



# Language and Early Grades Literacy Acquisition in Nepal

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# Backgrounder: Language and learning context in Nepal

- 2007 Interim Constitution guarantees preservation of all cultures and languages
- 102 spoken languages, with Nepali as national language and official LOI
- Adult literacy rate: 56% (higher for males [70%] than females [44%]); youth literacy: 79% (UNESCO 2007)
- Net enrollment in basic ed at 93.6%, survival rate to grade 5 at 54% (MoE 2009)
- Textbooks and print materials available in schools written predominantly in Nepali language





# Save the Children in Nepal

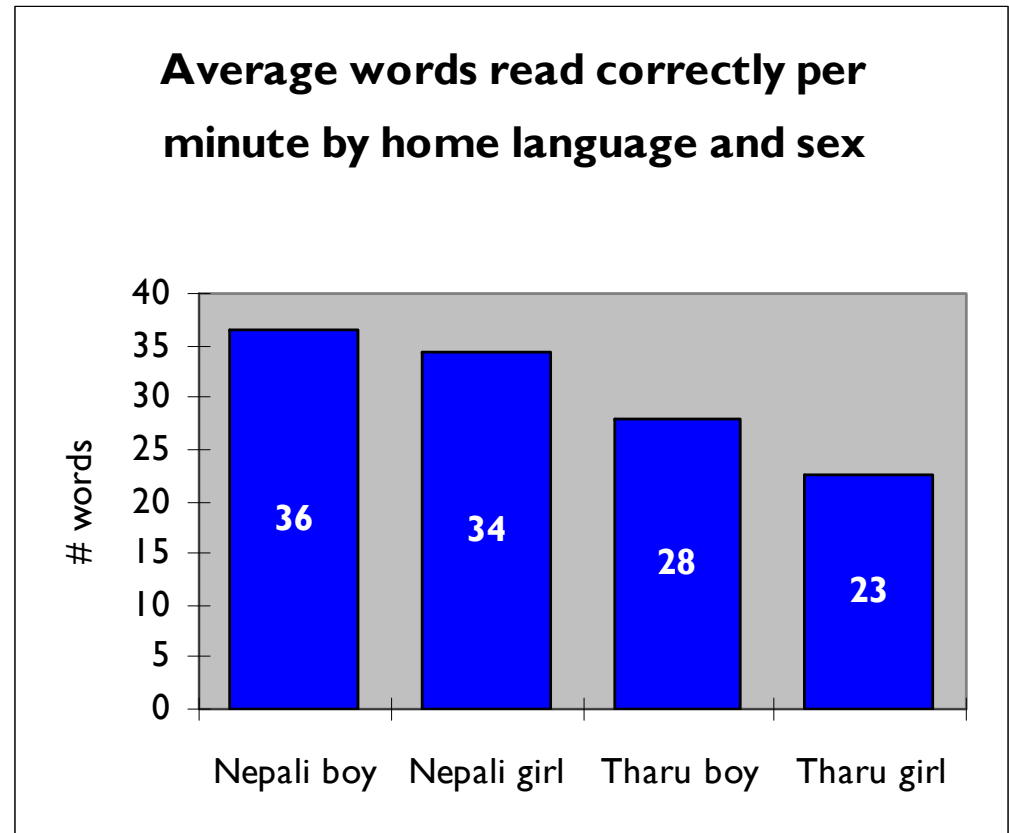
- SC presence in Nepal spans over 30 years
- As of 2009, now operating in almost all regions in Nepal, covering at least 56 districts and working with 90 local NGOs
- Education programs in far-western region working with mixed Nepali and Tharu populations, particularly in Kailali district, where SC has been working for over 15 years





# Literacy & language issues: findings from 2008 SC study

- Among 514 third graders, 42% couldn't read any words correctly in a minute;
- Evident disparity between language groups, and between girls and boys





