REPORT:

YOUTH LED SCHOOL SCORE CARD PROCESS

ActionAid International Nepal

2023

Foreword

It is with great pleasure and anticipation that ActionAid International Nepal (AAIN) introduces the report on "School Score Card" which is a testament to the collaborative efforts made by communities for the betterment of public education.

Improving the public education system has always been key to ensuring social justice and in enabling a conducive learning environment for all. With the constitution stating provisions for free and quality education, Nepal still faces its share of hurdles in realizing this condition. With communities taking forward community led efforts the practice of School Score Card proves as a powerful tool to bridge the gaps between the stakeholders of education, as it seeks both accountability and transparency from the public education system.

In developing the School Score Card, ActionAid International Nepal worked with the local partner NGOs to build the capacity of the youth in conducting the School Score Card in the schools of the respective communities. It is of great achievement that this process was youth-led as they play a pivotal role in upholding the governance in public education. The school score card report was prepared to assess the actions led by the communities in their public schools across Nepal and to identify gaps to improve the school system. The report assesses the practice of the school score card through the lens of governance, administration, quality learning, physical infrastructure, school safety and gender friendliness. It explores the learnings of the communities and what it might entail for future community led actions.

I would like to express sincere gratitude to Mr. Saroj Pokhrel, Head of Program Policy for guiding us and my team Ms. Renu Shrestha, Ms. Girwani Rana and Mr. Rahul Dewan for their contribution in preparing the report and aiding our efforts. Furthermore, I take this juncture to thank each youth and their communities in making the School Score Card a success. Last but not the least I thank our partner NGO's who have taken a pivotal role in leading the School Score Card process.

Devendra Pratap Singh,
Education & Youth Specialist,
ActionAid International Nepal.

Contents

Executive Summary

ActionAid's work on Education is aimed at improving the learning outcome through the creation and enabling of a safe learning environment by strengthening Education Governance System; investing in teaching learning pedagogical intervention; Developing teacher's capacity; capacity enhancement of primary stakeholders (children, adolescent girls and youth groups, School management committee and parent teacher association) and supporting for gender friendly school facilities. We generate evidence on the education financing gap, holistic status of school and creating public platform to scale up the agenda of the transformation of public education system. These efforts are directed at the three tiers of Government through the practice of accountability tools like school score card, citizen education report and Gender Responsive Public Service (GRPS) framework.

Based on the experience during the Covid-19 pandemic, we are focusing our interventions on the transformation of classroom through support in teaching learning aid and materials, digital equipment, and safe playing facilities. Our works are aligned and contribute to achieve the School Education Sector Plan (SESP) and Sustainable Development Goal-4 which is a long-term strategic commitment of the Government of Nepal. In a bid to promote evidence-based advocacy, ActionAid has been promoting model school initiatives in 162 schools of 31 Palikas. The model school initiative contributes to the Promoting rights in school's framework of AAN and aligns with the Star Approach of the Government of Nepal and are closely linked with the school improvement plan and intends to improve the learning environment, which will contribute towards an increase in learning outcome of students and reduce drop-out rate.

The School Score Card (SSC) 2023 is a description and consolidation of the status of school education in Nepal's public schools from the perspectives of participatory citizens led accountability tools, The "School Score Card' practiced by ActionAid Nepal's partners. The process of this tool's engagement and empowerment of young peoples, SMC, PTA, parents, students, teachers, school administration, communities and local CSOs to joint assessment and input tracking and monitoring of school performance and improving the quality of public education.

The report is an outcome of 21 public schools from different geographical location e.g. Doti, Bardiya, Palpa, Parsa, Siraha and Tehrathum (6 districts). The overall aim of report to generate evidence for improvement of school administration performance, school governance, quality learning environment and adequate financing for school facilities, teachers' capacity, and adequate use of teaching learning materials into the classroom. It also seeks to empower local peoples by enabling them to know about school functioning and analysis the information related to the daily operational activities of public schools through participatory assessment process. The data and information used in the report has been collected from 21 basic and secondary public schools. It is not a nationwide descriptive assessment, and the findings are not meant to be generalized for entire public schools in the country. Instead, it is our anticipation that the report be used to understand where gaps exist in the realization of school education as fundamental human rights and what actions can be undertaken to further strengthen and public education system in Nepal as per constitutional commitment 2015.

Introduction

Caption: School Score Card in process in Siraha

SCHOOL SCORE CARD AS DEMOCRATIC ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS (WHAT AND WHY?)

The school score card is a participatory, community-based approach for assessing government services or facilities by grading them according to a range of scores. The method describes bringing different stakeholders into discussion with the aim of finding out:

- Whether inputs promised for a service or facility have actually reached the frontline.
- How community members grade the performance of a particular service or facility.
- How frontline service providers themselves grade their own performance or that of their facility, and
- What can be done to overcome problems/ gaps at a facility and improve service delivery.

The school score card method is highly participative. The entire process relies on group discussion and active participation by community members and service providers. Likewise, the community members generate the scorecard themselves, and then use it to assess school facilities. There is a high degree of community ownership of the process and outcomes. One of the first steps in the school scorecard process is to clarify what commitments and standards exist-and then to take these to the community and to schools so that everyone knows exactly what rights and duties have been agreed to.

This promotes transparency in regard to the social contract that exists between an education unit of the local government- and the peoples it is meant to serve. By involving both supply and demand side in the assessment of school facilities or services, this methodology fosters open feedback, alternative solutions and exchange of information and public views.

OBJECTIVES

The main purpose of this School Score Card (SSC) report is to explain the scope to which education as a fundamental right is realized into practice in public schools and thereby to the school education's effort while also being brought into attention toward the policy and planning process of the local government. The key focus of school score card is to:

- Involve demand and supply side of schools' stakeholders to check the actual input promised and whether it is reached as per state obligation and standard.
- Assess school performance and degree of satisfaction of community's people.
- Provide space to school administration to assess their own performance and satisfaction of delivery.
- Facilitate to build collective commitment and effort to overcome problems and improve school education.

Methodology

Caption: School Score Card in process in Bardiya

THE APPROACH

This report is not a nationally descriptive survey of the government public school in the country that aims to make comprehensive overviews about the state of school education in Nepal provided through public schools. Rather it aims to describe and reflect upon the state of public education in schools that are attended by around 72 % of Nepali Children and draw allegations for transformed focus of both the state and non-state actors and groups to ensure equitable access to a high-quality public-school system for all children.

