# LASER PULSE

## Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research (LASER)
## Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (PULSE)

# Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE)
# Nepal Endline Report

**SUPPLEMENT TO AGREEMENT NO. AID-7200AA18CA00009**
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## ABOUT THE PROJECT

This report presents the results of an inclusive education endline survey completed in Nepal under the Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE) for learners with disabilities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal project. The findings in this report will help United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and its partners to inform adaptations to its inclusive education activities in Nepal and to plan for new inclusive education programming globally. This project is supported through a buy-in from USAID's Center for Education (EDU) within the Bureau for Development, Democracy and Innovation (DDI) (USAID/DDI/EDU) through the Long-Term Assistance and SErvices for Research (LASER) mechanism. The LASER buy-in mechanism is currently in place between USAID's Research (R) Division in the Innovation, Technology, and Research (ITR) Hub within DDI (USAID/DDI/ITR/R) and LASER PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine), a consortium led by Purdue University under cooperative agreement #7200AA18C00009. The MCSIE project has been executed by Inclusive Development Partners (IDP) under a sub-contract with Purdue University.

## ABOUT LASER PULSE

LASER (Long-term Assistance and SErvices for Research) PULSE (Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine) is a $70 million program funded through the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Innovation, Technology, and Research Hub that delivers research-driven solutions to field-sourced development challenges in USAID partner countries.

A consortium led by Purdue University, with core partners Catholic Relief Services, Indiana University, Makerere University, and the University of Notre Dame, implements the LASER PULSE program through a growing network of 3,700+ researchers and development practitioners in 86 countries.

LASER PULSE collaborates with USAID missions, bureaus, and independent offices and other local stakeholders to identify research needs for critical development challenges and funds and strengthens the capacity of researcher-practitioner teams to co-design solutions that translate into policy and practice.

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# Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AIM | Areas of Intervention Mapping |
| CEHRD | Center for Education and Human Resource Development |
| CFM | Child Functioning Model |
| EGR | Early Grade Reading |
| EGRA | Early Grade Reading Assessment |
| EGRP | Early Grade Reading Program |
| EMIS | Educational Management and Information System |
| EQ | Evaluation Question |
| FGD | Focus Group Discussion |
| FOI | Fidelity of Implementation |
| GoN | Government of Nepal |
| HI | Humanity & Inclusion |
| HQ | Headquarters |
| ID | Identification |
| IDP | Inclusive Development Partners |
| IEP | Individualized Education Plan |
| IET | Integrated Education and Training |
| IP | Implementing Partner |
| KII | Key Informant Interview |
| KU | Kathmandu University |
| LASER PULSE | Long-Term Assistance and SErvices for Research Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine |
| LEU | Local Education Unit |
| MCSIE | Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education |
| MEL | Monitoring, Learning, and Evaluation |
| MoEST | Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology |
| MoH | Ministry of Health |
| NAWB | National Association for the Welfare of the Blind |
| NDFN | National Deaf Federation of Nepal |
| NEGRP | National Early Grade Reading Program |
| NGO | Non-governmental Organization |
| NSL | Nepali Sign Language |
| OPD | Organization of Persons with Disabilities |
| PRA | Physical Rehabilitation Activity |
| PTA | Parent Teacher Associations |
| R4A | Reading for All |
| RC | Resource Classroom |
| SATC | Student Assessment Technical Committee |
| SMC | School Management Committee |
| SOW | Scope of Work |
| STRIDE | Strengthening Rehabilitation in District Environs |

| | |
|---|---|
| TLM | Teaching and Learning Material |
| TPD | Teacher Professional Development |
| UDA | Universal Design for Assessment |
| UDL | Universal Design for Learning |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| USAID | U.S. Agency for International Development |
| WEI | World Education, Inc. |

# 1. Executive Summary

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has demonstrated a vested commitment to supporting education for all learners globally, including learners with disabilities. This commitment is reflected in the 2018 USAID Education Policy (USAID, 2018b) and the 2019–2023 U.S. Government Strategy on International Basic Education (USAID, 2018a). In line with this commitment, USAID has funded projects and programs that support early grade learning for students with and without disabilities, such as those in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal. It is against this backdrop that the Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE) aims to generate evidence and lessons learned around the implementation of disability-inclusive early grade reading (EGR) programs. This report describes the endline findings in the evaluation of Reading for All (R4A) Nepal, an inclusive EGR activity that was implemented from May 2018 to December 2022.

The R4A activity was intended to strengthen data availability on children with disabilities through screening children for possible functional limitations or disabilities; strengthen the Government of Nepal's (GoN) institutional capacity at the federal and local levels to implement its constitutional and policy commitments to disability-inclusive education; and test three models of intervention in schools, each providing varying degrees of direct support.

**R4A Intervention Models**


- **Model A** schools were resource classrooms (RCs) for learners with disabilities and were spread across project districts. RC teachers received targeted training in the use of either braille, Nepali Sign Language (NSL), or strategies for supporting learners with intellectual disability (depending on the focus area of the RC).

- **Model B** schools comprised the largest group and received the lightest support. This entailed a cascade approach to training, with only head teachers from schools receiving direct training from R4A on inclusive literacy instruction, which they were expected to convey to the grade 1–3 teachers at their respective schools. Education focal persons also received training to take back to other municipal officers.

- **Model C** schools were in four focus municipalities within the districts of Banke and Surkhet. In Model C schools, head teachers and education focal persons received the same training as their colleagues in Model B. In addition, grade 1–3 teachers received direct training on inclusive literacy instruction. This model also included plans for coaching support at schools through R4A social mobilizers.

R4A's implementation took place during a period of transition and disruption in Nepal. Two contextual factors are useful to keep in mind when reading this report. In the first place, R4A was designed and began implementation as Nepal was in the early stages of a shift to a federalist government structure following the adoption of a new constitution in 2015. This meant that authority and decision-making power were in the process of devolving from the center to lower levels of government. Secondly, the global COVID-19 pandemic emerged and was at its height in the middle of R4A's implementation period.

## 1.1 Evaluation Background and Purpose

USAID is partnering with Inclusive Development Partners (IDP), through the Long-Term Assistance and Se rvices for Research Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (LASER PULSE) mechanism led by Purdue University, to conduct a four-and-a-half-year evaluation of three USAID inclusive education activities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal. This evaluation effort, referred to as MCSIE, seeks to derive lessons learned about what is working, for whom, and in what context to sustainably advance teaching and learning outcomes for children with disabilities in the target countries. In Nepal, IDP partnered with the Disability Research Center at Kathmandu University (KU).

USAID and its partners will use the MCSIE evaluation to learn from its inclusive education activities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal and to plan for new inclusive education programming globally. Evaluations of this type should be considered part of an iterative and responsive research methodology that generates knowledge over time.

## 1.2 Methodology

This report is an endline evaluation of R4A's activities related to inclusive education through the program's closure in December 2022. IDP is using a process-evaluation design to develop individual case studies of the inclusive education system in each country to show how the USAID-funded interventions have affected the respective systems. Five key themes provide a framework for the study and have helped to structure this report: (1) the process of setting up and implementing the project, (2) the screening and identification of learners with functional limitations or disabilities, (3) the teacher training models supporting learners with disabilities, (4) the inclusive instructional models to improve reading outcomes, and (5) the project's unintended consequences.

To shed light on the core themes and findings in Nepal, IDP, with support from KU, conducted an extensive review of over 180 project documents since the start of the evaluation; conducted 383 key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with a range of stakeholders; collected 514 responses to surveys; and conducted 258 observations of project activities as well as classroom teaching practice in schools.

## 1.3 Answering the Evaluation Questions

For each of the study's five themes, USAID generated an evaluation question (EQ) to inform the evaluation of individual country programs and programming across the three countries. The following is a summary of these findings according to EQ.

1. **Process:** What worked well/poorly in the process of setting up an efficient, effective, and sustainable system to focus on improving the quality of education for learners with disabilities?

**Answer:** Within the project design, R4A made concerted efforts to promote project sustainability, including embedding R4A staff in the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) and developing the capacity of organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Having large percentages of staff with disabilities and staff with close personal connections with persons with disabilities were strong and innovative elements of the project. However, given the emerging nature of the field, most staff had a limited background in the technical area of inclusive education. In the early stages of the project, R4A used external consultants' and HI's headquarters (HQ) staff's technical guidance and expertise in literacy instruction and screening to supplement knowledge gaps and used training and field visits to develop OPD-partner capacity. OPD engagement was another innovative element of R4A, and much was learned from this initiative. At times, R4A limited OPD engagement to operational and coordination roles rather than technical leadership and did not consistently provide accessibility for persons with disabilities. However, OPD partner responsibilities increased over the life of the project, including in technical areas of implementation related to inclusive education and supporting schools. When describing how R4A changed their organization, one OPD leader said:

> *Whenever we call a school, we can easily say our organization and have recognition and a good response. We have also been able to enhance our capacity through the project, especially on inclusive education… A few of our team members have received intensive training and increased their capacity on inclusive education—now they can be champions of inclusive education. R4A strengthened OPDs across the country… this was a wonderful idea to enhance OPDs and bring them together.*

Local-level government education officials were very supportive of the project goals. They expressed a need for more guidance to support inclusion in schools through their role in

monitoring activities. Several stakeholders described a desire for a whole-school approach in future activities, wherein educators (general and RC), local government, parents, and community members, as well as students themselves, are engaged together in formal and informal ways to support inclusive education. While R4A was focused on literacy and only implemented in grades 1–3, the original design included more robust community and parental engagement, much of which was prevented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Nothing about Us without Us**

From solicitation through implementation of R4A, including OPDs as full project partners was a core aspect of the project. This is a significant achievement for USAID and the project as they seek to enshrine the principle of "nothing about us without us." Many lessons were learned throughout the project that will inform future inclusive work regarding representative OPDs.

OPD partners provided tremendous value to the project with local knowledge of existing resources, community context, and lived experience with disability. They largely expressed satisfaction with their engagement on the R4A project and felt their capacity was substantially increased in inclusive education. Some areas, like providing accessibility and more timely consultation, could have been strengthened. During KIIs, OPD representatives reported they were generally satisfied with their engagement on the R4A project and felt their organization's technical and operational skills had been strengthened. Senior project staff noted that, before R4A, most OPD engagement in the education sector focused on advocacy related to access to education for children with disabilities. Now, OPDs can advocate for the quality of the education students receive once in school. R4A OPD partners reported that participation in R4A has raised their organizations' stature in the community and that they have received recognition from local government as technical advisors on disability and inclusive education, which has led to stronger relationships. OPD representatives shared their perspectives on how the project could be improved. This included being part of the design phase for the project, providing more training to OPDs on operations and technical aspects of inclusive education, and allowing OPD staff to use their knowledge and expertise to contextualize training materials. Furthermore, OPD partners indicated that future activities should ensure transparency and support in their individual budget activity and administrative and human resource costs to ensure funds are adequate to cover and align with the scope of work (SOW). Lastly, OPD partners also recommended including their organizations' permanent staff and board members in project interventions to institutionalize knowledge gains and support sustainability.

2. **Screening and Identification:** What methods worked best to identify learners with disabilities?