# SC's response: Literacy Boost

- Save the Children's signature approach to support children's early grades reading development
- Based on the latest reading research, and responds to SC's own findings of low reading performance in countries where we work, including Nepal
- 3 components: assessment, teacher training and community action
- Aims to improve reading instruction, strengthen children's access to literacy and language experiences, and measurably improve children's reading and learning





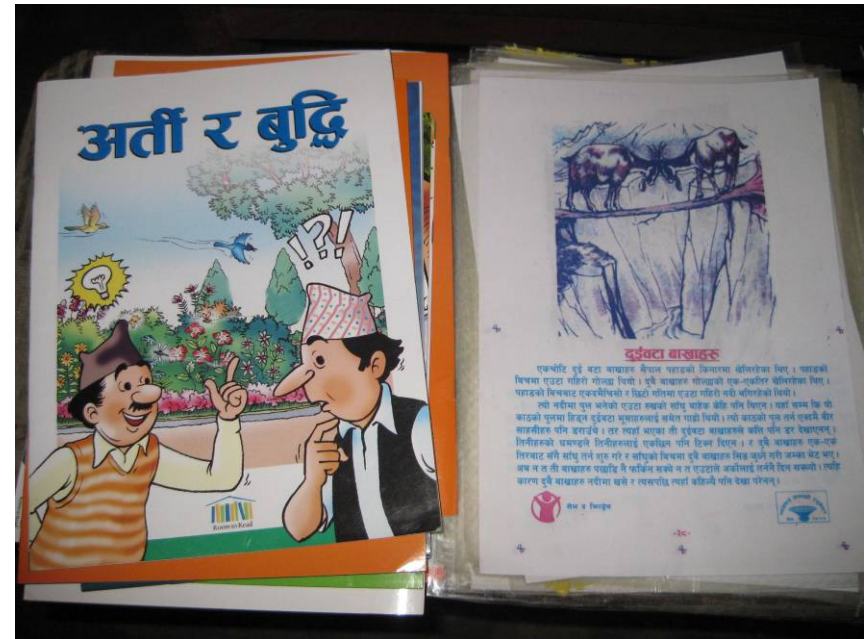
# Literacy Boost in Kailali, Nepal

- Implemented in Nepal as a pilot program (dubbed Padhai Bikash or PABI) in Kailali beginning in April 2009
- Implemented in 16 schools and approximately 52 communities located in Bouniya and Kotatilsipur VDCs
- Local NGO, BASE, as main implementing partner

# L1 supportive elements of Literacy Boost:

## Book Banks

- Collection of interesting, relevant, simple books and print materials for children to enjoy reading
- Kept by community volunteers so that children can borrow materials near their homes
- Materials in Tharu and Nepali languages
- Include books from Room to Read







# L1 supportive elements of Literacy Boost: Reading Camps & Reading Buddy

- Activities for children outside of school to promote reading practice and develop a love of reading
- Run by local community volunteers who could speak the children's language



## SAPANA READS TO LEARN

Sapana is a third grader in a primary school in Kailali. She usually plays with her sisters during weekend but she has discovered a new way to spend her free time: reading. She has been going to Saturday morning reading camps for children in grades one to three in her village, which is mainly a Tharu speaking community.

At Saturday reading camp the facilitators read stories to children in Nepali and Tharu languages, bridging the gap between two languages and helping them learn better. The storytelling method in these reading camps involve a lot of creativity and interaction with children, which makes reading

fun. She says, "I have to wait so long for the Saturday to come. I have never missed a single story in reading camp. I wish I could go to reading camp twice every week"

Reading Camps are a part of Save the Children's Literacy Boost Pilot Programme in two VDCs in Kailali. Children also learn through "reading buddy" system, where children help one another. Sapana and her reading buddy Pushpa read stories together during break time at school. Sapana has read all the books in her reading camp and the book bank at school. She, however, has a favorite- Ryain Ryain, a book about how we must use books properly. Her teacher has noticed a marked change in Sapana, "she used to be so quiet in class now she is the one who asks most number of questions and picks up a book without being told to."





