

## **Final Evaluation Report**

### **“EMPOWERING PARENTHOOD IN NEPAL”**

**International Child Development Program, ECEC Kathmandu, Nepal**



**Nabin Dangol**  
**External Evaluator**

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### **List of Abbreviations**

EAT	Empowerment Assessment Tool
ECEC	Early Childhood Education Center P.Ltd
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICDP	International Child Development Program
INGO	International Non-governmental organization
MoE	Ministry of Education
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ToF	Trainer of Facilitator
ToR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers

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## 1. Background and Purpose

The project named “*Empowering Parenthood in Nepal*”, is a 5-year project that started in 2020 and ends in December 2024. The goal of the project is to introduce and integrate evidence-based effective child rearing practices (ICDP) in Nepal in collaboration with educational institutions, local government, and civil society bodies. The overall objective of the project is Children will have increased psychosocial wellbeing through improved parent-child communication. The project aims ICDP Nepal is self-sufficient with regards to future training of ICDP trainers and facilitators, earned ICDP certification and ICDP implemented as integrated program in 4-6 organizations, local government also included in one their programs. It also aims to have regional meeting, conference and database system is established.

ECEC has engaged Nabin as external Final Evaluator. He is a senior development researcher specializing in education and child rights. With a wealth of experience, he has successfully led education projects in Nepal and currently contributes to academic teaching and consultancy work in education development. This final evaluation report highlights what project achieved and where it could improve in the project. The final evaluation aims to be a learning experience and ensures follow-up on lessons learned as well as an assessment for the final year adjustment and improvement. Participants should feel ownership of the results and be willing to adjust if needed. The target groups and key stakeholders will be involved to empower them.

## 2. Methodology

The final evaluation primarily utilized qualitative methods, including interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), informal meetings, interactions, and observations. Prior to the field mission, an evaluation matrix, checklist, desk research of project documents, study tools, and data collection schedule were developed and reviewed with the ECEC project team. The evaluation adopted a participatory approach, engaging all stakeholders to ensure comprehensive data collection.

The evaluation was led by an external evaluator, Nabin Dangol, with a supporting team from ECEC. Various methods were employed, such as reviewing planning and reporting documents, conducting individual interviews with key stakeholders like ECEC staff and local government representatives, and holding FGDs with trainers, facilitators, and caregivers. Data were gathered from diverse participants, including head teachers, teachers, parents, caregivers, facilitators, trainers, Master Trainers municipality education staff, and schools in Belbari Municipality. The collected data underwent analysis to derive key findings and recommendations as per the Terms of Reference (ToR). To ensure representation across categories and levels, schools and trainers were randomly selected, and respondents (teachers, parents, officials) were purposively chosen with the help of ECEC field staff in Belbari and the Kathmandu office. Classroom observations and parent-teacher interactions were also part of the evaluation. Additionally, an informal reflection meeting was held with the project team and other facilitators in Belbari to enhance the evaluation process.

However, some limitations were encountered, leading to the inability to conduct planned meetings with targeted drop-out facilitators and caregivers from Kathmandu. Time constraints also prevented home visits to caregivers and meetings with non-facilitated caregiver groups and their children to explore differences further. Moreover, the evaluator's participant observation in the training itself and a meeting with the Mayor of Belbari Municipality were not feasible during the evaluation.

### 3. Executive Summary

The ICDP program has demonstrated great success in the Nepali context, showcasing its effectiveness in promoting positive parenting practices and child development. ECEC, as an institution, possesses the necessary capacity to not only sustain the work of the ICDP program with quality but also expand its reach to a wider audience and deeper impact. This combination of a successful project and a capable institution sets a strong foundation for continued progress and positive outcomes in the field of child development and caregiving in Nepal.

The project's comprehensive training structure, efficient resource utilization, market-oriented funding approach, positive stakeholder feedback, and transparent financial management collectively indicate a well-managed and sustainable operation, ensuring effective utilization of inputs for desired outcomes.

The ICDP project implementation demonstrates its significant effectiveness in promoting positive changes within families, caregivers, and to some extent communities. Through collaboration with various stakeholders including likeminded organizations, civil society bodies, municipalities, and schools, the project has garnered widespread adoption and recognition. The strategic shift towards local trainers and education materials has not only reduced costs but also enhanced ownership and sustainability. By addressing challenges and leveraging existing strengths, the project is well-positioned to sustain its momentum and contribute to long-term societal well-being.

The ICDP program has profoundly impacted individuals across diverse backgrounds, including master trainers, facilitators, and caregivers, showcasing its effectiveness in promoting real parenting skills and fostering new perspectives. Through practical approaches like role-playing and real-life stories, participants experienced joyful learning and significant personal growth, leading to enhanced empathy, improved communication, and positive transformations in family dynamics. The project's influence extended to rural and urban caregivers, with noticeable improvements in disciplinary practices and increased community engagement. Overall, the project's outcomes signify a genuine positive change in parent-child relationships, communication skills, and overall well-being, highlighting its significant impact on the target group.

The ICDP training program has achieved significant organizational sustainability by developing confident trainers and fostering a strategic funding model. These trainers are well-equipped with skills and program understanding, ensuring continued impact and growth. At the community level, the project has empowered individuals and established informal support networks, though efforts are needed to reach lower socio-economic groups. Financially, though private company with the project's social enterprise model and collaborations with local governments have ensured stability and reduced reliance on external funding. Ongoing partnerships and community engagement indicate a strong foundation for sustained impact and growth.

The ICDP program has encountered several challenges and valuable lessons during its implementation. Trained facilitator teachers faced initial resistance and misconceptions from co-workers, emphasizing the importance of clear communication and understanding among staff members. The introduction of child-friendly techniques posed challenges, especially with traditional disciplinary methods, highlighting the

need for ongoing training and support for teachers in adopting new approaches. Furthermore, engaging caregivers and ensuring their consistent participation remains a challenge, with dropout rates and skepticism from some community members. The influence of extended family members, especially teenagers, on children's upbringing has also been noted, suggesting the need for expanded training and support beyond caregivers. Gender dynamics in participation and resource management have also been observed, requiring tailored strategies to engage all stakeholders effectively.

To enhance the sustainability and impact of the ICDP program, several recommendations are proposed. Firstly, a sustainable model with potential for expansion is crucial, focusing on reaching remote areas, subsidizing rates for participants from poor communities, and collaborating with government and local organizations for broader reach and impact. Secondly, collaboration with government bodies and organizations is recommended to integrate the program into national strategies and policies, ensuring long-term success and scalability. Encouraging resourceful caregivers, promoting inclusivity through network forums, utilizing local language materials, leveraging social media for awareness campaigns, and improving database management and monitoring are also key recommendations to enhance program effectiveness and impact assessment. These recommendations aim to address challenges, build on strengths, and maximize the positive impact of the ICDP program in Nepal.

