

**Education for Children with Disabilities – Issues in Access, Challenges, Solutions**

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**Abstract**

Education is undoubtedly important for the development of all children, but it becomes a matter of even greater significance for children who are disabled. For children with disabilities, their prospects in life for equitable social and economic opportunities are disproportionately jeopardized when they lack access to quality education. The aim of this research is to understand the issues in education faced by children with disabilities, specifically, the challenges they face. Based on perspectives of disability education and inclusive education, this research utilizes a descriptive study design to understand the issues in education for children with disabilities. In Nepal, a signatory state of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, significant challenges persist in access to quality education for children with disabilities. Preliminary interviews from six students and their teachers revealed systemic problems in access and delivery of education for children with disabilities. Guided by these prompts and insights, a comprehensive survey instrument was prepared for data collection with students. Field based survey data was collected with 66 students. Additionally, seven interviews were conducted with teachers, administrators, and administrators who worked with these students. The survey data was analysed using IBM's SPSS Version 23. Insights from data analysis and interviews revealed that children with disabilities face a critical shortage of qualified teachers, learning resources and disabled-friendly physical infrastructure. The primary implication of this study is towards Nepal Government's education policymakers. The ultimate objective of this study was to shed light on issues of disability education and thereby increase access and quality of education for children with disabilities in Nepal<sup>1</sup>.

*Keywords:* Disability, access, quality of education, rights of children, special needs

## Introduction

“My friends at school often hurt us unintentionally by talking down about other people with disability. Even if their comments are not directed towards me, I feel hurt because I am disabled too. I feel like schools should make a sincere effort to increase awareness about disability, and that it is illegal to discriminate against disabled people – and that mocking them is not right.”

### - Vision-impaired Student

It is a fact that disability in children is not a matter of choice; however, choices available for children with disabilities can make their disability a non-issue or a big burdensome issue, and thereby drastically alter the quality of their life. As Stella Young, comedian, journalist and activist with a disability has famously said “My disability exists not because I use a wheelchair, but because the broader environment isn’t accessible” (Young, Stella, 2012). The point is that disability would not be looked upon as such if there was access to disability-friendly resources wherever needed. With accessible disabled-friendly resources, a disabled person would be able to live his/her life independently and would be able to function to their fullest capacity just like regular individuals. Therefore, access to resources is a key factor that influences a disabled person’s life experience by making their disability either a non-issue or a limiting issue. With proper access, disability becomes less of a limitation and more of a potential.

It is now a matter of fact - education is one of the biggest discriminators when it comes to the quality of life of an individual. Educated individuals have access to a better quality of life compared to individuals who lack education. Children who lack access to education are therefore in grave danger of being relegated to a life of misery and challenges. A disabled child without education access faces an increased threat of failure in life. Countries around the world are cognizant of this basic fact and therefore proactive about children’s education regardless of the children’s vulnerability – disabled, orphan, minority, disadvantaged, or otherwise. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - 1989, of which Nepal has been a signatory state since 1991, mandates the rights of

children including those related to health, education, social, cultural, political, and economic according to international law (UN, 1989). Consistent with this, the constitution of Nepal stipulates - education is a basic right for all children and that disabled kids have the right to obtain special privileges from the state (*Constitution of Nepal*, 2015). The major types of disability (in order of prevalence) in Nepal include physical (mobility) impairment, visual impairment (blindness), hearing Impairment (deaf), dual sensory impairment (deaf-blind), speech impairment, mental (psychological) disability, intellectual disability, and multiple disabilities (CBS, 2011).

Problems faced by disabled children in Nepal when it comes to their education access are mostly either talked about anecdotally or emotionally. To the researcher's knowledge, systematic research that delves into the issues of education for disabled children is lacking. More specifically, there is a lack of understanding of issues and challenges in education faced by children with disabilities in Nepal. A perspective from the children with disability is also lacking. As such, there is an urgent need to understand comprehensively the challenges children with disabilities in Nepal face in access to quality education.

