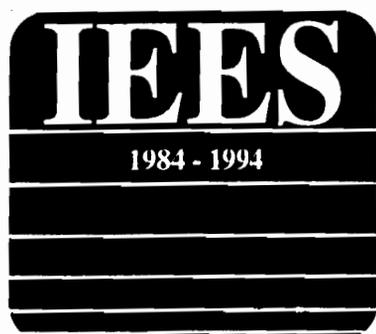


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**Primary School Repetition and Dropout in Nepal:  
A Search for Solutions**



**IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY  
OF EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS**

Improving the Efficiency of  
Educational Systems (IEES)  
A USAID Project

Statistics and Computer Section  
Planning Division  
Ministry of Education, Culture  
and Social Welfare  
His Majesty's Government of Nepal

October 1993

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# **Primary School Repetition and Dropout in Nepal: A Search for Solutions**

## **Research Team**

C. Howard Williams, Director  
Dibya Man Karmacharya  
Chuda Nath Aryal

## **Consultants**

Cynthia O'Brien  
David Chapman

## **Programme and Technical Support**

New Era, Pvt. Ltd.  
Ram Sharan Kharel  
Gyaneshwor Amatya  
Vishnu Karki

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## **PREFACE**

The research which is summarized in this report was developed through many discussions with officials at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Social Welfare (MOEC/SW). Several topics were discussed to meet the needs of the Ministry for information in key areas in the efficiency and delivery of educational services. While these topics still merit research attention, a consensus developed that the focus of this research activity should be on the perspectives of parents and community members on school participation.

As we have pointed out in the report, the causes of early grade dropout and repetition are well known. Although we set about validating these causes, we focused most of our efforts on generating ideas on what could be done about it. Consequently, the major value of this report is in presenting the views and advice from the community on how to improve school participation.

I would like to acknowledge the encouragement, support, and assistance provided for this project by many professionals and scholars. The number of persons to be acknowledged seems extraordinary, being nearly equal to the number of pages in the report. Yet that is the nature of a collaborative enterprise and this report represents the efforts of many colleagues and partners.

The intellectual and organizational leadership for defining this research was provided by Dr. Ishwor P. Upadhyaya, Secretary of the MOEC/SW. Mr. Keshab Nepal provided valuable support and advice throughout the project, both as Joint Secretary and, later, as advisor on our progress and results. Mr. Tirtha B. Manandhar and Mr. Bhola Lohani gave conceptual and process feedback throughout.

Mr. Nanda Krishna Karmacharya and Mr. Chuman Sing Basnyat gave us oversight and assistance for the overall effort. Mr. Uttam B. Amatya coached us on the practicalities of our effort and approach.

The assistance and support given by Florida State University and the U.S. Agency for International Development were essential for the research to happen at all. The interest and attention given by Dr. John Mayo, FSU, and Dr. Mike Calavan, USAID resulted in a higher quality of research than what otherwise might have been the case.

The Statistics and Computer Section of the Ministry, through two "generations" of staff, were essential to accomplishing this task. Messrs. Vishnu Karki, Mahesh Parajuli, and Gyaneshwor Amatya were the first team from this section to tackle the challenge of analyzing Ministry and Project data. As these three staff members went on for graduate studies, Mr. Ram Sharan Kharel picked it with capability and ease.

The New Era, Pvt., Ltd. organization gave us their experience, advice and a professional staff to accomplish the job. Mr. Madhup Dhungana was a key advisor throughout, and Mr. Jagat Basnet headed New Era's research team for this project.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and colleagues on the research team. Our work was especially rewarding as we learned from this experience and from each other along the way. Also, I would like to thank Ms. Christa Skerry for providing editorial assistance in producing the final document.

We hope that the information provided by this research report will of continued use for education and development policy makers, managers, and scholars in improving student attendance and progression in primary school.

C. Howard Williams  
Kathmandu, Nepal

# **Primary School Repetition and Dropout in Nepal: A Search for Solutions**

## **Overview of the Study**

This study investigated (1) family, school, and community factors contributing to grade repetition and student dropout during the early grades of primary school and (2) what actions parents, school personnel, and community leaders believe can be taken at the community level and by the Ministry of Education and Culture/Social Welfare (MOEC/SW) to improve student flow through the primary grades. The design of the study was based on two premises. First, grade repetition and dropout during primary school represent some of the most serious constraints to internal efficiency now facing the education sector in Nepal. Second, although much is already known about the reasons for repetition and dropout at the early grades, much of the solution to improving student flow will rest on interventions undertaken at the community level. The MOEC/SW needs more information on community-school dynamics if it is to effectively assist communities in raising the efficiency of primary education.

## **Background**

The most serious constraints effecting the efficiency of the education system in Nepal are the high repetition and dropout rates at the primary school level. Less than half of the children who begin Grade 1 complete primary school (Grade 5), with most dropping out after Grade 1 or 2, before they even acquire basic literacy or numeracy skills. The waste is enormous, both in terms of the loss of talent, as children fail to gain skills they need in later years, and in terms of education resources that yield no return for the expenditure. Investment in the education system - teacher training, instructional materials, classrooms - is largely wasted if students do not remain in the system long enough to benefit from this system.

Because the severity of the problem and many of its causes are well understood by the educational leadership of Nepal, this study focused on identifying solutions - reasonable strategies for alleviating the problem.

## **Phase I: Rates, Reasons, and Perceived Importance of the Issue**

While this study was designed to identify solutions rather than further study the problem, current information on the rates and reasons for repetition and dropout is a necessary input to effective discussion of strategies for improving student flow, for two reasons: (1) the pattern of repetition and dropout across grades can indicate where interventions should be targeted to have maximum effect and (2) decision makers, faced with difficult trade-offs and accountable to multiple interest groups, must be able to justify their eventual course of action with solid evidence. Consequently, during Phase I of the study, current rates of student flow were computed using national educational statistics and data from records

from the study sample schools, and interviews were conducted within selected communities to determine local perceptions of the reasons for repetition and dropout.