# L1 supportive elements of Literacy Boost: Community Workshops



- Awareness raising sessions for parents on the importance of language and literacy development for children's learning
- Conducted in the community, using local volunteers and the local language



# L1 supportive elements of Literacy Boost: Nepali to Tharu literacy class

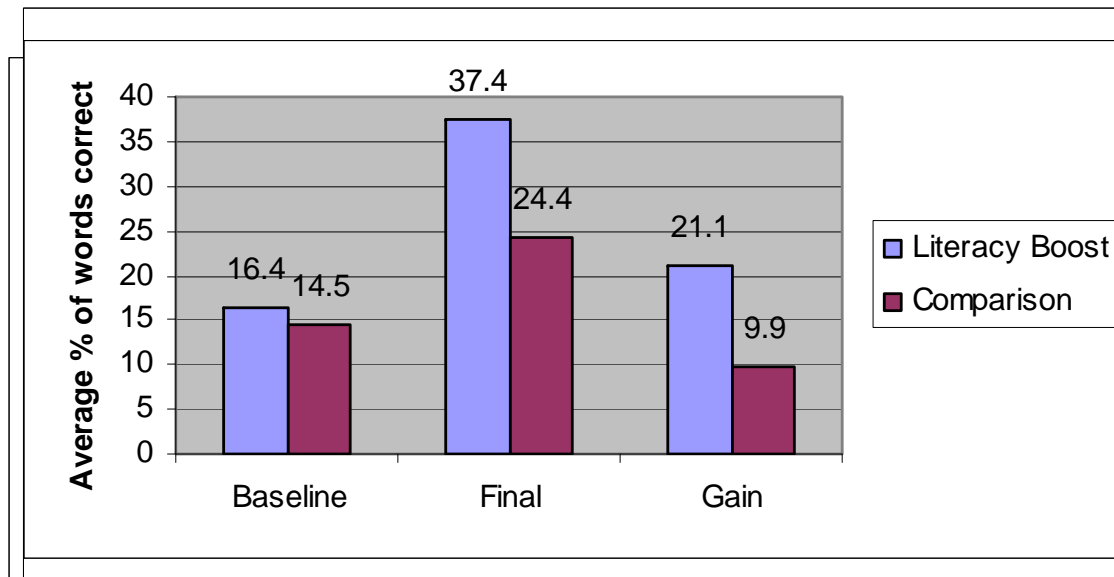
- Intended to train adults already literate in Nepali to read Tharu materials
- Over time, became an informal Tharu literacy class for non-literate women in the community





