

Policy Brief on Inclusive Education and Assistive Technology for Girls and Young Women with Disabilities

1) Organizational Introduction:

Access Planet Organization is led by women with disabilities and is working to promote rights, empowerment, and inclusion of girls and young women with disabilities in Nepal. ACCESS PLANET focuses on technology and capacity building, promoting quality education, wellbeing, and leadership capabilities of the women with disabilities.

2) Description of the problem:

Despite global recognition that the Inclusive Education (IE) at primary, secondary, and higher levels is crucial for sustainable futures and the enjoyment of human rights and freedoms, persons with disabilities in Nepal face significant barriers compared to their peers without disabilities, and young women and girls with disabilities face significant barriers compared to their male counterparts. The main objective of education is to increase access and opportunity for girls, children, and women with disabilities. This goal encompasses free formal and non-formal education, including vocational, technical, and special education designed specifically for the needs of individuals with disabilities. Additionally, there is an emphasis on creating a disability-friendly environment (Country Profile=Nepal=UNICEF; digital era-inclusive education 2022). However, in the context of Nepalese society, there are many gaps that manifest and hinder the achievement of this objective. Challenges range from transitioning to secondary school due to travel distances, lack of assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs, crutches, white canes, Braille tools), and human assistants to inaccessible environments. Additionally, negative attitudes and behaviors from teachers, students, and school stakeholders, alongside inaccessible classrooms, toilets, and other physical infrastructures, especially affect those with physical, visual, and hearing impairments (Strengthening the Voices of Adolescents with Disabilities in Nepal; website-NDWA; Country profile-Nepal). Safety concerns in schools, hostels, and on the way to school are very

significant, as are maturation-related issues and lack of accessible WASH facilities, which discourage adolescent girls from pursuing quality education.

Resource centers across Nepal provide education for children with disabilities, often with just one teacher addressing their needs. However, the quality of teaching and limited educational resources, such as materials in large fonts, audiobooks, or visual materials for the deaf and deaf-blind are inadequate. Schools for deaf-blind children are scarce, leading to their educational deprivation. A lack of early disability identification and intervention services further deprives girls of essential education and healthcare (Country profile-Nepal 2022; Strengthening the Voices of Adolescents with Disabilities in Nepal; Disability Inclusion Strategy-Plan International; Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities Women Enabled International facts). Family support is crucial, yet complexities within families often hinder access to quality education and services for women and girls with disabilities. Communication gaps, especially in deaf families, and language barriers exacerbate these challenges. Moreover, young women with disabilities face intersectional discrimination based on caste, class, and language, adding to the economic, social, cultural, and psychological barriers that impede their educational pursuits. For instance, the deeply-rooted taboos, social norms, practices surrounding menstrual period and child marriage, in many rural and remote Nepalese communities along with multiple and intersectional forms of discrimination on other grounds such as caste and ethnicity, particularly women and girls with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, autistic persons, and persons from ethnic, Dalit, Madhesi and Muslim communities which surely limits their participation in education along with their other spheres of life (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Nepal* I. -2018).

In the context of providing education, offering sports and other extracurricular activities is considered essential for leading a healthy and productive life. However, young women and girls with disabilities often report that they are denied access to these crucial facilities within and without the school environment. In many cases, sports and entertainment activities in schools are not designed inclusively, failing to allow these girls to participate (. (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Concluding Observations on the Initial Report of Nepal* I. -2018).

This problem is further exacerbated by the neglect of the sexual and emotional health issues of the young girls and women that can lead to feelings of depression and anxiety and, in some cases may even contribute to suicidal thoughts.

Gender stereotypes, low expectations for girls with disabilities, restricted social mobility compared to boys and men with disabilities, and stigmatization of disability often prevent young women and girls with disabilities from accessing opportunities for a fulfilling life. The lack of disaggregated data (Country profile-Nepal 2022; Strengthening the Voices of Adolescents with Disabilities in Nepal) on young women and girls with disabilities complicates resource allocation and policy implementation.

Nepal's commitment to inclusive education for young women and girls with disabilities, as outlined in SDG Goal 4, the UNCRPD (particularly Article 24), and other national and international legislations, shows commitments to realize this right. Addressing these challenges remains crucial for the empowerment and inclusion of young women and girls with disabilities in Nepal.

