



# The Status of Teacher Education and Development in Nepal

Case study 2: Madhesh Province

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# 1. Introduction

This is one of three provincial case studies conducted as part of a study of teacher education and development in Nepal commissioned by the British Council. The case studies form annexes<sup>1</sup> to the main report, which provides full details of the objectives and methodology of the study. Overall, though, the goals of the research were to understand current approaches to teacher education and development in Nepal, with a focus on basic education teachers and secondary teacher of English, science and mathematics, and to make recommendations for improving the support teachers receive at both pre-service and in-service levels.

The fieldwork for this case study in Madhesh was conducted by Vertex Consult in the period 16–21 October 2022. The fieldwork schedule is included in the appendix and it

consisted of a series of individual and group meetings with a range of stakeholders, including:

- university lecturers and campus chiefs
- schoolteachers
- school principals
- education officials at federal, provincial, district and municipality levels.

In Madhesh, a total of 86 stakeholders contributed to individual and group meetings. All meetings were conducted face-to-face in Nepali and, with consent, audio recorded. The discussions lasted 30–60 minutes.

The results of the qualitative work in Madhesh are presented below, starting with the pre-service context. This report was drafted by Vertex Consult and finalised by Simon Borg.

# 2. Pre-service teacher education

The fieldwork related to pre-service teacher education was conducted at Ramshwaroop Ramsagar Multiple Campus, Janakpur, of Tribhuvan University in Dhanusha district and in S.S.M. Yadav Campus located in Siraha in Siraha district, which is an affiliated campus of Tribhuvan University.

## 2.1 Status of teaching profession

Although teaching is generally a respected profession in Nepali society, the lecturers working in pre-service teacher education in Madhesh felt undervalued in relation to other professions (particularly in terms of salary). They also felt that, despite their good reputation, they were dissatisfied with several aspects of their work. One was the pressure they were under to reward students:

I feel proud to be a lecturer, but my dignity is lessened when I tend to teach in the classrooms. I hardly find few

students in the regular classes. More often, many of them even do not stay for whole class. But, the students feel they deserve to get more marks and grades for which they pressurize us. Students are more focused on the marks and grades than the quality of teaching and learning activities. (Lecturer)

Lack of sufficient staffing was another challenge noted by the lecturers and which they felt interfered with the quality of education that students received:

There are a large number of students but no teachers in some subjects such as geography and political science. As a result, we have to tolerate unnecessary pressure from the side of students and related stakeholders. More importantly, we cannot recruit part-time teachers these days due to a lack of policy provision. TU does not provide us with any resources or allocate sufficient budget. After all, there is serious impact for the teaching and learning of students in the campus. (Campus chief)

<sup>1</sup><https://www.britishcouncil.org.np/status-teacher-education-and-development-nepal>

Lecturers also felt that their expertise was undervalued and underutilised by the government:

I know people respect teachers and even obey them. But, I realize only respect does not fulfil our needs and other requirements. We are devalued in comparison to other intellectual professions. The government is not able to utilize us in many aspects. In many cases, we are not prioritized for the activities for which we are most suited. (Lecturer)

This situation affected the motivation of lecturers and this was compounded by a lack of opportunities for professional development:

I have been teaching in this campus for several years. Frankly to say, I have neither got any opportunity to enhance my teaching methodologies nor for other professional development. There is no favourable environment in the campus to adopt new methodologies and use of resources. I am totally demotivated with such circumstances. With the feeling of demotivation, I feel too awkward to explore more. In fact, how can a teacher deliver well with the feeling of demotivation? (Lecturer)

In relation to the status of teaching in Nepal more generally, lecturers were concerned about the decreasing number of students joining education faculties and the impact this would have on the teaching workforce in the years ahead. Additionally, many of those students who did study education did not seem to have the attributes required for them to be effective professionals:

I have observed the situation of vacuum of availability of good teachers in some of the specific subjects in the school level. On the one hand, there is less enrolment of students in education faculty, and on the other, students have less interest in the teaching profession. Moreover, the students also have less desire to enrich their knowledge. This is obvious during the practicum, which many students do not take seriously. How can they become a good teacher without a practicum? (Lecturer)

One factor contributing to decreasing interest in teaching as a profession was the difficulty of securing a position in a school. According to head teachers, this was a result of government policy:

Thirty years ago, the government allocated four teacher posts in those schools where students took the SLC exam. Since then the government has not allocated any additional teacher posts in these schools. But, there has been an increase in the number of students by 30 times at present. Isn't there any role of the government in the education sector? Should the government not take ownership for educational development? (Head teacher)

## 2.2 Education programmes

In Madhesh Province, TU offers Bachelor's (four years) and Master's level (two years, four semesters) programmes, including several streams in the Bachelor's of Education (B.Ed.) programme, which we focus on here. According to the lecturers, there was sufficient enrolment in English, mathematics and science education programmes, although the number of students taking mathematics education had decreased in recent years. One of the lecturers felt this was both because mathematics was more challenging and because the level of students gaining admittance to education programmes had fallen:

Relatively, Mathematics is more difficult than other subjects. Students need to be more creative and devoted. But I have seen the students do not want to labour hard. At the same time, there has been a loose examination system at plus 2 level and hence the graduation of many more academically weaker students as well. The students are inclined to choose relatively easy subjects and hence, the number of students has decreased in Mathematics education. (Lecturer)

## 2.3 Programme design

TU informants were asked about the content of the B.Ed. programme for English (see Table 1). All courses are worth 100 marks and assessed theoretically (i.e. through written examinations, typically focusing on knowledge recall and often utilizing multiple-choice questions – 'Th' in the 'Assessment' column in the table). A minority of courses also involved some practical assignments ('P' in the Assessment column). Only two courses (ELT Methods and Teaching Practice) seem to focus on the development of student teachers' practical teaching competences, suggesting that these competences remain under-developed when students graduate.

**Table 1: ELT Courses on Tribhuvan University B.Ed.**

	Course no.	Course title	Assessment	Mark
<b>First year</b>	Core Courses			
	Eng.Ed.411	General English	Th	100
	Major Courses			
	Eng.Ed.416	Foundation of Language and Linguistics	Th	100
	Eng.Ed.417	Reading, Writing and Critical Thinking	Th	100
	Minor subjects			
	Eng.Ed.418	Foundation of Lan & Ling	Th	100
<b>Second year</b>	Core Courses			
	Ed.421	Educational Psychology	Th	100
	Eng.Ed.422	Reading in English	Th/P	80+20
	Eng.Ed.423	Expanding Horizons in English	Th	100
	Eng.Ed.424	English For Communication	Th	100
<b>Third year</b>	Core courses			
	Ed.431	Curriculum & Evaluation	Th	100
	Major Courses			
	Eng.Ed.432	English Language Teaching Methods	Th/P	80+20
	Eng.Ed.433	English for Mass Communication	Th	100
	Eng.Ed.434	Academic Writing	Th	100
<b>Fourth year</b>	Core Courses			
	Ed.441	Teaching Practice	Th	100
	Ed.442	Instruction Technology		
	OR			
	ICT In Education			
	OR			
	ICT in Specialized Subject			
	Major Courses			
	Eng.Ed.445	Translation Theory and Practice	Th/P	80+20
	Eng.Ed.446	Literature for Language Development	Th	100

In the case of TU, the curriculum and syllabus for education programmes are regularly updated, but the lecturers are not involved in the process (according to one lecturer, ‘we have been continuing the ritualistic activities of teaching and learning in the campus but we mostly don’t know about the changed curriculum and syllabus’). The work is managed centrally by TU, but the lecturers had no knowledge of who precisely did it. When programmes were updated, lecturers received instructions and were expected to follow these. Additionally, they did not receive any training

to help them become familiar with the new curriculum.

## 2.4 Teaching approach

Lecturers were aware of the gap between the modern teaching methods they were aware of and their actual pedagogical practices on education programmes. One professor of mathematics, for example, explained that:

The public campuses are not able to change as per the changed scenario. We are aware of the modern method of teaching and we can diligently use PowerPoint presentations and other modern methods. But, we



cannot implement them all in our classes due to lack of resources and unsupportive environment in the campus. So, we are compelled to use the same traditional lecture method whether the students benefit or not. Mostly, we the lecturers of Mathematics are suffering a lot. We cannot show the three dimensional figures to the students due to lack of modern tools. (Professor)

## 2.5 Teaching practice

All B.Ed. students complete a period of school teaching in their final year. The respective campuses allocate the students to a nearby school, although students are free to make arrangements at other schools too. They are supposed to prepare 30 lesson plans for 45 days and conduct teaching practice regularly according to a schedule set up by the school principal. Students are visited and assessed by university lecturers at least three times. One lecturer stated that ‘we visit the school and monitor their practicum as well. Moreover, we provide feedback to them for their improvement.’

