

Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project

March 2019

Issue 17

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 17th issue will help us reflect upon activities and achievements from the month of February 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

'Get to Know Your CSOs' Enhances Understanding of Civil Society and Citizen's Role

Interface Nepal organized 'Get to Know Your CSOs' program in Dang on February 24, 2019. The objective was to engage with the public, including civil society organizations (CSOs) and media, to enhance public understanding of CSO contribution to society and the importance of civic role in improving governance and accountability.



Video dramas featuring popular artistes Dhurmus-Suntali (Sitaram Kattel-Kunjana Ghimire) were shown which took the centerstage of the event.

Participants said they had been doing something for the society in different capacities, but that they realized they were acting as civil society members, only after participating in the program. It also provided an opportunity for CSO representatives to share their works and experiences to advance understanding of their roles.

Other activities included presentation of a documentary on CSOs in Nepal, quotes by experts on the role and importance of CSOs, interactions with the public, recognition of the CSO champions of the district and word games,

and selfie board for photoshoot, among others. The presentation of approximately one hour, excluding interactions and sharing at the end, was rolled out throughout the day, so that people could join at their convenience.

The organizers also coordinated with the local media including newspapers, radio and television stations for interviews with the team members to reach out to larger audience for awareness.

Organized in collaboration with Rural Women Development Center more than 200 people including representatives from government agencies, CSOs, students, youth, women, men, people with disabilities and people from various ethnic groups participated in the event.



Strengthening Enabling Environment for Civil Society and Media Organizations in Nepal

Civil Society and Government Discuss on Draft Bill of Social Organization Act, 2019

SAP Nepal organized a discussion on the draft bill of Social Organization Act, 2019 in Kathmandu on February 11, 2019. The objective was to urge the government to include CSOs' concerns in the draft bill.



Representatives from concerned ministries, government offices and CSOs discussed on the provisions of the draft bill. The discussants included Bashistha Kumar Ghimire, Under Secretary at the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA); Sarita Rayamajhi, Under Secretary at the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen (MOWCSC); Rajendra Thapa, Under Secretary at Nepal Law Commission (NLC) and Nisha Baniya, Legal Advisor to Social Welfare Council (SWC).

Human rights activist Charan Prasai; Rajendra Aryal, Chair of Federation of Community Forestry Users, Nepal; Kamala Panthi, Vice President of Sancharika Samuha; Samjha Shrestha, Chair of Shantimalika Network; Bhakta Bishwokarma, Chair of Dalit National Federation; Kedar Khadka, Executive Director of GoGo Foundation; and Arjun Bhattarai, Deputy General Secretary of NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) were other discussants.

Sanjeev Ghimire brought into discussion the provisions of the draft bill relating to the definition, registration, scope of work, reporting requirement and timing, potential interference on CSOs, and prior approval for funding, and said they were inconsistent with the spirit of Article 17 of the Constitution of Nepal and Article 22 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Arjun Bhattarai said NFN had objection to the provisions of the structure of SWC, foreign funding regulation, and use of earmarked budget.

Legal and Policy Advisor of CS:MAP, said the bill should include CSO sustainability. Samjha Shrestha emphasized on the need for one-window policy for CSO registration and reporting process. Kamala Panthi urged policy makers to clarify on the provisions related to renewal of CSOs. Kedar Khadka said the provision of imprisonment should

be removed from the draft bill. Narendra Prasad Joshi, Executive Director of SAP-Nepal, requested the law makers to consider the global context in law-making process. Rajendra Thapa said since the draft bill had already been submitted to MOHA, NLC could do nothing about it. Sharita Rayamajhi said MOWSCS wanted to collaborate with MOHA to finalize the draft bill. Bashistha Kumar Ghimire said the consultation was informative and the inputs would be incorporated into the draft bill. There were 35 participants (12 female).



GoGo Foundation conducted a similar interaction in Bhaktapur to discuss on and recommend changes in the draft bill of Social Organization Act, 2019 on February 15, 2019. The views were put forth in an event organized by the GoGo Foundation on February 15, 2019.

Som Sharma Bajgain, President of NFN Bhaktapur Chapter, chaired the event whereas chief guest was Navaraj Gelal, Chief of District Coordination Committee, Bhaktapur. Guest speakers included Pushkar Budhathoki, President of FNJ Bhaktapur Chapter, Narayan Krishna Shrestha, Chief Administrative Officer Bhaktapur, and Devendra Shrestha, President of Nepal Bar Association, Bhaktapur.