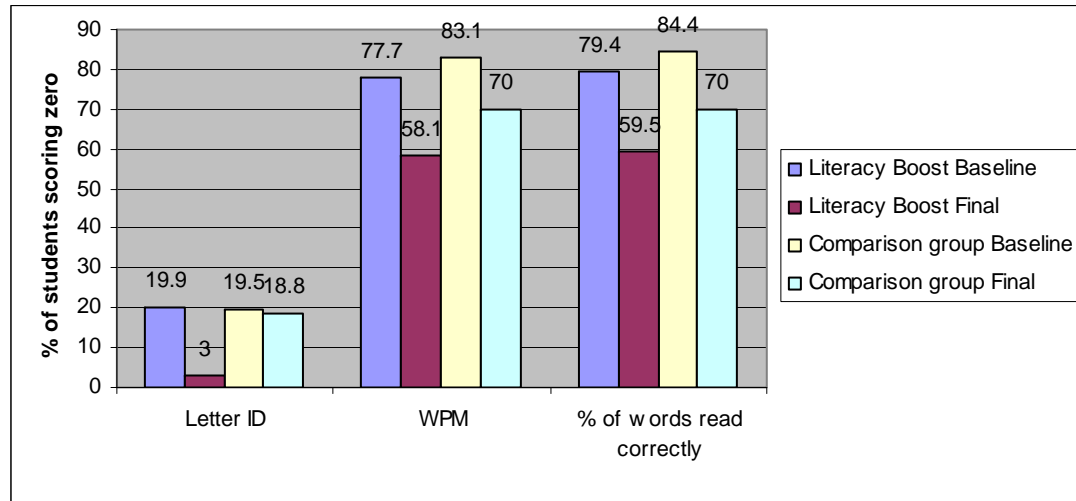
# Year 1 Literacy Boost Results

- Analyzed baseline and end of school year reading assessment scores among grade 2 children in LB and control schools
- Language of assessment: Nepali (the LOI)
- Showed that students from LB schools showed significantly higher gains in key skills than comparison schools at end of year
- Because these groups were equivalent at baseline, this indicates that Literacy Boost supported greater reading skill progress during the school year





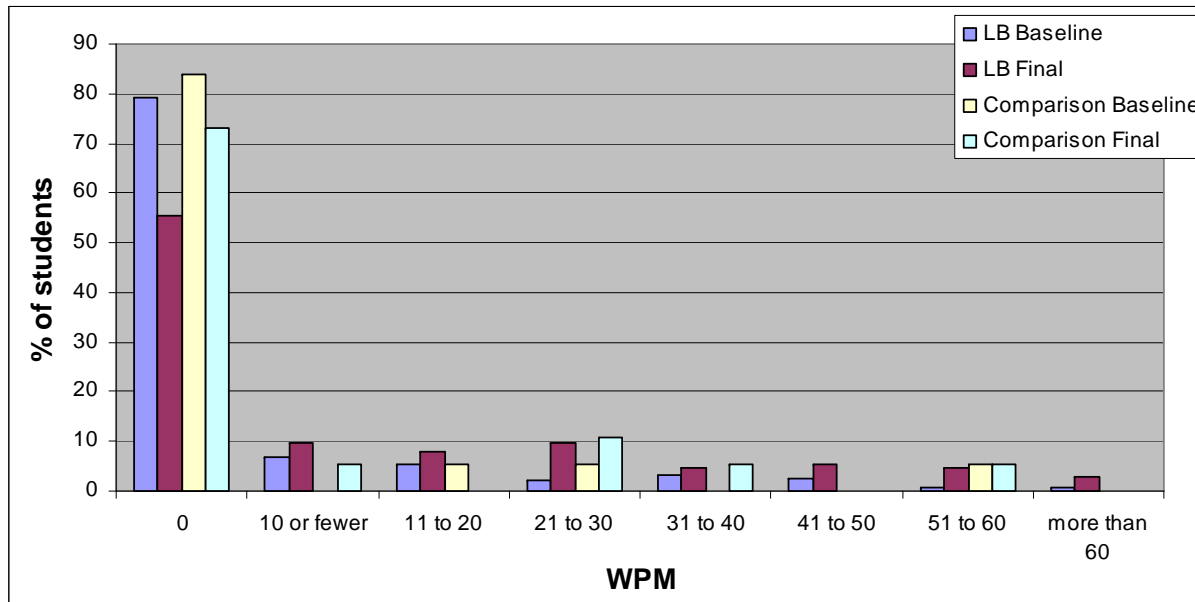
# Progress of matched sample: Tracking the Zeroes



- There was a high percentage of 0 scores at baseline for letter identification, reading fluency and reading accuracy.
- When these percentages are compared to the percentages of zero scores found at the end of the year, in both LB and comparison groups, the drop in the percentage of zeroes in the Literacy Boost group is always larger than the drop in the comparison group and is particularly notable for letter identification.
- *This suggests that Literacy Boost may have had an especially strong impact on supporting the weakest students in the group.*



