

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This evaluation assesses the impact of interventions in the second phase of the Child Mental Health Programme (CMHP), implemented by Centre for Mental Health and Counselling-Nepal (CMC-N) from 2008 to 2012. CMHP comprises two sets of interventions, one focused on schools and creation of a child friendly environment, and the other focusing on mental health issues related to public health facilities and in communities. This evaluation study proposal has been approved by Nepal Health Research Council, the tools used in the study and protection of the information of the participants has been ensured. This report covers the evaluation of the schools programme and forms a companion to the report on the mental health programme evaluation.

The study reviewed a randomly selected sample of 23 of the 69 schools where CMHP activities have been implemented, covering 14 out of 42 in Dolakha district and 9 out of 27 in Kavre. About one third of the sampled schools were independently studied by an external evaluator (four schools in Dolakha and three in Kavre). Key informants were interviewed using semi-structured questionnaires, and included head teachers, counsellor teachers, School Management Committee (SMC) members, child club members and parents of children with emotional and behavioural problems. A total of 26 classrooms were observed in Dolakha and 16 in Kavre, using semi-structured guidelines. A control group sample was taken from 12 randomly selected schools where no CMHP activities had been implemented (eight from Dolakha and four from Kavre), using the same key informant groups and study tools.

Qualitative findings revealed that school interventions using child friendly approaches and positive disciplinary tools had resulted in increased motivation among students to attend school regularly, to participate actively in class work and carry out homework, to be self-disciplined in class and to keep the classroom and themselves clean and tidy. The play and drawing materials helped to make students happy in school and more confident in their interactions with the teacher. Students participate in classroom management, making group seating arrangements, maintaining the attendance board and other promotional boards, using play and drawing materials and are more motivated to follow school rules. Teachers have also learned that they can teach children without beating or using other severe forms of punishment, and this creates improved trust between teacher and student. Relations between the school and parents are also improving, due to the school including parents of children with emotional and behavioural problems in school activities. This has encouraged other parents to visit the school and ask about the progress of their children. The control group sample showed significantly lower understanding of emotional and behavioural problems in children, positive disciplinary techniques, the concept of child friendly classroom management and school based counselling. Overall learning achievements of students in child friendly classrooms increased by 5.14% and attendance rate by 5.34%, and school dropout rate decreased by 2.34%, compared with the baseline data gathered before the programme began and compared with the control group. In control schools attendance remained about the same over the four years, learning achievements increased by only 1.9% and dropout rate increased significantly by 5.76%.

Findings from the teachers and counsellor teachers replicated these results, demonstrating increased knowledge and practice of child friendly classroom management. Teachers felt that frequent coaching and guidance in case management from the professional psychologist had helped them to develop effective counselling skills, and this support should be continued in future. The counselling

service provided by trained teachers in school was perceived to be helpful by children who received this service, as they felt more confident about coming to school knowing they would receive support and the teacher would help them to find solutions for their difficulties (learning related, interpersonal issues with friends and teachers, and family problems). However, there is a need for more inputs in the assessment of emotional and behavioural problems, counselling skills related to problem solving and understanding of normal behavioural reactions according to the developmental age and gender of children. Careers counselling training is needed for secondary level teachers, as many students were confused about choosing appropriate vocational and optional subjects in grade 8, 9 and 10 and at +2 level to support their future career choices.

Findings from SMC members and parents are in line with the above findings. Parental awareness activities have improved the practices of parents in dealing with the problematic behaviour of their children, as evidenced by responses from both parents and children. Interactions with child club members revealed that programme activities supported the development of leadership and management of child clubs and use of child friendly teaching-learning in the classroom, which promotes student involvement in classroom management and discipline. This is important from a rights based perspective, as children who are empowered about their rights can convince other parents to send their children to school, and they have a better developed sense of responsibility at home, in school and in the community. Fund generation by child clubs seems to be good for their sustainability, but care is needed to ensure children are not placed at risk through having a large amount of money in the club fund, which could placed children at risk because of not having capacity to manage fund properly. It is better to ensure the fund remains at a level that children can manage for daily needs related to promotional activities.

Classroom observations revealed that 84% of the sample schools are using the CMC support materials well, with the remainder using them only partially, for example in some cases promotional boards were not always properly used, drawing activities not regular, or the child friendly classroom concept not fully taken on although positive disciplinary techniques were being used. Shortcomings were usually found to be due to lack of motivation of a few teachers, although they quoted many other reasons.

Findings from different sources of information (informants) confirmed activities of CMHP have placed significant positive impact on student, school environment and teaching learning activities. Schools have taken initiation to continue the activities supported by CMHP such as arrangement of play materials, reinforcement tools (love jar, candy party), promotional boards, child friendly furniture. Counselling service by teacher counsellor also proved effective as revealed by the findings from the student received counselling services and their parent. Trained teachers were capable and confident in assessing emotional, behavioural and learning related problems in the children and were able to provide counselling at schools. Evaluation team recommends continuing the mental health activities in schools giving focus on participation of community in the program activities so that sustainability can be ensured. Strong involvement of the existing education system is highly appreciable approach of the CMHP which further ensure for the sustainability in the practice of knowledge and skills of child mental health activities in schools.