



Consolidating National Policies on Equivalency towards Accomplishing Universal Primary Education (UPE)





This monograph was prepared by Dr. Mana Prasad Wagley and Dr. Shreeram Prasad Lamichhane.

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For more information please contact:

UNESCO Office in Kathmandu

Jawalakhel, Lalitpur, P.O. Box 14391

Kathmandu, NEPAL

E-mail: kathmandu@unesco.org

Tel: +977-1-5554-396/769

Fax: +977-1-5554-450

<http://www.unesco.org/kathmandu>

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Dr. Shreeram Prasad Lamichhane
Dr. Mana Prasad Wagley



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Kathmandu Office

Jawalakhel • Lalitpur • PO Box 14391 • Kathmandu • Nepal
Phone +977-1-5554-396/769 • Fax +977-1-5554-450

Abbreviations

APPEAL	Asia-Pacific Programme of Education for All
ASP	Alternate School Programme
CCOSP	Child Centered Out of School Children Programme
CERID	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development
DEO	District Education Office
EFA	Education for All
FE	Formal Education
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSP	Flexible Schooling Programme
IFCD	Innovative Forum for Community Development
INGO	International Non Governmental Organizations
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MDG	Millennium Goals
MOES	Ministry of Education & Sports
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NFEC	Non-Formal Education Center
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategic Paper
RP	Resource Person
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SOP	School Outreach Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nation's children's Fund
UPE	Universal Primary Education
VDC	Village Development Committee

Contents

1. Introduction	1
Background	1
Objectives	2
Expected outcomes	3
Study procedures	3
2. Review of national documents	5
3. Review of international experiences	8
4. Existing scenario of ASP	13
Respondents' ideas	19
FGD results	21
FSP completer case	23
5. Strengthening basic and primary education	25
Enrollment gap	27
Gender gap	27
Retention gap	28
Dalit's education gap	28
Janajati's education gap	29
Literacy gap	29
6. Equivalency measures	30
Policy recommendations	30
Functional mechanism	32
7. Annexes	33

List of tables

Table 1: Tools Matrix	4
Table 2: Comparative Picture of the Status of FSP in Various Places	13
Table 3: Comparative Picture of the Status of SOP in Various Places	16
Table 4: Respondents' Ideas	19
Table 5: Enrollment of FSP Completers in Mother School	24

Chapter I

Introduction

Background

By virtue of its empowering characteristics having to do with human development, nonformal education extends over a wider space in terms of its roles and functions. In other words it is not equated with merely a literacy program but more than that it is extended to regard the need for unfolding creative, analytical, critical and productive powers that lie inherent in an individual. To this end, the importance and meaning of nonformal education as an active agent for human empowerment has been increasingly recognized.

NFE has, since the sixties, grown functionally more dynamic over the world. The NFE tradition is, in fact, an effective dimension—an achievement—in the field of education, and NFE as such may be looked upon as an alternative, or complement, to formal education. In expert's definition, NFE has been accepted as a participatory teaching process quite different from the formal curriculum and structure—different in that it is focused on existing needs and problems. The objective of NFE is not bound within any particular functional field, process or structure and so can be adjusted or readjusted as required.

The pace of NFE expansion in Nepal started in the mid-seventies, when CERID launched an innovative project 'education for rural transformation' in Lahachok VDC of Kaski district. Then in the late seventies after reflecting on the positive outcomes of the Lahachok project, CERID launched the 'integrated nonformal education project' in five districts of Nepal. These achievements proved to be landmarks paving the way for expeditious operation of NFE activities in Nepal. Consequently government and non-government organizations strove to establish NFE delivery structures in such a rapid manner, at a gallop pace. (CERID, 2006)

Today, in Nepal, there are numerous NGOs and I-NGOs involved in NFE programs. Conceivably, the focus of these programs is on human development with emphasis on fostering human skills in areas such as health, education, social living, awareness building, income generation, civic awareness, human rights and so on. It seems that these organizations have used their own *modus operandi* to conduct NFE activities. Moreover the graduates of these NFE programs saw no doors open forward to use and implement their own knowledge and skills. Most of them want to go for further study and some of them to end in some kind of income generating skills. In this context, it has been essential to know the strengths of such programs which can be accredited for the entry to formal education mainstreaming. There are some programs under alternative schooling run by the NFE center of the MOES. Thus this study focused on the Consolidating National Policies on Equivalency towards Accomplishing Universal Primary Education (UPE) in Nepal.

Although quantitative growth in primary enrollment has reached up to an impressive level it has yet to increase further to attain a level of full satisfaction because a little over 15% of the school age children are still out of school. As formal education structure alone would not be sufficient to meet the 'education for all' goal the essentiality of alternative learning strategies are undisputable.

To cater the need of the out of school population (especially children) to enter into the mainstream of formal education, the NFE Center of the MOES has launched Alternative Schooling Program (ASP). This program came into existence to fulfill government's commitment of EFA by 2015. This ASP covers two programs: School Outreach Programs (SOP) and Flexible School Program (FSP). The SOP targets children from ages 6-8 years located in small hamlets and sparsely populated areas. Providing schooling facility of grades 1-3 this program intends all SOP graduates to join grade 4 in the mainstream formal education system. This is a three years program. On the other hand, the FSP targets children aged 8-14 (who are out of school). The FSP uses consolidated primary school curriculum so as to make the participants able to join grade 6 after 3 years of study. The intention is to save valuable time of the participants with special training in three years. This program intends to enroll children living in urban, suburban and industrial areas where child laborers are prevalent. Both FSP and SOP emphasize need-based and demand driven educational programs that target mainly the socially disadvantaged population and out of school girls. These programs have been in operation since 2000.

Equally important is the fact that unless a system of bridging the alternative learning approach to the formal school system with the provision of legal recognition to the learning achievement of the participants of alternative learning strategies is institutionalized alternative approach to learning has little meaning. The only way to ensure such legal recognition can be set through the consolidation of national policies on awarding equivalency to the academic achievements of the participants of the alternative learning modalities vis-a vis the students of conventional schools.

In order to address the need as mentioned above it seems pertinent to undertake a study with focus on analyzing the existing situation of the equivalency provision and pursued practices and to suggest, on the basis of the study results, policy concerns for further reform.

Objectives

This study intends to review equivalency initiatives and research outcomes in other countries along with existing equivalency linkages of NFE to formal education structure and to recommend some operational modalities in the Nepali context. Moreover, the study aims to

- ♦ Add further impetus in the process of attaining UPE through research based policy direction concerning equivalency linkages between non-formal and formal education streams.
- ♦ Analyze case(s) of unschooled and come up with some policy recommendations with the intent to enable them to enter into mainstream education and/or into the world of vocations

- ♦ Suggest functional mechanism for the implementation of the recommended equivalency policies.

Expected Outcomes

- ♦ ASP participants' needs will be identified with particular focus on how they perceive basic and primary education.
- ♦ Approaches adopted to educationally facilitate unschooled and dropout children will be identified.
- ♦ Policies and strategies contributing to equivalency linkages between formal and non-formal education will be produced.
- ♦ Meaningful inputs for strengthening basic and primary education will be suggested.

Study Procedures

The main purpose of this study was to analyze the program perspectives and come up with policies for consolidating the ongoing NFE approaches to mainstreaming formal education structure. For the purpose Kathmandu, Kaski and Morang were selected as sites for the study. Later, when it was known that none of these districts have FSP completers, one more district Kavre was added to study the completers' case. Parents, children, social workers, teachers, facilitators, head-teachers, NFE officials and others were identified as the respondents. This study adopted qualitative approach soliciting perception and ideas of the stakeholders through interviews and focus group discussions. The field researchers identified the respondents from within the program centers. To make this research more relevant several procedures were applied. 9: A critical analysis of the equivalency situation was carried out by adopting the following procedural steps. Documents Review: Analytical review of policies, programs and interesting practices of equivalency between formal and non-formal education both from within and outside the country.

Case Studies: Case(s) was analyzed showing both strong and weaker links with respect to equivalency. In doing this unschooled case(s) was explored

FGD: Respective stakeholders were involved in a discourse aimed at exploring their perception and views regarding equivalency.

Interviews: Interviews were conducted with SOP and FSP facilitators, school supervisors, DEO, head-teachers, teachers, SOP and FSP children, parents of the SOP and FSP children, frontline runners, school management committee members and policy makers regarding their perception, strengths, weaknesses and expectations.

The collection of information focused mainly on the needs, policy and practice of equivalency regarding the SOP and FSP activities. The following table explains.

Table 1:
Tools Matrix

Respondents	Needs	Policy	Practice of equivalency
Participants	√		
Facilitators	√	√	√
Parents	√		√
Frontline runners +NGO/INGO	√	√	√
DEO/RP	√	√	√
Policy makers including NFEC Officials	√	√	√

♦ *See Annex.1 for themes identified for interviewing and FGD.Chapter II*

Chapter II

Review of National Documents

Attempts were made to search literatures that are relevant to equivalency measures of the NFE-FE dichotomy. However, very few national documents have indicated the kinds of equivalency we were talking about. This section provides information on the NFE activities related to the alternate school program for the out of school population as mentioned in different policy as well as research documents of Nepal.