This school score card (SSC) is based on the PRS Framework, Constitution of Nepal 2015, and educational provision of Local Government Operation Act, 2017   We developed and agreed with community and school administration on the indicators for input tracking and assessment for each of the six broad areas that were afterward developed into checklists, questionnaire and focus group discussion.

The Promoting Rights in Schools Framework

1) **Right to free and compulsory education:** There should be no charges, direct or indirect, for primary education. Education must gradually be made free at all levels.

2) **Right to non-discrimination:** Schools must not make any distinction in provision based on sex, race, colour, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, ethnicity, ability, or any other status.

3) **Right to adequate infrastructure:** There should be an appropriate number of classrooms, accessible to all, with adequate and separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys. Schools should be built with local materials and be resilient to natural risks and disasters.

4) **Right to quality trained teachers:** Schools should have a sufficient number of trained teachers of whom a good proportion are female; teachers should receive good quality pre-service and in-service training with built-in components on gender sensitivity, non-discrimination, and human rights. All teachers should be paid domestically competitive salaries.

5) **Right to a safe and non-violent environment:** Children should be safe on route to and in school. Clear anti-bullying policies and confidential systems for reporting and addressing any form of abuse or violence should be in place.

6) **Right to relevant education:** The curriculum should not discriminate and should be relevant to

the social, cultural, environmental, economic, and linguistic context of learners.

7) **Right to know your rights:** Schools should teach human rights education and children's rights in particular Learning should include age-appropriate and accurate information on sexual and reproductive rights.

8) **Right to participate:** Girls and boys have the right to participate in decision making processes in school. Appropriate mechanisms should be in place to enable the full, genuine, and active participation of children.

9) **Right to transparent and accountable schools:** Schools need to have transparent and effective monitoring systems. Both communities and children should be able to participate in accountable governing bodies, management committees and parents' groups.

10) **Right to quality learning:** Girls and boys have a right to a quality learning environment and to effective teaching processes so that they can develop their personality, talents, and physical and mental abilities to their fullest potential.

EDUCATIONAL PROVISION OF LGO ACT 2017 (BASIC AND SECONDARY EDUCATION)

1. Formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and regulation of policies, laws, standards and plans for early childhood development and education, basic education, parental education, informal education, open and alternative continuous learning, community learning,

2. Establishment, approval, operation, management, and regulation of community, organizational, guthi and cooperative schools,

3. Planning, operation, approval, monitoring, evaluation and regulation of technical education and vocational training,

4. Approval, monitoring, and regulation of schools providing education in mother tongue,

5. Property management of the schools which have been merged or closed.

6. Establishment and management of village and municipal level education committees,

7. Establishment and management of school management committees,

8. Naming the school,

9. Land ownership; documentation, protection, and management of properties of the community schools,

10. Quality enhancement of schools and reading materials distribution,

11. Positions for teachers and staff in community schools,

12. Mapping, approval, authorization, adjustment, and regulation of school,

13. Educational infrastructure, maintenance, operation, and management of community schools,

14. Operation, monitoring, and management of basic level exams,

15. Testing and management of students' learning outcomes,

16. Management of free education, student motivation and scholarships,

17. Approval and regulation of teaching outside of school, like tuitions and coaching

18. Protection, promotion and standardization of local level knowledge, skills, and technology,

19. Operation and management of local libraries and reading rooms,

20. Coordination and regulation of education programs up to secondary level,

21. Management of grants and its budget for the community schools, establishment of accounting discipline for income and expenditure of school, its monitoring and regulation,

22. Teaching learning, training for teachers and staff, capacity development,

23. Operation of extracurricular activities.

School Selection: 21 Schools in six districts of Sudur Paschim Province, Lumbini Province, Madhesh Province and Koshi Province where AAIN has been working with its local non-governmental organizations (NGOs/CBOs), were identified for the school score card process (see annex 1). Of these, eleven schools were operating classes from grades 1–5, one school till class 6, one school till class 7, four schools till class 8, one school till class 9, two schools till class 10 and one school which operated till class 12. While selecting the districts, attention was taken to ensure that the country's three separate landscape belts, namely, the Tarai, Hill, and Mountain were represented. The schools were selected by AAIN's local partners that have education programs in that school in close consultation with local government and their counterparts. The school and community visits involved consultation and focus group discussion, review & reflection, and in-depth interactions with several stakeholder groups, including SMCs, PTAs, head teachers/teachers, students, parents and local government representatives and officials.

STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is structured into Six distinct chapters, with each chapter looking at a precise issue of the public school system from the indicators of School Score Card and validated by community and school (describe in annex 2). Chapter 2 describes the status of school administrative process in the selected schools. Chapter 3 focuses on the overall school governance, mainly on the practice and status of accountability and transparency of school expenditure and access to information. Chapter 4 looks at the quality education, mainly focusing on teacher availability & their capacity, use of teaching learning materials in classroom, teaching pedagogy and educational materials. In Chapter 5 is focus on adequate school facilities in school specially on safe physical facilities e.g. classroom, playground, furniture, wash facilities and digital equipment. Finally, in Chapter 6 we analyse the financing gap between existing allocation and local realities of education rights and highlight some implications and recommendations for overcoming them.

BACKGROUND OF SCHOOL SCORE CARD AREAS AND ITS PARTICIPANTS

The School Score Card was practiced in 6 districts namely: Parsa, Siraha, Doti, Terhathum, Bardiya and Palpa. (Chart 3) 21 schools from various districts conducted the SSC practice. There were 2343 participants in the School Score Card process (Table 1). 382 students participated played an active role in the School Score Card. The efforts were led by the youth in their own communities.

