Process-based and Formative Evaluation of the Education Equity Strategy in Nepal (2014-2021)

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ACRONYMS

ASIP	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan		LG	Local Governments
AY	Academic Year		MDI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
AWPB	Annual Work Plan and Budget		MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys
BRM	Budget Review Meeting		MoEST	Ministry for Education, Science and Technology
CBO	Community Based Organizations			
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics		MoFAGA	Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfers			
CEHRD	Centre for Education and Human Resource		MTR	Mid Term Review
CFS	Child Friendly Schools		NASA	National Assessments of Student Achievement.
CWD	Children With Disabilities			
DAC	Development Assistance Committee		NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
DDC	District Development Committee		NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
DLI	Disbursement Linked Indicator		NPR	Nepalese Rupees
DMS	Data Must Speak		OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
DOE	Department of Education			
DPO	Disabled People Organisations		OoSC	Out of School Children
ECED	Early Childhood Education		PIM	Program Implementation Manual
ECCCP	Education Cluster COVID-19 Contingency Plan		PMEC	Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions
EDCU	Education Development and Coordination Unit		PTAs	Parent Teacher Associations
EFA	Education For All		PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
EGR	Early Grade Reading		PPE	Pre-Primary Education
EI	Equity Index		RBF	Result Based Financing
ELR	Early Learning and Reading		RC	Resource Centers
EM	Evaluation Matrix		RPs	Resource Persons
EMIS	Education Management Information System		ROSA	UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia
EQ	Evaluative Question		SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
ES	Equity Strategy		SEE	Secondary Education Examination
ESIP	Equity Strategy Implementation Plans		SIP	School Improvement Plan
ESP	Education Sector Plan		SSRP	School Sector Reform Program
ESPDG	Education Sector Program Development Grant		SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
FY	Fiscal Year		SMCs	School Management Committees
GPE	Global Partnership for Education		SuTRA	Subnational Treasury Regulatory Application
GRA	Global and Regional Activities		SWAP	Sector Wide Approach
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratios		T.o.C	Theory Of Change
HOI	Human Opportunity Index		ToR	Terms of Reference
ICT	Information and communications technology		TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
IP	Implementing Partners			
JFA	Joint Financing Arrangement		TWG	Thematic working group
JFP	Joint Financing Partners		VDC	Village Development Committee
JRM	Joint Review Meeting		UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
KPI	Key Performance Indicators		UNSDCF	United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework
KII	Key Informant Interview			
LEDPG	Local Education Development Partner Group		VDC	Village Development Committee
			WE	World Education
			WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The consolidated equity strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal, titled as "Equity Strategy" (ES), was launched in December 2014. The main objectives of this strategy are to reduce the current disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes for children in basic and secondary public education in Nepal. The strategy envisions to achieve this by (i) developing an Equity in Education Index (Equity Index), at national and sub-national level, and (ii), supporting the development of Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIPs) to allow for a systematic use of the equity index to inform need-based planning at local government level thus reducing identified disparities.

With the current School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) coming to an end in July 2021, the government initiated the development of a new long term-education sector plan. The present evaluation of the Equity Strategy is expected to inform the implementation of the strategy during, and as part of the new education sector plan in the new federal context and guide the application of the equity index and equity strategy implementation plans.

The evaluation aims at illustrating the direct and indirect effects that the introduction of the Strategy has had on applying an equity-based approach within the previous two education sector plans through a comprehensive analysis.

The audience of this evaluation are the Government of Nepal, education sector development partners, UNICEF, UN Agencies, implementing partners and other stakeholders who will make use of the evaluation results.

The Thematic evaluation scope will focus on equity dimensions (gender, geographical location, wealth quintile, disability, ethnicity and caste) based on available data provided by UNICEF and the two main pillars of the ES: Equity Index and equity-based interventions. The geographical scope of the evaluation is national with specific focus on the 15 districts which were prioritized for interventions under the Equity Strategy. The chronological scope included all documented activities under the Equity Strategy implemented since 2014.

A set of Evaluative Questions was defined and agreed during the inception phase and 5 OECD[1]/DAC[2] criteria have been used for this evaluation: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability.

The evaluation is formative and process-based with a strong focus on learning lessons. It adopted a mix method approach (qualitative and quantitative) and the following steps: Reconstruction of the Theory of Change of the ES, secondary quantitative[3] and qualitative data review and analysis, primary qualitative data collection through Key Informants Interviews at National and Sub National level with a range of stakeholders (i.e Government education staff, UNICEF staff, Non-State Actors, donors agencies...) being also the anticipated users of the outcomes of the evaluation.

The evaluation took place between mid-January 2021 to end of April 2021 and was organized under three main phases: inception, data collection/analysis and reporting.

The main findings and conclusions of the evaluation are described for each evaluation criterion.

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[1] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
[2] Development Assistance Committee
[3] Using mainly the Flash reports data

RELEVANCE

The 2014 equity strategy responded to an identified need to test an innovative approach of using education data for equitable resource allocation and targeted programming. It was pioneer in addressing equity issues in accordance with an analysis of equity dimensions and explaining factors. Moreover, it succeeded in moving equity consideration fairly high on the Nepalese education policy agenda. However, the definition of equity underpinning the Strategy and calculated by the index has 3 major interrelated weaknesses:

- The strategy addressed equity issues adopting a cross-cutting definition where individual characteristics and social barriers prevail (poverty, caste, gender, disability). It is not focused on educational needs. Data for SLC exam was not available for all Local Governments – hence not used initially for analysis.[4] Once the data will be available for all LGs for grade 8, the learning dimension will be added in the index. Moreover, only few local equity plan analyzed by the evaluation team addressed learning needs or promoted equalization of learning opportunities within the school environment.

- The design of the index and proposed measurement of deprivation across districts underlies a linear complementarity (and equal weight) between access-participation-learning outcomes. At international level, the analysis of schooling trends usually considers learning perspectives above participation (and sometimes even above access), bearing in mind that weak learning outcomes are a major cause of dropout. The index therefore failed to capture the learning explanations to drop-out. The evaluation team also questions the idea that there would be a "main driver" of inequity because of their cumulative and hierarchical nature, where poverty always ranks first.

- The strategy focusses on education demand, understood mainly under the access and participation dimensions. ESIPs activities mainly focussed on enrolment campaigns (access) and participation measures (meals, hygiene products for girls), but not enough on learning. The quality of education supply in the most vulnerable areas was not addressed nor analysed. This is an important shortcoming as school provision is generally differentiated in terms of quality (community versus institutional schools, concentration of "good" teachers in several privileged localities, existence of huge differences in learning environments, etc.). Thus, access to differentiated education service provision can lead to different participation and learning.

COHERENCE

The Equity strategy was coherent with Nepalese international commitments and paved the way to further effort implied by the 2030 Agenda in terms of nationwide quality and equitable educational provision. It was adopted within a context of major governance change (shift to federalism) and progressive ownership of the new governance mechanisms by national and local decision makers. As such, the Equity strategy proved coherent with the evolving context and fully adaptive. With the transition to federalism and new division of competences, the ES targets additional financing to local government levels / municipalities, thus making pillar 2 of the ES (the ESIPs) dependent upon local planning capacity and prerogatives.

This focus reduces the scope of possible measures when they do not depend upon local governments, in particular major policy levers revolving around human resource (among them teacher affectation and capacity development, for instance to identify student's needs, management of the diversity in classrooms and building trust with parents). As teacher-related measures still refer to national competence, more coherence could have been expected at local level to align local efforts with education policy decisions taken at national level. In this context, the evaluation team noted a limited internal coherence of the Equity strategy and inconsistency between the highly comprehensive dimension of the index and the limited scope of implemented measures in the field.

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[4] SLC examination is a public examination for the purpose of certification at the central level, not similar to grade 8 and grade 5 examination and not developed as the as the NASA test.

EFFECTIVENESS

Our analysis of effectiveness is partly nurtured by Nepalese school enrolment performance. Undoubtably, the implementation period of the equity strategy was a strong momentum for effective reduction in the aggregate number of OoSC at national level. A good performance of most of the 15 targeted districts is confirmed in terms of access, and the gender gap was effectively addressed. Parity in basic education, already acquired nationwide at Lower basic level, is now achieved at Upper basic level, with girls even over-represented in lower basic both at national level and in the targeted districts.

The evaluation team confirms the number of 256 000 OoSC reintegrated into schools with little grade-related variation, suggesting that the campaigns were effective for all age groups. However, caste and ethnicity-related barriers still remain poorly addressed, with some trends to be confirmed by further demographic data, for instance the decrease in Janajatis enrolments over the past 10 years.

Our analysis also shows a decrease in survival rates in districts that have experienced recent rapid increases in enrolment, more visible at Lower basic level than at upper basic level. These results confirm the demand-orientation of the ES that succeeded in bringing many children back to schools but did not foster increased school capacity to help them remain in schools and learn. To summarize, the index proved effective for ranking purposes, and succeeded in triggering new and effective measures targeting mostly school enrolment and participation. It was rather misused or poorly understood by education planers and policy makers to inform needs-based programming and equity-focused measures.

In quantitative terms, only 13% of LGs have endorsed their ESIP plan by January 2021, although in many cases, ESIP development successfully triggered the development of a general LG education plan where they were still missing. Broadly, the initial rationale according to which understanding equity dimensions would lead to more tailored and diversified actions did not really materialize in the field. Interventions analyzed by the evaluation team were quite similar from one ESIP to another and focused mainly on "mainstream" OoSC (back to school campaigns representing the bulk of funding) and general participation measures (meals and girls hygiene products). In other words, and despite the strong increase in analytical data available, equity interventions designed and implemented failed to address the needs of the highest number of excluded children, namely those in school but not learning (disability, poverty, language…).

The evaluation also underlines the role played by the members of the Equity and inclusion Technical Working, as well as UNICEF, CERHD and World Education who have been instrumental in supporting the dissemination and support for the implementation of the Strategy.

EFFICIENCY

Considering the limited scope of the index and effects of ESIP development support, its current use and its reduction in scope compared to what was initially planned, one can ask if the development of the index was a cost-effective targeting system compared to other (potentially less sophisticated) strategies.

Efficiency consideration refers here to the capacity of local planners to use the ES effectively (or even use possible alternative in terms of equity analysis through the use of the schooling profiles)

Important effort was made to train LG education staff to prepare the plans in regional workshops. These workshops were valuable for building large commitment from Central, Provincial and Local Governments but were made less effective because of strong staff turnover following the workshops. Alternative solutions were identified, among them the WE-sponsored blended training strategy, proving relevant and more efficient solutions in the COVID-19 context.

However, ESIP did not always address the root causes of inequity. The funding allocated for each municipality was quite limited and it was not clear how and to what extent the budget was used for the implementation of the ESIPs in the absence of accountability, dedicated budget line to track the allocation of funds and lack of M&E mechanisms at LG level.

Overall, the evaluation team found evidence of capacity building support provided mainly in relation to data analysis and planning but less in term of institutional setup (i.e coordination, collaboration, reporting, implementation mechanisms...)

SUSTAINABILITY

The COVID-19 context is a strong challenge for the equity strategy's sustainability, both in terms of development results and in terms of equity acquis. There are concerns that those existing technological discrepancies, the digital and socio-economic divides, and a divide in terms of parents' literacy rate could contribute to widen the gaps in access and quality of education for the most marginalized groups. In some schools, the pandemic context hampers mid-day meal grant distribution and delayed pro-poor targeted scholarships. As part of its CoVID-19 School Sector Response (GPE) supplementary program to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, the World Bank included a Sub-component 2.3: Schools grants to schools from selected local governments. The sub-component will support most disadvantaged local governments (100-125 LGs) in regions that have been impacted by COVID-19 through school grants to ensure safe re-opening of schools and continued learning.

The transition to federalism is also a major challenge for the sustainability of the strategy, with limited capacity to deal with education supply at LG level and thus potential risk for LGs to focus on infrastructures rather than on quality. Still, the design and implementation of the ES has contributed to strengthen the capacity of education staff in the 15 focused districts on 1) understanding of Equity Issues, 2) integration of equity into the planning cycle and 3) on data analysis.

Nevertheless, because of the important capacity gaps and the lack of sufficient human resources at LGs and provincial levels, this should rather be seen as a work in progress during a first pilot phase that would need to be strengthened in the future. A major bottleneck for the retention of children at schools (including most probably the recently reintegrated OoSC) and improvement of learning outcomes, remains the shortage of teachers in the low performing LGs and issue with teachers' deployment across the schools. Improved consideration of educational needs and learning outcomes for the most vulnerable children will therefore be key for a sustainable consideration of the Equity Strategy acquis.

It seems that the use of EI can be considered as an excellent instrument for communication, funds mobilization and advocacy but less as a tool for action. To implement effective equity-based activities, there is a need for a more classical analysis of the education demand in these marginalized localities. A clear understanding of the ways education demand interacts with supply side characteristics is also necessary as supply peculiarities are not immediately apparent in the EI computation and ranking.
Some school mapping considerations and reduction of differences in quality will be important to promote education in specific location where, the education system is of poor quality. In this sense promoting equal access and retention in lagging locations is necessary but not sufficient as an equity objective.

An analysis of education demand of marginalized groups should also include a labor market analysis allowing to assess whether it is discriminating or not for marginalized groups. If the labor market is segmented and does not offer a comparable status and earning, for a given level of education, to every member of the society, those with specific low expectations could have a rational weak demand for education. Improving access, participation and learning would be important but not sufficient to strengthen education demand for many of the marginalized groups whose social and economic positions are weakly linked to educational performances.

To summarize, the evaluation confirms that the ES succeeded in anchoring equity considerations in the Nepalese education system, nurturing all Nepalese education planning documents after 2014 and raising wide awareness among education stakeholders. Its undeniable acquis needs now to evolve towards a more education-focused scope, investing more on the educational needs and targeting vulnerable children at the right scale, namely their school environment.

The following recommendations are formulated:

Recommendations related to the acquis of the equity strategy

1. Shift to an explicit focus on learning
2. Clarify responsibilities and consider the entire education supply chain (federal/district/LG/School)
3. Clarify measures and their remedial potential for each equity dimension
4. Consider evolving the index into a revised targeting mechanism.

Recommendations for the future National Education Plan

5. Strengthen generation and use of evidence for programming and learning
6. Strengthen planning, monitoring and reporting as well as coordination and cross sectoral collaboration functions related to social inclusion:
7. Ensure Equity in Financing and not only in programming
8. Ensure that equity-based interventions address both education-related demand and supply needs as well as cover well the three main equity area on access, retention and learning outcomes
9. Mainstream Equity in education planning processes to improve accountability
10. Institutionalize support mechanisms for need based support to LGs for developing the overall ESPs.
11. Revise or update of the equity in the new context, SDG4:Education 2030 and the new federal context and the new funding modality of the country

CONTEXT AND OBJECT OF THE EVALUATION

1.   Brief socio economic and political context

1. Nepal has experienced major political, social and constitutional change since emerging from 11 years of civil war in 2006. Despite steady growth of real GDP per capita of 4 percent in the decade following the war, the country remains vulnerable and is the poorest in the south Asian region.[5] In 2015 there was a major earthquake, killing nearly 9,000, with hundreds of thousands made homeless, and over 17,000 classrooms of 8,000 schools damaged and in need of reconstruction.[6] The southern, low-land, Terai region experienced serious flooding in 2017, affecting one million people with major crop damage.[7] From 2020, as with the rest of the world, Nepal is facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

2. The country of 30 million people is very diverse; geographically, with its mountainous north, hilly center and southern Terai (low-land) zones; and in terms of ethnicity, language and caste. According to the Government of Nepal's own work on a multidimensional poverty index (MDI) in 2018 - the incidence of poverty was estimated at 29 percent, with the poverty headcount ratio much higher for rural than for urban areas – 33 percent vs. 7 percent. The 2011 Population Census recorded 26.5 million people of 126 different caste/ethnic groups who speak 123 different languages. Nepal has come a long way in exposing and addressing inequalities within its society, by developing legislations to address discrimination based on caste and religion and to help ensure equality and universal access. However, Nepal's historical and structural past continues to influence the hierarchical structure of the society which has resulted in continued differential access to economic, political and socio-cultural resources and the marginalization of some groups and the continuing inequity in the society.

3. As almost 80 percent of the population live in rural areas, rural poverty predominates. Whilst poverty rates are highest in the mountainous northwest, the absolute number of poor people is highest in the southern Terai region. Alongside low incomes, drivers of poverty include child mortality, inadequate cooking fuel, flooring and roofing, challenges with nutrition, as well as low school attendance rates.[8]

4. In November 2006, a Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed, declaring a formal end to a ten-year civil war. An Interim Constitution was adopted in January 2007, with a complex eight-year process, leading to the 2015 Constitution of Nepal. The new Constitution marked the end of Nepal's monarchy and the beginning of a new era as a federal republic.

2.   Nepal education sector

5. Nepal's constitution stipulates the right of all children to a free and compulsory basic education and access to free secondary education. Nepal is aiming to reach SDG 4 of ensuring equitable access to quality education and life-long learning by 2030, which is also an overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs. Nepal is committed to the principle of 'leaving no one behind', recognizing that inequality is not only an impediment to growth and human development, but also a violation of shared norms, values and people's intrinsic sense of fairness.

6. The SSRP focuses on educational disparities related to caste, ethnicity, religion and geographic factors, and there was progress towards universal primary education as well as in ECED enrolment. A major changes in the SSRP period was the shift from primary (Grades 1-5, aimed at ages five to

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[5] GDP per capita was USD 743 in 2018. IMF, World Economic Outlook Database
[6] https://reliefweb.int/report/nepal/nearly-300-quake-ravaged-schools-rebuilt-gorkha
[7] Flooding was caused in part by tensions with India, exacerbated by India's decision to close 18 dams and embankments along the border during monsoon season to protect its own farmers. Nepal recently ranked the 11th most affected by climate change over the past 20 years. Germanwatch, Global Climate Risk Index 2019
[8] Government of Nepal, 2018a. NEPAL Multidimensional Poverty Index,

ten) to Basic Education (Grades 1-8) with the aim to achieve universal access under the free and compulsory basic education policy for public 'Community' schools. 'Institutional' schools, which are private, also play a large role in enrolment in Nepal and for richer and more urban families remain the preferred choice.

7. Nepal's education sector has seen progress in recent years particularly in increases in the net enrolment ratio (NER) for all levels of education, and in gender parity of enrolment. The sector has been managed through a succession of sector strategic plans, including the School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) (2009-2015/16) and the current School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) (2016-2020/21[9,]). A new plan is now being developed.

8. The current plan was approved in 2016 and aims to increase participation of all children in quality school education by focusing on strategic interventions and new reform initiatives to improve equitable access to, and the quality, efficiency, governance, management and resilience of the education system.

9. According to a presentation on EMIS and Equity Index made for the Global DCP meeting May 30, 2019 and based on the analysis made in the context of development of the Equity Strategy, large regional disparities remain with inequalities across different groups in Nepal. Some of these are shown in the figure below, with those most marginalized in the Terai region receiving comparatively very little schooling, and significant distinctions by privilege and caste. Important geographical variation is also noted as regards pupil teacher ratios (PTRs).

Figure 1: Inequalities in years of schooling across different groups in Nepal
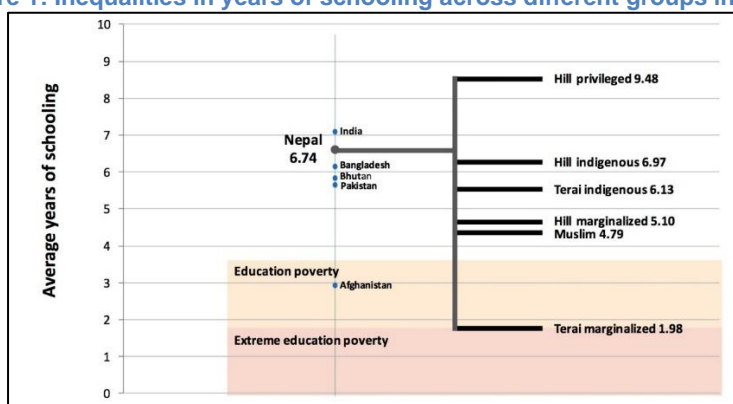
Source: Presentation on EMIS and Equity Index for the Global DCP meeting May 30, 2019.

10. SSDP implementation is led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST). The SSDP is implemented through a Steering Committee that also oversees a DACS/TWG secretariat.

11. The SSDP is implemented through a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp), supported by nine Joint Financing Partners (JFPs)[10,] providing support through a Joint Financing Arrangement (JFA). Implementation of the SSDP is also supported through other Development Partners, including Non-JFPs, I/NGOs, some of them being members of the Local Education Development Partner Group (LEDPG). As outlined in the JFA, the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MOEST) and the JFPs jointly conduct two review meetings annually: a Budget Review Meeting (BRM) and a Joint Review Meeting (JRM). TWGs are organized though different policy areas, and the equity strategy

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[9] The original time scale of the SSDP was from FY 2016/17 – 2022/23. However, in the mid-term review it was decided that the SSDP would complete two years early (2020/21). This decision was taken due to the changing context (i.e. federalisation and the government's updated education policy).

[10] JFPs are Asian Development Bank, European Union, Finland, Global Partnership for Education, JICA, Norway, UNICEF, USAID and the World Bank.

and issues of acess and participation is the subject of a follow-up performed by the Equity Technical Working Group acting as permanent advisory group and meeting monthly.

12. The current five-year costed program (2016-2020/21) represented a major experiment in the financing modality, in which six out of nine joint financing partners (JFPs) to the education sector linked all or part of their disbursements to Result Based Financing (RBF) indicators.[11] These were split between ten disbursement linked indicator (DLI) areas, with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank the largest two JFPs, linking their concessional loans to seven DLI areas each; and the European Union, the largest donor via grant funding, focusing on three DLI areas. The fund flows from each of the JFPs to respective DLIs is shown in the figure below.

13. There is one DLI in SSDP implementation that relates to the equity particularly DLI 6 focuses on Equity and OOSC enrolment and benefits from a total amount of 30 M$ USD[12] accounting for less than 1% (0,075%) of the total of USD 400 million across the nine DLI areas planned for the 2016-21 period.

Figure 2: SSDP fund flows by donor and by DLI, 2016 - 2020/21 (allocations)
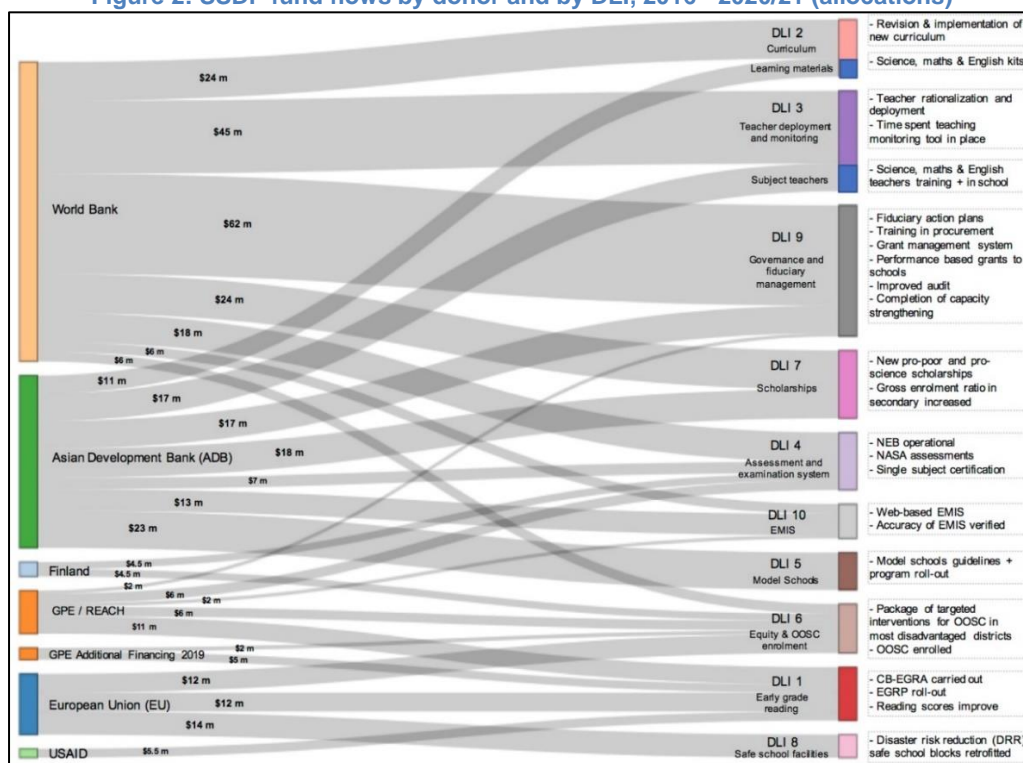
Source: SSDP Joint Protocol updated to October 2019. Figures show potential disbursements. Exchange rate used of €1 = USD 1.12.

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[11] The nine are Finland, the GPE, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Norway, UNICEF, USAID, the ADB, the EU, and the World Bank. Australia was originally going to fund the SSDP but pulled out before any disbursements.
12 World Bank: 6 M$, Finland 4,5 M$, GPE/REACH 6 M$, GPE additional funding 2019 2 M$ and European Union 12 M$

3.   The transition to federalism

14. The adoption of the 2015 constitution led to major change in the governance model in Nepal with the ambition to provide local governments with more responsibilities, power and accountability. Each level has their own executive and 3 levels administrative divisions have been defined as per below:
    - 1 Federal government at central level
    - 7 Provinces, replacing the former 14 administrative zones grouped into 5 development regions
    - 753 local governments (6 metropolises, 11 sub-metropolises, 276 municipalities and 460 palikas, i.e. rural municipalities). The governing bodies of the rural municipalities and municipalities are referred to as village executive and municipal executive.

15. Federalism in Nepal is still recent, with the first elections taking place by the end of 2017. All legislative and regulatory acts necessary to inform local governance are not yet in place in some cases or fully owned, and in many cases, former governance habits remain, leading to some understandable confusion.

16. The local governments are now thus the main unit to take care of the school education system. Local Governments do not manage the Education Management Information System (EMIS).They report in it, validate the data for their LG. The challenge is to ensure sufficient capacity in local governments to address their new responsibilities.

17. A comprehensive legislative framework is envisioned under the forthcoming Federal Education Act, to clarify the roles of the three tiers of government on delivering school education services. Meanwhile, the National Education Policy 2076 (2019) provides further direction in terms of legislative and institutional provisions and responsibilities for implementing them.

18. The governance structure thus consists of three tiers, with federal budget decentralized to local government tiers. Many of the funds, functions and functionaries that had previously been managed by central, district and village (VDC) authorities have now been transferred to provincial and local governments. New legislation, institutions, and administrative procedures are being formalized to administer this new setup. To mitigate likely disruptions, in 2019 the government developed a transitional roadmap for the education sector.

19. The Local Government Operations Act (October 2017) places 23 functions of the planning, monitoring and management of basic and secondary schools under the jurisdiction of local governments including formulating education policies, strategies and plans and conducting basic level examinations.

20. The Federal Education Act has been submitted to the federal parliament for approval and is envisioned to provide a legal framework regarding the roles of local, provincial and federal governments in school education service delivery mechanism. In the meantime, the following acts have been adopted after the initiation of the SSDP in 2016 to facilitate the transition to the federal context in the education sector, most notably the Local Government Operation Act (MoFAGA, 2017), the Civil Servants' Adjustment Act and Regulation (MoFAGA, 2019), The Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfer Management Act (MoF, 2017), the Natural Resource and Fiscal Commission Act (MoF, 2017), and the Appropriation Act (MoF,2018); the Fiduciary Risk Management Action Plan (FMAP) prepared as a tool to strengthen financial management, including procurement; the Compulsory and Free Education Act which was enacted in 2018. The Federal Education Act is awaiting parliament approval.

4.   Education Context

21. The latest Joint Review Meeting report 2020[13] provides a snap shot view of the main indicators in the education sector in Nepal for the Fiscal Year 2019/20 as described thereafter:

22. In early childhood education and development and pre-primary education (ECED/PPE), the Gross enrolment rate has reduced (86.4 percent vs the target of 87.7) and the net enrolment rate (67.2 percent vs the target of 64.1) exceeded its target indicating that the quality and efficiency continues to increase. In Grades 1 to 5, there was good progress on reducing gross enrolment and accelerating net enrolment, compensating for the underachievement in the previous year. The limited progress on the basic education survival rate (79.3% vs the targeted 88.2%) and completion rate (72.7% vs the targeted 81.7%) indicates a need for substantial acceleration towards achieving these targets.[14]

23. In terms of equity, gender parity at the basic level was maintained and the reduction of the percentage of out of school children (6.2% vs the targeted 6.6%) would have enabled the achievement of the Year 5 target of 5%. However, this is now at risk due to the extensive disruptions to school education in academic year (AY) 2020/21 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

24. Despite the noted efforts made in past years to ensure equity in access to education, the share of enrolment of students from vulnerable groups declined – in particular students with disabilities. This decline appeals further consideration of the effectiveness of interventions to reduce disparities in access, participation and learning for these groups.

25. The 2019/20 Flash data reports that 63.6% of all public schools providing basic level education met only three out of five of the PMECs, although only 13.4% of schools met all five priority minimum enabling conditions (PMECs). This greatly exceeds the Year 4 target of 6.1% . Despite this achievement, further investment is required in upgrading school conditions, especially water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, to allow the safe return of students to schools as directed by the approved school reopening school framework.

26. There has been reasonable progress on secondary education (Grades 9–12) in FY 2019/20 in relation to the 2015/16 SSDP baseline indicators. The net enrolment rate (NER) in Grades 9–12 was 47.2% against the targeted 49.3%. The cohort survival rate to Grade 10 increased to 60.3% against the targeted 59%. The percentage of students enrolled in technical schools increased to 5.5% against the targeted 4%. And 12,725 secondary level students received pro-poor scholarships in FY 2018/19. The main Secondary Education Examination (SEE) could not be held in FY 2019/20 due to COVID-19 and internal evaluations were instead used to assess students' performance.

27. The effects of the pandemic risk reversing the achievements made to date as many schools have been closed due to the COVID-19 health crisis. Contingency plans have been developed to ensure that children continue to learn during the school closures through remote learning platforms offered by the government.

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[13] Overall status and progress presented in the most recent Flash and Status reports

[14] Nepal School Sector Development Program, Joint Review Meeting - Aide Memoire. November 23 -26, 2020

5.   Rationale for an Equity Strategy

28. The Education For All (EFA) agenda brought about a global movement to ensure the opportunities that are provided through good education could become accessible for all and that schools become inclusive learning environments, providing quality education.

29. Equity in education has been a key concept both globally and in Nepal. Nepal's Education for All National Plan of Action (2001-2015) stated that social equity is one of the key strategic objectives for the country. Many of socio-cultural and political traditions in Nepal are largely discriminatory and exclusionary and are expressed in different dimensions including gender; socio economic status; location; health and nutrition status; disabilities; caste and ethnicity; language; and certain vulnerable groups such as working children.

30. The Education for All (EFA) National Plan of Action (2001-2015) stipulates the need for an integrated school system with grades 1 to 12. The Three-Year Interim Plan (2007/08 to 2009/10) further underlined the need for an integrated approach to school education. The Interim Constitution (2007) has recognized basic education as a fundamental right and made provisions for free and compulsory basic education, leading to free education up to the secondary level. These policy manifestations have provided a basis for initiating and implementing the reform in the school sector.

31. The School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) further builds on the inclusion within education. The Program covers the period from July 2009 to July 2016. The purpose of the SSR Plan was to improve efficiency in education, aiming at EFA and MDG goals to reach parity in gender and inclusion, and ensure equitable access to quality education through a holistic school sector approach.

32. Nepal has reached significant achievements within the education sector over the last decade, however these achievements have not been enjoyed by all equally. Disparities remain, leaving certain groups of children behind in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes.

33. As such, the SSRP Mid Term Review (MTR) in 2012 recommended the development of a consolidated equity strategy.

6. Object of the evaluation

34. In response to the further need for strengthening equity in education in the Nepal school education sector, the Government of Nepal has developed the Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector, which was launched in December 2014. The main objectives of this strategy are to reduce the current disparities in (i) access, (ii) participation and (iii) learning outcomes for children in basic and secondary public education in Nepal. The strategy presents a two-folded approach in meeting these objectives:

   1. The Development of (an) Equity in Education Index(es), which shows the prevalence and severity of disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes in education, using both school sector data and population data from different levels.
   2. A consolidation and further targeting of current strategies deployed by the Government and Development Partners (including I/NGOs and CSOs) to strengthen an equity/need based approach.

6.1 The Equity Index (EI)

35. The Equity Index was envisioned to be fully embedded within the Education Management Information System (EMIS), in the Department of Education and to support the Government in targeting and equity-based allocations within the Annual Strategic Implementation Plan/ Annual Work Plan and Budget (ASIP/AWPB) from Financial Year (FY) 2015/16 onwards.

36. In February 2015, Nepal joined the multi-country GPE Global and Regional Activities (GRA) project on District/School Profile Cards (also known as "Data Must Speak" project) implemented by UNICEF. The action plan of the project for Nepal included technical support for the development of the equity index(es), aligned with the support to be provided for the development of district profiles within the same project.

37. The Equity Index is a composite index aggregating three components of the education sector: access to education, internal efficiency, and learning.

38. Access to education uses Census data, which is updated only every 10 years, but gives more opportunities to explore different types of disparities between population groups.

39. The other two components of the equity index use EMIS data. Comparing rankings of districts with regards to out-of-school children numbers obtained using Census data on one hand, or estimated using EMIS enrolment data on the other. 9 of the 10 lowest performing districts were found to be in common. This further validates the use of EMIS data as a credible data source.

40. The roll-out of the school based EMIS allows for the use of EMIS as unique and yearly-updated data source. As such, the computing and monitoring of the index remains fully owned by the Government and is in the process of being embedded within the EMIS section and reporting.

41. The Equity Index captures disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes in basic and secondary school education level in Nepal (grade 1 to 12). To this end, data were selected for the 3 dimensions of access (enrolment), participation (survival rate) and learning outcomes (initially grade 10 certificate exams but currently in the process of replacing this with grade 8 exams)

42. A summary of the outcome indicators, circumstances and data sources is presented in the following table.

Figure 3. Variables of the Equity Index

Source of the figure: Presentation of the EMIS and Equity in the Education Sector in Nepal by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Nepal. May 30, 2019, Kathmandu, Nepal.

43. The development and implementation of the Equity Index was prioritized as one of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) Stretch Indicators. The GPE grant is supervised by the World Bank who is therefore a key partner in the work on the Equity Index. In addition, the global monitoring framework of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on Quality Education includes an indicator on Extent to which formula-based policies reallocate education resources based on disparities in education outcomes.

44. The purpose of the Equity Index is to account for children's opportunity for school education by factoring in their pre-existing vulnerabilities that are caused by their circumstances/contexts. To this end, the Equity Index was developed in 2016 at national level and 2017 at district level to allow computation of the severity of disparities leading to objective comparison, ranking and unpacking to illustrate the contribution of the different drivers.

45. The equity index was developed by the Ministry of Education with support from UNICEF Headquarters, South Asia Regional Office and Nepal Country Office (through the Data Must Speak" Initiative), the World Bank and GPE. It uses the disparity-based formula known as the Human Opportunity Index (HOI) and draws on both household and school-based census capturing data on gender, geography, socio-economic status, ethnicity and caste, and disability.

46. The data were initially analyzed and converted into an equity score by district. This creates a picture of the intensity of inequity by district across the country. The concept behind the ES is that data can be used by education planners and policy makers to rank districts according to their composite index score and inform resource allocation and equity-focused sector analysis and strategy formulation.

47. After the Equity Index was initially developed and adopted (based on Nepal's former 75 districts), the Index had to be adapted to the emerged 7 provinces and 753 local governments in the context of the transition to federalism. The computation of data for the equity index is covering all Local Governments units but is not yet developed up to the school level.

48. Adaptative work is still ongoing to advise and support the government on the potential of development and linkage of a resource index to the Equity Index. The Resource Index will be based on the Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMCEs).

6.2 The Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIPs)

49. Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIPs) were developed in 2018 to allow for a systematic use of the equity index to inform need-based planning at local government level to reduce identified disparities. The aim is to ensure the formulation of ESIP includes active engagement of local and school levels. Finally, the Equity Strategy has identified a number of key activities that are to be undertaken at the central and local government level to strengthen the institutional capacity of the

sector for undertaking equity-based programming and planning, including a menu of potential targeted interventions sorted against the different drivers of disparity.

50. The development of ESIPs involved several stakeholders such as CEHRD, MOSD, EDD, UNICEF and technical support from World Education. Starting from 2016 onwards, CEHRD allocated conditional grants to districts (in 2016 and 2017) and then to local governments (in 2018) to bring out-of-school children into school, while local governments were provided with the flexibility to demand plans and programs to meet identified needs.

51. The rationale of ESIP is to help local governments in systematically undertaking steps to translate their equity index score in need-based planning and monitoring as described in the graphic below.
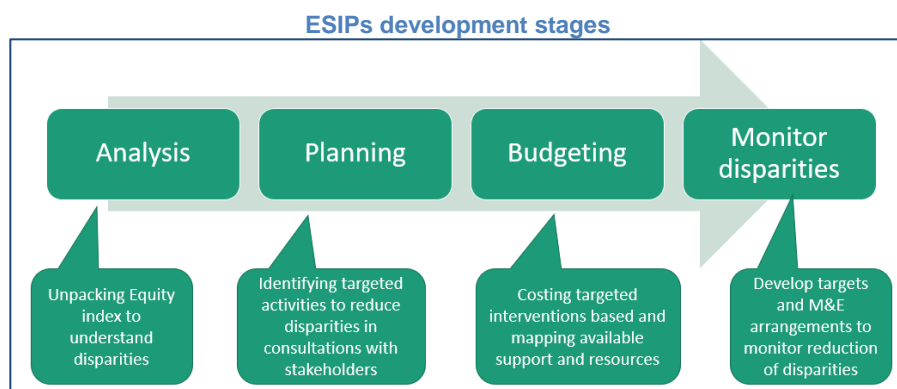
ESIPs development stages

Source: Presentation of the EMIS and Equity in the Education Sector in Nepal by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Nepal. May 30, 2019, Kathmandu, Nepal

6.3 Timeline of the Equity Strategy

52. In 2017, the Ministry of Education[15] (MoE) and the CEHRD ranked Nepal's 75 districts[16] based on their Equity Index scores to identify the districts with the highest level of disparities in education outcomes. The 15 districts with the lowest score were selected for targeted interventions to reduce the disparities for more equitable access, participation and learning outcomes. Districts as an education administrative unit were abolished in 2018 with new tier of government set-up at local level. As a result, 189 local governments were to be supported instead of the previously selected 15 districts.

53. The Equity Index was used to identify and target the districts and later local governments with the highest disparities in education outcomes for specific interventions (the latter in a way to undertake the unpacking, analysis and planning to strengthen needs- based interventions and programs to achieve reduction of disparity in access, participation and learning outcomes through targeted interventions).

54. In 2016/17, the five districts identified by the Equity Index as having the highest disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes received extra funding to run targeted interventions to reduce the number of out-of-school children. [17] These districts were Rautahat, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Parsa and Bara.

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[15] This was reformed to become the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) in 2018.
[16] Note: Nepal now has 77 districts as two of the previous districts were split into two in 2017/18 and have been dissolved in 2018 to make place for 753 (municipal) local government.
[17] Provision of budget was allocated of NPR 1.5 million per District (USD 13,200) in 2016/17 to implement the targeted interventions according to a recent World Bank study: Results-Based Financing in the Education Sector: Country-Level Analysis, Nepal, submitted to the REACH Program at the World Bank , draft Final Report, 5 October 2020

55. In 2017/18, the five districts that ranked from sixth to tenth were provided with such funding to run targeted interventions (Dolpa, Rolpa, Doti, Humla and Siraha).[18]

56. In 2018/19, the additional funding mechanism was revised to include an equity-based formula[19] and to allow additional funds to be provided to local governments instead of provinces and the local governments located within the previous district boundaries of district eleventh to fifteenth (Bhajang, Achham, Jajarkot, Banke and Dhanusha). The number of newly established local governments within the previous fifteen districts amounts to 189 municipalities.

Table 1. Timeline of the Equity Strategy

Year	Main Milestones
2012	SSRP mid-term review recommends the development of an equity strategy
2013-2014	Equity Strategy is developed and approved in December 2014
December 2014	Consolidated Equity is approved
February 2015	Government initiates the development of the Equity Index, with support from UNICEF and World Bank, based on which 75 districts are ranked
March 2015	Implementation of the equity strategy is selected as one of the three 'stretch indicators' for the GPE education sector implementation grant, managed through the World Bank SSDP sector support
August 2016	Equity index formula approved
February 2017	SSDP is formally approved by MoF
March 2017	Targeted interventions are included in the 2017/18 for 5 districts with lowest equity scores
July 2017	JFA for the SSDP is signed, including joint DLI framework which includes DLI on implementation of equity strategy (DLI 6) subscribed by World Bank, GPE, EU and Finland
November 2018	18.1 % reduction of out of school children in 5 districts with lowest equity scores independently verified (OoSC report 2018)
December 2018	Equity index developed for newly established 7 provinces and for local governments in the 5 previous districts ranking lowest in terms of index score
March 2019	Resource allocation formula proposal is developed with technical support from UNICEF
March 2019	Targeted interventions and additional budget for the 40 local governments scoring lowest on the equity index (within the 15 targeted districts) included in the 2019/20 ASIP/AWPB
May 2019	SSDP mid-term review updates equity strategy targets in PRF
July 2019	All 753 local governments are ranked by equity index
Nov 2019 onwards	Technical support to selected 40 Local Governments to develop their ESIPs
November 2019 onwards	Support to 80 local governments (including the previous 40) to develop their local ESIPs
November 2019	63.5% reduction of out of school children in the 10 districts with lowest equity index score confirmed
2020	Severe impact of covid-19 pandemic in implementation of targeted interventions and development of ESIPs
January 2021	Confirmation that over 250,000 out of school children have been enrolled in formal education and learning centers nation-wide since the start of the SSDP
February 2021	Evaluation of the equity strategy to inform the new Education Sector Plan (ESP) Donor agencies are currently supporting a series of studies related to the Education Sector Analysis as part of the ongoing development of the new Education Sector Plan (ESP)

Source: UNICEF February 2021.

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[18] In 2017/18, the CEHRD allocated NPR 34,700 million (around 300,000 USD) to the 10 targeted districts to spend on returning out-of-school children to education.

[19] The lump sum that is allocated for supporting municipalities that have been identified through the equity index is allocated across these municipalities using a formula that includes a fixed tranche (base amount) which is the same for all municipalities to ensure a volume that allows municipalities to utilize this and a variable tranche that determines their share of the overall funds based on their prevalence (number of out of school children), severity (equity index score), and performance (reduction against their baseline in the previous year(s)

EVALUATION PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

1. Purpose and Objectives of the evaluation

57. The purpose of the evaluation is to contribute to evidence-based adaptation of the Equity Strategy to increase its use and effectiveness as part of Nepal's new federal education sector plan. Mainly, the evaluation aims at illustrating the direct and indirect effects that the introduction of the Strategy has had on applying an equity-based approach within the previous two education sector plans through comprehensive analysis.

58. As per the ToR, the evaluation's objectives are:

   ▪ Evaluate the Equity Strategy's intended and unintended effects, in terms of its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability
   ▪ Gather lessons learned on the observed opportunities, achievements and challenges linked with the use of the Equity Strategy
   ▪ Assess the perception of stakeholders on efficiency of various targeted equity interventions
   ▪ Develop recommendations which will guide policy makers in the use of the Equity Strategy under the new education sector plan and contribute to evidence based equity focused programming and policymaking.

2. Scope of the evaluation

59. The **Thematic evaluation scope** focuses on equity dimensions (gender, geographical location, wealth quintile, disability, ethnicity and caste) and the thematic areas of the ES: learning, access and survival rates based on available data provided by UNICEF (EMIS data). The evaluation covers the two main pillars of the ES namely: the Equity Index and the major equity-based interventions

60. **Geographical scope**: The evaluation has a national focus on ranking disparities, based on which 15 districts were identified as having the highest prevalence of disparities and therefore prioritized for interventions. 186 local governments formerly included into those districts have been categorized by the equity index (levels of participation and access) including gender and some equity dimensions.

61. **Chronological scope:** While the evaluation covers the districts initially prioritized in 2016, it includes all documented activities under the Equity Strategy which have already been implemented since 2014 and are still ongoing in 2021.

3. Evaluation Criteria and Questions

62. As it is a Formative process-based evaluation, the evaluation focused on the extent to which the two pillars of the Equity Strategy, namely the Equity Index and the Equity based interventions, have been implemented, how they have been implemented, what can be learnt from their implementation and if there were any constraints related to their implementation in various contexts (transition to federalism and COVID-19 situation).

63. The following 5 OECD/DAC[20] criteria have been used for this evaluation: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Sustainability. Criteria and Questions are further described in the Evaluation Matrix presented in Annex 3.

4. Use and users of the evaluation.

Users and expected uses of the evaluation are outlined in the Table below.

Table 2. Users and Expected uses of the evaluation

Evaluation Users	Evaluation Uses
Government (Ministry of Education, science and technology and relevant line agencies and entities)	With the SSDP being in its final phase, the government has initiated the development of a new long term-education sector plan. The evaluation of the Equity Strategy is expected to inform the implementation of the strategy during and as part of the new plan in the federal context and guide the application of the equity index and equity strategy implementation plans.
Provincial and local governments	Provincial and local Governments will be given opportunities to share the challenges and lessons learnt they are facing in rolling out the Equity Strategy at local level.
UNICEF Senior Management staff	By better understanding the contributions of the Equity Strategy to the Nepal's Education development agenda, UNICEF will be able to update its Program Strategy in the future and target adequate support.
UNICEF Staff (Education, health and Water Sanitation sections)	The Evaluation Report will provide information for an improved cross-sectional collaboration within UNICEF Office as the Equity Strategy encompasses various program areas (education, health and water sanitation) .
UN agencies	UNICEF Education Section and other UN agencies, in collaboration with all partners involved in the implementation of the Education component of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), will introduce strategic/implementations changes to their strategy when relevant.
Development partners	Country programs and strategies of all development partners working in the education sector and having linkages with support in other sectors will benefit from the evaluation.
Member organizations of the Equity and Inclusive Education joint Thematic Working Group, Local Education Group in Nepal, (including LEDPG, CSOs, stakeholder representatives and platforms, etc.)	Mainstream (into their day-to-day practices) the good practices identified during the evaluation and address the shortcomings that have emerged in the course of the analysis.

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[20] OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. DAC Development Assistance Committee

METHODOLOGY

1. Evaluation Approach

64. This evaluation is formative and process-based with a focus on learning lessons and informing policy making.

65. For this evaluation, we used a mixed method (qualitative data collection and secondary data analysis) and theory-based approach[21] to triangulate existing secondary quantitative data, reviewing existing documentation and collecting additional primary data through a series of KIIs at National and Sub National level conducted all remotely.

66. Based on the Equity Strategy document, the evaluation team reconstructed the T.o.C (See annex 12). Several findings are related to the relevance of the design of the Equity Strategy and bring useful perspectives in relation to the pathways of change and assumptions of the T.o.C that were initially designed. See for example section 1.2 related to the analysis of the design and framework of the Equity Strategy.

67. An important task under this evaluation was also to undertake an in-depth analysis of the datasets from the EMIS (mainly flash reports derived periodically). The team also considered available MICS data for analytical purposes[22] but it was not used at the end. See Evaluation Matrix in Annex 3

2. Data Collection Method and Sampling

68. The following data collection methods were used during the evaluation: Desk review of relevant information (See annex 1), analysis of secondary quantitative and qualitative information, key Informants interviews (KIIs) at National and Sub National level. (See annex 2 for more details about the respondents met during the evaluation).

69. Selection of municipality: The initial list of selection criteria for municipalities had to be revisited to 1) better fit with the challenges related to interviews' organization and municipalities' selection, 2) to consider both municipalities having implemented their ESIPs and municipalities having not. To meet these challenges, the initial purposive sampling method was changed to a convenient sampling. We also used a snowball technique to identify the respondents.

70. Key Informants for Interviews (KIIs) were selected purposively based on a list provided by UNICEF and CEHRD.

71. The table summarizes the number of   interviewees at various levels disaggregated by gender.

Table 3. Number of respondents interviewed through KIIs or FGDs (National level only for the latter)

Level	Male	Female	Total
National Level (KIIs)	10	6	16
National Level (FGDs)	13	16	29
Sub National Level (KIIs only) (Province, LGs and schools)	35	9	44
Total	**58**	**31**	**89**

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[21] Theory based evaluation is an approach to evaluation (i.e., a conceptual analytical model) and not a specific method or technique. It is a way of structuring and undertaking analysis in an evaluation.
22 A wider use of MICS data was not relevant nor possible for methodological reasons, linked mainly with issues with comparability of data.

72. Interviews were carried out with Respondents from the Ministry of Education (At federal, provincial and Local Governments level), UNICEF, Donor agencies, NGOs, and with members of the Equity and Inclusion Technical Working Group (TWG)[23].

73. It was initially expected to select 7 municipalities (including one school in each municipality) using a purposive sampling method. We finally interviewed (remotely) respondents from 6 municipalities using a convenient sampling method. The main purpose of these interviews was to get an in-depth understanding of Equity based Interventions implemented at local level. The list of municipalities and schools covered is presented below.

Table 4. List of municipalities and schools

Rationale for selection	4 Provinces	5 Districts	6 Municipalities	13 Schools
This LG was selected as the development of the ESIPs involved some schools which was not always the case for the other LGs.	Province 2	Rautahat	Rajpur	Janata Secondary school, Janata High School,
This LG had shown little engagement and interest for the ESIP process and it was important to understand the reasons behind it.	Province 2)	Bara	Subarna	Nepal Rastriya Secondary School,
Barekot is a very deprived municipality as evidence by poor level of education outcomes.	Karnali (Ex province 6)	Jajarkot	Barekot	Aiswarya High School, Janata Adharbhut School, Kalika Primary School, Sita Secondary School
This LG has involved non state actors to design their ESIPs, a practice that is rarely found in other municipalities.	Lumbini (Ex province 5)	Banke	Khajura	Gyanodaya high school, Janasewa Secondary School, Mustakul Ullum Madarsha
This municipality has performed better in term of planning the ESIP	Sudurpashchim	Doti	Sayal	Kaladhunga Basic School, Janata Janardan Secondary School
This municipality has performed better in term of planning the ESIP	Sudurpashchim	Doti	Purbichauki	Shree Saraswoti Adharbhut Vidhyalaya (Basic School), Bhagwati Basic (grades 1 to 5) school

74. In each municipality and school, the following type of respondents were interviewed: Education Officers at provincial and municipality level, headmaster of the school, one parent from the Parent/teacher Association (when available), one parent of out of School children.

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[23] See annex 2 for more details about the respondents

75. Below a list of the main characteristics of the municipalities visited:

Municipality	Year for ESIP planning	Budget received	Number of Out of School children	Involvement of Non state Actor in planning	Involvement of other departments in planning	Status of Implementation of ESIP
Barekot	1st plan this year (2020/2021)	4,300 USD this year	''Few OoSC''	No	No	Not started yet
Khajura	1st plan this year (2020/2021)	11,000 USD this year	*''1,119 OoSC from 1 to 12 grade''*	Yes	No	Not started yet
Rajpur	1st plan this year (2020/2021)	25,000 USD this year	*''25% of children out of schools''*	Not clear	Yes	Being implemented
Sayal	2nd year of planning exercise	10,000 USD last year. 7,000 USD this year	''31% of children out of schools''	No	No	1st plan partly implemented. 2nd year plan not started yet.
Subarna	2nd year of planning exercise	Last year budget was not used because of COVID-19	*''11000 students who are out of school''*	No	Limited (with health only)	Not started yet
Purbichauki	2nd year of planning exercise	Last year budget was not used because of COVID-19	*''This year,194 OoSC''*	Limited	Yes	Not started yet

3. Analysis of Collected Data

76. For the qualitative component of the evaluation, Evaluation Questions were coded and represented in the various Questionnaires for the KIIs. Information collected during the interviews was regularly added into a word document organized per Evaluation Question that was used as a backbone for the final report.

77. Transcripts from KIIs were compiled daily in a word document. In doing this iterative work, we were able to check and ensure that data was triangulated before the information was then analyzed and consolidated into the final report. Any divergence of opinions (between sources or between respondents for example) is highlighted in the present final report.

78. For the Quantitative data analysis, the following data sets were used[24] and subsequent analysis undertaken as per the table below:

Type of data sets used	Analysis conducted	Purpose and method of analysis	Limitations
Flash report annexes for the corresponding years (2009 to 2019)	NER global evolution by district 2009-2019	Set the schooling performances by districts and groups of districts over the period. Compare the ranking of districts according to schooling performances with the EI ranking	To have a better idea of the Nepalese schooling context and to offer an alternative way of identifying schooling problems in terms of access, retention and transition, we intended to compute a "schooling profile analysis"[25] on the basis of a data request to the EMIS team (estimation of GIR for every grade in basic and primary education). We received the data concerning school enrolments and repeaters per grade but not the promised information needed on demographic data for the school years 2009, 2015 and 2019)
Flash report annexes for the schooling years 2009, 2015 and 2019.	NER annual average growth rates by district 2009-2015-2019	Examining the annual growth of NER (basic and secondary levels) over the period and subperiods	No limitation
Flash report annexes for the schooling years 2009, 2015 and 2019.	School completeness (grade 1-8), survival rates transition rates, by districts and groups of districts	In order to analyze eventual school mapping problems regarding schooling performances and equity we computed one indicator of school completeness by districts and groups of districts and also mobilized data on school survival and transition for the corresponding levels	If it had been available, the estimation of « schooling profiles » could have been very useful for determining the trend of schooling by districts and its main characteristics in terms of access/retention/transition. These analysis of schooling profiles is easier to understand and to be used as a planning tool than the cohort analysis (PRD indicators) presented in the flash reports.
Flash report annexes for the schooling years 2009, 2015 and 2019.	Students/teachers ratios by districts and groups of districts	Analysis of the evolution of these ratios over the period at the districts level as an indicator of quality	Official data except for 2019 (computation done on the basis of the enrolments and the reported number of teachers by education levels).
Flash report annexes for the 2015	Selected schools facilities by districts and groups of districts in year 2015	Examining the main school facilities (water, electricity, internet access, toilets for girls/girls) by district and group of districts	These data were produced after the 2014 earthquake and we could not find any actualization in the flash reports.
Flash report annexes for the schooling years 2009, 2015 and 2019.	Index of parity girls/boys in terms of basic education enrolment. Shares of Dalit and Janajatis children in basic education enrolments	Measuring who are the beneficiaries of the equity strategy in terms of gender, caste and ethnicity	The lack of demographic refences concerning caste and ethnicity by districts has constrained our analysis for these dimensions.

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[24] Primary Quantitative data analysis was conducted to answer Evaluative Questions related to the Evaluation criteria Relevance and Effectiveness. See annex 3 for the evaluation matrix.

[25] see Education sector analysis methodological guidelines. Vol. 1: Sector-wide analysis, with emphasis on primary and secondary education 2014

4.   Ethical and evaluation principles

79. The evaluation was conducted according to the evaluation norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)[26] and the UNEG Code of Conduct[27] .Transversal analysis of human rights, gender and equity aspects was undertaken in line with the Guidelines on the Integration of Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluations[28].·Close attention was paid to the compliance with the GEROS standards[29].

80. During the whole data collection process, the evaluation team respected the following ethical safeguards for interviewees: respect for dignity and diversity, right to self-determination, equitable representation, respect for vulnerable groups, confidentiality and the "do no harm" principle.

81. The following key evaluation principles were also respected:

1. **Independence and conflict of interest:** Members of the evaluation team are independent and have not been involved in Project activities, nor have they been responsible in the past for the design, execution or supervision of the Project;
2. **Impartiality:** The evaluation team provided a comprehensive and balanced presentation of the project's strengths and weaknesses. The evaluation process took into account all views received from stakeholders;
3.**Transparency:** The evaluation team communicate as openly as possible the purpose of the evaluation, the criteria applied and the expected use of the results. The evaluation report provides transparent information on its sources, methods and approaches;
4.**Disclosure:** It is expected that the Evaluation report will serve as a mechanism by which the findings and lessons identified in the evaluation will be disseminated to policy makers, operational staff, beneficiaries, the general public and other stakeholders;
5.**Ethics:** The evaluation team respected the right of institutions and individuals to provide information in confidence, and the sources of specific information and opinions contained in the evaluation report have not been disclosed.
6.**Credibility:** The Evaluation is based on data and observations that are considered reliable and trustworthy with respect to the quality of the instruments, procedures and analyses that have been used to collect and interpret the information;
7.**Usefulness:** The report present facts, findings and issues, conclusions and recommendations in a comprehensive and balanced manner.

82. All sub national interviews were virtual and recorded. All participants were asked for authorization to record their interview. Any issues or information that the interviewees wanted off the record were not transcribed. All the recordings are securely stored in a computer used only by one team member. Information will be deleted permanently after the final submission and approval of the report. Informed consent was collected before starting the recording.

83. The evaluation design and approach brought in the evaluation principles: UN and UNICEF's commitment to a human rights-based approach to programming, to gender equality, and to equity in the following manners:

84. Whenever possible and relevant, the team requested to interview a balanced number of men and women. At the end 35% of the number of respondents interviewed were female. One member of the evaluation team was a gender expert and was responsible for collecting information at sub national level.

85. The Object of this evaluation: Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal (Equity Strategy), is to reduce the current disparities in (i) access and participation and (ii) learning outcomes for children in basic and secondary public education in Nepal. This is done through incorporating equity-based interventions and strategies in the education sector plans and alignment of non-state resources to these, as well as the use of an Equity Index that includes gender as one of

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[26] http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914
[27] http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100
[28] http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/980
[29] http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/607

the potential drivers of inequity but recognizes its intersectionality with other drivers and that it therefore cannot be taken as a stand-alone dimension. For this reason, there was no standalone criterion on gender and/or human rights included in the Term of Reference and in the evaluation framework as this was mainstreamed into other evaluation criteria and Evaluative Questions.

86. The Object of the evaluation is very much contributing to the fulfilment of children rights to education and more particularly marginalized children. For this reason, findings and analysis of this report are directly related to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (commonly abbreviated as the CRC.) The Consolidated Equity Strategy is implemented in the context of the previous and current national education sector plans that aims for basic education to ensure equitable access to quality education through a rights-based approach and promotion of a child-friendly environment in schools.

87. As can be seen in this report, the evaluation team conducted a quantitative analysis of existing data in using a gender lens. Data for enrolled OoSC was conducted per grade and per gender. Recommendations related to the improvement of girls' education are included in the report. Among them, the importance of secondary education in relation to access to sciences studies for girls for example is highlighted.

88. In short, the following actions were taken to ensure gender equality and social inclusion

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- Ensure that evaluations include GESI-related questions that are linked to the project/program ToC and situational analysis.
- Include a GESI expert in the evaluation team and seek to ensure that all evaluation team members have some understanding of GESI within the context of the project/program being evaluated.
- Collect feedback from women and poor and excluded groups using appropriate tools.
- Design and use instruments that clearly capture disaggregation and issues impacting women, the poor, vulnerable and excluded people.
- Use both quantitative and qualitative methods whenever possible.
- Prepare disaggregated data and an evaluation report that captures benefits to women, poor, vulnerable and excluded people and also documents remaining issues.
- Include explicit documentation of the implications and impact on women, the poor, vulnerable and excluded people.
- Develop a management response plan that includes actions to address GESI-related findings and recommendations.

Source: A Common Framework for Gender Equality & Social Inclusion-2017. GESI Working Group, 2017: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Working Group, International Development Partners Group, Nepal.

5. Limitations and mitigation measures of the evaluation

89. The following limitations were encountered and mitigation measures were used during the evaluation process.

Table 5. Limitations and Mitigations measured

Type of limitation	Limitations	Measures taken to mitigate the limitations
Remote Field work	In some cases, it was difficult to contact the respondents because of national holidays or limited access to internet (at field level)	We rescheduled the interviews.
Access to financial information and evaluation design	Due to unavailability of precise government level financial information per municipalities and because of the design itself of the evaluation (that is mainly a process-based evaluation and not an impact evaluation), it was not possible through this evaluation to relate reduction of disparities in education outcomes with increased needs-based funding in the 15 focused districts of the ES.	We attempted to describe the main status of the DLI 6 and DLI 7 (that are important proxy indicators of the ES) without linking their results to specific funding streams. We also attempted to provide an overall perspective of the effects of two Equity focus schemes, namely the scholarship program and the mid-day meals.
Limitation of the methodology	Because of time constraints and scope of the evaluation, it was not possible to use the MICS data	For the secondary quantitative data analysis, we conducted the data analysis only based on the available data from EMIS. (The flash reports)
Turn Over of staff	Some Education staff interviewed in the field were new and were not too familiar with the ESIPs process which has limited the reliability of the data collected in some instances	We identified other sources of information to triangulate the information or traced down the person from the Provincial level that was in charge of supporting the development of the ESIP at LGs level.
Gaps in access to respondents	Sayal: The teacher was not available for interview. Subarna: It was not possible to interview a parent with an OoSC[30]. Barekot: instead of a parent of an OoSC, we interviewed a guardian of a child at risk of dropping out. The NGO was not available for an interview. In Sayal and Purbi Chauki guardians of OoSC were not available. We interviewed one NGO working in the same two municipalities. Khadjura: The parent of a OoSC was not invited for interview.	
Limited Number of interviews with Government staff at National level	The evaluation team conducted several interviews at sub national level with education government staff but was able, at National level to contact only three government staff responsible of EMIS and working at CEHRD. The reason is that staff were too busy with multiple requests for interviews related to several studies being conducted at the same time to prepare the new Education sector plan	We identified other sources of information to triangulate the information.

Recognizing the limitations encountered during this evaluation, we still believe that our findings are reliable since the evaluation approach used a range of sources of information (desk review, KIIs and FGDs). Furthermore, while conducting the field research, we noticed that no new information was gathered after the completion of 2/3 of the KIIs, implying that the saturation point was reached.

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[30] The OoSC's parents were not near the school premise where the virtual meeting was organized because children living close to the school were all attending school.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

1. Relevance of the Equity Strategy to context and needs

1.1 Added value of the Strategy

R 1. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been based on the equity-based issues and challenges observed in the education sector, and the needs of children in marginalized ethnic groups, castes and low-income families?

R1.1 Sub question: To what extent has the Equity Strategy added value in the context of ''natural'' observed systemic downward trend towards universalisation of access, participation and learning outcomes? How sound was the rationale to select the three capacities (access, participation and learning outcomes) as a justification for a dedicated Strategy on Equity?

Added values of the Equity Strategy

1. A key rationale behind the development of the Equity Strategy was that even though there had been a well-functioning Education Management Information System (EMIS) for decades, **the data obtained from the education system were not fully analyzed and more importantly, the government wasn't fully using the data it received to track progress or monitor which geographic areas or population groups were in need of additional resources to address structural inequities**. Through the "Data Must Speak" initiative, the ambition was to test an innovative approach of using education data for equitable resource allocation and targeted programming. For this purpose, UNICEF worked with the Government of Nepal, its partner organization World Education, and received technical support from UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia (ROSA) and the Education team at UNICEF Headquarters.

2. It naturally led to the 2-pillars structure with, on the one hand a comprehensive index to target the most relevant populations, and on the other hand, a set of policy measures addressing the needs of these populations. **The idea behind the Equity Index was also to move away from current blanket approaches to scholarships and other equity policies**, which have been largely unmonitored; to provide an opportunity for evidenced-based planning and budgeting and a methodology to track progress and measure effectiveness of more tailored approaches. The ES, as it was adopted in 2014, does not have its own action plan[31] at national level, leading **pillar 2 to be dependent upon local planning capacities**.

3. **To support the buy in of the Equity Index, an incremental approach was used by first advocating for the need of an objective way of measurement of Equity based on government data**. The 1st computation of the index took time to convince the government to actually use the data. The index was conceptualized in 2014 and approved in 2016 by MoEST. Noting that the first list of districts computed through the Equity Index was not surprising compared to previously known figures, the Government felt that the index could be used to further '' unpack'' the inequity issues at local level. It then provided **an evidence-based information for MoEST to advocate for the Ministry of Finance to allocate additional funding**. UNICEF indicated that ''*once we are understanding where the disparities are and what are the drivers, it makes disparities workable to be used for planning and resource allocation.*''

4. Similarly, **the equity index was also seen by respondents interviewed as a good communication avenue that helps to prompt discussion at local level about disparity**.