National Education Commission (1992) recommended the government "to confer literacy on out of school children and school drop outs of the 8-14 age group through the medium of children's education programs and to encourage them to go in for formal education" (p.133). About equivalency of non formal and formal school levels the report clearly suggested that " A definition of different levels of literacy—basic level, middle level and self study level – should be prepared, and the equivalence of each of them with formal education should be laid down. Similarly, the curriculum for the first and second stage of children's education should be worked out, and the equivalence of each of them with formal education should be determined. While deciding on the equivalence of different levels of literacy, the basic level should be equated with class 3 of primary education, and the middle level with class 5. Likewise, the first stage of children's education, conducted by the Children's home or other social organizations should be equated with class 3 of primary education, and the second stage with class 5" (p.134). Moreover, it suggested open admission from lower secondary to secondary level at self study level.

Although equivalency of formal and non formal education was not talked in the Ninth Plan (1997-2002), the emphasis can be found in NFE. The policy emphasized on the interrelationship between literacy and basic primary education. The Plan further envisaged an access of literate children to enter formal education.

The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) focused on literacy, post-literacy, income generating and life relevant non formal education. The Plan aimed to provide opportunities of basic primary education to 200, 000 children through non formal education. It also emphasized education for out of school children.

High Level National Education Commission (1999) recommended Siksha Sadan as school extension program for out of school children using the same textbooks used in the formal primary schools. It also recommended some bridge from NFE to formal education. Moreover the report recommended non forfal primary and non formal secondary leading to open education up to the higher education level.

EFA National Plan of Action (2001-15) in its goal 3 stated "Ensuring that the learning needs of young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skill

programs". The current provision of the government in this regard is the NFE for children who missed normal schooling. The same plan in goal 4 stated "Achieving a 50% improvement in the level of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all". The government strategy in this regard has been NFE for out of school children and youths for mainstreaming to formal education. The plan envisages a 100 percent child enrollment in primary education by 2015. To achieve this goal the plan mentions mainstreaming out of school children through certain strategies like

- ♦ Bringing disadvantaged and deprived children to formal education
- ♦ Compensating opportunity costs linking with INGO/NGO
- ♦ Provision of alternative schooling and school extensions
- ♦ Residential schools in sparsely populated areas.

Moreover the plan envisages association of out of school children and youths with work places like health, environment, agriculture, veterinary occupational preparations. It also dreams bridging school to work. The area of equity and parity is said to be sought through school extension program and full time as well as part time residential schools. Whatever the programs, the plan talks about guaranteed quality and relevancy.

EFA (2004-09) mentioned the enrolment and retention of out of school children as the main issue and challenge for mainstreaming and participation. In its principle and strategies the plan indicates "with a view to addressing the needs of the marginalized children, alternative and flexible schooling will be emphasized" (p.23). Moreover, it states that in order to increase access of children, who are currently out of school, the program will focus on physical access as well as multiple ways to bring all children to school. The plan has a strategy of alternative and flexible schooling to meeting the needs of all children including indigenous people and linguistic minorities.

In 2004, UNICEF funded a study on "Assessment of out of school children program" which was conducted by IFCD. The study aimed assessing classroom practices and methods being used in UNICEF supported CCOSP classes, identifying impacts of the CCOSP on the learners, and studying the modality of management and implementation of the program. It covered 40 classes of CCOSP II in Sunsari and Nawalparasi districts. The impact of the program was found in raising the level of literacy, community development, community awareness and collaboration in local development process, and transferring knowledge of health and sanitation from classes to home environment. Poor physical facilities, small classes, absenteeism of both the learners and facilitators, dropouts, lack of facilitator's preparation, and their incapability in contextualize the learning in local culture were some of the major flaws of the program.

In 2004 JICA funded a study on "A survey of dropout children of Dhading and Siraha districts" aiming to identify common causative factors of school dropouts, identify most influential factors that have dominantly caused school dropouts, and recommend measures to address school dropout problems. This study surveyed 29 schools and found out mainly the following

- ♦ Poverty, household chores, illiteracy of parents are some of the major reasons for dropout
- ♦ Dropout children were interested to rejoin the school.

In 2005 a study was funded by JICA on Situation analysis of SOP and FSP in Dhading and Siraha districts conducted by TESSON the main purposes were identifying the existing situation of SOP and FSP graduates, analyzing positive and negative factors that contributed the children to remain in formal school or drop out and recommending strategic measures to improve the programs. The study assessed 8 FSP and 14 SOP centers and their programs from 2000 to 2003. The study found

- ♦ The age range of SOP was 4-14 while enrolling and that was 6-14 for FSP
- ♦ The wastage ratio was 25
- ♦ More boys were enrolled, dalits were less enrolled
- ♦ Classes were not child friendly
- ♦ There was a problem of materials and resources
- ♦ There were more male facilitators than female ones
- ♦ Day time was not appropriate for students
- ♦ Socialization skills, cooperativeness and friendliness are some of the major learning achievements of the students
- ♦ General knowledge, language transfer and 3 R's were some other achievements
- ♦ Not all FSP completers were enrolled in grade six; more than 60 percent of the graduates were enrolled in lower grades from 2-5. Similarly about 25 percent of the Sop completers were found enrolled in grades 2 and 3.
- ♦ The drop out rate for both programs was more than 20 percent.
- ♦ Overage, tardiness, below standard in formally targeted classes, were some of the major problems of the programs.
- ♦ About 30 percent in SOP and 20 percent in FSP never completed the program; poverty was the main cause.
- ♦ Not joining formal schooling even after the program was because of no cost to buy school dress and materials and parental pressure to work for household support.

Similarly, Education Regulation (2062) emphasizes on alternative school program for 6-14 years and mainstreaming out of school children in formal schooling through non formal education.

In sum, the attention of the educationists and that of policy makers are found to have some focus on NFE. They seem to have realized the value of NFE as an alternate approach to formal education so that out of school children will get an opportunity of access to education. Although not many literature talk about the formal-nonformal equivalency in education, the intent of the researchers, educationists and policy, makers are found positive in this regard.

Chapter III

Review of International Experiences

Materialization of 'Education for All' will be increasingly possible if a comprehensive education system where the provision for learning strategies outside of the formal system is well-placed and due recognition is given to the learners' achievement for their mobility within the system and their credibility in the world of work. In other words, synergies between formal and non-formal education must be fostered by establishing equivalency programs. Realization of this need by mostly economically underdeveloped countries has led them to develop equivalency programs. The provision of equivalency linkages between formal and non-formal education essentially calls for accreditation of skills and knowledge gained through non-formal education. This approach not only will give esteem of parity to non-formal education but also create opportunities for the NFE participants to seek space for themselves in the formal and non-formal production sectors. Indeed, the importance and meaning of equivalency between formal and non-formal education seems to have been increasingly recognized by economically least developed countries. Such trends are evident in some developed countries also. In this connection, cases from some countries are presented.

In Bangladesh BRAC (Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee) has run alternative schooling program for the children who are unable to join formal schools. The program has three year cycles and is offered three hours per day, six days a week. It's been reported that more than 90% of the enrollees to this program successfully complete the three year cycle and subsequently a large proportion of them are admitted to the government school system after confirming their eligibility by administering achievement test to them (For details see appeal@unesco.org).

A unique example of accreditation and equivalency is found in the Philippines' education system. According to the report 'Non-formal Education Accreditation and Equivalency (NFE A&E) System – Philippines' the BNEF (Bureau of Non-Formal Education, 2006) recognizing the importance of institutionalizing the NFE A&E as a viable alternative learning system has made linkages and articulation agreements with other concerned constituents of the Philippine Basic Education System. These agreements which were put in place through negotiations with various concerned institutions recognize the Elementary and Secondary Certificates of the NFE A&E System as legitimate and comparable forms of certification to that of the formal system. The same report states, the BNEF signed articulation agreements with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) to provide NFE A&E test passers' access to TESDA's vocational training and education programs. Similar agreements were signed also with the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC) which recognize NFE A&E secondary level passers as eligible candidates to join colleges and universities. Even Civil Service Commission recognizes the NFE A&E certificates as valid as elementary and secondary certificates for permanent appointments to govern-

ment positions. With the establishment of these linkages NFE A&E has been accepted as a legitimate alternative to formal schooling thereby opening access of NFE A&E graduates to the formal post-elementary and post-secondary education system as well as to vocational and technical training opportunities.

For the credibility assurance of NFE A&E as equally significant education system it is crucial to maintain comparable standard and quality with that of formal streams of education. This necessarily involves using effective policies and procedures with respect to NFE A&E testing registration and administration.

The Philippines case demonstrates a comprehensive approach to equivalency linkages between formal and non-formal education systems in the sense that the equivalency provision is not limited only to transfer graduates of the non-formal system to the formal system but to other gainful training programs. Moreover, the graduates of NFE A&E system are counted as eligible candidates for the positions in the civil service.

Accreditation Equivalency Program adopted by the Philippines is the best known certification and equivalency program which ensures eligibility for the school drop-outs completing this program to re-enter the formal school system or gain access to work in a company. Under this program students' skills and knowledge proficiencies are assessed through the administration of Educational Placement Test (Bureau of Non-formal Education and Asia Pacific Co-operation, 2006).

The Philippines case presents a very impressive scenario regarding Accreditation Equivalency program in the sense that once accreditation is conferred on the graduates of NFE A&E programs on the basis of Educational Placement Test they gain mobility benefit within the formal education system as well as in the world of work. The case shows heightened effectiveness of Accreditation Equivalency program which has been remarkably possible because of strong emphasis placed on safeguarding high standards of quality assurance in the NFE A&E programs. The policy which provides NFE A&E with parity of esteem has mitigated traditionally inflicted discriminatory attitude towards NFE A&E. This is a meaning lesson for other countries where NFE is looked down as inferior cousin of formal education.