Although Disability Inclusive WASH facility seems to be dispensable at home and school for women with disabilities, hardly disability inclusive WASH provision enshrined in mainstream WASH Nepalese legislation.

Similarly, the effectiveness of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in creating an equitable and accessible learning environment for young women and girls with disabilities has been significantly proven. On one hand, ICT-based teaching and learning environments cater to the specific needs of these individuals. On the other hand, many such girls and boys are still reliant on traditional learning and teaching approaches and materials. This disparity is further highlighted by the fact that only about fifty percent of schools were ready to provide some form of remote teaching-learning support to children with disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic. This indicates a lack of widespread adaptation of ICT-based education, underscoring the need for greater integration of technology in educational settings to better support students with disabilities.

3) Overview:

This policy brief was prepared by reviewing a number of pertinent policy documents and available legal documents in close consultation with the ACCESS PLANET team members. It was revealed that the young women and girls in general move through a transitional period significantly, with its impact on them varying depending on the context. The changes in their health and body physically and psychologically, transition from primary school to secondary or secondary school to college or formal education to informal; or vocational and technical education and job market

etc. But in the case of young women and girls with disabilities living in the community like rural and suburban setting, it impacts further them quite adversely. Disability based discrimination, stigma, lack of services and facilities to enable them push them further isolation, anxiety, marginalization, and impoverishment.

Despite global recognition that IE at primary, secondary, and higher levels is crucial for sustainable futures and the enjoyment of human rights and freedoms, persons with disabilities in Nepal face significant barriers compared to their peers without disabilities, and young women and girls with disabilities face significant barriers compared to their male counterparts. The main objective of education is to increase access and opportunity for girls, children, and women with disabilities. This goal encompasses free formal and non-formal education, including vocational, technical, and special education, designed specifically for the needs of the individuals with disabilities. Additionally, there is an emphasis on creating a disability-friendly environment. However, in the context of Nepalese society, there are many gaps that manifest and hinder the achievement of this objective. Challenges range from transitioning to secondary school due to travel distances, lack of assistive devices (e.g., wheelchairs, crutches, white canes, Braille tools), and human assistants, to inaccessible environments. Additionally, negative attitudes and behaviors from teachers, students, and school stakeholders, alongside inaccessible classrooms, toilets, and other physical infrastructures, especially affect those young women and girls with physical, visual, and hearing impairments. Safety concerns in schools, hostels, and on the way to school are very significant for such girls/young women, as are the maturation-related issues and lack of accessible WASH facilities, which discourage adolescent girls from pursuing quality education.

Often they encounter a lack of assistive devices, mobility problems to transit from low-grade school to higher-grade school or formal school, vocational and technical education, for deaf women. Due to emotional and SRHR materials and dealing support, this situation becomes more vulnerable. Lack of educational materials, sign language interpretation, particularly young women with visual impairment and deaf and hard of hearing. There are several policies, national and international mandates, and commitments putting in place, i.e. Constitution of Nepal 2015, Free and Compulsory Education Act 2018, Act related to Children, Disaster Risk Management Act 2019, WASH-related policy and plan, CEDAW, with having more or less references to name few

to ensure the rights and fundamental freedom of persons with disabilities particularly girls and women with disabilities. To further such rights, Nepal's commitment to the UNCRPD, SDGs, enacted Act Relating to Rights of the Persons with Disabilities-2018 with having it regulation talk a lot of things, including inclusive and special education, ICT-based education, health and rehabilitation, inclusive WASH facility and services to ensure various rights and entitlements of persons with disabilities.

