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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 19th issue will help us reflect upon activities and achievements from the month of April 2019, 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 on making future editions even more interesting and fruitful.

Happy reading!

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

Strengthening Enabling Environment for Civil Society and Media Organizations in Nepal

Neelakantha Municipality Gears up to Implement Open Government Partnership Principles

Neelakantha Municipality, Dhading is perhaps the first municipality in Nepal committed to implement Open Government Partnership (OGP) principles and its working modality. The municipality has been continuously organizing different discussion and consultation meetings - both formal and informal - with civil society, media and stakeholders. It has been carrying out those activities since the executive committee of the municipality decided to implement OGP working modality on October 4, 2018.



Recognizing transparency, accountability, citizen participation and use of technologies and innovation as the core principles of OGP, the municipality had launched “*Mero Neelakantha Mero Mobile*” application and web portal on April 15, 2018. The mobile application and web portal have been used as

an interactive platform for information sharing between the government and citizens.

The municipality organized a stakeholders meeting on April 9, 2019 and formed a 20-member OGP Steering Committee of the municipality of which Mayor Bhim Prasad Dhungana and CSO leader Shiva Adhikari are the co-chairs. The committee includes representatives from CSO community, Federation of Nepali Journalists, Federation

of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, consumer groups, and women groups, among others. The committee will develop an OGP action plan to render the municipality more open, transparent, accountable, citizen-friendly and effective.

The first meeting of the committee held on the same day, decided to convene the committee meeting on the last Tuesday each month, to develop an effective working procedure for the committee, and to enhance knowledge among committee members on OGP working modality. CS:MAP facilitated the attendance of Mayor Dhungana and Chief Administrative Officer Jagan Nath Pant at the 5th OGP Summit held in Tbilisi, Georgia on July 17-19, 2018.

<http://www.pigeonkhabar.com/archives/6594?fbclid=IwAR0KrMnWvmWQXBSr2KXyI1DG5DTCL0Diatay7VQGbttmcBdonK9wFoyA5oc#.XKxu9siD5xw.facebook>

Stakeholders' Debate on RTI Bill of Province 3

Freedom Forum organized a policy stakeholders' discussion on the Right to Information (RTI) Bill for Province 3 on April 3, 2019 in Kathmandu. The objective was to make the stakeholders aware of the positive and negative provisions of the bill, acquaint them with constitutional guarantee of RTI, and international standards and best practices relating to Freedom of Expression and Information.



Freedom Forum's Project Manager Sanjeeb Ghimire presented a paper on the bill. Former Secretary of National Information Commission (NIC), Shree Ram Panta explained that the reason and purpose should not be made mandatory for filing a RTI request and that the provision of punishment must be a part of the proposed law. Chief Executive of Freedom Forum Tara Nath Dahal said proactive disclosure is at the crux of RTI law and that it must be made binding upon all public bodies and political parties to practice proactive disclosure of a set of stipulated information. Non-fulfilment of compliance to the RTI laws must be punishable, he added.

The FHI 360 Legal and Policy Advisor stated that the record of information sought and supplied must be updated. Individuals should be able to seek information through post, email, fax, SMS and that should be provisioned in the law. The proposed bill does not specifically mention any clauses which guarantee the furnishing of requested information, said Ramesh Paudyal, member of province assembly. Province Assembly Member, Rajendra Man Shrestha said if the bill was ratified as it is, it could be disastrous for democracy. Radha Ghale, another member of province assembly emphasized that the RTI law must be supportive of democracy and good governance.

Province Assembly Member Bijaya KC Shrestha said the bill must distinguish between the private and public information concerned with public officials. Accepting the flaws in the bill, Province Assembly Member Jeevan Dangol said the bill needed substantial discourse to make it more progressive. A total of 37 participants (10 female) including province assembly members, lawyers, policy stakeholders, RTI activists and campaigners, journalists and other stakeholders participated in the policy discussion.

