

Report on Baseline Data Collection on Deaf Education in Nepal

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WORLD FEDERATION OF THE DEAF



International
Disability



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Executive Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of this report is to share findings from a consultancy project for the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD), funded by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland through the International Disability Alliance, regarding inclusive and equitable quality education through the medium of sign language for deaf learners in Nepal. These recommendations are based on this report's review of literature and national and international policy regarding deaf education in Nepal, and analysis of data gathered during fieldwork in Kathmandu and Makwanpur, Parsa, Bara, and Chitwan Districts during March and April 2019, including recommendations from deaf and hearing educators, school administrators, and government authorities.

The objective of these recommendations is to orient the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education in the medium of sign language, and of sections 3, 4, and 5 of Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which call for learning of sign language in tandem with promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community; the deliverance of education in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual; and the employment of teachers, including teachers with disabilities, who are qualified in sign language. The recommendations are in keeping with Nepali legislation in the form of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act and 2015 Constitution. Reference is also made to the CRPD Committee's (2018) recommendations regarding establishment of a sign language research centre and greater support for trained teachers and Nepali Sign Language (NSL).

In line with the disability rights movement's motto of "Nothing about us without us," these recommendations are intended to promote the utilization and maintenance of Nepal's existing resources and expertise in the form of experienced teachers, school administrators, deaf schools, and deaf associations.

Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners. Deaf learners' right to NSL-medium education should be upheld and funds allocated to support free education and residential accommodation for all students.

Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children. Educational policy should clearly state that NSL-medium education for deaf children with signing peers and teachers is part of an inclusive education system. Nepal's existing network of deaf schools needs to be supported and maintained as part of an inclusive education system that provides NSL-medium education. However, a range of educational settings and placements for deaf learners, including attendance at neighborhood schools and co-enrolment models like those described in this report, will be supported and enhanced by improved teacher preparation, provision of accommodations such as NSL-proficient teachers and interpreters for deaf students in mainstream schools, and parent sign language learning.

Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training. This training should focus on the provision of NSL-medium education, where the language of instruction is a native signed language, or NSL, and written Nepali is taught as a second language in addition to English and other tribal or indigenous languages. This training program may be housed at the Central Secondary School for the Deaf, Kathmandu,

which currently provides a B.Ed. program for deaf postsecondary students. Training should include courses in the following areas:

- NSL-medium education principles and pedagogy;
- deaf social practices, values, and histories in Nepal;
- sign language linguistics;
- literacy frameworks for deaf learners (e.g., visual processing strategies; a top-down reading model; critical pedagogy);
- early childhood education;
- differentiated instruction.

The training program should be offered with financial support where needed for both pre-service teacher candidates and in-service teachers from across Nepal to enable both groups to develop their skills and knowledge. This program may eventually lead to the establishment of a Master's level program at Tribhuvan University or another university in Nepal.

Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach. A teacher licensure exam and teaching observation for NSL-medium education teacher candidates should relate to NSL-medium education competencies and NSL skills, and be offered in a NSL and written Nepali format in cooperation with higher education authorities.

Recommendation 5: Implement affirmative action policies for pre-service and in-service deaf teachers. Such policies should enable deaf candidates to receive teaching jobs and be eligible for teaching upper grades (including “plus 2” and university classes) and promotion to school administrative positions, such as principal. These policies are also intended to help ensure experienced deaf teachers without teaching licensure do not lose their jobs and can receive further training leading to NSL-medium education teacher licensure.

Recommendation 6: Recruit and train deaf instructors for a NSL-medium education teacher-training program. Deaf instructors should be recruited from the pool of qualified deaf Nepali teachers with B.Ed. and M.Ed degrees and teacher licensure. Further training for deaf instructors may be held in collaboration with sign language-medium education researchers and practitioners from other countries and tailored to the needs of Nepali teachers.

Recommendation 7: Recruit and train deaf residence counselors. Deaf residence counselors (or wardens) should receive training in child and youth care and developing recreational and educational programming for meeting the needs of residence students. This training should be provided in sign language and may be provided in the form of workshops and courses at deaf schools or other entities.

Recommendation 8: Provide intensive NSL courses for hearing teachers and teacher candidates. These courses should be offered as part of the NSL-medium education teacher-training program and in partnership with deaf associations across Nepal as part of teachers' continuous development.

Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children. To begin with, classes should be provided at deaf schools across Nepal. Training of early childhood educators should be supported by a NSL-medium education teacher-training program.

Recommendation 10: Provide specialized NSL courses and/or home visiting services for parents of deaf children. Parent NSL courses and/or home visiting services to families with young deaf children should be established in different regions of the country, in partnership with deaf schools and deaf associations and with financial support from the government.

Recommendation 11: Provide NSL-medium education for deaf students in mainstream school resource classes. Students in mainstream schools should be taught by teachers with native-like NSL proficiency and who have been trained in a NSL-medium education approach. Students in these settings should also have access to NSL-using peers.

Recommendation 12: Provide deaf learners with adult literacy classes. Deaf adult learners should have access to Nepali and English literacy classes in the medium of NSL. These classes should enhance preparation for university studies and/or employment, and should be provided by deaf schools and deaf associations with government funding.

Recommendation 13: Provide deaf learners with further opportunities for university studies. Deaf students' access to a range of university courses should be supported by provision of qualified NSL interpreters. Deaf students' access to university studies will support research and training in NSL-medium education.

Recommendation 14: Provide access to education for out-of-school deaf children and youth. Schools should admit deaf children regardless of age and support their learning of NSL, written Nepali and other languages, and curricular content.

Recommendation 15: Support the development of further resources for NSL-medium education. Deaf teachers and deaf associations should form an NSL curriculum team for the development of NSL curricula and video resources, including resources for early childhood, with financial support from the Ministry of Education.

Recommendation 16: Support research in NSL-medium education and training of deaf researchers. There should be training of deaf researchers and further study of best practices in NSL-medium education and NSL teaching and learning. This training and research may take place through a sign language research centre and/or in cooperation with the Open Institute for Social Science, Kathmandu.

Purpose

Summary

The purpose of this project is to collect data on deaf education in Nepal for the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD). The main objective of this consultancy, funded by the International Disability Alliance (IDA), is to prepare a report to provide evidence on deaf people's access to inclusive and equitable quality education in Nepal on an equal basis with others, to orient the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 4 and Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The data collection also supports the Inclusive Education Task Team of the IDA. IDA's financial participation in the project is sponsored by a grant provided to the WFD from the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom and Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland.

About WFD:

The WFD is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) representing and promoting approximately 70 million deaf people's human rights worldwide. The WFD is a federation of deaf organisations from 122 nations; its mission is to promote the human rights of deaf people and full, quality and equal access to all spheres of life, including self-determination, sign language, education, employment, and community life. WFD has a consultative status in the United Nations and is a founding member of IDA.

Background:

From WFD's perspective, the implementation of Article 24 of the CRPD to provide education through the medium of sign language has not been sufficiently understood and documented. The trend of implementing inclusive education has not necessarily taken measures to provide education in sign language environments nor through the medium of sign language. The WFD (2018) has published the Position Paper on Inclusive Education to address the current situation.

The objective of the baseline data collection in Nepal is to produce evidence regarding deaf people's access to inclusive and equitable quality education through the medium of sign language on an equal basis with other learners, to orient the implementation of SDG 4 in compliance with the CRPD. The report is intended to be used as a model on data collection on education through the medium of sign language and become an advocacy tool for national associations of the deaf in Global South countries using Nepal as a model.

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to share findings from a consultancy project for the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) regarding inclusive education for deaf learners in Nepal, with reference to the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (which includes the Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs) and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). SDG 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, corresponds with Article 24 of the CRPD regarding the right to education for persons with disabilities. Achievement of these goals is linked to Nepal's overall aim to move from being a least-developed country to becoming a middle-income country by the year 2030 (Cosic, Dahal, & Kitzmuller, 2017).

Concerning deaf people's access to inclusive and equitable quality education in Nepal on an equal basis with others, there has been a need to gather and analyze data regarding deaf learners' access to education that facilitates learning of sign language and promotion of a positive deaf identity as outlined in Article 24(3)(b). There has also been a need to ensure education is delivered in the most appropriate languages in environments that maximize learners' academic and social development as per Article 24(3)(c). This report sought to gather and analyze data in relation to the situation of deaf and hearing teachers in Nepal, with reference to Article 24(4) and (5) regarding taking appropriate measures to employ teachers with disabilities who are qualified in sign language, providing training to professionals and staff, and ensuring persons with disabilities have access to tertiary education. These provisions will ensure the orientation of SDG 4.

Nepal has a pattern of projects involving multilingual education that are funded by external donor agencies and that aim to strengthen capacity and provide model schools and networks (Fillmore, 2019; Taylor, 2010a). For instance, when the Maoist government came to power in 2007, with support provided by the government of Finland it introduced a multilingual education project in order to support the capacity of indigenous or tribal communities to provide first-language education and culturally relevant pedagogy (Taylor, 2010b). As part of this project, the National Centre for Educational Development prepared teacher-training manuals in multiple languages (Taylor, 2010b). In 2019, in relation to the government of Nepal's commitment in its 2015 Constitution to maintaining and promoting linguistic diversity and indigenous languages in education, the government's Language Commission and Volunteer Services Overseas Nepal partnered to implement a mother tongue-based multilingual education project in two rural municipalities (Fillmore, 2019).

Nepal has been dependent on donor agencies for as much as half of its educational budget (Taylor, 2010a), and the overall quality of education has been poor (Cosic et al., 2017). Various reasons for Nepal's history of poverty are outlined in Cosic et al.'s (2017) World Bank report, including being a landlocked country with underdeveloped infrastructure and unstable governments. The National Federation of the Deaf Nepal (NDFN) has received funding from the Danish Association of the Hard of Hearing, the Swedish Organization of Disabled Persons International Aid Association, the Swedish National Association of the Deaf, and Deafway from the U.K. (Green, 2014). British and Swedish organizations, among others, provided funding for NDFN's Nepali Sign Language (NSL) standardization project (Graif, 2018; Hoffmann, 2008). Norwegian deaf associations have provided similar support (Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011). Many schools for the deaf have been reliant on NGO funding (Hundley, 2011). During the researcher's March 2019 visit, it was observed that several NSL dictionaries have been published by NDFN with support from Australian Aid,

and in April 2019 the researcher visited the Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School in Hetauda that has also received funding from this organization. During the visit to the Hetauda school, the principal stated that following the 2015 earthquake, Plan International provided support for rebuilding the school which had been damaged. Deafway (2018) provided similar support for rebuilding a deaf school in Sindhali. A deaf sign language teacher in Hetauda stated that Plan International paid him to teach sign language to a hearing teacher of a deaf resource class in Bara District. Thus, the support of international charities and NGOs has been visible in Nepali deaf education.

Acharya (1997), Hoffmann-Dilloway (2011) and Graif (2018) describe attitudes toward deaf people in Nepal as being shaped by hearing people's cultural perceptions, including stigma attached to deafness. As a consequence, some families with deaf children have hidden their children from public view, thereby exacerbating linguistic isolation (Hoffmann, 2008). After the 1950s, these attitudes to some extent were alleviated by the influence of international NGOs (Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011). Deaf people are commonly referred to as *lāto*, or dumb/mute, but deaf communities in Nepal prefer the term *bahira*, which refers to lack of hearing (Acharya, 1997; Graif, 2018). In her study of villages with deaf people in eastern Nepal, Green (2014) writes that she did not observe deaf people being stigmatized in a religious sense, but negative attitudes of governments and policymakers, and anecdotes of families hiding their deaf children were reported during the researcher's 15 March and 16 April 2019 workshops with government representatives, teachers, and school administrators, and during school visits of 17-19 April.

This report has two parts. Part I contains a literature review, supplemented by data from fieldwork, summarizing background information regarding education, language, and the role of deaf associations in Nepal. Following this is a discussion of Nepali and international policy and practices related to sign language-medium education for deaf learners. Part II contains a description and analysis of baseline data gathered in Kathmandu from 10-15 March 2019 and in Kathmandu, Makwanpur, Parsa, Bara, and Chitwan Districts from 17-19 April 2019. These findings are linked to recommendations for achieving SDG 4 for deaf learners in Nepal in line with Article 24 of the CRPD.

