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| Country Name | The Project for Basic Education Improvement in Support of the School Sector Reform in Nepal |
| Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal | |

I. Project Outline

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-------------------|--|
| Background | In response to The World Education Forum on Education for All (EFA) in 2000, the Government of Nepal implemented the “School Sector Reform Program” (SSRP: 2009-2015) aiming at achieving a primary education net enrolment ratio of 99% by the year 2015. The Government planned to provide free basic education and extended the period of compulsory education from five years to eight years. This extension required 55,344 additional classrooms nationwide, creating a big gap with the total demand for classrooms. At the same time, capacity of District Education Offices (DEOs) and the local communities represented by School Management Committees (SMCs) needed to be further developed to manage their schools in the most effective manner. | | |
| Objectives of the Project | To improve learning environment and expand access to basic education in the target area of Nepal by procuring construction materials for school physical facilities and furniture and constructing the facilities, as well as technical assistance for improvement of school management to maximize the effect of school construction, thereby contributing to the achievement of the SSRP. | | |
| Contents of the Project | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project Site: Districts of Sunsari, Sarlahi, Dhading, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Nawalparasi, Banke, and Kailali 2. Japanese side <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Provision of grant necessary for procurement of construction materials and furniture for 382 schools (764 classrooms) * The number of target schools (classrooms) was increased from 350 schools (700 classrooms) by additional procurement utilizing the remaining fund. (2) Technical assistance (soft component) for capacity development of DEOs and SMC members (in planning and implementation of School Improvement Plan (SIP), participatory school construction, etc.) and teachers (in providing quality education) 3. Nepalese side: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) (Works to be covered by the Government of Nepal) Receipt and storing of materials at depots; supervision, technical advice, and monitoring of the construction work by communities (2) (Works to be covered by the communities) Receipt of materials at the depot, transportation to site, and storage; collection of local materials and procurement of un-skilled labor; construction and maintenance of facilities (764 classrooms for 382 schools) | | |
| Project Period | E/N Date | February 24, 2012 | Completion Date September 5, 2015 (Submission of the report of confirmation survey of the facilities constructed with additional procurement) |
| | G/A Date | February 24, 2012 | |
| Project Cost | E/N Grant Limit / G/A Grant Limit: 930 million yen, Actual Grant Amount: 930 million yen | | |
| Executing Agency | Department of Education (DoE), Ministry of Education (MoE) * At the time of ex-post evaluation, MoE has been restructured to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the DoE has been restructured as Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD). | | |
| Contracted Agencies | Main Contractor(s): Marushin Shitaka Construction Co., Inc.; Mainawati Steel Industries Pvt., Ltd. Main Consultant(s): Fukuwatari & Architectural Consultants Ltd.; Save the Children Japan Agent: Japan International Cooperation System | | |

II. Result of the Evaluation

< Constraints on Evaluation >

- We could not separate the effects of the technical assistance of this project from those of other projects including the Support for Improvement of Primary School Management (SISM) Phase- 2 (JICA technical cooperation project, 2013-2018) and cooperation by other governmental and non-governmental development partners.

< Special Perspectives Considered in the Ex-Post Evaluation >

- The assumed impact of this project is not mentioned in the Ex-ante Evaluation Sheet. For this evaluation, we set the assumed impact as “Contribution to the achievement of the SSRP” based on the project objective mentioned in the Minutes of Discussions on April 5, 2011. Since the Minutes of Discussions does not clarify the meaning of “the achievement of the SSRP,” we define it as “To ensure equitable access to quality basic education for all children in 5-12 age group,” which is the objective of the Basic and Secondary Education Component of the SSRP.
- Indicator 2 for Quantitative Effects (Promotion rate/Survival Rate at the targeted school) was used to verify the assumed impact of this project rather than the direct outcome (effectiveness) since (a) this indicator is a logical consequence of the direct outcome of this project, namely, “to improve learning environment and expand access to basic education” and (b) survival rate is one of the key indicators of the SSRP. Since the project did not specify the baseline data and the target value at the time of the baseline survey, we verified the indicator by whether the average survival rate of Grade 5 of the target schools reached the target of the SSRP by the time of ex-post evaluation.
- Since Nepal’s education administration system is in transition due to restructuring for decentralization, it is misleading if we evaluate the institutional sustainability by just looking to the current status of staff assignment for education functions including operation and maintenance (O&M) of the classrooms constructed. Therefore, the prospects for the period after the restructuring is completed was incorporated in the judgment as much as possible.

