Education for All 2004-09
Formative Research Project

Study Report 31

Alternative Schooling: Addressing the Unserved School-age Children

Trihuvan University
Research Centre for Educational Innovation and Development (CERID)
Balkhu, Kathmandu, Nepal
2009
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formative Research Project, CERID</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Coordinator: Dr. Kishor Shrestha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Advisor: Prof. Arbinda Lal Bhomi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Researcher: Rom P. Bhattarai</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Acronyms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Alternative Schooling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASAMA</td>
<td>Accelerated Compressed Learning for Malagasy Adolescents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASP</td>
<td>Alternative Schooling Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.Ed</td>
<td>Bachelors in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BEUPA</td>
<td>Basic Education in Urban Poverty Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSS</td>
<td>Bhanu Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRAC</td>
<td>Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CASP</td>
<td>Community Based Alternative Schooling Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBO</td>
<td>Community Based Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERID</td>
<td>Research Center for Educational Innovation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLCs</td>
<td>Community Learning Centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMC</td>
<td>SOP/FSP Class Management Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DANIDA</td>
<td>Danish Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEO</td>
<td>District Education Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFNC</td>
<td>District Non-formal Education Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSP</td>
<td>Flexible Schooling Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSSS</td>
<td>Himchuli Samudaai Sewa Samaj</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID/OS</td>
<td>Institutional Development/Organizational Strengthening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFCD</td>
<td>Innovative Forum for Community Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIEP</td>
<td>International Institute for Educational Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-NGO</td>
<td>International Non-government Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JPS</td>
<td>Janaganar Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JICA</td>
<td>Japan International Cooperation Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSs</td>
<td>Mother Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NER</td>
<td>Net Enrollment Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFE</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFEIG</td>
<td>Non-formal Education Implementation Guidelines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
NGO    Non-government Organization
NORAD Norwegian Agency for International Development
NHSS  Nanbin Higher Secondary School
OSP   Out of School Program
PCF   Per Child Funding
PRA   Participatory Rural Appraisal
PSDC  Program for School Dropout Children
PIG   Program Implementation Guide
RCs   Resource Centres
RP    Resource Person
SBPS  Sahara Bal Primary School
SBNEC Sunaulo Bhabisa Non-formal Education Center
SCPRC Street Children Protection and Rehabilitation Centre
SLC   School Leaving Certificate
SOP   School Outreach Program
SS    School Supervisor
SSR   School sector Reform
TESON Teacher Educator's Society of Nepal
T/L   Teaching and Learning
TOT   Training of Trainers
UCPC  Urban Child Protection Committee
UBEPC Undugu's Basic Education Program
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund
UPE   Universal Primary Education
VDC   Village Development Committee
VEP   Village Education Plan
Executive Summary

Background

The thrust of the EFA program is to ensure children’s equitable access to quality basic and primary education. With a purpose to address the goal of EFA 2004-2009, Non-formal Education Centre (NFEC) has launched the Alternative Schooling Program (ASP) in two forms namely, ‘School Outreach Program’ (SOP) and ‘Flexible Schooling Program’ (FSP). SOP provides an opportunity of three years education using same text books as those used in Grade 1, 2, and 3 of the formal schooling system to school age children who cannot go to school and the FSP offers a five-year primary school curriculum condensed into a three-year program by scheduling flexible time and choosing a location at their convenience.

An overarching question is what can be done in order to accelerate progress in increasing the access of the most at risk groups of school children to education and ensure its quality and achieve the EFA goals by 2015. The present study, therefore, was conducted to have an in-depth information on the status and provision of alternative schooling and exploring ways for strengthening the program.

- This study mainly attempts to seek responses to the following questions:
- What is the status of alternative schooling?
- What are the provisions of alternative schooling?
- How alternative schooling contributes educational access and quality to the children of disadvantaged groups?
- What alternative mechanisms could be designed and implemented in order to address the issues of under-age and over-age children?

Research Design

The design of the study was a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research. The focus, however, was more on collection of qualitative data and their interpretation.

A combination of purposive and random sampling procedures was adopted by considering continuity of SOP/FSP classes, phase out classes and access to both SOP/FSP classes for the study. Five districts representing different ecological belts were selected: Ilam, Dolakha, Chitwan, Kaski and Banke. For sampling purpose, the running classes, phased out classes and the Mother Schools (MSs) were selected in all districts. Altogether 12 SOP Classes, 16 FSP classes and 21 MSs were included in the study. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected by using a variety of research instruments and techniques such as literature review, interview with key personnel at district and grassroots levels, FGDs with students of SOP/FSP classes, SOP/FSP graduates and teachers, headteachers of MS and parents. In addition, field visits were done to interact with students participating in SOP/FSP, teachers and headteachers of the MS, facilitators, CMC members, and parents. Additionally, the DEO and its staff members were consulted.

The findings of the study are presented in two ways- case study by district, and discussion and synthesis of the key concerns in a comprehensive manner.
Findings

The major findings of this study are as follows:

DEO is the major agency in supporting the SOP/FSP Program. Allocation of SOP/FSP classes are based on the available quota which is not distributed as per the needs and demands. DEO has not disseminated about the SOP/FSP program at the district and community levels and has not distributed the NFEC guidelines to concerned persons. Some formal schools have obtained SOP/FSP quota and enrolled the school going children in the name of SOP/FSP. Grade 1 was recognized as SOP and SOP in order to provide a quota was to a proposed primary school.

Comparatively, SOP was more successful than FSP in terms of the achievement and the demands of the local people for increasing quotas for SOP. Overall, the classes that are initiated by local community and are located in appropriate place are more successful.

There is no practice of conducting community survey on literacy status. The facilitators prepare a list of unschooled children to obtain the quota only. The allocation of SOP/FSP for the districts are not in accordance with the demand from the district. To facilitate the access to education, there is a need to increase the number of SOP/FSP quotas. Otherwise, present operational system restricts the educational access and quality to disadvantaged groups.

Some formal schools were designated as the MSs for SOP/FSP with the recommendation of the RP and concerned headteachers by ignoring the Program Implementation Guideline (PIG).

In all places, the most disadvantaged groups are getting benefits from the program. For example, Thami, Tamang, and Kusuley in Dolakha, Chepang and Tharus in Chitwan, Khatway in Banke and Lepcha in Ilam, have benefited from the provisions. It was found that for retaining the students in the SOP/FSP program, the provision of scholarship, uniform and snacks for them are essential. Generally, the age range of the students in SOP was 3 to 10 years and in FSP 5 to 15 years.

It is notable that in some places there is no different between SOP and FSP program.

At district and community level, the concept of the SOP and FSP was not well understood. Only the people who are knowledgeable about SOP/FSP programs request for the SOP/FSP quotas in the community. Notable numbers of the SOP/FSP quotas are obtained by some schools by admitting school age children as well as dropouts in the name of SOP/FSP.

Dropout prevails both in SOP and FSP classes. The seasonal migration of parents, engagement of the children in wage earning, overage and lack of incentives were some of the main reasons of dropouts in the FSP, while underage, and fake enrollment were the reasons of dropouts in the SOP. Additionally, lack of similar program in the following year was also a reason of dropouts in SOP/FSP.

Lack of income generation activities among the households of the unschooled children is also found to be one of the problems related to dropouts in SOP/FSP class or formal school programs.

Minimum qualification of the facilitators was SLC. However, some facilitator’s educational background was up to Bachelors level. Facilitators are provided a basic and refresher training. Lack of basic training to the new facilitators who replace the old ones, unavailability of the textbooks and pencils and other teaching aids or their
availability only after the commencement of the class were the unearthed problems. Even the textbooks are not distributed on time due to delayed delivery from NFEC to the Districts concerned. Retention of the trained facilitators for a complete cycle of the SOP/FSP was a challenge. However, in some places the facilitators are working in a minimum salary of Rs. 2000.00 with the hope of being primary school teachers in the future. Trained facilitators are applying appropriate teaching methods in the class and they are demanding refresher training. Substitute teachers are generally involved in management of SOP/FSP center in the community.

The SOP/FSP classes are running in the building constructed particularly for SOP/FSP, bamboo cottage, and person’s veranda. Besides, the classrooms of formal schools were also used as a place for SOP/FSP classes.

There is lack of effective supervision and monitoring, and lack of data management system in both the DEO and the MS. Monitoring of the program from the DEO is rare. In some places, the SOP quotas are provided as a foundation to open new primary school, while in other places, the SOP students are also enrolled in formal school at a certain grade.

Provision of 20 students per class has restricted the opening of SOP/FSP classes. It has indirectly encouraged the facilitator to enroll school going children or underage children in the SOP/FSP classes. SOP/FSP textbooks are not useful to bilingual children. In terms of the SOP classes, the access to enrolling students in formal school is increasing; however, the practices of running formal classes in the name of SOP/FSP are a major threat. There are problems of underage children in both SOP and FSP classes. Children of ECD age are found in SOP classes and those of SOP age in FSP classes. In some places, there is a double entry of school age children in both school and SOP/FSP classes. Provision of both SOP and ECD could help resolve the problems of dropout.

A cluster could be formed with a minimum of 8 to 20 students comprising children of ECD and SOP age level (e.g. 3 to 9 years) in a place or children of FSP age level (8 to 14 years), separately. The MS should be supported with relief quotas of school teachers who can teach in SOP/FSP classes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The major conclusions and recommendations of this study are as follows:

Conclusions

The system of allocating SOP/FSP quotas for the districts is not need based and its distribution at the district level is very ad hoc and arbitrary. In most districts, there are increasing demands for SOP quotas but not for FSP.

It was obvious from the study that SOP/FSP classes that are initiated by local community and located in appropriate places are more successful and comparatively SOP is more successful and highly demanded in the local communities.

Because of the SOP and FSP implemented for some disadvantaged groups in remote areas of the districts, the program has contributed to increasing educational access and quality to school age children who were deprived of the opportunities.

It is deemed necessary that alternative schooling programme be linked with income generation activities in order to retain the SOP/FSP graduates in the formal school
programme to prevent dropouts from the formal school at various grades and also to provide future employment opportunities to them.

At local level, the VDC has not been consulted to allocate the quotas for SOP/FSP in the local communities. DEO has not disseminated about the SOP/FSP program at the district and community levels and not distributed the PIG to concerned persons. The MS does not feel responsible in the monitoring of the SOP/FSP and in ensuring the admission of the SOP/FSP graduates to the assigned grades. The allocations of SOP/FSP for the districts are not in accordance with the demand from the district.

Neither the DEO nor the MS are keen in supervision and monitoring, and maintaining data related to SOP/FSP classes, and the students. Under age in the SOP classes and overage in the FSP classes is a common feature. Even the SOP classes enroll the children of the ECD level. The SOP and FSP quotas are given to schools to meet the shortage of teachers. The students are enrolled in schools in the name of SOP or FSP students.

Attractive remuneration for the facilitators is needed to retain the good ones for a complete course cycle of the SOP/FSP. The facilitators’ training should focus on students grouping, multi-grade teaching, and preparation of instructional materials.

Without discrimination, the inputs provided to formal school students should be provided even to SOP/FSP students. Restriction on the admission of the school students in the SOP/FSP can contribute to increasing the access to education and prevent the prevailing trend of dropouts. Provision for 20 students per class is a serious problem in increasing access to education. Double entry of school age children in both schools and SOP/FSP classes has led to the misuse of resources. Provision of both SOP and ECD in the community and provision of SOP in different clusters would be encouraging local communities for SOP.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations have been proposed.

- Advocacy and orientation program on SOP/FSP should be launched at district and community levels. The VDCs and CBOs should be involved in conducting the rapid survey of school age children before any demands for SOP/FSP quotas are made.

- Compulsory provision for the distribution of guidelines to the classes, MSs and facilitators should be made.

- Quotas for SOP and FSP, specially the SOP should be increased keeping in mind the principal goal of increasing access and quality of basic education to school age children. The most disadvantaged groups in all districts should be targeted while distributing the quotas. This will not only fulfill the local demands for education but also increase the educational access.

- Provision should be made at the DEO and the MS level to maintain data related to SOP/FSP enrollment, dropouts and passed students, SOP/FSP graduates admitted to formal school, and facilitators’ background information. The tools for monitoring SOP/FSP classes should also be developed as necessary.
• Alternative schooling programme should be linked to income generation activities in order to retain the SOP/FSP graduates in the formal school programme.

• Short-term and long-term skill training should be provided to the graduates who leave the school at primary (grade 8) or secondary levels (grade 10 and 12). These types of training programmes should be conducted at school level through annex programmes based on the available resources or local market demands. These types of programmes will support the school dropouts to generate self and wage employment.

• Special programmes should be provided for the school dropouts at grades 8, 10 and 12.

• Textbooks for SOP/FSP classes should be developed in different mother languages to address the differing needs of bilingual students.

• Strict regulation should be made for the MS to recognize SOP/FSP graduates as being equivalent to their school children.

• Provision for ECD and SOP programs should be made to run together or as separate classes with many clusters in the catchment areas of the MS. In areas with small number of school dropouts, FSP should be conducted. This can help solve the problem of under-age and over-age children in the SOP/FSP.

• A practical and effective system for the selection of well-qualified and committed persons be developed for selecting facilitators. Besides, provision for attractive salary and incentives should be made. A teacher associated with the MS could be a right person to be the facilitator.

• A single facilitator to teach all subjects and care every child individually seems unscientific and impracticable. Provisions of two facilitators should, thus, be made to have full-fledged teaching in FSP/SOP.

• Resource mobilization at community level through MS, VDCs and CBOs, voluntary organizations and development projects is essential to generate funds for providing incentives to the facilitators and out of school children to attract them to the SOP/FSP.

• Besides, the allocation of quotas, the rate of enrolling at least 20 students in a SOP or FSP class should be revisited considering the scattered pockets of settlements of the disadvantaged population.

• Action research on improving the educational participation of school age children through multi-grade teaching for ECD, SOP and FSP students should be conducted.
Acknowledgements

The current Education for All (EFA) 2004-2009 sector program in Nepal is a comprehensive primary education intervention as a part of Nepal’s EFA National Plan of Action (NPA) (2001-2015). The Government of Nepal (GON) has initiated this intervention in line with the long term objectives of social inclusion, improving access to and improving quality of primary education. To this end, Alternative Schooling Program (ASP) has been implemented in two forms namely, ‘School Outreach Program’ (SOP) with three years education for school age children of the age group 6 to 8 years who cannot go to school and the ‘Flexible Schooling Program’ (FSP) with a five-year primary school curriculum condensed into a three-year program by scheduling flexible time and choosing a location at their convenience. As a result of various noble attempts, the ‘Net Enrolment Rate’ (NER) of primary level has notably increased in recent years. The NER trends since 2001 to date for the primary level shows satisfactory progress, the NER being 91.9% in 2008 (MOES, 2008). However, the survival rate does not indicate a promising progress on the part of school going age children who continue to remain outside the education system. The problem of most educationally deprived groups and school age children in gaining access to basic education has remained to be a critical issue. In this context, the present study provides an in-depth information on the status and provision of AS by exploring ways for strengthening the program and finding ways for alternative measures.

The research team received invaluable information from the field with full support and cooperation from different groups of stakeholders. The research team would, therefore, like to express heartfelt thanks to all of them. The research team would also like to express sincere thanks and appreciation to Prof. Dr. Arbinda Lal Bhomi, Executive Director of CERID and Prof. Dr. Kishor Shrestha, Coordinator, FRP, for their continued support and cooperation while undertaking this study.

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2009 Bharat Bilas Pant, Ph.D Researcher
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acronyms and Abbreviations</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Summary</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgement</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Context</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationale of the Study</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II 6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Related Literature</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of Policies and Programs</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Related Studies</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Experiences in Alternative Schooling</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III 15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Design</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Framework</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Samples</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Tools</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Generation</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER IV 19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion on Field Findings: Cases by District</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study of Ilam District</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study of Dolakha District</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study of Chitwan District</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study of Kaski District</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study of Banke District</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER V 72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VI 91</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Findings</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provisions of Alternative Schooling</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Alternative Schooling</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to Educational Access and Quality</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative mechanisms</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER VII 95</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions and Recommendations</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEXES</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

Introduction

The Context

The thrust of the Education for All (EFA) program is to ensure children’s equitable access to quality basic and primary education. With a purpose to address the goal of EFA 2004-2009, Non-formal Education Centre (NFEC) has launched the Alternative Schooling Program (ASP) in two forms namely, School Outreach program (SOP) and Flexible Schooling Program (FSP). SOP provides opportunity of three years education using same text books as those used in Grade 1, 2, 3 of formal schooling system to school age children who cannot go to school and the FSP offers a five-year primary school curriculum condensed into a three-year program by scheduling flexible time and accepting a location at their convenience.

The term Alternative Schooling (AS) has always referred to nontraditional education with a number of approaches to teaching and learning other than mainstream or traditional education. In the United States of America, in the late 1960s, the first alternative public schools were identified; however, the underlying definition and characteristics of schools of choice have remained relatively unchanged. They include voluntary participation, small school size, caring teachers with high expectations, customized curriculum, personalized instruction, safe learning environment etc.

In the developed countries like the United States of America, educational alternatives that include charter schools, alternative schools, independent schools, and home-based learning vary widely, but often emphasize the value of small class size, close relationships between students and teachers, and a sense of community.

Late by the year 2000, the ideas of AS expanded to include a distinctive opportunity to participate in schools of choice. These programs serve as the benchmarks of effective practice in alternative schooling. The programs included alternative or optional schools, career-theme or technical magnet schools, charter schools, contract schools, open enrollment programs, residential alternatives, voucher programs, home schools, internet courses and programs, blending high school with college, and area learning centers. Each of these school/program types are represented by established, successful working models.

AS is gaining increasing popularity in many countries of the world with goals of providing with access and quality of education to the children. It has become an integral component of public education throughout the world from developing countries like Nepal to developed country like the United States of America.

In Asian countries especially in Nepal, the AS subcomponent has two programs, namely a SOP and a FSP. The models of AS namely SOP and FSP in Nepal have no certainty as such. The programs have remained in try-out phase and program implementation as well as research activities are continuing.
Table 1: EFA Indicators on Universal of Primary Education (UPE)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
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</thead>
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<td>101.3</td>
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<td>79.1</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>73.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival Rate to G5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Department of Education, 2008

The primary level enrollment increased by an annual average of 4% from 2003 to 2006 and reached 4,515,059 students in 2006. In Nepal, a review of selected EFA indicators on universal primary education indicates that the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) trends since 2001 to date for the primary level shows satisfactory progress, the NER being 91.9 in 2008 (MOES, 2008). However, the survival does not indicate a promising progress on the part of school going age children who continue to remain outside the education system.

Rationale of the Study

Mainly two major obstacles geographical feature of the country and severe socio-economic conditions are preventing school age children not only to attend the formal school but also AS. The first obstacle is especially for the school age children of remote villages and separately populated areas. The second obstacle keeps away the children of both rural and urban settings to attend the school. In order to cope up with this situation and contribute to the goal of EFA 2004-2009, Non-formal Education Centre (NFEC) has launched the SOP and FSP.

The policies and strategies indicated firmly by the SSR Core Document (2009-2015) envisaged literacy and various types of non-formal education to affirm as the right of basic education of all adults and youth. The core document has also explicitly mentioned that in order to ensure access of basic education and literacy program to all; non-formal mode of education to both school age children and adults will be developed and extended (DOE/MOES, 2008, pp 18).

To this end, a number of schools are operating in selected districts with different operational models. There are a number of issues related to planning and management, access to, relevance with and quality of SOP and flexible schooling. At national level, the problem of expanding the AS program throughout the country and increasing the intake is a great challenge and at the same time it is a challenge to maintain the quality of the program. There is also a need to identify the operational model of SOP and FSP that can be more suitable to enroll a large number of school age children and to retain them. There is also a need to explore models that can really avert the high dropout rates among primary school children. New alternative programs and provisions need to be assessed with the aim of addressing the following problems and issues:

- providing opportunities to out of school children to access higher levels of education and improve their living standard.
- developing innovations in instructional models and operation of schools reaching specially most at risk children.
• involving school age children of varying age groups in both program SOP and FSP as per increasing needs and demands.

• training staff and facilitators and mobilizing them to attain the objectives, involving higher institutional resources like colleges, and universities and educational research centers e.g. Faculty of Education, Tribhuvan University and CERID.

• developing mechanism for sustainable resource mobilization and involvement of community groups, volunteers, parents, teachers, and actors like NGOs, CBOs and donors.

• increasing the quality, relevance, and sustainability of literacy programs and to ensure continuous curriculum development and revision.

• increasing the participation of the community in developing literacy programs.

• addressing the needs and aspiration of the parents about the needs of their children.

• capacity-building for Community Learning Centers (CLCs), and teachers.

Above all, it is needed to conceptualize that literacy programs should meet the needs of school age children and the community, with the aim of reducing poverty and increasing productivity. For providing literacy, alternative models for SOP and FSP need to be developed, piloted, and expanded to meet the different learning needs of and different age groups of the participating children. The present study, therefore, intends to have in-depth study on the status and provision of AS by exploring ways for strengthening the program.

**Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

• To identify the provision made for alternative schooling in terms of types of program, location of schools/learning centers, inputs provided (T/L materials), recruitment of facilitators, training of facilitators, incentives to children, participation of parents and community groups

• To examine the status of alternative schooling in terms of geographical coverage, delivery system, allocation of quota, partner agencies/institutions, management, retention of the children in the program.

• To assess technical and managerial aspects of the program that has influenced the attainment of educational access and quality of children among disadvantaged groups.

• To suggest alternative mechanisms that could be designed and implemented in order to address the issues of under-age and over-age children.

To address the objectives of the study the following key questions were asked:

• What are the provisions of alternative schooling?

• What is the status of alternative schooling?

• How does alternative schooling contribute to educational access and quality for children of disadvantaged group?
• What alternative mechanisms could be designed and implemented in order to address the issues of under-age and over-age children?

These research questions were elaborated more specifically to clarify and address the objectives of this study and to provide guidelines in developing the research tools as indicated below.

Provisions of AS
• Who decides the location of SOP/FSP classes?
• Have the classes received all sorts of inputs (text materials and stationery) as indicated in the AS Program Implementation Guide (PIG)?
• What procedures were adopted in recruitment of facilitators?
• What is the minimum qualification of the facilitator?
• Who provides training to the facilitators?
• What is the duration of training of facilitators?
• Do the SOP and FSP participants receive any incentive?
• What is the level of the community participation in SOP and FSP?
• What inputs are received from the parents and community groups to run the SOP and FSP?
• Who monitors the program (RP, Local Supervisor, and teacher)?
• What is the frequency of monitoring visits in AS classes?
• What is the performance level of the participants?
• To what extent does the SOP and FSP get support from the DEO and SOP/FSP Class Management Committee (CMC)?
• Are there any supports from community leaders and NGOS/CBOs in running the SOP/FSP?

Status of AS
• To what extent have the VDCs been covered in each district?
• Have the local community received adequate quota to run the SOP and FSP as per demand?
• How have the demands/needs been collected by the agency for SOP and FSP?
• Who takes initiatives in opening SOP or FSP class?
• Which agencies other than DEOs are supporting the FSP/OSP program?
• How were the implementing agencies/institutions selected?
• What is the retention rate of the out of schoolchildren in the program?
• Have any efforts been made to readmit those children who leave SOP/FSP or formal school after admission?
• What measures are needed to retain them in the schools?
• What is the enrollment pattern of SOP/FSP graduates in formal school?
• What is the age and ethnic composition of the participating children?
• What problems are observed in running AS?
• What efforts are made in solving the problems?

Contribution of AS to Educational Access and Quality for Children of Disadvantaged group
• What is the level of students’ participation?
• What is the status of the students continuing the FSP?
• To what extent did the program attracted the students to join formal school?
• Do they opt for higher education?
• What is learning of the community through SOP and FSP?
• What do the SOP and FSP completers do?
• What are the notable achievements and effects of SOP and FSP as observed by different groups of the people in the community level?

Alternative Mechanisms to Address the Issues of Under-age and Over-age Children
• What mechanisms should be followed for active participation of the disadvantaged children?
• What measures should be followed to address the problems of underage and over age schoolchildren in the SOP and FSP?
• What measures should be taken to increase educational access and quality of SOP and FSP?
• What arrangements are needed for strengthening the entire mechanism for SOP and FSP in the grassroots level and its linkage with formal schools?
CHAPTER II

Review of Related Literature

This chapter presents a review of related policy documents, previous studies, different alternative schooling models and formative research studies carried out by CERID. More specifically the present study focuses on substantive findings of previous studies in relation to increasing the access to basic education and ways and means to improve it.

Description of Policies and Programs

In recognition of World Declaration on Education for All, 1990, Nepal has put immense human efforts and financial resources to improving access to and quality of primary education. In April 2000, the World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal provided opportunities to assess achievements, lessons, and failures of EFA goals over the period of ten years. In case of Nepal, the assessment did not show a promising result of the review of the achievements of EFA campaigns in 1990.

The current Education for All (EFA) 2004-2009 sector program in Nepal is a comprehensive primary education intervention as a part of Nepal’s EFA National Plan of Action (NPA 2001-2015). The NPA provides the long-term vision and planning framework for the Ministry of Education (MoE) and aims to achieve the 2015 Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and the EFA goals by introducing systemic improvements in service delivery and planning mechanisms. In consonance with the six major goals set by the Dakar Forum for the year 2015 and one additional goal set in view of the ethnic, social, and linguistic diversities, Nepal developed its plan of action.

The first six goals mentioned below are those based on the EFA Dakar Framework of Action and the last one to address the emerging needs and concern of the country for the year 2015.

Of the seven goals based on the EFA Dakar Framework for the year 2015, two major goals are related to access to and quality of education. One is ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities have access to free and compulsory primary education of good quality and the other is achieving a 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults (MOES, 2003b). The Core Document for EFA 2004-2009 is the main reference document for the initial design of the EFA program (MOES, 2003a). The thrust of the EFA program is to ensure children’s equitable access to quality basic and primary education. Nepal’s EFA program is a Government undertaking, drawing support from pooling partners, non-pooling partners and national as well as international NGOs and local communities.

MoES has adopted an innovative and reform oriented approach with flexibility and openness for learning through the EFA implementation, according to the Mid-Term Review of the Program. Since the Government’s new School Sector Reform (SSR) has taken shape, several major support programs and interventions under EFA are about to come to an end. Very recently, the government has also launched the National Literacy Campaign. It is high time for the Government to systematically evaluate the design, implementation, and outcomes of the current activities by determining how effective the EFA plan has been. This will help guide decisions on policy and reform.
initiatives and make necessary adjustment to sector plans and strategies that are likely to continue in the next phase. An overarching question is what can be done in relation to accelerate progress in increasing the access of the most at risk group of out of school children and ensure its quality and achieve the 2015 EFA goals?

With a purpose of contributing to the ASP by increasing the school enrollment ratio of children between the ages of 6-14 who have no access to the educational system, the students’ enrollment in schools, and attracting for reentry in formal education in future, a cooperative agreement was held between the Nepal Government and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in 2004. The Community-based Alternative Schooling Project (CASP) was thus launched in 2004 to help improve the existing Alternative Schooling Programs (ASPs) for out-of-school children and promote non-formal education through pilot activities. Under the EFA framework, CASP is implemented by the Non-Formal Education Center (NFEC), Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), and District Education Office (DEO) in coordination with local NGOs. CASP aimed to develop an operational model of the community-based ASP to enroll out-of-school children in schools by the end of 2008.

From that time, the CASP has been functioning in Nepal (See Diagram 1 for ASP Model suggested by CASP). As envisaged in the model, there were four key concepts in implementing the CASP activities.

• CASP focuses on improving ownership and partnership among stakeholders through sharing experiences and cooperating to build up appropriate pilot activities.

• CASP focuses on strengthening a linkage between non-formal and formal education for sustainable educational development.

• Community is the main actor to initiate pilot activities of CASP. Without community participation, non-formal education programs for children will not produce results.

• CASP builds networks among stakeholders from the central level to the community level.

The review of each experience by stakeholders will be the platform for formulating relevant non-formal education programs in Nepal. To implement pilot activities at the district level, a Working Group comprised of NFEC, DEO, a local NGO, and JICA/CASP was formed in each target district, namely Siraha and Dhading.

The CASP plans further strengthening the ASP and has been contributing to Institutional Development and Organizational Strengthening (ID/OS) (CASP, 2006). It has also been contributing to how harmony and cooperation between program/service delivery institution, i.e. government and the demanding institution or origination i.e. community could be strengthened. The purpose was community mobilization of the institutions depending on the (I)/NGOs and CBOs and the program implementation by the NFEC and DEOs (CASP, 2006).

Under CASP model, NFEC gives training and technical support to DOE and DEO gives technical support to the community. The NFEC also gives training to School Supervisors and Resource Persons of the respective district to conduct training to the facilitators. Facilitators are given 15 days training in the first phase and 7-10 days training by RPs and SSs in the respective district. Generally, RPs and SSs are also responsible to monitor the ASP i.e. FSP/SOP. The principal of the MS is assigned as a
responsible person to monitor the ASP. The principal of the MS provides monitoring and feedback to the facilitator. Community participation is equally important in this program. For this, District Development Committee, VDC, and parents’ of the community play a vital role.

The CASP was piloted in two districts- Siraha and Dhading in 2062 B.S. and additionally the program was implemented in Kathmandu in 2063 B.S. However, considering the low literacy level, at national level, 30 districts, which had literacy level of less than 40%, were targeted. A total of 20 VDCs were selected from each of the 30 districts from the fiscal year 2062/063(CASP, 2006, pp.18). This program was launched by developing Village Education Plan (VEP) through the medium of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) by conceptualizing the bottom-up approach of planning. Beginning from 1999/2000 (056/57) to 2007/08(064/65) altogether 1429 SOP centers and 1186 FSPs were conducted in the country.

Diagram 1: CASP Model
Overall, there are two features in ASP - joint initiative with NFEC and support to District Level Centres. First, the UNICEF is closely working with NFEC to strengthen ASP by providing technical support to develop child centered training packages of ASP, reviewing the FSP condensed curriculum in the context of changed formal curriculum and assisting NFEC to build coordination, networking and partnership with like minded organizations to share NFE issues and best practice for quality program intervention. Secondly, the UNICEF is assisting the program districts in close partnership with District Education Offices (DEOs), Municipalities and local NGOs to implement alternative education centers in the communities and in the urban areas (CASP, 2006, annex).

Presently both SOP and FSP are running in 53 districts of the country. The OSP Program in each district covers 5 to 7 Village Development Committees (VDCs) with a range of 20 to 30 participants. This clearly shows the limited coverage of the program. The FSP programs are focussed in the urban areas where the school age children have opportunity to attend three types of program. The curriculum from Grade 1 through 10 are condensed into three levels: primary, lower secondary and secondary with 3 years, 2 years and one year program, respectively. In other words, they have access to formal school curriculum in non-formal setting. For FSP each district is allocated 10 to 15 quotas. Recently, the first batch of the SOP completed the third level (secondary level of the FSP) i.e. School Leaving Certificate Level Examination. In Nepal, high dropout among the schooling children is one of the very critical problems in school education. Under the non-formal education scheme, program for school dropout children known as PSDC is being experimented by the government with support of JICA. In the ASP a number of donors like ADB, DANIDA, and NORAD are involved in funding at national level, while JICA has been involved as a technical cooperating agency in implementing the PSDC program besides funding it.

The problem of most educationally deprived groups and school age children in gaining access to basic education has remained to be a critical issue in the East Asia and Pacific Region including central Asia. In this connection, the contribution made by International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) in reviewing the situation of out-of-school youth in various Asian countries, and analyzing in depth large-scale projects, have succeeded in giving a second chance to these children (UNESCO Education.Htm, 2006).

