



Government of Nepal  
**Ministry of Education**  
**National Early Grade Reading Program**  
**(2014/15-2019/20)**



**PROGRAM DOCUMENT**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ASER	Annual Status of Education Report
CAS	Continuous Assessment System
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
CLAs	Central Level Agencies
DCT	District (NEGRP) Core Team
DDC	District Development Committee
DEO	District Education Office
DOE	Department of Education
DP	Development Partner
ECD	Early Childhood Education
ECED	Early Childhood Education and Development
EFA	Education for All
EGR	Early Grades Reading
EGRA	Early Grades Reading Assessment
EMES	Education Management Efficiency Survey
ERO	Education Review Office
ETC	Education Training Center
FCBE	Free and Compulsory Basic Education
HT	Head-teacher
I/NGO	International/Non-Government Organization
LRC	Lead Resource Center
MLE	Multilingual Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
MoI	Medium of Instruction
MT	Mother Tongue
MTBMLE	Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education
MTOT	Master Training of Trainers
NASA	National Assessment of Student Achievement
NCED	National Centre for Educational Development
NCT	National (NEGRP) Core Team
NEGRP	National Early Grade Reading Program

NER	Net Enrollment Rate
PMEC	Priority Minimum Enabling Condition
PPC	Pre Primary Class
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RC	Resource Centre
RED	Regional Education Directorate
RP	Resource Person
RT	Resource Teacher
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
SS	School Supervisor
SSRP	School Sector Reform Program
TA	Technical Assistance
TLM	Teaching and Learning Materials
TOS	Teacher Observation Survey
ToT	Training of Trainers
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TWG	Technical Working Group (for NEGRP)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee

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# National Early Grade Reading Program Document

## 1. BACKGROUND

The SSRP Extension Plan (2014/15-2015/16) recently approved by the Ministry of Education has include key priority areas for implementation in the next two years and it has set the course for educational interventions beyond 2015. Series of discourse on education beyond 2015 has identified improving the overall situation of literacy and learning achievement in early grades as the primary agenda in developing countries. Studies have revealed that the student learning level has been very low in many developing countries in early grades. As such, the early grade reading program has been included in the SSRP as one of the priority program with a view to improving the quality and competency in foundational skills among children in early grades in community schools.

The National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) is a five year program of the Government of Nepal which will be implemented beginning from the FY 2014. The program will focus primarily in improving the reading skills of students in early grades, especially in grades 1-3 of primary level. This program document is prepared to supplement the concepts and the nature of NEGRP as envisioned in the SSRP. This document elaborates early grade reading program by breaking down the broad concepts and strategies into detailed action steps and implementation plan. Therefore this document (NEGRP) is essentially an annex of the national education program document of the country – the SSRP.

This document is prepared by the Ministry of Education with some technical support received from USAID/Nepal. The Ministry of Education formed a Technical Working Group (TWG) consisting of senior staff from MOE, CDC, NCED, and DOE to provide regular technical support in the preparation and development of this document. Both National and International Technical Assistants (TAs) were made available through USAID to MOE to support the TWG in preparing this document. The TWG along with the TAs made several visits to selected districts and regions to collect relevant information and for consultations. Towards the final product of this document, a small Core Team was formed for more frequent and engaged discussion.

The final draft prepared by the TWG was shared and thoroughly discussed with CLA heads and the Development Partners. The document was taken one step further for consultation at the regional level with a view to orient on major components and strategies of NEGRP to district level implementers and stakeholders and also to collect feedback for its finalization. Thus, the current form of NEGRP has blend major concerns and feedback received through various consultative processes employed in its development.

## 1.1 EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

The Education for All (EFA) efforts in the South Asia region, in the past decade or more, have focused more on improving access and retention in primary education. Significant gains have been achieved through this global movement. However, in Nepal, the School Sector Reform Program (SSRP) has been the major guiding force, since 2009, which aims for improving the overall education (school) sector. The SSRP is one step ahead as it has incorporate sector-wide approach to education by encompassing all levels of school based education under one framework. During this period, remarkable progress has been achieved in the net enrollment rate (NER) for basic education (grades 1-8) from 73% in the SSRP base year (2008-09) to 87.5% in 2012-13.<sup>i</sup> The gender parity index for primary and basic education of 0.99 shows almost complete parity in enrollments. Clearly, the strong focus on access and enrollment has yield rich dividends.

The number of community-based and school-based ECD/PPCs is 34,174 of which 4,901 pre-primary classes are running in institutional schools and the rest 29,273 are running in the community schools and as community based ECDs. Almost 56% of new entrants in grade one have attended ECD/PPC class.<sup>ii</sup> Studies have shown visible progress in learning achievement among students enrolled in grade one with ECD/PPC backgrounds. Thus, the expansion of ECD/PPC in both the community and in community schools lays basic foundations to build on early grade reading program.

There has been significant progress in the share of teachers with the required qualification and training from 66% in 2008-09 to 94.5% (community schools) in 2012-13. The in-service need-based training of teachers has been institutionalized and it is conducted at Resource Centre (RC) level. However, teachers still lack the basic training in teaching reading skills as these were hardly felt necessary in pedagogical practices. The Mid-term Review (MTR) of SSRP and the recent study on Teacher Management and Development Strategies (2013) indicate the need for review of the current Teacher Professional Development (TPD) arrangement and the exclusive role of the Resource Centre (RC) in teacher training and academic support for primary schools.

Similarly, there are a few areas that need particular reference when planning for early grade reading program. For example, primary school completion rate needs to be accelerated as it has increased only by 6 percent points in last 3 years (from 68.7% in 2009-10 to 75% in 2012-13). Similarly, the repetition rate in grade 1 has remained high at almost 20% throughout the period. Thus, while enrollments have improved dramatically, the school system requires to be strengthened significantly to function efficiently.

The focus of the SSRP is now on ensuring that schools meet the Priority Minimum Enabling Conditions (PMECs) which are mainly inputs that are prerequisites or basic enabling conditions for improving the quality of education. However, many community schools have yet to meet all five identified PMECs<sup>1</sup>. Only about 4% of the schools have met all five

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<sup>1</sup> 1) Adequate classrooms, 2) appropriate student-teacher ratio, 3) timely availability of free textbooks, 4) toilet facilities for girls and 5) book corners.

PMECs. About 11% of schools have fulfilled only one PMEC, while around 23% have fulfilled two PMECS. Nearly 32% schools have fulfilled three PMECS, and 28% have four PMECS. About 88% schools do not have book corner which is considered crucial in promoting reading skills.

#### 1.1.1 STUDENT'S LEARNING LEVEL

There is very little current data available on student learning in Nepal. National assessments of grade 3 & 5 students have been conducted sporadically since the mid 1990s. There are some limitations of the Nepali language test and analysis (for grade 5) used in these national assessments.<sup>iii</sup> The basic findings of the assessment for Nepali language for grade 5 (1999) are as follows:

- Average scores of about 51 (out of 100). High standard deviations of 15 or more. No significant improvement in scores over time.
- Lowest mean scores in Terai ecological belt
- The performance for writing including dictation, creative writing (composing), letter writing, correct writing was very low-- mean scores of about 30, against the overall mean score of about 50.

National Assessment of Students Achievement (NASA), under Education Review Office (ERO), has completed assessment of grade 8 students and the analysis of grade 8 results is recently out. The overall achievement in grade 8 students is below 50% in all three subjects - Nepali, Math and Social Studies. Grade 3 and 5 assessment results are yet to be published.

However, the grade 3 Nepali test does not include any oral test items like oral reading fluency. While the test includes a variety of reading and writing skills, they do not provide an itemized analysis of performance on different sub-skills. This assessment only provides a big picture of trends across time and regions. More systematic assessments are needed for understanding the specific problems faced by students in different reading sub-skills. The Early Grade Reading Assessment program currently being implemented under the USAID support is likely to bring clarity on different dimensions of reading skills among students in Nepali language.

Certain assessments of Nepali language reading skills made by INGOs between 2009 and 2011 based on EGRA & EGRA-like tests clearly show that reading achievements of students in primary grades are really low. These assessments covered only 20-50 schools, and between 300 and 500 students in grades 1-4. Some highlights are mentioned below:

- Only 43% students in grade 2 could read all letters correctly (Room to Read-2009)<sup>iv</sup>
- 36% of native Nepali speaking students in grade 3 could not read a single word in a text (EQUIP 2-2010)<sup>v</sup>
- 80% students in grade 2 could not read a single word; the mean oral reading fluency was 5 words per minute (Save the Children 2011)<sup>vi</sup>
- Only 38% students in grade 2 could read 4 out of 5 words (ASER 2011)<sup>vii</sup>
- Only 3.3% students in grade 2 and 19.94% in grade 3 could read all consonants correctly. Only 12.53% students in grade 2 and 23.08% in grade 3 could read all



simple words correctly. Only 1.54% students in grade 2 and 3.52% students in grade 3 could read the passage correctly (World Education, 2012)<sup>viii</sup>

Some student assessments were also carried out in districts in Kathmandu Valley, Kavre and Chitwan districts during April-May 2013 as a part of the EGRP design development process by the Technical Working Group (TWG).<sup>ix</sup> Almost all students assessed were first language speakers of Nepali.<sup>x</sup> Most of these schools are located in habitations that are not remote or really deprived socioeconomic pockets. Thus, these results are likely to be significantly better than many other deprived parts of the country. The brief results are as follows:

**Table 1: Assessment scores for Grades 2 & 3**

<b>Skill tested</b>	<b>Beginning of Grade 2</b>	<b>Beginning of Grade 3</b>
Number of letters read correctly per minute (out of 60)	<b>34.6</b>	<b>49.4</b>
Number of CVs read correctly per minute (60)	<b>18.8</b>	<b>35.1</b>
Number of familiar words read correctly per minute (50)	<b>13.3</b>	<b>20.2</b>
Oral Reading Fluency (cwpm)* (60)	<b>12.7</b>	<b>23.3</b>
Comprehension questions answered correctly (out of 4)	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.8</b>

\*cwpm=correct words read per minute

Thus, reading achievement levels in early grades are low; far lower than grade-wise expectations. In addition, reading levels within the same classroom also vary significantly. These results are similar to those of reading assessments carried out in other countries in South Asia and other developing countries in the world. It is important to note that there are pockets and schools where reading levels could be higher. And, there are schools where a majority of students are not learning to read well.

Generally, writing skills are much weaker than reading skills as evidenced by the National Assessments of grades 3 & 5 and the small scale assessments carried out by Room to Read and TWG. These results are similar to those in neighboring countries in South Asia (See ASER, 2012 for reading assessments in India).

Although the above assessments are based on small scale observation, they do not provide information regarding the situation in different parts of the country and across different mother tongue groups. Also, these studies are limited to assessment of reading skills in Nepali language only. Therefore results presented above provide only a cursory glance at students learning level.

## 1.2 LANGUAGE SITUATION IN NEPAL

Nepal has a very high degree of cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity. The multilingual nature of the country poses a challenge in defining language-in-education policies. The 2011 Census enumerated more than 123 mother tongues. From the Census data, it will be erroneous to conclude that only 44.6% children understand Nepali when they first join school in the ECED class or grade one. In mixed habitations with more than one language/ethnic group, it is common for children to know the lingua franca which maybe Nepali or a variant (dialect).

Therefore, it is crucial to understand children's language proficiencies (oral fluency and comprehension) at the time of entry to school. No such surveys are available in Nepal. For the purpose of understanding the varied language situations in classrooms in different parts of the country, a simple typology of language situation can be visualized based on the following two dimensions:

- a. *Students' understanding of Nepali language* when they first start school. This is an important dimension of the language situation because Nepali is the medium of instruction (MoI) in 80-85% community schools in the country.
- b. *Number of first languages in the classroom*: This is an important dimension because it can help decide if a particular first language can be taught as a language subject or used as MoI in the early grades.

The percentage of schools where students do not have a reasonable understanding of Nepali at the beginning of grade 1 could be around 5-10%. Only about 5-10% schools have a language situation where students have no or limited understanding of Nepali and almost all students have the same first language. In about 10-15% schools where English is the MoI, students obviously have no understanding of the language (English) when they begin school.

### 1.2.1 LANGUAGES IN EARLY GRADES IN NEPAL: POLICY PROVISIONS

#### ***THE PRIMARY CURRICULUM (2007)***

- The curriculum for primary stage provides for use of Nepali or English or the mother tongue as the medium of instruction (MoI) in primary grades.
- Nepali and English are compulsory subjects. Eight periods a week are allocated for Nepali language subject and five periods a week for English.
- Mother tongue can be taught as a subject in the four periods allocated for a local subject. The language spoken by the majority of students should be chosen while selecting the mother tongue for teaching in schools.
- Local subjects such as locally useful vocation, occupation, religion, culture, tradition, local heritage, environment conservation, locally available technologies, festivals, and social system can be offered if mother tongue is not taught.
- The curriculum and textbooks of mother tongue and local subjects will be developed by schools themselves with the help of the resource centre and District Curriculum Coordination Committee. But, if the similar curriculum is applicable in a district,

curriculum can be developed for wider use in the district. Likewise, if the similar curriculum is applicable within one resource centre, the curriculum can be developed as the resource centre level.

**EFA NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION (2001 -2015)** has, among others, one of the objectives to ensure the rights of indigenous people and linguistic minorities to basic and primary education through mother tongue. To achieve this objective, the Ministry of Education (MOE) in its EFA Core Document (2004-2009) has mentioned that the programs that provide education in mother tongues will be encouraged in order to increase access of children from diverse linguistic groups. Regarding the implementation of mother tongue as a subject and medium of instruction in schools, the EFA Action Plan has specified following five different phases.<sup>xi</sup>

**THE THREE YEAR INTERIM PLAN (2007-2010)** mentions trilingual policy in education; Nepali as the official language, mother tongue, and English as an international language. It states that basic education can be provided in the mother tongue(s).

**THE INTERIM CONSTITUTION-2007** clearly states that Nepal is a “multiethnic, multilingual, multi-religious, and multicultural nation” and that receiving basic education in one’s mother tongue, and preserving and promoting one’s language, script, culture, cultural civility and heritage are fundamental rights (Part 3, Article, 17).

**THE SCHOOL SECTOR REFORM PLAN (2009-2015)** supports implementation of the mother tongue-based-education program in schools by introducing mother tongue as a medium of instruction. By the end of 2015, the SSRP has made its target to implement mother-tongue-based multilingual education in 7,500 schools. To this end, comprehensive Guidelines for MLE have been developed.