**Answer:** Various stakeholders provided substantial positive feedback, and they described firsthand how R4A's screening activities raised awareness and changed behavior among school and government personnel and facilitated needed support to children. R4A made

concerted efforts to pilot the Washington Group Child Functioning Model (CFM) for school use. Data from the project's first technical verification showed that the project encountered several methodological barriers. Given these concerns, R4A initiated a second round and found that the CFM was able to flag 77.8% of children in the vision domain correctly, 66.7% of children in the mobility domain, yet only 27% of children in the hearing domain. Findings from the second technical verification activity suggest this tool has established validity for use for vision and mobility. The tool is not recommended for screening hearing, and no technical capacity was available in the country to validate other functional limitations the CFM covered.[1] The R4A project design and subsequent performance measures relied heavily on screening and identification. This presented many challenges, as identifying learners with disabilities is an emerging practice with limited international guidance or validated tools for implementing partners (IPs).

3. **Training:** What training model(s) worked best to provide teachers with the resources and support they need to best meet the needs of learners with disabilities?

**Answer:** In collaboration with the Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) Integrated Education and Training (IET), R4A delivered numerous trainings to general education and RC teachers in the final one-and-a-half years of implementation, and several training packages have been formally adopted into Nepal's teacher professional development (TPD) system. In-person training workshops became increasingly possible as Nepal's worst stages of the COVID-19 pandemic subsided. Stakeholders noted during interviews that the cascade training approach, used in Model B schools, was not very effective, and researchers found that training content had been inconsistently transferred from school administrators who had received direct training from the project to the early grade teachers in the school who had not participated. Conversely, teachers in Model C schools—who did receive direct training (as well as other ongoing forms of project support)—were able to discuss what they had learned, and researchers found that teachers had retained and were applying some principles of inclusive instruction at the time of project close. RC teachers spoke highly of the direct training they received over 15 days in one of three workshops focused on teaching and supporting children with specific disability types. RC teachers also reported they had either never received such targeted training during their career or that it had been many years since any training had been offered to them. General education and RC teachers expressed a desire to be trained together in the future.

[1] R4A technical validation studies showed the Washington Group demonstrated validity for functional limitations only in the domains of physical and vision, and a recently completed study of the CFM-TV (teacher version) in Nepal also found several limitations to the tool's validity in this context.

4. **Instruction:** What instructional models worked best to improve classroom instruction and reading outcomes among learners with disabilities?

**Answer:** Stakeholders supported the concept of including learners with disabilities in general education classrooms in theory and as an ideal to strive toward. However, in practice, existing constraints related to infrastructure and teacher capacity reinforced the perception that the RC model, with largely segregated instruction, is the only realistic scenario in Nepal at this time. Educators and government officials alike described inclusive education as referring to *"the kind of education that assures accessibility of equal education to all the persons from different caste groups, persons with limitations or disability, women, persons from rural geography and to [the] financially underprivileged community,"* to quote one local government official overseeing education. Many viewed transitioning some learners with disabilities from RCs to general education classrooms as a worthwhile goal. Yet, they doubted the existing capacity of schools and teachers to manage and support these learners appropriately. Classroom observations, surveys, and interviews showed that RC teachers had the most growth in applying inclusive teaching practices, indicating that they are a strong resource for their students and have the potential to support general education teachers as well. The limits of cascade training were evident in data from Model B schools, where teachers showed less capacity for inclusive instructional practices. Teachers in Model C schools, who received more direct support from R4A, showed gains in inclusive practice, but three months past the end of implementation in schools, the impact showed signs of fading. Gender and disability representation in R4A-distributed teaching and learning materials (TLMs) is lower than expected, with girls representing 38.8% of gendered characters, falling short of USAID's targeted gender benchmark of 50%, and disability representation at 0.9%, falling far short of the USAID's benchmark of 15%.[2] R4A engaged the appropriate stakeholders and drew on past implementer experience in developing the adapted Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) instruments. More research and testing are needed globally to understand whether and how to modify assessment tools for learners with disabilities versus universally designing them to capture learning gains from a larger share of learners, both with and without disabilities.

5. **Unintended Consequences:** Were there any unintended consequences of the activity? What were they?

**Answer:** Previous evaluation questions covered the majority of the findings from the MCSIE evaluation. The global COVID-19 pandemic was an unanticipated historic event resulting in prolonged school closures and a shift from in-person to virtual teacher training and instruction. The health sector's understandable prioritization of public health over

[2] USAID Guidance for Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Educational Materials

screening and referral support during this time resulted in changes and delays to R4A activities. Additionally, while some OPD partners or local government offices were able to find funds to support individual cases, overall, the project did not plan for costs associated with referrals and supports needed by children identified as having potential disabilities, which resulted in some children being flagged but not able to seek diagnosis and support.

## 1.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Inclusive education is a new area for many donors and implementing partners (IPs), and findings from this report help build the evidence base by highlighting lessons learned and programmatic aspects that should be replicated in the future. The following table summarizes some key recommendations, which are elaborated further in Section 5 of this report.

| EQ AREA | CONCLUSIONS | FUTURE PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|---|---|
| **Process**  | ● Partnering with national- and local-level OPDs infused the project with direct knowledge and expertise on disability, and all stakeholders benefited from the existing connections that these partnerships brought to the project.<br>● Embedding project technical staff within government offices during implementation allowed for strong communication and collaboration, which was mutually beneficial to both the project and government partners.<br>● Recruiting external consultants and headquarters staff for their technical guidance was necessary to supplement knowledge gaps and develop OPD-partner capacity. | ● Given that inclusive education is an emerging area for many donors, undertaking an extensive situational analysis before procuring a new program in a country can lead to an improved and more localized design.<br>● Continue with a robust co-creation process and allow partners to revise the budget and SOW to integrate USAID and government commitments.<br>● Promote and allow additional time to pilot tools, resources, and approaches before scaling up, and consider possible government delays in necessary approvals.<br>● Collaboration and knowledge sharing between sectors and technical experts are crucial to ensure that the multi-faceted needs of learners with disabilities are addressed.<br>● In decentralized contexts, find ways to strengthen the capacity of localized government units as well as middle-tier levels of government (i.e., provincial level), in addition to that of central units and actors.<br>● To promote meaningful OPD engagement, allocate budget and time to ensure reasonable accommodation is provided, build lasting organizational capacity for donor partnerships and continued work, ensure representation for all disability types in those partnerships, and plan for broader OPD knowledge-sharing. |

| EQ AREA | CONCLUSIONS | FUTURE PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|---|---|
| | | ● Adopt a whole-school approach by engaging educators (general education and RC teachers), parents, local government, and community members together in formal and informal ways.<br>● During project design, anticipate possible crises that could impact implementation, such as widespread health emergencies or natural disasters that could cause long-term school closures or access barriers. Ensure that risk and mitigation plans include long term school closures and ways to maintain engagement with and support to learners, families, and educators.<br>● Embed disability inclusion in all education programs, both pre-service and in-service. |
| **Screening and Identification**  | ● Adopting a screening tool based on the social model of disability can lead to positive changes in awareness and understanding. Many stakeholders in Nepal experienced significantly increased awareness of the presence of disability in schools and a shift in perception: from a child with a disability being "a problem" to the school system being responsible for creating inclusive environments for that child.<br>● Service mapping and including OPDs and local government structures within the screening and referral process are innovative strengths for addressing the gap between project screening and a referral for subsequent diagnosis. | ● Allow substantial time and budget to pilot and validate screening tools, including those for vision and hearing. Align screening tool selection with domains that can be validated by local medical professionals.<br>● Encourage collaboration with the health sector at the donor and government levels to ensure that the screening system is improved—from screening through diagnosis—and consider adding trained community volunteers to Student Assessment Technical Committees (SATCs) as they are scaled across the country. |

| EQ AREA | CONCLUSIONS | FUTURE PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|---|---|
| | ● Allowing for time and budget to technically verify new screening tools yields valuable information on the validity of screening tools in new contexts. Nevertheless, in contexts that lack trained medical personnel in a given domain, such as cognitive, learning disability, behavioral, and attention domains, validity testing will not be possible. | ● Find opportunities to share lessons learned on screening with global platforms to fill the evidence gap.<br>● Continue improvements to Educational Management and Information System (EMIS) so that data is accessible centrally as well as locally. Local education officials may require targeted support and training in order to access and use EMIS data. |
| **Training**  | ● The project worked with OPDs and the government (CEHRD) to develop in-service training packages for RC teachers who had previously been excluded from the TPD opportunities offered to, and required for, general education teachers.<br>● Members of OPDs led the training workshops on NSL and braille for RC teachers, ensuring representation, accuracy of content, and appropriateness of delivery. | ● Embed inclusive principles, including USAID's adopted Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach, throughout all training curriculum and materials.<br>● Promote accountability for and sustainability of inclusive instructional practices by investing in pre-service teacher training.<br>● Provide direct training from facilitators with classroom experience and include TLM demonstration and practice.<br>● Include OPD partners as training facilitators throughout all project training on inclusion and involve them in materials development and review.<br>● Train general education teachers alongside RC teachers and provide opportunities for RC teachers to share their insights and expertise for supporting learners with disabilities through school-based sharing meetings as well as, more broadly, through online or SMS-based communities of practice. |

| EQ AREA | CONCLUSIONS | FUTURE PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS |
|---|---|---|
| **Instruction**  | ● Adopting a social model approach to disability can build awareness of disability and a willingness to envision and promote the inclusive education vision in Nepal.<br>● Teachers expressed appreciation and excitement for the project's guidance on how they can produce teaching and learning resources using locally found materials.<br>● When trained in the general education curriculum for literacy, RC teachers showed the most growth in applying literacy and inclusive teaching practices, indicating that they are a strong resource for their students and have the potential to support general education teachers as well. | ● Foster understanding among educators that all general education classrooms have struggling learners who need support and that they should promote inclusive practices regardless of disability status.<br>● Engage OPDs and RC teachers, along with Local Education Unit (LEU) officials, as appropriate, to provide coaching and mentoring to general education teachers in schools.<br>● Provide guidance on whether and how to adapt the EGRA for different populations of disabilities using international best practices on test adaptations and accommodations. |
| **Unintended Consequences**  | ● The project quickly adjusted its communication approaches and efforts when the COVID-19 pandemic prevented in-person gatherings. Among project staff and partners, communication remained clear and strong. | ● Continue discussions to determine the best way to obtain monitoring, learning, and evaluation (MEL) data on learning outcomes in environments where comprehensive screening and evaluations are not yet taking place.<br>● If and when virtual training is needed, support participants by providing more technical assistance, access to materials, and opportunities for practice.<br>● Budget and set aside funds to meet the needs of project beneficiaries facing financial hardship as a result of the intervention. |

# 2. Introduction

This section of the report provides an overview of the Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE) evaluation's purpose, the Reading for All (R4A) program, and this endline report.

## 2.1 Purpose of Evaluation

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is partnering with Inclusive Development Partners (IDP), through the Long-Term Assistance and SErvices for Research Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (LASER PULSE) mechanism led by Purdue University, to conduct a four-and-a-half-year evaluation of three USAID inclusive education activities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal. These inclusive education activities represent USAID's most concerted efforts to date to build systems to ensure students with disabilities have access to quality education. MCSIE seeks to derive lessons learned about what works, for whom, and in what context to sustainably advance teaching and learning outcomes for children with disabilities in the target countries. Toward this goal, IDP is using a process-evaluation design to develop individual case studies of the inclusive education system in each country and to show how the USAID-funded interventions have affected the respective systems. Five key themes provide a framework for the study: process, identification, training, instruction, and unintended consequences.

