



# INCLUSIVE EDUCATION REPORT:

## Realities Facing Hard of Hearing Learners in Nepal and Uganda



Ministry for Foreign  
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Front page cover: Students who are hard of hearing in a classroom in Uganda.



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The project lead consultant and overall project manager take full responsibility for the report and its contents.

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# Executive Summary

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This publication is the result of the International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) Inclusive Education study in Nepal and Uganda of an often-overlooked group of learners with a disability, namely, those who are hard of hearing.

The study focused on the requirements of hard of hearing learners in Nepal and Uganda in mainstream education settings. Through qualitative methodology, it explored the perspectives of four respondent groups (parents/caregivers, hard of hearing learners, teachers, and decision-makers and stakeholders) on the key factors that facilitated or inhibited the implementation of inclusive education at the local level in both countries. Major levels of education were covered by all respondent groups. Private and public schools were also taken into consideration. The study looked into the issues of early rehabilitation of hard of hearing learners, access to hearing aids and assistive technologies, availability of support services, accessibility and inclusivity of learning.

In total, 82 respondents were interviewed through the use of a structured extensive interview guide that contained a set of straightforward sequential questions with multiple choice and open answer options. Interview tools were similar for each set of respondents in each country but differed in specific aspects adapted for the local context (e.g. education system).

The results demonstrated, on the one hand, the relative invisibility of the needs of hard of hearing learners in educational policies, and, on the other hand, discrepancies between the inclusive education policy provisions and practice in both countries. Collected evidence confirmed that hard of hearing children and young people face challenges in mainstream education mainly as a result of the lack of knowledge about their rehabilitation, access and communication requirements, and lack of trained resources in education and public health sectors. The key findings from both countries can be represented as follows:

- There is insufficient training for teachers, school staff and policymakers about hearing loss that would generate an understanding of the educational rights and needs of hard of hearing learners.
- There is a lack of access to necessary hearing aids (which in turn, delays speech and language development with children and impacts academic performance), early identification and intervention, and technical assistance with assistive listening technologies/devices such as FM systems<sup>[1]</sup> or induction loops<sup>[2]</sup>.



- Hard of hearing people as a group are not recognized as a separate disability category in education policies or their definition in disability policies is misleading (as compared to accepted WHO standards) which, in public and educators' perception, conflates their specific access, communication and educational requirements with the requirements of Deaf students. As a result, hard of hearing learners may get better access to learning and information at special schools for the Deaf when they present themselves as Deaf students using sign language<sup>[3]</sup> than in local schools.

On the basis of the evidence that emerged in the course of the study, key enabling factors for inclusive education were clustered according to socio-economic and cultural factors, factors related to family support, school infrastructure, training, learners' individual factors, rehabilitation-related factors, factors related to stakeholders' involvement and policies

To briefly summarize respondent views:

Parents indicated serious constraints in purchasing hearing aids and assistive listening devices, which are not provided by the state. They also reported missing information about the possibilities for early rehabilitation and intervention services, resulting in late hearing loss assessment, delayed language development and, consequently, diminished possibilities for their child.

Hard of hearing children frequently mentioned a lack of accessible educational materials and inclusive teaching approaches as well as an inadequate understanding of how to address their hearing loss. They also stated that social interaction with hearing peers was important to them. Some students reported obstacles in participation in class activities and being limited to only a few close friends whose support they regularly sought.

Teachers reported that they do not have the necessary expertise for educating hard of hearing students and lack in-service and pre-service training in educating children with disabilities as well as any training on teaching hard of hearing children.

Stakeholders from non-governmental organisations, education departments and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) emphasized the lack of newborn and early hearing screening, poverty and economic constraints, budget cuts, common stigma towards disability as well as a false assumption that hard of hearing learners do not need serious support through assistive technologies and access to information and communication. They also reported that since access and accommodation requirements for hard of hearing children are not articulated in policies, teachers are not trained to understand the difference between the needs of the Deaf and the hard of hearing students.

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<sup>[1]</sup> FM systems are wireless assistive hearing devices that provides an effective amplification and cut out background noise over distance

<sup>[2]</sup> Induction loop is a sound system in which a loop of wire around an area in a building produces an electromagnetic signal received directly by hearing aids

<sup>[3]</sup> In special schools for the Deaf, education is based primarily on sign language as the only common language

You will find full accounts of all respondents' views in this report. The report will guide you through the study by summing up and covering:

- Experiences in education shared by hard of hearing children and youth, parents, teachers, and decision-makers and stakeholders.
- Information on teacher training, access and other support measures for hard of hearing students.
- Common challenges in inclusive education for hard of hearing children and youth in Nepal and Uganda.
- Key enabling factors for inclusive education.

The IFHOH Inclusive Education report is intended for use by government education policy-makers, key stakeholders such as teachers and other educators, hard of hearing students, families, non-governmental organisations, disabled people's organisations (DPOs), disability inclusion advocates and community representatives.

The information in this report can be used as a tool to inform advocacy actions towards inclusive education and to draw stakeholders' attention to equity and inclusion of hard of hearing people. It is hoped that the study will contribute to the identification of better education policy provisions and strategies to bring about a truly inclusive educational system for hard of hearing learners.

The International Federation of Hard of Hearing People (IFHOH) was established in 1977 as an international, non-governmental organization, registered in Germany. IFHOH represents the interests of more than 466 million hard of hearing people worldwide. This includes late-deafened adults, cochlear implant users, and people who experience tinnitus, Meniere's disease, hyperacusis and auditory processing disorders. IFHOH has over 40 national member organizations from most regions of the world. IFHOH, the European Federation of Hard of Hearing People (EFHOH) and the Asia Pacific Federation of the Hard of Hearing and Deafened (APFHD), work to promote greater understanding of hearing loss issues and to improve access for hard of hearing people. IFHOH has special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), affiliation with the World Health Organization (WHO), and membership in the International Disability Alliance.

# Introduction

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The IFHOH Inclusive Education Project consisted of a needs assessment study on the requirements for the inclusive education for hard of hearing children and youth in Nepal and Uganda. The project was the first development project undertaken by the International Federation of Hard of Hearing people working in collaboration with member organizations in Uganda and Nepal.

The purpose of the project was to carry out a mapping exercise of the educational status of hard of hearing children and youth within the Kampala School District in Uganda and Province Number 3 of Nepal (renamed Bagmati Province as of January 12, 2020), with the goal of identifying key factors for their inclusive education.

Project data and findings will assist IFHOH in reframing its education policies to incorporate aspects of inclusive education that are unique to developing countries. The work from this project will also contribute to an advocacy plan to promote the right to inclusive education for hard of hearing children.

Some of the issues that the needs assessment considered, were:

- Barrier-free environments
- Captioning in the classroom
- Captioning of videos and other audio-visual materials
- Language development
- Hearing aids and cochlear implants
- Assistive technology
- Support services (e.g., tutoring)
- Social interactions
- Teacher education

Project data also contributed to the work of the Inclusive Education Task Team of the International Disability Alliance. This task team worked towards framing the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from the perspective of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) and disabled people's organizations (DPOs), while ensuring participation of the most marginalised groups.

One of the results of the project is this report which outlines challenges and needs faced by hard of hearing students in mainstream education in Nepal and Uganda. The report also attempts to demonstrate what practices could be useful for other developing countries in their work towards making education for hard of hearing learners more inclusive.

# Context and background of the mapping exercise

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## Conceptual Definitions

### WHO ARE HARD OF HEARING?

The definitions used for the project were taken from publications of IFHOH. Hard of hearing means “all people who have a hearing loss and whose usual means of communication is by speech. It includes those who have become totally deaf after acquisition of speech. This also includes late-deafened adults, cochlear implant users and people who experience tinnitus, Meniere’s disease, hyperacusis and auditory processing disorders.”<sup>[i]</sup> Sign language is not included in the definition but can be used as a communication support. To better understand the differences between the identities, degrees and definitions related to hearing loss, we provide a few of the most widely accepted definitions here:

#### **Hard of hearing**

usually refers to persons with varying degrees of hearing loss who communicate primarily by spoken language. A hard of hearing person may use hearing aids and/or cochlear implants and may supplement any residual hearing with assistive listening devices.

#### **deaf**

a term used to describe the inability to hear normal speech and general sounds.

#### **Deaf**

a cultural, linguistic and political identity acquired by many deaf persons. Individuals who are members of the Deaf community, subscribe to the unique cultural norms, values and traditions of that group. Members of this group typically use sign language as their first language.<sup>[ii]</sup>

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines disabling hearing loss as greater than 40 dB in the better hearing ear in adults (15 years or older) and greater than 30 dB in the better hearing ear in children (0 to 14 years).<sup>[iii]</sup> Most of the hard of hearing persons with mild, moderate, severe and profound hearing loss fit under this definition.

It should be noted, however, that hard of hearing, deaf and Deaf people are, foremost, people who identify themselves as such and that boundaries between hard of hearing and d/Deaf can be fluid. For example, a person whose audiogram shows a profound hearing loss may identify herself as being hard of hearing although clinically she may be considered deaf. The person chooses their reference group, using the sociological definition of a hearing loss. Or, a person who has a moderate hearing loss may respond to the term of being deaf because of a lack of cultural distinctions between terms of being hard of hearing or deaf in her community, yet the person functions as a hard of hearing person.

**“Hard of hearing are a heterogenous group with different needs from those manifested by socially or culturally Deaf.”<sup>[iv]</sup>**

There is also variability in supports required by an individual such as: aural rehabilitation, hearing aids, cochlear implants, other assistive devices, and captioning. As well, their needs may differ. One person’s needs may be as simple as lip reading with hearing aid use while another person may require more complex accommodations such as assistive technology and/or classroom captioning.

The IFHOH Inclusive Education research was targeted specifically towards experiences of hard of hearing children and youth. As a result, the focus of the project was on the specific access, communication and educational needs of hard of hearing learners.

## DEFINITIONS OF HEARING LOSS AND HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE IN UGANDA AND NEPAL

### NEPAL:

The Nepal Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017)<sup>[vi]</sup> defines a “*person with disability*” as a person who has long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory disability or functional impairments or existing barriers that may hinder his or her full and effective participation. The Act has classified disabilities in 10 categories and provides a definition of “*hard of hearing*” which was later accepted by the National Education Policy (2019).

Hearing loss is described as “*problems arising in an individual who cannot discriminate composition of the parts of hearing and voice, rise and fall of position, and level and quality of voice.*” This definition is divided into “(a) *Deaf: A person who cannot hear voice above eighty decibels or who needs sign language for communication*” and “(b) *Hard of hearing: A person who needs a hearing device to hear or who can hear voice from sixty-five to eighty decibels.*”<sup>[vii]</sup>

Given the WHO definition that defines hard of hearing as people with hearing loss greater than 30 dB (in children) and 40 dB (in adults), the Nepal Act Relating to Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2017) excludes hard of hearing people with a hearing capacity from 26 to 64 dB.<sup>[vii]</sup>

In Nepal, statistics on disability are only available on a national level. According to the 2011 Census of Nepal, people with hearing loss constitute 15.4% of the disabled population, while the data from the 2011 National Living Standards Survey identifies the amount of people with hearing loss as 23.4% from the overall disabled population.<sup>[viii]</sup> The data collection combines deaf and hard of hearing into a category called “*hearing impaired*.”

### UGANDA:

The Persons with Disabilities Act (2006) defines 10 categories, one of which is “*difficulty in hearing.*”<sup>[ix]</sup> Its Disability Coding section contains four disabilities related to “*Ear and Eye defects*”: Deaf without speech, Deaf with speech, Deaf blind, and hard of hearing.<sup>[x]</sup>

According to the National Policy on Disability (2006), a group of people with “hearing difficulties” constitutes 15.1% of the disabled population. The Uganda National Population and Housing Census 2014 (NHPC), states that people with “hearing disability” represent 9.2% within the disabled population of five years and above.<sup>[xi]</sup> The hearing loss prevalence numbers seem somewhat at variance.

Hard of hearing and deaf are not separated out in the Draft Policy in Special Needs and Inclusive Education (2011); instead, the term “*hearing impairment*” is used. As a result, separate statistics are not kept on the numbers of hard of hearing persons in the school system.



## WHAT IS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

For this project, the definition of inclusive education of the International Disability Alliance was used. The IDA consensus paper on how to achieve SDG 4 in compliance with United Nations Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) Article 24 (2019) states:

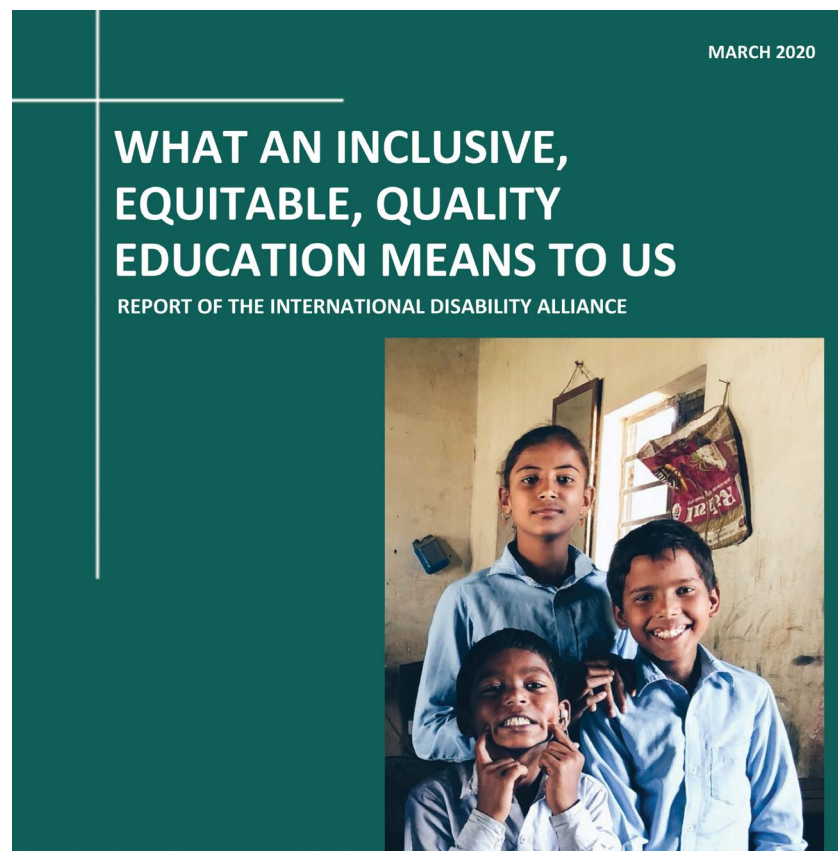
**“In an inclusive education system, all learners with and without disabilities are learning together in classes in their local community schools. All learners receive the support they need, from preschool to tertiary and vocational education, in inclusive and accessible schools and educational facilities, including sign language bilingual schools.” [xii]**

IDA's position reaffirms that children and youth should be educated with their peers, rather than in special schools, with the recognition that deaf individuals may still require bilingual schools in order to communicate in their language. This approach is in line with the UN CRPD Article 24 and the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 that calls for ensuring “inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting life-long learning opportunities for all.”<sup>[xiii]</sup>

