have a positive effect on enrolment and the current demand is far greater than the supply of scholarships. However, the practice of reducing the amount should be stopped in order to not counteract the intervention. Instead, the number of scholarship quotas can be increased by establishing basket funds at national, district and village levels with contributions from the central government, development partners, District Development Committees (DDCs), Village Development Committees (VDC) and civil society.

7 Quality

One of the intermediate objectives of the SESP is to improve the quality and relevance of public secondary schooling. As pointed out in the Core Document, this is to be achieved through curriculum reform, reforms of the assessment and examination system, and through teacher education interventions.

This chapter assesses the relevance of the intermediate objective (Section 7.1), the overall effectiveness measured as progress towards the intermediate objective (Section 7.2), and efficiency and effectiveness of the various strategies launched under SESP to increase quality and relevance (Sections 7.3 to 7.6). The assessment is summarised in Section 7.7 including an overall assessment of the sustainability of the benefits produced. Finally, Section 7.8 includes specific recommendations for the consideration of the GoN and its partners.

7.1 Relevance

SESP is clearly relevant in the sense that it has addressed many of the factors believed to influence the quality of education, such as improving teachers' training and experience, curriculum reform, providing better classrooms, availability of learning materials and improved management of schools. The overall approach to curriculum development in SESP seeks to take a wide range of factors into account. These include the syllabi, the teaching-learning materials, the assessment systems, and the teachers' qualifications. Such a comprehensive approach is vital for educational development. Also, it seems that the priorities and intended practices of the new curriculum are supported by both teachers and students.

Secondly, the overall rationale for having a clear focus on quality is highly pertinent, since this area has been on the policy agenda in Nepal for at least a decade. The interventions proposed by SESP are well argued and clearly target areas in need of support. The high number of untrained teachers and the long tradition of rote-based learning are two clear indications that there is a need for coherent interventions to improve the quality of education.

Several of the inputs to be provided under the SESP consultancy package were designed to support activities related to curriculum development, assessment and teacher education. As pointed out in Pinz (2008), many of the original ToR for this consultancy, which were framed in 2002, "were not relevant at the time of delivery". Hence, the delay in fielding these inputs has meant that the relevance of some of the interventions has decreased.

7.2 Progress Towards Target

Pass Rates

The performance targets for the quality dimension of SESP were to raise and sustain measurable improvements in educational outcomes as evidenced by grade 8 and SLC pass rates (refer to Box 7.1 below). The exact target for these increases was never estab-

lished. It was underlined, however, that the improvements in educational outcomes should specifically be achieved for girls and students from traditionally disadvantaged groups.

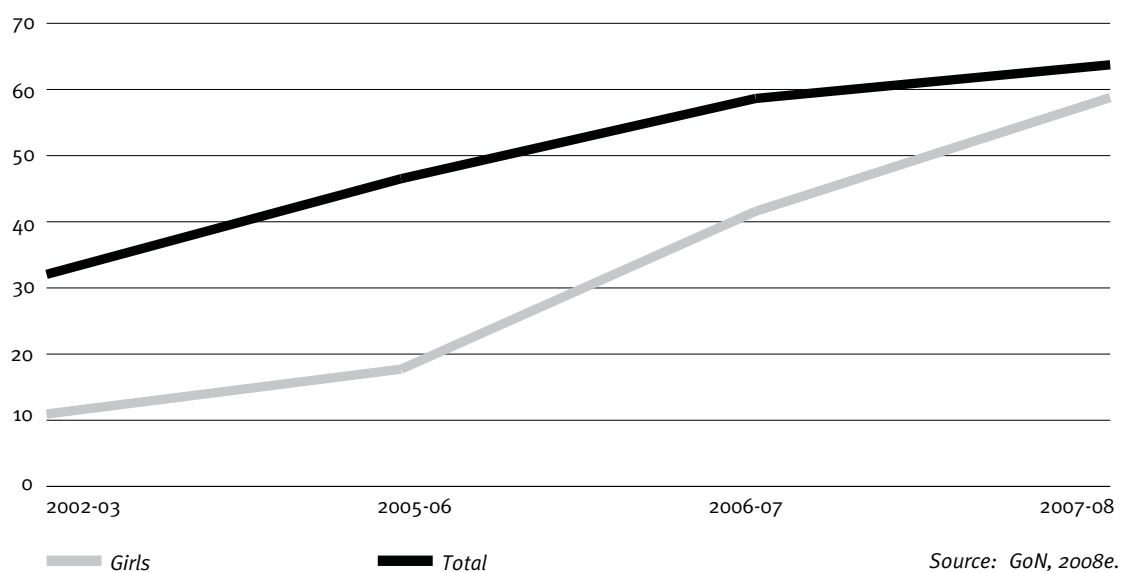
Box 7.1 SLC Examination

The SLC examination is conducted in eight subjects. Each subject carries a maximum of 100 marks, with a pass mark of 32. All eight subjects must be passed to get a SLC certificate. Students sitting for an examination for the first time are called “regular” examinees. Students who fail in a maximum of two subjects can re-sit in the failed subjects a month later in the so-called supplementary examinations, where the pass mark is increased to 35. Students who fail in more than two subjects will have to wait to the following year for re-examination in all subjects. Unlike before, there are no limitations to how many times a student can re-sit an exam. Exams generally consist of written tests. Oral exams exist only in English, while subjects such as Science, Health, Physical Education and Environment and Computer science have a practical component. From 2006/07 onwards, students are only tested on the basis of grade 10 curriculum, while previously they were tested in both grade 9 and 10 curricula.

Chart 7.1 below presents the overall development in SLC pass rates as well as the pass rate for girls. The increase since 2002-03 is staggering: The pass rate for the overall population has doubled, and the rate for girls has increased more than five-fold. The overall increase in SLC pass rates coincides with a marginal improvement in transition and promotion rates.

Chart 7-1 - SLC Pass Rates (Country vs. Girls)

SLC pass rates



The increase in the pass rates can be explained by many factors: Reports from the case study districts suggest that frequent testing of students in secondary education takes place. For grade 10 students, a “send up” exam is carried out to determine whether a student is eligible for appearing for SLC examination or not. This has been practiced in order to prepare students for SLC exams and thus increase the possibility of better SLC pass rates in schools. Other reported causes of increased pass rates include organisation of extra preparatory (coaching) classes for the examinees, use of ‘private school’ textbooks, and testing based on the grade 10 curriculum only.

Table 7.1 below shows the results of comparing the relative change in SLC pass rates over the period 2005-07 for PIDs to the relative change in non-PIDs at national and regional levels and by focused comparisons. The table illustrates the difference in percentage points between PIDs and non-PIDs by the final year of the comparisons, 2007. The number of pluses or minuses indicates the scope of the difference. If the difference between the two scores is less than five percentage points the difference is not treated as substantial.

Table 7.1 Indexed SLC Pass Rates, 2005-07 Trends for PIDs Compared to non-PIDs

	Total	Region			Focused Comparisons		
Trend in indexed SLC pass rate compared to non-PID		Western (1 PID of 16 Districts)	Mid-western (4 PID of 15)	Far-western (5 PID of 8)	Jumla (PID) vs Rasuwa	Kailali (PID) vs Bardiya	Doti (PID) vs. Dadel-dhura
Boys	+	--	++	=	++	+	++
Girls	++	--	++	-	++	++	++

Source: Own calculations based on OCE.

Legend: LSS Lower secondary school; SS Secondary school; ++ PIDs scoring >15 percentage points higher than non-PIDs by 2007; + PIDs scoring 6-15 percentage points higher than non-PIDs by 2007; = Difference between PIDs and non-PID no greater the 5 percentage points by 2007; - non-PIDs scoring 6-15 percentage points higher than PIDs by 2007; -- non-PIDs scoring >15 percentage points higher than PIDs by 2007;

A clear difference between national level and PIDs in favour of the PIDs. While SLC pass rates for the nation as such have doubled, they have increased dramatically from 17.7 per cent in 2002/03 to 53.9 per cent in 2007/08 for the ten PIDs. Despite this increase, the PIDs are still behind the country average in absolute terms.

The increase in SLC pass rates for girls in the PIDs has, like the national average, increased by almost a factor of five, but from a much lower base. Girls’ pass rate stood at 3.85 per cent in 2002-03, and it has increased to 18.3 per cent in 2007-08. It is, however, worth noting that the current level of 18.3 per cent represents a significant drop from the 2006-07 level of 28.78 per cent.

The comparison at regional level by contrast does not reveal a consistent difference between PIDs and non-PIDs. Only the PIDs in the mid-western region have, on average, outperformed the rest of the districts in the region. The results at regional level cannot, however, refute the hypothesis that PIDs have fared better than comparable non-PIDs.

The validity of the results from the western region is limited, given that the data only reflects the performance of one single PID compared to 15 non-PIDs, Rupandehi, which started out from a relatively higher point of departure than all the other PIDs (the only PID with an SLC pass rate above 10 per cent in 2002/03).

For the far-western region, the results are somewhat inconclusive with a small underperformance of girls in the PIDs. The results from the far-western region are arguably influenced by the relatively poor performance of Kailali, which, as the district in the region with the highest population, demonstrated the lowest pass rates for girls compared to the rest of the PIDs in 2007. Over the entire span of the SESP intervention, the pass rates for girls in Kailali has only doubled, while for many of the other PIDs, it has increased by a factor of five, six and in some cases even more.

The focused comparison confirms that PIDs have outperformed their comparators by a considerable margin. The fact that the PIDs start from a nominally lower point of departure explains part of this, but the overall increase in SLC rates in the PIDs nevertheless remains remarkable, and would arguably not have been achieved without the PID intervention. It is likely that the increased focus on SLC pass rates created by SESP has contributed to boosting awareness and performance in the districts for this particular indicator.

Data are not available to follow similar trends for disadvantaged groups. It has, however, been reported through the district case studies that students from the traditionally marginalised communities do well in such exams but data does not allow for an assessment of change over time. As an example, the DEO Planning Officer from Bardiya reports that more Tharu students now pass with higher marks in the SLC than before. Similarly, the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal reports remarkable improvements in terms of internal efficiency and SLC performance for disabled people. Apparently, more than 60 per cent of visually impaired students sitting for SLC exams now pass, and more than 20 per cent of the students with hearing disabilities. Accordingly, this somewhat dispersed evidence point in the same direction, i.e. that SLC pass rates have also increased for disadvantaged groups during the period of SESP implementation.

The validity and reliability of pass rates as an indicator of the quality of education have, however, been widely discussed during the evaluation team's interactions with stakeholders in Nepal. The very significant increases in SLC pass rates for the nation, and in particular for the PIDs, lend further support to the hypothesis that data reliability and/or reliability is limited. Some PIDs have seen pass rates for girls increase by a factor of 10 – in some cases even 15.

The change in the test form mentioned in Box 7.1 has, according to the DEO in Doti, contributed to the increase in performance in that particular district. Moreover, it has been reported through the case studies that some of the interventions related to student assessment and examination (refer to Section 7.4 below) have had a positive impact on the way SLC examinations are being conducted. For example, specification grids, usually for exams taken by the schools and the resource centres, are reportedly also used in SLC examinations. Stakeholders have also pointed to a greater variety in the structure of SLC questions which may enable a fairer assessment of the students.

These changes notwithstanding, a high level of cheating and pressurising of teachers by parents in district and national examinations is still reported. PABSON and a number of teachers and DEO staff interviewed by the evaluation team are frustrated and critical of the

SLC exam monitoring system and the perceived pressure to demonstrate good SLC pass rates. However, there is no indication that cheating and other malpractice has increased over the period of SESP intervention, but it is likely that the inclusion of SLC pass rates as major performance target in the SESP has increased attention and awareness in the districts of the need to demonstrate an increase in SLC pass rates. For example, according to a majority of teachers, parents and RPs interviewed in the case study districts, a more liberal assessment and promotion policy has been introduced in recent years.

Moreover, the assessment of grade 8 students carried out in 2008 does not support the notion of a dramatic increase in quality. Although longitudinal data is not available to assess changes over time, the assessment indicates that student performance is still disappointing despite the improvements in SLC pass rates. According to the assessment, overall performance of the 2,640 participating students was below expectations for each subject (Nepali, English, Mathematics, Social Studies, Science, Health and Population). Students had only achieved half of the envisaged skills. Importantly, the study establishes that, in comparison with previously conducted studies with much smaller target population and scope, there has been little progress in achievement in Science and English, hardly any in Mathematics and regress in Nepali. This conclusion should, however, be treated with some caution, since it is not based on directly comparable baseline data.

