



# Joint Evaluation of Nepal's Education for All 2004-2009 Sector Programme

**Evaluation Report 1/2009  
Executive Summary**

Submitted by Cambridge Education Ltd and METCON Consultants



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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

The basis for the Joint Evaluation lies in the Joint Financing Agreement of 2004 as one of two external evaluations, one at the mid-term and one at the expiry of the Programme.

The purpose of the evaluation is:

To provide information about the outcomes of Education for All (EFA) 2004-2009 that the Ministry of Education<sup>1</sup>, donors and other education stakeholders can use for policy work and in the design of the School Sector Reform (SSR).

The Joint Evaluation of the EFA Programme 2004 – 2009 was undertaken by a team of five independent consultants, two international and three national, over a period of approximately 10 weeks from November 2008.

As specified in the Terms of Reference, the Joint Evaluation team prepared an Inception Report that was shared with the Government of Nepal (GoN) and the Development Partners (DPs) at an Inception Seminar on November 18th, 2008. After adjustments to the proposals made in the Inception Report, the substantial Programme documentation was studied; evaluation instruments were finalised; various stakeholders were interviewed; primary data was gathered from eight Districts representative of the development zones of Nepal with an emphasis on Districts with low ranking in terms of Human Resource Development Indices. Views on the EFA Programme were elicited from more than 300 people, representing parents, teachers, students, local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Village Development Committees (VDCs) and personnel of District Education Offices (DEOs), with a focus on women and disadvantaged groups.

The methodology used combined close study of documentation of the progress of the Programme from conception up to the present time, examination of national trends and the District variations of the key performance indicators with primary data collected from the selected eight Districts and from key stakeholders at the central level. The primary data is qualitative and represents the perceptions of stakeholders from students to development partners. The findings reported in Chapters 3, 4 and 5 emerge from the evaluators' study of that primary data obtained through discussions and interviews. Causal connections are impossible to

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<sup>1</sup> The Ministry of Education and Sports changed its name to Ministry of Education on August 31st, 2008. Since the name of the Ministry during the main part of the EFA programme (2004-2008), and thus the main part of the period under evaluation was Ministry of Education and Sports, both names will be used when referring to the Ministry administering the EFA programme throughout this report.

tie down with 100% certainty with the methodology adopted because of the lack of controls – for instance the existence of areas of the country where the interventions were not attempted. Thus, care has to be taken in the interpretation of the findings. Annex 3b gives a short account of how the qualitative data from the District Studies was treated and presents some of that data to allow readers access to the same raw material available to the evaluators.

### **About the EFA 2004 – 2009 Programme**

The EFA Programme 2004-2009 is a five-year strategic plan within the framework of the EFA 2015 National Plan of Action (NPA). Three objectives were identified:

- i) Ensuring access and equity in primary education,
- ii) Enhancing quality and relevance of primary education, and
- iii) Improving efficiency and institutional capacity.

The programme was estimated to cost a total of US \$814.5 million in 2003 prices.

### **Findings and Recommendations**

Findings are grouped under three headings based on the programme objectives, of Access and Equity, Quality and Efficiency and Institutional Capacity, including Finance, Planning and Audit. Recommendations, of which there are 31<sup>2</sup>, are also grouped under the same headings, with a final trio of recommendations intended for design of the School Sector Reform. Along with each recommendation, Chapter 7 gives suggestions for effecting these recommendations.

### **Progress on the Programme**

Regarding **Access and Equity**, there has been considerable progress on a number of indicators and substantial growth in the system as a whole. Most notably, Nepal has managed to achieve overall enrolment increases that are accompanied by a reduction of gender and caste/ethnic disparity.

Regarding **Quality**, while there is some weak evidence from somewhat reduced dropout rates that quality is improving, overall progress is somewhat disappointing. There apparently remain huge inequalities in provision, with schools serving the poorest and most marginalised communities being the least well staffed, resourced or supported.

As for **Improving efficiency and institutional capacity**, the most significant progress has been in the revitalising of School Management Committees and the hand-over, or more correctly, the handing back of schools to become community-managed. The implementation of the programme has steadily passed to the Districts, and schools, for implementation.

