

Role of UNESCO in Nepal
Multilateralism in Education-2015-2019

A Dissertation

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Letter of Recommendation

I certify that this dissertation entitled “Role of UNESCO in Nepal: Multilateralism in Education 2015-2019” has been prepared by Suraj Silwal under my supervision. I hereby recommend this dissertation for final examination by the research committee at the Department of International Relations and Diplomacy, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Tribhuvan University in the fulfillment of the requirements for the MIRD 526 Thesis for the Master’s Degree in International Relations and Diplomacy.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work has been done by myself, and no portion of the work contained in this document has been published or submitted in support of any application for any other degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of learning. In case of other authors' information, ideas and arguments, the sources have been duly cited and acknowledged as per the requirements. The copyright of this research work belongs to the author.

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Approval Sheet

Abstracts

United Nations (UN) provides a platform for countries to build partnerships and promote common agendas for action. International development partners have promoted unprecedented socio-economic development globally and are crucial for the education sector of Nepal. UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), one of the UN's specialized agencies with a unique mandate, has prioritized Africa and developing countries for its operation and has extended support in science, culture, education, and media globally. It also serves as a lead UN agency for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) relating to quality education globally. Nepal, as a developing country and a member state of UNESCO, has benefitted from several UNESCO programs.

This research paper has attempted to understand the significance of UNESCO for Nepal in the education sector. The study utilized multilateralism and institutional liberalism as critical research theories. Data from official websites, archives, articles, publications of UNESCO, the Government of Nepal (GoN), and published interviews of critical officials associated with UNESCO were secondary data for the research. The study has revealed that UNESCO is a crucial actor in education multilateralism globally. Despite its challenges, its unique mandate and position in global educational multilateralism make it a significant partner for Nepal. The technical support it has extended, research it has funded, policies it has advocated, the national capacity it has raised, and the model projects it has carried out are significant for a developing country like Nepal.

Key Words: Multilateralism, Development partners, SDGs

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List of Abbreviations

CADE	Convention Against Discrimination in Education
CLCs	Community Learning Centers
ECOSOC	Economic And Social Council
GoN	Government Of Nepal
ICESCR	International Covenant On Economic, Social, And Cultural Rights
KOICA	Korean International Cooperation Agency
LDC	Least Developed Country
MoE	Ministry Of Education
MoF	Ministry Of Finance
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
NATCOM	National Commission For UNESCO, Nepal
NPC	National Planning Commission
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UDHR	Universal Declaration Of Human Rights
UNESCO	United Nations Education Cultural And Scientific Organization
UIS	Unesco Institute For Statistics
UN	United Nations
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America
WFP	World Food Programme

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Nepal emphasizes the role of development partners in achieving Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) and graduating into a middle-income country (National Planning Commission, 2017). Numerous development partners work with the Government of Nepal (GoN) in supporting its socio-economic development. Their involvement in these development activities revolves around almost all aspects of human activities. It ranges from economic and political issues to military, scientific, education, cultural, health, and other related fields. Among these several sectors, the education sector receives the highest level of funding from international development partners, among other sectors relating to development in Nepal (Ministry of Finance, 2017).

UN and its agencies have been a significant partner of Nepal since it joined the global multilateral institution in 1955. The Development Cooperation Policy of Nepal states the requirement of support from international development partners in Nepal's development and the government's strategy to make international aid effective and enhance cooperation (Ministry of Finance, 2014). The UN-led multilateral organization is crucial for Nepal's foreign policy considering its geopolitical situation. Multilateral organizations like the World Bank, International Monetary Fund(IMF), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) engage in a wide range of global development activities, including the education sector.

As a lead UN agency for global education goals, UNESCO is at the forefront of providing possibilities among governments, non-governmental organizations, and interested scholars for intellectual contact and joint action in the education sector. Its mandate is unique compared to other multilateral international development partners. However, the organization also suffers multiple challenges in carrying on its mandates. There is a research gap accessing the significance of UNESCO in the education multilateralism of Nepal. There is also a lack of study that documents the importance of UNESCO, which specializes in technical and policy expertise, in contrast to other development partners who directly provide loans and grants for development projects to the government. There is a lack of research assessing the position of UNESCO in the development sector of Nepal. Hence, the study aims to fulfill this gap.

The research utilized the lens of multilateralism and institutional liberalism to examine the role of UNESCO in Nepal between 2015-2019. . The theories supported the understanding of tools at the disposal of UNESCO and its significance and challenges it faces promoting its mandates. This research utilized public documents, archives, reports, news published by the GoN, the UN, and UNESCO to understand multilateral cooperation in the education sector of Nepal. The research thus accesses how the GON and other stakeholders within the framework of global education multilateralism interact with each other. The study explores the value of multilateralism in education promoted by UNESCO for Nepal

1.2 Statement of the problem

Nepal emphasizes the role of development partners in attaining socio-economic development (GoN, 2016). A large number of organizations exist to promote socio-

economic development in Nepal. Multilateral institutions are one of such kind. These organizations have diverse and complex roles, overlapping and sometimes conflicting social, legal, and political dimensions. These organizations can be seen as an actor, a forum, a resource, or a combination of these at once. Considering these positions, what is the significance of UNESCO among these diverse actors in the education sector?

The education sector is a significant priority of development partners among these actors in Nepal, and the GoN seeks for support in the education sector. The international support coming through the budgetary system has been GoN's priority (Ministry of Finance, 2017). The UNESCO has been supporting the Government of Nepal through technical assistance, policy recommendations, model projects, and research beyond the budgetary system of GoN. So the support of UNESCO is not the priority of the government; still, UNESCO has importance. So paper examines the significance of UNESCO's support in the education sector of Nepal.

UNESCO was established as a specialized UN agency with its unique mandates in education. It is also the lead UN agency on Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Quality education. UNESCO has been working with Nepal since joining the UNESCO Kathmandu Office in Nepal in 1998. The office The research shall observe the role of the global multilateral organization- UNESCO in the education sector of Nepal between 2015- 2019 as the period is the first five years of the implementation of SDGs at the global level and the implementation of the federal constitution of Nepal in Nepal's case.

1.3 Research Questions

The research intends to look into the following research questions precisely:

- How has UNESCO contributed to Nepal's education sector development between 2015 and 2019?
- What is the significance of UNESCO in education multilateralism and its impact on Nepal?

1.4 Research Objectives

- To assess the significance of UNESCO in educational multilateralism for Nepal
- To analyze how UNESCO advances its mandate globally through education multilateralism and its impact on Nepal
- To examine the contributions of UNESCO to Nepal's education sector between the years 2015-2019

1.5 Significance of Research

The research was conducted to document the role and significance of UNESCO for the education sector of Nepal. Nepal relies on development partners for its socio-economic development role of development partners is crucial to graduate to a middle-income developing country from Least Developed Country. The UN and its agencies have played a significant role in promoting socio-economic development globally and are a critical partner in the education sector of Nepal. Nepal's foreign policy enabled UN-led multilateral effort considering its sensitivities towards its geopolitical situation.

UNESCO was established as a specialized agency of the UN to promote global cooperation in education, science, and culture. Nepal became a member of the multilateral organization UNESCO in 1955. Among several UN agencies operating in the education sector of Nepal, there is a research gap in documenting the significance of UNESCO, which mainly contributes through specialized technical and policy expertise for Nepal rather than financial means.

The year 2015 is a pivotal year for Nepal and international aid. It is the year SDGs replaced MDGs. It is the beginning of a new developmental agenda that is more ambitious and comprehensive, building upon the prior knowledge, lessons learned, and priorities of MDGs. 2019 marked the end of the first five years of achieving SDGs. UNESCO is the lead UN agency for SDG-4 relating to the global goal of promoting quality education. The organization supports cooperation in the education sector globally. This paper assessed the significance of the agency in advancing its global educational mandate envisioned by SDG4 and how it impacted Nepal during these five years.

The year 2015 was significant for Nepal's education sector. Nepal was struck by a massive earthquake of a 7.8 Richter scale in April 2015 (GoN, 2022). This disaster has significantly affected Nepal's education sector and brought light to education in emergencies (National Planning Commission, 2015). The education sector drew significant attention and resources from the international partners, especially towards disaster preparedness and reconstruction in the education sector. Later that year, in September 2015, Nepal promulgated its federal constitution after decade-long armed conflict and political instability. However, the process has begun as early as 2008 with the first constituent assembly election. The transition from a unitary state to a

federal republic brought a paradigm shift in national and sub-national governance's system, structure, and functioning. The change devolved substantive development and service delivery responsibilities to province and local governments and started a new junction towards education restructuring. This political transition and the development challenges Nepal faced in Nepal have also influenced the education sector and the priorities of UNESCO in Nepal, making this study significant. Hence, examining the significance of UNESCO in this period aims to add value to the existing knowledge gap.

1.6 Organization of the study

The proposed thesis shall have the order of the chapter as follows:

1) Introduction to the research

The chapter presents the background of the research and justifies its significance of the research. It also clearly states the research problem and the objectives of the research.

2) Review of Literature

The chapter explores the core research which was critical for this study. The research introduced critical theories and frameworks, multilateralism, and institutional liberalism for the research, and the ongoing dialogue within the theories is discussed. The empirical researches published by the GoN and UNESCO, which guided the study, are also discussed in this chapter. The chapter also provides insights regarding the implication of those researches in the study and identifies research gaps.

3) Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology and the design of the research. It also mentions the limitations of the research and the ethical concerns regarding the research.

4) UNESCO- UN's Multilateral Organization in Education

This chapter introduces the tools in the disposal of multilateral UN agency-UNESCO. The chapter explores legal Instruments, policy recommendations, and technical support UNESCO has extended in education. It discusses the convening power and how it has promoted global cooperation while supporting educational research and capacity building. This chapter examined how UNESCO utilized these tools and promoted education multilateralism globally and explored Nepal's interaction within the framework of these tools. This chapter also builds the correlation between multilateralism promoted by UNESCO and its significance in the education sector of Nepal.

5) Significance of Development Partners in Nepal and UNESCO

This chapter starts by setting the background on and significance of development partners and multilateral efforts led by the UN for Nepal, focusing on the education sector. The chapter also introduces the challenges multilateralism is facing. The chapter also reflects the socio-political condition and challenges of Nepal and how they guided UNESCO's developmental priorities in Nepal. Then the chapter explores the significance of UNESCO projects and how they impacted the education sector of Nepal.

6) Discussion and Conclusion

The research also explores the challenges organizations face and how it impacts operations. Using the methods mentioned above to access background, theories, and cases relating to UNESCO, the research has tried to achieve its objectives of the research and thus discussing challenges faced by UNESCO and drawing the conclusion of the study.

Chapter 2 Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Review

2.1.1 Multilateralism and Institutional Liberalism

In the aftermath of the Second World War, multilateralism emerged as the new world order. International institutions were created to keep the peace, protect human rights, and promote international cooperation. UN was at the center of global multilateral effort and was established on the realization that the world's challenges are best met by collective action. With time, the UN and its scope expanded and have successfully avoided large-scale war among countries. In 1990 that Keohane, a key proponent of multilateralism, defined it as the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states by ad-hoc arrangements or through institutions (Keohane R. O., 1990). However, this definition is limited to quantitative. With time, the concept of multilateralism evolved. Ruggie has contrasted multilateralism with bilateralism and unilateralism and defined it as foreign policy based on respect for international order, indivisibility, generalized organizing principles, and diffuse reciprocity norms (Ruggie, 1996). Robert W Cox, in 1992, considered the former kind of multilateralism dominated by principal agencies of the Western world economy. Non-state actors like the private sector and civil society are equally essential actors promoting global agendas (Cox R. W., 1992). Gramsci has explained that post-war multilateral institutions need to be understood not simply as instruments controlled by nation-states but more broadly as arenas within which states and other social forces continue to struggle and construct the shape and meaning of world order itself (Gramsci, 1993). The author has highlighted that the emerging world order is transforming due to

economic, political, and socio-cultural change. With the changing time, the definition and nature of multilateralism have evolved and expanded by various researchers in the field.

Classic Multilateralism, universal, inclusive, and democratically based on rules and institutions of the UN system, is one of the responses to tackle these global challenges. However, it faces its own set of challenges. In the early years of multilateralism development, the centrality of states was the core of multilateral efforts. Multilateral institutions have been criticized as bureaucratic, unaccountable, and elite-driven institutions undermining democracy (Keohane, Macedo, & Moravcsik, 2009). However, this has changed over the years. However, in the current scenario, the private sector, academia, and broader civil society also play a significant role in multilateral efforts. Their interrelations determine the form and content of multilateralism. The multilateral world order is so dependent on states' input that multilateralism is not functioning to its possibilities. Nevertheless, as liberal perspectives see it, pluralizing world politics broadens and deepens the context of International Relations. Non-governmental organizations and non-state actors like researchers, multi-national corporations, trade unions, and teacher associations also play a vital role in the system, and multilateralism has ensured multi-stakeholder partnership (Francine, 2019).

Global challenges need global action; multilateral organizations were established with this objective. They have become a powerful platform to raise their concerns, exchange ideas, promote cooperation, and utilize knowledge from other countries' experiences. They also provide spaces, but whether states are treated equally encourages diverse stakeholders' voices.

