



Himalayan Trust Quality Education Review

Final Report

17 May 2019



ALLEN+CLARKE

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Photo: Students from Shree Khumjung Secondary School.

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ACRONYMS

AFN	Action for Nepal
CAS	Continuous Assessment System
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DOE	Department of Education (Nepal); now the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development
EGRA	Early Grade Reading Assessment
ERO	Education Review Office
GFA	Grant Funding Arrangement
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
HTN	Himalayan Trust Nepal
HT(NZ)	The Himalayan Trust (New Zealand)
KRQ	Key Review Question
LIPS	Literacy Improvement Project in Solukhumbu
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MOE	Ministry of Education (Nepal)
MERI plan	Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement plan for SBTTP
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PD	Professional development
PISA	OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment
REED	Rural Education and Environment Development Center
SBTTP	School-Based Teacher Training Programme
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
SEE	Secondary Education Examination
SLC	School Leaving Certificate
SMC	School Management Committee
TOR	Terms of Reference

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

A review of the Quality Education in the Solukhumbu 2015-2019 Programme (the Activity) was undertaken from February to May 2019. The primary focus of the Review was to determine the effectiveness of the Activity in improving the quality of education in the Solukhumbu; identify any unintended outcomes, particularly benefits to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal; inform decisions on whether to proceed with a second phase of the Activity; and (if the decision is made to proceed with a second Activity phase) to consider the current direction or potential changes that would improve the Activity's effectiveness.

The Activity aims to ensure children of the Solukhumbu region in Nepal receive an improved quality of education through teacher training, the provision of educational materials and resources, school management training, infrastructure improvements, and the provision of scholarships for further education. This includes strengthening school infrastructure, the provision of education resources to approximately 65 schools, and providing scholarships for roughly 100 students. Building on a long history of New Zealand support, a new Grant Funding Arrangement (GFA) was finalised between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and the Himalayan Trust (HT[NZ]) in 2015 to undertake the Activity. The GFA was extended in 2016 to cover an additional three years of Activity funding through to 2019.

Review methodology

The Review approach was guided by the Review's purpose, the Activity's Terms of Reference (TOR), and the following key review questions (KRQs).

- What progress has been made in achieving intended Activity outcomes and outputs?
- What factors are enhancing or constraining progress towards intended outcomes?
- What unintended outcomes are evident as a result of the Activity (positive and negative) - particularly benefits to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal?

Recommended changes likely to deliver improved and/or more sustainable outcomes from a possible second phase of the Activity were guided by the following two KRQs:

- To what extent is local ownership of the Activity developing?
- Could a second phase of the Activity build on progress to date and continue to deliver sustainable outcomes?

Data collection activities included a document and data review (see Appendix Two – Document and Data References), individual and small group interviews, and classroom and workshop observations.

A four-phased approach was undertaken. Phase One considered the Activity's context and operating environment, including the Activity's Results Framework and changes to the Framework that have occurred over time. Phase Two involved data collection and debriefing activities, including an in-country visit to Nepal to engage and consult with key stakeholders on progress made to date, and factors enhancing/constraining progress towards intended outcomes. A thematic analysis of all data collected was undertaken in Phase Three, including identification

of initial findings and recommendations via a sense-making session with MFAT and HT(NZ). Report findings and recommendations were then developed in Phase Four.

Findings

Review findings are aligned against the Activity's current Results Framework. The Review report includes outcome statements for progress made across the Activity's intended outputs,¹ intended short-term outcomes,² and intended medium-term outcomes.³ Tentative findings against the Activity's long-term outcome (i.e., *"Improved access and educational outcomes for students in Solukhumbu"*) and unintended outcomes are also outlined (see also Appendix Four for a findings summary).

Teaching and learning resources provided

Findings indicate that Activity-funded teacher and learning resources remain valuable in the Solukhumbu. HT(NZ) and its implementing partners were found to enable improved access to education for local people through the provision of privately-funded teachers' salaries. Activity-funded teacher salaries were found to continue to fill a resourcing gap in the region. Local government officials have expressed the desire to manage teacher allocation and funding within their municipalities, but cannot do so until governance and management processes are more fully designed, embedded, and implemented.

In-country resource provisions are managed by Himalayan Trust Nepal (HTN), which currently allocates learning resources (e.g., stationery) to 61 schools according to school 'cluster'. HTN gathers information from Activity-funded trainers on cluster size, school need, student enrolment (for student materials such as exercise books), and number of teachers per school (for classroom materials) to calculate specific resourcing allocations across the schools. Materials are then distributed to schools annually by the trainers. Findings suggest that the remoteness and lack of roading in the Solukhumbu is an access barrier that makes the cost of supplies such as stationery much higher than other regions. Overall, HTN's distribution formula enables equal distribution of Activity-funded resourcing, but is only the first step in helping to ensure the right resources are provided to the right schools.

Teacher and Head Teacher professional development

The Literacy Improvement Project in Solukhumbu (LIPS) implemented by Action for Nepal (AFN), and the School-Based Teacher Training Programme (SBTTP), run by HTN, are two Activity-funded programmes that focus on improving student achievement and literacy through teacher and Head Teacher training and development. Elements of both programmes were seen to align with underpinning theories of and practices for best practice literacy development.

¹ The Activity's outputs include: 1) Teaching and learning resources provided; 2) Teacher and Head Teacher professional development; 3) Parent and community engagement; 4) Scholarship programme delivered; and 5) Monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

² The Activity's intended short-term outcomes are: 1) Students engaged in meaningful learning activities; 2) Head Teachers and teachers apply new techniques for planning, teaching, assessment and management; 3) Students pursue further study; and 4) Improved plans and reports.

³ Intended medium-term outcomes for the Activity include: 1) Increased abilities of students in core curricular subjects; 2) Students successfully gain skills and qualifications; and 3) Successful teaching and learning documented for application in other areas of Solukhumbu.

Programme success was believed to be dependent upon various school factors. Interviewees consistently reflected on teacher turnover as a serious concern for the programmes. A LIPS trainer quoted a 60 percent turnover in one year, and another estimate provided by staff was 13 of the approximately 25 – 28 teachers had left the school (~50 percent turnover). SBTTP staff quoted a 21 percent turnover, reflecting 14 of the 66 teachers supported. Stakeholders further noted that some Head Teachers were not receptive to change, or that they didn't have support from teachers for the professional development programme.

Overwhelming, the success of both programmes was seen to hinge upon effective engagement between local, provincial, and national government. Interviewees noted that more collaboration across these government levels (and between Activity partners) is required to identify and/or adopt norms and standards that will affect local and provincial areas in future.

Parent and community engagement

Stakeholders reported that engagement between the schools, parents, and communities was continuing to develop for both Activity-funded initiatives (LIPS and SBTTP). This included building engagement into the designs of programmes, use of reading logs to support engagement at home, parental visits to their child's classroom, and parents contributing to school meetings and discussions with teachers about their child's school plan. These activities were seen to enhance parents' own learning, awareness of the value of education, and responsibility for the role they play in their child's learning activities.

Scholarship Programme delivery

The Scholarship Programme is supporting high-achieving secondary and tertiary students and is widely valued. Although minimal, what anecdotal evidence was available suggested that Activity-funded scholarships enabled or supported further educational opportunities for scholars.

A scan of the 2018 applications showed that scholarship applications came largely from low income families that earned between 30,000 to 80,000 Nepali rupees per year (\$400 to \$1,000 NZD per year) and worked in manual labour-type occupations (e.g., porter, farmer, trekker). This scan suggests that any amount of scholarship, even small amounts, may be beneficial for the family and scholar.

Monitoring and evaluation systems

During the current GFA term, MFAT required HT(NZ) to increase its monitoring and programmatic approach to developing and progressing intended outcomes. Evidence of progress made towards this aim was evident: for example, in response to a report that suggested HT(NZ)'s earthquake prioritisation efforts had created a decreased focus on monitoring and evaluating activities, HT(NZ) recruited a development education specialist with monitoring and evaluation (M&E) expertise in 2016 to provide mentoring support to the programme and develop a meaningful process for outputs.

HT(NZ) does not have a full-time presence in Nepal, therefore proficient M&E processes and outputs from its in-country implementation partners HTN and AFN are vital. Evidence collected for the Review suggests that these partners are focusing their efforts on these M&E processes, and both have established M&E plans for their respective SBTTP and LIPS programmes.

More widely, the Activity's Results Framework has undergone various iterations across the funding period. Changes in focus for outputs and outcomes in 2014, 2016, and 2018 was seen to create limitations and complications for HT(NZ), HTN, and AFN in assessing progress made. These changes in focus, in addition to broader issues such as shifts in the political context and unsystematic and/or infrequent use of existing standardised assessments, make tracking progress against intended outcomes over time challenging for all partners as any efforts implemented take time to eventuate.

Students engaged in meaningful learning activities

The Review found that students in LIPS classrooms were effectively engaged in and practicing reading, writing, and/or listening skills. LIPS classrooms also provided many opportunities for language learning and literacy through its space and resources.

Learning objectives in LIPS classrooms were not clearly visible. None of the observed LIPS teachers conveyed or made clear what they wanted students to *learn* either visually (on a white board) or orally. Interviews with teachers also suggested a stronger focus on LIPS activities and the child-centred approach than on learning objectives.

Teachers are learning and adopting programme techniques

Activity-funded teachers are embedding differentiated learning activities and activities that focus on children's interests. Teachers are also planning the activities and using assessments as part of their practice.

The design of both LIPS and SBTTP promotes child-centred learning, as reflected in lesson plans, the monitoring schedule, and interviews. Further, teaching techniques known to support oral language and literacy were observed in LIPS classrooms, including predictive questioning; pausing and encouraging turn-taking; including all children in group activities; and emphasising new words and directing students to repeat words to build vocabulary. Enhanced teaching quality due to SBTTP techniques was also noted across a variety of sources, including documents and interviews. In terms of assessment techniques, child-centred assessments were included but unique across both programmes. The interviews and observations did not demonstrate assessments being used to promote students' self-regulated learning. Classroom management strategies were also reported across both programmes, and management strategies were observed in the LIPS classrooms that helped teachers manage behaviour and refocus students.

Students' further pursuit of studies

Anecdotal evidence suggests the Scholarship Programme supports students' further studies. Further, interviews suggested that scholars had successfully completed their funded studies, but tracking individual scholars beyond their completion is a challenge for HTN.

Improved plans and reports

HT(NZ) produced and contributed to a number of plans and reports over the funding period that were Activity-specific. Improvements in SBTTP and LIPS programmes' reporting outputs were also noted. Further, HT(NZ) is currently working towards enhancing its planning and reporting systems, and is seeking continued assistance from and collaboration with its implementing partners to do so. Ultimately, HT(NZ) seeks to encourage HTN and AFN to build sound rationalisation and evidence for resourcing (e.g., how many teachers or training sessions are

required across school clusters and why), which HT(NZ) can then incorporate into funding requests and planning and reporting processes for MFAT.

Students' abilities in core curricular subjects

It was unclear whether progress in this area was being made, and whether any change identified was meaningful. Review results showed mixed trends, quantitative details were missing, and the outcomes, assessments, and reporting approaches have changed over the years. For example, HTN documents showed that achievement data reporting changed each year over the funding period. Achievement data for Activity-supported schools varied across sources and assessments.

Literacy achievement scores

As per the above finding, it was unclear whether literacy achievement is progressing. Review results indicated potential progress with in-class literacy assessments, but scores using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) varied. Some stakeholders suggested that it was too early to determine the extent to which LIPS has impacted on learning outcomes, whereas others reported notable increases in students' abilities for both SBTTP and LIPS. More widely, evidence reviewed shows that qualification attainment is exceeding expectations and remaining stable.

Successful teaching and learning documented for application

The Review found that teaching and learning opportunities are being shared within programmes, several of which are built into the design of both LIPS and SBTTP. Across-programme successes were also shared, though to a lesser extent. Examples include LIPS resources being provided to SBTTP staff and inclusion of SBTTP in an initial LIPS training, and SBTTP's adoption of some LIPS-developed teaching strategies. Stakeholders suggested that competition between LIPS and SBTTP may be acting as a barrier for enhanced sharing opportunities. Despite this, stakeholders also voiced an interest in increasing integrated learning opportunities.

Improved access and educational outcomes

Findings suggest that progress is being made towards the Activity's long-term outcome "*Improved access and educational outcomes for students in Solukhumbu*", with limitations noted. Broader and longer educational outcomes for the Solukhumbu region are being realised, and support was seen to be contributing to and completing a "life cycle" ultimately leading to sustainability. For example, some stakeholders who attended Activity-funded schools have gone on to pursue further studies (sometimes through HT(NZ) scholarships), have returned to the Solukhumbu, and are now actively involved in their communities' governance processes or with implementing partners in the region. Ultimately, education offers individuals opportunities for employment, the ability to support themselves and/or their families, and to contribute to the development of their communities. Access to quality education is believed necessary to achieve and sustain this educational life cycle.

Unintended Activity outcomes, including benefits to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal

In addition to examining progress made towards the Activity's intended outputs and outcomes (see above), unintended Activity outcomes were also noted. These included unanticipated issues or changes (both positive and negative) attributed or related to the Activity, and Activity-relevant outcomes not listed in the current Results Framework. Unintended outcomes evidenced by the Review included enhanced student confidence, the larger-than-anticipated impact of resourcing

changes on schools, how the Activity supports embedding English-medium instruction in schools, and the unintentional effect of Activity-relevant activities on migration to the Solukhumbu.

A key, unintended outcome of the Activity also considered was New Zealand's relationship with Nepal. Findings suggest that the reputation built initially by Sir Edmund Hillary's Hillary Trust has continued into the activities of HT(NZ) and HTN. Several stakeholders mentioned that this long-standing history has built a foundation of trust between these agencies and the Solukhumbu, which in turn was seen to be the foundation for keeping "New Zealand's spirit alive in Nepal" and was a key part in foreign policy relations between the two countries.

Local Activity ownership

Local Activity ownership was seen to be growing rapidly, namely as a result of Nepal's political shift to federalism. New authority and responsibilities now afforded local municipality officials offer a range of opportunities to enhance ownership of education-related activities in the region, as well as the sustainability of Activity-funded support. Several local ownership examples were noted, including local municipality officials' influence on school governance processes and their ability to contract teachers to stay at specific schools for agreed periods of time.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided to further enhance the Activity's effectiveness in enabling students' access to quality education opportunities in the Solukhumbu.