The Plan also makes a commitment to guarantee children’s right to basic education through mother tongue at least for the first three grades. According to the Plan, the choice of medium of instruction in school will be determined by the School Management Committee (SMC) in consultation with the local government. Grades 4 and 5 can follow a transition from the mother-tongue medium of instruction to Nepali medium of instruction. From Grades 6 to 8, the medium of instruction can be fully in Nepali. Furthermore, English will be taught as a subject from Grade 1 onwards.

However, these different policy statements are not completely in alignment with each other. Moreover, some of the policies are not in the best interest of young children. For example, the policy of teaching Nepali and English literacy from grade 1 as well as the option of introducing MT as a subject from grade 1 puts a huge burden on the child. By allowing schools to take their own decisions, the policy has indirectly encouraged the spread of English medium of instruction. Also, there should be greater clarity about the different strategies for use of MT in primary education (which are used in an overlapping manner right now) like teaching MT as a subject, using MT as the foundation to bridge to other languages, using MT as MoI for early grades etc.

### 1.2.2 LANGUAGES IN EARLY GRADES: ACTUAL PRACTICE

- Nepali is used as the MoI in about 85% (estimated; no data is available) community schools at the primary stage.
- English is used as MoI in about 10-15% community schools. The situation is very different from one district to another. In the 3 districts in Kathmandu Valley more than 70% schools have shifted to English as MoI; in districts like Pokhara, Nawalparasi 50-60% community schools are now English medium; Jhapa district has about 35% schools with English as MoI from grade 1 or even ECED. There are other districts like Parsa, Aacham, Dolkha & Rasuwa where less than 5% community schools offer English as MoI.
- Nepali language is usually taught for one period a day—about 6 periods a week against the curricular stipulation of 8 periods a week.
- In about 90-95% of community schools, English is taught as 2 subjects. One compulsory subject for 5 periods a week and another as ‘local subject’ for 4 periods a week. Effectively, English has the maximum curricular time of 9 periods a week and a total weightage of one-third marks (annually) of 200 out of 600 marks.
- MT is taught as a subject in less than 5% schools in early grades (could be as low as 1-2%). Actually, in most districts, there is no systematic teaching of MT as a subject. Based on community interest and support or other considerations, some teachers use storybooks and MT textbooks developed by CDC in a flexible manner, mostly for oral work in MT. The perspective for such teaching is to maintain the language and make students feel comfortable at school by using their MT. There is no real educational objective for teaching MT (wherever it is being done in a loose manner) since Nepali and English are taught simultaneously in grade 1, and literacy instruction is initiated in both from the first few days in school.
- A mother tongue based multilingual education (MTBMLE) curriculum is followed in about 25-30 schools in different regions. Some schools continue from the Finnish supported MLE project and some are supported through I/NGO programs or other local initiatives. There is lack of clarity in the appropriate approach for MLE to be adopted in some of these initiatives.
- The SSRP & MLE guidelines (2007) describe a policy of additive multilingualism where MT is used initially, and the transition to Nepali can happen in grades 4-5. English could be used as MoI after that. However, the curriculum itself does not advocate for such a staggered (and additive) approach to teaching of languages. Also, in practice, no school in the country follows this approach. Even in *some* of the so-called MLE schools supported by I/NGOs, MT, Nepali and English are taught simultaneously from grade 1 and the focus for Nepali and English language is teaching of literacy in these languages.
- It is estimated (Consolidated Statistics 2011) that almost 20,000 classes use local MT as ‘transitional language’ in the teaching and learning process at the primary level to make better interpretation of the subject matter for those students whose mother tongue is not Nepali. Twenty-three local languages were reported to be used to explain content to students, mainly in early grades. Maithili, Tamang, Bhojpuri, Tharu, Awadhi and Doteli languages were used widely in the Terai and Far-Western Hilly districts for this purpose.

Clearly the actual practice of teaching different languages in early grades is quite different from the policy provisions. English occupies the pride of place and has the maximum instructional time out of all subjects. The main reason why community schools are shifting to English MoI is to stave off the threat from private schools and to try and keep their enrollments from declining and responding to parental demand for English. The interests of children are not considered when these decisions are taken. Nepali is just one of the 6 subjects and there is little appreciation of the crucial role Nepali or MTs can and should play in thinking, communication and cognition for young children.

## **1.2 MAJOR CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN EGRP IN NEPAL**

Reflections made in this section are drawn on the basis documents reviews such as the flash report, status report and periodic progress reports published by MOE, DOE and relevant institutions including findings presented in various research works carried out by MOE, DOE and other agencies. Further, recent observation and interactions carried out by TWG in selected districts and schools also provided insights to draw upon apparent challenges and opportunities that exist in implementing NEGRP in the country.

### **1.2.1 CHALLENGES**

#### **LOW LEARNING LEVEL**

As outlined earlier, there is great variation in reading achievements in Nepali language in early grades across schools, districts and language groups. There is also significant disparity in reading level of students within the same school and classroom. A common situation in low performing schools is of low means and high variance in reading achievements in Nepali language in early grades. Since, there are no significant assessments of reading skills in other mother tongues that are readily available the **TWG** carried out limited classroom observations, interactions with headmasters and teachers, resource persons (RPs), school supervisors, ETC faculty and representatives of CLAs to arrive at some understanding of the classroom situation, resources and common teaching practices.

Some of the factors identified for the low reading achievements of primary stage students in Nepal include:

#### ***System related factors***

- a. **Low instructional time allocated to the teaching-learning of Nepali language:** The allocated instructional time for Nepali language subject is 8 periods a week. However, effectively, Nepali is taught for only one period a day. Classes are held in most schools for 140-150 days a year. This translates to about 90-95 hours of ‘allocated instructional time’ for Nepali teaching. There are competing demands from other curricular subjects, especially English and Mathematics. Nepali language is treated as just one of the six subjects taught in early grades. The actual teaching time and the students’ time-on-task is much lower. MT is taught as a subject in less than 2% schools. Only 4 periods a week are allocated for MT teaching. There needs to be a much better understanding of the crucial

importance of reading and language development in improving learning in primary grades.

- b. No clear strategies in place for students with limited understanding of Nepali at school entry:** There are no surveys, but some estimates indicate that between 20-30% students face a serious disadvantage on account of their limited understanding of standard Nepali when they start school. All these students study either through Nepali or English as MoI from grade 1. Teachers use local languages to explain to students who do not understand Nepali. However, there is no clear strategy and teacher professional development on teaching of Nepali as a second language. Lack of an appropriate language-in-education policy for teaching languages in early grades has resulted in neglect of Nepali and MTs and an unhealthy focus on English.
- c. Inadequate monitoring, supervision and academic support:** The structural arrangement of School Supervisors (SS) and Resource Persons (RPs) is not in a position to monitor the quality aspects of school functioning. While the limited numbers of SSs are busy with administrative work, most RPs are also not in a position to discharge their academic functions effectively. The reasons include: (a) RPs have too many responsibilities. They spend about 65% of their time on administrative tasks including conveying messages from DEO office to schools and teachers and collecting feedback. RPs give the least time to classroom observation and academic guidance to teachers. (b) Many RCs have a large number of schools, making it difficult for the RP to conduct regular school visits. Some RCs have 40 or more community schools in their RC, (c) In many cases, the RP selection process is not the most appropriate and the person selected is not the best suited for the role of RP.<sup>xii</sup> Also, there has not been a systematic and long term investment in capacity building of RPs and Roster Teachers (RT).
- d. Teacher Professional Development (TPD) strategy not working too well:** The completely decentralized approach of need based training has some problems. Often teachers do not clearly articulate the real problems faced by them in the classroom as training needs. The roster teachers (RT) have to, almost singlehandedly, prepare the training module and conduct training of teachers. The counseling support often does not work out properly because good roster teachers are not allowed to remain away from their schools. Many RPs do not have the capacity (skills and attitudes) required for mentoring of teachers. There needs to be much greater investment in capacity building of RPs and RTs on a regular basis. They also need to get regular academic inputs from ETCs and NCED for strengthening the TPD system. *Unfortunately, there has been no training under TPD for teaching of Nepali language or MTs in the past 3 years in any RC anywhere the country.* This has not been identified as a training need by schools and teachers.
- e. Inadequate focus on learning outcomes and accountability for student learning:** The system has been mainly focused on provision of inputs. DEOs, SSs and RPs do not focus on student learning during school visits or in review meetings. The publication of SLC results is one occasion that the system's attention is focused on low achievements, but this does not translate in to regular monitoring of student learning at school and RC level,

especially for primary grades. The accountability of the system, school and teachers for student learning, especially to parents, is not strongly established. Also, the system does not demand a ‘learning for all’ approach where the focus would be on **all students** achieving basic learning outcomes.

- f. School based assessments not focused on skills and outcomes:** Term tests and annual examinations, even for early grades, are focused on assessing memorization of textbook content and not key learning outcomes as defined in the curriculum. These question papers are prepared either by the school teachers or some local boards. All tests are paper-pencil tests, while assessment of reading skills in early grades requires oral tests (mainly). Also, key milestones during the course of the year (e.g. term-wise) are not available to help guide skill based and outcome oriented testing.
- g. Minimum learning conditions:** A significant proportion of schools do not have the identified basic learning conditions (PMECs). The most crucial one is the availability of adequate teachers. Class sizes are high in several *Terai* districts. No learning improvement program can be effective if class sizes are higher than 45-50. Also, multigrade teaching is the norm in small schools with inadequate teachers. Early grades are not considered very important, and often, the less competent and less experienced teachers are assigned to these grades. 88% schools do not have book corners, one of the five identified PMECs. Availability of a variety of graded reading materials is crucial for developing strong reading skills.
- h. Reading is not recognized as a distinct and crucial component of the language curriculum:** Reading is not recognized as a specialized area of language development and is subsumed as a part of the overall language curriculum. Reading needs to be given dedicated time during the Nepali language class. It must also be given due attention in pre-service and in-service teacher professional development. As per the curriculum for grades 1-3, 25% of the language teaching time is earmarked for reading. Since the total instructional time for Nepali language subject (and MT) is low, the time allocated for reading is also inadequate.
- i. Textbooks have certain limitations:** The texts in the Nepali language textbooks are difficult for most students in grades 1-3 to read fluently with understanding. The texts are not properly graded from simple to more difficult through the year. This is a constraint in development of strong reading skills. Also, the Nepali language textbook in grade 1 does not provide adequate scope for development of early reading skills by supporting systematic instruction of phonological & phonemic awareness and phonics. There is a need for identification of specific vocabulary to be introduced in each grade systematically through the texts.

### ***Teaching-learning related***

Some of the observations outlined below relate to the general classroom environment and teaching-learning process, while others are specifically related to teaching of reading and the language subject.

- a. Low time-on-task & teaching-learning process being teacher-centered:** A teacher-centered process does not provide adequate opportunity for students to practice and

consolidate skills that have been taught. The focus remains on teaching, as opposed to learning. The on-task learning time for students is low as they are mostly listening, copying, chorally repeating or watching another student working on the board. Only a small proportion of teachers employ group work strategies with specific learning tasks.

b. **Teachers do not teach according to students' reading levels:** Teachers continue teaching from the textbook, or a predetermined sequence and pace, even if students are far behind in their reading ability. One of the reasons for this disconnect between teaching and students' reading abilities is the teachers' compulsion to follow the textbook and complete the syllabus. Teachers 'complete' a lesson by going through a series of prescribed steps, e.g. reading aloud to students, choral repetition by students, reading by a few students, explanation about the text and difficult words, and answers to comprehension questions in the textbook. All this is done even though teachers are well aware that most students are not able to read or understand the text. They also don't have an alternative since the texts in the textbook are difficult and most students are unable to read them. The other issue is: whose reading levels should be considered by the teacher? Each class has such a disparity in reading levels that it is difficult to arrive at an average level for the class. *This problem of teaching being pitched at a level much higher than students' abilities has to be addressed seriously.*

c. **Lack of a comprehensive and balanced approach to teaching of reading:** Some of the major problems with the teaching-learning process of reading include:

- **The focus is on teaching content, rather than developing a clearly identified set of skills:** Thus, teachers focus on 'covering' the language textbook instead of focusing on development of skills that contribute to early reading success, e.g. phonological and phonemic awareness, development of oral language, pre-writing skills, concepts of print, letter-sound association and blending of sounds, vocabulary development, comprehension and fluency.
- **Decoding not taught systematically:** Decoding instruction is not done systematically through a variety of activities. There is not enough scope for students to practice their decoding skills to develop a high degree of automaticity. The common teaching methods, usually referred to as 'drilling', include repetition and chanting and copying from the board that do not help in development of strong phonics skills.
- **Comprehension is not stressed adequately:** The focus of teaching is almost exclusively on drills and completing the lesson. Comprehension, which is the essence of reading, is neglected. Teachers prefer to give explanations themselves and ask only questions that require yes/no or one word answers. The focus is on simple recall type questions and not on deeper comprehension with inferential type questions.
- **Reading outcomes not assessed regularly:** The classroom transaction is not focused on understanding students' progress towards identified reading milestones. Therefore, teachers continue to teach the textbook irrespective of the reading levels of students in the class. While CAS (continuous assessment system) offers a good framework for



regular, formative assessment, it has not taken strong roots at the classroom level. Some of the reasons for this include: (a) lack of clarity about the concepts and practices (b) additional burden on teachers for filling up CAS forms (c) inadequate understanding of how corrective action can be initiated following the assessment (d) lack of test items for different competencies identified for each lesson and measurement (e) pressure to complete teaching of textbooks etc. Also, testing of reading skills requires assessment practices not used commonly in classrooms.

- **Multilevel classrooms with high disparity in reading levels:** It is a challenge for teachers to work with students with very different reading levels in the same classroom. Some teachers have evolved their own strategies for limited differentiated instruction. However, there has not been any major teacher professional development initiative on working with students at different achievement levels in the same classroom.
- **Lack of appropriate reading materials and practice for developing fluency:** Right now, there is not enough scope for students to practice and develop their reading skills. There are hardly any simple and graded materials that can help students who are beginning and early readers to practice their newly learnt reading skills.
- **Teaching practice does not provide for adequate revision and consolidation, and specific remediation for weaker students:** Since the focus is not on ensuring student learning outcomes, there is not adequate time and emphasis on practice and revision and extra support to students who are falling behind.

