

**IPP107**

01 February 2005

**Executive Summary**  
of  
**Vulnerable Community Development Plan**

*for*

*Nepal Education for All Programme  
(2004-2009)*

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*Submitted to*  
The World Bank  
DANIDA  
Ministry of Education and Sports

February 2004

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# Abbreviations

<b>BPE</b>	Basic and Primary Education
<b>BPEP</b>	Basic and Primary Education Programme
<b>CBS</b>	Central Bureau of Statistics
<b>CMIS</b>	Community Managed Information System
<b>CWIN</b>	Child Workers in Nepal
<b>DEO</b>	District Education Officer
<b>DoE</b>	Department of Education
<b>ECD</b>	Early Childhood Development
<b>EFA</b>	Education For All
<b>EMIS</b>	Education Management Information System
<b>FHP</b>	Feeder Hostel Programme
<b>FHs</b>	Feeder Hostels
<b>GER</b>	Gross Enrolment Ratio
<b>HDI</b>	Human Development Index/Indicator
<b>NHDR</b>	Nepal Human Development Report
<b>HMG/N</b>	His Majesty's Government, Nepal
<b>INGO</b>	International Non-Government Organisation
<b>IPDP</b>	Indigenous People Development Plan
<b>M &amp; E</b>	Monitoring and Evaluation
<b>MoES</b>	Ministry of Education and Sports
<b>MoU</b>	Memorandum of Understanding
<b>NCED</b>	National Centre for Educational Development
<b>NEFAP</b>	Nepal Education For All Programme
<b>NER</b>	Net Enrolment Ratio
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>OD</b>	Operational Directive
<b>PEB</b>	Programme Executive Board
<b>RC</b>	Resource Centre
<b>SNES</b>	Special Need Education Section
<b>SMC</b>	School Management Committee
<b>TSC</b>	Teacher Selection Committee
<b>VDC</b>	Village Development Committee
<b>VCDP</b>	Vulnerable Communities Development Plan

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This Vulnerable Community Development Plan (VCDP) addresses social exclusion in primary education and the effects and implications for vulnerable people for the Nepal Education for All Programme (NEFA) 2004-2009 as detailed in the EFA Core Document, 2003. The Core Document sets out a five-year plan with three primary objectives: (i) ensuring access and equity in primary education, (ii) enhancing quality and relevance of primary education, (iii) improving efficiency and institutional capacity

A significant proportion of the total population of Nepal are Dalits and indigenous people (recent estimates from the 2001 census suggest 16 percent Dalits and 36.4 percent indigenous population. Because they inhabit all regions and districts of Nepal covered by this broad national education project, a Vulnerable Communities Development Plan is an essential prerequisite for achieving the stated objective of social inclusion in primary education as set out in the NEFA Core Document. The central goal for this VCDP is to assess the capacity of the NEFA programme to offer inclusive education to meet the learning needs for all disadvantaged communities in Nepali society, including ethnic minorities, women, *Dalits* and indigenous people and linguistic minorities through equal access to educational resources as advanced in the Dakar Framework of Action of April 2000. The overall Project Development Objective of the EFA Core Document for Nepal is to strengthen Nepal's institutional capacity at national, district and school levels so as to deliver more efficient and better education services. The Social Development Objective is to foster genuinely inclusive education environment in Nepal.

This VCDP plan assesses NEFAP compliance with accepted safeguard policies, primarily The World Bank's Operational Directive (OD) 4.20 on Indigenous Peoples. This directive requires that vulnerable people benefit from development projects and that potentially adverse effects on these vulnerable communities resulting from Bank-assisted activities are at best completely avoided or at least mitigated.

**Social inclusion** is defined in the World Bank Social Analysis Sourcebook as '*the removal of institutional barriers and the enhancement of incentives to increase the access of diverse individuals and groups to development opportunities*' (as cited in Bennett 2003: 4). The EFA Core document presents inclusive education with the following definition: "*inclusive education is to 'incorporate learning needs of socially marginalized groups, children with disabilities, indigenous children and children living in difficult circumstances with special needs'*". The Ministry of Education and Sports further defines 'disadvantaged children' as *children with disability, girls, Dalit (23 disadvantaged groups) and other marginalized groups*<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

**2.1 International Policies:** Over the past few decades the international development agenda has witnessed rapid progress in policy reform on education. Following the Jomtien Meeting, the DAKAR Framework of Action, 2000 has called for a global commitment to achieve Education for All (EFA) goals and has inclusive education as a core priority. Other international instruments have together provided a sound framework of rights and equity for all women and children and other vulnerable groups. Nepal has been signatory to all these commitments and EFA has been a high priority since 1990.

**2.2 National policies:** the new Constitution of 1990 established Nepal as a much more inclusive state by explicitly describing it as "multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and democratic country". A number of key reforms have been introduced to strengthen the focus on equity and decentralisation most significantly

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In the Nepalese context this includes women, former "low caste" or Dalits and Indigenous Peoples or Janajati. The latter two groups especially fit the World Bank description in its Operational Directive.

i.e. "ethnic minorities, linguistic minorities, children from indigenous groups as per 2002 Act, working children, street children, conflict & calamity affected children, children from remote regions, poor children, children from parents in prisons, those rescued from trafficking and children from migrant parents." (EFA core document)

the *Local Self-Governance Act, 1999*. The *Tenth Five Year Plan* is the first national plan to have social inclusion as one of the four pillars of the Nepal Poverty Reduction Strategy and identifies inclusive education as a central approach to reduce gender, ethnic and caste related disparities. Decentralisation is presented as a core strategy with school education to be managed locally with increased community participation. The approval of the *7th Amendment of the Education Act, 2001* has provided formal rights to communities for the management of primary schools for improved responsiveness to issues of equity and access in primary education<sup>2</sup>. However, though community involvement is repeatedly stated as a key strategy for decentralization, further analysis and improved modalities is required to ensure that equal participation of women and children from disadvantaged families and ethnic minorities can really take place.

