Multilingualism and sustainable development in Nepal

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This paper reviews the background to education and language policies addressing minority language use in basic education in Nepal. The new 2015 Constitution states that every Nepali community living in Nepal shall have the right to acquire education in its mother tongue up to the secondary level, and the right to open and run schools and educational institutions as provided for by law. According to the Census of 2011, over half of all Nepalese do not speak Nepali as their first language.

The Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 16 support multilingual education when they say:

● Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Goal 4).
● Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (Goal 16).

This paper will make recommendations based upon the reported outcomes of the existing multilingual education projects. This includes the author’s own experience of working with two different language-speaking communities that support multilingual education projects in primary schools: Dangaura Tharu in Dang District and Limbu in Panchthar District.

We are not poor but our vision, leadership, management skills, and tolerance to power is weak. An inclusive, quality multilingual education system is capable of overcoming these issues. Quality education matters for quality development.