

Education for All – Nepal
Review from a conflict
perspective

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Review of the Education For All (EFA) programme in Nepal was commissioned by the Finnish Embassy on behalf of the group of supporting donors and undertaken by a team of consultants contracted by International Alert. The intention is to examine the EFA programme in relation to conflict and the current political crisis. Over a period of a month the team reviewed the relevant literature, visited the Mid-West and East, and engaged in consultation with stakeholders in Nepal. Using a methodology based on the Strategic Conflict Assessment of DFID, factors relating to conflict have been addressed in three main categories- social, economic and political exclusion. A fourth category relates to security factors, or the immediate effects of violence. In accordance with the Terms of Reference the team has focused more on the impact of education on conflict rather than the impact of conflict on education.

The Review concludes that the design of the EFA programme is directly aimed at issues of exclusion and therefore is a highly appropriate response to conflict. Among the instruments available to donors it may be one of the most suitable at the current time. It reflects many of the DAC Principles for working in Fragile States. The Review recommends continued funding at current levels. There are, however, a number of serious deficiencies in implementation and donors could focus their efforts in relation to the EFA programme more sharply 'on' conflict.

The EFA programme has been relatively successful in distributing scholarships to *dalits* but the amount actually received is commonly half what was intended and very small in relation to the overall cost of education. Scholarships are nowhere near enough to compensate for the loss of labour when children are sent to school. With government staff rarely if ever visiting schools, ostensibly because of the conflict, there is ample scope for patronage especially in the case of scholarships for '50 percent of poorer girls'. In practice, resources are focused on the District towns while interior areas are neglected.

There has been considerable progress in primary-level enrolment, and there is now good representation of minorities and girls, but many classrooms are extremely overcrowded. The system for appointing and transferring teachers is inflexible, non-transparent and ineffective. There are now serious imbalances in the spread of teachers, with classes of over a hundred common in the *terai* (plains) while classes in hilly and mountain areas may typically have less than ten children.

School Management Committees have little alternative but to employ additional teachers, often paid for by contributions from parents and remunerated at far below the official rate. These additional hires count for 19 percent of all teachers. Teachers' unions are alienated by this spread of low-paid and informally-contracted employment. Overcrowding has also led communities to construct extra classrooms by raising funds locally; usually by imposing a levy per student. There is a risk that poorer children may be excluded, although these negative effects appear to be counteracted to a considerable extent by increasingly positive attitudes towards education.

Although School Management Committees constitute an important step towards decentralization, their budgets are so small that they have little freedom of choice. Virtually the entire budget has to be devoted to fixed costs. They prepare School Improvement Plans for presentation to the District Education Officer, but the process of decision-making is non-consultative and lacks transparency. The District Education Officers, for their part, complain that they are given arbitrary budgets by the government, without meaningful consultation or relationship to the needs of particular areas.

Problems of implementation reduce the programme's ability to address social and economic exclusion. But the conflict itself has moved into a more overtly political phase focused around political rather than social and economic exclusion. Many of the problems in EFA implementation arise not simply from resource constraints but from an almost complete lack of functioning consultative processes. The problem of overcrowding cannot be addressed because teachers have adamantly opposed transfers of staff and greater devolution of power, as in the case of Community Managed Schools. For their part, local communities feel that government is not sharing with them the cost of rising expectations. They note that officials rarely visit the schools and that when they are called to the District town it is to be talked at rather than discussed with.

There has been little real consultation with representative groups, notably teachers, communities and organisations concerned with the rights of minorities. The agenda within the EFA programme revolves around a narrow debate between donors, officials and a few academics. This has led to a focus on issues that are peripheral in relation to current causes of dissatisfaction and conflict. For example, groups representing *dalits* and *janjatis* are concerned about the issue of wider representation within the educational system rather than being assigned restricted roles relating to their ethnicity or social status.

Such groups call for attention to deeper problems. There is an increasing divide between government and private schools and a deep social division between those educated in Nepali language and those educated in English. This is not simply because English is increasingly a requirement for higher-paid employment. The education system delivers success to those who study in English and failure to those who study in Nepali. The success rate for children from private schools in the School Leaving Certificate examination is about 80 percent while the success rate for children from government schools is only 20 percent. In order to sit for the examination, children have to pass through ten years of schooling with internal examinations at each stage. The rate of repetition and drop-out is very high indeed, especially in Grade 1 with nearly half the children having to repeat the Grade or dropping out. Only 16 percent of children complete primary education and the number is further reduced in the five further secondary Grades before the SLC exam. Thus, less than one child in twenty who enters the state education system achieves the basic pass.

The reasons for failure in the SLC examination relate to deficiencies in government schools and in the examination system rather than any fault of the children. Most children from government schools faced with a practical test in science will inevitably fail if their school had no laboratory or scientific equipment.

They fail in English because it was not used regularly in the classroom, and the expected standard is now based more on the practice of private schools where English is the medium of instruction. If they fail in one subject, they fail the whole SLC. Such children have good reason to blame the system, and may leave school in a state of anger and frustration.

Why do failures of implementation persist? Few officials now send their children to government schools – a fifth of children now attend private schools and the proportion is increasing. Officials have no personal stake in the state education system. But a more fundamental problem is the distrust characterizing all current relations between officials and people. A more open and consultative style of government would undoubtedly improve matters. Better relationships could be established with teachers' unions and other representative groups. The issue of imbalance in teacher distribution could then be addressed.

Some observers consider that such fundamental changes will have to wait until the political crisis is resolved. Grievances are becoming intensely politicised and there is a tendency to want to blame government rather than solve problems. But this argument can be turned the other way. The education sector could play a leading role in conflict transformation by demonstrating consultative and inclusive behaviour and by creating forums for discussion about such pressing issues as privatization, English language education and examination failure.

Key Recommendations

Donors should move from working 'in' conflict to working 'on' conflict. This means that they should-

1. Address short-term deficiencies through collective action by the pooling group, notably-
 - Publish the TRSE monitoring reports
 - Develop a specific dialogue with teacher representatives about over crowding and community-managed schools
 - Encourage all political parties to develop policies on education
2. As a medium-term strategy orientate joint activity towards conflict transformation by adopting a set of principles covering such issues as information-sharing, consultation and accountability
3. Develop a long-term strategy based on encouraging and supporting a debate about changes in education, notably overcrowding, allocation of teachers, examination failure and language of instruction
4. Continue to fund the EFA programme at current levels
5. In addition, continue to support infrastructural improvement through NGOs but putting greater emphasis on coordination as a means of state-building

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASIP	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Project
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CERID	Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (Tribhuvan University)
CSP	Community Support Programme (DFID)
DEO	District Education Officer
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DoE	Department of Education
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ESAT	Education Sector Advisory Team
HMG/N	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
IA	International Alert
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
RRN	Rural Reconstruction Nepal
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
WFP	World Food Program

Introduction

This review was commissioned by the Embassy of Finland on behalf of the 'pooling partners' supporting the EFA programme in Nepal –Denmark, Finland, Norway, UK and the World Bank. Other funding stakeholders include ADB, JICA, WFP and UNICEF. The Ministry of Education and Sports and the Department of Education have also been involved in developing the Terms of Reference –see Annex 1.

International Alert, a UK-based agency focused on peacebuilding and with a programme in Nepal, was requested to manage the project. The review team comprised two international consultants supported by a local research assistant. Tony Vaux (Team Leader and primary author of this report) has over thirty years experience in development and has visited Nepal many times as a conflict adviser for DFID and UNDP. Professor Alan Smith holds the UNESCO Chair in education and conflict at the University of Ulster at Coleraine, Northern Ireland. Sirjana Subba, local consultant, has particular experience of issues relating to gender and indigenous peoples, and was particularly helpful in developing our understanding of those issues.

Before the work in Nepal, International Alert commissioned work on an analytical framework for understanding the conflict implications of implementing a Sector-Wide Approach (SWAp) on education in Nepal. This 'Background Paper and Analytical Framework' by Sarah Bayne (Bayne: 2005) summarizes recent work on SWAps, Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, aid effectiveness in Fragile States and the relationship between education and conflict. It is available from International Alert.

With a total of less than 60 days of consultant time, we were able to make two visits to the Districts despite intense political activity during the period of study. The first three-day visit was to the *terai* (plains) and hills of the mid-West (Banke, Bardiya and Surkhet Districts). At this point Smith returned to the UK while Subba and Vaux undertook a second visit was to the hilly regions of the East (Sankhuwasabha). For itinerary and list of persons consulted see Annex 2. After these visits a presentation of preliminary findings was made to stakeholders in Kathmandu on 2 February. This report seeks to incorporate feedback from that meeting.

Methodology. We have drawn heavily on the DFID methodology of Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA)¹. This uses a 'mapping' approach to analysing conflict rather than a 'questionnaire' and gives greater scope for treating each conflict as unique, in accordance with DAC Principles for Fragile States (Principle 1). SCA mapping is done by listing the factors relating to conflict and then dividing them into four categories- security, political, economic and social. These are further divided into different levels –international, national and local and put on a matrix or 'map'-

¹ DFID (2002)

Table 1: Conflict Factors

	Security	Political	Economic	Social
International				
National				
Local				

Analysts then seek to identify the key issues and focus attention, if possible, around a single area of the 'map' which seems to contain the central tension underlying conflict. Over the last few years many conflict assessments have been conducted in Nepal, including those by Tony Vaux for DFID and UNDP as well as other major analyses have been conducted by the EU and GTZ.

In this report we have not set out an explicit analysis along SCA lines but instead used the mapping technique as a background to clarify the relationship between various EFA issues and conflict. Although social and economic factors were important among the original causes of the conflict in Nepal, they have now been transformed into concerns around political exclusion and deepened by increasing violence (security factors). This process, which has important implications for the EFA programme, is analysed under the following section headings-

- Social and Economic Exclusion
- Political Exclusion
- Security Factors

The Impact of Conflict on Education. The escalation of conflict since 1996 has had considerable impacts on service delivery and the provision of education. This includes well-documented instances of damage to schools and attacks on District Education Offices; the use of school buildings by the Army and the Maoists); school closures and displacement of pupils and teachers; abduction of pupils for political indoctrination and recruitment; beatings and in extreme cases, killings of pupils, teachers and other personnel.²

These are alarming from a humanitarian perspective, but they are not the main focus of this review. Such instances are unfortunately consequences of the conflict, rather than fundamental causes. The initiative to promote schools as 'zones of peace' is an important response, although its success is likely to be dependent on closer dialogue and agreement between protagonists to the conflict rather, and this is ultimately related to the dynamics of broader peace negotiations. The Ministry has provided a paper that indicates that a budget line of Rs 4.6 million has been created within the EFA to support a range of measures in response to the impact of the conflict on education (for example, support to conflict-affected pupils and teachers through scholarships, counselling, deputing teachers to other schools). The paper suggests that a focal person at district level is required to monitor the impact of the conflict, but there seems little evidence of this being implemented in practice.