Nevertheless, such disability-related policy provisions and references are generic, which highlight broader issues of the disability sector, leaving a persistent gap in regard to addressing particular issues facing by young women and girls with disabilities. The problem pose more extensively while such policy provisions fail to provide policy directions towards concerns and issues of such women and girls in relation to receiving effective and equitable learning in IE setting. The situation further worsens with the fact that the provisions outlining in the CRPD, SDG goals and other international policies and mandates are yet to be transcribed into action on one side, on the other hand, the misunderstanding that 'homogenous issue' – one size fits all! Yet, the needs can be very different across the different impairment groups completed further to address the aforesaid issues and concerns. IE related technology, to enable young women and girls with disabilities particularly with sight impairment and with hearing disability to learn more effectively and efficiently in inclusive setting is imperative. Other various cross cutting issues that women with disabilities come across quite often, i.e. health and rehabilitation and gender related practical needs should be addressed. Both state and non-state stakeholders should make collaborative efforts to this end without leaving behind under the cloud of their uncertain future.

4) Analysis of existing policies:

The Constitution of Nepal - 2015, is a significant document that promotes inclusion and participation, aiming to create an equitable society that includes all minority communities, including young women and girls with disabilities. Several articles within the constitution specifically protect and promote the rights of persons with disabilities:

Basic Education and secondary education as a Fundamental Right: The constitution reaffirms basic education as a fundamental right, stating that every citizen shall have the right to free and compulsory basic education, and free education up to the secondary level. (*Nepal Law Commission – NLC*, nod)

Article 31.3: This article guarantees the right of persons with disabilities to receive free higher education in accordance with the law.

Education for Persons with Visual and Hearing Disabilities: Pursuant to Article 31, persons with visual impairments have the right to obtain free education through Braille script, while individuals with hearing and speaking disabilities are entitled to receive free education through sign language.

Article 39: It talks about the special right of protection for children with disabilities from the state.

Article 42: This article ensures that persons with disabilities have the right to live with dignity, acknowledging their diverse identities. It also ensures equal access to public services and facilities, along with special opportunities and benefits in various areas, including education, health, and employment.

Furthermore, Nepal ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in May 2010 obligates the country to implement various legal obligations to advance the rights of persons with disabilities. The CRPD emphasizes creating equality among women, girls, boys, and men with disabilities, thereby protecting the rights of young women and girls with disabilities to equitable and inclusive learning opportunities. It addresses their specific needs and concerns, ensuring they are as per with their male peers with disabilities.

Article 24 of the CRPD underscores that inclusive education is a fundamental human right for every child with a disability, advocating for an education system that accommodates students of all abilities and requirements at all levels, including pre-school, primary, secondary, tertiary, vocational, and lifelong learning.

The Act Relating to the Rights of Persons with Disability-2018 (ARPD-2018) in Nepal serves as an initiative to operationalize the constitutional provisions and the provisions enshrined in the CRPD, focusing on ensuring quality inclusive education for persons with disabilities, including young women and girls (*Nepal Law Commission – NLC, n.d.*). The key aspects of the ARPD related to education include:

- Education Access Under Article 21: According to various sections of Article 21 of the ARPD, persons with disabilities are entitled to receive higher education and technical and vocational education from institutions run by the Government of Nepal (GON) or those operating with financial support from the GON.

- Non-Discrimination Policies: The ARPD prohibits educational institutes from discriminating based on disability in school admission, participation in extracurricular activities, provision of educational materials, and in creating effective teaching-learning environments.
- Provisions for Specialized Learning Methods: The Act calls for the provision of education through Braille or alternative scripts, sign language, information technology means, and peer learning as per the needs of learners with disabilities.
- Accessible Education and Hostel Facilities: Section 7 of Article 21 mandates the GON to provide education through accessible information technology means, appropriate language methods, scripts, curricula, and course books, along with hostel facilities, to create an enabling learning environment for learners with visual and hearing disabilities.
- Evaluation System and Accessibility: The ARPD instructs the adoption of appropriate evaluation systems according to the needs of individuals with disabilities and mandates the availability of accessible learning materials, accessible buildings, and other facilities. It also emphasizes scholarships/financial support to encourage the continuous pursuit of quality education by learners with disabilities.
- Obligations for Private Education Institutes: The Act also obliges private education institutes to provide free study facilities to a number of students with disabilities as determined by the Government of Nepal.

However, while the ARPD makes significant strides in addressing the educational needs of persons with disabilities, it remains silent on several critical issues pertaining to girls and young women with disabilities. These unaddressed issues include school-based violence, sexual education, reproductive health-related education and response, and ensuring equality between girls and boys in education. This indicates a gap in the legal framework, highlighting the need for further amendments or additional policies to comprehensively address the rights and needs of young women and girls with disabilities in Nepal.

