

Aide Memoire

First Review Mission Secondary Education Support Program (SESP) 18-21 November 2003

The Secondary Education Support Programme (SESP) was launched in August 2003, and has accomplished the comprehensive interim project in preparation for full-fledged implementation of the programme.

The First Joint Review Mission of the SESP was carried out in Kathmandu from 18 to 21 November 2003 by the representatives from the Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES) of His Majesty's Government of Nepal (HMG/N), Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Denmark.

The mission also had participation from the National Planning Commission, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, Ministry of Local Development and Financial Comptroller General's Office. The list of the participants in the mission is attached as Annex - A. The MOES chaired the meetings. Separate consultations were conducted with the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance.

This Aide Memoire was drafted and agreed to by the three partners of SESP.

In line with the Terms of References and deliberations during the mission, the mission agreed on the following:

Progress in Preparation

The mission was informed that the National Planning Commission had confirmed the designation of SESP as P1 (Priority One Programme in the Government Expenditure Classification) with immediate effect. The programme will remain P1 in the future to secure its national priority status with respect to financing.

The mission recognises the HMG initiatives for legislative and institutional reform programmes to facilitate the process of change in the education sector. The activities carried out under the Interim Project have been instrumental in preparing the ground for SESP implementation. The amendments in the Education Regulations have paved the way for streamlining teacher training, curriculum and assessment systems in school education. Likewise, the formation of the high level Monitoring and Evalua-

tion Committee, Programme Execution Board and Programme Management Committee, as well as giving Educational Council for Human Resource Development (ECHRD) the mandate to function as an apex institution for teacher training and human resource development activities in education, have provided a basis for moving towards a holistic approach in the education sector. This has also contributed to ensuring coordination within the MOES itself, and between other line ministries and agencies for the programme.

The mission appreciated Government's initiative towards addressing the issue of ownership and utilization of the Secondary Education Development Units (SEDUs). This will help ensure institutionalization and effective utilization of the programme resources.

The mission was informed about an ongoing study on scholarships and incentive schemes with the assistance of ESAT, which was presented to the mission. The mission emphasized the importance of the study on scholarships to be provided to the low-income groups of children and to children from disadvantaged communities. The mission recommends that the study should have adequate geographical representation to cover wider economic and social issues to ensure children's access to education and retention in school.

The mission expressed the need for a time-bound plan of action for resolving issues relating to the implementation of the programme.

Implementation – status, issues and the way forward

MOES presented a budget release modality aimed at facilitating the efficient programme implementation. Further elaborations and clarity in this respect is required before the coming March mission.

For the purpose of the Annual Strategic Implementation Plan (ASIP) and the annual budget negotiations, the four main component distributions as established in the Core Document (guided by indicative percentages) will be followed.

A note will be made in the ASIP, that, because of the definition of SESP as a programme (project) with its own financing scheme, budgeting will be applied according to the 12 cost items as indicated in the Core Document as well as in the ADB Loan Agreement.

Regarding the use of Danida direct funding, Danida noted that direct funding is intended to facilitate programme development and implementation according to a set of

criteria agreed among the three partners, and clearly identified needs, and will be indicated in the total SESP budget as a lump sum provision.

The three partners expressed their commitment to accomplishing the activities planned for the current fiscal year.

In the event changes need to be made in the already agreed Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB), the three partners should meet to resolve the issues.

MOES requested that flexibility be applied in programme implementation for targeting beneficiaries and also wherever possible to work in the places affected by the ongoing conflict with due compliance to the agreed document.

The selection of districts was discussed at length. The mission advised that the poverty based criteria, composed of data from the Human Development Index and selected educational indicators should be used for the identification of the remaining eight districts. The mission further noted that the number of beneficiaries from the intensive approach should be guided by the formative research provision. The mission accepted that selection of schools in Doti and Humla could be carried out during this fiscal year on the basis of educational and other school indicators only.

The three partners realized the complexity of the district selection issue, which will be further explored and presented in the next monthly meeting.

Institutional restructuring

MOES shared information on current initiatives to create a responsive organisational structure. MOES also informed the mission that it is going to establish a "Monitoring, Evaluation and Inspection Division" under MOES. The Inspection Section will be a separate section with adequate staff bearing responsibilities to develop tools and mechanisms for school supervision and eventually development of quality standards for school education.