Cambodia's initiative to promote community learning centers is remarkable. Programs such as adult functional literacy and family life improvement, income-generation skills and entrepreneurship, primary and lower secondary equivalency for children and youth, post-literacy and continuing education materials and information, and family education for early childhood development are conducted in community learning centers. One of the significant features of these community learning centers is that apart from various community support programs, they also operate NFE programs having equivalency with primary and lower secondary levels. For this purpose learning components are identified through curricular adjustment and upon the completion of the course the students are administered tests for measuring their achievement and subsequently are accredited for their entry into the formal system.

The prospect for the expansion of access to formal education system through equivalent NFE operated by community learning centers will certainly increase the momentum to meet EFA goal. In this context, the utility value of community learning centers, as in Cambodia, should be recognized to run NFE programs that attain equivalency with the formal education system.

Brazil has run a program called Telecurso 2000 which is a condensed version of basic curriculum which is offered through distance education mode. Young adults are the participants of this program who have left primary or secondary schools before completion. The courses offered in this program prepare the participants to take examinations for formal certificates (Castro, 1999). Obtaining formal school certificates is a testimony to the proficiency of the participants for further advancement in the formal education structure as well as in job markets.

Namibia's National Literacy Program comprises three stages. In the first stage learners are introduced to their mother tongue and are provided with skills to write properly. The completers of the first stage and those who have had some prior schooling are enrolled in the second stage. In this stage the participants are involved in promotional activities relating to reading and writing and in building knowledge and skills in functional areas such as agriculture, health, civics, etc. They are also involved in issue-based discussions.

The third stage has the provision of English learning. Completion of the third stage of National Literacy Program is accredited as equivalent to completing the fourth grade of formal primary school (The World Bank Group, 2001)

Brazil and Namibia cases demonstrate flexible stances in awarding formal school certificates. The completers of Teleresco 2000 program in Brazil require them to take examinations before providing them with formal school certificates whereas in Namibia the third stage completers are officially accepted as grade four completers of formal primary school.

With the objective to offer learning opportunities in areas such as functional literacy and practical skills for street children and other disadvantaged children living around the slums of Nairobi 'The Undugu Society' developed 'The Undugu Basic Education Program'(UBEP) in 1978. This program consists of three phases, and each phase lasts for a year. The curricula of phase 1, 2 and 3 are similar to those prescribed for primary schools. There is a provision for the completers of phase three to receive vocational training in carpentry, sheet metal and tailoring. The learners interested in vocational training are apprenticed to artisans in the informal sector with a view to enhancing their practical skills and broaden their insight about the world of work.

One of the major success factors of this program is that similarity between the UBEP curriculum and the formal school curriculum has enabled the completers of UBEP program to continue their further education in the for school system. The most important lesson learnt from this program according to Thompson (2001) is that during the course of developing Adult Education and Non-formal Education programs it is important to set up vertical and horizontal links with formal education so that movement between the two sub-sectors picks up the pace. Thus, NFE designed into a progressive frame as mentioned above gains greater value for itself with an attribute of similar potency to that of formal education system.

A case from Uganda is worth mentioning here regarding equivalency between non-formal and formal education. Uganda has commenced 'Basic Education in Urban Poverty Areas' (BEUPA) with the aim to empower out-of school children and adolescents within nine to 18 age groups. BEUPA has interesting attributes such as its core curriculum is a condensed form of the primary school curriculum which has established similarity between the primary school curriculum and the BEUPA curriculum; closer interactions between these two approaches has facilitated the students to move from one sub-sector to another; BEUPA delivers a shortened curriculum from five years to three years cycle; contents are organized into learning areas and a learning area is equivalent to one term's instruction; local expertise are involved to provide skills training which has established a vital link between the school and the community; and learning activities are conducted three hours a day and the rest of the time the learners use for meeting their needs.

One of the main success factors of this program, apart from facilitating learners to get an easier access to primary education, lies in providing career guidance to the learners eventually helping them to move from school to work. What we can learn from this program is that a proper adjustment of primary curriculum which has the provision to be delivered through non-formal approach in a shortened way will create an enabling interaction between formal and non-formal sub-sectors and accords the latter the parity of esteem (Thompson, 2001).

Madagascar demonstrates a unique scenario relating to equivalency provision between formal and non-formal education. Various innovative NFE initiatives have been launched with the aim to reach out to the educationally un-reached people. One of such initiatives is ASAMA (Accelerated Compressed Learning for Malagasy Adolescents). It aims to give a second chance to the adolescents within 10-15 age groups who have had no access to formal school or who dropped out from grade one or grade two for completing the elementary level. ASAMA participants are required to complete the elementary curriculum in ten months who otherwise would have taken five years which is the usual length of time to complete formal elementary level. This program is conducted 42 hours a week and is divided into three terms. The participants use the first six weeks (in other words one term) for reading and during the following term they are taught the curriculum of first and second year of elementary cycle. In the second term the participants' learning achievements during the previous two years are assessed and subsequently recommended for the next term based on the assessment results. In the last term the participants are taught the remaining three years' curriculum of the elementary level. The main attraction of this program is that apart from being intensive it is impressively flexible in the sense that if a participant decides to break away from the program before completing it and wants to re-enter into formal school s/he is allowed for it, provided the concerned individual agrees to take the examination so as to ascertain his/her qualification which helps to determine what level of primary schooling is appropriate for his/her re-entry.

Another important initiative in Madagascar is the operation of Planet of Alphas program for the educationally left out adolescents within 10-17 age groups. The participants under this program are provided with writing and reading skills. Those who complete the course of this program are

accepted as eligible participants in the ASAMA program. Once they complete ASAMA program become potential candidates to enter into the formal schooling system.

Equivalency programs do not seem limited to economically underdeveloped countries only. Even developed countries have recognized their importance. A case of Germany (<http://www.bmz.de/en/issues/education>) shows that children and young people who did not attend school or who dropped from the school early are provided with educational support programs which are tailored to their specific needs and subsequently are linked to the formal educational institutions further learning or to the production sectors depending on their competencies. The latest policy decision has established links between school and non-school primary education which legally recognizes qualifications of non-school learners and thus has ensured esteem of parity to non-school education thereby dispelling the misgiving that it is a parallel and inferior education system.

In sum, cases of equivalency linkage between formal and non-formal education in diverse contexts make it clear that in order to reach out to the educationally un-reached children and adolescents, formal recognition to their competencies which they have achieved from extra-formal provisions of education needs to be sanctioned. And for this matter, administration of achievement tests to the completers of the non-formal system which determine the compatible level of the formal education system should be necessarily ruled in. Competency tests can be administered either by making necessary adjustments in the existing educational mechanism or by setting up a separate entity. Moreover, the purpose of equivalency should be more than transferring the completers of the non-formal system to the formal one. As in the Philippines case equivalency is offered to the learners of the non-formal system in accordance with their program-specific competencies to not only enter into the job market and training institutions but also to compete for the civil positions. These are some brilliant lessons for the decisions of consequence in the education sector in Nepal.

Chapter IV

Existing scenario of ASP

Based on the interviews and observation of SOP and FSP activities a matrix has been prepared separately for SOP and FSP. These matrices give an overall picture of the existing scenario of the programs. Moreover, it provides information on the need, composition, participants' selection criteria, venue selection strategy, selection of facilitators, qualification and training of the facilitators, adequacy and implementation of training skills, program operation time, availability of textbooks and supporting materials, teaching learning processes, attendance pattern and student assessment mechanism of the programs. The following tables explain. Table 2 explains the existing scenario of FSP in different districts.

Table 2:
A comparative picture of the status of FSP programs in various places

Themes	Kathmandu	Morang	Kaski
Need	-Children of landless migrants -Engaging labor works, including household chores -Unable to manage the cost for learning materials/stationeries and fees in formal schools. -Unschooled, drop out and irregular students of formal school. -Janajati	-Children of landless migrants and working class children -Engaging labor works, including household chores -Dalit	-Children from poor socio-economic status - Dalit -irregular students of formal school -Children of landless migrants. -Distance of formal school is not easily accessible
Composition	-Socially disadvantaged (Dalit, Janajati...) -Labor workers -Students from mother school -8-14 years of age -Boys and girls	-Socially disadvantaged (Kamat, Sahani, Paswan, Mandal...) - Students from mother school -8-14 years of age -Boys and girls	-children from mother school children -grade 5 completers -married girls -Boys and girls -8-14 years of age --Socially disadvantaged (Gandharva)

Participants selection criteria	-Poor economic condition -Not able to afford formal schooling -Compelled to labor -Priority to girls	-Out of school children -Poor economic condition -Not able to afford formal schooling -Compelled to labor -Priority to girls	- Poor economic condition -Not able to afford formal schooling -Compelled to labor
Venue selection	-DEO determines the area -NGO decides the Tole	-DEO determines the area -NGO decides the Tole - no public place for classroom	-DEO determines the area on the request of mother group
Facilitator identification	-Advertisement by NGO/sometimes selection by NGO -Selection through interviews -Recommendation to DEO -DEO appoints	-Appointment by DEO -Recommendation by NGO -Sometimes volunteer	-Appointment by DEO -Recommendation by mother group
Qualification of facilitator	-SLC to B.ED - 15 days' induction training -5 days training by DE Office -2 days training by JICA	-SLC - 15 days' induction training -5 days training by DE Office	- SLC - 15 days' induction training -5 days training by DE Office -newly replaced not trained
Adequacy of implementation	-Inadequate training to deal with highly heterogeneous students -Not enough to teach all subjects of grades 1-5 integrated. -Very difficult for teachers to conduct classes -Lack of supportive environment -Training not sufficient	-No monitoring and feedback. -Lack of conceptual clarity among management committee and facilitators -Irregularity of students	- Inadequate training to deal with highly heterogeneous students -Not enough to teach all subjects of grades 1-5 -Irregularity of students -Lack of supportive environment