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[31] Even though there have been some attempts at the beginning to develop some action plans at national level but it did not work.

5. **The ES contributed to give more emphasis on equity issues in Nepal** and nurtured all Nepalese education planning documents after 2014. For example, the SSDP document (2016-2021) updated in March 2020, includes 157 occurrences of the word Equity. Our rapid review of the occurrences of the word equity in the various versions of the SSDP indicates **an increase interest for equity issues** as per the table below.

Table 6. Occurrence of the word equity in SSDP

Documents	N° Words	Occurrence word equity	%
School Sector Reform Plan 2009-2015 (August 2009)	37439	12	0.03
School Sector Reform Program/Sector Wide Approach (SSRP/SWAP) Extension document. Feb 2014	29789	14	0.05
School Sector Development Plan 2016/17–2022/23 (BS 2073/74—2079/80) 2016	74851	142	0.19
School Sector Development Plan 2016-17 - 2020/21. Approved: August 2016. Updated: March 2020	75285	157	0.21

Source: Authors

6. **The SSDP even provides a key result area on equity** with a definition aligned with the initial ES, stating that the purpose of educational reform is to "*ensure that the education system is inclusive and equitable in terms of access, participation and learning outcomes, with a special focus on reducing disparities among and between groups having the lowest levels of access, participation and learning outcomes.*" Equitable and inclusive access and participation is one of the 9 expected key results area[32] of the SSDP:

7.Equitable and inclusive access and participation — *Nepal's achievements in access to education have not ensured access for all, with certain groups experiencing less access to and participation in quality education, including low participation of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. The aim is to reduce the disparities experienced by groups with low access, participation and learning outcomes. The Consolidated Equity Strategy (2014) needs to be implemented for the consolidation and the needs-based targeting of related strategies through the use of disparity-based formulas and the provision of inclusive education for children with disabilities.*

7. Out of 153 indicators included in the SSDP result framework, 26 (around 17%) are related to Equity while other indicators also contribute to advance the Equity Agenda indirectly as per the table below.

Table 7. Number of indicators related to equity in SSDP

Dimension/type of indicator	Total
Quality alone	31
Quality (including proxy)	47
Equity (including proxy)	26
Access	22
Resilience (including related activity)	8
Efficiency (including proxy)	19

Source: SSDP, GoN, 2016 (extracted from the SSDP review report 2019)

8. **ES is integrated in several documents such as SSDP progress reports, the flash reports, the status reports and out of school reports**. The EI is integrated within the ESP and in the monitoring and progress reports for the ESP that are regularly produced by the government through the flash reports

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[32] Result areas are: 1. Federalism and decentralisation, 2. Quality and effective pedagogy, 3. Curriculum Framework and learning materials ,4. Assessment and Examination, 5. Teacher management and professional development, 6. Languages of education, 7. 7. Equitable and inclusive access and participation, 8. Enabling environment, 9.Infrastructure development and school safety.

9. The adoption of the ES led to an increased focus on equity by the Government and non-state actors that has been evidenced by:

- A better collaboration around equity between Organisations working in the education sector and with the government through the discussions taking place in the Equity technical Working Group.
- The setting up of a dedicated group on equity has allowed that relevant and articulated suggestions on equity be made at the plenary discussions during the JRM and BRM times. [33] This has permitted to raise equity higher in the education agenda at the level of the Ministry of Education.
- A stronger avenue for advocacy on equity whereby members of the equity TWG are jointly participating to the regular JRM and BRM missions to ensure that equity remain high in the agenda.
- A renew interest of the Government for equity issues materialised by additional funding from the federal budget provided to the 15 focused districts that were ranked by the Equity Index.
- A stronger awareness of LGs on equity issues and inequity dimensions taking place in their municipalities
- A dedicated Disbursement Link Indicator such as the DLI 6, indicates also the importance of equity for some donor agencies
- An increase dialogue between donor agencies and the Government to strengthen the Equity Agenda in the Education sector

10. We found that the strategy also contributed to consensus building in ''operational terms'' with the understanding that:

- There is a consensus on the objective set by the strategy to target the most vulnerable areas (districts then local government) and concentrate resources in these most needed locations.
- The strategy leads to specific fieldwork to identify and prioritize targets (in a context of a lack of local skills, which we can hope is temporary) with basic data extracted from EMIS (Although, whose presentation of education indicators is more descriptive than analytical and pedagogical for the stakeholders) who will then finally trigger actions through the implementation of the ESIPs.
- There is an ambition to mobilize donors for additional resources allocations.
- The tool has been developed in order to make it evolves according to the future capacities of EMIS.

11. Nevertheless, other sources indicate **that Quality and equity in education remain challenging** and, although they are mentioned in the SSDP, they will continue to go unchallenged: "*The SSDP identifies altogether 11 policy directions and 20 implementation strategies under equity, quality, efficiency and relevance to achieve the objectives and 31 key results. For most of these, there are no specific targets or indicators*"[34].

12. A recent meeting (April 2019) of the TWG on equity and inclusion highlighted the need for more gender disaggregation of targets to yet be applied for the many PRF indicators. The same meeting also noted that relevant **SSDP Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) need to be further disaggregated by caste/ethnicity.**

13. On the other hand, this consensus-based strategy may give the impression that it does not take sufficiently into account the scale of the problem identified (as drivers are not weighted as discussed later in this report in the section related to the effectiveness of the index) or that it takes precedence over other more comprehensive policies that contribute to the same objectives.

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[33] The mid-term review is the only time where the program result framework can be updated, the BRM facilitates joint planning for the upcoming academic year and the JRM review jointly the previous academic year
[34] Juho Uusihakala Consulting. (2016). Appraisal of School Sector Development Plan 2016/17-2022/23 of Nepal.

14. In order to test the relevance of the EI we looked at the ranking of districts that derived from their performance in basic schooling (NER for upper basic) in 2009, 2015 and in 2019 (see annex 4 for methodological considerations and detailed results). The result shows that the 15 ES selected districts since 2015 are effectively within the 30 districts performing less than the national average in 2009 (with 2 exceptions) but with a different ranking than the one measured by the EI. Unsurprisingly, the 5 least-performing districts in both selections are the already well-known Teraï districts, lagging behind others for a long time. However, differences exist when considering the other selected districts. More precisely, when we refer to schooling performance through NER in upper basic, some districts appear to perform less than the selected ES districts. In reference to the EI built in, these districts have low C (average performance) and also low D (average inequities performance linked to the equity drivers). The fact that these districts are excluded through the EI ranking is questionable as it is clearly inequitable for someone to live in a district that performs badly (even if in these districts the low performances concern equally all the groups considered in the equity drivers).

1.2   Analysis of the design and framework of the Equity Strategy

15. As part of this assignment, the evaluation team reconstructed the Theory of Change (ToC) of the Equity Strategy (See inception report). Though this process, several issues were identified as described thereafter.

Issues with the design of the Equity Strategy:

16. T**he 2014 ES document was highly ambitious** and included a long and rather confusing list of possible equity-based interventions proposed as examples or "menu of options". The list provides a good basis for brainstorming and identifying relevant actions but may be perceived as overwhelming for the LGs for their operationalisation. Some of the interventions suggested as possible measures tackle long-term societal changes and /or long-term systemic education changes[35] in the overall education sector that may not be able to be addressed under this strategy, and are definitely out of the possible scope of ESIPs.

17. In addition, **the initial design has some loopholes** in the sense that it does not encompass information related to assumptions and risks and also lack relevant pathways of change between the various elements that compose the Strategy. (see paragraph 21 below)

18. Even though the Equity Index is a major component of the strategy, **there is a limited description in the Section III: ''*Framework of the consolidated equity strategy for the school education sector''* about activities and outputs related to the index** and explanation on how they will contribute to reach the objectives. Nevertheless, we note that the equity index was yet to be developed when section III was written.

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[35] For example: Interventions related to societal changes through awareness raising or strengthening education services such as holistic development within ECED services..

19. **It is not clear from the Strategy document which entity in the Ministry of Education will be in charge of operationalizing the strategy and ensuring effective planning, monitoring** and consolidation of information about results and outcomes. Similarly, the level of responsibilities for the effective implementation of each of the described interventions is not mentioned in the ES (federal, provincial, district and local).

20. Overall, we found that **the Strategy** is built partly as a logical framework, partly as an outcome model or a ToC and **does not provide an overall and visual perspective of what should be expected.**

The pathway of change may not be so linear

Equitable access → Equitable participation → Equitable learning outcomes → Equitable life outcomes
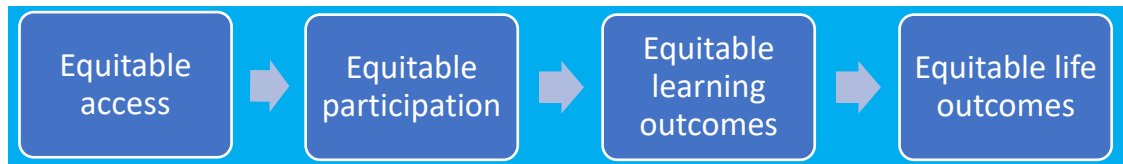
Figure 4. Main Pathway of change of the ES

21. **The EI design described above seems to imply a linear complementarity (and equal weight) between access-participation-learning outcomes.** At international level, the analysis of schooling usually put the learning perspective before the participation (and sometimes even before the access). Dropouts often follow weak learning outcomes and repetitions.

22. In reality, **access should not only be considered in quantitative terms.** It should also take account of the fact that **school provision is differentiated in terms of quality** (community versus institutional, concentration of "good" teachers in several privileged localities, huge differences in learning environments, etc.). Thus, **access to differentiated education service provision can lead to different participation and learning**.

23. **This is further highlighted by the fact that the deployment of teachers to the schools is not equitable**. Owing to the budget constraint, the number of positions of permanent, temporary, and *Rahat* teachers has been kept unchanged in the central budget for many years and MoEST is expecting Local Governments or schools to compensate for shortcomings from their own resources. The deployment of permanent positions is unequal over the territory[36], and not all Local Governments have the capacity to compensate and recruit more personnel, **meaning that economically poor schools have a higher ratio of teacher/students.** A resource index that should have taken these points into consideration was expected to be part of the consolidated EI. A resource index has been effectively developed but is not yet included in the analysis of the ranking.[37]

24. Similarly, **participation is often dependent on learning** (repetition produces dropouts, participation depends on families' perception of the interest for their child to attend a low quality school or to keep children in difficulty at school if the service provided does not sufficiently support these children). For example, drivers of successes for retention will not only be access but also the quality and efficiency of the school system itself. Studies have shown that children will tend to remain at school provided that the school itself is of quality.

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[36] Facility for Studies and Support to the Elaboration of the New Education Sector Plan (ESP 2030), Nepal ACA/2020/416-867, Economic and Public Finance Analysis and Projection of the Nepal Education Sector Final report. Oct 2020

[37] A resource index was expected to be part of the consolidated index and only has been developed once but not included in the ranking

Issue with the method of calculation of the index

25. The method of calculation of the Equity Index takes some dimensions of inequity equally into account[38]. It therefore does not take into account evidence on school participation (From CSOs in particular) underlining the **considerable weight of family resources in real inequalities** and the weak (net) effect of the various other dimensions.

26. The ES described clearly the importance of meaningful equity dimensions: (i) equity in meaningful access, (ii) equity in meaningful/functional participation and (iii) equity in meaningful learning outcomes[39]. Nevertheless, **it felt short in identifying the various issues pertaining to the drivers of these dimensions that could potentially be tackled through targeted supply and/or demand equity-based interventions. [40]**

27. **The idea that there would be a "main driver" of inequity is undoubtedly debatable** because of their cumulative and hierarchical nature (poverty is a factor that dominates all the other drivers) and does not dispense from a detailed analysis of the various factors inherent to local context in terms of supply and demand, to be able later on to put in place appropriate policies.

28. Finally, the index shows severity of the disparity (ie, the value of 'D') but not prevalence or is not able to weigh drivers that are otherwise not significant (such as disability for example).

The design of the index and the OoSC as a main policy induce a focus of the interventions on the demand side of the education system and fails to take education needs of targeted children into consideration

29. The way the Equity index is designed induces a focus on the demand side of the education sector as the main drivers of inequities are related to various typologies of children and as such the index does not include aspects related for example to a lack of education services and quality in specific geographical areas.

30. See annex 6 for a summary of issues that could be tackled through supply or demand oriented interventions that have not been envisaged in the initial design of the Strategy.

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[38] The EI does not weight the various inequity drivers (gender, caste, geographical background, family income, specific vulnerability) but uses instead an arithmetic mean which assumes that their weight is the same in term of contribution to inequity.

[39] Meaningful has been added to avoid confusion that the strategy's focus areas are seen in a superficial and physical sense. Access within the strategic framework does not mean merely enrolment, which specified an administrative action, but a child entering education (both basic and secondary level) and being welcomed in doing so. Participation goes beyond for example retention or attendance, it means a child physically being within the school, being engaged in the social and educational processes within the education system and feeling safe and accepted while doing so. Finally, learning outcomes, not just in the sense of being sufficient to pass tests, but aligned with the potential and the needs and context of the child's livelihood and life skills. Source: Equity Strategy 2014.

[40] Please annex 6. Possible supply and demand actions

1.3 Adequation of the Strategy to respond to barriers and needs

Sub question R 1.4: To what extent do equity-based interventions (both undertaken and proposed) respond to the Context and structural causes of disparities in education outcomes? And how do they respond to reducing barriers in access, participation and learning outcomes based on identified needs?

Sub question R 1.5: To what extent does the operationalization of the equity strategy through targeted interventions allow a response to these barriers being intersectional and including several drivers of disparities that disproportionally increase disparities as assumed in the theoretical framework?

The Equity Index

31. At its design stage, the index was to take into consideration the following dimensions of inequity Gender, location, Ethnicity (Dalit/non-Dalit), disability, wealth, parent's education. In the end, because of issues related to data availability, the index computed data mainly related to the following three categories: gender, location and ethnicity. Also, the dimension "disability" was not included as the number of children with disabilities was statistically not significant enough.

32. As detailed in other sections of this report, these challenges impacted the relevance and use of the index for data analysis compared to regular Education indicators.

Equity based interventions

33. The additional funding provided to LGs to address disparities in education were sometimes perceived by the LG as additional opportunities to support the education sector as a whole as shared by this LG met during the evaluation.

''Earlier too there had been works on equity whether they were seen or unseen. Now a name is given for those works. Like giving scholarship is also equity. So, supporting stationery, bags, clothes had been done earlier also. Now too we are doing the same thing. We are not doing it differently whether we make plan or not. But now we need to bring 100% students back to school within certain time period which is stressed by making a plan. Ensure their access and quality.'' LG Education officer

'My children study in grade 9, 6 and 4. For grade 4 child, there is provision of lunch, scholarship, uniform and textbooks. For bigger girls, the municipality provides uniform and cycle. My daughter has also received cycle and uniform. Scholarship comes from school, uniform and cycle come from municipality. I encourage other parents to send their children to school. There is good education, the provincial government has provided for lunch and the municipality has been providing uniform and lunch. Enrolment drive (Welcome to school program) had immense impact on the kids and it was effective.'' KII with a mother of enrolled children

34. According to UNICEF and WE, the majority of the LGs from the 1st batch of 40 LGs supported are at the final stage of endorsement of their plans by the municipality councils. **Nevertheless, based on our discussion with the key informants interviews only few of them have actually implemented their plans.[41]**

35. As the supported LGs were recently sensitized about equity, **some ESIP interventions look like more as a wish list for the education sector** as a whole but do not focus enough on how to address the root causes of inequity. **The first round of 5 ESIPs is to be taken as a baseline and every round should improve the ESIPs.** Mainly, **LGs have not yet been able to look at the dimensions on why children are lagging behind and could not yet identify the activities that would help break the barriers to access.** This could also be explained by the current capacity gaps (and lack of analytical skills) at local level that is currently prevailing in the context of the transition to federalism.

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[41] Unfortunately because of lack of information and monitoring reports, it was not possible to identify how many of the LGs had started to implement their plans.

36. Among the 14 reasons for being OoS highlighted by the household survey conducted by CEHRD[42] in 2019, poverty accounted for 60.5% of the responses. CEHRD suggested that these children either had to work or were unable to afford to go to school. This reason has direct and indirect relations with other dropout factors. The next most common response was the distance to school (11.0%), lack of interest to go to school (4.1%) and engagement in some sorts of labour (5.0%).

Table 8. OoSC survey findings 2019

District	Students	Poverty	Distance to school	Disability	Personal or family illness	Language	Conflict	Migration	Early marriage	Personal care	Discrimi-nation	School not child friendly	Not interested in study	Labour	Other
Total	Girls	60.7	8.4	1.0	1.8	1.6	0.2	1.5	1.7	5.3	1.6	1.8	4.9	5.4	4.1
	Boys	60.2	13.6	0.5	1.7	1.1	0.1	1.0	1.2	5.3	1.2	1.8	3.3	4.7	4.2
	Total	60.5	11.0	0.8	1.7	1.4	0.2	1.3	1.4	5.3	1.4	1.8	4.1	5.0	4.1

''She was teased in her class regarding her age which embarrassed her to attend the class and she dropped out''; ''I admitted them when they were 5 years old but due to irregularities they were unable to pass the grades regularly so they dropped out''; ''Those students who fail grade exam or are absent for a long time due to seasonal migration for work, see their friends moving in higher grades and are demotivated to repeat the grade''. KII with parents of Out of Schools Children.

''There are various reasons for drop out and irregular attendance of students for example: families travelling to India for work taking their children with them, lack of awareness among parents, students involved in works to earn, natural disaster affecting the school etc.'' KII with a LG education officer

37. As UNICEF experienced in other countries, "back to school" campaigns are generally quite effective to bring back children to schools. The issue that remains is how to make sure they remain at school.

38. As described in some of the ESIPs, and through the KIIs, **there is a belief that the main reason for dropping out is children engagement in domestic chores. Poverty, internal migration, illiteracy and lack of awareness among parents were also perceived as being the root causes of dropping out. Nevertheless, studies have shown that even if the child' family is poor, parents will tend to leave the child at school provided that he/she is performing well, implying that the focus should be on improving the quality of the school system[43] (the supply side of the education system) to ensure better retention rates**. Accordingly, most ESIP were focussed on access with only few targeted activities to address issues related to participation and learning outcomes.

39. A baseline data was started in 2015 with a nominative list of out of school children gathered through household survey. **The baseline findings is not yet used as an opportunity to better understand the effects of school reintegration programs and more importantly if the out of schools children reintegrated actually remained or not in the school system and if not why they dropped out.**

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[42] The 15 districts with the highest level of disparity as per the access plus participation ranking for academic years 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19 (Table 3) were selected as the subjects of the baseline assessment of out-of-school children conducted in 2019

[43] Access indicators such as NERs and NARs reflect the results of the interaction between the supply of educational services and household demand for education. The availability of schools and teachers, proximity of schools to households, state expenditure on education are some key indicators of supply. Similarly, demand side indicators, which are functions of household preferences and constraints that affect the use of the services supplied, include inter alia, family and cultural background of students, direct private costs of education, and scholarships or financial assistance received by household.

40. In some instances, (based on KIIs), there was anecdotal cases of schools also working on retention of reintegrated children but there has been uneven successes in doing it because of various factors (poverty, context, family situations..) as described with the quotes below.

''I would give any help that is needed but SMC has not been formed now. All the activities the school has been doing is helping to sustain the students in the school. Earlier, students would come to school and leave at 12, 12:30 pm but now, we see that the students are staying up to 3, 3:30. The teachers are also supporting. Our house is near the school and we keep the school under supervision on how it is doing. I think now, if the teachers could spare some time, and organize some programs on raising awareness in the locality that would be good.'' KII with a parent of school going children

'I have 3 children. Two are married and one son is 10 years old. He dropped after studying grade 5. Due to poverty, he has to do a lot of work but I didn't ask him to leave school. He left on his own. I know that the school has been providing many things. If I try again and hard then maybe he will come back to school. My husband had gone abroad earlier but now he is here. I admitted him twice to a private school but he ran away from there too. I couldn't do anything. He used to come to school but during COVID lockdown there was a gap and since then he didn't want to come back to school.'' KII with a parent of out of school going children

41. The SSDP Mid Term Review recognized important results obtained in terms of reducing the number of OoSC[44]. The same source reported that this was due to the important work conducted by local stakeholders (schools, LGs, SMCs, etc.) and Non-State Actors that have been highly involved in awareness campaigns and made home visits to identify and enrol OoSC in formal and non-formal schemes.

42. Nevertheless, **access and more importantly retention in the education system for the most disadvantaged children remain a challenge**. Late entry and specific difficulties faced by these children increase the risk of dropout before completing basic education[45]. It seems that incentives and efforts are focused on children's enrolment whereas resources to give proper attention and follow-up for these students may not be in place to support their participation in the long run. The report further notes that drop out factors are complex, often intricate and require a holistic approach where the school environment can only play a limited role.

43. The Flash report (2018/2019) report highlights also an early risk of drop-out between grade 1 and grade 2 in community schools, at 19% compared to 4% risk in institutional schools.

44. This issue partially explains the setbacks observed in terms of survival rates and cycle completion rate. The flash report (2075, 2018-2019) confirms this negative trend in survival rate at grade 8 for 2018/2019 but also indicates an increase in repetition rate. These trends confirm that **stakeholders at school level have not yet been able to adjust their pedagogical practices and support children with special needs (such as Children with disabilities). There is a need to improve the minimum enabling environment for the children to participate and learn.**

45. To track the evolution of school performance, a resource index has been developed but the input in data is limited. So far it is based on the 5 Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMEC)[46]. UNICEF mentioned ongoing work to increase the relevance of this resource index, in particular an option paper, still under discussion. Currently, the Government tracks how many of these conditions are met (through the flash reports). **What is still missing is to set a target on how many enabling conditions need to be there to be considered as good score.**

46. The following table shows the three components of the equity index (access, participation and learning) by province and compares the values of the equity index and those of the resources index. The table is integrating data on learning, as it is an old form of EI which today is limited to the access and retention components only. The relationship between the two indexes (EI and resource index) suggests that there is a positive correlation between them. **This positive relationship can**

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[44] The MoEST reports a total 258 000 OoSC enrolled in formal and non-formal streams in the MTR document

[45] For the year 2017/2018, nearly 40% of 5-year old boys from the Dalit and most disadvantaged communities do not attend school. The correlation between late entry and the risk of early drop-out has been largely documented worldwide. (Source: TWG on Equity and Inclusive Education – April 2019 cited in the SSDP MTR 2019)

[46] Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMEC) of: 1) student- teacher ratio; 2) classroom space; 3) set of textbooks per child per year; 4) separate girls and boys toilets plus water; and 5) book/learning corner in all classrooms

be interpreted as a sign that poor performance is linked to low resources. We can also consider, as in many countries where the relation between resources and outcomes is relatively weak, that this positive correlation is explained by the fact that the best performing schools benefit from additional resources (due to their location and attractiveness) without establishing a causality between these two dimensions.

Figure 5. Disparities in Educational Outcomes & Resource Allocation

Educational Outcomes and Resource Allocation

	One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six	Seven
Participation	0.673	0.277	0.719	0.744	0.544	0.474	0.448
Learning	0.386	0.296	0.669	0.529	0.380	0.306	0.269
Access	0.840	0.598	0.850	0.892	0.823	0.780	0.801
Equity Index	0.633	0.390	0.746	0.721	0.582	0.520	0.506
Resource Index	2.936	1.830	3.022	3.338	2.496	2.342	2.414
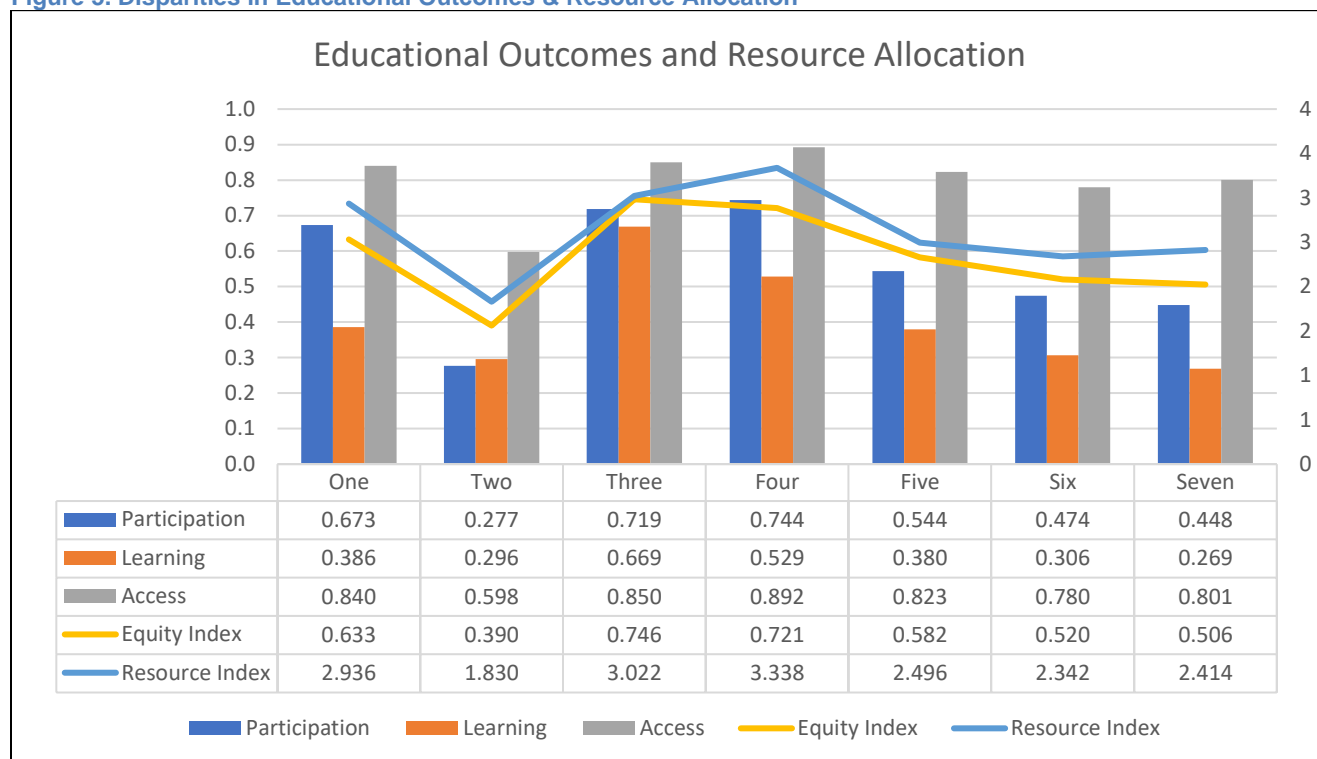
47. The 2019/20 Flash data reports that 63.6% of all public schools providing basic level education met only three out of five of the PMECs, although 13.4% of schools met all five PMECs, which greatly exceeds the Year 4 target of 6.1%. Despite this achievement, **the report also calls for further investment in upgrading school conditions, especially water, sanitation and hygiene facilities, to allow the safe return of students to schools as directed by the approved school reopening school framework.**

48. The evaluation team also found that little was planned and done through equity-based interventions to address the barriers to the inclusion of Children with Special Needs in the education system. **Addressing Disability barriers are likely to require greater financial investment and expertise linked with inclusive teaching practices than barriers relating to school uniform or stationary costs for example**.

49. Please see also for more information in this report the section that answers sub Question R4.2: *To what extent have cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the ES?*

CONCLUSION R 1. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been based on the equity-based issues and challenges observed in the education sector, and the needs of children in marginalized ethnic groups, castes and low-income families?

Evaluative Judgement: *The ES is a good avenue in term of awareness raising and advocacy, leading to great equity-based mobilization but activities implemented in the field focussed mainly on out-of-school children, notably access and participation, and partly failed to address the learning needs of vulnerable children in schools.*

ES is relevant with the 2030 global agenda and provides a specific strategy to reach the most vulnerable children alongside the overall education policy planning cycle (SSRP and SSDP). It responds to the challenge of equity through the provision of data related to several identified key drivers of disparities (gender, ethnicity, location, ability, etc.). The rationale is to target children lagging further and further behind in terms of access, participation and learning that could lead them to benefit less from the National Education Policy. The strategy is seeking to make the institutional structure and mechanisms increasingly capable for undertaking need-based programming and budgeting.

The Equity Index is the vehicle to support the targeting of ultra-disadvantaged children and allows to inform subsequent remedial interventions. It "scientifically" legitimizes the choice to work on a relatively limited number of beneficiaries.

The evaluation team found that the Equity Strategy is also a good avenue in term of awareness raising and advocacy leading to great equity-based mobilization and making Nepal a pioneer country in specifically addressing equity issues in education. The strategy addressed with relative success the access and participation challenges, although the most marginalized still remain hard-to-reach. The ES described clearly the importance of meaningful equity dimensions: (i) equity in meaningful access, (ii) equity in meaningful/functional participation and (iii) equity in meaningful learning outcomes[47]. Nevertheless, it felt short in identifying the various issues pertaining to the drivers of these dimensions that could potentially be tackled through targeted supply and/or demand equity-based interventions.

However, equity interventions effectively reflected in ESIP and implemented in the field focussed mainly on out-of-school children, notably access and participation, and partly failed to address the learning needs of vulnerable children in schools. It leads the equity strategy to neglect part of the equity challenge and failing to recognize that, in many cases, the learning dimension prevails on access and participation when dropout results from the poor quality of school supply in the most vulnerable areas. In that case, the learning needs of vulnerable children are not directly addressed.

LGs have not yet been able to look at the dimensions on why children are lagging behind and could not yet identify the activities that would help break the barriers to access, participation and learning. This could also be explained by the current capacity gaps and still unclear legal framework in the context of the transition to federalism.

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[47] Meaningful has been added to avoid confusion that the strategy's focus areas are seen in a superficial and physical sense. Access within the strategic framework does not mean merely enrolment, which specified an administrative action, but a child entering education (both basic and secondary level) and being welcomed in doing so. Participation goes beyond for example retention or attendance, it indicates a child physically being within the school, being engaged in the social and educational processes within the education system and feeling safe and accepted while doing so. Finally, learning outcomes, not just in the sense of being sufficient to pass tests, but aligned with the potential and the needs and context of the child's livelihood and life skills. Source: Equity Strategy 2014.

1.4   Rationale of the Strategy with regards to national Education context

Rapid overview of the context

50. In order to look at the enrolment pattern in Nepal, we referred to the evolution of NER in the four level of education. If NER underestimates the real schooling performance of the country in a period of multi-cohort schooling, it remains the best indicator for temporal comparisons in the perspective of progressive stabilization of the entry age into the education system. As can be seen in table 1, the NER at the basic level comes close to 100% at the end of the period 2009-2019 indicating that universalization has been quite reached. This performance leads to few disparities between districts (district standard deviation for this indicator is only 0,4 in 2019)[48]. The schooling indicator at Lower secondary (Upper basic) is also progressing significantly as it already reaches 89,7 % in 2019 with a growth of 42 % over the period. The standard deviation computed at the district level of Lower secondary in 2019 is 8,9 (against 13,9 in 2009). Clearly the universalization of the NER at basic level depends mainly now on the progress made at Upper Basic level. This objective seems attainable before 2030 as can be seen in figure 9. Lower secondary and secondary are growing in parallel indicating that progress made at lower levels translate rapidly at the higher levels. The parallelism is less strong for secondary and higher secondary indicating that this last level (that concerns fewer children), is less dependent of the secondary level growth.

Figure 6. Enrollment pattern 2008-2020

Equations shown in figure:
$$y = 0.3253x - 559.37, \quad R^2 = 0.8731$$
$$y = 2.5972x - 5153.9, \quad R^2 = 0.9587$$
$$y = 2.5568x - 5092.6, \quad R^2 = 0.9506$$
$$y = 2.0143x - 4041.7, \quad R^2 = 0.9666$$

Legend:

Green bullets for basic, Purple for lower basic, Blue for secondary and Orange for Higher secondary

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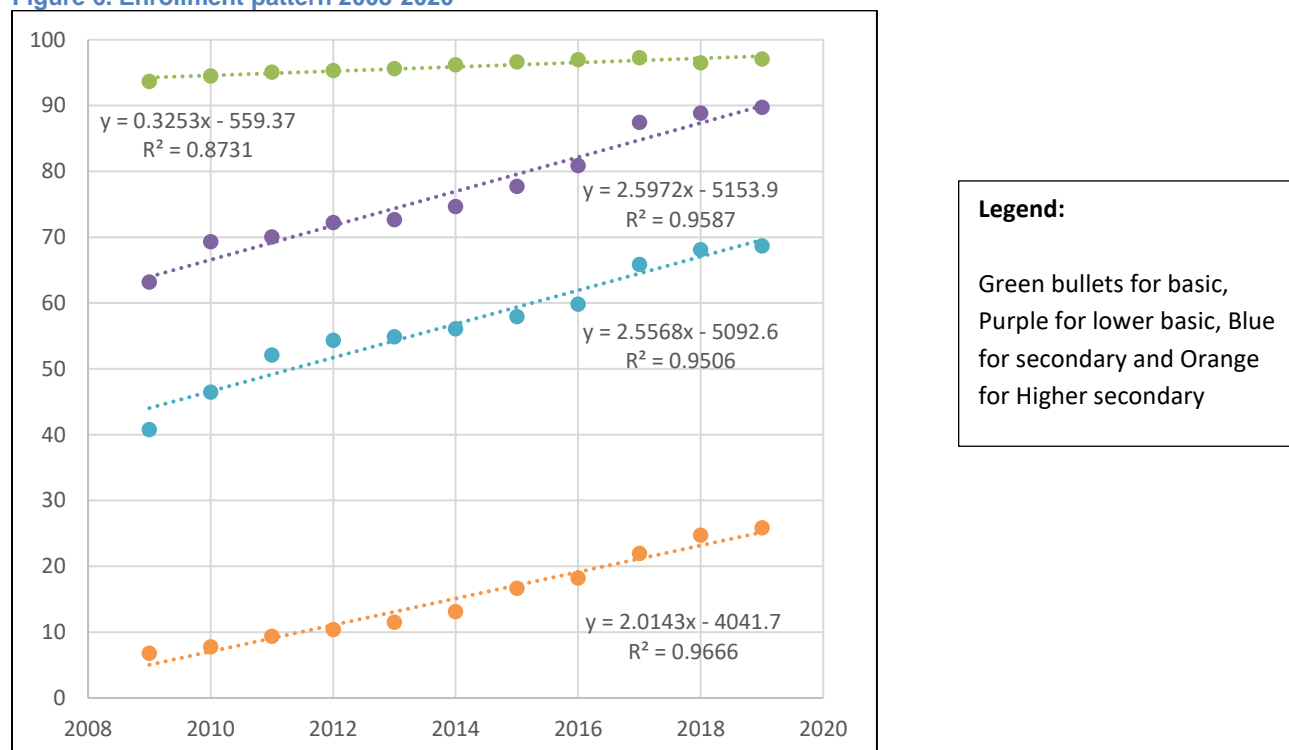
[48] This statistic measures the dispersion of the indicator (NER lower primary) between the districts considered in the analysis, which means that the differences are very small (and therefore that the possibilities of a differentiation of results between districts that could testify to a possible inequity are low, which justifies focusing more particularly on what happens at the upper basic level in order to analyze situations of inequity in basic education.

51. **Several strategic documents and studies have shown that overarching issues in the education sector in Nepal are quality and efficiency**. The recent Education sector analysis, (Nepal, MoEST 2020, supported by USAID) indicates that Nepal should focus on learning equity and teacher quality and make them the overarching issues that need to guide the education system. It also points disparities and lack of targeted programming as major issues in addition to quality and efficiency.

52. Already in 2013, the World Bank report on Nepal Human Development, access, equity, and quality in the education, health and social protection sectors noted that Nepal's progress in improving access to and efficiency of educational services had been impressive but that more needed to be done on quality as evidenced by the persistently low pass rates in the national board exams at secondary level. The report called for more focused educational interventions on the Terai as this will have a significant impact not only on enhancing access and reducing the overall number of out-of-school children, but also raising the educational status of the most disadvantaged ethnic groups.

53. At the time of development of the Equity Strategy in 2014, the SSRP 2009-2013/15[49] **recognized already that social inclusion and equity issues continued to prevail as a major concern across all levels of education delivery,** together with low levels of learning achievements and persistently high drop-out and repetition rates.

Rationale for the design of an Equity Strategy

54. **A major purpose of the ES,** as shared by Government personnel interviewed at Federal level, **was also to improve coordination and cross sectorial coordination on Equity at all levels** (within the Ministry of Education, between Ministries and with development partners). The extent to which this coordination effectively improved is discussed later in this report.

55. The MoEST presented this overall dynamic and its comprehensive set of activities as summarized in the table below:

Global Partnership For Education GPE-GRA (Data Must Speak); Initiative implemented across five countries to strengthen quality and use of data through establishment of feedback mechanisms;
- Support to development of Equity Index
- Support to development of school and district/ municipality profiles
- Support to conceptualize an equity resource index
- Support to establish web-based EMIS

GPE-ESPDG; Support for adaptation and decentralization of the Nepal education sector plan in the federal context;
- Development of Local level Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIPs)
- Development of toolkits for using data for strengthening local level accountability and planning

GPE-ESPIG; Equity Index selected as the Equity-based stretch indicator and included as an indicator in the joint Disbursement Linked Indicator framework;
SSDP technical assistance facility; will support the further strengthening of the web-based EMIS to include additional components and features needed to establish cross sectoral linkages and as per need of the three tiers of government.

Support on adding modules in EMIS relating to children with disabilities and medium of instruction by various development partners

Source: Presentation of the EMIS and Equity in the Education Sector in Nepal by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Nepal. May 30, 2019, Kathmandu, Nepal

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[49] The emphasis of the component basic and secondary education of the School Sector Reform Program, SSRP (FY 2009-2013/15) was to increase access to and participation and to promote equity and social inclusion and improve quality and relevance of basic and secondary education.

CONCLUSION R.2. Does the Equity Strategy adequately respond to the overall context of the Education Sector in Nepal?

Evaluative Judgement: *We found that **the Equity Strategy partly responded to the overall context of the Education Sector** for the following reasons:*

Rationale for the development of the ES shared by Government personnel interviewed at Federal level was to improve communication, coordination and cross sectorial coordination on Equity at all levels (within the Ministry of Education, between Ministries and with development partners). The choice of a dedicated strategy strongly contributed to this objective, and the inclusion of equity efforts into the global sector plan was successful, with numerous references to equity.
Geographically wise, beside the 15 focused districts of interventions supported by government with technical support by UNICEF through WE, orientation and dissemination of Equity Strategy was also organized at Provincial level in Province 2, 5, 6 and 7 indicating, some level of reach beyond the 15 focus districts.

In the context of the transition to federalism, the ES showed excellent adaptability. ESIP planning effectively contributed to the global education planning effort at local government effort, and the index was recalculated to fit to the revised structures of education planning.

The Equity Index and Grants/ESIP system adopts a multidimensional approach to exclusion, but there remain few explicit interventions to address and monitor progress, beyond efforts to reduce the number of out of school children. Indicators in the results framework of the SSDP do not always include the level of disaggregation required to monitor the impact of those efforts meant to reduce exclusion, and some indicators tracking progress among the most disadvantaged populations have not been updated.

Respondents interviewed indicated that the ES strategy fell short in addressing key factors like language, child marriage and disability issues.

1.5   Reach and timeliness of the Strategy

R.3. Have the equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children that need them most and at the right time in terms of facilitating access, participation and learning?

Timeliness of the Equity Strategy

56. The implementation plan for the Consolidated Equity Strategy for 2015/16 envisioned initially to roll out the District Equity Strategies (including targeted interventions) for 25 districts, through a phase-wise approach:
    - 5 districts rollout in 2016/17,
    - 10 districts in 2017/18
    - all 25 districts in the third year of rollout 2018/19.
    As of 2021, the strategy is being rolled out in 15 districts as described in this report.

57. The index was developed in 2014, however it was only approved in 2016. As described later in this report the development and validation of the ESIPs took more time than anticipated because of the complex governance and sanitary context.

58. Internal factors that contributed to delay the implementation are: staff turnover, capacity gaps in planning and overstretched staff slowing down the process. In some cases, the LGs had to send

back part of the funds to the central level as they did not have sufficient capacity to implement the planning process itself. The transition to federalism required a complete and time-consuming recalculation of the Equity Index as well as rethinking of the implementation plans. COVID led to closing schools for 9 months with massive impact on the ES implementation.

Geographical Reach

59. **The roll out of the strategy is at the initial stage with 40 LGs in the final stages of developing their plans out of 753. According to the KIIs, only few LGs started the implementation of their plans, although LGs authorities interviewed during the evaluation shared that they are confident that they can conduct the planned activities in the coming months**.

60. Respondents interviewed during the evaluation indicated that **beside the 15 focused districts of supported interventions (government, UNICEF through WE), orientation and dissemination of Equity Strategy was also organized in Province 2, 5, 6 and 7 indicating some level of reach beyond 15 focus districts.**

Thematic Reach

61. Without going into impact assessment that is not formally included in this evaluation, our analysis shows that the ES was concomitant with an increase in schooling (average annual growth of NER in upper basic, reduction in the number of OoSC), notably more marked in the 5 districts initially selected trough the EI. However, it is highly likely that children on the margins of marginalization, such as children with disabilities, have not benefited to the same extent from this new enrolment drive. (See annex 4 of this evaluation report for more information)

   A decrease in survival rates is observed in districts that have experienced recent rapid increases in enrolment. These considerations linked to the demand for education of discriminated groups deserve specific studies which could explain the rationality of their decision to leave the school system prematurely. On the national labor market, field interviews suggest that opportunities for unskilled jobs abroad directly compete with the highly uncertain benefits expected from a longer stay in school .

62. Early years and improved access to ECEC are widely considered as key to promote equity in education. UNICEF and our findings indicate that only limited activities took place in the context of the rolling out of the ESIPs in relation to ECD interventions even though several ESIPs mentioned ECD activities as their priorities. According to our KIIs, UNICEF is advocating for a mapping of ECD facilities to have a better understanding of the coverage.

63. More information on the extent that the ES has reached its target group can be found in the following section and in the section related to the effectiveness of the ES.

CONCLUSION R.3. Have the equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children that need them most and at the right time in terms of facilitating access, participation and learning?

Evaluative Judgement: *The development of the index and the implementation of the ESIPs have been delayed due to internal and external factors. Only few LGs have started to implement their ESIPs. Mother tongue curricula and language of instruction need to be further stressed and prioritized when planning to support OOSC. The ES is therefore a work in progress.*

Time wise, the implementation of the ESIPs was delayed due to combined issues such as staff turnover, capacity gaps in planning and overstretched staff. In some cases, and despite the relevant support provided by UNICEF, the LGs had to send back part of the funds to the central level as they did not have sufficient capacity to implement the planning process itself. External factors falling clearly outside the scope of the ES, such as the transition to federalism and the COVID-19 situation, largely contributed to the delays. COVID closed schools for 9 months so had a massive impact on the ES implementation as far as school-based measures are concerned.

The roll out of the strategy is therefore at its initial stage, with 40 LGs in the final stages of developing their plans out of 753. Only few LGs started the implementation of their plans, although LGs authorities interviewed during the evaluation shared that they are confident that they can conduct the planned activities in the coming months.

The rationale for the development of the ES was also to strengthen the overall dynamic of the system through a comprehensive set of activities addressing equity issues for specific marginalised groups of children. This report shows that this aim is very much a work in progress as there are many rooms for improvements. Coordination with NSA contributing the strategy was not systematic, and in many cases, measures planned were rather general and focused on access (enrolment campaigns, infrastructure) and participation (meals, hygiene products), thus failing to capture the diversity of drivers of inequity. The evaluation team did not identify measures actually addressing learning needs.

Overall, a review of the work conducted by NGOs in the 15 focused districts of the ES found that the impact of language is inconsistently considered as an important component in project or program design. Mother tongue curricula and language of instruction need to be further stressed and prioritized when planning to support OOSC

1.6 Linkage of the Strategy with multi-sectoral responses

R.4 To what extend the strategy has leveraged multi-sectoral responses (so including linkage to sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc.)	Sub Question R 4.1: Has the implementation of the ES, through the introduction of the equity index or equity strategy implementation plans prompted cross sectoral communication, coordination, or collaboration at federal, provincial and/or local governments

64. At local level, main contributions for the design of the LG plans seem to have come from the education staff, municipal and wards level staff. In some cases, school principals were also part of a three-member committee to develop the plan.

65. At municipality and Provincial levels, Social Development Section and Ministry of Social Development are responsible for overall social development (health, education, women and children, protection) issues. These units/departments at Municipality and MoSD were involved in the ESIPs preparation. Some education officers interviewed mentioned cross-sectoral consultations, for example with the health department, although not always reported in the written ESIPs documents.

''While making the plan, all departments should have been involved. People from education, health sector, livelihood, protection are related with children. There was a talk on keeping these people while making the plan but the entire role was given to the focal education person in all the municipalities.'' KII with World Education staff.

''There is agriculture division, employment division, health division which should have been connected with education. Now, in municipality there is household income programs. They should have focused on education and launched program but there has been no active collaboration between these different divisions till now. '' KII with one LG education officer.

66. The LGs did not involve non-state actors in the design of the ESIPs to a wide extent, with some remarkable exceptions (some local NGOs mentioned few times). ESIPs often failed to capture the diversity of actors and interventions contributing to equity at local level in a context where reporting mechanisms are still weak and inadequate to the new federal structure.

''We have been working with our existing partners UNICEF, VSO, etc. For the past twenty two years, JJYC has been working with 30 partners like government, INGOs, UNDP, USAID and have completed 45 projects. '' 'Nobody has talked to us about the equity strategy or the ESIPs. However, our focus is on equity and inclusive related programs.'' KII with a Non state actor

''We have allocated 37 lakh 88 thousand rupees for electricity, drinking water, building toilets, conducting extra-curricular activities and teaching learning materials. This money is provided to spend for 47 community schools. So this has helped to address equity and we have also invested in classroom strengthening. For fixing fan or other appliances, painting, girl-friendly classroom, the municipality has supported. We also conduct awareness programs. Day lunch covered under the conditional grants. '' KII with LG education officer.

67. Outside of the ESIPs, the evaluation team observed many evidences of joint programming at school level involving the government and non-state actors. Below and example of such collaboration.

''Scholarship, free lunch and free books distribution programs are provided by government of Nepal. NGO provides some support to build toilets, taps. EGR (Early Grade Reading) program collaborate with local authorities as well as our school and WFP. INGO is also helping to provide access to free lunch to students. The lunch expenses till now are supported only by WFP not by the government of Nepal.'' KII with LG education officer

68. At federal level, the Equity and Inclusive Education sub-Technical Working Group offered opportunities for cross-sectoral dialogue. Attendees were generally from the following Organisations: CEHRD, MoEST/VSO, UNICEF, embassy of Finland, Norway, WFP, Kathmandu University, Humanity and Inclusion, DFID, save the Children, Plan International and the World Bank. But despite some initiatives to address issues such as WASH or gender-based violence at school, the ES did not lead to intensified cross-sectoral coordination.

> Sub Question R4.2: To what extent have cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the ES?

Overview of the activities effectively implemented through the ESIPs

69. According to the CEHRD report 2020[50,] in 2016/17, the five districts[51] identified by the Equity Index received extra funding to run targeted interventions to reduce the number of out-of-school children. The interventions promoted participation in school and non-formal learning. According to the Out Of Schools reports, these plans include guidelines and non-formal education (NFE) packages for 5–12 year-old out-of-school children, special packages for children with disabilities and working youth, and bridge courses for re-entry into formal education (Door-to-door visits, media campaigns...)

70. As shared previously, only few LGs have started to implement their ESIPs. As implemented activities have not been reported by the LGs, we can only mention here the ESIPs' activities implemented in Sayal municipality and Rajpur (2 out of the 6 municipalities covered by this evaluation who reported some activities). Interventions included: ECD expansion and capacity development of ECD facilitators and learning materials for ECD programs in Sayal and in Rajpur Municipality: household data collection to identify OoSC.(Rajpur)

71. As reported to the evaluation team by LGs, alongside the budget and programme under SSDP, additional funds were also made available through CEHRD to enabling local governments to design and implement the equity strategy including:
   ▪ Household surveys to collect statistics on out-of-school children
   ▪ Organisation of workshops to understand the Equity Index score of the local government and linked to this the drivers of disparities and composition of the out of school children in the municipality.
   ▪ Monitoring of the enrolment and retention of out-of-school children and report this in EMIS.

72. Some LGs and schools reported some equity focused interventions but were not clear if it was funded under the ESIPs or as part of the regular education support program. They mentioned the distribution of free textbooks, scholarships and provision of mid-day meals in the targeted districts, as well as local advocacy and awareness campaigns, with household visits being understood as an effective strategy to increase participation as well as enrolment. Similarly, incentives to students

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[50] Status of out-of-school children in districts with the highest disparities in access, participating and learning outcomes. An overview of the status and characteristics of out-of-school children in the 15 districts that rank highest in terms of disparities in access and participation, as measured through the composite Equity Index. Centre for Education and Human Resource Development. January 2020
[51] These districts were Rautahat, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Parsa and Bara

were provided based on the number of students captured from Flash Reports to encourage and retain them in schools with uneven success as described below.

> *''The support from local authorities as well as from government does have some positive impact in regular attendance as well as enrolment of students. The sanitary pads are supported from primary health center and municipality education section. The problem is that the allocated budget for the ongoing program is insufficient; i.e. The books provided by the government are scarce and there is a problem of transportation with the books (using mules or donkeys to carry them) which results in delay of distribution of the books to students. The expense for the load to carry is supported by schools and isn't supported by the government.'' KII with SMC chair of an High school.*

> *''Nearby there are Dalit settlement. Parents come to enrol without children. Later the students do not appear in the classes; students from class 4 & 5 go to India to earn money which is totally supported by parents. For such we have decided to provide allocated free curriculum books and scholarship directly to students when they come to school, not to their parents. We have problems as students do enrol but never attend classes but are present only to pass the exams. As per the girl student they hesitate to attend classes during their menstruation. We have some problems regarding management of toilets and drinking water but we do provide sanitary pads. Our school provides scholarships for Dalits which is supported by the government of Nepal.''*
> *'' Initially there was a program when 4 girls are enrolled they would get 4 packets of oils. But now parents normally start to enrol their child from age of 3-4yrs. But they do not encourage them to continue to higher grades (e.g. Class 6) they rather choose to earn money in India and do not attend the final exams. Those students who fail grade exam or are absent for a long time due to seasonal migration for work, see their friends in higher grades and are demotivated to repeat the grade'' KII with a teacher of lower secondary level*

Extent to which geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the ES.

73. Following the development and implementation of the ESIPs, there has not been any monitoring and progress reports to appreciate the status and quality of these interventions. It was therefore difficult for the evaluation team to assess fully and quantitatively if cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability have been effectively reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the ES. To bridge this gap, we identified information in the desk review and the KIIs, pertaining to some more salient dimensions of inequity, but this information may not always be specific to the 15 focused districts, as per below:

Multilingual education

74. The inclusion of multilingual considerations into ESIPs has been affected by an unclear status of the multilingual education strategy[52] and uneven support for mother tongue-based education among teachers and parents.

> A report prepared for VSO Nepal and the Language Commission of Nepal found that there is a "reasonable degree of support for mother tongue-based education among teachers and parents" (Fillmore, 2019). In the study, teachers and parents were positive about mother tongue instruction and believed mother tongue instruction helped students learn more quickly (Fillmore, 2019). An exception to this were Temal parents, with only half preferring their children learn in the mother tongue first (Fillmore, 2019). Despite feeling positive about mother tongue instruction, many felt they did not have the resources or skills to fully teach in the variety of mother tongue languages, and would not be able to create their own materials (Fillmore, 2019; Ranabhat et al, 2018, World Education, 2016).
>
> The Curriculum Development Centre has developed primary school textbooks and supplementary reading materials in 22 languages (UNESCO 2020). Given that Nepali is spoken as a first language by at least 45% of households, and a further 33% of the population speak one of the other ten most common languages as their first language,[53] it should be possible, in theory, to provide mother tongue medium education for most of the population using the materials developed so far. Data from the 2019 MICS (GoN 2019) indicate that the language used at school is the same as the language used at home for most (60%) children, but this is not the case for a large minority nationwide and for most children in Province 2, where the language used at school is the home language for only 39% of 7-14 year olds.
>
> There are constraints on the supply side in terms of a shortage of qualified teachers fluent in some minority languages, and resourcing challenges to providing mother tongue education in school communities where there are multiple languages spoken. A further barrier to the implementation of mother tongue education is the popular demand for English medium education. This may be driven by a prevailing misconception that learning in English medium from an early grade is the most

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[52] Gender Equality and Social Inclusion analysis of the Education Sector in Nepal, Ruth Naylor, Amy West, 17th July 2020
[53] Figures taken from "population Distribution by Mother Tongue of Nepal, 2011" excel spreadsheet provided by UNICEF for this study.
Note: The NASA 2018 grade 5 assessment notes that 64 percent of the student sample reported that Nepali was the language spoken most at home.

effective way to learn English, and a false association of English medium education with quality education, an association that is difficult to shift given that the Institutional (private) schools are predominantly English medium and generally perf orm better on learning assessments.

Multilingual education is mostly an issue to be tackled at national level, and fully considered within JRM meetings. The 2018 JRM Annual meeting minutes recommend a policy position paper be commissioned on how English as a subject versus as a language of instruction would be best oriented to provinces, including recommendations for local governments on how to integrate English as a subject as part of education services (JRM AM, 2018, Annex 5).

Source: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion analysis of the Education Sector in Nepal, Ruth Naylor, Amy West, 17th July 2020

75. A closer look at the sample of ESIPs made available for this evaluation, indicates that some activities were indeed included for teaching mother tongue and encourage children with special abilities to access the schools with provision of ''*unspecified materials''* for children with special abilities. For example, Lungri and Madhav Narayan Municipality Plans include activity to carry out instructional Learning achievement activities in local languages by identifying children's individual potential but fall short in explaining how this will be done.: '' *Carrying out instructional activities in local languages by identifying children's individual potentials*''

76. Overall, a review of the work conducted by Non State actors in the 15 focused districts of the ES found that the impact of language is inconsistently considered as an important component in project or program design by Non State Actors, and more globally by LEGs. Mother tongue curricula and language of instruction need to be further stressed and prioritized when planning to support OOSC (World Education, 2016, p.15).

''We have not made any plans for linguistically diverse students because the budget was low and we couldn't include a lot of things under our low budget.'' Source: KIIs with a LG education officer.

77. The question of multilingual education would undoubtedly deserve a more detailed analysis and benchmark from other countries' experiences to identify the most adapted leverages for action. The existence of textbooks in national languages is not enough to build a multilingual education policy. It supposes a relatively fine knowledge of existing linguistic areas, a minimum training of the teachers responsible for it, a fine management of the teachers' allowances according to their linguistic knowledge and finally an adaptation of curricula. Recommendations made by some respondents (interviewed during this evaluation) to address language barriers is to raise awareness of teachers on the importance of the issue and encourage them to use local resources from parent and communities who are generally very supportive to promote their own cultures.[54] Another suggestion is to develop textbooks locally and promote good example on the importance of teaching small children in their mother tongue language.

Disability inclusion

78. The global context of Nepalese education is not fully inclusive so far, and many children with disabilities remain unattended. Important leverages have however been identified:
   - **Local authorities awareness**: a study conducted with children, parents, teachers, head teachers and local and district level authorities of 21 schools, observed that although 90.5% (19) of the headteachers were aware that children with disabilities have rights to free education,

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[54] The USAID Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP) supports teachers with coaching and professional development, and provides early grade reading instructional and supplementary reading material to schools. The program also builds the capacity of the Government of Nepal to effectively deliver early grade reading services. EGRP engages local NGOs to work with school management committees and parent-teacher associations to conduct reading awareness and advocacy campaigns and trainings. The program was evaluated at midline, in 2018, and shows a large positive effect on reading outcomes among students for whom Nepali is their first language and those who have a non-Nepali mother tongue.

87.5% (21) of the local level authorities were not aware of the rights of children with disabilities related to education.[55.]

- **Supply shortages**: according to HI[56,] the Nepalese education system lacks teacher training on disability, disability friendly infrastructures and Learning materials, even in special schools and resource classrooms.
- **Demand shortages**: Research findings on barriers to education of CWDs released in 2014 showed that stigma and discrimination are common across caregiver and child interviews. Many families believe that children with disabilities learn better in boarding schools or in specialized institutions than in their care or in regular schools due to their limited capacity to provide proper support.[57]
- **Existing tested leverages**: A 2018 study concluded that scholarships provided by the Government for children with disabilities was one of the few to be considered, by teachers, students and families, as relatively impactful [58.] Some of the ESIP reviewed included such provisions.

79. Nepal lacks accurate data about children with disability. For example, the UNICEF OSC-O study, undertaken in 2016, found that about 30% of out of school children presented one or several disabilities, while the 2018/2019 OoSC survey found that among the out of school children (188,623) from the age group 3-18 years in the 15 targeted districts, a total 889 (0.5%) children were reported as having some sort of disability. The HI study also found that available data largely underestimate the prevalence of disability underlining also the problem of inadequate and inefficient screening at school.

80. According to key respondent working in the inclusive education sector, none of the LGs have implemented the full set of basic inclusive interventions such as disability-friendly educational infrastructure and facilities, improved teacher training, flexible curriculum and organization of awareness raising activities with parents for equal access to all. Respondents interviewed at field level found that the Government provides resource class for children with disabilities as well as hostel facilities. Teachers received a training on disability but this was done many years ago sometimes back in 2010. ESIPs were not an occasion to update and/or further elaborate such minimum standards.

81. Despite notable efforts to start finding children with disabilities, NSA and LGs work in the 15 focused districts of the ES[59] is insufficiently focused on projects to support children with disabilities to enrol into mainstream, formal schooling and address disability-related barriers. (STC, 2016). **Our review of a sample of ESIPs show that the plans include mainly activities to address the physical barriers of CWDs (Disability-friendly physical structures[60,] provision of assistive devices) and to some extent communication barriers (provision of specific educational materials, and encouragement to parents to bring differently able children to child development centres). Other barriers for the inclusion of CWDs are not mentioned (Attitudinal, Policy, Programmatic, Social, transportation).**

82. Sometimes activities from the ESIPs are vaguely described and therefore poorly operational: ''*Making special plans for children with different abilities and disabilities.'' ;''Always trying to make schools disabled-friendly and child-friend/girl-child-friendly.*''

Inequitable learning:

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[55]   Institute for Legal Research and Consultancy (ILRC), 2019
[56] Disability inclusive education analysis in Nepal, Draft 1, Dr. Niraj Poudyal and Dr. Natasha Graham, 7th of September 2020
[57]   UNICEF ROSA survey mapping (2020)
[58] Vertex Consult Pvt. Ltd. (2018). A study on the effectiveness of the scholarship provided at school level and identification of measures for its improvement (Final Report 2074/075). Kathmandu: Department of Education.
[59] Interventions targeting out of school children (OOSC) in Nepal. A desk-based review on the impact of non-state actors' interventions on access and retention for OOSC. Prepared by Freya Perry on behalf of the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, Government of Nepal, and supporting Development Partners. March 2019.
[60] Constructing disabled- and child-friendly school buildings, toilets, and drinking water structures.

83. The MTR report briefing for the Equity and Inclusive Education mentioned that NASA 2017 results raise concerns when it comes to equity in terms of learning outcomes. There are significant differences based on ethnicity when it comes to results in Nepali, Math and Science: Brahman/Chetri students perform significantly better in Math, Science and Nepali while Dalit perform significantly worse than all others (page 57).

84. In Khajura municipality, we found that religious school (madarsa education) is provided maximum up to the grade 5 which is an issue for the continuity of the education cycle.

'Even though children might be 15 years, they still study in grade 3. This is a problem. The challenge may be because we have not opened such religious schools for grade 6,7,8 or 8,9,10.'' KII with LG education officer

Geographical Location

85. Our review of NGOs interventions in the 15 focused districts of the ES[61] showed that many NGOs did not significantly increased their focus towards districts identified by the Equity Index analysis. For instance, no reports were identified for either Rasuwa or Taplejung districts in 2019. As such, the study recommended that further orientation on the EI and the need to target specific areas where disparity is exceptionally high need to be communicated with the I/NGO community.

CONCLUSION R.4 To what extend the strategy has leveraged multi-sectoral responses (so including linkage to sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc.)

Evaluative Judgement: *Following the development and implementation of the ESIPs, there has not been any monitoring and progress reports to appreciate the status and quality of these interventions. It was therefore difficult for the evaluation team to capture fully and quantitatively the number of cross-sectoral issues effectively addressed. Based on our discussions with the LGs we found that there has been limited multi sectoral responses and cross collaboration between government departments. Nevertheless, the Equity and Inclusive Education sub-Technical Working Group offered opportunities for cross-sectoral dialogue at federal level.*

At municipality level and Provincial level, Social Development Section and Ministry of Social Development are responsible for overall social development (health, education, women and children, protection) issues. These units/departments at Municipality and MoSD were involved in ESIP preparation. Some education officers interviewed mentioned cross-sectoral consultations, for example with the health department, although not always reported in the written ESIPs documents. The potential for cross-sectoral collaboration during the analysis of the index result was also underexploited in a context of unstable education planning capacity at LG level.

At federal level, the Equity and Inclusive Education sub-Technical Working Group offered opportunities for cross-sectoral dialogue. Attendees were generally from the following Organizations: CEHRD, MoEST/VSO, UNICEF, embassy of Finland, Norway, WFP, Kathmandu University, Humanity and Inclusion, DFID, save the Children, Plan International and the World Bank. But despite some initiatives to address issues such as WASH or gender-based violence at school, the ES did not lead to intensified cross-sectoral coordination.

A closer look at the sample of ESIPs made available for this evaluation, indicates that some activities were indeed included for teaching mother tongue and encourage children with special abilities to access the schools. The plans include activities to address the physical barriers of CWDs (Disability-friendly physical structures, provision of assistive devices) and to some extent communication barriers (provision of specific educational materials, and encouragement for parents to bring children to child development centres). Other barriers for the inclusion of CWDs are not mentioned (Attitudinal, Policy, Programmatic, Social, transportation). But overall, we noted that interventions tended to focus on "mainstream" leverages, and often failed to capture the ambitious and multisectoral information provided by the index to formulate a multisectoral response.

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[61] Interventions targeting out of school children (OOSC) in Nepal. A desk-based review on the impact of non-state actors' interventions on access and retention for OOSC. Prepared by Freya Perry on behalf of the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, Government of Nepal, and supporting Development Partners. March 2019.

1.7 Relevance of the ES to the context of COVID-19

R.5. To what extent is the Equity Strategy relevant in allowing the government to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context?	Sub question R5.1: Have there been attempts to align the implementation of the strategy to newly emerged needs in the COVID-19 context?

86. In Nepal, from 3 January 2020 to 9 May 2021, there have been 385 890 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 3 632 deaths, reported to WHO. As of 28 April 2021, a total of 2 453 512 vaccine doses have been administered. [62]

87. The current set up of the Equity Index does not include learning outcomes (at least for now) and as such has limited use to track the effects of the COVID-19. Future studies on the various pass rates before and after COVID-19 will probably provide more useful information when examination results are made available.

88. The desk review and KIIs did not yield much information in relation to the use of the ES (mainly the EI and the ESIPs) in relation to the COVID situation. One of the reasons is that the federal government disseminated an alternative learning strategy for the COVID context and this strategy did not require the LGs to go through a planning process for its implementation.

89. Some informants interviewed mentioned attempts to strengthen WASH interventions in schools during COVID time.

''In some schools, there is no water. In ESIP, we have made a plan to give budget to the schools to fit taps. These things are actually the work of municipality. The municipality has allocated 1 crore for the education sector which is basically for salary. The municipality does not want to spend on other things.'' Source: KII with an Education Officer.

90. The impacts of the COVID-19 on children education are very much related to potential digital and socio-economic divides and level of parents' literacy to accompany their children while children are studying at home. This means that marginalised children who have less access to ICT equipment will most probably see a drop in their learning outcomes. This means that the ES needs to reflect adequate focus on addressing the digital divide and equity-based appropriate use of technology in education.

