



©Photocredit/CARE

“Chharari”

Platform for Open Dialogue Between Citizens, Local Government and Education Stakeholders to Promote Equitable Quality Education

Overview

The National Census of 2021 shows that Nepal's literacy rate is 76.2%, with a male literacy rate of 83.6% and a female literacy rate of 69.4%. The 2015 constitution of Nepal has guaranteed the right to education with provision of free and compulsory basic education and free secondary education. The national education data of Center for Education and Human Resource Development of Ministry of Education shows that Net Enrolment Rate (NER) at Basic level (grade 1-8) is 95.1 where drop-out rate is 0.5%. Similarly in secondary level Net Enrollment Rate is only 57.9 where girls' enrolment rate is 55.8 against 59.9 of boys. Regarding the enabling environment in schools, only 72% of Basic schools and 66.8% of secondary schools have fulfilled five prioritized minimum enabling conditions¹.

The government of Nepal has endorsed School Education Sector plan (2022/23-2031/32) which has a goal to prepare capable, prosperous and multi-oriented citizens by (a) Ensuring equitable access and participation of all children in school education, especially those who are disadvantaged, marginalized and disabled due to economic and social reasons. (b) Enhancing the quality and relevance of overall school education to ensure minimum learning achievement in every child. c) Making all citizens literate with work related and life- skills and to expand the continuous and lifelong learning opportunities. d) Promoting governance in all bodies of school education and strengthening coordination and cooperation among the three tiers of government to make the delivery of educational services effective.

¹ Basic learning conditions are nationally defined requirement of teachers, classroom, library, textbooks and separate toilets for girls and boys at basic level and teachers, classroom, library, textbooks, ICT infrastructures, science lab and separate toilets for girls and boys

CARE Nepal is implementing accelerated learning program ‘also called UDAAN’² using government approved condensed curriculum targeting to out-of-school adolescent girls aged 10-14 from marginalized communities for creating access to quality education through successful transition into formal public schools along with enhancing girls’ leadership and life-skills. Besides creating access to formal education, CARE Nepal jointly with partner is engaging with parents, communities, schools for creating enabling environment for girls to access, retain and learn. In addition to strengthening the government system, CARE has been supporting to enhancing the capacity and promoting accountability among service providers which includes training programs, development of equitable programs, plans, guidelines and policies for the effective implementation of educational interventions. In collaboration with the Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology CARE supported in developing and disseminating condensed curriculum, learning materials and facilitators guides including contribution to develop Non formal and life-long learning operation and management standards-2079.

CARE Nepal jointly with Hilly Region Development Campaign (HRDC), has been implementing an education program in Bheri municipality, Jajarkot which includes accelerated learning program for out-of-school girls, remedial learning and life-skill mentoring support to adolescent girls who are at risk of dropping out from school, implementation of community score card in schools including support to them for creating conducive environment for adolescent girls in schools. In the Bheri municipality of Jajarkot the major problem of school education is lack of teachers, and they are short of 31 teachers at basic level and 55 at secondary level. This shortage has impacted on students learning but with the partnership of development agencies and support from federal and provincial grant, remedial learning programs have been implemented by local government. Regarding the physical infrastructure, the municipality is struggling to manage adequate resources for construction of classroom and furniture. The situation of physical infrastructure was even worse after the devastating earthquake in Jajarkot on 3rd November 2023.

CARE Nepal jointly with partner has organized an event named “**Chhahari**” to have open discussion between citizens, education stakeholders from communities and the local government (service provider) on different educational issues of Bheri Municipality of Jajarkot through participatory process. The processes followed in **Chhahari** were collection of opinions and concerns from community stakeholders regarding education related service delivery by local government, discussion in platform for promotion of governance & accountability and seeking commitment from accountable representatives and officials of local government for promoting equitable and quality education.

