

Education Journalists Group, Nepal

C. Girl's Education in Nepal

Nepal presents dismal female literacy rate in the entire SAARC region. It has the lowest female literacy rate in the region. The literacy level of people above six years is 54 percent, of which 65 percent are men and 42.5 percent women. The net enrolment rate for boys stands at 86 percent and for girls, 74.6 percent. This clearly shows gender disparity among boys and girls in education as in other sectors of Nepalese society. Accordingly, EJG has commissioned a study in DACAW districts, to outline overall impact of UNICEF activity as well as cases of success and failures. The team has reviewed the overall scenario relating to education, the status of girl child and quality education. The investigative reporting has been conducted in each of the five VDCs of Kavrepalanchowk, Saptari, Kapilvastu and Dadeldhura among DACAW districts.

The study aims to find answers to the following questions:

1. What is to be done to provide educational access to all the children?
2. What could be the best option that stops dropouts of the children before they complete school education?
3. Who is responsible for not being able to provide female teachers in all the schools?
4. What kind of education discourages children from leaving school?
5. How productive has been the scholarship provided to girls as inspiration?

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Acknowledgements

This study report is based on the case study reporting from four districts of the Kingdom of Nepal. The main focus of this study is to explore the real field situation through journalistic reporting of the real field experience of the cases of success and lessons to be learnt on educating girl child.

During the six-month long study period, more than hundred reports were published in national dailies as well as local newspapers. Education Journalists Group is proud to learn that after the reports were published in the newspapers, it has brought some changes at the local level and policy level. Though the changes were small, it did have some impacts on the parents, head teachers and SMC. Some signs of improvements were noticed in some places of Kavre and Saptari.

EJG study team employed quiet a new methodology in this project by collecting reports through community-based journalists. The study team during the study period has encouraged forming a two-way channel between the target group, the general public and the policy makers as well as implementing agencies. At the same time news and views on girls education has mainstreamed in Nepali media. Now the people in the study area do not

hesitate to express their willingness of educating children and express the problems they are facing.

If this type of two-way channel is regularised and managed from the central monitoring unit, the impact of incentive programmes like scholarship and feeder hostels would be clearly decisive.

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EJG hopes that this study report will contribute the MOES and donor agencies for their policy formulation and programme implementation.

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Abbreviations & Synonyms

BPEP	Basic and Priamry Education Programme
CDO	Chief District Officer
DEO	District Education Office
DDC	District Development Committee
DEC	District Education Committee
<i>Daijo</i>	Gift/dowry
<i>Dum</i>	One of the Dalit communities
<i>Dalits</i>	So-called low caste groups in Nepal
EJG	Education Journalists Group
EFA	Education for All
<i>Madrassas</i>	Islamic Religios School
<i>Madhesi</i>	People of Terai origin
<i>Majhi</i>	People belonging Indegenous nationality
MoES	Ministry of Education and Sports
<i>Pahari</i>	Indegenous nationality
<i>Pahade</i>	Hill origin people
SMC	School Management Committee
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNESCO	United Nations Eduactional Scientific and Cultutral
Urdu	Muslim language
VDC	Village Development Committee

1. Executive Summary

Nepal presents dismal female literacy rate in the entire SAARC region. It has the lowest female literacy rate in the region. The literacy level of people above six years is 54 percent, of which 65 percent are men and 42.5 percent women. The net enrolment rate for boys stands at 86 percent and for girls, 74.6 percent. This clearly shows gender disparity among boys and girls in education as in other sectors of Nepalese society.

Education is the key indicator for reforming society and upgrading its economic and social status. For poor and deprived women, education is a key to the well being of their lives.

Nepal is committed to raise women status. The Ministry of Education and Sports has been implementing the policy to providing universal primary education for all girls, irrespective of their ethnic origin, religion, culture or linguistic heritage or disability. Various non-governmental agencies are supporting for the achievement of the goal. Basic & Primary Education Programme (BPEP) was launched to integrate the programme activities into the regular activities of MoES in order to achieve sustainability. Besides BPEP, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has commenced various activities in the districts to raise the status of girls. UNICEF through DACAW Programme has been helping the girl child for dress and stationaries to ensure the participation of girl child in school and for reducing the school dropouts.

Accordingly, EJG has commissioned a study in DACAW districts, to outline overall impact of UNICEF activity as well as cases of success and failures. The team has reviewed the overall scenario relating to education, the status of girl child and quality education. The investigative reporting has been conducted in each of the five VDCs of Kavrepalanchowk, Saptari, Kapilvastu and Dadeldhura among DACAW districts.

1. The team, during massive case study reporting, community and district-level interaction, reviewed the incentive programmes, which has a direct impact in increasing girls enrolment. The range of incentives, scholarship and facility for feeder hostel, directly related to girls participation. The incentive programme to be continued, but the process of implementation should be reviewed.
2. The government policy continues to place the strong emphasis on educating girls. But the Maoist insurgency in the rural areas disturbed the current plans and policies. Teachers have been beaten to death and even killed, school buildings have been bombed and destroyed by the insurgents. Kidnapping of students and disturbing their exam made normal functioning of the education system increasingly difficult under the present circumstances.
3. The role of female teacher has been the most influencing factor for girls education and enrollment. But the policy of employing minimum one female teacher in each primary school has not been implemented properly. None of the 8,000 schools have a single female teacher. It has been a clear proof that schools, which have female teacher have enrolled more girls student and have less dropout trend. Similarly, recruitment of female resource person trainers and staffs should also be encouraged.
4. Since most girls in rural areas have to keep themselves busy in daily household chores, out of school programme should be introduced for them. Such programme should be related with their daily life as well as employment- oriented.

Women Education division, Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) is supposed to establish a central -level monitoring unit in association with the Ministry and Department of Education.

If the monitoring unit is decentralised in the districts and VDCs level, it would work as a catalyst to encourage housewives for sending their daughters to school. This unit can also monitor policy implementation and the incentive programmes at the same time. UNICEF, UNDP, Action Aid, Nepal, Save the Children and EJJ, which are working as units can also be included. With this, the incentive programmes for girls could be delivered and monitored by a separate unit.

5. The mapping of school should be carried out in accordance with the realities facing the region. Priority should be placed for girls and disadvantaged children.
6. A nation-level advocacy unit should be formed so as to eradicate the social evils like *Chaupadi (Untouchability)*. It is necessary that National women's Commission and the organisations alike should participate in the advocacy units.
7. Education supporting programmes like BPEP II should be gender-neutral.
8. The practice of child marriage has to be stopped.
9. Skills and job-oriented education has to be introduced to encourage parents send daughters to school.
10. Morning and evening classes have to be run for those children, specially for girls working at home and have limited time for normal schooling.
11. Authorities must ensure that classes are run regularly.

2. Research and Investigative Reporting on Girls Education

2.1 Introduction

This report is based on field s case study reporting concluded in 20 selected VDCs in four different priority districts across the country. The four districts selected for case study include: Kavrepalanchowk (Bagmati), Saptari (Sagarmatha), Kapilvastu(Lumbini) and Dadeldhura (Mahakali).

Through the help of the journalists, an investigating reporting was concluded in these districts, where the UNICEF has implemented its DACAW programme. The case study was concluded on the status of girls education and issues related to quality of education, local, social, economic, religious, cultural, political and ethnic factors as well as schools physical infrastructure, and teaching-learning environment. A number of reports were published in various newspapers during the investigating period, which lasted from August 2001 to December 2001 and the remaining case studies and photo stories (unpublished) are summarised in this report.

2.2 Background of girls education in Nepal

Education is key to life s opportunities and for survival itself. But the illiteracy of women and girls is posing a great challenge in Nepal. It is also a global concern today. At present over one billion people are illiterate, and almost 113 million children are still out of school. Of them two-thirds are girls.

Despite global commitment and various efforts from the government and non-governmental organisations, the existing literacy programme still falls short of target and is ineffective. Studies show that education efforts are marred by high dropouts rates, low retention rate and minimal impact among the participant. Annual average literacy growth rate stands at an abysmal 0.86 percent but the annual average growth rate of population is increasing at an alarming rate of 2.6 percent. In order to bridge this gap, Nepal has to attain average annual growth rate of at least 5 percent literacy. For female literacy, Nepal needs the growth rate of 6 percent.

The history of priority given to girls education in Nepal is not long. The first government efforts for promotion of women in education in Nepal dates back to 2037 BS, when Nepal spearheaded its sixth five-year-plan (2037 BS 042 BS). Ever since, in the successive five-year-plans of the government, plans have been formulated for empowering women to participate in education sector. In the seventh and eighth plan period, with an intention to make women force participate in education sector, the government launched various programmes, including girls scholarships and the recruitment of female teachers in schools. While for those girls still outside the reach of school education, Non-formal Education (NFE) was also introduced.

The ninth plan accorded top priority to poverty alleviation and for human resource development. Girls education as a part of human resource development, was given an important priority, which each primary school was to have at least one female teacher. Priority was also given to the recruitment of female teachers in lower secondary and secondary schools. Special package programme was introduced in districts, which had

reformed their schools, specially in the field of educating girls. During this phase of the plan, these programmes made some improvements over girls enrolment in schools and to some extent reduced the school-dropouts.

In the ninth plan period, under the DACAW programme, UNICEF and other international non-governmental organisations, working for girls education, brought some improvements over the gloomy scenario of girls education in Nepal through their clear goals and direction. But the geographic factor, existing social set-up, unequal economic status and the recent conflict have made it difficult to realise gains from this programme. Moreover, the already achieved outcome of the programme has not been able to bring lasting impact on the society.

Women are the focus/centre point of the 10th Plan. Government believes that if women are brought into decision making process, projects can be completed at lower costs and also be better sustained. Women have been identified as the change agents.

2.3 Methodology

The research study was carried out through investigative journalistic approach. EJM in this study, did not involve in finding quantitative data. But it analysed case studies from the community and district level interactions making use of the secondary data, especially from MoES, UNICEF and other non-governmental organisation.

To conduct the study five reporters from national dailies were appointed in each of the districts. These reporters after a brief training, frequently visited the targeted VDCs. They met students and their parents, teachers, headteachers, members of SMC as well as concerned officials from local self government for case study reporting. Hundreds of cases of success and some cases of failure have been reported. A number of these reporting were published during the investigating period in national and local newspapers.

EJM district co-ordinators, mainly based on these case studies organised community level interaction in each VDC. The outcome of VDC level interaction was put forward to district level interaction. As per the outcomes, five basic questionnaires were discussed at the district level interaction, which are provided below:

Questionnaire:

1. What is to be done to provide educational access to all the children?
2. What could be the best option that stops dropouts of the children before they complete school education?
3. Who is responsible for not being able to provide female teachers in all the schools?
4. What kind of education discourages children from leaving school?
5. How productive has been the scholarship provided to girls as inspiration?

Since the district education authority participated in the interaction, EJM co-ordinators tried to conclude the interaction session at the same occasion, so that an immediate correction in implementing level could be pointed out.

The outcomes from the district-level again became the feedback for reporting in the field. The same finding is compared with national scenario and the main feedback for central-level interaction was pointed out in the workshop.

2.4 Analysis of the situation in the study area

Situation of girls education differs according to Nepal's geographic, social and ethnic diversity. The indicator for girls education in Nepal in a broader picture shows that it gradually falls lower and lower as we go from east to west. As we compare and contrast the study in all the four districts, both the enrollment rate and dropout tendency is low in Saptari and Kavrepalanchowk.

