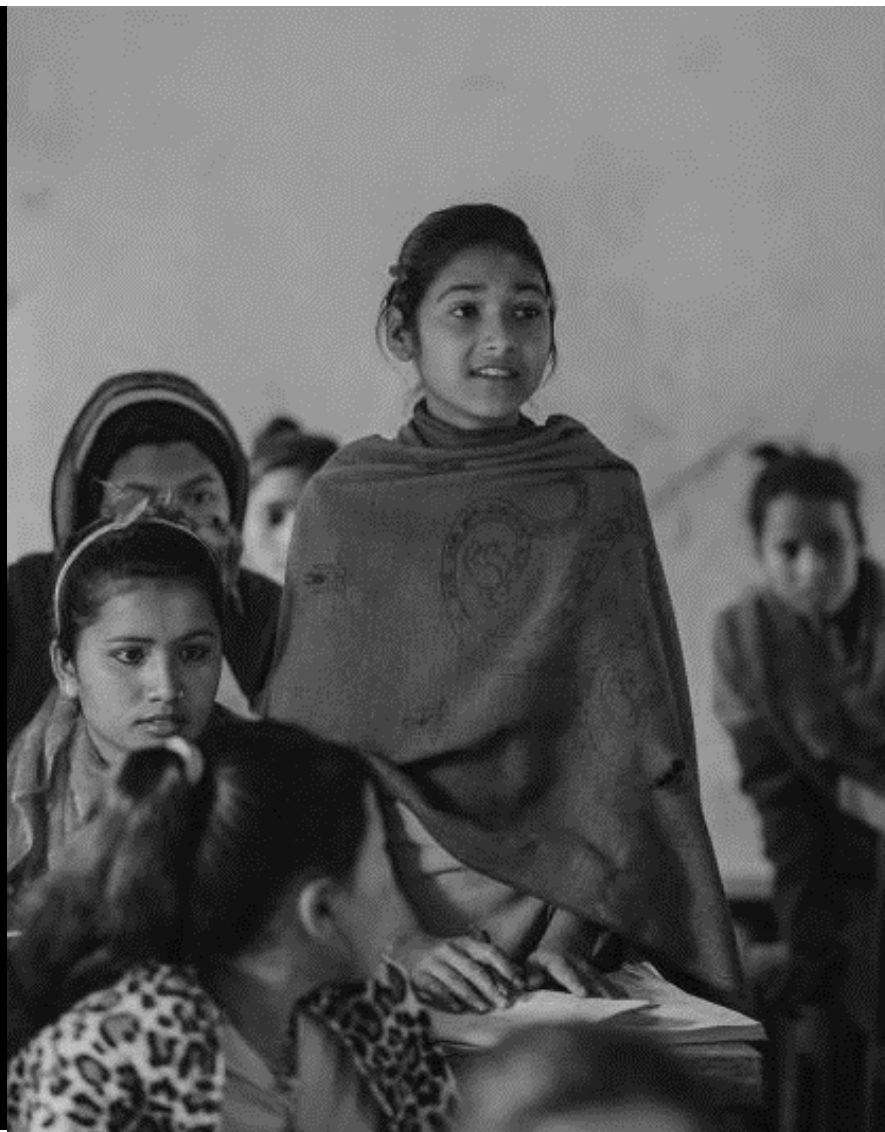


JANUARY 2019

# MTB MLE Model Building Activity

Baseline Report

Prepared for VSO Nepal  
and the Language  
Commission of Nepal



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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nepal is a diverse and multilingual nation, with more than 123 languages recorded in the most recent census, collected in 2011 (Government of Nepal, 2012, p. 4). The Government of Nepal is committed to maintaining the country's rich linguistic landscape and reflecting it within its education system – article 31(5) states that “every Nepali community living in Nepal shall have the right to acquire education in its mother tongue up to the secondary level”. The School Sector Development Plan further emphasises this commitment (Government of Nepal, 2015, 2016).

The Language Commission of Nepal and VSO Nepal have entered into a partnership to implement a mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB MLE) activity and provide a positive model for Nepal of how to achieve this commitment. The purpose of the activity is:

1. To build an effective, practical, and resourced model of MTB MLE in six schools;
2. To build support for and understanding of MTB MLE in two municipalities; and
3. To document the process undertaken to achieve the above outcomes, and to facilitate replication of this process in other locations.

Prior to beginning implementation of this activity, a baseline study was conducted in both target locations. The purpose of this baseline is to: 1) set benchmarks at the beginning of the activity against which the impact of the activity will be measured against; and 2) to provide a comprehensive situational analysis of the target locations to inform the activity design.

Key stakeholders, who are vital to the success of the activity, have been included as respondents in the baseline study: parents/guardians; teachers; students; and early grade classes. This report presents the results for each participant group and discusses the implications of these results for the design and implementation of the activity.

Wide support for mother tongue-based education was found among parents, guardians, and teachers. All parents in Phidim and about half of the parents in Temal stated that they preferred their children to learn in their mother tongue. Awareness and advocacy efforts may build on this positive sentiment to create momentum around the model building activity.

Though most teachers understood the positive role of mother tongue languages for learning, they did not feel that they had the resources or abilities to switch to a mother tongue-based program at this time. The model building activity therefore will need to focus on building teachers' pedagogical skills and access to resources. Mixed levels of understanding of the role of the mother tongue on second and third languages was noted and should be clarified among teachers during training workshops.

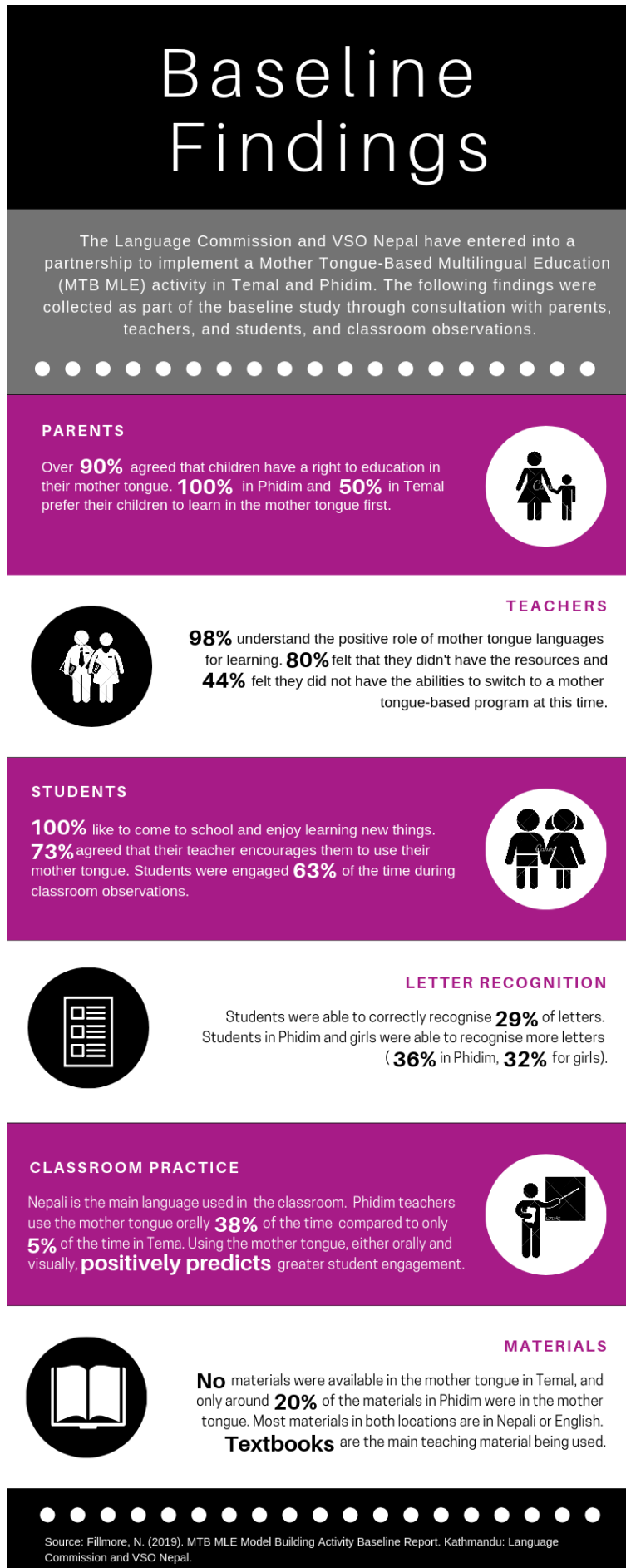
Students responded positively to statements about their schooling experience. Many students affirmed that their teachers were already encouraging them to use the mother tongue. Though the quality of the data collected on student learning outcomes was mixed, for the letter recognition component, students were only able to correctly recognise around one third of Nepali letters shown to them. Girls were able to recognise more letters than boys.

Classroom observations provided an interesting insight into current teaching practices in early grades. Teachers in both locations were found to be using the mother tongue to a limited degree, with Phidim teachers making much greater usage of the mother tongue compared to those in Temal. However, Nepali was the most dominant language used in both locations. Further qualitative observations are necessary to better understand the ways in which teachers are currently using the mother tongue and inform teacher training activities. Though time spent using the mother tongue was limited, when it was used it was linked to higher levels of student engagement.

Materials available in the mother tongue were limited in Phidim, and non-existent in Temal. Teachers were found to primarily be using the textbook, which is currently only available in Nepali language for most subject areas. Training teachers to make their own supplementary materials in the mother tongue and in more student-centred teaching practices is therefore likely to increase the time spent using the mother tongue.

A summary of the baseline study findings is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1 Summary of baseline findings



## 2. SUMMARY OF THE ACTIVITY

The concept note for this activity is provided in Annex 2, with key points summarised below.

### 3.1 Plan

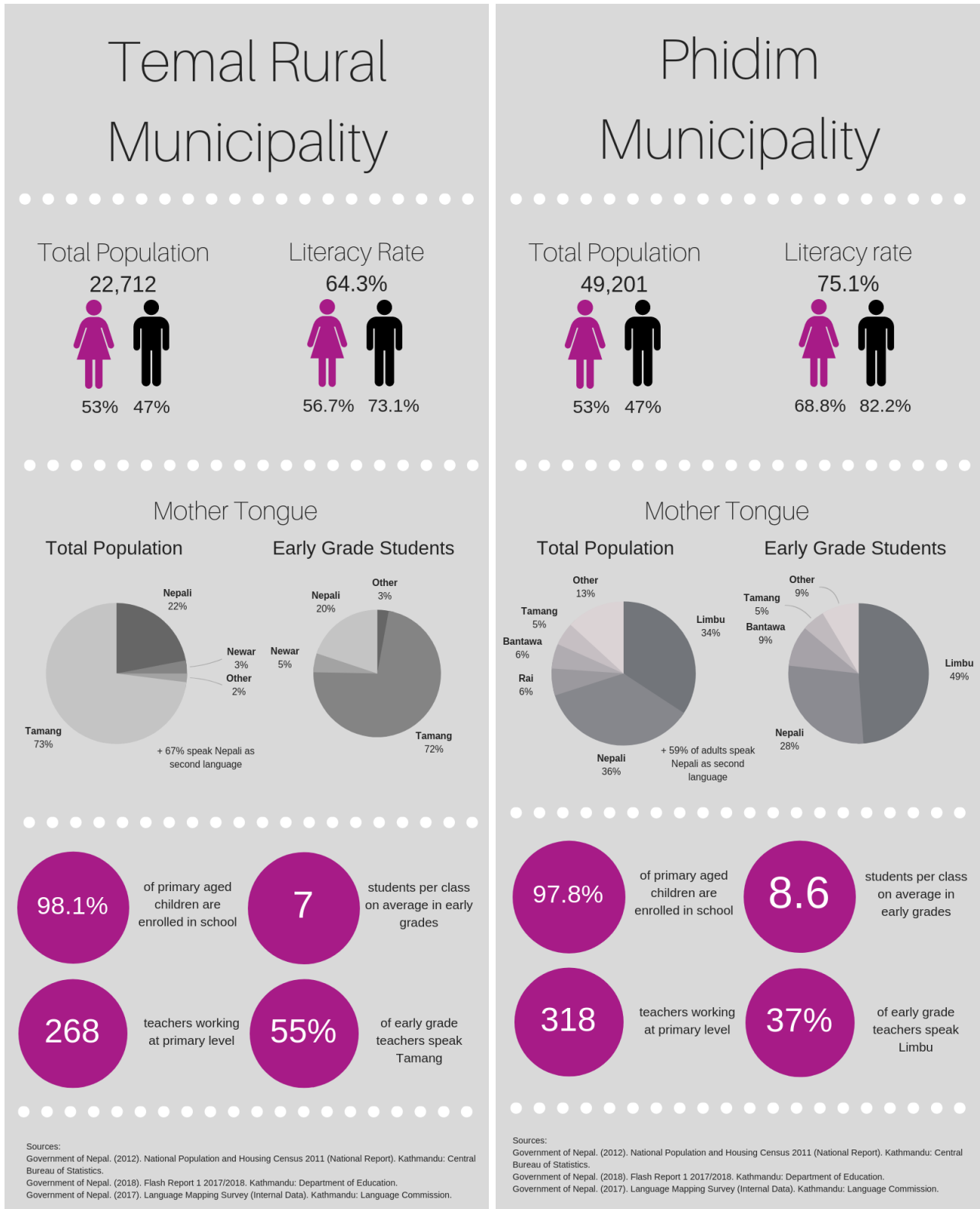
The activity is planned in three stages, which will include the following activities:

- **Phase 1 (August 2018 – March 2019):** Phase 1 will include all the necessary preparatory steps prior to implementation in the classroom, including school selection, material development, and teacher capacity development. The baseline study was completed during this Phase.
- **Phase 2 (April 2019 onwards):** Phase 2, which will correspond to the 2019/2020 school year, will involve implementation of MTB MLE in early grades classrooms. Classroom implementation will be complemented by ongoing mentoring and monitoring, as well as mid-term and final reviews. A mid- and end-line study will be conducted during Phase 2.
- **Phase 3:** It is anticipated that a third phase of this activity will be the eventual scale-up of the activity by both partner municipalities and other interested municipalities. During Phase 3, all financial resources should come from local municipality education budgets, with the Language Commission providing ongoing technical support and sharing of developed learning materials. Additional tracer studies may be commissioned during this phase.

