

Madhesh Education Initiative



Women Development Advocacy Center

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1. Introduction to WDAC

Women Development Advocacy Center (WDAC) is an aspiring social enterprise. We are wholeheartedly invested in helping young women and mothers secure sustainable livelihoods. We are also interested in nurturing the hearts and minds of young learners in schools. WDAC was established in 2013 with the aim of helping women from Madhesh specially in Dhanusha district for their sustainable livelihoods. Over the period of time, it has worked in number of areas including women's soft skills optimization, digital literacy and humanitarian support during flood emergency. WDAC flood emergency response program was targeted to the affected population in Dhanusha and Mahottari districts.

2. Madhesh Education Initiative

Madhesh Education Initiative (MEI) was born right after our flood response program in July 2017. We learnt that the quality of life in the flood affected areas is very low. Post flood, we felt that improving quality of life for the affected population requires multi-pronged approach. It requires investing in children's education early on, and it also requires creating economic incentives for parents to be entrepreneurial so that they can send their children to schools. Through this initiative, WDAC aims to provide quality and compassionate teachings to children in the primary grades from underprivileged communities and create economic and entrepreneurial opportunities for the parents (specially the mothers) in Madhesh.

2.1. Objective

The Initiative aims to improve the quality of public education in primary grades in Madhesh. It also envisions to improve the economic and entrepreneurial opportunities for the families of the children.

2.2. Our Story: How we are doing it?

Until now, we have helped school management in hiring 7 teachers in 5 schools. Four of them are established community schools in Dhanusha district. Because of high student teacher ratio (62:1), these four schools were juggling between classes. We, therefore, decided to provide one teacher in each of the school. We have been paying their basic salary and providing them on the job training and guidance.

The last school out of five is a special case. It is still in the process of establishment. A community leader who works in the nearby wildlife trust fund helped start the process. He has his own reason to help start this school. As a wildlife person, he encountered many children from Musahar¹ community coming to do fishing and hunt for wild animals in the wildlife protected area endangering their lives. He has seen many of them wounded by the wild animals. Although some of the children from the community were enrolled in a public school (2 kilometers away), the majority of them did not attend school. So, he thought opening a school targeting 300 Musahar and Dom households might prevent children from coming to encounter wildlife. In addition, they will also get much needed education. He consulted with the community people specially mothers and elected ward officials. They agreed to his idea, and they decided to open a school. However, there was another side that needed to be addressed as well. The

¹The **Musahars** (literal meaning: rat-chasers) are a Hindu scheduled caste and considered one of the lowest groups within Dalit communities.

issue of livelihood – if children were not catching fishes and wild animals and going to school, how would the households sustain only with meager income earned by the fathers? Especially, when the meager income earned by the fathers is usually spent in alcohol consumption! The community was in desperate need for livelihood support if they were to send their children to school. So, it was decided that loans with a very minimal interest rate would be provided in the names of mothers if their children are regularly sent to schools.

After all these initial decisions made with the community people/mothers, the community leader started looking for partnership with individuals and organizations. Right after the flood emergency in Madhesh in 2017, we were also looking for ways to support underprivileged communities especially in education and livelihood sectors. It was such a nice coincidence that we found each other. As a young organization, we never worked in basic education before. But we were excited that this work was something coming from the side of community. We did not impose any of our ideas.

We decided to go ahead and hire 2 teachers from the community to start the school in December 2017. After we hired and agreed to pay a bare minimum salary for them, the school started in January 2018. The number of children coming regularly to school is around 200; the teachers are trying their best to accommodate their learning needs. They have a school hut that is made in a piece of land temporarily given by a community member. There is nothing other than that. We have been providing training and guidance to the teachers on how to teach in such a condition.