## **The Study**

**Procedure:** This study was conducted in two phases. Activities in Phase 1 were undertaken to confirm (1) the recent rates of student repetition and dropout, (2) the extent that high rates of repetition and dropout were seen as a problem within local communities, and (3) the principal causes for poor student flow as perceived at the community level. Within each of the 20 communities studied, interviews were conducted with 16 persons, as follows: two teachers; two community members; six parents (two of promotees, two of repeaters, and two of dropouts); and six students (two promotees, two repeaters, and two dropouts). Additionally, the headmaster in each community completed a school description form which was designed to collect demographic information about the school.

Data from Phase I were used in the selection of the sites for inclusion in Phase II. In Phase II, a total of 12 focus groups were conducted in four communities with educators, female parents, and male parents to identify strategies these respondents believed (1) could be effective in improving student flow and (2) would be well received by the community.

**Sample:** Selection of districts, communities, and individuals to participate in this study followed an intentional sampling procedure, designed to target communities most likely to provide relevant data. In the first step, an analysis of current repetition and dropout rates by district was computed using national education data made available by the MOEC/SW's Planning Division. Based on this analysis, four districts with particularly high repetition and dropout rates were selected for inclusion in the study. The sample included one Mountain district, two Hill districts, and one Terai district. Within each of those four districts, five communities were selected on the basis of consultation with the District Education Officer (DEO). Of the five communities in each district, four were selected because of their relative remoteness and because they have high repetition and dropout rates and one was selected because of its close proximity to the district headquarters and because it was expected that it would have relatively low repetition and dropout rates.

Rasuwa district was selected to represent the 16 Mountain districts of the country, Dhankuta and Dadeldhura were chosen to represent the 39 Hill districts, and Kapilvastu was selected to represent the 20 Terai districts. Dadeldhura is also a Basic and Primary Education Programme district.

Although these four districts were selected on the basis of geographic representativeness, and not considered to represent any unusual cultural or economic uniqueness, the study team determined that an assessment of the

representativeness of the sample schools should be conducted. An assessment was made to determine the consistency or divergence of the sample schools' enrolment structures compared with those of the sample districts and the nation as a whole.

The results of this analysis indicate that the structures of primary enrolment in the sample schools in each of the four districts did not deviate to a significant extent from the enrolment structure of the nation as a whole. In addition, the sample schools of Dhankuta, Kapilvastu, and Dadeldhura were also consistent with the enrolment structure for their respective districts. Two of the five schools in Rasuwa also had enrolment structures similar to the overall district, though three sample schools had structures which varied somewhat from that of the district as a whole. In sum, the analysis indicated that the sample schools should be considered as representative schools for the purposes of this research study.

One community from each of the four districts was selected for inclusion in Phase II of the study, based on the research team's assessment of the receptivity of communities (from Phase I) to participation in Focus Groups. Within each of these communities, three Focus Groups were formed: one group for teachers, one group for mothers, and a separate group for fathers. Focus Groups for male and female parents were conducted separately based on the assumption that mothers would be more willing to speak openly in this arrangement. In each community, the headmaster was included in the teacher group. All Focus Groups contained 8-10 individuals. **Table 1** summarizes the sampling frame used in the study and **Table 2** summarizes the sample characteristics of the Focus Group participants.

**Instrumentation:** Interviews with parents, teachers, students, and community members were conducted following protocols that collected information on the perceived causes of repetition and dropout and the extent to which the respondent believed that high levels of repetition and dropout represented a problem.

**Data Analysis:** Interview responses were recorded by interviewers on the protocol forms which were then coded and major themes were summarized using a content analysis procedure. Discussion from each Focus Group was summarized by each Focus Group leader. These summaries were also coded and major themes were summarized using content analysis.

Table 1

## Summary of Sampling Frame Phase 1

LEVEL OF SELECTION	SELECTION CRITERIA	BASIS OF SELECTION	NUMBER SELECTED
<b>Phase I: Selection of Districts</b>	Combination of 1) high repetition and dropout rates, and 2) geographic representation: one Mountain district, two Hill districts, and one Terai district	Review of national education data	Four Districts
<b>Phase I: Selection of Communities within Districts</b>	Of the five communities selected in each district, four had high repetition and dropout rates and one had low repetition and dropout rates	Based on consultations with District Education Officers	Five Communities in each District (a total of 20 communities)
<b>Phase I: Selection of Respondents within Communities</b>	<p><b>Teachers:</b> Grade 1</p> <p><b>Students:</b> Grade 1,2, or 3</p> <p><b>Parents:</b> At least one child in Grade 1,2, or 3</p> <p><b>Community Members:</b> Residence in the community</p>	<p>Field researchers' inquiry, location, and identification</p> <p><b>Teachers</b> currently assigned to Grade 1</p> <p><b>Students:</b> attendance records</p> <p><b>Parents:</b> through students</p> <p><b>Community Members:</b> recommendation of teachers</p>	<p>Total of 16 persons per site X 20 sites = 320 persons</p> <p><b>2 Teachers</b></p> <p><b>Students:</b> 2 promotees 2 repeaters 2 dropouts</p> <p><b>Parents:</b> 2 promotees 2 repeaters 2 dropouts</p> <p><b>2 Community Members</b></p>
<b>Phase II: Selection of Communities</b>	Perceived receptivity to Focus Group methodology	Selected by research team	One Community in each of the four Districts (selected from the 20 communities which were included in Phase 1 interviews)
<b>Phase II: Selection of Individuals for Focus Groups</b>	<p><b>Teachers</b> of Grades 1-5 from community or neighboring school</p> <p><b>Parents:</b> from community with children in grades 1-5</p>	Based on Phase I interviews, respondents' or teacher/ headmaster recommendations	Separate groups of: 8-10 Teachers 8-10 Mothers 8-10 Fathers

Table 2

### Focus Group Sample Characteristics N = 12

	DADELDHURA	DHANKUTA	KAPILVASTU	RASUNA	TOTAL
<b>TEACHERS</b>	8	10	10	9	37
Experience	5-32 years	3-23 years	3-30 years	4-14 years	3-32 years
Qualification					
SLC	6	5	3	6	20
IA	0	2	6	3	11
Degree	0	1 (B.Ed.)	0	0	1
Other	2	2	1	0	4
Male	8	8	10	9	35
Female	0	2	0	0	2
<b>PARENTS</b>					
Male	8	8	6	9	31
Age	21-54 years	32-56 years	24-54 years	35-60 years	21-54 years
Literate	3 (SLC)	4	3	2	12
Illiterate	3	2	3	7	15
Classes	2	2	0	0	4
Female	7	10	7	7	31
Age	23-50 years	28-52 years	23-51 years	32-48 years	23-52 years
Literate	1	3	0	1	5
Illiterate	6	7	7	6	26
Classes	0	0	0	0	0
<b>ETHNICITY</b>	Brahmin Chhetri Sarki	Chhetri Kami Sarki	Muslim Tharu Yadov Magar Brahmin	Tamang Newari/Jyapu Brahmin Occupational	

## Results

### Repetition and Dropout: The Scope of the Problem

Table 3 presents the percentage of primary school students who are promoted, repeat, and dropout at the end of each grade, based on 1990 data made available by the MOEC/SW. Table 4 uses these figures to estimate the actual number of students who would complete primary school (through Grade 5) in five years.

