



Nepal Citizens' Education Report 2022 (Summary)

Background, Objectives and Approach

This Citizen's Education Report (CER) 2022 is a description and documentation of the status of school education in Nepal's public schools from the lens of the Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) Framework developed by ActionAid. The PRS Framework focuses on ensuring 10 fundamental education rights through active engagement and empowerment of parents, students, teachers, communities and local civil society organisations in collectively monitoring and improving the quality of public education.

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.



This report is the third of its kind produced by ActionAid Nepal (AAN) since the first report in 2012 and second one in 2017. The overall aim of the report is to generate evidence on the extent to which Nepali children have been able to equitably access high quality education through public schools. In doing so, it also seeks to empower local people by enabling them to act as data collectors and analysers of the information related to the functioning of public schools through participatory action research. The data and information used for the report has been collected from 31 basic and schools from six districts in four provinces (Province 1, Madhesh Province, Lumbini Province and Sudur Paschim Province). The data collection and analysis for the individual school CERs has been done by different local partner civil society organizations of AAN through surveys with the school administration, teachers and students, and through focus group discussions with parents, school management committee (SMC) and parent-teacher association (PTA) members, and interviews with the local government officials. The national CER is a consolidation of all the individual school CERs. It is not a nationally representative survey and the results are not meant to be generalised across the public schools in the country but to be used to understand where gaps exist in the realisation of school education as a fundamental human right and what actions can be undertaken to further strengthen and promote public education.

Status of education rights in schools

- **Right to free education:** Students and households continue to pay various kinds of fees for their participation in the school even though the schools do not charge monthly tuition fees. This shows that basic education is not free; however, compared to the findings from the 2012 and 2017 CERs, it has become 'more free' in the sense that students from primary grades are not required to pay any regular fees apart from those raised through child clubs. At the upper basic and secondary levels, schools continue to raise various fees from students and their parents. Also, there is no evidence that the local governments have enforced compulsory education at the basic level despite the enactment of the Compulsory and Free Basic Education Act 2075 v.s. Almost 50% of the schools have hired teachers locally through school's internal resources, with a higher incidence of local teacher recruitment in the Tarai compared to the hills, and school fees are important revenue source for providing salary to such teachers. Recruitment of teachers by local governments has partly addressed teacher shortages faced by schools, and has also contributed to reduction of fees.
- **Right to a safe and enabling school environment:** there have been gradual improvements in the schools' overall physical environment including classrooms, WASH facilities, and learning resources. However, classrooms are inadequate for all grades, including ECED in 15% of schools, 63% of schools do not have libraries, 53% of schools do not have basic ICT facilities, 83% of schools do not have science laboratories, and 70% of schools do not have a separate room for teachers. In terms of WASH, nearly 46% schools do not have separate toilets for girls and

boys, 55% of schools do not have treated drinking water, and 94% do not have basic first aid facilities. The lack of the above basic physical and educational infrastructure is bound to have significant effects on the quality of learning inside schools. In terms of safe and non-discriminatory school environment, responses from teachers and school management suggest that discrimination based on gender, caste/ethnicity, disability, etc and various forms of physical and psychological abuses do not occur inside school premises. Yet, information collected from students suggests that discrimination occurs in schools mainly based on caste/ethnicity and disability, and to a lesser extent gender. Further, children from Dalit and Janajati communities reported higher frequency of experience of verbal and other forms of abuse as compared to children from Brahmin-Chhetri and Madheshi communities.