The theory of institutional liberalism has recognized the role of international institutions in promoting international cooperation. The role of these international institutions would be to provide a flow of information and opportunities to negotiate, enhance the ability of a government to monitor others' compliance, implement their commitments, and strengthen prevailing expectations about the solidarity of international agreements (Robert & Georg, 2010).

The role of these international institutions would be to provide a flow of information and opportunities to negotiate, enhance the ability of a government to monitor others' compliance, implement their commitments, and strengthen prevailing expectations about the solidarity of international agreements (Robert & Georg, 2010). The UN has its system complexity with decentralized and overlapping councils and agencies. As per Keohane and Moravcsik, International Governmental Organizations (IGOs) like the UN reduce transaction costs, provide information, make promises more credible, and authorize agents to undertake technically complex actions (Keohane R. M., 2009). However, the support for the UN has been weakened by the most influential member states who advocated for it. UNESCO has also been a victim when several member states, including the USA, have withdrawn from its membership. Developing countries dominate the membership of the UN and most of its agencies.

UN has remained the central venue for pursuing multilateral efforts. It has broad appeal owing to its multi-level, multi-channel approach to governance. The UN system boasts a wide range of specialized agencies whose experts are deployed worldwide as per the availability of resources and the legal hurdles permitting (Kemal, 2020). Multilateralism offers states with limited influence in global affairs a voice, enhancing their role in international affairs greater than their size. Thus, their

work has also focused on supporting these developing member states. However, development partners like multilateral agencies also significantly influence national policies and program formulation. Thakur and Van Langenhove argue that the policy authority for tackling global problems still belongs to the states. At the same time, the sources of the issues and potential solutions are situated at the transnational, regional, or international levels (Thakur & Langenhove, 2007). They have recognized the need for cooperation at various levels of global governance to tackle global challenges.

Multilateral institutions heavily rely on powerful member states to carry on their duties. The US-supported forming several multilateral organizations, including UNESCO, after World War II and contributed one-fifth of its budget. Although these institutions were theoretically open to participation by all nations, their purpose and agenda were heavily influenced by the interests and preferences of the United States and its allies (Acharya, 2017). The crisis of multilateralism weakened in the 1980s when the United States and some other powerful countries rejected the United Nations as a vehicle for international action and a movement on the part of these countries towards either unilateralism or collective dominance in world economic and political matters (Cox R. W., 1992). The research argued that the financial crisis of the mid-1970s brought suspicion towards the United Nations system as an unfriendly political forum of developing countries which led to a reduced willingness on the part of the rich countries to finance aid to the developing countries. UNESCO has been the victim of this weakening support, reflected in its budgets and programs. This paper examines how within the limitations of financial resources, UNESCO has been maneuvering to promote its mandate in the education sector globally and in Nepal.

2.1.2 Education Multilateralism

The majority of research on multilateralism has focused on trade and economic liberalization. However, the concept has evolved into areas like climate change and cybersecurity. Besides these, there is also a wide range of issues where multilateralism functions; education is one of such areas. During the 1970s, early "multilateralism" variants faced a critical response to rising Third World demands for new world order and rapid changes in the global economic system (Karen, 1998). Alternative approaches were developed in response, with some focusing on poverty relief and others on more radical claims of global entitlement. Although these options were severely constricted, as seen by the limited flow of new resources and models into multilateral organizations' educational development efforts, they had significant implications making multilateralism in education a highly political agenda (Karen, 1998). The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions were fundamental elements of postwar multilateralism, supporting the stabilization, expansion, and greater integration of a global capitalist economy. Their work was also connected to the Cold War objective of integrating developing countries into Western state societies. As is well known, these organizations propagated a modernization-focused model of national development. At the same time, they encouraged the Western nations' societal compromise, which emphasizes state engagement in domestic social welfare and the establishment of national educational systems (Karen, 1998).

The research has recognized the growing dominance of the developing world in the multilateral organization, which has benefitted these nations while diminishing ownership from powerful countries from the capitalist economy. As per the researcher, Robert W.Cox Multilateralism is not just passive, dependent activity. It is

an active force shaping world order. “Multilateralism has to be considered from the standpoint of its ability to represent the forces at work in the world at the local and global levels. (Cox R. W., *Multilateralism and World Order*, 1992)” The author has questioned the global power relation the state's system held in the world order and emphasized the role multilateral actors play at the international and local level

In *International aid to education*, the research examined the power structure and discourse in global education governance and, through empirical analysis, shows that power imbalances in international aid to education are deep-rooted and extensive. Through case studies of two prominent organizations in the international education sector, the author shows how power is produced, retained, and strengthened by actors in the Global North (Francine, 2019). The research by Francine Menashy critically examined the United Nations’ Sustainable Development goals with a focus on partnership and education. The authors explore the intersection of partnership power and inequality through a network analysis approach. The research called for greater participation of education actors in the global south at all stages of international aid in education, from design and distribution to implementing international assistance. The author advocated for increased ownership of education programming and improvement in aid effectiveness. It explores the practice of multi-stakeholder partnership while questioning the discourse on increasing private sector participation at the regional and sub-regional levels. UNESCO, the UN's lead agency in SDG relating to education, has an even more significant role in promoting cooperation in developing countries like Nepal, which receives the highest funding in the education sector from multiple partners. The research paper thus places highly prioritizes partnership efforts conducted by UNESCO.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 UNESCO: An Introduction to its Education Program

Between 1942 and 1946, through negotiations, the UNESCO, a specialized UN agency that autonomously governed a general conference of delegates from member nations and an executive board of nominated, was financed through weighted assessments of countries. UNESCO was mandated to promote various educational and intellectual relations via responsibility for five areas: education, culture, social science, and mass communication (Wanner, 1982). Hence, justifying UNESCO's existence as a specialized UN agency and specific mandates per the growing necessity of time. The organization that had the task of reconstructing the education system devastated after World War II has been through significant change in global education multilateralism. It had a wide-reaching impact in areas and was also a victim of several controversies. With over six decades of experience in intellectual cooperation and field assistance, UNESCO has been a platform to provide governments, non-governmental organizations, and interested scholars possibilities of intellectual contact and joint action that might otherwise not exist.

Political neutrality is enshrined in its constitution; however, responding to 193 member states' needs and interests has been challenging. Hence, it is accused of representing the viewpoint of somewhat industrialized nations over the majority of its developing member states (Karen, 1998). As per Karen Mundy, UNESCO and its institutes and centers have survived crisis caused by constraints and competition between themselves and other global actors in education.

UNESCO publishes the Global Monitoring Report (GMR) for education every year. The report continues to be an editorially independent, authoritative, and evidence-based annual report published by UNESCO (UNESCO, 2016). The report examines the complex interrelationships between education and the critical development sector. It monitors progress towards education targets in the new Sustainable Development Goals framework. The report is also a significant resource for understanding global education challenges and an advocacy tool to promote awareness and informed decision-making among all education stakeholders in education. UNESCO also tracks achievement in global education, including Nepal, and publishes the report publicly. Hence it has served as critical literature to understand global education multilateralism and its impact and position on Nepal in terms of fulfilling its commitments.

The year 2015 marked the shift from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals. The 2015 report has highlighted the global education progress envisioned by Education for All goals established in 2000 at the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, the challenges faced, and lessons for shaping post-2015 global education agendas (UNESCO, 2015). The report is crucial to understanding the significance and effort of UNESCO in global multilateralism in education post-2015; hence has been realized as a critical document for this research.

Global education and multilateralism have seen tremendous change. The reform in international aid and its structures, the question of aid effectiveness and reform within UN. This change has also affected the global development sector. United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF 2018-2022), which was signed between the GoN and the UN, has guided the work of the UN and its agencies in

Nepal and aimed to enhance coordination among UN agencies hence supporting the national priorities of Nepal.

Coordination, support, and cooperation in international aid cooperation have been a priority of UNESCO. UNESCO has collaborated closely with national and international partners and has accumulated significant experience supporting national education policy (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, National Education Policies and Programmes and International Cooperation, 2001). The paper published by UNESCO is an attempt to reflect upon the evolution of practices of UNESCO. The researcher has worked with UNESCO for decades and has tried to draw a lesson and explore possibilities. As per the research, concentrated efforts toward national capacity building and better education planning have been the center of international development cooperation. As UNESCO specializes in technical assistance and building capacity, the organization's limited resource has also limited its operations globally and in Nepal. Development partners in education participate through several forms of international cooperation and a Sector-wide approach – School Sector Development Plan is the largest of its kind in the education sector in Nepal. As an active actor in international cooperation in education and a lead UN agency towards achieving SDG 4, it is crucial to understand its role in Nepal.

2.2.2 Development Cooperation Policy and Nepal SDGs

Achievements

International development partners have promoted unprecedented socio-economic development globally and are crucial for the education sector of Nepal (Ministry of Finance, 2014). International Development Cooperation, published by the Ministry of Finance in 2019, supports understanding of the Nepal government's strategies for

utilizing development aid in Nepal. The document replaces the Development Cooperation Policy, 2014, a predecessor of the Foreign Aid Policy, 2002. The policy document has adopted incorporating the federal structure of Nepal and the changed global context in international aid. This change in the country's political system also affected Nepal's development partners' operations.

Nepal places high importance on the role of development partners (GoN, 2016). The international support coming through the budgetary system will be the government's priority, while the area-based support on national importance and needs will get the second priority. Program-based international assistance will be the third priority of international cooperation. Support for other projects included in the national plan will be the fourth preference for international collaboration (MoF, 2018).

International development prioritizes support in the education sector of countries where the public, private, cooperatives, and the community lack capacity (Ministry of Finance, 2014). The low-income countries face significant financial, human, technical, and institutional resource constraints that are particularly difficult to meet (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, National Education Policies and Programmes and International Cooperation, 2001). Hence aid effectiveness is crucial. The development policy document lays out plans and policies of the government to support aid effectiveness and enhance cooperation among several development partners functioning in Nepal. The policy document has put reservations on hiring international consulting services, which is likely to affect the work of the development partners, which rely on global experts to carry out their function, including UNESCO. The policy document supports access to UNESCO's significance among international development partners in Nepal.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have inspired the global SDGs. These goals have guided the national policies and programs of UN member states. The international community assesses the achievement towards these goals periodically globally and nationally. The National Planning Commission(NPC) coordinates the global plans with respective ministries and development partners and mainstreams them into national policies and programs in Nepal. They develop a clear national strategy per the goals, implement it, produce assessment reports, and monitor progress.

The report published by GoN focuses on the government's achievements in achieving SDGs and how they impact national policies and programs. The report has also supported access to the 15 years (2000-2015) towards achieving the MDGs and five years (2015-2019) towards Nepal's progress towards SDG (National Planning Commission, 2020). This has been pivotal literature to aid the research. The assessment of achievement towards these goals supports understanding the position of a particular country and the role of development partners better. As per the assessment report of progress towards achieving MDG, Nepal's full achievement of global education goals is a challenge (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2001). However, the report has acknowledged achievements gained in several areas. Similarly, the five-year progress report on SDG progress has shown similar results. These studies support understanding challenges in education and the role UNESCO can play to mitigate such challenges better as a lead UN agency in education.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

The paper intends to apply multilateralism and institutional liberalism as critical theoretical concepts guiding this research. Multilateralism is the key to global

challenges. Robert O. Keohane, John Gerard Ruggie, and Stephen D. Krasner are prominent researchers referred for this research. While the works of literature on multilateralism have vast areas, this study has referred to literature relating to multilateralism in education, especially research by Karen Mundy. This study concentrates on multilateralism facilitated by the UN level in the education sector globally. This study has highlighted multilateralism in education as the core of its study.

The theory of institutional liberalism has recognized the role of international institutions in promoting international cooperation. The role of these international institutions would be to provide a flow of information and opportunities to negotiate, enhance the ability of a government to monitor others' compliance, implement their commitments, and strengthen prevailing expectations about the solidarity of international agreements. The UN has been at the forefront of multilateralism, enhancing coordination for generalized principles of conduct and policies. The research paper underpins the assumption that multilateral organization promoted by the UN is the preferred platform to conduct diplomacy in contrast to unilateral or bilateral means by countries from the developing world hence assuming that multilateral effort has a vital role in developing countries like Nepal.

The research paper realizes that states and non-state actors also play a significant role in the multilateral system in education globally and in Nepal to promote their mandates. The research draws a clear line between multilateralism and regionalism. This study considers regionalism as a building block to the roles of the United Nations rather than an antithesis. The paper recognizes the distinction between the multilateral UN institutions and the defensive form of multilateral institutions like the European

Union and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, which are exclusive rather than universal and have a much-limited mandate and scope.

Promoting education cooperation and standard-setting in member countries has been a central mandate of UNESCO. UNESCO's work in education aims to promote human rights, including economic, social, cultural, civil, and political rights. These rights are indivisible and interdependent, each contributing to the enjoyment of the other. Hence, while understanding the UNESCO mandate in education, it is essential to consider that other equally significant economic, social, and cultural rights with overlapping provisions also contribute to attaining full human rights.

