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Respected sir,

With the reference to the initiative, Group Research Project (GRP) launched by SAESM, it seems a great opportunity for students like us to come front and express our ideas and opinions for a common solution to the problem prevailing in the current situation – COVID-19. I'm Suman Shahi (student of BBA 2nd semester) from Tribhuvan University. I am writing with my great interest in participating in the GRP competition. It provides us a great opportunity to interact with other's views and see new perspectives of the situation. It builds up our confidence and generates our skills to explore and provides us knowledge helping us to build up our communication skills as well as social skills. I'm participating in group research project to bring out my ideas through this project. Not forgetting the fact, it expands our resume and leadership quality. Group Research Project is helping to convert the current pandemic to opportunity by collaborating virtually, to think together about the numerous socio-economic impacts of such pandemics and effective policies to counter it today and within the future. It is important to have a research project for students, especially in this pandemic situation because it helps us to have a detailed analysis of everything around us. When we analyze in-depth of any topic, the result comes out fruitfully and also makes our knowledge enhanced.

For the spread of COVID-19, most of the things are shutdown which causing the economy condition worse. As the world gets more and more interconnected, so do the risks we face. The pandemic has not stopped at any national borders. It has affected people regardless of nationality, rate of literacy, income, or gender. But the same has not been true for its consequences, which have hit the most vulnerable hardest. The nationwide lockdown in many countries has a significant impact on the world economy. Among different indicative themes listed for the project, I choose the education theme as it best suits me. Education is no exception. Students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, supported by their parents and eager and able to learn, could find their way past closed school doors to alternative learning opportunities. Those from disadvantaged backgrounds often remained shut out when their schools shut down. The lockdowns in response to COVID-19 have interrupted conventional schooling with nationwide school closures in most south countries as well as other countries. Learners in the most marginalized groups, who don't have access to digital learning resources or lack the resources and engagement to learn on their own, are at risk of falling behind. However, the challenges do not end with the immediate crisis. Spending on education may be compromised in the coming years. As public funds are directed to health and social welfare, long-term public spending on education is at risk despite short-term stimulus packages in some countries. Private funding will also become less as the economy weakens and unemployment rises more and more.

As of 30 September 2020, approximately 1.077 billion students are currently affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic. While some governments are starting to order teachers and students back to work, education, one of the most important drivers in the current economy, continues to be largely closed for business. It is no doubt student will suffer a lot from these education losses, causing them greater future economic pain. Young adults finishing school will face a weaker job market and lower returns on their schooling than expected. But the costs imposed on disadvantaged students by the COVID-19 crisis might be the greatest of all. The pandemic is widening the existing gap of inequalities in education. But we should pay attention to the potential downstream economic impact of a widening achievement gap, caused by school, college closures around the country.

In the context of Nepal, Inequality is a key characteristic of the Nepali society linked to the settlement area, caste, and gender of the child. Male children, children from higher castes, and from urban areas are far more likely to attain education than female children and children from lower castes and from rural areas. The ability to enjoy education is limited for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is always these children, the first to suffer when a disaster takes place. Therefore, it can be predicted that children in rural areas, from lower castes and girl children, are most likely to be negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. As we know education is a basic necessity in human life. The real meaning of education is learning which awakens the conscience of human beings. But now education is completely changed from original meaning or we can say that education is connected to earn money. Education swings from professionalism. The advent of COVID-19 to this unequal education system has worsened the situation. Due to this Nepal, the government has done some efforts to contain the spread of COVID-19 they shut down temporally the academic institution from nursery school to university which resulted in many examinations being postponed or rescheduled.

When it felt that everything had become too much sitting at home, then the academic institution starting juggling for new work due to the pandemic has significantly disrupted the education system. So it takes place by online classes in schools and universities in order to provide at least some form of educational continuity. As distance and online classes depend upon technological facilities including internet and Wi-Fi, COVID-19 continues to make it difficult for students as well as their parents to afford this thing. The pandemic has caused many losses of jobs of the working parent, making it more difficult for them to provide internet facilitates to their children and pay their fees. Most of the area has no internet facilities so it is difficult to attend online classes for students. It invites stress and anxiety to children as well as their parents free of cost. When schools reopen, an unequal impact will be visible again when some children return to school and some drop out permanently. These are the children whose families are no longer able (economically) to send their children to school, those children who have engaged in child labor, and those children, mainly girls, who got married. Child labor and child marriage are still a common form of child abuse in Nepal and researches have demonstrated a clear link between lack of access to education and subsequent increases in child labor and child marriage. In turn, child labor and child marriage prevent children from returning to education.

Therefore, educational response plans need to focus not only on the compensation of the loss of learning but particularly on enforcing the return of children to education once the school closures have lifted.

This will require the efforts of an interdisciplinary group of stakeholders who not only involved in education, but also in child protection, employment, and social welfare.

Sincerely,
Suman Shahi