

Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project

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Issue 14

CS:MAP Newsletter

Word 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 14th issue will help us to reflect upon activities and achievements from the month of November 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 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

Civil Society Reviews Electoral System

The National Election Observation Committee (NEOC) organized its third phase of commentary-based interaction on "Electoral Review: Concerns and Commentaries" on November 22, 2018 in Kathmandu.

Charing the interaction, Prof. Kapil Shrestha, vice-chair of NEOC, said NEOC had meticulously reviewed and revisited various aspects of electoral system. However, there were other issues such as National Identity Card, constituency delimitation, political financing and electoral justice along with electoral dispute resolution mechanism that need to be addressed with a priority.

Former Chief Election Commissioner Bhoj Raj Pokharel, said that inclusiveness is important in all aspects but even more in representation of political parties. "As the country has now transitioned into the federal system, decentralization of electoral authority is possible and should be done," he added.



Prof. Dr. Surendra KC called for the oversight of voter registration process by relevant stakeholders, especially of marginalized communities, to ensure their participation in elections. Advocate Tirtha Raj Basaula asserted that voter education alone is not enough to improve the electoral system of Nepal, emphasizing on the need to focus more on results than just process.

Pinky Gurung, President of Blue Diamond Society, emphasized on the need for an effective inclusion policy to ensure the electoral rights of the LGBTIQ¹ community in Nepal. "The community faces a lot of discrimination in all aspects of their lives including in registration as voters," she added. Bed Raj Dhungana, Rights Activist, was of the view that the state needs to provide necessary facilities to ensure electoral participation of migrants with disabilities, in consideration of the problems they face in registering as voters.

Prof. Dr. Kusum Shakya, vice-chair of NEOC made a comprehensive presentation on "Voter Registration". She minutely analyzed various characteristics and challenges of voter registration in Nepal. Similarly, Tej Sunar of NEOC, made a presentation on "Election and Concerns of Inclusion" where he analyzed Nepal's electoral system and areas for improved inclusion. He also recommended ways for improving the electoral system in Nepal.

Majority of the participants expressed their views on the steps to be taken to ensure inclusive representation in future elections, and recommended voter registration to be carried out throughout the year in Ward offices. A total of 67 people (male-35, female-35, third gender 1) participated in the interaction including electoral experts, former chief election commissioners, CSO leaders, rights activists, researchers, Election Observation Coordination Group (EOCG) members and journalists.

Advocacy Leads to Acton: Uterine Prolapse Screened in Doti

KI Singh *gaunpalika* in Doti district organized a camp for the check-up and treatment of uterine prolapse in rural women. The female Common Assembly (CA) members in Doti talked about the uterine prolapse (*aang khasne samasya* in the local dialect) among local women as a pressing health issue. The issue first raised by the CA was then discussed at the PPWG meetings and also shared at the *Sajha Sabha* forum.

As a result of the advocacy and lobbying efforts made by the CA, KI Singh *gaunpalika* allocated the budget for organizing a uterine prolapse screening camp. The local media also played a vital role in raising awareness by widely disseminating information on the issue. Following relentless efforts made by FMDC and the support extended by stakeholders, the *gaunpalika* was convinced and organized the camp.



In addition to allocating budget and conducting the screening camp, the *gaunpalika* decided to cover the surgery costs for patients who were identified as having chronic problems. As a result, a camp was organized in Ward No. 5 in which 100 women suffering from uterine prolapse were screened and 16 were recommended for surgery.

The *gaunpalika* mobilized Female Community Health Volunteers, and health personnel from the local health-post to organize the camp. CA and LDAG members also actively contributed to plan and organize the event. Til Bahadur Bohara, Health Coordinator of the *gaunpalika* told the women suffering from uterine prolapse about the importance of the camp. Traditional norms, values, cultures and geographical hardships led to fewer women attending the camp than what was expected.