91. Some stakeholders met during the evaluation suggested that it was time to revisit the list of districts produced by the Equity Index as the list may not reflect anymore the current level of disparities, particularly in the COVID context.

CONCLUSION R.5. To what extent is the Equity Strategy relevant in allowing the government to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context?

Evaluative Judgement: *The Equity Strategy was not used much to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context.*

The current set up of the Equity Index does not include learning outcomes (at least for now) and as such has limited use to track the effects of the COVID-19. Future studies on the various pass rates before and after COVID-19 will probably provide more useful information when examination results are made available.
The desk review and KIIs did not yield much information in relation to the use of the ES (mainly the EI and the ESIPs) in relation to the COVID situation. One of the reasons is that the federal government disseminated an alternative learning strategy for the COVID context and this strategy did not require the LGs to go through a planning process for its implementation.
Some stakeholders met during the evaluation suggested that it was time to revisit the list of districts produced by the Equity Index as the list may not reflect anymore the current level of disparities, particularly in the COVID context.

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[62] https://covid19.who.int/region/searo/country/np

2. Coherence of the Equity Strategy

2.1 Coherence with interventions from Non-State Actors

C.1. The extent to which the Equity Strategy contributed to increased coherent interventions with an equity focus in the education sector implemented by non-governmental organizations and development partners?	C 1.2 Sub Question: What actors are involved in equity-based planning, programming, budgeting, implementation in the education sector? C 1.3 Sub Question: How are/can these different actors engage, align, use the equity strategy in their work? C 1.4 Sub Question: Has this led to greater alignment among actors or with the government planning process, increased need-based support, increased results, increased coverage, more efficient use of resources, increased coordination, etc?

92. In 2015, MoEST circulated a Consultation Guideline For Strengthening Equity in Access, Participation and Learning Outcomes through Stakeholder Participation in the Education Sector in Nepal. This was part of a campaign to disseminate the Equity Strategy and advocate CSOs to mainstream the key elements of the strategy in their regular programming. Out-of-school children reintegration led to improved coordination with 9 CSOs. Although the SSDP Mid Term Review 2019 found that the EI was not sufficiently used by I/NGOs when planning their interventions (i.e. most disadvantaged districts not necessarily covered), the evaluation team identified some effects as identified below.

93. A 2019 desk-based review[63] of Non-State actors interventions targeting out of school children (OOSC) in the 15 focus Districts of the ES seems to prove a relative prioritization of districts selected through the Equity Index. In particular, not a single project was identified for engaging out of school children in either Rasuwa or Taplejung, despite their poor performance. See annex 11 for more details.

94. Our review of a sample list of ESIPs indicates that office-bearers of Equity Strategy Planning Committees generally involved the following entities: Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chief Administrative Officer, Accountant, Learning Motivator, Education Asst Coordinator, technical Assistants, computer Operator, Education Development and Coordination Unit, chairpersons of the wards. As can be seen, other government departments or non-state actors do not seem to have been invited to sit in the committee raising questions on the level of cross collaboration and coordination that effectively took place to develop the plans. Lack of close collaboration with NGOs was also exemplified by the limited information sharing between the Governments and NGOs as reported in the 2020 DMS report.

95. During our field work, we found one rare case of collaboration and joint planning involving the municipality and non-state actors during the design of the ESIP, unfortunately it seems that this was an exception, based on the will of individual decision-makers. No evidence allows to confirm that ESIPs had a structural effect on further CSO-LGs coordination and joint programming.

''There is a local NGO called Deaf Nepal who has mentoring program called Big Sister which takes all the muslim and madhesi children who have been dropped out from school for any reasons. They taught them for 9 months non-formally. After attending the non-formal education, the children have been given 3-4000 NPR on a monthly basis to attend the formal school. So while making ESIP plan, we invited Deaf Nepal and we exchanged our ideas and incorporated those ideas in the plan, linked up all ideas.'' KII with one LG officer

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[63] Interventions targeting out of school children (OOSC) in Nepal A desk-based review on the impact of non-state actors' interventions on access and retention for OOSC. Prepared by Freya Perry on behalf of the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, Government of Nepal, and supporting Development Partners. March 2019.

'' When human resource and management center provided us with guidelines, models and formats to design the ESIP plan, I had shared with them that other NGOs were working on similar projects and if we collaborate with them then there would be more human resource also and therefore we should work with them. If we look at schools of Khajura rural municipality, we see that on the same school CVIC has also worked, CR Nepal has also worked on protection and reduction of early child marriage. Similarly Janajagaran Samudaya has been working with 17 madarsha schools for equity. Plus, Deaf Nepal has been working on out of school children and how to bring them to school, sustain them and bring good learning outcomes.'' KII LG education officer

96. Below an example of joint collaboration on equity between a municipality and Non state Actors addressing specific educational needs:

''Classroom management, teaching management, teaching through materials are equity related strategies. We have included equity inclusive plan in our municipality. Under the RDC's (Rural Development Plan, a local NGO) plan, it is being implemented under UNICEF and World Education's support in all twelve schools in this municipality. This is a grade one to three program where improving reading level, creating educational environment, use of mother tongue, teaching in mother tongue are emphasized. For this, funding comes from world education and UNICEF till now and on top of that municipality has also added money.'' KII with a Learning Motivator.

97. Such integration could lead to updated lists of possible measures and nurture the relevance of ESIPs as well as most efficient interventions related to identified barriers. A list is available in annex 7.[64] The list is derived from the report: *''Review of non-state actors interventions on access and retention for out of school children (Perry 2019)''*

C1.1 Sub Question: To what extent multi-sectoral equity interventions and social safety net programs that respond to needs of children enabling them to access, participate and learn, have been driven by or established under the Equity Strategy?

98. As described later in this report, the school meal program supported by WFP is also implemented in the focus districts and the forthcoming GPE additional grant for COVID is also considering the ranking of the EI for programming.

99. The GESI Analysis. Education Nepal-2020 shared that commitments at national level have, in many cases translated into progressive implementation at local level, especially where the government has been directly supported by international donors, UN agencies and INGO/NGOs as described below:

'We have been working on early grade learning for grade 1-3 children which has been running in 4 municipalities for the past one/one and a half years. We have also started this in other 4 municipalities just recently. Under this program, we give training to teachers of grade 1-3 on how to manage classroom, how to deal with children with disability and manage classroom for betterment of education. We gave a basic training of 5 days to teachers on how to manage the seating arrangement for slow learners, Children with hearing impairment , how to teach them. Similarly, we made plan in municipality and we have asked principals to make a plan. We have also been lobbying by going to the households and raising awareness of parents to bring them to schools'' KII with staff from WE

CONCLUSION C.1. The extent to which the Equity Strategy contributed to increased coherent interventions with an equity focus in the education sector implemented by non-governmental organizations and development partners?

Evaluative Judgement: *Non-governmental organizations and development partners were more engaged in the Equity Strategy agenda at National level and less at sub national level. Non State Actors did implement some equity focused interventions but were not involved much in the development and implementation of the ESIPs driven by the LGs.*

In 2015, MoEST (NCE) circulated a Consultation Guideline For Strengthening Equity in Access, Participation and Learning Outcomes through Stakeholder Participation in the Education Sector in Nepal. The evaluation found that if many cases Non-State Actors contributed to the OoSC survey, supported the back to school campaign and implemented equity focused interventions. However, their involvement in the design and planning phases of the ESIPs was minimal and they did not systematically participate in the discussion around the ESIPs at LG level.

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[64] Source: Review of non-state actors interventions on access and retention for out of school children (Perry 2019)

In term of synergies with other programs, as described later in this report, the school meal program supported by WFP is implemented partly in the focused districts and the forthcoming GPE additional grant for COVID is also considering the ranking of the EI for programming.

In addition, the Equity Index has been used as one of many other criteria by several development partners: UNICEF, EU, Finland, WB, GPE, DFID, USAID[65] to target support or subscribe to results related to the implementation of the ES. EU has included the use of the equity strategy in its CSO grant application window for example.

In terms of internal coherence, it was agreed in the SSDP MTR to embed the EI in EMIS in 2019 but this is yet to be completed (currently the codes are being written into EMIS) due to the delay in mobilizing required technical assistance (from EU/ADB).

One noticeable and positive example of integration is that within the context of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)[66] to Nepal, the World Bank is also targeting part of its interventions in the 15 focused districts identified by the EI.

The shift to federalism with competences at national and local levels still to be clarified also made it complicated to ensure full coherence between ESIP and national funding allocation policy. Schools tend to receive the same amount of funding but have disparities in term of capacities, and this important equity issue was not addressed as it does not depend upon LGs.

2.2 Synergies of the Strategy with Education Policies & Programs

C.2. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been reflected in education sector programs and policies?

100. The Equity Strategy built on several existing frameworks related to both enrolment of OoSC and improvement of learning environment and/or education quality:
   ▪ Basic Education Plan: for enrolment of Out of School children
   ▪ Welcome to School: School Enrolment Campaign Guidelines
   ▪ Child Friendly Schools National Framework: to enhance (P)MEC and CFS indicators
   ▪ School as a Zone of Peace Initiative
   ▪ Curriculum: Soft Skills and TVET
   ▪ Improvement programs following EGRA and EGMA
   ▪ Provision of Midday meals and Health Supplements
   ▪ Scholarship and Opportunities Guidelines (under revision)

101. The ES is reflected in the SSDP framework, notably DLI 6.

102. The Equity Index has been used as one of many other criteria by several development partners: UNICEF, EU, Finland, WB, GPE, DFID, USAID[67] to target support or subscribe to results related to the implementation of the ES. EU has included the use of the equity strategy in its CSO grant application window for example.

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[65] One of the reasons shared by USAID of not using the Equity Index to prioritize its programming was that the index did not include learning outcomes and data related to disabilities. Nevertheless, USAID did use the ranking of LGs computed through the EI to select its programming geographical areas for its COVID-19 response program.
[66] The World Bank Group's Nepal Country Partnership Framework (CPF) 2019–2023 include a Focus Area 3 of enhancing inclusion and resilience and an Objective 3.1 (improving equity in access to quality education).
[67] One of the reasons shared by USAID of not using the Equity Index to prioritize its programming was that the index did not include learning outcomes and data related to disabilities. Nevertheless, USAID did use the ranking of LGs computed through the EI to select its programming geographical areas for its COVID-19 response program.

103. **We could not find strong evidence of overlap between additional equity focused interventions (ESIPs) and other equity-based interventions taken place in the same locations to identify the possible synergies**. Nevertheless, we were able to see some level of synergies for 4 out of the 7 districts targeted for the Mid-Day meal Program[68] supported by WFP and 3 out of the 16 districts of the USAID Reading for All program as per the table provided in annex 8.

104. The ES did not sufficiently take into considerations lessons learned from the Education Safe School Safety framework. The proposed package of equity focused activities such as Gender and social inclusion teacher, protection, disability, safe learning facilities, DRR, risk education have not been integrated sufficiently in the ESIPs while programming multi-level interventions.

105. The Equity Strategy itself, which looks like more as a policy document, is struggling to be implemented (in the LGs that implement ESIPs) because of the lack of capacity at LGs level in the context of the transition to the new Federalism structure. Also, the unspecific nature of measures proposed in the **ESIPs are not clearly aligned with the annex of the ES that has a menu of specific actions/ targeted interventions**. Also, the ES lacks a roadmap and a costed implementation plan.

106. More information can be found later in this report in relation to the use of the ES for the selection of programs. See section related to Sub question EFFE 5.1: *What was the rationale/justification for selecting the interventions?*

Sub question C 2.1: To what extent has the ES guided the strategies in the SSDP and to what extent was its operationalization facilitated through its program implementation guidelines and in the annual strategic implementation plans and annual work plans and budgets?

107. As part of the support provided to the LGs, CEHRD prepared a LG-ESIP guidelines and tools to support them with the planning stages.

''The guideline provided by CEHRD helped us because that guideline provided an outline for what to include, what title to keep which helped us in writing. World Education had given us a budget of 30 thousand rupees while writing.'' KIIs with one Education Officer

108. We found that if the guideline is clear about the various steps needed to prepare the ESIPs and on how to identify the data for the analysis of the education issues in the municipality, it felt short of providing clear and detailed instructions on how to develop the plan. (beside a list of potential activities that could be developed to address equity disparities). Also, the section 2.5 related to monitoring was not properly translated into monitoring plans and framework in the sample of ESIPs that we reviewed.

109. One issue reported is that the funding allocated to the LGs came as a lumpsum with budget heading not always identified for equity-based interventions. Therefore, the LGs could use this budget for other education needs than the activities implemented in the ESIPs. This has caused problem for the LGs to clearly link the funding with their ESIPs. This means that it is difficult to standardize the implementation of a national policy across LGs since LGs don't seem to be held accountable for the ESIPs and can repurpose funds received for equity interventions. This is an important issue which in itself drives inequity. The inequity in capacity across LGs, unequal use of ESIPs, leads to inequitable focus on equity.

''The budget come under the same basket and the chief administrator doesn't know the headings, like in one heading, there are 8/9 subtitles and we do not know under which one is ESIP. So, if the education section tells what money to be used in which title, the spending would be accordingly otherwise by mistake one money might be used for another purpose.'' KII with a LG education officer

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[68] 7 districts for the WFP Mid-Day meal program in Darchula, Bajhan, Bajura, Achham, Doti, Jajarkot and Dailekh.

110. With the transition to federalism, and new funding and budgeting responsibilities given to the LGs, some respondents suggested that to be effective, equity should be mainstreamed not only in the education plan but also in the overall Palikas annual plans. The advantage of this would be that equity will then be more likely included also in other sectors such as WASH and health[69] for examples.

> Sub Question C 2.2: To what extent is the implementation of the ES monitored in terms of the inclusion of indicators in the SSDP program result framework (including DLIs), integration of the Equity Index in the EMIS and in sector progress and status reports

111. The Equity Index and Grants/ESIP system adopts a multidimensional approach to exclusion, but there remain few explicit interventions to address and monitor progress, beyond efforts to reduce the number of out of school children. Indicators in the results framework of the SSDP do not always include the level of disaggregation required to monitor the impact of those efforts meant to reduce exclusion, and some indicators tracking progress among the most disadvantaged populations had not been updated at the midterm review stage.

112. As shared earlier in this report the TWG on equity and inclusion highlighted the need for more gender disaggregation of SSDP targets and that SSDP Programme and Results Framework (PRF) indicators need to be further disaggregated by caste/ethnicity. See below, Gender disaggregated targets yet to be applied for the following Programme and Results Framework (PRF) indicators. (As per the proposal from the TWG in April 2019)

- *PRF Outcome 1.2:*
  - % of grade 3 students reading grade level text with fluency and comprehension.
  - Student learning achievement scores (%) in grade 5 (currently disaggregated by subject)
  - Student learning achievement scores (%) in grade 8 (currently disaggregated by subject)
- *PRF Outcome 2.1:*
  - Survival rate to grade 12 by cohort
- *PRF Outcome 2.2:*
  - Number of students enrolled in technical subjects in grades 9-12
- *PRF Outcome 3:*
  - Literacy rate 6 years+
  - Literacy rate 15-24 years
  - Literacy rate 15+ years
- *PRF Outcome 4.1:*
  - % of trained ECED/PPE teachers
  - No of trained subject teachers for math, science, and English

DLIS and equity

113. Lessons learned from the ES were translated into the SSDP framework: DLI 6 on OOSC explicitly linked to equity, and DLI 7 focus on pro-poor scholarship scheme for secondary level.[70] However, other DLIs within the SSDP also have implications for its equity, and DLI 6 and 7 only refer to a limited approach of equity in terms of access. They do not refer to equity through the learning dimension, and therefore fail to capture equity as the capacity for the education system to provide equal learning opportunities to all students.

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[69] Both sectors should contribute strongly to advance the education and equity agenda through provision of health and wash facilities and services in schools.
[70] Pro-poor targeted scholarship (PPTS) and pro-science scholarship (PSS) schemes that includes targeted interventions for increasing girls' participation in science subjects in G11 and 12.

114. As these DLI make up a significant proportion of the overall funds particularly for investment in the sector, the allocation for these indicators could make a difference to the overall equity of sector expenditure and directly address educational needs of vulnerable children in their school environment.

115. One noticeable and positive example of integration is that within the context of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)[71] to Nepal, the World Bank is also targeting part of its interventions in the 15 focused districts identified by the EI. The World Bank considers five key performance indicators (KPIs) including Indicator 4: NER in basic and secondary education in 15 most disadvantaged districts as ranked in the equity index (disaggregated by gender)[72].

Integration of the Equity Index in EMIS

116. It was agreed in the SSDP MTR to embed the EI in EMIS in 2019 but this is yet to be completed (currently the codes are being written into EMIS) due to the delay in mobilizing required technical assistance (from EU/ADB). Although this is still a work in progress, because of the importance of EMIS for the EI, the evaluation team looked for information related to the functioning of the EMIS as described below.

117. Integration of EI into EMIS is also made complex by the shortcomings of the EMIS identified in early 2016, currently under consideration[73]:

Main issues found with the EMIS data
- Quality (Some inconsistency& incompleteness)
- Timeliness (some delay on reporting)
- Availability (well managed DBs)
- Coverage (NFE, HSEB and other DBs)
- Verification and Validation
- Linking EMIS with planning and monitoring at all levels
- Duplication in collection
- Difficult to address the expectations of all stakeholders (disaggregated information)
- Limitation of Resource, Skill Manpower, Physical facilities

''EMIS is filled by an appointed computer teacher by the municipality. EMIS is useful for schools and even parents are aware about it. And if it isn't updated then they come to remind us that their child should be listed in EMIS in a fear that they would be devoid of scholarships provided by schools. So parents enquire about their child's name being included in the EMIS list regularly but they do not relate it to the regularity in attendance of their child.''
KII with a school teacher

118. The issues identified above were echoed by the USAID education sector analysis 2020 report that shared the following points pertaining to the EMIS.

/***EMIS data are routinely used for decision making** at the school, local, and central levels, particularly on issues related to equity*. School data play a major role in monitoring SSDP activities, and local governments and SMCs use the data for making a range of decisions, such as allocating scholarships (Bessières et al. 2019; Magrath and Torrano 2020). More than 90 percent of schools in the country reported data in the 2018/2019 Flash I report, with the remaining schools expected to report in the Flash II report (Bessières et al. 2019). To ease dissemination, the platform allows users at all three levels of government to access the

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[71] The World Bank Group's Nepal Country Partnership Framework (CPF) 2019–2023 include a Focus Area 3 of enhancing inclusion and resilience and an Objective 3.1 (improving equity in access to quality education).
[72] Progress of this indicator was assessed as ''mixed'' end of 2020. NER in basic education is below year 3 target whereas NER in secondary surpassed the year 3 target.
[73] Government of Nepal. Ministry of Education Department of Education. "The School Level EMIS in the DOE System" 25 07 2016 presentation

data.[74] When developing the SSDP Annual SIP and the Annual Work Plan, CEHRD uses the index to develop need-based interventions, such as providing school meals.

Local governments provide essential assistance with IEMIS to schools, but capacity issues can hinder this effort. Many schools, even those with an Internet connection, struggle to use IEMIS—about 80 percent of basic and lower secondary schools and 20 percent of secondary schools lack the capacity to use the platform (Bessières et al. 2019). The government has provided guidance to help schools, but the extent to which schools use this guidance is unknown (British Council 2020). To address the issue, CEHRD has developed cluster systems, where a high-capacity school can help other schools use the platform. However, this can divert staff in the high-capacity school from other activities. Schools often send data directly to local governments and EDCUs, either electronically or in hard copy. Yet these stakeholders themselves may lack the resources to subsequently report the data to the central level, which results in delays in publishing the Flash reports (Flash Report 1 2019-2020; Bessières et al. 2019). To aid both local governments and schools, MoEST has recommended to first train IEMIS officers at the provincial level, who can then train officers at the local level. Local officers can subsequently work with schools to submit data using the web-based platform.

Concerns about data quality. (…)
The midterm review of the SSDP and Nepal's development partners have called for strengthening quality of IEMIS data, as well as clarifying responsibilities of different levels of government in the absence of District Education Offices (JRM 2018; Magrath and Torrano 2020).

119. The SSDP review report shared that while the Program Result Framework (PRF) includes targets regarding the number of students or schools benefitting from dedicated grants, the indicators to monitor whether these inputs have been effectively transformed into results (i.e. the number of schools reaching the minimum enabling conditions or percentage of targeted students enrolled/retained) are not calculated.

CONCLUSION C.2 To what extent has the Equity Strategy been reflected in education sector programs and policies?

Evaluative Judgement*: The Equity Strategy has partly been reflected in education sector programs and policies.*

The Equity Strategy built on several existing frameworks relating to both enrolment of OoSC and improvement of learning environment and/or education quality. The Equity Index has been used as one of many other criteria by several development partners: UNICEF, EU, Finland, WB, GPE, DFID, USAID to target support or subscribe to results related to the implementation of the ES. Nevertheless, we could not find strong evidence of overlap between additional equity focused interventions (ESIPs) and other equity-based interventions taken place in the same locations to identify the possible synergies.

We found that if the implementation guideline is clear about the various steps needed to prepare the ESIPs, it felt short of providing clear and detailed instructions on how to develop the plan. Also, the ESIPs were not accompanied with monitoring plans and framework.

It is difficult to standardize the implementation of a national policy across LGs since LGs don't seem to be held accountable for the ESIPs and can repurpose funds received for equity interventions. This is an important issue which in itself drives inequity. The inequity in capacity across LGs, unequal use of ESIPs, leads to inequitable focus on equity.

Indicators in the results framework of the SSDP do not always include the level of disaggregation required to monitor the impact of those efforts meant to reduce exclusion, and some indicators tracking progress among the most disadvantaged populations had not been updated at the midterm review stage.

One missing area for ES reflection is – SDG4: Education 2030 Nepal National Framework for action.

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[74] National-level users can view data from schools within all 753 local governments, provincial-level users can view data from schools within their province, and local-level users can view data from schools within their municipality.

3. Effectiveness of the Equity Strategy

3.1 Capacity of the Strategy to leverage additional funds

EFFE.1. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based government and non-state actors funding in the Nepal school education sector?	EFFE 1.1 Sub Question: To what extent has the Equity Strategy been able to leverage additional funds (earmarked, non-earmarked, on/off budget, to government, to stakeholders, etc.) for equity-based interventions that were not initially planned by other interventions?

120. The decentralization process, started with budget year 2017-18 and became effective in 2018-19, has changed funding mechanisms, with consequences on reporting processes and the availability of financial data. The majority of SSDP funding is now channelled to local governments under a set of conditional grants provided from the federal budget. In addition, provincial and local governments get non-earmarked resources from revenue-sharing mechanisms and equalization grants and could spend part of this on education activities. CEHRD estimates that expenditure for school education from PGs' and LGs' own resources represents 12% of provincial equalization grants and 6% of local equalization grants[75]. Only conditional grants are identified as education within the GoN budget.

121. Across Nepal, at local level a school's budget is calculated using a per capita formula. This allocation is the same for all students across the country, so each school receives its budget based on the number of children enrolled, without taking any equity factors into account. Such a flat allocation mechanism is not compatible with the ambitions of the Equity Strategy, and international knowledge base in equity in education, considering that "schools with larger shares of disadvantaged students require additional investments in human and material resources" (OECD, 2019). For example, a very remote school may need to provide food for the students at lunchtime. In an area in which incomes are low or unpredictable, the local community may not be able to provide additional supplies or resources required for teaching and learning.[76]

122. Based on the equity index, 15 of the 75 previous districts were identified in 2016[77], converged to 186 out of the total 753 local governments. These districts, and later local governments, were selected for receiving additional budget and technical assistance for identification and execution of targeted interventions based on the analysis of dominant drivers of composite equity index at district level. The ongoing integration of the EI in the Government's Education Monitoring Information System (EMIS) has begun to support the Government in targeting equity-based allocations within the Annual Strategic Implementation Plans/Annual Work Plans and Budgets (ASIPs/AWPBs). The government mobilizes human resources and additional funds, UNICEF provides technical assistance through World Education (i.e. experts, facilitation of meetings, etc.) and through earmarked budget support.

123. In 2016/17, the five districts identified by the Equity Index received extra funding to run targeted interventions to reduce the number of out-of-school children. [78] Similarly, in 2017/18, the five districts that ranked from sixth to tenth[79] were provided with such funding to run targeted interventions. 33

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[75] Nepal Education Sector Analysis, Nepal Local Education Group, September 2020. First draft ESP Draft report, page 152

[76] Source: Nepal's equity index: innovations in financing to reach the children most in need. Nepal's efforts to reduce disparities across the education sector are bearing fruit: in the last year, 24,090 children were enrolled in school. June 21, 2018 by Wenna Price, Global Partnership for Education and Jimi Oostrum, UNICEF Nepal. Blog

[77] All 75 district were ranked based on their equity index score (ie their disparity in education outcomes), based on this, th bottom 15 were selected to introduce targeted interventions and set targets for reduction in the access disparity in the following years as 60% of the total out of school children were found to be within those areas

[78] These districts were Rautahat, Sarlahi, Mahottari, Parsa and Bara.

[79] Dolpa, Rolpa, Doti, Humla and Siraha

124. In **2017/18,** the CEHRD allocated NPR 34,700 million (around 300,000 USD) [80] to the 10 targeted districts to spend on returning out-of-school children to education. According to the 2017-2018 status report, each district was finally allocated an amount of NPR 1.5 million (13,200 USD). [81]. This budget was provided as conditional grant linked to the requirement of LGs to ensure identification and sustainable enrolment of out of school children. LGs were instructed through the EDCUs using the Government's SSDP Program Implementation Manual[82] (PIM) on how to utilize this grant in support of their efforts towards enrolment of out of school children.

125. In 2018/19, additional funds were provided to local governments instead of provinces and the local governments that are within the previous district boundaries of district eleventh to fifteenth. [83]. The number of newly established local governments within the previous fifteen districts amounts to 189 municipalities from which 80 LGs are being supported with equity-based interventions.

126. For the Year 2019/2020, the additional funding formula was revised to include for the first time an equity-based formula[84] and to provide a Grant for enrolment and retention of OOSC to selected LGs for a total amount of NPR 29,984 million (around 257,000 USD).[85] This represents an insignificant amount if we compared this figure with the NPR 98,458,535 million (around 844 Millions of USD) of the total School Sector Development Plan Intergovernmental Fiscal Transfer to LGs for Conditional Grants during the same year.[86] As indicated in the RBF report, DLI 6 received just USD 0.3 million allocated in 2019/20, compared to the average value of the DLIs over the five-year period of the SSDP of USD 24 Million.

127. The year 2019/20 included the first equity-based allocations, (rolled over into 2020/21 due to the delays in service implementation caused by the pandemic) of selected municipalities to develop their local level equity strategy implementation plans (ESIPs) with the support of the GPE Education Sector Program Development Grant (ESPDG) managed by UNICEF. UNICEF aligned the use of some the ESPDG funds available to strengthen local level planning capacity to mobilize the Technical Adviser that supported the federal government in the induction and follow up of the targeted local governments for the development of their ESIP.

''The budget for this year for Barekot district is Rs. 5 lakhs (4,300 USD) under ESIP. This amount is provided to local levels by the government. The technical support was provided by CEHRD. WE also provided Rs 60000.(500 USD)'' KII with LG education officer

128. Additional amounts have been provided for the targeted districts and a funding formula has been used recently, nevertheless, **it has not yet resulted into a shift in equity based financing** as mentioned by some respondents. Majority of the funding (mainly from the Government) available for the local Governments (grants) and children (Scholarship) remain not tied to an equity agenda.

129. At first, the LGs did not know how best to use the additional funds they received, they also did not have earmarked funds to be able to conduct the participatory planning process and also the timing of the planning for the ESIPs was not aligned with the planning cycle of the Government. For the

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[80] Equivalent to 297,874 USD (exchange rate as of 29012021). Source: CEHRD, Out of school report, Jan 2020

[81] Other sources of information indicated that at the end, the government allocated some funds to the districts but the amount was unevenly spread across districts with some districts receiving 16,000 USD while other only 2,000 USD for the implementation of their equity based interventions.

[82] Due to the transition period, there was no mechanism in place for the federal government to support the Municipal WASIP/AWPBs for the year 2017/18. As the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIPs) were envisioned to be developed as a chapter of these local plans and budgets, the section in the SSDP PIM served as the ESIP outline for the year 2017/18.

[83] Bhajang, Achham, Jajarkot, Banke and Dhanusha.

[84] The lump sum that is allocated for supporting municipalities that have been identified through the equity index is allocated across these municipalities using a formula that includes a fixed tranche (base amount) which is the same for all municipalities to ensure a volume that allows municipalities to utilize this and a variable tranche that determines their share of the overall funds based on their prevalence (number of out of school children), severity (equity index score), and performance (reduction against their baseline in the previous year(s)

[85] Some sources indicated that this amount is around 1 million USD. Unfortunately we did not receive confirmation of the amount after having contacted the CEHRD colleagues

[86] SSDP AWPB per Fiscal Year 2019/2020

first years, through its partnership with UNICEF, WE provided a lumpsum of 900 USD for each LGs for planning purposes.

130. There are several types of education grants in Nepal. Local Governments are receiving funds from the federal government, both conditional grants earmarked for specific purposes, and non-earmarked funding through revenue sharing, equalization grants, special grants, and matching grants. The Conditional Grants are the only ones managed by the Ministry of Education while the equalization grants are managed by the Ministry of Finance and are not tied. Some stakeholders met during the evaluation suggested to include the formula of the Equity Index into existing formulas of the equalization grants. The idea would be to use the grants to incentivize the LGs to achieve better equity results in the education sector. Knowing that the equalization grant is a multisector grant, it may be difficult to implement as several Ministries would need to be consulted to revise the formula of the equalisation grant .

CONCLUSION EFFE.1. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based government and non-state actors funding in the Nepal school education sector?

Evaluative Judgement:

Based on the ranking of the Equity index, districts and later local governments received additional budget and technical assistance for identification and execution of targeted interventions. Starting from 2016/2017, additional funding was transferred to the local Governments to implement their ESIPs. It is only in 2019/2020 that the additional funding formula was revised to include for the first time an equity-based formula[87]. *The evaluation team found that if this was a good step in the right direction to ensure better equity-based allocation, nevertheless,* **it has not yet resulted into a shift in equity-based financing.** Available funding (mainly from the Government) for local Government (grants) and children (Scholarship) remains mainly untied to an equity agenda. Funds transferred to the LGs were limited and remained targeted to the 15 selected districts.

Some issues were reported at LG level where the amount transferred from the central level was not clearly identified, thus forcing the education officers at LG level to negotiate their access to equity-based funding with the chief administrators with some difficulties.

3.2 Effects of increased funding on disparities

EFFE 2. In the case of increased needs-based funding and/or resource mobilized by non-state actors, has this led to a reduction of disparities in education outcomes between children that are/were based on their gender, caste, ethnicity, ability, location, socio-economic status, vulnerability or a combination of these?	Sub question EFFE 2.1: Have these additional resources led to improving the education outcomes for children? Sub Question EFFE 2.2: Has increased funding led to achieving intended results of the ES?

131. Due to unavailability of precise government level financial information on the budget that LGs have received as an equalization grant for each of the 15 focused districts and because of the design itself of the evaluation (that is mainly a process-based evaluation and not an impact evaluation), we do not intend to relate reduction of disparities in education outcomes with increased needs-based funding in the present report. The following section has attempted rather to describe the main status of DLI 6 and DLI 7 (that are important proxy indicators of the ES) without linking their results to specific funding streams. We also attempted to provide an overall perspective of the effects of two Equity-focus schemes, namely the scholarship and the mid-day meals programs.

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[87] The lump sum that is allocated for supporting municipalities that have been identified through the equity index is allocated across these municipalities using a formula that includes a fixed tranche (base amount) which is the same for all municipalities to ensure a volume that allows municipalities to utilize this and a variable tranche that determines their share of the overall funds based on their prevalence (number of out of school children), severity (equity index score), and performance (reduction against their baseline in the previous year(s)

Results related to DLI 6 and 7:

132. The most significant indicator that can be used to access the effects of the ES is DLI 6. Indicator DLI 6: Reduction of disparities in access and participation under Objective 1 of the SSDP (Objective 1: Improved Access to Quality Basic Education) was included in the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) program result framework as one of the ten Disbursement Linked Indicators for the five-year SSDP implementation period by GPE, World Bank, EU and Finland with a total result-based financing of US$ 24 million.

133. The Equity strategy document (2014) envisaged initially that costed implementation plans will be reflected in the Annual Strategic Implementation Plans (ASIP) and Annual Work Plans and Budgets (AWPB) for the academic year 2014-15 and 2015-16. As part of the GPE stretch indicator timeline and under DLI 3 (Development of an equity index and its utilisation for providing targeted supports to districts), it was then foreseen that in 2016/17, there would be targeted interventions implemented in 5 highest ranking districts and 10 more districts in 2017/2018 and 15 in 2018/2019.

134. The SSDP review conducted in 2019 acknowledges that the targets in terms of district covered was achieved as per the table below.

Table 9. No of districts with targeted interventions

Indicators	Baseline (2015/16)	Year 1. Target 2016/17	Year 1 Achievement	Year 2 Target 2017/18	Year 2 Achievement	Year 3 Target 2018/19	Year 4 Target 2019/20	Year 5 Target 2020/21
No of districts with targeted intervention	0	5	5	10	15	15	15	15

Source: SSDP Review (2019)

135. In 2016 (Year 1), the Department of Education (DoE) undertook a baseline household survey in the five selected districts, with just under 100,000 OOSC aged 3-16 and 59,000 OOSC in the 5-12 year olds category across the five first focus districts. Every subsequent year, the baseline was updated in the next batch of 5 focus districts.

136. To summarize the out-of-school children numbers presented in the baseline surveys[88]:
   - 108,000 children were out-of-school in the five districts surveyed in 2016/17 amounting to 9.6 percent of the 1,120,000 aged 3–18 year old in these districts;
   - 28,700 children were out-of-school in the five districts surveyed in 2017/18 amounting to 6.6 percent of the 435,000 aged 3–18 year old in these districts;
   - 52,300 children were out-of-school in the five districts surveyed in 2018/19 amounting to 6.5 percent of the 801,000 aged 3–18 year old in these districts;
   - An almost equal proportion of boys and girls were found among the out-of-school children.

''For the Out of School survey, teachers and grade twelve students were used to conduct the survey. Teachers alone were unable to take the survey in such large area like ours. Some grade 12 students were asked to participate to the survey, not a lot, just a few. We had made a format. That format had to be filled up by going to people's houses. For 14/15 days, three of us from the committee used to go to places where there were surveys so that there would not be false data.'' KII with one LG education officer

137. Below a table with the main DLI 6 Targets versus Achievements in priority districts of the Equity Strategy that shows that for all years, the planned targets were exceeded.

DLI 6: The most disadvantaged districts ranked based on equity index have been selected for targeted intervention to reduce out of school children

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[88] CEHRD, 2020.

Table 10. DLI 6 achievements

YEAR	Year 1 2016/17	Year 2 2017/18	Year 3 2018/19	Year 4 2019/20	Year 5 2020/21
DLI targets	6.1a Targeted interventions implemented in the 5 most disadvantaged districts (according to the Equity index) 6.1b **20%** reduction in the aggregate number of OOSC in the 5 most disadvantaged districts (according to the Equity index)	6.2a Targeted interventions implemented in the 10 most disadvantaged districts (according to the Equity index) 6.2b **20%** reduction in the aggregate number of OOSC in the 10 most disadvantaged districts (according to the Equity index)	6.3 **30%** reduction in the aggregate number of OOSC in the 15 most disadvantaged districts (according to the Equity index)	6.4 **250,000** cumulative number of OOSC brought to schools or Learning Centers (LCs)	6.5 OOSC in basic education age reduced to 5% (reduced by 5.6 percent from a baseline of 10.6 percent) in the relevant age group
JFP / Value	6.1a GPE DLI 3(i) US$ 0.7m 6.1b GPE DLI 3(ii) US$ 2.2m + EU €2.39m + Finland €0.55m	6.2a GPE DLI 3(i) US$ 0.7m 6.2b GPE DLI 3(ii) US$ 2.2m + EU €2m + Finland €1m	6.3 EU €2m + Finland €1.2m	6.4 WB DLI 2.4 – US$6m. + EU €2m + Finland €1.25m + GPE AF £1.2m	6.5 EU €2m + GPE AF $1.2m
Results [89]	6.1a Achieved / 6.1b Partially achieved (correction via IVA report, **18.1%** reduction based on the initial claim of 22.39 % reduction)	6.2a Achieved / 6.2b Achieved (over-achieved according to IVA) **47.3%**[93]	6.3 **57.8%** [90] Awaiting IVA verification	**256,000** [91] Reported as achieved (independent verification is ongoing)[92]	Data not yet available

Sources: Joint Protocol original (2016) and Joint Protocol MTR May 2019 update. DLI Achievement Reports Years 1, 2 and 3. BRM May 2020 Aide Memoire. School sector development program, Disbursement Linked Indicator matrix (March, 2017), Results-Based Financing in the Education Sector: Country-Level Analysis, Nepal, submitted to the REACH Program at the World Bank, draft Final Report, 5 October 2020.

Tentative analysis of National level results with Results found in the focused districts

138. The Flash report 2019/2020 summarizes the share of Basic education (5-12) OoSC and its evolution since the baseline (2015/2016) at National level. The number of OOSC is decreasing from 10,6% in 2015/2016 to 6,2% in 2019/2020 and could reach the SSDP target of 5% in 2020/2021. The table below shows good results at National level (All districts together) in term of reduction of Out of Schools in Nepal since 2015.

Table 11. Percentage of OoSC in basic education

Sub sector/thematic area	Baseline (2015/16)	3-year target (to 2018/19)	Achievements (in 2016/20)				5-year target (to 2020/21)
Indicator			16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	
% of out of school children in basic education (age 5-12) National level	10.6	7.5	9.0	8.7	7.3	6.2	5

Source: Flash Report 2019/2020

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[89] Note: Results are cumulative in terms of increase in percentage of OOSC reduction
[90] The DLI achievement report noted that for Year 3, 33,687 of age group 7-12 year old (17,148 girls and 16,539 boys) who were prior to the 2018/19 academic year were considered as out of school, enrolled in school in 2018/19 across the 186 municipalities in the 15 districts representing 57.8% (60.0% for girls, 55.7% for boys) of all the 58,254 out-of-school children in that age group against a target of 30% for the DLI 6 year 3. Independent verification of this achievement, as required by the protocol, could not proceed due to the lockdown that was imposed to prevent the transmission of the COVID-19 virus in the country.
[91] Source: Flash I report (2019/2020).
[92] The achievement report for DLI 6.4 is expected to be submitted by December 31, 2020. Source: 2020 JRM Aide Memoire as of 08122020
[93] 39,611 children (20,179 girls and 19,432 boys) aged 7-12 have been enrolled in 2017/18 across the 186 municipalities within the 10 previous district boundaries. This equals a reduction of 47.3% (49% for girls, 45.7% for girls) of the out of school children population at that age group in this area. Source: Status report 2017-2018

139. As described previously in the DLI results table, a cumulative figure of less 256,000 Out of Schools children was found nationally for the year 2019/2020 compared to the baseline of 2015/2016. As this figure still needs to be independently verified, the Evaluation Team attempted to triangulate the figure of 256,000 OOSC reintegrated in the school system at national level during the period 2014-2020. This work is proposed in the table below that aims to assess the reduction of OOSC at National Level using extrapolated School Age Population and GER rates

Table 12. Reduction of OoSC at National level

Fiscal Year	Level/ Primary schools only	Enrolment 5-12 years	GER	School age Population	OOSC	Oosc cumulative reduction/ Baseline	Reduction Oosc/ baseline in %	
2015/2016	Lower basic	4 264 942	135.4	3 149 883				
	Upper basic	1 862 873	95.4	1 952 697				
	Total	**6 127 815**		**5 102 580**	**540 874**	0		
2016/2017	Lower basic	4 135 253	133.6	3 095 249				
	Upper basic	1 859 359	103.3	1 799 960				
	Total	**5 994 612**		**4 895 210**	**440 569**	-100 305	-18.54%	1 Year
2017/2018	Lower basic	3 970 016	**132.3**	3 000 768				
	Upper basic	1 866 716	**108**	1 728 441				
	Total	**5 836 732**		**4 729 209**	**411 441**	-129 432	-23.93%	2 Years
2018/2019	Lower basic	3 730 602	121.4	3 072 984				
	Upper basic	1 824 777	96.6	1 889 003				
	Total	5 555 379		**4 961 987**	**362 225**	-178 648	-33.03%	3 Years
2019/2020	Lower basic	3 543 862	119.3	2 970 547				
	Upper basic	1 775 142	96.1	1 847 182				
	Total	5 319 004		**4 817 729**	298 699	**-242 174**	**-44.77%**	
2020/2021	Lower basic							
	Upper basic							
	Total							

Source: Analysis conducted by the Evaluation team based on available education data

140. From 2015/2016 to 2019/2020 the total number of OoSC 5-12 has been reduced by 242,174 which seems coherent with the number of 250,000 children back to school noticed in many official documents including children enrolled in CLC. The cumulative reduction of 5-12 OoSC over the 5 years period is 44,7%. The two data sets are consistent, provided that the demographic data we have used is valid (School age population data). It should be noted nevertheless that our data does not include children who have joined technical/non-formal centres which could explain the differences between the two findings.

141. A reduction of OoSC for the age group 3-18 can also be observed at the level of the 15 bottom districts identified through the ranking of the Equity index according to disparities in access and participation. For the first group of five districts, the reduction of 3-18 OoSC number have been 55,1% in 3 years. For the second group of 5 districts the reduction of 3-18 OoSC number have been 49,1 % in 2 years.

Table 13. Reduction of OoSC age group 3-18 for the 15 districts

	Oosc 3-18 2015/2016	OoSC 3-18 2018/2019	Reduction OoSC	Reduction Oosc %		
5 districts	107 594	48 288	59 306	**55.12 %**[94]	-53.84%	In 3 years
10 districts	28 725	14 631	14 094	**49.07 %**		In 2 years
15 districts	52 311	52 311	0			
Total	188 630	115 230	73 400	**38.90 %**		In 3 years

Source : OoSC reports

142. Due to the difference in the school age population considered in the previous two tables (5-12 years and 3-18 years), it is difficult to compare directly the reduction of the number of OoSC over the period in the selected 15 districts with the reduction that took place at national level. What we can reasonably say at this stage is that a large reduction of OoSC can be observed in the selected districts but also that this reduction was not limited to these selected districts as it has also concerned many other districts in the country as can be seen in the table 18 below.

143. To have a better appreciation of the extend of the reduction in the focused districts (where specific interventions have been put in place) in comparison with nation-wide results, one can consider the data concerning the 5-12 OoSC evolution which are nevertheless limited to the first 5 districts selected, as per our analysis below.

Table 14. Reduction of OoSC age group 5-12 for the first 5 bottom districts

	OoSC 5-12 2016/2017	OoSC 5-12 2018/2019	Reduction Oosc	% 5-12 OoSC back to school
5 firsts districts	58,491	27,984	30,507	52.16%
National level	440,569	362,225	78,344	17.8 %

Source: flash reports concerning household surveys

144. For the five districts at the very bottom of the EI ranking in terms of access and participation, the number of OoSC back to school is 30,507 between 2017 and 2019 corresponding to 52,16 % of the initial OoSC number. These figures compare to a score of 17,8 % at the national level for the same period shows a significantly higher reduction than the national reductions over the period 2016-2020 indicating that the targeting has had a positive effect.

145. The evaluation team found that the share of 5-12 OoSC in the first five focused districts of the ES that represents 13,28% of all 5-12 OoSC at the national level in 2015, decreased to 7,73% in 2018/2019, suggesting a real effort was made in these districts to bring the OoSC back to school.

Table 15. Share of the OoSC 5-12 in the 5 districts[95]

Share of the OoSC 5-12 in the 5 districts in 2016/2017 compared to all OoSC 5-12 in Nepal	Share of the OoSC 5-12 in the 5 districts in 2018/2019 compared to all OoSC 5-12 in the Nepal
58,491/440,569	27,984/ 362,225
13.28%	7.73 %

146. We conducted another data analysis based on the latest Out of School report 2019/2020 for the 15 districts of the ES. The chart in annex 9 provides a picture of the percentage of enrolled children

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[94] The number of OoSC go from 107594 in 2016 to 48288 in 2019, a decrease of 55.12%.

[95] Here we look at the share of OoSCs in the top 5 districts selected under the policy being evaluated. It was 13.28% in 2016, it drops to 7.7% in 2019 which means that these five districts have reduced the number of their OoSC faster than all the other districts.

but this time for the age group 7-12 years (while our previous analysis concerned the age group 5-12 years).

147. In all 15 districts but for the age group 7-12, we can observe that a majority of districts, with few exceptions, have performed quite well in their efforts to bring back children to the school system with percentage of enrolment varying from 89% to 33% depending on the districts. 8 districts score above 70% enrolment, 4 reaching almost 70% and 4 districts lagging behind with enrolment rates around 30% only.

148. The Mid Term Review (MTR) of the SSDP (2019) found that in basic education, the number of disadvantaged children receiving scholarships and targeted interventions had increased significantly, from 117,953 in 2016/17 to 214,712 in 2017/18 (JRM, Nov. 2018) and similarly to our findings, that targeted interventions based on the EI (grants for midday meals, scholarships, enrolment campaign for out-of-school children, etc.) may have contributed to reduce disparities in terms of access to basic education.

149. Finally, we also undertook an analysis of data for enrolled OoSC per grade and per sex as per the table below.

Table 16. Enrolled OoSC per grade and sex

OoSC/Grade	7	8	9	10	11	12	Total
OoSC Girls	4714	3295	3514	4401	6994	5708	28626
OoSC Boys	4735	3215	3529	4561	7252	6450	29742
Total	9449	6510	7043	8962	14246	12158	58368
% Girls	**49.9%**	**50.6%**	**49.9%**	**49.1%**	**49.1%**	**46.9%**	**49.0%**
Enrolled girls	2887	1957	2103	2622	4217	3362	17148
Enrolled boys	2710	1758	1985	2477	4081	3528	16539
Total	5597	3715	4088	5099	8298	6890	33687
% of Enrolled Girls	**61.2%**	**59.4%**	**59.8%**	**59.6%**	**60.3%**	**58.9%**	**59.9%**
% of Enrolled Boys	57.2%	54.7%	56.2%	54.3%	56.3%	54.7%	5.6%
% of Enrolled children	59.2%	57.1%	58%	56.9%	58.2%	56.7%	57.7%

150. As suggested by the figures above, if the girls represented on average 49% of the OoSC, for all age groups, **more girls than boys were enrolled in the 15 districts** with an average of almost 60% girls enrolled compared to 40% boys.

151. Grade wise, interestingly, we did not find much variation in terms of enrolment per grade suggesting that the communication campaign was able to enrol children from all age groups.

152. Surprisingly the **age group used for data analysis of OoSC is not consistent across reporting documents,** with some reports using the age group 5-12 years old while the DLI reports use the age group 7-12 years. There is therefore a lack of a consistent communication[96] on the issue of OoSC. OOSC are considered children aged 5-12 not in school. However 5-6 year olds are still considered easier to enroll as they could be late enrollments and therefore were not allowed to be claimed by the government when presenting the achievement reports to trigger DLI funding.

153. The success of enrolment policies and related enrolment measures should however not hide related difficulties for schools having to adjust to the specific needs of these new types of students (Although, this finding is not specific to the 15 focused districts of the ES). Additional efforts will be necessary to ensure that newly enrolled children can further progress in the cycle; **The quality of the teaching learning process has not sufficiently progressed to enable students, firstly to reach grade 8 then, for those reaching grade 8, to pass their exams.**

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[96] The published official data relate to different age groups and that different aspects are analysed in relation to different age groups which is confusing.

154. Another way to document these different points is to refer to the enrolment (NER) in the worst performing districts before and after the launch of the ES (see methodology in annex I "a tentative empirical analysis of the implementation of ES"). When we look at the upper basic NER evolution during the period 2009-2019, we can compute the annual growth rates of NER by districts over two sub-periods (2009-2015 and 2015-2019) as shown by the data presented in table below. While the average annual rates of UB NER were globally constant around 3,5% per year at national level, they evolve very differently at the district level, i.e in the 15 ES districts but also in the unselected ES districts who were with the previous ones among the 30 less performant districts in terms of schooling in 2009. More precisely we observed globally a rapid increase in the first period followed by a slower increase in the second period.

Table: NER Upper basic 2009-2019 and average annual growth rates of NER according to the three-year period.

Table 17. NER Upper basic 2009-2019

	NER Upper basic			Annual growth rates		
	2009	2015	2019	2015/2009	2019/2015	2019/2009
Rautahat	21,4	43,3	63,9	12,0%	10.3%	11.6%
Manang	22.5	77.6	92.8	22.9%	47.0%	15.2%
Sarlahi	29.0	43.6	63.9	7.0%	10.1%	8.2%
Mahottari	30.5	56.7	89.9	10.8%	12.2%	11.4%
Dhanusha	31.0	50.5	63.8	8.5%	5.9%	7.4%
Jumla	32.1	87.9	90.8	18.2%	0.0%	10.9%
Bara	33.2	58.5	76.4	9.9%	7.0%	8.7%
Saptari	36.0	58.5	86.5	8.5%	10.3%	9.2%
Siraha	36.4	56.6	67.7	7.7%	4.7%	6.4%
Kapilbastu	37.1	54.7	74.5	6.6%	8.0%	7.2%
Parsa	37.4	48.5	62.7	4.5%	6.6%	5.3%
Khotang	37.7	85.8	96.5	14.6%	2.9%	9.8%
Mugu	40.6	95	95.5	15.2%	0.2%	8.9%
Humla	43.1	62.1	67.1	6.3%	1.9%	4.5%
Dolpa	43.8	71.6	90	8.6%	1.9%	7.9%
Mustang	43.8	77.8	93.3	9.9%	4.7%	7.8%
Achham	46.9	84	96.6	10.1%	3.6%	7.5%
Sindhupalchok	47.9	77.6	95	8.3%	5.0%	7.0%
Rupandehi	48.0	70.4	85.4	6.6%	4,9%	5,9%
Doti	49.6	71.2	82.9	6.1%	3.8%	5.3%
Rolpa	52.5	66.5	89.1	4.1%	7.6%	5.5%
Banke	54.5	72.5	86.6	4.9%	4.4%	4.8%
Sunsari	56.1	70.5	88.2	3.9%	5.8%	4.6%
Morang	56.6	76.3	89.1	5.1%	4.0%	4.7%
Kathmandu	57.1	80	95,8	5,8%	4.6%	5.3%
Bajura	60.2	78.2	93.8	4.5%	4.7%	4.5%
Sindhuli	61.1	86.1	95.7	5.8%	2.6%	4.6%
Nepal	**63.2**	**77.7**	**89.7**	**3.5%**	**3.6%**	**3.6%**
Jajarkot	64.0	98.3	96.6	7,5%	-0.5%	4.2%
Bajhang	72.3	79.5	95.7	1.6%	4.7%	2.8%

155. The first 5 districts selected by the ES are a notable exception to this national trend by presenting in 2015-2019 average annual growth rates much higher than those of the other districts and especially higher in the second period (the period of intervention of the ES). The trend is less clear for the other districts selected by ES with a shorter intervention period. **These elements give clear credit to a positive effect of ES activities over the period.** We can see in the appendix that this effect is also observed for secondary education.

Table 18. Average annual growth rates (NER Upper basic) by districts categories (2009-2015)[97]

	2015/2009	2019/2015	2019/2009
First batch of five districts	9.1%	9.4%	9.2%
Second batch of five districts	6.6%	4.9%	5.9%
Third batch of Five districts	6.8%	3.8%	5.5%
Others districts	10.5%	4.7%	8.0%
Nepal	3.5%	3.6%	3.5%

Source: Flash Reports

156. This empirical analysis of the ES confirms (partially in the 5 districts studied) the effects observed following the OoSC campaigns and shows that this rise of enrolment in the very marginalized districts is associated with a decrease in the survival rates for these districts that is more visible at the Lower basic level than at the upper basic level. At the same time, analyzing the situation of the different districts engaged through the ES and especially the first group selected, we observed that they implemented less ECD classrooms and that they continue to suffer a weak supervision associated with higher students/teachers ratio. These results confirm the demand side orientation of the ES that succeed to bring back to schools many students but with only few changes in the schools capacities to help them remain in schools and learn. (for more details see annex 4 : ''a tentative empirical analysis of the ES'')

The effects of scholarships and midday meal program

The scholarship program

DLI 7 – Revised Scholarship Guidelines with Pro-Poor Scholarship Scheme approved and rolled out

Table 19. DLI 7- achievements

YEAR	Year 1 2016/17	Year 2 2017/18	Year 3 2018/19	Year 4 2019/20	Year 5 2020/21
DLI targets	7.1 (i) Pro-poor targeted scholarship (PPTS) and pro-science scholarship (PSS) schemes approved. Ii) that includes targeted interventions for increasing girls' participation in science subjects in G11 and 12	7.2 (i) PPTS in G9 and 11, and PSS in G11 implemented in 25 districts and ii) in 15 of these districts with targeted interventions for increasing girls' participation in science subjects in G11 and 12	7.3 PPTS in G9,10,11,12 and PSS in G11 and 12 implemented in 50 additional districts	7.4 5.0% increase in GER for secondary education over the baseline (girls 61.6 and boys 61.8)	7.5a 7.0% increase in GER for secondary education over the baseline (girls 63.6 and boys 63.8) 7.5b Retention rate of poor students to G12 community schools is 60%
JFP / Value	7.1 WB DLI 2.1 – US$6 m + ADB DLI 1 US$3m	7.2 WB DLI 2.2 – US$6 m + ADB DLI 1 US$7m	7.3 WB DLI 2.3 – US$6 m	7.4 ADB DLI 1 US$4m	7.5a ADB DLI 1 US$4m 7.5b WB DLI 2.5 – US$6 m
Results	Achieved	Achieved (data collection delayed WB verification)	Achieved (subject to IVA)	Likely surpassed	7.5a Likely surpassed 7.5b Unclear

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[97] Here we look at the annual growth rate of the NER in the different district groups and at national level. It can be seen that :

- The average growth was higher in the selected districts (1 to 3) than in all other districts (the Average Annual Rate is significantly lower at the national level than in each of the 3 groups of districts and in the group of districts where enrolment was initially low but which were not selected (other districts) than at the national level

- Growth rates are lower between 2015 and 2019 for all districts and at the national level, except for the first group of districts where support measures have been implemented

157. The pro-poor scholarship scheme seems to have been successful in term of reach and is now covering the whole Nation, nevertheless, **an assessment is needed to monitor the effectiveness of the scheme at the level of the students** according to ADB.

158. As reported by the latest gender study[98], a considerable portion of the SSDP budget is used to provide a wide range of others scholarships[99], administered both locally and centrally. The 2017 BRM highlighted the need for reviewing and revising pro-poor, pro-girl scholarships and their implementation in target districts, including addressing EMIS to report on data by individuals and by districts.

159. The Social Protection sector assessment and public expenditure review drafted by the World Bank Social Protection team[100] noted considerable space to improve the equity and targeting of scholarships (residential vs day student, and wider support for poorer students to access and stay in secondary education). The report also calls for an increase of financial amount provided to the children in early years by adjusting the child grant and midday meals.

160. The same review shared that **beyond enrolment, the impact of scholarships on attendance and retention in school has been minimal**, likely due to the small size of the benefit for the cases on basic education scholarships.

161. Without strictly referring to effects of scholarships, we noticed that the annual growth rates of NER in secondary education has been, as in lower basic level, rising at a very high level during the period 2015-2019 for the first five districts selected into the equity strategy. For these 5 districts the annual secondary NER growth rates was 10,3, more than twice time higher than all others districts (selected and unselected) and then of Nepal. (see table below and annex I).

Average annual growth rates (NER secondary) by districts categories (2009-2015)

Table 20. Average annual growth rates (NER secondary) by districts categories (2009-2015)

	2015/2009	2019/2015	2019/2009
First batch of five districts	9.7	10.3	9.7
Second batch of five districts	7	3.2	5.4
Third batch of Five districts	8.6	4.8	7.1
Other districts	8.9	3.6	6.7
Nepal	6	4.4	5.3

Source: Flash reports

162. While some schemes provide benefits from grade 1 to 10 (e.g. scheme for Dalit students and those with disability), few specifically target students at secondary level (grades 9-12). They include the only poverty-targeted scheme for secondary students and the scheme for poor Dalit, Chepang and Raute students. The former only covered 34,000 students in FY19. Given the low net enrolment rate at secondary level, expanding the coverage of secondary level scholarships could be critical to enhance this outcome.[101]

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[98] Gender Equality and Social Inclusion analysis of the Education Sector in Nepal, Ruth Naylor, Amy West, 17th July 2020
[99] According to the Ministry's Scholarships Guidelines 2074, there are 15 types of scholarships including five residential scholarships
[100] Social Protection Assessment & Public Expenditure Review FY 2011 - FY 2020, Draft for review, February 2020
[101] The net enrolment rate declines from 92.7 percent in basic education to 46.4 percent in secondary. At higher secondary (grades 11-12) the net enrolment rate is even lower at 24.7 percent (Flash Report 2018-19).

163. The review notes that **coverage rates are particularly low for the disability grant and the child grant.** The report indicates that the child grant, which is distinctly pro-poor, currently only covers all Dalit children nationwide and all children in 14 selected districts (153 LLs) thereby excluding non-Dalit poor children in other parts of the country.

164. An independent report[102] indicates that scholarship programs offered to Dalits were problematic. Dalit students were bullied for receiving scholarships. In addition, money allocated for scholarships was found to be insufficient and sometimes, in some cases, funds diverted to pay teachers' salaries and (re-) construct physical infrastructure.

165. As described in the latest version of the Social Protection sector assessment and public expenditure review drafted by the World Bank Social Protection team, Scholarships and midday meal programs under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology spent NPR 5.8 billion in FY19. The scholarships covered about 3.2 million beneficiaries in FY19. Of these, about 2.9 million were students at basic level and about 0.2 million at secondary level. A few thousand students benefitted from scholarships at the tertiary level. According to the Ministry's Scholarships Guidelines 2074, there are 15 types of scholarships including five residential scholarships. The value of scholarships ranges from NPR 400 to NPR 40,000 per year.[103]

166. The scholarships are aimed at enhancing gender equity and inclusion in access to basic education and are mainly targeted to girls, Dalits, those with disabilities and the marginalized.[104] New categories were introduced post-conflict to cover newly recognized vulnerable groups and the conflict-affected population.

''The local government gave this year Rs.400 scholarships to all the girls from grade 1 to 8 and sometimes up to grade 10. This year we distributed scholarship up to grade 9 also. We send names of the students. They look at our EMIS and see our data. They send the money to us and we distribute the money in presence of them or in presence of some authoritative persons. Regarding day lunch, Just now, they sent the money for 40 days. They count public holidays and Saturdays and they deduct these days and send the money. They send 15 rupees per person for lunch and we try to give local foods to the children like greens, rice puffs, beaten rice, rice-lentil porridge. Though they indicate to grade 1 onward, they give money for pre-primary kids also. '' KII with a head teacher

167. The same review of the World Bank[105] found that the correlation between net enrolment rates (for girls and overall) and per capita scholarship was positive and statistically significant. This suggests that on average local levels with higher enrolment rates were allocated higher per capita scholarship budget.

168. According to one head teacher interviewed, Scholarship was not transferred on time this year because of the COVID-19 situation.

''The 100% girls scholarship is for all girls studying up to grade 8, there is Dalit scholarship provided to students till class 8 and also there is poverty based scholarship provided by CEHRD (last year: 2 students studying science in class 11, 5 students studying different subjects in class 11 and students studying in class 9 got it) but we have not received it yet this year even I tried.'' Source: KII with head teacher

Mid-Day meal program.

169. The World Bank study[106] indicates that per capita allocation for the midday meal did not have a statistically significant correlation with net enrolment rates. Anecdotal evidence gathered from our discussion with respondents at field level indicate nevertheless some positive effect of mid-day meals on the enrolment of children.

''Day lunch has helped to minimize out of school children to a great extent. When lunch is not given then the parents don't send their kids. Otherwise, even toddlers are also brought to schools''

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[102] Asia Foundation, 2018
[103] Details on each scheme are in annex 1.
[104] Children belonging to 26 marginalized groups
[105] The Social Protection sector assessment and public expenditure review drafted by the World Bank Social Protection team
[106] The Social Protection sector assessment and public expenditure review drafted by the World Bank Social Protection team

"Providing lunch has increased participation of girls. Boys have begun to go to madarsha and girls from Muslim community too have begun to go to madarsha. After ten o'clock, they come here but in the morning, they go to madarsha. Muslim girls have begun to go to madarsha in the morning to get religious education and come to school in the afternoon and stay until the school closes. There are sixteen madarsha running and in this area. there are a large number of children, especially girls." Source: KII with one teacher.

170. An evaluation[107] of the school meal program conducted in 2019, found that the program has been effective in improving the learning outcomes[108] of school aged children during the program period. Nevertheless, the same World Bank study found limited evidence of correlation between scholarship and midday meals program budget and the performance of students and schools. The impact of scholarships on attendance and retention, and by extension on graduation, has been limited by the small size of the benefits for basic level schools.

171. The midday meal program aimed at improving nutritional status, class attendance and learning capacity, covers over 1.3 million children in 44 districts (435 local levels), including 11 districts under the Food for Education program supported by the World Food Program. The midday meals are costed at an average of Rs. 15 per meal per day provided each day throughout the school year. Reported by the social economic impact analysis (p 13)[109,] a cost-benefit analysis of the schools' meal programme in Nepal demonstrates an increase of 3 percentage points in school attendance and a decrease in 2.65 percentage points in drop-out rates as well as 0.9 year increase in school-life expectancy in addition to other health and nutrition benefits (GoN, 2018).

172. As can be seen from the available evidence provided previously, there has been mix findings on the effects of the scholarship and mid-day meal programmes on the education outcomes as summarized below:

Table 21. Summary effects of scholarship and mid-day meal on education outcomes

	Access	Retention	Learning Outcomes
Scholarship	Strong effect	Limited effect to positive effect	Limited effect
Mid-day meal	Limited effect to positive effect	Positive effect	Limited effect to positive effect

Source: Authors.

The equity agenda is a work in progress and more needs to be done

173. Overall, the equity agenda is still work in progress with several rooms for improvements as per our desk review. The table in Annex 10 : "Pending issues per equity dimension"; provides a summary of pending issues in relation to each equity dimension of the ES.

CONCLUSION EFFE 2. In the case of increased needs-based funding and/or resource mobilized by non-state actors, has this led to a reduction of disparities in education outcomes between children that are/were based on their gender, caste, ethnicity, ability, location, socio-economic status, vulnerability or a combination of these?

Evaluative Judgement : *It was not possible through this evaluation to relate reduction of disparities in education outcomes with increased needs-based funding. In terms of development results, our analysis shows that the ES was concomitant with an increase in schooling (average annual growth of NER in upper basic, reduction in the number of*

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[107] USDA McGovern Dole Food for Education Program in Nepal. 2014-2017. End-line Evaluation Report, April 2019
Source: https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000111917/download/ and https://en.setopati.com/social/122062

[108] Around 22.7 percent of the students correctly read 45 words or more per minute and were considered as proficient in reading comprehension- a key result outcome. Significant differences (p<0.05) were observed across Listening Comprehension, Letter Sound Knowledge, Matra Reading, Non-word reading and Oral Reading Comprehension across schools with different programme component composition. Of which, students in the schools with SMP, WASH and EGR scored higher than the rest. Comparison of endline results with baseline 2015, show substantial change in the literacy outcome with more than 20 percentage point difference.

[109] Socio-economic impact analysis of education in Nepal, Study 2: Analysis of the social impact of education, Astrid Korin, 19th August 2020

OoSC), notably more marked in the 5 districts initially selected trough the EI. The reduction in OOSC in the targeted districts exceeding the national reduction of OOSC, which could indicate that the targeting of interventions has been effective.

Grade wise, interestingly, we did not find much variation in term of enrolment per grade suggesting that the communication campaign was able to enrol children from all age groups.

A decrease in survival rates is observed in districts that have experienced recent rapid increases in enrolment, more visible at Lower basic level than at upper basic level. These considerations linked to the demand for education of discriminated groups deserve specific studies which could explain the rationality of their decision to leave the school system prematurely. On the national labor market, field interviews suggest that opportunities for unskilled jobs abroad directly compete with the highly uncertain benefits expected from a longer stay in school.