Operating time	-4 hours a day -Morning shift	-2-3 hours a day -Morning and evening shift	-2-4 hours a day -Morning and evening shift
Availability of materials	-NFEC textbooks used for regular classroom available -DEO provides textbooks and stationeries -Not available in time -Textbooks not according to difficulty level of the age groups, too difficult -Gap in vertical alignment of the textbook	-Textbooks available in time. -Materials were available from but not sufficient	-Textbooks were available but stationeries were not available sufficiently.
Teaching learning process	-Lack of planning and preparation -Classroom environment is not supportive -No activities only lecture	-Just as coaching/tuition class in the perception of parents and children. -It is difficult to say they are learning from school or FSP classes	-No child friendly method.
Attendance pattern	60 percent	-Most of the students were regularly attending in the attendance record but the class has not been conducting regularly in the season of harvesting. -Children were self motivated to come in tuition	Most of the students were regularly attending in the attendance record but the class has not been conducting regularly
Student assessment	-Continuous assessment but no records -Final exam by DE Office – question from DE office -conducted by NGO	-At the end of the year -questions prepared by mother school.	-At the end of the year -questions prepared by mother school.

The matrix given below in Table 3 discusses about several themes under the SOP programs in three districts Kathmandu, Morang and Kaski. Based on fieldwork the matrix presents the present status of SOP in a real sense.

Table 3:
A comparative picture of the status of SOP programs in various places

Themes	Kathmandu	Morang	Kaski
Need	-Children of landless migrants -Unable to manage the cost for learning materials/stationeries and fees in formal schools.	Children of landless migrants	-Poor socio-economic status (Dalit) -Irregularity of students to formal school.
Composition	-Socially disadvantaged -Age from 4-10	Socially disadvantaged	-7-9 years of age -Boys and girls -Socially disadvantaged (Dalit)
Participants selection criteria	Compelled to labor	Poor economic condition	Poor economic condition
Venue selection	-determined by the DEO through RP	-determined by the DEO through RP	-determined by the DEO through RP
Facilitator identification	-Advertisement by NGO/sometimes selection by NGO -Selection through interviews -Appointment by DEO	Appointment of facilitator by DEO	-Appointment of facilitator by DEO on recommendation of VDC and Mother School -Somewhere the facilitator was the head teacher of SOP class conducted school
Qualification of facilitator	-SLC pass -Training induction 17 days' -5 days' English teaching for SOP	-SLC pass -Training induction 17 days'	-SLC and IA -20 days training
Adequacy of implementation	-Inadequate training to deal with highly heterogeneous students -Not enough to teach all subjects of grades 1-5 integrated.	-Inadequate training to deal with highly heterogeneous students	Training not sufficient about teaching methods and assessment process. -Difficult to understand term and terminology of training package.

Operating time	-4 hours/day -Afternoon	-4 hours/day -Operation time and shift (day) determined by the rule of formal school/ mother school	Duration of the program determined by the DEO/NFEC. -Operation time and shift (day) determined by the rule of formal school/ mother school
Availability of materials	-TG not available -Books available -Textbooks not according to difficulty level of the age groups, too difficult	Textbooks available but stationeries not sufficient	Textbooks available but stationeries not sufficient.
Teaching learning process	-Lack of planning and preparation -Classroom environment is not supportive -No activities only lecture	-Lack of planning and preparation -No child friendly method	-No child friendly method.
Attendance pattern	-About 50 percent	-About 50 percent -Irregular	Almost regular
Student assessment	-Written final exam as per the rule of mother school	Written final exam as per the rule of mother school	-Final by RC made tests -Homework

The operation of ASP, which consists of SOP and FSP, marks a significant initiative in providing alternative educational opportunities for those children who on account of various socio-economic and cultural barriers failed to get an access to formal education. This alternative means of learning, which is fashioned along the nonformal approach, has addressed the unschooled children's educational needs thereby opening for their avenues of further learning.

This study took stock of the existing status of FSP and SOP programs of three districts—Kathmandu, Morang and Kaski. Several relevant characteristics of these programs were viewed in order to identify their status. Obviously, deprived and disadvantaged children, marginalized and destitute families including children from Janajatis and Dalits and also dropouts of the formal schools. Who must not be left behind from gaining educational opportunity necessitated the need for launching ASPs and in all these three districts these are the types of children found studying in ASPs.

Since the priority of ASPs is to embrace deprived and disadvantaged children their selection necessarily attends to screening their deprivation, poverty, socio-cultural marginalization, and of

course gender consideration. In sum, ASPs are firmly geared towards educational enablement of the last, least, lost and the lowest.

Next, it is also important that selection approach of program venue necessarily affects children's participation. In the study locations, selection of program venue was done by DEO on the suggestion of NGOs and RPs, which, in fact, is a participatory process.

Another important ingredient of the program is the identification of facilitator. In the case of ASPs in all the districts there are two methods to recruit facilitators. The first one is through advertisement by the concerned NGOs and the second one is through recommendation by NGOs to the DEO. As an exception to this, in Morang for the SOP, the DEO took upon himself to appoint the facilitator. In one SOP in Kaski, the headteacher of the primary school where SOP is conducted is the SOP facilitator. Interestingly, in Morang for FSP operation in one FSP location there is one volunteer facilitator.

Regarding qualification and training of ASP facilitators, SLC is the minimum level. However, there are two exceptions where even an BA and an IA have worked as facilitators. In the case of their training they are provided 15 days' training at the outset and a follow-up training later. Apart from that, for the ASP facilitators in Kathmandu JICA has provided two days' training—whereas in one SOP in Kaski, there is a new facilitator who has yet to receive the training.

There is unanimity that training is inadequate. The facilitators have no ability to execute grade 1-5 integrated curriculum effectively. The facilitators receive no follow-up inputs because of the absence of monetary and feedback mechanism.

The training package does not include inputs relevant for dealing with heterogeneous students. In addition, the teachers' constraints have further increased because the students are not regular. As per the convenience of the children the ASP classes are run 2-4 hours a day morning and day shift. It is uniform in all the ASPs in all the three study districts. So far as availability of learning materials are concerned, textbooks prepared by NFEC are distributed through DE office, and there is no problem of availing learning materials to the students in time. But, the ASPs in Morang do not have sufficient learning materials. Mainly, students have no adequate stationeries.

The traditional lectured-based teaching learning method is predominant in all the Asps. The facilitators have no other ways than the traditional method to teach the grade 1-5 integrated curriculum. From the way the students are taught, it is difficult to differentiate ASPs from formal school class activities which prominently are characterized by traditionalism.

Intermittent operation of ASP classes is a major problem. Since the classes are not operated regularly it is natural on the part of students to be irregular. Obviously during the harvesting season the students' regularity is long broken. Despite all these, in the ASPs in Kathmandu, the students' attendance rate is found to be 60 percent. In the ASPs in Kathmandu, like in the formal schools, the students are examined by DE office. DE office prepares questions and concerned

NGOs conduct the examination. In the case of APs in Morang and Kaski the question papers are prepared by the mother school.

Respondents' ideas

This section deals with ideas of different respondents regarding the need of ASP, and policy and practice associated with the existing ASP programs.

Table 4:
Respondents' ideas

Respondents	Needs of ASP	Policy required	Practice of Equivalency
Policy Makers including NFEC Officials	• Need to Achieve EFA • Achieve MDG • Only formal schools not enough • Alternative measures required	• NFE further schooling (unschooled and dropouts) • Equivalency test and induction of a bridge program for further education and also for branching out to other areas of learning.	Parity of esteem to non-formal education (Accreditation).
DEO/RP	• Formal school alone is not enough to achieve EFA • Still many children out of school	• Management, monitoring, supervision, feedback system. • Separate class room for FSP • Separate section of NFE in DEO office • District wise massive program in campaign form	Efforts to link NFE to FE to achieve EFA by 2015. • Yearly examination • Examination at the end of program • Admit in formal school

Frontline runners + NGO/INGO	• Joint efforts of all social organizations only can help achieve EFA; thus alternative approaches needed	• Scholarship for dalit and girls • Clear policy of NGO/INGO involvement • Ensuring further schooling for ASP completers • Guarantee of support • Accountability of mother school, NGO and other agencies	• Each year screening and sending to formal schools needed • Now 3 years waiting too long
Parents	• No time to care children • No knowledge to support • No money to afford	• Full support including tiffin • Free education even in high schools for those completing ASP	Have heard that their children can continue in school classes
Facilitators	• All children need to learn • Not all can go to school • Schools are far	• Separate classroom provision • Facilities as other formal class • Facilitator's salary as per qualification	• Children are mainstreaming after ASP
Participants	• Willing to learn • Goal is to become <i>Thulo Manchhe in future</i>	• Continuity of learning	Can go to school

The above matrix provides respondents' ideas on three major aspects of FSP and SOP such as needs of ASP, policy and practice of equivalency. The respondents include policy actors associated with NFEC, DEO and RP, Frontline runners and NGOs plus INGOs, parents facilitators and finally participants. The respondents viewed that ASP would be necessary in order not only to provide alternative educational opportunity to the unschooled children, they are unschooled because of various socio-cultural and economic reasons, but also to achieve MDG and EFA goals. Due recognition to ASP is crucial because formal schools alone can not reach out to all the unreached mass of the children.