Table 1: Participants in the Process of School Score Card

Detail/ Area	Terhathum	Parsa	Siraha	Bardiya	Palpa	Doti
Male	110	83	424	113	176	256
Female	125	67	461	25	86	35
Student (Female)	43	21	66	16	17	35
Student (Male)	32	6	71	14	12	49
Total Participants	310	177	1022	168	291	375
Number of Schools	4	3	5	3	3	3

Chart 1: Student Participation according to gender in SSC
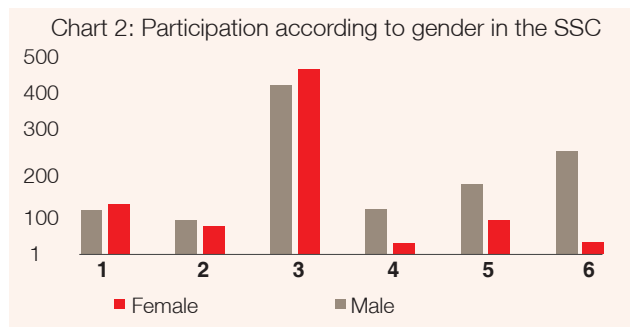

Chart 2: Participation according to gender in the SSC
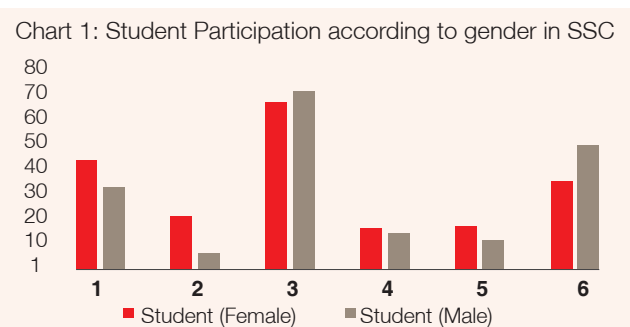
Chart 3: Number of Total Participants in SSC according to District

310
177
375
291
168
1022
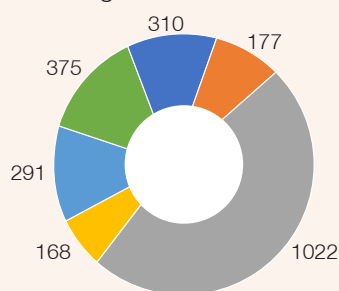
Terhathum Parsa Siraha Bardiya Palpa Doti

Chart 4: Number and Location of Schools

3 4
3
3
3
5
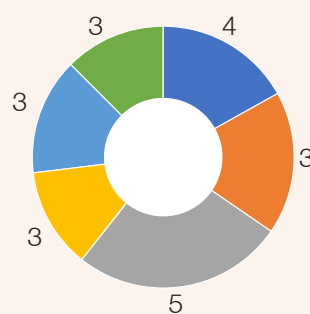
Terhathum Parsa Siraha Bardiya Palpa Doti

There School Score Card was centered at being inclusive and representative as it saw the participation of members from the Dalit, Indigenous and Disabled communities (Table 2 & Chart 5). There was a total of 811 members from Dalit community, 6 from disabled community and 1443 from other communities who were involved in the SSC.

Table 2: Participants from Disadvantaged Communities in SSC

Vulnerable Communities	Terhathum	Parsa	Siraha	Palpa	Bardiya	Doti
Dalits	43	53	523	23	2	167
Disabled	0	0	5	1	0	0
Others	267	124	146	193	601	112

Chart 5: Participants from Disadvantaged Communities in SSC

700
600
523
601
500
400
300
267
193
200
174
146
167
112
100
43
53
23
5
2
1
0
0
0

Terhathum Parsa Siraha Palpa Bardiya Doti

■ Dalits ■ Disabled ■ Others
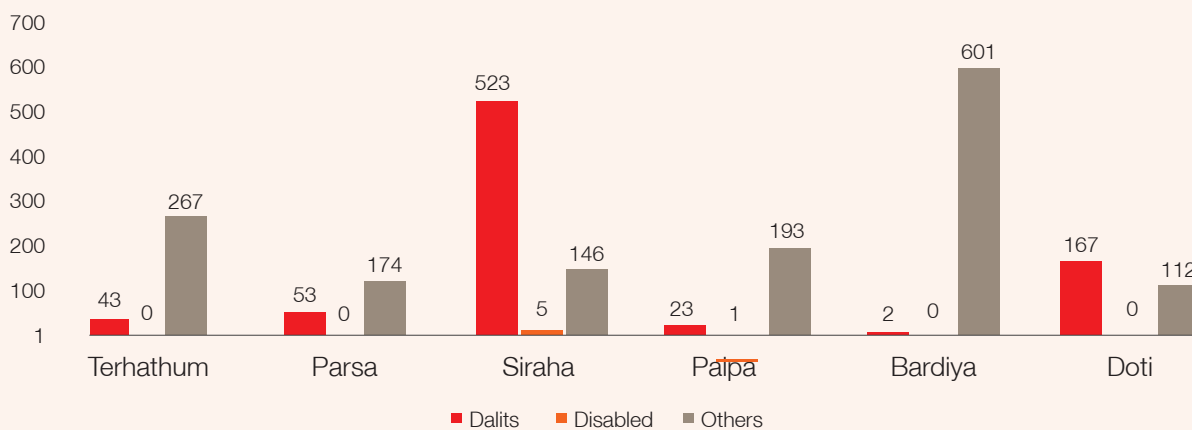
Findings & Analysis of the School Score Card

Caption: School Score Card in practice in Doti

ADMINISTRATION

Opening and Closing timing of School:
Maintaining punctual and stipulated scheduling in school is a fundamental aspect to creating a structured and conducive learning environment and an accountable school governing instrument.

As per the regulations set by the Nepal government, the standard timing for public schools is from 10 am to 4 pm and or defined by Local Government as per their local context. Following an assessment of It was found that out of the 21 schools which conducted the School Score Card only 6 schools open and close on time. Around 12 schools which were found to have unsatisfactory opening and closing times it was found that they open regularly on time, but it was found that their closing times were not constant.

In Parsa the school opens on time but does not close on time. In Doti the school opens at 10 am and closes at 4pm normally, but due to the extreme heat in the summer season the school opens at 6:00 am in the morning and closes by 12:00 pm.

Teachers' regularity in Schools
Teachers' consistent presence is basic to building a conducive and effective learning environment, influencing not only academic and functional learning outcomes but also the overall growth, development, and wellbeing of students within the school community. This commitment not only motivates students but also helps maintain an optimistic school culture, advancing trust and building stronger relationships among students and teachers.

Upon assessing 21 schools, it was evident that a majority of schoolteachers, 18 schools informed that they were not punctual and demonstrated irregular attendance. However, there are exceptions, such as Nava Jyoti basic school in Rajapur Bardiya which has implemented a fine of Rs 50 for teachers arriving late. This initiative has proven effective in applying regular and timely attendance of teachers and non-teachers' staff. It is also being committed by principal and SMC committee after the joint interface meeting to effective monitor and ensure the consistency and timely attendance of teachers in future as part of action plan.

