

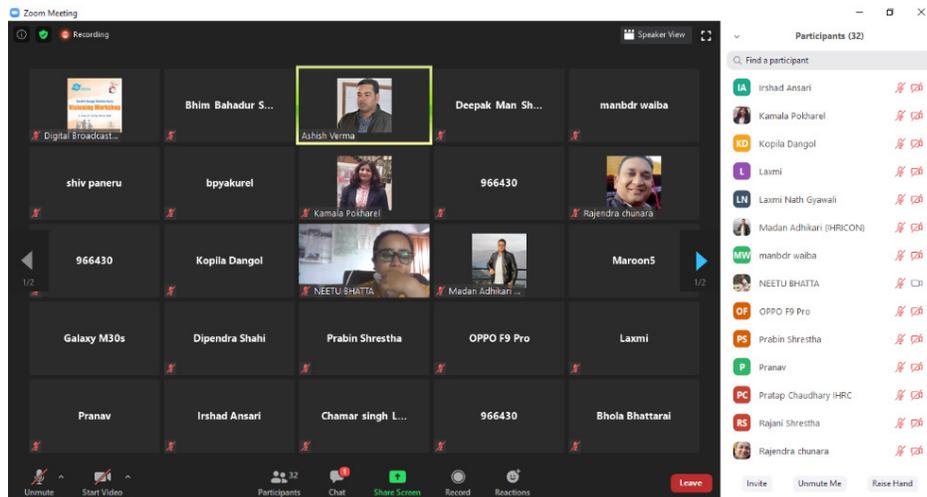
CS:MAP Working Areas:

USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Districts: Kapilvastu, Palpa, Arghakanchi, Gulmi, Dang, Salyan, Pyuthan, Rukum, Rolpa, Banke, Bardiya, Surkhet, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Kailali, Doti, Achham, Kanchanpur, Dadeldhura, and Baitadi
Earthquake-affected Districts: Okhaldhunga, Ramechhap, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Sindhupalchowk, Kavrepalanchowk, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha, and Makwanpur

Local Government Units: Amargadhi, Badhaiyatal, Banfikot, Bannigadhi Jaygadh, Barhabise, Bheri, Bheriganga, Bhotekoshi, Bijaynagar, Birendranagar, Budhanilkantha, Changunarayan, Chhatradev, Chhatreshwari, Chhedagad, Chisankhugadhi, Dashrath Chand, Dipayal Silgadhi, Duduwa, Fikkal, Gauriganga, Ghorahi, Godawari, Golanjor, Gorkha, Gulmidarbar, Guransh, Isma, Kageshori Manohara, Kalika, Kapurkot, Khadadevi, KI Singh, Konjyosom, Krishnapur, Lekbesi, Likhu, Likhu Tamakoshi, Manahari, Megyang, Molung, Narayan, Naubaini, Neelkantha, Panauti, Roshi, Sandhikharka, Sanfebagar, Shahid Lakhani, Shailung, Saruma Rani, Siddhalek, Suryabinayak, Tamakoshi, Tinau, Tribeni, Triveni and Uttargaya

Coordination meeting with CSOs

On July 13, 2020, Equal Access International (EAI) conducted an online meeting with CSO representatives to discuss Listening Discussion and Action Group (LDAG) initiatives and challenges during the COVID-19 context. The CSOs shared about the situation of LDAGs in the project districts, self-initiations by LDAGs in COVID-19 response, and challenges faced. The major activities initiated by the LDAGs were in promoting awareness about COVID-19, management and oversight of quarantine sites, relief distribution and other related activities. Some LDAGs also collaborated with their local government to document the status of disadvantaged families, and supported in relief distribution for them. All the CSOs and EAI agreed on the need for continued collaboration among LDAGs, Common Assembly, *Sajhedari Manch* and other youth groups. However, the CSOs agreed that due to the lockdown, the LDAG mobilization has been affected. Also, the CSOs shared that due to weak internet connectivity, virtual meetings with most of the LDAGs will be quite challenging. EAI also presented the findings of an assessment of LDAG situation and possibility of virtual meetings among the LDAGs. EAI also requested for CSO support in participation and promotion of *Sajha Boli* and *Saathi Sanga Maanka Kura* radio programs, Public Service Announcements, and *Mero Palika Mero Chaso* (SMS MyVoice) campaigns. The CSOs and EAI decided not to resume the LDAG meetings at this time, and instead assess the possibility of virtual meetings. The meeting concluded with an agreement to continue efforts towards ensuring sustainability of LDAGs through collaborative efforts among CSOs and EAI.