**2.2.1** Nepal continues to present poor improvement in the HDI for women in most sectors inspite of significant efforts at all levels to confront **gender based inequality** and discrimination. Nepal has been signatory to numerous International Conventions ( Platform for Action, CEDAW, CRC and and providing increasing policy reform and resources for women's development and gender mainstreaming. The Tenth Plan, building on the efforts of the ninth Plan has a specific focus on social inclusion that has created a strong and positive policy environment for empowerment of women and girls.

**2.2.2 Dalit communities** have not witnessed much change from being the most religiously, culturally, socially and economically oppressed population in Nepal. Two recent measures, the Local Self-Governance Act 1999 and the establishment of the National Dalit Commission aim to increase Dalit participation in governance with improved protection of rights. Despite this, and the signing of other national and international acts and conventions in particular CERD, the caste ideology has continued to have a strong influence on Nepalese society and Dalits continue to have the lowest social, economic and political status compared to other groups in Nepal.

**2.2.3** The Constitution of Nepal provides solid constitutional bedrock for indigenous peoples to have access to mother tongue language instruction (Articles 6<sup>3</sup> and 18). The Seventh Amendment to the Education Act of 1971 made further provisions for the medium of instruction in primary education in Nepal (up to Grade Five) to be in mother tongue. The Government formed the *National Committee for Formulating Cultural Policy and Programmes* in 1992 to conceive and realise concrete plans to help preserve and promote Nepalese culture. A bill for a 'three-language policy' – mother tongue, Nepali and an international language (likely English) has been presented in parliament.

### 3. Review of government education policy from an inclusion perspective: BPEP and NEFAP

The Basic Primary Education Programme (BPEP) implemented by MoES/DoE has been recognized for several significant achievements in improving primary education in Nepal. Specific amongst them are:

- Net Enrolment Rate increased from 69 percent in 1998 to 81 percent
- Cycle completion rate increased from 42 percent to 60 percent
- Gap between girls and boys in NER reduced to 11 percent
- Literacy rate reached 54 percent (men 65 percent and women 43 percent)
- Initiation of bottom up planning process with resources at the site of implementation and active involvement of stakeholders
- Decentralised programme implementation with more than 80 percent resources at district and sub district levels. (*EFA Core Document, Nov. 2003*)

After the successful completion of BPEP, the following lessons have been identified by MoES relating to social inclusion:

<sup>2</sup> School Management Committee (SMC) was made responsible for management of community schools at primary level

<sup>3</sup> Article 6 of Part 1 of the Nepal Constitution states: (1) The Nepali language in the Devanagari script is the language of the nation. The Nepali language shall be the official language; (2) All the languages spoken as the mother language in the various parts of Nepal are the national languages of Nepal.

- Moving towards a demand-driven approach
- Intensive social mobilisation for involving stakeholders in strategic decision processes
- Decentralisation of education to ensure equity, transparency, accountability and participation
- Classroom focused interventions for enhanced learning achievement
- Building partnership with stakeholders-parents, local bodies, I/NGOs, Community Based Organisations and private agencies
- School-based support and participatory monitoring

### 3.1.1 BPEP lessons as related to social exclusion

**3.1.1.1 Primary schools and teachers:** There are about 25,000 primary schools in Nepal. The number of public schools is much higher as compared to the private schools, which show a sharp decline since 1999, a consequence of the Maoist insurgency. There are just 25 percent women teachers in Nepal, an increase of four percent since 1996. Still, there has been very little change in the gender gap. Typically, the number of women teacher's decreases rapidly in lower secondary and secondary levels. As regards training, overall the situation is bleak with 85 percent teachers currently not fully trained. Data indicates that the districts with the lowest proportion of primary school women teachers in 2001 (e.g. Bajhang, Achham, and Baitadi), had very low NER values. Therefore it is essential to review the policy of recruiting one-woman teacher in primary school and implement effective strategies to recruit a minimum of two women teachers.

At present, there is no disaggregated data by ethnicity/caste for teachers. However, the recent data from 39 districts on caste/ethnic composition of Resource Persons and School Supervisors confirms the domination of the privileged castes (78.63 percent are Brahmins and Chhetris).

Recognising the poor results from previous centre driven plans, the Seventh Amendment has adopted a new approach, on the assumption that communities have the capacity to manage primary schools with effectiveness, efficiency and quality once given the ownership.

**3.1.1.2 Discrepancies in data on primary school education:** Data on primary education are collected and processed mainly through school based MoES system and household based CBS system. Unfortunately the two systems use different sources and apply different methodologies for data collection, and therefore produce different sets of data. There is also inconsistency in data reporting, which exists in the data among different variables over one year and same variables over the data of several years. These inconsistencies then force us to question all available data and raise concerns about data reflecting social inclusion issues, as they, especially, require sensitive collection and management.