Interaction on CSOs' Constitutional Rights Held in Gandaki Province

INSEC organized an interaction on constitutional rights for civil society organizations (CSOs) in Pokhara, on April 28, 2019 among the provincial parliamentarians of the Gandaki Province. The objective of the interaction was to promote informed discourse among the parliamentarians on constitutional rights of CSOs. INSEC presented a paper

on 'CSOs Constitutional Rights.' Minister for Internal affairs and Law of Gandaki Province, Hari Bahadur Chuman said that the province government was planning to promote partnership with CSOs. He further committed that the government would initiate the development of provincial law governing CSOs after the reform of the federal in keeping with constitutional provisions.



Six provincial parliamentarians expressed their thoughts on legal, policy and practical issues related to CSOs. They pledged that the provincial legislation would facilitate civil society participation in development, accountability, capacity building and transparency issues. Similarly, they raised concern over the existing malpractices of resource utilization by CSOs and their jurisdiction. They suggested that impartial performance by CSOs would help to galvanize public understanding, confidence and ownership.

Participants representing CSOs criticized the governments at federal, provincial and local levels for defaming CSOs and misinterpreting their role. They suggested that the authorities have the right to regulate CSOs through laws but should not attempt to control the civic space guaranteed by the constitution. They requested provincial parliamentarians to ensure that constitutional provisions and guarantees were incorporated in local laws. Similarly, the event chair and the chairperson of INSEC, Indira Shrestha said that INSEC was facilitating this type of interaction throughout the country for ensuring the constitutional rights to association in the provincial and federal laws. A total of 57 participants (18 female) including provincial minister for internal affairs and law, 15 parliamentarians, and 42 CSO representatives actively participated in the event.

Collaboration between CSOs and Media Emphasized for Promoting Civil Rights

Samjhauta Nepal and Media Advocacy Group convened an interface between civil society organizations (CSOs) and media on April 24, 2019 in Lalitpur with the objective of reinforcing the role of CSOs and media in protecting and promoting civic rights amid rising concerns of shrinking civic space. Panelist Krishna Man Pradhan, general secretary of Nepal Law Society, said restriction on CSOs weakens civil rights. He emphasized the watchdog role of CSOs to promote public participation in law- and policy-making process and secure fundamental rights. CSOs should self-regulate and be transparent, accountable, research-oriented and focused on areas of expertise, he added. Editor-in-Chief of Barhakhari.com, Prateek Pradhan, provided a brief historical background to the civil rights movement, where media played a crucial role in helping the movement gain momentum and garner public support. He also explained how it inspired the Nepali people in the People's Movement of 1990.

Sharu Joshi Shrestha urged CSOs and media to revisit their roles and collaborate for collective action to achieve larger goals. Referring to a research finding showing a surge in female feticide in Nepal, she said a girl child's right to life needs to be secured. She said CSOs and media can collaborate on promoting best practices of local bodies and participation of women and marginalized communities in politics.

A journalist stated how the rising trend of journalists joining as press advisors to the local governments has prevented journalists from their duty of scrutinizing government policies and actions. Pinky Gurung, a transgender activist, emphasized on ensuring the voice of sexual minorities as they have no representation in the government. She emphasized on the need for both CSOs and media to work together to improve public trust and safeguard civic space. Altogether 50 people representing Madhesi, Muslim, sexual minorities, CSOs and media participated in the event.

Orientation on the Local-level Planning Process to Secure Entitlements

Orientations on the local-level planning process were organized in Rasuwa, Dang, Makwanpur, Nuwakot, Dolakha, Kathmandu, Okhaldhunga, Gorkha, Rukum, Rolpa, Salyan, Pyuthan, Kavre, Sindhupalchowk, Palpa, Gulmi, Kapilvastu and Arghakhanchi districts in April 2019. The main objectives of these orientations were to familiarize community people with the seven-step planning process and to ensure the crucial participation of marginalized communities in the local-level planning process.