### 1.2.2 OPPORTUNITIES

Expanding **Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) and Continuous Assessment System (CAS) programs in schools** has indeed created some positive environment to foster reading and leaning achievement among students. Besides, extensive network of national and international non-government institutions have already tested reading focused programs at some level. These organizations, including some UN agencies, have heavily supported in developed a strong foundation for early childhood programs in the country. This experience and expertise is well recognized and can be cost-effectively up-scaled to early grades of primary level.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has recently draft a **two year extension of the SSRP** to match it with the EFA/MDG timeline. The two year extension of SSRP has focused on a limited priority activities that should pave the way for broader and concrete intervention in education beyond 2015. In this respect, the EGRP is a most viable intervention as it has gained considerable momentum in Nepal recently.

A concept paper and draft NEGRP prepared by Thematic Working Group (TWG) and the Technical Assistance (Education Sector Advisor) has convinced both the MOE and the Development Partners (DPs) that improving early grade reading should indeed be the next movement for education sector in Nepal. **Early grade reading program has been included**

**as one of the priority programs of the SSRP.** The MOE/DOE has been already acquired a separate budget line for early grade reading program.

EFA and MDG goals focused in achieving access, equity, and quality in education. Many developing countries have made significant progress in areas of access to education. However, when it comes to quality and learning level, many countries are still very poor. Improving reading level among students therefore has been globally recognized as priority areas in education for now and beyond 2015.

Practice of early grade reading focused program in other countries with similar condition in Nepal has proved successful in improving learning level among students. A variety of tools, strategies, and expertise are available which makes implementation of early grade reading programs less expensive, feasible and also provides options to choose to meet country specific needs.

## 2. THE CORE CONCEPT OF EGRP

Reading is the ability to understand written texts and it consists of two related processes: **word recognition** and **comprehension**. Word recognition is concerned with strong decoding skills. Comprehension relates to a good understanding of what is being read. Skilled reading is the ability to read fluently with comprehension. In the context of NEGRP, reading skills also include related writing skills.

Reading and writing skills (literacy) is best acquired in a language familiar to the child. This could be the child's mother tongue or any other language she understands well. This principle has important implications for NEGRP in Nepal, given the varied children's first language situations across the country.

There are some universally recognized principles for use of languages in primary education that are based on extensive research and understanding of language learning processes. These are:

- a. **It is most appropriate to teach literacy to a child in her first language; a language the child understands well and speaks fluently.** To be able to read well, a child must acquire fluency in decoding and also have a good comprehension of the language. This will not be possible if the child does not understand the language well.
- b. **A language that is unfamiliar to children should not be used as a medium of instruction till they acquire basic proficiency in it.** Children who are forced to learn through a language significantly different from their first language (mother tongue or a language they are familiar with) face a double disadvantage. They have to learn a new language, and at the same time, try and learn through that unfamiliar language. This burden of incomprehension (and alienation) is just too heavy if the medium of instruction is a totally unfamiliar language or a foreign language like English. It can safely be said that such children are being denied 'an opportunity to learn'.
- c. **Literacy skills learnt in one language are easily transferable to another language at an appropriate time.**

- d. Children can learn to speak and understand two or more languages even in the first one or two grades, if they are taught in a non-threatening environment and the focus of teaching other languages (apart from the first language) is not on acquiring literacy skills. **Teaching of literacy in L1, L2 and L3 should be staggered across the 5 years of primary school.**
- e. Mother tongue should remain a medium of instruction for at least 5-8 years of education. In the later primary grades, the regional or national language could also be used partly as MOI. An early shift of MOI to the second or third language (called an early exit transitional model) can compromise learning.
- f. **One or two years of pre-primary education can help greatly in supporting oral language development of the child's MT** and introduction of oral second language to help prepare the child for learning to read from grade 1.
- g. A focus on reading (as a subject) in early grades will give the child a headstart for the rest of the curriculum in later grades.

The current policy and practice of language teaching-learning in Nepal is not in alignment with these principles. NEGRP is mainly concerned with the teaching of reading and language development in early grades and this document will not address the issue of MOI in detail.

## 2.1 CORE PRINCIPLES OF NEGRP

The NEGRP has identified basic principles outlined below as core guiding principles for the program which has been grouped under to broad sub headings such as general principles and reading related principles:

### 2.1.1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- i. **Education of equitable quality** will be the cornerstone of NEGRP. The program design is based on the assumption that given the right conditions, almost every child is capable of learning to read and write. NEGRP will promote strategies that help ensure learning for *all* in the classroom.
- ii. **High students' time-on-task**, especially for reading related activities by creating a learning oriented instructional design with activities and materials and a mix of whole-class teaching, group-work and individual practice activities. Workbooks, when designed and used properly also help enhance student time-on-task
- iii. **Active student learning**: Students learn when they are actively engaged in a learning task. Merely copying or repetition and an exclusive focus on memorization do not result in learning. An active learning environment requires that students are provided with small challenging tasks on a regular basis and are given support or scaffolding in achieving them. The teaching process itself should be skill-focused and not entirely content-oriented.
- iv. Creation of a system-wide environment of **accountability for student learning**. The role of resource person (in supervision and instructional support), school teacher (in classroom instruction) and parents (in providing parental support and care at home including monitoring classroom practice) is crucial for students learning. Therefore,

- RPs, school teachers and parents should be made equally accountable for student's learning.
- v. **Continuous teacher professional development** including frequent refresher training, workshops, on-site academic support through discussion and classroom demonstrations, teacher meetings for lesson planning are crucial to bring change in classroom practices. Training should be practical and directly useful to teachers for classroom transaction. Training methods should be experiential and aim at bringing about a consensus for change in teaching practice and some beliefs and attitudes about how young children learn, especially 'learn to read'.
  - vi. Provision of **adequate time for revision and practice** by students with special focus on those students who are lagging behind. The focus has to be on *all* students learning.
  - vii. **Regular assessment** based on clearly identified milestones. **Corrective action** based on assessment results for adjusting pace of teaching, extra revision and differentiated instruction.

#### 2.1.2 READING (AND LANGUAGE) RELATED PRINCIPLES

- i. Children should acquire literacy initially in their first language. In case that is not feasible in the beginning, teaching of the second language should follow the following principles:
  - Teachers should be bilingual and be able to speak the students' first language(s).
  - Initial focus on development of oral skills and basic vocabulary before teaching literacy.
  - All teaching input and reading materials in the second language should be comprehensible to students at all points in time.
  - Use of students' first language(s) should not be discouraged.
- ii. A language that is unfamiliar to children should not be used as a medium of instruction till they acquire basic proficiency in it.
- iii. Adequate instructional time for Nepali language (and MT wherever MT is taught as a subject) teaching including dedicated time each day for reading activities. Ideally, 12 periods a week should be allocated to teaching of Nepali language. In no case, should this be less than 10 periods a week. At least half of the instructional time should be earmarked for reading activities. These could include reading aloud, shared reading, model reading by teacher, group or paired reading, silent reading and reading for pleasure.
- iv. Clear statement of grade level expectations or outcomes for reading that should be understood by all. There should also be term-wise reading outcomes clearly identified. These could also be stated as reading milestones along with the time of the year (say number of weeks or months of instruction) when they are expected to be achieved.

- v. Balanced reading instruction, i.e. emphasis on both practice of skills and meaning making.
- vi. Oral language development, reading and writing are closely linked and reinforce each other. Ideally, a reading program should work on development of all language skills.
- vii. High quality and systematic phonics instruction to build automaticity in sound-symbol association, especially in grade 1 and early grade 2.
- viii. Focus on developing fluency in reading. For this purpose, graded reading materials including reading cards, decodable texts and storybooks should be available in the classroom and used regularly. Such practice of reading should be a part of the instructional design.
- ix. Adequate focus on development of higher levels of comprehension skills. This should be initiated in grade 1 itself through adequate scope for listening comprehension.
- x. Adequate time should be provided for development of foundational skills for literacy, e.g. oral language development, phonological awareness, concepts about print, visual discrimination, free drawing and practice of pre-writing skills, etc. These pre-reading and pre-writing skills are best developed during preschool or pre-primary classes. If that is not feasible, time should be set aside at the beginning of grade 1 for these foundational activities.
- xi. Reading skills and habit are closely linked. Ideally, each classroom should have a reading corner with a variety of simple and interesting reading materials (mainly storybooks) and dedicated time should be earmarked for reading with facilitation from the teacher. A school library would help in sustaining reading habit after the early grades. In addition, reading events and reading promotion activities help in increasing the value for reading and developing reading habit.
- xii. Community and family engagement in students' reading progress at school and promoting reading at home will support development of reading skills and habit.

### 3. NATIONAL EARLY GRADE READING PROGRAM

The Government of Nepal and all the Development Partners supporting SSRP have shown firm commitment to develop strong foundations for improving reading skills at the core of the extended phase of the School Sector Reform Plan which will become effective from July 2014. This Program Document outlines the objectives, strategies, and the expected outputs and outcomes of the National Early Grades Reading Program (NEGRP) of the Government of Nepal.

#### 3.1 PROGRAM GOAL

Improving the quality of education, specifically student's learning.

#### 3.2 PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

**The main objective of NEGRP is to improving reading skills of all students in grades 1-3 in Nepali.** Students in these grades will learn to read fluently with comprehension and be able to construct meaning from a variety of texts. The focus of the program would be on equitable learning, i.e. enhanced reading skills of all students.

#### 3.3 MAJOR COMPONENTS OF NEGRP

The NEGRP broadly incorporates seven different components. Each component is essential in improving reading focused learning achievement in early grades. However and since school conditions vary significantly from school to school, the decision whether all or some of the components to go in specific school(s) will be determined on the basis of school's classification as A, B and C category of school. Criteria for classification of schools and its procedures are discussed in the implementation plan.

The major components of the NEGRP are:

- 1. Strengthening Early Childhood Education and Development**
- 2. Instructional Design**
- 3. Materials Development, Production and Distribution**
- 4. Teacher Professional Development and Instructional Support**
- 5. Continuous Assessment and Remedial Support**
- 6. Community Development and Support**
- 7. Research, Monitoring & Evaluation**

##### 3.3.1 STRENGTHENING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Many research and evaluation studies have shown promising results of early childhood education programs in students' learning and retention. In early grade reading program also, student's prior knowledge and preparation tend to play major role in enhancing their reading

skills. Generally, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills are effectively delivered in early childhood education programs.

The SSRP has rendered significant priority in ECED programs to extend it in all community schools. Therefore, in-line with the intent of the SSRP, support will be provided, during the NEGRP program period, to harmonize ECED to complement objectives of early grade reading programs. ECED curricula and instructional processes will be reviewed to focus on listening, speaking and sound recognition skills among preschool children.

While the program inputs for ECED are already included in the SSRP Extension Plan, the purpose of ECED component to be mentioned in the NEGRP document is simply to establish the downward linkage of NEGRP and therefore it is simply a place holder in this document.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Readiness for primary education.

#### **KEY RESULTS**

- ECED instructional design is revised to enhance pre-literacy skills among children in pre-school age.

#### **STRATEGIES**

Within the broader framework of ECED policy and guidelines, CDC will review the existing curricula and instructional processes of ECED focusing more into pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills.

As it is already included in the SSRP extension plan, ECED service providers (facilitators) will be given orientation on pre-literacy and numeracy training to enhance their capacity to guide students properly and to prepare them for primary education.

### **3.3.2 INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN**

Instructional design includes scope and sequence of the expected outcomes, the approach to teaching (methods) of different skills, activities for instruction, teaching and learning materials (TLM) to be used and the formative and summative assessment strategies (focus and methods).

Current instructional design is heavily loaded with content knowledge. It has introduced six subjects including Nepali, English, Math, Science and other two subjects in early grades (1-3). Subjects like English, Math and Science are usually considered difficult subjects and therefore they draw more resources (teacher and students' time) than Nepali.

Thus the focus on subject specific content in the instructional process has obscured knowledge of foundational skills such as reading, writing and comprehension. Therefore, there's a need to revisit curricular focus highlighting more on foundational skills. Subject specific knowledge can be introduced at later grades, for example, from grade four onwards. Therefore, the objective of early grades should be clearly delineated as reading, writing and comprehension with increased level of competency in higher grades.

Current design does not support any specific hours for teaching reading skills in the classroom. Altogether, 34 period and six subjects are too heavy for early grade students. Instead of different subjects, more play and activity based instructional design will be developed and enforced in early grades.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Promoting student's creative learning through active participation, interaction, and creation.

#### **KEY RESULTS**

- An integrated curriculum is in effect for early grades (1-3) at the end of this program.
- Minimum learning competency in three foundational skills – reading writing and comprehension – is defined for each grade and are assured successively.
- CAS is effectively implemented with the provision of remedial support for students lagging behind.
- Teachers are prepared to facilitate students' active learning.
- Instructional design is aligned with the core concepts and principles of early grade reading program – at least 90 minute is allocated for Nepali language teaching focusing on improving reading skills.
- All students possess basic competency in foundational skills – reading, writing and comprehension.

#### **STRATEGIES**

CDC will constitute an experts team to review existing curricula for integrating current focus of subject specific knowledge into foundational skills with clearly stipulated learning outcomes for foundational level (grades 1-3). The team of experts will conduct a thorough review of current curricula and its association with the pedagogy including relevance of textbooks and reading materials provided by the government.

USAID has already commissioned a study to assess reading materials available in the market. This assessment will provide further support for making necessary revision in the current curricula. During the NEGRP program period, curricula for grades 1-3 will be revised and integrated to form one package focusing on foundational skills.

CDC in consultation with relevant experts will develop an integrated instructional design focusing more on peer to peer interaction, student's active participatory in the classroom, promotion of both group and individual works, observation and making reflections on observed events, and so forth.



All (grade and language) teachers in grades 1-3, in primary schools will receive appropriate training and orientation on teaching reading skills. Through the training, teacher's will be prompted to minimize their role as a teacher but, to act more as a facilitator by encouraging students to proactively engage and interact in the classroom. Teacher will be prepared to encourage students engage in learning and creative activities.

Curricular objectives for early grades will be set to measurable outcomes focusing specifically in reading, writing, and comprehension skills. The emphasis will be given more to age and grade specific learning skills and less on contents so that it would be possible to develop multiple materials around the curricula. All (grade and language) teachers in primary level will be fully oriented on curricular objectives and its expected outcomes.

In order to improve basic competency and reading skills in Nepali language, CDC will develop series of supplementary reading materials for grade 1-3 students. USAID has already commissioned a local firm to study the quality and relevance of currently available materials in the market. Findings of this study will provide the basis for CDC to determine the type and quality of materials needed to develop and/or to make it available for students in early grades.