**Table 3**  
**Cumulative Impact of Repetition and Dropout**  
**1990 Data**

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Percent of students promoted at the end of year	34	72	80	76	67	86	87	92	87
Percent of students who must repeat grade next year	43	19	14	15	12	9	8	8	8
Percent of students who drop out at end of year	22	10	6	9	20	5	5	0	5

Source: MOEC/SW Manpower and Statistics Section

**Table 4**  
**Summary of Student Flow Assuming 100 Pupils Start Grade 1**

Grade	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Number of Students Entering Grade One	100	40	34	31	27	20	18	17	17
Number of Students Promoted to Next Grade	34	29	27	24	18	17	16	16	15
Number of Students Who Must Repeat Grade	43	7	5	4	3	2	1	1	1
Number of Students Who Drop Out	22	4	2	3	6	1	1	0	1

For every 100 children who start Grade 1, 18 will complete primary school (through Grade 5) in five years, and 37 will drop out in the first five years. The remaining 45 students will repeat grades, with about 15 eventually finishing the primary cycle and the other 30 eventually dropping out. Overall, then, only about one-third of those starting primary school will ever finish Grade 5. Given the rates of repetition and dropout, it will be necessary to provide 232 pupil-years of schooling to produce those 18 graduates in five years. In contrast, if these 40 students progressed through the first five grades with no dropout or repetition, it would require only 90 student-years of schooling. Consequently, it costs the equivalent of about 2.6 years worth of schooling for every one year that leads to graduation. These statistics suggest that improving the efficiency of student flow through primary school could reduce the cost of primary schooling by up to 60%.

### Student Attendance in School

Student attendance in school is prerequisite to their effective participation and success. The rates of student attendance in the 20 sample schools are presented in Table 5. Student attendance records provide a clear indication of the day-to-day realities of school participation which annually leads to promotion, repetition, and dropping out. Many parents, teachers, and community members expressed the view that the circumstances of subsistence living often make it difficult for children to attend school regularly. Children are not only needed to assist with household chores, they are also often wage-earners. As indicated in Table 5, less than half of the students enrolled in Grade I in the 20 sample schools attended on a daily basis.

Table 5

### Enrolment, Annual Attendance and Examination Results Grade I: 1991/92 (2047/48)

District (Number of Schools)	Enrolment		Average Attendance (percentage)		Examination Results (5)					
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Promotees		Repeaters		Dropouts	
					Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Dadeldhura (5 Schools)	208 (59%)	142 (41%)	58	53	34	27	62	63	4	10
Dhankuta (5 Schools)	231 (56%)	182 (41%)	44	48	37	44	54	47	9	9
Kapilvatu* (4 Schools)	247 (68%)	118 (32%)	44	46	41	33	45	49	14	8
Rasuwa (5 Schools)	179 (57%)	135 (43%)	41	34	33	22	52	61	15	7
Total (19 Schools)	865 (60%)	577 (40%)	47	46	37	33	53	54	10	13

- \* Attendance records from one school in Kapilvatu have been discarded due to clearly observable manipulation of students' attendance (perfect attendance rates were recorded).

## **Repetition and Dropout: The View from the Community**

Repetition and dropout are not only problems for the schools but are dimensions of family and community life. In order to develop appropriate strategies to alleviate the problems associated with dropout and repetition, it is imperative to understand in greater depth the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of people who comprise communities.

Phase II of this study was designed specifically to gather such information through in-depth focused discussions with groups of community members in selected districts. Information was collected using Focus Group Interviews with teachers, male parents and female parents regarding the benefits of education, the causes of dropout and repetition and, finally, interventions that can be undertaken at the individual, school, community and ministry levels. A strength of this study is the inclusion of women's perceptions, views and attitudes regarding dropout and repetition.

A description of the communities which were selected as representative and robust for Focus Group discussions, from among the 20 included in the initial round of data collection during Phase I, is presented in **Table 6**, below. These descriptions are derived from community members' reports and estimations, and are followed by a summary of community responses to: (1) the benefits of education, (2) the causes of drop-out and repetition and (3) discussion of issues specifically raised by female participants. This is followed by a review of the interventions and recommendations generated by this study.

In Kintang, 67 percent of children between the ages of six and ten attend school. School repetition and dropout are considered problems by the community. In Jibjibe, 77 percent of the primary age children attend school. Repetition and dropout are considered problems by the community. In Jawavari, approximately 64 percent of the primary age children attend the public school. Other children are sent to nearby Madarsa for instruction in Urdu and the Koran. Repetition and dropout are considered problems by the community. In Tatar, of the children between the ages of six and ten less than half attend school. Community representatives do not consider repetition and dropout to be serious problems, although this view could be an artifact of the Focus Group composition, in that the ethnic representation of the focus group was consistent with the ethnic groups attending school.