USAID and its partners will use the MCSIE evaluation to learn from its inclusive education activities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal and to plan for new inclusive education programming globally. Evaluations of this type should be considered part of an iterative and responsive research methodology that generates knowledge over time. The following report outlines the final evaluation findings from R4A Nepal, while cross-national comparisons will be made subsequently in MCSIE work.

## 2.2 Overview of Reading for All

USAID's R4A program was awarded in 2018 to Humanity & Inclusion (HI), in partnership with World Education, Inc. (WEI), and was originally a three-year, $3.88 million activity focused on improving early grade reading (EGR) outcomes among children with disabilities in grades 1–3 in 16 districts of Nepal. Due to delays in gaining approvals and establishing formal partnerships with the Government of Nepal (GoN), aspects of project implementation were behind by a full year and further stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of these setbacks, R4A was granted an extension and closed in December 2022. In addition to the extension, the project scope was modified to reduce the number of intervention districts and to add an objective related to remedial instruction and support in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. The contract modifications meant that R4A was a $5.5 million activity that was implemented in 3,415 schools in 10 of the 16 National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) focus districts (Banke, Surkhet, Bhaktapur, Kaski, Mustang, Dhankuta, Parsa, Dang, Kailali, and Dadeldhura). The activity was intended to strengthen data availability on children with disabilities through screening children for possible functional limitations or disabilities; strengthen the GoN's institutional capacity at the federal and

local levels to implement its constitutional and policy commitments to disability-inclusive education, and test three models of implementation, each receiving varying degrees of direct support (see Exhibit 1).

**Exhibit 1. R4A's Models**


- **Model A** schools were resource classrooms (RCs) for learners with disabilities and were spread across project districts. RC teachers received targeted training in the use of either braille, Nepali Sign Language (NSL), or strategies for supporting learners with intellectual disability (depending on the focus area of the RC).

- **Model B** schools comprised the largest group and received the lightest support. This entailed a cascade approach to training, with only head teachers from schools receiving direct training from R4A on inclusive literacy instruction, which they were expected to convey to the grade 1–3 teachers at their respective schools. Education focal persons also received training to take back to other municipal officers.
- **Model C** schools were in four focus municipalities within the districts of Banke and Surkhet. In Model C schools, head teachers and education focal persons received the same training as their colleagues in Model B. In addition, grade 1–3 teachers received direct training on inclusive literacy instruction. This model also included plans for coaching support at schools through R4A social mobilizers.

## 2.3 Purpose of Endline Report

MCSIE originally comprised four phases: (1) inception, (2) initial data collection, (3) midline data collection, and (4) endline data collection.[3] IDP conducted an initial inception visit to Nepal in November 2019. Since MCSIE's start date began well after project implementation commenced in Nepal, IDP was only able to collect data closer to the midline and endline of project

[3] These phases were subject to change based on the COVID-19 pandemic and shifts in data collection plans and project end dates.

implementation. Furthermore, IDP proposed an interim report as an alternative to an initial or midline report due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which put a halt on all in-country data collection for the MCSIE team and slowed many of R4A's activities. Finally, through the MCSIE Areas of Intervention Mapping (AIM) Study, IDP has examined and documented the various screening, teacher training, and instructional efforts undertaken broadly in Nepal by other stakeholders, such as local and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In April 2023, IDP produced a separate report on this topic.

This endline report seeks to provide a cumulative overview and reflection on the available evidence to answer each of the five areas of inquiry or evaluation (process, screening and identification, training, instruction, and consequences), as they pertain to the work of the R4A project. The report also serves to shed light on the status of inclusive education programming for relevant stakeholders in Nepal, others within the USAID network, and global stakeholders who would like to learn from the evidence generated.

# 3. Methodology

This methodology section provides a general overview of the methods used to obtain data for the report, including information on data collection and analysis methods, the role of evaluative rubrics and checklists, and the limitations of this study.

## 3.1 General Overview

For each of the study's five themes, USAID generated an evaluative question (EQ) to inform the project of individual country programs as well as programming across the three countries:

1. **Process:** What worked well/poorly in the process of setting up an efficient, effective, and sustainable system to focus on improving the quality of education for learners with disabilities?
2. **Screening and Identification:** What methods worked best to identify learners with disabilities?
3. **Training:** What training model(s) worked best to provide teachers with the resources and support they need to best meet the needs of learners with disabilities?
4. **Instruction:** What instructional models worked best to improve classroom instruction and reading outcomes among learners with disabilities?
5. **Unintended Consequences:** Were there any unintended consequences of the activity? What were they?

Although not part of the original EQs, this study also examines for whom the programs work or do not work and what specific contextual factors may influence successes or create barriers.

## 3.2 Methods and Sample

This report uses a vast set of data collected by IDP and Kathmandu University (KU) from 2019–2023 for both the interim report and the endline report. In selecting the districts to study for the school sample, IDP and KU chose districts that represented urban and rural areas and also ensured that the sample included schools receiving R4A's more intensive intervention (Model C). Schools in the control group were selected from areas with demographic similarities and adjacent to project intervention areas.

The following is an abridged summary of these methods and sample sizes (see a list of tools in Annex B).

**Exhibit 2. Snapshot of Primary Data Collection Sample (non-school-based)**

| TYPE | SAMPLE |
|---|---|
| Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) | 109 (total) |
| Federal government | 12 |
| Local government | 13 |
| Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) | 21 |
| EGR teacher trainees (general education and RC) | 34 |
| Screening trainees | 10 |
| Implementing partner (IP) staff | 19 |
| Surveys | 249 (total) |
| IP staff | 150 |
| Teachers (related to training) | 61 |
| Families | 38 |
| Training and Event Observations | 18 (total) |
| EGR training activities | 10 |
| Screening training activities | 2 |
| Other training activities (Early Grade Reading Assessment [EGRA], data managers) | 2 |
| Learning and sharing events | 4 |

**Exhibit 3. School-Based Data Collection Sample**

| Data Collection Tool | Data Collection Round | Bhaktapur | | Kaski | | Banke | | | Surkhet | | | Control | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Model A | Model B | Model A | Model B | Model A | Model B | Model C | Model A | Model B | Model C | Bardiya | Lalitpur | |
| Teacher survey | Round 1 | | 22 | | 27 | 7 | 4 | 11 | 9 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 15 | 126 |
| | Round 2 | | 20 | | 21 | 11 | 10 | 18 | 12 | 12 | 16 | 9 | 10 | 139 |
| Classroom observation | Round 1 | | 18 | | 21 | 7 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 11 | 15 | 113 |
| | Round 2 | | 10 | | 18 | 11 | 10 | 18 | 12 | 12 | 16 | 9 | 11 | 127 |
| Teacher KII | Round 1 | | 11 | | 13 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 65 |
| | Round 2 | | 9 | | 12 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 8 | | | 65 |
| Head teacher KII | Round 1 | | 11 | | 13 | 6 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 5 | | | 55 |
| | Round 2 | | 8 | | 12 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 8 | | | 63 |
| RC teacher KII | Round 1 | 1 | | 2 | | 4 | | | 6 | | | | | 13 |
| | Round 2 | | | 2 | | 5 | | | 6 | | | | | 13 |
| Total | | 1 | 109 | 2 | 141 | 67 | 52 | 84 | 74 | 69 | 77 | 48 | 57 | 779 |

***KIIs or FGDs (total combined sample: 374)***

- **Government staff.** In total, the team conducted 25 KIIs with national or subnational government staff from the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) (key stakeholders were interviewed at interim and endline).
- **OPDs.** The team interviewed representatives from all 12 of R4A's OPD partners (10 district partners and two national partners) over the course of 21 meetings.
- **Teachers at training workshops.** The team conducted FGDs with a total of 44 teachers (34 following instructional training and 10 following screening training).
- **Teachers at schools.** The team conducted a total of 156 KIIs with general education and RC teachers during two rounds of school-based data collection. When available, teachers were the same in both rounds.
- **Head teachers.** The team conducted 118 KIIs with head teachers during two rounds of school-based data collection. Most of these were the same head teachers in both rounds.
- **IP staff.** Across the lifetime of the evaluation, the team conducted 19 interviews with IP staff (key staff were interviewed at interim and endline if available).

***Surveys (total sample: 514)***

- **Training survey.** IDP conducted a pre-post survey of teachers who received EGR instructional training that was completed by 61 participants.
- **IP staff survey.** 150 staff from HI, WEI, and the OPD partners completed an IP survey.
- **Classroom teacher survey.** The team conducted a total of 265 teacher surveys in schools across two rounds of data collection. For the most part, teachers were the same in both rounds.
- **Household survey.** The team interviewed 38 parents/caregivers whose children had individualized education plans (IEPs) developed with R4A support.

***Observations (total observations: 258)***

- **Training observation.** IDP local staff observed two screening trainings, seven EGR instructional trainings for general education teachers, three trainings for RC teachers (focused on EGR and specific instructional strategies and considerations for students with different kinds of disabilities, including NSL for learners who are deaf/hard of hearing, braille for learners with visual disabilities, and support strategies for learners with intellectual disability), one data managers' training, and the EGRA enumerators' training. The team observed trainings conducted remotely as well as in person.
- **Classroom lesson observations.** The team conducted a total of 240 lesson observations across two rounds of school-based data collection.
- **Learning and sharing event observations.** IDP local staff observed four R4A learning and sharing events in the final months of the project.

***Secondary Source Reviews (187 materials)***

- **Material review.** In total, the evaluation team reviewed 187 official project documents, including training materials, screening materials, datasets, teaching and learning materials (TLMs), and project reports. Some documents were brief, such as event participant lists or job descriptions, while others were much longer, such as various reports. Annex A provides a full list of referenced materials and project documents reviewed for this project.
- **Equity and Inclusion Checklist.** IDP and KU team members adapted and piloted USAID's Guidance for Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Educational Materials Checklist with R4A student TLMs. This checklist was used to review 30% (N=62, included in above total) of R4A-provided decodable storybooks.

To support local data collection, IDP's international research team conducted remote and in-person enumerator training with IDP's local staff members and the KU team on various occasions ahead of fieldwork. This training introduced MCSIE, familiarized local enumerators with the data collection tools and procedures, provided a how-to training for conducting KIIs and FGDs, reviewed ethical considerations, and provided time for interview skills practice. The research team validated data collection and reporting through informal meetings over the course of visits to Nepal in April 2022 and March 2023.

## 3.3 Limitations

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, IDP was unable to visit Nepal in 2020 or 2021. As a result, IDP worked closely with local staff and partners to support their in-country data collection efforts, some of which needed to shift to virtual formats, such as telephone interviews and surveys, due to pandemic conditions. Additionally, because of the pandemic, it was challenging for both the project itself and MCSIE evaluators to gauge the project's effectiveness. For example, with schools closed or offering virtual instruction for nearly two years, the team could not observe classroom-based instruction until early 2022, at which point teachers and students were only beginning to adapt to the new in-school realities. Such prolonged school closures also had a direct impact on the project's activities and results since teachers had less time to practice using the new teaching strategies and materials than originally anticipated. Nonetheless, evaluators have attempted to triangulate data with other sources, such as interviews and surveys, to demonstrate the project's effectiveness wherever possible.