Part I. Background

Education.

Deaf schools.

The first school for the deaf in Nepal, *Bahira Balak ko School-Kathmandu*, was established in 1965. It was first known as the Speech Instruction Centre for Deaf Children and was located in Bir Hospital before moving to Bal Mandir in Naxal, a neighbourhood in central Kathmandu (Acharya, 1997; Green, 2014). Later known as the Central Secondary School for the Deaf, along with the Kathmandu Association of the Deaf (KAD) whose office is close by, this school is said to be the origin of NSL. The flourishing of NSL took place even though the Central Secondary School followed an oralist philosophy when it was founded, until 1988 when it adopted a Total Communication philosophy involving production of spoken Nepali along with signs in Nepali word order (Acharya, 1997; Green, 2014; Hoffmann, 2008; Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011). Four other deaf schools were established in the same time frame in Surkhet, Bhairahawa, Saptari, and Dharan (NDFN, 2019a). While mainly hearing persons have been in charge of deaf schools, mainly deaf people run deaf associations, which have maintained close ties with deaf schools (Green, 2014; Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011).

During the researcher's 10-11 March meetings with NDFN representatives and school officials, it was stated that the Central Secondary School for the Deaf was the first deaf school in Nepal to establish a high school for deaf students and provide vocational training. Since 2013, it has also provided a B.Ed. program for deaf students in the form of night classes including the subjects of population studies, English, and Nepali. As school officials stated during the 11 March meeting, in the ten years leading up to the founding of the B.Ed. program, there was discussion about where it should be located. Because of the need to provide residential accommodation for deaf students, the B.Ed. program is housed at the Central Secondary School.

Beside the Kathmandu school, three other deaf schools in Pokhara, Baglung, and Bhairahawa currently offer a "plus 2" or classes 11 and 12 program. During the 10 March meeting, NDFN representatives stated that six deaf schools go to class 10, while the rest may only go to class 5 or class 8 (Hundley, 2011). On 19 April, during an interview with Chitwan deaf association and NDFN representatives, it was explained that in the past, classes 1-3 were known as pre-primary education; classes 3-5 were primary education; classes 6-8 were lower secondary education; classes 9-10 were secondary education; and classes 11-12 were "plus 2." Nowadays, classes 1-8 are known as basic education and classes 9-12 as secondary education, while early childhood development or ECD is for children aged from three to four.

Deaf children in Nepal, like other children, often do not begin attending school until age 5 (although many children may begin school later than this), and their parents generally do not receive services to support learning of sign language, although some schools and deaf associations may provide NSL classes for parents. Therefore, addressing young deaf children and their parents' need for sign language learning as well as ECD is a central concern for improving access to equitable and inclusive quality education in the medium of sign language. As Bhandari (2017) describes, ECD or pre-primary classes have not been widely available across Nepal, especially in rural areas, and social gaps have been created by government-funded versus private kindergartens, which focus on English-medium instruction. Pre-primary classes for four- and five- year-olds have been school-based, while ECD classes for three- and four-year-olds have been community-based. Private kindergartens may offer early childhood education for children under the age of three (Bhandari, 2017). However, as reported by participants during 15 March and 16 April workshops

with hearing educators and educational authorities, ECD has not been widely available to deaf children in Nepal. Bhandari (2017) cites a Department of Education report that found 0.21% of disabled children are enrolled in ECD. In addition, there has been insufficient training for early childhood educators (Bhandari, 2017). **See Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children.**

Although free education in sign language for citizens with hearing or speaking impairment is guaranteed in s. 31(4) of the 2015 Constitution, and children with disabilities are entitled to social security benefits including disability cards and scholarships, some parents of students at government-run schools have been asked to pay school fees, including residential fees (Human Rights Watch, 2011). This observation was also stated by NDFN representatives during 10-11 March meetings. During the researcher's visits to a deaf school and resource classes outside of Kathmandu on 17-19 April, lack of school funding was reported for teacher salaries; classrooms; student transportation; residential facilities (including beds, tables, and benches); sign language tuition for deaf students and hearing teachers; and interpreters. On 18 April, it was reported by school officials for resource classes in Parsa and Bara Districts that parents have no money to send their children to the closest deaf school (despite the proclamation of a free education in sign language). **See Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners.**

Resource classes.

In 1990, the government of Nepal established resource classes for deaf children in mainstream schools (NDFN, 2019a). On its website, Gallaudet University (n.d.) lists 16 schools for deaf students in Nepal, but Hundley (2011) says there are at least 18 deaf schools and 133 deaf resource classes in the 75 districts of Nepal. On several occasions during the researcher's March and April 2019 visits to Nepal, it was stated that there are 22 deaf schools; during a 15 March meeting with school administrators and government representatives, it was stated there are 174 resource classes and 21 deaf schools.

Hundley (2011) states deaf resource classes are of two types: self-contained, where deaf learners of various ages stay with the same teacher all day in the same classroom, and inclusive, where deaf learners attend classes with nondeaf peers for part of the day and receive remedial instruction in NSL for the other part. In so-called inclusive resource classes, teachers may also serve as interpreters and educational assistants in mainstream classrooms. However, during 18 April visits to three schools with resource classes, only self-contained classes with students of various ages were observed. In one school in Bara District, the resource class educates deaf students in classes 1-5, and deaf students in classes 6-8 attend classes with nondeaf peers, with no accommodations or teachers of the deaf provided for deaf students in these classes. **See Recommendation 11: Provide NSL-medium education for deaf students in mainstream school resource classes.**

Many deaf resource classes, as well as deaf schools, provide residential facilities for students (Green, 2014). As observed during the April 2019 workshop with hearing teachers, school administrators, and government representatives and school visits, these are often referred to as hostels and are often not free to deaf students, but deaf students may receive a disability scholarship to help cover part of the cost of hostel accommodation. As stated during the researcher's visit to a resource class in Parsa District on 18 April, the disability scholarship provides 4,000 NPR per month. According to Green (2014), many deaf

resource classes are residential facilities taught by a single hearing teacher. Therefore, deaf schools with residential facilities may be better positioned to provide a sign language environment. On 11 March, a NDFN board member stated that the Central Secondary School has begun to hire deaf residence counselors (or wardens). However, at the Hetauda deaf school that the researcher visited on 17 April and at each of the three resource classes that were visited on 18 April, a cook (a nondeaf person) is responsible for taking care of all children. At two of the schools with resource classes, all deaf children sleep and eat together in one room, while at the third school with a resource class, the hostel is for both deaf students and students with learning disabilities who share accommodations. **See Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners and Recommendation 7: Recruit and train deaf residence counselors.**

Deaf and hearing teachers.

Green (2014) reports that the numbers of deaf teachers appear to have risen in the past decade, a reflection of more deaf learners passing the Secondary Education Examination (formerly known as the School Leaving Certificate). By passing this exam, an individual can enter the “plus 2” system, which is similar to a combination of upper high school grades and community college (Green, M., personal communication, February 22, 2019) and equivalent to classes 11 and 12. Completion of “plus 2” in turn enables individuals to study for a B.Ed. degree. During the 16 April workshop with hearing teachers, school administrators, and government authorities, it was stated by the B.Ed. program principal at the Central Secondary School that approximately 150 deaf students have graduated from the B.Ed. program and more than 600 from “plus 2.” However, deaf individuals have experienced some difficulties in writing teacher licensure exams (Green, M., personal communication, February 22, 2019), and this issue also surfaced repeatedly during the researcher’s March and April 2019 visits. During a 10 March meeting, it was stated by NDFN representatives that no deaf Nepalis possess a Master’s or doctoral degree, but on 15 and 19 April the researcher met two deaf teachers who stated they are studying for Master’s degrees. **See Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training and Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach.**

Approximately 74% of teachers of the deaf in Nepal are hearing and receive only rudimentary training in NSL (Hundley, 2011). Green (2014) reports that hearing teachers may receive from 10 days to 6 months of training in NSL. During the 15 March workshop with hearing educators and educational authorities, it was stated that teachers may receive 15 days of training in sign language. On 18 April, a resource class teacher reported to the researcher that they received 4 months of sign language tuition. According to Hoffmann-Dilloway (2008, 2011) and Hundley (2011), most teachers in Nepali deaf schools teach by producing standardized NSL signs following Nepali word order (this can also be termed Total or Simultaneous Communication, or signed Nepali). This practice restricts the range of instructional techniques employed in the classroom, with most teachers relying on lectures, one-on-one explanations, or bookwork for their students (Hundley, 2011), instead of sustained dialogue or child-centered instruction. However, some deaf schools have a higher proportion of deaf teachers who can implement a bilingual pedagogy where NSL is the language of instruction and Nepali is taught in its written form (Hundley, 2011).

Hoffman (2008) has argued that teaching in signed Nepali occurs in part due to government and educator perceptions that NSL is the same language as Nepali, albeit in a different modality. Deaf schools in Nepal have been required to state their language of instruction is Nepali in order to prepare their students to

take the Secondary Education Examinations, and Nepali is also the primary language of instruction in most schools for hearing learners (Hoffmann, 2008, p. 113). Deaf schools follow the same government curriculum as other schools (Hundley, 2011). Deaf sign language teachers may instruct new hearing teachers of the deaf in signed Nepali rather than NSL, thereby reinforcing monolingual instructional practices (Hoffmann, 2008, p. 136). However, NSL-medium education promotes deaf learners' academic proficiency in written Nepali (Cummins, 2006). **See Recommendation 8: Provide intensive NSL courses for hearing teachers and teacher candidates.**

Language.

Multilingualism.

Nepal has approximately 122-140 ethnic spoken languages in a population of 30 million people, and over half of the population speaks a language other than Nepali, the official language, as their first language (Graif, 2018; Hoffmann, 2008; Taylor, 2014; Turin, 2005). Turin (2014) notes that “in Nepal, the continued vibrancy of minority mother tongues has been associated with their remote and sequestered status” (p. 375), and multilingualism is common (Turin, 2005). However, many indigenous or tribal languages are severely endangered (Turin, 2005). Before 1991, Nepali-medium education was mandatory for all learners in line with the then-monarchy's one nation-one language policy that aimed at eliminating other languages beside Nepali and that held power for over 240 years (Taylor, 2010a, 2010b; Turin, 2005). In 1991, a new constitution recognized the right to mother-tongue education in the primary grades (Taylor, 2010a), and this was strengthened by the 2007 Interim Constitution introduced by the newly elected Maoist government (Taylor, 2014). According to Turin (2005), the Maoist insurgency in Nepal, which lasted from 1996-2006, invoked indigenous or tribal peoples' right to mother-tongue education as part of its campaign. Under the 2015 Constitution, all mother tongues in Nepal are recognized as national languages, and all children in Nepal have the right to mother-tongue education. This right is linked to literacy development in minority languages as well as Nepali and thereby to poverty reduction (Taylor, 2014; Turin, 2005).

NSL and natural sign.

Using a Swadesh word list designed for sign language research, Woodward (1993) found that NSL belongs to the same language family as Pakistani Sign Language and Indian Sign Language. This finding was challenged by Zeshan (2003), who suggests regional varieties of Indo-Pakistani Sign Language may be used in the same three countries. However, related to descriptions of previously isolated deaf adults encountering signing deaf communities, several authors discuss the question of what constitutes NSL (Graif, 2018; Hoffmann, 2008). As Graif (2018) writes, deaf adults previously isolated from deaf communities and deaf persons who were directly involved with creating the NSL dictionaries represent two extremes of one pole, while most deaf people in Kathmandu fall somewhere in the middle. Many of these signers do not incorporate lexical items from the dictionaries in their utterances and yet communicate effectively (Graif, 2018). Graif states, “This question of shared knowledge runs through every register and every regional form of NSL. It foregrounds the problem of speaker competency because it makes the *content* of NSL unexpectedly hard to find” (p. 100, emphasis in original). Nonetheless, there is agreement by researchers that the NSL dictionaries represent standard NSL lexical items, which are taught in NSL classes (Graif, 2018; Hoffmann, 2008).

