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I: Interviewer

P: Participant

Interview duration: 1:36:20

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I: Our recording has been started. We are starting our interview now. I came to know that there is no policy for early childhood development from the Nepal government. What are the activities related to stimulation that is going on in areas? Could you briefly tell us about that?

P: In our constitution, in article 39, it has stated that every child has the rights to secure early childhood development. We do have policies. We have policies but we have not transferred that into a plan and implemented in any programme. We have been raising voice for holistic development since 7th 5-year plan. There are two things. We need to look a child from conception to 8 years, which lies under international definition. The other thing is it is not just early stimulation or downward extension of grade one. It should look after the holistic development of the child ... physical, emotional, social, cultural ... We have included 6 different areas for development We should also see the ELDS (Early learning development standard) of a child. Have you heard about it?

I: No.

P: This is also there... it is prepared by the government...ELDS also looks at 6 main domains. You should see this too... This programme has accepted that early childhood development helps in overall development of a child ... and for that Health, nutrition, education, and another relevant ministry should participate in this programme ... ELDS says that programme should be launched like this. This should be launched with the inter-ministerial coordination.... it talks about various other things related to programme implementation... This has not happened yet. later in the National ECD strategies ... this

also consists of same points. In that we have focused on nurturing and care framework and have said that we need to take this stimulation, nutrition, protection... programme together. It should be conceived by the government. We need to form a council, which will be the apex body and we should involve every ministry like health and nutrition, agriculture, water and sanitary, women and children, federal affairs, and general administration ministry. These all are relevant. We involved them all when we were developing the national ECD strategies.... and another thing that we must remember is that... it is not like before... Since we are on a transition phase, we have gone into the federal system now. Federal government should not decide everything for us. Local government has the authority and responsibility to look after early childhood development and any other education related activities. Not in early childhood. there are more than 36,000 centers Local government does all the planning, monitoring, and management of early childhood development programme. They have been delegated... Legally now this is their responsibility. Similarly, province is also equally important... now what is happening is ... strategies have been made at federal level. This makes coordination between inter-ministerial plus inter-agencies as well. There are various organization in Nepal like UNICEF and UNESCO which are working for education, nutrition and health sector. There are other like ADB and World Bank ... there are many INGOs and NGOs ... In Nepal early childhood development was initiated by NGOs, CBOs with support from INGOs rather than Nepal government. We need one integrated programme for this... this is what we are looking for.... Strategy paper has also conceived this idea... that we need such programme... this is not only government's.... This should be implemented by the 3 levels of government, federal, province and local level. Within these governments... for example in Kathmandu city here are 6 types of ministries that are directly related.... but what they do... they work separately... ministry of education only sees education sector, which is fine it is Ministry of education it cannot see health and nutrition... Women and children and elder citizens... they are looking at protection only ... like they are taking care of for orphans and all ... what I mean is there is no linkage in between the ministries. But now the strategy paper is raising these things...

63 I: How can we facilitate the integration sir?

64 P: We have the culture of working in isolation till now... we work in isolation, not only in
65 the government ... not only between the ministries (inter-ministries) but in every intra
66 ministries as well it is like this... Even in UNESCO, there are different departments of
67 child rights, child, health, child nutrition, early childhood and many more. There is no
68 coordination within them as well. We have this gap in every department. A survey done
69 with UNESCO in 2012 I think ... showed this gap and proposed that something must be
70 done to reduce this gap. It had shown how early childhood development programme
71 could be integrated and coordinated in Nepal and how this could be implemented. What
72 is the situation and how we should go about this ... this is an important par. So, one I said
73 about the culture ... Another thing is early childhood development itself is a new thing in
74 the community in the field of development area.... Because we do not consider education
75 only after the child is admitted in grade one... even before grade one we don't care
76 much...but in Nepal in our culture, and in different ethnicity ... if we see... we have not
77 been neglecting early childhood stimulation. We have our own indigenous way of
78 providing childcare and early stimulation practices... we have a tradition (*chalan*)... you
79 must know... like in our culture... in many villages before marriage or after marriage girls
80 are gifted with dolls... we still have these practices in our community...in many place...
81 if we look at nutrition ... we have many things in nutrition... like what types of food we
82 should eat and what we should not eat? How to take care of postnatal mother.... What
83 should be done before that... We have an article called "journal of early childhood
84 development". I don't know the exact volume in that article, but you will find about the
85 myths and reality of early childhood in one of the volumes. We have written this
86 article...

87

88 I: Can you give any examples?

89 P: For example, there is myth where pregnant women is not supposed to be touched on an
90 eclipse day because it will leave a spot-on baby's body or cheek we don't have any
91 scientific reason for that, but it is so much prevailing in our community that everyone
92 here believes that. What do we call this now? Is it a myth or reality? Another saying is
93 pregnant women should not watch any animals being killed or she and her husband is