Some policy measures are desirable in order to raise the level of ASP efficacy. More importantly ASP completers should have equal parity of esteem as to those enrolled in formal schools. Similarly, ASP students after getting through the equivalency test should face no hurdles to continue further education in formal schools. It is also desirable to organize technical/vocational bridge programs for them so that they gain competency to be absorbed into the job market. Strengthening the ASP is equally crucial for which a policy distinctly focused on monitoring, supervision and feedback system should be introduced. Expansion of ASP on a massive scale should also be a priority. Provision of incentive and various forms of scholarships to the prospective ASP children should be put in place and mother school should be required to observe accountability standards for which identification of such standards should be accomplished. It is also crucial to enquire whether three years' period should stay but priority that ensures ASP completers free education up to the secondary level should be the heeded policy regarding the guarantee of adequate facilities should also be credited.

FGD results

The FGD among stakeholders in Kathmandu, Pokhara and Morang revealed the following facts and recommendations:

1. The advertisement for ASP quota should be made transparent with timely advertisement in regular interval.
2. The selection of venue, facilitator, school and even NGO should be impartial and transparent.
3. The money to be made available to ASP institutions should be provided in time without any delay. The process of getting money is lengthy in process and sometimes unnecessary discussion with the DE office.
4. Since all SOP and FSP graduates do not join further schooling they need vocational orientation to live a productive life.
5. Three years is very long for students to sustain. The dropout possibility is very high and it has been so in the past. Provision should be made to release children after one or two years to enroll in adequate classes in the formal school program.
6. The strength of the qualification of the facilitators does not help FSP run successfully. The issue is "how can one SLC pass facilitator successfully run all the subjects from grades 1-5?" At least B.ED level is required to implement condensed curriculum to a heterogeneous group.
7. Condensed courses are not relevant to all places. Demand-driven and need based package is essential to motivate more out of children to ASPs.
8. NGOs running ASPs should be made accountable to enroll all graduates to formal schools. Not all parents are interested to enroll their children in schools after the ASPs are over and in some cases mother schools are not willing to enroll the ASP graduates. The benefit of making NGOs accountable will be the financial support to children's education through sponsors.

9. SOP should be made available where children do not have access to schools. The practice shows that SOPs are run in school premises. Either a separate school for the disadvantaged where schools are very far from reach or association of SOP classes in the regular schools is suggested.
10. It seems that the DEOs do not have ideas or full understanding of the places where ASPs are needed. The kind of places and the NGOs running currently proves this.
11. Once programs are distributed as per the quota there has been no monitoring of the mechanism thus lowering the quality of ASPs.
12. Facilitators once trained are not provided with follow-up support. Facilitators say they need extra support to run consolidated course of FSP.
13. There is a role ambiguity in places where headteacher of the school is appointed as facilitator of SOP. Similarly people do not see difference in SOP and formal classes when SOP is the mainstream class of the formal school.
14. In one of the FSP in Kathmandu there are about 800 such students out of school; how can one FSP quota cover all; why not give approval for a new school?
15. To motivate out of school children to ASPs as well as in the formal schools after that school dress and tiffin should be provided.
16. The quality of ASPs with that of the similar grade in the formal schools is always a question.
17. In some cases there are under age children admitted in ASPs which has been problem to the facilitators.
18. The payment for the facilitators can not motivate them to teach the type of students they have to handle. They should get at least the same salary as their counterparts get in formal schools.
19. In ASPs there has been no parental support.
20. Community members lack information about the ASPs campaign of the government.
21. In proposed schools the DEOs are asking to run the SOP rather giving them approval of the status of regular schools.
22. FSP in some cases are run in facilitators' house.
23. School students use FSP as tuition classes.
24. Flexible Schooling Program (FSP) training concentrated more on theoretical knowledge than the practical needs of the classroom. Duration of training including micro-teaching should be increased up to one month to make all participants involve in it and the provision of real classroom teaching should be included in the package to provide adequate practice in managing and practicing non-formal primary education (FSP) teaching strategy in real classroom context.
25. Appropriate number of students in one Flexible Schooling Program (FSP) classroom was suggested to be around 15.

FSP completer case

In order to get a complete understanding of FSP completers, a case study was undertaken in Dhungharkha, Dandagaun, in Kavre district. The case was studied in the light of the following components.

Commencement of FSP: The FSP class in Dhungharkha was started in 2057 BS. The number of participants was 20, of which the number of boys was 7 and that of girls was 13 within the age bracket of 5-11. Nineteen of them were from Newar ethnic group and one from Tamang. All of these children came from families with poor economic background, mostly marginal farmers and laborers. The purpose of FSP was to provide educational access to unschooled children by introducing condensed courses so that they could complete primary cycle within 3 years and become eligible to join grade 6 thereafter. The class was run in a public shelter (pati) as decided by the RP. It was a convenient venue because it is centrally located in the village. The classroom did not have furniture; however the students used mats for their seating. Availability of drinking water was insufficient and the condition of the toilet was poor. FSP course was run till 2060 BS. All of the 20 students completed the course successfully. Only five of the completers did not join the formal school. They stayed back at home. They were all girls. The reason behind was they did not get family support. The family heads were firm on their argument that grade 5 equivalent education of their daughters is adequate for them to better manage household affairs.

Resource management: In order to run the FSP class, a SLC-passed local inhabitant was recruited as facilitator. The main job of the facilitator was to run the class. Since the facilitator's role differs from formal school teacher's role, primarily because the facilitator has to teach condensed course, a training program of two phases 15 days' at the outset followed by 5 days in the second year was run to capacitate the facilitator. In reality, the facilitator was hardly found running the FSP class distinctively from how a formal school class is run. Frequent follow-up of the facilitator's performance and subsequent flow of feed-back was absent which consequently left the facilitator to use his/her own discretion. Learning resources such as books and stationeries were provided free of cost. This indeed, aroused the children's motivation and encouraged parents to send their children to the FSP class. In addition, the government took care of meeting other financial requirements. In fact, NFEC provided Rs 9000 for stationeries and Rs 2000 as the facilitator's monthly salary through mother school.

Program management: Resource Person (RP) was the main actor who identified the location for the operation of the FSP class. It was his/her individual discretion rather than objective measures used for the identification of program location. This approach is likely to forgo other locations where the need for the program was relatively crucial. The facilitator is appointed by the DEO on the recommendation of mother school and/or RP. Here again appointment of the facilitator on the basis of fair competition was lowered. This negligence is most likely to leave behind competent candidates. As regards identification of FSP children, the facilitator took the lead role. His/her individualistic choice was the major determinant as to who should join FSP class. The importance of communitywide dissemination about the program was grossly ignored. So far as the

class operation time and duration are concerned, the children preferred morning time three hours from 7am to 10am. The crucial aspect of the program was that children and facilitator both attended the class regularly. This is the major attribute of success of the program.

Results: After the completion of the ESP mother school examined the children and enrolled them in different grades on the basis of their achievement score. Although no one got the opportunity to get enrolled in grade six, one of them who was enrolled at grade 5 secured first position in the final exam of the school and since then he has been securing first position in the class. Now he is studying at grade seven. Similarly another student was enrolled in grade 4 who secured 3rd position in the class and then secured 2nd position in grade 5. Now he is studying in grade six. One of them who was enrolled in grade 2 secured first position in the class and has been securing first position in the following grades since then. No one dropped out from the class.

Table 5:
Enrolment of FSP Completers in the Mother School (2061)

No. of Students	Grade Enrolled	Now Studying Grade
5	5	7
5	4	6
3	3	5
2	2	4

Mother school took the written and oral test of the children and placed them in appropriate grades according to their achievement score. They were not found adequately competent in English and Math subjects for grade Six. On the other hand, curriculum and textbooks of FSP lacked equivalency to grade 5 of formal school.

Along with the positive results there were several problems as well. A mere SLC graduate would not possess desirable competencies to teach condensed course in the FSP class. Moreover, the training was less helpful for them; there was no follow-up and feed-back provision for which there was no provision of human resource. Physical infrastructure and facilities were inadequate and less than child-friendly. Identification of the facilitator and location to run the program was decided not on the basis of objective measures, although there are certain criteria for the tasks. The facilitator has constraints to complete the course within the given time frame. Enrollment of under age children has made them disadvantaged because even after completion of the FSP, they did not get chance to get enrolled in grade six because of underage. More importantly, schools other than the mother school administered their own test before they enrolled the FSP completers. The FSP case as presented above sheds light on strong and weak aspects of FSP. Since FSP is a program which includes condensed course, actualization of this course in the FSP class necessarily needs greater efforts and skills. A mere SLC graduate with a short orientation would not be able to play effective role to teach the condensed course. Therefore, more importantly, reconsideration is needed, inter alia, for the change in the facilitator's recruitment standard.

Chapter V:

Strengthening Basic and Primary Education

Proper education policy is an important instrument to bring about greater equity. The amendment to the Education Act was done in cognizant to this fact. The PRSP/Tenth Plan emphasizes of universalization of primary education that prepares people for better future living and earning. The MOES has committed to improving the efficiency of the education system, increase access to primary and secondary education, expand literacy programs and extend opportunities for technical and vocational education as mentioned in the sub-sector goals of the PRSP/Tenth Plan. The Tenth Plan (2002-2007) envisages 90 percent NER for primary education, 70 percent literacy for 6 years+ and 63 percent for 15 years+ population, and female literacy of 55 percent.