Green (2014) reports most deaf people in Nepal do not know NSL. The sign language varieties used by these individuals are termed “homesign” by Hoffmann (2008), “nonstandard sign” by Graif (2018), and “natural sign” by Green (2014). The latter author notes “natural sign” is “a limited repertoire of signs shared by deaf and hearing people” (Green, 2014, p. 1), and it is a term used in NSL to encompass a broad

range of communicative practices that extend beyond what is commonly understood in the literature as “home sign” (i.e., signing created by isolated deaf children in oralist homes). In part, this distinction between home sign and natural sign is because hearing individuals can also be involved in natural sign’s use and formation, and it is reportedly used in both rural and urban settings in Nepal. Natural sign is also distinct from so-called village sign languages used by deaf and hearing persons in signing micro-communities (Green, 2014), which are small communities often based on a labor economy and where deaf-hearing marriages are common (Burke, Snoddon, & Wilkinson, 2016).

Green (2014) explains that due to the circumstances of deaf life in Nepal, NSL signers “are particularly committed to ideals of standardization but at the same time highly flexible in their signing practices” (p. 17). From Green’s (2014), description, natural sign is more broadly used than NSL, and its users include both non-NSL signers and NSL signers communicating with people who do not know NSL. NSL is highly standardized in terms of lexicon, and NSL signers from around the country both understand each other and perceive themselves as using the same language (Green, 2014). NSL is often learned from deaf peers and teachers in formal educational contexts, while natural sign is learned in the home and community (Green, 2014). However, for deaf people in Nepal the communicative affordances and comprehensibility of NSL (including academic and decontextualized language) are much greater than those of natural sign. As well, the capacities of natural sign used by deaf people by far exceeds what is available to deaf signers by way of hearing people’s natural signing (Green, 2014). Green (2014) further distinguishes between “long sign,” or NSL that incorporates Nepali grammatical patterns, and “short sign,” which follows NSL’s own grammar.

Deaf community demographics.

Nepal has a comparatively large deaf population owing in part to prevalence of ear infections, but lack of infrastructure and many deaf people’s situation in rural areas means that many deaf people do not encounter each other until later in childhood or adulthood, if at all (Graif, 2018; Hoffmann, 2008). Hundley (2011) cites a 2007 study by the World Health Organization that estimated that 16% of the population in Nepal has a hearing loss, while the 2011 National Living Standards Survey found 23.4% of the population have hearing impairments (cited in Disability, Education and Development, 2019). Most deaf people are born into hearing families (Acharya, 1997). Green (2014, p. 177) reports that the 2011 census found 4,476 signers in a population of 88,743 deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind people, and that 5% of deaf people used a sign language. The 2011 census reported 717 urban signers and 3,759 urban signers. Graif (2018) suggests there are between 250,000 and one million deaf people in Nepal, but most do not attend school (Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011). During the 10 March meeting with NDFN representatives, it was reported that there is little research regarding numbers of deaf children or how many know sign language.

Deaf people who entered deaf schools relatively early in life and remained in contact with deaf associations after graduating are most proficient in signed and written languages (Hoffmann, 2008). Hoffmann-Dilloway (2008, 2011) reported that deaf people living in rural areas are often recruited by deaf organizations in their home villages and encouraged to relocate to urban areas with more deaf people and social services. Deaf people from rural areas who thus encounter NSL signers are often reluctant to return to their villages (Hoffmann, 2008, p. 128). However, during 18 and 19 April interviews with Makwanpur, Parsa, and Chitwan District teachers and deaf association board members, the researcher observed that returning home from Kathmandu and working to support deaf children, schools, and deaf communities in home villages and rural areas was important to these individuals.

Deaf associations.

In 1995, the National Federation of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was jointly established as a national umbrella organization by the Kathmandu Association of the Deaf (KAD), the first organization of deaf people to be formally founded in Nepal, and seven other regional deaf organizations. In 1992, the National Federation of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was renamed the National Federation of the Deaf Nepal (known as NDFN to distinguish it from the National Federation of the Disabled—Nepal, which has the acronym NFDN) (Green, 2014). The NDFN (2019b) website lists 44 regional member associations in seven provinces. The regional deaf associations host NSL classes for deaf and hearing people, while the NDFN oversees NSL standardization and dictionary production (Hoffmann, 2008). Historically, Deaf associations across Nepal have also published their own newsletters (Acharya, 1997).

NSL dictionaries.

NSL standardization projects led to the production in 2004 of the *NSL Dictionary* (Graif, 2018; Green, 2014; Hoffmann, 2008; NDFN, 2019a). A three-volume dictionary was previously produced in 1996-1997 (Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011). During the researcher's visit to Kathmandu in March 2019, NDFN presented a card printed with the International Sign alphabet, NSL fingerspelling (vowels, conjunct letters, and consonants), and NSL numbers; two children's NSL dictionaries; a NSL calendar; a calendar-style basic dictionary of NSL terms; and basic- and medium-level versions of the NSL dictionary. As NDFN secretary Surya Bahadur stated during a visit to the NDFN office on 11 March, the first three dictionaries became the fourth published dictionary, which evolved into the two basic- and medium-level dictionaries. The seventh, hardcover version of the NSL dictionary is organized to follow NSL handshapes. During an 18 April visit to a resource class in the Shree Devanandan Devraj Higher School, Ramnagari, Parsa District, three boys began teaching the researcher different signs from the children's NSL dictionaries in their classroom. These dictionaries were reported to have been delivered by the Parsa deaf association president from the NDFN office in Kathmandu. Thus, it was observed that the NSL dictionaries produced by NDFN are a resource in use at schools with deaf children. However, further NSL curriculum and resource development is needed for exemplary NSL learning. **See Recommendation 15: Support the development of further resources for NSL-medium education.**

NSL classes.

For deaf adults who did not previously attend a deaf school, NSL classes mark a site of entry into deaf communities (Hoffmann-Dilloway, 2011). Often, these classes are learners' first experience of formal education, and they provide an opportunity for deaf adults to meet and socialize (Green, 2014). This observation was borne out during an 19 April meeting with founding members of the Chitwan deaf association, who reported first having learned NSL via classes provided by other deaf associations. The KAD established the first NSL classes in 1990; similar classes are held at other district deaf association offices (Green, 2014). Outreach classes, lasting from between 6-10 months in local villages and typically taking place for a few hours in the mornings from Sunday-Friday, aim to teach deaf people who did not attend deaf schools (Green, 2014). These types of classes were established by NDFN in 1995 with support from the Danish Association of the Hard of Hearing. NSL classes typically teach NSL vocabulary and fingerspelling as well as the Nepali alphabet in Devanagari script (Green, 2014). Green (2014) reports that the Gandaki Association of the Deaf in Pokhara has offered mobile NSL classes for parents of deaf children, and the Central Secondary School for the Deaf has held classes for parents on site. Other deaf association projects have focused on supporting deaf women from rural areas and elderly deaf people (Green, 2014).

See Recommendation 12: Provide deaf learners with adult literacy classes and Recommendation 10: Provide specialized NSL courses and/or home visiting services for parents of deaf children.

Sign language-medium education for deaf learners

Sign language-medium education in national and international policy.

The Nepali Education Act of 1971 historically defined special education as education for deaf children in addition to blind children and children with learning disabilities (cited in Disability, Education and Development, 2019; Committee on Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). In Nepal, this legal framing of deaf schools as special education may influence WFD's efforts to have sign language-medium education viewed as part of inclusive education (Kauppinen & Jokinen, 2014; World Federation of the Deaf, 2015). However, WFD's position that sign language-medium education is part of inclusive education is in accordance with the view of deaf associations in Nepal, which have invoked arguments for the right to mother-tongue education in NSL as a distinct language (Hoffmann, 2008). These arguments are aligned with the right to mother-tongue education that was provided to other indigenous or tribal minority-language children in Nepal as part of the 2007 Constitution that was enacted by the newly elected Maoist government to follow UNESCO's Education for All (2017) goals (Taylor, 2010a, 2010b) and in the successive 2015 Constitution.

However, there may be a tension between tribal peoples' mother-tongue education rights, which are linked to decentralized government and regional autonomy, and NDFN's advocacy for a centralized national standard for NSL-medium education (Graif, P., personal communication, March 1, 2019). This tension may have led to a refocusing of Nepali deaf community activism on a disability rights agenda following the CRPD and the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act, which mentions the right to sign language education (Graif, P., personal communication, March 1, 2019). In addition, Nepal is a member of the United Nations' Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which issued the Incheon Strategy (United Nations, 2012) for persons with disabilities. Goal 5 of the Incheon Strategy, to expand early intervention and education for children with disabilities, mentions "proportion of children who are deaf that receive instruction in sign language" (5.5) as a supplementary indicator for tracking progress.

The Nepali Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act closely follows the wording of the CRPD. Section 14.3 of the Act guarantees right to a cultural and linguistic identity based on deaf culture and sign language. Section 17.2 guarantees the right to government information and communications in sign language. Importantly, Section 21.6-7 guarantees the right to free education in the medium of sign language. Section 39 instructs the "Implementation Committee" for the Act to make interpreter services available and to lead research in and development of NSL (Graif, P., personal communication, March 7, 2019). However, this legislation does not mention the need to ensure teachers of deaf children are proficient in NSL.

The Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution includes the following:

31. Right to education (5) Every Nepalese community residing in Nepal shall have the right to get education in its mother tongue and, for that purpose, to open and operate schools and educational institutes, in accordance with law.

Section 31(4) of the Constitution mandates the right of visually impaired learners to receive instruction in Braille “and the citizens with hearing or speaking impairment, to get free education through sign language, in accordance with law.”

The Constitution makes special provision for the right to language and culture in the following section and in other sections related to social justice:

32. Right to language and culture: (1) Every person and community shall have the right to use their languages.

(2) Every person and community shall have the right to participate in the cultural life of their communities.

(3) Every Nepalese community residing in Nepal shall have the right to preserve and promote its language, script, culture, cultural civilization and heritage.

Another provision of the Government of Nepal’s (2015) Constitution regarding children’s rights bears relevance for deaf children’s sign language-medium education needs in congregated settings:

39. Right of children

(9). Children who are helpless, orphaned, physically impaired, victims of conflict and vulnerable, shall have the right to special protection and facilities from the State.

See Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal’s (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners and Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children.

Sign language-medium education in practice.

From grade 1 onwards, hearing children in Nepal learn Nepali and English in addition to their own first language (Taylor, 2010a). As Skutnabb-Kangas (1995) has noted, for multilingual education to be successful, the following principles should be implemented (adapted to correspond with best practices in NSL-medium education):

- The first language should be the main language of instruction;
- Children with the same first language should be grouped together, at least initially;
- High levels of bilingualism should be expected;
- Teachers should be fluent in the minority language;
- The second/foreign language should be taught through the medium of the child’s first language;
- The first and second language should both be compulsory school subjects (cited in Taylor, 2010a, 2010b).

As Taylor (2010b) notes, these principles are rooted in Cummins’ (1981, 2009) conception of conversational and academic language proficiency, and how continued growth in the first language is necessary to initiate and sustain academic proficiency in a second language. Depending on the sociolinguistic situation, academic proficiency in a second language can take as many as 10 years to develop, and the longer minority-language children are instructed in the first language, the greater their academic performance (Taylor, 2010b). These practices also correspond with Article 24(3) and (4) of the

CRPD related to promoting the learning of sign language; ensuring the education of deaf children is delivered in the most appropriate language and in environments that maximize academic and social development; and the employment of teachers qualified in sign language. Moreover, the above practices support continuous school attendance for all minority-language children. Dropout rates in primary grades have been a significant issue for indigenous or tribal minority-language children in Nepal, with as many as 50% of indigenous children previously dropping out in grade 1 (Taylor, 2010a, 2010b), and the issue is exacerbated in the case of children with disabilities who often have not attended school (Human Rights Watch, 2011; United Nations, 2016).

As Taylor (2010a) writes:

When children receive L1-based instruction, they do not experience linguistic/cultural blocks to their learning as they do not have gaps in their comprehension of lessons, do not require translation, etc. All children need L1-based curricula, textbook materials, source books, and support materials ... Another consideration is that assessment must be conducted in the language of instruction to attain valid measures of student learning (p. 147).

