

Nepal Early Childhood Education Diagnostic

Main Messages

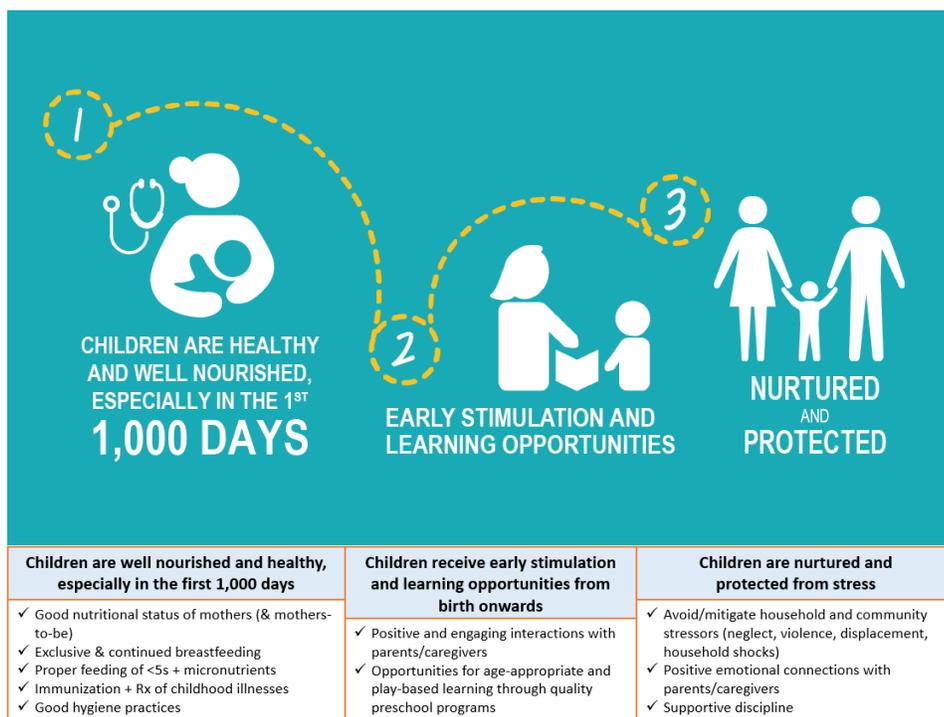
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1. Quality early childhood education and development holds important promise

Quality early childhood education and development (ECE) builds productive workforce for the future. It lays strong foundations for children to acquire cognitive and socioemotional skills, launching them on higher learning trajectories and making them more adaptable and resilient.¹ ECE investments are also effective in closing developmental gaps between children from different socioeconomic backgrounds.² For children exposed to poverty and other adverse conditions, quality early childhood programs can increase adult competence, reduce violent behaviors and social inhibition, as well as foster growth in the subsequent generation.³

Investments in nutrition, health, and stimulation in the first 1,000 days of life builds stronger brains (figure 1.1). Engaged parents and caregivers during this phase also matter for the development of children’s language skills, motor, and self-regulation skills, as well as various social behaviors.⁴ **As children age, around age 3, socialization and more formal early learning become important to prepare children to succeed in primary school.** Quality preschool at this stage further strengthens children’s executive functions (e.g., working memory, flexible thinking, self-control), launching them on higher learning trajectories.⁵ In Bangladesh, for example, rural children who attended preschool performed better in first- and second-grade speaking, writing and mathematics, compared to those who did not.⁶

Figure 1.1 Investments in nutrition, health, and stimulation in the first 1,000 days of life builds stronger brains



Source: World Bank Investing in Early Years conceptual framework.

¹ World Bank 2019.

² Heckman 2011.

³ Walker et al. 2011; Walker et al. 2015

⁴ de la Brière et al. 2017.

⁵ Camilli et al. 2010; Nores and Barnett 2010; World Bank 2018.

⁶ Aboud and Hossain 2011.

2. Government of Nepal increasingly emphasizes ECED in its education policies

The establishment of the Montessori School in Kathmandu in 1948 marks the beginning of early childhood education in Nepal.⁷ Early childhood education and development center in its current form was established and has been expanding since the 1990s. School-based, community-based, and private facilities and three major modalities for ECED service provision.⁸ School-based ECED Centers offer 1-year free service to children aged 4-5. Community-based centers cater to children aged 2-4 years and are free of charge as well. For both the school-based and community-based centers, the government of Nepal (GoN) provides funding for facilitators' salary, facilitator's training and teaching learning materials. Private schools often offer 3-4 years of pre-primary classes (PPCs) at the nursery, lower kindergarten, and upper kindergarten levels and target children between 3 and 5 years old. Private facilities charge anywhere between NRs 500 and more than NRs 15,000 per month (or roughly 5-150 US\$ per month), but in the meantime they tend to cover a wider range of services than school- or community-based centers.⁹

Nepal's evolving education policy framework reflects its increasing attention to providing quality ECED services.

In Education for All (EFA) 2004-2009 and the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) 2009-2016, ECED was listed as one important element with the goal to improve access and increase equity. The 8th amendment to the Education Act passed in 2016 realigned the school structure into basic (ECED/PPE to Grade 8) and secondary (Grade 9-12), formally recognizing the early childhood education as a part of the formal school education. In 2016 GoN launched the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), which was developed for the period of 2016 to 2023 to carry on the unfinished agenda of EFA and SSRP. In SSDP there has been greater emphasis on ECED. The objective of ECED is more detailed and clearly divided into dimensions of access, quality, and efficiency. Each dimension has elaborated strategies and planned interventions. In addition to the two SSRP indicators on number of ECDCs and the percentage of grade 1 new entrants with ECED experience, three indicators have been included to capture the quality of ECED services, namely the percentage of ECED/PPE facilitator with the required qualification, the percentage of facilitators with one-month training and number of school ECED/PPE meeting minimum standards.¹⁰

In the meantime, Nepal's education system is being further decentralized in light of the country's transition to federalism.

The Constitution promulgated in 2015 introduced a three-tier federal system comprised of federal, provincial and local governments (LG) (table 2.1). Funds, functions, and functionaries hitherto managed by the central, district and village authorities are moving to the seven new provinces and 753 LGs. Right of child to education (free and compulsory basic education and free secondary education) and to formative child development are included as fundamental rights in the Constitution (Article 31 and 39). Further, the Constitution defines "basic and secondary education" as exclusive power of the local government (Schedule 8). The Local Government Operations Act 2017, which provides further details on the functions of the local government, places 23 functions related to planning, monitoring, and management of basic and secondary education, including for ECED, under the jurisdiction of the LGs. The Act specifies that the local government shall be responsible for formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and regulation of policies, laws, standards and plans for early childhood development and education. The Free and Compulsory Education Act passed in 2018 defines ECED as a year-long childhood development and education focused on holistic development. It stipulates that at least one-year long ECED should be provided to children after four years of age and parents shall enroll their children in a convenient

⁷ Government of Nepal, MOE, 2009.

⁸ School-based ECED centers refers to public/community school-based centers supported by the government of Nepal.

⁹ Gómez Fernández 2018.

