

# DALITS IN INDIA AND NEPAL: POLICY OPTIONS FOR IMPROVING SOCIAL INCLUSION IN EDUCATION

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**DALITS IN INDIA AND NEPAL:  
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IMPROVING SOCIAL  
INCLUSION IN EDUCATION**

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## List of Acronyms

AIN	Association of International/Non-Governmental Organizations
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EMIS	Education Management Information System
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
I/NGO	International/Non-Governmental Organization
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NEFA	Nepal Education For All
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NLSS	Nepal Living Standards Survey
NRs	Nepali Rupees
OBCs	Other Backward Classes
PTA	Parent–Teacher Association
RCHS	Reproductive and Child Health Survey
SC	Scheduled Castes
SMC	School Management Committee
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abiyan – Universalizing Primary Education
ST	Scheduled Tribes
SWC	Social Welfare Council
TRSE	Technical Review of School Education
UNICEF	United Nations Fund for Children



## Executive Summary

Dalits are a particular caste group found in South Asia, largely in Nepal and India, where the manifestation of their social exclusion is very similar. For Dalits (the term meaning down-trodden or oppressed), their status as ‘untouchables’ puts them at the heart of an insidious form of discrimination and social unacceptability.

In both Nepal and India, suffer educational disadvantage. In *Nepal*, Dalits are poorer than most other social groups.<sup>1</sup> In *India*, scheduled caste (SC) children remain disadvantaged across many social indicators. There has been a significant increase in overall literacy rates and school participation rates across the country since the early 1990s. Gender and social disparities have also declined with an overall increase in school attendance. However, disparities still exist. According to a UNICEF supported Baseline Survey in India, there are significant disparities in attendance rates and also learning achievements between children from scheduled caste and other castes. Dalits lag behind other social groups in terms of educational attainment in Nepal also.

Reasons for the exclusion of Dalits include insufficient education facilities, poor teaching methods and discriminatory attitudes towards Dalits by teachers and children of other caste groups. Limited and inequitable distribution of budget affects the poor (and thus many Dalits) more, and their exclusion from savings and credit schemes has further increased their poverty. Additional factors in Nepal have been the effects of the conflict and the fragmentation of the Dalit movement.

Governments of both Nepal and India have anti-discriminatory laws, the main problem being the lack of enforcement. Targeted financial allocations to districts in India with high numbers of scheduled caste children, and scholarships to Dalit children in Nepal and India, have been implemented. However coverage is an issue. The problem analysis shows that while certain universal measures are useful and necessary for enabling Dalit children to enrol and complete primary education, they are by no means sufficient. Dalits are not only disadvantaged by poverty, but also by social exclusion from civil and political processes, and other forms of social interaction. It is therefore helpful to place this group very firmly in a social exclusion framework in order to articulate their very special needs and to develop policies to meet them.

Based on relevant global evidence and the notion of *intentional* action by certain groups to limit opportunities for others, the paper concludes that three layers of policy options are needed: universal policies which might improve the enrolment and completion of Dalits and others; special measures for disadvantaged children; and particular special measures for Dalits which address the relational aspect of deprivation. Finally, one of the lessons from India has been that piecemeal approaches, which only address one element of exclusion, have limited success. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive approach which addresses all the barriers to access simultaneously.

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<sup>1</sup> Bennett, Lynn (2005). Caste and Ethnicity-based Inequality in Poverty Outcomes: A Preliminary Exploration of NLSS I & II. A presentation made on 12 May 2005.

## Resumen Ejecutivo

Los dalits o intocables son una casta especial que habita en Asia meridional, especialmente en el Nepal y la India, donde la manifestación de su exclusión social es muy parecida. Para los dalits (el término significa oprimido), su situación como “intocables” les convierte en las principales víctimas de una insidiosa forma de discriminación y de rechazo.

Tanto en el Nepal como en la India, sufren desventajas educativas. En el *Nepal*, los dalits son más pobres que el resto de los grupos sociales<sup>2</sup>. En la *India*, los niños de las castas reconocidas siguen desfavorecidos en relación a muchos indicadores sociales. Desde comienzos de los años 1990 se ha producido un aumento considerable en las tasas generales de alfabetización y la participación escolar en todo el país. Las disparidades de género y sociales también se han reducido, con un aumento general de la asistencia a la escuela. Sin embargo, siguen existiendo disparidades. Según una Encuesta de Referencia realizada en la India con apoyo de UNICEF, hay disparidades considerables en las tasas de asistencia y también en el nivel de aprendizaje entre los niños de las castas reconocidas y de otras castas.

Entre las razones que explican la exclusión de los dalits cabe citar la insuficiencia de establecimientos educativos, los métodos de enseñanza deficientes y las actitudes discriminatorias hacia los dalits por parte de los maestros y los niños de otras castas. Una distribución limitada y poco equitativa del presupuesto afecta más a los pobres (y por tanto más a los dalits), y su exclusión de los sistemas de ahorro y de crédito ha aumentado más su pobreza. Otros factores adicionales en el Nepal han sido los efectos del conflicto y la fragmentación del movimiento dalit.

Tanto los gobiernos del Nepal como de la India disponen de leyes contra la discriminación, pero el mayor problema es su aplicación. Se han puesto en práctica asignaciones financieras destinadas a distritos seleccionados en la India donde hay un número elevado de niños de castas reconocidas, y se han otorgado becas de estudio a niños dalit en el Nepal y la India. Sin embargo, persiste el tema de la cobertura. El análisis del problema indica que, aunque algunas medidas universales son útiles y necesarias para promover la matriculación y la terminación de la escuela primaria de los niños dalit, no son suficientes. Los dalits no solamente están desfavorecidos por la pobreza, sino también por la exclusión social de los procesos civiles y políticos, y de otras formas de interacción social. Será por tanto muy útil colocar a este grupo firmemente en un marco de exclusión social a fin de articular sus necesidades muy especiales y formular políticas destinadas a satisfacer estas necesidades.

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<sup>2</sup> Bennett, Lynn (2005). *Caste and Ethnicity-based Inequality in Poverty Outcomes: A Preliminary Exploration of NLSS I & II*. Una presentación realizada el 12 de mayo de 2005.

Sobre la base de pruebas pertinentes a escala mundial y la noción de la acción *intencional* de determinados grupos para limitar las oportunidades de otros, el documento llega a la conclusión de que se necesitan tres estratos en materia de opciones de política: políticas universales que puedan mejorar la matriculación de los dalits y otras personas, y la terminación de la enseñanza; medidas especiales para los niños desfavorecidos; y medidas especiales concretas para los dalits que aborden el aspecto relacional de la privación. Finalmente, una de las lecciones de la India ha sido que los enfoques fragmentarios, que solamente abordan un elemento de la exclusión, dan resultados limitados. Por tanto, se necesita un enfoque amplio que aborde simultáneamente todos los obstáculos al acceso.

## Résumé Analytique

Les Dalits sont une caste particulière que l'on trouve en Asie du Sud, et plus particulièrement en Inde et au Népal, où leur exclusion sociale se manifeste de manière très similaire. Pour les Dalits (le terme signifie « écrasés » ou « opprimés »), leur statut d'« intouchables » les place au cœur d'une forme insidieuse de discrimination et d'exclusion sociale.

Au Népal comme en Inde, ils sont désavantagés dans le secteur de l'éducation. Au *Népal*, les Dalits sont plus pauvres que la plupart des autres groupes sociaux<sup>3</sup>. En *Inde*, les enfants de la caste déshéritée sont défavorisés selon de nombreux indicateurs sociaux. Un accroissement significatif des taux généraux d'alphabétisation et de participation scolaire a été constaté dans le pays entier depuis le début des années 1990. Bien que les disparités sexospécifiques et sociales aient également diminué avec l'accroissement général du taux de fréquentation scolaire, elles subsistent. Selon une enquête témoin réalisée en Inde avec le soutien de l'UNICEF, il en existe de substantielles dans les taux d'assiduité et dans les résultats scolaires entre les enfants de la classe déshéritée et les autres. Les Dalits sont aussi à la traîne des résultats scolaires par rapport à d'autres groupes sociaux au Népal.

Figurent au nombre des causes d'exclusion des Dalits les installations scolaires inadaptées, les mauvaises méthodes pédagogiques et l'attitude discriminatoire des enseignants et des enfants d'autres castes envers eux. La répartition limitée et inéquitable du budget touche davantage les pauvres (donc de nombreux Dalits), et leur exclusion des plans d'épargne et de crédit ont fait augmenter leur pauvreté encore davantage. Autres facteurs au Népal, les effets du conflit et la fragmentation du mouvement dalit.

Les Gouvernements du Népal comme de l'Inde ont des lois anti-discriminatoires, le problème étant qu'elles ne sont pas appliquées. En Inde, on a ciblé les affectations budgétaires dans des districts où demeure un nombre élevé d'enfants de la caste déshéritée, ainsi que des bourses au Népal et en Inde aux enfants dalits. Toutefois, la couverture est un problème, et son analyse montre que bien que certaines mesures universelles soient utiles et nécessaires aux enfants dalits qui peuvent ainsi s'inscrire aux études primaires et les achever, elles ne sont nullement suffisantes. Les Dalits ne sont pas seulement désavantagés par la pauvreté, mais aussi par l'exclusion sociale des procédures civiles et politiques ainsi que d'autres formes d'interaction sociale. Il est donc utile de placer résolument ce groupe dans le cadre conceptuel de l'exclusion sociale afin de pouvoir exprimer les besoins très spéciaux qui sont les leurs et de mettre sur pied des politiques pour y répondre.

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<sup>3</sup> Bennett, Lynn (2005). Caste and Ethnicity-based Inequality in Poverty Outcomes: A Preliminary Exploration of NLSS I & II. Présentation effectuée le 12 mai 2005.

Se fondant sur des faits au niveau mondial et sur la notion d'action *intentionnelle* de certains groupes désireux de limiter les chances d'autres groupes, ce rapport conclut que trois niveaux d'options stratégiques sont requises : des politiques universelles qui pourraient améliorer la scolarisation des Dalits et d'autres groupes ainsi que le taux d'achèvement de leurs études, des mesures spéciales pour les enfants défavorisés, et des mesures particulières appliquées spécialement aux Dalits, qui abordent l'aspect relationnel de la privation. Enfin, une des leçons tirées de l'expérience indienne est que les approches au coup par coup, qui ne font qu'aborder un seul élément de l'exclusion, ont un succès limité. Il faut donc trouver une approche globale qui s'attaque simultanément à tous les obstacles.



# 1. Introduction

Dalits are a particular caste group found in South Asia, largely in Nepal and India, where the manifestation of their social exclusion is very similar. Despite certain measures, the issues surrounding Dalits are still embedded deep in the social structure and the psychology of both institutions and individuals. As the following problem analysis will show, Dalits in both countries are discriminated against and suffer educational disadvantage. The issue is a social one.

This paper examines how the educational opportunities of Dalit children in India and Nepal are affected by their caste status and sets out policy options for overcoming the impediments to their inclusion in education. The paper first sets out an analysis of the overall situation of Dalits in India and Nepal. This is followed by an analysis of the extent of social exclusion of Dalit children in education in India and Nepal. The response of both governments to address the social exclusion of Dalit children is then taken in up with an analysis of the effectiveness of these measures. The paper concludes with policy options for improved social inclusion of Dalit children in education.

The problem analysis is lengthy, in order to demonstrate adequately the depth and complexity of the issue.

## 2. Situation Analysis of Dalits in India and Nepal

### 2.1. The Situation of Dalits in India

Historically, the caste system classified people by their occupation and status. 'Each caste had a specific place in the hierarchy of social status' (Shah, 2006, p. 19). Although in 'scriptural terms' social and economic status were supposed to be separate, the economic and social status of the various castes tended to coincide (Shah, 2006). However, since the 19th century, the link between caste and occupation has become less rigid as it became easier for people to change occupations. This change has accelerated with the economic boom which has taken place in India since the early 1990s. There has not, however, been a corresponding fluidity in caste, as intermarriage is very rare. Privileged sections of society tend to be from 'upper castes' while the disadvantaged sections come from the so-called 'lower castes'. Caste 'can be seen as the institution that has been structuring and maintaining for centuries relations of power among different communities, and seeks to legitimize these power relations through systematically dispensing mixes of economic and cultural assets/opportunities and deprivations to different communities.'<sup>4</sup> Many have commented on the robustness of the caste system, 'which has survived in the South Asian societies in one form or the other, despite the fundamental ideological and structural changes that have occurred through the spread of religions like Islam and Christianity as well as of model secular and egalitarian ideologues, all opposed to the very idea of hierarchy based on inherited statuses.'<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Sheth, D.L. (2004). 'Caste, Ethnicity and Exclusion in South Asia: The Role of Affirmative Action Policies in Building Inclusive Societies', UN/HRD 2004 Regional Paper, Islamabad. p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

For Dalits (the term meaning down-trodden or oppressed), at the bottom of this hierarchical system, it is their status as ‘untouchables’ which puts them at the heart of an insidious form of discrimination. This particular phenomenon results in the social unacceptability amongst people of other castes to touch the same food and utensils, draw water from the same source, or enter the same temples.

The specific structure and hierarchy related to castes is specific to various states and regions in India, with only the highest caste, the Brahmins, consistently faring better throughout the country. Not only are there differences in the names of the various castes, but the hierarchy between them may also be different between regions. However, castes who traditionally suffered discrimination based on untouchability, which was an element of the caste system throughout India, have been identified, enumerated and incorporated in the ‘schedule’ of the Constitution. ‘The implicit criterion for inclusion in the Schedule Caste list is the social and religious disability suffered by a caste on account of untouchability, i.e. being at the pollution end of the social hierarchy.’<sup>6</sup> In defining who would be included in the Schedules, the government originally used the 1931 census report, and to a large extent duplicated a list created in 1936.<sup>7</sup> Currently, the National Commissions for Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) are vested with the responsibility of considering castes for inclusion or exclusion from the Schedule, which then needs to be ratified in Parliament. The discriminated communities are then officially designated as Scheduled Castes (SCs). Included in the SC category are communities from three different religions, Hinduism, Sikhism and Buddhism, all having within them communities traditionally suffering from untouchability. The term Dalit is the generally accepted term for the ‘ex-untouchables’, which corresponds to Scheduled Castes, which as mentioned above denotes the legal status as coined in the Constitution.