The teachers on average come to school post 10 am and leave before 4pm. In Janakalyan Adharbhut School it was noticed that the principal comes to school only once a week.

Attitude and Behavior of Teachers the towards community

The attitude and behavior of teachers towards the community offers beyond the classroom boundary, shaping the overall educational experience for students and contributing to understanding the development prospective and well-being of the broader community. Teachers who actively adopt this role can make a significant and positive impact on both learning outcomes and community relationships.

In the assessment of 21 schools, it was outstandingly observed and appreciated by community, parents, and students about the behavior of teachers and school staff towards parents and community people which was well managed and consistently encouraging. The consensus of admiration and welcome from diverse stakeholders have initiated collaborative and improving educational environment within the community.

School Fee

Nepal's Constitution of 2015, Article 31, guarantees every citizen the right to basic education, with compulsory and free education at the basic level and free education at the secondary level ensured by the state. Special provisions are made for girls, people with disabilities, respecting the rights of indigenous peoples. Even though the Free and Compulsory Education Act 2018 prohibits the schools from charging fees, but into reality, 72 % schools are charging fees on various heading from parents and showing the key causes is inadequate budget for daily school operation.

The practice of charging exam fees varying from NPR 20 to 2000 monthly and specifically the school who are running into English medium. These fees are intended to cover the costs associated with conducting exams, paying for contract teachers due to shortage of teachers and managing administrative tasks. The school defends the decision to impose fees, guided by parental recommendations, referring to the inadequacy of state-provided funds to cover such management costs. Out of the 21 schools assessed, only 6 schools found their commitment to being entirely fee-free, assuring that no charges were levied under any category or pretax.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE

Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability play essential roles in establishing an effective education system that promotes trust among parents, community peoples and hold accountable school administration towards quality education. Out of 21 public schools, only 9 schools have conducted regular social and financial audits while a significant number lacked transparency with only a few disclosing details annual financial income and expenditure and other local resources. Also, some school management committee participated in the budget making process but were unaware about government budget allocation. It was found to be a common practice in school that the schools' teachers informed parents about basic details, but active participation and commitment were passive. However, during the interface meeting, parents realized and expressed their commitment to improve their active role in school affairs in days to come. Limited involvement of parents and students in decision making tied with inadequate information on financial matters were observed. It is essential to note that effective practice of transparency and accountability measures and instrument, sound leadership, communication flow and collaboration is highly required.

In Parsa it has been noticed that the involvement of the SMC in finalizing the budget is limited, active participation from the SMC is required. Further the overall budget and program budget of the schools is also not made public. There has been no monitoring and supervision by the education unit of the local government to oversee utilization of budget as well. In Siraha social audits were conducted, however parents and students were not aware of it.

School Management Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations

The School Management Committee (SMC) and Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) are key governing bodies to manage overall school governance. These governing instruments are responsible for proper management of school educational system, functional school governance, community engagement, and learning outcome and wellbeing of student. However, discussions with communities, parents, and teachers revealed that only a few schools out of 21 hold regular bimonthly meetings of SMC and PTA. Awkwardly, the agenda around physical facilities and infrastructure priorities more rather than issues of enabling learning environment, teachers' capacity, teaching learning materials and participation the School Improvement Plan development process.

3 schools among the 21 schools were found to have no SMC and PTA, while 3 schools, informed that committees are passive and are holding irregular meetings focused on infrastructure. The schools which were completely missing or have not been able to conduct were from the areas of Parsa, Siraha and Terhathum. Student involvement in the decision-making process is very controlled with only 8 schools reporting that there were students who were involved in the decision-making processes of the SMC. The school management committee formation process was to politicize and interfered with by local leaders. Regarding inclusion of the committee, it has been practiced ensuring the inclusiveness of people from marginalized community, parents, Dalits and other excluded groups and women as legal provision.

It is reported that 18 schools have conducted forms of Social Audit. This is duly to be noted as there seems to be in contrast with the fact that the schools which have practiced social audits have still not been able to uphold the proceedings of the social audit.

Ms. Lok Maya Darlami, Teachers' Parents Association President:

"Many people in the committee did not even know about the duties and rights of the Teachers' Parents Association. We realize that we must come together to improve the score of our school."

Monitoring & Evaluation Committee

The Monitoring and Evaluation Committee function as regular monitoring of school activities, recommending area of improvement, ensuring the quality deliberation of education, and attention toward better and conducive learning environment to the holistic development of students.

Local government monitoring provided valuable suggestion to schools such as improving teacher regularity, requiring session plan, ensuring clean toilets and submitting teacher absence leave application as seen in Shree Keling basic School in Terahathum

During the assessments and joint interface meetings with school stakeholders and separate groups of beneficiaries, it was observed that there was no monitoring and evaluation committee in 21 schools. While it is acknowledged that Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) or School Management Committees (SMC) can play a vital role as monitor school affairs, it was observed that these governing bodies were not effectively functioning as assigned their role.

Similarly, as per constitutional provision and local government operation act 2074 school education is primarily the responsibility of the local government and accountable for managing and overseeing

various aspects of school education within their jurisdiction including financing, teacher management, operation, and administration of schools. However, the information received from the School Score Card process, series of discussion uncovered that there is limited initiation of monitoring & supervision initiated by education unit of local government. Schools have been receiving large portion of conditional grants from the federal government channelized through local government and low priority of local government for education allocation or special attention around quality learning materials, school facilities and improvement of governing system.

Complaint hearing Mechanism & its Effectiveness

A Complaint hearing mechanism in schools is a governing instrument regulated by government as legal compliance to address and resolve grievance or complaint registered by student, parent's teachers, or stakeholder. This mechanism involves specific steps for registering issues/ complaints, reviewing, and resolving   through proper hearing mechanism in a transparent process.

> *Keling Basic School in Terahathum has implemented a suggestion box, informed students, and parents about its usage, and established a Complaints Resolution Committee chaired by the head of the school management committee. The suggestion box is reviewed monthly.*

Out of the 21 schools assessed, 3 schools have not set up a complaint mechanism, while many others either did not have a hearing committee / mechanism or, if formed, were not actively functioning.

