USAID's Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II) in Nepal

Year 2 Annual Progress Report: June 1, 2021–May 31, 2022 (including January–April 2022 Quarterly Report)

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Cooperative Agreement No. 72036720CA00001

The authors' views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

Cover photo: A student demonstrates how to use a pinwheel chart to learn Nepali sentences at Ban Shakti School, Jirabhawani Rural Municipality, Parsa District. (Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

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List of Abbreviations

3T	Technical Task Team
AWP	Annual Work Plan
CB-EGRA	Classroom-Based Early Grade Reading Assessment
CDC	Curriculum Development Center
CEHRD	Center for Education and Human Resource Development
CIES	Comparative and International Education Society
CLA	Central-Level Agency
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
cwpm	Correct Words per Minute
DCC	District Coordination Committee
DQA	Data Quality Assessment
EDCU	Education Development and Coordination Unit
EGR	Early Grade Reading
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
EGRP	Early Grade Reading Program
EGRP II	Early Grade Reading Program II
EP	Education Profile
ERO	Education Review Office
ETC	Education Training Center
FEDUC	Foundation for Educational Change
FY	Fiscal Year
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GON	Government of Nepal
HRDD	Human Resource Development Division
IC	Integrated Curriculum
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEMIS	Integrated Education Management Information System
IND	Indicator
IR	Intermediate Result
IT	Information Technology
JICA-IMEN	Japan International Cooperation Agency's Project for Improving Mathematics Instruction in Nepal
L1, L2	First Language (Mother Tongue), Second Language
LEU	Local Education Unit
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MEP	Municipal Education Plan
MGML	Multigrade, Multilevel

MOEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
MOSD	Ministry of Social Development
MTOT	Master Training of Trainers
N/A	Not Applicable
NARN	National Assessment for Reading and Numeracy
NEGRP	National Early Grade Reading Program
NPR	Nepali Rupee
OLE Nepal	Open Learning Exchange Nepal
ORF	Oral Reading Fluency
PTA	Parent–Teacher Association
RFP	Request for Proposals
RISE	Research on Improving Systems of Education Programme
RTI	RTI International (registered trademark and trade name of Research Triangle Institute)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEC	Surveys of Enacted Curriculum
SMC	School Management Committee
SRM	Supplementary Reading Material
TLG	Teacher Learning Group
TLMs	Teaching and Learning Materials
TOR	Terms of Reference
TOT	Training of Trainers
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
TPS	Teacher Professional Support
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	U.S. Government
VAT	Value-Added Tax

1   Introduction

1.1   Program Overview

Program name:	United States Agency for International Development's (USAID's) Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II) in Nepal
Program start date and end date:	June 1, 2020 – May 31, 2022
Name of prime implementing partner:	RTI International
Cooperative agreement number:	72036720CA00001
Names of subcontractors:	Not applicable
Major host-country counterpart organizations:	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MOEST), Curriculum Development Center (CDC), and the Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD—which includes the Human Resource Development Division (HRDD) and Education Review Office (ERO)
Geographic coverage:	Kathmandu and the following 38 districts: Achham, Baglung, Banke, Bara, Bardiya, Bhaktapur, Bhojpur, Dadeldhura, Dailekh, Dang, Dhankuta, Dhanusha, Dolpa, Doti, Kailali, Kapilvastu, Kanchanpur, Kaski, Khotang, Mahottari, Manang, Mustang, Myagdi, Nawalparasi West, Parsa, Rasuwa, Rautahat, Rolpa, Rupandehi, Salyan, Saptari, Sarlahi, Sindhuli, Sindhupalchok, Siraha, Surkhet, Taplejung, Tanahun
Reporting period:	Year 2: June 1, 2021 – May 31, 2022 (including the January–April 2022 period)

1.2   Executive Summary

This report provides a progress update for the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II), covering June 1, 2021–May 31, 2022. The report also provides an update for the final reporting quarter of the year. The reporting quarter would typically cover January–March 2022, but given that would leave the months of April and May 2022 uncovered, USAID approved rolling April 2022 into the final reporting quarter.

EGRP II is a 2-year program funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) providing technical assistance to the Government of Nepal (GON) that is being implemented from June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2022. EGRP II's support to the GON is provided in the context of the shift toward the recently developed Integrated Curriculum (IC), ongoing decentralization in Nepal's governance system, and prolonged disruptions to teaching and learning due to the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic.

Building on the foundation of the first Early Grade Reading Program (EGRP) that was implemented from 2015 to 2020, EGRP II aims to improve early grade literacy for students in grades 1–3 in Nepal's public schools by supporting IC development and rollout (Objective 1), strengthening local capacity for early grade reading (EGR) service delivery (Objective 2), improving teacher professional support (TPS) (Objective 3), and assisting with the COVID-19 response in the education sector (Objective 4).

Year 2 of EGRP II was a time of noteworthy accomplishments alongside ongoing disruptions and adaptations due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects in Nepal, as well as a

substantial focus on preparing for and executing a successful program closeout. An overview of key achievements during the year is provided in *Figure 1.*

Figure 1:   Key EGRP II achievements in Year 2

Key Year 2 achievements	Finalized training materials for the IC teacher professional development (TPD) package and supported the Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) to train 203 master trainers and provincial-level trainers
	Supported the GON to revise the national EGR benchmarks to promote measurement along a continuum of student skills
	Completed 58 Round 2 local capacity development workshops with 1,650 GON participants and 30 Round 3 workshops with 456 GON participants to strengthen education sector planning across 396 municipalities
	Supported revision of TPS training manual; conducted training for 80 TPS master trainers; and assisted district and local education officials to conduct joint monitoring visits to 1,307 schools
	Rolled out a home- and community-based learning model in 487 schools across 32 municipalities in Madhesh Province to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 on children's learning, reaching 82,245 learners in total in Year 2
	Designed and conducted research on IC and TPS implementation and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system in Nepal

Under Objective 1, EGRP II supported CEHRD to finalize and distribute the materials for the 10-day IC TPD training package, including a trainer's guide and a packet of training resource materials covering the Nepali, English, mathematics, and "Our Surroundings" subjects in grades 1–3. The program team also assisted CEHRD to plan for and implement a central-level master training and seven provincial-level trainings of trainers for the IC TPD package. These trainings reached a total of 203 participants, who are now prepared to cascade the training further at district and cluster levels. Training quality monitoring supported by EGRP II found that these trainings were conducted with a good level of quality, with a quality rating of 4.01 out of 5 given by workshop participants, but also found a clear need to dedicate more time to the trainings and provide more opportunity for hands-on practice.

In addition to supporting the master training of trainers (MTOT), EGRP II agreed during the Year 2 Annual Work Plan (AWP) design process to help the Curriculum Development Center (CDC) and CEHRD develop, pilot, and finalize an interactive mobile application (called the Teacher Support Application) to provide further guidance and coaching to teachers on rolling out the IC. The application was successfully completed and handed over to CDC and CEHRD in April 2022. EGRP II also supported the GON to conduct qualitative and quantitative operational research studies on the implementation of the IC during the year, highlighting key strengths in the curriculum while also underscoring that substantial additional support for teachers will be required to equip them for effective rollout. The quantitative study was carried out through a collaboration with the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) Programme, a global initiative that sponsors research to understand and address the causes of poor learning outcomes in lower- and middle-income countries.

EGRP II's assistance for EGR policy strengthening in Year 2 included a technical advisory to the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MOEST) and the central-level agencies (CLAs) on the government's National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) minimum package costing and adaptations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, EGRP II continued supporting the Education Review Office (ERO) to analyze and report on the 2020 National Assessment for Reading and Numeracy (NARN) findings for a range of different audiences, and guided the process of EGR benchmark revision to reflect the various proficiency levels of learners in Nepal. The benchmark revision process included a series of workshops convened by a special task team, analysis of past learning outcomes data sets in Nepal against the new benchmark cut-off scores, and a field test to validate the revised benchmarks conducted during EGRP II's endline data collection. The process culminated in a meeting of the task team in late April 2022 to review the findings from the field test and prepare to recommend the revised benchmarks for formal approval by the MOEST.

Year 2 activities under Objective 2 focused on adjusting to the COVID-19 situation by modifying the approach for the Round 2 capacity-development workshops, using either in-person or virtual modalities as the situation required. In total, EGRP II supported 47 Round 2 workshops for the Level 1 and 2 districts in Year 2. Based on experiences with the first two rounds of workshops and feedback from government officials, the EGRP II leadership team determined that some adjustments to the local capacity-development approaches were needed to achieve the program's planned outcomes during Year 2. With this in mind, EGRP II shifted to a more targeted approach that utilized technical task teams (3Ts) made of district and local education officials who provided tailored support for education planning and budgeting to selected local governments. Efforts to implement this approach included forming and orienting the 3Ts, having the 3Ts provide on-site coaching to local government officials, and successfully implementing 30 Round-3 capacity-development workshops that emphasized finalization of Municipal Education Plans (MEPs) and budgets. During Year 2, EGRP II also supported 58 DCC meetings, 34 extended DCC meetings, and 86 exit meetings with district and local government officials to promote effective NEGRP implementation and prepare for EGRP II closeout.

As a result of these efforts, by the end of April 2022, 67.2% of EGRP II's 396 target local governments had a final draft or approved version of their MEP in place. All of those plans included EGR components in some way, with printing and distribution of curriculum and curricular materials, followed by TPS and teacher training, appearing as the most common elements. Moreover, 80% of *palikas* had allocated part of their budgets to EGR activities, and 76% to education in emergencies activities. Almost all (99%) of palikas had used Integrated Education Management Information System (IEMIS) data for education sector planning and budgeting, while 96.5% of local governments had taken steps to validate the IEMIS data shared by schools.

Activities in Objective 3 focused on supporting CEHRD to revise, finalize, print, and distribute the existing TPS Management Procedure based on experience and evidence generated through EGRP. Once the TPS Management Procedure was approved by MOEST, the EGRP II technical team worked with CEHRD (including the Human Resource Development Division [HRDD]) to revise the existing 5-day TPS training manual—which had originally been developed with EGRP support—to align the manual with the revised TPS

Management Procedure, the TPS Guideline, and the IC. Operational research on TPS was also designed, conducted, and shared during Year 2, highlighting good levels of awareness of the revised TPS approach among district and local officials, and some penetration at the school level helped by innovative practices in TPS provision tailored to the local context. At the same time, the research accentuated how the revised TPS approach has yet to take root and become institutionalized at the subnational level, with pressing need for further ongoing capacity development.

EGRP II also continued supporting local governments to plan and budget for TPS provision through the local capacity-development activities described under Objective 2. As a result, by the end of April 2022, 87% of EGRP II's target palikas had formally selected their TPS options and 96% had formed their TPS expert groups, while TPS training for the expert groups had been provided in about one-quarter of the palikas. Mobilization of these expert groups proved to be the most popular option selected by the local governments, followed by mobilization of head teachers and primary in-charge teachers and learning exchanges between schools and local governments. In line with CEHRD's priorities, EGRP II supported all local governments with orientation on the TPS local expert group approach, followed by ongoing support to roll out roster group activities at the local level.

After finalizing revisions to the existing TPS training manual to align it with the updated TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline, EGRP II supported CEHRD to plan for and conduct TPS MTOTs to cover the 22 Level 1 and 2 districts that had not previously received TPS training through EGRP. A total of 80 TPS master trainers were reached through this effort. They are now positioned to continue rolling out cluster-level TPS training in the next GON fiscal year, because this type of training was not adequately budgeted for during the 2021–2022 GON fiscal year.

Joint monitoring efforts continued during Year 2, although repeated school closures due to COVID-19 significantly hampered progress. Despite those disruptions, EGRP II managed to support visits to 1,034 schools in total across the Level 1–3 districts during the year, with visit participants filling out 1,639 quality observation forms covering aspects such as the school and classroom environment and the effectiveness of TPS.

In response to staffing and time limitations, EGRP II determined that a targeted approach for TPS support to local governments would be required, because it would be difficult to reach all 396 palikas with intensive technical assistance. As such, EGRP II provided overall orientation on the revised TPS guidelines to all palikas, and then worked with district and local stakeholders to identify one TPS sample palika in each district that would act as a hub of best practices for the other palikas in their district. To roll out the sample palika approach, EGRP II provided TPS capacity development to the 38 sample palikas and then assisted them to conduct 35 teacher learning groups (TLGs) before the omicron variant forced a return to widespread school closures in early 2022.

EGRP II's Year 2 efforts in Objective 4 focused on supporting CEHRD to finalize and thematically categorize the 119 new digital early grade learning lessons developed in partnership with Open Learning Exchange Nepal. As of the end of April 2022, those lessons were still awaiting upload to CEHRD's online learning portal. In addition, EGRP II continued and scaled up the community- and home-based learning approach that had been successfully started in Year 1. This intervention rolled out in two phases, with Phase 1

starting in Year 1 and covering 219 schools and Phase 2 covering an additional 268 schools in Year 2. In total, 487 schools participated across the two phases, with children split into approximately three learning clusters per school (1,459 in total) that met outside of school hours for remedial learning activities aligned with the IC.

Activities completed in Year 2 included initial events to kick off Phase 2 activities in new palikas and schools, plus orientations on the activity approach with school and community stakeholders. In addition, EGRP II provided teacher training for the new Phase 2 teachers and refresher training for the existing Phase 1 teachers, plus an additional training on appropriate multigrade, multilevel (MGML) instructional approaches for all teachers. EGRP II also finalized procurement and distribution of tablets for the new Phase 2 schools, replenished stationery for the Phase 1 schools, and provided teaching and learning materials (TLMs) to all the target schools to promote high-quality EGR instruction.

The EGRP II team switched from the small-grant modality that had been developed to cover activity expenses during Phase 1, instead utilizing a travel allowance payment approach directly with participating teachers and head teachers. The team also supported head teachers and local government officials to conduct periodic quality monitoring visits to the clusters, which identified modest but steady improvements in quality over time. The homeschooling activity ended successfully in mid-March 2022, and EGRP II supported the Ministry of Social Development (MOSD) of Madhesh Province to conduct a final closeout meeting with all participating Education Development and Coordination Units (EDCUs) and Local Education Units (LEUs) in April 2022, to plan for the future of the activity after EGRP II financial support ended. Local stakeholders demonstrated strong local buy-in for the activity as EGRP II support wound down, with 103 schools across 21 palikas continuing to run learning clusters using the schools' own resources; 4 palikas continuing to run the activity in 56 schools using municipal resources, and an additional 16 palikas having proposed municipal budget allocation for continuing the activity in 251 schools.

Also in Year 2, EGRP II engaged a local research firm to conduct a study on the impacts of COVID-19 on children's learning in Nepal, and commissioned a review of the fidelity and sustainability of the community- and home-based learning activity by an external researcher using RTI's own research and development funds. The COVID-19 impact study identified that the pandemic had substantially affected students' learning and, together with the challenge of rolling out the IC at the same time with limited training opportunities, had constrained teachers' ability to cover expected curriculum content. At the same time, the study identified promising approaches that could be amplified in future emergencies, such as use of the GON's guidelines for flexible learning, and deployment of community-based learning clusters in particular.

The external review found high levels of demand for the community- and home based schooling activity, combined with strong interest and some commitment from local government and school officials to continue the catch-up learning approach with their own resources. Areas for improvement were also identified, including the need to find learning spaces that are more appropriate for children, ensure reasonable group sizes, and provide supplies in proportion to the number of students in each cluster.

Activities undertaken related to monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) during Year 2 focused on strengthening and expanding the MEL system and dashboards and revising the

program's MEL Plan in response to the changing context and requests from USAID to add performance indicators. As a result, EGRP II was able to collect fine-grained data on palika-level progress and priorities in planning for education sector activities, including TPS. In addition, the team completed an internal data quality assessment (DQA) as well as internal learning reviews, which identified many areas of strength but also found that future programs should do more to verify the appropriate display and use of supplementary reading materials (SRMs) and promote more effective rollout of TPD and TPS approaches at the local government and school levels.

Finally, EGRP II prepared for and conducted endline data collection, analysis, and reporting for the program's learning evaluation. The endline was conducted in two phases, first in 45 schools in Achham, Bara, Bhojpur, Nawalparasi West, Rasuwa, Surkhet, and Tanahun Districts to measure overall impact; and second in 47 schools in Dhanusha, Rautahat, Saptari, and Sarlahi Districts to measure the value-added impact of the community- and home-based schooling activity for COVID-19 response in Madhesh Province. During March and April 2022, the EGRP II team worked on data analysis and reporting through a detailed endline report document.

Lastly, the EGRP II team collaborated closely with the GON at all levels and with development partners active in the Nepal education sector in pursuit of mutual goals. This was achieved through frequent formal and informal meetings as well as final learning and sharing events reaching all GON levels. The program also promoted gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in hiring practices and staff capacity development and reflected GESI principles in areas such as MEL and research. Communications products and activities such as success stories, social media stories, and an in-person site visit to Madhesh Province by the USAID/Nepal Mission Director helped EGRP II spread information among a range of audiences about program objectives and outcomes.

Nearly all technical deliverables were completed as of the end of April 2022. Activities for the final month of the program, May 2022, will focus on completing remaining progress reporting, staff demobilization, office closeout, and equipment handover tasks before the formal end of EGRP II on May 31. In addition, the EGRP II team will focus intensively on completing the endline report and summarizing research findings and overall lessons learned and future recommendations.

1.3   Program Description

EGRP II is a 2-year, USAID-funded program of technical assistance to the GON that is being implemented from June 1, 2020, through May 31, 2022. Similar to USAID's EGRP, EGRP II is continuing to support the GON to scale up the NEGRP in coordination and collaboration with relevant stakeholders so that all grade 1–3 students in community schools in the 38 NEGRP target districts (see *Figure 2* plus alphabetical list in Section 1.1) demonstrate improved reading outcomes.

Figure 2:   EGRP II target districts

Levels	No. of Districts	Begin NEGRP Implementation	Begin In-school Rollout
Level 1	8	July 2020	April 2021
Level 1	10	July 2019	April 2020
Level 2	4	July 2018	April 2019
Level 3	6	July 2017 or	April 2018
	10	July 2015	April 2016

□ Province Boundary

⬡ EGRPII Central Office

⬡ EGRP II Regional Office
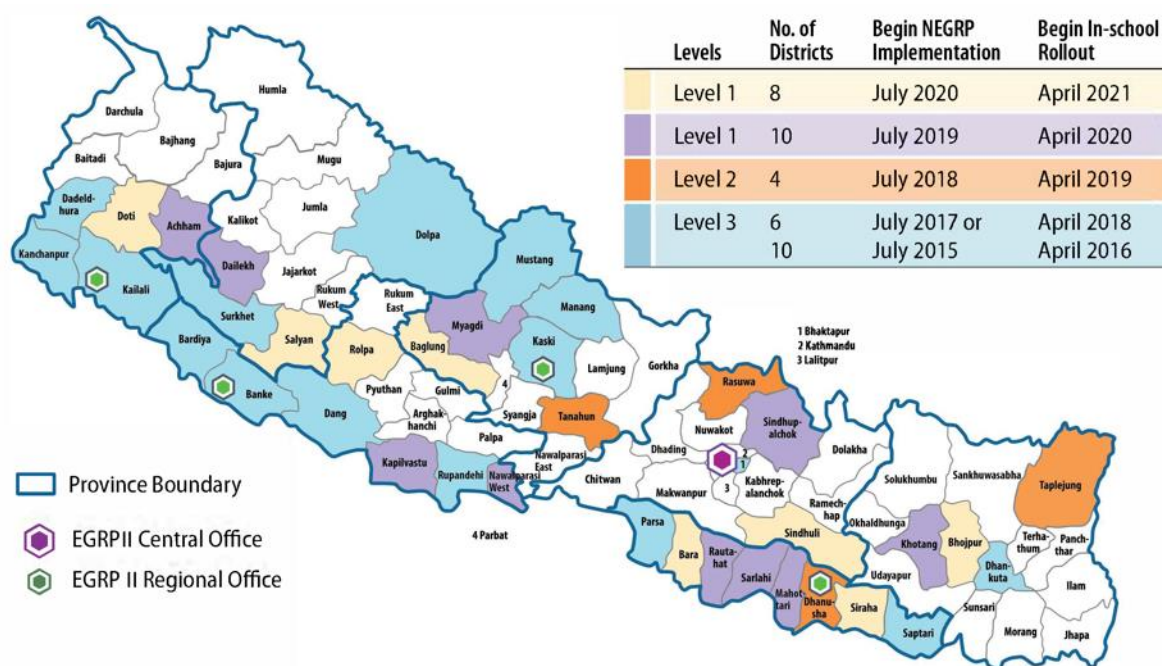
EGRP II support has been provided in the context of (1) the shift from a subject-based curriculum to an IC in the early grades, (2) the transition from a centralized to a decentralized governance system, and (3) ongoing and potential future disruptions to teaching and learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, EGRP II has achieved its goal through four objectives, as captured in *Figure 3.*

Figure 3:   EGRP II program goal and objectives

Outcome: Improved early grade literacy in grades 1–3 for students in Nepali public schools

Objective 1: Support development and rollout of the IC and continue to scale up early grade reading

Objective 2: Build municipal- and provincial-level capacity for delivering early grade reading services

Objective 3: Improve local governments' ability to provide teacher professional support, coaching, mentorship, and supervision

Objective 4: Support continuity of learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic

Objective 1 focuses on offering technical assistance to CDC and CEHRD as they develop and roll out a 10-day training package for the IC nationwide. In particular, this technical

assistance will enable the eight new NEGRP target districts that have not yet received TPD training to meet NEGRP minimum package[1] training requirements.

EGRP II then expected to fund an MTOT for 50 additional trainers for the nationwide IC training package in program Year 1 and 150 in Year 2, to supplement the 120 trainers already planned by CEHRD in Year 1. In coordination with CEHRD, training for all 200 additional trainers shifted to Year 2. As part of these efforts, the program offered technical assistance and quality monitoring of MTOTs as well as subsequent training rollout at the cluster level. EGRP II also helped CDC and CEHRD to design research on effective strategies for implementing the IC.

Furthermore, the program has assisted MOEST and its CLAs, including ERO, to analyze and disseminate EGRP assessment outcomes. The program also supported ERO to analyze and report on data from the NARN and CB-EGRAs. These data will be used to inform policy making and practice around early grade learning, including reporting for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4),[2] potential revisions to the NEGRP minimum package, the new education sector plan reflecting EGR best practices, and revised national EGR benchmarks.

Outcomes under Objective 1 include the following:

- Technical support offered on EGR best practices in developing the nationwide, 10-day IC training package and MTOTs
- MTOT funded 200 master trainers for the nationwide IC training package, in agreement with the GON
- Operational research on the IC to inform future implementation
- Assessment data analyzed and utilized to inform education sector policy and programming

Through **Objective 2,** EGRP II focuses on helping municipalities formulate education policies and costed action plans that reflect NEGRP minimum package expectations around EGR under the IC. EGRP II has supported LEUs to use data for decision making by developing and maintaining LEU profiles with information on learning outcomes, EGR teacher training status, coaching frequency, and teacher and student language profiles. In addition, the program has helped local governments document and report information on allocation and use of discretionary budget resources in education. The above was achieved through a set of workshops delivered at the LEU level as well as supportive follow-up meetings and monitoring efforts. Finally, EGRP II picked up from where EGRP left off at contract close at the end of October 2020, by overseeing the remaining distribution of SRMs to schools in all 22 NEGRP expansion districts.

Outcomes under Objective 2 include the following:

- All LEUs in 38 districts are using the updated IEMIS and education profiles

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[1] The *minimum package* is a costed set of interventions designed to improve EGR, including curriculum development, TLMs, teacher training and support, community and parent engagement, and monitoring and learning assessment. EGRP assisted the GON in developing the minimum package.

[2] Sustainable Development Goal 4 focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable high-quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

- All LEUs in 38 districts are tracking and reporting discretionary resources dedicated to education
- All schools in 38 districts have at least one book corner for grades 1–3

Objective 3 focuses on assisting LEUs with implementation of TPS. Based on the research findings and experience from EGRP, EGRP II supported CEHRD to prepare the revised TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline, incorporating a menu of TPS implementation options for LEUs. The program then supported CEHRD and Education Training Centers (ETCs) to design, roll out, and monitor MTOTs for TPS. EGRP II also supported operational research on TPS, combined with the study on the IC, which will allow MOEST and CEHRD to examine the feasibility and effectiveness of different TPS menu options. Joint monitoring and periodic visits by GON officials and program staff to LEUs and schools reinforced best practices in EGR instruction and TPS. EGRP II also helped the government design and implement a training of trainers (TOT) for a roster of experts for TPS and provided follow-up support to 38 selected sample palikas for TPS. As a result of these efforts, by the end of April 2022, local governments in the 38 districts had defined and tested an evidence-based model for teacher support, coaching, and supervision.

Outcomes under Objective 3 include the following:

- CEHRD has updated TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline to support flexible TPS approach
- MTOT completed for TPS
- All LEUs are piloting an approach to TPS
- Operational research on the TPS pilots completed

Objective 4 focuses on COVID-19 responses in the education sector. This effort included activities to help central and subnational governments promote EGR engagement for students during extended school closures, prepare for resuming EGR instruction upon schools' reopening, and plan for possible future school reclosures. This objective was intended to respond flexibly to emerging needs resulting from the pandemic. Activities included supporting CEHRD and CDC to develop new digital early grade learning content for CEHRD's learning portal. EGRP also provided technical assistance to CDC to develop guidelines for teachers and parents, reflecting adjusted curriculum content and flexible learning approaches that could be implemented during a shortened 2020–2021 academic year. EGRP II also assisted ERO to assess the impact of COVID-19 mitigation and prevention measures on students' learning through a mixed-methods research approach.

The program provided direct support to LEUs to implement community- and home-based learning opportunities, targeting rural, disadvantaged municipalities that are heavily impacted by COVID-19 (e.g., school closures, high rates of infection); have limited access to online, radio, or television learning opportunities; and may not reopen schools in the foreseeable future. These interventions included small grants to schools—which later shifted to direct allowance payments to teachers and head teachers—distribution of tablets preloaded with offline learning content, and decodable books and stationery packs. Finally, regional and district program staff continued the practice established through EGRP of supporting palikas to use funds for local-level COVID-19 responses—particularly printing and distributing self-learning materials for students. Program staff also participated in emergency Education

Cluster mechanisms at provincial, district, and municipal levels to support coordination and planning.

As indicated earlier, EGRP II has been implemented in 38 NEGRP districts, covering 396 LEUs. The program has provided intensive support for implementation of the NEGRP minimum package in 22 districts where MOEST is expanding EGR activities (Levels 1 and 2) and continued technical assistance for the 16 districts that were targeted under EGRP (Level 3). EGRP II currently operates from a Kathmandu central office and recently closed out four regional offices. Supported by other regionally based technical staff, one district coordinator per district worked closely with LEUs and other local government staff to plan for and roll out NEGRP activities. The district coordinators were embedded in EDCUs at the district level to support LEUs in implementing activities such as MTOT rollout, monitoring and use of data for decision making, and building of LEU skills in TPS. In addition, local program officers based in selected LEU offices provided surge capacity to support community- and home-based learning activities for the COVID-19 response.

2 Summary of Programmatic Accomplishments Versus Goals

This section lays out a comparison of actual accomplishments by program objective against goals established for the period in the Year 2 AWP and MEL Plan. The section identifies reasons for activities that were delayed or established goals and indicators that were not met, where applicable.

Table 1 provides an overview of the status of EGRP II objectives and goals, along with related accomplishments and explanations for any such delays, during Program Year 2. In the "Accomplishments and status" column, items with no shading were fully completed. Two items shaded in light blue were nearly but not fully completed by the end of April 2022, largely due to factors outside of EGRP II's control.

Table 1:   Programmatic objectives and goals versus accomplishments and status as of April 30, 2022

Objectives and goals	Accomplishments and status
Objective 1: Support development and rollout of the IC and continue to scale up EGR	
Technical support is offered on EGR best practices in development of the nationwide, 10-day IC training package and MTOTs.	Trainer guide and training resource materials were finalized in coordination with CEHRD. Ongoing technical assistance was provided for IC orientations and trainings at district and cluster level.
MTOT funded 200 master trainers for the nationwide IC training package, in agreement with the GON.	203 master trainers were trained on the IC TPD package against a target of 200 trainees.
Operational research on the IC is conducted to inform future implementation.	The IC operational research study was completed, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative elements.
Assessment data are analyzed and used to inform education sector policy and programming.	Data analysis and publication of a brief on NARN findings was completed. Revised benchmarks were drafted and subjected to extensive further quantitative validation upon request from GON and USAID.
Objective 2: Build municipal- and provincial-level capacity for delivering EGR services	
All LEUs in 38 districts are using the updated IEMIS and education profiles.	99% of palikas used IEMIS data for education sector planning and budgeting against a target of 100%. In addition, 67% had either a final draft or an approved version of their municipal education profile.
All LEUs in 38 districts are tracking and reporting discretionary resources dedicated to education.	80% of palikas reported discretionary budget allocation for education sector priorities.
All schools in 38 districts have at least one book corner for grades 1–3.	EGRP II team members followed up to ensure proper display and use of the SRMs in schools through IC TPD trainings, DCC meetings, local capacity-development workshops, TPS trainings, joint monitoring visits, etc.
Objective 3: Improve local governments' ability to provide TPS, coaching, mentorship, and supervision	
CEHRD has updated TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline to support flexible TPS approach.	The approved TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline were printed and distributed widely.
MTOT is completed for TPS.	The training manual for the TPS MTOTs was completed and EGRP II supported training for 80 TPS master trainers.

Objectives and goals	Accomplishments and status
All LEUs are piloting an approach to TPS.	87% of palikas selected TPS options based on the menu of options in the revised TPS Management Procedure. 96% of palikas formed local expert groups and EGRP II supported initial training of 889 TPS roster experts. 1,307 schools received joint monitoring visits, falling short of the target of 2,376 visits because of the repeated and prolonged school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. 38 palikas participated in the TPS sample palika approach to act as a hub of best practices for other palikas in their district.
Operational research on the TPS pilots is completed.	The TPS operational research study was completed.
Objective 4: Support continuity of learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic	
New interactive digital learning content is developed and uploaded to CEHRD's learning portal.	119 new digital lessons were completed and handed over to CEHRD. CEHRD then assumed responsibility for upload of the contents to their portal. Because CEHRD had decided to reorganize all material on the portal by theme, however, additional time was needed to cross-reference the new digital lessons. Although EGRP II provided substantial ongoing support, uploading was not yet complete as of April 30, 2022.
Ongoing COVID-19 response planning support is provided to subnational education offices.	EGRP II team members provided ongoing COVID-19 support in the education sector at the national, provincial, district, and local levels as needed in response to the changing situation.
Support is provided to 16 targeted disadvantaged palikas to implement community- and home-based learning clusters where school reopenings are unlikely and access to technology is limited.	Community- and home-based learning activities were successfully implemented in 487 schools across 32 palikas in the eight districts of Madhesh Province.
Technical assistance is provided to the GON on learning-loss assessment.	The study on COVID-19 pandemic impacts on learning in Nepal was completed.
Technical assistance is provided to the GON on materials development and teacher orientation on adjusting the curriculum and instruction for a shortened school year.	All grades 1–3 flexible learning guidelines for parents and teachers were distributed and EGRP II continued supporting orientations on the materials for GON officials at local and district levels.

In addition to the updates above on activity status, *Table 2* provides an overview of EGRP II's progress toward USAID fiscal year (FY) 2022 (October 2021–May 2022) indicator targets as of the end of April 2022. The "FY 2022 status summary" column explains both the indicator status as of the end of April 2022 and deviations of ±10% in line with USAID norms for indicator reporting. A more detailed update on performance indicator tracking is provided in *Annex B*.