UNESCO's action at the global level impacts UNESCO's role in Nepal. Hence the study examines the role of UNESCO at the global and national levels to promote education multilateralism in Nepal between 2015-2019 using the abovementioned theories. The study examines the role of development partners in socio-economic development per GoN's Development Cooperation Policy. It then examines the significance of UNESCO among other development partners in education using the participation of SSDP, the most extensive multilateral partnership in education.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection

The research questions for this study demanded applying a qualitative investigation approach. The information for the study was primarily collected through the standard qualitative content analysis process. The study made use of secondary data. The research referred to the publicly available data to conduct the investigation. It utilized published information, resources on UNESCO's website, publicly available reports, and the papers published and endorsed by UNESCO Kathmandu Office, the UN, and the GoN. The researcher also reviewed the publicly available interviews of the key informant who has supported the agency's functioning. Key informants of the research were officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoE), UNESCO Kathmandu Office, the regional office, and the National Commission for UNESCO. Publicly available interviews of the UN resident coordinator and several UNESCO Kathmandu Office Heads at different time intervals were also reviewed to support the research objective. The investigation also analyzed the findings of the independent researchers accessing the role of UNESCO globally. The NPC, Ministry of Education, its inline agency, and development partners are critical for UNESCO to work towards this goal. The publicly available documents they produce serve as vital literature for the research. The research accessed archives, web news, publications, and the material published by UNESCO and independent researchers supported by UNESCO retrieved from UNESCO's Kathmandu Office's Library and UNESCO's digital Library-UNESDOC. The research also examined the web news and published document on the UNESCO official website for content analysis.

The qualitative research gathered, documented, and examined publicly available data and records to access the role and significance of UNESCO in the education sector. The information was explored utilizing the lens of multilateralism and institutional liberalism theories. Thus, the findings are presented. Thus, the research mostly used qualitative methods and historical content analysis to draw upon its conclusion. Based on these methodologies, the study used deductive reasoning around these concepts. The study analyzed the role and significance of UNESCO in Nepal at a systemic and institutional level to support the education system of Nepal through educational multilateralism.

3.2 Data Analysis

Since the qualitative research model leads to multiple realities, the study is subjective and has adopted a deductive process.

3.3 Ethical Issues

The researcher consulted the UNESCO Kathmandu Office and the officials while conducting the study. The researcher was granted consent for the study. The researcher, as a former staff of the UNESCO Kathmandu Office, has respected the confidentiality of the office, including intellectual property, and only presented publicly available information. The opinions expressed in the study are sole of the author and have no endorsement by UNESCO.

3.3 Delimitations

UNESCO's mandate extends to culture, science, media, and education. However, for this study, the research shall examine the role of UNESCO in the education sector of

Nepal. More specifically, the study examined the role of UNESCO and its significance in the education sector while taking the cases between 2015-2019 in Nepal.

As a member state of the UNESCO, the GoN also contributes to UNESCO in several ways: being a member of the thematic group, executive board, or financially. The National Commission for UNESCO, which exists within the Ministry of Education, is also a key institution of UNESCO. It endeavors to promote the mandate of UNESCO and support the role of UNESCO in the country. The commission is integral while accessing the role of UNESCO. However, to limit the research's scope, the study shall present an overview of the National Commission relating to education multilateralism in Nepal; however, it refrains from accessing programs and activities of the commission.

The research also refrains from evaluating the impact of the programs and projects on education to the extent possible. The study does not cover several areas like the leadership role or commitments and ownership of other partners in a project which can be considered topics for further investigation. The research also doesn't examine the political issues within the organization, specifically the political appointment of its Director-General and other political and bureaucratic issues which affect the organization. The international system lacks an overarching political authority. Hence, powerful member states are dominating actors in global multilateralism. Their influence has led to criticism of multilateral institutions for undermining the sovereignty of a state. However, this research does not examine the organization's affairs to undermine the state's sovereignty or interference in national politics.

Development partners in education participate through several forms of international cooperation. Sector-wide approach – School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) is the largest of a kind where multiple development partners cooperate in the education sector in Nepal. This research shall utilize the participation of UNESCO in the SSDP education plan to justify its significance compared to other development partners. However, the researchers acknowledge that UNESCO is not a donor agency in SSDP. It focuses more on technical support in the education sector of Nepal.

3.4 Definition of Key Terms

Multilateral Development Partners: Institution or agency with multiple participating nations or parties providing development assistance to Nepal (MoF, 2018).

Regime: Set of principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures that states and other international actors accept as authoritative in the area (Kranser, 2022).

Official Development Assistance: Donor governments contribute to developing countries and multilateral organizations. It also serves as an indicator to measure international aid.

Sustainable Development Goals: The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are the ambitious compact undertaken by the global community of nations, also known as the Global Goals, were adopted by the United Nations and its member states in 2015 as a universal call to action. It has 17 goals and 169 targets to be achieved by 2030 (UN, 2022).

Off-budget funding: Those funds aren't reflected in the Government of Nepal's Red Book (Ministry of Finance, 2017).

Technical Assistance: It refers to assistance provided by development partners for the capacity development of individuals and institutions, including training, seminars, consultancy services, and the cost of associated equipment. Technical assistance also includes fees for project preparation and pre-investment activities (MoF, 2018).

UN Country Team: United National Country Team is a United Nations inter-agency body that consists of representatives of over 18 UN funds, programs, and specialized agencies working in Nepal. Under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator, the team provides overall leadership to the work of agencies working in the country and aims to formulate a joint position over strategic issues, ensure coherence in action and advocacy and plan and deliver work together.

Chapter 4 Significance of UNESCO in education

Under the auspice of the United Nations (UN), several institutions exist and have diverse roles and responsibilities. UNESCO was established as a *specialized agency* of the UN under the Economic and the Social Council in November 1945, after the end of the wreckage brought by World War II. It is also a UN agency leading SDG relating to education. It undertakes research and shares it with the world, convenes meetings and conferences with global stakeholders, promotes international standards, and provides technical support to member states as per its mandate.

While international aid is accused of representing countries in Global North, the role of UNESCO as a leading global education is a significant role in shaping the international and national discourses in education and defining the interest of the majority of low-income developing member states of the world (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, National Education Policies and Programmes and International Cooperation, 2001). UNESCO faces challenges at several levels. Abdul Aziz, Deputy Prime Minister of State of Qatar and former Qatari ambassador to the UN, shares the value and the need for UNESCO to face its evolving challenges. “UNESCO needs to demonstrate contribution to the world clearly as the world needs science, education, and culture more than ever.” (Al Kamari, 2020).

UNESCO has challenges within but outwardly promotes coordination among various governments in policies; to do so; they utilize multiple instruments at their disposal. The powerful tools and approaches at the disposal of UNESCO in education multilateralism are discussed in the following sub-chapters :

4.1 Convening Power

Multilateral institutions form a relationship cluster through an iterative process of regularized patterns of interaction through conferences and treaties. The regular interaction pattern becomes regimes and institutions that support the implementation of specific rules and channel behavior into particular paths. As Klaus Schwab from World Economic Forum puts his argument, with the acceleration of globalization, there is a need for space where the private sector, government leaders, experts, and civil society leaders can get together and talk as equals. This value of space has been reflected in extraordinary turnouts at UNESCO's events and the very high level of attendance for decades.

UNESCO possesses global recognition for convening power in education and integrating diverse actors from various strands for sustainable development. UNESCO calls on global, regional, and national stakeholders to promote cooperation and provide recommendations of the members' states as per their endorsements. It has been a leader in organizing international education conferences and movements with partnerships from member states and other partners related to education.

Table 1: World Education Conferences Hosted by UNESCO

Title of Conference	Year	Country
World Conference in Education	1990	Jomtien, Thailand
World Education Forum	2000	Dakar, Senegal
World Education Forum	2015	Incheon, Korea

The conference built consensus on a global, regional, and national framework for action reiterating commitments to legal instruments adopted in the past. In 2015, UNESCO convened the World Education Forum in Incheon, Republic of Korea, jointly with UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, and the World Bank hosted by the Government of Korea. The forum was also a platform to take stock of how well countries delivered to the commitments of EFA and to reach an agreement on the global education agenda within the comprehensive framework for Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2020). One thousand six hundred participants, including 120 education ministers from 160 countries and other development sector officials globally, attended the conference. Six delegates from the Ministry of Education, GoN, headed by the then Minister of Education, Chitra Lekha Yadav, participated in the congress NGO forum that preceded the event, which provided a platform for NGOs to agree on a collective civil society vision for education post-2015. Similarly, the National Campaign for Education Nepal, which is a network of 364 member organizations representing civil society, NGOs, teacher federation, and education journalists groups recognized by the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) from Nepal, also attended the conference (National Campaign for Education Nepal, 2019).

UNESCO's general conference serves as another significant congress governing the organizational mandate. It brings together member states of UNESCO once every two years and several NGOs. The Conference brings heads of State and government, education and higher education ministers, culture ministers, and high-level officials from the UN and the government on the same platform. The General Conference also provides opportunities for UNESCO to conduct meetings among donor countries to

promote UNESCO's priorities. These conferences and conventions support gaining reaffirmations of states' commitment to fulfilling their obligations.

As a member state, Nepal participates in UNESCO's General Conference regularly. Between 2015-2020, three General Conference was held, and Nepal attended all three conferences. In the 38th and the 40th Session, the Nepali Minister of Education, Science, and Technology of Nepal, Giriraj Mani Pokhrarel, addressed the, whereas, in the 39th session, Nepal's ambassador to France addressed the general conference.

UNESCO also convenes various global and regional conferences on several themes relating to education globally. Nepal has been directing its efforts to achieve global goals promoted by the UN and has repeatedly reaffirmed its commitment. In April 2001, the Nepal government, UNESCO, and NATCOM jointly organized the SAARC Minister of Education Meeting. Education Ministers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka met in Kathmandu in April 2001 to review the Education For All progress which World Education Forum adopted in 2000. The UNESCO Kathmandu field office also conducts meetings at the international and national levels among diverse stakeholders. To dialogue and reach understandings among various actors while implementing its projects.

UNESCO works together with other stakeholders on various issues on the global level. GPEis one of such most extensive multilateral partnerships comprising governments, civil society, international organizations, the private sector, private foundations, and donor agencies for developing coordinated strategies to improve the learning environment for children (Global Partnership for Education, 2015).

This convening power is instrumental as it is a hub for exchanging information, knowledge, mutual learning, and cooperation. These events, actions, and research

shape global debate, movements, and commitments among the member states, leading to a common path to follow. They stimulate renewed interest in translating broad socio-economic concerns into specific, manageable programs. These platforms also review progress and follow-up mechanisms where needed, and follow-up conferences and events held in the later years function as a measure to take stock of the progress. UNESCO provides the spaces, but whether actors are treated as equals is debatable, but they represent a growing sense of interdependence and globalization of human concerns.

4.2 Legal Instruments promoted by UNESCO in Education

UNESCO promotes standard-setting instruments internationally. These instruments relate to culture, education, natural science, social and human sciences, communication, and information. They are adopted under the auspices of UNESCO solely or jointly with other international organizations and member states. These legal instruments are declarations, conventions, and recommendations. Tools elaborated by UNESCO in education have their genesis in UNESCO's constitutional mandate for the right to education. UNESCO declarations and recommendations are adopted through UNESCO's general conferences by the member states.

The international legal instruments are based on the national implementation with modest international oversight. Governments cannot legitimately deny obligations voluntarily incurred by becoming parties to international legal instruments. The multilateral mechanisms facilitate compliance through mobilizing public scrutiny that reminds states of their commitments and draws national and international attention to the violation, prompting national actions.

UNESCO promotes Human rights through its Educational Mandates.

UNESCO work to promote human rights in several ways. UNESCO has exclusive responsibility concerning certain rights, in particular: the Right to education; the Right to participate in cultural life; the Right to freedom of opinion and expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information; and the Right to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications (Human Rights: Questions and Answers, 2011)

UNESCO's promotion of the Right to education includes standard-setting activities, conducting educational research, and disseminating knowledge on human rights and education. UNESCO supports capacity building and provides technical support to policymakers, promoting the Right to education. It also carries out model projects to set benchmarks and elevate the standard. UNESCO operates with its nine unique centers and institutes globally, with each one's particular holding in the education sector to support its mandate.

UNESCO's legal binding instruments are rooted in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Although UDHR is not a formally binding agreement in international law, following the UDHR, the UN General Assembly adopted several other international norms. It has been a mighty instrument in the development of human rights. Several other conventions, declarations, recommendations, frameworks, and action programs have followed. These legal instruments draw inspiration from each other, yet they remain distinct.

Article 26 of the UDHR has proclaimed that all human being has the right to education (UDHR, 1948). Instruments like the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights 1966 (ICESCR) and the Convention on the Rights of the

Child (1989, CRC) have widely recognized the Right to education and are within the international obligation. Article 13 of the ICESCR, which covers the Right to education, was drafted at the suggestion of UNESCO's Director-General. (UNESCO, 2006). Nepal is a party to ICESCR and 12 other human rights instruments, including optional protocol and convention relating to International Human Rights Treaties (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2020).

UNESCO's conventions are subject to state parties' ratification, acceptance, or accession. No legal obligations are imposed immediately after the treaty is signed; however, by signing the Convention or Optional Protocol, states indicate their intention to take steps to be bound by the treaty later. It also creates an obligation between signing and ratification or consent to be bound, to refrain from acts that would defeat the object and purpose of the treaty. (United Nations, 2019). Declarations are non legally binding but may be politically authoritative. Conventions are multi-party treaties that are legally binding.

The 1960 UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (CADE) is the main UNESCO standard-setting instrument in education. It is the first international instrument that extensively covers the Right to education and has a binding force in international law (UNESCO, 2020). It provides for the elimination and prevention of any form of discrimination in education (Article 3), as well as for the adoption of measures that promote equality of opportunity and treatment (Article 4) (UNESCO, 1960).