DEC Nepal organized an orientation for four Common Assembly (CA) members and community people on the local-level planning process and public service entitlements in Dhading and Makawanpur districts. DEC district project coordinator and municipal chief executive officer/planning officer facilitated the sessions organized in coordination with working *palikas*. The orientation focused on local-level 7-step planning process and project prioritization in planning process, budget allocation from the center, province and local levels, and timeline of the planning process. CA members, local youth and citizens participated in the orientation program.

Likewise, HRPLSC conducted a one-day orientation on the local-level planning process for community people, CA members, Dalit, Janajati and other marginalized communities in Pyuthan, Rukum, Rolpa and Salyan districts. A total of 6 events were organized with the participation of 151 people from different sectors. Participants were orientated on the importance for civic engagement and citizen participation at Ward level planning workshops, which is the most important phase during the seven-step planning process. Former members of Ward citizen forum, citizen awareness centers, members of LDAGs, CA members, and people from marginalized communities participated in the orientation.



The local government of Dolakha has committed to prioritize programs for fiscal year 2019/20 focusing on target communities. Deputy Mayor of Bhimeshwor Municipality said that the activities should be prioritized from settlement level during the planning process. She committed to ensure the meaningful participation of poor and marginalized people and prioritize plans that directly benefit the vulnerable groups. Vice chair of District Coordination Committee Mana Maya Jirel also reiterated on settlement-level planning process in participation with citizens.



Chairperson of HURADEC Dolakha, Uddhab Prasad Pokharel, said local government should allocate specific budget to the target communities. Community action researcher, Menuka Subedi shared key findings of a community research conducted on 'budget allocation for target community in FY 2018/019'. A total of 29 people (19 female) including vice chair-persons from Melung, Baityaswar, Kalinchowk and Tamakoshi *gaunpalikas* along

with the representatives from target communities participated in the event in which Bhimeshwor Municipality committed to ensure community participation during this fiscal year's planning process.

CDC-Nepal organized a one-day orientation on 'Local-level Planning Process' at Uttargaya *gaunpalika* Ward no. 4 Karmidanda, Rasuwa on April 19, 2019. Ram Sharan Mijar, treasurer of CDC-Nepal, and Laxmi Phuyal program coordinator, presented best practices of planning process at *gaunpalika* or Ward level. Based on the Local Government Annual Budget Planning Act, 2018, the orientation focused on seven-step planning process for meaningful participation of citizen and civil society.



Elected representatives (Ward member and chairperson of Uttargaya-4) agreed to timely inform stakeholders during planning process; ensure the participation of marginalized communities in planning process from Ward to *gaunpalika* level; ensure public participation in local level policies and Acts formulation process; mobilize more human and natural resources; and promote good governance and social accountability. Keshar Bahadur Bulun, Ward chair, committed to ensure the participation of women, children, Dalit, Janajati, people with disabilities, and senior citizens in Ward and *gaunpalika*-level planning and decision-making process. Forty-five people (16 female) participated in the event.

Private Bank Discusses Access to Loans

HRPLSC organized *Sajhedari Manch* meeting in Sarumarani *gaunpalika* on April 19, 2019 in Pyuthan. This meeting was different from earlier ones as a representative from a private bank also participated in it and explained how citizens can access bank loans. Rajendra Singh, an official of Prime Bank in Sarumarani *gaunpalika*, responded to queries from citizens on how they can avail agricultural loans. As agreed in the meeting, the Ward office and Prime Bank will organize a joint orientation for youths and other citizens on the process and conditions required for accessing loans for agriculture and other business purposes. The meeting also discussed issues and agenda forwarded by CA meetings. A total of 23 representatives from the Ward offices, CA, unit chiefs of health, agriculture, education and disaster risk reduction offices, and citizens from marginalized communities participated.