It is also observed that although the provision for complaint mechanisms is in place, the mechanisms are not functioning. This has been shared by 4 schools reporting how the complaint box is not accessible due to placement and lack of consistency. There is a need to revitalize and capacitate these committees. Additionally, none of the schools have designated a focal person to handle the complaint mechanism separately and even appointed gender focal teachers.

Notice Board & Information Officer

Schools have been paying less attention to a proper information system and no designated information or communication officer nominated. Out of 21 schools none have an information focal person whereas 13 schools have a notice board for information dissemination but very few communities and parents are aware of this. The schools fall under Madesh Province (8 schools) have no notice board in place and no school focal person has appointed or lacks focal person working as information officer. It has also been observed that amongst the 13 schools only 4 schools have highlighted how the noticeboard has been set up for effective use.

Mr. Ram Chandra Chowdhury, Ward President, Bardiya:

"The meeting with Kamaiya Mahila Jagran Samaj Nepal proved to be positive. The discussion meeting on the implementation of the community score table for school improvement was appreciated by all. The school score is very important for the improvement of the school and since I was also the chairman of the education department of this school before I will cooperate with different levels in order to improve every area of this school. There are many shortcomings in the school, but we all have the responsibility to improve the school. I am committed to improve the physical and financial sector of the school in a positive way."

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Caption: School Score Card practice in Parsa

Availability of Educational, Teaching and Learning Material

Educational materials are essential for facilitating quality teaching learning process into the classroom, motivating both teachers and students. They enable critical thinking, practical sessions, and maximise child centered teaching process. By providing adequate teaching resources, contribute to an engaging learning environment, empowering educators, and students through quality teaching pedagogical approaches.

The Quality of Teaching-learning in the schools:

The application of training in classroom pedagogy falls under the professional and moral code of conduct of trained teachers. However, in our classroom observation we found that trained teachers were largely content with applying traditional teacher-centred teaching-learning procedures. The majority of teachers almost exclusively relied on blackboard and textbooks, and we did not see any use of other teaching materials.

Limited funding hinders access and availability of educational materials in schools, impacting the

quality of teaching. Many teachers face challenges in utilizing available resources effectively, affecting the delivery of quality education due to capacity deficit. Few teachers plan sessions in advance, translating their commitment towards effective teaching but the majority of teachers do not prepare lessons plans and proper use of it. Assessing the 21 schools, 50% of them have libraries but they face numerous challenges including limited physical space, limited accessibility for children availability and update of books and proper management of these resources.

Status of Lesson Plan

Lesson plans are essential in ensuring that teaching and learning processes become impactful. They provide learning objectives and activities for each lesson, facilitating a positive and child centered learning facilitation into the classroom. Regarding daily lesson plan preparation by teachers, it was an alarming response revealing that nearly 99% of them admit to not preparing lesson plans and use them in classrooms. They argue that they already have a predetermined idea of what to deliver and cite time constraints as a limiting factor. Even among those who have received training, there is a low use of such

available resources, a tolerant approach to following instructional methods, and an ignoring in developing and use of educational materials. Additionally, it has been observed that many teachers lack capacity building training to handle and use of the updated digital tools and techniques, aggravating the challenges faced in implementing effective teaching practices. Nevertheless, certain schools, such as Shree Singha Bahini Basic School in Terahathum, have taken proactive measures following a monitoring visit by the Local Government Monitoring Committee. This initiative specifically addresses issues related to lesson preparation and proper practices, use of educational materials, and other aspects of effective teaching and learning processes.

In general, the student-teacher ratio (STR) is lowest in primary education and highest in higher secondary level. This clearly reflects the unequal adjustment of teachers across the different levels of education. Likewise, private schools have a lower STR than public schools. There is also big disparity in STR between the different provinces, with the Madhesh province having the highest STR, and the Bagmati and Gandaki provinces having the lowest STRs.

Through the SSC practice, Student Teacher Ratio (STR) was found that Parsa had an average of 68:1 Both Parsa and Siraha reported that there were inadequate teachers in their public schools. On the other hand, the findings suggested that Doti, Bardiya, Palpa and Terhathum had adequate teachers with Doti having a ratio of 30:1 and Bardiya having an average of 23:1. While taking the statistics into the ratio both temporary and permanent teachers were taken into account. It was noted that none of the 21 schools had adequate training for the teachers and 14 schools reported that they have a lack of subject teachers.

Child Club and participation in school affairs: The child clubs are involved in conducting various activities for the students such as sports competitions, quiz, public debates, cultural programs and awareness-raising activities such as conducting public rallies on specific days. In some schools, child clubs are also engaged in monitoring student and teacher attendance. Response from students indicate that they have the opportunity to participate in various co-curricular and extra-curricular activities in the school. The majority of students have participated in quiz competitions, sports activities, and singing and dancing. In contrast, fewer students have participated in debate, public speaking, story/poetry writing, and drama activities.

Limited number of child club led activities were conducted and students were not involved in planning process in annual plan of schools. School administration said that due to budget constraints there are problems implementing and build conducive environment to promoting children's leadership roles through effective implementation of extra curriculum activities. Despite these challenges, there is a struggle to bringing and facilitate school and the community to foster such child led actions to enhance their knowledge and skills of children to learn and relate experience into their life skill. It is not an issue of budget deficit, there is scope and opportunity to adjust from available resources and encourage creativity and connection as per the local context. Similarly, practice of project assignment for co-curricular activities is found rarely and specially in pre basic level grade.

Scholarship distribution and management
Scholarship programs are a progressive provision introduced by the Nepal government in school education which create an equitable, accessible, and affluent educational environment that impacts children from disadvantages, marginalized and girls and the broader society. The information received via School Score Card process across 21 public schools discloses that students from Dalit, economically disadvantaged families, and those with outstanding academic achievements, are receiving annual scholarships NPR 400. The disbursed scholarship is provided in cash and handed over to parents. While there is an irregular interval in timely communication with the community, it is usually distributed by June. However, parents have expressed a demand to increase the scholarship amount. There are also

practices of kind distribution of scholarship e.g. school uniforms as per the decision made by the School Management Committee. The record of scholarship distribution is not publicly disclosed by the majority of schools.

Availability of Textbooks

Community people's response that from this academic year textbook have been distributed by school first time which was not in past years. While assessing, it was shared by the parents' children and school that they have received the textbook without any pay for this.