The Impact of Education on Conflict. The way in which education has been provided, historically and more recently as part of the EFA plan, may compound

² Department of Education information indicates that 5 education personnel, 11 pupils and 182 teachers have been killed up to the end of 2005.

inequalities and perceived (or real) injustices, so that resentments within and between parts of the population are increased. In such a situation, it could be argued that to continue certain patterns of educational administration and provision may be 'harmful' since it perpetuates the underlying causes for conflict, erodes confidence in government's capacity to provide basic services and creates an environment where it may be easier to mobilise support for violent insurgency.

It is extremely positive that so many children continue to be educated on a daily basis despite the conflict and further that significant progress has been in increasing the number of children enrolling in primary school.³ In such circumstances it would be difficult to argue that the overall EFA framework is 'doing harm' since maintenance of the education system undoubtedly contributes towards a certain degree of 'stability' despite a difficult and uncertain political environment. Indeed, the EFA framework has a number of helpful characteristics that are consistent with the DAC Principles in that the donor 'pooling' arrangement encourages better coordination; includes a strong commitment to strengthening government capacity for service delivery of education; and contains strategies to address exclusion. It is difficult to see in what circumstances donors would wish to withdraw from the EFA mechanism, although support for service delivery via government will always give rise to questions of legitimacy where government itself is perceived to be party to a conflict. Donors may be accused of strengthening unpopular, undemocratic or illegitimate regimes. The OECD-DAC principles suggest that channelling assistance through non-state agencies may be an alternative strategy in such situations⁴.

Within this overall caveat it is still worth examining the potential impact of the various elements of EFA on the dynamics of the conflict since, from a technical point of view, the manner of implementation may have a 'positive', 'relatively neutral' or 'negative' impact depending on its effect on access and inclusion in education. The donors' decision to commission this review will also be of wider interest beyond Nepal since it is one of the first to involve an education sector analysis from a conflict perspective that is grounded in a 'real life' example.

Some stakeholders have been surprised by our focus on the impact of education on conflict rather than the impact of conflict on education. Education is usually considered as a benign activity which is adversely affected by conflict. The problem, in this view, is simply to maintain education 'in' conflict. But in reality education is a sector of governance which reflects and demonstrates fundamental issues such as inequality and exclusion. Our previous work on education and conflict (Smith and Vaux: 2003) has focused on the 'two faces' of education (following Bush and Saltarelli: 2000). Education can be a tool by which conflicting parties pursue their ideologies. Consequently, education can also have a 'malign' face, causing conflict rather than reducing it. In the case of Nepal,

³ The TRSE (p.10) reported an overall increase of 12% in 2005 over the previous year, and an increase of 25% at Grade One in 2005 attributed mainly to the 'Welcome to School' enrolment campaign.

⁴ Vaux & Visman (2005) Service Delivery in Countries Emerging from Conflict, Report for DFID, Centre for International Co-operation and Security, Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, UK.

for example, the education system has been instrumental in the exclusion of certain social groups. The objective for donors should be to transform educational inputs into a means of resolving conflict.

There is relatively little that can be done about the influence of conflict on education whereas the influence of education on conflict can be adjusted through EFA planning. Statistics for abduction of teachers and school-children are readily available and constantly increasing. There are several detailed reports on the impact of conflict on children. We have referred to these in the Bibliography but, with the agreement of the commissioning party and International Alert, we have not repeated this data in the text but instead focused on the ability of education to influence or even transform conflict.

In reaching conclusions and recommendations we have drawn on the DAC 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States'. This set of principles, currently being piloted in nine countries including Nepal, represents the most widely accepted view of 'good practice' and are based on wide research⁵. In our conclusions we refer back to the DAC Principles in making overall judgments about the EFA programme.

Sources. Our analysis has been considerably strengthened by the timely publication of the Technical Review commissioned by the pooling donors (TRSE: 2005). Data in the Review from a sample of around 1,000 schools gathered by independent teams provides a valuable cross-reference to the 'Flash' reports produced by government (DoE: 2005a and 2005b). The latter are based on a bigger sample but suffer from internal inconsistencies. Accordingly, we have used the Technical Review as the primary source, while the 'Core Document' (MOES: 2003) is our primary source regarding the plans and intentions for the programme. For other sources see Bibliography -Annex 4.

Structure of the Report. After an introductory section the main analysis of the report is presented in sections covering social, economic and political exclusion followed by a summary of current security factors. The critical issues arising from this analysis are examined in Section Five before reaching conclusions and recommendations in Section Six.

⁵ OECD (2005)

Section One: Overview

1.1. The EFA programme in Nepal

The EFA programme in Nepal is based on earlier initiatives in the education sector (BPEP 1 and BPEP 11) and came into being when these were aligned with the global EFA programme following the Dakar Forum in 2000. The programme has been further oriented towards the Millennium Development Goals as a 'National Plan of Action'⁶. It is focused on six issues-

1. Early Child Development (ECD)
2. Access for disadvantaged groups to 'free and compulsory' education
3. Meeting the learning needs of all
4. Adult literacy
5. Eliminating gender disparities
6. Quality education

In the National Plan education in 'the mother tongue' is included as a seventh issue but in most documents and reports it is incorporated in the six priority areas listed above. We have followed the same practice in this review.

The EFA programme has separate budget lines from the national education programme. These are intended to provide additional flexible support around EFA objectives. In practice around two thirds of the EFA spending is tied to ongoing commitments, notably teachers' salaries and benefits⁷. Contributions from donors amount to 25 percent of the total EFA budget of \$160m per year. Around 75 percent of the programme goes directly for teachers' remuneration, corresponding approximately to the government input, while the donor input is nearly equal to the total of more flexible elements within the programme (\$45m per year). This core EFA budget is allocated mainly to district-based activities as follows-

Table 1: EFA fund allocations to districts %

Programme component	%
Expanding early childhood development	6
Ensuring access to all	21
Meeting the learning needs of all	1
Reducing illiteracy	2
Eliminating gender disparity	20
Improving all aspect of quality education	46
Operating cost and incremental salary	4
Total	100

Further inputs are made by non-pool partners including JICA which provides buildings for the schools within the overall EFA framework. The current phase is

⁶ HMGN (2003)

⁷ Figures in this section are from the TOR for this Review prepared by International Alert based on official documents

from 2004-2009 and the main outcomes anticipated are: increasing the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) of Primary Education from 81 to 96 percent; reducing the Dropout Rate from 39 to 10 percent at Grade One and increasing the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) of Early Childhood / Pre-Primary Classes from 13 to 51 percent by 2008.⁸ In brief there has been good progress on enrolment for primary education but dropout rates remain high and progress towards Early Child Development has been limited.

The EFA programme is focused on primary education while a similar programme supports secondary education –Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP). Donors have established an independent monitoring process called Technical Review of School Education (TRSE) covering both EFA and SESP.

1.2. Components of the EFA programme

1.2.1. Early Child Development (6 percent of funds). Although a focus on preparing children for primary education can be dated back to 1997, government funding of pre-schools is relatively new and the systems are undeveloped. The EFA programme envisages a rapid expansion, but there are severe resource constraints and organisational limitations. Few buildings have been provided and in many cases ECD classes double up with Grade 1 in primary schools. The ECD teachers, recruited informally by local communities, generally work for around 20 percent of the official pay for primary school teachers. Most such teachers view themselves either as volunteers or as job-seekers, using their experience in ECD as the basis for becoming fully-paid teachers later. Support from government officials has been very limited especially in remoter areas. Overall there is a serious skewing of ECDs towards better-off parts of the country⁹.

1.2.2. Access to All (21 percent). Despite the title of this budget-line, the main element is improving physical facilities (82 percent of component budget). Seventeen percent of the component budget is allocated to alternative schooling and inclusive education with the remainder for preparation of Village Education Plans. Although the general objective is to increase participation of *dalits* and other disadvantaged groups¹⁰, the scholarships for *dalit* children are included in the budget line for 'eliminating gender disparity' see below. Outside the EFA programme, school feeding programmes for disadvantaged groups and distribution of special foods as an incentive for poorer girls were also introduced, supported by WFP. In addition, government and NGOs have collaborated in a 'Welcome to School' programme which has provided further ad hoc incentives. As a result, there has been a rapid increase in primary enrolment over the last years but repetition and drop-out rates remain high, indicating dissatisfaction with the service being delivered.

1.2.3. Meeting the learning needs of all (1 percent). The focus here has been mainly on curriculum revision, cooperation with NGOs and CBOs, and lately also mainstreaming religious schools.

⁸ MOES (2003)

⁹ TRSE (2005) p8

¹⁰ MOES 2003 p7

1.2.4. Adult Literacy (2 percent). The focus has been on functional literacy for women. This is scarcely significant in scale and appears to be poorly aligned with the national literacy programme and other larger ventures in this field.

1.2.5. Eliminating gender disparity (20 percent). The focus has been on scholarships for *dalits* and poorer girls, developing a gender-sensitive curriculum and recruitment of more women teachers (currently around 25 percent in primary schools¹¹).

1.2.6. Quality education –block grants (46 percent). This large element in the EFA programme includes the regular block grant made available to schools (on a per capita basis) as well as responses to the School Improvement Plans. It also covers bonuses for well-performing schools and grants for schools that transfer to community management.

1.3. Conclusions

The four main areas of focus in the EFA Programme, and therefore in this review, are-

1. ECD centres
2. Scholarships
3. Decentralized school management
4. Block grants

The issue of minorities constitutes a cross-cutting issue relevant to conflict. In the following sections the EFA programme is examined under five headings including minorities. We examine them against Social and Economic Exclusion (Section Two), Political Exclusion (Section Three), and Security Factors (Section Four).

¹¹ MOES 2003 p12

Section Two: Social and Economic Exclusion

2.1. ECD Centres

ECD centres address exclusion in two ways. Firstly, they help prepare children for school both in respect of behaviour and language skills –a function that may be especially beneficial in the case of *dalits* and minorities. Secondly, the day-care provided by ECD centres enables mothers to work and allows elder siblings to attend school (or avoid having the younger child with them in class). This may be especially beneficial for poorer families where pressures to achieve immediate income are strongest. Figures indicate relatively high levels of enrolment in ECD classes from *dalit* families¹².