UNESCO has 42 conventions to date, and 22 are related to education. Besides this, Nepal has ratified five other UNESCO conventions in culture and natural science. Nepal has not ratified UNESCO's 1960s CADE. However, Nepal has signed six of

UNESCO's conventions or optional protocols as a member state of UNESCO. Nepal ratified the 1983 Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific in 1989, relating to education.

Table 2: UNESCO's Convention ratified by Nepal

Name of Convention	Year of Ratification
1970s convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property	1979
1972's Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage	1978
Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat	1987
Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific	1989
International Convention against Doping in Sport	2010
2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	2010

Source:(UNESCO, 2021)

The UNESCO convention on education ratified by Nepal is significant in recognizing certificates, diplomas, or degrees from educational institutions in contracting states. The convention has mechanisms of meeting regularly at least every two years and can also meet on an ad hoc basis per the party's request. The 1960s CADE convention requires reports by the signatory state on the legislative and administrative provisions

they have adopted. Nepal does not report the legislative and administrative requirements it has adopted to UNESCO. However, UNESCO has placed significant interest in the laws, bylaws, and policies relating to education. UNESCO has closely observed the development of the Constitution of Nepal 2015, especially concerning the Right to education, the Compulsory and Free Education Act 2018, and National Education Policy, 2019. UNESCO Kathmandu office advocates and supports GoN's work on UNESCO conventions (UNESCO Kathmandu Office, 2011).

The global human rights regime is based on robust and widely accepted norms but weak mechanisms of international implementation, producing an inadequate system of national implementation of international human rights. Even in achieving SDGs, these instrument has been recognized as a cornerstone. There is also no system at the United Nations to execute and monitor resolutions. The secretariat writes letters to member states to report on the execution of regular General Assembly and ECOSOC resolutions. Some countries report while others do not. Every five years, they conduct mid-term assessments of the implementation of the global conference conclusions, but not with much rigor.

Similarly, multiple reporting requirements and significant transaction fees have added to the government's and development partners' workloads. States with limited resources and capacity are often overloaded with extensive annual and periodic reporting international treaties require. Today, international concern is how states treat their citizens or how their laws and policies are guided in their territory. International Human Rights law has been a distinctive feature of international politics; however, the pursuit of such law continues to be restricted by rules on the use of force and the weak system of global implementation. States retain near-exclusive rights and

responsibilities for implementing internationally recognized regimes. Contemporary international society has constructed a system of national implementation of human rights norms. Multilateral action helps spread international human rights norms, mobilize pressure, and support local human rights advocates. Nevertheless, these instruments are essential to member states and multilateral institutions for normative action.

4.3 Global and National Cooperation

Many global challenges need global cooperation to tackle. United Nations was established to tackle these global challenges with the goals to “maintain international peace and security,” “develop friendly relations among nations” and “achieve international cooperation in solving international problems” (UN, 2022). UN and its agencies demonstrate great importance to international cooperation and facilitate knowledge sharing. Multilateralism provides these platforms where nations collaborate. With each country’s developmental stages, their need varies. However, to a great extent, developing countries have similar challenges. Developing countries dominate the membership in UNESCO. Hence, they provide a platform for these developing countries to share their know-how and promote their agenda primarily through the general conference, which has identified Africa as its priority.

The organization has facilitated north-south and south-south collaboration at the global and regional levels, including the SAARC region. Increasingly, countries of the global south are fostering cooperation in science and technology through regional or international centers. At the South-Asian regional level, SAARC signed a memorandum of understanding with UNESCO regarding cooperation in education, science, and culture in 2008. The cultural agenda of SAARC mentions the possibility

of collaboration with UNESCO to promote SAARC culture. (SAARC Cultural Center, 2020). In April 1999, UNESCO supported organizing the SAARC Conference on Preparing Teachers for Universal Elementary Education, which resulted in collaborative projects among SAARC countries on teacher education programs, practices, and policies (UNESCO, 2000). The organization promotes standards among nations in South Asia in terms of learning outcomes. Similarly, Malaysia's International Science, Technology and Innovation Centre for South-South Cooperation (ISTIC) was established in 2008 under the auspices of UNESCO.

Exchanges among high-level government officials are also crucial to enhance cooperation. The World Education Forum serves this function hosted by UNESCO and other partners to promote the right to education and human rights. Through global, regional, and national conferences, it brings together representatives of regional groups, international organizations, donor agencies, non-government organizations, and civil society to adopt a common framework. The organization also promoted global north-south cooperation. In July 2019, education ministers from G7 countries met at UNESCO and launched “Her Education, Our Future” in the presence of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malaa Yousafzai and French President Emmanuel Macron. This initiative aimed to collect reliable data to support gender equality in and through education effectively, improve legal and political frameworks and plans to advance rights, and implement better teaching and learning practices.

In 2011 UNESCO launched the Global Partnership for Girls and Women’s Education. Governments of China, France, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, and the USA, International organizations like UN Women, UNFPA, World Bank, and Private sectors like Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation, Allied Aid Foundation, CEO Institute, CJ Group,

GEMS Foundation, Hainan Airlines, HNA Group, Nokia, Packard Foundation, Procter & Gamble, UNFCU Foundation and Civil society organizations and NGOs like the Barefoot College supported the project (UNESCO, 2011). This credibility to bring a wide range of institutions together for a joint effort is with limited institutions, proving its importance. Nepal became the beneficiaries of three projects under this initiative. UNESCO Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education, Joint Programme on Empowering girls and young women through education, and UNESCO/HNA Partnership for girls' and women's education.

Table 3: List of Global and regional conferences organized by UNESCO

Date	Name of the Conference	Location
May 2019	International Conference on Artificial Intelligence and Education	Beijing, China
May 2015	International Conference on ICT and post-2015 education	Qingdao, China
November 2019	Launch of Artificial Intelligence powered Global Digital Library	Kathmandu, Nepal
October 2015	Sub-regional Conference on EFA Unfinished and Post-2015 Education Agendas in SAARC countries	New Delhi, India
November 2015	Asia-Pacific Meeting on Education 2030	Bangkok, Thailand
September 2015	International Seminar on Girls' and Women's Education	Beijing, China

The organization also ensures the transfer of knowledge, experience, and best practices among countries. The organization facilitates sharing of knowledge the countries have with each other. It promotes sharing innovative yet low-cost technologies with developing and least-developed countries. UNESCO draws the government's attention to local capacity building and localized resources' applications and extends technical support to the needed countries. It facilitates experts and volunteers from one country, and institutions volunteer to work with the governments in institutions of other countries. Between 2015-2019 high education experts from Sweden extended support to the University Grant Commission, GoN through UNESCO.

Similarly, volunteers from China, Germany, and Korea have supported the UNESCO Kathmandu office's work to achieve its objectives in Nepal while promoting international cooperation. However, there are also many areas to promote cooperation. UNESCO's report published in 2015 mentions that it could not ensure continuous political commitment and had limited success in engaging with government agencies and stakeholders (UNESCO, 2015).

A developing country like Nepal places vast importance on multilateral and regional cooperation. A multilateral organization like UNESCO has facilitated such collaboration at the national, regional, and global levels. It works closely with other UN bodies, agencies, global, regional, and national organizations, and stakeholders. It also maintains close international relations with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and works on specific projects, promoting cooperation among diverse stakeholders.

4.4 Policy Recommendation and Technical support

Standard-setting has always played an important role in multilateral agencies' activities. The UN has been a powerful platform to promote standard policies and action globally among states. Many global agendas promoted by multilateral institutions are adopted in national laws globally. UNESCO is a multilateral institution that promotes standards in national policies relating to education globally. It has accumulated significant experience supporting national efforts at education reform and sector policy formulation (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, National Education Policies and Programmes and International Cooperation, 2001). UNESCO offers expertise to the government in a wide range of policy and technical areas. UNESCO has been promoting human rights and fundamental freedom, understanding, tolerance, and friendship among different nationalities, racial and religious groups, as stated in Article 26 of UDHR. These policies are adopted by states at various levels across various platforms to ensure their commitment to influencing national policies and programs.

March 1993, by the International Congress on Education for Human Rights and Democracy of the UNESCO, and other human rights instruments, the World Conference on Human Rights recommended that States develop specific programs and strategies for ensuring the broadest human rights education and the dissemination of public information, taking particular account of the human rights needs of women. As per the Global Monitoring Report (GMR), 94 low and middle-income countries have legislated free lower secondary education. Among these 94 countries, 66 have a constitutional guarantee, and 28 others have enacted other legal measures (UNESCO, 2015).

Nepal also promulgated its constitution in 2015, which guaranteed the right to education. These rights did not exist constitutionally in the past. On the global level, with the support of its specialized agencies, UNESCO also monitors the progress in education through its periodic reports. The goal of universal primary education by 2015 and 100% literacy was one of such global and Nepal's national educational goals. In 2008, Nepal launched the National Literacy Campaign Programme to achieve a 100% literacy rate by 2011. The goal was not achieved; however, the GMR report recognized the effort of the Nepal government to expand primary education in successive national development plans. Nepal adopted policies and programs to achieve those goals (UNESCO, 2015). The GoN shares national plans, laws, and directives in education with development partners for their feedback. The Draft National Education Act was shared with UNESCO and other partners for input before it was adopted.

As per the GMR report, education has remained under-financed by many governments, and similarly, donors have reduced aid to education since 2010 (UNESCO, 2015). Likewise, the global educationalist recommends 15% to 20% of GDP for education. UNESCO encourages member states to allocate 4-6% of Gross Domestic Product or 20% of the public expenditure. Similarly, the organization also sets outcome goals for developed countries to reach 0.7% of the gross national product for official development assistance to developing countries (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2020). The agency also observed the government's expenditure on education and published the report annually.

The organization also encourages the international community to step up their commitments, especially in low and lower-middle-income countries. Since 2000, after

the Dakar World Education Forum, major donors like the European Union and the OECD have given higher importance to technical and vocational education and training, which is also the outcome of research and continuous advocacy. The organization also draws the attention of governments and the international community toward the Marginalized and disadvantaged group's right to education. The GMR Report 2020 had the theme of inclusion; the 2019 report had the theme of migration; the 2011 report focused on conflict, whereas the 2010 report was about marginalization (UNESCO, 2020).

UNESCO celebrates several international occasions relating to its mandate and the international days proclaimed by the UN. UNGA designates these "International days" to mark an essential aspect of human life and history. Specialized agencies like UNESCO can also proclaim international days depending upon their regulating body and regulations (UNESCO, 2020). Each of these international days provides an opportunity to organize activities to the day's theme for UNESCO and member states. A range of activities and events are conducted to celebrate the days globally. International Literacy Day and the international year of indigenous language are some of the well-adopted international days in Nepal that UNESCO promotes.

UNESCO field offices play a critical role in analyzing the national policies, tracking progress, and producing reports. The UNESCO GMR report explicitly mentions the names of states that guarantee girls' and women's right to education or forbid gender-based discrimination in national constitutions, legislation, and specific policies (UNESCO, 2015). These reports become the basis of "naming and shaming" countries on the international stage and contribute to a broader level of educational

research and debates, which serves as substantial evidence to determine the future effort of the national government.

The multilateral organization sets a common standard of achievement for all people and nations. Priorities and goals set by these multilateral organizations get refined with time. In 2005, The UNESCO office took the initiative to form an interagency UN to work on EFA (UNESCO, 2005). UNESCO supported the government of Nepal in developing a National Plan of Action to achieve the Education for All targets (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2001). In-School Sector Reform Plan, UNESCO provided policy advice in primary and secondary school and higher education strategy development focusing on open and distance learning education (UNESCO Kathmandu Office, 2011). The Guideline for Education Sector Development Plan Appraisal was developed by GPE and UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning to support the Education Sector Plan of governments globally. Simultaneously, UNESCO has supported the GoN in formulating key educational policies as a lead UN agency in education.

In 2009, UNESCO and partners published a global review of sexuality education and technical guidance for school and extra-school initiatives (UNESCO, 2009). Later, UNESCO published international technical guidance on sexuality education, which recommends a set of topics and learning objectives covered in comprehensive sexuality education and recommendations for planning, delivering, and monitoring effective, comprehensive sexuality education programs (UNESCO, 2018). This research and guide serve the curriculum developers globally, including the states, development partners, civil society several actors working in the area, including the

GON. Between 2015-2019, UNESCO Nepal's office's largest budgetary project has components promoting comprehensive sexuality education.

The organization offers guidance and expertise explicitly to policymakers and other stakeholders. It helps countries plan, build and rebuild education systems responsive to a rapidly changing world (UNESCO, 2011). With the changing political scenario in Nepal with federalism in place, there was a need for educational policy support; UNESCO played a significant role with its global network, knowledge, and research. As early as 2009, when the national debate on the transition from unitary to the federal system was a subject of broad national discussion, UNESCO facilitated the establishment of “Federalism and Education Support Group” (National Institute for Research and Training & American Institute of Research, 2017). As per UNESCO's activity report, it organized an interaction program in which parliamentarians and senior policy officials from the MoE and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development discuss the roles and responsibilities of local governments in the education service delivery within the new federal governance structure (UNESCO). Later the same year, UNESCO trained infrastructure and policy experts, educationists, and elected representatives from the Kathmandu Valley in the roles and responsibilities of the newly elected representatives for the education service delivery.