Though the parents are increasingly beginning to realise that both son and daughter should go to school, their income levels and social set-up is still coming as a stumbling bloc on the path of progress. Following educational scenario has been reflected while evaluating the situation of girls' education concluded in four study districts during the study period:

I The role of state looks weak:

The social evils had firmly rooted in the villages, affecting girls' education because the state has not made girls' education compulsory. People in rural areas are yet to realise that primary education is a basic and fundamental right of the people, let alone the awareness of the fact that education plays vital role in poverty alleviation and transforming the society towards progress in the long run.

I Unhealthy social custom:

Though the state had restricted the practice of child marriage and related societal evils through the social Reform act 2031 BS, in practice, the same still holds supreme in the society and has not been implemented. Studies concluded in Saptari shows that all the five VDCs are practicing child marriage. Where the non-governmental sector is actively lobbying against these ills, girls have started attending schools even after their marriage. But such students do not complete the cycle of learning. As they deliver child in their tender ages, they are compelled to leave schools. Locals claim that if they are provided with skills and job-oriented education right from lower secondary level, the dropout tendency will be stopped.

Kapilvastu has similar history of child marriage. Where the Muslim population is predominant, this problem is critical. But the situation of Dadeldhura district is different from rest of the three districts. Untouchability holds supreme in this district and the girls are compelled to drop out from schools in their teenage. In every month, they are forbidden from going to school for about 10 days, which amounts to a colossal loss in time for learning. More than this is a problem of shyness that compels them to quit schools unable to face their male counterparts in the classrooms on various grounds. In some of the cases, female teachers from other districts working in Dadeldhura are chased away from the district during their monthly discharge (Menstruation period).

I Ethnic seclusion:

Nepal's social base is founded on religious and ethnic values. Though Muslim population is predominant in some of the Terai regions (Gorkha, hills), they remain cut-off from the national mainstream in Kapilvastu, especially in awareness and performance in literacy programme. Since a large segment of Muslim communities send their children to Madrassas (Islamic religious school), only a few of them send their kids to public and private schools. Once their sons complete Madrasas, they enroll them in schools but this is not so in the case of their daughters.

Taking stock of the unique geographic and religious factor, there is a need to provide education in mother languages to this special category of people, which firmly believe in age-old culture and rigid tradition.

Abdul Uhab, organising member of Shyam Primary School in Kapilvastu's Jahadi village admits that he sends his daughter only in a Madrasa while he is a teacher in a public school. Head teacher Maharuddin Musalman of the same school says he does not encourage Muslims in his village to attend the formal schooling because the public education in Nepal does not have a provision to teach their religion and culture. Of the 285 students in his school, there are 101 girls. But there are only two Muslim students in this school. As the public schools do not teach in Urdu, Muslim girls are not attending schools in this region. This is also apparently proved why Muslim students do not attend

public schools in Nepal if we see the hordes of Muslim students attending to Ekadui Urdu Boarding School in Kapilvastu.

I **Climatic factor:**

In the Terai districts, once the family completes its harvest, they leave their houses to work in neighboring Indian districts. Girls as a result, will have to stay back and perform the overall household chores as the families migrate to India in search of jobs to fend themselves. As a result, they have no time for schooling. Winter is no exception: they have to look after cattle and winter crops. A large number of people in Spatari, Kapilvastu and Dadeldhura go to India every year for works. If the schools in these regions ran classes in afternoon and morning shift, girls in these districts would not have to quit schools.

Conversely in Kavrepalanchowk, the climatic factor has little impact. But the Pahari community in Ekadui VDC here migrates to Bhaktapur and Lalitpur every year for about six months beginning September to work in brick houses. As a result, their children are deprived of education.

I **Weak management of scholarship and related programme:**

There are instances where the government scholarship has not reached the targeted schools and disadvantaged segment of the community. In Kapilvastu s Shyam Primary School, located at Jahadi VDC, no scholarship was distributed last year (2058). The parents and headmaster in this school refused to sign the papers protesting against the District Education Office (DEO), because the office simply asked them to sign, not showing the details of the scholarship. Thus, the DEO did not distribute the scholarship to this school. In a school (Sitlabaks Primary School) in same VDC, the DEO similarly asked the parents and headmaster to sign the papers and they only received school dress in return. In two other schools in the same VDC, scholarship amounting to Rs 4,09,000 was provided by the government but the amount was not distributed on the ground that a school supervisor was transferred to another place. When the parents approached to a resource person, he said that he had no knowledge about the existence of such a scholarship. It was later learnt from Sunil Bikram Shah, ex-VDC chairman that the DEO had frizzed the amount pretending that it was dispatched late to the office.

In Kavrepalanchowk s Sathighar Bhagawati VDC, it was found that school enrollment had shoot up after the students were provided with dress and stationers but when they were not provided the same, school enrollment had fluctuated between 30 too 42 percent. Girls also tend to leave schools if they find their counterparts in the classrooms dress better and posses better books and stationers.

I **Inadequate female teachers:**

The government has not been able to implement the policy, which say that each school must have compulsorily a female teacher. Statistics shows that there are more than 8000 schools which do not have a single female teacher. In Ram Jankai Primary School at Niglihawa 3 in Kapilvastu, there are three volunteer female teachers. This school has enrolled more girls than boys.

3. Cases of success & lessons to be learnt

I Manti Devi Kori, a fourth-grader in Rastrasevak Primary School is an embodiment of pride and hope among the inhabitants of Kapilvastu s Bidhyanagar VDC. She is the only female person in this locality to have reached the fourth grade. In her 12th birthday, she became a celebrity in the village to reach grade four but got married two years ago. It will take another decade for her wisdom tooth to appear but she is already married but this has not really affected her learning. She still attends a local school. Had she been already sent to her groom s house, things would have turned out altogether different: she would have to quit her classes once and for all to perform household chores under the command of her hunky husband. Thanks to the parents who decided not to do so at so tender an age. But one would be mistaken here to assume that Kori s parents decided to keep her back because she was still a child. It were a group of teachers, who first convinced her parents to keep their tiny tot at home until she completes her elementary education. Parents quickly responded. Kori continued her education.

Teachers did so because this girl was showing exemplary performance in the class in her studies. Shyamdev Prasad Ojha is a teacher in Rastrasevak Primary School. When approached, he told the journalists that the teachers had requested Kori s parents to keep her back for sometime, as she was performing very well in classes. In this communities overwhelmingly belonging to Dalits, a social taboo is in place, which forbids a girl child from attending school after she attains her puberty or her fifteenth birthday. 15 years is a peak marriageable age for the girls in this community and they discontinue girls to attend school. Girls in this village and the adjacent areas do not come to school, teacher Ojha says. Manati is the single benefactor of the government s girl s scholarship scheme in the whole of this backward community.

I Sixty per cent of the communities in the villages around this school are Muslims. Of the 40 percent of the remaining population, only 10 per cent are Brahmins, Kshetriyas and other advanced communities. Rest is all Dalits and other similar backward population. There exists a yawning gap between the few advantaged and a large disadvantaged groups if we see enrollment rates of their children in schools. Inhabited by 60 percent Muslims, school enrollment rate for Muslim children in this region is in a very sorry sate. Of the total of 105 students currently enrolled here, only five belong to Muslims. Muslim girls are hard to find in the school. Even in other communities and ethnic groups, awareness on girls education is in a dismal state.

I Manati s future is at stake if the school continues charging her exam fee twice a year and that she continues to pay bills for textbooks and other school construction and repair fees.

I One district in northern Kapilvastu, renowned for very poor status of girls education, has, however, made remarkable progress: It has enrolled more girls than boys. This area has nearly 40 percent girls enrolled in schools.

I Statistics shows girls enrollment rate in Kapilbastu district is only 38 per cent. But this is the government statistics. On an average national level, this district has the highest number of girls to dropout before completing primary education. Nityananda Gyawali, who has been a chairman of the School Management Committee (SMC) of Bal Lower Secondary School in Banganga VDC for over three decades, however, claims that status of girls education in his area is highest in the country. While he was the chairman of SMC, there were 614 students in all, in his school, out of which 311 were girls and 303 boys. Arjun Shahi, a teacher in this school evaluates in two ways as to why girls enrollment has outpaced boys . First, he says there is no discrimination made between sexes and second there is a trend that more boys are enrolled in private schools and most girls in public, which show this paradox.

I Female teachers are increasingly attracting girl child to school. Ram Janaki Primary School offers this unique example in Kapilvastu. Located in Niglihawa VDC-3 and inhabited by a heterogeneous mixture of population both from hills and Terai, this school has paradoxically more girls than boys. Parents in this area are well aware of the need to educate their daughters-an awareness quite uncommon even in the flourishing towns of the country. Most parents have now started saying in one voice: If we educate son, we educate only one but if we educate daughter, we educate the family and the whole of the community! Though this still looks like island of awareness in the sea of ignorance in Kapilvastu, thanks largely to the awareness level that is typically growing over the years.

I Of the total of 169 students studying here, ninety are girls. Gyan Bahadur Chhetri, a teacher in this school explains why this is so in his words: It is due to female teachers . But he adds that it is not merely due to boys enrolled in private schools. It is rather due to a rise in awareness level. But the past two years before the establishment of this school was different. This school got underway only with the small collections from a local temple. Ever since, three female teachers in the locality were given opportunity to teach here, which brought about this change. These three lady teachers are still working as volunteer teachers. But amidst this encouraging performance, there is one common complaint from all: government has not supported. Of these three female teachers, one could have been recruited by the government as a teacher for non-formal education. But Mahendra Singh Shrestha, an ex-DEO contends that since the government had separate rules and regulations, this could not be arranged by the DEO.

I Abdul Uhab, a member of School Management Committee in Kapilvastu s Shyam Primary School, located in Jahadi village never sent his daughters to public school. But of late, he is now beginning to regret that he sent all of his daughters to Madrasas after they crossed their schooling age. Now they unfit for formal schooling.

I But Uhab does not agree that this awareness came to him late now. But his neighbors Chamar, Patharkad communities and the alike, which are typically backward in this area have become aware and started sending their daughters to school since the last two years. This reflects clearly the growing concern for girls education. Somakanta Poudel, a schoolteacher thinks that it is a progress in this society even if two Musalman girls are enrolled in a school where there are 285 students in all. Guardian Mewa Lal Chaudhary however, says there is still huge gap between the Hindus and Musalmans in terms of girls education. But now we leave household chores unattended but not allow our daughters to squander away their time at home...We send them to schools even if we need to pay their education.

However, no national programme has ever been able to touch the Musalman community. They still prefer to send their kids to Madrassas even if they had to pay fees but when it come to formal schooling of their sons, they tend to them to Madrasas. Their daughters do not have even opportunity to guess what a Madrasa looks like, let alone formal schooling. Maharuddin Musalman, school head teacher says until the Muslim s religious and ethnic issues are included in the primary education; government s programme will have hardly any relevance to the target group here. He claims: I have been teaching since 21 years. But I have not been able to convince my own community all these years.

I Even the students in far-western and far-flung rural districts have started completing diploma. Navadurga VDC-8 is one of the most advanced villages in the whole of Kapilvastu district. A girl student from this village had completed her diploma and two more are currently studying diploma. Where Brahmins and Ksetriyas have predominance, even the parents have been found to be educated. A large number of

them are found to be sending their daughters to schools in Kathmandu and Terai without making discrimination between sons and daughters. They, unlike many others do not think that daughters have to be educated just to find a better husband.

