

# Education Journalists Group, Nepal

## G. EJG - UNICEF Investigative Reporting on Girls Education

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 Program (BPEP) was launched to integrate the program 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 Program has been helping the girl child for dress and stationeries 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.

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## 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.

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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 should be reviewed to be continued.
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 in sending their daughters to school. This unit can also monitor policy implimentation and the incentive programmes at the same time. UNICEF, UNDP, Action Aid Nepal, Save the Children and EJG, 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 UN Children's Emergency Fund (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 few photo stories unpublished are enclosed 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.

In tenth plan as per the commitment made by the government in National Development Forum 2002, educating girls has been given most priority. Specific programmes have to come on the topic.

### **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.

The study is based on field-reporting by selected local reporters of national dailies. Five such reporters 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.

#### **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:

#### **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 evils, 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 Saptari, 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 to 42 percent. Girls also tend to leave schools if they find their counterparts in the classrooms dress better and possess better books and stationers.

### **I Inadequate female teachers :**

The government has not been able to implement the policy, which says that each school must have compulsorily a 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 Bidhyanager 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 state. 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 Birendra Pradhan, chief of UNICEF Nepal district unit says girls' enrollment rate in this 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. 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.
- I 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 litters 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. E.J.G has awarded Rs 500 to this girl, who is the first among the Dalits 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 Dalits 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.

#### **4.0. Outcomes from the study in community level**

W i t h i n t h e a g r e e d f r a m e o f r e s e r a c h a n d i n v e s t i g a t i v e s t u d y E J G c o n d u c t e d f i e l d c a s e s t u d y r e p o r t i n g o r g a n i s e d c o m m u n i t y l e v e l i n t e r a c t i o n a n d d i s t r i c t l e v e l i n t e r a c t i o n .

T o e a s e t h e s t u d y r e p o r t i n g f o l l o w i n g q u e s t i o n a r e s w e r e t a k e n a s b a s i c g u i d e l i n e s .

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 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.

### **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.

? 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 households 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 these 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 attain 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.
- I 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.
- I 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.
- I 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.
- I 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.
- I 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.
- I 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.

- I 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.
- I 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 girls 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.

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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 holds 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.

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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.

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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 Gagaj, 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.

- I 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.
- I 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.
- I 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)
- I 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.
- I 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.

- I 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.
- I 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.
- I 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).
- I 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 (schoalrships). (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 begin and as a result of this child marriage, girls are deprived of their education.

- i) It was decided to put 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 son 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, 15 and 16 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 Pharshaid, 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.

## **5.0. Conclusion and Recommendations**

In Nepal basic education is a matter of great concern. The government has made commitments for Education for All (EFA) by 2015. Similarly, primary education declared free by the constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal has paid special attention on women and the disadvantaged groups and for their equal opportunity and right to get state facilities. But the pace at which the programme are implemented is slow. And as our study reveals, there is a gloomy and bewildering scenes of educational performance in many rural districts. Poverty, ignorance, social ills continue to plague the rural Nepalese society. It has greatly underscored the benefits of education, which has rapidly transformed the society in other places.

Various programmes have been initiated by the government along with its national and international commitments and in collaboration with the non-governmental organisations. This has generated a new feeling among the parents to send their daughters to school. Compared to previous one, this effort has been noteworthy. This is a quantitative progress, which has increased number of girls going to schools in the recent years. Especially in urban areas, this trend has well crossed over the national average. But still much needs to be done in rural areas, which houses over 80 percent of the country's total population and the situation of girls' education remains abysmally dismal.

At least 20 percent of the total children in their primary school age are still to be enrolled in schools in Nepal. Another 40 percent of the children in their school age group cannot go to school. In the absence of skills and job-oriented education in rural areas, illiterate parents are unaware that they need to send daughters to school. Since the education system to this date was not job-oriented and competitive, it could not be linked to modern-day demands of the market. All the primary, secondary and tertiary education could not be linked with modern-day market and made adoptive to changing times. The present education only aims at

providing the lessons. It does not train people to brace-up challenges personally and trains them to take risks. To resolve this problem, a revised curriculum could be introduced in every school. For those unable to attend classes due to workload at home, special classes could be run.

Social, cultural and legal hurdles act behind the slow progress in girls' education in rural areas. The government cannot escape from this blame. The government's policy has brought this problem to the fore. Who is to take forward the declared package and new plans are a big confusion. It is not yet clear whether those programmes are to be taken by the Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare or by the local governments such as VDC and municipality. Education Act and the Local Self-Governance Act are contradictory to each other.

Similarly, the government has not accorded priority to the role of NGOs. If an integrated programme comprising of primary education, health sector and literacy are taken forward and a policy is formulated accordingly, reforms could be possible.

Aside the government, the NGOs are also trying to do something in the education sector. But there is lack of both co-ordination and communication. If a concentrated effort is given to the goal of education and curriculum making, it could stop school dropouts and parents' tendency of not sending their wards to school. Education that teaches only basic skills of reading and writing is not enough and it does not attract the rural masses. To educate girls, mothers need to be educated. For this a special programme is required. At the current pace of progress shown by plans and efforts, this kind of programmes is not suitable.

Another significant aspect is revising the examination pattern. The current system of pass/fail has to be reviewed and an efficient system to be developed to replace it. School dropouts could be stopped through appropriate grading system for the promotion of students to next grade. The need of the hour is girls' education. It can help reform other sectors through a chain effect. Primary education must be made free and compulsory by law and periodic plans. Girls have to be provided educational opportunity right from their pre-primary age. For this, pre-primary classes or pre-schooling programmes have to be run for girls. Otherwise, school dropouts of girls cannot be controlled in the primary level.

The just concluded research study has revealed both successes and failures.

Ethnic minorities including the Dalits and the disadvantaged require special attention. The government has to ensure that the scholarship for girls reaches to target groups and the District Education Office does not misuse it. Scholarships to girls on monthly basis would bring better results on girls' education. Parents must be informed about the existence of scholarships and its relevance.

Not all the public schools have female teachers. As our study shows, female teachers play vital role to boost girls' enrollment in schools, the state must therefore, ensure that female teachers are recruited in every school. There are over 8,000 schools without female teachers.

The state has to make girls' education compulsory, remove social evils through a joint efforts of the government as well as of the civil society and the parents.

The state must also ensure that public primary education is free and compulsory. As our study reveals, pupils are still found to be paying fees in various forms though the government had declared public primary education free by an act.

Our study reveals that free dress and stationeries from DACAW/UNICEF has brought better schooling outcome. Therefore, to attract poor and disadvantaged pupils to schools, free

dressess and stationeries have to be provided to all the children belonging to poor strata of society.

Since child marriage is a bane to society and is doing a great diservice to girls eduaction, the state must impose reasonable ban on this practice. Marriageable age for girls has to be fixed and those not abiding by this regulation must be punished seriously.

Teachers must be made accountable. Reward and punishment system has to be introduced to make them accountable. SMC should be authorised for teachers managements also.

The DEO must ensure that classes are run regularly. For this, RPs must frequently visit the schools and monitor the school activities.

State must ensure that gender discriminations prevalent in the rural areas are removed totally. It must also provide girls with an oppportunity for further education so that it will help raise female literacy.

Madrassas, the Muslim religious schools have to be reformed and mainstreamed with the national eduaction. They must impart modern education. Muslim children must be encouraged to attend government schools.