**Table 6**  
**Phase II: Community Profiles**

COMMUNITY VDC DISTRICT	Kintang Bhigau Dhenkuta	Jibjibe Dheibung Rasuwa	Jaweveri Jawavori Kepilvastu	Tater Bhumiraj Dhadeldura
<b>POPULATION</b>				
VDC	4,413	3,880	2,147	2,739
District	148,386	36,744	371,778	104,847
<b>GEOGRAPHY</b>	Middle Hills	Mountains	Terai	Hills
<b>ETHNICITY</b>	Brahmin, Chhetri (60%) Rai, Limbu, Magar (30%) Sarki, Kami, Newar (10%)	Brahmin (75%) Tamang (20%) Damai, Sarki (5%)	Muslims (38%) Kurmi, Chamer (31%) other Terai ethnic groups (31%)	Chhetri (40%) Brahmin (25%) Sarki, Damai, Parki, Kami (35%)
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>	Farming (59%) Wage-earners (35%) Civil Servants (5%)	Farming (75%) Wage-earners (18%) Civil Servants (6%) Small Entrepreneurs (1%)	Farming (87%) Wage-earners (5%) Civil Servants and Caste-Related jobs (7%)	Farming, Animal Husbandry (90%); Civil Servants, Small Entrepreneurs, Cottage Industry (10%)
<b>MIGRATION</b> (No. per year)	40 left the community last year in search of employment	120 left the community last year in search of employment	10-15 left the community last year in search of employment	
<b>TRANSPORTATION</b>	Nearest town with motorable road is a 10 km. walk away from Kintang	Motorable road connects Jibjibe to small market town just two km. away, and main town (25 km. away) can be reached by regular bus service.	Bullock carts are used on dirt road within the community. Motorable road connects to a paved road which leads to the district headquarters 10 km. away.	Walking, Horse-back riding. Motorable road (1/2 hour walk from community) connects to local market and district headquarters (3-5 km. away).
<b>HEALTH</b>	Health services are available in the district headquarters (a 10 km. walk).  Health Status: (children) dysentery, typhoid, worms; (adults) typhoid, gastro-intestinal ailments.	No health center (required to travel to district headquarters or Kathmandu for care).  Health Status: (children and adults) dysentery, coughing.	Health center 5 km. from the community.  Health Status: (children) coughing, dysentery, pneumonia, typhoid; (adults) typhoid, dysentery	Health service available in the district headquarters.  Health Status: (children) pneumonia, dysentery, eye sores; (adults) respiratory problems.
<b>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES</b>	Drinking water, small bridge construction, school building and water supply for the school.		Labor to construct school room and fencing for school yard. Donations for the school.	Temple and trail construction; organized cultural programme to raise money for the school.
<b>EDUCATION</b>	One primary school which services 1,500 households	One primary/lower secondary school serves Jibjibe (150 households) and a community (77 households) from another VDC.	One primary school for 500 households.	One primary/secondary school.

## **Benefits of Education**

Participants of each of the Focus Groups agree that education is important. Community members believe education benefits the individual, the community, and society in general. Individuals benefit by gaining knowledge in literacy and numeracy skills. These skills allow them to conduct business, profit from business dealings, and keep household accounts. Individuals who are educated have better job prospects, enjoy greater health because they practice better hygiene and are held in higher esteem by the community. Communities benefit by having a larger literate population that is able to settle disputes more easily and increase the efficiency of farming and agriculture practices. Additionally, the community benefits because of improved sanitation and hygiene practices. Girls benefit from education because it enables them to improve their social status, become more self-reliant, develop confidence, and gain access to job opportunities. Education also increases the likelihood that girls will eventually educate their own children.

A quote that represents the perceptions of the respondents regarding the importance of education is offered below:

*Education is an inner-eye, it is a door to knowledge. A man without education is a man without sight. Therefore, though we are uneducated we have sent our children to school so that they can know what is happening around them and all over the world. To understand and know the world better, education is a must.*

## **Causes of Repetition and Dropout**

Communities are aware of the educational problems related to student flow. The single most identified reason for dropout and repetition is poverty. Students drop out because parents need their help at home or need the income they can generate in an occupation. Respondents believe that the illiteracy problem is negligible when the fundamental needs of survival are present. Respondents reported that food, clothing, and shelter are primary concerns. Therefore, a person struggling for basic subsistence cannot readily relate to the secondary and tertiary benefits of literacy and numeracy.

In addition to poverty, other reasons for the high levels of repetition and dropout were identified through the Focus Group discussions. These reasons are consistent with: (1) results from Phase I of this study, which was designed to validate the causes of repetition and dropout, (2) review of literature world-wide and (3) local historical knowledge and discussion regarding repetition and dropout in Nepal. These causes (listed in **Table 7** below) are organized by school-related issues, child-related issues and parent-related issues.

**Table 7**  
**Causes of Drop-out and Repetition**

SCHOOL-RELATED	CHILD-RELATED	PARENT-RELATED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School schedule conflicts with agricultural schedule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance is irregular</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children used for house, agricultural work</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of female teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls are more occupied in household and agriculture activities than boys</li> <li>• Girls are married at an early age</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low priority for sending girls to school</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High student/teacher ratio</li> <li>• Teaching is ineffective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are negligent/uninterested in schooling</li> <li>• Slow in learning curriculum materials</li> <li>• Fail exams</li> <li>• Frequently repeat grades</li> <li>• Not sufficiently fluent in Nepali</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents don't sufficiently understand school and schooling; can't properly support school or child's learning</li> <li>• Sending underage children to school for day-care</li> <li>• Nepali not used/taught at home</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poor, or lack of facilities and materials</li> <li>• Poor access: schools are too far from homes</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• View schools as politicized</li> </ul>

### Female Participant Reactions

This study was specifically designed to include information from women to represent their views and perceptions of education in general, and dropout and repetition in particular. Although some changes regarding women's status are in progress, women are still not fully valued in the society.

The ability to collect data from women for this study was deemed potentially problematic. Therefore, there was some methodological concern that women's perceptions would be less reliable, and less valid than their male counterparts. However, results from the data collected from all Focus Group interviews suggest that women's responses were similar to men's. Both males and females held similar beliefs regarding the benefits of education, the causes of dropout and repetition and strategies to alleviate this problem. In addition to the concerns and solutions shared by male parents, female participants articulated three additional measures which could improve participation of girls in school: (1) strictly enforce the current law restricting the age of marriage, (2) make available more contraceptive methods for parents and (3) create awareness about the importance of educating girls.

### **1. Enforce Current Age Laws**

Respondents believe that girls are often deprived of the opportunity of schooling due to early marriage because the law regarding the minimum age of marriage is not strictly enforced; a majority of females are married at a young age. Additionally, a high number of those who begin school never complete their education because they marry early. Women believe that although the incidence of men wanting to marry educated women is increasing, it is not yet pervasive.