In conclusion, the very positive trends in SLC rates are most likely indicative of an improvement in the quality of education. For example, the fact that girls' SLC pass rates have increased more than boys' pass rates is largely expected given the extra focus on providing scholarships and other targeted inputs to girls. However, given the validity and reliability problems related to SLC pass rates and the fact that other quality indicators do not mirror the positive developments in SLC data, the overall assessment is that quality has improved less dramatically than suggested by the SLC rates.

Didactic and Teaching Methods

The notion that quality has improved, albeit less than SLC rates suggest, is confirmed by the evidence from the case study districts that indicates marginal, positive changes in the softer aspects of the learning environment, notably the awareness and, to some extent, behaviour of teachers in the classroom.

District case studies indicate increased awareness among teachers about new teaching methods. Students interviewed in the districts have consistently reported that teacher behaviour is starting to change. Students in a number of schools have mentioned that teachers' attendance has improved and classes are held regularly, indicating better teacher management. The students have also pointed to improvements in the teaching styles of teachers, away from the traditional lecture method towards more interactive methods, including more discussion and better two-way communication with the teachers. It has also been reported that a culture of sharing experiences and good practices between teachers has increasingly taken root. Moreover, the majority of stakeholders interviewed at district level point to a reduction in the use of corporal punishment, although there are still exceptions to this trend, as evidenced by one of the district case studies.

The EFA joint evaluation similarly shows that teachers and resource persons interviewed at district level point to "child-centred" learning methods being adopted. The EFA joint evaluation also reports that students find that "teaching has become more interesting". However, it is possible that students' assessment of change over the five-year period of the

SESP implementation is somewhat biased by the fact that the students themselves, in the course of the implementation, have advanced to higher grades where the style of teaching is expected to be more advanced, irrespective of the changes introduced through the SESP. In other words, it may be difficult for students to assess change in teacher behaviour over time at a given class level, since they move from one grade level to the next during that time.

The above indications of improvement in behaviour need to be considered further together with the statements made by several teachers and staff at Education Training Centres, indicating that very little of the teacher training is being practiced in the classroom. This issue is further elaborated in Section 7.5. In conclusion, the overall trend is positive, but not as positive as the significant increases in SLC pass rates and the positive statements by students would suggest.

As for quality, the evidence of changes in inclusive practices at school level is also somewhat ambiguous. Tangible improvements have, as further elaborated in Section 7.3 below, been made to the teaching materials and the curriculum. However, some of the evidence presented by stakeholders to the evaluation team suggests continued discriminatory behaviour at school level. Students from minority groups in Bardiya, for example, mentioned that it can sometimes be difficult to understand some of the Nepali words used by the teachers. Moreover, despite the achievements in terms of increased Dalit enrolment reported in the previous chapter, the NFDN and FEDO still consider that the learning environment is not conducive for Dalit enrolment. The organisations have acknowledged some improvement in the use of teaching materials and methods at schools, but they also point out that quality remains poor. According to these organisations there is continuous discrimination in the treatment of Dalit students and “very little knowledge and practice of social inclusion” at school level. NGOs interviewed and NGOs in some districts visited by the evaluation pointed out that the weaker students (who often have a Dalit background) often sit at the back of the classroom and therefore get less teacher attention. In summary, some of the tangible changes made to the textbooks and curriculum do not appear to have been enacted as intended in the classroom.

Despite these concerns, the majority of teachers, trainers and district officials interviewed by the evaluation team consider the extent of discriminatory practice in schools to be very limited. While this may be taken at face value as a sign of an improved learning environment, it may also be an indication of how little the interviewees are aware of or willing to analyse education issues from a discrimination and social inclusion point of view. Some of the words used during the interviews indicate that this may be the case. It is also notable that there is no method or agreed approach in the schools to assess and measure the extent of discriminatory practice by teachers and other figures of authority in the schools.

Accordingly, the evidence suggests that quality is improving overall, but not at a rate that is high enough to cater for the massive increase in access created by SESP. Arguably, the SESP has not focused enough on creating an environment that caters for disadvantaged groups, but a more detailed assessment of this particular area would be required to confirm this hypothesis. However, it is noted that inclusion strategies do not form a major part of the Core Document.

7.3 Curriculum

Efficiency

The purpose of the *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) was to provide the overall framework for development of appropriate, grade-specific curricula by setting out a broad outline of the overall intentions of the curriculum. The NCF has been implemented with considerable delay, but has now been approved by the GoN through the National Curriculum and Evaluation Council.

The initiative to develop the NCF started in 2004, but according to CDC, the initiative only truly started in 2006, when a new executive director was appointed. The development of the NCF, especially the decision on which themes to include in the framework, appears to have been influenced by political factors. Accordingly, the major political changes that took place during SESP implementation have clearly also affected the preparation of the NCF. The 2008 status report observes that technical backstopping provided to CDC has been inadequate.

Although approved, the framework is still being fine-tuned to take into account various challenges such as the need for an integrated curriculum that includes Higher Secondary School.

Through SESP, the *curriculum for grades 9-10* has also been revised. In total, a change in 15 subjects was implemented with emphasis on gender and inclusion. Stakeholders from the national Dalit organisations confirmed that they had been engaged in 2004 to review some textbooks (through ESAT) and as a result, some discriminatory words and stories had been changed. However, they also claim that many teaching materials and books still need to be revised.

Curriculum revision for lower secondary levels is still in process. As for the NCF, the revision of the grade 9-10 curriculum was done with some delay, apparently as a result of the time needed to agree on the selection of common subject matters for students.

Effectiveness

According to some stakeholders consulted by the evaluation team, the *NCF* has not been communicated in an effective manner. The NCF was disseminated in 40,000 copies to schools but, as pointed out by CDC, “most teachers do not open it” – arguably because it is perceived as having limited relevance for their daily work. None of the teachers interviewed during the district case studies have referred to the NCF. Accordingly, the overall assessment is that NCF has not yet served its purpose.

At local level, the new *curriculum for grades 9-10* has been positively received by the teachers and the students in the case study districts visited. The new curriculum is better sequenced across levels and subjects, more activity oriented, there is adequate provision for making references to local contexts, and it encourages students to be investigative and creative. For example, teachers in one school in Doti mentioned that the curriculum now matches the respective grades better, but still needs to be more vocational or skills-development oriented. Moreover, the quality of textbooks has also improved as they now contain more illustrations. Teachers in turn have indicated that the new curriculum, besides providing a good transition from one level to the next, has also established coherence among the different subjects at the same level. As an example, it was mentioned that statistics is now taught at same level in economics, maths and population. Likewise,

teachers in one school in Kailali have noted that there is much greater focus on conversation skills in English. Further, they also found improvements with respect to the inclusion of description of different groups and communities in social studies textbooks.

Despite these improvements, stakeholders interviewed at schools in Jumla and Rasuwa were of the opinion that students left the school system without the required qualifications to take up a “real job” requiring a minimum of vocational skills. In Rasuwa, the need for more emphasis on tourism, a dominant sector in that particular district, was emphasised. Hence, while the overall assessment at district level is that the curriculum has improved in terms of coherence across grades, style of presentation, and sensitivity to marginalised groups, there is some indication, based on evidence from only two out of six districts visited, that the actual subjects being taught could be better targeted towards the specific needs of the labour market.

The assessment of the revised curriculum is more mixed at the central level. On the one hand, DoE points to the revision as one of the main achievements of the programme. PABSON further notes that a more practical approach is used through the revised curriculum, and TUN emphasises that the revised curriculum increasingly focuses on life skills and has become more inclusive, also mentioning disabled students. On the other hand, some key stakeholders refer to the revision as mainly a “repackaging” of the curriculum and its focus on life skills is questioned.

Stakeholders from the NGO community have pointed out that CDC could have done more to involve stakeholders in the curriculum revision to make the contents as practical and as relevant to the regional context as possible. Moreover, some NGOs interviewed suggest that the secondary curriculum could include basic information about Nepal’s laws and human rights aspects, with a view to developing future citizens and making them aware of their rights and obligations as citizens. CDC for its part points out that curriculum reform was not a major part of the programme. CDC claims that “it was seen merely as a technical matter” and considers that there was inadequate provision for capacity development on textbook writing and curriculum development. The overall assessment is that SESP has been successful in creating a more relevant curriculum, but there is still ample scope for further revising the curriculum to focus on analytical skills and student-centred learning, as well as inclusive and non-discriminatory teaching. Furthermore, there is scope for consulting a wider group of stakeholders in developing a curriculum that is “better matched” to developing future “nation developers”. At the same time, a more strategic approach within the programme to capacity development could have facilitated the work of CDC and other implementing entities.

SESP further included a separate set of activities to *promote local contents curricula*. None of the stakeholders consulted by the evaluation team centrally and in the districts can, however, point to any successful examples of local contents curricula for secondary school. This is clearly an area where progress has been less than satisfactory. CDC confirms that there is a demand locally for such curricula. Teachers, SMC and parents in districts agree that the curriculum has to be more practically oriented, more “life-skills oriented” and more suited to the regional and local context.

The SESP Core Document refers to the establishment of ad hoc district level fora for incorporation of local curricula. The existence of such fora was reported in the majority of districts visited by the evaluation team. However, it was reported that this forum or curriculum committee (consisting of DEO as Chair, DDC, SMC, development

organizations, etc.) had not done any significant work, except for holding occasional meetings and sending reports to the CDC. Interviews at district level suggest that adequate expertise has not been available locally to develop such curricula. This is also confirmed by the 2008 status report, and appears to have been the key constraint for this particular intervention. It further seems that a more thorough situational analysis would have been useful to document local conditions in various parts of the country, acknowledging the role of teachers and local communities without leaving them with the responsibility to develop parts of the curriculum themselves.

7.4 Student Assessment and Examination

Efficiency

The SESP Core Document defines the need to “improve the quality and efficiency of student assessment and examinations”. The specific interventions include upgrading of 8th grade exams, consolidation of quality gains in SLC exams, and the establishment of a secure printing press.

Specific outputs include a handbook on *student assessment* (including a new specification grid), a training package that has been provided to head examiners, and the construction of 36 marking/exam halls. Overall progress has been satisfactory, but the OCE points out that the scope of training has been too limited to ensure effective rollout. In addition, the longer-term behavioural effect of the training has been limited by the frequent transfer of DEO staff. Strikes in some districts have created implementation obstacles, just as the late delivery of TA has reduced the overall effectiveness of the input.

To further improve the examination environment, the SESP has provided substantial funds for the procurement and installation of a *secure printing press* for JEMC to print SLC exam forms, rather than ordering them from India. The procurement of the press was significantly delayed, but a Japanese company was eventually selected through a second tender, and the press has now been installed and is operational in a newly constructed and guarded building. It is not immediately clear why such a task must rest with the public sector. However, the JEMC claims that the investment will be paid back to the GoN as if JEMC had operated as a commercial entity. It should be noted, though, that the market on which JEMC operates is price-regulated. Alternatively, the assignment could have been contracted out to a private enterprise. The argument for printing these forms in Nepal rather than in India seems to be based more on principles of self-sufficiency than on efficiency and value-for-money considerations.

Effectiveness

Notwithstanding these reservations, the evidence from the case study districts suggests that teachers are aware of the need to use specification grids for better *student assessment*. Likewise, the teachers in the case study districts feel that the new evaluation or student assessment methods, which are based on a specification grid, enable the teachers to conduct a more comprehensive and fair assessment of the students. Teachers from Doti and Dadeldhura have reported that they now focus more on a continuous system of assessment of learning, comprising unit tests, quarterly and final exams. Further, according to the students, there is now more variety in the structure type of questions in test papers, resulting in a reduction in failure rates. As mentioned in Section 7.2 it is likely that these changes also have contributed to the very significant increases in SLC pass rates. The OCE, on the other hand, reports that teacher awareness of changes in the

exam system is limited, and it is possible that more could have been done to communicate the changes so that the overall effect could have been increased.

In summary, the fact that the teachers interviewed by the evaluation demonstrate awareness and support for the new initiatives suggest that the overall effect of the initiative has been satisfactory, at least with respect to the districts visited by the evaluation team. The activities under SESP have, however, not explicitly targeted the reported widespread malpractice and cheating, and it is possible that overall effectiveness could have been improved if these issues had also been addressed by the programme. In this context, the OCE mentions that it is essential for the DEOs to ensure effective enforcement and regulation of examinations at the local level.

With respect to the *secure printing press*, the effectiveness of the investment depends on the degree to which GoN is able to maximise the utilisation of the press. If it is only used for printing SLC exam papers, it is estimated that it will only be operational for 25 days a year. It is obvious that such an expensive machine should be used to the maximum of its capacity.