1 Relevance

<Consistency with the Development Policy of Nepal at the Time of Ex-Ante and Ex-Post Evaluation>

At the time of ex-ante evaluation, this project was consistent with Nepal's development policies such as the SSRP as mentioned in "Background" above. At the time of ex-post evaluation, the constitution of Nepal (2015) and the "School Sector Development Plan" (2016-2022) envision to ensure equitable access to free and compulsory basic education with quality and for all children aged 5-12 years.

<Consistency with the Development Needs of Nepal at the Time of Ex-Ante and Ex-Post Evaluation >

At the time of the ex-ante evaluation, this project was consistent with the needs for additional classrooms and capacity development in school management as mentioned in "Background" above. The continuing needs is confirmed at the time of ex-post evaluation.

<Consistency with Japan's ODA Policy at the Time of Ex-Ante Evaluation>

The Japan's assistance policy for Nepal in 2011 held three priority areas, namely, (1) Poverty alleviation in rural regions, (2) Peace building and steady transition to democracy, and (3) Building of social infrastructure and institutions for balanced and sustainable economic growth.¹ In addition, the "Rolling Plan for Nepal" positioned the basic education sector as a development issue under (1) above.

<Evaluation Result>

In light of the above, the relevance of the project is high.

2 Effectiveness/Impact

<Effectiveness>

The project objective was achieved. Based on the field survey of 30 out of the 382 target schools sampled from each of the eight target districts, all the 764 classrooms constructed by the communities are assumed to be in use at the time of ex-post evaluation. The number of students who could become newly accommodated to these classrooms almost achieved the target despite of a decrease in enrollment in all target districts reflecting a recent increase in enrollment in private schools.

The effects of the technical assistance were observed as follows.

(1) Administrators: Then DEO officers enhanced participation in SMC for classroom construction under this project, improving transparency in terms of appropriate targeting and timely transfer of funds for material transportation and masons. After project completion, due to the devolution, most of the trained DEO officers were deployed at the municipality level (local government). The interviews with them and head teachers (HTs) of target schools found that they were well trained to support schools to prepare SIP and monitor the implementation of SIP very frequently.

(2) Teachers: About 25 HTs and 19 SMC chairs shared that teachers especially teaching primary level were trained on child-friendly teaching learning process. The classroom observation in some of the surveyed schools found that teaching and learning materials were well displayed on the wall and used. It was also found that there were enough desks and benches. Furthermore, child clubs prepared a code of conduct for the teacher, students and SMC. If teacher gives physical punishment to any students, they report it to the school management through child club. Similarly, if any student is bullying to other friend or any one student is looked down because of caste and religious they immediately report it to the school management.

(3) SMC: 100% of the visited schools had SMC. It was also found that every visited school conducted SMC meeting at least once in a month. While reviewing last three SMC meeting minutes, it was found that they discussed agenda about needs and conditions of physical facilities of the school and prepared requests to be submitted to the local government for support. Also, all visited schools had SIP. Most of HTs informed that they used it and updated it annually. It also found that among SMC members who had received training on SIP preparation during the project, majority are still in the SMC and involved in preparing and updating of SIP as needed as well as helping to implement SIP activities. HTs informed that they organized brief orientation to new members about SIP preparation even after the project. HTs and SMC chairperson of the visited schools informed that due to the technical assistance provided under the project by save the children and their partner NGOs, they could meet frequently, making minutes of meeting, timely collecting local materials, generating community contribution for timely completion of the classroom construction.

<Impact>

The project has partially contributed to the SSRP goal, i.e., equitable access to quality basic education for all children in 5-12 age group. The survival rate of the sampled target schools is slightly lower than the national SSRP target. While the survival rate may not correctly represent access to education,² HTs, some teachers and SMC chairs of the surveyed schools confirmed that because of big room size and enough space given by the project, students feel comfortable to stay in the classroom, which may have positively affected their continued and regular attendance. At the same time, it should also be noted that natural disasters (such as heavy floods in the Terai districts every year and the earthquake that hit Dhading district in 2015) negatively affected student attendance. In another respect, the Flash Report (DoE, 2013/14 and 2014/15) shows that the increased number of classrooms during the project period contributed to upgrading of schools from the lower basic (Grade 1-5) to the upper basic level (Grade 6-8). In addition, as mentioned above, the project has also contributed to enhanced quality of education at the target schools.