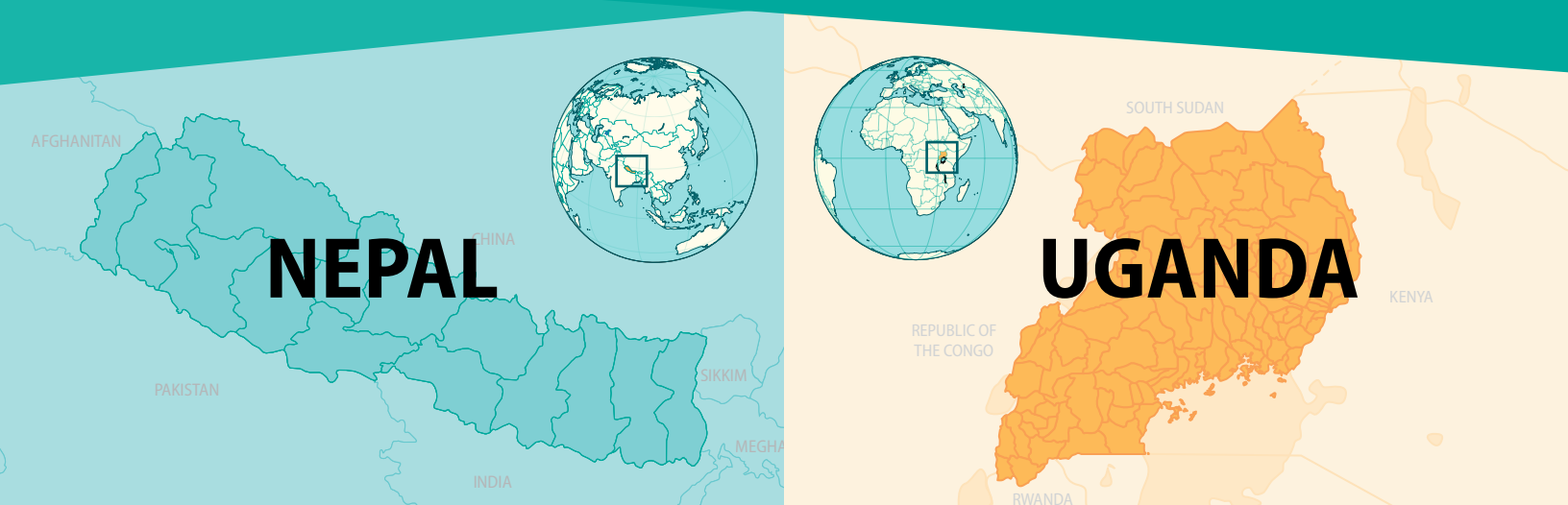
The General Comment No. 4 of Article 24 of the CRPD (2016) states:

*"Inclusion involves a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. Placing students with disabilities within mainstream classes without accompanying structural changes to, (e.g., organization, curriculum and teaching and learning strategies), does not constitute inclusion. Furthermore, integration does not automatically guarantee the transition from segregation to inclusion."*

According to the IDA statement, in keeping with the UN CRPD, an inclusive education system does not exclude the right of children and parents to choose to attend an inclusive school, such as a boarding school or other accommodation options that are outside of their community in special circumstances. Further, as per the CRPD, support services and (re)habilitation services that are required to develop specific skills and language acquisition should be available at the community level. For hard of hearing people these services are important. For example, at the preschool level, there is a need to focus on early rehabilitation and language development.



# Policy frameworks in relation to education of hard of hearing people



## NEPAL:

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MOEST) is responsible for education, including special needs education and inclusive education policies. The School Sector Reform Plan (2009-2016) defines the education system in Nepal as comprising two levels: basic education (grades 1 through 8), and secondary education (grades 9 through 12).<sup>[xiv]</sup> In addition, there is pre-primary (preschool) education in some areas, notably in urban areas. The same applies for post-secondary education. Nepal has two types of schools: community (public) and institutional (private). Community schools receive government grants, and institutional schools are self-funded and operated by non-profit trusts or companies. All universities are publicly managed and supported by public funding.

Nepal ratified the CRPD in 2010. The Constitution of Nepal (2015) safeguards, in Article 31, the right to education. It is compulsory and free of charge up to the secondary level for citizens with disabilities. It ensures that citizens with hearing and speaking impairments shall have free education through the provision of sign language.<sup>[xv]</sup> No other provisions for hard of hearing learners such as assistive technologies are mentioned.

The National Education Policy (2019) and the Constitution provide the right to all children to attend mainstream schools from primary level up to the eighth grade.

The concept of inclusive education was reflected in the Nepal Inclusive Education Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2016) which was replaced by National Education Policy (NEP) in 2019. The NEP requires the provision of appropriate educational opportunities through special and inclusive education, based on the needs of the children with disabilities and the principle of inclusion. It calls for a diversified curriculum and textbooks, audiovisual and support teaching materials and learning methods corresponding with the nature of students' disabilities. The policy also has provisions for disability-friendly academic curriculum and systems of

assessment. However, as attention to the issues and needs of hard of hearing people is quite new in Nepal, academic curriculum and an assessment system for hard of hearing students have not been formulated yet. The available curriculum and assessment system have only focused on deaf students; learning methods, materials and examination accommodations include accessibility measures in special schools for the deaf.

In the Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Sector in Nepal, which is part of the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) (2016-2023), the term “disability” is viewed as the “the deprivation that children who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments experience with regard to access to and participation in education on an equal base with others, as well as in obtaining learning outcomes.” In the spirit of the UN CRPD, it is viewed as an interaction between the person’s ability and attitudinal or environmental barriers. This document also recommends that, for equity evaluation purposes, sign language is to be recognized and taken into account in the mother-tongue dimension, as it the first language for Deaf people<sup>[xvi]</sup>. Again, there is no mention of the needs of hard of hearing people relying on speech and assistive technologies.

The SSDP program, a major education reform in Nepal, influenced the country’s National Education Policy in such aspects as the country’s vision for equitable access to quality education for all. SSDP acknowledges the existence of a special and segregated education provision for children with disabilities, and aims to build capacity for the inclusive education of all children, by training pre-service teachers on “(i) the needs and abilities of children with special needs, (ii) child-centered pedagogical methods and (iii) active and participative learning techniques, instructional accommodation and activity differentiation,” by building on partnerships with non-state actors and different level ministries.<sup>[xvii]</sup>

It also states that the number of resource centers and special schools for children with hearing loss is to be maintained. At the same time, it is expected that the number of students with disabilities receiving scholarships will rise to 83,353 in 2020/21 and the number of schools with “interactive pedagogical materials for children with disabilities”<sup>[xviii]</sup> will increase to 50 in 2020/21.<sup>[xix]</sup>

The SSDP program also envisions training of technical personnel “on managing inclusive education and delivering special needs education,”<sup>[xx]</sup> special initiatives “to ensure that children with hearing impairments are taught by teachers knowing sign language,”<sup>[xxi]</sup> and the strengthening of diagnostic and referral mechanisms” including the establishment of specialized Children with Disabilities Early Childhood Education facilities.”<sup>[xxii]</sup> The needs-based development of ICT educational material for children with visual and hearing impairments and the development of a long-term plan that would gradually turn special schools into resource centers are other strategies and objectives outlined by the SSDP.<sup>[xxiii]</sup>

At the secondary level, the SSDP program expects to increase the level of special schools for children with hearing loss from zero to seven in 2020/21 (which goes against the concept of inclusive education), to increase scholarships (both residential and non-residential) for children with disabilities from 11,000 in 2016/17 to 13,000 in 2020/21, as well as to increase inclusive spending to 0.13 million USD in 2020/21<sup>[xxiv]</sup>.

Other recent policies providing for improved education for children, are:

- The National Framework of Child-friendly Schools for Quality Education (2010)<sup>[xxv]</sup>
- The Consolidated Equity Strategy for the School Education Sector in Nepal (circa 2014)<sup>[xxvi]</sup>
- A Policy Relating to Children (2012) — which makes specific provisions for children with disabilities<sup>[xxvii]</sup>
- The Thirteenth Plan (2013-2016)<sup>[xxviii]</sup>
- The Education Act, Eighth Amendment (2016), which defines inclusive education as *“education provided under the regular system for children with disabilities, maintains special needs education (SNE) and legislates for flexibility in curriculum, books, teaching-learning and assessment system for children with disabilities”*<sup>[xxix]</sup>
- The Fourteenth Plan (2016-2019), to make public infrastructures, institutions and communication accessible, to establish rehabilitation centers and to strengthen community-based rehabilitation programs<sup>[xxx]</sup>
- A draft of the 15th paper is also available<sup>[xxxi]</sup>

All policies are carried out at the administrative level of provinces, districts, municipalities and rural municipalities. The province and local governments, which are municipalities, have to formulate their policies on a local level to achieve the National Plan. Local governments are responsible for policy implementation.

## UGANDA:

The system of education in Uganda comprises early childhood education (from 3 to 6 years old), seven years of primary education (from 7 to 13 years old), six years of secondary education (four years – lower secondary for children of 14 to 17 years old and two years – upper secondary for those 18 years to 19 years old), and three to five years of post-secondary education (20 years old and above). Education is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Sports.

There are public schools which are usually free and private schools which charge tuition; however, there are few public schools in Uganda, and the demand for free education outstrips the availability of places at the public schools.<sup>[xxxii]</sup> Average class size in public schools may exceed 100 students. By contrast, class size in private schools can be up to a maximum of 55 students for primary schools or 60 for secondary schools.<sup>[xxxiii]</sup>

Education is a constitutional right enshrined in the 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Uganda. Article 30 makes education for children a human right, while Article 34 obliges the state and parents to provide children with basic education.

Uganda was among the first countries to ratify the UN CRPD in 2008 and committed itself to progressive realisation of social and economic rights of people with disabilities. A number of national policies seek to ensure rights to education and provisions for children with disabilities, including:

- The 1992 Government White Paper on Education defines basic education as a right of every individual
- The Uganda National Institute of Special Education Act (1995) instituted Special Needs Education (SNE) and put responsibility on the Faculty of Special Needs and Rehabilitation of the Kyambogo University to address the specific educational needs of pupils and students with disabilities, to provide assistive devices and train teachers in SNE and inclusive education (IE)
- The National Council for Disability Act (2003) was established to address complaints of violations of the Constitution
- Uganda's Persons with Disabilities Act (2006) and its National Policy on Disability (2006) promotes *"equal opportunities and enhanced empowerment, participation and protection of rights of persons with disabilities irrespective of gender, age and type of disability."*

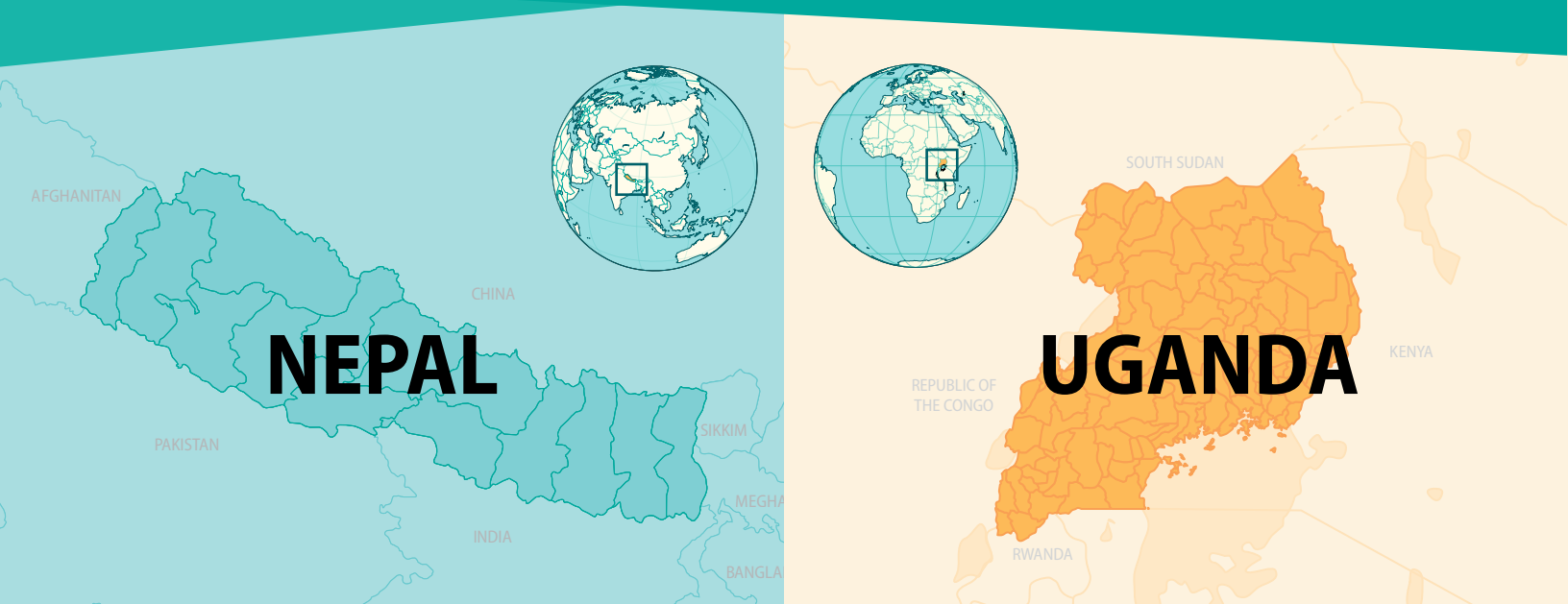


- The Education Act (2008) provides for compulsory primary education for all age appropriate children.<sup>[xxxiv]</sup>
- The Universal Primary Education Act (1997) introduced inclusive education in Uganda and made it financially possible for families to send their disabled children to school by providing free primary education to four children in every family, including disabled children. However, there is no national policy that obliges all schools to make education accessible to all children at all levels.
- The Copyright and Neighboring Rights Act (2006) allows for any work to be transcribed into Braille or sign language for educational purposes.<sup>[xxxv]</sup>
- The Ministry of Education and Sports developed the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Policy in 2011; however, it is still in final draft. In 2017, the policy was merged with the informal education policy, resulting in one broad policy that covers all types of inclusion (e.g., people disadvantaged on the basis of gender, poverty, refugee status, rurality).<sup>[xxxvi]</sup> This policy was expected to develop a common understanding of inclusive education in Uganda and measures to achieve it, but the problem around the statement on the definition of IE and the needed measures became a stumbling block to having it passed by the cabinet.

The inclusive education policy in Uganda, overall, is still in the development stage, making inclusive education a statement of aspiration rather than a tangible plan for action.<sup>[xxxvii]</sup> There is also no reference to hard of hearing learners in most of the policies or attention to their specific requirements.

Administrative levels in Uganda's decentralized policy framework are national, district, county/municipal, sub-county/division and parish/ward levels. Local governments have the primary responsibility for putting in place appropriate interventions.

# Socioeconomic situation in Nepal and Uganda in regard to generic education and inclusive education



## NEPAL:

Nepal is a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic and multi-religious developing country in South Asia. Over 40% of the population live below the poverty line.<sup>[xxxviii]</sup> Severe earthquakes that struck Nepal in 2015 left more than 600,000 structures in Kathmandu and other nearby towns either damaged or destroyed,<sup>[xxxix]</sup> and a shattered the country's economy. As of 2017, electrical coverage had reached 95.5% of Nepal's population.<sup>[xi]</sup> Nowadays, almost all schools in Nepal have electricity.

An estimated 78% of children with disabilities are not in education<sup>[xli]</sup> and only 1% of the population with disabilities in Nepal has access to employment.<sup>[xlii]</sup> Disability is rarely addressed as a public health issue or taken into account in education, health and economic development.

Very few mainstream public schools enroll children with disabilities. Instead, the children attend special schools, where children with a particular disability (such as children who are blind or who have an intellectual disability), are grouped with others with a similar disability. Some attend mainstream private schools. The size of a regular class should not exceed more than 40 students in both public and private schools.<sup>[xliii]</sup> Out of more than 30,000 schools in Nepal, just 380 have what they call "*resource classes*."<sup>[xliv]</sup> In the schools visited by Human Rights Watch, children in resource classes ranged in age from 7 to 17, with some in their 20s.<sup>[xlv]</sup>

Nepal has made significant progress in achieving universal primary education in recent years, but children with disabilities remain largely excluded from mainstream schools. Government policies declare inclusive education goals, but there is a big gap in implementation – concrete plans and mechanisms are lacking.