7.5 Teacher Education and Development

Efficiency

The overall intention is to improve the quality and efficiency of teacher education and promote effective teaching in the classrooms. Two types of training are provided: The first is ten months of in-service training provided to teachers who have not had pre-service training. This is provided by the various ETCs across the country. This training is given in three phases or modules based on a revised curriculum. Lower secondary and secondary teachers spend a total of two months at the ETC. The second type of training is provided by the Resource Centres (RC). This is more of a short course (between three and seven days), mainly demand-based subject teacher training at the lower secondary and secondary levels. Moreover, management training is provided to head teachers and the construction of a number of Lead Resource Centres (LRC) is anticipated. At the central level, the activities also include development of training materials and grants to the Faculty of Education for competency-based pre-service training.

As a result of the programme, a high proportion of teachers have taken the ten-month in-service training. In the districts visited, for example, all previously untrained teachers will have been trained by November 2009. NCED reports that 97 per cent of the total force has now been trained. Hence performance is far ahead of target according to the NCED. Data for the 2008/09 Flash I Report establish that in community schools, 54.8 per cent of teachers in lower secondary are now fully trained. For secondary school, the proportion of fully trained teachers is significantly higher at 79.4 per cent (GoN, 2008g: 41). Although this figure does not correspond fully with the NCED data, it is clear that SESP has contributed significantly to increasing the number of trained teachers, especially in secondary school, while lower secondary seems to have been under-prioritised. Similarly, community-funded teachers report that they are not on the priority list of training.

Some schools have been reluctant to send their teachers away for such period. The insurgency arguably also had an effect. For example, training centres have not functioned as envisaged. Recruitment of female teacher and teachers from disadvantaged groups has also been a challenge. NCED reports that female trainers “do not come to our centres”

because of mobility problems. However, a relatively high proportion of the very few female teachers at lower secondary and secondary are reported to be fully trained – in fact the share of fully trained teachers is higher for women at both lower secondary and secondary levels. For secondary school, 82.9 per cent of the few female teachers are fully trained.

Effectiveness

There are no longitudinal data available to assess changes in the capacity of teachers over the time of SESP implementation to assess the overall effectiveness of the teacher education interventions. The majority of teachers interviewed by the evaluation feel that the training has improved their cognitive skills, increased content knowledge and oriented them to various ways of student-centred, child-friendly and activity-based teaching methods. However, feedback from the case study districts consistently indicate that while teachers are increasingly aware of new teaching methods, the training has not been applied as intended in the classrooms. Hence, although students, as reported above, point to a change in the behaviour of teachers and the teacher-student interactions, it is clear that the change in behaviour would have been more significant if teachers had been able to fully apply their skills in the classroom.

The perceived lack of effect may, as elaborated below, reflect the quality of trainers, the discrepancy between the training situation and the poor conditions teachers face in the classrooms, lack of follow-up and support mechanisms on the job, a weak performance culture in the schools and the continued inability of the system to provide quality materials in a timely manner to facilitate teaching.

The ten-month teacher training was delivered through a cascade system using a training of trainers approach. As the Status Report 2008 points out, the number of subject-specific trainers is limited. In many cases, training centres had to rely on roster trainers. According to NCED, the purpose of such rosters is to “pull the best experts from the local market”. However, given a remuneration of only NRP 200 per session (less than DKK 15), it is questionable whether ETCs will be able to attract the best candidates to the roster. In theory, the teachers on the roster should be the best. However, the evaluation consistently heard complaints about the quality of the courses, as the teacher trainers were no more qualified or knowledgeable about the subject taught than the trainees. Many therefore regard the in-service training as having limited value. Accordingly, the evidence consistently indicates that the training could have been more effective if better skilled trainers had been available to deliver the training.

The training is typically aimed at teaching a class of 30-40 students, meaning that the training does not resemble a real classroom situation with limited materials to facilitate the teaching and overcrowded classrooms. The student-teacher ratio (STR) has increased slightly for lower secondary and is currently at 69 students per teacher. In the Terai, the STR is at 88, higher than for any other eco-zone. Moreover, there is no provision for practice teaching in the lower secondary and secondary teacher training. Teachers interviewed by the evaluation team report that they have not been able to implement everything they have learned from training, such as the use of lesson plans, teaching materials and activity-based teaching, mainly due to a large number of students and a heavy workload.

Although some mechanisms are in place to provide on-site professional support to the school teachers in order to translate training into enhanced student learning outcomes, these measures are assessed to be inadequate by teachers and teacher trainers interviewed

by the evaluation team. They point to the need for giving teachers the necessary on-the-job training and guidance in the classroom. This is confirmed by the GoN (2008) and by the Teachers' Union of Nepal (TUN).

In addition, a mindset and performance challenge may be at play: Some of the central stakeholders consulted indicate that teachers do not prepare properly, and the MoE reports that teacher absenteeism is still a major issue (refer to aide memoire from the May 2008 Joint Annual Review Meeting). The hypothesis of a poor performance culture in the schools is strengthened by the notion that the design of the teacher promotion system does not clearly reward teachers for using new techniques and methods. The particular dynamics and performance incentives of the teachers depend on their nature of employment. There are, as pointed out by the TUN and AIN, more than ten different categories of teachers. This makes it increasingly difficult to design a performance-based system, as the various types of teachers respond to different incentives and depend on different bodies for their continued employment.

Finally, there is no evidence to support that the readiness of the system to provide teaching materials and textbooks to the schools has improved. Access to school books and teaching aids presenting new methods are a precondition for effective teaching of new methods. However, as consistently claimed by teachers interviewed by the evaluation, such teaching aids are rarely available, and textbooks continue to arrive with delay or in inadequate quantities. This was also cited as a problem in the aide memoire from the May 2008 SESP technical meeting. As far as teaching materials are concerned, it is essential they support the educational priorities of the reform with its focus on student activity and learner-centeredness. In a situation with large classes and relatively poor teacher qualifications, the materials themselves play an even more significant part. They must encourage students to become involved in a wide range of investigative activities and encourage small-group interaction.

It is outside the scope of the joint evaluation to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the school distribution system. However, JEMC headquarters and the regional distribution centre in Nepalgunj indicated to the evaluation team that the system has become more efficient because of increasing printing capacity and closer follow-up throughout the distribution system. They also report, however, that external events such as the strikes and the insurgency have continued to impact on the effectiveness of the distribution system.

7.6 Teacher Recruitment

Efficiency

The core document recognises the need to encourage women to join the teaching profession. It does so by providing specific funds for in-service training, provision of residential allowances and construction of women's hostels.

It is questionable whether this represents an efficient use of resources given that other factors have a significant bearing on willingness and ability of female teachers to work at secondary schools. District case studies show that it is difficult to attract women candidates to lower secondary and secondary posts in rural areas. Head teachers and district education officers explained that it was difficult to get qualified applicants, although it is mentioned in the vacancy note that female, Dalit and Janajati applicants would be pre-

ferred. It is generally believed that the educated women prefer to work in urban areas and are hesitant to travel to remote districts, as they still face societal and family barriers to working in such areas away from their families.

Similarly, the provision of residential allowances was not assessed by stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team as sufficient to attract female teachers. Finally, it is notable that provision for women's hostels had been dropped due to design flaws and unavailability of land as elaborated in Section 6.3.

Effectiveness

Overall, the effectiveness of any drive to boost teacher recruitment is reduced by the fact that the teacher deployment system has not been operational in Nepal for more than ten years. As a result, schools and districts throughout the country have been forced to recruit large number of temporary teachers, such as teachers recruited out of the so-called relief quota (locally referred to as "Rahat" teachers") and teachers recruited by the community. It was reported through the district case studies that Rahat and community employment of teachers has increased the possibility for employing women, Dalit, and Janajati candidates to teacher positions. However, no data are available to assess or substantiate this change.

The share of female teachers at lower secondary had increased from 18.6 per cent in 2007-08 to 24.7 per cent in 2008/09 and for secondary, the share had increased from 11.5 per cent to 15.9 per cent (GoN, 2008e). Despite these achievements, the situation is particularly critical at secondary, where GPI is 0.19 – and even lower at 0.04 in the mountain eco-zone.

The importance of recruiting female teachers for boosting girls' enrolment and retention is underlined by the EFA joint evaluation. It would seem that more progress has been made in this area in the primary school – greatly facilitated by a larger pool of qualified female primary school teachers. The need for increasing the number of female teachers at the higher classes remains as urgent and relevant as ever.

For secondary school, the share of Dalit teachers had decreased slightly from 3 per cent to 2.3 per cent, which in turn reflects that only few Dalit candidates with a bachelor's degrees are available. The trend is similar for Janajati teachers: A decrease from 11.2 per cent in 2007-08 to 10.9 per cent in 2008-09 for lower secondary, and a decrease from 9.4 per cent in 2007-08 to 7.2 per cent in 2008-09 for secondary. Despite the increase in relative terms, it is worth noting that the recruitment had increased in absolute terms.

7.7 Assessment

The interventions adopted by the SESP to improve the quality of education have clearly all been *relevant* and have been met with strong demand.

The *efficiency* is assessed to be medium. For the curriculum development activities, the process leading to the development of the NCF does not seem to be efficient. The technical assistance (TA) was provided with delay and in inadequate measures which in turn impacted the overall efficiency. Similarly, for the teacher education component, it seems that the use of teacher trainers with higher skills (combined with other factors such as provision of teaching education materials and on-site support for professional develop-

ment of the teachers) could have led to an overall better use of resources. With these observations in mind, it should be noted that the SESP has been able to deliver most of the outputs within the agreed time according to budget.

The overall quality has increased during the period of SESP implementation, measured by the increase in the SLC pass rate. The qualitative evidence from the district case studies confirms that the quality of education is improving, but also indicates that the change is less significant than what is suggested by the very high increases in SLC pass rates. There is still a long way to go before students' learning and achievements are significantly improved. The indications of changes in teacher behaviour in the classroom is a notable step in the right direction, but it is clear that the SESP interventions could have been more *effective* in a different and more facilitating context. For example, the additional challenge of awareness and sensitisation of the social discrimination practices in the community and in the classroom have not been addressed sufficiently. Moreover, the curriculum needs to match better the demands of preparing future citizens of Nepal.

The approach to improving quality has mainly been input-output based and has not adequately targeted factors such as the performance incentives of teachers and students, the inadequate number of subject teachers available to provide quality education to a rapidly increasing student population, inadequate capacity in the implementation system and the need for continuous professional support to teachers. Moreover, it seems that the contextual constraints on the new curriculum have not been taken sufficiently into account. If a new curriculum is to change dominant teaching-learning practices in significant ways, it needs to be built on thorough analyses of the context for which it is intended, and it should consider how instruction is to be conducted and supported to acknowledge the role of contextual constraints.

It is generally agreed that one of the most significant factors for any educational reform to succeed is the education and professional development of the teachers. However, teacher education initiatives within SESP have not addressed some of the key problems faced by teachers, such as how to organise participatory and learner-oriented instruction in situations with very large classes, with few resources and weak infrastructure and in a situation with a relatively weak educational background for many teachers. In a situation with large numbers of teachers who are not educated specifically for the profession and lack subject matter expertise, there is an obvious need to ensure that minimum requirements are met, and therefore to offer short courses for those who are already in the profession. However, in the longer run there is an obvious need to develop more coherent teacher education programmes with a strong professional orientation. This assessment builds on the recognition that teaching is a profession that requires continuous reflection in action (Schön, 1983). It should not primarily be seen as a technical task where pre-developed academic knowledge is used to solve pre-specified educational problems. Rather, it requires teachers to make on-the-spot decisions with regard to the contents, the students, and especially the students when working with the contents (Skott, 2004).

The assessment of the need for a more coherent teacher education programme further draws on the National Research Council (2001) in which *teaching proficiency* in relation to mathematics is specified. "Such proficiency requires (1) conceptual understanding of the relevant core knowledge; (2) fluency in carrying out instructional routines; (3) strategic competence in planning instruction and in solving problems that arise in instruction; (4) adaptive reasoning, i.e. the ability to reflect on and learn from teaching experience; and (5) a productive disposition towards both the subject and its teaching and learning,

meaning that they are able to phrase new and relevant questions in these fields and to develop qualified answers to these questions”. These five strands of teaching proficiency are interwoven and between them, they are considered as a fundamental prerequisite for quality instruction. This calls for the need to situate the education of prospective and practising teachers in close proximity to classroom instruction, both when it relates to the content itself and when it involves the students.

Moreover, programmes for professional development of teachers need to be in line with the emphases and priorities of the education sector as a whole and to take into consideration the constraints imposed on classroom teaching and student learning by factors such as student-teacher-ratios, the quality and availability of teaching-learning materials, physical conditions etc. At the same time, the mentality and performance culture of the teachers may also need to be addressed more explicitly. If changes are to be made through the teacher education programmes, an attitudinal change among the teachers also needs to be promoted. It is important, for example, that the MoE system encourages performance and change.⁴

One of the intentions of the SESP was furthermore to allow for a more practical approach to the contents, one that takes local conditions seriously. In practice, this has led to a situation in which parts of the curriculum is decided at the district level. The evaluation has found no evidence that such local development has taken place. This is hardly surprising. It is not a simple task to develop high-quality curricula with the materials needed to support it, and it seems somewhat naïve to expect local communities to be able to be in charge of such development. Rather than expecting them to do it on their own, it should be recognised that they are in need of massive support in order to complete the task successfully, or it should be the obligation of the central level to develop curricula that are sensitive also to local educational needs. In either case, it should be acknowledged that it is a task that requires considerable resources.