### **2. Make Available More Contraceptive Methods**

Female Focus Group participants thought that better family planning could result in smaller families. Smaller families mean less children to clothe, shelter and feed, less work to accomplish and possibly more available income. Parents believed this additional income would help cover the costs of schooling. A quote representing this point of view follows:

*Free distribution of contraceptives controls the birth rate which enables the parents to afford their children's food, clothing and education so that they do not have to force their children to stay away from school. Female volunteers should be assigned to distribute contraceptives. We are already aware of the fact that having many children who do not get enough food, clothes and education is sinful, whereas, birth-control is not.*

### **3. Create Awareness About the Importances of Educating Girls**

In this society, boys are given first preference in education because it is assumed they will become more prosperous and more able to support parents in their old age than girls. Girls are viewed mostly as a liability. Because girls are given in marriage at an early age and thought to "belong" to their husbands' families, parents are often reluctant to invest in their education. Female respondents, however, believe educating girls is critical.

Female respondents believe that educated girls, when they do marry and have children, will support and advance their children's (both boys and girls) education. These educated children will then marry and support the education of their children, thus leading to a more literate society. Recent educational literature indicates that a predictor of student achievement is the educational level of the mother. A quote that was taken from a woman participant summarizes this view:

*In spite of being endowed with other good qualities, an uneducated girl gets an uneducated groom and, being ignorant of education, their children are not educated. But, though a girl is ugly, if she is educated she gets an educated groom and their children also become educated. Thus, education can be considered better than beauty. Education creates awareness about equality and provides power to women to claim their rights.*

## **Practical Ways to Reduce Repetition and Dropout: Some Proposals**

Districts report that no real systematic efforts have been undertaken to address the problems of dropout and repetition. However, in some cases, school and parents have acted on their own initiative. Schools reported having "parents' festivals," where parents were invited to the schools to participate in special programs and projects. During the day, awards such as stationery materials, school supplies and flour were made. The festivals were discontinued because of the expense.

Parents reported their own efforts to reduce dropout and repetition, which included allowing students more time to study and complete homework assignments, and freeing children from certain household and agricultural activities.

In an effort to provide information to the MOEC/SW, to strengthen systematic responses to address the issues of repetition and dropout, this study presents 21 possible interventions to improve student flow (**Table 8**). The proposed interventions are based on (1) suggestions offered by participants of the Focus Groups, (2) the experience of other countries, (3) findings from previous research in Nepal and other countries, and (4) the analysis and experience of the research team. These interventions are offered as a basis for policy and program discussions among educators and government decision-makers concerned with improving the quality and efficiency of primary education in Nepal. The eventual strategies used to improve student flow in primary school must be based on careful examination of the appropriateness and feasibility of these suggestions within the larger context of Nepal.

To assist decision-makers in reviewing these interventions in terms of cost, political feasibility, and probable impact, they are presented in four categories: (1) Low Cost/Politically Easy; (2) Low Cost/Politically More Difficult; (3) High Cost/Politically Easy; and (4) High Cost/Politically More Difficult. Cost refers to both the direct expenditure needed to implement an idea and to non-monetary costs that may be incurred by that implementation. For example, the direct monetary cost of offering instruction in a local language may be for new textbooks and instructional materials while a non-monetary cost may be a loss of ease of communicating by a common language across areas of the country. Political feasibility refers to how easy (or difficult) it may be to gain widespread consensus and support for a particular strategy. Probable impact refers to how effective a particular intervention is likely to be in

addressing the problem of student repetition and dropout. Some strategies might be expected to have a major impact right away, while others might be expected to make only a modest impact over a longer period of time. The proposed interventions are summarized in **Table 8**, below:

Organization of suggested interventions in these four categories is not intended to imply that high cost, politically difficult, or modest impact strategies should not be undertaken. Indeed, depending on the intervention, they may be the best course of action. These decisions need to be made by the national leadership in light of a wider set of considerations and an understanding of the trade-offs involved. For example, it may be better to pursue a high cost, politically difficult course of action that promises a high probability of success in a relatively short time than to pursue a low cost, politically easy course of action that yields only a small marginal gain over a longer period of time.

**Table 8**

**Interventions for Reducing  
Primary School Student Repetition and Dropout**

COST/POLITICAL FEASIBILITY	LOWER COST	HIGHER COST
<p><b>POLITICALLY EASY</b></p>	<p><b>High Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Checklist for evaluating student performance</li> <li>• Information campaign aimed at parents</li> <li>• Multi-grade schooling combined with more, smaller schools</li> <li>• Improved Parent-Teacher communication</li> </ul> <p><b>Low Impact</b></p>	<p><b>High Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allow teachers to teach in local (regional) languages</li> <li>• Improve supervision of teachers</li> <li>• Expand day care, particularly in rural communities</li> </ul> <p><b>Low Impact</b></p>
<p><b>POLITICALLY MORE DIFFICULT</b></p>	<p><b>High Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased flexibility of school year and school day</li> <li>• Restrict enrollment to age appropriate age-groups</li> <li>• Improve headmaster performance</li> <li>• Strengthen School Management Committees</li> </ul> <p><b>Low Impact</b></p>	<p><b>High Impact</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide more scholarships</li> <li>• Make school attendance compulsory</li> <li>• Improve quality of instruction through better teacher training and instructional supervision</li> <li>• Wider use of contraceptive methods</li> <li>• Merit pay based on teacher performance</li> <li>• Improve employment and income generation opportunities at the community level</li> <li>• Add one female teacher per school</li> <li>• Target girls for scholarships</li> <li>• Target media campaign encouraging girls' enrollment</li> <li>• Enforce age laws for marriage</li> </ul> <p><b>Low Impact</b></p>

## **1. LOW COST/POLITICALLY EASY**

### **Checklist for Evaluating Student Performance**

A frequent reason for high pupil repetition is that teachers are unsure about how to evaluate a child's readiness for promotion to the next grade. Each school (or teacher) devises its own test to use as the basis for promoting students to the next grade. This means (1) there is little, if any, common criteria across schools (a pupil considered passing in one school might be considered failing in another school), and (2) most promotion tests are developed by teachers who have no formal training in test development (2/3 of all primary school teachers are untrained). Even if teachers are basing their judgements about promotion on a wider set of information about the student, the high repetition rates suggest that teachers may not make particularly good promotion decisions.