UNESCO is also particularly interested in its member countries' education laws, regulations, and policies. During the visit of the director-general of UNESCO in Nepal, she highlighted Nepal's constitution, ensuring the Right of every citizen to free and compulsory primary education, including the women's rights to education and literacy (UNESCO, 2020). In 2019, development partners working in education, including UNESCO, were consulted by GoN before the education bill was adopted.

The governments consulted organizations working in education to receive their feedback, including UNESCO.

In the light of the Education 2030 agenda, UNESCO, together with member states, developed The Education 2030 Framework for Action, a key policy recommendation document to be adopted by the member states. Member countries adopted the policy document in the World Education Forum in Incheon in 2015, and later in 2019, the South Asian level SAARC Framework for Action 2030 was developed and approved. UNESCO has supported developing this document at the global and regional levels. Henceforth, member states must develop their National Framework for SDG4 implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation framework for tracking its objectives, which Nepal also fulfilled in 2019 with the technical support of UNESCO (UNESCO, 2020). As a lead agency, UNESCO provided technical support to GoN to develop the Education for All National Plan for Action (2001-2015) and the National Framework for Education 2030. These two documents are the critical guiding policy documents for federal, provincial, and local governments to develop their education plan, program, and monitoring mechanism for SDG 4. Once Nepal, as a member state, commits to the global educational goals, they are reflected in national educational policies and programs. UNESCO led the global Education for All (2000-2015) movement as the lead agency for Sustainable Development Goal number 4- Quality Education. It monitors progress and provides technical support and recommendations.

The organization offers various intellectual cooperation and mutual educational assistance possibilities. This mandate covers the holistic and inclusive vision of lifelong learning, including early childhood care and education, primary, secondary and higher education, youth and adult skills, adult literacy, gender parity, and quality

education. Since its inception globally, UNESCO has supported governments supporting education reform and providing technical assistance. UNESCO has prioritized promoting gender-based equality in education globally; hence, several education projects focus on reducing inequality in education.

Since multilateral implementation mechanisms facilitate national compliance by mobilizing public scrutiny, promoting the UNESCO agenda in the public sphere is needed, especially among civil society. Concentrated efforts from local civil society, transnational NGOs, development partners, and UN agencies pressure states from inside and outside in various venues, promoting global norms UNESCO and other similar organizations carry. Meaningful engagement, consultations with broad, inclusive stakeholders, and the establishment of formal mechanisms for sustained stakeholder engagement in implementing educational goals are equally important.

4.5 Educational Research and capacity building

UNESCO publishes research and global reports concerning education. This research is a vital tool globally for drawing attention to emerging challenges, identifying policy reforms, and sharing best practices. These reports also act as a periodic review of progress. UNESCO frames itself as having the objective of stimulating public policy debate (UNESO, 2015). It conducts research and its wide range of global, regional, and national partners. These research and data have become trusted and independent voices on the state of international education, producing practical recommendations to all countries and partners. This evidence-based publication is an indispensable tool to governments, researchers, education and development specialists, media, and students.

Since 2002, UNESCO has published Global Monitoring Report (GMR) on education. Until 2015, the report focused on the achievements of Education for All, and after 2015 it focused on SDG 2030 agenda on quality education. Since 2002, UNESCO reports have assessed education progress in some 200 countries and territories almost annually (UNESCO, 2015). Another Instrument multilateral organization like UNESCO has leadership through the power of data and the amount of space and opportunity they can create by establishing facts, data, and science. The organization also presents and monitors the world's progress through the data it produces. The report has played a crucial role in supporting countries by providing robust assessment and analysis to facilitate policy-making and powerful advocacy tools for government and civil society. The information has also presented data relating to Nepal in various instances.

UIS is the statistical UN agency under UNESCO. UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) provides education data to many global reports and databases, such as the SDG global database of the UN Stats Division, the Global Education Monitoring Report, World Development Indicators and World Development Report (World Bank), Human Development Report (UNDP), State of the World's Children (UNICEF). The Institute serves Member states of UNESCO and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, research institutes, universities, and citizens, with all data freely available. Since UNESCO research uses global experts, these reviews are considered impartial and authentic.

UNESCO's research builds upon the study of other independent or institutional researchers on the subject area. Recognizing the work of these independent researchers and highlighting them in UNESCO's research gives credibility to the

investigation. Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2015 has derived work of Gouri Srivastava's "Envisioning the Common Historical and Cultural Past, Gender Concerns and Conflict Management and Social Tensions: An Analysis of Upper Primary Textbooks of Social Studies of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal". The background paper has highlighted Nepal's government's effort to eliminate gender bias from curricula and textbooks. This kind of recognition in the multilateral forum encourages nation-states to advance their effort further, making it a significant source of motivation.

UNESCO has supported the MoE in preparing annual school statistics reports (Flash and consolidated reports) and developing the capacity of school principles to manage school records efficiently. In 2015, GoN, with the technical support of UNESCO, GoN joined its expertise to support sustainable data collection, dissemination, and analysis system on financial issues relating to education. The GPE, in partnership with UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the International Institute for Educational Planning (a body of UNESCO), and GoN, prepared National Education Accounts- Expenditure for Education (2009-2015). The research intended to support Nepal to draw a complete, accurate picture of financing in education from all sources, including government, development partners, and parents, and is used by all education stakeholders. These research methodologies were based on international standards on the System of National Accounts and the International Standard Classification of Education and various practices. These researches also intended to support international data availability as the absence of individual national data affects global data.

There is a broader realization that education monitoring progress has improved and expanded, and the role of a multilateral institution like UIS cant be ignored. Several of its research shows data relating to Nepal. It shows that Nepal has achieved gender parity among girls and boys in the primary gross enrollment ratio; however, it highlights the need to achieve gender parity in higher education and subject areas like science, technical and vocational education engineering, and mathematics. As per UNESCO Institute for Statistics database, the share of female primary teachers rose from 23% in 1999 to 42% in 2012. Similarly, UNESCO research has suggested that early child marriage is one reason early girls drop out of school in Nepal (UIS, 2022).

UNESCO research serves as significant policy recommendations for the government. They have suggested recruiting more female teachers to eliminate gender biases in textbooks that the government adopts (Bista, 2022). These independent researches support the government in policymaking and evaluating their past efforts. There are numerous researches conducted by UNESCO or by an independent institution with the support of UNESCO to support the education sector of Nepal since its establishment. Some of them are presented in the table below:

Table 4: Educational Research conducted by UNESCO in Nepal

Year	Title of the Research
1997	Management of education systems in zones of conflict-relief operations: a case study in Nepal
2004	Reforming the Ministry to improve education: an institutional analysis of the Ministry of Education and Sports of Nepal
2005	Girls in science and technology education: a study on access participation and performance of girls in Nepal
2008	Poverty reduction strategies and governance with equity, for education: Case studies of Cambodia, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Nepal
2016	Report on “out of school adolescent girls”
2017	Reading the past, and Writing the future
2017	Post Disaster Education Status

(Source: UNESDOC Digital Library)

There is a need for investment in data and capacity for adequate measurements to inform policies. Similarly, strengthening the role of non-state actors is equally vital. Meaningful engagement, consultations with broad, inclusive stakeholders, and establishing formal mechanisms for sustained stakeholder engagement in implementing educational goals are equally important. UNESCO invests significantly in countries to conduct academic research and develop the national capacity of these broad stakeholders to implement this knowledge and support sustainable educational development.

Chapter 5

Significance of Development Partners and UNESCO in the Education Sector

Development partners play a significant role in promoting global development, and in the case of developing countries, their role is even more critical. Educational financing is among the top priorities among development partners globally. Support for education development and reform has thus been at the center of the agenda of international development cooperation for many decades, but the results have often been disappointing (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, National Education Policies and Programmes and International Cooperation, 2001).

Nepal also relies heavily on development partners. As per Development Cooperation Report, development partners contributed almost a quarter of the national budget until 2015, 29 % In the year 2016-2017 and 22% in 2017/18 (Ministry of Finance, 2017). Although fluctuating each year, they remain at a significant volume. The government of Nepal has remained optimistic about the support of Development Partners in its effort to attain its development objectives. Since the 1970s, multilateral assistance programs started to play an essential role in development planning and accounted for more than 70 percent of funding for development planning. Since the 1980s, most foreign aid has been in the form of multilateral assistance programs in Nepal.

Nepal received funding through borrowing or grant mechanisms. The World Bank Group, Asian Development Bank, UN Country Team, European Union, and International Fund for Agricultural Development have been the prominent Multilateral Development Partners (Ministry of Finance, 2017). The education sector

received the highest aid in Nepal's finances among all other sectors in the year 2016-2017, amounting to US\$ 127.24 million, 9.1% of Official Development Assistance (Ministry of Finance, 2017) which shows the interest of development partners in supporting the education system in Nepal. According to the Global Monitoring Report, global funding for education still needs an additional US\$ 22 billion to ensure just quality pre-primary and primary education, proving the international community's role in supporting low-income developing countries (UNESCO, 2015).

The GoN realizes the need for the support of these partners to graduate from its status of "Least Developed Country" to a Middle-Income country while achieving the targets set by SDGs by 2030 (MoF, 2019). Although several challenges persist in the education development of Nepal, its progress towards the Millennium Development Goal of Universal Primary Education has been noted as impressive. The role of international development partners has been significant in achieving progress at the national and global levels. In the short run, the government of Nepal believes in securing foreign aid; however, in the long run, it aims to reduce aid dependency (Ministry of Finance, 2014).

Development aid is dispersed among small initiatives and several development partners in the same sector. Coordination among aid recipient government and development partners at the global, regional, and national levels remains crucial, especially when there is a lack of trust between the government and the international development partners. The International aid effort has been subject to critical reflection for its relevancy, hence greater efficiency demand in recent years.

International development and multilateralism face challenges in several fronts. Ownership and support for these multilateral institutions have weakened (Cox, 1997).

Multilateral agreements like the Paris Declaration have demonstrated the path for development partners to make their aid effective. Additionally, several international regimes have advocated that the government and development partners align their aid strategies to achieve aid efficiency. It has tried to address the challenge by advocating that both the sides of government and development partners should align their aid strategies to achieve the desired results in the host country (OECD, 2009). However, development partners appear reluctant to channel their aid into the country through the government's budgetary system, although changes can be seen.

Over the past decades, the modality of international collaboration has changed, integrating external funding into national funds to encourage cooperation among international partners and make aid effective. Support for the development and reform of the education sector has been at the center of international aid, and multilateral effort has played a significant role. Over the past decades, development aid modalities have focused on complementing national education priorities through sector-wide reform (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, 2001).

Nepal also receives the most significant international assistance in its education sector, and a considerable amount of resources in development aid are being used internationally for technical assistance. School Sector Development Program (SSDP) is the most extensive program of the GoN from the perspective of both aid commitments and disbursements, which receives a significant contribution from several major development partners to achieve Nepal's education priorities. The World Bank, Asian Development Bank, European Union, *UN Country Team*, and bilateral donors like Japan and the United Kingdom have continued as the top donors. These agencies also contribute to the National budget through on-budget, off-budget,

on-treasury, and off-treasury contributions through modalities like Program support, Project support, Sector Wide Approach, Humanitarian Assistance, and Budget Support in Nepal (MoF, 2018).

The range of factors determines the priorities of multilateral organizations in a country. The national vision proposed by the education program is, to a great extent, the result of negotiations between the federal authorities and its development partners and, more specifically, the bilateral and multilateral organizations that finance education (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, 2001). The global north countries are accused of maintaining influence over the international aid organization, holding key decision-making positions, particularly around funding, thus exercising power around low-income countries in the global south (Menashy, 2019).

The 2030 Global Agenda and the SDG Goals remain the best road map for overcoming the challenges of ending poverty and achieving sustainable development. Quality Education is the foundation of attaining SDG, and the importance of partnership and international cooperation in supporting developing states to achieve these goals is evident. Multilateral efforts are seen as crucial to achieving these SDGs. However, the High-level Political Forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council at its 2019 session, reported that the world is not on track to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (ECOSOC, 2019).

In a country like Nepal, where several development partners work in the same areas, it is even more challenging to measure the specific impact of each partner. However, these development partners push forward their specific priorities, procedures, and agendas in the national policies and programs of the aid recipient countries. Similarly,

these different development partners have particular priorities and procedures that are often not flexible. These agencies influence the national policies and programs, making them an active and influential actor in decision-making over national policies and priorities. Dependence on external aid is also suspected of interfering with national programs and policy. Development efforts have been criticized as they rely on imposing imported wisdom on developing countries that have failed miserably. Many of these countries have been unable to replicate the dominant model of modernization (Ajit & Murari, 2007). This reality has a critical reception as there is no solely home-grown solution to each country's unique challenges. However, technical, financial, and policy-level support is essential for a developing country like Nepal.

5.1 UN and the Development Cooperation in Nepal

Without the UN system, global multilateralism is not conceivable. It has provided a venue where cooperation triumphs over conflict. UN works with and through the government to assist people. Their part is to support the government and ensure the member states respect and meet international conventions and treaties' commitments. Nepal's foreign policy has realized the role of development partners in attaining its objectives and UN, its values, and its platforms remain core towards pursuing its diplomatic effort.