Objective of Chhahari

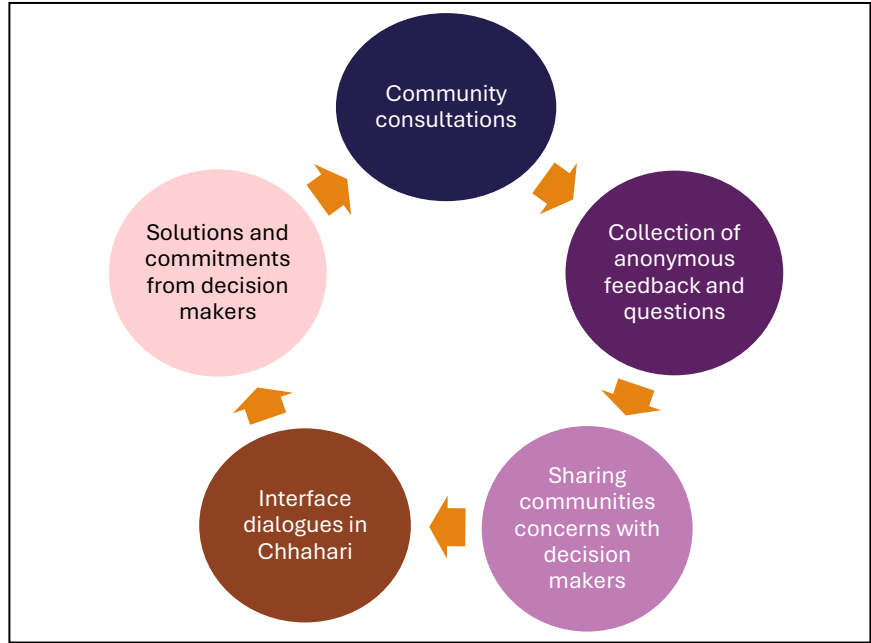
Create a participatory platform to engage citizens, community stakeholders and decision makers to have a dialogue on existing issues of education at local government (palika level) considering the equity, quality, relevance and governance of education system through consultative process and collectively

² **UDAAN** Program is a transformative initiative that enables out-of-school girls from marginalized, poverty-stricken families to re-integrate into regular schools by offering 11 months condensed curriculum which also equips girls with essential leadership and life skills beside learning facilitation.

discuss the possible solutions through increased accountability of the decision makers and service providers.

Process Followed during Chhahari

The Chhahari process was commenced with the sampling of schools and consultations with community stakeholders of school education (includes; community people, school teachers, school management committees, community learning centers, parents and school children) for the collection of anonymous questions along with the field visit to schools. Following the questions collected from stakeholders, they were clubbed into respective subsectors to generate anonymous questions. Prior to the event the questions were provided to local government for their preparedness which was followed by face-to-face discussion on issues in



the presence of local government (Mayor, Deputy mayor, Mayor, education committee, Education, youth and sports section, women and children section and health section of municipality).

The following were the steps followed during chhahari.

1. **Collection of Anonymous Questions:** For the collection of anonymous questions from community stakeholders such as students, schoolteachers, school management committees and parents, the program team selected the schools, ensuring representation of community schools based on their types. Based on the sample field, enumerators were mobilized to collect the anonymous questions from schools. A total of 15 schools of Bheri Municipality were sampled representing Lower Basic 1-5 (6), Basic 1-8 (3), secondary 9-10 (5) and secondary 9-12 (1) schools covering different wards of municipality.
2. **Clubbing of Questions:** After collecting the questions from stakeholders, these questions were clubbed based on their nature in relation to the subsector. Collected questions were clubbed into six subsectors i) Physical infrastructure ii) access iii) teaching learning iv) inclusion v) Governance vi) policy implementation including the implementation status of the free and compulsory education Act. While clubbing the questions repeated questions were removed and questions were specified based on the subsector and the schools.
3. **Disseminate anonymous question to the local government:** After clubbing the questions clubbed questions were handed over to the accountable duty bearer which includes Mayor, Deputy Mayor , Municipal Education Committee, Education, youth and sports section , women and children section and health section of municipality so that they can prepare with their answers reviewing their plan, policies

and programs that already exist or the commitment to address the concerns /questions from community based stakeholders.

4. **Organizing Chhahari Forum:** As Chhahari is a shade of big tree, where people sit and chat to each other, the setting of Chhahari is preferred in the open space (if available nearby). During the Chhahari event which witnessed participation of 90 people, these five steps were followed to have open discussion on education related issues.