94 should not kill any animal... this is such a nice thing... This is a culturally embedded
95 practice as well ...so that the child does not learn about any sort of violence when they
96 are in the womb but more about resilience related things.... We can see many practices
97 like this. There are many... We tried to understand what the scientific reasons were and
98 what are the ... whether this is true or not... Our programme is also related to health,
99 nutrition, protection, and early stimulation as well. We do have early stimulation in our
100 community ... like singing songs for them at bedtime from early childhood telling
101 story to the kids. There are many types... Many of them have phased out... but some are
102 still there...We need to continue good practices ... but that is not happening... in terms of
103 scientific reasoning ... when we talk about early childhood playing with good toys...
104 sitting in good place... some of these modern early childhood concepts is like
105 handicapped.... Like I said before... If you see over these 36000 ECD centres in each
106 district, they will look like downward extension of grade 1... you will find that they have
107 formal teaching, A, B C D English letters and 1 2 3 numeric letters are taught... there is
108 such kind of problem ... but they don't teach anything about health and nutrition
109 components. I went to see in a project in (a particular) district. No doubt the nutrition
110 programme is important, and government of Nepal is focusing on that too. They have a
111 school nutrition programme ... They provide 15 rupees per day per child on school days.
112 It is good as it is a seed money for some of the kids and it won't be enough for everyone
113 though. But when we talk about nutrition, they only think of junk foods.... there are two
114 reasons for preference of Junk food...One reason is they don't need to cook or prepare
115 anything ... they get ready-made food... and another is nutrition practice or nutrition
116 behaviour... Nutrition is not just about feeding. They need to learn about nutrition as
117 well. There are also things like involve them in nutrition as well. For example, I have
118 heard that ADB has a big project...they are funding more than 100 million in
119 constructing of one school. I asked them in that school... They have been running
120 nutritional programme for 15 years. Since the school lies in one of the remote areas in the
121 (that particular) district. they have been running this nutritional programme for 15 years,
122 but they don't have a kitchen in that school. They used to cook all the foods like pudding
123 (jaulo), but they used to cook in a place like a storage room... where they have stored
124 damaged chairs, tables, bags of cement ... it was like a dumping site ... where they

prepare food and feed children... what we are learning from this? ... what nutrition related things can we teach to children? ... that place where millions of money was allocated in the new school construction ... there I asked the school whether they had a proper kitchen and a dining hall at all. There is not ... In the current situation we are calculating about feeding nutrition food and still are providing the kids worth of 15 rupees only. There is no growth monitoring at all. This was from the beginning not just now. In many places where we did the programme... nutrition programme was there ... Growth monitoring was done. But what they do is... they used to note down the height and weight of the child only and they would put it down in the register. They have not plotted the growth monitoring chart as well. I don't know what is in practice right now because this is 10-15 years ago... Growth monitoring is not just about measuring the height and weight. We need to plot it down every month and understand in which level the child is and what kind of intervention do they need...I did not see these kinds of things.... UNICEF has recently supported nutrition rehabilitation. I have heard this has been recently started... It has been working very well in countries like India and Bangladesh. They have very good nutrition rehabilitation centre ... They keep mother and children in the rehabilitation center for months. We need that on our country too... there are many problems like this in r country... Various studies have shown how to integrate health and nutrition and early stimulation...many studies have shown that we need to do this... our studies have also shown same things...it has synergistic effect... It has effects on each other. Have you studied "the twelve who survived?"

I: "the twelve who survived" ...

P: There was a book "the eleven who survived" before. It was written by Robert Mayor's. He is considered as international father of Early Childhood. He has been working before Heickman. He gives more economic reasons. But the other one looks more psychologically and holistically. In his book he has mentioned that if a child is healthy, his education and nutrition is also good. It also applies in UN related agencies like UNESCO or WHO. According to the definition of WHO, absence of disease is not considered as health. Kid should be healthy from psychosocially as well. This was a definition from 2046 BS. Mayor has proved in his book that if a kid has nutrition, then he is healthy and has a healthier stimulation. This three are interconnected with each other.

156 The kids which is healthy from psychosocially, he is automatically healthy. These kid
 157 demands according to how they feel. If they are hungry, they demand food. They cry too.

158 I: Directly and indirectly?

159 P: Yes. It has been [xx] years since I completed my PHD in early childhood. I studied a
 160 book called “towards off fears start” before joining my PHD. It was a hot cake at that
 161 time. I pursued in early childhood after reading that book only.

162 I: Sir, you said that ECD has policies, but it has no plans and has not been implemented.
 163 What might be the reasons? (00:19:22)

164 P: I talked about culture as well. Another thing is government’s commitment as well.
 165 Finance ministry always have budget related problems when we talk about programme
 166 for early childhood development. They say that they cannot do it. One is the financial
 167 reason ... In our country the budget for development in the last 40 years ... 80% of our
 168 country’s budget is used in construction work like roads, electricity, and bridges. We
 169 talked to the secretary of National Planning Commission when we were working on the
 170 ECD strategy paper. He said that 80% is allocated for construction and the remaining
 171 20% is utilized by other aspects. Certain budget is allocated to the education and within
 172 that less than 2% is allocated for early childhood development. One side they do this and
 173 other side we talk about holistic development and early childhood development... so there
 174 is a problem... financially... in terms of political commitment...

175

176 I: We are financially stable, but we are lacking from priority, right?

177 P: Yes ... We have written in many articles. Education department has published an article
 178 in their annual journal... I have talked about this. Now government cannot rest until they
 179 shift their paradigm. They have a strong political slogan only. They say, “prosperous
 180 Nepal, Happy Nepali”. For 40 years they have been using the budget in construct things...
 181 to fix the road and the bridge ... if they keep spending all the budget on those things then
 182 how will the country develop... country will not develop like this ... They need to rethink
 183 as well. If we increase the budget from 2% to 5%, maybe the early childhood programme
 184 will be double improved ... these are the simple things ... we can simply analyse these
 185 things ... its not that we don’t have... we don’t have integration... health has been
 186 doing... We have nearly 45 thousand volunteers (FCHVs) in MNCH programme. They

187 have been providing health related services. Why are they not involved in early childhood
188 programme? Why did we not run early childhood stimulation programme via them? We
189 have so many health volunteers... world respects them... we have nutrition programme ...
190 Nutrition programme is running separately... like I said about the school before ... it
191 condition is not good... We need to integrate every programme in one ... more than the
192 policy now the programme should go in integrated manner... We need to ensure that any
193 child who is born in any of the 77 districts in this country should receive health, nutrition,
194 protection and early childhood facilities from conception ... (00:22:59)

195
196 I: Sir, you talked about volunteers. You meant FCHV volunteers.