¹⁰ Percentage of ECED/PPE facilitators with required qualification, percentage of ECED/PPE facilitators with one-month training, and percentage of grade 1 new entrants with ECED experience are also part of the Key Performance Indicator for SSDP.

school (within 2km from residence). The Act also stipulates that an ECD Center shall be established within 3 years if no convenient school is there to provide ECED services.

Against this backdrop, a new set of policy actors will implement SSDP and school education beyond the SSDP period (figure 2.1). At the Federal level the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) and its central level agencies including the Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD)¹¹ is the implementing agency for the SSDP. At the provincial level the Provincial Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) is responsible for the provincial level policy related matters, where the Provincial Education Development Directorate (EDD) and the Provincial Education Training Centers will be a main responsible implementing agency for school education related activities at the provincial level. At the district level the previous District Education Offices have been dissolved. But as a transitional arrangement, Education Development and Coordination Unit (EDCU) have been established to facilitate, coordinate, and provide technical assistance to local governments to smooth SSDP implementation. At the local level education units have been set up in the local governments to carry out program activities and to provide supervisory and technical support to schools.

Table 2.1 Legal framework relevant for ECED

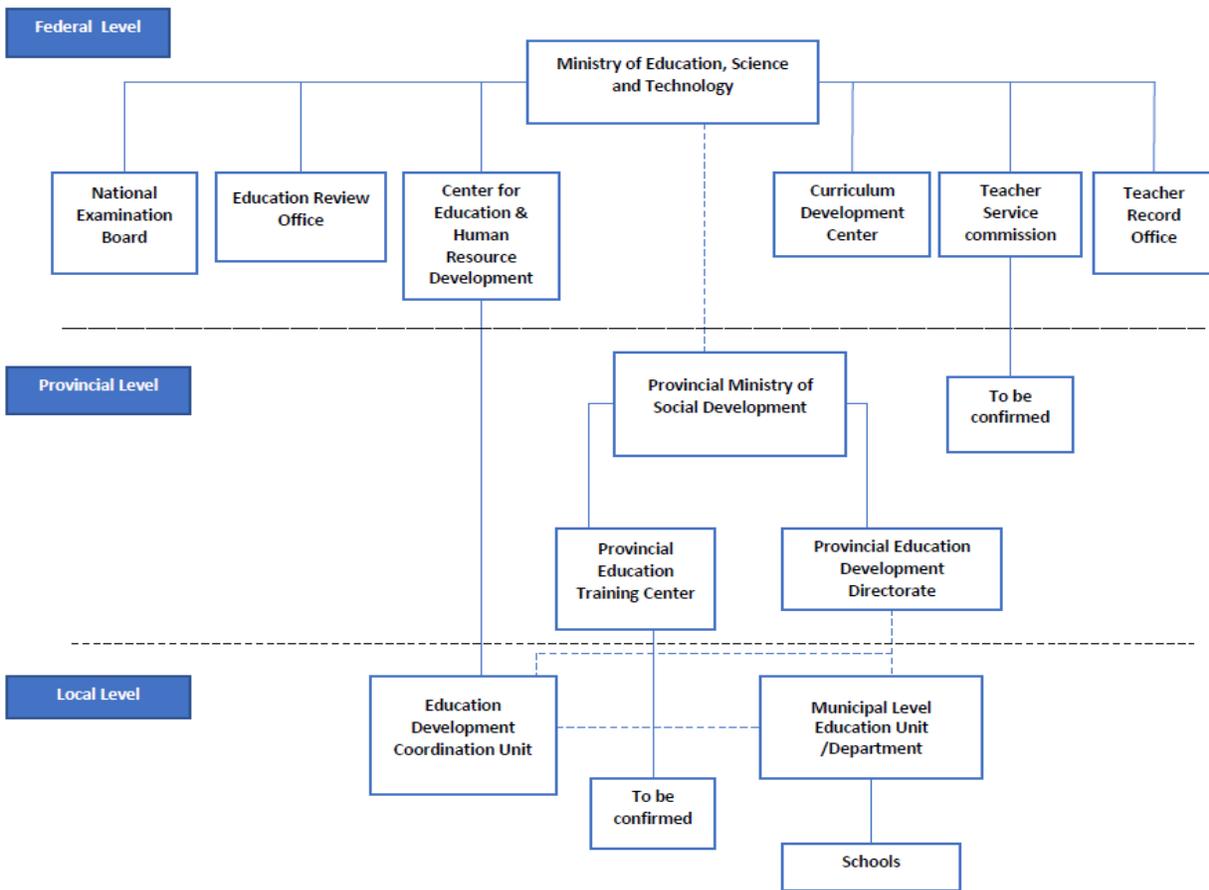
Constitution promulgated in 2015	Education Act 8 th Amendment, 2016	The Local Governance Act, 2017	Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three-tiered government structure (central, provincial and local) • Education is indicated in the list of concurrent powers of federal, provincial and local levels (Schedule 9) • Local government has exclusive responsibilities of basic and secondary education (Schedule 8) • The Constitution recognizes education as a fundamental right and protects the rights of children to identity and name, and to education, formative child development, health nurturing, social security, and protection from all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amendment incorporates one-year of ECE into basic education. • The new system contains 2 levels of education: Basic education (pre-primary to 8) and secondary (9-12) • It calls for a SMC chair to be selected from its members, and gives SMC major responsibilities for governing and managing schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local governments (LGs) are responsible for larger territories and are mandated with much greater responsibilities • Planning, monitoring and management of basic and secondary education, including ECED, are under the jurisdiction of the new LGs • On quality, LG is responsible to improve reading material distribution, position school teachers and staff, maintain school infrastructure, oversee basic level exams and student learning outcomes, carry out teacher learning/training, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It defines “Basic education” as school education provided from grade 1 to grade 8. • It defines “Early childhood development and education (ECED)” as a year-long childhood development and education, which is focused on holistic development, and which is to be provided to children above four years of age before they enter grade 1. • It stipulates citizen’s right to receive ECED. • It stipulates that at least one-year long ECED should be provided after four years of age and parents shall enroll their children in a convenient school (within 2 km from residence). • It stipulates that a school be established within 3 years if no convenient school is there to provide basic level compulsory education. • Private schools to be service oriented. • it stipulated private schools and schools operating under Guthi allocate quota to provide free education.

¹¹ Previously the Department of Education.

forms of violence and exploitation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On accountability, LG is supposed to establish and manage village and municipal level education committees and school management committee (SMC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> GoN will allocates grants to local bodies based on school and student numbers and results, and local bodies allocate required budget to school. It stipulates education ministries to develop monitoring indicators and local level governments to submit annual monitoring reporting on key indicators including number of schools, enrollment, and budget allocation.
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Source: Authors' compilation.

Figure 2.1 Main policy actors of SSDP



Source: MOEST Transitional Roadmap, May 2019

3. Despite progress in recent years, significant gaps remain in ensuring access and quality ECED services for all

3.1 Gaps in access and quality persist despite expanding ECED centers and increasing enrollment

Nepal has made significant progress in ECED access in the past decade. ECED gross enrollment ratio (GER) has increased from 63.4% in 2007 to 84.1% in 2017. Percentage of grade 1 new entrants with ECED experience doubled from 33% in 2007 to 66.3% in 2017 (figure 3.1). Commensurately, the number of ECED centers has seen steady increase from around 30,000 in 2009 to over 36,000 in 2017, serving almost a million children. The number of school-based and community-based centers increased by 23% from 24,773 to 30,448, whereas institution-based private centers grew by 42% from 4,316 to 6,120 (annex figure 6.1).

