



EUROPEAN UNION
DELEGATION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO NEPAL

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Education group

Despite the tremendous progress made by the education system in Nepal in the last few decades, notably in terms of widening access to education, many challenges still remain such as quality of education, infrastructures, financial management, teachers management, lack of data...

Because now is the time for reforms and changes in Nepal's education structure, with a shift on government's efforts from "access" to "quality education", the situation calls for a deeper and more coordinated intervention from the CSOs in order to keep the momentum going and encourage the transition to a more equitable, child-friendly, and safer education system in Nepal.

1. Gaps and priorities of the sector

The inefficiency of the education system and the gap between policy and implementation have resulted in **poor learning outcomes**, affecting in priority the most vulnerable students (girls, ethnic minorities, untouchables...). The **large dropout rate and low completion rate** are alarming factors that exist across ethnic/social groups and regions. Strengthening of evidence-based strategies and specific policies for enrolling out-of-school children is needed.

In terms of quality of learning, rote learning is still happening rather than deep learning. The focus should be made on **changing the learning approach** putting children at the center, through a more pedagogical and creative learning. The use of ICT and new learning materials should be promoted. Along with this, **soft skills** (financial education, health and comprehensive sexual education, active citizenship...) and **vocational skills** (trainings, better professional counselling...) should be further developed and implemented. Addressing the quality issues should be done at the root by focusing on the universities and college trainings with **improved learning environment and professional development schemes for teachers**.

Schools often remain **an unsafe place to learn for girls and vulnerable children**. Violence is still present in some schools. The priority should lie in providing inclusive education and mainstreaming of at risk children with special attention to children with disabilities who are faced with problem of respect, problems of accessibility, materials and infrastructures.

Along with this line, **a more equitable early childhood education system** (ECE) needs to be developed focusing on rural and remote areas, involving parenting education, and through home and community based programmes and training centers.

Regarding school management, education management like SMC and PTA remain largely ineffective to fulfill their responsibility. A stronger focus has to be done on **good governance and greater accountability** at all levels (teachers, schools, VDC...) The presence of party politics in teacher management can also sometimes affect the teaching quality. On the other hand, schools are sometimes not enough involved in policy-making (e.g. for the development of curriculums, local communities and schools should be more involved in the decision making process)

Finally, **quality and awareness of data** is low, especially at local level. National presented numbers are often not known at local level, compromising Right to Information (RTI). There is thus a need for strengthening data to better inform planning and advocacy.

2. Roles of CSOs in addressing these issues

CSOs have **dual** role to play: **to complement government's work** on the ground through service delivery but also to act like a **critical partner and watchdog**.

By partnering with the government through service delivery, **CSOs should act like models sharing best practices**. To do this, capacity building of CSOs themselves should be reinforced so that they can in turn help to build capacities of teachers or work. Capacity development takes time. In case of teachers, best practices on peer support and mentor schemes should be further expanded.

CSOs should also act like watchdogs and initiate discussion with Government to work on realistic and achievable plans. Policy analysis should be done at different levels, from grassroots organization to higher levels. Even though CSOs have limited capacity to undertake large surveys and research, they can do analysis based on for example census data to do small in depth studies and still keep a critical eye.

Beyond this, more policy research and analysis and public expenditure tracking should be done to inform planning and represent the voice of the civil society

3. Technicalities: projects cycle, allocation and duration

Regarding available funding and timeframe, acknowledgement of the diversity in context, needs and therefore costs is needed to encourage CSOs to work with the **hardest to reach** as they will present the highest 'cost per child' and donors often want to claim substantial number of beneficiaries for the fund provided.

Concerning geographical focus and duration, there was a consensus that there should not be any geographical focus in particular as quality issues are present all throughout the country. But in general, the focus depends on the topic tackled. Projects should target big cities as well as rural areas. Three years seem too short to obtain the desired outcomes so five year project cycle would seem more appropriate.

Finally, recommendations were made regarding **budget ceiling and marginalisation costs**. The EU should have leverage on how to define project costs since different projects in different parts of the country don't necessary bear the same project costs.

Governance group

1- Priorities and gaps:

Understanding of democratic governance: as the constructive interaction between the citizens and the State. Governance is about the empowerment of the citizens (with their rights and responsibilities), holding the State accountably and having fair and clear rules of the game for the state-citizen relationship.