Step 1: Sharing of good /remarkable work from local government in education sector:

The local government shared the initiatives they have taken to bring positive impacts in the lives of school children and education stakeholders in communities. Mr. Chandra Prakash Gharti, Mayor of Bheri Municipality shared the remarkable work carried out by municipality, such as ; allocation of fund worth NPR 27.5 million for managing teachers in schools for quality education, additional incentives to the ECED facilitators to provide NPR 15,000 salary for each including 1 months festival allowance, developed and endorsed local curriculum and has plan to prepare text book based on curriculum,9 school buildings are being constructed in coordination with JICA, five years periodic plan is developed prioritizing education, facilitated remedial learning classes with support from federal and provincial grant across secondary schools, have managed ICT with internet facility, library/book corner and science lab in all secondary schools, provided first aid box to school with training on first aid medication, promoting extra and co-curricular activities in schools etc.

Step 2: Responding to the anonymous questions from respective accountable service providers: To the concerns /questions raised by the community-based stakeholders, Mr. Chandra Parkash Gharti-

Mayor, Ms. Sita Jaishi - Deputy mayor and local government officials includes Mr. Dal Bahadur Gharti-Acting Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Amrit Pun- Unit Chief of Education, youth and sports , Mr. Dipak Oli, Health unit chief of Health and Mr. Santosh Pun child welfare officer representing women, children and senior citizen section of municipality responded in alignment with the policy, programs, priorities of the local government and the achievements made. Most of the questions were related to lack of classrooms and the risks as the building cracked and damaged by the earthquake and students are learning at open ground due to lack of classrooms and furniture in school, lack of separate toilet with WASH facilities (even there are not functional toilets in many primary schools). Similarly, on the issues related to teaching learning were centered around lack of learning materials in schools, computers are not accessed by students due to lack of trained teacher to teach computer skills, no provision for alternative teachers when the teachers



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stay on long leave (especially during maternity and sick leave of teachers) and course facilitation halted for long time, lack of subject teacher for Math and science subjects, irregularity of teachers in schools. Respective accountable officials and representatives responded to each of the clubbed questions asked by event facilitator. Similarly, concerns related to inclusivity were on blanket basis scholarship distribution at the rate of NPR 400 per year for Dalit and all girl children (from grade 1-8), no support to the children who migrate with their parents to India, lack of scholarship for poor children. Access to school is difficult for all children due to the lack of schools in communities beyond 5th and 8th grade so students need to walk up-to 3-4 hours a day for school. Besides, the schools are collecting fees from parents during enrolment period. Regarding the governance of the education system, absenteeism among teachers is high, vacant teachers are not timely recruited were the major concerns of stakeholders.

Step 3: Development and dissemination of code of conduct for face -to-face questions and open discussion: Before going to have face-to-face dialogue on open floor, code of conduct was shared to the participants from both sides (service provider and community stakeholders) to facilitate the discussion in harmonized environment. Raising hand while putting their concerns, no repetition of question which are already asked by other participants, raise their concerns and ask questions in polite manner, do not stigmatize and blame others while putting questions and responding, respect others and maintain confidentiality, no defense in feedback and ask the questions and respond which are related to educational issues (subject matter) were the major code of conduct agreed upon by participants and accountable stakeholders.

Step 4: Open dialogue on education issues (Face-to-face discussions): Following the agreement to follow code of conduct, there was a two-way discussion on additional concerns beyond anonymous questions where community stakeholders asked questions and related accountable officials /representatives from local government responded to them. Some questions and responses were as follows.

Questions/ grievance / Feedback	Responses from accountable Official/ representatives
As scout is important to develop moral characteristic among students It is important to implement scout program in schools which contributes for developing moral character and discipline among students. (Bhim Bahadur Chand Head teacher)	As head teachers are responsible for running schools, local government will support to implement scout program If come with the action plan. (responded by Mayor Chandra Prakash Gharti)
Bheri Triveni Secondary school is not getting approval to upgrade schools for running 11 and 12, why municipality is not giving permission to upgrade the classes. (Krishna Bk, SMC chairperson)	It is good to upgrade schools, but the school needs to have proper infrastructure and fulfill the criteria. On the other hand, the local government has a liability to run the schools including teacher management, so further capacity should be assessed before permitting them to upgrade their level. (responded by Mayor Chandra Prakash Gharti).
There was provision of remedial classes for 9 th and 10 th grade in previous years, municipality need to continue this practice to improve learning of students. What is the	Remedial classes will be conducted this year, not only for 9 th and 10 th grade, but municipality will also collaborate with development partners to run remedial classes to low performing students from