One alternative is to provide teachers with a standardized End-of-Year Student Performance Checklist that they could complete for each child. The Checklist (1) would help teachers focus on important student behaviours; (2) would be less formal than a test; and (3) would help introduce consistency across schools. Several countries are successfully using this approach to improve student progression.

In addition to directly improving student progression, the Student Performance Checklist could indirectly help improve retention, to the extent that one reason for dropout is student and parent discouragement when children have to repeat a grade.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There are currently no plans to develop such a checklist, although developing and using such checklists is a methodologically sound and reliable stop-gap measure until teachers can receive appropriate training, and valid and reliable assessment systems are in place. Currently, in-service and pre-service programmes are provided to train teachers to assess student performance, although this coverage of training needs is limited.

### **Information Campaign Aimed at Parents**

Parents, particularly those who did not attend school, often do not realize the ways in which they can help improve their local schools. They may not understand what goes on inside schools or what things distinguish a school that is working well from one that is not. Traditionally, parent involvement in the local schools is limited to providing materials or labour for school construction or repair, but there are other ways they can influence the quality of the instruction and improve their children's retention and completion rates.

One way to help parents is through a national radio information campaign. Short announcements each day could suggest (1) things parents can look for in their local school that signal a successful school (e.g., teachers always come to class, teachers are not late); (2) questions that parents should ask their child's teacher about their child's performance; (3) suggestions for how the community-school council might operate; (4) reasons why student attendance is important; (6) the importance of homework and the ways parents can encourage their children to do their homework; (7) short descriptions of creative activities or programs operating in some schools; and (8) suggestions for the most effective ways that a community-school council might spend an additional Rs 5,000, an additional Rs 10,000, etc. Some announcements could be made by important public figures (the Minister or Minister of Education), some by headmasters or teachers describing successful activities in their schools, and some by MOEC/SW or radio officials presenting other types of information.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

Although there are some public information components included in specific programmes, e.g., Women's Education Programme, Basic and Primary Education Programme, and the CTSDC (audio programme), there are no information campaigns being carried out which have the coverage and scope suggested by this proposal.

#### **Multi-Grade Schooling Combined With More, Smaller Schools**

A major problem identified in the Focus Groups was that young children have to walk too far to get to school. One solution is to have schools closer to students' homes by establishing more, smaller schools. The only way this can be done economically is to use multi-grade classes, that is, several grades in the same classroom being taught by the same teacher. In many countries, the use of multi-grade classes actually raises student achievement, as (1) younger students learn from overhearing lessons meant for older students; (2) older students can review previous material by listening to lessons meant for younger students; and, (3) more advanced students can help less advanced students.

While multi-grade teaching poses some additional demands on teachers, these can be partially offset by provision of good instructional materials that provide for individual and group exercises that students can work on while the teacher is working with children at a different grade level. This proposal is considered low cost because the government already allocates money for new schools. Creation of these schools presumably would not require funds in addition to what is already planned. The proposal is politically easy, because it directly addresses a need of parents and children. It is expected to have high impact since distance from school is thought to be a fairly major reason for dropout.

One way to avoid the problems of teacher isolation and materials distribution posed by many, small schools is to have the small schools organized as remote units of larger, more centrally located schools, with the headmaster of the larger school assuming responsibility for instructional supervision and management of the smaller schools. In Nepal, this might be done by using school clusters and or a central supervisory school, as in the BPEP.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

Multi-grade schools currently are operating in some remote areas. The BPEP school mapping could provide a baseline profile where such schools could ideally be located. The BPEP cluster system could serve as an organizational model for supporting instruction in these schools.

#### **Improved Parent-Teacher Communication**

Attrition and repetition can be reduced if parents better understand how to encourage and support the activities of schooling, for example, by allowing their children time to do homework, insisting they do their homework, and ensuring their children go to class and arrive at school on time. The teacher and headmaster can do much to help parents understand how these factors can improve children's education.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There is provision for parent involvement in the schools in the directives to the districts and the rules and regulations. However, the ways in which parent-teacher communication can be introduced, facilitated, and established has not been programmatically undertaken.

## **2. LOW COST/POLITICALLY MORE DIFFICULT**

### **Greater Flexibility in the School Year**

The MOEC/SW or District Education Committee needs to be more flexible in allowing schools to decide (1) which months they will be in session, (2) when classes are offered during the day, and (3) the length of the school year.

The single most frequent reason parents cited for student dropout and absenteeism (which can lead to repetition when students fail to learn the material that was covered in their absence) is the need for children to help with household chores or in agricultural activities. The problem is often a conflict of schedules - children are needed at home and in the fields during the time classes are in session. A low cost solution is to schedule classes at times less likely to conflict with family demands. Since agricultural seasons vary by geography and region of the country, it may be necessary to let every district (or school) set its own schedule (within general

guidelines that define the number of hours a week and days a year that instruction must occur. The proposal is low cost and highly responsive to parents' needs. The major (and perhaps only ) political difficulty is probably among central MOEC/SW officials, who may be concerned with losing control over standards for schools' operations.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

Setting the school calender is currently subject to some degree of discretion by the District Education Committee. This discretion is limited to scheduling around climatic and agricultural seasons. School level discretion would be more responsive to parents' and students' needs but would require guidelines and supervision by the District Education Office.

#### **Restrict Enrolment to Age-Appropriate Students In Grade One**

One reason for high Grade 1 repetition is that parents use primary school as a form of day care, sending underage children to school. Attendance of underage children in Grade 1 skews the enrolment figures because these children are counted as repeaters when they return each year until they are of the correct age to be promoted. A high impact way of reducing repetition rates is to stop this practice. However, alternative means for caring for these underage children need to be found, or it could result in higher attrition of older children who might then be kept out of school to watch the younger children. The introduction of pre-school or day-care could relieve the pressure on parents and teachers for enrolment of underage students.