**3.1.1.3 Special Needs Education Section:** Specific programmes for Special Needs Education Section offers a Special Education Scheme that provides for four types of disability: *Mental, Physical, Blind, and Deaf*.

The programme is run in regular schools and is presently in 56 districts where 309 classes are running. Students with disability are provided scholarship amounting to Rs. 1000 for hostel and food facility. The schools arrange one resource teacher and one maid for teaching and managing the children. The Resource Centres (RCs) are setup in regular schools and there is a provision of Rs. 50,000 per resource class. Residential scholarships are provided for the blind, deaf and mentally retarded.

**Current concerns for a culture of inclusion:** Inclusion has almost entirely been of those with disabilities, only a negligible number of those who are socially excluded. Incentives only provide support to children to gain access to schooling. Schools require to address the issues of exclusion and promote a more socially and academically inclusive culture. The education administrative system needs to demonstrate its commitment to social inclusion by including it as a criteria for excellence in guidelines and monitoring. As of now, the criteria for becoming a "model school" are purely related to academic achievements. At central level, within the DEO there appears to be inadequate conceptual clarity of what Inclusive Education entails and activities generally are linked with special education. A project approach by the stakeholders has reduced a sense of ownership and a learning process has been inadequate at central, district or at school levels about these issues.

**3.1.1.4 Feeder Hostel Programme:** The BPEP programme attempted to invest in girl students as future female teachers through the setting up of feeder hostels in remote areas. The findings of a recent survey show that the problems of the programme are associated with inefficient dissemination of information regarding FHs, unequal representation from target districts, insufficient budget for scholarships and hostel management, inadequate physical facilities (toilets, water, rooms and compound wall), little attention from DEO in terms of supervision, monitoring and evaluation. These issues were compounded by the lack of awareness of FH girls about their role to serve as primary school teachers especially in remote areas, unconditional enrolment of the girls into FHs, and absence of practice of appointing them as teachers immediately after graduation (*Literature Review on Studies on Girls and Women Education in Nepal, 2001*).

**3.1.1.5 Expenditure tracking survey:** The Expenditure Tracking Survey of Primary, Lower Secondary and Secondary Schools, carried out by the Office of the Financial Comptroller General in June 2002 found that the fund flow of the budget from the Ministry to the Department was extremely slow. The budget allocations made to schools were actually spent either by the Ministry or by the District Education Office. Government grants constituted about 70 per cent of the total annual income of the schools surveyed. This study confirms the urgent need to redesign current government structures and decision-making processes.

The study reported that schools were collecting fees, although illegal, from primary level students as well. Field visits during the social analysis confirmed this. In fact, several Dalit children, girls, parents and NGO staff identified this 'unofficial fees' as a primary cause for increase in drop out rates. Innovative strategies for accountability and transparency are necessary as at present only the DEO and the accountant are informed about the programme and the available budget. Community involvement, with specific focus on the inclusion of excluded groups, is essential for increasing transparency and accountability at local levels.

## **3.2 Review of EFA Core Document**

### **3.2.1 Strengths of the EFA Core Document**

- Policy and strategy framework responsive to EFA goals and vision for ensuring access and equity
- Targeted interventions for social inclusion of girls, Dalits, ethnic and linguistic minorities and other marginalised groups
- Decentralisation of school management through community schools
- Building partnerships with stakeholders
- Gender mainstreaming

**3.2.1.1 Strengths from gender and social exclusion aspects:** Eliminating gender disparity is highlighted by the guiding principles that emphasize gender mainstreaming and social inclusion as primary approaches. There are reference to issues of social equity and mitigating social cultural barriers in the principles and strategies for implementation. Specific reference to inclusion of women in key programme components, in particular the increased recruitment of female teachers, special provisions for inclusion of girls, gender sensitive curriculum, incentive schemes and partnerships for social mobilisation for awareness raising indicate positive recognition of existing disparities. There is commitment to follow the recommendations of the gender audit carried out by DoE that are presented in the 10-point action plan. The first comprehensive study on incentives and scholarships has been initiated. The commitment to establishing criteria and distribution mechanisms based on the findings, are positive steps towards the development of a more realistic and equitable design.

**3.2.1.2 Strengths for Dalit and Janajati and bi-lingual aspects:** Provision of scholarships for indigenous peoples becoming gradually compulsory, increase in special programmes for indigenous peoples and other disadvantaged groups and encouraging mother tongue education programmes are some strengths of the core document. Meeting the learning needs of all children including indigenous peoples and linguistic minorities using locally available materials, to produce educational materials and promote alternative and flexible schooling to address the needs of marginalised children are other excellent elements supportive of social inclusion. That 20 percent of curricular content is to be based

on local contexts to reflect diversity of local cultures is to be highly appreciated. The document has recognised the need for social mobilisation programmes through awareness raising and empowerment for marginalised groups, and the need to make the curriculum relevant to children's daily lives. It supports the shift from teacher-centred to child-centred teaching methods and promotes targeted programmes such as incentives and scholarships for marginalised groups. Extra resources are to be given to schools that increase enrolment of children from indigenous communities and priority is to be given to indigenous and disadvantaged communities when recruiting teachers.