The objective of this research is to identify issues related to access to education from the perspective of the children with disability themselves. To ensure a thorough understanding of issues, children's survey data is complemented with interview data obtained by discussing the status quo of disability education of children with teachers, caretakers, and administrators. After having learnt comprehensively about issues and challenges faced in education by children with disabilities in Nepal, implications for practice in the context of children with disabilities in Nepal are suggested.

### **Literature Review**

Education for children with disabilities is a concerning topic in several studies. Extant research shows that compared to their non-disabled peers, children with disability lag far behind in terms of educational achievement (Aron & Loprest, 2012; Brekke et al., 2023; Yoder & Cantrell, 2019). There are multiple reasons as to why this is the case. Children with disability are more likely to have higher school absenteeism either due to

their physical or medical conditions and this impacts their educational outcomes (Klein et al., 2022; Mizunoya et al., 2018). Also, children with disability face social and physical barriers and this creates educational inequality resulting in subpar educational achievement compared to children without disability (Chatzitheochari & Platt, 2019; Yoder & Cantrell, 2019). Research also shows that in general, there is a lack of adequate support in terms of teachers, staff, and teaching materials required for children with disabilities (Kurowski et al., 2022).

The United Nations (UN) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. As such society's impact on a person with a disability has huge significance in whether that person can live a meaningful life (UN, 2006). A landmark event for those with disabilities, the UN CRPD sought to "promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity" (UN, 2006). This includes not only the principles of equality of opportunity and accessibility but also includes the right of persons with disabilities to education. Nepal became a signatory state in January 2008, and it formally confirmed and ratified the convention resolutions as of May 2010. Access to education for children with disabilities is also poignant from the perspective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Persons with disabilities are at a disadvantage regarding most SDGs and education access is of critical importance (UN, 2018).

In Nepal, where the government's priority is to increase the literacy rate, currently standing at 65.9%, increasing education access for all children is crucial, including children with disabilities (CBS, 2011). Many problems persist despite the best interests of governments, and the primary ones include problems related to teaching, testing, and mentoring. Key barriers to enrollment and attendance of children include poverty, social exclusion, disability, migration, child labour, social norms and gender bias (Scheuermann, 2013). Research shows that only 5-15% of children in poor countries like Nepal have access to assistive technology which hinders the children's access to school

and significantly impacts their learning outcomes (UNICEF, 2013). Only a few schools in Nepal meet the children-friendly school standards. 20% of government schools lack improved water and sanitation facilities, with an additional 19% lacking separate toilets for girls and boys and menstrual hygiene management facilities (MOEST, 2016). Therefore, for children with disabilities, providing them access to quality education often becomes a matter of even greater challenge not just for the parents of the children, but also for the concerned school and its administrators.

Inclusive education is considered one of the most effective ways of providing all children regardless of their status – disabled or otherwise - an equitable chance at attending school. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines inclusive education as “a process intended to respond to students’ diversity by increasing their participation and reducing exclusion within and from education” (UNESCO, 2009). An inclusive education system allows students of diverse backgrounds and statuses to learn and grow together while being accepting and respectful of differences. Inclusive education is beneficial for students with disabilities from the viewpoint of academic performance as well as social and emotional development. Research shows that when students with disabilities are put in inclusive classrooms, they have better learning outcomes compared to when students with disabilities are taught in segregated classrooms (Baker, 1995; Katz & Mirenda, 2002). Also, inclusive education contributes positively to social and emotional skill development for students with disabilities (Katz & Mirenda, 2002; Schwab, 2015). Unfortunately, it requires a lot of commitment from multiple stakeholders – teachers, parents, school administrators, community leaders, and government policymakers – to make inclusive education a priority and success.

### **Research Methodology**

This research utilizes a descriptive study design. Descriptive designs are useful when gathering information to understand a particular phenomenon or activity. Much is unknown about education access and challenges for children with disabilities in Nepal. Therefore, a descriptive study is a suitable approach for this research.