Although ‘pre-schools’ have been common in the private sector for some time, they are relatively new in the government sector and therefore the social effects are not yet entirely clear. There is an argument that the EFA programme is so under-funded that ECD centres simply divert scarce resources within the programme. But they do seem to meet a strong need in poorer and potentially excluded communities. ECD centres have been started spontaneously by *dalits* and Muslims, for example.

The key problem is that the rapid spread of ECD centres has been focused in the better-off areas with 47 percent of enrolment in the Central Development Region (Kathmandu) with the remainder spread (fairly evenly) over the other four Regions¹³. Within those other Regions enrolment is heavily focused around District towns. Generally, implementation seems to rest on local initiatives rather than the inputs of government officials. It appears that there is considerable demand for ECD centres from poorer groups but the EFA programme is skewed towards the better-off areas.

2.2. Scholarships

Scholarships for *dalits* are distributed all over Nepal. The TRSE report indicates that most eligible children receive support and the Review Team found no school which had not received an allocation for *dalit* children. There are few cases where *dalit* children have received nothing but the amounts are considerably less than the target budget of Rs 500 per child. The budget provides for only two thirds of the required amount¹⁴. At the District level the practice is to reduce the amount to Rs 350 per registered student and this may be further reduced at the level of the school because the number of children attending may be greater than officially registered. In most cases we found that the final amount distributed was about Rs 250. This might cover the necessary school notebooks and pencils but would not pay for uniforms or other direct costs let alone the ‘opportunity cost’ in terms of losing the child’s labour in the family.

¹² 23% above the proportion of total population in the Western Region according to TRSE (2005) p8

¹³ TRSE (2005) p8

¹⁴ ‘The government makes a provision to distribute 23,729 Dalit scholarships which is a big gap with the actual enrolment of 36,335 students for primary education’ TRSE (2005) p35

Although schools receiving the *dalit* scholarships are not supposed to charge fees, especially to *dalits*, the general practice is to charge significant fees to all students. One recent study suggests that the direct annual cost (including fees, uniforms and books) of sending a child to primary school is 819 and the indirect total cost including loss of the child's labour is Rs 4,607.¹⁵ By implication, scholarships provided under the EFA programme are unlikely to make any significant difference to the economics of sending a child to school and there are also some potentially negative social effects in singling out *dalits* for this benefit.

Similarly, scholarships for girls are distributed in most schools, with just a few cases where the school management has decided to allocate the fund for different purposes. But it is common to find that these scholarships are not targeted according to need, as intended, but according to other factors such as educational achievement and social connections. In some cases this reflects lack of direction given to the schools and in others 'capture' by elites.

In the schools there is some debate whether scholarships should be based on social exclusion, economic need or 'merit'. Some teachers and a number of officials and wealthier stakeholders were inclined to argue that scholarships never reached the children but were consumed by the parents, perhaps in an alcoholic spree. While such perceptions may be based purely on social stereotypes, they may to some extent spring from a sense of resentment or unfairness. A common argument (especially among *Bahun*s¹⁶) is that 'There are poor *Bahun*s and rich *dalits*'. Discrimination by caste, according to this view, is unrealistic. But given the history of discrimination against *dalits* the issue is not what the richer classes think but whether *dalits* are ready to cope with the consequences of being singled out for affirmative action. *Dalit* groups indicate that this is justified and they are willing to defend it. Enrolment of *dalit* children is still relatively low and it will take many years to reverse the effects of discrimination in the past. Scholarships for *dalits* appear to play a very valuable role.

In the aggregate, there is no serious problem with the enrolment of girls in primary schools; girls' enrolment enjoys a gender parity index of 90 and appears to be improving. However in some districts – in particular the Karnali Zone and in Eastern and Central Terai – girls' enrolment is still a serious problem and cause for concern. Often these districts also have the lowest ratios of female teachers.

We conclude that scholarships for *dalits* are a good way of targeting social exclusion and should at least be provided at the intended level. The balance between scholarships for *dalits* and poorer girls is an issue for wider social debate – an example of the need to bring educational issues to the fore in political debate. In relation to conflict it is known that a high proportion of *dalits* support the Maoists – a far higher proportion than among 'poorer girls'.

¹⁵ IIDS (2004). There is an extensive literature on the impact of scholarships, notably from CERID.

¹⁶ Referred to in India as Brahmins

2.3. Minorities

Some schools have included *janjati* children in the distribution of scholarships, although this is not intended under the EFA programme. The designation '*janjati*' includes a wide range of social and economic status, including some groups that are quite wealthy, such as the Newars. Although there are some *janjati* groups that are almost entirely poor it has proved difficult to find an acceptable formula. In the absence of a national 'schedule', as in India, schools find it hard to establish fair and transparent criteria.

The issue of education in minority languages is contentious. The EFA programme includes provision for translation of textbooks, and we understand from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) that textbooks are in an advanced state of preparation for seven out of the eleven major *janjati* languages. We found no example of such textbooks being distributed and representatives of the minorities¹⁷ expressed scepticism both about the degree of progress and about the fundamental intention. In their view, education in Nepali is better than education in the 'mother tongue'; it gives wider access to society and better chances of advancement.

The argument for separate language streams in education seems weak. Moreover, the TRSE report suggests that the presence of local teachers in schools has no significant impact on examination pass rates¹⁸. This could be because the effect is masked by other factors, but it may also suggest that the ability of the teacher to switch into a 'mother tongue' does not affect educational outcomes. The most useful role for the EFA programme may be to promote ECD centres, where *janjati* children have an ideal opportunity to align their language skills before starting primary school.

The aspirations of the *janjati* groups are a significant issue in the current conflict. There is indeed a danger that the current conflict could lead to secessionist tendencies but this is not yet the case. *Janjati* groups are clear that their objective is representation and political inclusion. Respect for *janjati* groups in the main curriculum and the attitude of teachers are important factors but there seems little reason to allocate resources to providing education in minority languages. This issue neatly illustrates a wider point; there is a great deal of focus on social and economic exclusion, but the real problems lie in lack of representation, or political exclusion.

2.4. Decentralized School Management

The EFA's emphasis on decentralization could open the way for local 'elite capture' especially in the absence of monitoring by government officials. But this is less of an issue than might be expected. One of the most significant trends in education in Nepal in the last few years is the rapid expansion of private schools. It is now estimated that as many as 20 percent of primary school children attend

¹⁷ Including Dr Om Gurung of NEFIN but it appears that he has expressed different views on other occasions. Our conclusions reflect the views of team member, Sirjana Subba.

¹⁸ Representation of *janjatis* was found to be a satisfactory 23% but only 2% of teachers are *dalits*..

private schools¹⁹. The Maoists initially targeted and closed private schools across the country but more recently the Maoists appear willing to tolerate private schools, possibly because the schools represent an important source of revenue. According to the views of stakeholders, practically all permanent government employees send their children to private school. This means that none of those operating the education system and developing its policies have a personal stake in the outcome.

If this trend continues we may expect local elites to disengage from government schools. This is not yet reflected in any significant change in the caste composition of SMCs, which remain dominated by the upper castes²⁰. The SMCs must have representation of *dalits* and women but this is usually a token weak person, as had long been the custom in other such bodies. It is not unusual to find that scholarships and other benefits get diverted to children of the SMC Chairman, but the opportunity for significant financial exploitation is so limited that the real elites are no longer interested. Far greater profit can be made by running a private school charging fees which, per student, often amount to more than half of a (permanent) teacher's salary.

Although fees charged in government schools are considerably less they are on the increase and may become a serious constraint to EFA objectives. The reason for fee-charging is not usually related to any malpractice by the school management but to under-resourcing by the government.²¹ Because of the shortage of teachers and huge imbalance in class sizes schools have often found it necessary to hire additional teachers.²² Most schools do this and it is not uncommon to find that half the teachers in a school have been hired locally on an informal basis. The cost of such teachers has to be passed on to the parents although in some cases local bodies such as Forest Users Groups and VDCs offer support.

Similarly, lack of classrooms is often such a critical problem that schools build their own, drawing donations as far as they can from local institutions and parents. The outcome is an annual charge based on the Grade of the pupil. In practice, payment is not optional nor is there any means testing. Every parent is expected to pay the same, although in some extreme cases the SMC will grant exemptions.

Since schools do this in order to meet minimum standards, notably the official Student-Teacher Ratio, the real problem is lack of government funding. The rhetoric of 'Free and Compulsory' education only makes sense if backed with the minimum necessary resources. This is not the case, and the burden falls most heavily on poorer families. The disparity between government statements and the reality undermines confidence in government and increase grievances.

Similarly, government responses have been less than helpful to schools started spontaneously by local communities. With current overcrowding, communities

¹⁹ The official figure in 2004 was 11% (MOES 2004).

²⁰ 56% Bahuns and Chhetris, 30% *janjati* and 4% *dalit* -TRSE (2005) p37

²¹ According to TRSE 2005, seven percent of school income came from fees, and TRSE 2006 reported income from fees at five percent.

²² 19 percent according to TRSE 2006

have started smaller ‘unaided’ schools and then applied for government registration. Several schools we visited in the *terai* had been dismayed to find that government charged Rs 50,000 for registration – a huge sum for a small community. The Department of Education later told us in Kathmandu that this charge had been dropped, but clearly the schools had not been told. Such lack of information aggravates problems unnecessarily.

Even when ‘unaided’ schools in the *terai* achieve such registration they are entitled to only one teacher per 60 students, compared with the norm of 50. This ‘double standard’ reflects a wider problem of arbitrary decision-making. SMCs frequently expressed lack of confidence in the decision-making process of the DEO and Ministry. They felt ill-informed and considered that resources were allocated mainly to those who were physically and metaphorically close to the DEO.

2.5. Block Grants

EFA funds are used to support the annual ‘block grant’ that schools receive on a capitation basis. In practice this is about Rs 300 per student and small primary schools might receive about Rs 30,000 per year for all costs other than teachers. A significant part of the fund usually has to be set aside for administration. The funds are commonly used to pay the salaries of additional teachers. The whole fund might typically pay for one teacher on the basis that such locally-employed teachers are generally paid less than half of the full primary teacher’s salary of Rs 4,900 per month. This means that funds are not available for necessary equipment, repairs and day-to-day maintenance –hence the poor state of many school buildings.

The reality is that schools cannot use ‘block grants’ for development as envisaged in the EFA. Although schools are assiduous in completing their School Improvement Plan, which is often a condition for release of the block grant, the additional funds available are so limited and so focused on schools around the district town that this is of no real significance for most primary schools in rural areas. Overall funding is below the level required to meet the most basic needs; this not only leads to poor conditions in the schools but also limits the feeling of self-governance.

