

A NEED OF DEINSTITUTIONALIZATION:

Study on the situation of Children with disabilities studying in resource classes with residential facilities and developing strategy towards community based inclusive education and family reintegration

INTRODUCTION

Despite of many legal provisions that prohibits and discourage the separation of children with disabilities from parental care, in practice, a significant number (eight thousand) of children, have been placed in institutional care by the state to provide education. Having very minimal services they are living in the most vulnerable condition and doubled handicapped due to the separation from their families. Most of these children come from the poorest section of the population. It is estimated that at least sixty percent of disabilities found in Nepal are poverty related.

Children with disabilities are 17 times more likely to be institutionalized than the children without disabilities (UNICEF:2018). In 2019, 15045 children were receiving support from child care homes (NCRC 2020). Children raised in institutions are 10 times more likely to be involved in prostitution, 40 times more likely to have a criminal record, and 500 times more likely to commit suicide (Civil Society in Development, n. d.). Institutions discourage individuality, impose mass treatment, deprive residents from essential freedoms, segregate them from their families and communities, suppress individual choice, and foster a perception that people with disabilities are unable to take a place in society (Open Society Foundations,2019)

This study has been carried out to map the existing scenarios of educational services for children with disabilities aiming to suggest possible strategies for their deinstitutionalization and point to community-led inclusive education solutions in line with Nepal's national policies and international treaties / obligations.

The study covered six Resource Classes and special schools. Sixty-one children with diverse disabilities i.e., intellectual, visually impaired, hard of hearing and physical disabilities composed the sample population. The households of the sample children i.e., their families, communities and municipalities / villages were interviewed so to get their perceptions and suggestions. Altogether, one hundred and eighty-seven respondents were systematically interviewed.

SELECTED RESOURCE CLASS/SCHOOL FOR STUDY

Province	Municipality	School	Disability Category
Province 1	Biratnagar Metropolitan city	Gograha Secondary School	Intellectual
Bagmati	Melamchi Municipality	Indreswori Secondary School	Intellectual
Bagmati	Tarakeshwor Municipality	Prithivinarayan Secondary School	Visually Impaired
Lumbini	Tulsipur Municipality	Gurujajur Secondary School	Visually Impaired
Lumbini	Kapilvastu Municipality	Janata Namuna Secondary School	Hearing Disability
Sudurpaschim	Godawari Municipality	Sudur Pachhim Samabesi Vidhyalaya	Physical Disability

NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS SELECTED

Respondent	Godawari	Tulsipur	Kapilvastu	Tara-keshwor	Mel-amchi	Bi-ratnagar	Total
Children	10	10	8	10	11	12	61
Parents	10	10	7	8	11	12	58
Resource Teachers	1	1	0	1	2	2	7
Caregiver	2	1	1	1	2	2	9
Municipality Staff	6	4	1	2	5	3	21
FGD Participants	8	7	3	0	7	6	31
Total	37	35	20	22	38	37	187

MAJOR FINDINGS

1. Policy Contradiction

While in one document children with disabilities should not be separated from their family in the name of education another policy allows it. Government policies across ministries are not harmonized, causing confusion at all levels and sections of service providers. Thus, amid this confusion, the rights and the protection of children with disabilities are jeopardized.

2. Weak response of local government

The provisional and municipality levels of government are not informed or have not accepted the responsibility of their mandate with regard to CWD and their families. Presently, services at municipality level are confined to the mere issuing of disability cards and disability allowance.

3. Broken Relationship with family and parents

Children living in Resource Classes have broken contact with their families. While few see their families once a month the vast majority see their families only once or twice a year, this situation constitutes child separation. Thus, the Resource Class concept does not abide by international conventions nor by Nepal's national legislation.

4. No monitoring

There is no monitoring of the residential facilities of the Resource Classes regarding child protection and the child's overall wellbeing. No resources schools are aware of Govt. Hostel Guideline

5. Deprivation from basic rights

The overall cost of having a child in a Resource Class is estimated at nearly 1,30,000 Rs. per annum, making this service probably the costliest government provision today. This huge investment is yielding comparably little towards the individual child's long-term wellbeing but is depriving him / her of their basic rights.

6. Huge gap in the implementation of policies

While there are many state provisions released by different ministries e.g. financial support, medical support, transportation facilities, support to care giver at home, sign language training for parents, and income-generation training for families there is no linkage between these benefits at implementation level.

7. Significant gap in provisions and practice

In policies and laws the inclusive education has been defined as a process of developing an educational system that opens the opportunity for all children to receive education in a non-discriminatory environment in their *own community* by respecting

the multicultural differences. Despite this policy provision curriculum practice requires all children to follow the same lesson plans disregarding their learning differences and challenges. In practice, there is little inclusive practices found in community schools thus excluding the majority of children with any form of special need.