# Progress of students in matched sample: still a lot of children who read 0 wpm

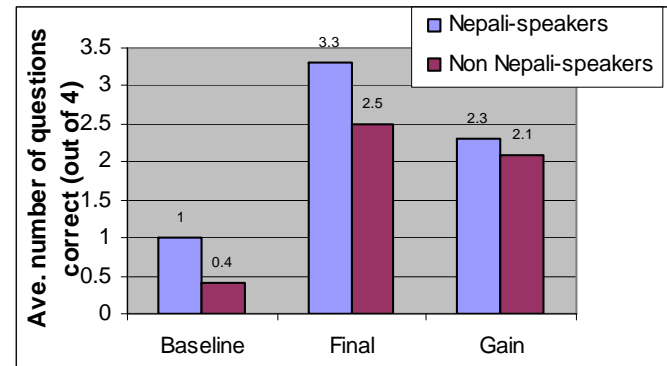
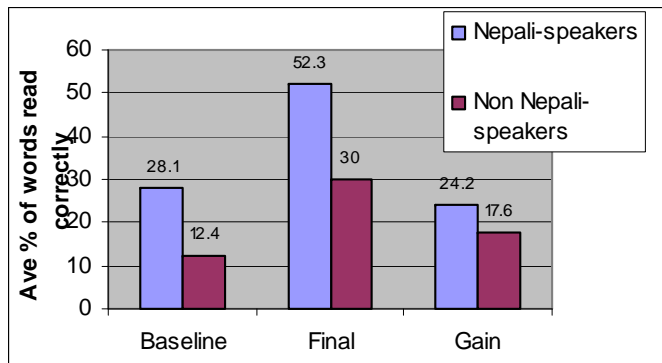
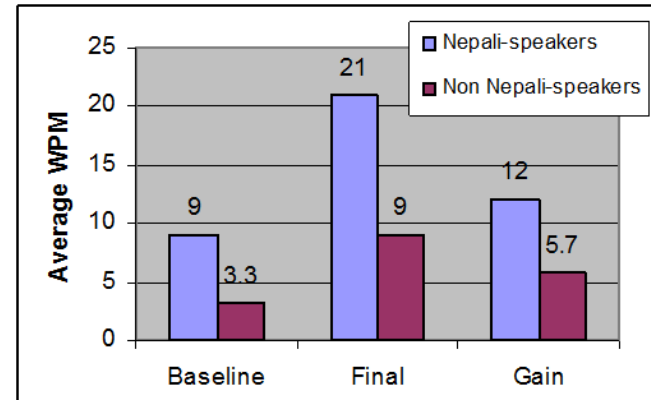
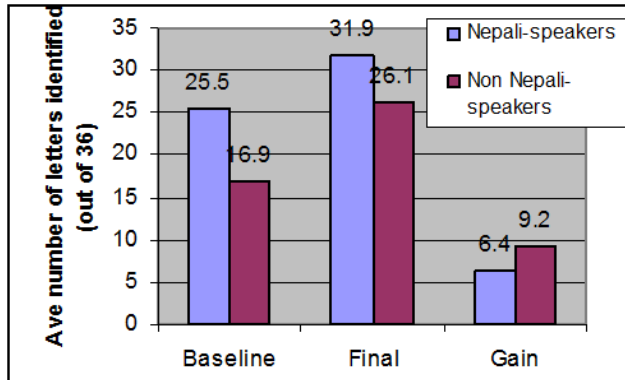


- More than half of LB students still cannot read a single word at the end of the year even though this number dropped from nearly 80% at the start of the year.
- Of the LB children who are still at zero words per minute at the end of the year, **57% were female** and **76.2% were non Nepali-speakers**.
- There was only a 10% decrease in the percent of students who cannot read a single word in the comparison group.