### 3.2 Municipality Selection

Two municipalities were selected for this activity: Temal Rural Municipality, Kabhrepalanchok District, and Phidim Municipality, Panchthar District. They were selected by the Language Commission based on their prior consultations with municipality governments, where both municipality governments had independently expressed interest in hosting a mother tongue-based program. Descriptive data on the two selected municipalities is provided on the following pages.

Figure 2 Target municipality demographics





### 3.3 School selection

School data was collected through a previous Language Commission study in the target areas (Government of Nepal, 2017). The agreed criteria for school selection are outlined in Table 1.

*Table 1 School Selection Criteria*

<b>Criteria 1</b>	Above average number of students in Class One	This criteria ensures that the impact of the program is felt by a sizeable group of students, and to provide a wider database from which to draw conclusions and recommendations from the activity.
<b>Criteria 2</b>	The majority of students in Class One speak the target language (Tamang/Limbu) as their mother tongue	This criteria assists in determining which schools are more homogenous in their language practices. With the time and resources available for this pilot activity, its aim is to build a model for schools that represent a homogenous language context. Approaches that are effective for a school with students from homogenous language backgrounds may not be effective in a school with students from largely heterogeneous language backgrounds. It is recommended that a separate activity be commissioned to build a model for heterogeneous schools.
<b>Criteria 3</b>	The majority of teachers in the selected school speak the target language (Tamang/Limbu) as their mother tongue	This criteria ensures that there are sufficient teachers already within the school with the language ability to teach in a Tamang- or Limbu-based program.

While it is preferable that selected schools meet all three criteria, it was agreed that schools meeting two of three criteria could still be selected, particularly where there are other outstanding features that warrant their inclusion in the activity.

#### **Temal**

The three schools selected in Temal are: Narayansthan Basic and Secondary School, Balka Lyan Basic School, and Setidevi Basic School.

*Table 2 Temal School Selection Criteria Summary*

<b>School</b>	<b>Criteria 1</b>	<b>Criteria 2</b>	<b>Criteria 3</b>
<b>Narayansthan Basic and Secondary School</b>	YES – 11 students are enrolled in Class One	YES - 100% of students in Class One speak Tamang as their mother tongue	NO – only 35% of teachers speak Tamang as their mother tongue
<b>Balka Lyan Basic School</b>	YES – 10 students are enrolled in Class One	YES - 100% of students in Class One speak Tamang as their mother tongue	YES - 100% of teachers speak Tamang as their mother tongue
<b>Setidevi Basic School</b>	YES – 9 students are enrolled in Class One	YES - 88% of students in Class One speak Tamang as their mother tongue	YES - 75% of teachers speak Tamang as their mother tongue

Narayansthan school did not meet all three criteria (only 35 per cent of teachers speak Tamang as a mother tongue) but was included on the strong recommendation of the local government resource person. The resource person argued that the school is a model school<sup>1</sup>, that it was geographically close to the municipal centre, that teachers spoke Tamang fluently (even when it was not their reported mother tongue), and that there was a high degree of motivation among the school's teachers and leadership.

Interestingly, as a municipality, Temal is relatively homogenous in its linguistic makeup, with the majority of students (75 per cent) in early grades speaking Tamang as their mother tongue across

<sup>1</sup> Model Schools were setup by with funding from the Asian Development Bank and are now run by government. There are around 1,000 model schools throughout Nepal and they receive additional support and budget to become an example school for neighboring schools.

the municipality. Other language groups represented in the early grades in Temal are Nepali, Newari, Majhi, and Magar.

### Phidim

The selected schools in Phidim are: Badhuk Basic School, Yangnam Basic School Mahakabi Basic School. All schools selected in Phidim meet the selection criteria, as per Table 3.

Table 3 Phidim School Selection Criteria Summary

School	Criteria 1	Criteria 2	Criteria 3
<b>Badhuk Basic School</b>	YES – 10 students are enrolled in Class One	YES - 100% of students in Class One speak Limbu as their mother tongue	YES – 100% of teachers speak Limbu as their mother tongue
<b>Yangnam Basic School</b>	YES – 6 students are enrolled in Class One	YES - 100% of students in Class One speak Limbu as their mother tongue	YES - 100% of teachers speak Limbu as their mother tongue
<b>Mahakabi Basic School</b>	YES – 11 students are enrolled in Class One	YES – 100% of students in Class One speak Limbu as their mother tongue	YES - 100% of teachers speak Limbu as their mother tongue

Phidim is less homogenous than Temal, with Limbu students making up about half of all early grade students in the municipality. Other language groups represented in the early grades include Bantawa and Rai.

### 3.4 Launch

The program launched in Temal from the 20-21 November 2018, and in Phidim the following month, on the 18-19 December 2018. The launch events aimed to build rapport with local government and stakeholders and confirm their support for the proposed project.

The launch events brought together the Chair and Secretary of the Language Commission, VSO Nepal's Head of Inclusive Education, the Municipality Mayor and Deputy Mayor, Ward chairs, and from the local level, school principals, chairs of school management committee, chairs of teacher-parent associations, and journalists from both print and electronic media.

Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) between the Language Commission and municipality governments were signed in both locations. MoUs cover the roles of the municipalities, school authority, parents, and community leaders in promoting mother tongue education, preserving language identity, enhancing quality of education and

Figure 3 Launch Event in Temal



Figure 4 Launch Event in Phidim



a successful transition of young children from home to school.

By signing MoUs, municipality governments committed to supporting the program both during the period of implementation supported by the Language Commission, and beyond using their own resources.

Speaking in the program, the Mayors of Temal and Phidim Municipalities expressed their gratitude to the Language Commission and VSO Nepal for selecting Tamang and Limbu languages the model building project. They affirmed the need of mother tongue instruction to enhance quality and preserve language and culture. They showed their commitment to work further in implementing MTB- MLE through tripartite collaboration with the Language Commission, VSO Nepal and local government.

The launch events in both locations confirmed that there is strong support locally for the activity.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study sought to establish a baseline in target schools and communities and to develop a comprehensive situational analysis of target schools. Educational literature shows that the success of an intervention is dependent on having a solid understanding of both the challenge to be addressed, and the context within which it is occurring (Spink, Cassity, & Rorris, 2017). This baseline study intends to fulfil these prerequisites.

Primary data collection focused on assessing three domains of quality education: classroom practices; teacher and parent understanding and support; and student learning outcomes. Four tools were used to assess these domains.

#### 4.1 Sampling

Table 4 shows the final sample size, together with respondent rates for each group of respondents. Annex 3 breaks down the sample by location. Temal exceeded the target sample for all respondent groups.

Table 4 Sample size

Respondents	Target sample size	Actual sample size (total Temal and Phidim) <sup>2</sup>	Proportion actual to target	Notes
Parents	28	32	112%	Target was to survey at least half of the parents of students in Class One.
Teachers	30	41	137%	Target was to survey all teachers who teach in Class One, head teachers, principals.
Students	57	45	79%	Target was to survey and assess all students in Class One.
Classes	18	22	122%	Target was to observe at least three classes in each of the six selected schools.

For parents, teachers, and classes, a larger sample size was achieved than the original target. However, for students, the sample size was smaller than expected. This may be because some students were absent on the days that data was collected, or that the enrolment data used to calculate target sample size was out of date.

Sampling was not random. Enumerators were free to select parents, teachers, students, and classes based on the availability of respondents during data collection timeline.

#### 4.2 Tools

Tools were developed and peer reviewed in September and October 2018. All tools were translated to Nepali, and relevant questions of the Student Assessment Tool were translated to Tamang and Limbu. Copies of the tools can be obtained by writing to the author.

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 3 for a break down of the sample for each location.

### ***Parent/Guardian Perception Survey Tool***

Parental support is necessary for a new mother tongue-based project to be fully implemented. If parents do not support the program, efforts may be minimized or sacrificed and the program may ultimately fail (Dekker & Dekker, 2016). In Nepal, many parents view language as a critical factor in decision making around their children's education, with evidence suggesting that a desire for their children to learn English is leading many parents to leave the public education system in favour of English-medium private schools (Ranabhat, Chiluwal, & Thompson, 2018). Therefore, it is important to understand parental perceptions and preferences around language use to ensure that the activity is able to adequately address any misconceptions and build support among parents.

The Parent/Guardian Survey included nine statements that were read to parents by the enumerators in Nepali or their mother tongue. Parents and guardians were asked to state their level of agreement with each statement, using a four category Likert scale.

### ***Teacher Perception Survey Tool***

Research shows that teachers' attitudes and perceptions influence their practice (Fang, 1996). Understanding teachers' points of view and attitudes regarding the role of language in education gives us an insight into teacher knowledge of the area, which can inform the amount and type of effort the activity will need to invest in raising the awareness and capabilities of teachers.

Early grade teachers from all schools were surveyed to understand their perceptions and outlooks on mother tongue education. As with the Parent/Guardian Survey, teachers were asked to state their level of agreement with 12 statements, using a four category Likert scale.

In developing the final statements for the teacher survey, the author reviewed the statements and methodology used in the Nepal Early Grade Reading Assessment, Education Management Efficiency Study and Teacher Observation Study (RTI International, 2014a).

### ***Student Survey and Assessment Tool***

The first component of the student-level study was a Student Perception Survey. As with the teacher and parent/guardian surveys, the student survey included a number of statements (six) that were read aloud to students in their preferred language. Students expressed their agreement with the statement using a Likert scale.

The second component of the student-level study was an assessment of reading abilities, specifically: letter recognition, oral language development (measured through a listening assessment) and reading abilities. Listening and reading abilities were assessed for both Nepali and the mother tongue, while letter recognition was only assessed in Nepali<sup>3</sup>.

The link between learning outcomes and mother tongue-based education is well proven in the local and international literature (see for example World Education, 2016; Tomas & Collier, 1997; Hynsjö & Damon, 2015; Alison Pflepsen, 2011). Therefore, this study did not seek to provide rigorous, generalisable evidence of improved learning outcomes; but rather to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of this specific intervention.

The Assessment component of the Student Survey and Assessment Tool drew from the Nepal Early Grade Reading Assessment Study (RTI International, 2014b). The author is grateful to RTI for sharing the full tool set.

### ***Classroom Observation Tool***

The Classroom Observation tool used in this baseline is based on the Stallings 'snapshot' of classroom observation (World Bank, 2015).

The Stallings snapshot model captures data at regular intervals (usually between 2-5 minutes) and records student, teacher and classroom interactions as a 'snap shot'. Because of this, Stallings is considered a low-inference tool for measuring classroom interactions and time on task to produce quantitative data for comparison. However, the full Stallings tool can be lengthy, with a large number

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<sup>3</sup> Though should be assessed in mother tongue in the mid- and end-line.

of items for scoring, and therefore requires extensive enumerator training. Without in-depth enumerator training, the risk of mis-coding can be large and reliability of results reduced (RTI International, 2016).

