



# Educate the Future

Early learning opportunity in Baglung and Rolpa



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**Cover Photo:** Healing and Education through Art: Children painting at an ECED center in Baglung.

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Introduction:

## Life of a child in Rolpa and Baglung

Life in Baglung resembles that of Rolpa in many ways, only it can be said that livelihood indexes are relatively better in the former than the latter. Otherwise, a general idea applies, in that life is rural, agro intensive and the trend of male family members going to foreign countries for employment is widespread. Geography and agriculture are similar; and as of now both have their hilly landscapes steadily plowed with road projects. In some ways, opportunities are opening up. In recent history Rolpa had been a hotbed for a decade old civil war; more so than Baglung.



For a child in the more rural parts of these two districts, it is probable that his/her family will have markedly low income which makes parents' priority survival rather than the child's curiosity. It is also likely that someone from the family has gone out to Kathmandu, India or the Gulf (and many have), in the short run they will make it easier for others to follow and until the trend starts deflating, there is mostly the mother; the siblings or the grandparents to look after the children at home. The mother is busy with her daily work—and it takes a lot to sustain life in a village. Even when one considers the fact that remittance income must be easing some of the burden, life can be incredibly busy; just taking care of the cattle, a small

patch of land, water, daily meals and other duties can be taxing. In her circumstances, the mother can only take care of the child's basic necessities and there is a limit to which she can attend to his/her questions. The siblings are occupied with children their age, or helping out at the house and doing homework. They don't have a mother's patience with a child, the learning they impart is informal, more on the practicalities of life, but for the most part they are also still learning. Grandparents grant a more direct influence. Both parents and older



siblings have an authority of fear over the child, which extends to school. At most of the Early Childhood Education and Development (ECED) centers in Rolpa as well as Baglung a good number of grandfathers and grandmothers showed up on behalf of the children, and many come every day to get their grandchildren to the ECEDs and back. They share what they know, and in many respects it's a very important education.



School has traditionally been a revered institution and however they work, it's assumed by parents that the teachers probably know better. There is knowledge that education is important, yes, but the idea of it is mostly beaten down through generations, confined to doing well in exams and staying obedient in the class room (or the house), rather than asking questions, learning or applying. As a mother in Liwang, Rolpa confessed, she didn't really know any better: that a child requires patience in their part to learn. Getting erratic at a children is probably an

outcome of the hardships of life and many times, its cycles, and it's taken as a fact of life. Moreover, when it comes to education, anything out of the sticks or carrots ideology has not been commercialized beyond major cities and towns. For a globalizing world, schooling has evolved beyond information and Municipalities and towns have a mushrooming Montessori culture in a name of good schools, but children in villages are still subjected to the kind of education from twenty years earlier, putting them further back .





## ECED Education

For a child of primary learning age, (children of age 5 enter primary school in Nepal) making the entry to class one is a difficult thing. Without an ECED between home and grade one, the children in that classroom are not learning very much. For one thing, as a headmaster of a primary school in Rolpa confided, the students are scared of the teacher and think him (or her) as someone who exerts authority the way siblings or parents do. Perhaps, the grandparents are friendlier; but the children wouldn't consider a teacher the same age as their brothers or mothers as their friends. These kinds of strictness colors the child's idea of their teacher and not many hands are raised in class one, for question or answer. A teacher is an adult through and through, who has a rigid authority (and perhaps even manners). Moreover, many fail grade one

At the ECED centers the teachers are a little more enthusiastic about teaching and interacting with younger children, and perhaps because of their training, look to be considerably patient with the children.

because they don't attend all the classes, teaching is monotonous, and it's difficult to keep up. It's hard enough grasping all the things that are taught, and in the manner that they are taught, many times multiplied when one does not attend regularly, either because of situation at home, or because of the child's own disinterest.

At the ECED centers the teachers are a little more enthusiastic about teaching and interacting with younger children, and perhaps because of their training, look to be considerably patient with the children. At an early age, getting habituated to this friendlier idea of a "teacher" can put the children's minds at relative ease about their sirs and madams when they get to higher grades. At any case, they do better since they have learnt a lot of what is taught in grade one, at the ECED level itself, cutting back on the reasons for a teacher to put on his/her angry face.





