The power of “Learning Together” in Nepal

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While Nepal has made significant progress in increasing access to education in the Education for All period, some marginalized groups continue to have some of the lowest literacy levels and education access rates in the country. In eastern Nepal, the most marginalized communities are low-caste Dalit populations and Muslims who live in the most remote parts of the districts. Besides their low socioeconomic status, these populations lack adequate access to schooling, lack instruction in their mother tongue, and receive poor quality classroom teaching. For instance, of the estimated 1.2 million out-of-school children, one quarter live in just four out of the 75 districts (CBS 2011).

This paper discusses the innovative approaches and design of the Sanga Sangai “Learning Together” project, which aims to address these disadvantages through mother tongue instruction and an intergenerational commitment to learning. These interventions highlight the centrality of mother tongue instruction and intergenerational learning in enabling education’s transformative role in achieving the integrated Sustainable Development Goals. The project is targeted at 20,000 girls who have never been to school or have dropped out.

A key feature of the program is non-formal literacy and numeracy classes followed by school enrollment. In addition, given that education has to be viewed through a lifelong learning approach, the mothers of the girls have also been engaged in non-formal education for adult literacy, with a special emphasis on health curricula, to be extended with workshops about saving and credit and livelihood. In addition, to promote intergenerational learning, the project provided spaces for intergenerational meetings for learning exchanges and local art promotions to promote women’s agency and empowerment. During the process the challenges and successes have been documented.