Table 2:   Progress toward FY 2022 indicator targets as of April 30, 2022

Indica-tor (IND) no.	Indicator	FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)		FY 2022 status summary	Life of program
		FY 2022 Target	Actual through April 2022		Target
Improved early grade reading in grades 1–3 for students in Nepali public schools in the 38 NEGRP target districts					
IND 01_ ES. 1-1	Percent of learners targeted for United States Government (USG) assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of grade 2	9.4% (non-cumulative)	8.5%	This target was missed by 0.9 percentage points (9.6%).	9.4%
IND 02_ ES. 1-3	Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings reached with USG education assistance	101,576 (non-cumulative)	To be confirmed[3]	To be confirmed	269,766
IND 03_ ES. 1-50	Number of public and private schools receiving USG assistance	1,534 (non-cumulative)	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	4,249
IND 04_ Custom	Percent of grade 2 and 3 students classified as fluent readers using national benchmarks	Grade 2 = 9.4% Grade 3 = 15.6% (non-cumulative)	Grade 2 = 8.5% Grade 3 = 20.2%	The grade 2 target was missed by 0.9 percentage points (9.6%). The grade 3 target was exceeded by 4.6 percentage points (29.5%). The EGRP II speculates that grade 3 students could take better advantage of alternative learning approaches during the pandemic because they already had a stronger foundation of learning to build on than younger peers in grade 2.	Grade 2 = 9.4% Grade 3 = 15.6%

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[3] Indicators marked "to be confirmed" in Table 2 are pending receipt from GON of the IEMIS data for the 2021-2022 academic year, which is required for accurately counting the number of students and schools reached in relevant EGRP II target areas.

| Indica-tor (IND) no. | Indicator | FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022) | | FY 2022 status summary | Life of program |
		FY 2022 Target	Actual through April 2022		Target
IND 05_ Custom	Percent of grade 2 and 3 students classified as emergent readers using national benchmarks	Grade 2 = 31.8% Grade 3 = 38.7% (non-cumulative)	Grade 2 = 28.1% Grade 3 = 30.1	The grade 2 target was missed by 3.7 percentage points (11.6%). The grade 3 target was missed by 8.6 percentage points (22.2%). This indicator is affected by the number of students who move into or out of the emergent reader category. If more students move into the fluent reader category (as occurred in the EGRP II endline), the emergent reader category will look smaller. This is a negative outcome for the indicator but a positive outcome from the learners' perspective.	Grade 2 = 31.8% Grade 3 = 38.7%
OBJECTIVE 1: Support development and rollout of the new Integrated Curriculum and continue to scale up early grade reading					
IND 06_ Sub-Intermediate Result (IR) 1.1_ Custom	Number of master trainers trained on the IC	150 (non-cumulative)	203	This target was exceeded by 53 trainers (35.3%). This deviation occurred because EGRP II could not complete any of the planned trainings during Year 1 and as such, all trainees were reached in Year 2.	200
IND 07_ Sub-IR 1.1; 3.3_ (ES. 1-6)	Number of educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	0 (non-cumulative)	0	Not applicable (N/A)	1,551

| Indica-tor (IND) no. | Indicator | FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022) | | FY 2022 status summary | Life of program |
		FY 2022 Target	Actual through April 2022		Target
IND 08_ Sub-IR 1.2; 2.1; 3.3_ES. 1-12	Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	945 (non-cumulative)	1,471	This target was exceeded by 526 education administrators (55.7%). The excess occurred because additional TPS roster training participants from the sample palikas were not anticipated at the time of the MEL Plan indicator target was revised for Year 2.	4,827
OBJECTIVE 2: Build municipal- and provincial-level capacity for delivering EGR services					
IND 9_ Sub-IR 2.1; 2.2_ Custom	Percent of local governments/levels using IEMIS profiles for planning and budgeting in the education sector	100% (cumulative)	99%	This target was missed by 1 percentage point (1%).	100%
IND 10 Sub-IR 2.1_ Custom	Percent of local governments validating IEMIS data shared by schools	98% (cumulative)	96.5%	This target was missed by 1.5 percentage points (1.5%).	98%
IND 11_ Sub-IR 2.2; 2.3_ Custom	Percent of municipalities formulating their annual municipal education plans and budgets that include early grade reading/learning	50% (cumulative)	67.2%	This target was exceeded by 17.2 percentage points (34.4%). The target was modest due to uncertainties around the COVID-19 pandemic. EGRP II was able to exceed the target substantially due to the multiple efforts at local capacity development and the effective change in modality for the Round 3 workshops.	50%
IND 12_ Sub-IR 2.2; 2.3_ Custom	Percent of local governments allocating discretionary funds to education sector activities	80% (cumulative)	79.8%	This target was missed by 0.2 percentage points (0.25%).	80%
IND 13_ Sub-IR 2.4_ Custom	Number of schools with book corners that include supplementary reading materials	0 (non-cumulative)	0	N/A	2,291
IND 14_ Sub-IR 2.4_ Custom	Number of supplementary reading materials delivered	0 (non-cumulative)	0	N/A	456,120

| Indicator (IND) no. | Indicator | FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022) | | FY 2022 status summary | Life of program |
		FY 2022 Target	Actual through April 2022		Target
OBJECTIVE 3: Improve local governments' ability to provide teacher professional support, coaching, mentorship, and supervision					
IND 15_ Sub-IR 3.2; 3.3_ Custom	Number of LEU staff, head teachers, and primary in-charge teachers who receive TPS training	1,182 (non-cumulative)	–	This target was missed by 1,182 trainees (100%). The target was missed because achieving it depended on GON to roll out TPS training after EGRP II provided initial support, but this activity was not planned or budgeted for by the GON during the fiscal year.	1,182
IND 16_ Sub-IR 3.2; 3.3_ Custom	Number of master trainers trained on EGR teacher support, mentoring, and coaching	464 (non-cumulative)	549	This target was exceeded by 85 trainees (18.3%). The excess occurred because more participants from the TPS sample palikas joined the trainings than were anticipated at the time the MEL Plan indicator target for Year 2 was revised.	1,428
IND 17_ Sub-IR 3.4_ Custom	Number of schools receiving joint monitoring and coaching support through USG assistance	2,096 (non-cumulative)	1,307	This target was missed by 789 visits (37.6%). The target could not be met because COVID-19 caused repeated school closures, and school access is a requirement for the monitoring visits.	2,376
OBJECTIVE 4: Support continuity of learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic					
IND 18_ IR 4_ Custom	Percent of learners who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of grade 3 in targeted 16 local governments of Madhesh Province	16.4% (non-cumulative)	28.9%	This target was exceeded by 12.5 percentage points (76.2%). EGRP II suggests that the target was exceeded because the effectiveness of the community- and home-based learning activity was even stronger than originally anticipated.	16.4%

| Indicator (IND) no. | Indicator | FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022) | | FY 2022 status summary | Life of program |
		FY 2022 Target	Actual through April 2022		Target
IND 19_IR 4_Custom	Number of new interactive digital early grade learning lessons created and uploaded to the CEHRD learning portal	119 (non-cumulative)	0	This target was missed by 119 (100%). The deviation occurred because CEHRD had not yet uploaded the contents to their learning portal, although all 119 lessons were complete.	119
IND 20 IR 4_ ES 1.13	Number of parent–teacher associations (PTAs) or community governance structures engaged in primary education supported with USG assistance	0 (non-cumulative)	0	N/A	487
IND 21_IR 4_Custom	Number of education stakeholders oriented/trained to implement community/home-based learning	0 (non-cumulative)	0	N/A	16,510
IND 22_IR 4_Custom	Number of electronic devices distributed to support community/ home-based learning	0 (non-cumulative)	0	N/A	2,156
IND 23_IR4_Custom	Percent of local governments allocating funds for emergency response and recovery	Status reporting	76.2%	N/A – status reporting only.	Status reporting
IND 24_ES 3.1-2	Percent of schools implementing evidence-based early grade learning interventions in USG-assisted schools	26.7% (cumulative)	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	26.7%
IND 25_ES 3.1–3	Number of teachers receiving professional development, support, or supervision in USG-assisted schools	0 (non-cumulative)	0	N/A	1,551

| Indica-tor (IND) no. | Indicator | FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022) | | FY 2022 status summary | Life of program |
		FY 2022 Target	Actual through April 2022		Target
IND 26_ES 3.1-4	Number of local governments with education policies developed with support from USG	198 (cumulative)	266	This target was exceeded by 68 local governments (34.3%). The target was modest due to uncertainties around the COVID-19 pandemic. EGRP II was able to exceed the target substantially due to the multiple efforts at local capacity development and the effective change in modality for the Round 3 workshops.	198
IND 27_ES 3.3-3	Number of plans with funding set aside for emergency response and recovery by federal and subnational governments (health and education)	277 (cumulative)	299	This target was exceeded by 22 plans (7.9%).	277
IND 28_ ES.1-51	Number of learning environments supported by USG assistance that have improved safety, according to locally defined criteria	0 (non-cumulative)	0	N/A	1,461

3 Detailed Progress and Key Current and Cumulative Achievements

This section describes in more detail EGRP II's progress toward program outcomes and deliverables during Year 2 from June 1, 2021, through May 31, 2022, including the January–April 2022 period (which includes activities that occurred since the last quarterly report). The section first provides updates of activities and achievements under program Objectives 1–4, related to improved curriculum and instruction, local capacity development, and TPS, as well as the COVID-19 response in the education sector. Next, updates are shared on program MEL efforts as well as liaison efforts with the GON and collaboration with other actors in the sector. The section also delves into activities undertaken to promote GESI and describes communications, branding, and marking efforts. Finally, a summary of programmatic accomplishments compared with goals during Year 2 and specific to the January–April 2022 period is provided. In addition, *Annex A* provides a concise summary of progress from January–April 2022, and—as noted earlier—*Annex B* is an updated table of progress against the EGRP II indicators. *Annex C* on upcoming activities notes that there are no activities planned apart from closeout efforts in the remaining period of the program, and *Annex D* contains examples of success stories.

3.1 Objective 1: Support Development and Rollout of the IC and Continue to Scale Up EGR

Objective 1 focuses on supporting the GON with development and rollout of the IC and policy-related support for scale-up of best practices in EGR in the context of the IC and decentralized governance, as captured in *Figure 4*.

Figure 4: Objective 1 components
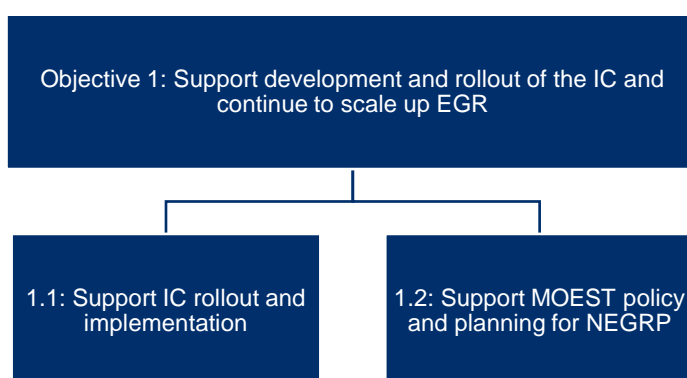
3.1.1 Sub-Objective 1.1: Support IC rollout and implementation

Support CEHRD to develop a 10-day IC TPD certification training package for rollout nationwide, incorporating EGR elements (Activity 1.1.1)

In Year 2, EGRP II continued efforts that were started in Year 1 to support the GON to develop the IC TPD certification training package. During the Year 1 AWP development process, EGRP II agreed with the GON and USAID that only one training package would be developed for the 10-day IC TPD certification, and that a separate package focused on EGR elements in the IC—as EGRP II originally envisioned—would not be needed.

Figure 5: **Diagram from the trainer's guide explaining how a theme is reflected across multiple IC subjects**

During the June–September 2021 period, activities related to development of the 10-day package focused on supporting CEHRD to revise and finalize training-related materials, including a trainer's guide and a packet of training resource materials. Both materials cover the Nepali, English, mathematics, and Our Surroundings subjects, reflecting the IC's integrated and thematic nature. The trainer's guide equips trainers with the information they need to design and conduct IC TPD trainings, including the training objectives and content, guidelines for explaining the integrated nature of the curriculum (*Figure 5*), and tips for demonstrating model lessons during the training. The training resource materials include technical documents that can be used by both trainers and trainees to support and extend their knowledge on subject matter content and teaching and learning approaches for the IC. The content incorporates a selection of model lessons that demonstrate best practices in teaching the IC and managing classroom interactions.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, CEHRD approved the IC TPD trainer's guide and training resource materials that had been finalized during the June–September 2021 period. EGRP II then assisted CEHRD to develop print-ready copies of both materials Finally, the materials were distributed to trainers and participants in electronic and print version at the IC TPD provincial TOTs that took place in December 2021, as described under Sub-Objective 1.2 below.

Activity 1.1.1 was completed as of December 2021, and therefore additional progress is not reported for the January–April 2022 period.

Support CEHRD with implementation of MTOT and training quality monitoring for the IC TPD and IC+EGR TPD packages (Activity 1.1.2)

In Year 1, EGRP II supported the GON to design and deliver virtual MTOTs for the IC TPD package, contributing to the government's goal to build a cadre of qualified master trainers for the new curriculum in grades 1–3. In Year 2, CEHRD initially indicated that they would continue implementing the MTOTs virtually due to a resurgence in the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal. To prepare for virtual MTOT modalities, the EGRP II team participated in capacity building sessions delivered by RTI home office short-term technical assistance providers during the June–September 2021 period. These sessions covered topics such as effective use of online meeting and classroom platforms.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II continued coordinating with CEHRD to plan for MTOT implementation through a series of meetings and workshops conducted in October and early November 2021. EGRP II then assisted CEHRD to conduct a virtual MTOT for 10 days starting in mid-November 2021, with 27 participants (3 women) joining from the ETCs in each of the seven provinces. CEHRD and CDC facilitators took the lead in running the MTOT sessions while EGRP II provided technical and information technology (IT) backstopping and supported with designing and running asynchronous learning activities connected with the training sessions.

Based on facilitator and participant feedback on the MTOT, CEHRD determined that it would be more effective to conduct the provincial-level TOTs in person rather than virtually. Subsequently, EGRP II supported CEHRD to plan and deliver one 7-day TOT in each of the seven provinces. The TOTs were led by the provincial ETC staff who had been trained during the MTOT, with technical and logistical support from EGRP II. Trainees typically included LEU officials and head teachers, who were guided to plan for subsequent rollout of 10-day cluster-level IC TPD trainings in their areas. Both the central and provincial MTOTs covered similar topics, including the concepts in the IC; classroom management approaches; the curriculum, student workbooks, and teacher guides for each subject in the IC; teaching practicum and feedback; the TPS system; and approaches to student assessment and evaluation.

In total, 176 participants from all but three districts[4] of Nepal joined the provincial-level TOTs, including 16 women. Combined with the participants in the virtual MTOT, the total number of master trainers trained on the IC TPD package with EGRP II support was 203 (19 women), thereby exceeding EGRP II's planned total of 200 participants (***Table 3***).

Table 3:   Trainees in the MTOT and provincial TOTs, by province and gender

Province	Men	Women	Total
Bagmati	18	7	25
Gandaki	30	1	31
Karnali	30	1	31
Lumbini	29	2	31

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[4] The three districts were Manang, Mustang, and Myagdi, which had already been included in virtual IC TPD TOTs conducted with EGRP II support in late 2020 and thus were not prioritized for participation this time by the provincial ETC.

Province	Men	Women	Total
Province 1	26	2	28
Madhesh	28	4	32
Sudur Paschim	23	2	25
Grand Total	**184**	**19**	**203**

In addition to supporting CEHRD to implement the IC TPD trainings at the central and provincial levels, EGRP II supported ETCs, EDCUs, and LEUs to conduct district- and cluster-level IC orientations and IC TPD trainings. During Year 2, EGRP II provided technical assistance for 82 orientations and an estimated[5] 19 trainings, as summarized in *Table 4.* The team also coordinated with CEHRD and USAID to prioritize teacher training quotas for the GON's July 2021–June 2022 fiscal year, so that ETCs would allot any remaining quota slots to teachers who had yet to be trained in the eight most recent NEGRP expansion districts (EGRP II's Level 1 districts).

Table 4: IC orientations and IC TPD trainings supported, by district

No.	District	No. of IC orientations supported	No. of IC TPD trainings supported
1	Baglung	-	3
2	Bara	18	-
3	Ilam	-	1
4	Jhapa	-	1
5	Kapilvastu	-	1
6	Mahottari	14	-
7	Nawalparasi West	-	1
8	Rupandehi	21	1
9	Sankhuwasbha	-	1
10	Saptari	7	-
11	Sarlahi	8	-
12	Sindhuli	-	9
13	Siraha	14	-
14	Sunsari/Morang	-	1
	Total	**82**	**19**

Beyond supporting CEHRD to plan and conduct the IC-related trainings, EGRP II also assisted with quality monitoring of the MTOTs and subsequent provincial-level TOTs. Trainees filled out a total of 125 training quality monitoring forms after the trainings took place in December 2021, with an average rating of 4.01 out of 5 indicating a good level of quality was achieved across different quality domains (*Table 5*). According to the findings, the main areas of improvement for future trainings are to (1) dedicate more time to the

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[5] The number of IC TPD trainings is estimated based on EGRP II's tracking data. Since these trainings were not directly organized by EGRP II, it is difficult to directly verify the accuracy and completeness of the event numbers.

trainings, since all IC subjects have to be covered; (2) increase the hands-on demonstration of materials during the trainings; and (3) improve logistical elements, including venue and refreshments.

Table 5: Training quality ratings from the IC TPD MTOTs and TOTs

Training aspect	Average rating
Objectives: Clarity and fit to trainees' professional needs	4.18
Content: Fit with trainees' job functions, linkage between practical and theoretical aspects, and coverage of emerging trends	4.04
Time: Appropriate and adequate time allocation for the training and sessions, and adherence to the schedule	3.95
Facilitation: Support for reflection and hands-on practice, inclusion, reflection, nurturing environment, and encouragement of questions and feedback	4.03
Materials: Use of information and communication technology (ICT) and other hands-on training materials	3.89
Assessment/evaluation: Inclusion of formative assessment, adequate coverage of evaluation tools and protocols in the IC	4.03
Logistics: Conducive venue and satisfactory refreshments	3.80
Replicability: Confidence of trainees in their ability to use and share the knowledge and skills with others	4.15
Overall average	**4.01**

In addition to supporting the MTOTs, EGRP II agreed during the Year 2 AWP design process to help CDC and CEHRD develop an interactive mobile application to provide further guidance and coaching to teachers on rolling out the IC. During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II agreed with CEHRD and CDC on the purposes of the Teacher Support Application:

- A repository where teachers can view and download key curricular materials, teacher training materials, guides for teachers, and other resources based on the IC;

- A platform where teachers can pose questions to and receive rapid technical support from IC coaches or experts such as teacher trainers and curriculum designers, and share their feedback on the IC; and

- A forum for teachers to exchange ideas and best practices with each other related to implementation of the IC.

EGRP II then released a request for proposals (RFP) for app development services in September 2021. During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II chose a bidder through a competitive process—Smart Palika Pvt. Ltd.—and began working with the selected software development company to create the app design and start to develop the app pages and the back-end infrastructure for app management.

During the January–April 2022 period, SmartPalika continued the development work that began in the previous quarter. Progress made during this period included refining the different pages and functions in the application, such as user login, registration, and profile pages; pages for accessing curriculum materials; and pages for posing individual questions or engaging in group chat with other users. EGRP II and SmartPalika also supported CDC and CEHRD to designate "super administrators" and "administrators"

Thumbnail image of one of the pages in the interactive application before piloting

to manage the back end of the app, and subject-matter experts to respond to queries from teachers using the app. The app was then piloted with selected teachers from across Nepal representing different subject areas as well as teacher trainers from the provincial ETCs. SmartPalika revised the app based on the feedback, developed an app user guide, and created a short public service announcement that can be used to publicize the app and promote wider uptake among end users. To wrap up the application development process, SmartPalika conducted an orientation for the application backend managers at CDC and CEHRD on how to host and use the system, and handed over the source code to the GON in mid-April 2022.

Design and conduct operational research on the IC (Activity 1.1.3)

EGRP II aims to support the Nepali government not just in rolling out the IC through trainings and quality monitoring, but also in conducting operational research on IC and TPS implementation. During the program's Year 1, EGRP II regularly consulted with CEHRD and CDC to develop the research questions and designs for this operational research and to adjust expectations and timing in line with the

Teachers in Salyan District discussing the level of cognitive demand in the IC during the orientation on the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) methodology. (Photo credit: Birendra Dash)

COVID-19 pandemic situation across the country. Based on these discussions, EGRP II and CDC agreed to conduct the research during the 2021–2022 academic session. EGRP II then coordinated with CDC and CEHRD to develop linked quantitative and qualitative studies for the operational research on the IC.

Quantitative Research

The quantitative elements of the study have been carried out through a collaboration with the RISE Programme, a global research endeavor investigating how education systems in developing countries can overcome the learning crisis, directed by Oxford University and Oxford Policy Management. The study uses the Surveys of Enacted Curriculum (SEC) methodology, which examines and quantifies the alignment between the intended IC outcomes and content in the grade 1 Nepali subject area and actual instructional and assessment practices, and identifies recommendations on how that alignment could be improved if needed.

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II kicked off the formal collaboration with the RISE Programme, whose advisors then provided orientation on the SEC approach to a specially formed panel of curriculum and language experts from CDC, Tribhuvan University, and a local school in Bhaktapur. This session was followed by a series of workshops in the October–December 2021 quarter to adapt the SEC English Language Arts/Reading taxonomy to Nepali and, using a curriculum coding and rating process, identify levels of cognitive demand required of children when they are learning the IC Nepali subject in grades 1–3. On the basis of the coding and rating, the research team developed a teacher survey tool, to be administered to teachers to measure the extent to which they covered each curricular area and which types of teaching methodologies they used.

After coordinating with CDC and the RISE team to conduct a dry run and finalize the teacher survey tool in Sindhupalchok in December 2021, EGRP II then conducted the survey from late December through mid-January 2022. Teachers first joined an orientation on the SEC methodology and then completed the survey, which assessed how much time the teacher spent covering the skill areas or topics in the Nepali subject. In addition, the teachers indicated the expected cognitive demand placed on learners in each skill area or topic, ranging from the least demanding (memorization) to the most demanding (analysis, investigation, and evaluation).

In all, 149 grade 1 teachers from 149 schools across Achham, Baglung, Parsa, Rasuwa, Rupandehi, Salyan, and Taplejung Districts participated in the survey. These locations were chosen to represent Nepal's three ecological belts across all provinces, as well as the diversity of rural and urban municipalities and languages spoken around the country. In addition, the number of schools sampled was proportionate to the total number of schools in each province (*Table 6*).

Table 6: Sample of districts and schools in the quantitative study

Province	No. of districts	No. of EGRP II-supported schools in the province	Sampled district	No. of schools sampled
Province 1	4	1,529	Taplejung	14
Madhesh	8	3,754	Parsa	34
Bagmati	4	1,510	Rasuwa	13
Gandaki	6	1,875	Baglung	17
Lumbini	7	3,515	Rupandehi	33
Karnali	4	1,566	Salyan	14
Sudur Paschim	5	2,476	Achham	24
Total	**38**	**16,225**	**7**	**149**

Subsequently, EGRP II team members completed data entry and the RISE team conducted data analysis. The draft findings were summarized in March 2022 and EGRP II expects the final report to be completed in early May 2022. The preliminary findings of the curriculum mapping conducted as part of the study indicate that the IC is highly aligned in the first 3 years of primary school, with nearly complete overlap in content across grades 1–3. For example, all three grades place a strong emphasis on vocabulary, comprehension, and writing skills, with less focus on listening, speaking, and presenting. Most emphasis is on middle levels of cognitive demand, with students expected to spend a substantial amount of time explaining and generating knowledge in these content areas rather than simply recalling (low cognitive demand) or exhaustively analyzing and evaluating (high cognitive demand).

With regard to the alignment between the curriculum and teachers' instructional practices, the study focused only on grade 1 because the IC for grades 2 and 3 had yet to be extensively rolled out. The findings indicated that grade 1 teachers' instruction overlaps reasonably well with the grade 1 IC, with an alignment index score of 0.68 out of 1. However, teachers reported emphasizing comprehension and writing less than prescribed by the IC, and placing more focus on lower levels of cognitive demand (recall, explain) than expected. *Figure 6* visually depicts these challenges with alignment between intended content and actual instruction using "heat maps," which show darker colors where content areas (listed vertically on the left of each map) are covered with more intensity at a certain level of cognitive demand (listed horizontally at the bottom of each map).

Figure 6: **"Heat maps" of the level of alignment between the grade 1 curriculum content and grade 1 teacher coverage of that content**
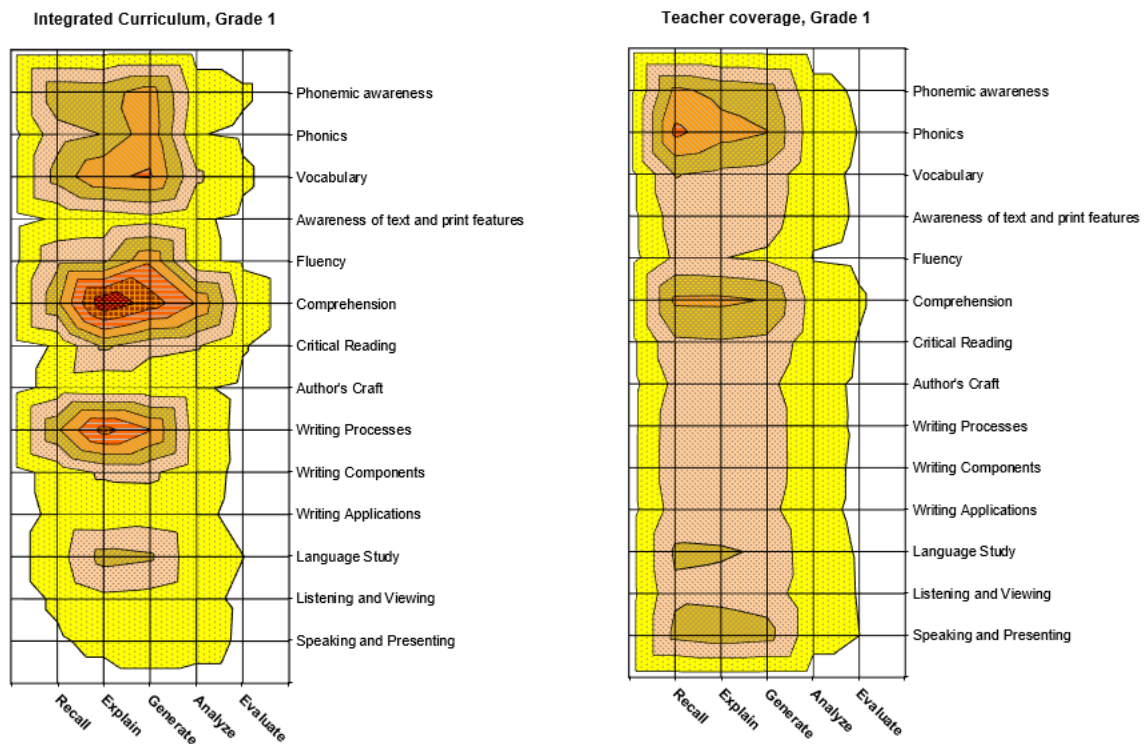
Turning to the alignment among the curriculum, teachers' instruction, and how learning is assessed in the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), the study found that the emphasis in the IC and teacher instructional practices is generally spread out across topics, whereas the EGRA is highly concentrated, focusing most on phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension. Moreover, the EGRA places more emphasis on recall than the IC, especially for phonics. As a result of these factors, the alignment index between the curriculum and the assessment is 0.51 and falls to 0.44 between instructional practices and the assessment. Of note, the EGRA was not designed as a curriculum-linked assessment tool and is intended to measure a limited set of score skills, although it was adapted for the Nepal context in 2014 and 2016 when the former curriculum was in place but has not been reviewed again since the IC was designed and rolled out in 2018–2019.

Overall, the study findings indicate that the content of the IC is cohesive across grades, but that teachers may need more training and coaching to ensure they apply the IC's content and methodologies as intended, and are consequently able to evolve past the teacher-centered methodologies that predominated in the past (see the findings of the qualitative study in the next section). Moreover, further investigation may be required to understand why these mismatches are occurring; for example, if teachers view some of the expected content and levels of cognitive demand in the IC as too advanced for their learners, they may deliberately simplify their methods or adjust their content focus. Finally, the study indicates that there is limited alignment between the EGRA, the curriculum, and teacher instruction, suggesting that all three elements may need to be reviewed to understand the reasons for the misalignment and make modifications as required.

In addition to preparing the study findings for dissemination, during the January–April 2022 period, the EGRP II and RISE teams collected feedback on the SEC methodology from participating teachers, CLA staff, and EGRP II staff to inform future improvements to the SEC methodology in contexts such as Nepal (*Figure 7*). This feedback was largely positive and indicated that the SEC methodology, with a few minor adjustments, could be useful for future mapping of the alignment between curriculum and instruction—for example, in grades 2 and 3.

Figure 7:   Feedback on the SEC methodology from study implementers and participants

- For curriculum developers, the methodology was invaluable as a tool for structured review of the IC, including strengths and gaps, particularly in relation to international standards and best practices in curriculum development for EGR.

- For teacher trainers, the methodology helped identify teachers' level of familiarity with and understanding of the student knowledge and skills promoted in the IC and how teacher professional development and support could be better tailored to the gaps in teachers' understanding.

- For teachers, the methodology promoted deeper understanding of the concepts in the IC and the teaching approaches that can be used to impart the requisite knowledge and skills to students in the early grades.

- For the EGRP II and RISE teams, the methodology was observed to be clear and systematic, but in the future, the terminology should be simplified for end users such as teachers in contexts similar to Nepal.

Qualitative Research

The qualitative research on the IC (combined with the qualitative research on TPS described in Sub-Objective 3.1, Activity 3.1.2) was designed to complement the quantitative SEC study. The qualitative study was carried out by local research firm Vertex Consult in close coordination with EGRP II and the GON. The study focused on the following research questions:

- What factors are supporting or hindering teachers' effective delivery of the IC?

- To what extent have IC orientations and TPD training on the IC supported teachers to roll out curriculum?

- What additional capacity development and support might teachers need to better implement the intended contents and pedagogical approaches?

During the June–September 2021 period, the EGRP II team finalized the terms of reference (TOR) for the study and developed an RFP to hire a local research firm that would carry out the combined research on the IC and TPS implementation in coordination with USAID, CDC, and CEHRD. The RFP indicated Achham, Baglung, Parsa, and Rasuwa—a subset of the districts chosen for the quantitative part of the study—as the locations for qualitative data collection.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II chose Vertex Consult as the successful bidder through a competitive process and organized an inception meeting with CDC and CEHRD to kick off the collaboration among the different agencies invested in the study. Vertex then convened their team of researchers, drafted the data collection tools and guidelines, conducted a dry run of the tools in Sindhupalchok District, and finalized the tools

based on the experiences during the dry run. Data collection then began in December in Parsa and Achham Districts.

During the January–April 2022 period, Vertex continued collecting data in the remaining sites in Baglung and Rasuwa Districts, completing all fieldwork in early January. *Table 7* below captures the total number of key informants interviewed as well as focus group discussions and classroom observations conducted in the study.

Table 7:   Number of key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations in the qualitative study

Study participants	Districts			
	Achham	**Baglung**	**Parsa**	**Rasuwa**
Key informant interviews (number of women interviewees)				
Teachers	4 (4)	4 (3)	4 (2)	4 (3)
Head teachers	4 (0)	4 (1)	4 (2)	4 (0)
School management committee (SMC) members		1 (0)	1 (0)	1 (1)
LEU and EDCU officials	2 (0)	3 (1)	2 (0)	3 (2)
Teacher trainers	1 (1)	1 (0)	1 (1)	
Local experts		1 (0)	1 (1)	
ETC officials			1 (0)	
EGRP II staff	1 (0)	2 (0)	1 (0)	
Totals	**12 (5)**	**16 (5)**	**15 (6)**	**12 (6)**
Other data collection approaches				
Focus group discussion	2	1	1	1
Classroom observation	4	4	4	4
Grand totals: 60 key informant interviews (with 37% female informants) plus 5 focus group discussions and 16 classroom observations				

After completing data collection, Vertex transcribed and analyzed the data and prepared a draft report in February 2022. The draft report was shared with GON and USAID and finalized in March 2022. EGRP II disseminated the findings of the report during final learning and sharing events in April 2022.

> *"We have included training and materials for the Integrated Curriculum in our Municipal Education Plan, with help from EGRP II." – LEU official, Baglung District*

Key findings from the study related to IC implementation included the following:

- The IC was being rolled out in all study locations but to a varied extent and with mixed results.

- CDC, CEHRD, and EDCUs had taken on substantial leadership roles in promoting IC implementation.

- Orientation information on the IC had reached the schools in the study sample but it was insufficient to promote deeper knowledge and practical application of the curriculum.
- Not all head teachers and teachers had been fully trained on implementing the IC effectively, and the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant impediments to rollout of orientations and trainings on the curriculum.
- Teachers were encouraged to conduct self-study on the curriculum in the absence of orientation and training, but this proved challenging and was inconsistently implemented due to a lack of access to materials, time, and motivation.
- Teacher guides were not readily available at the school level due to a number of constraints, such as lack of communication from the central level, lack of distribution of the materials from the central level, limited coordination at the local level to combine print runs and supply all schools, and challenges in downloading and reading digital versions of the materials from the CDC website.
- As a result, there was weak understanding among the end users about the objectives, approaches, and content in the curriculum.
- Some teachers were observed applying more traditional, teacher-centered teaching and assessment approaches although the IC calls for more interactive, student-centered instruction as well as assessment using learning portfolios.
- The student workbooks received universally positive feedback for their quality and content, although some stakeholders indicated that the grade 1 content was challenging for learners who had not participated in early childhood development classes.
- Some but not all teachers were found effectively using SRMs to enhance reading practice and skill development; likewise, use of TLMs during instruction was inconsistent.
- Where teachers were implementing the curriculum effectively and knowledgeably, a key contributing factor was that they had participated in IC orientation and training. Demonstration classes and opportunities for practicum were also cited as important factors.

3.1.2 Sub-Objective 1.2: Support MOEST policy and planning for NEGRP

Disseminate EGRP endline findings (Activity 1.2.1)

The 2020 EGRP endline EGRA findings were disseminated in EGRP II Year 1.

Support MOEST to develop the new education sector development plan and revise the NEGRP minimum package (Activity 1.2.2)

This activity was largely completed in Year 1. In Year 2, EGRP II continued to provide support on the NEGRP minimum package. This support included inputs in September 2021 on an adapted minimum package that would focus on essential elements for the GON to continue during periods of COVID-19 pandemic disruptions, such as TLM distribution and teacher training, in discussion with USAID and the World Bank. In addition, EGRP II provided updated details on NEGRP minimum package costing to USAID upon request in February 2022, to support decision making regarding implementation of the adapted minimum package.

Provide technical assistance to ERO to analyze NARN data and support GON to report on SDG 4.1 (Activity 1.2.3)

EGRP II supported ERO to finalize reporting for the 2020 grade 3 NARN in Year 1. During the June–September and October–December 2021 periods of Year 2, EGRP II provided continuous support to ERO to summarize and package the NARN findings for different audiences, as requested by ERO during the Year 2 AWP development process. The proposed purpose of this analysis was to break down the NARN data into simpler elements that could be more easily communicated to diverse stakeholders, including people from nontechnical backgrounds. The EGRP II team participated in capacity development led by RTI's home office advisors on analysis and visualization of the NARN data, and then used those skills to identify key messages to communicate to the different audiences. Some of the key messages were shared with GON stakeholders for feedback during a quarterly NEGRP Steering Committee meeting in November 2021.

During the January–April 2022 period, the EGRP II team continued working on the analysis and visualization of the 2020 NARN findings. EGRP II initially planned to produce three separate briefing papers for policy makers, teacher trainers, and school administrators. However, to avoid repetition in the content, the team determined that it would be more effective to present the key points for each audience in a concise way within the same briefing paper. The team worked with a graphic designer to integrate eye-catching graphics into the papers to communicate the key messages (see ***Figure 8*** for an example). After finalizing the brief in April 2022, EGRP II shared the findings and recommendations during the final learning and sharing events in April 2022.

Figure 8:   Graphic on key findings from the NARN briefing paper

LINKS BETWEEN PARENT ENGAGEMENT IN LEARNING AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Average % scores by subject and parent engagement level
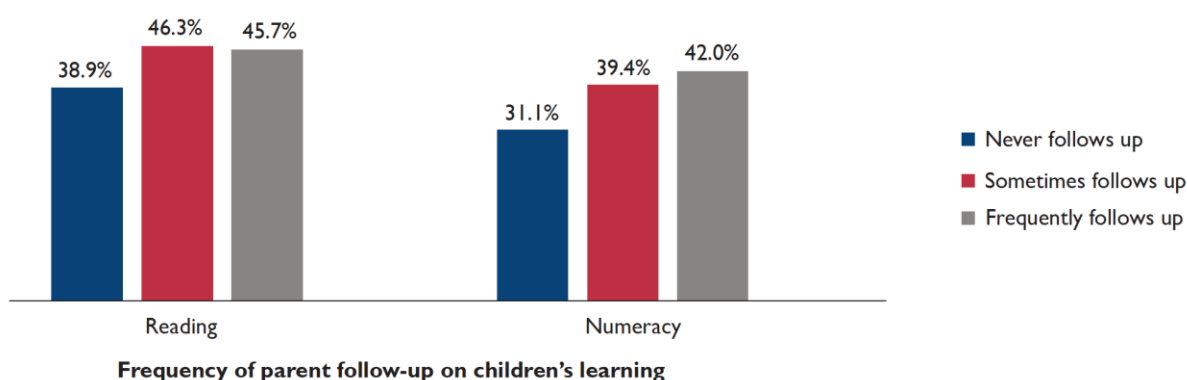
In addition to supporting NARN data analysis and dissemination, in late September 2021, EGRP II participated in a workshop on the "policy linking" approach to utilizing ERO's grade 5 national learning assessment for the purposes of SDG 4 reporting led by ERO and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. In addition, the EGR benchmark review efforts undertaken through Activity 1.2.4 employed elements of policy linking to help the GON revise the existing benchmark in line with global SDG reporting

requirements. The EGRP II team expects that these capacity-development inputs will help the GON utilize the policy-linking approach for informing reports on the SDG 4.1 indicator, which USAID and other development partners help to craft for global use.

Review benchmarks and determine possible proficiency milestone benchmarks (Activity 1.2.4)

Throughout program Years 1 and 2, EGRP II provided ongoing technical assistance to MOEST and the CLAs to review and revise the GON's existing EGR benchmark. The aim of this activity was to provide more actionable data to the GON on children's learning status by grade and proficiency level rather than relying on a single benchmark that could discriminate only between students who were "fluent readers with comprehension" and those who were not.

As part of this effort, during the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II hired a local expert consultant to support the reading benchmark development and finalization process in coordination with a task team that had been established in Year 1 with representatives from ERO, MOEST, CDC, CEHRD, the EGRP II MEL team, and Room to Read. The consultant then drafted a revised benchmark document and shared it for discussion during task team meetings. Through these meetings, the task team agreed on the reading subskills to be benchmarked, and agreed on proficiency levels for those subskills, including SDG 4.1 reporting requirements.

During the October–December 2021 period, the task team convened an expert panel composed of 10 Nepali subject curriculum and assessment experts, teacher trainers, and EGR teachers. The expert panel tasked with determining cutoff scores; for example, what is a "pre-basic" reading level for grade 1 expressed as an oral reading fluency (ORF) rate? Using standard procedures for setting benchmarks, the experts determined suggested cutoff scores for each proficiency level. Three cutoff scores were set for each subskill, by grade, to categorize students into four levels of proficiency, as captured in *Figure 9*.

Figure 9:   Proposed EGR benchmarks for grades 1–3

Reading subskill	Pre-basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
Grade 1				
ORF (cwpm)	Less than 15	15 to less than 25	25 to less than 35	35 and more
Comprehension (% correct response)	Less than 20	20 to less than 40	40 to less than 60	60 and above
Grade 2				
ORF (cwpm)	Less than 20	20 to less than 30	30 to less than 40	40 and more
Comprehension (% correct response)	Less than 30	30 to less than 50	50 to less than 70	70 and above
Grade 3				
ORF (cwpm)	Less than 20	20 to less than 35	35 to less than 45	45 and more
Comprehension (% correct response)	Less than 30	30 to less than 60	60 to less than 80	80 and above

Note. cwpm = correct words per minute.

