

**SUPPORTING
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING
IN NEPAL**

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Sushan Acharya
Mo Sibbons
John Bailey

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ACRONYMS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ASIP	Annual Strategic Implementation Plan
BPEP	Basic and Primary Education Programme
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CDO	Chief District Officer
CSIP	Community School Improvement Planning
COPE	Community Owned Primary Education
DANIDA	Danish International Development Aid
DDC	District Development Committee
DDF	District Development Fund
DDP	District Development Plan
DEC	District Education Committee
DEF	District Education Fund
DEP	District Education Plan
DFID	Department For International Development
DIMC	Decentralization Implementation and Monitoring Committee
DIP	Decentralization Implementation Plan
DOE	Department of Education
DTO	District Technical Office
DUE	Danish University of Education
EC	European Commission
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECECO	European Commission Education Coordination Office
EFA	Education For All
EMIS	Education Information Management System
HMG	His Majesty's Government
HTT	Head Teacher Training
HRD	Human resource Development
INGO	International Non-Government Organization
JCF	Joint Coordination Forum
LDO	Local Development Officer
LMS	Local Management of Schools
LSS	Lower Secondary School
LSGA	Local Self -Governance Act
MOES	Ministry of Education and Sports
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
MTR	Mid Term Review
NCED	National Council for Education Development
NDF	National Development Forum
NFE	Non Formal Education
NGO	Non Government Organization
NPC	National Planning Commission
PIP	Programme Implementation Plan

PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan
PTTC	Primary Teacher Training Centre
RC	Resource Centres
RED	Regional Education Director
RP	Resource Persona
SAP	School Action Plan
SDP	School Development Plan
SEDU	Secondary Education Development Unit
SESP	Secondary Education Support Programme
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SIP	School Improvement Plan
SMC	School Management Committee
SSIP	School Physical Improvement Plan
SS	Secondary School
TA	Technical Assistance
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
TPR	Technical Panel Report
TSC	Teacher Service Commission
VDC	Village Development Committee
VEC	Village Education Committee
VEP	Village Education Plan
WFP	World Food Programme
WB	World Bank

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The first part of the of the second Basic and Primary Education Programme (BPEP II) Mid-term Review that took place in the last quarter of 2001 concluded that in order to effect changes in the education system, a move towards community ownership of public schools would be necessary. The review also concluded that several shifts from current practice to new practice will need to be initiated and/or consolidated. This re-orientation is supported by legislation and regulation that began in 1999 with the passing of the Local Self-Governance Act by Parliament and the Regulations passed on the Act in 2000. The 7th Amendment to the Education Act 1971 (2002), the revised Education Regulations (June 2002) and the Teacher Service Regulations (June 2002) further support the re-orientation.

These shifts include decentralizing the budget and authority, providing a block grant to schools, and improving the capacity of school and community to manage their schools.

In Nepal, the BPEP II programme initiated the School Improvement Plan (SIP) and the School Physical Improvement Plan (SIPP). The SIP was seen by the Technical Panel reviewing BPEP II to be the major tool for more effective decentralized delivery of education, and was endorsed by the Mission in December 2001.

The terms of reference for this consultancy were to assess and plan future technical assistance for the development of school improvement planning capacity at central, sub-district and school levels. However it became clear that for the Department of Education the anticipation was broader with an anticipation of a clarification of the concept of school improvement planning and possible formats for individual school plans. For these reasons the annexes include possible models and formats. The consultants feel that the interactions of the past few weeks have helped DOE move the process forward and further conceptual clarifications have been built into the tentative action plan in Annexe 1 and a matching TA input in Annexe 2.

1.2 The objectives of the overall consultancy

The objectives of the overall consultancy were to assist in improving the process of community-based school planning and in particular:

1. To document the status of the school improvement planning process being piloted by the Department of Education (DOE);
2. To document other school improvement models being carried out in Nepal through various programmes of assistance in the primary and secondary subsectors;
3. To assist the DOE in developing a plan for improving the way in which schools and their communities plan and implement their educational objectives, consistent with current or proposed policy, including budget decentralization, with respect to the current situation in Nepal and with other subsectors in the system;
4. To define the support needed from various levels of the education system for this process;
5. To assist the DOE, primarily at the sub district level, to implement an improved process.

The first two objectives were met by a rapid assessment of the status of school improvement activities. The assessment included the DOE's programme and (i) reviewed the current coverage and status of SIP implementation; (ii) documented the

implementation process of SIP; (iii) reviewed training manuals and materials; (iv) visited SIP pilot districts (v) documented other models of SIP and (vi) collected available impact studies. The process and findings of the assessment are outlined in Section 4.0.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this consultancy was to

1. To summarize the processes and regulations relating to the authority and responsibilities of the school, in the light of existing and proposed policy (including block grant and local structures)
2. To work with the DOE to develop a plan of action for implementation of assistance to the school improvement planning process which reflects the policy situation and which builds on existing practice in Nepal;
3. To recommend technical assistance (TA needs) and possible candidates for implementation.

2.0 PROCESS

2.1 Briefing

The European Commission Education Coordination Office (ECECO) Programme Coordinator and the National Coordinator briefed the international and national consultants. The findings of the *Rapid Assessment of School Improvement Planning in Nepal* (Acharya and Singh 2002) were presented by one of the study team members. Priority activities for the consultancy team were set which included a coordination meeting with the relevant DOE officers.

2.2 Identifying issues and priorities

A meeting of the consultancy team with the DOE held in Sanothimi identified the following DOE priorities:

- There is a need to develop a synergy within elements of a currently fragmented system
- Their concern is that every component of the BPEP programme should be devolved and every activity should be linked through the SIP to give a school level focus to implementation.
- Schools should not be required to provide access to every child, but made responsible for the quality of schooling delivered. [Note that this and the former statement are in some conflict with each other. Thus one of the early agreements of the consultancy team was to help the DOE team to reach a consensus view of what activities they thought the school (through the SIP) would be responsible for].
- National priorities and guidelines should be incorporated into and through the SIP strategy. These include the focus on gender equity, the importance of strengthening primary class 1, and a need to ensure participation of children from disadvantaged group households.
- There is a need to provide guidelines on the monitoring and evaluation of SIPs, to create an effectiveness assessment system for SIPs.
- There are many stakeholders involved in education, and the system for the decentralisation of financing through a block grant system has identified new actors to be involved in this

devolved schooling system. A priority need is to identify how to involve all these stakeholders adequately in the SIP process.

2.3 Document review

To inform the process and to ensure coherence with Government strategy, a number of current documents related to government policy, the primary education system, and donor support were provided through the EC documentation centre and from other sources. These were read and the information used as the basis for the development of subsequent activities, and to reinforce the eventual recommendations of the consultants.

2.4 Structure of the consultancy report

The consultancy team agreed the structure of a final report to be provided to the DOE to facilitate their future programme implementation, and divided the writing of sections according to their individual TORs and individual strengths.

2.5 Workshops and consultations

The results from the Rapid Appraisal proved a very valuable basis for discussions with a wider constituency of DOE middle and senior level officers. From the perspective of the consultancy team the purpose of the workshop was to ensure joint ownership of any recommendations. An exploration of the current status of the SIP process was undertaken by the DOE representatives led to the identification of current problems and broad categories of issues that needed to be addressed to strengthen both the process and outcomes from SIPs

After analysing the outcomes of the first workshop further consultative activities were arranged: a second workshop to prioritise activities, the setting up of a core group of DOE officers to liaise with consultants, and a further working group discussion

The workshops' outcomes and preliminary agreement on the way forward were used to prepare a first draft of recommendations, and these were shared with the EC coordinators before presenting them to the DOE.

2.6 Indicators

An input was provided to a partly concurrent consultancy activity supporting the development of a set of process and impact monitoring indicators for the system and the BPEPII programme. Queries concerning the linkages between the draft set of indicators produced, the existing EMIS system, and any micro-level component activities (such as the SIP) were discussed, as was the appropriate disaggregation of data to reflect government education priorities on poverty, gender and disadvantaged population sub-groups.

2.7 Draft final report

The draft final report was presented to the core group for an in-depth discussion.

3.0 INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

This section will look at the international context of SIP, some examples of SIP/SDP in practice and some lessons to learn from the international experience

3.1 Definition

What does SIP mean? It is worth noting that SIPs are closely related to School Development Planning (SDP), a term which is often used for a similar approach to devolving power to the local level. SIP and SDP can be defined as the active involvement of the school and its community in identifying and meeting school determined goals in the context of local or national policies and goals (the latter are described below). The emphasis is on schools setting their own realistic targets for development and using their own resources, as well as state resources, to meet those targets. As such, it covers all aspects of schooling from teaching and learning, to choices about equipment and staff training.

School Improvement Planning (SIP) is sometimes used interchangeably with SDP and there is no real difference, but SIP is more commonly used to refer to schools whose 'hardware' needs have been met and who are primarily focusing on their 'software' needs. As the emphasis in Nepal is to improve the quality of teaching and learning through a focus on school management of resources then SIP is an appropriate term to use.