Listening, Discussion and Action Groups (LDAGs) in COVID-19 response



The youth in LDAGs have continued their initiations in COVID-19 response through collaboration with their local government and other groups in their community. Masuriya LDAG and Mahadev LDAG in Kailali, Hatemalo LDAG in Kavrepalanchok, and Syauli LDAG and Bhur LDAG in Jajarkot worked with their respective local governments in documentation of the needy people. They also engaged in relief activities such as distribution of essential supplies, installation of handwashing devices, and other related activities. Mahadev LDAG also supported the set-up of a quarantine center in Gauriganga Municipality 9, Shankarpur on May

23, 2020. The center was established for the returnees from India and other countries. They supported to arrange for the beds, food, and safe drinking water for the returnees. These initiatives of LDAGs were acknowledged by the local level representatives who were equally glad to have LDAG support in COVID-19 response. These are some of the exemplary initiatives that the LDAGs in CS:MAP project districts have undertaken in collaboration with local government representatives, and media organizations.

EAI in coordination with CSOs have been providing support to the LDAGs, and also documenting these activities. These activities not only constitute a significant part of the COVID-19 response, they are also evidence of LDAGs as a critical youth mass that has the potential to bring change in the community. Moreover, these activities were self-initiated by the LDAGs, and they were able to collaborate with local level, media organizations and other youth groups in their communities. These initiatives by the LDAGs are testimonies of their capacities as youth groups in joint efforts as well as in oversight of the government response to COVID-19.

Trained journalists continue to report on COVID-19 situation and impact

The CS:MAP trained journalists have continued reporting about the COVID-19 situation and responses, and published 41 articles from July 1-15 in various national and sub-national media outlets. Some of the significant issues covered during this period include impact of COVID-19 on the education sector, remittance, and tourism sector. Likewise, the journalists using their knowledge and skills on 'investigative journalism' and 'advocacy monitoring and oversight' uncovered issues related to poor quarantine management and public dissatisfaction (<https://bit.ly/2ZiizVd>, <https://bit.ly/3fr5fEr>); status of government directives on COVID-19 prevention and their implementation status; status of COVID-19 testing centers; and local level initiatives in establishing testing centers. The journalists also reported on the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in the Kathmandu valley (<https://rajdhanidaily.com/id/16644/>), and suggested effective prevention measures. One of the journalists based in Kathmandu also prepared a series of news reports on the importance of wearing masks (<https://bit.ly/3gU4iVx>), and the importance of following social distancing and other preventive measures (<https://bit.ly/32gImju>), that were broadcast through CoronaCare on Nepal Television a COVID-19 special TV program.

Media initiatives in COVID-19 response

Through innovative radio programs, Public Service Announcements (PSAs), youth-targeted campaign, and social media mobilization, EAI continued efforts towards promoting awareness about COVID-19; and the dissemination of information about the government plans and policies to address the COVID-19 impact such as unemployment, managing returnee migrants, and also, advocating for better response from the government for combating COVID-19. The *Sajha Boli* radio programs produced by the radio partners in July 2020 focused on local level plans and policies in COVID-19 response, fiscal year 2077/78 budget, and local level-initiated self-employment policy. Besides *Sajha Boli* radio programs, the radio partners also produced COVID-19 specific radio programs that included interviews with government officials about COVID-19 response at the local level, quarantine management, testing status, relief distribution and other related issues. Likewise, *Saathi Sanga Maanka Kura* radio program produced during this period highlighted the importance of youth engagement in oversight at local level in COVID-19 response, and also discussed about the importance of quarantine sites.

EAI also coordinated with 15 local radio station partners in the project districts to produce COVID-19 specific PSAs on a weekly basis in 10 different languages which are broadcast by 39 radio station partners on a daily basis. The PSAs in July 1-15 (<https://bit.ly/3j5FlZ8>, <https://bit.ly/32u7CF>) called for ensuring safety and security of women and children in the quarantine sites, and promoted awareness about the importance of home isolation. Currently, EAI is working with the radio partners in preparation of PSAs on the need for addressing the increasing cases of mental health issues such as depression and anxiety as a result of COVID-19.

EAI has also been encouraging youth in COVID-19 response through *Mero Palika Mero Chaso* (SMS MyVoice) campaign. Initiated in May 2020 amidst the COVID-19 context, the campaign has received over 300 calls and 16 video messages from the youth. The local level representatives have also participated in the campaign and appreciated the initiatives from the youth in their community. A Ward chairperson from Gauriganga municipality Ward number 9 in Kailali district has shared a message appreciating the initiations from LDAGs and other youth groups in the Ward in COVID-19 response (<https://bit.ly/3j88suJ>).