Kedar Khadka made a brief presentation on CSO Sustainability Index, 2017 and the draft bill of Social Organization Act, 2019. Some participants welcomed the provision saying that the bill looked better but there were still some controversial words which need to be corrected.

Participants openly expressed their views on the draft bill. The renewal period of CSOs has been proposed for 3-5 years, number of board members has been proposed seven people which are good, they said. Narayan Krishna Shrestha said that CSOs and government should collaborate for the overall development. Likewise, Devendra Shrestha and Puskar Budhathoki said that some local government official were less accountable to public service delivery and created unfavorable environment for CSO registration and renewal time. Navaraj Gelal said that some provisions in the draft bill were not CSO friendly. It has been reported that nepotism and favoritism is deep rooted in CSOs, he added. A total of 51 people (19 female) participated in the program.

Public Interest Story Wins Best Feature Award

Freedom Forum's fellowship story on public interest reporting has won the 'Best Feature Award'. Gokul Prasad Baskota, Minister for Communications and Information Technology, gave away the award to Aditya Dahal, one of the fellows of Freedom Forum, on February 19, 2019. The award carries a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 5,000. Freedom Forum had provided Dahal a fellowship for investigative reporting on reconstruction.



Dahal's news titled "*Sankhu Dwellers Facing Constraints to Build Houses in Traditional Style*" covered the issues of post-earthquake reconstruction where the

households suffered due to lack of construction materials, human resources and delay in releasing housing grant by the government. Following the publication of news report, the reconstruction works of Sankhu, an old settlement, gathered pace.

The fellowship on reconstruction supported Dahal to dig out the factors behind the delay and dilemma among the dwellers and concerned government authorities related to the reconstruction of private houses in the traditional style. Sankhu which lies in Shankharapur Municipality, on the north-east outskirts of the Kathmandu Valley, was one of the worst affected settlements during the 25 April 2015 Nepal earthquake.

Dahal, associated with the state-run National News Agency, was awarded during the 58th anniversary celebration of the agency. He is one of 13 recipients of the fellowship provided to explore the major issues concerning public interest on post-earthquake reconstruction works. It aimed to seek the attention of the earthquake-affected people, local and national governments, humanitarian agencies, and other stakeholders. Public Interest Reporting training was provided to 33 working journalists from 14 earthquake-affected districts with support from CS:MAP.

Civil Society and Media Engagement with Government for Effective Public Resources Use and Services Delivery

Public Information Officer of Ramechhap Receives Cell Phone

Forty-three information officers of government offices in Ramechhap district have got a mobile phone each and dedicated numbers, to disseminate information as provisioned by the Right to Information Act. On January 27, 2019 stakeholders raised the issue in *Sajha Sabha* organized in Manthali that government offices were ineffective to disseminate information to the people. Chief District Officer (CDO) realized and committed to resolve it. As a result, they got the cell phones.

The CDO office also instructed to display the phone number of information officers ensuring full access of the public across the district. Earlier, people complained that they had minimal access to government notices in the district. Journalists also complained against the unfriendly government offices in terms of information dissemination. Consequently, the CDO office organized an interaction on 'Right to Information and Journalists' to address the issue. Assistant Chief District Officer Yagya Prasad Sharma committed to improve information dissemination system.

LDAG Members Lead Development Work

Thanks to the relentless efforts of Listening, Discussion and Action Group (LDAG) of Lekbeshi Municipality Ward No. 7 in Surkhet through *Sajha Boli* radio program, the members of the group have been able to take a lead on local development activities.



They have been raising the issues of development with the Ward in different fora. As a result, 4 LDAG members are in the 9-member users committee to renovate local drinking water source. Among the four, one is the chairperson, the other a secretary and two are members.

The committee has received NRs 155,000 from the Ward. LDAG members discussed and demanded to renovate drinking water source as the women had to spend a long time to fetch water from a distant source. Now the renovated reserve tank is functional with three taps. Bal Krishna Oli, LDAG member and chair of the committee, led and completed renovation before deadline.

CA Monitors Public Services and Gets Assurance of Improvement

Common Assemblies (CAs) of Kumalikot and Ranagaun in Doti formed one monitoring and one observation committee focusing on agriculture, health, education and sanitation within the *gaunpalika*. Both committees have 7 members each encompassing Ward members, CA facilitator, local media, CSO and local government.

