

Inclusive Education - A Fundamental Enabling Rights for the Differently Able Children: Experiences of Save the Children (Norway) in Nepal

**Nupur Bhattacharya
Advocacy & CRC Programming Director
Save the Children Norway, Nepal**

Abstract

In Nepal, an average of 5% of the total child population is with disabilities. Out of this disability population, 68.9% are deprived of any education and 77.7 % of them are girls. Currently, Special Needs Education is being implemented in 46 districts by the Government for the children with various disabilities in segregated settings. Children with physical disabilities are provided with a scholarship (RS. 500) to study in the regular schools. But due to high social stigma, discriminatory social attitude as well as inadequate school environment, drop out and repetition rate is high. To bring some change to this grim scenario, SCN supported CBR Projects on the Rights Based Approach to prepare positive environment in the families, communities and schools adopting an effective “Transition Process” for the successful inclusion of children with disabilities in regular and integrated special schools. Mass awareness raising to develop adequate knowledge and understanding in society, increasing the accountability of the key duty bearers and stakeholders, educating and enabling the families to meet their obligations and responsibilities, building up the self esteem and resilience of children themselves, and preparing the schools for the children are the major steps in transition process. These four projects have demonstrated success in their respective districts where 220 regular schools have accommodated 800 children with disabilities creating a child-friendly environment so that the children can enjoy their studies. The issue of “discrimination” and stigma, negative or over protective attitude of the families, negative mind set of the communities and distrust of the schools about the “ability” of the handicapped children as well as low self esteem of children themselves are the major barriers in the task of including these children in education. An effective Transition Programme will help to bring down all these barriers. Education is an Enabling Right for children.

Akar is a 10-year-old boy with cerebral palsy in Thapa Gaun of Chhaling Village Development Committee, 8 kilometres away from Bhaktapur city in Kathmandu valley. The biggest wonderful change for him was when he started going to the village school as a student of Lower Kindergarten. He has got a special chair to support him to sit in the classroom at the front row. He listens to the teachers and learns his lessons,

as he has to learn to write yet. He is too spastic to use his hand to write. His mother helps him out to practice to write with his left foot. His mother carries him to school every day and brings him back home after the school, which is ½ hour walk from his house through the mountain trails of the village. The teachers and all classmates/school mates are very helpful and friendly. He has got many friends now; in fact he has 22 friends to chat with, to play with and to help him when he needs. He is a very happy and intelligent child. He loves to go to school and never wants to miss the school. Akar shows his frustration and goes to tantrum if he can't reach school on time. The school Akar goes to a small village school with classrooms void of any materials. But, the teachers are compassionate and loving as well as caring. School has brought a tremendous change in Akar's life. His development progress has become faster. His parents are convinced that he will start walking shortly and his capacity to speak and to write will improve soon.

Akar was registered with Bhaktapur Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Project four years back. He could hardly control his head and whole body's movement, could not sit and could not even raise his body. He used to be very sad and depressed and used to cry always. His parents had run around to consult many hospitals and doctors to find out some solution of his handicap situation, but nothing helped and in fact his condition became worse, spasm in his body increased more. Now they receive the practical help they need from Bhaktapur CBR to support them to increase the functional capacities of Akar. With CBR's technical support and advice Akar has started walking a few steps only recently, though awkwardly. He can also bring himself up to a sittings position now all by himself. While in a lying position he can exercise his lower limbs/legs through playful therapy like kicking balloons with his foot. His family, specially his mother and grand father take very good care of him, provide needed physiotherapy, do the activities to develop his daily living skills, talk to him to improve his speech and play with him in every way to increase his functional capacities.

There are about 900 children like Akar with different kinds of disabilities who are enjoying their right to education in the four CBR projects supported by Save the Children in four districts of Nepal.