- I Dadeldhura, which relies on Doteli culture, worships young virgin girls in remote villages as Kumari goddess. Therefore, these Brahmins think that educating these Kumaris is a part of religion itself. This feeling had brought impact on other communities in the locality. As a result, parents here send their daughters to schools.
- I In a community in far-western region, which so long held on to a belief that educating daughter was crime, they have even started offering academic certificates of their daughters as a dowry gift during their daughters wedding. While arranging a daughter's wedding, there is a custom to offer money to the groom's family. When Rupal's Dharma Nanda Joshi arranged a wedding of his daughter Radha Joshi, he not only offered cash but also a diploma pass certificate. At present, this trend has been rampant among the educated families in villages.

A huge majority of girls in Alital VDC in Dadeldhura district go to school. Three liters of edible oil provided under the primary education project has been held responsible for setting such a trend in the locality, motivating girls between their age 5-10 to go to school in large numbers.

Teachers of Shankar Kedar Primary School in Alital-8 in Dadeldhura, have even started a new trend: visiting each household and forcibly taking girls in school, if they are found to be kept at home for performing household chores. Ten-year-old Radha B.K is the typical example of a student enrolled forcibly by teachers in this locality. Parents feel indebted to Nirmala Gautam and Dhanshari Oli-female teachers in the locality for initiating this arduous task through advocacy. Now, having influenced by these teachers, the teachers of Jagadamba Primary School in ward-8 and Saraswati Primary School in ward-9 have similarly started doing the same.

- I The emerging literate women population in Dadeldhura are now eliminating the evil practice of untouchability, which so far affected far-western Nepal. As increasing number of girls are getting educated, changes are obvious. The morning scene around the rural villages nowadays is of encouraging one. One can see schoolgirls cleaning their houses and pavements. Now the women folk have started raising vegetable gardens and roam freely in the village. They have also started shedding off their seclusion and are coming forward in the society to provide social service. Nirmala Joshi, Laxmi Tamrakar, Saraswati Bohara are the names quite familiar in this village. There are a dozen of women who have become an apple to the eyes of the villagers for they are bracing up to take social works and provide leadership, which was otherwise a rare thing for a woman to do here not long ago.
- I Girls enrollment has shoot up with the implementation of girls education. Beginning the fiscal year 2057-2058, girls enrollment in Saptari's Rampura Malhaniya and Itahari's Bishanpur VDCs has shown remarkable progress. In two of the lower secondary schools in Itahari's Bishanpur VDC, enrollment has shoot up to 90 percent. During the fiscal 2056-57, at least 3,47 students were enrolled in school while in the fiscal year 2057-58, the number has increased to 7,36, according to Ram Shevak Yadav, school supervisor. In schools where girls education is implemented, girls are provided with cash amounting to Rs 300 and some school dress.

There are 113 girls of the total of 180 students enrolled in Rastriya Primary School in Ranjitpur. In Rudra Narayan Lower Secondary School in the same VDC, there are 171 girls, 112 in Janta Rastriya Primary School and 286 in Janata Secondary School in Hati,

Bishanpur. Yadav, teli, Mushahar, Ishan, Botar, Chamar, Khatway, Raya, Mandal, Gudi, Dev, Thakur, Malaha, Kayastha are some of the ethnic and indigenous groups inhabiting the region.

- I Dum community, which had so far remained secluded from other communities due to a belief of untouchability, has now started sharing the same carpet, desk and benches with other students in the classrooms. Malekpur Sabali Marik, a student in Saptari's Pathargadi's VDC-4, who thought it was a sin to sit together with other girls in the classrooms, has now started sharing common bench with her classmates. She is now in grade six. Though the practice of untouchability still prevails in the society, girl students have defied it in school.
- I Manju Ram is a girl student orphaned in her childhood. Despite having born in a very poor family, she is now studying in Itahari's Hanti Secondary School. She completed her tenth grade while performing laborious works along with her widowed mother, just to pay her education. She is without a house, land and family. But she stays in her uncle's house. Headmaster Phuleswor Mandal says this girl has been exempted from admission fee and monthly tuition fees. But now she has been awarded with a Dalit scholarship. EJC has awarded Rs 500 to this girl, who is the first among the Dalit girls in five VDCs of Saptari to reach tenth grade.
- I About 70 girls continue to attend schools regularly despite the fact that their names are not enrolled in schools due to unavailability of birth certificates. In Gyan Jyoti Rastriya Primary School in Phaseth VDC of Saptari district, 70 girl students regularly attend school. But there is no record of these students in schools nor any attendance. School headmaster says they have no birth certificates. But the official, who was responsible for providing birth certificates has absconded after collecting Rs 50 each as fee from the parents for the certificates. In some VDCs there are no VDC building.
- I Dalit girls also reaching to secondary level education in large numbers. In SLP Secondary School in Pathargada VDC of Saptari, girls have reached to ninth and tenth grades. While Dev Kumari Biswakarma is in grade nine, Geeta Kumari Ram is in eighth grade. Thanks to the Dalit scholarship. They heartily admit that everyone treats them squarely and no one calls them Dalits. I will study so long as I am able to stand on my own feet, says Biswakarma appearing to be bold.
- I Sancharani Tamang of Methinkot VDC -1 in Phusredanda, regularly sends her six daughters and a son to school. She is setting an example for other women though she is functionally illiterate by birth. A school nearby her house is running with the grants from the government. Tamang has been elected unopposed as a member of School Management Committee in this school. Her youngest daughter Toli Maya is in grade one, Meena in two, son Sukh Dorje in grade 3, and Meema Maya in four. But two of her daughters Muneshwori and Jit Maya had drop out from school in grade six. I sometimes feel pinching that two of my daughters quit school, says Tamang, regretting that her daughters had left the school much against her wishes.
- I Twice failed in SLC, Bimala Bik of Kavre's Kushadevi VDC hopes to achieve success in her third attempt this year, when she sits for the iron-gate examinations, which had twice failed over 65 percent students through out the country's public schools. Bimala is the only Dalit girl student in this VDC who have reached SLC level. She is provided with Dalit scholarship. She is grateful for being the highest literate Dalit woman in her village. Failing a number of times in SLC has never shattered her dreams. She now feels bit worried over her small sister Nanu, who has been deprived of even elementary education. But she is determined to pass SLC this time and will probably, given the courage and will at so tender an age.

4. Outcomes from the study in community level

With in the agreed frame of reserach and investigative study, EJK conducted field case study reporting, organised community-level interaction and district-level interaction.

To ease the study reporting following questionares were taken as basic guidelines.

1. What is to be done to provide educational access to all the children?
2. What could be the best option that stops drop-outs of the children before they complete school education?
3. Who is responsible for not being able to provide female teachers in all the schools?
4. What kind of education discourages children from leaving school?
5. How productive has been the scholarship provided to the girls in the form of inspiration?

The outcomes of the reporting and interaction has been summed up as follows: (District-wise)

4.1. Outcomes of study in five VDCs of Dadeldhura:

The study was conducted at Rupal, Gangkhet, Dribal, Dibyapur, Alital and Navadurga VDCs of Dadeldhura district. Discussions and informal person-to-person reporting was conducted. The outcomes of the whole reporting process are as below:

- I It has been revealed that awareness level has been rising among many to send their children to schools. Though it is in the form of inspiration, the scholarship scheme launched by governmental and non-governmental organisations has led to a rise in the number of children attending schools.
 - (i) Parents seem readying to sending their daughters to schools after the primary school feeding project began supplying 3 liters of edible oil to the children. But the parents fearing to lose out the oil have been reportedly requesting them to fail their wards in the examinations. In some cases, it has been even reported that the teachers not listening to them are threatened with blows.
 - (ii) Girls from the society are being provided scholarships from various units. Receipts have been made in the names of poor and the Dalits girls but the teachers and the so-called forward people in the village ultimately amass the oil.
 - (iii) Parents allege that there is a shortage of at least 945 quota allotted to girl students under the DACAW programme and that while making selections, schools are found to be practicing discriminatory method. Parents say the schools are selecting those who are near and dear to the school custodians or the authority close to the schools. Under the same quota, where 500 Dalits were to be selected, it has been found to be inadequate. Most Dalits said they were not provided with that facility though they deserve it.
 - (iv) There has been misuse of funds provided for girls education. The scholarship amounting to Rs 2,500, which had been sent to Nava Durga Secondary School in 2058 BS, went to pay the allowance of the VDC chairman. A part of it was used in the construction of road. School headmasters and the members of School Management Committee (SMC) act as though such scholarships were awarded by them, parents say. The number of girls going to school has increased whenever they were provided with school dress and stationeries but once these items are not distributed, they used to leave their schools.

While on the other hand a large number of children do not come to schools because of their dress and stationeries.

I More than anything else, ***Chaupadi (practice of untouchability during menstrual cycle)***, an evil practice, has affected girls education.

- (i) After a 10 -11 years old girl experience her first menstrual cycle, she is being cut-off from school education. The parents here view text-books as Hindu goddess Saraswati (goddess of knowledge) and schools as their temple that prohibits a girl undergoing menstrual cycle to touch the books and enter the school. The parents, therefore, keep off their daughters from schools and make them stay at home for five to seven days a month.
- (ii) Even if the girls undergoing menstrual period are sent to schools, the headmasters are found to be sending them back to home forcefully.
- (iii) A female teacher teaching in Dadeldhura, who hails from outside, has to leave her rented room during the menstrual period and has to seek a room in the district headquarters. When she is pregnant and delivers a baby, she is expelled from the rented room by the house owners.
- (iv) A girl undergoing menstrual cycle is being banned from crossing over a river from the bridge. They are scared by stories of the local deities told by the people in the village just to stop them from attending schools. That is why girls drop out of school. In Dadeldhura, a girl was not allowed to reappear her SLC examinations for the third consecutive time just because of her monthly discharge, which came during her exam time.

I **Dalits children are irregular in their schooling**

- (i) In the study, it has been revealed that a large segment of Dalits enroll their children for the sake of oil and school dress and once they receive these facilities, they stop sending them to schools. They then enroll their children in the same class next year, in the hope of receiving the same package again.
- (ii) A majority of these children drop out from schools once they complete their third, fourth and fifth grades. After completing grade six, parents keep their children at home for household works because their children are not entitled to receive those facilities again and moreover, they have to pay fee to school.
- (iii) Children are discriminated in terms of Dalits and non-Dalits and on the basis of lunch provided to children in the school. The lunch is provided for their nutritional diet. Girls have stopped attending schools feeling ashamed as they are discriminated from each other in terms of Dalits and non-Dalits and kept in the class separately.

I Teachers of Shankar Kedar Primary School in Alital have been found to be performing great job. They are forcibly bringing girls to schools from each households in the area. Parents and teachers here feel contented over successfully completing the awareness programme in the school. This is leaving a deep impact on the neighbours .

I Girls are deprived of their education because they are differentiated from boys.

- (i) Sooner or later, a daughter has to go to her husband s house. It is better they learn only a few words, goes the belief that holds supreme among the village s poor.