### 3.2.2 Challenges

A number of challenges from a gender, Dalit and Janajati perspective, were identified:

**No compelling vision and a lack of conceptual clarity:** A review of the EFA Core Document from a gender and social inclusion perspective reveals that conceptual clarity on gender and mainstreaming and inclusive education is still lacking and a rights based approach is absent. There is no compelling vision of how to deliver on proposals, with no detailed discussion of the reasons that children from vulnerable communities are not attending school or how their poor attendance can be practically addressed.

**Unclear Modalities:** There are no details on the 'how' of the operationalisation despite frequent references to social mobilisation, community participation, collaboration and participatory planning to improve inclusion, but there is no insight into 'which' community members as language used throughout the document is gender-neutral. The EFA programme does not introduce specific mechanisms to address the extensive discrimination faced by Dalit children in school and classrooms, which requires specific procedures for punishment to teachers and others to ensure such impunity is confronted and stopped.

**Absence of or insufficient priority on women, Dalit, and Janajati representation at all management levels:** Inclusion of representatives from these vulnerable groups is minimal in school management structures. Women's representation is low. SMCs have almost no representation of men and none of women from the Dalit families. Research has indicated that high caste Brahmin men run most SMCs. Given that the role of SMCs is now key to effective management of community schools, and equity is a core goal, the document does not spell out a clear strategy to include representatives from marginalized communities. There are no indigenous people's representatives in Programme Executive Board (PEB). The involvement of representatives from indigenous communities in the management of education at a regional or community level is not addressed in the Core Document.

**Commitment to make primary education free is weak and non-committal:** No indication is provided of a time frame or results to ensure more girls, Dalit and Janajati children join school and complete their education. There is strong field evidence that primary education is not 'free' but schools demand sums of money frequently for various school activities. Girls suffer in particular.

**Participatory planning and evaluation:** *Participatory planning and evaluation appears mere rhetoric* as primary stakeholders, specifically women and children are not included in equal numbers and with equal status, only senior Government officials are proposed as members of the national committee. M&E design is typically top down with far too many layers in the management and reporting structures resulting in confusion, duplication and poor accountability.

**Absence of specific actions for improved incentives management for Dalits:** While several scholarship projects by government and donors are offered for Dalit children, it is well known that these do not reach many of the intended beneficiaries. The numbers of scholarships are far less than the number of students and the amount is inequitably distributed. There is rampant misuse with elite and higher caste authorities using funds for other purposes. Dalit parents have poor access to information on procedures and rights to incentives and do not claim their due.

**Insufficient emphasis on ethnic teachers speaking indigenous languages:** There is an insufficient emphasis on ethnic teachers speaking indigenous languages. The importance of local knowledge and ability in locally spoken languages, is not addressed. There is no mention of locally recruited or ethnic teachers and the figures and goals of local teachers coming from indigenous communities are not explicit enough.

**Lack of clarity on the difference between mother tongue and bilingual education:** A lack of clarity on the difference between mother tongue and bilingual education is demonstrated by the insufficient focus on precisely what kinds of linguistic policies may be suitable for Nepal's indigenous communities.

**Deeper institutional bias:** Indigenous peoples invariably come at the end of the list of disadvantaged communities indicating a deeper institutional bias against indigenous peoples and reluctance to acknowledge that they now make up around 35 percent of Nepal's total population. Their issues appear to be add-ons rather than being mainstreamed within overall policy directives.

**No explicit budget for the development of indigenous communities and ethnic languages:** There is no mention in the financial details of funding allocated to indigenous peoples and the provision for education in the mother tongue and no explicit mention of funding for extending bilingual education initiatives

### **3.2.3 Budget analysis**

Given the current rate of progress in enrolment in primary education, it is unlikely that Nepal will achieve universal access to primary education by 2015. If the existing trend continues, about 89 percent of all appropriate-age children will enjoy access to primary schooling in 2015. (*United Nations Country Team, Progress Report 2002: Millennium Development Goals, Nepal*). EFA (2004-09) has estimated a total budget of US\$ 815 million. Including estimated regular expenditures, the total government contribution for EFA would be US\$ 536 million (66 percent). The remaining US\$ 279 million (34 percent) are to be covered through donor support. Nearly one-third (32.3 percent) of the total budget is allocated for school-feeding programme.

Programmes expected to contribute directly to increase inclusive education and social access to schooling for the deprived have 5-8 percent e.g. scholarship (5 percent), non-formal/literacy (4 percent), women education (4 percent), free textbooks (8 percent). With more than one-third share, improving quality of education is given high priority. Life skills in the curriculum, is being introduced to contextualize the learning. Reducing illiteracy includes women literacy programme, out of school children programme, and skill training. Eliminating gender disparity provides scholarship and other incentives to girls and Dalits and EFA has received an allocation of 8 percent, an increase from the 5 percent in BPEP. Under the present budget scenario, this component shares about five percent in total BPE sector budget whereas in EFA, share of this component would be over eight percent in total (including agreed programmes). While the increase has to be appreciated, this is a very limited resource for addressing the EFA priority goal of reducing gender and social disparity.

## **2. THE PARAMETERS OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN NEPAL: BASELINE DATA ON WOMEN, DALIT, JANAJATI AND DISADVANTAGED GROUPS**

### **4.1 Barriers to social inclusion**

Barriers to social inclusion in Nepal include gender-based social stratification, which in turn must be placed in the prevailing ethnic, and caste based hierarchies that structure economic and social relationships in Nepal. This defines how the lives of girls and boys, men and women will be shaped according to the caste and ethnic groups they are born in, their religion and the location of their community and the rules and norms that these social structures define. These social structures govern all spheres of an individual's daily life. In education, children in Nepal are not able to attend school on account of four main barriers: *economic, physical/mental, geographical and social reasons*.