In terms of financial support, the national government provides exemption of fees to any person with a disability wanting to attend a government school or college and makes provision for the “*education to the blind, deaf and feeble-minded persons*,”<sup>[xlvii]</sup> mainly through providing special schools for them. If a person has a disability card, s/he can get a tuition fee exemption at government-managed schools or colleges, both in special and mainstream schools. Some special schools have residence facilities, but the cost of these facilities is waived only for students in a severe financial condition.

The SSDP contains the provision of extra financial assistance to schools serving children with special needs,<sup>[xlviii]</sup> in the form of scholarships which are meant to cover medical expenses, transportation, aids, books and learning materials.<sup>[xlviii]</sup>

The Government of Nepal has allocated a small amount of funding to an NGO, called Cochlear Implant Nepal Group (CING) to support cochlear implant surgery for low income families with children younger than 5 years old. There is no public funding for hearing aids nor reference to state legislation for the provision of hearing aids. Hearing aids can sometimes be purchased and serviced in another country in order to ensure better quality during the hearing aid fitting process. Spare replacement parts (for broken hearing aids) sometimes have to be purchased in India as they are lacking on the domestic market.

## UGANDA:

Uganda is a low-income country with 85% of its population living in rural areas<sup>[xlix]</sup> and a high population growth rate at 3.1% compared to a world average of 1.2%.<sup>[i]</sup> In 2013, more than one-third of Ugandan citizens lived below the international poverty line of US \$1.90 a day.<sup>[ii]</sup> Uganda has a high gap of 12 percentage points between persons with and without disabilities living below the international poverty line. Around 60% of people with disabilities live below the poverty line as compared to around 48% percent of people without disabilities (data from 2010-2011).<sup>[iii]</sup> Less than 10% of households of persons with disabilities had electricity in 2001-2015.<sup>[iii]</sup> The majority of the schools in Uganda are still not grid connected. In 2013, 84% of primary schools and 87.6% of secondary schools were not connected to the grid. In rural areas, only 5-7% of schools have electricity.<sup>[iv]</sup> Availability of electricity is far worse in the case of state schools than in the private ones, with only 26.4% of the state secondary schools having electricity, compared with 66.1% of private schools.<sup>[iv]</sup>

According to the UNICEF report “Research Study on Children with Disabilities Living in Uganda” (2014), approximately 9% of children with disabilities of school age attend primary school, compared to a national average of 92%. Overall, just 5% of children with disabilities can access

education through inclusive schools and 10% through special schools. The Global Initiative on Out of School Children (2015) reports that even if children with disabilities can gain access to school they are particularly disadvantaged by non-inclusive teaching methods inflexible curricula and examination systems.<sup>[lvi]</sup> Also noted is that many teachers are still not sufficiently able to assist learners due to limited in service training.<sup>[lvii]</sup>

The National Development Plan (NDP) states that 10% of children in school have disabilities, and their access to education is hampered by limited technical, human, financial and physical public resources. Lack of adequate funding to SNE deprives children with disabilities of their right to education and increases their susceptibility to poverty,<sup>[lviii]</sup> as public financing for special needs education accounts for only 0.1% of the education sector budget. <sup>[lix]</sup>

The out-of-school rates of children with disabilities are two-to-three times as high as those of children without disabilities in Uganda.<sup>[lx]</sup> Only around 2-3% of persons with disabilities aged 25 years and older completed tertiary education around 2012.<sup>[lxi]</sup>

In relation to hearing loss, it is estimated that there are more than 300,000 deaf children in Uganda (the figures do not separate out d/Deaf and hard of hearing children).

According to UNICEF, enrollment levels for Universal Primary Education was 94% in 2012, but only 10% of the children with hearing loss (both d/Deaf and hard of hearing) were enrolled in UPE.<sup>[lxii]</sup>

Such interventions as the introduction of Universal Primary Education in 1997 and Universal Secondary Education in 2007, resulted in the enrolment of a larger number of learners with disabilities, including learners with hearing loss.

The increase in enrollment required more resources. However, with stagnant grants/budgetary allocations, there has been a reduction in the unit cost of the grants to individual learners.<sup>[lxiii]</sup> High cost of schooling is one of the major reasons for excluding children especially at the secondary education level (unlike the UPE program where 75% of the primary schools are public).<sup>[lxiv]</sup> Every term, the government provides a small subvention to each government-aided school that is known to have children with disabilities,<sup>[lxv]</sup> but these subventions are of a very small amount and often do not arrive on time.

Provision of inclusive education, in general, is constrained by a weak policy framework, limited in-service training, socio-cultural factors and inadequate financing.<sup>[lxvi]</sup> Socio-cultural factors also undermine enrollment of girls and children with disabilities. These include child marriages, early marriage, child labor and female genital mutilation, among others.

As data on learners with disabilities is available mostly at the national level, its lack at the district and local levels hinders planning and targeting of educational services. There is a confirmed “lack of ability of a system to identify assessment and placement of children requiring SNE.” <sup>[lxvii]</sup>

There is no public provision for cochlear implant surgery and hearing aids. The government does not provide any hearing aids for any age, creating a reliance on foundations to provide children with free hearing aids. However, they are usually provided without a process for individual fine-tuning and fitting.



Uganda student with a lollipop during a school break.



# Research Methodology

The main aim of the mapping exercise was to identify the key factors contributing to inclusive education of hard of hearing children in the given contexts of selected school districts in Nepal and Uganda. The focus of the research was on students attending public and private schools in the selected districts and municipalities, with particular attention to the experiences of hard of hearing learners. The needs assessment intended to document views of respondents as to the status of educational practices for hard of hearing children and youth.

It should be emphasized that the mapping exercise did not aim to develop in-depth analysis of the state of inclusive education for hard of hearing learners in Nepal and Uganda, but rather to get a snapshot of the educational experience and most pronounced challenges and needs faced by hard of hearing learners in mainstream education in the selected school districts of the study.

**The project was conducted in two areas in each country.**

## Province Number 3 (Bagmati Province), Nepal

was selected for the mapping exercise as a large number of hard of hearing learners study at different levels of education in Kathmandu located in Bagmati Province. The city has a concentration of services (medical service and rehabilitation services) that have drawn people from the rural areas. There is also a greater number of private schools and universities in the capital city than in outlying districts.

## Kampala school district, Uganda

was chosen because the district contains mainstream schools, higher institutions of learning and the existence of several disability organizations including organizations of and for hard of hearing people. Kampala is the capital and largest city of Uganda, divided into five divisions: Kampala Central Division, Kawempe Division, Makindye Division, Nakawa Division and Rubaga Division. The needs assessment was carried out in all five divisions.

The mapping exercise team consisted of the project coordinator, one coordinator and one national project associate for each country. The national associates in Uganda and Nepal were responsible for collecting and analysing the data. National project associates identified respondent groups in their countries, conducted interviews and prepared reports of the findings, using condensation methodology for interview analysis.

The needs assessment was carried out through a qualitative study of an exploratory nature. Associates selected interview cases according to intensity, and a number of rich cases was identified that provided in-depth information. A series of face-to-face individual, qualitative in-depth interviews with respondents representing each target group, was conducted. A qualitative approach was chosen to explore the perceptions and attitudes of respondents, which are critical for successful inclusion of hard of hearing learners. Importantly, it gave a voice to the hard of hearing learners themselves and an in-depth account of their needs in mainstream education.

To reflect multiple perspectives on inclusive education for hard of hearing learners, the mapping exercise covered four respondent groups in both countries:

**1** Parents/caregivers of hard of hearing children and youth

**2** Hard of hearing learners (not necessarily related to parents/caregivers in the first group) .

**3** Teachers of hard of hearing children and youth, as well as school administrators (respondents were not necessarily working with the interviewed group of hard of hearing learners)

**4** Key decision-makers (district education officers, government officials) and stakeholders (community experts on inclusive education, leaders or members of the organizations of hard of hearing people)

All major segments of education were covered by the target groups: pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary. Types of schools (public/private) as well as degrees of hearing loss (moderate/severe/profound) were also taken into account in the research design.



It should be noted that the hard of hearing learners' group was not necessarily related to or involved with the other respondents in the study, including parents, caregivers, teachers and administrators. Parent participants were, in large part, parents of younger children attending pre-primary and primary school, to ensure that information on the situation of these children was collected. Therefore, directly interconnected findings between the groups should not be expected and this dynamic may account for some variance in the responses.

Research objectives were developed in relation to each interviewed target group. For the purpose of identifying comparable target groups we referred to education level as a common denominator in both countries, while the age of students could differ in the same level of education in Uganda and Nepal accordingly.

## Research Objectives

Parents or caregivers of hard of hearing children/youth	To identify <b>barriers</b> to and <b>factors</b> for inclusive education from parents'/caregivers' perspective; to understand opportunities provided by parents'/caregivers as well as their role in a hard of hearing child's inclusion (Note: in the study, this category is referred to as parents.)
Hard of hearing children (students)	To identify <b>barriers</b> that hard of hearing students face in primary, secondary, high school and higher education; their access needs as well as <b>factors</b> for their inclusion in education
Teachers of hard of hearing children	To identify <b>barriers</b> hard of hearing students face in education (primary, secondary, high school and higher education) and their <b>needs</b> , as well as <b>factors</b> for their inclusion of hard of hearing children and youth in mainstream education; To identify the needs (training, support systems, etc.) of teachers working with hard of hearing students, fulfilment of which would support their provision of inclusive education for hard of hearing students
Decision-makers and stakeholders	To identify <b>policy</b> tools for inclusive education of hard of hearing children and youth; To identify <b>structures</b> and <b>support</b> provided for inclusive education of hard of hearing children and youth; To collect their thoughts on improving access to inclusive education for hard of hearing children and youth

Altogether, 82 respondents were interviewed in Nepal and Uganda in the groups of parents/caretakers, hard of hearing learners, teachers, key decision-makers and stakeholders. Please see Table 1 for more information on the respondents. The research was also supported by a literature review on inclusive education in Uganda and Nepal as well as country-specific research.

**Table 1. Overview of the target groups and respondents interviewed in the mapping exercise.**

Target Groups	Parents of hard of hearing students
Age of Hard of Hearing Onset	3 to 20 years old
Education Level	Primarily pre-school, primary, secondary levels
Nepal	8 parents of children aged 3-13 years old
Uganda	13 parents of children aged 3-20 years old attending private (n=5), schools for deaf students (n=5) or private special schools for children with disabilities (n=3)
Target Groups	Hard of hearing students
Age of Hard of Hearing Onset	8-30 years old
Education Level	Primary to higher education at university and colleges
Nepal	16 students in total, 8-30 years old. 3 students had moderate hearing loss, 6 had severe hearing loss and 7 had profound hearing losses. All had bilateral hearing loss except for 1 student. The 2 students with profound hearing loss studied at a special school for the deaf and 14 students were from regular mainstream schools and colleges. Surveyed students studied in both private and public schools/colleges.
Uganda	15 students in total: 6 students (18-24 years old) studying in a state-owned university, 6 (12-13 years of age with 1 being 17 years old) in state-owned primary schools and 3 students in private secondary schools. 12 students had mild hearing loss, 2 students had moderate hearing loss and 1 student had a severe hearing loss.
Target Groups	Teachers
Age of Hard of Hearing Onset	3-30 years old
Education Level	Pre-school, primary high school, higher education levels
Nepal	In total, 12 teachers, varying from mainstream pre-school to university, were interviewed for the study (2 teachers per each level of pre-school, primary level, secondary level and higher secondary level), and 4 teachers from higher education (i.e., colleges, affiliated by a national university). 1 school was a community-managed state school and 7 schools were private schools. Similarly, 1 college was a community college and the other 2 colleges were private colleges affiliated with the national state university.
Uganda	10 teachers in mainstream schools or universities, including 4 primary school teachers, 2 high school teachers and 4 lecturers from a state university. The study was conducted with teachers who teach hard of hearing students in state mainstream primary schools, a private high school and lecturers from a state university.

Target Groups	Key decision-makers (district education officers, govt. officials) and stakeholders (community experts on inclusive education, community leaders or members of organizations of hard of hearing people)
Age of Hard of Hearing Onset	
Education Level	
Nepal	The interviews were conducted with 5 different institutions related to inclusive education of hard of hearing at all education levels: Inclusive Section of Department of Education; Education Development and Coordination Unit (formally known as District Education Office) responsible for all local government of the district; Education Section of Metropolitan City, responsible person for inclusive education of National Federation of the Disabled Nepal and President of Hard of Hearing organization.
Uganda	<p>3 decision makers/stakeholders were interviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) The chairman of private schools in the central division of Kampala, responsible for monitoring private schools in the division, and director of St. James Primary school, Wakiso</li> <li>ii) Center Manager of the Uganda National Association for the Deaf</li> <li>iii) Local Council chairman – community leader, local government level decision- maker.</li> </ul>

## DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND ANALYSIS

The data was collected using an extensive structured qualitative interview approach. Different interview guidelines were prepared for each target group. The guidelines were in part based on and inspired by the UNICEF/Washington Group module on limitations to school participation<sup>[lxviii]</sup> (the Washington Group Short Set on Functioning is a tool for standardizing global data collection on disability) and TALIS questions (the Teaching and Learning International Survey) for teachers' interview guide. For this study, the interview guide contained a set of straightforward sequential questions with multiple-choice and open-answer options. Interview tools were similar for each group in each country but differed in specific aspects (adapted to local geographical units, education systems. etc.). Information-rich cases were selected and the sample size was determined by the study's objectives.

The development of the research instruments and mapping exercise process took place in the following way: the project coordinator developed an interview guide proposal for each target group, then adapted it on the basis of feedback from national associates. The methodology approaches, interview guides and challenges of data collection were discussed by the project coordinator and national associates in bi-monthly Skype meetings. The testing results indicated whether further adaptation of the interview guide was necessary. The coordinator also proposed an outline for the comprehensive findings reports, which was reviewed by the project team. Finally, national associates conducted interviews with the target groups (starting with the parents' group and closing with decision-makers) and developed the findings reports for each group. All interviews were conducted in English; in Uganda, they were sometimes combined with the use of Luganda language to help participants understand the content of the questions. In Nepal, a translation was done into Nepali language and interviews were conducted with the help of bilingual English-Nepali guides.

In total, 11 bi-monthly Skype meetings were held by the project coordinator for discussions, reviews and mutual consultations with national associates on the mapping exercise content and process, selection of respondents, development of tools and report-writing. The project team, including the project coordinator, national associates and oversight team, held a two-day face-to-face meeting at the conclusion of the project to discuss the project and common findings. The rich discussion contributed to the mapping exercise, as it gave space to a focus group-like discussion. This outcome had not been anticipated in the original design of the study.

## LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of the study is that data on hard of hearing persons is not representative in Nepal and Uganda, as statistics on hard of hearing is lacking. In addition, disability data is fragmented and not fully disaggregated. This leads to a non-representative sampling dataset. The methodological challenges were:

- Looking into limited geographical areas (districts) in Nepal and Uganda while keeping the macro view of the situation of people with disabilities on the national levels.
- Securing information about the context in each country from the available sources to provide a background for the study. Persistence in securing the information was required and employed by the project coordinator and associates.
- Recognizing linguistic and conceptual equivalence. It was important to keep linguistic conceptual differences in both countries in mind, as concepts may have different meanings in different contexts. Therefore, the team agreed on the equivalence of the used concepts and terms where necessary.
- Ensuring results were reported similarly for both jurisdictions, given different approaches and styles. Common survey instruments were developed, and the project coordinator worked with associates to finalize reports to ensure overall consistency in conveying the results.
- Reporting of results reflects a small number of responses and is dependent on the sample interviewed.

The mapping exercise also faced a few data collection challenges related mainly to:

- Understanding of the questions' content
  - ◊ The questions were simplified as much as possible to ensure their understanding by respondents. Still, at times the project associates needed to translate the guide into the native language of respondents who didn't speak English.
  - ◊ Questions could be difficult to understand (e.g., for parents or hard of hearing learners) and such interviews required a significant investment in time and efforts.