- (ii) A son is usually enrolled in a private-boarding school but a daughter is not. At the most, a daughter finds public school. But as several private-boarding schools have been closed in the recent years, this trend has marginally declined.
 - (iii) While sons are given freedom daughters are left at home to perform household chores with their movements curtailed. The girls, as a result, being over-loaded with household chores, are obliged to leave schools untimely. This custom is common among several castes.
- I Boys still go to school even as they fail their exams twice and thrice but girls do not. A girl who fails once, stops going to her school. This trend is most common in grade six.
 - I Scholarships provided for girls by the government is found to be addressing the needs of target groups in some places but inadequate or poorly distributed in some other places. It is found to be rampantly misused. The headmaster who brings the scholarships from the District Education Office (DEO) seldom informs it to his teachers or mentor in the school.
 - I Schools are established but teachers are yet to be recruited in them. Therefore, girls do not go to schools.
- (i) The study has revealed that with the exception of Navadurga VDC, in all other VDCs, there are schools for every wards. However, they are opened without any consideration for the local population and adequate planning in the village. These schools are simply serving the needs of those people who have greater influence in the locality and command greater political control. In consequence, in the communities located afar, girls education has been severely handicapped. In this areas, villagers themselves have established schools but they are unable to get teachers recruited in them.
 - (ii) The biggest problem is unavailability of teachers. Even those teachers who were already there have been found to be displaced, while in some cases, teachers are found to be involved in Maoists activities. While pretending to be affected by security situation, some teachers have applied for transfer and promotion. They were actually doing this for their convenience. In some cases, teachers are working against the norms of the Seventh Amendment to the Education Act and are acting as the sole decision-maker in the School Management Committee(SMC) while overriding the decision of the SMC Chairman. In all these problems, District Education Office has been found to be least bothered. Whenever the SMC requests for the recruitment of teacher to fill the vacancy, their request is being turned down or given no heed at all. Instead, the concerned authority tries to escape the matter by showing some lame excuses. Various programmes are executed forcibly regardless of the existing rules and regulations.
- I The practice of child marriage common among various castes groups has also affected girls education.
 - (i) No girl child belonging to Magar and other Dalits communities crosses over to grade five. No sooner does she attains her twelfth birthday, her parents think it is wise enough to arrange her wedding.
 - (ii) Parents keep their girl child uneducated due to the belief that she has to get a husband who is more educated than herself. If they educate her more than a boy, she is less likely to get an educated husband.

- | Girls drop out from school early due to a difference in the levels of school dress their male counterparts wear. Due to their shy nature, they feel humiliated to be in the classroom with their friends who wear better clothes.
- | Most schools charge admission fees, exorbitant monthly tuition fees and examination fees twice or thrice. Girls are disqualified to sit in their examinations because their parents are unable to pay the fees on time. As a result, girls are compelled to leave schools.
- | Parents stop sending their daughters to schools after they attain their 12 - 13 years of age. They fear that their daughters would mess-up in their teen-age. This problem is critical in places where schools are located afar and when the girls have to travel a long hazardous distance, often crossing rivers and thick jungles in order to reach to their schools.
- | Due to the existing education system, which does not generate skills and managerial abilities, parents feel discouraged to send daughters to schools. This is also compounded by the fact that once a girl completes her secondary education, she begins to think that she should not perform household chores, which is beyond her dignity. The parents, as a result feel disheartened to educate their daughters even up to secondary level.
- | The Dalits and oppressed groups in rural areas have a wrong notion that if they keep their daughters at home, they would receive money. This has been fueled by hopes and promises shown by the local NGOs who work in the villages.
- | Instead of raising the awareness for education, various NGOs have attracted the children towards money. As a result, children go to schools only when they receive money and most of the time engage themselves in household works. They go to school only if they received money from the NGOs.
- | Most of the well-educated people and teachers in the society are engaged in their own organisations and keep busy in seminars and meetings. Even during the school hours, the District Education Office organises most of the training. The holidays are not used properly.
- | In most schools, teachers come to schools only for their attendance while in some schools, a teacher handles at least 150 students in the same class. In many schools, there are over 150 students in a single classroom and there is a single teacher to teach them.

4.2. Outcomes of discussions in five VDCs of Kavrepalanchowk

In Kavrepalanchowk district, the study was conducted in five VDCs. They are: Kushadevi, Methinkot, Chandeni Mandan, Kalanti Bhumidanda and Sathighar Bhagawati.

The facts as revealed in the studies have been published in the media.

In the first round, a discussion was held between the parents of Majhi Gaon and the adjacent areas and a lower secondary school situated in Chandanimandan VDC in Bindabashini.

Next, a discussion on girl education was held between the parents of Methinkot's VDC, which runs the school Sanshari Devi Primary School in Chattreparti, Sarki communities of the Sarkitole, and parents of Sathighar Bhagawati ward no 4. Similarly, a discussion had been held between the parents of Kushadevi's Kamidanda of Bhumidada Kalanti Village and the parents of Gagalgaon.

In the discussions and meetings with the guardians in the area, parents said that schools in the area do not run classes for their children. They alleged that teachers do not report to schools, schools charge fee to their wards in various forms, while claiming that education is free.

Following points have been expressed during the discussions held between the officials of the SMCs, teachers and the local guardians. The outcomes of those discussions is felt essential and have been outlined here as under:

- I Several students have been found enrolled in the schools in this area. In the area, it has been revealed that VDC and various organisations have been active for the purpose.

In most primary schools, every year, students are enrolled and registered for each school-year. Though the social mobiliser and the facilitator themselves do not report to the schools, they have been found to play a good role in enrolling the children in the schools. However, they still keep girls at home for works and send boys to schools. Where the dress and stationeries are provided to the Dalits children, the school enrolment has seen sharp increase, but where this practice is non-existent, only about 30-40 percent of the total students enrolled come to school. Hence, dress does matter for schooling outcome.

- I Attendance of Dalit s children is found to be very minimal and unsatisfactory.

- (i) In Methinkot VDC s ward -1, 20 percent of the Mizar s children do not attend school. There are altogether 37 such households in the Ward.

Though all the children of the Mizar are enrolled in the school in the locality, they do not go to school. In ward-5 of the same VDC, there are 59 households of the Mizar community. In Ramche, there are 18 households belonging to Biswakarma and 54 other Pahari households. Devi Mizar, a local resident of Mizar Tole and a Pahari girl are the two-girl child belonging to these communities who have on record reached their seventh grade. No other has been able to complete the same grade from those communities. Girls completing their sixth and seventh grades in the 25 households of Kushadevi s Kamidanda village are considered as scholars, highly literate in the area. It is a big surprise for the locals here that Shakuntala Majhi, a girl in the community has reached her tenth grade in Chandeni Mandan, a village of Majhi, which has 68 households.

- (ii) Most girls have been found to desert their schools soon after attaining their third, fourth and fifth grades. They feel more happier to spend their school-less days than to be in school, which they feel as a prison.
- (iii) Most of the teenaged girls in Chandanimandan, Methinkot and Kushadevi have been found to be employed in various restaurants of Kathmandu. They also work at carpet factories and work in the houses of businessmen in Kathmandu. When they return home from the city clad beautifully and looking attractive and different, the school girls are tempted to follow them. This discourages them to attend schools. The impact on Majhi Gaon in Chandanimandan is severe.
- (iv) In the Tamang s village, 15 to 20 percent of the children do not attend schools. In Bhumidanda and Magargaon, there are 45 households but not a single girl child here attends the school.

- I Due to discriminations between son and daughters, girl child are deprived of schooling

- i) Daughters are made for their husbands and leave their parents house, so they only need to learn about a few A,B,C.. this belief hold supreme in the village. Once a girl reaches 3-4 grades, and attains her puberty, the parents keep her at home for works.
 - ii) For their sons education, parents even spend over Rs 500 per month but for their daughters education, they send them to government school. In Bhumidanda s Balprakash School, there are more girls than boys enrolled. (This trend has been fuelled by the government officials working in the area and the local male population, including the most learned and the forward, who feel that educating a girl child amounts to nothing)
 - iii) They give total freedom for their sons but keep engaged their daughters busy in the daily household chores, as a result, girls have hardly any other time-pass. Due to this step-motherly treatment to daughters in the family, Ranjita and Pramila, two school-going girls of Kalanti Village had been compelled to leave their schools while studying in grade 5.
- I Most of the teachers, who teach in the community schools, send their wards to private schools. In Chandeni s Majhiganon, there are 408 people. Among them, only one has passed SLC and engaged in teaching at a local school. He is Raju Majhi. He has three children. He has enrolled all of them at a private school located around 80 meters away from his school. In order to make others realise that one has to sacrifice some money in order to get good education, I am doing this, he says. This is a problem common in the district s several places.
- I A large number of girls leave schools due to a caste feeling. They make distinction between rich and poor, lower and upper castes and divide themselves as the oppressed and the privileged. In some of the hills schools, an upper caste student refuses to allow to share his desk and bench to his lower caste counterpart just because he carries his pack-lunch, which he thinks is holy, and must not be touched by his low-caste playmate or classmate. This has also discouraged girl child to come to school.
- I A boy, who fails his examinations twice or thrice continue to attend school but a girl has to quit once she fails. Bimala and Mina Mizar, two sisters of Sathighar Bhagawati VDC, Ward-5 failed only once recently but had to leave the schools. They claimed that they were sick during the examinations and had failed. No one had reported the school authority or the examiners that they were sick.
- I Most scholarships given away to girls have been consumed by the headmasters. Parents do not know that there are any scholarships for their children. In the villages dominated by Dalits population, parents only know that the scholarships exists for the school dress. Sometimes, scholarships come and at other times, it does not come. It looks as though the headmaster is the supreme authority to grant scholarships or keep it himself undisclosed.
- I Girls leave the schools because there are hardly any female teachers in schools, to whom they could wholeheartedly express their difficulties. The situation of education unemployment in the villages, where educated girls have to spend their jobless days, has come as a discouraging scene for the future generations of girls to attend schools.
- I Children also leave schools due to problems facing their schools
- i) There are 115 students in Sansharidevi Primary School. The Methinkot VDC annually provides Rs 30,000as grants to this school, which has been established in 2054 BS. The school building has been constructed solely with the support of the VDC. The District

Education Office and the Resource Centre hardly provide any books to these 115 students. There are three teachers who are teaching in this school drawing monthly salary amounting to Rs 833. But there are only 35 students in a nearby Krishna Primary School, where there are four teachers recruited by the government. Teachers in this school try hard not to provide books to students of another local school in Chatreparti. This is because; they fear losing out their jobs once the government gives recognition to Chatreparti school. The Teachers of Janak Mavi., however, feels that Krishna Primary School has to be merged with Chatreparti.

- ii) A total of 160 students sit in the same class in grade 6. There are students of two primary schools and students of Janak Mavi. in the combined class. Jit Maya Tamang of Phusredanda had to quit her school in this class, which looks like a cinema hall. She had to quit because she failed her exams. A single teacher has to handle the class of 160 students. Her mother Sancharani Tamang feels upset and says she had even resorted to burrowing a loan of Rs 60 in order to educate her daughter.
- iii) A proposed school in Bindabashini, ward-3, in Majhigaon has been handed over to Chandanimandan VDC, ward-2 has been running on in Dandalithok but the School still carries the school sign board bearing the name of Majhigaon and with the same files and records.
- iv) In Kalika Primary School in Kalanti Bhumidanda Ward No 7 in Gagol, all the classes up to grade five are run in the same hall. Except for the few tin-partition separating the classes, it looks like a one whole classroom. Even the office is run within the same hall.
- I Marriage is the single-most important factor depriving girl education among the Dalits, Tamang and Pahari communities.
 - i) Marriage for a daughter is fixed generally at the age of 15/16. That is the reason why girls are deprived of secondary education.
 - ii) There is a belief that boys generally have to be more educated than girls for the marriage and that there is a fear that the girls will have less scope to find an educated husband so the parents do not educate their daughters much.
- I Where the levels of notebook, textbooks and dresses differ in quality among the same students in the same grades, it has been observed that students leave schools those who do not compete each other. Among the girl child, a feeling of shyness is common, which discourages her to go to school.
- I In most of the schools, admission fee and examination fee has been charged from the parents a number of times. Most poor students have to quit their exams and even from the schools as their parents are unable to pay the dues timely to the schools. Many girl students have often been affected as a result.
- I Parents fear their daughters chastity as they attain their 13/14 years of age. As a result, they arrange their marriage instead of sending them to schools.
- I Girls do not come to school because there is no environment created by the schools for encouraging them to come to classes.
- I Ram Bahadur Mizar of Chandeni-4 has a son and a daughter. Both the kids have been attending schools for over five years but Mizar does not know in which grades his son and daughter are studying in. However, Mizar feels that he must educate his children.