Government and the ECED Program

Between progress and space for progress

“Currently ECED is executed as a program, it has to come under a system, whether it's within the school system or something else”, *Narmaya Thapa*



“Currently ECED is executed as a program, it has to come under a system, whether it's within the school system or something else”, Narmaya Thapa, energetic national ECED expert at Save the Children and one of the champions trying to bring the program to “mainstream” voices her biggest concern for ECED in Nepal at the moment. With decades of experience in the field she has an eye for a key policy change that might really make a difference on a large scale, because as a “program” the ECED has not been getting the priority in budget and state support it deserves. The relegation also means that, state feels more comfortable asking support from international/national non-governmental organizations, local governments and communities to implement the ECED program. In the Nepal School Sector Reform Plan (SSRP) 2009 the government distributes responsibility of ECEDs between itself and others:

“The Department of Education (DOE) is implementing the ECED program in collaboration with I/NGOs and community based organizations. Contractual arrangements have been made by the Department with partner agencies to obtain technical and financial support for ECED implementation. DOE also provides a lump sum grant to the ECED centres on an annual basis. In addition, the CDC (Curriculum Development Centre) and NCED (National Centre for Educational Development) will offer technical support in their respective areas, required for setting norms and standards and for delivery of services including curriculum development, facilitator training and evaluation system development”.

DOE's annual monetary support amounts to a measly 2,500 rupees (approximately \$29, 1 USD = 85 NPR ) for the facilitator's monthly salary. Aside from the fact that the remuneration is too low for modern times, the whole grant doesn't really do much for the program. Venues and important arrangements are left to the community; and the local government, the schools or communities have to come up with additional money for anything else. Most don't have that much cash to spare; the local government funds are inconsistent, privy to unstable politics or frozen, there is no extra money at the school and the communities don't see anything happening by putting in more. A good ECED will cost a big amount. This leaves the ECEDs the way they are without non-governmental support.



## The School Sector Reform paper admits:

[Similarly], a major concern for ECED is to secure quality in the ECED program. Although the quantitative growth of ECED centres has been remarkable, quality issues to ensure minimum standards are yet to be addressed. The creative aspects of ECED appear to have been buried under the content load of ECED curricula.

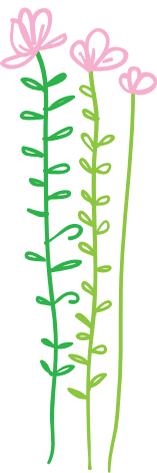
Early Childhood Education and Development is defined as a holistic approach to “education” that aims to build a basis of quick learning for children going on to become working citizens. The government’s choice of a name is indicative of a critical failure of its program. Without nongovernmental support, the ECED program is constricted by an unfortunate

lack of infrastructure. The teaching methodologies that government prescribes while training facilitators, can’t be implemented without resources. So “learning” becomes “studying” and “education” more or less limited to “syllabus”.

Narmaya Bhujel, facilitator at Garang Dhara ECED Center in Baglung was aware what ECED education was supposed to be like, but at a center that was many sizes too small and with little learning materials, it looked quite unrealistic. The teachers from a nearby school encouraged her to go the usual route. “They advised me to hold the children’s hand and teach them to write. The children weren’t that enthusiastic to learn, they came crying and felt pressured to study”, she says.

A couple years later, she was talking to a primary level teacher from the same school. He informed her that students going from the ECED to class one were quite smart in the





first grade but seemed to taper out as they went higher up—ultimately she says, there was almost no difference between an ECED and non ECED child. She believes this had happened because of rote learning; the children probably remembered their lessons, making them smarter than children who had come without an ECED education, but eventually it watered down and they were level because the method is faulty, she estimates. In comparison, quite satisfied with her current teaching methodology, she says the children seem to retain a lot of what is taught, quickly. “This learning is going to stay with them for a long time”. The current methodology as she puts it, is a reality because of the QLO (Save the Children program for quality ECED center) intervention—a red and yellow building, housing a single large room (18\*12 feet) as well as toys and materials like charts, books and crayons. Its airy, comfortable interior provides a much needed learning environment. Now the children have the space to sit in a neat circle, play at their own private corners, run around inside, or sleep if they would like it. The program’s results with learning are echoed by other facilitators.