This study utilizes two different methods of data collection. Specifically, this research uses field surveys as well as semi-structured face-to-face interviews as tools for data collection. A field survey was conducted with the students with disabilities whereas face-to-face interviews were conducted with teachers, administrators, and caretakers of these students.

Analytic tools used in the research include IBM's Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 23. The data analytic technique used in the study mainly includes sample descriptive statistics. Results from data analysis will be interpreted and explained throughout to highlight important and relevant issues.

### **Survey Instrument**

In this study, we utilized a questionnaire based on a 5-point Likert scale as the survey instrument. The Likert scale response varied from 1- *Strongly Agree* to 5 - *Strongly Disagree*. The survey had a total of 23 questions which were worded both positively and negatively to reduce response error. The survey also had demographic questions, however, there were no questions asked about the participant's name birth date or phone number to ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

The survey instrument was translated into Nepali language, checked for content and face validity, and pilot-tested prior to administration. Also, we trained volunteers to administer the survey and requested approval from concerned parties before administering the survey. The detail of the survey instrument is provided in the Appendix section.

### **Sample**

The sample for this study was children with disabilities in the schools of the Rupandehi district of Nepal studying in grades 6 through 12. The sample chosen was a convenience sample because of the time and resource constraints of the research. Table 1 lists the total number of children with disabilities in the Rupandehi district. The total number of school-aged children with disabilities in Rupandehi is 2,179. In order of prevalence, physical disability was the most prevalent, followed by blindness and speech problems as second and third most prevalent form of disability.

**Table 1***Children with Disabilities in Rupandehi*

Type of Disability	Physical	Blindness	Deaf	Deaf - Blind	Speech Problem	Mental	Intellectual	Multiple Disability
Number of Children	703	328	155	25	363	227	135	243

Note. Information obtained from Census Nepal, 2011.

In this study, we include in the sample students with disabilities studying in grades 6-12, and this corresponds approximately to children aged 10-19 years. The total population of children with disabilities in Rupandehi district in this category is 1610. However, many school-aged children with disabilities in Nepal do not attend school for different reasons, mostly either because of a lack of accessible school facilities or severe limitations of disability. The exact percentage of this is often a matter of debate due to a lack of concrete statistics, however, it could be as high as 90% (Lamichhane, 2013; UNESCO, 2009). In this study, we focus on physical, visual, hearing, and mental disability only. This is because we collect data from students, and it becomes a challenge to collect data from students with - dual sensory, speech, intellectual, or multiple - disability.

We collected data from four different public schools in the Rupandehi district. These schools were selected since they were the only schools that catered to students with disabilities in the Rupandehi district. The school's name and information are not disclosed for confidential purpose.

Altogether, we were able to collect survey data from 69 students with disabilities from the four schools listed above. The range of disabilities in students included vision, hearing, mental, and physical mobility. The class of the students ranged from class 6 through 12, thus including both primary and secondary level students. We intentionally did not include students below class 6 because the survey required participants to assess, evaluate, and determine multiple issues - topics which are generally challenging for younger children. Therefore, our cutoff point for data collection was placed at class 6. Students in the survey included both male and female students.

## **Interview**

We supplemented our survey data with seven interviews from teachers, caretakers, and administrators. These interviews were semi-structured in nature, allowing the researchers and those interviewed to explore issues as they arise. Altogether, we were able to conduct seven face-to-face interviews with teachers, care-takers, and administrators and we have transcribed the key points from the interview here:

### ***Vision-impaired Teacher. Teaches visually impaired students.***

“We face a crucial shortage of teaching resources, especially those needed for blind students, such as Braille. “Curriculum Development Center (CDC) needs to pay closer attention when developing teaching resources for such students and make them readily available.”

### ***Teacher. Teaches Cass for Hearing-impaired Students. Also, Teaches Class With Regular Students Only.***

With my hearing-impaired students, I face tremendous challenges in communicating my intent or emotion as I use sign language. There is no way of knowing whether they understood the nuances of what I was saying. I wish there was more visual or tangible content that I could use as a teaching aid for those students. With regular students, I know quickly whether or not they understood my intent.