Mehrotra (2006) recognized that there has been political and social mobilization of SCs in India, particularly in certain poor states such as Uttar Pradesh (UP), which is one of the poorest states in India. However, this mobilization has failed to translate into positive change in the social sector for this excluded population. As Mehrotra wrote, ‘while UP’s mobilizers of the Dalits (SCs) have focused exclusively on capturing power, the gains to the lowest castes have been entirely of a symbolic nature.’<sup>8</sup>

## 2.2. The Situation of Dalits in Nepal

As in India, the term Dalit is a politically coined word meaning ‘the poor and the oppressed’ and is less sensitive than the meaning of ‘Harijan’ or ‘Acchhoot’ or so-called ‘untouchable’. The Nepal Legal Code of 1854, the Muluki Ain, formulated on the basis on Hindu Orthodoxy included five hierarchical categories. They are: i) Tagadhari (wearers of holy thread); ii) Non-enslavable alcohol drinkers (Namsinya matyali), iii) Enslavable alcohol drinkers; iv) Impure but touchable (Pane nachalnya, chhoi chittto hlno naparani); and v) Untouchable castes (pani nachalnya, choi chhito halnu parniya – caste from whom water is not acceptable and whose

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<sup>6</sup> Sheth, *op. cit.*, p.40.

<sup>7</sup> De Haan and Arjun (2005). ‘Social Policy: Towards Inclusive Institutions’, University of Guelph and Department for International Development, UK, Paper at the World Bank Conference ‘New Frontiers of Social Policy; Development in a Globalizing World’: December 12–15, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Mehrotra, Santosh (2006). *The Economics of Elementary Education in India: The Challenge of Public Finance, Private Provision and Household Cost*. Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi. p. 1.

touch requires sprinkling of holy water). It is believed that this caste hierarchy was influenced by political considerations and it was endorsed by state counsellors who were mostly from high castes. It is also accepted that the political ideology of Nepal as a Hindu state (which changed as of 2007 – Nepal has now been designated as a secular state) has remained highly exclusionary.

Despite the legal provisions, caste-based discrimination continues to be practised. Indeed, the Dalits themselves practise discrimination among their own group. Thus there are two kinds of ‘untouchabilities’: i) between upper caste and Dalits; and ii) within the Dalits. Dalit women and men suffer equally from the practice, but terai Dalits face more discrimination than those living in the hills.

Unlike in India, Nepal has no single defined schedule of castes. Different Dalit organizations such as the Dalit Vikas Sammtte formed in 1997 and the National Dalit Commission have identified different groups as belonging to the Dalit caste. As the list fluctuates, the numbers of the Dalit population also vary according to different sources. Estimates range from 12% to over 20%.<sup>9</sup> Lack of national consensus on the Dalit population is one of the factors hindering a better understanding of the magnitude of disparity and discrimination faced by the Dalit community.

The Dalit community in Nepal is also not homogenous. Dalits can be examined in three broad regional groups: i) dalits in the hill areas; ii) Dalits in the Newari community; and iii) Dalits in the terai areas. The practice of untouchability is more severe among the Madeshi community in the terai and in the hills of the Mid Western Region and Far Western Development regions of Nepal. Some Dalit groups fare better than others. For example, the literacy rate among the gaine (singers) is 49% and is higher than the national average. The lowest literacy rate is found among the Mushar community, who live in the terai. On most socio-economic indicators, Terai Dalits fare worse than hill Dalits.<sup>10</sup>

### **2.3. The Phenomenon of Untouchability**

In order to address the situation of Dalits, it is important to understand the phenomenon of ‘untouchability’. The Hindu version of untouchability also has a racial basis as the impure status is based on birth and religion. Bhattachan *et al.* (2002) listed a total of 205 existing practices of caste based discrimination which can be grouped into nine categories. They are: i) denial of entry into houses, restaurants, temples; ii) inability to perform important religious service because wearing a sacred thread is not permitted, etc.; iii) access to common resources such as using water from tap or pond used by upper caste is denied; iv) denial of participation in public activities or entry into public places such as religious functions, government functions; v) forced labour or discriminatory practice of labour; vi) dominant behaviour towards Dalits such as Jadau

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<sup>9</sup> National Dalit Commission (Bennett, 2006) has determined that 11.8% of the total population are Dalits. Quoting the same original source, Census 2001, the Vulnerable Communities Development Plan states that Dalits constitute 16% of the total population. ‘State of the Rights of the Child in Nepal’, a 2004 report by a child rights NGO, Child Workers in Nepal (CWIN), reviewed by the UN CRC Committee in 2005, also states that Dalits constitute 16% of the total population (p. 8). According to the Human Rights Watch Group (2004), some NGOs estimate the Dalit population to be 21% of Nepal’s population. Centre for Human Rights and Global Justice (2005) ‘Missing Piece of the Puzzle’ estimates Dalits ‘comprise over 20 per cent of Nepal’s population’ (p. 7). Reasons for the differences are: (a) surveys or studies use different definitions/categorizations of Dalits, that may include or exclude groups; for example, the Newar Dalits are counted under ‘Newar’, not ‘Dalit’ in the Census; (b) many Dalit family names are similar to those of other groups resulting in miscategorization; (c) respondents themselves do not want to be identified as Dalits. According to TSRE (2005), 15% are Dalits (under secondary), p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Bennett (2006).

system (practice of obeisance); vii) atrocities such as more rape cases among Dalit women than others; viii) social boycott – if a ‘high caste hindu’ member marries with a Dalit of either sex, he or she is banned from the society; ix) Attitudinal untouchability such as if one sees a kami (blacksmith) early in the morning it is considered inauspicious, or if there is a Dalit teacher then children of high caste groups will not attend the school.<sup>11</sup>

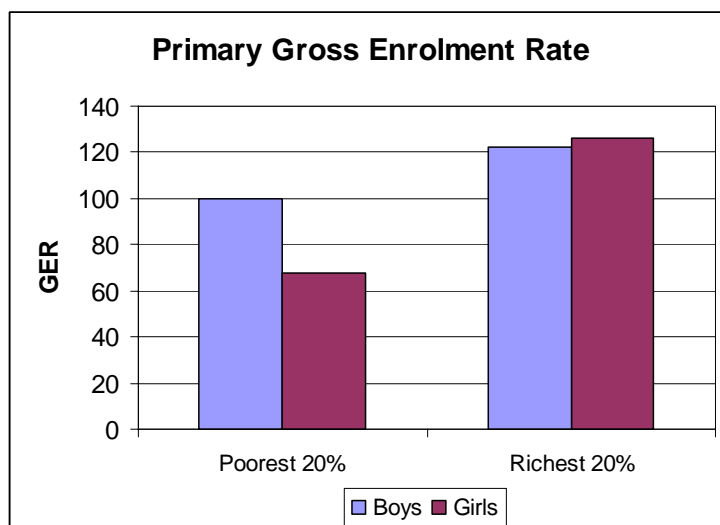
## 2.4. Multiple, Overlapping Disparities and Discrimination

These affect Dalits in various spheres of life, including in education.

### Poverty

In *Nepal*, Dalits are poorer than most other social groups. While the proportion of the population below the national poverty line is 31% nationally, 47% of Dalits live below the national poverty line.<sup>12</sup> Eighty-six per cent of Dalit households have an income lower than the national average.<sup>13</sup> Multiple regression analysis of Nepal Living Standards Survey (NLSS) II data also found: a) per capita consumption of Dalit households is about 46% lower than that of the Brahmin and Chettri (the highest Hindu caste groups); and b) the ‘social penalty’ for being a Dalit translates to Rs. 4,853 (or US\$ 67) less per capita consumption.<sup>14</sup> Since the average national consumption per capita is Rs.15,484, this difference is significant.

NLSS II also found that poor families are less likely to enrol their children, particularly girls, in primary school.



<sup>11</sup> Bhattachan *et al.* (2002).

<sup>12</sup> Bennett, Lynn (2006). *Unequal Citizens: Gender, Caste and Ethnic Exclusion in Nepal*. DFID/World Bank. Figure 7, p. 18. Based on analysis of NLSS II by Kishor P. Gajurel.

<sup>13</sup> Bennett, Lynn (2005). *Caste and Ethnicity-based Inequality in Poverty Outcomes: A Preliminary Exploration of NLSS I & II*. A presentation made on 12 May 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Bennett (2006), *op. cit.*

Poorer families have less to spend on their children’s education. Families in the poorest quintile spend NRs 416 per family on education compared with NRs 8,691 for the richest quintile.<sup>15</sup> Most schools in Nepal rely on families to provide stationery, uniforms and many schools charge exam or registration fees.

Child labour is prevalent among poor families, although employment of children under 14 years as labourers is prohibited by the Child Act 1991. NLSS II found that the proportion of children aged 5–14 who are working and not attending school is highest among the poor (21% in the poorest quintile) and decreases for the richer quintiles.<sup>16</sup> The opportunity costs of schooling for poor families is significant.

Many Dalit families also make a precarious livelihood, earning their income in the informal sector,<sup>17</sup> through daily wage labour, often involving seasonal migration.<sup>18</sup> This insecurity deters families from making longer term investments by educating their children.

In *India*, scheduled caste (SC) children remain disadvantaged across many social indicators. Estimates from the 2000 National Sample Survey suggest that SC ‘constituted 20 per cent of the rural population, but 38 per cent of the poor.’<sup>19</sup> Table 1 shows that as an average for India, 27.09% of the population live below the poverty line in rural areas compared with 36.25% of the SC population, and 23.62% in urban areas compared with 38.47% of the SC population. Furthermore, after holding a variety of individual and household characteristics constant (including such as education, occupation, age and gender of the head of the household), as will be discussed later in this paper, Kabeer notes that the SCs were still 19 per cent more likely to be poor than the rest of the population.<sup>20</sup>

**Table 1 Population below poverty line in India, SC and ST (NSSO, 1999/00)**

Population below poverty line (%)	India	SCs	STs
Rural Areas	27.09	36.25	45.86
Urban areas	23.62	38.47	34.75

Source: National Sample Survey Organization

## Conflict

The internal conflict in *Nepal*, which expanded in scope and intensity from 1996, affected education and children in many ways, including accelerating the trend of migration (due either to security concerns or difficulties in maintaining livelihood). Family migration to urban centres may disrupt or end children’s schooling for financial reasons, because of difficulties in finding places in crowded urban schools, particularly in the middle of a school year, or children not

<sup>15</sup> According to NLSS II, household spending on education in the poorest quintile is 1.3% compared with 4.8% in the richest quintile. Annual household consumption for the poorest 20% households is NRs. 32,028 and for the richest Rs 181,064.

<sup>16</sup> NLSS II, volume II, page 53, Table 12.7.

<sup>17</sup> The Informal Economy & Workers in Nepal. ILO. Decent Work for all Women and Men in Nepal, Series 3. 2004. p. 21.

<sup>18</sup> Seasonal Labour Migration in Rural Nepal: A Preliminary Overview, Gerard J. Gill, Overseas Development Institute Working Paper 218.

<sup>19</sup> Kabeer, Naila (March, 2006) ‘Social Exclusion and the MDGs: The Challenge of “Durable Inequalities” in the Asian Context’, Institute of Development Studies, paper presented at the Asia 2015 Conference. p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

being able to keep up with the classes as the quality of teaching is poorer in rural areas. Lack of official documents, such as transfer or birth registration documents, can also present an obstacle when transferring to a new school. Migration of male family members may increase the work burden of the remaining members, particularly women, resulting in children being pulled out of school to take on their share of the burden. Children may also be sent away for fear of being arrested, tortured, abducted or recruited by the army, police or Maoist forces.<sup>21</sup>

The precise impact of the conflict on Dalit children and their schooling is unknown, but it would be safe to assume that they are more affected due to their lower socio-economic position in society.<sup>22</sup> For example, a study by the Central Child Welfare Board and Save the Children Alliance found that one third of the 17,583 children found to be leaving Nepal for India during a three month period (July–October 2004) were Dalits.<sup>23</sup> They were the largest group, followed by Chhetris and Brahmins, who together only constitute 33 per cent of the total population. Despite the progress towards peace in Nepal, issues still exist. Demonstrations by new groups continue to result in closure of schools, and previous dynamics at district level have not yet ceased entirely.

## Gender

Since the Dalit society is also systematically integrated in the patriarchal mode of the Hindu caste system, in *Nepal*, the social and economic status of women is much lower than that of men. This is manifested in the lower health and nutritional status of Dalit women, as well as in the political representation of Dalit women, which is negligible.<sup>24</sup> However, as compared with the high caste women, Dalit women have greater mobility. This is due to the economic need to go out and seek for employment and income for their families.

Data on literacy rates show the gender disparity among Dalits. Whereas 44% of Dalit men are literate, only 24% of Dalit women reported they could read and write a simple sentence.<sup>25</sup> Terai Dalits have lower literacy rates than hill Dalits. Poverty affects schooling for girls more than for boys. The gender gap in enrolment is bigger in poorer households than in richer households.

**Table 2 Distribution of ever-married women aged 15–49 who are illiterate: UP, Tamil Nadu and India (NFHS, 1998/99)**

	Tamil Nadu	Uttar Pradesh	India
SC	64.1	85.0	73.0
Others	5.0	57.2	43.8

In *India*, the literacy rates of women, SC and ST continue to be below average. Table 2 shows the percentage of the ever-married women by caste who are illiterate in India, and in two selected states: Uttar Pradesh, which is one of the

most disadvantaged; and Tamil Nadu, which is among the most advantaged states in India. One

<sup>21</sup> Source: UNICEF Situation Analysis 2006. Interviews with conflict-displaced children in Kathmandu, unpublished, February 2006. Amnesty International (2005), *Nepal: Children Caught in the Conflict. Rewrite the Future: Education for Children in Conflict Affected Countries*. Save the Children Alliance, 2006.