- Challenging access to respondents
  - ◊ Access to respondents proved to be challenging due to several factors, including lack of identification and self-identification of hard of hearing learners.
  - ◊ Securing participants at times that did not interfere with school breaks and national holidays, was worked around by extending the timeframe for the interviews.
  - ◊ It was possible to reach respondents largely thanks to the involvement of project associates in both countries in non-governmental organizations for hard of hearing people, and links to schools with hard of hearing students. This helped to establish trust between associates and the respondents they interviewed.

The following sections will present the descriptive analysis of the data collected in the study, drawing together the perspectives of the different participants. The perspectives have been organized, in large part, along the key components of inclusive education for hard of hearing as articulated by the IFHOH Education Paper (2014). These components included: the provision of a barrier-free environment optimized for maximal speech intelligibility, visual access to information through the use of captioning or speech-to-text technology, support services to maximize language development, the free provision of hearing aids and assistive listening devices, the provision of a variety of personal support services, support for social interaction and specific training for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing.





Child on the right, with a cochlear implant, studies with the support of a classmate.



## Research Findings

The following section of this report summarizes the findings for each of the target groups in the study. As noted in the methodology section of the report, the parents were not necessarily those of the students involved in the study, nor were the teachers necessarily their instructors. This dynamic may account for variances in responses.



Young boy wearing a cochlear implant attending a class in Nepal.



## Nepal findings on challenges of inclusive education for hard of hearing people — participants' perspectives:

### Parents' Perspectives

#### ROLE OF PARENTS

Most parents stated that they provided training and exercises to develop speech of their children at home. Major activities that parents conducted at home were communication exercises, reading and writing exercises, singing and music-related exercises and drawing and playing activities. It was reported that nearly all children of interviewed parents communicate through speech, listening and lip-reading. Parents stated that they try to provide proper hearing aids as early as possible, to ensure successful rehabilitation. Most of the children use hearing aids (but started using at different ages for economic reasons) and two children used cochlear implants. According to their parents, nearly all children continue to have difficulties with understanding other people's speech.

Parents stated that they informed schools about the hearing loss and communication needs of their children. Some parents reported that they had contacted their local hard of hearing organization prior to school enrollment of their children to request a joint visit to the school, in order to explain the communication and accessibility needs of the child to the teachers and principal.

Some parents with children in primary upper grade school placed their child in extra classes for the subjects in which their child has been lagging behind, such as sciences and mathematics. They felt this was needed. Parents try to regularly support their child's education at home by motivating them to learn and repeat the course content together.

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR HARD OF HEARING

The majority of the parents expressed the view that children with and without disabilities should go to the same school together. Some parents, however, stated that children with total and profound hearing loss should choose special school education if mainstream schools did not provide necessary support services for hard of hearing children. Some of the parents were also of an opinion that if a mainstream school already has students with hearing loss and teachers knew how to teach them, they felt that their children's schooling would be more appropriate in that school. Most parents stated they were satisfied with the cooperation from their child's schoolteachers.

## COUNSELLING FOR PARENTS AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Parents stated they were not satisfied with the access to necessary information on hearing loss, early intervention services and the extent of inclusion of their children in school. They stated that they did not have proper knowledge on assistive listening devices and speech and language development. This knowledge came solely from their own experience in parenting hard of hearing children. Some parents described a bitter experience of mainstream schools having rejected their profoundly hard of hearing children and suggesting the placement of their child in special deaf schools, even though the parent preferred the child to be close to home and to focus on auditory means of learning in an inclusive setting.

Parents reported that there is no newborn hearing screening or hearing screening for children before school enrollment, even at the pre-school level. As a result, many children's hearing loss was identified late and parents felt that there were other issues that were still unidentified. Most parents also found that the information provided by doctors and audiologists was too technical and difficult to understand.

These parents felt that social counseling could be provided by organizations of the deaf or hard of hearing but acknowledged that it would be limited as there are few such organizations. Parents also stated that it is beneficial to share their experiences and success stories with other parents of children with hearing loss.

## ACCESS TO HEARING AIDS AND COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

Parents shared that their children have hearing aids. Some hearing aids were donated by private foundations or NGOs. Some parents who purchased hearing aids from hearing aid centers, complained that although hearing aid service centers were available in the capital city and other big cities, there is a lack of proper consultation, explanation and after sales service at the centers.

Parents of two children with profound hearing loss reported that after using hearing aids for a while, they replaced them with cochlear implants. Parents of other children with profound hearing loss shared that they also wanted cochlear implants for their children and were recommended the surgery by doctors but couldn't afford the surgery because of its high cost. Respondents stated that there is no direct government provision for cochlear implants, so most children, even those profoundly hard of hearing, have been using hearing aids. As parents indicated, thanks to a cochlear implant group, it has become possible to receive very limited state funding support for a unilateral cochlear implant for a child under the age of 5 and limited post-surgery rehabilitation support after surgery. Still, they said, the number of children who benefit from this support, is very low - only 10-15 children per year.

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Parents reported that their children did not have assistive listening devices such as FM systems. Parents stated that they did not know about assistive devices, and they also stated that teachers and school staff didn't have any knowledge about assistive listening technologies. They stated that devices such as induction loops and FM systems had never been used for their children in the schools.

## SUPPORT SERVICES

Parents stated that they were not satisfied with support services that their children receive. There are no support services such as oral interpreting, sign language interpreting, captioning and note-taking. Extra support such as an itinerant teacher, speech therapist, tutor, psychologist or counselor are not available at schools.

Parents shared that, in general, in Nepal, such services as audiology, hearing aid fitting and speech therapy are available outside of school, but the supply does not meet the demand because of the lack of trained human resources. Few companies provide the services and parents reported having to pay a lot of money for them as well as for the assistive devices and hearing aids. In addition, these services are only available in the capital city, so parents outside of the capital have to travel there for their children to receive these services or have to relocate to get needed intervention.

Parents reported that the quality of available speech therapy was poor, as public speech therapy services are lacking or only provided in big city hospitals, while private services are too costly.



**“The government should provide support services to the school where hard of hearing students study”**

(A father of an 8-year-old hard of hearing child, Nepal)

## SOCIAL INTERACTION

Parents of children at the pre-school and primary level, stated that their hard of hearing children do not feel that they are excluded in school activities and cultural life. However, the responses were different for students in the upper primary school grades, secondary and tertiary levels. Parents spoke of their exclusion from games, music and outdoor school activities. Parents felt their exclusion was due to communication barriers. Notably, children who do not have clear pronunciation and speech, were reported to have more difficulties making friends than children with fewer speech difficulties.



## SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Parents shared that the infrastructure of the government schools was much better than most of the private schools, but their maintenance was low. They also reported that the quality of education was below that of private schools. The private schools conduct classes in English and use extra textbooks for math, English and science subjects. Parents reported that most small-sized private schools are operating in small hired residential houses. Their classrooms are very narrow and do not have enough light to see teachers' facial expressions and lip movement. Lessons are noisy as many children speak at the same time. Most classrooms produce an echo due to a lack of insulating partitions and/or sound absorption materials, resulting in an extremely unfavorable acoustic environment for hard of hearing children.

Almost all parents expressed the view that their hard of hearing children face significantly more difficulties in learning as compared to their hearing peers. To help their learning situation, teachers in both private and public schools allow hard of hearing children to sit in a front row (but not always and there is no guarantee that this placement will be allowed) and try to face them for easier lip-reading.

Parents explained that in all classrooms, the chairs are set up in the shape of a theater seating arrangement, which doesn't allow a hard of hearing child to see other pupils' faces. Classroom environments were found to be noisy, with not enough light. Parents felt that there were more safety features in private schools for hard of hearing children, as compared with public schools.

## TEACHER TRAINING

Parents stated that they felt that school teachers know about deafness and the issues faced by children who are considered to be deaf, but not about the specific needs of hard of hearing students. Teachers lack knowledge and skills on how to teach and take care of hard of hearing children in school. Parents also reported that although teachers in public schools have opportunities to take pre-service and in-service training which includes some aspects of inclusive education, it doesn't address individual needs of children with disabilities. Thus, the in-service does not provide guidance for teachers on teaching hard of hearing children in an inclusive way.

They also do not have training opportunities that would have made them better informed about the needs of hard of hearing children. Teachers' lack of competence is a key barrier for hard of hearing children's inclusion at school, according to the parents interviewed.



**“In this situation [lack of knowledge on educating hearing loss children among teachers], a special school for hard of hearing will be better than the current [mainstream] school”**

(A mother of preschool 4-year-old hard of hearing child, Nepal)



A hard of hearing Nepali student (first on the right) listening attentively to classmates.

# Students' Perspectives

Students at primary, secondary, and higher education schools were interviewed; the findings are summarized together as there were many commonalities in self-reports.

## SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND ACCESS TO ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Almost all hard of hearing children stated that they found it hard to understand other people's speech and lectures, even when wearing a hearing aid or CI, and that their teachers were not always aware of their difficulty. They stated that hearing was further compromised by background noise.

Students reported having difficulties understanding teachers in the noisy environments, which were observed in many classrooms. They reported difficulties with following the classes and extra-curricular activities. Secondary school students stated that they relied on family members to fill in the gaps. They stated that they sat in the first rows of the classroom and received help from close friends to follow the classes. At the higher education level, students reported that teaching is less interactive than used in earlier forms of schooling, limiting the understanding by hard of hearing students. As well, they found a lack of attention to individual students.



**"Teachers do not allow me to participate in extra-curricular activities."**

(A primary level female hard of hearing student, Grade 4, 9 years old, Nepal)

It was reported that most students who are considered deaf attended a special college for deaf students. However, it only offers curriculum up to an undergraduate level in limited fields of study, and to pursue a master's degree, deaf students have to enroll into mainstream colleges. The hard of hearing students with severe to profound hearing loss attending university shared that they either can't follow lectures or the process becomes extremely exhausting for them, so instead of attending classes, they decide to study textbooks and notes at home on their own and to turn up only for exams.





Students who are  
hard of hearing in a  
Nepali classroom.



## SOCIAL INTERACTION

Several of the participants were students with profound hearing loss. They reported that their speech difficulties and unclear pronunciation distanced them from classmates and restricted their friendships to only few close friends. Hard of hearing youngsters, especially those in their teens, do not want to be in an inferior position because of their hearing loss. They reported trying to avoid disclosing their difficulties to their teachers and friends.



**“I often remain silent in my college  
as I have limited friends”**

(A university female hard of hearing student  
aged 23, Nepal)

## ACCESS TO HEARING AIDS AND COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

Out of 16 surveyed students, 12 reported using hearing aids. Students reported that most hearing aids were bought by their families, with a few students obtaining them from a hospital that receives hearing aids donated by NGOs. Students explained that many hospitals distribute free or low-cost donated hearing aids, including second-hand hearing aids donated from other countries.

There was often a significant time gap between the identification of hearing loss and intervention; sometimes as late as after more than 10 years from the moment of identifying hearing loss.

Students shared that in order to purchase hearing aids, they or their parents often have to travel to the capital city or to India. The current situation improved a bit with an increase in the number of hearing aid centers in big cities in Nepal. The students also shared that because of the high cost of hearing aids, hard of hearing people often depend on donated hearing aids, which are not adjusted adequately to their specific hearing and speech recognition levels. As a result, part of the surveyed students stopped using donated hearing aids, because they simply couldn't use them without proper fitting and follow-up audiology procedures.

## ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY AND SUPPORT SERVICES

The students said that there is no support across schools and colleges in Nepal in terms of assistive technologies or services. They reported that sitting in a front row and asking friends for help (repeating the instructions, giving explanations, sharing lecture notes) was their main means of support. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

### ○ TEACHER COMPETENCIES

#### → All levels:

Students reported that their teachers do not have knowledge about hearing loss. They feel that teachers may have a positive and friendly attitude towards hard of hearing students but no skills in supporting and educating them in a truly inclusive manner. Most surveyed students expressed appreciation of their friends' support (by providing notes and assisting with communication and interaction in the classroom). The support was deemed to be more helpful and critical for their study progress than teachers' support.

In comparison to the primary and secondary levels, high school students found their teachers less supportive of them, attributing this, in part, to the teachers' increased workload.

#### → Higher education:

Students reported that teachers were empathetic or sympathetic but lacked an understanding of how to accommodate for hearing loss.

At all levels, teachers in schools where hard of hearing students have been already studying were reported by students to be familiar with the challenges of hard of hearing students and positive about building competencies in inclusive teaching for hard of hearing youth.

## ACCESS TO QUALITY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Most students reported to be a little to moderately satisfied with the amount of advice and information they had received about education possibilities for students with hearing loss. Almost all surveyed students said that hard of hearing students should not attend special schools for the hard of hearing or deaf and should be educated in an inclusive environment, but with necessary supports. Still, many surveyed students were unaware of their options because of lack of advice and information from medical and technical experts and educators. The higher the grade, the more difficult it was for surveyed hard of hearing students to progress with their studies.

Hard of hearing higher education students with the 65-80 dB hearing loss and who have an official disability status and disability identity card, shared that they can obtain tuition-free study only at state universities and its constitutional colleges (not in affiliated private colleges).

Table 2. Academic and access support for hard of hearing students at schools in Nepal

NEPAL					
TYPES OF SUPPORT	EDUCATION LEVELS				
	Pre-school	Elementary	Secondary	High School	Higher Education
NOTE-TAKING:	None	None	None	None	Provided with presentation slides
ACCESS:	None	None	None	None	None
ACADEMIC:	Extra support in exam taking, extra instruction, preferential seating	Extra support in exam taking, extra instruction, preferential seating	Extra support in exam taking, extra instruction, preferential seating	Extra instruction, preferential seating	Extra instruction, preferential seating
SPEECH and HEARING CARE:	None	None	None	None	None



A young learner  
from Nepal with a  
cochlear implant.

# Teachers' Perspectives

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION:

The responses about whether it's better for hard of hearing students to study in mainstream school or in a specialized setting were mixed. Around two-thirds of the surveyed teachers agreed that hard of hearing children can study in mainstream education and that inclusive learning is possible on the condition that special support and resources are provided. They said they would prefer to see hard of hearing students in mainstream school or college. The other one-third of surveyed teachers expressed doubts that hard of hearing students with severe and profound hearing loss would benefit from mainstream schools. They suggested that special education would be more suitable for them. On the question of special or regular class, one-third of the teachers preferred a special class for hard of hearing within a mainstream schooling, stating that this approach enabled children to achieve better educational outcomes than being completely mainstreamed. The other two-thirds of the teachers stated that they preferred mainstream regular classes.

## 🕒 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

### → All levels:

Teachers interviewed reported that their schools have electricity and the classroom is light enough to see teachers' and peers' facial expressions. The acoustic environment was found to be average as schools were not designed to meet the needs of hearing loss students. Other comments by teachers for each school level were as follows:

### → Pre-school:

There is no carpeting on the floor, no window curtains and other sound absorption measures or materials. Outside noise, including from other classrooms, disturbs hard of hearing students who use amplifying devices.

### → Primary school:

Compared with pre-school, primary schools had better infrastructures but were still not desirable acoustic environments (e.g., noise from open music classes and children playing outside).

→ **Secondary school:**

Nearby playground brings lots of noise.

→ **Higher secondary:**

Classes are concentrated in lectures rather than in outside sports or music activities, so the environment is less noisy than in primary and secondary schools.

→ **Higher education:**

Class size is larger than in primary and secondary schools and the environment is more acoustically friendly to learning, especially in private colleges.

🕒 **ACCESS TO ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

The following summaries are based on views from the teachers in relation to their particular school settings.

→ **Pre-school level:**

Teachers shared that they often face hard of hearing students when talking to them but admit that they did not always repeat questions and conclusions or adjust learning and communication methods. Teachers stated that they informed classes about hearing aids used by hard of hearing children, but do not explain their access needs because the children are too young to understand them.