The available time and resources for training enumerators for this baseline study was extremely limited, and therefore a simplified version of the Stallings tool was utilised. In simplifying the tool, the author drew from the observation tool utilised in the 2014 study for Save the Children Nepal (Weinberg, 2014).

Rather than relying heavily on single letter codes as the standard Stallings tool does, the tool used in this baseline study provides more descriptive statements on the possible activities being undertaken, and the enumerator just needed to indicate those that are being completed at that snapshot point.

### ***Tool Validation***

All four tools used in the baseline study are based on existing tools that have been well validated internationally and in Nepal. Therefore, a lengthy validation process was not required, however, all tools underwent a process of peer review. All four tools were peer-reviewed by Dr. Prem Phyak, Assistant Professor and Head of the Department of English at Tribhuvan University, and the Classroom Assessment tool was additionally peer-reviewed by Helen Horton, VSO Teacher Trainer.

## **4.3 Data collection and analysis**

### ***Data collection***

Baseline data was collected in November and December 2018. Local resource persons were used as enumerators. Resource persons generally come from a teaching background and were either native speakers of or fluent in the target languages. Enumerators were trained by the author and Language Commission advisers in the tools and data collection protocol during the launch events in each location.

In Temal, the two resource persons travelled together to all three schools to collect data, while in Phidim, the three resource persons elected to take responsibility for one school each and travelled to the schools separately.

### ***Data entry and cleaning***

Enumerators were also responsible for data entry. After data collection had been completed, data was entered into an Excel template by the enumerators using their own laptop computers. Soft copies of the compiled data were provided to the author, and hard copies of the original forms were also sent to the Language Commission office. Enumerators compiled and sent all data for each location in one batch.

The author compiled the data from the two locations into a single database. Data was cleaned initially in the Excel template, and then again in SPSS. Significant gaps were found in the Phidim data, particularly for Classroom Observation data. Student assessment data for listening and reading was found to vary greatly between schools and between enumerators who collected the data (for example some schools having no students correctly answering any questions, and other schools with students answering all questions correctly), so much so that the author decided to ignore this data for the purposes of analysis and focus only on the letter recognition data.

### ***Data Analysis***

Data was analysed by the author using Microsoft Excel and SPSS in January 2019.

## **4.4 Limitations**

The methodology described in this section was selected to provide an understanding of the opinions, beliefs, abilities, and practices of key stakeholder groups that will be involved in the model building activity. The prevailing conditions and resources were taken into consideration in selecting the study methodology.

An important consideration in designing the study was the ability to collect data quickly, so that the results could inform the activity and not hold up its implementation. A second important consideration was the limited funding pool available for the activity as a whole, and the desire that the majority of funding went towards the activity itself, rather than base-, mid-, or end-line studies. With this in mind, there are noteworthy limitations in the methodology and subsequent findings.

The time and funding limitations meant that it was not possible to hire experienced enumerators or researchers, to pay for translators for the English-speaking author, or to pay for extended travel for VSO or Language Commission staff to the field to collect data. Local government resource persons based in the target municipalities were instead chosen as enumerators.

Local resource persons' experience and capacity in conducting educational research was mixed, but generally low. This meant that a primarily quantitative methodology and highly prescriptive tools were used, over more qualitative or open tools. Further qualitative research may reveal more nuance to the existing findings. For example, teachers state that they 'mostly' use the mother tongue, but observations found this not to be the case. Semi-structured interviews and/or qualitative research could help explain this gap.

Local resource persons are usually former teachers and are likely to have existing relationships with the respondent groups. This is both a strength and weakness: these existing relationships may mean respondents are more comfortable in sharing their honest opinions, or, depending on the quality of the relationship and local power dynamics, it may have the opposite effect and cause respondents to give the answers they think the resource persons want. If the latter, the generally very positive findings of the perception surveys (detailed in section 4) may be overstated.

There are also some strengths in using local resource persons as enumerators, for example most resource persons were able to speak both Nepali and the target mother tongue.

Enumerator training was limited to two hours at the conclusion of launch events. While the limited training time did not appear to be a problem in Temal, it may have contributed to the lower quality data in Phidim. The Student Assessment and Classroom Observation tools were more complicated than the Perception Surveys, and enumerators would likely have benefitted from 'practice sessions' with the tools prior to data collection.

The limited time available to conduct the baseline study before the implementation of the activity meant that there was no opportunity to field test tools. This challenge was partially overcome by drawing heavily from existing, field-tested tools as described in this section. However, issues were still found in the quality of the data from the Student Assessment and Classroom Observation tools which may have been prevented with field testing in the target municipalities.

Finally, the sample size of this study is sufficient for drawing conclusions about the target schools and communities but is not large enough to draw conclusions or make recommendations that are generalisable more widely. The aim of this study was only to understand the current situation in target areas to inform the model building activity. There are other local and international studies available that have used more rigorous methodologies and sample sizes (see for example Hynsjö & Damon, 2015; RTI International, 2014a; Tomas & Collier, 1997; World Education, 2016).

## **4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Parent Perception Survey**

As part of this study, 32 parents were surveyed, including 20 parents in Temal and 12 parents in Phidim. All but one parent surveyed spoke the target language (Tamang or Limbu) as their mother tongue. 50 per cent of parents interviewed were female.

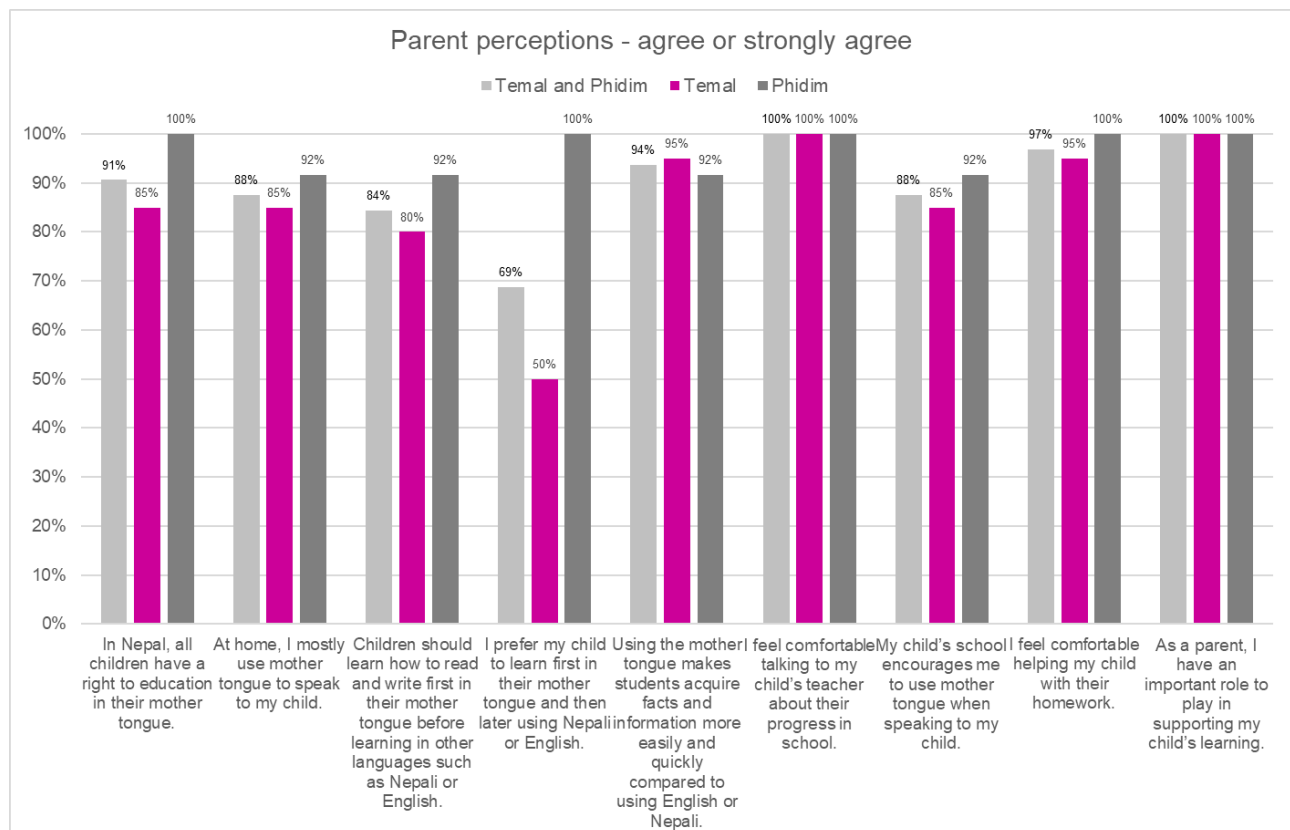
Overall, parents' perceptions were overwhelmingly positive in both locations. Over 90 per cent of parents agreed that children have a right to education in their mother tongue, and that using the mother tongue helps students acquire information quickly. All parents agreed that they have an important role to play in supporting their child's education.



In Phidim, all parents stated that they preferred their child to learn first in their mother tongue and then later in Nepali or English. This finding means that there is likely to be strong support for the MTB MLE model building activity in this municipality. This statement was more divisive in Temal, where parents were evenly split in their agreement. The activity may need to include a larger focus on advocacy among parents in Temal.

The full results of the Parent Perception Survey are provided in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Parental Perception Survey results by Location



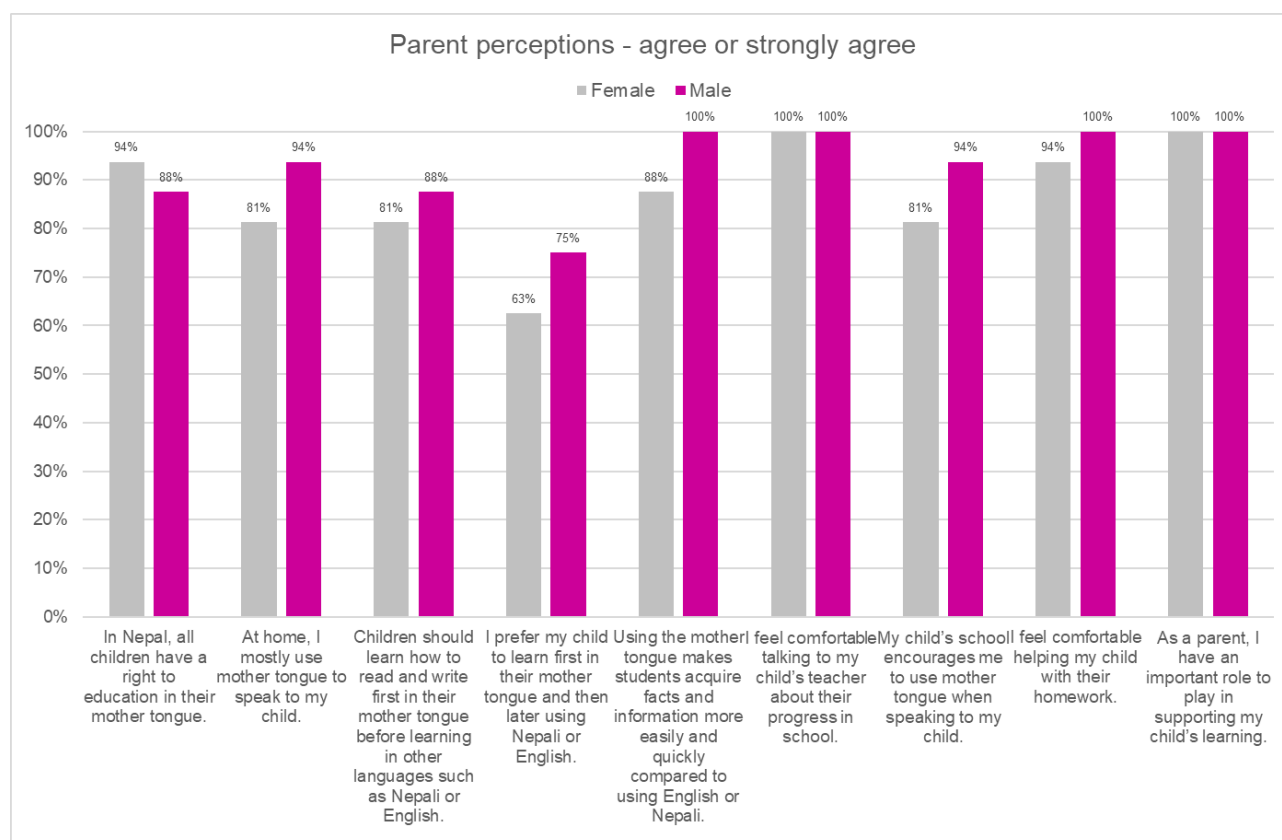
In general, both female and male parents were positive about the role of mother tongue languages in education systems. Males were slightly more positive in most statements, while females were less likely to prefer their child to learn in the mother tongue. Figure 6 provides a full break down by gender.