<sup>22</sup> It should, however, be noted that the Maoist policy is to promote the abolishment of the Hindu caste system, and promoting the concerns of the lower caste groups. It is not known what proportion of the Maoist supporters are Dalits.

<sup>23</sup> *An Increasing Wave: Migration of Nepalese Children to India in the Context of Nepal's Armed Conflict. A Research Report prepared jointly with the Central Child Welfare Board and Save the Children Alliance*. 2005.

<sup>24</sup> Bennett (2006), *op. cit.*; Acharya (2005).

<sup>25</sup> Acharya Annex 4.1, based on Census 2001. 34% of Dalits above 6 yrs + are literate, compared with the national average of 54%.

can see that there is a significant difference in the level of illiteracy in the two states among all the castes, therefore confirming the significance of disparities between regions in India. However, SC ever-married women were disadvantaged in both states, with 85% of SC women illiterate compared with 57.2% of other higher castes in Uttar Pradesh, and 64.1% of SC women in Tamil Nadu compared with 5.0% of higher castes.

Dalit women have to face three pronged discrimination – they are women, they are Dalits and then they are Dalit women.

### **3. Problem Analysis**

#### **3.1. Education in India and the Extent of Social Exclusion of Dalit Children**

There has been a significant increase in overall literacy rates and school participation rates across the country since the early 1990s. Gender and social disparities have also declined with an overall increase in school attendance. This is confirmed by the data from various sources including the National Family Health Survey II (1998/99), Reproductive and Child Health Survey 2002–04, the 2001 Census and routine monitoring information from the Department of Education. The country is approaching near universalization of enrolment at the primary stage. The Gross Enrolment Rate has increased from 90% in 2003–04 to 98% in 2004–05. Similarly, the net enrolment rate has risen from 72% to 82% during the same period (Department of Education, 2006) A number of factors have contributed to the rising enrolment rate, including the introduction of midday meals, opening of alternate schools, promoting the participation of Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and massive enrolment drives.

While enrolment and attendance in primary school has increased, the quality of education remains a major concern. Little emphasis has been placed on making education more relevant and activity-based, and child-centred learning arrangements are still very weak. There are many situations where children mechanically go through five years of primary education and emerge barely literate, leading to community apathy towards schooling. The poor quality of education is reflected in the continuing low level of completion rates of primary school. The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) and National Family Health Survey (NFHS) collected data on the 'level of education completed', whereas the Reproductive Child Health Survey (RCHS) provided data on the years of education completed. The length of primary education is also defined differently in different states of India with some states having 5 years of primary education and others having 4 years. Hence in some states the completion rate is calculated for the 9–11 years age group while in others it is with the 10–12 years of age group. Table 3 indicates that, based on the RCHS II (2002–04), 37.8% of children in the 10–12 years age group have completed at least 5 years of schooling.

Disparities in primary education can be seen between children from different castes, economic groups, sex, rural and urban, certain characteristics of households and between the different regions in India. These different forms of deprivation do not work in isolation. The most disadvantaged children would suffer from multiple forms of exclusion and disadvantages, including for example being from the Scheduled Castes (SC), girls, poor, living in a poor and/or remote location, etc. It is therefore important to acknowledge the multiplicity of deprivations and

**Table 3: Percentage of children completing primary school (various sources)**

Survey	% Completed
NSS 52 (1995–96)	32.8
NSS 55 (1999–00)	36.8
NFHS II (1998–99)	37.7
RCHS II (2002–04)	37.8

the interrelationship between them. This paper, however, will focus on the social exclusion of SC children as one key aspect of disparities between children in primary education in India.

Using completion rates of five years of schooling as a key indicator of education status, Table 4 shows that SC population are disadvantaged when compared with Other Backward Classes (OBCs). It should also be noted that ST children are in some ways even more disadvantaged than SCs in terms of education status. Regarding the accessibility of the education system for ST children, issues such as the language of instruction, remoteness of their habitations, poverty and other factors are barriers to access for this disadvantaged group. While both SC and ST children are disadvantaged, the specific issues related to the social exclusion of SC children from primary education will be the focus of this paper. The tables below will continue to show ST children as a reference.

**Table 4 Completion rate of 10–12 years by caste (RCH 2002–04)**

Social Group	SC	ST	Others
Male	36.3	32.6	44.8
Female	32.3	26.6	44.1

Based on the National Family Health Survey of 1998/99, Table 5 shows that only 65.7% of SC children age 7–17 are currently attending school compared with 81.3% of higher caste groups. Furthermore, 20.8% of SC children never attended school compared with 7.6% of children from high castes.

**Table 5 Percentage of children age 7–17 by schooling outcomes (NFHS, 1998/99)**

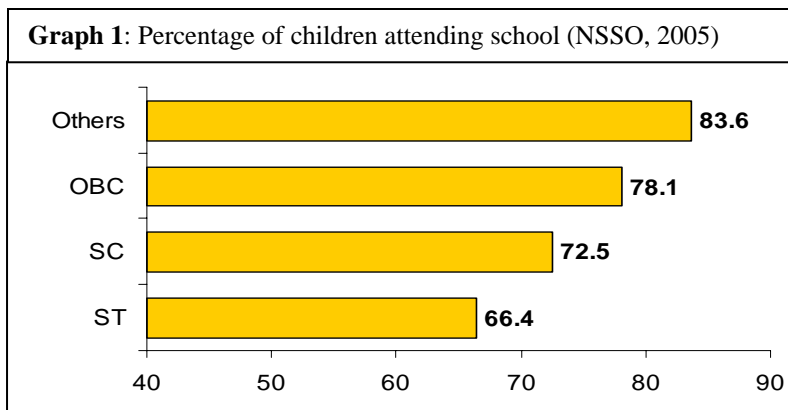
Caste/Religion of the household head	Never attended	Ever attended	
		Dropped out	Currently attending
Hindu SC	20.8	13.0	65.7
Hindu ST	29.7	13.9	56.3
Hindu other	7.6	10.6	81.3
Other	7.8	10.7	81.1

Using data from RCHS II for boys and girls, Table 6 indicates the disparities in rural areas between children from SC castes and also between the poorest 20% compared with the richest 20% of households. This survey defined economic status based on households' ownership of assets such as electric fan, radio/transistor, pressure cooker, telephone, bicycle, car, tractor and water pump among others. The table indicates that SC children are disadvantaged compared with children from other castes in each of the economic groups, but also that the economic status of the household is a very important discriminating factor in accessing education. The table also indicates that girls are disadvantaged compared with boys in the lower economic group, but less so in the higher economic group.

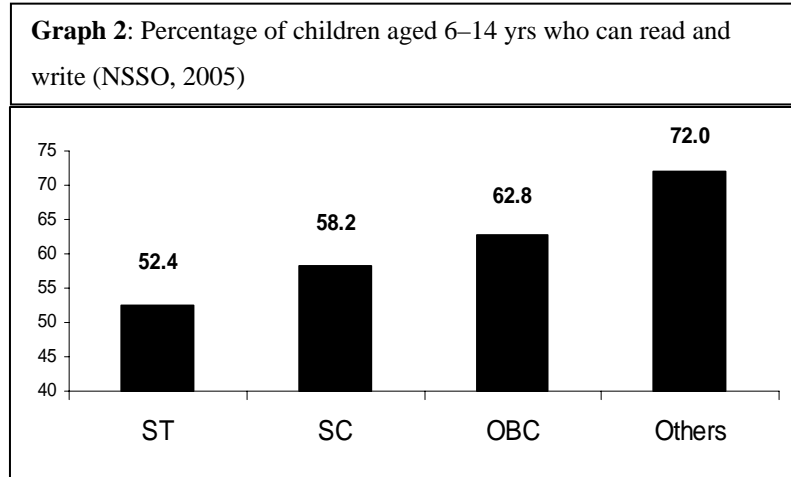
**Table 6 Percentage of children in the 10–12 years age group who have completed at least 5 years of schooling across economic groups and gender in rural areas (RCHS, 2002–04)**

Rural	Male			
	SC	ST	Other	Total
Poorest 20%	23.5	22.9	22.2	22.5
Richest 20%	50.0	56.9	54.2	52.9
	Female			
Poorest 20%	17.4	15.5	18.5	16.5
Richest 20%	52.5	45.4	55.1	53.0

According to a UNICEF supported Baseline Survey which was undertaken in 2005 by the National Sample Survey Organization in 43 districts in the country, there are significant disparities in attendance rates and also learning achievements between children from scheduled caste and other castes. Graph 1 indicates the percentage of children (6–14 years) attending school, which is 72.5% for SC compared with 83.6% for children from other castes. While beyond the scope of this paper, which is focused on social exclusion based on caste, it is interesting to note the even lower figure for children of scheduled tribes, which is 66.4%. As mentioned previously, this is an indication of the multiple disadvantages which tribal children face including poverty, remoteness and learning in another language.

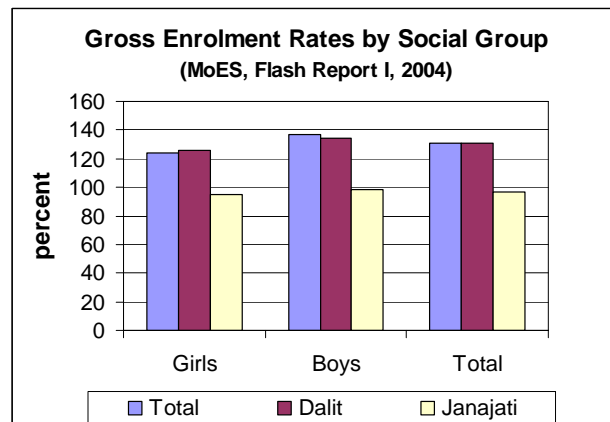


Graph 2 indicates the percentage of children who can read and write, disaggregated by caste (and also including the tribal children as reference). There is a difference between SC children and children from other castes in the percentage who can read and write, which is 58.2% compared with 72.0% respectively.



### 3.2. Education in Nepal and the Extent of Social Exclusion of Dalit Children

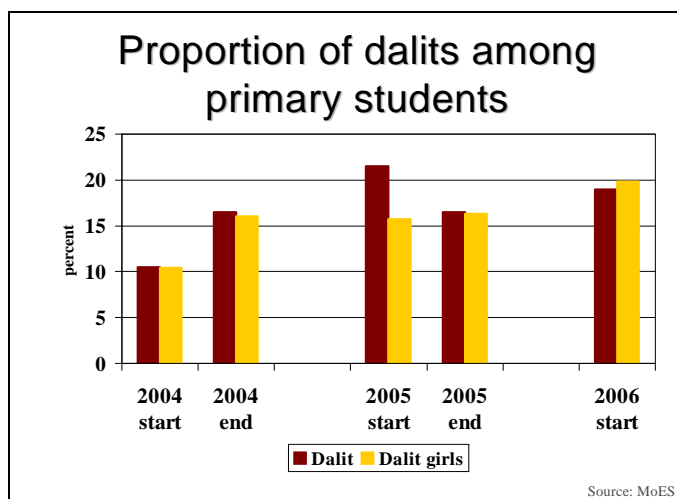
In Nepal, Dalits lag behind other social groups in terms of educational attainment. Whereas the national average for people 6 years and above who had never attended school is 44%, the figure was 76% for terai Dalits and 43% for hill Dalits.<sup>26</sup> These figures show that, historically, the Dalit community has had limited access to schooling. The figure of 30% is mentioned in various reports, but the source is unknown. Another analysis of NLSS II data finds a similar pattern that Dalit boys and girls are faring better than Muslim and Terai middle caste boys and girls in terms of schooling. Recent Ministry of Education data indicate a more promising trend, although there remain questions about data quality.<sup>27</sup> The only



<sup>26</sup> Bennett (2006). p. 29. Based on analysis of NLSS II 2003/04.

<sup>27</sup> Net enrolment rates calculated by the Ministry of Education and Sports are higher than net attendance rates from household surveys by about 10 percentage points on average. One report also suggests that enrolment of Dalits may be particularly inflated by education officials in order to pocket a portion of the Dalit scholarships (Dalit Welfare Organization Central Office 2006). In

published enrolment rates for Dalit children show that gross enrolment rates for Dalit children are the same as the national average at 131%. Disaggregated by sex, Dalit boys fare 2 percentage points lower than the national average, and Dalit girls are 2 percentage points above the national average.<sup>28</sup> Further evidence of the promising trend is that the proportion of Dalits among primary students has been increasing since 2004.



Despite this positive trend, completion is an issue and the data suggests that Dalit children who start school are less likely to complete the primary cycle than other students. Bennett reports that Dalits have the lowest completion rates for primary education (and account for less than 1% of the graduate population).

To date, there is no published primary completion rate or survival rate by caste. But one way to capture the trend is to compare the number of students for the first and last years of primary education. Grade 5 enrolment as a proportion of Grade 1 enrolment is lower for Dalit children compared with the national average. The Dalit girls do worse than Dalit boys. This suggests that Dalit children drop out or repeat more than other children, and that the problem is worse for Dalit girl students.<sup>29</sup>

*Figure 1 Percentage of Grade 5 students to Grade 1 students for academic year 2004/05*

	Girls	Boys	Total
<b>Start of school year</b>			
Dalit students	18%	47%	34%
All students	35%	38%	36%
<b>End of school year</b>			
Dalit students	18%	22%	20%
All students	33%	35%	34%

Secondly, Dalit students are also less likely to appear in year end exams compared with the

addition, not all schools submit reports so the Ministry data is adjusted for non-reporting schools (about 16 per cent at the beginning of school year 2005/06). The total number of private schools in Nepal is unknown, and it is estimated that only a small proportion of private schools submit reports to the Ministry.

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, Flash Report I, for school year 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, Flash Report 1 & 2 for school year 2004/05.

national average.<sup>30</sup> Since it is not possible to continue to the next grade without passing the year end exams, this would result in lower primary completion rates for Dalits. On the other hand, TSRE 2006 found that the retention rate<sup>31</sup> in Grade 1 for Dalit students in school year 2005/06 is comparable to that for other students. This could be a positive sign that Dalit children are increasingly staying on in school.