Non formal education can be an important strength to achieve government's target to fulfill EFA by 2015. Since nonformal education can embrace people living in disadvantaged situations it can educate them with the same strength as that of formal schooling system. Moreover, the currently running FSP and OSP can become a tool for achieving EFA in time. Reports on MDG and EFA have made the government alert that the ongoing formal education alone can not help fulfill the goal.

Like in other countries, Nepal also has committed to achieving universal primary education by 2015. These goals include 100 percent enrollment of 5-9 age group, 100 percent of completion of primary schooling of those who enroll and 100 percent adult literacy rate of 15-24 year olds. The gender equality in primary and secondary level education envisaged as in 2005 has not been completed yet. Nepal has made progress in primary education enrollment in the past decade. However the data sources say different things. NLSS II reports 72 percent NER whereas School Level Education Statistics provide a data of 87.4 in 2006. Whatever be the case, if present trend continues and the government is able to devise adequate policies to address the existing out of school children, it is very likely that Nepal will achieve UPE by 2015. However, the enrollment scenario alone would not be enough; the completion rate is also equally important including the quality achievement by these children.

The MOES has also committed to increasing the investment efficiency by reducing dropouts and repetition rates and by increasing the promotion rates through a mechanism of Continuous Assessment System (CAS). By introducing the scholarship provisions MOES also has shown its commitments to reduce dropouts and repetition rates in the disadvantaged sections. However, measures to provide access to out of school disadvantaged groups have not been addressed adequately. In this situation the only alternative is the NFE programs which can assist such groups to be educated and to join in formal mainstream.

Enrolling children to school alone will not solve the problem of basic and primary education. We already have our experience of increasing more than 3 percent enrollment between 2004 and 2006 through school welcome program but nobody knows how many of them again returned

back to their homes without having rooms for study, without having teachers to address their educational needs and without having enough support to continue their education. Unless these children are educated we can not claim achieving EFA. Thus NFE measures are essential to educate all children whether they are in or out side the school premises.

Previous educational studies and NLSS reports show that children from low income group particularly girls do not attend schools. The number of children from Dalit and Janajati group is big. The proximity to school (distance), parental unwillingness and in some cases children's unwillingness also have affected. It was also found that households closer to schools are more likely to enroll their children in the school. Children from higher income households and educated parents are more likely to attend schools. As compared to the eastern region, children in the central region (low poverty) are less likely to be enrolled in primary school, while children in the western region (or high poverty) are more likely to be enrolled in primary school. With these children at hand, one can not think formal education as the panacea. Unless alternative approaches are applied, these children will always be left behind from the educational opportunities.

There are issues of mother tongue, ethnicity, poor economy, and cultural differences in education. Most of the children not attending schools fall in one or the other category. Unless these issues are addressed the achievement of MDG goals and that of EFA will be very difficult. UNDP (2005) in its MDG progress report for Nepal quotes

It is estimated that more than 10,000 children work in stone quarries and sand mines in Nepal; contractor agents often engage children on purpose, taking advantage of the existence of a large pool of unprotected child laborers. Ninety percent of these children earn less than Rs 60 (80 US cents) a day. The majority of child workers are girls, who are less often sent to school, more often urged to toil for the family's survival; female child workers are more vulnerable and easily exploitable. The vast majority of the child miners are illiterate and less than a third of literate children go to school beyond class 3.

Based on the article Digging for survival: Child miner's realities written by Boonpala, Panudda and published in an English Daily, June 12, 2005, Kathmandu.

The recent policy of free primary education has done but a little progress. The piloting of compulsory primary education in 5 districts did not work. The scholarship provision has attracted very few non-enrollees. The policy has not been able to motivate the hard-core group (children from disadvantaged community, sparsely populated areas and below poverty group) to come to school. These children, being the main source of family income, are often discouraged to join the school by their parents. The enrollment campaign 2005 and 2006 has brought more than 250,000 children to school but in the absence of the program/policy for their retention nobody knows how many of them will continue their study. There are cases where more than 200 children are studying in one single classroom. The same report quotes:

Janajagaran School at Sindhuli has a room to adjust 70 children in grade 1. The recent enrollment campaign increased the enrollment of children in grade 1 and the number reached 270. There has been no additional construction nor do they have any additional teachers. All 270 students are now studying sitting on floor like listening lecture of a politician in a mass meeting. How can they learn and what quality education do they get?

Based on the news clip published in a national daily on June 11, 2005

These examples also provide evidences that formal education alone can not help the government to achieve the goal of EFA. Thus the report recommends to focus more on alternative approaches of education through nonformal mode. Ensuring access and inclusion of all children is the main concern and suitable nonformal education equivalent to the ongoing formal education is increasingly crucial.

Organizations that have strong networking capabilities, working experiences of community mobilization, and experiences as scorekeeper of the MDGs, experiences in funds administration and commitment for Nepal's development can perform the job easily by linking MOES to the lower echelons of the society.

The NFE model for this should be MOES®Independent organization®Local level coordination®Program implementation with strong monitoring and feedback mechanism. Wagley (2006) mentions the following gaps as challenges in education that have hindered the achievement of EFA by 2015.

1. Enrollment gap

At the macro level the NER stands at 87.4 (DOE, 2006) which is calculated as 72 (NLSS II). At the micro level, the NER analysis shows the following picture (DOE, 2004)

- ♦ NER below 60 = 3 districts (Saptari, Sarlahi, Rautahat)
- ♦ NER from 60-79 = 8 districts (Sunsari, Siraha, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Bara, Kapilbastu, Jumla and Mugu)
- ♦ NER from 80-89 = 20 districts (Lalitpur, Taplejung, Baitadi, Terathum, Udayapur, Morang, Kavre, Makawanpur, Parsa, Manang, Nawalparasi, Rupandehi, Dolpa, Rolpa, Humla, Jajarkot, Kalikot, Bajhang, Banke and Kanchanpur)
- ♦ NER from 90-95 = 36 districts (Rest of the districts)
- ♦ NER above 95 = 8 districts (Gulmi, Palpa, Syangja, Kathmandu, Chitawan, Khotang, Okhaldhunga and Ilam)

These figures suggest that the MOES should focus its UPE activities both through FE and NFE more on 11 districts where the NER is below 80.

2. Gender gap

At the macro level the gender disparity index stands at 86 (Wagley & Poyck, 2005). At the macro-level, again, the NER of girls is 78 which is below 12 percent point than that of boys. Attempts have been made to increase girls' enrollment in primary schools by scholarship provisions. In some districts oil for education program has been launched. Separate toilets for girls were constructed in 5231 schools (EFA Status report -2004). Scholarship for 50 percent girls was one of the programs under 18 EFA indicators.

At the micro-level the enrollment of girls provides the following scenario: (DOE, 2004)

- ♦ NER below 60 = 5 districts (Siraha, Dhanusha, Kapilbastu, Jumla, Mugu)
- ♦ NER from 60-69 = 4 districts (Bara, Parsa, Kalikot, Humla)
- ♦ NER from 70-79 = 8 districts (Sunsari, Kavre, Dolpa, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Banke, Bajhang, Baitadi)
- ♦ NER from 81-90 = 17 districts (Taplejung, Terathum, Rasuwa, Sindhuli, Makawapur, Lalitpur, Nawalparasi, Rukum, Salyan, Dailekh, Dang, Bardiya, Bajura, Achham, Doti, Dadeldhura, Kanchanpur)
- ♦ NER above 90 = the rest 41 districts

The figures suggest more emphasis should be placed on 17 districts where the NER of girls is below 80. Attempts should be made to make NFE programs available to more girls through open mode so that they could get equal opportunity with boys.

3. Retention gap

Universalization of primary education also calls for universal retention. The cycle completion rate should be 100 percent to achieve the purpose of UPE. The scenario of dropout, repeaters, and cycle completion rate is as follows:

- ♦ Cycle completion rate = 76 (EFA Status Report, 2004; MDG Progress Report, 2005)
- ♦ Dropout rate = 15.3, 5.8, 7.0, 7.5, and 13.5 in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively in 2003 (EFA Status Report 2004)
- ♦ Repeaters' rate = 34.0, 19.4, 15.3, 15.7, and 13.5 in grades 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 respectively (Ibid)
- ♦ Drop outs = around 15 percent in Grade 1 and around 10 percent in grade 5

The figure is alarmingly for grade 1 dropouts and repeaters. Same can be said about the cycle completion rate. The figure of repeaters can not be neglected in other grades too. The dropout rate in grade 5 is also big. To cater to the dropouts the ongoing programs of NFEC should be strengthened and implemented in such areas.

4. Dalit's education gap

To make MDG success, all children should join and complete primary schooling. Many primary aged children from the disadvantaged minorities and Dalits are still denied their right to primary education. The reasons are mostly due to social, economic and educational constraints rather than lack of physical access to school (MDG Needs Assessment Study 2005). Out of 13.3 percent share in 5-9 age population, the enrollment of Dalit children in primary level is 8.7 percent. Thus NFE can be a boon for this group.