Further action is required on behalf of the MoE and its implementing partners if some of the key results delivered under SESP are to become *sustainable*. For the revised curriculum and the new teaching methods to be properly institutionalised, it is important that factors such as scarcity of teachers and lack of performance incentives in the teaching profession are addressed. More generally, it is vital that the gains made in terms of increased access and enrolment are mirrored by corresponding gains in quality and improvements to the learning environment so that retention rates can be increased. Gains made in terms of access are only truly sustainable if they are mirrored by similar increases in quality.

- 4) *The proposals from the National Research Council in relation to mathematics are in line with many more general suggestions for teacher education. Clandinin and Conelly, for instance, have written extensively about teachers and their qualifications, and in a recent article, Clandinin has developed their argument further (Clandinin 2009). She suggests focusing on “teacher knowledge” rather than “knowledge for teachers”. The latter refers to pieces of knowledge that teachers are expected to acquire independently of context and carry with them into their classrooms. In contrast, teacher knowledge is embedded in teachers’ lives and gained from experience in relevant contexts, and Clandinin worries that “Teacher knowledge, personal practical knowledge, the experiential knowledge teachers construct and reconstruct in life and work contexts and find expression in their practices are given little or no attention in policy statements designed to reform curriculum” (p.7). The recommendations above are meant to remedy this situation.*

7.8 Specific Recommendations

1. Collection of longitudinal data on student achievement

SLC pass rates have been adopted by SESP as the key proxy indicator for whether the educational system improves the quality of education. The joint evaluation concludes that a more comprehensive measure is needed to assess student performance. Similarly, the EFA joint evaluation points to the need for a set of school quality indicators to be used for a more comprehensive assessment of progress (Norad 2008: 20).

In order to substantially improve the information available to policymakers as to whether the education system delivers value for money, it is recommended that the GoN initiate a process whereby the collection of subject-wise longitudinal data on student achievement is defined and incorporated in the SSR. The data should preferably be quantified to allow for a consistent assessment of change over time. It must be emphasised that the recommendation is not only to develop and distribute more standardised tests nationwide. The data collection should also involve more qualitative aspects of students' progress in some of the key subjects, including the students' development of conceptual understanding, their proficiency in applying their knowledge in real world contexts, and their ability to solve problems within the domains of the different subjects. Such studies could be implemented on a sample basis in part to respond to any issues raised by the findings of the quantitative longitudinal data collection on student achievement. Information from such qualitative studies may feed into a continued curriculum development process. This is not to undermine the relevance of SLC pass rates, but it is clear that they cannot stand alone.

2. Further revision of the secondary curriculum

Despite progress made under the SESP, there is still a need for the development of a "better matched" curriculum and for building the subsequent capacity to implement it. Issues still to be elaborated include addressing social inclusion and discriminatory aspects, which have to be dealt with more strongly. Secondly, the evaluation endorses the proposal to give further emphasis in the secondary curriculum to making students aware of their rights and responsibilities under Nepal's laws, with a particular focus on the human rights aspects.

3. Improve the character and quality of existing teacher education programmes

It requires a long-term effort and commitment to change entirely the dominant approach to teacher education, including educating teacher educators with the relevant background, developing suitable teaching-learning materials for teacher education, and changing the belief that the best educational background of a teacher is a strong academic background in the subject(s) in question. However, the three recommendations below may also be introduced, even if the ambition is merely to improve the character and quality of existing short-term courses for practising teachers. It is recommended that teacher education programmes are characterised by the following three principles:

- i) **Modelling good teaching.** This means initiating teaching-learning practices in teacher education that resemble situations envisaged in the prospective or practising teachers' own classrooms.

- ii) **Strengthening the relation between the academic content of instruction in teacher education with the content as taught by the prospective teachers upon graduation.** This means that teacher education programmes should – whenever possible – attempt to take the contents as taught in school as a starting point for the development of the participating teachers’ own academic development. Student teachers may then discuss subject matter questions and problems that arise from classroom instruction and deal with them at significantly higher and qualitatively different academic levels than what is expected from their future students.
 - iii) **Discussing students’ work and classroom interaction.** Teacher education programmes should include a significant element of school-based instruction and discussion of transcripts or examples of classroom interaction or students’ solutions to tasks. Also, and equally important, the student teachers should consider what options the teacher has to promote student learning in each of the examples dealt with.
4. **Efficient usage of the secure printing press**
To maximise the value from the significant investment in the secure printing press, the GoN should allow the JEMC to use the press to its maximum for purposes within JEMC’s mandate.
5. **Teacher deployment and management**
Finally, it seems vitally important that the GoN reactivate the teacher deployment system, so that the student-teacher-ratio can be substantially improved with a particular focus on subject matter teachers at the lower secondary and secondary level. Strategies of how to recruit female teachers and teachers from disadvantaged groups should be given particular attention in this context. A more fundamental issue to be addressed is the performance culture of the teachers. The current system does not adequately reward performance and innovative behaviour. MoE and the Teacher Service Commission should be tasked to critically review how the current staff appraisal system can be revised to better reward performance and application of student-centred techniques, for example.

8 Institutional Capacity

SESP has among its intermediate objectives “to develop the institutional capacity and management of central and district education institutions and public secondary schools based upon a decentralised system of planning and management”. Moreover, according to the Core Document, the “principal policy goal” of the SESP is to strengthen the involvement of local communities in the running and funding of their own schools, with assistance from and under the supervision of the national government.

The main strategies launched to achieve these objectives include capacity development of relevant actors at national, district and school levels to institutionalise the Annual Strategic Implementation Plan modality. In this, the school takes responsibility for the School Improvement Plan (SIP), which in turn creates the basis for developing District Education Plans at district level, and, at central level, developing a single ASIP for primary and secondary education. In addition, SESP includes funds specifically set aside for school mapping and strengthening programme monitoring activities, including the establishment of a school inspectorate in the MoE. The bulk of these interventions are implemented under component four of the SESP, “Institutional Management and Capacity Building”.

This chapter evaluates the relevance of the intermediate objective (Section 8.1), the overall effectiveness measured as progress towards the intermediate objective (Section 8.2), and efficiency and effectiveness of the various strategies launched under SESP for increasing the institutional capacity of the system (Sections 8.3 and 8.4). The assessment is summarised in Section 8.5 including an overall assessment of the sustainability of the benefits produced. Finally, Section 8.6 includes specific recommendations for the consideration of the GoN and its partners.

8.1 Relevance

The inclusion of a capacity development and institutional strengthening component in the programme is clearly relevant. To emphasise the importance of such a component, it is noted that EFA similarly targets this area.

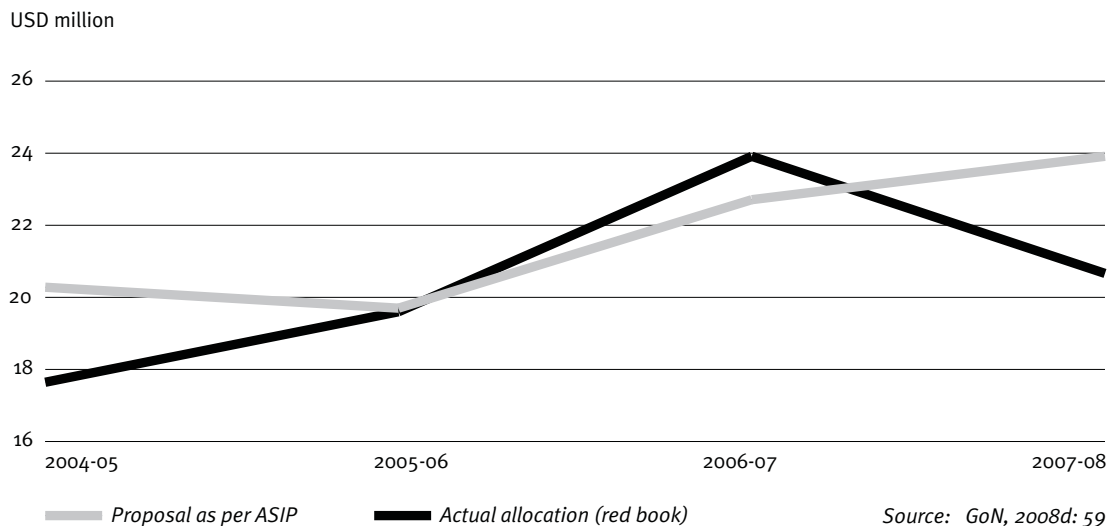
It is, however, not clear on what basis the specific interventions included in the programme target the most relevant areas and needs and more fundamentally, whether the capacity development component has been designed to achieve certain targets or address certain well-defined performance and capacity gaps. The lack of needs assessment and functional reviews to guide the allocations of funds suggests that the various capacity development interventions are based more on the ability of the various beneficiaries to argue their case than an objective and transparent needs analysis and functional review.

8.2 Progress Towards Target

According to the SESP Core Document, the main performance target for the component is the “development of an annual strategic plan (ASIP) and annual work plan and budget”.

Overall, interviews with central and district level stakeholders confirm that the ASIP planning modality has taken root and is being regularly prepared at all levels of the system. The MoE has consistently been able to secure funding for its ASIP from the Ministry of Finance, as evidenced by Chart 8.1 below. Actual allocations have generally followed proposed allocations, although a drop can be seen for financial year (FY) 2007/08. Moreover, according to the Programme and Budget Section at the DoE there has been a 95 per cent implementation of the ASIP.

Chart 8.1 – ASIP budget and actual allocations for SESP



All the schools visited by the evaluation make five-year SIPs and there is provision of SIP-based funding. According to GoN (2008e), 64.5 per cent of schools have SIPs. The schools are required to update the SIPs annually and inform the ASIPs at DEO level (all schools make only SIPs, while DEO makes the five-year ASIP for the district). The ASIPs produced by the schools are in reality based on the quotas given to them by the DEOs, and the ASIPs of DEOs are in turn based on the quotas given by the DoE. A total of 2,718 grants were provided in 2006-07 according to the 2008 Status Report.

There is general appreciation of the ASIP planning modality among donors. The main issues currently appear to be the quality of the planning process as well as the contents of the planning documents. DoE reports that there is not enough capacity in the system to regularly check the contents of the many ASIPs prepared at district level. Similarly, DEOs do not have the capacity to systematically assess the plans developed by the schools. In summary, a good basis for a bottom-up planning system has been laid, but the capacity at the lower levels of the system does not yet allow for effective implementation of this system.

It has been stated that SIPs are made by interactions with the SMCs, Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs), parents and other relevant local stakeholders. However, the case studies suggest that mainly the head teacher and some of the teachers were found to be involved. Other teachers and the SMC members expressed ignorance about the contents of the plan. Similarly, the EFA joint evaluation notes that, in the worst of cases, SIPs are developed by head teachers with or without SMC involvement, and “although SIPs are produced by

almost all schools, their use of planning and budgeting is very limited”. Finally, several stakeholders at central level question the degree to which the modality has in fact helped the planning processes. Accordingly, the evidence suggests that SIPs have not yet been developed in a sufficiently transparent and participatory way, and implementation is rather poor.

The sections below discuss the various capacity development interventions fielded through SESP to institutionalise the ASIP planning modality and strengthen the overall capacity of the system. It is important to highlight that SESP is only one of several programmes seeking to institutionalise the SIP and strengthen the capacity of the system. The strengthening of the SIP planning modality is, for example, also a main feature of the EFA programme.

8.3 Capacity Development

One of the targets of the SESP is to “develop the structures and capacity of national level institutions to develop policy, plan and implement the SESP as a sector programme”. Similarly, the SESP Core Document provides for the “development of district capacity to manage public secondary schools” and the “improvement of daily management and operation of public secondary schools”. The assessment of progress is, however, difficult to establish, since no baseline indicators have been agreed, nor any indicators to track progress. In the absence of such indicators, the sections below discuss the various capacity development interventions fielded through SESP and changes in the capacity at national, district and school levels.

National Level

The lack of a coherent strategy for capacity development of the education delivery system has been cited by the majority of stakeholders interviewed at central level. This is echoed by several review aide memoires, which point to the need for capacity development of education agencies for the overall programme to be effective. The 2006 MTR, as a case in point, confirm the need for the MoE to develop a human resources development plan, which is to pay particular attention to quality and capacity building of institutions such as NCED, CDC, and OCE. However, there has been limited follow-up of this decision.