Goma Ghimire, of Seto Gurans Bal Batika in Baglung municipality taught at a private school in Kathmandu before she came here. But the current methodology has made a different impression on her: “This is learning by physically seeing or feeling things”, she says. She calls someone to go and see what kind of a day it is outside. A children runs to the door; looks up at the sky and runs back to announce his judgment, “Cloudy”. In a few moments, rain breaks. Under the chattering of a slow drizzle, Ghimire announces nap time and arranges the children on a row of beds. “This education is sustainable”, she says taking a little time off. Her relationship with the students here is also different than in Kathmandu, where she taught primary school. “When I meet someone in the Bazaar, or around the neighbourhood, they call me ‘sister’ and introduce me to their parents. They are comfortable and easy around me”.

A program that facilitates cognitive development at an early age is ever the more a global basic necessity. For Nepal though, there are other perks: it will help the country come out of an increasingly outdated concept of



education, and will aid to plug massive drop out rates. Narmaya Thapa again: “How many children disappear in the school system, between primary and School Leaving Certificate ( examination for completing 10th grade in Nepal ) Isn’t that a big loss for the government, its investments?” Along with its other benefits, she believes an effective ECED education will help children chart the muddy waters of school education.

## Minimum Standards for ECED Centers

In the “National Minimum Standard for ECED Centers” handbook 2010, the government in collaboration with agencies and other stakeholders, has continued a column of lofty ambitions for a program so crippled by lack of resources. Pages eight to nineteen are devoted to prescribing the proper minimum ECED standards, each page with a continuing table of four columns: Area, Sub-Area, Minimum standard, and Ideal standard. Area includes the different facets of ECED education, like physical infrastructure, materials and such, while sub area is a break down of the same. The ideal standard column is mostly empty, one would think also because the minimum standards themselves are quite ambitious. Even centers supported by Save the Children can aspire to these standards, for other ECEDs, the climb is much steeper. Still, Thapa believes, it’s good to believe in the positive. “It’s progress. Nine years ago there was no ECED at all, now it’s a program, for the future it only needs to get better”, she ends, smiling to



herself, while finishing lunch at a Healing through the Arts (HEART) training she is coordinating for Save the Children. The government knows how important ECED education is. In the same minimum standard handbook, a World Bank research is cited during introduction: every dollar spent on a child’s early development

*will produce a benefit that can be calculated to about seventeen on the same currency. “Getting suitable opportunities for development and learning is every child’s first right”, it concludes.*

**Getting suitable opportunities for development and learning is every child’s first right.**





# Holistic Approach to ECED

The District Education Office (DEO), chief implementing agency for the ECED program is taking heat on behalf of the government right now. ECED focal person at the Baglung District Education Office confides that Education Ministry is a lone ranger at the moment, without the support of Health and other concerned ministries. "ECED education considers nutrition, it concerns children and is supported by local institutions as much as the government, so it's the job of Health, Women and Children, and Local Development Ministries along with us, to realize this project", he says. Talks are in order for such collaboration. Right now though, the government as a whole seems a little wobbly at the weight of this endeavor. Since 2011 the Israel's National Agency for International Development Cooperation (MASHAV), United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Save the Children (SC) have been working together to support capacity building and training programs related to developing holistic approach of ECED for children below 5 years old. Five districts (Accham, Baglung, Udayapur, Mahottari and Jumla) have been selected to pilot holistic ECED integration services until 2015.