Lecturers had differing views about the effectiveness of the teaching practice course; some felt it was beneficial, but others were more critical, noting that many students did not take the practicum seriously, did not teach as much as they are required to and were treated leniently when they were assessed. Some

lecturers also highlighted school principals’ dissatisfaction with the commitment and performance of student teachers during the practicum.

## 2.6 Alignment with Teacher Service Commission (TSC) examination

Graduates wanting to secure a state teaching position must pass the TSC examination – their university qualification does not suffice. University lecturers were, though, frustrated by the lack of alignment between the TSC and education programmes and the lack of co-ordination between universities and the TSC. Lecturers played no role in the design of the test or in the assessment of candidates:

It is said there should be co-ordination between the teacher-producing agencies and their selection agencies. But I am afraid, we are completely ignored and regarded as inferior. I am really surprised why the concerned agencies devalue the professors and other lecturers especially in the selection of the teachers. After all, we produce the teachers and we know about the requirements of teachers. (Professor)

The content of education programmes was not aligned with the content of the TSC, and this, according to lecturers, was one factor that contributed to the increasing fail rates on the examination.

# 3. CPD

This section focuses on continuing professional development (CPD) provision for teachers in Madhesh Province. The insights reported here were obtained through interviews and group discussions with school teachers, school principals and education authorities at the provincial, district and municipality level.

## 3.1 The need for CPD

The role of CPD in teacher quality was universally recognised but it was also acknowledged that teachers did not have access to sufficient teacher development

opportunities. One of the education unit heads explained that:

We have been advocating for quality education in schools. We are trying to enhance it and conducting 4–5 days of capability development training for the teachers at different levels. I know training for limited days will not suffice for the real needs of teachers. There must be continuous and regular support for them. (Education officer)

A head teacher, too, felt that while teachers did make efforts to provide quality education, they need more regular training to improve their teaching methods:

All of us are advocating for quality education, but without competent teachers, it's too tough. No doubt, the teachers are also working for enriching quality education. Indeed, many of them have got TPD as well. But, the trend of teaching is completely changed at the moment. They deserve to be trained in modern methods which they are lacking in our context. So, I demand to provide them refresher trainings very often at least every year. I am sure such CPD will boost motivation and refreshment for the teachers for enhancing quality education. (Head teacher)

The issue of responsibility for funding teacher CPD also arose in our discussions. Schools have access to subsidies from the education department at central level (these have to be used in certain ways) and subsidies from the municipality (which are allocated without conditions). According to education unit officials, head teachers prefer to use subsidies for improving school infrastructure rather than CPD and expect additional funds for CPD to be provided centrally.

### 3.2 Teacher induction

The study team had hoped to organise meetings with newly appointed teachers, but it was found that no new appointments had been made in state schools in Madhesh for some time. At the time of the fieldwork, the most recent TSC results had just been published, and selection interviews were about to take place. We did speak to teachers who had previously been selected through the TSC process, and they all agreed that they had not received any induction training after their appointment. So, once again, even though the importance of such training was acknowledged by the education authorities, there was a gap between what was considered important and what happened in practice.

### 3.3 CPD as centralised training

At the training centre at Janakpur, where the main focus was on TPD training, it was felt that there was a big gap between the centre's capacity and the demand for training:

There are hundreds of schools and thousands of aspiring teachers for the training, but, we have limited budget, quota and manpower as well. The aspiring teachers are so huge that if we keep on providing opportunity for every

one of them, it might take several years to get their turn for the training. Moreover, by the time, a teacher gets an opportunity for next round of training, he/she may forget the previous knowledge of training. (Education officer)

Even at municipal level, education units noted that 'there was limited budget allocation to education'; one official cited a figure of one million rupees that had been allocated for refresher training.