Students' assessment will be made mandatory at specific intervals so that teachers could make plans to focus on low performing students. Students' regular assessment will be linked with the Continuous Assessment System. Remedial support will be made available to students lagging behind in meeting minimum learning competency.

### **3.3.3 MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION**

The fact is that many community schools lack a proper library. Primary schools usually do not have a library except in a few schools where it is supported by external agencies. Teaching and learning in community schools is thus exclusively focused on textbook contents. Simply put, curricular objectives are translated into textbooks, for which teachers are trained to teach, and even examinations are focused heavily on assessing the content knowledge. Consequently, additional reading is neither required, nor it is supported by the current design of school education.

Since students come from different social and economic background, their level of cognition is naturally different. Introduction of one textbook in each subject is therefore both inadequate as well as inappropriate as it does not address the needs of graded contents and materials that are required according to student's level of cognition.

NEGRP therefore focuses primarily on producing graded reading materials for students in early grades by recognizing their level of cognition and particular interest. This will include materials in Nepali language at the beginning of the program and expanding it gradually to include materials in mother tongue. Schools will be upgraded to include library corners in grade 1-3 with adequate reading materials. Parents will be encouraged to be the part of the reading program as their role becomes even more important to sustain the program objectives.

## **OBJECTIVE**

Preparing primary schools to foster reading skills and culture.

## **KEY RESULTS**

- All primary schools have adequate instructional and reading materials.
- All schools have reading corners in at least early grades (1-3)
- In every reading corner there are at least 50 items of instructional and reading materials accessible for children all the time during class hours.
- Students frequently check-out materials for reading at home.

## **STRATEGIES**

CDC will annually prepare approved list of both instructional and supplementary reading materials appropriate for specific grade and level of students. The assessment currently being conducted under the USAID support will help in identifying quality and appropriacy of available reading materials in the market.

Multiple sets of reading and instructional materials will be approved to meet the diverse reading and learning needs of students living in different community and culture. Possibility of printing and distribution of materials locally will be explored and established to minimize the time for printing and its timely delivery.

CDC will develop norms and guidelines for printing instructional and reading materials. Private and public printers will be called for developing, printing and distribution of materials on a competitive basis.

### ***Print-rich classroom environment***

A classroom environment rich in print stimulates early literacy acquisition. It also provides opportunities for assessment using the material available. Essentially, in a print-rich classroom, students are encouraged to produce, organize and display variety of materials including printed reading materials. For this purpose, schools will require to improve classroom environment by making sure that there's enough space for display, display materials are accessible to small children, and that teachers frequently use those materials.

## **OBJECTIVE**

Promoting conducive classroom environment for effective teaching and learning.

## **KEY RESULTS**

- All classrooms, especially in early grades, are nice and tidy with adequate display of reading and instructional materials.
- Student's work is properly displayed and is easily accessible to students.
- Every classroom has a book corner with appropriate reading materials

## **STRATEGIES**

As it is already included in the PMEC, every primary school will be provided with a reading corner at least in its early grades (1-3) with at least 50 books per grade. Teacher will be provided orientation to make use of reading corners to maximize students reading skills and reading habit.

Teachers will be trained to encourage students to produce materials and to display it in the classroom. Teacher will also encourage students to keep their classroom clean and tidy.

### **3.3.4 TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT**

Teacher training packages including different modules developed under the Teacher Professional Development (TPD) were mostly demand based. Unfortunately, there were no specific demands from school teachers for training modules on teaching reading skills. This is mainly because most teachers are not aware of the fact that teaching reading skills is equally complex and it requires specific knowledge about teaching procedures and steps to be followed in the classroom. Consequently, most primary school teachers still lack basic understanding about the importance of reading skills and the knowhow about teaching reading skills.

School supervision and instructional support to teaching and learning process has long been raised in different research documents including MTR of the SSRP. While the RPs and SS are already overburdened, the need to clarify their roles and functions to focus them within their primary responsibility of supervision and instructional support to school teachers has been highly felt.

Clearly, internal monitoring and academic support component is at the heart of any program aimed at improving student's learning. Traditional teaching-learning practices do not change easily. Training programs often have limited impact. Regular reinforcement through academic support visits and meetings are crucial to ensure better adoption of the program strategy by teachers.

The NEGRP intends to build the capacity of school teachers, resource persons and school supervisors to focus more on instructional support to school teachers. The Department of Education has already commissioned a study on resource center which will be helpful in making appropriate policy decisions regarding the roles and functions of RPs and school supervisors. This will guide the design team to develop appropriate training modules for school teachers, RP and school supervisors.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Improving quality and competency of school teachers.

#### **KEY RESULTS**

- Grade (1-3) and subject (Nepali) teachers in all community primary schools are trained in teaching reading skills.

- Instructional support to school teachers is available on demand.

## **STRATEGIES**

NCED will conduct a thorough review of TPD modules including teacher needs/satisfaction survey on a national scale to supplement the design and development of appropriate teacher training modules. NCED has already planned a survey during this fiscal year which will be expanded to cover the requirements for early grade reading training needs.

Based on the survey results, training modules and the nature of its delivery will be designed centrally by NCED in consultation with local and international experts as needed. Such modules will be tested in a few schools before launching it nation-wide. Each module will have its separate manual and user friendly guideline that will serve both as training manual to master trainers and a reference material for school teacher.

Along with the development of training modules, NCED will prepare a comprehensive training plan to cover grade (1-3) and subject (Nepali) teachers in primary level during the NEGRP program period including conduction of M/TOTs through ETC and LRCs for teacher training.

Besides school teachers, NCED will also develop training packages for ECED facilitators, and to the school head-teachers. Both ECED facilitators and HTs will receive 7-10 day long early grade reading program and related management and instructional training.

During this period, NCED will also strengthen its system that includes ETCs, LRCs and the stock of master trainers and rosters and will build institutional capacity for overall management and effective delivery of training to school teachers and other stakeholders.

The Department of Education will make available resource teachers (RT) in each RC to support school supervision and instruction support to school teachers. NCED will develop specific training package to train these RTs.

### **3.3.5 STUDENT ASSESSMENT**

Regular assessment is crucial to monitor students' progress and to provide remedial support as required to fulfill grade specific minimum learning competency. Significant improvement is necessary in current practices of CAS. Similarly, there's a need to strengthen the capacity of school teachers in student assessment.

The Education Review Office (ERO) has successfully completed its first round of student assessment in grade 3, 5, and 8. The results of grade 8 student assessment has been recently made public and the results of grade 3 and 5 student's learning achievement is about to come-out soon. The methods adopted for the national assessment of student achievement (NASA) by ERO is of very high standard and the results have been highly accept by all stakeholders. The need is therefore to build institutional capacity of ERO to include assessment of early grade students on its regular program and activities.

Improving reading skills in early grades require regular assessment of students followed by necessary remedial support to them to catch-up with grade specific minimum learning competencies. Although CAS is in effect for sometimes now in the early grades, most schools have continued taking periodic examination of student for promoting the grade. This situation suggests some kind of disconnect between CAS and the existing practices in school.

The NEGRP will strengthen the practices of CAS in early grades by simplifying the process of student assessment and will also provide remedial support services and teacher training to use CAS effectively in early grades.

#### **OBJECTIVE**

Assurance of grade specific minimum learning competency in all students.

#### **RESULTS**

- All students achieve grade specific minimum learning competency.
- All students are promoted to higher grades with required learning competencies.

#### **STRATEGIES**

Capacity of CDC and Education Review Office (ERO) will be build to develop assessment tools and templates specifically focusing on assessment of reading skills among students in early grades. ERO will develop periodic plans and sampling strategies for regular and independent assessment of students in early grades.

ERO will be supported to institutionalize the tools and procedures currently being tested in 32 districts under the USAID's support. Support will be made available for ERO to build their capacity to manage and utilize these tools and procedure in regular assessment of students.

Schools will conduct both regular and periodic assessment of students using prescribed templates and procedures. NCED in collaboration with ERO will develop student assessment training package for school teachers to conduct internal assessment of student's progress on a regular basis. This training package will be a short-term (3-5 days) modular package and will also include components of CAS.

CDC will develop remedial package to be used to support students lagging behind and NCED will develop training package for school teachers to use remedial courses and will also conduct the training.

Simple reading tests for use in the classroom by teachers or academic support staff will be developed for different reading milestones by CDC initially. CDC will also develop simple guidelines for preparation of these reading test items. At a later stage, DCT and RC level teams can also develop more test items.

#### **3.3.6 MONITORING, EVALUATION & RESEARCH**

MOE/DOE has its own and regular system of monitoring and supervision down to school level for which provision of Resource Centers headed by Resource Person are made available in each cluster of schools. Besides, there are school supervisors based in the district office to

support school supervision. These specialized positions jointly provide support to schools and teachers as technical backstop for monitoring and instructional improvement. However, there is a need to review and reorient RP and school supervisor's role and functions as over the years the number of schools in each RC has increased significantly and the increasing administrative works at the DEO required RP and SS support to manage it.

Both the MOE and DOE has allocated funds for periodic evaluation and research works on topical and contemporary issues in education in the country. In last few years, MOE and DOE has published series of research based documents and evaluation reports that has feed its findings and recommendations into planning and programming. During the NEGRP implementation MOE and DOE's capacity in research and evaluation will be built to conduct and utilize findings and recommendations of research and evaluation work.

Timely monitoring by trained people with appropriate tools and using simple and easy to follow procedures is crucial to ensure effective implementation of the early grade reading programs. The role of Resource Center (RC) and the Resource Persons (RPs) in this respect becomes obvious. However, RPs are, as discussed it earlier already, over burdened and the NEGRP requires additional and more focused time for regular instructional support to school teachers in early grades.

Therefore there's a need to make necessary arrangements to meet the requirement for timely monitoring and supervision support to school teachers. I/NGOs experience in this area is more relevant as they used external support of Social Mobilizers to conduct regular visit to schools to follow-up on student's weekly progress and also observed classroom and provided instant instructional support to school teachers.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

Tracking student's learning achievement through improved quality in classroom instruction.

#### **RESULTS**

- Program schools are monitored regularly using standard templates and procedures
- School teachers receive timely support to improve classroom instructions.

#### **STRATEGIES**

MOE/DOE will appoint at least 3 Resource Teachers (RT) in each RC to support regular monitoring and supervision of early grade reading program in the first phase districts. These RTs together with the RPs and SS, will receive training from NCED on monitoring and follow-up of early grade reading program including a thorough orientation on monitoring tools and procedures.

ERO in collaboration with CDC will develop a simplified assessment and follow-up tools as a check list for regular collection of student's progress data. These RTs will visit to each

program school at least twice a month and use prescribed tools and templates to report the progress to their respective RCs.

Each RC will be strengthened with required capacity (computers and internet services) to support online data entry. The RTs will input their data using the online system on a regular basis. The DOE has already started this system in most districts. The software for online entry is already designed for EMIS which can be cost effectively expanded to include information on student's learning achievement. The same system will be expanded to include DEO, REO and the DOE so that these offices will have direct access to these information for their use as appropriate.

The role of DCT will be maximized in mobilizing SMCs and PTAs for locally monitoring schools progress in general and reading skills in particular in early grades. SMC and PTA members will receive orientation on their roles and responsibilities including specific functions that might be necessary to ensure smooth implementation of NEGRP in their school.

#### **MONITORING**

Monitoring will be carried out at four different levels: 1) at the school level, 2) at the RC level, 3) at the DEO level, and 4) at the central level.

*At the Schools Level*, as stated earlier, HT, SMC and PTAs will be trained and oriented to conduct basic follow-ups using simple and easy to follow processes for example recording teacher and student's regularity, number of days classes were conducted in the month, and number of times RT, RP, SS and DEO personnel visited the school, etc. ERO will develop a simple tool for monitoring at school level and the DOE/CDC/NCED will provide the training and orientation to the HT, SMC and PTAs.

*At the RC Level*, RPs will be primarily responsible for monitoring the progress in schools within their cluster. However, and as stated earlier, additional support of three staff – Resource Teachers – will be made available to each RC. RTs will be assigned to monitor and supervise schools in sub-cluster within the cluster of the Resource Center. RTs will visit each school within their sub-cluster at least twice a month. They will use standard checklist and formats to record student's progress in reading skill. RTs will be responsible to input their data into online system.

*At the District Level*, the District Core Team will be prepared to conduct periodic visit to selected schools to follow-up implementation of NEGRP including observation of classrooms to assess both teacher and student's performance. The DCT will be also encouraged to validate the information available in the database at the DEO and RC level.

*At the Central Level*, monitoring division of the MOE will coordinate regular visit by the members of the NCT (and other staff of NCED, CDC and DOE) to visit districts, RCs and schools regularly to collect feedback on the administrative and academic issues relating to

NEGRP implementation. DOE visits would focus more on administrative issues of implementation including supply of materials, training of head teachers, support from SMCs, progress of preparatory activities for launch of a new phase etc. The NCT (and other CDC and NCED staff) would focus more on classroom related issues.

ERO will develop a simple observation instruments incorporating the core classroom practices of NEGRP in its regular national assessment protocol. This will also serve as an independent or third party assessment of student's achievement in reading skills. The findings and recommendations of ERO report will provide necessary feedback to NEGRP team to improve its design and implementation as appropriate.

RPs, School Supervisors, SMC and PTA members will be trained (through NCED) and oriented (through DOE) to provide necessary support for enhancing student's learning in schools by maximizing their capacity to perform specific roles and functions effectively.

#### **EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES & IMPACT**

The Department of Education will include evaluation and impact studies in its regular program under the Research and Monitoring unit. The unit will use third party in most cases to conduct evaluation and impact studies.

The NCT will annually determine areas for evaluation and impact assessment. These will be periodic evaluations specific to topical issues. A longer term and national assessment of students reading level such as EGRA type assessment will be conducted by ERO on a fixed interval. For this type of assessment ERO will adopt the EGRA tools and the capacity of ERO staff will be developed to manage assessment of students using tools and procedures of international standards.

Towards the middle of the NEGRP, DOE will develop the ToR for hiring the consultants for conducting mid-term evaluation and towards the of NEGRP a final evaluation will be conducted.

#### **3.3.7 COMMUNITY & FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

Role of parents and community members is very much crucial in developing foundational skills especially in listening and reading skills. Since parents in rural communities are either illiterate or are not fully aware about early reading skills, there's a need to include parent education program to foster reading at home.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

Enhancing community and family involvement in student's learning.