## 4. Findings and Conclusions

Findings are organized under the following headings as framed in the ToR (The specific questions from the ToR are italicized):

### 4.1. Relevance

*The extent to which the project meets the needs of the target group and country priorities. To what extent are the objectives of the project still valid?*

The ICDP project aligns with Nepal's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3, 4, 5, and 16, emphasizing health, well-being, gender equality, and peaceful societies. The project's objectives resonate with these goals, demonstrating a shared dedication to advancing children's rights and overall well-being.

The project's relevance is underscored by its second-phase continuation, built upon the insights and experiences gathered from the previous phase. Leveraging local human resources and translated educational materials ensures long-term sustainability, addressing the evolving needs of target communities effectively.

ICDP stands out as an effective and practical approach compared to existing parent-care programs and child-friendly governance initiatives in Nepal. Through hands-on activities, discussions, and practical tools, ICDP sensitizes caregivers, promoting self-discovery and fostering meaningful behavioral changes in teachers, caregivers, parents, and children.



In the context of Nepal's changing societal dynamics, with transitions to nuclear families, urban migration, and increased digital exposure, initiatives like ICDP play a pivotal role in addressing emerging challenges and fostering healthy child parent communication. The project's strong demand for parental support, as evidenced by community and school stakeholders in Belbari Municipality, highlights its relevance in addressing fundamental societal needs.

Furthermore, the endorsement and request for the ICDP project from local authorities signify its recognition and significance in promoting child well-being. By empowering caregivers and community members to understand and meet children's basic needs, the project contributes to creating a nurturing environment conducive to child growth and development. Overall, the ICDP project's alignment with national priorities, responsiveness to community needs, and endorsement from local authorities demonstrate its relevancy in meeting the evolving needs of the target group and country priorities.

## 4.2. Effectiveness

*The extent to which the project has achieved its objectives.*

*To what extent has the project achieved the planned results, project goal and overall goal?*

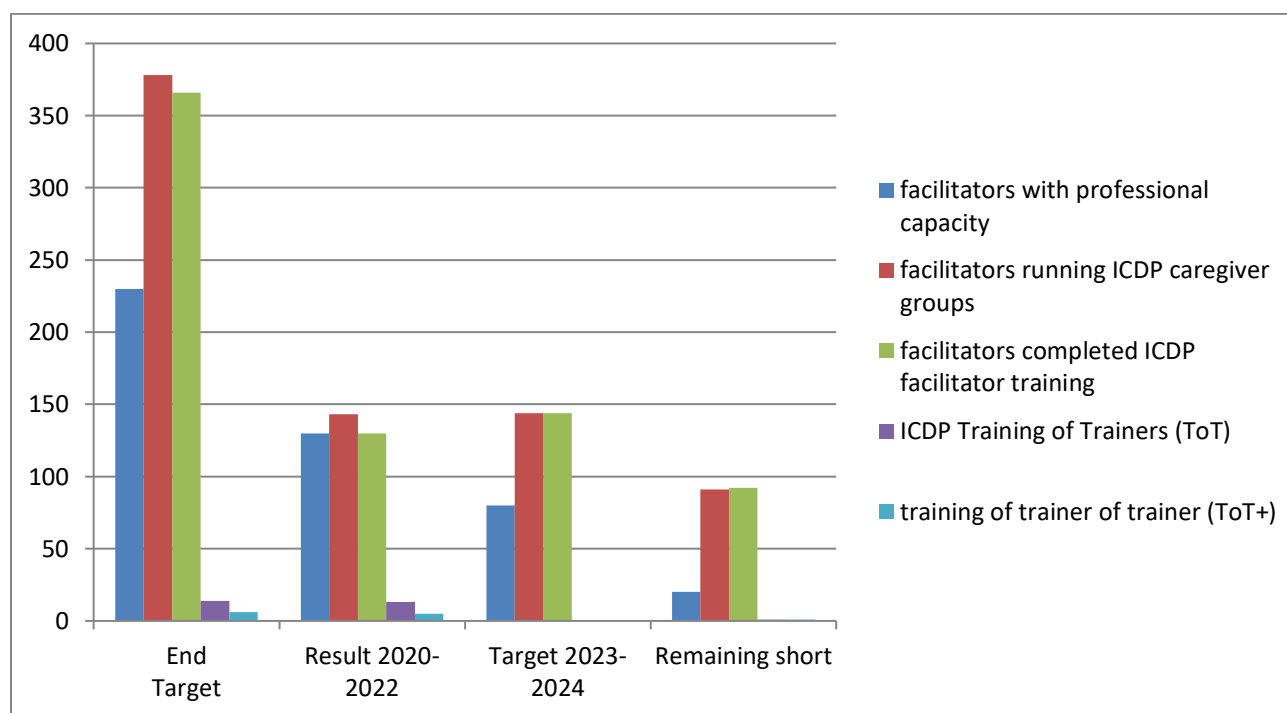
*Are there any unplanned positive / negative effects?*

*To what degree has the LFA (results framework) been effective in measuring the results of the project?*

The overall objective is increased psycho-social well-being for the children of Nepal through improved parent-child communication. The project goal for 2020-2024 is to introduce, integrate evidence based effective child rearing practices in Nepal in collaboration with the Educational institution, Local government and Civil society bodies. In the project's final year 2024, the aim is to reach the planned targets while adapting to the ongoing effects of COVID-19.

Here in the chart, the "End Target" refers to the ultimate goal to be achieved within the specified timeframe, while the "Result 2020-2022" reflects the actual outcomes attained during that period. The "Target 2023-2024" outlines the expected goals for the subsequent period. The "Remaining Short" column indicates the shortfall or gap between achieved results and end target set in the project plan. It highlights the work still needed and adjustments required to meet the original target set. The "Expected Achievement" providing a percentage estimate of progress towards meeting the targets. The remaining short column shows the gap between achieved results from 2020-2022 and the target set for 2023-2024, compared to the initial project target.

