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## NEPAL FACT SHEET

# GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT SUPPORT TO THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Nepal has made remarkable progress in expanding learning opportunities for children and adults. Since 1990, net primary school enrollment rates increased from 64 to 95 percent, with near gender parity. Yet, the quality of education remains low, as are secondary school completion rates. Inadequately trained teachers, a lack of appropriate learning materials, and insufficient support at home, prevent children from developing the reading skills in early grades that will allow them to learn throughout their academic career.

The Government of Nepal (GON) and development partners developed the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) 2016 to 2023, which serves as the GON's education sector strategy and supports Nepal's vision to graduate from the status of a least developed country by the year 2030. The SSDP aligns with Nepal's international commitment towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were ratified by the UN General Assembly in September 2015. Building upon the lessons learned and the gains made in the sector under these programs, the SSDP is designed to enable the school education sector to achieve the targets defined under SDG 4: *“Ensuring equitable and inclusive quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all.”*

USAID/Nepal's earlier involvement in the education sector focused on early childhood development. Based on USAID's Education Strategy and local assessments that found extremely low reading scores despite high primary school enrollment, USAID shifted to a leading role in advocating for early grade reading to be on the national education reform agenda. USAID completed multiple diagnostics that

pointed to specific areas of need to improve early grade reading. This included Nepal's first nationally representative Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA), which found that the majority of students read far below international standards; 55 % of 2nd grade children whose mother tongue was not Nepali scored zero on reading assessments, and; teachers have only a minimal command of evidence-based instructional techniques for teaching early grade reading.

## **DIRECT BUDGET SUPPORT FOR READING**

Under the SSDP, the Ministry of Education (MOE) prioritizes reading as a foundational skill for life and has launched the National Early Grade Reading Program (NEGRP). In recognizing the importance of strengthening country ownership, sustainability, and technical capacity to improve early grade reading, USAID directly channels assistance through host country systems to support the implementation and scale up of NEGRP.

In 2014, USAID commenced a five-year commitment of direct budget support to the MOE to implement NEGRP in 16 districts in the Eastern, Central, Western, Mid-Western and Far-Western regions. USAID's support will help improve reading skills of one million children in grades 1-3.

## **PROGRAM OBJECTIVES**

- Design, produce, and distribute evidence-based EGR instructional materials for use by teachers;
- Train grades 1-3 teachers on the use of the provided materials;
- Support monitoring and coaching in EGR for teachers in target districts;
- Improve classroom-based EGR assessment processes in target districts;
- Institutionalize policies, standards, and benchmarks that support improved EGR instruction and outcomes;
- Engage parents and families to support reading in target districts;
- Strengthen capability of parent-teacher associations and school management committees to contribute to improved early grade reading outcomes.

## **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

- Improve early grade reading skills of students: Increase the percentage of grade 1–3 public primary students who can read and comprehend grade-level text;
- Improve students' learning assessment system: Classroom-based EGRA and National Assessment System of Students' Achievement with EGR indicators institutionalized;
- Increase family and community support for early grade reading.