After the task team set the provisional revised benchmarks, in November and December 2021, officials in ERO and the MOEST highlighted the need for further validation of the new benchmarks through additional empirical data collection and consultation with education decision makers. USAID also requested EGRP II to conduct further analysis of existing learning outcomes data sets against the revised benchmarks to examine how the different proficiency levels that had been set by grade aligned with past student performance in Nepal.

During the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II conducted the further data collection and analysis requested by ERO and USAID. Specifically, EGRP II coordinated with ERO to agree on data collection instruments, which included tools drawn from ERO's assessment item bank, to assess ORF and reading comprehension in grades 2 and 3 (see an example in *Figure 10*). EGRP II assessed students with two oral reading comprehension passages from the item bank to ensure the assessment would have 10 comprehension questions instead of only five, because five items (as used in previous assessments) are not sufficient for breaking out performance four proficiency levels. Grade 1 was not included in the validation exercise due to the lack of existing, validated instruments to measure skills in that grade and the limited time available to create new tools.

Figure 10: A passage used to assess reading comprehension for benchmark validation

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रमा विद्यालयबाट घर फर्किदै थिइन् । उनले बाटामा मानिसहरूको ठूलो भिड देखिन् । भिडमा साथीहरूले बालकथाको किताब किनेको देखिन् । घरमा पुगेर रमाले आमालाई बालकथाको किताब किनिदिन अनुरोध गरिन् । आमाले किताब किनिदिनु भयो । रमाले कथाको किताब पढेर आमालाई सुनाइन् । शुक्रबार विद्यालयमा कथा वाचन प्रतियोगिता भयो । प्रतियोगितामा रमा प्रथम भइन् । आफू प्रथम भएको कुरा आमालाई सुनाइन् । आमाले खुसी भएर अर्को किताब पनि किनिदिनु भयो ।

EGRP II then conducted data collection using the grade 2 and 3 instruments as part of the program's endline evaluation in February and March 2022. In total, 272 students were assessed across grades 2 and 3 in 45 schools across Achham, Bara, Bhojpur, Nawalparasi West, Rasuwa, Surkhet, and Tanahun Districts (*Table 8*).

Table 8: Student demographics for the benchmark validation study (*N* = 272)

Student grade	Proportion and (*n*)
Grade 2	50% (136)
Grade 3	50% (136)
Student gender	
Boys	48.9% (133)
Girls	51.1% (139)
Student language group	
First language (L1)	50.7% (138)
Second language (L2)	49.3% (134)
Average student age	
Grade 2 students	8.1 (136)
Grade 3 students	9.4 (136)

After completing data collection, EGRP II then conducted data analysis, prepared a brief report on the findings, and shared it with ERO. According to the analysis, only 18.4% of students scored at the proficient level or higher in ORF in grade 2, a figure that rose to 31% for grade 3 students. A larger percentage of students fell into the proficient category or higher on reading comprehension, at 29.4% in grade 2 and 50% in grade 3 (*Table 9*). Similar to past assessments, the field test identified that L1 students performed substantially better than their L2 peers.

Table 9: ORF and comprehension performance in the benchmark validation study, by grade (*N* = 272)

Average student scores	Grade 2 (*n* = 136)	Grade 3 (*n* = 136)
Average ORF score (words read correctly in 60 seconds)	13.7 words	26.4 words
Average reading comprehension score	28.1% of questions answered correctly	50.1% of questions answered correctly
Proportion of students with scores of proficient or higher on ORF	18.4% (25 students)	33.1% (45 students)
Proportion of students scoring proficient or higher on reading comprehension	29.4% (40 students)	50.0% (68 students)

According to the field test, the oral reading benchmarks performed as expected and EGRP II recommended them formal approval by MOEST. At the same time, there was an apparent mis-match between the ORF and reading comprehension averages, which generally higher scores on comprehension than would typically be expected because the two skills are linked. This misalignment could have been caused by divergent levels of item difficulty between the ORF and comprehension subtasks; or by the fact that answers to comprehension questions on two separate passages were combined into a single score. As such, EGRP II recommended that the GON should develop a single, unified comprehension passage with 10 question items at a range of difficulty levels, for each grade, rather than using two separate passages, each with a set of questions. Given the very low achievement in Grade 2, the study also suggested that the assessment used in this field test may have been too difficult for that grade, or that students need additional, targeted support to meet expectations about their reading skill development. Moreover, future assessment activities in Nepal should include assessment of Grade 1-3 students with appropriately leveled tools for each grade to align with the fact that the revised benchmarks were set by grade with the expectation that students would be assessed using grade-level text.

EGRP II also conducted additional analysis of past early grade learning assessment data in Nepal using the revised benchmarks. The analysis included national-level assessments such as an EGRA supported by USAID in 2014 and the 2020 NARN assessment, plus project-specific assessments such as EGRP's baseline, midline, and endline, and EGRP II's baseline. The analysis identified most students as falling into the "pre-basic" category according to the revised benchmarks, with only around a quarter or a fifth of students reaching the "advanced" level (***Figure 11***).

Figure 11:   Percentage of grade 3 learners in each reading benchmark category for ORF, 2014 EGRA and 2020 NARN
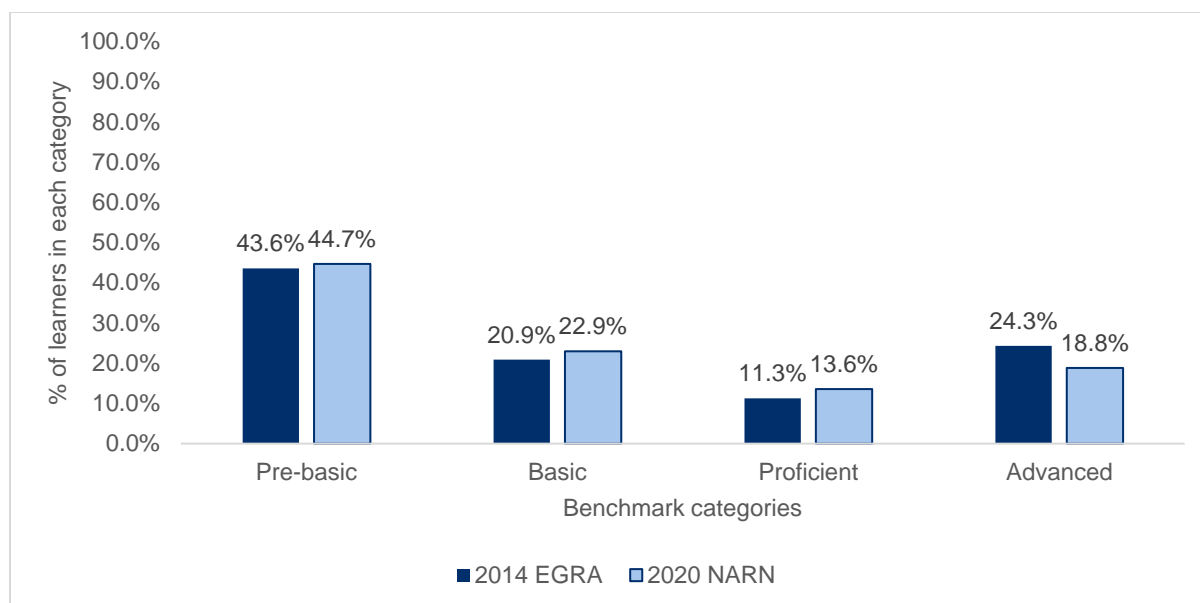
Taken together, the additional empirical study conducted by EGRP II coupled with the analysis of past learning assessment data using the revised benchmarks indicate that a large percentage of Nepali children have not yet developed ORF proficiency, although there are signs that comprehension levels are somewhat higher.

The EGRP II team supported ERO to convene a final benchmark task team meeting in late April 2022 to review the field test findings and determine next steps for formal ratification of the revised benchmarks. EGRP II expects that the GON may finalize and approve the revised benchmarks by May 2022 based on these additional assessment findings and data analysis. The following are other recommended future activities related to benchmarking that the GON could use after EGRP II ends:

- Identifying targets for improvement in learner performance against the benchmarks over time.
- Developing an assessment framework, developing tools, and creating guidelines for test administration and analysis for early grade learning.
- Improving the quality of early grade learning assessment practice in Nepal by developing the capacity of a pool of assessment instrument developers.
- Ensuring uniform and standard procedures for assessment administration of EGR.

3.2   Objective 2: Build Municipal- and Provincial-Level Capacity for Delivering EGR Services

Objective 2 aims to build municipal and provincial capacity to deliver and scale up EGR services in the context of decentralization and the IC. To achieve this objective, EGRP II will work on building local capacity for NEGRP planning and implementation, supporting the use of data for decision making at the local level, and providing SRMs to target schools in the 22 NEGRP expansion districts, as captured in *Figure 12*.

Figure 12:   Objective 2 components
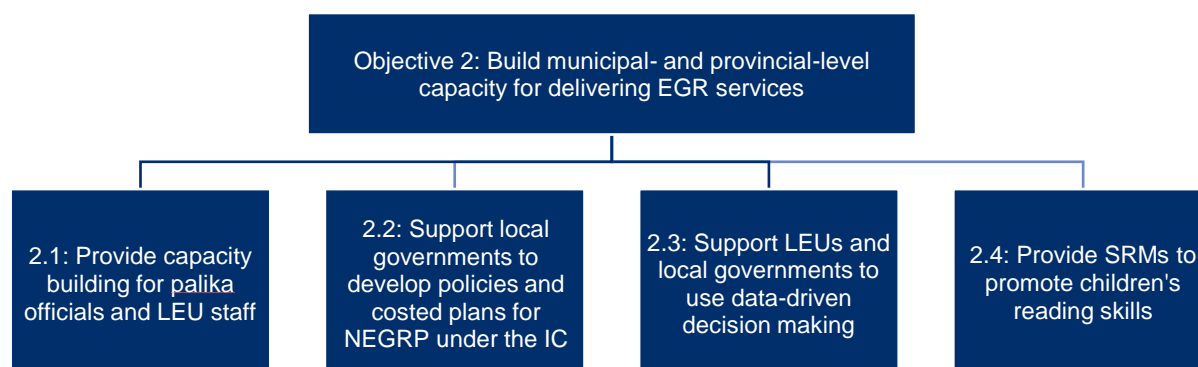
3.2.1   Sub-Objective 2.1: Provide capacity building for palika officials and LEU staff

Design, plan, and conduct TOT for workshops for LEUs in Level 1, 2, and 3 districts (Activity 2.1.1)

In Year 1, EGRP II completed the TOTs and workshops for Round 1 of the local capacity development covering all 396 local governments. Toward the end of the year, the program team conducted Round 2 TOTs with GON staff, assuming that the second round of the capacity-development workshops for the palikas in the 22 Level 1 and 2 districts would take place in person. Then 11 in-person Round 2 workshops were completed before the end of Year 1.

By the June–September 2021 period, however, substantial COVID-19 restrictions had been reimposed in Nepal. In response, EGRP II determined that it would be best to shift to a virtual modality for the remaining Round 2 workshops. To help achieve this aim, EGRP II conducted a new TOT geared to online platforms, and revised the format and agenda of the Round 2 workshops to make them more suitable to online learning.

Deliver workshops for LEUs in Level 1, 2, and 3 districts (Activity 2.1.2)

After completing the revised TOTs for the Round 2 workshops, the team rolled out 39 virtual events within the June–September 2021 period.

In the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II continued to support the remaining Round 2 local-level capacity-development workshops that could not be completed during the previous quarter due to competing time demands. Switching back to an in-person modality as COVID-19 restrictions eased, EGRP II helped coordinate eight Round 2 events to cover all remaining Level 1 and 2 local governments. In total, 58 workshops were completed during the second round of capacity development across Years 1 and 2, reaching 1,650 total participants (13% women). As shown in *Figure 13*, nearly all participants came from the local governments and schools, with a smaller percentage from the federal and provincial levels.

Figure 13: Breakdown of participants in the Round 2 local capacity-development workshop, by organization (*N* = 1,650)
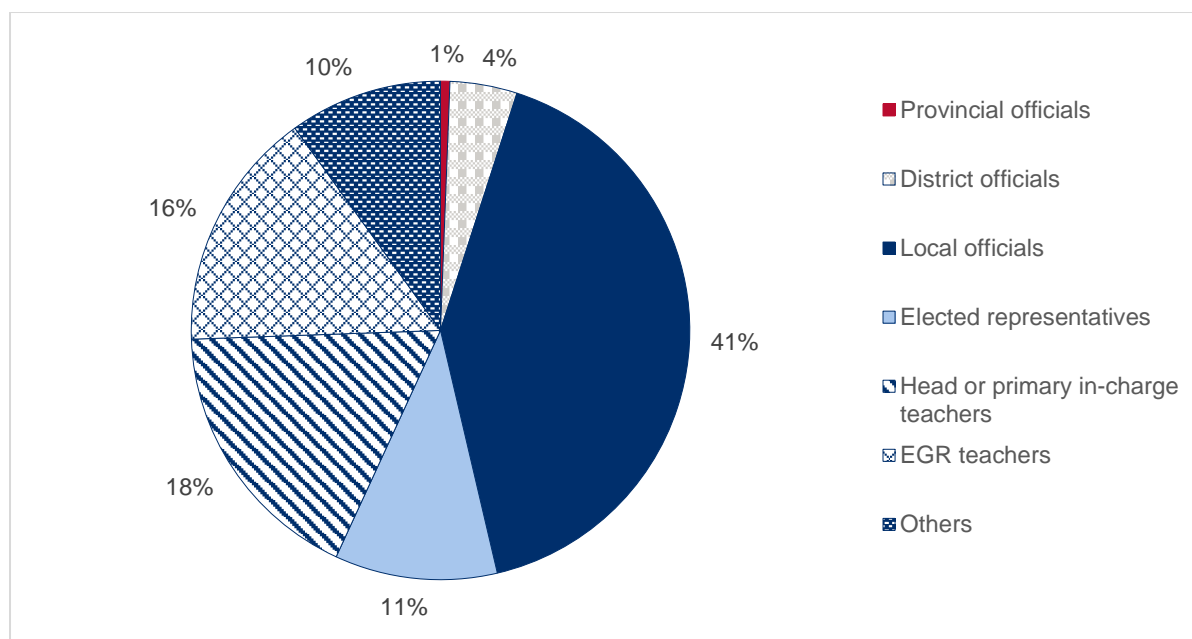
Based on experiences with the first two rounds of workshops and feedback from government officials, the EGRP II leadership team determined that some adjustments to the local capacity-development approaches would need to take place in order to achieve the program's planned outcomes during Year 2. Broader content had been covered in Rounds 1 and 2 to orient stakeholders on topics such as the NEGRP minimum package, EGR best practices, TPS, and use of data for decision making. The Round 1 and 2 workshops also helped local government officials start the process of local education planning and budgeting. Nevertheless, it became clear that more targeted support would be required for the local governments. In discussion with GON counterparts, EGRP II decided to work with EDCUs to form 3Ts at the district level to accelerate the process of Education Profile (EP) and MEP development and provide in-depth technical support to at least 60% of local governments (selected according to those that needed the most support). The 3Ts would be led by the EDCU head or designate and would consist of two LEU heads or designates, two district-level IEMIS experts, two district-level planning experts, and the EGRP II district coordinator from each district.

During the June–September 2022 period, EGRP II began working on this revised approach by developing a TOR for formation of the 3Ts, supporting all 38 EDCUs to identify suitable 3T members, and developing guidelines for mobilizing the 3T members to support local governments with education sector planning. Using these guidelines, EGRP II supported EDCUs to conduct 2-day orientations for the 3T members in 18 districts during the June–September 2022 period and the remaining 20 districts during the October–December 2022 quarter. In total, 338 participants (8% women) joined the 38 events that were conducted, with most coming from EDCUs and local governments (*Figure 14*).

Figure 14: **Breakdown of participants in the 3T orientations, by organization (*N* = 1,650)**
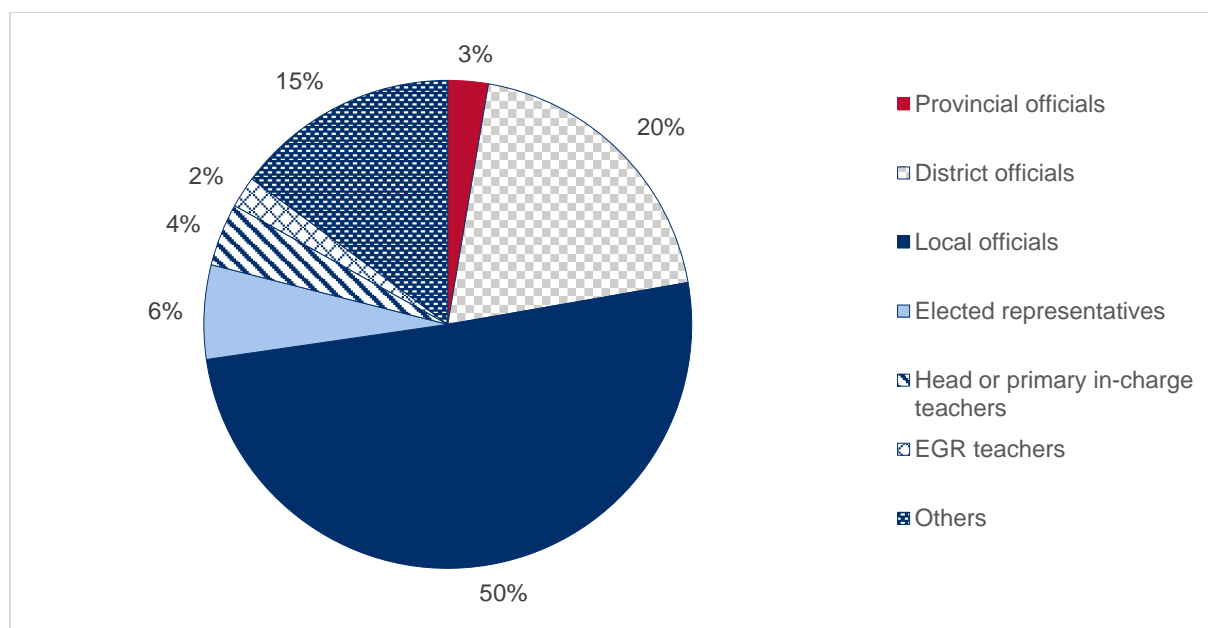
After the 3Ts were oriented, they mobilized to conduct visits to local governments to provide on-site coaching and technical support for education planning. This support included reviewing draft MEPs and EPs, sharing reference materials for education sector planning, assisting with IEMIS data analysis and interpretation, and conducting advocacy with elected representatives to leverage local financial resources. During the October–December 2021 quarter, 3T members conducted 26 coaching visits and events reaching 77 district and local-level education stakeholders. During the January–April 2022 period, 3T members continued carrying out some coaching activities, although their efforts were hampered due to a resurgence of the COVID-19 pandemic in January and February. During this period, 3T members conducted three additional meetings with seven participants, for an overall total of 29 events reaching 84 education stakeholders (6% women).

In addition to providing this type of roving support to selected palikas, 3T members worked with the EGRP II team to plan and conduct Round 3 of the local capacity-development workshops in targeted palikas with a focus on write-up and finalization of municipal education plans and education profiles. During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II supported 10 Round 3 workshops across eight districts reaching 139 participants. In the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II helped the 3T members conduct an additional 20 Round 3 workshops with 317 participants. In total, 30 Round 3 events were held with 456 officials (8% women). The breakdown of participants by organization is provided in ***Figure 15***.

Figure 15:   Breakdown of participants in the Round 3 capacity-development workshops, by organization (*N* = 456)
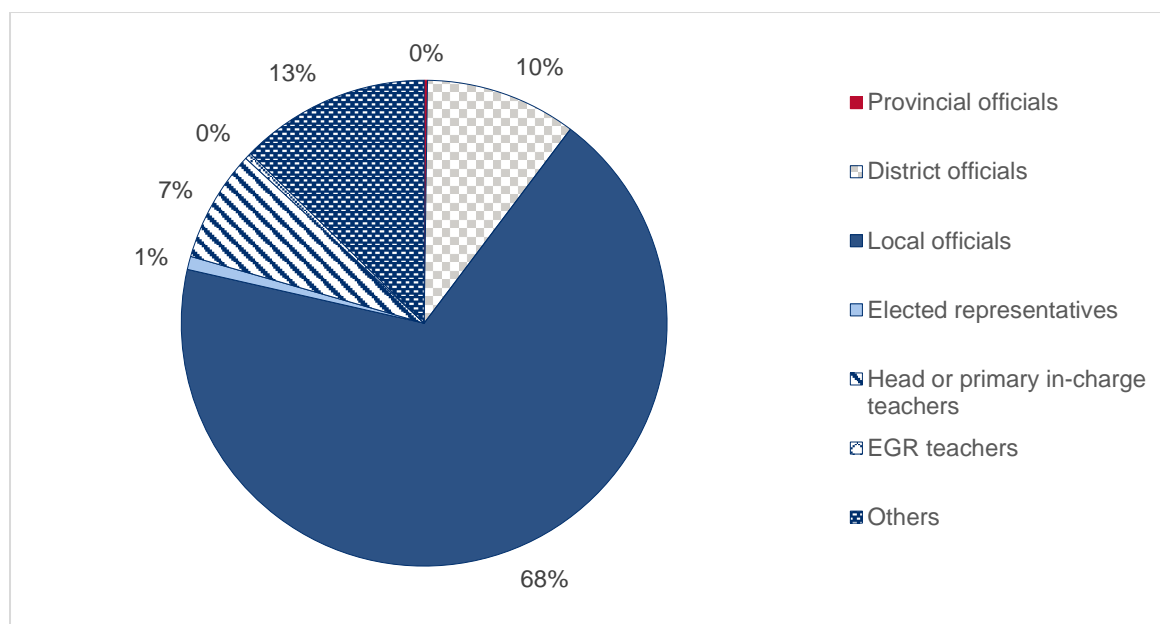
While conducting the Round 1 and 2 capacity-development workshops, EGRP II collected training quality data from training monitors as well as participants themselves. As shown in *Table 10* below, the average quality rating provided by the participants for the Round 2 TOTs was 4.18 out of 5, while for the workshops it rose to 4.23 out of 5. These findings indicate a good level of fidelity in the quality of the trainings between the TOTs and workshops. Generally, participants found that the TOTs and workshops met their objectives and fit with trainees' expectations and job requirements. Some modest room for improvement could be found, however, in areas such as time allocation and management, use of training materials, and use of assessment to measure trainee knowledge and skills.

Table 10:   Training quality ratings from the Round 2 local capacity-development TOTs and workshops

Training aspect	Average rating – Round 2 TOTs	Average rating – Round 2 workshops
Objectives: Clarity and fit to trainees' professional needs	4.17	4.37
Content: Fit with trainees' job functions, linkage between practical and theoretical aspects, and coverage of emerging trends	4.17	4.31
Time: Appropriate and adequate time allocation for the training and sessions and adherence to the schedule	4.08	4.13
Facilitation: Support for reflection and hands-on practice, inclusion, reflection, nurturing environment, encouragement of questions and feedback	4.19	4.25
Materials: Use of ICT and other hands-on training materials	4.12	4.17
Assessment/evaluation: Inclusion of assessment to measure trainee knowledge and skills	4.08	4.13
Logistics: Conducive venue and satisfactory refreshments	4.27	4.23

Training aspect	Average rating – Round 2 TOTs	Average rating – Round 2 workshops
Replicability: Confidence of trainees in their ability to use and share the knowledge and skills with others	4.33	4.25
Overall average	**4.18**	**4.23**

Conduct follow-up meetings and reviews with LEUs and EDCUs (Activity 2.1.3)

In addition to the capacity-development workshops described in Activities 2.1.1 and 2.1.2 above, EGRP II also conducted ongoing support and follow-up on education sector planning and service delivery at the district and local level. The program provided this support through NEGRP DCC meetings as well as LEU review meetings.

LEU Review Meetings

EGRP II continued supporting LEU-level review meetings during Year 2. These LEU review meetings served as useful avenues to present progress updates and galvanize further action within each municipality. In the meetings, EGRP II provided technical support to develop education profiles and MEPs and to use IEMIS for decision making, and encouraged and guided implementation of NEGRP minimum package activities at the local government level. In total, 153 local government review meetings or visits were conducted during Year 2 through both virtual and in-person modalities, including seven events that were completed during the January–April 2022 period. The review meetings reached a total of 703 participants (15% women) in Year 2, with nearly three-quarters of the participants coming from local governments and locally elected offices as well as schools (***Figure 16***).

Figure 16:   Breakdown of participants in the local government review meetings, by organization (*N* = 703)
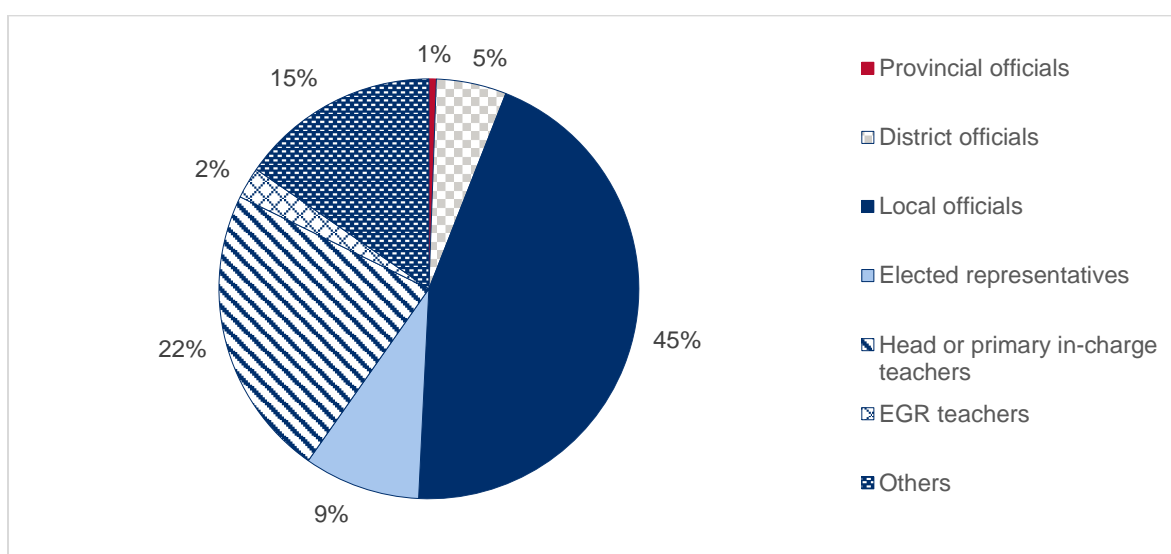
DCC Meetings

DCC meetings continued to be an important avenue for communication and coordination on NEGRP and EGRP II activities at the district level in Year 2. DCCs generally have up to 11 members and are responsible for coordinating NEGRP implementation in each district. They are led by the EDCU head with representatives from among other EDCU staff, the EDCU NEGRP focal person, the Confederation of Nepalese Teachers, the Nepal Nongovernmental Organization Federation, the District Federation of Nepali Journalists, SMC and PTA members, a Nepali subject matter expert, and officers from LEUs. EGRP II has supported both regular DCC meetings with this group of members, and extended DCC meetings that involve more participants from among elected officials, with the aim of increasing the support and engagement of elected decision makers in NEGRP implementation.

During the June–September 2021 period, 51 DCC meetings were conducted, including 41 regular DCC meetings with 308 participants (16.8% women) and 10 extended DCC meetings with 131 participants (17.6% women). Subsequently, during the October–December 2021 quarter, 87 participants (13.8% women) participated in nine DCC meetings. In addition, one extended DCC meeting took place involving 16 participants (3% women).

During the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II supported districts to conduct 8 DCC meetings with 96 participants (15.6% women) and 23 extended DCCs with 362 participants (18.5% women). Thus, the total of DCCs conducted during the reporting period was 31 DCC meetings with 458 participants, of whom 17.9% were women.

This progress brought the total number of regular and extended DCCs conducted in Year 2 to 92 with 1,000 participants (16.9% women).

DCC meetings typically focused on the following agenda items:

- Review of NEGRP implementation
- Status of education profiles, MEPs, and TPS rollout
- Selection of the set of 60% of the NEGRP palikas for targeted EGRP II support to develop EPs and MEPs
- Selection of sample palikas for TPS implementation
- Implementation of the NEGRP minimum package
- Mobilization of 3T members to support local governments with EP and MEP development

- Organization of joint monitoring visits
- Promotion of continuity of students' learning during COVID-19.

Because EGRP II was soon coming to an end, the DCC meetings during the January–April 2022 period also included recaps of progress to date, discussions of next steps and future priorities to sustain NEGRP activities, and a description of potential upcoming USAID-funded support in the education sector through the proposed "Early Grade Learning" program. These DCC meetings allowed EGRP II team members at the regional and district levels to say farewell to education stakeholders and thank them for their high levels of coordination and collaboration over the years.
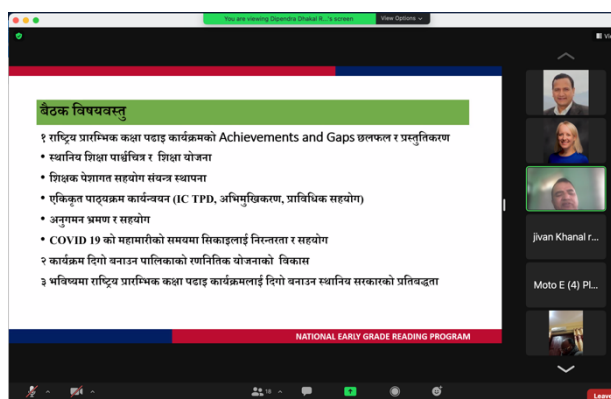
Screen shot from the final DCC meeting in Rupandehi District in February 2022

Similar to the DCC meetings, exit meetings were organized in Bara, Dhanusha, Mahottari, Manang, Parsa, Rautahat, Saptari, Sarlahi, and Siraha, to share key EGRP II achievements, next steps, and information about potential upcoming USAID support. EGRP originally intended to conduct these events as full DCC meetings, but due to concern about the COVID-19 pandemic and a backlog of other tasks to complete in Province 2, the meetings were organized with smaller groups that included some overlap with typical DCC membership. Altogether, 86 exit meetings were conducted with the participation of 230 education stakeholders, including DCC members, LEU officials, and teachers or head teachers.

3.2.2   Sub-Objective 2.2: Support local governments to develop policies and costed plans for NEGRP under the IC

Support local governments to develop/adapt, roll out, and monitor their Municipal Education Plans and budgets (Activity 2.2.1)

As a major focus of the capacity-development workshops described above, EGRP II and the 3T members supported local governments to develop their municipal education plans and budgets. During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II assisted CEHRD to prepare a facilitation guideline, based on the format of the periodic education plan circulated by MOEST, for supporting 3T members and local governments. This planning guideline incorporates multiple sections covering all aspects of education service provision at the local level. The guideline was used during local capacity-development workshops to help local governments flesh out their MEPs and budgets. As a result of the concentrated efforts of local government officials, 3T members, and EGRP II staff during Year 2, the program was able to exceed the performance indicator target for MEP drafting or finalization at the palika level. As shown in *Figure 17*, 266 out of 396 of palikas (67.2%) had either a draft or final plan in place as of the end of April 2022, exceeding the target in the MEL Plan by 17.2 percentage points.

Figure 17: Percentage of palikas reaching MEP progress target (*N* = 396)
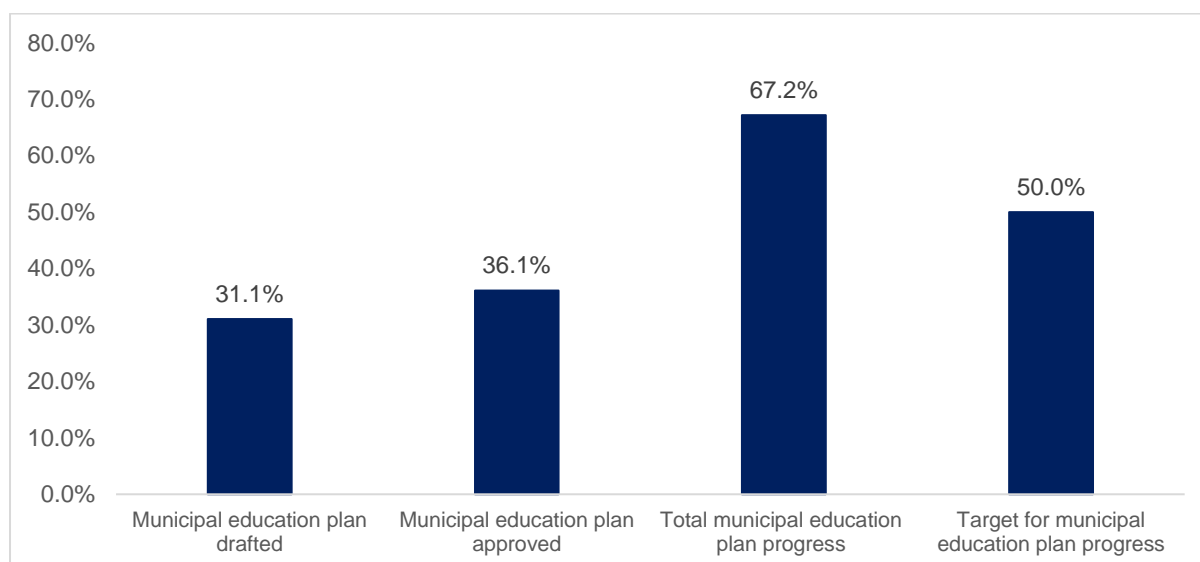
Out of the MEPs that were drafted or finalized, all of them included EGR components in some way. As shown in *Table 11* below, the most common component was printing and distribution of curriculum and curricular materials such as TLMs, followed by TPS and teacher training. Components with the lowest frequency of inclusion were student assessment and community engagement, indicating that more advocacy for incorporating these elements may be required in the future. The table includes budget allocations for the different components that EGRP II was able to substantiate using MEP budgets or similar. The budget allocations totaled to over 4 billion Nepali rupees (NPR), or approximately US$39 million.

Table 11: Percentage of local governments including different EGR components in their municipal education plans (*N* = 266)

EGR components	Percentage of local governments including those components in their MEPs	Total budget allocated to EGR components (in NPR)
Curriculum and curricular materials – printing and distribution	94	1,353,073,037
Teacher training	92	926,081,388
Teacher professional support	92	481,137,900
Community engagement	60	217,247,938
Student assessment	69	241,397,250
Monitoring and evaluation	88	365,534,660
Others	68	951,373,253

EGRP II's extensive efforts to build capacity for education sector planning and budgeting resulted in substantial achievements related to budget allocations for education sector priorities, including education in emergencies, at the palika level. As shown in *Figure 18*, 80% of palikas allocated their own budget resources to EGR activities against a target of 50%; and 76% allocated resources towards education in emergencies, against a target of 80%.

Figure 18: **Percentage of palikas allocating their own budget resources for education sector priorities (_N_ = 396)**
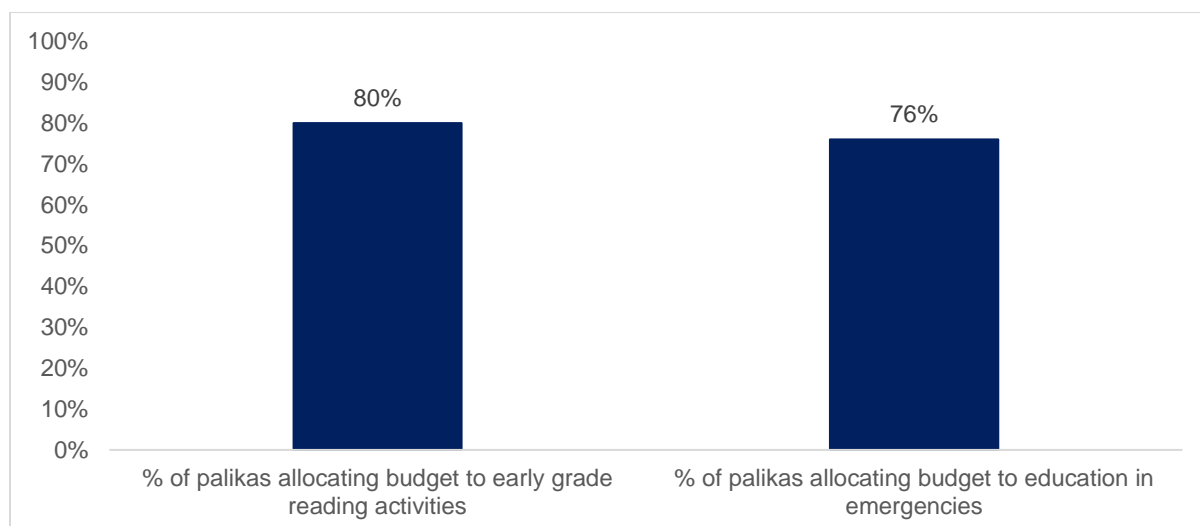
3.2.3 Sub-Objective 2.3: Support LEUs and local governments to use data-driven decision making

Support LEUs to develop and maintain IEMIS local education profiles (Activity 2.3.1)

As part of the local capacity-development workshops and support for municipal education planning and budgeting, EGRP II assisted local governments to access and use IEMIS data to drive prioritization of education strategies and budget allocation. Local governments used the IEMIS data and their analysis of the various education indicators the IEMIS contains (sample in _Figure 19_) to develop their municipal EPs.