The situation of children with disabilities in Nepal

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 10% of the world's population has some kind of disability and that of those 3% are severely affected enough to need some kind of specific intervention in order to be able to function normally. In Nepal a number of studies have been conducted since 1980 by the government and non-government efforts to estimate the number of people with disabilities in the country. Each study came up with a different figure ranging from 3% to 8% of the population being with disability. A study by Basic & Primary Education Project (BPEP) of Ministry of Education (MoE) on the Special Education Need conducted in 30 districts of Nepal has shown that an average 5% of the total child population of Nepal is with one or more kind of disability. The mortality rate of children with disabilities is significantly higher than non-disable children, even when the disability is not life threatening, due to negligence and lack of proper care when they are sick. For those who survive, the absence of access to adequate rehabilitation facilities and prevailing social stigma, apathy and discriminatory social attitude towards them provide a background as to why the results of the studies indicate a lower prevalence than internationally agreed standard. The families hide them.

Education for children with special needs is being implemented in 47 districts (267 schools) currently by the Government for the children with visual impairment and blindness, with hearing impairment and with mental retardation and learning disability. However, it is segregated special need education. Children with physical disabilities are provided with NRS 500 (US \$ 7 per month) as scholarship to study in the regular schools. Inclusive Education for the children who are deprived of their education rights due to social discrimination against their caste, ethnicity, gender, ability is being piloted currently by the government in four districts out of 75 districts in Nepal.

The national scenario is grim. Very few NGOs or INGOs involved in mainstream development sectors have included issues of disability in their agenda. Disability is considered to be a "difficult and technical area" and is "not manageable by everybody". Thus, it has become the "issue only for NGOs involved in the disability sector". Many of the organizations (government, I/NGOs) work with a "Charity Approach" while addressing the issue of disability. Disability is still in the low priority zone of attention, excluded and denied from the benefit of the main stream of development issues. As a result, more than 80% of differently able children are deprived of their basic rights, though the reality cry is that the quality of lives of 70-80% of children with disabilities is manageable at the community level through attitudinal changes, awareness raising and a very basic level of capacity building programme to the family members/community people, civil society and government structure.

A recent situation analysis (year 2000) conducted by the Government and UNICEF (Nepal) shows that 69% differently able children (78% are girls) are deprived of any education. 70% of children with disabilities felt that they face problem to live with self-respect. About 80% of young people with disabilities were economically dependent on family. Less than 2% receive any health and rehabilitation services.

Thus, the issue of violation of the rights of differently able children is still lurking as a challenge for Nepal as a state party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. About 5% of children with disabilities of total child population of Nepal are at the bottom most of the disadvantaged children whose rights are denied and violated. They are less visible and therefore, are still in least priority in the national agenda of development, are most vulnerable to exclusion and discrimination in the families, communities and in the mainstream of development activities.

The major root causes to address are ignorance, misconception and negative mind set in the family, community and the schools (formal and vocational). A general negative assumption of the families and society that they can't do anything on the one hand and very low self esteem of the children with disabilities themselves (as the result of the strong discriminatory attitude) on the other are the major reasons. Gender and caste discrimination, in addition, adds to the damage.

As against this national situation, when we look at the achievements of Save the Children, Norway-Nepal (SCN-N) and its partners, they have brought great hope with their demonstrations where families and communities have created special as well as equal opportunities for their children with disabilities to develop their optimum potential. 900 differently able children are enjoying their education rights in about 210 schools in a disable friendly happy environment in SCNN supported CBR project

areas in four districts. Special classes (lower KG to class 4) for the hearing impaired children are integrated in the regular schools, where during breaks, play times, lunch time, during extra-curricular activities like dancing, acting, mime shows, drawing sessions, all children are together without any discrimination. There are examples in these schools where children with hearing problem have been included in regular class V of the higher secondary school, as the special class is only up to standard IV. It is not easy but it has been a great pleasure for the School Management Committees, teachers, students to see how wonderfully those kids with hearing problem are managing their studies in the regular classes with respect and dignity in mutual cooperative environment among the teachers, the children with hearing impairment and other children in the class. The children with hearing problem are very proud of themselves and are very happy to have this opportunity to be part of others (who can hear) in the same class. This is an effort of Biratnagar CBR Project in the Eastern Nepal in the process of gradual inclusion of the children with hearing impairment in all the classes in pre-primary, primary and secondary. All the teachers, CBR Biratnagar has provided member of the School Management Committee, District Education Office personnel with the training on sign language. (There is only one School for the Deaf up to secondary level in the country's capital city; others are only up to primary only.)