Recently, the community people came together to name the school. They came up with the name 'Shree Rajdevi School'. Rajdevi is the goddess they worship for her knowledge and kindness, and they want their children to be kind and knowledgeable like Rajdevi after attending this school. We also think that it is very important to teach children academic knowledge and skills, especially children from this underprivileged community that is systematically deprived of opportunities. If we want to make our world even, it is important everyone gets equal opportunities. But more than that, if we want to live in a happier and peaceful world, we feel that cultivating kindness and compassion in children from early grades is crucial. We believe that delivering quality education first needs compassionate teachers. And, we are wholeheartedly trying to prepare the teachers to be compassionate and deliver what they know the best in the face of this material challenge.

We have also started implementing an idea of community cooperative which will lend loans to the mothers. The mothers and community leader are now trying to secure a piece of land to build a permanent school in the community. The type of school they want to establish is 'cooperative school'. For that, every mother (except for the poorest of poor) has agreed to pay a small amount of money to send her children to school.

We, at Madhesh Education Initiative, are moved by this act of mothers almost all of whom do not know how to read and write. Although we are moved and encouraged by the mothers' enthusiasm to send their children to school, we also are cautious to not let them depend on us for their every problem. So, we always wait on them to tell us what support they need from us. Until now, we have been asked to help them with teacher training and enhancing quality of education in the school. We are also asked to help them establish the cooperative. We are humbled, but at the same time feel challenged given our own resources.

2.3. What are our aspirations?

We really want to provide our teachers the best training and guidance how to teach these children. We want the teachers to not only teach them academic knowledge and skills, but sports, arts, music, culture, values and compassion. We also want the teachers to help the mothers with their literacy. Through cooperative loans and some partnership with the local businesses, we want the mothers to involve in income generating activities for their children so that they can regularly go to school. On top of that, we also want to help the community to build a school building although they haven't asked us to do that.

The initiative is very young: running in its first year. So, it is still in very initial and testing phase. We want to stay small until we know that the work we are doing brings positive impact in the community. If we know what we are doing works, in the long run, we wish to create a pool of trainers who can teach teachers not only to teach effectively but to be innovative in whichever setting they are to bring the best out of children. We also plan to prepare our trainers to demonstrate high level of compassion and help teachers cultivate compassion and basic human goodness in the children. We also wish to help large number of mothers be literate and find ways to involve in income generating/livelihood activities. For that, we plan to actively build partnerships with the local governments and work hand-in-hand with them as they have all the mandates for enhancing the quality of K-12 education under their geographic jurisdiction.

2.4. Our Take on Sustainable Livelihood

Before rolling out the loans through local cooperative, we asked several mothers about their livelihood interests. The mothers mentioned sewing, cleaning/household activities, goat/cow/buffalo rearing, and cooking as some of their top choices. Baby sitting and shop keeping were also chosen as some of the options.

To encourage their livelihood interests, we have started loan program in the Rajdevi School Mushahar community. Loan will be provided to a group of 5 mothers through a local cooperative named Harit Tara cooperative with a very minimum interest rate. The interest received will go to a pool fund created to support more groups of mothers to cater to their livelihood.

Because we would like every kid to receive quality education irrespective of their background and ethnicity, we want to create enabling environment at the family level to enroll and retain children in the schooling system through the loans. The loans are subject to enrolling kids into school and parents' active participation in the school. The livelihood loan amount below the market interest rate is directly proportional to the social and educational criteria jointly agreed with the mothers from the communities. The loan size will increase in case the indicators are well met and decrease accordingly (*refer to annex1: parents' evaluation matrix*).

3. Context Analysis

3.1. Political Landscape

Nepal has recently completed its local, provincial and national level elections. The left alliance has won the majority of the seats in all levels. The government has proposed to bring in a new education policy with the aim of developing 70 per cent technical and 30 percent non-technical human resources. The recently announced budget for fiscal year 2018/2019 has also

put education at its forefront allocating around 10.19% of the total federal budget². However, a lot of structural issues including how the education system would look like under the new government are still uncertain. The only clarity we have is that the constitution of Nepal Schedule-8 has given exclusive rights to the local government to implement 23 areas of basic and secondary level of education (*refer annex2 for the complete list of areas*).