Figure 19: **Screenshot of IEMIS data used for Education Profile development and planning in a rural municipality in Doti District**

EGRP II achieved notable progress in this area, with 392 out of 396 local governments (99%) using IEMIS data for education sector planning and budgeting against a life-of-project target of 100%. In addition, as shown in *Figure 20*, 29.3% of palikas had a final draft of their EP in place, while 37.9% of palikas had an approved EP. Project data also identified that 96.5% of local governments had taken steps to validate the IEMIS data shared by schools, either through one-on-one follow-up or sample-based spot checks of the data submitted by the schools in their catchment areas.

Figure 20:   Percentage of palikas reaching EP development progress target (*N* = 396)
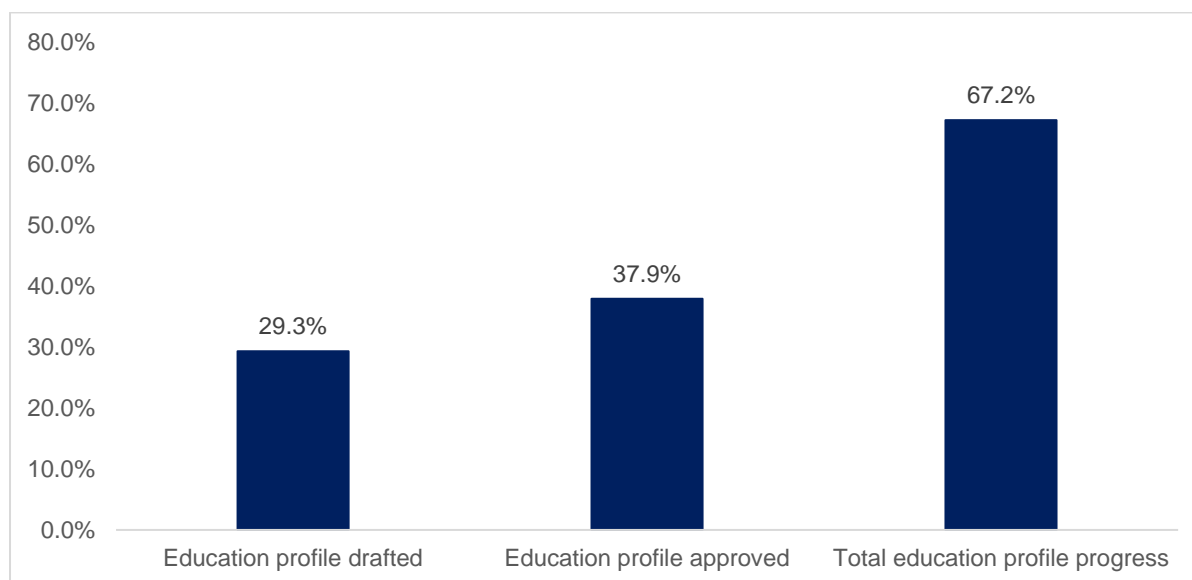
3.2.4   Sub-Objective 2.4: Provide SRMs to promote children's reading skills

Distribute SRMs to target schools in the 22 NEGRP scale-up districts (Activity 2.4.1)

This activity was completed in Year 1, and no further progress is reported. During the reporting period, the EGRP II team members continued following up to ensure proper display and use of the SRMs in schools through avenues such as the IC TPD MTOTs and TOTS, DCC meetings, LEU capacity-development workshops, TPS activities, and head teacher meetings. Likewise, EGRP II conducted an internal DQA to identify the status of the display and use of SRMs in schools (described further under MEL, Section 3.5 below).

3.3   Objective 3: Improve Local Governments' Ability to Provide TPS, Coaching, Mentorship, and Supervision

Objective 3 focuses on building capacity for TPS, which is a key input in helping teachers build and sustain improved practices for EGR instruction. Objective 3 activities include supporting the CEHRD/HRDD with revising TPS guidance, supporting local governments to roll out TPS, and conducting joint monitoring and coaching side by side with GON officials, as captured in *Figure 21*.

Figure 21:   Objective 3 components
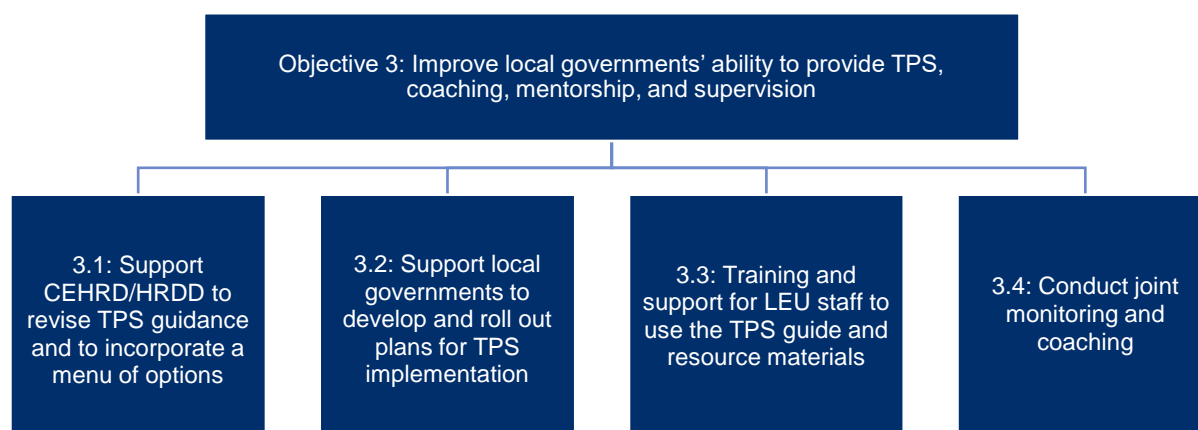
3.3.1   Sub-Objective 3.1: Support CEHRD/HRDD to revise TPS guidance and to incorporate a menu of options

Support CEHRD to prepare revised TPS guideline and manual (3.1.1)

During Year 1, the EGRP II team supported CEHRD to revise and finalize the existing TPS Management Procedure based on experience and evidence generated through EGRP. The revisions included providing the following menu of seven options for TPS implementation at the local level:

- Classroom observation and feedback or coaching from head teachers or basic-level coordinators
- Formation of TLGs and organization of meetings to share learning on TPS
- Formation of TPS roster expert groups at the local level and mobilization of the groups to observe classrooms and offer ongoing support
- Appointment of resource teachers for classroom observation and feedback and coaching for teachers
- Mobilization of a roster of trainers for classroom observation and coaching
- Organization of inter-school study visits
- LEUs' provision of distance support using ICT

The revised TPS Management Procedure, 2077[6] was approved by MOEST in April 2021, and EGRP II then assisted CEHRD to finalize the TPS Guideline, which provides additional guidance on TPS implementation. Subsequently, during the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II completed printing and distribution of both materials to all schools in the 38 program districts.

Once the TPS Management Procedure was approved by MOEST, the EGRP II technical team worked with CEHRD/HRDD to revise the existing 5-day TPS training manual—which had originally been developed with EGRP support—to align the manual with the revised TPS

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[6] 2077/2078: This year in the Bikram Sambat Nepali calendar, with the new year starting in the middle of April, roughly corresponds to 2021.

Management Procedure, the TPS Guideline, and the IC. The revisions were completed during the October–December 2021 quarter through a series of meetings and workshops with CEHRD leaders and technical staff, supported by EGRP II curriculum and instruction team members. The main objective of TPS training is to develop the capacity of the GON technical staff who are expected to provide ongoing technical support to the teachers to improve their classroom practices. According to the revised TPS Management Procedure, those staff will provide technical support to EGR teachers by observing their classrooms, providing coaching, and encouraging teachers to support each other by sharing their experiences through TLG meetings. The training content includes an introduction to the NEGRP; an overview of the policy and legal provisions for the TPS system; a review of the IC; details on approaches to and methods for providing TPS; coordination, communication, and planning for TPS implementation; and tools and approaches for classroom observation and support.

During the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II coordinated with CEHRD to finalize the revised TPS training manual based on feedback from participants during the TPS MTOTs described under Section 3.3.3 (Activity 3.3.2). The document then underwent graphic design and layout to prepare a print-ready copy (see thumbnail images in *Figure 22*). EGRP II expects that the training manual will serve as an important guideline for capacity development on TPS in the future, particularly for ETC trainers, EDCU officials, and local governments as they mobilize local expert groups and implement other TPS options at the palika and school levels.

Figure 22: Thumbnails of the revised TPS training manual
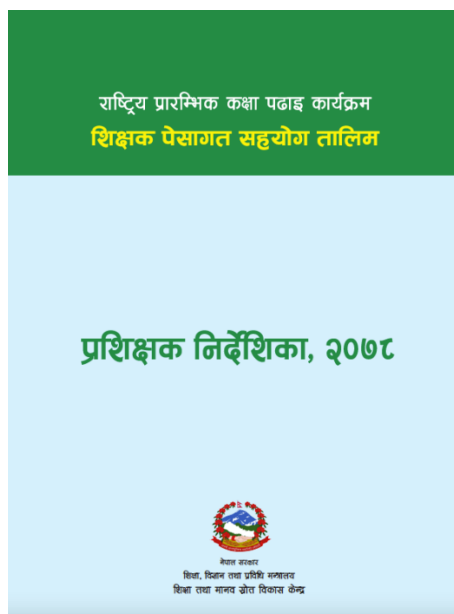
Thumbnail of the front cover of the revised TPS training manual	*Thumbnail of an inner page of the revised TPS training manual, which provides an example of a coaching scenario at the school level*
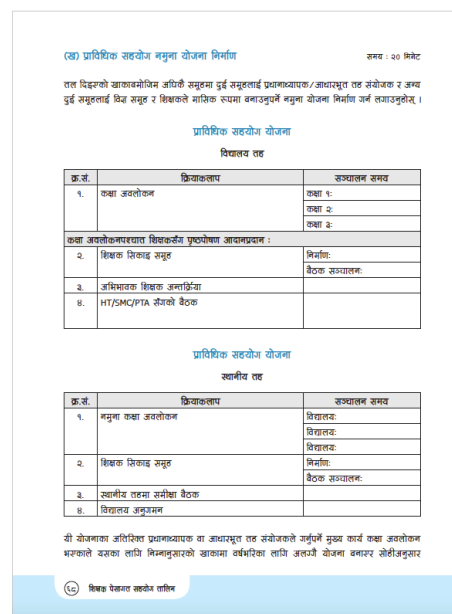
Carry out operational research on TPS (Activity 3.1.2)

As discussed above under Sub-Objective 1.1 (Activity 1.1.3), EGRP II supported the GON to conduct operational research on the IC and TPS. The overall objective of the TPS-related portions of the operational research study was to examine how TPS has functioned in grades

1–3 and to recommend areas for further improvement. The research questions specific to TPS included the following:

- To what extent do TPS stakeholders at the federal, provincial, district, local, and school levels understand their roles and responsibilities for TPS?

- To what extent and how effectively are those stakeholders carrying out their TPS roles, and how satisfied are teachers with the support they receive?

- What are the common challenges faced, and solutions and innovative practices implemented by TPS actors at the local level to ensure effective professional support mechanisms?

Further details on the study design and implementation are discussed under Sub-Objective 1.1, Activity 1.1.3, including the geographic locations and the number of informants across the selected districts.

The TPS portion of the study identified the following key findings:

- The LEU and EDCU officials interviewed generally had a clear understanding of the purpose and approaches of TPS, and had received the TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline distributed by EGRP II. They had also participated in orientation and training regarding their TPS roles and responsibilities, although some uncertainty lingered about how to operationalize those roles in practice.

- It appeared that this understanding had not yet trickled down consistently to teachers, SMC members, or TPS roster expert group members, however. As a consequence, the school-level actors who participated in the study had not all integrated TPS effectively as part of their core functions, although some schools had taken exemplary steps such as forming TLGs and holding monthly TLG meetings.

- Local governments supported most directly by EGRP II were found to have made more progress in implementing TPS—at least in terms of forming the roster expert groups and starting to mobilize them in some cases.

- However, repeated waves of the COVID-19 pandemic were cited as impediments to progress on TPS at the palika and school levels, with classrooms shuttered for long periods and TPS providers prevented from conducting observation and feedback sessions with EGR teachers.

- In addition, expert group members who had received training noted that the duration (3 days supported by EGRP II) was insufficient in relation to the demands of the role.

- Teachers generally expressed that they would find support from TPS roster expert group members to be helpful, but that they had yet to feel any significant impact of the expert groups at their level. At the same time, there was limited evidence of a culture of sharing being promoted among teachers in the schools visited.

- The major challenge to effective TPS implementation cited by stakeholders at the palika and school levels was the fact that they had received only initial orientation and training about their roles and responsibilities and required additional technical assistance and monitoring for effective TPS implementation in practice. In addition, large workloads and small numbers of staff in most of the palikas made it difficult for LEU officials to carry

out TPS consistently and effectively—a concern echoed by head teachers and primary in-charge teachers.

Overall, the findings point to good progress made on raising awareness of the TPS system and beginning to roll out the revised TPS guidelines at subnational levels. Nevertheless, the study clarified that the revised TPS approach is still nascent, and that additional orientation, training, and follow-up will be required to ensure that the approach takes root.

3.3.2   Sub-Objective 3.2: Support local governments to develop and roll out plans for TPS implementation

Support local governments to plan for TPS rollout (Activity 3.2.1)

To promote strong ongoing teacher support mechanisms, EGRP II assisted local governments to understand TPS best practices and to plan for TPS rollout through training sessions during the local capacity-development workshops. Through these sessions, EGRP II oriented local stakeholders on the newly introduced TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline, as well as the TPS options envisioned in the procedure, so that local governments would be able to identify appropriate TPS options and include them in their MEPs. Furthermore, the participants learned practical skills for providing ongoing support to EGR teachers.

During the June–September 2021 reporting period, the EGRP II team organized orientation events for the 3Ts described under ***Objective 2***, which included sessions dedicated to inclusion of EGR components and TPS mechanisms in MEPs. The positive impact of those TPS-related sessions in both the local capacity-development workshops and the 3T orientations then was reflected in the EGR and TPS content in the MEPs developed by local governments. Similarly, TPS topics were key elements of LEU review meetings, DCC meetings, and joint monitoring visits. Implementation of TPS mechanisms through formation of local-level TPS roster expert groups was one of the core agenda items during DCC meetings during this reporting period, resulting in identification of the sample palikas—one in each district—needing additional support (see also Activity 3.4.2 below).

During the October–December 2021 quarter, the EGRP II team continued to organize 3T orientations as described in the paragraph above. Similarly, TPS continued to be a standing agenda item during DCC and extended DCC meetings. During the DCC meetings, participants discussed what the status of TPS implementation was in the palikas in their district, how to mobilize local TPS roster experts, and how to organize teacher learning meetings and TPS activities related to the TPS sample palika that had been selected in each district.

In the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II continued to follow up with local governments on TPS planning and rollout. EGRP II also gathered data on the extent of TPS planning and rollout and potential gaps to be addressed in the future. As of the end of April 2022, the EGRP II team had confirmed that the target palikas had made steady progress in planning for and rolling out TPS services. As shown in ***Figure 23***, 346 out of 396 palikas (87%) had formally selected their TPS options, double the figure at the end of the June–September 2021 reporting period. In addition, 96% of palikas had formed their TPS expert groups, while TPS training for the expert groups had been provided in about one-quarter of all palikas. Taken together with the results of the TPS operational research study, these figures indicate that the

TPS options had started to become institutionalized at the local government level. However, more support will be required for palikas that have not yet selected their TPS options and/or trained their TPS expert group members.

Figure 23:   Status of TPS planning and rollout by local governments over time (*N* = 396)
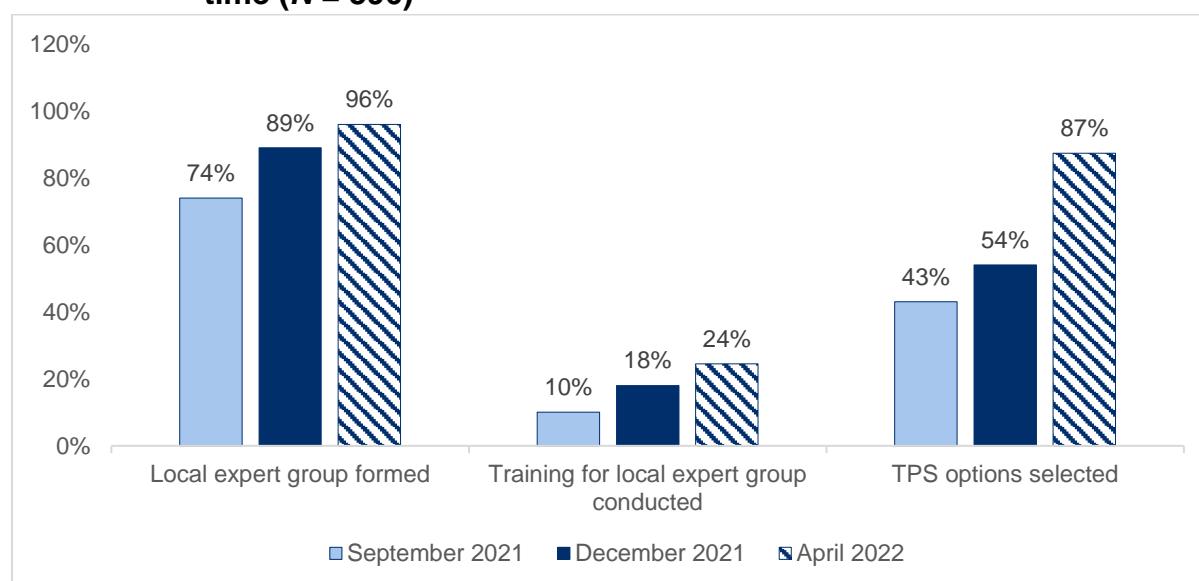
In addition to tracking overall levels of progress towards TPS rollout, EGRP II collected data on the types of TPS options selected by palikas (***Table 12***). The most common choice was mobilization of local expert groups, followed by mobilization of head teachers or primary in-charge teachers. The least common options were mobilization of resource teachers, use of ICT and other virtual support mechanisms, and learning exchange visits. One the basis of these findings, EGRP II can conclude that the program's support for formation of local expert groups was successful in penetrating nearly all local governments. At the same time, however, stakeholders were relatively more familiar with the head teacher or primary in-charge teacher option but less likely to have selected activities such as learning exchanges, resource teacher mobilization, or use of ICT. The less popular options may have not been chosen because they were relatively less familiar or accessible, or because they were perceived as more expensive in terms of time, human resources, or activity budgets.

Table 12:   Percentage of local governments selecting different TPS options (*N* = 346)

TPS options	Percentage of local governments selecting each TPS option
Classroom observation and feedback or coaching from head teachers or primary in-charge teachers	60%
Formation of TLGs and organization of meetings to share learning on TPS	43%
Formation of TPS expert groups at the local level and mobilization of the groups to observe classrooms and offer ongoing support	95%
Appointment of resource teachers for classroom observation and feedback and coaching for teachers	17%

TPS options	Percentage of local governments selecting each TPS option
Mobilization of roster trainers for classroom observation and coaching	38%
Organization of inter-school study visits	21%
LEUs' provision of distance support using ICT	20%

Note. The percentages do not total to 100% in this table because local governments could choose more than one TPS option.

Support local governments with capacity development of roster of experts for TPS (Activity 3.2.2)

As one of the approaches for ensuring strong ongoing support to teachers through TPS, CEHRD requested EGRP II support to mobilize a roster of TPS experts who will be able to support TPS at the local level, as codified in the TPS Management Procedure. CEHRD identified this strategy as a means to fill the gap created in teacher-support mechanisms after the withdrawal of the "resource person" position when Nepal shifted to a federal governance approach. The GON's Program Implementation Manual for Nepali fiscal year 2077/2078 included a budget allocation for mobilizing the expert group members, but did not allocate funds for capacity development for the experts. With this shortcoming in mind, CEHRD requested that EGRP II offer a capacity-development activity so that the experts would be able to observe classrooms effectively and provide feedback and coaching to teachers as required.

This requested activity could not be completed in program Year 1 because the TPS Management Procedure and the TPS Guideline had not yet been finalized. Once these materials were completed and approved, EGRP II revisited the idea of orientation events for the anticipated TPS roster experts. Subsequently, EGRP II and the CEHRD planning section team jointly developed the training content for 2-day orientations and worked together to plan TOT events. The main objectives of the TPS roster expert orientations included the following:

- Orienting the experts on the new TPS Management Procedure, TPS Guideline, and key TPS provisions

- Enhancing the capacity of TPS actors and supporting them by rolling out TPS mechanisms at the local level

- Familiarizing TPS actors with classroom observation and coaching tools and techniques.

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II helped CEHRD organize a total of 22 virtual orientation events covering all 396 municipalities in the 38 program districts, and with 889 participants (110 women) from federal, provincial, and local governments (*Figure 24*).

Figure 24: Participants from different levels of government in the TPS roster expert TOTs (*N* = 889)
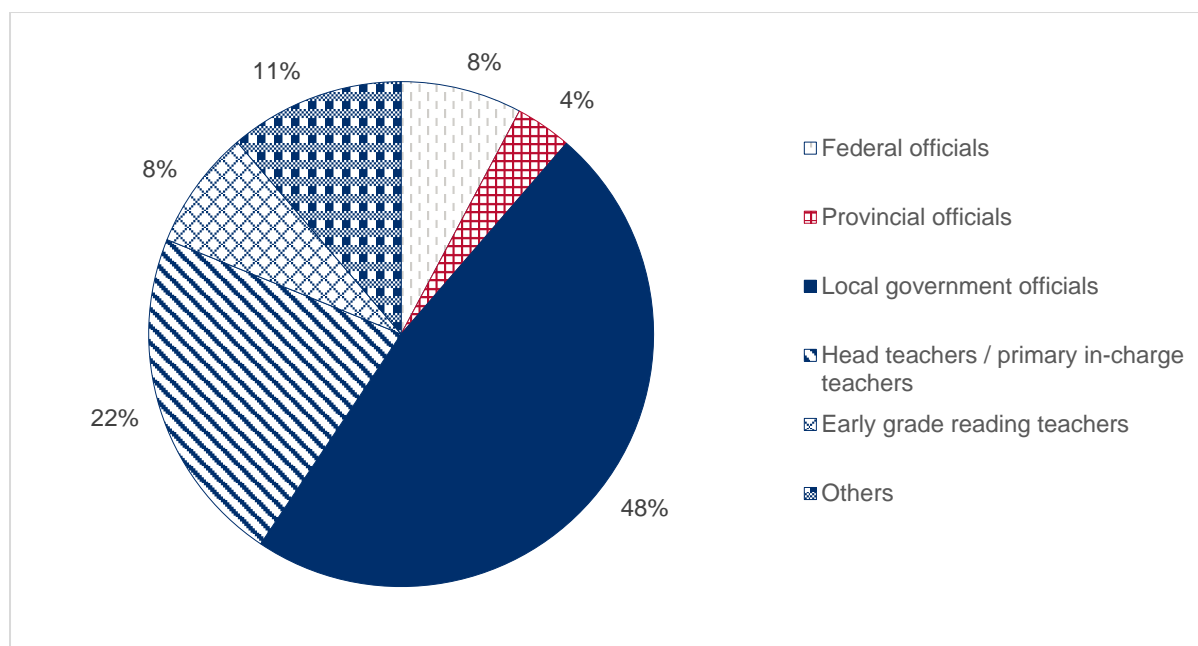
The first orientation events in each province were facilitated by the EGRP II Kathmandu office technical team and CEHRD personnel. They also incorporated aspects of a TOT for the ETC personnel and NEGRP focal persons from EDCUs who had joined. Those ETC and EDCU staff then facilitated sessions in their respective provinces and districts from the second events onward. At the end of the second day of each workshop, LEU heads or other LEU personnel committed to forming rosters of TPS experts in their palikas and to organizing meetings to orient the roster experts who did not participate during the orientation events. They also developed TPS implementation plans to mobilize the roster experts in their respective palikas.

During the October–December 2021 quarter and the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II district coordinators continued to support palikas to deploy their TPS roster expert groups through ongoing communication and coordination avenues at the local level, such as 3T mobilization efforts, local capacity-development workshops, and head-teacher meetings. These efforts proved fruitful in increasing the percentage of local governments that had formed their expert groups from 74% at the end of September 2021 to 96% at the end of April 2022, as shown above in *Figure 23*. At the same time, EGRP II was able to catalyze some progress in advocating with local governments to provide additional training to the roster experts beyond the initial TOTs. However, EGRP II's tracking data showed that over three-quarters of all palikas still had not rolled out this training by the end of April 2022, highlighting that more will need to be done in this area in the future.

Reflect on TPS implementation, share lessons learned, jointly solve problems, share operations research results when available (Activity 3.2.3)

Through a variety of means, EGRP II has supported stakeholders at the school, cluster, palika, and district levels to reflect on TPS implementation, share lessons learned, and solve common problems related to TPS. Throughout Year 2, this collaborative effort was carried

out during joint monitoring visits, TLG meetings, and DCC meetings. For example, during the joint monitoring visits, technical experts observed classrooms and shared their observations on strengths and areas for improvement in EGR instruction. Similarly, DCC meetings were also used as a forum to share experiences from the joint monitoring visits; that is, local government personnel and DCC members offered reflections on the school visits and classroom observations, and meeting participants jointly discussed action plans to resolve common TPS challenges.

In addition, head teacher meetings conducted within each local government were an important avenue for the TPS actors to share their experiences and feedback from their classroom observation and coaching activities. During those meetings, EGRP II district coordinators supported the TPS roster experts with information on how to model essential lessons in the IC; how to support teachers to use the IC curriculum, teacher's guide, and student workbooks; and how to help teachers effectively assess student learning.

The EGRP II team also collected case studies to reflect on key achievements, best practices, and future priorities for TPS implementation. An example of case study findings from Sarlahi District is provided in **Figure 25**.

Figure 25:   Pathway for TPS implementation in a TPS case study from Dhankaul Rural Municipality, Sarlahi
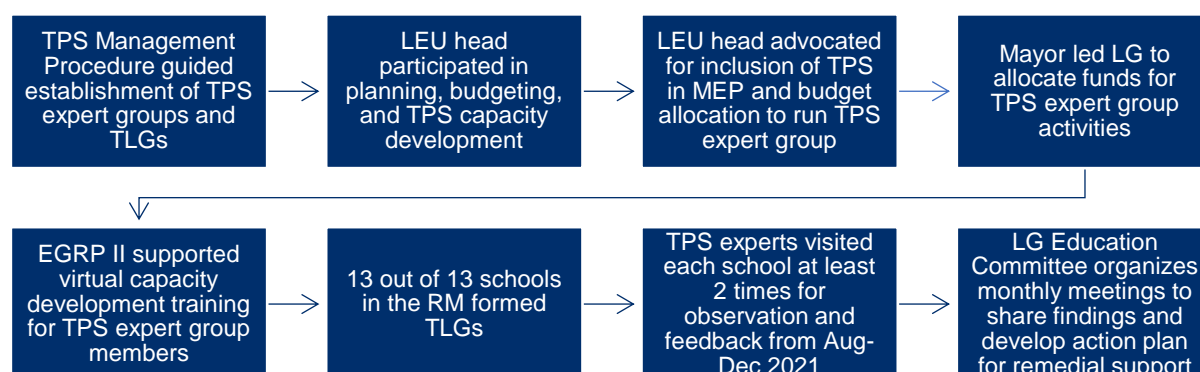
The case studies identified an interconnected factors promoting uptake and sustainability of TPS at the local level. These factors included establishment of a uniform national approach to professional support through the revised TPS Management Procedure, and the presence of "touch points" and catalytic events for capacity development such as orientations and trainings. In addition, advocacy with local government elected leaders, combined with incorporation of TPS within LG plans and budgets, helped to promote greater buy-in for TPS rollout at the local level. The case studies also found that simply conducting monitoring visits to schools was not sufficient, and that follow-up and feedback mechanism were needed to promote reflection on school visits and action planning on the basis of the classroom observations through the local government Education Committee.

Finally, the operational research on TPS implementation provided opportunities for structured reflection with TPS providers at all levels of the Nepal government using a set of interview questionnaires. As captured in Section 3.3.1 (Activity 3.1.2) above, stakeholders identified that there was widespread understanding of the revised TPS approach among

district and local actors but that the approach had yet to take root extensively at the school level, necessitating further follow-up action in that domain.

3.3.3 Sub-Objective 3.3: Training and support for LEU staff to use the TPS guide and resource materials

Conduct orientation of LEU officials on the use of TPS Management Procedure, TPS Guideline, and resource material (Activity 3.3.1)

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II shared the TPS Management Procedure, TPS Guideline, and other relevant resources with LEU officials, head teachers, and other stakeholders, such as elected representatives, during the local capacity-development workshops. Those meetings focused on sharing progress and improving EGR instructional practices and TPS rollout. Participants received orientation on the use of the materials and on effective TPS implementation. Similarly, the local capacity-development workshops focused on orienting and building capacity of local-level stakeholders to develop education plans incorporating EGR components and TPS mechanisms. The workshops also trained local government officials on classroom observation techniques and coaching best practices.

In August 2021, EGRP II distributed the revised TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline to all schools, local governments, and EDCUs in the 38 program districts, as well as to provincial and federal stakeholders. The distribution included MOEST and CEHRD, all seven MOSDs, Education Development Directorates, and ETCs; 38 EDCUs; 396 local governments; and 13,298 schools.

These efforts brought Activity 3.3.1 to a close and, as such, no further updates are provided after September 2021.

Implement MTOT to prepare 80 TPS master trainers (Activity 3.3.2)

After finalizing revisions to the existing TPS training manual to align it with the updated TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline in the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II supported CEHRD to plan for TPS MTOTs to cover the 22 Level 1 and 2 districts that had not previously received TPS training through EGRP. During a final planning meeting in December 2021, CEHRD and EGRP II agreed that an average of three participants

Group work during a TPS MTOT in Rupandehi. (Photo credit: Narayan Shrestha)

from each Level 1 and Level 2 district, as well as two participants from each provincial ETC, would be selected to join the MTOTs, which would take place in Banke, Rupandehi, and Sunsari Districts. CEHRD circulated a letter to all seven provincial ETCs to identify suitable participants who fell into the appropriate selection categories:

- EDCU officials
- Senior-level local government officials
- Senior head teachers

- Senior secondary school teachers, preferably Nepali subject teachers
- ETC officials with expertise in Nepali language as a subject

During the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II supported CEHRD to conduct the three MTOTs, with facilitation by CEHRD staff and EGRP II central-level curriculum and instruction team members. After returning to their duty stations, MTOT trainees were then requested to cascade TPS trainings at the cluster level. In all, 80 TPS master trainers (13% women) were reached from the Level 1 and 2 districts. The breakdown of participants in the MTOTs, by district and gender, is captured in *Table 13,* while *Figure 26* provides the breakdown of participants by organizational affiliation.

Table 13:   Participants in the TPS MTOTs

Province	District	Men	Women	Total
Bagmati	Kavrepalanchok*	2	0	2
	Rasuwa	2	1	3
	Sindhuli	3	0	3
	Sindhupalchok	2	1	3
Bagmati total		*9*	*2*	*11*
Gandaki	Baglung	3	0	3
	Myagdi	3	0	3
	Tanahun	5	0	5
Gandaki total		*11*	*0*	*11*
Karnali	Dailekh	3	0	3
	Salyan	3	1	4
	Surkhet*	1	0	1
Karnali total		*7*	*1*	*8*
Lumbini	Kapilvastu	2	1	3
	Nawalparasi West	3	0	3
	Rolpa	3	0	3
	Rupandehi*	1	1	2
Lumbini total		*9*	*2*	*11*
Province 1	Bhojpur	3	0	3
	Khotang	3	0	3
	Sunsari	3	0	3
	Taplejung	3	0	3
Province 1 total		*12*	*0*	*12*
Madhesh Province	Bara	2	3	5
	Dhanusha	2	1	3
	Mahottari	3	0	3
	Rautahat	3	0	3
	Sarlahi	3	0	3

Province	District	Men	Women	Total
	Siraha	3	0	3
Madhesh Province total		*16*	*4*	*20*
Sudur Paschim	Achham	3	0	3
	Doti	4	0	4
Sudur Paschim total		*7*	*0*	*7*
Grand total		71	9	80

Note. Districts marked with "*" are not EGRP II Level 1 or Level 2 districts; participants from those districts are from the provincial ETC that is located within the district and therefore are assigned to that district for the purposes of this table.

Figure 26: Participants in the TPS MTOTs, by organization (*N* = 80)
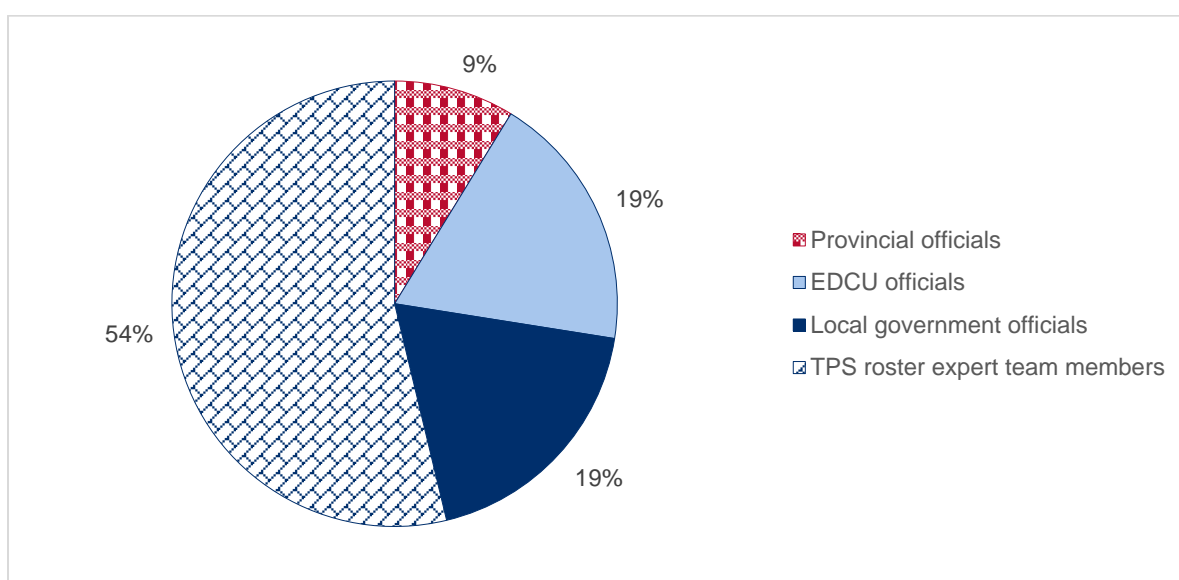
The TPS MTOTs covered the range of elements in the revised training manual, and incorporated both theoretical and practical aspects. Broad topics included:

- Introduction to the NEGRP
- Policy and legal provisions for the TPS system
- The Integrated Curriculum and TPS provisions described in the curriculum
- Approaches to and methods for providing TPS
- TPS technical support, coordination, and communication within the education system

- Classroom observation and support to teachers
- Planning for TPS implementation.