Interestingly, the only statement that females were more likely to agree with was 'In Nepal, all children have a right to education in their mother tongue'. There has been significant news coverage of the right to mother tongue education in the constitution<sup>4</sup>, and, anecdotally, men have been found to be more active news readers. This finding should be further explored through qualitative focus group discussions or semi-structured interviews to better understand the information sources females are accessing that lead to stronger support of this statement.

No notable trend was found between other parental characteristics (such as age, mother tongue, education level) and support for mother tongue languages in education. Though no consistent trend was noted in parental response by education level, some variation was present, as illustrated Annex 4.

<sup>4</sup> For examples in English see "Education in mother languages stressed," 2005; "Only few schools imparting education in mother tongue," 2018; Tumbahang, n.d.

Figure 6 Parental Perception Survey results by gender



## 5.2 Teacher Perception Survey

The Teacher Perception Survey included 41 teachers: 21 teachers in Temal and thirteen teachers in Phidim. Most teachers surveyed (32) spoke the target language (Tamang or Limbu) as their mother tongue. The remaining nine teachers spoke Nepali as their mother tongue. 17 teachers surveyed were female and 24 were male.

As with parents, teachers in both locations were generally positive about the inclusion of mother tongue languages in education. Almost all teachers agreed that students have a right to education in their mother tongue, and that using the mother tongue helps students acquire information more quickly. Most teachers agreed that “It would be easy to use mother tongue as the medium of instruction”. These findings demonstrate that there is likely to be support from teachers in both locations for the activity.

Only 61 per cent of teachers in Temal and 54 per cent of teachers in Phidim agreed with the statement “using the mother tongue too much in the classroom makes it difficult for students to learn other languages like Nepali and English”. Unlike the other statements which are phrased in a positive light, this statement is the only statement in the set which is phrased negatively, so it is possible that this may have caused some confusion with teachers. As part of future teacher training and advocacy, it will be important to clarify the positive role early education in the mother tongue has on fluency and literacy in other languages.

Interestingly, 79 per cent of teachers in Temal and 85 per cent of teachers in Phidim agreed that they are already ‘mostly’ using the mother tongue to teach students. As we will see in Section 5.5, this finding does not correlate with the language use observed during the classroom observations as teachers were only observed to use the mother tongue on average about 25 per cent of the time. Further qualitative observations will be necessary to better understand how teachers are currently making use of the mother tongue, and to be able to provide tailored teaching training activities to support them to use the mother tongue more effectively.

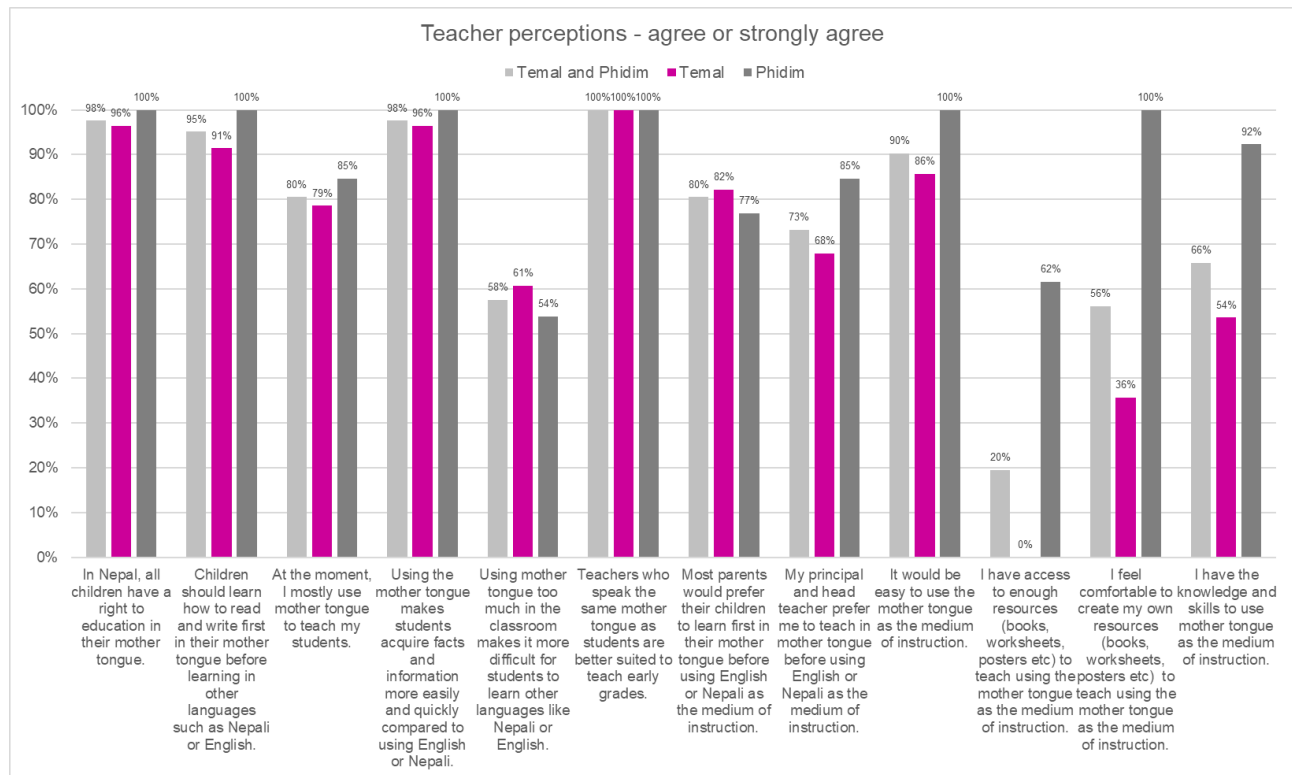
The final three statements all relate to teachers’ perception of their existing resources and skills to implement a mother tongue-based program. Here we see lower levels of agreement with the



statements, particularly in Temal. The finding that zero per cent of teachers in Temal feel that they have access to resources in the mother tongue was confirmed during a recent field visit by a team from the Language Commission – the team was unable to locate a single book or other teaching resource in the mother tongue. This shows that, although teachers generally agree that mother tongue languages have a role in education, they are lacking the resources and skills to switch to using mother tongues as the medium of instruction. The activity therefore should focus on increasing teachers' resources and abilities to implement a mother tongue-based program.

The full results of the Teacher Perception Survey for each location are provided in Figure 7.

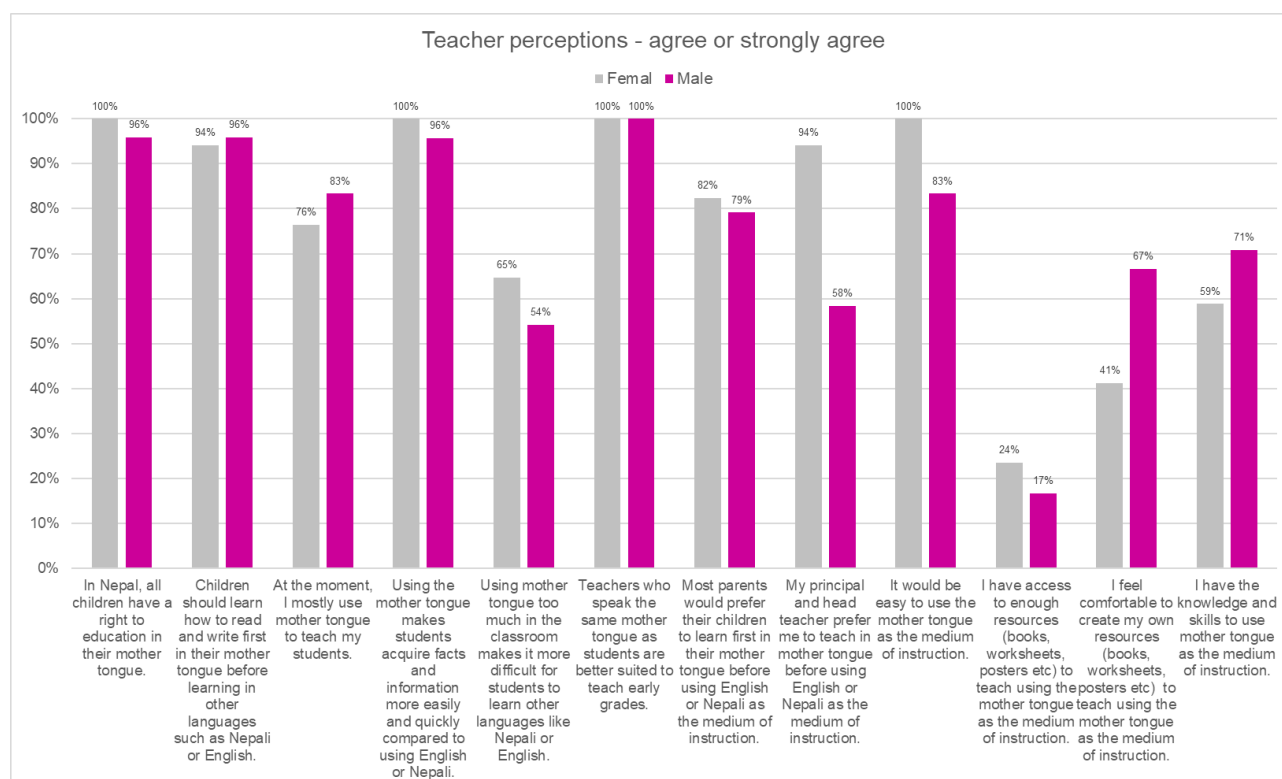
Figure 7 Teacher Perception Survey results by location



Interestingly, although male parents were found to be more likely to agree with all statements, the Teacher Perception Survey results were more mixed by gender. As per Figure 8, the Survey found that female teachers were more likely to agree with most statements, but with several exceptions. Male teachers were more likely to agree that “children should learn to read and write in their first language before learning other languages” and “at the moment, I mostly use the mother tongue”. Male teachers were also more likely to agree with the final two statements, which ask teachers to reflect on their own skills and abilities to teach in the mother tongue. This may reflect the wider social phenomenon of females tending to be more self-critical of their own skills and abilities (Shipman, 2014).

No notable difference was found between other teacher characteristics (such as age, mother tongue, education level) and support for mother tongue languages in education.

Figure 8 Teacher Perception Survey results by gender



### 5.3 Student Perception Survey

The student-level component of the baseline study included a Student Perception Survey and a Student Assessment section. 45 students, all in Class One, were surveyed and assessed, including 31 students in Temal and 14 in Phidim. 31 students were female and 14 were male. Almost all students surveyed and assessed spoke the target languages (Tamang or Limbu) as their mother tongue, with three students speaking Nepali as their mother tongue and two speaking both Nepali and Limbu as their mother tongue.