# Mother tongue and LB results: Nepali speakers vs. Non-Nepali

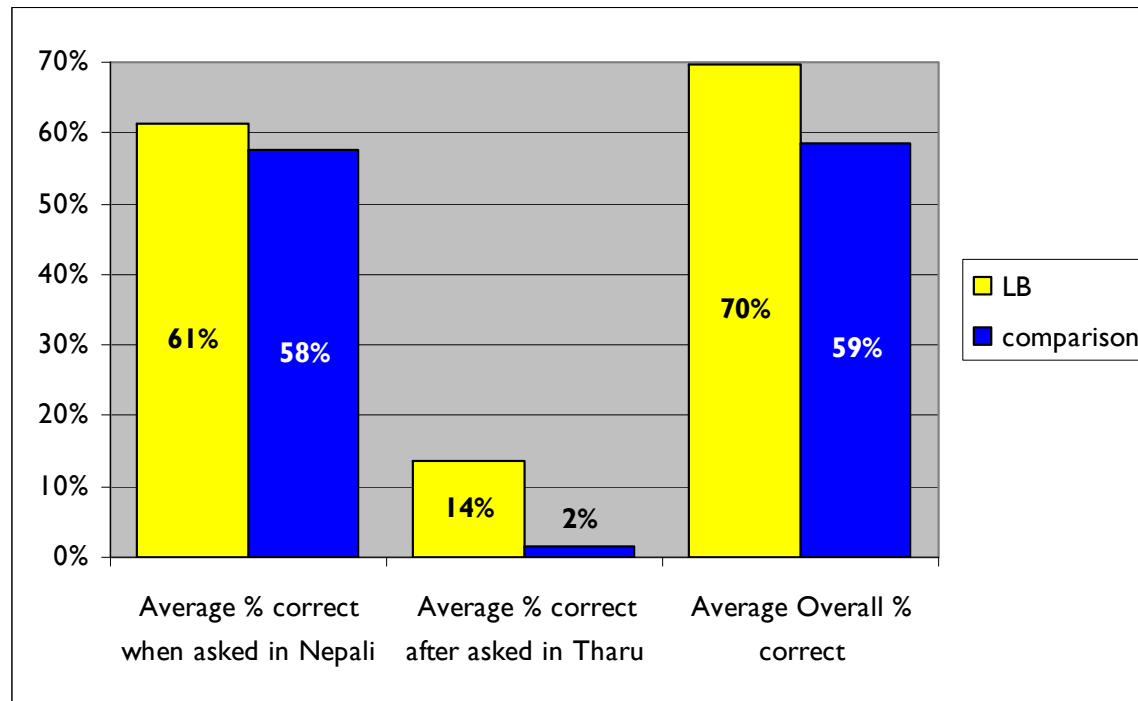


- At baseline and at the end of the year, the Nepali-speaking students did significantly better than their non Nepali-speaking counterparts on letter identification, fluency, accuracy, and comprehension



# Comprehension

- Questions asked first in Nepali, then in Tharu to 134 (of 376) children who had not replied



When students were asked in Tharu, additional LB students demonstrated their comprehension.





# Mother tongue and Literacy Boost: Did LB help non-Nepali speakers?

- Comparing the end of year scores\* of non Nepali-speakers between the LB group and the comparison group, the students in the LB group do significantly better at letter identification ( $p=0.000$ ), CAP ( $p=0.000$ ), and numeracy assessments ( $p=0.001$ ).
  - ***These results suggest that LB supports second-language learners in these areas***
  - ***Attention needs to be intensified to support second-language learners in reading fluency, accuracy and comprehension.***



\*Comparison of scores of the total sample



# Language & literacy differences: implications for programming



- ***Tharu-speakers*** lag behind their Nepali-speaking counterparts in all components of literacy except for CAP and numeracy, and ***female students*** have lower numeracy scores than males. *Further thought needs to be given on how to support these groups in particular.*