The MTOTs included school visits for practicum purposes. During the school visits, trainees conducted grade 1–3 classroom observations, observing full 60-minute classes and filling in the classroom observation tool in Annex 1 of the TPS Management Procedure. The TPS trainees then conducted grade-specific post-class conferences with teachers to share feedback and helped head teachers to practice convening TLGs during the school visits. After returning to the training venue from their school visits, trainees discussed how to develop strong

TLG meeting with a head teacher and school staff after the classroom observation and feedback session with EGR teachers at a school in Siraha District. (Photo credit: Deepak Pandit)

and sustainable mechanisms to provide regular support to teachers. The trainees also developed district-specific action plans to scale up cluster-level TPS training for head teachers, primary-level in-charge teachers, local expert group members, LEU officials, and other TPS actors.

Feedback on the MTOTs included the following:

- Pre- and post-training assessments of participant knowledge related to TPS theory and practice identified a 17 percentage point increase in the average score between the start of the training and the end.

- The training helped participants gain a greater understanding of the practical tools and approaches for providing TPS and, even more strategically, develop greater understanding of the importance of TPS for continuous improvement in teaching and learning.

- Participants appreciated the clear training agenda and session plans in the TPS training manual as useful tools for helping them implement subsequent trainings within their districts upon returning from the MTOTs.

- During the feedback sessions between TPS providers and teachers in the practicum, the training participants demonstrated a tendency to give multiple points of feedback, even though the guidance to trainees was to limit their comments to two or three points that would have the most impact on improving teaching practices. This area will require attention during the cascade trainings and other TPS activities involving feedback sessions with teachers, such as joint monitoring visits.

- Although the training itself was successful, participants noted that TPS rollout had been limited, and that onward cascade training after the MTOTs would be challenging to implement without adequate budget allocation. Participants discussed and agreed on a key next step of advocating with local governments to allocate TPS training and monitoring

budgets in the next GON fiscal year (2022–2023) in cases where that had not already been done for the current fiscal year (2021–2022).

3.3.4 Sub-Objective 3.4: Conduct joint monitoring and coaching

Revise, print, and distribute monitoring tools (Activity 3.4.1)

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II supported EDCU and LEU officials to print and distribute paper-based monitoring tools to be filled out during the joint monitoring visits. Once the tools were completed by the joint monitoring teams, data were entered by program staff into a real-time monitoring and visualization platform through KoBo Toolbox.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II made some adjustments to the joint monitoring visit modality to provide more frequent and less time-intensive joint monitoring opportunities. Instead of conducting district-level joint monitoring with district-based stakeholders, EGRP II focused on LEU-level joint monitoring and increased the coverage of schools. As part of this effort, EGRP II provided orientation to LEU officials on paper-based monitoring tools and distributed the tools to the monitoring teams.

In the January–April 2022 period, a wave of school reclosures due to the omicron variant of COVID-19 limited the ability to support EDCU and LEU officials to conduct on-site monitoring visits and use the monitoring tools.

Collaborate with LEU staff on monitoring and reporting (Activity 3.4.2)

During Year 2, EGRP II faced several disruptions to joint monitoring activities caused by resurgences of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, the pace of the visits slowed considerably during the June–September 2021 period, with only seven schools visited in locations not as heavily impacted by school closures, especially in Mustang District. These efforts brought the cumulative total of schools visited to 280; 849 observers filled out monitoring forms.

The pace of the visits picked up again when pandemic restrictions eased in the October–December 2021 quarter. As of December 2021, cumulatively, EGRP II had helped 37 districts across all seven provinces conduct joint monitoring visits to a total of 899 schools, with a total of 1,903 joint monitoring forms filled out by officials.

Pandemic restrictions once again disrupted joint monitoring visits during the January–April 2022 period, although through a final push, the team was able to make some progress. During the reporting period, the cumulative number of schools visited rose by 408 to 1,307 total, with 2,464 observers filling in monitoring forms. As shown in **Table 14**, as a result of careful planning with LEU officials, the visits were roughly evenly spread across Nepal's seven provinces, and the Level 1, 2, and 3 districts were proportionate to the number of districts in each category.

Table 14: **Number of schools receiving joint monitoring visits, by province and district level**

Province	Number of schools			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Total
Province 1	49	16	33	98
Madhesh	327	29	134	490
Bagmati	33	18	19	70
Gandaki	79	56	79	214
Lumbini	44	N/A	142	186
Karnali	8	N/A	34	42
Sudur Paschim	77	N/A	130	207
Total	**617**	**119**	**571**	**1,307**

Note. "N/A" (not applicable) indicates that there were no EGRP II-supported Level 2 districts in that province.

While conducting the visits, observers filled out the monitoring tool described just above under Activity 3.4.1 with their feedback from the visit. *Figure 27* summarizes the level of each observer's agreement with quality statements about elements of the school environment, classroom observation, and teacher professional support, provided by all 2,464 observers during the school visits. Questions related to the quality of different elements at the school covered the following areas:

- **School environment:** School cleanliness, tracking of teacher and student attendance, regularity of teacher and student attendance, school improvement planning and documentation of learning achievement, and regularity of school management and parent–teacher meetings.

- **Classroom observation:** Student presence in the class and possession of textbooks, training level of the teacher, presence and use of teaching and learning materials, interaction levels of the students, variety in classroom management and grouping techniques, display of materials, presence and use of a classroom library, opportunities for students to practice, and use of feedback and evaluation by the teacher.

- **Teacher professional support:** On-site practice of classroom observations, feedback, discussions with teachers by district or local government officials and the head teacher or primary in-charge teacher, uptake of the feedback by teachers, and sharing of best practices among teachers occurring regularly at the school and palika levels.

Similar to previous quarters, these monitoring efforts found that the quality of school environments was rated the highest, whereas schools struggled somewhat more with TPS implementation. However, examining trends in the quality ratings from the joint monitoring visits over EGRP II's 2 years, subtle improvements in TPS provision at the school level can be observed. For example, at the end of September 2021, 14% of observers had strongly disagreed that there was high-quality TPS provision in the school they visited, while that unfavorable figure had dropped to 9% by the end of April 2022.

Figure 27:   Quality ratings of schools by joint monitoring visit participants, by three categories of interest (*N* = 2,464)
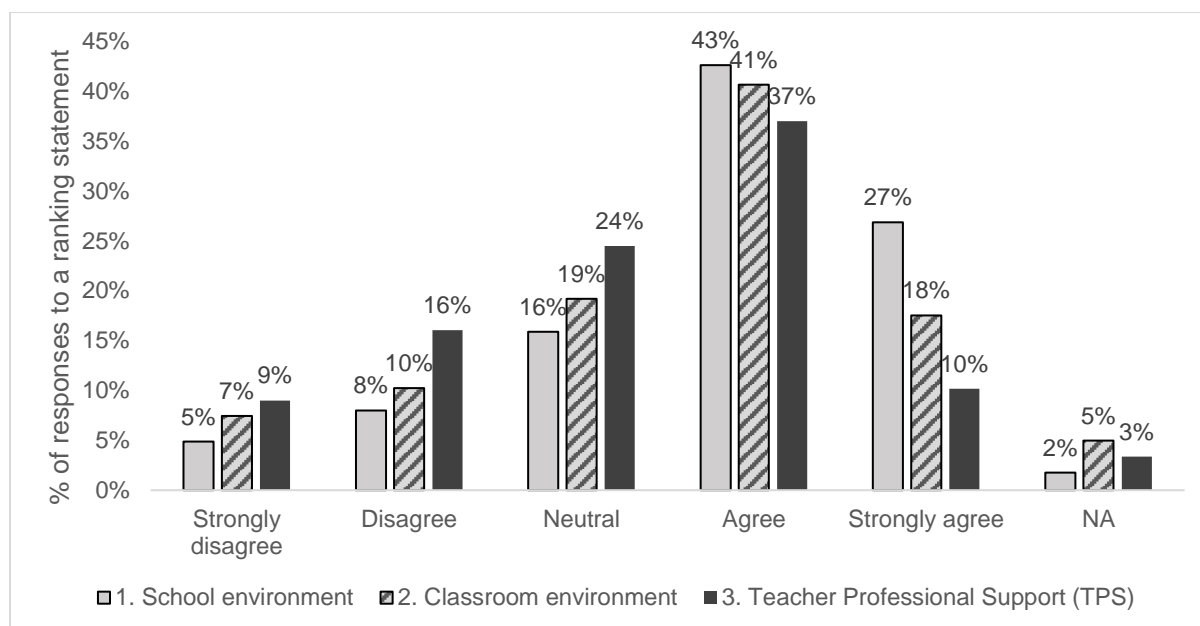
In addition to conducting joint monitoring visits and other general support for TPS across all target palikas, EGRP II provided focused inputs for TPS in the selected sample palikas.

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II coordinated with EDCUs and local governments to identify 38 sample palikas—one in each target district—to receive more intensive TPS support from the program and to act as a hub of best practices among all palikas in the district. *Table 15* below provides the list of the 38 sample palikas across EGRP II's target districts.

Table 15:   List of TPS sample palikas and number of schools and clusters in each palika

No.	District	Palika name	Number of schools	Number of clusters
1	Achham	Mellekh Rural Municipality	42	2
2	Baglung	Bareng Rural Municipality	30	2
3	Banke	Khajura Rural Municipality	47	2
4	Bara	Pheta Rural Municipality	18	1
5	Bardiya	Gulariya Municipality	46	2
6	Bhaktapur	Suryabinayak Municipality	50	2
7	Bhojpur	Pouwadhungwa Rural Municipality	33	2
8	Dadeldhura	Amargadhi Municipality	38	2
9	Dailekh	Dungeshor Rural Municipality	27	2
10	Dang	Babai Rural Municipality	34	2
11	Dhankuta	Chaubise Rural Municipality	44	2
12	Dhanusha	Dhanushadham Municipality	25	1

No.	District	Palika name	Number of schools	Number of clusters
13	Dolpa	Jagadulla Rural Municipality	8	1
14	Doti	Shikhar Municipality	71	4
15	Kailali	Janki Rural Municipality	40	2
16	Kanchanpur	Laljhadi Rural Municipality	17	1
17	Kapilvastu	Kapilvastu Municipality	52	2
18	Kaski	Rupa Rural Municipality	30	1
19	Khotang	Rawa Besi Rural Municipality	28	**1**
20	Mahottari	Manra Siswa Municipality	27	1
21	Manang	Chame Rural Municipality	4	1
22	Mustang	Gharapjhong Rural Municipality	10	1
23	Myagdi	Mangala Rural Municipality	44	3
24	Nawalparasi West	Sunwal Municipality	53	2
25	Parsa	Bahudarmai Municipality	17	1
26	Rasuwa	Kalika Rural Municipality	19	1
27	Rautahat	Rajpur Municipality	13	1
28	Rolpa	Rolpa Municipality	67	4
29	Rupandehi	Tilottama Municipality	61	3
30	Salyan	Darma Rural Municipality	34	2
31	Saptari	Rupani Rural Municipality	13	1
32	Sarlahi	Bagmati Municipality	43	2
33	Sindhuli	Kamalamai Municipality	84	2
34	Sindhupalchok	Balefi Rural Municipality	32	2
35	Siraha	Laxmipurpatar Rural Municipality	22	1
36	Surkhet	Birendranagar Municipality	60	3
37	Tanahun	Myagde Rural Municipality	26	1
38	Taplejung	Aathrai Tribeni Rural Municipality	33	2
		Totals:	**1,342**	**68**

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II closely worked with each of the selected local governments to build capacity for rolling out TPS implementation support. EGRP II provided capacity-development training to TPS actors in 37 of the 38 palikas during that reporting quarter (Amargadhi Municipality in Dadeldhura District had already been covered during the previous quarter). This effort brought the grand total to 38 workshops reaching 469 total participants (16% women).[7] ***Figure 28*** presents the breakdown of workshop participants by organization.

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[7] Note: EGRP II reported a total of 473 participants for this training in the October–December 2021 quarterly report, but after final data cleaning in January 2022, the verified total was 469.

Figure 28: **Participants in the 3-day capacity-development workshops for sample palikas, by organization (*N* = 469)**
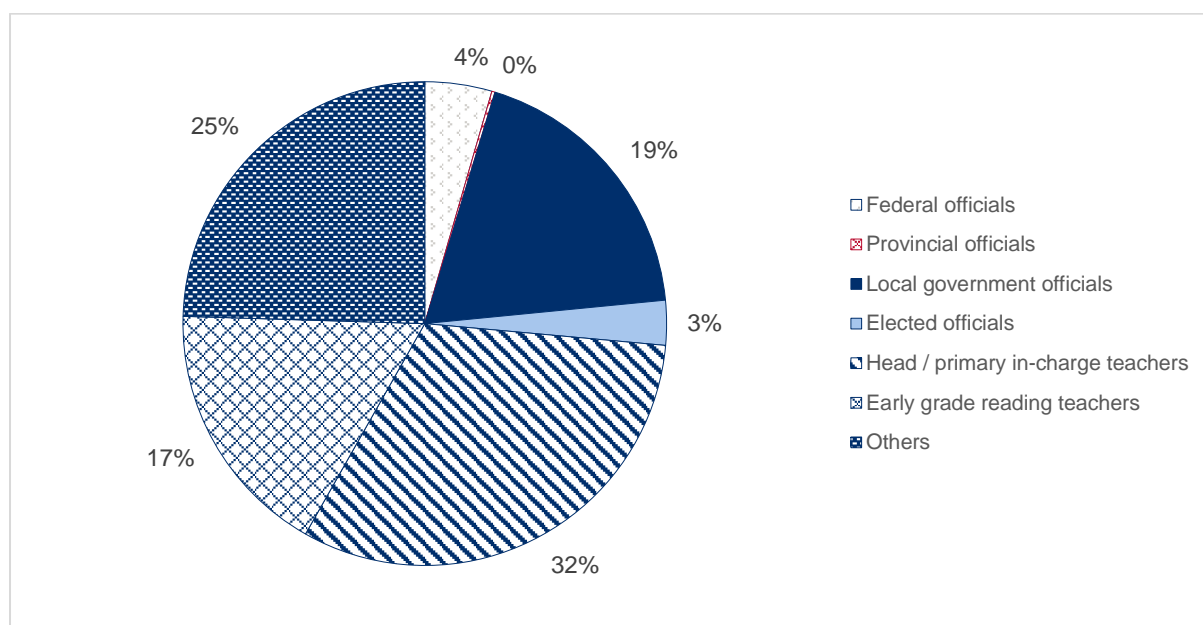
The capacity-development trainings for the sample palikas built skills in conducting classroom observations and coaching teachers, as well as organizing school, cluster, or palika-level TLG meetings for sharing learning and improving instructional practices. After the TPS providers participated in the capacity-development trainings, the sample palikas began developing their action plans to roll out TPS. The activities included in the action plans focused mainly on visiting schools, observing classrooms, providing coaching support to the teachers, and organizing TLG meetings. During the TLG meetings, participants exchanged teaching and learning experiences and challenges with implementing the IC. TPS roster expert team members shared experiences and lessons learned with TLG participants and discussed how to implement appropriate alternatives to make the classroom practices more effective. In addition, experienced teachers (among the roster experts) modeled and demonstrated best practices for teaching in a specified content area, as requested by teachers.

A school-level TLG meeting in Dhankaul Rural Municipality, Sarlahi District. Photo credit: Deepak Pandit

After the TPS trainings were completed in the sample palikas, local governments and schools there began implementing TLGs. During the October–December 2021 quarter, 30 TLG meetings took place, while during the January–April 2022 period, an additional five TLG meetings were held. These efforts raised the total number of TLG meetings supported by EGRP II to 35, with 918 total participants (54% women). *Figure 29* presents the breakdown of workshop participants by organization. The total number of TLG meetings conducted fell short of expectations due to COVID-19 restrictions that were reimposed during January and February 2022. Nevertheless,

the figure represents significant progress in establishing a practice of conducting TLG meetings to promote TPS at the palika level.

Figure 29:   Participants in TLG meetings, by organization (*N* = 918)
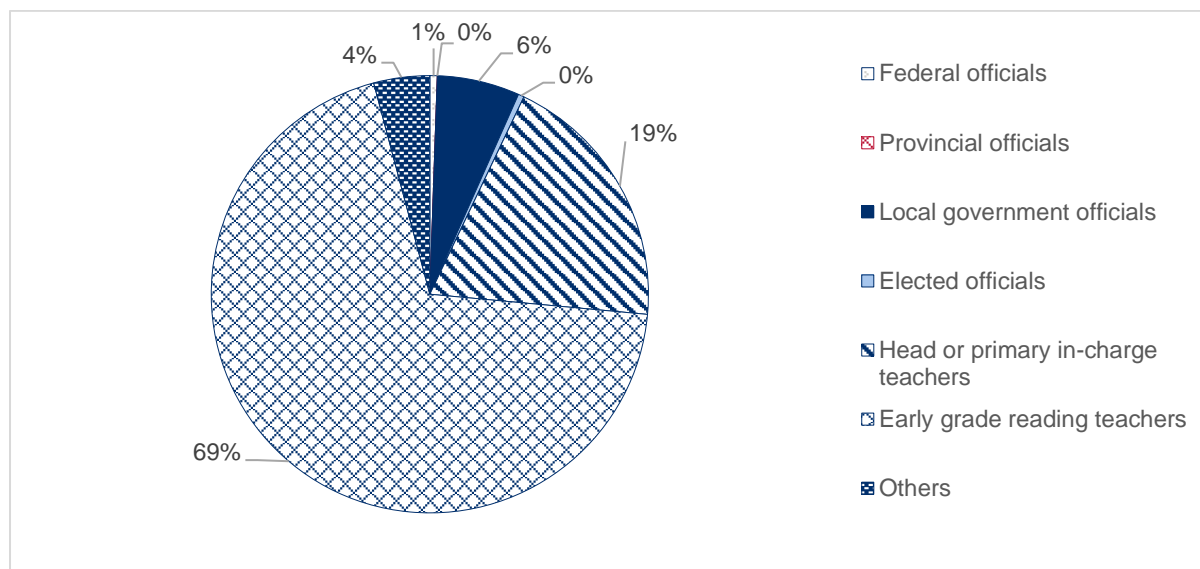
3.4   Objective 4: Support Continuity of Learning in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

Objective 4 entails COVID-19 response activities to help students continue learning during extended school closures, and to help LEUs and schools prepare for school reopening, as well as potential reclosures, as outlined in *Figure 30*.

Figure 30:   Objective 4 components
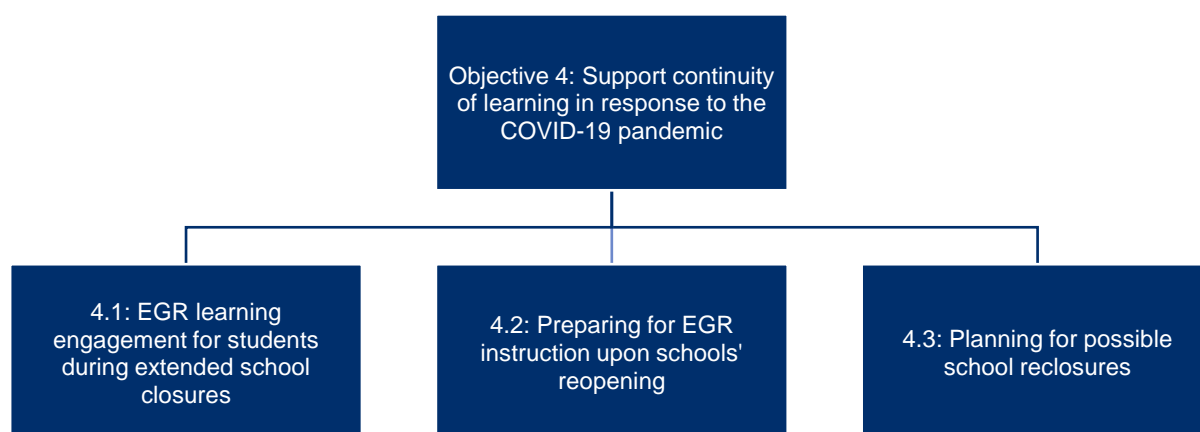
3.4.1 Sub-Objective 4.1: EGR learning engagement for students during extended school closures

Develop digital content for CEHRD's online learning portal for grades 1–3 (Activity 4.1.1)

To support the COVID-19 response in the education sector and to promote continuity of learning, USAID requested RTI to establish a partnership for developing interactive digital learning content. The goal of this activity was to create additional online learning content to supplement existing lessons on CEHRD's online learning portal, an especially important task during extended school closures with large numbers of children forced to learn from home. After undergoing a competitive tendering process, EGRP II partnered with Open Learning Exchange Nepal (OLE Nepal) on the process of lesson development and finalization, in close coordination with CDC and CEHRD.

During the June–September 2021 period, OLE completed a total of 45 lessons from milestones 1 and 2 in OLE's scope of work and shared them with CEHRD. An additional 74 lessons in milestones 3–5 were still under review as of September 2021. In general, development and revision of all of the lessons required extensive back-and-forth, tripartite dialogue, and follow-up among EGRP II, OLE, and CEHRD.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II worked closely with OLE and CEHRD to ensure that all of the remaining 74 lessons were completed and any outstanding feedback on the first sets of 45 lessons was addressed. Once all 119 lessons were completed to a satisfactory level, OLE handed over the electronic files to CEHRD. Given that CEHRD was in the process of revising their learning portal, in agreement with USAID, EGRP II relieved OLE of the responsibility of ensuring that the files were uploaded to the portal and left that task exclusively with CEHRD.

During the January–April 2022 period, CEHRD informed EGRP II that they had reorganized their learning portal to categorize all digital lessons and other learning materials into themes according to the themes in the IC. CEHRD then requested EGRP II technical assistance to tag each lesson according to the theme(s) it contained to make the uploading process more straightforward. **Table 16** provides an example of how the process of identifying the main themes in each lesson was done for the grade 3 English subject, which included six new digital lessons.

Table 16: Grade 3 English digital lessons, categorized by IC theme

Lesson title	Main IC theme covered
1. Simple messages	Me and my family
2. Asking permission	My school
3. Animals in my village	The environment
4. Sentence formation	Me and my family
5. Friends and fruits	Communication, technology, and markets
6. What Raju disliked	Hobbies and interests

EGRP II completed this task and shared the results with CEHRD in March 2022. The team also conducted repeated follow-up to advocate with CEHRD to upload the content onto their

upgraded portal. However, as of the end of April 2022, the content had yet to be uploaded as planned.

The final list of the digital content that EGRP II and OLE Nepal handed over to CEHRD is presented in *Table 17*.

Table 17:   Final list of digital lessons

Subjects	Grades			Total
	1	2	3	
Nepali	5	4	5	14
Mathematics	6	5	8	19
Our Surroundings:				
Science	4	3	5	12
Social studies	12	13	10	35
English	5	3	6	14
Nepali Sign Language	15	0	0	15
Dyslexia	10	0	0	10
Grand total	**57**	**28**	**34**	**119**

Support local governments in COVID-19 response coordination and allocation of resources for continuity of learning (Activity 4.1.2)

To address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's learning, EGRP II developed a community- and home-based learning activity targeting some of the most educationally marginalized communities in Nepal. This intervention rolled out in two phases, with Phase 1 covering 219 schools across an initial set of 16 palikas in the eight districts of Madhesh Province. Phase 2 then scaled up to cover 487 schools across 32 palikas in the same districts, including the schools and palikas that had first been covered in Phase 1. The first phase ran for four months from February through May 2021, and the second phase for 7.5 months from August 2021 through mid-March 2022. To implement the activity, children were split into approximately three learning clusters per school (1,459 in total) that met outside of school hours for remedial learning activities aligned with the IC. Overall, 82,245 children (52.5% girls) participated in the learning clusters; that figure removes double-counting of students who participated in one grade during Phase 1 then moved up to the next grade during Phase 2.

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II focused on scaling up the activity to cover the 16 additional palikas. The implementation modality was also shifted, to end the use of small grants that had been used in Phase 1 to cover school-based expenses and instead provide direct allowance payments to teachers and head teachers for travel costs to and from the learning clusters. This change was instituted based on the learning that small grants imposed burdensome paperwork requirements on schools that were challenging to fulfill during pandemic circumstances, required more time to set up, and were relatively inflexible mechanisms (e.g., difficult to modify grant amounts and periods of performance).

To start the Phase 2 expansion, EGRP II coordinated with CEHRD, the MOSD of Madhesh Province, and the eight EDCUs in the province to select the 16 additional palikas and finalize

the new school list, including details of student enrollment and numbers of EGR teachers. EGRP II then supported the target schools to form learning clusters—or re-convene them in the case of the Phase 1 schools—and to assign teachers to support children in the clusters. To promote effective cluster management, schools were helped to set up 1,459 cluster management committees engaging 4,377 parents (40% women). EGRP II also developed and finalized reporting templates to be used by schools and teachers, guidelines for travel-expense payments to teachers and head teachers, report review and verification mechanisms, and a dashboard for data management.

After identifying the new palikas and schools, EGRP II worked with the Madhesh Province MOSD to organize two one-day consultation events joined by officials from the MOSD, the Education Development Directorate, the ETC, EDCUs, and palikas, as well as EGRP II team members. After the consultation workshops, EGRP II helped to conduct Phase 2 inception meetings in each of the 32 target palikas under the leadership of the EDCUs and the respective LEUs. The meetings oriented school and community stakeholders on the activity, its implementation modality and approaches, and the roles and responsibilities of LEUs and schools in Phase 2. *Figure 31* provides a breakdown of the numbers of inception meetings and participants in the meetings across the existing (Phase 1) palikas and the palikas added in Phase 2.

Figure 31:   Breakdown of events and participants in the inception meetings

Existing palikas: 31 inception meetings with 558 participants (78 women)	**New palikas:** 35 inception meetings with 656 participants (77 women)

Teacher training was the next step in the Phase 2 process. To enhance the skills and capacity of participating teachers, EGRP II coordinated with EDCUs and local governments and organized 1-day refresher trainings in the Phase 1 palikas and 2-day trainings in the Phase 2 palikas. The trainings were facilitated by EGRP II district coordinators and local-level program officers, who themselves had received a 2-day TOT in advance of organizing teacher trainings at the cluster level. Overall, 33 one-day refresher training events were organized in the 16 existing palikas, with 680 participants (50.1% women), and 44 two-day training events were conducted in the 16 new palikas with 873 participants (48.1% women).

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II also procured and distributed three tablets per participating school.[8] This quantity allowed for one tablet for each EGR teacher for a total of 804 tablets (plus extras for government administrators and program staff). Digital copies of learning materials—including TLMs, SRMs, audio recordings, classroom videos, and online learning applications—were compiled and uploaded to all tablets, along with a user guide for teachers that was also distributed in hard copy to all teachers.

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[8] There were 268 schools in total, including 264 schools in the 16 new palikas and the four schools that were added in three existing palikas.

In addition to tablets, EGRP II distributed and oriented local stakeholders on the use of 3,920 sets of stationery packs and low-cost decodable readers to the target schools in the 16 Phase 2 palikas. The stationery included notebooks, coloring notebooks, pencils, pencil sharpeners, erasers, packs of colored pencils, and 20 titles of decodable readers.

EGRP II's east regional office team became adept at organizing and distributing large quantities of stationery items to the learning clusters. (Photo credit: EGRP II staff)

Similar to the June–September distribution, during the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II provided 3,399 stationery packs to 223 target schools in the 16 Phase 1 palikas where community- and home-based schooling was continuing from Year 1. This new stationery distribution was intended to replenish the stationery that had been distributed to the schools initially during Year 1. Each stationery pack was prepared for a group of 10 students and contained notebooks, drawing pads, pencils, pencil sharpeners, erasers, and colored pencils. Before handing over the stationery pack to schools, EGRP II led an orientation session about the quantity of materials in each pack, demonstrated the content of a pack of stationery, and provided guidelines for distributing the stationery among the students to ensure that the intended beneficiaries would receive the materials as soon as possible.

Based on discussions with the USAID/Nepal Education Development Office team after a field visit they conducted to Madhesh Province in October 2021, EGRP II began the procurement process for providing TLMs for the clusters. This procurement responded to the USAID team's observation that EGRP II could do more to support high-quality instruction in the clusters by providing additional materials focused on promoting core reading skills. In total, EGRP II provided 2,918 sets of pinwheel charts and 1,459 sets of letter flashcards, picture-word cards, and window cards to all of the clusters, with distribution wrapping up in February 2022.

Also based on feedback from the USAID field visit about the quality of teaching in the clusters, the EGRP II team prepared an MGML teacher training package for the learning clusters in Madhesh Province in November 2021. A training handbook and materials suggested activities that aligned with the IC for grades 1–3 and aimed to equip teachers with the skills to identify student learning levels and provide differentiated instruction (***Figure 32***).

Figure 32:   Thumbnail of a slide from one of the presentations prepared for the MGML trainings for cluster teachers
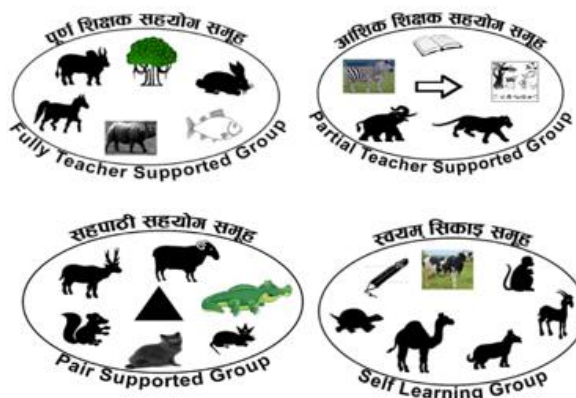
Using the MGML handbook as a guide, the EGRP II curriculum and instruction team developed a short training manual and then conducted a one-day orientation in December 2021 for team members working on community- and home-based learning in Madhesh Province and the Janakpur regional office so that they could cascade the knowledge and skills to head teachers and teachers.

While planning for the intended MGML teacher training, EGRP II determined that it would be challenging to involve all cluster teachers directly in the training due to time and staffing limitations as well as COVID-19 restrictions on in-person gatherings in effect at the time. In discussion with USAID, EGRP II shifted the modality to train one of the three cluster teachers in person at each school. These teachers were selected according to their capacity to cascade the training to the other two teachers at their school.

A teacher trained in MGML instruction cascading the training to the two other cluster teachers at her school. (Photo credit: Sanjay Gupta)

In total, 32 one-day training events were held in February 2022, reaching 581 participants (41% women). The trainings were led by the LEU officials who attended (*Figure 33*), with EGRP II technical assistance. As part of the training, participating teachers were instructed on how to cascade the training content and approaches, and the cascade occurred throughout the remainder of February 2022. The EGRP II team conducted monitoring checks to ensure that the cascade was occurring as planned, and received positive feedback in general that the training was well received by all teachers who benefited.

Figure 33:   Participants in the MGML trainings, by organization (*N* = 581)
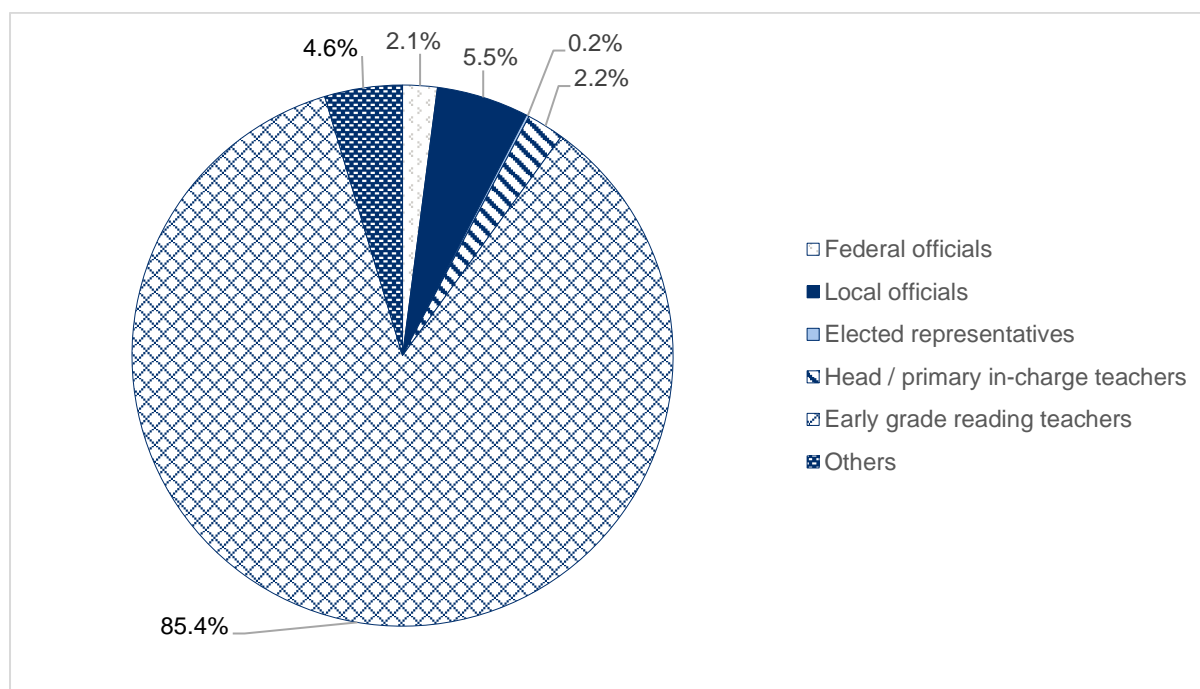
To complement the community mobilization and teacher training activities and substantiate that the community- and home-based schooling intervention was taking place as planned, EGRP II collected data on the frequency and quality of cluster operation throughout Phase 2. As shown in *Figure 34,* most clusters were run more frequently than the minimum standard of 15 days per month that EGRP II established in coordination with local stakeholders, indicating high levels of demand for the activity among parents and community members.

Figure 34:   Percentage of clusters operating less than 15 days, 15 days, or more than 15 days, by month (*N* = 1,459)
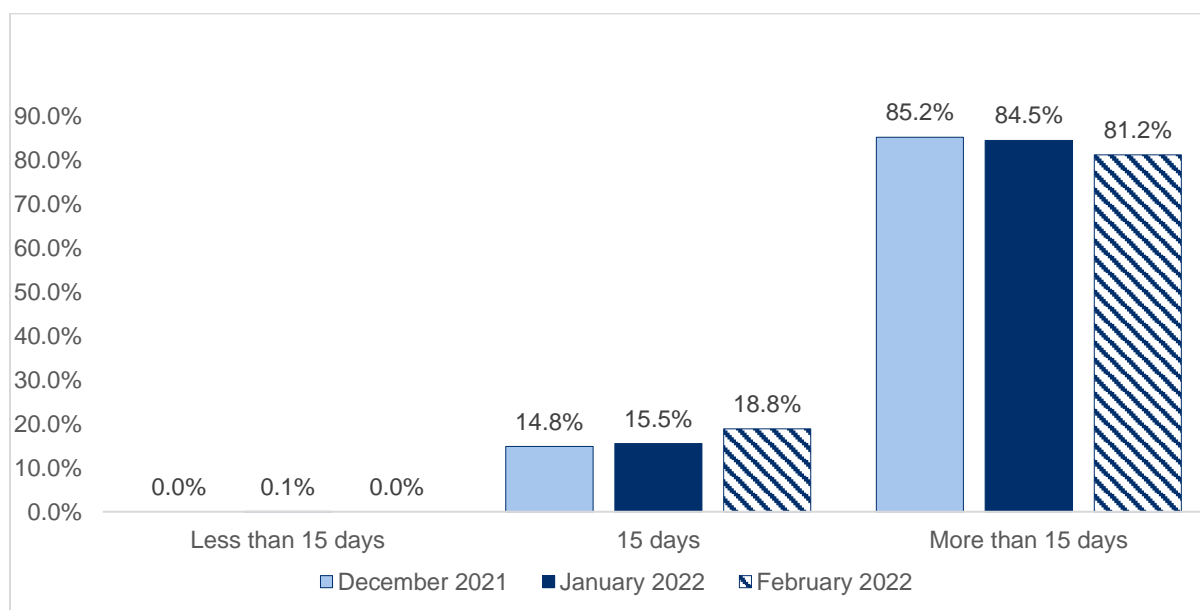
EGRP II also helped school leaders and local governments to monitor quality and support teachers and students in the learning clusters through two main approaches: (1) Regular cluster monitoring by each head teacher or senior teacher, and (2) joint monitoring visits to the clusters by local government officials.