Although these issues are somewhat different for children who may not encounter NSL until they enter a deaf school, for deaf children instruction in NSL provides many of the same benefits as other L1-based instruction. Taylor (2010a, 2010b) recommends a funds-of-knowledge approach (Moll & González, 1997) wherein community groups can evaluate program and materials design in terms of their correspondence with community values and knowledge, and indigenize such designs where necessary in order to meet community needs. This approach means teachers regard learners from a position of strength rather than from a deficit perspective, and build on prior knowledge and language practices from learners' families and home communities. However, in the Nepali context indigenous or tribal teachers' and materials developers' prior knowledge should also be honoured (Taylor, 2010b). This point bears relevance for providing consultation regarding the provision of inclusive education for deaf learners in Nepal and how a range of possible educational models may already exist in and/or be adapted for this context (see Murray, Snoddon, De Meulder, & Underwood, 2018 for a list of different inclusive education models for deaf children). Providing professional development opportunities for deaf and hearing teachers and strengthening existing NSL resources and deaf community-school partnerships may better support deaf children's education.

Additionally, Taylor (2010b) suggests that depending on the context, curricula can incorporate local information on such topics as:

agriculture (local flowers, plants, trees and seeds), water distribution and management, animal care and veterinary medicine, home farm economy or home business economy, mechanics, carpentry, masonry, electrical appliances, indigenous/minority remedies, herbal cures and midwifery, biology and mathematics.

Moreover, learners can be encouraged to write and produce texts in their first language to expand the range of available resources (Taylor, 2010b). Similarly, sign language texts and literature may be expanded through deaf learners and teachers' use of video and digital technology. However, the implementation of multilingual education for hearing learners in Nepal has been impeded by lack of funding or resources for

adequate programming (Taylor, 2010b, 2014), an issue that may also impact deaf schools in Nepal that have grown up like “mushrooms” but that lack outreach and centralized oversight and teacher training (Hundley, 2011). As Taylor (2014) writes, some of this lack of resources may be politically motivated, but grassroots efforts from local communities can potentially overcome at least some of the difficulties with implementation.

Part II. Baseline data collection in Kathmandu, 10-15 March 2019

The researcher visited Kathmandu from 9-16 March and collected observational and interview data from 10-15 March 2019. During this week, the researcher participated in meetings between NDFN and WFD; visited the Central Secondary School for the Deaf and the NDFN offices; attended a three-day IDA meeting; and conducted workshops/focus group interviews with deaf teachers and association members and with hearing teachers and educational authorities. This section reports the researcher's activities and findings.

Meeting between NDFN and WFD on 10 March.

On 10 March, the researcher met with Kedar Prashad (KP) Adhikari and Surya Bahadur, who are respectively the president and general secretary of NDFN, along with Alexandre Bloxs, the WFD's Human Rights Officer. At this meeting, NDFN representatives expressed several concerns and goals for deaf education, including the desire that deaf candidates be able to complete teacher licensure exams (which were stated to be long and difficult) in sign language and the quality of deaf education be improved. The latter issue was linked by NDFN to the problem of hearing teachers' inadequate sign language proficiency, which is a pervasive concern in deaf education. NDFN representatives also expressed that deaf and disability organizations have different goals, and deaf organizations' main goal is sign language rights and sign language-medium education, which are not adequately addressed by disability groups. The representatives stated there were problems collaborating with the National Federation of the Disabled—Nepal (NFDN), the national disability umbrella organization, and that deaf associations were previously excluded from CRPD- and SDG-related training provided by the NFDN. **See Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children; Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach; Recommendation 8: Provide intensive NSL courses for hearing teachers and teacher candidates.**

However, as stated during this meeting and as observed during the same week, NDFN is active in terms of meeting with different government officials, representatives, and ministries in regard to different issues, including issues raised by the CRPD Committee's (2018) concluding observations on Nepal's initial report (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2015). Section 34 of the CRPD Committee's (2018) concluding observations recommended establishment of a sign language research centre and certification system for sign language interpreters, but aside from a reference in s. 36(a) to "providing support for trained teachers, Braille and sign language," this report did not refer to sign language-medium education for deaf students.

Visit to the Central Secondary School for the Deaf on 11 March (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Central Secondary School for the Deaf, Kathmandu.

[Image description: A three-storey, cream-coloured building with a pile of dirt and rubble outside the front doorway. A dark-coloured sign with white Nepali script rests on a ledge beneath a third-storey window.]

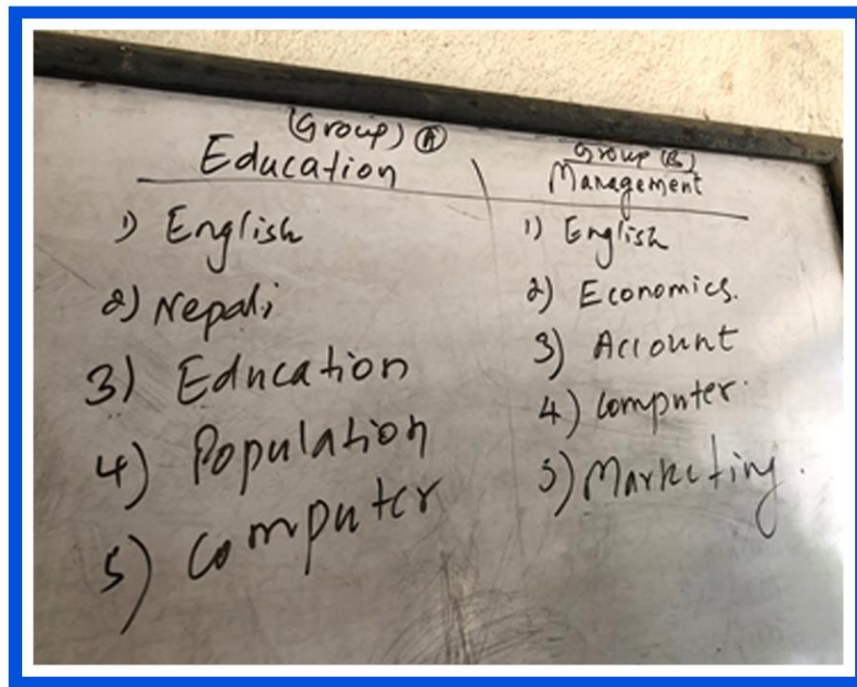


The researcher arrived at approximately 9.15am to visit classes 11 and 12, which met from 6.00-9.30am. Classes 1-10, some of which the researcher briefly visited, met from 10.00am-4.00pm, and B.Ed. classes (which were not observed) took place during the evening. School officials stated there are 388 students in total, with 215 boys and 173 girls, and 150 high school students. The school follows the Nepali government curriculum and employed 6 deaf teachers and 1 deaf aide along with 16 hearing teachers. However, only hearing teachers taught in the high school and B.Ed. programs. **See Recommendation 5: Implement affirmative action policies for pre-service and in-service deaf teachers.**

The school had 17 students in class 11 and 12 students in class 12. The classes were divided into two groups that respectively studied subjects related to education (English, Nepali, education, population studies, and computers); or subjects related to management (English, economics, accounting, computers, and marketing). Students chose the group they wished to study in. A school administrator wrote the list of available subjects and groupings on a whiteboard (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. List of subjects available for study in classes 11-12

[Image description: Part of a framed whiteboard with the two lists of Group A: Education and Group B: Management subjects handwritten in black marker.]



The researcher conducted a focus group interview with class 11 and 12 students, who were aged between 18 and 22, where students were asked about their previous educational experience. Some students had grown up attending the Central Secondary School, and other students had transferred to this school after attending other deaf schools that did not provide education beyond class 10. One girl stated that she had previously attended a mainstream school until class 10. Several students reported using natural sign to communicate with their families. The students stated their desire to continue their education via the B.Ed. program housed at the Central Secondary School. Finding a job, continuing with university studies, and skills development were mentioned as students' goals for their futures. Many students stated a desire to become teachers. When asked about problems they have had in their education, the students mentioned the need to further develop literacy skills. As one student stated, in the future after they graduate it will be difficult to communicate with hearing people without having good Nepali writing skills. **See Recommendation 12: Provide deaf learners with adult literacy classes and Recommendation 13: Provide deaf learners with further opportunities for university studies.**

Following an introduction to classes 1-10 via an outside assembly and brief visit to three elementary classes, a meeting was held with the Central Secondary School principal, Upendra Parajuli; the B.Ed. program principal, Rishi Devkola; and a deaf teacher and former WFD board member, Ramesh Lal Shrestha. In response to a question about the school's use of the government curriculum, it was stated that more research is needed regarding the suitability of this curriculum and whether and how it may be revised to meet the needs of deaf learners. As the Central Secondary School principal stated, children need a local curriculum that meets their needs, and the curriculum needs to be more flexible and deaf-friendly (this was a term that came up several times during the researcher's visit to Kathmandu). The B.Ed. principal remarked that deaf children should first be asked what they want in terms of a curriculum. He added that the B.Ed. program must teach deaf people so they will have jobs in the future. The deaf teacher, Ramesh

Lal Shrestha, stated that it is important to have deaf teachers and that their status should be equal to hearing teachers, as inscribed in law. More research in how to teach deaf learners is needed. **See Recommendation 16: Support research in NSL-medium education and training of deaf researchers.**

The Central Secondary School principal described a need for more funding for laptops and other equipment for deaf students to help with learning NSL. He felt deaf children should stay in residence for their optimal educational development. In response to a question about parents' feelings regarding children staying in residence, the principal stated parents of deaf children desire for their children to receive an education and be taught by other deaf people. He added that he has seen how in other countries, when children are born deaf their parents learn sign language. In Nepal, parents do not learn sign language. This must be developed by deaf associations to support more communication at home between deaf children and parents. The deaf teacher, Ramesh Lal Shrestha, added there is no funding to pay deaf people for teaching parents sign language, although in the past there was a project funded by a Denmark NGO. Ramesh added that good communication in sign language supports deaf children's literacy development. Currently, there is no funding or law related to teaching sign language to parents of deaf children. Although deaf children's sign language rights are recognized in legislation, there is no policy for how to implement these rights. **See Recommendation 10: Provide specialized NSL courses and/or home visiting services for parents of deaf children.**

Visit to the NDFN office on 11 March.

Following the researcher's visit to the Central Secondary School in the Naxal neighbourhood of Kathmandu, there was a visit to the NDFN offices in Putalisadak. This meeting included the NDFN treasurer, Bir Bahadur Bogati, and another board member, Arbind Chaudhary, who is originally from Saptari in Province No. 2, near the border with India. KP Adhikari presented a map of Nepal with 42 local deaf associations (although the NDFN website lists 44 associations) and explained Nepal has three regions: the Himalaya (mountain) area, the middle hill region, and the Terai region in the south (see Figure 3). The capital, Kathmandu, is in the hill region and has a comparatively good deaf school. KP Adhikari had wanted the researcher to visit deaf schools outside of Kathmandu so there was better understanding of the problems in deaf education in the rest of the country; thus, the researcher's April visit included several schools in rural areas. Arbind Chaudhary's former school in Sapturi was cited as an example. In this region, more deaf students attend mainstream schools where there are perhaps 100 hearing students and 10 deaf students in a given school with a deaf resource class. The hearing students are organized into different classes, but the deaf students are all in the same resource class where the teacher has inadequate sign language skills. The deaf school in this region has grown smaller, and government funding has declined due to the prevalence of mainstreaming. It was stated that mainstream education is bad for sign language and there is more sexual abuse of deaf children by hearing teachers because deaf children have less ability to communicate and report abuse. **See Recommendation 11: Provide NSL-medium education for deaf students in mainstream school resource classes.**

Figure 3. Map of Nepal with local deaf associations (NDFN, 2019b).

[Image description: A map of Nepal is divided by colour into 7 different provinces. Red flags mark the location of 42 different deaf associations.]