Overage enrolment occurs, in part, when children are held out of school to help in the family, and then are allowed to go to school when younger children no longer need watching or other family members are old enough to replace them in agriculture. Over-age children sometimes dropout because they feel embarrassed at being older than their classmates.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There currently is no operational restriction at the school level against (1) underage enrolment or (2) overage enrolments for non-academic reasons in Grade 1.

#### **Improve Headmaster Performance Through Better Selection, Training, and Supervision**

Evidence from many countries indicates that well trained, committed headmasters can reduce attrition and dropout through the demands they place on teachers' attendance and classroom performance, the demands they place on student attendance, and the effectiveness of their communications and rapport with parents and community leaders. Findings from Focus Groups, however, suggest that some

headmasters exercise their influence for personal gain rather than to promote more effective schooling, by sometimes extorting money or labour from teachers in return for releasing paychecks.

Better selection, training, and supervision of headmasters could be an effective way to elicit the positive benefits of good school-level instructional supervision and community-school relationships. Since some amount of headmaster training is already being funded, additional financial costs are expected to be minimal. More expensive will be the supervision needed to ensure that good school-level leadership practices are appropriately implemented. The political cost will come in the need to base selection of headmasters on educational rather than political criteria.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

Headmaster training is currently being provided by the BPEP, the PEDP and, to some degree, by the CDC. Systematic selection and supervision, based on educational criteria, will require policy and programme support to the District Development Committee and Village Development Committee levels.

#### **Strengthen School Management Committees**

Evidence from many countries suggests that the quality of instruction can be improved when communities have more direct participation in the activities of the local school. The improvements come about when community members can bring pressure on teachers for proper lesson preparation and attendance, when community members understand and support the importance of student attendance and completion of homework assignments.

Findings from the Focus Groups, however, suggest that Community-School Councils in Nepal do not always work effectively. Membership may be through political appointment rather than through local elections. This sometimes results in Council decisions being more strongly influenced by political rather than educational considerations. For instance, some parents felt that their local Council appeared to make personnel decisions based on teachers' political beliefs rather than on their competence.

One approach is to form School Management Committees based on local elections rather than appointments. While this could be done at little or no financial cost, it would require both government and community members to place educational quality above political considerations. For some groups, this might be seen as having a high political cost.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

Strengthening of the school management committees is being supported through the BPEP, the Primary Education Development Project (in its design), and, to

some degree, by the Curriculum Development Centre. Evaluations of these efforts could focus on the degree to which the School Management Committees can be made more effective through support and intervention programmes, and the degree to which their effectiveness is affected by their political nature.

### **3. HIGH COST/POLITICALLY EASY**

#### **Allow Teachers to Teach in Local (Regional) Languages**

Nepali is a second (or third) language for many students and teachers. One reason for repetition and dropout is that students who are not fully fluent in the language of instruction do not understand the teacher or the textbook. In some cases, pupils have difficulty understanding a teacher who lacks fluency in the language of instruction. One proposal, already under discussion in Nepal, is to allow instruction to occur in the language specific to a location. While politically popular, the shift to local languages could entail high costs, as textbooks and instructional materials would need to be translated. However, a bilingual instructional programme, or providing instruction in the local language while using Nepali texts, could mitigate these higher costs. A less direct, long-term cost may be faced if Nepali fluency is compromised by local language instruction, e.g., if students lack the language skills they eventually need for better employment or job mobility.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

While there is provision for local language instruction in the Constitution and in the recommendations of the National Education Commission, there is currently no programme which addresses or introduces local language instruction.

#### **Better Supervision of Teachers**

Student repetition and dropout is sometimes due to parents' perception of low educational quality - the benefits of childrens' participation in low quality schooling are outweighed by the benefits to be derived from using children for household and agricultural work. The quality of schooling can sometimes be increased by ensuring teacher attendance and providing more effective instructional supervision. While the idea of improving educational quality is politically popular, it can carry a high price tag depending on how the improved supervision is implemented. If it comes from the central MOEC/SW through more frequent visits of the inspectorate it can be expensive.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There are currently provisions in the rules and regulations for teacher supervision, which is variably supported by District Education Officers, and programmatically supported by the BPEP and PEDP. Accountability to local levels of authority, i.e., DDC and VDC may improve teacher supervision.

## **Expand Day Care, Particularly in Rural Communities**

Expanded day care can reduce repetition and dropout as (1) underage children have an alternative to repeatedly attending Grade 1 (and being counted as repeaters), and (2) older children are freed from child care responsibilities and are able to attend school and have more time to complete their school-work.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There currently is no programmatic provision for day care facilities or services.

## **4. HIGH COST/POLITICALLY MORE DIFFICULT**

### **Provide More Scholarships**

A direct cause of student dropout is that parents cannot afford the costs associated with children going to school (uniforms, supplemental instructional materials, etc.). Scholarships would directly address this problem. Moreover, scholarships can be distributed in ways that encourage retention of groups found to be at particular risk of attrition. For example, one country which is trying to raise female enrolment awards scholarships to any girl (in specific rural areas) that returns to school the following year. However, scholarships cost money. Moreover, they often entail a political cost if that money is taken away from other high priority uses. Nonetheless, they are the most direct response to one of the most widely cited problems leading to dropout.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There are currently several scholarship programmes operating in Nepal, some targeting specific populations, others specific geographic areas. The MOEC/SW Scholarship Section provides limited scholarships for poor, academically talented students, as do the Buddhanilkantha and Gandaki Boarding Schools. The MOEC/SW Women's Education Programme provides hostel facilities and scholarships for girls studying in primary and secondary school. The USAID/Asia Foundation Banke District Girls' Scholarship Programme supports girls by providing scholarships for girls in Grades 6, 7 and 8. These programs provide assistance to otherwise disadvantaged groups. Their coverage, however, leaves much room for additional assistance of this type.

### **Make School Attendance Compulsory**

While the financial cost of making school attendance mandatory would depend on the extent of compliance and effectiveness of enforcement, successful implementation could result in massive demand for more teachers, teacher training, and school places. Without a substantial infusion of money, quality could decline as

class sizes grow and more unqualified teachers enter the system. Taking money from other sectors could incur a political cost, particularly if the added investment in education led to a decline in educational quality. In addition, compulsory school attendance could be seen as running counter to the principles of the new democracy.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There are currently no policy or programme initiatives to make education compulsory.