3.2. Local Context

Dhanusa District, a part of Province No. 2, is one of the 77 districts of Nepal. The district, with Janakpur as its district headquarter, covers an area of 1,180 km² and has a population of 754,777. The most common language spoken in Dhanusa is Maithali. The majority of the people in Madhesh are dependent on agriculture as their main income for livelihood. However, the things have changed in recent days, and the majority of the young men even from the rural Madhesh have gone to the gulf countries for labor jobs. This has also put good impression on the mindset of the younger boys which has significantly increased their dropouts from the schools.

In general, the quality of education is very low in the public schools in Nepal (*figure 1 below shows the gap*). The situation is much worse in the case of some of the districts in Madhesh including Dhanusha (*figure 2 and 3 illustrate the situation*). The problem is further compounded by low level of girls' enrollment, early marriage among girls, and lower level of mothers' literacy and participation in income generating activities.

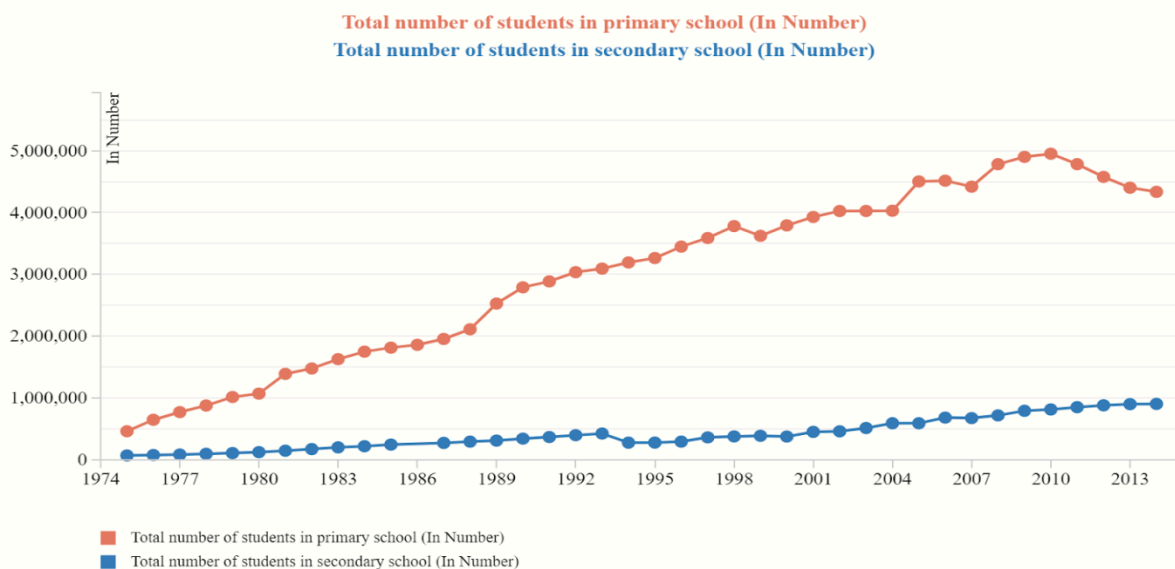


Figure 1 (Source: <http://www.nepalmap.org/>)

² <http://kathmandupost.ekantipur.com/news/2018-05-30/education-budget-fails-to-match-governments-lofty-goals.html>