### ***Care-taker / Teacher. Teaches Visually-impaired Students and is a Resident Caretaker as Well.***

Our blind students are taken care of in a hostel built on-site at school from community donations and grants. We lack resource teachers. If I fall sick and take a sick leave, they do not have another resource teacher (one who understands Braille) to look after their academics. Students have difficulty going to their homes during days when the school is off as they need someone to take them home and their parents are not always able or have the means. Our students have different degrees of disability and we are not able to support them as much as they need.



***Care-taker. Serves Students With Mental Disabilities.***

There is a lack of differentiated education for the children. Everyone (very young to older) is put in one classroom and taught the same content regardless of their capabilities which are different. With mental disability, it is a challenge to grade student learning since the student's mental situation changes all the time. They respond fine one day and another day they don't even want to talk. Parents are dependent on the school to look after their kids and schools are not equipped to handle that. I am the mother of a disabled student and I am here at the school taking care of my child along with other disabled children since there is no one else to look after them.

***Principal. School Serves Students With Hearing Disability.***

We suffer from lack of resources (teachers and physical infrastructure) and often we are forced to put different level students in the same classroom. Sign language (as taught in Nepal) is limited as there are only 7500 words (signs) available and a lot of things cannot be explained to students as a result. Syllabus is the same as that for regular students and that is a problem as the rates of learning are vastly different and some of the content just cannot be delivered. Students have difficulty learning about feelings (such as love, affection, hate etc.) and learning becomes challenging as a result. There are some students with multiple disabilities and that becomes a problem for us to manage. The government provides us with a per-head cost for each student. However, the students need more support and resources than what can be provided with that amount.

***Principal. School Serves Regular Students as Well as Students With Mental Disabilities.***

We have a lack of trained educators and infrastructure to help the disabled student. Right now we are constructing buildings which will house classrooms and hostels for students with varying mental disabilities. Soon enough we are going to be the designated resource school for students with mental disability, and hopefully, more resources from the government will be available. Once

completed, there should be more customized resources for students with mental disability.

***Principal. School Serves Visually-impaired Students as Well as Regular Students.***

When accommodating students with disabilities along with regular students in a class, the regular students often felt like they had to sacrifice certain fun aspects of school, and the students with disabilities felt guilty for being the reason for it. Also, we are being completely unfair to students with disabilities when it comes to testing. My vision-impaired students who learn Braille have to give tests through dictation with another student. Neither do they have any control over what to write (including grammar) nor do they have enough time for it. Unfortunately, we are in a position where we are unable to afford extra resources or attention to our students with disabilities, and I fear that is quite a common problem for schools like ours.

### **Results**

We utilized responses from a total of 66 participants after dropping 3 responses for incomplete responses. The 66 survey responses were utilized for data analysis. Survey items that were negatively worded were reverse-coded so that all the items were pointed in the same direction. The survey items used in the data collection are included in the annex section of the report. Sample descriptive of the participants are shown in Table 2 below. The male and female student population is roughly equal as seen in Table 2. Out of the survey participants, 21 are visually impaired, 41 are hearing impaired, 2 are mentally impaired, and 2 are physically impaired. Table 3 shows information about the class of the survey participants. As can be seen from Table 3, most participants are from class 12, and then class 11, and then class 10 respectively.