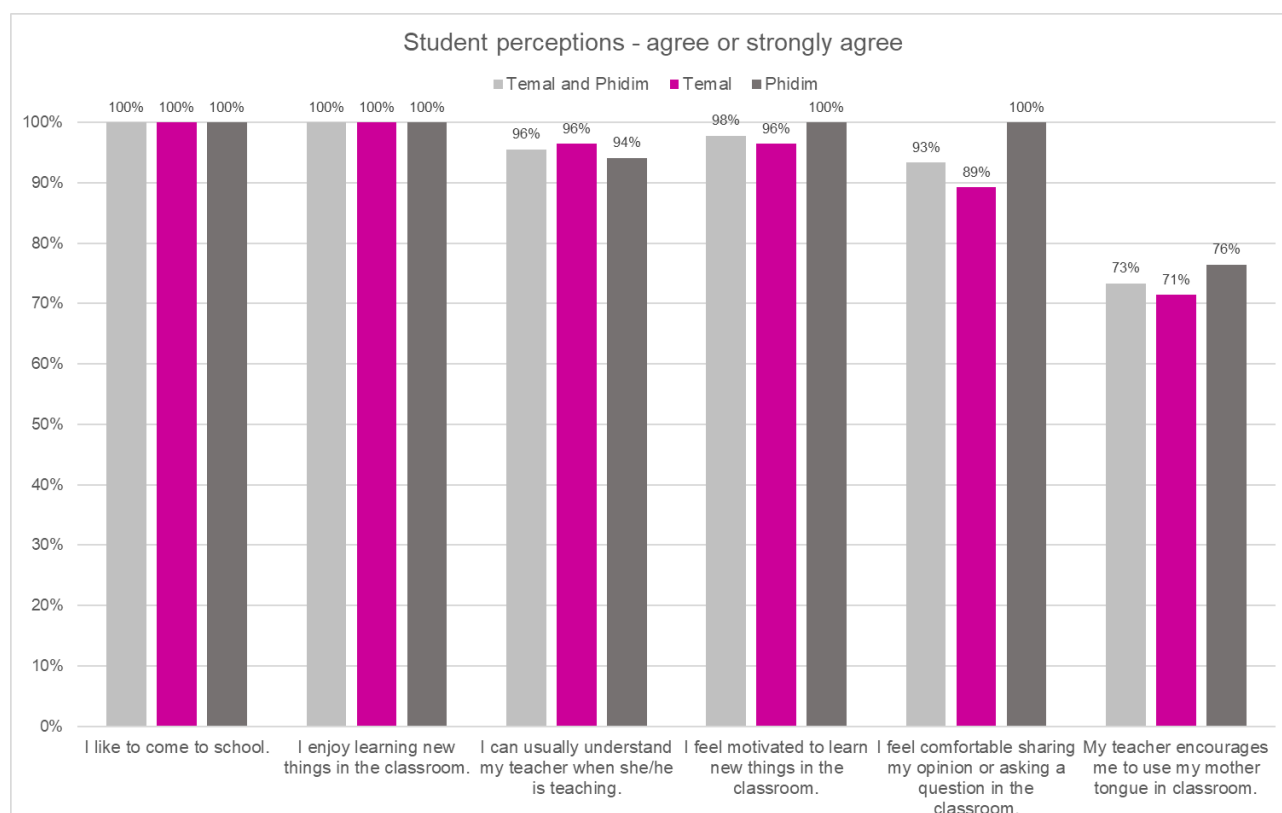
For the Student Perception Survey component, students were surveyed on their feelings towards school, their teacher, and learning. Overall students in both locations were positive about their school experience. While the first five statements aren't exclusively related to mother tongue usage in the classroom, it's encouraging to know that students are enjoying their educational experience.

The final statement is the only statement on the student survey directly related to mother tongue usage. For this statement, 71 per cent and 76 per cent of students in Temal and Phidim respectively agreed that their teacher encourages them to use the mother tongue. When controlling for students mother tongue and considering only students who speak the target language as their mother tongue, these figures change to 69 per cent in Temal and 79 per cent in Phidim.

This finding, as well as the finding from the teacher survey, is at odds with the classroom observation finding that little teaching is currently happening in the mother tongue (see Figures 13 and 14). Further qualitative observations and interviews are required to determine why self-reported usage of the mother tongue differs from observed practice. For example, perhaps the presence of the enumerators, who were known to the teachers, influenced the use of language.

The full results of the Student Perception Survey are provided in Figure 9. No notable difference was found between student characteristics (such as gender, age, mother tongue) and perceptions towards school, their teacher, or learning.

Figure 9 Student Perception Survey results by location



## 5.4 Student Assessment

The second component of the student-level study was an assessment of student reading abilities. The same students surveyed in section 5.3 were assessed for their letter recognition, listening, and reading abilities. Listening and reading abilities were assessed for both Nepali and the mother tongue, while letter recognition was only assessed in Nepali. As discussed in the methodology section (Section 4.3), issues were experienced with the student assessment tool and data quality, the results from the listening and reading abilities assessments have been excluded from this report<sup>5</sup>.

Students were on average only able to correctly recognise 29 per cent of letters. Students in Phidim scored higher than those in Temal. Students in Temal correctly recognising 27 per cent of words and students in Phidim correctly recognising 36 per cent of letters. Figure 10 illustrates students' letter recognition results by location.

Female students were found to be able to recognise more letters correctly (32 per cent). This finding is consistent with other student reading assessments in Nepal, such as RTI's Early Grade Reading Assessment (RTI International, 2014b). Figure 11 shows the letter recognition scores disaggregated by gender.

<sup>5</sup> The author, VSO Nepal, or the Language Commission may further analyse this data at a later date once further data cleaning and verification has been conducted.

Figure 10 Student Letter Recognition results by location

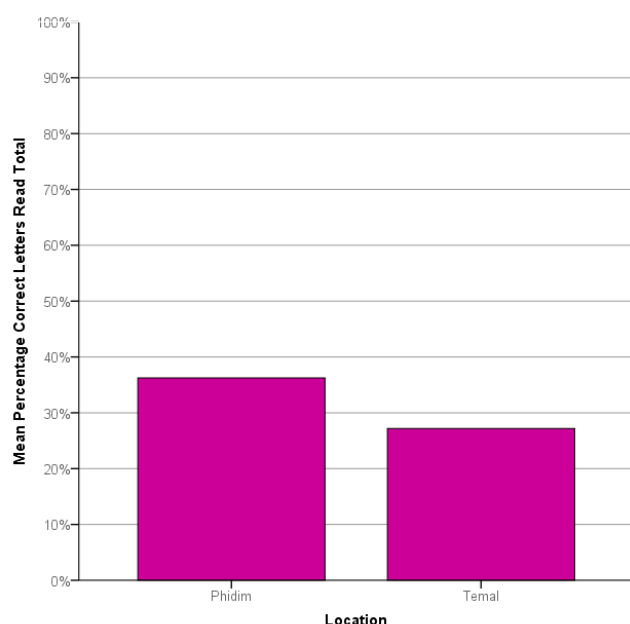
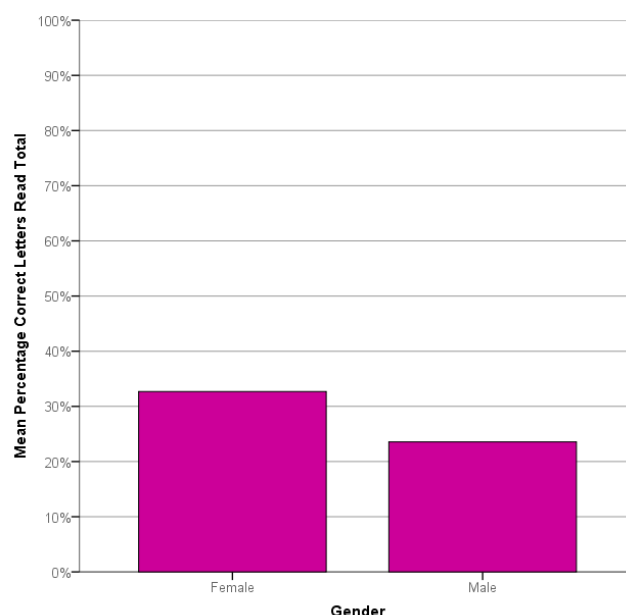


Figure 11 Student Letter Recognition results by gender



## 5.5 Classroom practice

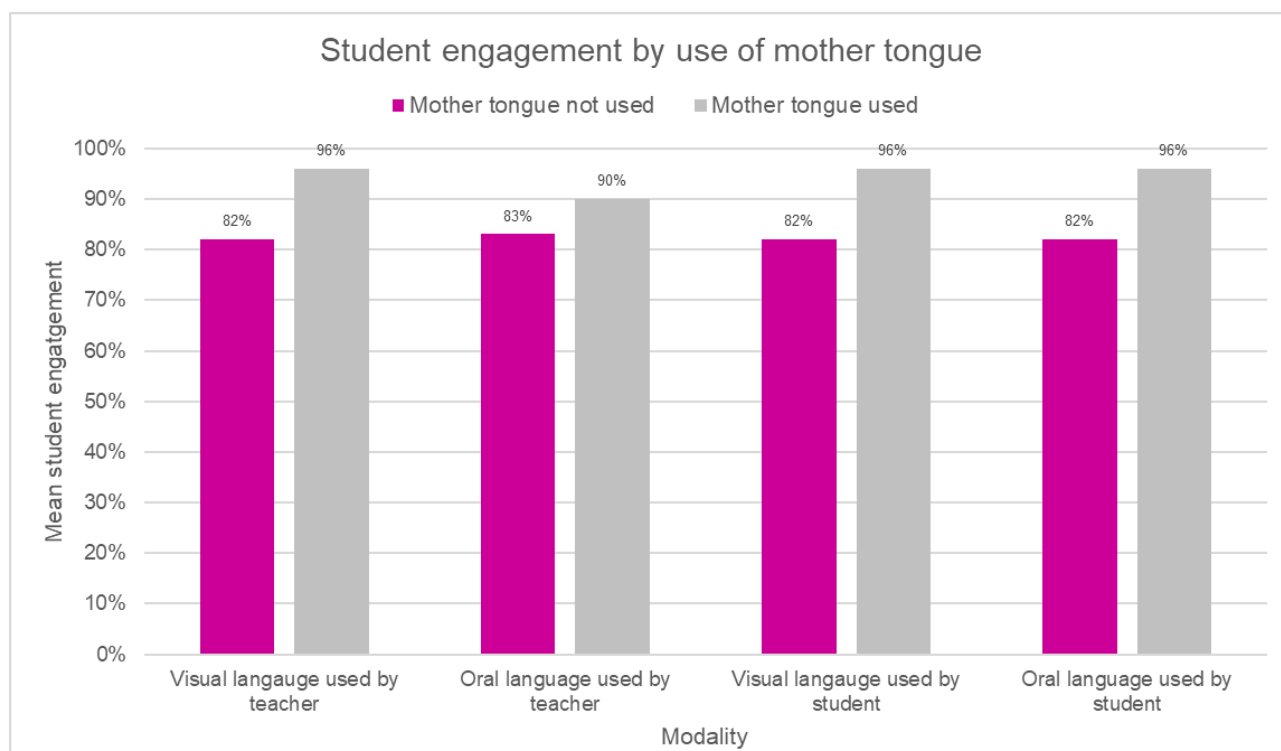
For the classroom practice component of the study, 22 classes were observed including 12 in Temal and 10 in Phidim. All classes observed were at Class One level, and all teachers of classes observed spoke the target language as their mother tongue. Seventeen of the classes observed were taught by female teachers.

As with student assessment data, there were large gaps in data for the classroom observation data, particularly in Phidim. Nevertheless, the data available was sufficient to draw some important findings about classroom practices in target schools.

Annex 5 and 6 provide a breakdown of the time spent by teachers and students on various classroom activities by location. Note that enumerators were free to select more than one teacher or student activity for each snapshot. Further qualitative observations are necessary to validate the findings presented in these annexes.

Positively, all students were found to be engaged 63 per cent of the time. An important finding is that use of the mother tongue, both orally and visually, and by teachers and students, positively predicts greater student engagement, as per Figure 12. Though this finding is based on a limited sample pool (as the amount of time spent using the mother tongue either visually or orally was limited, as per figures 13 and 14), it is consistent across all modalities of language use, and is supported by the literature (For example Baker, 2001; Benson, 2006).

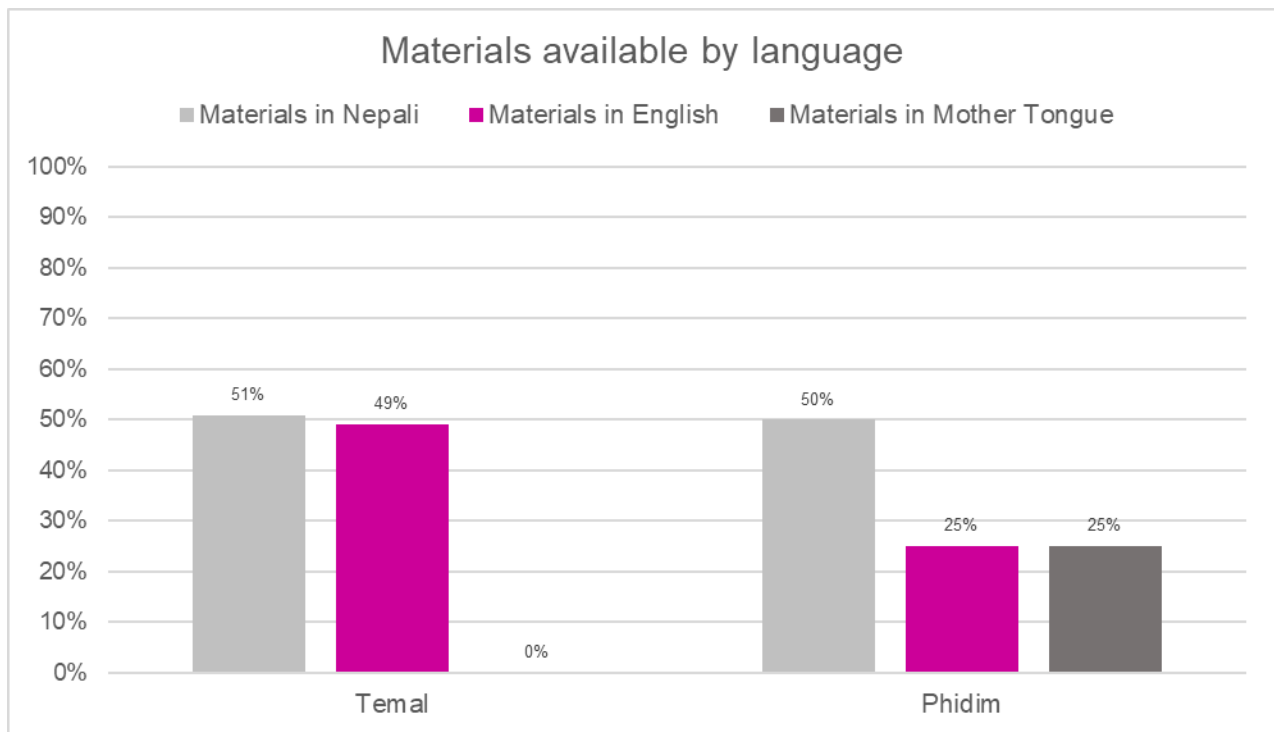
Figure 12 Student engagement by use of mother tongue



Overall, classes in Phidim appear to be making more use of the mother tongue in teaching activities and materials. However, even within Phidim, use of the mother tongue is less than that of Nepali. Nepali was found to be the most frequently used language in both locations.