Education Level Passed

40.2%

Have passed the primary level

a little higher than the rate in Nepal: 39.04%

Highest education level reached

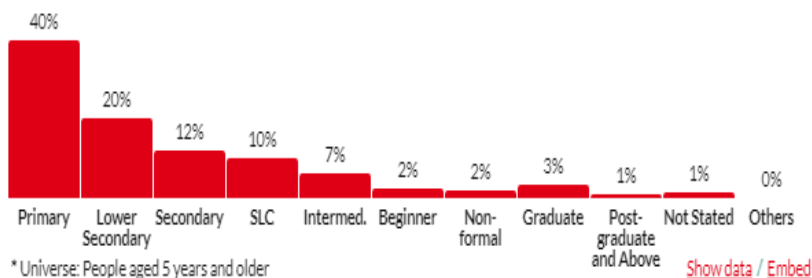


Figure 2 (Source: <http://www.nepalmap.org/profiles/district-20-dhanusa>)

Literacy



Can Read and Write
Not Literate
Can Read
Not Stated

Literacy rate by sex

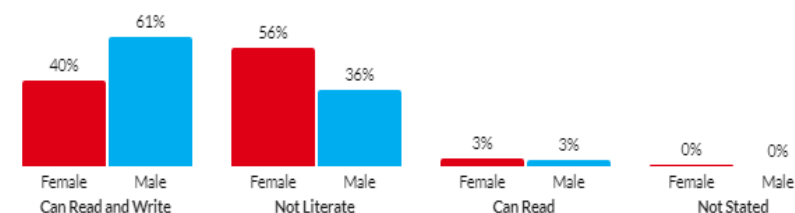
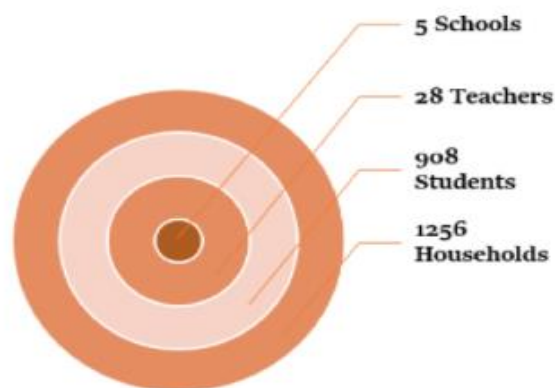


Figure 3 (Source: <http://www.nepalmap.org/profiles/district-20-dhanusa>)

4. Our School Community

The schools we are supporting are – Shree Janajati Primary School Sinurjora (1 teacher), Shree National Primary School Baghchoda (1 teacher), Shree National Primary School Baniniya (1 teacher), Shree Lower Secondary School Bhangwa (1 teacher), and Shree Rajdevi Community School (2 teachers) (*refer to annex3: school profiles*). In total we have been supporting 5 schools with 6 teachers. In addition to paying their salary, we have been providing teacher training and regular mentoring to these 6 teachers. As agreed with the school community, the initiative team is responsible for evaluating the teachers on a quarterly basis (*refer to annex4: teacher's evaluation matrix*). The team is also allowed to evaluate other teachers in the schools. Based on the evaluation, the schools have to take corrective measures to improve their school performance. If the measures are not taken properly, the initiative can be discontinued from the school. This agreement was reached among the school teams, local office personnel and the initiative team.



This is just the beginning of our work in terms of improving quality of education and livelihood in Madhesh. The teachers we have provided have already started teaching in the schools. Ideally through MEI, we want to work on the holistic school development and provide sustainable means of livelihoods to the parents. We do not want to impose our ideas in the name of improving quality of education and livelihood if there is no ownership and demand from the community side. Therefore, our core mantra of this initiative would be to build meaningful relationship in the community and work in their best interests.