8. Gap of Knowledge and Qualification

Children with disabilities are receiving education, through segregated special schools, integrated schools, and Resource Classes. The vast majority of the teachers do not have adequate knowledge or qualifications in special needs education. Teachers are unable to prepare or implement Individualized Education Plan (IEP). They are not aware of differentiate instruction or how to conduct assessment accommodations.

9. Lacking Alternative Materials

The use of alternative or supplementary materials to support students in mainstream classrooms or resource classes is lacking. A "one fit all" pedagogical approach is widespread. Of the sample group 90% of students called for appropriate learning materials, 82% of students asked for individual support, they were rarely supported in their own particular needs. Likewise, 79% of students felt it would be beneficial to receive instruction in small groups.

10. Harassment and Bullying

The main reason for parents choosing institutional care for their children is the lack of appropriate educational services in their community. Some children who enrolled in community schools were forced to leave their school due to harassment and bullying by their peers.

11. Lack of early Identification

A significant number of children with severe and moderate disabilities are living at Resource Classes. Staff, teachers and caretakers alike, do not have the knowledge or manpower ability to fulfill the childcare or educational needs of these children. The admittance of these children to the classes was mainly due to families not receiving any form of support, they were simply not aware of how to take care of their child and had no other choice. None of the interviewed parents had been offered Community Based Disability Services prior to sending their children away. Parents wanted to keep their children within the family if they had both health and educational provisions locally.

SOME INFOGRAPHS

Figure 1: Duration in institutional care

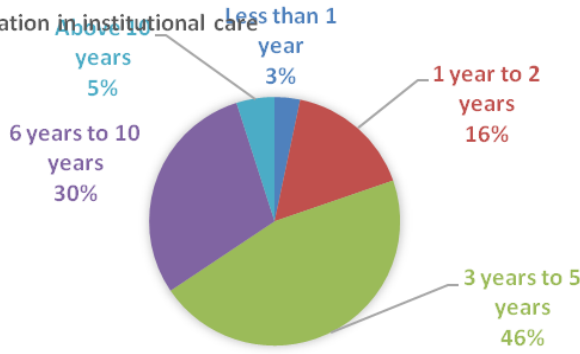


Figure 2: Main reasons for leaving family for education

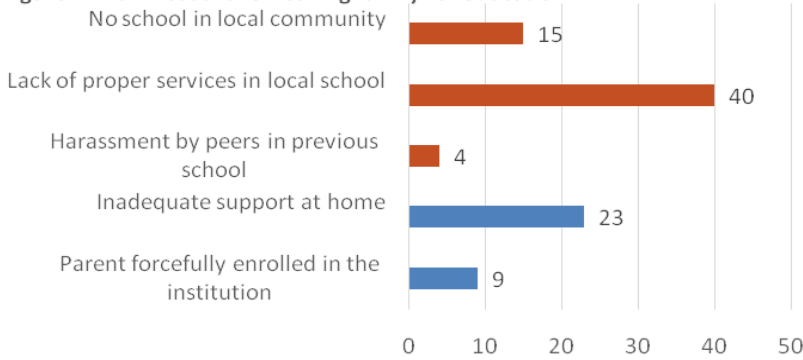


Figure 3: Feeling of children when they leave their family first time

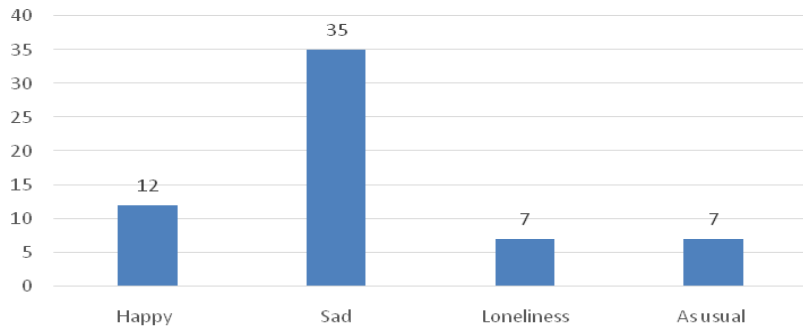
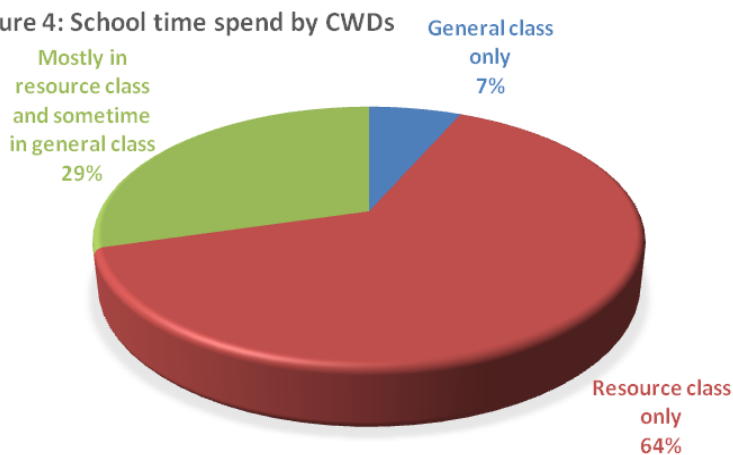