Head teacher monitoring visits were conducted at least once a month in each of the clusters. Aspects tracked through a monitoring form completed by the head teachers during the visits included (1) cluster management, (2) use of TLMs, (3) use of tablets, (4) availability of stationery for students, (5) attendance of teachers at the cluster gatherings, (6) parent support for the clusters, and (7) parent support for children's learning at home. Overall, 9,723 total visits to the learning clusters were reported in Year 2. The monitoring by head teachers identified modest improvements in areas such as use of teaching and learning materials, availability of stationery to students, and parent support to children's learning at home between September 2021 and March 2022 (*Figure 35*), although more could be done to promote meaningful parent participation.

Figure 35:   Average cluster quality ratings given by head teachers, by domain (*N* = 9,723)
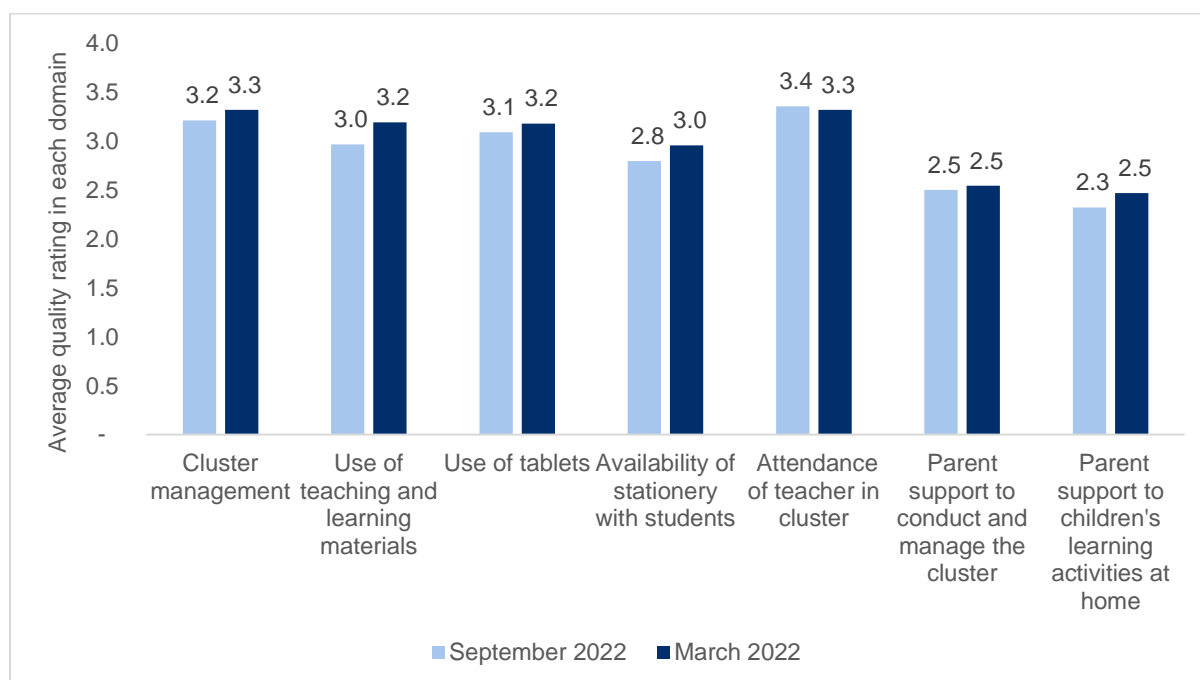
In addition, 519 clusters were monitored through 137 joint monitoring events in Year 2, with officials such as mayors or deputy mayors, ward chairpersons, and LEU heads participating. During the visits, participants observed activities in the clusters and organized sharing and reflection meetings with the school teams. Feedback from these joint monitoring visits identified that the ongoing head teacher support to cluster teachers was one of the most useful and successful aspects of the overall quality monitoring efforts for the intervention. Similar to the head teacher monitoring results shared in *Figure 35*, however, the joint monitoring visits also identified that parent and community engagement in cluster management and teaching and learning was the main area for future improvement.

During EGRP II's final months, the program's focus was on successfully learning from, closing out, and handing over the community- and home-based learning activity to local governments, schools, and community leaders. To promote shared learning and planning for the future of the community- and home-based learning activity, EGRP II implemented final internal learning meetings and conducted an external review using RTI's internal research and development funds, as part of a multicountry study on education sector responses to COVID-19. The internal learning review identified substantial achievements but also outlined several challenges that will need to be addressed in the future:

- Tablets have insufficient audio volume when used outside or with large groups of children. If tablets are used in such settings in the future, Bluetooth speakers should be provided to amplify the volume.

- EGRP II set up three clusters per school to align with the fact that typically three EGR teachers would cover the early grades in each school. However, this arrangement proved challenging in schools with large student enrollments, because it resulted in very large cluster sizes. In the future, implementers should consider apportioning the number of clusters based on the population of grades 1–3 students in each class.

- The travel allowances provided to teachers were viewed as insufficient in relation to the high levels of demand for the catch-up learning activities, with many teachers running the clusters more frequently than originally envisioned. In addition, both the school grant and the allowance payment approaches placed significant administrative, tracking, and paperwork burdens on program staff. Options to streamline the burdens and/or provide more dedicated staff time should be considered in the future.

- The spaces provided for the learning clusters held in community settings were sometimes inadequate for large groups or for insulating the groups of children from outside noises and interruptions during cluster operation.

The review commissioned by RTI aimed to provide external feedback on the intervention and answer questions such as:

- What was the intended design of the community- and home-based schooling intervention?

- What were the challenges and successes of the intervention?

- What are the prospects for continuing the intervention after EGRP II and/or after the COVID-19 pandemic is over?

The external review was conducted by an experienced local qualitative researcher who visited five schools in Sarlahi and Rautahat Districts. The schools were purposely selected to represent a range of different conditions, such as schools that started implementation as part of the Phase 1 or Phase 2 remediation batches; schools running the clusters in community or classroom settings; and schools with large or small numbers of children participating. To answer the research questions, the researcher conducted focus group discussions and interviews with a range of stakeholders, including head teachers and teachers, cluster management committee members, and local and district government officials (see *Table 18* for a list of informants consulted in the study, plus cluster-related success stories in *Annex D*). Observations of teaching and learning activities were also conducted while cluster teaching activities were running.

Table 18:   Final list of digital lessons

	Sarlahi District	Rautahat District	Total
Head teachers	3	3	6
LEU heads	2	2	4
Cluster teachers	9	6	15
Parents	6	4	10
EGRP II staff	1	1	2
Total	**21**	**16**	**37**

The review found that stakeholders had strong understanding of the objectives and intended approaches of the community- and home-based learning approach, including the reasons for targeting younger learners with additional support to build—or rebuild—a foundation of skills. Informants shared their observations that the activity had a strong impact on children's skill development and ability to grasp the required content in the curriculum, in line with the activity's objectives. Study participants also noted that the key inputs provided as part of the activity, such as stationery and tablets, were distributed on time and as planned. The study also identified very high levels of demand for the activity, which sometimes created challenges for teachers when the demand outstripped their ability to provide differentiated instruction as they had been coached during trainings provided by EGRP II. Specific areas for improvement were also identified, including finding learning spaces that are more appropriate for children, ensuring reasonable group sizes, and providing learning supplies in proportion to the number of students in each cluster. The study also uncovered that parent engagement levels may not have been as high as expected—a finding echoed by EGRP II's monitoring data, as discussed above—and that more emphasis should be placed on this aspect in the future. In addition, stakeholders indicated strong interest and some commitment from local government and school officials to continue the catch-up learning approach with their own resources, whether or not the pandemic continued to affect education in the same way as in the past two years.

During the closeout event in Madhesh Province, an LEU representative pointed to how his palika was highlighted as a success story for allocating their own funding to support continued catch-up learning. (Photo credit: Jodie Fonseca)

In addition to these efforts to learn from and document the community- and home-based schooling activity, EGRP II coordinated with the MOSD of Madhesh Province to conduct a closeout event in early April 2022 with participation from USAID/Nepal EDCU and LEU officials from the participating districts

and palikas. During the event, participants reviewed and celebrated the achievements of the catch-up learning activity and discussed lessons learned.

Overall, the feedback from GON representatives during the event was positive. For example, the MOSD Education Division Chief noted that "business as usual" would not solve challenges of education equity in Nepal, and that EGRP II's technical assistance had helped the GON move past the usual models to implement an impactful intervention in the most disadvantaged areas of the province. A participating head teacher highlighted how the MGML training conducted with EGRP II support helped teachers categorize learners by skill and provide effective support to help catch up on the curriculum. Local government officials spoke proudly of the steps they had taken to ensure that the catch-up learning activity would continue after EGRP II support phased out, using palika financial resources.

In total, 43 government officials joined the event, as indicated in *Figure 36* below.

Figure 36:   Participants in the community- and home-based learning closeout event (N=43)
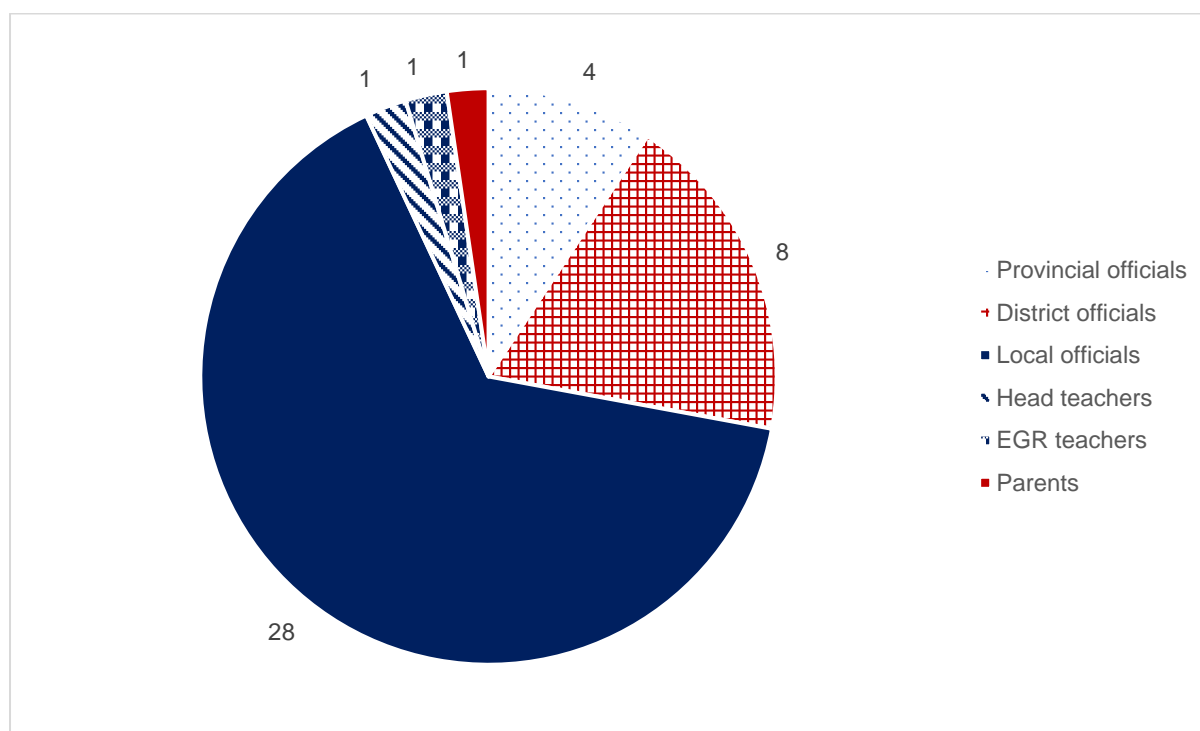
The strong local buy-in for the activity identified in EGRP II's monitoring and research efforts and expressed during the closeout event was reflected in the concrete commitments shown by local governments to continue catch-up learning with their own resources. For example, as of mid-April 2022, 103 schools across 21 palikas were continuing to run 282 learning clusters using the schools' own resources. In addition, 16 palikas had proposed municipal budget allocation of approximately US $78,218 for continuing the activity in 251 schools. Four palikas had successfully approved budget allocations of roughly US $14,432 and were running the activity in 56 schools.

3.4.2 Sub-Objective 4.2: Preparing for EGR instruction upon schools' reopening

Support ERO/GON to analyze learning loss (Activity 4.2.1)

The Year 2 AWP incorporated an ERO request that EGRP II conduct a study on the impacts of COVID-19 on children's learning in Nepal. During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II coordinated with ERO and USAID to complete the study design. The objectives of the study were determined as follows:

1. To assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on student learning in the early grades of community schools.
2. To explore the barriers and challenges that students face in accessing teaching and learning activities during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. To assess education system resilience and draw recommendations for policy, resource allocation, and practice to address future effects of COVID-19 on the education sector.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II worked with USAID and ERO to develop a TOR for the study, including the proposed sample of districts and informants, and the study timeline. After a request for proposals was advertised, an evaluation committee composed of EGRP II, ERO, and USAID representatives found during a bid evaluation in November 2021 that no bidders had met the RFP's minimum eligibility requirements. Thus, EGRP II reissued the RFP in the third week of November 2021 and a firm was successfully contracted through a subaward in late December 2021.

During the January–April 2022 period, the selected research firm, Foundation for Educational Change (FEDUC) got started with their work by conducting a desk review of policies and practices for COVID-19 response in Nepal's education sector. Subsequently, FEDUC drafted and conducted a dry run of the data collection tools in Bhaktapur and revised the tools based on the findings of the dry run. Data then were collected in six EGRP II

Dry run of the tools for the study on COVID-19 impacts on learning at a school in Bhaktapur District. (Photo credit: FEDUC staff)

target districts—Achham, Bara, Bhojpur, Surkhet, Tanahun, and Taplejung—which had been selected to represent a range of geographical features, languages spoken, and socioeconomic conditions. *Table 19* below provides an overview of the sample of informants reached across the study locations (with numbers of female informants indicated in parentheses).

Table 19. Overview of informant sample for the study on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's learning

(Parentheses indicate numbers of female informants)

Location	Federal or provincial government	Local govern-ment	Head teachers	Teach-ers	Parents or SMC / PTA members	Stu-dents	EGRP II staff	Totals
Districts								
Mangalsen Municipality, Achham District	N/A	1 (0)	3 (0)	3 (1)	3 (0)	3 (0)	2 (0)	**15 (1)**
Pheta Rural Municipality, Bara District	N/A	1 (0)	3 (0)	3 (1)	3 (0)	3 (2)	2 (0)	**15 (3)**
Arun Rural Municipality, Bhojpur District	N/A	1 (0)	3 (0)	3 (2)	3 (2)	3 (1)	1 (0)	**14 (5)**
Birendranagar Municipality, Surkhet District	N/A	1 (0)	3 (2)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)	1 (0)	**14 (11)**
Myagde Rural Municipality, Tanahun District	N/A	1 (0)	3 (0)	3 (3)	3 (3)	3 (3)	2 (1)	**15 (10)**
Phuling Municipality, Taplejung District	N/A	1 (0)	3 (0)	3 (3)	3 (1)	3 (1)	1 (0)	**14 (5)**
Other locations								
Provincial officials	5 (0)	–	–	–	–	–	–	**5 (0)**
Federal officials	3 (0)	–	–	–	–	–	–	**3 (0)**
Grand totals								
Total men/boys	8	6	16	5	9	8	8	60
Total women/girls	0	0	2	13	9	10	1	35
Total overall	8	6	18	18	18	18	9	95

The study identified several key findings related to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in Nepal. In particular, children's learning was adversely affected by the pandemic due to prolonged school closures followed by short reopening windows, which left large chunks of the curriculum untaught. All children were affected, irrespective of their social backgrounds, but stakeholders reported that the effects were most acute for children in rural areas. The challenges were compounded by students' limited access to ICT to support alternative modes of learning, gaps in teacher skills in managing ICT use when technology was available, and limited availability of learning and reading materials in students' homes. In addition, disruptions to teacher training and coaching on the IC left teachers dealing with the double impacts of the pandemic and the lack of preparation to implement the revised curriculum. There was also widespread feedback that children tended to forget previously learned content and found it difficult to catch up on the learning after schools reopened, presenting further challenges to teachers trying to cover the curriculum. Local education

officials faced similar difficulties related to planning and coordinating the pandemic response, with gaps in resource sharing and communication persisting among local stakeholders despite the formation and mobilization of education clusters.

Although the challenges identified in the study were many, promising practices were also found. For example, LEU officials learned how to use technology, including online collaboration platforms, to coordinate support to schools and teachers. In addition, the federal government response was supportive in promoting flexible learning approaches and curricular adjustments tailored to local circumstances. Community-based approaches such as *tole shiksha* (small gatherings of learners) were well received and perceived by local stakeholders to be an effective alternative learning approach.

The study identified several recommendations for the future, as captured in *Figure 37*. These findings and recommendations were shared widely with education stakeholders in Nepal through final learning and sharing events at the end of the program.

Figure 37:   Summary of findings from the study on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's learning

- National and subnational plans for education in emergencies should be in place ahead of time and then fully implemented and monitored when needed.
- The GON should create a more enabling environment for deploying virtual learning modalities, and train teachers preemptively on ICT use and curriculum content adjustment.
- Stronger intergovernmental coordination, communication, and joint monitoring mechanisms are needed to prepare for and respond to similar future emergencies.
- The learning loss caused by the COVID-19 pandemic should be compensated for through concentration of effort and resources on catch-up learning.
- Cluster-based learning (*tole shiksha* or similar approaches) should be promoted and deployed in the event of similar disruptions, and mainstreamed within the education system as a best practice to promote ongoing catch-up learning for the students who need it even without a state of emergency in effect.

Support CDC and CEHRD to help teachers deliver EGR instruction during shortened school year (Activity 4.2.2)

In Year 1, EGRP II worked closely with CDC to prepare parent–teacher guides to promote flexible learning strategies for children in grades 1–3. During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II conducted orientations on the materials for all 38 EDCUs and 396 local governments as well as other school-level stakeholders such as head teachers and SMC members. The orientation facilitators shared details about the objectives of the guides as well as the processes parents and teachers can follow to support children's learning during and after COVID-19 disruptions. In total, EGRP II reached 821 participants (15.6% women) through 34 virtual orientations on the materials during Year 2.[9]

In addition to the orientations, EGRP II distributed printed copies of the guides to 38 EDCUs, 396 local governments, 13,928 schools, seven ETCs, seven Education Development Directors, MOEST, CDC, and CEHRD, at federal, provincial, district, and local levels. After

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[9] Note: The June–September 2021 progress report indicated that 183 participants were reached through eight virtual orientations. However, the reporting was only partial at that time. After reviewing all event data for the purposes of this annual report, the MEL team counted a total of 821 participants across 34 events.

receiving the materials and in response to the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic that took place in 2021, local governments printed additional copies of the materials using their own financial resources and distributed them to schools for parents to pick up locally.

This activity was concluded as of September 2021, and as such, further reporting is not provided for the remaining months of the program.

3.4.3   Sub-Objective 4.3: Planning for possible school reclosures

Activities to support children as school openings and closures have fluctuated are discussed under Sub-Objective 4.2 just above.

3.5   Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning, and Adapting

Activities undertaken related to MEL during Year 2 focused on strengthening and expanding the MEL system and dashboards and revising the program's MEL Plan in response to the changing context and requests from USAID to add performance indicators. In addition, the team completed an internal DQA as well as internal learning reviews. Finally, EGRP II prepared for and conducted endline data collection, analysis, and reporting for the program's learning evaluation.

3.5.1   Develop MEL system and dashboards

During the June–September 2021 period, the MEL team supported development of two new tools for tracking program activities and outcomes in response to evolving needs. The first tool tracks the status of progress and outcomes related to selected indictors of local capacity development and planning as well as TPS and helps with reporting on those indicators in the MEL Plan. The tracker was especially useful in helping the team measure progress at a fine-grained level, by district and palika. The second tracking tool was developed for the community- and home-based schooling activities in Madhesh Province in response to the need to collect high-quality, uniform data on implementation of learning clusters, as well as to track head teachers' monitoring efforts and other joint monitoring visits to the clusters.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II revised the program's MEL Plan, including adjusting the indicator definitions and targets to align better with the program design and the COVID-19 pandemic context. The team also added five new indicators as requested by USAID (the indicators numbered 24–28 in *Annex B*). The MEL team then updated the program's indicator trackers and dashboards to align with the revised MEL Plan, and conducted team orientation to ensure awareness of the new requirements.

During the January–April 2022 period, the EGRP II MEL team updated the program's output tracker database and visualization platform to include detailed data collection in two areas: The types of EGR activities included in MEPs and budgets; and the TPS options selected by each local government that had selected options at that point. This additional data collection generated useful information on the specific content of education plans and budgets for each local level, and the gaps that will need to be addressed in the future.

3.5.2 Conduct routine monitoring, reporting, and collaborative learning

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II conducted two main activities related to monitoring, reporting, and learning in addition to routine tracking of program progress: An internal DQA and a round of internal semiannual regional learning review workshops.

Indicators chosen for field-based verification during the DQA are captured in *Table 20* below. These indicators were selected to align with the DQA requirements in EGRP II's MEL Plan and to cover a range of standard and custom indicators as well as outcome and output level indicators.

Table 20:   List of indicators verified during the internal DQA

IND 02_ES. 1-3: Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings reached with USG education assistance
IND 03_ES. 1-50: Number of public and private schools receiving USG assistance
IND 07_Sub-IR 1.1; 3.3_(ES. 1-6): Number of educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance
IND 08_Sub-IR 1.2; 2.1; 3.3_ES. 1-12: Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance
IND 09_Sub-IR 2.1; 2.2_Custom: Percent of local governments/levels using IEMIS profiles for planning and budgeting in the education sector
IND 10_Sub IR 2.1 Custom: Percent of local governments validating IEMIS data shared by schools
IND 11_Sub-IR 2.2; 2.3_Custom: Percent of municipalities formulating their annual MEPs and budgets that include early grade reading/learning
IND 12_Sub IR 2.2; 2.3_Custom: Percent of local governments allocating discretionary funds to education sector activities
IND 13_Sub-IR 2.4_Custom: Number of schools with book corners that include SRMs
IND 14_Sub IR 2.4_Custom: Number of SRMs delivered
IND 17_Sub IR 3.4_Custom: Number of schools receiving joint monitoring and coaching support through USG assistance
IND 20_IR 4_ES 1.13: Number of PTAs or community governance structures engaged in primary education supported with USG assistance
IND 21_IR 4_Custom: Number of education stakeholders oriented/trained to implement community/home-based learning
IND 22_IR 4_Custom: Number of electronic devices distributed to support community/home-based learning

The MEL team conducted data verification for these indicators on a sample basis at schools and in government offices in Achham, Baglung, Bara, Dhankuta, Dhanusha, Doti, Kanchanpur, Nawalparasi West, Rupandehi, and Sindhupalchok Districts.

After completing the field verification process, during the October–December 2021 quarter, the EGRP II MEL team analyzed and prepared a report on the findings and recommendations for future use. The key findings from the internal DQA indicated that multiple levels of verification ensured the objectivity of the data and reduced the possibility of data manipulation and unauthorized changes. In addition, evidence to substantiate all indicators was well documented within the MEL system, and reporting the data on a weekly and monthly basis through the MEL system ensured timely availability of information for management decision making across all indicators.

However, the DQA identified an important shortcoming related to Indicator 13 on book corners in schools. This indicator was defined broadly to include data on SRM distribution to each school, but not necessarily on verification of the presence of book corners. This workaround was put in place because the EGRP II team did not have the time and staffing to verify book corner setup in the thousands of schools in the target districts, although the team did provide orientation on SRM display and use during all other available opportunities (DCC meetings, local capacity-development workshops, TPS-related workshops, joint monitoring visits, etc.). The limited ability to follow up on book corner setup directly with schools was perhaps reflected in the fact that, during the sample-based school visits, book corners were found in 24% of schools while 41% of schools had hung the books in the classroom or had made other similar arrangements, leaving 35% of schools that had not displayed the SRMs in the classrooms. These findings point to the importance of allocating greater resources for training and follow-up on SRM use at the school level or finding low-resource ways to get the message out to schools despite limited program staff time.

In addition to the internal DQA, the MEL team also spearheaded internal learning review workshops during the June–September 2021 period. The workshops aimed to assess the quality of program implementation and identify areas for improvement; understand potential barriers and challenges in program implementation; and identify to what extent the program approaches contributed to attainment of desired outcomes and what recommendations for improvement might be advised. According to feedback gathered from the EGRP II team, overall, the areas for improvement included support for IC TPD rollout and TPS implementation. The greatest strengths were identified for community- and home-based learning activities, implementation of the local capacity-development workshops, and implementation of joint monitoring and coaching. The team used these findings to focus efforts on supporting the quality of IC TPD trainings and orientations and developing the sample palika approach (see Activity 3.4.2) for providing more intensive TPS support rather than trying to provide limited support to hundreds of palikas.

During the January–March 2022 quarter, the EGRP II MEL team supported the program leadership to design and conduct a final internal learning review meeting, which was held in early March. The learning review covered a set of questions, asking team members to prioritize (1) the most successful approaches or activities implemented throughout the program that could be pointed to as "flagships"; (2) top areas of improvement in the future; and (3) key ways in which the program utilized data and learning to drive decision making and course adjustments (*Figure 38*).

Figure 38:   Summary of findings from the final internal learning review

The most successful flagship approaches and activities

- Support to district governments with orientations on the IC
- Targeted support to selected local governments through formation and mobilization of 3Ts and workshops focused on write-up of MEPs and EPs
- The menu of TPS options in the revised TPS Management Procedure and the TPS Guideline, including formation of local expert groups and modeling of effective TPS in sample palikas that act as hubs for the other palikas in each district
- The extensive engagement of school, community, local, and provincial government leaders in the community- and home-based learning activities

Top areas for improvement in the future

- Additional advocacy and technical support for training and coaching to teachers on the IC

- Expanded role for provincial governments in NEGRP planning and rollout

- Further training and guidance to local governments to implement, monitor, and update their MEPs over time, including implementation of TPS options

Key uses of data for decision making and course adjustments

- Data from the survey on local capacity used to pivot to virtual modalities during the waves of the COVID-19 pandemic

- Data from the local-level tracker used to identify gaps in local capacity development and education planning and budgeting and to provide targeted assistance to select palikas

- Local governments identifying their top priorities in the education sector using IEMIS data

- Regular staff meetings to review progress and solve problems, resulting in a shift to the TPS sample palika approach rather than attempting to provide limited support to all 396 palikas

3.5.3   Conduct program learning and evaluation

To measure program outcomes, EGRP II designed an innovative, low-cost learning evaluation that takes advantage of the GON's CB-EGRA learning assessment approach. In coordination with ERO, EGRP II completed baseline data collection during the January–March 2021 period for two phases of the learning assessment—the first covering the overall program and the second covering the COVID-19 response activities in Madhesh Province. ERO's CB-EGRA tools for grades 2 and 3 were the main data collection instruments for both learning assessments. In addition, a mini-EGRA (i.e., limited to only the reading fluency and comprehension subtasks) was conducted with a subsample of students in the first phase of the study. The data from the mini-EGRA were used to equate the CB-EGRA scores with the EGRA outcomes that are required for reporting on EGRP II learning outcome indicators. Findings from the overall program assessment were reported in detail in the Year 1 Annual Report and published in the baseline report entitled, *Volume 1: Student Reading Performance in the Early Grades.*

During the June–September 2021 period, the EGRP II team finalized reporting on the second assessment covering the activities in Madhesh Province, published as *Volume 2: COVID-19 Response: The Home- and Community-Based Schooling Intervention.* This study aimed to answer questions about reading skills performance in grades 2 and 3, differences in performance for boys and girls, and the value added of the COVID-19 response component over and above EGRP II's support for the NEGRP minimum package.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II worked on finalizing both baseline reports after addressing comments from the GON on their preferred approach to presenting the baseline data. The MEL team also began preparing for the EGRP II endline evaluation by developing a detailed implementation plan, data analysis approach, and reporting template, with support from the RTI home office. In addition to working on the baseline and endline, the EGRP II team provided technical assistance on development of CB-EGRA items in four districts (Bardiya, Dolpa, Manang, and Mustang) but could not complete the planned workshops in two remaining districts (Parsa and Saptari) due to time constraints. These workshops were useful in helping local officials and teachers to contextualize CB-EGRA items for their local situation and to expand the pool of items available for assessments in ERO's assessment item bank.

During the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II finalized preparations for and conducted the EGRP II endline CB-EGRA learning evaluations. The overall sample included 45 schools in Achham, Bara, Bhojpur, Nawalparasi West, Rasuwa, Surkhet, and Tanahun Districts, while the COVID-19 response sample focused on 47 schools implementing community- and home-based learning activities in Dhanusha, Rautahat, Saptari, and Sarlahi Districts. To prepare for the endline, the MEL team first conducted an internal orientation for program staff. This step was followed by 2-day trainings for the teachers who would be conducting CB-EGRA data collection with grade 2 and 3 students. Those teachers then carried out the student assessments, which took place from mid-February to mid-March 2022, with technical support and quality monitoring by EGRP II MEL staff and district coordinators.

While the CB-EGRA administration was in progress, EGRP II staff conducted mini-EGRA data collection on a subsample of grade 2 and 3 students to support further field testing of the revised EGR benchmarks. Data were entered using KoBo Toolbox (see the sample in *Figure 39*), and were then analyzed with support from RTI home office statisticians. The EGRP II team also utilized the same real-time tracker to monitor data collection progress that had been previously utilized during the baseline, to ensure that the process adhered to the short timelines that were available as the program was in the closeout phase.

Figure 39:   Screenshot of the KoBo Toolbox data entry sheet for CB-EGRA data in the EGRP II endline

Once data collection was completed, the EGRP II team cleaned and began analyzing the data in March and April 2022 to answer the research questions in the evaluation. The findings and implications from the evaluation are presented in detail in the EGRP II final progress report. The team also drafted a single endline report document entitled *Endline Report: Program Impact on Student Reading Performance in the Early Grades,* which provides the overall results and also discusses the value-added of the COVID-19 intervention in Madhesh Province.

3.6   GON Liaison

One of EGRP II's main goals is to provide technical assistance and support to the GON's MOEST to build capacity for rollout of the NEGRP minimum package under the School Sector Development Plan and in line with the IC. As such, close coordination and collaboration with government counterparts from the federal to the local levels specified below was a key EGRP II emphasis throughout Year 2.

During the June–September 2022 period, EGRP II supported MOEST to conduct a quarterly NEGRP Steering Committee meeting in July 2021. During the meeting, the EGRP II team presented on progress during Year 1 of the program as well as plans for Year 2. EGRP II also coordinated with CEHRD on planning the IC TPD MTOTs, designing operational research, determining local capacity-development efforts, planning TPS training activities, and reviewing and finalizing the digital content for CEHRD's learning portal. EGRP II collaborated with CDC on finalizing the parent–teacher guides for flexible learning in grades 1–3; designing operational research on the IC and implementing the SEC methodology; and developing the interactive application for teacher support on the IC. ERO coordination focused on areas such as EGR benchmark revision and design of the study on impacts of the pandemic and related responses on students' learning. Subnational-level liaison included extensive communication with MOSDs, Education Development Directorates, and ETCs on local capacity development and support for IC TPD orientations and trainings. In addition, EGRP II's district coordinators and local program offices also engaged regularly with the program's 396 targeted local governments, with a focus on carrying out local-level planning and budgeting, setting up TPS roster expert groups, and providing intensive support for COVID-19 response in the 32 target palikas in Madhesh Province.

In November 2021, EGRP II assisted MOEST to conduct another quarterly Steering Committee meeting. The agenda included a review of previous meeting decisions, updates on EGRP II's progress during the June–September 2021 period, discussion of upcoming program activities and the program closeout plan, and sharing of the drafts of the revised EGR benchmarks and the NARN policy briefs. Coordination with CEHRD, CDC, and ERO continued on themes similar to those in the previous quarter. Apart from working with federal agencies, EGRP II worked closely with provincial ETCs to organize the IC TPD training events and plan for the TPS MTOTs. In the same way, EGRP II held several virtual and in-person consultative meetings with EDCUs and local governments for conducting joint monitoring visits; mobilizing local TPS roster expert groups; and mobilizing technical task

Meeting between the MOSD Secretary for Madhesh Province and EGRP II team members during the Chief of Party's field visit in March 2022. (Photo credit: EGRP II staff)

team members for drafting, reviewing, and finalizing MEPs and EPs; and advocating for effective implementation of TPS at local levels.

During January–April 2022, EGRP II focused intensively on closeout meetings and exit planning with GON stakeholders at subnational and national levels. These discussions took

place through DCC meetings with district and local government representatives, and through field visits undertaken to Madhesh Province by the Chief of Party and the Director of Programs, who were joined by ERO representatives who wanted to observe endline data collection. The Chief of Party and Director of Programs both also attended a final learning and closeout meeting in Madhesh Province in early April 2022, chaired by the MOSD Secretary and attended by representatives of the eight EDCUs and 32 palikas participating in the community- and home-based learning in the province.

At the central level, EGRP II focused on program closeout and future planning through another quarterly Steering Committee Meeting conducted in February 2022, which shared progress updates and discussed the closeout timeline with MOEST, CDC, CEHRD, and ERO officials. In addition, a final learning and sharing meeting in mid-April 2022 and a high-level event to celebrate 7 years of the NEGRP (from 2015 to 2022) in late April, both held in Kathmandu. The overall objective of the learning and sharing event were to share key achievements of NEGRP with EGRP II support from 2020–2022 and to discuss future recommendations and implications for the Nepal education sector. More specifically, the event allowed EGRP II to:

- Share achievements, research, and lessons learned related to rollout of the IC, TPS, and local capacity development for EGR, and identify future recommendations;

- Share the processes, approaches, and achievements from community- and home-based learning for COVID-19 response in Madhesh Province and other COVID-19 response initiatives to continue students' learning, along with discussion on the broader implications for the education system going forward; and

- Present and discuss the findings and recommendations from EGRP II-supported research and assessment activities, including revised EGR benchmarks; learning assessments; and research on the IC, TPS, and COVID-19 impacts on students' learning.

The learning and sharing event was chaired by the MOEST Joint Secretary for Planning and Monitoring and the Acting USAID/Nepal Mission Director. Presentations on achievements and lessons learned were given by GON officials from CDC, CEHRD, and ERO with support from EGRP II and the research partners conducting the studies on the IC, TPS, and COVID-19 impacts on learning in Nepal. Participants raised several critical suggestions for the future, such as:

- The importance of having IC TPD trainers for the early primary grades who have actual experience teaching students at that level, instead of or in addition to current roster trainers, who are typically secondary school teachers

- The need to ensure that teachers are well trained in and comfortable with the continuous assessment approach built into the IC, which to date has been challenging for some teachers to understand and integrate into their everyday practices and weekly time tables

- The fact that coordination and collaboration often occurs effectively between district and local level governments, but this may not be visible to central-level officials, highlighting the need to strengthen communication between the national and sub-national levels

In total, 35 participants (17% women) joined from across GON agencies, including MOEST, CDC, CEHRD, and CDC at the central level; as well as representatives from the provincial, district, palika, and school levels. The event was also featured prominently on USAID/Nepal social media sites.

The 7-year celebration event was attended by the MOEST Joint Secretary for Planning and Monitoring, the USAID Mission Director, and other high-level representatives from the GON and development partners. The objective was to reflect on and celebrate NEGRP achievements since the inception of the program in 20215. The event first featured a presentation on NEGRP accomplishments, challenges, and future directions. Next, national-level journalists and other participants raised important questions about penetration of the program at

The USAID/Nepal Mission Director sharing remarks during the 7-year celebration event. (Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

grassroots levels, sustainability of NEGRP within GON systems, and plans for future scale-up. The EGRP II Chief of Party, the Mission Director, and the Joint Secretary shared concluding remarks highlighting the importance of continued collaboration to ensure effective implementation of the NEGRP at all levels, with a focus on promoting equity in children's participation and learning. Overall, 14 central-level GON participants (29% women) joined the event from the MOEST, CDC, CEHRD, and ERO. The celebration was subsequently featured on USAID/Nepal social media sites and covered in the national press, including articles in media outlets such as The Himalayan, My Republica, and Gorkha Patra.