The DoE has been reorganised, the number of sections has been downsized from 14 to 12, but there is no indication that this reorganisation was based on a functional review. Similarly, it is not clear in what way this restructuring is supposed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the DoE. There is, for example, no explicit mention of targets and performance indicators against which the effects of the restructuring could be assessed.

The CDC also agrees that provisions for capacity development have been limited and lacking of a clear strategic focus as to how capacity development interventions could support the other components in the best possible way. As already mentioned it has been observed that technical backstopping provided to CDC has been inadequate. CDC itself claims to have prepared and submitted two or three capacity development plans, but has had little positive response from the DoE, resulting in a lack of capacity and technical expertise to develop efficiently and effectively the various curriculum activities under the component. A School Assessment Unit has been set up within CDC, but the staff has, according to CDC, not received adequate training. Finally, a continuous assessment system with a guidebook was created with the support of a consultant but there was not,

according to CDC, adequate time on the contract to provide the necessary training and institutionalise the changes.

The framework for training institutions has been rationalised as a consequence of SESP. Three institutions have been merged into one, which operates according to a single planning document. This has resulted in a reduction of duplications and has at the district level led to the formation of ETCs to replace what was formerly known as secondary education development units (SEDUs). Accordingly, the NCED now operates through a network of 34 Education Training Centres which, according to the NCED, has brought training closer to the school teachers. In addition, as part of the programme, it was the intention to construct 200 LRCs, but this target was subsequently downgraded to 46 by the MTR due to budget constraints. It was further decided to construct LRCs only in districts where there are no ETCs. DoE has faced some difficulty in getting the requested budget for LRC construction; compared to an initial request, only a third was eventually granted by the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

Finally, limited capacity building has been provided to OCE. The main inputs include the installation of Internet and upgrading of physical facilities. These inputs have been characterised by the OCE as the most significant changes created by SESP. There is some way to go in terms of building the capacity of regional examination offices.

In the absence of a plan, the allocation of funds for capacity development has, as already mentioned, mostly been a result of the outcome of bilateral negotiations between DoE and the various entities; CDC, NCED, OCE etc. Despite the absence of the plan, some improvement of IT facilities and other technical skills has taken place, but it is not clear to what extent these capacity development measures have served to address performance gaps that would have an overall bearing on the effectiveness of the programme. Such a link is clearly missing in the programme.

District Level

MoE has provided some orientation to districts to improve the quality of ASIPs but, according to stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation team, the training provided has not been adequate to fully institutionalise the planning modality. Similarly, all the DEOs visited by the evaluation team have received support from SESP for the construction of a District Examination Office building (two rooms) within the DEO premises. This, according to the DEO, has made it easier to process the answer sheets of grade 8 and SLC examinations. Teachers are not allowed to take the answer sheets to their homes, but have to process them in the examination building.

However, the absence of a strategic plan for capacity development has also had implications at the district level. According to the DoE, no holistic capacity development needs assessment was conducted at the outset. Nor was any systematic capacity building provided to the DEOs and the rest of the delivery system at SMC level. Hence, training and capacity development interventions have mostly been carried out in an ad-hoc manner.

The evaluation team's interactions with DEOs revealed a mixed picture with respect to the capacity development opportunities offered through SESP. It was reported by the planning officers in Kailali and Doti that there were no specific training provisions for DEO staff other than the annual orientation workshops for the district education officer and the planning officer. In Jumla, on the other hand, several training courses were offered annually, which the DEO staff made use of.

Irrespective of the actual volume of training being offered to the DEOs, the impact of such training is limited by a high turnover of district education officers and other staff in all the DEOs visited by the evaluation. For instance, an official at the DEO in Kailai stated that he had seen three DEOs during his two-year tenure. Similarly, in Doti there have been six DEOs in the past ten years. A similar situation is the case of DEO Jumla, where the previous DEO was away from the district for a substantial period of time, leaving the school supervisor as acting DEO for almost two years (from mid 2007 to the first quarter of 2009). Moreover, many of the school supervisor positions in all the DEOs visited by the evaluation team have not been filled, which seriously jeopardises the capacity of the DEO to monitor and supervise lower secondary and secondary schools/levels. There are also examples of district staff being away for long periods of the year. Similarly, the EFA joint evaluation points out that supervision is one of the weakest links in the school management system in Nepal. The joint evaluation concludes, for example, that limited classroom observations are undertaken by HTs, RPs, and/or school supervisors. Moreover, several school supervisors in the districts visited admitted to having limited knowledge, skills and time to do field visits to schools.

The Resource Centres are responsible for extending on-the-site professional support to the teachers. However, feedback from district case studies indicate that their role has evolved to a more administrative charge, focusing on data collection and information sharing on plans and policies. District case studies further show that Resource Centres are generally understaffed and under-resourced, with only one RP at each centre to cover clusters of up to 40 schools. Furthermore, the RP position is not permanent and there is no written job description for the position. As a result, RPs have very limited capacity to enforce and supervise the development of SIPs at the individual schools. Based on the district case studies, RPs find themselves poorly equipped to provide on-site professional development support to the teachers. Although the RPs may be biased in their assessment to secure more resources, the evaluation team agrees that the current provision for the RPs and the RCs is not commensurate with the very ambitious aspiration spelled out in the SESP and EFA programmes.

CDC committees have been established at district and regional levels to assist in the curriculum development process, but CDC is faced with the challenge of providing adequate budgets to these committees. In the districts visited by the evaluation team, the CDC had only had one meeting during the period.

School Level

Legal provisions are in place for the formation of a School Management Committee in all schools. The Education Act and the Education Rules and Regulations have clear provisions for the selection of the SMC, composition of its members and its duties, roles and responsibilities. The SMCs in all schools visited have been selected at a parents' meeting. According to GoN (2008e), 17 per cent of SMC members are women, 9.1 per cent are Dalit and 33.5 per cent are Janajati.

Where the constitution process of SMCs is believed to be non-transparent, the ensuing accountability of the SMC to the community will also be limited. It is notable that the formation of SMCs in the majority of schools visited by the evaluation team had been based on an election between different party panels and, in some cases, (Bardiya and reported by Banke DEO too) communal fighting destroyed the school. The national Dalit organisations further point out that excluded groups, particularly Dalits, are not adequately represented in the SMCs, and female representation and participation in

SMCs is often only a face value act as reported by some central level stakeholders interviewed by the evaluation.

SESP has provided capacity development interventions to institutionalise and consolidate the SMCs. However, only the SMC chair, the member secretary (by default the head teacher of the respective school) and the female members have been entitled to management training provided by the DEO. The other members of the SMC have not been given any kind of orientation or training. According to the DoE, capacity building of SMCs is one of the areas where achievements have not been as good as expected.

Capacity is particularly weak in rural areas, and there is some evidence to show that they are not clear about their mandate. In some cases, as reported by the TUN, SMC chairs are seen as powerful and possessive, and there have been cases of mismanagement and harassment of teachers and recruitment not being made on the basis of merit.

It was reported by the SMCs that their primary role was in the improvement of the overall environment of the school, such as construction of classrooms, fencing off of the school compound, provision of other services, and solving any other problems faced by the school. SMC members also stated that they were actively involved in conducting enrolment campaigns and in monitoring the regularity of teachers' and students' attendance. The evaluation has also seen evidence of involvement of the SMCs in approving all decisions made by the school, such as approving SIP, recruiting teachers, fixing the level of school fees, making decisions related to construction related activities, etc. However, the SMC members interviewed by the evaluation team also indicated that they had difficulties in monitoring the quality of the actual teaching-learning or pedagogical processes happening inside the classrooms.

Although the SMCs may still be acting as a rubber stamp in some cases, the provision of letting the SMC approve all school-related decisions can and has paved a way for greater involvement in education-related affairs at school level. Similarly, the EFA joint evaluation indicates that while SMCs have traditionally only played supportive roles, they seem to be gradually taking a more assertive role.

Management training to head teachers is in place in all the schools visited by the evaluation team. The HTs are also given training on SIP, social audits and school mapping. The HTs interviewed by the evaluation team generally expressed satisfaction with the training. However, some of the HTs interviewed expressed a wish that some of the SMC and PTA representatives and active teachers could benefit from such training. Furthermore, short refresher training courses on different management and leadership skills as well as financial/account keeping are required. Central level ministry officials interviewed by the evaluation team, on the other hand, have questioned the impact of the training provided to the HTs. Accordingly, the evidence does not allow for a clear overall assessment of the effectiveness of the training.

Evidence from district case studies suggests that the relation between head teachers and SMCs is generally good, but there are examples of power struggles between HTs and SMCs. Some SMCs, for example, get involved even in relatively detailed decisions about who is to teach which subject without having the required subject/teaching-related experience. Finally, the evaluation has observed that schools with higher SLC pass rates also seem to be better managed. The best performing schools (schools displaying SLC pass rates from 47.3 to 90.9) visited by the evaluation team all gave the impression of being well managed in terms of:

- Active and respected HT with good management skills
- Good relationship between SMC and HT
- Political consensus on improving school despite political party affiliation
- Active interaction with community and inclusion of local intellectuals
- SIP preparation used actively to mobilise community stakeholders
- Clear plans for school infrastructure improvements expressed in SIPs and used for mobilising external support
- Regularity of teachers and good team spirit among them.

Clearly, many other factors influence school performance, but the above have all consistently been observed in the best performing schools. This confirms the importance of capacity development and institutional measures to improving educational outcomes.

8.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The Core Document establishes a matrix of SESP indicators for monitoring purposes broken down into educational indicators and reform indicators. Specific targets are available for some of the educational indicators (for example GER), but for most of them, targets are not explicit, which makes it difficult to assess progress. As a case in point, the desired relative increase in SLC pass rate was never made explicit, although this was expected to be done through a SEPS baseline study, which was apparently never carried out.

The responsibility for assessing progress against these indicators is not firmly placed with any specific organisation. Instead, the Core Document stipulates that SESP will be “monitored and reviewed” by stakeholders on an annual basis. In reality, most of the monitoring work has been carried out by the DoE. According to the DoE, the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) unit in the MoE has been in charge of monitoring progress against GoN-defined indicators, while the DoE has been doing the more detailed M&E work against the abovementioned matrix of SESP indicators.

The amount of work done by the REMIS and M&E sections at the DoE is comprehensive as documented by the Flash Reports, statistical collections and Status Reports. Nevertheless, there is still scope for further refining the system and its indicators. As a case in point, it would make sense to break down the Janajati population into more groups, as it is composed of groups with a high and low degree of resources, making the current practice less useful for analytical purposes.

MoE has for its part, in addition to its normal M&E work, a school inspectorate that was established at the outset of SESP, as documented in the aide memoire from the 2003 review of the programme. The requirement for this inspectorate to be operational was among the preconditions for ADB support to SESP. Overall, the capacity, budget and scope of the inspectorate’s work is assessed as being rather limited. The inspectorate has itself indicated to the evaluation team that there is a need “to improve on working tools”. To better assess the quality of the work carried out by the inspectorate,

the evaluation team had further requested copies of inspection reports. None of these have been shared with the evaluation team.

At district and school level, reporting of data runs smoothly, but field (district) level programme monitoring and feedback into the annual review and programme planning by DoE were reported to be limited by DEOs.

According to the Planning and Budget Section at DoE, 66 per cent of schools have completed social audits, but it is unclear to what extent findings have been accepted and followed up on as relevant.

8.5 Assessment

SESP has not had a clear vision or strategy for capacity development. Despite the absence of such a framework, rationalisation of the institutional framework has been implemented, and each of the central agencies has received pockets of capacity development. The overall *relevance* and *efficiency* of the various capacity development interventions have been reduced by the absence of a coherent strategic framework to guide the allocation of the funds. Hence, the overall impression is that funds have been spent on an ad-hoc basis rather than according to a commonly agreed framework. Nevertheless, several of the individual interventions have been highly appreciated by the recipients and it is evident, based on visits to the various institutions, that there is a continued need for capacity development and upgrading of facilities and IT systems.

The SESP has been instrumental in institutionalising the ASIP planning modality. The SESP has contributed to laying the foundation for a more participatory process that could lead to greater involvement of and ownership by the local community. Important contributions to this process have also been made through the EFA programme, emphasised by the fact that ASIP covers both primary and secondary education. However, the quality of the process and the output still remains to be fully assessed. The capacity of the system still has some way to go before the intentions of the ASIP planning modality can be fully harvested.