Dalit pass rates for Grade 5, the last year of primary education, for 2005 are marginally lower than the national average, but better than janjatis<sup>32</sup> (at least for girls). For 2004 data has not been published, but the Ministry of Education report notes that they are ‘almost the same’ for Grade 5.

From the above, we can conclude from the Ministry data that:

- In recent years, Dalit children are increasingly enrolling in primary school. The exact magnitude of the disparity between Dalit and non-Dalit children cannot be ascertained.
- Dalit children seem less likely to complete primary education, compared with other children.
- But the Dalit students who do remain in school until Grade 5 perform comparably, only marginally lower, than the national average.

In the subsequent sections, potential factors affecting enrolment and completion of primary education for Dalit children will be discussed.

### **3.3. Overt Discrimination**

#### **3.3.1. Factors related to the education system/sector**

##### **Education systems are growing, but not fast enough to meet the needs**

In *Nepal*, at least 800,000 children of primary school going age are estimated to be out of school.<sup>33</sup> However, the education system is already stretched and lacks capacity to accommodate these out-of-school children. Between 1990 and 2005, the number of primary school students increased by a factor of 1.6, but the number of schools increased by 1.5, and number of teachers by 1.3. As a result, the student–teacher ratio grew from 39 to 1 in 1990 to 41 students per teacher in 2005 (Flash Report I, 2006). The Technical Review of School Education 2006 found in their survey of 1000 schools that the student classroom ratio is 37:1 nationally, but 50:1 in the terai region. Classrooms of lower primary grades in the more populated areas, such as the terai and urban towns, are particularly overcrowded. This creates a systemic disincentive to increase student enrolment at the school level. The enrolment campaign conducted in academic year 2005/06 resulted in an increase in Grade 1 enrolment of about 22%<sup>34</sup> and has created further

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<sup>30</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports Flash Report 2 for school year 2004/05.

<sup>31</sup> The definition of retention used in TRSE 2006 is to compare ‘enrolment at the beginning and attendance in second term examination for the academic year 2062 (2005/06)’. There seem to be different definitions of retention being used in different education documents.

<sup>32</sup> The term used to refer to ethnic groups or indigenous minorities.

<sup>33</sup> UNESCO/UNICEF 2005. Children Out of School: Measuring Exclusion from Primary Education.

<sup>34</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports Flash report data cited in TSRE 2005, p. 9-10.

strains on the system. It is expected that the enrolment campaign has increased Dalit enrolment, but it was not only for Dalit children, and its specific impact on Dalit enrolment has not been quantified.

### **Poor teaching quality and learning achievement**

In *Nepal*, despite the increasing proportion of trained teachers, from 15% in 2001 to 45% in 2005,<sup>35</sup> teaching methods are still not adequately child friendly, and tend to focus on rote learning. In 2003, the national assessment showed that mean scores in Grade 5 achievement tests were 33 per cent in Mathematics, 45 per cent in English, 56 per cent in Nepali, 61 per cent in Social Science, and 67 per cent in Environmental Science and Health Education. School Leaving Certificate (after 10 years of schooling) pass rates are poor at 46%.<sup>36</sup> These poor learning achievement results suggest that there is room for system-wide improvements to enhance the quality of learning and teaching.

In *India* the perception of the quality of the education system (which it is reasonable to expect to be somewhat correlated with the actual quality of the system – including the curriculum, pedagogy, etc.), by the parents and students, and their assessment on the benefits of education (will their child get a better job, etc.), and the accessibility of the education system (distance, cost, etc.) will influence the decision of whether parents decide to send their children to school (and children themselves). The social status of the child, which is predominantly determined by caste, also influences this assessment. ‘In a socially and economically stratified society like India, decision-making at the individual level is closely linked with collective or group behaviour. Individual preferences and collective or social norms may not move in the same direction’ (Jha and Jhingran, 2005, 26). The above analysis of the additional challenges to accessing education by scheduled caste is an example of the individual aspirations of these children and their parents not matching the social norms of the wider community.

A key element of social exclusion of SC children from primary education is the extent to which discrimination is practised by teachers. While reliable quantitative data are not available related to the perception or levels of sensitivity of teachers to caste-based discrimination, in *India* anecdotal evidence and certain smaller scale qualitative studies suggest that teaching practices in the classroom negatively affect SC children and result in another ‘push’ factor from primary school (Ramachandran, 2004). ‘Teachers in India are predominantly upper caste and bring their own understandings of the legitimacy of caste relations into the classroom. Dalit children are expected to run errands and are assigned menial tasks such as sweeping and cleaning the classrooms. Higher rates of teacher absenteeism were reported when children were mainly from Dalit and tribal communities’ (Kabeer, 2006, p. 11).

### **Children suffer from abuse and neglect in schools**

In *Nepal*, students, teachers and parents all acknowledge that beating and humiliating children in the name of discipline is very common in schools. The more ‘disadvantaged’ students tend to suffer more, and teachers are reported to use punishment against selected children as a demonstration effect to frighten the rest into submission. Students who are younger, from poor or

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<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Education and Sports, Flash Report I, November 2006 (draft).

<sup>36</sup> This data is for academic year 2004/05. MoES website.

lower caste groups are most likely to be the targets.<sup>37</sup> Verbal abuse against Dalit children by calling them derogatory names is reported in India where ‘Dalit pupils have been called ‘Kadu-Jana (forest people) who would not learn without being beaten.’<sup>38</sup>

In societies where major atrocities are committed against Dalit communities every year (in *India* the estimate is 25,000), and Dalit pupils are called derogatory names of people who would not learn without beating, it is hardly surprising that fear of teachers and corporal punishment are constraining regular school attendance.<sup>39</sup>

One institution in India noted: ‘We have an appalling body of evidence that suggests that teachers’ preconceptions, bias and behaviour, subtle or overt, conscious or unconscious, operate to discriminate against children of SC/ST background. Low expectations, condescending and downright abusive, unstated assumptions of “deprived or deficient” cultural backgrounds, languages and inherent intellectual deficiencies of SC/ST children, labelling, discriminatory classifications are common and routine. Discrimination including being made to perform menial jobs like sweeping, and being forced to form their own circles, results in the feeling of isolation, alienation and discrimination experienced by SC/ST children.’<sup>40</sup>

Drinking water is an area of strong taboos and there is much anecdotal evidence around discrimination in use of water sources at schools. Dalit children in India, for example, most often are not allowed to use the same water pots as dominant caste children if there is a water source. Also when there is limited water supply in the school, usually only teachers are using it though it may be extended to the dominant caste children, not to Dalit children. It is also seen that in the list of errands done by the children in school, fetching water for teachers is done by dominant caste children and not entrusted to Dalits. In many of the villages, when the water sources are common, Dalits wait for their waterpots to be filled by the dominant caste members and the task most often falls on women and girl children.<sup>41</sup>

### **Corruption/lack of trust in the local duty bearers of the education system**

Transparency International found in *Nepal* that the education system was identified as the third most corruption prone sector, after the police and judiciary, with one in four respondents experiencing irregularities in their day-to-day contacts. The key facilitators of corruptions are reported to be teachers, followed by management committees.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Violence Against Children in Nepal Series 2: A study of the system of school discipline in Nepal. Centre for Victims of Torture (CVICT) Nepal & UNICEF Nepal, 2004.

<sup>38</sup> Anitha, B.K. Village, Caste and Education. Cited in Namala, A. (2006), *op. cit.*

<sup>39</sup> Namala, A. (2006). Children and Caste-based Discrimination: Policy Concerns. Paper presented to the regional Meeting on Social Policy in South Asia: Towards Universal Coverage and Transformation for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Kathmandu, Nepal, 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> May. UNICEF/UNRISD.

<sup>40</sup> NCERT cited in Namala, A. (2006), *op. cit.*, p. 11.

<sup>41</sup> E-mail communication between S. Durston and A. Namala, Institute of Dalit Studies, Delhi 17<sup>th</sup> January 2007. This assertion is to be followed up in a study on social exclusion relating to Water and Sanitation in Schools by UNICEF in 2007.

<sup>42</sup> Transparency International, Corruption in South Asia; Insights and Benchmarks from Citizen Feedback Surveys in Five Countries. December 2002.

## Limited budget

In *Nepal*, among the social sectors, education has a higher proportion of the budget at 16.5% of the total government budget of which 70% was spent on basic education in fiscal year 2004/05 (revised budget estimate).<sup>43</sup> This translates into about \$36/primary school child.<sup>44</sup> Of the available budget, much of it is spent on teacher salaries, with a small proportion to improve teaching and learning.<sup>45</sup> Schools are expected to generate their own funds to make up for any shortfalls, which results in schools charging fees, despite the national policy of free education. This creates a problem for schools catering to poor, disadvantaged communities.

There are also questions about the effective use of the limited resources. The Ministry of Education conducted a Public Expenditure Tracking Survey and found that not all of the funds intended for school use were actually reaching the schools, and there were delays in disbursement of funds in some cases, such as for scholarships, which had a detrimental effect on the poorer communities and families.

In *India* during the 1990s, the focus of the large-scale District Primary Education Programme and more recently the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) ('Universal Primary Education Campaign') was on addressing the inadequate budgetary resources and the poor quality of teaching, which were regarded as two key constraints to achieving universal participation. However, while it is obvious that universal elementary education demands a significant increase in financial allocation, it is also evident both from the experience in India but also based on global experience that finances alone will not ensure attendance of disadvantaged populations. One of the development objectives of the SSA is 'enrolment of children of SC and ST will be near parity with that of other groups', which in itself is a relatively modest objective as it focuses on enrolment, rather than completion of learning achievements, and also mentions 'near parity' rather than parity. However, the approach the programme has adopted is not sufficiently comprehensive in addressing the above mentioned constraints and will therefore fail to influence the relevant decision-making processes which relates to a child's education status, particularly related to the issues faced by SC children.

### 3.3.2. Community-level dynamics

#### Educational level of parents

A study in *Nepal* found that the literacy status of parents can affect how well the children perform in school.<sup>46</sup> Ten per cent more of the children attending early childhood development (ECD) centres with two literate parents were promoted from Grade 1 to 2, and 10 per cent less repeat in Grade 2. If a similar effect is also found with children not attending ECD classes, this would place Dalit children at a disadvantage, as a higher proportion of Dalit parents are illiterate. There are also many studies that suggest that increased parental appreciation of education and/or

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<sup>43</sup> National Planning Commission, Government of Nepal. An Analytical Study of Basic Social Services in Nepal. April 2006. Table 3.2.

<sup>44</sup> NRs 11,546 million for basic education for 4,502,697 primary students (CCA 2006 third draft, Annex 1; Goal 2) = Rs 2,564 per student.

<sup>45</sup> Basic Social Services Study, 2001. National Planning Commission.

<sup>46</sup> What's the difference? The Impact of Early Childhood Development Programs. A study from Nepal of the Effects for Children, their Families and Communities. Save the Children US & Norway. 2003. p. 41.

participation of illiterate parents in a non-formal education class increases the likelihood of their children enrolling in school. This may also be a factor for further investigation, as many Dalit parents have not had much schooling.

### **Lack of community level leaders and role models**

The proportion of Dalit teachers is low. TRSE 2006 in *Nepal* found that only 2% of teachers are Dalits, and this had not improved significantly from 2005. While there is an explicit policy which has been successful to increase female teachers in schools, a similar policy for Dalit (or janjati) teachers does not exist.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, it is debatable whether an increase in the number of female teachers causes an increase in female student enrolment, although these two factors are found to be consistently correlated. Equally, the impact of increasing the number of Dalit teachers on Dalit enrolment and retention is not known.

There are also few Dalit political leaders. According to an ILO study, an analysis of the 1997 election results from 735 village development committees (VDC) revealed that the Dalits constituted only 1.63% of the chairpersons and 3.95% of the vice chairpersons.<sup>48</sup>

### **Exclusion of Dalit communities from development initiatives**

In *Nepal*, for example, Dalits have been excluded from savings and credit in programmes. This hinders Dalit families from engaging in decision making processes. Experience from Welcome to School campaigns suggests that some Dalit parents decided to send their children to school because of the invitation card – since they had never received an invitation before.

### **Strengthening local capacity to manage a comprehensive response**

In order to address all of the determinants of social exclusion, it is important for any intervention designed to reduce disparities to include **strengthening local capacity to manage a comprehensive response**. This will ensure that an approach is context-specific and addresses the local particular determinants and dynamics of exclusion which exist within a community. This is of particular relevance to caste issues in *India* and the forms of exclusion, recognizing that the nature of the caste relationship varies greatly between regions and communities (Shah, 2006). It is therefore necessary for any strategy to include the facilitation of a process in which communities undertake an analysis of causes and factors which lead to social exclusion of children from primary school and develop a comprehensive response. Consistent with a human rights based approach, both the nature of the process of addressing this issue, as well as the results itself, are factors which should be prioritized. The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution, which was enacted in 1992, delegated various powers and responsibilities to the locally elected bodies called the Panchayats, which provides a platform for strengthening a broader process to address social exclusion. One of the main recommendations from the review of SSA in 2006 was ‘Greater use of Innovation Funds should be encouraged for interventions to boost the performance of first generation learners, especially SC and ST children and older girls’ (Department of Education, 2006, p. 5). The innovation funds should be managed locally and

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<sup>47</sup> Recently Dalit interest groups and civil society have been discussing the introduction of such a policy.

<sup>48</sup> ILO, Discrimination and Forced Labour, *supra* note 37, quoted in Center for Human Rights and Social Justice (2005). Missing Piece of the Puzzle, p. 15, footnote.

based on an analysis of the barriers faced by SC children within the household, the community and in the school (and the interplays between these).

### **3.3.3. The national policy environments**

#### **Discrimination against Dalits is illegal; social inclusion is promoted in government policy/, but implementation is weak**

Discriminatory practices against Dalits and their exclusion from educational opportunities continue in both India and Nepal despite the legal provisions in the Constitution, various government Acts,<sup>49,50</sup> policies and plans.