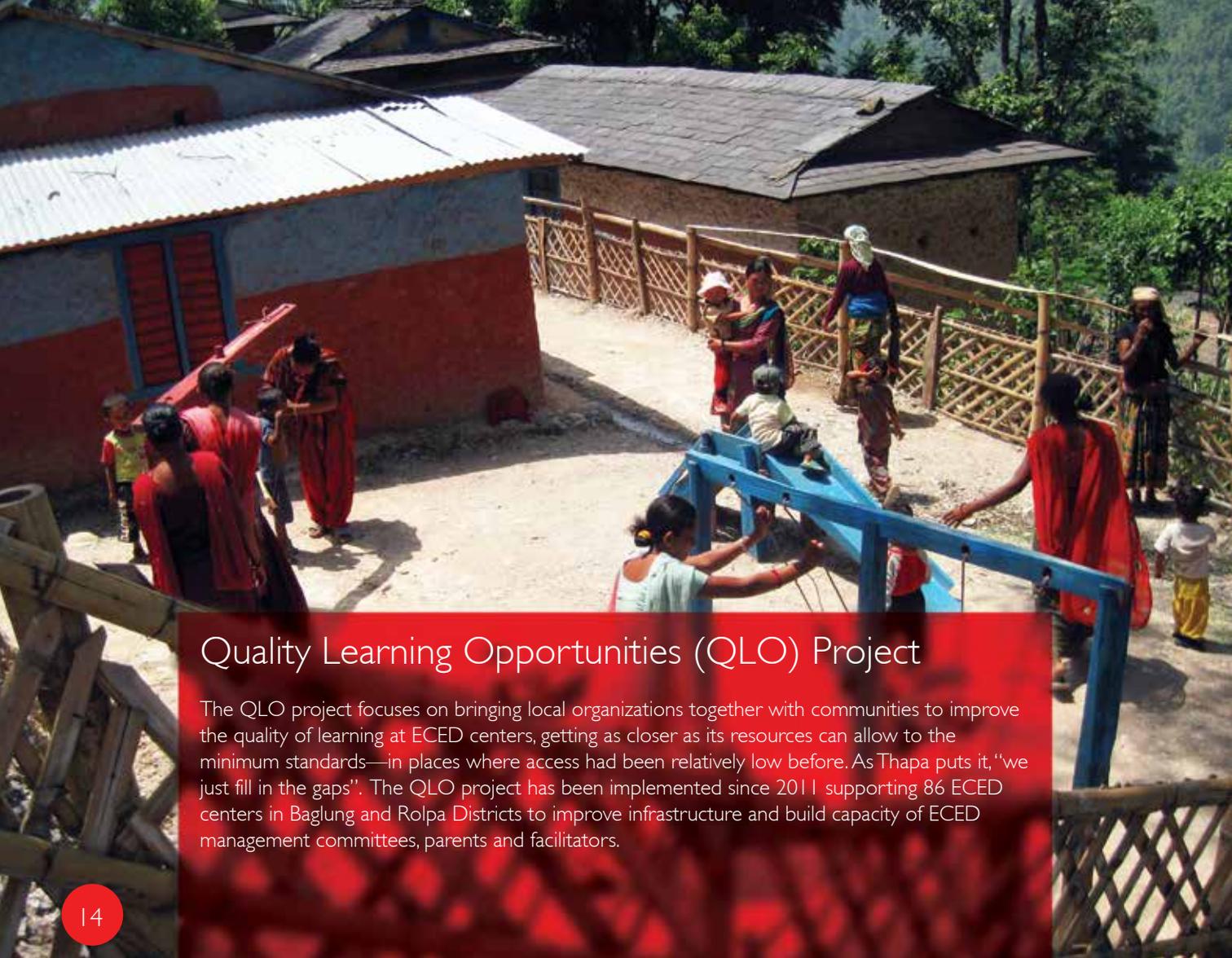
Every dollar spent on a child's early development will produce a benefit that can be calculated to about seventeen on the same currency



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Before –  
Dagatundanda  
ECED Center,  
Daga 4, Baglung  
District



<  
After –  
Dagatundanda  
ECED Center, Daga  
4, Baglung District



## Quality Learning Opportunities (QLO) Project

The QLO project focuses on bringing local organizations together with communities to improve the quality of learning at ECED centers, getting as close as its resources can allow to the minimum standards—in places where access had been relatively low before. As Thapa puts it, “we just fill in the gaps”. The QLO project has been implemented since 2011 supporting 86 ECED centers in Baglung and Rolpa Districts to improve infrastructure and build capacity of ECED management committees, parents and facilitators.



## ECED centers Before 2012

Conclusions for the need of a project like QLO can probably be derived from what the centers are like, without intervention. Before the intervention, most facilitators reported makeshift places, or a small spare classroom at the schools, as ECED venues; or the sessions were run along with grade one itself. In spite of training, the facilitators could not conduct classes on ECED principles, and left to their own devices taught the basic letter and number.

The centers seem to have been of little value when compared to what they are supposed to be. Some classes were run on cold floor shanties with little space, air or light. This discouraged both parents and children from ECED education as

much as it did not encourage them to be a part of it. The encouragement is important because crucially the children can't get to these centers themselves, a sibling or an adult needs to take them along. If the ECED centers are not that attractive for parents, they won't make the push to send their children to school. Finally, learning on the basis of color, light, song-dance, playing or napping, as the ECED course prescribes, is not helped by narrow, cold and drab rooms. The facilitator has to make many compromises, making the centers little more than namesake. ECED is supposed to be an education that prepares young minds for learning, rather than for grade one by already teaching what they are going to study at the beginning of their primary education.