### **Policy**

Although there have been clear policy thrusts towards decentralisation, greater community participation and more responsiveness to linguistic and cultural diversity, detailed plans that can guide implementation have not been developed. As a result, there have been some inconsistencies such as conflicting policies on free education and cost-sharing implementation modalities, practical problems in implement-

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<sup>2</sup> Chapter 7 summarises findings and specifies the 31 recommendations. The recommendations are numbered as in Chapter 7. Only the most salient are addressed here for want of space.

ing multilingual education and some lack of clarity regarding the respective roles of 'special', 'non-formal' and 'inclusive' education.

#### *Recommendations*

**R1** Develop a policy on cost sharing based on studies to gain further understanding of what educational costs are met by families and the impact of these on enrolment.

**R2** Develop a more complete policy on languages in education covering the use in primary education of specific languages, bilingual teachers, textbooks etc.

**R3** Develop a policy for Inclusive Education articulating both the inclusive provision to be aimed for in all schools, and the envisaged roles, scope and scale of 'special' and 'non formal'/alternative education programmes.

### **Improving Access, Equity and Quality Strategies**

#### *Incentives*

Incentive payments, additional to free primary education, have been perceived as having made a huge impact on access of girls, Dalits and disadvantaged Janajatis. Enrolments are up and the perceptions of all groups of stakeholders at the District level ascribe the increases in large part to scholarships and other incentives. Additional infrastructure and improved school management may also be contributory factors. Additional support to overcome the 'opportunity costs' of education have also been highly valued.

#### *Recommendations*

**R4** Simplify and sharpen scholarship schemes and criteria, whilst continuing to keep all types of basic education free of direct fees and costs.

**R5** Target additional funding to disadvantaged schools through School Improvement Plans (SIPs), for locally-relevant strategies to address 'opportunity' costs of education.

### **The Teaching- Learning Process and Environment**

While there are more teachers and more trained teachers, the effort required to change classroom processes has seemingly been under-estimated and in many schools these remain unsatisfactory. The potential of an inclusive, 'child- friendly' approach to enable any school to include the vast majority of children in its catchment area has been recognised by some stakeholders.

#### *Recommendations*

**R6** Strengthen 'in school' and 'whole school' training and support.

**R9** Further integrate the concepts of child-friendliness, gender sensitivity and diversity into a 'vision' of quality education and all quality strategies.

### **Quality Standards and Monitoring**

There is a lack of key input standards and no monitoring of changes in how students are learning and their learning achievement, as well as the factors and variables that affect that achievement.

### *Recommendations*

**R8** Establish within a national body the capacity to carry out regular sample assessments of student learning achievement in core skills.

**R11** Ensure completion and use of School Quality Standards and Indicators.

### **Early Childhood Development, Non Formal Education and Adult Literacy**

Some good work has been done. However, targeting of Early Childhood Development (ECD) has been inadequate, the scale of Non-Formal Education (NFE)/adult literacy too limited, and across all these programmes it is recognised that there has been insufficient attention to quality.

### *Recommendation*

**R12** Develop clear operational frameworks for ECD, NFE and Adult Literacy through clarifying the purpose and priority target groups of each.

### **Capacity and Institutional Development**

#### *Interpretation of capacity development*

The interpretation of capacity development has been restricted, in the main, to providing training. Capacity within the EFA Programme should include human resources, e.g. numbers of teachers, the skills and knowledge of the human resources, the availability of financial and physical resources, management systems and tools as well as the institutional context, including the decentralisation to schools, for the Programme.

### *Recommendations*

**R13** Broaden the concept of 'Capacity Development' to encompass the deployment and management of all resources.

### **School Management and School Improvement Planning**

The hand-over of schools to become Community-managed schools has generally had positive outcomes but some, possibly the poorer communities, lack the leadership to take back their schools.

The best SIPs have demonstrated the effectiveness of increasing the involvement of community members.

### *Recommendations*

**R14** Build Capacity of School Management Committees (SMCs) and Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) by orienting all SMC members, not only the chairperson, to their duties and ensuring that the SIP and social audit processes are understood by all stakeholders.

### **Teacher Training, Deployment and Professional Development/Support**

There persists an overall shortage of teachers and huge inequalities in the deployment of teachers.

*Recommendations*

**R16** Continue the attempts to ensure a more equitable distribution of teachers between districts and between schools within districts.

**District Education Offices and NGO Partnerships**

District Education Officers and their staff seem to lack the capacity to manage the scope and scale of the EFA programme.