Save the Children Norway Nepal has prioritized its work to ensure the rights of differently able children in Nepal since 1990, which remain an area of fundamental concern in Nepal. In the strategy period 2002 to 2005, the country programme is striving together with its partners to reach the following goal:

“We want to improve the quality of lives of children with disabilities through mobilizing civil society and government, supporting and enabling them to address the issue through prevention, inclusion and community based rehabilitation.”

To contribute to this strategic goal, SCN and its partners in childhood Disability Support Project have strived ahead to build up the constituencies at all levels, from grassroots to national, from civil society to national government in favor of the rights of differently able children. Enriching the key stakeholders and duty bearers with adequate knowledge and understanding, sensitizing them to increase their accountability towards differently able children and enabling them to meet their responsibilities and obligations have been the priority.

In addition, the focus has been on mobilizing and enabling the cooperation/collaboration of self-help groups, non-disable children and youth. The focus has been on empowering what I refer to as ‘differently able children’ to claim their rights.

Inclusive and Integrated Education have been always the major focus to empower and enable the differently able children to develop their self-esteem and self-reliance. Save the Children Norway strongly advocates for the Right to Education as an enabling right to realize other rights of the children and is demonstrating to prove so with its partners’ managed CBR Projects in four districts of Nepal.

Outcomes

SCNN and its partners' collaborative advocacy efforts with self-help groups have resulted to remarkable changes and development in the disability sector, e.g.

- ❑ National planning commission is drafting comprehensive National disability policy where Right to Inclusive Education has been prioritized with the directed dignified space for children to be accommodated by all the schools.
- ❑ Ministry of Local Development has expressed its short term and long term commitment to include provision of program and budget at all level of local development organizations & disabled friendly provision in local public buildings now onwards (public schools are part of that).
- ❑ Ministry of Women Children and Social Welfare has started implementing CBR programs in pilot districts in all 5 regions in collaboration with NGOs to scale up the efforts of CBR Programmes in creating access of education for the differently able children.

At the local level in the districts where SCNN's CBR Partners are operational:

- ❑ District Development Committees have included childhood disability in their short term/long term plans.
- ❑ District Education offices has prioritized the planning of inclusive and special education with CBR organization in the planning committee.
- ❑ Local Development Department in one district has declared the policy and order to make all future constructions disable friendly.
- ❑ District Education Offices and NGOs have extended educational scholarships to the needy differently able children.
- ❑ Schools are also providing free ship to the needy children with disabilities with special consideration.
- ❑ Schools are making themselves disable friendly – physically and psychosocially.
- ❑ Children with different kinds of disabilities are going to inclusive/integrated and special schools regularly and are very happy.
- ❑ In Lalitpur District- a district in Kathmandu Valley -a special class for the children with mental retardation is in a process of integration in a general public school of the city by the advocacy efforts of CBR Patan.
- ❑ All the three special class for the deaf managed by CBR Bhaktapur, (in the Kathmandu Valley) CBR Biratnagar (Eastern Nepal) and CBR Palpa (Western Nepal) are integrated in the public schools by the effort of CBRs and with the active support of District Education Offices and school authorities there.
- ❑ Civil society institutions and individuals are supporting CBR organizations by sponsoring the education of differently able children whose parents are too poor to support their children's education.

Interventions

The most important area of intervention by Save the Children Norway and its partners is to plan and manage the transition process of differently able children from home to schools for their meaningful sustained inclusion in the schools to prevent drop outs and repetition. The objective of this process is to:

- ❑ Prepare the family and home environment, preparing the neighbors and community to accept the child's right to achieve formal education.

- ❑ To prepare the school (teachers, school staff members, School Management Committees, other school children) to accommodate the child with disability with comfort, respect and dignity.
- ❑ Prepare the children with disabilities themselves to agree to go to school.