197 P: Yes.

198
199 I: You said that we could not join FCHV in this programme, right? Could you tell me
200 something about this? How can they be involved in this?

201 P: We have problem in thinking as well. Like when we talk about ECD there is a concept
202 that should be a centre... like a kinder garden or nursery school... this is how people
203 perceive... then we need facilitators or teacher, caretakers, and maids. Then we need to
204 cost these... This is all because we have never left our traditional thinking. these
205 volunteers visit home to home they have home to home approach... they meet
206 parents... they work with mothers ... so along with the nutrition and health they should be
207 able to talk about early stimulation. If they can tell the mothers or elder members of
208 family how to do early stimulation activities It would be good if we did via them ...
209 with that health and nutrition, they could also talk about early stimulation. I have seen
210 similar thing in Srilanka in a home-based programme ...village volunteers would work
211 with pregnant and lactating mothers plus early childhood parents together every week on
212 topics related to early stimulation and health, nutrition. We have various modules in early
213 childhood. We do not need to be center based only. Government have been looking for
214 children above 4 years... they have regulated ECD programme ... have provided
215 facilitators and teachers...they have provided money for nutrition programme... but
216 important age group is below that ... There are three groups below 3. Have you seen it?

218 I: Yes.

219 P: Other nations have this problem as well, but this is a severe problem of this in our
 220 country. The mortality and mobility rate are higher in our country below 3 years old.
 221 There is no point of any programme beyond 4 years if the child does not survive at all.
 222 We need to focus on the inputs from pregnancy to early childhood ... this is the reason...
 223 So that the baby right for survival, growth and development... their inborn right could be
 224 ensured this way...
 225

226 I: Sir, you said that FCHV should be involved in programmes like this. Suppose we plan to
 227 run this stimulation programme in existing nutrition programme. Now how should we
 228 take this? How will this effect on their workload and availability? (00:26:26)

229 P: I don't think it will affect Like I said earlier that it will be beneficial for both... if we
 230 stimulate the child well ... their health and nutrition will be good as well many could
 231 have stimulation problem more than nutrition... for example, if parents and children does
 232 not have interactions. No matter how much you talk about nutrition and health... that
 233 child could be mentally weak... Parents are supposed to give this early stimulation to the
 234 kids. So, parents and child should have this kind of interaction should be taught... for
 235 example, if a kid does a mistake, parents beat them immediately... they start beating
 236 when the child is small 6 months – 1 year... if at least we could teach them not to react
 237 like that to the kids... then that will be a right message.... that is why how should parent
 238 behave... beside health and nutrition. early stimulation is not about teaching the kids the
 239 alphabets... it includes interaction and socialization are the most important parts in early
 240 stimulation...singing and making the kids enjoy ...we should teach these things to
 241 them... even the volunteers that we have if we show them how they can include early
 242 stimulation components with the existing regular nutrition and health activities they have
 243 been doing...some of these will be delivered as message... with mother or other
 244 members of family.. we need to talk about various development stages of child with the
 245 parents. We need to talk about mental development as well. Parents need to know this
 246 simple scientifically proven information. For example, auditory organs of children are
 247 fully developed before 3 years old that is why their speech development is better when
 248 they are small. Many parents don't know this ... That is why we say that in early

childhood if children are exposed with various sounds from small age. Not at a loud disturbing volume but at least they should be able to differentiate the sound... It will help in their speech development His listening skills will increase. His speech will be developed if we listen to them as well. If children are exposed from an early age their speech will be better... but what we do... we do not listen to children... and make them do what we want... these simple things are there...for 4-5 days... I think ... these kinds of universally accepted things which are important for early stimulation and social development... if we train these simple things to the volunteers for 10-15 days then definitely there will be a change in their behavior. These volunteers have been assisting the health-related programme now so at the same time this will also go together... That does not mean we are saying close 36000 ECD programmes... we need to understand that as well... because people think “ok we all need to go there and now we don’t need this” ... they could feel like this...we are not saying that... that is not true...one model could be that ... for small children below three years... We can even include this in golden thousand days as well. There are many avenues...

I: one thing is, these volunteers should work together in this new stimulation programme in parallel with the existing nutritional programme in which they have been working, right? This will increase the performance. What might be other avenues? (00:30:38)

P: I have studied in one article that in Nepal there have been experiments of many early childhood development programmes. Have you heard the name of entry point? It was a programme done by *Seto Gurans* ... 35 years ago, *Seto Gurans* did one piloting. There was one project named PCRWH (Production create for rural women) farmer’s project in the late 70’s and 80’s. Ministry of agriculture used to do this project. There was another project named as small farmer’s development project... it was done by Agricultural development bank I think.... talking about how early childhood development started ... not for the child development but to engage their mother, sister, aunts in income generating activities and to separate the child from them ECD programme was started.... It was like a model for Nepal ... Small families who do not have enough members (5 to 7 members), would look after those kids in turn wise... there would not be any teachers involved... They would look after the kids in turn wise manner in a weekly basis. For

280 example, if a parent had 5 years old kid and another parent had 6-year-old kid... then one
281 day one would look after the children and another day another would...these parents
282 were provided certain trainings about things related to health, nutrition and early
283 stimulation. They used to teach parents about how to raise children, how to take care of
284 them and all other things related to toilet trainings. (00:32:43)

285
286 Now this could not happen in our community... I have said many times before... We
287 could not make our piloting programme to the national programme. Like MCH
288 programme I said before... so these kind of programme ...we call it home-based
289 programme. We can also do home based programmes. This is not centre based, but it
290 could be for age group of 4 and 5 ... this is home-based. Many international studies have
291 shown that it does not require to do this programme for 5 days a week or 6 days a week ...
292 we don't even need that.... Running programmes like this twice a week or three times a
293 week also does benefit holistic development in a child. Studies have shown that as well. I
294 think you should talk this with people in the government as well.