Specifically, inventories were conducted in Indonesia, Thailand and Mumbai in India to provide a broad overview of existing education strategies aimed at the disadvantaged - developed by either public or private actors in these countries. The projects like the Social Action Program in Pakistan, the community schools in Andhra Pradesh (India), the Pratham project also in India, and the Out-of-School Children’s Program in Nepal indicate several factors as necessary to ensure their success (UNESCO Education.Htm, 2006).

The challenges of most of the countries in ASP lie in not only providing choices but also making it relevant to differing needs of the learners, socio-economic and geographical difficulties. Further, successfully evaluating and replicating programs are the challenges. A wide range of approaches needs to be offered to implement curriculum, instruction, school governance, and management. With these provisions, only we can properly design and implement AS for target beneficiaries in Nepal. AS might be of different models depending on the geographic location, socioeconomic condition of the learners, the available resources, and the partnership...
between the volunteers, parents, facilitators, local communities, and the donors. There might be varying levels of focus on unique curricular and instructional approaches, the needs and interests of students, the career themes and professional relevance, experiential learning, and on organization, administration, mobilization of volunteers and CBOs, governance, and funding.

Review of Related Studies

A number of researches are carried out in the field of primary education with reference to educational participation, curriculum, achievement and school dropout. However, there are very few studies in the area of SOP and FSP. Considering the scenario of the low literacy rate, limited access of primary education and quality, the government has put tremendous efforts and resources in SOP and FSP with expectation to contribute efficiently to achieving EFA goals. Despite increasing access to basic education, a number of challenges remain in our doorsteps in implementing a program as reflected by various studies (CERID 1997, CERID 2007), and in progress as pointed out by status reports (DOE/MOES, 2008).

With the purpose of finding out the effectiveness of the SOP in terms of investment and field implementation, a study entitled “Out–of–School Children Program (OSP): an effectiveness study” was conducted in 2000. The study revealed a considerable level of improvement in the access and teaching learning situation. However, the physical conditions of this program and the delivery of the materials were reported to be very poor (CERID, 2000, pp.30). In addition, the need for improvement in quota distribution without political interference and hiring of the facilitators at local level was revealed by the study. The study recommended improvement in the quality of reading materials, opportunity for further education to those who completed OSP program and design of the training program to the facilitators to address the differing needs of OSP I and OSP II (Ibid, 2000, pp.27).

Review of Research Studies

With a purpose of identifying the existing situation of SOP and FSP graduates; analyzing the positive and negative factors that contributed either to remain in formal school or dropout and recommending strategic measures for improving the SOP and FSP program, Teacher Educators Society-Nepal, (TESON) conducted a study entitled “Situation analysis of SOP and FSP in Dhading and Siraha districts” in 2005. The study revealed that there were growing numbers of students in the SOP and FSP, both. However, gender gaps prevailed in both districts. In addition, there was substantial number of dropout in both SOP and FSP and the tendency of not joining formal school was high (TESON, 2005, pp.x). Similarly, the study found the average enrollment of the children in the SOP and FSP. The recruitment of female teachers was a positive factor in increasing enrollment of the children from the disadvantaged groups.

In order to increase girls’ access to SOP and FSP, the study recommended for recruiting more female teachers. Besides, the study also recommended for ensuring flexibility of class time and launching awareness programs for parents and community members to send their children to SOP and FSP in order to retain them in the formal schools(Ibid, pp. x, xii).

A tracer study of out-of-school children’s program, conducted by Innovative Forum for Community Development (IFCD) in 1997 revealed that girls participation in OSP
was very low, only a few graduates of the OSP were enrolled in formal school. Students’ engagement in household affairs, parents’ migration from their own community to other places were the barriers in the participation of school age children in the OSP. As regards the effectiveness of the program, the children preferred formal school rather than OSP as they could not meet their expectations (IFCD, 1997, pp.6-8). The facilitators’ irregularity in the class was also a negative factor in distracting the children to the class.

A research project on life skills education for out-of-school youth designed for developing ways and means by CERID to address the needs of youth in Nepal found that NFEC has run some programs for OSP youths but most of them are not functioning to improve their level (CERID, 2007pp.50). This report has indicated that any program developed for OSP youths should be continued until they are skilful for the world of work (Ibid, 2000, p.55). There is a relevance of skills training to those children who are dropped from the OSP program II or III. Above all, the report has indicated that there is a need of developing different types of non-formal education programs to address the life skills needs to OSP youths.

CERID conducted a study entitled “A study of out-of-school adolescents in Nepal: a research study” in 2004 with a purpose of investigating into the situation of the OSP adolescents, particularly the girls of Nepal. The study revealed that over 80% of the adolescents are out-of-school and the provision of education available from schools; OSP and skills training provided by various agencies are inadequate (CERID, p.51).

Based on the study, the report has made a number of recommendations. However, with regard to OSP, the report mentioned that the OSP is running on traditional ways with less facility. Regarding the FSP and SOP monitored by the Department of Education (DOE), the Status Report 2008 records a good progress at the district level programs. The components of FSP and OSP included printing and distribution of materials, teachers’ guide and training manual preparation for FSP for the first phase, training manual preparation of school outreach program, reference material preparation for facilitators, preparation of statistics forms, preparation of model questions and their printing (15 subjects), 6 days training of trainers (TOT) for FSP, free textbook distribution for FSP, program monitoring, text-books revision and CRC preparation for NFE-SOP program.

In FSP, the physical as well as financial progress was reported to be 95% and 91%, respectively. Among the nine activities, the physical implementation rate was found highly satisfactory i.e. 90% above. Similarly, financial aspects of the activities were recorded 85% and above expectation, remuneration for the new flexible schooling facilitators and training for facilitators (existing) were 68% and 77% respectively. Regarding the OSP, the overall physical progress of this subcomponent was 98% and financial implementation rate was 94%.

As indicated by the report the progress related to the activity related to classroom management and training for facilitators (existing), within the subcomponent of OSP, had slightly low physical implementation rates with 89% and 79% respectively. The physical progress for the Inclusive Education (Special Needs Education) subcomponent was satisfactory i.e. 100% among the five activities under it and the financial implementation rate was 94%. At the central level, under two subcomponents -AS and education for special needs children, altogether fourteen activities were planned for the FY 2007-08. The overall physical and financial progresses of this component were 94% and 75% respectively (MOES, 2008). The
status report 2008 clearly mentioned about the problems, and issues related to SOP, and FSP. Most of the districts reported the irregularity of FSP/SOP students and their de-motivation due to lack of scholarship for them. Despite the lack of effectiveness in the program, there is a high demand of the SOPs in remote and hill districts (i.e. Lamjung and some districts in Karnali zone). At the same time, the allocation of quotas was reported to be insufficient (MOES, 2008).

International Experiences in Alternative Schooling

International experiences have shown that alternative schooling can be effective for the children who are unable to join formal schools. In Bangladesh, the experience of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) has shown very effective ASP for the children who are unable to join formal schools. A course of three-year cycle with three hours per day, six days a week has very positive effects on the part of the children and more than 90% participants have successfully completed the three-year cycle. After completing the program, they are required to demonstrate their eligibility through achievement test administered to them. In practice, a large proportion of those who pass the test are admitted to the government school (appeal@unescobkk.org).

A program called Telecurso 2000, a condensed version of basic curriculum is offered through distance education mode in Brazil. The dropouts of primary or secondary schools have the opportunity to participate in this program. After completing this program, the participants are eligible to appear in the test and receive formal certificates (Castro, 1999, cited in Lamichhnae and Wagley, 2007). After obtaining formal school certificates, the participants will have opportunity to further their formal education (Lamichhnae and Wagley, 2007).

In Namibia, the provisions of National Literacy Program are divided into three stages. In the first stage, the learners are taught the mother tongue to develop writing skills. After completing the first stage, the children, with prior schooling background are eligible to join the second stage to further develop the skills of reading and writing as well as acquire knowledge and skills in functional areas such as agriculture, health, civics, etc. Finally, at the third stage, there is a provision for learning English. The third stage completers will have the equivalency of grade 4 in certificate. (The World Bank Group, 2001, in Lamichhane and Wagle, 2007).

There are similar experiences observed in Brazil and Namibia with a slight difference on the mode of certification and admission to formal school. In Brazil, the completers of Teleresco 2000 program require to pass the examinations to obtain formal certificate. However, in Namibia the third stage completers are officially recognized as grade four completers of formal primary school (Ibid, 2007).

In Nairobi ‘The Undugu Basic Education Program (UBEP ) was developed by ‘The Undugu Society’ in 1978 with the objective of offering learning opportunities in areas such as functional literacy and practical skills for street children and other disadvantaged children living around the slums of Nairobi. In this program, the curriculum offered to primary school is condensed into three phases of one year each. The completers of this program are eligible to receive vocational training in carpentry, metal work and tailoring (Ibid, 2007).

One of the major success factors of this program is that the similarity between the UBEP curriculum and the formal school curriculum has enabled the completers of
Alternative Schooling: Addressing the Unserved School-age Children

UBEP program to continue their further education in the formal school system (Thompson, 2001, in Lamichhane and Wagley, 2007).

An exemplary case of equivalency provision between formal and non-formal education prevail in Madagascar. With the aim of providing a second chance to the adolescents within 10-15 age groups, who have had no access to formal school or who dropped out from grade one or grade two, for completing the elementary level an initiative known as initiatives ASAMA (Accelerated Compressed Learning for Malagasy Adolescents) was introduced. In place of five years formal elementary level, a ten-month course was developed. This program ASAMA is conducted for 42 hours a week and is divided into three terms.

In Madagascar, there is an operation of Planet of Alphas program for the age group of 10-17 years not covered with the educational program. After gaining, writing and reading skills and completing the course, the participants are recognized eligible in the ASAMA program. Thus, it is obvious that those who have limited access to education or those who are left out educationally are provided with different schemes - e.g. condense curriculum, accreditation, and equivalency to formal education. However, one very critical point to be considered is the level of competency expected from the participants and various support programs to run the program.

Lamichhane and Wagley, (2007) conducted a study entitled Consolidating National Policies on Equivalency towards Accomplishing Universal Primary Education (UPE), with the following purposes:

− to explore further impetus in the process of attaining UPE through research based policy direction concerning equivalency linkages between non-formal and formal education streams;
− to analyze a case of unschooled children and come up with some policy recommendations with the intent to enable unschooled children enter into mainstream education and/or into the world of vocations,
− to suggest action steps for the implementation of the recommended equivalency policies.

In the study, the authors have critically analyzed the national and international experiences and lauded that out of school children population is to be brought to the mainstream of formal education to meet EFA goals by 2015. With the study, the researchers have identified three major measures along with the action steps framework to improve the existing ASP in order to bring it to the standard of formal school education. In addition, the researchers have recommended action steps along with the responsible agency (who), time to start action (when) and the process (how).

In consideration of the major findings, the researchers have suggested the action steps for the education sectors in Nepal:

• Commencing open schooling provision for those who do not complete FSP or SOP within the time period.
• Making provision for vocational and/or technical skills as alternatives to those who are not willing to join formal schooling due to various reasons.
• Facilitate the opening of new primary schools in those places where hundreds of children want to join SOP.
• Allocate quota for SOP classes in small scattered villages.
• Make provision for regular monitoring to strengthen the SOP and FSP.
• Increase the qualification of the facilitators to B.Ed. and provide better of remuneration for facilitator as per qualification.
• Ensure priority to ASP in EFA basket to ensure EFA by 2015.
• Screen children each year to determine their academic status and channel them to mainstream formal education.
• Strengthen professional capacity of NFEC.
• Ensure coordination of skills and knowledge among various stakeholders to make ASP program effective.
• Ensure quality of ASP on par with the respective grades in mother schools (Lamichhane and Wagle, 2007).
CHAPTER III

Study Design

Study Framework

The design of the study was a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research. However, the focus was on qualitative data collection and interpretation. Research triangulation, a general practice of qualitative research, was used to enhance the authenticity of the information. In this regard, field visits were ensured to interact with the end users of the program, i.e. school age children, teachers, facilitators, CMC members, headteachers, and parents etc. Additionally, the DEOs were consulted. Thus, based on the research questions and the objectives of the study, the framework of the study is represented diagrammatically as below.

Study Samples

A combination of purposive and random sampling procedures was adopted by considering continuity of SOP/FSP classes for years and access of both SOP/FSP classes for study. The districts thus selected provided a representative form of sample to solicit the views of disadvantaged children representing various socio-economic and ethnic groups, facilitators, parents, community leaders, CMC members and selected NGOs/CBOs involved in running the program.

The selection of sample for the study was done to ensure that the districts and location of SOP and FSP run both in the past and present were represented. Thus, based on the criteria mentioned above, Dolakha, Ilam and Chitwan represented the hills and the Tarai districts, which started the SOP program in 1999/2000. Dolakha, on the other hand, represents the mountain belt that started the SOP and FSP program simultaneously in 2003/2004. Kaski represents the western hill district running both FSP/SOP. Banke, represents the Tarai districts where both SOP and FSP are running. For sampling purpose, depending upon the status, the running
classes, phased out classes and the MSs were selected. Table 3.1 given below summarizes the number of SOP/FSP classes and the MSs selected for the study.

**Table 3.1 Number of SOP/FSP Classes and Formal Schools/ Mother Schools Visited**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>SOP Classes</th>
<th>FSP Classes</th>
<th>Mother School(MS)/Formal School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Running</td>
<td>Phased out</td>
<td>Running</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilam</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dolakha</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chitwan</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaski</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banke</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

Besides visiting the SOP/FSP classes, the SOP/FSP students and graduates, the students admitted into formal schools, the headteachers and teachers of the MSs and the members of SOP/FSP CMC, parents and community members were interviewed. Discussions were made with the concerned community members and FGD was conducted with the graduates of SOP/FSP and parents. The respondents were selected according to their availability at district level and grassroots level. Most of the facilitators and headteachers of the selected SOP/FSP classes and concerned MS were contacted. Regarding the SOP/FSP, generally all the students of the class were observed and 3 to 5 SOP/FSP students enrolled in the formal school were contacted.

**Study Tools**

With regard to the objectives of the study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected by using varieties of instruments such as guidelines for interview with concerned personnel, guidelines for FGD with students and parents, classroom observation form, and survey form. Altogether, there were six types of interview and interaction guidelines, two types of guidelines for FGD, one class observation form, two types of survey forms and planned discussion/interaction with DEO.

**Guidelines for Interview and FGD**

The interview schedules as well as the guidelines for the FGD were developed in order to solicit the information from students, teachers, parents and other concerned persons regarding their understanding of SOP/FSP, quota distribution, delivery of textbooks and other related materials, supervision of the program, achievement of the students and strength and weaknesses of the program. Depending on the types of respondents the language used in interview schedules and the guidelines for FGD were prepared.

**Classroom Observation Form**

With a purpose of drawing an in-depth information about teaching-learning situation, performance of children participating in SOP and FSP as well as teachers/facilitators in the classroom and overall rating of the classroom dynamics, and the guidelines for classroom observation was developed. The classroom observation helped the observer to summarize overall impressions of the class.
performance in terms of content or style, facilitators/teacher's major strengths and suggestions for improving instructional process and teachers' teaching skills or performance.

**Survey Form**

A survey form to collect information about the SOP/FSP classes, and formal schools working for SOP and FSP was used. Besides the information of the class with reference to students’ number, gender, ethnic composition, age groups, enrollment pattern, and facilities available in the class monitoring of the program, the visits made by the parents and community members were also recorded.

**Data Generation**

In order to collect the required data and information, data collecting instruments were used in all five districts selected for the study. A summary of the instruments used for data gathering is given in Table 3.2. (See Annex 1).

Basically, a critical review of the policy documents such as MoES implementation and documentation, research reports; Tenth Plan/ Three Year Interim Plan (2007-10), EFA National Plan of Action (2001-15), EFA Core Document (2004-09), School Sector Reform 2008, EFA Global Monitoring Report/ UNESCO, National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2007/08, and training packages of the FSP/SOP program were made. Further, educational statistics and flash report of the Department of Education and other related research reports were reviewed.

Furthermore, interview with key personnel at district level and grassroots level, at community level for example, the facilitators, headteachers, parents, teachers, and supervisors provided valuable information and data were interviewed. Further information through interaction with parents, members of the CMC, teachers, and headteachers of the MSs and opinion leaders were obtained.

In order to draw information related to AS, FGD with disadvantaged children representing various socio-economic and ethnic groups, and also with teachers, head teachers of MS and parents were conducted for the following purposes:

- Assess the inputs and supplies, and effectiveness and efficiency of the FSP and SOP programs in achieving the intended outcomes;
- Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program's governing structure intra- and inter-agency cooperation, including the Government and donors;
- Provide inputs as to how the FSP and SOP could be expanded to EFA program which may gradually move towards EFA as per the School Sector Reform;
- Identify problems associated with the allocation of quota, needs and demand, implementation, regularity of the participants and dropouts from the program.
- Provide recommendations to improve policymaking and service delivery to address the issues of under-age and over-age children.

After collecting data and summarizing the major findings at the district level, planned discussion/exchange of information was organized at the DEO. Discussion was attended by the DEO, its staff members, RPs and school supervisors (SSs). The major sources of information were both primary and secondary sources. The review of related documents, and research reports were secondary sources of data while
those collected at district level through field visits, FGDs, interview, classroom observation, and survey were primary sources. In the process of the research, data collection, analysis, and interpretation took place concurrently. Both qualitative as well as quantitative techniques were used for data analysis by taking into consideration the available information from different sources and components of the objectives by following the framework.

**Photograph of a FGD with SOP/FSP Students in Banke**

The findings of the study were synthesized and reported as cases by district. As appropriate the cases of SOP/FSP, MS, and SOP/FSP graduates were presented. The case study of each district reflects on key concerns like site selection and distribution of quota for SOP/FSP; a glimpse over currently running programs; delivery of inputs: textbooks and stationery selection and training of facilitators; duration and timing of the classes; enrollment pattern of the SOP and FSP students; and formal schools. In addition, the case study reflects on classroom management and pedagogical practices; achievement of the SOP and FSP; supervision and monitoring; community mobilization; contribution to educational access and quality; and sustainability. Besides the district cases, a synthesis of the discussion was prepared. For the authenticity of the information collected, the data obtained from different sources at field level and related literatures were triangulated. Generally, the quantitative information were based on the enrollment of the students in SOP/FSP, dropouts from the programs, SOP/FSP graduates enrolled in the class and number of facilitators who were trained or untrained etc.
CHAPTER IV

Discussion on Field Findings: Cases by District

This chapter deals with cases of five selected districts in terms of: (i) site selection and distribution of quota for SOP/FSP, (ii) SOP/FSP classes at a glance and enrollment pattern, (iii) selection and training of facilitators, (iv) delivery of inputs for SOP/FSP, (v) achievement of students, (vi) supervision and monitoring, (vii) understanding of AS by the stakeholders, community mobilization, (ix) contribution to educational access and quality, sustainability and (x) issues related to SOP/FSP.

With regards to AS, the Nonformal Education Implementation Guidelines (NFEIG) 2064 have clearly indicated policy guidelines and implementation strategies criteria for distribution of quota for SOP and FSP classes, selection and training of facilitators, distribution of inputs- financial and technical both, distribution of teaching materials and other inputs, roles and responsibilities of Mother Schools with regards to selecting the location for allocating SOP/FSP classes, selecting facilitators for conducting SOP and FSP, supervision and monitoring and many other details related to implementation of the SOP/FSP programmes. However, in course of presenting the discussion on field study of each district, the actual situation of the districts has been discussed in different specific headings as mentioned above to broadly reflect on provision of the AS, status of the AS, contribution of AS to educational access and quality children of disadvantaged group and alternative mechanisms to address the issues of under-age and over-age children. A synthesis of actual situation compared to the NFEC Guidelines has been presented in the succeeding chapter of this report.

In this chapter, discussion on the field findings attempts to reflect on geographical coverage, adequacy of quota, needs and demands for OSP and FSP classes, initiatives and agencies in opening OSP or FSP class, enrollment and dropout rate, efforts made to readmit those children who leave SOP/FSP or formal school after admission, measures needed to retain them in the schools, the age and ethnic composition of the SOP/FSP students, and problems observed in running AS and initiatives in solving the problem.

Similarly, the case study reveals the decision on the location of SOP/FSP class, delivery and status of inputs (text materials and stationery), procedures adopted in selecting, and training the facilitators, educational level of the facilitators, duration of training, the participation of parents and community groups in SOP and FSP, monitoring the SOP/FSP, frequency of supervision and monitoring of the class, the performance level of the participants.

Similarly, the discussion depicts the overall contribution of the SOP/FSP program in terms of participation of the SOP/FSP age children, their continuation to the FSP, status of the OSP and FSP completers and notable achievements of SOP and FSP. Finally, the case study also reflects on the mechanism that should be followed for active participation of the disadvantaged children, address to the problems of underage and over age schoolchildren in the OSP and FSP, particularly to increase the access and quality of the SOP and FSP and strengthening the mechanism for SOP and FSP in the grassroots level and their linkage with formal schools in terms of the learning outcomes defined in the curriculum.
Case Study of Ilam District

Site Selection and Distribution of Quota for SOP/FSP

The DEO has provided quota of SOP/FSP classes on the recommendation of Community Learning Centre (CLC) and RC in remote areas where access to school was difficult, especially for the disadvantaged groups and the endangered groups (Lepcha). It was apparent from the discussion with DEO that in the areas where there are demands for the primary school, the DEO has a tendency of providing quotas for SOP or FSP. Field observation revealed that formation of CMC and regular monitoring of the classes and admission of the SOP/FSP graduates were not fully based on the NEFC guidelines. The SOP/FSP quotas are not adequate to address the demands of the district nor are the available quotas distributed properly.

SOP and FSP Classes at Glance

According to the district personnel, the quality in SOP/FSP in terms of the achievement level of the children participating in the program is below expectation due to lack of motivation of the facilitators, poor physical condition of the classes, problem of retention of facilitators due to low salary, and their aspiration for further education, and recruitment of untrained facilitators.

The study revealed that the facilitators have run two FSP classes in Barbote-6, and Godak 2 Laptantar, which are already proposed as primary schools. Similarly, the facilitators are running two SOP classes in Kanyam-7, and Godak I- Silpur that are also conducted in primary schools. SOP/FSP classes have been a base for opening a primary school. Some SOP classes are running with the intention of converting it to a primary school. If the SOP classes are continued as formal primary school, there will be implications in government funding, teachers’ quotas and other support. At the outset of the SOP/FSP, the communities were found to be satisfied with SOP/FSP quota, but they were frustrated later when the DEO rejected their demands for upgrading SOP/FSP classes in to a primary school.

In the FSP of Godak-2, there were 14 participants (5 girls and 9 boys.). Their average age during the admission was 11.7 years, ranging from 8 years to 17 years. There were 11 Janajati students, 2 Dalit and one from other ethnic groups. In the FSP of Godak (phased out), there were 12 students (6 girls and 6 boys.). Their average age was 9.7 years, ranging from 8 to 12 years. All the students were school dropouts of grade 1 and 2. Out of 12 students, three were admitted to MS at grade 5 and 6 each. Three were transferred to other formal schools.

In the FSP of Barbote-6, there were 19 participants (11 girls and 8 boys.). Their average was 6.5 years, ranging from 6 years to 9 years. There were 6 Dalit and 12 Janajati students and one student from other ethnic group. All the characteristics of SOP were found in FSP running at Silpur (Barbote-6). The DEO had availed the FSP quota in the name of relief quota. In Silpur, the initiative for the SOP was from the side of the MS. In case of Barbote FSP, the Durga primary school has provided SOP fund and scholarship. The CMC was formed for the FSP but without following the NFEC guidelines. The MS and the FSP facilitator have not received NFEC guidelines.

In the SOP of Kanyam-7, Ambi , there were 16 participants (11 girls and 5 boys.). Their average was 5.3 years, ranging from 5 years to 13 years. In Kanyam-7, Ambi (SOP), with the initiative of the MS, the site of the SOP was selected. It provides
access to school age students of neighboring VDCs of Shantipur. However, Shantipur VDC is not concerned so much with the benefits of such program. In Kanyam-7, Ambi, the MS was active in monitoring the SOP with the purpose of releasing the facilitators’ salary and providing support received from DEO and to suggesting the facilitator for running classes effectively. As revealed by the study the students of both SOP and FSP classes were enrolled in MS as well. For instance, the students of SOP classes in Kanyam-7, Ambi and those of FSP in Barbote were also enrolled in MS. The reason behind it was that the students could be provided with scholarship on the one hand and school could receive PCF fund on the other. According to the facilitators, the date of birth was maintained only to meet the age criteria of 6-8 years as defined in the NFEC guidelines. There was prevalence of both overage and under age students in the classroom.

**Enrollment Pattern of the SOP/FSP Students**

In Ilam, all quotas for SOP and FSP classes (10 FSP and 4 SOP) were distributed. There were more than 20 students on average in each FSP. Altogether 207 students (113 girls and 94 boys) participated in the FSP classes. By ethnicity, 45% were Dalit, and about 55 % were from Janajati. As per the record available, 81.9% boys and 86.7% girls were graduated from the FSP program. Similarly, in the SOP classes there were 59 students (36 boys and 23 girls). On average, there were 15 students in each SOP class. By ethnicity, there were two Dalit students (one boy and one girl), while there were 45% boys and 32% girls from Janajati group. All the students passed the examination. Analysis of the students’ participation in the SOP/FSP classes shows that there is a prevalence of dropout in both SOP and FSP classes. In case of SOP of Kanyam-7, Ambi four students joined Phargorip Primary School that was converted to primary school from SOP. There were about 19% dropouts at level 1 of the SOP.

In Silpur, only 55% were admitted to MS school at grade 4. In other words, the dropout was 45%. In Barbote, the FSP classes are running at the 3rd level. The classes are conducted at the primary school. In Laptantar, the register showed that 11 out of 14 students attended the level-2 examination and they were upgraded to level 3. In other words, the drop out from levels 2 to 3 was 21.4%. Contrary to the views of FSP students, there were only 8 FSP graduates who were studying in grade 3. In other words, only 3 out of 14 were enrolled in formal school at grade 3 instead of grade 4. In Godak-6, 6 out of 13 i.e. 46% FSP graduates from Godak-6 were admitted to the MS. As per the reported cases, three students were admitted to grade 5 and 3 students to grade 6. Interaction with the headteacher of the MS showed that the performance of the FSP graduates admitted to the MS was satisfactory. All the SOP/FSP graduates in three places ---Barbote, Ambi, and Silpur who were admitted to the MS were recorded in the school register.

**Selection and Training of Facilitators**

As per the provision made for the facilitator, the minimum educational qualification for the facilitator is S.L.C. and s/he should be appointed by the DEO following the recommendations of MS, CMC, and CLC. In Ilam, the facilitators were selected by the DEO following the recommendations of MS, CMC, and CLC. The facilitator for the FSP class in Barbote-6 and in Godak-2 was selected by the CMC. Among the SOP/FSP classes visited there were both male and female facilitators. There were 2 male and 3 female facilitators. The selection of facilitators for SOP and FSP classes, were both done by MS, CMC, and CLC jointly.
The educational qualifications of the facilitators ranged from S.L.C. to B. Ed. One of the female facilitators had the qualification of B. Ed. Two SOP facilitators and one FSP facilitator were from Janajati ethnic group. There was none from Dalit ethnic group. In SOP, two facilitators received only refresher training during the second and 3rd year without attending the basic training. According to the DEO, the facilitators are given training as per the DOE guidelines. The facilitators were given a 10-day basic training during the first year and 5 days refresher training during the second year. According to DEO personnel, the training was of 13 days but they concluded in 10 days considering the cost of training. For the third year, there was no provision for the training. Some trained facilitators were dropped, but the substitute facilitators were not given training. In terms of FSP, the facilitators took both basic and refresher training.

**Delivery of Inputs: Textbooks and Stationery**

As per the provision made the SOP students had to receive all the books at a time and, a pencil, one notebook, and an eraser each month from the DEO. But in practice, they received all the books and one time delivery of a pencil, one note book, and an eraser. The DEO also provided various teaching aids, like charts and pictures. Most of the FSP students were not given the textbooks. In some classes of Barbote, Godak-2, and Silpur, the students were given the textbooks, but the facilitators did not use them considering them of high standard. The DEO has provided limited instruction and the materials for the children to play with.

**Classroom management and pedagogical practice in SOP/FSP**

Interaction with DEO staff and the Headteachers of the MS reveals that the time and duration of the classes are flexible to address the differing needs of the students. Only few SOP and FSP classes are running smoothly for 4 hours. Most of the classes run for 2 to 3 hours a day- from 11.00 am to 3:00 pm in some classes and 11.00 am to 2:00 pm in other classes in all three places- Barbote-6, Godak-2 and Godak. The SOP and FSP classes are running in the formal school, community building constructed by the local people or some time in a teacher’s home. The local community members and parents preferred the construction of a classroom for SOP and FSP, with an intention for converting it to a formal primary school. The FSPs running in Barbote and in Laptantar were effective due to participatory teaching-learning process, use of teaching aids, and good seating arrangement.

In Ambi, all the students from classes 1 to 4 including those of the SOP were in a single room. One facilitator who was studying in B.Ed. 3rd year had difficulty to conduct the class due to varying age of the students. The refresher training she attended was not adequate for teaching the children. She did not understand child-friendly methods. The facilitator also had a language problem in most of the classes of Ilam. Most of the time the facilitator used the teacher-centered methods.

The students from the disadvantaged group were irregular, so, the facilitator had to repeat the lesson for the children of the group in question. For example, Manisha Lapche aged 14 from a SOP class wants to be regular but she requested the facilitator to close the class in break-time to go on wage earning. In SOP of Silpur and FSP class at Godak, the facilitator expressed that the students are benefited by getting stationery and inter-relationship between students. The facilitators had problems in managing time, preparing instructional materials and meeting the objectives of
curriculum. There was no evidence that the facilitators never used instructional materials.

**Achievement of SOP and FSP Classes**

In course of the study, the team could not access to the record of SOP and FSP classes that were phased out in recent years. During the interaction, the DEO, RPs and head teachers of the MSs visited opined that at least half the number of SOP and FSP graduates had joined the formal primary schools. In reality when a cross check was made the enrollment of SOP/FSP graduates in the formal school was far below. However, the FSP and SOP graduates who are enrolled in formal school have shown a satisfactory level of the achievement in 3Rs.

Despite the training, the SOP/FSP facilitators were not able to follow the textbooks for instruction. In terms of achievement, the SOP graduate could join class 4 but it is very difficult for the FSP graduate to get admitted to grade six. The students of level 3 of FSP have joined class 3. The SOP/FSP has been very useful for dropouts of grade 1 and 2. Generally, overage students have dropped classes. Interaction with students of SOP and FSP levels revealed that they have not acquired the knowledge and skills as per the curriculum of grades 1 to 3. Similarly, the FSP students have not shown performance based on three years condensed curriculum. The headteacher reported that the facilitators were regular and they have used child-friendly method in teaching. There was no attention from the DEO and MS to make the program effective by motivating children, taking record of unschooled children etc. The local community was keen to establish a primary school using the SOP and FSP.

**Supervision and Monitoring**

The supervision at community level should be to complement the support provided by the DEOs, RPs and CMCs. In the context of the SOP and FSP, the DEO has to play an important role in the supervision work as NFEIG 2064 has clearly mentioned that monitoring, supervision, and evaluation is one of the major functions, responsibilities and rights of the DEO with regards to SOP and FSP. In the guidelines, it is also mentioned that designating a school supervisor as a focal person for SOP and FSP is also one of the tasks of the DEO. From the viewpoint of supervision and monitoring of the program, it is very essential to consider the following questions:

- Are the SOP and FSP classes in line with the planned objectives?
- To what extent are the SOP and FSP implemented effectively on a planned way?
- Has the program commenced in time within ceiling of allocated budget and other program inputs?
- How well are the SOP and FSP classes running?
- To what extent have the school age children benefited from the program?
- Are the SOP and FSP objectives and target achievable?
- Is there a need to correct the plan?

