

CARTA

Citizen Action for Results,
Transparency, and Accountability



School Sector Reform Project (SSRP)

PROJECT DETAILS

PARTNERS

Partnership for Transparency Fund
HELVETAS Swiss Inter-cooperation
SKY-Samaj Nepal

TOTAL COST

US\$ 66,937

DURATION

March 2014 – December 2014

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

15 districts covering 3 ecological belts
(terai, hill and mountain) in 5
development regions

SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY TOOLS

Key informant interview (KII), citizen
report card (CRC) and focus group
discussion (FGD)

CONTEXT

The School Sector Reform Project (SSRP) is a follow-up of the ongoing "Education for All" program in Nepal. In 1975, the Government of Nepal began distributing textbooks at no cost to primary students in remote districts. Since 2010, free textbooks have been distributed to all students up to grade 10 in community schools throughout the country. The government agency responsible for implementing SSRP is the Department of Education under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. The Janak Education Material Center (JEMC) was established to manage the production of textbooks and educational materials.

According to the project guidelines, students are expected to receive their textbooks by April 28 (within the two weeks of the start of the academic year with the exception of a few mountainous districts). Unfortunately, textbooks have not been getting to the schools on time. The textbook shortage is a recurring problem throughout the country, especially at the start of every academic year. Efficient textbook distribution is critical to ensure that books arrive at schools on time. Yet, there is not a well-developed monitoring system which can track the performance gaps in the textbook printing and distribution process (TPDP). JEMC and private printers are responsible for both textbook production and distribution. JEMC prints 60% of the total textbooks, while private printers produce the rest. JEMC has legal authority to distribute textbooks for grades 1 to 10 throughout the country while private printers are limited to certain development regions, districts, and classes.

A total of 19 private printers were assigned to print and distribute textbooks for the academic year 2013/14.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

Due to the lack of available data for monitoring purposes, the sub-project goals were to verify the quantity of printed textbooks and report the number of textbooks received by students. The collected data offered a snapshot of the existing textbook distribution conditions. In as much as the sub-project began in the middle of the printing and distribution cycle and only included one partial cycle, it was not possible to demonstrate comparisons between monitored and unmonitored cycles.

The sub-project had four specific objectives:

- To familiarize stakeholders with the printing and distribution process.
- To verify the quantity of printed school textbook as per printing plan.
- To gather data about the distribution process.
- To make recommendations to improve the process.

RESULTS

The initial assessment of the awareness levels surrounding TPDP showed that district and school level committees had limited knowledge of the TPDP process and were not functioning properly. Hence, SKY-Samaj shared information about the TPDP and organized awareness raising events. State officials participated in these meetings.

Based on the collected data, the two primary reasons for the unmet delivery targets were the inefficient printing and delivery processes. The CRC showed that only 45% of students received complete sets of textbooks within the two weeks of the start of the academic year. Both the JEMC and private printers could not meet their textbook printing targets within the timeframe. For instance, JEMC delivered 82% of the available textbooks by the scheduled delivery date (April 14) and did not increase the percentage delivered over the next three months. Private printers delivered 76% of the available textbooks on time. The delivery channel of private printers was short compared to that of JEMC, and as a result, there was rapid progress in private printer textbook delivery between March 19 and April 15.

CARTA

The objective of Citizen Action for Results, Transparency and Accountability (CARTA) is to enhance the development impact, sustainability and ownership of pro-poor projects in Bangladesh and Nepal financed by the World Bank (WB), by promoting civil society organization engagement and experience and capacity to demand better governance. The program was funded by US\$1.9 million grant from the Japanese Social Development Fund (JSDF) and administered by the WB.

The student survey showed 95% of the students received a complete set of textbooks by July - three months after the start of the academic year. Almost all students received their textbooks by August. The final sub-project report offered several recommendations to improve the process.

IMPACT

JEMC, the government owned printing house, is primarily responsible for textbook production and distribution and the greatest contributor to the unmet delivery target. JEMC's inefficiency, combined with non-functional monitoring systems at the school and district levels, resulted in a slow delivery process that negatively impacted the students' right to get equal access to education.

The sub-project findings were shared with the District Education Offices, which have taken actions to improve the TPDP. Although the information provided by CARTA could be very useful for improving the textbook delivery timeframe, it remains unclear who will be responsible for the data collection process, if anyone. Data collection is expensive and can be easily tampered with. Thus, an independent party such a CSO could be a good option for gathering unbiased information. However, it is not clear whether external data collection will be implemented.