3.2 International context of SDPs

School Development Planning has been around for two or three decades in different forms. Within the last ten years it has gained currency as more developed country systems have introduced it. Many developing countries are now also introducing this approach.

Countries using or in the process of introducing SDP/SIP include: UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, parts of the US, the Netherlands, Portugal, Hong Kong, and South Africa. You will notice that not many of these are in Asia. However, Bangladesh and India are introducing school development initiatives and there are some lessons to learn from those countries.

SIP/SDP has been introduced for a variety of reasons in these countries, but there are some common characteristics. These characteristics are interlinked and operate to varying degrees in different countries. These reasons can be classified as macro-economic, political, economic-efficiency, participation-equity, and educational

3.2.1 Macro Economic Reasons

In the last 30/40 years in developed countries there has been a rapid change from state intervention and control, to an increasing role for the free market, even in areas once the monopoly of the public sector e.g., - telephones, water, power (electricity and gas), and transport. So-called privatisation of these services has occurred in developed countries for example America, the UK and Australia in the 1980s and 1990s. Privatisation introduces competition, but it is also a kind of decentralisation of government power - it encourages people to look to alternatives to central control. People in these countries gradually got used to the idea that various aspects of life - aspects of public service once undertaken by large government departments or monopolies - could also be undertaken by small firms or by local companies. This was a change in attitudes, a change in thinking. Education is a mirror of society and it is not long before changes happening in the commercial sector have an impact on the education sector.

3.2.2 Political Reasons

In some countries SIP began as part of the movement for decentralisation of the control of education. In different countries this took different forms. In the UK for example the introduction of SDP by a right wing government was very clearly an attempt to reduce the involvement (and politicisation) of county education authorities who were at that time largely in

the control of left wing politicians. In Sri Lanka the current programme of decentralisation in education is intended to mirror the political decentralisation of power to provinces - this has roots in the conflict between Tamils and Sinhalese. In South Africa the moves to school development planning have part of their roots in the desire to give the traditionally excluded black population control over their local services.

3.2.3 Economic/Efficiency

Another key argument used in favour of SIPs is an economic/efficiency argument. By giving schools control of their own budgets (or a large part of the budget) it is argued that decision-making about spending priorities is more informed and better targeted e.g. in the UK in the 1980s if a school window was broken the head teacher had to wait for the county authority to send someone to fix it - now they can hire someone themselves and negotiate the price. Now, they can decide how to allocate the budget within the school, before the budget was allocated for them. This delegation of financial control is seen as increasing the efficiency of the school in the way it operates by having spending decisions taken at the lowest level of the education system, moreover it is seen as an efficient mechanism for distributing funds to meet stated educational goals. This is returned to later. Another efficiency argument for SDP is that it promotes "managerial efficiency" - the literature on school effectiveness tells us that effective schools are well managed schools.

3.2.4 Participation and Equity

More recently, SIP has been seen - especially in developing rather than developed countries - as a mechanism for involvement of communities in solving educational problems. It has been seen as a tool for gaining support for education from communities, for raising resources and for ensuring local accountability. In systems where there remain problems of access this can be especially useful - it can lead to the participation of groups who normally feel excluded or who do not value education highly.

In more developed countries there is also an emphasis on community participation in school development - this is usually manifested through participation by parents and community representatives (e.g. religious leaders) on Boards of Governors. However, there is also an emphasis on parental involvement in learning through support at home and also in the delivery of teaching and support in the classroom.

3.2.5 Educational Reasons

Last, but certainly not least, there are strong educational reasons for the promotion of SIP.

Firstly, the very process of planning forces school staff and parents to articulate and define what the schools goals and priorities are. Secondly, SIP makes schools and teachers accountable to themselves and to others for the education they are delivering to children. This in turn highlights weaknesses and can be used to target efforts to improve the situation. Thirdly, planning and reviewing of actual achievements encourages reflection. Reflective teachers and reflective schools are sensitive to the school environment they create and the responsibilities they personally and collectively have. This is a good thing.

3.2.6 Summary

None of the characteristics described above **on its own** necessarily explains why countries have introduced SIP/SDP: it is usually some combination of these factors. But, in almost all cases a common characteristic has been the delegation of some resources - usually financial - to the control of the school. Without such delegation the increased responsibility passed on to schools as a result of SDP is like asking someone to cook a meal without any food: they produce the menu and the recipes but no meal on the table.

3.3 Some examples of SIP/SDP

3.3.1 Specific Case of the UK

1. SDP came via Local Management of Schools (LMS) which introduced delegated school budgets
2. At the same time a new inspection system judged schools partly on the goals they set themselves within the national policy framework and targets
3. Increased powers and accountability for Boards of Governors made school development planning an important tool on which everyone could agree direction, targets and whether those had been achieved.

In fact, in the UK financial delegation came before school development planning and it was the greatly increased control that schools had over their own budgets that made SDP an important tool of school planning.

As a result of these changes head teachers needed a great deal of training and support in their new duties. LMS was not popular initially as head teachers felt they were being drawn away from their educational responsibilities. 10 years later most head teachers are strongly in favour of LMS, welcome the control and flexibility of decision making it gives them and believe that schools are better managed, with the result that the overall quality of education delivery has risen.

3.3.1 Specific case of Gansu Province in China

SDP is being introduced in four of the poorest counties of Gansu Province in China. These counties are characterised by large ethnic minority populations, and high levels of poverty. They are remote and mountainous suffering extremes of climate. The material used for training in SDP in Gansu is provided (separately) as an example of one approach. Some questions and answers.

1. What are the common characteristics of SDP in Gansu with the descriptions of international practice just given?
2. What were the original intentions of introducing SDP during the design of the project?
3. What have been the experiences of implementation?

Common characteristics

- A macro-economic situation in China in the last ten years, which has emphasised reduction of state control and increasing privatisation or semi-privatisation of once publicly, provided services.
- A political situation which supports decentralisation of powers to provinces and counties, but with the centre retaining considerable control over policy

- An increasing interest in school - community links as a way of solving the problems of access still prevalent in poorer areas.
- A strong history of planning, of setting goals and targets - but most of this coming from the top rather than the bottom.

Differences

- There are some differences between the characteristics described above and the four counties in Gansu. There is less emphasis on the economic efficiency characteristics of SDPs as there are worries about how to control the delegation of financial powers to schools.
- The reality of financial decentralisation is also limited in poor counties who are net recipients of funds from the province.
- There is currently little political motivation. Giving greater control to schools is not yet seen as a benefit to the education system.

In summary, conditions in China are favourable to the introduction of SDP, but the specific approach which is right for the four counties in Gansu is still in the process of development. This example usefully demonstrates the need to match the design of the SDP/SIP approach to suit the needs of the particular location. It is not possible to take a ready-made design and use that without amendment in another context. Local needs and the state of development of the education system in those places must be taken into account if SDP/SIP is to be introduced.

What were the original intentions?

The original intentions of the project were to use SDP as a vehicle for improving the link between schools and their communities to help solve issues of access. It was expected that this process would help schools look at their own problems and ask what they could do about them. It was anticipated that, if the experiment was successful, some or all schools might move to some form of partial control over their own non-personnel budgets.

SDP was also seen as a mechanism by which schools could look at all aspects of their development, including teaching and learning - but it was recognised that many schools would, in the initial period of the project, be obsessed with hardware rather than software issues.

Finally, an essential feature of SDP is the reform of county level budgeting for education - known as the two commitments (increased allocations from the county budget to education and increased allocations to non-personnel expenditures within the education budget). The intention of this reform is to ensure that there will be sufficient funds for SDP to continue in the future after the project has ended.

3.4 What can Nepal learn from the Gansu experience of implementation?

Those original intentions remain for the Gansu four counties SDP. However, implementation of the SDP process has produced results, which are of importance for the DOE to consider.

The first 18 months of SDP in Gansu was very successful. There are many stories of active community participation, of schools creating strong links with parents that have resulted in more children attending school and of schools coming to understand the communities they serve better. But, - in reality probably only about 50% of the schools have done SDPs as intended. For many schools SDP is still seen as a vehicle for delivery of project funds, not as a means of

school development. It is a mechanism, which is accepted, but not fully embraced as the policy developers had hoped.

In the next two years they are hoping for change. Their optimism relates to expected outcomes as schools focus less on hardware issues and more on software, as more and more teachers are trained in new methods and continue upgrading their skills, as head teachers are gradually trained in more modern management methods and as the new inspection system being piloted helps schools to review and assess the progress they are making towards their own targets. In other words, and of relevance to Nepal, simply introducing SDP for schools and communities of itself is necessary but not sufficient to get positive and sustained results. There is a range of other concurrent activities that are essential if the whole is to be successful.

In Gansu there is still a long way to go, and in particular the linking of SDP with county budget changes needs much more work and greater understanding. The four counties have committed themselves to putting more money into the education budget each year, and most importantly more money into the non-personnel budget. These commitments are not easy - but they are central to the sustainability of SDP and the development of schools in the four counties after the end of the project. (Expenditure choices are always difficult - whether in a developed or developing country - there is never enough money to make everyone satisfied).

