



About Reading for All (R4A). USAID’s R4A program was awarded in 2018 to Humanity & Inclusion (HI), in partnership with World Education, Inc. (WEI), and was focused on improving early grade reading (EGR) outcomes among children with disabilities in grades 1–3 in 16 districts of Nepal (reduced to 10 districts in response to delays caused, in part, by COVID-19). The project closed in December 2022. The activity was intended to strengthen data availability on children with disabilities through a process of 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.

About the Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE). MCSIE is a formative evaluation of USAID’s three inclusive education programs in Nepal, Cambodia, and Malawi. MCSIE asks: what is working to advance teaching and learning outcomes for children with disabilities? Specifically, MCSIE examined:

- ⇒ the overall **process** of setting up an inclusive education system;
- ⇒ efforts to **screen and identify** learners with disabilities;
- ⇒ **teacher training** models to build educator capacity;
- ⇒ the project’s **inclusive instructional approaches** for early grade reading (EGR); and
- ⇒ **unintended consequences** resulting from the project.

Purpose of this Brief

- ⇒ This policy brief presents recommendations for the Government of Nepal (GoN) to improve the inclusive education system for learners with disabilities in the early grades of Nepal’s public schools, based on findings from the Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE).¹ Inclusive Development Partners (IDP) conducted the study in collaboration with the Disability Research Center at Kathmandu University School of Arts.

Key Takeaways

- Partnership with organizations of persons with disabilities provides tremendous value to inclusive education programming.
- Close collaboration between government (at all levels) and project staff is key to success.
- The field of inclusive education is emerging, and evidence is limited. Plan for mapping and piloting of new approaches before implementation.
- Consider alternative screening approaches as the Washington Group questions are only validated for screening vision and physical limitations.
- Direct teacher training models with practical classroom examples are more successful than train-the-trainer models in inclusive education. Consider collaboration between resource and general education teachers.
- Continue to develop the EMIS sub-system to track learning of children with disabilities.

¹ Kochetkova, Emily, Karr, Valerie, Stone, Ashley, Poudyal, Niraj. 2023. Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE): Nepal Endline Report. West Lafayette, IN: Long-term Assistance and Services for Research - Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (LASER PULSE) <https://www.edulinks.org/resources/learning-multi-country-study-inclusive-education>

Partnership and Collaboration

Organizations of persons with disabilities (OPD) partners can provide tremendous value to projects with their local knowledge of existing resources, community context, and lived experience with disability. OPDs expressed satisfaction with their engagement on the Reading for All (R4A) project and felt their capacity was substantially increased in inclusive education. It is important to plan for accessibility and consult with a diverse range of OPD partners through all project phases, including the design phase, to ensure successful collaboration and representation.

Embedding project staff within the ministry offices allows for the exchange of knowledge and close collaboration. Embedding R4A staff within GoN offices was mutually beneficial and contributed to the project's efforts to support inclusive education.

Local education units (LEUs) require close consultation and support. LEU officials recommend future programs include more explicit engagement with local (and provincial) government personnel.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Continue collaborating closely between sectors, development partners, implementing partners, and diverse OPDs to implement inclusive education.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Involve all levels of government in project planning, implementation, and training, particularly given the authority that resides at the provincial and local levels.

Emerging Evidence

There is limited evidence on learners with disabilities in most low- and middle-income countries, including Nepal.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Conduct situational analyses and/or systems mapping before designing and procuring new programs in the country. This will help implementers determine areas of strength and current capacity within systems to inform program design, coordination, government collaboration, and the co-creation of programs.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Embedding substantial time to pilot new tools, resources, and approaches is essential for all projects, especially in emerging areas such as inclusive education, where more evidence-based practices in low-resource settings are needed.

Screening

The Washington Group Child Functioning Model (CFM) is effective in flagging the vision and mobility domains but ineffective in detecting the hearing domain. The CFM was able to correctly flag 78% of children in the vision domain and 67% of children in the mobility domain but only 27% of children in the hearing domain. The validation of other domains in the CFM could not be conducted due to a shortage of medical personnel capable of performing such assessments.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Use the CFM only for vision and mobility screening. Consider piloting universal and routine hearing and vision screening in partnership with community health workers at the school level.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Promote cross-sector collaboration between local, provincial, and national government to ensure information sharing and data use.

Including OPDs and local government within the screening and referral process is helpful.

Effective screening requires multiple stakeholders to ensure that students are flagged, referred for diagnosis, and, ultimately, receive disability supports and services (i.e., government assistance, assistive devices, educational supports). OPDs and Student Assessment Technical Committees (SATCs)² show promise in collaborating to provide support for the screening process through the review of screening

² Committees are comprised of local officials from various ministries responsible for coordinating, monitoring, and supporting early screening at the school level, including ensuring referral and, as appropriate, service provision by educators.

data, data entry into EMIS (see more on this below), and seeking referrals for medical services and treatment.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Develop coordination between the health and education sectors for screening and referral activities, allowing community health workers to engage with education systems to conduct routine screening.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Strengthen SATC's capacity to collaborate in bringing the work of relevant ministries and OPDs together for children with disabilities. Consider adding trained community health volunteers to SATCs as they are scaled across the country.