Figure 3.1 New Grade 1 entrant with pre-primary education has doubled since 2007

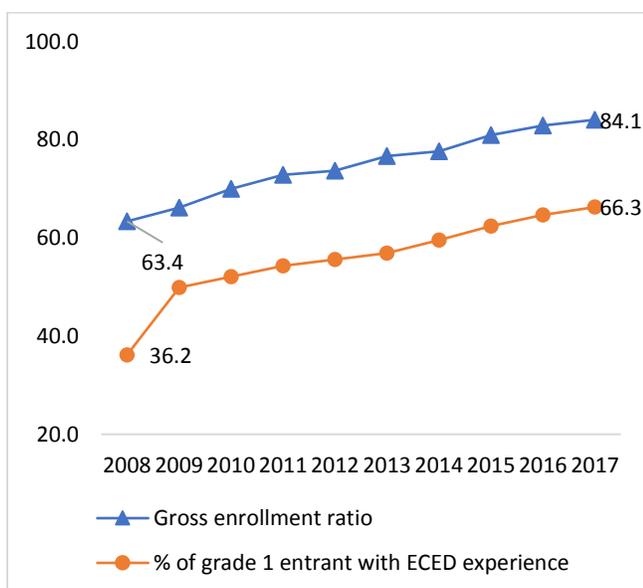
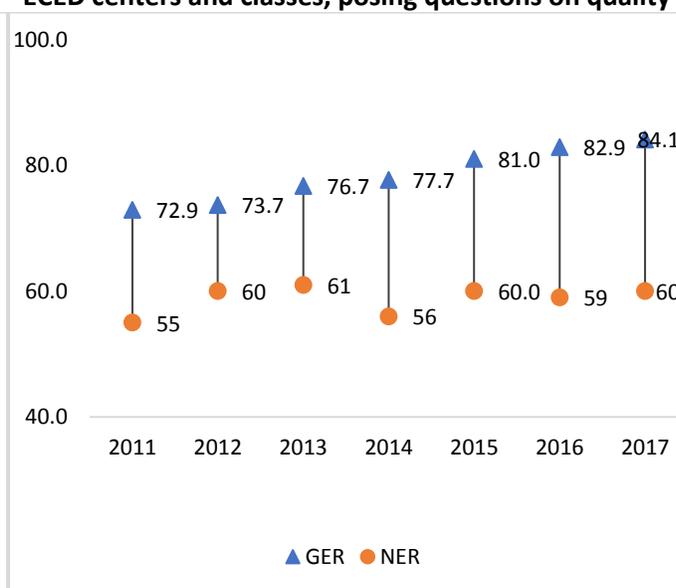


Figure 3.2. Persistent gaps between GER and NER suggest many under-aged and over-aged children in ECED centers and classes, posing questions on quality



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS; accessed Nov 2, 2019) GON flash report of various years

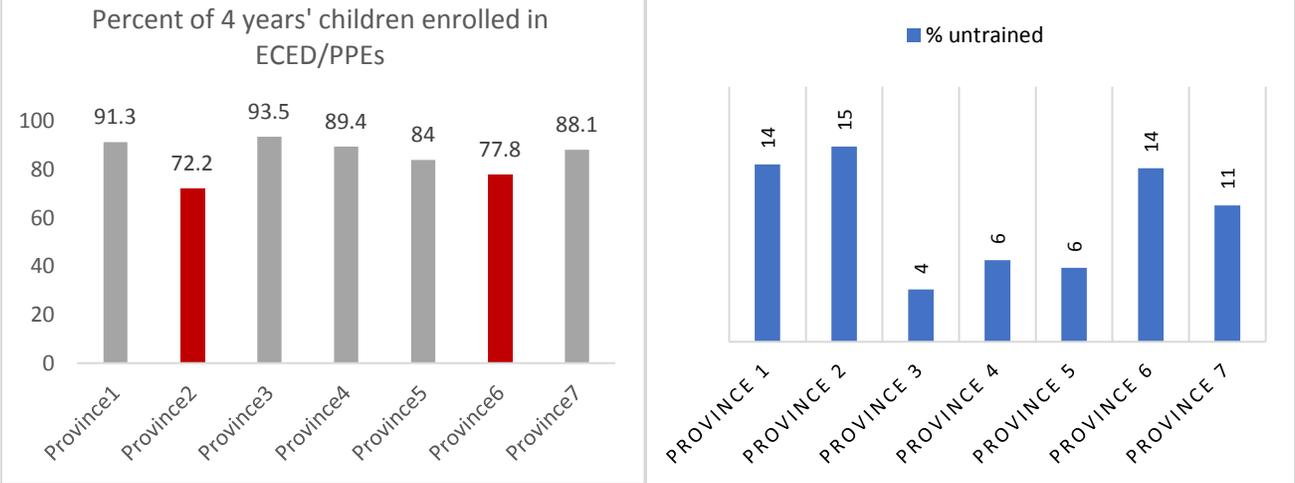
The increased enrollment and number of ECED Centers, however, cannot hide the fact that Nepal is still not meeting all the demand of children who are at the official entry age for ECED. As figure 3.2 shows, in 2017 as much as 40% of pre-primary school aged children are not attending ECED, and about one-third of new grade 1 entrants did not receive pre-primary education. For those children, school readiness is questionable. Nepal also has room to improve its ECED enrollment compared to countries such as Mongolia, Vietnam and Pakistan, which all have higher NER. Nepal’s out of school children (OOSC) rate of children one year younger than official entry age for primary education is also much higher than countries including Mongolia and Thailand (annex figure 6.2).

What is more, gender, socio-economic, and geospatial inequity exist in accessing quality ECED services. Though Nepal has achieved gender parity in basic and secondary school enrollment, the ratio of girls to boys is still at 0.90 in ECDC attendance in the past years¹². In 2017, girls’ gross and net enrollment rate in ECED is 83% and 55%

¹² Flash report of multiple years

respectively. Both ratios are lower than boy’s, which are at 89% and 61%¹³. There is also a stark enrollment difference between the poorest and richest households—84% of children from households of the wealthiest quintile attend ECED, while the rate for the poorest quintile is only 41%, according to 2014 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). ECED enrollment are unevenly distributed across provinces and Province 2 and 6 particularly are falling behind.

Figure 3.3 provincial gaps in ECED access and trained ECED facilitators, 2017



Source: GoN Flash Report (2017-2018).