This additional money will help to maintain the spending on teaching - learning materials, scholarships and building maintenance, which is currently provided by donor funds. Without these commitments - and their continuation beyond the project life, the schools will climb a ladder to a new level, only to find the ladder taken away from them.

In Nepal, the decision to devolve financing through the block-grant system will be confronted with many problems over the next few years, and these will need to be responded to in a timely and effective manner. The importance of having mechanisms to identify and respond to implementation difficulties is a pre-requisite for the successful introduction over a number of years.

3.5 Key lessons

Perhaps one of the key lessons from looking at SDPs internationally is that they have all been accompanied by delegation of resources to schools. This is the incentive that gives schools some real control over their own development and the reward for being asked to take on additional responsibility. This does not necessarily mean cash and there are a range of options which can meet the goal of devolving some financial responsibility while retaining a measure of control against mismanagement.

Giving schools responsibility for setting budgets can be a first step, giving them control over a proportion of the budget can be another. Giving some funds in direct grants - either budgetary or extra-budgetary can be another - giving full control over the entire budget is not necessary the best way forward. This has not even happened in English schools despite their long experience of SDP.

However, some commentators have noted that devolving financial controls can be problematic in countries where there is a traditionally strong central control. One solution, adopted in India for example, is to devolve budgetary responsibilities to **clusters of schools**, rather than individual schools. Depending on the success or otherwise of the implementation of the block grant modality, this may be worth considering in Nepal where the school district could be a natural vehicle for such an arrangement.

Further examples of developing countries introducing SDP/SIP, which may be of interest to the DOE, are:

- The Imbewu I project in South Africa. They have produced some good materials which we do not have available here in Nepal.
- A WB project in Cambodia
- A DFID funded project is introducing SDP in Jamaica and materials may be available about this activity, although we do not currently have access to these.

Learning from experiences in Nepal is clearly relevant, and the section below which outlines the outcomes of the rapid assessment study provides some insights into the significant areas for strengthening of the existing SIP process, and identifies other Nepal group's approaches. There are some lessons, which can be learnt from these, as well as from these international perspectives.

In summary, international experience indicates that SDP can be a very successful and powerful force for change in education, but that it needs at least 3/4 years to implement properly and is most successful when accompanied by some form of financial delegation to schools. It takes considerable time to make SDP part of the school's daily work and for it to be seen as a tool of development. Complementary reforms in inspection, teacher training and school financing are also needed to ensure success.

4.0 NEPAL'S EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANNING

4.1 School improvement planning in Nepal

Although there is some conceptual confusion about the nature and role of school improvement plans there is an understanding that the concept probably has the following parameters.

- School Improvement Planning is a micro-planning process undertaken with the active involvement of the beneficiaries.
- A meeting of stakeholders (including the SMC, VEC, teachers, parents and community leaders) analyse the achievements and failures of the school in the past.
- School level information is collected and analysed for the stakeholders to gain an idea of the present status, issues and challenges.
- The stakeholders set targets on a periodic basis leading to a long term and commonly agreed mission and vision of the school.
- Activities are prioritised while considering available expertise, skill, knowledge and resources.
- This process plus involvement in planning, programming, implementing and monitoring develops community ownership.
- Participatory monitoring will encourage further involvement and contributions.

The main elements of SIP are:

- A description of a school's vision and future directions
- The goal's and objectives of the school
- Targets to be achieved
- Activities for the physical development of the school to make the school environment conducive and stimulating for learning
- Instructional process and outcomes
- Timeframe
- Fixing responsibilities
- Monitoring plan
- Reporting system

- A charter that the school agrees to operate within the guidelines and takes all responsible steps for ensuring the achievement of agreed goals within the available resources and time.

The concept and elements are introduced here to give some substance to the SIP acronym, which is used for the process (planning) and the product (plan) (see also Annex 4). In this section we look at the rapid assessment of SIP and in a later section the highlights of consultative workshops and meetings.

4.2 Objectives of the rapid assessment

As a baseline for SIP improvement planning exercise a rapid assessment of the status and situation of SIP was conducted (Acharya and Singh 2002). The objectives of this assessment were to document the status of the SIP process being carried out by the DOE and to document other school improvement models being carried out in Nepal through various programmes in the primary and secondary sub sectors. The findings and the future directions presented by the assessment were based on perspectives of the RPs, school/community, DOE personnel, other models of SIP, and the observations made in selected documents of BPEP.

4.3 Document review and discussions

Document review, and discussions with the stakeholders were the major activities undertaken during the assessment. The reviewed documents included training packages, different models, evaluation reports, and other relevant documents of BPEP. Interview and discussions were held with concerned people from DOE, other agencies/programmes and field level implementers. Chitwan and Jhapa were selected for this purpose.

The process of the assessment was grouped into areas. First, it briefly reviewed a few selected major documents to understand how the idea of SIP has been perceived and evolved at the BPEP central level. Second, the assessment focused on the implementation of the SIP process including training events. Third, models used by other agencies were reviewed. On the basis of these some possibilities for future action were put forward.

4.4 Key documents

Besides training related materials five major documents were reviewed: the BP EP Programme Implementation Plan (PIP) 1999, the Technical Panel Report (TPR) 2001, Mid Term Review (MTR) 2002, the Annual Strategic Implementation Plan (ASIP) 2002/003 and the Secondary Education Support Programme 2002 (SESP) were reviewed. All of these documents emphasize bottom up planning and it apparent that over the period the concept has received more thrust.

PIP began with the necessity of micro planning for physical and instrumental improvement. Activities began to happen to some extent according to what PIP proposed. However the ASIP 2001/02 found that bottom-up planning (micro planning) hardly exists (TPR, 2001). It concluded SIP as ineffective, less realistic and supply driven. The TPR (2001) on the other hand identified capacity building of local level institutions as a requirement for better implementation of bottom up planning process. Followed by this a major shift in the programme took place when the MTR 2002 added SIP as a fifth component of BPEP. As a push to the drive ASIP 2002/03 decided to focus on a SIP based development programme. In the meantime SESP, a draft joint programme document prepared by ADB and DANIDA came up with the concept of community school improvement planning (CSIP) in secondary education. CSIP focuses on access, activity, quality, relevance, rehabilitation and maintenance of the physical facilities, and institutional capacity at all levels. In anticipation of only one primary/secondary school improvement model being developed the concept was modified and the word 'community' dropped and the same acronym, SIP adopted.

The proposals and arguments made in the above mentioned documents are based on certain assumptions that are still in the process of being operationalised. For example, the block grant scheme, the Village Education Committee (VEC), and whole school development perspective included in the separately named SIP and CSIP are some of the assumed realities.

4.5 The assessment

The assessment of the implementation process of SIP found it a good beginning to orient people towards decentralization and demand driven planning. Though driven more by the hope of getting monetary support, SIP did reveal some positive outcomes. It initiated a culture of keeping written records, documents and the profiling of schools. It also began to make primary stakeholders realize the need and importance of reliable data for determining their educational needs and developing the plan. A few respondents realised that the manual was leading them to an appraisal of their own realities and needs, this is also a positive result of the SIP exercise.

Nevertheless the training part seemed to require some modification. The overall design of the training including manuals, contents/terminologies, training duration, participant selection criteria, was found to be inadequate. Post-training backstopping or follow-up supports was also inadequate.

Most schools from Chitwan and Jhapa did prepare the plans. However it was reported that difficulties and issues were encountered during the planning exercise. Some of the difficulties and issues identified were related to the determination of school catchment area, wider participation, resource identification for proposed activities, and quantitative data processing.

The assessment showed that more practice is needed before the stakeholders are able to capture the notion of SIP. The rapid assessment also found the gap, mentioned by ASIP 2001/02 and TPR 2001, in identifying the genuine needs. Emphasis seemed to have been given more to physical facilities than quality aspects of school education. They have their own rationale in doing so which cannot be ignored either.

Apart from technical difficulties, two major issues raised by the report relate to implementation: limited faith in local people's ability to comprehend any given matter and generate ideas, and lack of understanding regarding the potentiality of primary level students in SIP processes.

Other models reviewed included school improvement programs of Save the Children Japan, Save the Children US, Community Owned Primary Education (COPE), Plan International, and School Action Planning (SAP) of Secondary Education Development Project. One common factor that guides all of these models is the right-based approach to education. Though most of them used the DOE modality at the beginning their implementation approaches are different from that of the DOE. Most of them have used local NGOs to provide backstopping to the schools. In general they all support the EFA mission, community school partnership, preparation of grassroots level planning cadre, and ownership of the school by local stakeholders.

In this context the rapid assessment proposed some directions for the future. They included directions for updating training, implementing the SIP process as well as actual plan, and linkage with other partners. The plan of action proposed in this document also draws upon the directions identified by the rapid assessment report.

5.0 THE NATIONAL CONTEXT

5.1 Policy documents

Building on the Rapid Assessment review of documents the section sets the SIP process firmly within the Governments pro-poor and decentralisation policies. While the review of the policy documentation and the legislation reveal weak coordination, consultation and implementation they **do** reflect an overall trend towards a decentralized system of education provision and the pursuance of certain good governance reforms. The Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Local Development, the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Finance are leading actors in promoting these changes.