Schools also receive textbooks free, financed under the EFA programme. Production was recently contracted out to private publishers in five districts on a pilot basis in order to improve efficiency. But the TRSE report indicates that there are still serious problems. 1.3 million text-books were not produced because of mistakes in budgeting²³. Many children failed to receive textbooks at the start of the school year with most waiting for up to a month and 40 percent later than two months into the school year²⁴. Such bureaucratic errors make nonsense of any attempt to fine-tune the EFA programme. They also undermine the chance of success in examinations for children in government schools compared with

²³ TRSE (2005) pxii

²⁴ TRSE (2005) p37

private schools, where textbooks (in English) purchased directly by the students present no problems of production or delay.

2.6. General Issues

On a quantitative basis there has been remarkable progress in Nepal's education system. In just three decades education has changed from being the preserve of elites to almost universal access through 28,000 schools spread across the country²⁵. The problem is no longer access but quality. Aspirations have risen and there are strong demands for equity and involvement underlying the current conflict and political crisis. The education system functions very much as a gift from a supposedly benevolent state; students should be grateful for what is provided. This is becoming less acceptable as a political contract.

With increasing enrolment rates, the immediate problem in government schools is not social or economic exclusion but overcrowding, especially in the *terai* and in the valley towns, such as Birendranagar in Surkhet District. In these schools it is common to find around a hundred students in a class, and there are reports of classes with two hundred children²⁶. In the hilly and mountain areas there is very little crowding and some schools are almost empty and there are cases where the number of teachers is higher than the number of students. As the TRSE report observes- *'At the national level for all 75 Districts the growth rate has gone up by 22% over the rate in 2004. However, in 13 Districts the enrolment at Grade One went down. Most of these Districts are from the mountain and hill.'*

This suggests an underlying process of migration; it makes sense that people are moving out of the contested interior areas to those that are more secure. However, the figures suggest that there is also an absolute increase in the numbers of children attending schools and this is felt even in the remoter areas so that to some extent the out-migration is compensated for by new entrants.

In the TRSE Review the ratio of students to teachers in primary schools was found to be 45:1 on average²⁷. This corresponds closely with national norms of 40, 45 and 50 respectively for the mountain, hills/valley and *terai* regions. This should not give rise to the extreme overcrowding that we witness today. The problem is that there is a wide imbalance across the country with very high student-teacher ratios in the *terai* and valleys and very low ratios in the mountain and hilly areas. As the TRSE report concludes- *'Distribution of teacher and other educational resources is not equitable'*.²⁸ This has given rise to calls for the government to move teachers more vigorously according to need. It is known that many of the teachers deployed in the mountain and hilly areas do not stay in their posts but instead draw salaries while living in Kathmandu.

²⁵ 91.4% of Nepalese households are within half an hour's walk from a primary school according to the National Living Standard Survey 2004.

²⁶ TRSE (2005) p11 gives the remarkable case of the Rajarshy Janak Secondary School, Dhanusha, where enrolment increased from 57 to 466 in the last year.

²⁷ TRSE (2005) p2

²⁸ TRSE (2005) p18.

The problem of moving teachers around is not simply a matter of issuing the necessary orders. Even if the numbers in the mountain and hill school are relatively low they still have to run the same number of classes in each school. Teachers often have to teach more than one class at once and although this practice ('multi-grading') has some possible benefits in terms of interaction between students at different levels, it would clearly be difficult with large numbers. Global studies indicate that teachers almost always oppose multi-grading because it is seen as an additional, complicated task and requires sophisticated skills in pedagogy and classroom management that are extremely difficult with large class sizes.²⁹ Although training for teachers in multi-grading is available in Nepal, there has been insufficient engagement with teachers and there is widespread resistance. Without agreement on this issue, teachers remain reluctant to cooperate with attempts to distribute teachers more rationally across the country. Government seems unable to negotiate its way forward on such issues.

The TRSE report indicates that there is an under representation of female teachers (30 percent), but suggests that this may improve as the number of girls enrolled in school has increased. The majority of teachers come from high castes and there are limited numbers of *Janajati* and *Dalit* teachers. The review suggests that this reflects the current levels of educational achievement within different groups and advocates affirmative measures to encourage under-represented groups to become teachers. However, these would appear to be longer term, systemic issues that are more likely to be resolved as a result of the eventual impact of EFA if it proves to be effective.

More immediate concerns relate to poor qualifications, low morale and lack of motivation amongst teachers, attributed in part to low salaries and late payments. There is also an issue about levels of teacher absenteeism, although it has been reported that the Maoists been effective in 'policing' this in the areas they control. Teachers have come under attack from both parties to the conflict and there are reports of teachers being tortured and killed, either for not complying with the demands of one side or on suspicion of supporting the other side. The National Teachers Association estimates that more than 160 teachers have been killed and 3,000 displaced by the armed conflict, with an inevitable impact on the provision of education. In areas under the CPN (Maoist) control, teachers are compelled to pay five to ten percent of their income to the Maoists as well as attend 'political education' sessions and teach the Maoist curriculum.

The government also seems cumbersome in dealing with relatively minor problems. Conflict and other factors have made many children change schools and also there has been a huge increase in the number of children wanting to enrol. To register they have needed a birth certificate which should be obtained from the VDC Secretary, but this person (a government appointee) was unlikely to live in the village and most of them lived in the District towns. It is expensive for parents to visit the town, especially for those who have migrated to distant places. Parents either suffered economic loss or withdrew their children – and this was most likely in the case of poorer families. As the TRSE Report points out

²⁹ See Little (2004) on the challenges of 'multi-grade teaching' and 'differentiated learning'.

this practice was directly contrary to the intention of the EFA programme³⁰. Officially, the birth certificate requirement was recently withdrawn but District Education Officers and parents are not aware of the change. Government could do a great deal more to make the system more flexible, properly communicating to districts and schools that birth certificates are no longer required, and helping families in the new circumstances.

But the most critical issue is the examination system. Children who enrol for school and receive support, such as it is, from the EFA programme are practically all destined to become social and economic 'failures'. Students have to contend with overcrowded class-rooms, lack of facilities, late arrival of textbooks and demoralised teachers. There is a very high rate of repetition³¹ and drop-out especially in the early years, with nearly half the children having to repeat Grade 1 or dropping out. Only 16 percent of children complete primary education and the number is further reduced in the five further secondary Grades before the SLC exam at Grade 10. With only 20 percent of those that sit the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) examination achieving a pass, the outcome is that the great majority of children struggle through the education system without any formal result.

What makes this a highly divisive issue in society is that more than 80 percent of children from private schools pass the examination. One major fault of the SLC examination is that it is a 'pass or fail' test with no consideration for any limitations in the government school system. Students must pass in every subject in order to receive the Certificate. But few government schools have adequate facilities for science and many students fail because they have never before conducted practical scientific experiments. Moreover, private schools use English as the language of instruction, whereas government schools teach in Nepali. The examination favours those who have greater practice in English –this is the major reason why students from government schools fail.

The rise of English as a prerequisite for social and economic inclusion is a major phenomenon in Nepal today, and one that the government education system has largely ignored. Unfortunately it is one of the unintended but negative consequences of the dominance of international aid as an 'industry' in Nepal. Employers, including government and many NGOs, stipulate English as a necessary qualification. Private schools have moved forward quickly to meet this need but government schools have been left behind. The result is a two-tier system, representing a deep social divide. The SMCs in some government schools and most of those that are fully devolved ('Community-managed' schools) have introduced English as a language of instruction. But the vast majority of government schools teach in Nepali while practically all private schools teach in English. EFA debates tend to circle around the issue of minority languages, whereas the really divisive issue is between Nepali and English.

In relation to conflict, this is a serious issue. Children who struggle through the government schools against all the odds and then fail their exams are likely to constitute an alienated and potentially aggressive class. Within the group that

³⁰ TRSE (2005) p43

³¹ i.e. failing the end of year exam and having to sit the same Grade again.

'fails', there are deeper forms of social and economic exclusion. Out of those who make it through to the SLC examination only two percent are *dalits*³², although they comprise 15% of the population.

2.7. Conclusions

Closer examination reveals that many of the problems lie in the way that things are done rather than what is done. The problem is not simply lack of resources but lack of vigour and commitment in implementation. Above all there is a lack of consultation and sense of sharing in addressing the issues. Teachers have been driven to stand up for their own rights rather than those of the children they educate. DEOs feel alienated from wider issues of education because they do not feel recognised by the authorities and so make little effort to go out and visit schools, relying on the ever-acceptable excuse of 'conflict' as a reason for staying in their offices. Schools are not told about changes, receive textbooks late, and have to allocate less than the stipulated amount for scholarships –all without explanation or support.

Meanwhile a deeper divide is emerging in society. The issue is not as much about caste, minorities and gender as might be expected. The issue is about children in government schools being educated to fail, while those with wealthier parents are practically guaranteed success. They look with envy at those in private schools. Where possible their parents will make huge sacrifices to get out of the government system but for most of them it is impossible. None of this is conducive to resolution of conflict.

³² TRSE (2005) p21

Section Three: Political Exclusion

Many of the issues examined from the perspective of social and economic exclusion also reflect problems of political exclusion. In this section we examine this phenomenon more explicitly before moving forward into an analysis of the impact of conflict on education in Section Four.

3.1. ECD Centres

Although the spread of ECD centres has been rapid, there has been little opportunity to debate the order of priorities or the way in which the ECDs are run. Given that they act as child-care centres enabling parents to work, as well as for pre-primary education, the timing and location of ECD centres is likely to be crucial. This lack of consultation, together with poor targeting of the resource (as noted in Section Two) reflects a style of governance that has become increasingly unacceptable and adds to the general feeling of political exclusion. Parents often have to make considerable financial sacrifices to pay for teachers, buildings and equipment. It is arguable that by committing to the concept and then not meeting expectations government invites a sense of grievance.

3.2. Scholarships

The spread of information about scholarships has been better than for other elements of the EFA programme. In particular, radio has been used to good effect. But the government has been reluctant to admit that the amounts distributed are much less than the entitlement. In fact there is a fundamental uncertainty about this. The Department of Education asserts that Rs 500 is the amount to be provided, but this is not stated in the School Grant Operation Guideline, leaving schools and DEOs in a state of uncertainty.³³ A further problem is the requirement that schools distribute scholarships on particular dates (Children's Day etc) even though funds had not reached the schools by that time. This is yet another example of what schools and parents perceive to be arbitrary and high-handed behaviour from a government that seems unwilling to listen or consult.

