

## Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project

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# CS:MAP Newsletter

### Words from the Chief of Party, Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project

I take immense pleasure in bringing to you yet another issue of the Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project (CS:MAP) monthly newsletter. I sincerely hope that this tenth issue will help us to reflect upon activities and achievements from the month of July 2018, share with and learn from one another, cherish the collective results that we have achieved this far, and aspire to do more towards advancing the Nepali public interest. As with the earlier issues, we anticipate that you will enjoy going through this edition, and provide feedback in making future editions even more interesting and fruitful. Happy reading!

Bishnu Sapkota  
Chief of Party, CS:MAP; Country Director, FHI 360 Nepal

### Strengthening the Enabling Environment for Civil Society and Media Organizations in Nepal

#### Orientation on Social Audit in Manthali, Ramechhap

A day long orientation program on Social Audit was organized by GoGo Foundation, in Manthali, Ramechhap on July 27, 2018. The objective of the orientation was to sensitize CSOs on the social audit mechanism and its significance in the present context. The participants discussed the challenges and problems encountered while conducting social audit at the local level. The event also included discussions on the differences between public hearing, social and public audit, process of social audit and why social audit is an important tool to promote accountability and transparency.



District Coordination Committee Chair, Prem Bahadur Khadga, FECOFUN Ramechhap President Dula Bahadur Shrestha, Democratic/Loktantrik NGO Federation President Himal Dhungel, NGO Federation of Nepal District Chair Milan Ghising, District Bar Association President Pandav Prasai and FNJ District Chair Ramesh Dhungel along with the Executive Director of GoGo Foundation Kedar Khadka were the prominent speakers of the workshop.

The participants confirmed that the orientation program was useful to re-orient them on the professional utilization of the social audit mechanism for ensuring good governance practices within district level civil society organizations. Twenty-seven participants (four female) participated in the event.

#### Right to Information (RTI) training to public information officers

Freedom Forum conducted a three-day residential training on right to information (RTI) for public information officers (PIOs) in Kapilvastu from July 26-28, 2018. A total of 19 PIOs (two female) were trained on the

*"The content and components of the training have completely changed my understanding of my responsibilities. I used to think that as PIOs, we did not have much power; I now realize that we do have a powerful role to play as PIOs."*

◆ *Mani Bahadur Gurung, Information Officer, Sarumarani gaunpalika, Gulmi*



agencies, and provisions for mandatory proactive disclosure of stipulated public information.

Eleven of the nineteen participants were from the local level health, education, agriculture and disaster risk reduction offices while the remaining represented district level offices such as the District Administrative Office, District Coordination Committee, and Postal Service Department. The participants came from Pyuthan, Gulmi, Arghakhanchi, Palpa and Kapilvastu districts.

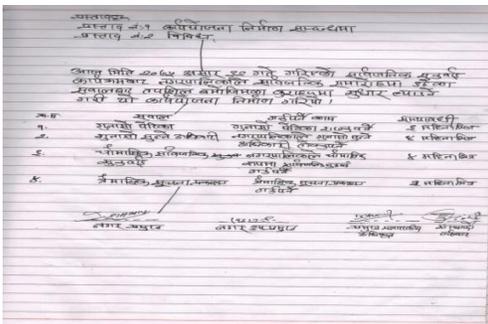
The participants expressed commitment to promote the use of RTI in their respective offices. Freedom Forum's Chief Executive Tara Nath Dahal and General Secretary Dharmendra Jha facilitated the training.

importance of the RTI Act, policies and provisions for maintaining transparency and accountability in public

## Government Engagement for Effective Public Resource Use and Service Delivery

### Local governments seek civil society organization support in facilitating public hearings

Local governments in Arghakhanchi and Sindhupalchok districts are now requesting CS:MAP district partners for technical support to conduct public hearings at municipality level, giving them an opportunity to put technical skills acquired through continual training to practice. CS:MAP district partners carried out Exit Poll and Citizen Report Card surveys to measure quality, people's satisfaction and other dimensions of municipal service delivery, remaining in compliance with the government's Public Hearing Guidelines 2067. Findings of the Exit Poll and Citizen Report Card surveys were made public during the public hearing.



**Society (IRDS)** facilitated a public hearing organized by Bhumikasthan municipality in Arghakhanchi district on July 15, 2018. The public hearing was chaired by the Mayor Resham Thapa. During the program, Chief Administrative Officer Bhesraj Panta, presented quarterly progress reports and service delivery status to the citizens at the public hearing. Responding to people's concerns and grievances, the mayor and chief administrative officer made commitments to establish a grievance redress mechanism and, on a quarterly basis, to make public, 20 types of information as made mandatory by the Right to Information Act. Most questions and concerns from participants focused on the lack of opportunity for people's participation in the planning process. About 200 participants took part in the event.