As has already been indicated the emerging policies and legal frameworks directly related to the education sector are seen in a number of key documents including the 7th Amendment of the Education Act 1971 (2002), the Local Self-Governance Act (1999), draft 10th Plan documents, the Education For All documents (EFA), documentation of the BPEPP II mid-term review, minutes of the Decentralisation Implementation and Monitoring Committee (DIMC), the National Development Forum sector paper on education (NDF 2002), the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF 2002) and the SESP Core Document (2002). Also reflected in these documents and legislation are the re-alignment and creation of new bodies to deal with the desired changes. Based on the Education Act 1971 the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Teacher Service Commission recently developed sets of Education Regulations, which are approved by the Cabinet (June 2002).

There are a number of clear strategic shifts occurring in Nepal both in overall policy (poverty reduction as laid out in the PRSP/10th Plan), governance (decentralisation as legislated within the LSGA) and education (Education Act 1971, 7th Amendment and Education Regulations - 2002). Within the context of policies outlined in these documents and the programme documents of BPEPP and SESP this chapter summarise some of the processes and regulations relating to finances, authority and responsibilities of the school at the central and local level. These policies are currently being proposed, clarified and implemented with regular reviews making the task of clear identification of status at the field level difficult.

5.2 Poverty Reduction And Decentralisation

5.2.1 Poverty reduction

According to a Concept paper on Poverty Reduction Strategic Plan (PRSP)/10th Plan (NPC 2000) the overriding objective of Nepal's development efforts is poverty alleviation and the country is committed to reduce poverty by focusing prioritised policies and programmes on poverty alleviation. A number of factors contribute to the continuation of the high incidence of poverty in Nepal including low and fluctuating agricultural growth rates and inadequate social service delivery (including education). The PRSP/10th Plan is supported by the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF), which provides a three to five year time-bound action plan. The plan process is being carried out as a participatory and bottom-up activity.

The paper describes the current state of poverty in Nepal, changes in poverty over time, proximate causes of poverty as well as giving an outline of the Government's efforts for poverty reduction. In the context of these efforts the paper outlines some significant improvements in social development indicators while recognising that the quality of public schools, which are the only avenues available for poor people, is consistently low at all levels and access for the poor is also constrained by a number of socio-economic factors. Dropout rates and failure rates are high in public schools. Less than 18% of the primary school children complete the primary cycle on time and approximately 60% of primary school teachers are untrained.

As part of the development of the PRSP a number of public consultations were held to define and analyse peoples perceptions of poverty and its causes. In this context the people saw a need to increase the access and quality of social services, promote gender equity and increase the role of local bodies .

The 10th Plan is conceptually built around four overarching goals; broad-based high economic growth, social sector development, targeted programmes for the backward and vulnerable groups, and good governance. Strategic planning for social sector development recognises the importance of education and equity in strategies to reduce poverty.

5.2.2 Decentralisation

Historically Nepal has experimented with delegation, deconcentration and devolution. And the 1990 Constitution of Nepal recognises decentralisation as a fundamental element of democracy and district development committees, village development committees and municipalities were set up following legislation in 1992 (NDF 2002)

The Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) was enacted in 1999 and a set of regulations covering local self-governance and finance were approved in 2000. This Act and the regulations lay the foundation for the local self-governance system in Nepal. It has statutorily recognised the role of local self-governance and devolution to make local bodies more responsive and accountable to their populace. These legal frameworks have increased the authority and responsibilities of the local bodies and increased their devolution of administrative, judicial and fiscal powers. The Local Self-Governance Act calls for comprehensive transference of central decision making power and implementing authority to local bodies.

Other achievements in addition to the Act and Regulations includes (i) capacity building at district and municipality level, (ii) establishment of a Decentralisation Implementation Monitoring Committee (DIMC), (iii) a collaboratively developed Decentralisation Implementation Plan (DIP), (iv) the identification of conflicting Acts to be amended in line with the LSGA, (v) the merging of some line agencies and the establishment of a District Technical Office (DTO) and (vi) the establishment of a Joint Coordination Forum (JCF) for local governance to begin reviewing the situation for policy improvement.

The government is committed to devolution and the 2001/2 programme and budget supported devolution of basic and primary education, primary health, agriculture (including live stock) and postal services to local bodies. The paper recognises the need to define the tasks and service jurisdiction of local bodies and central agencies to avoid: (a) uncoordinated flow of resources, (b) programme duplication, and (c) overlapping. Central agencies are gradually being confined to the functions of monitoring and directing, strengthening the local bodies, providing financial support and coordinating the centre and local levels. While the LSGA lays down a vision for decentralisation, there are difficulties with implementation that are being tackled with a large gap remaining between legal provisions and actual devolution: both administrative and fiscal decentralisation are largely inadequate, there are issues of accountability of local bodies to the people, and the capacity of locally elected authorities to assume their new roles is very limited. Both at the district level and the centre this is a challenge the education sector is facing positively and which will be returned to later.

A comprehensive time-bound District Implementation Plan with 60 activities to be implemented by different ministries and the NPC within 5 years was approved in January 2002. The DIP covers functions and responsibilities, budget and budget flow; staffing arrangements, staff accountability towards local bodies, capacity building and effective monitoring. However, the importance of central government is stressed in regulating, monitoring, financing and facilitating the operation of local bodies, and ensuring delivery of public services that is national in nature.

Currently there are several issues of decentralisation and local governance, which are multi-sectoral and clearly relate to the education sector (Figure 1).

Identified priorities include, (i) directions to line ministries, including education, to complete the first stage of devolution this fiscal year (2001/2) and (ii) the building of capacity at the local level parallel to the devolution of powers. In order to build capacity: a clear fiscal decentralisation framework, a clear accountability for the devolved responsibilities, markets and institutions able to respond to the emerging demand for capacity support and a minimum level of capacity within local bodies to manage a programme of capacity building, are needed.

- | | |
|---|--|
| a | There is resistance to shift from a centrally controlled decision-making and fiscal system to local units under the DDC umbrella. |
| b | The weak capacity of local bodies and lower-level governance units constrain their ability to sustain the autonomy provided by law. |
| c | Reorientation and capacity building of central-level bureaucracy from a controlled to a decentralised environment is needed. |
| d | There is a lack of clarity and delineation of tasks and functions of the local bodies with poor linkages to the finance and management systems. |
| e | The number of local bodies in Nepal, especially the VDCs, is too large from the perspective of planning, administration, coordination, cost efficiency and service delivery. |
| f | The number of locally elected representatives is too large and does not correspond with the local bodies resource capacity. |
| g | The existing collective decision-making process does not ensure proper accountability. Two way information flow and feedback between the local bodies and the citizenry is one of the mechanisms ensuring accountability. The current practice does not ensure the transparency and accountability envisioned by the LSGA. |
| h | The block grant has not yet been either requirement- or criterion-based or transparent enough. Equity has remained the crucial issue of grant distribution each year. |
| i | As local bodies have a limited revenue base there is a greater need to share more responsibility of development with the private sector, the communities, and self-supporting NGOs. |
| j | There is no clear mechanism for involving non-state development partners in the development planning and programming processes other than through the implementation of projects. The private sector is recognised as an active development partners but its roles are not clearly articulated at the operational level. |
| k | The monitoring aspect of decentralisation and local governance is still weak. |

Figure 1 Issues of Decentralisation and local governance

The Government's strategy is three pronged: fiscal support, capacity support and a monitoring and evaluation system. *Fiscal support* includes initiatives to put in place a Fiscal Commission that will advise the Cabinet on fiscal decentralisation policy and (i) clarify expenditure assignments between the three levels of government (central, DDCs and municipalities/VDCs), (ii) set up a framework for fiscal transfers from central government comprising of current grants and capital grants, (iii) clarify revenue assignments and propose effective systems for local revenue administration.

The *capacity support* vehicle will have two routes: a demand route that will be a simple rapid response grant and a supply route which will be more complex and is based on the reality that many local bodies do not even have the basics to manage their devolved responsibilities. The demand window will provide grant resources for local authorities to define and contract-in the capacity. Some may hire private sector assistance, others will contract in NGOs, and some may commission training institutions to design courses and so forth. The supply window will help the many local bodies where management and administrative elements are missing and help the centre provide the adequate statutory requirements in budgetary and financial areas. This will need a dedicated institutional set up. Two other important areas are the setting up of the District Technical Office and the vision of the Local Service. A *monitoring and evaluation system* is the

needed to build in a mechanism to learn as the process continues for this a strong system will be needed.

These decentralisation issues will be clearly expressed in the 10th Plan linked to the overall policy of poverty reduction.

5.3 The Seventh Amendment and Education Regulations (2002)

5.3.1 Underlying assumptions

The amendment is based on a number of assumptions (Shrestha 2001) those that relate directly to school improvement planning are:

- School communities have disowned public schools and there is a need to revive community ownership of schools, which are perceived as 'government' schools.
- Parents are the main stakeholders and they are the ones that have the natural interest in school operation.
- Teachers have a legitimate feeling of neglect and need to be seen as a main stakeholder in the schools where they work.
- Teachers unions are traditional labour unions and need to become professional unions.
- There is a need to reduce the roles political parties have played in teacher recruitment and only an Act of Parliament can only check this.