Figure 13 shows the availability of materials by language in each location. No materials were available in the mother tongue in Temal, and only around 20 per cent of the materials in Phidim were in the mother tongue. These findings support teachers' perception (outlined in section 5.2) that there are not enough resources to support mother tongue-based teaching at present. In Temal, materials were almost evenly split between Nepali and English, while in Phidim, the largest share of materials were available in Nepali, and English and mother tongue materials were evenly available.

Figure 13 Materials available by location



Similarly, looking at the percentage of time spent using each language, Phidim classes appear to be making greater use of the mother tongue as compared to Temal. Figures 14 and 15 show the percentage of time teachers and student spent using each language by location.

Figure 14 Language use in Temal

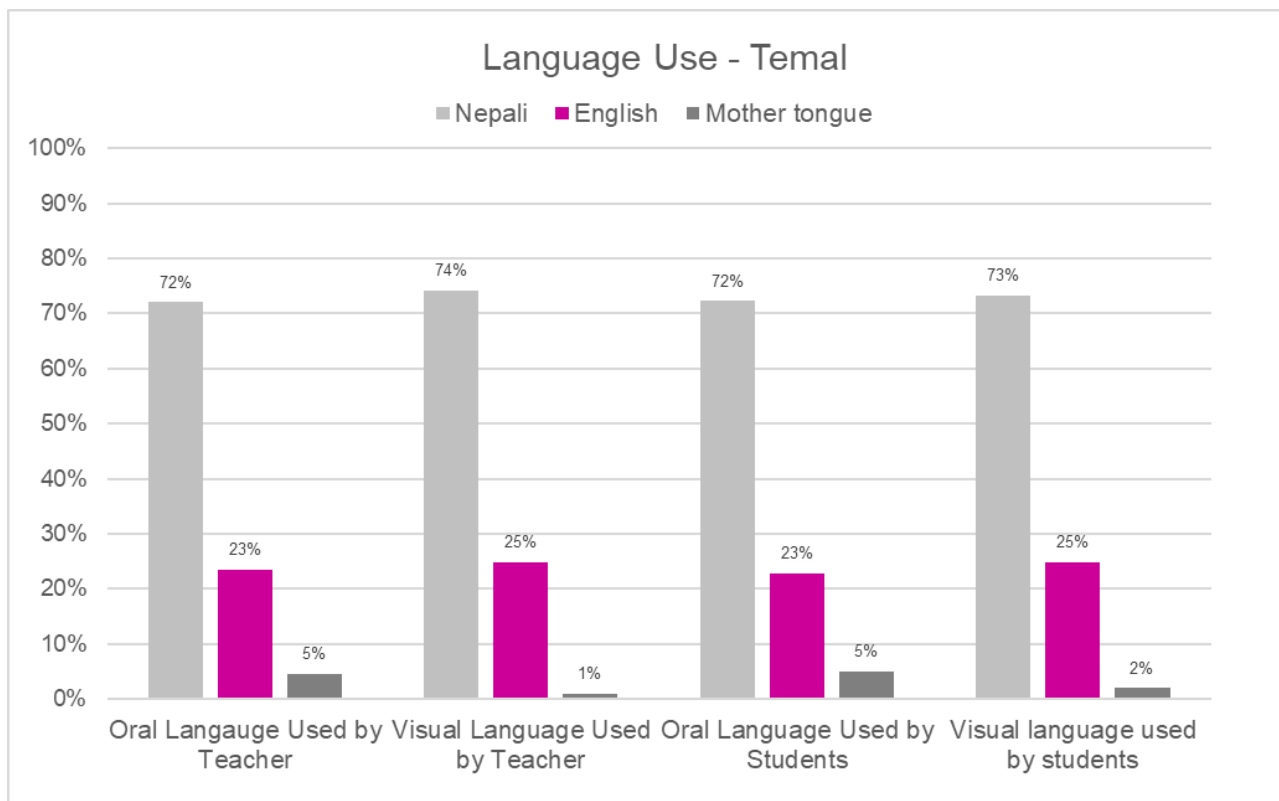
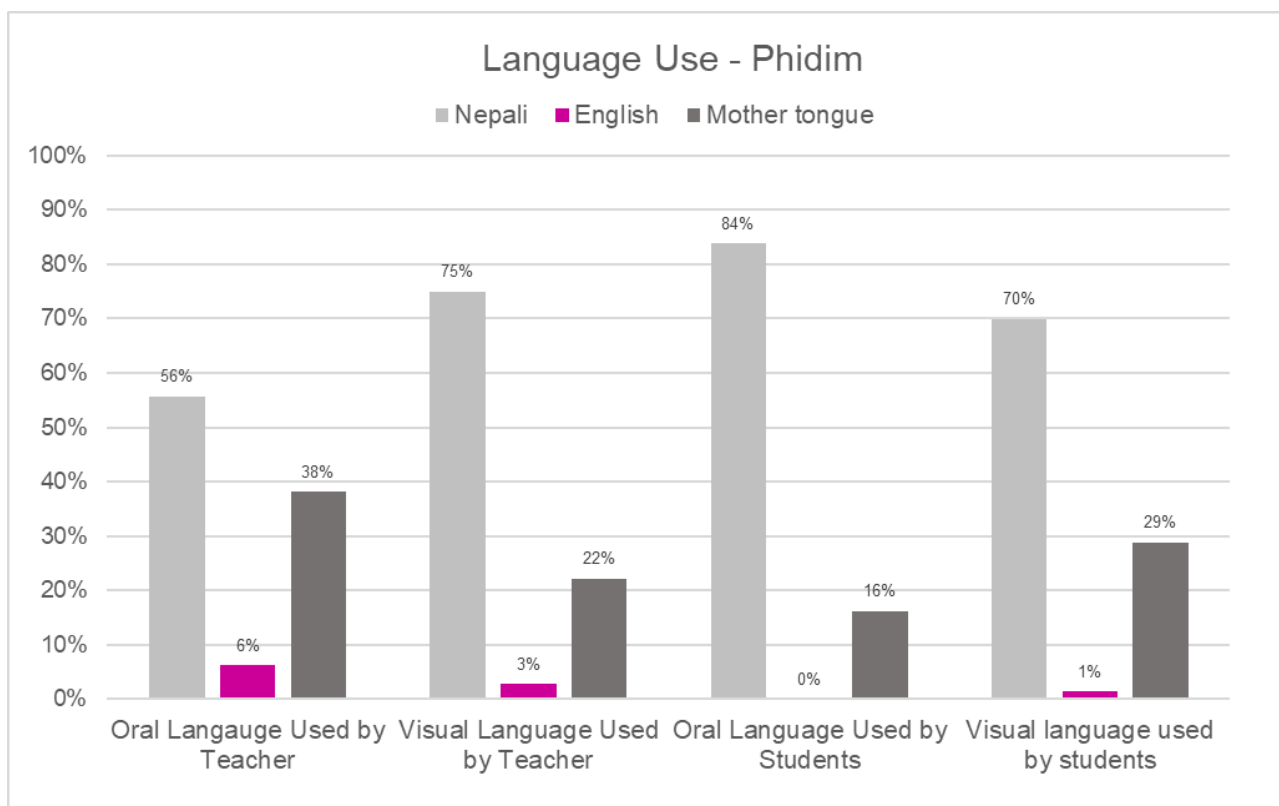
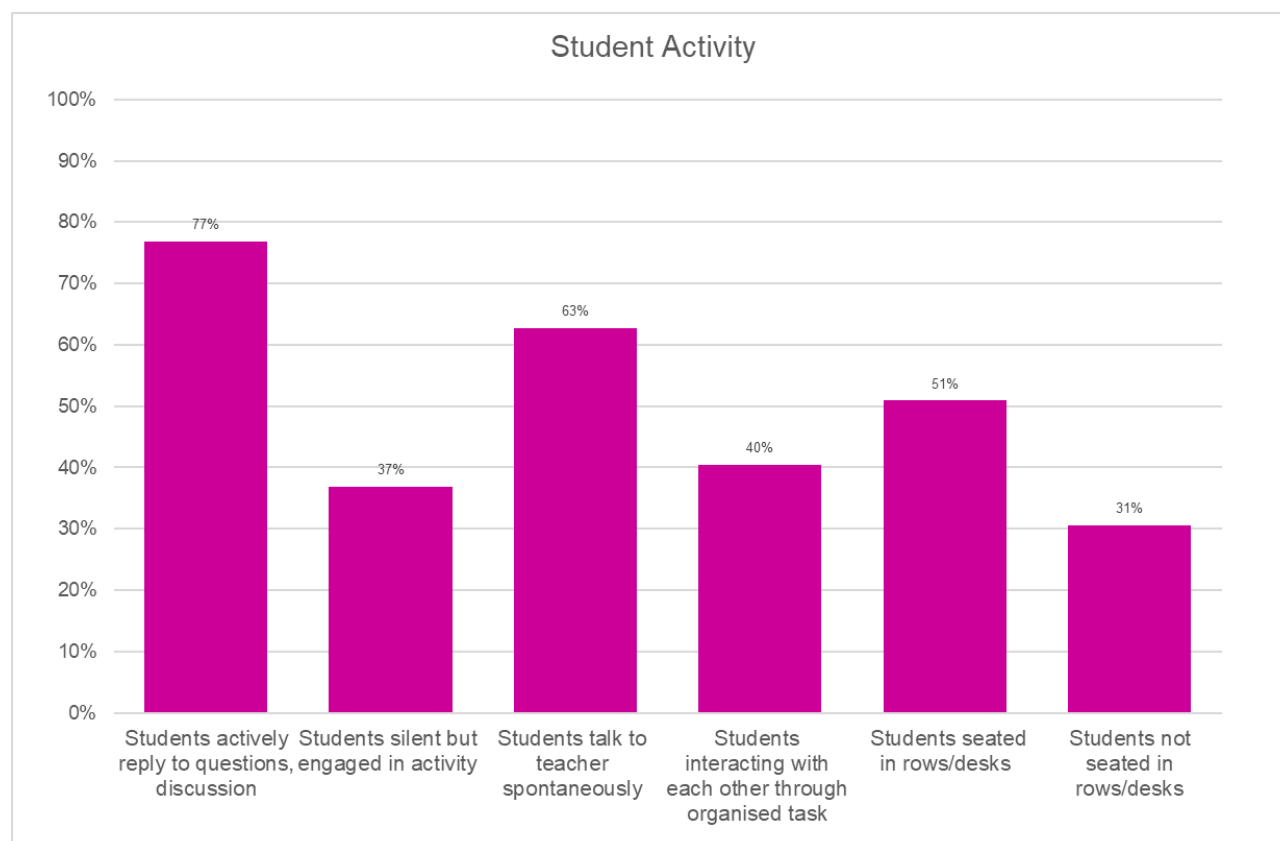


Figure 15 Language use in Phidim



The primary materials being used to support teaching are the blackboard and textbook, as per Figure 16. Notebooks, primers, pictures, and cards are also being used. Big and small books are being used very infrequently, a concerning finding given the results are specific to the first grade where big or small story books are usually considered invaluable for developing literacy skills<sup>6</sup>. The activity should therefore ensure that teachers are equipped with the skills to create and utilise story books in their teaching.