Parity in basic education, already reached nationwide at Lower basic level, is now achieved at Upper basic level. Girls are now overrepresented compared to boys in Lower Basic in the three groups of districts selected for ES (particularly for the first of the three groups). This over-representation of girls is established in 2019 in the Upper Basic for all the groups of districts considered. (ES districts and others)

However, it is highly likely that children on the margins of marginalization, such as children with disabilities, have not benefited to the same extent from this new enrolment drive.

In addition, no clear effect is noted on vulnerable ethnic groups. Concerning the Dalits, the share of enrolment is stable during the period 2009-2019. At national level, Dalits represent around 20% of children in lower basic and growing from 12,6 to 15,6 % in upper basic over the period. In contrast, the share of Janajatis decreases among the total enrolments in the two cycles of basic education during the same period.[110]

In the first 5 districts, the evaluation team also observed that less ECD classrooms were implemented and that they did not succeed in improving their student/teacher ratio, significantly higher than in other areas. These results confirm the demand side orientation of the ES that succeeded to bring back to schools many students but with only few changes in the schools capacities to help them to remain in schools and learn.

We found mixed findings on the effects of the scholarship and mid-day meal programmes on education outcomes.

	Access	Retention	Learning Outcomes
Scholarship	Strong effect	Limited effect to positive effect	Limited effect
Mid-day meal	Limited effect to positive effect	Positive effect	Limited effect to positive effect

Source: Authors.

3.3 Effectiveness of the Equity Index for the Strategy implementation

EFFE 3. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Index been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 3.1 Sub question: To what extend was the design, ownership, use, effect, etc of the Equity Index to inform policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring processes for a more equitable education?.

Current use of the EI

174. As developed in other sections of this report, the EI has been used to rank districts (and later on LGs) in Nepal in relation to their disparities related to access and retention mainly. The EI is also used at Federal level to allocate funds to the most needed LGs starting with 80 LGs in the 15 focused districts.

175. A list of LGs has also been computed and was used to select 186 LGs in the 15 focused districts to support them with the development of their ESIPs. More than 50% of these 80 Palikas have already developed the ESIPs but only few LGs have implemented them. **The index was used mainly at LGs level as ''an entry point'' for needs-based planning.**

176. **The government supported by UNICEF through WE provided the selected LGs with a summary sheet displaying key education data categorized under access, participation and learning outcomes.** The summary sheet compared the main education indicators of a specific LGs with federal and provincial level figures based on Flash 1 and Flash 2 data.

177. As per our review, the Equity Index was mainly mentioned in the ESIPs to explain why the municipality ranked low. Therefore, **reference to the EI was used mainly as the main rationale for the development of the ESIPs** but as explained previously not really for planning purpose where Flash 1 and 2 data were found more relevant.

178. Index scores do not seem to have been sufficiently used to produce a variety of data analysis and thus measure the progress made (if the content of the index evolves over the years). For example**, the index is not (yet) calculated on a regular basis to show whether LGs efforts result in increase of scores/ reduction of disparities** (leading to efforts being made to embed the EI in EMIS).

Difficulty to compute data

179. Stakeholders interviewed reported that in many cases, it was **difficult for the LGs to use the EMIS data to compute key education indicators by themselves because of lack of capacity. Technical assistance was provided by WE to bridge this gap.**

180. A recent study[111] also confirms that the reduction in OoSC for DLI 6 is complex to achieve as **local governments do not know which combination of learning materials, teacher practices, inputs and accountability processes are best able to improve learning in the classroom**.

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[111] Results-Based Financing in the Education Sector: Country-Level Analysis, Nepal, submitted to the REACH Program at the World Bank, draft Final Report, 5 October 2020

Evolution of the index over times and reduction in scope

181. The relatively underuse of the index can also be explained by its reduction in scope compared to what was initially envisaged in the ES. The SSDP (revision 2016) foresaw that the outcome equity index would include the following indicators:

Table 22. Initial scope of the Equity Index

Indicator	Source of data	Dimensions of equity	Level of disaggregation	Levels of education	Frequency
Out of school rate	EMIS and population census	Gender, additional dimensions (location, caste/ethnicity, disability, wealth, mother's education) if dataset is made available to DoE.	District only	Basic education (1-8)	Every year for gender, once for additional dimensions if they become available
Survival rates	EMIS	Gender, location, caste/ethnic groups using exact figures. Disability using available data on enrolment and estimates for repetition. Disability may be computed exactly once individual student information (or more disaggregated information) becomes available at central level.	District, VDC, school for average, district only for disparities along dimensions of equity	Basic education (1-8), secondary (9-12)	Every year
Learning outcomes	Grade10 exams 8th grade District exam data	Gender	District, VDC, school for grade 10 exams. VDC and school only For 8th grade exams (no comparability between districts).	10th grade for regional/state exam 8th grade for district exam)	Every year

182. Following the recommendation in the Status Report 2018/19, the equity index was adapted to the federal context, with a ranking calculated for all 753 LGs, replacing the previous formulation by former districts.

183. Reduction in the scope of the Index compared to the initial design of the Strategy.
The evaluation team found that the way the computing of data is calculated now only covers 3 drivers of disparities compared to the 8 stated in the ES in 2014. The extent to which dimensions can be covered depends on available data and data needs to meet certain requirements (for example be available for all LGs). It is interesting to note that many respondents interviewed during the evaluation did not realize that the scope had been reduced.

a. **Learning outcomes are not included in the current index:** the learning dimension (the SLC pass rate) was found to have issues as the exam was not standardized enough to offer comparability at LG level. The SLC was cancelled in 2017 and was replaced by the Secondary Education Exam (SEE) at grade 12. The previous grade 10 SLC was changed from pass/fail to a single subject certificate (therefore, there is no pass/fail rate after 2017). This issue is being tackled by UNICEF and the Government. As part of the Equity Index computation, the grade 8 Examination System was introduced in the Web Based IEMIS in 2018/2019 so that LGs could use this system to generate the desired results. In 2019,

around 250 LGs had used this system to conduct the annual grade eight examinations. They were 400 in 2020. Based on the demand from the LGs, World Education not only provided technical support on data management but also provided trainings associated with the system. It is expected that the result obtained from this system would be used to compute the Equity Index and to find out the learning outcomes of grade 8 students.

b. The Index now only **covers 3 drivers of disparities (**Gender, castes/ethnicity and location) **compared to the 8 stated in the ES** in 2014[112]. Initially the index was computed per district based on the data from the Central Bureau Of Statistic (CBS), offering a variety of data based on the 2011 census. Later it was observed that there was no significant difference between the CBS data and EMIS, therefore it was decided to use the EMIS only, and take advantage of its annual updates[113].

c. **Lack of available data to track students performance in sub-categories of the eight dimensions of equity.** The eight dimensions of equity identified in the Consolidated Equity Strategy (DoE 2014) recognize that students' access to education, their participation, and their learning outcomes are influenced by gender, caste/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, health and nutrition status, geographical location, disabilities, language, and vulnerability status. However the data is not available to track how students in sub-categories of the eight dimensions of equity perform. Therefore, the report suggests that one foundational step towards closing equity gaps is to ensure that data is available to identify excluded students.

d. Existing disability data are not statistically significant at local government level as they were at district level. For this reason, disability had to be removed from the list of drivers. Disability data can be included but would need to be weighted (likesome other drivers) and that requires an adaption in the EI formula that has not received endorsement yet.

e. The EI is not intended to be computed at school level. Need based analysis could be strengthened at school level planning but that would be a different tool to be developed under the EI.

f. The index fails to capture **the various categories of family income, which should be considered as an important driver of disparity.** For instance, a rich Dalit family should not be considered in the same position as a poor family as far as access to education is concerned.

Limited consideration to differentiation and access to education services

184. The drivers of inequality are related with the situations of inequity but may not be direct causes. Some situations of school inequity in participation and learning could be due to differentiated education services in terms of quality and cost thus confining children from the most disadvantaged families to a ''second-class school structure''. Efforts are made to ensure that all schools offer Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMEC) but there is little analysis of the role of differentiation between community and institutional schools which the Index fails to capture.

185. There is an uneven geographical repartition of primary schools in Nepal with some districts having mainly access to grade 1-5 schools, limiting therefore children's opportunities. Nevertheless,

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[112] The National Equity Strategy framework encompasses eight dimensions or drivers of inequity: i) gender ii) socio economic status (SES), iii) geographic location, iv) health and nutrition status, v) disabilities, vi) caste and ethnicity, vii) language, and viii) children from vulnerable groups.

[113] The Equity index was computed using CBS 2011 projections for the access (as that allowed taking wealth and other dimensions into account), EMIS data for participation and National Examination Board data for SLC pass rate to do the initial ranking of districts. After that, the independent verification of the EMIS and the confirmation that the EMIS and CBS data produced similar rankings was used as a justification for MoEST to decide to use EMIS data for both the access and participation computation of the provincial and local level equity indexes

looking at the high transition rates observed, these school map considerations could be of low impact on effective schooling (see annexe 4). Furthermore, these national results can hide local situations where school map could be a barrier to schooling in very specific cases nad/or isolated areas.

Untapped opportunity to further use the baseline data on Out Of School Children

186. A baseline data was started in 2015 with a nominative list of out of school children gathered through household survey. Based on our KIIs, it seems that no specific additional studies or analysis were undertaken from this dataset than those in the annual Status Reports, DLI achievement reports and OOSC status reports. In particular, this baseline data were not used to understand the effects of school reintegration programs, and better know if a significant proportion of reintegrated children actually remained at school.

CONCLUSION. EFFE 3. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Index been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?

Evaluative Judgement: *The Equity Index was used mainly as a communication and advocacy tool rather than a support to the implementation of the Equity Strategy, mainly because of its reduction in scope .*

In relation to the effectiveness of the index, the evaluation found that:
- The EI was used to select the districts and the municipalities with higher disparities. **The index was used as the main rationale for the development of the ESIPs but not really for planning purpose** where Flash 1 and 2 data were found more relevant.
- It was **difficult for the LGs to use the EI because of complex formulas** compared to existing capacity in data analysis and planning.
- The index is **not meeting its planned objectives in term of scope[114] to produce a variety of data analysis and thus measure the progress made overtime**. Many respondents interviewed during the evaluation however did not realize that the scope had been reduced.
- Some stakeholders met during the evaluation suggested that **it was time to reconsider the list of districts produced by the Equity Index** as the list may not reflect anymore the current level of disparities in the COVID context.
- There is **little analysis of differentiation between community and institutional schools** and there is no consideration of this element in the handling of the Index.
- **The OoSC baseline data set has been unused** to better understand the effects of the school reintegration program and more importantly if the out of school children reintegrated (as they represent a significant share of the Out of Schools[115]) actually remained or not in the school system and if not, why they dropped out.

3.4 Effectiveness of the ESIPs for the Strategy implementation

EFFE 4. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 4.1 Sub Question: Has the scope of the equity strategy resulted in an adequate volume of interventions and reach? EFFE 4.2 Sub question: To what extend the envisioned ESIP development process is feasible? EFFE 4.3 Sub question: To what extend produced ESIPs have shown genuine efforts to identify appropriate types and varieties of interventions?

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[114] Now covering only 3 drivers of disparities compared to the 8 stated in the ES in 2014

[115] The Out of school report 2019 indicates that of the 115,230 out-of-school children with age group 3–18 year olds in the 15 targeted districts in 2018/19, in total 89,233 of them (77.4%) reported that they were attended school in the past but left out the school education system and the remaining 22.6% had never attended in the school education. The highest proportion of out of school in the category of Ever school/dropped out children is in Grade 1 with 18.8% (compared to 23.2% in 2017/18), whereas, for other grades it is between 6.6% and 11.5%.

187. The Equity strategy includes support to local governments in adopting systematic need-based planning, which is expected to spill over from a 5-year Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIP) development into general education planning and programming. Prior to the development of the plan, the LGs units must conduct an extensive analysis of their situations on access and participation (including specific planned and targeted interventions).

188. The rationale of ESIP is to help local governments in systematically undertaking steps to translate their equity index score into need-based planning and monitoring as described in the graphic below.

Figure 7. ESIPs development stages

Source: Presentation of the EMIS and Equity in the Education Sector in Nepal by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in Nepal. May 30, 2019, Kathmandu, Nepal

189. It was agreed during the provincial workshops held at the end of 2019 that CEHRD, MOSD, EDD, UNICEF and World Education would provide technical supports during the ESIP process. A lumpsum of 100,000 NRS was paid for the LGs during the ESIP preparation, through World Education and local NGOs[116] in order to support LGs with the payment, bills and other necessary documents.

190. In 2017 and 2018, the EDCUs coordinated with local government education officers to design OoSC plans and programs. They were encouraged to include representatives of disadvantaged groups in the local planning process. In 2016, 2017 and 2018, CEHRD allocated conditional grants to districts (in 2016 and 2017) and local governments (in 2018) to bring out-of-school children back to school, while local governments were provided with the flexibility to demand plans and programs to meet identified needs. It was agreed that the EDCUs would guide local governments to enrol 20% of the out-of-school children into school by the end of corresponding academic years.

191. The Equity Strategy initially set targets for the implementation of equity-based interventions on a short-term (FY 2014/15 & FY 2015/16), and medium-term perspective (3-5 years post July 2016). In the end, the full Equity Index was computed and used to guide the updating of LG-ESIPs from year three (2018/19) onward.

192. 80 out of the 186 Local Government units located in the 15 target districts were selected based on their composite scores established from the Equity Index for intensive implementation of the Equity Strategy. The strategy was rolled out at Local Level through 40 Local Government units in 2019/2020 and 40 more in 2020/2021. As of January 2021, 66 LG had provided information regarding their status in term of planning and inclusion in their local education plan.

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[116] CDC for Doti; KIRDARC Nepal for Dolpa; HURAC for Rolpa; RDC for Rautahat, Bara, and Parsa; SDC for Mahottari, Sarlahi and Siraha.

193. The status table below indicates that in March 2020, only 23% of the first batch of 40 envisioned ESIP in 9 districts (out of 80 planned in 15 districts) had been endorsed and none of them (0%) had yet been integrated into the local strategic plan.

Table 23. Steps for the design of the ESIPs as of March 2020

Steps	Number of LGs per sub steps of the ESIP as of 25th March 2020	% of LGs (among 40 LGs) who completed the sub step	Status in relation to the expected steps
Initial Orientation	34	85%	
ESIP working Group formation	34	85%	
Situation Analysis	27	68%	Step 1 : Evidence and analysis
Sharing of the analysis	26	65%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
Program Identification	26	65%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
Prioritization and Cost estimation	26	65%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
Budget forecast	26	65%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
ESIP formation	26	65%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
ESIP endorsement	9	23%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
ESIP in Local Level Strategic Plan	0	0%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning

Source: UNICEF, ESIP Status till 25th March 2020

The situation of the 40 LGs as of 18 December 2020[117] indicates that the process is moving slowly. 9 months after (from April to December 2020), only 6[118] out of 40 LGs had moved for at least one additional sub step in the planning process.

194. The same table but with inclusion of the 80 LGs in 15 districts as of 27th January 2021 shows that 50% of the LGs conducted an analysis of their situation, whereas only 13% of the LG-ESIP have been endorsed by the Local Government. 10 months after, none of the 80 LGs had yet included their ESIP in the local level strategic plan (including the first batch of 40 LGs).

Table 24. Steps for the design of the ESIPs as of January 2021

Steps	Number of LGs per sub step as of 27th January 2021	% of LGs (among 80 LGs in 15 districts) who completed the sub steps	Status in relation to the expected steps
Initial Orientation	61	76%	
ESIP working Group formation	61	76%	
Situation Analysis	43	54%	Step 1 : Evidence and analysis
Sharing of the analysis	40	50%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
Program Identification	33	41%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
Prioritization and Cost estimation	25	31%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
Budget forecast	24	30%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
ESIP formation	23	29%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
ESIP endorsement	10	13%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning
ESIP in Local Level Strategic Plan	0	0%	Step 2 : Strategic Planning

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[117] The data has been shared with the evaluation team but has not been presented in this report
[118] Haripurwa NP; Bishnu GP; Bariyarpatti GP; Jagarnnathpur GP; Durga Bhagwati GP; Gujara GP;

195. The ESIP was initially expected to complement the LG Education Plan. However most fragile LG's had no education plan at all. As a result, several ESIP became the foundation for LG's broader Education Plans. The LGs already had funds and needed to identify specifically where the greatest needs were and then the resource gaps. Some LGs focused on ECD, some on parents' engagement for school enrolment, others on madrassa mainstreaming, some included school meals etc. We found that what was implemented at LG level seems to have been mainly driven by the familiarity of the interventions by the LGs and what can be put in place, but was less based on actual needs and the result of a prioritization process.

196. In year two (2020/2021), the government pushed for the ESIPs to be integrated into the broader education planning and budgeting system. This is why, an additional step: '*the integration of the ESIP with the Local Level Strategic Plan''* was added in Year 2. Since none of the LGs had prepared local level education plan or local strategic plan, this step could not be completed for any of the LGs.

197. Even though the LGs, for most of them, did not complete the full design and validation process of their ESIP, the Government decided to still allocate some funding (although a limited amount) to kick start the equity-based interventions. UNICEF indicated that only few LGs could not spend the funds allocated. According to UNICEF, in 2019/2020, 80 LGs were running late with full disbursement also because of the COVID-19 situation. Some respondents indicated that some LGs had to return the funds as they could not spend it on time. Other respondents indicated that providing the funds for the interventions before the completion of the planning process may not have been the best decision to promote learning related to development of planning processes.

Strong Points and Challenges of the ESIPs

198. We identified several challenges linked with the design and implementation of the ESIPs as per the consolidated list (from various sources) described below[119]. One of them is the over prioritization of financial resources on the development of "visible" infrastructures with little space for quality-focused, teaching-learning process related activities as described in this quote from a school principal met during the evaluation.

''Last year, I made a proposal and sent it to the municipality. The proposal was to seek Montessori training to teachers who were teaching early grades. The municipality supported 2/2.5 lakhs. We trained 36 teachers for 7 days and a local NGO provided some materials to us that could be used in primary level classes. The ones that got training were very happy because they were hopeful about the change that would come to the school by getting that training but community wise, that investment of 2/2.5 lakhs was useless because the outcome was not seen. They were of the opinion that, 2/2.5 lakhs could have been used to construct roads.''

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[119] The list of Strong points and area to improve is a compilation of findings from the /KIIs as well as derived from the list of issues raised during the TWG meeting dated on 05/08/2020 referred as Annex 2; Analysis of year 1 local level ESIP Planning Process

Strong points

Strong interest in engaging in education planning - Overall there was a strong interest from the Palikas to engage in education planning. Many were very proactive in engaging teachers, parents and other stakeholders.

Engaged teams – Despite the lack of staff in the Palikas in most Palikas they were able to identify a team to work on the plan that were very engaged and committed.

Analysis and Rational Choice of Priorities – In general smart choices for use of ESIP funding and prioritization was observed. However many Palikas while able to articulate this in discussions did not reflect this in the written plan. Several Palikas created tables within the plans that showed this better.

Good Plans that can Contribute to Model Building – Several of the plans provide good models and these have been reviewed to include in a revised recommended outline. Many were simple clear and easy to follow.

ESIP Becomes Basis of Education Plan – None of the 40 Palikas supported being new had any education plans in place. Many expressed interest in using this as the basis of the main Education Plan.

Municipality Approval – This was a brand new process but many Palikas were successful in getting the ESIP discussed and approved by their Education Council.

Challenges

Re-insuring LGs about the roles of each planning level. The Local Government Operation Act, 2074 BS mandates local government to prepare their own mid-term, long-term and strategic plans of all sectors including education. For this reason, when the discussion started about the use of the EI as a planning tool, some LGs thought that there was interference from the Central Level. Staff from federal government had to re-ensured them that they were only providing technical support to help prepare the plan and to help secure the federal funds.

Lack of planning experience with the Education Focal Persons: It was difficult to initiate the ESIP activities because many LGs did not have persons with planning experience.

Multiplicity of Overlapping Education Plans and Lack of Links to Budgeting and Accounting System: With many plans for education – 5 Year Education Plan - Annual Plan – ECD Plan – Comprehensive School Safety Plan, Covid Pandemic Contingency Plan etc the Palikas feel over stretched and burden by so many plans that overlap.

Trained staff replaced: A lot of effort went into training staff to prepare the plans in expensive regional workshops. These were valuable for building the commitment of the Central, Provincial and Local Government to the process. Unfortunately on the return to the Palikas the team members were replaced by others creating a challenge to prepare the plan.

Least prioritization by LGs: It has been felt that LGs have their own priorities but also that the development of Local Education Plan has not been into their main agenda. In fact, none of the first 40 LGs has produced their own local education plan. In such context, it was very difficult to convince LGs to prepare ESIP. Priorities of LGs is also more on hard ware components. LGs tend to prioritise their budget allocations on salaries and infrastructures and less on software components such as improving quality and retention in the education system.

Demarcation of roles and responsibilities: It is evident that the LGs need technical support not only in ESIP formulation but also in many other areas. While federal and provincial government along with UNICEF and World Education provided technical support during the preparation of ESIP, a clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities need to be made, at least for federal and provincial government, so that each line agencies can technically guide LGs when and where needed. Similarly, the role of Education Development and Coordination Unit (EDCU) also needs to be demarcated so that this line agency can also support LGs in multiple ways.

''*Since government structure is in transition nobody really knows what and where things are happening and who is in charge. i.e. at the district level there are still two structures- one EDUC, which used to be the District Education Office and also the Social Development unit (SD) of the provincial government. SD unit is also responsible for education along with other social sectors.* '' KII with a provincial director

Inadequate funds: The LGs were provided with NRS 100,000/ (around 900 USD)- in a lumpsum basis to support cost related to the preparation of ESIP. It was hoped that the LGs would also find additional money so that they can further strengthen the ESIP process and eventually prepare the local level education plan or local strategic plan. This has not been the case and besides the allocated money, none of the LGs allocated extra budgets for planning purposes. The allocated money was not adequate in order to comply with the 10 steps that was envisioned during the ESIP formulation process.

ESIP as a criterion for release of ESIP implementation funds: During the ESIP formulation process, it was assumed that ESIP will be a major criterion for release of the implementation funds and without this plan, the LGs would not be able to spend the fund. However, this was not the case as LGs were provided with the funds even when the ESIP plan was not submitted. This act sent out the wrong message to the LGs that ESIP is not a criterion for release of ESIP implementation funds which then proved to be an obstacle during the technical support.

Cut and Paste behaviour – Concerns were raised that Palikas cut and pasted information. When these staff are stretched effort needs to focused on the analysis and planning aspects. To make it simpler core background information on what Equity dimensions are or legal requirements could be provided as text in boxes that can be inserted if required to make it easier.

Multi responsibilities under one person: At LG level, education officers are often fulfilling many various other responsibilities part of a broader social development agenda, such as education, health, women development…Education is therefore diluted among others functions and priorities.

Limited implementation because of the COVID situation: Some LGs could not implement their plans because of the restrictions imposed by the COVID situation.

Gaps expressed by the schools are related to the needs to conduct additional awareness raising program for the parents, providing economic support for poor families, teachers' capacity development trainings, proper allocation of scholarships in sufficient quantity to reach more children, school meal for secondary school going children.

199. As shared previously, only few LGs have started to implement their ESIPs. As per the information provided in the Out Of School Reports, in the AWPBs/ASIPs and based on the Key Informants Interviews, below a summary of the typical interventions that were implemented following the additional budget provided to address Inequity issues in the focused districts and LGs. As such, Local Governments can be seen to be predominantly working on improving the demand side of education, with some elements of supply but that do not address systemic gaps in the education system (i.e. mainly lack of teachers and issues related to quality and efficiency of education provision.)

Table 25. Main activities implemented through the ESIPs

Non Formal Education	School Based Approach	Other Activities
Mobilization of Community learning centres (CLCs) for household visits and awareness raising;	Provision of school bag, stationery and uniform to students.	ESIPs Planning workshops Out of School Children survey
Enrolment campaign and welcome to school in collaboration with I/NGOs;	Topping up of regular scholarships. Provision of mid-day meals	Data tabulation and analysis in the context of development of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIP)
Street drama at pocket areas	Improve the ECD centres physical facilities and equipment	
Running learning centres	Extra classes for weak students	
Adoption of child for education	Teacher management (additional teachers appointed from local level)	

Sources: Compilation done by the authors from KIIs with respondents, Out Of School Reports, AWPBs/ASIPs and from the 2019 desk-based review on the impact of non-state actors' interventions on access and retention for OOSC.

200. A financial view of the funding invested per type of interventions in 2017/2018 indicates that the bulk of the funding went for the enrolment of OoSC through the CLCs, the Alternative Learning Centers and for capacity development interventions. Funds were still disbursed as a regular block grant in 2017/2018.

Table 26. Breakdown of budget allocated to 10 targeted districts to adress OoSC in 2017/2018

Activities	OOSC Enrolment Campaign	Flexible School Program	Awareness campaign	Program to enrol OOSC through CLCs	Alternative Learning centres	Capacity Development to plan interventions using Equity Index	Total
NPR million	1,103	3,729	6,234	9,2	7,976	6,458	34,7
%	3%	11%	18%	27%	23%	19%	100%

Source: MoEST ASIP/AWPB, FY2017/18.

Limited geographical scope of the interventions

201. Some respondents interviewed during the evaluation shared that the geographical scope of the ESIPs was limited as their implementation effectively took place only in few LGs that are included in the 15 focused Districts and there is not yet a scale up plan and available funding to increase the geographical scope of the interventions at National Level. Some stakeholders also had the impression that the support brought to the 80 LGs looks like a '' supported pilot project'' that is not yet ready for a full replication.

Limited thematic scope of the Equity Based Interventions

202. As reported by the latest ESA gender study[120], the focus on reducing rates of out of school children in the targeted support and the monitoring of progress does not allow to take into consideration all vulnerable children. Whilst the equity strategy is contributing to the inclusion of the most excluded children of primary school age (those not in school), it does not necessarily address the needs of most of the excluded (those in school but not learning). Neither is it clear whether those newly enrolled will be provided with quality education eager to to keep them in school and learning. The midterm review of SSDP noted that limited resources and attention had been given to the follow up of students once enrolled.

203. As reported by the latest ESA gender study[121], the Equity Index and Grants/ESIP may adopt an approach where "social inclusion" is not clearly defined, and there are few explicit interventions to address it and monitor progress, beyond efforts to reduce the number of out of school children.

204. The same report indicates that data show persistent inequalities in education, for example:[122]
   - Dalit and Janajati are underrepresented at higher secondary and representation decreased over the period 2014-2018[123]
   - Secondary access is limited for the poorest quintile
   - Literacy outcomes of non-Nepali mother tongue speakers are far below those of Nepali mother tongue speakers.

205. Below a compilation of suggestions brought by the respondents during the evaluation: The ES strategy should better address, language, child marriage and disability issues, take also in consideration the issue of equity in financing (schools tend to receive the same amount of funding but have disparities in term of capacities), the importance of secondary education should be highlighted further in the strategy in relation to access to sciences studies for girls for example.[124] Overall the scope of the strategy should be holistic from ECD to upper secondary as stakeholders met perceive that the current focus seems to have been more on basic education and on access for Out Of School Children.

Relationship between the ESIP and the Schools:

206. Our discussions with some schools indicate little ownership of the ESIP by the schools as the ESIPs is mainly perceived as a LGs' plan. Schools were not systematically involved in its design. Schools implement activities related to Equity and inclusion, they may include such components in SIP but not under the banner of ES or ESIP, meaning that the schools may not know what ESIP is.

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[120] Gender Equality and Social Inclusion analysis of the Education Sector in Nepal, Ruth Naylor, Amy West, 17th July 2020
[121] Gender Equality and Social Inclusion analysis of the Education Sector in Nepal, Ruth Naylor, Amy West, 17th July 2020
[122] See section on Gender, caste, ethnicity in the Annex 4. ''Quantitative analysis of the Equity Strategy'' for more information regarding this findings
[123] Please see annex 4 for more details
[124] The Lower quintile was not able to access secondary education as it is unaffordable

207. LGs get money from the federal level for ESIP. LGs then allocate budgets to schools on the basis of the requirements (e.g. top up for scholarship, school bags, etc.). Nevertheless, LGs may not distribute the total ESIP budget to schools. They can also spend it for their own programs. E.g. parental education.

208. On what basis LGs allocate additional budget for equity and inclusion related activities to schools is not clear. LGs do not collect SIP. They may organize discussions from which they will know which school needs what. According to our discussions with the KIIs at sub national level, budget allocation for schools are based on various sources as follows: household survey to identify the OoSC, supervision visits made by LG education officers, Village profile, EMIS, health center's data about children under 5. LGs also collect information from teachers and parents about out of school children.

CONCLUSION EFFE 4. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?

Evaluative Judgement: *The Equity Strategy Implementation Plans were partly an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy also because the trend is now that LGs should develop an education plan taking into consideration equity issues. (rather than a standalone ESIPs). Only few LGs implemented their ESIPs, it is therefore a work in progress that would need to be strengthened with clear monitoring tools.*

80 out of the 186 Local Government units located in the 15 target districts were selected based on their composite scores established from the Equity Index for intensive implementation of the Equity Strategy. The strategy was rolled out at Local Level through 40 Local Government units in 2019/2020 and 40 more in 2020/2021.

The evaluation team found that although many of the first batch of 40 LGs had developed their plans, as of 27th January 2021 only 13% of the 80 LG-ESIP had been endorsed, indicating a slow process. (even if most of the 40 LGs have now an ESIP). The ESIP was initially expected to complement the LG Education Plan. However most fragile LG's had no education plan at all. As a result, several ESIP became the foundation for LG's broader Education Plans that they are now developing. In addition, it should be noted that development of the ESIPs was during the height of the initial COVID-19 period in Nepal, when schools were closed and LGs were fully engaged in providing essential emergency responses.

Education staff were found motivated and engaged to develop the plans but they experienced issues with staff turnover and competing priorities at LGs level with a centralization of decision taken by the chief administrator. In the new context of transition to a federal structure, education officers are often fulfilling many responsibilities part of a broader social development agenda, such as education, health, women development…Education is therefore diluted among others functions and priorities often goes to hardware type of activities (infrastructures) and less to other components such as capacity building or awareness raising.
The central level provided support to the process. The implementation guideline for the ES was found clear about the various steps needed to prepare the ESIPs and on how to identify the data for the analysis of the education issues in the municipality, but it felt short in providing clear and detailed instructions on how to develop the plan. Concretely, the sample of ESIP analyzed revealed different contexts and initial analysis, but very similar and convergent activities.

Through the implementation of their ESIPs, Local Governments have predominantly worked to improve the demand side of education, with some elements of supply but that do not address systemic gaps in education provision (i.e. mainly lack of teachers and issues related to quality and efficiency.) The bulk of the funding went for the enrolment of OoSC through the CLCs, the Alternative Learning Centers and for capacity development interventions. This focus on OoSC leads to change the focus of the ES. In most cases, ESIP contributed to the inclusion of the most excluded children of primary school age (those not in school) but did not address the needs of most of the excluded (those in school but not learning).

Also, section 2.5 of the ESIPs related to monitoring was not properly translated into monitoring plans and framework in the sample of ESIPs that we reviewed. It is therefore unclear whether those newly enrolled children will be provided with education of sufficient quality to keep them in school and learning.

3.5 Modalities of selection of the interventions

EFFE 5. To what extent has the Equity Strategy facilitated the Government of Nepal to achieve the equity-based targets and objectives within the previous and current education sector plans?	Sub question EFFE 5.1: What was the rationale/justification for selecting the interventions? Sub question EFFE 5.2: What was the added value of reviewing the analysis and appraisal to inform the selection of the target and objectives of the LG ESIPs?

1. To enhance access and improve equity, the government has 16 different types of scholarships in place that target specific population groups such as conflict-affected, disabled, girls, Dalits, and poor and talented students. According to the latest USAID education sector analysis 2020, many of these scholarships are not as such targeted to students who are weak financially. Thus, many of these benefits are skewed in favour of females who are in the richest consumption quintile (World Bank 2014). The Terai ethnic groups also do not benefit much from these initiatives.

2. The evaluation found that the Equity Index is not always used by development Organizations for targeting interventions but is rather sometimes used as one of the selection criteria. Many organizations have their own project planning cycle and criteria for selecting their target area. Targeting is often made based on thematic criteria of relevance for a particular type of project. For example, food security projects will tend to focus on food deficit areas even if they also have a role n providing school meals. Therefore the ranking of the Equity index is only partly used for prioritization of education interventions. In addition, some projects started before the list of municipalities was available and cannot yet change their tageted geographical areas. Below the example of UNICEF on how the Equity criteria is selected for Education interventions.

UNICEF integration of equity.

In the context of the development of the UNICEF/Government Country programme action plan 2018-2022, UNICEF selected a number of priority rural and urban municipalities (palikas). These priority palikas include convergence palikas and program specific priority palikas. The Convergence palikas were identified as most deprived according to the Child Deprivation Index (2015) and are receiving multi-sectoral assistance provided in a coordinated way through cross sector interventions involving health, wash, nutrition, child protection, C4D and education programming. Cross sector collaboration take place at UNICEF field offices level.

In other program locations where UNICEF is implementing education projects (outside of the convergence palikas), the Equity Index was used as one of many indicators to select the geographical areas for interventions.

Equity is mainstreamed in education programming areas of UNICEF. For example, UNICEF supports Community-based early childhood education (ECE) and parenting education. Supply-side bottlenecks are being addressed by improving teaching skills and developing quality teaching and learning materials. UNICEF also supports improvement of classroom teaching and learning, the promotion of early grade literacy and numeracy and the use of appropriate mediums of instruction. Finally, UNICEF is strengthening the technical and institutional capacity of the education sector for DRR and CCA, education in emergencies and the Schools as Zones of Peace initiative. As part of the implementation of the school safety comprehensive framework, one component is related to improved social protection environment that aims to address child protection issues through enhanced social security of parents and their children (especially girls, children from underprivileged families and children with different abilities), thus promoting more equal access to education.
In its CPD for the period 2018-2022, UNICEF is targeting 200 LGs with the developments of their ESIPs. As of March 2020, 80 LGs have been supported in this process.

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3. Some donors such as the EU for example, are mainly supporting the education sector through budget support. In this case, they cannot select the municipalities as the responsibility to allocate funding to the most needed areas remains with the Government. For the other projects supported by the EU (outside budget support), the list of districts and municipalities produced by the index is used as one of the selection indicators. Equity in Education is a major pillar of EU intervention in the Education sector. Funding from the EU to non-state actor projects in education provides an

important complement to the sector wide support, promoting greater access, equity and inclusion of marginalized children in education.

4. According to the 2020 DMS activity report, our discussion with WE and some of the LGs, not every education focal person was familiar with data analysis and EMIS, therefore World Education supported LGs[125] by providing them with a useful summary sheet of the LGs with data categorized under access, participation and learning outcomes. The summary sheet includes LGs with comparison of education indicators with the national and provincial levels. See thereafter as an example, the data for the Lungri Municipality. The LGs were also encouraged to use other sources of their own information to generate such type of analysis.

Comparing the current state of the rural municipality with those of the provincial and federal governments. (the example of Lungri Rural Municipality)

Table 27. Computed indicators. Summary tables. ESIPs

1	Indicators and indices based on access		Nepal	Province no. 5	Lungri Rural Municipality
1.1	Experience of child development among students enrolled in grade 1		66.9	66.1	75.02
1.2	Gross Enrolment Ratio [GER] in grade 1		123.9	149.8	220.69
1.3	Net Enrolment Ratio [NER] in grade 1		96.3	95.6	95.08
1.4	GER in basic level grades 1–5		118.6	130.2	156.04
1.5	NER in basic level grades 1–5		96.6	97	93.67
1.6	GER in basic level grades 1–8		109.2	121.4	134.29
1.7	NER in basic level grades 1–8		92.7	95.1	84.40
1.8	Gender Equity Ratio of NER at basic level grades 1–8		1.03		93.69
1.9	Rate [sic] of out-of-school children of 5 to 12 age group		7.3		
1.10	GER in secondary level grades 9–12		66.2	78.3	37.81
1.11	NER in secondary level grades 9–12		46.4	47.4	34.10
1.12	Gender Equity Rate of NER of secondary level grades 9–12		1.07		0.82
1.13	Number of students enrolled in technical stream in grades 9–12		29269		
2	**Participation-based Indicators and Indices**				
2.1	Retention rate for grade 8		77.9	78.5	
2.2	Completion rate of basic level		71.3	73.8	
2.3	Retention rate for grade 10		58.5	55.5	
2.4	Retention rate for grade 12		22.2		
2.5	Percentage of female teachers in basic level		43.1		32.63
2.6	Percentage of female teachers in secondary level		18.85		6.25
3	**Learning Achievement-based Indicators and Indices**				
3.1	Learning achievement scores (%) in Grade 5	Match	49		47.6
		Nepali	46		51.6
		English	47		49.6
		Social			51.9
		Science			49.4

5. The relationship between the analysis of data and the proposed activities was not always clear and coherent for many LGs. Many LGs proposed similar activities even though their context may be different. LGs will need more support in the future to customize further their plans to address the causes and factors of inequity.

6. If the support provided by the government with technical support by UNICEF through WE to the LGs during the appraisal phase was useful, our analysis of a sample of the ESIPs indicates that the plans were very ambitious in regard to the limited budget that was allocated for their implementation. In the meantime, in some cases, the total amount of the overall budget was missing and sometimes activities were not costed which rendered the financial analysis impossible. Some plan (i.e. Chhartasong Rural Municipality) displayed a budget of 5,948,320 NPR (51,000

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[125] WE is a technical assistance mobilized as per the requirements and demand of the government, made available through UNICEF's implementing partner.

USD) or higher which is far above the funding that was made available by the federal level to them, raising questions on how the plan will be implemented in the future.

7. The LGs developed a 5 year-plan (2016-2023) to be aligned to the National level SSDP plan but as they started the development of the plan very recently, it did not seem to us coherent knowing that there remains only 3 years before the end of the SSDP period.

CONCLUSION EFFE 5. To what extent has the Equity Strategy facilitated the Government of Nepal to achieve the equity-based targets and objectives within the previous and current education sector plans?

Evaluative Judgement: *As previously mentioned, ESIP preparation process triggered education planning efforts in many LGs. Development results and equity-related DLI also seem to have been improved thanks to the ES. The support provided by UNICEF and its partner World Education to the analytical process was welcome and allowed comparison of educational indicators between LGs.*

Nevertheless, the relationship between data analysis and the proposed activities was not always evident and coherent. Many LGs proposed similar activities even though their context may be different. LGs will need more support in the future to customize further their plans to address the causes and factors of inequity.

Some respondent mentioned the need to further highlight the importance of secondary education in relation to access to sciences studies for girls for example.[126] They also insisted on the need to have a more holistic and systemic scope of the strategy from ECD to upper secondary as stakeholders met perceived that the focus was more on basic education and on access for Out Of School Children.

3.6 Effectiveness of the Strategy in the emerged Federal structure

EFFE 6. Has the emerged federal structure in the education sector had an effect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the equity Strategy?	EFFE 6.1 Sub Question: What has been the level of appropriation of the Equity Strategy at National and local level in the context of the emerged federal structure? EFFE 6.2 Sub question: To what extent is the equity strategy compatible with the emerged federal structure in the education sector and coherently adapted at the different government levels? EFFE 6.3 Sub Question: To what extent has the federal transition affected the implementation readiness across the different tiers of government

Consequences of the transition to the new federal structure for the implementation of the Equity Strategy

8. The recent Country Level Analysis[127,] (ESA) reported that many indicators related to the DLIs were originally designed with a view to the District Education Office (DEO) having a major role in implementation. As structures were radically changed with federalism, the indicators had to be revised, with the delivery mechanism replaced with LGs. Following federalism, the main means of delegation or attempt for the center to delegate to the local level is via budget lines clearly labelled within the Conditional Grant to LGs, with implementation detail set out in the Program Implementation Manual (PIM). As set out in a meeting in April 2019 on the EGRP: "*the government shared that collecting all the data for the achievement report was extremely difficult and either the reporting requirements or the reporting system needs to change. It was noted that this was a serious challenge across all DLIs due to the federal transition.*"

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[126] The Lower quintile was not able to access secondary education as it is unaffordable
[127] Results-Based Financing in the Education Sector: Country-Level Analysis, Nepal, Submitted to the REACH Program at the World Bank ,Draft Final Report, 5 October 2020, Joseph Holden, Evaluator, Economist, Team Leader, Yadab Chapagain, Evaluation Consultant

9. This issue of financial reporting was exacerbated by a period in which the LGs had no obligation to report to MoE or CEHRD, and instead only had to directly report to the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. The Government is now seeking to make the LGs report to Education Development and Coordination Unit (EDCU) & Subnational Treasury Regulatory Application (SuTRA).

10. As shared later in this report, the directive from the Government is now for the LGs to first develop their education plans (as many LGs do not have yet their own education plans) in which they are invited to mainstream equity in the education plan instead of developing stand-alone ESIPs that will then be merged into the education plans. The Government with technical support from UNICEF and WE had to adjust the implementation guidelines to reflect this new direction. Starting from July 2021 onwards, USAID and the British Council will support several LGs in the previous 75 districts to develop their local education sector plans in which it is expected that equity be integrated.

11. The ES seems to have played a positive role for LGs to address the challenge of overall federal transition. Nevertheless, it is not clear in the future what role the federal and provincial level could play to strengthen the capacities of LGs now that the district level disappears. The start-up phase of the rolling out of the ESIPs have demonstrated that LGs required crucial technical support and guidance on planning, data management and analysis as well as on monitoring/evaluation that are all key needed functions for the implementation of the Equity Strategy.

12. Overall, the following challenges related to the transition to the new federal structure have been identified during the 2019 SSDP MTR and through our data collection phase and contribute to impact negatively on the implementation of the ES:

- o Uneven redeployment of essential staff between institutions at provincial and local government can potentially cause disruption in education service delivery.
- o Uneven capacity of staff already deployed, potentially causing increased disparities between provinces, localities and schools.
- o Delay and uncertainty regarding the pace of redeployment, leading to lack of clarity of the support needed and inability to strengthen institutional capacity accordingly
- o Institutional memory loss/lack of ownership of SSDP at provincial and local level government that could potentially disrupt the timely implementation of the SSDP program and activities.
- o Lack of clear definition of role, responsibilities and reporting mechanisms between the three levels of the education federal structure increasing the risk of duplication of investment in the school sector, and decreased alignment between needs and support provided.
- o Legal framework pending regarding teacher management and professional development and dissolution of RCs and reduction of ETCs, bringing new challenges for completion of implementation of activities to reach the expected outcomes of the SSDP.
- o Possible significant increase in additional recruitment and resignation of government staff instead of their redeployment, causing systemic shortage of expertise within the provincial and especially municipal governments.

CONCLUSION EFFE 6. Has the emerged federal structure in the education sector had an effect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the equity Strategy?

Evaluative Judgement: *The emerged federal structure in the education sector had a major effect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the ES. The restructuring of state functioning changed from the previous 75 districts as the main unit of sub-national administration to the local governments. As noted also by other recent studies, Provincial and local governments lack capacity to deliver education services, and substantial capacity building will be needed to support the transition.*

More particularly, the evaluation team identified gaps in data analysis, planning, reporting and monitoring. Areas to strengthen also include intersectoral and cross collaboration and coordination with non-education related departments as well as with non-state actors as the latter were not much engaged in the design of the ESIPs plans.

4.   Efficiency of the Equity Strategy

4.1   Financial and human resources utilization and alternative strategy

EFFI 1. Has the equity strategy contributed to the government utilizing financial and human resources for equity-based interventions in an efficient way?	EFFI 1.1 Sub Question: In what way it contributed to utilizing financial and human resources efficiently? EFFI 1.2 Sub question: Are financial and human resources sufficient to achieve intended results of the strategy? EFFI 1.3 Sub Question: Is there an alternative strategy that could have been used to address inequity issues in the education sector?

13. In view of the limitations related to the potential use of the index, its current use and its reduction in scope, (see previous section on the effectiveness of the Equity Index for the Strategy implementation), one can ask if the development of the index was a cost-effective system to use as part of the Equity Strategy or if a more cost-effective strategy would have been better. (see thereafter a proposed alternative strategy). More precisely, the amount of funds committed to the EI are not considerable. The question of its efficiency refers more to the capacity of local planners to use it effectively.

14. For the first batch of 40 LGs, a lot of effort went into training education staff from the LGs to prepare the plans in regional workshops. These were valuable for building the commitment of the Central, Provincial and Local Government to the process but unfortunately some team members were later on replaced by others creating a challenge to bring the actual plan preparation team up to speed. Following this experience, support provided by the government with technical support by UNICEF through WE, organized blended program of trainings activities with some of the exercises being conducted remotely and some others in person. This was found also relevant and a more cost-effective strategy in the context of COVID-19.

15. As described in other sections of this report, the funding allocated for each district was quite limited and at the time of writing this report, it was not clear on how and to what extent the budget was used for the implementation of the ESIPs as there was no proper monitoring of activities being done (following the use of a monitoring plan) or a narrative and detailed progress and financial report. We were told that this was not accomplished mainly because of the COVID-19 situation.

16. Many LGs interviewed were doubtful that the Government will continue funding the development of the ESIPs in the future because the new directive is now to first develop the municipality education plan and mainstream equity issues in this plan. As seen later in this report, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are putting a lot of strain on the overall government budget that may also impact the education budget. Government staff interviewed at central level indicated that they will see the results of this evaluation before engaging in a scale up plan to roll out the ESIPs in other districts.

EFFI 1.3 Sub Question: Is there an alternative strategy that could have been used to address inequity issues in the education sector?

17. In comparison to a more '' traditional DMS strategy '', we found that the Equity Strategy does not take sufficiently into account the 'school' level' (in term of computing relevant data for planning and programming) and could therefore appear out of step with a conventional DMS strategy.[128]

18. According to our analysis, the DMS involves the calculation (and comparison between schools or LGs which is not yet the case in Nepal) of more '' regular type of data'' concerning (access/retention

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[128] The key components of the model we are referring are: ie feedback mechanisms to improve access to data). The IE was added on to the other components DS was requested to support, such as school report cards web based EMIS

and learning outcomes) through the use of "school profiles" (dashboard) and the mobilisation of communities around the school's progresses in the different outcomes. The DMS approach has also the advantage of recognizing the importance of the LGs for the role they could play in data analysis for the implementation of the equity strategy at school level (Through their analysis and comparison of the various school profiles in their municipalities).

19. What would be key in the next education plan is to ensure that schools and LGs are accountable to their local constituencies. This does not seem yet to be the case now also because of the vacuum left by the new federal system where the functions of monitoring and reporting are very weak at Local level. This is also due to the lack of capacities and the lack of sufficient teachers in the schools. To this end, the DMS activities (that are supporting school-based tools facilitating a transparent and more objective picture of the school situation-the school profile) should be further supported but with revised school maps offering comparison between schools resources and performances rather than simply describing the schools resources as is actually the case in Nepal.

20. Therefore, the International DMS concept[129] seems to us more relevant than the Equity Index, in a context that combines strong decentralization with limited data analysis capacity at field level. The advantage of what we call '' classic DMS'' is that it aims to capacitate the schools to use EMIS data and display the results in a user- friendly document: the school profile. The other advantage of the DMS model is that, unlike the Equity index, it also allows to visualise data that are related not only to the demand side of equity issue but also to the supply side of the education sector (through a view on the level of achievement for the 5 Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions priorities but also through the comparison of school equipment and staff in respect to other schools at the municipality and LG levels.)

21. To run a DMS activity, it will be necessary to revisit the actual school profiles who offer only few comparisons according to the different indicators that could help the school community to understand the specific situation of their school. The present school profile is very weak and poorly informative. The introduction of equity indicators in the school profile could be a good strategy to put the equity dimension at the heart of discussion inside the school community and to envisage some activities that could address directly these issues. The LG schooling profiles should be adapted accordingly and could be a great help for the design of an adequate education plan that will have direct results through activities run into individual schools.

22. As shared during the debriefing meeting for this evaluation, there is currently no planning tool embedded in EMIS to facilitate the planning process of the LG.

23. Other alternatives strategies proposed by some respondents are: i) mainstreaming equity in LGs planning and budgeting process not only in the local education plan but also in the overall LGs development plan to ensure that equity is taken in considerations also in WASH and health sectors; ii) Strengthen further capacity buildings efforts of LGs[130]; iii) provide support to the inclusion of equity also at the level of the schools through their SIPs.

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[129] At this stage, DMS in the case of Nepal responds to needs flagged by the sector and offers relevant TA to address these in a specific area, there is no DMS concept or component within the ESP as such.

[130] Particularly for newly appointed education officers at LG level.

CONCLUSION EFFI 1. Has the equity strategy contributed to the government utilizing financial and human resources for equity-based interventions in an efficient way?

Evaluative Judgement: *In view of the limitations related to the potential use of the index, its current use and its reduction in scope, one can ask if the development of the index was a cost-effective system to use as part of the Equity Strategy or if a more cost-effective strategy would have been better for geographical targeting. The amount of funds committed to the EI are not considerable. The question of its efficiency refers more to the capacity of local planners to use it effectively (or even use possible alternative in terms of equity analysis through the use of the estimation of enrolment profiles)''*

However, the Equity Index still keeps its relevance as a tool that can be used in the future to follow up trend over time in access and retention for OoSC in various geographical localities and ultimately learning outcomes once the index would have integrated the relevant data for that.

A lot of effort went into training education staff from the LGs to prepare the plans in regional workshops. These were valuable for building the commitment of the Central, Provincial and Local Government to the process although affected by turnover of staff.

The funding allocated for each district was quite limited and it was not clear on how and to what extent the budget was used for the implementation of the ESIPs as there was no proper monitoring of activities being done (there was no monitoring framework or plans) or a narrative and detailed progress and financial reports.

4.2   Contribution of internal/external factors for implementation of ES

EFFI.2. Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented within its planned timeframe? And Why?	EFFI 2.1 Sub question: Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting?

Processes and tools

24. Briefing materials were prepared and disseminated: A list of potential Strategies and activities[131] to improve Equity in Education has been developed to support the rolling out of the ES at local levels. In addition, the following briefing materials have been prepared for provincial preparatory visits for rolling out of the ESIP development into local education planning and programming:
   - Presentation of the SSDP
   - Presentation of Equity Strategy
   - Presentation of preliminary analysis of Equity Index score of selected Local Governments (LGs)
   - Presentation on purpose and use of LG-ESIP guidelines
   - LG-ESIP guidelines and tools
   - LG profile, including equity index score
   - Power point templates for group work on analysis of disparities and alignment with planning cycle
   - A Draft outline detailed agenda for the Equity Strategy Implementation Plan induction workshop

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[131] For Schooled or Never schooled children, Young children but never enrolled because parents never bothered , Children from the poorest families not attending school due to poverty; Child marriage and girl children being kept at home to care for younger siblings and not attending school; Children With Disabilities; Dalit children not enrolling not attending or dropping out of school school; Muslim children not attending schools using national curriculum; Working children not attending school or attend irregularly; Parents migrating seasonally for work causing children to dropout and not attend school; Young children that enrolled but dropped out because of distance to school in heat of the day; Children drop out during monsoon when streams and rivers flooded; Children from more remote communities not attending because of distance to school; Hungry children who don't come to school; Children attended school but dropped out because they did not enjoy school; Attended primary school close to home but did not make transition to lower secondary grades in next community; Parents don't think school is safe - especially for girls; School dropouts feel too old to return to school; Improve Quality of ECD; Increase focus on Learning Outcomes in Early Grades; Child Who Fail Because of Language Difficulties; Teaching-Learning Materials; Local Curriculum; Address poor attendance; Remedial Support for Struggling Students; Improve Assessment; Teacher Management; Infrastructure Management; Extra-Curricular Activities; Good Governance;

25. For the rolling out of the ESIP development into local education planning and programming, orientation workshops have been organised at the end of 2019 with the LGs to introduce the following detailed planning steps below:

Expected steps for ESIP planning (and inclusion in the Local Education Sector Plan) and implementation process

Step 1: Evidence and analysis. Look at available data from the perspective of:
- Access, to different groups (for example boys, girls, children with disabilities, different minority/religious groups) have the same level of access. If not, who have the least access?
- Participation, to different groups (for example boys, girls, children with disabilities, different minority/religious groups) have the same level of attendance, retention and completion. If not, who have the lowest participation?
- Learning; are children learning equally. If not, which groups have lower learning outcomes

Step 2: Strategic planning
- Validate analysis with relevant stakeholders
- Map planned activities that respond to the outcomes of the analysis
- Cost activities and develop budget
- Map available resources that can be used for additional activities
- Prioritize based on available resources
- Identify resource gap
- Map support of other line agencies non-government partners that can be mobilized

Step 3: Implementation & monitoring
- Describe implementation arrangements for targeted activities
- Develop/select indicators and targets to measure results
- Define implementation timeline and monitor arrangements

(Source: Template for ESIP induction workshop.)

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26. Below a quote from one LG officer met during the evaluation that indicates also that some LGs did liaise with the schools for the development of their ESIPs.

''The process of making ESIP was such that first of all it was discussed in an education committee. The committee told us (Education section) to go and observe the schools and make plan accordingly. We met with principals of all schools and asked them to find out how many children were out of school through surveys. After that, we made the plan. After making the plan, we first asked the education committee to approve it and then after we asked the local executive board to endorse the plan.''

27. The Government and UNICEF have invested a lot of efforts in designing communication and planning packages to disseminate the Strategy and more particularly, tools to be able to use the Equity Index for planning and fund allocations at local level.

28. **Lack of integration of the ES in programming of Non State Actors**. It seems also that the EI is not sufficiently communicated to and therefore not used by I/NGOs when planning their interventions (i.e. most disadvantaged districts not necessarily covered) (Perry 2019). Further cooperation between the MoEST and NGOs coordination in that regard could be useful to ensure appropriate targeting of their interventions and synergies between different kinds of support.

29. World Education (WE) shared with the evaluation team that they had difficulty sometimes to monitor the work in progress of the ESIPs due to the limited number of staff they had (Only 1,5 staff to cover 80 LGs spread across 15 districts) and also that the new context of COVID-19 with the subsequent travel restrictions had constrained their monitoring work.

30. **Lack of key indicators of results and monitoring plans at LG level.** Our review indicates that the plans are very much activity based and do not include a set of indicators or a monitoring plan. Plans including monitoring component use the following sources of information to monitor the activities: Annual examination result details/student learning achievement, Student enrolment details, details of students that will increase following entry of out-of-school child developments [CDCs] in school, records of provision of educational materials/child play things corners, social

audit report. Some plans included provision for the organization of monitoring activities and mentioned supervision checklist as a monitoring tool. **Nevertheless, we did not find evidence of strong monitoring activities being implemented as part of the ESIPs at this early implementation stage. Now in the context of COvid, real time monitoring needs have emerged and it has become even more important to be able to monitor implementation of response and recovery plans in education.**

31. **So strengthening the monitoring function at LG level and the importance of it, should really be highlighted**

''We have not made a separate format for monitoring of ESIP. We have monitored the ESIP through analysis of data such as how many students came, who got the scholarships, observation of schools under our general monitoring plan. We will be monitoring ESIP in the coming months'' KII with Education officer.

32. **Lack of sufficient social inclusion indicator at SSDP level:** For the key performance indicators to track progress for the most excluded, the GESI study 2020 notes that the main indicator of focus appears to be the out of school rate for primary school aged (5 to 12 year old) children. Whilst secondary enrolment ratios are tracked, the SSDP results framework does not track out of school rates for children of secondary school age, the stage at which disparities in access education widen, and more children are excluded. Literacy rates for different age groups have been included as key performance indicators to track progress for the most excluded, but no new data has been recorded for these indicators since the baseline.

33. With sufficient levels of data disaggregation, it would be possible to monitor social inclusion through many of the indicators provided in the results framework. However, **the SSDP MTR 2020 noted that indicator sets do not always include the level of disaggregation required to monitor the impact of targeted interventions** for gender equality and social inclusion, and of intersection vulnerabilities, at the level of the learner or the teacher. As an example, **the analysis concerning the ethic/caste discriminations are questionable and relatively weak as they used often enrolment numbers without referring to the respective shares of these groups in the school age population.**

34. **Limitations to conduct monitoring missions because of the COVID-19 situation**: As part of the BRM and JRM mission, equity stakeholders (from the TWG) used to conduct twice a year, a 5 days monitoring mission along with the Government. Since a year now, it has not been possible to monitor the activities on the ground because of the travel restrictions imposed by the COVID situation.

35. **Lack of reporting about activities implemented**: Various stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation shared that it was difficult to have a clear picture of what was effectively implemented through the equity based interventions (the ESIPs more particularly as there are some information available for activities implemented by Non State Actors) because there was no readily available progress and consolidated completion reports to assess what was done and what have been the strengths and areas to improve in relation to these equity based interventions. One respondent mentioned that there was no requirement from the central government to the LGs to encourage them to report about their ESIPs activities which can also partly explain why there was no such reports. In addition, as autonomous entities, LGs are not entitled to report to the Ministry of education and their main reporting lines are under the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA). Other respondents also indicated that many equity-focused interventions are being implemented by the Government and non-state actors but that these activities may not be linked to the ESIPs and were therefore under reported.

36. **Unclarity on roles and responsibilities in relation to the monitoring function**. Our interviews with Education Officersreveal a lack of clear Roles and Responsibilities at local level in relation to the monitoring of activities in the education sector as expressed by the quote below:

''We all hope that monitoring and planning would be done by a single education division. Who else would do it? We would monitor when the plan is implemented. We have not decided who would monitor when till now. We have thought of involving rural municipality chairperson and ward chairpersons as well in monitoring''. KIIs with an Education Officer

37. As illustrated by the quote below from a school principal, the previous monitoring system is not working anymore in the new federal system in transition. In some areas, the concept of learning motivator is being piloted but there may be some issues with its sustainability in the future.

'Learning motivators roam around schools. They go to classes, meet with teachers and continuously encourage them. If the teachers face any problems while using any materials, they immediately go to classrooms or meet the teachers in the office and help to solve the problems. I am very happy because there was a time when Primary school supervisor and lower secondary school supervisors used to come to schools and give feedback to the teachers. After that, school supervisors used to come. With federalization they stopped coming. So, only principal were the ones to give feedback to the teachers. Learning motivators are here until EGRP (Early Grade Reading Program) and after that they would no longer work. They would stop coming and there would be a gap.''

38. As such Monitoring, evaluation and reporting remain weak areas that need to be strengthened in the future to ensure better accountability. Some LGs are already preparing monitoring team as per the quote below:

''For monitoring, principals and education and sports branch's authorities who work under the municipality are supposed to form a group/team. We have publicized a notice to recruit some experts to help us with monitoring activities. We had a discussion last time to form a team with supervisors so that they could observe teaching learning activities in the classroom and they could also provide help to the teachers when they face any problems. The committee has not been formed. After we have the experts, the committee will be formed and then I think there would be monitoring activities.'' KII with a LG officer

39. **Data on retention and learning outcomes are not available**. Similarly, if the number of children back to schools is known, data on retention and learning outcomes following the implementation of the interventions are not available.

EFFI 2.2 Sub Question: What external and internal factors caused delays in the implementation of interventions?

40. **Delay in the design phase**: From the validation of the ES to the implementation of the ESIPs, some delays have been observed as it took time for the various stakeholders (i.e. the TWG members have been supporting this with FCDO being one of the members) to design the implementation phase, including the design of the implementation guideline.

41. **The external context also contributed to delay the rolling out of the ES** such as the change of context because of elections, the new federal structure[132] and the COVID-19 situation[133].

42. **Redeployment of staff:** The midterm review of the SSDP plan (Feb to June 2019) found that in the context of implementing the new devolved mandate to the local government[134,] the redeployment of staff and the probable necessity to proceed with a massive recruitment of civil servants[135] will affect the education system in terms of existing expertise at different levels in the coming years. This is also compounded by the fact that the redeployment process shows some level of reluctance from different categories of civil servants (including teachers) to be redeployed at the provincial and local levels, especially in remote areas. Since the ES is fully integrated in the education system, the evaluation team believes that there is a strong likelihood that this new context will also negatively impact (hopefully temporarily) the future path of implementation of the Equity Strategy and more particularly at local level.

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[132] See previous section 3.6 Effectiveness of the Strategy in the emerged Federal structure
[133] See section 5.1 sustainability of the strategy in the context of COVID-19; *Risks related to the new context of the COVID-19 situation.*
[134] All funds for basic school operations and developmental activities are now transferred to LGs.
135 Localities where essential staff are absent cannot proceed to fund transfers in time, hindering the possibility for schools to function adequately.

43. **Lack of clear reporting and joint planning mechanisms**. The SSDP Mid Term Review (MTR) 2019 noted that several stakeholders interviewed at provincial level by the MTR team also pointed out the lack of clear reporting and joint planning mechanisms between the various tiers of Government (Federal, Provincial and Local) and the risk of duplicated support from the Provincial Government and Federal Government at local level.

44. Issues with planning processes at school level. As described in this report, in some municipalities, some schools were involved in the design of the ESIPs. Nevertheless, it was not clear to us on what would be the link between the ESIPs and the School Improvement Plans (SIP) knowing that many schools are reluctant to design their SIP as they get frustrated because in many cases their plan has not been followed up by the municipality with enough funding allocation for its effective implementation. As caught in a vicious cycle, because the schools are not producing SIP, then the municipalities allocate the money for the design of the SIP to other purposes as per the quote below:

''In the schools, there might not be enough teachers according to the number of students, there might not be enough building or toilets, the school should ask for these things through SIP but the head teachers say that the municipality is not working on it, so the school won't develop the SIP'' KII with WE staff
'' Nobody makes SIP and there was a need to make calendar. So I made calendars instead." KII with a LG Education Officer.
'' We submit the SIP to the responsible authority not for planning purpose but because they give us our salary without any trouble.'' KII with a teacher

45. Lessons from the few LGs who did implement activities from the ESIPs indicate that the first budget allocated was used mainly to set up the ECD but **more funding and time would be needed to address the root causes of inequity issues**. The COVID-19 situation also impeded the distribution of some scholarships as expressed in the quote below:

''We had obtained a budget of around 8 Lakhs (7,000 USD) from the government last year and that was spent under the titles: opening of new ECDs, trainings to newly appointed ECD facilitators and distribution of educational materials, parental education and student scholarship programs. Scholarships to genuine talented students, which was planned last year couldn't be distributed due to the pandemic ''KII with Head teacher

'While implementing the ESIPs, we faced some challenges. When we approached out of school children there were many socio-economic factors, which couldn't be covered by ESIP. Even we supported ECD level/classes, they are still inadequate and some have small spaces which make it difficult to store and appropriately use the teaching learning materials. We were unable to focus on specific topics such as Parental awareness. The budget provided by the central government is also low.'' KII with one LG officer

46. **Inadequate allocation for human resources**. In ESIP the budget is allocated only for activities that directly benefits students. Teachers are hesitant to work. they are afraid that there will be no facilities to them. For instance, we have to call teachers from far away and we can't use the ESIP budget to pay for their travel cost or any other expenses (e.g. tea/snacks).

''We have appointed one teacher for parental education and one to provide trainings to ECD facilitators under ESIP. But the guideline does not allow us to provide allowance to them. This has affected implementation of ESIP.'' KII with a respondent

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EFFI 2.3 Sub Question: What external and internal factors, including elements of the ES, contributed to accelerating the progress?

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47. **The relevance of an '' advisory body ''**. One of the contributing factors for the implementation of the Strategy has been the role played by the members of the Equity and inclusion Technical Working Group, and the technical assistance provided by UNICEF, (through World Education) and WB. As described in this report, this may not have yielded fully the expected results for different internal and external factors, but genuine efforts were made to make it happen.

48. **The importance of reactivity and adaptation to a new context**: The transition to federalism has been identified as the main cause of delay for the implementation of the strategy. This was due to the fact that channels of coordination and collaboration are yet to be established between the central, provincial and local level in the context of the three tiers decentralisation mechanism (in

which the previous district level disappears). To go around this issue, the Government and UNICEF moved from district level scoring to local level scoring with the Equity Index. This demonstrates a good reactivity and adaptation to the new context.

49. **The importance of partnerships for Equity:** One of the strong contributing factors to advance the Equity agenda has been the partnerships between the Government and Non-State Actors as many of the projects supported by Non-State Actors aim to address equity issues more directly even though as said before, these projects are not reflected in the ESIPs and Non-State Actors were rarely invited during the design of the ESIPs. This collaboration allows to leverage funding for Equity and deliver effective equity focus programs in particular geographical areas, drivers or dimensions of Equity even though there are still some gaps to address among others, language and disability disparities.