1. **Continue to fund teachers' salaries beyond 2019 until local governance and management processes are more fully designed, embedded, and implemented** (Section 3.1.1.).
2. **Build an equity-based approach** by developing an educational strategy and/or needs analysis led by local municipalities to ensure the right support is channelled to the right schools (Sections 3.1.1. and 3.2.4.); enabling further study for those most in need and/or to better meet regional workforce needs through scholarship recipients (Sections 3.1.4. and 3.2.3.); increasing future resource allocation based on need (Section 3.1.1.); continuing to fund teacher salaries in areas where teachers are most needed (Section 3.1.1.); and considering how gender differences in school attendance is impacting on access to quality education (Section 3.2.8.).
3. **Increase collaboration between implementing partners (HTN and AFN), their respective teacher training programmes (SBTTP and LIPS), and local government** to enhance teachers' professional development opportunities, parent engagement (Section 3.1.3.), and the overall effectiveness of both programmes (Section 3.1.2.).
4. **Provide relevant resources and an enhanced focus on learning objectives tailored to specific age groups** to maximise learning opportunities for and engagement with young people (Section 3.2.1.).
5. **Support school practices that foster and demonstrate student achievement.** The provision of quality education is key to student achievement, therefore support for this objective could include:

- a. **ensuring collaboration between all Activity partners** to best utilise their collective expertise, better identify and address M&E gaps and opportunities for M&E alignment, and to further build local and in-country capacity and shared processes for learning (Sections 3.1.2. and 0.);
 - b. **continuing to provide school staff assistance** to improve pedagogical practice based on evidence-based, best practice strategies and principles relevant to the learner and wider literacy and student achievement goals (Sections 3.1.2., 3.1.5., 3.2.1., and 3.2.2.) while addressing broader contextual needs, such as teachers' English language skills, local literacy skills, and use of ICT (Sections 3.2.1. and 3.2.2.);
 - c. **supporting partners to develop and use evidence bases for programmes' design and function (Section 3.1.5.), as well as for learning and improvement processes** through use of consistent and robust assessment practices within classrooms to inform student and teacher reflection, review, and planning (Sections 0., 3.2.5., and 3.2.6.); and
 - d. **encouraging partners to compare and report student progress in more detail**, including the assessment process, the unit of analysis, regional progress versus national progress, and/or progress over time against expected growth (Section 3.2.5.).
6. **Identify realistic and achievable opportunities for strengthening local ownership of education while retaining the Activity's focus on schools and students.** Nepal is experiencing significant political changes which will impact on the education system. Further support for this change could include:
- a. **supporting and building local municipality capacity and capability** (Section 0.);
 - b. **facilitating development of an agreed Action Plan(s)** between local government officials, implementing partners, and schools' SMCs (Sections 0. and 3.2.4.);
 - c. **establishing shared expectations, targets and actions between education partners (HTN and AFN) and local municipalities, including sharing of successes and learning opportunities** (Section 3.2.7.);
 - d. **collaborating with local municipalities to determine how scholarships may be awarded** to contribute to regional workforce needs (Section 3.2.3.); and
 - e. **collecting and collating evidence through more systematic assessment practices** (Sections 0. and 3.2.6.) to ensure alignment between local and central government curriculum and practices, and to enable enhanced accountability and learning opportunities.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The Himalayan Trust in New Zealand (HT[NZ]), formerly the Hillary Trust, has provided humanitarian support for nearly 60 years to the Solukhumbu region of Nepal. Founded by Sir Edmund Hillary following his 1953 scaling of Chomolungma/Mount Everest with Tenzing Norgay, HT(NZ) has long supported education, healthcare, and safe water initiatives in the area.⁴

Building on a long history of New Zealand support, a design document was developed in 2014, and a Grant Funding Arrangement (GFA) was finalised in 2015 between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and HT(NZ) to undertake the Quality Education in the Solukhumbu 2015-2019 programme (the Activity). The GFA was varied in 2016 to cover an additional three years of Activity funding through to 2019.⁵

The Activity aims to ensure “*children of the Solukhumbu region in Nepal receive an improved quality of education through teacher training, the provision of educational materials and resources, school management training, infrastructure improvements and the provision of scholarships for further education.*”⁶ This includes strengthening school infrastructure, the provision of education resources to approximately 65 schools, and providing secondary and tertiary scholarships for roughly 100 students. More broadly, the Activity aligns with the Government of Nepal’s National Strategy for Early Grade Reading Programme and its Ministry of Education’s School Sector Reform Extension Plan.⁷ HT(NZ) partners with its Nepali counterpart, the Himalayan Trust Nepal (HTN), and another non-government organisation (NGO) Action for Nepal (AFN) to implement the Activity.

1.2. Review Purpose

This Review of the Activity was commissioned by MFAT to:

- determine the Activity’s effectiveness in improving the quality of education in the Solukhumbu;
- identify any unintended Activity outcomes, particularly benefits accruing to New Zealand’s relationship with Nepal;
- inform decisions on whether to proceed with a second phase of the Activity; and
- (if the decision is made to proceed with a second Activity phase) consider the current direction or potential changes that would improve its effectiveness.

Other relevant Activity stakeholders such as HT(NZ) and its implementing partners may also benefit from the Review’s findings in order to enhance the effectiveness of the programme’s delivery and impact.

⁴ Himalayan Trust, 2019. *About us*. Available at <https://himalayantrust.org/about-us/>.

⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. 2019. *Terms of Reference for the Review of Himalayan Trust, Quality Education in the Solukhumbu 2015-2019, Nepal*. Internal document, p. 12.

⁶ Ibid, p. 11.

⁷ Ibid, p. 11.

1.3. Review Scope

The timeframe of the Review included the period between 2014 and 2019. The Review considered services delivered as part of the Activity, as well as the beneficiaries (students, teachers, parents, and communities) of Activity support within the Solukhumbu region of Nepal. The Review also considered organisational relationships relevant to the Activity, including the following stakeholders:

- MFAT staff in New Zealand and New Delhi, and New Zealand's Honorary Consul in Kathmandu;
- HT(NZ);
- HT(NZ)'s implementing partners in Nepal (HTN and AFN); and
- local and national Nepali government and NGO officials.

1.4. Structure of this Report

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 outlines the Review's methodological and data collection approaches, including the Activity's Results Framework and limitations of the Review;
- Section 3 outlines the Review's findings, organised across the Activity's intended outputs and outcomes;
- Sections 4 and 5 provide lessons learned and Review conclusions; and
- Section 6 presents a list of recommendations.

2. REVIEW METHODOLOGY

2.1. Approach

The approach was guided by the Review's purpose, the Activity's Terms of Reference (TOR; see Appendix One – Terms of Reference), and the following key review questions (KRQs).

- What progress has been made in achieving intended Activity outcomes and outputs?
- What factors are enhancing or constraining progress towards intended outcomes?
- What unintended outcomes are evident as a result of the Activity (positive and negative) - particularly benefits to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal?

Recommended changes (see Section 6) likely to deliver improved and/or more sustainable outcomes from a possible second phase of the Activity were guided by the following two KRQs:

- To what extent is local ownership of the Activity developing?
- Could a second phase of the Activity build on progress to date and continue to deliver sustainable outcomes?

The criterion of 'effectiveness' outlined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Criteria for Evaluating Development Assistance guided the Review. The approach to the Review was also founded on the principles of independence, transparency, usefulness, partnership, and participation.

A four-phased approach was undertaken for the Review. Phase One considered the Activity's context and operating environment, including the Activity's Results Framework and changes to the Framework that have occurred over time. Phase Two involved data collection and debriefing activities, including an in-country visit to Nepal to engage and consult with key stakeholders on progress made to date and factors enhancing/constraining progress towards intended outcomes. A thematic analysis of all data collected was undertaken in Phase Three, including identification of initial findings and recommendations via a sense-making session with the Activity's key stakeholders (MFAT and HT[NZ]). Findings and recommendations were then drafted and finalised in Phase Four.

Data collection activities included a document and data review (see Appendix Two – Document and Data References), individual and small group interviews (see Appendix Three), and classroom and workshop observations. For ease of reading, a code for each data source was developed (see Table 1 below). These data collection codes are used throughout the report to indicate the source of all findings and supporting evidence.

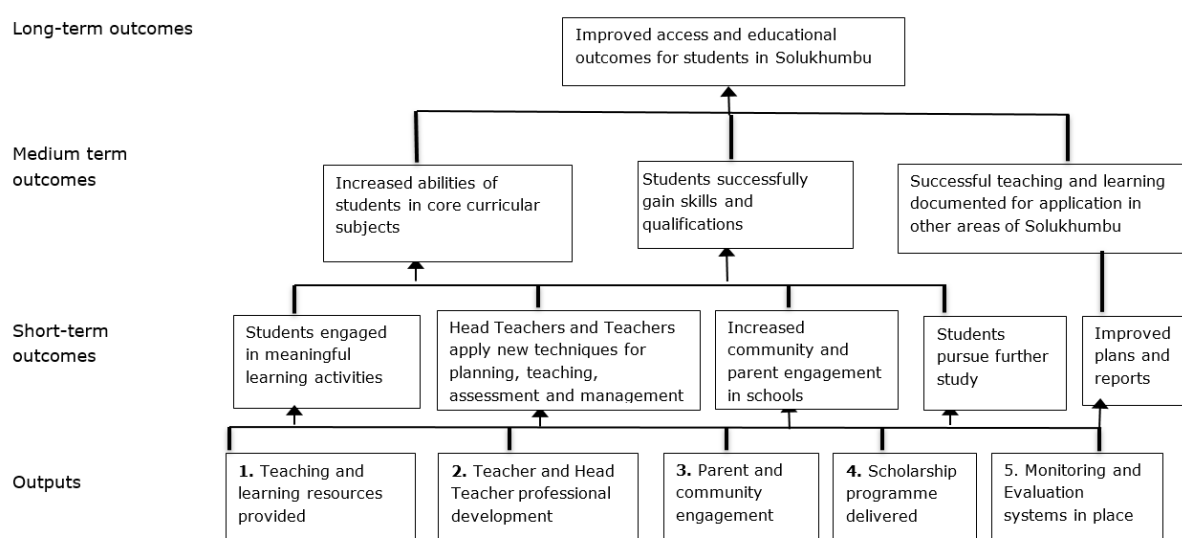
Table 1: HT(NZ) Quality Education Review Coding Key

Code	Description and total number
DOC	Documents and data reviewed as part of the Review (N = 31)
NZ	MFAT representatives and Honorary Consul to Nepal (N = 5)
HT	HT(NZ) and HTN representatives (N = 6)
IP	Other Nepal-based stakeholders from Action for Nepal (AFN), the Ministry of Education (MOE), the Department of Education (DOE) and the Social Welfare Council or SWC (N = 4)
SS	School staff representatives, including Head Teachers and teachers (N = 10)
LO	Local government officials from three municipalities (N = 3)
PR	Recipients of the Activity/Quality Education Programme, including parents (N = 2)
O	Observations from classrooms and workshops (N = 8)

2.2. Results Framework

The Review utilised the Activity’s current Results Framework (see Figure 1 below) to consider progress made towards Activity outputs and outcomes. Review findings (see Section 3) are also structured around the Results Framework.⁸

Figure 1: HT(NZ) Activity Results Framework



⁸ The HTNZ Activity Results Framework was revised and notified in the 2016-17 Activity Report. Key changes include an enhanced emphasis on evidence-based programming decisions; a refocus towards teacher training based on most cost-effective strategies to support student learning and achievement; and a refocus on embedding literacy in funded teacher training programmes.

2.3. Review Strengths and Limitations

Three key strengths of the Review included:

- its flexible methodology, designed to collect information from a wide range of stakeholders within a short timeframe;
- the provision of relevant and accurate information; and
- the Review Team's understanding of the scope and intended objectives of the Review.

First, the flexible, semi-structured engagement methodology enabled relevant information to be collected across KRQs, while also enabling stakeholders to provide information they considered most important and relevant to the Review. This was an important approach to take to encourage buy-in and ownership of the findings. Further, provision of accurate and relevant information enabled the Review Team to understand the Activity's context, collect information relevant to the intended uses, and produce credible findings and recommendations. Last, the Review Team's attention to the scope of the project ensured findings and actionable recommendations could be produced in a short timeframe.

A main limitation was the short timeframe (11 working weeks) available to complete the Review. This impacted specifically on the sampling approach for selecting school sites for classroom observations; the number of schools visited; the overall number of stakeholders the Review Team could engage with and analyse information from; and the depth of quantitative analyses provided. Implications of this limitation were that:

- more data was collected on the Literacy Improvement Project in Solukhumbu (LIPS) than the School-Based Teacher Training Programme (SBTTP);
- the smaller number of school classrooms observed prohibited greater generalisability of findings;
- a small number of stakeholders were omitted from the Review; and
- some data, such as comparisons between student achievement scores in Activity-funded schools and national scores, could not be obtained in time to include in the Review.

3. FINDINGS

This section outlines Review findings based on a document and data review, stakeholder interviews, and observations. Emerging findings and preliminary recommendations were presented to MFAT and HT(NZ) stakeholders on 12 April, 2019; feedback from that process has been incorporated into this report.

Review findings are organised to align with the Activity's current Results Framework. Sub-section headings are presented as outcome statements for progress made across the Activity's intended outputs,⁹ intended short-term outcomes,¹⁰ and intended medium-term outcomes.¹¹ Tentative findings against the Activity's long-term outcome (i.e., "*Improved access and educational outcomes for students in Solukhumbu*") and unintended outcomes are also presented below and in Appendix Four as a findings summary.

3.1. Progress Towards Intended Outputs

The following section provides outcome statements and supporting evidence of progress made towards the Activity's five intended outputs as illustrated in the current Results Framework: teaching and learning resources provided; teacher and Head Teacher professional development; parent and community engagement; Scholarship Programme delivered; and monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

3.1.1. Teaching and learning resources, including salaries, remain valuable

The Activity's emphasis and resourcing shifted over the current GFA period from teacher and learning resources to literacy-focused teaching behaviours (DOC7, DOC14). Findings suggested Activity-funded teacher and learning resources remain valuable in the Solukhumbu and that progress against this output is being made.

Teacher salaries

HT(NZ), HTN, and AFN were found to enable improved access to quality education for local people through the provision of privately-funded teachers' salaries. Local government officials have expressed the desire to manage teacher allocation and funding within their municipalities, but cannot do so until governance and management processes are more fully designed, embedded, and implemented.

Education in Nepal has shifted from "access to education" to "quality education", with a new focus on standards of quality input, quality process, and quality products in education (DOC1, p. 6). A key requirement for accessing quality education includes access to skilled and capable teachers. Although most students now have an opportunity to attend school (DOC7, p. 9), access to *quality*

⁹ The Activity's outputs are: 1) Teaching and learning resources provided; 2) Teacher and Head Teacher professional development; 3) Parent and community engagement; 4) Scholarship Programme delivered; and 5) Monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

¹⁰ The Activity's intended short-term outcomes are: 1) Students engaged in meaningful learning activities; 2) Head Teachers and teachers apply new techniques for planning, teaching, assessment and management; 3) Students pursue further study; and 4) Improved plans and reports.

¹¹ Intended medium-term outcomes for the Activity include: 1) Increased abilities of students in core curricular subjects; 2) Students successfully gain skills and qualifications; and 3) Successful teaching and learning documented for application in other areas of Solukhumbu.

education through skilled, well-trained teachers remains an issue in remote, mountainous districts such as the Solukhumbu. Retention of government-appointed teachers in the area is challenging due to harsh winter conditions and high living costs (DOC1).

Though some of the main trekking trails have achieved better economic opportunities from the development of tourism, the majority of people still live on traditional agriculture and experience economic hardship... the cycle of poverty is some way off from being broken. (DOC1, p. 8)

HT(NZ), along with other NGOs and international non-government organisations (INGOs), provide salaries for teachers in the Solukhumbu region. HT(NZ) specifically provides salaries for 22 teachers across 12 schools (DOC14, DOC19). This support was viewed as a central component to improving quality education in the region (PR1, SS3, SS4). In some instances, these salaried teachers make up a significant proportion of schools' wider teaching staff: in one case, an interviewee reported a total of 12 teachers at the school, three of whom were government-salaried teachers with the other nine being NGO-funded (SS3). Further, the Nepal government's suggested teacher-to-student ratio is understood to be 1:20-25 (L02), but the Review found higher ratios in some classrooms, with a 1:40+ ratio observed in one classroom (O1) and 1:31 reported in another (O7).¹²

Having a sufficient number of teachers to accommodate the local population remains a barrier, with further support likely required for teachers able to teach in English-medium schools, particularly at the primary level (DOC19, p. 26). Despite this continued need, the provision of Activity-funded teacher salaries is expected to end this year (DOC7, DOC14) as "*local government has indicated it will assume greater responsibility for teacher placements*" (DOC14, p. 19). Qualitative data suggests otherwise: although government officials are interested in assuming greater responsibility for teacher placements, they also indicated that NGO funding support for teachers' salaries beyond 2019 is still required as they continue to establish and build their governance and management systems (L01-L03; see also Section 3.1.2).