Another limitation was that the MCSIE research team did not consistently receive advanced notice from R4A of observable activities. At times, the MCSIE team had limited ability to conduct in-person or virtual observations due to late or short notice of project activities. When possible, the MCSIE team would quickly maneuver project staff and reprioritize activities to conduct observations. R4A explained that late notices were usually the result of the project itself changing and adjusting plans up until the event began.

Finally, the team encountered challenges in meeting with parents and caregivers associated with the project. Because the pandemic significantly hindered R4A's own plans for community and parental engagement, many families of children in project schools had little to no awareness about R4A activities, including screening, reading instruction, and IEPs. Additionally, many parents live far from the schools their children attend or work long days and have limited availability or even access to a means of reaching them. Stigma and lack of understanding related to disability was also a factor in some parents' reluctance to speak with the MCSIE team. Overall, this evaluation lacks parent and caregiver perspectives.

# 4. Nepal Endline Findings

This report section provides an overview of full evaluation findings, divided according to the five evaluation questions (EQs).

## 4.1 Process

**EQ1: What worked well/poorly in the process of setting up an efficient, effective, and sustainable system to focus on improving the quality of education for learners with disabilities?**

**Answer:** Within the project design, R4A made concerted efforts to promote project sustainability, including embedding R4A staff in the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) and building an organization of persons with disabilities (OPD) and non-governmental organization (NGO) capacity. Having large percentages of staff with disabilities and staff with close personal connections with persons with disabilities were strong and innovative elements of the project. However, given the emerging nature of the field, most had limited background in the technical area of inclusive education. In the early stages of the project, R4A used external consultants' and Humanity & Inclusion's (HI's) headquarters (HQ) staff's technical guidance and expertise in literacy instruction and screening to supplement knowledge gaps and used training and field visits to develop OPD-partner capacity. OPD engagement was another innovative element of R4A, and much was learned from this initiative. At times, R4A limited OPD engagement to operational and coordination roles rather than technical leadership and did not consistently provide accessibility for persons with disabilities. However, OPD partner responsibilities increased over the life of the project, including in technical areas of implementation related to inclusive education and supporting schools. When describing how R4A changed their organization, one OPD leader said:

*"Whenever we call a school, we can easily say our organization and have recognition and a good response. We have also been able to enhance our capacity through the project, especially on inclusive education…. A few of our team members have received intensive training and increased their capacity on inclusive education—now they can be champions of inclusive education. R4A strengthened OPDs across the country… this was a wonderful idea to enhance OPDs and bring them together."*

Local-level government education officials were very supportive of the project goals. They expressed a need for more guidance to support inclusion in schools through their role in monitoring activities. Several stakeholders described a desire for a whole-school approach, wherein educators (general and resource classroom [RC]), local government, parents, and community members, as well as students themselves, are engaged together in formal and informal ways to support inclusive education.

### 4.1.1 Project Design, Staffing, and Management

**With the shift to a federalist government structure, more decision-making authority shifted to local-level government offices; these offices need to be considered for project planning and engagement.** In the case of R4A, municipal-level Local Education Units (LEUs) oversee schools. Therefore, they may provide useful insights into program design during the solicitation process. While central-level government officials (i.e., the Center for Education and Human Resource Development [CEHRD] Inclusive Education and Training section) from the MoEST were included in design discussions, ultimately, the authority lies at the local level. Similarly, after the project closes, local education offices need records and systems to ensure institutional memory and the ability to carry the work forward. While LEUs possess decision-making authority, they can only financially sustain the work after a project closes if they have budget support from the district, provincial, or federal government. The lack of direct engagement with provincial government officials during project implementation, and the limited engagement with district officials, could create challenges when LEU officials advocate for support to sustain the work.

**Many KII participants expressed that the R4A timeline and budget were limited for such an ambitious scope of work (SOW) and the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated implementation challenges.** With an original budget of $3.88 million, the solicitation requested that activities within 16 districts in Nepal build on the work already undertaken in those districts by USAID's Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP). R4A held a two-day co-creation workshop with the GoN and other stakeholders, yet this occurred after the budget and SOW were already developed, making it challenging to shift the scope or add activities during co-creation. USAID noted that a longer co-creation phase with more involvement from OPD resource partners may have mitigated challenges related to partner selection and scope[4]. USAID also indicated that, in hindsight, a less prescriptive solicitation would have been better suited for an emerging field of

[4] For example, involving OPDs during co-creation may have raised the need for a partner to represent intellectual disability or may have allowed for robust discussion related to professional development in sign language

practice (inclusive education). A contract modification in December 2020, which reduced the districts from 16 to 10 and extended the timeline by 17 months, was helpful in allowing the project to focus resources and make slightly more implementation progress, but the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on project activities was significant until project end.

**The R4A project design and subsequent performance measures relied heavily on screening and identification. This presented many challenges, as identifying learners with disabilities is an emerging practice with limited international guidance or validated tools for implementing partners (IPs).** While the R4A monitoring, learning, and evaluation (MEL) plan aligned with USAID requirements, it showed that many activities and data related to screening and identification were precursors for several of R4A's performance indicators, including the goal-level indicators to measure the project's overall success. In addition, efforts to validate screening tools and the COVID-19 pandemic greatly impacted R4A's ability to implement its screening activities on schedule, and activities were significantly delayed. This, in turn, affected other activities tied to screening data. **R4A experienced high staff turnover, resulting in a need for additional training as new staff were hired.** The project struggled to retain staff, in part due to better-paying opportunities in the education sector and exacerbated by necessary lulls in implementation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among OPD and NGO partners, some staff positions were only partially funded by the project, and these organizations lost staff due to their inability to provide the remaining portion of those salaries. A KII participant from R4A noted that orienting and training new staff incurs additional time and expenses that were not planned for in the project.

**Project staff reported limited experience in disability-inclusive education and worked to build capacity by garnering external technical expertise and developing staff training to bridge this gap.** As far as working on inclusive education for learners with disabilities, 42.6% of staff from Humanity & Inclusion (HI) and World Education, Inc. (WEI) and 64.1% of OPD/NGO staff reported no previous experience. Of HI/WEI staff, half (51%, N=24) had four years or less of experience in inclusive education, and 4.3% (N=2) had more than five years. Of OPD/NGO staff, 29% had four years or less of experience, and 4% had more than five years. This is not surprising, given that inclusive education is an emerging field in Nepal and there are limited opportunities for professional training and development. The majority of HI and WEI staff had university-level degrees and reported studying a range of subjects (see Exhibit 4).

**Exhibit 4. HI and WEI Staff's Areas of Study**

| Area of study | % of respondents[5] |
|---|---|
| Finance, Policy, and/or Administration | 41% |
| Education | 24% |
| Social Science | 15% |
| Rural Development | 15% |
| Disability-Inclusive Education | 3% |
| Economics | 3% |

When asked about experience in disability-related areas prior to working for R4A, some responses included "coordinating and cooperating with people with disabilities in education, health, and rehabilitation," "capacity building," "advocating for disability rights," "conduct[ing] screening on children with disabilities," "disability-inclusive development approaches," and "local level planning for disaster impact on people with disabilities." HI and WEI received support from international and regional staff and experts for general project management, screening and identification efforts, and teacher training preparation. During the start-up phase, all project staff received a two-day orientation in inclusive education and conducted a field visit to RCs to understand the different approaches to inclusive education. KII participants reported high staff turnover, resulting in a need for additional training as new staff members were hired.

**Lack of expertise related to intellectual disability in-country and within the project hampered the project's ability to provide support in this area.** R4A had two national OPD partners that focused on persons who are blind or have low vision and persons who are deaf or hard of hearing, respectively. The project did not have a national OPD partner for people with intellectual disability, although these organizations do exist in Nepal. Nepal lacks a robust network of professional support for people with an intellectual disability; by also lacking a partner with experience and expertise supporting this population, the project was hampered in its ability to respond to the student needs uncovered by the screening process as well as the needs of RC teachers who teach students with an intellectual disability (discussed more in the Training section of this report). The evaluation team did not find an explicit reason for this, but project staff indicated that the timing of co-creation, when children with intellectual disability were added to the project scope at the GoN's request, was too late to make major budget or partnership changes.

[5] Calculations do not add up to 100% due to rounding.

### 4.1.2 Sustainability

**KIIs revealed that embedding consortium staff within GoN offices was mutually beneficial and contributed to the project's efforts to build GoN's capacity related to inclusive education, which may lead to sustainability.** Staff reported that being proximal to GoN counterparts was extremely valuable and essential as it allowed easy communication and collaboration and a free and informal exchange of ideas. The GoN stated that it appreciated having R4A staff within the office as the R4A project worked with a variety of learners from different disability categories and supported the broader goal of inclusion for all learners with disabilities regardless of their disability label. R4A noted that this process took extensive time and effort but was worthwhile.

**Local government officials responsible for overseeing schools request training and support to monitor and evaluate inclusive practices.** LEU officials were overall very positive about R4A and hoped the work could be sustained (though they would need budgetary support). Several LEU officials also noted that, while they were engaged with the project through training and coordinating various activities, R4A needed to prepare them to monitor and evaluate schools and teachers for inclusive practices. School supervision is among their responsibilities, and LEU officials supported the inclusive approaches R4A promoted. Still, they felt the work would be more sustainable if they had received targeted support and guidance to ensure inclusion continues.

**The COVID-19 pandemic severely limited engagement with parents.** R4A had plans for robust engagement with parents, including forming or working with Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs), connecting parents of children with similar disabilities or limitations with one another for parent-to-parent support, and coaching parents on how to actively support their children's learning. However, many of these plans were not possible for most of the implementation period due to COVID-19. Parents of students in Model B schools, where the intervention was limited, had little to no engagement with the project. Parents of students in RCs and Model C schools, where the intervention was more intensive, were engaged mostly in developing IEPs. OPD staff (social mobilizers) also made efforts to connect with parents of children with disabilities in these areas (in Banke and Surkhet districts), particularly when schools were closed. Efforts by the MCSIE team to speak to parents did not yield additional information; those who did speak to the team seemed to know very little about R4A's work.

**Nothing about Us without Us**

From solicitation through implementation of R4A, including OPDs as full project partners was a core aspect of the project. This is a significant achievement for USAID and the project as they seek to enshrine the principle of "nothing about us without us." Many lessons were learned throughout the project that will inform future inclusive work regarding representative OPDs.

OPD partners provided tremendous value to the project with local knowledge of existing resources, community context, and lived experience with disability. They largely expressed satisfaction with their engagement on the R4A project and felt their capacity was substantially increased in inclusive education. Some areas, like providing accessibility and more timely consultation, could have been strengthened. During KIIs, OPD representatives reported they were generally satisfied with their engagement on the R4A project and felt their organization's technical and operational skills had been strengthened. Senior project staff noted that, before R4A, most OPD engagement in the education sector focused on advocacy related to access to education for children with disabilities. Now, OPDs can advocate for the quality of the education students receive once in school. R4A OPD partners reported that participation in R4A has raised their organizations' stature in the community and that they have received recognition from local government as technical advisors on disability and inclusive education, which has led to stronger relationships. OPD representatives shared their perspectives on how the project could be improved. This included being part of the design phase for the project, providing more training to OPDs on operations and technical aspects of inclusive education, and allowing OPD staff to use their knowledge and expertise to contextualize training materials. Furthermore, OPD partners indicated that future activities should ensure transparency and support in their individual budget activity and administrative and human resource costs to ensure funds are adequate to cover and align with the SOW. Lastly, OPD partners also recommended including their organizations' permanent staff and board members in project interventions to institutionalize knowledge gains and support sustainability.