5.3.2 Community schools and institutionalised schools

Under the Amendment 'public' schools have been re-named and re-conceptualised as 'community' schools. While, in itself this will not create better schools, it is a step towards creating the environment for more involvement of the community in some aspects of their schools.

5.3.3 District Education Committees

The important changes in composition are that the CDO is no longer the vice-chairperson, there is no role for the RED, the DEC is authorised to nominate some of the 13 members, separate membership is provided for community and institutionalised (private) schools and only one teachers union is recognised. Hopefully these changes will reduce politicisation along party lines, integrate institutionalised schools and decisions concerning primary and lower secondary schools will be improved.

DDC Chairperson (DEC Chairperson)
 DDC Secretary
 Four teachers representing primary, lower secondary, secondary, higher secondary (one female teacher)
 One SMC chairperson from a community school
 One SMC chairperson from an institutionalised school
 One VEC chairperson
 One educationist
 One Chairperson of District Teachers Union
 District Education Officer (Member Secretary)

Figure 2 Membership of district education committees

Authority and responsibility of the District Education Committee

With the 7th Amendment for the first time the authority and responsibility of the DEC is mentioned in the Education Act. The Amendment brings about some major changes in the authority and responsibility of the DEC including

- The responsibility to prepare the District Education Plan rather than just approve it. The amended Act no longer mentions the required authority of the DEC to classify schools.
- The amended Act removes the authority of the DEC to vary the grant-in-aid to schools.
- The authority to deploy approved teachers positions has been retained.
- Authorisation to set the remuneration of school account auditors.

While the Amendment does not appear to have given the DEC a clear role in financial resourcing, allocation and transaction its new composition clearly gives a wider range of stakeholders the opportunity to influence district education policy and planning and raises the question of what funds in what form are required for the DEC to function in its new role. The DEC should still have an important role in formulating recommendations for locating and relocating schools based on school mapping.

5.3.4 Village Education Committees

These committees are established for the very first time by the Amendment within all Village Development Committee areas. Their role will be to look after and support educational development in the village. Most VDCs have more than one primary school and some are located in the wrong places. Some schools have too many teachers and others too few. The VEC should have the authority to correct these types of problem.

There is no explicit provision for establishing Municipal Education Committees.

Village Education Committees

VDC Chairperson or person designated to act as VDC Chairperson (Chairperson)
 A person nominated by the DEC selected from among the SMC Chairpersons in the VDC
 Two persons (one female) nominated by the VEC from among the social workers
 School supervisor of the area
 Member of the DEC from the area of the VDC
 A headteacher of a school of the highest level in the VDC (Member Secretary)

Figure 3 Membership of village education committees

5.3.5 School Management Committees

The situation in schools before July 2001 is summarised in the institutional analysis of MOES (DUE 2001). Schools and their teachers have had a direct line management relationship to the District Education Office and District Education Officer, as well as the school management committee (SMC). Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged that the SMC lacks formal power and is often constituted in line with political considerations. Parental involvement in SMCs continues to be limited and is hindered by the growing tendency of affluent parents to remove their children from the public system. Other local bodies have no formal relationship to local schools. While the LSGA attempts to define roles of local bodies in relation to education, their influence has remained marginal.

Notwithstanding the imminent changes, the current school financing relations and norms related to the management of teachers (through the TSC) remain substantial barriers to local ownership.

Until the 7th Amendment the composition, authority and responsibilities of school management committees were included in the regulations. The regulations have not proved a stable enough mechanism during the decade of party politics. Inclusion in the Education Act through the 7th Amendment hopefully will lead to some stability. The Amendment provides a uniform number of 9 members for the SMC's of primary, secondary, lower secondary and secondary schools. There are significant changes in the SMCs of community schools but no significant change for institutionalised (private) schools.

Authority and responsibility of the SMC's of community schools

According to Shrestha (2001) the amended act does not include provision to activate the SMC's. However the 7th Amendment does include a clause that authorises the SMC to appoint teachers for the school from among those who possess a teacher's licence (see below).

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Chairperson (selected from the guardians) ▪ Three (one female) guardians selected by guardians. ▪ Chairperson of ward or municipality ▪ One nominated by SMC from among intellectuals/education supporters ▪ One nominated by SMC from among the founders ▪ One teacher representative ▪ One headteacher (Member Secretary) |
|---|

Figure 4 Membership of community school management committees

Education regulations June 2002

In addition to the Amendment certain functions, duties and rights have been fixed for the Community School Management Committee by the Education Regulations approved by Cabinet in June 2002 (Annexe 5). These responsibilities mainly concern school and teacher management with some mention of resource management and the academic environment and student discipline.

Under the regulations the SMC has an overall mandate to operate, monitor and manage the school at the same time maintaining and preserving school records and documents in a secretariat placed in the school building. The school is expected to participate in different activities organized by the government, to follow the direction of DEO, organize annual meetings for parents and donors every year, present annual reports covering the previous academic year's income, expenditure, educational attainment, future plans and programmes. Their responsibilities include generating additional financial resources for the school and requesting for students' scholarship reimbursements.

Their role in teacher management is emphasised by sub-clauses covering the security and quality of teachers work and conditions, appointment of teachers and other employees (on salaries and allowances not less than the government scale for equivalent levels) from available school resources. The committee has a responsibility to (i) inform the District Education Office within 15 days of the occurrence of a vacancy in an HMG approved teachers' position, (ii) take actions on absent staff and teachers - including submitting a report for the DEO with a clear recommendation from the SMC, (iii) select teachers for training, (iv) formulate policies for these teachers to serve the school for at least 3 years after the completion of training, (v)

maintain regularly updated teachers' records (vi) inform DEO on actions taken to the teachers and (vii) deduct from salary an amount for days teachers are absent.

Addition broad responsibilities include managing necessary teaching materials and equipment for raising the academic standard of the school and formulating and implementing a code of conduct for students.

5.3.6 The Functions, Duties and Rights of the Head Teacher

Headteachers are recruited from the ranks of permanent teachers whose entry qualification is often SLC although it maybe an intermediate certificate with no stipulation of seniority and given a 5-year tenure with the possibility of extension. School Management Committee members, teachers and parents expressed a complete ignorance of the formal roles and responsibilities as they are stated in the Education Regulations. This was also true of Headteachers. Most primary headteachers spend 70% of their time teaching and the remaining includes visiting the District Education Office, paperwork/financial management; liaison with parents, local leaders and community workers, planning and programming, attending meetings and data related work. Very little was spent on teacher support

Within the framework of the Amendment the regulations approved in June 2002 give a clear and detailed description of the functions, duties and rights of the headteacher (Annexe 6) that give an indication along with the role of the SMC of functions, duties and rights at the school level.

The headteacher is clearly expected to be the educational leader responsible to the SMC and DEO (as well as the community) for maintaining the education standards of the school (quality, environment and discipline) by creating (i) a conducive and cooperative environment among teachers, students and parents by coordinating the staff of the school and (ii) maintain politeness, good conduct and the discipline in school and (iii) taking classes daily as fixed by the ministry.

The administrative and management tasks of the headteacher are defined as (i) preparing class routines in consultation with the teachers and monitoring the programmes (ii) operating and controlling the administrative work of the school (iii) manage for the cleanliness of school and the operation of extra curricular activities (iv) making arrangements for enrolling students and conduct examinations in the school (v) providing transfer certificates and other documents to the students (vi) maintaining records of important events taken place in the school and (vii) expending the money as authorized by regulation and direct by the SMC and maintain the income and the expenditure records of the school.

A number of sub-clauses give the headteacher authority to manage teachers. These embrace: (i) calling a monthly-minuted staff meeting, (ii) submitting teachers and employees performance reports to the SMC and the District Education Office. (iii) maintaining discipline records of teachers and employees and reporting to the SMC and DEO, (iv) submitting the salary reports of teachers and employees appointed by school itself in a SMC meeting for approval (v) stopping salary increments of teachers failing to secure 15% pass results or disobey school discipline and neglect their duties.

Certain sub-clauses relate to student discipline. The headteacher has a responsibility to (i) preventing any mischievous activities within the premises of the school and hostel, (ii) expelling students who have disobeyed the school discipline rules

Other management tasks related to learning and teaching include (i) preparing annual calendars of operation for the school and approval from the School Management Committee and implement the same (ii) preparing and implementing the annual, half yearly and monthly plan

and programmes relating to the teaching and learning in the school (iii) recommending names of teachers for training approved by the SMC to the District Education Office, (iv) implementing the school curriculum and textbooks approved by the Government, (vi) Conduct the periodic examinations regularly maintaining standards,

In relation to the education system the headteacher has a duty to (i) forward salary reports of the teachers holding government approved positions to the District Education Office, (ii) specify the duties and responsibilities of teachers and employee work, (iii) obey the directives of the District Education Office and SMC, (iv) complete and submit on time the school's progress report, statistics and other relevant information to the defined authorities and (v) submit the job performance evaluation forms of the teachers appointed on school resources.