The difference between GER, net enrollment rate (NER), as well as percentage of grade 1 new entrants with ECED experience indicate that there are many underage and overage children attending ECED. This also raises concerns about ECED quality. Providing ECED services to a wider age range of children is more difficult for facilitators in ECED centers, as they must conduct multilevel interactive activities in the classroom, but they do not always have the appropriate training and support to deliver such activities. What is more, trained facilitators are not evenly distributed with Provinces 2 and 6 lagging behind.¹⁴

Furthermore, lack of adequate physical infrastructure and management poses challenges for ECED/PPE Centers to create enabling learning environment. While the government of Nepal (GoN) has put in great effort in setting the standards including National minimum standards on ECD centers, implementation of the minimum standard has not been uniform and moreover is not supported through additional resources by the government.¹⁵ A 2017 study carried out by Education Review Office (ERO) found that more than 40 percent of the ECED centers do not satisfy the infrastructure standards. In addition, less than 15% of ECED centers met the management standards related to health check up, management of compound area and management of learning and play materials.¹⁶

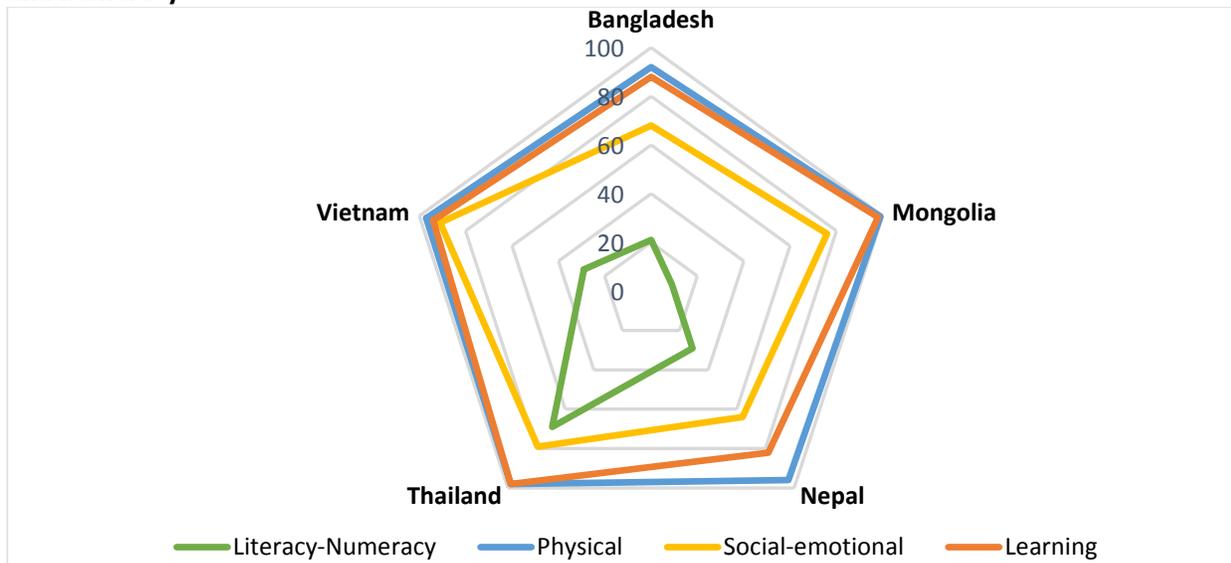
3.2 GoN’s commendable progress in access is yet to be translated into quality outcomes

Given these gaps and challenges, GoN has not yet translated its progress in ECED into quality outcomes. In 2014, less than one third of Nepalese children aged 36-59 months were developmentally on track in literacy and

¹³ Government of Nepal, 2018
¹⁴ Refers to 16-day basic training provided by the government.
¹⁵ National Minimum Standards for ECD centers was introduced in 2010 by the Ministry to ensure uniformity in the ECD service. The Minimum Standard is divided into eight major categories: physical infrastructure; health nutrition, safety; minimum required materials; outdoor environment; ECD management committee and governance; human resource quality; parents, children and community; drinking water and sanitation.
¹⁶ A report on ECD Assessment in Nepal 2017, Education Review Office.

numeracy and only 64% were on track in the social-emotional domain according to UNICEF’s Early Child Development Index (ECDI), which are lower than many other countries in the region (figure 3.5). There is a disparity in performance among different geographical regions, wealth quintiles, and mother’s education levels.

Figure 3.4. Less than one-third of Nepalese children aged 36-59 months are developmentally on track in literacy and numeracy



Source: UNICEF 2014.

4. GoN needs to take more actions to realize the SSDP promises and SDG goals

4.1 On the demand side, GoN can invest more in parental education to raise awareness and engage communities

Responsive and positive parenting provides important support for children’s skills development and school-readiness.¹⁷ Effective parental involvement in early childhood education connects classroom experience and home activities, creating a cohesive learning environment for children to acquire foundational cognitive and socioeconomic skills.¹⁸ However, parents do not always have the necessary information on the value of ECED services to make the appropriate choices, or the skills and resources to provide care, protection and stimulation for children.

In Nepal, there is room to improve parents’ awareness and support of ECED. For example, according to the 2014 MICS, two-thirds of Nepalese children aged 36-59 months get sufficient adult support for learning at home, while the ratio is much higher in countries such as Bangladesh (78%), Thailand (93%) and Vietnam (76%). Paternal support is particularly insufficient—only 10 percent of 36- to 59-month-olds are engaged by their fathers in four or more early learning activities including reading books or looking at picture books, telling stories, singing songs, taking children outside the home, compound or yard, playing with children, and spending time with children naming, counting or drawing things. In addition, 20 percent of the Nepalese children under 5 are left alone with inadequate care. In terms of learning materials, less than 5% of children under 5 have three or more books at home, and about half of them have 2 or more toys. Moreover, the level of adult support, children care and learning materials also vary significantly by mother’s education and the family’s socioeconomic status (figure 4.1).

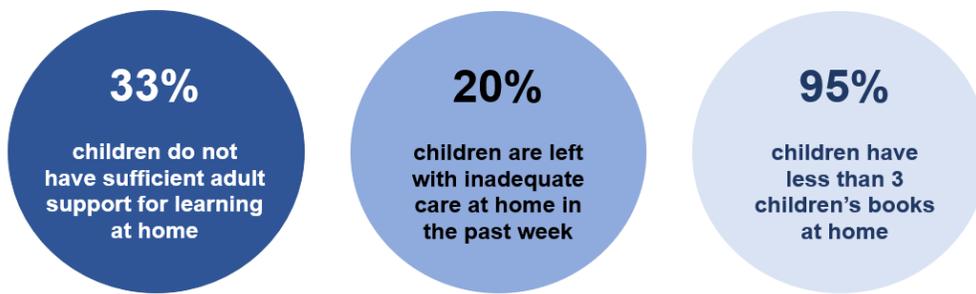
¹⁷ Meaney 2010, Burke, et al. 2011.