- I Dalits Scholarships have been amassed by all those who have power in the society. This is the claim made by the parents.
- I A large number of children leave children classes, though they are run in several places.
- I An idea has been developed by the students who think that they must not work in the households works as they complete secondary education. This is due to the lack of organised and skills development education. Parents as a result feel that if they educate their daughters, they would not work at home.
- I There is a notion among the Dalits that if they do not send their children to schools, they would get scholarships. So they wait for the scholarships instead of sending their wards to schools. This is the saying of the parents during the discussions.

4.3. Outcomes of the study from KAPILVASTU district

Kapilvastu, despite being an accessible district, is still backward from the point of view of education and levels of awareness. More than the state of gloomy educational performance is a problem of inequalities among the inhabitants of the district. This is being proved apparently by the fact that in Gauri VDC, which is close to district headquarters, girls enrollment rate is less than 10 percent while in a little remote VDC of Bandganga, it is over 80 percent. This reflects clearly as to how widening is the gulf between the well aware and the least aware citizens.

In an effort to study the situation of girls education in five of the VDCs of Kapilvastu, with a view to draw the picture of the district's 77 VDC, we divided the district into three regions: North, Central and South regions.

In the 16 VDCs of the North regions, we selected Bandganga, of the 15 VDCs of Central Region, we selected Jahadi and from the 46 VDCs of South Region, we selected Gauri, Labani and Bidhyanagar VDC. We completed the studies in these VDCs and began publishing the news. The Group had organised interactions in the schools of Labani and Gauri VDC. The schools include: Shyam Primary School in Jahadi, Bal Lower Secondary School in Bandganga, Rastra Sevak Primary School in Bidhyanagar and in Netra Jyoti Secondary School.

In the interaction, teachers, parents and officials of the School Management Committee (SMC) were present. The interaction focused only on the issues facing Nepali society in its totality. In other words, parents went on blaming teachers and SMC. The teachers and SMC officials put blame on District Education Office (DEO) and the persons in Resource Centers. Quite often, many issues are related to center rather than with the regional and district level stockholders. People feel that some of the District Education Offices had done more than they expected them to do. Issues uncovered in our studies and those raised during the interaction are provided here under:

Even the smart-looking primary school children cannot communicate in Nepali language. Besides poverty and hard work at home, lack of awareness has hindered improvement over girls education. Less than 10 percent of the total students are girls who reach lower secondary level. They also include backward communities. Due to the unavailability of birth certificates, admission in schools has been denied. Unable to take up educational awareness programme in a small way, teachers becoming more concerned towards their job rather than on society, arranging marriage in tender ages and sending girls to her husband's house, not disseminating information about the government's plans and policies to the parents and society and poor school-building are a number of problems confronting the region.

- | In schools situated in northern parts of the district, where Pahadey (hilly) communities are a majority, the number of girls and boys in the class are more or less the same. In public schools, there are more girls and in private schools, there are just more boys. If you give birth to a son, you will get a goat, if it happens to be a girl, you get a pumpkin goes the saying that holds true to the parents of this hilly region, who educate their daughters in public schools and sons in private schools.
- | This is an example of the district's educated community. The private schools have attracted all most all that even all most all, including the teachers of public schools, who send their children to private schools. In the public schools they serve, they have inadequate physical infrastructures and therefore, poor quality of education. That's why they send their children to private schools. Arjun Shahi, a teacher of Shree Bal Lower Secondary School, a public school wholeheartedly admits that he sends his daughter to a private school. He voices out the same reason as explained above.
- | Among the educated and middle-class people, who have tested the quality of education, they are raising the concerns over deteriorating quality of public education system. Even the chairman of the School Management Committee of a public school admits that he sends his child to private school. (This is what Nityananda Gyawali, SMC chairman of Bal Lower Secondary School says)
- | A small number of indigenous people and Dalits who live here have not yet started sending their children to school. Government programme has yet to reach in the region. Teachers have not spread the awareness on the programmes available for the backward and the girls.
- | Bidhya Chaudhary, who was among the Tharu, educated from Majhauwa, Bihar has become a bad example. As he remained bachelor, he thinks that it he could not get married as he was educated. This has set a bad impression in Tharu community that a girl who is highly educated is less likely to get a husband.
- | Unavailability of education in mother languages is the main reason that keeps girls education in the district at a low profile. *Madehsi* communities say that they are willing to send their daughters to school only if they are taught in mother language. Girls would be more interested to learn if mother language is given the preference.
- | Taking stocks of the geography and from the religious point of view, Muslims children in this district desperately need to be taught in Urdu. Being an organising committee member of Shyam Primary School, Abdul Uhab says he sends all his daughters to *Madrassas* (Islamic religious school). This clearly explains why girls are enrolled in Urdu boarding.
- | As the government education system has no provision for their caste, culture and religion, they say that they are not playing any role towards promoting educational awareness in their society. Maharuddin Musalman is a headmaster of a primary school. He has 285 students in all, out of which there are 101 girls but only two Musalman students. Of the total population in the region, there are at least 50 percent Musalman and only 15 percent *Pahade* (Hills people).
- | The state's special education package for the target groups does not arrive in target schools. It gets disappeared half way down the road before reaching the school. Last year, this scholarship was not distributed in Shyam Primary School of Jahadi. Parents and headmasters blame District Education Office for doing the injustice. They allege that the DEO simply asks them to sign on the paper and that they have refused to do so. In

Sitalabaks Primary School, another school of the same VDC, they were asked to sign on the blank papers and later only school dresses were distributed.

- I Due to the transfer of a school supervisor from a school in the same VDC, scholarship fund amounting to Rs 400,900 has been found to be missing. Teachers and parents said that when they approached to the resource persons of the same school, he blatantly ignored them saying that he did not have any knowledge about it. Former VDC chairman Sunil Bikram Shah, who is said to have inquired from the DEO, says quoting the DEO as saying that the amount has been freeze due to a delay.
- I It is a good and exemplary education policy to have a provision for recruitment of female teachers in every school. But the DEO has not been able to implement this policy into action in various places. There is not a single female teacher in Shyam Primary School of Jahadi VDC, which houses 50 percent Musalman. A single female teacher could well influence the population in this VDC to enroll girls in schools. Ram Janaki Primary School in Niglihawa-3 is another example where female teachers are not recruited. Though there are three volunteer female teachers, the school has several times more girls than boys. But the school has no teachers recruited. When requested the resource person to appoint a female teacher at least in the form of a non-formal education teacher, the request has been turned down, asserts Gyan Bahadur Chhetri, a local educationist.
- I However, out 12 teachers currently teaching at Bal Lower Secondary School in Banganga, at least six of them are female. This region has been populated by a large number of educated lots.
- I Though scholarships are awarded to girls, they feel still burdened by the examination fee and school construction fee. Manati Kori, a girl student belonging to Dalit community, who got married during her tenth birthday, still goes to school. But her future is uncertain as she might have to quit school any time due to exorbitant examination fees charged from her.
- I Inability to select competent teachers, training s and awareness unable to mould them into abled teachers form the stumbling bloc to realise the stated objective and plans.

4.4. Outcomes of the study from Saptari district

The study was conducted in itahari Bishanpur, Pathargada, Bhagawatpur, Muleth and Pharsaith of Saptari district.

Discussions had been held between the parents, officials of the School Management Committees (SMCs) and teachers in Rudra Narayan Lower Secondary School, Gorgam in Bishanpur, S.L.P. Secondary School in Pathargada, Janta Lower Secondary School in Kachahari, Bhagawatpur, Rastriya Primary School in Gathiya (the only school existing in the Maleth VDC), and Gyan Jyoti Rastriya Primary School in Jhalahi in Pharsaid VDC.

The parents complained that quality has declined in these schools, teachers had stopped teaching and have stopped attending the classes. These teachers are also said to have allowed the practice of untouchability and discriminations in schools. Most parents said that such a meeting was limited to a forum for putting forward the grievances against schools and was of without any value.

- I Number of girl students enrolled in the schools have outnumbered the boys in the VDCs, where girls education has been enforced. However, the number of girls not attending the classes after receiving the scholarships remain high.

- i) The girl students would regularly come to schools if they were granted scholarships on monthly basis after evaluating their daily attendance in the schools.
 - ii) There are many girls who drop out from schools if they stop receiving the scholarships.
 - iii) Boys enrolled in schools have stopped attending classes after they learnt that only girls were entitled to receive money (scholarships). (This is a report based on the study undertaken in Itahari's Bishanpur area, where girls' education has been implemented.)
- I** According to the tradition, various Dalits communities, including the Dum and Mushahar are sent off to marriage at the age of 6 -7 years. These students have been found to desert schools immediately after their marriage. Among most of the Terai's indigenous nationalities, girls are married before their menstrual cycle begins and as a result of this child marriage, girls are deprived of their education.
- i) It was decided to put a ban on child marriage based on various beliefs and traditions and take action against the parents who send their children in marriage before they attain their age of 20.
 - ii) Education must be made compulsory for both sons and daughters, irrespective of their gender. A provision for reward be made for those parents sending their children to schools and punish those for not sending their kids to school.
 - iii) Muslim children have been enrolled for Islamic teachings rather than in community school. A provision has to be made for the Muslim parents to compulsorily send their children to community schools.
- I** There has been a rise in awareness that girl child should be educated. In primary schools, girls in their 15 and 16 are being taught. However, these teen-age girls drop out early from schools due to various reasons:
- i) Girls in their age 12, 18 and 19 years are enrolled from grade five to ten. These girls are tempted to leave schools either due to the teasing by the boys or by harassment from their male counterparts, in the classrooms or on their way home after schools. They are, therefore, compelled to quit their classes feeling ashamed.
- (This is the claim of the parents in Gorgam, Pathargada, and Janta Lower secondary schools in Bhagawatpur)
- ii) In the Terai, if a girl happened to be defamed, she is immediately sold off to marriage fearing her chastity by her parents no matter whether she has attained her puberty or not. This compels her to leave the school.
 - iii) There are hardly any female teachers in the schools, who could listen to their problems and help them. Even if they are there, they refrain from listening to their problems.
- I** More girl students have left their schools than boys due to the absence of regular classes in schools. Seeing their girl child squander away their time in the absence of classes in the schools and since there is hardly any time pass for them in the schools, their parents have asked their girl child to leave schools untimely and help at home.
- I** If they provide more education to the girls, the parents were to offer more dowry (Daijo in Nepali) in their daughters' marriage and therefore, as soon as their daughters complete second and third grade, the parents stop sending them to schools.