50. **The importance of the Global Commitments on Equity**: The global education focus on equity and the fact that Nepal has an Equity Strategy also contribute positively as this allows a consistency of support from Global to National level commitments in relation to the equity agenda. (Nepal is aiming to reach SDG 4 of ensuring equitable access to quality education and life-long learning by 2030, which is also an overarching objective of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs) Global commitment encourages donors and Countries to tend for more inclusion of equity in the Education sector plans. For example, Equity is a central element in the Global Partnership in Education in which the World Bank is the grant agent for the GPE grant implementation.

51. **The importance of local decentralization and local leadership as positive contributors to education outcomes**. In some cases, too much centralization of work at the level of the chief administrative officer (municipality level) was contributing to slow down the process. In other cases, this time at school level, the leadership of the headmaster is seen as essential for the success of the education system as per the quote below from a Non-State Actor interviewed.

''The headmaster has a great responsibility. He stays here 24 hours. He observes all the classes. He observes subject-wise classes from time to time. All things are going ahead well in this school because of him. When the head writes a letter/application to the municipality, the municipality provides the needed materials from time to time. He puts locks on the school and lets student go out only on time. He doesn't let students run from school. If the children could, they would run away after lunch but he doesn't let them run away. If our school environment is good, if teacher staff do their duty honestly, if they teach in a good way, if all the children are satisfied, everything goes well.'' KII with a non-State actor

''Students don't drop out here. Learning is good in comparison to past learning outcomes. When head sir came, since then there has been improvements. Earlier, former head sir would come four-five days in a month. This present head sir stays here, in the school.'' KII with a teacher

CONCLUSION EFFI.2. Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented within its planned timeframe? And Why?

Evaluative Judgement: *Interventions were not implemented fully within its initial timeframe as several internal and external factors have constrained the effective implementation of the strategy as per below. The main delay has concerned the ESIPs that could not be implemented (for most of them) because of the limitation of movement due to the COVID-19 situation.*

- The index relies on limited data that have reduced its scope.
- Lack of key indicators of results and monitoring plans at LG level.
- Lack of sufficient social inclusion indicator at SSDP level
- The external context also contributed to delay the rolling out of the ES such as elections, transition to federalism and COVID-19.
- Lessons from the few LGs who did implement activities from the ESIPs indicate that the first budget allocated was used mainly to set up the ECD but more funding and time would be needed to address the root causes of inequity issues.
- Lack of capacity and turnover of staff at LG level.

Some factors have contributed to accelerating the progress of implementation of the ES

- The **role played by the members of the Equity and inclusion Technical Working, have been instrumental** in supporting the dissemination and support for the implementation of the Strategy. The positive role played by WE, CEHRD and UNICEF to support the rolling out of the strategy in the pilot municipalities have proven instrumental to kick start the process and accompanying the development of the ESIPs.
- **A good resilience and adaptability of both ES pillars to the new governance context.**
- One of the **strong contributing factors to advance the Equity-agenda has been the partnerships (whether formalized or not) between the Government and Non State Actors** as many of the projects supported by Non-State Actors address equity issues more directly (even though these projects were not reported in the ESIPs).

4.3   Opportunities for strengthening institutions and capacities

EFFI.3. Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities and how has the evolving federalization context of Nepal affected that?	EFFI 3.1 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the institutional setup (coordination, collaboration, funding, reporting, implementation mechanisms..)? EFFI 3.2 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the capacity of the education staff to undertake data analysis and planning functions?

52. The design and formulation of the ESIPs offered an opportunity for LGs to learn from this planning process and also attempted to design their plan based on real equity issues.

53. The planning related to the ES had more ownership in the sense that even though it took more times to deliver, the whole process was conducted by the local authorities themselves with back up support from WE.

54. Similarly, thanks to this initiative, the LGs have learnt to engage more with Disabled People Organisations (DPO) and/or women groups which is important for an improved participatory approach of planning. Nevertheless, as shared in this report, it is not clear if this consultation process with non-state actors took place in all LGs. When this took place, the organizations consulted were not always mentioned in the ESIPs plan or rarely mentioned.

55. The evaluation found evidence of capacity building support provided mainly in relation to data analysis and planning but less in term of institutional setup (i.e coordination, collaboration, reporting, implementation mechanisms..) which are also areas to strengthen as shared by one LG met during the evaluation.

''Local level are given rights to conduct programs related to non-formal education but they don't do. That doesn't lie in their priority. I don't think they should just provide guidelines, directions, coordination, facilitation and leave us. Only providing budget is not enough. We should also look at the implementation aspect. We should also pay attention to knowledge, skill and attitude. So, there are different local problems. All 753 municipalities have their own problems.'' KII with a LG education officer.

56. Overall, we found that the following activities and opportunities contributed to strengthen the staff capacities through workshops and or mentoring and coaching interventions:
- Development of the equity resource index
- Further use of equity-based formulas to inform grants provided in the education sector
- Linkage with overall need based and evidence-based education sector planning at LG and school level
- Linkage between school level and LG level planning
- Highlighting that provinces have the potential to be used as resource hubs for supporting LGs on a need base for planning
- Revision on indicators in the new Education Sector Plan

CONCLUSION EFFI.3. Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities and how has the evolving federalization context of Nepal affected that?

Evaluative Judgment: *Overall, the evaluation team found evidence of capacity building support provided mainly in relation to data analysis and planning but less in term of institutional setup (i.e coordination, collaboration, reporting, implementation mechanisms..)*

The design and formulation of the ESIPs offered an opportunity for LGs to learn from the proposed planning process and also assisted them to design their plan based on real equity issues. This was not always the case in the past where some districts (who were then in charge of the education planning functions) were not familiar with equity-based interventions.

The development of the ESIPs has been an opportunity to sensitize the LGs on data analysis, it shows also that more trainings need to be conducted in this area for the LGs to be able to produce by themselves evidence-based plans.

5. Sustainability of the Equity Strategy

5.1 Level of sustainability of the Strategy in the context of COVID-19

S.1. To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? How has COVID-19 affected the sustainability of financial, operational and institutional capacity of the Education Sector?

57. GON imposed a nationwide lockdown from March 24, 2020 to reduce the spread of COVID-19 with new measures to ease the lockdown in June 2020.

58. In Nepal, millions of children have experienced a significant loss of learning during the 7-month school closure, with large numbers of these children being at risk of not returning to appropriate levels, or returning at all, without targeted support. Pro-active planning for the remaining 4 months of this school year 2020/2021 and transition to the next is perceived by the education sector as essential to address these critical issues to avoid reversing the impressive gains made in the past decade.

59. Since May 2020, UNICEF has been tracking social and economic impacts of Covid-19.[136] The data show that in May 2020, more than 90% of children stopped going to school. Most children, including those living in low-income households and belonging to marginalized groups lost access to education at that point. However, children living in 29% of households studied at schools that offered Distance Learning (DL). But only half of children with access to DL took advantage of it. Even as the situation in terms of remote learning improved later, children from low-income households and marginalized groups were most likely to struggle in comparison to their peers from economically better off families.

60. The 2020 JRM Aide memoire reported that in terms of equity, gender parity at the basic level was maintained and the reduction of the percentage of out of school children (6.2% vs the targeted 6.6%) would have enabled the achievement of the Year 5 target of 5%. However, this is now at risk due to the extensive disruptions in school education in academic year (AY) 2020/21 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, the decline of the share of enrolment of students from vulnerable groups, in particular students with disabilities, despite the noted efforts made in past

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[136] UNICEF's presentations can be accessed here: https://www.unicef.org/nepal/reports/covid-19-child-and-family-tracker-findings .

years to ensure equity in access to education, signals the importance of looking at the effectiveness of interventions to reduce disparities in access, participation and learning for these groups.

61. The 2019-2020 Nepal Education annual status report found that the Food for Education (Mid – day meal) Programme which is supported by World Food Program (WFP) distributed standard nutritious meal to the home of each student of 7 districts (Darchula, Bajhan, Bajura, Achham, Doti, Jajarkot and Dailekh). However, in the other districts, due to the remaining lockdown and services closed, the Local Governments of 70 districts, were unable to distribute the grant to the community schools. Distribution of Pro- Poor Targeted Scholarship were also delayed for the same reasons. All these events may jeopardize the early achievements of the ES.

62. The conditional grants received by local governments included the new budget line 'Continuation of student learning during COVID 19'; but only 56.82% of this budget line was spent by the end of the Fiscal Year, according to the 2020 JRM Aide Memoire dated on 08012020. The low expenditure on some budget lines was a consequence of the disruption of activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Local governments were still able to spend 86.54% of their SSDP allocations.

> S 1.1 To what extent is the Equity Strategy possible to be continued in terms of its implementation in the current COVID-19 context?

63. The Equity Strategy is tied to the SSDP and to the overall context in which it interacts.
Below, the main measures and plans put in place by the government to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic:

   a. According to the ASIP 2020-2021 document, to address the COVID-19 crisis, the government of Nepal rechannelled the education budget and Activities to address the effects of COVID-19

   b. Funding was transferred to all LGs to develop, transmit/broadcast and produce/print the learning materials to students. NPR 100 million was allocated to each province at the beginning of FY 2019/20 and they were authorized to utilize that budget in addressing also the effect of COVID-19. NPR 11.20 million was reallocated for developing, producing and broadcasting lessons through radio and television. Online teacher training provision has been made to address the prevalent situation. Budget allocation to provinces has been doubled for FY 2020/21 considering COVID-19 and other possible unforeseen disasters.

   c. The following policies documents were drafted and circulated to guide the various level of the education system during the COVID-19 time: Education cluster Contingency plan 2020; Alternative Learning Facilitation Guidelines 2020;Emergency Action Plan for School Education 2020; School Health Safety and Sanitation Guidelines 2020; School Reopening Framework 2020 approved; Closed User Group (CUG) Service Implementation guidelines developed so as to facilitate communication among teachers and students.

64. The Emergency Action Plan for School Education 2020[137] includes the following 3 components. Component 1: Remote learning methods for continued learning for all children, including children with disabilities (CwD) and marginalized. Component 2: Support to Provinces and Selected Local Governments to support safe re opening and continued learning. Component 3: Management, Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation.

65. The development of the Alternative Learning Facilitation Guidelines and the Closed User Group Service Implementation Guidelines is expected to mitigate the disruption to children's learning from the closure of schools since the start of AY 2020/21. According to the MTR team[138], the recent approval of the school reopening framework was hailed as a milestone to facilitate local

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[137] Source: Presentation of MoEST, Status of COVID19 response in Education, 18 November 2020
[138] 2020 JRM Aide Memoire 08122020

governments to start the process of reopening schools, although there is an urgent need to confirm the mechanism to monitor the adherence of disinfection and safety protocols.

66. Nepal's applied for US$11 million COVID-19 funding from GPE (through the World bank) to support the Government in undertaking the activities in its Education Cluster COVID-19 Contingency Plan (ECCCP) and fund activities to respond to the impacts of COVID-19 to enable learning to continue during short-term, periodic, and long-term school closures, enable schools to safely resume and mitigate the impacts on students and teachers including loss of learning time and psychosocial impacts.

67. As part of its COVID 19 School Sector Response (GPE) supplementary program to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, the World Bank included a Sub-component 2.3: Schools grants to schools from selected local governments. The sub-component will support most disadvantaged local governments (100-125 LGs) in regions that have been impacted by COVID-19 through school grants to ensure safe re-opening of schools and continued learning but also[139] LGs considered as low equity status and access to alternatives facilities i.e. internet/TV/Radio etc

68. Equity-related strategies and activities have been integrated in the education COVID-19 contingency plan. During the 9th of April 2020 Equity TWG, it was shared that the contingency plan adopted a need-based approach in dividing the school-aged population into (i) children able to access digital/ online learning resources, (ii) children able to access media for distance/home-based learning resources and (iii) children not able to access any of the two above options (off-grid). Within that last group, a sub-group of children most at risk[140] was identified.

69. Teaching and learning had continued through the alternative modalities of online, local community, home-based, face to face and contact classes and through radio, sibling support, project work and home-based tasks. Digital learning, printed packs, tole (community) education and partial school opening were reported to be more successful than radio and TV-based classes. The main focus was said to have been on reaching out to students while assessments of the quality and learning achievement had yet to be carried out. Below an example of activity implemented:

''During COVID UNICEF/world education has given thermal gun to measure temperature and water tank for hand wash. I also arranged some facilities from other organizations too. During COVID lockdown, I did meeting through online and we arranged for home learning also in at the level of the village, ward and settlements. Home learning was done under this same program. It was effective in the sense that the children were continuously busy in learning. The children were taught by school teachers, parents and upper graders like eleven/twelve grade students that also helped at their own homes the smaller children.'' KII with a learning motivator from an NGO

S 1.2 How resilient is the Equity Strategy to changes and what are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained?

The Risks Inherent to the lack of capacity to deliver in the Transition to Federalism.

70. A 2020 study[141] found that sector ministries are under-capacitated with respect to their federal mandate (policy-setting and monitoring and evaluation) and over-capacitated with respect to implementation functions for which they are no longer responsible (WB-UNDP, 2019).

71. The same report highlighted that the transition to federalism has also increased the need for systematic capacity-building for elected officials and civil servants at all levels, at great cost, and for which a comprehensive strategy is still lacking.

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[139] Source: Presentation made on 18th November 2020 by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology about the status of COVID-19 response in Education

[140] Aim to cater to the needs of these children through tailored packages and with support from available expertise and technical assistance to ensure needs are met for children that are identified as at high risk of discontinuing their education (children living with disabilities, children from poor or marginalized communities, etc.)

[141] Facilities for Studies and Support to the Elaboration of the New Education Sector Plan (ESP 2030), Nepal ACA/2020/416-867. Nepal Education Sector Analysis - Vulnerability and Risk Assessment of the Nepal Education Sector - Draft 1-12 October 2020

72. Another issue is also the ''new chain of command'' and possible centralization of decision- making power at local level (at the level of the chief administrator of the Municipality) with potential impact on the effective organisation and speed of the work in the education sector as well as in other sectors of development. It seems of utmost importance to clarify respective responsibilities of duty bearers occupying decision-making positions at all levels of the education system in the context of transitioning to the new federal structure.

''Earlier, there was a district education office and other offices that used to work, now that has been decentralized the power lies mainly with the Chief Administrator. If the chief administrator and accountant are absent or have other priorities then the whole work of the rural village municipality gets stuck.'' Source: KII with Education officer.

''Even though we might have an education focal person (at LG level), the administrative officer has a great role to convince mayor, associate/assistant mayor, to decide how to move ahead.'' KII with a non-state actor.

73. **Lack of priority given to the education sector**. Many LG reported that in the context of the decentralization, because of competing priorities, education was not given enough interest by the municipality council. Also, the focus was often on improving infrastructures rather than supporting teacher capacity development activities. In some cases, priority is given to secondary education which also creates some tensions between the various education levels as per the quote below.

''Primary level is blamed for poor performance. The secondary level blames primary level in this respect. But, when we tell them to support primary level for the same reason, they want to get the support for themselves (secondary level). This is an irony.'' KII with an NGO worker

Risks related to the new context of the COVID-19 situation.

74. **The Equity Strategy is very much dependant on its implementation context** and more importantly COVID-19 impacts on children and on the education sector as a whole. Various recent documents highlighted that the COVID-19 pandemic had and is having a devastating impact on children's lives and wellbeing, including a significant loss of learning, disproportionately affecting students from the most vulnerable groups.

75. **Substantial investments will need to be made to ensure that schools used as quarantine centres are properly disinfected** to meet standards on safe class-sizes, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities to ensure the safe return of students to school and to enable the staggered resumption of education across regions and among different social groups.

76. **The COVID-19 context may impact the education sector for a longer time**, with schools reopening and later re-closing, as has happened in some countries. This shows the need to establish strong links between formal and alternative education that allows learning to continue as students return to schools or have to resume learning from home. This also emphasizes the need for a monitoring system that tracks children's status to help prevent the most vulnerable ones from dropping out during these transitions and to track their learning.

77. **Financing and reporting risks for the education sector**: As reported in the latest Education Economic and Public Finance Analysis[142], because of the COVID-19 situation, the federal government is facing challenges in revenue mobilization and public expenditures management which introduces risks on public financing, private funding, and education financing provision in general. The level of Households' spending shows a strong demand for education, but also raises a question of equity in access to quality education as wealthier families tend to enrol their children more in private schools.[143] Family education spending is dependent on financial transfers received from workers abroad and could be constrained by the uncertain development of these transfers due to the economic and health crisis.

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[142] Facility for Studies and Support to the Elaboration of the New Education Sector Plan (ESP 2030), Nepal ACA/2020/416-867, Economic and Public Finance Analysis and Projection of the Nepal Education Sector Final report. Oct 2020
[143] The level of Household spending shows a strong demand for education, but also a certain disaffection with community schools: despite a significant additional cost, a large number of families choose feepaying education, no doubt because of the perception of better supervision of children and better results, but also for the mastery of English or for the sake of social distinction

78. **Transition to Federalism accentuates the difficulties in reporting information** (because of lack of capacity or access to electronic transmission of data in some cases), between the various tiers of the federal system. This was highlighted in the study as several Development Partners are linking their disbursements to the attainment of indicators. Difficulties in a proper flow of information increase the burden of progress reports, timely assessment of DLIs and could add to the difficulties in the release of foreign resources on time in the future.

79. **Risks of increased dropouts:** The desk review and discussions with various stakeholders indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified the issues of family poverty, disadvantaged and marginalized family members, and family unemployment services. As highlighted by the Education Economic and Public Finance Analysis[144], a large number of education beneficiaries from the school and technical education and higher education levels are deprived of education, information, understanding, skills, and abilities by the lockdown measures and school closure. The socio- economic impacts are likely to be reflected through increases in school dropouts, child labour, and early marriages.

80. The following challenges and risks have been identified in the Education Contingency plan:
    ▪ Ensuring an aligned approach and intergovernmental coordination between Federal, Provincial and Local level cluster mechanisms to align response plans and budgets at all levels
    ▪ Schools being used as quarantine centers, risking schools to have to remain closed beyond the official reopening date to complete quarantine periods and allow disinfection
    ▪ Ensuring schools are able to comply with requirements such as adequate WASH and sanitation facilities and social distancing (especially in the more densely populated Terai and the remote mid and far west)
    ▪ Funding gap to ensure adequate response in current scenario and scenario 2 of the plan.

81. There have also been concerns[145] that existing technological discrepancies, the digital and socio-economic divides, and a divide in terms of parents' literacy rate could contribute to widen the gaps in access and quality of education for the most marginalized groups. Some believe that the COVID-19 response may cause further educational inequity and socio-economic exclusion: *''The current ICT infrastructure and the distribution of access in the urban and rural areas have created two tiers of inequalities among Nepalese citizens, i.e. between students who live in an urban area and those from a rural area, and between the rich and poor who can barely afford to access the internet''.*

82. In Nepal, a majority of schools do not have computer facilities and therefore use internet cafe to upload EMIS related information. Furthermore, only 12,4 % of community schools use computer in teaching learning activities. This figure could be used as a proxy indicator of the limited potential computer knowledge of students (as we may assume that most of the knowledge of poor children come from the schools since they may not have access to a computer at school) as described in the table below.

Table 28. Availability of computer and electricity facilities in community schools

Total community schools	Schools with computer facilities			Schools with electricity facility
	Total Number of schools with computer facilities	Number of schools using Computers for administrative proposes	Number of schools using Computers in teaching learning activities	
29,607	8,366	4,690	3,676	10,275
% of schools	28.3	15.8	12.4	34.7

Source: Flash report 2016/2017

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[144] Facility for Studies and Support to the Elaboration of the New Education Sector Plan (ESP 2030), Nepal ACA/2020/416-867, Economic and Public Finance Analysis and Projection of the Nepal Education Sector Final report. Oct 2020
[145] https://www.ukfiet.org/2020/nepals-response-to-school-closures-mapping-equity-and-inclusion/

83. Lack of ICT equipment is an important issue in the schools as evidenced in the quote below:

'' Computer course is a compulsory subject from class 6 to 10. Last year only we obtained 9 computers and total number of students in grade 6 is 72, in grade 7 there are 63 and in class 8 there are 78; in practical class each student doesn't even get time to touch the computer.'' Source: KII with head teacher

84. According to a recent study done by Humanity and Inclusion (HI) in 21 districts all over 7 provinces in Nepal, 83% parents/caregivers of children with disabilities feared that their children would fall behind in learning due to COVID-19 (HI, 2020). Seventy percent (70%) of them also reported lack of suitable learning materials as the top barriers. The study suggests that fundamental principles of inclusive education have to be expanded to digital learning platforms as well.

85. The stakeholders of the December 2020 meeting[146] recognized the varying contexts of different schools and for different students in the same schools, and hence suggested that a highly contextualized approach be adopted to support local governments and schools, rather than a blanket approach. The plans for provision of free internet connections via sim cards by telecom companies was welcomed as a positive initiative to reduce the digital divide; although many students do not have devices to use this provision.

86. The government with technical support by UNICEF through WE and the schools, organized a network of communication with schools and parents that has contributed to reach the students during the COVID-19 health crisis.

''We made teachers' group. After that teachers made a group of parents who they knew. Whenever we got good materials, we used to share to the group, the group used to share to the teachers and the teachers used to share to the parents. So we also conducted home education in each settlement. Later when things began to be normal, we conducted settlement education. After everything was back to a normal situation we asked them to come to school. We did not leave municipalities on their own during the pandemic.'' KII with a field staff from WE

87. **Implication of the COVID on the development of the ESIPs.** During the 9th April 2020 Equity TWG, the participants to the meeting indicated that all selected local governments will most likely need to start again on their ESIP development given that their baseline and needs will have significantly changed once the schools reopen.

Risks related to an unfinished agenda on Quality, Efficiency and Equity in the education sector

88. **Lack of expertise in data analysis at local level:** The resource centers (RCs) and resource persons (RPs) had mandates to support educational development in the satellite (cluster) schools, to ensure the smooth implementation of the pedagogical reforms and follow up on teachers' professional development at school level. They also served as data collection centers, supporting information flows from and to the DEO, including data collection for the EMIS. A qualitative study[147] indicated in 2011 that the Resource Center used to spend most of their time on data Collection and Record Management. Their dissolution, accompanied by the reduction in the number of education training centers, had significant impacts both on regular data collection and the system's capacity to follow-up and provide support on the quality improvement process at school level.[148]

89. **Factors that affect progress of the SSDP and by extension will affect the expected outcomes of the ES:** The MTR of the SSDP noted important progress that has been made during the first half of the program in terms of developmental activities but also that several factors are likely to affect progress in the coming years as per below:
   ▪ the high number of core reforms implemented at the same time.
   ▪ the high level of technical expertise necessary to implement them.

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[146] Between the Government and the MTR team
[147] Final report, role of resource center for improving quality education in schools submitted to department of education (moe), sanothimi, bhaktapur, nepal, july, 2011, submitted by Santwona memorial academy pvt. ltd. educational research and consultancy center.
[148] Secondary schools are better equipped with ICT equipment. The government was planning to train the schools on EMIS but this was postponed because of the COVID-19 situation.

- the time needed to implement systemic reform in order to solve long pending issues before moving forward.
- the time needed to develop a common understanding of the different reforms and activities implemented at all levels of the education system, including the different levels of education management, but also communities, pedagogical teams and parents.
- the time needed to disseminate new tools and practices through the education management system at all levels.
- limited human and financial resources.

90. **Pending and systemic issues in the education sector** raised during the December 2020 meeting between the Government and the MTR team, included the motivation of teachers to teach, the implementation of policies and programs, coordination between the levels of government and between different stakeholders, building the capacity of teachers, the continuity of learning, the use of technology, equitable access, reporting and monitoring and school safety.

91. The main remaining challenges were said to be related to communication during the crisis, monitoring and evaluation from the center and at the local level, overcoming learning losses, achievement and opportunity gaps and capacity gaps.

92. **The shortage of teachers and issue with staff redeployment**: The main preoccupation of education stakeholders and teachers is that in many poor LGs, there are not enough teachers in place or there are teachers volunteers who often resign because of their limited salary. As described before, lack of clear instructions on teacher redeployment is a core issue to address. In the current context, it is therefore difficult to ensure that enrolled children will remain at schools.

''I am chairperson of the School Management Committee. In our school we have 1620 students and we only have 17 teachers. We run the classes in two shifts. For grade 6-12, we have morning classes from 6am to 10:30am, and from 10:30am to 4pm for nursery to grade 5. We have done this because there is a scarcity of room and teachers.'' KII with chairperson of SMC

Risks related to funding availability for scaling up the ES.

93. EMIS staff along with all stakeholders and program implementers in central, provinces and LGs have been enhanced through various trainings on Equity Index and its use in program implementation. Nevertheless, the ES is at a pilot stage and government staff shared with WE that it is not clear to them **how funding will be secured to scale up the initiative in other LGs in the future. More particularly, respondents at field level have concerns that funds allocated may not be used solely for equity based interventions but also for other education needs.**

'Sometimes the budget solely made for ESIP program might be allocated to other areas, which is a trend seen previously in other sectors. I am still not 100% sure that all budget would go to the designated planned program.'' KII with LG education officer

Risks of future dropouts related to the family context.

94. There are still some chances that Children recently brought back to school drop out again because of the attraction to find jobs in India.

''The trend of enrolling but dropping out of school is still ongoing, although it has decreased compared to past years. They leave to go to India to earn. Mostly drop out students increase after the completion of class 6-7, out of which children of Dalit community are higher in numbers. Most students are present in class regularly except in emergency cases.'' KII with a SMC chair

95. Below some reasons for drop out shared by a head teacher interviewed.

''In our area, parents lack awareness about education and those who have well family background do get enrolled in our school. Dropout reasons:
1)Families who can afford do transfer students to private school and when we collect data later they are calculated as dropouts and increase the dropout rate.
2)Due to marriage, esp. girls (studying in 6-10 grades) and they drop out of school after getting married.

CONCLUSION S.1. To what extent can the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? How has COVID-19 affected the sustainability of financial, operational and institutional capacity of the Education Sector?

Evaluative Judgement: *The federal transition seriously challenges the sustainability of the ES. Sector ministries, including the education sector are under-capacitated with respect to their federal mandate (policy-setting and monitoring and evaluation) and over-capacitated with respect to implementation functions for which they are no longer responsible. The transition to federalism has also increased the need for systematic capacity-building for elected officials and civil servants at all levels, at great cost, and for which a comprehensive strategy is still lacking, including in the education sector.*

The COVID-19 situation has seriously restricted the access to education services for all children and most likely the children from poor families who have limited access to ICT materials. Before the health crisis, schools were already poorly equipped in computer and internet access. There have been about existing technological discrepancies, the digital and socio-economic divides, and a divide in terms of parents' literacy rate and how those discrepancies could contribute to widen the gaps in access and quality of education for the most marginalized groups.

In some schools, because of the pandemic, it was not possible to distribute the mid-day meal grant to the community schools. Distribution of Pro- Poor Targeted Scholarship was also delayed for the same reasons. All these events may jeopardise the early achievements of the ES.

Below the possible risks identified during the evaluation that could restrained the sustainability of the ES results:

- The Risks inherent to the lack of capacity to deliver in the Transition to Federalism.
- Lack of priority given to the education sector at LGs level and a focus on infrastructure rather than on service delivery and quality.
- Risks related to the COVID-19 context that is likely to impact the education sector for a long period and damaging more the most vulnerable
- Family education spending is dependent on financial transfers received from workers abroad and could be constrained by the uncertain development of these transfers due to the economic and health crisis.
- Difficulties in a proper flow of information in the context of the new federal structure increase the burden of progress reports, timely assessment of DLIs and could add to the difficulties in the release of foreign resources on time in the future.
- A large number of education beneficiaries from the school and technical education and higher education levels are deprived of education, information, understanding, skills, and abilities by the lockdown measures and school closure. The socio- economic impacts are likely to be reflected through increases in school dropouts, child labour, and the proportion of early marriages.
- Risks related to an unfinished agenda on Quality, Efficiency and Equity in the education sector
- The ES is at a pilot stage and government staff shared that it is not clear to them how funding will be secured to scale up the initiative in other districts in the future. More particularly, respondents at field level have concerns that funds allocated may not be used solely for equity-based interventions.

5.2 Contribution of the Strategy in strengthening capacities

S.2. Has the equity strategy facilitated/attributed to strengthening capacity of education sector duty bearers and stakeholders to address education disparities?

96. Based on our discussions at federal and local level, the design and implementation of the ES has contributed to strengthen the capacity of education staff mainly in the 15 focused districts supported by UNICEF on 1) understanding of Equity Issues, 2) on planning and integration of equity into the planning cycle 3) on data analysis.[149] Nevertheless because of the important capacity gaps and the lack of sufficient human resources at LGs and provincial levels, this should rather be seen as a work in progress during a first pilot phase that would need to be strengthened in the future.

97. Feedback received from the people who attended the capacity building activities related to planning shared positive feedback about the trainings they had received as per the quote below:

''Our capacity has improved drastically. After returning from the training in Nepalgunj we were confused regarding strategy planning preparation but after the 3 day facilitation program conducted in Dipayal, we finalized the plan, and we learned how to do it, how to prioritize. Now we can do planning conveniently. When we were making plan, the chief sirs from the Social Development Directorate (of Province 7) which is located in Dipayal also facilitated. They provided technical support.'' KIIs with a head teacher

98. Much more would need to be undertaken in the comings months on ensuring that the education staff at all levels have received proper trainings on planning, data analysis, coordination and monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Capacity gaps are found at all levels as mentioned by this respondent:

''Province also lacks sufficient human resources. I can talk about myself as we need 7 people in OCMC but we have just 1 staff that was provided by the central government. If we have more staff, the Province can support in piloting and helping in capacity development through experience exchange. Model demonstration is another work needed to be done by the provincial level and inter local government coordination, IT support, health hygiene, materials for awareness, etc. Facilitating the local levels is the main work for the provincial government.'' KII with a provincial level education director

Sub Question S 2.1: To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS?

99. The EI team worked with EMIS managers on the inconsistencies that had emerged in the initial EI calculations, which led to the first changes in the classifications of the worst performing districts. The Data Quality Assessment Report related to the 15 districts that has been shared with the Evaluation team indicates that an extensive review of the database was conducted with the team of DOE. The main goal of this exercise was to address the data quality issues raised on different forums and discussions, especially for 12 districts with regard to survival rate and SLC rate.

100. Two basic sources of data errors were looked for: 1) Error in the database itself as a result of wrong information entered at the beginning. 2) Error in the data used to compute the EI because of data processing error such as wrong formula, error of copying/pasting and syntax error. Explanation provided for the error in the data was related to the fact that initially, the urban/rural and Dalit/non-Dalit definition was not well defined in the EMIS. (This has now been fixed). In addition, there was a transition period where the data collection system was changed from form based to EMIS. This could have led to confusions and errors while entering the data.

101. SLC data for Mustang district was reviewed and major corrections were made to improve the accuracy. There were some districts such as Mustang, Dang, Sarlahi and Rautahat whose enrolment ratio for the year 2014-2015 exceeded values up to 900%. The enrolment data for the districts were then re-extracted from the database with ''massive improvements'' in the data quality according to the report.

102. While the index is being embedded in the EMIS, our findings suggest that since the introduction of the index until very recently, no calculation seems to have been made to examine the evolution of the index (Between 2016 base year and 2020).

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[149] The process of designing the ESIPs has involved several government staff organised under a planning committee which offers an additional opportunity for the processing of education-related information of the rural municipality, analysing the data, identifying the academic issue and, accordingly, formulating a plan

Equity based interventions are mainly oriented towards enhancing demand for services and less on strengthening the supply side of the education system

103. The MTR of the SSDP reported that key achievements[150] at the end of SSRP School Sector Reform Plan/SSRP (2009–2016) were made thanks to two strategies: i) the progressive decentralization of education service delivery through the creation of school management committees (SMCs) as functional, accountable bodies engaging communities in education, and ii) the introduction of a targeted demand-side program, through scholarship programs for female students and children from disadvantaged caste/ethnicity groups, income groups, and geographic regions; the provision of free textbooks, and; the provision of salary and non-salary per capita financing (PCF) based grants for quality enhancement.

104. As it is the case in other countries, back to school campaign are generally quite effective to bring children to schools, the issue that remains is how to make sure those children effectively remain at school. Reason given by children for dropping out is mainly related to poverty. Nevertheless, studies have shown that even if the child' family is poor, parents will tend to leave the child at school provided that he/she has some good school results, implying that the focus should be on improving the school system (the supply side of the education system) to ensure better retention rate.

105. As we already discussed in this report, the bias toward a demand side activity is linked with the actual limitation of the EI around access and participation. Taking into account the learning dimension should question new elements relative to supply side (teacher quality, students/teachers ratios…) but also lead to analyse new local situations where the schools are performing well without the required equipment. That is the heart of the new DMS positive deviant school study currently being designed actually with UNICEF support.

106. As described in this report, the planned interventions mainly address the demand side of the sector and less the supply side. Equity based interventions did include some aspects related to the supply component but they are mainly aiming to address the lack of economic income of the families (school meals, pro poor scholarship and provision of text books) and as explained before, in the review of the SSRP School Sector Reform Plan/SSRP (2009–2016), had some effects mainly on access.

107. Findings from many studies have shown that the key remaining concerns in the education sector in Nepal are not necessarily related to access of marginalized population groups to the education system (At the notable exception of the children with disabilities) but rather associated to a problem of quality (which influence retention and learning outcomes). As reported by a recent news article[151], it is difficult to talk about quality when there is not enough teachers.

''The kids don't have any problem. They have willpower, they have desire, they are creative, they are doing good. The problems lie within us-teachers who are appointed by the government. We have not been able to return to the government for what it has been paying to us. We lack many things.'' KII with one head teacher of secondary school.

108. As reported by stakeholders working in the field, by LGs and provinces consulted and through several recent studies, one of the key bottlenecks for school retention (including most probably the recently admitted Out of Schools) and improvement of learning outcomes, is the lack of teachers in the school system and more particularly in the low performing LGs and issues with the way

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[150] Such as the net enrolment rate (NER) for primary education increased from 71.0 percent in 1998 to 96.9 percent in 2016 (the NER for girls increased from 61.0 to 96.6 percent in the same period). The primary cycle completion rate increased from 58.0 percent in 2004 to 80.0 percent in 2016, and the percentage of out-of-school children (OoSC) among 5-12 year old children decreased from 21.0 to 14.8 percent between 2003/04 and 2010/11. Gender parity in the NER at the primary (grades 1-5), basic (grades 1-8), and secondary (grades 9-12) levels had already been achieved. Similarly, disparities in education access across income groups and ethnic/caste groups decreased significantly during this period.

[151] https://kathmandupost.com/national/2021/02/07/government-yet-to-fill-teacher-vacancies-even-as-decline-in-education-quality-is-reported

teachers are deployed across the schools which is not always based on needs. Teachers are the number one priority of the LGs but their hands seem to be tied as the current teacher rationalization and redeployment plan is not yet operational, as it is being revised as part of the drafting of the new Federal Education Act.

109. When central government[152] doesn't provide the required teachers, the schools and local government cope in recruiting volunteer teachers but because of the low salary, they tend to resign after few months. A recent article[153] in the national daily newspaper Kathmandu Post reported that around 10 percent or 13,000 teacher positions[154] are vacant as the Teachers Service Commission has not been able to announce vacancies for the last three years.[155]

110. Therefore, we believe that the successes of the strategy should not be limited to local actions that would have been induced by the ranking resulting from the EI and the proposal of solutions to be implemented only at the local level as the issues at stake are mainly related to gaps in supply that can not necessarily be addressed locally. (ex: reduce structural heterogeneity between schools, decide on policies such as multilingualism, addressing the shortage of teachers and high turnover of staff in some districts...).

111. This view point is not shared by everyone since some LGs did indeed include activities to strengthen ECD or madrassas in their plans. More study on the availability of resource at school level (resource index) by district is probably necessary to shed light on this point, as it would probably highlight the fact that activities to improve the supply of education services must be considered at the national level and that local mobilization of the demand for services, as is currently the case with the focus on equity-based interventions, may not be enough to address the issues of inequity. Governance, leadership, motivation from teachers and teaching quality are the main issues that should be addressed through supply-focused interventions.

112. This evaluation found that Palikas have a good understanding on how to tackle access and participation but less on how to address learning outcomes. As a consequence, the ESIPs do not include sufficient activities to address this dimension.

CONCLUSION S.2. Has the equity strategy facilitated/attributed to strengthening capacity of education sector duty bearers and stakeholders to address education disparities?

<u>Evaluative Judgement</u>: *The design and implementation of the ES has contributed to strengthen the capacity of education staff mainly in the 15 focused districts supported by the government through UNICEF contribution on 1) understanding of Equity Issues, 2) on planning and integration of equity into the planning cycle 3) on data analysis.[156] Nevertheless, because of the important capacity gaps and the lack of sufficient human resources at LGs and provincial levels, this should rather be seen as a work in progress that would need to be strengthened in the future.*

The inclusion of the Equity Index in EMIS has contributed to improve its quality as the EI team and the EMIS managers has worked together on resolving the inconsistencies that had emerged in the initial EI calculations, which led to the first changes in the classifications of the worst performing districts. Progress in access to quality data is however still an area of progress.

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[152] The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) is responsible for teacher licensing and recruitment
[153] https://kathmandupost.com/national/2021/02/07/government-yet-to-fill-teacher-vacancies-even-as-decline-in-education-quality-is-reported
[154] There are 150,000 permanent positions of teachers in over 29,000 public schools across the country.
[155] The government has yet to appoint the chairperson and members to the commission.
[156] The process of designing the ESIPs has involved several government staff organised under a planning committee which offers an additional opportunity for the processing of education-related information of the rural municipality, analysing the data, identifying the academic issue and, accordingly, formulating a plan

LESSONS LEARNT

The following lessons learnt can be drawn from this evaluation.

1. Programming interventions at municipality level should go hand in hand with capacity building and coaching activities (related mainly to data analysis, planning, coordination, monitoring and reporting) to accompany the transition to federalism at local level.

2. A well-established information and coordination process at Federal level (Through the Equity and Inclusion TWG and discussion during JRM and BRM) does not necessarily translate in the same functioning processes at local levels were less cross sectoral collaboration within departments and with non-State Actors was observed for the design and implementation of the ESIPs.

3. Presentation of the data in a user friendly format for planning purpose is important for data analysis at local level while transitioning to the new federal structure. Full integration of the EI into EMIS will facilitate this process as the system will automatically compute the relevant information.

4. Political awareness and education of local representatives[157] makes an important difference in the understanding of equity and on prioritization of financial and human resources for the education sector at municipality level. This means that they should be included in any capacity building efforts.

5. Having an equity focused strategy does indeed contribute to raising awareness but also in delivering equitable outcomes for children. The issue to consider is to develop evidence based, thoroughly analyzed and well-prepared interventions that hit the right targets. This has also to do with the enabling environment such as the national capacity, finances and systems.

6. With the Equity Strategy, it is important to invest in capacities and systems which help to ensure results-based management and sustainability. By RBM, we mean 'converting interventions into tangible and evidence-based results'' that demonstrate narrowing gaps in access to education by all children in Nepal.

7. Budget management and budget transparency is also key to track dedicated budget allocation for equity in the education sector.[158]

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[157] Particularly the chief administrator at LGs level
[158] See more information related to this topic: Budgeting for Equity: Gender Budget Initiatives Within a Framework of Performance Oriented Budgeting. UN women publication.

CONCLUSIONS

RELEVANCE

The 2014 equity strategy responded to an identified need **to test an innovative approach of using education data for equitable resource allocation and targeted programming**. It was pioneer in addressing equity issues in accordance with an analysis of equity dimensions and explaining factors. Moreover, it succeeded in moving equity consideration fairly high on the Nepalese education policy agenda. However, the definition of equity underpinning the Strategy and calculated by the index has 3 major interrelated weaknesses:

- The strategy addressed equity issues adopting a cross-cutting definition where individual characteristics and social barriers prevail (poverty, caste, gender, disability). **It is not focused on educational needs**. Data for SLC exam was not available for all Local Governments – hence not used initially for analysis. Once the data will be available for all LGs for grade 8, the learning dimension will be added in the index. Only few local equity plan analyzed by the evaluation team addressed learning needs or promoted equalization of learning opportunities within the school environment.
- The design of the index and proposed measurement of deprivation across districts underlies a **linear complementarity** (and equal weight) between access-participation-learning outcomes. At international level, the analysis of schooling trends usually considers learning perspectives above the participation (and sometimes even before the access), bearing in mind that weak learning outcomes are a major cause of dropout. The index therefore failed to capture the learning explanations to drop-out. The evaluation team also questions the idea that there would be a "main driver" of inequity because of their cumulative and hierarchical nature, where poverty always ranks first.
- The strategy **focusses on education demand**, understood mainly under the access and participation dimensions. ESIPs activities mainly concerned measures focussing on these two dimensions, mainly enrolment campaigns and participation measures (meals, hygiene products for girls). The **quality of education supply** in the most vulnerable areas was not addressed nor analysed. In reality, **school provision is differentiated in terms of quality** (community versus institutional, concentration of "good" teachers in several privileged localities, huge differences in learning environments, etc.). Thus, **access to differentiated education service provision can lead to different participation and learning**.

COHERENCE

The Equity strategy was coherent with Nepalese international commitments and paved the way to further effort implied by the 2030 Agenda in terms of nationwide quality and equitable educational provision. It was adopted within a context of major governance change (the new Federal structure) and progressive ownership of the new governance mechanisms by national and local decision makers. As such, the Equity strategy proved coherent with the evolving context and fully adaptive. With the transition to federalism and new division of competences, the ES targets additional financing to local government levels / municipalities, thus making pillar 2 (the ESIPs) dependent upon local planning capacity and prerogatives.

This focus reduces the scope of possible measures when they do not depend upon local governments, in particular major policy levers revolving around human resource (among them teacher affectation and capacity development, for instance to identify student's needs, management of the diversity in classrooms and building trust with parents). As teacher-related measures still refer to national competence, more coherence could have been expected at local level to align local efforts with education policy decisions taken at national level. In this context, the evaluation team noted a limited internal coherence of the Equity strategy and inconsistency between the highly comprehensive dimension of the index and the limited scope of implemented measures in the field.

EFFECTIVENESS

Our analysis of effectiveness is partly nurtured by Nepalese school enrollment performance. Undoubtably, the implementation period of the equity strategy was a strong momentum for effective reduction in the aggregate number of OoSC at national level. A **good performance of most of the 15 targeted districts is confirmed in terms of access**,[159] and **the gender gap was effectively addressed**. Parity in basic education, already acquired nationwide at Lower basic level, is now achieved at Upper basic level, with girls even over-represented in lower basic both at national level and in the targeted districts. As noted by the Nepalese government, this phenomenon is partly the reflec of boys' preference for 'institutional' or 'private' schools as well as frequent seasonal migration due to labour market demand.

The evaluation team confirms the number of 256 000 OoSC reintegrated into schools with little grade-related variation, suggesting that the campaigns were effective for all age groups. However, caste and ethnicity-related barriers still remain poorly addressed, with some trends to be confirmed by further demographic data, for instance the decrease in Janajatis enrolments over the past 10 years.

Our analysis also shows a decrease in survival rates in districts that have experienced recent rapid increases in enrolment, more visible at Lower basic level than at upper basic level. These results confirm the demand-orientation of the ES that succeeded in bringing many children back to schools but did not foster increased school capacity to help them remain in schools and learn. To summarize, the index proved effective for ranking purposes, and succeeded in triggering new and effective measures targeting mostly school enrolment and participation. It was rather misused or poorly understood by education planers and policy makers to inform needs-based programming and equity-focused measures.

In quantitative terms, only 13% of LGs have endorsed their ESIP plan by January 2021, although in many cases, **ESIP development successfully triggered the development of a general LG education plan where they were still missing**. Broadly, the initial rationale according to which understanding equity dimensions would lead to more tailored and diversified actions did not really materialize in the field. Interventions analyzed by the evaluation team were quite similar from one ESIP to another and focused mainly on "mainstream" OoSC (back to school campaigns representing the bulk of funding) and general participation measures (meals and girls hygiene products). In other words, and despite the strong increase in analytical data available, equity interventions designed and implemented failed to address the needs of the highest number of excluded children, namely **those in school but not learning** (disability, poverty, language…). The evaluation also underlines the **role played by the members of the Equity and inclusion Technical Working, as well as UNICEF, CERHD and World Education have been instrumental** in supporting the dissemination and support for the implementation of the Strategy.

EFFICIENCY

Considering the limited scope of the index and effects of ESIP development support, its current use and its reduction in scope compared to what was initially planned, one can ask if the development of the index was a **cost-effective** targeting system compared to other (potentially less sophisticated) strategies.

The question of its efficiency refers more to the capacity of local planners to use the ES effectively (or even use possible alternative in terms of equity analysis through the use of the estimation of enrolment profiles) Also, a lot of effort went into training LG education staff to prepare the plans in regional workshops. These were valuable for building large commitment from Central, Provincial and Local Governments but were

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[159] The OOSC reduction in the targeted district exceeded the national reduction

made less effective because of strong staff turnover. Alternative solutions were identified, among them the WE-sponsored blended training strategy, proving relevant and more efficient in the COVID-19 context. However, ESIP did not always address the root causes of inequity. The funding allocated for each municipality was quite limited and it was not clear how and to what extent the budget was used for the implementation of the ESIPs in the absence of accountability, dedicated budget line to track the allocation of funds and lack of M&E mechanisms at LG level.

Overall, the evaluation team found evidence of capacity building support provided mainly in relation to data analysis and planning but less in term of institutional setup (i.e coordination, collaboration, reporting and implementation mechanisms).

SUSTAINABILITY

The COVID-19 context is a strong challenge for the equity strategy's **sustainability**, both in terms of development results and in terms of equity *acquis*. There are concerns that existing technological discrepancies, the digital and socio-economic divides, and a divide in terms of parents' literacy rate could contribute to widen the gaps in access and quality of education for the most marginalized groups. In some schools, the pandemic context hampers mid-day meal grant distribution and delayed pro-poor targeted scholarships. As part of its CoVID-19 School Sector Response (GPE) supplementary program to mitigate the effects of COVID-19, the World Bank included a Sub-component 2.3: Schools grants to schools from selected local governments. The sub-component will support most disadvantaged local governments (100-125 LGs) in regions that have been impacted by COVID-19 through school grants to ensure safe re-opening of schools and continued learning[160] .

The transition to federalism is also a major challenge for the sustainability of the strategy, with limited capacity to deal with education supply at LG level and thus potential risk for LGs to focus on infrastructures rather than on quality. Still, the design and implementation of the ES has contributed to strengthen the capacity of education staff in the 15 focused districts on 1) understanding of Equity Issues, 2) integration of equity into the planning cycle and 3) on data analysis.[161]

Nevertheless, because of the important capacity gaps and the lack of sufficient human resources at LGs and provincial levels, this should rather be seen as a **work in progress** during a first pilot phase that would need to be strengthened in the future. A major bottleneck for the retention of children at schools (including most probably the recently reintegrated OoSC children) and improvement of learning outcomes, remains the shortage of teachers in the low performing LGs and issue with the way teachers are deployed across the schools which is not always based on needs. Improved consideration of educational needs and learning outcomes for the most vulnerable children will therefore be key for a sustainable consideration of the Equity Strategy acquis.

It seems that the use of EI can be considered as an excellent instrument for communication, funds mobilization and advocacy but not as a tool for action. To implement effective equity-based activities, there is a need for a more classical analysis of the education demand in these marginalized localities and a clear

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[160] Source: Presentation made on 18th November 2020 by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology about the status of COVID-19 response in Education

[161] The process of designing the ESIPs has involved several government staff organised under a planning committee which offers an additional opportunity for the processing of education-related information of the rural municipality, analysing the data, identifying the academic issue and, accordingly, formulating a plan

understanding of the ways this education demand interacts with supply side characteristics which are not immediately apparent in the EI computation and ranking.

Some school mapping considerations and reduction of differences in quality will be important to promote education in specific location where, the education system is of weak quality. In this sense promoting equal access and retention in lagging locations is necessary but not a sufficient equity objective. Moreover, an analysis of education demand of marginalized groups should also include an analysis of the labor market to assess if it is discriminating or not for marginalized groups. If the labor market is segmented and does not offer a comparable status and earning, for a given level of education, to every member of the society, those with specific expectations could have a rational weak demand for education. Improving access, participation and learning would be important but not sufficient to strengthen education demand for many of the marginalized groups whose social and economic positions are weakly linked to educational performances.

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To summarize, the evaluation confirms that the ES succeeded in anchoring equity considerations in the Nepalese education system, nurturing all Nepalese education planning documents after 2014 and raising wide awareness among education stakeholders. Its undeniable acquis needs now to evolve towards a more education-focused scope, investing more on their educational needs and targeting vulnerable children at the right scale, namely their school environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A list of recommendations and list of candidate actions have been assembled from the main findings and conclusions to be considered for inclusion in the next Education Sector Plan

The present report shows undoubtable successes directly linked with the implementation of the equity strategy but also rooms for improvement. To date, no country in the world can claim to have entirely eliminated socio-economic inequalities in education, nor is there international consensus on the most effective measures to support equity. Nepalese authorities can now build on 7 years of equity-related experience which we turn into a set of recommendation hereafter. Some of these recommendations have already been formulated in other recent studies and have been consolidated here, others are derived from this evaluation.

This section on the recommendations includes a more descriptive section that provides the rationale and contextual information to the recommendations. The main recommendations have been summarised at the end of this report.

1. Recommendations related to the *acquis* of the equity strategy

1.1 Broaden the scope and focus more explicitly on learning

The first bulk of ESIP tend to prove that the global understanding of equity in education is still only partial among local stakeholders, and too often limited to the access and participation dimensions. Our first recommendation is therefore to clarify more precisely what is referred to with equity in education thus improving its relevance with regards to the **learning dimension**. This would mean to further elaborate on the initial ToC, which tended to assume that the quality of instruction available to children is adequate and that students learn more if they spend more time in school. **The present evaluation confirms that this condition is not met in the field.** As a result, the future education plan should more systematically link equity considerations with the quality of **education supply**.

We suggest a more **comprehensive definition of Equity in education** linked with educational and learning needs, thus avoiding confusion identified in the field:

- **Equity** in education **does not only refer to OoSC**: access and participation in school do not automatically lead to learning outcomes
- **Equity** in education is strongly **related to the inclusive** potential of schools: Learning needs of the most vulnerable children will be met if teachers can address them in a differentiated manner.
- **Equity** in education is strongly linked with **poverty**, bearing in mind that poverty is the first factor of inequity, both in terms of access and learning. Poverty can be addressed through different mechanisms, notably education and social programs that improve students' environments outside of school. As a reminder, the global evaluation of OoSC confirmed the prevalence of economic barriers to schooling worldwide

FIGURE 4 **Prevalence of barriers**

Barrier	Very Low	Low	High	Very High
Economic background	7.8	33.3		58.8
Personal physical characteristics	1.9	22.6	35.8	39.6
School accessibility	11.3	20.8	35.8	32.1
Household characteristics	8.2	20.4	42.9	28.6
Personal cognitive characteristics	18.8	25	33.3	22.9
Vulnerability of child	15.7	27.5	35.3	21.6
Parents' background	16.7	27.1	37.5	18.8
Safety and security concerns	18	26	38	18
Cultural background	9.8	29.4	43.1	17.6
Language of instruction	21.2	36.5	32.7	9.6
School culture/rules of behaviour	24.5	49	18.4	8.2
Personal history	30.6	24.7	26.5	8.2

Source: UNICEF, Formative evaluation of the OoSCI, February 2018. Global Picture.

OECD (2019) recently suggested a more comprehensive definition: "equity in education means that **schools and education systems provide equal learning opportunities to all students**. (…) Equity does not mean that all students obtain equal education outcomes, but rather that differences in students' outcomes are unrelated to their background or to economic and social circumstances over which students have no control."

A revised understanding of equity should also take into consideration low average performance even if this low average performance is shared equitably among the various groups identified already as barriers of equity.

A first step is of course to integrate learning in the index. For ESIP, the approach should more systematically connect to existing school supply, and several data or factors could be taken into consideration:
- Develop analysis of demand for education taking into account the costs and benefits of education among various population groups and including their expectations on economic and social positions.
- Strengthen the M&E dimension of ESIP with a specific component leading to follow-up reintegrated children and address learning challenges for the most vulnerable children,
- Take into consideration the number of schools meeting minimum enabling conditions in each palika within the planning process. Although they do not include information on learning, they may provide an opportunity for education planers to consider supply in their planning process;
- Add to PMEC consideration on teacher/pupil ratio in the schools, to be consolidated at provincial level and advocate for more additional teacher deployment in the deprived areas.

1.2 Clarify responsibilities and consider the entire education supply chain

The upcoming publication of the education act should allow clearer views about accountability mechanisms to be implemented in the federal context. The implementation of ESIPs at local level have suffered from a still unclear picture of 'who does what". This identified need to further clarify overall responsibilities as regards the whole education supply chain (federal/district/LG/School), shall also lead to define how and through which consultation structures they coordinate. Such a clarification process, including also NSA and education policy implementing partners, should allow to define further, both at national and local level, what is the responsibility of education sector decision makers and what should be carried out by social programs improving students' environment outside of school.

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Such a clarification should also allow to further take into consideration the school level in the planning process. Specific equity-related communication channels should be set-up at local level, with school principals and systematically associate them in the planning process. This would also provide an opportunity to take into consideration the level of concentration of vulnerable children in the schools at LG level.

Depending upon the capacity of local planning processes to take into consideration the different actors and resources invested at local level, both nationally, locally and by external partners, local plans may then consider the opportunity to plan resources according to the concentration of vulnerable children in schools under their responsibility. According to OECD, "**In countries where there is a higher concentration of disadvantaged students in certain schools, targeting resources to disadvantaged schools can be an effective strategy. In countries where disadvantaged students are less concentrated, targeting individual students and their families can be more effective**. ». In New Zealand, recent research carried out within the framework of the national equity index concluded that **once schools get beyond 30% of their students from disadvantaged circumstances they struggle to achieve** (e.g. secondary schools are unlikely to achieve high NCEA Level 2 achievement rates at these levels of disadvantage).

Considering the entire supply chain down to the school level in the planning process could therefore bring more coherence into local education plans and allow the emergence of new levers of **collective remedial measures** such as targeted improvements to school infrastructure for disability purposes, teacher training and support, language-development programs for minority students, tutoring and homework-assistance services, extracurricular activities, and customized instructional programs to address the learning challenges particular to disadvantaged and minority students.

Such a strategy suggesting a mix of individual and collective measures would also take into consideration the fact that high concentration of disadvantaged children in a school, impacts on all students in the school, not just those from disadvantaged circumstances.

Of course, it also entails improved effort on M&E, ensuring that ESIPs and/or LGs education plan include a monitoring framework and plan that are aligned to the new National Education Sector Plan. In addition, it is recommended to:

- Invest heavily on capacity building activities related to monitoring, data analysis, coordination and planning for all tiers of the new Education Federal structure. To this end, use a "learning-by-doing" and coaching approaches for the strengthening of both technical and institutional capacities.
- Clarify the role of the provincial education unit (Provincial Education Training Centres) to support the rolling out of capacity building efforts and provision of quality control and quality insurance services to LGs.
- Provide guidance to the LGs to ensure that education officers are trained and empowered and that education is given due priority as part of the local social development agenda.

What would be key in the next education plan is to ensure that **schools and LGs are accountable to their local constituencies**. This does not seem yet to be the case now also because of the vacuum left by the new federal system where the functions of monitoring and reporting are very weak at Local level. This is also due to the lack of capacities and lack of sufficient teachers in the schools). To this end, the DMS activities that are supporting school based tools that facilitate a transparent and more objective picture of the school situation (the school profile) should be further supported. It will be important to strengthen the roll out of an improved school profile[162] as a tool for accountability and advocacy at school level. This implies a complete redefinition of the format, content and even access mode (as few schools are computerized) of the "school" profile.

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[162] That compare the school achievement with other schools similarly to the work undertaken by WE for the analysis of data at LG level in the context of development of the ESIPs. (see summary sheet in the evaluation report)

1.3 Clarify measures and their remedial potential for each equity dimension

The first round of ESIPs is to be taken as a baseline and every round should improve the upcoming ESIP planning processes. Although no international consensus exist on the most effective measures, research shows that equity policies have more success "if they are implemented as early as possible and if they dismantle the extensive barriers to learning that disadvantaged students face, focus on students' attitudes, and social and emotional well-being" [163.] The evaluation team considers that the initial list included in the 2014 ES document felt short in providing education planners with effective measures linked with each identified barrier. Our recommendation therefore is to invest on **improved consistency between analytical work and policy formulation phase.**

Such a support could take the form of the organization of province-based Equity Conference eager to discuss lessons learned and share experiences from the planning processes. The results of the present evaluation could be the occasion to trigger such discussions.

Another important step would be to further elaborate on the list and levels of measures eager to respond to identified individual and collective barriers. Suggested measures have three levels of intervention (classroom, school, education-system level) and are organised as per below:

- **Support to disadvantaged children, adolescents and young adults in their education**: "each country needs to understand at what age inequity begins to affect individuals and how it deepens over a lifetime"
- **Provide quality early-education programs to disadvantaged children**
- **Set ambitious goals and monitor the progress of disadvantaged students** (described as "National resilience")
- **Develop teachers' capacity to detect student needs and manage diverse classrooms**
- **Reduce the concentration of disadvantaged students in particular schools**
- **Foster student well-being** / **Create a climate that favors learning and well-being**
- **Encourage parent-teacher communication and parental engagement**

Such a modelling work, leaving full room for local adaptation, could take the form of **equity packages** for each barrier/dimension, supporting planning challenges and suggesting clear links between identified equity challenges and effective remedial measures. Such packages should be fully adapted to the revised map of competences resulting from the federal governance framework.

In addition, existing Equity based interventions could better address remaining disparities in education outcomes particularly around language, disability, castes and geographies, notably:
- Support development of equity sensitive local education plans (at LGs and school levels) that are developed in a participatory way through cross sector as well as through strengthened coordination and collaboration mechanisms with a larger variety of stakeholders from within the government system and with Non-State Actors.
- better address child marriage, languages, geography and disability inclusion gaps and issues, as well as focus more on the importance of secondary education in relation to access to sciences studies for girls for example.
- Increase the number of women in educational leadership, increasing both the number of female headteachers in schools and the number of females in senior positions within all layers of the education administrative system (local, provincial and national levels)
- Address inequalities within the institutional school sector. Some countries such as the Philippines, for example, have approached this through providing vouchers for girls to attend private secondary

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[163] OECD (2018), Equity in Education: Breaking Down Barriers to Social Mobility, PISA, OECD Publishing, Paris. https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264073234-en. See page 39.

schools. An alternative approach might be closer regulation and enforcement of quotas within the non-state sector for female students and students from disadvantaged groups.[164]

1.4 What about the index?

The index had a pivotal role to mobilize resources and stakeholders. The SSDP adopted after 2014 now makes clear reference to equity measures, but rather focuses on the national level: since then, the Nepalese education system committed to the 2030 agenda and therefore needs to focus on equity nationwide.

The question shall therefore be embedded in a global reflection on equity-based financing, but in this case seen at a national scale. Worldwide, averages of 4 to 6% of the total education sector budget are seen as a good average to expect some effects, bearing in mind that it also implies that "mainstream schools" receive less.

To be an efficient tool for a shift to wider equity-based financing, **the index should then also be able to consider evolving into a revised targeting mechanism** taking into consideration both the school level and the learning dimension, where **schools with larger shares of disadvantaged children may receive additional investment in human and material resources to address learning challenges**.

Rather than using the index for overall affectation, a revised index could allow to consider the share of equity-financing within the overall education-related expenses

The evaluation team also wishes to underline the great interest of an alternative model also developed through the Data Must Speak approach but with improved focus on school level. This approach strengthens accountability of the education sector through the development and use of school profile and increased parent commitment. The DMS approach has also the advantage of recognizing the importance of the LGs in terms of the role they could play in data analysis for the implementation of the equity strategy at the school level (Through their analysis and comparison of the various school profiles of the schools present in their municipalities).

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[164] Recommendation from the GESI report

2 Recommendations for the future national education plan

2.1 Strengthen generation and use of evidence for programming and learning

- Complete the body of knowledge with additional equity focused quantitative and qualitative studies to generate evidence for advocacy and programming. (i.e conduct a demand analysis study[165], ensure a better use of the Out of schools database to track the level of retention in the focused districts, conduct additional surveys and information gathering regarding key issues, such as the activities that improve the retention of OoSC and their learning outcomes, which would also be beneficial to improve the activities of the program and its efficiency.)
- Ensure that data is available and conduct data analysis to track how students, in each LGs, in sub-categories of the eight dimensions of equity perform to be able to devise differentiated strategies that eliminate barriers to access and measurement of impact. This should be done through computing and consolidating key education outcomes indicators while embedding them into the EMIS with a more user friendly interface. (As this is currently done by WE on behalf of the LGs and therefore it is not a sustainable approach)
- Develop IEMIS to include OoSC mapping and monitoring,
- Address long time issues related to the lack of accurate data on children with disabilities in the education sector.
- Continue using education data to inform equity in answering the following research questions

  - To what extent the index can provide a disaggregated data analysis per driver of inequity?
  - To what extent the index can take in consideration the various drivers of inequity according to their importance through a weighted system?
  - To what extent the flash reports could provide more detailed analysis of the data for the focused LGs' interventions disaggregated per drivers of inequity and per dimensions?
  - To what extent the equity-based interventions have been effective to reach different categories of marginalised children?
  - To what extent the baseline information on OOSC can be used to inform progresses following the equity-based interventions?
  - To what extent the Education Federal Government can monitor the use of the additional funding provided for the equity-based interventions in the context of the new federal structure knowing that the LGs report to MOFA and not to MOE?

2.2 Strengthen planning, monitoring and reporting as well as coordination and cross sectoral functions related to social inclusion:

- Include more SSDP social inclusion indicators in the result framework of the national and LG Education plans that are SMART and quality oriented as per the recommendations made by the equity and inclusion Technical Working Groups.
- Ensure that some key indicators such as the proportion of schools meeting minimum enabling conditions, are included in the PRF to monitor progress in terms of quality learning environment, and consider an update of the MEC to include learning.
- Strengthen coordination and cross sectoral collaboration at central and local level within government system and between Government and NGOs.

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[165] A demand analysis study is needed to better understand the main reason and roots causes that leave children Out of Schools children. Ideally, the study should include a qualitative component that will unpack the reasons about why children are not at school but also a quantitative survey that will identify potential correlation between the education context (quality of learning, presence or not of teachers) and the family context. (income, perspective future for the children…) in various geographical localities. The aim would be to better understand if there is a correlation between improved education services, access and retention and the family context (number of children, wealth of the family..)

2.3 Ensure Equity in Financing and not only in programming

- Ensure equity in financing through more targeted scholarships and better funding allocations to the most needed municipalities and schools, based on equity-based formulas.[166]
- More particularly, consider a comprehensive review of the education and wider social protection financial system, including the distribution and targeting mechanism, and role of respective federal tiers to improve the equity and targeting of scholarships (residential vs day student, and wider support for poorer students to access and stay in secondary education).
- The ES should explore further social protection and cash transfer mechanisms such as pro poor scholarship now covering all districts in Nepal.
- Ensure that heading of budget lines are clearly mentioning equity focused interventions to ensure that the funding will not be used for other purposes

2.4 Ensure that equity-based interventions address both education-related demand and supply needs as well as cover well the three main equity area on access, retention and learning outcomes in the new context of the Federal structure and COVID-19 health crisis

- Community-based interventions which addressed social stigma and challenged stereotypes, increased awareness of educational rights and thereby education-related demand should be coupled with school-based interventions that developed teachers' capacity for inclusive pedagogy to help keep children in school.
- Advocate for the appointment and redeployment of teachers to the most needed localities as this is the most single important factor that constraint the education sector at this time.
- Include strategies to increase the use of transformative and inclusive pedagogies within schools and classrooms to improve the quality of the teaching[167] as a way to retain children at schools. Reduce heterogeneity in school provision through appropriate measures (e.g. reducing the gap between community/institutional schools), and at the local level promoting teacher stability or making schools more accountable for their performance. Greater engagement of SMCs and parents in school management, teacher recruitment, and the monitoring of school and classroom processes can help enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom as well as overall school governance.
- Invest on ICT in and outside the schools to ensure access to distant learning for all and more particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- New vulnerable population have emerged because of the COVID-19, many schools have collapsed because change in demography, roles and responsibilities of the education administrative system have changed. It would be important to redefine the rules through case by case interventions to identify who should do what and at what level.