## Result 1: ICDP Nepal are self- sufficient with regards to future training of ICDP trainers and facilitators



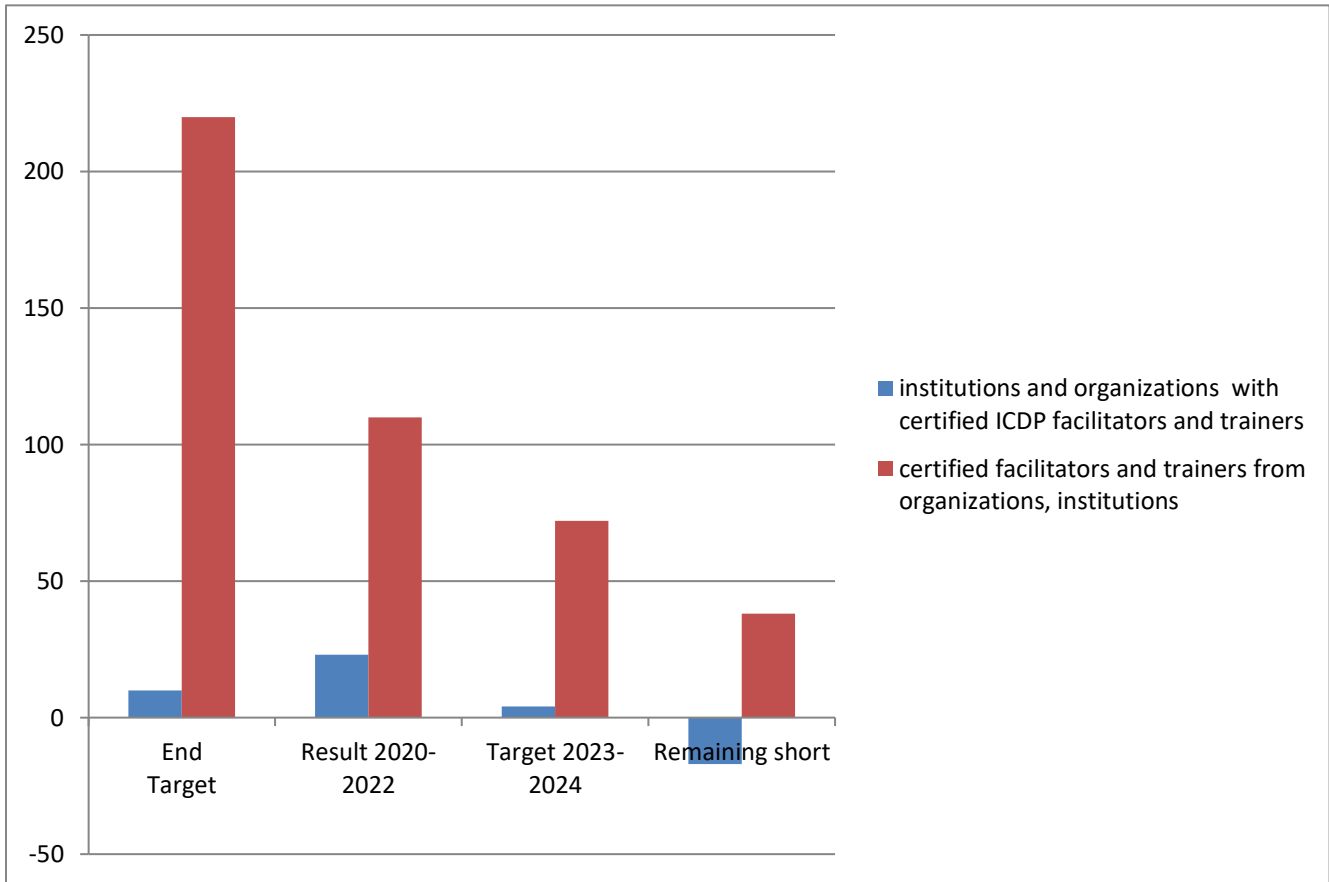
**Facilitators with Professional Capacity:** The end target is 230 facilitators. The actual result achieved from 2020-2022 is 130, leaving a shortfall of 80 facilitators. The expected achievement, based on the remaining short, is 91%. This suggests that if the current rate of progress continues, approximately 91% of the target is expected to be achieved by the end of 2023-2024.

**Facilitators Running ICDP Caregiver Groups:** The end target is 378 facilitators. The actual result achieved from 2020-2022 is 143, leaving a shortfall of 144 facilitators. The expected achievement is 76%. This indicates that there is a larger gap to be filled compared to the professional capacity target, with an expected achievement of 76%.

**Facilitators Completed ICDP Facilitator Training:** The end target is 366 facilitators. The actual result achieved from 2020-2022 is 130, leaving a shortfall of 144 facilitators. The expected achievement is 75%.

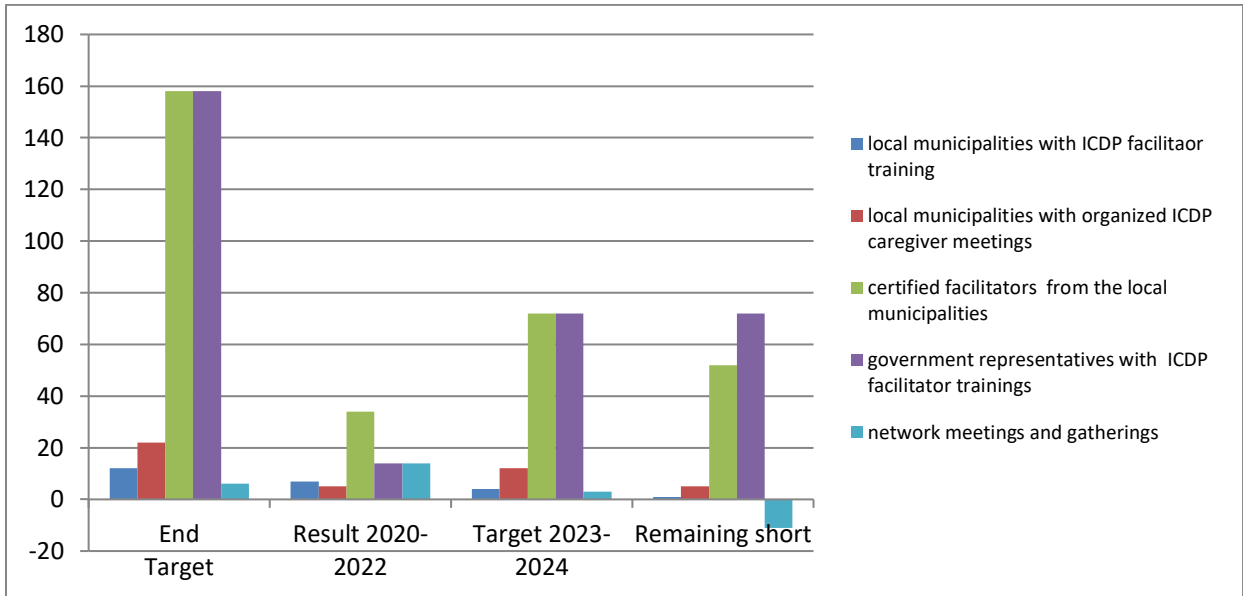
**ICDP Training of Trainers (ToT) and Training of Trainer of Trainer (ToT+):** For both of these indicators, the achieved results meet or exceed the targets, with a high expected achievement percentage. This suggests that the training projects for trainers have been successful and are on track.

**Result 2: ICDP is implemented as integrated projects through a minimum of 4-6 organizations institutions.**



The end target was initially set at 10 institutions, but the actual result for 2020-2022 exceeded expectations, reaching 23 institutions. The significant overachievement in the number of certified institutions and organizations demonstrates strong uptake and commitment to the ICDP project. The end target for certified facilitators and trainers was 220. However, the actual result for 2020-2022 was only 110, indicating a shortfall. The projected target for 2023-2024 is 72, with an additional 38 facilitators and trainers required to meet the target. Efforts should be intensified to bridge this gap and ensure adequate capacity building within institutions and organizations.