Training & Instruction

Direct training of teachers is more successful than a training-of-trainer (ToT) approach, and teachers desire trainers who have a teaching background. In interviews, stakeholders noted that training administrators as trainers (the ToT or cascade approach) was ineffective. Teachers who did receive direct training were better able to demonstrate learning and apply principles of inclusive instruction at higher rates during classroom observations and in key informant interviews (KIIs). Teachers and LEU officials desired more training from those with direct experience.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Emphasis should be on directly training teachers rather than cascading training on inclusive education.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Cascade models, if used, should have careful oversight and monitoring along with mentorship and coaching.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Recruit experienced teachers to provide training.

Training general education teachers alongside resource classroom³ (RC) teachers can provide opportunities for RC teachers to share their insights and expertise. RC teachers were found to have the most growth in applying inclusive education practices, indicating that they are a strong resource for their students and have the potential to support general education teachers as well.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Include general education teachers and RC teachers together in teacher professional development (TPD) opportunities to foster joint learning and collaboration.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Emphasize policies and directives to improve the interaction between RC and general education teachers in schools, enabling knowledge transfer in both directions.

It is important for training materials and resources to be accessible to persons with disabilities or clearly referenced in training and to include clear links to practice. While R4A training was interactive and included elements that teachers found helpful, the training content was not accessible for persons with disabilities and lacked practical application in presentation and materials.

- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Include OPD partners, RC teachers, and LEU officials as training facilitators in training all teachers and in materials development.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** During training, provide robust examples of practical strategies for classroom instruction alongside theory and basic concepts of disability. Engage trainers who have a background in teaching.
- ⇒ **Recommendation:** Reference and distribute training materials and ensure all materials are accessible for persons with disabilities, such as in Braille or large print or provided via email in advance upon request.

³ An RC is a separate classroom designed for children with disabilities that is located within a larger school.

Ten days of training on sign language is not enough to learn Nepali sign language to teach students who are deaf or hard of hearing.⁴ KIIs revealed that RC teachers felt that training was welcome but insufficient for their needs. R4A also developed open and freely available Nepali sign language mobile apps.

⇒ **Recommendation:** To ensure teachers are fluent in Nepali sign language, training needs to be longer and more comprehensive (see footnote 2), even with mobile app support.

Education Data

Confidentiality of student information before disability diagnosis is important. Entering suspected disability data into EMIS, before diagnosis, could put students at risk of labeling or discrimination.

Local government officials need easy and consistent access to EMIS data. LEU officials found it difficult to access EMIS data collected from their own areas, which limited their ability to extract and examine data to make informed local decisions.

⇒ **Recommendation:** Make provisions for data on disability to be stored in EMIS only after proper diagnosis.

⇒ **Recommendation:** Investigate and resolve the problems with data access for local-level use, as reported by LEU officials, to allow them to produce relevant reports and analysis and to inform training and capacity building for local actors.

EMIS lacks pre-existing RC student data for students who are being supported in the RC but who, nevertheless, lack an official diagnosis or ID card.

⇒ **Recommendation:** Develop the EMIS system to include RC student data as well, such as using an EMIS code to indicate RC.

There is more to learn about language and literacy assessment approaches for measuring the progress of children with disabilities.

⇒ **Recommendation:** Continue developing and testing assessment tools for diverse populations of disabilities using principles of Universal Design for Assessment (UDA) and specific adapted instruments for learners as needed (i.e., sign language and Braille), drawing from the latest global evidence.

Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE) for learners with disabilities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal

Contact: Dr. Valerie Karr, President (IDP) and Principal Investigator (MCSIE)

Email: valerie@inclusivedevpartners.com

Project Webpage: <https://laserpulse.org/portfolio/multi-country-study-on-inclusive-education/>

SUGGESTED CITATION

Kochetkova, Emily, Karr, Valerie, Stone, Ashley, Poudyal, Niraj. 2023. Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education (MCSIE): Nepal Endline Report. West Lafayette, IN: Long-term Assistance and Services for Research - Partners for University-Led Solutions Engine (LASER PULSE)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This Policy Brief was produced by the [Multi-Country Study on Inclusive Education \(MCSIE\) for learners with disabilities in Cambodia, Malawi, and Nepal](#) project. The project was supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the [LASER PULSE](#) mechanism. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID and the United States Government.

⁴ Deaf learners need teachers who can sign with near native fluency. See <https://www.inclusivedevpartners.com/wp-content/uploads/IDP-Deaf-Education-Position-Paper.pdf>