<p>plan for the municipality for this year? (Pabitra Oli, Student)</p>	<p>lower grades. (Amrit Pun, Head of Education, Youth and Sports Section, Bheri Municipality)</p>
<p>What is the plan of local government to educate orphan and helpless children who don't have parents to support their education? Bheri Triveni Secondary School Rimna has 207 students from outside Bheri Municipality including Rukum west and Nalagad municipality, school is struggling to manage the rooms and students are not able to pay rent outside school. In this case what is the plan of the local government to support hostels in school? (Prem Bahadur pun Head teacher)</p>	<p>Regarding the children who don't have parents (orphans and helpless) the municipality will further discuss feasibility and resources for residential schools. He praised that the school is providing educational opportunities to students even they are from other districts /palikas the issue of hostel has come to the concerns of local government, they will have plan of what they can do in future for management of hostel. (responded by Mayor Chandra Prakash Gharti).</p>
<p>Despite the provision to keep 40 students in a classroom, due to the high number of students they are keeping more students. Shivashankar secondary has school won the president running shield of Jajarkot district, but they have not organized any running shield event in their school due to lack of playground. What is the municipality's plan to overcome the situation? (Sanat Prasad Sharma, Head teacher)</p>	<p>We are aware on the challenges of school and need of classroom, furniture and toilets including compound wall construction, to overcome the issue, palika has already coordinated with donor agency (JICA) and has plan to construct building with modern facilities very soon. (responded by Mayor Chandra Prakash Gharti).</p>
<p>There is no electricity in Brampakhu primary school, WFP's Road construction project has affected the playground of school, while constructing Temporary learning centers in school after earthquake there is difference on standards and quality. TLC constructed in school has not fulfilled the standards. (Bharat Oli – Head teacher)</p>	<p>We are aware of challenges of school, If there is effect of WFPs construction in school we will discuss to solve the issue. TLCs were from different agencies and did not have same structure and standards; we have already discussed with development agencies for similarity on quality and standards of TLCs. (responded by Mayor Chandra Prakash Gharti).</p>
<p>Despite the provision of free and compulsory education Tribhuvan Secondary school Khalanga Jajarkot is collecting fees from students of grade 6 to 12 during enrolment. Isn't it against the law? (Mina Kumari Thapa student)</p>	<p>Schools are not allowed to collect fees from parents and students. We will consult with head teachers at what revenue heading they are collecting the fee from students. We will regulate and can be legal case if school has collected the fee. (Amrit Pun, Head of Education, youth and sports section Bheri Municipality)</p>
<p>As there are differences in the physical infrastructures and qualities of school, for the equitable development of school it necessary to classify the schools based on their status with identification of unique challenges. There is duplication on the schemes from local and provincial governments, certain standards should be developed to minimize the duplication. (Karna Bahadur Shahi – Head teacher , Tribhuvan Basic School Risang)</p>	<p>As an issue has come to their attention, local government will develop profile of each schools including the challenges of schools, to minimize the duplication. Local government will consider providing support to schools based on the problems in coming days. (responded by Mayor Chandra Prakash Gharti).</p>

Step 5: Commitment from accountable stakeholders with signature: After responding to the open questions at the forum, local government representatives and officials had made 6 commitments for the further improvement of the education system to ensure equitable quality education for children. The following commitments were made by local government representatives.

- a. Reconstruction of damaged /affected school buildings and toilets by the earthquake, in coordination and collaboration with different development partners and governments.
- b. For improving teaching learning materials in the schools, will develop textbooks of local curriculum based on the developed local curriculum of Bheri municipality.
- c. Provide training to teachers based on demand and needs, expand remedial learning program for quality education and to improve the learning achievement of the students.
- d. Considering the effectiveness of the scout program, it is decided for the expansion of the scout program at school level with an action plan. Publish education profile of local government.
- e. Implement local **government- police partnership** program against drug abuse, child marriage and domestic violence that has aimed at improving the quality of education. Regular monitoring of schools for quality education.
- f. To implement the Free and Compulsory Education Act effectively, will regulate schools who are collecting fees from students in the name of support to school.

After the commitment Mr. Chandra Parkash Gharti- Mayor, Ms. Sita Jaishi- Deputy Mayor, Mr. Dal Bahadur Gharti- Act. Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Amrit Pun- head of education, youth and sports section, Mr. Dip Bahadur Oli – Head of Health unit and Mr. Santosh Pun Child Welfare officer signed on this commitment dated on 1st September 2024 in the presence of 90 plus participants representing 18 schools and catchment communities.