**4.1.1 Economic barriers:** Nepal is predominantly an agricultural country, drawing about 40 percent of its Gross Domestic Product from this sector with approximately 85 percent of its population still earning their living from farming. The annual per capita income of Nepal is now USD \$240 and around 42 percent of the population are estimated to be living in poverty. The majority of the population is rural-based, where poverty is at its worst, particularly in the mid-western and far-western regions of the country which are beset by the double problem of continuing food shortages and the ongoing impact of the State-Maoist conflict. Given the social stratification in Nepal, women

and girls are often the first victims of resource poor households. A woman's share in household assets and income (and even basic food security) is far more uncertain than a man's. Nepal Living Standard Survey data indicates that female-headed households are poorer than male-headed households.

The poverty level among the upper **social castes** (Newars, Brahmins and Yadavs) is generally much lower than that of the groups that are lower in the social ladder. The Dalits have poverty levels as high as 65-68 percent. They live five years less than the average non-Dalit Nepali citizen; collectively own less than one percent of farm land; and have an appallingly low literacy rate of 10 percent for men and 3.2 percent for women, compared to the national rate of over 50 percent.

For every HDI indicator, **Janajati** groups fall below the national average and well below that for the Brahmins, Chhetris and Newars but there is considerable variation in the welfare status of different Janajati groups. Among the more disadvantaged Janajati groups with large populations are the Tharu, Tamang and Kham Magars, along with 16 other smaller groups.

**4.1.2 Geographical barriers:** Nepal is one of the poorest and most mountainous countries in the world with great diversity in terrain that presents a range of challenges for access and infrastructure. Significant geographical variations mirror the existing income poverty differentials. The HDI for urban areas (0.616) far outstrips that for rural areas (0.446), because of far better access to services, resources and opportunities. Similarly, there are significant differences among ecological zones. The HDI for mountains (0.378) is well below that for the hills (0.51). The broad scattering of communities in the mountains sharply limits access to services and resources and severely disadvantages people who live there. Human development in the hills is higher than in the Terai (and the national average). The high concentration districts of Hill Dalits are Surkhet, Kailali and Kaski and Siraha, and Saptari for Terai Dalits. Gender based development indicators are low in almost all the districts with Kailali having a female literacy of merely 15.27 and male literacy of 55.75 and Saptari with a female literacy of 13.3 percent and male literacy at 53.3 percent (*NHDR 1998*). The central and eastern regions of the country have the highest proportion of indigenous peoples, but the data overwhelmingly indicates that Janajatis primarily occupy the hilly and mountainous regions of Nepal, and that these districts are often remote and accessible only by foot. All available data in Nepal suggest that poverty is more rampant, deeper and severe in rural (as compared to urban) areas.

**4.1.3 Barriers for children with special needs:** Children with disability are the most visible group, from amongst the MoES definition of disadvantaged people that have been targeted for special needs education and are amongst the most excluded from access to school and education. Disability, class and gender discrimination, extreme poverty, inadequate access to health care, lack of access to free education and social exclusion all contribute to the hardships faced by many children. The situation analysis of disability in Nepal has revealed that 68.2 percent of total disabled have no education (*HMG & UNICEF 2000*).

**4.1.4 Barriers caused by Maoist conflict:** For the present plan, and for the successful implementation of the NEFAP 2004-2009 programme, understanding the effects and implications of the Maoist insurgency on Nepal's education system is essential. Hundreds of schools in several districts have shut down due to damaged infrastructure, capture of the premises, fear, abduction or death of teachers and students. 3,000 teachers have been displaced from district schools and some 700 private schools targeted by the Maoists have closed down since 1996. Children have been traumatised and emotionally scarred by the effects of war and these are potentially more harmful in the long run than many physical injuries (*CWIN, 2003*).

The insurgency has had several consequences on the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Women and girls' safety, livelihood and status have been negatively impacted especially with a sharp rise in male migration. Dalits too have become a victim as both the conflicting parties and the general public treat them with suspicion. Figures indicate that every third guerrilla is a woman and that 70 percent of these women come from indigenous ethnic communities.

Given the far-reaching impact of the conflict it is unrealistic to speak of an 'inclusive education system for all' in the present climate where whole districts are without more than a few functioning schools. His Majesty's Government of Nepal's most immediate task must be to seek a speedy and

complete resolution to the present conflict and to depoliticise education and schools. Without this, EFA may be implemented in Kathmandu but will remain a distant dream in most of rural Nepal.

## 4.2 Social barriers for vulnerable groups

The primary focus in this analysis is to understand the various barriers for exclusion of children from school. Past research has concluded that social exclusion occurs due to inequality in:

- **Gender relations:** How the given socio- cultural structures in a particular community define the formal and informal rules for men and women, boys and girls for equal opportunity in decision-making, access, control over resources and participation and the resultant impact on their social status.
- **Caste:** How the social stratification by caste hierarchies prescribes the degree of exclusion and inclusion of specific caste groups and the discriminatory norms and practices that results between higher and lower castes.
- **Ethnicity:** How the norms and socially defined practices of dominant ethnic groups define the degree and form of discriminatory practices towards disadvantaged Janajatis
- **Language:** How communities speaking the dominant language have more possibility for inclusion and the resultant inequality between Nepali speaking people and other minority mother tongue languages.