Further, the mission was informed on the interim restructuring of the Department of Education (DOE), merging the Primary and Secondary Education Divisions into a one "Educational Management Division" and establishing a "Planning and Program Division" and "Administrative Division". The seventy-five District Planning Officers have been designated to exclusively undertake the planning and monitoring functions in the districts.

SEDEC and DEC will be merged with the NCED, making it an apex body for educational development, management and teacher training. The merger is anticipated to involve the retention of a degree of functional autonomy as determined by their technical mandates. However, this merger should be in accordance with paragraph 7 of Schedule 6 of ADB's Loan Agreement. The mission noted that 75 additional positions for SEDUs still need to be clarified.

Likewise, the mission appreciated the merger of the Primary Publishing Cell and the Secondary Textbook Unit under the authority of the Curriculum Development Centre, following the recommendations of the Interim Project Report.

Also, the mission appreciated the efforts to secure a viable and responsive organisational structure for the future, pointing to MOES as a truly technical ministry. However, the mission recommended that the MOES puts forward a systematically designed and time-bound action plan for the restructuring, including rationales for and issues related to the organisational restructuring. The action plan should take into consideration the capacity building issues that emerge from the restructuring.

Responses to the conflict

The mission was presented with a brief assessment of the impact of the on-going conflict on the school education system. MOES acknowledged that the effect of ongoing conflict is considerable in some aspects of education, displacing teachers, in some cases even the students. Physical damages were also reported in some administrative buildings, but not to schools.

Incomplete levels of data and information make it difficult to establish and verify reports as well as design adequate and responsive policies and strategies. MOES informed that a fixed mechanism will be established to systematically monitor the impact.

Further, MOES informed the mission about the initiative to establish "schools as zones of peace". Among others, the HMG/N was reported to have responded to a call from seven donor agencies following the "Doti school incident" by requesting the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Defence to respect the integrity of schools.

Also, MOES requested that the overall programme implementation is facilitated by built-in flexibility with a view to providing services to areas heavily impacted by the conflict, including alternative mechanisms for service delivery like construction works carried out by local communities.

The mission expressed its appreciation of current initiatives of securing schools as a safe place while requesting more and specific information on how the initiatives will be promoted. The mission, further, supported the establishment of a conflict monitoring mechanism aimed at systematically monitoring events, suggesting that engaging district based NGOs, CBOs and/or (user) groups of beneficiaries who could facilitate the gathering of information apart from providing goods and services.

Technical Assistance

MOES desires to use, to the extent possible, available expertise within MOES, and the existing long-term advisors and the assistance from nationally available experts for undertaking the planned activities. However, it may need to use individual consultancies for some specified activities particularly in CDC, NCED, DEC and SEDEC. The international consultancies should preferably be provided within the context of institutional linkages.

Monitoring, indicators and reporting

MOES presented a monitoring framework and indicators as well as the reporting structure for SESP. It was emphasized that MOES's monitoring framework should be compatible with the NPC monitoring procedures and should meet MOF reporting requirements.

The mission agreed that further elaboration of the monitoring mechanism is deemed necessary involving the three partners to SESP, and with specific references to the circumstances and environment of the programme. A revised and consolidated monitoring framework, and indicators as well as reporting procedures will be presented during the March mission, 2004.

Next review

The next SESP mission is expected to take place in March 2004. An exact date is to be decided in accordance with the decision on the BPEP II review mission.

Action plan

The three parties agreed to the following time plan:

Activities	Target	Responsible Agencies
Developing criteria for scholarships for disadvantaged students	31 Dec, 2003	MOES/DOE
Institutional restructuring and reorganisation	31 Jan, 2004	MOES
Ownership of SEDU building	31 Jan, 2004	MOES/DOE/SEDEC
Establishing school inspectorate	31 Jan, 2004	MOES
Staff positions	28 Feb, 2004	MOES
Consultancy services for physical construction	31 Jan, 2004	DOE
Performance monitoring indicators	28 Feb, 2004	DOE