- I The whole of a community has been found to be deprived of education due to the discrimination and untouchability allowed even by the teachers in schools. The Dum community in Maleth has stopped sending their children to school after a local Muslim teacher manhandled the students. (The teacher belongs to Rastriya Primary School in Maleth)
- I About 15 to 20 percent of the parents have been found to possess a belief that it is useless to send girl child to school
- I Most schools have no furniture. Most girls refuse to come to classes, as they find it shameful to carry sacks, jute bags and sit on the floors before the boys. (In Gorgam School and Bhagawat Kachahari s Lower Secondary School, this has been opined by the parents)
- I Girls are also facing problems as most schools have no separate toilets for them. What they have is a common toilet.
- I In the schools where female teachers are recruited, girls have been found to openly express their difficulties to them wholeheartedly, but there are schools where not a single female teacher is being found. In Bhagawatpur, two primary schools and an upper primary school have no single female teacher.
 - i) There are instances of squabbles between the girls and the boys in the school. In such a fighting between them, girls are often the losers. They only weep and do not complain to the teachers. Instead, they leave the school.
 - ii) Parents have a wrong notion that educating girls would amount to nothing. This, they say, because, they have seen several girls spending their sad unemployed days in the village. Several parents have been found in Bhagawatpur, who stick to this custom: educating girl child is of no use. What they see, they speak here.
 - iii) Over 70 girl students have been unable to register their names in the school due to the absence of their birth-certificates and they are also not able to obtain their text-books and stationeries in school. Problems of birth registration is rampant in many VDCs. For instance, in Gyan Jyoti School in Pharsaid, no one feels responsible towards these 70 girl students. The VDC secretary has not returned after charging Rs 50/ each to the household as fee for birth registration. But no birth registration has ever been done. The school, on the other hand, has not enrolled the students here without obtaining the birth certificates for the last 7 months.
 - iv) Scholarships for the Dalits has benefited only about 10 to 40 percent of the schools. Parents accuse the head-teachers of making discriminations while allotting such scholarships.
 - v) Other types of scholarships reach the schools but the parents seemed to have hardly any knowledge about their existence. The headmaster has been found to keep such scholarships for himself for at least 2 to 3 years. Even the schoolteachers have been misinformed about the existence of such scholarships, which are in many cases, reportedly being distributed by the headmasters among themselves and the students guardians without anybody s notice.
 - vi) Not a single child belonging to a Mushahar community in Pathargada comes to school. In this region, there are at least 70 Mushahar s households. In the same locality, there are 40 to 50 Dum s households but only 2 boys currently attend the school. In Bhagawatpur,

over 250 girls do not come to school. They are kept at home for performing the household chores.

- vii) Students, whose dresses, notebooks and school bags are inferior in quality with their counterparts in the same classrooms, feel discouraged to come to classes. This is more so in the case of girl students.
- viii) Parents seem less prepared to send their wards to schools after they see a large number of educated unemployed in their villages. Girls have been wrongly construed as a distinct caste, which is often seen as made for others households.
- ix) In the absence of skilled training and managerial education, there is a feeling that once a student completes his secondary education, he should not involve in the household chores. This belief holds supreme in the region. Parents as a result, feels that more they educate their children, less they are attached to the family and household works. The parents, thus, take out their kids from the schools before they reach to secondary level. In particular, girls are affected more by this notion.

5. Public Opinion

DADELDHURA

Yog Raj Pandey (LDO)

Research had been concluded for the rampant aberration plaguing the society. It is noteworthy to have done a research on difficult thing. I feel that publicising societal ills that come as a bottleneck for girls education could help reduce the rampant superstitious belief. Whatever has pointed out, they are realities we are facing. These topics are relevant. I don't think these are wrong. A time has come for all to help eradicate such social evils. Others topics are also relevant. There has been palpable progress on girls education when compared to the past. But we need to put concentrated efforts at bringing impact on girls education. For this, everybody needs to support. Awareness has to be raised in all societies to end weaknesses prevalent in society's culture and tradition. The efforts of Education Journalists Group (EJG) is highly praiseworthy.

Raghubar Bhatta (former DDC Chairman)

In certain cases, I would disagree with the EJG's findings in the five VDCs. As a social worker, I have frequently visited all the places. I have not noticed so many things. If we talk of societal evils and taboo thereof, there has been increasing progress than what we witnessed during the yesteryears. Social evils rampant in the society today are the outcomes of ignorance and lack of awareness. I saw with my own eyes how female teachers residing in Dadeldhura on rented quarters were chased away by the house owners during their menstrual period. Wouldn't be able to find female teachers if such a thing gets wide publicity. Journalists could better focus on other relevant issues rather than reporting on such a thing. Poverty is the single most important factor that curtails girls education beyond grade six. Previously, it was hard to find an educated girl in the village. It is different today. There are many educated girls in the villages. It is, however, commendable job done by journalists to investigate into girls education.

D.R. Pant (Journalist)

The five-grader girls at Bhageshwor VDC cannot read A,B,C,... Even as girls started attending classes, there is no quality in the learning. We even distorted news on this matter. The reality is that they come to schools just for the sake of nutritious food provided in schools. Besides,

they need to return home early to help their parents that affects their learning. I wrote a news: When students return from schools, they come with buffaloes .

Tej Bahadur Ayer (Teacher)

There are issues raised here over culture and tradition. But our wrong attitude is more responsible than these societal obstacles. Why do parents send their daughters alone in the forest for fetching fodder while they fear sending them alone to schools? There could be robbers in the forests. We want to see all-round changes at once. We can not compare and contrast the pace of development with that of Kathmandu s. Unlike the past, girls attendance in schools has improved dramatically. There are instances where the attendance of girls in school is as high as 60 percent and that of the boys only 40 percent. Even in 10+2, girls attendance has reached to 25 percent.

Keshab Bohara (Student leader)

The programme is highly appreciated but it would have been decisive had the parents been invited.

Shiva Raj Uprety (DEO)

Our social set-up is like this. How can we say one is deprived of education? No one is deprived of it. Every individual is related to education. Some girls might have been unable to go to schools. It is true. For this, each one must dutifully perform his or her own task at hands. There has been reform in our education policies as time demands. There is now a need for decentralisation and the programme has been launched accordingly. More responsibilities are given to the local stockholders. Parents should be conscious of their responsibilities and rights. As far as scholarship is concerned, it is adequate. Every year, over one million rupees is being funneled in for scholarship through the District Education Office (DEO). Various NGOs and INGOs similarly provide scholarship. UNICEF is one among them. In matters related to the misuse of scholarships, it is for the School Management Committee (SMC) to decide. We don't receive such complaints. We don't even get scholarships receipts though we requested a number of times. Therefore, in issues related to the misuse of scholarships, we are innocent. There is an issue raised over text-books. We provide free text-books to primary classes. There are however, different methods of how text-books are provided in other districts. There are three ways: In our district, the parents purchase books and upon the submission of the receipts, we reimburse their money. It is true that books are not purchased directly. I believe that poor are not only poor in their capacity but also in their intelligence. A set of primary class textbooks cost Rs 60-80 and that it is again refunded. This money is being spent for cigarette instead of purchasing textbooks. This much of minimum awareness is a must among the parents.

I have no knowledge about the rumour that students are charged fee in primary level. But I cannot rule out the possibility of charging fees in schools, which goes to pay the salary of additional teachers during vacancy. Fee is being charged from sixth grade onwards and has been followed strictly as per the Seventh Amendment to the Education Act. Fee regulation is Dadeldhura is very judiciously followed. Many schools are exempted from fees as they derive their internal resources. There is no severe impact of menstruation on girls education. It has declined now. Biggest thing is that awareness should come to all.

Gajendra Bahadur Shahi (Former DDC Chairman)

Though the journalists went round all the five VDCs but some facts from the VDCs are reported wrongly. For instance, I don't think teachers are displaced in all the five VDCs. Their efforts are commendable but issues like menstruation is sensitive and they could have taken caution while reporting it. There is inadequate teachers recruitment. In the primary level alone, we require additional 90 teachers. The works on nutritious feeding has disadvantaged the parents rather than benefiting them. They have to stop their works and carry loads. Journalists efforts are genuine and the story of Bhageshwor is true. The girls in this region have to work hard at home and are weak in their studies.

Shiva Raj Pant (Guardian)

In Janjyoti Primary School, through the use of power, a new teacher has been recruited curtailing the authority of the School Management Committee. While trying to stop him from signing the attendance register, the District Education Office came in between. No one knows where the teacher is now. Where is he kept now? This has to be made public.

Shiva Raj Uprety (DEO)

He is now being transferred temporarily to another school. We raised this issue while in a meeting of the Education Committee. It was decided by the Committee itself.

Former DDC chairman (Ganjenu Shahi)

At the village level, girls' education is still critical. While running Saraswati Higher Secondary School, we had to search for girl students as the school had no single girl. The act of negligence on the scholarship amount of Rs 25,000 by the VDC chairman of Navadurga is true. To stop this misuse, the DEO must at least mobilise its manpower. It is understood that even the receipts were not delivered to the DEO but the DEO has the manpower in place to collect such bills. Parents are burdened by the fees. The state should put efforts to promote girls' education through the mobilisation of civil society. Without change in human attitude, this is impossible and so we tried a number of ways.

Hari Prasad Bhatta (Writer)

Though it is good to have made reporting in every village, one cannot be perfectly correct. When compared to past, social evils have declined. We have also witnessed to this development. First of all, there has to be educational awareness. We have the need for humanitarian education.

Prem Raj Bohara (Lecturer, Mahendra Higher Secondary School)

We have education policy that blames teachers only. Teachers are blamed for restricting girls experiencing menstrual cycle from entering the school and for making discrimination between the Dalits and non-Dalits. One cannot put the entire blame on teachers and put them in shame by writing like that. You can never find teachers like that. If that happened then it is the social ills. They deserve to be punished seriously in public. To take actions, one has to be bold enough. It is useless to blame only.

Journalist Pant

Whatever has been published was in fact seen in the society. In some sensitive issues, journalists even do not disclose the news source.

Chairman Shahi

Alright! prove, which schools' girls in menstrual period were suspended from schools by the teachers?

Ram Dhama (reporter)

On a broad day light, before the eyes of journalists, teachers forced a girl out of school just because she was experiencing menstrual period. This was already carried by newspapers.

Nira Jairu (Dalit Woman)

A girl who experiences menstrual cycle has to hide for at least 15 days. This problem was even faced by own cousin. There are many ills in the society. If you go and inquire from Chachoda Secondary School in the district headquarters, you would have a clear understanding of how serious is the problem. In this school, Dalits are discriminated. We cannot blame journalists for reporting what they see in the society.

Bharat Nepali (Dalit Leader)

If we talk about menstrual cycle, even lecturer Bohara had thrice restricted his daughter to write her examinations. In every school, discrimination is being made against Dalists children.

Padam Bista (Section Officer, DEO)

I believe that due to a shortage in scholarship, its distribution has been made difficult. There is a need for tripartite coordination between the parents, teachers and students to make education accessible to all. I have also learnt that there are forces working to put down the chairman of the School Management Committee (SMC). Still, he should not fall in their trap. There are instances of irregularities while recruiting teachers. It happened primarily because the parents are unaware. No complaint has been filed against the teachers who keep busy at the works of NGOs and INGOs. The SMC has to take action on such teachers.