In the three districts where R4A partnered with NGOs because OPD capacity was too limited, NGO partners nevertheless collaborated with local OPDs to support their work and bridge their gap in disability knowledge. Additionally, NGO partners reported that these collaborations allowed them to build the capacity of local OPDs. During KIIs, the three NGO partners shared that they formed mutually beneficial relationships with local OPDs in their area. These collaborations were informal for the most part. One NGO drafted a memorandum of understanding with an OPD that allowed for the OPD to support the NGO with their disability expertise in some activities (including screening, teacher training, and a general understanding of disability rights), with the NGO providing in-kind organizational capacity building support in return, including helping to develop a Disability Coordination Committee at various locations in the district. The NGO also reported that the relationship with the OPD caused them to realize their own policies and operations were not inclusive, and they took steps to improve, including updating their language to be more respectful of people with disabilities and renovating the office bathroom to make it accessible. Another NGO was able to provide compensation to a local OPD chairperson to help support the NGO in learning

about disability as well as in supporting R4A training. In addition, now the two organizations have found ways to work together. A third NGO also worked to engage a local OPD but was unable to provide budgetary support, and the collaboration was limited.

A quarter (25%) of all project staff identified as having a disability, including those employed through OPD and NGO partners, and 64% reported having a close relationship with an individual with a disability. Hiring people with disabilities provided strong representation in the program and is consistent with the international disability motto of "nothing about us without us," and the large numbers of staff with close connections to disability through relationships provided additional, important support and understanding. OPD partners expressed a desire for the full range of disabilities to be represented on the project. They also suggested activities that could enable them to share the knowledge learned from R4A with other OPDs in their region that were not directly connected with R4A to build their capacity and knowledge for inclusive education as well as for future partnerships.

**Local-level OPD partner staff supported the facilitation of some R4A training interventions.** WEI and HI staff, or in some cases CEHRD officials, were the primary facilitators, with OPD staff serving in support roles mainly behind the scenes. However, during screening and EGR trainings for general education teachers, OPD staff led the training session that introduced disability. KIIs with OPDs noted that they would have liked to have been more involved in developing training materials and that including board members and staff who are permanent (versus only those hired for the project) in training as full participants could have helped to provide more continuity and smoother transitions when project staff turned over. OPDs suggested that donors or implementers develop a roster of OPD trainers with technical expertise to guide future partnerships and noted that for particular topics, such as sign language, the only expertise held in country is with OPDs.

**National-level OPD partners led the development and provision of training for RC teachers of children with vision and hearing disabilities.** R4A provided two training workshops that each consisted of five days of inclusive EGR instructional training and 10 days of targeted training in using braille for RC teachers of children with vision disabilities or NSL for RC teachers of children with hearing disabilities. R4A's National Resource Partners—the National Association for the Welfare of the Blind (NAWB) and the National Deaf Federation of Nepal (NDFN)—developed the training packages and facilitated the workshops, showing a high level of expertise in the subject matter and a range of training modalities. This included lectures, daily recaps, demonstrations and role play, group work, making TLMs from local materials, and school visits for observation and practice. RC teachers who participated reported they were grateful to receive long overdue, focused professional development while also expressing a desire for more training. In particular, teachers in the NSL training said they appreciated help with basic signs but needed much more support to teach and communicate with their students:

*"10 days of training in sign language is not enough to learn sign language to teach students with disability. This was just introductory for us; it would be better to provide one month or lengthier training for advanced sign language, which will help us to teach them."* (Male, RC Teacher)

**Training for RC teachers who serve students with an intellectual disability did not include OPD input and showed evidence of bias and misunderstanding of intellectual disability among facilitators as well as participants.** Unlike the braille and NSL training, an OPD partner did not facilitate the training for RC teachers who serve students with intellectual disability because R4A did not have a partner with a specialization on this type of disability due to the original solicitation only having a focus on hearing and vision disabilities. (Nepal government stakeholders pressed for the inclusion of intellectual disability during the early stages of the project, but this did not lead to adding a partner OPD). While the training was interactive and included elements that teachers found helpful, the training content was more about disability types, history, and theory. Based on observation and review of training materials, training did not provide robust guidance on practical strategies for classroom instruction. When teachers asked the training facilitators specific questions about scenarios they may encounter in the classroom, facilitators were unable to provide responses or demonstrate strategies that teachers could apply. In addition, participants engaged in role-play activities that included someone acting as a student with an intellectual disability. The evaluation team observed training facilitators and teachers laughing during this exercise, and participants were observed generally making comments that indicated a lack of understanding about intellectual disability without any response or engagement from facilitators.

**Accessibility of project and training materials to support partners with disabilities was inconsistent.** Ensuring accessibility and accommodations for people with disabilities is not yet a standard consideration in the Nepal context. R4A staff made explicit efforts to ensure that OPD representatives as well as RC teachers who have disabilities were able to access events and materials. Nevertheless, instances of inaccessible materials occurred at times throughout the project—both in printed materials as well as projected materials and those requiring the use of technology. Observations of final training events and learning events near the end of the project showed several instances of material inaccessibility. While NSL training included sign language interpretation, printed, or projected materials were not always made available in braille or large font for participants with vision disabilities. As a result, the evaluation team observed that participants with disabilities were less engaged in discussion and interactive activities during the workshops.

## 4.2 Screening and Identification

**EQ2: What methods worked best to identify learners with disabilities?**

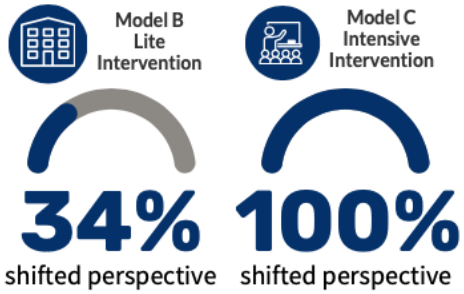
**Answer:** Various stakeholders provided substantial positive feedback, and they described firsthand how R4A's screening activities raised awareness and changed behavior among school and government personnel and facilitated needed support to children. R4A made concerted efforts to pilot the Washington Group Child Functioning Model (CFM) for school use. Data from the project's first technical verification showed that the project encountered several methodological barriers. Given these concerns, R4A initiated a second round and found that the CFM was able to flag 77.8% of children in the vision domain correctly, 66.7% of children in the mobility domain, yet only 27% of children in the hearing domain. Findings from the second technical verification activity suggest this tool has established validity for use for vision and mobility. The tool is not recommended for screening hearing, and no technical capacity was available in-country to validate other functional limitations the CFM covered.[6]

**R4A's efforts to include OPDs and local government within the referral process was an innovative strength for addressing the gap between project screening and a referral for a subsequent diagnosis.** Challenges in coordinating the health and education sectors for screening and referral activities showed the importance of such collaboration. Of the 201,219 children screened through R4A, only 455 (0.2%) resulted in a diagnosed disability, well below what prevalence rates would suggest; much work remains to be done to improve linkages in the screening system and connections between actors (project, government, and sector) to screen, refer, and diagnose children with disabilities effectively. Lastly, while many improvements have been made to the Educational Management and Information System (EMIS) subsystem to reflect better data on learners with disabilities, including data for domains that currently have no validated tool, storing student data within the EMIS before diagnosis occurs could place students at risk of labeling or discrimination. Once diagnoses are confirmed, EMIS data should also be made accessible to local government officials and central-level actors to use in decision-making. Local education officials, in particular, may require targeted support and training in order to access and use EMIS data, as some reported being unable to access data they had previously entered.

[6] R4A technical validation studies showed the Washington Group demonstrated validity for functional limitations only in the domains of physical and vision, and a recently completed study of the CFM-TV (teacher version) in Nepal also found several limitations to the tool's validity in this context.

**The screening and identification process led to significant awareness raising among school and local government personnel about the presence of children with disabilities in schools.** This led to fundamental shifts in perspectives for government officials and educators, particularly teachers in Model C schools (R4A's intensive intervention model). This finding is based on interviews with R4A staff, OPD partners, school personnel, and government officials who all noted the positive transformation that followed screening activities. Numerous individuals expressed the surprise they and other stakeholders felt when they saw the screening data because they had no idea that so many children with functional limitations are struggling to learn in school. Screening training helped shift perspectives to the social model of disability, i.e., from focusing on the child with disability as a "problem" to considering what teachers can do to support struggling learners.

**Exhibit 5. A Shift in Teachers' Perspectives**




As a Model C teacher stated:

> *Yes, there is change in perspective. Before we did not know what kind of disability students are facing, or students [are] struggling [for a] reason we did not know, but now after the training, we understood the students' difficulties. So, we identified the problem students were facing and accordingly we dealt with the problem by focusing on him or her and gave required materials and support, which brought good results in their studies.*

Administrators and the OPD staff who supervised implementation also noted that teachers have become more patient and supportive with students they had previously assumed were badly behaved. Administrators and local governments are eager to continue screening and scale it to other grades, and as a result of screening, OPDs have gained more visibility and legitimacy for their role in facilitating the process and advocating for inclusive education.

**Prior to screening rollout, the project's partner OPDs conducted a mapping of services for referrals.** The mapping activity took place in each of the project districts and captured detailed information about the sector (i.e., health, advocacy, rehabilitation, education, etc.), location, and services provided (see mapping categories in Exhibit 6 below). KIIs revealed that working with OPDs familiar with services in their communities was a great way to bridge the gap between

project screening, referral, and, ultimately, diagnosis and services. While this was done on an ad hoc basis, it demonstrates the benefits of OPD partnerships.

**Exhibit 6. Service Provider Database**

| Reading for All Project | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Annex:4 List of Service Provider Mapping | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Health | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| S.N | Organization /Name of Group | Address | Types of organization or group (Gov, NGO, Company, Private) | Contact Person/ Dept | Position | Contact numb | Email | Main Services/ Activities | Service provision/ facilities | Future plans | Working Gaunpalika/ Municipality | Remarks |

**The CFM was modified significantly from the original design, and teachers needed more consistent use of the CFM in practice.** During government consultations, the CFM was simplified for ease of implementation. In addition, although the CFM Manual for Interviewers (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2018) directs enumerators to ask questions related to possible functional limitations and suggests that interviewers probe or provide examples, R4A deviated from these recommendations by developing mini-assessments to determine if learners have functional limitations. The mini assessments outlined in R4A screening training materials were not based on validated tools or approaches (e.g., the project instructed hearing assessors to put children in a group and call out each child's name to see if the children had appropriate responses), which could lead to misidentification. It was unclear to what extent this approach was practiced across project schools. Any changes to screening tools require careful comparative testing and validation.

**R4A made concerted efforts to validate the CFM tool before scaling its use across the project districts; however, this was outside the original program description, and there was not a budget allocated for this activity.** R4A did significant work to validate the CFM by conducting two technical verification activities after collecting project screening data. This involved engaging medical professionals in conducting evaluations of children flagged and not flagged by the CFM tool. KIIs indicate that several staff members thought this process could have been stronger and more thorough if there had been planning and a corresponding budget to ensure verification was done effectively; as it was, project funds were reallocated from elsewhere in the budget.

