

COVID-19: ADAPTATION AND INNOVATION IN EDUCATION PROGRAMMING IN NEPAL



In behest of the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, Save the Children adopted a series of innovative approaches to continue education projects by twinning trans-media and advocacy to ensure that children's education is prioritized. The innovations which were activated as 'pilots' have been tested and validated to ensure its effectiveness, reach, resonance, and impact to address the learning and education gap faced by children during the COVID-19 situation.

The learning document discusses innovative approaches to educational programming, and pilots that worked to promote educational continuity - strengthened through digital conversations and meaningful participation of both children and stakeholders in the curation and design process.

RADIO A 'GO -TO' FOR INFORMATION DURING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

More than 60% of Nepal's household own a radio set¹, the inclination towards radio listening has further increased post-COVID, as people in the most hard to reach communities consider radio to be trustworthy in terms of news, views and opinions related to COVID-19. A critical review of media habits also proves a shift in radio listening, as people prefer individual radio listening to be more effective than group listening. Similarly, with the evolution of information technology, most people listen to the radio through their mobile phones. Understanding the evolution of radio listening, and its influence during humanitarian crisis, Save the Children activated a series of radio messages to educate, inform, and inspire communities, especially children and parents to understand the concept of home-based learning, and sensitize caregivers of their critical role in continuation of education even during the pandemic

Media access survey

Save the Children conducted a media access survey to understand target audience inclination towards the media during COVID-19, and identify effective media tools to communicate and disseminate education focused messages. The survey was conducted in Saptari, Mahottari, Sarlahi (Eastern region), Dailkeh, Kalikot, Jajarkot, Rolpa, Achham, Banke, Bajura (Mid and Far-western region), and Kavrepalanchowk (Central).

Region	% of HH with access to radio	% of HH with access to mobile	% of HH with access to TV
EFO	26%	93%	61%
MFWFO	64%	91%	42%
Total	44%	92%	53%



AWARENESS RAISING THROUGH PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS (PSAs)

Public Service Announcements (PSAs) were produced in close coordination with the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MoEST) and the Education Cluster to advocate for the continuation of learning and education during the pandemic. The PSAs are designed to provide critical skills and knowledge on the concept of education at home, positive parenting skills, and life-skills for children and parents to cope with the ever-changing fluid situation, which has triggered fear and anxiety in many. The PSAs were developed targeting parents, children, teachers, and highlighted their roles and responsibilities to create a conducive learning environment at home. To reach the most hard to reach communities, and the most marginalized, regional language messages in Maithili and Awadhi were prioritized, along with Nepali language messages. The radio PSAs were disseminated through local and national FM stations, reaching to approximately 15 million listeners. Similarly,

Save the Children also partnered with the Community Information Center (CIN) to broadcast the messages through 300 community FM stations to strengthen reach, resonance, and impact of the

messages. Television PSA's were also designed in partnership with MoEST, which was disseminated through the state-owned Nepal Television.

Understanding the need for diffusion of efforts through collaboration and coordination, Save the Children partnered with Plan International Nepal to develop two television PSAs on education at home. From an inclusion approach, these visuals were curated in sign language, and were disseminated through social media.

बालबालिकाको लागि घरमै शिक्षा
रेडियो कार्यक्रम

“रमाउँदै सिक्दै”...



हरेक दिन बिहान ११:३० बजेको साफा खबर लग्ने
सामुदायिक सूचना नेटवर्क (सिआईएन) मार्फत
देशी भरीका सामुदायिक रेडियोबाट एकैसाथ

Save the Children

नेपाल सरकार
शिक्षा, विज्ञान तथा प्रविधि मन्त्रालय

RADIO SCHOOLS: INTRODUCING A NEW WAY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Identifying the need to address the critical learning gap in children, and sensitizing both stakeholders and caregivers about their role to continue education through innovative digital tools and approaches, Save the Children developed a series of 'radio-based learnings' aired through national and local FM stations. The radio-based learnings were curated in the form of 'radio schools' led by local teachers and media practitioners with technical backstopping support from Save the Children.

The radio schools developed in local languages included chapters on early childhood care and development, early grade learning, catch-up classes from primary to secondary school students, Secondary Education Examination (SEE) preparation classes, and information on caregiving and positive parenting.

“The radio schools have become a lifesaver for us during this pandemic. We listen to the radio, take notes of the lecture, and discuss the learnings with our friends - the process is like going to school.”