Figure 16 Use of materials in both locations



Given that the primary material being used by teachers is the textbook (Figure 16), and that at present the majority of the Curriculum Development Centre-approved textbooks are only available in Nepali, it is not surprising that the use of the mother tongue is limited (Figures 13 and 14). The activity will need to provide training to teachers on developing supplementary teaching materials (such as big and small books, primers, worksheets, etc) and on more student-centred teaching pedagogies in order to increase the time spent using the mother tongue (Figure 13 and 14), increase the availability of materials in mother tongue (Figure 11) and the use of a wider variety of materials (Figure 15).

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings outlined in Section 4, the following recommendations are put forward to inform the refinement of the activity design and implementation.

<sup>6</sup> The Classroom Observation tool only notes whether or not these resources were used by the teacher, and not their availability to the teacher. Further qualitative observations can further explore this finding to better understand why teachers are not using these types of learning resources.



### ***Recommendations for advocacy***

1. Parents are generally positive about the use of mother tongue languages in education in both locations. Advocacy efforts may build on this positive sentiment to build momentum and commitment from parents to support the activity. For example, parents can be mobilised as teaching resources to share cultural folk tales and practices in the classroom, and to help their children to build oral language skills in the home that can be translated into literacy skills.
2. Although most parents in Temal understand that children have a right to education in the mother tongue and that the mother tongue better supports learning, only about half of the parents surveyed preferred their children to learn in the mother tongue first. Advocacy efforts in Temal can work to convince the remaining parents to support the mother tongue-based program, by building on the benefits that teachers already understand and agree with.
3. Teachers are similarly positive about the use of mother tongues in education and understand the link to learning, however the link to fluency and literacy in second and third languages was less clear. Advocacy and training efforts with teachers should be sure to clarify the positive effect mother tongue languages have on the future learning of dominant languages such as Nepali and English.
4. The findings from this study show that there is a reasonable degree of support for mother tongue-based education among local stakeholders (teachers and parents). These findings should be reassuring for the Government of Nepal as the continued implementation of its Constitutional commitments. VSO and the Language Commission should consider how other findings (for example on the limited availability of mother tongue materials and textbooks) can form part of their advocacy efforts to the Ministry of Education, Phidim and Temal Municipal Governments, and other relevant departments (such as the Curriculum Development Centre for the finding on materials).

### ***Recommendations for teaching training***

5. This study found that teachers are already using Tamang and Limbu mother tongues to varying degrees. Pending further qualitative studies (see recommendation 9), teacher training activities should help teachers to be able to use mother tongue more effectively. For example, if they are currently using the mother tongue to directly translate the text book, teaching strategies such as Total Physical Response<sup>7</sup> could be a more effective way to bridge from the mother tongue to Nepali without building student dependency on direct translation.
6. Though teachers were generally positive about the potential role of the mother tongue in education, they felt that they did not presently have the resources or skills to begin teaching fully in the mother tongue. Teacher training activities do not need to spend large amounts of time 'convincing' teachers of the value of mother tongue but can instead focus on increasing teachers' resources and abilities to implement a mother tongue-based program.
7. Limited materials in the mother tongue were found in Phidim, and no materials were found in Temal. Similarly, the primary teaching material found to be used was textbooks in Nepali. Through the teacher perception survey, we know that few teachers feel capable of creating their own materials in the mother tongue. These three findings all build a strong case for focusing training for teachers on how to develop their own supplementary materials in the mother tongue. By developing teachers' capacity to create their own materials, rather than centrally developing materials and cascading to teachers, the activity is likely to be more sustainable long term.

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<sup>7</sup> See British Council (n.d.)

8. In line with recommendations 5, 6, and 7, teacher training activities should be skills-based, and provide teachers with the capacity to independently support student bridging and to create their own materials. These skills are best developed in the teachers' local environment, with opportunities to practice in the classroom, and be held over an extended, multi-day period. Ongoing support and mentoring, that continues into Phase 2 and 3, from Language Commission and local resource persons will be vital for new skills to become embedded in teachers everyday practice.

### ***Recommendations for further study***

9. This study utilised a primarily quantitative methodology. Further qualitative studies, such as focus group discussions, semi-structured interviews, and qualitative observations would complement the existing data. For example, focus groups or semi-structured interviews would provide an insight into parent and teachers' motivation for agreement (for example, had they just seen a news article on the right to mother tongue?). Qualitative observations would help explain the gap between observed language use and teachers' assertion that they 'mostly' use the mother tongue already.

### ***Other recommendations***

10. This study has found that even limited use of the mother tongue, either orally or visually, and by students or teachers, all predict more student engagement. Though the generalisability of this finding is limited due to sample size, it is reinforced by other studies in Nepal (e.g. Ranabhat et al., 2018; World Education, 2016) and elsewhere (e.g. Benson, 2006). This is an important finding for the Government of Nepal and for other local municipalities as it shows that 'something is better than nothing' when it comes to mother tongue education.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study has provided both a benchmark that can be measured again at mid- and end-line to assess the impact of the model building activity as well as an insight into the current situation that can be used to inform the design of the activity. It has provided recommendations for advocacy, teacher training, and further study.

Encouragingly, both parents and teachers are generally supportive of mother tongue education in both locations. Teachers' were concerned with the availability of resources and their own abilities to implement a mother tongue-based program, and gaps were found between their reported level of mother tongue use, and observations in the classroom. Teacher training activities should focus on building teachers' capacity to use the mother tongue for child-centred teaching approaches and to be able to develop their own supplementary materials in the mother tongue.

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## ANNEX 2: CONCEPT NOTE

# VSO Support to Language Commission of Nepal

### Background

Nepal is a diverse and multilingual nation, with more than 123 languages recorded in the most recent census<sup>8</sup>. The Government of Nepal is committed to maintaining the country's rich linguistic landscape and reflecting it within its education system. A commitment to strengthening mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB MLE) features prominently in the Constitution of Nepal and in the School Sector Development Plan (SSDP).

The Constitution of Nepal called for the establishment of a Language Commission to advise on a number of constitutional provisions, namely: determining the criteria for official language(s); conserving and promoting the languages of Nepal; advising on the status of present use of mother tongue languages in schools and advising on their further uptake in education; and monitoring and researching languages. The Language Commission has already initiated a language survey of 10 target languages to better understand language use and fluency at the school level.

Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) Nepal has operated in Nepal since the 1960s. Education is one of two signature programs of the organisation. VSO Nepal and the Language Commission entered into a partnership, articulated in a Memorandum of Understanding, in 2017. VSO Nepal has already supported the Language Commission through the provision of a Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education Specialist Volunteer in July 2018. This concept note outlines the planned second component of VSO Nepal support to the Language Commission.

### Proposed activity

It is proposed that partnership between VSO Nepal and the Language Commission be dedicated towards Phase 1 of a MTB MLE Model Building activity between August 2018 and March 2019. Phase 1 will include all of the necessary preparatory activities required to launch the delivery of MTB MLE in the classroom by the new school year. VSO Nepal will provide both financial and human resources in support of this phase of the activity.

The second phase of this activity will consist of piloting the MTB MLE model developed in Phase 1 within partner schools. During this phase, less financial resources will be required as the Language Commission intends to utilise local resource persons for monitoring and mentoring activities. VSO Nepal will continue to support the activity during Phase 2 and Phase 3 through the provision of a volunteer.

### Purpose

The purpose of this activity is:

1. To build an effective, practical, and resources model of MTB MLE in up to nine schools;<sup>9</sup>
2. To build support for and understanding of MTB MLE in up to three (3) municipalities; and
3. To document the process undertaken to achieve the above outcomes, in order to facilitate replication of this process in other locations

### Principles

This activity will be governed by the following principles:

- Teacher and child centred: teachers are at the core of the education system and are responsible for making the day to day decisions that most affect the teaching and learning process. We will ensure that teachers are consulted and represented at each step of implementation. Students are the ultimate beneficiaries of MTB MLE and therefore their needs will also be at the forefront of all program decisions.

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<sup>8</sup> CBS (2012:4). National Population and Housing Census 2011 (National Report). Kathmandu: Central Bureau of Statistics.

<sup>9</sup> See page 30 of the SSDP for more details on these three identified school types.

- **Indigenised knowledge:** A strength of MTB MLE is its ability to bridge the gap between what the student comes to school knowing (their culture, traditions, language, heritage) and what they learn in school (how to read, write, count). We will ensure this link is strong by ensuring all learning materials and teachers' guides responsibly represent indigenous knowledge and practice.
- **Close collaboration and sharing:** There is a wide community of organisations and individuals in Nepal that maintain an interest in MTB MLE, including the Language Commission and VSO Nepal. The experiences and resources of other organisations should be leveraged to strengthen this activity, and therefore close collaboration with the MTB MLE community will be a feature of this activity.

## Justification

Local and international experience shows that children learn best when education is delivered in a language they can understand. Through MTB MLE, Nepal's education system seeks to improve learning outcomes for its students, and particularly for those who do not speak Nepali as a mother tongue. Both the National Assessment of Student Attainment (NASA) and the Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) studies highlighted language as an important factor in poor learning achievement.<sup>10,11</sup>

MTB MLE also supports the transfer, preservation, and maintenance of Nepal's indigenous languages, and with them, the rich cultures and histories that are enshrined within in them. Unfortunately, there is only one remaining speaker of Dura language (who is a non-native speaker), two speakers of Kusunda language, and only three speakers remaining who have kept Tilung language alive. Almost all indigenous languages of Nepal are declining in terms of native speakers.<sup>12</sup>

Despite the widely held belief that greater exposure to dominant national or international languages during the early years of schooling increases students' eventual fluency, MTB MLE has been shown to increase fluency and literacy in both the mother tongue and secondary languages.<sup>13</sup> This finding is important in view of the strong economic value placed on English proficiency in the Nepali context.

MTB MLE also supports the achievement of both Government of Nepal and VSO Nepal priorities. The Government of Nepal has made a constitutional commitment to providing education in students' mother tongue,<sup>14</sup> a commitment which is further emphasised in the Ministry of Education's School Sector Development Plan (SSDP – 2017-2023).

VSO Nepal's goal for its education program is to see 'the most disadvantaged children and young people in Nepal have equitable and inclusive access to quality learning and skills development to reduce poverty'.<sup>15</sup> The pedagogical and affective benefits of MTB MLE, particularly for disadvantaged groups, is well proven in the literature<sup>16</sup>, therefore by supporting this activity, VSO will be contributing towards this goal. Further, the lessons from this activity will be applicable to other VSO Nepal activities, particularly the Sisters for Sisters Program, and potentially for other country offices.

## Target areas

Based on prior consultations between the Language Commission and municipality governments, the following target areas have been selected:

Province	District	Local levels	Language
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<sup>10</sup> RTI (2014). Nepal Early Grade Reading Assessment, Education Management Efficiency Study and Teacher Observation Study. Kathmandu: USAID.

<sup>11</sup> Metsämuuronen J and Kafle BR (2013) Where Are We Now? Results of Student Achievement in Mathematics, Nepali and Social Studies of Grade 8 in the Year 2011. National Assessment of Student Achievement (NASA) Educational Review Office (ERO) Ministry of Education. Kathmandu: Nepal

<sup>12</sup> See CERID <http://cerid.org/>

<sup>13</sup> Thomas, W., & Collier, V. (1997). *School effectiveness for language minority students*. Washington, DC: National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education.

<sup>14</sup> Specifically, clauses 31, point 5, and clauses 32 point 1 and point 3.

<sup>15</sup> VSO Nepal (2017). Education Signature Programme: Quality inclusive education for all in Nepal 2016-2020. Kathmandu: VSO

<sup>16</sup> For an example of one influential study showing the link between language of instruction and learning outcomes, see J D Ramirez et al (1991). Final Report: Longitudinal Study of Structured English Immersion Strategy, Early-Exit and Late-Exit Transitional Bilingual Programs for Language-Minority Children. San Mateo: Aguirre International

3	Kabhrepalanchok	Temal Rural Municipality	Tamang <sup>17</sup>
1	Panchthar	Phidim Municipality	Limbu <sup>18</sup>

Within these municipalities, it is expected that up to three schools per municipality will be jointly selected with the municipal government.