Recommendation 1. Activity-funded teacher salaries should continue beyond 2019 until local governance and management processes are more fully designed, embedded, and implemented.

Learning resources

Progress in the provision of learning resources is being made. HTN's distribution formula enables equal distribution of Activity-funded resourcing, but is only the first step in helping to ensure the right resources are provided to the right schools.

Progress against this output is being made (DOC14). Observations indicated the presence of reading corners and materials such as reading guides (DOC14, O1, O2, O4-O6).¹³ In-country resource provisions are managed by HTN, which currently allocates these learning resources (e.g., stationery) to 61 schools according to school 'cluster'.¹⁴ HTN gathers information from Activity-

¹² Conversely, the Review also found instances of very high teacher-to-student ratios in schools with lower student enrolment numbers, which may be impacting on children's ability to access these materials.

¹³ SBTTP is planning continued development of 'child-friendly' school environments including toilets, drinking fountains, libraries, and book corners (DOC16).

¹⁴ Each school cluster contains one secondary school and the basic or primary schools feeding into the secondary school. For example, one cluster may contain a total of 10 schools, with one secondary school and nine basic schools. As a result, every cluster has varying numbers of schools, student enrolments and teachers.

funded trainers (both LIPS and SBTPP) on cluster size, school need, student enrolment (for student materials such as exercise books) and number of teachers per school (for classroom materials) to calculate specific resourcing allocations across the schools (DOC17, HT4). Materials are then distributed to schools annually by the trainers (HT4). Findings suggest that the remoteness and lack of roading in the Solukhumbu is a particular access barrier that makes the cost of supplies such as stationery much higher than other regions (DOC1, HT4).

Activity-funded provision of learning resources remain of high value in the Solukhumbu, despite a reduction in these funded resources from \$42,587.50 in 2017-18 (DOC7) to \$31,340.00 in 2018-19 (DOC14). This reduction, particularly in stationery (e.g., paper, markers, exercise books) was noted across several stakeholders (HT2, SS7, SS9). One stakeholder group noted that they “hardly managed” with the absence of previously-provided markers and paper, and concerns were raised about managing further resourcing reductions (SS6). Similarly, another stakeholder considered that the SBTPP-funded stationery provided to students was very important and eased parents’ burden, particularly in poorer villages where provision of exercise books and materials was considered more difficult (SS9, HT2). One Head Teacher noted that many students attending the school cannot afford supplies and are being provided supplies from the “old stock” (SS7). One parent noted that they would need to rely on friends to pay for any supplies (PR2).

Recommendation 2. As HTN is currently unable to determine what regions in the Solukhumbu have more equitable access to learning resources, the Review recommends increasing the focus on need identification.

3.1.2. Two programmes are contributing to teachers’ professional development

Progress against this intended output is being made: two programmes (LIPS and SBTPP) are being implemented that focus on improving student achievement and literacy through teacher and Head Teacher training. Both LIPS and SBTPP were seen to align with underpinning theories of and practices for best practice literacy development.

Documents reviewed demonstrated a change in focus for Activity-supported training. Specifically, the 2014-17 Activity signalled a refocus on teachers’ professional development, considered to be the most cost-effective form of support most likely to improve student learning and achievement (DOC1). The focus of teachers’ training in the 2016-19 Activity was further refined to more explicitly support children’s oral language and literacy in the early grades (DOC7, DOC2). Documents also highlighted an alignment of this Activity refocus with Nepal’s Education Review Office (ERO), which identified the need for enhanced student literacy (DOC20, p. 49) and teachers’ pedagogical practice (DOC1). Interviewees suggest this refocus was welcomed, as government training and certification fails to provide its teachers an adequate transfer of pedagogical concepts to classroom practices, and offers limited classroom-based support (HT1, IP1, IP4, LO1, PR1, SS7).

Two Activity-funded professional development programmes are currently being provided in the Solukhumbu to fill this gap in government teacher training. The SBTPP, which reflects the earlier Activity design focus; and LIPS, which reflects the later Activity design. The programmes are delivered by two providers: HTN provides SBTPP, and AFN implements LIPS. Although there are some recognised similarities between the programmes, the programme providers are not working together in the design, delivery or learning components (HT1, IP2, LO3). A third provider, Rural Education and Environment Development Center - Nepal (REED Nepal), was supported by

the first Activity's design (DOC1). Activity support for REED Nepal ceased in 2017 (DOC8). An overview of these programmes is provided in the following table.

Table 2: Overview of Activity-supported professional development programmes (SBTTP and LIPS), 2017-18

Programme	Schools Supported	School Staff Supported	Students Supported
SBTTP	11	66	413
LIPS	11	25 – 28	319

Elements of both the SBTTP and LIPS programmes were seen to align with underpinning theories of and practices for best practice literacy development used by MFAT (NZ2). As a four-year professional development programme, SBTTP focuses on 11 schools in the Solukhumbu region, and supports 66 teachers and Head Teachers from grades 1 to 10 (DOC16, HT1). Interviews and documents demonstrated SBTTP's alignment to theories of and practices for literacy development acknowledged by MFAT as outlined below (NZ2).

- **Supporting teachers to improve and sustain their practice.** Best practice approaches include motivating and upskilling teachers in their classrooms to adopt child-centred and child-friendly practices (DOC1, HT1, HT2) with the goal to improve students' core subject assessment outcomes (HT1). Building upon best practice, SBTTP teacher trainers were formally trained in both child-friendly teaching and Early Grade Reading (DOC19). Teachers are also provided support through classroom observations and demonstrations to modify their practice relevant to their context (PR1, SS4, SS7, SS8, SS10).
- **Supporting leadership within the school context.** In-school leadership support assists teachers to improve and maintain their practices (HT3). SBTTP offers leadership support via Head Teacher training and monitoring, and also supports parental engagement in schools and inter-school competitions (HT1).
- **Undertaking regular formative assessment.** Ongoing teaching and learning via formative assessment processes helps improve students' achievement of intended learning outcomes (HT3). SBTTP trains teachers to use the Nepali-promoted Common Assessment System (CAS) and track student progress over time (DOC19, HT1, HT3).
- **Sourcing literacy materials that are contextualised, relevant and appropriate for the environment.** SBTTP supports contextualised and relevant literacy materials through identifying and making use of local resources (DOC18, HT2).

As a pilot programme that experienced some challenges and consequent changes in its design, LIPS also aligns with MFAT's understanding of best practice theories and practices for literacy development (HT2, NZ2). HT(NZ) awarded AFN, a relatively new education provider, the design and delivery of LIPS beginning in 2016 (DOC8, HT2). LIPS was initially developed as a prototype programme that focused upon the principles of alignment (supporting Government of Nepal's education policy), experience (using a suitably qualified team), and evidence (implementing evidence-based, monitoring and evaluation [DOC7]). Its design was built upon early grade reading programmes from USAID, World Education and Room2Read (IP2). The effectiveness of LIPS' design was dependent upon HT(NZ)'s ability to recruit a suitable programme manager with literacy learning expertise who could in turn recruit local teachers, change their perceptions about literacy practices, then train them to work in schools (DOC6). Education experts were considered too expensive (IP2), so HT(NZ) personnel with education experience, two experienced Nepali teachers, and an M&E person designed the LIPS programme using materials from World

Education (IP2). Later documents showed an unexpected difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified staff to deliver the programme (DOC7). Despite these challenges, LIPS is now implemented in 11 Khumbu schools and supports between 25 and 28 teachers in grades 1 to 3. The programme has a bespoke structure, where teachers oversee a series of seven activities over a 90-minute session aimed at building student literacy skills.

Interviews and documents demonstrated alignment to best practice theories and practices (NZ2):

- **Supporting teachers to improve and sustain their practice.** LIPS was seen to help develop teachers' skills through repeated class coaching; promoting teacher peer-to-peer supports; building an enabling environment for students (e.g., child-friendly environment; reading corners; teaching learning materials support to enable access to child literature for reading and writing skill development); and involving parents and stakeholders in learning (O1, O2, O4-O6). Although the teacher trainers did not benefit from any literacy-specific training, several were experienced teachers (IP2).
- **Supporting leadership within the school context.** LIPS utilises strategies to engage with parents (DOC15) and provides checklists for observations to head-teachers (SS2, SS7, SS8).
- **Sourcing literacy materials that are contextualised, relevant and appropriate for the environment.** Like SBTTP, LIPS sources literacy materials that are contextualised, relevant and appropriate for the environment, and develops materials with teachers (O7). LIPS develops students' skills in English and Nepali literacy (as well as English acquisition as a second language). The programme is adapted and tailored to fit community needs (O7), and issues are continuously identified and addressed through stakeholder consultation (HT3, O7).

As school- and classroom-based teacher training programmes, LIPS and the SBTTP were seen as more effective than other centrally-based training programmes taught outside of the school and specific classroom context (IP1-IP3, LO3, HT1, HT2, HT6-7, SS7, SS9, SS10). Teachers were seen to benefit from both programmes through group work and group feedback with one another (HT2, O7, SS4).

Suggested improvements for both programmes and training more generally were also noted. There was clearly a desire to see even more training support for teachers to support their work (HT1, HT2, SS6, SS9, SS10). This included the amount of time spent with teachers (SS1); the involvement of more "experts" in programme design and delivery (IP2, SS1); more frequent opportunities to share professional development practices between teachers in community-cluster schools (LO1); enhanced training for embedding ICT teaching and learning approaches (SS6); and more formal feedback loops supporting incorporation of both student and parent input into modifying and/or improving teaching methods. This included, for example, the opportunity to create an anonymous "complaint box" (LO1).¹⁵ Additionally, interviewees noted some concerns about the lack of literacy continuity before Grade 1 and beyond Grade 3 (IP2, O7, PR1).

Further programme success was believed to be dependent upon various school factors. Interviewees consistently reflected on teacher turnover as a serious concern for the programmes (IP2, HT1, HT6, LO2, SS2): a LIPS trainer quoted a 60 percent turnover in one year, and another

¹⁵ The 'complaints box' example was used to illustrate how community feedback can be enabled; the stakeholder was not suggesting community concerns exist about the wider programme or Activity-funded support in the region.

estimate provided by staff (IP2) was 13 of the approximately 25 – 28 teachers had left the school (~50 percent turnover). SBTTP staff quoted a 21 percent turnover, reflecting 14 of the 66 teachers supported (DOC16). Stakeholders further noted that some Head Teachers were not receptive to change, or that they did not have support from teachers for the professional development programme (HT6).

Overwhelmingly, the success of both programmes was seen to depend upon effective engagement between local, provincial, and national government. Nepal’s current federal structure promotes a “shared rule” between these three tiers, with increased authority and responsibility vested to municipality officials first elected in 2017.¹⁶ The terms and implications of this engagement continue to evolve,¹⁷ and NGOs such as HTN are mindful that any activities it undertakes must support and supplement the needs and policies of local government (HT2), while the wider political system continues its own transition into federalism. Ultimately, stakeholders considered that enhanced collaboration and coordination across these government levels is needed, including alignment of policies, practices, and spending budgets (IP1, IP3, IP4, HT1, HT6, IP4).

Recommendation 3. The Review recommends increased collaboration and partnership between implementation partners (HTN and AFN) and local government for education-relevant activities.

3.1.3. HT(NZ)-funded programmes are encouraging parent engagement in schools

Findings indicated strong support for progress made towards increased parent and community engagement in schools. Stakeholders reported that student work and portfolios were being shared with parents, and engagement between the schools, parents, and communities was continuing to develop.

Stakeholders reported increases in various types of parent and community engagement for both Activity-funded initiatives (LIPS and SBTTP). For example, one of the consistently noted strengths of LIPS was its focus on parental engagement (LO1-LO3, O7, SS1, SS2, SS4, SS7). Stakeholders considered that the reading log activity used as part of the LIPS programme supported engagement at home: students are expected to take books home and read them with their parents, while parents are required to note this learning activity as complete in the reading logs (SS1). The average number of days in one year that students took home books and completed this reading activity was 26 days in Grade 1, 28 days in Grade 2, and 32 days in Grade 3 (DOC15).

In addition to increased engagement between parent-child shared reading at home (LO1, LO3), stakeholders cited several other specific instances of engagement attributed to LIPS. These included:

- increased frequency of parents visiting their child’s classroom (LO1, PR1, SS4) to teach students about various topics such as washing hands (SS1) and making dumplings or momo (SS8);
- parents contributing to school meetings and discussions with teachers about their child’s school plan (LO1); and

¹⁶ Australian Aid and The Asia Foundation (2017), available here: <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Diagnostic-Study-of-Local-Governance-in-Federal-Nepal-07112018.pdf>.

¹⁷ iBid.

- improved frequency and quality of relationships between parents and their child's teachers (IP2, L01).

It is understood that, on average, schools participating in LIPS undertake four such inclusive activities a year (DOC15). These activities were seen to enhance parents' own learning (L02); awareness of the value of education (L03); and responsibility for the role they play in their child's learning activities (L03). Overall, this enhanced access to parents was believed to positively impact on their involvement and interest in their child's learning activities and progress in the classroom (L01, L03). As one parent said, "Sometimes my kids teach *me* (PR1)!"

The SBTTP programme measures three parental engagement indicators of success (DOC18):

- 50 percent of parents attend parent-teacher events at school (monthly reports from Head Teachers);
- 25 percent of parents visit the school in a month (monthly reports from Head Teachers, and trainer reports in November); and
- at least one School Management Committee (SMC) meeting annually.

SBTTP reported a range of activities to enhance parent engagement (DOC19). This included strategies for maintaining positive and regular contact, preparing to implement home reading logs, and undertaking an 'interaction programme' with parents (DOC19). In support of this documented information, stakeholders considered that the SBTTP's embedded parent interaction component enhanced engagement between teachers, parents, and students (SS9, HT2). Further, SBTTP trainers' facilitation of community interactions were viewed as effective at increasing parents' ability to monitor and help their children manage homework and study activities (HT2); manage a good study environment at home; and develop a greater awareness and understanding of the value and importance of their children's education (SS9, SS10).

Some enablers and barriers of progress towards enhanced engagement were noted. A key enabler included support and interest from municipality officials to increase parent and community engagement in Activity-funded schools (L01-3). The rapid growth of responsibilities and accountabilities given to municipalities after recent elections will come with its own opportunities and challenges (see Section 0). However, the majority of stakeholders were positive towards what officials could achieve in the future to enhance engagement between parents, teachers, students, and schools. Conversely, various contextual barriers may make increasing parent engagement "pretty hard going" (HT6): many students live in hostels away from their parents (L02); reading and writing are not familiar elements in Nepali culture (IP2); and some parents may be unmotivated to participate (PR2) or not fluent in Nepali and/or English (HT6).