Krishna Ojha (Principal, E. Mountain Boarding)

This meeting has been highly productive. All the concerned people attended. There are problems including the seclusion forced on those during their monthly discharge. I have committed this crime even in my own house. Every wise people must rise above this petty social beliefs. State should provide facilities but it has not. We have few female teachers. For this more efforts to be made.

Section Officer Bista

Female teachers are working under project. But still problems are bound to increase. It is because the project has decided not pay their salaries. This problem is bound to increase. The state has made a policy not to increase the recruitment.

Gopal Thapa (DFO, UNICEF, Dadeldhura)

Education Journalists Group (EJG) had indeed done a wonderful job. They had raised the points where teachers are forcibly dragging the girls to school. This might create negative feelings. This has to be reviewed and reformed.

KAVREPALANCHOWK

Lok Prasad Upadhaya (District Education Officer)

The Education Journalists Group (EJG) had done a wonderful job in pointing out the irregularities and shortcomings in education in the district's five of the VDCs. I do acknowledge that many children in this district do not attend school due to the district's terrain physical setting, societal backwardness, etc. The District Education Office has been putting its strenuous efforts at resolving the problems that are seen. In accordance with the His Majesty's Government of Nepal, Ministry of Education and Sports policy to provide access to education to all the children in 75 districts of the country, the District Education Office in Kavre has initiated various programmes.

We have launched various programmes to meet the goal of Education for All for all the children of Kavre between their ages 6-10 by the year 2015. While the efforts are on to meet this objective declaration of the government to provide Education For All within that year, there are problems facing this district such as in the school-mapping programme. The said school-mapping programme, which was put in place by the government as back as 2046 BS is now outdated. Now, it does not match the criterion set then, specially with regard to the physical planning made during that time, population, etc. Now, there is a need to make new plan for school mapping. For this, some schools, which are felt not essential to function independently, have to be incorporated into the other schools, in some schools there is a

need to recruit more teachers, some schools have to be removed and in some others, number of teachers has to be reduced.

Danida has implemented Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP) for enhancing the girls education. The Donors, including the Danida have always pressed for the recruitment of female teachers in schools, but they cannot recruit female teachers. In some of the urban areas, we still find more female teachers in a school than the male but when we see in the schools in remote areas, it is just the opposite. For instance, in Phoksingtar, a remote area, there is a critical problem as to how to recruit female teachers? This is a formidable challenge before us.

There are problems seen in the scholarships allotted to the districts poor and the Dalits children. In some schools, even the grade-one students write more beautifully than their teachers. We have asked our teachers in 2-3 schools through letters to visit those exemplary schools and learn from the experiences there. If they are doing wrong, and if it is proved, we will take actions against them. The resource persons recruited in districts resource centres are busy with their training and are unable to go to the field. This has posed difficulties over monitoring and learning about the irregularity in schools.

Him Nath Dawadi (Chief District Officer)

There are problems in education sector because the headmasters and the teachers are not committed towards their professions. The principals and teachers of private-boarding schools could even count their fingers and tell the names of those students missing their classes. They can tell which of their students missed which classes, when they come and when they do not come. However, headmasters and teachers of a community school (government school) do not know which grade his students belong to, when they come to school, and keep no record of their absentee students. This is a big irregularity. On the other hand, a private school teacher draws half the salary of a public school teacher, yet he does his job wonderfully well. But a public school teacher feels that he is working without salary and is lazy. This has intensified the problems in education sector.

A public school teacher feels that if he teaches his own son in the public school, he would never pass. So he enrolls him in the private school. How can other students, who are not his own kids pass from the lessons he gives them? A secondary level teacher derives salaries equivalent to a government officer's level. He should not be therefore, allowed to work in his native place. A teacher, who draws out such a handsome salary, has to be ready to go anywhere for his duty. Teachers should not be given their jobs in their hometown, which has affected the learning environment. On the other hand, no genuine Dalits and poor students have been able to get their scholarships as it is consumed by those who have uppermost hand in the villages and those who are rich.

Ashakaji Sevak (Campus Chief, Kavre)

Except the admission fee, no one must charge any other fees from a girl student, while she enrolls to a school. Girls must be given a priority for the scholarships provided to a school. Had there been wrong person getting such scholarships, the District Education Office has to take the initiative to investigate it and ensure that the distribution of such scholarships is judicious. Schools must have compulsory female teachers. For the equal right to education for both girls and boys, there has to be a massive advocacy and awareness programme to be organised at the local level. It is then that the slogans for girls education become meaningful.

Hari Manjushri (Chairman, Nepal Human Rights Organisation, Kavre)

Children are deprived of their rights to education primarily because the parents feel not responsible for their role and duty. If the parents become responsible towards their role, children need not have to be cut off from their right to education. Teachers must understand

the psychology of their pupils and the parents must know their children s. While distributing the scholarships, a clean and right person has to be selected.

Bhim Prasad Dhakal (Superintendent of Police, Banepa)

I welcome the journalists for their efforts to collect the exact facts on the situation of children after going round the villages. Had there been a study on how many children had been affected by the eight-years of Maoists insurgency, it would have been better. There are reports that several children in the districts are recruited in the Maoists army. There are students from schools who have been taken by the Maoists.

Sheshab Gautam (Lawyer)

In the issue of Dalits education, there has been a need for radical surgery. Teachers, parents, District Education Office, all sectors have to put their concentrated efforts for Dalits education. Until and unless the state come forward with a productive and job-oriented type of education, I don't think the problems in education would be solved. In the declaration for child rights, there are provisions for compulsory elementary education for both boys and girls. But Nepal, even after signing the treaty, has shown little attention to this.

Deepak Poudel (Guardian, Mahadevasthan VDC)

I wish to congratulate the journalists for bringing to the fore the problems facing the rural and poor villages. Had the journalists also covered the issues on some rich districts, which have still problems with education, it would have been better. In some places, teachers teaching in public schools have invested on private schools and have concentrated half of the time for their private school while giving little time for teaching in the public schools. Who will monitor this? Today's education has become urban-oriented. This has left the students in the village potentially vulnerable to unhealthy competition. Girls education has become unsuccessful because even a rich man in the village is tempted to keep his daughters at home for performing the household chores.

Radhika Ghimirey (Facilitator, Sathighar Bhagawati VDC)

All most all parents of Sathighar Bhagawati VDC 5, who overwhelmingly belong to the Dalits communities, work six months a year, starting the Winter season, in the bricks factory of Bhaktapur. As they work in brick factory, they also bring their kids along with them. How can their children be bettered off any way? To improve this, all these parents must be provided with employment opportunities in their own village.

Rajbhai Manandhar (Teacher)

We happen to read in newspapers that in some districts, the government provides lunch for the students to attract them to the schools. If this is continued in this district as well, I believe that the enrolment rate would improve. On the other hand, the activities in private schools and the public schools have a sky of difference. If the activities in public schools were also carried out on par with the private schools, the quality of education in public schools would no doubt improve and the poor children also could get quality education.

KAPILVASTU

Mahendra Singh Shrestha (Acting DEO)

Most issues raised in the interaction at the VDC level have been straightway sent to the District Education Office (DEO) without considering the limitation of the DEO. The DEO is not in a position to support the private schools. There are several schools in this district, which are pointed out by the journalists. Now, the School Management Committee (SMC) has more rights. It is better to understand what is feasible and what is not feasible in the policy level.

Since the last two years, no teacher has been recruited. The District Education Committee (DEC) had already decided that female teachers must be recruited in places where there are no female teachers. In schools where the government had not been able to provide female teachers, the Act on education has denied us our due rights. We have been observing this but due to various causes this has not been implemented. Instead of putting signatures on the original papers, parents were asked to make their commitments.

Manoj Kumar Shrivastav (PABSON President)

No sir, when requested for new teachers in schools, which had no female teacher, permission was granted for recruiting only male teachers. I can give evidence for this. This happened in a school in Gongolia.

Mahendra Singh Shrestha

The DEO might have done this in one or two places but this cannot happen in all places and had not happened before.

Bairagi Maila (Journalist)

The section officers of this District Education Office are working as non-officers. Not only one or two, we can give a dozen of examples. These officials say one thing and do some other thing. In a serious issue like girls education there could be no improvement so long as the officials are viewed as political men or of the government's and protected them. Therefore, I would like to say something...

Mahendra Singh Shrestha

I feel it is necessary to add some points to the already raised issues and the programme of the DEO. Nobody knows how much scholarship is sent by the Center and when it arrives here. Later, to wait for it and go through the official norms, it is being delayed to some extent. There are cases against some schools, which are constructed on disputed lands and for those schools, no scholarship has been decided. In some cases, we are compelled to select the students who are poor to award such scholarships as the target groups are not found. We are serious about the resolution of the problems but the civil society and the concerned people must understand the problem and the compulsion.

Chakra Bahadur Chhetri (Journalist)

Parents refused to accept the school dress for their children as the teachers themselves asked them to sign up the empty paper. We want to know why this happened.

Mahendra Shrestha

No, they were asked to sign the paper for committing themselves to educate our daughters from grade one to five. They did not simply sign on the empty paper nor the paper was without any mention of the money.

Swami Keshavananda (Sford Nepal)

Education has no sex and had never been. Instead, it is better called as education for girls. There is one common problem in our whole human society. That is how we look upon son and daughters with discrimination as we raised them. It is not due to the educated and uneducated and the rich and poor, that has caused the problem. The problem is due to the lack of awareness among the people. So long as revolution in people's awareness does not take place and as people continued to be possessed by their meek mentality, the problems abound. Therefore, the problems are within us. Women folk introduce to people saying they are the wives of their husband. Obtaining a degree alone cannot solve this problem. This is resolved through awareness. Society is a group, which lives in various beliefs. The society criticizes one who lives by self-disclosures but one has to feel proud and move forward. If we are to transform the world we must first transform ourselves. If those of us present here take

decision by heart and devote ourselves at the cause, we are sure to achieve our objective. Else, we only end up in the programme like this.

Manoj Shrivastav

The attitude of the learned people towards the public schools is nonetheless frightening as the statistics for girls' education. We cannot make people aware why education is important unless education is made practical and needful according to the changing times. We must concentrate on this. Sincerity or accountability is the area where reform in present education should address. After that people's participation is a thing of the *Gita*. We have to create an environment where people realise the need themselves, lest, it would be of no meaning whatever efforts we put in. Even from other sectors, women literacy has to be given a priority. We have the challenge to educate even the parents.

Phadindra Acharya (Headmaster)

So long as we continue to differentiate a girl from a boy, this problem will remain the same. A son is seen as wealth and a daughter with burden. It is differences in attitude rather than understanding that has left girls' education unattended. It is not worthy to blame teachers.

Madhuri Shrestha Balkrishna

Those people who had often questioned the need to education are slowly regretting now. Their daughters now overcrowd the colleges. The youths, which are poor, now search educated girls as their wives. It is true, now we have to go from door to door campaigning this. Education is made very expensive, it has to be made affordable to all. Programme has to be thrown in backward areas where illiteracy is high.

Baburam Khanal (CPN-UML)

Main problem is the structure of the society. A wife has to treat her husband like a god. There is a need that women take up decision-making posts. Both daughter and son should have equal rights over their common paternal property. Some successful women had obtained the property from their mothers and transferred it to their daughters. That is another aspect. The next is that there is no uniformity in the levels of educational success. Students having come of very poor and dusty schools and those with the very affluent and luxuriant backgrounds are left to compete each other. There is neither reward for the praiseworthy achievements or works nor punishment for the evil deeds. To remove the discrimination, common education for all is a must. For this teaching methodology should be common to all. Education should be developed into professionalism. Children with disabilities should be the targets. And how much must the government and the parents contribute, should be precisely mentioned. Education system should be changed so as to deliver it easily to the pupils.