The need for strong supervision and monitoring particularly from the MS is expected at the grassroots level. In the context of the SOP and FSP, the DEO and the MS both have played an important role in selection of the facilitators and the follow-ups in the
operation of the classes. However, field visit showed that neither the DEO nor RPs, are visiting all SOP and FSP classes to improve the teaching and learning situation. They have visited selected classes to ensure that they are running regularly and well. Some classes are visited by the DEO, while others by the headteachers and teachers of the MS, and respective CMC members. There has been monitoring visits from the DEO and the MS in Laptantar. The MS has looked after the SOP centre in Ambi and Silpur and FSP centre in Barbote-6, but it has not monitored the classroom process. The DEO personnel expressed the essentiality of regular monitoring and supervision visits and planned for it but no evidence as such was seen during the visits to the SOP and FSP classes. Some CMC members have visited the SOP/FSP classes but they have no capacity to suggest the facilitator for effective instruction.

Understanding AS by the Stakeholders

The NFEIG 2064 B. S. has clearly mentioned that SOP means the School Outreach Program known as Prathamik Vidyalya Bistarit Karyakram and FSP the Flexible Schooling Program known as Anaupcharik Prathmik Karyakram in Nepali. The concept of FSP and SOP were not fully comprehended by the stakeholders at district and local community levels in Nepali and English, both. The authorities at district level have understood the term SOP and FSP partially. Interaction with the local stakeholders particularly the CMC members, local people, and parents showed that they have no understanding of the SOP and FSP. All the communities in Laptantar, Ambi, and Gokdak-6 understand SOP/FSP as a branch of school. Even all the teachers of MS understood, SOP/FSP as a branch of school to address the needs of children who are deprived of accessing to education due to difficult geographical areas. It was very hard to draw generalization that the local people have understood the concept of FSP and SOP. Educating the DEO staff members, teachers of the MS and the local community about the provision of SOP for children of the age group 6-8 and that of FSP for the school dropouts or the children of the age group 8-14 years is very essential. The community people did not perceive any significant differences between the SOP/FSP classes. Nevertheless, they opined that the level of children could be different. Besides, the SOP/FSP children could get notebook, pencil, and an eraser.

The observed difference was that there were underage and overage children both in FSP/SOP classes, while there were average age children in formal school. The students felt that the SOP/FSP classes are conducted by the local female facilitator. The parents perceived SOP/FSP as the opportunity for schooling to disadvantaged and minority groups. The SOP graduates, enrolled in MS expressed about the differences of SOP and formal school in terms of building, play ground, subject teaching and grade teaching in the SOP. Other stakeholders mentioned that the SOP classes as an easy access to their children. The SOP graduates from Ambi, reported more friends and more teachers in a school. Other noted differences were school uniform and new types of the lessons in English and Math and time bound nature of SOP/FSP.

As per the guidelines of NFE implementation, the DEO is authorized to designate a formal school as Matrividylaya. Accordingly a primary school running at least grade 5 will be the formal school for SOP and the community school of lower secondary or secondary level which is convenient for them will be designated as formal school for FSP. As envisaged in the NFEIG 2064, the roles of formal schools are related to:
− Assisting in selecting location for SOP or FSP class,
− Preparing daily and annual instructional plan,
− Assisting the facilitator in teaching-learning,
− Conducting regular supervision and monitoring of the class,
− Assuming responsibility for examination of examination in the centre
− Publishing result and arrange for certificate,
− Arranging for enrolling grade 3 children of SOP to grade 4 and third level of FSP to grade 6,
− Assisting in solving educational problems of the centre
− Arranging for forwarding progress reports of the SOP/FSP to the DEO
− Recognize the SOP/FSP participants equal to the students of the formal school,
− Certifying the attendance of the facilitator and recommend to the DEO for payment of remuneration

Most of the MSs in Ilam have assisted in releasing fund for stationery, establishment cost, textbooks, and educating the community about SOP/FSP. The MSs in Ambi, Silpur, Lapanttar, and Barbote have fulfilled the administrative roles only. They are releasing fund for stationery, establishment cost, textbooks, and convince the community for running the SOP/FSP. The MSs have also taken side of the SOP and FSP to receive financial support from the VDC to construct SOP/FSP building and from community forest for the furniture. Barbote has also deputed a teacher to help FSP and other classes in private-funding and providing PCF. Generally, in Ilam, the MSs are involved in recommending persons to DEO for appointing the facilitator. Exceptionally, in Lapanttar, the CMC have recommended facilitators to the DEO for their appointment.

Community Mobilization

The CMC of SOP and FSP have the key roles in smooth operation of any community-based programs. Involvement of the local stakeholders, particularly of the local community, parents, local leaders, and the CMC were seen to some extent. However, no involvement of any NGOs, CBOs, or INGOs in running SOP/FSP was observed. The local community has donated land and voluntary labour for the construction of building and the management of the furniture. The local communities have collected donation from VDC and the community. The local community in Lapanttar is mobilized to collect fund by organizing Deusi, Bhailo, where as the local community people in Ambi have contributed to free labour. No notable activity was performed in the SOP/FSP classes at Barbote-6 and Silpur.

Contribution to Educational Access and Quality

The AS in the forms of SOP/FSP is relevant to minority and disadvantaged groups; the way SOP and FSP are implemented does not ensure that all school age children have access to primary education by 2015. The programs like these are supposed to be allocated in providing access to unschooled primary age children in difficult circumstances like poverty, and difficult terrain. In terms of the operation of the SOP/FSP in Ilam, it could be anticipated the provision made in primary school namely, scholarship for girls, Dalit scholarship, scholarship for disabled students,
and other various types of scholarship from VDCs, (I)NGOs, CBOs, also necessary to ensuring increased access and quality in primary education.

**Sustainability**

Most of the local stakeholders were informed of the quota-based system of SOP and FSP distribution. They were not fully aware that SOP/FSP was designed only for three years. The headteachers of the MS, the facilitators and the CMC members expressed that for sustainability, the SOP should be under the role and responsibility of the MS. According to the facilitators, MS, CMC, the VDCs, and CBOs, they should work collaboratively for developing physical infrastructure and ensure monitoring of the SOP/FSP at community level. In terms of existing practices of running SOP in formal school, it was suggested that ECD, grade 1, 2 and 3 students should be kept together and multi-grade teaching should be applied. Kenyam-7 Ambi, is an exemplary SOP class. There are eight students in class 1, 6 in class 2 and 5 in class 3. The number of students is quite enough to conduct SOP. Mapping on the out of school children is important to run SOP and FSP. It was observed that introducing ECD along with SOP could be a proper means of sustaining the SOP and FSP for disadvantaged children. Further, SOP/FSP should have continuity or else other alternative programs should be implemented

**Issues Related to SOP/FSP**

Interview, discussions, and FGDs conducted with the stakeholders at the district and community level have indicated some problems and issues related to quotas for SOP and FSP. The quotas allocated by NFEC do not address to the district demand. Similarly, the trained facilitators who left the program before the completion of the cycle are replaced by new facilitators. Some facilitators have received only refresher training. One very critical issue is related to assuming SOP/FSP classes as a part of the formal school and planning to upgrade them into primary school.

The duplication of students also prevails between SOP/FSP and formal schools. Lack of monitoring and recording of information related to SOP/FSP graduates, statistics of unschooled school aged children, provision of one shot programs, lack of substitute facilitators, and unhealthy practice of attracting SOP/FSP children to formal school are critical issues to be considered. The SOP/FSP classes are treated as an opportunity to supplement the shortage of school teachers and obtaining Per Child Funding (PCF). The provision of PCF in some places has created unhealthy competition of attracting school age children participating in SOP/FSP to formal schools despite the inconvenience caused to the children. Limited fund is released from NFEC on the one hand and some SOP/FSP even does not get full funding from DEO on the other. The local community has a feeling that there is no mass sensitization about the usefulness and importance of SOP/FSP among local community groups compared to formal school program.

**Case Study of Dolakha District**

**Site Selection and Distribution of Quota for SOP/FSP**

In Dolakha, altogether 20 VDCs were provided with SOP/FSP quotas to address the need of local people. The areas thus selected for running the SOP and FSP were done keeping in view the geographic isolation, difficult topography, cultural barriers, settlement of deprived communities and minorities having very low performance in
terms of literacy level, and educational participation. The study revealed that there are currently 25 FSP classes of which 20 started in 2006/07 and 5 in 2007/08. Presently, there are 8 FSP classes that started in 2007/08. It is worth mentioning that 10 SOP and the same number of FSP started in the year 2003/04 have already phased out.

The study revealed that the MSs had the key roles of launching the SOP and FSP in their catchment areas. Generally, the RCs were involved in informing the formal schools about the quotas of SOP and FSP. Following this, the local communities were involved in running the classes. The discussion with the stakeholders revealed that the allocation of SOP and FSP quotas were influenced by the community leaders and the political parties. The District Level Nonfomal Education Committee (DNFEC) was inactive. The DEO and concerned bodies could not use their jurisdiction to decide the quotas. In this regard, lack of data on unschooled children was also a problem.

The community members and DEO staff mentioned that the quotas for FSP/SOP should be need-based, not for a job for an unemployed local youth. At district level, there was no statistics on the population of unschooled children by their age and there was no demand for quotas of SOP/FSP as per the number of unschooled children, population density, and distance to the formal schools. Despite this, the actual location of the places where SOP and FSP classes are running appeared to be appropriate. In Dolakha, the communities who have received SOP/FSP quotas have been successful in enrolling all the school age children. The disadvantaged communities like Thami, Kusule and Tamang in Dolakha have been benefited from the SOP/FSP classes.

The location of the class within the proximity of the children, familiarity with the facilitator, and provision of free textbooks, notebooks, and pencils, peer groups to accompany to the class were factors enabling access to SOP/FSP. In addition, the recruitment of female facilitator, and the use of mother tongue as instructional medium were also factors enabling access to SOP/FSP.

SOP/FSP Class at Glance

The FSP classes at Lapse, Bonch situated amidst three small communities of Karki, Basnet, and Tamang in Bonch VDC, Ward 6 with about 80 households. Of the 21 children (13 girls and 8 boys), only 13 were present. Later on one joined a neighboring primary school in grade 1. In the beginning, one female facilitator was selected and provided with training through DEO. However, she left the job for personal reason and a substitute facilitator was identified for continuing the class. The new facilitator had no training opportunity.

Photograph of FSP children in Lapse, Bonch, Dolakha

The physical conditions such as seats, toilet and playgrounds were very poor. The facilitator was regular and used to inform the children and the parents about her absence in advance. The
children were not tidy and were of very tender age. They were keen to see the visitors and show their face in Camera. Most of the children were accompanied by their parents.

The FSP class conducted by Sunaulo Bhabisya Nonformal Education Center (SBNEC), Saharpa-1 is located in Bhim Municipality Ward no 1 of Dolakha which was started only three months later. Despite the orientation to the facilitator about age range, selecting location to run the classes, the facilitator did not feel responsible to inform the DEO about the mismatch of the age group.

On the day of our visit, 11 students were present. Among them nursery children were also present. There were 11 students (7 girls, 4 boys) from Kusule ethnic group. Their age ranged from 6 to 16 years, average age being 9.63. Out of total number of students, two were dropouts from primary schools of Charikot. Rest of the students were attracted to join FSP who were studying in class one of formal schools. In addition, two students were studying in class two, four students were studying in class 3 of formal schools. All these students were taking level one course of FSP. The classroom in the community building of SBNEC for FSP class was quite spacious. Students were sitting on a mat in a one row.

In FSP class conducted in Dolakha-4, Gagarus, there are 20 students (12 boys and 8 girls) in Gagarus. Their age ranged from four to nine and half years, average being 6.7. They are all Thamis. Only 10 children are regular. Three girls and two boys were already dropped out. The SOP class focused on Thami population. The physical condition of the FSP class was pitiable. In order to conduct the class the balcony of the facilitator’s house was used where two benches, a blackboard, and some charts were seen.

Establishment of the “Thami Utthan Sansthan” encouraged the Thami Community to send their children for a proposed SOP class. They conducted ECD in one room and SOP in the other Seti Devi Balbikash Kendra Chaathali.

A discussion with 9 FSP graduates (two boys and seven girls) enrolled in formal school in “Chaathali” was conducted. Of the 9, all except two completed the initial grade in which they were admitted. During admission, they were of the age group 5 to 8 years with exception of one 5-year aged child. The average age was about 6.5 years. One boy and one girl could not pass Grade 3. Six have reached grade 5, and 3 grade 4. All except one was admitted to grade 3. One who was admitted to grade 2 reached grade 4. Their average age during admission was 6.5 years but the age now is 9.3 years. None of the children was admitted to the FSP in accordance with the government rule.

There were two facilitators working in a team in the same place- one SOP class and another ECD class. There were only five school age children who were not enrolled either in the SOP or in formal school. Of the five, three children were from a single Thami family and the rest two from Brahman family. In Phulpa Primary School, there were 8 FSP graduates from Gagara FSP who were enrolled at grade 2 and 3, only after attending an entrance test. This shows not only the reluctance of the MS to enroll the FSP graduates, but also the low performance level of the FSP graduates. This point indicates not only towards lack of commitment and seriousness on the part of MS but also flaws on the strategy and design of FSP itself.
Enrollment Pattern of the SOP/FSP Graduates

In Dolakha, no records as such was available in the DEO. By identifying some key informants, efforts were made to track out whether SOP and FSP graduates could be contacted. In this effort, an NGO was instrumental in identifying one SOP and one FSP centre that were phased out. A case study of the FSP class in Gagaras that was phased last year revealed that 8 of the 20 FSP graduates were enrolled in MS called Phulpa Primary School at grade 2 and 3. The headteacher of respective MS mentioned that the FSP graduates were enrolled in either grade 2 or 3 because their performance level was not in par with grade 5.

As indicated by the parents of the FSP graduates the Rampa Lower Secondary School did not accept their children for admitting to class 4. They were asked for entrance test in which only 10 students passed. They were admitted to grade 3. Obviously, this situation raises questions on the practical aspects of the SOP and FSP and the models to expect SOP and FSP graduates to join mother school. Most of the FSP were in the age group of 5 to 10. The CMC and the facilitator of the FSP strictly did not follow the guidelines. Comparisons to previous study signify that there was a similar trend of enrolling FSP graduates in lower grades. About 61 % FSP graduates were enrolled below the desired level (TESON, 2005). This is an indication towards the wastage of resources and failures of the grade 5 year curriculum condensed to 3 years.

Analysis of the number of children enrolled and dropped out showed that the dropouts rate is very high. 5 out of 21 participants in Lapse FSP classes were dropouts. Similarly in Saharpa FSP classes, 9 out of 20 i.e.45% were dropouts. However, in SOP classes at Gagaras, three girls and two boys were already dropouts. An in-depth analysis of the Lapse FSP classes indicated that 2 children migrated along with their children to Kathmandu, 2 to 3 children were just irregular, 2 children were underage and therefore they were dropped out. It was also found that one child was forced by a local neighboring primary school of Sera to join in grade 1. The PCF was also one of the factors associated to the motive of concerned school. Generally, very common reason of the dropout from the SOP and FSP classes was the underage of children who could be enrolled in ECD classes.

With regard to determining the dropouts in formal schools, only two MSs were identified and the record of the FSP graduates who were admitted there was analyzed. The analysis confirmed that only about 40 % of the FSP graduates were enrolled in formal schools. Some of the children who were admitted in the formal schools were irregular, and few were absent for an extended period. Interaction with local community, head teachers and parents pointed that first reason was the children’s willingness to support their parents through wage earning, the second reason was distraction to formal school due to lack of friendly environment, long school hours; schools were far off and in inappropriate locations. It was hard to bring children into SOP/FSP who often migrate along with their parents.

Interaction with the facilitator of SOP classes revealed that one boy dropped out of the program because she punished him for not doing the homework and being unmotivated to the class. Overall, the study showed that the cause of dropout from SOP/FSP or formal school was associated with the economic condition of the family, lack of joyful learning or lack of awareness among the family members of the child.
Delivery of Inputs: Textbooks and Stationery

The textbooks and stationery are provided by the DEO through the MS to the facilitator for facilitating learning of the children of the SOP and FSP classes. The DEO has entrusted MSs for providing the materials and stationery to the SOP and FSP and supervising the running of the programs. However, the interaction with the facilitators, children, parents, and community leaders revealed that some of the facilitators were provided with text materials and stationery for SOP and FSP participants by the formal schools, while the others are given cash directly to the facilitators. It was perceptible from the field visits that most of the FSP and SOP classes received the materials through the formal schools only 2 to 3 times over one year period.

Generally, the head teachers were involved in all matters related to the running of the SOP and FSP classes. It is worth noting that the teachers of Devi Secondary School in Bonch were neither aware of the recognition of their school as a MS for the FSP nor were they aware of the SOP or FSP program.

Similarly, all except a few teachers of Pashupati Kanya Mandir -the MS supervising the FSP of the Saharpa, were ignorant about the SOP and FSP classes, inputs provided to such classes and the role of the formal school toward running them. Only the headteacher was in communication with the facilitators. However, in case of the SOP at Gagaras, the teachers of the concerned formal school were comparatively more familiar with the program and the role of the school as Mother School. One of the main reasons behind this was that the both SOP and FSP were conducted in the same place few years back. Some parents and community members in Lapse mentioned that the participants were given all textbooks, not stationery such as notebook, pencil and erasers as per the fixed guidelines.

Selection and Training of Facilitators

The interaction with the DEO, its staff members, RPs, parents and CMC chairperson and members, and the facilitators reveal that the selection of facilitators as well as their training has been done as per the set guidelines. There was no intervention from the MS or the DEO. Practically, the local community gave priority to the female candidates from their own ethnic group. No competition as such was held by the CMC.

In the FSP classes at Lapse, the CMC members mentioned that the facilitator was chosen from the local community from their own ethnic groups. The facilitators were given appointment by the DEO in the beginning, but the DEO was not informed of the replacement of the facilitator. In Lapse FSP classes, the facilitator who was trained and started the job left it later and another facilitator replaced her by the CMC. The facilitator, thus, substituted did not receive any type of the training. Similarly, in Saharpa, the age of the facilitators who were interviewed ranged from 20 to 30 years. As regards their educational qualifications, they ranged from SLC to Bachelor’s level. Among the facilitators of SOP and FSP visited, only one substitute facilitator was untrained. The substitute was for the facilitator who left the program for her 10 +2 examination. The remaining facilitators received 2-weeks training as per the provision.

Most of them have chosen the job of facilitators partly as part-time jobs to earn some money in pursuing further education and partly due to their motivation to teaching profession. The interaction study revealed that the facilitators are positive towards...
the program. Interaction with the parents, the local people, and the members of the CMC divulged that the facilitators were generally involved in making a door-to-door visit together along with community leaders to motivate the school aged children for SOP and FSP classes. During the campaign, the community leaders and the facilitators made the local people aware of the importance of SOP and FSP programs, the provision of facilities to the facilitator and to the children who join the program.

**Classroom Management and Pedagogical Practices in SOP/FSP**

Effectiveness of the teaching and learning in the SOP/FSP by and large depends not only on the timing of the class, but also on the use of teaching learning materials, teaching method and the classroom dynamics on the whole. By virtue of being the AS, the facilitator has chosen the timing to address the needs of the children. As reported by the DEO, the parents, the RP and local people, the SOP and FSP classes which are running smoothly, have run classes fully for 4 hours with compliance to the guidelines. They generally run the classes from 11.00 am to 3:00 pm in the day time. The SOP and FSP classes are also running in the community building, VDC building, and bamboo cottage constructed by local people or in the veranda of the local people.

None of the FSP and SOP classes was found to be running in the morning or evening in Dolakha. Some begin the class at 10:00 am while others at 11:00 am. The facilitators and local people mentioned that it was one of the positive steps towards motivating the children to continue their students later in the formal school.

**Photograph of a SOP Classroom in Lapse, Bonch**

In Lapse, the time for running FSP classes was scheduled from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm. The classes were running in a classroom made temporarily of Bamboo. The local community made the classroom with voluntary labor contribution. In case of Saharpa, the FSP classes were running from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm. After 3 o’clock, the facilitator keeps her engaged with nursery level children who came to class with their older brothers or sisters.

**Photograph of a FSP Class in Saharpa, Dolakha**

In SBNEC, Saharpa, it was very hard to bring children in SOP in the beginning. Later parents realized that it provides qualitative education than formal schools where the students find a place to read within their community. The facilitator was able to approach children individually due to small class size and spacious room. The facilitator used chorus and drill methods with the help of a textbook. The class started with children’s greetings and prayer of “Saraswati”. The facilitator commenced the class by telling a story and a rhyme to teach moral lesson to motivate them.

Most of the students had already joined formal
schools and learnt for some time. The children did not understand anything in formal schools and they did not get a child friendly environment. No SOP textbook is taught in the classroom. Only the basic reading, writing, and arithmetic are taught. In spite of the usefulness of the training, the facilitator used only traditional knowledge and skills in teaching. The facilitator had contact only with the headteacher not with other teachers of the MS school.

A case of the FSP classes Saharpa showed that the facilitator faced difficulty in teaching English. To avoid such kind of situation, training, workshops, refreshment trainings and feedback should be given time to time. Regular monitoring from MSs, the DEO and RPs will also overcome such situations.

In Gagarus, different charts for numerical, English and Nepali alphabets were hanged on the wall. The furniture was inadequate even for 10 students and no toilets. The neighbors as well as the owner of the house are facing problems on sanitation and drinking water. Moreover, children were not neatly dressed and well combed.

Overall, the facilitators endeavored to facilitate learning but they had difficulty in delivery, due to lack of knowledge on the curriculum weightage, and reference materials. On the other side, the students had difficulty in learning English, studying books, and understanding languages. One untrained facilitator mentioned that she had no knowledge and skills that are useful in conducting child friendly teaching – learning. Another facilitator who had received the training viewed that there was a need for refresher training, regular supervision, and monitoring from the RP and the formal school.

**Achievement of the SOP and FSP**

In this study, students’ achievements were considered with a view to assess the expected learning outcomes of specific grade equivalent to formal education, success rate in the SOP/FSP classes and formal school after graduation in SIOP/FSP classes. In addition, students’ communication ability and parents’ perception regarding their children’s learning were considered with regards to their achievement. The DEO and RPs and the head teachers of the MSs visited opined that at least half the number of participants enrolled in SOP and FSP were reported to have joined the formal primary schools. In overall, the FSP and SOP graduates have shown a satisfactory level of the achievement in 3Rs. Rating over the performance of the children of SOP and FSP classes by the headteacher of the respective formal schools was fair only in terms of the children’s participation in classes and motivation to come to school, not in terms of performance indicators defined by the curricula of SOP and FSP.

In Lapse, the children’s performance level could not reveal the expected level of the performance. A review of students work through their notebooks and the lessons studied recently show that they have not attained the expected level of performance. Parental reflection on the performance of their children indicated that the children are able to reckon headlines of the newspaper such as Gorkhapatra and Kantipur, reckon of numbers from 1 to 10, write their own names in Nepali, socialize with friends and visitors, get motivated to go to class and finally to make phone calls. Examination of their class notes showed that the children had practiced writing numbers from 1 to 10, writing of joint words and English words.

Students who were enrolled in primary schools are attracted to join FSP because they could not understand the prescribed course well. Secondly, they were not familiar
with the Nepali language spoken in school as they speak the “Kusule” language at home. Third, with the establishment of FSP, the students do not need to go far from home at least 40-45 minutes on foot. Fourth, the facilitator has proved to be child friendly to attract more numbers of students.

In Chaathali, a discussion with nine FSP graduates revealed that they would like to continue their study to be a teacher, doctor, pilot, or nurse. Social Studies was the subject liked by half the number of children. English was a difficult subject perceived by all children. They realized that meaning and spelling were difficult in English, and problems in division were difficult in Mathematics. Among nine children, four expressed mathematics as the difficult subject and five English.

The students opined that compared to SOP, the formal school is more attractive for learning because of more play materials, more neat and clean school environment and garden. Students indicated that the facilitator was often irregular however she used child friendly method in teaching. Parents as well as children both insisted on having formal school for the ethnic group like Thami for better learning opportunities. Parents expressed the need for regular monitoring and supervision of the SOP centre.

Overall impression was that though the quotas were less than their needs, the SOP and FSP quotas are, however, allocated to the needy areas. The program has reached the disadvantaged communities and ethnic groups. However, contrary to the provision for FSP, the classes are running for children of age group 5 to 12. This means there are underage children in the FSP classes. Similarly, in the SOP classes, nearly one third of the children were of the age group 3 to 5 years best suited for the Early Childhood Development (ECD). When asked about the age group of the students, the headteacher of the MS, the RPs and the facilitator mentioned that the choice depended upon the available quota. It was also obvious from the local community members that they were in need of the literacy classes, so they could not argue with the DEO on providing SOP or FSP quota. Among the SOP/FSP classes, which were visited, the CMC members, the parents, and the children, the most useful or positive parts of the program were appropriate location, flexibility in time, delivery of free textbook, pencil, notebook and eraser, children’s motivation for learning, and supervision of the class by the RP and the CMC members.

In one of the SOP classes, there were dropouts due to the facilitator’s unfriendly behavior and punishment by the teachers. It was also one of the factors distracting the children to SOP classes. The local community, CMC members, and facilitators mentioned that the phasing out of the SOP/FSP in three years was one very fundamental drawback. The parents and the CMC members viewed that there was no adequate supervision from the formal school and the RP. The DEO was also found not prompt in supervision and monitoring of SOP and FSP Classes.

**Supervision and Monitoring**

The field visit revealed that the monitoring and supervision part is very weak. Visits to SOP and FSP classes by the DEO, the headteachers and teachers of the MSs, RPs, and the CMC members were not found to the extent needed. Limited visits of the headteachers and RPs were focused on the regularity of the students and facilitators. In one class, the RP was reported to perform a demonstration class. The teachers of the MSs were not aware of SOP/FSP, and the role of the MS in smooth running of the SOP/FSP. However, some MSs were willing to perform the administrative and
supervisory role such as assisting in selecting location for SOP or FSP class, arranging for forwarding progress reports of the SOP/FSP to the DEO and certifying the attendance of the facilitator and recommending to the DEO for payment of remuneration. They are partly fulfilling the responsibility of assisting the facilitator in teaching learning, supervising and monitoring the classes. The MSs have arranged for enrolling SOP/FSP graduates to formal school. They are not exactly following the guidelines to enroll grade 3 children of SOP to grade 4 and the third level of FSP to grade 6. They have also not treated the SOP/FSP students equally as the ones of formal school. The MS did not devote time for regular supervision and monitoring of the classes and for solving educational problems of the class.

The headteachers have not recognized monitoring and supervision of SOP/FSP classes as their roles. They expressed that lack of time, heavy - workload, lack of supporting hands, and incentive are the major constraints. The CMC members are reported to visit the classes occasionally. They, however, have no capacity to suggest and guide the facilitator for effective instruction and raise issues related to the effectiveness of the SOP/FSP. The MS need to be supported with various means i.e. technical and financial.

Not only the community members but also the facilitator felt that regular monitoring and supervisor are very essential to assess the performance of the children as well as facilitator and ultimately the success of the SOP/FSP. The CMC members were found visiting the classes, but their visits were not useful in improving the teaching-learning situation. The members of the CMC mentioned that they require training on how they could contribute in a creative way to improve the classroom environment. Drawing information from the local community about how the local stakeholder is cooperating in running the FSP, the research team went though the minute of the FSP Class.

**Understanding AS by the Stakeholders**

The concept of FSP and SOP are not been fully comprehended by the stakeholders at district and local community in Nepali and English, both. Particularly, the local community has not understood SOP as a program designed for school age children of the age group 6-8 years and the FSP for the age group 8-14 years. The community needs to be educated about children age groups for SOP or FSP. The parents misunderstand SOP/FSP as a school concept.

Interaction with the local stakeholders particularly facilitators and headteachers of the MSs, CMC members, local people and parents showed that they have limited understanding about the SOP and FSP. The DEO and RCs have not organized any program to orient, train and familiarize them with the concepts, program and implementation strategies of SOP and FSP, and their role in educational growth and development. None of the agency concerned was knowledgeable on the importance of tracking the data on school age children.

Observations of the local communities unveiled that most of the beneficiaries, and the local stakeholders have conceptualized both SOP and FSP as the children literacy, which have been in practice as previously conducted by OSP. Thus, the local community did not envision any difference on the age group of the school age children while deciding for admitting them to SOP or FSP program. The age range of the children in both FSP and SOP classes ranged from 5 to 16.
With the purpose of identifying the reasons associated with submissive roles of the formal school, the DEO staff, the headteacher, and facilitators of formal schools were interacted. The outcomes disclosed that except designating the formal school for SOP or FSP and sharing the guidelines for SOP and FSP briefly, no attempts have been made to orient and train the facilitators and headteacher of MSs and the members of the CMC about the roles and responsibilities of the MSs. Even the CMC members and the facilitators are not aware of the roles of the formal school. The DEO considered allocating the quotas and releasing budget through the MS were considered the only prime responsibility.

Community Mobilization

It was apparent from the study that there was no active involvement of any NGOs, CBOs, or INGOs in running SOP/FSP. However, by virtue of being community based program the role of the facilitator, the headteachers of the MSs, and parents of the school age children were vital. Though the local community members and parents are positive towards the provision of SOP and FSP classes, they expressed their grievances for not providing support for constructing a classroom through the DEO. The study revealed that the SOP and FSP classes are running well in those places where there is mutual interaction, and cooperation between local community and the parents. Various types of supports extended by the local community, the facilitators, and the parents to run the SOP/FSP effectively were commendable.

In Gagrus, as children were taught in the balcony of the house, they were distracted their attention by the people or neighbor passed by. Therefore, CMC and community members demanded for a separate SOP building.

Because of the usefulness of the FSP program, the parental involvement in the FSP of Saharpa was visible. The local community have arranged not only the classroom but also demonstrated their enthusiastic support thinking about the sustainability of the program. The CMC has been successful in collecting timber from the forest to make furniture. The local community is running the FSP labeling it as a proposed primary school. The CMC has proposed grade 1. There is ongoing discussion for making a large building and a playground for the children. In order to make furniture of FSP, timber was collected by the community and subsidy for construction cost was received from the DEO and Municipality of Dolakha. The Municipality provided corrugated sheet for roofing.

For the collection of goods, the community has collected Rs 200 each from 11 persons. After completion of FSP, it is planned to start either grade 1 primary school or to admit the students to formal school in Charikot that takes an hour on foot from the residential area. In this situation, SOP should be continued. Another community in “Lapse” has supported the FSP class by constructing temporary room for classroom. In-depth analysis of some SOP and FSP classes reflect on the strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threat as well in running the program. In Lapse FSP classes, the district line agency of Forestry and VDC have donated nearly Rs. 50,000.00 for assisting the construction of classroom for FSP. The local community and CMC are planning to construct the classroom with supporting walls. It was explicit that there was a shared vision among local community and the CMC about SOP and FSP. They expressed that the FSP classes should not be on quota basis for one shot, but it should be continuous program to address the unschooled children of the same age group. Besides the local community, the CMC has planned to construct a
building to run primary school to enroll the FSP graduates from their own community in future.