Recommendations 3 and 6. To enhance the effectiveness of progress made, it is recommended that a continued emphasis on a partnership-based approach be given to drive a unified plan (e.g., an "Action Plan" or "Master Plan") between implementing partners, schools and local government officials.

3.1.4. The Scholarship Programme is supporting high-achieving students

Progress against this intended output is being made. The Scholarship Programme is supporting high-achieving secondary and tertiary students and is widely valued. Although minimal, what anecdotal evidence was available suggested that Activity-funded scholarships enabled or supported further educational opportunities for scholars.

HTN administers externally-funded scholarships on behalf of a range of donors, including HT(NZ). To administer scholarships, HTN publishes yearly announcements of when scholarships become available. Students and families respond by completing applications for specific qualification levels (specifically Grade 11, Grade 12 or 10+2, Bachelor's, and Master's) and focus areas (e.g., science, nursing, education, management). Scholarship applications require both applicant information (e.g., student's contact details, demographics, applicants' School Leaving Certificate/School Entrance Examination grades) and information about the applicant's family, such as occupation and annual income. The following table provides an overview of the number of Activity- and HT(NZ)-funded scholarships awarded (total and by gender) across the Activity's funding period.^{18, 19} In 2018, approximately 16 percent of applicants were awarded a scholarship (HT4).

Table 3: Activity-Supported Scholarships Between 2014 - 2018

Year	Qualification Level	Female	Male	Combined
2014 - 2015	Grade 11	18	29	47
	Grade 12	20	26	46
	Bachelor's	16	23	39
	Master's	3	1	4
	2014/15csub-total	57	79	136
2015 - 2016	Grade 11	13	23	36
	Grade 12	25	27	52
	Bachelor's	18	26	44
	Master's	2	1	3
	2015/16 sub-total	58	77	135
2016 - 2017	General 10+2 (Grade 12)	8	12	20
	General Bachelor's	13	10	23
	"SEHM" 10+2 (Grades 11 and 12)	15	21	36
	"SEHM" Bachelor's	6	7	13
	Master's	0	0	0
	2016/17 sub-total	42	50	92
2017 - 2018	General 10+2 (Grade 12)	19	22	41
	General Bachelor's	5	7	12
	"SEHM" 10+2 (Grades 11 and 12)	24	16	40
	"SEHM" Bachelor's	4	4	8
	Master's	2	0	2
	MDRES students	1	3	4
	2017/18 sub-total	55	52	107
GRAND TOTAL		212	258	470

According to HTN scholarship guidelines, scholarships are awarded based on academic achievement, financial need, previous HTN support (for higher qualification levels), and students'

¹⁸ Information taken from Annual Progress Reports prepared by HTN.

¹⁹ As noted in Table 3, Scholarship categories changed in the 2016/17 Annual Report: Grade 11 was subsumed into 10+2, and the Sir Edmund Hilary Memorial Scholarship (SEHM) was added. Scholarship categories also changed in the 2017/18 Annual Report: the Mountaineering Disaster Relief and Educational Support (MDRES) scholarship was added for 2014 avalanche victims' children.

commitment. However, scholarships are largely awarded based on achievement to top applicants in each focus area (HT4). If there are equal grades among the top applicants, the scholarship is awarded to a student that may be otherwise disadvantaged based on other categories (e.g., gender, disability, and/or caste [HT4]). This approach was slightly contentious among stakeholders: some interviewed suggested that merit-based (achievement) scholarships ensured students who work hard are provided further education opportunities (HT2, HT4), whereas other interviewees believed more targeted scholarships could build local capacity for in-demand occupations (LO3) or explicitly support financially disadvantaged scholars (HT2).

Reputationally, HTN was reported to be “the grandfathers” of scholarships (NZ1), and evidence indicates the Scholarship Programme is highly valued. For example, a scan of the 2018 applications showed that scholarship applications came largely from low income families that earned between 30,000 to 80,000 Nepali rupees per year (\$400 to \$1,000 NZD per year) and worked in manual labour-type occupations (e.g., porter, farmer, trekker [HT4]). This scan suggests that any amount of scholarship, even small amounts, may be beneficial for the family and scholar.

Although minimal, anecdotal information suggested that Activity-funded scholarships enabled or supported further educational opportunities for scholars ([HT3, HT6]; see Section 3.2.4). There was also no evidence available concerning whether these scholars, over time, return to the Solukhumbu. It was broadly recognised by those interviewed that some professions, such as teachers (HT3, IP2, LO3) as well as doctors and engineers (LO3), are in short supply in the region. As such, some noted that scholarships may contribute, and could be contributing more, to longer-term regional workforce needs (LO3, HT6).

3.1.5. Monitoring and evaluation systems are in place

Progress against this output is being made, with enhanced monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems evident across HT(NZ), HTN, and AFN over the funding period.

During the current GFA term, MFAT has required HT(NZ) to increase its monitoring and programmatic approach to developing and progressing intended outcomes (NZ2, NZ3). Evidence of progress made towards this aim was evident: for example, in response to a report that suggested HT(NZ)'s earthquake prioritisation efforts had created a decreased focus on M&E activities (DOC11), HT(NZ) recruited a development education specialist with M&E expertise in 2016 to provide mentoring support to the programme and develop a meaningful process for outputs (H6). HT(NZ) and HTN stakeholders also discussed HT(NZ)'s interest and efforts in improving the organisation's M&E processes and moving away from previous, less formal M&E actions (HT1-HT3, HT4, HT6).

HT(NZ) does not have a full-time presence in Nepal, therefore proficient M&E processes and outputs from its in-country implementation partners HTN and AFN are vital.²⁰ Evidence collected during the Review suggests that these partners are focusing their efforts on M&E processes, and both have established M&E plans for their respective SBTTP and LIPS programmes (DOC15, DOC18). Specifically, SBTTP has a monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI)

²⁰ Strong relationships, trust, and collaboration is also required between these three organisations to facilitate effectiveness achievement of the Activity's intended outputs and outcomes; see Sections 3.1.2., 3.5, 5, and 6 for details.

plan that outlines a range of success indicators and targets aligned to key questions (DOC18, HT2), and submits six-monthly reporting after annual teachers' training against the MERI plan to HT(NZ) (HT2).

Similarly, LIPS has a M&E system in place and retains a monitoring and evaluation officer, who reports against progress made every six months to HT(NZ) (DOC15, DOC26, IP2). In 2017, LIPS also produced a baseline report which included a range of assessments to evaluate the reading skills of Solukhumbu students in 11 schools such as the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) (DOC23).²¹ Stakeholders highlighted that the LIPS baseline report enabled AFN to develop and design later phases of the LIPS, which they saw as effective practice (IP2, LO3).²²

Areas for improvement and barriers hindering progress towards enhanced M&E systems were also noted, such as:

- M&E processes were not being consistently or widely undertaken across Activity-supported schools (LO2);
- M&E activities only target LIPS- and SBTTP-supported teachers and students (LO2);
- there is too heavy of an emphasis on M&E outputs compared to outcomes (HT6); and
- there is some under- and over-reporting of M&E information (HT3, LO3).

More widely, the Activity's Results Framework has undergone various iterations across the funding period. Changes in focus for outputs and outcomes in 2014, 2016, and 2018 (DOC1, DOC8, DOC14) creates limitations and complications for HT(NZ), HTN, and AFN in assessing progress made. These changes in focus, in addition to broader issues such as shifts in the political context (IP2) and unsystematic and infrequent use of existing standardised assessments (IP4), make tracking progress against intended outcomes over time challenging for all partners as any efforts implemented take time to eventuate (HT3).

Recommendation 5. Activities to enhance progress against this output could include:

- developing evidence bases for programmes' design and function (e.g., evidence about how specific teaching practices do/do not support literacy, evidence about how literacy supports access to education);
- supporting further development of expert, local or in-country Nepali M&E capacity and capability; and
- increasing collaboration between partners to support one another's M&E processes. This could involve sharing lessons learned, what "successful" M&E practices do/do not look like, and ways in which the different programmes can support and contribute to one another's learning and achievement outcomes.

²¹ EGRA measures early years literacy using a range of domains such as letter name knowledge, word identification, passage reading, writing, and mathematics. See Sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.6 for further details.

²² It is understood that SBTTP (and previously REED Nepal) did not undertake baseline or needs assessment reporting to document existing capabilities and needs prior to implementing teacher training activities (LO3). Needs analyses were viewed as an important step forward in rationalising any funding and support from HTNZ (HT3).

3.2. Progress Towards Intended Short- and Medium-Term Outcomes

The following section provides outcome statements and supporting evidence of progress made towards the Activity's five intended short- and medium-term outcomes as illustrated in the current Results Framework.

3.2.1. Students are engaging in meaningful learning activities

Progress against this outcome is being made. The Review found that students in LIPS classrooms were effectively engaged in and practicing reading, writing, and/or listening skills.

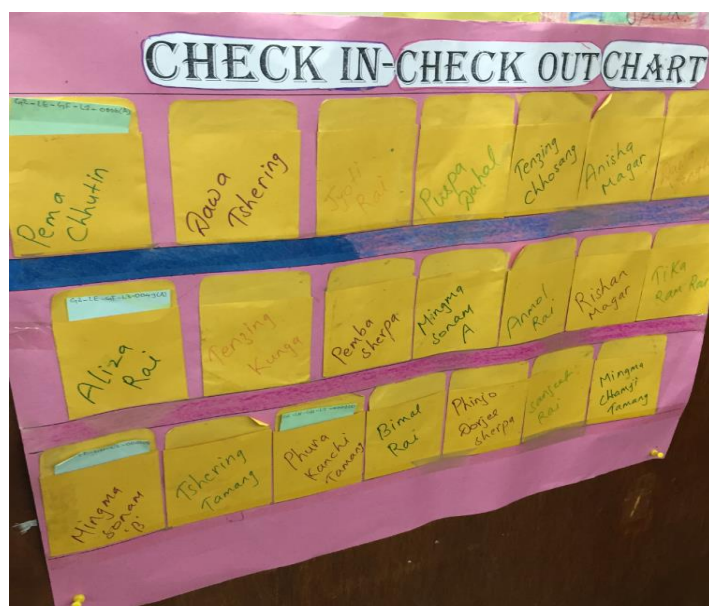
LIPS classrooms provided many opportunities for language learning and literacy through its space and resources. There were specific book areas easily reached by children and within their line of sight (O1, O2, O4-O6).²³ Books available in classrooms included fiction (O1, O2, O4-O6) and non-fiction books (O1, O2, O4). Teachers clearly utilised materials to build upon students' vocabulary and listening comprehension (O1, O2, O4, O5). In one case, a library was available that contained hundreds of reading books (O6).

Language learning was further developed through reading aloud strategies. Teachers read children's books to students sitting on mats (O1, O2, O4, O5), such as "A Good Deed Everyday" (O1) and "Beauty and the Beast" (O2). Teachers emphasised specific words that may have been new (e.g., "neighbour"), translated new words from English to Nepali, and directed children to repeat the word aloud (O4). Some teachers made use of specific strategies to extend their students' learning, such as predictive questioning, pausing and encouraging turn-taking, and including all children in group activities.²⁴ However, observations suggested that it might be difficult for children to see the text in the book, because the text was small and books were often far away as the teacher was in front of the class (O1, O2, O4, O5). Limited ability for children to view the text being read may be limiting their opportunity to develop literacy skills more effectively. Nevertheless, students made use of reading materials independent of the teacher, both inside (e.g., students reading aloud individually or in small groups) and outside (e.g., "check in-check out" class books) classrooms (see Figure 2).

²³ Aligns with best practice indicators for literacy-enabling environments and resources. See also Siraj-Blatchford et al, 2002; Harms et al, 1996; Sylva et al, 2006; I-CAN, 2008; and Communication Trust, 2008.

²⁴ Aligns with 'best practice' strategies used for language learning. See Justice, 2004; Dockrell et al, 2010; Carlo et al., 2004; Brigman et al, 2003.

Figure 2: LIPS Classroom Check In/Check Out Chart



A range of additional learning strategies were also observed. For example, a 10-minute exercise (O6) helped students practice writing about a general topic chosen by the teacher (e.g., “work done by self on vacation”, “family member”). Students also wrote independently at their desks while teachers circled the desks and observed (O1, O4). Students asked the teacher how to spell words (e.g., “little”, “cut”), and the teacher said the letters aloud for the specific student while the others worked on their writing.

LIPS lessons encouraged students to practice speaking English while extending their listening skills. For instance, students engaged in 10-minute peer-to-peer, child-centred interactions (O1, O2, O4-O6). Each child discussed information relevant to themselves, such as their “pet animal” (O1) and what they saw “at the market” (O2). Children took turns sharing this information rather than asking each other questions, and students later stood in front of the class to relay their stories to the entire class (O1, O2, O4, O5). Interviews similarly indicated successful development of students’ listening and speaking skills: several stakeholders mentioned a noticeable increase in students’ ability to speak publicly (both in English and Nepali), which they attributed to LIPS and wider HT(NZ) support (LO1, LO2).

However, learning objectives in LIPS classrooms were unclear. Specifically, none of the observed LIPS teachers made clear what they wanted students to *learn* either visually (on a white board) or orally (O1, O2, O4, O5, O6). Interviews with teachers also suggested a stronger focus on LIPS activities and the child-centred approach than on learning objectives.²⁵

Recommendations 4 and 5. To enhance more effective learning opportunities, future Activity considerations may include aligning teacher training practices with evidence-based pedagogical design. An enhanced focus on learning objectives tailored to specific age groups and continued provision of relevant resources supporting literacy (e.g., literacy-focused books relevant to the

²⁵ Teachers’ clear communication about students’ learning objectives is a ‘best practice’ approach for enhancing and accelerating student achievement. See also Visible Learning, 2017, in which a very large effect size ($d = 0.75$) or impact of learning objective clarity on student achievement is noted.

child and his/her local community and surroundings, such as a Sherpa history or picture book) would also likely bolster students' engagement and achievement.

3.2.2. Teachers are learning and adopting programme techniques

Progress against this outcome is being made. Observations demonstrated Activity-funded teachers embedding differentiated learning activities and activities that focussed on the child's interests. Teachers are also planning the activities and using assessments as part of their practice.

Planning techniques. The design of both LIPS and SBTTP promotes child-centred learning, as reflected in lesson plans (SS8), the monitoring schedule (DOC18), and interviews (SS7, SS8, SS10). Observations showed consistent application of the LIPS scheduled activities (O1, O2, O4, O5, O6), and SBTTP-trained teachers were said to be following its design by spending more time in a lesson (20-25 minutes) on student-centred activities (SS7). These strategies were seen to align with central government's guidelines (IP3). However, LIPS teachers may be focusing on the activity rather than the learning objective (SS8).

Such plans may focus students and teachers on the activity (e.g., what they will do) rather than on what they will learn (e.g., reading about "the fox and the goat" to develop students' themed-based vocabulary). Further, the structure of the LIPS literacy programme was noted as challenging for teachers in the first year, as this was viewed as a significant change from what was viewed as traditional teaching methods (SS1, SS4).

Teaching techniques. Teaching techniques known to support oral language and literacy were observed in LIPS classrooms, including predictive questioning; pausing and encouraging turn-taking; including all children in group activities; and emphasising new words and directing students to repeat words to build vocabulary (O1, O2, O4, O5, O6). Interviewees reported using new LIPS techniques and seeing the results, such as feeling energised and interested in teaching (SS1, SS2, SS4). The training provided by LIPS was seen to be making a "big difference" for improving the teaching quality of teachers trained through the programme (LO1). Enhanced teaching quality due to SBTTP techniques was also noted across a variety of sources, including documents (DOC19) and interviews (SS9, SS10). There was a desire to learn additional teaching strategies (O7, SS4).