¹⁸ <http://www.panworldeducation.com/2017/03/22/role-of-parents-in-early-childhood-development/>

While SSDP aims to increase the engagement of parents and communities in ECED/PPE by providing parental education and packaged programs, concrete, larger-scale interventions have not been put in place during the first three years of SSDP. Even though MOEST and different I/NGOs have been conducting parental orientation programs to make the parents aware of the importance of ECED services and need for ECED centers, considerable number of parents, especially those from disadvantaged and underprivileged communities still do not have access to parenting education.¹⁹

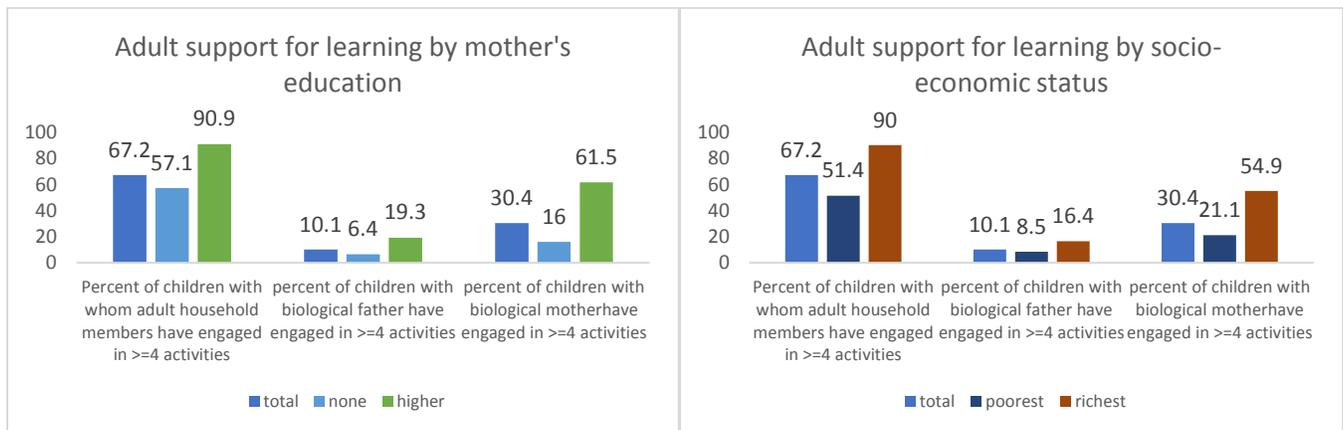
GoN can further explore three aspects in the design and roll-out of parental education programs in the coming years. First is to embed parental education related to ECED in adult literacy, income generation and skills training programs. Apart from raising awareness of ECED services, the curriculum should also cover practical knowledge that helps parents meet the needs of young children, such as nutrition, health, sanitation, immunization, parental love, respect and care, play, and other motor requirements. Second is to build and leverage the relationship between family and community to engage parents ongoingly. For instance, according to UNICEF evaluation report, some community-based ECE centers managed to work with parents by establishing savings funds for children. Finally, it is important to strengthen the capacity of school management committees (SMCs) and parent teacher associations (PTAs).

Figure 4.1. Parents’ awareness and support of ECE is lacking, and are particularly inadequate in poorer households

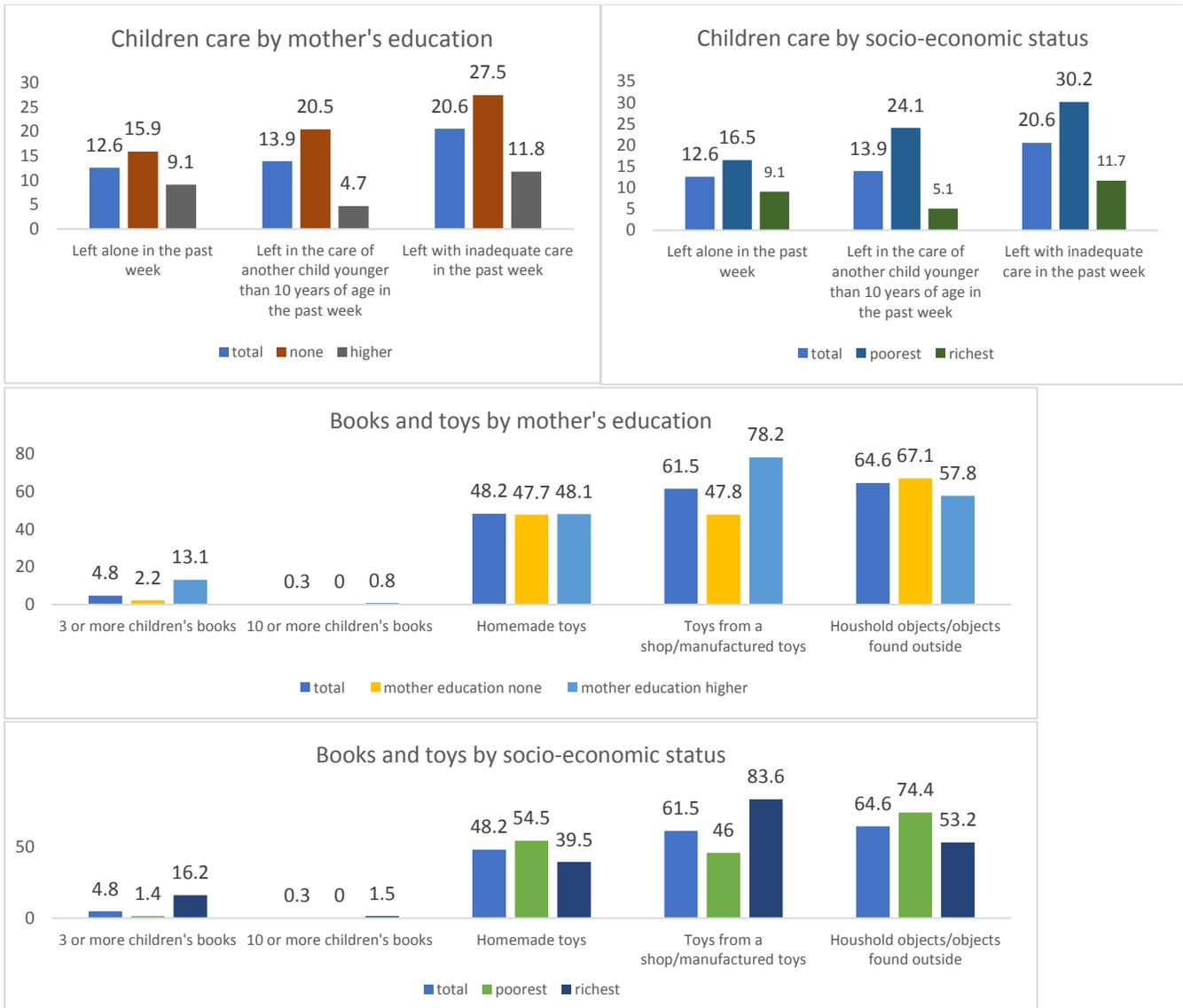


Source: UNICEF MICS 2014.

Figure 4.2. Parents’ awareness and support of ECED is lacking, and varies by mother’s education and family’s socioeconomic status



¹⁹ Seto Gurans NCDS 2015.



Source: MISC 2014.

4.2 On the supply side, it is important to train, incentivize and create a pipeline of qualified ECE facilitators

Facilitators need to be properly trained to ensure teaching quality. SSDP's key strategies to improve the quality of ECED include (i) increase in the minimum qualification level of ECED/PPE facilitators to grade 10 and (ii) increase number of facilitators having at least one-month training. In line with the strategy, new ECED/PPE facilitators are required to have the minimum qualification of grade 10 and ECED customized teachers training curriculum has been released in 2018, which was developed as a refresher curriculum targeting teachers who have already taken the basic ECED training in the past. However, the percentage of facilitators with one-month training is only 10.4% in 2018/19²⁰, still a long way towards SSDP's 5-year target (to 2020/21) of 97%.