These are evidences to reflect on the commitment made by the local community to enroll the SOP and FSP graduates in the MS. Thus, it was obvious that there are both strength and opportunities to run the FSP. The weakness is enrollment pattern of under age children in both SOP and FSP, while the threat is government ad hoc policy of distributing quotas instead of conducting survey of unschooled children and collecting demands from the grassroots level.

**Contribution to Educational Access and Quality**

In Dolakha, the provisions that can boost up the children’s participation in the SOP/FSP are very limited. Community mobilization was observed at a very minimum level. The community people observed that scholarships for girl, Dalit, and disabled students, and other various types of scholarships from VDCs, I/NGOs, CBOs should also be made available in SOP/FSP.

By the nature of the SOP/FSP program opportunity for increasing access to basic education are high. The recruitment of female facilitator and use of mother tongue as instructional medium, and the provision of SOP at the convenient place, were factors enabling access to SOP/FSP. However, in terms of limited number of SOP/FSP quotas available to Dolakha District, it is apparent that the access to unschooled children is very limited.

**Sustainability**

In Dolakha, the information obtained through various tools reveals that the government is not serious about the effective implementation of SOP and FSP. In order to achieve the goals of the programs, sustainability is essential. To this end, the government should be serious in implementing the program as per the set policy guidelines, run awareness raising and sensitization programmes for stakeholders about the SOP and FSP. In addition, monetary or other suitable type of incentives to the headteachers to carry out additional responsibilities related to SOP and FSP would be required. To sum, there is a lack of government commitment for SOP and FSP at the implementation level.

**Issues Related to SOP/FSP**

In Dolakha, despite the challenges to run SOP/FSP due to scattered areas there are widespread demands for them. Interview, discussion, and FGDs conducted with the stakeholders at the district and community level have indicated some issues related to planning, designing, and implementing of SOP and FSP. Who should be the key player a local community leader or the headteacher or any influential person in distribution of quota, selection of site, monitoring and recording of information related to SOP/FSP graduates, and maintaining statistics of school going aged children.

In some places, the SOP/FSP classes are treated as an opportunity for those unemployed youths. In other places, SOP classes are treated as a continuation of school where unschooled children receive opportunity to continue class each year. A critical issue, therefore, is the way of sensitizing the people about the usefulness and importance of SOP/FSP among local community groups compared to the formal school program. Who can be the facilitator and who should do this job is also an
issue. A general feeling prevailing in the society is that any one can be a facilitator for the SOP/FSP classes. The issue is really on the minimum qualification of the facilitator. In some places, there is a serious problem of not finding an effective and qualified facilitator. A committed facilitator can not continue with the SOP/FSP for three years. Therefore, selection of a good facilitator and its retention call for an attractive package.

In some places like Gagarus, the presence of underage children in the class was a great challenge. It has not only hampered the regular teaching but also the issue of utilization of the program raises a question. In some places, the provision of PCF has created unhealthy competition of attracting school age children from SOP/FSP to formal school despite the inconvenience to the children. Who should be accountable for ensuring proper allocation of the quota and address the real needs of the school age children? As an alternative way, should any residential program be introduced to address the differing educational needs of seasonal migrants, disadvantaged group, and castes? is also an issue.

Case Study of Chitwan District

Site Selection and Distribution of Quota for SOP/FSP

In Chitwan, during the year 2056\057 four SOP classes were run in the district. All quotas seemed to be distributed in the needy places of the district such as Chandibhangyang, Kabilas, Baghauda and Darechowk which are very remote places of the district. As per the records, initially there were 6 SOP classes but later two classes Meghauli and Kaule were dropped. These classes were shifted from one place to another. In this context, the DEO and its staff members could not disclose the reasons. The staff member responsible for the AS was new and there were no documents to clarify why two classes were dropped. In 2057\58, there were four classes, three classes distributed in one VDC named Kaule and one in VDC Saradanagar. In Kaule, lower secondary School was considered as a MS for two OSP centers and one secondary school was selected as a mother school in Saradanagar which was later changed as revealed by the document. Only three centers seem conducted in this year. No quotas for SOP were distributed in the year 058\59.

In the year 2060\61, four SOP classes were conducted. All the centers appeared to be located in needy places of the remote areas such as Kabilash, Darechowk, Siddhi, and Ayodhyapuri. As revealed by the NFEC document, 12 quotas were allocated in Chitwan. However, as revealed by the DEO document and records there were only 8 classes in implementation. In the year 063\64, the district had distributed 20 quotas for SOP. They are currently completed level 2. A review of the document showed that some classes like Sukranagar are counted in the total quota but the class was dropped from the record later. It was a problem for accessing information from the concerned NGOs and CBOs who were involved in coordinating the SOP and FSP classes. Despite the efforts to analyze the record in the DEO office and contacting the local community members and NGOs, it was difficult to collect any evidence on SOP and FSP that were mainstreamed in the MS though the SOP.

It was apparent from the record of NFEC that 10 FSP quotas were distributed in the year 056\57. However, the DEO record revealed that only 8 quotas were distributed and later converted into SOP quota as FSP could not long last smoothly for some reasons. In the year 057\58, there were 4 quotas but the district document showed 3 centers remained closed by the end of 060 and responded from the beginning of 061.
As per the records, 10 quotas run up to level 2 in the year 2060\61. The document showed level 2 for the year 056\57, 060-12-20,061\62 etc. In the year 061\62 the district has provided 10 FSP quotas to NGOs, 3 for Nepal Gramin Atmanirbhar Abhiyan, 3 for Gramin Mahila Bikash Kendra, 3 for Himchuli Samudaik Kendra and one for Nepal Chhyarog Niwaran.

Though the NFEIG 2064 has clearly set guidelines for the distribution of quota for SOP and FSP classes, it has not been fully practiced. The DNFEC has not been made successful in ensuring representation in the concerned district line agencies and other related persons in Chitwan for quota distribution and site selection. The field visits showed that the RCs, some community leaders and teachers who are knowledgeable about the SOP/FSP also approach the DEO to avail SOP/FSP quotas in the community they prefer. The discussion with the District Education Officer, the headteachers of MSs, the RPs, the facilitators, and the members and chairpersons of CMC revealed that there was no influence of the opinion of leaders and the political parties in the distribution of quota.

To some extent, decision for allocation of SOP and FSP quotas was influenced by the local NGOs/CBOs and headteachers. The distribution of quotas was difficult due to lack of data on school age children not served by the formal school. The hilly regions of the district require more quotas for SOP/FSP. It is interesting to note that the SOP quotas were distributed in Municipal areas where there is no real need for it.

The District Education Officer in this subject admitted that the DEO generally takes a decisive role regarding the distribution of quota which would later be endorsed by DNFEC. The District Education Officer opined that due to limited quotas available for SOP and FSP, he could not use rationality in distributing them to address to the local need and demand. The community members and the DEO staff mentioned that the quotas for FSP/SOP should be need based and the program should not be treated as a means for providing job to an unemployed local youth. The interaction with the District Education Officer, SSs, RPs, Section Officers, and headteachers of the MSs revealed that the MSs were not committed on fulfilling their responsibilities.

In Chitwan, the SOP classes running with active local participation in convenient place have been successful in enrolling the SOP graduates to formal school. Because of this program, the disadvantaged community like Tharu, Bote, Kumal, Darai, and Majhi have benefited from the SOP classes. However, there are questions related to the running of FSP classes, especially those running under the coordination of some NGOs.

The District Education Officer mentioned that based on the concern expressed by the community, he made intensive supervision and follow-up of the FSP classes to identify their actual condition. Later he found that most of the FSP were either very ineffective or run by the school teachers as coaching centres by enrolling formal school students. To sum up, the DEO had made no demand for FSP quotas. They had only requested for more SOP quotas. However, from the Central level, the DEO was given a few SOP as well as FSP quotas for Chitwan district.

**SOP and FSP Classes at Glance**

The SOP class in Jutpani, Sundarvasti center, is located in ward no.7 of Jutpani VDC in the areas of landless people inhabited by Tamang and Dalit. The SOP Centre serves out of school age children from the local community with 48 households, 27 of Dalit and rest of Tamang. The class is located in an appropriate place. It takes about
five minutes to reach the class. There were altogether 19 children. The age of the students ranged from 7 years to 12 years with an average of 9.05 years. An in-depth study revealed that the children who were enrolled in the SOP classes were also studying in the MS. Of the 19, 12 students studying in class 2, 6 students in class three and 1 in class one. By ethnicity, there were 13 Tamang, 4 Dalit, and 2 Magar children. The condition of the classroom was very poor. There was no good seating arrangement. There were some planks for children to sit on. There was no provision for a toilet.

Interaction with the facilitator and the parents revealed that there were no playing materials in the class. The facilitator was regular and used to inform the children and the parents about her absence in advance. The children were not tidy and were of very tender age. They were keen to see the visitors and show their face in the Camera. Their parents accompanied most of the children. The SOP class of Piple VDC is located in convenient place at ward no.6, Baidyapani. This class provides schooling opportunity to Tamangs and Chepangs living with a harmonious relationship. It serves the children of the area with more than 50 households.

In the SOP classes, there were 31 children (18 boys and 13 girls) from the Tamang and Chepang children. By ethnicity, there were 3 Tamang boys and 2 girls as well as 15 Chepang boys and 11 chepang girls child. The students age ranged from 4 to 9, average age being 6.8 years. Overall, six children were of underage and 4 average aged. Underage and overage children are enrolled in this program due to location of formal school unexpectedly far from the community, poor economic condition of the parents, and children’s parents’ engagement in activities to fulfill basic needs.

In 061\62 the FSP classes were conducted in Brahamatol, Ratnanagar Municipality ward no.3. In the FSP classes conducted by the Himchuli Samudaaik Sewa Samaj (HSSS), there were 18 students and their age range was 9 to 14. An in-depth study revealed that all children of the FSP class were those enrolled in formal school and were attending the FSP as a tuition center. The FSP class was conducted by a female. She served for two years only before her marriage. The HSSS appointed a male facilitator to complete the remaining duration of the program. He conducted the class in Shantichowk ward no.2 of Ratnanagar Municipality in the temple of Siddhi Ganesh. According to the facilitator, the students were from the surrounding areas with walking distance of 10 to 15 minutes. Most of the parents were living in rented houses and working in Brick factory. There was no up-to-date record of HSSS in the DEO office. One of the FSP classes is operated by the HSSS. The record shows that the HSSS is housed at the residence of headteacher of Jaya Magala School, at Jamuna Pur Ward no 2.

The Seto Gurans Child Development Service Club (SGCDSC) coordinated one of the SOP classes for the children of Ward nos 1, 2, 3 and 4 in K.B. Line, Ward No 11 Narayanghat and Bharatpur. The children in the SOP classes were Dalits, Sukumbasis or labours. Most of the parents were illiterate laborers. The SOP Classes were running only from seven months. It is the transferred quota from the other place. It is confirmed as per the official record (an official letter record of the DEO office) as well as the opinion of the secretary of SGCDSC. As mentioned by the secretary, the SGCDSC got sponsorship for only seven months.

In fact, the DEO Office had the budget left over from those programs which did not run smoothly before. The facilitators who conducted the classes did not receive any utilities such as books and stationery. In the beginning, the Club distributed study
materials for students. However, they could not manage for supporting such facility without support from the DEO office. The facilitator who was conducting the SOP received a monthly salary at the rate of Rs 2000 per month. As mentioned by both the facilitator and secretary of the Club, the facilitator’s salary was reduced to support study materials for students. This class did not follow the rules and regulations of the SOP program. There were 17 students in the class. The age of students ranged from 8 to 16 years. Rastriyā Primary Vidyalaya, Ganeśṭhan is the MS of this class.

The SOP class, Dedauli-6, Padampur was implemented in the year 2064 BS. Altogether 26 students (16 boys and 9 girls) enrolled in the year 2064. By ethnicity, all students except one were Chaudhary. Only one was Tamang. The age of the students ranged from 5 to 11 years. The average was 10 years. There was the presence of both underage and overage children respectively. The main reasons for not sending the children in formal school as reported by the parents were poor economic condition, lack of awareness on the necessity of education, and parents feeling insecure to sending their children alone in formal schools.

In the second year, the total number of students reduced from 26 to 20, as SOP had no provision to admit new students annually like formal schools, some children were grown up to go to formal school with their neighbors, sisters and brothers, as the school catchments area is somehow at a reasonable distance from the community (30-45 minutes walking distance). In spite of targeting SOP center to the disadvantaged group (Chaudhary and Tamang), the location is inappropriate. Therefore, SOP stood as a time pass for small children in which they all desire to go to formal schools after a year or a two. The SOP Class at Yawatole, Pithuwa-8 was established in 2064 B.S. which is running the second level of the program. In the SOP class at Yawatole, Pithuwa-8 a building is rented on hire at Rs. 300 per month. There are altogether 25 students enrolled in which 11 students are female and 14 are male. Eight students are of underage that only 5 years of average age. The age group in this center ranges from 5-7 years. SOP classes in this place are generally understood as a substitute of ECD.

**Enrollment Pattern of the SOP and FSP**

As per the record of the NFEC, 50 SOP classes were conducted in Chitwan during the period of 999/2000 to 2006/07. Of the total, 30 SOP classes were already phased out and 20 classes running in 2006/07 are still not phased out. Similarly, in case of the FSP, 34 classes were running from 1999/2000 to 2004/05. Of the total, 20 FSP classes were phased out in recent years. On an average 20 students were reported to be participants in each class. Though the objectives of the AS was to ensure the SOP and FSP graduates to join the grades 4 and 6 respectively at the MS, there was no record in the DEO Office about the FSP completers and those joined the MS at grade 6. In conversation with DEO staff members like SS, RPs, Section Officer and the District Education officer, it revealed that the FSP classes were not systematically running. In fact, some classes were running in the name of the FSP but the class in fact was the tuition for schooling students.

However, in case of 16 SOP classes running in the year 2003/04 and 2004/05 and phased out recently, most of the children in 7 SOP classes have been studying in the primary school upgraded from the SOP upon the request of the community and their support for establishing a school. To locate the exact number of SOP graduates and track their enrollment in formal school it was not possible at all. In a nutshell, the DEO mentioned that except those studying in SOP upgrade to primary school; a very
few SOP/FSP graduates have joined the respective MS. It is worth mentioning that in some places the MS are also selected on an ad hoc basis. For the SOP classes which are running in needy places also, the community support is very effective.

An in-depth analysis of FSP graduates of the year 061\62 revealed all of them were admitted to the MS from the very beginning and in the name of the FSP center, all the students were taking tuition. There were altogether 18 students and there were no dropouts at all. Their age ranged from 9 to 14 years.

Of 17 children who participated in the SOP conducted at K.B. Line Bharatpur, none of them was given a chance to get admission in the MS. In spite of this situation, 3 or 4 students were reported to have been admitted in some schools in distance places. The DEO personnel mentioned that contrary to the expectation, some FSP graduates were admitted to the grade below six. In practice, the FSP graduates were admitted to lower grades, grade 3 or 4, as their performance was not on par with grade 5 students of formal schools, so they were admitted to lower grades. For different reasons, tracking the dropout in SOP and FSP classes as well as formal school was not possible. However, the situation analysis showed that there is a prevalence of the dropout in both SOP and FSP classes and in the formal.

The SOP classes conducted in Dhovan Pustakalya had 15 children and the classes were closed after few months of their operation as three fourth of the children were absent or irregular. The reasons for dropouts were migration of the parents, and their engagement in wage earning. After the termination of the SOP classes, about four students were reported to be admitted in near by Chitransen Primary School. In the SOP class run at K.B. line, more girls than boys were dropouts due to economic condition and household chores. In Jutpani, some parents desire to educate their children even by wage earning. According to them, school violence is one cause of school dropout. SOP is a remedy in this place. In Shantinagar, there was no support of parents and as mentioned earlier it was only a tuition center.

Analysis of the number of children enrolled and dropped out show that the drop out rate is very high. In the SOP class of Dhedauli -6, Padampur started in the year 2064 BS; there were 26 students (16 boys and 9 girls). However, in the second year, the number dropped from 26 to 20 i.e. the dropout rate was 23%.

The main reasons for the dropout was the lack of provision to admit new students annually in a way similar to formal schools; increased age of children to go to formal school with neighbours, sisters and brothers, and the location of formal school at a reasonable distance from the community. In the SOP centre of K.B. line Bharatpur, some children were dropouts from nearby formal schools. As revealed by the study, major factors associated with notable dropout rate in SOP and FSP classes were the underage children who could be enrolled in ECD classes, the school environment quite different than the SOP which they were used to, poor economic condition of the family and comparatively more girls than the boys were dropouts due to economic condition and household chores.

Preference of the ECD children was to the SOP classes, as primary school was located too far and distribution of the ECD quota in other places. Students were irregular, though the schools were not at far distance. Some of the students admitted to the SOP were irregular, and a few remained absent for an extended period. The main reason was the children’s willingness to support their parents through wage earning. The other reasons were distraction to formal school due to lack of friendly environment, long school hours, and the school at far distance and inappropriate
location. It was hard to retain those children in SOP/FSP classes who often do seasonal work along with their parents. Overall, the cause of dropout from SOP/FSP or formal school was associated with the socio-economic condition and lack of awareness about education.

Selection and Training of Facilitators

No fixed standard was adopted for selecting the facilitators and providing training. This fact revealed from interaction with the DEO and its staff members, and interview with RPs, the parents and CMC chairperson and members. Generally, females were preferred for the job of a facilitator and the males were recruited as the substitute. In the SOP class at K.B.Line the substitute facilitator was experienced. She did not receive any training opportunity to run the classes. She was associated as a teacher in another program known as “Diyalo program.”

It is notable that in Jamunapur whose MS was Rastriya Primary School, published a notice for selecting a facilitator. But being a single applicant, a female was selected. In Piple, the MS and the CMC worked together to select a facilitator. Since there were no SLC graduates at all in the local community, the MS and CMC selected a female who has not completed SLC. She comes from a walking distance of one and half hour. In Piple, the MS received quota after contacting the DEO for 11 times.

In Dhovan Pustakalaya, the facilitator was selected by the CMC with the cooperation of the RP. She was local female from Brahmin ethnicity. She had completed SLC. In Himchuli, the FSP centre was conducted by a female for two years until she was married. A male facilitator was recruited for the rest of the period to complete the program.

At the outset of the program, all the facilitators were given two weeks training. However, if for some reason the trained facilitators were not able to continue the program, the newly recruited facilitator could not receive any type of the training. The field observations indicated that all the facilitators were given appointment by the DEO. But generally the DEO was not informed in cases of replacement of the facilitator. Only the MSs were informed of the replacement of the facilitator.

As regards the training, the facilitator of Jutpani and Piple was given 10 days basic training and 4 days refresher training. However, the facilitator of Himchuli received only refresher training of 4 days. The facilitator mentioned that the refresher training was not so worthwhile without basic training. The basic training was especially useful in providing basic concept of teaching, and the use of local materials. In the SOP classes of Dhedauli, the facilitator’s educational standard was12 grade. In order to conduct the classes, she got training from the DEO. In the first phase, she got 10 days training and 7 days training in the second phase. The SOP facilitator of Dhedauli reported that the training has enhanced her innate capacity. It was useful in motivating students, entertaining them by various means, and teaching effectively in child friendly environment.

Overall, the local community gave priority to the female candidates depending upon the ethnicity of the local community and targeted school age children. Exceptionally, in some places, the CMC called for open competition to select the facilitator. In overall, among the facilitators of SOP and FSP visited, most of them had received basic training while some had received only refresher training only.
As indicated by the study, some of the facilitators have chosen the job of facilitators to make use of their free time while some other have done so due to their motivation to teaching profession. In addition, some facilitators have taken this job due to the request from the local community. Interestingly some of the facilitators are the kin of the CMC. The interaction with the facilitators, the CMC, the parents and the community members revealed that facilitators are positive towards the program.

**Delivery of Inputs: Textbooks and Stationery**

The DEO has entrusted the MS for providing the materials and stationery to SOP and FSP classes. However, in practice the textbooks and stationery were provided by the DEO to the students of the SOP and FSP classes. In some places, the facilitators collect the textbooks, notebooks and pencils from the DEO directly. Some of the SOP classes were given textbooks and stationery by the MSs. The textbooks for FSPs were however not delivered in time. In Piple, the DEO has provided a cupboard, and stationery materials. Similarly, the Ms has availed a teacher’s table, and a white board. The children used to sit on the plank of the wood or using their own mats. There was no provision for drinking water and sanitation. There was a small playground. It was very hard for all students to play at a time.

In the SOP at K.B.Line, the facilitator used the books received from that program. She distributed those books to the students of SGCDSC, which was used in the Diyalo program. Children were quite happy to study in SOP that targets the children of slum area. So, the facilitator was selected by the organization itself. Generally, the nature of the program is for three years. Generally, the facilitator did not use the textbooks in the FSP class considering them of higher standard. Some SOP classes that were conducted for a few months did not receive the textbooks and pencil at all. Those who received the textbooks, notebooks, and pencil did not receive through out the whole program. Some facilitators have distributed books to the SOP/FSP classes but they have not used at all. They are teaching on their own style. Some of the SOP/FSP classes received textbooks and stationery from the headteachers of the respective MS. Only some SOP/FSP classes received the establishment cost.

**Classroom Management and Pedagogical Practices in SOP/FSP**

Generally, the facilitator has chosen the timing to address the needs of the children. None of the FSP and SOP classes was found to be running in the morning or evening. Only a few FSPs are running for 1 to 2 hours as tuition for schooling students in the morning or evening. Classroom observation showed that only a few SOP classes were found to be running. As reported by the DEO, the parents, the RP and local people, only a few SOP and FSP classes are running smoothly for 4 hours with compliance to the NFEIG. They generally run the classes from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm in the daytime. In some places, the facilitators are conducting the classes from 10 am to 3:30 pm. The SOP and FSP classes are running in the community building, VDC building, and bamboo cottages constructed by the local people. Some SOP classes are running in a room newly constructed by the local community. One of the SOP class is conducted in a teacher’s house of the MS. The community supports drinking water and sanitation.

Some of the local community members and parents are positive towards the provision of SOP. However, reporting regarding the FSP classes was not positive. The local community members mentioned that only SOPs are needed in some places.
The local people had the resentment on running SOP/FSP classes as there was no supervision from the DEO or the MSs.

In Piple, there is no separate committee to manage the SOP. In place of the CMC, the School Management Committee has been used. However, a separate 5-member construction committee is active. In Shantinagar, the management of Siddhi Ganesh temple is functioning as the CMC. Interaction with the facilitators and children revealed that the facilitators had difficulties in classroom delivery. They were not knowledgeable on the weightage of the curriculum and teaching methods. The children felt difficulties in English subject, studying books and medium of instruction. The facilitator mentioned that children’s irregularities, poverty, and lack of awareness towards education are major hindrances. The children are also found to be engaged in work that supports their family in economic matter. The facilitator argued that only running the FSP centre for one shot without linking it to the MS is worthless. She runs the centre because there were primary school dropout children, otherwise it was impossible.

In Piple, the facilitator started the class by singing the national anthem, review of the earlier day, and checking homework. She did not use lesson plan inside the class. The training helped her in motivating children; deliver the content in child friendly manner. From the classroom observation and interaction, it was obvious that the training did not help the facilitator in dealing with difficult children, and in delivery of the content in English and Math subjects. The building for running SOP classes was constructed with the support of the community.

The facilitators were not successful in clarifying the purpose of the lesson. The delivery of materials in the classroom teaching was satisfactory. There was no conducive environment in the class. There was lack of effective plan and seating arrangement, furniture, and space for classroom activity. Some classes were running in personal houses others in temporary rooms made by the local community in the public land. The children, however, were performing singing and dance activities, as a part of teaching learning. The presence of underage children in the class was a great challenge. Organizing joyful learning ensuring active participation of all children in the class was a great challenge to the facilitators.

Overall observation revealed that no rule was followed in the formation of the CMC. There was no follow-up and monitoring as to whether the DEO guidelines are followed or not. It was apparent from the field visit and interaction with parents, and the facilitators that the CMC were not considered so important in conducting the class. Some of the facilitators were running SOP classes without attending training. Those who received training expressed the need for refresher training and regular supervision, and monitoring from the RP and the formal school.

Achievement of the SOP and FSP Classes

Interaction with the DEO, RP, stakeholders, facilitators and the children point toward positive impacts of the SOP and FSP classes that are running smoothly. Most of the SOP and FSP classes observed were phased out. The SOP planned for the year 066 was not started. The DEO and RPs and the head teachers of the MSs opined that achievement of FSP was very insignificant compared to SOP. About half of the participants of the SOP who completed the class were reported to be enrolled in the formal school.
One of the major achievements was the upgrading of the SOP as a primary school with the initiatives of the CMC and local community. As per the DEO reporting about 35% of the SOP phased out were upgraded to primary school. There was no resistant from the DEO. However, the DEO experience on the FSP was negative. Most of the FSPs were running as a coaching centre for the formal school students. The local community utilized a very few SOP classes. The SOP graduates have shown a satisfactory level of the achievement in 3Rs. They have not only increased level of knowledge and skills but also good study habit.

In K.B. line, the achievement of the children who participated in the SOP classes was socialization, satisfactory level of literacy to join formal schools, understanding schooling environment. The program, however, did not appear to be successful in terms of the performances. Lack of monitoring of the SOP by the DEO and the MS was main cause of the inefficiency of the program. The parents want this type of program to continue. In the beginning, the parents were assured of the opportunity for their children to join the MS but later they were not given such chances. So, parents are somewhat frustrated in K.B. Line regarding this program. The parents opined this type of program is not meant for the poor people like them. They quoted (अतीतीस के कार्यक्रम आपातकालीन गरीब को नामी होइन | यती कार्यक्रम मोटापाटा को भूंड बढाउने कार्यक्रम हो |) This is only to benefit the rich segment of the society. They are never benefited from this kind of program.

In Dhovan Pustakalaya, the parents and members of the CMC indicated that the children’s performance was satisfactory. However, the SOP class was closed, as the children were very irregular and they were demanding food, snacks, and support to family. Some of the local community members and the facilitators used to give some light snacks to the children in the beginning. However, it was not possible to manage for the whole period. The number of absentees increased gradually and as a result, the class was closed after a few months.

The assessment of the SOP and FSP by the parents in Piple is negative. They were unaware about the fact that the SOP runs for only the period of three years. Had the facilitator and headteacher informed earlier about the fact, the parents would not have enrolled their children at SOP. The community members expressed that their children learnt to write and did not know to read. Community people are now monitoring the regularity of the facilitator and the students both. Interaction with the community members and parents showed that the students’ performance is not on par with the level of formal school. However, the avenues for formal education are open due to the SOP/FSP classes. In terms of the course completed and the prevailing curriculum, the performance of the children in both SOP and FSP could be considered to be far below the expected level.

At the community level, the aspiration towards such program is very high. People are expecting to establish a primary school instead of SOP because the center is located at higher altitude and it takes at least an hour whereas to reach the MS it takes two hours. School is, therefore, not an easy access to this community. Now, parents are happy to have an easy access to their children of age group 6-8, in which schooling is impossible for them.

In Jutpani, some parents observed the SOP/FSP to be less useful as they have to ask their children for wage earning e.g. carrying bricks. If their economic condition were satisfactory they would not require SOP/FSO, instead they could send their children to formal school. For instance, the headteacher of the MS in Jutpani mentioned that
while surveying the number of children in the community, he found a case of hiding an elder child of Chepang to look after the household works and cattle. Having no status survey of out of school children, the DEO had no acquaintance with such case. The MS received quota after 11 times consultation with the DEO. It leads to the essentiality of the right of MS, and the local CMC to appoint the facilitator. According to headteacher the involvement of the MS is must for smooth running of the SOP/FSP classes. According to the CMC members and the parents, the most useful or positive parts of the SOP/FSP were the proximity of the school for the children, no need to give extra money to their children, parents feeling their children safe, a better environment with extra care and support of the facilitator.

In many places, neither the facilitators nor the CMCs were fully aware of the inputs such as textbooks, notebook, pencil, and eraser received from the DEO through the MS. The children did not receive such materials on regular basis. There were cases where the children were supported by their parents for such materials. One of the concerns of the local community, CMC members, and facilitators was on the phasing out of the SOP/FSP in three years. In some places, the local community and CMC have identified the opening of SOP as a basis to establish primary school.

**Supervision and Monitoring**

In Chitwan, the supervision and monitoring component of the program is not effective. Though some CMCs are interested in the SOP/FSP, there is a need for clearly defining the roles of stakeholders involved and to ensure the follow-up and monitoring.

In case of HSSS, it approached the DEO for obtaining quota for FSP. It did not form any CMC to monitor and supervise the FSP. In HSSS, the facilitator mentioned that the problems he faced in running the FSP classes are lack of proper place to conduct the class, inadequate materials, difficult to gather children, distraction due to low salary, and language difficulty to teach the FSP textbooks.

In Piple, the regularity of the SOP class was monitored by the local community. In terms of quality, the SOP class in Piple was far better than the programs running in Bharatpur municipality. The facilitator mentioned that the parents did pay very little attention to their children’s learning at home. The facilitator kept the children and their parents well informed about her absence in SOP in advance. Besides ensuring distribution of curriculum, textbooks, and instructional materials, training of facilitators, provision for classrooms, the supervision and monitoring has a great role to play in the success of the program. However, supervision and monitoring was the weakest part of the SOP/FSP Program. The field visit showed that even the headteachers of MS are not visiting the SOP and FSP classes to the extent needed. Limited visits of the CMC are focused on checking the regularity of the children and facilitators. Interaction with the district authorities like the DEO staff members and the headteachers of the MS noted lack of time, over-workload, lack of support hands, incentive were the constraints. However, all concerned laud the necessity of regular monitoring and supervision. In view of the increasing roles of the DEO in the district the local communities mentioned the MS could be the right agency for monitoring the SOP/FSP and improve the quality of the teaching-learning.
Understanding AS by the Stakeholders

There are some conceptions and misconceptions among the local stakeholders about the concept of alternative schooling and its types - SOP and FSP in Chitwan. The local community, parents, and CMC members have not understood the concept of SOP and FSP. The concept of the term SOP and FSP has not been transmitted to the local community, parents, CMC members, and even the authorities at district level. A very few DEO staff members have comprehended the concept of FSP and SOP in Nepali and English, both. Particularly, the local communities have understood SOP and FSP both as the branch of the school, tuition centre for school age children of the age group 6-14 years.

The concept of SOP was hardly understood by the community and parents. The community has generally understood SOP/FSP as the branch of the school. Therefore, parents are requesting the facilitators to admit their children each year. Otherwise, they do not see the necessity of the SOP or FSP and want to enroll their children into the formal schools.

Photograph of an Interview with the Facilitator in BSS, Banke

In Piple, people understand SOP, as a branch of the school. Neither RCs, nor the MSs, and the facilitator have oriented the local community about SOP. They supposed it a branch of Rastriya Primary School. The local people were not knowledgeable that SOP was a phase out program. Field findings indicate that after the termination of the SOP, conflict might arise between the school and community. An aggressive question raised by the community was: "Is the class to tie up the goats? Shall we divide stones? Should not we break the knee of the concerned persons and authorities? They viewed that they can fulfill their demand when they are united." Community people have been sensitive toward education because they suffered much and have come to understand the importance of education.

Regarding the concept of SOP/FSP, the concerned MSs have their own observation. In Jutpani, the MS mentioned that the distribution system of the SOP/FSP should ensure that SOP is distributed only in those places where disadvantaged people are living and their settlement is scattered. The community people and the facilitators mentioned that a survey on the literacy status of the community should be conducted by the DEO in consultation with RC, nearest school, CMC and the local community. Based on the literacy status the decision should be taken and MS fixed accordingly.