Teachers' management and availability

Effective teacher management and availability as per government standard are pre-conditions for creating a quality educational environment in schools. This ensures and promotes quality teaching learning processes and rebuilds community trust. The trained and qualified teachers, efficient management, motivation, and commitment are key driving considerations to contribute to the overall success of and learning outcome of children in a public school.

Information received during School Score Card of 21 schools, insights gathered from parents, community members, and the school community disclose a reality where 50% of the required teachers' positions are still vacant. To address this gap, the schools have been managing such transition through hiring contract / temporary teachers to fulfill staffing requirements. The impact on quality delivery of public education is poor due to the shortage of adequately trained, motivated, and subject wise teachers in upper basic and secondary grade. In response to this human resource shortage, the school has been charging fees as an easy alternative. Thus, this does not comply with the constitutional provision of free and compulsory school education. Due to such underline causes, there are doubts in maintaining the desired educational standards due to limitations in teacher availability, low pay, and their required capacity.

Remedial / Recovery Classes

the provision of remedial classes is special initiative to offer extra effort and facilities to students facing leaning barriers and build quality learning environment for slow learners and back benchers. Key objectives of this initiative are to bridge learning gaps due to various causes and reinforcing essential skills. While assessing 21 schools, it has been observed that only 4 schools have operated extra or remedial classes for children or as per need of the children. In community discussion, parents and students were demanded remedial classes.

Day Meal Management Status

The objective of the day meal provision is to feed nutritious meals to students, promoting better health, increased school attendance, and improved their academic performance. This fiscal year, the government's provision of a day meal facility for students of ECD to grade 5 and meal allowance of NPR 15, which is considered insufficient. All 21 schools have implemented this support by either disbursing Rs 15 based on attendance or arranging meal facilities in in-school. But such provision was for up to grade 6 in the last fiscal year due to budget constraint.

In Palpa, parents are expressing worries about the diverse practices in schools. Some schools selected external vendor for food supply which is unhygienic and low nutritious value, some schools were provided cash based on the monitor of home cooked meal. These kinds of different practices have been observed, and concerns raised among parents.

Access and availability of sports materials

Schools are facing a shortage of sports materials; some students have access and to engage unsafe play during lunch breaks. Insufficient budget has led to student engagement in physical activities through sports being compromised. For instance, Singhabahini Basic School in Terahathum has received a budget of NPR 100,000 from the local government to purchase sports materials, but remaining schools have lack of adequate sports

materials in other schools. Parents were realised to demand fund for such heading from the local government to benefit all schools. Additionally, there is also a lack of safe playgrounds in schools.

Community Representative, Siraha:

"Before the year 2079, our school lacked quality education. Two teachers were doing their best, but two teachers were not enough to provide quality education to all children up to grade 5. Despite the teachers' best-efforts children were often left without guidance. Several children did have any homework assigned to them. The children used to get back their notebooks empty from school. After Nagar Swayasebar Municipality built two rooms and Dalit Jan Kalyan Youth Club supported a child-friendly environment by painting classrooms the school has significantly improved. Teachers have begun to come to school regularly. Now there is a teacher for all classes. The children are assigned homework and are completing it as well. The teaching in the school has really improved as well. Earlier, the boys and girls attending the school used to drink unsanitary water, but with the help of the Dalit Jan Kalyan Yuva Club, the students are now able to drink clean water. At first, after having lunch, they had to go to the pond to wash their hands and utensils, but now, with the help of the organization, sufficient water is being provided to the children for drinking and washing purposes. The toilet facilities have also been improved."

Physical Facilities and Infrastructure

In general, we observed that the selected schools did not have adequate classrooms and furniture for early childhood education and development (ECED) and other grades. Schools with a longer history of establishment verge to have adequate and better equipped and safe school buildings than those that were established later. It was observed that the ECED and early grade classrooms in the majority of schools have carpet flooring and floor sitting arrangement. However, in the schools that did not have adequate classrooms, it was found that the children in ECED were mostly combined with grade 1 students and taught together. Moreover, in cases of severe shortage of classrooms, we came across instances of children in ECED and early grades sitting on the verandah or in the open ground. Students from various grades reported that teaching would be affected during adverse weather conditions. The overall impression that we gathered was one of poor physical facilities.

Physical infrastructure, educational resources, digital learning resources are the enabling factors to meet the objective of quality and safe school education. While assessing these indicators it was observed that there is lack of well-equipped and adequate infrastructure, required furniture's, lack of bookshelves, proper carpeting, lack of dashboard, separate meeting hall for teachers, display boards and safe facilities,

The lack of availability of ICT lab and capacity deficit of teachers are key barriers to handling digital equipment e.g. uses computer, smart board, mobile phones for teaching learning. Similarly, limited schools have laptops but are not in use, require repairment. Lack of skilled teachers, available ICT equipment is not in effective use of technology. Traditional methods of limited schools are still in practice though there are facilities of ICT.

In Parsa district 3 schools have separate toilets for girls and boys and the availability of gender friendly toilets was satisfactory. But there is lack of disable friendly infrastructure which is essential for inclusive and promotion of equal access to education for diverse ability.

Female parent, Keling Basic School, Terhathum:
"I had not come to such a gathering in school. I did not even know when such an invitation was sent. There is a lot of work to be done in school. We must educate our own children. If we enroll them in urban areas, the expenses will be very high. Here, they have been able to study by eating home-made food. If we send them further the expenses will be even higher. Thus, we need to improve the school and the teaching quality. We are not able to teach our children properly, thus the responsibility lies on the teachers."

At the same time, many schools also lacked an enabling social environment free from all forms of discrimination and abuse. This contradicts the state rhetoric of an enabling physical and social environment that can promote learning in a physically safe environment without any discrimination and fear.

Regarding water and sanitation facilities in schools revealed an insufficient in comparison with students' ratio especially in hilly and mountain districts. There is lack of separate rest rooms for girls during menstruation and other possible health issues, lack of disposal of the sanitary pads that leads to irregularity on school attendance girls especially for the grade of upper basic and secondary level.

There were not any GBV cases reported so far indicating positive safety environment in schools however no school have mentioned the mandatory provision of gender focal person to address the specific concern of girls and boys except three schools of The Tehrathum where no focal person appointed as gender focal person.

From the perspective of safer schools, there are schools who are at high risk from landslides (Doti) and Tehrathum reported that are under risk of landslides. All the schools who mentioned that they are prone to disaster are located but no safety measures assess and adopted as safe school standard.