295
296 I: Okay, sir I will take this detail. You said that we need to train these FCHV for 5-7 days.

297 P: Yes, not just for 5-7 days. Instead of giving all training at once... it should be given in
298 chunk over a period of time It will be helpful if we provide them training 4 times a
299 year rather than giving 20 times. Like... it is better to give them 5 days of training four
300 times a day instead of giving 20 days of training at a time...

301
302 I: How can we manage this if we run this programme via FCHV?

303 P: There are two three things that comes together... firstly, we need to take this as a
304 national-level programme. Because our aim is to run this programme in 7 provinces and
305 in all 753 local levels as well. It is not a big problem if we do this in 1 or 2 villages or
306 local government. We are also presenting one proposal. It is related with our strategies
307 paper... in accordance with it we are planning to do a pilot programme for a year or
308 two.... from the central level their job is done... National ECD paper is developed ... their
309 job is done... Now main action needs to happen at the local government. So, we have
310 been thinking how local government work on this can... We have been doing trying this

311 from the organization for which I have been working now. We need national commitment
312 for this. We need commitment from the related stakeholders... Without their
313 commitment, nothing will happen here... Political commitment is the main part. This
314 should reach to the province level and then to the local level ultimately. Most important
315 thing is they don't have any realization of what we are talking about. This is important...
316 simply we need to make them understand that if we do such an integrated programme
317 then the rate of return of this programme is high. We need to prepare for a dialogue with
318 them. After the realization, the power and authority that has been given to the local and
319 province level government to make plans, make policies and programme ... they need to
320 use it. this is what I think... I have been working in this field for 25- 30 years. You might
321 see in countries like India, Philippines and Srilanka. There was programme called BKK
322 in Indonesia. They used to say it BINA KABOLA KARON in their native language. The
323 thing we are discussing it right now they have done these 40 years back. When they came
324 to know that programme should be integrated ... what they did was... their president did
325 the initiation ... it is called presidential degree. They made it national programme and
326 commanded finance ministry to allocate budget for this. During the Marcos time in
327 Philippines what they did was... World Bank also did one piloting project for this
328 integrated programme. Marcos declared it national programme after it was successfully
329 completed. You might have heard about ICDS (Integrated child development services) in
330 India in 1979. I did one case study in Delhi... they have high level national commitment
331 there... It took them 3 years for this programme development only. One Indian professor
332 from USA was hired to formulate this programme. They had Agandwadi... like we have
333 FCHVs... but they said that now this programme must be taken forward as an integrated
334 child development programme... It took them 3 years to integrate ICDS programme. It is
335 considered as one of the largest early childhood programmes in the world. They used to
336 criticize it as nutritional programme only... at first it was started as a nutritional
337 programme ... The system we have here is similar as them. The main point is that ICDS
338 programme is a progress of the poor programme. (00:39:54) There are nearly 30 lakh
339 centers. It is in huge number. They have done the things which we are trying to formulate
340 in our ECD strategy paper. Within the ministry of human resource, they made an apex of
341 the inter-ministerial coordination committee of all the ministries of women, children,

education, health. Everyone would stay there. They would pass the plans to the province and local level. Center government at Delhi would allocate certain budget for this programme. For example, for province no. 7, they would allocate certain budget for nutrition, health and early childhood programme for targeted children and work. They have been doing this for past 30-40 years. This is something we can learn as well ... In our ECD center, there is lack of coordination between INGO, NGO, and governmental side ... some from save the children, some from plan ... there has been such division in the ECD centre... This is not how they do it. For example, center government would allocate certain task for ZAIKA with an allocated budget ... that for three years for this province you should do this programme for the nutrition ... central government will allocate the task like this in India ... those who cannot complete the task they ask them to leave... They once commanded UNICEF that they should not do things on their own... they asked them within three months duration to deliver thousands of refrigerators to every health post for inoculation to protect the vaccine storing and medicines. In health sector, they did many works as well. We call many of our health workers as district assistants, AHEBA and all ... it is written in the job description of their health workers that in every child development programme they should do the growth monitoring task ... Teacher is not supposed to do growth monitoring task. A health person is supposed to do this every month. Health personnel have been given the responsibility to look after the nutritional supplement as well. Do we need to send them to a rehabilitation centre or whether it is PEM, calorie malnutrition or micronutrient deficiency? According to that which child, which parent, which pregnant woman what kind of intervention is needed this is all decided by the health personnel... They don't require extra money as it has been mentioned in their job description as well.

- I: We have the same culture in Nepal as well. We don't know about the implementation part, but after understanding the governmental level of work, we found that health worker is doing growth and weight monitoring. (00:43:53)
- P: They don't do the growth monitoring of every child group. They do it for children below two years only... There is a gap in that. They do growth monitoring but there is nothing related to early stimulation. We should use the results of growth monitoring. They need

373 to talk about the nutritional status... what are the remedy, parent's role, what kind of
374 support government will provide, what kind of supplemental nutrition is needed... which
375 is the most important aspect is lacking in our system. Another think is health volunteers
376 or personnel does not go in ECD center. It is separated...