6.0 FUNDING MODALITIES

Within the contexts described in sections 2 and 3 the MOES has set out the framework for its decentralisation of education management endeavours in the concept paper written in Nepali and summarised in this section.

As has been described the LSGA has given a legal framework for the empowerment of local bodies to make them responsible for local development and the paper on decentralisation (Anon 2002) has highlighted general problems which also apply to the education sector. In line with this concept, the Education Act has been amended in the spirit of decentralisation. Section 3 has outlined some of the new legal frameworks that will support the decentralisation efforts of the MOES. Since education is a key area of public concern it is natural that local bodies should have a key role in school operation and management. The pace of decentralization shall be augmented on the basis of experiences acquired during its implementation.

6.1 School improvement plans and village education plans

According to the concept paper each school, in accordance with Article 43, 111,195 of the LSGA with active participation of the local community, guardians and school management committee shall develop a school improvement plan (SIP) covering a period of 3 or 5 years with specific targets indicated for every year.

- The VEC shall, in an integrated manner, develop a Village Education Plan¹ on the basis of individual SIPS developed by the schools and send it to the concerned VDC for evaluation and approval.
- The VDCs shall send each of their plans to the DDC through their District Education Office. It is intended that these will contribute to the DDC's work in designing an overall DEP and consider this as an integral part of the DDP.
- While preparing the DEP, a team (the Planning Team) consisting of members of DEC, representatives of teachers, non-governmental organizations and university lecturers shall provide technical support.
- During the process of preparing the overall DEP, the Regional Directorate of Education shall provide technical assistance.
- The monitoring mechanism of programme implementation shall be an integral part of the plan.

¹ The Village Education Plan is has a broader constituency than a SIP and will include activities such as: sensitisation programmes at the village level, assurances of access to primary education, emphasis on education to those children who belong to socially marginalized nationalities and Dalit (low-cast) and who need special learning, non-formal education programme, child development programme, strengthening the quality of Primary Education and enhancing the internal efficiency of schools.

- ⇒ The DOE shall send the lump sum grant to the DDF and such amounts shall be deposited in a non-freeze account of the DDF.
- ⇒ The LDO shall be authorised to release the lump sum grant to the DDF. A non-freeze account also shall be maintained in the DDF.
- ⇒ The DEO shall receive the released amount in the DDF as per the approved annual programme of the district. The LDO shall be responsible to release the amount as per approved programmes.
- ⇒ The DEO shall release the Government's grant to the schools as per the approved SIP.
- ⇒ Once the fund is received in DEF from the DDC, the amount will be sent to the schools through the VDC of the five districts that are selected for piloting. Then the schools in the other seventy districts shall receive the amount directly from the DEO as usual.
- ⇒ An arrangement shall be made to distribute the amount for scholarships, early child development and non-formal education through the VDC in all seventy-five districts.

Figure 5 Fund release procedure

6.2 Fund Flow Mechanism for VEPs

The sum to be vired by the Government should be called down from the DOE once the VEP has been endorsed by the DDC and locally available funds for implementation clearly indicated. The Ministry for Education and Sports will release the fund to the Education Development Fund as a series of lump sum payments allocated for: salary and allowance of primary teachers (approved posts in the district); administrative expenses of approved primary schools; stationery as per approved teachers posts in the primary school; medical expenses, pension and gratuity that the teachers are entitled to receive after their retirement; all types of scholarships that are provided for the districts; the non-formal education programme and other grants.

The DDC shall be responsible for arranging auditing and clearance for all the types of grants released from District Education Fund to VDCs and schools listed in figure

- An amount according to the endorsed plan for the operation of the NFE programme.
- All types of scholarships distributed under the VDC
- A grant for the operation of the child development programme.
- An amount within the endorsed plans for community mobilization.
- Other grants
- In the five piloting districts the allocated amount for salary, stationery, administrative expenses and any other allocated amount for primary education.

Figure 6 Government Funds to be made available to VDCs through DEOs

6.3 Monitoring mechanisms

At the local level participatory monitoring of input, process and output indicators developed at the local level as part of the SIP process should be monitored by the community and a school status report should be prepared by the SMC and sent to the Resource Centre, DEO and DDC.

During the process the VDC, VEC, SMC and the Resource Centre should monitor the SIP. Accordingly, five schools from each Resource Centre should be visited as a joint venture with the DEO and DDC and a status report shall be prepared and sent to the RED and DOE.

Each DDC will ensure that the project monitoring mechanism is an integral part of the DEP in order to assure that the programme has been operated as per the plan; the allocated officer has utilized the fund within the set process for the allocated programme, and the programme has achieved the expected result.

All REDs shall prepare a report after having monitored the Resource Centres and the schools within the Resource Centres in their respective areas. The DOE shall prepare a report after monitoring the 75 districts. Education Ministry shall monitor mechanically.

6.4 Skill development and staff management

Skill development training will be organised for local level officers, officials and headteachers on school management, planning, resource mobilization and inspection. Then, an instruction manual will be made available to operate the programme in an organized way.

According to the Articles 225, 256, 257 of Local Governance Act, until a Local Service is formed for managing staff at the local level, the District Education Office in accordance with the interim management policy of the Government will manage the staff..

6.5 Classification of programmes

The concept paper finishes with taxonomy of broad areas identifying responsibilities and roles in a decentralised system at the central, regional, district and local levels.

Central Level: Curriculum, textbooks, production and assessment of training materials, construction works in central and regional levels, research studies, execution of school level national sports competition, monitoring and evaluation, management of materials and services.

Regional Level: Monitoring, evaluation and supervision, regional level workshop, training, evaluation of district education planning and execution of school level regional competitions.

District Level: School operation, district level training, workshop, construction of district education buildings, Resource centre and classroom building; operation of non-formal education, monitoring, supervision, scholarship distribution, procurement of materials, organising district level sports competition.

VDC, VEC, School Level: School management, improvement of the school's physical facilities, management of non-formal classes, and planning for school improvement

6.6 Block grant

- A block grant is a sum of money, made available directly to the users in a form of grant, without being allocated to any specified activity.
- The users will have authority to allocate the block grant in specified activities that are more relevant to the children learning at the local context.

6.6.1 The current situation

- 15% of national budget is allocated to education and 55% of this goes to primary education.
- The government bears 100% of teacher salaries and allowances and a lump sum of Rs10,000 per primary school for the salary of non-teaching staff and stationary.
- The government also provides scholarships and the cost for free distribution of textbooks to all primary schools.
- A primary school feeding programme also operates in 24 districts with WFP cooperation.

- The teachers' salaries, allowances and stationary costs are born by the recurrent budget.
- The DOE authorises the district education office to release the budget to individual schools.
- The Auditor General's Office accepts the record of transferring the budget to the schools' account as evidence of appropriate expenditure.
- The development budget including BPEP II funds is released to the DEO by the Department of Education and spent as per the programme by the District Education Office. This reduces the visible impact of the development budget, which has only indirect access to schools.

6.6.2 Legal considerations

- Budget speech (FY 2001/2) clearly stated that the budget for primary education shall be channelled through VDCs.
- The Education Act 1971 (7th Amendment, 2002) clearly supports decentralisation and intends to empower civil society and local bodies in the management of primary education.
- The DIMC has provided directions to channel the primary education budget through VDCs.
- No legal constraints are seen to directing the primary education budget to schools or VDCs.

6.6.3 Financial considerations

- Budgets are channelled directly to schools but the schools have no authority to reallocate the 90% allocated to teacher salaries of the budget to other than the specified activity.
- The 10% covering stationary and administration is in the form of a block grant and schools can break it down into specified activities.
- The BPEP budget [poorly expressed? Is this (part of) the governments development budget?] amounts to about 10% of the total primary education budget and could be channelled direct to schools (in the form of a block grant based on the SIP) who are capable of managing the BPEP budget provided that proper facilitation and guidance are given. (Where does the VDC fit? Do schools have the capacity? Normal recurrent operational matters should not be part of a SIP, if already in operation. However developing a new modality would be.)

6.6.4 Principles of distribution

Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Schools with the same learning needs should receive the same amount of block grant. ▪ Discretionary decisions in allocation of money through block grants should be minimised as much as possible. ▪ The total school budget should redress the unfair traditional allocation of resources with some schools being treated better than others.
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The basis for allocation of the budget to each and every school should be made public.
Subsidiarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decisions should only be made centrally or at the district level when school-based decision-making cannot take place (For example procurement using IDA guidelines).
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A school which receives resources because it has students with a certain learning need has a responsibility of providing programmes to meet those needs, and should be accountable for the use of those resources, including outcomes in relation to the learning needs.
Strategic implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New funding arrangements should be implemented progressively over a period of time to eliminate radical changes. ▪ The use new technology and a computerised system to produce summary qualitative, physical and financial progress reports needs to be considered.