¹ lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersexes, queer and allies (or asexual)

#MaBolchhu: Voice against Gender-based Violence

Media Advocacy Group and Samjhauta Nepal organized a storytelling program as part of the ongoing #MaBolchhu campaign on November 23, 2018 in Kathmandu. The event was scheduled to mark the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence (GBV), held every year from November 25 to December 10.

Prominent women leaders from different sectors shared their personal stories and the struggles they faced as women, whilst moving up the leadership ladder in their respective fields. Karishma Manandhar, prominent actress-turned-politician, was the key note speaker. Likewise, Bimala BK, Member of Federal Parliament; Devu Parajuli, Rehabilitation Therapist at the National Disabled Fund; Nitu Pandit, Chairperson of Sancharika Samuha; and Dr Usha Jha, Member of the National Planning Commission, were guest speakers who reflected on the issues of gender-based discrimination.



“Voices of women have been silenced so often in a society like ours. We need to start open discussions and dialogue to tackle the discrimination and violence women and girls face. Campaigns like #mabolchhu need to reach the women and girls from rural communities whose voices have not been heard,” emphasized Karishma Manandhar. Similarly, Dr Jha said, “The #MeToo movement has given strength to many women to speak up against the violence they continually face in their lives. However, unless we change the patriarchal values and attitude, we won’t be able to achieve anything significant to tackle violence against women and girls,” she added. The speakers together with the participants pledged to speak up against every form of GBV in their personal and professional lives and be their own ambassadors to end GBV.

HEAD Coalition Leads Advocacy Initiatives

HEAD coalition meetings held in Nuwakot and Rasuwa districts discussed the status and key progress on two advocacy issues - regularizing social audit of community schools in Nuwakot, and the use of trees for housing purpose at the buffer zone of Langtang National Park in Rasuwa, including other current issues in both districts.

The major objectives of the HEAD coalition meetings were to form subcommittees for advocacy campaigns to be led by the Federation of Nepali Journalists of Nuwakot and Rasuwa districts. The meeting also formed subcommittees in both districts to lead advocacy and campaign efforts.



During the meeting, HEAD coalition members discussed important issues like polluted drinking water, unmanaged dumping site of Dhovikhola in Rasuwa, increasing use of pesticides in agricultural products, the need for participation of marginalized and minority communities, media and civil society in the local-level policy making process, among others. The meeting prepared a draft plan of action for advocacy activities to be undertaken for a

“Sajhedari Manch will provide opportunities for governments and CSOs to regularly interact and find solutions mutually to improve public services and policies at the local level,” they said. “Sajhedari Manch will fill in this gap for civic engagement”, they added. Integrated Rural Development Society (IRDS) formed four Sajhedari Manch in Gulmi and Arghakhanchi districts. Deputy chair Tulasi Devi Shrestha and Chief Administrative Officer Bhesh Raj Panta of Chhatradev *gaunpalika* of Arghakhanchi thanked IRDS for its efforts to create opportunities for civic engagement at the community level.

Elected Representatives Oriented on Social Accountability Tools



SOCH Nepal continued to orient the civil society and elected peoples' representatives, representatives from schools, and health posts on Social Accountability tools. An event was organized at Shahid Lakhan *gaunpalika* of Gorkha district. The main topics of the orientation were Public Hearing, Social Audit, Public Audit, Community Score Card, and Right to Information.

The orientation primarily focused on policy provisions and importance of the application of SA tools for earning people's trust and ownership of activities undertaken by the Ward government. The Ward chair of Shahid Lakhan *gaunpalika*-8, Kashi Raj Amgain said that the

orientation would help enhance transparency, accountability, and ensure citizen participation. A total of 35 people participated in the orientation. Chiefs of Shahid Lakhan *gaunpalika* Wards 7 and 8 committed to apply SA tools for promoting accountability and transparency in their respective Wards.