Krishna Karki (District Development Committee)

Where there is a problem, there is solution that often crops up with a problem. We all have to put our thoughts into action. We got to encourage the target groups, which often comprise of very poor and backward communities. Our experience tells that for those pupils who are once enrolled, it is easier for us to press for their continuity. Attracting pupils through money does not serve the desired objectives. Let's provide the existing education and then talk of quality.

Narayan Prasad Poudel (Journalist)

For having organised this programme on the occasion of the world's human rights day, our EJM friends deserve special thanks. But at the policy level, no one gives a damn about what we experience and see. We must learn from China, which prohibits by law the birth of more than one child. Education is a must in such society. It is better if a daughter is also allowed to perform the rituals on her father's death anniversary (Hindu girls are not allowed to offer *pinda* (rice cooked in milk) to their dead parents. The sons usually offer it). Without a decisive and serious efforts, problems are bound to remain the same. Planning without evaluating the problems and decisions from the center would add to the miseries. An official who comes here

spends four hundred rupees in distributing clothes worth forty rupees. He can never grasp the scale of the problems. No matter how much money is being funneled, without an appropriate strategy to spend them, it is going to be a sheer waste.

Radha Nepal (headmaster)

By simply clamoring for girls' education, girls cannot be educated. Twenty years of experience tells me that so long as the mother is uneducated and is unaware, daughter cannot be expected to be better than her mother is. Therefore, it is imperative that while formulating the programme, this aspect has to be taken into consideration. The discriminations made as soon as the child is born, be ended. The family members must individually or collectively work to rectify this social error and reform themselves. This will only enable us to reach to the stated objective.

Sambhu Sapkota (DDC)

It is far more easily to put blame on others. It would have been better if the criticisms are made after evaluating the crux of the problem.

Shivendra Purus Dhakal (CDO)

On behalf of the district, I thank Education Journalists Group (EJG) for having organised such a programme on the human rights day. Many issues are already raised. The social set-up and the tradition are responsible for the existing disparity. However, since two decades ago, this region has been witnessing palpable changes. Special programme has to be launched for those who do not send their children due to poverty or for those who do not send both boys and girls to school. And for those who send sons and keep daughters at home, should be encouraged with the existing programme in more relevant way. Those household which has preference for sons must be convinced to treat daughters on par with their sons and encourage them to send both of them to schools. The studies concluded by EJG had suggested us to focus our attention in the southern region, where we got to take up the programmes seriously. This is a lesson for our district-level officials.

Birendra Pradhan (UNICEF)

In the 16 districts of western development region, only Kapilvastu offers a red signal in educational performance. In this district, not only girls' education is under a turmoil but also the entire education presents a dismal scene. Girls Net Enrollment Rate (NER) remains at a dismal 38 per cent. Main problem is due to differences in people's psychology. Besides, there are few schools. Community participation in education is almost nil. People do not say it their school, they only say they are government's schools. We have to think of alternate schools for areas, which have no schools. Experience tells us that not all efforts go waste. Programme is successful in areas, where local participation is increased. But the efforts are minimal. More than the money they spend in education, poor people spends on tobacco and smoke. This community must be made fully aware. Only poor has to be financed but their definition has to be re-viewed.

Ramesh Sharma (former DDC chairman)

We are tempted to look only at one side of the problems and do not try to visualize the other side, which offers solutions. Teachers and officials of the School Management Committee (SMC) who do not enroll their children in the schools they teach or represent such schools, have become a problem for themselves. Issue of mother language is not a problem in itself, it is because a language like English, which has no parameters to distinguish between an elder or a younger is being encouraged for the children and Nepali, which is their mother language is being given no preference. How can this be justified?

Journalists, in their studies, had raised issues on some positive aspects here. Therefore, I guess, some negative news is being disseminated. But the issues discussed are relevant. If we talk of quality education, there are instances where a student taught in private school by

the teachers who are paid less than their counterparts in public schools does far better than a public school educated student. Our weakness is due to our inability to make the community to shoulder the responsibility and encourage them. All other problems revolve round this.

SAPTARI

Subash Joshi (Advisor, DDC, LGP, Saptari)

The journalists had done a commendable job in investigation of the situation facing the girls in five VDCs. I believe that the journalists had concentrated on reporting in their papers only the essential points. However, they have clearly underlined the causes as to why girls do not go to school, through the discussions and interaction held in these five VDCs. However, how many girls are there in these five VDCs? How many do not go to school at all? And how many leave schools? These are some of the statistics not mentioned in their reports.

Chitra Prasad Devkota (District Education Officer, Saptari)

The topics for discussions thrown by the Education Journalists Group (EJG) are very relevant ones to our current situation. It is worth appreciating the efforts taken by EJG to remove ills of education sector. The conclusions arrived at the discussions in five VDCs of Saptari have opened the floodgates of Saptra as to what is the actual situation of education in this district. If the problems raised in the discussions are taken seriously for improvement, there could be a positive exit from the problems of education. Above all the problems, it is political intervention in education, which had brought about havoc to our school education. The discussions undertaken in five VDCs have clearly pointed out why we could not provide educational access to all the children in the region. Sometimes back school-mapping had been done, which had fixed the distance from one school to the other by a margin of one kilometre. But when a river flows between the two schools, there could be two schools on either side. There has been no thought given on the country's geography while delimiting such boundary and mapping of the schools. Besides, the inability to provide required infrastructure to schools has affected the school education. It is an established fact that girls leave schools in the absence of toilets in the school. There are no female teachers. There are a total of 5,000 female teaching posts allotted in the country. In them, 19,00 are permanent and 3,100 temporary. Every year, we have to beg money from the donors. No single female teacher has been provided so far to Saptari district. Parents in these five VDCs say their schools have no activity. For this DEO is also responsible. This report has given a good feedback to the DEO. There is no classes in schools, why should we go to school is the saying among many students. There are many problems in school education. But there is no reason to look them with negative attitude always. Girls scholarship is run currently in two VDCs. There has been some budget made available for furniture and toilet. In only we could work honestly, most problems could be resolved successfully. There could be changes in our attitude once the members of the School Management Committee are selected from within the parents, whose children are enrolled in that school. If only teachers, DEO and the local stakeholders work honestly without forgetting their responsibility, quality education could be achieved.

Shiva Ram Yadav (Secretary, Maleth VDC)

If job-oriented education is given, villagers would send their daughters to school. The lack of awareness among parents today is due to the absence of job-oriented education to their children.

Raj Chandra Yadav (Advocate, Culturalist)

Though the Society reform act, 2031 is operational now, I feel that there is still adverse affect on girls here due to the inability of the act to reform the society.

Child marriages and dowry are emerging as formidable problems. The NGOs should strive to enforce the Act (Mulki Ain) in the form of protest group. There is a provision in the Muluki Ain to remove child marriage. In the law too, this has to be codified. We discriminate even between our own children. We educate our sons, control on daughters. There is need to change this attitude. In the towns, girls have started going to schools, but in remote areas, particularly, among the Dalits community, they are held back. The Local Self Governance Act must empower the VDCs to punish those parents who refuse to send girls to school.

Bijaya Nanda Jha (K.A.Ma. Vi., Teacher)

Enforcement of compulsory education seems to be a correct step. In poor countries, there is a problem of education. Poor people in poor countries have the problems of poverty as same as fifty years back. There is neither clear policy of the government on education nor any political party has the mandate for education reform in their election manifestos. There is lack of awareness among the society. There are teachers in the society who do not report to school on time. But the society has not become aware of this. Scholarships arrive in Summer. There is problem of distribution as it comes too late. If these scholarships are given on the basis of attendance, it would be fruitful.

Hit Narayan Das (former teacher, Balmandir, Rajbiraj)

Parents and teachers should have equal responsibility and roles to play. Parents in the town and cities send their daughters to school but the parents in the remote areas do not send because they are less aware. For those students who cannot study after their 5th, 6th and 7th grades, they should be trained to acquire certain skills and training.

Shanker Deepak Sharma (Ex-headmaster, K.A. Secondary School)

There has been no rise in awareness on education so far in the absence of the educational policy that is required for making education a goal-oriented. If the teachers are sincere and honest, most problems would be solved.

Bhabendra Yadav Nepal (President, Teachers Association)

Due to an inability to enforce law, there are irregularities in education. Had two Dalits students not passed their examinations, the Dalits Scholarships would have been terminated. While the students belonging to Ram Chamar community passed in several schools in their third divisions, several only a Dalit student from Odraha Secondary School passed his examinations. The District Education Office should visit all the primary school students in the district and inquire from the parents the progress and problems of their children.

Hiranya Kumar Gupta (Guardian)

There is an outdated thinking on education here. There has been no change in the education system. It continue like the one during the Ranas Panchayati period.

Prabhakar Lal Das (Social Scientist, TU)

Students should be out of the conflicts. They should refrain from strikes, agitation, protests programme and the similar political activities. Where all unitedly move forward in this goal, problems in education sector would be resolved soon.

Narayan Prasad Chaudhary (Engineer)

There can be no improvement in girls education in the district if the ratio of girls and boys do not remain the same in the class. Social actors also play vital role in bringing quality to the education. There are 11 actors, including teachers, parents, intellectual groups, social servants, DDC and VDC. If all of them commit, education problems could be resolved without much difficulties. And this would also resolve problems to educate girls. 20 years ago, the

girls and boys ratio stood at a dismal 10:90. Now in many VDCs of Saptari, the girls/boys ratio in schools has reached almost 50:50.

Radheshyam Raman (President, K.A.M. School Management Committee)

While recruiting teachers, their capability should also be tested besides verifying their certificates. There are teachers in the district recruited who cannot even spell correctly from A to Z. In such a situation, we cannot think of any improvement over education.

Anil Kumar Anal (Journalist)

Due to societal make-up, some girls cannot even come out of their houses. Therefore, most important thing is spreading awareness among the parents. Girls also miss their schooling when their school is located far from their houses.

Durga Regmi (Dakau/UNICEF)

Due to a rigid social set-up, girls are not sent to schools. Girls are married soon after they complete their primary education. Teachers are to play a role in removing gender disparity.

Sukh Ram Yadav (Journalist)

Each school should have at least two female teachers for promoting girls education. Parents would be encouraged to send their daughters to schools if the education provided in the schools helps generate skills and provide job security in future. If only Dalits students are given the scholarships, other competent students feel discouraged.

Arun Kumar Tiwari (Journalist)

According to the psychology students have, teachers should teach them.

Kumar Pathak (Principal, Durga Academy School)

No girls below 20 years must get married. We blame each other for the mistakes, but we all are responsible. Therefore, we have to collectively and individually contribute towards girls education, earnestly.

Pradeep Bajracharya (Local Development Officer)

There are various problems facing girls education as there is no supervision and monitoring of the education sector. Even in the educated villages of Saptari, there are numerous problems.

Shiva Hari Prasad Bhattarai (Program Co-ordinator/ Press Council member)

The programme on girls education organised by EJM has been important one. We strongly believe that such programme would give added advantage to the efforts for girls education.

Also See [Nepali report on Girls Education in Nepal](#)