- **Right to participate in school governance:** The majority of schools have formed SMCs and PTAs as per the existing legal provision. However, in the majority of schools (23 out of 31) SMC and PTA members have not received any training or orientation on their responsibilities after becoming a member of the committee. Likewise, head teachers from 19 schools (out of 31) had not received any leadership training after their appointment as head teacher. All the schools have a child club that 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. In terms of transparency and accountability at the school level, only 20 schools have formulated annual plan and budget, only 21 have conducted parent assembly, 24 have conducted social audits, and 28 have conducted financial audits. Findings suggest that overall parental participation in school affairs is generally low and such participation is not geared towards educational activities. In terms of local government engagement with schools, the majority of schools acknowledged receiving some additional support on top of the federal conditional grants from the local governments for school physical facilities improvement (classrooms, toilets, drinking water, etc), teacher support, ICT equipment, furniture, and learning materials. However, nearly 33% of schools (10 out of 31) stated that the local government officials have not conducted any monitoring and supervision visits to the schools.
- **Right to good quality education, including the right to qualified and trained teachers:** Evidence suggests huge discrepancies in student teacher ratio (STR) across different local governments, districts and ecological belts, from a low STR of 7.0 in Palpa district to a high of 77.6 in Siraha district. The STR is higher in the Tarai compared to the hills and in secondary schools compared to basic schools. Further, only 20% of schools have stated that they have adequate teachers for different grades and subject. Of the total teachers, only 34.5% were permanent, and 37.4% were temporary and relief teachers. About 28% of the teachers were locally recruited (through the

schools' internal resources, by the local governments and through other local resources). The majority of teachers are qualified but nearly 43% have not received any continuous professional development training. Likewise, none of the teachers acknowledged having received any training in the past two years. Lecturing and question-answer/discussion were the two most common methods used by teachers. In the majority of classrooms, the walls were devoid of any educational materials, including those produced by students, and there was little evidence of the use of other student-centred and participatory methods such as demonstrations, group work, project work and community work.

Recommendations

- **Need for greater resource mobilisation:** There is an urgent and continued need to increase federal allocations to education, and within it to school education, to fulfill the state commitment towards free school education. Such allocations need to be made towards creation of new teacher positions, strengthening of school safety and resilience, supporting the direct and indirect costs of children likely remain out of school, and for providing inputs aimed at enhancing quality such as libraries, labs and ICT infrastructure in the schools. Likewise, additional resources need to be allocated for teachers' continuous professional support at the local level given that pre-federal institutional arrangements for teachers' professional support and supervision have been dismantled. Various studies indicate the need for greater domestic resource mobilisation to ensure education financing, and this also calls for more innovative approaches to domestic resource mobilisation such as progressive taxation and dedicated taxation for education.¹ This seems feasible given that households are already contributing more than 50% of national education financing.
- **Need for strengthening local governance of education:** according to the Education Sector Analysis conducted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in 2021, 54.4% of local governments did not have an education officer in 2020.² While this situation has improved since then with nearly 85% of the local governments with at least one

education officer in 2022 according to the data from the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development, understaffing and placement of underqualified staff particularly in rural municipalities remains a problem, which has immediate impact on the frequency and quality of school monitoring and supervision. Hence, the federal government needs to revisit its policies with respect to the staffing of local governments. Likewise, given the increasing responsibilities placed on local governments with respect to the delivery of school education, there is a need for supporting in capacity development of local governments in the areas of planning and budgeting, providing professional support to schools and teachers, and better use of data for additional need-based resource allocation. 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.

- **Need for continued civic engagement with public schooling:** As stated earlier, the aim of this CER is to not only ascertain the state of public schooling with respect to the cluster of education rights but also to support in its improvement in the process. In the whole process, schools have been visited multiple times by the researchers (members of various CSOs that have been closely associated with the schools), first to collect the data and information and later to share and disseminate the findings. This process of continual engagement with the school-community is expected to improve and rectify areas where gaps exist. Experience from previous CERs shows that this participatory action research process has led to improvements in the condition of toilets for the students, infrastructure for ECED and grade 1 students, regularity of students and teachers, and parents visiting schools on a more regular basis and inquiring about their children's progress. This points towards the need for an enhanced role for civil society organizations over a sustained period of time in improving the overall process of schooling in these communities.

1 ActionAid International. 2020. Who cares for the future: Finance gender responsive public services. Available online at: <https://actionaid.org/sites/default/files/publications/final%20who%20cares%20report.pdf>

2 MOEST. 2021. Nepal Education Sector Analysis. Kathmandu: Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.



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