The area of greatest confusion is the scholarships for 'poorer' girls. Although officially the key criterion is poverty, the scholarships are very often awarded on a patronage system with the connivance of the DEO. Local elites take advantage of their dominance of SMCs and connections with the DEO, causing resentments among others. Sometimes an argument is made that the scholarships should be given according to 'merit'. This runs counter to the EFA's purpose of compensating for the disadvantages faced by poorer children. They are unlikely to be top of the class if they have to support their families through hard work outside school and lack a home environment conducive to success with home-

³³ According to the Embassy of Finland in Kathmandu, the Department of Education intended students to receive only Rs 350, but used the Rs 500 figure for budgeting purposes in recognition of an underestimation of eligible students. In reality, schools are not able to guarantee even Rs 350 and the actual amount is often Rs 300.

work. There is a gulf between the donors' concern about economic and social exclusion and the social norms of the Nepali elite, which are based on a form of competition in which they possess all the advantages. Affirmative action through scholarships is just about acceptable if paid for by foreign donors but arguably it would disappear without external support. The concept of positive discrimination, such as reservation of places at University and jobs, has been consistently rejected by the Supreme Court. Migrants are likely to notice that in India *dalits* enjoy not only affirmative action but positive discrimination; and this has enabled them to exert a wide influence through political channels. The contrast between Nepal and India, with its serious commitment to social equity and thriving economy, has become a key factor underlying the conflict -partly because poverty in Nepal forces people to migrate.

3.3. Minorities

Similarly, the Kathmandu discourse focuses on minority languages reflecting a 'divide and rule' approach. The minorities themselves are much more interested in political representation and rights. They may be prepared to accept the concept of Nepal as a nation but they expect to be able to negotiate their specific concerns. Similarly, they would prefer government to address the issue of overcrowding in schools rather than talk to them about the possibility of education in Tharu or Limbu languages.

As observed in Section 2.6., the deepest divide is between government and private schools or between Nepali and English education. This is much more important than the divide between Nepali and minority languages. Government schools struggling to teach in English medium lack support from the establishment.

3.4. Decentralized School Management

Government supports the concept of School Management Committees but in practice the SMCs are little different from Parent Teacher Associations, whose primary role is to raise additional funds. In many cases the two bodies have become the same.

Supervisors based in the DEO's office are supposed to undertake regular school visits and have to fulfil quotas but they generally achieve this by going to the same nearby schools again and again. When they do visit outlying schools their role is usually limited to checking attendance; no classroom support is given. Although government officers often cite conflict as the reason why they do not visit the schools, parents and teachers commonly observe that they never made such visits even before the conflict began. Teachers reported that there had never been an official visit to schools just a couple of hours walk from the road. Research indicates that supervisors are viewed as 'threatening' and only interested in recording and quantifying problems³⁴.

³⁴ Bhatta (2005) p25

More recently, 'Resource Persons' have been appointed from within the teaching profession and paid to visit other schools. These are usually teachers from the same locality who are given the task of supporting others. A 'Resource Centre' is established in each District, invariably in the District town, and teachers are invited to visit it for discussions and training. This sounds impressive but neither of these systems appears to work effectively. None of the schools we visited had seen the Resource Person and they expressed scepticism about the value of going to the Resource Centre.

The poor performance of this scheme may be a reflection of the generally low morale among teachers. This phenomenon is a major factor affecting the EFA and deserves further analysis. When schools were first established in Nepal they were in effect community schools created and run by local people –or to be more exact local elites. Government then stepped in to pay the teachers and set common standards. The political parties then exploited the link with government to pressurize teachers into becoming party workers. The teaching profession became highly politicised. Teachers not only lost their commitment to the local community but also engaged in party politics. What has happened more recently is that private schools have emerged in the image of the old local schools, catering to the needs of the better-off while the government schools have been left to address the needs of poorer families. When they can afford to do so, teachers send their own children to private schools.

Belatedly, the concept of Community-Managed Schools has been re-introduced into government policies. The idea is that government will continue to pay the teachers, but the C-M schools will otherwise have as much autonomy as possible. Teachers have opposed this because they fear that the C-M schools will stop paying them the full government salaries. With substantial numbers of teachers are on informal terms of employment, hired and paid through income sources other than government³⁵, and many paid as little as 25 percent of the official rate, this is a serious threat.

Teachers have used their political leverage and it appears that they have been able to influence the Maoists, who now have a national policy of closing such schools. There are many reported cases of the Maoists locking up the offices of the headmaster and administration as a warning of their opposition. This usually leads to school closure.

The World Bank has been a major proponent of the C-M school concept and it has been argued that Maoist opposition is aimed at the World Bank. But discussion with teachers' unions suggests that the root of the problem is lack of trust in government. Teachers simply do not believe the assurances they are given about protection of their rights and status. This lack of trust appears to arise from a long process of alienation. Teachers unions were not consulted in the development of the Operation Manual for Community-Managed schools³⁶. Officials regard the unions as politicized; unions complain that they are not consulted. This has become a vicious circle.

³⁵ TRSE 2006 estimates about 20 percent; teachers' unions estimate closer to 50 percent.

³⁶ Bhatta (2005) p21

It seems unlikely that the C-M school concept will advance until government takes a more positive attitude towards stakeholder representation, with teachers as one of the most critical elements. All this serves to show that a top-down style of education management is unlikely to work in the Nepali context. It easily becomes embroiled in party politics and the conflict. Dialogue and compromise is necessary on all sides; but this does not happen. Social competitiveness and self-interest is the norm. With rising expectations and no political channel through which such issues can be resolved, the result is continued conflict.

3.5. Block Grants

With almost negligible resources available from government for infrastructure development (classrooms, water supplies and toilets) some schools have been able to attract support from donors and NGOs. The quality and efficiency of such work is often higher than that done by government but there is a serious risk that the outcomes reflect specific interests and preferences rather than a national assessment of need. Donors and NGOs choose their own areas of operation according to priorities which are not subject to democratic influence and usually lack transparency. The effect is that one school may get a wonderful new classroom while the next does not. This may create grievances and put pressure on SMCs. The underlying effect can easily be to reduce the accountability of government. But this need not necessarily be the case. As the DAC Principles indicate- *'Demand for good governance from civil society is a vital component of a healthy state'*³⁷. But this presupposes that civil society accepts such a role. Unfortunately, civil society in Nepal represents more of a 'contractor' culture, willing to provide services if paid to do so but not usually developing 'demand'. This goes back to a more fundamental issue concerning the role of international aid; it has been too much focused on supplementing the activity of a weak state rather than supporting the democratic demand that would ultimately strengthen it. This is directly contrary to the DAC Principle 3- *'state-building is about depth not breadth'*.

JICA supports an infrastructure programme that is tied in to the EFA and follows government priorities, even though the construction work is managed directly by JICA. But the level of public accountability still depends on transparency and consultation by government. In practice government officers tend to focus on schools in government-controlled areas as these are the only places they visit. Other donors and NGOs may seek to compensate for this by going to remote areas but the overall result is patchy and may seem inexplicable to individual communities. If any such community attempted to assert a 'right' to support under the EFA programme or to 'demand' that government standards should be upheld they might accurately be told that much depends on the support of donors. Rather than being encouraged to create 'demand' they are being encouraged into acquiescence.

3.6. Conclusions

³⁷ OECD (2005) Principle 3: Focus on state-building as the central objective

There is a fundamental contradiction between the concept of basic education as a 'right', as envisaged in EFA, and the concept of education as a discretionary benefit, as currently in Nepal. The present system works on the conception that any benefit received by a child should be acknowledged with gratitude. If a scholarship is less than the statutory provision and insignificant in terms of incentives to attend school it must still be seen as a sign of a benevolent dispensation that had no obligation to do anything at all. Trust in such a benevolent dispensation has deteriorated sharply, partly because of the inability of the elite to maintain the semblance of democracy and partly because of rising expectations, accelerated by exposure of Nepalis to globalizing concepts. The outcome is that the current style of governance is unsustainable. Education is a good example of the resentments and outright opposition that develop in such a situation creating a vicious circle in which new grievances appear.

The EFA programme is a donor-driven agenda in both positive and negative senses. It encourages Nepal to tackle increasing problems of exclusion. But it also leaves government with the option of blaming donors for its own shortcomings. It is easy to believe from the media in Nepal that donors actually run the country – a falsehood that some donor officials are too eager to embrace. In so far as they support peripheral elements within the EFA and act as if the Ministry were accountable to donors alone they undermine the political contract. But by grouping together and instituting an independent process of monitoring, donors have now put themselves in a position to shift the focus towards accountability to the people. If they keep the monitoring reports to themselves and proceed only on the basis of closed-door discussions with government they may even reinforce current negative trends. If they publish the reports and open up the analysis to wider debate they will be strengthening the state in a far more profound sense. This would be a form of conflict transformation that would ultimately yield practical educational outcomes.

Section Four: Security Factors

Conflict arises where a predatory elite asserts its interests over all others and where the expectations of significant groups of people are out of balance with the reality. This has been neatly summarized as the interaction of ‘Greed and Grievance’³⁸. In many cases such conflict is kept within the bounds of political debate but in Nepal it has developed into violence, threatening the security of everyone including school-children. Whereas social, economic and political exclusion are underlying causes of conflict, insecurity is the consequence. This section addresses the tactical as opposed to strategic relationship between education and conflict. What approaches within the purview of the EFA programme comply with the DAC Principle of ‘Do No Harm’?³⁹

4.1. Zones of Peace

The impact of conflict (in this case meaning violence) on education in Nepal is widespread and serious. It includes-

- Abductions of children as recruits or for ‘training’
- Violence against teachers as government agents or (until recently) political representatives
- Fighting within school premises
- Maoist ‘taxation’ (at least 5 percent of teachers’ salaries) taken under threat
- Forcible closure of schools⁴⁰

A high profile response to this has been the campaign for schools to be ‘Zones of Peace’. This aim of this campaign (run by UNICEF, Save the Children and others) is clearly a very worthy one but the implication that all children up to school-leaving age should have no part in the political crisis of their country is unrealistic. What are children supposed to learn about in Social Studies classes if it bears no relationship to the current conflict? Can issues such as *dalit* exclusion and minority language be separated from the conflict? Is not the alienation of teachers a mark of serious problems of governance? These are issues that children confront in their daily lives.

