Towards a sustainable approach: the Lhomi MTB-MLE preschool program in Nepal

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Being a linguistically diverse country with over 120 language communities, Nepal has faced many challenges in providing better quality education to all children regardless of their mother tongue. While the national education policy has made room for multilingual education, mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) as an approach has not been widely adopted or supported by the public education system. To date, only a few MLE programs have been implemented in community or private schools as pilot projects by INGOs and NGOs. While these programs have displayed positive results and successes, they face constraints in making a sustainable impact in the wider community due to funding and resource limitations.

This presentation showcases a new two-year MTB-MLE preschool pilot program for the Lhomi community in Nepal. Implementing the program in two government primary schools enables the Nepal Lohmi Society (NELHOS) to introduce the MTB-MLE approach and child-centered pedagogy to the public early childhood education system, where the national curriculum has not been developed. Contextualised curriculum and materials were tailor-made in consultation with the Lhomi community, local educators, and education officials. Program cost is kept low by leveraging the schools’ existing infrastructure and human resources. The program also involves Lhomi adult literacy class participants and the local community – many of whom are parents who requested the MLE program for their children – in material development and in providing assistance to the program. Through this, NELHOS hopes to promote an all-round literacy environment, thereby making a sustainable impact on the community.