→ **Primary level:**

Teachers said that they faced hard of hearing students when speaking to them, provided additional consultation upon request, and used visual materials such as videos, but their accessibility depended on availability of captioning in the videos. The teachers confirmed that they periodically informed their class about the communication needs of hard of hearing students and the students used hearing aids, which resulted in classmates being more supportive of their hard of hearing peers.

→ **Secondary level:**

Teachers indicated that they adjusted their lectures to the access needs of hard of hearing students by writing on the board or repeating the key lesson points. One teacher did not want to share the access needs of a hard of hearing student to his/her classmates to protect his/her privacy and not make him/her feel inferior or singled out. Visual educational materials were rarely used. Teachers also stated that students with moderate hearing loss did not have many difficulties compared to those with other hearing loss levels and understood most of the lectures by sitting in the first row.

→ **High secondary level:**

Teachers stated that they allowed hard of hearing students to sit in the front seats, faced them when talking, and provided extra consultations upon request. They also said that they used visual materials such as PowerPoint slides and shared lecture slides with students. Teachers shared that they inform the class about the access needs of the hard of hearing students and requested their close friends to support them.

→ **Higher education:**

Lecturers said that they often wrote down questions and information on the board, shared lecture slides and provided extra consultations when time allowed. Most lecturers regularly shared information about the needs of hard of hearing students with their peers. They also emphasized that their hard of hearing students should ask for support from friends and rely on them for their lecture notes.

🕒 **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

→ **All levels:**

Teachers did not report the use of any assistive technology for students such as induction loops, FM systems, infrared systems or captioning devices. All teachers also said that they do not know about these assistive technologies. Furthermore, pre-school and primary teachers did not know about the key basic devices such as hearing aids or cochlear implants.

🕒 **SUPPORT SERVICES**

→ **All levels:**

Teachers reported that support services such as note-taking with carbon paper, audio recording in class, support with deciphering audio records or photocopying access (e.g., free or discounted) were not provided. Access support services such as real-time captioning, real-time note-taking, computer note-taking, sign language interpreting and oral interpreting were also unavailable. Other services not provided were speech and hearing care support such as hearing testing/audiologist, hearing consultation, advisor on hearing loss, speech therapist, equipment servicing, speech reading/lipreading classes, visits from d/Deaf/hard of hearing resource person, school psychologist or school counselor.

In terms of academic support, preferential seating, extra instruction and exam accommodations were provided, although not always. Other academic support services as priority registration, academic tutoring, extra instruction, room changing, itinerant (visiting) teacher of the d/Deaf/hard of hearing, teacher's aide, school tutor for students with disabilities or students' disability advisor at the university, were not available.



## 🕒 TEACHER TRAINING AND COMPETENCIES

Teachers' feedback regarding teaching training was as follows: Generally, there is little training for mainstream schoolteachers on how to teach students with disabilities inclusively and little Special Needs Education (SNE) training. There is one-month of on-the-job training and one-week refresher training for government teachers, but the supply does not meet the demand. Teachers of public school resource classes and in special schools are prioritized for training in SNE. In particular, there is no training for teaching students who are hard of hearing. See Table 3.

### → **Pre-school level:**

Teachers reported that they learned about hearing loss and accessibility needs of hard of hearing students from the students' parents and through their own experiences.

### → **Primary level:**

Teachers reported that they were not sure where SNE training could be obtained, and that they did not have opportunities to participate in any professional development training.

### → **Secondary level:**

Teachers said they were open to cooperating with hearing loss-related organizations to gain necessary knowledge.

### → **High school and higher education:**

Unlike primary and secondary levels, respondents reported that during the last 12 months, they had opportunities to take part in some professional development training, but only in their own subjects and not related to inclusive education.



**“Although I have been teaching a child with hearing loss for more than five years, I do not have any opportunity to learn about hearing loss”**

(A male teacher of Grade 7 lower secondary level student, Nepal)



Inter-service collaboration (which refers to collaboration with other entities such as preschool collaborations with primary schools), was not reported by teachers, except for a pilot project of collaboration between a university and a school. Through this project, university students who studied education or SNE could work with students with disabilities (at special schools) for their practical training.



**“Schools should collaborate with the organizations which are working for hearing loss for the better education for hard of hearing students”**

(A male teacher of community college undergraduate student, Nepal)

**Table 3. Limitations of teacher training and awareness of hearing loss needs in Nepal**

NEPAL					
TEACHER TRAINING	EDUCATION LEVELS				
	Pre-school	Elementary	Secondary	High School	Higher Education
Education received	High School to BA degree	BA degree	BA degree to MA degree	MA degree	MA degree to M. Phil.
Teachers with hearing loss at schools	No one	Limited	Limited	Limited	No one
Training of teachers in SNE	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited
On-job training to improve teaching hard of hearing students	None	None	None	None	None
Training of teachers in IE	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited	Limited

# Key Decision-makers and Stakeholders' Perspectives

## POLICY AND PRACTICE OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Key decision-makers reported that due to changes to the National Education Policy in 2019, provincial and local level education policies need to be formulated. Some key elements of the new policy reported were that provincial governments have full authority to design curriculum, develop assessment systems, manage teachers, staff and physical facilities, and formulate and adapt operation policies. However, it was also noted by respondents that there are challenges to policy implementation due to the lack of skilled human resources (teachers and support staff), lack of financial resources, lack of commitment and accountability, and specifically, the lack of awareness about hearing loss.

For example, it was noted that there is a vital need to improve teachers' competencies in educating children with hearing loss. The National Center for Education Development (NCED) is a responsible body for human resource development and is undertaking activities related to teacher development, and capacity development of educational personnel under the Ministry of Education. However, as respondents argued, the current training modules do not cover all types of disabilities. The d/Deaf and hard of hearing are covered in one module, which should be separated into two as the needs of these groups are, in many ways, different. The frequency of training should also be increased so that more teachers have opportunities to take it.

The three layers (central, district and municipality) of decision-makers described the quality of inclusive education of hard of hearing students as mostly satisfactory to good. They stated that there is no national early childhood intervention policy applicable to hard of hearing children. Children have the option to go to early childhood development schools, and most children in urban areas attend pre-schools. One of the key problems as described by stakeholders, is the identification of hearing loss. There is no mandatory newborn, infant or pre-school hearing screening. Parents are usually the first to identify hearing loss of their children. Depending on the degree of hearing loss and knowledge of parents, parents decide upon the schools for their children. This is because there is no authority responsible for determining which school a hard of hearing child should attend. Authorities are perceived to have low awareness of the educational needs of a hard of hearing child.



**“The government should assess vision and hearing of every student before enrolling in the primary level schooling”**

A representative of an umbrella organization for persons with disabilities.

## AWARENESS AND VISIBILITY OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN

Decision-makers identified the following key needs of hard of hearing students: reasonable accommodations (classroom setting and environment), provision of hearing aids, communication support (face-to-face), teaching materials (visual materials), and school and financial support. Similar needs were also raised by stakeholders from Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs).

Main barriers for hard of hearing children and students to inclusive education were cited to be: lack of skilled and accountable human resources in education institutions; lack of training opportunities; lack of access to hearing aids except for urban areas; lack of school budget to provide support services and assistive technologies to hard of hearing students, and a low awareness about the challenges and needs of hard of hearing among school teachers and management.



**“Lack of human resources, commitment and resources, and low level of awareness are the major hindrance for implementation [of inclusive education].”**

(Education official, Nepal)

Respondents emphasized that awareness, sensitization and advocacy should be raised to draw attention of all stakeholders to the access needs of hard of hearing students, as hard of hearing identity and disability categories are comparatively new in the context of Nepal. The access needs of hard of hearing learners has not been explicitly recognized and indicated in policies and guidelines. They stated that data should be collected separately about the hard of hearing population from the d/Deaf group relying primarily on sign language, as the needs of the two groups are different.

Stakeholders were of the opinion that local governments should provide support services and assistive technologies to the schools with hard of hearing students, and for the allocation of additional funds to the schools with students with disabilities.

**Table 4. State support measures for hard of hearing students in Nepal**

State-supported measures for education of hard of hearing students in government schools in Nepal	Levels of education
<b>Funding incentives for institutions</b> (funding for educational institutions offering support to certain student groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary</li> <li>Secondary</li> <li>High School</li> </ul>
<b>Direct student financial support</b> (grants or loans to alleviate financing of study, advising and support services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary</li> <li>Secondary</li> </ul>
<b>Indirect student financial support</b> (provision of subsidized/affordable accommodation, meals, transport)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary</li> <li>Secondary</li> </ul>
<b>Financial support to a student's family</b> (elementary, secondary and high school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not provided</li> </ul>
<b>Financial support for students with disabilities or their families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not provided</li> </ul>
<b>Financial support for rehabilitation</b> (access to hearing aids, FM systems, audiology services, speech therapy, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not provided</li> </ul>
<b>Counselling and support services for hard of hearing students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not provided</li> </ul> <p>Provided at all levels by NGOs and DPOs and in limited areas and numbers</p>
<b>Training teachers in inclusive teaching and learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary</li> <li>Secondary</li> <li>High School</li> </ul>
<b>Information campaigns on inclusive education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary</li> <li>Secondary</li> </ul> <p>Organised by NGOs and DPOs, in limited areas and numbers</p>
<b>University cooperation with schools</b> (e.g., to raise aspirations of pupils with disabilities to pursue higher education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>
<b>Provision of support services for hard of hearing students</b> (note-taking, real-time captioning, oral interpreting, academic accommodations, speech/hearing care, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>
<b>Provision of assistive technologies for hard of hearing students</b> (FM-systems, infrared systems, induction loops)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>
<b>Data collection and research on hard of hearing students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary</li> <li>Secondary</li> <li>High School</li> </ul> <p>Hard of hearing and d/Deaf are grouped together as "hearing-impaired" students group in the statistics</p>
<b>Other measures:</b>	<p>Monthly state social security allowance NPR 3000/- and 1600/- for profoundly and severely disabled persons</p>

## SUGGESTIONS ON MAKING EDUCATION MORE INCLUSIVE FOR HARD OF HEARING LEARNERS

In the interviews, stakeholder respondents suggested the following measures be taken in order to support the development of inclusive education in Nepal:

- DPOs should work across the country to find out the challenges of hard of hearing people in different geographical areas, as most DPOs are currently concentrated in the capital city.
- State authorities should focus on policy and guideline development in provinces, local levels and school levels.
- State authorities should introduce compulsory hearing assessment of each child before their school enrolment.
- Apart from advocacy, research and trainings, NGOs should focus on concrete measures that support policy implementation, such as investing in identification equipment infrastructure so that local organizations can directly provide early identification and intervention services to hard of hearing children.
- State authorities should pay attention to the enforcement of policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- Teachers should be rewarded accordingly with their performance in implementing IE. Punitive measures should be developed for those who exclude, discriminate against and stigmatize hard of hearing students.
- Based on the policy developed by the federal government, provincial and local governments should formulate their IE policies and guidelines covering inclusion of all types of disabilities.
- Those working in the education sector should be trained in how to develop, implement and evaluate inclusive education policies and guidelines.
- Governments should coordinate with DPOs and NGOs for the additional support and implementation of inclusive education.



Children who are hard of hearing  
attending a school in Uganda.



## Uganda findings on challenges of inclusive education for hard of hearing people — participants' perspectives

# Parents' Perspectives

### ROLE OF PARENTS IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Parents indicated that it is mostly them who identify hearing loss in their children, along with trained teachers and health professionals. At the same time, parents requested more information about hearing aids, early rehabilitation and inclusive education; they stated that a lack of information affects their ability to make informed choices of educational institutions.

Parents said that they monitor academic progress of their hard of hearing children and support them with learning at home. They reported that they maintain good cooperation with teachers who provide their children with scholastic materials. Parents also said that they plan cultural opportunities so that their children don't feel excluded from cultural life and can interact more with peers.

### ACCESS TO HEARING AIDS AND COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

Parents of hard of hearing children who attend private mainstream schools, reported that their children have access to hearing aids, while parents of children attending special schools for deaf students stated that their children did not use hearing aids. Parents of children in private schools reported working hand-in-hand with the mainstream school administration for their children to be provided hearing aids at a small cost through the d/Deaf/hard of hearing resource staff member. However, their children's hearing aids are kept by their class teachers and are only given to the children while in class because the children may lose or damage them. Parents also stated that they have little knowledge about the functionality of hearing aids.

A few parents reported that their children only used the hearing aids in class and not outside of class because they found the sounds irritating; outside of the class, some children were stated to use sign language. Some parents shared that their children were not using hearing aids because audiologists had not adjusted the hearing aid settings for the child.

No child had a cochlear implant because they are expensive for parents to afford and they are not provided by the state.

## ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Parents reported that the cost for assistive technology was very high and mostly not affordable. The use of assistive technologies depends on the family's financial capacity. In two cases, parents of hard of hearing children with intellectual disabilities reported that a hearing aid was not required as their children attended a special public school where the children used hand gestures (simplified sign language) for communication.

## SCHOOL CHOICE

Parents reported that it is the parents' and teachers' joint responsibility to determine which type of school would be most suitable for a hard of hearing child. Several parents of "mainstream children" expressed satisfaction with their children's access to education since the children are able to follow the academic process very well with the help of peers and teachers. Other parents found the pace too fast in a mainstream setting and were contemplating transferring their children to the special deaf school, where they could follow lessons with greater ease and interact through sign language.



**"At times, my girl is not understood by her fellow students because she is hard of hearing and her pronunciation is not clear."**

(Parent of a hard of hearing girl aged 9 years old and a primary school student, Uganda)

Several parents stated that their children may lack self-awareness and self-esteem which hinders their progress in academics in mainstream school. One parent of a 15-year-old still in primary school said that she had decided to transfer him to the public deaf school instead where he could learn sign language and associate with other deaf children.





**“My child is too old to study with young children and it really hurts me as a parent.”**

(Parent of a hard of hearing 18-year-old student who is still in primary school, Uganda)

Some other parents stated that they had decided to enroll their children in schools for the Deaf instead, where sign language is the only medium of communication and support services such as note-taking are provided. They were of the viewpoint that the provision of services would enable their hard of hearing children to catch up academically with their hearing peers. The parent of a child with both a hearing loss and a learning disability noted that the additional challenges the child faced because of the dual disabilities, were not being met.

## **SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT**

Generally, parents reported that the schools' acoustic environments were not conducive to learning. In their opinion, and ideally, an accessible classroom would be well-ventilated, well-lit, have no noise in the background, use sound absorption materials, and be well-equipped with audio and visual equipment that enhances learning in hard of hearing children. Parents stated that the lack of an accessible environment leads to miscommunication between teachers and hard of hearing learners, unfair assessment and poor performance.

## **ACCESS TO ACADEMIC LEARNING AND SUPPORT SERVICES**

Parents said that, at school, their children are encouraged to sit in the front seats so that they can lipread. Parents felt that teachers were not trained in communicating with hard of hearing children and did not know how to use assistive technologies such as FM systems or induction loops.

Parents reported that there are no sign language interpreters, captioners, school psychologists, or note-takers available in mainstream schools with sign language interpreters and notetakers available only on a rare basis. They said that school counsellors, audiologists and matrons may be available at some schools. (School counsellors render services to students in mainstream schools; matrons/wardens render services to all students in school boarding sections, in both mainstream and special schools, and act as caretakers of such students. Audiological services are available at mainstream schools when the need arises).

Parents stated that Deaf/hard of hearing resource persons also visit mainstream schools from time to time.

# Students' Perspectives

## STUDENT INTERACTION WITH PEERS AND ATTITUDES AT SCHOOL

### → All levels:

All levels: Hard of hearing students said that they can interact well with their peers but have a lot of challenges: they miss out on agreements and instructions, are often trapped in misunderstandings, feel shy in communication or are even bullied.