HEAD Network Starts Public Service Oversight

The HEAD Network of Dolakha has started public service oversight in the Education and Health sectors. This month, the network monitored the local health post and Ambika Foundation School in the Tamakoshi *gaunpalika* - 7, Hawa, Dolakha. The public service oversight of the school and health post was led by HURADEC and included journalists. They interacted with the staff of the health post and school, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders at Hawa on the basis of an oversight checklist prepared earlier. The HEAD Network has also planned to monitor schools and health posts in the Shailung *gaunpalika* as well. HURADEC Nepal has planned to prepare public service oversight reports and share with stakeholders for further improvements in public service delivery.

Primary Health Center Commits to Improve Public Service Delivery

CDC-Nepal had formed a HEAD Coalition on representing the priority areas of health, education, agriculture and disaster risk reduction. The purpose was to carry out oversight of public resource use and public service delivery based on agreed indicators included within a checklist. The HEAD coalition members were orientated on the checklist for conducting the public service oversight and monitoring. CDC-Nepal facilitated the formation of a seven-member group for carrying out joint monitoring of public service delivery at the Deurali Primary Health Center of Myagang *gaunpalika*, Nuwakot.



Thirty different indicators were used in the monitoring conducted on April 22, 2019. Following the monitoring, the team shared the following major findings with concerned sectoral agencies and local government (Myagang *gaunpalika*) for improving service delivery: lack of clean drinking water, irregular management committee meetings, no separate section for treating communicable diseases, *Gaunghar* clinic not conducted as per provisions, lack of information disclosure, lack of waste management, and no provision to provide special services for marginalized communities.

Social Accountability Tools Used to Enhance the Quality of Health Services

Sundar Nepal Sanstha applied the Community Score Card (CSC) tool to the Bheriganga Health Post in Bheriganga Municipality 11, Ramghat, Surkhet for the first time. CSC is used to ensure internal good governance of health post and quality in service delivery. As part of application of this tool, meetings with the management committee, staff and beneficiaries of the health post had been conducted focusing on the preparation of initial work, resource mapping, face-to-face interaction and monitoring of services. The health post carried out self-assessment utilizing a schedule that included indicators that the CSC helped identify. The issues were discussed in a meeting and an action plan was developed for the next six months. A five-member monitoring committee was also formed. The health post management committee committed to implement the action plan.



Similarly, SOCH Nepal applied CSC to Prapcha Health Post in Molung *gaunpalika* – 5, Okhaldhunga on April 5-9, 2019. The application of the tool found out the following issues: lack of separate room for family planning counseling and immunization; unfriendly behavior of the staff; lack of room for village clinic and ineffective waste disposal system; lack of display of citizen charter in visible place, lack of stretchers for carrying patients, lack of awareness programs in schools, lack of women-friendly toilets; lack of training to Female Community Health Volunteers; and no regular supply of water, among others. A Monitoring Committee was also formed for the effective monitoring of action plan. The management committee of the health post developed an action plan and committed to address the said problems within six months. The plan includes



the need for display of the list of the medicines in the Nepali language in visible place; managing separate rooms for counseling and immunization; provide services with a smile; effective disposal of syringes and waste; display of Citizen Charter at a visible location and provide awareness program by health post staff; regularize supply of water; and to provide necessary training to Female Community Health Volunteers, among others.

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सुदूरपश्चिम प्रदेश		सुदूरपश्चिम प्रदेश	
क्र.सं.	सूचकांक	वर्णन	प्रतिक्रिया
१	१	शुद्धता	बुझिन्छु
२	२	सुगन्ध	बुझिन्छु
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४	४	आर.सी.को उपलब्धता	बुझिन्छु
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- प्रस्तावित समिति
१. खैरोक-जीवन फुल
 २. रसदस्य-लिलामाया फुल
 ३. लक्ष्म-गंगाभाया सुनुवार
 ४. लक्ष्म-देवकुमारी काफ्ले
 ५. लक्ष्म-रमा फुल