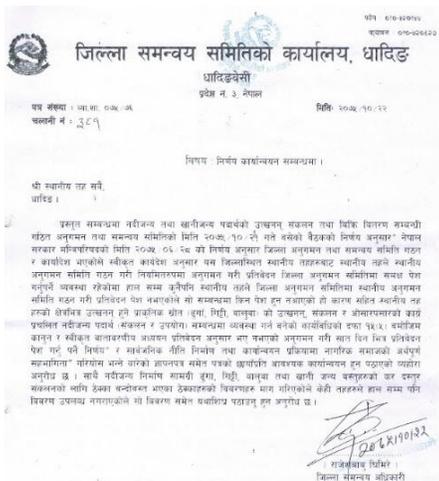
The Monitoring and Observation committee observed the dumping site of Sujung Hospital, Sahid Smriti High School and sanitation of Rajapur, Ganapani and Magar Tole in Dipayal-silgadhi Municipality. Likewise, the Observation Committee observed and took information on educational activities of Saraswoti Higher Secondary School, and Masteshwari and Bhuwaneshwari Secondary schools of KI Sing *gaunpalika* of Doti and provided their feedback.



As a result, the schools and hospitals accepted the inputs and committed to improve the standard and quality of their education and services.

CSOs and Media Take Initiative for Joint Action

DEC Nepal and NGO Federation Dhading Chapter jointly organized strategic coalition building meeting between CSOs and media in Dhadingbesi on February 4, 2019.



The objective was to finalize a memorandum on local-level policy formulation and implementation and involvement of civil society in it and handover to the local government. The meeting finalized the memorandum and jointly handed over to District Coordination Committee (DCC).

It also covered the constitutional provisions and civil society participation in the policy formulation and implementation process. As local governments are scattered, and it is time consuming to handover the memoranda to

individual *palikas*, they decided to send the memoranda through DCC. DCC wrote a letter to all local units in Dhading for civil society participation in local-level policy development process.



The civil society group in Dhading would follow up with the process. A total of 23 CSOs and media representatives participated in the meeting.

Civil Society and Government Collaboration Emphasized

Samudayik Sarathi organized an interaction on local governments and civil society partnership on February 25, 2019 in Chautara, Sindhupalchowk. Advocate Dinesh Tripathi presented a paper on existing legal provisions and international experiences of constructive partnership between local governments and civil society.

Som Sapkota said that civic space was shrinking so more collaboration between government and civil society was needed. “This can be improved and strengthened through collaboration,” said Sapkota. Gyanendra Timalisina,

District Vice-chairperson of Federation of Nepali Journalists, said regular interaction among journalists, Nepal Bar Association and civil society organizations is a must for citizen-government collaboration.



Chairing the program, Januka Parajuli, Deputy Mayor of Chautara Sanghachok Gadhi Municipality, claimed that citizen participation was ensured while formulating 31 laws by the municipality. "CSOs should empower and sensitize citizens at the grassroots level for effective civic engagement" she added. Representatives from media, academia, civil society, the private sector, government agencies, and lawyers, among others participated in the interaction.

Interaction on Civic Role in Local-level Planning Process Held

Rural Women Development Center (RWDC) organized an interaction on 'The Role of Civil Society in Local-level Planning Process' on February 20, 2019 in Dang district with the objective of increasing civic participation in the decisions that affect people's life.



A paper on 'Local-level Planning Process' was presented. Based on the Local Government Annual Budget Plan Act, 2018, the interaction focused on seven steps planning process for meaningful participation of public and civil society. Elected representatives agreed the following topics to ensure civic engagement: in seven steps planning process; from Ward level to sub-metropolitan and district level; public participation in policies, Acts formulation process; mobilizing human and natural resources; for more accountable government entities; mainstream marginalized communities; and good governance at local governments.

Representatives from local governments committed to increase public participation in upcoming planning process, budget allocation and policy formulation. The interaction formed a team to carry out joint actions for ensuring policy priority and social issues for advocacy and campaign in the district. In total, 60 people (35 female) representing CSOs, government agencies, political parties, media, women's groups and the private sector participated in the interaction.

RWDC also applied Community Score Card (CSC) at Saundiyyar Health Post of Ward no.7 under Ghorahi sub-metropolis. The CSC was held on February 24, 2019 to Feb 26, 2019. RWDC



identified gaps, strengths and weakness in service delivery of the health post and developed actions plan to improve the services. Khopiram Chaudhary, Chair of Ward no. 7, committed to apply this tool in schools and agriculture center too.