Moreover, why should schools be exempt from the conflict rather than businesses and offices? Ideally the whole of Nepal would be a ‘zone of peace’ but this seems scarcely feasible; to separate out particular sectors is unworkable. The underlying principle seems to be that children should not be subjected to violence, which is of course a fundamental international principle, but the principle applies just as much to children at home as it does to children in schools.

³⁸ Coined by Paul Collier of the World Bank – see Berdal and Malone (eds) (2000)

³⁹ Principle 8. The phrase derives from the Hippocratic oath traditionally taken by doctors and has been developed into humanitarian discourse by Mary Anderson and others. See bibliography.

⁴⁰ It is estimated that 13% of school days are lost due to conflict or political reasons –TRSE (2005) p44

Government officers do not visit schools leading to lack of support, consultation and supervision. But this problem existed long before the conflict reached its current form; if suddenly there was an end to the violence, the underlying problems of low morale, inefficiency and poor governance would persist – perhaps leading back into violence again.

In practice, neither of the contending parties has shown much respect for the 'zones of peace' campaign. The Maoists continue to daub the walls of schools with slogans. Teachers are afraid to remove them and then come under threat from the security forces. Checkpoints are frequently located near schools and in the recent municipal elections schools were used as polling booths.

The role of schools in the midst of violent conflict does not appear to be seriously negotiable. But is it possible to conduct education in a way that reduces these risks? What factors are particularly crucial to the warring parties? Is there a role for the EFA programme?

4.2. Factors relating to the EFA programme

As noted at the outset, the theory behind the EFA programme is to reduce exclusion; this is also a significant part of the Maoist agenda. The scholarships for *dalits* and poorer girls reflect the interests of important Maoist constituencies. Moreover, work done on the curriculum under the EFA programme has resulted in elimination of provocative elements that existed in the past. Maoist leaders are reported to have examined the curriculum and underscored various points that they did not like but there are very few examples of direct interference. The recent introduction of photographs of the royal family at the front of textbooks caused a reaction from some Maoists. But this has been inconsistent. In some cases Maoists have insisted that the photographs are torn out; in others they have simply been ignored. Either way, the content and style of education does not seem to be a major issue.

Most of the violence appears to be collateral in the sense that it occurs against a teacher because of political connections or poor performance rather than as a direct assault on the education system. Schools literally get caught in the cross fire. There is no attempt to stop or change education through violence. Indeed, the Maoists have ensured that the education system continues to function.

In fact education is a major source of income for the Maoists and could be said to fuel the war. The Maoists impose a tax of between 5 and 25 percent on Nepal's 143,000 teachers and in addition extract substantial sums from the management of private schools⁴¹. But it would be absurd to argue that the EFA programme facilitates this process even though a substantial part of the funds are allocated for teachers' salaries. It is not as if there is an option to reduce the payments or close the schools.

The Maoists have shown little inclination to impose their own curriculum even where schools are firmly under their control. Despite much sensationalism in the

⁴¹ Centre for Investigative Journalism (2004) p100

press, it seems unlikely that the Maoists have developed a full educational curriculum. Although copies of Maoist schedules for military training have been published, sometimes under the title of ‘Maoist curriculum’⁴², these do not seem to be a substitute for normal education. High level statements indicate that the main focus of Maoist education is ‘to spread literacy among the masses’ and there is a strong emphasis on ‘practical and vocational education’⁴³. But this does not seem to be supported by practical action. The most common impact of Maoist activity is to ensure that teachers attend regularly, under threat of dire consequences. In Sankhuwasabha District there is reported to be a parallel Maoist ‘School Management Committee’ for each school. It seems that their purpose is to oversee the official committee and promote wider accountability.

Maoist opposition to Community Managed Schools has been the subject of much debate, largely because it seems surprising for the Maoists to oppose decentralization, as it would give them greater opportunities for local control. But the Maoist opposition seems to emanate from a high level⁴⁴ and may be motivated by the chance to take sides with the teacher unions against the government even if this might be contrary to local interests. In some cases local commanders have taken a different course and tolerated such schools, often because of strong support from the local community. This is symptomatic of a wider phenomenon. The Maoists are susceptible to strong pressure from local communities, whereas the security forces are not.

There is nothing within the specifics of the EFA programme that directly provokes violence against schools. Putting greater emphasis on vocational training and literacy because they are priorities according to Maoist policy statements might be worth consideration but such a change would be unlikely to yield any significant result especially if resources were taken away from other activities such as scholarships for *dalits*. But is there a case for focus on particular areas where the Maoists are most active?

4.3. Prioritising support in conflict-affected districts

There is a close correlation between areas of poor educational performance and areas of Maoist activity⁴⁵. This includes areas with excessively high numbers of students per class in the *terai* and areas of low literacy in the hilly and mountain regions. This leads to the question whether it might be appropriate to select a limited number out of the 75 Districts and then focus EFA resources in order to have maximum impact on conflict.

Although this has some theoretical attractions, there are a number of practical problems. Firstly such a plan would involve diversion of resources away from other districts which might then reasonably complain of being ‘excluded’. Since the EFA programme is based on national norms (such as the amount of scholarship per child) this would entail serious changes to the design of the

⁴² Nepal (2005) pp13-14

⁴³ Quoted from statement by a ‘sub-regional leader’ in Nepal (2005) p14

⁴⁴ See TRSE (2005) p3 for a copy of a Press Release prohibiting ‘localization of the local level schools’

⁴⁵ See Annex 2

programme and a complex process of handling public reactions which would probably (on the basis of past experience) be mismanaged. Moreover it is doubtful whether paying *dalit* children three times as much in certain districts would have significant outcomes in terms of conflict. Unless donors were prepared to put in massive additional resources the negatives would outweigh the positives – such a change would do harm.

A further objection is that the conflict is no longer simply about social and economic exclusion, nor even purely about the Maoist insurgency. It has become linked with a wider political crisis focused around governance. This would not be addressed by targeting those extremely deprived areas where the conflict began. The challenge of developing a strategy to restore confidence in governance in this area is crucially important and will require some creativity in terms of devising and implementing social policy. Initiatives will likely need to prioritise proper consultation, participation and accountability as key tools rather than targeted funding.

There is, however, a possibility that the introduction of ECD centres could be prioritised towards such areas. Given that only a quarter of the country has been covered and selection has to operate anyway because of budget constraints it would seem possible to ensure that new centres are located largely in areas most affected by conflict. But the correlation of violent and deprived areas is so close that such a strategy could be based simply on criteria of need. As we understand it there is indeed a plan to focus the development of ECDs in needy areas but the practice has been very different.

4.4. Education for peace

Is there a place for peace education in the schools? This is part of the ‘zones of peace’ campaign and arguably could be included within the EFA programme. A focus on peace in social studies classes sounds as if it could do no harm. Peace education might help children to address some of the conflicts in their own lives but if the issue is the exclusion of whole groups in society through unfair systems and barriers of language and qualification, such efforts are more likely to expose grievances than to address them. They will also become very difficult for teachers to handle in a non-political manner. In extreme cases the attempt could attract violent reactions.

It is common for the school curriculum to be perceived as an extremely powerful tool to promote particular political ideologies, religious practices or cultural values and traditions⁴⁶. The values and messages carried by the curriculum may be a reflection of both the underlying causes of a conflict and become a battleground that parties to the conflict try to control. There is some evidence of this in Nepal. Since the King took direct power, promising to quell the insurgency, his government announced plans to make education more 'nationalist' and according to a 2005 ICG report, there has been a request for the inclusion of royal photos in school text books. Considerable attention has also been given to reports of the Maoists imposing a curriculum of 'people's education' in areas under their control.

Whilst the Maoist curriculum receives a lot of attention in the press, the views we encountered suggest that it is less widespread than popular accounts suggest and there is a lack capacity to implement it.

According to Maoist leader Keshar Pahadi, "in the time of war, the schools are not only temples of learning; but are also the basic ground for military training and to learn the theory of war." Pahadi refuses to accept that schools should be zones of peace and aggressively condemns the idea for being counter-productive to the new people's movement. The Maoists seems determined to use the educational institutions to spread their message of revolution. They are trying to convert the existing schools into bases for the 'people's war' and develop model schools to teach Marxist-Leninism and Maoism in every area under their command. To do this they include the science of war as a compulsory subject and omit subjects like religion, the monarchy, Sanskrit, and moral education. A few teachers have been deputed to teach 'people's education' in some schools. The major constraints faced by the Maoist are in finding teachers who can teach Marxism and Maoism.

Nepal, K. (2005) *The Maoist Service Provision in Parts of Mid and Far West Nepal*, Center for Professional Journalism Studies, Kathmandu.

In other international contexts aspects of curriculum that have proved to be controversial include arrangements for language of instruction, teaching of history, content of textbooks⁴⁷. In Nepal the demand for mother tongue education from ethnic minorities seems to be impeded mainly by the difficulty in recruiting teachers, but all groups seem to recognise the need for education in the Nepali language as well. The increase in the number of private schools has also introduced the use of English as the language of instruction. In the schools we visited the teaching of History did not appear to address sensitive and

⁴⁶ Smith, A. (2005) Education in the 21st Century: Conflict, Reconstruction and Reconciliation, *Compare*, Vol. 36, No. 4, December 2005, pp. 373-391.

⁴⁶ Spink, J. (2005) Education and politics in Afghanistan: the importance of an education system in peacebuilding and reconstruction, *Journal of Peace Education*, 2(2), 195–207.

controversial issues and this would be consistent with the reluctance of teachers in other countries during times of conflict. There was some reference to controversy about the inclusion of pictures of the royal family in textbooks, but in general terms the issue seemed to be more about lack of availability of textbooks rather than heated battles over their contents. One example we encountered of the impact of the conflict on curriculum involved the cancellation of Physical Education (PE) because the Army based close to the school thought it looked too much like military training. Overall this suggests that the situation regarding curriculum is important to monitor but is not critical in terms of having a significant impact on the conflict in the short term, although this may change at a later stage.

4.5. Conclusions

The DAC Principle of 'Do No Harm' in relation to fragile states is rather different from its 'normal' conception in situations of violent conflict. In the 'normal' discourse the emphasis is on maintaining equality between competing interests so as not to inadvertently reward greed or increase grievances. This leads to calls for service delivery to be equally distributed. In fragile states the emphasis is on ensuring that no activity inadvertently undermines 'national institution-building'. This does not mean supporting the government at the expense of other parties; on the contrary the DAC Principles (see Principle 3 and footnote) emphasize that strength does not come from a monolithic state but from a pluralist society in which civil society has an increasing role to play as the state fails. The role of civil society is not to substitute for the state but to enhance its effectiveness through dialogue and activities that link the government to the people.