#### **Confusion in roles and responsibilities in decentralization of the education sector in Nepal**

In *Nepal*, inconsistencies in government policies on decentralization have resulted in confusion on the accountabilities of duty bearers at sub-national level. The Local Self Governance Act (1999) authorizes local bodies – Municipalities and Village Development Committees (VDCs) – to establish pre-primary schools, manage schools within their jurisdiction, plan and implement local education plans and establish libraries. But these are all unfunded mandates. Funds for schools come through Department of Education (DoE), which considers schools, not local bodies, as the focal point of the decentralization process. Accordingly, School Improvement Plans, which are prepared by schools, are the essential basis for funding schools, not Village Education Plans, which the VDCs prepare. To determine school budget allocation, the Department of Education uses a nationally applicable formula on the basis of data (on enrolments, class size, structure, level, etc) in the School Improvement Plans and the allocated budget also goes directly to schools. The local bodies have no decision making role in this process. In other words, decentralization as practised in the education sector conceptually differs from what is conceived in the Local Self Governance Act. According to the Ministry of Education, planning, budget allocation and monitoring in schools does not require the involvement of the local bodies. The Local Self Governance Act has not made it legally binding for the Ministry of Education to adopt VDC as the focal unit of decentralization. These discrepancies result in the lack of clear accountabilities to ensure that national policies and strategies are implemented in light of local realities, which would otherwise, theoretically, be responsive to Dalit communities.

Another accountability issue related to decentralization is that neither school management committees nor local bodies that are supposedly managing schools have been adequately trained and equipped to undertake their tasks.

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<sup>49</sup> The Education Act (1951) and its Seventh Amendment (2001): Apart from the right to education guaranteed by the constitution, the Act for education mentions the following provisions: (a) Section 16 includes provision for free primary education and no admission charges to community schools; (b) Sub-section 2 mentions free education to the under privileged communities like Dalits, indigenous groups and women in the secondary level; (c) Sub-section 3 prohibits imposing fees for the new admissions in the name of the school.

<sup>50</sup> Local Self Government Act, 1999: The preamble of this act mentions the upliftment of the backwards and Dalit community and guarantee for the distributive justice in all fields of state mechanisms of the country.

## **Policy and decision making are not always based on evidence**

As noted above, information on the situation of Dalit children in education in *Nepal* is lacking, although efforts are under way to improve data collection and analysis. Because data are not systematically disaggregated by social groups, old data or data using inconsistent definitions are quoted,<sup>51</sup> resulting in major disagreements on numbers and trends. This problem is not specific to the education sector, as noted above.

In *India*, strengthening data management systems which provide disaggregated data by caste, gender and other characteristics at local level is necessary. This data must be complemented by data on dropouts and on those who have never attended school (Ramachandran, 2004, p. 23). However, this level of disaggregation is often not currently included in either routine government monitoring systems such as the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of DPEP, or the District Information System for Education (DISE of SSA) or surveys which collect information on education indicators.

## **Donor influence in the education sector**

*Nepal* has had a sub-sector wide approach for primary education since 1999, involving eight external partners, many of whom contribute significant amounts of funding support. The proportion of donor funding in the basic education sub-sector is 21% for fiscal year 2004/05<sup>52</sup> which may be an underestimation of the donor contribution, since some donors provide direct funding into the sector and their contribution may not be reflected in government records.

In the past, there has not been much attention paid by the donor community to social inclusion. This is beginning to change, including among the international organizations involved in the education sub-sector wide approach, and presents a key opportunity to address Dalit issues in education in Nepal. For example, the Vulnerable Communities Development Plan, carried out with support from the World Bank in 2004, is just beginning to be utilized to develop a monitoring framework, and a study on Social Inclusion in Education SWAPs in South Asia will yield more evidence (to be published in 2007 by UNICEF ROSA).

## **Civil society is not well coordinated**

The contribution of civil society organizations to the education sector in *Nepal* is significant. However, there is no comprehensive information on the number of organizations working in the education sector, the nature of their work nor the budget. Coordination of NGOs' and INGOs' activities are expected to take place at the district level and no national formal forum exists for civil society organizations working in the education sector.

The number of national NGOs in Nepal has increased radically since the restoration of democracy in 1991 from less than 500 registered before restoration to about 18,000 registered in 2005. The actual number is estimated to be larger, at nearly 30,000, although not all may be functional and many are small organizations.<sup>53</sup> Among international NGOs, many are registered

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<sup>51</sup> For example, a 2005 DFID study quotes Bennett (2003), which uses data from the 1999 Nepal Human Development Report, which in turn had used data from 1991 and 1996 to derive indices.

<sup>52</sup> BSS 2006, Annex II.

<sup>53</sup> UNICEF Situation Analysis 2006.

with SWC, and 52 are registered members of the Association of INGOs (AIN).<sup>54</sup> The budget of AIN members is reported to be about Rs. 7.3 billion (about US\$100 million) in 2005, of which half is spent on the social sector.

Some I/NGOs run schools and non-formal classes, and others pilot innovations to make national government policy operational in the context of local realities. Many organizations focus their support on the disadvantaged community, including Dalits. I/NGOs also position themselves as ‘watch dogs’ of the government, along with the media. The potential role of the civil society to hold national and local governments to account remains untapped.

### **The Dalit movement is fragmented and has not necessarily focused on education issues**

The movement of the Dalits in *Nepal* is over five decades old. However, most efforts have been sporadic and incidental and have never been national in scope. Since the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1990 the Dalit movement has gained momentum, however, with the establishment of NGOs and interest groups by Dalits or those working to improve the plight of Dalits and other disadvantaged communities. Also the focus of the movement has been to tackle the issues of untouchability and other discriminatory behaviour, and it has not focused on education or other social issues. Since April 2006, after the king’s direct rule ended, political parties have been emphasizing the need to address the concerns of Dalits and other marginalized groups.

### **Conflict and political instability**

The conflict in *Nepal* has undermined the governance mechanism overall, including in the education sector. Limited mobility and access by government officials has further hindered monitoring and supervision of schools, which was already inadequate before the conflict worsened. Teachers and schools were ‘caught in the middle’ between the royal government policies on the one hand, and directives and threats from the Maoist government structures on the other. In addition, the absence of local elected bodies and representatives in the last four years resulted in a significant deterioration of the government’s accountability, including in the education sector. A survey of 1000 schools in 2005 found that about 13% of the officially prescribed 220 school days were lost due to the conflict or political reasons.<sup>55</sup> The political situation has dramatically improved in 2006 and 2007, providing opportunities for the introduction of new policies, including for the education of Dalit children.

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<sup>54</sup> Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN). A Review of AIN’s Contribution to the Tenth Plan/Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP 2002-07). July 2005.

<sup>55</sup> TRSE 2005, p. 43.

## 4. What Have the Two Governments Done to Address the Problem?

### 4.1. Measures Introduced

#### Overall legal framework

Both governments have antidiscrimination laws.

In *India*, Article 17 of the Constitution of India makes discrimination an offence. It enshrined the abolition of ‘untouchability’ and its practice in any form as a punishable offence. The Government of India’s approach to historically marginalized groups in education draws on provisions made in the Indian Constitution, which contains explicit state obligation towards protecting and promoting social, economic, political and cultural rights. ‘The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation’ (Directive Principle of State Policy, Article 46). The Constitution mandates positive discrimination in government services, state-run, and sponsored educational institutions. Amendments to the Constitution also enabled representation of SC men and women in local governance structures.<sup>56</sup>

Some of the constitutional provisions which aimed at positive discrimination are:

- Article 17: Abolition of ‘untouchability’ and making its practice in any form a punishable offence
- Article 46: Promotion of educational and economic interests
- Article 16 and 335: Preferential treatment in matters of employment in public services
- Article 330 and 332: Reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament) and State Assemblies

The 73<sup>rd</sup> Amendment of the Constitution, which was enacted in 1992, delegated various powers and responsibilities to the locally elected bodies called the Panchayats, which provides a platform for strengthening a broader process to address social exclusion. One of the main recommendations from the review of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (the education sector programme) in 2006 was ‘Greater use of Innovation Funds should be encouraged for interventions to boost the performance of first generation learners, especially SC and ST children and older girls’.<sup>57</sup> The innovation funds should be managed locally and based on an analysis of the barriers faced by SC children within the household, the community and in the school (and the interplays between these).

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<sup>56</sup> De Haan, Arjun (2005). ‘Social Policy: Towards Inclusive Institutions’, University of Guelph and Department for International Development, UK, Paper at the World Bank Conference ‘New Frontiers of Social Policy; Development in a Globalizing World’. December 12-15, 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Department of Education (2006). *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan: Fourth Joint Review Mission*. Aide Memoire, New Delhi.

In *Nepal*, even though caste based discrimination was declared illegal in the Civil Code in 1963, it was not made punishable until the 1990 constitution of Nepal. The 1990 constitution declared that ‘No person shall, on the basis of caste, be discriminated against as untouchable, be denied access to any public places or be deprived of the use of public utilities. Any contravention to this provision shall be punishable by law’ (Article 11(4)).

Since the mid-1990s, social inclusion has become an increasingly important agenda for development. The Ninth Plan (1996–2002) was the first national development plan to address the issue, and included sections on the ‘Downtrodden and Oppressed Community’ in the chapter on Social Security. It was the first plan in Nepal to address Dalits and Janjatis by name. The plan focused on the capacity development of the disadvantaged people, provision of reservation in scholarships, allocation of a portion of the grant in the local government budgets for the uplifting of Dalits, and it proposed the establishment of a Dalit coordination committee in every district. Some organizations such as the Dalit Bikas Samiittee (1997) and The National Dalit Commission (2002) were established by the government.

Nepal’s Tenth Plan (2002–07), which is also the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), recognizes the importance of inclusive development. It has recognized that lack of voice, political representation and empowerment are just as important dimensions of poverty as are the economic and human development dimensions. Therefore inclusion is one of the four pillars of the PRSP. This pillar has focused on 1) mainstreaming excluded groups to ensure equitable access to all, and 2) providing targeted programmes to the hard core poor. These include employment for Dalits, preferential provision in foreign employment, sensitization programmes against untouchability at local level, scholarship programmes for Dalits, housing arrangements for homeless Dalits, skills promotion for income generation training to improvise and modernize their traditional occupations, arrangement of leasehold forest within community forests for Dalit forest users, provision of grants to poor Dalits for micro-irrigation, provision of focal points in government agencies, provision to enact new special laws to abolish all discriminatory provision, and mandating political parties to nominate Dalits at each level. The recently formed interim legislature has nominated Dalit members.

### **Financial measures**

During the 1990s, the focus of the large-scale District Primary Education Programme in India and more recently the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) (‘Universal Primary Education Campaign’) was on addressing the inadequate budgetary resources and the poor quality of teaching, which were regarded as two key constraints to achieving universal participation.

However, while it is obvious that universal elementary education demands a significant increase in financial allocation, it is also evident both from the experience in India and global experience that finances alone will not ensure attendance of disadvantaged populations.<sup>58</sup>

Both Nepal and India have provision for fee-free education at the primary level, although parents still bear indirect costs for education.

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<sup>58</sup> Barr, E. and Jenkins, R. (2006). Social Exclusion of Scheduled Caste Children from Primary Education in India. Paper prepared for New School/UNICEF Social Protection Meeting 31<sup>st</sup> October -1<sup>st</sup> November 2006.

In *Nepal* the Education Act (7<sup>th</sup> Amendment 2001) provides for free primary education. Apart from the right to education guaranteed by the Constitution, the Education Act mentions the provisions below:

- Section 16 includes provision for free primary education and no admission charges to community schools.
- The provision of sub-section 2 mentions free education to the under-privileged communities like Dalits, indigenous groups and women in the secondary level.
- The Act prohibits imposing fees for new admissions in the name of the school under sub-section 3.

In *India* a constitutional amendment was passed in 2002 making free and compulsory education a fundamental right for children aged 6–14 years. The national and state governments continue to deliver the programme *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA), which aims to achieve universal elementary education by 2010. Tuition fees have been abolished in all states in government schools at least up to upper primary level. Most of the states have abolished tuition fees for SC/ST students up to senior secondary level.

### **Targeted financial allocations**

In *India*, 15% and 7.5% funds on a notional basis from the budget of the Department of Elementary Education & Literacy and Secondary & Higher Education have been allocated under the Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively. 244 districts have been identified as special focus districts on a cross-matching basis, consisting of areas of Minority Concentration blocks/tehsils, ITDP blocks, Schedule V & Scheduled VI areas and districts with SC female literacy less than 10%. These districts will receive focused attention by the Centre as well as by States/Territories in the implementation of programmes/chemes.

In *Nepal*, In order to defray some of the indirect costs of schooling, the government has made textbooks free.

### **Provision of infrastructure**

In *India*, under the Scheme of Strengthening of Boarding and Hostel Facilities for girl students of Secondary & Higher Secondary Schools, preference is given to girls' hostels located in educationally backward districts, particularly those predominantly inhabited by SC, ST and educationally backward communities. Priority is given to the areas of concentration of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the programmes of District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Lok Jumbish (LJ), Shiksha Karmi (SK), Non-Formal Education (NFE) and National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education.

To meet the surge in enrolment experienced in *Nepal* after the Welcome to School campaign, government has constructed temporary classrooms.

## **Provision of ECD**

The government of *Nepal* is attempting to provide ECD to as many children as possible, in the knowledge that this a predictor of future success in the education system.

## **Better planning and monitoring**

In both India and Nepal, disaggregation of educational statistics has been introduced. This highlights the issue and progress of particular groups – in India the scheduled castes and tribes; in Nepal the Dalits and Janjatis.