These funding issues highlight a problem with a CPD system that relies on central training – teachers will get limited opportunities to take part. In fact, while during our meetings with teachers in Madhesh about 50 per cent said they had attended TPD training, for many of them this had been many years previously. There was, therefore, a great demand among teachers for 'refresher training'.

Teachers had mixed opinions about the quality of the training they had attended. Several were not satisfied:

I had a great expectation of learning some new ideas to excel in the teaching profession. I was quite eager in the first day. But, all of my expectations went in vain when the trainer started training. I didn't find any new ideas other than simply some copy pasted slides from internet. I was expecting how to solve the problems of effective teaching in the classroom. But, I could not find any of solution for that. (Teacher)

I was surprised on the method adopted in the training centre by the trainer. The trainer used to tell us to discuss about the problem among each other in the training hall. After all, we expected to learn something new from the trainer. I didn't find the trainer very confident on the content as well. I was wondering whether only I was not satisfied but the other participants too were not enjoying. There were a lot of complains about the trainer. In one of the sessions, I took over from him and other participants liked it and insisted that I take the class for the rest of the days. (Teacher)

Education officials acknowledged such complaints but did feel that (as some teachers confirmed) much good-quality training was provided. Teachers' dissatisfaction, it was felt, was also sometimes of a more personal nature:

Occasionally, we get complaints about the effectiveness of the training. We have many experienced resource persons and trainers who are really good in delivering training. I have attended their training myself as well. In our context, teachers are guided by personal feelings – ‘How can a person in a similar post deliver training to them? How can he train us?’ Yet, I don’t mean everyone is competent enough. Hence, there should be change of trainers more often. They must be provided with trainer training regularly. (Education officer)

Teachers also noted that head teachers did not always given them permission to attend TPD due to the disruption caused when teachers were away for ten days:

There are few teachers in the school and classes are hampered a lot when some teachers remain absent. As TPD training is conducted for 10 days, our principal rarely sends the teachers for training due to disturbance of classes in the school. But, some of us attended the online TPD. It was quite fruitful for the school as well as the teachers. In one way, the classes were not hampered and in another way, we learnt new ideas. (Teacher)

### 3.4 Independent CPD

Although CPD was strongly linked to centralised training, during discussions with teachers and head teachers various examples were highlighted of teachers pursuing their development more independently. Informal discussions among teachers about the subject matter they taught were commonly mentioned, while some teachers also said they searched online for ideas and activities for their teaching. The Covid-19 pandemic had also provided a stimulus for teachers to improve their online teaching skills:

During COVID-19 pandemic, the schools were closed. But, the school initiated the online teaching and trained us. As we were accustomed with the physical classroom and lecture method of teaching, I had troubles for online teaching initially. But, later on, I started enjoying online teaching. In fact, it boosted my self-confidence. I found it even more effective as we can share the documents, videos and other resources and even check the assignments submitted by the students. For instance, I was able to learn GeoGebra [a mathematics app] and guided the students to it. If there was no online teaching, I am sure I would never learn about it. (Teacher)



Head teachers felt that such interest in independent CPD, and teacher development generally, was more evident in younger teachers, while more experienced teachers were generally seen to be less motivated to change:

There are many senior teachers in our school. Of course they are experienced but I have not found them much interested in change. They generally follow a traditional method of teaching and are against technology. There is no trend of self-study and use of resources for teaching. I have seen them teaching without preparation. Despite several attempts to introduce changes in the school, I have not been successful. I do not get support from the teachers. In fact, there is no hard and fast system for reward and punishment for the teachers in the school. (Head teacher)

Teacher motivation and accountability were also highlighted as challenges by the education authorities:

In our public schools, many of the teachers are not very interested in teaching. Many of them lack will- power and are not accountable to their profession. Some of the teachers tend to see teaching only as a job. They expect others to support them rather than updating themselves. This lack of will-power among the teachers is hindering their CPD. (Education officer)

### 3.5 Teacher professional support

Teacher professional support (TPS) consists of collaborative and school-based mechanisms – such as mentoring and peer observation – that are intended to provide ongoing and less centralised opportunities for teacher growth. The evidence obtained from Madhesh suggests that, since the move to federalism



and the devolution of responsibility for TPS to local authorities, effective TPS had yet to be established. Head teachers and teacher trainers were supportive of TPS, but were deterred by the increased workload it created for them:

I am a teacher trainer and have been conducting training for the teachers for several years. In my school, I support the teachers in preparation of educational materials, conduct model classes and occasionally class observation of the teachers. As I am teacher trainer, I am often away from the school and am over-loaded with other administrative work, so my support for the teachers is somehow limited. (Teacher trainer)

During discussions with teachers, they did not provide any examples of TPS they had been involved in, and their understanding of professional development was linked very closely to TPD training. One head teacher, though, did describe a TPS activity in which subject teachers from different schools met to share experience and in some cases even exchanged classes for a while:

Once, our municipality made a system of exchanging the subject teachers in nearby schools. Really, it was nice and teachers had an opportunity to learn and share their expertise. As a matter of which some of our teachers were exchanged with other schools. They made their efforts from their side. But, I observed students had less advantage from it. As the teachers are changed, the methodology of teaching is also changed. After all, students need some time to cope with the new teachers. Unfortunately, the system is stopped. (Head teacher)

### 3.6 Selection of teachers for TPD

The selection of teachers for TPD was meant to be co-ordinated among the EDCU, municipality education unit and schools: information about TPD was supposed to be relayed from the ETC to the EDCU, then to the relevant education unit in the municipality and finally to head teachers. However, during meetings for this study, the education unit heads and head teachers complained that they were often uninvolved in the selection of teachers and that this was finalised directly by the ETC. The selection process was thus not based on any understanding of which



teachers needed training; rather, teachers with personal connections to the ETC were often given preference. Other teachers who had been overlooked expressed frustration at the situation:

I have been teaching in the school for more than five years and not attended any training yet. I don't know when I will get my turn. It is said TPD is provided to the teachers based on priority. I have seen some of the teachers attending TPD more than twice. Such situation really makes me frustrated and demotivated. I have realized the increase in tendency of such attempts especially after implementation of federalism. (Teacher)

Head teachers who were involved in the selection process explained that they preferred to send active teachers to TPD because they would make greater efforts to share and apply what they learn:

While selecting the teachers, I tend to recommend the active ones. If I recommend the inactive ones, they tend not to implement in the classrooms but the active ones will definitely share the knowledge with fellow colleagues and even in the classroom. (Head teacher)

### 3.7 Impact of federal system on CPD

Since the implementation of the federal system, when responsibility for school education was passed to local governments, several mechanisms related to CPD and educational development (such as resource centres) have been removed or replaced. All stakeholders we spoke to highlighted the difficulties this had created for teacher professional development. Budget and human resources were particular challenges for the ETC. Despite official policy, it was still unclear whether local government

had taken full responsibility for educational development or whether its focus was largely on educational infrastructure. As the EDCU explained:

After the federal structure, the roles and responsibilities of EDCU are quite limited. There are lots of policy hurdles. At the moment, we have been continuing the activities guided from the central level. Actually, we have very limited roles for the overall educational development. (EDCU head)

Some education officers, though, felt the new structures were an improvement on those in place in pre-federal times and argued that they provided teachers with more opportunities for professional development:

We are working for the educational development of school at the local level. There has been establishment of ward and municipal level education committees. The important thing is they are properly functioning. We have been co-ordinating with such committees. We have a schedule of monitoring and evaluation of the schools and visit the schools regularly. During our visit, we monitor the school infrastructure and environment and the class observation of the teachers. We discuss among the teachers and suggest them for the improvement. (Education officer)

The teachers we spoke to, however, presented a different view of the manner in which local CPD mechanisms were working; they did not agree that regular supervision and monitoring of schools was taking place and had not received feedback from the education unit.

### **3.8 Role of ETC**

Within the federal structure, the main responsibility for CPD lies with ETCs. Despite their limited budget, the ETC officer explained that two forms of training (following central advice) were provided for teachers: one-month certification (divided into two blocks of 15 days each) and needs-based customised training (lasting 2–5 days) for the teachers in the province.