Assessment techniques. Child-assessments were included but unique across both programmes. Interviews suggested one strength of SBTTP was that it promotes and develops teachers' skills in implementing CAS to measure student progress (HT1, HT2, SS9).²⁶ Not everyone values or implements CAS (see below), and other formative assessments have been created. In LIPS schools, prescribed and short writing tasks were used to assess literacy (see Section 3.2.6), though one document indicated this assessment is not being done or submitted consistently (DOC15), with only 8 of the 11 schools submitting their results. Teacher "assessments" also appeared to promote fidelity. In LIPS, checklists were provided by the programme to teachers and Head Teachers (SS2, SS3, SS7, SS8) for teachers to self-review their practice (SS8). Head Teachers observed and

²⁶ CAS measures progress across course content, expectations, and objectives from various data sources such as participation, teacher judgement, and student portfolios. See also Baniya, 2010 (2067 Bikram sambat Nepali date), available here: <http://nespap.unescobkk.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Enhancing-Learning-Through-Continuous-Assessment-System-Nepal.pdf>.

provided feedback to teachers (SS2); and teachers shared what they are doing in the classroom during staff meeting. (SS3).

The interviews and observations did not demonstrate assessments being used to promote students' self-regulated learning; there were no student learning goals visible in the classrooms (O1, O2, O3, O4, O5, O6, O8). Teachers and Head Teachers were not able to demonstrate gathering student feedback on teaching practice and learning in order to inform the strategies; nor were they able to demonstrate how the assessments informed future learning for the child. However, at one school, students were asked to attend a SMC meeting to represent the student voice (SS7), and when asked about student feedback, another noted that the students instructed her to speak louder (SS4).

Management techniques. Classroom management strategies were also reported across both programmes (HT1, SS1, SS4, SS10), and two specific management strategies were observed in the LIPS classrooms that helped teachers manage behaviour and refocus students. One LIPS teacher utilised a call-and-response clap (O1), and another spoke directly to the class (O4):

Teacher: Are you ready?

Students: Yes (all together)

Teacher: Can I speak?

Students: Yes (all together)

However, some stakeholders noted that the SBTTP two-day training was too short (SS7), and others suggested that some school leaders' unwillingness to adapt to new ways of working or lack of engagement hindered more effective progress (HT3, O7, LO2).

Recommendation 5. To further improve teaching practice, it would be valuable for LIPS and SBTTP to further promote techniques known to influence student achievement. This could include structuring learning around the objectives; moving students from practicing to building skills; embedding formative assessments; using information to monitor progress as well as to inform both student and teacher reflection, review and planning; and incorporating strategies to collate and use student feedback to inform pedagogy and accelerate learning.

3.2.3. Students are pursuing further studies with scholarship support

The Review could not determine whether the Scholarship Programme has systematically enabled scholarship recipients' further studies. However, anecdotal evidence suggests scholarships support students' further study, and it is highly likely that even small amounts of support may be beneficial for the scholar given the relatively low incomes of families in the Solukhumbu region.

Documents and interviews suggested that scholarships support students' further study. As noted in Section 3.1.4, there is some self-reported evidence to suggest that Activity-funded scholarships enabled or supported further educational opportunities for scholars. HT(NZ) documents also highlighted scholarship recipients' stories, demonstrating how they had pursued further study because of the scholarship (DOC28-DOC31). For example:

- "... I was supported by Himalayan Trust Nepal which allowed me to continue my studies without being a financial burden on my parents" (DOC28, p. 57).

- “... With the help of the Himalayan Trust, who provided me with financial support, I was able to complete my +2 from Salleri VDC” (DOC28, p. 60).
- “... With Himalayan Trust scholarships, I continued my studies from Intermediate up to M.A.” (DOC28, p. 57).
- “After passing grade 12 national board exam in good division I got Himalayan Trust Nepal Scholarship to study Bachelor Degree in Education subject” (DOC30, p. 29).

Interviews suggested that scholars had successfully completed their funded studies, but tracking individual scholars beyond their completion would be challenging (HT4). However, one sourced document listed the current occupations of former scholarship recipients, including for example, teachers, doctors and CEOs (DOC29, p. 29-30).

Recommendations 2 and 6. Future Activity-funded Scholarship Programme activities may like to consider how to monitor need for support alongside enabling “further study” of scholarship recipients; and how further study contributes to the wider regional workforce needs.

3.2.4. There is a focus on enhancing future reporting and planning systems

HT(NZ) progress against this output (i.e., improved plans and reports) is being made. HT(NZ) and its implementing partners have a focus on future planning and reporting systems.

HT(NZ) produced and contributed to several plans and reports over the funding period that were Activity-specific as well as for more general audiences, including:

- contributions to the Activity’s design documentation and continued appraisals and progress reports regarding the Activity’s effectiveness and impact (DOC1, DOC2, DOC6-DOC8, DOC11, DOC14);
- a Strategic Plan spanning the later part of the GFA period, which outlines and aligns its education-focused programme goals (specifically Goal 2 “Equitable and Quality Education”) the fourth UN Sustainable Development Goal of “Quality education” (DOC12); and
- annual reviews reporting on both Activity- (e.g., quality education) and non-Activity (e.g., healthcare, safe water) activities such as LIPS (DOC5, DOC10, DOC13, DOC21).

A previous Activity progress report completed by HT(NZ) about reports from implementing partners also indicated improved progress in planning and reporting (DOC14). “High quality” reports from both SBTTP and LIPS programmes were received; monthly reporting from the agencies was considered “accurate and timely”; and six-monthly and annual reports from AFN and HTN were “greatly improved” (DOC14, p. 18).

HT(NZ) is currently working towards enhancing its planning and reporting systems, and is seeking continued assistance from and collaboration with its implementing partners to do so (HT6). This included an interest in continuing to build the existing partnership with HTN and closer collaboration with AFN (HT2, HT3, HT5, HT6), and engaging with local municipalities to incorporate their perspectives and needs into HT(NZ)’s broader planning and reporting (HT5). Further, the new appointment of HTN’s Chief Executive was seen as an action that has and will be making positive improvements in plans and reporting to HT(NZ) (NZ1).

Ultimately, HT(NZ) seeks to encourage HTN and AFN to build sound rationalisation and evidence for resourcing (e.g., how many teachers or training sessions are required across school clusters

and why), which HT(NZ) can then incorporate into funding requests planning, reporting and processes for MFAT (HT3, HT5). *“The information needs to stack up so that people feel confident with how money is being spent”* (HT5).

Stakeholders voiced the need for increased collaboration between implementing partners to improve knowledge sharing, build on and document successes, and incorporate new learnings into future plans and reports (IP2, HT1-HT3, HT5, NZ1, NZ2). This included a suggestion shared independently across some stakeholders for collaborative development of a “Master Plan” to set out education-related roles, responsibilities, actions (including a potential needs analysis), and accountabilities between HT(NZ), HTN, AFN, other relevant NGOs, and municipalities within which implementing partners operate (HT3, HT5, IP2, LO3).

HT(NZ), HTN, and AFN voiced interest in working together on future planning initiatives, but local government will need to lead these processes (HT5, IP2). In this way, increased local government accountabilities were seen as both an enabler and barrier to progressing work in this area and others. While newly-elected government officials voiced an interest in and the need to increase their role in overseeing future educational activities in the region, they were also struggling to build the management and programme development capabilities and secure dedicated funding channels from central government for new initiatives (L1-L3, IP1).

Recommendation 6. It is recommended that enhanced collaboration between all relevant agencies working in the education sector be led by local municipalities. Collaborative development of an educational strategy (e.g., a “Master Plan” or “Action Plan”) is recommended to help avoid duplication and overlap of services currently offered, and to ensure that the right support is channelled to the right schools.

3.2.5. Data on students’ abilities in core curricular subjects varies

There is currently limited ability to determine the extent to which Activity-supported activities such as SBTP and LIPS are supporting students’ abilities in core curricular subjects using existing achievement measures, and whether any change is meaningful.

It is unclear whether progress is being made towards enhancing Activity-supported students’ ability in core curricular subjects. Review results show mixed trends, quantitative details were missing, and the outcomes, assessments, and reporting approaches have changed over the years.

These aforementioned factors have limited determination of whether any measured change is meaningful. For example, HT(NZ) documents showed that achievement data reporting changed each year of reporting, making comparisons between times difficult to make reliably. In 2014/15 “subject-wise” achievement data are provided at the school level as a total and overall average for English, Nepali, Math, Science, Social and Population-Health-Environment (PHE) (DOC28). However, in 2015/16 “learning achievement” data are:

- provided at the school level for different schools from the previous year as an undefined number;
- overall average and subject “scores” are not provided for PHE; and
- there is no reference or comparison made against achievement in the previous year (DOC29).

Similar inconsistencies appear across consequent annual reports (e.g., missing information about the assessment scoring, timing of the assessments, the assessment sample, results such as score

variance, and different units of analysis such as cluster-, school- and class-level data), making comparisons between years impractical. Such information and its consistent reporting is necessary to ensure interpretation of any result is accurate.

Given these issues, achievement data for Activity-supported schools, outlined in Table 4 below, were compared only between 2016/17 and 2017/18 (DOC16, DOC31).²⁷

Table 4: Activity-supported SBTTP and LIPS schools' student achievement scores (CAS and annual school exam results) in core subjects, 2016-17 and 2017-18

Subject	SBTTP-funded school data		LIPS-funded school data	
	2016-17	2017-18	2016-17 (n = 308)	2017-18 (n = 319)
English	48.7	56.5	66.6	65.4
Nepali	53.6	60.3	66.1	61.3
Mathematics	43.9	57.4	70.7	63.8
Science	50.7	59.1	65.4	61.7
Social Studies	40.9	56.7	60.8	64.0

Results showed a general rise in average subject scores over time within SBTTP schools. However, LIPS programme also collated achievement data based on the schools' annual exam results (DOC27), which summarised achievement between three years (2016 to 2018). The average across the two later years indicate different results; namely a decrease in average scores.

As previously stated, these findings should be treated with caution. Without student numbers, specific grade-level results or error rates, it is difficult to establish if these changes are significant and a cause for concern, or if these changes are simply due to natural student growth patterns or a few student anomalies. More robust and consistent data could also help determine factors contributing to or impacting on changes in achievement over time, as divergent views on such antecedents currently exist. For example, some stakeholders attributed the decrease in scores to LIPS taking the focus away from core curricular subjects (O7, SS7), whereas others noted that embedding literacy in early grades will enable students to access content required for the core subject areas more easily, therefore scores are likely to rise (O7).

Recommendation 5. Further recommendations could include standardising an assessment to make reliable comparisons over time within and across programmes, and between regional and national progress. This may involve, for example, the assessment focus (e.g., fluency versus English), the assessment process (e.g., sampling approaches and procedures), and/or the unit of analysis (e.g., class, subject, school, year level). Further, future reporting could include greater detail so that comparisons and estimates of student progress can be made. Minimally, this would include descriptive statistics (e.g., student numbers relevant to the unit of analysis) and statistical estimates (e.g., average, standard deviation).

²⁷ Note that sample sizes for SBTTP-funded schools' student CAS scores were unavailable.

3.2.6. Achievement scores are mixed

It is unclear whether literacy achievement is progressing. However, Review results indicated potential progress with in-class literacy assessments, and general qualification scores appear to be increasing.

Review results indicated potential progress with in-class literacy assessments, but EGRA scores varied, and therefore it is unclear whether literacy achievement is progressing. Some stakeholders suggested that it was too early to determine the extent to which LIPS, for example, has impacted on learning outcomes (IP4, IP2), whereas others reported notable increases in students' abilities for both SBTTP and LIPS (SS4, SS9, SS10). General qualification scores appear to be increasing.

Literacy assessments implemented by HTN and AFN indicated that students were achieving higher scores and grades. For example, in a recent joint report produced by LIPS and local government staff, reading skills (in Nepali and English) of LIPS students were measured by asking students to write their name, the name of their village, and a sentence in both Nepali and English (DOC15). The assessment was then scored by teachers from 1 (lowest ability) to 9 (highest ability) for each student, and an average score was provided for each class (DOC15). Results demonstrated improved bilingual (Nepali/English) reading skills of LIPS students among the eight of the 11 LIPS schools that submitted data. SBTTP also administered and reported results of a literacy test of English and Nepali languages to measure reading fluency and understanding among 106 students in eight schools in the Khumbu region (DOC30, p. 15). The test contained a passage of 100 words in Nepali and in English with short questions, true/false closed questions, and vocabulary test exercises. The same test was re-administered two months later: results showed the median Nepali fluency move from a "D" grade to a "B" grade, and the median English fluency move from a "C" grade to a "B" grade.

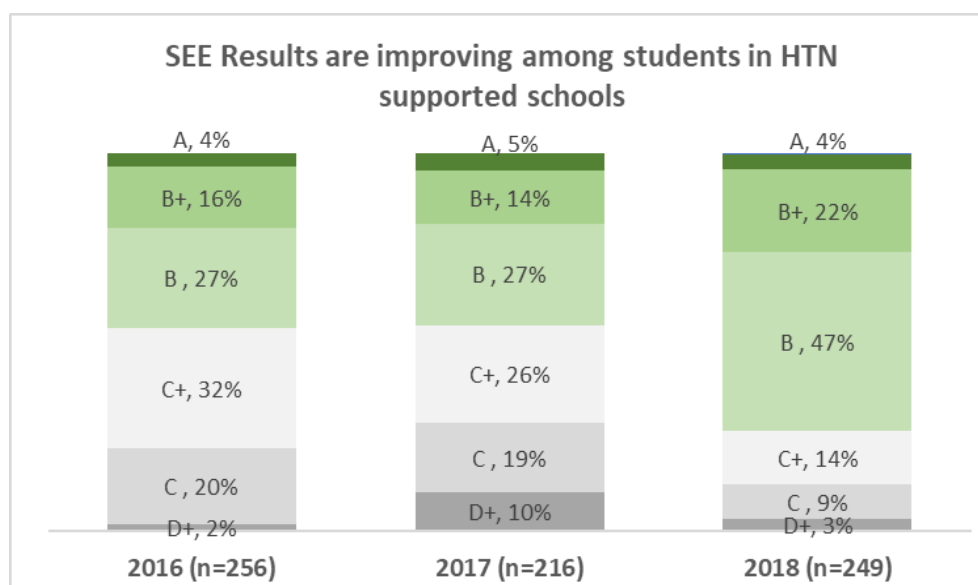
Although the aforementioned assessments are tailored to the two programmes' needs and are simple to complete, they may not reflect an assessment of true literacy (i.e., 'validity'). Standardised assessments, such as the EGRA, may offer more reliable and valid results. EGRA is conducted nationally on a sample basis. However, as the Solukhumbu region is not included annually in Nepal's ERO reports (e.g., DOC20), the LIPS team conducts EGRA using a sample base in the first quarter of the academic year.