#### **Improve Quality of Instruction Through More Effective Teacher Training and Instructional Supervision**

To the extent that repetition and dropout are a function of low quality instruction, better teacher training and supervision could positively impact student retention and flow. However, teacher training is one of the most expensive inputs to education, both because the training itself is expensive and because it raises the recurrent cost of education as teachers with more training qualify for higher salaries. While the investment in training may be warranted, it is important to be sure that the basic problem arises from lack of training rather than from a school environment in which teachers' are unable to implement the training they already have. If implementation of training is the problem, improved instructional supervision may be a more effective intervention to raise instructional quality in ways that impact on student repetition and dropout. A focal point for effective supervision of teachers will be to clearly define the instructional role of teachers, so that supervisors and teachers can objectively agree on desirable behaviours, supervisors' diagnoses and assessments of teachers' effectiveness, and instructional support programmes.

#### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

Teacher training and materials development are currently central components of several major programmes of the MOEC/SW: BPEP, PEDP, CDC, and the Radio Education Programme. Instructional supervision, however, is less emphasized in part because it is less tangible to define and observe. The degree to which teacher training results in improved classroom performance will need to be specifically incorporated into the research and evaluation designs of the above-mentioned programmes.

#### **Better Contraceptive Methods**

Some Focus Group participants thought that better family planning could result in smaller families which, in turn, could mean families would have more discretionary income available to cover the costs of schooling.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

While the UNFPA-funded Population Education Project and the CDC contain general messages addressing family planning, there are currently no programmes under the MOEC/SW which introduce and support better family planning practices.

#### **Merit Pay Based on Teacher Performance**

Merit pay systems are expensive and difficult to implement fairly on a large scale. They also tend to have a high political cost, since teachers who do not get rewarded often become disillusioned. While merit pay-type schemes were suggested by some Focus Group participants, merit pay systems tend to have high costs and uncertain impacts.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

The Education Day central and district awards are the only current means of recognizing and rewarding outstanding accomplishments in teaching.

#### **Improve Employment and Income Generation Opportunities at the Community Level**

Some Focus Group participants suggested that improving the economic opportunities within their communities could result in more discretionary family income and, in that way, improve the ability of parents to pay the costs of keeping their children in school. However, participants did not have specific proposals for improving their local economy and it is not clear that additional discretionary family income would necessarily be allocated to meet education expenses. While improving local economies is highly desirable and may have the intended impact on education, this tends to be a high cost proposal with uncertain impact.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

The MOEC/SW currently provides limited training through the Population Education and CTEVT.

#### **Add One Female Teacher Per School**

Participants of some Focus Groups thought that the presence of female teachers in the classroom can stimulate and support girls' enrolment. Parents feel comfortable sending their female children to school if there is a female teacher present. The participants suggested that there be at least one female teacher in each school.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There is a 1993 policy mandate for priority to be given to hiring female teachers so that at least one female teacher will be on staff at each primary school.

### **Target Girls for Scholarships**

Sending girls to school is a secondary consideration for many families because of societal attitudes towards girls and family financial constraints. To bring girls' enrolment and attendance in line with boys', the Focus Group participants suggested that greater provision of scholarships be made for the female students. More scholarships will ease the financial burden of sending their daughters to school. Although this suggestion will be costly to implement, it appears desirable, at least for a given period, and would improve the likelihood of a change in attitudes and behaviours.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

The MOEC/SW Women's Education Programme provides scholarships for girls studying in primary and secondary school. The USAID/Asia Foundation Banke District girls' scholarship programme supports girls through scholarships for grades six, seven, and eight. These programs provide assistance to otherwise disadvantaged groups. Their coverage, however, leaves much room for additional assistance of this type.

### **Target Media Campaign Sections Specifically Encouraging Girls Enrolment**

A media campaign could be an effective means for spreading messages related to the importance of girls' education. Radio is accessible in nearly all parts of Nepal. Similarly, television messages can be effective, though more limited in coverage. In addition, pamphlets and booklets with messages and mini-stories can be widely distributed. The use of a multi-media approach to promote girls' education could prove successful in changing attitudes and practices towards girls in society.

### Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action

There are public information components in specific programmes, e.g., Women's Education Programme, BPEP, and CDC (audio programme). However, there are no current information campaigns which have the coverage and scope suggested by this proposal.

### **Enforce current age laws for marriage**

Focus Group participants also suggested enforcement of marriage age laws as a means to address girls' dropping out of school. If the age limit for marriage is strictly observed, it is expected that more girls will continue with their studies. However, it will require more than enforcing the law to change the practice of early

marriage of girls - it will also require educating the communities where early marriage is widely practiced.

**Current MOEC/SW Programme and Project Action**

There are currently no MOEC/SW or HMG programmes which encourage support of the current age laws for marriage.

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## **Recommended Strategies for Reducing Repetition and Dropout in the Early Grades**

After careful consideration and discussion with Ministry officials, the research team has identified four strategies which the Ministry can continue or undertake to expressly reduce the numbers of children who repeat the early grades or dropout altogether:

- I. Continue to develop, evaluate, and expand the BPEP and PEDP, which should include foci on:
  - \* student assessment
  - \* psychology, sociology and management issues of student dropout, repetition, and success
  - \* policy implementation of school staffing to include at least one female teacher per school
  - \* girls' scholarships.
  
- II. A national information campaign, including preparation and distribution of checklists through radio broadcasts and printed handouts for (a) teachers to evaluate student performance, and (b) for parents to evaluate and support their children's education.
  
- III. MOEC/SW should consider policy development in the following areas:
  - \* active programmatic support for multi-grade schools in remote communities
  - \* greater district/community initiative and discretion in setting the school year schedule and session time
  - \* support for local language instruction through teacher training, including teaching Nepali as a second language for early grade teachers
  - \* couple provision of pre-school and day care with restrictions against underage primary enrolments.
  
- IV. MOEC/SW should utilize communication with national leadership and other sectors to focus attention and support for:
  - \* enforcement of current age laws for marriage
  - \* provision and marketing of better contraceptive methods
  - \* improved employment and income generation opportunities, particularly at the community level.

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