For these preparations the interventions made are:

- ❑ Changing the negative mind set of the key stakeholders and duty bearers.
- ❑ Breaking down the barriers of social stigma.
- ❑ Increasing the knowledge & understanding of the duty bearers and key stakeholders and sensitizing them to increase their accountability towards their children with disabilities.
- ❑ Enabling the parents/family members as the primary duty bearers, and the key stakeholders e.g., neighbors, community people, Educational Institutions (formal schools, vocational schools), local government and civil society institutions to fulfil their obligations and responsibilities to respect the right of the child with disability to education.
- ❑ Creating a positive environment everywhere for the child to study and learn.
- ❑ Increasing child's self esteem and resilience.
- ❑ Increasing the child's functional capacities and daily living skills.

Major activities to achieve the desired changes through successful interventions are:

- ❑ One- to-one family counselling to motivate sensitize them to understand the obligation and enabling them to take the responsibility and the same for immediate neighbors.
- ❑ Meetings/ dialogue sessions with Parents groups (of the similar category disability) with the demonstration of examples of success.
- ❑ Awareness raising and sensitization through interactions, orientations/workshops with key stakeholders, e.g. Teachers, School Management Committee members, local government body personnel, community groups, influential community leaders, non-disable children of the community neighborhoods and schools, staff members of the schools about the Rights issues of children with disabilities and their respective responsibilities and obligations and to develop their knowledge and understanding about the causes, prevention and rehabilitation measures of childhood disabilities.
- ❑ Child-to-child disability awareness/ experiential games for adults and children stakeholders.
- ❑ Training for the school teachers to practice non-violent teaching methodologies to prevent psychosocial developmental deviation (mental health problems).
- ❑ One-to-one psychosocial counselling for the individual child.
- ❑ Primary Rehabilitation therapies for each child with individual specific programming and needed medical interventions to increase child's functional capacities and daily living skills, provision of assistive devices to decrease and manage the handicap situation.
- ❑ Transition process for school enrolment of school age children.
- ❑ Focusing specially to intervene with the social discrimination to create equal opportunities for the children with disabilities belonging to socially discriminated castes and ethnic groups, economically very poor families and girls with disabilities.

- Promoting Child Club movement of Nepal by supporting/working with Inclusive child clubs to enable the differently able and non-disable children together to raise the rights issues of children and to claim their rights.

On average, it takes 6 months to 2 years to go through such transition process for sustained inclusion in education. CBR workers, during such transition processes, focus on the other children of the family and community too if they are denied of the opportunity to education and put their efforts to create opportunities for other non-disable children of the family.

Inclusion in action

Dilip Mondal, an 11 years old boy, lives in an urban slum of Biratnagar city, in Eastern Nepal. He belongs to a family of an extremely poor community who are landless and without any skill or resources. They are socially discriminated as “Low Caste” and their deprivation of any sort of education or skills has made them more vulnerable for the violation of their basic rights. All adults in the community are seasonal unskilled laborers in agricultural fields or factories with a very low wage. Education for them is a luxury. The whole community is illiterate.

Dilip has severely crooked legs and hands as a result of the deformed bones due to Rickets since birth, and his growth is stunted too. On top of that he has burn deformity due to a fire accident he was in when he was 6 months old. Due to the very weak bones he has to be protected always from very minor falls to prevent bone fractures and further physical problem. Dilip has lost his mother when he was a very young baby and reared by his grand mother primarily. His father and the stepmother take good care of him, though the grand mother is the one who is the most responsible for Dilip’s life. He is a very pleasant and intelligent boy and quite smart too. He is very articulate, always smiling and always remembers his social responsibilities.

Biratnagar CBR found Dilip in 1999. Biratnagar CBR, with active participation of the family and the community, strived for his social as well as medical rehabilitation to develop his functional capacities and social inclusion. He was enrolled in the local school in the year 2002, April in grade 1. It took a long and hard advocacy work for Biratnagar CBR to bring in attitudinal changes in the school authority and teachers to accept Dilip as a student in the school – Dilip being a Dalit boy and “Disabled” on top of that- making him double victim of social discrimination.