377
378 I: These are not the responsibility of health volunteers. This is the concept. You gave
379 wonderful examples of ECD and how it is going in other countries. WHO has also
380 recommended to launch combined programme of nutrition and stimulation as it benefits
381 the child for growth and development? It has been running from earlier time as well. Sir,
382 which of the ongoing nutritional programme will be the most preferable to launch with
383 stimulation programme? How can we manage this? (00:45:44)

384 P: I talked about multisector nutritional plan. Ministry of health and education is involved in
385 this plan and planning commission made that plan. We made the early childhood national
386 strategy paper. We don't have coordination between us. They think that ECD is a part of
387 that nutrition plan. What we say is nutrition is one of the components of early childhood
388 development. Stimulation and health, protection related aspects are not included in
389 nutrition. This is a problem in here. We did plan with the same planning commission...
390 It could have been done in one instead of two separate programmes. We have spent
391 money and time to build that plan ... we took 1-2 years... and similarly 1-2 years was
392 spent to prepare nutrition plan...

393
394 I: Why is there this gap? How did it arise?

395 P: We don't have a vision from the top level.

396 I: There is no realization like you said.

397 P: We have conceived in the ECD strategy paper that it would be helpful if we form a
398 council.

399 I: How can we reduce this gap in future?

400 P: This can be done in 2 levels. Service delivery is done in low level like inward and in
401 home. We make plans on top level only ... that's why we changed to federal system from
402 unitary government ... the reason for federalism is that the plans made for Kathmandu
403 does not apply same as in MUGU and KARNALI. But not constitutionally these all

authorities have been delegated to the local level. We need to improve capacity building in the local government level. If the local government understands what we have been talking then it is possible... If a ECD center is not running properly, then it will affect the entire village as well. The local parents in the community will face more problems ... parents are people of the same community... Plans and policies should be made at the low level to strengthen the system ... Funding and facilitation should be done from the top level. Because money is all collected by the federal government, the Education ministry gets billions of rupees in the budget allocation, and they provide 1.6% only for ECD. And they tell us to do ... but that is not things will work... They should provide more than 1.6% ... 6%... or how much they can... they should increase the budget and send it to the local government for this programme. The budget is also sent in two ways ... one is for a dedicated task and other is just sent unallocated... initially they used to send for ECD but now it has been two years they send budget without any allocation ... when education is mentioned... the focus goes on schooling not on ECD... They are concerned with more participation of children in school and improving the results in SLC and plus two level. In school, small children gets neglected and then not just in their behaviour but small children get neglected in funding as well. According to my research they have been providing 6000 rupees for ECD facilitators... they are appointed as ECD facilitator but all they do is teach the student in classes 1-6. This is because school has its own priorities. they focus on higher-level classes, not the small level...this should be reversed now... We have more challenges in early childhood development. What should be explained to the schools is that if a kid is not performing well in his SLC level, maybe that is because he was not doing well in ECD. They have not been prepared well to read and write...we need to explain them this... People expect results sooner. if they pay money for tuitions and coaching then the child might get good result in 12. They have bigger pride in that... but for a small child...they cannot wait for 10-12 years for the result ... this is a problem.... We did consultation in many villages before publishing that research paper. They say we know this, but we get votes by building bridge and building school ... this is also a problem...

434 I: That is why this sector is not focused and it is a challenging part to run stimulation
 435 programme.

436 P: Yes

437 I: Sir, we talked about the strategies from the top level. The work is done by the local
 438 government. Suppose local government applies these policies and wants to run this
 439 programme in community level, how should they run this to run it smoothly?

440 P: Of 7, 5 provinces have made provincial level strategy paper, or they are in process of
 441 making that document...

442

443 I: ECD related?

444 P: Yes, ECD related strategy paper are being developed at provincial level... National
 445 strategy paper is the reference document for this. They have been working based on the
 446 national ECD strategy about how they can do in the provincial level... Local level is the
 447 main factor for this.

448

449 I: How can we launch this?

450 P: We have made a guidebook two years ago. UNICEF funded this and it was made with the
 451 collaboration of education ministry and general affairs ministry. We have developed a
 452 guidebook related to early childhood development. It talks about know how... like what is
 453 ECD, why is this important...how does it contribute to the development of children or the
 454 community... this guidebook has all the guidelines for the local government. It has been
 455 published by the education ministry and general affairs ministry. It has topics like
 456 stimulation, health, and nutrition and how these things are interrelated with each other.
 457 How is health affected by the nutrition and stimulation? How this programme is operated
 458 worldwide and how is this being operated in our country. It is printed in Nepali. I don't
 459 think it is in English. You should see that in website. People won't apply this if they are
 460 not aware. We had given orientation of one day at local level in maybe 4-5
 461 municipalities. They respond well about the programme related to child. They said, "we
 462 had never gathered like this and talked about children. We talked about school and how
 463 to build school that is related to children above six years... but for small children we had
 464 never thought like this ..."

465 I: I have experience while in data collection in my interview courses. People are just not
 466 aware of the programme.

467 P: Long time back I did an action research project for 4 years with a research center. It was
 468 action research... This research made me attracted toward early childhood development.
 469 After that project [X] funded for my PHD. We did this in Dolakha, Kavre and Mahottari.
 470 We did pilot in 9 sectors. It was “preschool education for better nutrition”. We gave few
 471 subsidies, but the community was supposed to do all the work for that. We have a strong
 472 community in our country. For instance, there was a place in the Kavre district. We did
 473 talking’s with the leaders and then with the community people. We talked with 100
 474 people. People were carrying loads on their back at that time. We made them aware about
 475 the programme and talked with them about the benefits of child development. He said “I
 476 am 80 years old now. I have never discussed about kids-related topic in my life. We talk
 477 about buffalos and how to extract more milk from them. We talk about roads and
 478 electricity only. But this we have never done”. So, they had some money and then they
 479 immediately made ECD center within the four months’ time. They used to sell milk and
 480 collect money as tax ... they are called users’ group.... They had lots of money but did
 481 not know where to invest it. after we talked with them, they found a road... So, they
 482 invested in this project... This is an example... That was a long time back but still the
 483 situation is same ...