Further interaction revealed that the rules, regulation, and provision for facilities made for SOP/FSP should be made transparent. The MS and its teachers are to be oriented towards the SOP rules and provision. The MS should not be selected on political basis. In Jutpani a very inconvenient Rastriya Primary School was selected as the Ms. It was obvious that the students never used to go to this School.

Similarly, the headteacher of Piple mentioned that SOP is very essential in the areas with high dropouts, lack of access to school, lack of awareness towards education,
and low-socio-economic status. The headteacher was of the opinion that people’s recognition on the importance of SOP is not encouraging. The headteacher of the concerned Ms mentioned that one of the Chepang households did not report correctly on the number of school age children. He did not disclose information about his elder child as he could keep the child engaged for household works like raising cattle.

One notable example on conducting SOP was seen in Piple where the school conducted survey of school age children and arranged for SOP classes. It revealed from the study that the SOP classes were consisted of some students from ECD class and those studying in grade one. For this, training on multi-grade teaching should be provided both for ECD and SOP classes.

The study indicated that selection of appropriate location and educated community play a vital role in the running of the SOP/FSP programs. Further, the quality of the program could be maintained by establishing harmonic relation with ethnic groups, and monitoring of the SOP/FSP by the community itself. The authority should initiate to formulate education plan at the community level. Interaction with the local stakeholders particularly facilitators, and school teachers of MS, CMC members, local people and parents showed that the concept of MS, its role on management, monitoring, and supervision of the SOP and FSP is not understood well.

As revealed by the interaction, the children, the parents, the facilitators, and the local community members were not knowledgeable about the basic difference of SOP and FSP. However, they noted some differences between formal school and the SOP/FSP on school setting, the socio-economic level of children, teaching-learning environment, facilitator, duration of timing, and learning environment. The headteachers and teachers of the MS noted further differences between formal school and the SOP/FSP. Relatively, they had better conceptual clarity on the FSP/SOP and formal education - SOP/FSP as a program to those school children who can not attend the formal school, and formal school as a regular school that has the assets of more qualified teachers, better physical facilities, and monitoring and supervision from the DEO.

Additionally, local female facilitator conducts the SOP/FSP classes and the formal school by the government teachers. In addition, the SOP/FSP classes provide opportunity to unschooled children to join formal school. The children mentioned that they have no experience of school environment. They viewed formal school is not attainable for them. They can not afford for different materials.

The field observation and discussion revealed that among the various roles, most of the MSs have contributed to selecting location for SOP or FSP classes, certifying the attendance of the facilitator and recommending to the DEO for the payment of remuneration. Only a few MSs are fulfilling the responsibility reporting to the DEO on the progress reports of the SOP/FSP, assisting the facilitator in teaching learning and supervising and monitoring the class. Some of the MSs have arranged for enrolling the SOP/FSP graduates to the respective MSs. However, in Chitwan none of the FSP has practically reported on their successful phase out and enrollment of the FSP graduates to the schools. None of the MS has exactly followed up the guidelines to enroll grade 3 children of SOP to grade 4 and grade 5 level of FSP to grade 6. Another interesting finding was that hardly a few MSs have treated the SOP/FSP graduates as equal to those of formal school. None of them has devoted time for regular supervision and monitoring of the SOP/FSP classes. Interaction with the
DEO staff, and the headteacher admitted that the MSs have not been very dynamic in sharing the guidelines for SOP and FSP to orient and train the facilitators and the members of the CMC about their roles and responsibilities.

**Community Mobilization**

Community people have been sensitive towards education. They have understood the importance of education. However, their participation is not so encouraging in all places. Only in successful cases, the VDCs have played positive roles in identifying potential barriers that may hinder children from attending formal schools. The study revealed that the SOP and FSP classes are running well in those places where there is mutual interaction, and cooperation between local community and the parents. Various types of support extended by the local community, the facilitators, and the parents to run the SOP/FSP effectively were commendable.

In Chitwan the DEO had entrusted the NGOs and CBOs in running the SOP/FSP classes. However, the NGOs and CBOs were involved only in obtaining the quotas for SOP and FSP classes but not in managing them. The NGOs were keen only in obtaining the quotas and allocating the classes to their own persons. Beyond this, they had no roles in monitoring and supervision of the classes or facilitating them in other ways. Once the quotas are assigned to someone the NGOs and CBOs felt as if they have fulfilled their responsibilities.

It was apparent from the field that sending their children to SOP or FSP classes was considered only by the people of the local community in Jutpani. They did not feel other responsibilities like managing the place for classroom, increasing the facilities, or monitoring the activities in the SOP/FSP classes. One female social worker provided her Veranda and convinced the community about the importance of the program. Some of the parents were reported to be visiting the SOP/FSP classes only at the time of receiving the materials provided to the center by the DEO or the MS.

Because of the usefulness of the SOP, the parental involvement in the SOP of Piple was visible. The local community have arranged not only the classroom but also demonstrated their enthusiastic support thinking about the sustainability of the program. In Piple, the local community provided land, free labor and collected woods and timber. The VDC donated Rs. 20,000.00 and local community forest assisted Rs. 10,000.00 last year. This year VDC has released Rs. 40,000.00. They preferred to strengthen the SOP to establish class 1and 2 as well as ECD for younger children as they were not knowledgeable about the SOP as a phase out program. In the SOP classes in Dhedauali the local community has supported for drinking water and sanitation. Black board, plastic mat for students, teacher’s chair, chalk, etc. were available in the classroom. In Shantinagar, the local community and the parents did not extend support to run SOP/FSP. They considered SOP as a centre for tuition. It was apparent from the study that orientation on the concept of the program, and selection of appropriate place for SOP/FSP are key determinants for the effective operation of SOP/FSP. Further maintaining close relationship with local community and ethnic groups, involvement of local community in monitoring are key factors in the success of SOP/FSP. The CMC and local community have planned to establish a primary school. It was obvious that there are both strength and opportunities to run the SOP.
Status of AS

Contribution to Educational Access and Quality

The commitment of the local community, appropriate location, students’ familiarity with the facilitator, and provision of free textbooks, notebooks, and pencils from the DEO were factors contributing to increasing access to SOP/FSP. Further, the local female facilitator, and use of mother tongue as the medium of instructional were the contributing factors in access to SOP/FSP.

A general perception among the teachers, facilitators, and community people was that ASP in the forms of SOP/FSP is relevant to minority groups, and the deprived ones. It was apparent that the status of the SOP and FSP classes was largely different from one place to another. The reasons behind their status were approaches for demanding quotas, the selection process of the facilitators and the way facilities are provided to students. However, with regard to access to primary education, most of the respondents mentioned that the selection of sites and allocation of quotas were decided on the basis of some influential persons or the community leaders or schoolteachers. Before requesting for a SOP or FSP quota there was no rapid assessment of the literacy status in the community. There was no involvement of the VDC to assess the community needs. There is no system of keeping records on the school age children participating in the SOP/FSP classes and the children who have just completed the course. Not all SOP/FSP completers are found to be enrolled in the MS in the fixed grade.

Dropouts in the SOP/FSP classes were reported to be the result of lack of facilities like scholarship, uniform, and snacks. In some places, even the textbooks were not distributed. It was obvious that the DEO has not effectively implemented the provisions made for the SOP/FSP. In some places, the SOP classes are conducted only for a limited duration of seven months, one year or two year. It is, thus, apparent that the access to unschooled children is very limited.

Sustainability

The discussion and interviewees with the district authorities revealed that the program like FSP is not feasible unless the children are provided with some support like scholarship, uniform, and snacks. In addition, the criterion of having 20 participants in a class is not feasible. On the spot observation, and interaction with the local community members revealed that the FSP classes were running as tuition centres for the formal school students. Therefore, the question of sustainability does not apply with the FSP classes. Overall finding related to FSP was misuse of the resources.

The SOP planned only for three years has obstructed the involvement of parents and the local community from the second year of the program because they could not enroll their children. They mentioned that the SOP should not be treated as intermittent activity but as a regular program. Further, facilities for the SOP classes should be increased in view of the physical facilities and technical support provided by the government to formal school. In addition, awareness education to CMC members, parents and local community, and training/orientation to headteachers and teachers of the MS are must. Further, provision for intensive basic and refresher training for the facilitators; supervision, and feedback mechanism are necessary for
its sustainability. Generally, it was perceived that a sound system of ECD could be a proper means of sustaining the SOP.

**Issues Related to SOP/FSP**

One very prominent issue found in Chitwan was on sensitizing the people about the SOP/FSP program. The community people have been sensitive toward education because they suffered much and have come to understand the importance of education. In course of running the SOP, the community of Piple actively participated. The effort of the community in constructing classroom through community resource mobilization (VDC fund, free labor, and corrugated sheet) to motivate school age children to attend the SOP are highly commendable. The community is committed to the continuity of the classes 1 and 2 as well as ECD for younger children. However, the community members were not aware of the fact that the SOP is a phase out program. This is going to be a great issue in future. An issue is who should be responsible agency or person for advocacy/orientation about SOP/FSP and national policy and provisions.

In some places, school catchment areas and SOP/FSP are not too far. But the program was not implemented to needy areas. People take SOP/FSP classes as the substitute of ECD. The issue is: can not we run ECD and SOP together as multi-grade teaching?

The people do not understand well the concept of SOP/FSP they rather define it as a “branch of the school.” Quotas for such programs are inadequate in the needy places i.e. rural areas. The community survey on literacy status of school going children by involving VDC for identification is not practiced. None of the stakeholders like the local community, DEO, RP, and MS feels them responsible in monitoring the SOP and FSP classes. Who should be involved in surveying the literacy status in the grassroot level- VDC or DEO or MS? Further, data management system in the DEO or the MS is lacking.

**Case Study of Kaski District**

**Site Selection and Distribution of Quota for SOP/FSP**

In Kaski, SOP/FSP quotas were distributed upon the requests of the local community through the RCs, secondary school, and local leaders. The priority, however, was given to remote parts of the district, and to disadvantaged groups. The quotas received to the DEO through NFEC were distributed to different communities with recommendation of the RP by considering the local demand. The limited quotas that were distributed targeted to remote areas with Dalit settlement, settlement of landless people, the street children and those with low socio-economic status. A formal survey was not conducted to assess the situation of school age children.

In Lahachowk, the schoolteachers and the CMC understood SOP as a program for disadvantaged and Dalit settlement. The community people opined that SOP has contributed to establish a primary school providing a SOP quota for grade 1 in two classes. The DEO Kaski has ignored such cases.

According to the provision of NFEC guidelines, SOP graduates are expected to join grade 4 and FSP gradates in class 6 after the completion of the program. In case the SOP students, they are admitted to grade 1; they will be gradually promoted to grade 4. The record of SOP graduates showed that they have joined grade 4. In fact, this
effort indicates towards the misuse of resources and duplication of data. For example, in one of the schools visited, there were 36 students in grade 1, of which 25 were recorded as SOP students at the DEO. Field visit revealed that two quotas for SOP and FSP classes were provided to one primary school and another secondary school as the MS. For instance, both quotas were given to Himalayan Primary school. SOP was supposed as class 1 and FSP was supposed as class 3. In addition, two FSP quotas were provided to one MS in Lahachowk. According to the headteacher, FSP has been conducted for Dalit dropout students and has been successful to complete the primary cycle for them.

In Sahara Primary School, it was observed that the FSP quota used for integrated curriculum of classes 4 and 5 for 1 year. Interaction with the facilitators and the teachers of the MS showed that the FSP curriculum was too big for both facilitator and students for the coverage of the texts in terms of teaching and learning. She further added that FSP is helpful to meet the aspiration of the children of landless people. Their children had no access to education for some reasons. The significant part is implementation part and classroom delivery. The instructional materials helped the children in their learning.

Field visit showed that the FSP quota was provided to an NGO, a rehabilitation center for street children. Street children are beginners in reading and writing. The purpose of the NGO is to bring street children in the center, provide education, and rehabilitate them. FSP has supported for providing the salary of the facilitator. Visit to one of the MS revealed that the quota was received only because of the school coordinator who knew about the SOP/FSP program during his visit to the DEO for another purpose. The DEO has not informed the school about such type of program. Before demanding for the quota with DEO, the School Coordinator held discussion with the head teacher and the teachers if they could really manage a class to those who are deprived of the school opportunities due to their poor economic condition.

Only after the commitment of a female teacher, a request was submitted to the DEO for FSP classes. Discussion with the teachers and acting headteacher of the MS named Nabin Higher Secondary School (NHSS) revealed that the participants were selected from economically backward communities representing Brahmin, chettri, and Gurung. The case of the NHSS in Kaski revealed that the MS had the key roles of launching the FSP in their catchments areas. Generally, the RCs were involved in informing the formal schools about the quotas of SOP and FSP. However, this school had no prior knowledge about the SOP/FSP. A common feeling among different respondents was that the SOP quota, not FSP is needed, but SOP quota should be increased and it should explicitly be focused on remote hilly areas. Discussions at various levels revealed that if the monitoring and supervision is effective, the SOP and FSP both could increase the access of the disadvantaged community to education.

**SOP and FSP Classes at Glance**

A review of the annual report of the DEO Kaski revealed that in the year 2006/07 there were 10 FSP classes which were closed by the end of mid April 2008. Similarly, as regards to the SOP, out of 10 previously run classes only seven were continued. All five SOP and eight FSP classes conducted in the year 2005/06 were also phased out by mid April 2008. Among the quotas of 2061/62, three classes are conducted for one year integrating the curriculum of classes 4 and 5 in three different schools.
namely, Ramadi primary school, Nabin Higher Secondary School (NHSS) and Sahara Primary School.

In Lahachowak, the SOP/FSP classes have been conducted in the interest of the facilitators and no mechanism has been made for their smooth conduction. If the facilitator has to be involved in personal work, the center remains closed. It was found that the classes were closed on the day of observation. However, interaction with the students and the local community members revealed that the class was not running for a month. The problem of underage and overage prevailed in all SOP/FSP classes. The SOP classes were conducted in formal schools. While conducting the SOP in school, class 1 students were supposed to be of the SOP class, which is beyond its concept. A brief presentation on various SOP and FSP classes which are running now or have been phased out before is presented below in brief.

The SOP class was conducted by Janagaran Primary School (JPS), Lahachowk -5 in the year 2062. The age range of the students was 10 to 14 years during the third cycle and average age was 11.4. As reported by the facilitator, there were 20 students (12 boys and 8 girls) in the SOP classes. Of the 20 students, one was studying in grade 3. The enrolled students were taught in the same class but the SOP students were enrolled in the name of the SOP classes. The SOP was converted into the school due to lack of resources. The DEO provided Rs. 11,000 to the school in the name of the SOP for one year.

This Sahara Bal Primary School (SBPS), Shivatole-9, Pokhara has conducted FSP for a year in 2064 BS that targets to those students who were dropouts from grades 1, 2, and 3. With the initiative of the headteacher, the SOP classes were conducted in SBPS. There were 18 girls. Of the total, 6 were Dalit, 10 Janajati, 1 Brahmin and 1 Muslim.

A condensed course of grades 4 and 5 was introduced to the FSP classes. This program mainly focused on the school age children of the slum area. It was instrumental in providing an access to basic education leading to the admission in formal school. Some of them are still studying in the same school. A facilitator used to teach all subjects. These are now studying in grades 5 and 6 in the same school. They have aspiration for studying up to grade 10.

The FSP in JPS, Lahachowk -5 was conducted by the JPS in the year 2063. The anticipated age range of the students was 8-14 years. As reported by the facilitator, there were 20 students in the FSP class. However, verification revealed that 11 students (7 girls and 4 boys) appeared in the examination of the second cycle. All of them passed the examination and are presently studying in the third level. The enrolled students are studying in grade 3.

In Tallo Gagan Gaunda, Khudukhola, one SOP class was conducted. There were 25 students (17 boys and 9 girls). The age range of the students was 8 to 12 years during admission. The average age, however, was 9.3 years. By ethnic groups there were 12 Dalits, 9 Janajati, and the rest other. These students were enrolled in grade 1 of Himalayan Primary School in 2061/62, in the name of SOP. All these students were regular in the formal school. Of the 36 students of grade 1, only 26 were enrolled in the name of SOP and they received the notebooks, pencils, and eraser.

This Janakalyan Primary School, Jogimara, Lahachowk -8 has conducted FSP in the year 2007/08 and presently it is in the second year of the program. There were 20 FSP students in the register. However, in the record of the MS, there were only 9
students who appeared in the examination of the first cycle. This program was running with focus on the deprived students i.e. Dalits. Of the 9 students, 4 were Dalit. FSP was initiated only with the help of the RP, door-to-door campaign, and survey of school dropouts. The class was running in the morning shift. These were real FSP students in the morning. The DEO provides Rs. 9,000 for expenditure to Shree Kshitiz Primary School-Lahachowk- the MS. Most parents are uneducated and unaware of the importance of education. They are engaged in unproductive activities. Teaching children of such parents was a great challenge to the facilitator. One additional task of the facilitator was to deal with such parents.

The FSP classes were conducted by a NGO named Urban Child Protection Committee (UCPC), and Street Children Protection and Rehabilitation Centre (SCPRC) Pokhara-7. The DEO allocated FSP quota to the UPC targeting the street children of the age group 8-14. The program started in the year 2006/07 is running in the second year. There were 19 students (1 boy and 3 girls). Of the total, there were 8 Dalits, 5 Janajati and the rest other. Students were motivated to join FSP classes, because NGO has sponsored for a residential program and managed the facilitator for the class. The class served as a platform to those encountered with family and economic problems, parent’s divorce case etc. It is noteworthy that the center’s main purpose was to rehabilitate the street children and not to assist them for school. However, the center has received the FSP quotas and the facilities available to the facilitator. Until now, they have contacted 132 students of which 19 were enrolled in the FSP Program. Overall, 67 children have already been rehabilitated. Including the FSP students, there are 24 students.

In the FSP at Ritthepani, there were 20 students (12 girls and 8 boys). Of the total, there were 8 Dalit, 9 Janajati and the rest from other castes. In fact, only six students were real FSP participants. The rest were the schooling children enrolled in the FSP classes for tuition. Of the total students, only a few were of the SOP age group. The students were irregular because they were involved in domestic labor. The curriculum designed for FSP was not in practice yet. This curriculum has remained to be a challenge in attaining the objectives of the curriculum.

The FSP in Nabin Higher Secondary School (NHSS) is located in Gairapatan, ward no 5 of Pokhara Municipality. The FSP classes were conducted in the classroom of the MS in the morning before the day school started. Normally the classes ran for two and half hours to three hours a day. There were 17 students (9 boys and 8 girls) in the FSP classes. The age of the students ranged from 10 to 16 years. Three to four students were above the age of 14. The FSP class was a one-year pilot program for unschooled school age children running with the assistance from UNICEF. Most of the students were school dropouts. By the end of the FSP, all students were given annual test together with the students of formal school. Of the 17 students, only two (one boy and one girl) were unsuccessful in the test. However, none of them was given the mark sheet.

**Photograph of FSP Graduate in NHSS, a formal school, Pokhara**

Among 15 FSP graduates from the NHSS,
Gairapatan only four (3 boys and one girl) were admitted to formal school at grade 6 in the month of May 2007. At the time of admission, their average age was 13 years. The age ranged from 11 to 16 years. After passing grade 6, they are now studying in grade 7.

Interaction with the supervisor of the FSP class, who is also the schoolteacher, mentioned that the FSP class started in April of 2006 and completed by the end of March 2007. During the visit, interaction was held with four students (1 girl and 3 boys) who were admitted to grade seven. These students were from four different castes and ethnicity - Gurung, Chhetri, Muslim and Dalit. Their current position in the class in terms of the performance was of average standard.

Enrollment Pattern of the SOP and the FSP Graduates

As per the record of the NFEC, 5 SOP classes and 18 FSP classes were conducted in Kaski during the period of 2004/05 to 2006/07. Among the quota of 2004/05, three classes have been conducted for one year with the integrated curriculum of grades 4 and 5. Records were not available regarding the students enrollment in SOP and FSP classes and those who completed the SOP/FSP classes. Interaction with the headteachers of the MS and schoolteachers and discussion with some students revealed that excluding those who are enrolled in formal schools in the name of SOP/FSP, a very few SOP/FSP graduates join the formal school according to the criteria- grade 4 for SOP graduates and six for the FSP graduates.

Interaction with the DEO of Kaski revealed that dropouts prevailed both in SOP and FSP and in formal schooling. As mentioned earlier, the SOP classes are treated as grade 1 of formal school. The FSP class provided an opportunity to disadvantaged and Dalit community for education. In the SOP class running at JPS, 8 out of 20 students were dropouts. The cause of dropout was migration and overage of the students.

In Tallo Gagan Gaunda, all school students were registered in SOP, so there was no question of dropout. In FSP, Ritthepani, of the 20 students enrolled, only 6 were real students in FSP. These students attended the class through individual contact of the facilitator. The students were the children of poverty-stricken family. These children are used to collect stones in the riverside from early morning to dusk. After completion of FSP, they did not join formal school.

In Lahacowk, 11 out of 20 were FSP students. The rest were registered in FSP but those students attended tuition classes. Now, the program is running in the third level. In rehabilitation class for street children, there are no fixed criteria made for them. The class has not made any provision for admitting the SOP/FSP completers to join formal school in FSP. The role of the MS was to submit document and put forward to the DEO for the release of facilitator's salary. All FSP facilitators and the teachers of the MS mentioned that FSP was conducted because of the availability of quotas in the district.

Generally, in the name of SOP, formal schools had already admitted the children in grade 1. Therefore, the SOP students were automatically promoted to upper grades. The role of the MS was to maintain documents and send it to the DEO. No student joined class 4 even if the records were managed for reporting to the DEO. According to the facilitators, all the students were school students. It shows that the concept of SOP is lost here.
In JPS, Lahachowk, the SOP was converted to the school due to lack of resources. The DEO provided Rs. 11,000 to the program for a year to support stationery to school. This money was utilized for conducting a school not the SOP. According to the facilitator, SOP should be conducted in the remote areas to a place convenient to disadvantaged children. For overaged children, the FSP program is more useful than SOP.

Among 15 FSP graduates from NHSS, only four (3 boys and one girl) was admitted to formal school at grade 6 in the month of May 2007. At the time of admission to grade six, their average age was 13 years. The age ranged from 11 to 16 years. All of them successfully completed the grade 6 and are now enrolled in grade 7. The students who are studying in grade seven are optimistic about their future.

Selection and Training of Facilitators

Discussion with the DEO, its staff members, RPs, the parents and the chairperson and members of CMC, and the facilitators reveal that the selection of facilitators as well as their training did not take place as per the set guidelines. There was no intervention from the MS or the DEO. Generally, the local community gave priority to the female candidates from their own ethnic group.

Most of the facilitators were selected by the community or the MS. Among the SOP and FSP classes visited, some facilitators were running the classes without training. The trained facilitators mentioned that the basic and refresher training helped them in teaching-learning. The provision of stationery largely encouraged both Dalit children and the children of landless settlement areas to come to school.

The facilitator running the classes in JPS attended 15 days training offered by the DEO in the first year. In the second year, she received 7 days refresher training. In SPS, the MS provided a facilitator with I.Ed qualification considering the importance of the program. The facilitator mentioned that she had not received training that could help to adapt instruction to differing level of students. According to her, the strategy of enrolling FSP graduates to grade six was not practical because of their poor performance. There is a need of collaborative learning and the training to facilitators to suit teaching to children of varying ages.

Delivery of Inputs: Textbooks and Stationery

As per the provision, the textbooks and stationery are provided by the DEO through the concerned MS to the facilitator for SOP/FSP students. Based on the objectives of the AS, financial support is availed to the DEO for purchasing materials such as books, notebooks, pencils, erasers, chalk, duster, attendance registrar etc. However, the interaction with the facilitators, children, parents, and community leaders revealed that some SOP and FSP classes have received textbooks and stationery from the concerned MS, while others have not received them at all. It was perceptible from the field visit that the FSP and SOP classes running for more than a year received the materials 2 to 3 times over one year period from the concerned MS.

In course of conducting the FSP classes, the facilitator faced the problem of using the textbooks. The facilitator could not follow the textbooks based on the condensed curriculum due to its high standard. In NHSS, the facilitator was given all the textbooks required for the students. Being associated with the NHSS, the facilitator had the access to use all facilities available in the formal school. Exceptionally, the FSP classes conducted in Sahara Bal Primary School, Shivatole-9 under the pilot
program did not receive any books from the DEO. They simply got stationery materials like notebooks, pencil, and eraser.

**Classroom Management and Pedagogical Practices in SOP/FSP**

Most of the SOP/FSP classes are running in formal schools as their part in the daytime. Some FSP classes were running in the morning for 3 hours in between 6:00 to 9:30 am, while others were running according to the timetable of formal school. The FSP in SPS was conducted in the school premises in the morning. The class was four hours long. The SCPRC runs the FSP as a residential program to the street children for the age group 8-14. Even the facilitator was given the accommodation facilities. Both FSP and SOP classes running in JPS and the JPS, under the responsibility of the MS- Kshitz Primary School have chosen morning time, respectively. In NHSS, the FSP class was conducted in the classroom of the MS in the morning before the school starts day shift. Normally the class ran for two and half hours to three hours a day.

The training was not available to all the facilitators. The trained ones mentioned that with the help of the training they conduct the class more effectively. In JPS, the facilitator who had received the basic training of 15 days and refresher training of 7 days mentioned that she starts the class by singing the national anthem, talking about interesting incidents, review of the earlier day, and checking homework. She does not use lesson plan inside the class because it does not come into effect. She mentioned that the training has facilitated her to attract and keep students active in the class, deliver the content in the easiest way, to keep the class child friendly and to teach students in a practical way. Since all the SOP classes were phased out, observation of the pedagogical practices was not possible. However, there were provision of furniture, display of pictorial charts and satisfactory classroom condition.

Interaction with the facilitator and the headteacher of the MS showed that a traditional method, chorus drill, was used in the teaching-learning process. Teachers are prepared for the content but lacked the process of classroom delivery. Observation of the class showed that teaching materials were found in the classroom but the teachers had no idea of using them relating to texts.

During interaction, the facilitators mentioned that they need constant monitoring and periodical training during the program. According to the facilitators, the FSP curriculum has not been followed thoroughly due to age variance of the students. In Rithhepani, the headteacher of the MS reported that the facilitator formed the groups for managing age difference in the class. Students have been able to read and write, understand simple words, solve simple questions in Nepali, and solve simple problem on addition and subtraction in Math, these do not adequately cover the set curriculum of FSP.

In NHSS, where the FSP was conducted before, the condition of the classroom was apparently good. The seating arrangement was good. Interaction with the facilitator, the schoolteachers, and the students revealed that there was no problem of physical facilities like furniture, play materials, charts and pictures. The textbooks and stationery are provided by the DEO through the UNICEF funding. The facilitator was given all the textbooks required for the students. Being associated with the NHSS, all facilities available to the formal school students were also available to the facilitator and the students of the FSP classes.
Achievement of the SOP and FSP in Kaski

FSP/SOP has helped the dropouts and the over-aged children especially the Dalit and the children of landless people to continue their education. FSP has contributed to liberating out of school children. Students, who used FSP as a tuition class, enhanced their learning. FSP/SOP has provided opportunities to the students who have not access to school or who are dropout of the formal school in remote areas. Managing time to attend SOP/FSP classes by the students of Dalit and disadvantaged community is another achievement of the program. The delivery of SOP quota, supply of stationery, and training to the facilitator have helped the school to establish primary school in needy places.

Interaction with the facilitator and the students indicated positive outcomes of the FSP classes conducted by UCH as a residential program. The most interesting subjects taught in FSP are English, Math, and Nepali. The students aspire to pass grade 10. Otherwise they are bound to earn livelihood working as driver, tailors etc.

The assessment of the SOP and FSP by the local people especially the parents and teachers mentioned that they were not aware of the pilot program. In some communities where the SOP runs in the school, the parents do not have idea of SOP or FSP. In some places, the local people, and the students have considered SOP as an easy means to increase access to formal school because they can obtain free notebooks, pencil and eraser.

About FSP, the observation of local stakeholders was very positive. They consider it a very good attempt to have an easy access to their children. In one of the MS visited, the FSP graduates who were enrolled in the MS successfully passed grade 6, which was a matter of satisfaction to the parents. However, some CMC members, the parents, and students observed that there is no supervision from the DEO or any other authorities. Among the SOP/FSP classes visited, the CMC members and the parents mentioned that the most useful or positive parts of the program were children’s access to school due to appropriate place and a better environment, and support of the facilitator.

Supervision and Monitoring

An in-depth observation of the minutes of the class revealed that there is no effective supervision and monitoring from the DEO. According to the DEO staff, there is frequent change of staff in the DEO which has caused hindrances to be informed to change chain of the program. In Lahachowk, the informal discussion with the facilitator revealed that the facilitator is managing the class and keeping records of students. The practice of supervision and monitoring did not reveal through observation and discussion. In all the classes visited, there was no monitoring and supervision by the MS. In Rittheepani, the headteacher met the facilitator but did not observe the class.

Discussion with the headteacher and teachers of Kshitiz Primary School, Lahachowk revealed that the headteacher did not visit the FSP classes for two reasons. First the FSP class is located in a distant place from his home and the second teachers’ involvement in the monitoring of the SOP/FSP is a burden for them. If they care for the FSP, it has negative effects in the management of the formal school. However, the headteacher mentioned that he could just cooperate by enrolling the FSP graduate to his school. Towards the monitoring and supervision, the MS viewed that either DEO
must be involved or the MS should be given full orientation about the program and provision of incentives to the teachers involved in monitoring and supervision.

The CMC members were found to be visiting the classes, but their visits were not useful in improving the teaching-learning situation. In some places the supervisor of the SOP/FSP has suggested that they require training on how they could contribute in creative way to improve the classroom environment. The supervision and monitoring component of the programs are not effective. To some extent, the CMCs are interested in the monitoring and supervision of the SOP/FSP program, but they have no capacity to suggest the facilitator in the academic side of the program. A common problem observed was that the district authorities like the DEO staff members and the headteachers of the MS feel short of time, over-workload, lack of supportive hands, and incentive. Nevertheless, all stakeholders observed the need for effective monitoring and supervision.

**Understanding AS by the Stakeholders**

A few teachers and headteachers of the MSs and the facilitators have comprehended the concept of FSP and SOP partially. The stakeholders at district and local community also have not fully comprehended the notion of FSP/SOP in Nepali and English, both. Since the out-of-school children are enrolled in the school in the name of SOP and FSP in some places, there is no need for the parents and the children to understand the features of the SOP and FSP.

Some parents and local people understand SOP/FSP as a school concept. The DEO and RCs have performed no activities to orient, train, and familiarize them with the concepts, program and implementation strategies of SOP and FSP. Observations of the local communities unveiled that most of the beneficiaries, and the local stakeholders have conceptualized both SOP and FSP as the children literacy, which has been in practice as OSP. The community people, schoolteachers, and even CMC did not fully understand the concept of SOP. At community level, there is a bit of confusion in SOP and OSP. The MS in Lahachowk was not aware of the terminologies of SOP and FSP. The MSs have not monitored the SOP and FSP classes. The other teachers of both MSs did not know about the SOP and FSP.

One notable difference was that the community, the MS and the facilitators are convinced of SOP/FSP classes as a phase out program. In the context of SOP, no difference between the formal school and SOP was observed because the class is conducted in the school and the students did not have the feeling of different classes. Some facilitators felt the difference in their salary and their practice of multi-grade teaching. The children admitted to FSP classes however they had the feeling of different curriculum. The students were not collected with the purpose of admitting them to class 6 according to NFEC guidelines.