The Free and Compulsory Education Act 2018 (*Nepal Law Commission – NLC*, n.d.) in Nepal represents a progressive step towards the education of children with disabilities, aligning with the prioritization of children from other marginalized groups. Key provisions of this Act include:

- Equal Access to Quality Education: The Act strongly asserts that every citizen is entitled to equal access to quality education without discrimination, implicitly including persons with disabilities in this right.

- Section 7 Provisions for Persons with Disabilities: This section emphasizes that persons with disabilities are not only entitled to receive education through special education methods but are also entitled to receive free higher education.

- Hostel Facilities for Children with disabilities: The Act reinforces the provision of arranging hostel facilities for children with disabilities and other hostel-required marginalized children in a prescribed manner.

- School Admission and Scholarships: Under this Act, children with disabilities can be admitted to schools that best suit their needs. Additionally, children of the parents with disabilities are eligible for monthly scholarships, similar to other adversely affected groups of children.

However, a significant gap in the Free and Compulsory Education Act 2018 is its lack of specific provisions for gender equality and addressing the special needs of the girls with disabilities from different identities. This omission points to a need for more comprehensive legislation or amendments to existing laws to ensure that the unique challenges and requirements of girls, particularly those who belong to the underrepresented and traditionally marginalized groups such as Dalits, Madheshi, Tharu, Indigenous, Muslim, rural locations etc. are adequately addressed and met by the educational systems of Nepal. This would involve not only equal access to education but also special attention to the gender-specific barriers and requirements they face, including issues related to safety, health, and social inclusion.

The National Education Policy of 2019 (*Nepal Law Commission – NLC*, n.d.) in Nepal, which supersedes the Disability Inclusive Education Policy of 2017, takes an inclusive approach towards the education of children with disabilities. The policy endorses both inclusive and special education approaches, taking into account the severity of disabilities in children. Similarly, there is a specific obligation for special and integrated schools to provide residential hostel facilities. This is especially important for children who are far from home or have mobility restrictions. The policy emphasizes developing accessible school environments and talks about diversifying curriculum, instruction, and assessment methods, textbooks, and assistive materials. Most importantly, a progressive aspect of this policy is its mandate to teach children with disabilities by adopting adaptive technology and information technology, enhancing their learning experience

and accessibility. Despite of its true spirit of mainstreaming the disability and inclusive education approach within the main education policy, there is huge gap in terms of clearly outlining the needs and measures for solutions for this diverse community. Hence, there is clear need of revising this policy from the disability and intersectional. The policy also must ensure that special education will be provided within the mainstreaming school premises.

Article 19 of the Act relating the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (*Nepal Law Commission – NLC*, n.d.) obligates the Government of Nepal to formulate necessary provisions to protect the rights of women with disabilities. It emphasizes establishing an environment that supports the optimum use of their knowledge, skills, and potential. It gives equal priority to "protecting their health and reproductive rights, taking into account the special situation of women with disabilities." This provision, if effectively implemented and translated into specific school protection policies, can significantly benefit young women and girls with disabilities. It acknowledges the need for additional support and protection in educational settings, ensuring that their health, well-being, and rights are safeguarded. This approach aligns with the broader goals of inclusive education and equity, aiming to create a more supportive and accessible learning environment for all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities.

The Article 12 of the Act Related to Child Rights set forth special provision of children with disabilities. The subsection 2 of the article recognized prestige and independence identity of children with disabilities along with their right to participation and live a life in a dignified way. Likewise, subsection 3 and subsection 4 of the article ensure the right of such children to access public services equally like others, i.e. access to education, healthcare, rehabilitation, employment preparation with a right to mingle in society. The surfacing observation with this article remains that the additional needs and concerns of girls with disabilities have not recognized directly.