Furthermore, trainings are often too short or irregular to provide adequate support for facilitators. According to the UNICEF evaluation report, most of trained facilitators have attended only short courses. The recently launched

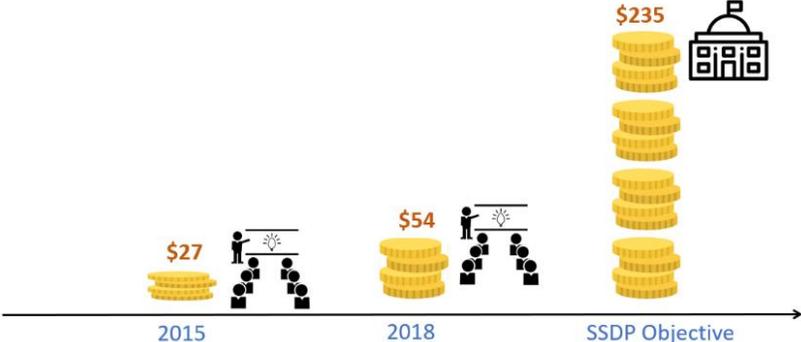
²⁰ Government of Nepal 2019. ECED facilitators are paid NPR 6,000/month, 45% of the prevailing minimum wage (NPR 13,450/month).

refresher training programs for trained facilitators only last for 5 days in total, and they only take place once or twice a year.²¹ The intensity of facilitator training is not adequate for facilitators to develop productive competencies.

Facilitators are not equipped with appropriate pedagogy to deliver on the established Early Learning and Development Standards. The pedagogical practices were found to be more academic. This is particularly true in school-based and private ECD centers where facilitators prefer using books and printed materials and reciting content.²² Such classroom-based teaching methods are often against the children-friendly approach. Even though the ECED curriculum emphasizes the child-centered approach, many facilitators are not yet ready to implement the government curriculum in practice.

Low remuneration leads to low retention and demoralizes facilitators. Facilitators are under-paid and only few schools and local governments are reported to supplement official salaries of facilitators.²³ Retention is a problem as facilitators looked for better opportunities. In school-based ECD centers, more qualified facilitators also tend to teach higher grade students often with a wish of being promoted to teach at a higher grade at the same school. This can reduce care for their own ECED classes. To increase facilitator supply, SSDP also plans to incorporate ECED in the curriculum of Grade 9 graduates, but this is yet to be done. Facilitators also lacks motivation to put in more effort. In the absence of ECED facilitators, often community-based ECD centers are closed, leaving children uncared. Although in similar situation school-based center can fill teachers from higher grades, substitute teachers lack the content knowledge or pedagogical skills for ECED. To address the issue SSDP has put aligning facilitators remuneration with grade 10 level government employees as one of its goals, and the result is yet to be seen.

Figure 4.3. Monthly salary of ECED facilitators is far from SSDP objectives



Source: SSDP Program Implementation Manual (2015, 2018), SSDP (2017)

4.3 New interventions call for more resources and better coordination

ECED sector in Nepal calls for more resources in overall government education planning. As figure 6 shows, Nepal’s government expenditure in pre-primary education as a percentage of GDP is 0.06%, which is significantly lower than the corresponding expenditure in countries such as Mongolia, Vietnam, and Thailand, as well as the minimum standard of 1% of GDP to ensure quality ECED services. Nepal is lagging far behind the three countries in the share of pre-primary education expenditure of total government expenditure, only slightly higher than India

²¹ 2018 Nepal: Evaluation of the National Early childhood Development Program.

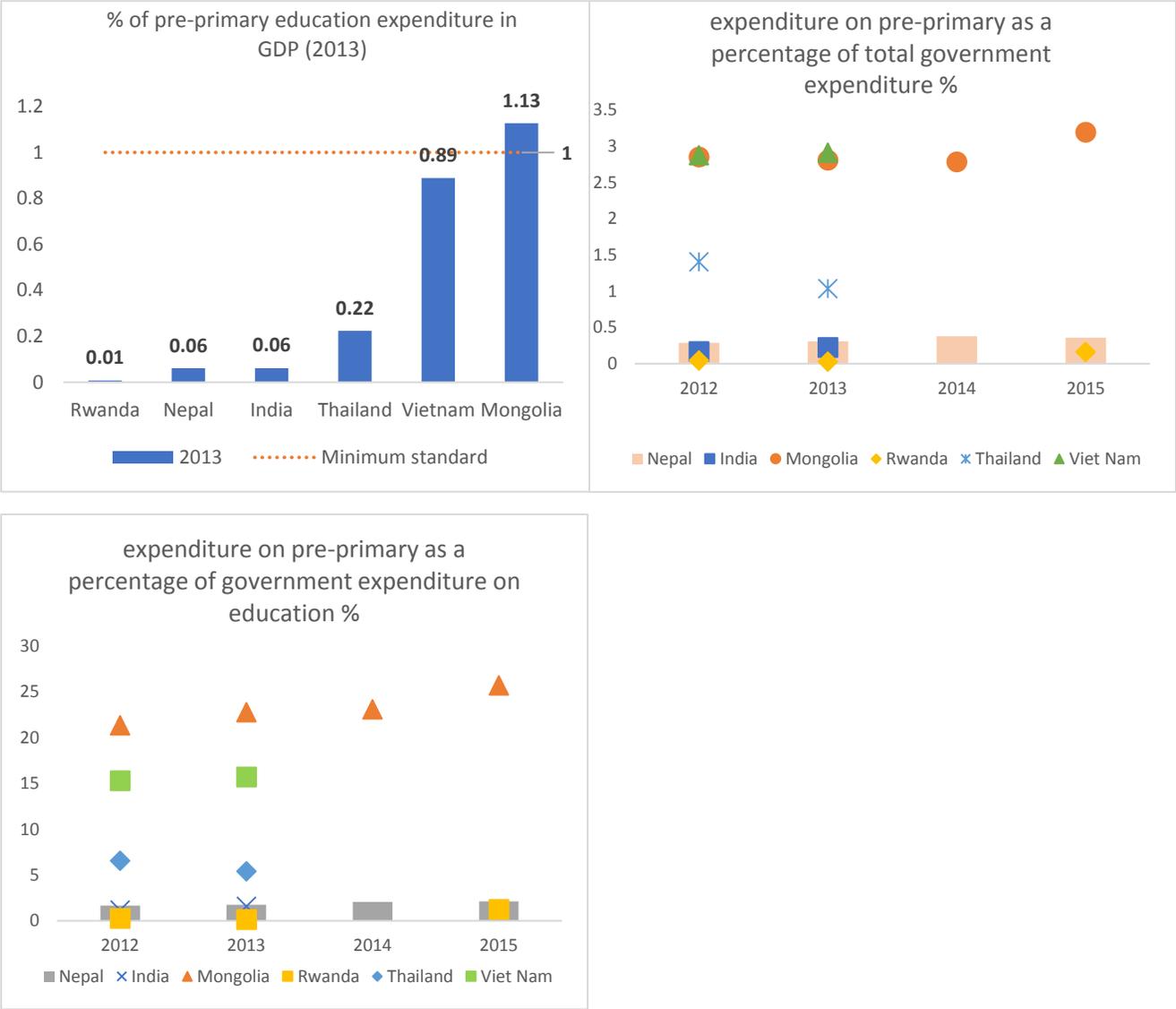
<https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_103315.html>

²² ibid

²³ Gómez Fernández, R. 2018.

and Rwanda. Nepal is performing worse than these high spending countries in almost all domains of early childhood development index, indicating that its ECED sector is not getting adequate resources for quality service delivery. Nepal is also at the bottom of all countries in share of government pre-primary expenditure in education expenditure. In 2015 the country’s pre-primary education expenditure consists only 2.1% of total education expenditure, in stark contrast with Mongolia (26%). ECED expenditure only consists 3.8% of total SSDP expenditure in 2018, while basic and secondary education consists 54.7% and 25.4% respectively.