2.5 Mainstream Equity in education planning processes to improve accountability

- If LGs may not be accountable to the central level in the new federalism system, they still need to be accountable to national objectives. For this reason, it may be more appropriate in the current context (also in the context of limited capacity at local level) to ensure that equity is rather mainstreamed in the local education plan. This can be done if clear, concrete and overarching central level objectives that focus on equity in the context of the forthcoming Nepal Education Sector Plan Development 2022-2030 (aligned to the global level education agenda 2030) are made available to the local government entities as a clear guidance note/road map.
- Accountability can also be improved if parents are given the opportunities to be more engaged in the Parents Teachers Associations but also if school profiles are developed (Through the DMS project) and used to compare schools within the same province for example.

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[166] The USAID, education sector analysis 2020 noted that there was a need for a clear strategy in the forthcoming education plan to spell out how recurrent expenditure related to resources based on a disparity based formula will be included and sustained in the SSDP period.

[167] This is also needed in the growing competitive context with private schools

- Strengthen Programming at LGs and school level with diffusion and use of school profile for social audit to ensure accountability towards parents as a mean to promote a more qualitative and functioning education system
- Similarly, there may not need to have a separate Equity Strategy for the rolling out of the next Nepal Education Sector Plan Development if its objectives are well aligned to those of the SDG 4 where equity is already mainstreamed at every level.[168]

2.6 Institutionalizing support mechanisms for need based support to LGs for developing overall ESPs

Lessons learned from the preparation of ESIP with autonomy and ah-hoc technical assistance provided to selected local governments should also be taken into consideration in this political transition period. Federalism shall imply planning and decision autonomy at local level, and of course this will be a long-term and progressive process. During the transition, large capacity gaps shall remain and should be addressed in order to mitigate severe dysfunction, not only in equity-related issues but also in global education supply and education services delivery. In a context where shared duties between the central and local levels in education are still to be further clarified by the law, the evaluation team identified a clear need for users' friendly education policy planning tools, quality support and monitoring. Under present conditions, it seems unrealistic to consider that each of the 753 local governments education officials receive training at short notice, without mentioning staff turnover issues. However, trained resources in education planning exist at provincial and central levels and should contribute to this global support effort. This support could take the form of:

- The provision of analytical and education planning templates aligned with SSDP, with corresponding dashboards defining global baselines and targets, including as regards equity
- A form of labelling system for local education plans, should central validation be rejected, allowing to encourage local government to require the support of other officials (from another tier of the federal structure), including with financial incentives
- The set-up of provincial (?) based education planning task forces in charge of labelling local plans
- A powerful centrally-based equity policy eager to provide central level support in specific areas and to compensate clear inequity situations poorly addressed at local level.

Depending on the type of competences remaining under the responsibilities of the central state and those definitely transferred to local governments as regards policy making, the Federal Ministry could then organize its support at central and provincial levels and prepare for its new role through the creation of monitoring tools and equalization schemes eager to monitor "equitable focus on equity".

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[168] SDG 4 is composed of 7 outcome targets and 3 means of implementation. 3 of these outcomes are more specific to primary and secondary education and also include a focus on equity: Universal primary and secondary education: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Early childhood development and universal pre-primary education: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. Gender equality and inclusion: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

Proposed actionable recommendations

Proposed 10 Actionable recommendations with clear activities for their implementation	Responsible entities
1.Recommendations related to the *acquis* of the equity strategy	
1.1 Broaden the scope and focus more explicitly on learning	
▪ **Integrate learning in the index**.	
▪ Provide a more **comprehensive definition of Equity in education** linked with educational and learning needs. This would mean to further elaborate on the initial ToC.	
▪ For ESIP, the **approach should more systematically connect to existing school supply**, and several data or factors could be taken into consideration:	
o Develop analysis of demand for education taking into account the costs and benefits of education among various population groups and including their expectations on economic and social positions.	
o Strengthen the M&E dimension of ESIP with a specific component leading to follow-up reintegrated children and address learning challenges for the most vulnerable children,	
o Take into consideration the number of schools meeting minimum enabling conditions in each palika within the planning process.	
o Add to PMEC consideration on teacher/pupil ratio in the schools, to be consolidated at provincial level and advocate for more additional teacher deployment in the deprived areas.	
1.2 Clarify responsibilities and consider the entire education supply chain	
▪ **Clarify overall responsibilities as regards the whole education supply chain (federal/district/LG/School)** shall also lead to define how and through which consultation structures they coordinate.	
▪ **Specific equity-related communication channels should be set-up at local level**, with school principals and systematically associate them in the planning process.	
▪ **Improved effort on M&E,** ensuring that ESIPs and/or LGs education plan include a monitoring framework and plan that are aligned to the new National Education Sector Plan.	
In addition, it is recommended to	
▪ **Invest heavily on capacity building activities related to monitoring, data analysis, coordination and planning for all tiers of the new Education Federal structure**. To this end, use a "learning-by-doing" and coaching approaches for the strengthening of both technical and institutional capacities. Provide guidance to the LGs to ensure that education officers are trained and empowered and that education is given due priority as part of the local social development agenda.	
▪ **Clarify the role of the provincial education unit** (Provincial Education Training Centres) to support the rolling out of capacity building efforts and provision of quality control and quality insurance services to LGs.	

1.3 Clarify measures and their remedial potential for each equity dimension	
▪ Invest on **improved consistency between analytical work and policy formulation phase.** Such a support could take the form of the organization of province-based Equity Conference eager to discuss lessons learned and share experiences from the planning processes.	
▪ Another important step would be to **further elaborate on the list and levels of measures eager to respond to identified individual and collective barriers**. Suggested measures have three levels of intervention (classroom, school, education-system level) and are organized as per below:	
o Support to disadvantaged children, adolescents and young adults in their education: "each country needs to understand at what age inequity begins to affect individuals and how it deepens over a lifetime"	
o Provide quality early-education programs to disadvantaged children	
o Set ambitious goals and monitor the progress of disadvantaged students (described as "National resilience")	
o Develop teachers' capacity to detect student needs and manage diverse classrooms	
o Reduce the concentration of disadvantaged students in particular schools	
o Foster student well-being / Create a climate that favors learning and well-being	
o Encourage parent-teacher communication and parental engagement	
▪ **Better address remaining disparities in education outcomes** particularly around language, disability, castes and geographies, notably:	
o Support development of equity sensitive local education plans (at LGs and school levels) that are developed in a participatory way through cross sector as well as through strengthened coordination and collaboration mechanisms with a larger variety of stakeholders from within the government system and with Non-State Actors.	
o better address child marriage, languages, geography and disability inclusion gaps and issues, as well as focus more on the importance of secondary education in relation to access to sciences studies for girls for example.	
o Increase the number of women in educational leadership, increasing both the number of female headteachers in schools and the number of females in senior positions within all layers of the education administrative system (local, provincial and national levels)	
◦ Address inequalities within the institutional school sector. Some countries such as the Philippines, for example, have approached this through providing vouchers for girls to attend private secondary schools. An alternative approach might be closer regulation and enforcement of quotas within the non-state sector for female students and students from disadvantaged groups.[169]	
1.4 Consider evolving the index into a revised targeting mechanism	
▪ **Strengthen roll out of an improved school profile[170]** as a tool for accountability and advocacy at school level.	
▪ **The index should evolve into a revised targeting mechanism** taking into consideration both the school level and the learning dimension, where schools with larger shares of disadvantaged children may receive additional investment in human	

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[169] Recommendation from the GESI report
[170] That compare the school achievement with other schools similarly to the work undertaken by WE for the analysis of data at LG level in the context of development of the ESIPs.
(see summary sheet in the evaluation report)

and material resources to address learning challenges. Rather than using the index for overall affectation, a revised index could allow to consider the share of equity-financing within the overall education-related expenses.	
2 Recommendations for the future national education plan	
2.1 Strengthen generation and use of evidence for programming and learning	
▪ Complete the body of knowledge with additional equity focused quantitative and qualitative studies to generate evidence for advocacy and programming. (i.e conduct a demand analysis study[171], ensure a better use of the Out of schools database to track the level of retention of the children in the focused districts, conduct additional surveys and information gathering regarding key issues, such as the activities that improve the retention of OoSC and their learning outcomes, which would also be beneficial to improve the activities of the program and its efficiency.)	
▪ Ensure that data is available and conduct data analysis to track how students, in each LGs, in sub-categories of the eight dimensions of equity perform to be able to devise differentiated strategies that eliminate barriers to access and measurement of impact. This should be done through computing and consolidating key education outcomes indicators while embedding them into the EMIS with a more user friendly interface. (As this is currently done by WE on behalf of the LGs and therefore it is not a sustainable approach). Introduce a planning tool in EMIS to facilitate the planning process for the LGs	
▪ Develop IEMIS to include OoSC mapping and monitoring,	
▪ Address long time issues related to the lack of accurate data on children with disabilities in the education sector.	
▪ Continue using education data to inform equity in answering more research questions on equity.	
2.2 Strengthen planning, monitoring and reporting as well as coordination and cross sectoral collaboration functions related to social inclusion:	
▪ Include more SSDP social inclusion indicators in the result framework of the national and LG Education plans that are SMART and quality oriented as per the recommendations made by the equity and inclusion Technical Working Groups.	
▪ Ensure that some key indicators such as the proportion of schools meeting minimum enabling conditions, are included in the PRF to monitor progress in terms of quality learning environment, and consider an update of the MEC to include learning;	
▪ Strengthen coordination and cross sectoral collaboration at central and local level within government system and between Government and NGOs.	
2.3 Ensure Equity in Financing and not only in programming	
▪ Ensure equity in financing through more targeted scholarships and better funding allocations to the most needed municipalities and schools based on equity-based formulas.[172]	

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[171] A demand analysis study is needed to better understand the main reason and roots causes that leave children Out of Schools children. Ideally, the study should include a qualitative component that will unpack the reasons about why children are not at school but also a quantitative survey that will identify potential correlation between the education context (quality of learning, presence or not of teachers) and the family context. (income, perspective future for the children…) in various geographical localities. The aim would be to better understand if there is a correlation between improved education services, access and retention and the family context (number of children, wealth of the family..)

[172] The USAID, education sector analysis 2020 noted that there was a need for a clear strategy in the forthcoming education plan to spell out how recurrent expenditure related to resources based on a disparity based formula will be included and sustained in the SSDP period.

▪ More particularly, consider a comprehensive review of the education and wider social protection finance system, including the distribution and targeting mechanism, and role of respective federal tiers to improve the equity and targeting of scholarships (residential vs day student, and wider support for poorer students to access and stay in secondary education).	
▪ The ES should explore further social protection and cash transfer mechanisms such as pro poor scholarship now covering all districts in Nepal.	
▪ Ensure that heading of budget lines are clearly mentioning equity focused interventions to ensure that the funding will not be used for other purposes	
2.4 Ensure that equity-based interventions address both education-related demand and supply needs as well as cover well the three main equity area on access, retention and learning outcomes in the new context of the Federal structure and COVID-19 health crisis	
▪ Community-based interventions which addressed social stigma and challenged stereotypes, increased awareness of educational rights and thereby education-related demand should be coupled with school-based interventions that developed teachers' capacity for inclusive pedagogy to help keep children in school.	
▪ Advocate for the appointment and redeployment of teachers to the most needed localities as this is the most single important factor that constraint the education sector at this time.	
▪ Include strategies to increase the use of transformative and inclusive pedagogies within schools and classrooms to improve the quality of the teaching[173] as a way to retain children at schools. Reduce heterogeneity in school provision through appropriate measures (e.g. reducing the gap between community/institutional schools), and at the local level promoting teacher stability or making schools more accountable for their performance. Greater engagement of SMCs and parents in school management, teacher recruitment, and the monitoring of school and classroom processes can help enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom as well as overall school governance.	
▪ Invest on ICT in and outside the schools to ensure access to distant learning for all and more particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.	
▪ New vulnerable population have emerged because of the COVID-19, many schools have collapses because change in demography, roles and responsibilities of the education administrative system have changes. It would be important to redefine the rules through case by case interventions to identify who should do what and at what level.	
2.5 Mainstream Equity in education planning processes to improve accountability	
▪ If LGs may not be accountable to the central level in the new federalism system, they still need to be accountable to national objectives. For this reason, it may be more appropriate in the current context (also in the context of limited capacity at local level) to ensure that equity is rather mainstreamed in the local education plan. This can be done if clear, concrete and overarching central level objectives that focus on equity in the context of the forthcoming Nepal Education Sector Plan Development 2022-2030 (aligned to the global level education agenda 2030) are made available to the local government entities as a clear guidance note/road map.	

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[173] This is also needed in the growing competitive context with private schools

▪ Accountability can also be improved if parents are given the opportunities to be more engaged in the Parents Teachers Associations but also if school profiles are developed (Through the DMS project) and used to compare schools within the same province for example.	
▪ Strengthen Programming at LGs and school level with diffusion and use of school profile for social audit to ensure accountability towards parents as a mean to promote a more qualitative and functioning education system	
▪ Similarly, there may not need to have a separate Equity Strategy for the rolling out of the next Nepal Education Sector Plan Development if its objectives are well aligned to those of the SDG 4 where equity is already mainstreamed at every level.[174]	
2.6 Institutionalizing support mechanisms for need based support to LGs for developing overall ESPs	
▪ Use trained resources in education planning from all levels to assist LG to produce their plans and compute school profile up to the time LGs have gained sufficient capacities to do it by their own. ▪ Support Need-based interventions related to use of data, consultation and coordination including cross-sectoral components and linkage to SIPs with the schools.	
2.7 Revise or update of the equity strategy in the new context: SDG4:Education 2030 and the new federal context and the new funding modality of the country	

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[174] SDG 4 is composed of 7 outcome targets and 3 means of implementation. 3 of these outcomes are more specific to primary and secondary education and also include a focus on equity: Universal primary and secondary education: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes. Early childhood development and universal pre-primary education: By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. Gender equality and inclusion: By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

ANNEXES

Annex 1. Documentation for the desk review

We were provided timely with the following set of documents that are being used during the desk review phase.

Presentation of the equity strategy and its application within the education sector of Nepal Thematic working group meeting minutes. These documents contains all Equity thematic working group minutes and annexes and were useful to understand the timeline, sequence and process.

Joint Sector Reviews. The set of documents provided contained all the Aide Memoires of the joint review and planning missions in the education sector, the priorities in the education sector plan's program result framework which have been used as the basis of the technical support provided through the Equity thematic working group.

Education Sector Analysis: The folder includes all studies conducted during the last 2 years in relation to the preparation of the forthcoming new Education Sector Plan that is being developed.

Plans and budgets. The documents include the education sector plans (ESPs), annual strategic implementation plans (ASIPs), annual work budgets and plans (AWPBs) and equity strategy implementation plans (ESIPs) where agreed strategies and budgets to operationalize the equity strategy are reflected

Equity Index. The folder included the baseline analysis, formula, design and computations of the equity index and information related to the Data Must Speak initiative that supported the development of the index.

Data Reports. The folder contained the EMIS and MICS data, as well as Flash and Education sector status reports for the period 2010-2020. Furthermore, the CBS data, including population growth projections, were also shared with the evaluation team.

In addition, following our request, the following documents were shared with the Evaluation team:
- Latest achievement report for DLI 6 submitted by the government to the Joint Financing Partners (JFPs) via the development partner focal point (ADB)
- Draft situation analysis report on the impact of COVID on the Nepal education sector.
- Attached the institutional capacity needs assessment undertaken for the SSDP
- Draft education sector analysis,
- Methodology for the annual fiduciary review,
- Inclusive Education approach paper
- UNICEF study on Out of Schools Children 2016

Annex 2. List of respondents interviewed

National Level (Kathmandu)

Date	Type of Interview (KII or FGD)	Name of the Respondant	Function/Organisation/title of the respondant	Men	Women
16 Feb	KII	Mrs Helen Sherpa	World Education		1
17 Feb	KII	Mr Ian Attfield	UK FCDO	1	
15 Feb	KII	Mr. Shankar Thapa	EMIS section	1	
15 Feb	KII	Mrs James Alexander Russell	Education Sector Planning Liaison Officer,MoEST and UNICEF	1	
15 Feb	KII	Mr Jimmy Oostrum	UNICEF Nepal. System Strengthening Education Specialist	1	
17 Feb	FGD	Mr Mark Waltham	UNICEF Nepal Education section chief	1	
17 Feb	FGD	Mr Ivan Coursac	UNICEF ROSA, Education specialist	1	
15 Feb	KII	Mr Purushottam Acharya	UNICEF Nepal, Education output manager		
18 Feb	KII	Ms Frances Hitchens	Consultant, Education Sector Analysis		1
22 Feb	KII	Dr Mukunda	UNDP	1	
25 Feb	FGD	Ms Kati Bhose	Finnish education program		1
25 Feb	FGD	Ms Indra Gurung	Finnish education program		1
25 Feb	FGD	Mr Jaya Krishna Upadhyay	USAID	1	
25 Feb	FGD	Mrs Laura Parrott	USAID (Education Specialist)		1
26 Feb	KII	Mr Serge Peano	Consultant economic and public finance analysis	1	
1 March	KII	Dr Ananda Paudel	Head of VSO inclusive education program	1	
2 March	KII	Ms Kamla Bisht	NORAD		1
2 March	KII	Mr Joan Casanova	Delegation of the European Union	1	
3 March	KII	Ms Smita Gyawali	Asia Development Bank		1
4 March	KII	Mr Matt Broussard	UNICEF Innocenti group, previous head of the Data Must Speak initiative.	1	
3 March	FGD	Shankar Thapa	Head of EMIS	1	
3 March	FGD	Sambedan Koirala	World Education	1	
5 March	KII	Dr Lava Deo Awasthi	MoET Nepal's Language Commission.	1	
9 March	KII	Ms Laxmi Paudyal	Save the Children		1
12 March	FGD	Indra Panta,	UNICEF education officer Nepalganj (Karnali and Sudurpaschim Provinces)	1	
12 March	FGD	Indra Gupta,	UNICEF education officer Nepalganj (Sudurpaschim Province)	1	
12 March	FGD	Pharsu Ram Panth,	UNICEF education officer, Nepalganj (Karnali Province)	1	
12 March	FGD	Bimala Manandhar,	UNICEF education officer,Janakpur (Province 2)		1
12 March	FGD	Bishnu Maya Bhattarai	UNICEF education officer,Janakpur (Province 2)		1
12 March	FGD	Manju Wagle,	UNICEF education officer,Siddharthanagar (Lumbini Province)		1
12 March	FGD	Rajani Maharjan	UNICEF education officer(Lumbini Province)		1
1st March	FGD	Mr Mark Waltham	UNICEF Nepal, Education Section Chief	1	
1st March	FGD	Mr Dipu Shakya	UNICEF Nepal. Early Childhood Education Output Officer	1	
1st March	FGD	Ms Lyndsay Rae McLaurin	UNICEF Nepal. Basic Education Output Manager		1
1st March	FGD	Ms Purnima Gurung	UNICEF Nepal. Adolescent Education Output Manager		1
1st March	FGD	Mr Purushottam Acharya	UNICEF Nepal. System Strengthening Output Manager	1	
1st March	FGD	Ms Sabina Joshi	UNICEF Nepal. Safer Schools Output Manager		1
19 February	FGD	Ms Divya Dawadi	Ministry of Science Education and Technology, GoN		1
19 February	FGD	Ms Kamla Bisht	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation		1
19 February	FGD	Ms Maya Sherpa	World bank		1
19 February	FGD	Ms Laxmi Paudyal	Save the Children/ AIN		1
19 February	FGD	Mr Ananda Poudel	VSO Nepal/ AIN	1	
30 March	FGD	Divya Diwadi,	CEHRD		1
30 March	FGD	Ghanashyam Aryal	CEHRD	1	
			TOTAL: 43	**23**	**20**

Sub national level

Date	Name of the Respondant	Function/Organisation/title of the respondent	Total men	Total women
04-mars	Shree Niwas Baitha	Jana Jagaran Yuwa Club (JJYC), Subarna Municipality	1	
05-mars	Idrish Mia	Head Teacher, Nepal Rastriya Secondary School, Subarna	1	
05-mars	Mahendra Pratap Yadav	Guardian, Nepal Rastriya Secondary School, Subarna	1	
05-mars	Ranjit prasad Yadav	SMC (care taker) Chairperson- No formal SMC, Nepal Rastriya Secondary School, Subarn	1	
05-mars	Savita Yadav	Teacher, Primary level, Nepal Rastriya Secondary School, Subarna		1
05-mars	Siyaram Yadav	JJYC representative, Subarna	1	
07-mars	Sonapat Sah	Mother of OoSC, Subarna		1
07-mars	Bijaya Kant Mishra	Janata Secondary School, Rajpur Municipality	1	
07-mars	Md. Ajahar Alam	Learning motivator, RDC/WE/UNICEF Rajpur	1	
07-mars	Rashida Parveen	Early grade teacher, Janata Sec School, Rajpur		1
07-mars	Munchu Devi Ram	Mother, Janata Sec School, Rajapur		1
07-mars	Mohammad Kalam	Parent, Janata Secondary School Rajpur	1	
07-mars	Deepak Khatri	Rajpur Rural Municipality Edu Officer	1	
10-mars	Khagendra Brd Malla	Khajura Rural Municipality	1	
10-mars	Ram Bahadur Malla	Barekot Municipality Edu Officer	1	
11-mars	Shiwaraj Phuyal	Subarna Municipality Edu Officer	1	
11-mars	Sushil Kumar Yadav	Subarna Municipality WE Field Staff	1	
12-mars	Kabiraj Pun	Birendra- Aiswarya High School, SMC Chair, Barekot	1	
12-mars	Kikari Nepali	Kalika Primary School, PTA member, Barekot		1
12-mars	Jasbir Kami	Janata Adharbhut (Basic) School, Guardian, Barekot	1	
12-mars	Man Bahadur Rawat	Teacher, Sita Secondary School, Barekot	1	
13-mars	Dr. Kamal Pokhrel	Province 7	1	
15-mars	Harkbahadur Saphari	Rural Municipality Edu Officer, Sayal, Doti	1	
16-mars	Surya Bahadur Singh	HT, Kaladhunga Basic school, Sayal, Doti	1	
16-mars	Ganesh Prasad Joshi	PTA member, Janata Janardan Sec. School, Sayal, Doti	1	
16-mars	Harkabahadur Singh	SMC chair, Janata Janardan Sec. School, Sayal municipality	1	
16-mars	Kalpana Naagari	Parent Kaladhunga Basic School, Sayal Doti		1
16-mars	Prithiraj Jyoti	HT, Kalika Secondary School, Barekot		1
18-mars	Satish Gurung	Communicty Development Center, NGO Purbi Chauki	1	
18-mars	Chandra Bahadur Jora	Teacher, Saraswoti Basic School, Purbi Chauki, Doti	1	
18-mars	Khadak Bahadur Khadka	HT, Rajendraswor Sec School, Purbi Chauki	1	
18-mars	Tek Bahadur Khadka	HT, Bhagawati Basic School, Purbi Chauki	1	
18-mars	Parvati Devi Khadka	PTA member (Parent)Saraswoti Basic School		1
18-mars	Prem Singh Khadka	SMC member, Bhagawati Basic School, Purbi Chauki	1	
18-mars	Binod Bhatta	Municipality Education Officer, Purbi Chauki	1	
18-mars	GaganBhadur Khadka	HT, Yogini Secondary School, Khajura	1	
21-mars	Bhakta Bahadur KC	SMC Chair, Gyanodaya Namuna Vidyalaya (high school) Khajura	1	
21-mars	Saklen Khan	Guardian+teacher, Mustakul Ulum, Madarsa, Khajura	1	
21-mars	Phatte Kumari Jaisi	Social Development Coordinator, Khajura		1
21-mars	Lok Bahadur Khatri	PTA Chair, Janasewa Secondary School, Khajura	1	
24-mars	Thaneshwar Gyawali	Deputy Director Social Development Directorate, Lumbini Province	1	
24-mars	Jeevan Giri	Disable Empowerment and Communication Center (DEC) Nepal, Khajura	1	
25-mars	Ganesh Singh	Social Devt Directorate, Karnali Province	1	
27-mars	Surya Raj Ghimire	Was in Social Devt Diretorate in P1 now in P2	1	
		Total of KII: 44	35	9

Annex 3. Final Evaluation matrix

Final Evaluation Questions	Sub Questions	Indicators	Data Collection methods	Data source
Relevance (R): The extent to which the Equity Strategy responds to the context of Nepal and the needs of children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.				
R 1. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been based on the equity-based issues and challenges observed in the education sector, and the needs of children in marginalized ethnic groups, castes and low-income families?	R1.1 Sub question: To what extent has the Equity Strategy added value in the context of ''natural'' observed systemic downward trend towards universalisation of access, participation and learning outcomes? How sound was the rationale to select the three capacities (access, participation and learning outcomes) as a justification for a dedicated Strategy on Equity?	Extend of overlapping of the '' natural'' evolution of the proxy indicators of the 3 dimensions of the index compared to the evolution of the 3 dimensions of the Equity Index in the focused districts. ☞ Analysis of the "natural" dynamics of the system by considering the evolution of access, completion, transition and completion rates over the last 15 years Type and adequation of equity-based issues and children needs identified in the education sector at the time of designing the strategy that have been taken into account and included in the Equity Strategy document	Computation of data sets from EMIS and MICS Desk review Estimates of schooling profiles (grade 1 to grade 12) at national level and by districts	EMIS, MICS Desk review of documents that were used for the development of the Equity strategy[11]
	R 1.2 Sub Question: What has been the added value of computing data from EMIS and population data using the Equity index formulas compared to more traditional aggregation of data for the education sector as an information and advocacy tool to reduce disparities in education outcomes?	Evidence of added value (or not) of the new data consolidated from the Equity Index versus usual EMIS/population data. ☞ Comparison between ranking of districts based on learning outcomes only and ranking of districts based on consolidated Equity Index. ☞ Analysis of the causes of drop-outs in household surveys and/or estimation of the determinants of the probability of dropping out before the end of the cycle, in analysing the correlation between repeater and drop-out rates and level of learning outcome and drop out.	Computation of data sets from EMIS, MICS and other Household surveys	EMIS, MICS, Household surveys

[11] Mid-term review of the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) 2012. Child Friendly School Framework (DOE, 2010) . Child Friendly School Rollout Plan (DOE, 2011), Teachers management strategy (DOE, 2013),Strategic implementation plan for gender equality in girls' education (DOE, 2007), Action Plan for Establishing Incentive Scheme to Promote and Reward Good Practices in Schools (DOE 2013), School Health and Nutrition Program (MOE & MOH 2010), School as Zones of Peace Program (MOE, 2012).

	R 1.3 Sub Question: To what extent the design, theoretical framework including the ToC and rationale of the strategy are appropriate, relevant and effective for the envisioned purpose?	<u>Level of consistency and alignment of the various elements of the Equity Strategy</u> ☞ Analysis of the possible link between the three main dimensions of the Equity Index to validate or not ''the linear ES model'' that says that access lead to participation that lead to learning Outcomes. ☞ Analysis of the internal system of computation and weighting of data of the Equity Index in relation to the various dimensions and drivers of inequity. ☞ Analysis of the relationship between the Equity Index and the Resource Index. ☞ Analysis of the '' baseline T.o.C'' in comparison to the findings from the evaluation (more particularly in relation to the assumptions and risks component of the T.o.C and in light with the ongoing work on the development of the new SSDP)	Correlation at the district and LG level of EI, EI components and resources index	EMIS
	<u>Sub question R 1.4</u>: To what extent do the equity-based interventions (both undertaken and proposed) respond to the context and structural causes of disparities in education outcomes? And how they respond to reducing barriers in access, participation and learning outcomes based on identified needs? <u>Sub question R 1.5:</u> To what extent the operationalization of the equity strategy through targeted interventions allows a response to these barriers being intersectional and including several drivers of disparities that disproportionally increase disparities as assumed in the theoretical framework?	<u>Level of adequation between equity-based interventions and causes/barriers of inequity?</u> ☞ Analysis of the main drivers of inequity and proposed/implemented Equity Based Interventions ☞ Analysis and understanding of the method of calculation and definition of ''Out Of School Children'' OOSC. ☞ Content analysis of transcripts from KIIs and list of interventions planned and/or implemented	Computation of data sets from EMIS, MICS and other Household surveys Desk review KIIs Confirmation of OoSC trends at national and 15 districts related to the EMIS data	EMIS, MICS, Household surveys Thematic Qualitative studies related to each drivers of inequity. List of interventions implemented Transcripts from KIIs
R.2. Does the Equity Strategy adequately respond to the overall context of the	<u>R 2.1 Sub Question:</u> What has been the rationale for the design of an Equity Strategy to reinforce the overall dynamic of the system compared to a lighter	<u>Level of alignment of the strategy with the current supply and demand needs of Education Sector in Nepal</u>	Desk review of documents related to the Education Sector in Nepal before and after	Programme documents / Monitoring and progress reports

Education Sector in Nepal?	capacity building intervention of the system?	☞ Analysis of the scope of the Equity based Interventions and nature of these interventions (in relation to their support to supply and demand needs of the education sector).	the design of the Equity Strategy. KIIs with UNICEF, the Government and Non-State Actors Characteristics of schools by districts and equity	/ Status reports on out of school children, /DLI achievement and verification reports,/Joint sector review aide memoires. Findings from interviews with UNICEF, Government and Non-State Actors
R.3. Have the equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children that need them most and at the right time in terms of facilitating access, participation and learning?		Level of achievements of the DLI indicators over the years since 2015 Level of achievements for various categories of children	Desk review of Joint sector review aide memoires, Flash and DLI Reports	Joint sector review aide memoires, Flash and DLI Reports
R.4 To what extend the strategy has leveraged multi-sectoral responses (so including linkage to sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc.)	Sub Question R 4.1: Has the implementation of the ES, through the introduction of the equity index or equity strategy implementation plans prompted cross sectoral communication, coordination or collaboration at federal, provincial and/or local governments Sub Question R4.2: To what extent have cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the ES	Level of multi-sectoral responses (also including linkage to sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc.) observed from the desk review and from KIIs Level of evidence about inter-governmental coordination mechanisms, meetings set up in relation the ES. Evidence of activities implemented through the ESIPs that are related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability	ESIPs Desk review of documents related to coordination mechanisms, meetings..	Desk review of ES documents including other sectorial responses ESIPS

			KIIs with UNICEF, Government and Non State Actors.	KIIs with UNICEF, Government & Non State Actors that have implemented equity interventions during COVID-19 time in 2020.
R.5. To what extent is the Equity Strategy relevant in allowing the government to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context?	Sub question R5.1: Has there been attempts to align the implementation of the strategy to newly emerged needs and context from the COVID-19 context?	Extent of which the Equity Strategy (including the Equity Index) has been used and/or adapted in the new context of COVID-19	Desk Review of COVID-19 education focused documents from the Government and from UNICEF	

Coherence (C): the extent to which the Equity Strategy has increased or decreased the ability of the Government of Nepal and external actors to undertake need-based an evidence-based planning, programming and budgeting under the previous and current education sector plans.				
C.1. The extent to which the Equity Strategy contributed to increased coherent interventions with an equity focus in the education sector implemented by non-governmental organizations and development partners?	C1.1 Sub Question:To what extent multi-sectoral equity interventions and social safety net programs that respond to needs of children enabling them to access, participate and learn, have been driven by or established under the Equity Strategy?	Extent to which the Equity Strategy has facilitated the implementation, by non-governmental organizations and development partners, of more coherent interventions with an equity focus.	KIIs with UNICEF, governmental organizations and development partners	Findings from interviews with governmental organizations and development partners
	C 1.2 Sub Question:What actors are involved in equity-based planning, programming, budgeting, implementation in the education sector?	Level of alignment among actors or with the government planning process		
	C 1.3 Sub Question: How are/can these different actors engage, align, use the equity strategy in their work?	Level of need-based support, results, coverage, use of resources, coordination, etc because of this alignment and coordination.		
	C 1.4 Sub Question: Has this led to greater alignment among actors or with the government planning process, increased need-based support, increased results, increased coverage, more efficient use of resources, increased coordination, etc?			
C.2. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been reflected in education	Sub question C 2.1: To what extent has the ES guided the strategies in the SSDP and to what extent its operationalization facilitated through its program	Extend to which the Equity Strategy is reflected/embedded/integrated in government policy, planning and budgeting, for the different types of government documents (acts, policies, sector plans, annual plans, appraisals, evaluations and reviews, work plans and budgets, etc.)	Desk review of education policies, programs and budgets	Findings from interviews with Government

	implementation guidelines and in the annual strategic implementation plans and annual work plans and budgets?		KIIs with Government institutions and UNICEF education staff	Institutions and UNICEF.
sector programmes and policies?				
	Sub Question C 2.2: To what extent is the implementation of the ES monitored in terms of the inclusion of indicators in the SSDP program result framework (including DLIs), integration of the Equity Index in the EMIS and in sector progress and status reports	Level of inclusion of the Equity Strategy in the SSDP program result framework, reports and in the EMIS (through the Equity Index)	KIIs with Government institutions and UNICEF education staff	Transcripts from the interviews

Effectiveness (EFFE): the extent to which the Equity Strategy has achieved its objectives and goals.

EFFE.1. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based government and non-state actors funding in the Nepal school education sector?	EFFE 1.1 Sub Question: To what extent the Equity Strategy has been able to leverage additional funds (earmarked, non-earmarked, on/off budget, to government, to stakeholders, etc.) for equity-based interventions that were not initially planned by other interventions?	Extent that the ES has mobilised additional funding and activities. Level of additional funding mobilised in comparison with previous funding received by the local government.	KII with Government and Non state actors at National Level KIIs with Government and non-state actors in the Nepal school Education sector. Review of Budget and expenditures of sampled programs implemented based on the Equity Strategy	Findings from interviews with Government and non-state actors in the Nepal school education sector Budget and expenditures of sampled programs implemented based on the Equity Strategy
EFFE 2. In the case of increased needs-based funding and/or resource mobilized by non-state actors, has this led to a reduction of disparities in education outcomes between children that are/were based on their gender,	Sub question EFFE 2.1: Have these additional resources led to improving the education outcomes for children? Sub Question EFFE 2.2: Has increased funding led to achieving intended results of the ES?	Outcomes from discussion with Non State actors and from review of secondary data in relation to potential reduction of disparities for children in the focused districts	KIIs with non-state actors Desk review of programs implemented by non-state actors (if documentation is made available)	Transcripts from KIIs with non-state actors Desk review

caste, ethnicity, ability, location, socio-economic status, vulnerability or a combination of these?				
EFFE 3. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Index been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 3.1 Sub question: To what extend was the design, ownership, use, effect, etc of the Equity Index to inform policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring processes for a more equitable education?.	Extent of the effect of the Strategy on the work of planners at the local level (understanding of the approach, confidence in the EI guidelines, ability to extend the analysis of these guidelines and to define an appropriate remediation plan, etc.)?	KIIs with Education staff at local level Desk review	Transcripts from KIIs SSDP reviews documents and education sector analysis
EFFE 4. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 4.1 Sub Question: Has the scope of the equity strategy resulted in an adequate volume of interventions and reach? EFFE 4.2 Sub question: To what extend the envisioned ESIP development process is feasible? EFFE 4.3 Sub question: To what extend produced ESIPs have shown genuine efforts to identify appropriate types and varieties of interventions?	Variety, type and volume of interventions implemented compared to the ones described in the Strategy paper. Extend of the interventions with regard to local and national objectives Level of strengths and areas to improve in the envisioned ESIP development process. Type and level of planning activities conducted by local planners to identify appropriate interventions.	KIIs at local level Desk review	Transcripts from KIIs at local level SSDP reviews documents and education sector analysis
EFFE 5. To what extent has the Equity Strategy facilitated the Government of Nepal to achieve the equity-based targets and objectives within	Sub question EFFE 5.1: What was the rationale/justification for selecting the interventions? Sub question EFFE 5.2: What was the added value of reviewing the analysis and	Type of justification provided by education planners for selecting the interventions? Type of added value shared by respondents to conduct reviewing and appraisal work to inform the selection of the target and objectives of the LG ESIPs.	KIIs	Transcripts of the KIIs at local and national level

the previous and current education sector plans?	appraisal to inform the selection of the target and objectives of the LG ESIPs?	Level of feedback received from the respondents in relation to the results achieved thanks to the equity-based interventions.		
EFFE 6. Has the emerged federal structure in the education sector had an effect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the equity Strategy?	EFFE 6.1 Sub Question: What has been the level of appropriation of the Equity Strategy at National and local level in the context of the emerged federal structure? EFFE 6.2 Sub question: To what extent is the equity strategy compatible with the emerged federal structure in the education sector and coherently adapted at the different government levels? EFFE 6.3 Sub Question: To what extent has the federal transition affected the implementation readiness across the different tiers of government	Level of influence of the emerged federal structure in the education sector on the appropriation of the implementation of the Equity Strategy Level of adaptation of the ES to the new federal structure	KIIs	Transcripts of the KIIs. Desk Review
Efficiency (EFFI): the extent to which the Equity Strategy enabled the Government to achieving equity-based targets and objectives in a timely and cost-efficient way?				
EFFI 1. Has the equity strategy contributed to the government utilizing financial and human resources for equity-based interventions in an efficient way?	EFFI 1.1 Sub Question: In what way it contributed to utilizing financial and human resources efficiently? EFFI 1.2 Sub question: Are financial and human resources sufficient to achieve intended results of the strategy? EFFI 1.3 Sub Question: Is there an alternative strategy that could have been used to address inequity issues in the education sector?	Number and type of examples reported of efficient use of financial and human resources for equity-based interventions Level of adequation of financial and human resources to design and implement the Equity Based Interventions Description of alternative strategies (if available)	KIIs with Government institutions (including M&E staff), non-state actors and UNICEF education staff.	Findings from interviews with Government Institutions, non-state actors and with UNICEF staff.
EFFI.2. Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented within its planned timeframe? And Why?	EFFI 2.1 Sub question: Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting? EFFI 2.2 Sub Question: What external and internal factors caused delays in the implementation of interventions?	Evidence of processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions that have been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting Type of external and internal factors that caused delays or contributed to accelerating the progress in the implementation of interventions.	Desk review of documents related to the equity-based interventions KIIs with Government, UNICEF and non-state actors that have been involved in the design	Monitoring and progress reports / Status reports on OoSC / DLI achievement reports

	EFFI 2.3 Sub Question: What external and internal factors, including elements of the ES, contributed to accelerating the progress?	Percentage between ''planned' versus ''effectively implemented'' interventions	and implementation of the interventions	/ Joint sector review aide memoires. Findings from interviews with UNICEF, Government and Non-State Actors List of equity interventions implemented
EFFI.3. Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities and how has the evolving federalization context of Nepal affected that?	EFFI 3.1 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the institutional setup (coordination, collaboration, funding, reporting, implementation mechanisms...)? EFFI 3.2 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the capacity of the education staff to undertake data analysis and planning functions?	Extend that the ES has contributed to strengthen the institutional setup (coordination, collaboration, funding, reporting, implementation mechanisms...) and build capacity of education staff.	Desk review of documents related to the equity-based interventions KIIs with Government, UNICEF and non-state actors that have been involved in the design and implementation of the interventions	
Sustainability (S): the extent to which the Equity Strategy allows ability to adapt to emerging challenges and changing context and outcomes of the Equity Strategy are long-lasting and continue benefiting children's education.				
S.1. To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? How has COVID-19 affected the sustainability of financial, operational and institutional	Sub Question S 1.1: To what extent is the Equity Strategy possible to be continued in terms of its implementation in the current COVID-19 context? Sub Question S 1.2: How resilient is the Equity Strategy to changes and what are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained?	Level of appreciation (positive and negative) and evidence provided from respondents related to the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government to sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long term (including in the COVID-19 context) and why. Type of risks that could jeopardise the sustainability of the ES	KIIs with government staff Desk review of program documents	Transcripts from the interview with Government staff

			KIIs with government staff	Transcripts from the
capacity of the Education Sector?				
S.2. Has the equity strategy facilitated/attributed to strengthening capacity of education sector duty bearers and stakeholders to address education disparities?	Sub Question S 2.1: To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS? Sub question S 2.2: To what extent, the strategy is effectively answering to supply and demand needs at the national and sub national levels in the education sector for a more equitable education?	Level of appreciation (positive and negative) and indicators provided from respondents related to the support provided by the Equity Strategy to strengthen capacity of the education sector (including EMIS). Type of interventions of the ESIPs related to supply and demand.	KIIs with government staff Desk review of program documents	Transcripts from the interview with Government staff

Annex 4. Data Collection tools

Introduction for all Key Informant Interviews

Good morning,

I am part of a team of consultant contracted by the Ministry of Education and UNICEF to evaluate the Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal.
The equity strategy was launched in December 2014 with the main objective to reduce the current disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes for children in basic and secondary public education in Nepal.

The Strategy aims to help the Government and other development Organizations to identify, plan, allocate funding, execute and monitor equity based interventions based on the analysis of dominant drivers of a composite equity index at district level, in order to achieve a reduction in the number of marginalized group of learners in the selected municipalities.
We would like to interview you to discuss your knowledge and experience of with the rolling out of the equity Strategy in your geographical area. The interview will last one hour. There is no right or wrong answer and you can decide not to respond to some of the questions if you wish so.
Your participation is voluntary and you can drop out any time you want ;
Please note that our discussion will be confidential and will not be recorded.
Do you agree to take part to this interview.?
Many thanks
The evaluation team

	Type of Respondent covered under the Evaluation Instrument	Method	Level of interaction
1	UNICEF, Government departments (MOE, and existing GoN inter-department links with MOWCSW, MoHP, MoFALD, MoTL) Implementing partners and members of the Equity Thematic working group	KII	National
2	Government staff from the Provincial, and Local Government level.	KII	Sub National/local
3	Head teacher and Representative of the School Management Committee (SMC)	KII	Local (school)
4	Representative of the Teachers	KII	Local (School)
	Representative of Parent from the Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)	KII	Local (school)

5	Representative of Parent of children not attending the schools	KII	Local (school)

Type of Respondent	Number of Respondent
National level :	
▪ UNICEF education staff	2
▪ Ministry of Education, science and technology	4
▪ Centre for Education and Human Resource Development	1
▪ Equity thematic working group members (including Implementing agencies for the UNICEF Education Program and other non-state actors)	10
▪ GoN inter-department links with MOWCSW, MoHP, MoFALD, MoTL	3
Sub Total	**20**
Sub National/Field level : (6 localities/schools in 1 province and 2 districts)	
▪ 1 Provincial (education person)	1
▪ Local Governments, social development coordinator (Education) and education officials of targeted municipalities (2 per municipalities x 6 municipalities)	12
▪ Headteachers (6 municipalities)	6
▪ School Management Committee (1 Chairman person or another member per school x 6 schools)	6
▪ Representatives of the Parents (Sitting in the PTA, preferably female parent) . 1 per school X 6 schools	6
▪ Representative of the teacher. 1 per school x 6 schools	6
Sub Total	**37**
Community level: (6 localities/schools)	
▪ KIIs with parents (preferably female) of out of school children (From minorities groups, parents with girls with disabilities...). 1 per school catchment X 6 schools	6
Sub Total	**6**
Total	**61**

Parent of children not attending the schools

Date of interview:	Name/function of the respondent:
Gender of the respondent:	
Ethnicity	
Caste	
Income level	
Province/district/Local Level Unit name:	

1. Relevance: the extent to which the Equity Strategy responds to the context of Nepal and the needs of children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Do you have children? If yes how many and what is their age?
Disability
Did you children ever attended the schools?

Have some of them dropped out of the schools? If yes, could you please tell us why this has happened? What could have been done to avoid your child dropping out of the school?

What do you think the education sector/school should do to help you address the challenges you are facing to enrol and retain your children in the schools? And why?

3. Effectiveness: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has achieved its objectives and goals.

Have you heard of any interventions aiming to support families to enrol the children out of schools in the school system? If yes , what do you think of these interventions? Is it useful? Why?

Example of Equity based interventions conducted following additional funding provided for the ESIPs	
Household survey and mobilization of Community learning centres (CLCs) for household visits and awareness raising; Data tabulation and analysis in the context of development of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIP)	Provision of school bag, stationery and uniform to students. Enrolment campaign and welcome to school in collaboration with I/NGOs; Topping up of regular scholarships.

Other '' more regular equity focuses interventions'':

Per child grants to schools for learning materials; Integrated child development workshop (Local level); Grant for the programs on enrolment and retention targeted for out of school children; Residential education management for child labour and street children; Non-residential scholarship for basic and secondary level student at community school Scholarship for students; Extension of hostel facility in community schools of mountainous districts; Management cost for mountain hostels; Grants for school with special education Scholarship for students with disability; Non-residential scholarship for conflict affected children; Scholarship for students with disabilities studying at higher education; Grants to school for Midday meal to the students of basic level (Grade ECD - 5) in targeted districts. (Source: Statut report 2019/2020, DLI).

To what extent the equity based interventions (if done) have helped you to enrol your children? What has changed and why?

5. Sustainability: the extent to which the Equity Strategy allows ability to adapt to emerging challenges and changing context and outcomes of the Equity Strategy are long-lasting and continue benefiting children's education.

What will be the conditions needed in your family and at school to enrol and also retain your child at school?
Who should provide this support?
To what extend the COVID-19 has changed your situation in relation to school enrolment for your children? How do you address this issues?

CAYAMBE
EDUCATION

EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS (EQ) FOR HEAD TEACHERS AND SCHOOL MANAGEMENT COMMITEES

Date of interview:	Name/function of the respondent:
Gender of the respondent:	
Organisation/department/school name:	

Note for the interviewer: Ask only the questions in blue to the respondents. The rest of the questions are only for your information

Introduction

Have you heard about the Equity Strategy? What has been done in your school in relation to the implementation of this strategy? (in term of planning (through the use of the Equity Index) or implementation of the equity based interventions…)

RELEVANCE: the extent to which the Equity Strategy responds to the context of Nepal and the needs of children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

R 1. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been based on the equity-based issues and challenges observed in the education sector, and the needs of children in marginalized ethnic groups, castes and low-income families?	R1.1 Sub question: To what extent has the Equity Strategy added value in the context of ''natural'' observed systemic downward trend towards universalisation of access, participation and learning outcomes? How sound was the rationale to select the three capacities (access, participation and learning outcomes) as a justification for a dedicated Strategy on Equity?

What do you think are the added value of these additional interventions (use of equity index for planning/budgeting and equity based interventions) for your school catchment area?
☞**add probing questions focusing on equity issues. For example, if head teachers don't mention kids with a disability or out of school children….**

Sub question R 1.4: To what extent do the equity-based interventions (both undertaken and proposed) respond to the Context and structural causes of disparities in education outcomes? And how they respond to reducing barriers in access, participation and learning outcomes based on identified needs?

Sub question R 1.5 :To what extent the operationalization of the equity strategy through targeted interventions allows a response to these barriers being intersectional and including several drivers of disparities that disproportionally increase disparities as assumed in the theoretical framework?

What do you think will be the potential equity based interventions to implement in your area to address the issues of inequity? OR What interventions have you implemented already and why did you select them ? Was there other more relevant interventions that could have been implemented? Which ones?
Could you please explain how these interventions have reduced the barriers in access, participation and learning outcomes based on identified needs?

Example of Equity based interventions conducted following additional funding provided for the ESIPs

Household survey and mobilization of Community learning centres (CLCs) for household visits and awareness raising; Data tabulation and analysis in the context of development of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIP)	Provision of school bag, stationery and uniform to students. Enrolment campaign and welcome to school in collaboration with I/NGOs; Topping up of regular scholarships.

R.3. Have the equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children that need them most and at the right time in terms of facilitating access, participation and learning?

Have the equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children that need them most and at the right time in terms of facilitating access, participation and learning? How many and which typology of children have you reached with these interventions? Was the support delivered on time? If not why?

R.4 To what extend the strategy has leveraged multi-sectoral responses (so including linkage to sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc.)	Sub Question R 4.1 : Has the implementation of the EES, through the introduction of the equity index or equity strategy implementation plans prompted cross sectoral communication, coordination or collaboration at federal, provincial and/or local governments Sub Question R4.2: To what extent have cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the EES

How did you link these equity based interventions with other responses (sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc) ? Do you know if the sanitation facilities are disability friendly ? How about Menstrual Hygiene Management.?
To what extent have cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the EES

R.5. To what extent is the Equity Strategy relevant in allowing the government to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context?	Sub question R5.1: Has there been attempts to align the implementation of the strategy to newly emerged needs and context from the COVID-19 context?

To what extend have you use the equity based interventions to address the issues faced by the COVID-19? Will it be possible to use them? If no why?
☞Do you know if any covid related interventions took into account disability, provision of safety kids…. Provision of internet to children who couldn't afford it especially when all had to study online ?
Our data on social and economic impacts of covid showed that mostly children living in low income households were not able to take advantage of remote learning. It would be good to find out from head teachers, if their schools were involved in any ES guided intervention which helped them resolve lack of access to school during covid ?

COHERENCE: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has increased or decreased the ability of the Government of Nepal and external actors to undertake need-based an evidence-based planning, programming and budgeting under the previous and current education sector plans.

C.1. The extent to which the Equity Strategy contributed to increased coherent interventions with an equity focus in the education sector implemented by non-governmental organizations and development partners?	C1.1 Sub Question :To what extent multi-sectoral equity interventions and social safety net programs that respond to needs of children enabling them to access, participate and learn, have been driven by or established under the Equity Strategy? C 1.2 Sub Question :What actors are involved in equity-based planning, programming, budgeting, implementation in the education sector? C 1.3 Sub Question : How are/can these different actors engage, align, use the equity strategy in their work? C 1.4 Sub Question : Has this led to greater alignment among actors or with the government planning process, increased need-based support, increased results, increased coverage, more efficient use of resources, increased coordination, etc?

To what extent have you involved other Stakeholders (i.e: Non State Actors or other than the education department) in the design and implementation of the ESIP? Who are they? What has been the strengths and areas to improve of this collaborative work?

C.2. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been reflected in education sector programmes and policies?	Sub question C 2.1: To what extent has the EES guided the strategies in the SSDP and to what extent its operationalization facilitated through its program implementation guidelines and in the annual strategic implementation plans and annual work plans and budgets?

Was the program implementation guideline useful for the design and implementation of the interventions?

EFFECTIVENESS: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has achieved its objectives and goals.

EFFE.1. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based government and non-state actors funding in the Nepal school education sector?	EFFE 1.1 Sub Question: To what extent the Equity Strategy has been able to leverage additional funds (earmarked, non-earmarked, on/off budget, to government, to stakeholders, etc.) for equity based interventions that were not initially planned by other interventions?

What additional funding did you receive from the Government to design and implement the strategy? (For planning and implementation of equity based interventions). For which year did you receive this funding? What was the amount per year? What do you think of the amount received? Was it enough? Why?

EFFE 2. In the case of increased needs-based funding and/or resource mobilized by non-state actors, has this led to a reduction of disparities in education outcomes between children that are/were based on their gender, caste, ethnicity, ability, location, socio-economic status, vulnerability or a combination of these?	Sub question EFFE 2.1: Have these additional resources led to improving the education outcomes for children? Sub Question EFFE 2.2 : Has increased funding led to achieving intended results of the EES?

To what extend this additional funding (from government and from non-state actors) made a difference in the life of children in term of reducing the disparities?

EFFE 3. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Index been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 3.1 Sub question :To what extend was the design, ownership, use, effect, etc of the Equity Index to inform policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring processes for a more equitable education?.

How did you use the equity index to design and monitor the equity based interventions?

Expected steps for ESIP planning (and inclusion in the Local Education Sector Plan) and implementation process

Step 1: Evidence and analysis. Look at available data from the perspective of:
- Access, to different groups (for example boys, girls, children with disabilities, different minority/religious groups) have the same level of access. If not, who have the least access?
- Participation, do different groups (for example boys, girls, children with disabilities, different minority/religious groups) have the same level of attendance, retention and completion. If not, who have the lowest participation?
- Learning; are children learning equally. If not, which groups have lower learning outcomes

Step 2: Strategic planning
- Validate analysis with relevant stakeholders
- Map planned activities that respond to the outcomes of the analysis
- Cost activities and develop budget
- Map available resources that can be used for additional activities
- Prioritize based on available resources
- Identify resource gap
- Map support of other line agencies non-government partners that can be mobilized

Step 3: Implementation & monitoring
- Describe implementation arrangements for targeted activities
- Develop/select indicators and targets to measure results
- Define implementation timeline and monitor arrangements

(Source: Template for ESIP induction workshop.)

Key detailed steps generally include:	*Note*

1. Initial Orientation 2. ESIP working Group formation 3. Situation Analysis 4. Sharing of the analysis 5. Program Identification 6. Prioritization and Cost estimation 7. Budget forecast 8. ESIP formation 9. ESIP endorsement 10. ESIP in Local Level Strategic Plan 11. Implementation, monitoring and reporting about the Equity Based Interventions	After or in parallel to the process described on the left, the LGs Units have received an additional amount of funding from the federal level to allow them to start implementing Equity Based Interventions (for some of them, even though they did not complete the design of the ESIP)

EFFE 4. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 4.1 Sub Question : Has the scope of the equity strategy resulted in an adequate volume of interventions and reach ? EFFE 4.2 Sub question: To what extend the envisioned ESIP development process is feasible ? EFFE 4.3 Sub question :To what extend produced ESIPs have shown genuine efforts to identify appropriate types and varieties of interventions ? EFFE 4.4 Sub question :What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?

What do you think of the volume of interventions and reach? Was it enough to make a difference for children access, retention and improve learning outcomes ? why?

What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?

EFFE 5. To what extent has the Equity Strategy facilitated the Government of Nepal to achieve the equity-based targets and objectives within the previous and current education sector plans?	Sub question EFFE 5.1: What was the rationale/justification for selecting the interventions? Sub question EFFE 5.2: What was the added value of reviewing the analysis and appraisal to inform the selection of the target and objectives of the LG ESIPs?

What was the rationale/justification for selecting the interventions?

EFFE 6. Has the emerged federal structure in the education sector had an effect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the equity Strategy?	EFFE 6.1 Sub Question: What has been the level of appropriation of the Equity Strategy at National and local level in the context of the emerged federal structure? EFFE 6.2 Sub question: To what extent is the equity strategy compatible with the emerged federal structure in the education sector and coherently adapted at the different government levels?

	EFFE 6.3 Sub Question: To what extent has the federal transition affected the implementation readiness across the different tiers of government

What are the impacts of the new federal structure on the implementation and appropriation of the interventions implemented? How did you adapt to this change?

EFFICIENCY: the extent to which the Equity Strategy enabled the Government to achieving equity-based targets and objectives in a timely and cost-efficient way?

EFFI 1. Has the equity strategy contributed to the government utilizing financial and human resources for equity-based interventions in an efficient way?	EFFI 1.1 Sub Question: In what way it contributed to utilizing financial and human resources efficiently? EFFI 1.2 Sub question : Are financial and human resources sufficient to achieve intended results of the strategy? EFFI 1.3 Sub Question : Is there an alternative strategy that could have been used to address inequity issues in the education sector?

To what extend the funding you have received was use in an efficient way? What could have been done to reach the same results with the same amount or less funding and why?

EFFI.2. Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented within its planned timeframe? And Why?	EFFI 2.1 Sub question : Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting? EFFI 2.2 Sub Question : What external and internal factors caused delays in the implementation of interventions? EFFI 2.3 Sub Question : What external and internal factors, including elements of the ES, contributed to accelerating the progress?

What can we learn from the process of designing and implementing the equity based intervention ? (policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring). Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting?
What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions in your school catchment area?

EFFI.3. Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities and how has the evolving federalization context of Nepal affected that?	EFFI 3.1 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the institutional setup (coordination, collaboration, funding, reporting, implementation mechanisms..)? EFFI 3.2 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the capacity of the education staff to undertake data analysis and planning functions?

What capacity building exercises or activities were supported from the Equity Strategy to improve the teaching and quality of teaching ?

SUSTAINABILITY: the extent to which the Equity Strategy allows ability to adapt to emerging challenges and changing context and outcomes of the Equity Strategy are long-lasting and continue benefiting children's education.

S.1. To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? How has COVID-19 affected the sustainability of financial, operational and institutional capacity of the Education Sector?	Sub Question S 1.1: To what extent is the Equity Strategy possible to be continued in terms of its implementation in the current COVID-19 context? Sub Question S 1.2 : How resilient is the Equity Strategy to changes and what are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained?

To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of your school can sustain the results of the implemented interventions in the long-term? Including during COVID-19 time

S.2. Has the equity strategy facilitated/attributed to strengthening capacity of education sector duty bearers and stakeholders to address education disparities?	Sub Question S 2.1 : To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS? Sub question S 2.2 : To what extent, the strategy is effectively answering to supply and demand needs at the national and sub national levels in the education sector for a more equitable education?

To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS?

☞**Do you think that the Out of Schools Children who have been recently reintegrated thanks to the equity based interventions will stay in the school? Why?**

EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS (EQ) FOR NATIONAL LEVEL KIIS

Date of interview:	Name/function of the respondent:
Gender of the respondent:	
Organisation/department:	

Note for the interviewer: Ask only the questions in blue to the respondents. The rest of the questions are only for your information

RELEVANCE: the extent to which the Equity Strategy responds to the context of Nepal and the needs of children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

R 1. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been based on the equity-based issues and challenges observed in the education sector, and the needs of children in marginalized ethnic groups, castes and low-income families?	R1.1 Sub question: To what extent has the Equity Strategy added value in the context of ''natural'' observed systemic downward trend towards universalisation of access, participation and learning outcomes? How sound was the rationale to select the three capacities (access, participation and learning outcomes) as a justification for a dedicated Strategy on Equity?
	R 1.2 Sub Question: What has been the added value of computing data from EMIS and population data using the Equity index formulas compared to more traditional aggregation of data for the education sector as an information and advocacy tool to reduce disparities in education outcomes ?

What do you think are the added value of the Equity Strategy (use of equity index for planning/budgeting and equity based interventions) compared to other strategies?
Have interventions which were implemented under the ES contributed to reducing inequities ? For example, how did they address the needs of children belonging to low-income families and marginalized ethnic groups ? How did they help in preventing children from dropping out of schools ? How about getting dropouts back to school ?

R 1.3 Sub Question: To what extent the design, theoretical framework including the ToC and rationale of the strategy are appropriate, relevant and effective for the envisioned purpose?

What can we say from the design of the strategy? What should be kept and what should be changed?
did they do any assessment based on which they developed the ToC ? What equity dimensions did they consider in designing the ToC ?

Sub question R 1.4: To what extent do the equity-based interventions (both undertaken and proposed) respond to the Context and structural causes of disparities in education outcomes? And how they respond to reducing barriers in access, participation and learning outcomes based on identified needs?

Sub question R 1.5 :To what extent the operationalization of the equity strategy through targeted interventions allows a response to these barriers being intersectional and including several drivers of disparities that disproportionally increase disparities as assumed in the theoretical framework?

To what extent do the equity based interventions (both undertaken and proposed) respond to the context, structural causes and barriers of disparities in education outcomes based on identified needs ?

Example of Equity based interventions conducted following additional funding provided for the ESIPs	
Household survey and mobilization of Community learning centres (CLCs) for household visits and awareness raising; Data tabulation and analysis in the context of development of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIP)	Provision of school bag, stationery and uniform to students. Enrolment campaign and welcome to school in collaboration with I/NGOs; Topping up of regular scholarships.

To what extent do you think that the activities implemented in the context of the Equity Strategy address the supply side issues of the education sector?

Examples of supply and demand interventions:

Supply: The availability of trained and qualified schools and teachers, proximity of schools to households, state expenditure on education, availability of text books and schools facilities that meet quality standards.
Demand indicators are functions of household preferences and constraints that affect the use of the services supplied, include inter alia, family and cultural background of students, direct private costs of education, and scholarships or financial assistance received by household.

R.2. Does the Equity Strategy adequately respond to the overall context of the Education Sector in Nepal?	R 2.1 Sub Question: What has been the rationale for the design of an Equity Strategy to reinforce the overall dynamic of the system compared to a lighter capacity building intervention of the system?

What has been the rationale for the design of an Equity Strategy to reinforce the overall dynamic of the system compared to a lighter capacity building intervention of the system?

R.3. Have the equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children that need them most and at the right time in terms of facilitating access, participation and learning?

How many and which groups of children have been reached with these interventions? Was the support delivered on time? If no why?

R.4 To what extend the strategy has leveraged multi-sectoral responses (so including linkage to sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc.)	Sub Question R 4.1 : Has the implementation of the EES, through the introduction of the equity index or equity strategy implementation plans prompted cross sectoral communication, coordination or collaboration at federal, provincial and/or local governments
	Sub Question R4.2: To what extent have cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the EES

How did you link these equity based interventions with other responses (sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc) ?
What have been the coordination and collaboration in relation to the various tiers of the Government in relation to the ES?

R.5. To what extent is the Equity Strategy relevant in allowing the government to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context?	Sub question R5.1: Has there been attempts to align the implementation of the strategy to newly emerged needs and context from the COVID-19 context?

To what extend have you used the equity index and the equity based interventions to address the issues faced by the COVID-19? Will it be possible to use them? If no why? Will it be possible to continue implementing them ?

COHERENCE: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has increased or decreased the ability of the Government of Nepal and external actors to undertake need-based an evidence-based planning, programming and budgeting under the previous and current education sector plans.

C.1. The extent to which the Equity Strategy contributed to increased coherent interventions with an equity focus in the education sector implemented by non-governmental organizations and development partners?	C1.1 Sub Question :To what extent multi-sectoral equity interventions and social safety net programs that respond to needs of children enabling them to access, participate and learn, have been driven by or established under the Equity Strategy? C 1.2 Sub Question :What actors are involved in equity-based planning, programming, budgeting, implementation in the education sector? C 1.3 Sub Question : How are/can these different actors engage, align, use the equity strategy in their work? C 1.4 Sub Question : Has this led to greater alignment among actors or with the government planning process, increased need-based support, increased results, increased coverage, more efficient use of resources, increased coordination, etc?

To what extent have you involved other Stakeholders (i.e: Non State Actors or other than the education department) in the design and implementation of the ESIP? Who are they? What has been the strengths and areas to improve of this collaborative work?

C.2. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been reflected in education sector programmes and policies?	Sub question C 2.1: To what extent has the EES guided the strategies in the SSDP and to what extent its operationalization facilitated through its program implementation guidelines and in the annual strategic implementation plans and annual work plans and budgets?

To what extent has the EES guided the strategies in the SSDP?

EFFECTIVENESS: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has achieved its objectives and goals.	
EFFE.1. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based government and non-state actors funding in the Nepal school education sector?	EFFE 1.1 Sub Question: To what extent the Equity Strategy has been able to leverage additional funds (earmarked, non-earmarked, on/off budget, to government, to stakeholders, etc.) for equity based interventions that were not initially planned by other interventions?

What additional funding were provided to districts and LGs to design and implement the strategy? (For planning and implementation of equity based interventions). For which year? What was the amount per year? What do you think of the amount? Was it enough? Why?

EFFE 2. In the case of increased needs-based funding and/or resource mobilized by non-state actors, has this led to a reduction of disparities in education outcomes between children that are/were based on their gender, caste, ethnicity, ability, location, socio-economic status, vulnerability or a combination of these?	Sub question EFFE 2.1: Have these additional resources led to improving the education outcomes for children? Sub Question EFFE 2.2 : Has increased funding led to achieving intended results of the EES?

To what extent this additional funding (from government and from non-state actors) made a difference in the life of children in term of reducing the disparities?

EFFE 3. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Index been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 3.1 Sub question :To what extend was the design, ownership, use, effect, etc of the Equity Index to inform policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring processes for a more equitable education?.

How did the equity index help to design and monitor the equity based interventions?