Nepal also highly emphasizes the UN Charter and international law in its foreign policy (MoF, 2020). SDGs are the global goals adopted by the UN member states to promote peace and prosperity for people, and the planet has guided Nepal's Development strategy. Nepal was one of the countries which took an initial step towards adopting SDG goals in its National plan. The GoN aligned its national plan,

sectoral strategies, and expenditure framework to SDGs. The prime minister of Nepal serves as the chair of the steering committee that guides the SDGs (GoN, 2019). UN works globally with the government, public, private and cooperative sectors, and civil societies to promote these goals.

UN has also been a significant partner of Nepal since it joined the global multilateral institution in 1955. UN started its work in Nepal when Food and Agriculture Organization opened its office in Kathmandu in 1951, before joining the UN. The UN has supported Nepal in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts. After the end of the armed conflict in Nepal in 2007 UN set up a mission in Nepal to monitor the disarmament of rebels and the preparation of constituent assembly elections (UNSC, 2007). The mission had critical reception in Nepal; however, its role cannot be undermined. Similarly, the UN became a crucial partner in supporting the federal transition of Nepal.

Nepal has actively participated in the UN and its institutions since joining it and placing it highly important. Nepal served as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) for 2018-2020. Nepal's involvement is ever-increasing in the United Nations. Nepal's foreign policy highlights the importance of multilateral efforts to conduct its state affairs. Nepal's constitution explicitly mentions that the UN's charter shall guide its foreign policy (GoN, 2015). Nepal's geopolitical position between two competing neighbors, India and China, among the most significant bilateral donors, adds complexity to its foreign affairs. The more a country depends on external aid, the less its programs and policy formulation will be carried out according to a national consensus. Among different kinds of donors, multilateral donors, as opposed to bilateral donors, have been prioritized by Nepal's foreign as

bilateral aid is linked to political reasons. Multilateral action would encourage unbiased policymaking. Hence, multilateral organizations' role is significant to a country like Nepal.

15 UN Agencies, excluding the World Bank, function as a *UN Country Team* in Nepal. The UN country team has supported Nepal through Official Development Assistance, mainly through “Technical Assistance” and “Grant” (Ministry of Finance, 2014). These agencies remain distinct yet complement each other's efforts while competing To foster cooperation and coordination among UN’s funds, programs, and agencies *UN adopts the “One UN”* approach of the United Nations Country Team. This is part of the structural change within the ECOSOC of the UN. The change aims to ensure coherence, synergy, and complementarity. At the national level, the “One UN” approach is demonstrated by embracing the UN-level UNDAF). Within the framework, all UN agencies operate to support the development process in Nepal. It also guides UN agencies' work in Nepal. The framework was developed in cooperation with GoN and has highlighted SDGs and National development priorities as its guiding principles (UNCT Nepal, 2017).

The World Bank, UNDP, UNESCO, UNICEF, and WFP are the key UN agencies supporting the education sector of Nepal through UNDAF. In Nepal’s case, UNDAF has not prioritized goals relating to promoting quality education in Nepal despite development partners contributing significantly to Nepal's education sector. UNDAF not recognizing Sustainable Development Goal relating to Quality Education as its priority demonstrates that it has not been the priority of the most resourceful UN agencies in Nepal post-2018. While education isn't the priority sector of UN agencies in Nepal, its activities are still blamed for being disjointed and fragmented at the

operational level (Murari, 2007). The World Bank, being the largest multilateral UN donor agency for Nepal, has very little collaboration with other UN agencies in Nepal. Although UNESCO is the lead agency UN agency in education, World Bank and UNICEF substantially contribute to global education aid in a country like Nepal.

National Roadmap to SDGs has recognized the need for partnership with multilateral and bilateral donors to mobilize resources for achieving SDGs. The national development plan, the "13th Periodic Plan" and the "14th Periodic Plan" are again in line with global goals- promoted by the UN- MDGs, and SDGs, creating a correlation. The national plan has recognized how it intends to build on the unfinished agenda of MDGs and embraces ambitious aspirations of fulfilling the SDGs (GoN, 2016). Nepal's roadmap to implementing SDGs has highlighted the role of the private sector. The UN has a significant role in bringing broad stakeholders, including coordination between UN agencies, host countries, and other donors at a shared platform and promoting cooperation and multilateralism. UNDAF drew the UN system's collective vision and response to tailor the specific needs of individual countries, clearly setting out targets, roles, and priorities. It has prioritized the role of NGOs, civil society, and development partners.

The SDGs also guide UNESCO's activities at the global level and the national development priorities adopted by the government of Nepal (UNESCO, 2018). Seven Committees exist to implement and monitor SDGs' progress in Nepal. The Social Development Committee, which looks after SDGs relating to quality education and gender equality, has focused equally on the role of partnership to achieve the targets (National Planning Commission, 2017).

The SSDP- National plan for education has also aligned Nepal's commitment to the Education 2030 agenda adopted at World Education Forum hosted by UNESCO (MoE, 2016). As per the national plan, UNESCO remains a key implementing partner for SSDP and UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank, and other bilateral and multilateral partners. However, they are also facing increasing challenges.

The UN member states who contribute the most have contributed less and less to the economic and social UN institutions. The number of institutions in the UN system that promotes multilateral action has significantly increased since the founding of the UN. The participation in multilateral institutions has not changed substantially over time; however, the ownership has dwindled in this institution by its members' states. Hence bilateral and regionalism are also challenging multilateral efforts of the UN while complementing it. However, in the case of many developing countries, multilateral cooperation needs critical reflection and reconstruction regarding its effectiveness in tackling the vast challenges. Several multilateral agencies' contribution is insignificant considering many developing countries' vast socio-economic challenges. Often the impacts are not easily attributable, and results seem disappointing. However, multilateral support led by the UN remains crucial to developing countries like Nepal.

The issues in the development and education sectors are evolving, and Sustainable Development Goals adopted at the global level provide a framework for global actors and national actors to aspire. The multilateral approaches are the key to tackling global challenges and attaining national priorities. Hence, the UN's role in bringing together the voices of government, civil society, international development partners, the private sector, and the public sphere, enhancing collaboration and coordination

among them, and improving efficiency in achieving the educational priorities of Nepal is crucial.

5.2 Significance of UNESCO and Nepal's Diplomatic Engagement

UNESCO was founded to encourage international cooperation via education, science, culture, and communication on November 16, 1945. The office has also sought to protect cultural heritage, promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, empower people via a free exchange of ideas and access to information and knowledge, and mobilize scientific knowledge and science policy for long-term development. UNESCO's mandate was to contribute to peace and security by advancing peoples' mutual knowledge and understanding, encouraging education and the spread of culture, and protecting, increasing, and sharing the world's cultural and scientific heritage appropriately. It worked toward this goal firm in the belief that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed" (UNESCO Constitution). The organization has been providing possibilities for intellectual contact and joint action for governments, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, and scholars that might otherwise not exist.

The constitution of UNESCO has stated its purpose to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science, and culture to further universal respect for justice, the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms (UNESCO Constitution). Multilateral organizations have been a platform to promote global values, principles, ideologies, and norms. It supports countries to plan, build and rebuild education systems responsive to a rapidly changing world (UNESCO, 2011). To complement the efforts of national

governments, UNESCO, as the lead agency in SDG-4 education, coordinates and mobilizes all partners relating to education at national, regional, and international levels. It maintains an official relationship with governments globally and works on specific projects. It works with multilateral and bilateral funding agencies, regional and sub-regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, and broad-based civil society organizations to carry out its task.

UNESCO utilizes the General Conference, the Executive Board, and the secretariat to carry out its role. The General Conference comprises representatives of all member states and is UNESCO's main decision-making body. UNESCO General Conference meets every two years to orient the organization's policies. Following one vote per country, it approves UNESCO's program and budget. Every six years, it appoints the Director-General upon the recommendation of the Executive Board. The Executive Board, composed of 58 Member States, meets twice a year to prepare the work for the General Conference. It is also responsible for ensuring that the Secretariat effectively implements decisions taken by the General Conference. UNESCO's Secretariat consists of the Director-General and the staff. The Director-General prepares the draft budget and program and oversees the work of the staff. The staff members organize and coordinate the program activities approved by the Member States (UNESCO Constitution).

The values promoted by the UN serve as its guiding foreign policy (GoN, 2020). In May 1953, Nepal became a member of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). In 1998, the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu was established. Within the 68 years of joining the organization, Nepal has served on the Executive Board of UNESCO twice, representing the Asia Pacific Region

(Ministry of Education, 2019). It has also served as vice-chairperson, Nomination Committee, and Apex committee on administrative, budgetary, and financial issues (Nepali Headlines, 2020).

UNESCO is the only UN entity with a National Commissions system in its Member and Associate States. They promote UNESCO's national, regional, and international ideals. They comprise figures from each country's intellectual and scientific communities, forming a vital link between the organization and civil society. It participates in elaborating, executing, and evaluating UNESCO's programs globally. It organizes its activities and implements them on behalf of UNESCO. Through NATCOM, Nepal has carried forward the mandates promoted by UNESCO as a member state. NATCOM played a significant role in coordinating the partnership between the Ministry of Education and Developmental partners and UNESCO, specifically in the School Sector Development Plan. Ministry of Education at the federal level prepared a National Framework for Action for Education 2030 in collaboration with the Nepal National Commission for UNESCO under the technical guidance of UNESCO (MoE, 2022). After Nepal joined UNESCO, as per the provision of UNESCO, the National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM)) was set up in Nepal in July 1954 under the chairmanship of the then Minister of Education. The Ministry of Education's secretary (MoE) has served as the Secretary-General of the NATCOM, Nepal, ever since (Nepal National Commission for UNESCO, 2019).

NATCOM works with UNESCO clubs, centers, and associated schools to promote the organization's ideals and actions at the grassroots level. UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategies stress their central role in promoting cooperation with other civil society partners. These organizations are grouped into national, regional, and

international networks. This network provides UNESCO with a firm base in grass-root level activity. The organization also supports UNESCO's headquarters, regional offices, and field offices to promote coordination with the government and its inline agencies

Financial assistance varies among member states, although they have an equal amount to vote in the biennial General Conference to determine UNESCO's policies and projects. Members are mandated to contribute the assessed contributions under their membership, which goes to the organization's regular budget-making. The General Conference decided to allot a budget of \$1.2 billion to UNESCO for 2018-19. This includes a regular program budget of \$595.2 million and voluntary contributions for specific actions from public and private sources (UNESCO, Jan). UNESCO's regular budget is utilized chiefly for its day-to-day operation, like paying for the regular staff or other general recurring expenditures. Thus, it depends upon extra-budgetary funds to carry out a significant portion of its activities. However, for the first time in 20 years, it has increased its budget by 3% in the education sector. In the UN system, specialized agencies are legally independent of the UN and have separate budgets, members, rules, and personnel. The bulk of its funding comes from the voluntary contributions of its members, governments, institutions, and individuals. Then UNESCO aligns its funds on projects and programs based on the recipient country's development priority, policy, and government strategy.

The projects of UNESCO are registered and approved by the GoN through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Finance. (MoF, 2020). Nepal as a member of the organization also contributes financially to UNESCO. It contributes 0.9% of the total regular budget of the organization, amounting to US\$23564 for the

year 2020 (UNESCO, 2020). GoN funds it annually and receives funds from UNESCO headquarters biennially. UNESCO in-line agencies and field offices can finance its specific activities wherever it finds them relevant. However, its functions are legally and financially autonomous and are responsible for its operations. It also supports the UNESCO field Office and development partners to coordinate with the GoN and vice-versa at the national, regional, and international levels.

UNESCO also has a presence in the region of South Asia. Organizations like South Asian Foundation exist solely to promote SAARC and UNESCO's spirit. It was established by Madanjeet Singh Kaur, a renowned Indian diplomat, painter, photographer, and writer, and a designated UNESCO goodwill ambassador in 2001. The organization has chapters in each SAARC member country. It is also the apex body of SAARC and has also entered into official relations with UNESCO. The organization has set up further eight UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Institution of Excellences Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and Srilanka.

UNESCO has 74 field offices globally, including country offices, cluster offices, regional offices, and headquarters (UNESCO). It also has specialized departments that support UNESCO's program, providing specialized support for cluster and national offices in education, culture, natural and social science, human science, and communication and information. The Office fosters peace, reduces poverty, and promotes sustainable development and intercultural dialogue in Nepal by strengthening government policies and programs related to education, the sciences, culture, and communication. It provides these platforms where nations collaborate, where states learn from each other, and also share the know-how and experience of each other promoting standards in policies. Utilizing the mechanisms mentioned

above, UNESCO draws attention to emerging global challenges and promotes the implementation of an equitable, just, and inclusive education system globally.

UNESCO has also been the victim of weakening support for these multilateral institutions (Acharya, 2017). This lack of funding has led to heavy reliance on extra-budgetary financing. Their focus has shifted to their core priorities. This lack of funding sources significantly affected the role of UNESCO in Nepal, which has vast agendas; other development partners have challenged its role, including other UN agencies like the World Bank and UNICEF. Considering UNESCO's enormous scope and limited resources, it is inevitable that it must focus on its comparative strength to make its impact visible. In November 2019, on occasion, the 40th General Conference of UNESCO shared its plans for a focused education strategy. UNESCO programs prioritize regions with the least resources, especially Africa. Since Nepal is a South Asia, it has not been a priority to the financially crunched organization. UNESCO has stated Africa and Gender Equality as its priorities.