No negative impacts were reported during the field survey and in any reports. There was no land acquisition and resettlement for this project, either. As a positive impact on the gender aspect, girls' share at the surveyed schools is maintained at a slightly higher level than boys after the project (51-52% in 2016-2018). This project directly and indirectly contributed to raising parental awareness about importance of girl's education in the project districts according to the interviewed stakeholders. The physical facilities (classrooms and toilets) constructed by the project also contributed to attract girls in the school.

<Evaluation Result>

Therefore, the effectiveness/impact of the project is high.

Quantitative Effects

| Indicators | Baseline 2012 | Target 2018 | Actual 2018 | Actual 2019 |
|------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|

¹ ODA Country Data Book (2012)

² The consultant in charge of the technical assistance commented that the reliability of the survival rate depends on the consistency of data on enrollment and repeaters. During the field survey for this evaluation, it was realized that some underreporting of school data.

| | Baseline Year | 3 Years after Completion | 3 Years after Completion | 4 Years after Completion |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|--|
| Indicator 1: Number of additional students that can be newly accommodated ^(a) | - | 34,500 | 32,928 | 33,310 |
| Indicator 2: Promotion rate/Survival Rate at the targeted school (Alternative Indicator: Survival rate of Grade 5 at the target schools on average ^(b)) | (SSRP Baseline for Nepal 2008/09) 58% | (SSRP Target for Nepal 2015/16) 90% | N.A. | (Average of the sampled target schools) 88.3% |

Source: (a) Preparatory Survey Report; Estimation based on the field data of 19 target schools. (b) SSRP; Flash Report 2017/2018, DoE.

Note: For Indicator 1, the target value was estimated by multiplying the planned number of classrooms (80-100 in each district) by the number of students per classroom (45-50 in each district). The actual values were estimated by multiplying the total number of usable classrooms constructed by this project (764 classrooms) by the average number of students/classroom (43.1 in 2018 and 43.6 in 2019) calculated based on the data on the 19 out of the 30 sampled schools.

3 Efficiency

While the project cost was as planned, the project period exceeded the plan (ratio against the plan: 100% and 119%, respectively). The project period was extended due to the increase in the volume of the Outputs, i.e., additional procurement for the increased number of classrooms to be constructed. Based on the comparison between the planned and actual project period against the planned and actual quantity of the Outputs, it is concluded that the increase in the project period was not proportional to the increase in the Outputs. Therefore, the efficiency of the project is fair.

4 Sustainability

<Institutional Aspect>

Nepal's education administration is under restructuring, and the structures that existed during the project implementation period such as DoE (national level) and DEOs (district level) of the MoE have been restructured as CEHRD of the MoEST and Education Development and Coordination Unit (EDCU) of each district respectively. At the time of ex-post evaluation, all schools are under the education unit of each local government (municipality and rural municipality) under district. Nevertheless, all of them put education in a priority and SMC continues to be responsible for O&M of schools including the facilities constructed under this project. HTs and SMC chairs interviewed clearly shared that they were feeling better now as they received support immediately as the local government is nearby distance than the then DEO. They also opined that the bureaucratic process had been lengthy even to receive a very small support from DEO, but now no lengthy process at the municipal area. We can be optimistic that there would not be institutional problems in O&M of school facilities by SMC with support from local government. However, the recently restructured institutions have just started their functions and need to wait and see how it will be fully institutionalized.

<Technical Aspect>

As described in "Effectiveness/Impact" above, those who were trained under this project are utilizing their skills in school management and teaching, while many of the trained administrators belong to different organizations from those during the project implementation and the institutional structure is still in transition. Teachers are still at target schools and SMC chairs also in the community or as members of the respective SMCs. Previously DEOs used to organize training but now the education unit of each municipality is organizing training on school maintenance and management and facilitation for SIP preparation including O&M. They were found to be capable to provide training. Frequency of training could not be confirmed. Although stakeholders responded that training would be provided as per need and demands and availability of resources, there is slight uncertainty in terms of sufficiency under the restructured arrangement.