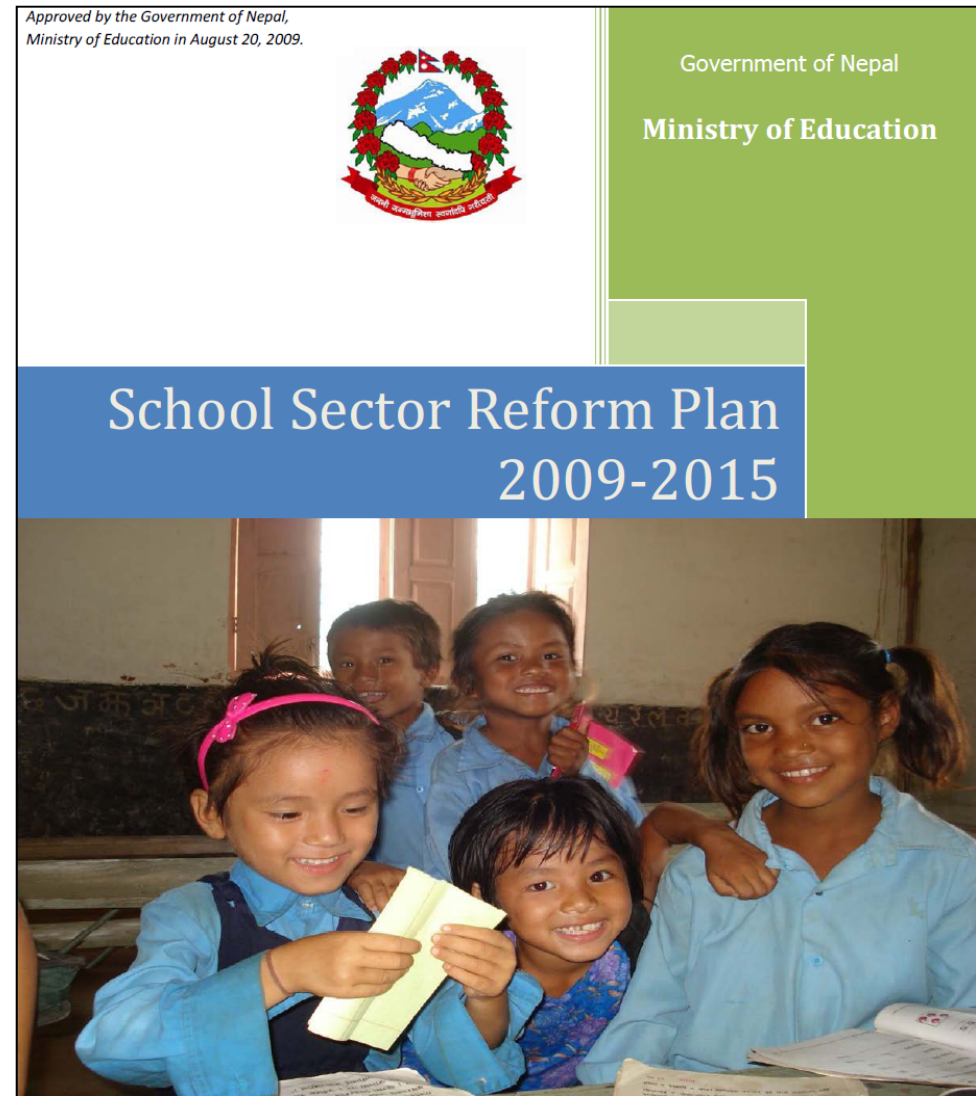
# Current mother tongue-supportive SC initiatives and plans in Nepal

- Continuing Literacy Boost implementation in Kailali, and planning to collect/develop more Tharu reading materials for children
- Developed a new Literacy Boost teacher training session focusing on addressing language issues in the literacy classroom
- In new impact site in Kapilvastu, SC has completed a mother tongue and education situation analysis to guide the development of MLE initiatives
- Building capacity of staff and partner NGOs to address language and literacy issues



# Nepal SSRP, language and learning: prospects for action

- Nepal's School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009-2015 is "focused on raising the quality, efficiency and effectiveness" of education services
- "Introducing mother tongue as medium of instruction" among the policy directions stipulated to improve the quality & relevance of Basic Education





# Nepal SSRP, language and learning: prospects for action



- Nepal's Department of Education Curriculum Development Center tasked with:
  - Developing a comprehensive MLE framework to be implemented “gradually” through district offices
  - Develop learning materials in the different languages



**Namaste!**  
**Thank You!**