**Table 2***Sample Descriptive of Students with Disabilities*

		N	%
Gender	Male	32	48.5
	Female	34	51.5
Disability Type	Visual	21	31.8
	Hearing	41	62.1
	Mental	2	3.0
	Physical	2	3.0
Total		66	100.0

**Table 3***Class Distribution of Students with Disabilities*

Class	N	%
6	1	1.5
7	5	7.6
8	1	1.5
9	7	10.6
10	12	18.2
11	17	25.8
12	19	28.8
Missing	4	6.1
Total	66	100

**Table 4***Survey Response Profile (% of Respondents)*

	<i>Strongly Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Your family/caretaker supports you to attend school.	89	11	-	-	-
Your family encourages you to study.	68	26	4	2	-
You are happy to go to school.	80	9	5	-	6
You have many friends at school	51	29	9	3	8
Your teachers care about you.	42	38	18	2	-
You feel education helps to secure your future.	68	18	2	5	8
You can go to school on your own.	65	18	5	6	6
You feel judged negatively at school because of your disability	9	6	15	30	40

The result of the survey response is discussed next. Table 4 lists some significant responses from the participants. As seen from Table 4, on the question “Your family/caretaker supports you to attend school”, the response was - 89% strongly agree (SA), 11% agree (A), and 0% response for neutral (N), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD). This means all students (100%) indicated that their family supports them to attend school. On the question “*Your family encourages you to study*”, the response was - 68% *strongly agree* (SA), 26% *agree* (A), 4% *neutral* (N), 2% *disagree* (D), and 0% *strongly disagree* (SD). This means 94% of students indicated that their family encourages them to study. Similarly, on the question “*You are happy to go to school*” most of them - 89% (80% SA+ 9% A) - are happy to go to school. Similarly, 86% (68% SA + 18% A) of

students feel strongly that *education helps secure their future*. 81% (52% SA + 29% A) of students indicated that they have many friends at school. Also, most students - 80% (52% SA + 29% A) - felt that *teachers care about them*. Most students - 83% (42% SA + 38% A) - had a positive attitude about their ability to go to school by themselves (*can go to school on your own*). In summarize these findings, our data shows that students with disability are in most cases not deterred in person because of their disability in going to school, getting educated, and valuing the importance of education. Also, data shows that parents and teachers are as individuals a reliable source of support felt by these students. This is a positive affirmation towards education by students with disabilities and supported by their families, friends, and teachers. This is a crucial first step in education.

Also, our study did not find evidence of systemic discrimination felt by students with disabilities. On the question “You feel judged negatively at school because of your disability”, the majority of students - 70% (30% D + 40% SD) - disagreed that they were judged negatively because of their disability. Fewer number of students - 15% (9% SA + 6% A) - felt judged negatively and some chose to stay neutral (15% N). However, this low percentage of negative judgment could be also because most of the students with disabilities in our sample consist of visually impaired or hearing impaired students. Because of their impairment, these students are unable to register but a limited range of expressions - negative or otherwise - intended towards them.

**Table 5***Survey Response Profile (% of Respondents)...Continued*

	<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Neither Agree nor Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>
Your school's physical facilities are disabled-friendly.	9	41	17	9	24
You cannot learn as much due to a lack of disabled-friendly learning resources.	12	32	36	14	6
Your teachers do not know how to teach students with disability.	59	26	5	6	5
You feel neglected at school because of your disability.	33	15	29	17	6
Your school has special classrooms for students with disability.	38	21	17	14	10
Your school uses assistive technologies that support your learning.	30	50	14	2	5
You study in the same classroom as regular students.	59	18	3	6	14

Next, we discuss additional findings from the survey as presented in Table 5. When asked whether “Your school’s physical facilities are disabled friendly”, one out of two students - 50% (9% SA + 41% A) - indicated that their school’s physical facilities are disabled friendly, with the rest either staying neutral or disagreeing (17% N, 9% D, 24% SD). This means, that even though half of the students agree that the physical facilities are disabled-friendly, the other half either disagree that the physical facilities are disabled-friendly (33%) or have no opinion about it (17%). This raises a related but concerning issue - whether students with disability are even aware of what a modern disabled-friendly physical facility should be like or is one in reality in this day and age.

Having never seen or experienced a modern disabled-friendly physical facility, students might not be able to contemplate one or feel the lack thereof when it's not present at their school. This makes the issue of availing a modern disabled-friendly physical facility to students with disabilities not less important but all the more poignant because the responsibility to provide adequate accessible physical facility falls squarely on the school and the government. Not providing children with disability an appropriate disabled-friendly physical facility is denying them their basic constitutional right, their right to effective education.