NGOs/Community Based Organisations (CBOs) have played a positive role in implementation but there are wide variations in NGO capacity and effectiveness and Districts have not always been able to ensure co-ordination and optimal use of these additional resources.

*Recommendations*

**R18** Strengthen school supervision and inspection through revision of job descriptions to define further the roles of Resource Persons (RPs)/supervisors and the differentiated meanings of 'support', 'supervision' and 'inspection'.

**Data Collection, Analysis, Monitoring and Learning**

Excellent progress has been made on building the data collection and Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) including good attention to disaggregation.

*Recommendations*

**R19** Strengthen and further institutionalise Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning by, e.g. developing capacity at national and district levels in the analysis and use of qualitative information to illuminate observations from quantitative analysis.

**Finance, Planning and Audit**

*Level of financing*

In international comparative terms Nepal is allocating more than the average proportion of Gross Domestic Product to primary education. Even so, because Nepal started from a very low base, the allocations are inadequate.

*Recommendations*

**R23** GoN to keep to its commitment to allocate 20% of the public sector budget to education, within that share at least 60% should be allocated to EFA Goals.

**Resource Allocation**

Per capita funding is an objective, yet unobvious, tool for allocating resources between districts and within districts.

*Recommendations*

**R24** Explore ways to reflect within the funding formula the level of prior investment and poverty of Districts and, within Districts, within VDC.

## Planning Processes

Bottom-up planning is beginning to work.

### *Recommendations*

**R25** Design systems for plan aggregation from lower to higher levels. Include mechanisms to ensure mainstreaming of gender and equity into DEPs, VEPs and SIPs. Pilot the system, revise and mainstream ensuring the provision of orientation and training to all the stakeholders.

## Financial Management and Audit

School-level audit reveals poor record keeping.

### *Recommendations*

**R26** Continue efforts to make the Financial Management System more effective particularly regarding audit (financial and performance) at the school level.

## Joint Financing Agreement and Technical Assistance

The JFA is highly regarded by both the GoN and DPs as a successful co-ordination mechanism, which has resulted in reduced transaction costs for all. The GoN is now controlling the TA planning process and its management.

### *Recommendations*

**R27** With further capacity development and support, TA management and recruitment should be moved to the MoE, with an earmarked TA pool being provided under the SSR.

## The Evolution of Programme Design from EFA to SSR

In the EFA programme, developing components to directly correspond to each of the EFA goals might not have been the most effective for practical implementation or for ensuring mainstreaming of cross cutting issues. Plans for programme evaluation were not sufficiently thought out from the design stage.

The importance of carrying out a baseline study, whichever approach to Programme evaluation is taken, cannot be overestimated.

### *Recommendations*

**R29** Consider a different way of conceptualising the objectives and components of EFA under SSR (setting objectives relating to 'access and equity' across the 'sub sectors' of Basic Education and defining the dimensions of social inclusion and equity that need to be mainstreamed across each objective).

**R30** Programme evaluation should be conceptualised and agreed between the GoN, the DPs and other stakeholders before the SSR is launched. It may include evaluating processes as well as outcomes and to do that effectively a degree of continuous or, at least, intermittent commitment to the Programme is necessary, suggesting retaining a single evaluation agency.

**R31** A baseline study or the equivalent in terms of an end-of-EFA Programme evaluation should be included in the evaluation design.

**Looking Ahead**

EFA has achieved many important successes, particularly with regards to equitable access. The SSR, with its strong leaning towards quality improvement, including 'equity' in quality, will tackle classroom processes that have in all countries proved more resistant to rapid change. It is in that context that the analysis and findings of the Joint Evaluation will, we hope, prove useful to those involved in its design and implementation.