## Getting started and over difficulties

Communities had been enthusiastic about ECED and efforts in trying to build and sustain a center themselves, is proof of their interest. However, there was little knowledge about what ECED education should be like, and even if they did know, the communities were either O.K. with what they had, or suffered resource constraints.

QLO's key ECED intervention, i.e. building construction, amounts to 300,000 rupees in monetary support that Save the Children provides to communities, but it isn't nearly enough. The communities themselves need to find land, as well as manage labour donation, which have sometimes accounted to more than the seed money itself. In some cases, communities have invested as much as 300% more than SC's grant amount. Still everybody agrees that the monetary support was a big boost, because basically no one wanted to let it go when it was theirs for the taking.





QLO's seed money seems to have been a very important motivational factor for visualizing and starting work on the new space. At some places people were initially skeptic, why do we need a big building? Some didn't help because they didn't have children of ECED age (3-4 years) and didn't care. But such cases are few and far between. Communities in general were really enthused about building a nice place for their children to play and practice a more modern concept of learning (as they have come to know through parents' education training). When the classes started some parents had doubts about the teaching methodology.

Communities in general were really enthused about building a nice place for their children to play and practice a more modern concept of learning

Song, dance and sleeping didn't seem like much of an education, but as they began noticing changes (good manners, hygiene, academics), they were completely in support.

It is amply clear that ECEDs need intervention at the moment, if they are to reach the potential the government has envisioned. QLO

has brought in teaching materials, more regulated training, and finally, the required physical space to the program, upping the quality in the ECED program.

The most important feature of the QLO intervention has been physical infrastructure. The building itself is very important, not only because it offers the space required for teaching on ECED's core values but also, as we see in the case of Bhimgithey's Namuna ECED center, Baglung, its existence as an entity of its own is conducive to a better learning environment for children. It also shows how for an ECED, the environment takes fuller meaning, dependent as it is on a great number of factors.



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## Jeevan likes ECED now

Five year old Jeevan goes to the Namuna ECED Center in Khal of Bhimgithi VDC-8, Baglung. Before the new building was constructed in a separate space, the ECED class was held at a smaller venue in the Buddha Higher Secondary School (HSS) premises nearby. Jeevan was an irregular attendee back then, and when he came, he didn't want to stay that long. His facilitator relates how he once tried to escape the ECED class out the window but got stuck halfway on the metal bars. "I had to go outside and pull him out", she says. Jeevan lives with his grandmother, father and two older siblings in a VDC which technically falls in Doti district but is still just a bridge away from Bhimdithi. With busy elder siblings he would mostly be alone at home, and being slightly separate from that of the other children coming to the ECED, it was difficult for him to continue friendships outside of the class as other children easily did, living

nearly one another. But at the school itself, there was another, more serious problem which deflated children's enthusiasm for attendance.

At the old center, the higher grade children would bully ECED children and it was "difficult for them to access water, toilet and the playing grounds", as headmaster Khimananda Acharya of Buddha HSS recalls. Even though it stands out among other older centers in that it was already furnished with much of the ECED materials, and classes ran smoothly enough, the children (some of whom are much smaller than primary students) didn't feel secure enough. Jeevan was silent about this, but parents and facilitators maintain that the children were intimidated by the environment at school and this was a big reason for absenteeism. As the new building got finished and sessions began there, both attendance and admission rates shot up. Despite some initial reluctance (Jeevan's grandmother would stay all the way through the class for the first month), Jeevan has begun enjoying the new center, and his



interest as well as ability in academics has sharply improved. He takes out a hardcover notebook from his bag to show for it. When someone comments that not many pages are filled with his "writing practice", he immediately looks up and clears the air; "It's a new notebook". "He comes home and everyday after dinner he tells me, dad lets study and he sits down and starts reading. He knows, all the letters, the numbers, English words, what day it is, what is the weather outside", Jeevan's father Chandrakanta Fuljel who works at Buddha HSS as helping staff, lists within a breath.





## Enthusiasm for attendance

For children like Jeevan, the ECED centers can be a great place to spend half of the day. Tucked in a relative corner of their communities, they are free to learn, play and pursue their interests. Even from afar, the new ECED centers look like the place to be. For one thing they are new; and the bright red and yellow colors are attractive. Inside, carpeted from wall to wall, the hall is clean and enclosed to make you think it's a world of its own. Most facilitators report that parents come to the centers,

Inside, carpeted from wall to wall, the hall is clean and enclosed to make you think it's a world of its own.

not only to see their children run hither and there happily reciting nursery rhymes but also because occasionally they themselves seem quite interested in dabbling with the wooden elephants, the lego or a set of crayons.