#### **KEY RESULTS**

- SMC and PTA are fully functional in program schools.
- Parent's gathering is frequently organized in schools.
- Over 70% of the parents attend school functions.



## STRATEGIES

The focus will be on school based activities that can be implemented through the head teacher, teachers and RPs such as:

- Initial mobilization around the importance of learning Nepali & MTs (part of a national campaign)
- Pre-launch environment building meetings with head teachers; school based meetings with PTA and SMCs. Also meetings with DDC, VDCs
- Quarterly parents' meeting with grade teacher for discussing student progress with report card
- Two reading events in a year including a 2 hour parents' workshop on reading
- Community members visit classroom for storytelling and reading aloud (as feasible)

Meetings of PTA and SMCs will include discussion on NEGRP and the support needed from these bodies. The SIP will also include support to NEGRP and reading in general.

Schools will be encouraged to conduct parents gathering on a regular basis as mandatory event. Moreover, parents of early grade children will be specifically requested to make visits to classroom on a rotational basis to encourage children's participation and activities in the classroom.

## 4. ACTIVITIES, INPUT & OUTCOMES

A statement of 'NEGRP Inputs & Outcomes' and a log-frame indicating expected outputs and outcomes and measures or indicators may be seen in **Figure 1 and 2** below.

**Figure 1: NEGRP STATEMENT OF INPUTS & OUTCOMES**

<b>FINAL OUTCOMES</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Students acquire basic reading skills as defined (short-term; 1-2 years)</b></li> <li>• <b>Students develop an increased interest in reading books (long-term; 3-5 years)</b></li> </ul>					
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES</b>					
<b>Improved reading instruction</b> <i>(Teaching practices aligned with NEGRP)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased teacher effectiveness to teach reading</li> <li>• Increased access to and use of instructional materials and other reading materials</li> <li>• Print-rich environment in classrooms</li> <li>• Students actively engaged in learning activities (high time-on-task)</li> <li>• Frequent assessment and its use to drive instruction</li> <li>• Focus on all students learning</li> <li>• Targeted attention to low achieving students</li> </ul>		<b>Increased system capacity &amp; support to NEGRP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased understanding within the system of importance of reading and NEGRP strategies</li> <li>• Improved supervision and monitoring</li> <li>• NEGRP prioritized at district and national levels</li> <li>• Systems for material production, purchase and distribution streamlined</li> <li>• National reading assessments conducted as per schedule</li> </ul>		<b>Increased community and family support for reading</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased awareness of importance of reading in Nepali and MTs</li> <li>• Increased interest in children's reading progress</li> <li>• Increased support to reading at home</li> </ul>	
<b>MAJOR INPUTS/COMPONENTS</b>					
<b>Curricula and Instructional design</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated curricula</li> <li>• Systematic teaching-learning sequence</li> <li>• Clear learning milestones</li> <li>• Regular assessment</li> <li>• Lesson plans with teaching strategies, activities and materials, including use of textbook</li> <li>• Focus on identified reading skills</li> <li>• Scaffolding, revision and support to weaker students</li> <li>• Simple teachers' guide</li> </ul>	<b>Material development, production &amp; distribution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instructional materials</li> <li>• Reading materials and books as part of instructional design</li> <li>• Additional books for classroom/school libraries</li> </ul>	<b>Teacher Professional Development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initial and refresher trainings</li> <li>• Regular academic support</li> </ul>	<b>Regular assessment, Monitoring &amp; Evaluation &amp; Research</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formative assessment</li> <li>• Milestone based tests followed by revision/remediation</li> <li>• Assessments during monitoring visits</li> <li>• Monitoring of NEGRP included as priority responsibility at district &amp; RC levels</li> </ul>	<b>Capacity building of National &amp; District structures for NEGRP development &amp; implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of dedicated teams and intensive training/orientation</li> </ul>	<b>Community &amp; Family engagement</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PTA meetings for sharing students' progress</li> <li>• Reading events</li> <li>• Workshops with parents on importance of reading at home</li> </ul>

<b>ENABLING CONDITIONS</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased instructional time for Nepali Language subject</li> <li>• Ensuring PMECs in all schools, especially appropriate student-teacher ratios</li> <li>• Regular functioning of schools and teacher attendance</li> <li>• Creating an environment in the education system of accountability for student learning</li> <li>• Priority &amp; strong sustained support for NEGRP at all levels of government</li> <li>• Creating effective partnerships for supporting NEGRP</li> <li>• Social mobilization on language-in-education issues with focus on increasing value for learning Nepali and MTs in early grades</li> <li>• Changes in the early grades language textbooks to focus on development of reading skills</li> </ul>			

**Figure 2: NEGRP LOGFRAME**

Expected Outcomes/Outputs	Measure of Outcome/Output	Means of verification	Remarks
<b>OBJECTIVE/ULTIMATE OUTCOME</b>			
All students acquire basic reading skills by the end of each grade	<p><b>Grade 1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % students who can recognize all letters</li> <li>• % students who can read simple words</li> <li>• % students who can read a simple text at 30 correct words per minute</li> </ul> <p><b>Grade 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % students who can recognize all letters</li> <li>• % students who can read simple words (grade 1 &amp; 2 level)</li> <li>• % students who can read a simple text at 45 correct words per minute</li> <li>• % students who can answer recall type and simple inference questions after reading a text</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>Grade 3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % students who can read grade 2 &amp; 3 level words</li> <li>• % students who can read a simple text at 60 correct words per minute</li> <li>• % students who can answer recall type, simple</li> </ul>	Baseline and endline sample assessments; with or without control groups	<p>Milestone based assessments in each classroom would help in tracking progress at school level and initiating local corrective action</p> <p>Another set of indicators need to be developed from the equity perspective to look at performance of the lowest quartile of students. These could be of two types: (a) Inter-quartile range, i.e. difference between Q1 and Q4 performance, or (b) proportion of students who score very low on selected reading indicators (number of letters read at the end of grade 1; reading fluency at the end of grade 2 etc.)</p>

	<p>inference and integrating ideas type questions after reading a text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>% students who can write 3 correct sentences based on a picture</b></li> </ul>		
Students develop a habit of reading, i.e. an interest in reading books at school and home (depending on availability)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time available/spent per week reading independently for pleasure</li> <li>• Number of books borrowed from library</li> <li>• Number of books read per month</li> </ul>	Annual data collection from classroom/school library and timetable (for dedicated library time) by RC staff	To be measured only if this component has been implemented
<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME: IMPROVED READING INSTRUCTION</b>			
Increased teacher effectiveness to teach reading	% teachers who teach reading at defined levels of fidelity (in relation to NEGRP instructional design)	Classroom observations of sample classrooms, student records, print environment etc. through an external arrangement	<p>Difficult to define different aspects of effective teaching-learning and create measurable indicators. A few crucial aspects may be chosen, e.g. teaching of phonics, strategies for developing reading fluency and comprehension, inclusive nature of teaching process, regular assessments and follow-up action. Also, this requires multiple visits to the same classroom.</p> <p>Observation checklists during regular visits by academic support personnel could also help provide some evidence of teacher effectiveness, but capacity and objectivity could be issues.</p>
Increased access to and use of instructional materials and other reading materials	% classrooms that contain requisite materials	Annual census verification by the Resource Centre	The 'use' aspect would be clubbed with the classroom observations planned for teacher effectiveness
Print-rich environment inside classrooms	% classrooms that have identified minimum standards of print-rich environment	Annual verification by Resource Centre	Elements of a print-rich environment and minimum standards will need to be defined

<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME: INCREASED SYSTEM CAPACITY &amp; SUPPORT TO NEGRP</b>			
Improved monitoring & supervision for NEGRP	% schools visited once a month by either DEO or school supervisors with observation about NEGRP or students' reading levels	Through a specific study by an external agency on monitoring aspects of NEGRP by verifying from school visit records	Important to look for substantive observations about NEGRP
Increased system understanding of importance of reading	Reading and NEGRP included in major policy documents and communications from MOE & CLAs to other levels		
NEGRP prioritized at district level	Number of meetings of District Core Team (for NEGRP)	Verification of Meeting records by RED	
Increased instructional time for teaching Nepali language	% schools where Nepali language subject is taught for at least 10 periods a week	Annual survey based on school timetable	
National early grades reading assessments & Program evaluations conducted	<p>Sample reading assessments to (a) assess impact of NEGRP for phase I, or as needed, and/or (b) trends in reading achievements over time and geographies conducted as per decided schedule.</p> <p>At least 2 evaluations of different aspects of NEGRP conducted by 2016.</p>	<p>Based on the impact design for grades 2 &amp; 3 for Phase I, or as decided National level sample EGRA-like assessments for the entire country for assessing overall trends.</p> <p>These could include comprehensive classroom observation studies to study the extent to which NEGRP strategies are being implemented inside classrooms (fidelity of implementation). Also studies to evaluate the effectiveness of different aspects of materials, training, regular academic support, community engagement etc.</p>	
Research to support and develop NEGRP further conducted regularly	National level agencies and universities complete research studies as decided; disseminate results and help improve NEGRP further	Research reports and dissemination meetings	These could include researches in to teacher adoption of NEGRP strategies; changes in teacher beliefs and attitudes, changes in attitudes towards Nepali and MT teaching etc.

<b>INTERMEDIATE OUTCOME: INCREASED FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR READING</b>			
Increased understanding of importance of reading and learning Nepali and MTs	% SMCs and PTAs that support increased emphasis on local language learning at school	Special sample survey to get perceptions through interviews	
Increased support to reading at home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% parents who encourage students to read at home</li> <li>% parents who bought storybooks for children</li> </ul>	Research to understand changes in parents' attitudes	
Increased interest in children's reading progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% parents who attended meetings to discuss students' reading assessments/report cards</li> <li>% parents who attended special reading events organized by school</li> </ul>	Data collected from school records. Once a year, if needed	
<b>ACTIVITIES/INPUTS</b>	<b>MEASURE OF OUTPUT</b>	<b>MEANS OF VERIFICATION</b>	<b>REMARKS</b>
<b>Material development, production and distribution</b>			
Development, production & distribution of instructional and reading materials	<p>Materials in the identified languages developed and produced/printed well in advance of the start of school session</p> <p>% schools that receive (a) instructional materials, (b) additional reading materials in time</p>	<p>As reported by the national NEGRP team</p> <p>To be verified through visits by RC staff within the first month of start of school session</p>	
Establishment of book corners in grades 1-3 with all identified books (purchased by SMCs)	% classrooms where book corners with at least 75% of all identified books available in Nepali and/or MT	To be verified once a year.	
<b>Teacher Professional Development</b>	% Teachers identified for training who have received all rounds of training including the 3 one-day meetings	DEO/RC records	
Regular academic support visits to schools by RP and EGR resource teachers for assessing learning, classroom observation, guiding teacher, demonstrating a lesson etc.	% classrooms visited at least once in 3 months (4 times a year) by an academic support person (RP or EGR resource teacher)	To be checked once a quarter by RC based on visit notes in school records. To be verified by DCT	
<b>Regular assessment in classrooms</b>			
Milestone based tests being conducted by teachers as suggested by NEGRP	<p>% teachers who conducted such tests last quarter</p> <p>% teachers who took follow-up action based on assessments</p>	RC staff to verify from school records each quarter and interaction with schools	
Academic monitors (RPs & EGR resource teachers) conduct sample student assessments	% classrooms where assessments by academic support persons were made at least twice a year	To be checked from school records	

<b>Capacity building of National &amp; District structures for NEGRP development &amp; implementation</b>			
Functional national EGRP teams for Nepali and other MTs	Number of meetings of each team during a quarter		
Functional district level NEGRP team	Number of meetings of each team during a quarter		
Intensive and frequent training of team members	Number of days of training for National & District Core Teams		
<b>Community &amp; Family engagement</b>			
Parent-teacher meetings to discuss students' reading progress	% teachers who hold such meetings as per schedule (at least twice a year)	To be collected during an annual school based data collection	
Reading events organized at school (if part of strategy)	% schools that organized at least one reading event/competition in the past year	To be collected during an annual school based data collection	
Workshops with parents on importance of reading at home	% schools that organized such workshop	To be collected during an annual school based data collection	
Prepare & discuss student report cards on reading progress on quarterly basis	% teachers who prepared, distributed & discussed such report cards with parents	To be collected during an annual school based data collection	

## 5 PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The NEGRP will be implemented in three different phase that also includes developmental works to be completed before its rollout in April 2015. The time available between program start in July 2014 and the start of academic session in April 2015 will be utilized to complete all developmental works.

The NEGRP will be rolled out in three different phases. Phasing will follow both horizontal as well as vertical extension of NEGRP in the district. During the first phase, NEGRP will be launched in grade one and two in 16 districts. In the second phase, horizontally, NEGRP will be extended to 24 new districts in grade one and two whereas it will be extended vertically to grade three in the 16 districts of the first phase. In the third phase, NEGRP will be extended to 35 new districts in grade one and two. During this phase, 24 second phase districts will be extended to cover grade three. Thus, in the fourth year of the program, NEGRP will be fully implemented covering all 1-3 grades in all 75 districts.

During the third phase of the program implementation MT will be introduced in selected schools in selected districts. The figure (Figure 3) and the table below (Table 2) summarizes phased implementation plan.