- Sandhya Verma, grade 9, Banke

“The radio classes use a mix of educational and entertainment elements to deliver classes on science, math, English, Nepali, and social studies. We have seen great participation of students through phone calls, quiz contests, and through social media discussions.”

- Dr. Laxmi Poudyal, Education Advisor, Save the Children in Nepal

EDUTAINMENT RADIO SERIES TO SUPPORT COVID-19 EDUCATIONAL GAP

Early Literacy and Math (ELM) at Home – Radio series targeted to children age 3 to 5

10 radio sessions targeted to children age 3 to 5 years was developed by Save the Children. The radio episodes aired from local FM stations of Jajarkot, Saptari, Sarlahi, and Mahottari are designed to strengthen early literacy and math skills in children by using innovative and locally available resources. The radio series are available in both Nepali and Maithali.

‘Hamro School’ – Radio series targeted to grade 1 to 3

Radio series, ‘*Hamro School*’ targeted to parents and caregivers to hone their skills and knowledge on step-wise self-learning materials to continue children’s education at home was produced and aired in line to the Ministry of Education Science and Technology/Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (MoEST/CEHRD) and Nepal Education Cluster endorsed self-learning materials. The radio series was piloted by Radio Roshi in Kavre, covering 15 adjoining districts. A total of 135 radio lessons were produced for grades 1 to 3 covering 405 activities.

“Ramaundai Sikhdei” (Enjoy and learn) – Radio series targeted to parents and caretakers

‘*Ramaundai Sikhdei*’ – an edutainment based educational radio program to build the capacity of parents and caregivers in conducting various family learning activities to support their children’s learning and wellbeing at home was produced by Save the Children. A total of 10 radio programs was designed and produced in collaboration with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology (MoEST) was aired in 300 + community FM stations via Community Information Network (CIN).

Radio series for parents having 0-3 years old child on early stimulation, nutrition, and positive parenting

A specialized radio series targeted to parents and caregivers of 0-3 years old children was developed under the ‘*Shubhaaramha*’ project in Kalikot. The radio series included integrated messaging on early stimulation, health and nutrition, and positive parenting. Through a co-creation process, the program content was designed by trained social mobilizers and local FM producers, and was aired twice a week to strengthen reach, resonance, and impact.

SOCIAL MOBILIZERS AND TEACHERS SUPPORT CONTINUED ACCESS TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

As we abide by WHO and government circulated guidelines on physical distancing and other precautionary measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, Save the Children acknowledges the fact that innovation in program implementation cannot succeed without collaboration. Therefore, our pilots and innovative of approaches to education program continuation involves social mobilizers, teachers, and educational practitioners, who support in assessment of context to identify the best-suited approach to address the educational gaps in the most hard to reach and marginalized communities. In the past 4 months, Save the Children has invested in digital consultations, and cascading of critical skills to diffuse innovative learnings and practices on the grounds. Capacity building of social mobilizers and teachers through digital hangouts, phone consultations and cascading support have been prioritized, which has led to the successful implementation of innovative communications and external facing actions to continue access to teaching and learning.



DISTANCE LEARNING THROUGH MOBILE PHONES

In Saptari, more than 70 Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) teachers reach out to 518 parents via mobile phones every week to cascade critical knowledge and skills on positive parenting, child well-being, and innovations to create an enabling environment for their children at home. Social mobilizers, Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) teachers and facilitators, along with local NGO partners conduct a community mapping to identify households with children below 3 years. The parents from these households are then enrolled in a weekly discussion on childhood development and partake in stimulation exercises to understand their role in the holistic development of children.

Weekly sessions are briefed and inducted by social mobilizers to the ECCD teachers, which is further cascaded to groups consisting of more than 5 to 7 parents. A follow-up is also activated to ensure that exercises and stimulations explained during the weekly sessions is being practiced. This innovation has also been replicated in Jajarkot district.



‘HOME TEACHER SUPPORT’ INITIATIVE

Save the Children designed the ‘Home Teacher Support’ initiative to encourage learning continuity of children at home. Social mobilizers identify the most-educated member of the family as the lead teacher to continue learning and teaching in the family. Orientation and cascading session on curriculum, resources on teaching and life-skills based education are provided to the selected individual by social mobilizers. Co-teacher is also identified to conduct life-skills based education and extra-curriculum activities, such as, handwashing, supporting household level chores, facilitating games on critical learning etc. Home teachers

are also aided with teaching practices and tools through Save the Children’s radio schools designed for parents and caregivers.