5. Projected Annual Budget

Program Activities	Cost Head	Unit	Amount
MEI Teachers	Monthly salary	6*10,000*12	720,000
Training of Trainers (TOT)	Training design	50,000	350,000
	Development of master trainers	225,000	
	Training materials	50,000	
	Transportation and communication	25,000	
Teachers' on the job training	Design and development	200,000	350,000
	Training materials	50,000	
	Transportation and communication	100,000	
Reflection Training	Design and development	100,000	200,000
	Training materials	50,000	
	Transportation and communication	50,000	
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning	Research and community mobilization	100,000	180,000
	Supervision and on-site coaching	50,000	
	Reporting	30,000	
Livelihood for parents	Partner engagement		50,000
	Revolving fund for parents	50,000*10	500,000
Communication & Transportation	Communication		15,000
	Transportation		200,000
Human Resource	Staff salary	3*30,000*12	1,080,000
	Rent	12*10,000	120,000
	Total Amount		3,765,000

Annex1: Revolving livelihood loan evaluation matrix for parents

1. School enrollment
2. Parent-Teacher meeting
3. Attendance
4. Hygiene and sanitation
5. Classroom participation & homework

Annex2: The exclusive rights of the rural municipality and municipality in basic and secondary education

1. Formulation, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and regulation of policies, laws, standards and plans for early childhood development and education, basic education, parental education, informal education, open and alternative continuous learning, community learning,
2. Establishment, approval, operation, management and regulation of community, organizational, *guthi* and cooperative schools,
3. Planning, operation, approval, monitoring, evaluation and regulation of technical education and vocational training,
4. Approval, monitoring and regulation of schools providing education in mother tongue,
5. Property management of the schools which have been merged or closed
6. Establishment and management of village and municipal level education committees,
7. Establishment and management of school management committees,
8. Naming the school,
9. Land ownership; documentation, protection and management of properties of the community schools,
10. Quality enhancement of schools and reading materials distribution,
11. Positions for teachers and staff in community schools,
12. Mapping, approval, authorization, adjustment and regulation of school,
13. Educational infrastructure, maintenance, operation and management of community schools,
14. Operation, monitoring and management of basic level exams,
15. Testing and management of students' learning outcomes,
16. Management of free education, student motivation and scholarships,
17. Approval and regulation of teaching outside of school, like tuitions and coaching
18. Protection, promotion and standardization of local level knowledge, skills and technology,
19. Operation and management of local libraries and reading rooms,
20. Coordination and regulation of education programs up to secondary level,
21. Management of grants and its budget for the community schools, establishment of accounting discipline for income and expenditure of school, its monitoring and regulation,
22. Teaching learning, training for teachers and staff, capacity development,
23. Operation of extracurricular activities.

Annex3: School profiles

Name of the School	Total Students (M/F)	Total Teachers (M/F)	Qualitative Information/Challenges
Shri RastriyaBidhyalaya, Hanspura rural municipality-2, Dhanusha	200(75/125)	4 (1/3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough infrastructure - Less number of teachers - Teachers are not trained - Difficult to raise funds/resources from local level
B.P. Bidhyalaya Laximiniya, Dhanusha	203(73/103)	5 (2/3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough infrastructure - Less number of teachers - Teachers are not trained
Shree Ni Ma Bidhyalaya Laximiniya, Dhanusha	151(49/102)	11(6/5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not enough infrastructure - Teachers are not trained
Shri SonaNai Ra PraBidhyalaya Laximiniya, Dhanusha	154 (94/60)	4(3/1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In the process of expansion and needs support in recruiting extra teachers
Shri Rajdevi Community School	200	2(1/1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No infrastructure at all - Needs support in overall functioning of school

Annex4: Teacher's evaluation matrix

1. The appointed teacher will function as a social mobilizer to ensure every stakeholder is included in the program.
2. The appointed teacher needs to maintain cordial relations with the parents. S/he should make sure the parents-teacher meeting gains a momentum to ensure favorable environment of learning for the students.
3. The teacher should demonstrate active engagement and bring forth newness in the classroom and ensure students participation. S/he should make sure to include extra-curricular activities in the course of learning.
4. The teacher should submit a progress report to Women Development Advocacy Center every 3 months before the renewal of his/her contract. The report should include monthly details on the parent-teacher meeting, coordination with the school and analysis of the learning outcomes of the program.

Annex5: Pictures from Madhesh