Most have gotten over the initial skepticism regarding ECED's teaching methodology and can see that their children are turning taatho (a term used very often by parents which translates to "smart"). Parents are also now more vigilant about sending their children to the ECED centers, as well as helping them get over the first day blues. After a week or so of attendance, the children

don't want to stay home nearly as much as they did.

Learning needs an encouraging environment, both at school and home. No parent wants their children left behind though—for good things like this, outreach and sharing what the world knows can be enough. Just knowing that being patient with a child can improve his/her learning for example (also an important part of QLO's parents' education), the guardians in Rolpa seem to have taken a relatively new concept of education, wholeheartedly. Encouragingly there is greater participation in making toys for ECEDs from parents and care takers.



## Ek Doko Khelauna

Sharmila, 22 cannot send her 18 months old son Umesh to the nearest ECED center. They live too far away from the center and the hills are too steep for the child to walk. With her husband away in India for work, she has too many household responsibilities to walk almost an hour downhill to take Umesh to the center.

Recently, Sharmila participated in a toy-making workshop for parents who live in remote parts like her who cannot send their children to ECED centers. She came back from the workshop with a basket full of toys she made for Umesh with locally available materials like plastic, cloth, and wood. She painted fruit seeds with different colors so that she can introduce shapes and colors to her son. They also made colorful garlands of different materials like plastic, flower, and bamboo.

Sharmila is excited to see that the *ek doko khelauna* didn't just bring toys in his life but also discipline. Sharmila says that Umesh keeps the toys safely in the doko after he is done playing with it.

Ek Doko khelauna is a special program designed for children and families that do not have easy access to early learning like early childhood development centers.





Kalpana Ghimire brings her daughter Bishakha and her neighbour's daughter Ashiak to Ghaiya Bari ECED center and walks almost 45 minutes downhill on the steep paths of her village. She says that she had *ek doko khelauna* in her home which her daughter enjoyed so much that she didn't want to deny her an opportunity to learn more at the ECED center. So she has enrolled her daughter at the ECED center even if it means she has to spend few hours in the day to bring and fetch children to and from the center. She and her neighbor take turn bringing their children to the center.

## A boost of confidence

Most community members seemed a little shy in our meetings. Some had to be prompted twice to make a formal sort of an introduction, a Namaste, name and business. When a class full of children in an ECED stood up and introduced themselves, however, it seemed apt that the parents were proud and marked it as an achievement. Lack of formal communication skills hold one back from voicing opinions and it can look intimidating if the other person is doing it really well. As Dhana Maya Pun, community leader for Dhawang VDC in Rolpa said once, joking “I went with a heart full of things to say, but returned rounding the scarf around

my neck”. Tirsana Bista, chairperson for the ECED center at Bageshwori Primary in Titrikot, Rolpa gives QLO the credit for some positive behavioral change on the children: “They now do namaste, they don’t talk needlessly if they don’t know and are really put together”, she says. So progress as can be estimated for these early years of the project’s implementation, and as seen from the community, is a child in Rolpa asking her mother what day it is and then replying herself, “Aaitabar” (Sunday), in a showoff of what she learnt today at the center. Parents were all smiles and seemed proud of their children for things like that.

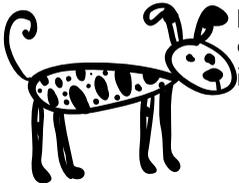


## Bal Vikash ECED Centre

Majhing, Dhawang VDC, Rolpa District

The new Bal Vikash ECED Centre with its bright yellow and pink walls and accompanying blue windows is a contrast amongst the greens and browns of Majhing village. Up till last year the centre was located in the middle of a jungle between Majhing and the mountainous pastures where the community takes their livestock to graze. The old location was in poor condition and the difficult walk through the jungle often deterred parents from sending their children to the centre. According to the School Management Committee (SMC) Chairperson, the new building has changed the parents' perceptions of the ECED. He stated: "the children who didn't come to the ECED before are now attending because of the new building and facilities". Today there are 10 children enrolled in the Centre.