Figure 4.4: GoN’s investment in ECED compared with other countries



Source: UIS

4.4 New interventions also need a strengthened M&E system

Nepal does not have a comprehensive M&E system to track children’s needs and intervene where needed. There is no formal mechanism to report monitoring findings to higher level education officers or any other body.²⁴ In the

²⁴ UNICEF 2018.

pre-federal structure District Education Office staff, Resource Persons, or the SMCs were involved in monitoring activities, however, these do not appear to be structured or regularly implemented across districts. There are no clear guidelines for the head teachers for the monitoring, and they are also not keen on monitoring facilitator's performances, as they were conscious that the facilitators were severely under-paid. Quality standards such as national minimum standards for ECD and ELDS have been established but yet to be enforced. Monitoring on the recruitment and performance of facilitators is often absent.

GoN also needs to systematically collect data to inform ECED policy making. Although administrative and survey data are collected regarding ECD programs (enrolment, usage, nutrition, and health), accurate data are not collected for ECD centers and their activities, which include facilitator training, awareness raising, stakeholder orientation, ECD messages on nutrition, etc.

To improve on this front, GoN can consider mobilizing the head teachers in monitoring the recruitment and performance of ECED facilitators on a regular basis. In addition, more in-depth data collection at the ECEC/PPC level will be useful to inform policy making. Specific tools that focus on the quality aspects of ECED such as Measuring Early Learning Quality and Outcomes (MELQO), ELDS or other similar fit-for-purpose tool can be incorporated in M&E as well.

4.5 The ongoing federalism restructuring poses both challenges and opportunities to the ECED sector

The ongoing federalism restructuring presents a historic chance that empowers the local governments to deliver quality ECED services. The 2015/16 Education Sector Analysis (ESA) identified the introduction of a federal system as a major imperative for increasing equity, quality, and efficiency in the education sector. These findings were echoed by a World Bank study that showed strong support for federalism at the frontlines.²⁵ Majority of head teachers and teachers believe that under federalism LGs will be more accountable and improve education quality.²⁶

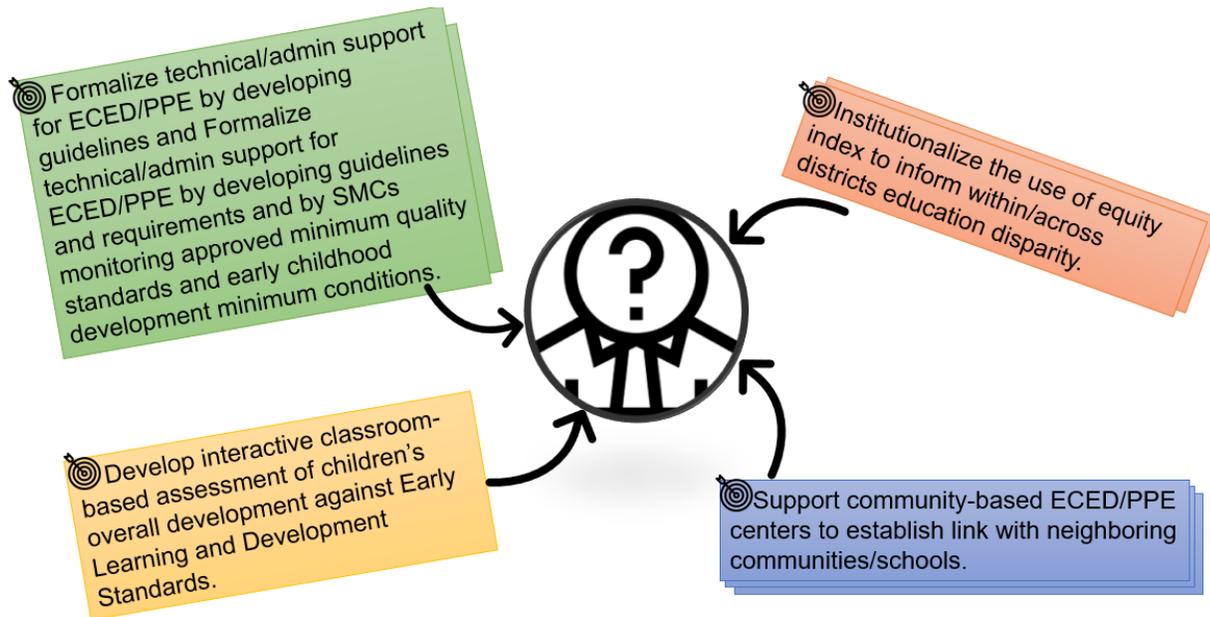
Whether the federal transition improves education delivery depends on LG-level capacity and governance systems. There is the risk of short- to medium-term disruptions to education service delivery as systems get reconfigured. Since the federal system is in its formative stage, there has been delays in clarifying roles and responsibilities across agencies and in deputation/recruitment of education officials to province and local levels. These disruptions could have long term consequences for children.

Indeed, SSDP implementation framework regarding ECED is vaguely stated in light of federalism. First, certain objectives and interventions planned under SSDP have no clearly defined actors and actual implementation plan. Examples include formalize technical/administrative support for ECED/PPE by developing guidelines and requirements and by SMCs monitoring approved minimum quality standards and early childhood development minimum conditions; develop interactive classroom-based assessment of children's overall development against ELDS; support community-based ECED/PPE centers to establish link with neighboring communities/schools; develop incentives for ECED/PPE teachers by aligning their remuneration with grade 10 level government employees and develop career paths with specification for different levels, etc. **Second, SSDP task allocation has been unclear within federal and local level.** For instance, how will the provincial governments and the transitional district units be specifically involved in different interventions and activities are not clear. **Third, in the absence of clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities, there is potential for overlapping responsibilities and duplication of efforts between agencies and the different tiers of the government.**

²⁵ World Bank 2018.

²⁶ World Bank 2019.

Figure 4.5. Certain SSDP objectives are pending to be clearly designated to specific policy actors and translated to concrete implementation plan



Source: Authors' compilation.

The tremendous heterogeneity across LGs on capacity and governance can create or deepen existing inequities. Capabilities of local government/leader and capacity of local personnel to absorb the new jurisdiction vary greatly. Local bodies that are not fully prepared have higher political and governance risks including corruption, local elite capture, inadequate transparency in funds allocation, distribution, and use, which posts challenges to effective program implementation and sustainability.