It is the Education Management Information System (EMIS) of DPEP, and the District Information System for Education (DISE of SSA) in *India*, while it is the official EMIS in *Nepal*, which introduced disaggregation of data by social groups, including caste, from academic year 2004/05. Both countries mandate surveys to include these groups in information on education indicators. In addition, Nepal is carrying out a study to assess the level of emphasis in relation to Dalits and other socially excluded groups in the sector-wide approach in operation. Such approaches do not always analyse and plan for disparities, including in Nepal.<sup>59</sup>

## **Quotas**

The University Grants Commission (UGC) in *India* provides relaxation of 5% from 55% to 50% at the Master's level for appointment as Lecturer for applicants from SC/ST. There is a 15% reservation of seats for SCs and 7.5% for STs in central government, and in technical educational institutions. The higher educational institutions administered by the central government reserve 15% seats for Scheduled Castes and 7.5% for Scheduled Tribes in the case of admissions as well as in appointments (teaching and non-teaching posts). Seats are also reserved in hostels attached to the central universities/colleges.

## **Scholarships directed through the education system/schools**

In *India*, various states make special provisions for SCs by providing financial schemes, scholarships, special hostels, concessions in fees and grants for books (de Haan, 2005).<sup>60</sup> Out of 43,000 scholarships at the secondary stage for talented children from rural areas, 13,000 scholarships are awarded to SC/ST students. Out of 1000 scholarships, 225 scholarships are exclusively reserved for SC/ST students under the National Talent Search Scheme. This would provide an incentive to those groups to enrol at the primary level also.

In *Nepal*, scholarships for Dalits have been popular for a number of years and began in 1996. They have provided the main intervention in the education sector for addressing social inclusion. The Local Self Governance Act 1999 provides for the upliftment of the backward and Dalit communities and guarantees distributive justice in all fields of state mechanisms of the country.

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<sup>59</sup> This was a desk study which is being followed up by a multi-country study on the ground in South Asia, organized by UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, January-March 2007, and will include Nepal.

<sup>60</sup> de Haan, Arjun (2005). 'Social Policy: Towards Inclusive Institutions', University of Guelph and Department for International Development, UK. Paper at the World Bank Conference 'New Frontiers of Social Policy: Development in a Globalizing World'. December 12-15, 2005.

Section 28 (1) Gha mentions the provision of scholarships to students of backward and marginalized communities.

*Scholarship rule 2003*: The state has enacted the rule for providing scholarships to the poor and marginalized. The Ministry of Education and Sports distributes scholarships to these groups as well as providing quota based scholarships to lower secondary level girl students in 75 districts. Under Rule 10 there is a provision for open contest for the selection of appropriate candidates, while under Sub-rule 3, there are 10% quotas for women, Dalits and indigenous groups for higher technical courses. In order to qualify, under Rule 12 he/she who has obtained 60% shall be eligible to get a scholarship. But the rule states that for Dalits, indigenous groups and women, 50% shall be the criterion for candidacy.

The Nepal Education for All (NEFA) 2004–09 primary education programme has set aside additional funds to provide scholarships for all Dalit children, and the Budget speech for the fiscal year 2006–07 spelled out the provision of scholarships at the rate of Rs. 350 for 50 per cent of primary level girl-students belonging to economically weak and deprived communities as well as to all students of the Dalit community studying at the primary school level. Arrangements will be made for public distribution of such scholarships in two instalments with a view to ensuring effectiveness and transparency in scholarship fund distribution. Private schools have also been encouraged to provide places for disadvantaged students. For 2006/07, arrangements have been made to require private schools to enrol with scholarships at the rate of one student per 50 students from among the children of Dalits, conflict victims and martyrs. This programme will hopefully enable about 20,000 children to be educated.

### **Non-cash transfers**

Non-cash transfers such as school meals have been tried in both Nepal and India. In *India* the trial had three objectives: first to provide food for poor children, second an incentive to come to school, and third to engage in social engineering – to try to overcome taboos of untouchability where Dalit children were mixed with others. Cooking oil for girl students as well as school meals has been tried in *Nepal* for poor communities to provide nutrition as well as an incentive for attendance.

### **Innovations at school level**

An innovation in *Nepal* has been *school mapping* with community involvement, which takes into account social as well as physical distance to school, and needs not only numbers. Some innovative community approaches have also been tried, such as community EMIS and micro-planning.

Establishment of *School Management Committees*, that include representation from the community served by each school, is now mandatory in Nepal.

Another innovation in Nepal is the *Child Club* movement. These clubs typically carry out a range of activities within their schools and communities, such as: identifying out-of-school children, through their membership networks; negotiating with parents (and employers in the case of working children), local authorities and organizations for support of children to bring them to school; organizing rallies and campaigns in the community; working as watchdogs against all

forms of violence, exploitation and abuse of children in the community and schools; supporting schools to improve the teaching and learning environment, including sanitation and hygiene.

## **4.2. Have These Measures Worked?**

### **Implementation of the anti-discrimination laws remains an issue**

Discriminatory practices against Dalits and their exclusion from educational opportunities continue in *Nepal* despite the legal provisions in the Constitution and various government Acts,<sup>61,62</sup> policies and plans. Very little was done in terms of implementation for social inclusion during the Ninth Plan. The Tenth Plan (2002–07) has social inclusion as one of the four ‘pillars’ or strategies, with a separate chapter on ‘Targeted Programmes’ (chapter 28). However, targets and indicators are not very specific, thus assessing the implementation and the impact is difficult. Furthermore, the development policies for Dalits have remained merely welfare oriented without addressing the structural problems. Mainstreaming of the social inclusion strategy across all development areas is also weak. While the Poverty Monitoring and Analysis System, designed to monitor the implementation of the Tenth Plan/Reduction Strategy Paper specifies disaggregation by caste and ethnicity for many indicators, it is not clear how this will be put in practice, since there are over 100 caste and ethnic groups in Nepal.

In *India*, while the Constitution mandates positive discrimination in government services, and state-run and sponsored educational institutions, scheduled caste (SC) children remain disadvantaged across many social indicators. Estimates from the 2000 National Sample Survey suggest that SC ‘constituted 20 per cent of the rural population, but 38 per cent of the poor (Kabeer, 2006, p. 3). As an average for India, 27.09% of the population live below the poverty line in rural areas, compared with 36.25% of the SC population and 23.62% in urban areas compared with 38.47% of the SC population. Furthermore, after holding a variety of individual and household characteristics constant (including education, occupation, age and gender of the head of the household), Kabeer notes that the SCs were still 19 % more likely to be poor than the rest of the population (Kabeer, 2006, p. 4).

### **Free primary education has had an impact**

Although it is difficult to attribute increase in enrolment to specific measures, it is thought in *India* that the abolition of school fees in 2002 made a contribution to the increase in overall enrolment in recent years. The same may be the result of campaigns in *Nepal*. Also in Nepal, textbooks are free, according to government policy, but the allocated budget is insufficient.<sup>63</sup> Families often need to pay for them at the beginning of the year and are later reimbursed.

### **ECD has made a difference, but provision remains problematic**

In a study in *Nepal*, children having passed through ECD were found to achieve better pass rates in Grade 1 and 2 examinations, show lower repetition rates than the national average, be less likely to drop out of school in the critical early years and moved from Grade 1 to 2 at twice the

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<sup>61</sup> See especially the Education Act (1951) and its Seventh Amendment (2001), *op. cit.*

<sup>62</sup> Local Self Government Act, 1999: The preamble of this Act mentions the upliftment of the backwards and Dalit communities and guarantee for the distributive justice in all fields of state mechanisms of the country.

<sup>63</sup> TRSE 2006, p. 40.

national rate. Overall enrolment of Dalits in education in the study district, 30.5%, was surpassed by 98% of the Dalits in the study group in ECD enrolling in primary education.<sup>64</sup> To the extent that completion is an issue, ECD appears to be a powerful strategy. However, in Nepal several ways of providing ECD have been tried, notably community based ECD and an ECD class at the school. The schemes have encountered two main problems. One is that the remuneration for ECD facilitators has been too low to retain and motivate them, and the second is that the requirement of matching funds by poor communities is not able to be met. Unless ECD is mainstreamed into the sector and adequately financed, this option will continue to be the poor relation of education provision and may result in severely compromising the life and educational chances of marginalized groups such as Dalits.

### **Data has encompassed disaggregation but quality remains an issue**

In both countries, there is a large gap between official EMIS and data from household surveys.<sup>65</sup>

### **Have quotas worked?**

While quotas are filled, the feeling is that those who have benefited from quotas in *India* tend to be already from better-off backgrounds, even amongst the Dalit groups.

### **Scholarships have worked better in India than Nepal, but both countries need to devote more resources to provide coverage**

In *India*, Mohamed Ajwad's analysis of anti-poverty programmes in Uttar Pradesh (2006), based on National Sample Survey data of 2002/03, found that the school scholarship programme progressively reached SC/ST households (he combined these two groups in his analysis). He found that 61% of the beneficiaries were from SC/ST households in this programme, which was more than twice the percentage of SC/ST in the population, and therefore indicates that the programme was successfully targeting this population (Ajwad, 2006, p. 8). This compares with only 13.1 per cent of other backward castes and less than 10 per cent of non-backward castes receiving the scholarship (Ajwad, 2006, p. 15). Poor households were also more likely to receive the scholarship than rich households in both urban and rural households. However, it was noted in the analysis that considering that all SC/STs are entitled to the scholarship, significant improvement in coverage will still be needed if the remaining 40 per cent of enrolled SC/STs, around 2 million pupils in Uttar Pradesh, are to be included in the scholarship programme.<sup>66</sup>

In *Nepal* a study found that only 65% of Dalit students attending primary school in the sampled districts received scholarships. The same report concludes that not only are the government funds insufficient but the governance procedures in place for distributing these funds are not adequate.<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, it is reported by Acharya<sup>68</sup> that the management and distribution of

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<sup>64</sup> Barnett, Arnold and Saptara (2003). What's the Difference? The Impact of Early Childhood Development Programmes. A study from Nepal of the Effects for Children, their Families and Communities. Save the Children US and Norway, Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>65</sup> For example, in Nepal, the proportion of Dalit children in the primary school age population (5-9 year olds) is inconsistent in different Ministry documents. (13.3% in Flash Report I for AY 2004/05; 15% in TSRE 2005, p. 21 and 16% in the Vulnerable Communities Development Plan.)

<sup>66</sup> Ajwad, Mohamed Ihsan (2006). Anti-Poverty Programs in Uttar Pradesh. World Bank Staff Paper, World Bank, Washington. p. 16.

<sup>67</sup> Bajracharya (2005). Technical Review of School Education.

scholarships in Nepal is far from equitable, even for targeted groups. There is an absence of uniform criteria and process, and, in the face of insufficient funds to provide scholarships to all Dalit children, different districts apply different criteria, often dividing the amount amongst schools which then have to make choices about individual students. Local decisions are made by head teachers and others who might have different opinions, and the selection is open to bias. The scholarships have also typically been distributed on merit at the end of the year, thereby providing an incentive scheme for retention rather than enrolment and for brighter students. Field reports have also reported that it is not always the same children who are supported each year, so completion by children of a cycle through this support is in question. Knowledge of the scheme by community members is partial, and observations suggest that where Dalits discover the scheme, they clamour for it. The conclusion is that the policy is unlikely to work unless sufficient funds are made available and strict criteria for distribution and process applied.

### **Non-cash transfers**

Non-cash transfer initiatives such as provision of school meals have had a mixed impact. In *India*, some would argue it has increased attendance rates (although there is some anecdotal evidence that it has led to children only coming of the time of the meal and then leaving). There is also evidence that head teachers inflate attendance figures in order to receive more funds – as the amount of money provided for food to the school is calculated based on the number of children regularly attending. The other big issue around midday meals is that Dalit children are excluded. Cultural practices related to food are particularly sensitive to caste based discrimination, and the midday meal has resulted in another form of exclusion of Dalit children. Studies have cited that when an SC is a cook the dominant caste will not eat,<sup>69</sup> SCs are excluded as cooks and helpers for midday meals programmes, children experience discrimination in seating arrangements while being served food, and they are given inferior meals and insufficient quantity of food.<sup>70</sup>

### **School level innovations have had an impact, but more needs to be done**

While in *Nepal*, the composition of *School Management Committees* is supposed to reflect their communities, a recent survey found that only 2–4 per cent of school management committee members are Dalits.<sup>71</sup> This means that Dalit parents are in less of a position to influence community decisions taken for their children's schooling. Furthermore, mere membership in a committee does not necessarily mean that Dalit parents voice their concerns and influence decisions. The effectiveness of SMCs in making decisions that truly reflect the concern of parents and the community is not known.

There are also some promising results from the *Child Clubs in Nepal*.<sup>72</sup> Some child clubs report that 'untouchability' is less of an issue among child club members. Children from poor,

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<sup>68</sup> Acharya, S. and Luitel, Bal Chandra (2006). The Functioning and Effectiveness of Scholarships and Incentive Schemes in Nepal. UNESCO Kathmandu Series of Monographs and Working Papers No. 9. UNESCO Kathmandu, Nepal.

<sup>69</sup> Thorat, S. and Lee, J. (2006). Dalits and the Right to Food: Discrimination and Exclusion in Food-Related Government Programmes. Indian Institute of Dalit Studies Working Paper Series No. 3, 2006.

<sup>70</sup> Namala, A. (2006). Children and Caste-based Discrimination: Policy Concerns. Paper presented to the regional Meeting on Social Policy in South Asia: Towards Universal Coverage and Transformation for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Kathmandu, Nepal, 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> May. UNICEF/UNRISD.

<sup>71</sup> New Era 2005:34, cited in Bennett education chapter draft. TSRE 2005 or 2006 says 4% of surveyed schools.

<sup>72</sup> Child Club Study.

disadvantaged families are often reported to find self-esteem and a sense of ‘belongingness’ as a result of membership in child clubs. The evaluation of the UNICEF supported DACAW (Decentralized Action for Children and Women) programme has also found that community based monitoring where the community aims for full coverage can help people to internalize the values of inclusion and non-discrimination. The multi-sectoral, integrated programme approach has also enabled children who have completed the Out of School programme to support other development activities for their own community. For example, by acting as a secretary/keeper in a mostly illiterate community or a translator for a non-English speaking community, young people have been able to practise their leadership skills.<sup>73</sup>

## 5. Policy Options

The problem analysis has shown that while certain universal measures are useful and necessary for enabling Dalit children to enrol and complete primary education, they are by no means sufficient. This group is not only disadvantaged by poverty, but also by social exclusion from civil and political processes, and other forms of social interaction. It is therefore helpful to place this group very firmly in a social exclusion framework in order to articulate their very special needs and to develop policies to meet them.