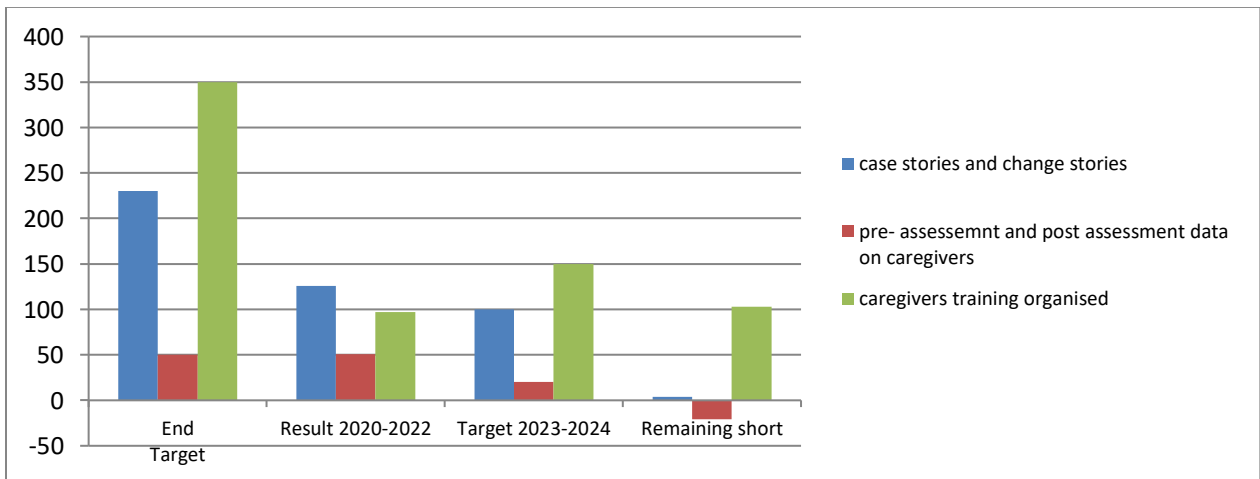
**Result 3: Local government have piloted an inclusion of ICDP in one of their projects**



The projected target for 2023-2024 is 4 local municipalities with facilitator training, with 1 additional municipality needed to meet the target. The expected achievement stands at a high 92%, indicating substantial progress. The end target for Local Municipalities with organized ICDP caregiver meetings was set at 22 municipalities. However, only 5 municipalities conducted such meetings by 2022, resulting in a significant shortfall. The projected target for 2023-2024 is 12 municipalities, with 5 additional municipalities needed to meet the target.

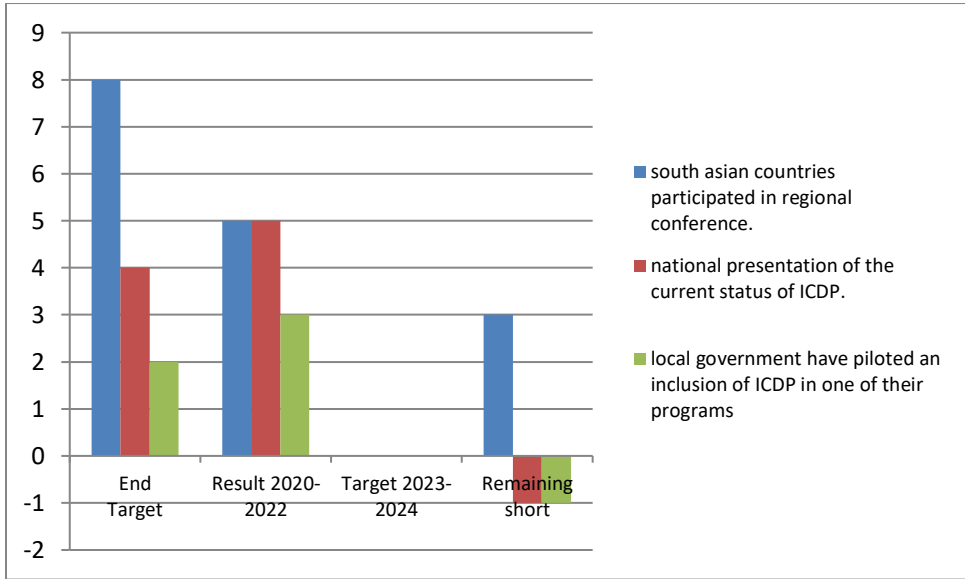
While there have been notable achievements, such as high expected achievements in facilitator training, there are significant shortfalls reaching out municipalities and challenges in implementing ICDP projects by local municipalities in their projects, indicating the need for focused efforts to meet targets effectively.

**Result 4: A database system is established**



While there has been commendable progress in some areas, such as case stories and change stories, and pre-assessment and post-assessment data collection, there are significant challenges in organizing database of caregiver training sessions with high volume of managing qualitative data.

Result 5: Facilitating a regional Network Conference of ICDP



Overall, the data suggests successful progress in facilitating the regional Network Conference of ICDP, with positive participation from South Asian countries, national presentations by participating countries, and local government pilot projects. Despite minor shortfalls in some areas, the expected achievements indicate overall effectiveness.

The Key Achievements:

4.2.1. Wide Adoption and Strengthening Collaboration:

The project has been instrumental in introducing and collaborating on the ICDP project among diverse organizations, leading to noticeable attitude and behavioral changes among beneficiaries and target groups. It has been highly effective and motivating for participants, resulting in a high demand for its continuation. The effective collaboration with local government, NGOs, schools, churches, and private organizations has been pivotal in centralizing efforts and introducing evidence-based child-rearing practices across sectors. Notably, the involvement of local government school teachers, some representatives as facilitators and paying for the training fees highlights the project's significant contribution to community engagement and capacity building.

The relationship between facilitator teachers and caregivers has undergone a notable transformation. Caregivers now view teachers as valuable allies, marking a significant departure from past tendencies to blame each other for children's behavior and education. This shift in perspective reflects the positive impact of the training provided by facilitator teachers, which caregivers highly value. The newfound collaboration and support between teachers and caregivers serve as a source of motivation, contributing to a more harmonious and effective educational environment.

#### **4.2.2. Staff Participation:**

It's commendable that almost all staff members of ECEC and their spouses have participated in the trainings after being encouraged and believing in its goal. They are actively implementing it and are satisfied with the results.

#### **4.2.3. Reflective Practices:**

The training encouraged reflective practices, enabling all participants to challenge their beliefs about children's behaviors and needs. This led to personal growth and enhanced caregiving and parenting skills.

#### **4.2.4. Strategic Shift towards Local Trainers:**

Despite initially incurring high costs with international trainers, the transition to local trainers has proven beneficial for sustainability and ownership. This strategic move aligns with the project's long-term goals and has been well-received by stakeholders.