Under federalism the local leaders may prioritize political pressure over technical needs. The misaligned incentive of service delivery at the LG level can create inefficiency and inequity. In a World Bank conducted survey on federalism, head teachers were relatively more optimistic about timely delivery of school funds that are more 'politically visible' such as textbooks and teacher salaries than for funds that only some students receive (scholarship grants) or funds that are discretionary (school renovation grants). Focus group discussions with head teachers also indicated some political economy concerns due to increased clientelism and vulnerability of education delivery to political infighting.²⁷ Besides, there are worries about inadequate support for marginalized groups such as migrant children since they are non-voters' children.²⁸

Linguistic diversity also presents challenges for Nepal's under-resourced education system in the context of fiscal decentralization. The medium of instructions in most schools is Nepali, but many educationists and some political groups have advocated that education should be provided to children in their mother tongues. The Constitution also provisions for education in mother tongue up to the secondary level (Schedule 31). The movement to federalism might give this fresh impetus. This particularly will create language barriers to Type 3 schools where learners are from diverse language backgrounds with no common mother tongue on entry to pre-primary education. However, in practice, there is an increasing trend of community schools starting into English as a medium of instruction due to strong demand for English-medium teaching from parents. However, most

²⁷ WB SSDP project appraisal document.

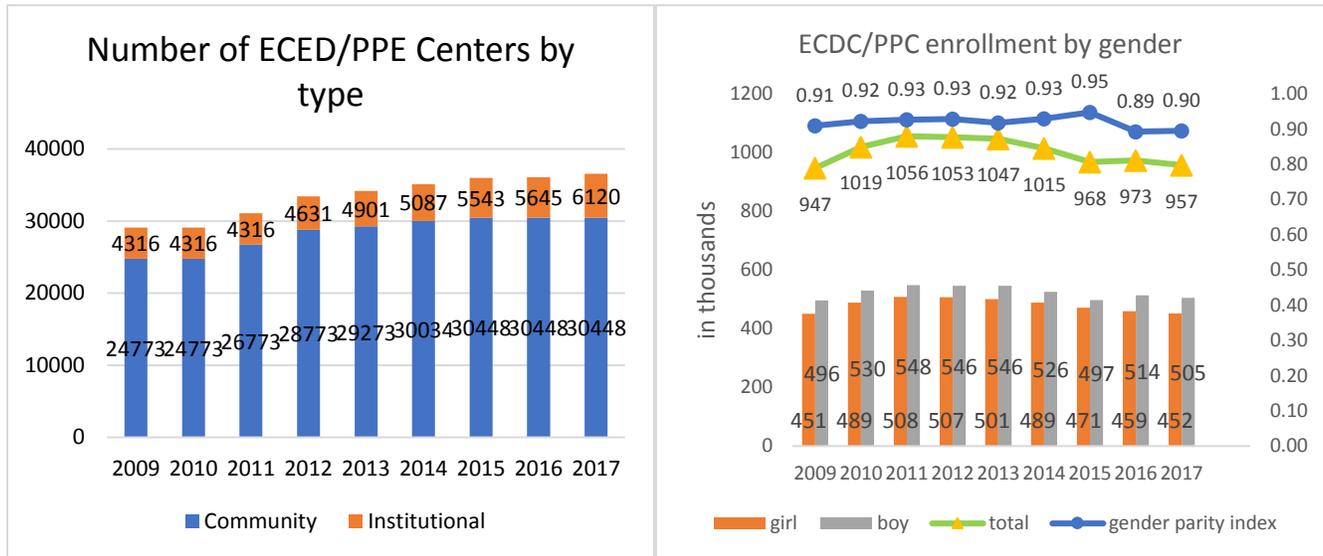
²⁸ World Bank 2019.

community schools are not resourced in teachers of teaching and learning materials to deliver curriculum in English, and affordability of private ECED Centers creates access barriers.

5. Conclusion

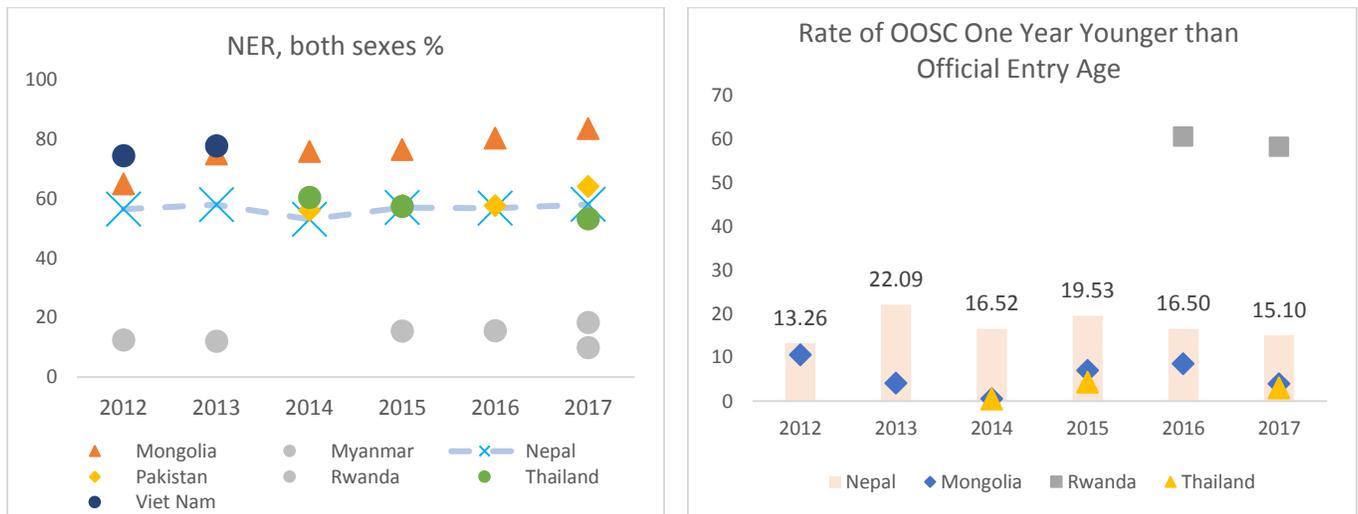
The diagnostic suggests that the GoN has paid increasing attention to ECED in its national policy framework, with which the provision of ECED services has gradually improved. Despite the progress, universal access to quality ECED services is still a distant goal. On the demand side, Nepal needs to invest more in parenting education programs to increase parent's awareness and engagement in ECED. On the supply side, Nepal needs to train, incentivize and retain qualified ECED facilitators to ensure quality teaching and learning. Any intervention programs will need to pay due attention to the quality of intervention and be adequately financed and well-coordinated to succeed. A strengthened and dedicated M&E system is also needed to keep track of ECED outcomes and performances of key stakeholders.

Figure 6.1 Increased number of ECDC centers and enrollment over years



Source: Flash reports multiple years

Figure 6.2 Nepal has room to improve its ECED enrollment compared to countries such as Mongolia, Vietnam and Pakistan



Source: UIS

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