5. Janajati's education gap

The case of Janajati's is not that bad as that of Dalit children. However, a large number of 5-9 age population of these have been out of school. Out of 43.7 percent share in 5-9 age population the enrolment of Janajatis' children in Primary education is 25.8 percent. NFE alone can make it possible that these groups join education mainstreaming.

6. Literacy gap

The Tenth Plan envisages 70 percent literacy for 6 years+ and 63 percent for 15 years+ population, and female literacy of 55 percent. MDG requires 100 percent literacy of 15-24 age group by 2015; now it stands at 73.

Education is directly related and positively correlated with poverty. Many children are not going to school because of poverty. Unless they are educated, poverty can not be reduced again. Thus ways reducing poverty through attraction in educational programs is vital. The present system of providing scholarships, cooking oil and midday meal has helped attracting children to school to some extent. Besides these, income generating programs for the children and their parents are essential so that they could earn to support basic education. Besides NFE can be an effective mechanism for flexible schooling to the needy groups.

Besides these, commitment from the part of government, in other words political commitments to implement best possible strategies in action is highly essential. Prioritization of UPE can be seen in development plans and MTEF; however, the implementation gaps need to be minimized. Similarly, dissemination of MDG and EFA from central to the local level is equally important since many people at the implementation level do not understand what MDG and EFA are all about.

Chapter VI: Equivalency Measures

From all the discussions in previous chapters it is now obvious that the achievement of EFA goals by 2015 is not at all possible until all the out of school children population is brought to mainstreaming formal education. Moreover the analysis of SOP and FSP programs of the three districts and a case study of one district revealed the fact that certain measures need to be adopted in order to clarify the equivalency issue. Thus this chapter provides three major measures along with functional mechanisms to improve the existing ASP to bring it to the standard of formal education (school) equivalency. Furthermore the recommended measures also focus on the livelihood skills of the ASP graduates rather pure academic equivalency alone.

A. Recommended policies and strategies contributing to equivalency linkage between formal and non-formal education

Issue 1: ASP outcome = Formal school outcome

Recommended policy measure: Make them equal first

Types of ASP	Equivalent to formal schools		
SOP grade 1, 2, 3	Regular 1, 2, 3	Differences in	
FSP condensed 3 years	Regular grade 5	-School time -Curriculum -Facilitator's strength -Nature of participants ►► -Monitoring mechanism -Motivation of facilitator -Motivation of participant -Nature of participants ((These unequal measures have left the disadvantaged behind)) ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲	Results Not adjustable Not encouraged Less recognized Not joining formal schools Not achieving EFA
Issue: ASP outcome = Formal school outcome			

Unless these differences are minimized the equivalency can not function in real sense. Thus policies minimizing these gaps need to be formulated in order to make ASP equally strong as that of formal school programs.

Issue 2: Children not joining school after ASP = Helping them to earn a living

Policy measure: Branch them based on need

Children joining formal schools after ASP	Children not joining formal schools after ASP
▶ Grade them annually in the appropriate class; do not wait 3 years ▶ Make GO/NGOs accountable for supporting further education ▶ Provide all kinds of support for completion of their basic education 1-8 ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲	▶ Provide them vocational skills in consultation with CTEVT ▶ Make them able to go for testing their skill at CTEVT Skill Testing Board ▶ Capacitate them to market their skill to earn a living ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲
Issue = Children not joining school after ASP = Helping children to go further	

This recommendation is related with the livelihood skills of the ASP graduates who do not join school after the program. Unless and until skill-based activities are planned, the investment made on the children will be of no worth especially the dropouts.

Issue 3: All children = Grade one status

Policy measure. Screen them and set standards

Screen them	Bridge them	Provide them opportunities	Output
▶ Design screening tests to identify the children's strength ▶ Test them and find out which classes they are fit in ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲	▶ If they need some extra support before joining further provide them bridging support ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲	▶ Place them in appropriate grades ▶▶ ▶ Provide them all supports that are needed. ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲ ▲	Ensure equal standard
Issue = Not all need to join grade 1			

This recommendation is related with the qualities at hand of those who are out of school. There may be children who can directly be enrolled in grades more than one. So the assumption of all out of school children are of grade one standard may be false. Thus screening them and placing them in an adequate grade could be another policy reform agenda. Similarly some children may need only a month or two bridging in order to equate with higher grades of the primary level. If this can be traced out by a screening test, achieving EFA would be much easier.

B. Functional mechanism

In order to make the recommended measures functional the following strategies are suggested to be reflected in ASP policies

- ♦ Start Open Schooling provision for those who do not complete FSP or OSP within the time period.
- ♦ Focus out of school population in the proposed open school piloting plan
- ♦ Provide vocational and/or technical livelihood skills for those who are not willing to join formal schooling due to various reasons. Skills to be tested by CTEVT Skills Testing Board to certify them for market consumption.
- ♦ Give approval of new primary schools in those places where hundreds of children want to join SOP.
- ♦ Give SOP quota to hamlet based population only.
- ♦ Focus on assessing the strengths of SOP and FSP through regular monitoring.
- ♦ Make provision of the salary of facilitator as per qualification; qualification to be raised to B.Ed.
- ♦ Prioritize ASP in EFA basket to ensure EFA by 2015.
- ♦ Screen children each year to determine their academic status and channel them to mainstream formal education.
- ♦ Create a professional body to look after ASP in centre and in district to run it seriously. In other words NFE strengthening should be manned by professionals/experts.
- ♦ Encourage networking of NGOs, schools and vocational training providers.

Ensure quality of ASP with the same grades in mother schools by establishing minimum standards and accountability system

Annex 1

Themes of the tools

1. Policy makers

- ♦ NFE's potential to achieve UPE
- ♦ Parity of esteem to non-formal education (Accreditation)
- ♦ NFE ® Bridging up with skill learning ® Skill testing ® Absorption into the job market.
- ♦ NFE to further schooling (unschooled and dropouts) ® equivalency test and induction of a bridge program for further education and also for branching out to other areas of learning.
- ♦ Human resources (capacitation)
- ♦ Financial resources leading to EFA funding
- ♦ Physical infrastructure
- ♦ ASP standard/accountability

2. Facilitators

- ♦ Professional development
- ♦ Level of participants to meet requirements
- ♦ Completion rate, further enrollment rate in the formal sector
- ♦ Constraints of delivering ASP
- ♦ Self-constraints
- ♦ Future improvement

3. Parents

- ♦ Satisfaction level
- ♦ Expectations
- ♦ Support by themselves
- ♦ Further support needed for children to be able to work, and for further education.

4. Front-runners (including NGO/INGO)

- ♦ Initiatives of their own
- ♦ Unschooled and dropout issues
- ♦ Facilitating government programs (tools and techniques)

- ♦ Perception of NFE-FE equivalency
- ♦ What exists now and what needs to be done

5. DEO/RP

- ♦ Years to take to achieve UPE through formal education alone
- ♦ Role of NFE in UPE both for unschooled and early dropouts
- ♦ New programs
- ♦ Efforts to link NFE to FE to achieve EFA by 2015
- ♦ Management, monitoring, supervision, feedback systems
- ♦ Innovations if any

Focus group discussions

1. There will be three focus group discussions one each in Biratnagar, Kathmandu and Pokhara
2. The FGD will be conducted in a heterogeneous groups involving parents, facilitators, participants, front runners and DEO/RP
3. Themes for FGD
 - ♦ Efficacy of existing policy and programs
 - ♦ Actual need
 - ♦ Critical reflections on program activities
 - ♦ Future directions

The themes as explained above will be focused as per necessity. Irrelevant ones will be left out because we just do not need to present the narratives specific to each of these themes.

Annex 2

Work Schedule

Description of Activities	Time Schedule
1. Collection of theme-specific literature and review	8 Oct. - 17Oct. 2006
2. Development of Research Instrument In-depth Interview Schedule FGD Triggers Case Analysis Framework	15 Oct. - 20 Oct. 2006
3. Field Survey 3-5 ASP locations to be identified in consultation with NFEC, UNESCO/Nepal. This activity will include the following.	25 Oct. 15 Nov. 2006
Interviewing Stakeholders which will comprise participants, facilitators, parents, social/ education front runners, DEOs, RPs, NFEC officials and others as deemed relevant.	
Analyzing cases	
Conducting FGD with field level stakeholders in three development regions.	
4. Submission of mid-term progress report	20 Nov. 2006.
5. Data organization, analysis and interpretation	21 Nov. - 15 Dec. 2006
6. Preparation of draft Report	16 Dec. - 29 Dec. 2006
7. Submission of draft Report	30 Dec. 2006
8. Finalization of the Report	15 Jan. 2007
9. Preparation for Dissemination Seminar	16 Jan. - 21 Jan. 2007.
10. Dissemination of Findings	22 Jan. 2007
11. Submission of the final Report	30 Jan. 2007

This schedule is subject to reasonable modification should there be any untoward events and needs. Your suggestions and cooperation to this end are crucial. I appreciate your ideas to this end.

The Research Team will consist of:

Research Navigator 1
 Research Coordinator 1
 Associate Researcher 1
 Research Assistants 2

Annex 3

Cases

FSP, Dhungkhark-9, Dandagun, Kavre

Total enrolled students – 20, Boys – 7 and Girls – 13

Cases of completion - 20

Cases of dropout - 0

Cases of completer but not going school – 5 girls

(Unknown about first student (G) of FSP and second, third and other 2 completer girls were at home)

- I. (1) Starting year – 2057
- (2) End year – 2060
- (3) FSP centre details

Physical status

- Program was conducted in public PATI.
- PATI was located at central part of the village.
- Furniture were not available and students were seated on the mat.
- Drinking water, toilet was available but not sufficient and appropriate.
- Centre was located at a walking distance about 1 hour from mother school.