Figure 4: School time spend by CWDs



Supports needed to receive education in the general classroom (multiple responses)

Response	Freq.	%
Accessible learning materials	55	90
Individual support by a resource teacher	50	82
Small group instruction	48	79
Sign language intervention	3	5
Accessible physical facilities	43	70
Transportation facilities	29	48
Disable-friendly environment	6	10
Multi-tiered supports	32	52
Medical support	40	66
Therapeutic support	24	39

Participation of students in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities (Resource Teachers) (multiple responses)

Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities	Frequency (n=7)
Participate regularly in the program organized by schools	3
Dance programme in parents' day	2
Play and dance with a peer in the classroom	2
Participation in sports day	1
Participation in a rally in World Disabled Day	1
Field trip	2

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **International conventions and national policies which protect the rights of children with disabilities should be strongly followed and implemented.**

A precondition for this is that the different government bodies secure cohesive policies in order to secure the protection and rights of CWDs and their families. Importantly also, this will give local governments, practitioners, and other duty bearers within the fields of education and child protection clear directions and more harmonious working conditions.

A commission or working group should be established at the National Child Rights Council inclusive of MOWCSC, CEHRD Ministry of Education, other key stakeholders and civil society organizations to lead a process whereby clarity is reached. This is paramount to ensuring the rights and protection of CWDs.

- **A national strategy for the deinstitutionalisation of CWDs should be developed.**
- **Children with disabilities should receive quality education through a support system based on their special learning needs in their community school i.e., within an inclusive education setting. This in time will benefit the whole concept and wish for a more inclusive society.**
- **All teachers teaching in mainstream classrooms should have proper knowledge about the taxonomy of educational objectives, multi-tiered support system, UDL, IEP, cooperative instructional methods, assessment accommodations, etc. to better education for all children**
- **Where good practices exist in Resource Classes they should be documented and used in the inclusive classroom settings.**
- **Those Resource Class teachers, although highly challenged by a very difficult mandate who have stayed dedicated to CWDs over the past many years should be recognized and encouraged to play a supportive role in the reorganising of services for CWDs.**
- **Government should promptly stop admissions to Resource Classes scaling down the service. Funds should be reallocated to the development of local inclusive educational services.**
- **Government should work in a phased manner to develop inclusive schools (with required infrastructure), All teachers need to**

- **be prepared i.e. they should comprehend the philosophy of inclusive education, its pedagogical approaches, classroom management and provide the necessary equipment to the schools based on CWDs needs.**
- **Disability assessment centres should be made functional at municipality level with required qualified human resources and needed equipment. Community based disability services should act as ongoing support to the families and schools, monitoring services set in place and adjusting provisions after the needs of CWD as they change.**
- **School teachers could also be trained as partners in the early detection of disability. They could contribute, like other local duty bearers, to referring CWDs to services. They could also play a vital role by providing data to the municipality, so it has continual updated data.**
- **While each child and each disability have some commonality and challenges within society all children and all disabilities are unique. Specialized knowledge regarding individual kinds and rear disabilities and needs should be available at municipality level.**
- **There is need for a cross sectorial approach, ministries need to work together, clarifying and harmonize services in order to achieve best and cost benefit services. Clear directions and guidelines will benefit provincial and local government implementation securing the rights of CWD and their families.**
- **Parent involvement is a corner stone of the inclusive education. Programs and platforms should be developed where parents in general but in particular those from marginalized groups should be empowered to participate in their children's education and future journey of life.**

Study Carried out by:
Resource Center for Rehabilitation and Development (RCRD) - Nepal

In Collaboration with:
Alternative to Separation (ATOS), CEHRD, Ministry of Education, CISU-Denmark, National Federation of the Disabled Nepal.

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