**Findings from the R4A project pilot and technical verification yielded important information and validated the CFM tool for screening children with functional limitations in the domains of vision and mobility.** The technical verification process included only three CFM domains—vision, hearing, and mobility—because Nepal does not yet have local medical professionals who are trained to assess and diagnose disability in the cognitive, learning, behavioral, and attention domains. Overall, the technical verification processes conducted by R4A demonstrated validity in the domains of vision and mobility, which met or almost met the minimum criteria for validity, but not for the hearing domain. More efforts are needed to validate screening tools for hearing and other disabilities. While the project flagged a large number of students with functional limitations, the small number of students who received a formal diagnosis suggests that

more work is needed to improve the system and linkages between screening, referral, and, ultimately, diagnosis. The CFM is an effective census-level tool, but its accuracy must be established due to its new use in classrooms. The low rate of diagnosis as a result of screening (0.2% of students screened received a disability diagnosis) suggests that significant gaps in the system must be addressed. Common difficulties reported for school-based administration include the shift from parents to teachers as respondents, competing demands on and priorities for teachers, and large class sizes with limited 1:1 time to become familiar with student functional limitations, especially when limitations are mild or not clearly visible.

**Analysis.** SATCs provide a promise for cross-sector collaboration but require continued support to address challenges. Adding community members to the committee could be a way to smooth inconsistencies in other members' availability.

**Collaboration between the education and health sectors, necessitated by the focus on screening, was limited, and this contributed to project delays and unmet goals, but Student Assessment Technical Committees (SATCs) show promise for bringing sectors together for collaboration.** Nepal has no established structure at the federal level for the health and education sectors to collaboratively manage the identification process from early screening through referral, assessment and diagnosis, and support services. Although the IP had an established relationship with the Ministry of Health (MoH), the lack of an existing collaborative structure as well as the combination of the pandemic and decentralization that came with the shift to federalism, meant that coordination between sectors was challenging at best and resulted in gaps. R4A organized a visit to India for CEHRD, and one of the main takeaways from the trip was the need to learn from India's health and education sectors working together. SATCs, which were piloted in the focus municipalities of Banke and Surkhet, bring together multiple stakeholders, including from the education and health sectors, as well as OPDs and local officials responsible for disability assessment and benefits. The CEHRD has directed all local governments across Nepal to form SATCs, and R4A provided important initial learning on their functionality. The project reported that SATCs sometimes faced challenges—especially at more intense periods of activity related to screening due to members already having full-time work responsibilities—and also noted gaps in the SATCs' ability to connect some children with more significant support needs to services, which can be expensive.

**No alternative plan was in place for screening if the CFM could not be used with accuracy.** Due to the project's design at the solicitation stage, R4A could not explore if alternative screening methods (such as vision or hearing screening) might be more accurate or even appropriate to the Nepali context for reaching the R4A objective of improved data quality on children with disabilities in the event that attempts to validate the proposed tool were unsuccessful or only partially successful, as was the case with the CFM. Upon conclusion of the project, R4A IPs' interviews and reports suggested the use of universal vision and hearing screening approaches as an

alternative to the CFM in future projects (this is also the MCSIE team's perspective; see Recommendations section).

**The EMIS system has been improved but contains gaps that may place students at risk and hinder local support.** The CFM is located within the EMIS subsystem, and a student's screening data is logged within their EMIS record before the student has received a medical assessment and diagnosis. The subsystem includes the option to use the CFM or use data from a direct medical assessment. If the CFM is used, the subsystem is programmed to create a personalized referral card, which can be printed for each student that the CFM flags as having a potential disability. It is then, ultimately, up to a student's family whether to proceed with a medical assessment. Their willingness or ability to do so depends on several factors, including cost, distance to a hospital or clinic, and perception of disability. While there is value in schools and teachers informally using screening data from their students to initiate discussions and planning related to learning supports that a given student may need, the formal step of including data on suspected disability within EMIS, before a diagnosis, could place students at risk of labeling or discrimination. This could happen if the screening tools are not yet accurate in domains other than vision and mobility. If EMIS, even temporarily, contains student data based only on findings from the screening process, many of which were inaccurate, this may also result in students being missed or not receiving adequate or appropriate services. In addition, as of project close, local data that was added to EMIS from schools was only made available at the central level. LEU officials shared that they were unable to extract and examine data for the schools in their area to make informed decisions, even though they were responsible for ensuring data is entered into the system. Lastly, R4A noted additional gaps within EMIS that need to be addressed, including the absence of RC student data and the absence of disability designation for students with known disabilities who are being supported in the classroom but who, nevertheless, lacked an official diagnosis and identification (ID) card.

**Analysis.** To protect children and prevent mistakes in service provision, screening data should be confidential until and unless a disability diagnosis is provided. Similarly, the EMIS subsystem should only contain domains that are measured with a validated tool.

## 4.3 Training

**EQ3: What training model(s) worked best to provide teachers with the resources and support they need to best meet the needs of learners with disabilities?**

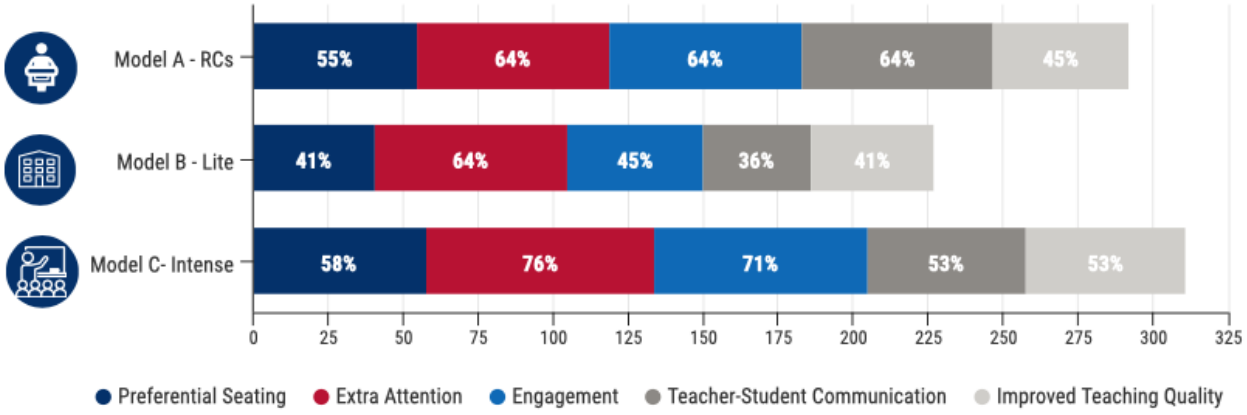
**Answer:** In collaboration with the CEHRD Integrated Education and Training (IET), R4A delivered numerous trainings to general education and RC teachers in the final one-and-a-half years of implementation (see Exhibit 1), and several training packages have been formally adopted into Nepal's teacher professional development (TPD) system. In-person training workshops became increasingly possible as Nepal's worst stages of the COVID-19 pandemic subsided. Stakeholders noted during interviews that the cascade training approach, used in Model B schools, was not very effective, and researchers found that training content had been inconsistently transferred from school administrators who had received direct training from the project to the early grade teachers in the school who had not participated. Conversely, teachers in Model C schools—who did receive direct training (as well as other ongoing forms of project support)—were able to discuss what they had learned, and researchers found that teachers had retained and were applying some principles of inclusive instruction at the time of project close. RC teachers spoke highly of the direct training they received over 15 days in one of three workshops focused on teaching and supporting children with specific disability types. RC teachers also reported they had either never received such targeted training during their career or that it had been many years. General education and RC teachers expressed a desire to be trained together in the future.

**Nepal's in-service teacher professional development (TPD) system now includes targeted and specialized training for RC teachers, who were previously excluded from TPD offerings, as well as supplemental TPD courses available for general education teachers.** Working with its two national OPD partners NDFN and NAWB, as well as with the CEHRD IET section, R4A developed three 10-day training packages for RC teachers focused on teaching with NSL, teaching with braille, and teaching learners with intellectual disability. R4A conducted these trainings in R4A districts during project implementation, and trainings have been formally approved and adopted by the MoEST into its TPD course offerings. Before the project, RC teachers were excluded from TPD opportunities; indeed, many RC teachers said during KIIs and FGDs that it had been over a decade since they had received any training that was relevant to their jobs, and many had never received training at all. Although a teacher of children who are deaf who is not fluent in NSL will need more than two weeks of training to become proficient in the language, the training package represents a major advancement in supporting these teachers. An NDFN-developed NSL app with project support allows for ongoing practice and skills-building. Similarly, teachers of children who are blind and need braille to read said there were basic elements of reading braille that they were unaware of before the training. The project also developed additional five-day training courses specifically about teaching reading using general inclusive practices, as well as using NSL and braille, that have been added to the official TPD course list.

**Analysis.** While RC teachers benefit from specific, targeted training, there can also be advantages to training general education and RC teachers together on content that is relevant to all learners. Both groups of teachers can learn from and provide support for the other's experiences related to implementing curricular content and supporting learners with disabilities.

**Head teachers reported observing positive changes in inclusive instruction as a result of R4A.** As the exhibits below show, head teachers in Model C schools observed the most changes overall. However, in the category of teacher-student communication, head teachers reported seeing this change the most in RCs (Model A). While improvements in Model C schools, which received more intense and direct support from R4A, are notable and encouraging—especially given the shorter-than-planned duration of school-based implementation—the changes observed in Model B schools show that a shift toward more inclusive instruction has begun to take place in general education settings, even without extensive project inputs beyond training head teachers. The largest shift was in the category of extra attention (from teachers to those students who show signs of struggling with the material).

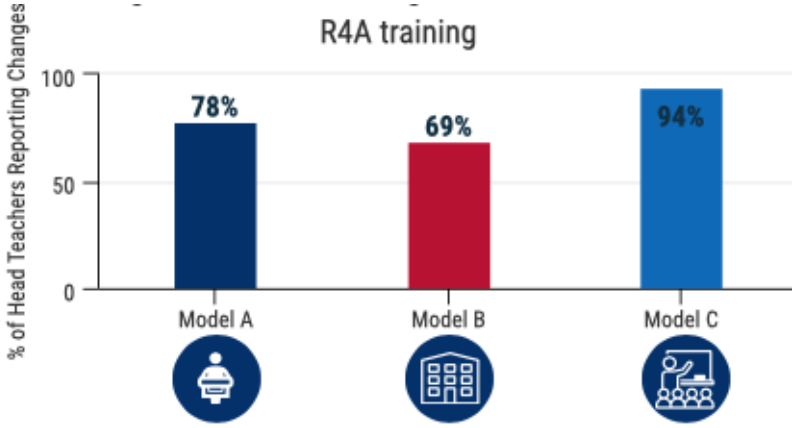
**Exhibit 7. Inclusive Instructional Changes Reported by Head Teachers[7]**




Additionally, nearly all (94%) Model C head teachers reported observing changes in student learning outcomes due to the project's training. In comparison, 78% of those from Model A schools and 69% from Model B schools saw changes.