Figure 7 Principles of distribution

6.5 Scope of the SIP programme for 2002/2003

- The block grant will be channelled through VDCs.
- The budget required for community mobilisation, ECD programmes, adult literacy, alternative schooling and local level EMIS, planning and management will be handled by the VDC.
- On approval of the SIPs implementation the budget for activities affecting the learning and the development of the children is given to the school.
- The programme will be implemented in a phased manner.
- The five bottom-up districts for the initial year.
- During the implementation period an intensive observation and formative study will be linked.
- The coverage would be extended on the basis of experience and lessons learned.

Disbursement mechanism

- The DOE would channel the school total budget to the VDCs via the districts for spending on approved SIP activities.
- The head teachers of schools directed/guided by the SMC will spend the money.
- The budget would be disbursed on the trimester basis upon a statement of expenditure submitted by the VDC.

Procurement procedure (Check contradictions)

- Schools will follow the IDA procurement rules (guidelines and orientation to be given).
- The school will follow government rules as per procurement of goods and services.
- The DOE will manage procurements following IDA guidelines involving NCB and ICB.

Auditing requirements

- Schools produce an annual self-assessment report signed and approved by the SMC and representatives of the stakeholders to demonstrate that the fund has been spent on approved activities.
- The DEO would employ registered private auditors to audit the schools expenditure as per the present provision.
- VDCs would submit a disbursement report to the DEO and the DEO will submit a cumulative report to the DOE for the purpose of reimbursement.
- Every three years the DOE and donors would jointly hire an independent national firm to assess and ascertain the appropriation of expenditure.

6.6 Available Budget 2002/3 for 5 bottom-up districts

The annual work plan and budget for FY 2002/3 is given in Annexe 7. Under centrally developed local capacity building TOT related to (i) VECs and SMCs is Rs 1,452,000 and (ii) for headteachers is Rs 400,000. The SIP based development programme has Rs 6,214,000 budgeted.

The total education allocations for the five districts are Rs128, 505,000 and shown in Annexe 8. This is broken up into allocations for physical facility (51.29%), VDC budgets (12.38%), RC budgets (0.53%), DEO budgets (11.41%) and SIP budgets (24.39%). The SIP based budget is based on a formula funding of Rs150 per student in the Terai districts and Rs200 in the hill districts. An individual schools allocation is based $NER \times 150/170$.

Annexe 8 also gives a statistical summary of the 5 districts, disaggregated for each district. There are 90 RCs, 194 VDCs, 9 municipalities, 9,827 teachers and 11,571 teachers serving

352,762 children. The tables are disaggregated to indicate the NER for boys and girls and the enrolment of disadvantaged children.

7.0 HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DOE CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS

Three consultation workshops in addition to several rounds of meetings were held with the DOE personnel while developing the action plan for SIP improvement.

7.1 The first workshop

In the first workshop focus was given on the causes that contributed to making SIP not as strong as it could be, and the effects of having a poor SIP strategy and design. The participants also identified the possible activities to make the SIP stronger. One of the major problems identified in the workshop was lack of clarity on the concept. All agreed that since SIP is a new experience so people at all levels are not as clear as they should be both in terms of concept and implementation process. Because of this and weak monitoring/supervision, lack of wider participation, inadequately helpful manual, high expectation from plans (SIPs), and low performance of schools the need for making the SIP more practical, more realistic and stronger in an overall sense were identified as priority actions. Some of the activities or measures proposed in the workshop to tackle these problems included more orientation, dissemination of information from central to local levels or vice versa, revision and proper field testing of SIP manual, capacity building by training and workshops, Strengthening of EMIS, assurance of support from the central level, and strengthening the monitoring capacity of the supervisors and head teachers. One prominent measure that came out of the workshop and which needs to be highlighted is the formation of VEC and SMC before initiating the SIP processes. However, some raised the issue of the ownership of school vision as well. In other words self-reflection was made regarding the ownership of the vision being served- is it DOE's, the schools', the districts' or the local stakeholders' vision? How to encourage local people to create their own vision about a school was another question raised by the participants. The need of organizing a school level workshop to determine local perception of the purpose of school was also felt. A report of the outcomes of this workshop is appended (Appendix 3).

7.2 The second workshop

A second workshop presented the analysis of the outcomes of the first workshop. Clarification was sought concerning many aspects of the changes proposed in the funding modality, particularly as this will influence the structure and content of the SIP programme. A paper was presented to the participants, which summarised and coordinated the outcomes from the group work of the previous workshop. The main areas, which require further action, were listed, and for each of these broad categories questions were presented to lead the participants towards a series of activities that would subsequently be logically ordered and details added.

7.3 The third workshop

To take this process further a third workshop was held with a core group constituted as an outcome of the second workshop. The third workshop, which was held with five section officers of DOE, assigned to work with the consultants as a core group; they also generated many useful ideas with regard to the improvement of SIP processes. The participants presented an idea of forming a core group of trainers at the RC level to provide training to the schools. Local elites, retired teachers and CBO/NGO will constitute the core group. They also challenged the effectiveness of the cascade model and the spoon-feeding design of trainings used by the DOE. A considerable confusion concerning many of the changes taking place in the devolved system, especially the changes that will take place in the five bottom-up districts was observed among the DOE personnel. Partly because they were unaware of the provisions made

by the new regulation and partly because they are inadequately informed about programmes other than those they are engaged in. This indicates that in the present context of rapid change in the governance and in the roles of different levels of the bureaucracy a need of dissemination of information and sharing inside the DOE among different programs is urgently required. The confusion about the decentralized fund flow mechanism was also obvious. Additionally, the issue whether the provisions made by new regulations regarding the roles and responsibilities of SMC, VEC, DEO, etc. correspond with the fund flow mechanism which is going to be implemented in two different modalities: one in seventy districts and the other more radical block grant scheme in five bottom up district.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE THE SIP PROCESS

The main areas for improvement have been discussed with a core group of section officers in the DOE and the following series of actions are recommended in order to address the multiple weaknesses identified by them and the earlier the rapid appraisal exercise. The technical assistance required to support these recommendations are summarised in Section 8.0.

8.1 The core working group

While schools will be responsible for implementing all activities related to primary and secondary schooling, the resources available, the guidelines within which they will have to function, and the training provided to them will need to reflect the whole range of primary and secondary programme sub-components. Currently, different DOE sections are responsible for delivery of different components and these are often implemented with little reference to another sections' activities. This is inefficient and does not maximise the effective use of scarce resources, such as local level trainers or resource people. For example, a focus on gender and ethnicity within the programme is currently provided through a separate unit and separate activities, not mainstreamed through the whole programme. A SIP will need to include these foci in order to be within Government frameworks. Hence, there is a need to coordinate the delivery of programmes within the SIP and a closer working relationship should be encouraged between the sections. Representation of all sections on a core working group could be the start of this closer collaboration with regular professional updating integrated into the way they work.

The DOE should set up a core working group to include primary and secondary representatives, capable of making joint decisions on a common way forward. A regular time slot for coordination meetings should be agreed, maybe once a month. It should also be available on an ad hoc basis to work on specific policy and strategy issues, but with consistent membership to ensure continuity and the development of institutional memory. A team leader should be agreed named located within the DOE to take responsibility for ensuring that meetings take place, to chair meetings, and to take recommendations forward and ensure their implementation.

8.2 SIP Design

The core working group should be responsible for the design of the revised SIP programme. The design will be comprehensive and include consideration of: personnel requirements, nature of the training/capacity building activities, training needs, other dissemination activities, materials and other resource requirements, location of training, school team structures, and means of monitoring outcomes. The plans will need to accommodate the different needs of a range of schools including small primary only schools, large secondary schools, remote locations and urban/metropolitan area schools. Additional materials that outline different modalities have been provided in addition to the description in Annexe 4.

8.3 SIP implementation

The SIP will ultimately be implemented at school level. However, in order to get to the stage where schools can effectively construct their own school plans many prior steps are required. These are outlined below.

8.3.1 Strengthening of Resource Centres and Resource Persons

The HRD report provides a comprehensive list of activities required in order to professionally strengthen the resource centres (RC) and the skills of the resource persons (RP). The following consolidated list of activities is considered to be essential in strengthening both the institution and the personnel.