#### **4.2.5. Behavioral Changes and Motivation:**

The project's emphasis on behavioral changes and effective parent child communication has been successful, with beneficiaries demonstrating high levels of motivation and energy. Participants have embraced skills such as effective communication, empathy, and positive reinforcement, leading to improved relationships within families and communities. A caregiver from the primary school shared, "We used to attend meetings where political and influential figures made decisions, and we were merely observers. However, now we have developed a strong bond with the facilitators and other teachers, enabling us to openly share our ideas and speak our minds during school meetings and parent interactions."

#### **4.2.6. Regional Outreach and Networking:**

The regional network conference served as a platform for regional collaboration, knowledge sharing, and networking among practitioners, researchers, and delegates. The event extended the project's outreach and generated interest from like-minded organizations, showcasing its potential for broader adoption.

#### **4.2.7. Motivated Facilitators:**

The facilitators emphasized the effectiveness of the two-hour weekly training sessions held over eight weeks, coupled with practical assignments that required them to apply what they learned through role-playing activities for a week. This action-based approach, structured from foundational to advanced levels, facilitated gradual and incremental learning. It enabled them to truly listen and understand, fostering empathy in their interactions with children and in all relationships. "The process of change begins with self-awareness and understanding, emphasizing the importance of being a role model and a catalyst for change rather than just delivering lectures." The facilitators also highlighted the value of sharing and practicing their learnings as a pair, whether with colleagues, parents, or caregivers. The certification and graduation process further reinforced this experiential learning approach. The strategy of reaching out to all children, including those in private and community grassroots schools, was deemed a good practice and an effective strategy for inclusivity. "Understanding a child doesn't require a psychology degree; it's

more about having a pure heart. It's not about theories but practical experiences that any caregiver can comprehend.”

### **4.3. Efficiency**

*The relation between input and results.*

*Assess the reasonability of the relationship between project costs and results achieved.*

The relationship between project costs and results achieved in the described scenario appears to be reasonably justified and efficient. Several key points support this assessment:

#### **4.3.1. Training Structure and Timeframe:**

The project acknowledges the time-consuming nature of its training programs, such as the Training of Trainers (ToT) lasting at least 7 months and facilitator training taking around 4 months. This indicates a thorough and comprehensive approach to capacity-building, which can lead to more sustainable and impactful results over time.

#### **4.3.2. Efficiency and Resource Utilization:**

The project demonstrates efficiency by leveraging contributions from participants themselves and utilizing resources effectively. Volunteerism among facilitators and cost-effective measures, like using school facilities for training sessions and managing lunch expenses efficiently for caregiver trainings, contribute to cost savings.

#### **4.3.3. Market-Oriented Approach:**

Unlike some NGOs that rely heavily on remuneration for training services, this project operates with a market-oriented approach, which implies a strategic and sustainable funding model aligned with the project's goals and outcomes.

#### **4.3.4. Positive Feedback and Stakeholder Satisfaction:**

Feedback from beneficiaries, including government officials like the Belbari municipality education officer, indicates satisfaction with the project's pro-activeness, timely delivery, transparency, and responsiveness to local needs. Stakeholders perceive the project as efficient and transparent in its operations.

Although the financial progress evaluation has not been carried in detail, the presence of the finance manager during field visits, audit reports, robust financial policies, regular audits by recognized authorities, and efforts to ensure integrity through capacity-building workshops all point to a well-managed financial system. This level of transparency and accountability inspires confidence in the project's overall financial management.

### **4.4. Impact**

*The real difference the project has had on the target group.*

*How has the project impacted the target group?*

*To what extent have this impact on the target group (cooperating organizations, parents, caregivers) been documented?*

The ICDP program had a profound impact on individuals from various backgrounds at varying degree, including master trainers, trainers, facilitators, and caregivers.

The ICDP training's well-researched structure and flexibility in adapting to local contexts made it exciting and effective. Through practical assignments, role-playing, real-life stories, and reflections, trainers shared, "we have learned real parenting skills and discovered new perspectives. It encouraged joyful learning by doing, with the change starting from within ourselves. We also learned to appreciate the beauty in our cultural context and make modifications as needed. "

Singi, a trainer of facilitator shared, "unlike other trainings we've attended, the ICDP training was a joyful and introspective experience. It focused on facilitating self-awareness, questioning our beliefs, and solving problems collectively. We used to feel guilty about not spending enough time with our own families, but this training helped us connect on a deeper level, enriching our relationships and providing practical parenting skills."

"I personally experienced a significant shift through the ICDP program," said Neeta Lama from Tewa organization. "It helped me empathize better with children who have special needs. The training sensitized me and other parents to approach these children with love and understanding, shifting our mindset towards welcoming these children into our schools and fostering meaningful interactions."

Some private school principal facilitators shared they attended the training to teach their teachers but realized they were reflecting their own behaviors with children. This realization led to significant personal change as they became aware of their wrong beliefs and assumptions about children, which ultimately shape children's behavior. They now focus on communicating with and respecting children as individuals.

The project has led to a significant improvement in parenting skills among participants, particularly in terms of fostering emotional connections, positive communication, offering praise, and setting boundaries effectively with children and others too. This has resulted in more empathetic parent-child relationships and positive transformations in family dynamics. Parents have become more aware of their children's individual developmental needs, treating them as independent individuals and enhancing overall family cohesion.

Caregivers in rural areas with fewer resources and educational opportunities often face greater challenges in implementing new parenting techniques and accessing support services. On the other hand, facilitators and caregivers from city backgrounds with more resources and education tend to have an easier time incorporating new skills and accessing support, leading to a more noticeable positive impact on their parenting practices and family dynamics.

The motivated caregivers from Belbari in FGD shared how they were initially hesitant to engage in meetings and groups have now become eager to participate in local government services, future training opportunities, demonstrating increased confidence and communication skills. This newfound confidence has also translated into improved relationships with their children and their community, as they have embraced skills like appreciation, encouragement, and effective communication. . It was also evident from the communication between the groups and the evaluator.

The project has made a notable impact on caregivers' and teachers' disciplinary practices, leading to a reduction in physical and harsh methods. Children, during school visits, spoke openly about changes in corporal punishment at home and school due to caregiver training. However, the evaluator's inability to visit homes, and longer stay in schools with children and class limited observation of real relationships and behaviors firsthand.

Overall, the project's impact can be seen in improved parent-child relationships, enhanced communication skills, decreased use of harsh disciplinary methods, increased community engagement.



These outcomes collectively signify the real difference the project has had on the target group, promoting positive change and well-being at various levels.