योजनामा जनसहभागिता बढाउन माग



समाजिक विकास तथा स्थानीय सरकारको विकासका लागि जनसहभागिता बढाउन माग गरिएको छ। योजनामा जनसहभागिता बढाउन माग गरिएको छ। योजनामा जनसहभागिता बढाउन माग गरिएको छ।

Resources assessment table; Self-evaluation score card; Performance evaluation score card; and Face-to-face meeting were used. Based on the findings, Chair of Ward no. 7 committed to address the following issues within six months: make immunization service effective; implement family planning service; ensure availability of 35 types of free medicine;

make maternity service effective; ensure effective regular health checkup service; conduct campaign for reducing tuberculosis; monitor performance of staff regularly; and manage pure drinking water and sanitation in the health post.

As an impact of the CSC, Ward no. 10 has requested RWDC for conducting CSC in March 2019. In total, 30 people (14 female) participated in the program.

Social Audit: A Step toward Ensuring Accountability

Samudayik Sarathi organized institutional social audit on February 28, 2019 in Kathmandu with an objective of ensuring transparency and accountability in its operation. The event focused on review of achievements, contributions, issues and challenges the organization faced last fiscal year. Major recommendations of the social audit were on improving active involvement of management committee members, preparing program exit strategy in line with strategic plan, diversifying funding and developing a sustainability plan.

Participants said that Samudayik Sarathi had inspired other organizations to conduct social audit and added civil society organizations (CSOs) should play watchdog's role, keep oversight of government activities and improve its own credibility through transparent and accountable measures.



A total of 54 people participated, representing various CSOs such as media, academia, government, the private sector, lawyers, and international agencies, among others. Dr. Bal Gopal Baidhya, former Vice Chair of National Planning Commission was the chief guest.

Capacity Building of CSOs and Media

Sajha Sabha Application Promotes Youth Engagement for Public Service Oversight

Community Development Center (CDC) Nepal conducted *Sajha Sabha* App orientation to LDAG members of Likhu and Myagang *gaunpalikas* in Nuwakot district on February 23, 2019.

The objective was to teach and educate citizens about using open budget portal and open government apps so that citizens can solicit, collect, document and share problems and issues in service delivery, budget allocation, and management, among others.

The main contents were concept of good governance and accountability of local authorities, service providing mechanism in different sectors, governance strengthening, role of LDAG members and process of *Sajha Sabha* App downloading and uploading system through mobile.



Thirty-five youth downloaded this App and uploaded their concerns related to local public services. Participants committed to use this App regularly and share for wider use. It supported to enhance the practical skill to use

information and communication technology for public oversight. A total of 36 people (30 female) participated in the orientation.

CDC-Nepal also conducted *Sajha Sabha* App orientation to LDAG members of Kalika and Uttargaya *gaunpalikas* in Rasuwa on February 22, 2019. The orientation focused on the role of LDAG members and process of *Sajha Sabha* App downloading and issues uploading system through mobile including others as stated above. Among 20 participants, 11 youth uploaded their concerns related to local public services in Rasuwa district and all participants downloaded *Sajha Sabha* App individually. There were 20 (11 female) participants.

SOCH Nepal Conducts OCA of non-CS:MAP Partner

SOCH Nepal conducted an Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) orientation for non-CS:MAP partner organizations from February 20-22 in Kathmandu with the objective of supporting them to find out their strengths and weaknesses and help improve their capacity.

During the OCA, SOCH Nepal assessed the strengths and areas of improvement of the Association for Dalit Women's Advancement of Nepal (ADWAN) in 39 areas. At the end of the program, ADWAN team prepared an action plan with the activities that will be implemented within three months, six months and one year with timeline and responsibilities outlined.



SOCH Nepal collected feedback from the participants. Pampha Pariyar, Chair of ADWAN said OCA was important for ADWAN and would help the organization to run effectively in future. She committed to revise the statute and other policies and formulate new policies and implement them to improve internal governance. She thanked SOCH Nepal and NEPAN for providing such an opportunity. A total of seven participants including board members, senior staff, and volunteers participated in the OCA. Project Coordinator of CS:MAP, Apsara Karki thanked CS:MAP for empowering her as a resource person for OCA.

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