Civil Society Organizations Discuss Virtually on COVID-19 Impact in Dhading

On June 21, 2020, **DEC Nepal and Shanti Nepal** jointly convened a virtual meeting with the civil society organizations on the COVID-19 impact in Dhading. CSOs, media, Red Cross Society and other activists discussed the issues and challenges due to COVID-19 and requested local government for effective response. As a result of the meeting, the CSOs also handed over a memorandum to the local governments.

CSOs Effort Branded Gorkha Quarantine Positively

The returnees staying at the Gorkha quarantine are so impressed with the quarantine management that they are reluctant to go back home after their quarantine period. At a time when quarantine management is creating negative impressions throughout the nation, oversight and monitoring led by CS:MAP HEAD Coalition helped improve the quarantine centers in Gorkha. CSOs, media, and other activists jointly collaborated with local governments and pressurized local authorities for effective management of quarantine. Prior to this, the CSOs handed over a memorandum to local authorities on May 12, 2020.

COVID-19 and Human Rights Situation of Women, and Sexual and Gender Minority

On July 9, 2020, CS:MAP partner **Women Act** held a virtual interaction on the human rights situation of women and sexual and gender minority groups, with activists and CSOs of West Rukum and Saptari. During the discussion, the participants talked about how COVID-19 has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and its socio-economic impacts. COVID-19 has hit women and sexual and gender minority groups harder, causing higher levels of psychological distress. A participant shared the story of a recent suicide case of a trans man, due to already dire financial situation made worse by COVID 19. Similarly, a participant shared a story of police reluctance to register violence against women case until the restoration of normal situation. The participants also discussed COVID-19 impact on girls' education due to tremendous pressure of additional household chores on women and girls. The critical role of civil society was emphasized in holding the government accountable to protecting rights of women, girls and sexual and gender minority community. Altogether 27 participants attended the interaction.

NGO Federation of Nepal Feed 3,000 Foreign Returnees

NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) has provided food and water to 3,000 foreign returnees in the holding center of Bagmati located at Bhaktapur since June 25, 2020. Upon the request from the Ministry of Women Children and Senior Citizens (MOWCSC), NFN took the responsibility and fed the returnees brought to holding center. NFN with the support of various other civil society organizations and individuals and in collaboration of NFN Bhaktapur has been handling the food and water services. Returnees are brought to holding center directly from airport with basic health checkup by Nepal Army. After spending few hours or a day at the holding center, they are transported back to the quarantine at their homes.

HEAD Coalitions in Ramechhap and Dolakha urge local governments to make disaster management a priority

The Health, Education, Agriculture and Disaster Management (HEAD) coalition in Ramechhap district released a press statement on July 06, 2020 urging the government to prioritize disaster management and mitigation. The statement highlights that the policies, programs and budget allocated for disaster risk reduction, management and mitigation activities, including for COVID-19 response, is not enough. The coalition stated that it hoped to draw the attention of all the *palikas* towards this issue.

Similarly, the HEAD Coalition in Dolakha district agreed to advocate for an Act related to disaster management at all the local levels of the district during a virtual meeting held on July 13, 2020.

CSOs contribute to COVID-19 response in Gulmi and Nuwakot

On July 10, 2020, **Integrated Rural Development Society (IRDS)**, with contribution from its different projects, donated a total of NRs 120,000 to all the local governments in Gulmi district for COVID-19 response. The three *gaunpalikas*, Malika, Dhurkot and Isma, received a total cash support of NRs 51,000 and the rest was divided among the remaining *palikas*. The organization had assisted the local governments virtually on policy making and budget formulation process during the lockdown as well.

Additionally, IRDS distributed masks and sanitizers to 995 Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) and to the members of Federation of Nepalese Journalists – district chapter Gulmi, for their protection in the frontline.

On July 5, 2020, **Community Development Center Nepal (CDC)** handed over medical kits to different health facilities of Nuwakot, namely - Trishuli district hospital, Ratmate health post in Belkotgadi, Deurali primary health center in Myagang, Kharanitar hospital in Tadi, and to the District Coordination Committee, for COVID-19 response. The organization handed over a total of 17 PPE sets, 35 liters of sanitizer, 11 thermal guns, 13 packets of surgical gloves, 1,700 surgical masks, 275 KN95 masks, 120 packets of soaps, 120 packets of sanitary pads and four sets of boots to these facilities.

Disclaimer: This 'COVID-19 Situation Report' is made possible by the support of the American People through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID.) The information in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government. The information is collected and verified in/through various GON sources including respective municipalities and provincial governments where CS:MAP is working.