Similarly, addressing the further need for strengthening equity in education, the Government of Nepal has developed the Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector, which was launched in December 2014. The main objectives of this strategy are to reduce the current disparities in (i) access & participation and (ii) learning outcomes for children in basic and secondary public education in Nepal. The equity index is intended to be the core planning and monitoring tool for the full-fledged implementation of the Consolidated Equity Strategy and is planned to be used to target the most disadvantaged districts and groups for specific interventions. However, it is observed that most of the local government and schools haven't

ideally utilized this tool in practice to promote the equity and access to education for marginalized children in Nepal.

Nepal's new School Education Sector Plan, 2022-2030, strengthens inclusive education by including targets on scaling up inclusive education schools and turning the 380 existing resource classes into inclusive education resource hubs for schools within the respective local governments. It also scales up an inclusive Education Management Information sub-System at the local level to consolidate data on children with disabilities to be able to offer educational services that respond to their specific needs.

One of the key strategies of SESP is to implement the inclusive education road map to ensure that children with functional limitations are supported to engage in the most inclusive form of education possible and that schools are strengthened to cater to identified needs of these children. Nepal has developed an equity index under the Constitutional Equity Strategy for the Nepal school education sector, which rates the disparities in access, participation and learning in basic education. The Gender Parity Index is 0.92 in ECED (School Education Sector Plan). The gender parity index in basic enrolment is 0.99 and in secondary level 1.01.

Though the plan has couple of great provision to promote the inclusive education systems, there is lack of specific and targeted goals and programs promoting the access of girls and women with disabilities in education. Nepal has achieved 95% above school enrollment rate but have haven't identified the out of school children and youth yet and the disability communities claim that most of them are children with disabilities particularly; girls and women with disabilities from the underrepresented groups. The OPDs, government and other stakeholders needs continuous discussion and prepare some targeted programs to reach out the marginalized and underrepresented girls and women with disabilities and ensure their education rights in practice.

Furthermore, the Complaint Hearing Guidelines, 2074 (Amendment 2077) isn't accessible and hence students; girls with hearing or vision disabilities haven't been able to share their feedback and issues with the school management.

In addition to this, the School Hostel Management Guideline 2071 has set the minimum standards of the hostel including safeguarding provisions and all other required teaching learning materials as per their disability. However, it is often reported that most of the resource classes have been struggling to maintain these minimum standards due to lack of resources and low level of cooperation from the local school management authorities.

In the same line, The CRPD Committee recommends to GON in regards to the rights to inclusive education and with sustainable development goal 4, in particular targets 4.5 and 4.a, to increase its efforts to achieve inclusive education by:

(a) Adopting a mandatory teacher-training policy on the inclusive education model, with indicators and goals to be achieved, and providing support for trained teachers, as well as Braille, sign language, Easy Read formats, alternative means and modes of communication and other auxiliary equipment and media;

(b) Ensuring access to inclusive education for all persons with disabilities at all levels of education, including adult education, throughout the country, and guaranteeing that the education model covers the most remote areas, incorporates a gender perspective and is ethnically and culturally relevant.

In summary, there is a policy gap addressing the special issues and concerns of the girls and women with disabilities and needs harmonization with mainstream and local level legislations for its effective implementation in the future.

5) Policy Gap analysis:

This review on major policy in relation to addressing the pertinent issues and concerns of the young women and girls with disabilities while receiving quality IE shows several gaps in the aforesaid policy. More importantly, none of the policy document has recognized specific young women and girls with disabilities and their specific issues to receive IE obtaining optimal learning outcomes in safe and dignified learning environment.

These policy provisions highlight to ensure the right to education of persons with disabilities through inclusive education considering the learners with disability severity which could be a great policy direction. Nevertheless, such disability-related policy provisions and references are generic, which highlight broader issues of the disability sector, leaving a persistent gap in regard to addressing specific issues facing by young women and girls with disabilities while receiving quality IE. Various evidence indicate that girls and young women with disabilities particularly; in the context of Nepalese community where there is multiple diversity within disability communities in terms of caste, language, gender, religion, geography etc., experience a lot of restrictions and challenges to receiving education because of gender related social norms attached with disability

