Nepal has a history of providing residential, segregated schools for children with disabilities with only a few isolated examples of good inclusive education for these children. UNICEF has been working to promote inclusion to ensure that children with disabilities have teaching and learning materials tailored to their needs within an education system that enables them to enrol and learn alongside their peers in their communities. For further background, see this report.

To accelerate change, UNICEF works on many fronts, including the provision of inclusive teaching and learning materials, training for teachers and education officials, and broad-based advocacy on the right of all children to have equitable access to quality education. Another critical plank in its strategy is to embed inclusive education within Nepal’s education sector plan and budget. This case study focuses on inclusive sector planning.

Nepal is in the final phase of developing its new School Education Sector Plan (SESP), set to run between July 2022 and 2030. In keeping with Volume 3 of Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines, with its increased focus on strengthening inclusion within national education systems for children with disabilities, one of the nine studies to inform sector plan development in Nepal was a disability inclusive education analysis. Based on this analysis, the Government and partners developed an inclusive education approach paper, which includes a contextualised conceptual framework for disability-inclusive education within school education.

Under the new sector plan, the Government and its partners will develop a roadmap to strengthen inclusion of children with disabilities. It will also scale up models of inclusive education and train local governments to plan, budget, implement and monitor these models better, so that more children with disabilities not only enrol in schools but learn and stay.
RESULTS ACHIEVED

• Building an inclusive sector plan means championing an inclusive analysis. UNICEF supported a dedicated analysis on disability-inclusive education in Nepal to inform the overall education sector analysis and the development of an inclusive education approach paper.

• Nepal’s new School Education Sector Plan, 2022-2030, strengthens inclusive education by including targets on scaling up inclusive education schools and turning the 380 existing resource classes into inclusive education resource hubs for schools within the respective local governments. It also scales up an inclusive Education Management Information sub-System at the local level to consolidate data on children with disabilities to be able to offer educational services that respond to their specific needs.

LESSONS LEARNED

• Data is key to advancing inclusive education. The transition to a federal model has scattered institutional capacity regarding key education functions at the local level, but it also represented an opportunity as responsible officers for social sectors are all put under the social development committee at the municipal level, presenting an ‘organic’ cross-sectoral institutional set up in terms of potential holistic planning and budgeting of disability-inclusive education. This has proven to be useful in the establishment of the EMIS sub-system, increasing capacity to capture more information, including on children with previously undetected disabilities and including those in early childhood education.

• Digital platforms can be potent tools for making transformational change in education systems. UNICEF has partnered with local organization, Ole Nepal (Open Learning Exchange Nepal), to develop materials, such as accessible digital libraries to support children with low vision or blindness, and interactive digital learning materials and Nepali sign language videos covering grades 1 to 6 to allow students who are deaf or hard of hearing to learn concepts in English, Nepali, math and science.

NEXT STEPS

UNICEF will continue to work with the Government to finalise and launch the new sector plan. Simultaneously, UNICEF is helping to prepare the 753 local governments, who are the main mandate holders on the management of school education within the federal country, to operationalise the new sector plan in local level education sector plans, budgets and monitoring frameworks, including the necessary resources to undertake need-based planning and implementation of inclusive education. UNICEF will continue to support the Government in presenting scalable inclusive education models and monitoring mechanisms based on the best practice. UNICEF will further support the Government in the development and implementation of a roadmap to be able to identify children with disabilities in the early grades, using the Washington Group questionnaires, as well as development of associated teacher training. Furthermore, during 2022, UNICEF will work with partners to broaden the scope of the inclusive education by developing a comprehensive training package for ECD facilitators, expecting to reach 300 ECD teachers, 3,000 children aged 3 to 5 years and 6,000 caregivers.

Cost effectiveness: Under the 2018-2022 Country Program Action Plan, UNICEF Nepal has mobilized US$ 10.3 million to provide over 80,000 children (51 per cent girls) with access to inclusive education.