Expected steps for ESIP planning (and inclusion in the Local Education Sector Plan) and implementation process
Step 1: Evidence and analysis. Look at available data from the perspective of: ▪ Access, to different groups (for example boys, girls, children with disabilities, different minority/religious groups) have the same level of access. If not, who have the least access? ▪ Participation, do different groups (for example boys, girls, children with disabilities, different minority/religious groups) have the same level of attendance, retention and completion. If not, who have the lowest participation? ▪ Learning; are children learning equally. If not, which groups have lower learning outcomes

Step 2: Strategic planning

- Validate analysis with relevant stakeholders
- Map planned activities that respond to the outcomes of the analysis
- Cost activities and develop budget
- Map available resources that can be used for additional activities
- Prioritize based on available resources
- Identify resource gap
- Map support of other line agencies non-government partners that can be mobilized

Step 3: Implementation & monitoring

- Describe implementation arrangements for targeted activities
- Develop/select indicators and targets to measure results
- Define implementation timeline and monitor arrangements

(Source: Template for ESIP induction workshop.)

Key detailed steps generally include:	Note
12. Initial Orientation 13. ESIP working Group formation 14. Situation Analysis 15. Sharing of the analysis 16. Program Identification 17. Prioritization and Cost estimation 18. Budget forecast 19. ESIP formation 20. ESIP endorsement 21. ESIP in Local Level Strategic Plan 22. Implementation, monitoring and reporting about the Equity Based Interventions	After or in parallel to the process described on the left, the LGs Units have received an additional amount of funding from the federal level to allow them to start implementing Equity Based Interventions (for some of them, even though they did not complete the design of the ESIP)

| EFFE 4. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy? | EFFE 4.1 Sub Question : Has the scope of the equity strategy resulted in an adequate volume of interventions and reach?

EFFE 4.2 Sub question: To what extend the envisioned ESIP development process is feasible?

EFFE 4.3 Sub question :To what extend produced ESIPs have shown genuine efforts to identify appropriate types and varieties of interventions?

EFFE 4.4 Sub question :What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions? |

Could you please explain to what extend the envisioned ESIP process help to design the interventions.
What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?

EFFE 6. Has the emerged federal structure in the education sector had an effect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the equity Strategy?	EFFE 6.1 Sub Question: What has been the level of appropriation of the Equity Strategy at National and local level in the context of the emerged federal structure?
	EFFE 6.2 Sub question: To what extent is the equity strategy compatible with the emerged federal structure in the education sector and coherently adapted at the different government levels?
	EFFE 6.3 Sub Question: To what extent has the federal transition affected the implementation readiness across the different tiers of government

What are the impacts of the new federal structure on the implementation and appropriation of the Equity Strategy? How did you adapt to this change?

EFFICIENCY: the extent to which the Equity Strategy enabled the Government to achieving equity-based targets and objectives in a timely and cost-efficient way?

EFFI 1. Has the equity strategy contributed to the government utilizing financial and human resources for equity-based interventions in an efficient way?	EFFI 1.1 Sub Question: In what way it contributed to utilizing financial and human resources efficiently?
	EFFI 1.2 Sub question : Are financial and human resources sufficient to achieve intended results of the strategy?
	EFFI 1.3 Sub Question : Is there an alternative strategy that could have been used to address inequity issues in the education sector?

To what extent the funding received by the provinces and LGs was used in an efficient way? What could have been done to reach the same results with the same amount or less funding and why?

EFFI.2. Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented within its planned timeframe? And Why?	EFFI 2.1 Sub question : Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting?
	EFFI 2.2 Sub Question : What external and internal factors caused delays in the implementation of interventions?
	EFFI 2.3 Sub Question : What external and internal factors, including elements of the ES, contributed to accelerating the progress?

What can we learn from the process of designing and implementing the equity based intervention ? (policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring). Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting?
What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?
Were there any delay in the implementation process of education interventions which were guided by the ES ? What caused those delays ? Was the budget allocated for those intervention sufficient ?

EFFI.3. Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities and how has the evolving federalization context of Nepal affected that?	EFFI 3.1 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the institutional setup (coordination, collaboration, funding, reporting, implementation mechanisms..)? EFFI 3.2 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the capacity of the education staff to undertake data analysis and planning functions?

Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the operational structure and institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities?

SUSTAINABILITY: the extent to which the Equity Strategy allows ability to adapt to emerging challenges and changing context and outcomes of the Equity Strategy are long-lasting and continue benefiting children's education.

S.1. To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? How has COVID-19 affected the sustainability of financial, operational and institutional capacity of the Education Sector?	Sub Question S 1.1: To what extent is the Equity Strategy possible to be continued in terms of its implementation in the current COVID-19 context? Sub Question S 1.2 : How resilient is the Equity Strategy to changes and what are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained?

To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? Including during COVID-19 time
How resilient is the Equity Strategy to changes and what are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained?

S.2. Has the equity strategy facilitated/attributed to strengthening capacity of education sector duty bearers and stakeholders to address education disparities?	Sub Question S 2.1 : To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS? Sub question S 2.2 : To what extent, the strategy is effectively answering to supply and demand needs at the national and sub national levels in the education sector for a more equitable education?

To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS?

To what extent do you think that the activities implemented in the context of the Equity Strategy address the supply and demand side issues of the education sector?

Examples of supply and demand interventions:

Supply: The availability of trained and qualified schools and teachers, proximity of schools to households, state expenditure on education, availability of text books and schools facilities that meet quality standards.
Demand indicators are functions of household preferences and constraints that affect the use of the services supplied, include inter alia, family and cultural background of students, direct private costs of education, and scholarships or financial assistance received by household.

EVALUATIVE QUESTIONS (EQ) FOR SUB NATIONAL LEVEL KIIS

(Provinces, Districts and Local Level (LGs) Government staff working in the education sector including education planners)

Date of interview:	Name/function of the respondent:
Gender of the respondent:	
Organisation/department:	

Note for the interviewer: Ask only the questions in blue to the respondents. The rest of the questions are only for your information

Introduction

Have you heard about the Equity Strategy? What has been done in your province/district/Local Government Unit in relation to the implementation of this strategy? (in term of planning (through the use of the Equity Index) or implementation of the equity based interventions…)

RELEVANCE: the extent to which the Equity Strategy responds to the context of Nepal and the needs of children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

R 1. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been based on the equity-based issues and challenges observed in the education sector, and the needs of children in marginalized ethnic groups, castes and low-income families?	R1.1 Sub question: To what extent has the Equity Strategy added value in the context of ''natural'' observed systemic downward trend towards universalisation of access, participation and learning outcomes? How sound was the rationale to select the three capacities (access, participation and learning outcomes) as a justification for a dedicated Strategy on Equity?
	R 1.2 Sub Question: What has been the added value of computing data from EMIS and population data using the Equity index formulas compared to more traditional aggregation of data for the education sector as an information and advocacy tool to reduce disparities in education outcomes ?

What do you think are the added value of the Equity Strategy (use of equity index for planning/budgeting and equity based interventions) for your geographical area?

Sub question R 1.4: To what extent do the equity-based interventions (both undertaken and proposed) respond to the Context and structural causes of disparities in education outcomes? And how they respond to reducing barriers in access, participation and learning outcomes based on identified needs? Sub question R 1.5 :To what extent the operationalization of the equity strategy through targeted interventions allows a response to these barriers being intersectional and including several drivers of disparities that disproportionally increase disparities as assumed in the theoretical framework?

What do you think will be the potential equity based interventions to implement in your area to address the issues of inequity? OR What interventions have you implemented already and why did you select them ? Was there other more relevant interventions that could have been implemented? Which ones?

Example of Equity based interventions conducted following additional funding provided for the ESIPs	
Household survey and mobilization of Community learning centres (CLCs) for household visits and awareness raising; Data tabulation and analysis in the context of development of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIP)	Provision of school bag, stationery and uniform to students. Enrolment campaign and welcome to school in collaboration with I/NGOs; Topping up of regular scholarships.

To what extent do you think that the activities implemented in the context of the Equity Strategy address the supply side issues of the education sector?

Examples of supply and demand interventions:

Supply: The availability of trained and qualified schools and teachers, proximity of schools to households, state expenditure on education, availability of text books and schools facilities that meet quality standards.
Demand indicators are functions of household preferences and constraints that affect the use of the services supplied, include inter alia, family and cultural background of students, direct private costs of education, and scholarships or financial assistance received by household.

R.3. Have the **equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children** that need them most and at the right time in terms of facilitating access, participation and learning?

How many and which typology of children have you reached with these interventions? Was the support delivered on time? If not why?

R.4 To what extend the strategy has leveraged multi-sectoral responses (so including linkage to sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc.)	Sub Question R 4.1 : Has the implementation of the EES, through the introduction of the equity index or equity strategy implementation plans prompted cross sectoral communication, coordination or collaboration at federal, provincial and/or local governments

How did you link these equity based interventions with other responses (sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc) ?

How did you coordinate with other governments departments for cross sectoral collaboration?

Sub Question R4.2: To what extent have cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the EES

How have you incorporated ES in your plan/program? Which plans/programs address learning needs of OSC or children with disability, mother tongue issues and issues identified in particular locations etc.?

R.5. To what extent is the Equity Strategy relevant in allowing the government to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context?	Sub question R5.1: Has there been attempts to align the implementation of the strategy to newly emerged needs and context from the COVID-19 context?

To what extent have you use the equity index and the equity based interventions to address the issues faced by the COVID-19? Will it be possible to use them? If no why? How can the ES be relevant and capable of to respond to unexpected situation like COVID 19?

COHERENCE: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has increased or decreased the ability of the Government of Nepal and external actors to undertake need-based an evidence-based planning, programming and budgeting under the previous and current education sector plans.

C.1. The extent to which the Equity Strategy contributed to increased coherent interventions with an equity focus in the education sector implemented by non-governmental organizations and development partners?	C1.1 Sub Question :To what extent multi-sectoral equity interventions and social safety net programs that respond to needs of children enabling them to access, participate and learn, have been driven by or established under the Equity Strategy? C 1.2 Sub Question :What actors are involved in equity-based planning, programming, budgeting, implementation in the education sector? C 1.3 Sub Question : How are/can these different actors engage, align, use the equity strategy in their work? C 1.4 Sub Question : Has this led to greater alignment among actors or with the government planning process, increased need-based support, increased results, increased coverage, more efficient use of resources, increased coordination, etc?

To what extend have you involved other Stakeholders (i.e: Non State Actors or other than the education department) in the design and implementation of the ESIP? Who are they? What has been the strengths and areas to improve this collaborative work?

C.2. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been reflected in education sector programmes and policies?	Sub question C 2.1: To what extent has the EES guided the strategies in the SSDP and to what extent its operationalization facilitated through its program implementation guidelines and in the annual strategic implementation plans and annual work plans and budgets?
	Sub Question C 2.2: To what extent is the implementation of the EES monitored in terms of the inclusion of indicators in the SSDP program result framework (including DLIs), integration of the Equity Index in the EMIS and in sector progress and status reports

To what extent the operationalization of the ES was facilitated through its program implementation guidelines and in the annual strategic implementation plans and annual work plans and budgets?

EFFECTIVENESS: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has achieved its objectives and goals.

EFFE.1. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based government and non-state actors funding in the Nepal school education sector?	EFFE 1.1 Sub Question: To what extent the Equity Strategy has been able to leverage additional funds (earmarked, non-earmarked, on/off budget, to government, to stakeholders, etc.) for equity based interventions that were not initially planned by other interventions?

Which additional funds (amounts per year) did you receive for the design and implementation of the equity based interventions? Did it arrive on time?

EFFE 2. In the case of increased needs-based funding and/or resource mobilized by non-state actors, has this led to a reduction of disparities in education outcomes between children that are/were based on their gender, caste, ethnicity, ability, location, socio-economic status, vulnerability or a combination of these?	Sub question EFFE 2.1: Have these additional resources led to improving the education outcomes for children? Sub Question EFFE 2.2 : Has increased funding led to achieving intended results of the EES?

What did you do with this funding? What have been the results of these interventions?
To what extend this additional funding (from government and from non-state actors) made a difference in the life of children in term of reducing the disparities?

EFFE 3. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Index been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 3.1 Sub question :To what extend was the design, ownership, use, effect, etc of the Equity Index to inform policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring processes for a more equitable education?.

How did you use the equity index to design and monitor the equity based interventions?

Expected steps for ESIP planning (and inclusion in the Local Education Sector Plan) and implementation process

Step 1: Evidence and analysis. Look at available data from the perspective of:
- Access, to different groups (for example boys, girls, children with disabilities, different minority/religious groups) have the same level of access. If not, who have the least access?
- Participation, do different groups (for example boys, girls, children with disabilities, different minority/religious groups) have the same level of attendance, retention and completion. If not, who have the lowest participation?
- Learning; are children learning equally. If not, which groups have lower learning outcomes

Step 2: Strategic planning
- Validate analysis with relevant stakeholders
- Map planned activities that respond to the outcomes of the analysis
- Cost activities and develop budget
- Map available resources that can be used for additional activities
- Prioritize based on available resources
- Identify resource gap
- Map support of other line agencies non-government partners that can be mobilized

Step 3: Implementation & monitoring
- Describe implementation arrangements for targeted activities
- Develop/select indicators and targets to measure results
- Define implementation timeline and monitor arrangements

(Source: Template for ESIP induction workshop.)

Key detailed steps generally include:	Note
23. Initial Orientation 24. ESIP working Group formation 25. Situation Analysis 26. Sharing of the analysis 27. Program Identification 28. Prioritization and Cost estimation 29. Budget forecast 30. ESIP formation 31. ESIP endorsement 32. ESIP in Local Level Strategic Plan 33. Implementation, monitoring and reporting about the Equity Based Interventions	After or in parallel to the process described on the left, the LGs Units have received an additional amount of funding from the federal level to allow them to start implementing Equity Based Interventions (for some of them, even though they did not complete the design of the ESIP)

EFFE 4. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 4.1 Sub Question : Has the scope of the equity strategy resulted in an adequate volume of interventions and reach? EFFE 4.2 Sub question: To what extend the envisioned ESIP development process is feasible? EFFE 4.3 Sub question :To what extend produced ESIPs have shown genuine efforts to identify appropriate types and varieties of interventions? EFFE 4.4 Sub question :What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?

Could you please explain to what extend the envisioned ESIP process help you to design the interventions?.

What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?

EFFE 5. To what extent has the Equity Strategy facilitated the Government of Nepal to achieve the equity-based targets and objectives within the previous and current education sector plans?	Sub question EFFE 5.1: What was the rationale/justification for selecting the interventions? Sub question EFFE 5.2: What was the added value of reviewing the analysis and appraisal to inform the selection of the target and objectives of the LG ESIPs?

How did you identify the interventions? Which criteria did you use to select the interventions

What was the added value of reviewing the analysis and appraisal to inform the selection of the targets and objectives of the LG ESIPs?

EFFE 6. Has the emerged federal structure in the education sector had an effect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the equity Strategy?	EFFE 6.1 Sub Question: What has been the level of appropriation of the Equity Strategy at National and local level in the context of the emerged federal structure? EFFE 6.2 Sub question: To what extent is the equity strategy compatible with the emerged federal structure in the education sector and coherently adapted at the different government levels? EFFE 6.3 Sub Question: To what extent has the federal transition affected the implementation readiness across the different tiers of government

What are the impacts of the new federal structure on the design, implementation and appropriation of the Equity Strategy at your level? How did you adapt to this change? What worked and what did not work because of the federal structure?

EFFICIENCY: the extent to which the Equity Strategy enabled the Government to achieving equity-based targets and objectives in a timely and cost-efficient way?

EFFI 1. Has the equity strategy contributed to the government utilizing financial and human resources for equity-based interventions in an efficient way?	EFFI 1.1 Sub Question: In what way it contributed to utilizing financial and human resources efficiently? EFFI 1.2 Sub question : Are financial and human resources sufficient to achieve intended results of the strategy? EFFI 1.3 Sub Question : Is there an alternative strategy that could have been used to address inequity issues in the education sector?

To what extend the funding you have received was enough to implement the activities?
To what extend the funding you have received was use in an efficient way?
What could have been done to reach the same results with the same amount or less funding and why?

EFFI.2. Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented	EFFI 2.1 Sub question : Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting?

| within its planned timeframe? And Why? | EFFI 2.2 Sub Question : What external and internal factors caused delays in the implementation of interventions? |
| | EFFI 2.3 Sub Question : What external and internal factors, including elements of the ES, contributed to accelerating the progress? |

Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented within its planned timeframe? And Why?
What can we learn from the process of designing and implementing the equity based intervention ? (policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring).
Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting?
What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?

| EFFI.3. Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities and how has the evolving federalization context of Nepal affected that? | EFFI 3.1 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the institutional setup (coordination, collaboration, funding, reporting, implementation mechanisms..)? |
| | EFFI 3.2 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the capacity of the education staff to undertake data analysis and planning functions? |

Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the operational structure and institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities? What capacity building exercises were conducted? What did you learn thanks to the process of planification and implementation?

SUSTAINABILITY: the extent to which the Equity Strategy allows ability to adapt to emerging challenges and changing context and outcomes of the Equity Strategy are long-lasting and continue benefiting children's education.

| S.1. To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? How has COVID-19 affected the sustainability of financial, operational and institutional capacity of the Education Sector? | Sub Question S 1.1: To what extent is the Equity Strategy possible to be continued in terms of its implementation in the current COVID-19 context? |
| | Sub Question S 1.2 : How resilient is the Equity Strategy to changes and what are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained? |

To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? Including during COVID-19 time
What are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained?

| S.2. Has the equity strategy facilitated/attributed to strengthening capacity of education sector duty bearers and | Sub Question S 2.1 : To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS? |

stakeholders to address education disparities?	Sub question S 2.2 : To what extent, the strategy is effectively answering to supply and demand needs at the national and sub national levels in the education sector for a more equitable education?

To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS?

To what extent, the strategy is effectively answering to supply and demand needs at the national and sub national levels in the education sector for a more equitable education?

Examples of supply and demand interventions:

Supply: The availability of trained and qualified schools and teachers, proximity of schools to households, state expenditure on education, availability of text books and schools facilities that meet quality standards. **Demand indicators** are functions of household preferences and constraints that affect the use of the services supplied, include inter alia, family and cultural background of students, direct private costs of education, and scholarships or financial assistance received by household.

FOR TEACHERS AND REPRESENTATIVE OF PARENT FROM THE PARENT-TEACHER ASSOCIATION (PTA)

Date of interview:	Name/function of the respondent:
Gender of the respondent:	
Organisation/department/school name:	

Note for the interviewer: Ask only the questions in blue to the respondents. The rest of the questions are only for your information

Introduction

Have you heard about any interventions in your community organised by the education sector to support access, retention and learnings of children? If yes, what was it?

RELEVANCE: the extent to which the Equity Strategy responds to the context of Nepal and the needs of children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

R 1. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been based on the equity-based issues and challenges observed in the education sector, and the needs of children in marginalized ethnic groups, castes and low-income families?

What do you think are the added value of these interventions for your school catchment area? To what extend these interventions have equally supported girls and boys?
☞add probing questions focusing on equity issues. For example, if head teachers don't mention kids with a disability or out of school children….

Sub question R 1.4: To what extent do the equity-based interventions (both undertaken and proposed) respond to the Context and structural causes of disparities in education outcomes? And how they respond to reducing barriers in access, participation and learning outcomes based on identified needs?

Sub question R 1.5 :To what extent the operationalization of the equity strategy through targeted interventions allows a response to these barriers being intersectional and including several drivers of disparities that disproportionally increase disparities as assumed in the theoretical framework?

If not implemented yet, what do you think will be the potential equity based interventions to implement in your area to address the issues of inequity? OR was there other more relevant interventions that could have been implemented? Which ones?

Example of Equity based interventions conducted following additional funding provided for the ESIPs	
Household survey and mobilization of Community learning centres (CLCs) for household visits and awareness raising; Data tabulation and analysis in the context of development of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIP)	Provision of school bag, stationery and uniform to students. Enrolment campaign and welcome to school in collaboration with I/NGOs; Topping up of regular scholarships.

To what extent do you think that the activities implemented in the context of the Equity Strategy address the issues faced in the schools and not only in the communities?

Examples of supply and demand interventions:

Supply: The availability of trained and qualified schools and teachers, proximity of schools to households, state expenditure on education, availability of text books and schools facilities that meet quality standards.
Demand indicators are functions of household preferences and constraints that affect the use of the services supplied, include inter alia, family and cultural background of students, direct private costs of education, and scholarships or financial assistance received by household.

R.3. Have the equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children that need them most and at the right time in terms of facilitating access, participation and learning?

How many and which typology of children (boys, girls, children with disabilities, minorities…) have been reached with these interventions? Was the support delivered on time? If not why?

R.4 To what extent the strategy has leveraged multi-sectoral responses (so including linkage to sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc.)	Sub Question R 4.1 : Has the implementation of the EES, through the introduction of the equity index or equity strategy implementation plans prompted cross sectoral communication, coordination or collaboration at federal, provincial and/or local governments. Sub Question R4.2: To what extent have cross-sectoral issues related to geographical location, mother tongue and disability been reflected and accommodated in the implementation of the EES

How these equity based interventions were linked with other responses (sanitation, nutrition, health, protection, etc) ? Do you know if the sanitation facilities are disability friendly ? How about Menstrual Hygiene Management.?
What has been the level of coordination and collaboration within the education sector?

R.5. To what extent is the Equity Strategy relevant in allowing the government to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context?	Sub question R5.1: Has there been attempts to align the implementation of the strategy to newly emerged needs and context from the COVID-19 context?

To what extend these interventions contributed to address the effects of the COVID-19? Will it be possible to use them? If no why?
☞Do you know if any covid related interventions took into account disability, provision of safety kids…. Provision of internet to children who couldn't afford it especially when all had to study online ?
Our data on social and economic impacts of covid showed that mostly children living in low income households were not able to take advantage of remote learning. It would be good to find out from head teachers, if their schools were involved in any ES guided intervention which helped them resolve lack of access to school during covid ?

COHERENCE: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has increased or decreased the ability of the Government of Nepal and external actors to undertake need-based an evidence-based planning, programming and budgeting under the previous and current education sector plans.

C.1. The extent to which the Equity Strategy contributed to	C1.1 Sub Question :To what extent multi-sectoral equity interventions and social safety net programs that respond to needs of children enabling them to access, participate and learn, have been driven by or established under the Equity Strategy?

increased coherent interventions with an equity focus in the education sector implemented by non-governmental organizations and development partners?	C 1.2 Sub Question :What actors are involved in equity-based planning, programming, budgeting, implementation in the education sector? C 1.3 Sub Question : How are/can these different actors engage, align, use the equity strategy in their work? C 1.4 Sub Question : Has this led to greater alignment among actors or with the government planning process, increased need-based support, increased results, increased coverage, more efficient use of resources, increased coordination, etc?

To what extent these interventions have involved other Stakeholders (i.e: Non State Actors or other than the education department) ? Who are they? What have been the strengths and areas to improve of this collaborative work?

C.2. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been reflected in education sector programmes and policies?	Sub question C 2.1: To what extent has the EES guided the strategies in the SSDP and to what extent its operationalization facilitated through its program implementation guidelines and in the annual strategic implementation plans and annual work plans and budgets?

To what extent the program implementation guideline was useful to guide your work on equity?

EFFECTIVENESS: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has achieved its objectives and goals.	
EFFE.1. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based government and non-state actors funding in the Nepal school education sector?	EFFE 1.1 Sub Question: To what extent the Equity Strategy has been able to leverage additional funds (earmarked, non-earmarked, on/off budget, to government, to stakeholders, etc.) for equity based interventions that were not initially planned by other interventions?

(Questions for Teachers only) **Are you aware of any additional funding received from the Government to design and implement these equity based interventions? (For planning and implementation of equity based interventions). For which year did you receive this funding? What was the amount per year? What do you think of the amount received? Was it enough? Why?**

EFFE 2. In the case of increased needs-based funding and/or resource mobilized by non-state actors, has this led to a reduction of disparities in education outcomes between children that are/were based on their gender, caste, ethnicity, ability, location, socio-economic status, vulnerability or a combination of these?	Sub question EFFE 2.1: Have these additional resources led to improving the education outcomes for children? Sub Question EFFE 2.2 : Has increased funding led to achieving intended results of the EES?

(Questions for Teachers only) **To what extend this additional funding (from government and from non state actors) made a difference in the life of children in term of reducing the disparities?**

EFFE 4. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?	EFFE 4.1 Sub Question : Has the scope of the equity strategy resulted in an adequate volume of interventions and reach? EFFE 4.2 Sub question: To what extend the envisioned ESIP development process is feasible? EFFE 4.3 Sub question :To what extend produced ESIPs have shown genuine efforts to identify appropriate types and varieties of interventions? EFFE 4.4 Sub question :What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?

What do you think of the volume of interventions and reach? Was it enough to make a difference for children access, retention and improve learning outcomes ? why?

What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions?

EFFE 5. To what extent has the Equity Strategy facilitated the Government of Nepal to achieve the equity-based targets and objectives within the previous and current education sector plans?	Sub question EFFE 5.1: What was the rationale/justification for selecting the interventions? Sub question EFFE 5.2: What was the added value of reviewing the analysis and appraisal to inform the selection of the target and objectives of the LG ESIPs?

Why did you select these interventions?

What is the **level of implementation readiness** of the Equity based Interventions?

(Teacher only) In case you did not implement yet the equity based interventions, to what extend are you ready for this? (_see examples of implementation readiness below_**)**

Indicators of implementation readiness of the equity based interventions:

Compatibility: Duty bearers (for example policy makers, budget holders, planners, etc perceive the interventions are appropriate, effective and feasible, The Education staff at all level believe that the proposed intervention supports existing programs; initiatives; policy and fits with how the education sector does things.
Leadership and motivation (buy in): There is stated leadership and commitment (including at federal, provincial, municipality and school level) for integrating selected equity based interventions in the education system.
Resource Availability. The education sector believe that in environment constrained by scarce resources, (e.g., staff, facilities, materials, policies, training and technology), targeted equity based interventions are needed to implement and sustain the identified intervention.
Knowledge and skills: Education Managers and staff think they have knowledge, skills, and abilities for designing, implementing and monitoring the interventions
Implementation support: The education sector has policies, procedures and monitoring/coaching capacity in place to support the interventions (Including fund flow, reporting, coordination and collaboration structures)
Children and parents participation and commitment: Children, families, and resource parents are committed and engaged in the planning or implementation of the interventions.

EFFE 6. Has the emerged federal structure in the education sector had an effect	EFFE 6.1 Sub Question: What has been the level of appropriation of the Equity Strategy at National and local level in the context of the emerged federal structure?

on the effectiveness of the implementation of the equity Strategy?	EFFE 6.2 Sub question: To what extent is the equity strategy compatible with the emerged federal structure in the education sector and coherently adapted at the different government levels? EFFE 6.3 Sub Question: To what extent has the federal transition affected the implementation readiness across the different tiers of government

(Teacher only) What are the impacts of the new federal structure on the implementation and appropriation of the interventions implemented? How did you adapt to this change?

EFFICIENCY: the extent to which the Equity Strategy enabled the Government to achieving equity-based targets and objectives in a timely and cost-efficient way?

EFFI 1. Has the equity strategy contributed to the government utilizing financial and human resources for equity-based interventions in an efficient way?	EFFI 1.1 Sub Question: In what way it contributed to utilizing financial and human resources efficiently? EFFI 1.2 Sub question : Are financial and human resources sufficient to achieve intended results of the strategy? EFFI 1.3 Sub Question : Is there an alternative strategy that could have been used to address inequity issues in the education sector?

(Teacher only) To what extend the funding you have received was use in an efficient way? What could have been done to reach the same results with the same amount or less funding and why?

EFFI.2. Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented within its planned timeframe? And Why?	EFFI 2.1 Sub question : Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting? EFFI 2.2 Sub Question : What external and internal factors caused delays in the implementation of interventions? EFFI 2.3 Sub Question : What external and internal factors, including elements of the ES, contributed to accelerating the progress?

(Teacher only) What can we learn from the process of designing and implementing the equity based intervention ? (policy formulation, educational planning/prioritization, management, resource allocation and monitoring). Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting?
What are the contributing and limiting factors for the implementation of the Equity Based Interventions in your school catchment area?

EFFI.3. Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities and how has the evolving federalization context of Nepal affected that?	EFFI 3.1 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the institutional setup (coordination, collaboration, funding, reporting, implementation mechanisms..)? EFFI 3.2 Sub question: Has the ES strengthened the capacity of the education staff to undertake data analysis and planning functions?

(Teacher only) Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the operational structure and institutional set up within the education sector and your school with regards to equity-based activities? What capacity building exercises were supported from the Equity Strategy?

SUSTAINABILITY: the extent to which the Equity Strategy allows ability to adapt to emerging challenges and changing context and outcomes of the Equity Strategy are long-lasting and continue benefiting children's education.

S.1. To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? How has COVID-19 affected the sustainability of financial, operational and institutional capacity of the Education Sector?	Sub Question S 1.1: To what extent is the Equity Strategy possible to be continued in terms of its implementation in the current COVID-19 context? Sub Question S 1.2 : How resilient is the Equity Strategy to changes and what are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained?

(Teacher only) To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of your school can sustain the results of the implemented interventions in the long-term? Including during COVID-19 time ? What are the risks that can prevent the interventions to be sustained?

S.2. Has the equity strategy facilitated/attributed to strengthening capacity of education sector duty bearers and stakeholders to address education disparities?	Sub Question S 2.1 : To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS? Sub question S 2.2 : To what extent, the strategy is effectively answering to supply and demand needs at the national and sub national levels in the education sector for a more equitable education?

(Teacher only?) To what extent the inclusion of the Equity Index has contributed (or not) to improve the EMIS?

To what extent do you think that the activities implemented in the context of the Equity Strategy address the supply side issues of the education sector?

> *Examples of supply and demand interventions:*
>
> **Supply:** The availability of trained and qualified schools and teachers, proximity of schools to households, state expenditure on education, availability of text books and schools facilities that meet quality standards.
> **Demand indicators** are functions of household preferences and constraints that affect the use of the services supplied, include inter alia, family and cultural background of students, direct private costs of education, and scholarships or financial assistance received by household.

☞Do you think that the Out of Schools Children who have been recently reintegrated thanks to the equity based interventions will stay in the school? Why?

Annex 5. Quantitative analysis of the Equity Strategy

The Nepalese education system refers to SDG and especially to SDG4 which main objective is to reach universal basic education for 2030. This specific objective seems to be realistic in quantitative terms and is part of the SSDP which put emphasis also on the qualitative aspects of schooling regarding the weak results in learning of Nepalese pupils as measured in early grades but also along basic education. The Equity strategy (ES) approved in 2014 aims to reduce disparities in schooling and improve quality of learning according to gender, caste, family resources, geographic location and other vulnerabilities. This strategy is based on an Equity Index which helps to select places (districts and now LGs) where it exists barriers according to the elements listed before that prevent many children to enrol and stay at school and get a learning level comparable to other geographical locations.

The formative evaluation of the Equity strategy which is the objective of this study concerns many complementary aspects :

- The first one concerns the opportunity to roll out such a specific strategy considering that its objectives are absolutely integrated to the global strategy expressed through the SSDP at the national level and which consists to reach an universal and good quality basic education and progress in secondary education.
- The second one concerns the relevance of the ES itself and of its main tool (the Equity index) as a targeting mechanism for the marginalized places lagging behind the national situation in term of schooling and learning.
- The third one concerns the partial efficiency of the ES as it can be analysed on the short period 2014-2020 through the activities already implemented in the places where live the marginalized children.

Methodological considerations

In order to evaluate the ES and especially the three main points listed above we need to assess the schooling context of education in Nepal and to analyse specifically the situation of the selected places (districts, LGs) in terms of schooling and learning outcomes. For this, we will refer to a sufficient period of time to understand the specific situation of these places but also to allow for changes that can be linked with the ES implemented activities. This reference period will be 2009-2019 which allows to analyse both the pre-ES period (2009-2015) and the implementation period (2015-2019).

The second choice that have to be made, concerns the indicators of schooling that could be used taking into account the available data. As the main indicator of education stock (performance), we considered the Net enrolment ratio (NER) considering that the Gross enrolment ratio (GER) does not offer a clear view of schooling performance as it integrates multi-cohorts phenomenon that will be less and less relevant over time.[175] We also added references to ''flows type of indicator'' such as survival rates and transition rates.

Schooling performances of Nepal education sector

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[175] Many children enrol too early at school because there is no ECD facilities in their area, therefore they are underaged in their grade.

As can be seen in table 1, the NER at the lower basic level comes close to 100% at the end of the period 2009-2019 indicating that **universalization has been quite reached, leading to few disparities between districts** as we found that the district standard deviation for this indicator is only 0,4 in 2019. The schooling indicator at upper basic is also progressing significantly as it reaches 89,7 % in 2019 with a growth of 42 % over the period. The standard deviation computed at the district level of upper basic in 2019 is 8,9 (against 13,9 in 2009) indicating that it exists more room for differentiation at district or LG level. Clearly the universalization of the NER at basic level depends mainly now on the progress that will be made at Upper Basic level. This objective is clearly attainable before 2030 as it can be seen on the graphic 1 that highlights the evolution of NER in the four level of education.

Table 1 : NER at the different education levels 2009-2019

	Lower Basic			Upper Basic			Secondary 9-10			Secondary 11-12		
	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total	Girls	Boys	Total
2009	92.6	94.7	**93.7**	61.9	64.3	**63.2**	40.1	41.4	**40.8**	6.8	6.8	**6.8**
2010	93.6	95.3	**94.5**	68.5	70.0	**69.3**	45.9	47.0	**46.5**	7.9	7.6	**7.8**
2011	94.5	95.6	**95.1**	69.5	70.5	**70.0**	51.4	52.7	**52.1**	9.7	9.1	**9.4**
2012	94.7	95.9	**95.3**	71.8	72.6	**72.2**	54.0	54.6	**54.3**	10.6	10.2	**10.4**
2013	95.0	96.2	**95.6**	73.5	71.7	**72.6**	54.6	55.1	**54.9**	11.6	11.4	**11.5**
2014	95.7	96.6	**96.2**	75.5	73.8	**74.6**	55.9	56.3	**56.1**	13.3	12.9	**13.1**
2015	96.3	96.9	**96.6**	78.9	76.5	**77.7**	57.3	58.6	**57.9**	16.9	16.4	**16.6**
2016	96.6	97.3	**96.9**	81.5	80.3	**80.9**	58.9	60.9	**59.8**	19.0	17.3	**18.2**
2017	97.1	97.4	**97.2**	86.3	88.6	**87.4**	65.1	66.7	**65.9**	22.4	21.6	**22.0**
2018	95.7	97.2	**96.5**	87.5	90.2	**88.9**	68.3	67.9	**68.1**	25.0	24.4	**24.7**
2019	96.4	97.7	**97.1**	88.7	90.7	**89.7**	69.0	68.4	**68.7**	26.2	25.4	**25.8**

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

At the end of 2019, 2 out of 3 children aged 10-11 year old (68,7 %) attend effectively the secondary level. The NER for the secondary level increased from 40,8% in 2009 to 68,7 % in 2019 (+ 68,7 % over the period). **The access to Higher secondary remains more problematic and exhibits a short fall with the preceding levels**. **Nevertheless, the period 2009-2019 for this level shows a very fast increase from 6,8 to 25,8 %.**

The pattern of Nepal ' shooling performance by education levels (graphic 1), shows clearly that lower basic **education is growing smoothly as it is approaching 100% while all the other levels are growing in parallel indicating that progress made at lower levels translate rapidly at the higher levels. It is particularly visible between upper basic and secondary** that present very closed patterns indicating that progress in upper basic is a source for progress in secondary. **The parallelism is less strong for secondary and higher secondary** while the shapes of the two progressions are close.

This pattern confirms that universal basic education will soon be a reality but also that it could be a good time to anticipate the eventual regulation of secondary levels according to the need of the economy and society (i.e. access to technical and professional training, access to tertiary education).

This strong growth in schooling helps to understand that the education system in Nepal has no major problem in quantitative term but real difficulties in the quality of the education system and especially the relatively weak level of pass tests of pupils in the main schooling subjects. In this context, the actual sectorial plan (SSDP), while targeting the 2030 schooling objectives puts the emphasis on factors and activities aiming to improve quality in education.

Graphic 1 : NER at the different level of education (2009-2019)
Legend: Grey: Lower basic, yellow: upper basic, Blue: secondary; green: higher secondary.
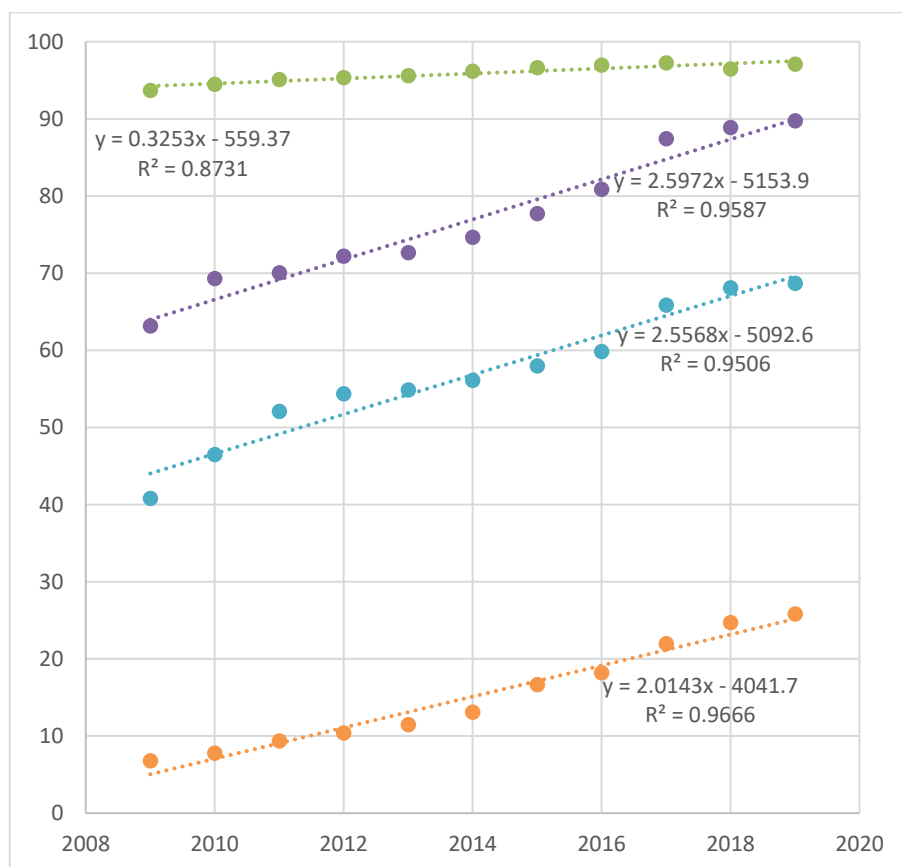
Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

The Equity Strategy

The ES has been launched in 2014 with the aim to reduce inequity in schooling and learning in basic and secondary education. Clearly its objectives seems to be similar to those of the SSDP which cannot be attained without the universalization of basic education, to eliminate any systematic disparities in schooling and learning due to geographical location, caste, gender, family wealth and vulnerabilities. **The ES in this context can be considered as a national effort to fight specifically the barriers of inequity that will take (too much) time to be eliminated and a clear message that no one will be left behind in the**

education system.[176] This mobilization for equity is exemplified through both funding sources: National and external education partners' financing mechanisms.

The ES is linked with the design of an Equity Index that helps to target the places (districts, LGs, municipalities) where disparities are prevalent and where specific activities can be implemented to eliminate the different barriers that limit the capacity of children to go/stay at school and learn.

The EI derived from the world Bank HOI index and has the following structure:

$$EI = C (1-D)$$

with C an average outcome of schooling in a given place and D the disparity observed according to individual, geographical or cultural characteristic. As such, the EI rectifies the value of C highlighting the existing disparities. The equity improvement may be attained both in increasing C and/or reducing D.

Theoretically, the final EI is the arithmetic average of three education outcomes (access, participation and learning) where D is computed and averaged for 7 equity drivers (gender, family wealth, geographical location, caste, ethnicity, disabilities and vulnerabilities). The partial EIs are computed for each driver and the final EI is the arithmetic average of all partial EIs. **Empirically, taking into account the availability of data, the EI has been today computed only for two education outcomes (access and participation) and equity drivers are limited to gender, geographical location and caste/ethnicity. After few adjustments a final EI list has been produced in 2015 ranking the 75 districts and allowing to select successively groups of five districts that were to benefit specific funds and activities aiming to reduce disparities in education outcomes. To follow the current decentralisation structure in Nepal, organised in three tiers (federal, provincial and local governments), the EI has then been more recently computed for all the 183 LGs.**

The EI acts as a consensual ranking avoiding the difficulties linked with the selection of few districts (LGs) among others that will be targeted for specific activities and national and international funding. EI is welcomed by most of the education stakeholders and is to some extent used to select activities and projects by the education partners and NGOs. It simplifies the choice of places of intervention and, theoretically, facilitates the ex-post measurement of the results obtained by the actions implemented.

The EI is a smart statistical tool that put a clear emphasis on the disparities in education outcomes among districts and LGs. Nevertheless it can be discussed theoretically considering its relevance in many aspects :

- The way the EI is built, implies a supposed linear effect of its components (access leads to participation that leads to learning outcomes) that ultimately influence the type of activities that will be implemented in the same direction. It implicitly considers the learning outcomes as a result of schooling (access and participation) while one could alternatively present the learning outcomes as a main determinant of access and participation as we believe that a « weak » school or « weak » pupil progression could affect negatively the education demand as it may imply in this case low education benefits for the family.
- **In operational terms, we therefore believe that in order to strengthen access and participation, priority should rather be given first to improve quality and learning benefits rather than simply act on the schooling** side itself (i.e reduction of education costs, OoSC campaigns, building new classrooms…). **In this perspective, the three education outcomes are**

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[176] In accordance with the national constitution that promote equity among all Nepalese regardless of their personal, cultural and regional characteristics

hierarchised and not really additive. Learning outcome is not only a product of the two first variables as it could also be a driver of the two others.

- **Inequity drivers are correlated with inequity situations but may not be direct causes.** These drivers, unlike the index calculation method which integrates them additively and with the same weight, are undoubtedly partly correlated with each other, cumulative and very hierarchical. **We thus do not find the preponderant weight of the effects of family income on school participation and their combination with the characteristics of individuals and families in terms of gender, disabilities, caste and ethnicity. Some of the situations of educational inequality in terms of participation and learning could result from the fact that the educational offer is locally differentiated in quality and cost and thus locks children from the most disadvantaged families into a second choice type of school structure. .**

- **EI is a good tool at the theoretical level but its ambition has been drastically reduced due to unavailability of data. Learning outcome has not finally been integrated and only 3 drivers are considered today. By limiting themselves to the conditions of participation and retention at school, activities are geared towards supporting demand, while taking learning into account would certainly lead to greater reflection on the issues of educational provision.**
- **Empirically limited, the EI can hardly be used as a time benchmark to measure the effects of policies put in place to address inequalities in education and educational achievement.**

- Beyond the ranking of the various places where the policy must be implemented, **EI does not define precisely the actions that must be taken, except by suggesting the main driver of inequities associated with the EI value in a given place.** The discussion and selection of the activities to be implemented are based on a classic planning analysis (analysis of demand and supply factors that can explain the local situation) aimed at defining (in particular by comparison with other places) the strengths and the weaknesses of a municipality (LG) likely to explain the weaknesses in the results of education and the activities that can be mobilized to address these weaknesses.

- **Clearly the use of EI would have been more effective if true analysis of education demand[177] had been conducted nationally and at the districts level before the implementation of the Index. The strategy of analysing the situation of each LG in terms of schooling and learning can only be effective in comparing these LGs against each other as WE attempted to do so while supporting the LGs in their analysis work to develop the ESIPs. The Question is now to ensure that this is institutionalised through an automatic process embedded into the EMIS.**

- Furthermore, the strategy of « unpacking the EI » appears to be much more difficult in the context of the current decentralization that leaves some of the 183 LG with very limited human resources in schooling analysis and planning.

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[177] The analysis of education demand looks at the effective education behaviour (access, retention) by examining these behaviours by both comparing the family characteristics and the schools characteristics. More than the preferences expressed by the different families, the real behaviour tell us what are the trade-off made by the parents among the different school characteristics. In a study of this type devoted to the demand for schooling in rural areas in Morocco during the 1980s, justified by the very low enrolment of rural girls, it was found that certain configuration of schools allowed the education of all girls who could be enrolled in school but also that the preferences expressed by families were not always verified in practice due to arbitration based on higher considerations. Families said, for example, that they preferred girls to be trained by women, but this preference was ultimately of little weight compared to their other primary wish to send their children to school near their home. (Jarousse JP and Mingat A. "The determinants of rural schooling in Morocco").

An attempt of an empirical analysis of the equity strategy

In order to assess empirically the relevance of the ES, we focused first our analysis on basic education performance, and more precisely on upper basic education as the lower basic education can be considered as almost universal. We considered three periods for this exercise:

- 2009 that features the pre- ES situation
- 2015 that represents the launch of the Equity Strategy
- 2019 a recent period were possible effects of the ES could be observed

Upper basic education level

Considering the initial period (2009) we selected the 30 districts whose NER in Upper Basic stood below the <u>national</u> average of 63,2 % (table 2). Among these 30 districts, 2 were added (Jajarkot and Bajhang) while their results were above this national average as they had been selected in the 15 districts of the ES in 2018. Among the 15 districts selected to benefit from the ES activities and funding, the first 5 are highlighted in yellow, the next 5 in grey and the last 5 in green. Apart from the 2 districts mentioned above, we found unsurprisingly all the districts chosen from 2015 on the basis of the EI in the 30 low performing districts in 2009 (according to their NER).

If the first five districts (in yellow) exhibited in average very low performances in 2015 when the EI was computed, it appears clearly that others, not highlighted in the table, were low performers in 2009 and even in 2015. If they were by definition well below the national average in 2009 it was also clearly the case in 2015 for Saptari, Kapilbatsu, Rupandehi and Sunsari, while at the same period Mustang , Sindhulpalchok and Morang where still very close to the national average. According to the EI calculation, these districts should exhibit a low C but also a low D and for this reason, they passed through the ES selection while they clearly stood behind in comparison to the national situation and were lagging in terms of universalization of basic education. In 2019, 14 of the 30 districts performed better than the national average and among them 4 belonged to the 15 districts selected for the ES.

In order to appreciate the growth of the NER in Upper basic education during the 2009-2019 period we estimated the average annual growth rates which takes into account the differences between the two sub-period (2009/2015 and 2015/2019). All districts that were below average in 2009 experienced an average annual growth in their NER for Upper Basic, higher than the average annual growth calculated at the national level. The only exception concerns Bajhang, whose NER level greatly exceeded the national average of NERs in 2009 (72.3% against a national average of 63.2%). Globally the annual growth rates appears to be higher during the 2009-2015 phase than during the 2015-2019 period.

Table 2 : Upper basic NER 2009-2019 and average annual growth rates of NER according to the three period.

	NER Upper basic			Annual growth rates		
	2009	2015	2019	2015/2009	2019/2015	2019/2009
Rautahat	21.4	43.3	63.9	12.0%	10.3%	11.6%
Manang	22.5	77.6	928	22.9%	47.0%	15.2%
Sarlahi	29.0	43.6	63.9	7.0%	10.1%	8.2%
Mahottari	30.5	56.7	89.9	10.8%	12.2%	114%
Dhanusha	31.0	50.5	63.8	8.5%	5.9%	7.4%

Jumla	32.1	87.9	90.8	18.2%	0.0%	10.9%
Bara	33.2	58.5	76.4	9.9%	7.0%	8.7%
Saptari	36.0	58.5	86.5	8.5%	10.3%	9.2%
Siraha	36.4	56.6	67.7	7.7%	4.7%	6.4%
Kapilbastu	37.1	54.7	74.5	6.6%	8.0%	7.2%
Parsa	37.4	48.5	62.7	4.5%	6.6%	5.3%
Khotang	37.7	85.8	96,5	14.6%	2.9%	9.8%
Mugu	40.6	95	95.5	15.2%	0.2%	8.9%
Humla	43.1	62.1	67.1	6.3%	1.9%	4.5%
Dolpa	43.8	71.6	90	8.6%	1.9%	7.9%
Mustang	43.8	77.8	93.3	9.9%	4.7%	7.8%
Achham	46.9	84	96.6	10.1%	3.6%	7.5%
Sindhupalchok	47.9	77.6	95	8.3%	5.0%	7.0%
Rupandehi	48.0	70.4	85.4	6.6%	4.9%	5.9%
Doti	49.6	71.2	82.9	6.1%	3.8%	5.3%
Rolpa	52.5	66.5	89.1	4.1%	7.6%	5.5%
Banke	54.5	72.5	86.6	4.9%	4.4%	4.8%
Sunsari	56.1	70.5	88.2	3.9%	5.8%	4.6%
Morang	56.6	76.3	89.1	5.1%	4.0%	4.7%
Kathmandu	57.1	80	95.8	5.8%	4.6%	5.3%
Bajura	60.2	78.2	93.8	4.5%	4.7%	4.5%
Sindhuli	61.1	86.1	95.7	5.8%	2.6%	4.6%
Nepal	**63.2**	**77.7**	**89.7**	**3.5%**	**3.6%**	**3.6%**
Jajarkot	64.0	98.3	96.6	7.5%	-0.5%	4.2%
Bajhang	72.3	79.5	95.7	1.6%	4.7%	2.8%

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

In order to appreciate more precisely the respective situation of the different districts in terms of NER growth, we computed the annual average growth for 4 categories (the 3 groups of districts successively selected through the EI scores and the other districts standing below the national average in 2009). The results are presented in table 3 below. Even though this evaluation does not aim to measure the impact of the ES, this simple exercise indicates that **higher average annual growth rates of the NER have been observed for the first five districts selected in 2015 (yellow),** representing the only group of districts where this growth was higher during the second period than the first one (respectively 9,4% against 9,1%), **indicating that they performed better compared to all other districts even though they were initially considered as the worse performing districts.** In the 2 other groups of districts selected, the growth was higher during the first period than during the second one. In average, apart from the first group, the growth of NER was higher in the ''unselected districts'' than in the districts having benefited from the ES (but in a shorter period than the first one because they were included in the strategy in 2017 for the grey ones and 2018 for the green ones. In the first group the situation of Mahottari is to be noticed as the NER in 2019 is 3 times the one observed in 2009.

Table 3 : Average annual growth rates (NER Upper basic) by districts categories (2009-2015)

	2015/2009	2019/2015	2019/2009
First batch of five districts	9.1%	9,4%	9,2%
Second batch of five districts	6.6%	4.9%	5,9%
Third batch of Five districts	6.8%	3.8%	5.5%
Others districts	10.5%	4.7%	8.0%
Nepal	3.5%	3.6%	3.5%

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

Secondary education level

The same exercise can be replicated concerning the secondary education level (grades 9-10) with the same ranking than the one obtained in 2009 for the Upper basic education level. In 2009, almost all of the 30 worst performing districts for the upper basic level, were below the national average for the NER at the secondary education level (Mugu, Morang and Kathmandu are exceptions to this trend). In 2019, among these same 30 districts, 10 exceeded the national average of the secondary NER by 68.7%, while 7 came very close to it.

The schooling performance (NER) for secondary education by district in 2009 appears to be positively linked to those observed for Upper Basic with, however, significant differences in classification. The R2 [178] comparing these two distributions is only 45% indicating that if access to secondary level depends positively on the development of the lower level, there are significant variations around this trend that should be further analysed in terms of demand but also in terms of supply.

We assume that secondary schools are undoubtedly more linked to the degree of urbanization of the different districts than basic schools. A further look at the correlation between the distribution of NER by district for the two other periods, shows that even still positive, the link becomes weaker, suggesting that the secondary level development seems less and less dependent of the development of upper basic level (R^2 of 35% for 2015 and of only 12 % for 2019) suggesting that secondary is less and less part of the family and youth education project as the basic education is growing.

As for upper basic we computed annual growth rates of NER according to the whole period and for the two sub-periods under study. The pattern appears to be somewhat similar with the one observed for upper basic. The annual growth rates for the whole period is in average higher for the 30 districts than for Nepal and higher during the first period (2009-2015) than for the second one (2015-2019) except for the first ES selected group (yellow) which presents an higher annual average growth for all the periods. Inside this latest group, and as for upper basic, Parsa is notably under-performing. As for Upper basic, some ''unselected districts'' show a poor performance and a weak progression in terms of secondary schooling during the period 2009-2019.

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[178] R-squared (R2) is a statistical measure that represents the proportion of the variance for a dependent variable that's explained by an independent variable (or variables) in a regression model

Table 5: NER in secondary education 2009-2019 and annual rates of growth during the sub-periods

	2009	2015	2019	2009/ 2015	2015/ 2019	2009/ 2019
Rautahat	21.1	48.5	66.2	14.9	8	12
Manang	18.7	41.6	36	14.2	-3.4	6.6
Sarlahi	22.3	43.7	63	12.2	9.5	10.8
Mahottari	20.4	43.4	57	13.2	7	10.8
Dhanusha	25.7	46.6	64.2	10.3	8.3	9.6
Jumla	38.5	53.6	36	5.8	-9.5	1
Bara	21.5	31.5	55.2	7	15	10
Saptari	21.1	60.7	74.2	19.4	5.1	13.3
Siraha	32.3	47.6	62.6	7	7.2	6.6
Kapilbastu	27.5	43.1	61.1	8.1	9.2	8.2
Parsa	27.1	23.9	36.4	-2.1	11	2.7
Khotang	39.3	55	71.5	5.8	6.8	6
Mugu	42.6	63.6	76.1	7	4.7	6
Humla	33.6	31.8	36.3	1	3.3	1
Dolpa	33.6	59.1	51.3	10.3	-3.4	4.1
Mustang	28.9	45.4	42.5	8.1	-1.5	4.1
Achham	33.1	51.6	61.3	8.1	4.4	6.6
Sindhupalchok	35.7	54.7	70.5	7	6.6	7.2
Rupandehi	33.6	55.3	65.9	8.1	4.4	7.2
Doti	27.2	43.7	49.5	8.1	3.1	6
Rolpa	24.8	43	52.3	9.2	5.1	7.7
Banke	32.5	54.1	67.5	9.2	5.7	7.7
Sunsari	40.6	55	65.2	5.8	4.4	4.8
Morang	43.1	59.9	73.3	5.8	5.1	5.4
Kathmandu	43.6	62.9	73.7	5.8	4	5.4
Bajura	31.8	67.5	77.1	13.1	3.3	9.1
Sindhuli	40.7	55.8	71.8	5.8	6.6	6
Nepal	**40.8**	**57.9**	**68.7**	**5.8**	**4.4**	**5.4**
Jajarkot	36.5	59.3	62.7	8.1	1.5	5.4
Bajhang	38.9	59.3	69.1	7	4	6

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

The second group selected into the ES (gray) appears to be lagging behind the other groups in terms of overall performances at the end of the period but also in terms of growth between 2009 and 2019 (Siraha, Humla, Doti, Dolpa, Rolpa).

Table 6 : Average annual growth rates (NER secondary) by districts categories (2009-2015)

	2015/2009	2019/2015	2019/2009
First batch of five districts	9.7	10.3	9.7
Second batch of five districts	7	3.2	5.4
Third batch of Five districts	8.6	4.8	7.1
Other districts	8.9	3.6	6.7
Nepal	6	4.4	5.3

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

Supply environment of the less performing districts

In this section we examine the operating conditions of the education system in the different districts considered in the first section and specifically the elements that may be linked to the quality of learning such as the evolution of the offer of pre-primary education level (grade 1 with ECD experience), that of factors linked to the school map (% complete basic schools and transition rates) / and to the supervision of students (students / teachers ratios).

Table 7 : % of pupils entering grade 1 with ECD experience

	2009	2015	2019
Rautahat	50.5	53.8	64.5
Manang	67.8	66.7	93.1
Sarlahi	50.2	59.6	58.7
Mahottari	52.9	67.3	61
Dhanusha	41.1	62.8	57.4
Jumla	36.3	50.7	69
Bara	48.1	57.9	73.9
Saptari	71.3	72.9	62.9
Siraha	43.4	69.4	61.7
Kapilbastu	52.8	64.5	75.9
Parsa	63.4	55.3	61.1
Khotang	56.6	39.4	57.1
Mugu	46.0	62.2	65.5
Humla	67.0	78.4	60.7
Dolpa	52.4	64.5	71.2
Mustang	67.6	64.5	67.8
Achham	63.0	48.9	70.2
Sindhupalchok	34.8	52.3	79.1
Rupandehi	42.0	62.8	68.1
Doti	47.4	56.7	76.3
Rolpa	37.3	58.5	71.9
Banke	45.1	65.7	69.2

Sunsari	56.1	61.2	70.4
Morang	49.9	78.1	68.4
Kathmandu	28.4	59.8	53.1
Bajura	61.3	52.1	63.5
Sindhuli	25.6	60.7	59
Total	**49.9**	**62.4**	**68.7**
Jajarkot	32.0	47.4	75.3
Bajhang	45.0	49.9	57.3

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

At the national level the opportunity to enrol in ECD has grown between 2009 and 2019 corresponding to a national policy included in the SSDP aiming at developing pre-primary education. This is illustrated by the fact that the proportion of newly enrolled grade 1 students with ECD experience increased from 49.9% in 2009 to 68.7% in 2019. This overall increase corresponds to an average annual increase of 3.2% over the whole period. It can be seen in the table presented below that this increase was higher during the period 2009-2015 than during the period 2015-2019 (the annual growth rates for the two periods are respectively 3,8% and 2,4% at the national level.

This increase has been notably weaker in the first districts selected in the ES (yellow), with an overall rate of growth of only 2% over the total period and respectively 1,9 and 2,3 % in the two successive sub periods.(2015/2009 and 2019/2015). The overall increase of ECD experience among the various districts groups considered here is in average two times higher than the one observed in the first group.

Table 8 : average annual growth of proportion of grade 1 with ECD experience

	2015/2009	2019/2015	2019/2009
First batch of five districts	1.9%	2.3%	2.0%
Second batch of five districts	5.2%	1.7%	3.7%
Third batch of Five districts	4.1%	5.3%	4.4%
Others districts	5.2%	3.0%	4.1%
Nepal	3.8%	2.4%	3.2%

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

Analysis of the effect of availability of continuous education in the same school on enrolment rates and drop out.

School mapping considerations should generally be considered as a possible cause of low enrolment and high drop-out rates. Particularly ''incomplete schools'' (who do not offer all 8 grades) may lead to rising costs in schooling and increase the distance to school for children who want to go to the superior grades. In a global policy aiming at universalizing the basic school attendance, the supply of schools offering all the 8 grades of basic level could be a good indicator of this situation. The table 9 below, shows the percentage of complete basic schools among all the schools offering basic education for the selected 30 districts and during the period 2009-2019. At the national level, the percentage of complete basic schools has grown notably from 17,7 % in 2009 to 46,1% in 2019. This increase has been very impressive in the latest period as the percentage of complete basic schools rose from 23,9 in 2015 to 46,1 % in 2019.

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Table 9 : proportion of schools offering all the 8 grades among total number of basic schools.

	2009	2015	2019
First batch of five districts	12.6	17.0	36.9
Second batch of five districts	14.2	20.5	36.8
Third batch of Five districts	16.5	22.1	40.6
Others districts	18.4	25.7	44.5
Nepal	**17.7**	**23.9**	**46.1**

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

The 4 groups of districts considered in this analysis appear very hierarchical and this for each of the 3 years considered with the lowest values observed for the group of the first 5 districts of the ES, then that of the two other selected groups and finally the group made up of districts not selected by the ES. On average, in 2019, the first group has about 37 % of complete schools, the second and third groups respectively 37 % and 41% and the last group 45 %. Even if the first group selected by the ES is still lagging behind the others, it has experienced the higher growth of the indicator over the total period (12 % per year) and mostly the higher growth in the recent period (2015/2019) with an annual growth rate of 20,3% per year.

Tables 10 : average annual rates of growth of the proportion of complete basic schools for the different groups of districts

	2015/2009	**2019/2015**	**2019/2009**
First batch of five districts	7.0%	20.3%	12.0%
Second batch of five districts	6.5%	17.9%	10.9%
Third batch of Five districts	5.5%	16.7%	10.0%
Others districts/30	6.9%	13.8%	9.5%
Nepal	5.1%	17.8%	10.0%

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

This discussion about school map considerations must be nuanced by the higher level of transition rates observed from one education level to the next one. As it can be seen from the data presented in table 11 below, in 2019 a very large majority of pupil reaching the end of lower basic level went to upper basic (93%) and an even higher proportion of pupils achieving upper basic went to secondary (97,5). **That result indicates clearly that the existence of non-complete basic schools does not constitute a problem for the vast majority of the pupils even if this situation corresponds to an enrolment in a new school.** The differences initially associated to the different groups of districts have been reduced all along the period, the lowest performer at the beginning of the period (yellow) exhibiting very high levels of transition close to all other districts.

Table 11 : average transition rates (%) from lower to upper basic and from upper basic to secondary (2009-2019)

	Lower to upper basic			**Upper basic to secondary**		
	2009	2015	2019	2009	2015	2019

First batch of five districts	77.9	88.4	92.6	88.7	95.5	95.0
Second batch of five districts	80,6	91.8	91.1	89.3	95.4	96.9
Third batch of Five districts	89.2	90.5	89.7	93.2	95.2	95.8
Others districts/ 30	87,8	91.6	92.8	93.1	95.5	95.7
Nepal	**85.4**	**91.6**	**93.0**	**91.2**	**95.9**	**97.5**

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

Survival rates

The relatively poor performance in terms of educational attainment (NER) which can still be observed today in certain districts, despite relatively strong growth, points to lower survival rates as evidenced by the data in the following table.

Table 12 : average survival rates to grade 5 (lower basic) and grade 8 (upper basic)

	Survival rates grade 5			Survival rates grade 8		
	2009	**2015**	**2019**	**2009**	**2015**	**2019**
Fisrt five districts	58.8	81.3	75.7	52.5	75.5	78.0
Second five districts	59.0	78.1	82.9	52.3	73.1	79.9
Third Five districts	62.7	81.5	79.8	49.0	72.2	79.5
Others districts	65.3	81.5	82.4	57.6	76.5	79.6
Nepal	**68.8**	**80.9**	**82.0**	**61.7**	**76.7**	**79.3**

After sustained growth in the first period (2009/2015), survival rates during lower basic level relatively stagnated or even felt for many districts during the second period. At the national level average survival rates grown from 68,8 to 80,9 % corresponding to an annual average growth of 2,7% per year, but rose to only 82 % in 2019 (+0,3% per year). During the first period, the survival rates has grown notably in the 3 selected district groups of the ES with an impressive annual growth rate of nearly 6% for the first group (yellow).As shown by the data in the table presenting the average survival rates by group of districts, the decrease is notable for the first group selected within the framework of the ES which shows an even negative growth of 1,7% per year of their average survival rate during the period 2015/2019.

Table 13 : average annual growth of basic level survival rates for selected groups of districts (2009-2019

	Survival rates grade 5			Survival rates grade 8		
	2015/2009	**2019/2015**	**2019/2009**	**2015/2009**	**2019/2015**	**2019/2009**
First batch of five districts	5.9%	-1.7%	2.8%	6.2%	0.8%	4.0%
Second batch of five districts	5.2%	1.5%	3.7%	5.7%	2.2%	4.3%
Third batch of Five districts	5.4%	-0.5%	2.8%	6.7%	2.4%	5.0%
Others districts	3.6%	0.3%	2.2%	4.9%	1.0%	3.3%
Nepal	2.7%	0.3%	1.8%	3.7%	0.8%	2.5%

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

Effect of Student Teacher Ratio (STR) on disparity.

A closer look at the students / teachers ratios in basic education shows that this is clearly a characteristic which sets the most marginalized districts against the others. If the general trend is indeed towards an improvement in the conditions of supervision (level of STR) for all the districts in lower basic, **the most marginalized districts are still those which present poor rates of supervision which could limit the desired improvement in learning**. At the national level for lower basic level the STR decreases from 1 teacher for 37 pupils to 1 teacher for 19 while for Rautahat district the ratio remains close to 60 all along the period. The other first districts selected by the ES show a decrease of Student Teacher Ratio (STR) during the period while they remain at high level in 2019.

Table 14 : basic education average students/teachers ratios in community schools (reported teachers)

	Lower basic			Upper Basic		
First batch of five districts	69.4	61.4	48.6	64.0	82.8	84.8
Second batch of five districts	39.8	26.6	25.0	36.0	42.8	42.0
Third batch of Five districts	47.0	35.2	32.4	52.6	52.8	50.4
Others districts	37.5	24.7	21.9	46.6	42.9	40.2
Nepal	**37.0**	**25.0**	**19.0**	**49**	**42**	**37**

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

In upper basic, where many teachers are operating in a same classroom, a comparable situation can be observed. If the STR is decreasing at the national level, it is growing or stable at a high level in all the groups of districts selected trough the ES. Again the situation of the first group (yellow) selected for the ES appears to be the worst

Effect of availability of basic equipment in the schools, on level of disparity.