LIPS' baseline assessment (DOC23) and a second assessment in 2018 have been conducted to date (DOC24). Reflecting a five percent margin of error across a range of assessments and based on stratified sampling, 104 students in Grade 3 were assessed from the 139 total enrolments in the 11 LIPS schools (DOC25). Grade 3 students being able to recognise *all* Nepali letters and vowels increased from three percent to 19 percent (+/-5 percent) from 2017 to 2018. Otherwise, results showed little change, with all other proportional results within the margin of error (DOC24). For example, small positive changes in Nepali story reading and listening comprehension (and equally small but negative changes in Nepali/English reading comprehension and writing) were found, but it is not possible to say whether these changes are meaningful due to the sampling approach used and because no estimates of variance were provided.

More widely, evidence reviewed shows that qualification attainment is exceeding expectations and remaining stable. In 2016, 95 percent of students achieved at least a C Grade to pass the national Grade 10 examinations or the School Leaving Certificate (SLC), which was significantly higher than the anticipated 38 percent C grade or higher pass rate (DOC11). Additional to this specific success, Khumjung school, the first school built by Sir Edmund Hillary and a school

currently supported by the Activity, was awarded a Government of Nepal prize for the best remote high school in Nepal based on the SLC examination results (DOC11). In 2016, the SLC was replaced by the Secondary Education Examination (SEE). Across Activity-supported schools with data for three years (n = 8), 98 percent of students passed the SEE in 2016, 90 percent passed in 2017, and 97 percent passed in 2018. Even more promising are increasing marks: just under half of Activity-supported students achieved a “B” grade or higher on their SEE between 2016 and 2017. In 2018, this proportion increased to 73 percent. Collectively, these data show a relatively steady high achievement rate, with increasing scores to 2018 (see Figure 3 below).

Figure 3: 2016 – 2018 SEE Results



3.2.7. Successful teaching and learning is being shared within programmes, but is not widely utilised between programmes or shared with the wider region

Progress against this outcome could be stronger. While evidence suggests teaching and learning opportunities are shared within programmes and across programmes to a lesser extent, wider application of successes to other areas of the Solukhumbu is relatively limited. HTN and AFN have expressed an interest and willingness to further integrate learnings from one another into their programmes’ designs and practices, which can then be extended into other regions of the Solukhumbu.

The Review found that teaching and learning opportunities are being shared within programmes, several of which are built into the design of both LIPS and SBTP (see Section 3.1.2). Further, LIPS and SBTP within-programme sharing about teaching and learning successes occurs at least annually during review meetings involving programme representatives, local government officials, teachers, parents, and Head Teachers (DOC14, DOC19, O7). Within-programme SBTP and LIPS monitoring team visits to schools also occur frequently throughout the school year, during which feedback and learning opportunities are shared (DOC14-DOC16, DOC19, HT1, HT3, HT4, IP2).

Across-programme successes were also shared, though to a lesser extent than what is occurring within the programmes. Examples of these shared learnings and successes between LIPS and SBTP include (but are not limited to):

- LIPS resources provided by AFN to SBTTP trainers and inclusion of SBTTP staff in initial LIPS training (HT7);
- SBTTP is developing a training manual that HTN intends to publish and share (HT2);
- a new SBTTP report will be published soon and shared with LIPS and relevant schools (HT2);
- SBTTP has adopted some examples from LIPS, such as training teachers to speak more slowly and use bigger handwriting (HT1); and
- SBTTP personnel attended LIPS' most recent annual meeting alongside other representatives from HT(NZ), HTN, AFN, and the Review Team (O7).

Otherwise, relatively limited sharing of successful learning and teaching practices between the two programmes was reported. Stakeholders considered that a key barrier to this was in part due to competition between LIPS and SBTTP for resourcing (HT1, HT2, HT4, HT7, IP2, NZ1).

Despite this barrier, stakeholders also voiced an interest in increasing integrated learning opportunities between LIPS and SBTTP (HT1-HT3, HT5, IP2). Changes in political contexts (i.e., successful municipality elections) are creating new spaces, new opportunities, and the need to “work in a different way” (HT2, IP2). This will be an important factor for enabling and ensuring successes are documented more widely and more effectively to other areas of the Solukhumbu.

Today, the development argument exists to spread support efforts wider afield: there are lots of other impoverished valleys nearby that don't get the focus because they don't have the world's largest mountain... [but] there's no reason why HT(NZ) can't [go further afield]. (NZ1)

Recommendation 6. It is recommended that future expectations, targets, and actions for integrated sharing and learning opportunities, including how these are brought to other Solukhumbu regions, be discussed and agreed between the three agencies.

3.2.8. Access and educational outcomes are improving

Review findings suggest that progress is being made towards the Activity's long-term outcome “Improved access and educational outcomes for students in Solukhumbu”, with limitations noted.

Activity support provides opportunities for students to access education through having suitable numbers of teachers available (Section 3.1.1.), as well as by providing scholarships to high-achieving students (Section 3.1.4.). Further support for student resources broadens opportunities for students to access the curriculum (Section 3.1.1.) and supports professional development through the provision of quality pedagogical training practices (Section 3.1.2.). Further, the Solukhumbu region exceeds the national average in terms of school attendance, with 68.5 percent of females and 73.0 percent of males aged 5 to 25 attending some level of education in the region, compared to 62.7 percent and 70.4 percent (respectively) in Nepal.^{28,29}

²⁸ National published statistics are summarised throughout this sub-section (Census 2011). Retrieved April 2018 from <https://nepalmap.org/profiles/district-11-solukhumbu/>.

²⁹ Future Activity support could include closer examination of these potential gender differences in school attendance, and how these differences may be impacting on continued access to quality education; see also Section 6.

Educational outcomes are less clear at this stage, with assessment data showing contradictory results (Sections 3.2.5. and 3.2.6.). Literacy rates are at near parity with the national average, equating to 64.2 percent of the Solukhumbu region in comparison to 65.9 percent of Nepal. This is notable, especially given the poverty rate is 2.2 percent higher in this region (25.7 percent of the Solukhumbu population versus 23.5 percent in Nepal).³⁰

Further, qualification attainment (i.e., SEE) is very high in the schools supported (Section 3.2.6.). In the broader context, this result reflects the students that attempt this qualification. Other statistics show 9.7 percent of students in the Solukhumbu region have passed secondary level education; this number is lower than the national average of 11.5 percent. This evidence suggests that keeping individuals in school should be a continued goal for enhancing access to education in the region.

Broader and longer educational outcomes for the Solukhumbu region were being realised; the support, no matter how small, was viewed as contributing to and completing a “life cycle” ultimately leading to sustainability. As discussed in Section 3.2.4., stakeholders mentioned a cause-and-effect cycle of how continued support for education in the area (initially from Sir Edmond Hillary directly, then later from the Hillary Trust and HT[NZ]) had impacted on the area as a whole. Further, several stakeholders who attended Hillary Trust/HT(NZ)-funded schools have gone on to pursue further studies (sometimes through Hillary Trust/HT[NZ] scholarships) in Salleri, Kathmandu, or further abroad, have returned to the Solukhumbu, and are now actively involved in their communities’ governance processes or with implementing partners in the region (HT2, IP2, LO2, LO3). Education offers opportunities for employment, for individuals to support themselves and/or their families, and to contribute to the development of their communities. Access to quality education is believed necessary to achieve goals and sustain this cycle of success.

3.3. Unintended Activity Outcomes

In addition to examining progress made towards the Activity’s intended outputs and outcomes (see Sections 3.1. and 3.2.), unintended Activity outcomes were also noted. These included unanticipated issues or changes (both positive and negative) attributed or related to the Activity, and Activity-relevant outcomes not listed in the current Results Framework. The following section details information regarding these unintended Activity outcomes, including benefits to New Zealand’s relationship with Nepal.

3.3.1. Unintended Activity outcomes

Outcomes not directly intended by the Activity but evidenced by the Review include enhanced student confidence, the impact of resourcing changes, tensions with English-medium schooling, and the unintentional effect of educational activities on migration to the Solukhumbu.

Student confidence. Increased student confidence was consistently cited across the Review. Students involved in the LIPS programme were clearly confident and engaged, each taking turns and talking to each other as well as presenting to the class (O1-O6, O8). Confidence attributed to LIPS was also consistently discussed in interviews and during the LIPS workshop (LO1-LO3, O7, PR1, SS1-SS4, SS6). LIPS students’ confidence was also noted in the Joint Monitoring Report,

³⁰ Sourced from Open Nepal Poverty rates (2001-2011), Retrieved April 2019 from <https://nepalmap.org/profiles/district-11-solukhumbu/>.

where teachers and students were observed to actively participate in the literacy session activities (DOC15). Increases in public speaking outside the classroom was also noted by some stakeholders (LO1, SS8), including at events such as National Park Day and school leaving ceremonies (LO1). Similarly, stakeholders suggested that students of SBTTP-trained teachers showed increased confidence compared to non SBTTP-trained teachers (HT2, SS9).

The impact of resourcing changes. A reduction in resourcing to schools that occurred over the current GFA funding period is having more of an impact than intended. Rationale for the deduction was discussed in the 2014 - 2017 Activity Design Document (DOC1), where HT(NZ) indicated a significant shift in funding away from the supply of “goods” (e.g., stationery) towards the development and empowerment of local people in order to bring a more sustainable lens to the work and reduce a culture of dependency (DOC1, p. 4).

The 2015 review of HT(NZ)’s education programme also discussed resourcing goods and stationery within the context of donor dependency (DOC3), stating that stationery provision was good “branding” for HT(NZ) but had limited impact on “actual learning outcomes” (DOC3, p. 13). One of the 2015 review’s recommendations was to phase stationery provision out “as soon as possible” and replace it with teaching and learning materials to support LIPS (DOC3, p. 30), a programme that had not yet been designed or implemented. Critics of the review and its recommendations (including the consequent decrease in resourcing) suggest that the review failed to take the local Nepali and Solukhumbu context into appropriate account (HT2, HT4, HT6).

As discussed in Section 3.1.1., the Review has found that learning resources remain of high value in the Solukhumbu. The Review also suggests that a process for need identification be undertaken in order to more accurately determine what regions in the Solukhumbu do/do not have better access to learning resources. Once school and regional needs are better understood and a robust evidence base has been developed, a plan for distributing and/or phasing out supplies can be discussed and agreed between relevant agencies.

English-medium in Nepali schools: A continued debate. As noted in the Activity design document (2014), “*the introduction of English-medium into the upper schools continues to be a challenge and the cause of much debate*” (DOC1, p. 4). The Review found this continues to be the case, despite the central government’s mandate that all schools teach in English from 2015 (DOC1).

The tension between central government guidelines and difficulties implementing the guidelines in the Solukhumbu was discussed by some stakeholders (HT2, SS9, IP1). Activity-funded support such as LIPS was viewed as a positive way of helping embed English-medium instruction in government schools (IP1, PR1), though other stakeholders considered that literacy in Nepali was needed before literacy in another language could be successfully taught (O7). Overall, stakeholders were generally in favour of English-medium schooling, saying that students were likely more able to speak English because of the policy change (PR1, PR2, SS6). English-language abilities were in turn seen to offer students more of a competitive advantage at the national level, and the English-medium schooling some students have received in the Solukhumbu was viewed as comparable to the instruction they would receive at boarding schools in Kathmandu (SS6).

The effect of educational activities on migration to the Solukhumbu. Unintended outcomes of support for education-related activities in the Solukhumbu and its impact on migration to the region were also noted. As mentioned in Section 3.2.4., stakeholders discussed how continued support for education in the area (initially from Sir Edmund Hillary directly, then later from the

Hillary Trust) had caused an increase in Solukhumbu's reputation for quality of teaching and educational opportunities that is said to be attracting migrants from other regions to the area (LO2). In turn, stakeholders suggested this may be causing overcrowding in schools and hostels; unavailability of teaching and learning resources; growing concerns over loss of cultural values and traditional ways of living; and the migration of wealthier students to Kathmandu (IP2, LO2, HT2). Some stakeholders voiced the desire to bring all students back to the Solukhumbu (LO2), and to hold the region up as a good community example for the other regions (IP2). One stakeholder suggested that migration issues could be curbed by enhancing quality education in lower Solu region, though this was acknowledged as something that might go against HTN's historical interest in continuing to provide aid the upper Khumbu region (IP2, HT2). Ultimately, the high quality of education in the upper Khumbu area was seen as a drawcard for many, who have chosen to move from lower regions of Nepal to the area in the hopes of their children receiving a better quality education, and that support should be focused on areas where aid is "really needed" (IP2).

3.3.2. Benefits to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal

The reputation built initially Sir Edmund Hillary's Hillary Trust has continued through HT(NZ) and HTN activities. These agencies' work was seen to be making a "big impact with limited resources", and was considered a core part of New Zealand's foreign policy work with Nepal.

As a strategic partner of MFAT's (NZ2, NZ3), several stakeholders mentioned that a key difference between HT(NZ) and other NGOs in the area is the concerted, long-standing history that exists between it and the Solukhumbu's beneficiaries, and the fact that HT(NZ) doesn't advertise or market its work: it is seen as "just doing" the work and as being trustworthy and serious in its intention to increase the sustainability of its work into the long-term (LO2, IP3, IP4, HT2, NZ1, HT3).

Further, stakeholders appeared to naturally associate Himalayan Trust funding, both from HT(NZ) and HTN, with Sir Edmund, his legacy, and – by association – New Zealand more widely. One stakeholder described how "Ed was a loyal friend who came back year after year," who went on to say it was "great to see [HT(NZ)] bringing Helen Clark out to help celebrate [the centennial]." (NZ1). "Unequivocally, it must be said that the HT(NZ) and the legacy of Ed is the absolute core of the [Nepal-New Zealand] relationship and the envy of many" (NZ1). "His work has created an enduring legacy, and keeps New Zealand's spirit alive in Nepal" (NZ3). Stakeholders further suggested that Sir Ed's legacy is "a key part" of New Zealand's foreign policy with Nepal (NZ1, NZ3).

HT(NZ) and HTN were said to be making a "big impact with limited resources. They are credible and reliable, and have played a critical role in maintaining the bilateral relationship [between New Zealand and Nepal]: they are keeping the profile of New Zealand alive in Nepal" (NZ3). Of MFAT's work in Nepal, one stakeholder described the agency as "hitting about its weight" and was impressed by what was being accomplished, saying that the \$350k offered to HT(NZ) was being "well spent on the ground" (NZ1).

3.4. Local Activity Ownership Is Growing

Due largely to drastic and recent shifts in Nepal's political context, local Activity ownership was seen to be growing rapidly. New authority and responsibilities now afforded local municipality officials offer a range of opportunities to delegate and enhance ownership and, ultimately, sustainability in Activity-funded educational support.

HT(NZ) is becoming increasingly selective of the school communities it works with, using the criteria of need and willingness to learn and change over and above the criteria of past patronage (DOC11, p. 4). This change, initiated from a review of the secondary training programme which showed weak leadership and a lack of support from some Head Teachers was limiting the long-term impact of any training, includes a focus on developing local ownership in the Activity (DOC11).