However, there is very limited data and indicators available to document the extent to which the capacity of the system has increased as a result of the various interventions. This in turn makes it difficult to evaluate the overall *effectiveness* of the capacity development interventions, but it is evident that most stakeholders see the interventions financed by SESP as inadequate. Similarly, at district and school levels, capacity development measures have been rolled out in a way that most stakeholders characterise as inadequate. Such statements may obviously have a certain bias, coming from potential recipients of additional capacity development interventions. Even so, the evidence relatively consistently suggests that higher quality, higher volume and better timing of the various capacity development measures could have made a difference, given the importance of preparing the system for the many challenges associated with large increases in enrolment.

As a case in point, the significant reduction in the number of LRCs being constructed and the limited staffing of the RCs will not be sufficient in a situation where support and supervision provided to the schools is limited. Moreover, ordinary SMC members have not received orientation, and only limited capacity development has been targeted at the DEO and RP-level.

Overall *sustainability* of the institutional capacity component is assessed to be low. The results created so far with respect to planning depend on the degree to which MoE, DoE and the rest of the implementing entities continue to build capacity for the development of ASIPs and insist on making these plans the building block for the sector. This in turn requires an increased focus on strengthening the participatory nature of the planning process and a closer monitoring of the quality of the planning documents. The sustainability of the capacity development interventions is similarly limited as long as the various inputs are provided in an ad-hoc manner without reference to a commonly agreed framework or strategy. Similarly, a more thorough needs assessment and functional reviews are required.

8.6 Specific Recommendations

The preceding sections have confirmed the importance of institutional capacity measures as a main driver for improving the overall performance of the secondary education system. In this spirit, the following detailed recommendations are proposed for consideration of the GoN and its partners:

1. **Increase ASIP monitoring and guidance**
For the ASIP Planning Modality to fully develop into an instrument for participatory planning and execution, more emphasis is needed from the central level in terms of monitoring and guiding districts, and from the districts in terms of monitoring and guiding schools on how best to undertake the process – and in terms of assessing and advising on the actual contents of the ASIP document and ensuring its actual implementation rather than just formulation.
2. **Develop a strategic framework for capacity development at all levels of the system**
The recommendation is made in view of the fact that increase in capacity is a sine qua non for effectively handling the increased number of students enrolling in secondary school. A capacity development plan should be developed in an open and transparent way by the MoE/DoE with full participation of all relevant agencies at central, regional and district levels. A clear definition and operationalisation of capacity should be the starting point for such an exercise. The evaluation notes that a task force has been constituted under the chair of the Joint Secretary of the Planning Division of the MoE to ensure the completion of a capacity development plan. It is important to ensure a more participatory, strategic and informed modus operandi for coordination of capacity development interventions. The GoN may consider establishing a coordination forum involving the various educational agencies, which in the interest of inclusion and participation will ensure that funds for capacity development are allocated according to needs.
3. **Increase the capacity of RCs so that they can effectively advise schools on preparation and implementation of the ASIP planning modality at the school level**
The RCs need additional manpower or more limited areas of supervisions to allow them to effectively act as sparring partners and advisers for the schools. Secondly, the RPs themselves will need additional capacity building to effectively take on this role.

4. **Provide additional training and orientation to all the SMC members**

Such training should focus on the proper roles and mandates of the SMC, including the division of labour between SMCs, head teachers and PTAs, what are the basic elements of effective schools, and ideas regarding how local authorities engage in education reforms elsewhere. Some of these can be done through efforts to enhance the linkages of SMCs to NGOs working in the education sector. Such capacity development could be effectively provided through SMC peer-to-peer sharing of experience.

9 Early Signs of Impact

One of the immediate objectives of the joint evaluation is to analyse the anticipated and unanticipated, positive and negative impact of the SESP on the target groups. The impact level of SESP is given by the *development objective*, which concerns the “expansion of quality secondary education suitable for the need of national development”. Secondly, the ToR makes reference to Vision 2012, which sets out the desired state for a student, a school and a district by 2012. This chapter assesses progress towards these targets.

9.1 Education for the Need of National Development

With a view to operationalising “the needs of national development” the Core Document refers to the so-called “aims of lower secondary and secondary education”. These aims focus on the type of students being produced by the system and emphasise for lower secondary the production of students “who believe in the nation and in democracy (...) competent in communicating ideas and be independent, hard working, health conscious, and ethical”. For secondary education, the vision goes on to emphasise that the system should produce “citizens who can contribute to economic development” and that “creativity, cooperation, independence and industriousness” should be stressed.

Achieving such aims requires that one balances a view of learning as acquisition with one of learning as participation in communities of practice (e.g. Lampert & Cobb 2003, Sfard 2003 & 2008, Wenger, 1998). In more practical terms, this means that students, if they are to learn to cooperate, need to support and supplement their mastery of prescribed methods and procedures with participation in genuinely collaborative efforts with involvement in exploratory activities in which they raise and investigate conjectures and results made by themselves and by their peers, if they are to develop their creativity; and with engagement in truly communicative practices with their peers and teachers, if they are to learn to communicate.

This vision for education differs from the teaching-learning practices that have traditionally dominated Nepalese classrooms. For such a vision to materialise, a long-term effort is needed. This is always the case with educational reform, but it is especially so in a situation with significant constraints in terms of student-teacher-ratios, teachers’ educational background, etc. SESP has taken some of the first few steps in that direction, as documented by the students’ observations of changes in the behaviour of teachers and the teacher-student interaction in the classroom.

Pass rates carry only limited information about the degree to which the students have developed the competences and qualifications mentioned in the aims of Nepalese secondary education, such as creativity, cooperation, independence and industriousness. Higher level cognitive skills that are more closely related to particular academic contents are also difficult to assess in a written exam.

A tracer study of SLC school leavers was carried out to establish their whereabouts, and whether secondary education had had any value for them in relation to pursuing higher studies, taking up employment and achieving personal and social life skills (GoN 2006). The results of the study showed that 68 per cent chose to pursue higher education either

part-time or full-time. Of that group, a majority did not find the subjects they studied at school to be relevant, an opinion supported by university professors in general, who found that school graduates lack the following: good study habits, a sound base of English, basic understanding of the subject matter, analytical minds and the ability to work independently. The graduates joining the labour force also found that schooling did not provide them with the kind of skills and competences relevant to their present life situation on the job market.

The conclusions of the 2005 assessment were largely confirmed by parents and teachers interviewed by the evaluation team in 2009, who report that, despite improvements, the curriculum is still too theoretical and needs more focus on life skills and vocational skills.

At the outset of the programme, the ADB calculated an economic internal rate of return (EIRR) of 14 per cent. A number of the assumptions underlying the calculation have already been examined in the preceding sections and chapters, and it is clear that most of them have materialised:

- Improved access and equity of access to lower secondary and secondary schools has been achieved
- GER for lower secondary and secondary schools of 65 per cent and 55 per cent were achieved by 2007
- Repetition rates for lower secondary and secondary schools have been reduced by more than 50 per cent compared to targets of 12 per cent and 7 per cent respectively by 2007
- Dropout rates for grade 9 has been reduced by 20 per cent compared to an assumption that lower secondary and secondary schools would be reduced by 12 per cent and 14 per cent respectively.

The joint evaluation has not collected data to verify whether the final assumption related to whether increases in private rates of return for wage earners have materialised.⁵ Nevertheless, it is clear that trends in key educational indicators have developed in a way that increases the likelihood that the scenarios predicted by the initial EIRR calculations will have materialised. This in turn implies that an increasing share of the youth are likely to, in part as a result of SESP, gain employment that yields higher wages, compared to the situation prevailing before SESP.

9.2 Vision 2012

The ToR specify the need for the joint evaluation, at the impact level, to assess progress towards achieving vision 2012 and establishing whether 2012 remains a realistic and desirable target. The vision defines the envisaged rights of students and requirements to schools and districts as they are expected to prevail in 2012.

5) *The calculation assumed increases in private returns to wage earners for each year of lower secondary and secondary school completed by 8.5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, adjusted for real growth in wage rates equal to 4 per cent annually.*

The vision specifies a set of rights for the student concerning access to and equality in general secondary education, relevance of the taught curriculum, quality of teachers and a conducive learning environment. The evaluation assesses that:

- SESP has made a significant contribution towards enhancing access to secondary education for all, irrespective of caste, ethnicity, gender, disability and locality.
- The curriculum has been modified to be better in line with new, student-centred teaching methods, but it is still considered too theoretical, and practical employment-oriented skills are lacking. The contents of the curriculum are not adjusted to the local contexts, but assessment practices are slowly changing, focusing on supporting students' learning.
- SESP has contributed to improvement of the learning environment and capacity development of teachers, but progress towards improving the quality of education is assessed to be inadequate. There is little evidence to show that student achievement has improved despite significant increases in SLC pass rates. Similarly, there is no evidence to show that SESP has made significant progress towards creating an inclusive learning environment. Positive steps can be noted such as the revision of learning materials and the allocation of scholarships to girls and children from underprivileged groups. More in-depth analysis is however required to show whether these steps will be adequate to change more fundamentally the views and behaviour of teachers, students and parents alike. Evidence from the case studies and from interviews with national NGOs suggests that discrimination is still a major issue with a direct impact on learning achievement and retention.

The 2012 vision for a school focuses on improvement in capacity which, according to the SESP Core Document, will become possible because of sound policies, clear self-evaluation by the school and community, a strong management capacity in the head teacher, external supervision through regular visits and inspections, and the coordination of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of the schools' work through SIPs. The evaluation assesses that:

- SESP has contributed to improving schools' physical facilities, most notably in the PID districts.
- SIPs are being developed at all schools, but only used by some schools as planning document for monitoring and evaluation. This reflects limited knowledge and awareness among general SMC members and parents about SIP and the SMC role and function. The exercise does, however, provide valuable information about the schools.
- Resource Centres lack capacity and are limited to functioning as data collectors and communication media between school and DEO.
- School accountability mainly focuses on SLC pass rates. There is extreme community pressure on schools to increase pass rates, causing teachers to increasingly focus their teaching to the pass requirements of the tests.

Finally, the district vision 2012 includes a functioning decentralised system of local government in which the responsibilities and resources of line ministries have been devolved to DDCs with support from line ministries. The evaluation assesses that:

- A planning system based on a bottom-up approach, starting with SIPs and leading to DEPs feeding into national education plans, including general secondary education, has been established. Although the system is centralised, with the DEO providing earmarked quotas based on budget transfers from DoE during the year, the schools now have a platform for planning which can be further developed.
- The management of the district education sector will further depend on qualified staff at the DEO. A high staff turnover caused by frequent transfers of district education officers, supervisors, planning officers and accountant positions has been a major impediment to effective management of the sector.

In summary, progress towards all of the three visions can be registered, but it is unlikely that the current rate of progress will allow Nepal to arrive at the Vision by 2012. Key challenges include the need to raise quality and make the learning environment more inclusive in a situation where the increasing enrolment puts a heavy pressure on the system. This will require, as outlined in Section 7.8, increased focus on monitoring of quality of education, further revision of curriculum, a more coherent teacher education programme and an improved system for deployment and management of teachers. Moreover, progress on capacity development at all levels of the system will also need to gain momentum.

It is believed that Vision 2012 continues to be desirable and relevant, i.e. a vision that sets out ambitious targets for the Nepalese education system. Some of the components of vision 2012 may not be relevant for an impact level assessment, as they involve more output-oriented issues such as the “regular development at the district level of district education plans (DEP)” and “access to information and communication technology” at the school level. Hence, there may be scope for simplifying the vision by removing some of the more output-oriented aspects, emphasising aspects that clearly spell out desired changes at the impact level.

10 Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Main Conclusions

SESP is clearly a *relevant* intervention. The three intermediate objectives are all accepted by interviewed stakeholders as relevant, and the specific benefits delivered at the district level have been appreciated and utilised by the beneficiaries. This is indicative of commitment and ownership. A lesson learned is that the formulation and preparation of the programme could, to a larger extent, have involved officials and representatives from the GoN, the private sector and civil society, had systems for their involvement been thought out.

After a slow start, the *efficiency* of the programme and the performance of the GoN improved. The last years of SESP implementation have seen satisfactory rates of implementation. Outputs have largely been delivered according to plan, which is a remarkable achievement, considering the conflict and ensuing tensions in Nepal. However, the MoE could have increased the efficiency with which TA funds were used to achieve targets by taking more ownership. It is a lesson learned that the enforcement of external procurement rules may lead to substantial delays, especially where the implementing agents have no previous experience with such rules. The performance of the donors is largely satisfactory in terms of making resources available on time, and development partners have demonstrated commitment by agreeing to align programme management more closely to national procedures.

Assessed against the key performance targets, the *effectiveness* of the programme is satisfactory in terms of improving secondary enrolment and in institutionalising the ASIP planning modality. In some cases, progress has even been impressive, such as increases in lower secondary enrolment, in girls' enrolment and in SLC pass rates. However, a more comprehensive assessment of progress towards targets reveals a number of areas where progress has been more modest.