Discussion with the children, the parents, the facilitators, and the local community members revealed that they had no experience to differentiate between SOP and FSP. They opined that most of the classes were conducted in the school. Therefore, except the recognition of being the SOP or FSP students and the assignment of single teacher as a facilitator they had no other observation.

Only a few MSs were fixed for the SOP and the FSP as per NFEC guidelines. However, in some places, secondary school or even higher secondary school is involved as the MS. Their major roles can be considered for selecting the facilitator and location for the SOP and FSP, monitoring of the classes and providing different
instructional materials and textbooks availed through the DEO to MS. Only a few are fulfilling such roles. The MS- Kshitiz Primary School of Lahachowk was given the responsibility of two FSP classes—one in Janakalyan Primary School and another in JPS. The MS is, however, passive in terms of its responsibilities including monitoring roles.

According to the facilitator, the MSs have not played the significant role except releasing facilitator’s salary, stationery, and establishment cost. Just assigning the MS is not adequate for SOP/FSP classes as they are themselves engaged in their work and can not afford time to supervise the class. The MSs were issuing checks to the facilitators; however there was a problem of cashing the checks.

According to the headteachers of the MS in Lahachowk and teachers of the MS, their duty has only been to submit the document and release the facilitator’s salary. The field observation as well as interaction with the stakeholders at district and local people and parents at community level suggest that the roles of the MSs should be increased. In Lahachowk, the SOP class is in a distance of 5 to 10 minutes walk. In this class, the MS has not taken initiative in selecting the facilitators, and locating the place to conduct the class. The headteacher of the MS expressed that neither he was aware of the objectives of the SOP/FSP program nor he was given clear instruction about his responsibilities by the DEO. He would have fulfilled his responsibilities if he had had pre-information and involvement to launch the program. He did not know the training pattern and record keeping system too. It was conducted in the JPS and the other SOP is conducted in Himalayan Primary School in Tallo Gagangaunda, Khudikhola. The MS of both classes were higher secondary and secondary schools. The secondary schools did not pay attention due to their own engagement. The MS released the facilitator's salary and submitted the document to the DEO.

In Lahachowk the MS of FSP reported that he performed the task of releasing the salary of facilitators and submit student's attendance. The headteacher opined that though one of his roles was to monitor the FSP, he has not been able to do so because the classes run in the morning from 6 am to 9 am but he attends the school at 10 am only. He could not spare extra time, as there is no provision for incentives for the headteacher for such additional task. In Ritthepani, the headteacher of the MS reported that his only role was to release the facilitator’s salary and maintain the document submitted by the facilitator. The MS immediately transferred the amount to the facilitator making a bill. He was also not aware of the objectives of the program including age of the participants, location for SOP/FSP, selection of the facilitator and training or orientation to them.

In FSP of Sahara Primary School, the headteacher of the MS expressed that she provided the school room to run the piloting program of FSP with the integrated curriculum for the dropouts of grade 3. Among the various roles, almost all the MSs have contributed to selecting location for SOP or FSP class, certifying the attendance of the facilitator and recommending to the DEO for payment of remuneration. Only a few MSs are fulfilling the responsibility and reporting to the DEO the progress reports of the SOP/FSP. In future, the role of MS should be increased towards running the SOP/FSP.
Community Mobilization

Community people have been sensitive towards education. They have understood the importance of education. However, their participation is not so encouraging at all places. The observation and discussion with different personnel like the DEO, school supervisors, community people, parents, and the facilitators mentioned that SOP is provided to those communities who demanded quotas for primary school. SOP remains to be an important program component of the DEO to fulfill the community demands for primary school. Towards this end, the community has contributed to the construction of classroom building in both places.

In Himalayan Primary School, the community established good relationship with Himalayan Club of Gandaki and received their help. The Himalayan club obtained the quota for SOP and FSP cashing their rapport with the DEO. Community raised the fund by collecting tax over selling stones and sand from the local river and by selling the grass from the school compound. In SOP, Lahachowk, the community has made a building and fenced it. VDC has donated some amount of money for the construction part and provided for teacher's salary. The community is also involved in the management of the program. The community opposed the headteacher of JPS working as the facilitator to conduct FSP in the morning and appointed another teacher as a facilitator. In FSP, Ritthepani the community was not active at all. The local school, however, has provided a room to run the classes. Thus, in a nutshell the community mobilization is not geared to raising the quality of the program at all except conducting the SOP or FSP classes.

Contribution to Educational Access and Quality

Alternative education in the forms of SOP/FSP relevant to minority of education is in progress. In recent years, SOP and FSP are the programs implemented to ensure that all children have access to primary education by 2015. In formal schools, various scholarship and incentive programs are introduced. Most of the communities that are deprived of the formal education are not aware of the provision of girls scholarship, Dalit Scholarship, scholarship for disabled students, and other various types of scholarship from VDCs, I/NGOs, CBOs. It was apparent from the field that not all school age children who cannot go to formal school are aware of the alternative schooling program like SOP and FSP. The role of the DEO to allocate the quotas to the schoolteachers or to enroll the schoolchildren in the name of SO/FSP is the drawback of the program.

The SOP/FSP program designed for school age children sounds to be good program to increase the educational access. However, lack of active participation of the community, slackness of the DEO and MS in monitoring the program and the tendency of the school to admit the out of school children to formal school in the name of SOP/FSP are impediments to increase the educational access to school age children or school dropout for the SOP and FSP. Despite this reality, as an effective strategy for increasing access to basic education, increment in the number of quotas for SOP/FSP, ensuring effective system of allocating SOP/FSP quota and monitoring of the classes, should be considered.

Sustainability

The discussion and interviewees with the district authorities revealed that the program like FSP is not feasible without providing support like scholarship, uniform,
and snacks. In addition, the criterion of 20 minimum children to open SOP/FSP classes is not feasible all the time. Discussion and interviewees with the local stakeholders suggested various ways in order to make the SOP and FSP sustainable. It was found that the three years SOP/FSP can not fulfill the objectives of providing access to education for all school age children. Provision of one-shot program has closed the door for new comers in the SOP or FSP program. To make the program sustainable and ensure the access to education both SOP and FSP should not be treated as intermittent activities. It should be a regular program. A program must be reviewed for out of school children. If SOP/FSP can not be given continuity, some other alternative programs should be implemented. Multi-grade teaching for both SOP/FSP students and combination of ECD and SOP classes or running the SOP and FSP together by two facilitators could be a good way for increasing the access to education.

Issues Related to SOP/FSP

Interview, discussion, and FGDs conducted with the stakeholders at the district and community level have indicated issues of whether SOP be conducted by a school or not. Despite having low literacy of the local communities, some VDCs of the district are not aware of the importance of SOP/FSP. It was apparent from the study that some perceptive headteachers have conducted SOP/FSP in the formal school. This has resulted in the shortage of the schoolteachers. Additionally, SOP/FSP classes are treated as opportunities for those unemployed youths. It was, thus, apparent that the mission and strategy of the SOP/FSP was undermined. This raises an issue of whether the DEO should play a lead role in the distribution of SOP/FSP quotas or there should be an alternative mechanism to work on the alternative schooling program.

It was also obvious from the study that there was no mass sensitization about the usefulness and importance of SOP/FSP among local community groups compared to formal school program. Therefore, there is an issue of who should be responsible for the advocacy of the SOP/FSP. Field observation showed successful story of SOP/FSP at places, some of the respondents mentioned that the present design of SOP/FSP is not suitable to the needs of the district. An alternative way to address the differing educational needs of seasonal migrants, disadvantaged group, and castes is still an issue for discussion.

Case Study of Banke District

Site Selection and Distribution of Quota for SOP/FSP

Discussion with the DEO, focal person for AS, headteacher of the MS, and facilitators revealed that the DEO issues and circular to all schools and the communities through the RCs regarding the quotas available for SOP/FSP classes and the process of distributing quota as per the guidelines set in the NFEC guidebook. Generally, the facilitator used to submit application with all related document of qualification and experience and a list of the out of school children who are expected to participate in the SOP/FSP program.

It was obvious from the field that DEO provided quotas for SOP and FSP especially targeting to the disadvantaged groups, and ethnic groups like Muslim, Khatwey, and Muktakaima. As regards the FSP, it was apparent from the record of NFEC that 5 SOP quotas and 6 FSP were distributed in the year 063/64. Similarly 6 SOP quotas
and 10 FSP quotas were distributed in the year 064/65. The SOP and FSP classes started in the year 063/06 have already phased out and those started in the year 064/05 will phase out by the end of 066.

Partly the decision for the allocation of SOP and FSP quotas was influenced by the local NGOs/CBOs and headteachers. In this subject the District Education Officer admitted that decision taken by the DEO would later be endorsed by DNFEC. Differences of opinions revealed between the DEO and its staff members, RP, SSs, reveal, the reality prevailed in the ground regarding the practice of site selection and distribution of quota for SOP/FSP.

In practice the DEO has been liberal to allocate quotas to those areas where the school headteachers are effective and have made request for additional quotas of the teachers for their school. It was apparent from the discussion with MSs, community leaders, parents and teachers of the MS that the SOP quotas are allocated to the secondary schools or primary schools in order to mobilize the school teachers. In addition, the headteachers, the responsible person from the DEO were keenly interested in allocating SOP/FSP quotas to the formal school to address the immediate needs of teachers for the school.

The immediate decision made by community members and responsible DEO staff on the distribution of the quotas for FSP/SOP was to resolve the problems faced by the formal school. The SOP/FSP classes are not conducted in local community to address the real needs of specific communities. However, the school age children who were admitted to formal school in the name of SOP or FSP students were worth targeting.

The interest for requesting the SOP/FSP quotas was influenced by the vested interest of the secondary school. The school has been successful in enrolling some of the school age children to formal school in the name of SOP classes. This definitely raises question as to whether a school should be allowed to obtain quotas to admit school age children in the name of the SOP/FSP. Because the goal of SOP/FSP is not to enroll the students in formal school in the name of SOP or FSP when they have already access to education.

It was apparent from the field that the quotas for SOP/FSP were not adequate on the one hand and limited available quotas on the other were under the access of influential headteacher. The DEO should play an efficient role to prevent this situation. Based on the findings, the DEO has decided that SOP quotas should be increased instead of FSP quotas to properly address the real school age children.

**SOP and FSP Classes at Glance**

In SOP of Bhanu Secondary School (BSS), Udharapur, there were 25 students (13 boys and 12 girls). The average age of the students during the admission was 9.68 years with the age range of 9 to 12 years. These students are currently studying in grade 4. A cross check showed that there were 22 students in the register of grade 4. Of the 25 students, 3 were absent. One of the students was reported to be transferred to a boarding school. By ethnicity, there were 10 Dalit, 2 Dhobi, and 13 Muslim students.

The SOP class is running in a small bamboo cottage inside the school compound. The children were kept on the floor on a mat. However, there was no adequate place to display children's activities. The facilitator was familiar with effective teaching
The facilitator tried to introduce child-centered approach by interacting with the students and forming groups, using charts and providing individual instruction. The traditional approach of teaching dominated the classroom. The facilitator did not prepare lesson plans. Generally, primary school textbook was followed. The teacher was feeling difficulty in instructing in the Awadi language. The facilitator had difficulty in communicating well with the Muslim students.

In the SOP at Kohalpur, there were 20 students (14 girls and 8 boys). The average age was 7.75 years and the age range was 7 to 9 years. The class was conducted in a small bamboo cottage with one room. The children as well as community are less aware of health and sanitation. The floor of the classroom was covered with mats, which were dusty to sit on.

FSP classes in Udharapur 5 were conducted in school in the morning by a school teacher of BSS. There were 20 students (10 boys and 10 girls). Currently, the average age of students was 12.9 years with the age range of students was 9 to 17 years. The ethnicity of the students was Muslim. The facilitator was also a teacher in BSS. The FSP classes were conducted in the veranda of the facilitator’s house. The classroom was congested and sufficient only for 10-12 children. The mat provided by the DEO is laid on the floor. The class was conducted in a small house like cow-shed. On the day of observation 10 students (5 boys and 5 girls) out of 20 were present. The age mentioned in the register was fake to meet the reporting requirement to the DEO. All students present in the class were regular school students and most of them were studying in class 3. In FSP classes at Uadarapur 7, there were 20 students (10 boys and 10 girls). The average age of the students was 10.25. The age range of the students was 8 to 14. The ethnicity of the students was Muslim. One boy and one girl dropped the school to go to Delhi for work.

In FSP Jayaspur, there were 20 girls students. The average range of the students was 12 years and the age range of 10 to 13 years. By ethnicity all girls were Muslim. The facilitator reported that all FSP graduates were admitted to the MS. However, during a cross check with the formal school reported that none of the graduates was admitted to the formal school.

**Enrollment Pattern of SOP/FSP Students**

In the SOP at Kohalpur, there was no dropout in the center. By ethnicity, there were 5 Khatik/Khatwey, 1 Dalit, 3 Tharus, and 1 Magar. In the SOP running at BSS, of the 25 students (13 boys and 12 girls) currently studying in grade 4, there were no dropouts at all. A cross check showed that there were 22 students in the register of grade 4. Of the 25, 3 students were absent. One of the students was reported to be transferred to a boarding school. By ethnicity, there were 10 Dalit, 2 Dhobi, and 13 Muslim students. In FSP, Udharapur 5, of the 20 students, four were dropouts (two students were migrated and 2 married).

In FSP Jayaspur, the class was conducted for all Muslim girls. During interaction, the facilitator reported that all FSP graduates were admitted to the MS. However, during a cross check, none of the graduates was found in the formal school. Interaction with the chairperson of the MS revealed that the FSP class was very irregular and hardly a few graduates might have been enrolled in other school, not the MS. In fact, all the graduates were dropouts.
Selection and Training of Facilitators

In the DEO, a staff is given responsibility to look after AS. According to the DEO staff, the frequent change of staff has caused problem in understanding the program and implementing it smoothly. A thorough revision of the appointment letter of the facilitator by the DEO, name of the facilitator, and duration of the program, shows that the SOP/FSP classes are to be conducted following the suggestions of the MS. Appointment of the facilitator in some places was made with the recommendation of the MS and somewhere only with the recommendation of the CMC.

The profile indicates that the age of the facilitator ranged from 25 to 31 years. Regarding the training, the DEO mentioned that the facilitator is provided a 15 days basic training before starting the program and 7 days refresher training in the following years of the program (i.e. level 2 and level 3). The field observation and discussion with the facilitators and the headteachers of the MS showed that there was no consistency in the length of the training provided to the facilitators. The length of basic training was 8 to 15 days and that of refresher training was 3 to 6 days.

According to FSP facilitators, the objectives of the program, specific objectives of the textbook, teaching method based on texts, classroom management, seating arrangement and distribution of learning materials were provided in the training. Among the classes visited, there were two female teachers for SOP, and two male teachers and one female teacher in FSP. The age range of the facilitators was 25 to 37 years. Only one facilitator was Muslim, the rest were Brahmin and Chhetri. The facilitator reported variances for the training days.

Delivery of Inputs: Textbook and Stationery

In Banke, the DEO was flexible in the distribution of the textbooks and stationery for SOP and FSP classes. The facilitators or the headteacher of the MS could collect the materials as they wish. It was also obvious that the books and stationery were obtained from the DEO without any problem. During the field visits, all the students had textbooks, notebooks, and pencils at hand. The students of SOP or FSP running in the school were attracted due to the delivery of such materials. The MS had managed mats for the students to sit on. All the facilitators had the access to teaching aids from the formal school. Some of the facilitators did not follow the textbooks in the class. However, they were carrying then to show that they had nice books.

Classroom Management and Pedagogical Practices in SOP/FSP

Duration of the classes and timing differed by the place and type of program- SOP or FSP. In Udarapur-7, SOP was conducted in the school timing from 10 am to 3 pm during winter season. In summer, the school runs in the morning so is the SOP. It is to be mentioned that BSS demanded a relief quota for a teacher due to heavy enrollment pressure in class 1(155 boys and 111 girls). When the school received SOP quota, it separated 25 students for SOP and conducted classes in a bamboo cottage.

In Udarapur 5 and 7, both, the FSP classes were conducted from 3 pm to 6 pm in the evening. The facilitators were teachers in the BSS appointed on private basis. They were provided Rs. 2000.00/month as salary in the name of the facilitator by the school. The school has managed to obtain FSP quota and recruit the teachers as facilitators. Excluding the FSP classes conducted in the formal school, generally, the facilitators have chosen the timing to address the needs of the children. The classes
were running in the morning, evening or even in the day time. Some of the CMC chairperson and the members and the headteachers had resentment on running the SOP/FSP classes, as there was no supervision from the DEO or the MSs.

For SOP running BSS has provided a small bamboo cottage inside the school compound for 25 students of grade 1. For sitting, they had mats arranged by the school itself. Some of the students were very active. Most of them could write their names in English and Nepali both. Some of them could not write their names in English. In FSP, Udarapur 5, the classroom management is very poor. Letter chart and English Alphabet chart was displayed on the wall of the house. The traditional approach of teacher’s instruction and group questioning was used. While asking the students, all were found to be formal school students. The trained facilitator could not transfer the training skills into the classroom situation. Against 20 students registered in the FSP, only 14 were present.

In Udarapur 7, the facilitator was conducting the classes in a small room of his house. The facilitator of the FSP mentioned that the students are irregular and it has been difficult to manage the subjects. Facilitators had neither lesson plan nor preparation for teaching. The facilitator used blackboard for mathematics teaching on addition. The classroom teaching was teacher-centered. The facilitator partly used question-answer technique. The students’ motivation for learning and participation in the classroom activities was very low. They were activated slightly by individual and group work. On the previous day of observation, the FSP textbooks were distributed. However, they were not used by both facilitator and students.

The students were not willing to stay long in the classes. The management of subjects for the daily session has been difficult. The facilitator has fixed the days for different subjects. He teaches Nepali and English on one day and the other subjects on the other. According to the facilitator, underage of the children is hampering the learning of other students. Only regular, average age and overage, talented students can perform the courses of FSP. Students could do no better than class 3.

In the FSP at Jayaspur, the classroom was not clean and was very congested. There was no space for material display and group formation. The facilitator followed traditional approach for teaching though she had passed B.Sc. A cross check revealed that some of the students in FSP were the formal school students. As expressed by the facilitator, she had trouble to achieve desired level of performance due to irregularity of the class. Overall observation revealed that, compared to the facilitators running SOP/FSP classes in the local community, the facilitators running SOP and FSP classes in the formal school performed better in the matter of delivery of content, methods, and resources.

In Kohalpur Pipri, the classroom is dark. There is no proper ventilation for the classroom. The mat provided by the DEO was laid on the floor of the classroom. Though the facilitator had the knowledge of good classroom practices, she followed traditional method in the class. She had difficulty in managing the class. The classroom was noisy and students were using vulgar words to each other. Even they disturb the class while reading practice was going on. The facilitator had a stick. However, she did not misuse it. The medium of instruction was Nepali that was difficult to Khatik students. She opined that she had difficulty in evaluation process of the students. In the SOP at Kohalpur, The students were provided with instructional materials as provided by the DEO but they were not properly cared for. The motivation part of the facilitator was very weak. The facilitator had difficulty in
providing instruction in the local language (Khatik). During the class, the facilitator used question-answer approach. The facilitator reported that she needs concise training to use instructional materials relating to texts.

**Achievement of the SOP and FSP in Banke**

According to the headteacher of the MS named BSS, the SOP and FSP classes were very successful when the programs were launched with the spirit of SOP/FSP. These programs were very useful in increasing access to education. The FSP classes have been useful to bring school dropouts back to formal school. Because of SOP/FSP quotas, disadvantaged, Dalit, Muktakamaiya children have received some facilities. Instructional materials provided by the DEO have helped disadvantaged students. According to headteacher, compared to the ECD, the SOP has been successful being the course similar to formal schooling. The SOP/FSP classes have contributed to lessening some problems of the formal school caused due to high enrollment rate in lower primary grades. According to the DEO staff, SOP has helped in the retention of students from disadvantaged groups. FSP has contributed specially to Mukta Kaimaiya areas. A review of the document in the DEO showed that the FSP class had developed their own letter pad stamped FSP Muktakamaiya. The community has taken initiative in the program.

Interaction with the facilitators revealed that the SOP/FSP classes are time saving. SOP/FSP classes have increased awareness level of the people in disadvantaged and Dalit areas toward education in Kohalpur Pipri. The disadvantaged group e.g. Khatwey are poverty-stricken people. They have hardship even to provide clothes to their children. In Khatwey, not a single child is grade 5 passed. They have managed their life through wage earning from factory, and pigs raising. The instructional materials provided to them have helped them a lot. The community people have positive impression about the class as it was in the centre of the community. Especially women ask the facilitator for regularity of class and effective instruction. In this regard, they stated ‘we are poor, we are illiterate’. In Kohalpur Pipri, the students cannot read fluently due to rhythm difficulty. Though the students have completed level two, they were unable to pronounce simple words. The facilitator was introduced with Continuous Assessment System (CAS) but she has no idea of how she can use it in the SOP. The facilitator did not use any instructional materials during the classroom observation.

Generally the local community, parents and the MS have positive assessment of the SOP and FSP classes. They feel that SOP/FSP is instrumental to encourage their children for continuing the formal school in upper grades. However, they opined that the information that SOP and FSP run for only period of three years is not good at all. They have also the opinion that when the classes like SOP/FSP are conducted for disadvantaged groups, the provision for scholarship of different types is very essential. They think that without continuing to upper grades, the objectives of SOP and FSP will not be fulfilled.

In BSS and Kohalpur, Pipri, both, the students, teachers, and the parents pointed out that SOP or FSP should be converted later to school and such programs should be continued in all local communities. Some of the facilitators, teachers and the headteachers of the MS mentioned that the facilitators are overused by the MS due to shortage of the teachers. Among the SOP/FSP classes visited by the CMC members and the parents, the most useful or positive part of the program was the opportunity provided to the school age children to learn in their own community. They feel that
the SOP/ FSP classes are more convenient than the formal school. None of the children in the SOP and FSP classes visited, felt the classes to be held in an inconvenient place.

Supervision and Monitoring

It was apparent from the interaction with the District Education Officer, SSs, RPs, Section Officers, headteachers of the MS that the MSs were not so committed on fulfilling their responsibilities of launching the SOP and FSP in their catchments areas. The needy areas have no access to SOP/FSP quotas. Considering the community concern on the quality of FSP, the DEO made intensive supervision and follow-up of the FSP to identify the actual condition. As a rule, the RPs were involved in informing the RCs about the quotas of SOP and FSP. Neither the MSs nor the RPs have devoted time for supervision and monitoring of the SOP/FSP classes.

Though supervision and monitoring is one of the key components in improving the quality of the teaching and learning program, this component of the program was very weak. Some CMCs were interested in the SOP/FSP programs, but they have no capacity as such to observe the classes and suggest for their improvement. They can only make sure that the classes are running regularly. It suggests for clearly defining the roles of stakeholders involved clearly in the program and to establish a mechanism that regular monitoring and supervision is done. Field visits showed that even the headteachers of MSs are not visiting the SOP and FSP classes to the extent needed. Like in other districts visited, the DEO staff members and the headteachers of the MS noted lack of time, over- workload, lack of support hands and incentive for regular monitoring and supervision.

Understanding AS by the Stakeholders

Understanding about AS prevail only among some selected DEO personnel like, DEO, and PC, i.e. the chief handling the AS. It was obvious from the field that if the SOP classes are conducted amidst the village as separate learning centre, the local people understand SOP as some forms of non-formal school. However, the SOP classes conducted in formal school were understood only as a part of the school program, not SOP. Even school teachers are not quite familiar with SOP and FSP. It was noteworthy that the headteacher of the BSS, the MS for two FSPs and one SOP was acquainted with the notion and spirit of the SOP and FSP. However, the circumstances prevailed in the school encouraged the headteacher to run SOP and FSP both in the same school.

In Kohalpur Pipri, the local community was not familiar with the provision of SOP. They assume SOP also as a school for school age children with some additional facilities. The parents, however, opined that their children are currently studying at the literacy center and will be admitted to formal school some time later. In Udarapur, the community did not understand the meaning of SOP. They understood FSP only as a tuition class in both wards 5 and 7 of Udarapur. There is a provision of CMC for SOP, but the school has not formed the CMC and School Management Committee both are regarded as the CMC. The parents reported that teachers bring the quotas and materials from the concerned agencies and they do not provide these to them. According to them, they do not know the provision of SOP\FSP and the budget is not transparent. In Udarapur, FSP has been treated as a tuition class. In fact, the local community did not understand the FSP. The textbooks provided to them have been supplementary to them because the participants are from school.
In Jayaspur, the MS did not understand the terminology of MS and FSP. The MS came to know the program when the salary of the facilitator was deposited in MS Account. Later, the CMC members delegated the power to the DEO and were informed about the program. Even the headteachers and teachers of the MS did not understand the terminology of the AS in Nepali and English. Some of the local people mentioned that in the name of the SOP/FSP, the tax fare money is being distributed on ad hoc basis.

Overall, it was understandable that the concept of the term SOP and FSP has not been transmitted well to the local community, parents, CMC members and even to the school teachers of the MS. Selected school teachers, headteachers and a few DEO staff members have realized the meaning of FSP and SOP, not exact version of it in Nepali and English, both. Discussion with the children, the parents, facilitators, and the local community members revealed that though the SOP/FSP classes are running in the school, they have found some basic differences on SOP/FSP classes and formal School. The students studying in the school did not receive free materials like notebook, pencils and eraser. In addition, the students who are participating in the name of SOP and FSP classes viewed that the socio-economic level of children and the age level are different when compared to regular school children. Additionally, the children studying in the school in the name of SOP/FSP classes feel that they have generally new teachers.

The SOP or FSP students considered the program as special to those children who can not attend the formal school. They considered formal school as a place for those children who can go to school on a regular basis and who have better socio-economic condition or those who need not involve in household work.

Generally, the headteachers and teachers of the MS were clear on indicating the basic differences between formal school and the SOP/FSP classes. Relatively, they had better conceptual clarity on the FSP/SOP and formal education- SOP/FSP as a program for those school children who can not attend the formal school, and formal school as a regular formal school program that have the assets of more qualified teachers, better physical facilities, and monitoring and supervision from the DEO.

There is a provision of MS for all SOP and FSP classes. The roles of the MS however are not well defined. Generally, the MS and some time the DEO himself were involved in the disbursement of the facilitator's salary and other logistics. Some suggestions about classroom, instructional materials and the textbooks are provided in the SOP classes. In the FSP, the role of the MS in monitoring part is found less satisfactory. According to the facilitator, the secondary schools are busy in their own work rather than monitoring the SOP\FSP classes. In practice, they conceptually minimize such programs. According to head teacher, the program has provided RS.2000 to the facilitator.

Some of the MSs have arranged for enrolling SOP/FSP graduates to the respective MS. In some places, there is smooth continuation of the SOP or FSP graduates in the formal school. In some places like in Jayuspur, there were marked differences on the reporting of the facilitator and actual observation in the school. Based on the cross check with the school register indicated that none of the FSP graduates reported to have been enrolled in the MS at different grades were in fact not enrolled at all. It was also observed that hardly a few MSs have treated the SOP/FSP graduates as equal as those of formal school.
Community Mobilization-

Visits to different SOP/FSP classes and interaction with the stakeholders revealed that there is a lack of community participation in the matter of SOP/FSP in Banke. The SOP classes in Kohalpur, however are running in a temporary shed constructed by the community as a classroom. There is no presence of other types of support extended by the community to run SOP. A 7- member CMC was formed with the purpose of community mobilization. The CMC, however, is involved in preparing a list of the school age children who either are dropouts or never enrolled in the school.

In BSS, the SOP was conducted in the school without community mobilization. The community and the parents had limited participation regarding the running of SOP and FSP as the SOP, is conducted in the school itself. In Banke, the DEO has not entrusted the NGOs or CBOs in running the SOP/FSP classes. Some of the schools with active headteachers were keen in obtaining the quotas and allocating the classes for the school teacher who is working voluntarily. In consideration of the situation of SOP/FSP, there is a great need of launching advocacy of SOP/FSP program in Banke so that the community can be mobilized for future program.

Contribution to Educational Access and Quality

It was obvious from the study that the SOP and FSP classes are conducted through the formal school which is not in compliance with the policy of the SOP and FSP programs. However, due to additional facilities like notebooks, pencils and eraser provided by the school to those enrolled in the name of the SOP or FSP has definitely increased the access of school age children to formal education. Since the SOP or FSP students are exposed to formal school environment, their retention in the school has increased and the dropouts reduced. Besides, the admission of the SOP/FSP graduates to respective grades e.g grade 4 and 6 have been ensured. The DEO has also remained active on allocating the SOP/FSP quotas to remote areas with the purpose of increasing the access of school age children to formal education.

In order to ensure that all children have access to primary education, the selection of sites and allocation of quotas should not be decided on ad hoc basis but on the basis of literacy survey by involving VDCs and CBOs at local level. Further, the current status of the SOP and FSP classes should be reviewed critically in terms of the quota allocation, modes of operation, enrollment pattern, and the management. In the places where the SOP and FSP classes are phased out, there is no information even about those children who have just completed the course. Not all SOP/FSP completers are found to be enrolled in formal school in the fixed grade.

Sustainability

Various measures were suggested by the local stakeholders in order to make the SOP and FSP sustainable. For sustainability of the program, the headteachers of the MS, the facilitators and the CMC members expressed that SOP quotas should be given to address the real needs of the unschooled children and dropouts. There were also opinions that SOP should be a part of MS within its catchment areas. The programs like SOP/ FSP should be facilitated by providing the school age children with some support scheme like scholarship, uniform, and snacks. Further, the criteria of having 20 participants in a class should not be mandatory.
A collaborative effort of the facilitators, MS, CMC, the VDCs and CBOs is essential for developing physical infrastructure and ensuring monitoring of the SOP/FSP. The MS and the local community groups should have leading role in obtaining quotas and developing supervision and monitoring tools. Additionally the local stakeholders expressed that the system of quotas in SOP should be changed and demand driven system should be introduced. The VDC should be involved in planning the SOP/FSP in the deprived communities. In addition, programs focused on increasing the awareness level of CMC members, parents and local community on the SOP/FSP program and ways to make them effective should be conducted.

**Issues Related to SOP/FSP**

It is very difficult to collect at least 20 students in one place to run the SOP or FSP classes. The issue is: is not it reasonable to run class with less than 20 students say, 10 or 15? The criterion of 20 students for a class has created a situation that prevents a local community to run the SOP or FSP classes. There is a need to revisit the criterion on the number of students to begin a SOP/FSP classes for the disadvantaged group. In some places the SOP or FSP classes are run including the underage children. A general understanding that a trained person is not required to run SOP/FSP classes also prevail in the local communities. An issue is what should the minimum qualification and the length of training.
CHAPTER V

Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of field findings keeping in view the current policies and program, and implementation of the SOP/FSP at grassroots level in relation to the alternative schooling to address the goal of EFA 2004-2009. In addition, this chapter presents a discussion of the findings from the review of related literature.

In this study, the information was analyzed to reflect mainly on overall provision of the SOP/FSP, the actual condition of the AS based on the SOP/FSP classes, the extent of educational participation of school age children not enrolled in the formal school and the availability of contribution of AS to educational access and quality, effective measures to increase the access of children from disadvantaged group and also address the issues of under-age and over-age children based on the actual situation prevailed at the community level. In this connection, the discussion on the related components are based on the specific information of the sample districts on needs, interest and conceptualization of SOP/FSP, site selection and distribution of SOP/FSP quotas, composition of participants (gender, age, and ethnicity), and delivery of inputs (textbooks, incentive and logistics). Additional information were analyzed to identify the classroom and instructional settings, regularity in class, selection and training of facilitators, interaction between facilitator, parents and community groups, parents’ and community groups’ expectations from the program, supervision and feedback, achievements of SOP/FSP, strategies for increasing access and quality in education, issues related to SOP/FSP and suggesting ways to address the needs of under age and overage children.