## **4.5. Sustainability**

*Whether the benefits of a project are likely to continue after donor funding has been withdrawn.*

*What is ECEC's general ability to take on such projects?*

*How will the results be sustained in the case of terminated external funding?*

*Will ECEC be able to sustain the services after the project period?*

*(Reference should be made to the Five Abilities model.)*

### **4.5.1. Organizational Sustainability:**

The ICDP training program has demonstrated significant sustainability and development, fostering a solid foundation for its future. One of its key successes lies in the development of confident trainers, both at the Trainers of Trainers and Trainer of Facilitators levels. The motivation and ability of the individual facilitators is high. These trainers are equipped not only with the necessary skills but also with a deep understanding of the program's principles and methodologies. The meeting with the executive director Pitamber has revealed it to continue and scale up the achievements with its strategy of taking its fees from organizations, participants and subsidized rates for needy individuals who can't afford. "Instead of a compassion-based approach focused on charity, we would shift our focus to a strategic, rights-based model that builds a robust system. This involves innovating, scaling up, and broadening our programs to include other parenting and children-based initiatives in collaboration with government and other organizations."

The project has developed a range of education materials, local contextual methods related to both training and parenting. These materials serve as valuable resources that support the training sessions and reinforce key concepts for participants. This approach contributes to the program's sustainability by ensuring that it has a robust set of tools and resources to continue its impact.

### **4.5.2. Community Level Sustainability:**

The project had a significant impact on the lives of its target group. The project successfully elevated the empowerment levels of higher-end target groups, such as trainers and facilitators, enabling them to make independent life choices and take new paths (power to and power over). It has successfully empowered individuals, especially caregiver mother, enabling them to make their own choices and become self-motivated (power within) while also fostering collective empowerment (power with). Those who have benefited from these positive changes have not only shared their experiences but also advocated for reaching out to all parents in the community. The interactive and motivating training contents have instilled a sense of belonging among caregivers, leading to informal support networks. However, this achievement has not yet been fully realized and main target group in the lower socio-economic end of community. ICDP Nepal should continue its commitment to reaching the most vulnerable and marginalized communities, even with limited resources as social enterprise model. Collaborating with INGOs and NGOs has proven effective in facilitating structural change. Moving forward, it is crucial to integrate the government sector into these efforts to reach a wider, mainstream population across Nepal, both geographically and socially. There is a lot of potential for increased partnership and local governing bodies are directly involved with the local community with increasing accountability.

### 4.5.3. Financial Sustainability

The project has strategically engaged with proactive and understanding local governments, overcoming bureaucratic hurdles more efficiently than NGOs. Though private company its social enterprise practice gives it leverage in legal and financial matters. The program's efforts to provide valuable services are appreciated by beneficiaries who find it worth paying a reasonable fee. The well-structured MOUs with local governments effectively handle social aspects and remuneration, allowing the program to focus more on content and learning. This has led to significant changes, with teachers participating in caregiver meetings without expecting remuneration.

Many caregivers and teachers are curious about the project's duration and sustainability. It's essential to reach out to more parents and model local government municipalities to incorporate the program into education budgeting and planning. There is limited time and resources to offer it to the most needy beneficiaries. There's a need to identify true needs and sensitize more local governments, resourceful organizations for partnerships.

Overall, the existing collaborations with numerous NGOs, the willingness of some local government like Belbari and other municipality to collaborate project into their plans, the engagement of local trained facilitators, and the commitment, motivation of community caregivers indicate a strong foundation for sustainability.

### 4.6. Crosscutting issues

*How has the project addressed the crosscutting issues of gender equality?*

The project has been instrumental in promoting gender equality and fostering harmonious relationships between genders, with a focus on integrating these principles into the ICDP teaching content. The documented case stories from project have illustrated how the project raised awareness about gender discrimination and its detrimental effects.

Traditionally in Nepal, child-rearing responsibilities have predominantly fallen on women, but this is gradually changing, especially among younger couples. The ICDP program has played a pivotal role in educating fathers about the significance of gender equality and their active involvement in household tasks and child-rearing duties. While initial participation from fathers in caregiving meetings was limited, those who attended reported notable transformations. They became more engaged in childcare activities like bonding, feeding, bathing, bedtime routines, playing, and communication with their children. Additionally, some fathers have started assisting with household chores and have become positive role models in their communities. This shift highlights the positive impact of the ICDP program in challenging traditional gender norms and promoting active fatherhood. In FGD, a significant change that was shared is the notable decrease in discrimination against girl children by mothers. The households that participated in the project's training sessions reported a decrease in reports of domestic violence, indicating a positive impact on overall family well-being. However, despite these advancements, there are still caregivers who hold onto gendered perspectives. Some caregivers from the intervention group believe that boys require more discipline than girls, and there is a normalization of the notion that males would struggle to participate in caregiver meetings and trainings.

One notable observation is the gender gap in community caregiver meetings, with fewer male participants. This reflects social norms where parenting is often seen as a female responsibility. However, trainers suggest that having both male and female facilitators working together would promote inclusivity and effective facilitation.

Overall, the project has not only strengthened family bonds but has also fostered a more inclusive and supportive community environment. It has empowered women to confidently express their rights and opinions, leading to greater inclusivity and equality in decision-making processes.

#### *How has the project addressed human rights (including people with disabilities)*

The ICDP project is committed to upholding human rights, including those of people with disabilities, in line with universally accepted humanitarian values and the convention of children's rights. The program emphasizes the protection, provision, and participation of all children, including those with special needs. Collaborations with organizations such as the Cerebral Palsy Center, Autism Care Nepal, and mental health organizations showcase the project's inclusive education approach. The project has successfully established a network-building platform, yet there is a need for referrals specifically for differently-abled children and those with special needs. There is potential for improvement in deepening interventions and designing support packages, referrals for children and caregivers in collaboration with these organizations and government centres, ensuring a more holistic and effective support system.

A female teacher and facilitator from a Cerebral Palsy center working with special needs children initially struggled with quick anger responses and a lack of empathy. However, after completing the program and practicing, she underwent significant personal growth. She learned to observe, contemplate, and respond calmly, leading to positive experiences in her daily life.

A father of autistic child and facilitator shared, "I've learned from networking with other parents facing more challenging situations than mine. Through their experiences, social media I've gained valuable insights, patience, and learned to live in the moment, spend quality time, and regulate my emotions. Without the ICDP training and networking platform, this growth would have taken me at least 10 more years or longer." As a facilitator, I've asked myself, "Am I truly implementing what I teach?" "This introspection has led me to become a better person by taking actions, questioning my prejudices and beliefs, and realizing the importance of sharing my experiences and knowledge. This journey has not only improved me as a facilitator but also as a parent, as I've learned valuable lessons that have positively impacted both roles."

#### *How has the project addressed this issue of environment and climate change ?*

While the project's primary focus is not on environmental sustainability, the Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC) has made strides in promoting eco-friendly practices. The organization creates educational materials from waste and natural materials, recycles used papers. There is an opportunity for further improvement by integrating small initiatives that teach environmental lessons, foster a culture of sustainability within the organization, promote the use of local education materials, making educational

material from waste and recycle, advocate for local play materials for parents and schools, and raise awareness about the harms of consumer culture.