related problems which hinder mobility and participation in public domain in the community like Nepal. Family support and community support remain imperative as well as appropriate school environment are essential which are almost left out addressing by the policy provisions. Providing education on SRHR and safety measure of young women with disabilities is essential part but they are missing in the policy direction. Provided such concerns elsewhere in the policy document targeting women with disabilities, they are not connected in school based education and girls with disabilities. The participation of the girls with disabilities in sports and other extra-curricular activities including their participation in child clubs and other relevant committees is important of quality IE but such things are not mentioned in the policy documents explicitly. Representation of their parents in SMC and PTA is also missing. ARPD set obligation that in regarding to educate persons with disabilities through sign language, braille and technical. But no highlight that how such technology or ICT based IE will be delivered to young women and girls with disabilities effectively. We could see references of providing vocational and technical education for persons with disabilities in different policies. But they do not talk targeting young women and girls with disabilities. The universal human rights entitlements and mandates and guidelines outlined in the CEDAW, CRC, and CRPD, SDG goals and other international policies and mandates should be well transcribed per the progressive realization principles; into the local acts and policies and actions. Yet, the needs can be very different across the different impairment groups, age, gender, ethnic background, language and many other identities of the person with disabilities.

Most of the girls and women with disabilities have been facing barriers due to the traditional and one way learning evaluation system being practiced at schools. Hence, it has to be revised as per the diversity of the disability and specific needs of these children. Similarly, all the children aren't in the position to attend the school every day or most of the days due to various family and accessibility issues. Hence, there is need of policies promoting the school at home approaches so as to ensure that out of school children and children with profound disability can also pursue quality education at home.

The School Education Sector Plan should be used fullest to promote the inclusive education and the plan also needs to be demystified from the intersectional approach within the disability community which will ultimately promote the access of the underrepresented girls and women with disabilities in the education system.

6) Recommendation:

Based on the above mentioned context about the access of young women and girls with disabilities in the Inclusive education and assistive technology, ACCESS PLANET proposes for the following policy related recommendations.

5.1. Girls focused inclusive education:

Inclusive education is vital for addressing the needs of young women and girls with disabilities. The recommendations will help to create an inclusive educational environment where young women and girls with disabilities are not only accommodated but are also given equal opportunities to thrive and succeed in accessing and enjoying their educational rights.

Some of the policy recommendations include:

- 5.1.1. National Education Policy should be revised and adopt specific policies focusing on the educational needs of the girls and women with disabilities. The blanket approach of the policy trying to address the diverse needs of the different types of disabilities with different identities should be addressed in policies is in the urgent need.
- 5.1.2. Municipal Education Policies should address the education needs of the women and girls those who have intellectual and developmental disabilities; with profound and severe disabilities. As the local government is taking care of the education folio, it should aim to ensure quality learning outcomes in inclusive settings for both girls and boys with disabilities.
- 5.1.3. Encouragement and supports for pursuing Inclusive Education: Young women and girls with disabilities should be encouraged and provided immediate supports to pursue their education by the families and local governments.
- 5.1.4. Child Safeguarding Policies should be in place in all the schools: Every school must have a comprehensive child safeguarding policy. This policy should specifically address the safety concerns of girls particularly; girls with disabilities, ensuring their protection in all educational environments.
- 5.1.5. Community Awareness and Support: The broader community should be made aware of and be supportive of the right to inclusive education for young women and girls with disabilities. This includes fostering an environment of acceptance and assistance.
- 5.1.6. Provision of Assistive Technologies: The schools should have policies and adequate budget to support on the assistive devices and education technologies should be readily

available. Additionally, schools should be accessible and inclusive, with peer support mechanisms in place to facilitate learning and social interaction.