## EVALUATION REPORTS

- 5.95 Integration of Environmental Concerns into Norwegian Bilateral Development Assistance: Policies and Performance
- 1.96 NORAD's Support of the Remote Area Development Programme (RADP) in Botswana
- 2.96 Norwegian Development Aid Experiences. A Review of Evaluation Studies 1986–92
- 3.96 The Norwegian People's Aid Mine Clearance Project in Cambodia
- 4.96 Democratic Global Civil Governance Report of the 1995 Benchmark Survey of NGOs
- 5.96 Evaluation of the Yearbook "Human Rights in Developing Countries"
- 1.97 Evaluation of Norwegian Assistance to Prevent and Control HIV/AIDS «Kultursjokk og Korrektiv» – Evaluering av UD/NORADs Studiereiser for Lærere
- 3.97 Evaluation of Decentralisation and Development
- 4.97 Evaluation of Norwegian Assistance to Peace, Reconciliation and Rehabilitation in Mozambique
- 5.97 Aid to Basic Education in Africa – Opportunities and Constraints
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- 9.97 Evaluation of Norwegian Assistance to Worldview International Foundation
- 10.97 Review of Norwegian Assistance to IPS
- 11.97 Evaluation of Norwegian Humanitarian Assistance to the Sudan
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- 4.98 Development through Institutions? Institutional Development Promoted by Norwegian Non-Governmental Organisations
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- 10.98 Strategy for Assistance to Children in Norwegian Development Cooperation
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- 14.98 Relief Work in Complex Emergencies
- 1.99 WID/Gender Units and the Experience of Gender Mainstreaming in Multilateral Organisations
- 2.99 International Planned Parenthood Federation – Policy and Effectiveness at Country and Regional Levels
- 3.99 Evaluation of Norwegian Support to Psycho-Social Projects in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Caucasus
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- 7.99 Policies and Strategies for Poverty Reduction in Norwegian Development Aid
- 8.99 Aid Coordination and Aid Effectiveness
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- 10.99 Evaluation of AWEPA, The Association of European Parliamentarians for Africa, and AEI, The African European Institute
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- 2.00 Norwegian Support to the Education Sector. Overview of Policies and Trends 1988–1998
- 3.00 The Project "Training for Peace in Southern Africa"
- 4.00 En kartlegging av erfaringer med norsk bistand gjennom frivillige organisasjoner 1987–1999
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- 6.00 Making Government Smaller and More Efficient. The Botswana Case
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- 2.01 Economic Impacts on the Least Developed Countries of the Elimination of Import Tariffs on their Products
- 3.01 Evaluation of the Public Support to the Norwegian NGOs Working in Nicaragua 1994–1999
- 3A.01 Evaluación del Apoyo Público a las ONGs Noruegas que Trabajan en Nicaragua 1994–1999
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- 3A.02 Évaluation du programme ACOPAM Un programme du BIT sur l'« Appui associatif et coopératif aux Initiatives de Développement à la Base » en Afrique de l'Ouest de 1978 à 1999
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- 1.03 Evaluation of the Norwegian Investment Fund for Developing Countries (Norfund)
- 2.03 Evaluation of the Norwegian Education Trust Fund for African the World Bank
- 3.03 Evaluering av Bistandstorgets Evalueringsnettverk
- 1.04 Towards Strategic Framework for Peace-building: Getting Their Act Together. Overview Report of the Joint Utstein Study of the Peace-building.
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- 5.04 Study of the impact of the work of FORUT in Sri Lanka: Building Civil Society
- 6.04 Study of the impact of the work of Save the Children Norway in Ethiopia: Building Civil Society
- 1.05 –Study: Study of the impact of the work of FORUT in Sri Lanka and Save the Children Norway in Ethiopia: Building Civil Society
- 1.05 –Evaluation: Evaluation of the Norad Fellowship Programme
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- 1.06 – Synthesis Report: Lessons from Evaluations of Women and Gender Equality in Development Cooperation
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- 2.07 – Study Development Cooperation through Norwegian NGOs in South America
- 3.07 Evaluation of the Effects of the using M-621 Cargo Trucks in Humanitarian Transport Operations
- 4.07 Evaluation of Norwegian Development Support to Zambia (1991 - 2005)
- 5.07 Evaluation of the Development Cooperation to Norwegian NGOs in Guatemala
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- 1.08 Synthesis Study: On Best Practise and Innovative Approaches to Capacity Development in Low Income African Countries
- 2.08 Evaluation: Joint Evaluation of the Trust Fund for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development (TFESSD)
- 2.08 Synthesis Study: Cash Transfers Contributing to Social Protection: A Synthesis of Evaluation Findings
- 2.08 Study: Anti- Corruption Approaches. A Literature Review
- 3.08 Evaluation: Mid-term Evaluation of the EEA Grants
- 4.08 Evaluation: Evaluation of Norwegian HIV/AIDS Responses
- 5.08 Evaluation: Evaluation of the Norwegian Research and Development Activities in Conflict Prevention and Peace-building
- 6.08 Evaluation: Evaluation of Norwegian Development Cooperation in the Fisheries Sector

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