*How has the project addressed the issue of anti-corruption?*

ECEC has taken measures to strengthen its financial structure by hiring an external consultant. In staff and team meetings, Digni's anti-corruption module is shared to emphasize the organization's zero-tolerance policy towards corruption. It has established an internal financial policy, managed by a dedicated team of account staff for routine financial matters. Annual audits, conducted by government-recognized auditors for each project and ECEC's core accounts, ensure transparency. The organization is committed to healthy financial practices, periodically assessing its adherence to these standards.

During field visits, the evaluation noted that both staff and facilitators are well-informed and diligently follow financial and administrative procedures, incorporating cost-efficient measures where applicable.

#### **4.7. Added value**

*Has HimalPartner had any added value to the project?*

HimalPartner (HP) and ECEC have cultivated a strong partnership over the past decade, with HP providing crucial support and guidance based on their knowledge of ECEC's strengths and weaknesses. ECEC recognizes HimalPartner as a partner in development rather than a donor. HP has been instrumental in various projects, including the development of teacher training programs and community trauma healing courses after the 2015 earthquake. Their administrative support and commitment to quality standards have greatly benefited ECEC's capacity building efforts and project management. Additionally, HP has been pivotal in introducing ECEC to relevant actors and organizations, facilitating valuable networking opportunities. The partnership is characterized by mutual trust and collaboration, contributing significantly to the betterment of children in Nepal. During the final evaluation of this document too, HP demonstrated swift action and a high level of concern for delay, further strengthening the partnership and fostering a culture of accountability and responsiveness.

### **5. Lessons learned Recommendations**

*Assess lessons learned and give recommendations for the changes to be done in the last year of the project and for a future without project support.*

#### **5.1. Lessons Learned**

Trained facilitator teachers initially encountered resistance from co-workers who misunderstood their intentions, assuming personal gain from the training. Implementing child-friendly techniques also posed challenges, with some teachers unfamiliar and taken aback by non-traditional disciplinary methods. Despite this, ICDP caregiver training has greatly benefited teachers with young children, inspiring a view of each child as unique and promoting care at home. However, challenges arise in translating these principles into the school setting, leading to inconsistencies and potential confusion among students. Besh

Kumar Khadka, a primary teacher suggests a solution: extending ICDP training to all teachers, as there is growing interest and willingness among most teachers to receive similar training.

The facilitators encountered several challenges, particularly in retaining caregivers. One major issue is the dropout rate of caregivers from early classes, with some expressing doubts about the effectiveness of using only appreciation and praise with children. Convincing parents to attend regular caregiver meetings has also been challenging due to work commitments, despite high encouragement for attendance. Only about two-thirds of caregivers complete the eight-week course. Some caregivers faced skepticism from the community but persevered and applied what they learned with patience and understanding. Despite these challenges faced while working with grassroots community caregivers in Belbari Municipality, there was a unanimous voice among caregiver participants advocating and need to reach out all caregivers in the community finding a good strategy and incentives working together.

Children are greatly influenced by their grandparents, older siblings, and teenagers in their upbringing. Caregivers, especially mothers, often find it challenging to apply learned skills when dealing with teenagers. Therefore, there have been numerous requests from caregivers to extend training and support to these extended family members and teenagers as well.

Gender Dynamics: The participation ratio of females is higher culturally, with exceptions of a few males due to their work commitments. More efforts are needed to engage males, especially in caregiving roles.

Coordinating caregiver meetings between paired teachers posed challenges, especially when there were fewer teachers available for regular classes in school. As a caregiver facilitator in the community, managing resources such as materials, books, refreshments, and time has been challenging due to limited budgets for some facilitators. This limitation hinders their ability to reach out and conduct more caregiver meetings effectively. The strategy to partner with resourceful organizations and local government budgets, school management committee would enabled them to facilitate at a much larger scale and meet demand of interested community members.

The Belbari Municipality has allocated a budget of 4 million rupees for education materials and also project support, which is noteworthy. However, two social mobilizers who participated in the training dropped out from the caregiver training. It remains challenging to engage local government staff. Despite the recognized need for parenting education by many local governments, convincing them to invest in ICDP programs has been challenging. The preference for short and conventional lecture-based trainings has hindered the adoption of the ICDP's participatory approach. Sangey, an experienced ECEC teacher trainer and ICDP facilitator, acknowledges these challenges but emphasizes the growing popularity of the program. She believes that more organizations and people will be willing to invest in it in the future. Sangey highlights the simplicity and practicality of the ICDP, which encourages self-reflection and a shift in perspective towards child-centered approaches. But this would hold true only for classes or groups who can afford to take lessons.

ICDP is most effective when trainers and facilitators can be flexible and adapt the content to the group they are training. ECEC has added some topics to the ICDP curriculum with permission from ICDP international. Conducting eight meetings over eight weeks can be challenging for facilitators, especially in busy schedules. It's important to consider the preferences of caregivers too, who may prefer meetings during work breaks or holidays.

## **5.2. Recommendations :**

### **5.2.1. Sustainable Model with Potential for Expansion:**

The ICDP training program has established a sustainable, contextual, and flexible model that has proven effective in its current scope. However, there is significant potential for expansion, particularly in reaching remote parts of Nepal where access to such programs may be limited. Expanding the program's reach is crucial to ensure that its benefits are accessible to all communities, including those in rural and remote areas. Expanding into remote areas requires a tailored approach that considers the unique challenges and needs of each region. This may involve collaborating with local government, local organizations, training local facilitators, and adapting the curriculum to suit cultural and contextual differences. In addition to reaching remote areas, the program should consider implementing subsidized rates for participants from poor communities. This can be achieved through various means, such as project support, grants, or contributions from those who can afford to pay higher fees.

### **5.2.2. Collaboration with Government and Organizations:**

To ensure the long-term success and impact of the ICDP program in Nepal, it is imperative to integrate it into government institutions and strategies. The program's participatory and learner-centered approach has shown effectiveness, adaptable to diverse contexts and caregiver groups. Building on successful connections with similar organizations and local communities over the past nine years, especially during the second phase from 2015, more collaboration with government bodies is needed for structural changes from individual to community levels. Interventions for government buy-in include advocacy efforts highlighting program benefits aligned with national priorities, capacity-building initiatives for officials on program principles and methodologies, and strengthened partnership with local governing bodies for joint planning and resource-sharing. By aligning with government policies and leveraging resources, the program can create broader and lasting impact on parenting and education practices in Nepal.

### **5.2.3. Encourage Resourceful Caregivers:**

Encouraging resourceful caregivers is essential for sustaining and expanding the positive impact of the project. Active and confident caregivers from rural areas have expressed a strong desire for a platform to share experiences and knowledge, showcasing genuine interest in empowering themselves and their communities. Collaborative planning among facilitators, teachers, local government, school management, and these resourceful caregivers at the local level is crucial. By working together, they can leverage their expertise and resources to create comprehensive support systems for families within the community. One key suggestion that emerged repeatedly was the importance of having at least one family member trained as a caregiver, especially in households facing challenges like low socio-economic status and teenage conflicts. Facilitators should identify resourceful caregivers willing to engage in informal learning and sharing sessions.

