

## Swiss Academy for Development (SAD)

# Move 4 New Horizons (M4NH) project, Nepal

### Project summary

Move 4 New Horizons (M4NH) is an educational pilot project for disadvantaged out-of-school children implemented by the Swiss Academy for Development (SAD) and the Nepalese grassroots organisation Dalit Welfare Organisation (DWO) in Dang District, situated in the Mid-Western region of Nepal since 2008.

As a main project activity, 15 non formal education (NFE)-classes are held in different rural villages, targeting low-caste children between the age of 5-10, who are deprived of education. After nine months, NFE graduates are integrated into the public school system.

The aim of the project is not only to facilitate children's access to public schools, but at the same time to support these children, who have experienced discrimination and conflict in the past, in their psychosocial development. This rests on the conviction that children can only fully develop their true potential if they have the necessary self-confidence, inner strength and motivation to overcome the multiple obstacles they face, to learn and to advance in life.

The use of interactive teaching methods and the integration of sport and play activities into the curriculum serves to strengthen these factors in a way that is non-intrusive and fun.

### Playful teaching approach

The children come to the NFE classes during six days a week and three hours per day. The NFE classes are taught by young facilitators who were recruited from the village population. Four subjects are included into teaching: maths, Nepali, English and sports.

Sport and play activities are not only seen as a recreational and fun side-activity, but as valuable tools to facilitate learning processes. They are therefore important elements of the curriculum: Sports lessons are being taught for at least three hours per week on an outdoor playground (a village square, a school yard or an unused field). Besides that, playful and interactive teaching methods (including games, songs, active sequences, etc.) are used by the facilitators during the indoor lessons, as well.

The facilitators have received intensive training on how to use the potential of sport and play to provide disadvantaged children with achievable and fun learning opportunities and thereby help them to develop self-confidence, trust in their teacher and a more positive attitude towards learning. According to our experiences, such didactical skills are elementary to channel the potential of sport and play into educational goals and to limit the negative side effects (jealousy, violence, exaggerated competition, gender discrimination, etc.) that sport and play can also trigger. SAD has also developed a manual as a practical reference on playful indoor and outdoor teaching, which is already used by many other organisations.<sup>1</sup>

### Evidence

The project's success so far shows that this approach effectively meets the specific learning requirements of children from disadvantaged backgrounds and significantly increases their "school readiness".

97% of the children who graduated from our NFE classes so far could be enrolled in public primary schools, 54% of them are girls. Our first long-term assessments show that our NFE graduate children score high when looking at educational continuity, with drop-out and repetition rates being significantly lower than the national average: After two years, 94% of the children who had attended our NFE classes in 2008 are still attending school regularly. The repetition rate among the first year's NFE

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<sup>1</sup> The manual can be downloaded from the internet in English and Nepali. See: <http://www.sad.ch/en/Publications/Move-4-New-Horizons.html>

graduates was 6%. In comparison to National educational statistics, these numbers are very low: Nepal is facing a drop out rate of 24% and a repetition rate of 30% in grade one at primary school on average.

These outcomes are even more remarkable if one considers that children with the socioeconomic background of the children in our NFE classes are normally those that are most at risk of dropping out early or having to repeat classes. Our NFE graduate children show not only a higher school continuity than average; their performance at school is often higher than the one of other children, too: 35% of the NFE graduate children are among the six best students in class, 12% of them are even among the three best students in class.

There is evidence that the innovative approach of using interactive teaching methods and integrating sport and play activities into the curriculum is supportive in achieving these outcomes. Thanks to this teaching approach, a more relaxed atmosphere is created in the classes and a playful interaction between the children is facilitated, in which they learn to integrate into a class of children, to gain trust into a teacher and to build their own self-confidence.

### **Innovation**

In rural Nepal, oversized classes, lack of child-friendly teaching materials and poor classroom infrastructure are the norm. Teachers, who do normally not receive any training or support and are overstrained with these conditions, stick to teacher-centred teaching approaches, disciplinary actions and physical punishment. The common perception of a learning environment being “efficient” if the children sit still and are quiet is especially difficult for children, who are not prepared for such an educational environment at home and face a multitude of disadvantages (such as malnutrition, having to work at home, lack of affection, etc.). Constantly lagging behind and receiving punishment for not being concentrated leads to a negative attitude towards learning in these children, which will also negatively impact their learning chances later at school. It is not surprising that under these circumstances, school drop out-rates are the highest during the first two years at primary school in Nepal and children from marginalized backgrounds are those that are most at risk of dropping out early.

It requires a lot of inner strength and resiliency for a young child to cope with the adverse environment at school and not to lose its motivation for learning. Since children from disadvantaged backgrounds normally do not bring these resources with them, this is exactly what our project is trying to support.

The playful teaching approach in our NFE-classes is offering these children achievable and “fun” learning opportunities and thereby helps them to develop self-confidence and a more positive attitude towards learning. This leads to the children being better prepared for school and achieving better learning outcomes there. The successes of our project so far strengthen us in our conviction that an interactive teaching approach, which addresses child development in a holistic way, is better adapted to the specific learning needs of disadvantaged and marginalized children. Basing on this positive evidence, efforts are being made to spread good practices and to replicate the project’s innovative approach elsewhere.

### **Ownership and sustainability**

Although factors like caste / gender discrimination and conflict affectedness are relevant as well, the main reason why children cannot attend school or drop out early lies in the fact that school is not affordable for their parents. In order to prevent our NFE class graduates from having to leave school early and to give them sustainable educational perspectives, we are also addressing the poverty of their parents: The mothers of the children in our NFE classes have been organised into mothers’ groups that engage in savings and collective income generating activities. E.g. the women have started vegetable farming, mushroom breeding, poultry farming, etc. and sell their products in local markets. The habit of saving, the availability of small credits and the returns from the collective works have already had an impact on the women’s economic and social empowerment and have enabled them to financially support their children’s education. After having witnessed these successes, the men have also abandoned their initial scepticism and are actively supporting them now. Like this, we help to create the necessary economic basis from which the parents can finance their children’s education by themselves.

Good relationships have also been established with local and national educational authorities. They are already technically and (to a small degree) also financially supporting our activities and it is envisaged that the NFE classes will be carried on by these authorities in the long run. Currently, the project is

funded through a private foundation in Switzerland. The local annual budget of this project amounts to around 120'000 SFr.

**Contact information**

Swiss Academy for Development (SAD)

Valeria Kunz

Project Manager

Bözingenstrasse 71

CH-2502 Bienne

Switzerland

T +41 (0)32 344 49 66

F +41 (0)32 341 08 10

[kunz@sad.ch](mailto:kunz@sad.ch)