According to the ETC, demand for TPD training was high. Due to limited resources and capacity in the centre, though, they were able to train only 25 teachers from a pool of 200–300

applicants. Previously, teachers were not seen to take their training very seriously:

In Madhesh, TPD is regarded as a matter of formality by the teachers. There are many teachers whose intention is simply to achieve stipend and other facilities provided by the centre than learning new ideas. Even 10 days TPD used to be completed in 6–7 days. (Education officer)

However, such issues were now being addressed, particularly in ensuring that all teachers submit the project work that is part of the training before they receive a certificate:

We had to follow the teachers for several times to submit their project work. Many of the teachers take the project work lightly and are not serious about it. If they are not given a certificate that would not count in for their promotion. At present, the results of the project work submitted by the teachers is even published on the ETC website. This is the new thing we have conducted at the moment. (Education officer)

### **3.9 Resource constraints**

The limited resources to support teacher CPD in Madhesh have already been noted several times in this report. While education officials supported many of the changes to the education sector resulting from federalism, difficulties arising from the new structure were also highlighted. The major constraints noted were a lack of budget and human resources. Hence, education officers admitted that they were only able to monitor teachers and provide feedback irregularly. How often training could be provided and to how many teachers were also limited by the constraints ETCs were experiencing. At the ETC in Madhesh, there were only seven members of staff, which was wholly inadequate given the large number of teachers they were expected to support.

In addition to the resource constraints in the ETC and the education unit in the municipality, head teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of teachers in schools. Vacant posts have not been filled for many years despite a substantial increase in the student population. EDCU heads confirmed there was a shortage of teachers in schools.

During our discussions, teachers explained that due to staffing shortages they were required to teach additional classes. As one explained:

I have a Master's degree in mathematics and was appointed as primary level mathematics teacher. But, our school has a lack of teachers and I even take classes till grade 10. Due to insufficient manpower, I have to take 5–6 classes daily. I have seen many of my friends in other schools taking classes at a higher level than their appointment. (Teacher)

Overall, different stakeholders had different explanations for the problems they were experiencing, though responsibility for these was generally externalised (i.e. blamed on some other party). Staff shortages both in training centres and schools, though, were severely felt.

### 3.10 Transfer of CPD to the classroom

There is limited follow-up of teachers who attend TPD and thus evidence is lacking about the impact this has on their classroom practices. During our meetings, some education officers raised doubts about how far teachers applied what they learned from their training; teachers, though, did tell us about ways in which they were trying to improve their lessons. Some of them were using PowerPoint presentations and other ICT methods which they learned during the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, teachers did comment on barriers that limited the extent to which they could apply new ideas:

I know modern methods of teaching. I have learnt them in the university courses and even achieved ideas for TPD training as well. But, I feel it is too difficult to implement all of them in the classroom. We have a huge number of students. Occasionally I try it but I am not successful. In fact, we cannot practically implement as we did or learnt in the training. (Teacher)

Teachers also felt constrained by the limited access they had to resources, especially the internet at school:

We are aware of technological developments and wish to use them for teaching. No doubt, there is internet in the school. But it is available only in the Head Teacher's office, so we cannot utilize it properly. (Teacher)

Head teachers felt that teachers did try to implement ideas from training in their lessons, but only for a short while:

I have found that the teachers are serious about TPD. They attend the training and even try to implement ideas in their classrooms. But, they tend to practise them only for a few days and gradually the implementation is completely stopped. I don't know why the teachers are reluctant to implement them regularly in their classrooms. I think it's due to the lack of a reward and punishment system in the school. (Head teacher)

## Appendix

### Madhesh fieldwork schedule

Madhesh Respondents	Municipality/Location	Activities
Ramswarup Ramsagar Multiple (RRM) Campus	Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City	KIIs and FGD
Municipality education unit head	Ganeshman Charnath Municipality	KII
Siraha District EDCU head	Siraha Municipality	KII
Surya Narayan Satya Narayan Marbaita Yadav Multiple Campus	Siraha Municipality	FGD and KIIs
Pashupati Adarsha Secondary School	Lahan Municipality	KIIs and FGD
Janata Secondary School	Dhangadhimai Municipality, Betaha, Bhawanipur	KIIs and FGD
Janata Secondary School	Sukhipur Municipality, Sukhipur	KIIs and FGD
Janta Jaiswal Secondary School	Ganeshman Charnath Municipality	KIIs and FGD
Sankat Mochan Secondary School	Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City	KIIs and FGD
Dhanusha district EDCU head	Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City	KII
Municipality education unit head	Janakpurdham Sub-Metropolitan City	KII