Human resource - SLC passed local facilitator

Other resources - Book and stationeries were available to participants without cost.

I. Program strength/weakness

1. Types of the program

- FSP three years program for 8 – 14 years children who were out of school.

2. Facilitation of the program:

Human – training 20 days at different times (before first level starting – 15 days in Kathmandu, before second level starting – 5 day in Kathmandu and before third level starting) 5 days in Kavre by NEEC/DEO)

Physical – books

Financial – 9000/- Rs for stationeries to participants and other management cost by NFEC through mother school.

- Salary for facilitator 2000 Rs. per month by NFEC through mother school.

3. Types of enrollees:

age – 5 – 11 years

sex – 7 boys and 13 girls

other status – cast – Newer 19

Tamang 1

- SES – low level/farmers but not sufficient farms, labour worker

4. Achievements:

- After completion the ESP mother school took their exam and enrolled them at different grades. Although no one got opportunity to enroll at grade six but one of them who enrolled at grade 5 had secured the first position in the final exam of the school and continuously he has been securing first position in the class. Now he is studying at grade seven. Similarly who got opportunity to enroll grade 4 had secured 3rd position in the class and had secured 2nd position at grade 5. Now he is studying grade in six. One of them got opportunity to enroll at grade 2 had secured first position in the class and continuously has been securing first position in the class. All of the students are talented in their classes.

Dropouts – 0

Success story (equivalent to grade six) – 0

Enrolment of completer at formal school (2061)

No. of Students	Grade Existing Grade
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5	57
---	----

5	46
---	----

3	35
---	----

2	24
---	----

Why did they enroll below grade ?

- Achievements

- Age (Some of them)

Mother school took their written and oral test and placed them in appropriate grade. They were not completely prepared in English and Math subjects for grade Six. Curriculum and textbooks of the FSP were not equivalent to formal school of grade 5. One teacher for different subjects, within three years, per day three hours it was difficult to complete the learning outcomes as formal school.

III. Program Management

Process:

- Class conducted area was identified by RP.

- Facilitator was appointed by the DEO through the recommendation of mother school/ RP.

- Participants were collected by facilitator.

- Class was conducted in the morning shift (7 – 10)

- Time three hours.

- Participants and facilitator were regularly attended in class.

Major problems to run the class:

- Difficult to conduct by SLC passed facilitator.
- Less salary to facilitator.
- Lack of physical facilities in the centre.
- Difficult to manage the cost provided by DEO for stationeries.
- Difficult to identify the target area.
- Lack of man power to monitor, supervision and feedback to ASP centre at district level.
- Difficult to complete the courses within the given time frame.
- Lack of continuously evaluation of participants in the class.
- Enrolment of under age children in the centre.
- Not positive attitude of parents towards their child education.
- Poor socio-economic status of the parents.
- Formal school did not accept the participants to enroll without their own test.
- RP/SS and mother school did not feel their duty to monitor, supervision and feedback to ASP centre.
- Geographical difficulties of the area.

How to solve the problem ?

- Upgrade the facilitator's qualification, training and salary.
- Provide minimum physical facilities in the center (own building, furniture, learning materials, toilet drinking water).
- Establish a section for only NFE at district level to - identification of target area, group and facilitator.
- Frequently monitor, supervision, evaluation feedback and motivate to continue the study of participants.
- Up date the records of the participant and follow up them.
- Successful participator must have the right to enroll at the designated grade with out any test of formal school.

IV. Cases of Students:

Completed cases:

1.	Name	:	Suklal Tamang
	Enrolled in FSP	:	2057 (Kartik)
	Completed year	:	2060
	Position of FSP class	:	4th
	Enrolled in formal School	-	Parbati Higher Secondary School
	Year	-	2061
	Enrolled grade	-	5 (according to the achievement level conducted by the test of PHSS)
	Position in the class	-	1st position in the final exam of 2061 at grade five.
		-	1st position in the final exam of 2062 at grade six.

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| Current grade | - | 7 (1st position in the class) |
| Current age | - | 14 years |
| Major weakness | - | Math and English subject |
| | - | Extra curricular activities (before enrolment at formal school) |
| Causes | - | Math and English courses of FSP were not equivalent to grade five of formal school. |
| | - | Lack of teaching competency of the facilitator in Math and English subjects. |
| | - | Short time duration (3 years program, per day 3 hours) |
| Measures | - | Lower grade (enrolment at grade 5) |
| Equivalency of the running FSP – Grade – 4 | | |
- 2.
- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Name | - | Rana Bahadur Shrestha |
| Enrolled in FSP | - | 2057/058 |
| Completed FSP | - | 2060 |
| Position in the FSP class | - | middle |
| Enrolment at formal school | - | 2061 (PHSS) |
| Enrolment grade at | - | 4 (according to the achievement level determined by the test of enrolled school) |
| Position in the class | - | 3rd position in the final exam of 2061 at grade 4. |
| | - | 2nd position in the final exam of 2061 at grade 5. |
| Current grade | - | 6 (1st position) |
| Current age | - | 13 years |
| Major Weakness | - | Math and English/extra activities. |
| Causes | - | Difficult course |
| | - | Short time duration |
| | - | Under age |
| Measures | - | Lower grade (enrolment at grade 4) |
| Equivalency of the running FSP (perception) – grade 4. | | |
- 3.
- | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Name | - | Krishna Bdr. Shrestha |
| Enrolled in FSP | - | 2057 |
| Completed FSP | - | 2060 |
| Position in the FSP class | - | lower |
| Enrolment at formal school | - | 2061 (PHSS) |
| Enrolment grade at | - | 2 (according to the achievement level determined by the test of enrolled school) |
| Position in the class | - | 2nd, 2061 at grade – 2 |
| 1st 2062 at grade – 3 | | |
| Current Grade | - | 4 (1st position) |
| Current age | - | 11 years |
| Major weakness | - | Math and English/extra activities. |

Causes	-	Under age
	-	Difficult to learn.
Measures	-	lower grade

Equivalency of the running FSP – 4

4. Name	-	Ganga Shrestha
Enrolled in FSP	-	2057
Completed FSP	-	2060
Position in the FSP class	-	middle
Enrolment year	-	2061
Grade	-	5
School	-	Prabati Higher secondary School.
Position in the class	-	Pass 2061, at grade 5 (Middle)
		Pass 2062, at grade 6 (middle)
Current Grade	-	7 (middle)
Current age	-	14 years
Major weakness	-	Math and English subject
	-	extra curricular activities.
Causes	-	difficult to learn
	-	short time dictation
Measures	-	lower grade

Equivalency of the running FSP – 4

Completed but not going school

1. Name - Sajana Shrestha	2. Name – Sarswoti Shrestha
Enrolled year in FSP – 2057	Enrolled year in FSP – 2057
Completed year – 2060	Completed year – 2060
Position in the FSP class - 2nd	Position in the FSP class – 3rd
Current age – 17 years	current age – 16 years

Rest of the other three completer including first girl of the FSP were out of school. All of they were involving household chores.

Why did not they enroll in formal school ?

- Poor socio – economic status of the parents and they can not afford the cost for further education.
- Not positive attitude towards girl's education of parents.
- Involving household chores.

What would help them to enroll the school ?

- Provide scholarship to maintain their educational cost.
- Conduct awareness and motivation program for parents about girl education.
- Provide opportunity to further education facility same as FSP.

SOP, Chandari Primary School
Chyamarangvesi-5, Thalagaun, Kavre

Total number of students – 19, Boys – 5, Girls - 14

Numbers of completers – 7

Numbers of repeaters – 12

Number of dropouts – 0

Starting year - 2059

Ending year - 2061

I. School/centre:

- Program was conducted in Chandevi Primary School and Participants were the students of school.
- School is conducted up to grade 5, including SOP facilitator there were 4 teachers and the total students were about 100.
- Minimum physical facilities – separate rooms for each grade, furnitures, drinking water, toilets were available.
- School is located at the central part of the village.
- Slope geographical structure of the village which is very much difficult.
- Habitation are scattered and difficult to reach one place to another through the confined foot path.

II. Participants:

Current grade	Number of Students		Total	Remarks
	Boys	Girls		
5	25	7		Completers
4	15	6		Repeaters (1 year)
3	03	3		Repeaters (2 year)
2	20	2		Repeaters (3 year)
Transferred other school			0	1
Grand Total	5	14	19	

Causes of repeaters:

- Irregularity in class due to away school from their residence
- Poor socio economic status of the parents
- Involvement in household chores.
- Lack of parental support to child education.

III. Program Management:

Process:

- Program was provided through the recommendation of RP.
- Facilitator was appointed by DEO through the recommendation of RP.
- Program was conducted according to the rule of school.
- Participants did not get the stationers with free of cost.

- The fund provided by the DEO for the stationeries to participants has been utilizing the salary of extra teacher according to the decision of SMC.

IV. Major Problems to run the program:

- Difficult to collect the determined numbers of participants out of school due to scattering homes in the village.
- Irregularity of students.
- Lack of monitoring, supervision and feedback mechanism.
- Not positive attitude towards child education of parents.
- Geographical difficulties.

V. How to solve them ?

- The provision of about 20 numbers of participants to conduct SOP should be changed.
- Frequently monitoring, supervision and feedback system should be adopted.
- Parental awareness program should be conducted.