### **5.2.4. Encourage network and Promoting Inclusivity**

The regional network conference proved to be an effective platform for networking, sharing experiences, and learning among Trainer and facilitators. However, concerns were raised regarding the high cost associated with participating in these conferences, particularly for facilitators from rural areas. To address this issue and ensure inclusivity, it is recommended that alternative solutions be explored. One approach could be organizing local network forums and meetings for facilitators from rural areas and various districts where NGOs collaborate with ICDP, providing them with an opportunity to connect, share knowledge, and collaborate at a more accessible level. Additionally, considering the financial constraints faced by many facilitators, support should be provided to at least a few members from each region to attend the regional conference.

#### **5.2.5. Utilize Local Language and Materials:**

The facilitators asked for simpler materials with more examples for caregiver meetings. They suggested using photos that reflect the diverse regions of Nepal. Utilizing local language materials and resources for training is crucial for effective implementation of the ICDP program. This approach ensures that participants can fully understand and engage with the content, especially in communities where the local language is predominant. By incorporating familiar language and cultural references, training sessions become more accessible and relevant to caregivers, enhancing their learning experience and retention of key concepts.

#### **5.2.6. Utilize Social Media for Awareness:**

A crucial recommendation for enhancing the program's impact is the utilization of social media platforms for awareness campaigns. Short, impactful videos, learning from training, or supportive videos from trainings can reach a wider audience and create a lasting impression. By leveraging social media, the program can effectively market itself, attract more participants, and create a ripple effect of positive change in parenting and caregiving practices. This would be beneficial to connect with more like-minded organizations and local governments on a wider scale.

#### **5.2.7. Database Management and Monitoring:**

The initiative to create a database is commendable, but there's a need to balance quantitative reports with qualitative success stories. The project is relatively small, yet it requires additional budgets and human resources to handle the significant volume of qualitative data entry and processing effectively. The database framework is still in development, and the lack of a solid final framework makes it challenging for IT consultants to make frequent modifications. Establishing a clear and robust framework will streamline the process and enhance efficiency. It would be recommended to conduct pre-assessments and post-assessments of parents and children, in addition to comparing data from parents who attended caregiver meetings and those who didn't, can provide valuable insights into the program's effectiveness and impact. While the results framework has been effective in quantitatively measuring outcomes, introducing qualitative internal monitoring and evaluation reports could provide deeper insights through qualitative analysis.

## Annex

Interviewees and FGD members are detailed in the following table:

Date and Place	Type	Participant	Organisation	Designation/ Work
Nov 25 2023, ECEC office	Facilitator Mix group FGD	ShrijanaShrestha	SGCP	Senior Teacher for special Needs
		Neeta Lama	TEWA	General Member ,Teacher
		SangeyBhuti Lama	ECEC	Teacher Trainer
		SurakshyaGiri	ECTC	Children Project Officer
		Bebi Raj Bhandari	Godawarisarokar	Chairperson,
		Kris Maya Tamang	ECEC	Stock Incharge
		Giri	ECTC	Counselor
		PranishShakya	Autism Nepal	Volunteer
Nov 25 2023, ECEC office	Facilitator Old Active group FGD (2014-2019 First Phase Project )	ShilaSunuwar	Three Star Teacher	Teacher Trainer
		Rita Acharya	KinderJoy Montessori	Principal
		Rita GhimireTimilsina	Pheonix Montessori Training Centres	Founder Trainer
		Anita Kafle	Kovida Preschool	Founder Principal , Teacher Trainer
		RachanaKhanal	Saugaat Montessori	Coordinator
		JayantiBhandari		
Nov 26 2023 , ECEC office	Trainer of Facilitators (2020-2021) FGD	Kamala ThapaChettri	ECEC	
		SingiLhomi	ECEC	
		Man BahadurRai	TSTEC	
		GeetaKapali	ECEC	
		PrabhaRai	ECEC	

Date and Place	Type	Participant	School
27 th Nov , Belbari	Basic School Caregiver Teachers Group , FGD	SuhmitaLimbu	Sirijana Basic School teacher
		NirmalaBajgai	Shree Devkota Basic
		YuvaKumariRajbanshi	Sirijana Basic
		ChandraKalaKunwar	Kali Seconday
		Amrita Chaudhary	Shree Devkota Basic
		Sewak Kumar Mandal	Shree Mahendra Basic
27 <sup>th</sup> Nov, Belbari	Caregiver Teachers Group FGD	DhrubakumarDahal	Shree Said Smriti Basic School
		Sakho Kumar Khawas	Ram Janaki Basic School
		Khem Raj Trital	Jana Nirman Basic
		Anita Giri	Jana Nirman Basic
		Tanka Maya Karki	Singha Devi Basic
		Anita Rai	Singha Devi Basic



Date and Place	Type	Participant	School
28 <sup>th</sup> November 2023 , Belbari	Caregiver parents FGD	Kalpana Yogi	Caregiver Parents
		BishnumayaDhakal	
		LaxmiKarki	
		Mina Dulal	
		SitaRai	
		Kamala Gurung	
		ShantaRai	
		BhimkumariDhital	
		KumariDhimal	
		Sabina Rai	
Nov 28 , Singh Devi Basic School Belbari	Interview	SitaRai	Female Single Parent
Nov 28 , Belbari Municipality office	Key Informant Interview	Sita Ram Bohora	Education technical officer Municipality
Nov 28 , Belbari	Interview	BheshKhadka	Dropout Caregiver Teacher
Nov 29 , Interview	Interview	RenukaMajhi	Female Single parent
Nov. 29 ,Interview Dropout	Interview	RadhaKhawas	Female Working parent

Date and Place	Type	Participant	Organisation	Designation/ Work
Feb 13 2024 , ECEC	Interview	VivekShakya	ECEC	Database
Feb 13 2024 , ECEC	Interview	PitamberNeupane	ECEC	Executive Director
Feb 13 2024 , ECEC	Interview	Yusuf Mahat	Finance Manager	
Nov 26 2023 ECEC	Interview	NikishThapa	ECEC	Counselor / KISC Trainer of Trainers
Nov 26 2023, Sharing Meeting	Sharing meeting	Randal Frivold	HimalPatner /Advisor	
Nov 16	Sharing meeting	SunilaMaharjan AnupamaMukhiya		Project Staffs
Nov-27-30 , Belbari	Informal meets , Transect walk with Facilitators Belbari	SuminMaharjan		facilitator
		SubbaBahadurBasnet		Field staff and facilitator ,
		Yusuf Mahat		Finance admin

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Lastly, immense gratitude is expressed to all community members who voluntarily participated in the focus group discussions and personal interviews. Their willingness to share their experiences has added depth and richness to the evaluation findings. Listening to the many lives touched and changed from trainings, facilitation, caregiver meetings during this evaluation has been a pleasure and a source of inspiration, joy. The positive impact observed has sparked personal curiosity, leading the evaluator to consider participating in facilitator training to further explore the program's contents and processes.