**“Some students abuse me, nickname me some embarrassing names which annoys me”**

(Hard of hearing female, 12 years old, primary school student, Uganda)

Secondary level students also suggested that policy should be put in place which prohibits oppression or marginalization of hard of hearing students by their hearing peers — they think that such a measure would prevent discrimination and dropout cases. They also recommend raising school staff awareness about hearing loss and resulting needs of hard of hearing students.

In relation to teachers, students felt that generally, their attitude towards them is respectful, caring, supportive, encouraging, positive and empathetic. However, university students pointed out that their accessibility needs are not accepted by some lecturers and that lecturers are very hard to approach. Some students also feel that their hearing peers avoid them so as not to experience any difficulties or awkwardness in communication, and do not want to help them (e.g., by clarifying instructions or sharing notes).

## ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

One of the interview questions asked students to rate their level of satisfaction with the access to information on inclusive education on a scale from “completely dissatisfied” to “completely satisfied”. Close to two-thirds of hard of hearing students stated they were “a little satisfied” with the information they received about inclusive education. Some students said they felt shy to ask around for more information about this issue and so they got a little information from the deaf/hard of hearing resource persons who visit their school.

Others, although not officially members of disability/hard of hearing organisations, received some information from the organisations or from their parents.

Several students stated that their parents were unaware of a possibility of a better and more inclusive education in private vs. public school. Some students stated that their family could not afford the private school fees, so placed them in a public school instead.

One third of the students stated that they were “completely dissatisfied” with access to the information about their perspectives in and possible choices of inclusive education.

## ☉ SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

### → Primary and secondary levels:

Students reported being rather satisfied with the environment. The students found the lecture rooms to be well-ventilated, well-lit and very quiet. They also reported that classes are located in a good sunrise location, lit from the east to the west. The reports show that overall accessibility of teaching instructions and acoustic environment were favorable for the learning process of hard of hearing students.

### → Higher education:

Students thought that, although lecture rooms do not have enough soundproof or sound absorption materials, they are still sufficiently quiet for learning. Students who use hearing aids and phone captioning apps, said that they were able to combine listening to and following lectures through reading captions, with good results. Some students also said that they use helpful large prints which they prepare themselves.

## ☉ ACCESS TO HEARING AIDS AND COCHLEAR IMPLANTS

### → Primary school:

Students stated that they have no access to hearing aids and are not aware of the existence of a cochlear implant since CI surgery is not provided by the state. Hearing tests were carried out by visiting d/Deaf/hard of hearing resource persons who didn't recommend using a hearing aid. Instead, children were given medication to relieve ear pain resulting from hearing aid use or ear inflammation but reported that their parents could not afford the medicines.

### → Secondary school:

One student, who uses a hearing aid provided by her sponsor, said she does not want to use them anymore for fear they will be visible to her peers. A couple of secondary students shared that they couldn't get hearing aids for themselves from the audiologist in private hospitals because of the cost.

### → Higher education:

Students said that they use hearing aids provided to them by their parents.

## ◎ ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

### → Primary level:

Pupils said that they only resort to lipreading, occupying front seats and copying notes. Assistive technologies are not provided.

### → Secondary level:

Students indicated that no assistive technologies are provided, so they rely on lipreading and front seat locations.

### → Higher education:

Students shared that they use mobile phones to text messages to their peers and check up on what is going on. Students said that most of them download the “Live Transcribe” Android app which provides captioning, easing their communication with others both in and outside the classroom (It doesn’t provide 100% accurate captioning, though, and is more of a replacement to professional services.) None have assistive listening devices.



“At university, they write for me on paper as a way of communication as I don't know sign language and I also depend on pamphlets.”

(Hard of hearing 20-year-old university student, Uganda)

## ◎ ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

### → Primary level:

Students reported that at this level they may receive such support services as exam accommodations, extra instruction, assistance from a teacher’s aide, visits from a d/Deaf/hard of hearing resource person and hearing testing. However, students said that d/Deaf/hard of hearing resource persons comes only once a year. The majority also stated that they missed the chance of having their hearing tested.

### → Secondary level:

Students at this level were interviewed at a private mainstream school. They said they can benefit from notes of lectures provided in advance by their teachers, priority registration, exam accommodations, extra instruction and preferential seating, as well as a change of rooms for acoustical reasons. The exception was one student who thought that services were not available in his school because he is the only hard of hearing student there.

→ **Higher education:**

In higher education, hard of hearing learners attending a university set up to be inclusive, reported that they can receive notes of the lectures in advance, get photocopying access, priority registration, extra instruction, preferential seating and room changes. They also said that they have access to an advisor on hearing loss and to a university counsellor. Sometimes, they have access to hearing testing/audiologist services. They can get reasonable accommodations such as extra time for exams, upon request.

Services are at no charge, except for students on private sponsorship who have to pay for access services. Students expressed an opinion that note-takers, sign language interpreting and oral interpreting should be provided for all hard of hearing students by the state on a free basis. As well, the services for hard of hearing students who are deaf/blind should also be at no charge. One hard of hearing student with a visual impairment reported needing note-takers but said that this service is not covered by the state and is of high cost.



**“I often miss important information during the classes”**

(Hard of hearing male, 14 years old, still in primary school, Uganda)

Table 5. Academic and access support for hard of hearing students at schools in Uganda

UGANDA				
TYPES OF SUPPORT	EDUCATION LEVELS			
	Pre-school	Elementary School (primary education)	High School (secondary level)	Higher Education (university)
NOTE-TAKING:	None	None	None or students hire notetakers themselves	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None (note-takers are hired by hard of hearing students at their own expense)</li> <li>• Photocopying (free or with a discount)</li> </ul>
ACCESS: Sign language or captioning	None	None	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sign language interpreting</li> <li>• Sign language learning but not free</li> </ul>
ACADEMIC:	None	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam accommodations</li> <li>• Extra instruction</li> <li>• Preferential seating</li> <li>• Academic tutoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam accommodations</li> <li>• Priority registration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exam accommodations</li> <li>• Priority registration</li> <li>• Academic tutoring</li> <li>• Extra instruction</li> <li>• Preferential seating</li> <li>• Student disability advising</li> </ul>
SPEECH and HEARING CARE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing testing</li> <li>• Counselling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing testing</li> <li>• Assistance by Deaf/ Hard of hearing resource persons</li> <li>• Counseling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Counselling</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hearing testing</li> <li>• Assistance by Deaf/Hard of hearing resource persons</li> <li>• Counseling</li> </ul>

## 🕒 TEACHER COMPETENCIES

In general, hard of hearing students emphasized a lack of competence in the ability of teachers at all levels in communicating with and educating learners with hearing loss.

### → **Primary level:**

Students stated the need for the school to recruit disability-friendly teachers who are trained in SNE.

### → **Secondary level:**

Students stated schools should be able to provide support services such as sign language teachers and interpreters, as well as school psychologists, lipreading classes and trained special needs teachers. Students suggested that teachers should improve their cooperation with parents as this will boost teachers' understanding of the core challenges hard of hearing students face at schools.

### → **Higher education:**

Respondents suggested to make sign language and lipreading classes free of charge for all students — both hearing and hard of hearing — in order to ease their mutual communication. The universities should also raise the awareness about hearing loss of all staff members, thus, building lecturers' competencies in inclusive education.



**“Teachers don’t take action when I address to them my hearing loss problems”**

(Hard of hearing young man, 17 years old  
secondary school student, Uganda)

# Teachers and School Administrators' Perspectives

## ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN

Most of the teachers conveyed a positive attitude towards inclusive education for hard of hearing children as they believe that it is the only way hard of hearing students will benefit. Almost half of surveyed teachers supported hard of hearing students' study in mainstream school on the condition that it has support staff/teachers, assistive devices and hearing aid provision. One teacher disagreed with inclusive education as it is being practiced now. She expressed concerns that many disabled students will be left behind because teachers lack necessary teaching skills to support all students with disabilities.

Teachers were divided on the issue of special classes/groups for hard of hearing students at mainstream schools. Slightly more than half of the teachers suggested that hard of hearing students could attend special classes/groups of hard of hearing students at school or university, depending on their level of hearing loss (the more profound, the more need for special classes) and on the lack of support services such as tutors. However, the rest of the teachers interviewed said they do not support the idea of special classes because this could lead to a high rate of discrimination and stigmatization of hard of hearing students, especially in secondary schools.

## 🕒 SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

### → Primary level:

Some teachers expressed concerns that hard of hearing students are bullied by their fellow students because of their hearing loss and have low self-esteem. Other teachers, though, felt that students were accepted by their peers; classmates usually offer them support such as notes to copy.

### → Secondary level:

Responses by teachers varied. Some teachers stated that they often don't know if hard of hearing students are accepted by their classmates because some students don't want their hearing loss to be known. Some teachers expressed dissatisfaction with hard of hearing students' social interaction with their peers and stressed that hard of hearing students are bullied by their fellow students and taken advantage of. Other teachers felt that students' social interaction was good.



→ **Higher education:**

Respondents reported that hard of hearing students are accepted by the lecturers and administration staff. A few lecturers shared that their hard of hearing students are sometimes bullied at university and given unfavorable nicknames. However, lecturers generally expressed the view that their hard of hearing students are generally accepted by their classmates who help them when need arises. This was the reason for their assessment of the social interaction of hard of hearing students with hearing peers as “good” and “satisfactory.”

At primary and university levels, the acoustic environment was described as conducive to learning (well-lit classrooms, electricity, low noise). At the secondary level, the acoustic environment in schools was found unfavorable. Classes are disrupted by external sounds, and the design doesn't take into account the needs of hard of hearing students.

◎ **ACCESS TO ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE**

→ **Primary level:**

Teachers said they adjusted their lectures for hard of hearing students by always repeating the questions and conclusions of the lesson and facing the students so that they could lipread. Teachers also reported informing the class about the access needs of hard of hearing students and ensuring that hard of hearing students were strategically placed or seated near a clever student who could offer assistance when necessary.

→ **Secondary level:**

Teachers reported adjusting their lectures for hard of hearing students by always repeating the questions and giving conclusions of the lesson, providing visual and text handouts and facing the students. Teachers stated that they are always open for additional consultation and allowed students to freely sit where they felt comfortable. Upper secondary school teachers said they did not inform the class about the access needs of the hard of hearing students because hard of hearing students, in this sensitive, adolescent period, may feel out of place and assume that their teacher is being discriminatory.

→ **Higher education:**

Lecturers said that they adjusted their lectures by repeating the questions and conclusions of the lessons, often facing their students and providing visual handouts. Only two surveyed lecturers said that they were always open for additional consultations. With only a couple of exceptions, lecturers reported to be fully welcoming to sign language interpreters and note-takers. Most were unsure if the access needs of students were being met but were aware that hard of hearing students seek support by borrowing notes from classmates.

As most lecturers come from the university that is called an inclusive institution and has

mixed ability groups, they shared that hard of hearing students who use hearing aids, are affected by the sound of Braille notetakers used by blind students when they are typing their notes.



**“As a teacher I make sure that hard of hearing children are strategically seated next to a student who can offer help to them.”**

(Primary school teacher, Uganda)

## 🕒 **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGIES**

### → **Primary level:**

Some teachers said they use laptops as teaching aids, as well as videotapes and CDs. Teachers also reported to initiate and improvise with the use of pictures, flashcards (cards with information on both sides) and posters with bold letters for their hard of hearing students. Teachers also reported using microphones; they were unaware of induction loops and FM systems and those devices were not provided to the school.

### → **Secondary level:**

Teachers stated that FM/radio systems and other assistive technologies were not available at their schools, because no one expressed the need for them. They felt that the number of hard of hearing students in mainstream schools is very small and that such students avoid requesting FM systems and induction loops so as not to feel “special” or look different from their peers.

### → **Higher education:**

Lecturers reported that the university does not provide assistive technologies for hard of hearing students because there is no data on numbers of hard of hearing people or students in the country and of their location.

## **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Teachers surveyed at public mainstream schools reported a lack of any support services provided by the school. Those included lack of note-taking with carbon paper, audio recording in class, support with deciphering audio records or photocopying access (e.g., free or discounted); no support in access such as captioning or computer notetaking, oral interpreting, nor speech and hearing care support such as speech therapist, equipment servicing, speech reading/lipreading

classes, and the services of a school psychologist. Some students obtained notes from another student directly or with a teacher's assistance. (Note: Teachers at public mainstream schools were at the primary level; no teachers at secondary public schools were interviewed as part of the study.)

At the primary level, teachers added that some teachers, especially in state-owned schools, are taught basic courses in sign language by visiting NGOs, but this measure cannot replace sign language interpreters — who are unavailable.

At the secondary level, surveyed teachers at a private mainstream school said that lack of note-takers at school made the learning environment unfavorable.

## 🕒 **TEACHERS' TRAINING**

### → **All levels:**

Teachers shared that they have limited knowledge of educating hard of hearing students. Those who pursue a BA degree (applies to primary, secondary and higher education teachers) pass a brief course in psychology about Special Needs Education, but with no specifics on educating hard of hearing students. Teachers stated that there is a lack of inclusive education as such and no in-service training on inclusive teaching about hard of hearing students.



**“Course content for teacher training is inadequate.”**

(Primary school teacher, Uganda)



**“Most teachers are not taught how to deal with hard of hearing students as part of the course.”**

(Secondary school teacher, Uganda)

Table 6. Limitations of teacher training and awareness of hearing loss needs in Uganda

UGANDA				
TEACHER TRAINING	EDUCATION LEVELS			
	Pre-school	Elementary School (primary education)	High School (secondary education)	Higher Education (university)
Education received	Early Childhood Education	Grade iii Certificate and above	Bachelor's degree in Arts/Science with education	MA degree and above
Teachers with hearing loss at schools	Information not available	Information not available	Some	Some
Training of teachers in SNE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-service trainings</li> <li>• Brief course in SNE for teachers trained in BA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-service trainings</li> <li>• Kyambogo University</li> <li>• Brief course in SNE for teachers trained in BA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kyambogo University</li> <li>• Brief course in SNE for teachers trained in BA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kyambogo University</li> <li>• In-service trainings</li> <li>• Brief course in SNE</li> </ul>
On-job training to improve teaching hard of hearing students	Not at all	Limited	Limited	Limited
Training of teachers in IE	No	Limited	Limited	Limited

# Key Decision-makers and Stakeholders Perspectives

## BARRIERS TO POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Decision-makers shared that at the national level, barriers to policy implementation are cuts in the budget, policy gaps, unclear policies, and the lack of operational strategies and guidelines. They added that policies do not explicitly mention different types of disabilities or reasonable accommodation. For example, there is a national early childhood intervention policy developed by the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, but the policy is not active nor was it implemented due to several reasons, among which are limited funding from the national budget, weak policy framework, limited in-service training and lacking data on learners with disabilities. Identification of hard of hearing children is mostly carried out by early child intervention institutions such as early child intervention schools, hospitals and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).

They reported a lack of identification of hard of hearing learners as a target group within policies. For example, national academic curriculum and its associated systems of assessment do not explicitly include hard of hearing individuals because they are considered to be the same category as the “deaf.” As a result, the accessibility needs for hard of hearing children are not articulated.



**“Students are very eager to study but government policies are still weak, leaving many behind.”**

(Local community chairman, Uganda)

Decision-makers and stakeholders stated that there also seems to be a lack of general understanding of inclusive education on different levels, while policies do not provide clear directions of action. The People with Disabilities Act (2006) promotes both inclusive schools and special schools, but lack of disaggregated and adequate data on children with disabilities, including hard of hearing children, doesn't allow for concerted initiatives. There are policies on in-service training for teachers at all education levels, and limited in-service training is provided. Respondents also shared that there is a lack of morale among the trained SNE teachers who lose motivation to teach at special schools because of low salaries.

At the district level, there is a local policy on inclusive education, but directives come from the Ministry of Education, the role of which is to present the budget for financing the education sector to the Ministry of Finance for payments. If a budget is not produced, no payments are made to the education sector. The constrained budget for education frustrates the education sector and sets back the goals of inclusive education.