Due largely to drastic and recent shifts in Nepal's political context, local Activity ownership was seen to be growing rapidly. New authority and responsibilities now afforded local municipality officials the ability to offer a range of opportunities to delegate and enhance ownership and, ultimately, sustainability in Activity-funded educational support (SS2, PR1, L03, IP3, HT2, IP2). The Review found support for local ownership of a variety of education initiatives, including (but not limited to):

- working more collaboratively with NGOs supporting local communities in the development of long-term strategies to ensure local government officials have a strong say in how to best allocate NGO funds (L03, IP3, HT2, HT3, NZ1, NZ3) and coordinating and integrating overlapping teaching/learning programmes such as LIPS and SBTTP (HT1);
- influencing and enhancing school governance via SMC interactions and oversight (IP4, L02);
- increasing authority to transfer government teachers in/out of school clusters (L01, PR1, IP1);
- the ability to approve or deny government teachers' salaried amounts (L02);
- the authority to contract trained LIPS/SBTTP teachers to stay at specific schools for a minimum agreed period of time (L01);
- the ability to help better support and sustain literacy achievement through local government funding channels beyond Grades 1 to 3 (PR1);
- encouraging development of scholarships targeting specific occupations that are needed within the community (L03);
- the ability to "phase out" non-performing, non pro-active Head Teachers and Assistant Head Teachers (L02);
- offering teacher training incentives for secondary students' pass rates, marks, and/or provision of additional classes outside of regular school hours to improve both teacher performance and student achievements; incentives currently being used by local government include free electricity, extra blankets, etc. (L02); and
- identifying local education priorities and securing the right teams to design and deliver the work (IP2).

One stakeholder suggested that “*all development agencies are struggling*” to figure out how to “capacitate” local governments, which are desperate for help as more responsibilities and accountabilities are devolved to them (NZ1). As such, future tensions are likely to build as central government realises the extent to which the power balance is shifting to local governments, and actively fights to keep control of international funding (NZ1). Diplomatic colleagues are concerned about money becoming more centralised over time (NZ1, NZ3), which could be exacerbated the more the international community concentrates its efforts on local governance support in the Solukhumbu (NZ1).

Corruption also remains a concern (NZ1), although there was hope this could be overcome with time (NZ1). Local officials were seen to be untainted by corruption that “plagued predecessors”, and were considered motivated, impressive, and “the way of the future” (NZ1). “*MFAT should be comforted to know that HT(NZ)’s work is being signed off by local government*” (HT3).

3.5. Future Phase of the Activity

The following section outlines key themes and stakeholders’ perceptions of what a future phase of the Activity could include (see Section 6).

Enhanced collaboration between implementing partners and local government and within governance operations. Stakeholders voiced an interest in enhancing partnership-based approaches and practices. This included suggestions for increasing collaboration between implementing partners and local government (NZ1, NZ3), such as encouraging NGOs as to which schools do/do not need support, and why (HT5); and supporting local municipalities to build work plans in collaboration with NGOs working in the area to help identify and address local issues (LIP1, LO3, IP4). Capacity development was a strong Review theme that included creating new support channels to newly elected officials for project and programme management (IP1, IP3, LO3, HT2) and encouraging local female representatives, particularly due to New Zealand’s strong history with women leaders (NZ3). Ultimately, interviewees believed future Activity phases should involve enhanced controls, processes, and monitoring of jointly-agreed outcomes so that accountability remains firmly in place, while funders become more accountable to municipalities themselves (LO3, NZ3). Future changes to governance operations were also considered, including the pros and cons of having multiple delivery partners (HT2, HT3, HT5, HT6, HT7) and altering funding arrangements between agencies.³¹

A renewed focus on teacher certification processes. A key consideration for future Activity phases could involve a wider, systematic focus to ensure government-trained teachers are more prepared to apply and implement conceptual methods taught as part of their certification process (IP3). The current system was seen as not meeting the needs of government teachers by not providing long-enough practicum or in-house training placements (HT2). To curb the existing over-reliance on NGOs and to provide qualified teachers in more remote areas such as the

³¹ Some benefits discussed of having multiple delivery partners included fostering a ‘healthy competition’ and variety by keeping “everyone a bit honest and on their toes”; and enabling non-traditional partners to innovate and be included (NZ1, HT3). Some challenges of multiple delivery partners were also mentioned, such as spreading funding too thinly to make an impact; ensuring trust and accountability remains strong while ensuring the primary partner (i.e., HTNZ) can still “keep tabs” on all implementing agencies involved; and additional administration and management costs due to additional contracting agreements and funding arrangements (HT3).

Solukhumbu, future support could consider contracting teachers to go to a teacher's college to obtain their Teacher Commission Exam Certification when existing contracts are completed (HT2, L02).

A more targeted, equity-focused approach. An enhanced focus on equity in the future would align with government priorities, particularly those outlined in the Government of Nepal's School Sector Development Plan (SSDP). Equity is a core dimension of the SSDP to ensure that *"the education system is inclusive"* and has a focus on *"reducing disparities among and between groups having the lowest levels of access and participation"* (DOC18, p. vi). Review findings suggest that some families in the Solukhumbu are financially able send their children to private schools in Kathmandu, leaving families with lower incomes and their children as those who access and participate Activity-funded schools (HT4, L02). Further development of an equity-focused approach should be enacted through close collaboration with municipalities for application across Activity-relevant components of the programme such as (but not limited to):

- relocating and/or recruiting Activity-funded teachers across schools to create more equitable teachers-to-student ratios, or across regions where municipalities' tax revenues are/are not yet supporting teachers' salaries (HT3, L02);
- placing a heavier emphasis on financial need for scholarship criteria and selection processes (HT4, HT5);
- providing hostel support for students living away from parents/caregivers (who otherwise walk long distances to/from school; L01, IP4); and
- shifting support for teacher, classroom, and/or student materials from some areas to others (HT3).

4. LESSONS LEARNED

Key lessons learned from the Review to inform future funding support for the Activity are related to awareness and adaptability to Nepal's shifting political landscape; use of standardised achievement measures; teacher certification; the New Zealand-Nepal relationship; support for early childhood education; locally-based training programmes; and infrastructure support. Lessons learned can be summarised as follows:

- Nepal's political landscape is shifting rapidly. All Activity stakeholders (MFAT, HT[NZ], HTN, AFN) are considering how current and future work can best adapt and prepare for this quickly-transforming political context. This includes alignment of local-provincial-central government policies and practices; identifying roles and responsibilities for progressing education strategies and guidelines; and working with local government to support capability and capacity development.
- Despite the central government policy requiring its use, standardised measures of student achievement such as CAS have not been adopted ubiquitously across classrooms in Nepal for various reasons. Local municipalities may adopt and implement such measures in future.
- Teacher certification remains a formidable barrier in the Solukhumbu, and current activities do not appear to have strong alignment between Activity-funded teacher certification and government policy. Some stakeholders suggested this could be addressed through closer collaboration with REED Nepal (an NGO that is government-certified to provide teacher training) and the DOE as the body responsible for government teacher in-service training, course design, materials development and training 'master trainers'.
- The long-standing history that exists between New Zealand and Nepal continues to influence relationships between HT(NZ) and its in-country partners. The majority of stakeholders considered that continued acknowledgement and reference to the importance of this historical relationship, and retaining a focus on developing sustainable projects relevant to local contexts, will help ensure ongoing successes.
- Centrally-based teacher training programmes were considered less effective than locally-based (at the school- or classroom level) training initiatives.
- Insufficient infrastructure for female toilet and sanitary facilities was observed across most schools visited. Although this observation falls outside of the Review's scope, it is nonetheless an important consideration for future development work in the region. A focus on access to cleaner and safer sanitation that takes the needs of women and girls into account will help promote gender equality.

5. REVIEW CONCLUSIONS

The support being provided by HT(NZ) as part of the Activity has delivered on outputs and made demonstrable progress towards many of its desired outcomes. Support for the Activity clearly remains relevant, particularly given the context of the Solukhumbu region. For instance, less than 10 percent of students in the Solukhumbu region had a secondary qualification.³² Nevertheless, students from Activity-funded schools are achieving higher grades in the most recent qualification assessments, and nearly all are attaining a qualification. This suggests that the support being provided to the education sector is working, providing quality education to those that stay in school. Equitable access is a key theme from the Review, and the focus on access (and continued access) remains important.

Resources remain valuable in the Solukhumbu. Provision of materials will remain a challenge, given transport challenges unique to the region and the associated costs of resources for families that earn relatively little. Further, HT(NZ) and its partners enable access to education for local people through the provision of privately-funded teachers' salaries. Access to quality education is also provided through two professional development programmes, both of which were believed to contribute to teachers' practices within the classroom. The evidence showed teachers adopting a range of techniques from the programmes, building confidence among both teachers and students.

Nevertheless, there remain significant needs in terms of supporting local teaching practice. Given the unavailability of assessment data, it's unclear if students are progressing in terms of literacy and overall achievement. Further professional development may need to focus on teaching practice known to have the greatest impact on student achievement, in addition to promote systematic and formative assessments to empower students and teachers in addition to funders.

Scholarships enable continued access for high-achieving students, and could provide even more opportunity to support access to those who need it most or who will contribute to the overall regional development goals.

Some contextual factors currently hinder stated educational goals in the immediate future. High teacher-turnover means that the current model of professional development cannot realise its goals, unless this is addressed. The recent decentralisation of government functions and power means some relative uncertainty while the systems are developed and mature. The change also affords opportunities for the educational support to empower its citizens and enable the longer-term goals for its people.

³² Census, 2011. Retrieved April 2018, <https://nepalmap.org/profiles/district-11-solukhumbu/>.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided to further enhance the Activity's effectiveness in enabling students' access to quality educational opportunities in the Solukhumbu.

1. **Continue to fund teachers' salaries beyond 2019 until local governance and management processes are more fully designed, embedded, and implemented** (Section 3.1.1.).
2. **Build an equity-based approach** by developing an educational strategy and/or needs analysis led by local municipalities to ensure the right support is channelled to the right schools (Sections 3.1.1. and 3.2.4.); enabling further study for those most in need and/or to better meet regional workforce needs through scholarship recipients (Sections 3.1.4. and 3.2.3.); increasing future resource allocation based on need (Section 3.1.1.); continuing to fund teacher salaries in areas where teachers are most needed (Section 3.1.1.); and considering how gender differences in school attendance is impacting on access to quality education (Section 3.2.8.).
3. **Increase collaboration between implementing partners (HTN and AFN), their respective teacher training programmes (SBTTP and LIPS), and local government** to enhance teachers' professional development opportunities, parent engagement (Section 3.1.3.), and the overall effectiveness of both programmes (Section 3.1.2.).
4. **Provide relevant resources and an enhanced focus on learning objectives tailored to specific age groups** to maximise learning opportunities for and engagement with young people (Section 3.2.1.).
5. **Support school practices that foster and demonstrate student achievement.** The provision of quality education is key to student achievement, therefore support for this objective could include:
 - a. **ensuring collaboration between all Activity partners** to best utilise their collective expertise, better identify and address M&E gaps and opportunities for M&E alignment, and to further build local and in-country capacity and shared processes for learning (Sections 3.1.2. and 0.);
 - b. **continuing to provide school staff assistance** to improve pedagogical practice based on evidence-based, best practice strategies and principles relevant to the learner and wider literacy and student achievement goals (Sections 3.1.2., 3.1.5., 3.2.1., and 3.2.2.) while addressing broader contextual needs, such as teachers' English language skills, local literacy skills, and use of ICT (Sections 3.2.1. and 3.2.2.);
 - c. **supporting partners to develop and use evidence bases for programmes' design and function (Section 3.1.5.), as well as for learning and improvement processes** through use of consistent and robust assessment practices within classrooms to inform student and teacher reflection, review, and planning (Sections 0., 3.2.5., and 3.2.6.); and
 - d. **encouraging partners to compare and report student progress in more detail,** including the assessment process, the unit of analysis, regional progress versus national progress, and/or progress over time against expected growth (Section 3.2.5.).

6. **Identify realistic and achievable opportunities for strengthening local ownership of education while retaining the Activity's focus on schools and students.** Nepal is experiencing significant political changes which will impact on the education system. Further support for this change could include:
- a. **supporting and building local municipality capacity and capability** (Section 0.);
 - b. **facilitating development of an agreed Action Plan(s)** between local government officials, implementing partners, and schools' SMCs (Sections 0. and 3.2.4.);
 - c. **establishing shared expectations, targets and actions between education partners (HTN and AFN) and local municipalities, including sharing of successes and learning opportunities** (Section 3.2.7.);
 - d. **collaborating with local municipalities to determine how scholarships may be awarded** to contribute to regional workforce needs (Section 3.2.3.); and
 - e. **collecting and collating evidence through more systematic assessment practices** (Sections 0. and 3.2.6.) to ensure alignment between local and central government curriculum and practices, and to enable enhanced accountability and learning opportunities.

APPENDIX ONE – TERMS OF REFERENCE



Terms of Reference:

Review of Himalayan Trust, Quality Education in the Solukhumbu 2015-2019, Nepal

Overview

This document specifies the Terms of Reference (TOR) for the review of Himalayan Trust, Quality Education in the Solukhumbu 2015-2019, Nepal.

This TOR has been developed to obtain proposals to meet MFAT's requirements for the selection of an independent and suitably qualified contractor. The final description of the Services that will be included in the contract will be confirmed through negotiation with the successful contractor.

Background

The outcome of 'Quality Education in the Solukhumbu 2015-2019' is to 'ensure children of the Solukhumbu region in Nepal receive an improved quality of education through teacher training, the provision of educational materials and resources, school management training, infrastructure improvements and the provision of scholarships for further education'. This Activity contributes to: literacy improvement; repairing and improving school infrastructure; providing education materials to 65 schools; providing scholarships for approximately 100 students; and providing training for teachers at 33 schools, including training 100 teachers in English medium education.

Review purpose

This review will be used by MFAT to:

- determine the effectiveness of the Activity in improving the quality of education
- to identify any unintended outcomes from the Activity – including benefits accruing to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal
- to inform decisions on whether to proceed with a second phase of the Activity and if so whether to continue with the current direction or consider changes that would improve the effectiveness of the Activity.

Review objectives, criteria and questions

Objectives

Objective 1: to examine the progress being made to date in achieving the Activity's outputs and short and medium term outcomes (Effectiveness)

- What progress has been made in achieving intended outcomes and outputs?
- What factors are enhancing or constraining progress towards intended outcomes?
- What unintended outcomes are evident as a result of the Activity (positive and negative) - particularly benefits to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal?

Objective 2: Future design and support – to identify any changes (recommendations) that would likely deliver improved and sustainable outcomes from a possible second phase of the Activity

- To what extent is local ownership of the Activity developing?
- Could a second phase of the Activity build on progress to date and continue to deliver sustainable outcomes? (recommendations for design)

Review scope

The scope of the review will include:

- the time period the evaluation will cover is 2014 to 2018
- its geographic focus Solukhumbu, Nepal
- the target groups are students and parents, teachers and principals in Solukhumbu, Nepal

Engagement with key stakeholders

In support of a consultative and participatory approach, the reviewer will be expected to engage with a number of key stakeholders. These stakeholders could include:

- partner country governments (local and national officials)
- MFAT staff in New Dehli and New Zealand’s Honorary Consul in Kathmandu
- Development partners, including local implementing partners
- target population in the local area

The results of the review will be reported and disseminated to MFAT and other key stakeholders.

Review deliverables

Anticipated key deliverables and delivery dates are as follows:

No.	Outputs	Description	Due date
1	Review plan	Documentation review, and finalised review plan	Early March 2019
2	Field work complete	Field work complete and initial findings shared with stakeholders (including MFAT and HT(NZ))	Early April 2019
3	Draft report	Preparation of the draft report and submission to MFAT*	Mid April 2019
4	Final report	Submission of Final Report taking into consideration feedback from MFAT and HT(NZ)	Early May 2019

*Draft report also shared with HT(NZ) for comment.

