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CASP Newsletter

The Community-based Alternative Schooling Project

समुदायमा आधारित वैकल्पिक विद्यालय शिक्षा परियोजना

Welcome! New NFEC Director Mr. Sushil Pandey

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With the departure of Ms. Bunu Shrestha in December 2007, Mr. Sushil Pandey, former Director of Regional Education Directorate (RED) for the Central Region, was appointed in January 2008 as new Director of Non-Formal Education Center (NFEC), CASP's counterpart organization. Mr. Pandey brings in his rich field experience he earned for 33 years – his past roles include School Supervisor and District Education Officer in 9 districts. Thus, his dedication to educational development of Nepal.

Mr. Pandey participates actively in C A S P activities. Regarding establishing the model of V i l l a g e Education Plan (VEP) – Community Learning Center (CLC), one of the principal CASP components for the coming



Mr. Sushil Pandey

fiscal year, he asserts, "VEP is very important for further NFEC planning and implementation." As he himself has developed a VEP in the Jhapa district, the director seeks linkage between VEPs and NFEC programs. Creating the model corresponds with the policy of the Nepalese government, which is developing VEPs in 600 Village Development Committees for the new fiscal year.

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Mr. Pandey emphasizes how important support of JICA is for the successful implementation of the Alternative Schooling Program (ASP). Declaring that CASP is an NFEC project, the new director believes that it will help Nepal achieve the Education for All (EFA) goals.

Among a number of development partners NFEC cooperates with, Mr. Pandey particularly values JICA–CASP. He states, "I am impressed with CASP because it is a community-based, grass-root level project. People involved in the project have a sense of ownership." The new director commends CASP for helping children who are out of school, as he is well aware how getting education provides a momentum for the young to improve their lives.

Facilitator Interaction Meeting

-Yasuko Oda, Information, Education and Communications Expert

CASP's pilot classes entered its third and final year in operation in the Dhading district and the second year in the Kathmandu district. For the two districts CASP organized a facilitator interaction meeting in Dhading on January 28th, 2008.

The facilitators and concerned stakeholders representing each district gathered and shared best practices and experiences with regard to the ASP. The participants informed each other of activities carried out at each ASP class.

Both Dhading and Kathmandu District Education Officers discussed what they could do to support the ASP classes. For example, they will help encourage children to understand more the importance of practicing good personal hygiene. The operation of the ASP classes, increasingly vitalized by such efforts as monitoring visits of Resource Persons and ASP Monitors and campaigns to raise parental and community awareness about education and extracurricular activities for children by Partner NGOs, is visibly transforming facilitators' isolation into confidence.

The facilitators of the Dhading district presented several cases of their classrooms and communities. For instance, FSP class facilitators have dealt with a participant population that is diverse in age (in the third year of the program, participants' ages now range from 10 to 16). It was also reported how parents of the Chepang community were educated on the importance of sending children to school. Great news is that more than a half of the participants are expected to successfully transfer to formal school. From Kathmandu, the facilitators presented activities organized to mobilize the community and informed that they continued to utilize those materials developed for the refresher training.



Facilitators and concerned parties present their experiences

* FSP: Flexible Schooling Program, ASP: Alternative Schooling Program, NFEC: Non-Formal Education Center, SOP: School Outreach Program

Quality counts

-Mutsumi Tsubouchi, Chief Advisor

Over four years, we have been working to make a model of Community-based Alternative Schooling, non-formal education for children. We designed this model particularly to give a chance for schooling to children from disadvantaged social groups. Therefore, initially our efforts were geared towards quantitative achievement according to the Education For All (EFA) goal.

As we worked on, we came to know the real meaning of EFA. It is not simply "education for all" but "quality education for all". 87% of school aged children are enrolled. But what about the survival rate? The statistics, which are based on an old census, say that less than a half of those enrolled reach grade 5 in five years. How come? The answer is simple: no quality education. Then, what is quality education? Is it well-trained, qualified and well-paid teachers or modern classrooms with fancy equipment?



Hand-built ASP classroom

I went to one of our classes in the Dhading district. The class is about a four and a half hour walk away, which is not as far as other ones. It, nonetheless, was difficult to get there, even for Nepali staff who trekked with us.

The classroom was literally hand-built by community people. It is not as fancy as you can see in the picture (bottom left). The facilitator (in formal education she would be called a teacher) is not best trained or qualified; School Leave Certificate is the highest degree she holds and she only received initial 15-day training before she began teaching. Neither is she well-paid; her salary is much lower than that of her formal school counterparts. But look at the faces of children she teaches. They all seemed happy to learn with her. The staff who visited the class with us were also surprised to see the children better performing than those attending formal schools in Kathmandu. Why? Because their parents and community members care about their education and the facilitator thinks very well how each child can "learn". Children get to know what it means to learn. I mean, learn in the real term.

Another story of quality education. In Myanmar I was involved in teacher training. Once I asked teachers who participated in training to write about "the most impressive teacher in your life".



ASP participants are "learning" with the support of community members

One teacher wrote about a teacher who saved her from humiliation of her classmates when it rained and she came in class with a plastic bag on. The teacher told the class that she put on the plastic bag as raincoat not because she was poor or unable to buy a regular raincoat but because she liked fashion.

What I would like to say is that quality education can be achieved under less than ideal circumstances. Those community people in Dhading and teacher in Myanmar care whether and how children can learn well. The teacher in Myanmar, a county with very remote mountainous areas like Nepal, made their classrooms feel safe, trusted and respectable. Quality education counts. And its improvement begins in a classroom. We should never forget that all education-related authorities, offices, discussions, plans, curricula etc., work only for "how and what children learn" eventually.

Or maybe for a little smile of a child.

More information

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"Sabailai Sikhako Awasar, Dinalai Narakhoun Kasar"
means " Do not hesitate to provide education opportunity for all people"