**4.2.1 Social dimensions of gender-based inequality:** Though women of Nepal make up more than half the total population and are the backbone of Nepal's agrarian economy, their access to productive resources, education, information, training, and other opportunities is extremely limited. Their social status and privileges are comparatively much lower than of men. Nepal's development indicators starkly demonstrate this: Life expectancy of women is 52.4 as compared to 55.0 for men and adult literacy is only 42.8 percent for women and 65 percent for men; Political participation of women at all levels is negligible and women and girls continue to face gender based discrimination, violence and abuse. Amongst Dalits, it is estimated that more than 98 percent of the Dalit women live in the rural areas. Their literacy is much lower to that of Dalit men. Dalit women face triple discrimination in their daily lives -as a woman, as a Dalit, and as a Dalit woman. Women's position relative to men in the Tibeto-Burman **ethnic groups** and among the lower caste Hindus was much higher than among the dominant high-caste Indo-Aryan groups (Bennett 2003). **Janajati women** are in the paradoxical role of being at once oppressed by state and national forces yet relatively better off in terms of gender equality within their own communities as compared to upper caste Hindu women. But education and literacy are particularly low among Janajati women. Women and girls with **disabilities** in Nepalese society experience additional discrimination because of their disabilities as they are exposed to greater risk of physical and sexual abuse, denial of reproductive rights and reduced opportunity to enter marriage and family life. Apart from birth affected disabilities, women and girls in Nepal also become disabled due to discriminatory social and economic practices and issues of gender based violence.

**4.2.2 Social exclusion of girls in education:** Literacy rates for girls in rural areas are clearly lower than urban areas due to many factors such as poverty, distance from schools, household labour and early marriage. Factors responsible for dropout of girls are predominantly related to the family and community, the school and the environment within the underlying gender based inequality and the lower status of women and girls. During the past decade however, the proportion of girls' literacy rates in rural areas has increased far more than in urban areas.

Nepal's geographical variation and the absence of gender sensitive employment structures bring vast disparity in the presence of **women teachers** by location and number. Bajhang has the poorest teacher related indicators (percent of female teachers, percent of trained and percent of female trained teachers). Siraha has the lowest enrolment related indicators with high gender disparity and is receiving merely Rs. 12,000 for girls' scholarship, which would suffice for just ten girl students annually. The BPEP programme attempted to invest in girl students as future female teachers but failed to produce the required cadre of local female teachers as envisioned.

**4.2.3 Caste and ethnicity based social exclusion:** The Dalits, as historically disadvantaged groups, lag behind in their income and asset levels, in their education and other human development indicators – and in the extent to which they are represented in the power structure. There are 205

existing practices of caste-based discrimination, prevalent against the Dalits that have been documented. The national average Dalit literacy is only 23 percent (*12 percent Dalit women and 33 percent men*) and only 30 percent of Dalit children go to school (*Situational Analysis of Dalits in Nepal, 2002*). Findings indicate that Terai Dalits have lower literacy rate in comparison to their hill counterparts and targeted literacy programmes are yet to be developed. The key challenges for inclusion of Dalit children in primary schools has been a generalised approach that does not take into account the specific constraints facing different groups of Dalits, the scale of educational support is too limited, with insufficient scholarship funds. Investment has been scattered with poor application of lessons learned in mainstream programmes and poor delivery of benefits, inefficient information dissemination and extreme poverty of many Dalit communities.

**4.2.4 Social exclusion of Janajatis and linguistic minorities:** Nepal's indigenous peoples are disadvantaged, particularly regarding access to education, as most indigenous children do not speak Nepali as their mother tongue. The main causes of dropout among Janajati girls and boys and children from linguistic minority backgrounds are: the absence of a curriculum representative of the ethno-linguistic composition of the nation; very few Janajati teachers speaking local languages who have the trust of the students; linguistic barriers to school attendance and poverty of parents which leads children to seek work rather than education.

It is a widespread belief among ethnic activists and rural villagers from indigenous communities that despite the countless legal provisions respecting their fundamental rights, an institutional inertia regarding the complex and emotive issues of mother tongue education and access of minority communities to government and power are inhibiting the realisation and implementation of these rights. Indigenous people, particularly in rural areas are poorly serviced by infrastructure, have very limited access to legal provisions to defend their rights and are intimidated by the very institutions which are meant to represent and protect them.

**4.2.5 Social exclusion due to special needs:** Disability, class and gender discrimination, extreme poverty, inadequate access to health care, lack of access to free education and social exclusion - all contribute to the hard ships faced by many children with disabilities and their families in Nepal (*G Lansdown 2003*). Children with disability are amongst the most excluded from access to school and education. Only 2-3 percent of these children receive education in developing countries (*UNDP 1996*). Those who do go to school are mostly in special schools run by NGOs and the private sector. Mainstream schools and teachers are poorly equipped to include disabled children and provide the required learning environment that would enable their inclusion.

Challenges for children with disabilities are poor access to education, poor quality institutional care rather than community based holistic care, limited learning materials for children with special needs, no orientation to parents and teachers on social inclusion issues and lack of address to the psycho-social aspects of children with special needs.