The Rehabilitation Facilitator responsible for Dilip’s rights built up the awareness of the whole community about the value of education and counselled them to register the births of their children. Birth registration is a compulsory criterion for the enrolment in schools in Nepal. The Rehabilitation Facilitator mobilized the whole community and parents of the other differently able children of the town too to strengthen the father of Dilip to claim the education right of his son and also lobbied vehemently with the school for Dilip’s right to education. As the result, an avalanche came. Dilip’s community, where education is not even the least priority at all, where the parents are hand to mouth to manage their hunger, got engaged in strong advocacy for the rights of all their children and the school respected and accepted their claim. Dilip proudly led a group of 10 other children of his community to enter the school with equal respect to enjoy the right to education. Dilip and his pals from his community are now happily enjoying the school without any discrimination now and Dilip has made many new friends there.

Gender discrimination is stronger if a girl child has a disability. SCNN has addressed the issue of gender discrimination and created a very positive environment around girls with disabilities to realize their rights. For example, Sharda is now 18 years old and studying in Nobel Academy in Kathmandu Valley as a grade 10th girl. She was six years old when Save the Children Norway- Nepal found her in Bharte village of Lamjung district in Western Nepal. Her lower limbs were totally paralysed by the severe attack of polio. With her parents, she was brought to Kathmandu by SCNN staff members for consultations with CBR Bhaktapur. CBR Workers trained the parents to provide physiotherapy for the wasted legs of Sharda to get her prepared for surgical intervention. After a year, she was operated on in the Hospital for the Rehabilitation of Disabled Children (HRDC) for her deformed legs and was given callipers and special shoes.

Her mother trained her to walk, with a walker first and then with a pair of crutches. Since then Sharda never stopped in her life to progress ahead with her education with her mother's tremendous support to design her life. She was put in an Early Childhood Development Center. Her mother, in spite of the bitter, satirical comments of the villagers, joined an adult literacy class to learn to support Sharda in her education. She was by then a girl of 8 years and she got admitted in the non-formal education class for the girls run by SCNN. After developing her basic literacy skills she got her admission in class 1 at the village school with the help of her mother. She studied in the village school up to class 8. During this time she had been active member of the child club of her village and she led the child club as chairperson as well.

In the year 2001 Sharda got the opportunity to come to Kathmandu to get her admission in class 9 in Nobel Academy. She is now at the final year of her school education. She is one of the best students in her school academically. She equally participates in extra curricular activities and has won many prizes. Sharada had some frustrating experiences for the getting admission in school as her English was poor as her initial training was in a village school, but now she has crossed all the barriers and has demonstrated her true potentials. She is very happy and confident young girl now with full of dreams to design her future.

These are but a few examples of how the partners are contributing to realize the rights of the differently able children through Childhood Disability Support Programme (CDSP) of Save the Children-Norway-Nepal; and how they have successfully brought in social changes to include children into the mainstream of the education system. CBR partners had to work very hard to bring in this social change by sensitizing and enabling the educational institutions, the families, the communities and the children themselves to make this transition of differently able children from home to schools possible. The major barrier was the negative attitude of the educational institutions and teachers who had doubts about the intellectual capacity of the children with disabilities. Problem was also with the families who were over protective with the concern that the children will not be able to cope with the study responsibilities and also that they will be bullied and insulted by other children in the schools. Community again had the same attitude that these children can't do anything and never with any education. SCNN with its partners have been successful in ushering an avalanche of attitudinal changes in the society and proved that given the opportunities the children with disabilities are equally capable in their capacities and talents.

Moving into adult life

There are examples of the positive action of the schools and school children too who, to respect the physical limitation of children with disabilities, have changed the rules of their schools or sacrificed the eligible facilities for them. There are also many examples of grown up youths who are now engaged in higher education at the college level or are the earning members of their families. Here is a case study of a self sufficient young man supporting his family.