### **The usefulness of a social exclusion approach**

As a definition, ‘social exclusion reflects the multiple and overlapping nature of the disadvantages experienced by certain groups and categories of the population, with social identity as the central axis of their exclusion.’<sup>74</sup> The value-addedness of the social exclusion approach is its emphasis on the role of relational features in deprivation.<sup>75</sup> Social exclusion can therefore be explained in terms of group interactions aimed at maximizing value and minimizing costs. ‘Individuals are most vulnerable when they have fewest personal capacities and material resources ... but none of these threatens their survival so long as they enjoy the protections afforded by membership of an inclusive group that co-operates productively and redistributes its product.’<sup>76</sup> Additionally, ‘all interactions take place in the context of norms, practices and institutions that steer, stabilize and regulate them.’<sup>77</sup> Members regulate each other’s actions by reinforcing norms of social obligation, and offer mutual support and assistance on a reciprocal basis. ‘All social formations have rules about rights as well as obligations, which determine when, where and how the goods for final consumption will be distributed. These rules are laid down collectively, but result in individual entitlements.’<sup>78</sup>

An additional feature of the social exclusion approach (in contrast to defining poverty in terms of material possession, or deprivation of services, which is the predominant focus of public discourse on poverty) is the ‘causal dynamics of exclusion, especially as they relate to

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<sup>73</sup> UNICEF and Decentralization in Nepal, Development Resource Mobilization Network, 2004.

<sup>74</sup> Kabeer, Naila (March, 2006). ‘Social Exclusion and the MDGs: The Challenge of “Durable Inequalities” in the Asian Context’, Institute of Development Studies, Paper presented at the Asia 2015 Conference. p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Sen, Amartya (2000). ‘Social Exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny’. Office of Environment and Social Development, Asian Development Bank, Manila.

<sup>76</sup> Jordan, Bill (1996). *A Theory of Poverty and Social Exclusion*. Blackwell Publishers Inc., Cambridge, MA. p. 5.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

*intentional* actions by certain groups to limit opportunities for others.’<sup>79</sup> This more usefully incorporates the attitudinal and structural relational issues at the heart of the caste system in South Asia, and explains why interventions of a different kind from those addressing other factors, such as poverty as described above, are needed.

This section will consider policy options for

- (a) getting more children into school in general – universal measures; and
- (b) special measures for Dalits where universal measures are not sufficient.

In relation to Dalits, the following section addresses three layers of policy:

1. Universal measures
2. Special measures for forms of disadvantage
3. Special measures related to the unique situation of Dalits.

### **Using global evidence**

Evidence shows that countries which have attained GER of over 85% and primary completion rate of over 70% are likely to have implemented the following measures in education:

- High percentage of GDP allocated to public primary education
- Unit costs in the middle of the range
- Teachers are paid an average of 3.3% of per capita GDP
- Slightly higher spending on non-teacher salary inputs than teacher salaries
- Average teacher : pupil ratio of 1:39
- Average repetition rates below 10%.<sup>80</sup>

Reviews of the research have also shown that the private rate of return to education (including employment in the informal sector) is determined not by years of schooling but by learning outcomes. Cognitive skills lead to higher productivity, but need to be matched by factors outside the school, such as more flexibility in the labour market, especially the balance between private and public, and, in agricultural communities, school leavers need access to improved technologies.

What the above tells us is that, firstly, system measures and indicators do not ensure equitable distribution of the education service; and, secondly, that enrolment in school is not a sufficient indicator of the performance of the system especially in relation to equity and outcomes. This is one reason why Bruns prefers the use of completion rates as an indicator of school and system performance, but this also is not a measure of equity, nor necessarily of learning .<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Marshall, J. H. and Calderon, V. (2006). *Social Exclusion in Education in Latin America and the Caribbean*. p. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Bruns, B. (2003). *Achieving Universal Primary Education by 2015: A Chance for Every Child*. IBRD/World Bank, Washington.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*

## 5.1. Universal Policies Which Might Improve the Enrolment and Completion of Dalits and Others

In order to increase enrolment and retention, it is suggested that adequate school places need to be provided, along with facilities such as water and sanitation, hostels, curriculum materials and teachers (including female teachers and those from a similar linguistic and social background where relevant), with effective teaching and learning processes, at a relevant physical distance for safe and sustained participation of all children.

One policy measure which would come some way to addressing this would be *universal and compulsory free primary education*, implemented and enforced by law. ‘Universal’ includes the necessity for government to provide facilities, and ensure the deployment and presence of teachers, as well as the responsibility of parents and guardians to send their children to school.

This and the measures described below require adequate finance, and both in India and Nepal, more financial investment in education is required. In the case of *Nepal*, although a high proportion of funds is allocated to education (nearly 16% of the national budget), and to primary education, because of the country’s failure to raise adequate revenue, it is very donor-dependent and has a funding gap of nearly NRs 130,000,000,000 (over US\$1.8 billion) between 2005–15 if it is to reach UPE by 2015. Nepal spends only NRs 547 per capita on primary education (around \$8).<sup>82</sup> In *India*, meanwhile, the government has committed to increasing the expenditure for the education sector from 3 per cent of GDP to 6 per cent. For Nepal, this is currently not possible so a policy measure would be for *donors to increase their allocations to primary education in Nepal and to prioritize primary education, though not to the exclusion of other levels*, or even primary education would suffer if there was no expectation for children to continue through the system.

Progress towards universalizing education can be seen in terms of:

- hardware, including school buildings, classrooms, furniture and sanitation
- software, which includes textbooks, writing materials, curriculum and pedagogy
- teachers
- institutional and management structure, and
- context and community variables.<sup>83</sup>

In terms of the relative effect of inputs, the main benefits from alternative inputs come from more textbooks, increasing total hours of class instruction, and restructuring overcrowded curriculum.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission/UNDP 2006. MDGs Needs Assessment for Nepal. This gap is calculated on the basis of the gap between public investment and government resources in a scenario of reduced security spending. US\$1=70 NRs.

<sup>83</sup> Boissiere, M. (2004). Determinants of Primary Education Outcomes in Developing Countries: Background paper for the Evaluation of the World Bank’s Support to Primary Education. World Bank Operations Evaluation Department. Washington D.C.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

## **Hardware is important**

It has been shown that, particularly in developing countries, the quality of school facilities is important. Learning achievement can be retarded when facilities are allowed to fall into disrepair. For example, school days will be lost through leaking roofs.<sup>85</sup> The importance of gender sensitive sanitation if girls are to enrol and attend regularly is also well known.

## **Software – mixed results**

Many variants within this category have mixed results from research. For example, there is controversial evidence on the importance of class size, and while it is recognized that classes of over 40 can limit effectiveness, if a teacher uses poor methods even in a smaller class then the results will not improve. Similarly textbooks, which are demonstrated to be necessary for education in resource-poor situations, to be appropriately designed and teachers trained to use them. Given the above, it is recommended that *sufficient, and bias-free textbooks are supplied to enable at least one per two children in each subject.*

Additionally, there is substantial evidence that children learn better in their mother tongue and that strategies for transition to a majority language are needed.

## **Teachers are crucial to the effort**

In order to achieve UPE, it is estimated that over 55,000 new teachers are needed in *Nepal*,<sup>86</sup> needing greater investment in teacher recruitment and training and a willingness on the part of the International Finance Institutions (IFIs) to accommodate an expansion in teacher recruitment.

The evidence relating to teachers' own education and their training is mixed in terms of the impact on learning outcomes. Trained teachers appear to be more effective in terms of cognitive achievement, but they still need to be present and motivated, a common issue in both *Nepal* and *India*. The main factors relating to teacher morale are poor working conditions and lack of professional support, as much as or more than their level of remuneration.

## **Management and institutional structure – the need for supportive institutions**

It has been shown that, particularly in developing countries, the impact of government policy and implementation capacity is important, particularly for determining the provision of facilities and equity of access.<sup>87</sup> Evidence is mixed over what decentralization and school autonomy influences. However, transparent and efficient allocations of both financial and human resources are needed, and in particular ensuring that funds arrive and are used well at schools themselves, and that teachers are deployed equitably to schools. *One measure for improvement is to devolve authority for enforcing teacher attendance, particularly to the district level, so that absenteeism is improved.*

In the developing world, there is no evidence that when schools are managed by communities, learning outcomes improve. However it has been observed community management improves interest from the community and the possibility of community financing. Recruitment of teachers

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Government of Nepal, National Planning Commission/UNDP 2006. MDGs Needs Assessment for Nepal.

<sup>87</sup> Boissiere, *op. cit.*

by the community has had very mixed response. While in the short term, locally recruited teachers can facilitate learning in local language, and the community can monitor the attendance of the teacher, recruitment is also open to capture by local elites. In this case, conditions of service, if they exist at all, are below the standard of any national or international conventions. This can develop into a two-tier teaching force, where one tier has proper conditions of service while others do not. Often it will be the women who are in the latter category, being those most likely to be in their home communities and recruited locally.

Work carried out in many places – Malawi, for example – demonstrated how, through PRA methods, communities could participate meaningfully in site selection for their own schools. However, due to the labour- and time-intensiveness needed, both governments and donors are reluctant to employ these methods.<sup>88</sup>

In order to address all of the determinants of social exclusion, it is important for any intervention designed to reduce disparities to include *strengthening local capacity to manage a comprehensive response*. This will ensure that approaches are context-specific and addresses the local particular determinants and dynamics of exclusion which exist within a community. This is of particular relevant to caste issues in *India* and the forms of exclusion, recognizing that the nature of the caste relationship varies greatly between regions and communities.<sup>89</sup> It is therefore necessary for any strategy to include the facilitation of a process in which communities undertake an analysis of causes and factors which lead to social exclusion of children from primary school and develop a comprehensive response. Consistent with a human rights based approach, both the nature of the process of addressing this issue, as well as the results itself, are factors which should be prioritized.

### **Context and community variables in relation to Dalits**

The measures discussed above will only be helpful for Dalits if particular attention is paid to the location of schools (so that Dalits do not need to cross the space of other caste groups, or if they do then it is without harassment), the relevance of textbooks and learning materials (especially the way caste relationships are portrayed within them), and the commitment of teachers to teach any child, whatever their caste. Additionally, while there is evidence that food is still an issue in terms of its preparation and allocation (midday meals), there is very limited knowledge on the use of the school water source, a big issue for Dalit families, who are chased away from community water sources by other caste groups because of their untouchability status.<sup>90</sup>

In summary, universality principles will benefit Dalits to a certain extent, but there is also need for an the additional element where social barriers to access and utilization of resources are removed. For additional impact on Dalits, sensitization to individual needs, removal of stigma on behalf of teachers, and removal of labelling and identities, are also needed.

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<sup>88</sup> Durston, S. and Nashire, N. (2001). Rethinking Poverty and Education: An attempt by an education programme in Malawi to have an impact on poverty. In COMPARE, Vol. 31, No. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Shah, Ghanshyam, Harsh Mander, Sukhadeo Thorat, Satish Deshpande, Amita Baviskar (2006). *Untouchability in Rural India*. Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi.

<sup>90</sup> Communication with Annie Namala from the Institute of Dalit Studies, Delhi, January 17<sup>th</sup> 2007. While there is little documented, there is substantial anecdotal evidence, and a study will be carried out in 2007.

## 5.2. Special Measures for Disadvantaged Children – Necessary But Not Sufficient

Conventional policy options, particularly universal ones, can be shown to address disparities which are common to many groups, such as those in the poorest quintiles, as well as addressing systemic issues such as poor quality. The above analysis shows that the Dalit group suffers from these more common disparities also, often overlapping, and that the majority of children in both countries do not enjoy a good quality public education – those who can escape will do so into the private sector.

Improving individual access, through removing barriers which are common to many children and their families, as well as addressing the systemic issues (supply side) will have some effect for marginalized children. However, this has rarely been enough to overcome factors relating to demand for education, particularly the indirect costs and value placed on education by families for their children.

To mitigate these, especially the poverty and gender aspects, various policy measures have been tried around the world.

### Cash and non-cash transfers

- **Conditional cash transfers to families.** Grooten (2006) summarizes the effects of both conditional and unconditional cash transfers on education. Conditional cash transfers have had an impact on enrolment in primary education of the order of between 3.5–5.8% for boys in Mexico and 7.2–9.3% for girls. In Nicaragua the average increase was 22%.<sup>91</sup>
- **Unconditional cash transfers to families,** particularly pensions, have been shown to have a positive impact on children's education in Brazil, South Africa and Namibia, while family allowances and child support programmes are also showing similar outcomes.
- **Scholarships directed through the education system/schools.** The Bangladesh female secondary school stipend programme increased enrolment of girls by up to 18% a year.

Transfers of the kind described above are an effective way of mitigating the effects of poverty and removing that particular demand-side barrier to participation in education. When tied to the participation of girls, as in the case of Bangladesh, they can also address the gender disparity. These measures have been shown to increase enrolment, but less data is available on completion and educational achievement.

However, various limitations exist. If the decision about who gets the stipend or transfer is dependent upon means testing, then this is probably not manageable either from institutional capacity or politically in both India and Nepal. It also promotes stigma attached to the target group. Many examples exist of this related to means-tested school meals and free milk in countries such as the U.K.

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<sup>91</sup> Grooten, S. (2006). Cash Transfers to Reduce Children's Poverty. Maastricht Graduate School of Governance, Policy Brief No. 2, August 2006.

Where the target group is obvious by sex or social category, other limitations exist. The first is ensuring sufficient funds to cover all the target group. In *Nepal* adequate coverage has not been achieved, and district education officers have needed to make choices, either to limit the number of beneficiaries or to spread a finite amount more thinly amongst more children (TRSE). The lesson is that even where the groups are easily identifiable (e.g. all Dalits, all girls), unless sufficient funds are available, allocation is open to abuse, bias and choices unacceptable to communities affected. Also the amount needs to be of a level that mitigates the costs attached to schooling, as the programme for primary school stipends in Bangladesh concluded.