During this visit, it was stated there are 22 deaf schools in Nepal. However, when asked about problems in deaf education, KP Adhikari stated that Province No. 1 had one deaf school; Province No. 2 had two deaf schools; Province No. 3 (where Kathmandu is located) had seven deaf schools; Province No. 4 had five deaf schools; Provinces No. 5 and 6 both had two deaf schools; and Province No. 7 had none (totaling 19 schools). Mainstream education also exists in the different provinces. KP Adhikari added that the biggest problems are teachers' lack of sign language proficiency in addition to language deprivation of deaf children. Provision and funding of early childhood development (ECD) and parent sign language classes are needed. **See Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children and Recommendation 10: Provide specialized NSL courses and/or home visiting services for parents of deaf children.**

NDFN general secretary Surya Bahadur stated that about ten strong local deaf associations have taught NSL to deaf people aged between 15-17 who do not know sign language. He presented various dictionaries geared toward adults and children, a calendar, and a fingerspelling card produced by NDFN with support from the Nepali government and Australian Aid. Surya Bahadur stated that previously, deaf associations and schools met to discuss lexical items for inclusion in the dictionaries. The basic- and medium-level dictionaries include different signs for some of the same terms or concepts, reflecting regional variation in NSL. **See Recommendation 15: Support the development of further resources for NSL-medium education.**

Meeting with Peter Graif and Uttam Maharjan on 12 March.

On the morning of 12 March, the researcher met with Peter Graif and Uttam Maharjan from the Open Institute for Social Science, a research and teaching cooperative established to address the need for better research methods training for university students in Nepal. Most students at the Open Institute, which also employs Nepali people, have B.A. degrees; students receive diplomas following completion of research methods training. As discussed during this meeting, Nepal's education system emphasizes rote learning for both hearing and deaf learners, and this in turn influences how NSL is taught following a top-down process of standardization, dictionary production, and prescriptive teaching of vocabulary. Peter Graif suggested an experimental approach is needed for studying more effective methods of teaching sign language in deaf schools and as part of interpreter training. Skills development is needed in the Nepali deaf community so more people have both NSL proficiency and subject matter knowledge. **See Recommendation 13: Provide deaf learners with further opportunities for university studies and Recommendation 16: Support research in NSL-medium education and training of deaf researchers.**

When asked about problems facing deaf education in Nepal, Uttam Maharjan stated that some regions in the Himalayas have no deaf teachers or teaching materials, and it is dangerous for children to travel to attend school. In these regions, people often do not have cars and parents want children to stay home and help with farming and other work instead of going to school. As the principal of the Central Secondary School also reported, Uttam Maharjan stated more funding is needed to enable deaf children to stay in residence while they attend a deaf school. He mentioned the example of one individual from the Himalayas who attended the Central Secondary School and stayed in residence; she now has a B.Ed. degree. **See Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners.**

IDA Inclusive Education Flagship Initiative 2nd Technical Workshop on 12-14 March.

The half-day meeting on 12 March provided background information regarding the Disability Catalyst Programme for implementing the SDGs that is funded by IDA and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and led by disabled persons' organizations (DPOs). There has been a lack of evidence regarding what may work to achieve SDG 4 for inclusive quality education by 2030, including policy scenarios for meeting CRPD standards adjusted to the reality of low- and middle-income countries. There have been issues related to out-of-school children and the quality of school services and outcomes. DPOs were to make clear recommendations regarding how to achieve SDG 4 in line with the CRPD by the year 2030. Participants were divided by disability constituency for group work on key questions related to developing a best set of outcomes and required steps for meeting this.

During a group discussion for the deaf constituency, Surya Bahadur stated he wished deaf candidates could take the teacher licensure exam in sign language to ensure they can pass the exam and more deaf teachers are trained. Related to enacting the 2015 Constitution's enshrinement of deaf children's right to sign language, KP Adhikari mentioned the need for more research, materials, and teacher training in sign language. In Nepal, there is no special training for teachers of the deaf. He suggested a sign language research centre in line with the CRPD Committee's (2018) concluding observations. **See Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training; Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach; and Recommendation 16: Support research in NSL-medium education and training of deaf researchers.**

The group then discussed different models of deaf education. KP Adhikari stated that deaf children in Nepal are taught in one of two settings: a deaf school or a resource class in a mainstream school, where deaf children stay in residence and are housed in the same classroom with students of different ages and the same teacher. He felt deaf schools provide a better quality education than resource classes. However, KP Adhikari is president of a deaf school, the Dhaulagiri Deaf Residential Secondary School in Baglung that has a co-enrolment model where both deaf children and hearing children attend the same classes that are taught in sign language. This school provides classes 1-12 plus a computer diploma. KP Adhikari also stated that he felt the Central Secondary School in Kathmandu has too many responsibilities (i.e., providing classes 1-12 plus a B.Ed. program) and he feels perhaps five more deaf schools are needed. There is also a need for early childhood development programs for deaf children. **See Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children and Recommendation 11: Provide NSL-medium education for deaf students in mainstream school resource classes.**

On 13 March, different DPO constituency groups presented findings and recommendations. The deaf constituency group gave a presentation with background information about deaf education in Nepal and a road map for implementing SDG 4 by 2030. It became clear during this part of the workshop that other DPO constituency groups prefer mainstream education rather than the congregated settings with signing teachers and peers that NDFN and WFD advocate for as an important part of providing inclusive and equitable quality education in the medium of sign language. **See Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children.**

Workshops with deaf teachers and association members on 15 March.

Before the 15 March workshop, KP Adhikari stated that representatives were invited from the KAD, Bhaktapur deaf association, and Lalitpur deaf association along with six deaf teachers from the Central Secondary School, one deaf teacher from the Bhaktapur deaf school, and one deaf teacher from the Kavre deaf school. Two deaf Nepali people who had attended university in India were also invited. In attendance were the following individuals:

- Shikha Pradhan, who teaches sign language to deaf women in Lalitpur;
- Satya Devi Wagle, who is KAD president and a member of the Central Secondary School board of directors;
- Anju Gurung, a KAD board member and a teacher at the Jumla deaf school;
- Bir Badhadhur Gurung and Ramesh Lal Shrestha, teachers from the Central Secondary School;
- Dinesh Paneru, who is president of the Kailali deaf association and a board member for a new deaf school;
- Kul Prasad Bhattarai, a teacher from the Central Secondary School;
- Siddhartha KC, who has a B.Ed. and previously taught at a deaf school in India and is now a board member of the Bhaktapur deaf association;
- Bir Bahadur Bogati, Sobita Paudel, Yasoda Gautam, Sharada Shrestha, and Surya Bahadur from the NDFN board.

The researcher began by briefly introducing the goals of the research project, then asked the group three questions:

1. What are the main problems with deaf education in Nepal?
2. What are the good things?
3. What changes would you like to see?

The group divided into three smaller groups that discussed the questions and made a list of points. At the end of the workshop, these lists were given to NDFN for translation to English. There were common themes raised by all three groups that are summarized below.

Related to problems with deaf education, the groups described the following issues:

- **Problems with pedagogy:** Teachers do not facilitate active learning but follow a rote learning process. In resource classes, teachers do not focus on teaching the curriculum but instead provide students with mindless activities for passing the time. Instead of answering questions from deaf students, hearing teachers write on the board and have students copy what is written. Teachers do not make use of technology; they only write on the board.
- **Problems with policy:** There are no requirements for teachers of deaf students to be proficient in sign language. There is no standard ratio for how many students are assigned to each teacher. There are no standards in terms of residential facilities. There is no clear policy regarding whether deaf learners can attend a mainstream school if they wish to do so. In terms of disability scholarships, there is variable funding available and it is not clear who will receive a scholarship (if a student is poor but has ability, they may still not receive a scholarship).
- **Problems with administration:** School management committees do not meet regularly to discuss student needs. Hearing teachers and school management committee members tend to speak instead of signing during meetings.
- **Problems with accommodations:** From class 1 to university, there are no interpreters available for deaf students. Other disabled students, such as blind students, receive accommodations and extra time when writing exams, but deaf students are not provided with an interpreter and are therefore not able to ask questions during exams. Deaf students also do not receive extra time when writing exams. Due to lack of access, deaf students cannot choose from a broad range of subjects in higher education.
- **Problems with teacher training, hiring, and promotion:** The government does not focus on the quality of deaf education, and teachers of deaf students are often not qualified. Hearing teachers have inadequate sign language skills. They often begin learning sign language after they are hired. There is favouritism toward hiring hearing teachers, and when a teaching position becomes available there is an unfair hiring process. There is no teacher evaluation, teacher training, or professional development for teachers of deaf students. Deaf teachers lack opportunities for promotion and can only teach up to class 8, not at the high school or university level, and deaf teachers are not promoted to become school principals.
- **Problems with resources:** There are few sign language materials for teachers or students and a lack of teaching materials in general. Deaf schools, classrooms textbooks, and uniforms are not designed to meet the needs of deaf learners. There are limited options for courses and subjects for deaf students. Students do not receive training in how to use computers in schools. Classrooms and school infrastructure are not deaf-friendly. There is little use of digital technology such as

projectors, computers, and smartboards. There are not enough residential facilities for deaf students.

- **Problems with language deprivation and school readiness:** One deaf teacher stated that by law, children in Nepal start school at age 4 or 5, in class 1. However, deaf children often have no language when they begin school. Deaf schools are responsible for filling gaps in children's language skills and knowledge so students can meet class 1 expectations. Deaf students often need three years of school before they can meet these expectations. The Central Secondary School for the Deaf provides three years of catch-up education before children enter class 1, while the deaf school in Pokhara provides one year of catch-up education.

See Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners; Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children; Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training; Recommendation 5: Implement affirmative action policies for pre-service and in-service deaf teachers; Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children; Recommendation 13: Provide deaf learners with further opportunities for university studies; Recommendation 15: Support the development of further resources for NSL-medium education.

Related to positive aspects of deaf education in Nepal, the groups listed the following highlights:

- **Advances in access:** Deaf students can access an education in sign language from elementary school to B.Ed. level. University-level education is now available, and education is free for deaf learners. Deaf children have access to deaf schools. Some deaf students who attend a resource class receive scholarships to cover the cost of residence.
- **Advances in resources:** Some schools have started including more technology (computers, projectors, smartboards) and teaching about technology. NDFN has produced children's sign language dictionaries and provides other support to deaf schools. There are now more deaf teachers in deaf schools.
- **Advances in curriculum:** Some schools teach NSL as a subject.
- **Advances in policy:** Following the 2015 Constitution, deaf students have the right to choose to attend a deaf school or mainstream school. Sign language is recognized in legislation as a mother tongue, and mother-tongue education is available in elementary school until class 5.

The groups were asked to each pick one change they wished to see from their list of points. Across groups, there was great similarity in the points raised.

- **Changes in teacher promotion and licensure:** One group stated they wished deaf teachers to have the opportunity to teach class 9 and above, and be promoted to school principal. Another group stated that they want deaf teachers to receive proper teacher licensure on a par with hearing teachers.

- **Retention of capable/skilled deaf teachers and training of new teachers:** One deaf teacher stated that he hoped the government will retain existing deaf teachers who have many years of experience even if they do not have a B.Ed. By law, a class 15 diploma or B.Ed. is required in order to be a teacher. The same group stated hearing teachers of deaf students must be skilled in sign language.
- **More opportunities for deaf students:** One group stated they wished for deaf students to be able to find good jobs after they graduate from school. The same group expressed a wish for a deaf university, sign language research centre, and deaf-friendly teacher training. The Nepali government must work with NDFN on a policy level in order to make these changes.
- **Expansion of sign language teaching and curricula:** The first group stated parents of deaf children should be encouraged to learn sign language and sign language should be taught as a school subject.

See Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach; Recommendation 5: Implement affirmative action policies for pre-service and in-service deaf teachers; Recommendation 8: Provide intensive NSL courses for hearing teachers and teacher candidates; Recommendation 10: Provide specialized NSL courses and/or home visiting services for parents of deaf children; Recommendation 13: Provide deaf learners with further opportunities for university studies; Recommendation 15: Support the development of further resources for NSL-medium education.

Workshop with hearing educators and educational authorities on 15 March.