### **4.3 Cumulative impact of varying types of social exclusion**

Data from districts located in development regions that have a high proportion of caste based social stratification or geographical barriers demonstrate how the presence of multiple layers of exclusion (e.g. income poor, Dalit, Janajati and disabled woman in a rural area, in a remote and difficult geographical location) can contribute to poor development and gender related indicators as compared to national indicators. – e.g. female literacy in Siraha is 26.8 percent and Jumla 16.7 when the national average is 42.4 percent; NER gender gap in Siraha is 46.5 when in Nepal it is 11.8.

**Conclusion:** Lessons learned from previous initiatives have enabled the EFA Core Document to set out a promising programme for more inclusive education, including targeted interventions for social inclusion of girls, Dalits, ethnic and linguistic minorities and other marginalised groups and decentralisation of school management through community schools. Despite considerable progress and positive developments, due to an absence of reliable data and an institutional reluctance on the part of earlier governments to implement reforms that fundamentally address structural inequality, a number of groups have been excluded from mainstream education policies in Nepal. The excluded groups, who face multiple levels of barriers, are predominantly indigenous peoples, occupational

castes, girls and women. To address the existing challenges is an essential prerequisite for achieving the stated objective of social inclusion in primary education as set out in the NEFA Core Document. Recommendations to support social inclusion are presented below.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

After several consultations with stakeholders,<sup>4</sup> local, national and international experts, and following a review of the primary and secondary literature, a set of strong recommendations have been devised for ways to guarantee the social inclusion and access of vulnerable people in Nepal's forthcoming *EFA* programme. The following set of recommendations offers targeted support and a framework for social change and transformation for various socially disadvantaged groups in order to improve social inclusion in primary education.

#### 5.1 National policies and directives

**5.1.1** The *Aide Memoire* of December 5, 2003, prepared by the *Appraisal Mission* for the EFA Programme, contains several important recommendations that are already under discussion. The social analysis team would like to reiterate four of these recommendations for the VCDP, as follows:

- (i) **Increasing non-salary recurrent budgets to schools through block grants:** We further recommend that the capacity building block grants be tied to specific measures to increase SMC accountability for social inclusion in primary schools with support from VDCs. Funds to VDCs/municipalities must also be tied to the grants made by them to community schools for social inclusion. Please see the discussion below on the conditionality for block grants.
- (ii) **Establishing two women teacher posts in every primary school:** We further recommend that **in areas with significant non-Nepali speaking population, at least one of these female teachers must speak the local language.** To implement this recommendation, regulations, special provisions and guidelines for two women teachers in every primary school needs to be developed. This can be done through MoES collaboration with the *Gender Affirmative Action Plan* currently being developed by the Ministry of General Administration (MOGA) and the high Level Committee on Affirmative Action recently established by the Prime Minister.
- (iii) **Restricting the role of the Teacher Service Commission (TSC):** The role of the TSC is to be limited to teacher licensing only, with *all future teacher appointments to be made by school management committees (SMCs)*. Additionally, support from local community groups is essential for the identification of suitable local women teachers, who are bilingual where necessary (*see 5.2.4 EMIS disaggregated data below*). Good governance practices for the fair and representative selection of teachers will require monitoring through tracking and social audits by community groups.
- (iv) **Gradually increase the role of the private sector in text book printing and distribution:** We also recommend that private sector philanthropic support be mobilised for: (i) educational radio broadcasts in local languages, (ii) establishing special relationship or "adoption" of local schools by corporate groups, and (iii) establish "twinning" arrangements whereby better off private schools offer support to local

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<sup>4</sup> On January 8, 2004, three focussed meetings were held with key national stakeholders from the activist communities representing women, *Janajatis* and *Dalits*. On January 9, representatives from these three groups participated in a high-level consultation with Government officials of the MoES/DoE along with other relevant ministries and I/NGOs to discuss inclusion issues and the proposed recommendations. From all the suggestions and comments made by the stakeholder groups, the most relevant and practical recommendations focused specifically on improving the learning experience of children are included here.

schools. The selection of private schools to be thus supported must be based on the review of their practices of social inclusion.

**5.1.2** Two further important recommendations have already been incorporated in the MoES Core Document and are awaiting implementation. The social analysis team recommends their immediate implementation:

- (i) **Implementation of Ten Action Points outlined in the Gender Audit of the Education Sector to integrate and mainstream gender:** The priority action points are: (i) establishing accountability of the relevant Government officials to follow up on the implementation of Ten Action Points at all levels, (ii) advocate strategic changes in structure and accountability of the *Women's Education Section* (WES) to enable the establishment of an effective *Gender Unit and Social Inclusion Unit*. The team further recommends a merging of the two sections, Special Needs Education Section and WES, so that this unit can then be accountable for gender, Dalit, Janajati and disabled mainstreaming in *all* sections of MoES and address issues of children with diverse needs rather than only focussing on programmes for one socially excluded group.