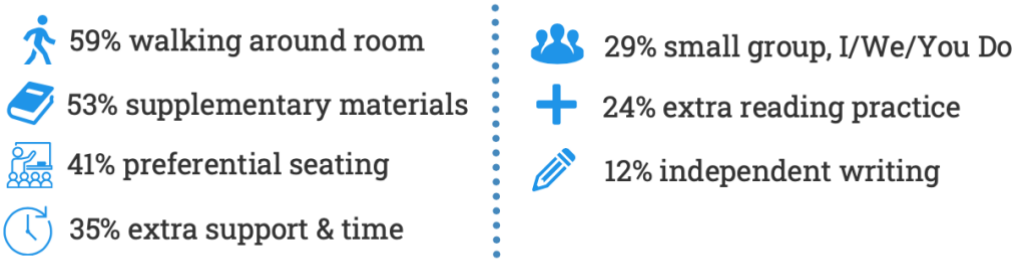
[7] This data is qualitative and based on head teacher reports during KIIs. The MCSIE team coded responses and categorized them into those depicted here based on key words or themes that emerged during data analysis. Thus, definitions are subjective and based on head teachers' own metrics for determining change.

**Exhibit 8. Changes in Student Learning Outcomes as a Result of R4A Training**




**Resources and training for teachers on inclusive early grade reading were strong in their theoretical foundation and description of the barriers that learners with disabilities face. However, more concrete, practical guidance for implementing inclusive classroom instruction strategies was needed.** Training observations, reviews of training materials and teacher resources, and interviews with educators and other stakeholders indicated that R4A provided teachers with a greater understanding of disability and the learning challenges that students face. Yet, teachers were not fully prepared or equipped to mitigate those challenges through tangible inclusive teaching practices. Training content and teacher resources included broad examples of activities or materials that could be used in the classroom but lacked the "how-to" element to help teachers envision how to carry out the approach with their students. During endline KIIs with head teachers, when asked to recall and describe what they learned from R4A's EGR training across intervention models, most mentioned a general introduction to disability (70%–83%) and screening and identification (71%–87%). Roughly half said the definition and concept of inclusive education (47%–58%) and non-discrimination and equity (41%–50%). Classroom teachers in Model C schools who received direct training from the project were also asked to name what they had learned during training; the results are below.

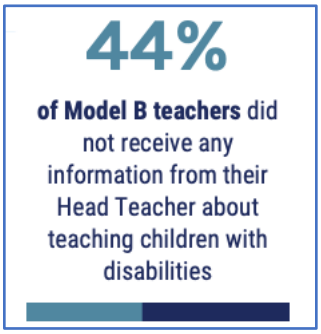
**Exhibit 9. Practices Model C Teachers Learned from Training**




During endline school visits, the MCSIE team observed some but not all practices in Model C classrooms. Overall, a minority of teachers could recall specific inclusive teaching strategies. During endline interviews with Model C teachers who received direct training from R4A, 29% said that their training lacked sufficient practice.

**The shift from in-person to virtual training impacted the variety and nature of interactive activities that took place during training and the teachers' access to materials.** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, R4A needed to shift training opportunities from in-person to virtual models to adhere to safety protocols. The shift to virtual training shortened sessions and required R4A to prioritize the most important concepts to keep. Feedback from KIIs and FGDs highlighted the loss of interactive components—demonstrations, the ability to practice key concepts being taught, and discussions among participants—as impacting the perceived effectiveness of the training. Although participants shared that the training concepts were useful and good to know, the ability to apply their newfound knowledge and receive feedback would have improved their skills. In addition, technical limitations, including internet connectivity, the electronic device used (usually a mobile phone), and unfamiliarity with online meetings, impacted training participants' engagement. These were in addition to the inevitable distractions and interruptions from surrounding activities when participating in virtual training from home.

**Exhibit 10. Model B Teacher Learning**




**The cascade model of training was not consistent or effective and may have been impacted by interruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.** Numerous stakeholders, including IP staff, LEU officials, OPD partner staff, and educators, stated that the approach of training selected school staff—typically head teachers who were expected to "cascade" the training down to teachers at their respective schools—was not an effective way to deliver inclusive EGR instructional practices. Stakeholders expressed a sense that the training content was not consistently delivered or that the quality was not good. Teachers confirmed that cascade training was inconsistent: during KIIs, 44% said they did not receive any information from their head teacher about teaching children with disabilities (generally or about reading instruction). Of those who did recall receiving information from their head

teacher, only half (50%) mentioned teaching strategies, and only 17% said they received information about the use of materials. LEU officials noted a preference for direct training at schools and the need for training to be routinely delivered for new teachers and as a refresher for previously trained teachers. One LEU official said:

> *I think, it would be better if R4A included teachers who are involved in teaching and dealing with students at lower grades, especially female teachers, instead of head teachers, since they are the ones who are really involved with the students.*

Interviews with head teachers after the project ended showed that in Model B schools, where teachers only received training through the cascade model (as well as overall fewer direct supports from the project), fewer head teachers reported observing changes in inclusive instructional practices as a result of R4A training, compared to head teachers in Model A and C schools. Exhibit 7 above shows that for almost every instructional practice mentioned in head teacher interviews, the occurrence was lower for Model B schools.

**Training materials aligned with international definitions of disability and access to inclusive education, but there was not a clear and continuous link between inclusive pedagogy and literacy concepts.** Participants desired more practical content and trainers with classroom teaching experience. Training materials covered a wide range of evidence-based literacy and inclusive education domains within three or five days. These teacher trainings primarily focused on inclusive policy awareness, reading strategies, and inclusive education innovations such as the general purpose of IEPs. Despite the wide-ranging topics covered during the training and in materials, a review of the resource materials provided to participants and interviews with them indicated that the content was more theoretical than specific and practical. Trainees were eager for more targeted guidance about implementing inclusive techniques in the classroom. Some also noted that trainers were typically from "management or bureaucratic backgrounds" and expressed that trainers with backgrounds in classroom teaching would be more effective. As one KII participant stated:

> *I have found that teacher trainings are conducted by trainers from management or fields other than the teaching-learning field. I think the whole process would be far more effective if trainers were professionals who are intensively involved in teaching-learning [on a] daily basis. This would ensure effective communication.* (Local Education Officer, Male)

Training materials for literacy instruction needed a clear or direct connection with core concepts of inclusive education strategies, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL). UDL promotes providing students with multiple means of engagement, representation, and expression in recognition of the variety of ways that students become motivated to learn, best receive and learn new information, and show what they have learned.[8] The R4A solicitation was released in 2017

[8] Hayes, A., Turnbull, A., and Moran, N. (2018). Universal design for learning to help all children read: Promoting literacy for learners with disabilities (First Edition). Washington, D.C.: USAID.

before USAID formally adopted the UDL approach to inclusive education; therefore, UDL was not a requirement. KIIs indicated that at least some R4A staff were familiar with USAID's UDL Toolkit before the start of teacher training, and elements of UDL were mentioned within training content, but UDL was not directly referenced as a source of guidance or content that informed teacher training plans. One project staff person noted that they preferred to use terms that are included within the concept of UDL (such as "inclusion" and "learning difficulties"), as the term "UDL" was not as useful in Nepal.

**Training materials and resources were not referenced or provided consistently.** At multiple training events, MCSIE team members observed materials, such as resource books or manuals, being made available to participants but rarely or never referenced by training facilitators and, thus, primarily ignored by participants. Presentation slides were not typically printed and distributed, though they were offered via email upon request.

## 4.4 Instructional Approaches

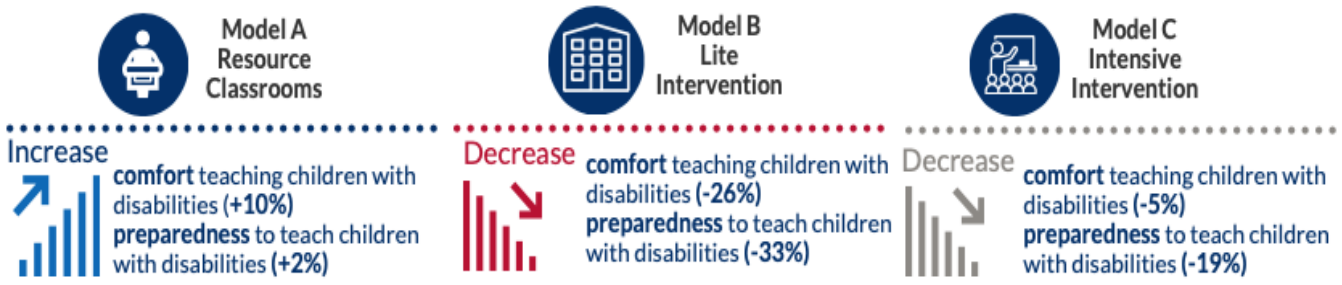
**EQ4: What instructional models worked best to improve classroom instruction and reading outcomes among learners with disabilities?**

**Answer:** Stakeholders supported the concept of including learners with disabilities in general education classrooms in theory and as an ideal to strive toward. However, in practice, existing constraints related to infrastructure and teacher capacity reinforced the perception that the RC model, with largely segregated instruction, is the only realistic scenario in Nepal at this time. Educators and government officials alike described inclusive education as referring to *"the kind of education that assures accessibility of equal education to all the persons from different caste groups, persons with limitations or disability, women, persons from rural geography and to [the] financially underprivileged community,"* to quote one local government official overseeing education. Many viewed transitioning some learners with disabilities from RCs to general education classrooms as a worthwhile goal. Yet, they doubted the existing capacity of schools and teachers to manage and support these learners appropriately. Classroom observations, surveys, and interviews showed that RC teachers had the most growth in applying inclusive teaching practices, indicating that they are a strong resource for their students and have the potential to support general education teachers as well. The limits of cascade training were evident in data from Model B schools, where teachers showed less capacity for inclusive instructional practices. Teachers in Model C schools, who received more direct support from R4A, showed gains in inclusive practice, but three months past the end of implementation in schools, the impact showed signs of fading. Gender and disability representation in R4A-distributed TLMs

is lower than expected, with girls representing 38.8% of gendered characters, falling short of USAID's gender benchmark of 50%, and disability representation at 0.85%, falling short of USAID's benchmark of 15%. R4A engaged the appropriate stakeholders and drew on past implementer experience in developing the adapted EGRA instruments. More research and testing are needed globally to understand whether and how to modify assessment tools for learners with disabilities versus universally designing them to capture learning gains from a larger share of learners, both with and without disabilities.

**Although teachers reported high levels of satisfaction and preparedness immediately following their EGR training, during endline surveys at schools, teachers in general education classes expressed decreased levels of comfort with, and preparedness for, teaching learners with disabilities.** This was particularly the case with Model B teachers, who had received the lite intervention and, therefore, less direct support. However, Model C teachers expressed the same sentiment. This may relate to the finding reported above that teacher training needed to be more practical to prepare teachers to implement inclusive practices in their classrooms. Few teachers described tangible ways that their teaching practice had changed as a result of R4A's intervention. However, some mentioned things such as encouraging their students more, using games during instruction, grouping students by skill level, and applying peer-learning strategies. With the final round of data collection taking place approximately three months after direct implementation in schools ended, this finding could indicate that R4A's impact is already fading.