Likewise, Samudayik Sarathi applied CSC to Chaku Health Post in Bhotekoshi *gaunpalika* Ward no. 5, Sindhupalchowk on April 21-24, 2019. Input tracking matrix, self-evaluation

matrix, performance evaluation matrix and interface meeting were conducted during the process. At the end of the interface, citizens and service providers jointly agreed to develop an action plan with a division of actions, responsibilities and deadlines. Based on the findings, the health post committed to address the scarcity of free medicines, establish staff mobility chart, improve sanitation, organize mobile health camps in remote areas, and arrange counselling room for patients, among others. Ram Adhar Choudhary, health post in-charge, committed to address these problems within the next six months. A five-member monitoring committee has been formed to monitor the implementation of the action plan.

Sundar Nepal Discloses its Information, Sets Example

Sundar Nepal, Surkhet has made public information, required by the Right to Information Act, 2007; and has perhaps become the first non-governmental organization in the district to proactively disclose information. Sundar Nepal disclosed 20 types of information to public by displaying them on a notice board in their organization. Sundar Nepal has been working on governance since a long time. However, it had not practiced such a public disclosure of information. Sundar Nepal took this initiation as part of social accountability to its constituencies. It has assigned Khim Regmi as the information officer for the organization. The information made public include organizational objectives, number of employees, types of services and program details, income, expenditure and other details as required by the provisions. Bhupendra Kandel, executive director of Sundar Nepal said they were happy to become probably the first civil society organization in the district to disclose information.



CS:MAP Partners being Recognized as Expert in Public Hearing

The expertise of CS:MAP partner NGOs in good governance has increasingly been recognized by the local governments. Ghorahi Sub-metropolis requested RWDC to facilitate a public hearing of the Sub-metropolis in Dang. The public hearing was conducted according to the Public Hearing Implementation Guideline, 2010 on April 18, 2019. Prior to the public hearing, an exit poll and application of Community Report Card (CRC) were completed within 15 days by RWDC. Besides that, Information Officer of RWDC shared the key achievements and findings under public service delivery and its effectiveness, citizen engagement, governance and budget.

Issues that emerged from the process pointed to the need for continued pro-active disclosure on a quarterly basis; developing integrated development plan; facilitating student enrollment; ensuring quality and free education; ensuring public participation in policy-making process; managing budget for sickle cell anemic people; providing textbooks to public schools in a timely manner; increasing agriculture subsidy and developing a policy for small farmers by engaging citizens; allocating inclusive budget in governance, gender equality, public service delivery and civic engagement, social development and disaster risk reduction. Elected representatives expressed their commitment to address issues raised by the 165 people that participated in this event chaired by Naru Lal Chaudhary, chief of Ghorahi sub-metropolis.

Media and CSOs Collaborate on Public Issue

Samudayik Sarathi has been advocating for providing tax waiver to owners of the land which has been acquired for expanding rural road in Barhabise Municipality in Sindhupalchowk district. Due to non-delisting of land ownership by the government authority, citizens are compelled to pay taxes for the land they have forfeited for the road expansion. The affected households had long been raising the issue, but the government remained indifferent to it. The issue was discussed at the HEAD coalition meeting which decided to join hands with media to further advocate on the issue.

Samudayik Sarathi collected evidences on the issue and discussed it with other CSOs and media in the district. HEAD coalition, CA members and local media submitted a memorandum to Niphunjo Sherpa, Mayor of Barhabise Municipality. The mayor said that he would resolve the problem. "Municipality will address the issue very soon," said Sherpa. This issue was published on Kantipur national daily also. Samudayik Sarathi organized a meeting with local media on April 19, 2019 for collaborative effort to address 'tax waiver of the land acquired for rural road expansion'. Moti Ram Timalsina, chair of Federation of Nepali Journalists Kavre District Chapter, agreed to jointly raise the issue and submitted a memorandum to mayors of Panauti and Banepa municipalities.