Similarly, Chhatradev *gaunpalika* in Arghakhanchi also approached IRDS for technical support in organizing a public hearing. During the hearing conducted on July 16, 2018, the Chhatradev *gaunpalika* chair, Lekhnath Pokhrel, made a commitment to organize public hearings on a quarterly basis, as required by the Good Governance (Operation & Management) Act. About 200 participants including Ward chairpersons, Common Assembly members, radio listening, discussion and action group members, local journalists, CSO representatives and service recipients actively took part in the programs.

**Samudayik Sarathi** provided technical support to conduct a public hearing at Barhabise municipality on July 30, 2018, with the participation of 150 individuals.



Questions and grievance at the public hearing were related to the delayed post-earthquake reconstruction process, lack of Citizen Charters at government offices, lack of opportunity for participation of people in the local level planning process, non-disclosure of income and expenses by the municipality office, and lack of mechanisms to lodge public grievances, among others. The deputy mayor, Ward chairpersons and executive officers, and Nepal Reconstruction Authority engineers responded to people's questions, grievance and concerns. They expressed commitments to form a Good Governance Committee at the municipal level, make arrangements to disclose monthly financial details, display Citizen Charters, and to establish a grievance redressal mechanism soon. Responding to the grievances related to delayed reconstruction, the municipality office made commitment to organize a separate public hearing to discuss on related issues.



Sanjeevani Nepal was requested to facilitate a public hearing at the Ward 2 of Dasarathchand municipality, for activities conducted in FY 2074/75. Sanjeevani Nepal provided guidance in the preparation and facilitation of the public hearing. Eighty persons (23 female) from the Ward participated in the program. A local resident, Chandra Bohara, expressed, "We are happy with the way our Ward chairperson is accountable and transparent; thanks to the CS:MAP project for introducing social accountability measures in our community".



Similarly, **Sundar Nepal Sanstha (BNA)** also facilitated public hearings for Wards 6 and 7 of Lekbeshi municipality in Surkhet in July 2018.



Likewise, **RWDC** provided technical support to the Ghorahi sub-metropolitan office to conduct a public hearing in accordance with the Public Hearing Guidelines 2067. Following a MoU signed between the sub-metropolis and RWDC, the date and venue of the public hearing was announced through radio and local newspapers. Most participants expressed happiness as this was the first time that exit poll and citizen report card were used to assess public satisfaction with public service delivery.

The following official commitments were made at the public hearing conducted by BNA:

- To promote organized and planned residential settlements in the municipality and a systematic and integrated property tax structure
- To make proper and fair use of local resources
- To promote effective citizen-friendly programs
- To continue periodic public hearings as a means of improving public services
- To make public/ distribute civic laws and regulations
- To install Citizen Charter at municipality offices
- To form local users committee that includes elected representatives (Ward chair and members)

The following official commitments were made at the public hearing conducted by RWDC:

- To conduct regular public hearing in the Ghorahi sub-metropolis and its Ward offices in accordance with the Public Hearing Implementation Guidelines 2067.

- To install Citizen Charter for effective public service delivery and public transparency and provide services as per the Charter.
- To provide public information about laws, policies, procedures and citizen rights.
- To prepare a development plan for the metropolis with the participation of citizens, especially most marginalized communities.
- To provide internet connectivity in the 19 Ward offices of Ghorahi to ensure smooth and timely service delivery.
- To provide Rupees 20,000 each to the families of those deceased due to natural disaster.
- To orient metropolitan office staff in effective public relations as a means of winning public trust.
- To promote the supply of clean drinking water in the sub-metropolis.
- To promote agriculture in the metropolis.
- To manage the budget and appropriate scholarship programs for providing technical and informal education for freed *Kamlaharies*, and for providing income-generation skills training.



### Media mobile camp serves as grievance redressal platform

HRPLSC Nepal in coordination with Kripalu FM, Pyuthan conducted a media mobile camp in Sarumarani *gaunpalika*-4 of Pyuthan district on July 13, 2018. Facilitated by a local journalist, the program served as a platform for people to express their grievances related to education, health, agriculture and other issues directly to the municipal officers.



lack of birthing centers, inadequate free medicines in health posts, unavailability of agricultural support such as seeds, among others, were some of the concerns and grievances raised by the people.