**“Teachers are ready to embrace inclusive education, but Ministry of Education is delaying funding for financing education projects.”**

(Local community chairman, Uganda)

## **AWARENESS AND VISIBILITY OF EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN**

Decision-makers and stakeholders gave an unsatisfactory rating to the inclusion of hard of hearing students both on national and local levels. This is explained, in part, by the fact that the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health which are responsible for providing support services at mainstream schools (such as note-taking, real-time captioning, oral interpreting, academic accommodations, speech/hearing care) and assistive technologies (such as FM systems, infrared systems, induction loops) do not explicitly identify these measures in their policies, because the needs of hard of hearing students in education are not known or understood.

According to the interviewed decision-makers, the key needs of hard of hearing children for inclusive education are:

- Support from family (including financial, for purchase of necessary hearing aids and technologies) and teachers
- Appropriate audiology services to understand the level of hearing loss and, consequently, individual learning needs
- Assistive technologies
- Visual aids and materials
- Development of social skills to enable hard of hearing children to participate on a par with their hearing peers



**“Inclusive education is a new concept in Uganda.”**

(an NGO leader, Uganda)



Main barriers for hard of hearing children's meaningful participation in mainstream school education in an inclusive way, were defined by decision-makers as follows:

- General prejudice and stigma towards people with disabilities which can lead to a rejection of children by their parents
- Limited in-service training for teachers in mainstream schools
- High cost of hearing aids and assistive technologies that enable participation
- Lack of consistent, disaggregated data on education of persons with disabilities by gender and type of disability, including the deaf/hard of hearing
- Lack of support measures and reasonable accommodation at schools for hard of hearing students
- Teachers are not trained to understand the difference between the needs of the Deaf and the hard of hearing students and adjust teaching methods accordingly
- Lack of understanding of what constitutes IE

*Table 7. State support measures for hard of hearing students in Uganda*

State-supported measures for education of hard of hearing students in Uganda district	Levels of education
<b>Funding incentives for institutions</b> (funding for educational institutions offering special support to certain student groups)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary</li> <li>Higher Education</li> </ul>
<b>Direct student financial support</b> (grants or loans to alleviate financing of study, advising and support services)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher Education</li> </ul>
<b>Indirect student financial support</b> (provision of subsidized/affordable accommodation, meals, transport, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher Education</li> </ul>
<b>Financial support to a student's family</b> (in elementary, secondary and high school)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>
<b>Financial support for students with disabilities or their families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>
<b>Financial support for rehabilitation</b> (access to hearing aids, FM systems, audiology services, speech therapy, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary</li> <li>High School</li> <li>Higher Education</li> </ul>
<b>Counselling and support services for hard of hearing students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not provided</li> </ul> <p>Provided at all levels by NGOs and DPOs and in limited areas and numbers</p>
<b>Training teachers in inclusive teaching and learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pre-elementary</li> <li>Elementary</li> <li>Secondary</li> <li>High School</li> <li>Higher Education</li> </ul>

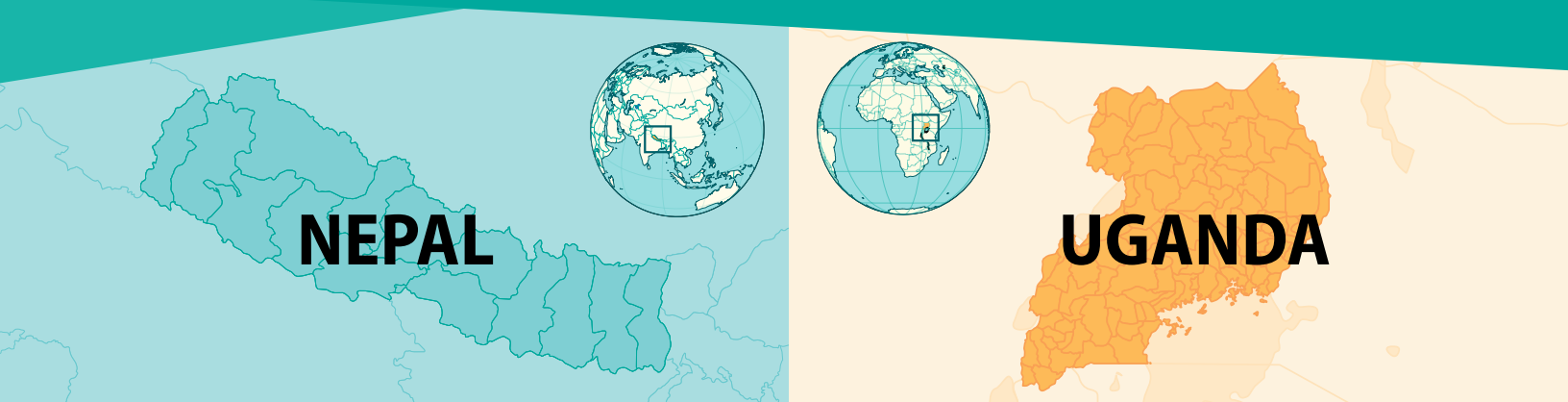
State-supported measures for education of hard of hearing students in Uganda district	Levels of education
<b>Information campaigns on inclusive education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secondary</li> <li>High School</li> <li>Higher Education</li> </ul>
<b>University cooperation with schools</b> (e.g., universities work with schools to raise aspirations of pupils with disabilities to pursue higher education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>
<b>Provision of support services for hard of hearing students</b> (note-taking, real-time captioning, oral interpreting, academic accommodations, speech/hearing care)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Elementary – Teaching aids and visual aids (charts and flash cards), examination accommodations (extra time), extra instructions, preferential seating, visits to d/Deaf/Hard of hearing students by resource persons; audiologists, school counselors</li> <li>Secondary – Lecture notes (in advance), priority registration, examination accommodations, extra instruction, preferential seating, school counsellor. Free hearing checkup once a year at public schools.</li> <li>Higher Education - Provision of support services (sign language interpreters, typists, note-takers). These services are provided to students on government sponsorship. Students on private sponsorship have to pay for such services.</li> </ul>
<b>Provision of assistive technologies for hard of hearing students</b> (FM systems, infrared systems, induction loops)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>
<b>Data collection and research on hard of hearing students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>
<b>Other measures:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not available</li> </ul>

## SUGGESTIONS ON MAKING EDUCATION MORE INCLUSIVE FOR HARD OF HEARING LEARNERS

In the interviews, respondents suggested the following measures to be taken in order to support the development of genuinely inclusive education in Uganda:

- More sensitization of the communities, stakeholders and decision-makers about inclusive education of hard of hearing people
- Following principles of Acceptability, Accessibility, Affordability and Inclusiveness realistically
- Extensive advocacy for increased budget from the Ministry of Education and ensuring that funds are available to enable inclusive education at schools
- More training for teachers on inclusive education, in-service training and also providing them with the needed incentives
- Sufficient state support services at schools and universities.

# Common findings for Nepal and Uganda



This section describes the common findings that hard of hearing learners face in education which were observed in both Nepal and Uganda. Findings are summarized according to the main topics of the report.

## ◉ ATTITUDES TOWARDS HARD OF HEARING PEOPLE

- An assumption that hard of hearing learners do not need serious support and do not require additional assistance through technologies and access to communication and information
- Lack of awareness about the needs of hard of hearing people leads to pity, fear or avoidance attitudes from the society and institutional staff, including in education, instead of the respect and empathy that hard of hearing people need for their inclusive participation.
- Children with hearing loss can be seen as a curse, bad luck or bad fortune in the family; as a result, such children may not even be allowed to go to school or to complete their schooling.
- Lack of a welcoming approach in public schools towards hard of hearing students

## ◉ BARRIER-FREE ENVIRONMENTS

- Environments, especially in some rural areas, are open or semi-open which acoustically challenge air environments.
- Noise pollution is common due to noise from:
  - ◊ Location of the school (e.g., near the road in urban areas)

- ◊ Playgrounds and sport areas next to classrooms
- ◊ Noise by other students in the classroom
- ◊ Blackboard writing
- ◊ No carpeting, curtains and other materials for sound absorption
- Classroom seating is usually a theatre arrangement where hard of hearing students sit in the front in order to lip-read their teachers, but cannot lip-read their peers

### ● **CAPTIONING**

- Captioning is not available at schools or universities
- There are no trained professional captioners and no training programs

### ● **EARLY INTERVENTION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT**

- Lack of newborn and early hearing screening
- Lack of early intervention programs for language development and essential early educational development
- Insufficient information for parents about available or necessary early intervention steps, which may result in late hearing aids purchase, late language development and lower academic achievement

### ● **ACCESS TO HEARING AIDS AND COCHLEAR IMPLANTS**

- Limited state funding for hearing aids, which creates a reliance on private or charitable sources
- No reference to state legislation for the provision of hearing aids
- Hearing aids are not readily available in the two countries with some limited availability in the capital cities. Aside from the provision of hearing aids by the government or foundations, they are often purchased from another country and serviced in another country as well.
- Lack of information about hearing aids and cochlear implants provided to parents, teachers and students
- Limited availability of cochlear implants
- No public provision for CI and CI rehabilitation (in Nepal – CI surgery is available with very limited funding for unilateral CI; limited rehabilitation after surgery for children younger than age 5); CI surgery is sometimes done outside of the country

### ● ACCESS TO ASSISTIVE LISTENING TECHNOLOGIES

- No provision and use of assistive devices such as loop systems and FM systems in schools
- No public legislation and budgetary provisions for assistive listening technologies
- No awareness in education and healthcare sectors about assistive technologies for hard of hearing, and their necessity
- Lack of advocacy and awareness-raising on access to AT for hard of hearing persons
- Lack of availability of assistive technologies (such as FM systems, individual and stationery induction loops) on the market
- Cost of assistive technology often beyond the means of parents and schools

### ● CHOICE OF SCHOOL

- Many respondents stated that they prefer private schools for their smaller teacher-to-pupil ratio and services but access is dependent on a family's financial situation.
- Parents may decide to send hard of hearing children to special deaf schools either because deaf schools have more services and education in sign language is free or because mainstream schools do not always easily enroll hard of hearing children.

### ● ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

- Support services start from the home at the family level (i.e., caring, support, identification of needs for hard of hearing learners). After this, teacher support is of paramount importance and takes the form of specialized attention to the learners' needs in teaching style.
- Public schools' budgets and provision of services is constrained
- Note-taking support services such as note-takers and free photocopying are not available.
- Access to support services such as captioning, oral interpreting, and sign language interpreting are not available in mainstream settings.
- Availability of academic support service is limited such as extra time for exams, extra instruction, and preferential seating.
- Tutors or assistants are not provided by the school.

## ● SOCIAL INTERACTION

- Parents and family members play an essential role in social interaction – it starts from home.
- Teachers may exclude hard of hearing children from taking part in extracurricular activities.
- Teachers, more often than not, explain to the class the challenges faced by hard of hearing students.
- Compared to other students, hard of hearing students have limited friends. In secondary education and higher, hard of hearing students can feel isolated.

## ● TEACHER TRAINING

- Teachers lack key competencies (skills, knowledge and attitudes) in educating hard of hearing students and do not receive training to gain these competencies.
- Special Needs Education (SNE) courses provide a basic knowledge only and do not address the needs of hard of hearing students. Some courses refer to hearing loss but only focus on the needs of deaf students, not hard of hearing students.
- Teachers face challenges adapting the curriculum for hard of hearing students so that they get the same knowledge in the allotted time period.
- Lack of attention from teachers and peers in classroom as to whether hard of hearing students follow them.

## ● POLICY DEFINITIONS AND STATISTICS

- Hard of hearing learners are categorized together with deaf learners and their unique needs are not reflected in the legislation, policy and practice. As a result, hard of hearing people are made to be invisible. The data on hard of hearing persons is lacking on national and local levels.
- Available disability data has no precision on the degree of hearing loss or the population affected by it, which makes it difficult to identify the real number of hard of hearing people in the country.



# Key enabling factors for inclusive education

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In this section, we summarize key factors for improving/enabling inclusive education for hard of hearing people in Nepal and Uganda, based on the results from interviewers and a meeting of the project team.

Many factors can either facilitate or constrain provision of inclusive education. The aim of the IFHOH Inclusive Education Study was to identify the factors supporting inclusive education for hard of hearing learners in Nepal and Uganda. On the basis of the qualitative data analysis, we derived the key factors enabling and/or improving inclusive education possibilities for hard of hearing learners that are relevant for both countries. The factors were clustered according to the findings that emerged from the mapping exercise as follows: socioeconomic, cultural, family-related, school-related, teacher-related, learner-related, rehabilitation-related, stakeholder-related and policy-related factors.

## ● SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS

Poverty in the studied countries largely impacts opportunities of inclusive education. Being constrained economically, families are not able to provide the best rehabilitation support to their child, purchase hearing aids/cochlear implants that are a basic requirement for early intervention or to purchase assistive listening devices. In the situation when general access to quality education is lacking, the lack of means of support beyond what the state can provide limits the chances of hard of hearing children to quality and accessible inclusive education.

## ● CULTURAL FACTORS

Traditional societal attitudes towards disability may shape perception about people with hearing loss and their capabilities. Even today, despite advances, there are many societies in which disability is seen as a calamity, bad karma, and the result of an evil eye or incarnate of evil spirits. Such a negative attitude towards disability is not conducive to understanding and an accepting philosophy of inclusion. Furthermore, this report demonstrated a common theme of a lack of understanding of the difference between learners who are d/Deaf and hard of hearing, and of their different access needs. As a result, hard of hearing persons are largely invisible in policies and even in practices.

## ○ FAMILY-RELATED FACTORS

### → Parents'/caregivers' attitudes towards hearing loss and inclusive education

Parental attitudes towards inclusive education and hearing loss of their child are a contributing factor to the child's placement in education systems. Parents seeking mainstream education may move to larger cities to have better access to rehabilitation and more choice of schools, whether state or private. Some parents may prefer that their child attend a special school for the deaf. They cited a lack of information and resources available in mainstream settings.

### → Family support, family access to information on early (re)habilitation and inclusive education

Role of the family in access to education is crucial: all surveyed students were supported by their families financially (tuition fees, uniforms, education materials, housing and food expenses). Primary and secondary school pupils are supported by their families in completing their homework, clarifying what was not understood at lessons, catching up with the lesson content and frequently consulting with teachers. Although parental support is important for all children, it is particularly important for hard of hearing students who often miss content in the classroom and need additional assistance to make up for it.

Family support is also important for the aural rehabilitation of a hard of hearing child since additional time is required to learn how to hear, recognize and repeat sounds. The study indicated a lack of rehabilitation and speech therapy support; thus the gap was left to parents to fill. Another area where there is a lack of information and support was in technologies and supports that could benefit the hard of hearing students, including about hearing aids, cochlear implants, assistive technology and captioning. Access to such information is crucial for the advocacy of family members for providing access to education for hard of hearing learners.

## ○ REHABILITATION-RELATED FACTORS<sup>[box]</sup>

### → Early identification and intervention

Early identification and intervention are key factors for a hard of hearing child's language development, academic progress and overall inclusion in the society. Children with late identified hearing loss have more difficulties in academic learning than those identified earlier.

### → Professional human resources in rehabilitation and support services

One of the obstacles to providing early rehabilitation and much needed support services is a lack of trained human resources in fields such as early intervention for hard of hearing children, speech therapy, audiology and special needs education. There is also a lack of trained professionals to provide captioning as a form of access. In the absence of such trained professionals, the onus falls on the educators and family members to fill gaps, or the hard of hearing learner goes without these supports.

### → Access to hearing aids and cochlear implants

Timely access to hearing aids soon after the identification of the hearing loss is a prerequisite for successful early rehabilitation and further inclusion. However, hearing aids in Nepal and Uganda are not provided or compensated for by the state. Many hearing aids received from various charitable organizations did not suit their users due to lack of calibration for the user and were, therefore, under-utilized. Since hearing aids are a basic form of access that can make a huge difference for students, a program for state support should be implemented in both countries.