- 5.1.7. Priority in Teachers Training: It is crucial to have a sufficient number of trained teachers who have practical knowledge and skills on inclusive pedagogy to address the unique learning needs of students with disabilities. This includes training in specialized teaching methods and understanding of the specific challenges faced by young women and girls with disabilities.
- 5.1.8. All the education policies and programs should assess the needs of the girls and women with disabilities from the underrepresented communities with different identities and adopt the intersectional approach within disability community as guided by the 'Leave No One Behind' principle.
- 5.1.9. The Equity Strategy and Equity Index must be followed by all the local governments and schools and the government should provide a guideline for its effective implementation.
- 5.1.10. Many girls and children with hearing and vision disabilities haven't been able to file cases and complaint with the school administration since the complaint hearing mechanism, according to the Complaint Hearing Guidelines, 2074 (Amendment 2077) is inaccessible and hence there is need of its revision.
- 5.1.11. Adopt the learning assessment systems and tools as per the nature and diverse needs of the children with disabilities.
- 5.1.12. The girls with disabilities; those with profound disabilities should be provided education at their own location/home provisions must be ensured in the education policies.
- 5.1.13. Some of the specific needs pertaining to safety and security measures, teaching learning materials, inclusive learning environment, and complaint hearing mechanism should be ensured in the School Hostel Management Guideline 2071.

5.2. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights Education:

Enhancing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) education for young women and girls, as well as boys is crucial for creating a more informed and supportive educational environment.

These policy recommendations include:

- 5.2.1. SRHR facilities in the inclusive and accessible environments. There is need of making the SRHR materials in the accessible formats addressing the needs of the diverse groups of

the women and girls with disabilities. All the girls and women including those with hearing disabilities, intellectual disabilities, vision disabilities should be able to get SRHR related information through a dedicated language interpreters and personal assistants and in other accessible formats.

- 5.2.2. Policies to avail of the SRHR materials which include creating and distributing SRHR-related educational materials in various accessible formats and languages. This ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities, can access and understand this vital information.
- 5.2.3. Orientation and Education on Body Awareness: Support Girls and young women, as well as boys and girls, to receive orientation about their body parts and how to maintain their SRHR. This education plays a critical role in dismantling social taboos and misconceptions surrounding these topics.
- 5.2.4. Designation of Focal Teachers and Reporting policies: Appoint focal teachers who are specifically trained to support young women and girls with their SRHR needs. Alongside this, establish a reporting mechanism to address and respond to their concerns effectively and sensitively.
- 5.2.5. WASH facilities and sanitary materials policies: The existing policies and provisions on WASH don't address some specific needs of the women and girls with disabilities in the school environment. Hence, there is need of policies to support an OPDs on advocating to ensure the availability and accessibility of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities and sanitary materials in schools is inevitable. This not only supports the health and hygiene needs of young women and girls but also promotes their continued participation in education without fear or discomfort.
- 5.2.6. The safety and security issues of the girls and women with disabilities are one of the main barriers to ensure quality education. Hence, the safe guarding policy of the schools and educational institutes should be revised and must adopt the measures to ensure the safe and secure learning environment.

5.3. Information, Communication and Technology and Assistive Technology for quality education:

Incorporating Information and Communication Technology (ICT) for the education of the young women and girls with disabilities is essential for promoting equitable and accessible learning. By

integrating ICT into the education system and ensuring accessibility, the students are given the opportunity to learn and excel on an equal footing with their peers. This not only supports their academic growth but also fosters inclusivity and equality in the educational environment.

The policy includes:

- 5.3.1. Provision of ICT Devices: Schools should ensure the availability and accessibility of sufficient ICT-related devices. This includes computers, devices for low vision, recording devices, and mobile phones of good quality. These tools are crucial for young women and girls with disabilities to access learning materials and participate in educational activities.
- 5.3.2. Policies on integrating ICT based education: Since present policies are not sufficient to promote ICT based IE education, there should be ICT Devices policy provision for targeting young and girls and boys with disabilities should be enacted and implemented so that Schools can ensure the availability and accessibility of sufficient ICT-related devices. This includes computers, devices for low vision, recording devices, and mobile phones of good quality. These tools are crucial for young women and girls with disabilities to access learning materials and participate in educational activities.
- 5.3.3. Development of Teaching Learning Materials in the accessible formats: Textbooks, reference books, and learning materials should be developed with ICT access in mind. This approach ensures that educational content is accessible to all students, including those with various disabilities.
- 5.3.4. Promoting the screen reading technologies: There is immense need of developing software specifically designed to aid in reading Nepali script/screen. This software should be made available to students who need it, allowing them to fully access and benefit from educational materials in their native languages.