Site Selection and Distribution of Quota for SOP/FSP

Mapping of different classes distributed to different VDCs of the district, on the spot visit of selected SOP and FSP classes, interaction with RPs, facilitators, and headteachers of the formal school, local communities, parents, CMC members and the facilitators, showed that the SOP and FSP classes are generally running in the needy areas. However, comparatively there are even more needy areas that sought SOP/FSP classes. The program has reached the disadvantaged communities and ethnic groups. Most of the quotas are allocated to disadvantaged, minority and ethnic groups of children of different geographical areas—e.g. Thami, Tamang, and Kusuley in Dolakha, Chepang and Tharus in Chitwan, Khatway in Banke and Lepcha in Ilam.

However, contrary to the provision for FSP, the classes are running for children of the age group 5 to 12. This means there are underage children in the FSP classes. Excluding the cases of SOP and FSP classes running in the school, in most of the SOP classes, nearly one third of the children were of the age group 3 to 5 years. In fact, these are the children best suited for ECD classes. When asked about the age group of the students, the headteacher of the MS, the RPs and the facilitator mentioned that there was no way out to change the type of the program once the quotas were allocated to particular place. It was also observed that in some places because of the shortage of the quota the community that required SOP quota was given FSP quotas in Dolakha. On the other side, in Chitwan instead of allocating SOP quotas for three years, the DEO provided a fund for 7 months to run the SOP classes. In fact, the SOP fund was left over for another SOP class that did not complete the cycle. In such
instances only the facilitators were given the remuneration. No other facilities for children were given.

Interaction/discussion with the District Education Officer, the headteachers of MSs, the RPs, the facilitators, and the members and chairpersons of CMC revealed that practically the major decisions for the allocation of SOP and FSP quota were influenced by the community leaders, the political parties, and the headteachers of the schools generally the secondary schools, undermining the role of the DNFEC. The District Education Officer in this connection admitted that the DEO could not play a decisive role as expected. The DEO and concerned bodies could not use their rationality to decide the quotas and need-based program due to unavoidable circumstances like availability of limited SOP/FSP quotas, and lack of data on the number of school age children not served by the formal school. In view of the district cases it is apparent that there is increasing need and demand for the SOP and FSP quotas. So there is a need to increase the quotas for the districts. However, the need assessment should be done by the concerned authority in coordination with the DEO prior to the distribution of quotas. Asking the facilitators to submit the names of school age children willing to participate in the class is not enough. It was noticed in the field that in all districts the names of either the under age children of ECD level or the children already studying in schools were written in the list while requesting for the quotas. This indicates that there is not only the need and planning for more SOP/FSP quotas but also the misuse of resources due to lack of effective monitoring.

A general perception at the district level was that a substantial number of SOP/FSP quotas are required for those places where small population lives in steep hills with low educational participation. There are examples of those places in all five districts—northern belt of Dolkha, remote hilly areas of Chitwan, Ilam, and Kaski and Indian border areas in Banke.

The community members and the DEO staff mentioned that the quota for FSP/SOP should be need based. Their observation was that the FSP/SOP is some time considered as a need of the community with intent of providing job to an unemployed local youth. The cases are noticed mostly in all places. In some districts, the SOP and FSP quotas were distributed to immediately address the pressing needs of the communities for a primary school even though they may not require the SOP or FSP quotas. This is true in Chitwan and Ilam. In Banke and Kaski, the schools are obtaining SOP or FSP quotas so that they can enroll the SOP or FSP students in schools and recruit their teachers as facilitators.

In such cases, the classes are not conducted to address the real needs of specific communities, in other words, the program should reach those school age children who live at far distance from the school catchment areas. At district level, there was no statistics on the population of unschooled children by their age and there was no demand for quotas of SOP/FSP as per the number of unschooled children, population density, and distance to the formal schools. Despite this, the actual location of the places where the SOP and FSP classes are running appeared to be appropriate.

It was apparent from the interaction with the District Education Officer and RPs that the DEO normally worked out on quotas available from the centre i.e. Department of Education (DOE)/ Non-formal Education Centre (NFEC) for SOP and FSP and disseminated information to all Resource Centers (RCs). Once the quotas for SOP and FSP are decided, a formal decision would be made by the DEO for providing
resources to MSs to arrange for running SOP and FSP classes, overall management of the centres, supervision and follow up, and payment to the facilitators. The study revealed that the MSs had the key roles in launching the SOP and FSP in their catchments areas. Generally, the RCs were involved in informing the formal schools about the quotas of SOP and FSP. Following this, some of the local communities were found involved in running the classes.

**SOP and FSP Classes at a Glance**

Especially some areas in Dolakha, hill areas of Chitwan and Ilam that have received SOP/FSP quotas have been successful in enrolling the school age children according to the fixed criteria of 20 students per class. Because of this program, the disadvantaged communities like Thami, Kusule and Tamang in Dolakha have been benefited.

**Enrollment Pattern in SOP and FSP Classes**

In all the districts visited, the facilitators have managed to enroll at least 20 students in the SOP and FSP classes. Because of the fixed criteria, it was apparent that the community people as well as the facilitators have in some places enrolled the underage children of ECD level in the SOP classes and on the other hand, even the school students registered as SOP or FSP students. Generally, about half the students in many places were fake students. Therefore, the problem of absenteeism and dropouts was obvious in the SOP and FSP classes.

In places where the SOP/FSP classes were conducted in the formal schools, there were no problems of enrollment or dropout either during SOP/FSP classes or after admission in formal schools. Though the provision for alternative schooling was made so that the SOP graduates join the grade four at Mother Primary School and FSP graduates join grade 6 at the Mother Lower Secondary or Secondary School, not all who completed the SOP or FSP were enrolled in the respective desired grades. Most of the MSs who are supervising the SOP or FSP running at the community level beyond school did not allow all students to join the desired grades. They were asked to qualify in the tests so as to enroll in the desired grades.

It is interesting to note that contrary to the expectation of enrolling the FSP graduates to grade six, some were enrolled in grade 2 and some in grade 3. The head teacher of respective MSs mentioned that the performance level of the FSP graduates was not on par with grade 5 students of formal schools. The performance level of SOP and FSP graduates was either at grade 2 or 3 level. Interaction with the head teachers of MSs revealed that though the FSP graduates were entitled to join grade 6 as envisaged by the program, they were not admitted in the grade 6 in question due to their achievement being far below the expected level. Most of the classes that have phased out have no records of how many continued in formal school and how many dropped out.

As mentioned by most of the DEOs, about half the total children of the SOP and FSP classes have joined the mother school. In some schools where the visits were possible and the records available, about half were admitted to formal schools, but not all in the expected grades. Obviously, this situation raises questions on the practical aspects of the SOP and FSP models to expect SOP and FSP graduates to join mother school. When asked about this situation, the local stakeholders, particularly the parents, the facilitators and the CMC members, mentioned that though the defined
age for FSP participants is 8 to 14 years, practically most of them fell in the age group of 5 to 10. The CMC and the facilitator of the FSP did not follow strictly the guidelines. Comparisons to previous study signify that there was a similar trend of enrolling FSP graduates in lower grades. About 61% FSP graduates were reported to be enrolled below the desired level (TESON, 2005). This is an indication towards the wastage of resources and failure of the 5 year curriculum condensed to 3 years.

One aspect of the study on AS was to diagnose the dropout rate prevailing in SOP/FSP classes and the MSs. Analysis of the number of children enrolled and dropped out shows that the dropout rate is very high in FSPs compared to the SOPs. The reason for FSP dropouts was the socio-economic condition of the family, tendency of the families to migrate for job hunting and engagement of the children in wage earning.

Generally, very common reasons of the dropout from the SOP and FSP classes were the underage of children who could be enrolled in ECD classes. The school students are admitted in FSP/SOP because schools were nearby and the quota of the program were distributed in the specific region. Students are irregular even if the school catchments areas are nearby. With regard to determining the dropout in formal schools, it was very difficult to track the records. Selected cases in Kaski, Dolakha and Banke revealed that even in case of SOP and FSP classes running well, the dropout rate is as high as 30 to 40% in formal schools.

In some of the schools, the children were admitted in the beginning after graduation from SOP or FSP but later they were very irregular. Interaction with local community, head teachers and parents pointed out that the first reason was the children’s willingness to support their parents through wage earning, and the second reason was distraction to formal school due to lack of friendly environment, long school hours, far distance of the school and inappropriate location. It was hard to bring into SOP/FSP those children who often do seasonal migration along with their parents. Lack of child friendly and joyful classes was also a reason in increasing dropouts in SOP and FSP classes. Overall, the study showed that the cause of dropout from SOP/FSP or formal school was associated with the economic condition of the family, lack of joyful learning or lack of awareness among the family members of the child.

**Delivery of Inputs: Textbooks and Stationery**

Based on the objectives of the AS, financial support is availed to the DEO for purchasing certain materials such as books, notebooks, pencils, erasers, chalk, duster, attendance register etc. The textbooks and stationery were provided by the DEO through the formal schools to the facilitator for facilitating learning of the children of the SOP and FSP classes. The MSs are entrusted by the DEO for providing the materials and stationery to the SOP and FSP and supervising the programs in operation. However, the interaction with the facilitators, children, parents, and community leaders revealed that some of the facilitators were provided with text materials and stationery for SOP and FSP participants by the formal schools, while the others have given cash directly to the facilitators. It was perceptible from the field visits that most of the FSP and SOP classes received the materials through the formal school, only 2 to 3 times over one year period. Only those SOP and FSP centers that received cash were providing stationery to the children as per the provision made in the NFEIG 2064 B. S.
Interaction with the teachers and the headteachers of the MSs, CMC members, parents and the facilitators showed that generally the headteachers were involved in all matters related to running the SOP and FSP classes in all districts. In many places the facilitators are not even aware of the facilities provided by the DEO for the SOP and FSP programs. In case of the SOP attached either to formal school or the SOP/FSP classes enrolling formal school students, the students are given all facilities. However, in case of FSP running outside the schools, not all students have received the textbooks supplied by the NFEC and in other places the students have not received the books at all. It is also notable that some facilitators have received the books but not distributed considering the standard to be high.

In many instances except some schools of Banke, Kaski and Chitwan, the school teachers could not share about the SOP and FSP classes running under the MS they are working. Most of the teachers were ignorant about the SOP and FSP classes, inputs provided for the FSP and SOP classes and the role of the MS toward running them. Only the headteachers were in touch with the facilitators. However, in case of the SOP, the teachers of the concerned MSs were comparatively more familiar with the program and the role of the school as MS. One of the main reasons behind this was the running of both SOP and FSP few years back in the same place.

Some of the parents as well as the community members in all districts especially in Chitwan and Ilam reported that the participants are not provided with stationery such as notebooks, pencils and erasers as per the fixed guidelines. Generally the SOPs/FSPs running in schools were given all textbooks, one notebook, one pencils and an eraser each only in the beginning of the session. It is an indication of the problem related to ineffective supervision and monitoring system and misuse of the funds by the concerned MSs. It was also obvious from Dolakha and Ilam that in some places the headteachers of the MS reimbursed the payment for books and stationery to the teachers for SOP classes.

With regards to the use of textbooks, generally the ones based on the condensed curriculum of the FSP program were not used by the facilitators considering it to be difficult. Some facilitators were distributing the textbooks to the students but practically they used the curriculum of formal school for initial stage.

**Selection and Training of Facilitators**

Interaction with the DEO, its staff members, RPs, the parents and CMC chairpersons and members, and the facilitators indicates that there is no consistency in the process of selecting facilitators and providing the training. The DEOs have not strictly followed the rules and regulations as per the set guidelines. However, there was no intervention generally from the DEO and the MSs. Exceptionally, a few headteachers or the chairpersons of the CMC, or any other community leaders who have taken initiative to obtain quotas for SOP or FSP classes have chosen the facilitator themselves. The local community who took initiative for the SOP or FSP gave priority to the female candidates from their own ethnic group.

Though the DEOs have mentioned about the public notices given on the SOP/FSP classes and the qualifications of the facilitators, no process of open competition as such was held. In some places, the CMC members mentioned that though there were other persons also interested to be facilitators, they were chosen from the local community with a preference of person from their own ethnic groups. This was evidenced in Chitwan, Ilam and Dolakha. Interaction with the members of the CMC,
the local community and the facilitators revealed that the facilitators were given appointment by the DEO in the beginning. But the DEO was not informed about the replacement of the facilitator when s/he was not able to continue due to personal reason. The age of the facilitators interviewed ranged from 20 to 40 years. As regards the educational qualification, the degree ranged from SLC to Bachelor’s level. Some were studying 10+2 and others just completed 10+2. Among the facilitators of SOP and FSP visited, those who were newly recruited were generally given 10 to 15 days basic training and 5 to 7 days refresher training. However, those who were replaced for some reason were generally untrained. Only a few new facilitators were given refresher training only. It was also obvious from the field that hardly few facilitators continued up to the three year cycle of the SOP/FSP. It was a general feeling that any one can teach the SOP and FSP students. It was observed from the field that all the facilitators linked to formal school completed the cycle of the SOP/FSP course.

As indicated by the study, most of them have chosen the job of facilitators partly as part-time job to earn some money to assist in pursuing further education and partly due to their motivation to teaching profession. The interaction with the facilitators, the CMC, the parents and the community members revealed that the facilitators are positive towards the program. Interaction with the parents, the local people and the members of the CMC pointed out that the facilitators were generally involved in a door-to-door visit together with community leaders to motivate the school aged children for SOP and FSP classes, and also persuade some of the parents to send their children to these classes. During the campaign, the community leaders and the facilitators made the local people aware about the importance of SOP and FSP programs, the provision of facilities that would be provided to the children who joined the program and to the facilitator during the training. Above all, the study revealed that the DEO or the head teacher of the concerned mother school must be vigilant for the program and provide training and feedback to the facilitator substituted later.

Classroom Management and Pedagogical Practices in SOP/FSP

Mainly the classroom management was considered keeping in view the timing of the class, duration of the class, physical arrangement for her class, and the pedagogical practices in terms of the preparation for class, set of teaching materials, and selection of effective method and evaluation of the student’s performance. The field findings revealed that most of the facilitators in consultation with the CMC have managed the timing for the classes to address the needs of the children. As reported by the DEO, the parents, the RP and local people, the SOP and FSP classes were running smoothly, for 3 or 4 hours in compliance with the guidelines. They generally run the classes from 11.00 am to 3:00 pm in the daytime or 6 am to 9:30 am in the morning. The SOP and FSP classes which were conducted by the formal schools were running according to the schedule of the schools. The SOP and FSP classes which were visited during the field work are running in the community building, VDC building, and bamboo cottage constructed by local people or in the verandah of the local people. Exceptionally, in some places in Chitwan, Dolakha and Ilam the local people and the CMC have constructed a building by mobilizing the VDCs, NGOs and CBOs so that they can later convert the SOP classes into primary school.

Though the local community members and parents are positive towards the provision of SOP and FSP classes, they expressed their grievances for not providing support for constructing a classroom through the DEO. The neighbors who did not
send their children to SOP and FSP classes had resentment on running the classes in the veranda of the local people. This was obvious in Banke and Dolakha. Though the previous study reported that the day time was inappropriate for the SOP and FSP classes, in course of the study; it was found that none of the FSP and SOP classes was found to be running in the evening in all districts.

The location of the class within the proximity of the children, familiarity with the facilitator, and provision of free textbooks, notebooks, and pencils, peers group to accompany in the class were factors enabling access to SOP/FSP. In addition, the recruitment of female facilitator, and use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction were also factors easing access to SOP/FSP.

Generally, the facilitators who had received the basic as well as refresher training were knowledgeable about good classroom practices, effective teaching method and use of instructional materials. However, the facilitators who run the classes effectively in a joyful environment were very few. Most of the facilitators conducted the class in traditional ways such as through lecture method and only a few used question-answer and participatory methods. The students’ motivation for learning and participation in the classroom activities was very low. It was observed that in some places, the SOP/FSP classes were beyond the control of the facilitator and even there were disciplinary problems like use of the vulgar words by the students and noise in the class.

In most of the classes observed, the facilitators did not use lesson plans. Generally the classes begun by singing the national anthem, talking about interesting incidents, reviewing of the earlier day, and checking homework. A few classes were observed to be very sincere as they delivered the content in the easiest way, in child friendly manner. Some of the teachers were even not prepared for teaching. The facilitator used blackboard for teaching mathematics. The classroom teaching was teacher-centered. The facilitator partly used question-answer technique. Some of the facilitators mentioned that the delivery of materials in the classroom teaching was satisfactory. Some facilitators had faced difficulty in using Nepali as the medium of instruction. However, they used question-answer technique. It was observed that in some places, classes were beyond the control of the facilitator and there were disciplinary problems like use of the vulgar words by the students.
could be made on instructional approaches and processes carried out to identify to what the extent in the utilization of inputs provided for SOP and FSP. Observation of selected classes of SOP and FSP both focused on facilitators’ preparation, delivery of content, methods, and resources, the platform provided to the children for questioning, performance, learner behavior and actual learning and evaluation. Generally, the facilitators were able to approach children individually due to small class size and spacious room. The facilitators used drill method, and lecture. Question answer and discussion techniques were rarely used.

Even in the formal schools where the SOP and FSP classes are conducted, the classes were dominated by the use of traditional approach. Some facilitators who were trained mentioned that the basic training was useful in providing them knowledge and skills related to teaching methods such as play-way methods, drama, story, and conducting exercise in the classroom. A very few facilitators have consulted with headteachers and teachers of the MS for effective teaching, teaching aids and so on. In course of field visits, no significant difference was observed between the trained facilitator and school teachers who used to teach as a facilitator.

Mostly no modern techniques or materials were used by the facilitator other than the textbooks and black boards. Comparatively, the facilitator finds difficulty in teaching English, Math, and Science in FSP as the curriculum is condensed form of grade 1 to 5. To avoid such kind of situation, not only basic training, refresher training, and workshops but also theoretical orientation on content should be given time to time. Regular monitoring from MSs, the DEO and RPs will also minimize such difficulty. The facilitator argued that only running the FSP classes without linking them to the MS is worthless.

A wide range of features in teaching learning situation of the classroom were noted through observation. It was evident from the rating of classroom dynamics that the facilitator was lacking the skills in preparing lesson plans, using of joyful teaching aids, and child-centered approach. Despite this situation, the facilitators’ role in introducing topics and activating the children for learning was found satisfactory.

To establish an environment conducive to the class, there was lack of effective plan, seating arrangement, adequate furniture, and space management for classroom activity. The presence of underage children was a great challenge. Organizing joyful learning, ensuring active participation of all children in the class was also a great challenge to the facilitators. The facilitators were, however, providing contents to the children. Discussion with selected facilitators revealed that some of them had not received the training. All the untrained facilitators mentioned that they had not received facilitators’ training provided by the DEO and, therefore, they had no knowledge and skills that are useful in conducting child friendly teaching-learning.

**Achievement of the SOP and FSP**

Interaction with the DEO, RP, stakeholders, facilitators and the children indicated positive impacts of the smoothly run SOP and FSP classes. In most of the schools visited in all districts, the records of the SOP and FSP phased out in recent years, were not available. The DEO, RPs and the headteachers of the MSs opined that at least half the number of participants enrolled in SOP and FSP were reported to have joined the formal primary schools. Overall, the FSP and SOP graduates have shown a very basic level of the achievement in the 3Rs. Though they appear in the
test and get promotion to upper level, they have gained optimum level of knowledge and skills.

As targeted by the SOP and FSP, the schoolchildren are expected to achieve knowledge and skills as determined by the set curriculum – grade 1 to 3 for SOP children and three years condensed primary curriculum for FSP children. The graduates thus completing 3 years SOP and FSP classes can join grade 4 and 6 respectively. The purpose of both SOP and FSP is not only to open avenues for formal school but also to develop knowledge, skills, and confidence level of the children. Generally, the SOP and FSP graduates could not reveal the expected level of the performance. In this regard, the evidence of the SOP and FSP graduates admitted to grade lower than the expected one is self explanatory.

A review of students’ work, notebooks and the lessons during the school visits and class observation also show that they have not attained the expected level of performance based on the curriculum. In addition, the students’ inability to write their names without any difficulties also indicates under achievement. Comparatively parents were satisfied with their children’s ability. Parental reflection indicated that the children are able to read and write and solve simple mathematical problems. They have also increased level of socialization with friends and visitors, motivation to go to class and finally to make phone calls. Bearing in mind the duration of the course completed and the prevailing curriculum, the performance of the children in both SOP and FSP could be considered to be far below the expected level.

Rating over the performance of the children of SOP and FSP classes by the headteacher of respective formal schools was fair only in terms of the children’s participation in classes and motivation to come to school, not in terms of performance indicators defined by the curriculum for SOP and FSP. In some places, in Kaski, Ilam and Banke, the FSP graduates have shown satisfactory level of performance

While asked about their future aspiration, the SOP graduates mentioned that they would like to continue their study until grade 12 or 13. Further, they added that they would like to be a teacher, doctor, pilot or nurse, plumber, farmer, driver and shopkeeper in the future. The perception of the children was influenced by their exposure to the school, community and district line offices, and business centers.

Some of the students opined that compared to SOP, the formal school is more attractive for learning because of more play materials, neat and clean school environment and garden. They also opined that there are also more teachers in formal school, so they have opportunity to learn with different teachers. The students enrolled in formal schools in the name of SOP and FSP have no clear idea of the differences of SOP and FSP classes with formal schools. Parents as well as children both insisted on the continuity of the SOP/FSP classes rather than one shot program.

Overall, in places where the SOP and FSP are running smoothly, the CMC members, the parents, and the children had a very positive expression about the program. They expressed that the SOP/ FSP programs are positive in terms of:

- Providing literacy classes at nearby the homes of the learners.
- Flexibility in time leading children to learn in a better environment with extra care and support of the facilitator.
Delivery of free textbook, pencil, notebook and eraser made parents not to spend extra money for their children for stationery support.

Providing motivation to children for learning in the SOP/FSP classes and creating interests for formal school.

Parents’ feeling of security and safety about their children (accidents, floods, etc.)

There is less risk of children going to and from school.

Monitoring of the class by the headteacher of the MS and the CMC members, and the parents.

The phasing out of the SOP/FSP in three years and lack of similar programs for growing children was observed to be the drawback of the program expressed by the local community, CMC members, and facilitators. In some places of Chitwan and Ilam the communities have the impression that the SOP and FSP classes are the extension of school. Especially, in Kaski, Chitwan, and Ilam, the communities in some places have considered the running of SOP and FSP as the step for establishing primary schools. Lack of minimum supervision from the DEO and very infrequent visits from the MS have created confusions on the part of local community.

From the viewpoint of the children, the positive aspects of the classes were facilitators’ friendly behavior, who were from their own locality and ethnicity, use of mother tongue in instruction, provision of free books, notebooks, pencils and erasers. It was observed from the field that though the examples of enrolling school aged children in the formal school in the name of SOP/FSP classes prevailed; the students would not have enrolled if they were not given free materials. It was observed from the cases of Banke, Ilam, and Kaski that the availability of SOP/FSP quotas in the formal school has temporarily solved the pressure of high students’ enrollment or the shortage of teachers’ quota. It was found that the curriculum and textbooks prepared for the FSP students with condensed curriculum of grade 1 to 5 lacks the quality of usability by the teachers and also they are not delivered at the community level in time.

Understanding AS by the Stakeholders

There are some favorable conceptions and misconceptions among the local stakeholders about the broad meaning of alternative schooling and its types -SOP and FSP. One key aspect of the study is to identify how local community, parents, and CMC members have understood the alternative schooling and its types -SOP and FSP. The notion of the term SOP and FSP has hardly been transmitted to the local community, parents, CMC members and even the authorities at district level. The concept of FSP and SOP is not fully comprehended by the stakeholders at district and local community in Nepali and English, both. Particularly, the local community has not understood SOP as a program designed for school age children of the age group 6-8 years and the FSP for the age group 8-14 years. The community needs to be educated that children of the age group 6-8 years who could not join the formal school can attend SOP and the school dropouts or the children of the age group 8-14 years can join FSP. SOP/FSP programs are short-term programs that mainly cover a period of 3 years to promote SOP/FSP graduates into schools. However, parents misunderstand this concept and they think that their children require admission annually. Parents understand SOP/FSP as a school concept.
Interaction with the local stakeholders particularly facilitators and headteachers of mother schools, CMC members, local people and parents showed that they have limited understanding about the SOP and FSP. No venture as such has been made by the DEO, and RCs, to orient, train and familiarize them about the concepts, program and implementation strategies of SOP and FSP, and their place in educational growth and development. The CMC members and the facilitators were not knowledgeable on the importance of tracking the data on school age children.

Observations of the local communities unveiled that most of the beneficiaries, and the local stakeholders have conceptualized both SOP and FSP as children’s literacy program, OSP, informal class, temporary school, extension of schools or like. Even in some places, the community tried to associate the SOP with the ECD programs conducted by the NGOs and CBOs in all districts. Thus, the local community did not visualize any difference on the age group of the school age children while admitting them to SOP or FSP program. The age range of the children in both FSP and SOP classes ranged from 4 to 14.

With the purpose of recognizing perceptual differences between SOP/FSP and MS settings and teaching-learning conditions and performance of the children, the parents, facilitators, and the local community members were asked to give their opinions. The respondents opined that the school setting, the level of children, teaching-learning environment, facilitator, and duration of timing are entirely different. The views of the headteachers and teachers of the MSs, the CMC members, and the facilitators were more or less similar to the differences of formal school and the SOP/FSP environment. Especially in cases of the SOP/FSP conducted in the school, parents as well as children have no sense of difference between SOP/FSP classes. They consider the school as an entity for all types of formal education.

The parents, the CMC members and the facilitator of the FSP/SOP classes running in the villages feel that the SOP/FSP classes are accessible to those school children who can not attend the formal school either due to its location or difficult walking routes and tender age of children. Further more, they mentioned that the SOP/FSP is conducted by a local facilitator generally by the female and class managed by parents of the children of SOP and FSP. In addition, the classes have opened opportunity for school age children to join formal school. The respondents felt that SOP/FSP classes are also designed for disadvantaged and minority groups. However, they observed that physical infrastructure and facilities to the SOP and FSP classes are in a pitiable condition and they do not seem to be a place of real attraction to school age children.

The respondents have the belief that comparatively formal schools have the assets of more qualified teachers, better physical facilities, active involvement of the DEO in monitoring and providing support. The respondents also view that though the SOP/FSP has resulted in an increased access to formal school, the quality part is comparatively better in formal school. Interaction with the respondents, however, could not show differences in learning management, learning materials and learning behavior of the children. Some of the parents mentioned that the children could learn better in SOP/ FSP classes compared to formal schools with crowded classes. The FSP children also were asked to express their views to differentiate between formal school and FSP. As viewed by them, formal school is a long way to reach, the teacher teach students in a clear, precise and understandable manner and teach lessons in a lovely way and get the child friendly environment. However, in FSP, the class is near to reach; all stationery materials including textbooks are free; the children do not get
a clear understanding about the lessons/chapters and they do not learn in a child friendly environment and the facilitator usually beats or uses force.

Among the various roles, the formal schools are found to be fulfilling only the administrative and supervisory role such as assisting in selecting location for SOP or FSP classes arranging for forwarding progress reports of the SOP/FSP to the DEO and certifying the attendance of the facilitator and recommending to the DEO for the payment of remuneration. They are partly fulfilling the responsibility of assisting the facilitator in teaching and learning and supervising and monitoring the class. The formal schools that have phased out the SOP/FSP have arranged for enrolling SOP/FSP graduates to formal school. They are not exactly following the guidelines to enroll grade 3 children of SOP to grade 4 and third level of FSP to grade 6. They have also not treated the SOP/FSP students equally as the students of formal school. The formal school has not devoted time for regular supervision and monitoring of the class, assisting in solving educational problems of the centre.

With the purpose of identifying the reasons associated with submissive roles of the formal school, the DEO staff, the headteacher, and facilitators of formal schools were interviewed. The outcomes disclosed that except designating the formal school for SOP or FSP and sharing briefly the guidelines for SOP and FSP, no attempts were made to orient and train the facilitators and headteachers of the MSs and the members of the CMC about the roles and responsibilities of the MSs. Even the CMC members and the facilitators are not aware of the roles of the formal school.

A thorough analysis of the NFEIG, working style and communication channel between the DEO and the headteacher of the formal school clearly reflect the prevailing mechanism that does not support smooth running of SOP and FSP. A gross impression that reveals from the study is that the DEO has not considered SOP and FSP seriously. Allocation of quota available from the centre and releasing budget through the MS were considered the only prime responsibilities. Overall impression from discussion with the DEO staff, RPs and headteacher of the formal school reveals that government is not serious about the effective implementation of SOP and FSP. If the programs were to be implemented successfully awareness raising and sensitization program on SOP and FSP at the district and local community level have to be conducted. Similarly, provision of orientation/training and workshops separately to stakeholders, monetary or other suitable type of incentives to the headteacher of the MS for additional responsibilities to carry over for SOP and FSP would be required. In sum, there is a lack of government commitment for SOP and FSP at the implementation level.

**Supervision and Monitoring**

One of the very key elements in improving the quality of the teaching and learning program as well as the quality of education is supervision and monitoring; In order to make the supervision and monitoring effective, as mentioned by the CMC, there is a need for clearly defining the roles of the stakeholders involved and ensure the follow-up. Supervision and monitoring has important role to play in the successful accomplishment of any program.

Supervision and monitoring has been re-conceptualized in Nepal with reference to the improvement of quality education especially in primary grades. With a view to raising the quality of SOP and FSP, efforts need to be directed not only to the distribution of curriculum, textbooks, and instructional materials, training of
facilitators, provision for classrooms, but also to SOP/FSP based supervision and monitoring that ensure the success of the program.

The field visit showed that neither the DEO nor the headteachers and teachers of formal school, RPs, and CMC members are visiting the SOP and FSP classes to the extent needed. Limited visits of the headteachers and RPs are focused on checking the regularity of the students and facilitators. Hardly in some districts like Dolakha, Kaski and Chitwan, the RP had visited the SOP/FSP classes. In some places of Dolakha, the RP performed a demonstration class. The CMC members are reported to visit the classes occasionally but they have no capacity to suggest and guide the facilitator for effective instruction and raise the issue of the absence of related persons for supervision from the DEO and the headteacher of formal school.

A major issue for discussion departs from the point of consideration that the NFEIG 2064 has clearly spelt out the critical role of other MSs to be more responsible for supervision and monitoring of the SOP/FSP. Besides, the NFEIG 2064 has mentioned that the CMC is also responsible for regular supervision and monitoring of the SOP/FSP classes. However, the field visit revealed that the monitoring and supervision part is very weak. The teachers of the MS are not aware of SOP/FSP, and the role of the MS in helping to smooth run the SOP/FSP. The headteachers are not considering their roles to monitor and supervise SOP/FSP classes as well as the roles carried out by the facilitator in course of classroom teaching and management of the SOP/FSP.

The headteachers of the MS expressed lack of time, heavy workload, lack of support hands, and incentive as the constraints to supervise and monitor SOP/FSP classes. Not only the community members but also the facilitator feel that regular monitoring and supervision are very essential to assess the performance of the children as well as that of facilitator and ultimately the success of the SOP/FSP. Supervision can be an important means to provide guidelines and suggestions for effective teaching and learning. According to the community members, regular monitoring and supervision are required not only to assess the running of the program but also to ensure the delivery if inputs from the DEO through the MSs have reached the target groups promptly.