This leads to a strategic question whether Nepal should be treated as a country dominated by war or as a 'fragile state'? In our view the situation is not so dire that the donor community has to think in terms of humanitarian action and substitution for the state. There is still an opportunity to reduce violence and transform the conflict into a peaceful process of transition by working with civil society actors such as representative bodies and NGOs.

Section Five: Critical Issues

5.1. Governance in the education sector

Government has appointed no new permanent teachers for around 16 years. In the meanwhile all kinds of temporary and substitute arrangements have been made, all with the characteristic that the teachers receive considerably less than the official primary schools salary of Rs 4,900 per month plus pension and other benefits. About half the teachers today are not employed on the official basis. The new teachers in the ECD centres receive about Rs 1,200 per month. 'Temporary' teachers with many years experience commonly receive less than half the official rate. SMCs often recruit teachers for as little as they will accept. Teachers say they were not consulted about Community-Managed schools and now oppose the concept. All this inevitably leads to huge resentments and distrust -and the target is the government.

Teachers recognise that the problem is deeply systemic but they also note that DEOs often behave in an arbitrary way and that social contacts play a very important role in decisions about transfers. There is ample scope for bribery and corruption. Although the DEO has the final word, the Ministry will often interfere in such transfers at the behest of other interests. Without visiting schools the credibility of the DEO is low. His actions in teacher transfer are likely to create harsh resentments.

DEOs are themselves subject to a similar process, with rapid transfers often based on internal political considerations, DEOs themselves complain that they are not consulted about the allocation of funds to their District but simply receive a spread-sheet setting out what has been decided in Kathmandu. They have no flexibility to move funds within the budget and must spend the full amount within the financial year or else it will be returned. Despite the lack of resources, under-spending is still a significant feature of the EFA programme.

Most of these problems go back to the issue of arbitrary, inefficient and unaccountable governance. Problems are not resolved by consultation; democratic balances are lacking. Resentments build up and teachers oppose the steps that might seem obvious to outsiders such as transfer to overcrowded class-rooms or further decentralization. The system is characterized by distrust.

5.2. The role of Information

It has been widely observed that information is poorly handled within the education sector. As Bhatta concludes in a recent article- *Information sharing and dissemination, dialogue and consensus building have been the weakest aspects of educational policy making and implementation in Nepal.*⁴⁸ The TRSE Report records that only 53 percent of the sampled schools knew about the existence of

⁴⁸ Bhatta (2005) p29

the School Grants Operations Guidelines, which sets out their entitlements under the EFA programme⁴⁹. The underlying problem is a one-way relationship. The DEO decides which schools will get grants. He does not visit remote schools and such schools see little point in the information they receive or in giving it back. Non-reporting is a major reason for inconsistencies in the 'Flash' reports and probably leads to significant bias in the results.

Few parents are aware that the official rate for *dalit* scholarships is Rs 500; they become used to the idea that they should accept what they are given and that it is pointless to try to unravel why they may receive Rs 250 at best. They may come to suspect corruption on a wider scale than actually exists. The funds in the budget were never enough to support the target figure. Such issues lead to a culture of non-communication. New schools in the over-crowded *terai* struggle to raise funds for registration even though the government has abolished this charge several months ago. Decisions flow from the top, and the views and interests of those below are considered irrelevant. There is no consideration for the person affected; this constitutes a kind of violence in itself.

5.3. The EFA programme and DAC Principles

These problems are systemic and, with rising aspirations and relatively free media, lead to a crisis of governance in two forms. Firstly, attempts by non-elite groups to achieve better representation have been largely appropriated by the Maoists and have become heavily charged with violence. Secondly, there is a struggle between elite groups, including the leadership of the main political parties, and the monarchical establishment. Currently there is a tactical alliance between the Maoists and the political parties but whether this is sustainable remains to be seen. As noted in the previous Section, this combination of conflict and political crisis has given Nepal many of the qualities of a Fragile State.

At first sight the EFA programme appears well aligned to the DAC 'Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States'. Operating through budget support, it could be characterized as having 'state-building as the central objective' (Principle 3). But instead of being a fully flexible SWAp under government control, the EFA programme is closely tied to specific budgets. Donors are heavily involved in influencing the EFA programme and to some extent see it as their own. This means that government can also portray the programme as belonging to donors and thereby escape from accountability. Donors have introduced their own monitoring mechanism, which provides much better data than was coming from government but represents a relationship that is supervisory rather than supportive.

Although the pooling mechanism facilitates coordination in accordance with Principle 7, some donors have remained outside the pool, notably JICA⁵⁰, while the World Bank has played a strongly individual role, especially in support of community-managed schools. All these factors tend to alienate the EFA from the

⁴⁹ TRSE (2005) p37

⁵⁰ According to local representatives, JICA feels that it will achieve less public recognition in Japan if it merges its individual actions into such pooling arrangements.

engagement of civil society in Nepal. Organizations are not sure whether they are arguing with government or the donors, or possibly with a specific donor.

The DAC Principles urge donors to ‘Mix and sequence aid instruments to fit the context’ (Principle 9). This alludes to the possibility of delivering services through alternative channels such as NGOs but includes a caution against ‘long-term dependence on parallel, unsustainable structures’. Valuable work in support of EFA objectives is being done by organisations such as Save the Children Norway and the Community Support Programme (DFID). But in the context of Nepal the issue is not so much about sustainability as the risk that such activity might further undermine the accountability of government. Attached to a wider engagement with civil society and formal integration with the EFA programme this risk would be minimized. Without it the state becomes more fragile. The problem is that NGOs find it difficult to engage with a government that operates in such a top-down manner. Lengthy discussions with officials are likely to be set aside by ministerial decree.

As noted in Section Three the DAC Principle 3 (‘Do No Harm’) does not directly impinge on the debate about focusing EFA support on certain critical areas, but the mechanics of doing so would probably exacerbate perceptions of the EFA as an arbitrary, unaccountable and donor-driven process.

In conclusion, the DAC Principles encourage a broader view of state-building than simple support to government. They indicate the need to build pluralist and inclusive systems. The state responds to financial pressures from donors but is much less responsive to dialogue with civil society. Donors should consider ways to use their influence to support pluralism in society rather than particular interests of their own.

5.4. General Conclusions

Enrolment rates have been increasing rapidly over the last years, suggesting that the desire for education is rising. These high rates are most marked in the *terai* and valleys suggesting that these are the areas of highest aspiration and also the focus for substantial migration from the hilly and mountain areas. Opportunities for jobs in India and elsewhere may be helping to fuel this demand. Families are being left in ‘secure’ areas while men go off to work. But the education system is not adapting to these profound changes. For school children the immediate problem is overcrowding in the class rooms. This can be addressed to some extent by more rational deployment of teachers but this depends on developing better relationships with teachers and their representatives. For schools the problem is lack of information and dialogue. This is not simply a matter of materials but also of attitudes. With budget control and independent monitoring, donors have developed a powerful tool for imposing their influence on the EFA programme. But civil society remains detached, and in the long run this weakens the state.

Section Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Funding decisions

The design of the EFA programme has been tried and tested in other situations, and it relates directly to the Millennium Development Goals. It derives to a considerable extent from initiatives that have been tested in Nepal. There are specific positive points about the programme: scholarships (at a reduced level admittedly) are actually reaching the schools and School Management Committees are functioning, although not across the breadth of activity that had been envisaged.

Despite all its deficiencies the EFA programme, in association with coordinated inputs to education through non-government channels, represents a valid form of development aid at the present time. It is targeted towards the issue of exclusion which is a fundamental cause of political crisis and conflict. It is designed as a partnership between donors and government, and has the potential to develop into a broader dialogue with civil society. It has the long-term capacity to strengthen the state. If donors lose confidence in Nepal, the EFA would arguably be the last development programme to be cut.

The problems do not arise from any particular failings of EFA principles but rather a systemic weakness in governance at the present time. This is likely to get worse in the short term as alienation from government becomes more politicised.

6.2. Conflict Transformation

Conflict situations lead to parallel sets of discourse. The government discourse in relation to the EFA programme is that officials make the best choices they can within the constraints of policy and resources. There is little point consulting other people because there are few choices to be made and many of the stakeholders are politicised. With time, and an end to the conflict, things will get better.....

The discourse among those who are alienated, some of whom may go to the extreme of supporting the Maoists, is that government allocates resources according to its own vested interests and officials waste money through patronage, corruption and lack of commitment. Education in Nepal receives only 2.5 percent of GDP which is low by international standards. The security forces are much better equipped than the schools. Officials do not visit the schools and give conflict as an excuse for poor performance. There is an acute lack of information and consultation.

Conflict transformation would seek to reconcile these two positions. But currently, the EFA programme exposes problems of governance rather than resolving them. There is no information or accountability because these values are not accepted by those in power. Society continues to create new forms of exclusion. Children may be willing to struggle with the education system but a block is placed in their way when it comes to the exam system and later by the 'English

divide' when they try to find a job. They may note that some of the impetus for qualification in English comes from the apparatus of international aid. They see donors supporting a state which does not deliver on its promises. They may conclude that only fundamental change can give them what they want, and go on to debate whether this will occur through political means or in another way. The challenge to donors is to push these arguments and perceptions back the other way.

To do this, the following key principles may be useful-

1. Information. It is important to give out information systematically as well as demand it.
2. Consultation. Education is embedded in wider social, economic and political processes. Involve representatives of the most affected groups.
3. Decisions based on a rights-based approach to education. Officials must go beyond tokenism in consultation and decision-making about education, and focus on participation and empowerment.
4. Decentralization. Government is not providing 'free' education and is in no position to make it compulsory. Let parents and teachers solve as many of their own problems as they can.
5. Transparent Monitoring. It is not enough to conduct surveys but these must be made public and opportunities given for debate and discussion.
6. Accountability. Apply processes of public audit to as many aspects of the EFA programme as possible.

In applying these principles, sequencing is important. To tackle the problem of overcrowding in schools dialogue has to be established with teachers' unions and this means facing up to mistakes that may have been made in the past and not insisting on the solution before the dialogue has taken place. Open information is a prerequisite for opening up such a debate.

In the language of conflict analysis⁵¹, donors to the EFA programme are currently working 'in' conflict. They are adapting to an increasingly hostile situation rather than directing their efforts to the causes of hostility. Given that the conflict with all its political ramifications is now by far the major obstacle to development, it is time to shift to a more direct relationship working 'on' conflict. This means using EFA inputs to transform conflict rather than deliver services.