- a. Establishment of a pool of expert trainers, skilled in participatory methodologies. It is anticipated that there will be significant number of training activities taking place on a continuing basis in RC catchment area schools and related bodies. This pool of people would be available on an ad hoc basis. It is suggested that the pool might include: NGO resource people; retired head teachers; experienced local residents; SEDU or PTTC trainers. *No technical assistance required but the DOE would be responsible for the ensuring each RC established a pool of expert trainers.*
- b. Provision of **generic training skills** to the RP and the pool of trainers. This will include: facilitation skills; training materials preparation; practical social analysis skills; and monitoring and evaluation. *(Some technical assistance will be required through independent TOT providers.*
- c. It is anticipated that the training of these trainers for a range of SIP related training will, over time, increase the capacity and skills of the pool of trainers in the RC, and of the RP.
- d. Note that there will be a need for a continuing staff development policy, as the pool of trainers will not be static, and not all those in the pool will prove to be effective or dedicated. An annual cycle of training events should be instituted. This will become an institutionalised activity and local trainers will undertake this regular, annual cycle of training.
- e. A question remains unanswered as to who will be the main providers of TOT for the specific training programmes, which will eventually take place. A possibility exists to identify suitable Regional Education Directorate officers to take on this role or through the NCED PTTC decentralised route. The DEO has a considerable workload and this is likely to increase, as they will be responsible for the monitoring and supervision of the implementation of the SIPs and the block grants. The advantage of regional trainers of trainers is that the training events can be decentralised and made more relevant to the local level, recognising the differing needs and ‘baselines’ of the regions. They will also be in a good position to coordinate the training events, which subsequently take place at school or VDC level. If this recommendation is accepted these core trainers will require training themselves, probably taking part in the generic skills training events outlined above. *Some technical assistance will be required through independent TOT providers.*

8.3.2 Resource centre supplied training for VECs and SMCs

- a. In order to develop VEC training/orientation there will need to be a review of existing training materials followed by a revision of training materials, including handbook of rules and regulations, and facilitators training notes. The key trainers will train members of the RC pool to run the orientation and guidance/training of VECs at resource centres.

- b The SMC formation, orientation and training process will include a two day TOT delivered by key trainers to members of the RC training pool. The final part of this TOT will be the planning of SMC training, taking the training as close as possible to the SMC not bringing them to RCs (in a few cases the RC will be the closest and most convenient location).

The content of the training for trainers should include: orientation and guidance on how to implement the rules and regulations; an introduction to the SIP and their role in its production; planning the timing for the SIP training and selection of representatives to take part in the training with other members of a school-community team.

To support this training materials will need to be introduced including a handbook of rules and regulations; posters and flip charts; facilitators training notes

The SMC orientation programme will include 4 SMCs in each training. Similar schools should be represented in each training i.e. SMCs from primary only schools together, LSS together, SS together etc.

The location of training: at a school central to their location (a cluster of schools). One of these will be at an RC, but most will not. The training should go to the schools not the school representatives to the training.

Some technical assistance will be required through a national sub-district local consultant and international consultants with experience in school management, school development/micro planning in their overall TOR and experience requirements. Note that this activity can take place at the same time as the SIP training development process.

8.3.3 Resource centre supplied training for school in the SIP process and practice

The SIP process and practice training will involve 4 school teams in each training. This three-phase activity will include

- Two days training in school improvement planning
- A community education mela in each school location to introduce the concept and conduct a social analysis with focal groups to determine the local vision and local education priorities
- Final plan production
- Once the plan is produced a further community event will be held to give ownership to the plan after which the plan should be publicly displayed.

To support these activities the RC training pool will need to be trained and materials developed. The final session will be determining optimal team composition for their own locations and the schools to be included (which will vary depending on the size and nature of the school, and the school location), and the location for the training. As with the SMC training this will be as close to the centre point of the schools involved as possible.

Field support and monitoring will be combined with training pool trainers to be involved in two activities.

- Monitoring of training 1: trainers to assess the process taking place at school level, and provide additional support where necessary.
- Monitoring of training 2: key milestones identified in the individual SIP and used to monitor progress by the school and the community. Public display of process indicators.

Some technical assistance will be required through a national sub-district local consultant and international consultants with experience in school management, school development/micro planning in their overall TOR and experience requirements Plus a further monitoring and revision input during the early stages of the implementation of the programme proper. Note that this activity can take place at the same time as the SMC training development process.

8.4 Activities to support and consolidate the SIP process

8.4.1 Gender/ethnicity training

Gender/ethnicity training, or orientation, is advisable as an early activity for all levels of staff within the education system. VECs, SMCs, headteachers, and teachers will be provided gender/ethnicity training as an integral component of the VEC, SMC, SIP and HTT integrated development package.

However, prior to this all trainers will require specialist training, and at the policy and planning level within the MOES, DOE, and district an awareness of gender concerns and some strategies to redress current imbalances is desirable. This integrated activity will include: materials and design development and central level, regional and district workshops. Essentially this must be a practical exercise leading to improved practice institutionally. Specific and felt needs and concerns should be addressed in the sessions which must therefore have flexibility built into their design and be responsive to those expressed concerns. *Some technical assistance will be required through a national sub-district local consultant school development/micro planning international consultant with gender training/ethnicity statements included in their overall TOR and experience requirements.*

8.4.2 Headteacher training

There will be a need to review of headteacher training (HTT) content, materials and methods and add or re-orientate content relating to SIP in appropriate sections of the HTT curriculum. This should include strengthening of the finance management section and introduction to new rules and regulations in the bottom-up pilot districts. An assessment needs to be made on whether headteachers will need a separate short training on finance management.

Some technical assistance will be required through a national sub-district local consultant and a school management international consultant with appropriate statements included in their overall TOR and experience requirements.

8.4.3 Finance management training and guidance

The introduction of the block grant system will have considerable implications for managing large sums of money for a complex set of activities. Finance management will need to be included in the SMC training, and in the SIP training (as part of an advisory handbook orientation sessions).

DDCs, DEC, DEOs, VDCs and VECs will require orientation and guidance on the new rules and regulations. We do not make any separate recommendations on how this should be conducted. It is assumed that this will be organized as part of a wider orientation process for the decentralization strategy. However, the need for consistency, clarity and transparency is essential if the SMCs and schools are to fairly access all available funds and other resources from the Government.

8.4.4 Communicating the changing context

Production of visually attractive materials to support training programmes: if the national priorities to address the needs of marginalized (disadvantaged communities) and women/girls are to be met it has to be assumed that SMCs will include non-literate members. In the wider community with current levels of literacy there are large sections of the population who cannot read. There are also areas of the country where Nepali is not the first language. Flip charts, posters, leaflets predom inantly using pictorial illustrations to guide the introduction of rules and regulations

Handbooks: Accessible, well-structured and easy to read separate handbooks for schools, VDCs and VECs and DEC's containing all the rules and regulation, all resources available and statements of government commitments to communities should be produced to accompany the SIP process.

Community mobilisation: consideration of the use of popular theatre, as well as posters and other publicity materials to contribute to dissemination of information about the decentralisation process and community involvement in schooling.

DEO orientation, and other district level officers: concise, clear and comprehensive information packs detailing all the changes, the roles and responsibilities of all officers and the obligations of the system towards them.

DEO orientation: In addition and separately, once the SIP training process has been determined and detailed the DEO and DEC will need to be informed of this process and their obligations towards its effective fulfilment (responding effectively and efficiently to demands from VECs/schools, monitoring of outcomes and collection of information). Supporting materials for this purpose are advisable.

Some technical assistance will be required through a commercial/NGO/multilateral organisation support in the design and production of visually stimulating materials. NGO support and advice for community mobilisation activities. DEO orientation should be linked to the SIP activities, and be supported by the LC and IC.

8.5 TA support to The DOE's school improvement planning programme 2002/3

The Department of Education has requested an assessment of the technical assistance that will be necessary to support the further development of the school improvement planning process recommended in Section 7.0.

It is the opinion of the consultants that process and implementation of school improvement planning will require a limited number of process inputs by international consultants, a more regular but clearly specified and scheduled inputs by a national consultant and some local support by national and local NGOs.

TA1	International school development/micro-planning consultant (3 months)
TA2	International school management consultant (3 months)
TA3	National sub-district implementation consultant (6 months) which would include facilitating the SIP core group meetings

Section	Action	Responsibility	Technical Assistance	
			National	International
8.1	Setting up the core working group	DOE	TA3	None
8.2	SIP design	DOE/ECECO	TA3	TA1,TA2
8.3.1	Strengthening RCs and RPs	DOE/ECECO	None	TOT providers
a	Establishing a pool of trainers	DOE/NCED	None	None
b	Provision of generic training skills	DOE/NGO	None	None
c	Increased capacity of RC trainers/ RP	DOE	None	None
d	Continuing staff development policy	DOE	None	None
e	Development of key trainers	DOE/ECECO	None	TOT providers
8.3.2	Training for VECs and SMCs	DOE/ECECO	TA3	TA1, TA2
8.3.3	SIP process and practice	DOE/ECECO	TA3	TA1, TA2
8.4.1	Gender ethnicity training	DOE/ECECO	TA3	TA1
8.4.2	Headteacher training	DOE/ECECO	TA3	TA2
8.4.3	Finance management	DOE/ECECO	TA3	TA2
8.4.4	Communicating changing context	DOE/ECECO	None	Local NGO

9.0 DEFINING THE SIP MODEL AND SIP FORMAT

In the wrap-up meeting with the Director-General of the Department of Education the problem of coordination and further development within a single model for school improvement planning and implementation was emphasised. With a number of Government offices and institutions being involved with SIP's through BPEP activities, emerging SESP activities and the SAP programme the need of an active Core Group meeting monthly to mainstream, develop, plan and monitor the programme is essential. The membership of this group under the chairpersonship of the DOE needs to be urgently formalised and regular meetings begun as soon as possible as the concept of school improvement planning is such an important platform at both the primary and secondary levels.

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