**Figure 3: Phased Implementation of NEGRP in the Country**



The program phase and implementation activities are discussed below:

**Phase I: Developmental works and rollout in 16 districts (16 July 2014 – 15 July 2015)**

**Phase II: Expansion in 24 new districts (16 July 2015 – 15 July 2016)**

**Phase III: Expansion in 35 new districts and continuation in full cycle (16 July 2016 – 15 July 2019).**

**Table 2: Phased expansion of districts and school grades**

		July 2014 – July 2015	July 2015 – July 2016	July 2016 – July 2017	July 2017 – July 2018	July 2018 – July 2019
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>Phase I</b>	Districts	16	16	16	16	16
	Schools	4,783	4783	4783	4,783	4,783
	Students	400,000	550,000	560,000	560,000	560,000
	Teachers	9,000	14,000	14,000	14,000	14,000
	Grades	Grade 1,2	Grade 1,2,3	Grade 1,2,3	Grade 1,2,3	Grade 1,2,3
<b>Phase II</b>	Districts		24	24	24	24
	Schools		9,001	9001	9001	9,001
	Students		580,000	800,000	800,000	800,000
	Teachers		18,000	27,000	27,000	27,000
	Grades		Grade 1,2	Grade 1,2,3	Grade 1,2,3	Grade 1,2,3
<b>Phase III</b>	Districts			35	35	35
	Schools			15,114	15,114	15,114
	Students			1,000,000	1,400,000	1,400,000
	Teachers			30,000	45,000	45,000
	Grades			Grade 1,2	Grade 1,2,3	Grade 1,2,3
	MT			MT in 200 Sch	MT in 400 sch	MT in 600 sch
<b>Total</b>	Districts	16	40	75	75	75
	Schools	4,783	13,784	28,898	28,898	28,898
	Students	400,000	1,130,000	2,360,000	2,760,000	2,760,000
	Teachers	9,000	32,000	71,000	86,000	86,000
	Grades	Grade 1	Grade 1&2	Grade 1,2,3	Grade 1,2,3	Grade 1,2,3

### 5.1 PHASE I: DEVELOPMENTAL WORKS AND ROLLOUT IN 16 DISTRICTS (16 JULY 2014 – 15 JULY 2015).

This is an ideal period for preparing all developmental work as the SSRP Extension Plan becomes effective from July 2014 and thus the funds for NEGRP can be mobilized for developmental works before the next academic session starts in April 2015. Thus, there will be

about 9 months time for completing the developmental works such as revision of instruction design, development and production of supplementary reading materials and storybooks, preparation of training modules, conduction of MTOT and TOTs, capacity building of the core team, conduction of baseline assessments and community mobilization.

From April 2015 (start of the academic year in *Baishakh 2072*), the first phase of the NEGRP will be rolled out in 16 districts. These districts include 13 Free and Compulsory Basic Education (FCBE) districts, namely: Dhankuta, Saptari, Bhaktapur, Parsa, Kaski, Rupandehi, Surkhet, Bardiya, Dadeldhura, Kanchanpur, Manang, Mustang, and Dolpa; and additionally, Kailali, Banke, and Dang will be included in the first phase to USAID's program interest district. Since three of the USAID's support districts (Kanchanpur, Bardiya and Surkhet) are already included in the free and compulsory districts, altogether 16 districts will be covered during the first phase of NEGRP implementation (see Figure 5).

### ***Testing modular approach to support early grade reading program***

Given the diverse condition of schools in terms of educational capacity and physical infrastructure, and in view of the immense value to making cost-effective intervention for better results in early grade reading; the MOE/DOE will pilot modular approach using controlled and randomized experimental design to examine effect of specific interventions in early grade reading. For example, schools that receive textbooks and supplementary reading materials only; schools that receive both materials and training; and schools that receive textbooks, training, and instructional support including some infrastructure support.

For this purpose, districts where NEGRP interventions have not been started will be selected. For example, districts in the eastern regions where NEGRP interventions will be effective only during the third year of implementation will be selected for randomized experiment. The early grade reading program will be broken down by components such as library and reading materials support, teacher training and instructional support, and infrastructure support, and for the control schools no support will be given until the NEGRP becomes effective in those districts.

This testing will be done as part of the knowledge building process and for the government's own consumption. MOE/DOE will actively seek partnership for conducting this extensive exercise as a joint venture. Information thus generated will be utilized towards making educational interventions more cost effective and results oriented.

The first phase programs will focus in grades one and two and will use Nepali language to start up the program. The following program and activities will be implemented during this phase:

**PHASE I: DEVELOPMENTAL WORKS AND ROLLOUT IN 16 DISTRICTS (16 JULY 2014 – 15 JULY 2015) –**

**MAJOR ACTIVITIES AND THE TIMELINE**

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2014					2015						
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J
<b>A Instructional Design and Materials Development</b>														
1	Development of instructional design for teaching Nepali in grade 1, 2 and 3.	CDC	Development											
2	Development of supplementary reading materials (graded reading cards and readers in Nepali for grade 1, 2 and 3)	CDC	Development											
3	Printing and distribution of textbooks for grades 1, 2 and 3 in 16 districts	DOE	Set of materials											
4	Printing and distribution of supplementary reading materials including graded reading cards, decodable texts, etc for grade 1 and 2 students in Phase I (16) districts.	DOE	Set of materials											
5	Printing of newly developed storybooks and other readers for grade 1 and 2 students in 16 districts	DOE	Set of materials											
6	Library corner with at least 50 sets of reading materials is established in grade 1 and 2 in all community primary schools in 16 districts (with book rack)	DOE/CDC	Schools											
<b>B Community Development and Support</b>														
1	Scholarships and family subsistence to the student of the poorest families	DOE	Families with school going children											
2	Orientation of community members and stakeholders in the first phase 16 districts	DOE Through NGO	School Community											
3	Community development program	DOE Through NGO	District											
4	Orientation of district core teams (Phase I - 16 districts)	DOE	District Team											
5	Local environment building and community/teacher dialogue in 16 districts	DOE Through NGO	School Community											
<b>C Teacher Professional Development and Instructional Support</b>														
1	Development of Initial and refresher training modules for primary school teachers	NCED	Development											
2	Orientation of Head Teachers and EGR resource teachers in 16 districts	DEO/RP	Head-teachers											

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2014						2015							
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J		
3	Training of master trainers in 16 districts	NCED	Districts													
4	Initial training of grade / Nepali subject teachers in grade 1 and 2 in 16 districts.	NCED	Teachers													
5	Training of EGR Resource Teachers and RPs in 16 districts.	NCED	RP and SS													
6	Appointment of EGR Resource Teachers (to be attached with RCs) in 16 districts	DOE	Travel and logistics													
<b>D Student Assessment</b>																
1	Development of student assessment tools and system at ERO - Alignment of EGRA tools with NASA	ERO	Development													
<b>E Research, Monitoring and Evaluation</b>																
1	Conduct student assessment in 16 districts.	DOE/ERO	Schools													
2	Monitoring, supervision and logistics	DOE	Per year													
<b>F Capacity Building</b>																
1	Central level (NST)	MOE	Individual													
2	District level (DTC) - in 16 district	DOE	Individual													
3	Central level (NST)	MOE	Commodity/ Institution													
4	District level (DTC) in 16 district	DOE	Commodity/ District													
5	Sub-district level (ETC/RC/LRC) - in 16 dist	DOE/NCED	Commodity/ RC/ETC/ LRC													
6	Media mobilization for the advocacy of NEGRP (in 16 districts and at the national level)	DOE	Times													
7	Exposure visits	MOE DOE/CDC/ NCED	Persons (CLAs)													
8	Technical Assistance (National + international)	MOE	Person months													
9	TA management and NEGRP implementation support	MOE	Year													

### PHASE II YEAR 2: EXPANSION IN 24 NEW DISTRICTS (16 JULY 2015 – 15 JULY 2016)

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2015						2016							
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J		
<b>A</b>	<b>Instructional Design, Materials Development and Support</b>															

Development/ Implementation Activities		Responsible Agency	Unit	2015						2016						
				July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	
1	Printing and distribution of textbooks for grade 1, 2, and 3 students in phase II (40) districts	DOE	Set of materials													
2	Printing and distribution of supplementary reading materials including graded reading cards, decodable texts, etc for grade 3 students in phase I (16) districts.	DOE	Set of materials													
3	Printing and distribution of supplementary reading materials including graded reading cards, decodable texts, etc for grade 1 and 2 students in phase II (24) districts.	DOE	Set of materials													
4	Printing of newly developed storybooks and other readers for grade 1 and 2 students in 24 districts	DOE	Set of materials													
5	Library corner with at least 50 sets of reading materials is established in grade 3 in all community primary schools in phase I (16) districts	DOE/CDC	Schools													
6	Library corner with at least 50 sets of reading materials is established in grade 1 and 2 in all community primary schools in phase II (24) districts	DOE/CDC	Schools													
<b>B Community Development and Support</b>																
1	Scholarships and family subsistence to the student of the poorest families.	DOE	Families with school going children													
2	Community development program	DOE Through NGO	District													
3	Orientation of community members and stakeholders in the second phase 24 districts	DOE Through NGO	Communities													
4	Orientation of district core teams (Phase II districts)	DOE	Districts													
5	Local environment building and community/teacher dialogue in Phase II (24) districts	DOE/DEO/RC	School community													
<b>C Teacher Professional Development and Instructional Support</b>																
1	Orientation of Head Teachers and EGR resource teachers in 24 districts	DEO/RP	School head-Teachers													
2	Training of master trainers in 24 district (20 person in each district)	NCED	Districts													
3	Initial training of grade 3 Nepali subject teachers in Phase I (16) districts.	NCED	Teachers													

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2015					2016								
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J		
4	Initial training of grade 1 and 2 Nepali subject/grade teachers in Phase II (24) districts.	NCED	Teachers													
5	Training of EGR Resource Teachers and RPs in 24 districts	NCED	Training													
6	Appointment of EGR Resource Teachers (to be attached with RCs) in 24 districts	DOE	Travel and logistics													
<b>D</b>	<b>Student Assessment</b>															
1	Piloting of student assessment tools	ERO	Development													
<b>E</b>	<b>Research, Monitoring and Evaluation</b>															
1	Periodic research	DOE/ERO	Schools													
<b>F</b>	<b>Capacity Building</b>															
1	District level (DTC) - 24 Districts	DOE	Individual													
2	Sub-district level (ETC/RC) - 24 District	DOE	Individual													
3	District level (DTC) - 24 Districts	DOE	Commodities / District													
4	Sub-district level (ETC/RC) - 24 District	DOE/NCED	Commodities / RC/ETC													
5	Media mobilization for the advocacy of NEGRP (in 16 districts and at the national level)	DOE	Times													
6	Exchange visit (24 Dist)	NCED	School Teachers													
7	Exposure visit	MOE DOE/CDC/ NCED	Persons													

### PHASE III YEAR 3: EXPANSION IN 35 NEW DISTRICTS (16 JULY 2016 – 15 JULY 2017)

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2016					2017								
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J		
<b>A</b>	<b>Instructional Design, Materials Development and Support</b>															
1	Printing and distribution of textbooks for grade 1 and 2 students in phase I, II and III (75) districts	DOE	Set of materials													
2	Printing and distribution of supplementary reading materials including graded reading cards, decodable texts, etc for grade 1, 2 and 3 students in phase (75) districts.	DOE	Set of materials													
3	Printing of newly developed storybooks and other readers for grade 1, 2 and 3 students	DOE	Set of materials													

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2016					2017									
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J			
4	Library corner with at least 50 sets of reading materials is established in grade 3 in all community primary schools in phase III (35) districts	DOE/CDC	Schools														
5	Development and distribution reading materials in MT in grade 1, 2 and 3 in (First phase 16 districts)	CDC/DOE	Set of materials														
<b>B Community Development and Support</b>																	
1	Scholarships and family subsistence to the student of the poorest families.	DOE	Families with school going children														
2	Local environment building and community/teacher dialogue in Phase III (35) districts	DOE/DEO/RC	School community														
3	Community development program	DOE Through NGO	District														
<b>C Teacher Professional Development and Instructional Support</b>																	
1	Initial training of grade 3 (Nepali subject teachers in Phase II (24) districts.	NCED	Teachers														
2	Training of master trainers in 35 districts.	NCED	Districts														
3	Initial training of grade 3 Nepali subject teachers in Phase II (24) districts.	NCED	Teachers														
4	Initial training of grade 1 and 2 (Nepali subject teachers in Phase III (35) districts.	NCED	Teachers														
5	Development of training package and conduction of training to school teachers on reading skills in MT	CDC	Teachers														
<b>D Student Assessment</b>																	
1	Periodic assessment of student's progress in grade 1 and 2 in randomly selected districts.	ERO	School (sample of 20 school per district)														
<b>E Research, Monitoring and Evaluation</b>																	
1	Mid-term assessment of NEGRP	MOE/ERO	Review														
<b>F Capacity Building</b>																	
1	District level (DTC) - 35 Districts	DOE	Individual (35 District)														
2	Sub-district level (ETC/RC) - 35 District	DOE	Individual (35 District)														
3	District level (DTC) - 35 Districts	DOE	Commodities / District														

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2016					2017								
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J		
4	Sub-district level (ETC/RC) - 35 District	DOE/NCED	Commodities / RC/ETC													
5	Media mobilization for the advocacy of NEGRP (in 16 districts and at the national level)	DOE	Times													
6	Exchange visit (35 Dist)	NCED	School Teachers													
7	Exposure visit	MOE DOE/CDC NCED	Persons													

**PHASE III (YEAR 4): CONTINUATION OF NEGRP IN FULL CYCLE (16 JULY 2017 – 15 JULY 2018)**

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2017					2018								
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J		
<b>A</b>	<b>Instructional Design, Materials Development and Support</b>															
1	Printing and distribution of textbooks for grade 1, 2 and 3 students in phase I, II and III (75) districts	DOE	Set of materials													
2	Printing and distribution of supplementary reading materials including graded reading cards, decodable texts, etc for grade 1,2 and 3 students in 75 districts.	DOE	Set of materials													
3	Development and distribution of reading materials in MT in grade 1, 2 and 3 in (Second phase 24 districts)	CDC/DOE	Set of materials													
4	Library corner with at least 50 sets of reading materials is established in grade 3 in all community primary schools in phase III (35) districts	DOE/CDC	Schools													
<b>B</b>	<b>Community Development and Support</b>															
1	Scholarships and family subsistence to the student of the poorest families	DOE	Families with school going children													
2	Community development program	DOE Through NGO	District													
<b>C</b>	<b>Teacher Professional Development and Instructional Support</b>															
1	Initial training of grade 3 (Nepali subject/grade teachers in Phase III (35) districts.	NCED	Teachers													
2	Training to school teachers on reading skills in MT	CDC	Teachers													
<b>D</b>	<b>Student Assessment</b>															



Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2017					2018							
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	
1	Assessment of student's progress in grade 1, 2 and 3 students in 75 districts	ERO	School												
<b>1</b>	<b>Research, Monitoring and Evaluation</b>														
1	Field based research on issues and challenges	DOE	Number of research												
<b>F</b>	<b>Capacity Building</b>														
1	Media mobilization for the advocacy of NEGRP	DOE	Times												
2	Refresher training to grade 1-2 school teachers in 75 district	NCED	Language and grade teachers												

**PHASE III (YEAR 5): CONTINUATION OF NEGRP IN FULL CYCLE (16 JULY 2018 – 16 JULY 2019)**

Development/ Implementation Activities	Responsible Agency	Unit	2018					2019							
			July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	
<b>A</b>	<b>Instructional Design, Materials Development and Support</b>														
1	Printing and distribution of textbooks for grade 1, 2 and 3 students in phase I, II and III (75) districts	DOE	Set of materials												
2	Printing and distribution of supplementary reading materials including graded reading cards, decodable texts, etc for grade 1,2 and 3 students in 75 districts.	DOE	Set of materials												
<b>B</b>	<b>Community Development and Support</b>														
1	Community development program	DOE Through NGO	District												
<b>C</b>	<b>Teacher Professional Development and Instructional Support</b>														
1	Refresher training of grade 1-2 (Nepali subject/grade teachers in (75) districts.	NCED	Teachers												
2	Training to school teachers on reading skills in MT in II phase (35) districts	CDC	School teachers												
3	Refresher training to grade 3 school teachers in 75 district including MT.	NCED	Language and grade teachers												
<b>D</b>	<b>Student Assessment</b>														
1	End-line assessment	ERO	School												
<b>E</b>	<b>Research, Monitoring and Evaluation</b>														
1	Final Evaluation	ERO	Evaluation												
<b>F</b>	<b>Capacity Building</b>														

Development/ Implementation Activities		Responsible Agency	Unit	2018						2019						
				July	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	
1	Media mobilization for the advocacy of NEGRP	DOE	Times													

## 6. IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS

The following arrangements and functional responsibilities for both preparatory activities and implementation of NEGRP is proposed for key institutions (also see Figure 7 below):

### 6.1 CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTER (CDC)

The CDC will play most important role during both development and implementation phase. Principally CDC is the main actor in overall coordination of academic activities in school education. Within the current mandate, development of curricular and instructional design including development of instructional and reading materials is the major responsibility of CDC.