UNESCO contributes primarily through *off-budget* funding to the GoN and provides technical and policy support. Between 2006 and 2011, UNESCO Kathmandu Office had an average expenditure of US\$ 305,579.5 each year, including its regular programs and extra-budgetary resources, and cooperation expenditures with regional offices and headquarters (UNESCO Kathmandu Office, 2011).

UNESCO has led the Education for All movement since 1990. UNESCO. Its Member States endorsed UNESCO's role in implementing SDG4-Education 2030 in the 39th session of the General Conference 2017. It leads and coordinates Education 2030 and acts as the focal point for education within the overall agenda. UNESCO has been entrusted with the task of leading and coordinating SDG 4-Education 2030 by:

- undertaking advocacy to sustain political commitment
- facilitating policy dialogue, knowledge sharing, and standard-setting
- monitoring progress towards the education targets
- convening global, regional, and national stakeholders to guide the implementation of the agenda and
- functioning as a focal point for education within the overall SDG coordination architecture.

UNESCO's role as a lead UN agency, coordinating global with multiple educational stakeholders in education, is not fully realized considering its limited resources; however, it has been a prominent global actor in education multilateralism.

5.3 Nepal's Education Sector's Challenges and UNESCO's

Interventions

In 2010, UNESCO honored the Non-Formal Education Center, Ministry of Education of Nepal, with the UNESCO Confucius Prize of Literacy, recognizing the impact of its literacy programs on marginalized population groups, especially the women in the communities. This recognition on the world stage encourages the national government to advance its effort and boost the country's image globally while inspiring other states going through a similar developmental stage. However, this also means that Nepal faces multiple challenges in the education sector.

For the study, Nepal's modern education development can be deconstructed into three phases. 1950-1990 can be considered Nepal's first phase of evolution with the introduction of democracy in 1951, replacing autocratic rule. Before During the period, educational opportunities were limited to family members and close friends of

the elite class (Ram Prasad Aryal, 2016). As per data, Nepal's literacy rate was around 4.3% until the period (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). Nepal became a member of the United Nations (UN) during this period. It started receiving international support to support and develop Nepal's education system and introduced formal and non-formal education programs to the general population.

In the second development phase in 1990-2015, the literacy rate increased to 65.9% as per the 2011 data. Although the literacy rate between male and female populations stands at 75.1% and 57.4% still showed discrimination (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2012). In the year, the multiparty system was introduced and witnessed a rise in the number of development partners in the education sector of Nepal. However, the country went through a 10-year-long armed conflict between 1996 and 2010. The period witnessed the severe violation of human rights and humanitarian law with large-scale disruptions in education (United Nations, 2006). This period was a massive setback to the progress of Nepal toward modern education development.

The third phase of the development of Nepal starts from 2015 onwards with the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal 2015. The period also witnessed the transition of Nepal into a federal state from a centralized state. The constitution of Nepal has been handed over to the local government to oversee and manage school-level education (GoN, 2015). This transition has recognized the importance of inclusivity of minorities in education and recognition of different languages and ethnicities and has given a large set of rights relating to education to different levels of government. This era is also crucial as Sustainable Development Goal has been adopted, and Nepal has proactively ensured its implementation in its laws, policies, and programs.

Nepal has shown progress in several socio-economic indicators with the rest of the world during this period. However, it faces multiple challenges in areas, notably quality, learning outcomes, and efficiency (MoE, 2022). Several research reports have shown that Nepal ranks very low in terms of several indicators relating to social equality. The HDI report of 2016 has highlighted that these social inequalities are highest in education among several groups, including women (UNDP, 2016). Nepal ranks high in early child marriage. Nepal's educational statistics show gender inequality. Girls' primary education completion rate in rural areas is significantly lower than boys (UNESCO, 2016). The research also indicates a higher chance for girls from low-income families to remain illiterate. Nepal also lags in providing learning opportunities to marginalized and underprivileged populations. As per the GEMR, 2016, 16% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students experience homophobic and transphobic violence in schools (UNESCO, 2016). The reform in action is needed to strengthen quality across the system and education system (MoE, 2022).

The lack of financial resources has affected the quality of infrastructures in Nepal education. Essential requirements such as access to clean latrines affect the girls' population. The lack of infrastructure relating to Information Communication Technology and capable resources person to use the technology has been a significant challenge in the education sector. The majority of school buildings also lack minimum safety standards. However, following the earthquake in 2015, schools, especially in the 14 most-affected districts, were constructed in line with guidelines and specifications to provide a safe learning environment (MoE, 2022).

As per SSDP, school students' learning is not progressing through the system (MoE, 2022). The national policy plan also highlights high school dropouts and the repetition rate in students' learning outcomes is still high. The document also reflects the disparity in learning outcomes between public and institutional schools (private). Similarly, the lack of a qualified workforce has affected the quality of education, educational data, policies, and programs. The document also shares the need for capacity building of the teachers in their subject and encourages a student-centered approach to teaching. For a Developing country like Nepal, which has limited resources and policy capacity, it can be challenging to implement treaties or fully adopt a global periodic reporting framework, including commitments made by Nepal in global and regional educational regimes. The federal transition also created a lack of human resources as education experts from MoE were utilized to roll out federalism and decentralize education planning and management (MoE, 2016). The report also highlights the lack of capacity in the local level community to meet the supervision and evaluation needed to ensure quality education.

The multilateral and bilateral cooperation agencies contribute financially and technically to the national educational development program. Similarly, the government, civil society, school management committee, and professionals in education and research and their different associations are trying to bring an adequate solution together with international partners. However, a lack of coordination among national and international actors working in low-income developing countries has been a global challenge. The state and non-state actors have not been able to engage meaningfully and establish a formal mechanism for sustained engagement in implementing its goals. Given that many donors have policies giving preference to aid allocation to LDCs, as Nepal aims to graduate to middle-income developing countries

losing its LDC status, there may be a decrease in the volume of assistance (Ministry of Finance, 2017).

The member states' social-economic conditions, human rights situations, and political developments affect the priority of development partners. UNESCO uniquely places itself within its limited resources to meet Nepal's educational needs. UNESCO works closely with the GoN, civil society, development partners, the general public, and stakeholders to promote quality education for all, gender equality, and adult literacy through global education multilateralism. During the visit of the Education Minister of Nepal to UNESCO Headquarters for the 38th Session of the General Conference, the government recognized the support of UNESCO in the Literate Nepal Mission and Family Literacy Program Non-formal education, Education Management Information System, Equivalency Program Framework, and Gender mainstreaming (MoEST, 2020). Nepal adopted UNESCO's program, strategies, and assistance at the national and sub-national levels (GoN, 2007)

Each project has unique objectives and associations, and its components aim to have specific interventions. There are several vital agendas UNESCO promotes globally. Around these broad agendas, guided by the priority of member states, accordingly, the activities of its field agencies are directed. The office's majors projects between the year 2015-2020 Nepal in the education sector are listed below:

Table 5: Major projects of UNESCO between the year 2016-2020

Project	Year	Major Activities	Budget (USD)
UNESCO-HNA Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education	2016 – 2020	Developing national capacity for gender-sensitive teacher policy formulation and building the capabilities of teachers, trainers, and trainee	70000
Creating Inclusive, Responsive, and Resilient Education Systems	2018-2019	Supporting the government in creating inclusive, responsive, and resilient education systems in Nepal	14000
Capacity Enhancement of the Nepalese Education Officials	2018-2019	Capacity enhancement of the Nepalese education officials for policy, planning, and monitoring for achieving the targets of education 2030	27000
Creating Inclusive, Responsive, and Resilient Education Systems	2018-2019	Supporting the government in creating inclusive, responsive, and resilient education systems in Nepal	14000
Strengthening Literacy and Lifelong Learning Opportunities in Nepal	2018-2019	Strengthening literacy and lifelong learning through capacity development	374000

ICT to Facilitate SDG4 in South Asia	2018-2019	Supporting the development of the revised ICT in education masterplan	18000
Teacher Training Reforms to Facilitate ICTPedagogy Integration	2013-2019	Supporting competency-based teacher training reforms to facilitate ICTpedagogy integration.	34000
Integrating SDG4 - Policy Reviews and Monitoring Frameworks	2017-2019	2017-2019	149000
Comprehensive Sexuality Education and a Safe Learning Environment in Nepal (UNESCOUNFPA-UN) for Adolescent Girls and Young Women	January 2016 - June 2020	Empowering adolescent girls and young women through the provision of comprehensive sexuality education and a safe learning environment in Nepal.	4425000

(Source: Ministry of Finance)

UNESCO projects intersect education, health, gender equality, and human rights. Its project mainly focuses on promoting gender equality, developing resilience in the education system through research and capacity building, and promoting non-formal education.

Education systems are expected to adapt to the rapidly changing demands of the social and economic environment. The changing political scenario in member

countries affects the program of UNESCO. The armed conflict and the federal transition of Nepal can be taken as an example that significantly affected the agenda and priorities of UNESCO. The political transition and events in Nepal have also significantly affected its priorities. After the beginning of the armed conflict in 1996 UNESCO Kathmandu field office was set up in 1998. The armed conflict lasted for ten years (1996-2006) and was followed by the federal transition, significantly impacting UNESCO's program and projects. Similarly, the natural disaster post-2015 also greatly affected UNESCO's programs and planning in Nepal.

The key projects of the UNESCO Kathmandu Office from extra-budgetary funding are the following, and the projects are discussed in the following sub-chapters:

5.4 UNESCO Major Projects in Nepal

Developing countries face multiple constraints. The growing need for the reconstruction and reform of the education systems represents great challenges for developing countries at the human, financial, technical, and political levels (Jallade, Radi, & Cuenin, National Education Policies and Programmes and International Cooperation, 2001). Nepal's political instability and socio-economic condition had their unique challenges too. The reality of the member state guided UNESCO's actions while matching it to resource availability and aligning to its core mandates. The need to support countries to strengthen their national institution by improving technical and management capacities has been a priority of UNESCO.

UNESCO's involvement in developing the education sector in Nepal dated to the 1970s when the "Equal Access for Girls to Education" program was initiated in collaboration with the then GoN and Norway. Since then, it has addressed board

arrays of concerns in education. The UNESCO Kathmandu Office was established in 1998 to foster peace, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable development and intercultural dialogue in Nepal by strengthening government policies and programs related to education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information (UNESCO Kathmandu, 2019). UNESCO Headquarters, the Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok and UNESCO New Delhi office, and NATCOM conducted UNESCO activities in Nepal until 1998 (UNESCO, 2000).

Since its inception, it has gradually grown and matured into several areas of competence of the agency in Education, Natural Sciences, Social & Human Sciences, Culture, Communication & Information. As of December 2019, it has three dedicated Units; Education, Communication & Information, and Culture in Kathmandu Office. Through these units, the organization has been carrying forward the overall mandate of UNESCO and engaging with the government, civil society, general public, media, private sector, and development partners in Nepal and developing its profile in the country. UNESCO Kathmandu field office works closely with the headquarters and the other UNESCO field offices and institutes in the region and the world, drawing on those units' resources and expertise. This is done through advisory missions to assist in the formulation of the projects, technical support to and assessment of ongoing projects, personal training, study visits, documentation, research, and publication. The significant projects supported by UNESCO between 2015 and 2019 are discussed below.

5.4.1 Capacity Development in Education

The Capacity Development for Education project intends to promote literacy and lifelong learning, particularly SDG4- Quality Education. It continued the past effort

under Capacity Development for Education for All, which started in 2003. The project targets the non-formal education sector, promoting gender equality and empowerment of girls and women across all areas of intervention (UNESCO, 2019). The project is being implemented in 25 Least Developed Countries globally. It focuses on nations in fragile situations or recovering from conflict or disasters and is the most far from meeting the SDG4 targets. The project helps the international community improve the capacity of countries to reconstruct their education systems and ensure long-term growth and sustainability (UNESCO, 2020).

Since the beginning of its operation, UNESCO has concentrated its efforts on improving learning opportunities by strengthening the non-formal education sector by promoting non-formal education and lifelong learning opportunities. In 2003, UNESCO led “The United Nations Literacy Decade” to increase literacy levels and empower everyone. It led to expanding programs of Community Learning Centers (CLCs). It is a community-based approach to encourage non-formal education in Nepal with the Ministry of Education. The GoN adopted the approach of lifelong learning opportunities and set up a department- The non-Formal Education Center, within the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2007). The project also prompted policy level change within the education sector. the Government’s Education For All- National Plan of Action recognized the potential of CLCs in adult literacy and continuing education. The government later adopted the CLC approach's 10th Five-year Plan (2002-2007).

This project supported the campaign and intended to address the challenges faced by decade-long political instability and armed conflict. During the period, Nepal witnessed an increased disparity between Nepal's social, cultural, and linguistic

groups, obstruction of the Right to education of several adults and children, and several other human rights violations (Parker, Standing, & Pant, 2013). The UNESCO office supported the country undergoing armed conflict with its first pilot CLC in Shreekot in Far West Nepal (UNESCO, 2003) in 1999. As of the report published by GoN total of 2152 CLCs exist in Nepal (UNDP, 2021). They receive regular funding from the government based on their annual plan and programs.