Local teachers play an important role to back up the lead and co-teachers, as they conduct cascading and refresher support to the teachers and aid them with resources to design interactive classes. These interactions between the teachers and home teachers also help with problem-solving, and designing strategic curriculum approaches for children staying at home. Similarly, the intervention also supports with strengthening cognitive behavior actions through practical learning skills, and creative home tutoring approaches.

COMMUNITY BASED TUTORIAL CLASSES

To address the educational gap faced by children in behest of COVID-19, volunteer teachers are strategically mobilized by local partner staffs, community volunteers, and parents to tutor children in the local communities of Saptari. The volunteer tutors conduct two hours of tuition classes and are rewarded with a nominal incentive. 17 tutorial classes have been activated, and COVID-19 prevention measures is diligently followed to ensure the safety and protection of tutors and the children.



DEVELOPMENT AND ROLL-OUT OF SELF-LEARNING PACKS

Save the Children, as the co-lead of the Nepal Education Cluster in collaboration with UNICEF Nepal, the Centre for Education and Human Resource Development (CEHRD) and Education Cluster supported the development of a series of self-learning packs for children from Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) to grade 8. The self-learning packs aims to aid children with critically required skills and knowledge to continue their education during the unpredictable COVID-19 situation, which has resulted to prolonged school closures. Save the Children provided thematic support in the development of the resource pack, and spearheaded the design, development, and review of module designed for students of grade 4.

The self-learning packs are targeted to children belonging to the most vulnerable communities, and are twinned with regular curriculum exercises, along with life-saving information on COVID-19 focusing on the overall development and holistic growth of a child. A total of 15,000 children have benefited from the self-learning modules, and will reach an additional 51,000 children by August 2020.



AWARENESS ON THE WHEELS: USING MEGAPHONES FOR CHANGE

In order to diffuse critical educational messages to the most hard to reach communities, Save the Children activated the “Awareness on the wheels” campaign in coordination with local NGO partners, social mobilizers, and local government. A tuk-tuk decorated with critical life-saving information on COVID-19 toured the most hard to reach communities, and aired messages on education at home, positive parenting, violence against children, and other media messages on educational well-being and creating

an enabling environment at home. The messages on education were also aired through megaphones strategically placed in religious sites and public venues. These external facing community interventions supported to strengthen the reach, resonance, and impact of the education related messages curated by Save the Children to address the learning and educational gap during the COVID-19 pandemic.



DIGITAL HANGOUTS WITH TEACHERS

Save the Children organized a ‘Digital Hangout’ or ‘virtual conference’ with teachers from primary to secondary level to discuss the challenges posed by COVID-19 in the education sector, and identify opportunities and innovative breakthroughs to ensure an enabling learning environment for children during the COVID-19 crisis.

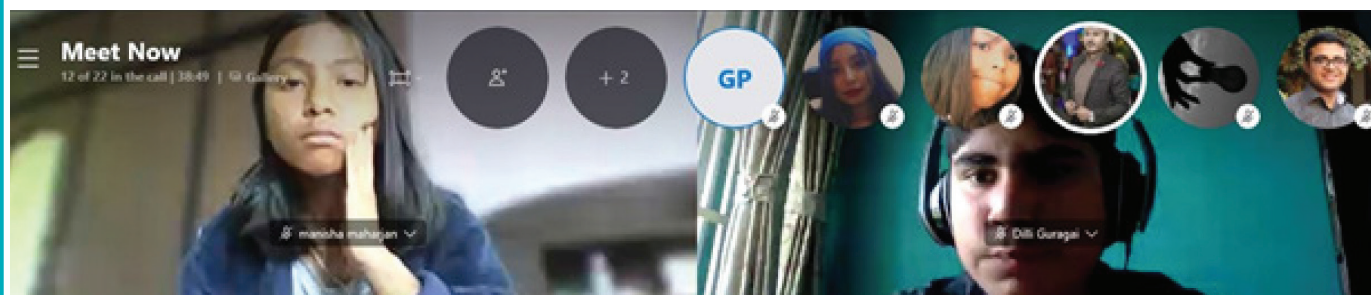
The virtual conference brought together teachers from different geographical backgrounds, and heralded discussion on the situation, need, and gaps to strengthen innovation in the education system during the COVID-19 situation.