When asked to respond to the question "You cannot learn as much due to lack of disabled-friendly learning resources," the response we obtained was the following: 12% SA, 32% A, 36% N, 14% D, and 6% SD. With only 20% (14% D +6% SD) disagreeing, the majority of students - 80% of them - indicated explicitly or otherwise that they have problems in learning due to a lack of disabled-friendly learning resources. 44% indicated explicitly – (12% SA + 32% A) - that they have a problem learning due to a lack of disabled-friendly learning resources, and the rest (36% N) neither agreed nor disagreed. This is an issue worthy of serious attention, evaluation, and solution. With problems in learning, these vulnerable students will have reduced chances of receiving effective education, and consequently a lowered chance of having an equitable quality of life.

Related to the topic of learning, most students indicated that the teachers who teach them are not well-trained to teach students with disabilities. As seen from Table 5, when asked whether "Your teachers do not know how to teach students with disabilities", 85% (59% SA+26% A) of students indicated that their teachers do not know how to teach students with disability, with only 10% disagreeing (6% D + 4% SD) and 5% staying neutral. This is a serious issue in itself and one that is also validated through interviews with teachers themselves as well as school administrators. Well-trained teachers are in crucial-shortage for students with disabilities, and the reasons are many. However, the main reason boils down to the lack of financial means for the school to bring qualified teachers on board. The government and in particular officials in charge of school education should take note, and seek solutions to improve the status quo. Otherwise, hoping for effective education without well-trained teachers is just wishful thinking.

When asked whether “You feel neglected at school because of your disability” 48% (33% SA + 15% A) of students indicated that they feel alone or isolated at school because of their disability, with 29% staying neutral (neither agreed nor disagreed), and another 23% (17% SD + 6% D) disagreeing. The feeling of being isolated or being alone in a crowd can lead to additional stress for the student. The school has to find creative means for involving students with disabilities in school activities so that they too feel just as equal and no less important members of the school community, and that they are cherished regardless of their different abilities.

We asked students whether their school uses assistive technologies that support their learning in the question “Your school uses assistive technologies that support your learning”. 80% of students indicated (30% SA + 50% A) that the school used technology to help their learning, with 14% staying neutral, and 6% disagreeing. However, the response is probably higher because the student sample, mostly blind or deaf, considered Braille or sign language as the assistive technology. However, these students also likely do not know what is out there that their school does not have. Therefore, even if students have access to limited technology at their school, they seem content because they do not know about other technologies that are out there. Once again, the onus is on the government and schools to provide the latest in technology to students with disabilities to ensure their effective education.

Asked whether “You study in the same classroom as regular students” most students indicated that they do study in the same classroom as regular students. As seen from Table 7, 77% of students indicated that they are in the same classroom with regular students during their class sessions. This is a positive point from the perspective of inclusive education which advocates that students with different capabilities should all be placed together in the same classroom. Also, when students learn together, both groups of students, those with or without disability, benefit because of new learning opportunities that arise.

When asked whether “Your school has special classrooms for students with disability”, 59% of students indicated that their school has special classrooms for students with disabilities. However, this is a bit concerning since the number should ideally be



higher. Students with disabilities do need a separate classroom furnished with special needs learning materials. Therefore, government and school administrators need to ensure that there are indeed special needs furnished separate classrooms for students with disabilities to use so that they can obtain the most of the education provided.

### **Discussion**

Children's education is a somber topic in itself. However, this becomes all the more serious when the child has a disability. With the right education and support from society, children with disability have the potential for a bright future. However, the status quo on the education of children with disability in Nepal has to change. Access to quality education is a problem for many children with disabilities in Nepal. The findings from the research point to this fact. Students with disabilities indicated strongly that - yes, they have family and teacher support, but they lack disabled-friendly learning resources and physical infrastructure. Also, students indicated that they lack well-trained and qualified teachers in their classrooms. Because of these issues, students indicated that they are having problems with learning. Therefore, with key resources lacking, quality education remains a challenge for many students with disabilities.