3.7 Collaboration and Coordination with Similar Interventions in the Sector

In Year 2, the EGRP II team was active in establishing new collaborations or strengthening existing coordination that had been built through EGRP and Year 1 of EGRP II.

During the June–September 2021 period, EGRP II formalized a collaboration with the RISE Programme (described further under Objective 1 above), negotiating an agreement in which the RISE team would provide their technical expertise for this research effort using their own financial resources. EGRP II also coordinated with MOEST, the World Bank, USAID, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Kingdom's Embassy in Nepal, Street Child Nepal, Young Love, and the EdTech Hub to design and conduct a "Symposium on Learning During and Post-COVID-19 in Nepal" as a side event to the Global Education Summit. Held virtually in 2021, the symposium highlighted innovative approaches to COVID-19 response in the education sector, including EGRP II's community- and home-based learning approach.

In addition, coordination with the Japan International Cooperation Agency's Project for Improving Mathematics Instruction in Nepal (JICA-IMEN) continued on local capacity-development efforts in districts in which the two programs overlapped, including Bhaktapur,

Saptari, and Tanahun. With ERO approval, EGRP II invited the Room to Read team to join the reading benchmark revision process due to the organization's wide experience in reading benchmark development in Nepal and beyond. UNICEF and EGRP II held a collaborative meeting in September 2021 in which both organizations shared their initiatives to support continuity of children's learning in response to COVID-19. With USAID's coordination, EGRP II met with World Bank Nepal in September 2021 to discuss how best to support the GON on disbursement-linked indicator reporting requirements related to EGR in light of the pandemic. Finally, the EGRP II MEL team leader participated in week-long workshop on policy linking for reporting on SDG 4 in September 2021, led by the GON and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

During the October–December 2021 quarter, EGRP II carried out collaboration and coordination efforts related to early grade learning in the Nepal education sector with a few different agencies. For example, the partnership continued with the RISE Programme team to conduct the operational research on the IC. EGRP II also communicated and shared information with organizations active in MGML teaching and learning in Nepal and the South Asia region, including the German–Nepalese Help Association, which worked with CEHRD to introduce multigrade teaching and learning in the Nepal context; and Pratham India, as it adapts its Teaching at the Right Level approach for Nepal in coordination with the World Bank. In addition, with support from the RTI home office team, EGRP II submitted a proposal for a panel session at the April 2022 annual (hybrid) Comparative and International Education Society (CIES) conference. The EGRP II presentation that was proposed (and accepted; see update below) covered policy linking for benchmarking and the use of an innovative, low-cost learning assessment approach that deploys CB-EGRA.

From January to April 2022, EGRP II focused intensively on exit planning with GON offices and on closeout preparations. As such, external collaboration was not as extensive during this period as in past reporting time frames. Nevertheless, EGRP II continued the partnership with the RISE Programme on the IC operational research. The team also joined a discussion in February 2022 with UNICEF and other implementing agencies working on EGR in Nepal, to brainstorm about a possible national campaign to promote a culture of reading. At the invitation of Peace Corps Nepal, EGRP II participated in a resource fair for English teachers in March 2022. The team presented a

A member of EGRP II's curriculum and instruction team presents at the display table at the resource fair for English teachers in March 2022. (Photo credit: Sandip Kuwar)

display table of EGR TLMs and SRMs and answered questions from the participants about their availability and use. The EGRP II Director of Programs also shared an update on EGRP II's COVID-19 response activities with the members of the Early Grade Reading Technical

Working Group in late March 2022. In addition, EGRP II invited a range of development partners and implementing agencies working on early grade learning across Nepal to join the final learning and sharing event in mid-April 2022, although their participation was limited to a virtual platform due to concerns about large group sizes in person.

Last but not least, the CIES organizers shared the good news in early January 2022 that EGRP II's panel proposal had been accepted for the CIES conference. The session took place on April 23, with EGRP II joining via a prerecorded presentation because in-person travel was not feasible during the last stages of program closeout and due to COVID-19 concerns. The session was chaired by a representative of USAID/Washington and the presentations included:

- *Capacity building and benchmarking in Kenya: Engaging ministries of education in policy linking,* shared by USAID/Kenya

- *Policy linking: The importance of feedback in establishing defensible global benchmarks,* shared by Management Systems International

- *Assessing early grade reading outcomes the cost-effective way: Using a classroom-based literacy assessment as an alternative to the EGRA,* shared by EGRP II.

The session organizers remarked that EGRP II's participation in the session was useful in highlighting real-world experiences and challenges with rolling out the policy linking process in coordination with national governments.

3.8   Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

In Year 2, EGRP II promoted gender equality and social inclusion in a variety of ways. These efforts included focusing on GESI in staff recruitment and capacity development; monitoring, evaluation, and research activities; and community- and home-based learning targeting in Madhesh Province.

With regard to staff composition and recruitment, as of the end of April 2022, the EGRP II team included various social and ethnic communities, as presented in *Figure 40*. The total number of staff had dropped to 19 by this date because most staff were demobilized in March and April. The greater-than-usual share of women in the EGRP II workforce reflects the fact that only Kathmandu-based staff remained at the end of April, and there are more women as a percentage of the Kathmandu team than there were in other regional office teams. At the same time, there were no longer any representatives from castes/ethnicities such as Madhesh or Dalit in the Kathmandu office.

Figure 40: EGRP II staffing as of April 30, 2022, by gender and ethnicity (*N* = 19)
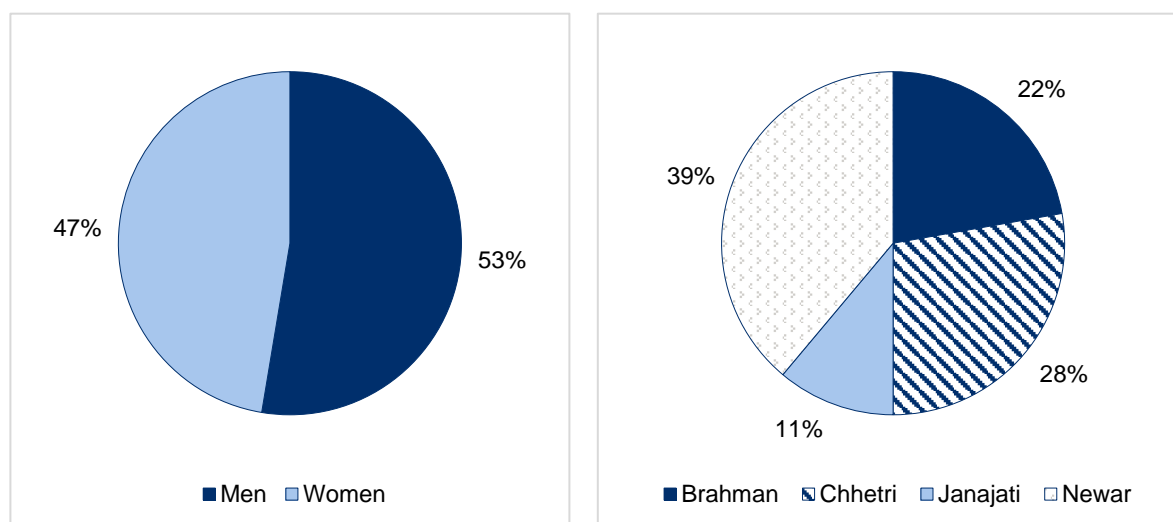
When recruiting to fill unfilled positions or replace departing staff during Year 2, EGRP II applied RTI's principles of diversity and inclusion, and was able to increase representation of underrepresented castes and ethnic groups to some extent. In addition, the GESI task team that was formed in Year 1 continued to support capacity building for all staff through an orientation on GESI in MEL and in research during the June–September 2021 period and an orientation on collecting photographs and success stories using a GESI lens during the October–December 2021 quarter. These efforts contributed to effective integration of GESI principles into operational research design and to success stories that highlighted GESI themes in municipal education planning.

GESI integration in research activities during Year 2 focused on applying a GESI lens throughout research design, data collection, and analysis efforts. For example, the TORs for all research studies advertised during the year included requirements for applicants to demonstrate GESI capacity, and the successful bidders were required to include a balance of men and women and researchers from different castes/ethnicities in their teams. In addition, the studies included selection of target areas and research subjects considering sociodemographic factors that underpin marginalization in Nepal, such as gender, the language spoken at home (Nepali as L1 or L2), and disabilities. Qualitative data collection tools gathered the perspectives of a range of stakeholders, including those from traditionally disadvantaged groups, and incorporated GESI elements during classroom observations.

For instance, during the data collection that took place during the January–April 2022 period for the study on COVID-19 impacts on education, the study team collected case study data to represent a range of student experiences with the pandemic, including:

- A Muslim girl from a family with high education levels in Bara
- A Newari girl from a socioeconomically disadvantaged family in Bhojpur
- A Brahmin boy from a merchant family in Achham
- A Dalit girl from a middle-class family in Tanahun
- A Sherpa girl from a remote community in Taplejung.

These case studies allowed EGRP II to highlight compelling stories about how the pandemic affected children from different backgrounds in disparate ways.

In addition to incorporating GESI principles into research activities during the January–April 2022 period, the EGRP II team applied an inclusion lens when conducting endline data collection—ensuring equal participation by both girls and boys, for example—and when carrying out endline data analysis and reporting. For example, the EGRA data collected during the endline for the purposes of validating the revised EGR benchmarks showed substantial disparities by sex, caste/ethnicity, with more boys than girls and more L2 learners than L1 learners falling into the pre-basic category for reading fluency (*Figure 41*).

Figure 41: **Percentage of grade 3 students falling into different oral reading skill categories, by sex and language**
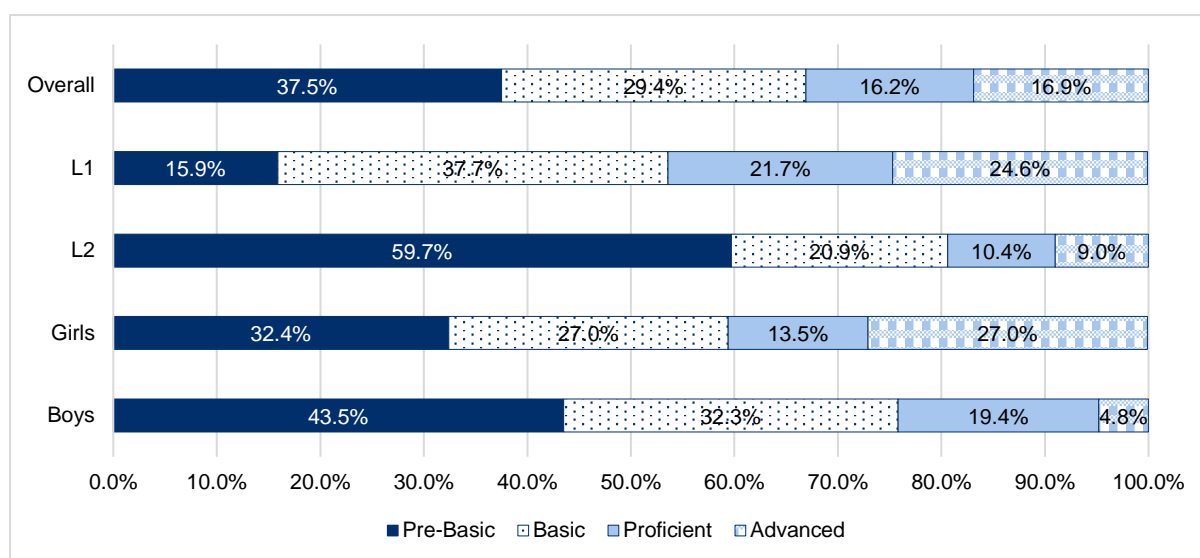
Finally, EGRP II applied social inclusion principles when selecting additional target palikas for the community- and home-based learning approach in Madhesh Province under Objective 4. Using the GON's municipal education equity index, EGRP II selected 16 additional, predominantly rural palikas across the eight districts in the province. This targeting approach ensured that the children benefiting from catch-up learning support were among the most vulnerable to begin with, even before the pandemic caused significant disruptions to their educational trajectories. During the January–April 2022 period, EGRP II provided additional capacity development to the teachers conducting the catch-up learning sessions on using the techniques of MGML teaching to differentiate their instruction. This engagement furthered GESI principles in the community- and home-based learning by providing teachers with tools to identify struggling L2 learners and adjust their teaching and learning practices accordingly.

3.9 Communications, Branding, and Marking

3.9.1 Communications activities and updates

Several activities related to communications, branding, and marking were undertaken during the January–April 2022 period, including the following initiatives:

- Coordinated the design and development of the interactive application for IC teacher support. Facilitated weekly meetings and recorded minutes on the progress of app development. Facilitated the process of piloting the app, compiling feedback, and ensuring alignment with EGRP II's branding and marking plan.

- Assisted the Director of Programs in editing, proofreading, and finalizing the GON version of the EGRP II quarterly report for October–December 2021 and shared it with the MOEST. (The GON versions are shortened to remove sections that are not relevant to GON readers.)

- Drafted social media content capturing key program activities and achievements and shared the content with USAID/Nepal for posting on official Facebook and Twitter accounts.

- Visited Parsa, Bara, Rautahat, Dhanusha, Kaski, Baglung, Myagdi, and Tanahun Districts to capture photographs and content for success stories and social media posts to highlight EGRP and EGRP II accomplishments despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These field visits took place between the last week of January and mid-February. Several high-resolution photographs, mostly from this trip, were selected to be submitted to USAID separately, as listed in *Annex E*.

- Prepared banners, press briefers and press releases, social media posts, photo collages, and videos of the final central-level learning and sharing and 7-year celebration events in April 2022.

- Began updating the content on EGRP II's landing page on RTI's website to reflect cumulative achievements and put the content into the past tense in anticipation of program closeout.

3.9.2 Media coverage of EGRP II

EGRP II received the following media coverage during the January–April 2022 period:

An article published in Janakpur Today on the USAID Mission Director's visit to Sarlahi District to discuss EGRP II and USAID's interventions. Used with permission from the publisher.

EGRP II's contribution to building the capacity of teachers and increasing access to books previously provided by EGRP, highlighted on the official Facebook page of USAID Nepal.

EGRP II highlighted on USAID Nepal's official Twitter account

USAID/Nepal social media posts from the final learning and sharing event at central level in April 2022.

Print and Online Media

- **Continuity of learning irrespective of closure of schools:** Mahendra Mahato is excited to see his rural municipality finding solutions to problems of low literacy, poor health, and poverty. He is excited to witness EGRP II's effectiveness in building capacity in the rural municipality. This program is being implemented in four rural municipalities of Sarlahi District with support from USAID Nepal and Nepal Government. Read the full article here: Janakpur Today. [https://ejanakpurtoday.com/44676/]

- **Two-days workshop on drafting of the Municipal Education Plan concluded:** A two-day workshop on Municipal Education Plan drafting organized jointly by the Kailali EDCU and EGRP II was concluded successfully. Read the full article here: Paschim Today. [https://paschimtoday.com/news-details/50168/2022-01-12]

- **TPS and the way forward:** The education officer in Darma Rural Municipality in Salyan District authored an article about the importance of TPS in Nepal's education sector and the way forward for implementing TPS at the local level. Read the full article here: Edukhabar. [https://www.edukhabar.com/news/15312]

Social Media

USAID/Nepal Facebook:

- Women make up 39% of the teaching workforce in Nepal's school education sector. We support head teachers, like Ambika Hamal from Dolpa, with strategies and training to

monitor and coach other teachers. Now, teachers in her school can teach better and their students are more successful. Who was your favorite teacher? #IWD2022 #BreakTheBias

- Is there anything more magical than a book? #Reading helps in so many ways. Children who read regularly at home and at school do better in school. USAID is working with the Government of Nepal to make sure every school has access to books in Nepali and other languages of Nepal. Tell us your favorite book in the comments below. #YouAreAReader #WorldBookDay #EGRP II

- By strengthening the capacity of municipal education units, in the last year alone, USAID reached 59% of grade 1–3 students with tailored interventions, including after-school programs. This has resulted in improved reading skills of primary school students by almost 50%. #EducationDay #educationforall #EGRP II

- USAID Nepal, in partnership with the Government of Nepal, is celebrating over 7 years of achievements of the National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) through a 'Learning and Sharing Event' in Kathmandu. Education stakeholders at all levels, including schools, communities, and local, district, provincial, and central government agencies worked together to make NEGRP a success! The independent research findings shared during the event showed significant improvement on student reading skills. #EGRP II RTI International Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Nepal USAID Education

- Today USAID/Nepal Mission Director Sepideh Keyvanshad congratulated the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology on the success of the National Early Grade Reading Program. This partnership between USAID and Government of Nepal led to an increase in the percentage of students in primary school who can read fluently. It also ensured that during school closures due to COVID, students had access to community- and home-based schooling in 32 municipalities of Madhesh Province. #NEGRP #EGRPII RTI International Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Nepal USAID Education U.S. Embassy, Nepal USAID – US Agency for International Development

USAID/Nepal Twitter:

- By strengthening the capacity of municipal education units, in the last one year alone, @USAID reached 59% of grade 1–3 students with tailored interventions, including after-school programs. This has resulted in improved reading skills of primary school students by almost 50%.

- Women make up 39% of the teaching workforce in Nepal's school education sector. We have supported head teachers, like Ambika Hamal from Dolpa, with strategies to monitor and coach other teachers, to ensure that children are successful in learning. #IWD2022 #BreakTheBias

- Today we are celebrating the achievements of @USAID's Early Grade Reading Program. Congratulations on the remarkable efforts of the @MOESTNEPAL to improve students' reading skills over the past 7 years! #EGRPII @RTI_Intl @moeneapal @USAIDEducation

- Today @USAID congratulates the GoN for the success of the National Early Grade Reading Program. This partnership between USAID & Ministry of Education led to an

increase in the % of students in grade 3 who can read fluently & had access to education during school closures. #NEGRP

3.9.3 Suggested social media posts

This section provides possible social media posts that USAID could consider using in the future, about activities that took place during the January–April 2022 period. The web addresses supplied in square brackets can be deleted from the final posts.

Sunita Devi Sharma with her daughter Srijana Sharma at a learning cluster in Baragadhi Rural Municipality in Bara District. (Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

- **Facebook:** "I was worried for my daughter's education since the pandemic closed schools. The clusters set up by EGRP II [https://www.rti.org/impact/usaid-early-grading-reading-program-nepal] meant a lot to me and the other parents here. My daughter was already having difficulties identifying letters and reading words in Nepali. The way the teacher taught in the cluster helped her learn faster than I thought she would. Plus, because of the fun atmosphere, she simply does not want to miss a day," noted Sunita Devi Sharma, mother of grade 3 student Srijana Sharma at Shree Janata Basic School, Baragadhi Rural Municipality, Bara. *(Photo: A. Karmacharya)*

- **Twitter:** "I was worried for my daughter's education since the pandemic closed schools. The clusters set up by EGRP II [https://www.rti.org/impact/usaid-early-grading-reading-program-nepal] meant a lot to me and other parents here," noted Sunita Devi Sharma, Baragadhi Rural Municipality, Bara *(Photo: A. Karmacharya)*

Rukshana Praveen, cluster teacher, Bindabasini Rural Municipality, Parsa District.
(Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

- **Facebook:** "Clusters set up by EGRP II [https://www.rti.org/impact/usaid-early-grading-reading-program-nepal] have reassured parents that their children will not miss out on their academic year. EGRP II-provided supplementary reading materials and stationery have also helped parents because they don't have to buy the materials with their limited resources. Parents also don't have to pay to send their children to the learning cluster. Children are very enthusiastic about studying here and have shown growth in their reading and writing skills," noted Rukshana Praveen, cluster teacher, Bindabasini Rural Municipality, Parsa. *(Photo: A. Karmacharya)*

- **Twitter:** "Children are enthusiastic about studying in the EGRP II [https://www.rti.org/impact/usaid-early-grading-reading-program-nepal] learning cluster and have shown growth in their reading and writing skills," noted Rukshana Praveen, cluster teacher, Bindabasini Rural Municipality, Parsa. *(Photo: A. Karmacharya)*

Ranjita Chaudhary, head teacher, Shree Banshakti Basic School, Jirabhawani Rural Municipality, Parsa District. (Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

- **Facebook:** "EGRP II [https://www.rti.org/impact/usaid-early-grading-reading-program-nepal] built a strong bridge between the school and parents, the school and the palika, and teachers and students. EGRP II taught us how to work hand-in-hand and support each other through improved approaches for early grade students. We understand better how teachers need capacity strengthening to help children learn and keep themselves motivated," noted Ranjita Chaudhary, head teacher, Shree Banshakti Basic School, Jirabhawani Rural Municipality, Parsa. *(Photo: A. Karmacharya)*

- **Twitter:** "EGRP II [https://www.rti.org/impact/usaid-early-grading-reading-program-nepal] built a strong bridge between the school and parents, the school and the palika, and teachers and students," noted Ranjita Chaudhary, head teacher, Shree Banshakti Basic School, Jirabhawani, Parsa. *(Photo: A. Karmacharya)*

Sher B. Karki, LEU Head, Shikhar Municipality, Doti District.
(Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

- **Facebook:** "EGRP II [https://www.rti.org/impact/usaid-early-grading-reading-program-nepal] motivated us to aim high and guided us to achieve our dream of preparing our Municipal Education Plan. EGRP II brought teachers, local representatives, and students together and taught them to work in coordination. EGRP II also guided us on forming a roster of experts and a teacher learning group to provide better professional support to teachers. We even used virtual coordination to continue collaboration during the pandemic," said Sher Bahadur Karki, LEU Head, Shikhar Municipality, Doti. *(Photo: A. Karmacharya)*

- **Twitter:** "EGRP II [https://www.rti.org/impact/usaid-early-grading-reading-program-nepal] motivated us to aim high and guided us to achieve our dream of preparing our Municipal Education Plan and providing better professional support to teachers," said Sher Bahadur Karki, LEU Head, Shikhar Municipality, Doti. *(Photo: A. Karmacharya)*

4   Challenges, Lessons Learned, and Mitigation Strategies

Table 21 briefly describes some of the emerging or ongoing challenges, lessons learned, and mitigation strategies over program Year 2 and during the January–April 2022 period.

Table 21: Challenges, lessons learned, and mitigation strategies

Challenges and lessons learned	Mitigation strategies
The outbreak of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nepal in 2021 and subsequent lockdowns affected implementation of activities that had been planned in in-person format (the preferred approach of many GON stakeholders) and required extensive adjustments to virtual modalities where possible. Subsequently, a new variant of COVID-19 caused a third wave of the pandemic in early 2022, with disruptions to schooling, travel, in-person meetings, and project closeout activities.	EGRP II continued to monitor COVID-19 trends and GON guidelines in all target districts and regional office locations and responded to changing situations as needed, in consultation with USAID. For example, EGRP II switched the local capacity-development workshops to a virtual modality and adjusted the content to complete the activities in a reasonable time frame. Virtual meetings and learning platform technologies were used to implement the planned program activities to the extent applicable. EGRP II also coordinated closely with CEHRD on switching the IC TPD MTOTs to a virtual modality and completed intensive staff capacity building—led by short-term technical assistance providers from RTI's home office—on effective virtual trainings.
Competing priorities and heavy demands on GON officials at the central level limited their available time for activities related to EGR and EGRP II. These barriers led to some delays in implementing key EGRP II Year 2 AWP activities such as IC TPD MTOTs and TOTs, interactive application development, implementation research on the IC and TPS, and TPS MTOTs.	EGRP II worked continuously with MOEST, CEHRD, and CDC officials to plan for and implement key AWP activities, and also collaborated with provincial, district, and local government officials to ensure that activities continued at the subnational level even when central-level bottlenecks occurred. The team conducted numerous formal and informal coordination efforts with CEHRD as well as MOEST, CDC, and ERO to maintain momentum and solve problems when delays occurred. Ultimately, all activities were completed as intended, although in several cases they were delayed past their original start time.
Not all early grade teachers had received teacher guides for grade 1, and there was a lack of communication from the central level about the timeline for grade 2 and 3 IC implementation and the availability of the TLMs for those grades. A few trainings or orientations on the IC were conducted in the last GON fiscal year (i.e., FY 2020–2021), but the teachers who were trained or oriented did not necessarily cascade the training to other teachers in their schools as intended. ETCs were granted a limited teacher training quota for GON FY 2021–2022, but the quota was not necessarily designated for early grade teacher training, and it was not clear whether ETCs would allocate it to IC TPD training in the districts where no training had occurred in 2021. As such, most early grade teachers continued implementing the IC without adequate training or orientation.	Throughout Year 2, EGRP II coordinated with central, provincial, district, and local government officials to push for effective rollout of IC TPD training. Specifically, EGRP II gathered data on the extent that training had already been rolled out and then advocated with ETCs to prioritize the available teacher training quota slots for GON FY 2021–2022 for IC TPD training for those areas and teachers where it was not conducted in 2021. The team also provided technical support for planning and delivering IC orientations and trainings at the district and cluster levels when they did occur. Finally, the team assisted local governments to plan for and implement IC TPD training using their own budgets to the extent possible, and to encourage already-trained teachers to properly cascade the training to their peers as intended.
Activities related to education planning, budgeting, and TPS at the local level were affected by limited personnel with competing workloads and frequent turnover, as well as lack of familiarity with and access to virtual technologies. Participation of locally elected representatives and other influential officials was also hampered by lack of time in the face of many competing demands.	EGRP II supported local education stakeholders with capacity development by using virtual platforms for meetings, workshops, and trainings. In addition, EGRP II developed clear guidelines and templates to assist local governments with education planning and budgeting to make the task easier. EGRP II also supported mechanisms to obtain greater buy-in for education planning and TPS from locally elected officials, such as extended DCC meetings and establishment of 3Ts.

Challenges and lessons learned	Mitigation strategies
Due to COVID-19 related delays and competing demands and high workloads for GON counterparts and program staff, the revised TPS approach was not completed until the end of EGRP II Year 1. This left less than a year in the program period for supporting local governments to learn about and plan for implementation of the new guidelines. In addition, with an average of approximately 10.5 palikas covered by each EGRP II district coordinator, it was difficult for program staff to offer intensive support to each palika for rolling out TPS during the time remaining.	EGRP II conducted virtual orientations on the revised TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline for all 396 local governments. In addition, the revised TPS approach was incorporated into the Round 2 and 3 capacity-development trainings, and EGRP II supported local governments to incorporate TPS into their MEPs and budgets. EGRP II also worked with district and local leaders to select one sample palika per district that would act as a hub of best practices for TPS. EGRP II then provided targeted TPS capacity development for those sample palikas so they could share their experiences and learning with the other palikas in the district.

5 Best Practices

This section indicates best practices developed during EGRP II Year 2 that could be taken to scale in the future. The key best practice identified during the year was the SEC methodology, described at length in Section 3.1.1, Activity 1.1.3.

The SEC research methodology includes a rigorous process for (1) mapping the intended content and teaching approaches in a curriculum and (2) analyzing the level of alignment between the curriculum and the way that it is enacted in real life through teaching and assessment. SEC entails a set of systematic steps, starting with adapting a global curricular taxonomy to the local curriculum in Nepal (for example, "letter knowledge" in a typical early grade language arts curriculum would include both letters and matra in Nepali). Experts then judge the amount of cognitive demand required for students to learn that skill, and use the taxonomy and cognitive demand levels to code and rate the different elements in the curriculum. After undergoing a training on the methodology, teachers then complete a survey to quantify how they taught each element in the curriculum (for example, if they taught matra knowledge through a lower cognitive demand approach such as memorization) and how much time they devoted to each element. The teacher survey data are analyzed to produce content maps—similar to topographical or "heat" maps—that explore the alignment between what the curriculum intends and what teachers actually taught (refer to Figure 6 above).

EGRP II supported CDC and other local experts to learn about the SEC methodology, apply it to analyze the grade 1 Nepali subject in the IC, and survey grade 1 teachers on their practices. Based on feedback from CDC, academics, teachers, and EGRP II staff, the methodology was highly useful for:

- Understanding global standards in curriculum development for EGR

- Using an established taxonomy to assess how the curriculum covers a hierarchy of learner knowledge and skills, from the basic to the complex

- Identifying gaps and areas for improvement in the Nepali subject curriculum

- Highlighting areas where teachers need more training and support to apply the curriculum effectively.

Based on the experiences in EGRP II's adaptation of the SEC methodology to the Nepal context, CDC curriculum developers indicated that the approach would be useful when they were developing new curricula or conducting systematic reviews of existing curricula in the future.

6   Prospects for Next Year's Performance

EGRP II formally closes on May 31, 2022. As such, prospects for next year's performance are not discussed in this report.

7   Management, Administration, and Safety

The EGRP management and operations teams undertook a range of activities during the January–April 2022 period. The following summarizes the primary tasks completed.

7.1   Management

Activities related to overall program management during the January–April 2022 period focused predominantly on preparing for project closeout, from both the technical and operational perspectives. Technical closeout activities undertaken included final exit meetings with district and local officials to discuss accomplishments and future plans for sustaining NEGRP activities. In addition, the program leadership team highlighted the program's closeout timeline during the NEGRP Steering Committee meeting in February 2022. The team also designed and led final learning and sharing and farewell meetings, including internal discussions at the

Some team members during a virtual farewell to the staff departing EGRP II in March 2022.

regional and central levels as well as two external events in April 2022 involving GON and USAID/Nepal leaders and other education sector stakeholders. The first external event covered EGRP II achievements, challenges, lessons learned, and evidence from program-supported research and evaluation. The second event was a celebration of seven years of USAID support for the NEGRP, starting with EGRP in 2015. Finally, EGRP II hosted field visits by USAID staff to Banke, Dang, and Salyan Districts, March 7–11, 2022, which focused on discussions with government officials, visits to schools, and collection of communications materials.

7.2   Human Resources

- Prepared, processed, and maintained documentation related to personnel actions of EGRP II local national staff.

- Issued employment termination notices to staff departing during March and April 2022 as part of the closeout demobilization plan.

- Issued six short-term independent contractor agreements for operational and program support.

- Issued one local consultant agreement for program support.

- Completed the FY 2022 goal setting cycle and completed RTI's quarterly performance-related Dynamic Development check-in meeting cycle in March 2022.

- Supported the ongoing in-country implementation of RTI's Rise Employee Recognition and Awards initiative.

- Coordinated various consultative meetings for project closeout and staffing from the human resources and operations perspective.

- Worked on various closeout activities, out-processing of staff, leave calculations, timesheets, closure notices for regional offices, repair and maintenance of regional offices, and disposition of office equipment.

- Developed and implemented a detailed project closeout plan for EGRP II regional and Kathmandu offices.

- Issued termination notices for EGRP II leased properties.

- Removed project assets and handed over the Dhangadhi, Janakpur, Nepalgunj, and Pokhara regional offices to the landlords.

7.3   Finance and Administration

- Prepared and submitted EGRP and EGRP II quarterly value-added tax (VAT) reports for the first quarter of FY 2022 to USAID.

- Received NPR 179,102,527.58 (US$1,543,987.31 or 95.41%) of the NPR 187,711,399.98 (US$1,618,201.73) VAT reimbursements submitted to the Inland Revenue Department.

- As of April 1, 2022, submitted VAT invoices of NPR 7,290,469.71 (US$ 62,848.87) to the Inland Revenue Department for reimbursement, and VAT invoices of NPR 292,848.26 (US$ 2,524.55.00) to USAID for endorsement for further submission to the Inland Revenue Department.

- Prepared Foreign Tax Reporting for FY 2021.

- Prepared bi-monthly cash management requests, payroll, vendor disbursements, and monthly financial reports.

- Coordinated within the team on budget planning, including preparing spending projections through the remainder of the program.

- Prepared monthly AWP budget and expense tracking reports and circulated them to EGRP II staff.

- Conducted periodic internal meetings to plan and prepare for project closeout.

Team discussion and document review during the internal financial audit, Nepalgunj, February 2022.
Photo credit: Kiran Ghimire

- Conducted an internal financial audit of the Pokhara, Nepalgunj, Dhangadhi, and Janakpur regional offices.

- Disbursed transportation allowances to teachers and head teachers for January, February, March, and April 2022 for the community- and home-based learning activities in Madhesh Province.

- Prepared budgets and managed cash advances and payments for various workshops and trainings.

- Arranged financial closeout of the Dhangadhi, Janakpur, Nepalgunj, and Pokhara regional offices; closed project bank accounts; and transferred the bank balance into Kathmandu bank account.

- Transferred all financial documents and files for the Dhangadhi, Janakpur, Nepalgunj, and Pokhara regional offices to the Kathmandu office for further shipment to the RTI home office for storage.

7.4   Procurement and Logistics

- Administered and closed out the subaward for operational research on the IC and TPS.

- Administered and closed out the subaward for research on COVID-19 impacts on student learning in Nepal.

- Administered and closed out the purchase order for printing, packaging, and delivering TLMs for the community- and home-based learning activities in Madhesh Province.

- Administered and closed out the purchase order for interactive application development for the IC.

- Disseminated project closeout notification to EGRP II vendors, suppliers, and service providers.

- Prepared a revised asset disposition plan for USAID submission as part of the program's closeout plan.

- Prepared handover notes for EGRP II assets. Removed and handed over assets to schools, government offices, and USAID partner organizations as per the approved deposition plan.

- Solicited and evaluated bids for a public auction to dispose of EGRP II vehicle and motorbikes.

- Arranged and coordinated logistics for various workshops and trainings.

7.5   Information Technology

- Provided ongoing support to the technical team to comply with RTI's IT privacy and security policies, as well as any other issues related to the computer operation, in coordination with RTI's Asia Regional Office.

- Provided remote IT technical support to all EGRP II staff as required.

- Supported the operations team in preparing the revised disposition plan for IT equipment as part of EGRP II's closeout plan.

- Supported the regional offices in removing, cleaning, and reformatting IT equipment and handing it over to schools and government offices as per the approved disposition plan.

7.6   Safety and Security

- Provided ongoing support to all staff for business continuity while working from home during the latest lockdown and prohibitory order.

- Maintained an up-to-date list of the physical whereabouts and working arrangements of all staff.

- Updated staff contact list, emergency phone tree, and staff Viber security group.

- Continuously provided new information and guidance related to COVID-19 to all staff through the Viber group, emails, and all-staff meetings.

- Monitored any potential escalations such as security incidents and staff illnesses.

- Maintained an up-to-date database for COVID-19 health insurance for staff and dependents.

- Facilitated COVID-19 health-care reimbursements for EGRP II staff members as needed.

- Procured hand sanitizer and masks and supplied them for all EGRP II workshops, trainings, and offices.

7.7   Environmental Compliance

No specific activities related to environmental compliance were undertaken during the January–April 2022 reporting period.

8   Finance and Expenditure Status

8.1   Activities for Next Quarter

Activities in May 2022, which is the final closeout month for EGRP II, will focus on completing all remaining reporting, including progress reports, research reports, and briefing papers. In addition, the EGRP II team will demobilize all remaining staff, conduct financial and bank account closures, and hand over all remaining equipment plus the Kathmandu office premises.

8.2   Estimated Expenditures

The total cumulative costs from program inception through March 2022, as well as the projected April–May 2022 expenses, are included in *Table 22*80.