Subash Prasad Yadav, Principal, Bandevi Basic School:
"We did not know about School Score Card, the practice of keeping scores and indicators on governance, administration, quality education and physical infrastructure was a very informative for building the capacity of school stakeholders. After learning about the 6 major areas used for school measurement, we are encouraged to improve. The practice of school score card has helped us improve the quality of education we are delivering. All the teams promised to work together to eliminate the errors and weaknesses in our school. I am grateful to Divya Development Resource Center for the support given to our school and I look forward for their continued support."

EDUCATION FINANCING

While the absolute amount allocated to education has been increasing over the years, the percentage of budget allocated to education has been decreasing since FY 2009/10 and remains well below the country's commitment to allocate 20% of the budget for the education sector (Figure 6). What is worth noting is that the downward trend continued even after the promulgation of the federal constitution in 2015 that had for the first time explicitly stated the right to free and compulsory basic education and free secondary education as a fundamental right.

Figure: Public Financing for Education in Nepal
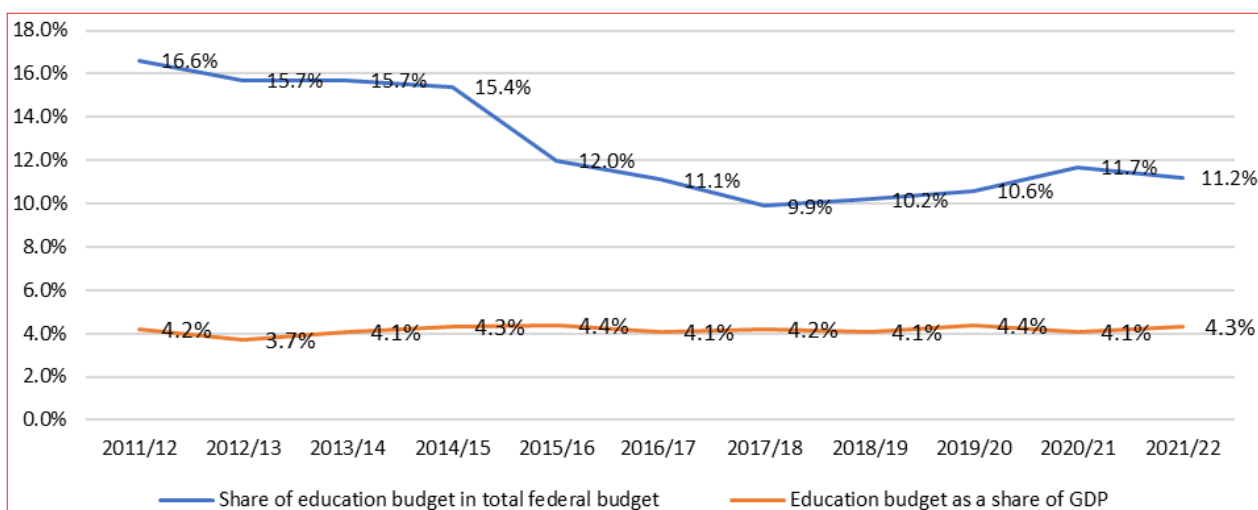
Financing plays a pivotal role in ensuring the provision of quality education and conducive learning environment. Globally, Nepal government has pledged to allocate at least 20% of the national budget to education, However, research conducted by ActionAid revealed that meeting SDG 4 would require 2.5 times more budget than the annual allocation in the education sector by Nepal government.

Notably, a large portion of the allocated budget for education is conditional grants to the local government. As significant portion specifically 75-80% is dedicated to teachers' salaries. This allocation ratio raises concerns about distribution of funds for needs for learning outcome and to come up with strategies to address the requirement of the budget at public schools.

After assessing 21 public schools, it has been observed that there are needs for additional resources that contributed to improved infrastructure, trained teachers, teacher recruitment. There is insufficient digital equipment for teaching learning improvement e.g. ICT lab, digital learning material, well equipped library etc. which are essential for improving quality learning. Teachers are involved in the budget-making process, but the allocated funds for schools are not disclosed to parents. Out of 21 schools except three Schools of Tehrathum, the majority of schools have not been supported adequately by local government for any additional budget into education sector besides the regular fund allocated by federal government. Schools do not have any internal sources of income to fill the financing gap of the schools for improvement of learning with quality. The majority of schools are charging fees in the heading of exams and other services. Out of 21 schools only 6 schools do not take any charges and are completely free. It found that the investment towards public education from local government is in low attention and limited allocation.

Latakalera school of Doti lacks internal resources and has received Rs 34,87,268 from local and provincial governments for fencing, wall construction, toilet facilities, and internet services. Shreeram School in Palpa relies on a trust fund for private sector teacher costs, which is insufficient at Rs 62,000. Singabahini School in Tehrathum received a local government grant of Rs 150,000 for fencing and water and sanitation support. Saraswati Adharbhut School in Siraha received Rs 16,00,000 from the local and provincial governments for meals and additional teachers, but only 50% of the construction work is completed.

WAY FORWARD:

- **Strengthening Local Education Governance:** It is crucial to mainstream the practice of accountability measures e.g. Social Audit, Complain handling mechanism, school dash board, appointment of information focal person, proper disclose of public notice in information board, periodic interface meeting among parents and school administration, effective role of school management committee and parent teachers association at schools to bear downward accountability and maintain transparency of school expenditure as provisioned in legal compliance.

- **Teachers' performance management and accountability:** Public school teachers need to be skilled, more accountable for student performance or deficiency thence because communities notice the role of the teachers as the most important for suitable efforts to improve education quality and learning outcome. Nevertheless, there is a more necessary aspect of quality which is the relevance and linkage of education to the daily life of the people. Prevailing efforts to initiate the local curriculum and other scope and possibilities of skills and abilities in school education need to be acquainted of this need for a applicable education.

- **Increase investment in Education:** Local Government need to prioritise and strong promise to increase allocations to education, and within it to school education, to fulfill the constitutional commitment towards free and quality school education. Such allocations need to be made towards qualified teachers' recruitment and their capacity development, improvement of safer school facilities and towards resilience, classroom renovation, enhancing quality learning environment e.g. WASH, libraries, educational materials, ICT infrastructure in the schools. Also, special attention for children stays behind out of school.