The focus should be at the local level. Local governance is needed for better services and quality of life for the most needed citizens. The absence of local elected representatives is hampering the proper functioning of the state at that level and a crisis of accountability. A priority should be to advocate for local elections.

CSO should play an active role in shaping local policies. While there was an agreement that participation in the planning process has improved in the last years (MOLFA has clear guidelines in this sense) there is a gap in effective implementation. They should partner with local authorities to ensure proper policy implementation. Different tools for social accountability were mentioned: public expenditure tracking, social audits, etc

Need for participation of people (poor & marginalised) in public affairs. For effective participation there is a need for civic education and building advocacy capacities of citizens.

This links with the need for active citizenship in all spheres of public life. In particular there was agreement on the priority to build a new and different political leadership

Access to information is instrumental to empower people, permit their participation in public policy and to hold the government accountable.

While CSOs should hold work to make the State accountable towards the citizens, there is also a need to improve the internal governance of CSO to maintain credibility. It was highlighted the need for CSO to work together (networking) and the role of bigger CSOs in building capacities of smaller CSOs.

Role as CSOs as whistle blowers. Accountability of the international treaties and agreements

2- Capacity constraints

From the experience of INGOs, to build capacities of counterparts (nepali CSO) you need to ensure ownership

There are capacity constraints at different levels: institutional (lack of vision and strategic planning, transparency), organisational (lack of internal procedures, lack of archiving, etc), and technical (some claim to be experts on a theme but there are still many weaknesses). Monitoring and evaluation is also an area to be improved

Capacity building needs differ according to the type of organisations (should be tailored made and should start with a frank assessment)

Some CSO that are not registered (i.e. membership organisations) can play a very good role in governance area. Legal constraints should be removed to allow their participation and access to funding.

A major issue is the political affiliation of CSO.

Some participants felt that there is a need to review the partnerships to refresh relations and to start partnerships with new CSO (local groups, member based organisation) and private sector where they can have an added value.

3- Geographic focus

No specific focus

4- Duration

Long projects (4-6 years). Per nature, democratic governance projects do not produce results in the short term.

Rural development group

1- Priorities:

A key priority, also in line with the upcoming national Agriculture Development Strategy, is helping farmers, on particular small farmers to commercialise their products so as to generate income, diversify nutrition, improve food security, raise the image of a farmer and reduce outmigration.

For this small farmers need support to access inputs, credit, technology, develop professional collective action or cooperatives.

Women farmers/head of households in rural areas are an important group due to outmigration of men and need special attention and empowerment.

Income generating activities like eco-tourism, agrobusiness or other innovative initiatives should be encouraged. Tourism promotion can offer good opportunities.

CSOs have an added value is raising awareness, helping local communities to organise themselves and linking them to Government services, local authorities and the private sector.

They can also advocate for a better implementation of Government programmes and stimulate better linkages between the actions of various Ministries / departments.

Migration cannot be stopped, but it can be managed, helping migrants to get the best out of migration, but also facilitating a good use of remittances and also good use of the experience of those migrating back.

The issues of security of land tenure and access to land are also very important for the small holders to increase agriculture productivity and commercialisation.

2-Gaps

Advocacy is underdeveloped

The capacity of membership organisations (women's organisations, farmers associations, etc...) or local community based organisations is an untapped potential. Larger service oriented CSOs should aim at reinforcing them.

3- Service delivery versus advocacy

Capacity for advocacy needs to be strengthened, but the need for services, especially in the most disadvantaged areas, is great. Moreover, the legitimacy of CSO's advocacy is based on their strong presence on the ground through services.

As mentioned above, membership organisations have a great potential if their capacity for advocacy can be raised. The top-down approach needs to be reversed.

4- Capacity constraints

Effective advocacy requires legitimacy (a large membership or popular base), advocacy skills, and good and relevant information. Research should be strengthened.

Many CSOs working at the grassroots are weak in documentation skills

5- Geographic focus

There were different views on this, depending on whether economic impact is intended or on the contrary if the most marginalised need to be reached.

6- How to reach smaller CSOs

They should not just be used as sub-grantees, but helped to structure themselves, acquire skills and link or regroup with other similar entities.

7- Duration

Very clearly the consensus was that a longer term approach is needed up to 7-8 years. The 3 years framework of many projects is not conducive to deep and sustainable transformation.