Before this workshop, KP Adhikari stated that he had invited six hearing teachers from the Central Secondary School, one hearing teacher from the Kavre deaf school, two education presidents, one representative from the department of education, and one person from the curriculum development centre. In attendance were the following individuals:

- The Central Secondary School for the Deaf principal, Upendra Parajuli, and the B.Ed. program principal, Rishi Devkola, along with teachers Santosho Chaudhary, Tikarawm Anarwma, and Raj Kuman Chaudhary;
- Yukta Prasad Sharma, Education President Undersecretary;
- Bainkuntha Acharya from the Ministry of Education who was previously head of the special education department;
- Divya Dawadi who works for the Province 1 department of education;
- and Narad Dhamala, a teacher who works with the department of education.

The workshop began with the same introduction and three questions about deaf education in Nepal. While the previous workshop with deaf teachers and deaf association members raised common issues and concerns across participants, there appeared to be more diversity among participants in this workshop in regard to some of the issues identified. This diversity was perhaps owing to different degrees of experience among participants with teaching deaf students. Participants in the workshop with hearing school administrators, teachers, and educational authorizes were not divided into groups for discussion but instead treated as a focus group. The Central Secondary School for the Deaf principal and B.Ed. program

principal both began by stating there have been 50 years of deaf education in Nepal since their school was established. In the beginning, the school's philosophy (and thus deaf education in Nepal) was oralist, but now it teaches with sign language. Another participant, a teacher who works with the department of education, stated that deaf education in Nepal already exists but needs to be expanded. For deaf children, there are resource classes and deaf schools. There is a high number of resource classes. Deaf education was established 52 years ago and has not changed much.

Related to problems with deaf education, participants identified the following issues:

- **Gaps in knowledge of how to implement sign language-medium pedagogy:** Participant #1 expressed the view that there is a limited sign language vocabulary and only 5,000 signs for teaching all school subjects; this view may reflect gaps in some educators' understanding of NSL. *There should be a bilingual system and signing should be properly developed with a curriculum for Nepali and NSL. The hearing and deaf school systems are the same, but with limited sign language vocabulary, course content should be made more visual. Teachers should use sign language and writing to make content visual and easier for students to learn.* (Participant #1)
- **Problems with resources:** *Available books are limited and do not meet the needs of deaf students.* (Participant #1)
NDFN has NSL teaching materials, but there are not enough materials. We should continue to develop more. (Participant #4)
- **Problems with curriculum and pedagogy:** *If the curriculum is not modified, it is difficult to teach deaf children. More hands-on activities and practical education are needed. For inclusion, education should be flexible. Flexible communication means following deaf children's needs, and the core curriculum should do the same. There are supposed to be possible modifications that can be made to the curriculum, but these are not followed.* (Participant #1)
There should be a separate curriculum for teaching children with disabilities and deaf children, but we do not know how to include more sign language or differentiated instruction. (Participant #3)
- **Problems with teacher training, professional development, and remuneration:** *Teacher training is needed because teachers do not know how to modify the curriculum.* (Participant #3)
We need to empower more teachers by providing skills training. (Participant #4)
Training for skills development is needed. People who have skills do not teach deaf students. Teacher salaries and the lack of support for teachers of deaf students are reasons why people who have skills do not teach. Teachers need more support. (Participant #5)
- **Lack of clarity regarding inclusive education policy:** *The government's inclusive education policy is unclear. We are trying to learn which policy best applies for deaf students. Instead of special education, we are transitioning to inclusive education. For 18 years, we have been discussing inclusive education. In terms of teachers and policy, it feels controversial. For teachers, students, and regular schools, there is a lack of guidance regarding the best ideas of what to do. We have a responsibility. Progress is slow in deaf education, and there are different methods and regulations. The solutions for deaf education are literacy and employment, and we need to be guided by deaf*

people. Policy should match these three elements. The general education system has different practices, but our educational policy copies the general education system and does not meet deaf students' needs, so they fail. Our policy should consider the Nepali context for its vision of deaf education. (Participant #2)

The concepts of inclusive education and special education are not clear in policy. (Participant #3)

Inclusive education has better outcomes, but we don't know how this applies to deaf children. (Participant #5)

- **Failure to consult with experienced educators of deaf students:** *The system does not recognize what we do. We have worked for 22-25 years, but people do not ask about our experience. (Participant #2)*
- **Problems with awareness and attitudes toward deaf people:** *Attitudes toward disability and deaf people are a widespread problem. When small villages hide deaf children, this speaks to attitudes about deaf people. (Participant #3)*
Many families hide their deaf children and don't show them. Parents need to know where to find support. NDFN should provide an awareness campaign. (Participant #4)
Society's attitude toward deaf and disabled people is not positive, and this impacts deaf and disabled people. (Participant #5)
Parents don't know about deaf schools. (Participant #6)
- **Problems with regional governments:** *Local governments don't think education is a priority. (Participant #4)*
- **Lack of employment and postsecondary educational opportunities for deaf young people:** *The big problem for Nepali education is how students can find a job. In the current context, deaf students finish school but do not have a job after high school. It is hard for them to enter university studies. High school plus one year of training equals higher education for deaf people. For students' inclusion, their learning achievement needs to be higher. (Participant #6)*

See Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children; Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training; Recommendation 13: Provide deaf learners with further opportunities for university studies; Recommendation 15: Support the development of further resources for NSL-medium education.

Related to positive aspects of deaf education in Nepal, participants listed the following:

- **Existing resources and possibilities for deaf students:** *We have schools and teachers, and students can become teachers or work in an office or so forth. This possibility proves society can include them. Now we collaborate with deaf educators for deaf children's education and figure out our future. (Participant #5)*

Related to changes they wished to see in deaf education, participants stated the following:

- **Clarification of inclusive education policy:** *We should plan steps, so the meaning of special education and inclusive education is clear. For our current situation, special education better describes it and is more practical. Deaf students must be included in society. (Participant #5)*
Inclusion can include sign language in multilingual schools. (Participant #3)
There are special and inclusive schools, but we can't have full inclusion for deaf students right now in Nepal. (Participant #5)
Inclusive education means education with support. (Participant #3)
- **Better training for teachers and students:** *Deaf-friendly teaching, technology and ICT training, training in how to use digital materials are needed. (Participant #5)*
There should be a preparatory class for educators of the deaf. (Participant #3)
- **Sign language education for families:** *There should be free sign language education for families, including in the family home. (Participant #3)*
- **Services designed to meet regional needs:** *The Terai region can use a local needs analysis design. For the hill region, services can go to homes. We should work with local governments to plan and intervene so that we provide education for all children. (Participant #3)*
- **More support for sign language education:** *The government should become more involved with developing sign language. Inclusive education celebrates diversity, and every child is special in an inclusive system. That's why deaf children need sign language as part of an inclusive system. (Participant #1)*

See Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners; Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children; Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training; Recommendation 10: Provide specialized NSL courses and/or home visiting services for parents of deaf children.

With this group of workshop participants, there was more time to ask questions regarding Nepali educational initiatives that were mentioned during the IDA workshop: scholarships for disabled children, the national early reading program, and Early Childhood Development (ECD) classes. A participant who is a teacher and works with the department of education stated that scholarships are available for all disabled children. The early reading program includes both deaf and blind students. 16 districts offer this program, which was supported by the Nepali government and Humanity & Inclusion for 2018-2021. The program includes sign language and is for classes 1-3. There is a sign language package as per a memorandum with Humanity & Inclusion, and resource development includes sign language skills for teachers. They want to add support and draft more teacher materials.

The same participant stated that ECD is a play-and-learn program. In the present situation, few children with disabilities are involved and there is no special program for them. Current data shows 2,010 children with disabilities are involved with ECD. In response, another participant stated that children with

disabilities need early childhood education. The Nepali government's focus was previously on universal elementary education, but there needs to be more focus on early childhood. **See Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children.**

At the close of the workshop, KP Adhikari stated that the government promotes inclusive education, but deaf children have the right to learn using sign language. Teacher training needs to be longer, and we need to ask for a budget for this.

Baseline data collection in Kathmandu, Makwanpur, Parsa, Bara, and Chitwan Districts on 14-19 April 2019

From 14-21 April 2019, the researcher returned to Nepal and again interviewed NDFN representatives; conducted follow-up workshops/focus group interviews with deaf teachers and association members and with hearing educators and government representatives; visited the Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School, Hetauda, Makwanpur District; visited two resource classes in Parsa District and one resource class in Bara District; and interviewed deaf association board members and teachers from Makawanpur, Parsa, Bara, and Chitwan Districts.

Meeting with NDFN on 14 April.

On the afternoon of 14 April, the researcher met with KP Adhikari to discuss the arrangements and schedule for the second visit to Nepal. During our meeting, KP Adhikari was asked if he had questions or feedback related to the Power Point with draft recommendations that had been prepared for the follow-up workshops with deaf teachers and association members and with hearing teachers, administrators, and government authorities on 15-16 April. KP Adhikari commented about the slide summarizing problems with teacher training, hiring, and promotion (e.g., deaf teachers cannot teach high school or become school principal). He agreed that at the Central Secondary School for the Deaf, no deaf teachers teach beyond class 8. KP Adhikari then stated that if deaf teachers have no license, they cannot teach. The government will sweep them away. The Teachers Service Commission (n.d.) is responsible for teacher licensure in Nepal. Both deaf and hearing teacher candidates are required to write an exam, which they pay a fee to write. KP Adhikari described how the teacher's examination contains what he termed "objective" or general-knowledge, multiple-choice questions related to Nepali cities and districts, the elevation of the Himalayas, and so forth. Instead of (or only) writing an exam, Nepali deaf communities desire for deaf people to undergo a teaching observation. KP Adhikari stated that teachers of mentally disabled students are only required to undergo a teaching observation; they do not write an exam, and deaf teachers and teacher candidates desire the same process. It was mentioned how during the 15 March workshop with deaf teachers and association members, deaf teachers stated they desired the same licensure and qualifications as hearing teachers. KP Adhikari explained that this may have been an issue related to teacher pensions, since there is often no pension or only a very small pension available to retired deaf teachers (who retire at age 60). **See Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach and Recommendation 5: Implement affirmative action policies for pre-service and in-service deaf teachers.**

Workshop with deaf teachers and association members on 15 April.

In attendance at this follow-up workshop were several individuals who had attended the 15 March workshop in addition to some new guests. Beside KP Adhikari and sign language interpreters Sanu Khimbaja and Dinesh Shrestha, present from the first workshop were the following individuals:

- KAD president and Central Secondary School board member Satya Devi Wagle;
- Central Secondary School teacher and National Deaf Sports Committee president Kul Prasad Bhattra;
- Sharada Shrestha, another Central Secondary School teacher and NDFN board member;
- Bhaktapur deaf association board member Siddhartha KC;
- sign language teacher Shikha Pradhan;
- KAD board member and Jumla deaf school teacher Anju Gurung;
- NDFN general secretary Surya Bahadur;
- and NDFN board member Bir Bahadur Bogati.

New guests at this workshop were the following individuals:

- Heaven and Lasta, both class 10 students at the Central Secondary School who had recently finished class 9;
- Renju Aryal, a resource class teacher in Myagdi District;
- Dhan Bhadrur Shrestha, a teacher from a deaf school in Gorkha District;
- Sharmila Manandhar, Dhiroz Adhikari, and Dinesh Badi Shrestha, teachers from a deaf school in Kavrepalanchok District;
- and deaf children's sign language teacher and deaf association president Bikram Ghale from Nuwakot District.

Feedback on the summary of findings.