484

485 I: This was a long time back, but there are a lot of communities where we find similar types
 486 of things. We hear similar things in the community as well.

487 P: Please go on. Have you done any review regarding integrating this stimulation
 488 programme?

489 I: I did systemic review and meta-analysis review as well. I have studied about the efficacy
 490 of integrated programme and intervention characteristics components. I studied about
 491 those components which changes the effectiveness of the interventions. Since in the
 492 context of Nepal, we are still lacking in policies and all.

493 P: If you ask this to the people in the planning commission, then it would be more
 494 beneficial.

495 I: You said earlier about lack of realization, no coordination in the inter-sector, no funding,
 496 no resources have been allocated.

497 P: There is a low priority in the local level as well. Let me tell you an interesting story. I did
 498 one case study. According to the mother's priority preference, child health comes in 4th
 499 place. Priority is cattle, as they keep cows and buffalos for milk. If they are not fed well
 500 then they will not give milk... so women wake up early in the morning to feed these
 501 domestic animals. They take care of these animals and 2nd thing they do is take the
 502 fertilizers and all in their field. After that, they think about food to feed the family. After
 503 that only they feed milk to the child.

504 I: 4th?

505 P: Yes. Even at home children fall in fourth priority... this shows they are least preferred...
 506 but children should have been prioritized at first ... according to the delicacy ... That is
 507 why many of these kids are separated from their mothers. They are left alone for hours...
 508 It hampers their physical and mental development. This is the reason why we talk about
 509 early stimulation. If you look at the government, even the Mayors from local government
 510 they say... "this is a nice thing but if we spend more on physical development then we
 511 get higher votes..." we have this kind of problems...in education there are more than
 512 thirty-four thousand schools in this country, and more than that we have ECD centers...
 513 but if we see the budget, less than 2% has been allocated to ECD programme. Like I said
 514 National Planning Commission have prepared multisector nutrition plan and as well as
 515 ECD plan as well. But they have not yet looked what could be merged while planning
 516 these... it is a problem...
 517

518 I: What are the opportunities that you have seen? One you said that we have enough
 519 volunteers. We could use them as well. What are the opportunities to run this ECD and
 520 stimulation programme? (1:02:54)

521 P: There are couple of opportunities. Constitutionally early childhood development right has
 522 been listed as a fundamental right ... this is a big opportunity. Because of this only, all
 523 governments were compelled and ECD strategy papers have been made. Because ECD is
 524 a constitutional right. If tomorrow the child does not get the constitution right, then there
 525 will be a problem... Another thing is for a long-time health, nutrition and early childhood

stimulation should be delivered in an integrated manner ... ECD does not mean only stimulation... it is a holistic development of child.... many documents have said these things... If you see in SDG, out of 17, 11 have been found to be directly related to early childhood development. From a legal and policy point of view, we are very strong. We are weak in our culture of working in isolation... sector-based working concept is a problem and second is we lack in political commitment because of vested interest... because the return in result is slow so it is difficult for us ... so political leaders and LG don't want to directly invest in ECD... another thing is we have low awareness level among people.

I: Sir, how can we break this barrier? These strategies will break some of these barriers certainly. Policies from the provincial level will make the local level to take some actions. How can we break these barriers? (1:05:08)

P: It is hard to break these barriers overnight. We need to plan to run couple of piloting programme whose tangible and positive results could be seen in couple of years. We should go in the community with poor, marginalized and disadvantaged community. It is more important for survival, growth, and development for them because they have low nutrition levels, they have low health indicators, and early stimulation is poor. Many studies have shown the difference of children achievement between those with educated parents and uneducated parents ...they have a significant correlation... If we could work in these communities, the result will open the eyes of the government. we don't have data at national level... We need to generate this data by ourselves at national level. This will be evidence-based then. We have been trying... We cannot show someone else's data for programme in this country... We need to show in Nepal. Action speaks louder they say...

I: what factors can help in the sustainability of this programme?

P: Sustainability can be seen in two-three ways... If the parents and local parents are aware of the need of early childhood, it will automatically make this programme sustainable. Another part is financial aspects. Many organizations have run many types of sustainability programme. but they were not successful so far. They say "*Muthi daan*" (giving a hand full) Some of them made plans of keeping the money in fixed deposit and

then run the programme from the interest they get. We need to strengthen community level now rather than the local level. We need to strengthen their “know how” ... if we can strengthen their sustainability then they will give more effort for programme sustainability... because they will feel there... either it is centre based, or home-based or it is done through the volunteers they will see the direct benefit... family will feel this... what was the situation when the programme was not there and what were the changes brought by the programme... what were the changes in the children, family, in the behaviour of the parents, the local people will see this... it is important to show this change because that helps to sustain the programme...? but only financial aspect won't make this programme sustainable. Financial aspect is important, but sustainability is not just due to financial availability... There is a programme in Zimbabwe and Australia. Have you heard COW project?

I: COW project in Australia?