Under the NEGRP, CDC will implement the following major program and activities:

#### ***Integration of the curricula for grade (1-3)***

Over the five year period of NEGRP, CDC will entirely revise the current curricula of grades 1-3 focusing more into foundational skills such as reading, writing and comprehension. Current requirements of subject specific knowledge will be minimized by integrating different learning needs of subject interests into one curricular package, focusing the need to learning the basic skills.

However, revision of the curricula will require considerable time as it has to go through a range of technical and administrative procedures including final approval from the Council. It is likely that the revision of the curricula might take five years to complete. Therefore, CDC will initiate the formal process for curricular revision and will achieve the target by the end of the five year period of NEGRP.

The revised curricula will clearly stipulate grade and level specific objectives with measurable learning competency so that schoolteachers, students and their parents all know the minimum competency that the student should/will acquire at the end of each grade and level. The curricula will also specify areas for student's regular assessment and follow-up instructional support for students not making required progress.

In the meantime, CDC will integrate instructional materials, especially the textbooks in grade 1-3, by assimilating different subjects into one instructional book or a workbook for each grade giving priority to mastery in foundational skills.

### ***Instructional Design (integrated materials – integrating subjects into one)***

Based on the overall intent and methods of early grade reading program, CDC will work out the overall instructional design for early grades (1-3) focusing teacher and students time on reading language. Since the early grade reading program will focus on Nepali language, instructional time for Nepali language will be revised to include at least 90 minutes (or two periods) per day. The first period will focus entirely on reading skills and the second period will focus on pedagogical knowledge.

CDC will use both national and international Technical Assistance to develop an integrated instructional design for grade 1-3 over the project period. Along with the instructional design a user friendly guide will be also produced to support both school teachers and trainers to use this guide as reference manual.

### ***Instructional Materials (Integrated Textbooks and readers)***

Instead of different textbooks for each subject, CDC will develop, in the program period, a single workbook for each grade in early grades (1-3) by incorporating required learning needs of subject specific knowledge. The workbook will also include the curricula and curricular objectives, and will clearly spell-out the expected learning outcomes in each grade. Integrated materials will be developed towards the end of the NEGRP.

In order to meet the learning needs of diverse language population, multiple workbooks will be developed to support school community where majority of students use Nepali as second language. CDC will use national and international TA support to design and develop integrated workbook for early grades.

### ***Supplementary Reading Materials***

Series of supplementary reading materials will be developed targeting students in early grades including those who speak Nepali as a second language. With the support from USAID, a study is currently underway to assess supplementary reading materials available in the market. The recommendation of the study will shed some lights on the quality and relevance of these materials for early grade students.

Based on the recommendation, CDC will purchase and/or develop and distribute adequate supplementary reading materials to schools. These supplementary reading materials will include story books, charts, reading/flash cards, puzzles, and so forth. Each school will have at least 50

set of reading materials in its library corner in each of its early grades 1-3. These materials will have proper label of grading on it so that the teachers can suggest for its use by students with appropriate level of cognition.

### ***Strengthening CAS with remedial support (training by NCED)***

CDC will conduct an independent review of CAS currently being implemented in schools. Based on the study results, CAS will be redefined including simplification of CAS tools and assessment procedures. Along with the review of CAS, CDC will develop a comprehensive manual of CAS which will also include remedial package for students not able to make desired level of progress in the class. NCED will develop teacher training module on CAS and remedial support. Primary school teachers will be given training on CAS and remedial support system.

### ***Capacity building***

CDC will require their capacity to be built in the following areas:

- Design and development of integrated curricula and instructional materials for early grade
- Expertise in layout, graphic design and editing software
- Exposure to EGRP implementation including integrated system in early grades
- Development of EGRP cell with appropriate equipments and software
- International Technical Assistance in the following areas:
  - Design and development of integrated curricula and instructional approach
  - Reading Skills teaching expert
  - Materials design and development expert
  - Assessment expert
- National Technical Assistance in the following areas
  - Language expert
  - Materials design and development expert
  - Assessment expert

### ***Research and evaluation***

CDC will conduct research and evaluation in the following areas:

- Review of current curricula and instructional approach
- Review of Nepali textbooks and supplementary reading materials
- Review of Continuous Assessment System

## 6.2 NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (NCED)

NCED is the main implementing body that develops teacher's capacity through different modular and refresher trainings programs. NCED has at least one training center (ETC/LRC) in each district and has developed quite an extensive roster of trainers including its own fulltime trainers. NCED's trainers are qualified and competent resources that regularly conduct different training requirements throughout the country.

For the NEGRP, NCED will develop a comprehensive strategy to provide different training requirements. For this purpose, NCED will also require strengthening and building its own capacity in areas of early grade reading program. During the development phase NCED will conduct a capacity needs assessment and will provide necessary capacity building programs for its own staff from central level to the ETC and LRCs. NCED will conduct the following major program and activities:

### ***Review of Basic TPD Design***

NCED will conduct a thorough review of the TPD design including its strengths and weaknesses in order to improve its effectiveness. NCED has already included this activity and budget in its regular program. The concerns of training requirements for NEGRP will be given particular attention during the review of the TPD design.

Based on the findings and recommendations of the review, TPD design will be modified to include more appropriate training modules including training modules focusing on reading skills and other capacity development needs required for effective implementation of NEGRP.

### ***Development of Training Packages and Training Manuals***

NCED will develop and conduct different training programs for schoolteachers, and other service providers as required. The major training programs (modules) will include the following:

- For ECED facilitators (focusing on pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills)
- For grade and language teacher in early grades (focusing on reading skills)
- For Resource Teachers
- For SMC and PTAs (focusing on their roles and responsibilities)
- On CAS and remedial support (to primary school teachers)
- On teaching in Mother Tongue

### ***Conduction of Training***

- On pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills To ECED facilitators
- On reading skills to all grade and language teachers in grade 1-3

- On monitoring and supervision including instructional support to resource teachers and RPs
- On CAS and remedial support to primary school teachers
- On teaching in Mother Tongue

#### **Research & evaluation**

- Capacity (of NCED system) needs assessment
- Needs assessment of short-term Package

#### **Capacity building**

- Strengthening institutional capacity to support early grade reading program
  - Building capacity of NCED staff
  - Building capacity of ETC and LRC staff
  - Office equipments and multimedia
  - Refresher/orientation in NEGRP to trainers
- Teacher exchange program
  - Exposure to different school culture and practices
- Production of IT based training materials
- Exposure visit to regional training institutes

### **6.3 EDUCATION REVIEW OFFICE (ERO)**

ERO conducts independent assessment of school, students, teachers and other education service providers on a priority basis. During the NEGRP implementation, ERO will be developed to include assessment of students learning achievement in early grades as a regular program. For this purpose capacity of ERO will be developed to manage student assessment independently using standard tools and procedures.

ERO will conduct the following program and activities:

- Development of tools and templates for students regular assessment and its use in improving teaching and learning in the classroom
- Development of simplified tools and procedures for CAS
- Capacity building
- Research & Evaluation

### **6.4 DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION (DOE)**

The Department of Education is the main implementing agency that manages school related matters in all 75 districts through its own institutional arrangements such as the Resource centers, District Education Offices, and Regional Education Offices.

Primary responsibility of NEGRP implementation therefore remains within the jurisdiction of the DOE. The DOE, based on the agreed NEGR program document, will develop Annual Strategic Implementation Plan (ASIP) and Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB). Through the ASIP/AWPB, the DOE will assign program resources to the institutions implementing specific programs.

Along with the program and budget, DOE will also assume the overall coordination and implementation responsibility that will require strengthening its own and internal mechanism to monitor and follow-up. DOE will conduct the following major activities under the NEGRP:

- Overall coordination of implementation
- Internal monitoring & review of administrative issues
- Orientation of education service providers such as the DEOs, RP, SMC, PTA
- Research & Evaluation

#### 6.5 MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE - EPC)

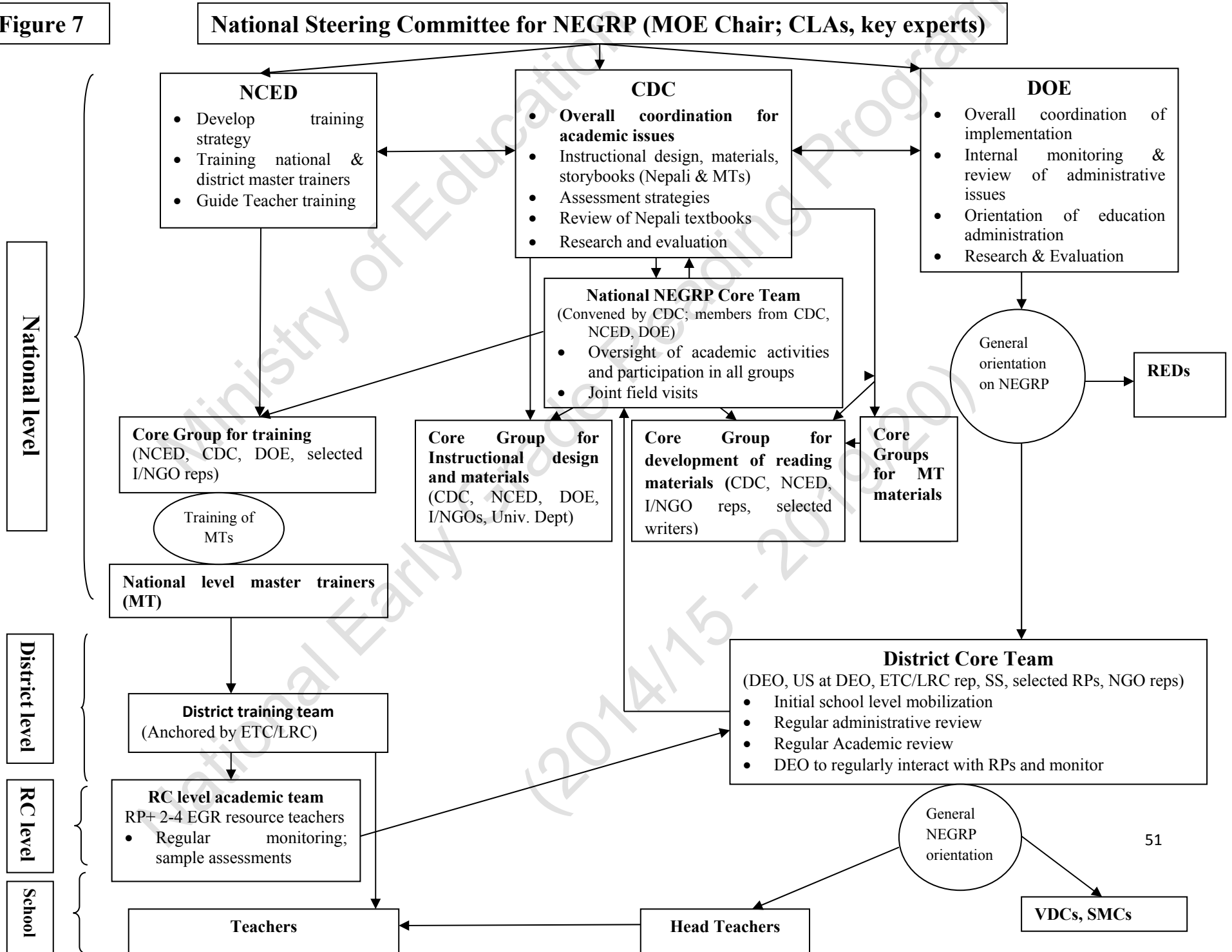
Ministry of Education is the policy making body and is accountable for achieving the program goal and objectives. Within the MOE, there's a section called Education Policy Committee (EPC) which is specifically responsible for the design of new program and activities. Early grade reading is relatively new program in Nepal and therefore EPC played a crucial role during the development phase of the NEGRP.

As the program steps up into implementation, the role of MOE/EPC becomes even more crucial to examine policy implications in the education system as a whole. Similarly, as the implementation of NEGRP progresses from one phase to another, it is likely that some regulatory provisions and policy backup would be required. For this specific purpose, EPC will continue to monitor NEGRP implementation closely.

For NEGRP related task, the MOE will conduct the following program and activities:

- Policy review and development to support smooth implementation of NEGRP
- Regular follow-up and monitoring including periodic progress review of NEGRP.
- Capacity building of key implementers and members of the NEGRP core team including NST, NCT, NCG and DTC focal points.
- Capacity building of EPC and relevant sections.

**Figure 7**





## 7. STRUCTURAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR NEGRP

Each CLA would dedicate 1-2 persons full-time for NEGRP activities. These persons will form the core of the National Core Team discussed in the next section. The selection of these full-time staff for NEGRP should be based on interest and commitment to reading and language instruction with a background in Nepali language curriculum and material development, training and/or quality improvement strategies for primary education. These core staff dedicated to NEGRP would not be transferred out of their positions for the next 3-5 years. In addition, each CLA will identify another 3-5 persons for being a part of the NEGRP core team and their participation in the different core groups with specific responsibilities.