The CMC members were found to be visiting the classes, but their visits were not useful in improving the teaching-learning situation. The members of the SOP/FSP CMC mentioned that they require training on how they could contribute in creative way to improve the classroom environment. The DEO, RP, and the MSs should regularly monitor and provide enough feedback for conducting the class effectively. Overall monitoring and supervision should be an integral part of the DEO, the headteachers and teachers of the MSs, and RPs with focus on:

- Improving the instruction of the SOP/FSP classes,
- Preventing problems emerged in course of running the SOP/FSP,
- Ensuring that the SOP/FSP classes are running in compliance with NFEIG 2064,

Community Mobilization

Community is the primary beneficiary of the school system whether it is formal or non-formal. Hence, its involvement is indispensable in the strategic planning, implementation and follow-up of the SOP and FSP. Without active involvement of
the community, the goals of enrolling the school age children particularly of disadvantaged communities to primary education through SOP and FSP is unattainable. In order to get constant support and contribution to foster enhanced learning achievement of children and total school development, community mobilization is inevitable. It relates to increased interaction between the school and the community for mutual support to attain common goals (MOES, 2003).

One of the key policies and strategies related to SOP/FSP program implementation is involving local government in planning and governance for unschooled children. The VDC/municipality has the important role to play in identifying potential barriers that may hinder children from attending formal school, and adopt the strategies such as school mapping, situation analysis and information from other sources (SSR, 2007). Particularly with reference to SOP and FSP, the VDC/Municipality has to involve NGOs, CBOs to implement alternative strategies such as SOP/FSP based on the settlement patterns such as seasonal migration, small hamlets and language and religion of the community. This demands for specific alternative forms of schools.

Involvement of the local stakeholders particularly the local community, VDCs, CBOs, parents, local leaders, and the concerned Management Committees like the CMC of SOP and FSP have the key role in smooth operation of any community based programs. It was apparent from the study that there was no active involvement of any NGOs, CBOs, or INGOs in running SOP/FSP. However, by virtue of being community based program the role of the facilitator, the headteachers of formal schools, and parents of the school age children were vital. The study revealed that the SOP and FSP classes are running well in those places where there is mutual interaction, and cooperation between local community and the parents. Various types of support extended by the local community, VDCs, the facilitators, and the parents to run the SOP/FSP effectively were commendable. Because of the usefulness of the FSP program, parental involvement in the SOP/FSP classes was visible in Dolakha, Ilam and Chitwan.

The local communities have arranged not only the classroom but demonstrated their enthusiastic support of constructing building thinking about the sustainability of the program. The local CMC has been successful in collecting funds from the VDC, community forest, or similar organizations. They have managed to donate free labor to construct the building so that they can later convert the SOP to primary school. In Chitwan, there are examples where the SOP classes have already received approval from the DEO as primary schools. A sense of ownership was observed in the selection process of the facilitator, formation of CMC, collection of timber for furniture, donation of free labor for construction work, inauguration of the centre and providing land for a SOP or FSP classes.

Nevertheless, there are also cases where the local communities do not feel their responsibility in the community mobilization. They feel as if their only responsibility is to motivate their children to enroll in the SOP/FSP classes. These are the evidences to reflect on the commitment made by the local community to enroll the SOP and FSP graduates in the formal school. Thus, it was obvious that there are both strengths and opportunities to run the FSP. The weakness is enrollment pattern of under age children in both SOP and FSP, while the threat is government’s adhoc policy of distributing quotas to schools involved in running SOP/FSP within school.
Contribution to Educational Access and Quality

Education is both a basic human right and a development tool. Therefore, with purpose of ensuring access to education, children of disadvantaged communities have been targeted for assistance in addressing the opportunity cost for schooling. Alternative education in the forms of SOP/FSP relevant to minority groups is in operation. In recent years, SOP and FSP are such programs implemented to ensure that all children have access to primary education by 2015. The programs like SOP/FSP are supposed to be allocated according to needs identified by the VEP where it has been prepared. These programmes have been instrumental in providing access to unschooled primary age children, particularly girls in difficult circumstances like poverty, and difficult terrain. The SOP/FSP graduates have access to formal primary education of good quality.

With the purpose of ensuring access to and equity in primary education a number of approaches and activities have been spelt out in various government documents and plan (EFA Core 2004-2009, Core Document). School mapping exercises, new and improved scholarship, and incentive programs for girls and children from disadvantaged groups, scholarship schemes, coordination, and collaboration with INGOs and NGOs, incentive programs, nutrition program in schools, and food for education are developed. Besides, plans are spelt out for introducing social mobilization program to reach the marginalized groups for awareness raising and empowering them to articulate their demands. Similarly, plans for scaling up School Improvement Planning and Village Education Planning to different VDCs/municipalities, and developing District Education Plans have been considered as the main vehicle for administration, planning, and management. In formal schools, various scholarship and incentive programs are introduced.

In Dolakha, the recruitment of female facilitator and use of mother tongue as medium instruction, provision of SOP at the convenient location and needy areas were also factors enabling children’s access to SOP/FSP. However, in terms of limited number of SOP/FSP quotas available to Dolakha District and mapping of the distribution of the SOP/FSP quotas throughout the distinct, it is apparent that the access to unschooled children is very limited. In other words, MDG/EFA goals are hard to reach in such context.

In various communities, alternative education in the forms of SOP/FSP as relevant program to minority groups and deprived communities is gaining popularity. Some cases of how SOP/FSP are running in three districts, Kaski, Chtwan and Banke in terms of the quota allocation, modes of operation, enrollment pattern, and management do not ensure that the school age children who are to be addressed in real sense have access to primary education. In general, the selection of sites and allocation of quotas were decided on the basis of personal approaches of the headteachers of formal school, the RP's and some active NGOs, community leaders or schoolteachers. There were no evidences of the community survey. In some places, the SOP/FSP quotas are divided into months or year and do not complete the cycle of three years. In some places, the SOP/FSP quotas are obtained by the formal schools and the students are enrolled in the name of SOP/FSP classes.

In all districts, no system of keeping records on the school age children participating in the SOP/FSP classes is found or those who were enrolled into formal schools for further education were also not recorded. Lack of tracer studies prevails by which it
is difficult to generalize the rate of increasing access to education. Not all SOP/FSP completers are found to be enrolled in formal school in the desired grades.

In Chitwan, the dropouts in the SOP/FSP classes are reported due to lack of facilities like scholarship, uniform, and snacks. In some places, even the textbooks were not distributed at all. It was obvious that the DEO has not effectively endorsed the provisions made for the SOP/FSP. Similarly, in Kaski most of the communities that are deprived of formal education are not aware about the provision of girls scholarship, Dalit Scholarship, scholarship for disabled students, and other various types of scholarships from VDCs, I/NGOs, CBOs. The role of the DEO to allocate the quota to the school teachers or enrolling the schoolchildren in the name of SOP/FSP is the drawback of the program. The experience of FSP classes conducted under pilot program of the UNESCO in Kaski showed that the FSP program designed for school dropouts of the age group 8-14 years sounds to be good program to increase educational access. However, lack of active participation of the community, slackness of the DEO and MS in monitoring the program and the tendency of the school to admit the out of school children in formal school in the name of SOP/FSP are the impediments to increase educational access of school age children or school dropouts for the SOP and FSP.

In Ilam, recruitment of female facilitators and distribution of scholarship and free notebooks and pencils were the positive steps. The SOP/FSP is considered relevant to minority and disadvantaged groups, and the quotas are supposed to be allocated in providing access to unschooled primary age children in difficult circumstances like poverty, and difficult terrain. But the DEO admitted that he has not been able to monitor the system of distributing quotas for SOP/FSP and also supervise the effectiveness of the program.

In Banke, the SOP and FSP classes are conducted through the formal school which is not in compliance with the policy of the SOP and FSP programs. However, due to additional facilities like notebooks, pencils and erasers provided by the school to those enrolled in the name of the SOP or FSP has definitely increased the access of school age children to formal education. Since the SOP or FSP students are exposed to formal school environment, their retention in the school has increased and the dropouts are reduced. Besides, the continuity of the SOP/FSP graduates in respective grades e.g grade 4 and 6 has been ensured.

In formal schools, scholarship for girls, Dalit Scholarship, scholarship for disabled students, and other various types of scholarship from VDCs, I/NGOs, CBOs are made available. As an alternative means of education, the provisions of SOP/FSP classes both are instrumental in increasing access to basic education. However, with respect to alternative schooling designed for school age children, the inputs on SOP/FSP that can boost up the children’s participation in the program are very limited. There is a need to revisit the strategy for implementing SOP/FSP classes and provisions that can be added to boost the enrollment. A separate implementation strategy on SOP and FSP is needed. Mobilization of the local CBOs and NGOs in needs assessment, running of the program and improving monitoring system are necessary. The quota system should be revisited and the number of quotas should be based on the needs of the districts which are reflected through community assessment on literacy status of school age children. Use of the SOP/FSP quotas to fulfill the teachers demand should be completely stopped. Also the criteria of fixing the number of 20 children for a class should be flexible so that in case of real students even a few students should be able to receive opportunity. A well grounded
advocacy for awareness building among the local communities about the purpose and strategy of SOP/FSP should be conducted. Increased roles of the DEOs in helping the SOP/FSP through academic and professional support and regular monitoring should be guaranteed by the DEO. Given such consideration, it could be broadly mentioned that access to education can be increased through SOP and FSP. Additionally, coordination with ECD program at the central and district level could contribute towards strengthening the SOP/FSP program.

**Sustainability**

The discussion and interview with the local stakeholders suggested various ways in order to make the SOP and FSP sustainable. The local stakeholders had grievances on quota-based system of SOP and FSP distribution. SOP/FSP planned only for three years have caused disinterest among parents from the second year of the program where they could not enroll their children. Neither SOP nor FSP should be treated as an intermittent activity but as a regular program. A long-term support policy by the MOE, provision of sufficient budget for physical facilities and technical support to formal school for SOP/FSP, awareness education to CMC members, parents and local community and training/ orientation to headteachers and teachers are must. Provision for proper selection of the facilitator, development of the desirable qualities through refresher training, supervision, and feedback mechanism are necessary for its sustainability. Generally, it was observed that a sound system of early childhood development could be a proper means of sustaining the SOP and FSP for disadvantaged children. The program must be reviewed for out of school children. SOP/FSP should have continuity, if not, other alternative forms of programs should be implemented.

**Issues Related to SOP/FSP**

There is a lack of dissemination on the concept of AS, SOP/FSP, MS, and the DEO inputs for SOP/FSP throughout the districts. Interview, discussion, and FGDs conducted with the stakeholders at the district and community level showed that the level of awareness about the importance of SOP/FSP among the local communities was very low. Despite the challenges to run SOP/FSP in scattered areas, there are widespread demands for SOP/FSP in Dolakha, Chitwan and Ilam. Without advocacy program, the DEO would issue notices about quotas for SOP/FSP classes through RCs, at the community level. However, various forms of linkages and influences in practice would influence their distribution. A real issue of the criteria for deciding the sites of the SOP/FSP is prevailing in many places.

It was also obvious from the study that that there was no mass sensitization about the usefulness and importance of SOP/FSP in the local community. Therefore, there is an issue of who should be responsible for advocacy of the SOP/FSP. Field observation showed successful story of SOP/FSP in some places. Some of the respondents mentioned that the present design of SOP/FSP is not suitable to the needs of the district. An alternative way to address the differing educational needs of seasonal migrants, disadvantaged group, and castes is still an issue for discussion.

In some places, the SOP/FSP classes have been recognized as the opportunities for youths’ employment. In other places, SOP/FSP classes are considered as opportunity for continuation of school where unschooled children receive opportunity to continue education. A critical issue, therefore, is concerned with the way of sensitizing the people about the usefulness and importance of SOP/FSP.
Who can be the facilitator and who should do this job is also an issue. A general feeling that any one can be a facilitator for the SOP/FSP classes prevails in the community. The issue is really on the minimum qualification of the facilitator. In some places, there is a serious problem of not finding an effective and qualified facilitator. A committed facilitator cannot continue with the SOP/FSP for three years. Therefore, selection of a good facilitator and its retention call for an attractive package. The obvious reason mentioned was that a formal school teacher is provided with attractive salary and other benefits while a facilitator teaching the same level of children at SOP/FSP receives only Rs. 2000.00 per month.

In Dolkha, a case of attracting a student from the SOP/FSP classes to formal school prevailed due to the provision of PCF despite the inconvenience to the children. In some places of Banke and Kaski, the school age children are enrolled in primary schools. The issue related to implementation strategy of the DEO is a major concern. Can we really meet the goal of AS when the SOP/FSP classes are conducted by the school itself? Is not it the task of the local community and the school to help enroll the school age children in formal school even in the absence of SOP/FSP classes? Who should be accountable for ensuring proper allocation of the quotas and address the real needs of the school-age children. Is not there a crucial need for an alternative way to address the differing educational needs of seasonal migrants, disadvantaged group, and castes be developed to provide cluster based SOP/FSP or residential program?

One very prominent issue found in Chitwan was on sensitizing the people about the SOP/FSP program. In one place where the SOP class is running well the local communities are not aware of the nature of the program. The community is committed for the continuity of the classes 1 and 2 as well as ECD for younger children. However, the community members were not aware of the fact that the SOP is a phase out program. After the termination of the SOP class, a conflict between the school and community is unavoidable in some places.

In some places, the community people consider SOP/FSP class as the substitute of ECD center. The people have not well understood the concept of SOP/FSP; they rather defined it as the “branch of the school.” Quotas for such programs are inadequate in the needy places i.e. rural areas. None of the stakeholders, for example, the DEO, RP, MS, the local community, and the CMC feels them responsible in monitoring the SOP and FSP class. There is no data management system in the DEO or the MS. An issue, therefore is on who should be the main body for the supervision and monitoring of the SOP/FSP class.

It was apparent from the study that some perceptive head teachers have conducted SOP/FSP in the formal school in Banke and Kaski. The intention was to draw the facilitators’ salary in the school so that the facilitator would also help in taking formal school class. This has contributed in helping to solve the shortage of the schoolteachers. Additionally, SOP/FSP classes were treated as opportunities for those unemployed youths. It was, thus, apparent that the mission and strategy of the SOP/FSP was undermined. This raises issue of whether DEO should play a lead role in the distribution of SOP/FSP quota or should there be an alternative mechanism to work on the alternative schooling program.

In some of the SOP/FSP classes, the facilitators left the program before the completion of cycle and a new facilitator without training run the program. Some facilitators have received only refresher training, while some others did not receive
training at all. In this circumstance, the issue is whether the facilitator should be trained or not and another issue is that in case of the recruitment of the facilitator who should provide the training and how funding should be made available.

In some places, it is very difficult to collect at least 20 students in one place to run the SOP or FSP classes. The issues are whether it is reasonable to run classes even if there are less than 20 students say, 10 or 15. The criteria of having at least 20 students have obstructed the local community for not implementing the SOP or FSP classes in some places. There is a need to revisit the criteria on minimum number of students to run classes for the disadvantaged group. In some places, the SOP or FSOP classes are running including the underage children.

A general understanding that a trained person is not required to run SOP/FSP classes also prevail in the local communities. An issue is what should the minimum qualification and the length of training. A serious problem of not finding an effective and qualified facilitator persists in many communities. A responsible body for the selection of sites, allocation of quotas and monitoring and recording of information related to SOP/FSP graduates is a critical issue. Above all, involvement of local CBOs, VDCs and community groups, and formal school is an issue to be considered by the government of Nepal. Without coordinated efforts of the local institutions the goal of educational access and quality is not achievable.
CHAPTER VI

Major Findings

This chapter draws the outcomes of the study from the review and field study. The major findings of this study are presented below, in line with the research questions and the objectives of the study.

Provisions of Alternative Schooling

- DEO has not disseminated about the SOP/FSP program at the district and community levels and not distributed the NFEC guidelines to the concerned persons.

- Local community, management committee and MS are involved in the selection of the facilitator. No conflict, as such, is seen in the selection and recruitment of a facilitator. In some places, open competition through the MS was made to select the facilitator. However, selecting females from local community and ethnic group is often the criteria.

- Facilitators are provided a fifteen-day training and a seven-day refresher training. The duration is generally decided based on the fund available. Substitute facilitator however did not receive any training.

- Minimum qualification of the facilitators was SLC. The educational qualification of the facilitators ranged from SLC to Bachelor’s level. In terms of the condensed curriculum of grade 1 to 5, the SLC holders had difficulty in teaching some subjects.

- Generally, the roles of the facilitators are satisfactory in terms of their involvement in the programmes. They are hopeful to be the schoolteachers in future. They have also trust over the continuity of the SOP/FSP program in future.

- Community building made particularly for SOP/FSP, bamboo cottage, community house, and a person’s veranda are used to conduct SOP/FSP classes. Besides, the formal school is also used as a place for SOP/FSP classes.

- Seating arrangements are not properly maintained in the class (Linear, U shaped seat arrangements). Blackboard is not properly used. Displays of materials are found in some classes.

- Community supports especially from the VDC, and community forest were involved in the purchase of land, construction of building, upgrading of the SOP/FSP to school and furniture making.

- There is lack of effective supervision and monitoring, and lack of data management system in the DEO and the MS both.

- Monitoring of the program from the DEO is rare. The MSs are not interested and the CMCs are not capable for this job.

- Support to SOP/FSP from the DEO was only administrative, that from the MS was also administrative and there was limited managerial support (material distribution and fund release).
• Academic supports from the MS and RPs were limited.

**Status of Alternative Schooling**

• There is no practice of having community survey on literacy status. The facilitators only prepare a list of un schooled school age children to obtain quotas There is no mechanism to verify it. Despite standard mechanism of quota distribution there is a political influence and personal approach of the community leaders and head teachers.

• Notable numbers of the SOP/FSP quotas are handled by the school head teacher by admitting school age children and dropouts in the name of SOP/FSP. Only the people knowledgeable about the quotas request for SOP/FSP in the community.

• Allocation of SOP/FSP centers is based on the available quotas and the quotas are distributed not as per the needs and demands. In different remote parts of the districts, the quotas were not available due to limited allocation of budget from the Centre. The available quotas were even not properly distributed.

• Some formal schools have obtained SOP/FSP quotas and enrolled the schooling children in the name of SOP/FSP. Recognizing grade 1 as SOP and providing SOP quotas to proposed primary school was also seen.

• Some formal schools were designated as MS for SOP/FSP with the recommendation of the RP and concerned headteachers by ignoring the PIG.

• The DEO is the major agency in supporting the SOP/FSP Program. To some extent, some VDCs, community forest, and local people have donated some cash. The local community has contributed free labor for the construction of the room.

• The SOP/FSP graduates who are enrolled in formal schools have shown their achievements at the satisfactory level.

• Comparatively, SOP was more successful than FSP in terms of the achievement and the demands of the local people for increasing quotas for SOP. Overall, the classes that are initiated by local community and located in appropriate places are more successful e.g. Ambi, Silpur and Barbote classes in Ilam, Piple in Chitwan, Pipri, Kohalpur in Banke and Lapse in Dolakha were exemplary.

• It was found that for retaining the students in the SOP/FSP programs, the provision of scholarship, uniform and snacks for the children is essential. Without such efforts readmitting the dropouts to formal school is almost impossible.

• Generally, the age range of the students in SOP was 3 to 10 years and that in FSP was 5 to 15 years. It is notable that in some places there is no discrimination of SOP/FSP programs. Only the quotas are duly considered.

• At district and community levels, the concept of and difference between the SOP and FSP was not well understood.

• Dropout prevails in SOP and FSP both. The seasonal migration of parents, engagement of the children in wage earning, overage and lack of incentives were the main reasons of dropouts in the FSP, while underage, and fake
enrollment were the reasons of dropout in the SOP. Additionally, lack of similar program in the following year was also one of the reasons of dropouts in SOP/FSP.

- The problems of toilets, playground, and drinking water are found generally in all places. Difficult geographical locations of the SOP/FSP classes have also created problems in rainy and windy seasons.

- Lack of basic training to the new facilitator who replaces the old one, unavailability of the textbooks, pencils and other teaching aids or availability only after the commencement of the class stand as problems. Even the textbooks are not distributed in time due to their delayed delivery from NFEC to District.

- Retention of the trained facilitator for a complete cycle of the SOP/FSP was a challenge. However, in some places the facilitators were working in a minimum salary of Rs. 2000.00 with the hope of being primary school teachers in future.

- Trained facilitators are applying appropriate teaching methods while teaching and they are demanding refresher training. Substitute teachers are generally involved in the management of SOP/FSP centers in the community.

Contribution to Educational Access and Quality

- In all places, the people of most disadvantaged groups are benefited from the program. For example, programs are addressed to disadvantaged and minority and ethnic groups of different geographical areas - e.g. Thami, Tamang, and Kusuley in Dolakha, Chepang and Tharus in Chitwan, Khatway in Banke and Lepcha in Ilam. This has contributed in increasing the educational access of the school age children.

- In some places, SOP quotas are provided as a foundation to open a new primary school. In some places, the SOP children are also enrolled in formal schools at certain grade.

- Programs are addressed to disadvantaged and minority groups and ethnic groups of different geographical areas. The allocation of SOP/FSP quotas for the districts are not in accordance with the demand made from the districts. To facilitate the access to education, there is a need to increase the number of SOP/FSP quotas. Otherwise the present operational system restricts the access of disadvantaged groups to quality education.

- Provision of 20 students per class has restricted the opening of SOP/FSP classes. In some remote areas, the students are deprived of the opportunity of going to classes due to this criterion. It has indirectly encouraged the facilitator to enroll schooling children or underage children in the SOP/FSP classes.

- Generally, the facilitators do not use innovative and participatory teaching methods in the class. Therefore, some of the students are either irregular or dropouts in the program. Teachers usually use drill and chorus method for class delivery.

- SOP/FSP textbooks are not so useful to bilingual children. Instructions for teachers, illustrations, and colorful pictures are still lacking.
Alternative Mechanisms

- There are problems of underage children in both SOP and FSP classes. Children of ECD age are found in SOP classes and those of SOP age in FSP classes. In some places, there is double entry of school age children in both school and SOP/FSP classes. In terms of the SOP classes, the access to enrolling students in formal school is increasing however the practice of running formal classes in the name of SOP/FSP is a major problem.

- Teacher training with focus on students’ grouping, multi-grade teaching, and preparation of instructional materials is very essential.

- In order to increase the access and quality of the SOP and FSP, the inputs provided to formal school students should also be provided to SOP/FSP students. There is demand for scholarship, snacks, uniform, and regular supply of learning materials and notebooks by the parents and students of SOP/FSP classes. This will not only prevent the dropout rate but also increase students’ participation.

- Lack of income generation activities among the households of the unschooled children is also found to be one of the problems related to dropouts in SOP/FSP classes or formal schools.

- Provision of classes that can enroll SOP and ECD age children together could help resolve the problems of dropouts.

- In order to address the issues of under-age and over-age children, the MS as a lead institution should be given overall responsibility of running SOP/FSP clusters entirely under its management and supervision. A cluster could be formed with a minimum of 8 to 20 students comprising children of ECD and SOP age level (e.g. 3 to 9 years) in a place or children of FSP age level (8 to 14 years) separately.

- The MS should be supported with relief quotas of school teachers who can teach in SOP/FSP classes. Additional funding for textbooks, notebooks, pencils and other teaching aids should also be given to the MS.
CHAPTER VII

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter draws the major conclusions and recommendations from the findings for improvement of the program based on the case studies.

Conclusions

Quota Distribution

- The system of allocating SOP/FSP quotas for the districts is not need based and its distribution at the district level is very ad hoc. In most districts, there are increasing demands for SOP quotas but not of FSP. But at national level, there is an imperfect tradition of distributing quotas indiscriminately to all districts throughout the country by ignoring the genuine needs and demands. There is a practice of asking the facilitators to submit a list of unschooled school age children to obtain the quotas. No verifications as such are made about the students. At the local level, the VDC has not been consulted to allocate the quotas for SOP/FSP in the local communities.

- Because of the lack of strong follow-up and monitoring mechanism, none of the agencies- DEO, the MS and the local community feels accountable for the SOP/FSP implementation. Academic support from the MS and RPs is vital. The allocations of SOP/FSP quotas to the districts are not in accordance with demand from the district. In other words, it restricts the educational access and quality.

- In terms of the findings, while distributing the SOP/FSP quotas, the most disadvantaged groups should be targeted. This will not only fulfill the local demands for education but also increase the educational access.

Monitoring and Supervision

The DEO has not disseminated about the SOP/FSP programs at the district and community levels and not distributed the NFEC guidelines to concerned persons. Neither the DEO nor the MS are keen in supervision and monitoring, and maintaining data related to SOP/FSP classes, and the students. The MS does not feel responsible in the monitoring of the SOP/FSP and ensuring the admission of the SOP/FSP graduates to the desired grade.

Enabling Factor for Successful Class

The SOP/FSP classes initiated by local community and located in appropriate places are more successful and comparatively, SOP is more successful and is demanded for local communities.

Problem of Under-Age and Over-Age Children in the Class

Under age in the SOP classes and overage in the FSP classes are common. The age range in SOP was 3 to 10 years and that in FSP was 5 to 15 years. Even the SOP classes enroll the children of the ECD level. The SOP and FSP quotas are given to schools to meet the shortage of teachers. The students are enrolled in schools in the name of SOP or FSP. This is underutilization of the program itself.
**Provision for Facilitators’ Remuneration**

Attractive remuneration for facilitators is needed to retain them for a complete course cycle of the SOP/FSP. Teacher training with focus on students’ grouping, multi grade teaching, and preparation of instructional materials is very essential.

The standard of the textbooks prepared for the FSP is felt difficult by the facilitator. For some subjects like Math, Science and English, the minimum qualification of SLC for the facilitator is not adequate.

**Distribution of Inputs to SOP/FSP Classes**

Different kinds of incentives provided to attract school age children to formal schools should also be provided to SOP/FSP students. Restriction on the admission of the school students in the SOP/FSP programs can contribute to increasing the access to education and prevent the prevailing trend of dropouts. In addition, the provision of convenient places for classrooms, toilets, playgrounds, and drinking water is necessary to attract the students to SOP/FSP.

**Flexibility in Students’ Number per Class**

Provision of 20 students per class is a serious problem in increasing access to education. It undermines the need of scattered places where it is hard to enroll 20 students in a class. Double entries of school age children in both school and SOP/FSP class have led to the misuse of resources. Provision of both SOP and ECD in the community and provision of SOP in different clusters would encourage the local communities for SOP.

**Linking alternative schooling to income generation activities**

It is deemed necessary that alternative schooling programme be linked with income generation activities in order to retain the SOP/FSP graduates in the formal school programme to prevent dropouts from the formal schools at various grades and also to provide future employment opportunities to them.

**Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Advocacy and orientation programs on SOP/FSP should be launched at district and community levels. The VDCs and CBOs should be involved to conduct rapid survey of school age children before any demands for SOP/FSP quotas are made.

- Revision of NFEC guidelines to suit the ground reality and compulsory provision for the distribution of NFEC guidelines on the program operation and facilities of the teacher should be made for the facilitator and, the MSs as well.

- Quotas for SOP and FSP, and especially for the SOP should be increased keeping in mind the principal goal of increasing access to quality basic education to school age children and some disadvantaged groups like Kusle, Lepcha and Thami etc.
• Provision should be made at the DEO and the MS levels to maintain data related to SOP/FSP (enrollment, dropouts and promoted, facilitators background information).

• Identification of the agency to monitor the SOP/FSP programs and the development of tools for monitoring SOP/FSP classes should also be developed.

• Strict regulations should be made for the MSs to recognize SOP/FSP graduates equivalent to their school children.

• Provision for ECD and SOP should be made to run together or as separate classes, in many clusters in the catchments areas of the MS. In areas with small number of school dropouts, FSP should be conducted. This can help solve the problem of underage and overage children in the SOP/FSP.

• Alternative schooling programme should be linked to income generation activities in order to retain the SOP/FSP graduates in the formal school programme.

• Short-term and long-term skill training should be provided to the graduates who leave the school at primary (grade 8) or secondary level (grade 10 and 12). These types of training programmes should be conducted at school level through annex programmes based on the available resources or local market demands. These types of programmes will support the school dropouts to generate self and wage employment.

• Special programmes should be provided for the school dropouts at grades 8, 10 and 12.

• Textbooks for SOP/FSP classes should be developed in different mother languages to address the differing needs of bilingual students.

• A practical and effective system for selecting well-qualified and committed facilitators should be developed. In addition, provision for attractive salary and incentives should be made.

• A teacher associated with the MS could be a right person to be the facilitator.

• A single facilitator to teach all subjects and care every child individually seems to be unscientific and impracticable. Provisions of two facilitators should, thus, be made to have full-fledged teaching in FSP/SOP classes.

• Provision for salary of a facilitator on par with primary school teachers and other incentives should be given to attract and retain the good facilitators for the whole cycle.

• Resource mobilization at community level through MS, VDCs and CBOs, voluntary organizations and development projects is essential to generate funds for providing incentives to the facilitators and out of school children to attract them toward the SOP/FSP.

• Besides, the allocation of quota, the rate of enrolling at least 20 students in a SOP or FSP class should be revisited considering the scattered pockets of settlements of the disadvantaged population.

• Last, but not the least, action research on improving the educational participation of school age children through multi-grade teaching for ECD, SOP and FSP students should be conducted.
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ANNEXES

Annex 1

Table 3.2 Matrix of Data Gathering Instruments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Tools used</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interview/Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DEO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Provisions of AS</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Status of AS</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Contribution of AS to educational access and quality for children of disadvantaged group</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Alternative mechanisms to address the issues of under-age and over-age children</td>
<td>✓</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Annex 2

List of SOP/FSP Classes and Mother Schools Visited

Ilam District

FSP Classes
1. Barbote-6
2. Godak-2
3. Godak-6

SOP Classes
1. Kanyam-7, Ambi
2. Godak-I, Silpur

Mother Schools
1. Durga Primary, Barbote
2. Purna Smarak Secondary School
3. Nanda Lower Secondary School
4. Padma Primary School

Dolakha District

FSP Classes
1. Gagarus Dolakha-4, Gagarus
2. Lapse, Bonch
3. Sunaulo Bhabisya Nonformal Education Center, Saharpa

SOP Classes
1. Gagarus Dolakha-4, Gagarus
2. Seti Devi Balbikash Kendra Chaathali

Mother Schools
1. Rampa Lower Secondary School
2. Devi Secondary School, Bonch, Dolkha
3. Pashupati Girls Secondary School, Charikot, Dolakha
4. Didhunga Primary school, Dildhunga Dolakha
5. Phulpa Primary School Puhulpa

Chitwan District

SOP Class
1. Jutpani
2. Piple
3. K.B Line Bharatpur-11
4. Dheduali -6, Padampur
6. Setodobhan Pustakalaya

FSP Classes
1. Atmanirbhar Abhiyan
2. Himchuli Samudaakik Sewa Samaj (HSSS)
Kaski District

**SOP Classes**
1. Lahachowk, ward no 5
2. Tallo Gagangaunda, Kudikhol

**FSP Classes**
1. Bus park Sukumbasi tole
2. Pokhara Municipality ward. No. 7
3. Lahachowk ward no.5
4. Lekhnath Municipality, Ritthepani
5. Gairapatan

**Mother Schools**
1. Lahachowk, ward no 5
2. Himalayan Primary School
3. Sahara Primary School
4. Barahi Higher Secondary School
5. Bir primary School
6. Navin Higher Secondary School
7. Banke District

**SOP Classes**
1. Kohalpur 8,
2. Pipari 2
3. Udharapur 7

**FSP Classes**
1. Jayaspur 2
2. Udharapur 5

**Mother Schools**
1. Bhanu Secondary Schools