In addition, progress reports (frequency and format to be agreed) may be required.

The above timeframe is indicative only and respondents' proposals should reflect their own availability, including the possibility of completing the review sooner.

Respondents should submit a proposal and budget for Phases One and Two.

The Activity Manager will approve the review plan. This will reconfirm the delivery of all or some of the proposed Phase Two, or none if, for whatever reason, MFAT decides not to proceed.

Review design

In proposing a review design, the reviewer should identify a simple and straight forward approach, methodology and tools to generate credible evidence that corresponds to the review's purpose and the questions being asked.

We envisage that this review will include a short documentation review and apply a mixed or multi-method approach, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, in undertaking fieldwork. This will increase the credibility and validity of the results.

The proposed review design should include how the reviewer will manage ethics in relation to interviewing students and seeking parental consent.

The final design will be confirmed in the review plan and in consultation between the reviewer and MFAT.

Relevant documents and data will be provided to the successful reviewer. See Appendix B for a list of key documents along with other relevant information and data.

Culturally responsive methodological approaches

There are a range of world-views and we encourage the use of culturally appropriate review designs, methods and approaches to ensure the evaluation contributes to the body of knowledge of the country and its people which are the focus of the evaluation.

The review plan

The reviewer will develop a review plan (using or being guided by MFAT's evaluation plan).

The review plan should include the review design. It will also include: a stakeholder analysis; an outline of the quality and ethical issues to be managed as part of the review; a schedule identifying key deliverables and timeline; identification of the risks and how they will be mitigated.

It is anticipated that the review plan will identify how the information needs can be met through current documentation and what information gaps, if any, will need to be filled through fieldwork including in-country visits. Data collection methods, for example, interviews (structured and semi-structured), focus groups, direct observation and case studies should be outlined.

The Activity's Results Framework (program logic, logic model) should form the basis of the review.

The review may be constrained by availability of key stakeholders and this should be considered in the design described in the review plan.

The review Steering Group will approve the evaluation plan, following any required amendments. The evaluation plan must be approved prior to the commencement of any field work or other substantive work.

The review will be constrained by the following and these should be considered in the design:

This review is a light-touch review which needs to be completed in a short space of time. The review plan should factor this in.

Reporting requirements

The review report must as a minimum meet quality standards as set out in Appendix C.

As this is an evidence-based review, the findings, conclusions and recommendations must be based on clear evidence presented in a way that allows readers to form their own views on the validity and reliability of the findings, including assessing the vested interests of sources.

Where there is conflicting evidence or interpretations, the report should note the differences and justify the findings.

Before submission to MFAT, the reviewer should ensure the final draft of the report is accurate, complete, and meets a good standard of English.

The draft review report will be reviewed by MFAT staff and stakeholders. Further work or revision of the report may be required if it is considered that the report does not meet the requirements of this TOR, if there are factual errors, if the report is incomplete, or if it is not of an acceptable standard.

MFAT will develop a management response to the review's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

Reviewer

We envisage that the review will be undertaken by an independent contractor.

The attributes (knowledge, skills, experience) required of the reviewer include:

- Evaluation expertise and experience, including undertaking development evaluations.
- Knowledge and/or experience of Nepal.
- Relevant technical experience and knowledge in education in a development context.
- Appropriate research, report writing and presentation skills.

Evaluation principles and standards

Consistent with the New Zealand Aid Programme evaluation principles, the review will deliver useful, credible findings relevant to the purpose of the review. The recommendations will be pragmatic and actionable, and presented in a way that promotes learning.

The reviewer will be transparent and independent. They must have no vested interest in the outcomes of the evaluation and be independent of those responsible for policy making, design, delivery and management of the development intervention.

All review processes and outputs are required to be robust and independent (carried out in a way that avoids any adverse effects of political or organisational influence on the findings) and transparent (process open and understood by all parties).

Quality standards

A list of MFAT quality standards for evaluations is presented in Appendix C. These are based on the OECD-Development Assistance Committee (DAC) set of quality standards for development evaluation.

When conducting the evaluation, the evaluation team will comply with the MFAT's Code of Conduct.

Evaluation principles and standards

The evaluation will be commissioned by MFAT and the reviewer will be accountable for its performance to MFAT.

The evaluation will be governed by a Steering Group. The Steering Group will ensure the evaluation is fit-for-purpose and is delivered in line with the agreed evaluation plan.

Key responsibilities of the Steering Group will include agreeing the Terms of Reference, evaluation plan and evaluation reports. Details of the purpose, roles and responsibilities are outlined in the Steering Group's Terms of Reference.

The Activity Manager, Ryan Brown, is responsible for day-to-day management and administration of the evaluation. Their responsibilities include contracting; briefing the evaluation team; managing feedback from reviews of the draft report; and liaising with the reviewer throughout to ensure the review is being undertaken as agreed.

Transparency

It is MFAT policy to make evaluation reports publicly available (e.g. on the MFAT website) unless there is prior agreement not to do so. Any information that could prevent the release of an evaluation report under the Official Information or Privacy Acts should not be included in the report.

Ownership of information

All the key deliverables and the data/information collected will become the property of MFAT.

APPENDIX TWO – DOCUMENT AND DATA REFERENCES

1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (authored by Himalayan Trust New Zealand), no date. *Activity Design Document Himalayan Trust Quality Education in Solukhumbu, Nepal (1 July 2014 to 30 June 2017)*.
2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2014. *Appraisal of Activity Design for Himalayan Trust, Quality Education in Solukhumbu*.
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5. Himalayan Trust, no date. *Himalayan Trust 2015 Review*.
6. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016. *Appraisal of Activity Design for Improving Education Outcomes and Access in Solukhumbu, Nepal*.
7. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2017. *Activity Progress Report: Improving Education Outcomes and Access in Solukhumbu, Nepal*.
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9. Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2016. *Variation 1 Himalayan Trust, Quality Education in Solukhumbu 2015-2017*.
10. Himalayan Trust, no date. *Himalayan Trust 2016 Review*.
11. Himalayan Trust New Zealand, 2016. *Activity Completion Report: Himalayan Trust*.
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17. Himalayan Trust Nepal, 2016. *Details of stationary supplied in 2016*.
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22. Action for Nepal, 2019. *LIPS annual review and planning workshop 2019 (presentation slides)*.
23. Action for Nepal, 2017. *Baseline report 2017: LIPS programme*.
24. Action for Nepal, 2019. *Summary assessment_BLS2017 vs LA2018*.
25. Action for Nepal, 2019. *Sample size and Sample Calculation_YrIII (July'18)*.
26. Action for Nepal, 2018. *Himalayan Trust New Zealand: Monitoring and Evaluation Report Year III*.
27. Action for Nepal, 2019. *Schools Annual Assessment Achievement Analysis*.
28. Himalayan Trust Nepal, 2015. *Annual Report 2014/15: Integrated development of Health, Education, Environment and Culture in the Himalayan Region of Solukhumbu District*.
29. Himalayan Trust Nepal, 2016. *Annual Report 2015/16: Integrated development of Health, Education, Environment and Culture in the Himalayan Region of Solukhumbu District*.
30. Himalayan Trust Nepal, 2017. *Annual Progress Report 2016/2017: Integrated development of Health, Education, Environment and Culture in the Himalayan Region of Solukhumbu District*.
31. Himalayan Trust Nepal, 2018. *Annual Progress Report 2017/18: Integrated development of Health, Education, Environment and Culture in the Himalayan Region of Solukhumbu District*.

APPENDIX THREE – INTERVIEW GUIDE TEMPLATE

Context

C1. Describe the key objectives of the Activity.

C2. Describe the role the Himalayan Trust New Zealand versus its implementing partners (e.g., Himalayan Trust Nepal, Action for Nepal, REED etc.) play in supporting the Activity. Why was the GFA developed with HT(NZ) rather than in-country partners?

C3. In what ways does MFAT support HT(NZ) and its implementing partners in delivering the Activity?

Effectiveness

1. Please provide an overview of any progress made towards intended Activity outputs since 2014.

Answers first, then prompt:

1.1 Teaching and learning resources provided

1.2 Teacher and Head Teacher professional development

1.3 Parent and community engagement

1.4 Scholarship Programme delivered

1.5 Monitoring and evaluation systems in place (INCLUDING student/parent feedback)

2. Please provide an overview of any progress made towards intended Activity outcomes since 2014.

Answers first, then prompt:

2.1 Students engaged in meaningful activities

2.2 Head Teachers/teachers apply new techniques [planning, teaching, assessment, management]

2.3 Community and parent engagement in schools

2.4 Further study

2.5 Improved plans/reports

2.6 Abilities in core curriculum subjects

2.7 Skills, qualifications

2.8 Documentation for wider Solukhumbu region

3. In what areas has most progress been made and why?

4. In what areas has least progress been made and why?

5. What factors have helped progress?

6. What factors have hindered progress?
7. Describe any changes in parent engagement you may have observed or heard about in the Solukhumbu since 2014.
8. Describe any changes in local ownership you may have observed or heard about in the Solukhumbu since 2014.
9. Describe any **unintended** Activity-relevant changes you may have observed or heard about since 2014.
10. In what ways, if any, does the Activity impact on Nepal's relationship with New Zealand?

Recommendations

11. What changes, if any, would you recommend **to improve** the Activity's intended outcomes?
12. What changes, if any, would you recommend **to sustain** the Activity's intended outcomes?
13. What changes, if any, would you recommend to improve enhanced partners' delivery of the Activity?
14. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the Activity to improve future relations between New Zealand and Nepal?
15. What changes – if any—in future support from MFAT to the education sector is needed in the Solukhumbu and why?

Answers first, the prompt teacher training, provision of education materials and resources, school management training, infrastructure improvements, scholarships

Conclusion

16. Do you have any other thoughts or comments about the Activity we have not already covered today?

HIMALAYAN TRUST QUALITY EDUCATION REVIEW

Background, Purpose and Methods:

The Quality Education in the Solukhumbu 2015–2019 Programme (the Activity) aims to ensure children of the Solukhumbu region in Nepal receive an improved quality of education through teacher training, the provision of educational materials and resources, school management training, infrastructure improvements, and the provision of scholarships for further education. A review of the Activity was undertaken from February to May 2019 to determine its effectiveness; identify unintended outcomes (particularly benefits to New Zealand's relationship with Nepal); inform decisions on whether to proceed with a second phase of the Activity; and consider the current direction or potential changes that would improve the Activity's effectiveness.

The Review approach included a document and data review, individual and small group interviews, and classroom and workshop observations. A thematic analysis of all data collected was undertaken, including identification of initial findings and recommendations via a sense-making session with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Himalayan Trust New Zealand.

Findings:

1 TEACHING AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Activity-funded teacher and learning resources remain valuable in the Solukhumbu. HT(NZ) and its implementing partners were found to enable improved access to education for local people through the provision of privately-funded teachers' salaries. Activity-funded teacher salaries were found to continue to fill a resourcing gap in the region. Local government officials have expressed the desire to manage teacher allocation and funding within their municipalities, but cannot do so until governance and management processes are more fully designed, embedded, and implemented.

2 TEACHER AND HEAD TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Literacy Improvement Project in Solukhumbu (LIPS) implemented by Action for Nepal (AFN), and the School-Based Teacher Training Programme (SBTTP), run by Himalayan Trust Nepal (HTN), are two Activity-funded programmes that focus on improving student achievement and literacy through teacher and Head Teacher training and development. Elements of both programmes were seen to align with underpinning theories of and practices for best practice literacy development. The success of both programmes was seen to hinge upon effective engagement between local, provincial, and national government.

3 PARENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholders reported that engagement between the schools, parents, and communities was continuing to develop for both Activity-funded initiatives (LIPS and SBTTP). These initiatives were seen to enhance parents' own learning, awareness of the value of education, and responsibility for the role they play in their child's learning activities.

4 SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME DELIVERY

The Scholarship Programme is supporting high-achieving secondary and tertiary students and is widely valued. Although minimal, what anecdotal evidence was available suggested that Activity-funded scholarships enabled and supported further educational opportunities for scholars.

5 MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

Changes in focus, in addition to broader issues such as shifts in the political context and unsystematic and/or infrequent use of existing standardised assessments, make tracking progress against intended outcomes over time challenging for Activity partner.

6 STUDENTS ENGAGED IN MEANINGFUL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Students in LIPS classrooms were effectively engaged in and practicing reading, writing, and/or listening skills. LIPS classrooms also provided many opportunities for language learning and literacy through its space and resources.

7 TEACHERS ARE LEARNING AND ADOPTING PROGRAMME TECHNIQUES

Activity-funded teachers are embedding differentiated learning activities and activities that focus on children's interests. The design of both LIPS and SBTTP promotes child-centred learning. Assessments were not being used to promote students' self-regulated learning.

8 STUDENTS' PURSUIT OF STUDIES

Anecdotal evidence suggests the Scholarship Programme supports students' further studies. Further, interviews suggested that scholars had successfully completed their funded studies, but tracking individual scholars beyond their completion remains a challenge.

9 IMPROVED PLANS AND REPORTS

HT(NZ) produced and contributed to a number of plans and reports over the funding period that were Activity-specific. Improvements in SBTTP and LIPS programmes' reporting outputs were also noted.

10 STUDENTS' ABILITIES IN CORE CURRICULAR SUBJECTS

It was unclear whether progress in this area was being made, and whether any change identified was meaningful. Review results showed mixed trends, quantitative details were missing, and the outcomes, assessments, and reporting approaches have changed over the years.

11 LITERACY ACHIEVEMENT SCORES

It was unclear whether literacy achievement is progressing. Some potential progress with in-class literacy assessments was noted, but scores using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) varied. Some stakeholders suggested that it was too early to determine the extent to which LIPS has impacted on learning outcomes, whereas others reported notable increases in students' abilities for both SBTTP and LIPS. More widely, qualification attainment is exceeding expectations and remaining stable.



12 SUCCESSFUL TEACHING AND LEARNING DOCUMENTED FOR APPLICATION

Teaching and learning opportunities are being shared within programmes, several of which are built into the design of both LIPS and SBTTP. Across-programme successes were also shared to a lesser extent. Stakeholders suggested that competition between LIPS and SBTTP may be acting as a barrier for enhanced sharing opportunities, though stakeholders voiced an interest in increasing integrated learning opportunities.

13 IMPROVED ACCESS AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Broader and longer educational outcomes for the Solukhumbu region are being realised, and support was seen to be contributing to and completing a 'life cycle' ultimately leading to sustainability. Access to quality education is believed necessary to achieve and sustain this educational life cycle.

14 UNINTENDED ACTIVITY OUTCOMES

Unintended Activity outcomes included enhanced student confidence; the larger-than-anticipated impact of resourcing changes on schools; how the Activity supports embedding English-medium instruction in schools; and the unintentional effect of Activity-relevant activities on migration to the Solukhumbu. A key, unintended outcome of the Activity was New Zealand's relationship with Nepal. The reputation built initially by Sir Edmund Hillary's Hillary Trust has continued into the activities of HT(NZ) and HTN, was seen to be the foundation for keeping "New Zealand's spirit alive in Nepal", and was viewed as a key part of foreign policy relations between the two countries.

15 LOCAL ACTIVITY OWNERSHIP

Local Activity ownership was seen to be growing rapidly, namely as a result of Nepal's political shift to federalism. New authority and responsibilities now afforded local municipality officials offer a range of opportunities to enhance ownership of education-related activities in the region, as well as the sustainability of Activity-funded support.