Purushottam is now 22 years old. He was an eight years old child when he came to the contact of Bhaktapur CBR. He was one of the first 11 children Bhaktapur CBR started working with for their total rehabilitation. His lower limb was totally wasted due to the attack of Polio. He could not walk and both his legs were severely deformed. He used to be within the four walls of a small room of their house. His father was a stone carver. Bhaktapur is very famous for wood and stone carving skills. Purushottam himself and his mother started working very hard to do the exercises for his legs regularly as directed by the CBR Facilitators, who used to supervise once a week during home visits. During that period he was supported by the CBR Facilitators to coach him during weekly home visits to enhance his basic skills for education. Schools were far from his home and it was difficult for his mother to carry him that far. Purushottam had to go through surgical interventions too to straighten out his legs. With regular Physiotherapy he started to walk with the help of a walker. Once he started walking with the walker he got admitted in a primary school.

During this initial period, it was very difficult to convince the school that he was capable like any other child in the school to take his lessons. It was also difficult to convince the family and Purushottam himself, as they were afraid that other children would bully him. Parents were also worried, as he had to take a long walk with the walker to reach the school. After strong and efficient advocacy and awareness raising work of CBR with the school authorities, teachers and the students of the school the school environment was made ready to put the child in the school. Teachers and students of the school had their mind set changed and were positive to welcome Purushottam to the school with proper respect and love. CBR was successful in changing the attitude of the parents too with efficient counselling and they were ready to send the child to the school. CBR had to work hard to change the attitude of the neighborhood too, the community people who used to point fingers to him and addressing him with names disrespectfully. CBR got success in changing the attitude of the community too creating a positive environment around the child to walk through to the school holding his head high. It is crucial to create such positive environment to ensure that the child would like to go to school, enjoy the study there and also get at the positive support of the family.

Purushottam was admitted in the Primary School, in class one, at the age of 11. He completed his primary education and just at that time his father expired. Purushottam was 16. He decided to discontinue his study, as he thought it was enough education for him, and he joined a Wood Carving Center as an intern to learn wood carving technology. At present, he is a professional wood carver of Bhaktapur involved in a wide variety of beautiful woodcarving. He lives with his elder brother and mother, and supports his family with his income.

There are many more examples of grown up differently able girls and boys who are earning members of their families. Laxmiswori, a 34 years old jovial young woman, is now working as the Computer Operator cum Receptionist at the Resource Center for Development and Rehabilitation in Bhaktapur. Her lower limb is totally wasted due to polio. She completed her school education, and got her training in computer skills with the help of CBR Bhaktapur. She can't walk, but she rides a motorcycle to move around confidently. Kalpana is now with Action Aid –Nepal working as the receptionist there. She is a married woman now. She was also affected by Polio and supported by CBR to develop her potentials to grow up with self-esteem and resilience. Severe rickets affected Sajan when he was a very small child. He is now a Campus going bright student of commerce and is aiming to have a career of Business Manager.

There are other examples of grown up children, now studying at the higher classes of the secondary school (9th and 10th grade), who are actively involved in the activities of inclusive child clubs. Ram Prasad, the president of one of the inclusive child clubs, was affected by polio, which is now history for him. Bijesh, the executive member of one of the inclusive child clubs and a grade 9 student of an English medium school not only writes with his left foot, but does everything using his efficient left foot as he is a spastic child. But he has crossed all the constraints with the help of CBR and now is fully included in the mainstream of social life. Bijesh is extremely good in painting. He is not at all embarrassed for his awkward looking walking style or impaired speech. Similarly, Suman, the past President of one of the child clubs, is active and talkative young member of the child club. He is in grade 9. He moves around the town of Bhaktapur confidently on his wheel chair. Because of the effects of Cerebral Palsy he can't walk and his speech is impaired. 2000 of such recorded Child Clubs under the Consortium of Organizations Working for Child Clubs of Nepal (with the involvement of at least 50,000 children) are involved in the promotion of Children's Rights in Nepal.