### **Quotas – the issue is at what levels**

Where a system is not universal, then quotas can play a part in lifting the educational status of marginalized groups. This is currently being implemented in college education in *India*. However, there is often a question related to the level at which these should begin. For excluded groups to be respected, they need to enter Higher Education on merit and this means bringing more on through the system to compete on a merit basis. In a situation of universal and compulsory primary education, then quotas might be more relevant at secondary and above, where places are limited. However, compulsory education will not be successful even at the primary level unless there is strong legal enforcement. Where participation in education is still largely voluntary, role models and teachers from the relevant social group are necessary. Quotas can address this need, particularly in the teaching force, through both the number and type of teachers trained, as well as their deployment.

### **Early Childhood Development and education programmes can avoid cumulative deprivation for all groups**

One determinant of progress in school is children's ability on school entry.<sup>92</sup> School readiness is influenced by a number of factors, including cognitive ability, social-emotional competence, and sensori-motor development.<sup>93</sup> These in turn are affected by inadequate cognitive stimulation, iodine and iron deficiency, and stunting due to malnutrition, as well as other factors such as environment and violence, all requiring interventions before three years of age. Many co-occur and are the subject of attempts at integrated ECD provision.<sup>94</sup> The **importance of reaching children at a very young age**, as issues related to social exclusion summarized above are more difficult to address as children become older, is another element in a comprehensive response to addressing social exclusion in primary education. The literature on the importance of early childhood development is well developed,<sup>95</sup> and is particularly relevant to the issue of social exclusion in primary education. In order for children to perform effectively in primary school, they must have an enabling environment and be adequately prepared, which includes having access to early childhood development opportunities either within or outside the home. This can be one of the most effective means of 'levelling the playing field' for excluded children.

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<sup>92</sup> Grantham-McGregor S., Cheung, Y.B., Cueto, S., Glewwe, P., Richter, L., Strupp, B. (2006). Two Hundred and Forty Two Million Children Fail to Reach Their Developmental Potential in the First Five Years in Developing Countries. *Lancet*.

<sup>93</sup> Blair, C. (2002). School Readiness: Integrating Cognition and Emotion in a neurobiological conceptualization of children's functioning at School Entry. *American journal of Psychology*, 57, 111-127. Cited in: Walker, S.P., Wachs, T.D. *et al.* (2007). Child Development: Risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries. *The Lancet*, Volume 369, Issue 9556, p. 145-157.

<sup>94</sup> Walker, S.P., Wachs, T.D. *et al.* (2007). Child Development: Risk factors for adverse outcomes in developing countries. *The Lancet*, Volume 369, Issue 9556, p. 145-157.

<sup>95</sup> UNICEF (2005).

In the case of *Nepal*, ECD, especially between the age of three and five years, has been shown to improve performance in primary education, particularly of Dalit children, though the study under consideration was a small sample.<sup>96</sup> If universal ECD were to be implemented, there would be additional costs, and if Dalit children only were targeted then many other disadvantaged children, especially the poor, would be excluded.

### **Let children participate!**

Encouraging the enrolment of Dalit children in the problem-solving and solution process, and also the care-givers in a community level process, may in itself contribute to positive change at community level. Similarly, encouraging **children themselves to participate in the management of the school**, and also reaching children who are not attending, and promoting the diversity of this participation by ensuring that Dalit children participate in the process, could be a significant step towards making schools more inclusive. The ‘Child Cabinet’ initiative supported as part of the UNICEF Quality Education Package in *India* is one such opportunity and, while not yet evaluated, is showing some positive signs of contributing to children’s involvement in the management of the school. It however does not include the stipulation of ensuring that the cabinet is made up of children from various castes (and other characteristics), and therefore will not necessarily address issues related to social exclusion. This could be made mandatory.

### **5.3. Particular Special Measures for Dalits – the Relational Aspect of Deprivation**

The additional and dominant disadvantage for Dalits is one concerning social relations, their ‘untouchability’, the *intentional* exclusion of them by other, more dominant, and in this case high caste groups, both allowed and perpetuated by the system itself. This is referred to as the relational aspect of social exclusion<sup>97</sup> and manifests itself as stigma, discrimination and identities.<sup>98</sup>

#### **Transfers – sufficient funds are needed for coverage**

Firstly, cost barriers to education need to be reduced. The simplest way of achieving this is, rather than means-testing, to target scholarships to all Dalits, with sufficient funding available and protected in the education budget. This might also need to be done for other marginalized groups, especially the poor. While not all Dalits are poor, and some non-poor Dalits will be included, it would be better to include more Dalits even if not poor, as means-testing is likely to unintentionally exclude members of a social group who need to benefit from education.

#### **Quotas – the labour market needs them too**

If universal, free and compulsory primary education is achieved, quotas at this level will not be needed. While the secondary (or post-basic) levels of education are not universal, quotas are one way of uplifting the Dalit community and therefore ***quotas should be implemented at post-basic level***. Although the above policy discussion emphasizes the importance of completion and

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<sup>96</sup> Save the Children U.S. (2003). What’s the Difference? The Impact of early childhood development programmes: A study from Nepal of the effects for children, their families and communities.

<sup>97</sup> Sen, A. (June 2000). Social exclusion: Concept, Application and Scrutiny. Social Development Papers no. 1. Office of Environment and Social Development, Asian Development Bank, Manila.

<sup>98</sup> Marshal, J.H. and Calderon, V. (2006). Social Exclusion in Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, *op. cit.*

learning outcomes if any impact on entering the labour market is to be felt, Dalits experience discrimination in the labour market even if they have completed school and acquired the relevant qualifications. If this continues, motivation for participating in education in the first place will decrease. Anecdotal evidence for this trend exists. ***Therefore, governments should extend the quota policy, e.g. now in higher levels of education in India, to the labour market (and outside to the civil service also)***, as has been done in post-apartheid South Africa.

The recent move of *Nepal* to include Dalits in the newly formed interim government is one step in the right direction, but has resulted from violent and political struggle, and it would be preferred that policies are in place to prevent the need for this. To pursue a more developmental path, Dalits need to be in decision-making positions at all levels, as a policy, and therefore ***quotas relating to the catchment area of the school should be in place for school management committees, and quotas reserved in policy committees, the civil service, and teaching service. This would not only increase the voice of Dalits in decision-making affecting them but also prepare them for participation in other levels of a democratic system.***

### **Early Childhood Development – avoiding cumulative deprivation for Dalits**

Interventions to mitigate against the deficiencies described above are needed for many children but should also be targeted and monitored in the case of Dalit children so that they do not suffer these disadvantages as well as those of their untouchability. Experience suggests that they are the last to benefit from such measures, so suffering multiple and cumulative disadvantage from service delivery. This disadvantage will extend through life if they do not perform well at primary level, and suggests that ECD is one intervention which may give them a good chance. For ECD to be universalized in *Nepal*, an additional costing will be needed.

### **Other measures are equally important**

Information regarding the level of exclusion of Dalit children from education is necessary to enable an effective management process at local level. The attendance of socially excluded children, such as the scheduled caste, tends to be more irregular than other children and therefore moving beyond enrolment data to focus instead on retention, transition, average years of schooling data, and most importantly completion rates and assessment of basic learning competencies, disaggregated by caste (and gender, and other social groupings), is necessary. This would improve the ability to assess and monitor the capacity of the education system to reach and provide a quality service to traditionally excluded groups. ***Strengthening data management systems which provide disaggregated data by caste, gender and other characteristics at local level*** is therefore necessary. This data must be complemented by data on dropouts and on those who have never attended school.<sup>99</sup>

Strengthening the generation and use of data, including placing it in the public domain, would in the case of *India* complement the recent positive developments related to expanding the power and use of the 'Right to Information' Act, which promotes the availability and use of information related to government services (and other information) to the public. It would also be important to include private schools in this equation, recognizing the trend regarding children (particularly boys belonging to higher caste) being sent to private school.

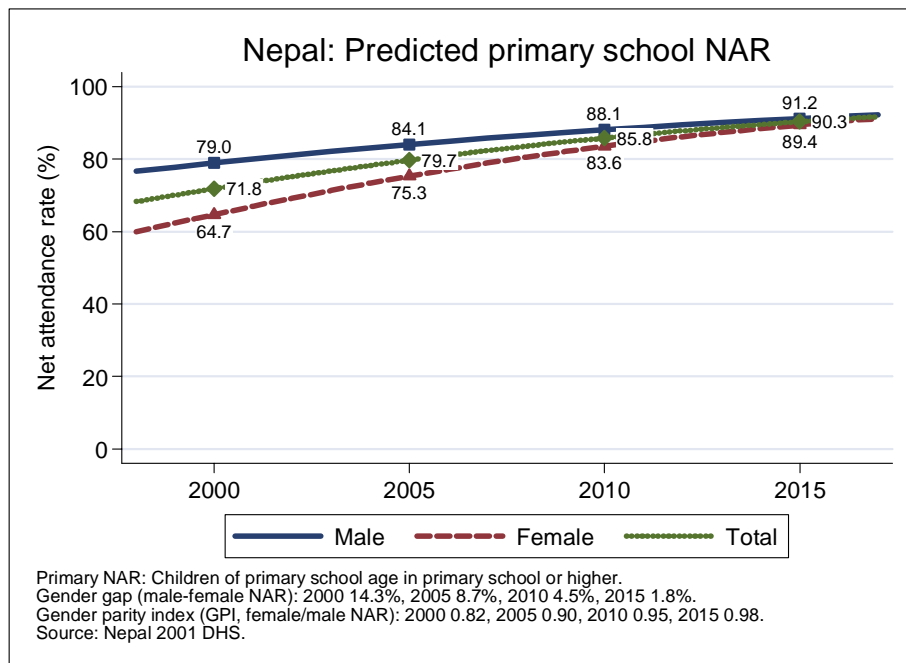
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<sup>99</sup> Ramachandran (2004). p. 23.

While the above suggestions will give Dalits a chance in the system, there is need to emphasize other measures which fulfil the human rights approach to education. There is need for teachers to teach Dalits, and sensitively, for textbooks to portray Dalits in a positive light in relation to other groups, for mutual use of water sources and equitable access to meals and other benefits, and for anti-discrimination laws to be enforced.

## 6. Conclusions

Universal Primary Education will not be achieved by 2015 at the current rate of progress, at least in *Nepal*. As a country gets closer to 100% attendance, the rate of increase becomes smaller because the last 5 or 10 per cent are more difficult to get into school than the first 90 per cent. A model developed by UNICEF does not consider the school participation of individual disadvantaged groups but can be likened to the population as a whole, and the attendance of girls. The graph below illustrates this.<sup>100</sup>



Many of the children without access to education will be those who are barred from school by social discrimination. While the MDG costing exercise for Nepal included special measures for girls, it noted the exclusion of Dalits and other socially marginalized groups, and costs scholarships for excluded groups, and awareness programmes for communities. This current paper endorses broader strategies in the MDG costing exercise for Nepal which recommends measures such as more water supplies to decrease time of children collecting water, better rural infrastructure and increased livelihoods. These measures will support policies in the education sector for the universalization of education, but not necessarily for Dalits.

<sup>100</sup> E-mail communication with F. Huebler, UNICEF HQ. The graph is part of the GAP country profiles that will be added to the childinfo.org website in the coming weeks.

The Dalit issue is, as described, only partly one of poverty and other more widespread forms of deprivation. The unique issue belongs to social relations, discrimination and identities, and particularly untouchability, which is historic and very deep-rooted.

Several policy options have been recommended in the discussion above and are summarized below.

## **6.1. Universal Policies, Which Will Also Benefit Dalits**

- ***Universal and compulsory free primary education.*** For this to be achieved, there will need to be provision for all, enforcement, and removal of cost barriers as discussed above in Section 3.
- ***Higher financial investment in education.*** *India* needs to raise the allocation of national budget to education, with a significant proportion going to primary education. For *Nepal*, as discussed above, there will be a funding gap needing to be filled by donors.
- ***Donors to increase their allocations to primary education*** in *Nepal* and to prioritize primary education, though not to the exclusion of other levels.
- ***Sufficient textbooks supplied*** to at least one per two children in each subject, but ideally one each per child, free, and on time for the start of the school year.
- ***Uniforms***, if compulsory, or socially desirable for equity reasons, ***be supplied free of charge.***

## **6.2. Special Measures for Dalits**

### **6.2.1. Needing additional finance**

The following special measures needing finance are recommended:

- Scholarships be targeted to all Dalits and funding prioritized, with sufficient funding available and protected in the education budget. This will need a higher investment in education.

MDG analysis in *Nepal* suggests that UPE will not be realized by 2015, unless the funding gap of over US\$1.8 billion is made up. There is a greater likelihood that this might be achieved now that the peace process is underway, and the signs are that more donor funding will be available. Whether it will be sufficient is not yet known. Therefore other policy measures to reach Dalits are needed in the interim within the current financial framework as well as in the long term to overcome the particular social exclusion experienced by Dalit children.

### **6.2.2. Possible within current financial frameworks**

The other measures suggested below are possible within current financial frameworks, but would need to include a communication component so that they are understood at all levels of the education system and society.

- Devolve authority for enforcing teacher attendance so that absenteeism is improved.
- Teacher training to include sensitization on caste issues to overcome stigma and discrimination.
- Textbooks to portray Dalits and others in a positive light, including relations with others.
- Quotas should be implemented at post-basic level.
- Governments should extend the quota policy to the labour market.
- Quotas relating to the catchment area of the school should be in place and enforced for school management committees, and quotas reserved in policy committees, the civil service, and teaching service.
- Sensitive implementation of universal measures – water, food/meals – which do not discriminate.

Finally, one of the lessons from *India* has been that piecemeal approaches, which only address one element of exclusion, have limited success. Therefore, there is a need for a comprehensive approach which addresses all the barriers to access simultaneously.





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