The international community recognized that promoting literacy is in the interest of all. Nepal Government adopted the National Literacy Campaign (2008-2012) and the Literate Nepal Mission (2012-2015). UNESCO has envisioned CLCs as an integral part of the societies and communities hence ultimately center for lifelong learning opportunities. They played a critical role in the government program declaring districts free from illiteracy. The project supports the equivalency and accreditation between formal and non-formal education. In collaboration with UNESCO, efforts have also been made by the GoN to establish non-formal education equivalency programs in the country.

Since its establishment, the program has become integral to UNESCO in Nepal. The initiative is a non-budgetary funding method and program strategy that pools funds from various sources, mainly from Nordic nations like Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Dubai Cares. Switzerland, Denmark, and Azerbaijan donated to the project (UNESCO, 2020). UNESCO Kathmandu's priorities and intends to carry forwards its activities and programs from all sectors in the office's competent incorporated through CLCs (UNESCO Kathmandu Office, 2016).

Integrating SDG 4: Policy Reviews and Monitoring Frameworks is another project that supports Quality data collection to support policy-makers in the making. There is

also a need to produce quality data to have internationally and regionally comparable data and monitor progress. Achieving internationally comparable data needs a global framework. International agencies provide internationally-comparable data in different statistical domains, calculate global and regional aggregates, and support global reporting. UN Statistical Commission, adopted by its Inter-Agency Expert Group on SDG Indicators, guided this requirement. These international requirements complement national and regional needs and priorities.

As a UN lead agency in education, UNESCO has supported countries globally to develop national quality data, which complimented regional and international data requirements and priorities in the education sector (UNESCO, 2015). It works with National statistical systems and is responsible for compiling data according to the fundamental principles of official statistics (relevance, impartiality, equal access, accountability, transparency, confidentiality). They then make this data available for national, regional, and global reporting. The Government of Nepal also has various means of collecting data like the Nepal Demographic Health Survey or Census, or Nepal Living Standard Survey; these surveys serve an essential role in monitoring progress in the education sector. It is necessary to coordinate the work of the Nepal government with the effort of other regional and global levels.

The Capacity Development for Education (CapED) was rolled out in 10 countries, including Nepal, to align SDG4 into national plans and policies. The project aimed to identify policy priorities and gaps and to improve national monitoring data and information systems in light of SDG4. The project led to the development of the SDG4 National Framework for Action and the National Strategy for the Development of Education Statistics in Nepal. The policy document served as the guiding policy document for all three tiers of government. National stakeholders were engaged in developing the documents and implementing specific activities on the ground during

the project. To align and strengthen national education data management systems and monitor progress toward SDG 4, the program aimed to enhance federal and local institutional capacities to review existing policies and strategies in light of SDG4, ensure ownership and accountability, and impact the program sustainability.

5.4.2 Promoting Gender Equality

Promoting gender equality has been a significant agenda of UNESCO globally. All its projects have components relating to promoting gender equality. In the early years of UNESCO in Nepal, its projects focused on promoting gender equality by controlling girl trafficking and addressing issues like gender-based discrimination, lack of education, economic deprivation, and poor state of law enforcement (UNESCO, 2003). Although UNESCO has shifted its focus from fighting girl trafficking in Nepal, promoting gender equality through other means has been the core of its programs and activities.

Table 6: Major projects of UNESCO promoting Gender Equality and their budget

Project	Year	Budget (USD)
Enhancing quality and relevance of learning for adolescent Girls (HFIT Project)	2016-17	90,689
Malala Fund for Girls' Right to Education	2016-17	224958
Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through the Provision of Comprehensive Sexuality Education and a Safe Learning Environment in Nepal	2016-17	270,000

(Source: Ministry of Finance, 2018)

“Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education” is an initiative under the framework for “Global Partnership for Girls and Women’s Education- Better Life, Better Future Future,” launched in 2011 and aimed to work in 20 countries where the education gap was significant. The US\$ 15 million project was globally launched in March 2015, targeting Tanzania, Mali, and Nepal.

The program was officially launched in April 2016 by the director-general of UNESCO and the Minister of Education in Kathmandu during the director-general's visit to Nepal. The \$5 million project aimed to invest in education while creating solid linkages between health and other relevant sectors. The five-year (June 2016 to June 2021) project targeted five districts of Nepal, Accham, Bajura, Rautahar, Sarlahi, and Sunsari, in collaboration with UN Women, UNFPA, and GoN (UNESCO, 2020).

The project has also paid special attention to revising the curriculum and incorporating Gender-Based Violence and Comprehensive Sexuality Education while making the textbooks available in the local language. The project supported building the capacity and knowledge of several adults with knowledge about the issues. Considering the marginalization of women and girls and the lack of access to safe water, sanitation, health services, and other basic needs in the project area (UNESCO, 2022). The project built model accessible toilets in the project district to encourage girls to school.

Korean International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) funded this global joint project by UNESCO, UNFPA, UN Women, and the host country's government executed the project.

Similarly, Under the UNESCO-HNA Partnership for Girls' and Women's Education, UNESCO initiated an effort in 2015 to increase the education sector's responsiveness

to gender equality in the Asia-Pacific region, focusing on teacher education. The project promotes the resolutions of the 1995 Beijing Conference on women. China Hainan Foundation funded the project. Cambodia, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan are participating in the five-year project -"Enhancing girls' and women's right to excellent education via gender-sensitive policymaking, teacher development, and pedagogy in South, Southeast, and Central Asia."

5.4.3 Other Projects

UNESCO's project has supported Nepal as per the need of time; they have evolved with the need of time. Projects and programs relating to disaster risk reduction, federalism, and information technology are important projects UNESCO has been supporting the GoN. A brief description of the projects is presented below.

Globally, UNESCO is a member of a global organization called the Inter-agency Network Network for Education in Emergencies, through which it works with international actors in education. UNESCO has been working with the Ministry of education to mainstream and implement Disaster Risk Reduction in Nepal's education sector since 2010 (UNESCO Kathmandu, 2021). Nepal is at high risk from several natural hazards such as floods, landslides, earthquakes, and droughts. Flood and landslides cause massive destruction every year. Nepal was struck by an earthquake of magnitude of 7.8 Richter scale in 2015, following which several international development partners, including the UN, extended humanitarian support to Nepal. After the disaster, UNESCO worked closely with the government on the Post Disaster Needs Assessment and the Post Disaster Recovery Framework in the education and culture sector. The support assisted the government in accessing the disaster's impact and outlined Nepal's needs and priorities through the post-recovery process. UNESCO

supported technical expertise to prepare the report and participated in the field trip in Gorkha, Tanahu, Lamjung, Sindhuli, and the government of Nepal and Development partners to access the educational institution and support the education sector Post-disaster Need assessment (World Bank, 2015). In 2017, the Terai region of Nepal was hit by massive rainfall resulting in heavy flooding and landslide. So Education Cannot Wait- a global fund for education in emergency granted Nepal with a fund of \$1.88 million. UNESCO contributed 8% of the total budget, amounting to \$153,762, and the rest to the other three partner organizations (Education Cannot Wait, 2019). The grant provided cash grants, distributed school supplies, developed gender-sensitive infrastructure, and supported building resilience in the education system. Similarly, UNESCO and Non-Formal Education, MoE developed the Nepali language textbook “Education in Emergencies: Self-learning Materials for Non-Formal Education” with the support of the project. The textbook was distributed to all community learning centers in the heavily affected region by the earthquake.

With the need of Nepal, UNESCO’s programs have also evolved. Between 2006 and 2015, the issues of inclusivity in a federal structure dominated the national, directly impacting the education sector. The transition from unitary to federal restructuring required constructive dialogue between different stakeholders. Discussions about inclusive education, comprehensive curriculum, peace education, education in the mother tongue, and federalism in the education system came to light. The international community's support, knowledge, and experience were significant in addressing these issues. Hence UNESCO played a crucial role in sharing those resources and knowledge.

As early as 2009, UNESCO encouraged the formation of a 'Federalism and Education Support Group' from among Nepal's prominent educational academics as part of this project. The group extended its support to the constituent assembly members and published research on six different areas of federalism and the education sector in Nepal (UNESCO, 2014). Under the UN Peace Fund Nepal, the UNESCO Office in Kathmandu undertook the project "Planning Effective Delivery of Education in Future Federal Nepal." The project aimed to aid Nepal's peace and development efforts by encouraging constructive discourse and planning that would lead to success in the country's constitution-making process. The project provided technical assistance to the new federal government bodies involved in the analysis and planning needed to ensure quality essential education services based on human rights, social inclusion, and non-discrimination (UNESCO, 2014).

The use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in education is one of the strategies to achieve the broader goals of education (GoN, 2013). UNESCO has been supporting the GoN with technical and financial support for the development process of the ICT Master Plan. UNESCO supported the government with experts and financial support to organize the workshop and develop the capacity to prepare for the master plan. The Master Plan included four significant components: ICT infrastructure, including internet connectivity, human resources, content development, and system enhancement. The master plan aimed to support GoN in expanding equity, access, and quality, reducing the digital divide, and improving the service delivery system in Nepal's education (UNESCO, 2020). UNESCO Kathmandu conducted the capacity-building workshop and the policy document with the support of the UNESCO regional Bangkok Office.

Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Challenges

The multilateral effort of UNESCO faces global, regional, and national challenges. Support for International development and multilateralism has weakened over time. Participation in multilateral institutions has not changed significantly; however, the lack of ownership and commitment toward Global goals decided by the same member states has challenged sustaining the multilateral effort. GoN participates in UNESCO's program; however, the actual ownership of GoN is a matter of debate. In South Asia, Srilanka Government offers international students scholarships to enhance UNESCO's objective. Similarly, countries like Japan work with UNESCO to award scholarships to organizations globally on the theme "Education for Sustainable Development.". Ownership by the GoN toward UNESCO's values and program enhances the government and agency partnership making the role of the multilateral organization successful.

UNESCO is a specialized agency independent of the UN's funding. It is funded by a mix of assessed and voluntary contributions. Despite having an essential responsibility in global education multilateralism, UN agencies like UNESCO lack financial resources while facing direct competition from other development partners. The UNESCO is developing a financial crisis, primarily due to its member states' nonpayment of assessed contributions. Few states are more resourceful than multilateral actors, leading to the dominance of the few, especially the developed countries, over the many. Hence domination of their agendas in the organization's program. Several member states have also withdrawn from membership of UNESCO,

citing disagreement over management and other issues. These member states rejoined the institution; however, withdrawals diminish the significance of multilateral agency and the values it aims to promote globally, challenging its motive of the establishment.

The global educational goals are relevant to different countries on different scales and contexts. Hence UNESCO and its mandate must be relevant to all its members as per the changing tide of time. Similarly, the role of the UN system has diminished in global governance by influential multilateral organizations like the BRICS, OECD, and EU, coordinating global responses independently. This approach has marginalized and sidelined traditional multilateralism, which is universal, inclusive, and democratic based on the rules and institutions of the UN system. UNESCO also faces competition from other development partners operating in the education sector of Nepal, including other UN agencies like UNDP and UNICEF in Nepal.

With an extended hierarchy, many multilateral agencies suffer bureaucratic delays in implementing projects. UNESCO is also not untouched. “Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education” was launched in 2011 and officially in Nepal in April 2016. At the national level, a minimal number of civil society, development partners, other UN agencies, and public spaces collaborate with the UNESCO Kathmandu office.

UNESCO possesses limited resources while facing multiple challenges in ownership, financial resource, and rising competition from other multilateral, regional, and UN agencies. Hence, UNESCO must identify and focus on core comparative capabilities and priority areas to meet the broad education mandate.

6.2 Conclusion

UNESCO was established as a UN's global multilateral education to tackle the challenges in education. UNESCO's persuasive mechanism has mobilized its strength to promote cooperation among member states and other relevant stakeholders, form common principles, and encourage standard action. Between 2015 and 2019, UNESCO has supported Nepal to plan, build and rebuild Nepal's education systems to be responsive to a rapidly changing world. It has promoted progressive policies, programs, and priorities in the education sector of Nepal. Its assistance in conducting research, sharing knowledge, and building the capacity of national education stakeholders is unique on its own.

It has provided a venue for developing county Nepal to raise their concern in the international arena. UNESCO's program in education is known for being delicately orchestrated and broadly based, rather than from the viewpoint of advanced industrialized nations. Its impartiality in interest and institutional neutrality compared to other donors has been a preferred choice among several developing countries. Its role is even more important for Nepal as it maintains a non-aligned foreign policy in international relations and aims to graduate from a low-income developing country to a middle-income developing country.

In Nepal's education sector plan, SSDP UNESCO has a limited role as a lead UN agency on SDGs relating to Quality Education. However, the national capacity it has raised, the research it conducted, and the model projects it has carried out were unique and significant in Nepal. Similarly, UNESCO also played a normative role. It served the duty to remind Nepal of its commitment and moral obligation through its various world or regional and national conferences and supported to adopt them into Nepal's

national policies and programs. It has also performed this role effectively in the case of Nepal. It has promoted national conversation and research to encourage facilitated compliance with international norms.

The development process is long-term and arduous; its impact is often not easily measured. Despite the shortage of funding for UNESCO and other multiple challenges, UNESCO has acquired skills, trust, and legitimacy to carry forward its mandates globally and in Nepal. It has successfully moved forward global agendas that may not be possible just through the governmental sphere. Its unique position in global education multilateralism was critical in promoting multilateral partnerships in the education sector of Nepal.

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