- **Problems with pedagogy:** As the researcher reviewed the summary of findings from the 10-15 March field trip, there were expressions of agreement from the Central Secondary School students regarding problems with pedagogy (teachers follow rote learning; teachers write on the board instead of communicating with students). The students stated that after class 10, it becomes more difficult because teachers for classes 11 and 12 and the B.Ed. program lack good sign language skills. One student commented that it is possible for deaf students to enter a mainstream university, but the government does not pay for interpreters and deaf students must pay for this themselves. It is hard. The same student mentioned that it might be possible for a deaf student's brother, for example, to accompany them instead of an interpreter if the brother knows sign language, but again it is difficult. This practice also contravenes Article 9 of the CRPD, which requires governments to provide professional sign language interpreters.
- **Problems with teacher training, hiring, and promotion:** Related to the slide summarizing problems with teacher training, hiring, and promotion, it was stated that the chief problem is hearing people holding onto their jobs and that several deaf people in Nepal have the skills to become school principal. It was stated that deaf teachers teach classes 9 and 10 in Gorkha and Baglung Districts, and the latter district also has a deaf principal. However, as one participant added, at the Central Secondary School the same hearing teachers teach all day from classes 11

and 12 in the early morning to elementary school from 10am-4pm to the B.Ed. program in the evenings, earning more, while deaf teachers are limited to teaching in the elementary school only. There was agreement that there is a problem with teacher licensure. Both deaf and hearing teachers follow the same procedure for receiving licensure. In response to a question about whether participants felt deaf teachers should receive a different license, one teacher participant stated that the exam and its questions should be different for deaf teachers, and include sign language. There should be both an exam and teacher observation to evaluate new teachers. However, one student participant commented that while both deaf and hearing teachers must have licenses in order to teach, there are both deaf and hearing teachers who lack licenses. There was a comment from another participant that there is a preference for hiring hearing teachers who do not know sign language instead of deaf teachers with sign language skills. A participant commented about his childhood experience of going to a deaf school with hearing teachers who did not know sign language and instead learning sign language from other deaf children on the playground.

- **Problems with resources:** Related to problems with resources, when asked about textbooks for deaf and hearing students, there was a comment that textbooks should be slightly different for deaf students related to a specialized curriculum for deaf children. Some books are hard for deaf students to read, and there are no sign language materials. However, another teacher participant commented that the same books should be used with deaf and hearing students who should receive an equal education, with sign language videos added for deaf students. Another teacher participant commented that young hearing children learn songs before they begin school, and she has seen on YouTube how other countries have sign language songs for young deaf children. Nepal does not have this.

See Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training; Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach; Recommendation 5: Implement affirmative action policies for pre-service and in-service deaf teachers; Recommendation 6: Recruit and train deaf instructors for a NSL-medium education teacher-training program; Recommendation 8: Provide intensive NSL courses for hearing teachers and teacher candidates; Recommendation 13: Provide deaf learners with further opportunities for university studies; Recommendation 15: Support the development of further resources for NSL-medium education.

There were a number of suggestions from the workshop participants with regard to strengthening this report's draft recommendations. One participant suggested there could be MA courses in sign language research and that Tribhuvan University could provide these. Another participant, a NDFN board member, stated that the draft recommendations had missed the problem of language-deprived, out-of-school deaf youth who may not enter school until 15 or 16 (however, another participant stated that deaf schools will not admit these children). Another participant added that there is a problem with deaf children not entering school until age eight, nine, or ten. However, as one participant stated, after age eight, deaf children without language or previous educational experience cannot enter school. **See Recommendation 14: Provide access to education for out-of-school deaf children and youth.**

Related to the need for early childhood education for deaf children (also missing from the draft recommendations), one participant mentioned that Nepal has private playgroups for hearing children

aged two-and-a-half and up and perhaps these can be provided for deaf children with public funding. **See Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children.**

Workshops with hearing educators and educational authorities on 16 April.

Several participants from the 15 March workshop were also present for the 16 April follow-up workshop, namely the following:

- Bainkuntha Acharya from the Ministry of Education;
- Yukta Prasad Sharma, Education President Undersecretary;
- Divya Dawadi who works for the State 1 department of education;
- Rishi Devkola, the B.Ed. program principal at the Central Secondary School;
- and Central Secondary School teacher Tikarawm Anarwma.

Also in attendance were Surya Bahadur, KP Adhikari, and sign language interpreters Sanu Khimbaja and Dinesh Shrestha. Prior to this day's workshop, it was relayed that Central Secondary School principal Upendra Parajuli was unable to attend. New guests included the following individuals:

- Yojani Sakha, principal of the Bhaktapur deaf school, which she stated had 17 children and two teachers;
- and Central Secondary School teachers Bir Shingh Kuwar, Guna Kumari Gautam, and Ratna Shova Dhungei (the latter is a teacher in the B.Ed. program).

Feedback on the summary of findings.

- **Problems with teacher training, hiring, and promotion:** Participant #1 discussed competition for jobs between hearing and deaf teachers. The government criteria are for teachers to have a B.Ed., sign language skills, and a teaching license. Hearing teachers may have a license but no sign language skills, while deaf teachers may not have a license but do have sign language skills. Participant #2 added that the license issue is difficult for deaf people: if they do not have a license, they cannot teach. Other disability groups see that deaf schools have teachers without licensure while their own schools have teachers with licenses. However, participant #1 responded that over the past twelve years, he has seen hearing teachers with licenses but no sign language skills. Teachers must know sign language. As he asked, what does having a license mean in this context? Deaf people are different from other disability groups. Participant #3 added that her own research had similar findings as mine. If teaching is bad, this is not quality education. Inclusive education needs to involve different kinds of licensure. For teachers of the deaf, sign language is important in addition to bilingual education. Teachers should have a license and training connected to deaf children: on top of receiving regular licensure, teachers must learn sign language. There should be training before they start teaching. First they must earn a license, then teach.
- **Problems with resources:** Participant #5 commented there are sign language videos that have been developed by the curriculum development centre.

- **Problems with language deprivation and school readiness:** Participant #3 commented that in Nepal, primary education is from classes 1-5, and we need to address deaf children's learning needs before primary education.

See Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training; Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach; Recommendation 5: Implement affirmative action policies for pre-service and in-service deaf teachers; Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children; Recommendation 8: Provide intensive NSL courses for hearing teachers and teacher candidates Recommendation 15: Support the development of further resources for NSL-medium education.

Visit to Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School, Hetauda on 17 April.

On the morning of 17 April, en route to Birgunj with KP Adhikari, Dinesh Shrestha, and a driver, the researcher travelled to the Shree Shanti Deaf and Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School in Hetauda, Makwanpur District (see Figures 4 and 5). The school visit took place during the week of Nepali New Year and following the end of the school examination period; consequentially, the school had recently closed for one month, and there were no students present aside from one boy, Kabir, who was then in class 2 and whose father, Krishna Prasad Subedi, was president of the school management council. Another student, Mutar, who was in class 7, was also present. In a meeting with assembled school staff, it was stated that the school was then running a one-week program to look for out-of-school deaf children.

Figure 4. Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School, Hetauda.

[Image description: A brown metal gate with white-and-yellow lettering in Nepali and white lettering in English reading Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School. Part of the wording is obscured because the gate is open to show three individuals—a youth, adult male, and young boy—standing and gazing at the camera. A motorcycle with helmet rests on its stand in front of the gate.]



A deaf teacher, Santosh Paudel, stated he has been teaching at the school for eight months. Prior to this, he taught at another school, a gymnasium near China, for 14 years and then stayed to help after the 2015 earthquake. Hetauda is his home city, and he is president of the Hetauda deaf association. Santosh Paudel stated he finished school when he was 19. He attended a mainstream school and then the Pokhara deaf school for classes 11 and 12. He lives with his parents on their chicken farm near the Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School. He looks after the chickens every morning and evening before going to work at the school. Santosh Paudel stated that he earns more money as a chicken farmer than he does as a teacher and would like more education but was not sure how to pursue this at his age, which was 27. **See Recommendation 3: Provide NSL-medium education teacher training and Recommendation 5: Implement affirmative action policies for pre-service and in-service deaf teachers.**

Figure 5. Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School campus. Pictured: Santosh Paudel.

[Image description: A row of light yellow and blue-coloured buildings in an inverse L shape, in front of which is a grassy lawn and three trees. A man in a baseball cap and white shirt stands to the right.]



The researcher met several other deaf and hearing teachers and the school's deaf principal of 15 years, Bishan Radhur Ladhi. The other deaf teachers stated they had worked at the school for three, ten, and 14 years respectively. Santosh Paudel stated that the school has 45 students: 26 boys and 19 girls, and seven teachers. Students from across state 3 currently attend the school. There were annotated maps of Makwanpur District and Nepal on the wall of the principal's office showing where students come from (see Figure 6). Five teachers are deaf and two are hearing. The school goes to class 7. After class 7, students go to other schools, such as the Central Secondary School in Kathmandu. Mutar, the class 7 student who was present during the visit, told us she will go to the deaf school in Gorkha after she graduates.

It was stated that the government pays the salaries of three teachers, while the salaries of four other teachers, who are paid less, are made up through fundraising and disability scholarships, which must also pay for deaf students' room and board. Around ten years ago, when the Indian government provided

funding for student transportation in the form of a school bus, there were 105 students (see Figure 7). Now, instead of the school receiving funding for transportation (i.e., paying for a driver and gas), there is a residential program that is funded by disability scholarships, which has resulted in fewer children at the school since it is more difficult for children to travel. The researcher was told there needs to be more communication with the educational authorities about this. **See Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners.**

Figure 6. Annotated map of Makwanpur District with students' home locations.

[Image description: A map of Makwanpur District is divided into villages using different pastel colours of pink, purple, blue, green, and yellow. Red marker has been used to circle locations on the map.]



The school's principal, Bishan Radhur Ladhi, stated that the school was damaged following the 2015 earthquake. Plan International and Australian Aid both provided support for the school following the earthquake; the latter organization donated 12 computers for a computer lab, but the school needs a teacher for the lab. They have needed such a teacher for two years. Santosh Paudel has taught the computer lab, but he stated that he wished there were another teacher who knows more about computers.

The school had new residences (or hostels) for girls and boys, who are housed in separate quarters. The researcher was told the boys' residence is hot. Older students sleep in the upper bunks, and younger students must share a lower bunk since there are not enough beds (see Figure 8). Teachers at the school take turns looking after children and cooking. The upstairs girls' residence has a sign language learning room for studying sign language every morning and evening (see Figure 9). Santosh Paudel stated the teachers take turns volunteering to teach the girls sign language outside of school hours.

Figure 7. School bus at Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School.

[Image description: A yellow school bus rests at the right beside a tree in the foreground. To the left of the tree is a metal slide and swings. Behind the swings is a yellow-and-brown building with a light red roof and a terracotta brick building under construction.]



Figure 8. Boys' hostel, Shree Shanta Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School.

[Image description: Two bunk beds flank a brown bookcase with shelves being used as a dresser. Pillows and duvets are laid or rolled up on each bed.]



Figure 9. Girls' hostel, Shree Shanta Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School.

[Image description: A room with light yellow-painted walls and painted images of five signers producing NSL signs with illustrations and Nepali script for each sign. A single bed is on the left next to a desk and bench and two single beds are side by side on the right.]



During this visit, the school classroom walls were brightly painted with illustrations from the NSL dictionaries, NSL fingerspelling handshapes, and Nepali. The researcher was also shown the cafeteria and kitchen, and met the cook. It was stated the cafeteria does not have enough tables and benches for all students, so they must take turns eating or eat outside.

Visits to deaf resource classes in Parsa and Bara Districts on 18 April.

On the evening prior to the visit to the Shoi Nepal Rastoiya Secondary School Bhikaan pur Dipora-1, Parsa, the researcher met a deaf sign language teacher, Sagun Shrestha, who is also founder and president of the Parsa deaf association. Sagun Shrestha was present during visits to two resource classes in Parsa District. During the visit to the second resource class in Parsa District, Sagun Shrestha shared that there is often no funding for deaf sign language teachers to teach sign language to hearing teachers of mainstream school resource classes. As he stated, it is not reasonable to ask deaf teachers to do this work on a volunteer basis. He added that he tried to convince parents of deaf children in Parsa District to send their children to the Shree Shanti Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School for free education in sign language, but parents are often reluctant to do this until it is too late for their children. **See Recommendation 8: Provide intensive NSL courses for hearing teachers and teacher candidates; Recommendation 9: Provide NSL-medium Early Childhood Development and pre-primary classes for deaf children; and Recommendation 10: Provide specialized NSL courses and/or home visiting services for parents of deaf children.**

The Shoi Nepal Rastoiya Secondary School has a resource class for deaf students in classes 1-5. Children from across Birgunj attend the school. When the researcher visited, there was one hearing teacher and 10 children in the class, who are aged from 7 ½ to 16. The teacher, Ashok Kuman Shah, has 30 years of

experience teaching hearing students and 18 years of teaching deaf students; at the school, he teaches both deaf and hearing students. A cook takes care of the children, who attend class, sleep, and eat together in one room. The researcher was told the children's home communities look down on them as dumb or *lāto*. The students' home villages range from being 15 to 100 kilometers away, and many students' parents are farmers.