Key findings from the digital hangouts with teachers:

- Lack of digital education tools and approaches has diminished the confidence of teachers. Therefore, capacity building and cascading sessions on new media use and digital/virtual classroom approaches should be prioritized.
- Strengthen advocacy and lobbying with federal and provincial government to introduce digital learning tools and technologies. Lobby to promote internet zones in schools through private partnership with internet service providers.
- Collaborate with organizations working in the field of quality and equitable education, and design resources for digital and distance learnings. Also, ensure that learning materials are disability friendly.

- Prioritize teacher's health and well-being by introducing 'teacher wellness plan' to cope with impact of COVID-19.
- Introduction of cross learning and sharing platforms between teachers to herald discussions on innovation, opportunities, and challenges of virtual and distance teaching. Explore avenues to share good practices and encourage replication of tools and approaches.

DIGITAL HANGOUT WITH CHILDREN: WHEN WILL SCHOOLS REOPEN ?



Save the Children conducted Digital Hangout session with children to know their concerns, opinions, and questions related to COVID-19 and its effect in their education. Children from different parts of the country participated in the virtual hangout, and discussed issues ranging from digital divide in education, lack of educational resources, inconsistency in communications related to reopening of schools, etc. The participants in Kalikot were wary of the government's plan of digitization of education system. "We don't have internet, and teachers are not comfortable using the net, so conducting classrooms through internet in our context will not work," expressed one of the participants. This sentiment was also expressed by participants of Mahottari, as they expressed greater inclination towards radio learnings and distance education through television in local languages.

The participants of Kalikot expressed their concern over the lack of enthusiasm in teachers towards exploring innovative solutions of teachings, as according to one participant, "the lockdown period is being taken as a vacation by the teachers, and there is no accountability towards the future of children." Whereas, the participants in Kathmandu expressed that interactive catch-up classes through zoom, and virtual learnings were effective, and they were also exposed to a "new normal" – as assimilation from formal classroom setting to a more virtual interface was innovative and participatory. Similarly, 67% quarantine centers are hosted in schools and educational institutes, and there is deepening fear regarding the safety of children, issues related to disinfection once the education system resumes to normal.

A critical review of the digital hangout interaction with participants from Kathmandu, Mahottari and Kalikot reveals a startling disparity in education in rural and urban settings. There's also a need to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of innovative alternative solutions, and critically analyze and test whether the provided educational alternatives best suit the need of children from the most hard to reach communities. The prolonged lockdown situation, lack of concrete plans from the government to reopen schools, and the absence of innovative and accessible alternatives poses a threat in the future of children, especially girls.

"As a girl I am afraid I will lose out on education, and because I must work at home, I hardly have time for studies. At least in school I could study, but because of the lockdown, I cannot even do that,"

shared, a 17 years old girl from Kalikot.

CHANNELING CHILDREN'S VOICES AND CONCERNS THROUGH THE 'PAWANKALI' SHOW

Save the Children has partnered with popular comedy show, 'Pawankali' to elevate the voices and concerns of children related to the prolonged school closures, and their anxiety related to their education. The show through the subtle use of comedy discusses critical issues faced by children during the pandemic and links their concerns to influencers stakeholders and decision-makers. To strengthen the reach, resonance, and impact of the show, and to ensure strategic diffusion, the comedy show is aired from 300 + community FM stations, YouTube, and DishHome Television every week.



One of the recent episodes of the 'Pawankali' show featured an exclusive interview with the Honorable Minister of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST), Giriraj Mani Pokharel, where he answered questions posed by the children on education during COVID-19, challenges of digital education, and the government's plan to reopen schools after COVID-19. The Minister during the interview stressed the commitment of the government to ensure safe and enabling learning environment to children during the pandemic.

RAPID ASSESSMENT ON THE IMPACT OF COVID: EDUCATION AND CHILD PROTECTION

The fluid and ever-changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has affected people globally and has derailed their social and economic condition. As people struggle to cope with the adversity created by the COVID-19 situation, there is a greater need to focus on children and take account of the unprecedented effect of the virus in their psycho-social well-being, and its repercussions in their daily lives.

Therefore, in order to understand the deepening effect of COVID-19 in children, Save the Children partnered with local partners to conduct a rapid assessment survey to understand the situation of COVID-19 and its effect in child protection and education issues in children in Province 2 and the Karnali Province.

Key findings from the rapid assessment:

- 80 percent of the children surveyed stated that radio was the most effective communications tool to garner information on COVID-19.
- 89 percent revealed to have conversations with the children, and actively partake in educational learning and sharing activities.
- Only 14 percent of children surveyed stated that they were in communication with their teacher during the lock down period and attested to the use of television and radio as effective distance learning tools.