Lawmakers Make Written Commitment at Civil Society Interaction

FMDC organized a province-level interaction with civil society and media representatives on their role in the changed context. The objective was to explore civil society space to collaborate with provincial and local governments. The importance of collaboration between civil society and media on common agendas was also discussed. Hem Raj Pant, former registrar of Far-West University, presented a paper on role of civil society in the changing context. A written commitment was made by the civil society and law makers for civil society participation in law and policy formulation process at provincial and local levels. Ensuring the participation of marginalized communities in government initiations was also emphasized. Deputy Speaker of Sudurpashchim Province Nirmala Badal (Joshi) led the discussion.



Capacity Building of CSOs and Media

Workshop on ICT for Advocacy Organized

DEC Nepal organized a workshop on the 'Use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Data in Advocacy' on April 15, 2019 with the objective of making CSO activists familiar with the technology. Participants learned about the use of data, and ICT and its importance for advocacy in daily life as well through theoretical and practical sessions. The facilitator provided information related to the advocacy challenge, effective communication messaging, and on the use of the Internet for research. Participants learnt the following: preparation of effective communication messages; information dissemination techniques; use of ICT and data in advocacy; and effective use of web site and social media. A total of 15 participants comprising CA coordinator, LDAG facilitator, District Coordinator, Community Action Researcher, and Community Reporter from 4 districts (Chitwan, Dhading, Gorkha and Makwanpur) attended the workshop.



Organizational Capacity of Partners Enhanced

ISOs partners - NNSWA, NEPAN and MITRA Samaj supported CSOs in conducting third round of Organization Capacity Assessment (OCA) of CDC, DEC, FMDC, IHRICON, IRDC, IHRC, Samudayik Sarathi, Sanjeevani, Sundar Nepal, HRPLSC, SOCH Nepal following the CS:MAP OCA tools and processes and prepared Institutional Improvement Plans (IIP) for the next one year. OCA of RWDC, IRDS and HURADEC are planned for the second week of May 2019. The assessment focused on 7 domains of improved internal governance (Governance, Administration, Human Resource Management, Financial Management, Organization Management, Program Management and External Relationship) and 39 sub-domains. Prior to the assessments, ISO partners were provided two days' refresher training on the tools and processes to equip them for the assessments and uniformity in facilitation and preparation of IIP.

Training on Effective Facilitation Skills for 'Listening Discussion and Action Group' (LDAG) Facilitators

On 28- 30 April, Equal Access International (EAI) facilitated a 3-day training on effective facilitation skills for radio 'Listening Discussion and Action Group' (LDAG) facilitators. Nineteen community youth participated from nine earthquake affected districts. The facilitators learnt about group facilitation skills, effective documentation of minutes and development of action plans for their groups. They became aware of their leadership role and responsibility in community engagement for oversight of public service delivery; service delivery gaps that affect the daily lives of women, youth and other traditionally marginalized groups; how they might be able to prompt local authorities to action; and on raising awareness about social accountability tools and its use at the local level.



They also discussed how their groups were formed and structured, and their experiences in coordination with local CSOs and media. They understood the facilitator's role in leading coordination and collaboration with other project actors including local radio partners, CSOs partners, community reporters and community action researchers; and how local actions that lead to constructive engagement with government and other local stakeholders can be planned and initiated. They understood the local level planning process and why and how local people should participate in this process. As a result of the training, two LDAGs of Ramechhap district conducted interaction programs with local governments to understand the status

of the local level planning process in their areas; assess civic access in the process; and seek commitment for citizen participation in future planning processes. Acknowledging poor civic participation in the planning process of the previous year, the local representative presented a plan to ensure the participation of marginalized groups and populations at the settlement level planning process. The Ward chairperson requested all participants for their proactive participation in community development work. Namuna and Bhalukhop LDAGs of Likhutapakoshi - 5, Ramechhap have prepared their priorities and plans for submission at the settlement level planning process that will begin in the 2nd week of June 2019.



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