<Financial Aspect>

Necessary budget for school management and maintenance is provided from local government. Schools are allocating budget as per the national standard. Current allocated budget for O&M of the visited schools were found sufficient because there was no major damage seen in the school building and they just needed to repair some furniture, but there is slight uncertainty in the future

Average budget of Terai district schools visited (Unit: Rs)

| Purpose | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Government fund | | | |
| For expenditures stated in SIP (per student) | 265 | 270 | 277 |
| For teachers' salary (per teacher/month) | 22,000 | 22,500 | 24,000 |
| For rehabilitation of buildings (per teacher) | 14,000 | 14,000 | 15,000 |
| For procurement of educational materials (per teacher/year) | 300 | 300 | 350 |
| Others | | | |
| In come from local resources (leasing school's land, fish pond, sales of fruits, and contribution from Community Forestry Group etc.) ranging from approximately Rs. 30,000 to 300,000. | | | |

Source: Schools visited

Average budget of Hill district schools visited (Unit: Rs)

| Purpose | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
| Government fund | | | |
| For expenditures stated in SIP (per student) | 290 | 290 | 300 |
| For teachers' salary (per teacher/month) | 23,000 | 25,000 | 25,000 |
| For rehabilitation of buildings (per teacher) | 13,000 | 14,000 | 15,000 |
| For procurement of educational materials (Rs per teacher) | 300 | 330 | 350 |
| Others | | | |
| Student direct support, stationary, Tour, game, materials | 32,000 | 32,000 | 35,000 |

Source: Schools visited

<Current Status of Operation and Maintenance>

All visited schools included O&M plan in the SIP. It was also found that each SMC was maintaining the constructed facilities in good conditions in general as the materials used in the facility is not sophisticated and it can be replaced and repaired locally.

<Evaluation Result>

In light of the above, while the situation observed so far generally indicates a positive outlook, there is slight uncertainty in terms of the institutional, technical and financial aspects in the future. Therefore, the sustainability of the project effect is fair.

5 Summary of the Evaluation

The project achieved its objective of improving learning environment and expanding access to basic education in Nepal by constructing classrooms and enhancing the capacity of education officers, teachers and SMC, which has partially contributed to the SSRP goal. For the sustainability, although no major problems have been observed, there is slight uncertainty in the future. It is expected to maximize the

effect of the project by continuing regular monitoring and the promotion of the linkage with SMCs in the process of transition of educational administration. As for the efficiency, the project period exceeded the plan.

Considering all of the above points, this project is evaluated to be satisfactory.

III. Recommendations & Lessons Learned

Recommendations to Executing Agency:

- Field survey revealed that no need of immediate repair of school facilities constructed under the grand aid. However, school building needs timely attention by school and local government. Therefore, Local, Provincial and Federal Governments are recommended to continue close monitoring the future needs of Operation and Maintenance of school facilities including of the schools constructed under Japanese grant aid and continue allocating necessary budget. The education official of Local Government and Provincial Government also admitted the need of making plan and put priority for operating and maintenance of school facilities and effective utilization for better learning.
- After the restructuring of the DEO, Local Government, Education Development and Coordination Unit at District level and Social Development Ministry at Provincial level are responsible for coordination at different levels for school and education data management. During the transition period after new three-tier government system introduced, most of the education officials in Nepal were transferred among federal, province and local government. Consequently, some officials appointed to project targeted areas were still under familiarization process with a local education context and even basic education statistics were not very organized. As the functional administration is a crucial, though the situation is improving, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology is recommended to keep their eyes on local education administration so as to provide necessary guidance for a better school education.
- Yet, the field survey found SIP was well maintained by the school and those who were trained under this project were utilizing their skills in school management and teaching. It is recommended to all government layers to further institutionalize their practical knowledge to secure stable SIP linking with funding for strengthening realistic planning including operation and maintenance of school facilities and avoiding possible duplication of activities and equitable distribution of resources.

Lessons Learned for JICA:

- HTs and SMCs are aware about importance of operation and maintenance of school facilities constructed by the project in the target districts. They seemed to be committed to include such activity in SIP, continuously approaching to access necessary resources at different level including local government. The strategy of combining hardware and software components (technical assistance through NGOs) seems useful for making the project activities effective.
- The field survey and analysis of the EMIS data shows the decreasing trend of student enrollment in schools. There are a number of factors such as economic, urbanization and a kind of competition or conflict between public and private schools, in decreasing student's enrolment in public schools. It would be better if the Preparatory Survey could reasonably analyze the situation while targeting the anticipated additional number of students in public schools. Local government is also planning to merge schools where the number of students are too small. Even though serious situation or scenario which may cause less use of the classroom were not observed to date in the targeted schools, a careful attention to social economic set out in and around the school is necessary in any other similar projects in future.



A classroom with well displayed T/L materials in Kailali



Outside view of a school with head teacher in Kailali



Inside view of a classroom in Nawalparasi



A picture of donation board kept in school in Banke