Anita, 4 years old, is one of the 10 children who attend the ECED classes at Bal Vikash. Her mother Santamaya explains that she prefers the new ECED centre to the old one as it means her daughter



does not have to walk as much as she did before. She adds that "Anita likes coming to class because she gets to play with different toys and games and she has made a lot of friends here." In addition to the educational materials provided by Save the Children, the toys which Anita and her classmates play with include those made locally by the parents of

the ECED children. Kaushal, the ECED facilitator explains that the parents were encouraged to contribute toys and learning materials for the ECED centre and the response was very positive. The classroom now has many locally made toys including a blue and red painted wooden bus, a toy plough, a wooden elephant and a bamboo flute which was Santamaya's contribution.



## Hygiene

According to the 2012 program report 99.9% of the children in the QLO project received basic health services (de-worming, vitamin A, immunizations etc). Keeping clean is common sense as much as an inherited instinct, but taking additional care to stay away from diseases or lethargy can be outreach, and it has been an achievement of the QLO program, both for the children, and sometimes through them, for the parents. The parents know this of course, but children prompting for help at the tap, sound so smart, they can't help but smile when talking about it. The parents seem a little amazed at their children turning sharp rather than just learned. The older siblings

didn't have the same facilities, which is why the difference is much clearer to them.

Similarly, QLO's infrastructure intervention has done to boost cleanliness because as Pushpa Thapa Shrees, facilitator at Garangdhara of Bhimdithi, Baglung says, parents don't want to send their children dirty, to a neat and clean place. "Before, the children returned all dusty and roughed up from sitting and playing on the mud floors. Parents told me, it was difficult recognizing their children when they came home. Some said, it was better off that they stayed home than going to such a place and getting sick". Since the new facilities offer a much cleaner space, it's embarrassing on the parents' part also to send their children untidy.



The parents seem a little amazed at their children turning sharp rather than just learned.



## Bageshwori ECED Centre, Titirikot, Liwang-VDC, Rolpa District

The ECED children of the newly built Bageshwori ECED Centre at Titirikot village are busy building towers and colorful vehicles out of wooden blocks, putting together various puzzles and amusing each other with masks. This sight is a novel one and one unthinkable just four months ago when the ECED students shared the same classroom as the grade one students at the Bageshwori Primary School. Hema Raut, the ECED facilitator, recalls the condition of the old ECED class: "The previous classroom consisted only of desks and chairs and had no space for learning materials or for activities requiring a bit of space." She elaborates: "we used to have to lock up the educational materials before and we rarely used them". However, with the new building Hema has found a lot of changes, "The new building is very different and better for the children with its carpeted floor and ample space...there is space to do a lot of things".

Mann Kumari Daagi (5 years old), who wears a red knit hat and a cheerful smile says that she has learnt the ABCs and *ka, kha, ga* by attending the ECED classes. Mann Kumari favorite toy is a wooden puzzle board about different types of birds and declares that it is her favorite toy in the classroom. When asked the names of the various birds, she is able to successfully identify them.

The school headmaster, Kyu Prasad Acharya, is hopeful about the new ECED center and what it means for the school as a whole. He states: "We know that it is easier for children to learn in grade 1 and onwards if they have had ECED experience. With the improved ECED now, we are hopeful that the overall quality of our education and students will be strengthened".



## Academics

Even though it is too early to site academic achievements of children who've been supported by QLO project it is encouraging that all children of age 4 have gone on to grade 1. In Nepal there are currently more than 16,500 early childhood development (ECED) centers, mainly in urban areas, with a gross enrolment rate of 60.2 per cent for 3–5 year olds. Statistics show that only 36% of children entering grade one has had prior educational experience in ECED centers. Research shows that ECED plays an important role in successful transition to school for children in Nepal, with higher promotion rates at Grade 1 and lower dropout. Most children tend to repeat in early grades because of their abrupt entry into primary school without any preparation. Children who have attended ECED centers know all the numbers, letters, which day it is, and whether it is sunny or cloudy outside.

In a region where young men are often absent, having migrated to Kathmandu or abroad in search of work, Angat is an anomaly, working as a facilitator at the Early Childhood Development (ECED) Centre of Janapriya Primary School located in Thulogaun, Dhawang VDC in Rolpa District. Angat, 20, grew up in Thulogaun and while most of his friends have left the village owing to the dearth of work opportunities, he continues to live and work there. He explains his decision: "I want to work for the community; it brings me a lot of satisfaction. Investing in the children of the community will ultimately lead to the development of the community."