**Exhibit 11. Teachers' Comfort and Preparedness at Endline**



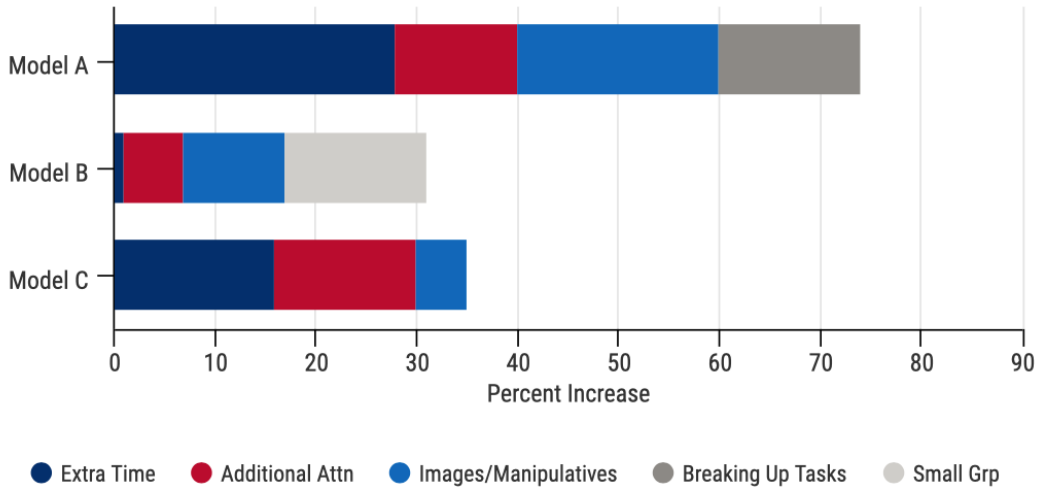

**School-level data showed greater belief in the ability of learners with disabilities to learn as well as emerging inclusive practices.** Analysis[9] showed an increase in teachers' positive

[9] Like R4A, MCSIE researchers from KU also conducted classroom observations in 2022 as well as teacher and head teacher interviews and surveys. The time frame was more comprehensive than R4A's Fidelity of Implementation (FOI) study, with the first round of fieldwork in March 2022 and the final round in December 2022, a span of nine months. MCSIE also visited all three implementation models in addition to control schools that did not receive R4A support (265 schools did not receive support). Researchers analyzed the data using a difference-in-difference (DID) approach, which reveals the change in R4A schools over and

perceptions and practice changes on some indicators and decreases in others. Significant changes include:

- Increases in the percentage of Model B and Model C teachers who believe that learners with intellectual disability can learn to read in general education classrooms when provided with an appropriate teacher, instruction, and support; and increases in the percentage of Model A teachers who believe that learners with learning or speech and communication disabilities can learn to read in general education classrooms when provided with an appropriate teacher, instruction, and support.
- Increases in the reported use of certain inclusive practices: allowing struggling learners to take extra time when needed; providing additional lessons or attention for struggling learners; using images, manipulatives, flashcards, etc. during lessons; using small group or pair work (Model B only); and providing detailed instructions or breaking tasks into smaller parts (Model A only).

**Exhibit 12. Increase in Observed Inclusive Teaching Strategies**



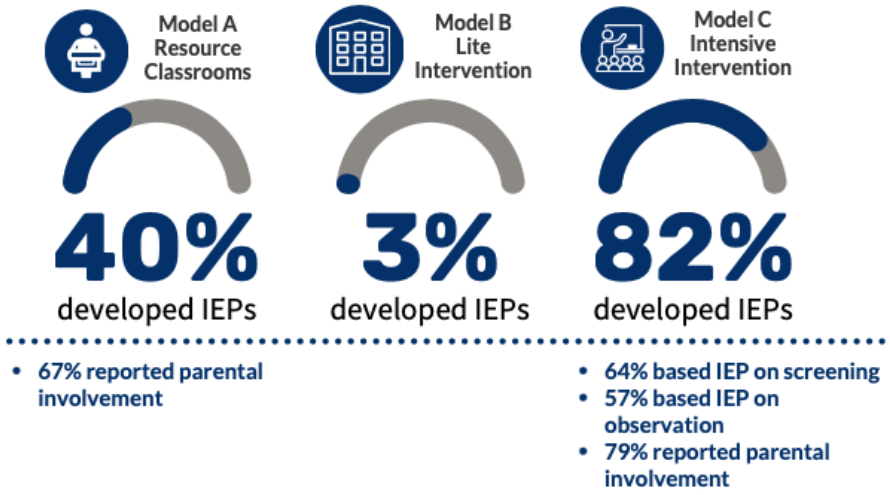

**The project developed 799 IEPs for students (54% male, 46% female) across all 10 districts, with most IEP development concentrated in the four focus municipalities of Banke and Surkhet (RCs and Model C schools).** The project hosted a reflection meeting on the IEP process and found that many participants preferred the name "individualized instructional plan" because the IEP template developed by R4A focused more on aspects of instruction versus an individualized education plan for a student. Participants found the current template lacked specificity on the needs of children and suggested a situation analysis of the child be included in the template and updated quarterly. However, other participants felt the IEP template should be shortened. Participants also discussed confusion over whether the IEP was for children with

above (or below, in some cases) the change in control schools to understand the likely impact of project implementation.

learning disabilities or all types of disabilities. Unfortunately, the workshop did not include parents, an essential stakeholder in IEP planning. During endline interviews, OPD partners expressed the unlikelihood that IEPs would be sustained. They felt that IEPs may be continued in some RCs, but within general education classrooms, it is unlikely that teachers will continue utilizing IEPs due to competing responsibilities. One OPD also shared that some teachers thought an IEP would provide them with additional resources for the learner, and because that is not the case, these teachers would likely not continue developing IEPs for learners.

**Analysis.** A review of R4A IEPs confirmed they were more aligned with instructional planning than individual education planning. While IEPs included a baseline of student strengths, the goals and activities did not incorporate student strengths, nor were accommodations provided or referenced. IEP activities were found to be more aligned with providing instruction plans to teachers rather than measurable and routinely monitored student educational goals.

**Exhibit 13. Teachers Reporting on IEP Use**




**Teachers expressed appreciation for the TLMs provided by R4A and the training they received on how to make TLMs with local materials**. In some cases, there was a time lag between R4A's delivery of TLMs to Model A and C schools and the training provided to teachers on how to use them. However, by the end of the project, teachers and local government officials saw the books, tablets with apps, and other supplementary TLMs as enhancements to teachers' practice.

**Using a version of USAID's Guidance for Promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in Educational Materials Checklist[10] to analyze student materials, the MCSIE team found that grade 1–3 student materials (essays, stories, and poems) have lower representation of females than males and very limited representation of disability.** Gender representation for student materials sampled was 38.8% girls, falling short of the targeted gender benchmark of 50%, and disability representation was 0.85%, falling short of the checklist's benchmark of 15% and well below the national census level of disability prevalence estimated at 2.2%. The MCSIE team observed that female characters were less likely to be equally represented in roles in stories than male characters. When represented, characters with disabilities were treated with respect and had support from their peers and families, and books clearly conveyed themes of equal participation, empowerment, and ability. However, at times, the visual imagery of disability was inaccurate or unclear.

**R4A used an inclusive approach to develop, pretest, and conduct EGRAs for students with vision, hearing, and intellectual disabilities.** While documented standards still need to be created for when and how to add accommodations[11] or modifications to the EGRA for these populations, R4A nevertheless drew from implementer experiences in other countries in determining changes to the instruments. R4A ensured robust inclusion and representation from the disability community in Nepal and from educators and other experts, who all contributed to informing and contextualizing the work. While full validity testing of draft instruments was not conducted, field tests of the instrument ahead of full data collection provided essential insights that allowed the R4A team to refine the tool and administration protocols further.

**Analysis.** Learners with intellectual disability should not have a modified version of the assessment. Instead, they should receive accommodations to take the existing EGRA.

**Linking learning outcome measurements with screening and identification hindered the project's assessment of its impact on literacy.** Various delays and challenges related to screening during the project meant that R4A needed to revise its plans for learning outcome measurements significantly. Revisions included assessing only learners from RCs rather than learners with disabilities in general education classrooms, which prevented the ability to compare intervention models. This is because the original EGRA sample design depended on having a list of identified learners with disabilities in general education classrooms. Still, the process of referral

[10] https://www.edu-links.org/resources/guidance-promoting-diversity-equity-inclusion-and-accessibility-educational-materials

[11] Accommodations support the learner to access the assessment content without changing the content and could include things like extending the overall time allowed to reduce pressure (provided that the fluency measure is retained), increasing font size, or showing fewer items on a page to reduce sensory overwhelm. Modifications result in changed content, such as a shorter story passage with simpler vocabulary.

Reading for All-Nepal. (2020j). *Draft 1.1— or children with visual impairment/disability guideline for users of the Early Grade Reading Skills Assessment*.
Reading for All-Nepal. (2020l). *Draft version 1.1—For children who are deaf/hard of hearing guideline for users of the Early Grade Reading Skills Assessment.*
Reading for All-Nepal. (2020k). *Draft version 1.1—For children with cognitive/intellectual disability guideline for users of the Early Grade Reading Skills Assessment*.
Reading for All-Nepal. (2020m). *Supporting resource book for facilitators for assessment on the basis of functional limitation.*

**Datasets**

Reading for All-Nepal. (n.d.). Children with and without disabilities.
Reading for All-Nepal. (n.d.). Head teacher master sheet.
Reading for All-Nepal. (n.d.). Parents master sheet.
Reading for All-Nepal. (n.d.). Teacher master sheet.
Reading for All-Nepal. (n.d.). Virtual 2 days early screening training database for pre-post test.
Reading for All-Nepal. (n.d.). CFM Technical Verification (round 1)

**Government Policies, Plans, and Special Reports**

Government of Nepal. (2016b). *Inclusive education policy for the person with disability 2072 (2016).*
Ministry of Education (MoE). (2016c). *School sector development plan, Nepal, 2016–2023.*

**MOUS or Contracts**

Reading for All-Nepal. (n.d.). *Terms of reference for multi-sectorial steering committee for implementation of Reading for All: Disability inclusive education for Nepali children.*
Reading for All-Nepal. (n.d.). *Terms of reference mobile education assessment team.*

**Miscellaneous**

Humanity & Inclusion. (2020p). *Rapid need assessment an inclusive response to COVID-19 in Nepal [Briefing paper].*
Reading for All-Nepal. (2018e). *Meeting minutes of presentation of Reading for All for the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST).*
World Education, Inc. (2022). *Project Completion Report*.

# Annex B. Tools

IDP and KU researchers collected data for the evaluation using the tools below.

| Type | Tool | Name |
|---|---|---|
| KIIs/FGDs | A | Government KIIs/FGD |
| | B | Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) KIIs/FGD |
| | C | Teacher FGDs at Training Workshops |
| | D | Head Teacher KIIs |
| | E | School-Based Teacher KIIs: General Education Teachers |
| | F | School-Based Teacher KIIs: RC Teachers |
| | G | National Government Official KIIs |
| | H | Local Education Unit (Government) KIIs |
| | I | Implementing Partner Staff KIIs/FGDs |
| Surveys | J | Pre-Post Instructional Training Survey |
| | K | School-Based Teacher Survey: R4A teachers |
| | L | School-Based Teacher Survey: control group teachers |
| | M | Implementing Partner Staff Survey |
| | N | Household Survey |
| Observations | O | Inclusive Education Training Observation Tool |
| | P | Classroom Lesson Observation Tool: R4A and Control Group Classrooms |
| Secondary Source Review | Q | Material Review |
| | R | Equity and Inclusion Checklist |