The following tables presents some schools characteristics concerning basic education level. (for the year 2015). It can be seen that most schools are equipped with water facilities. It concerns 3 schools out of 4 at the national level while the selected groups of the ES appears quite well equipped for this type of facility (90 % of the first 5 group, around 85 % for the 2 other selected groups).
The situation is worst in relation to access to electricity which concerns only one school about 3 at the national level. Again, the selected districts do not appear to be disadvantaged compared to the other districts, at least for the first five selected districts (yellow) while the 2 other groups count around 20% of schools equipped with electricity.

Table 15 : average main schools facilities for basic education in 2015

	% Schools with water	% Schools with electricity	% Schools with internet	Girls/toilets for girls ratio
First batch of five districts	90	36	3	170
Second batch of five districts	84	20	3	89
Third batch of Five districts	85	22	4	106
Others districts	77	36	7	141
Nepal	**78**	**33**	**5**	**106**

Source : Flash reports for the corresponding years

Internet connexion appears relatively scarce : **only 5 % of schools appears to be connected and even less in the 3 groups of districts selected for the ES (3 to 4 %).** It could be a serious problem, even if this situation may have changed since 2015 considering the fact that the schools can use internet to get their school profile on the web-EMIS and have an access to data allowing to situate their schools situation compared to others.

Finally, although the situation may have changed rapidly as this was one of the important facilities of the recent policy to provide an attractive school for girls, **the ratio between the availability of separate girls and boys toilets plus water and the number of girls enrolled in the school still seems high.**
It reaches 1 gender segregated toilet for 106 girls at the national level but is higher in many districts. In average the worst situation is observed in the first group of five districts (1 toilet/170 girls).

Gender, caste, ethnicity

Parity in basic education, already acquired at national level at Lower basic level, is now achieved at Upper basic level. **The analysis by groups of districts shows that girls are now overrepresented compared to boys in Lower Basic in the three groups of districts selected for ES (particularly for the first of the three groups).** This over-representation of girls is established in 2019 in the Upper Basic for all the groups considered.

Table 16 : IP girls/boys in basic education (2009-2019)

IP filles/garçons	Lower Basic			Upper basic		
	2009	**2015**	**2019**	**2009**	**2015**	**2019**
First batch of five districts	0.90	1.05	1.14	0.74	0.95	1.03
Second batch of five districts	1.00	1.10	1.05	0.73	0.96	1.06
Third batch of Five districts	0.97	1.07	1.11	0.73	1.02	1.06
Others districts	1.03	1.08	1.01	0.90	1.04	1.06
Nepal	**1.00**	**1.03**	**0.99**	**0.96**	**1.03**	**1.01**

The tables 17 and 18 below presents the shares of Dalits and Janajatis in basic education enrolments at the national level and for the groups of districts considered. **Concerning the Dalits, the share of enrolment appears stable during the period at the national level around 20% in lower basic and growing from 12,6 to 15,6 % in upper basic. In contrast, the share of Janajatis decreases among total enrollment in the two cycles of basic education.**

Table 17 : Dalit share in total enrolments in basic education by groups of districts (2009-2019)

	Lower Basic			Upper basic		
	2009	**2015**	**2019**	**2009**	**2015**	**2019**
First batch of five districts	26.1	24.1	20.7	17.7	17.0	14.6
Second batch of five districts	21.7	23.3	24.0	14.3	17.6	18.1
Third batch of Five districts	27.9	26.9	26.8	19.8	21.7	21.6
Others districts	18.0	18.6	19.3	12.9	15.0	16.8
Nepal	**20.0**	**19.7**	**19.5**	**12.6**	**14.4**	**15.6**

The first of the 3 groups selected in ES (yellow), is the only one to experience a decrease in the representation of Dalits in lower basic as in upper basic during the period. (from 26,1% à 20,7%). This first group of five districts is also the one which presents the strongest decrease in the share of Janajati almost 10 percentage points, over the period in the two cycles of basic education.

If we put these results into perspective with the fact that this first group of districts is the one that has benefited the most from the ES, particularly in terms of growth in enrolments, it is clear that this growth has not totally reached the children of the most marginalized groups in terms of caste or ethnicity, even if it has, by contrast, notably helped the girls to enrol massively in basic education.

Table 18 : Janajatis share in total enrolments in basic education by groups of districts (2009-2019)

	Lower Basic			Upper basic		
	2009	**2015**	**2019**	**2009**	**2015**	**2019**
First batch of five districts	24.9	20.7	15.3	30.3	25.1	20.8
Second batch of five districts	23.4	23.6	22.4	20.7	18.6	19.1
Third batch of Five districts	13.3	11.7	10.1	14.6	13.5	12.0
Others districts	36.5	36.0	36.9	36.3	36.8	38.5
Nepal	**38.6**	**34.0**	**33.7**	**41.7**	**38.6**	**37.6**

Main findings

1. Clearly the universalization of the basic level depends mainly now on the progress that will be made at Upper Basic level. This objective is clearly attainable before 2030. At the end of 2019, 2 out of 3 children aged 10-11 year old (68,7 %) attend effectively the secondary level. The access to Higher secondary remains more problematic and exhibits a short fall with the preceding levels.

2. Selecting the low performers districts in 2009 according to upper basic NER, it appears that they quite well include the districts selected through EI ranking (Jajarkot and Bajhang were out of range). Nevertheless the ranking is quite different than those of the EI except for the very low performers and some districts out of the initial 15 appears to be at this date, and in 2015, low schooling performers. EI excludes of its ranking districts with low C (and surely low D) while it can be fully considered as inequitable to live in a district performing less than the others

3. In order to appreciate more precisely the respective situation of the different districts in terms of NER growth, we computed the annual average growth of NER for 4 categories of districts for the period 2009-2019 (the 3 groups of districts successively selected through the EI scores and the other districts standing below the national average in 2009).

    i. On average, the annual growth of NER was higher in 2009-2015 than in 2015-2019 in the initially low performers districts while it was globally identical for the 2 periods at the national level.
    ii. Highest average annual growth rates of NER have been observed for the first five districts selected (by the EI) in 2015 representing the only group of districts where this growth was higher during the second period than the first one (respectively 9,4% against 9,1% per year), indicating that they had performed better compared to all other districts even though they were initially the worse performing districts. That could be view as an external (partial) positive result of the activities implemented through the ES.
    iii. As for basic level the annual growth rates in secondary level for the NER for the first selected group of districts under the ES appears to be the highest and especially since 2015.
    iv. The schooling performance (NER) for secondary education by district in 2009 appears to be positively linked to those observed for Upper Basic with, however, significant differences in classification. The R^2 comparing these two distributions is only 45% indicating that if access to secondary level depends positively on the development of the lower level, there are significant variations around this trend that should be further analysed in terms of demand but also in terms of supply. A further look at the correlation between the distribution of these NER by district for the two other periods, shows that even still positive, the link becomes weaker (R^2 of 35% for 2015 and of only 12 % for 2019) suggesting that access to secondary level is less and less part of a family and youth education project as the basic education is growing

We then look at the situation of the different districts considered and especially at their situation in terms of their schools characteristics aiming at improving schooling and/or learning

4. The annual average increase in the proportion of new entrants in basic education with ECD experience has been notably weaker in the first districts selected in the ES (yellow), with an overall rate of growth of only 2% over the total period and respectively 1,9 and 2,3 % in the two successive sub periods (2009-2015 and 2015-2019).

5. The proportion of « complete » basic schools remains low at the country level and in the less performing districts. It has improved notably between 2015 and 2019 and especially for the first ES selected group of districts. Nevertheless, these school map considerations appears to be weakly linked with low performance of schooling as we can observed a very hight and still growing transition rates inside basic education and between basic education and secondary.

6. After sustained growth in the period 2009-2015, **survival rates** during lower basic relatively stagnated or even fell for many districts during the second period (2015-2019). The decrease has been particularly visible in the ES districts groups and especially in the first 5 districts. This result suggests that the massive number of enrolments could have had some limits in the capacity of schools to retain this new (and coming back) pupils.

7. Our examination of the students / teachers ratios in basic education shows that this is clearly a characteristic which differentiates the most marginalized districts against the others. If the general trend is indeed towards an improvement in the conditions of supervision for all the districts in basic education, the most marginalized districts are still those which present the **highest** rates of supervision which could limit the improvement in learning. At the national level for basic level the STR decreases from 1 teacher for 37 pupils to 1 teacher for 19 while for Rautahat the ratio remains close to 60 all along the period. This situation is especially problematic in the CES first group of districts.

8. Access to data concerning schools facilities seems limited. Data for 2015 indicates that the districts considered in our study lack at this date electricity and especially internet connexion at a point that questions the schools capacity to use the net in order to send and collect data about their school situation. Gender segregated toilets are improving but appeared at this time problematic for the worst marginalized districts.

Annex 6. Term of Reference of the evaluation

Terms of Reference

UNICEF Nepal Country Office (NCO)

Process-based and Formative Evaluation of Education Equity Strategy

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1.   BACKGROUND

Up to 2014, Nepal had made remarkable progress in enhancing access to primary and basic education in recent decades. This included progress on ensuring equitable access to education, with gender parity having been achieved at all levels of school education, and historically deprived caste/ethnic groups increasingly proportionally represented at the school education levels. While the Net Enrollment Rate (NER) at the basic level has increased consistently between 2004-2014, a significant number of children remained out of school during this period. Children from households in the lowest socio-economic quintile, children with disabilities, and children from deprived communities were comprising the bulk of out of school children. The comprehensive analysis that was undertaken as part of the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) 2012 mid-term review found that the majority of these out of school children were located in a relative low number of districts and that rather than a single driver of disparity (gender, caste, ethnicity, location, ability, socio-economic status) it was the combination of a number of these drivers that disproportionally decreased their access, participation and learning outcomes. Acknowledging the need to take a holistic approach to address the need for a stronger and systematic equity-based approach in school education, the government developed a consolidated equity strategy.

The consolidated equity strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal, titled as "Equity Strategy", was launched in December 2014. The main objectives of this strategy are to reduce the current disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes for children in basic and secondary public education in Nepal. The strategy envisions to achieve this by (i) developing an Equity in Education Index (Equity Index), at national and sub-national level, using both school sector and population data, and (ii), through a consolidation and further targeting of available resources and current strategies based on identified dominant drivers of disparities in access and participation that are deployed by the Government and non-state actors to strengthen an equity/need-based approach.

Simultaneously, Nepal has been going through a transition phase with the introduction of the decentralized federal structure which was initiated with the 2015 Constitution of Nepal. Since then, the roll out of the federal structure has gained momentum. The emergence of municipality level local governments and provinces, with the demise of regional education directorates and district education offices, represents a major shift of functions and mandates within the school education sector. As per the exclusive and concurrent powers at the different government tiers that have were annexed to the Constitution and further unpacked in the years that followed, the 753 municipal-level local governments are mandated to be responsible for school education as per the constitution.

The purpose of the Equity Index is to account for children's opportunity for school education by factoring in their pre-existing vulnerabilities that are caused by their circumstances/contexts. For this, the Equity Index was developed in 2016 at national level and 2017 at district level to allow computation of the severity of disparities in objective manner that allowed comparison and ranking and unpacking to understand the contribution of the different drivers. Furthermore, the Equity Index was used to identify and target the districts and later local governments with the highest disparities in education outcomes for specific interventions and the latter to undertake the unpacking, analysis and planning to strengthen needs- based interventions and programmes to achieve reduction of disparity in access, participation and learning outcomes through targeted interventions. Following this, Equity Strategy Implementation Plans (ESIPs) were

developed in 2018 to allow for a systematic use of the equity index to inform need-based planning at local government level to reduce identified disparities. The aim is to ensure the formulation of ESIP includes active engagement of district, local and school levels. Finally, the Equity Strategy has identified a number of key activities that are to be undertaken at the central and local government level to strengthen the institutional capacity of the sector for undertaking equity-based programming and planning, including a menu of potential targeted interventions sorted against the different drivers of disparity.

The Equity Index is based on the model of the Human Opportunity Index (HOI)[1]. The HOI has been an established tool used by the World bank and Governments to measure how individual circumstances (i.e., characteristics that should not determine access to basic goods and services) can affect a child's access to basic opportunities such as water, education, electricity and sanitation. It is a synthetic measure of how far a society is from universal access to an essential good or service, and how equitably access is distributed across individuals. The HOI is thus an economic indicator that combines coverage rates and equality in a single measure. The index has a high credibility in design as it allows for triangulation of the school-based census data that is used in the participation and the learning with household-based census data on access.

The Equity Index is a composite index aggregating three components of the education sector: access to education, internal efficiency, and learning. Access to education uses Census data, which is updated only every 10 years, but gives more opportunities to explore different types of disparities between population groups. The other two components of the equity index use EMIS data. Comparing rankings of districts with regards to out-of-school children numbers obtained using Census data on one hand, or estimated using EMIS enrolment data on the other, 9 of the 10 lowest performing districts were found to be in common. This further validates the use of EMIS data as a credible data source. With the roll-out of the school based EMIS allows for the use of EMIS as unique data source which is updated yearly. The data selected for the Index within the access, participation and learning outcomes can be replaced if better or more relevant data becomes available without having to redesign the Equity Index. As such, the computing and monitoring of the index remains fully owned by the Government and embedded within the EMIS section and reporting.

The Equity Index captures disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes in basic and secondary school education level in Nepal (grade 1 to 12). For this, data was selected representing access (enrolment), participation (survival rate) and learning outcomes (initially grade 10 school leaving certificate exams but currently in the process of replacing this with grade 8 exams)A summary of the outcome indicators, circumstances and data sources is presented in the following table.

Areas	Access	Participation	Learning
Outcomes (Coverage)	Enrolment ratio (age 6-16)	Survival rate (grade 1- 8)	Initially grade 10 School leaving Certificate (SLC)[2] exam pass percentage, currently in process of changing to grade 8 exam results

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[1] The HOI is defined as $HOI = (1 - D)$, with C = average survival rate in a district ; $D = \frac{1}{2C}\sum_{i=1}^{h} w_i |C_i - C|$, $w_i = \frac{n_h}{n}$, $h = 2^k$ C_i = average outcome (enrolment ratio, survival rate or SLC pass rate) in a group i; h = number of demographic groups. (for SLC there are only two groups: male and female); k = number of dimensions of inequity (e.g. gender, disability, location); n = total number of students enrolled.; n_h = total number of students in a group i.

[2] The grade 10 SLC has since the initial computation been replaced by the grade 12 Secondary Education Exam (SEE) in the school education structure under the restructuring into basic (ECED-grade 8) and secondary (grade 9-12) education in the 8th Amendment of the Education Act.

Circumstances (Dimensions)	Gender, location, Ethnicity: dalit/non-dalit, disability, Wealth, parent's education	Gender, location, dalit/non-dalit, disability	Gender
Source of data	Initially Census, currently EMIS	EMIS	EMIS

The Human Opportunity Index is defined as $HOI = C(1 - D)$

Where,

C = average survival rate in a district

$$D = \frac{1}{2C}\sum_{i=1}^{h} w_i |C_i - C|, \; w_i = \frac{n_h}{n}, \; h = 2^k$$

C_i = average outcome (enrolment ratio, survival rate or SLC pass rate) in a group i.

h = number of demographic groups. (for SLC there are only two groups: male and female)

k = number of dimensions of inequity (e.g. gender, disability, location)

n = total number of students enrolled.

n_h = total number of students in a group i.

Based on equity index, 15 of the 75 previous districts were identified in 2016, which were converged to 186 out of the total 753 local governments, as having the highest disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes. For the initial ranking, only the access and the participation dimension were taken into account as the learning dimension (the SLC pass rate) was found to have issues as the exam was not standardized up to that point. These districts, and later local governments, were selected for receiving additional budget and technical assistance for identification and execution of targeted interventions based on the analysis of dominant drivers of composite equity index at district level, in order to achieve a reduction in the number of out of school children in these municipalities. The indicator that was included for this in the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) program result framework was selected as one of the ten Disbursement Linked Indicators for the five-year SSDP implementation period by GPE, World Bank, EU and Finland with a total result-based financing of US$ 24 million.

With the SSDP coming to an end in July 2021, the government has initiated the development of a new long term-education sector plan. The evaluation of the Equity Strategy will be expected to inform the implementation of the strategy during, and as part of the new plan in the federal context and guide the application of the equity index and equity strategy implementation plans.

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2.   PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the evaluation is to contribute to evidence-based adaptation of the Equity Strategy to increase its use and effectiveness as part of Nepal's new federal education sector plan. Mainly, the evaluation aims at illustrating the direct and indirect effects that the introduction of the Strategy has had onapplying an equity-based approach within the previous two education sector plans through comprehensiveanalysis. The evaluation's objectives are:

- Evaluate the Equity Strategy's intended and unintended effects, in terms of its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability
- Gather lessons learned on the observed opportunities, achievements and challenges of the use of the Equity Strategy

- Assessing the perception of stakeholders on efficiency of various targeted equity interventions
- Develop recommendations which will guide policy makers in the use of the Equity Strategy under the new education sector plan and contribute to evidence based equity focused programming and policymaking.

The audience of this evaluation are the Government of Nepal, education sector development partners, UNICEF, UN Agencies, implementing partners and other stakeholders who will make use of the evaluation results.

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3.   EVALUATION SCOPE

The evaluation will cover activities and developments of the Equity Strategy since 2014 to present. The evaluation scope will focus on equity dimensions (gender, geographical location, wealth quintile, disability, ethnicity and caste) based on available data. The evaluation will mainly cover analysis from through the lenses of human rights, gender and equity. The evaluation will focus on the local governments who were identified for targeted interventions based on their identified level of disparity in education outcomes, as well as on major equity-based nation-wide interventions such as provision of mid-day meals, distribution of sanitary pads and establishment of inclusive and gender sensitive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) facilities The objective is to understand and clarify the extent to which disparities of education outcomes were reduced among school-aged children in Nepal under the Equity Strategy.

The evaluation will focus on 15 districts which were prioritized for interventions under the Equity Strategy. These districts were identified as having the highest disparities in access, participation and learning outcomes in 2016. The districts have 186 local governments and categorized by equity index (levels of participation and access) including gender and equity dimensions. While the evaluation will cover the districts, which were prioritized in 2016, it will include all activities under the Equity Strategy which have already been implemented since 2014 and are still ongoing.

Evaluation approach will be process oriented and will not include evaluation of the Equity Strategy's impact. Impact will not be covered in this evaluation also due to absence of a counterfactual (i.e. comparable control context).

The Equity Strategy does not consist of a defied set of costed activities. However, an evaluation team will have access to data on different interventions and their budgets which were implemented based on the Equity Strategy.

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4.   EVALUATION FRAMEWORK AND METHODS

Evaluation framework and criteria

Based on the nature of the Equity Strategy, a process based, and formative evaluation approach is appropriate for evaluating the performance of the strategy. The evaluation will cover completed and ongoing activities to measure sustainable and equitable outcomes in the education sector. For this purpose, the evaluation framework is shaped with key questions pertaining to how the strategy addressed the needs of the most marginalized and vulnerable groups and what sustainable outcomes it contributed to delivering efficiently and effectively. The evaluation aims to tackle the Equity Strategy with seeking answers to questions on its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, precisely:

4.1. **Relevance**: the extent to which the Equity Strategy responds to the context of Nepal and the needs of children, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

4.1.1. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been based on the equity-based issues and challenges observed in the education sector, and the needs of children in marginalized ethnic groups, castes and low-income families?

4.1.2. Does the Equity Strategy adequately respond to overall context of the Education Sector in Nepal?

4.1.3. Have the equity interventions generated by the Equity Strategy reached those children that need them most and at the right time?

4.1.4. To what extent multi-sectoral equity interventions and social safety net programs that respond to needs of children enabling them access, participate and learn have been driven by or established under the Equity Strategy?

4.1.3. To what extent is the Equity Strategy relevant in allowing the government to address the increase in disparities caused by the current COVID-19 context?

4.2. **Coherence**: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has increased or decreased the ability of the Government of Nepal and external actors to undertake need-based an evidence-based planning, programming and budgeting under the previous and current education sector plans.

4.2.1. The extent to which the Equity Strategy contributed to increased coherent interventions with an equity focus in the education sector implemented by non-governmental organizations and development partners?

4.2.2. To what extent has the Equity Strategy been reflected in education sector programmes and policies and synergized programmes and policies of the Government of Nepal in other relevant sectors?

4.2.3. Are there policies or provisions that currently reduce the ability of the government to implement the equity strategy?

4.2.4 To what extent is the equity strategy compatible with the emerged federal structure in the education sector and coherently adapted at the different government levels?

4.3. **Effectiveness**: the extent to which the Equity Strategy has achieved its objectives and goals.

4.3.1. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based government funding in the nepal school education sector?

4.3.2. Has the Equity Strategy contributed to increased needs-based resource mobilization by non-state actors in the Nepal school education sector?

4.3.3. In the case of increased needs-based funding and/or resource mobilized by non-state actors, has this led to a reduction of disparities in education outcomes between children that are/were based on their ender, caste, ethnicity, ability, location, socio-economic status, vulnerability or a combination of these?

4.3.4. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Index been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?

4.3.5. Has the development and operationalization of the Equity Strategy Implementation Plans been an effective mechanism to support the implementation of the Equity Strategy?

4.3.6. To what extent has the Equity Strategy facilitated the Government of Nepal to achieve the equity-based targets and objectives within the previous and current education sector plans?

4.3.7. Has the emerged federal structure in the education sector had an effect on the effectiveness of the implementation of the equity Strategy?

4.3.8. Have processes, systems, analysis and tools for various equity strategy interventions been put in place to support the equity strategy implementation, monitoring & evaluation and reporting?

4.4. **Efficiency:** the extent to which the Equity Strategy enabled the Government to achieving equity-based targets and objectives in a timely and cost-efficient way?

4.3.1. Has the equity strategy contributed to the government utilizing financial and human resources for equity-based interventions in an efficient way?

4.3.2. Have interventions that were initiated due to the Equity Strategy been implemented within its planned timeframe?

4.3.3. Has the Equity Strategy strengthened the operational structure and institutional set up within the education sector with regards to equity-based activities and how has the evolving federalization context of Nepal affected that?

4.3.4. What was the efficiency of the various equity interventions, in terms of transfer cost, cost per beneficiary, logistics, timeliness of delivery?

4.3.5. Has the scope of the equity strategy resulted in an adequate volume of interventions and reach?

4.3.6. Have the equity interventions been performed adequately to reach the intended outputs and outcomes? Have their scope and reach been adequate? Which particular equity interventions has the largest reach?

4.5. **Sustainability:** the extent to which the Equity Strategy allows ability to adapt to emerging challenges and changing context and outcomes of the Equity Strategy are long-lasting and continue benefiting children's education.

4.5.1. How likely are the interventions driven by the Equity Strategy to continue benefiting children in the long term?

4.5.2. To what extent the financial, operational and institutional capacities of the Government can sustain the results of the Equity Strategy in the long-term? How has COVID-19 affected the sustainability of financial, operational and institutional capacity of the Education Sector?

4.5.3. Has the equity strategy facilitated/attributed to strengthening capacity of education sector duty bearers and stakeholders to address education disparities?

4.5.4. Has the Equity Strategy sustained through the changes caused by the federal transition and remained operational and/or institutionalized at the new provincial and local government level in line with devolved mandates?

4.5.6. To what extent is the Equity Strategy possible to be continued in terms of its implementation in the current COVID-19 context?

4.5.7. How resilient is the Equity Strategy to changes and what are possible risks that can prevent its results from being sustained?

Sampling

The main target areas of this evaluation will be 15 districts:

	Districts	Count of District	Sum of GP with less than 20% Participation
1	Achham	10	10
2	Baitadi	10	6
3	Bajhang	12	9
4	Bara	16	4

5	Dolpa	8	6
6	Doti	9	9
7	Mahottari	15	1
8	Parsa	14	6
9	Rasuwa	5	4
10	Rautahat	16	7
11	Rolpa	10	10
12	Saptari	18	10
13	Sarlahi	17	8
14	Siraha	17	10
15	Taplejung	9	7
	Grand Total	186	107

Districts with the percentage rate of participation
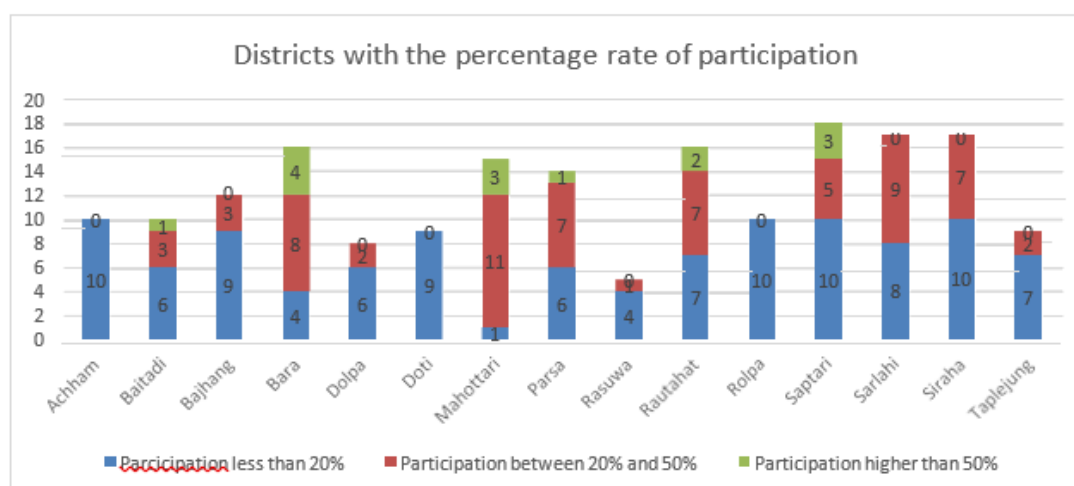
The evaluation team will develop sampling criteria based on equity index and ensure that the sample size of the target population for interviews, surveys and focus group discussions is representative of all 15 districts and preferably with oversampling students and parents. Preferred sample size is based on 95% confidence interval with margin of error of 5%.

Data collection methods

The evaluation will be based on qualitative data collection, secondary data analysis and desk review. Considering the pandemic, the evaluation will entail remote telephonic interviews with the governmental, development and non-governmental partners.

A representative sample of the 186 local governments and schools within these governments, sampled to reflect the diversity in geographical and caste/ethnicity diversity, should be included in the proposal for in-depth qualitative and quantitative data collection.

The list of organizations where relevant staff members will be interviewed [to be expanded during the inception phase]:

1. Ministry of Education, science and technology

2. Centre for Education and Human Resource Development

3. Equity thematic working group members

4. Wards and officials of targeted municipalities

5. School management

6. Teachers

7. Students and their parents

Key informant interviews will be interviewed through telephone, Skype and other platforms such as Zoom. If required, UNICEF will provide support in organizing online KIIs and FGDs with stakeholders.

Sources of data for secondary analysis:

1. MICS 2014 and 2019

Indicators for analysis:

Percentage of children (segregated by the Equity Index dimensions of location, gender, caste, ethnicity, socio-economic status and (dis)ability) of:

- primary school (grade1- 5) age currently attending primary or secondary school
- Lower secondary (grade 6-8) school age currently attending lower secondary school or higher
- upper secondary (grade 9-12) school age currently attending upper secondary school or higher

Percentage of children of:

Primary school age who are not attending early childhood education, primary or lower secondary school

- Lower secondary (grade 6-8) school age who are not attending Primary school, lower or upper secondary school or higher
- upper secondary (grade 9-12) school age who are not attending primary school, lower or upper secondary school or higher

Percentage of children of completion age (age appropriate to final grade) attending the last grade (excluding repeaters)

- Primary school (grade 1-5)
- Lower secondary (grade 6-8) school

Percentage of children age 3-5 years above the intended age for the last grade who have completed that grade

- Primary school (grade 1-5)
- Lower secondary (grade 6-8) school
- Upper secondary school (grade 9-12)

Percentage of children attending the last grade of primary school during the previous school year who are not repeating the last grade of primary school and in the first grade of lower secondary school during the current school year

Percentage of students attending in each grade who are 2 or more years older than the official school age for grade

- Primary school (grade 1-5
- Lower secondary (grade 6-8) school

Net attendance ratio (adjusted) for girls divided by net attendance ratio (adjusted) for boys
- Primary school (grade 1-5)
- Lower secondary (grade 6-8) school
- Upper secondary (grade 9-12) school

2. EMIS

- All school-level data for the period 2015-2020 plus student level data on access, attendance and grade 8 examination for those schools that have been selected as part of the representative sample across the 186 local governments that rank lowest on the equity index.

Desk review:

1. Budget and expenditures of sampled programmes implemented based on the Equity Strategy

2. Programme documents

3. Monitoring and progress reports

4. Status reports on out of school children

5. DLI achievement and verification reports

6. Joint sector review aide memoires

Analysis

The main areas of focus in terms of analysis within the overall performance of the Equity Strategy are disparities in **access, participation and learning of children.** The evaluation team will unpack developments in these areas and explaining how strategy's interventions are suitable in ensuring equity and meeting the needs of the target population, also, while adapting to the economic, political and social developments in the country.

To understand outcomes and possible setbacks of the strategy's interventions internal and external influential factors will be part of the evaluation analysis. In particular, the analysis will assess synergies between the strategy and other similar interventions, including duplications. Coordination between partners and adherence of the strategy to the education needs of children are top key areas to be assessed. The evaluation analysis should establish a link between the policy framework of the strategy, its interventions and the extent to which the intended results were achieved and improved the education outcomes. The timeframe, operational and logistical issues should be carefully examined in assessing how timely the interventions were implemented. Especially, considering natural disasters, federalization of the Government and pandemic, the evaluation will assess and explain how the interventions were adapted to the changed context and what lessons were learned.

The pandemic of COVID-19 and measures taken by the Government in response to it have immensely affected children's access to education. The new situation poses questions about feasible options for children to continue their education while staying at home, considering that only 30 % of households with children who study at schools that offer distance learning in Nepal.[3] Social and economic impacts of COVID-19 will also be among the central issues to be analyzed in evaluating the sustainability of the strategy's interventions.

To the extent possible, the secondary data analysis must correlate the relationships of relevant education indicators in MICS and EMIS to the Equity Strategy at different points of time.

Evaluability and Limitations

Due to the pandemic, it will not be possible to carry out a fieldwork which would enable gathering primary data, especially on children's access, participation and learning. Evaluating the Equity Strategy before the

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[3] UNICEF, "Child and Family Tracker", Nepal, 2020. https://www.unicef.org/nepal/reports/covid-19-child-and-family-tracker-baseline-findings

development of its new phase, conducting the proposed evaluation framework in this ToR is deemed necessary. Also, there are available secondary data such as MICS, EMIS, NASA and education finance data that will be used to assess the performance of the strategy in terms of improvements in relevant education indicators.

The theory of change is not separately developed but the equity strategy document includes a conceptual framework and describes the purpose of the strategy and the change it envisions to achieve through this. The equity strategy allows the government to use a formula based objective way to identify prevalence and severity of disparities in education outcomes and through this refocuses domestic and external resources to be allocated towards those local governments having the largest disparities. Simultaneously, the strategy includes support to local governments to apply a systematic approach to need-based planning, which is expected to spill over from the ESIP development into general education planning and programming. For the purposes of the evaluation, an evaluation team will develop a theory of change.

5. TASKS, PAYMENT PLAN AND DELIVERABLES

#	Item	Duration
1	**Inception Phase**	
1.1	Literature review	3 days
1.2	Consultations with Education Programme	2 days
1.3	Consultations with partners	2 days
1.4	Draft inception report with data collection tools	3 days
1.5	Final inception report and data collection tools	5 days
	Total number of days for inception phase	**15 days**
2	**Data Collection and Analysis Phase**	
2.1	Interviews with UNICEF staff	
2.2	Interviews with partners	10 days
2.3	Desk review of budgets and programmes (preferably to be conducted simultaneously at the same time with interviews)	
2.4	Secondary data analysis	10 days
	Total number of days for data collection and analysis	**20 days**
3	**Repot Writing**	
3.1	Triangulating findings and combining analysis	10 days
3.2	Draft evaluation report	
3.3	Final evaluation report	10 days
	Total number of days for evaluation report	**20 days**

6. DELIVERABLES:

1	Inception Report

The inception report is the outcome document of the research findings, interviews with UNICEF and stakeholders, and the review of the programme documents. The report must present the overall evaluation approach, detailed evaluation methodology, theory of change, evaluation matrix, process monitoring framework, final evaluation questions, data collection and sampling approach for the different data collection stages and types (including statistical power calculations for the household surveys) and timeframe for each proposed data collection method. The evaluation team must submit the first draft report by a required deadline. The draft report will be reviewed by UNICEF and the detailed list of comments, if any, will be shared with the evaluation team in 7 or 10 days. The evaluation team is expected to respond to the comments and revise the report in 7 days. Depending on the quality of the inception

report, the evaluation team may be required to revise it more than once until it meets the UNICEF standards. The entire inception phase is the time when the Evaluation Team and UNICEF verify that the inception report covers every detail and clarify expectations.

2	Data collection tools
3	Summary of Initial Findings from the Interviews, Desk Reviews and Secondary Data Analysis
4	Copies of the Data Files and Analysis
5	Evaluation Report

The first draft evaluation report submitted to UNICEF will be reviewed and it usually takes from 7 to 10 working days to provide the Evaluation Team with comments. The Evaluation Team will be responsible for revising the report and resubmitting it within the requested timeline. Similarly, to the inception phase procedures, the writing phase of the evaluation report will include reviews and feedback by UNICEF. The timeline for the review and feedback on the first and second draft reports will take about 7 and 10 working days. The evaluation team must respond to all comments and revise the report in a required timeframe by UNICEF. The report should include background, detailed description of methodology, analysis of data which address each of the key evaluation questions and conclusions. Comments and suggestions gathered during the meeting shall be integrated into the draft final report. The length of the evaluation report must be between 40-60 pages. TOC, evaluation matrix, data collection tools, tables and graphs illustrating evaluation findings must be included in the report as annexes.

6	Presentation of the evaluation findings to UNICEF and partners

The evaluation findings will be presented to UNICEF, and it will include a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the evaluation process and initial findings.

7. **DURATION**: Earliest possible start date , The contract expected to be concluded in 55 days.

8. **WORKING LOCATIONS**: REMOTE WORKING

9. PROPOSED PAYMENT SCHEDULE:

No	Payment schedule	Percentage
1	Upon delivery of the final Inception Report	30 %
2	Upon completion of Data collection and analysis phase	30 %
3	Upon delivery of the final Evaluation Report	40 %

CONTRACT SUPERVISION:

The evaluation team will be supervised by Evaluation Specialist. UNICEF Education Section will provide technical support in quality assurance of the evaluation products and support in coordinating required meetings with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders for this evaluation. Evaluation Reference Group (ERG) will be formed and consisted of experts from the Ministry of Education, UNICEF and other relevant partners. ERG members will provide support in quality assurance of deliverables through providing

Annex 7 : Supply and demand possible actions

Drivers	Issues that should be tackled through Supply oriented actions	Issues that should be tackled through demand oriented actions	Studies to examine these different points
Family Resources	Free education, subsidize ancillary costs etc by Government	Ability to finance the direct cost of studies (uniforms, consumables, etc.) not funded by Goverment Higher opportunity cost for the poorest (savings on domestic and productive family tasks) Prospects of lower earnings (education is only one of the elements of access to the best jobs next to relationships, social codes...). Poverty has a special status in drivers and is an aggravating factor for all other drivers.	The analysis of equity is mainly done trough household survey which collect opinions of the families about many dimensions of schooling (no enrolment, reasons for dropping out, consequences of repetition,…) and are often treated in a descriptive way. the problem of equity and its determinants deserves a more analytical approach. The hierarchy of inequity drivers should be analyzed trough multivariate analysis aiming to compare the net and gross effects of drivers and family characteristics (for example, explaining the probability to drop out at a given education level according simultaneously to gender, caste, geographical location controlling for family resources, family composition, distance to school, completeness of the school…). More than multidimensions household surveys, it could be useful to develop at national, provincial and districts levels, "education demand analysis" that concentrate on how schooling is affected simultaneously by schools specificities and families characteristics. The analysis of education demand looks at the effective education behaviour (access, retention) by examining these behaviours by both comparing the family characteristics and the schools characteristics. More than the preferences expressed by the different families, the real behaviour tell us what trade-off are made by the parents among the different school characteristics. In a study of this type devoted to the demand for schooling in rural areas in Morocco during the 1990s, justified by the very low enrolment of rural girls, it was found that certain configuration of schools allowed the education of all girls who could be enrolled in school but also that the preferences expressed by families were not always
Geographical location	. Distance to school, difficulties in the field . School attractiveness for teachers - Teacher quality/status - Teacher stability . Completion of school (including basic school which may be a different location for Lower and Upper Basic Chronic issue of closures of schools in mountains of Karnali Zone	Opportunity cost (children's earning prospects in the family setting) Earnings prospects of educated children in rural vs. urban areas (labour market specifics) Average poverty of rural vs. urban families	
Gender	Discrimination (attitude of the "school" towards children of both sexes).	Opportunity cost girls vs. boys Investment horizon for girls vs. boys (e.g. early marriage)	

Caste/Ethnicity	<mark>Pure</mark> discrimination (attitude of the "school" towards children from different caste or ethnicity	Request for another school that better promotes its own culture/religion/value Possibly different opportunity costs in relation to specific professions linked to certain castes or ethnic groups.	verified in practice due to trade-off based on higher considerations. Families said, for example, that they preferred girls to be trained by women, but this preference was ultimately of little weight compared to their other primary wish to send their children to nearest school.
	Language of instruction may differ +/- strongly from mother tongue (problem aggravated if heterogeneity of languages of pupils in the same classes	Earnings prospects of educated children from different backgrounds (specificities and discrimination in labour markets) Relative poverty of different castes and ethnicities	Referring to individual education demand theories, the analysis of equity should document the costs and benefits of education for the different groups in different contexts. The analysis of education benefits should be informed by labor market studies allowing to measure the benefits of education (access to formal market, access to job position, salaries, unemployment duration) for the different groups (gender, caste, geographical location, even disabilities) on national market and abroad. If the labor market is inequitable, the education expectations will be different among groups of people and that can explain different strength of education demand.
Disabilities	Discrimination (attitude of 'school' towards children with disabilities). Schools more or less adapted to mainstreaming disability Lack of assistive devices, individual support, detection and referral, inclusive education methods, etc.	Distance problems may become more acute depending on the disability. Family preference between special schools or integration with mainstream schools Perception of readiness and ability of school to cater to children's needs	Disability, because of its great variety, does not constitute a homogeneous whole that could be treated in a uniform way (this is also the case for the various vulnerabilities). The effective care of these children within the framework of an inclusive school would justify a specific analysis of demand for education in relation to disability and vulnerability of the type, more general, suggested above by considering the **effective schooling of children according to their handicap** (vulnerability) according to the characteristics of schools and families (and the way they interact) we should be able to better understand what facilitates or limits their integration into a common school. Once again, it would be important to compare the opinions of families with the reality of schooling. Specific studies concerning the education team and also the peer group would be of some helps in order to quote good practices of integration according to disabilities and vulnerabilities.
Vulnerabilities (especially orphans, children form roaming communities, day laborers working in stone quarries and brick kilns, children living on the street, etc	Discrimination (attitude of 'school' towards vulnerable children)	Importance and nature of care provided by family and friends Horizon within the caring group Limitations of the host institutions/ schooling of beneficiaries	

Annex 8 : Identified barriers in target districts and interventions from Non State Actors

Table 29. Identified barriers in target districts and interventions of Non State Actors

Barrier or reason for OOSC		Selection of interventions employed by I/NGOs in Nepal
Financial barriers[179]	Lack of money for school-related expenses (e.g. uniforms, books)	Provision of school materials;
		Conditional cash transfers
	Child labour due to family's immediate financial needs	Parental sensitization to importance of education through advocacy and communications campaigns
	Lack of child's basic needs being met, e.g. including severe malnutrition	Mid-day meals
	Lack of actual and/or perceived return on investment (i.e. no employment upon completing school)	Pre-vocational education in Grades 6-8;
		Life skills training;
		Small business grants or loans;
		Livelihood programmes;
		Career mentoring
Social barriers	Lack of appropriate documentation for school enrolment (birth certificate, citizenship)	Strengthening awareness of parents and guardians (e.g. through Ward Citizen Forum or Citizen Awareness Center);
		Life skills training;
	Lack of awareness by parents or children on their educational and other rights	Advocacy campaign;
		Strengthening governance (e.g. through Ward Citizen Forum or Citizen Awareness Center)
		Door-to-door campaigns;
		Adult champions, young champions, community mobilisers;
		Community events like reading melas
	Domestic work including household chores (and therefore lack of study time)	Door-to-door campaigns;
	Child or early marriage	Street dramas / interactive theatre;
		Community dialogues;
		ASRH programmes;
		Peer mentoring;
		Community mobilisers
	Menstruation and stigmatised practices (e.g. Chhaupadi)	ASHR programmes;
		Community mobilisers and Young Champions
	Seasonal migration	Mobile learning centres
		Strengthening governance (e.g. through Ward Citizen Forum or Citizen Awareness Center);

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[179] In some other country contexts, conditional and unconditional cash transfers have proved a popular and effective intervention for tackling financial barriers preventing children accessing education (most notably in Brazil), however, no interventions in the target districts in Nepal were noted in this desk review, with the exception of WFP.

	Lack of governmental support and/or political interference of schools	Strengthened governance and capacity of LG/EDCU(DEO) for tracking of OOSC through EMIS and learning through TMIS;
		Sensitization to Schools as Zones of Peace
	Lack of support from within the marginalised child's own community	Community dialogues, e.g. using Friere's REFLECT model
School-related barriers	Distance to school (e.g. due to community being physically as well as socially segregated)	Using local community spaces for: learning support classes, bridge classes, or other non-formal education programmes
	Poor infrastructure, including poor ASRH facilities and inadequate provision for children with disabilities	Girl friendly toilets;
		ASRH programmes;
		Sanitary pads making sessions;
		Strengthening school resources;
		Minor appliances supplied to children with disabilities
	Non-inclusive curriculum	Non-formal education programmes develop relevant materials that reflect students' realities;
		Variety of learning materials
	Non-inclusive teaching	Facilitators or teachers hired from marginalised communities for non-formal education programmes;
		Teachers who speak same language as marginalised children;
		Inclusive pedagogy training for teachers
	Non-representative teaching staff and/or lack of role models	Facilitators or teachers hired from marginalised communities for non-formal education programmes;
		Young champions or 'big sisters' who provide peer mentoring and guidance;
	Discrimination in the classroom by students and teachers, including sexual harassment of girls	School Management Committee and Head Teacher support, capacity strengthening and regular monitoring;
		School code of conduct and SIP in place
	Students are not learning the basics	Support to teachers in their professional development;
		Accelerated learning programmes; bridge classes;

Source: Review of non-state actors interventions on access and retention for out of school children (Perry 2019)

Annex 9 : Overlapping of programs in the 15 districts

Table 30. Overlapping of programs in the 15 districts

Provinces	Districts	Mid-Day Meal WFP 7 districts	USAID Reading for All Program	2016/2017 ES focused districts	2017/2018 ES focused districts	2018/2019 ES focused districts
Sudurpashchim	Bajhang	X				X
Sudurpashchim	Achcham	X				X
Sudurpashchim	Doti	X			X	
Province 1	Jajarkot	X				X
Province 1	Dolpha		X		X	
Province 1	Humla				X	
Province 2	Rautahat			X		
Province 2	Sarlahi			X		
Province 2	Mahottari			X		
Province 2	Parsa		X	X		
Province 2	Bara			X		
Province 2	Siraha				X	
Province 2	Dhanusha					X
Lumbini	Rolpha				X	
Lumbini	Banke		X			X

Annex 10 : Percentage of enrollment of OoSC in the 15 districts

Table 31. Percentage of enrollment of OoSC in the 15 districts as of 2019

15 Districts	OoSC 7-12 ans				Enrolled in schools as of 2019				
	Girls	Boys	Total	*% girls*	Girls	Boys	Total	*% girls*	% Enrolled
BARA	1987	1968	3955	*50,2%*	1788	1735	3523	*50,8%*	89,1%
PARSA	2604	2267	4871	*53,5%*	1920	1569	3489	*55,0%*	71,6%
MAHOTTARI	2181	2161	4342	*50,2%*	1543	1476	3019	*51,1%*	69,5%
RAUTAHAT	3267	3280	6547	*49,9%*	1157	1026	2183	*53,0%*	33,3%
SARLAHI	2231	2451	4682	*47,7%*	790	766	1556	*50,8%*	33,2%
Sub total	12270	12127	24397	*50,3%*	7198	6572	13770	*52,3%*	56,4%
DOLPA	104	93	197	*52,8%*	90	77	167	*53,9%*	84,8%
DOTI	528	575	1103	*47,9%*	441	444	885	*49,8%*	80,2%
HUMLA	234	217	451	*51,9%*	158	133	291	*54,3%*	64,5%
ROLPA	1323	1404	2727	*48,5%*	942	1106	2048	*46,0%*	75,1%
SIRAHA	1716	2037	3753	*45,7%*	1163	1324	2487	*46,8%*	66,3%
Sub total	3905	4326	8231	*47,4%*	2794	3084	5878	*47,5%*	71,4%
ACHHAM	2564	2723	5287	*48,5%*	2143	2093	4236	*50,6%*	80,1%
BAJHANG	1397	1381	2778	*50,3%*	1031	957	1988	*51,9%*	71,6%
BANKE	3218	3951	7169	*44,9%*	1139	1237	2376	*47,9%*	33,1%
DANUSHA	3065	2895	5960	*51,4%*	2081	1882	3963	*52,5%*	66,5%
JAJARKOT	2150	2282	4432	*48,5%*	762	714	1476	*51,6%*	33,3%

	Sub Total	12394	13232	25626	*48,4%*	7156	6883	14039	*51,0%*	54,8%
	TOTAL	28569	29685	58254	*49,0%*	17148	16539	33687	*50,9%*	**57,8%**

Note: The period for the first columns of the chart (Oosc 7-12 years) varies according to the period of engagement of the districts in the ES program. The first 5 districts started in 2015/2016, then 5 more districts were included in 2016/2017 and finally the last 5 districts in 2018/2019.

Annex 11 : Pending issues per equity dimension

Table 32. Pending issues per equity dimension

Dimensions/ drivers	Access	Retention	Learning
Caste	Higher secondary enrolment overall has increased rapidly over this period, by over 10 percent per year. The data on the proportion of Dalit and Janajati indicate that this growth has not been equitable in terms of caste an ethnicity, although it has been equitable in terms of gender. The disadvantages in access are experienced by boys and girls equally in quantitative terms. Dalit, especially female Dalits, are highly underrepresented in the teacher workforce at all levels. Janajati are underrepresented among higher secondary school teachers. In some municipalities, Muslim children are attending madrasas but do not join mainstream schools.	Representation of Dalits and Janajati in the school population decreases with level of education Dalit are less likely to complete basic education. Janajati, whilst well represented up to grade 10, appear less likely to enter higher secondary than other ethnic groups. Dalit and Janajati are underrepresented at higher secondary and representation decreased from 2014-2018	Completion rate for the most disadvantaged groups is low (46 percent only). The 2018 grade 5 NASA assessment (NASA 2019), showed that Dalit and Janajati students performed significantly below the national mean in mathematics. Dalit students also performed below average in Nepali but Janajati performance was equal to the national mean
Gender	The Gender parity Index (GPI) of the Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for grades 1-8 was at 1.00 in 2015. At secondary level (9-12) enrolment rates have also been close to parity throughout the lifetime of the SSDP (GPI of NER for grades 9-12 = 0.99 in 2015 and 1.01 in 2019. <u>But there are some gender disparities at the provincial level.</u> <u>ECD:</u> Whilst there are equal numbers of boys and girls accessing community ECED centres (school or community based), girls are underrepresented in institutional ECED centres, making up only 42% of their enrolment There is also gender inequality in institutional school enrolment at basic and secondary levels, demonstrating a preference for investing in boys' education over girls at the household level. Females are highly underrepresented in school leadership, with only 17% of female headteachers	At basic level, progression rates are higher for girls, and dropout and repetition rates higher for boys. Girls' attendance rates are similar to boys', and slightly higher than boys in higher grades (grades 8-10) Early marriage, the management of feminine hygiene and gender-based violence within schools or when traveling to/from school continue to be serious obstacles affecting girls' progress and completion of secondary education.	Gender gaps in learning outcomes, as measured by National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA), appear to have reduced over the last decade and overall differences between girls and boys scores in recent learning assessments are minimal. The grade 8 NASA, conducted in 2017 reveals small, but significant differences in scores by sex, with girls achieving higher scores in Nepali and science, and boys achieving higher scores in mathematics

Disability	No data is provided about children with disabilities in the census of 2011 for the enrolment rate for children 5-14-year-old. As pertains to Early Childhood Education approximately 81.0% of 4-year old were enrolled in 2015, with 0.21% reporting some sort of disability. The Department of Education (2013), as cited by the CRPD-N (2015) ,considered that 1.0% of all students enrolled at the basic level of education had a disability. The Flash 2 Report on Education (2017-18), indicates that the numbers of children enrolled in Lower Secondary having some sort of disability were close to 0.98% in total. Schools were found to be lacking physical, communication, attitudinal and curricular accessibility, with even special schools lacking ramps and accessible toilets, a situation not conducive to inclusive education.	Data reviewed emphasizes enrolment rates and include little information on survival rates. The Flash 1 Report on Education places the promotion rate for grade 8 at 90.9%, with 4.4% of children repeating the grade and 4.4% dropping out in the same time frame. Although no data on children with disabilities was available, the dropout rate was estimated to be considerably higher for children with disabilities. little support for teachers, with many having no preparation to teach multi-grade or use multi-level teaching strategies, having no training in how to ensure learning for children with disabilities, or in signalizing children with difficulties for further screening. A 2018 study found that the scholarship for children with disabilities was one of the few to be considered, by teachers, students and families, as relatively impactful both in terms of needs and of the amount given, even if problems still subside (e.g., transparency, amount, information).	No data on learning outcomes of Children with Disabilities. Special schools / resource classes are not provided with flexible/alternative or inclusive curriculums. Many teachers ignore the defined curriculum and base the education provided on their own lessons on special education. The frequent change of the official curriculum also poses challenges, as adapted materials such as braille books take longer to arrive due to constraints in translation, printing and distribution - these constraints also apply to the accessibility of other educational aids
Geography	Female teachers tend to be concentrated in urban areas. Boys are more frequently sent to institutional schools, indicating that some parents still invest more in boys' education (Flash report 2018 I p.29).	Net enrolment at lower secondary level remains low at 64.1 percent. Children, in particular girls, from poor households and certain geographic areas are much less likely to transition to the secondary level (USAID, 2017)	Learners from rural schools scored significantly lower than their urban counterparts and there was a strong association between timeliness in textbook availability and student achievement
Wealth	Early childhood education and secondary access is limited for the poorest quintile. There are large disparities in access to ECED based on household wealth.		The Socio-Economic Status (SES) of students has a low effect on scores in Mathematics and medium effect in Nepali Language. (Grade 8 NASA)
language	Lack of access to education in children's own language remains a barrier to developing literacy skills for many.		Literacy outcomes of non-Nepali mother tongue speakers far below those of Nepali mother tongue speakers. There are significant differences based on ethnicity when it comes to results in Nepali, Math and Science: Brahman/Chetri students perform significantly better in Math, Science and Nepali while Dalit perform significantly worse than all others In the 2018 grade 5 assessment, the

			performance of children from Nepali speaking households was significantly higher than those from households where other languages were predominant (NASA 2018). However, the main home language was not found to be linked to mathematics achievement.

Sources: GESI Analysis. Education Nepal-2020; Report published by the International Disability Alliance - Inclusive Education Flagship. Baseline data. Nepal 2019 (for the section on disability), MTR evaluation report conducted by Sofreco 2020

Annex 12 : Geographical presence of Non State Actors in the 15 districts

Table 33. Geographical presence Non State Actors in the 15 districts

Target District	Province	Number of reports received with interventions in the district	Organisations working in the district
Achham	Province 7	7	Humanity Inclusion, Restless Development, Save the Children, World Education
Baitadi	Province 7	1	World Food Programme
Bajhang	Province 7	1	World Food Programme
Bara	Province 2	1	World Food Programme
Dolpa	Karnali	1	World Food Programme
Doti	Province 7	5	Restless Development, Samunnat Nepal, World Food Programme
Mahottari	Province 2	9	Aasaman, Restless Development, Street Child, World Education
Parsa	Province 2	6	Aasaman, World Education, VSO
Rasuwa	*Province 3*	*0*	
Rautahat	Province 2	10	Aasaman, Restless Development, Samunnat Nepal, World Education
Rolpa	Province 5	2	Save the Children, World Food Programme
Saptari	Province 2	5	Aasaman, Restless Development, Street Child, World Education
Sarlahi	Province 2	4	World Education
Siraha	Province 2	1	Street Child, World Food Programme
Taplejung	*Province 1*	*0*	

Annex 13 : Simplified Theory Of Change. Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal

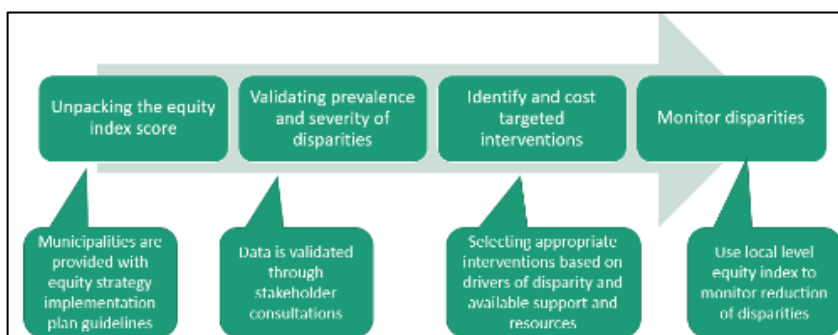|		
Impact	Marginalized Group of Learners achieve opportunities through education that enable them to **realize quality of life outcomes** and **contribute to establishing an equitable and inclusive society** that values its diversities through strengthening of equity across all levels and subsectors within the school education sector in Nepal.	
Long Term Outcomes	1. Marginalized groups of learners have **access to education**. 2. learners that are currently dropping out of education or at risk of doing so have strengthened their educational participation, retention and inclusion to strengthen their educational survival rate. 3. Marginalized groups of Learners have strengthened their learning outcomes that translate into quality life outcomes in the context of the learner and labor market.	
Short/Medium Term Outcomes *(Each short/medium term Outcomes are linked to each ''Long Term Outcomes'')*	1. Marginalised groups of learners are supported on a need base and thereby able to overcome their barriers in accessing education through utilization by the education system of evidence-based data analysis and monitoring and initiatives with regards to these groups. 2. learners that are currently dropping out of education or at risk of doing so have been identified and their specific both school and non-school based barriers have been addressed through addressing the knowledge gaps with regards to these barriers, alignment of efforts and initiatives to strengthen their educational survival rate and use of Equity focused indicators and data-driven analysis for budgeting and planning of equity focused interventions. 3. Marginalized groups of Learners have reduced inequitable learning outcomes and root causes of these discrepancies have been adressed through planned and funded equity focus and evidence - based targeted interventions focused on removal of barriers and catering specific needs, as well as with regards to relevance of education to skills.	

PATHWAYS OF CHANGE

Strategic Approach. Pillar 2:

Consolidate & align existing Equity-based interventions in the Education sector to strengthen their reach, impact and effectiveness

Main Output related to Pillar 2: Equity based Interventions informed by the use of the Index

The Government and other development Organizations effectively and equitably identify, plan, allocate funding, execute and monitor targeted interventions based on the analysis of dominant drivers of the composite equity index at district level, in order to achieve a reduction in the number of marginalized group of learners in these municipalities

	Main activities related to Pillar 2		
Equity Dimension	**Access**	**Participation**	**Learning Outcomes**
Gender	▪ Designing, implementing and increasing working with communities, schools and parents in order to strengthen the access and retention of students amongst disadvantaged groups, girls, disadvantaged ethic and religious groups, children with disabilities and vulnerable children; ▪ Strengthen the provision of Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMECs) – including providing safe and enabling environments for girls to learn, provide basic education in remote and difficult locations and support and enable children with disabilities; ▪ Strengthen the awareness of the importance and far-reaching benefits of girls' education; Implement schemes to increase and encourage higher female representation amongst teachers and management; Target and support ECED, nutrition and health programs in order to promote better health and reduce health risks in order to retain students, increase their attendance and assist in food and nutritional deficiencies; ▪ Increase and enhance programs providing education in mother tongue languages; Increase access to secondary education and the provision of relevant life skills and appropriate non formal skills to assist with entry into the labor market; ▪ Remove barriers and provide programs that cater to the specific needs and increased protection of vulnerable children – including orphans, street children, children with long term illnesses and children at risk of violence; ▪ Explore ways to use technological solutions in order to reach children in difficult circumstances or geographic locations.		
Disability			
Poverty& Health and Nutrition			
Caste, ethnicity and language			
Geographical location			
Vulnerable Groups			

PATHWAYS OF CHANGE

Strategic Approach Pillar 1: Development of an Equity in Education Index

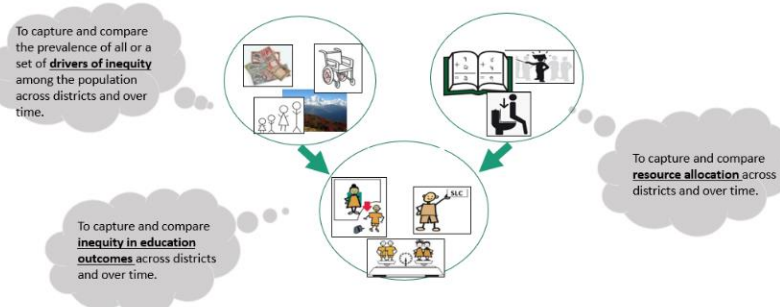**Main Outputs related to Pillar 1: Development of an Equity in Education Index**

1. Policy makers and budget holders have a **better understanding and use of the concept of equity in education policy, planning and budgeting** thanks to availability of relevant Equity focused indicators, data-driven analysis and validation by stakeholders and mechanisms to monitor reduction of disparities in education outcomes.

2. An Equity Index allows **to measure and compare disparity within the school education sector**, rank provinces and local governments to understand and **justify equity-based resource allocation based on understanding of the drivers of disparity** and their intersectionality.

3. The use of an Equity Index makes it possible to **prioritize funding according to equity-based financing formulas** and therefore increase **alignment of allocation of public resources and development assistance with identified needs.**

4. The Equity Index is embedded in EMIS data which **increases demand from the local level planners to use EMIS data for informing planning and budgeting purposes** based on which further improvements can be made such as school and subnational profiles/report cards that can inform stakeholders in their dialogue with budget holders.

Main activities related to Pillar 1:

➢ Conduct a need analysis as a starting point for the development of a more holistic index showing prevalence and severity of deprivation.

➢ Develop an Education Deprivation Index (EDI), based on the capability approach and structured according to its components, areas and dimensions that affect capabilities. It specifies the different grades of severity within these with regard to deprivation of access, participation and learning outcomes and the correlations that these levels have with each other and those within other equity dimensions. The focal dimensions of inequity that have been identified include: gender, socio-economic status, geographic location, health and nutritional status, disabilities, caste and ethnicity, language and children from vulnerable groups. When selecting the indicators and scales relevant indexes will be used including the Human Development Index (HDI), the Poverty Index (PI) and the Child Deprivation Index (CDI).

➢ Incorporate, wherever possible, the index with the Education Management Information System (EMIS) in order to strengthen the alignment and sustainability in data management at all level from National, sub-National and local levels.

The Equity Index

The Equity Index shows disparities rather than averages, allows equity-based financing of education, and unpacking at local level to inform need-based planning

To capture and compare the prevalence of all or a set of **drivers of inequity** among the population across districts and over time.

To capture and compare **resource allocation** across districts and over time.

To capture and compare **inequity in education outcomes** across districts and over time.

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Relevant line ministries other than the Ministry of Education (MOWCSW, MOFALD, MOHP and MOTL) agree to explore which strategic actions have relevant sector overlap that can be covered from their respective budgets.

District and local level bodies agree to explore available resourcing at these levels from provisions that have been made available for the social sector, as provisioned under the Local Self Governance Act (LSGA).

Socio- cultural practices and poverty issues take a long time to be addressed and may not be resolved during the time of implementation of the Equity Strategy such as for example:

- Entrenched and harmful cultural practices such as isolation of girls and women during menstruation (chaupadhi) and being married at an early age to avoid high dowry fees continue to cause severe marginalization for girls and young women which increase their likelihood of exposure to Gender Based Violence (GBV) and their educational outcomes and school attendance suffer.

- Persistence of various socio-economic status and poverty issues that lead to an overall absence of access to fulfilment of basic needs (including education) such as health, housing, empowerment, employment, personal security, etc

- Strong attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders full and effective participation in society (and in education) on an equal base with others for children with disabilities.

- Social, cultural and environmental barriers affect access to education for Children affected by HIV.

- Socio-economic barriers for Urban out of school and extremely poor children accessing non-formal or formal education.

- Persistence learning outcomes barriers faced by children with separation, addiction or incurable disease, abused children or those witnessing abuse at home, school and community.

Institutional support for Children with Disabilities remains inadequate for inclusion of children with disabilities in the mainstream schools such as
The lack of adequate diagnostic services and referral mechanisms to assess and identify children with different types of disabilities

Stronger than anticipated and perdurance of equity issues in the education system related to lack of technical capacity, administrative burdens, or availability of funding limit the implementation of the Equity Strategy

The Government do not have enough funding, human resources, capacity and textbooks to ensure mother tongue teaching in the lower grades.
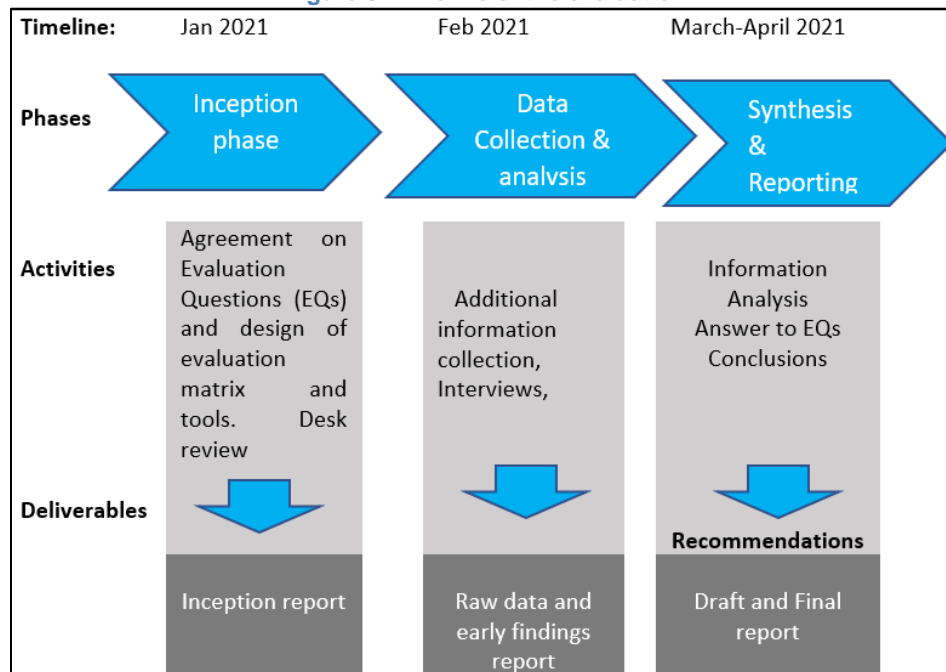
Despite policies in place to enforce the fulfillment of the quotas, it remains challenging to ensure need-based recruitment of women teachers across different regions and grade levels.

PATHWAYS OF CHANGE

There are not enough teachers in the early grades (1-3) of basic education that speak local languages.

Lack of incentives to address cultural and societal barriers for girls to access secondary education.

Annex 14: Calendar of work

Figure 8. Timeline of the evaluation

CAYAMBE
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