All of the school principals we interviewed voiced similar concerns. One of the school principals we interviewed said this –

We suffer from lack of resources (teachers and physical infrastructure) and often we are forced to put different level students in the same classroom.....The government provides us with a per-head cost for each student. However, the students need more support and resources than what can be provided with that amount.

Another school principal said this during the interview -“We have a lack of trained educators and infrastructure to help the student with disability.....”

Yet another school principal said this during the interview - “.....Unfortunately, we are in a position where we are unable to afford extra resources or attention to our students with disability, and I fear that is quite a common problem for schools like ours.”

Teachers and caretakers of these students with disabilities also voiced similar sentiments. When all the stakeholders in disability education are echoing the same issue, then there has to be serious consideration of the issue.

On a positive note, we found that these students with disabilities were very motivated towards getting an education, as they felt education was super important for them and their families supported them. They were happy to go to school and had friends and teachers who cared about them. We also found that these students were confident about their ability to go to school on their own, and did not feel negatively judged by others because of their disability.

The second issue that stood out was the attitude towards those who have a disability. Even though our results indicate that students who didn't register felt discrimination, the students with disabilities did feel neglected at school. These students felt like they were left out and sidelined. Discrimination also likely was not felt because most of our students are visually impaired or deaf, and this limits their ability to capture fully the nuanced discrimination hurtled towards them. Disability has been and remains a stigma - something that is looked down on as if it's a disgrace and somehow a fault of the person with a disability. This unfortunate perspective towards disability and those who have a disability is what perpetuates discrimination. Schools can tackle this problem from the root cause by educating children about disability; that those with disability are to be treated with fairness and respect, and that with the right help people with disabilities too can make valuable contributions to the society.

### **Limitations**

Research on this study likely suffers from several issues related to data collection and analysis. First, this study is related to children with disabilities, who are among the most vulnerable groups in society. As such data collection from vulnerable groups often suffers from communication problems, which is likely in this case. This unfortunately is a common problem as it has been noted by researchers elsewhere (Gilbert, 2004). Second, we are utilizing a convenience sample from the Rupandehi district instead of a more representative sample from across Nepal as we are constrained by our resources. We

hope additional studies can build on this study and increase the scope to include other districts, and if possible all of Nepal.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

Education is a fundamental right for all children, and children with disability are no exception. In this study, we sought to understand issues of education including challenges from the perspective of children with disabilities. Several problems are evident from this research when it comes to the education of children with disabilities in Nepal as pointed out by those children themselves. The biggest issue was the acute shortage of trained teachers and caretakers for students with disabilities in Nepal. Also, there was generally a lack of resources, including learning resources and physical infrastructure resources for these students. Almost all of the teachers, caretakers, and school administrators, echoed this sentiment - that children with disability are not availed reasonable accommodation and support in education, which is their right – their right to receive effective education. This is a serious issue that demands swift attention from the Nepal government's education policymakers.

The implications are aimed primarily at Nepal Government's education policymakers, and it is concerned with seeking solutions for improving education for those with disability. Bluntly speaking, in Nepal disability education has not received the due attention it ought to receive to date. As a result, the lives of many Nepali children with disability are at risk of being as successful as they can be. As a signatory member state of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the persons with Disabilities – 2006*, Nepali children with disabilities have the right to effective education by being availed reasonable accommodation and support so that they too can have a maximized chance at academic and social development in life. It is the obligation of the nation-state of Nepal to ensure that its children with disabilities can exercise their rights to effective education. This implies Nepal government and its education policymakers have to allocate the necessary financial resources to build disabled-friendly infrastructure, hire well-trained teachers, and bring modern learning resources so that the education delivered to the students with

disabilities is effective. Children with disabilities too are our future, and they are just as worth investing in.

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