Angat was not planning on becoming an ECED facilitator but after he completed his School Leaving Certificate (SLC or grade ten) examinations he learnt of the opening and decided to apply. Once he got the job, he was unsure how to handle a classroom of children and their parents. He says, "I used to be quite shy and afraid to approach the parents, however, the training (from Save the Children) I received



made me confident. I am also a lot more comfortable interacting with the children."

The training and Angat's new found confidence allowed him to approach his students' parents and share his knowledge and skills about developing locally-sourced learning materials. As a result, learning materials (miniature dokos (baskets), a sarangi (string instrument), a toy plough, cloth dolls, etc.) made by the parents, border the inner walls of the Centre.

Angat's hard work is clearly reflected in the children's enthusiasm as they go about playing with various learning materials; with a group of children playing catch with the bean bags and other children playing the sarangi and singing songs.





## Challenges and way forward:

A big concern for the QLO project is sustainability. The building is there, so are the carpets, the materials and everything else. All the facilitators have gotten refresher trainings, ECED Management committees are trained and parents have also attended parenting education session. But will the ECED centers be able to manage on their own? In time, the centers are going to need a repair or replacement. Communities are aware of the problem, and the answer comes from within: Khadka Narayan Shrestha, chairman of the Namuna ECED center management committee is certain that for something as positive as this, the community is always going to be there for help. "This is for the children's future", he says.

Another problem doesn't directly concern the QLO project but it does seem to stem from it. Primary school teachers know what is coming at them in a year or two years time; children who have been schooled on a learning idea that is physical and very much fun. The teaching methodology for our schools has been very much sticks or carrots. It needs to change if it's to successfully cater children coming out of ECED centers and build on their knowledge base. These are issues that the government will have to tackle with community support and awareness.

# Quality Learning Opportunities

2012-2013

ECED going children benefit from improved quality in education

## ECED Overview

### Specific Objectives and Results:

1. To improve the quality of learning opportunities in ECED centers
  - Result 1.1: Improved physical infrastructure and basic service provisions in ECED centers
  - Result 1.2: Increased utilization of ECED learning materials
  - Result 1.3: Improved ECED management capacity
  - Result 1.4: Increased knowledge and skills of ECED facilitators
2. To strengthen awareness and participation of ECED stakeholders at the community and district level
  - Result 2.1: Improved understanding of ECED importance among parents and community members
  - Result 2.2: Improved coordination among all ECED stakeholders



## Target Beneficiaries:

### Primary Beneficiaries:

- 2,406 children aged 3-4 from Dalit, ethnic minorities, geographically isolated areas and conflict affected areas.

### Secondary Beneficiaries:

- 109 ECED facilitators
- 415 members of the ECED management committees
- 2,543 parents of ECED aged children
- At least 100 stakeholders, i.e. VDC secretaries, District Education officers, School Supervisors, Resource Persons, and school teachers and management members.

## Key achievement

- 2,406 (WRO: 1,293/ MWRO : 1,113) children aged 3 & 4 years received opportunity to learn in a child friendly ECED classroom with sufficient space and light. Total of 100 ECED buildings were constructed with toilet and water facilities.
- 99.9% children of ECED centers received basic health services (De-worming, Vitamin-A, Immunization).
- 100% ECED centre facilitators started to develop learning materials by using local materials.
- All facilitators have started a culture of sharing and learning. They are sharing best practices in mobile meetings. They also exchange materials which they developed during the meeting. Before program intervention, these types of interaction were not practiced.
- ECED centers have started to keep records of children, health services, lesson plans, daily work plans etc.
- All ECED centres have separate ECED Management Committees. They organize meetings regularly and discuss how to improve the environment and management of ECED centers.
- Parent participation in different activities has increased i.e. parents are managing Tiffin (snacks) or day meals for children; they are participating in meetings, and developing learning materials at local level etc.
- 2,543 (WRO: 1,080 / MWRO: 1,463) parents are aware of early childhood care and development as well as its importance after participating in the parent education sessions.
- DEO (District Education Office) released funds for ECED on time after series of coordination meetings and joint visits to ECED centers.

2013 supported  
ECED centers

| Region   | District | No. of VDC | No. of ECEDs | PNGO               |
|----------|----------|------------|--------------|--------------------|
| Mid West | Rolpa    | 19         | 50           | HURAC              |
| West     | Baglung  | 13         | 36           | Seto Gurans<br>GYC |
| Total    |          | 32         | 86           |                    |



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## VISION

Our vision is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

## MISSION

Our mission is to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.



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