The chief administrative officer, health post in-charge, and the local agriculture officer responded by making public commitments to provide seeds to local farmers, procure adequate medicines for the health posts, conduct regular monitoring of school teachers, disseminate information on public services, among many others. A total of 65 participants including the service providers at the *gaunpalika* office actively participated in the media mobile camp.

The people identified issues and raised concerns on public service delivery by the *gaunpalika* office. Lack of information about services, irregularity of school teachers,

### Demand for Action

SOCH Nepal had provided an orientation on the seven-step planning process to the *Chalantar Sunar Basti Shrota Samuha* (LDAG) on April 11 and April 28, 2018. Most members of this LDAG are from the *Dalit* community. The orientation provided insights into the steps in the planning process, space for public consultation, and methods for setting priorities and agenda to take forth to the *Nagar Sabha* (Municipal Council). SOCH Nepal had also provided a similar orientation to the Common Assembly and the HEAD coalition earlier in April.



Following on from these orientations, the LDAG members discussed the need to prioritize water supply during the off-season; and put in the request for the building of a water supply tunnel to the municipal assembly/*Nagar Sabha*. The *Nagar Sabha* deliberations concluded that this demand was important and valid and forwarded the request to the Agriculture Department to sanction a grant of NRs. 70,000 for the construction of a water supply tunnel.

Regular access to clean water was another challenge for this community, mainly because other caste groups forbade Dalit groups to access water at the common well. This represents a broader social challenge whereby Dalit communities continue to be stigmatized and are not given easy access to water and other natural resources.

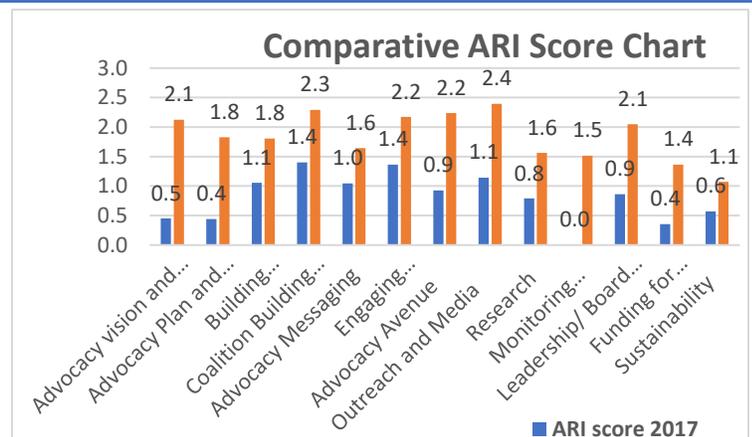
The local LDAG and CA members from the Kageshori Manahara municipality also put in a request for a budget for the maintenance of a well, the main source of drinking water for more than 250 marginalized people in the community. As a result of the collective effort, the municipality allocated a budget of NRs. 100,000 for the maintenance of the well, making it possible for a stable

supply of clean drinking water for the marginalized community.

With knowledge of the importance of citizen participation in the planning process, the LDAG members also requested for the allocation of a budget for the construction of a road in their community. The municipality allocated NRs. 300,000 for the construction of the road link to the *Dalit* village, mainly to provide better access to emergency vehicles such as ambulances. The group members shared a sense of empowerment with the knowledge that they can now participate in the identification of development priorities within their communities, and that marginalized communities can also have a share of development outcomes.

## Capacity Building of CSOs and Media

In May and June, CS:MAP ISOs Mitra Samaj, NNSWA and NEPAN conducted the second round of ARI assessments for all 14 CS:MAP local CSO partners. In accordance with findings from the assessments, the ISOs supported the preparation and adjustment of the ARI capacity building plan aimed at advancing advocacy capacity among CSOs. Advocacy capacity was measured in 13 advocacy domains on a scale from 0 to 5, with 5 indicating very good advocacy capacity. The ARI score chart shown alongside, represents significant increment in FY 2018 as compared to baseline figures measured in 2017.



The increment represents an overall growth in advocacy capacity through the institutionalization of advocacy issues into strategic documents, promotion of government engagement through Social Accountability mechanisms, improved evidence-based action research and increased commitment among CSO board and management.

The 2018 ARI capacity building plan prioritizes and includes increased utilization of evidence-based action research, increased engagement with the government and media, strengthening capacity of coalition and networks for their engagement on advocacy issues, and increased commitment from CSO boards and management. ISOs will provide continued support through regular coaching and mentoring.

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