In addition, state support and rehabilitation for cochlear implants should be provided which can make a major impact on the hearing capability and language development of a young child when provided at an early age.

### → Access to assistive listening technologies

Hearing aids alone do not guarantee speech understanding, especially in the situation of speaker-student distance or noise background. Assistive listening devices are, therefore, a crucial supplement to hearing aids that can be used together with them. Assistive listening devices such as induction loop systems, FM systems, infrared systems and service such as speech-to-text, are especially useful in the situation of higher education where lecturers are not able to provide sufficient attention to hard of hearing students. The state should allocate budgetary provisions for the use of assistive listening devices and adequate equipment at schools as necessities in inclusive education.

## ◎ POLICY-RELATED FACTORS

### → Policy Implementation

Government policies are clear that all children with disabilities have a right to education. As well, there is broad policy support for inclusion and accessibility of students with disabilities at the primary and secondary school levels. However, the needs of hard of hearing students were not identified in the education policies for the countries involved in this study, nor were there sufficient educational plans to meet the specific needs of hard

of hearing learners, backed by financial resources and a well-resourced, trained cadre of teachers. It is essential that government policy specifically recognize the hard of hearing population and address their needs with sufficient resources and staffing.

#### → **Data Collection**

As both hard of hearing and d/Deaf fall into the same disability category (hearing impairment), there are no separate statistics on the hard of hearing in Nepal and Uganda, and thus, a lack of the visibility of the needs of hard of hearing learners. Without an appropriate definition of the term “hard of hearing” on a policy level, separation of the hard of hearing group in the data from the d/Deaf group, and the disaggregation of disability data by each type of disability, access and educational needs of hard of hearing learners will not be visible nor will their needs be met.

### ● **TEACHER-RELATED FACTORS**

Teachers are the key persons in mainstreaming inclusive education in a school. Effective inclusion does not take place until teachers deliver an accessible and meaningful learning process to students with disabilities.

#### → **Teacher training**

A key factor in the success of inclusive education is in teachers’ professional competencies to work with hard of hearing children. Competencies cover skills, knowledge and values/attitudes. There is a vital need in well-trained mainstream teachers for inclusive teaching for hard of hearing students. Teachers’ attitudes towards hard of hearing students and inclusion are seen by respondents as no less important than teachers’ skills and knowledge.

Teacher training in IE and SNE and their motivation to ensure inclusive participation of hard of hearing students in education are key factors in IE. However, there is a lack of such opportunities in Nepal and Uganda, both in pre- and in-service training. SNE courses, as a rule, provide insufficient understanding of the access and communication needs of hard of hearing students because they do not cover material related to hard of hearing students. Other available in-service professional development courses typically do not include content related to disability and/or inclusion.

Teachers should be able to attend SNE courses and professional development courses related to inclusive education and/or disability issues. Professional development courses for teachers and lecturers should include disability and inclusive education. Schools should also encourage teachers to attend more conferences and workshops organized by organizations of hard of hearing and Deaf.

→ **Special Needs Education for teachers covering work with hard of hearing students**

To eliminate individual and systemic barriers to inclusive education for hard of hearing children, it is important, among other measures, to ensure that the needs of hard of hearing students are included in the SNE curricula for teachers. Respondents advised that current SNE reflects only the needs of the d/Deaf students. It should expand to addressing educational needs of hard of hearing students as well.

Mainstream schools should be able to recruit a trained itinerant service provider or benefit from a friendly SNE teacher who is competent in supporting hard of hearing students.

🕒 **SCHOOL-RELATED FACTORS**

→ **School climate, awareness of the teaching and management staff**

Without a supportive learning environment of the hard of hearing students' realities, inclusion is not possible. Schools should be able to raise awareness among students, teachers, and school management on hearing loss and sensitize them towards the needs of hard of hearing students.

This study uncovered cases of discrimination and bullying against hard of hearing students at school that may result in school dropout. There is a need for local governments to develop regulations supporting inclusive education that explicitly discourage discrimination and stigmatization of students with disabilities, including hard of hearing students, in order to ensure a safe environment and no dropouts. Safety of hard of hearing children's personal hearing aids and assistive listening devices should be also monitored.

→ **School infrastructure with good quality acoustic and light environment**

Availability of supportive school infrastructure is another deciding factor in the placement of hard of hearing students. Auditory processing is extremely difficult in poor acoustic situations, and lipreading depends on the ability to see faces in a well-lit room. Inclusive teaching processes, therefore, are largely dependent on the availability of electricity, well-lit classrooms, sound insulation and absorption materials to minimize echo and noise, including from tin roofs. At the moment, schools are not built with the design that is acoustically friendly to hard of hearing learners. Environmental conditions could be improved by providing well-lit areas for students to do their work and creating an environment that is more conducive to learning through portable or fixed noise absorption panels, and soft furnishings such as carpets, curtains and padded chairs.

### → Accessible teaching materials

Difficulty in understanding class lectures causes low academic performance and, consequently, low quality of education. Hard of hearing students often prefer learning through text/reading and visual learning strategies. These include textbooks available to all students, captioned videos or other captioned educational audiovisual materials, appropriate language teaching methods, scripts, coursebooks, text materials to supplement all tutorials, lectures and laboratory sessions, and announcements on class activities in writing. It may also be helpful for all hard of hearing students to be provided reading lists in advance of the study so as to allow more time for reading.

## 🕒 LEARNER-RELATED FACTORS

### → Hard of hearing students' self-awareness, empowerment

Because of the stigma and stereotypes of hearing loss ("hard of hearing are old people," "hard of hearing have intellectual problems"), most hard of hearing students hide their disability status and do not want to be identified as "disabled." This behavior prevents them from voicing their right to accessible education and necessary accommodations at school.

Families, DPOs, NGOs, organizations and communities of hard of hearing people are the first places where a hard of hearing child can be encouraged to develop self-awareness, positive self-identity, learn self-determination, self-advocacy skills and be empowered by real life examples and role models to stand for his/her rights in access to inclusive education.

Teachers can also empower hard of hearing students with a mandate to fight for their rights by reporting the cases of discrimination to concerned offices in schools. Teachers should assign hard of hearing students with responsibilities and active roles by including them in classroom activities and encouraging their fellow students to support them.

### → Self-advocacy

The importance of self-advocacy by hard of hearing children and young people for their meaningful participation in decisions that relate to them and their education should not be underestimated. Parents and community organizations should be able to assist in developing children's skills needed for self-advocacy.



## 🕒 **STAKEHOLDERS-RELATED FACTORS**

### → **Collaboration of various sectors in the community**

Cooperation with and exchange of practices and learning by schools, parents, community leaders, local authorities, departments of education, rehabilitation professionals, non-governmental, DPOs, and organizations of the hard of hearing are crucial contributing factors for improving inclusivity of mainstream education for hard of hearing learners.

### → **NGOs providing assistance and resources**

NGOs and DPOs, including organizations of hard of hearing people, play an important role in educating decision-makers, educators, school staff, community leaders and parents about hearing loss, and necessary interventions and accessibility measures. They can be instrumental in consulting on access to hearing care and education and in providing equipment and assistive devices to schools or persons responsible for placement in inclusive education. They also can urge policymakers and school management to act towards inclusion as strong advocates for hard of hearing learners.

## 🕒 **STATE SUPPORT AND FUNDING IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION**

An inclusive education system requires financial support, both direct and indirect, in order to function well. Direct financial support can take the form of incentive funding for schools and scholarships for students. Such support should also extend to socioeconomic factors that affect educational participation: food, housing and transportation. Indirect financial support means ensuring sufficient funding for support services such as supplies for note-taking and the provision of funding technical aids.

# Conclusions

Hard of hearing children and young people are one of the most overlooked disability groups in educational policies, programs and practices; in large part because of the lack of awareness and knowledge of their access, rehabilitation, and communication requirements as well as the lack of financial and human resources to provide inclusive education for them. The underlying reason for the gaps in policy and practice is that there is a lack of disability definitions, compounded by lack of disaggregated and adequate data on children and youth with different disabilities, including children with hearing loss. As a result, hard of hearing learners are invisible within policy target groups, and their needs in education are not known or understood. Hard of hearing children and youth must be specifically mentioned in government policies and cited in disaggregated data on the basis of disability, degree of hearing loss and population affected by it.

In the course of this research study, several enabling factors for inclusive education for hard of hearing learners were identified, related to the specific areas of importance for inclusive education of hard of hearing children, such as socioeconomic and cultural aspects, rehabilitation, family support, school infrastructure, teacher training, learners' individual challenges, work of stakeholders and decision-makers (such as Ministries of Education, DPOs and NGOs) and education and disability policies.

The study findings highlighted the necessary prerequisites for inclusive education of hard of hearing learners related to rehabilitation, accessibility and support services. Essential are early identification of hearing loss and immediate intervention (in order to ensure timely speech and language development as well as to prevent learning problems associated with the language deficit), affordable aural rehabilitation and audiology services, state provision of hearing aids and/or cochlear implants, access to assistive listening devices as well as to adequate specialized staff (e.g., speech therapists, psychologists, counselors, lipreading/speech reading class educators at school), reasonable accommodations and individualized support measures such as note-taking and captioning, in compliance with the UN CRPD Article 24. As well, some hard of hearing learners may require sign language services.

The lack of specialist education programs in early intervention, speech therapy, audiology, captioning and, consequently, trained human resources in these fields, largely hampers the progress of inclusive education. However, even state-provided or affordable rehabilitation, technologies and access alone do not yet guarantee inclusion in schools.

Teacher attitudes and teacher training were found critical for the inclusive participation of hard of hearing students in the classroom. Especially crucial is the teacher's competence in dealing with hearing loss.

For teachers and all stakeholders involved in education for hard of hearing learners, it is extremely important to realize that the needs of hard of hearing learners do not come down to just one type of support or intervention, but must be tailored to the individual, which often requires utilizing diverse supports and devices. It should be also kept in mind that not all changes need to be complicated. Sometimes, even small adjustments in teachers' approach and accommodations in teaching hard of hearing learners could turn out to be tremendously helpful. Examples are repeating the questions, summing up instructions or the topic discussed, calling a student's name and getting his/her attention before talking, indicating a page and a paragraph to be read, or explaining the context of a forthcoming discussion in advance. In regard to more complex teaching strategies to ensure comprehension of the learning material, establishing clear communication with hard of hearing students, understanding how to use assistive technologies, setting up an inclusive environment and making learning materials accessible are key.

One of the findings from the study was that teacher training in special education does not include sufficient, if any, content related to the needs of hard of hearing learners. To redress the situation, there should be pre-service training for all teachers in inclusive pedagogy that includes learning about the educational requirements of hard of hearing learners. As well, continuous in-service training is necessary for teachers to be refreshed and updated on new developments. The lack of training will not only aggravate the quality of education and its outcomes but will also lead to stigmatization of hard of hearing learners.

Besides competent educators, trained school staff and supportive school leadership are vital for building a culture of inclusion at schools. In addition, school systems should put measures in place to combat peer bullying and non-discrimination of students with hearing loss.

Changes in inclusive education policies and practices are only possible with the cross-sectoral cooperation of all stakeholders: programs related to disability inclusion and inclusive education should be developed, implemented and monitored with direct involvement of stakeholders working with hard of hearing learners across a variety of sectors including participation by district leadership and hard of hearing students themselves. This action is in line with the existing research that “inclusive education requires more than just the basic interventions (such as teaching and learning materials and accessibility) and requires more joined up cross-sectoral thinking.”<sup>[xx]</sup> It also supports meaningful participation by hard of hearing learners in all decisions affecting them, in the spirit of the “Nothing about us without us,” principle of disability representation.

Organizations of persons with hearing loss, in particular, have a strong role to play in supporting the advocacy of hard of hearing learners. The capacity of the organizations working with hard of hearing children should be supported, and the role of these organizations in training and mentoring society and state authorities in understanding the needs of hard of hearing learners should be fully recognized. In a similar vein, empowering hard of hearing children and youth and enabling their self-advocacy should also be at the core of the activities of such organizations as well as in overall disability policies and program development.

An equally significant aspect of inclusive education is recognizing the role of parents of hard of hearing children and supporting them as primary caretakers. Parents in the study reported that they lacked access to necessary information to provide supports needed for their child and to make informed choices about educational options for their child. They also spoke about a lack of choice, not having the option of an inclusive school attuned to the needs of hard of hearing children. Sometimes, decisions about school choice were made by parents on the basis that their hard of hearing child would benefit from attending a school for deaf students where the state provides more support as compared to mainstream schools.

There is hope that research results and recommendations will be the catalyst for advocacy actions and gradual, positive changes in the education domain for hard of hearing learners not only in Uganda and Nepal, but in other developing countries. There is hope that hard of hearing children and youth will become more visible and will be welcomed and respected in their right to inclusive education.



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# Appendix

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## CASE STUDY: HEARING AID AS A DOOR TO EDUCATION

Anita (not her real name) is a 25-year-old woman from the southern part of Nepal. She became severely hard of hearing in both ears at age 14 due to a high fever. At age 18, her hearing loss was detected after her parents noticed a change in her behavior but did not know its cause.

She managed to do well in school despite her hearing loss and went on to attend a post-secondary institution after high school. However, she continued to experience a lack of self-confidence due to being unable to hear. She found that it took her longer to complete her academic work and it took a toll on her health and well-being. She experienced a great deal of stress.

In 2015, at age 20, she was connected with a non-government organization (NGO) and they referred her for hearing tests and to be considered as a candidate for a hearing aid. She acquired a hearing aid, funded entirely by her parents at a considerable financial burden to them. There was no government or other funding available to her.

With use of the hearing aid, she found that her speech and understanding of the spoken word improved dramatically. She also experienced an increase in her self-confidence. She was able to participate to a greater extent in her classes and to succeed in her university classes to get a bachelor's degree.

As a result of acquiring a hearing aid, Anita's life turned around. She was able to successfully study at the university level and to obtain a bachelor's degree. She became more outgoing and confident in herself. Eventually, she went on to run her own business with the support of an NGO.

## Conclusion

Through use of a hearing aid, a hard of hearing student was able to successfully complete her college education. Her family faced financial difficulty in paying for the hearing aids due to lack of any government or other support. In other cases, students go without hearing aids because of the lack of financial support when the family does not have the means or capacity to fund the hearing aids themselves.



## CASE STUDY: INCLUSION REQUIRES SUPPORT

This case is about two hard of hearing students, Daniel and Michael (not their real names), who are in their second year at a university in Uganda. The majority of the students in the school do not have disabilities.

Daniel's hearing loss is mild and Michael's is moderate. Neither have other deaf or hard of hearing people in their immediate family. Daniel's hearing loss was caused by severe flu and was apparent at the age of 13 years and Michael's hearing loss came as a result of an accident at the age of 7 years. Both have low vision with difficulty seeing at a distance. Neither have hearing aids nor cochlear implants because of their cost. They communicate with their peers at the university through speech/listening/lipreading supplemented by writing on paper. They experience communication difficulties and tend to occupy front seats which are best positions for lipreading their lecturers.

Daniel and Michael are attending an inclusive school but experience challenges due to a lack of support services and assistive technologies. Neither have hearing aids nor note-taking provided. However, they are coping with some help from teachers and other students and are working hard to complete their studies despite the barriers encountered. They are not sign language users otherwise they may have been eligible to receive sign language interpreters from the government.

## Conclusion

Inclusive education does not mean just being in the class with other students; it requires support services such as note-taking and hearing aids. If they were sign language users, they would receive sign language services. A similar level of support is not available for hard of hearing students such as hearing aids, FM systems or captioning. With access to such supports as needed, hard of hearing students would experience less limitations and would be significantly more included in their education.







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