### **NEGRP STEERING COMMITTEE (NST)**

MOE has already formed a National Steering Committee (NST) specifically to support the development of NEGRP document and for its implementation. The NST is chaired by the Joint Secretary, Planning Division, of MOE and its members include CLA heads. The EPC works as the secretariat of the NST.

Several consultations have been already conducted by NST facilitating early grade related decisions. The EPC has maintained meeting notes and decisions taken by the NST.

### **NATIONAL NEGRP CORE TEAM (NCT)**

MOE has already formed a national NEGRP Core Team (NCT) which includes members from CDC, NCED, DOE, and MOE. The NCT has already begun its work and has provided considerable support in the development of NEGRP document. The NCT also provided guidance and necessary support for the implementation of early grade related studies and assessment programs supported by USAID which is currently underway, such as the Teacher Observation Survey (TOS), Education Management Efficiency Survey (EMES) and the Early Grade Reading Assessment.

The member of NCT will be represented on the different core groups, viz. Core Group for Instructional Design and Material Development, Core Group for Reading Material Development and Core Group for Training Development. The NCT will meet regularly to review the progress of different activities and resolving academic issues coming up in different core groups. The NCT will be responsible for providing academic guidance to all of NEGRP's working groups. The NCT (a few members at a time) would also undertake regular joint field visits to review training activities and classroom transaction. Academic feedback from the DCTs (District Core Teams) would be analyzed by the NCT for follow-up action. For example, feedback may suggest a certain focus or reinforcement of some aspects in the refresher training round. The NCT would recommend to the NCED's Core Group on Training to include these aspects in the refresher training or the RPM agenda.

The composition of NCT, as discussed it earlier, will include senior staff from the CDC, NCED and DOE. The most senior member from these institutions will convene as the chair of NCT and the EPC will work as the secretariat of the NCT.

#### NATIONAL CORE GROUPS

Core Groups for different tasks will be anchored by each CLA. They will include representation from the other CLAs. In addition, representatives from INGOs and NGOs that have expertise in development of instructional design, instructional materials, early grade readers and storybooks and training programs, assessment and evaluation strategies can be co-opted in to each of the core groups after discussion with them.

#### DISTRICT CORE TEAM (DCT)

This would be chaired by the DEO. One of the Under Secretary level officers at the DEO will be given responsibility for convening the DCT. This officer will be dedicated for full-time work for NEGRP. The DCT will include representatives from the local ETC/LRC, some or all School Supervisors, selected RPs and representatives of any NGO that has significant outreach in primary education in that district.

The responsibilities of the DCT will include:

- Initial school level mobilization prior to implementation
- Regular administrative review
- Regular Academic review

The RC level would report administrative and academic feedback to the DCT. At least 2 formal meetings would be held a month-one for discussing administrative and management issues relating to NEGRP and (b) academic issues. The Officer-in-charge of NEGRP at DEO office would be in regular touch with all RPs to discuss and review NEGRP on an ongoing basis.

The DCT will communicate with the NCT in case there is an important feedback to be shared with them or an input that is urgently needed.

#### RESOURCE CENTRE LEVEL

The RP will take primary responsibility for overall monitoring and academic support for all schools in the RC area. This will be a challenging task for all the reasons mentioned earlier. The RP will be assisted by 3 EGR resource teachers who would receive additional training on EGR. This group will meet at least once a month to review feedback from visits in the earlier month and plan for visits for the next month. They will also decide on issues to be reported to the DCT for the next meeting at district level to be attended by the RP.

## 8. CAPACITY BUILDING OF GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL

The starting point of any new quality education intervention is to create a team of education professionals at the national level (this could include competent personnel from region/districts as well) who go through a very intensive professional development program.

To support specific functions, capacity development is already included under each institution such as the CDC, NCED, DOE and MOE. As such, each institution will develop and implement their capacity development plans. However, the members of the NST, NCT, NCG and DTC focal points are key actors in the implementation NEGRP. These staff will require intensive orientation during the development phase and before the NEGRP is rolled-out for implementation. Lack of clarity in understanding the concept, objectives and strategies about NEGRP would easily lead to unexpected results. Therefore, the NST secretariat (EPC) will organize a comprehensive orientation and training to these key actors at the national level. For this purpose a mix of national and international TA will be used to design and deliver the orientation/training program.

### 8.1 TA MANAGEMENT OFFICE

MOE intends to run a TA management office to coordinate all the developmental activities including capacity building and management of national and international TA support. This office is crucial to ensure timely availability of resources, necessary technical backstop and logistical support for implementing agencies and responsible personnel. The TA management office will be able to manage all consultations, workshops, exchange and exposure visits. Further the office will also support in the selection of local and international vendors and service providers for a range of local and external support needed for the effective implementation of NEGRP including conducting Mid-term and Final Evaluations.

## 9. FINANCING

NEGRP is one of the priority programs of education sector which has been clearly reflected in the SSRP Extension Plan. The Government of Nepal is therefore fully committed to make funds available for its implementation. As the SSRP Extension Plan has been endorsed by the Government and the Development Partners, it is now a joint responsibility to ensure sufficient funds for the implementation of SSRP components including NEGRP.

Currently there are eight pooling Development Partners – ADB, Australia, European Commission, Finland, GPE, Norway, UNICEF, and World Bank – who have made their indicative commitments to support SSRP implementation. Besides, there are non-pooling development partners supporting SSRP are Japan, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, USAID, and WFP.

As a part of the SSRP Extension Plan, costs incurred in each of its activities are thus a shared responsibility of both the Government of Nepal and the development partners. For the implementation of NEGRP program and activities, a separate agreement will be made with the USAID to cover the costs of developmental activities and also to fund program implementation in 20 districts of Mid and Far-Western Development Region.

### 9.1 COST ESTIMATES

The estimated cost for NEGRP components and activities are derived using existing government norms and the expenditure pattern. Number of schools, students, teacher and other cost units are used from the Flash Report of 2012. An exchange rate of 95 Rupee per UD dollar is used to provide a safe cushion in case of fluctuation in the rate. Similarly, the number of cost unit is slightly on a higher side to safeguard in case there's inflation.

#### **Total NEGRP Cost**

<b>Development/ Implementation Activities</b>		<b>TOTAL</b>
A	Instructional Design and Materials Development	4,705,750,000
B	Community Development and Support	326,000,000
C	Teacher Professional Development and Instructional Support	904,070,000
D	Student Assessment	9,100,000
E	Research, Monitoring and Evaluation	29,400,000
F	Capacity Building	748,200,000
<b>GRAND TOTAL in NPR</b>		<b>6,722,520,000</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL in USD</b>		<b>\$70,763,368</b>

### 9.2 FINANCING

As stated earlier, the cost of the NEGRP is a shared responsibility of the Government of Nepal and the DPs including USAID as its major supporting partner. The total cost of NEGRP is estimated to be around US\$ 71 million over the five year period. USAID's support in the NEGRP is expected to be around US\$ 25 million. The remaining expenses will be covered by the Government and pooling DPs. USAID's support is expected to be available through the red book as well as through technical assistance.

## 10. ASSUMPTIONS AND PREREQUISITES

- Instructional time for Nepali language subject is increased to 12 periods a week. This translates (roughly) in to 200-220 hours of allocated instructional time, considering about 150 actual working days.
- Teachers are earmarked for teaching Nepali (and MT, if a school chooses teaching of MT as a subject) and are able to provide the earmarked instructional hours for these subjects, even if the school has a multi-grade situation.
- The social mobilization strategy for increasing the value for Nepali and mother tongue teaching-learning is effectively implemented to attempt to convince schools, parents, communities and education authorities about the need for a concerted effort to improve students' reading skills and habit in these languages.
- A clear assessment is made well in time about schools that need and are willing to teach MTs (as subjects or initial MoI).
- The government successfully addresses systemic issues relating to provision of adequate teachers and other PMECs. This is essential to ensure that all schools have satisfactory enabling conditions for effective learning, especially student-teacher ratios that do not exceed 40:1 in grades 1-3. The turnover of teachers teaching early grades (Nepali language subject) is not high.
- Key EGR resource teachers are identified and empowered in each RC to provide some academic support and monitoring (apart from the RP)
- A sustained focus is maintained on early grades reading skills through adequate funding and system attention and effort. SSRP in its extension phase, and other arrangements that may come in force after SSRP, prioritize the development of early grades reading skills as a crucial quality improvement initiative. DPs continue to support this initiative strongly.
- Dedicated teams at national and district level work on all aspects of NEGRP and the teams work in a professional learning mode with regular research, monitoring, feedback collection and follow-up action. The constant learning and revision of the program based on monitoring and evaluation findings and adaptation to different contexts will be the strength of NEGRP. The original design including materials and training worked out at the beginning should not be considered the final blueprint for implementation for all following phases.

### **Risks & limitations of NEGRP**

The following limitations could reduce the effectiveness of NEGRP its impact:

### **Language policy & practice related**

- Undue emphasis on teaching of English as a subject and also as MoI in schools.

- Even when schools opt for teaching of MT as a subject, all languages, viz. MT, Nepali and English are taught from grade 1, putting a huge burden on the young child. This could limit reading achievements in all the languages.

#### **Program design related**

- Non-inclusion of school/classroom libraries in all schools (on account of resource limitations) could be a constraint in sustaining the gains from improved reading skills and development of reading habit.
- The decision to not provide workbooks would limit the scope for appropriate practice for development of writing skills and reinforcement of the reading skills
- By not including ECED in the NEGRP interventions, an opportunity of systematic development of foundational pre-reading and pre-writing skills would be missed. The school readiness package in the first few weeks may not provide the same kind of opportunity of developing these foundational skills.

#### **Structural arrangement related**

- The inadequate arrangements (human resource) for regular on-site support and guidance to teachers would constrain development of teachers' skills and practices to change classroom teaching practice. If the group consisting of RP and EGR teachers is unable to regularly visit classrooms and guide teachers, the adoption of NEGRP strategies could be somewhat limited.

#### **Financing related**

- There is a gap in the funding for SSRP. It will be a challenge for the Ministry of Education and the DPs to locate and provide adequate resources for NEGRP. This will require reprioritizing existing initiatives and activities.

#### **Management related**

- Ensuring timely and quality printing and distribution of instructional materials
- Collaboration with private sector for publication of some/all the graded readers developed and ensuring their purchase through funds transferred to SMCs. SMCs have, in the past, spent money in violation of guidelines for grants.
- The demands of a learning focused program require closely coordinated development of instructional strategy, materials, training and academic support strategy, classroom based and other forms of assessment and monitoring and supervision. These related functions are under the domain of different CLAs, viz. CDC, NCED and DOE. There is a risk of compartmentalized implementation without intensive collaboration.
- There is a risk that key personnel at national level who have been earmarked for NEGRP and have received intensive training are transferred to other positions in less than 3-5 years.

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<sup>i</sup> Flash I Report: 2012/13, DOE/MOE

<sup>ii</sup> Flash I Report: 2012/13, DOE/MOE

<sup>iii</sup> Limitations of the National assessment for Nepali Language for grade 5 are as follows:

- There is no assessment of oral reading fluency.
- The comprehension questions even for grade 5 are only of the 'simple recall' type. There is no attempt to test for inferential comprehension.
- Most of the reporting and analysis has been on the overall mean scores that do not reflect the performance on key skill areas like reading fluency, comprehension and vocabulary.
- The analysis does not indicate what the low achieving students could or could not do. Some more basic skills like familiar word reading are not included and the test is not divided into stages based on skill sets, so it is difficult to say what levels were the low scoring students able to reach.
- The test is not graded from simple to higher order skills. An analysis of zero scores on certain questions would have given an idea of where students had a difficulty.
- A 30% score has been used as 'basic level competency'. However, the meaning of a 30% score is not identified.

<sup>iv</sup> Room to Read.(2009). *Baseline study of the reading ability of grade 2 students in community schools of Nawalparasi, Pyuthan, and Dhading districts of Nepal*. Nepal: Room to Read.

<sup>v</sup> EQUIP 2(2010). *Using Opportunity to Learn and Early Grade Reading Fluency to Measure School Effectiveness in Nepal* USAID. Assessment of 480 grade 3 students was conducted in 2008 in 23 schools in 4 districts in Nepal

<sup>vi</sup> An assessment of 368 grade 2 students was conducted by Save the Children in 2011 20 schools in 2 districts in Nepal.

<sup>viii</sup> Reading and mathematics assessment carried out by World Education in 2012 in 6 VDCs in Banke and Dang districts for 1232 boys and 1398 girls in grades 2 and 3 in 44 community schools.

<sup>ix</sup> The Technical Working Group (TWG) was constituted to initiate the process of development of the design of the National Early Grades Reading Program. It includes representatives from MOE, DOE, NCED and CDC.

<sup>x</sup> 64 students were assessed (32 in grade 2 and 32 in grade 3) across 7 schools in the districts of Bhaktapur, Kathmandu, Kavre and Chitwan. The student selection was not random. Therefore, the actual mean scores in these schools could be lower.

<sup>xi</sup> These phases were:

**i. Phase I (2003-2005):** To boost up the teaching of 11 minority languages which have literate traditions and textbooks (e.g. Limbu, Rai Bantawa, Newari, Maithili, Urdu, Bhojpuri, Magar, Sherpa and Tharu) as a subject and medium of instruction in a multi-lingual context at primary level.

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**ii. Phase II** (2006-2008): To design curricula and textbooks in minority languages which are inclined towards developing their written system and to introduce those languages and subjects and medium of instruction in the multi-lingual context at primary level.

**iii. Phase III** (2009-2011): To develop writing system of the minority languages and to introduce those languages and subjects and medium of instruction in the multi-lingual context at primary level.

**iv. Phase IV** (2012-2013): To design curricula and prepare textbooks in order to introduce all the minority languages including the most endangered ones as the medium of instruction at primary level of education.

**v. Phase V** (2014-2015): To establish at least one mother tongue school in each election constituency.

<sup>xii</sup> Based on (a) 'Final Report: Role of Resource Centre for improving quality education in schools' submitted by Santwona Memorial Academy Pvt. Ltd. Kathmandu in June 2011, and (b) discussions with DEOs, SS, RPs, head teachers and teachers in 4 districts