- **Strengthen Monitoring and Supervision of School:** Majority of local government education unit is understaffing and remains a problem, which has direct effect on the regularity and quality of school monitoring and supervision. Hence, the local government needs to have a monitoring and supervision policy to strengthen school monitoring system. Also, at the school level too, given that the SMC, PTA and the head teacher are the most important actors responsible for school governance and management, it is important to develop their capacity and expertise in these areas and to be able to perform the basic functions related to transparency and accountability towards the school community.

- **Local Education Plan and Programme:** As per given the school education authority on local governments for the delivery of school education, there is a need for technical support in capacity development of local governments in the areas of education policy, planning and budgeting, professional development support to schools and teachers, and improved use of data for additional need-based resource allocation.

- **Role of CSOs and CBOs with public schools:** the aim of this school score card process is a democratic accountability tools and led by community peoples to assess realities and together discuss about alternative for further improvement from both side school and community. This is citizen led accountability technique for frequent engagement and interface with the school community is expected to improve the areas of gaps. This process has led to immediate improvements in the school facilities, e.g. WASH, appointment of gender focal teacher, drinking water, availability of sport materials, teacher regularity and parents' attention towards their Childrens' progress and care at home. Thus, such effort from civic side is crucial to enhanced in improving the overall process of schooling in these communities.

ANNEX-1

Table I: Description of Schools

S. No.	Name of School	Location of the School	Province	Partner NGO
1	Bandevi Basic School	Paterwa Sugauli Rural Municipality-4, Bhatauda, Parsa	Madhesh	DDRC
2	Shree Nepal Rastriye Basic School	Paterwa Sugauli Rural Municipality-3, Rampur, Parsa		DDRC
3	Shree Nepal R.P. Basic School	Paterwa Sugauli Rural Municipality-5, Manohara, Parsa		DDRC
4	Shree Basic School	Lahan Municipality-22, Sisbani, Siraha		DJKYC
5	Saraswati Basic School	Lahan Municipality-13, Pakki tole, Siraha		DJKYC
6	Himalaya Secondary School	Dhangadimai Municipality-12, Simaltoki, Siraha		DJKYC
7	Adharbhut School	Dhangadimai Municipality-11, Nainpur, Siraha		DJKYC
8	Dalit Bhanubhagat Basic School	Lahan Municipality-24, Dadatol, Siraha		DJKYC
9	Shree Jalakaya Basic School	Aathrai Rural Municipality- 6, Chuhandada, Terhathum	Koshi	DS
10	Shree Keling Basic School	Aathrai Rural Municipality - 4, Iwah, Terhathum		DS
11	Ramsanskrit Secondary School	Aathrai Rural Municipality - 1, Sankranti Khelpur, Terhathum		DS
12	Singhabahini Basic School	Aathrai Rural Municipality - 2, Khamlalung, Terhathum		DS
13	Navjyoti Basic School	Rajapur Municipality - 2, Nayagaun, Bardiya	Lumbini	KMJS
14	Nepal Rastriya Pashupati Basic School	Rajapur Municipality - 1, Daulatpur, Bardiya		KMJS
15	Nepal Rastriya Secondary School	Rajapur Municipality -2, Nayagaun, Bardiya		KMJS
16	Karnadhar Secondary School	Mathagadi Rural Municipality-2, Rupse, Palpa		SRDCN
17	Shree Ram Secondary School	Mathagadi Rural Municipality -4, Jhudewa, Palpa		SRDCN
18	Shree Karnadhar Basic School	Bagnaskali Rural Municipality-4, Khanichap, Palpa		SRDCN
19	Latakalare Basic School	K.I. Singh Rural Municipality-6, Bhumirajmanda, Doti	Sudurpaschim	EDC
20	Mahendra Basic School	Dipayal Silgadi -5, Baghthata, Doti		EDC
21	Malika Basic School	Shikar Municipality-2, Mudegaun, Doti		EDC

17

Table II: Status of Schools

S. No.	Name of School	Class	Permission	Approval	Remarks
1	Bandevi Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
2	Shree Nepal Rastriye Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	ECD not Approved
3	Shree Nepal R.P. Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
4	Shree Jalakanya Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
5	Shree Keling Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
6	Ramsanskrit Secondary School	Till class 12	Approved	Approved	
7	Singhabahini Basic School	Till class 7	Approved	Approved	
8	Navjyoti Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
9	Nepal Rastriya Pashupati Basic School	Till class 6	Approved	Approved	
10	Nepal Rastriya Secondary School	Till class 10	Approved	Approved	
11	Karnadhar Secondary School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	Secondary
12	Shree Ram Secondary School	Till class 8	Approved	Approved	ECD has been Neither approved nor has Permission been granted
13	Shree Karnadhar Basic School	Till class 9	Approved	Approved	ECD not Approved
14	Shree Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
15	Saraswati Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
16	Himalaya Secondary School	Till class 10	Approved	Approved	
17	Adharbhut Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
18	Dalit Bhanubhagat Basic School	Till class 5	Approved	Approved	
19	Latakalare Basic School	Till class 8	Approved	Approved	
20	Mahendra Basic School	Till class 8	Approved	Approved	
21	Malika Basic School	Till class 8	Approved	Approved	

Table III: Indicators of the School Score Card

Heading	Indicators
Number of students according to Level	ECD
	Basic
	Secondary
Status of School	ECD
	Basic/Secondary
	School closing and opening time
Administrative	Regular attendance of staff
	Behaviour of employees towards students
	School service charges
Governance	Notice board
	Information officer
	Social audit
	Disclosure of expenses
	Formation of children club and meetings
	Formation and meeting
	Complain mechanism, management and effectiveness
	Monitoring and Evaluation Committee
Quality Education	Availability of learning and teaching materials
	Child-led extra and co-curricular activities
	Distribution and management of scholarships
	Availability of textbooks
	Arrangement and availability of teachers
	Co-curricular Extra class operation
	Library management and access
	Management of mid-day meals
	Availability of sports equipment
Physical Infrastructure	Facilitation and use of alternative teaching and learning technologies
	Availability of furniture
	Safe provision classrooms
	Availability and management of toilets and drinking water
Financial investment situation	Process of financial investment allocation
	Status of financial investment allocation
	Financial investment source
Child friendly environment	Management of student friendly washrooms
	Right to non-discrimination / equality
	Provision of first aid