Progress in enhancing access and equity in enrolment has improved significantly especially for lower secondary education. The evidence suggests that parents are more aware of the importance of educating their children, including girls. Scholarships have been instrumental in boosting enrolment for girls and marginalised groups, and the schools constructed in the PIDs can also explain part of the increase in enrolment. It is in many ways an achievement in itself that the PIDs, selected because of their great needs, have been able to keep up with the rest of the country. Moreover, the construction of school buildings and other infrastructure is, despite concerns about quality, consistently quoted by stakeholders in the districts as one of the most significant changes created by the SESP. Despite this enthusiasm, only limited maintenance plans exist for these buildings. However, a lesson learned is that HDI, used to guide the selection of PIDs, is not necessarily correlated with educational indicators such as enrolment and student-teacher ratios. Hence, a more informed targeting could be done if HDI was considered together with such educational indicators.

The very significant increase in SLC pass rates is encouraging and an indication of improvements in the quality of secondary education. However, a more comprehensive assessment of progress towards targets reveals a number of areas where progress has been more modest. Given the validity and reliability problems related to SLC pass rates and

the fact that other quality indicators do not mirror the positive developments in SLC data, the overall assessment is that quality has improved less dramatically than suggested by the SLC rates. For example, an assessment of grade 8 students carried out in 2008 does not support the notion of a dramatic increase in quality. Hence, while part of the increase in the SLC rate is likely to reflect real improvements to the curriculum, to teacher education programmes, to student assessment and to the learning environment, the very significant increase in SLC rates can arguably also be explained by poor reliability of data, continued cheating and pressurising of teachers by parents in district and national examinations, and the adoption of a more liberal assessment and promotion policy. The overall trend is positive nevertheless: An improvement in the quality of education can be detected at the school level as further documented by the district field visits undertaken by the evaluation.

The improvement in quality is notable since the significant increase in access has clearly put additional strains on a school system that was already struggling at the outset to deliver quality education relevant to the needs of the nation. Despite the positive trend, the overall effectiveness of the teacher education component has been reduced by a number of factors including lack of resource material at the schools, inadequate teacher allocations and a marked mismatch between the training situation and the actual conditions in most classrooms (e.g. introduction of teaching methods that do not take into account the very high number of students in classrooms). Teachers have been faced with increased workloads and are left with little time to prepare for and organise classroom activities encouraged in the training. A key outstanding challenge is the need to increase the proportion of female teachers and teachers from minority groups especially in secondary school.

The long-term *sustainability* of the gains made in access will need to be carefully monitored in the coming years. A key issue to follow is the retention rates and achievements of girls and students from disadvantaged groups. A key outstanding challenge is the need to increase the proportion of female teachers and teachers from minority groups, especially in secondary school. Finally, a lesson learned is that the various reform measures directed towards quality improvements need to factor in the role of the teacher performance culture in the public schools. Currently, the performance culture does not seem to promote the adoption of new techniques and methods.

Sustainability also depends on the capacity of the education management system to deliver. The programme has not had an adequate vision and strategy for building the capacity of the implementing partners, but different entities have still received relevant and much appreciated inputs. The overall impression remains, however, that progress on capacity development is limited, and that many of the interventions are either too limited in scope or the effectiveness is diluted by high staff turnover, especially at the district level. Hence, a key lesson learned is that a programme with the scope and ambition of SESP needs to be supported by a strong capacity development plan.

At the school level, SMCs are an interesting platform on which increased participation and accountability can be built. Current capacity development efforts need to be enhanced to enable the SMC to fulfil its envisaged role.

Finally, at the *impact* level, it is notable that quality appears to be improving although not at the rate suggested by the increase in SLC pass rates. As the assessment against Vision 2012 shows, Nepal still has some way to go before the aspirations of Vision 2012 can be

fulfilled. Improvements are registered in most areas of the vision but at the current rate of progress, it is far from certain that the vision will be achieved by 2012. As pointed out, there is need for increased focus on monitoring of quality of education, further revision of curriculum, a more coherent teacher education programme and an improved system for deployment and management of teachers. Moreover, measures for capacity development at all levels of the system need to be designed and rolled out in a more coherent and informed way.

10.2 Strategic Recommendations

This joint evaluation was carried out at a juncture where the final appraisal of the forthcoming SSR is ongoing. The SESP interventions are expected to continue in the framework of the SSR, which introduces a new school structure, comprising classes 1-8 as basic education and classes 9-12 as secondary education.

One of the immediate objectives of the joint evaluation is to elaborate forward-looking recommendations, which could contribute to policy development and the future development of the secondary education in view of the ongoing school sector reform.

The previous chapters have presented a number of recommendations that argue *inter alia* for the continued investment in infrastructure, scholarships, recruitment of new teachers, teacher follow-up training and increased focus on improvement in school management. All of these interventions are needed to sustain the gains of current investments.

Some of these recommendations can be implemented immediately, while others require a long-term approach. For the bulk of the specific recommendations, the responsibility lies with the GoN through the MoE and its various implementing entities notably the DoE, DCD, NCED, and the JEMC. However, Nepal's development partners also have a key responsibility in engaging in dialogue with the GoN on how best to sequence the reform and prioritise the external funding being made available to the sector.

Moreover, some of the issues may be outside the direct control of the education system, but require immediate action such as the need to reactivate the teacher deployment system. The lack of teachers has been identified as one of the main stumbling blocks for making further progress in terms of improving quality. Secondly, it seems important that the effect of reducing scholarship amounts be assessed as a matter of priority. Significant funds are spent on scholarships and it will be important to ensure early on in SSR implementation whether this practice needs to be corrected in order to maximise the value added of the programme. Similarly, the DoE should follow up immediately on the quality issues identified by the evaluation team to ensure that funds are spent as efficiently and effectively as possible at the district and school levels.

The evaluation would further like to put forward the following strategic recommendations to contribute to policy development and the future development of secondary education. To some extent, these recommendations overlap with some of the specific recommendations, but are more policy-oriented.

1. The strategies and methods employed to increase quality further need to be adjusted to better cope with the increasing student population in secondary education. First of all, there is a need to develop a better and more nuanced understanding of quality and its components. It is important that such a definition is fully owned by the GoN, and there is consequently a need to encourage the work already going on under the leaderships of the MoE to come up with a definition of quality in education in consultation with key stakeholders. Similarly, the MoE needs to define strategies to roll this out to schools and classrooms. The GoN needs to factor in processes such as student and teacher performance incentives and the actual conditions facing teachers in the classrooms when rolling out some of the specific recommendations mentioned in this report, such as further revision of the curriculum and the development of a more coherent teacher education programme. Moreover, the accountability for quality education outcomes and school performance has to be clearly outlined at the different levels, including the local government and the contributing agencies (development partners and NGOs).
2. In terms of the actual strategies, there is, in coherence with the decentralisation process, a need for a more contextualised approach with greater utilisation of local resources and increased flexibility in design of buildings and classrooms so that designs from DoE can be adapted to local conditions. Another important aspect is to strengthen the capacity at local level for increased accountability for school performance. The school-mapping exercise is critical in this context.
3. Strategies for promoting equity and inclusion of disadvantaged groups need to go beyond the access issue and, in the case of children with disabilities, the physical access within the school area has to be strongly enforced. The strategy should focus on developing a learning environment which is free of discrimination and which facilitates the retention and performance of students from disadvantaged groups.
4. Given the limited capacity in the system, and to exploit synergies, the potential for collaboration with NGOs, INGOs and the private sector should be better utilised. As a starting point, representatives could participate more fully in the SSR appraisal as well as in the forthcoming reviews. In the medium to long term, there may be scope for strengthening the consultation and coordination between the MoE/DoE system and the NGOs at district level.
5. Finally, future reforms and their underlying rationale needs to be more clearly communicated to have a real effect and impact at the district and school levels. As a case in point, initiatives such as the National Curriculum Framework need to be effectively implemented through a communication strategy tailored to the various target groups. For SSR, it is critically important that all key stakeholders are addressed through tailor-made communication that sensitises the stakeholders to the contents of the reform programmes, their role and the changes that they are likely to experience as a result of these changes. Communication plays an important part in securing commitment and ownership.

It is hoped that the above strategies will play a key role in further boosting access, equality and quality in secondary education. Regardless of the achievements of the SESP, it is important to remember that a very large part of the population still does not enrol in secondary education. Approximately two thirds of the relevant age group are still not enrolled in secondary school at the appropriate level.

Appendix 1 – Terms of Reference

1 Introduction

The Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP) came into effect in 2003 as a joint programme implemented under the aegis of the Government of Nepal with support from Asian Development Bank and Denmark with a total basket of 74.8 million USD over a sevenyear period.

The principal policy goal of the SESP is to strengthen the involvement of local communities in the running and funding of their own schools, with assistance from and under the supervision of the national government. The main vehicle for securing this greater involvement is the design and implementation of the School Improvement Plan (SIP).

The purpose of the SESP is to provide funding and technical assistance to achieve essential improvements in the quality of teaching, the curriculum and learning environments, while steadily building capacity at the central and local levels to take forward these improvements in the future and to fund from their own sources a higher level of recurrent and development expenditure.

The three main objectives of SESP are:

- Improvement in access and equity in secondary education;
- Improvement in the quality and relevance of secondary education; and
- Improvement in the institutional capacity to support a school-focused secondary education system.

The main outcomes the SESP aims to achieve are:

- To raise Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) in lower secondary from 55 per cent to 65 per cent, and in secondary from 35 per cent to 55 per cent by 2007
- To raise the participation of girls from 40 per cent to 50 per cent in both lower secondary and secondary education and to increase similarly the percentage of disadvantaged groups by 2007
- To raise and sustain measurable improvements in educational outcomes as evidenced by the grade 8 and SLC examinations; the numbers passing grade 8 should increase as should those passing SLC. Similarly proportionate increases should be achieved for girls and students from traditionally disadvantaged groups.

SESP is now nearing the end of its current phase of implementation and is going to be transformed into a sectoral frame within the School Sector Reform (SSR) from 2009 onwards. Although the SESP interventions will continue they will be part of the holistic school sector reform with focus on 1-12 school structure, comprising 1-8 basic education and 9-12 secondary education.

The evaluation of EFA has already begun and is expected to feed into the SSR Appraisal in March 2009. In this juncture, the EFA and SESP joint Mission held in November 2008 contemplated on the need for undertaking a separate SESP evaluation, along with the EFA evaluation, and agreed to carry out such an exercise, reflecting on the overall programme interventions and assessing the outcomes, paving the way for its continuation and integration within the SSR framework. The SESP evaluation is thus deemed crucial to draw lessons from the current programme and setting the stage for improving and expanding the secondary education programme across the country.

2 Evaluation Purpose and Objectives

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the development partners agreed to the purpose and objectives of this evaluation during the EFA and SESP joint mission in November 2008.

2.1 Evaluation Purpose

The overall purpose of the evaluation is to provide information about the outcomes and document early signs of impact of the SESP that MoE, the development partners and other education stakeholders can use for improving the policy framework and further the design of the on-going SSR.

2.2 Evaluation Objectives

The overall objective to which this evaluation is intended to contribute to is an improved foundation for the design of effective secondary education reform measures and intervention strategies. This will be achieved through the fulfilment of five immediate objectives designed to identify, document and disseminate key outcomes and lessons learned from the SESP.

The five-fold immediate objectives of the evaluation are to:

- a) Assess the efficiency, effectiveness, relevance and sustainability of each of the four components of the SESP as well as the SESP as a whole.
- b) Evaluate the strategies, approaches and methods adopted by the SESP in achieving the three main objectives.
- c) Assess the performance of (1) the implementing partners in the implementation of the respective components/activities and (2) the schools in the use of goods and services provided.
- d) Analyze the anticipated and unanticipated, positive and negative impact of the SESP on the target groups.
- e) Enlist the lessons learned and best practices developed by the SESP, and elaborate forward-looking recommendations, which could contribute to policy development and future development of the secondary education in the view of the on-going SSR.

It is expected that the immediate results of the evaluation will be that MoE's current work in sample districts (PID and non PID) is assessed documented and disseminated in

a systematic way, and that key information on outcomes and lessons learned are received and processed as input for the SSR initiatives.

In the medium term it is also expected that the evaluation will contribute to improved evidence-based and results-oriented programming as well as increased visibility of MoE's work. Through the involvement of the MoE's M&E staff throughout the evaluation, it is also expected that the evaluation will contribute to a strengthened M&E capacity, in particular with regard to evaluations. In addition, the evaluation is expected to provide information relevant for both accountability and learning purposes for the development partners ADB and Danida.