Though the SSDP<sup>19</sup> identifies three potential linguistic scenarios that may be present in Nepali schools, namely:

- Type 1: schools that are made up mainly of learners who are homogeneously Nepali speaking on entry to ECED/PPE or grade 1 (estimated as accounting for 60-70% of schools).
- Type 2: schools that are made up of learners that homogeneously speak a language other than Nepali as their mother tongue on entry to ECED/PPE or grade 1 (estimated as 10-15% of schools).
- Type 3: schools that are made up of learners from diverse language backgrounds with no common mother tongue on entry to ECED/PPE or grade 1 (estimated as 15-20% of schools).

The Language Commission's mandate to make recommendations around the use of mother tongues in education, and therefore this activity will target Type 2 schools. We may consider doing some small-scale research or other activities to provide advice to schools that fall under Type 3.

Where possible, schools selected should be 'typical' schools to maximise the applicability of the lessons learned from the activity. 'Typical' schools will be determined based on available data on financial resources, remoteness, infrastructure and facilities, complemented with qualitative feedback from municipal government partners where data is not available.

## Plan

The following section outlines the anticipated stages that this activity is expected to follow throughout its implementation. A further breakdown of the planned phases is provided in the Figure 1. Essentially, the activity will include three phases:

- **Phase 1 (August 2018 – March 2019):** Phase 1 will include all the necessary preparatory steps prior to implementation in the classroom, including school selection, material development, and teacher capacity development.
- **Phase 2 (April 2019 onwards):** Phase 2, which will correspond with the 2019/2020 school year, will involve implementation of MTB MLE in early grades classrooms. Classroom implementation will be complemented by ongoing mentoring and monitoring, as well as mid-term and final reviews.
- **Phase 3:** It is anticipated that a third phase of this activity will be the eventual scale-up of the activity by both partner municipalities and other interested municipalities. During Phase 3, all financial resources should come from local municipality education budgets, with the Language Commission providing ongoing technical support and sharing of developed learning materials.

Throughout all phases of this activity, regular Community of Practice events are anticipated. Plans for the functioning of this Community of Practice are detailed in a separate concept note. This forum will provide an advisory and peer review function to the implementation of this pilot but will also be a platform for interested individuals and organisations to discuss wider findings related to MTB MLE in Nepal.

<sup>17</sup> See: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/taj>; <http://www.language-archives.org/language/taj>

<sup>18</sup> See: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/lif>; <http://www.language-archives.org/language/lif>

<sup>19</sup> See page 30 of the SSDP for more details on these three identified school types.

## Phase 1:

[illegible]

## Phase 2:

[illegible]



## Outputs

The expected outputs from the Phase 1 include:

- A baseline report outlining the current state of teaching, learning, and perceptions in target schools;
- Inclusive language policies in each target school endorsed by the School Management Committee (SMC); and
- A collection of learning materials, readers, and teachers guides that are tailored to local context and a ready for teachers' usage during the activity.
- Case studies to describe the process used to develop model and materials.

Expected outputs from the Phase 2 include:

- A tested model of MTB MLE
- Case studies on best practice and innovative practice found through the activity
- Evidence of the effect of mother tongue education on learning outcomes, teaching practice, and teacher and community attitudes that can be utilized for advocacy efforts in new municipalities and schools.

## Budget

A tentative budget for this activity has been prepared and is subject to further negotiation between VSO Nepal and the Language Commission. In addition, VSO Nepal has also provided a volunteer MTB MLE Specialist on a full-time basis. Additional budget may be sourced from local municipal governments.

## Conclusion

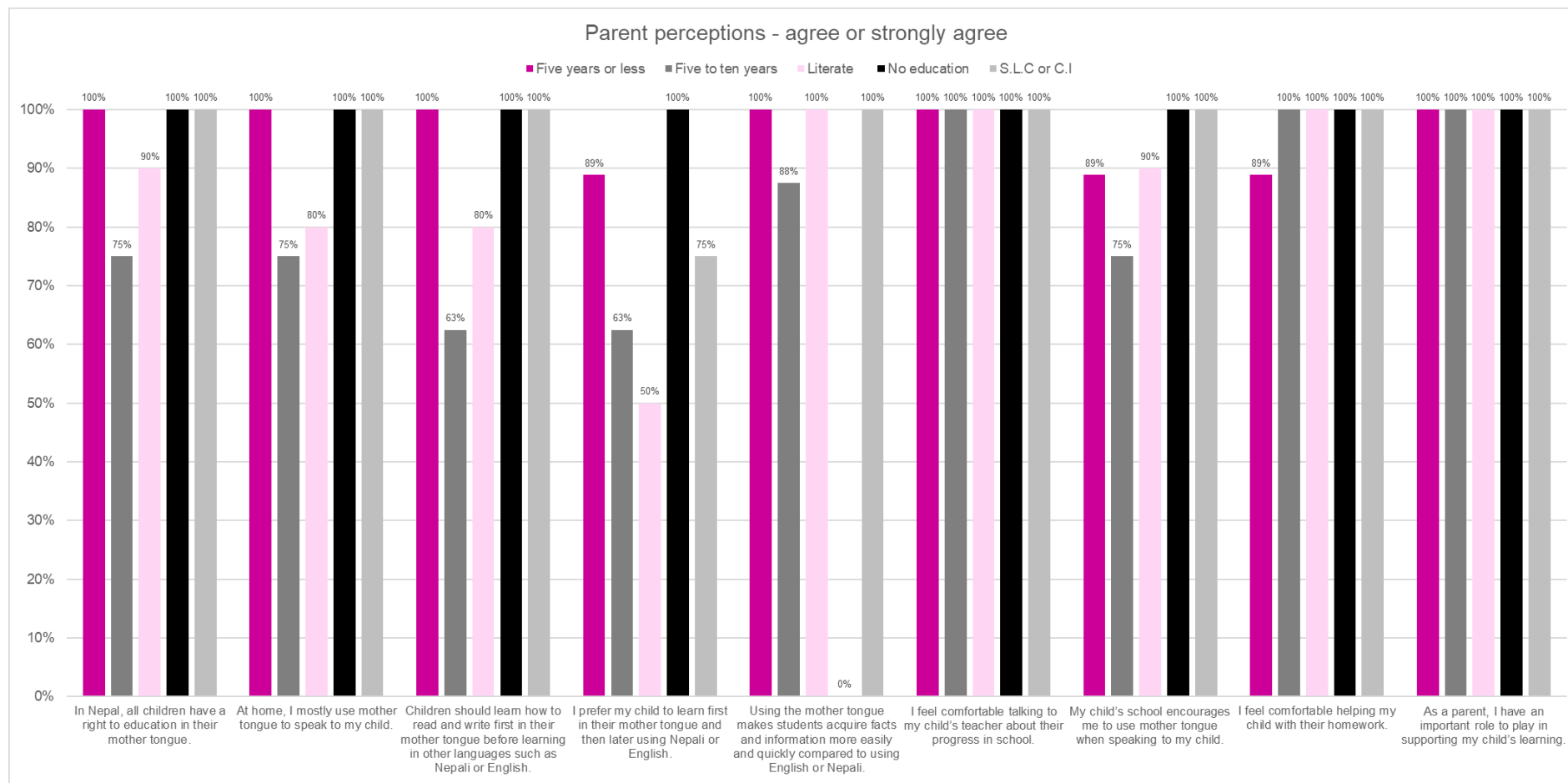
The Government of Nepal's vision for its people is one of prosperity and development across all sectors. Strengthening and building upon the country's existing diversity to achieve this vision is both an opportunity and a challenge. Language and multilingual educational represents an underutilised opportunity to achieve this vision.

With the establishment of the 2015 Constitution of Nepal, all functions related to language use are delivered to Language Commission. Among them is the responsibility for advising on MTB MLE. Based on the findings from recent studies on the use of languages in education across ten different languages in ten different local level locations, the present proposal represents an opportunity to develop a practicable, replicable model of MTB MLE which in turn will improve learning outcomes, break long-standing misconceptions about language in schools, and insure all Nepali children, no matter their language background, receive a quality education.

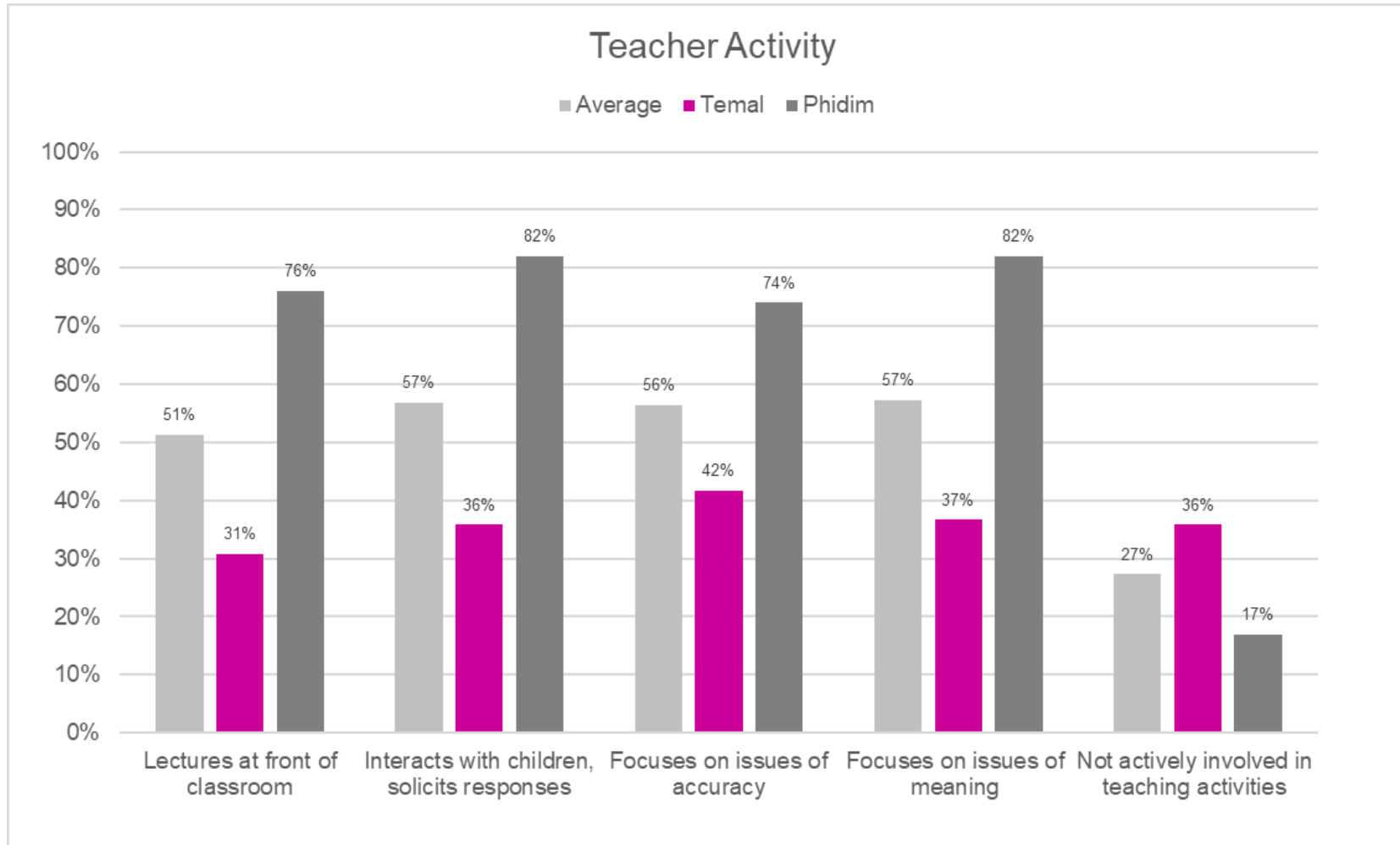
## ANNEX 3: FULL SAMPLE SIZE BY LOCATION

Respondents	Total			Temal			Phidim			Notes
	Target sample size	Actual sample size	Proportion actual to target	Target sample size	Actual sample size	Proportion actual to target	Target sample size	Actual sample size	Proportion actual to target	
Parents	28.5	32	112%	15	20	133%	13.5	12	89%	Target was to survey half of the parents of students in Class One.
Teachers	30	41	137%	15	28	187%	15	13	87%	Target was to survey all teachers who teach in Class One, head teachers, principals.
Students	57	45	79%	30	31	103%	27	14	52%	Target was to survey and assess all students in Class One.
Classes	18	22	122%	9	12	133%	9	10	111%	Target was to observe at least three classes in each school.

## ANNEX 4: PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS BY EDUCATION LEVEL



## ANNEX 5: TEACHER ACTIVITY BY LOCATION



## ANNEX 6: STUDENT ACTIVITY BY LOCATION