5.4. Engagement with Local Education Stakeholders:

This recommendation focuses on enhancing the involvement and representation of the girls and women with disabilities, as well as their parents/guardians, in the educational system. These suggestions are aimed at fostering a more inclusive and responsive educational environment. Implementing these recommendations would create a more inclusive school environment where

girls and young women with disabilities are actively involved and represented. This approach not only addresses their specific educational and extracurricular needs but also ensures their voices are heard and valued in the education system.

Some of the policy recommendations include:

5.4.1. Policies promoting participation of the parents in education mechanism: There is provision of participation of the parents in the SMC of the resources classes where as it is null in the mainstreaming schools. Hence, there is urgent need of the policies promoting involvement of Parents or guardians of girls with disabilities to be appointed to school and education management-related committees. Similarly, the policies should ensure the representation from local organizations of persons with disabilities in School Management Committees (SMC) can be highly beneficial. They can provide expert advice and advocacy for inclusive education practices and policies.

5.4.2. Policies for engaging in the extracurricular activities: Women and girls with disabilities should have equal opportunities to participate in school-based sports and other extracurricular activities. School should adopt the policies that ensure the provision of an appropriate environment, equipment, and techniques tailored to their needs will enhance their ability to engage in these activities.

5.5. Supporting on Technical Education and Vocational Training Education:

The above context analysis shows that there is need of the Technical Education and Vocational Trainings (TEVT) provisions for the young girls and women with disabilities to develop them as equally productive citizens. In the context that many of the women and girls with disabilities don't have technical and vocational skills, there is an ultimate need of the policies and programs promoting their needs of TEVT.

The policy includes:

5.5.1. Review the Technical Education and Vocational Training Policy from the disability lens and make necessary amendments ensuring the rights of girls and women with disabilities accessing the TEVT.

- 5.5.2. Adopt specific policies and programs promoting Technical Education and Vocational Trainings: The women and girls with disabilities often neglected and denied from benefiting from the technical education and employment opportunities. Hence, the Act on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities should be revised in order to guarantee the provision of specific measures on providing TEVT services for young girls and women with disabilities including those of diverse needs and identities.
- 5.5.3. Adopt policies on providing the TEVT information to young women and girls with disabilities in the accessible formats in order to ensure their meaningful participation in these vocational trainings.
- 5.5.4. Policies on ICT focused TEVT: Many girls and women with disabilities are dependent on different assistive technologies and ICT, there is need of policy and provisions promoting ICT-based vocational and technical education, which is increasingly relevant and beneficial for young women with disabilities.

7) Conclusion:

This policy brief was prepared in close consultation with the ACCESS PLANET executives and volunteers along with the desk review of the existing policies on disabilities particularly focusing on the inclusive education and women and girls with disabilities. The policy brief describes the existing policy provisions and highlights the needs of the policy formulation gaps and accordingly has given recommendations for future policy changes. This brief might serve as the guiding documents for the OPDs and decision makers on policy formulation on disability. There is need of updating the brief on a regular basis to incorporate the upcoming policies changes.

8) Appendices and sources:

- I. The Constitution of Nepal, 2015.
- II. Act Relating to Rights of the Persons with Disabilities, 2074.
- III. National Education Policy, 2019.
- IV. MoEST, School Education Sector Plan 2022-2032.
- V. United Nations Convention on the rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), 2006.
- VI. GR 4 of CRPD
- VII. CRPD Committee Conclusion Observations Nepal, 2018.
- VIII. Act relating to Children, 2018.
- IX. Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2018.
- X. Disaster Risk Management Act, 2019.
- XI. UNICEF, Country Profile of Nepal, 2022.
- XII. International Centre for Evidence in Disability at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and CBM Nepal and Plan International Nepal, Strengthening the Voices of Adolescents with Disabilities in Nepal, (2018).
- XIII. Plan International, Inclusive Education Strategy, (2018).
- XIV. Complaint Hearing Guidelines, 2074.
- XV. World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank, World Report on Disability 28 (2011).
- XVI. WHO and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health for Persons with Disabilities: WHO/UNFPA Guidance Note 3 (2009).
- XVII. Women Enabled International, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of Women and Girls with Disabilities Facts 3 (2021).

The End.