3 Evaluation Framework

The evaluation will have to cover three broad and interlinked areas:

- (a) study of the early impacts of the SESP interventions with regards to the target groups (including the participating students, teachers, Headteachers, School Management Committee members and school as a whole), and as compared to the main objectives and the 2012 vision described in the Core Document;
- (b) assessment of the performance of the SESP covering relevance of the objectives, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability; and
- (c) evaluate the performance of the partners including ADB and Danida; but in particular the implementing partners at different levels such as the MoE, DoE, CDC, NCED, OCE, DEOs, schools in the Programme Intensive Districts (PIDs) and other entities involved in either delivering or receiving SESP products and services.

In developing the evaluation methodology, it is expected that an approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods of collecting and analyzing data will be used, in order to assess the outcomes and potentially impacts of the SESP, including a quantification hereof where possible and relevant, as well as explanations of the processes and interventions that fostered or hindered the achievement of these outcomes and impacts. To gain methodological rigor, the evaluation should estimate the counterfactual, that is, what would have happened had the SESP never taken place. In order to achieve this, it is expected that the evaluation methodology will include a comparative approach whereby the investments and progress made in the PIDs is compared to the same in non-PIDs, so as to generate lessons learned about the value added of the SESP strategies and approach.

3.1 Early signs of impact on the students, teachers, principals and schools

The SESP is intended to contribute significantly to the achievement of the 2012 vision described in the Core Document. Through the delivery of a range of outputs and services, the SESP is expected to have an impact on the behaviour and performance of key stakeholders at various levels ranging from students over schools to district- and central-level service providers.

A basic requirement in assessing the early signs of impacts on students, teachers, principals, schools, and the service delivery system in general is the assessment of the manner in which they have or have not changed and the extent that the SESP was responsible. Through its vision for 2012, the SESP Core Document describes the situation that is expected to prevail

in 2012. The evaluation will assess the current status of progress towards this 2012 vision, and establish whether the 2012 vision remains a realistic and desirable target given the SSR and the current implementation, political and economic context.

3.2 Performance of the SESP

(i) Relevance of Objectives

The extent to which the SESP objectives are consistent with the MoE's policies on secondary Education (as well as with relevant international frameworks) needs to be assessed.

The relevance factor determines whether the SESP was worth doing. It assesses whether SESP objectives were focused on the right priorities when designed, and if they were adjusted to suit changing circumstances during implementation.

(ii) Effectiveness

Effectiveness is the extent to which the planned outputs, expected outcomes (immediate objectives) and intended impacts (development objectives) are being or have been produced or achieved. It should be noted that the assessment of early signs of impact has been singled out as an area of specific concern (see above).

(iii) Efficiency

Efficiency is the extent to which the SESP achieved, or is expected to achieve, benefits commensurate with inputs, based on economic and financial analysis or unit costs compared with alternative options and good practices.

Conventional project economic indicator – economic rate of return (ERR) – presents well recognized tests of efficient resource use. Sometimes, qualitative judgments by evaluators are necessary to assess efficiency, but always relying on an appreciation of the underlying concepts of cost/benefit analysis, together with good practice in similar situations and any other suitable indicators.

Assessments of efficiency (in the absence of ERR) should take into account, inter alia, the following factors:

- a) actual costs compared with appraisal estimates and any revisions;
- b) implementation delays and any redesign that may have increased costs;
- c) the level of benefits and their growth curves compared with expectations (if feasible);
- d) utilization rates for SESP facilities and services;
- e) whether services and facilities meet good practice standards; and
- f) whether the benefits stream appears adequate compared with the costs.

(iv) Sustainability of the SESP

Sustainability of the SESP and is an important part of the assessment, both in order to understand the performance of SESP so far, but also to facilitate integration of lessons learned and recommendations with regards to sustainability into future work. A further area of assessment that should be considered in relation to the issue of sustainability of SESP and the outcomes and impacts achieved, are the overarching factors of innovation and replicability of the SESP interventions.

3.3 Performance of the Partners

The performance of the partners needs to be assessed against the implementation agreements and planned outputs (products and services) set out in the SESP Core Document.

The items to be assessed include, but are not necessarily limited to, the following:

- a) The extent to which the MoE, ADB and Danida complied with the signed agreements;
- b) The extent to which the MoE and its implementing line agencies prepared and implemented annual plans and budgets (ASIP) in a manner that facilitated the timely delivery of the agreed SESP outputs in the agreed quality and quantity;
- c) The extent to which the donors made available the agreed inputs (financing and Technical Assistance) in time and in the right quantity and quality;
- d) The extent to which different implementing line agencies within MoE system at central, regional, district and school level, facilitated or hampered the SESP implementation and contributed to the achievement of SESP objectives;
- e) The extent to which the MoE's coordination, management and oversight functions facilitated the timely identification and assessment of implementation problems and the timeliness and appropriateness of the corrective measures taken; and
- f) The extent to which the intended target groups took ownership of the produced/delivered outputs and used these for intended/un-intended purposes.

4 Expected Outputs

After four (4) weeks from the commencement of the assignment, the Evaluation Team should submit an inception report and subsequently present their work at a seminar in Nepal (see tentative time line below). The consultants should undertake logistical preparation of the seminar. The inception report should outline the refined methodology, which include a matrix of analysis/evaluation matrix. This is expected to include the evaluation questions and to firm up the impact points, with indicators for each impact point, methodology for measuring the indicators, sources of data (including types, sizes and geographical coverage of PID and Non PID samples to be surveyed) and data collection instruments (questionnaires, focus group discussion guides, check-lists and etc.). It should further include preliminary results and pinpoint any specific challenges or areas of interest encountered or foreseen for the upcoming work. Based on the discussion and comments on the inception report, the consultants may be required to submit a revised version and/or a work plan containing any revision needed.

At the end of the period, the draft final report should be submitted and subsequently be presented at a seminar in Nepal. The consultants should undertake logistical preparation of the seminar. A hard and soft copy of the draft final report as well as a brief powerpoint presentation of the Evaluation Team's key observations and analysis made as well as main conclusions and recommendations should be provided to the Management Group no later than three working days before the seminar.

The final evaluation report should be presented incorporating the feedback received at the seminar and within three (3) weeks from the date of the seminar. The final report should be a well documented comprehensive SESP Evaluation Report which addresses the objectives listed under Section 2 above and in a format acceptable to the MoE, Danida and ADB. The final report and a brief summarizing power-point presentation should be provided in hard- and soft copy to the MoE.

The evaluation process and the report must comply with international standards (see the Evaluation Guidelines of EVAL, Danida).

5 Evaluation Management

The evaluation will be jointly managed by a management group comprised of representatives of MoE and EVAL (the premises for the joint evaluation management and the inputs of the partners are clarified in the agreed minutes of the partners' meeting in Kathmandu, February 2nd, 2009).

The management group will be responsible for the overall management of the evaluation (selection of consultants, chairing reference group meetings and seminars, quality assurance of the evaluations work etc.). An important aspect of the quality assurance is to ensure that the evaluation must be conducted in accordance with international standards, as mentioned above (see the Evaluation Guidelines of EVAL, Danida).

Further, two reference groups will be established, one based in Kathmandu, Nepal and the other based in Copenhagen, Denmark, to ensure the input of relevant stakeholders, help validate the findings and gain wider ownership. It is expected that the Nepal-based reference group will include (but not necessarily be limited to) ADB and the Monitoring and Evaluation Section of MoE. The reference groups will function in an advisory manner and give comments that the management group can carry forward to the consultants.

In line with international standards, it is stressed that the responsibility for assessment and interpretations rests with the consultants, and that the independence of the evaluation team will be maintained and respected throughout the process.

6 Logistical Arrangements

It is envisaged that the successful completion of this evaluation will rely heavily upon the mobilization of a strong team of specialists. The evaluation team should consist of consultants with extensive relevant international experience, as well as consultants with in-depth knowledge of Nepal and the education sector of Nepal. The team must possess strong competence and experience in the fields of complex evaluation, educational assessment, educational management, economics of education and international development cooperation. The team must further possess the relevant methodological skills required for an approach based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis, preferably including econometrics. The team must be able to work and write fluently in English and Nepali.

One of the team members will be assigned as Team Leader and should possess strong analytical abilities and excellent writing and presentation skills, as well as proven experience with complex, preferably joint, evaluations.

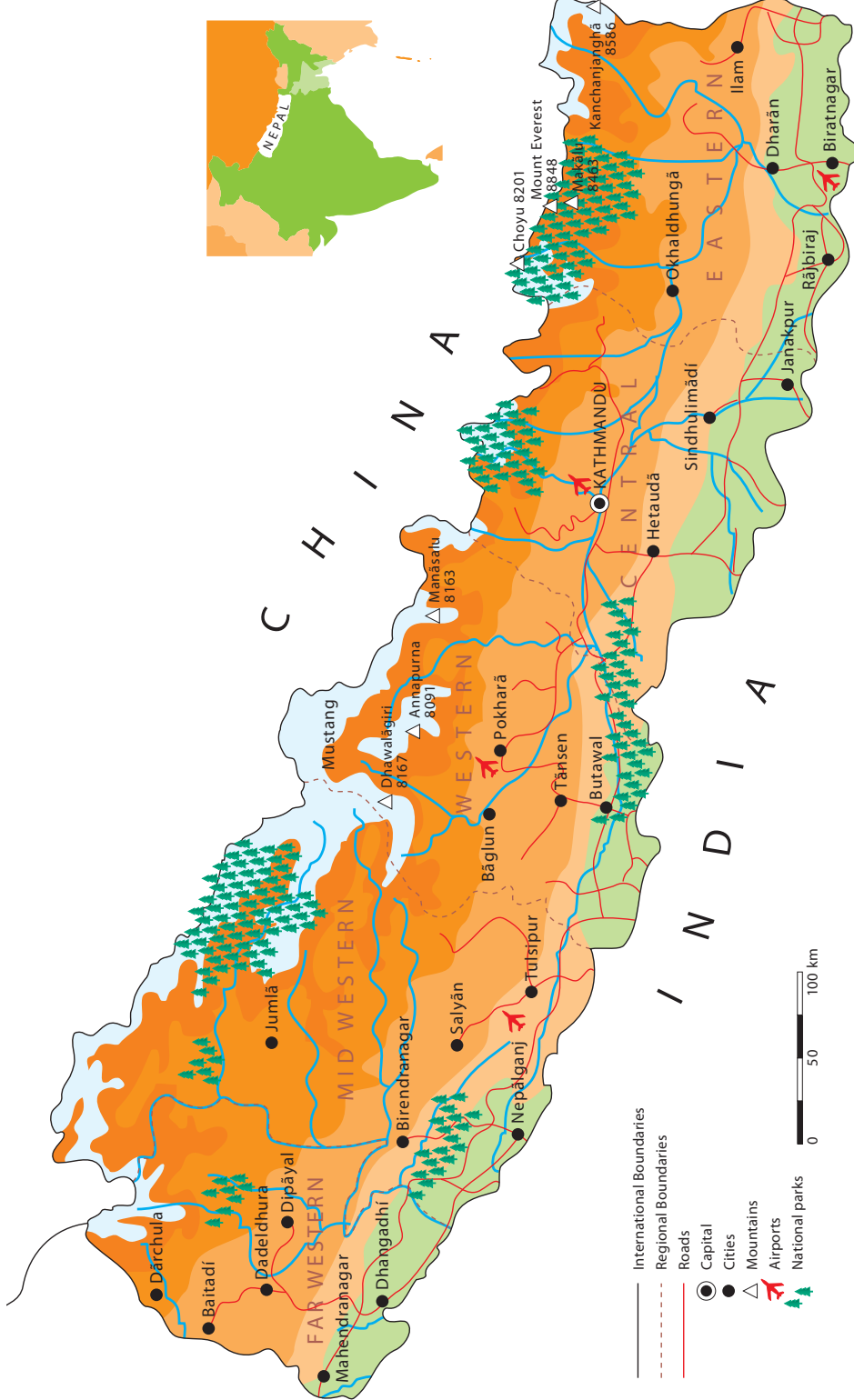
The duration of the study is expected to be from early March to late July 2009; see tentative timeline below. In order to complete the evaluation task in a timely manner, the consultants must be willing and able undertake at least two field trips to Nepal and be available for the Seminars.

A no conflict of interest policy will apply when selecting the consultants.

7 Tentative Evaluation Schedule

- 03 Feb 2009* Finalization of ToR.
- 04 Feb 2009* Announcement of the Evaluation.
- 20 Feb 2009* Deadline for submission of Expression of Interest.
- 06 Mar 2009* Signing of contract.
- 06 Apr 2009* Submission of inception report.
- 09 Apr 2009* Seminar on inception report.
- 19 Jun 2009* Submission of draft final report.
- 26 Jun 2009* Seminar on draft final report.
- 24 Jul 2009* Submission of final report.

Nepal



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