The school principal, Amula Alam, stated it is difficult with having only one room and one teacher for the deaf resource class. The researcher observed older students helping younger students with learning sign language. One seven year-old girl, Muskan, used pebbles for counting on her desk as she worked on her math lesson (see Figure 10), and several students provided a demonstration of learning by practicing writing on the board in Nepali and doing math problems (addition, subtraction, multiplication).

Figure 10. A deaf student, Muskan, in the Shoi Nepal Rastoiya Secondary School resource class.

[Image description: A young girl wearing a blue short-sleeved blouse sits at a desk and counts on one hand. With the other hand, she sorts a pile of pebbles. Behind her are other students working at their desks.]



KP Adhikari raised the question of why the students in this resource class could not attend the Shree Shanti school in Hetauda, since there are disability scholarships to support their attendance at this school that provides more of a sign language environment. The researcher was told about a boy in class 9 whose father refused to send him to the Shree Shanti school because there was no money for this.

The second school visited was Shree Devanandan Devraj Higher School, Ramnagari, Parsa. During the visit, there were five students present in the resource class that goes to class 5; four were boys (see Figure 11). As in the previous resource class visited, at first the students did not respond to the researcher's signing, but later three boys began teaching signs from the children's NSL dictionaries that Sagun Shrestha previously delivered to this class from the NDFN office in Kathmandu. After this, one student then told the researcher the other students' name signs, including the name signs of students who were absent. The

cook stated that there were nine children in total in the resource class. As in the previous school's resource class, here, the classroom, residence, and kitchen are in the same room, with boys and girls together.

Figure 11. Deaf resource class students at Shree Devnandan Devraj Higher School, Ramnagari, Parsa District.

[Image description: Two boys and a girl stand behind two boys who are seated at desks and grinning at the camera. Four students on the left wear blue shirts and one student on the right wears a patterned shirt.]



The teacher, Raj Kishor, who has taught in the resource class for 17 years, kept speaking instead of signing to his visitors. However, he stated that deaf and hearing people need sign language in order to work together. He received four months of NSL tuition and wishes to learn more sign language. The teacher wanted Sagun Shrestha to tutor him in NSL, but Sagun Shrestha lives 15 kilometres from the school and there is no payment for gas for his motorcycle or for his teaching time. The teacher stated he has asked the government for help but is ignored. Sagun Shrestha stated that rich parents in Parsa District send their deaf children to the Central Secondary School in Kathmandu, while poor parents send their children to a resource class like this one. **See Recommendation 8: Provide intensive NSL courses for hearing teachers and teacher candidates and Recommendation 11: Provide NSL-medium education for deaf students in mainstream school resource classes.**

The researcher met the school management council chair and principal; while we were present, the resource class teacher informed the principal that hearing people must learn sign language. However, the researcher was informed there is no money for deaf students because hearing people do not focus on their needs; instead, they focus on the needs of hearing students. There is no money for interpreters or sign language teachers. There was a discussion between the teacher and the school management council chair, who stated Sagun Shrestha has no teacher's license; therefore, it is difficult for him to be paid by the government. Sagun Shrestha then commented that the teacher's license is designed for hearing teachers of hearing students; there is no license for sign language teachers. **See Recommendation 1:**

Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners; Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach; Recommendation 11: Provide NSL-medium education for deaf students in mainstream school resource classes.

Sagun Shrestha stated that 20 kilometres away from the Shree Devanandan Devraj Higher School, there is another resource class in Bara District where he taught sign language to one teacher for two months, with Plan International providing funding for this. We visited this school next. On the way, Sagun Shrestha showed the researcher a school near the border with India where he taught sign language for 10 months; some of the students there later transferred to a deaf school in Lumbini. Sagun Shrestha needed to leave for work at his sheet metal business, and we were joined by Suraj Shrestha, the secretary of the deaf association for Bara District.

The third resource class visited was Nepal Rastriya Madhyamik Vidyalaya, Simara, Bara District. Students were then absent from the school due to recent completion of exams and a one-week school recess. In the classroom that was observed, two large desks with laminated surfaces were placed end to end, and chairs were grouped around these desks. The teacher's desk was in the corner. Present were Ganga Prasad Wagle, a disability support teacher; Achyut Dev Sitaula, the school vice principal; and Madan KC, a former teacher and school principal who was now campus head. The teacher for the deaf resource class, Sushila Gaugam, was not present on the day of our visit.

Ganga Prasad Wagle stated that the school hostel is for both deaf and intellectually disabled students. In one week, deaf children were due to come to school as new children were gathered. He stated there were 25 children in the deaf resource class for classes 1-5, with 21 staying in residence and four being day students. He added there were 40 deaf children in the region who are not in school, and he was working to bring them to the resource class. There were 18 intellectually disabled children who were in a separate class from the deaf children; however, both groups of children stay in the school residence together.

It was stated that the government provides financial support for one teacher and a cook. As it was stated, the main problem with the resource class for students in classes 1-5 is that there is only one classroom for all students. Hearing and deaf students are in the same classrooms for classes 6-8. There was one deaf student in class 6 and two deaf students in each of classes 7 and 9. There is no interpreter for students in the latter classes, and Ganga Prasad Wagle stated that deaf students simply copy the teacher's writing from the board. There is no teacher of the deaf for these students. Ganga Prasad Wagle added that he thinks the problem is similar across Nepal. He added that the government says to implement inclusive education like in Canada and Europe, but this is a problem for Nepal. The law states there is a funding model ratio of 10 children for each teacher. However, Ganga Prasad Wagle thought the school may receive funding for one new teacher, with the school paying the teacher's salary. He added that if the teacher is a deaf person, they may not have a teacher's license. **See Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children; Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach; Recommendation 11: Provide NSL-medium education for deaf students in mainstream school resource classes.**

KP Adhikari commented about deaf children copying from the board and how the Hetauda deaf school (i.e., the Shree Shanta Deaf & Hard of Hearing Residential Basic School) was one hour away from this school. Students now in classes 6-8 could go there instead of staying in the mainstream school without access to communication or education. KP Adhikari stated he has a good relationship with the mayor of the village, and Ganga Prasad Wagle could inform him if there was a problem related to students not having money to attend the Hetauda school. The government only provides 4,000 NPR each month in the form of a disability scholarship to cover room and board, and this makes it difficult for expenses to be covered. Ganga Prasad Wagle agreed that the class 6-8 students' education in the mainstream school is worthless, and a deaf school is better for them. He added that if parents are rich, they can send their children to a deaf school, but poor parents cannot afford this. Ganga Prasad Wagle added that deaf education in Nepal is unsatisfactory, and we must work together. He referred to KP Adhikari having recently been elected to the board of the National Federation of the Disabled Nepal, where perhaps he will be in a better position to advocate for deaf education. Ganga Prasad Wagle added that deaf children must have a deaf teacher, and whether the teacher has a license or not is not important. He mentioned two deaf teachers who previously taught the deaf resource class; when asked why these teachers left, Ganga Prasad Wagle mentioned the problem of teacher licensure. Now, there is a hearing teacher who due to a lack of NSL proficiency may not be as good as a teacher for deaf students. There may be 25 new children coming to the school, and if so, the school could hire a new teacher and cook. Ganga Prasad Wagle added that inclusive education is hard. There are no classes 11 or 12 at the Nepal Rastriya Madhyamik Vidyalaya school. If deaf children can go to a deaf school, the quality of education is better. The government has a law in regard to deaf education but is not implementing it well. The pay for teachers of the deaf is low. **See Recommendation 1: Implement s. 31(4) of the Government of Nepal's (2015) Constitution and s. 21(6-7) of the 2017 Rights of Individuals with Disabilities Act regarding free education through sign language for deaf learners; Recommendation 2: Develop a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf children; Recommendation 4: Offer an alternate model of teacher licensure based on the NSL-medium education approach; Recommendation 11: Provide NSL-medium education for deaf students in mainstream school resource classes.**

Meeting with Chitwan deaf association board members on 19 April.

At the New Balaju Auto Works, Panchakanya Service Centre, Chitwan District, KP Adhikari introduced the researcher to Bishnu Poudel, who was previously NDFN secretary and is now president of the Chitwan deaf association (see Figure 12). Bishnu Poudel stated that she grew up in a hearing school since there was no deaf school near her village, and she finished class 7. When asked how she learned sign language, Bishnu Poudel stated that when she was 17, in 1997, she went to Kathmandu for one year. The KAD had a project for teaching sign language to deaf people, and she attended sign language classes. One year later in 1998, she returned home. She remembered her friends in Kathmandu and thought of how she was alone in Chitwan. At this time, NDFN was holding a sign language class in Chitwan, but she was not aware of it. When she again visited Kathmandu, she learned about the class and returned to Chitwan, where she met around 12 other deaf individuals. In 2001, she decided to establish a deaf association.

Figure 12. KP Adhikari with Bishnu Poudel.

[Image description: KP Adhikari is seated to the left at a picnic table in front of a bright blue-painted wall. Bishnu Poudel, wearing an orange tunic with a light green pattern on the front and a small vermillion dot on her forehead, smiles at the camera.]



The researcher also met Madhu Sudan Niure, the secretary of the Chitwan deaf association, who was formerly a school principal in Baglung. As he stated, when his mother became sick, he moved home to Chitwan and became a resource class teacher. He now teaches children aged 6-16. At the school where Madhu Sudan Niure works, there are three classrooms for deaf children in classes 1-6 and two deaf teachers. There are 40 hearing children and 35 deaf children at this school. KP Adhikari explained that this school has decided not to accept more hearing students and will admit more deaf children so the school can transition to a deaf school. The school will add classes 7 and 8 as the present group of students grows. The name of this school is Basic (Adharbhat) School, Rapti municipality, Chitwan District.

Madhu Sudan Niure stated he moved to Chitwan at age two from an adjoining district. He attended a hearing school where he relied on lipreading. He completed “plus 2” and received a B.Ed. degree from a mainstream university. He also has a teacher’s license and is now studying for a M.Ed. degree. When asked about his studies at a mainstream university without accommodations, he stated that he mainly studies at home. **See Recommendation 6: Recruit and train deaf instructors for a NSL-medium education teacher-training program; Recommendation 13: Provide deaf learners with further opportunities for university studies; Recommendation 16: Support research in NSL-medium education and training of deaf researchers.**

This part of the report has reported findings from baseline data collection in Kathmandu, Makwanpur, Parsa, Bara, and Chitwan Districts during March and April 2019. The next section concludes the report.

Conclusion

This report has summarized literature regarding education, language, and the role of deaf associations in Nepal, and discussed Nepali and international policy and practices related to sign language-medium education for deaf learners. This report has also reported and analyzed data from fieldwork in Kathmandu, Makwanpur, Parsa, Bara, and Chitwan Districts during March and April 2019. These findings have been linked to recommendations for achieving SDG 4 for deaf learners in Nepal in line with Article 24 of the CRPD, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education in the medium of sign language.

As learned through the researcher's fieldwork, Nepal has an existing ecology of deaf schools, deaf teachers, and deaf associations, supported by exemplary policy and legislation that recognizes deaf children's right to free education in sign language, that should be supported and utilized in the effort to achieve SDG 4. This support should come in the form of a clear policy regarding inclusive education for deaf learners through the medium of sign language and in appropriate training and licensure for teachers of NSL-medium education for deaf children. Deaf learners' right to inclusive and equitable quality education also necessitates the provision of NSL-medium early childhood development programs, NSL classes and services for parents, training for deaf residence counselors who can provide a NSL environment, additional NSL resources, and adult literacy classes for deaf learners. Deaf learners also need access to university studies, including provision of qualified NSL interpreters, that will enhance provision of teacher training and research in NSL-medium education.

It is hoped that this report and its recommendations will strengthen the position of deaf people in Nepal, along with the schools and associations that have flourished through their efforts, and that deaf associations in other countries in the Global South will also take up this report as an advocacy tool.

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