There are hundreds of such examples of children whose quality of lives have been enhanced because they got the opportunity to enjoy their right to education. They are full of dreams about their future now. There are again hundreds of examples of grown up young men and women who have designed their lives with the support of their families and SCNN-CBR projects. Inclusive Education has enabled all of them to claim their other rights equally as others of the same age. They have won over their limitations as the society around them have accepted them "as they are" with equal respect and love which has given them the lives with dignity.

Some times, however, we do fail. The reasons are:

- ❑ If the child has multiple severe disabilities and does not have daily living skills.
- ❑ If the child has severe mental retardation.
- ❑ School is very far and not accessible for the child at all.
- ❑ Family can't provide time to take the child to school in the morning and bring back home after school.
- ❑ Public schools do not have a 'pick and drop' system.
- ❑ Public school can't manage the toileting problem of the child and the family, if nearby, is called whenever the child uses toilet. If the family is staying far then the child is soiled, thus sometimes it is cumbersome for the family and sometimes unmanageable for the school with very little resources. (Only some private

schools have caretakers for small children to manage their toileting time and these schools are expensive).

Drawing out the lessons

Reflecting on all of these experiences, points to some important lessons that can help to guide future practice. These include the following:

- ❑ Planning and implementing the transition process properly is crucial for any differently able child's inclusion in school.
- ❑ Active participation of the child's family, neighbors and the community during the process is also vital.
- ❑ It is not at all easy to get children with any kind of disability enrolled in school - lots of patience and perseverance are needed and scholarship alone automatically can't bring the result.
- ❑ Special attention for inclusion of girls with disabilities and children with disabilities belonging to socially excluded castes or very poor family is crucially needed – it's a 'double headed' challenge of addressing issues of discrimination.
- ❑ There is vast difference in the psychosocial development of the children who are included and those who are segregated. Segregated children might develop an inferiority complex, and either become introvert or too aggressive and weaker in socialization skills in comparison to the children of integrated or inclusive schools whose psychosocial health is much stronger-self esteem and resilience higher.
- ❑ Preparation of the school demands preparing the whole school-all teachers, staff, School Management Committee (SMC) and children.
- ❑ The Child-to-Child approach is very effective and essential to take up to address the issue of discrimination, to develop the understanding of the principle of non-discrimination and Inclusion and to enable the duty bearers and stakeholders for practical application of the principles of non-discrimination (no negative action) and Inclusion (deliberate positive action).

At the same time, there are some concerns and further challenges. For example:

- ❑ How to scale up to achieve the overall goals of 'Education for All' by 2015?
- ❑ How to respond to the thousands of children with disabilities are still un-reached. If we count the contribution of all the NGOs and government-supported projects to create access to education for this group of marginalized children, it is still less than 2% of this group who are enrolled in school.
- ❑ Special classes for the children with mentally retarded and multiple disabilities are still segregated and they need to be made, at least, integrated.
- ❑ Corporal punishment in schools is another crucial problem in Nepal, and the teachers spare the children with disabilities with PITY!!
- ❑ How to mobilize the whole teacher community of the nation and the children to bring an avalanche of social change to respect the right of differently able children to education?

We have realized the importance of mainstreaming the issue in the government system, to scale up. The Government, being a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), is primarily obliged to increase the quality of lives of ALL children in the country. More specifically, we are involved in active advocacy work to mainstream the childhood disability issue in the government's programming and have achieved success too to some extent.

The Government's 10th Five Year plan has covered the issue comprehensively and also it is a crosscutting issue for all the sectors of development. National government and local government agencies have developed short and long term plans, with budget allocated to create equal opportunities for the differently able girls and boys of the country. The Ministry of Health has accepted the concept paper presented by us to include childhood disability rehabilitation in the Primary Health Care system of the country.

So, small, but important changes in the government and in civil society have started occurring. But social mobilization process has yet to take the momentum to translate itself into a movement for the rights of differently able children. Let us hope for a just society, which will respect the rights of ALL children without any discrimination.