P: This programme was initiated by our friends in USA. This programme was done in village of Australia. In this programme, someone would donate cow to ECD center. ECD management committee now raise this cow. They use cow dung as manure in the field of ECD center. They use the milk to feed children would make those children to take care of the cow. When the cow give birth to a calf. This calf should be donated to the next center. This is one sustainable module. they give the responsibility. We are planning to do a similar approach in one community as well. Money is needed for sustainability so use local people ... local users' group helps in the income generation. Once we did run one programme for the orphanage. We surveyed first what kind of income generating activity could be done... there were two things... homestay and handicraft... We found that homestay was feasible and be good for income generation... we worked with hotel management to train people about running homestay and 10 families run homestay. 20% of the income generated from the homestay was allocated for the ECD programme. We had done this... We can do this in our new project as well. We have scopes for agriculture, horticulture, and medicinal plants as well in our village. We can tie up income generation and ECD programme as well. It could be locally sustained. That does not mean that government has no role there... Income generation at local level could be

588 helped in some extend. It increases some ownership as well. They don't have to be
 589 dependent on others. At the same time province government also could provide some
 590 money, funding, trainings etc. as well.

591 I: Sir, in context of Nepal, it is the best opportunity to use local resources in the market. It is
 592 a good concept to sustain projects like this.

593 P: But outsiders should not say them to adopt this concept. This should be community-
 594 based. Let them decide and let them take responsibility. What will work and what will
 595 not work instead of us saying this to them they should say...

596

597 I: It will help them understand their strength and weakness as well. They will be
 598 accountable as well. Sir, we found a couple of things from the community. Please provide
 599 us with some feedback. Both community people and health workers have been saying
 600 about the provision of incentives. It will be insufficient if we must work for the combined
 601 programme. This is from health workers point of view. Whether they are FCHV or
 602 anyone from health post. Community people ask for incentives as well. Yes, this
 603 programme is meant for us and our child. But why should we participate unless we are
 604 provided with any facilities and incentives? This is a trend. It is hard to do community
 605 work. What can we do overcome this?

606 P: service providers let's say volunteers... they cannot remain volunteers forever... they will
 607 be teaching about the early stimulation ... they will be giving more time to the parents...
 608 that time must be compensated... but if users group is looking for incentive, then that is
 609 difficult, and we have spoilt the system.... because we have seen NGO's have been
 610 providing 200-400 rupees to them for attending a meeting for an hour. This is where
 611 things went wrong... we have seen this and experienced it... In one project, when we
 612 conducted a meeting for an hour, they asked for money. In that place if they work for a
 613 whole day, they do not earn 200 rupees, but we give them 400 rupees for attending a
 614 meeting... so we are spoiling them... if that project does not go there then they will be
 615 suffering...they will not get the benefits... They don't see the long-term benefit. Instead,
 616 they seek for allowance for attending meeting... this has been spoiling the situation... we
 617 talked about those 9 centers in each three districts there was similar thing... the main
 618 thing is we cannot put everyone in one basket. Some people don't take the money... We

619 called people in our orientation before publishing this guidebook. Some people did not
620 take money. We need to promote this. It Is not possible to give all the time... We cannot
621 say we will give mothers 10 rupees more if you feed your child.... But we could provide
622 them with technical information or any other support as well. It is not logical nor
623 practiced as well to provide incentives to the beneficiaries.

624

625 I: What can we do then?

626 P: We should not take any programme from the outside. Now we should not do this. Let the
627 local people under the local government take this decision. Right now, this is the
628 problem... there is one programme from plan... another from Save the children... another
629 from JAICA... they are giving this they are giving that... we are spoiling those people...

630

631 I: They should go through the local government?

632 P: Programme should be owned by the local government. Or if others are taking the
633 programme, they should be flexible. Let them (community people) take decisions. We
634 should give ideas and technical support only. If they need training, we can give them
635 training for 4 days. But we need to leave all the organizing responsibilities everything to
636 the local.

637

638 I: How can we manage on the funding then?

639 P: First there should be a sustainability plan. Because we cannot support all the time. It is
640 okay to provide supplements for a nutritional programme. But what we say is we can
641 provide a subsidy for 1 or 2 of years only we will not do everything... we need their
642 contribution as well. We had done this before... there was nutrition programme and
643 supplementation were provided but what we said that we will be able to support for this
644 many years and after that you should be able to sustain this... so they will have to provide
645 a sustainability plan beforehand... They must contribute from the beginning as well. This
646 process is important... otherwise they will think they are doing the programme for us...
647 for example, it will look like if they are eating rice, they are eating for you... they will eat
648 but they will make it look like they are eating for us... because we have exploit people
649 from outside (meaning programme outside the government) ... this is a huge problem...

650

651 I: If we see the trend, local government in collaboration with the ward, goes to the local
652 level. After those volunteers are mobilized. We talked about the problems of top level.
653 What problems might occur in the local level as well?

654 P: I don't have much experience in this. Those who work in health, nutrition, education, and
655 protection all should have one...I gave an example of India and how they were
656 coordinating. The job description of doctor from AIMS hospital or AHEBA of health
657 post are properly defined in India... you need to do this task every month in the ECD
658 centre as in your area... they have defined this already... This is possible at local level...
659 What is beneficial here is that the local level government is responsible for all health,
660 nutrition education. They don't have many ministries... It is easier for them because only
661 one body is looking at all these... I think it needs to be done. Like anyone that should be
662 mobilized like paid unpaid or volunteers ... like health personnel, teachers and everyone
663 gets paid from the local level ... Before paying the teachers, it should be clearly stated in
664 their job description that they should do this health-related work as well... similarly
665 Health worker's additional work should also be allocated in their job description.
666 Otherwise, it is not possible to work in coordination...