This unit could also be given the responsibility to develop a modality on **sanctions against caste, ethnic or gender discrimination in schools for teachers or students**. The MoES Monitoring and Inspection section has a grievance cell, which is the responsible unit to deal with such complaints after they are filed. **To enforce sanctions against discriminatory practices and behaviour the following steps are necessary:**

- initiate dialogue with teacher representatives, civil society, and members from National Women Commission, National Dalit Commission, Nepal Federation of Nationalities, National Human Rights Commission and National Federation of Disabled-Nepal and education staff to review and develop policies, directives and mechanisms for sanctions against discriminatory behaviour and practices by school authorities, teachers or students.
- inclusion of provisions in Education Rules and Regulations for measures against discriminatory behaviour and practices. (refer **5.2 Core recommendations for actions at the village level**)

An existing Community Support Programme with a budget head of NRs. 23 crore rewards schools, which have 30 percent Dalit enrolment and/or 50 percent girls. The reward is equivalent to the salary of one teacher. These practices need to be strengthened.

- (ii) **Curriculum revision:** This work is ongoing and the curriculum of Grades 1-12 is up for review in 2004. The revision and preparation of the new curriculum must be conducted in close consultation with NGOs and the Nepal Federation of Nationalities, National Dalit Commission, Women Commission and representative organisation of the disabled, to ensure that social inclusion aspects are integrated throughout the approach and text. It is essential to include positive images of women, Dalits and ethnic minorities and to acknowledge and celebrate the cultural, ethnic and religious diversity of Nepal throughout the curriculum. A major focus of this new curriculum will be the development of a module based on international and national best practices on the use of bilingual teaching to facilitate home to school transition and academic success for non-Nepali speaking children.

## 5.2 Core recommendations for actions at the village level<sup>5</sup>

The team conducting the social analysis have prepared a detailed set of recommendations in the draft Vulnerable Community Development Plan. The **four core recommendations** are presented here. However like the whole NEFA programme, our whole approach rests on the **development of a strong School Management Committee that is accountable to all members of the community served by the school – whether they be rich or poor, male or female and with a special commitment to include children from Dalit communities and children who do not speak Nepali as their mother tongue.** All of the recommendations below are premised on the NEFA commitment to building strong accountable SMCs with specific strategies for implementation modalities at the village level.

### 5.2.1 Local support to SMCS from community groups to implement NEFAP

Conditionalities for SMCs to receive capacity building block grants must be established i.e. grants should only be given once SMCs take the initiative to establish formal agreements (MoUs) with community-level women's and children's groups or other relevant local organisations. These community level groups need to be assessed based on criteria developed about their demonstrated work on social inclusion issues.

Building on the School Improvement Plan and the District Education Plan pilot projects in five districts, SMC's, in co-operation with VDCs/municipalities, must initiate partnerships with community groups to carry out the following actions:

- (i) **Increase social diversity in SMCs:** advocate for the increase of women, *Dalit* and ethnic minority representation in SMCs, preferably up to 50 percent. Membership of a minimum of two women must be ensured.
- (ii) **Social audit** to enable community members to be more informed on:
  - access of targeted children to resources, scholarships and incentives
  - discriminatory behaviour and practices by school authority, teachers and children
- (iii) **Documentation of local knowledge for curriculum development:**
  - collect and document local information on the history and culture of *Dalits*, and ethnic and linguistic minorities
  - develop a suitable curriculum for using local languages in the home-school transition
- (iv) **Identification of local women teachers:** assisting SMCs to identify and recruit local women teachers.
- (v) **Social mapping of school catchment area.**
- (vi) **Community Management Information System (CMIS):** tracking school absenteeism and drop out rates by gender, caste and ethnicity of children from socially marginalised communities
- (vii) **Advocacy against discriminatory practices:** raising awareness and advocacy to local communities on national policies and directives for sanctions against discriminatory behaviour and practices
- (viii) **Capacity building:** sensitising school authorities, teachers and children on social inclusion issues

### 5.2.2 Develop modalities to reduce discrimination

- (i) **Report and monitor sanctions against discriminatory practices and behaviour:** Social audit by community level groups would identify discriminatory behaviour and

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<sup>5</sup> See figure.

practices by school authorities, teachers and children in schools. These will be reported to the relevant grievance cell for action and then be monitored for implementation.

- (ii) **Honouring good practices in social inclusion:** acknowledge and honour schools, teachers, students and others who have demonstrated initiative and good practices in social inclusion by:
  - (iii)
    - developing criteria for good practices and informing SMCs on selection process
    - arranging for wide media coverage on honoured persons

#### **5.2.3 Home to school language transition for non-Nepali speaking children**

- (i) Local groups should receive modest support from block grants or from the *National Dalit Commission* or the *National Janajati Foundation* to enable them to collect and document information on the history and culture of socially marginalised groups and include this in the curriculum and text books
- (ii) By **employing bilingual women teachers from the local community**, school-going children attaining fluency in both their mother tongue and Nepali, which will naturally lead to an increased acceptance of ethnic cultures and minority languages in wider Nepali society. Pre-service and in-service training will have to be provided to these local teachers as per need depending on their qualifications. **Training in the module on "Using bilingual teaching to facilitate home to school transition and academic success for non-Nepali speaking children"** would be offered to these teachers in the local area by MoES approved NGOs.

#### **5.2.4 EMIS disaggregated data**

- (i) EMIS must collect data disaggregated by gender, disability, caste (Dalit/non-Dalit) and ethnicity (Janajati/non-Janajati). At the school level, there may be need for more detailed classification of categories. These can be aggregated into user –friendly key categories for the Flash Reports.
- (ii) Use CMIS data collected by local groups under MoU with SMCs for baseline information in the collection of disaggregated data (*see 5.2.1 (vi) above*)

***Figure: Prioritised Recommendations for Community Level Actions***