6.3. Scenarios

The principles suggested above are intended to transform the situation towards peace but they will be affected by different political scenarios, and the tactical focus may have to be varied-

Increasing violence. There is a possibility that conflict may spread. This might have the following implications for the education sector-

- Schools might become a focus for humanitarian assistance, such as increased school feeding
- Conflicting parties might use schools more deliberately as bases for activity

⁵¹ Notably DFID (2002)

- Donors would switch support to NGOs
- Increased spending on security forces, extortion from teachers and destruction of school assets.

In the extreme case this scenario would undermine the case for continuing with the EFA programme and donors would focus simply on human rights protection and humanitarian relief. This scenario seems unlikely and so we have not developed more detailed contingency plans. In any case this lies outside our mandate.

Political progress. The current situation, in which large sections of the elite are excluded from political power, seems likely to change. But it is not yet clear whether the trend will continue beyond a superficial adjustment of power within the elite. The sequence could be-

1. Elites included
2. Middle levels represented
3. All levels represented

In terms of the EFA programme, this may open the way to tackle corresponding levels of problem-

1. The dangerous sequence of increasing enrolment rates, packed classrooms, increasing costs of education and exam failure
2. Lack of information and consultation within the education system and with *dalits*, minorities, and teacher unions
3. Deep-seated tendencies towards social and economic exclusion, characterized by the Nepali/English barrier and the private/government school divide

6.4. Moving Forward

Donors should first of all be realistic about the current situation. There is no possibility of 'free and compulsory' education until resource constraints are removed and dialogue with representative bodies removes barriers to progress. Until then schools will function as best they can, and the greater autonomy the better.

Donors should monitor possible negative impacts in terms of exclusion. If a need arises to focus within the EFA programme, scholarships for *dalits* are probably the most important single element.

Within the limited scope of current circumstances, donors working with government and representative bodies should apply the principles of conflict transformation suggested above.

Short-term strategy. In terms of social and economic exclusion the focus should be on-

- Timely distribution of books
- Spreading information about government budgets, criteria and requirements (e.g. school registration fees)
- ECDs, with a possible focus on violent/deprived areas

- Continued support for infrastructure through NGO support
- More rational distribution of teachers
- A more concerted strategy to address overcrowding

Medium-term strategy. Preliminary steps to address political exclusion might include-

- Involve DEOs in resource allocation
- Involve representative groups in district-level resource allocation
- Dialogue with teachers representatives, especially on C-M schools
- Dialogue with all representative groups on the issue of SLC failure
- Support representative groups to develop education policies
- Request political parties to publish policies on education

Longer-term strategy. With wider political representation it may be possible to take a less tactical and more principled approach, namely-

- Increase education budget as a percentage of GDP
- Revert to the 'free and compulsory' objective for primary education
- Base EFA processes on formal consultative processes that prioritise participation and empowerment
- Implement the desired student-teacher ratios in all cases
- Develop a policy to address exclusion based on English language
- Give added support and impetus to Community-Managed Schools (in consultation with stakeholders)
- Increase Block Grants to schools
- Strong affirmative action to make the SLC exam egalitarian
- Set up a representative national education commission
- Increased funding by donors for 'inclusion' elements

6.5. Roles for monitoring and research

In all these scenarios monitoring will play an essential role. The TRSE process initiated by the donors has already brought to light a range of important issues and provides reliable data on which decisions and discussions can be based. Areas for focus in the future may include-

- Publishing and disseminating the TRSE reports
- Causes of repetition and drop-out
- Timeliness of textbook availability
- Exam success/failure
- Fee-charging in all types of school
- Review of infrastructure grants

6.6. Key Recommendations

Donors should move from working 'in' conflict to working 'on' conflict. This means that they should-

1. Address short-term deficiencies through collective action by the pooling group, notably-
 - Publish the TRSE monitoring reports
 - Develop a specific dialogue with teacher representatives about overcrowding and community-managed schools
 - Encourage all political parties to develop comprehensive policies on education
2. As a medium-term strategy orientate joint activity towards conflict transformation by adopting a set of principles covering such issues as information-sharing, consultation and accountability
3. Develop a long-term strategy based on encouraging and supporting a debate about changes in education, notably overcrowding, allocation of teachers, examination failure and language of instruction
4. Continue to fund the EFA programme at current levels
5. In addition, continue to support infrastructural improvement through NGOs but putting greater emphasis on coordination as a means of state-building

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Annex 1

Itinerary and list of persons consulted

January 2006

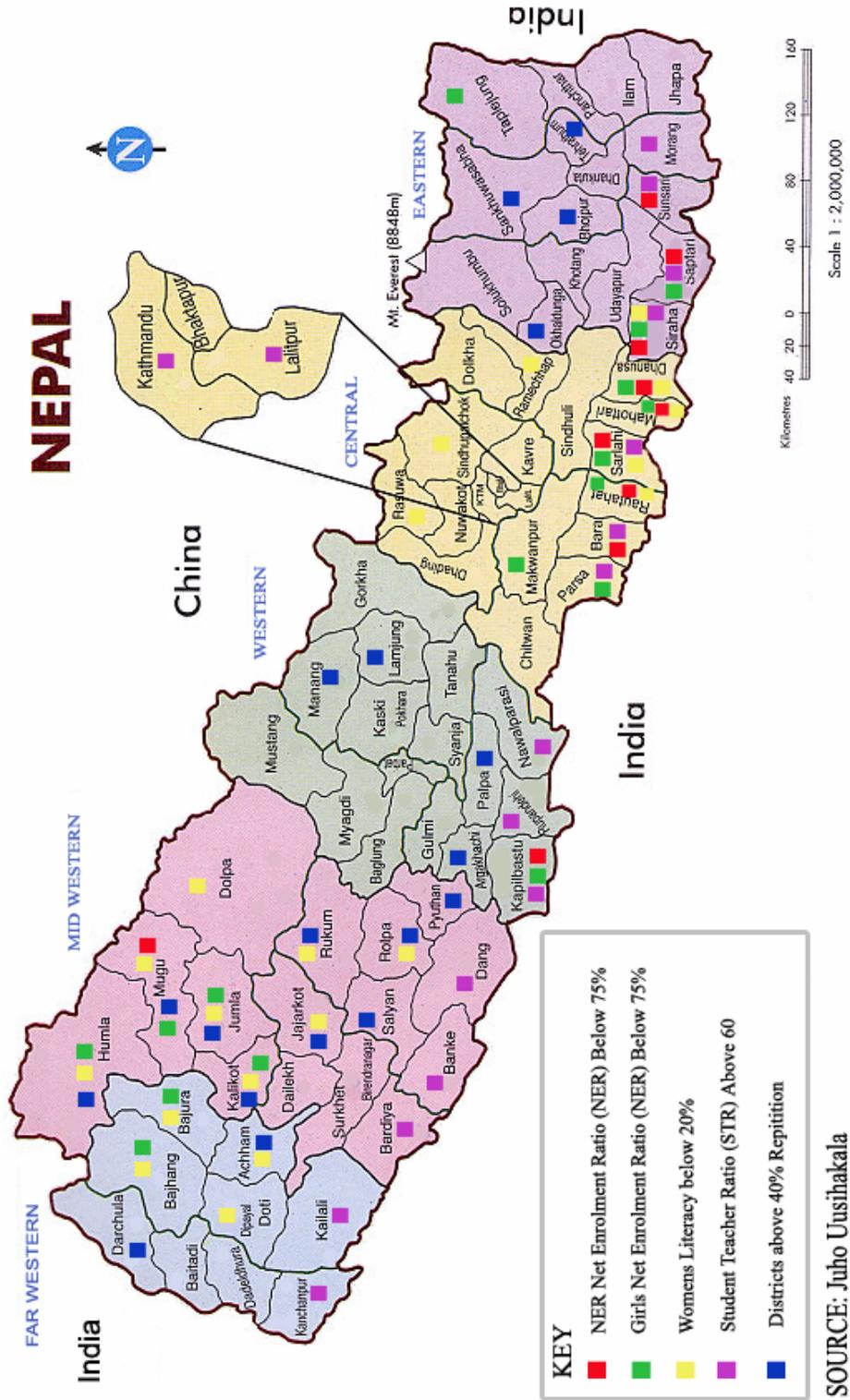
- 16 Arrival Kathmandu**
- 17 Rajan Sharma, Education Journalists Group
Elin Gjedrem and Kamla Bisht, Norwegian Embassy
Lava Deo Awasthi, Under Secretary (Planning), MOES
Koto Kanno and Sergio Hoyos Ramos, UNESCO
Dr Om Gurung, Nepal Forum of Nationalities
Juho Uusihakala, Embassy of Finland
Adam Barbolet, International Alert
- 18 Valter Tinderholt, Save the Children Norway
Samphe Lalungpa, UNICEF
Helen Sherpa, World Education
Minty Pandey, Plan Nepal
Else Moeller Nielsen, Embassy of Denmark
Krishna Pandey, ADB (briefly)
- 19 Leela Raj Upadhaya and Pramila Ghimire, WFP
Mark Segal and Andrew Hall, DFID
Sobit Ram Bista, Deputy Director, DoE
Krishna Lamsal and Kenichiro Kobayashi, JICA
- 20 'Bandh' in Kathmandu**
- 21 Departure to Nepalganj (AS, SS,TV)**
- 22 Rohit Odari, CSP
**School Visits in Banke District: Odarapur, Kansalan (ECD/school),
Khajura, Shivanagar (ECD/school)**
Travel to Surkhet
- 23 **'Bandh' in Surkhet**
Sobha B.K, CSP
Meetings with DEO, Assistant Regional Education Director, LDO
- 24 **School Visits in Surkhet District: Ghurhra High School, Latikoil and
Laxmi High School, Karekhola**
Return to Kathmandu
- 25 Rajendra Joshi, World Bank
Vidyadhar Mallik, Secretary, Peace Secretariat
Karsten Jensen, ESAT
- 26 **Alan Smith departs to UK**
'Bandh' in Kathmandu
- 27 Dr Rishi Adhikari, RRN
- 28 TV and SS -**Departure to Tumlingtar**
Discussions with local teachers
- 29 Drive to Khadbari
Meeting with DEO
- 30 Meeting with District teachers Association
Visits to Khadbari primary, secondary and special school (deaf and dumb)
Visit other primary schools in Sankhuwasabha
- 31 **Return to Kathmandu**

February

- 1 Teachers Union of Nepal
Kenichiro Ohashi and Rajendra Joshi, World Bank
- 2 Presentation to Stakeholders
- 3 **TV departs to UK**

Annex 2

EFA indicators by District



Displacement by District

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