667

668 I: Sir, what community people says that NGO/INGO people should come to teach us. They
669 know more. They don't believe their local people if they come and try to teach them.
670 They want outsiders to come and run this programme. They are okay if volunteers come
671 there and teach them but their supervisors or the person who leads them should be
672 NGO/INGO. They know more. What are your thoughts on that?

673 P: We have spoilt this. Even in Kathmandu, people wish if the trainer were a foreigner.
674 They give more value to them even if they don't know much. It is a mentally colonial
675 concept. It happens... Outsider person cannot do this and sustain it. rather than in words
676 they should feel in the activity ... how has a facilitator or health workers has helped
677 parents... If they ask for outsider people, then we need avail that too. But it won't be
678 sustainable, and it will be expensive.

679

680 I: How can we manage this then?

681 P: We can provide basic training for capacity building for health workers or ED facilitators
682 or teachers via INGO/NGO... They should show some expertise in their field as well.
683 Seeing only foreigners is not going to solve anything. It will be effective in the long run
684 as well if we can reduce the preference of outsiders (NGO and INGO). People in
685 Kathmandu also face this problem. They don't care what a Nepali person is doing but
686 they want to see foreign people as well.
687

688 I: How can local government and NGO work in combined form? You said one way also.
689 You said we should go via local government without exposing ourselves. Are there any
690 options rather than that? Not all programme goes via local government in today's context.
691 They go via NGO/INGO too. How can we unite this?

692 P: Local government has been strengthening recently. Some programmes also bypass them
693 as well. Social welfare Council is trying to put them all in one channel... If any NGO
694 from KARNALI needs to be registered in Karnali and not in Kathmandu... they are
695 planning to do this... This means they are responsible now. This policy is good. We
696 cannot say all NGO are good or all NGOs are bad. Even it goes to INGOs as well... There
697 was various INGO in California which were supporting programmes in Nepal. But we
698 have about 120 INGO's registered in Nepal. They have 400 INGO in California. So, this
699 is fake... I have visited them as well. They have done fairs in Nepal as well. INGO/NGO
700 have another history as well. We should focus on low level when we talk about ECD and
701 health and, nutrition programme. They need this programme. But they should be
702 monitored. There are social welfare council as well... some people from SWC might also
703 negotiate about the facilities which they are about to get. They might need money for
704 monitoring and renewing. Centralized system has been spoiling them as well. It will
705 check and well balance when it goes to local level.
706

707 I: Sir, I am going to ask last question. Sir, you have already said that we need to mobilize
708 FCHV in community level as well. We talked about their workload also. When talking to
709 them, they said that they are okay with the additional work, but their incentives and
710 facilities should be increased as well. They are okay with the workload. What is your
711 saying on this?

712 P: They cannot be volunteers for a lifetime. In India, constitutionally they cannot fire people
713 who have served for more than 15 years. They have this constitution right in private or in
714 NGO. You are entitled to permanent if you have worked for more than 15 years. In ICDS
715 in Agandawadi programme, there are more than 3 million people there. They are
716 protected by the constitution, so they win. They have rights. In our context, health
717 volunteers only receive money at the time of trainings and campaigns like polio and
718 vaccine distribution other time s they work for free... This thing is not good. They should
719 be paid minimum according to hours they work...

720
721 I: They have been paid 2000 monthly.

722 P: Minimum wage should be given by the government according to their work hours. And
723 now how much they add to this... if they were working for seven hours and if one hour
724 was added then they must pay accordingly by the government... if they don't invest, we
725 won't get any fruit... We cannot take them for granted in the name of volunteers.

726
727 I: Yes. Exactly.

728 P: It is not like our government does not have fund for this. Even INGO/NGO in Nepal
729 could not spend more than 60-70%. According to my understanding of 5-7 local
730 government, their budget of 20 to 30 crore gets lapsed every year. It is not that we don't
731 have money. Our country is like this because They don't trust people. They also think
732 that if we begin to give money then we may not be able to sustain so they don't give...

733
734 I: Sir, we talked many things today. I only had these things to ask. Now let me summarize
735 things what we have talked so far. We talked about the strategies in Nepal. You also
736 talked about the problems. You said that cultural aspect is also a problem. There are
737 enough ECD centers but there is less focus on kids who are below 3 years old. We can
738 use volunteers in community. It would be our best opportunity if we could use volunteers
739 in any of the additional programmes. We have strong legal policies and strategies. It is a
740 better opportunity for us from these 3 stages of government, as each government could
741 utilize the resources as needed. We don't have realization in any level. That is why there
742 is a lag in prioritization. Everyone focusses on their areas only and they want to

collaborate with other areas. Outsider's people should not expose themselves while going in the community. Rather they should go via local government. Community should be made aware, and they should realize this on their own for making it more sustainable. We should also support them as well. We lacked in evidence as well. If we could provide evidence from pilot programme as well, we could take ECD in national level rather than local level. Do you have to add anything to you?

P: We do have a habit of putting things behind, as now everything has been given to local government... If you talk to the federal and provincial level, they will say these responsibilities have been given to them. They don't give money, they do not give programme, but they give responsibility. how will it work... That is why early childhood development's status has been degraded now. Earlier, they used to send 2% budget. Now they have not sent any budget for 2 years. So, we don't know if at local level they will give preference. They have other priority... So now the government should make this a central or federal level programme... and then every year for all municipality and ward they should allocate budget for this programme.

I: it involves monitoring as well?

P: We need budget firstly. If federal level won't give money, then nothing will happen... But then again only federal government does not need to everything... Provincial and local level also look after this. Not just budget but there are many managerial parts as well like human resources development, training, and materials. Center level should do all the monitoring, feedback, and evaluation. This is need of the day.

I: Thank you sir.

End of the Interview