Table 22:   Cumulative costs and projected expenses

Cooperative agreement cost categories	Cumulative invoiced costs from inception through March 2022	Projected expenses for remainder of the project
Personnel and Fringe Benefits	$3,239,165	$514,935
Travel, Transportation, and Per Diem	$262,676	$17,687
Equipment, Supplies, and Contractual	$1,071,898	$6,442
Other Direct Costs	$1,435,563	$274,596
Indirect Costs	$2,628,724	$448,310
Total	**$8,638,027**	**$1,261,970**

Annex A: Update on Progress During the January–April 2022 Period

Objectives and goals	Accomplishments and status
Objective 1: Support development and rollout of the IC and continue to scale up early grade reading (EGR) • Technical support offered on EGR best practices in development of the nationwide, 10-day Integrated Curriculum (IC) training package and master training of trainers (MTOTs) • MTOT completed for 200 master trainers for the nationwide IC training package, in agreement with the Government of Nepal (GON) • Operational research conducted on the IC to inform future implementation • Assessment data analyzed and used to inform education sector policy and programming	All Objective 1 activities were completed as planned. • EGRP II advocated with Education Training Centers (ETCs) to allocate the remaining teacher professional development (TPD) budget quota for the GON fiscal year 2021–2022 for IC TPD training. • An interactive app to provide IC-related support to teachers was piloted and finalized. • Qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, and reporting for the IC operational research were completed. • A National Assessment for Reading and Numeracy (NARN) brief was completed and shared with GON. • Field testing of the revised EGR benchmarks was completed and the collected data were shared with GON.
Objective 2: Build municipal- and provincial-level capacity for delivering EGR services • All Local Education Units (LEUs) in 38 districts are using the updated Integrated Education Management Information System (IEMIS) and Education Profiles • All LEUs in 38 districts are tracking and reporting discretionary resources dedicated to education • All schools in 38 districts have at least one book corner for grades 1–3	All Objective 2 activities were completed as planned. • Technical task team (3T) mobilization and Round 3 local capacity development workshops focused on Municipal Education Plan (MEP) finalization were completed. • As of the end of April 2022, 99% of palikas were tracking and using IEMIS data for decision making. Furthermore, 80% had tracked and reported discretionary resources dedicated to education. • In addition, 36% of palikas had an approved MEP and 31% had draft plans in place. • Supplementary reading material (SRM) distribution was completed in all schools in the 22 National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP) expansion districts in Year 1.
Objective 3: Improve local governments' ability to provide teacher professional support (TPS), coaching, mentorship, and supervision • The Center for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) has updated TPS Management Procedure and TPS Guideline to support flexible TPS approach • MTOT completed for TPS • All LEUs piloting an approach to TPS • Operational research on the TPS pilots completed	Nearly all Objective 3 activities were completed as planned. • As of the end of April 2022, 96% of palikas had formed local TPS roster expert groups. • Joint monitoring visits had been completed in a cumulative total of 1,307 schools as of the end of April 2022. This figure fell short of the target of 2,376 visits because of the repeated and prolonged school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. • 38 palikas participated in the TPS "sample palika" approach to act as a hub of best practices for other palikas in their district, conducting 35

Objectives and goals	Accomplishments and status
	teacher learning group (TLG) meetings during the January–April period.
	• Operational research on TPS was completed, combined with the operational research on the IC as described under Objective 1 above.
Objective 4: Support continuity of learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic • New interactive digital learning content developed and uploaded to CEHRD's learning portal • Ongoing COVID-19 response planning support provided to subnational education offices • Support provided to 16 targeted disadvantaged palikas to implement community- and home-based learning clusters where school reopenings are unlikely and access to technology is limited • Technical assistance provided to GON on learning-loss assessment • Technical assistance provided to GON on materials development and teacher orientation on adjusting the curriculum and instruction for a shortened school year	Objective 4 experienced some delays related to digital content uploads to CEHRD's learning portal, but otherwise was completed as planned. • In all, 119 new digital learning lessons in Nepali language, English, mathematics, science, social studies, and Nepali Sign Language, as well as resources for children with dyslexia, were finalized and continued to await upload to CEHRD's learning portal at the end of April. Additional delays occurred because CEHRD redesigned its learning portal to classify lessons by IC theme, requiring a detailed review of the 119 lessons to segregate them by theme before upload. • EGRP II continued implementing the 1,459 community- and home-based learning clusters in 487 schools through project endpoint on March 15, 2022, to promote catch-up learning across 32 palikas in the eight districts of Madhesh Province. • Data collection, analysis, and reporting were completed for the study on the impacts of COVID-19 on the education sector in Nepal.

Annex B: Progress by Indicators (Quarterly Plus Cumulative Through Fiscal Year 2022)

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
Improved early grade reading in grades 1–3 for students in Nepali public schools in the 38 NEGRP target districts											
IND 01_ ES. 1-1	Percent of learners targeted for United States Government (USG) assistance who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of grade 2	Sample-based classroom-based Early Grade Reading Assessment (CB-EGRA)	7.4% (Baseline date: Feb/Mar 2021)	Baseline	–	9.4% (non-cumulative)	–	–	8.5% (Endline date: Feb/Mar 2022)	9.4%	8.5% (Endline date: Feb/Mar 2022)

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 02_ ES. 1–3	Number of learners in primary schools or equivalent non-school-based settings reached with USG education assistance	Integrated Education Management Information System (IEMIS); program data	Not applicable (N/A)	431,370	168,190 grade 1–3 children Male: 81,387 Female: 86,803 Level 1: 139,913 Level 2: 13,317 Level 3: 14,960	101,576 (non-cumulative)	101,371 grade 1–3 children (non-cumulative) Male: 52,305 Female: 49,066 Level 1: 49,165 Level 2: 4,412 Level 3: 47,794	–	To be confirmed[10]	269,766	To be confirmed
IND 03_ ES. 1-50	Number of public and private schools receiving USG assistance	IEMIS; program data	N/A	4,793	2,715 schools Level 1: 2,285 Level 2: 292 Level 3: 138	1,534 (non-cumulative)	1,526 schools Level 1: 745 Level 2: 101 Level 3: 680	-	To be confirmed	4,249	To be confirmed

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[10] Indicators marked "to be confirmed" in Annex B are pending receipt from GON of the IEMIS data for the 2021-2022 academic year that is required for accurately counting the number of students and schools reached in relevant EGRP II target areas.

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 04_ Custom	Percent of grade 2 and 3 students classified as fluent readers using national benchmarks	Sample-based CB-EGRA	Grade 2 = 7.4% Grade 3 = 12.6% (Baseline date: Feb/March 2021)	Baseline	–	Grade 2 = 9.4% Grade 3 = 15.6% (non-cumulative)	–	–	Grade 2 = 8.5% Grade 3 = 20.2%	Grade 2 = 9.4% Grade 3 = 15.6%	Grade 2 = 8.5% Grade 3 = 20.2%
IND 05_ Custom	Percent of grade 2 and 3 students classified as emergent readers using national benchmarks	Sample-based CB-EGRA	Grade 2 = 27.8% Grade 3 = 29.7% (Baseline date: Feb/March 2021)	Baseline	–	Grade 2 = 31.8% Grade 3 = 38.7% (non-cumulative)	–	–	Grade 2 = 28.1% Grade 3 = 30.1	Grade 2 = 31.8% Grade 3 = 38.7%	Grade 2 = 28.1% Grade 3 = 30.1
OBJECTIVE 1: Support development and rollout of the new Integrated Curriculum (IC) and continue to scale up early grade reading (EGR)											
IND 06_ Sub-IR 1.1_ Custom	Number of master trainers trained on the IC	Center for Education and Human Resource Develop-ment (CEHRD) records	N/A	50	0	150 (non-cumulative)	203 master trainers Male: 184 Female: 19	203 master trainers Male: 184 Female: 19	203 master trainers Male: 184 Female: 19	200	203 master trainers Male: 184 Female: 19

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 07_ Sub-IR 1.1; 3.3_ (ES. 1-6)	Number of educators who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	Provincial Education Training Center (ETC) records; municipality records; program data	N/A	3,522	1,579 educators Male: 888 Female: 691	0 (non-cumulative)	–	–	–	1,579	1,551 educators Male: 871 Female: 680
IND 08_ Sub-IR 1.2; 2.1; 3.3_ ES. 1-12	Number of education administrators and officials who complete professional development activities with USG assistance	CEHRD records; local-level records; program data	N/A	3,198	3,882 admini-strators / officials Male: 3,354 Female: 528 Brahmin / Chhetri: 2,327 Janajati: 563 Dalit: 137 Madhesi: 838 Muslim: 29 Others: 50	945 (non-cumulative)	1,074 admini-strators / officials (non-cumulative) Male: 956 Female: 118 Brahmin / Chhetri: 631 Janajati: 138 Dalit: 29 Madhesi: 263 Muslim: 7 Others: 6	397 admini-strators / officials Male: 363 Female: 34 Brahmin / Chhetri: 256 Janajati: 44 Dalit: 17 Madhesi: 76 Muslim: 2 Others: 2	1,471 ad-ministrators / officials Male: 1,201 Female: 152 Brahmin / Chhetri: 887 Janajati: 182 Dalit: 46 Madhesi: 339 Muslim: 9 Others: 8	4,827	5,353 ad-ministrators / officials Male: 2,039 Female: 680 Brahmin / Chhetri: 3,214 Janajati: 745 Dalit: 183 Madhesi: 1,177 Muslim: 38 Others: 58

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
OBJECTIVE 2: Build municipal- and provincial-level capacity for delivering EGR services											
IND 9_Sub-IR 2.1; 2.2_Custom	Percent of local governments/levels using IEMIS profiles for planning and budgeting in the education sector	Local-level records	N/A	50%	96.7%	100% (cumulative)	99% (cumulative)	99% (cumulative)	99% (cumulative)	100%	99%
IND 10 Sub-IR 2.1_Custom	Percent of local governments validating IEMIS data shared by schools	District-compiled IEMIS data	N/A	85%	96.5%	98% (cumulative)	96.5% (cumulative)	96.5% (cumulative)	96.5% (cumulative)	98%	96.5%
IND 11_Sub-IR 2.2; 2.3_Custom	Percent of municipalities formulating their annual municipal education plans and budgets that include early grade reading/learning	Local-level records	N/A	45%	14%	50% (cumulative)	41.2% (cumulative)	67.2% (cumulative)	67.2% (cumulative)	50%	67.2%
IND 12_Sub-IR 2.2; 2.3_Custom	Percent of local governments allocating discretionary funds to education sector activities	Local-level records	N/A	50%	71.2%	80% (cumulative)	71.2% (cumulative)	79.8% (cumulative)	79.8% (cumulative)	80%	79.8%

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 13_ Sub-IR 2.4_ Custom	Number of schools with book corners that include supplementary reading materials (SRMs)	Program data	N/A	2,291	2,228 schools By province and level: Bagmati: 376 Gandaki: 415 Karnali: 351 Province 1: 507 Madhesh: 106 Province 5: 139 Sudur Paschim: 334 Level 1: 1,982 Level 2: 246 Level 3: 0	0 (non-cumulative)	–	–	–	2,291	2,228 schools By province and level: Bagmati: 376 Gandaki: 415 Karnali: 351 Province 1: 507 Madhesh: 106 Province 5: 139 Sudur Paschim: 334 Level 1: 1,982 Level 2: 246 Level 3: 0
IND 14_ Sub-IR 2.4_ Custom	Number of SRMs delivered	Program data	N/A	456,120	427,278 SRMs By province and level: Bagmati: 71,255 Gandaki: 78,158 Karnali: 66,831 Province 1: 94,442 Madhesh:	0 (non-cumulative)	–	–	–	456,120	427,278 SRMs By province and level: Bagmati: 71,255 Gandaki: 78,158 Karnali: 66,831 Province 1: 94,442 Madhesh:

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
					23,465 Province 5: 29,306 Sudur Paschim: 63,821 Level 1: 470,997 Level 2: 80,004 Level 3: 0 By destination: Schools: 394,356 Local Education Units (LEUs): 21,240 Education Development and Coordination Units (EDCUs): 11,682						23,465 Province 5: 29,306 Sudur Paschim: 63,821 Level 1: 470,997 Level 2: 80,004 Level 3: 0 By destination: Schools: 394,356 LEUs: 21,240 EDCUs: 11,682

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
OBJECTIVE 3: Improve local governments' ability to provide teacher professional support (TPS), coaching, mentorship, and supervision											
IND 15_ Sub-IR 3.2; 3.3_ Custom	Number of LEU staff, head teachers, and primary in-charge teachers who receive TPS training	CEHRD and provincial ETC records	N/A	0	This indicator will be reported after the TPS training program rolls out	1,182 (non-cumulative)	This indicator will be reported after the TPS training program rolls out	–	–	1,182	–
IND 16_ Sub-IR 3.2; 3.3_ Custom	Number of master trainers trained on EGR teacher support, mentoring, and coaching	CEHRD records	N/A	355	964 trainers Male: 841 Female: 123 Brahmin / Chhetri: 630 Janajati: 108 Dalit: 35 Madhesi: 168 Muslim: 8 Others: 15	464 (non-cumulative)	469 trainers (non-cumulative) Male: 392 Female: 77 Brahmin / Chhetri: 302 Janajati: 77 Dalit: 13 Madhesi: 68 Muslim: 5 Others: 4	80 trainers (non-cumulative) Male: 71 Female: 9 Brahmin / Chhetri: 58 Janajati: 13 Dalit: 8 Madhesi: 1 Muslim: 0 Others: 0	549 trainers Male: 463 Female: 86 Brahmin / Chhetri: 360 Janajati: 90 Dalit: 21 Madhesi: 69 Muslim: 5 Others: 4	1,428	1,513 trainers Male: 1,304 Female: 209 Brahmin / Chhetri: 990 Janajati: 198 Dalit: 56 Madhesi: 237 Muslim: 13 Others: 19

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 17_ Sub-IR 3.4_ Custom	Number of schools receiving joint monitoring and coaching support through USG assistance	Local-level records; program records	N/A	1,584	280 By province: Bagmati: 30 Gandaki: 60 Karnali: 27 Province 1: 18 Madhesh: 39 Lumbini: 63 Sudur Paschim: 43	2,096 (non-cumulative)	899 schools (cumulative) By province: Bagmati: 56 Gandaki: 157 Karnali: 35 Province 1: 61 Madhesh: 329 Lumbini: 102 Sudur Paschim: 159	1,307 schools (cumulative) By province: Bagmati: 70 Gandaki: 214 Karnali: 42 Province 1: 98 Madhesh: 490 Lumbini: 186 Sudur Paschim: 207	1,307 schools (cumulative) By province: Bagmati: 70 Gandaki: 214 Karnali: 42 Province 1: 98 Madhesh: 490 Lumbini: 186 Sudur Paschim: 207	2,376	1,307 schools (cumulative) By province: Bagmati: 70 Gandaki: 214 Karnali: 42 Province 1: 98 Madhesh: 490 Lumbini: 186 Sudur Paschim: 207
OBJECTIVE 4: Support continuity of learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic											
IND 18_ IR 4_ Custom	Percent of learners who attain a minimum grade-level proficiency in reading at the end of grade 3 in targeted 16 local governments of Madhesh Province	Sample-based CB-EGRA	13.4% (Baseline date: Feb/March 2021)	Baseline	–	16.4% (non-cumulative)	–	–	28.9% (Endline date: Feb/March 2022)	16.4%	28.9% (Endline date: Feb/March 2022)

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 19_ IR 4_ Custom	Number of new interactive digital early grade learning lessons created and uploaded to the CEHRD learning portal	CEHRD records	N/A	94	0: All 119 digital lessons were developed and reviewed by EGRP II but not uploaded to the CEHRD portal	119 (non-cumulative)	0: All 119 digital lessons were uploaded to the CEHRD portal, but public release remained pending because of technical issues with the portal	0: All 119 digital lessons were uploaded to the CEHRD portal, but public release remained pending because of technical issues with the portal	0: All 119 digital lessons were uploaded to the CEHRD portal, but public release remained pending because of technical issues with the portal	119	0
IND 20 IR 4_ ES 1.13	Number of parent–teacher associations (PTAs) or community governance structures engaged in primary education supported with USG assistance	Program data	N/A	219	487	0 (non-cumulative)	–	–	–	487	487

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 21_IR 4_Custom	Number of education stakeholders oriented/trained to implement community/home-based learning	Program data	N/A	11,607	16,510 stakeholders Male: 8,333 Female: 8,177 Teachers: 1,977 Parents: 13,662 School management committee (SMC) or PTA members: 492 Others: 78	0 (non-cumulative)	–	–	–	16,510	16,510 stakeholders Male: 8,333 Female: 8,177 Teachers: 1,977 Parents: 13,662 SMC or PTA members: 492 Others: 78
IND 22_IR 4_Custom	Number of electronic devices distributed to support community/home-based learning	Program data	N/A	1,330	2,156 tablets	0 (non-cumulative)	–	–	–	2,156	2,156 tablets

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 23_IR4_Custom	Percent of local governments allocating funds for emergency response and recovery	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) and Ministry of Social Develop-ment (MOSD)	N/A	Status reporting	This indicator was to be reported after the end of the Nepal fiscal year 2020–2021. Definition of the indicator was under discussion with USAID at the end of Sep 2021.	Status reporting	72%	76.2%	76.2%	Status reporting	76.2%
IND 24_ES 3.1-2	Percent of schools implementing evidence-based early grade learning interventions in USG-assisted schools	IEMIS; program data	N/A	30.2%	17.1%	26.7% (cumulative)	25.1% (cumulative) (3,993 out of 15,882 schools)	To be confirmed	To be confirmed	26.7%	To be confirmed

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 25_ES 3.1–3	Number of teachers receiving professional development, support, or supervision in USG-assisted schools	CEHRD and provincial ETC records	N/A	3,522	1,579	0 (non-cumulative)	–	–	–	1,579	
IND 26_ES 3.1-4	Number of local governments with education policies developed with support from USG	Local government records; program data	N/A	178	56	198	107 (cumulative)	266 (cumulative)	266 (cumulative)	198	266 (cumulative)
IND 27_ES 3.3-3	Number of plans with funding set aside for emergency response and recovery by federal and subnational governments (health and education)	MOEST; MOSD; EDCUs; local govern-ments	N/A	277	271	277	287 (cumulative)	299 (cumulative)	299 (cumulative)	277	299

Ind. no.	Indicator and disaggregation	Data source	Baseline (date)	FY 2021 (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)		FY 2022 (Oct 2021–May 2022)				Life of program	
				Target	FY 2021 actuals (Oct 2020–Sep 2021)	Target	Quarterly actuals (Oct–Dec 2021)	Quarterly actuals (Jan–Apr 2022)	FY 2022 actuals (Oct 2021–Apr 2022)	Target	Actual
IND 28_ ES.1-51	Number of learning environments supported by USG assistance that have improved safety, according to locally defined criteria	Program data	N/A	1,461	1,459	0 (non-cumulative)	1,459 (cumulative)	–	1,459 (cumulative)	1,461	1,459 (cumulative)

Annex C: List of Key Upcoming Events and Dates

There are no key activities or events planned for the remaining period of the program in May 2022 apart from closeout tasks.

Annex D: Success Story or Case Studies

"EGRP II helped me become a compassionate teacher": Ram Babu Prasad Kanu, Shri Ne Ra Primary School, Parsa District

Head teacher Ram Babu Prasad Kanu helping student Kirti Kumari learn in a classroom at Ne Ra Primary School, Bindabasini Rural Municipality, Parsa District. (Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

"As a head teacher at a school, I had a stereotypical approach of handling school faculty and children," shared Ram Babu Prasad Kanu, head teacher at Ne Ra Primary School in Bindabasini Rural Municipality in Parsa District.

Mr. Kanu reminisced that before the implementation of the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II) at his school, he was almost indifferent to his teaching faculty, and old-school techniques of disciplining students seemed the only way of teaching them.

"Ever since EGRP II became a part of our school, I grew to become a better teacher, a responsible head teacher, and a compassionate person. It is like a journey of self-discovery I've had with this program," explained Mr. Kanu.

According to him, the program's techniques have helped him develop a new outlook on how to run a promising school. He appreciates the concept of learning by doing; the focus on making the classroom a playful atmosphere and a visually inviting space for children; EGRP's teacher professional development (TPD) training; and the close engagement with three tiers of stakeholders: teachers, students, and parents.

"I personally did not get to take part in training facilitated by EGRP II, but my teachers did and came back to share their learning. I had never seen my teachers so enthused to go back to their classrooms. Prior to the TPD training, my teachers always felt that teaching was just a job given to them. Upon completing their training, they were passionate about teaching. This

was the beginning of a new school for me. I sat down with my trained teachers and asked them to share with me and other faculty members all of their learnings," revealed Mr. Kanu.

After listening to his TPD-trained teachers, he also examined the supplementary reading materials, then borrowed a copy of the teacher's guide and read it thoroughly. This self-training helped him to better understand the importance of the relationship between teachers and their head teacher. As a result, Mr. Kanu decided to teach students of grades 1, 2, and 3, something he had not done in many years.

"I started to sneak into classrooms while my teachers were teaching," he said. "I sat down with the primary-level kids to observe how enthused my faculty as well as my students were. I now wanted to get back to teaching and make a difference."

Mr. Kanu offered an inspiring example of his journey of transformation through EGRP II. "There's a student in grade 1, Kirti Kumari. For 6 months, Kirti could not identify any letters and would just cry all day at school. Many of the teachers were struggling to get her to learn and told me that she had learning disabilities. Her parents believed the same. That was when I used EGRP II's teaching techniques and took it upon myself to help Kirti read." He added, "Four months later now, Kirti is a completely different student—enthusiastic, playful, happy, and eager to learn. She easily identifies letters, she can read words using a pinwheel chart and word cards provided by EGRP II, and she understands teaching by other teachers, too."

Mr. Kanu considers this young girl's progress to be a significant accomplishment for the school's teaching techniques, as well as for himself to understand how such techniques can play a pivotal role in changing a student's learning journey.

Sandip Prasad Kalwar, Kriti's father, confirmed everything said by Mr. Kanu, explaining, "I could not have been more grateful to the head teacher. My daughter hated going to school. She cried all day in her classroom and never understood what her teachers taught her. I thought my daughter would never be able to read and write; everybody said she had a disability. Since the head teacher committed to teaching my daughter one on one, she is a completely different person. She looks forward to going to school and to after-school cluster lessons more than she enjoys being at home."

Mr. Kalwar is one of many parents who have echoed the opinion that EGRP II has helped their children find their school and cluster a place to which they look forward to going every day.

"EGRP II is a remarkable program":
Rupindra Prabhavi Joshi, Shivalaya Primary School, Kaski District

Rupindra Prabhavi Joshi, Head Teacher, Shivalaya Primary School, Rupa Rural Municipality 2, Kaski District. (Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

"In all my teaching years so far, I haven't come across a program before like the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II), which is entirely focused on the learning journey of primary-level students," shared Rupindra Joshi, head teacher at Sivalaya Primary School of Rupa Rural Municipality 2, Kaski District, as he spoke about how effective EGRP II had been for students at his school.

Mr. Joshi, who himself has been teaching Nepali language to secondary-level students, said that EGRP II helped him understand how to break the traditional lecture method in teaching. In addition, Mr. Joshi had a lot to say when it came to EGRP II's role in building capacities of teachers teaching in grades 1, 2, and 3.

"Trainings such as the teacher professional support (TPS) and teacher professional development (TPD) provided by EGRP II at my school completely transformed my faculty members. Today I have an older, TPD-trained teacher who is teaching more effectively in the classroom than a young teacher without the training. Furthermore, having the learning materials, the supplementary reading materials, and the teacher's guide has helped teachers see clearly that teaching is a profession," he elaborated.

According to Mr. Joshi, after enrolling in and completing the TPS training provided by EGRP II, he immediately went back to his school and formed a teacher learning group (TLG), which turned out to be crucial for teachers to bring their instructional problems forward and to find solutions from among themselves. The TLG then planned and formed a corps of experts from the rural municipality and developed a plan for these experts to carry out timely monitoring of community schools.

"It is amazing to see how EGRP II worked strongly to connect all the dots between the local-level authorities and the schools in our rural municipality," he noted. "I am aware of how EGRP II has worked closely with palikas to strengthen their capacity to draft a Municipal Education Plan (MEP) and an Education Profile (EP) linked directly with schools. Joint monitoring of schools by teachers and palika officials never happened this routinely prior to EGRP II's intervention."

As a result, Mr. Joshi said that he, along with the head teachers from some other schools in the rural municipality, is routinely invited by the Education Development and Coordination Unit and by other officials from the education unit of the palika to discuss challenges and ways to mitigate them, along with discussions about the MEP and EP.

"Our palika has already allocated NPR 250,000 for teacher training alone for the near future. This is the beginning of more fruitful teaching careers guided by EGRP II," he concluded.

"What more can a parent ask for than a child wanting to learn?": Ram Bihari Yadav, Dhanusha District

Ram Bihari Yadav joins his daughter in a cluster in Aurahi Rural Municipality 2, Dhanusha District.
(Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

Although it was almost summer in mid-February in the eastern belt of Nepal, specifically in Aurahi Rural Municipality 2 in Janakpur, Dhanusha District, the morning still reflected the lingering winter. It was biting cold, but children undeterred by the chill of the early hour were gathered in a cluster, happy to learn from their cluster teacher.

Established and facilitated by the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II), clusters have been an important space for children to continue practicing their reading and writing skills while their physical schools have been shut for months because of the ongoing pandemic. Even though the instruction had not yet begun, around 15 children from grades 1, 2, and 3 were already seated in the courtyard of the cluster and each of them seemed extremely happy to be present to learn letters, write words, and sing songs with their cluster teacher.

Among all of the excitement and chatter, Ram Bihari Yadav, father of Radhika Yadav, a grade 1 student, was also one of the early birds at this cluster to see how Radhika's "distance learning" was working.

When asked about what made him want to observe the cluster at this early hour, Mr. Yadav answered, "It is just a good feeling to be here to see my child so happy to study. Your program [EGRP II] achieved a miracle for my child. She looks forward to coming to this cluster every day. Before your program came to her school, and before the cluster was set up, I had to struggle to convince my child to hold a pencil and a book. Now, she wants to draw, write, and read all the time."

According to Mr. Yadav, Radhika has been a fast learner ever since EGRP II's teaching techniques were introduced to the school and schoolteachers. In addition, supplementary

reading materials that EGRP II provided to students helped his daughter improve her ability to identify letters and words in Nepali far sooner than he had expected.

"When I was called by teachers and your EGRP II team to a meeting to brief us about this project, I initially wasn't really sure what you were trying to achieve. However, after attending several parent–teacher meetings and briefings on this initiative, I started to believe in your mission. It was after I saw the change in learning behaviors of my child that I realized that this is a game changer." Mr. Yadav chuckled and pointed out his daughter in the cluster, adding, "Look at her, she is not even bothered that I am also here. She is lost in her own world of letters, numbers, and words for good."

While the schools have remained closed to curb the threat of the ongoing pandemic, Mr. Yadav has visited the cluster every day and spent most of his time observing cluster activities. He said he has dedicated 2 hours every evening at home to sit next to his daughter and help her study the lessons she learned in the cluster.

"It is your program that made teachers open our eyes about the importance of parents' engagement in a child's learning journey," he commented. Then he elaborated, "I have realized that just spending a few hours to motivate my daughter can mean so much to her. Sometimes, she reads me letters, or she asks me to help her draw and sing poems or reads stories aloud. When I do so, she gets encouraged to read and write more. What more can a parent wish for?" Mr. Yadav then walked over to sit next to his daughter.

Radhika happily welcomed her father to read next to her.

"The multigrade, multilevel training shed light upon how teachers need to be more accountable": Lalsa Kumari Das, Rautahat District

Lalsa Kumari Das participating in the multigrade, multilevel (MGML) training in Katarya 4, Rautahat District.
(Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

Lalsa Kumari Das is a cluster teacher and a member of the child-development faculty at a community school in Balirampur Rural Municipality, Katariya 4, Rautahat District. She participated in a multigrade, multilevel (MGML) teacher training offered by the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II) in Rautahat District, held in February 2022. Ms. Das explained that this training had made all the participating teachers more accountable in terms of their approach to teaching.

"The MGML training took us back to the basics, and this was essential. Children learn quickly, but teachers need to know best practices for how to help them learn," Ms. Das shared. "Some great takeaways from this training were that teachers need to do their own homework every day, before going into their classroom or clusters; teachers need to understand the diversity and individuality of their students; teachers need to be patient; teachers need to be creative in designing learning materials that help students read and write better; teachers need to be proactive in communicating better with faculty members and the head teacher; and teachers need to keep connecting with parents of their students."

According to Ms. Das, trainings like MGML are essential for teachers at the primary level because what they learn becomes very useful even in the small instructional clusters taking place in communities while schools remain closed.

She elaborated, "This training has brought many teachers together to share their experiences of teaching students in grades 1, 2, and 3 using the new techniques, as well as the challenges they have faced and ways to mitigate those challenges."

"My Nepali teacher is my favorite teacher and I want to become like her": Tabita Kunwar, Tanahun District

Tabita Kunwar, grade 2 student at Min Primary School, Tharpu Municipality, Tanahun District.
(Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

"My favorite subject is Nepali language, and my favorite teacher is my Nepali teacher," said Tabita Kunwar, who is 9 years old and in grade 2. She smiled and added that she wants to become a Nepali teacher when she completes her academic degrees.

"No other classroom is as fun to read and write as Nepali class because we have so many stories, books, playful cards, and reading materials, and our teacher always makes us sing poems and even dance between poetry," Tabita shared. She was referring to supplementary reading materials, letter cards, and learning materials provided by the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II) to Min Primary School, Tharpu Municipality, Tanahun District.

According to Tabita, she scores the highest marks in Nepali in all her exams and all her friends in her class agree that Nepali is their favorite subject. She said, "Our teacher makes reading fun for us. We learn faster with all the materials our teacher uses and she [the teacher] always motivates us to read and write. I even prepare the next Nepali chapter on my own at home before my teacher explains that chapter."

In addition, Tabita revealed that after her teacher had interacted with her mother, Tabita's mother was keener to observe Tabita's learning and would spend hours every day helping Tabita to read and write at home. Such parent–teacher conversations were started in community schools by EGRP II to encourage parents to support their children's learning journey.

"I do not know what they talked about," Tabita said. "But ever since then, my mother sits with me every evening and asks me how my school went, asks me to read her a story at least or recite a poem, and tells me how proud she is of me. I just love it," she giggled.

"Okay, our bell just rang, so I must go home now. I just want to say I will one day become a teacher myself by studying hard and will make my school and my mother proud," Tabita concluded.

"Our Education Profile and Municipal Education Plan development would not have been possible without EGRP II": Surya Prasad Sharma, Baglung District

Surya Prasad Sharm, Head of the Education Development and Coordination Unit (EDCU), Bareng Rural Municipality 3, Baglung District. (Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

"The drafting of our community's Education Profile (EP) and Municipal Education Profile (MEP) would not have been possible without the handholding and guidance of the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II)," stated Surya Prasad Sharma, Head of the Education Development and Coordination Unit (EDCU) in Bareng Rural Municipality 3 in Baglung District.

According to Mr. Sharm, EGRP II had been advising the rural municipality from its early stages of planning the EP and MEP, by providing the technical support it needed. He elaborated, "EGRP II hosted a workshop for the government officials of the education department to train them in how to plan and write an EP and MEP. It guided us to plan the EP and MEP with practical activities and with goals that are realistic and achievable." He continued, "Given EGRP II's support and guidance, I must say that this is the first time that this rural municipality has designated a budget to enhance the education system here. We have planned several educational fairs and teacher professional development (TPD) training programs for the months to come. This is a fresh and promising beginning for all of us."

Furthermore, Mr. Sharm credited EGRP II with helping the rural municipality to assemble a roster of experts. He said that it was imperative for Bareng Rural Municipality to have subject specialists who could better monitor teachers and their instructional methods. He highlighted how several meetings organized by EGRP II to discuss and plan for the roster helped them form a group of experts who then proceeded to make several joint monitoring visits to community schools in the rural municipality.

"These joint monitoring visits by our members from the EDCU, the local expert team, and staff from EGRP II have been highly effective in terms of evaluating teachers' skills, observing classroom activities, gauging the reading and writing abilities of students in grades 1–3, and reviewing challenges. We now continuously communicate with both the expert team and head teachers, and provide them with all the support they need. In fact, we already have several monitoring visits planned for March and April this year," he concluded.

"Clusters should continue side by side with schools": Chandrakala Thakur, Dhanusha District

Chandrakala Thakur teaching her students in a cluster in Aurahi Rural Municipality 2, Dhanusha District.
(Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

Chandrakala Thakur normally teaches Nepali language as a subject in grades 1–5 at a community school in Aurahi Rural Municipality 2, Dhanusha District. With schools yet to resume in-person classes during the last week of February 2022 because of the ongoing pandemic, Chandrakala was hosting over a dozen students from grades 1–3 in the courtyard of her own residence, where she leads lessons as a cluster teacher.

Early in the morning, Chandrakala began her routine with her cluster by dancing along with her students as a warmup before beginning to help them with their syllabus.

After teaching her students for an hour, she took a quick break to sit with a team of visitors from the Early Grade Reading Program II (EGRP II) and talk with them about how imperative the cluster instruction has been for the children.

Ms. Thakur began, "The cluster has become a second school for early grade children, and the gatherings should continue even after in-person classes in school resume. During this time of the pandemic, the cluster has been the only medium for children to continue their learning journey. Imagine how much they would have missed in the absence of this cluster!" She continued, "The cluster has kept these children on track with their syllabus, while the whole teaching technique in which EGRP II guided me has helped me to keep the children excited about coming to the cluster sessions."

Referring to a recent multigrade, multilevel (MGML) teacher training program organized by EGRP II, Ms. Thakur added, "This training further enhanced my knowledge on producing easy-to-make learning materials at home that have helped children learn playfully. This training also encouraged me to understand child psychology better and to focus on and respect every child's individuality and learning capability."

According to Ms. Thakur. every child in this cluster attended 6 days per week. She explained, "They love reading and writing at this cluster facility so much that some of them even argue with their parents about how they do not want to miss any day here, even when their parents occasionally ask them to stay home for family functions. The children's engagement has won the hearts of parents because they are convinced that the cluster will ensure the growth of their child's learning."

Ms. Thakur also noted that the cluster approach had helped teachers in the rural municipality to keep themselves engaged and motivated. She clarified that teaching was far more fun than it used to be some years ago. She concluded, "Imagine if there were no cluster and schools were closed, too. We as teachers would have forgotten ourselves how to teach. At a personal level, using EGRP II's teaching technique, I feel like I have become a child myself. I am always eager to dance and sing along with children, I am always finding ways to create new learning materials to help children read and write better, and I am amazed by the children's enthusiasm for learning. It is a win-win situation where teachers, children, school, and parents all benefit at once."

Happy faces of grade 1 children of Bal Mandir Basic School, Beni Municipality, Myagdi District, holding their favorite storybooks. (Photo credit: Avash Karmacharya)

A student uses a pinwheel chart to form a word along with his cluster teacher in Aurahi Rural Municipality 2, Dhanusha District. (Photo: Avash Karmacharya)

Annex E: High-Resolution Photo Files with Captions

Selected photos taken during EGRP II-related activities are listed in *Table E-1*, and the original photo files are also attached separately to the version of this report transmitted to USAID. The photographer obtained the required consent from the subjects.

Table E-1.   List of high-resolution photos

No.	Photo caption	Date (all 2022) and location	Photo credit
1	A student demonstrates how to use a pinwheel chart to learn Nepali sentences	January, Parsa District	Avash Karmacharya
2	Sunita Devi Sharma with her daughter Srijana Sharma at a cluster in Baragadhi Rural Municipality	January, Bara District	Avash Karmacharya
3.	Rukshana Praveen, cluster teacher, Bindabasini Rural Municipality	January, Parsa District	Avash Karmacharya
4.	Ranjita Chaudhary, Head Teacher, Shree Banshakti Basic School, Jirabhawani Rural Municipality	January, Parsa District	Avash Karmacharya
5.	Head teacher Ram Babu Prasad Kanu helping student Kirti Kumari learn in a classroom at Ne Ra Primary School, Bindabasini Rural Municipality	January, Parsa District	Avash Karmacharya
6.	Ram Bihari Yadav joins his daughter in a cluster in Aurahi Rural Municipality 2	February, Dhanusha District	Avash Karmacharya
7.	Lalsa Kumari Das participating in the multigrade, multilevel training in Katarya 4	February, Rautahat District	Avash Karmacharya
8.	Tabita Kunwar, grade 2 student at Min Primary School, Tharpu Municipality	February, Tanahun District	Avash Karmacharya
9.	Chandrakala Thakur teaching her students in a cluster in Aurahi Rural Municipality 2	January, Dhanusha District	Avash Karmacharya
10.	Happy faces of grade 1 children of Bal Mandir Basic School, Beni Municipality	February, Myagdi District	Avash Karmacharya
11.	A student in Aurahi Rural Municipality uses a pinwheel chart to form a word	January, Dhanusha District	Avash Karmacharya