Additional support is being provided to local CSOs to develop resource persons capable of leading orientation on SA tools for citizen awareness. The SOCH district coordinator, Mohasin Ali Miya said, "Now I have the confidence to facilitate the SA tools orientation on my own". He thanked CS:MAP for empowering him as a resource person for facilitating SA tools orientation.



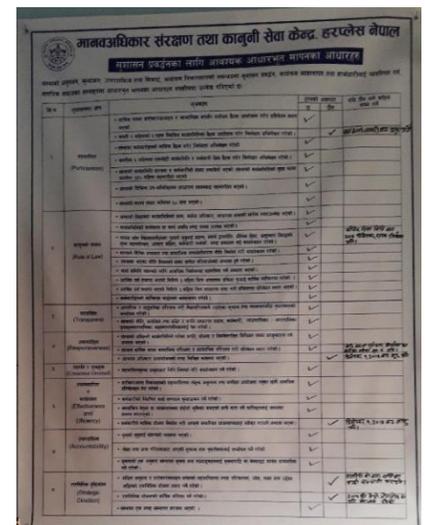
Capacity Building of CSOs and Media

Efforts to Strengthen Internal Governance of CSOs

Strengthening internal governance among CSOs is a major result that CS:MAP aims to achieve. To institutionalize and regulate self-governing mechanisms, CS:MAP has developed a checklist of minimum standards for CSO internal governance and has begun rolling it out among 14 CSOs at the initial stage.

To apply the minimum standards of internal governance, ISO partners NNSWA, NEPAN and Mitra Samaj organized an interaction on minimum standards for CSOs. During the interaction, CSOs internalized the importance of minimum standards for internal governance and agreed to review their organizational status on the basis of the checklist.

ISO partner NNSWA facilitated this process with 5 CSO partners (Sanjeevani Nepal Kanchanpur, FMDC Kailali, IHRC Banke, HRPLSC Banke, and RWDC Dang). Likewise, ISO partners Mitra Samaj and NEPAN supported HURADEC and SOCH respectively.



During the interaction, selected board members and senior staff of CSOs discussed indicators for each of the minimum standard in detail to help them assess their current internal governance status. The CSOs have formulated an action plan to achieve progress against each indicator based on this evaluation. CSOs have displayed the status of their organizations' internal governance, as assessed by utilizing the minimum standard indicator, on charts at visible places. ISO partners will work with CSOs to fulfill the identified gaps within the agreed timeline.

Refresher Training for Radio Program Producers

A three-day refresher training was organized for radio program production partners of *Sajha Boli* in Nepalgunj from November 20-22, 2018. The objective of the training was to provide information on new radio formats like outdoor discussion sessions and call-in segments; to build capacity among radio producers on how to conduct Critical Listening Feedback Session (CLFS); and to enhance their technical skills of editing and mixing of radio programs.



An outdoor session was conducted at Duduwa *gaunpalika*-3 of Banke district in coordination with of local CSO, Information and Human Rights Research Centre (IHRC) on the second day of the training. Vice chairperson and executive members of Duduwa *gaunpalika*, police, lawyers, journalists, representatives of CSOs, LDAG members, and students, among others, were present at the outdoor discussion session and shared their views on the status of gender-based violence (GBV) and suggested measures to be taken to minimize GBV in their community.

Based on this outdoor session, Krishnasar FM, a local partner of *Sajha Boli* radio program, produced a radio episode on GBV that was aired on December 2. All the producers conducted outdoor discussion sessions and produced a dedicated episode on '16 days of activism against gender-based violence' and those radio programs were aired on December 2. A total of 10 producers (five female) from 10 radio stations and two community reporters (one female) participated in the training. The training has helped sub-national radio program producers take discussions out from the studio and into the communities and to get community voices directly into radio program episodes.

Editorial Team

Sajana Maharjan, Deputy Chief of Party, CS:MAP, FHI 360 Nepal

Nirmal Rijal, Ph.D., Media Director, CS:MAP, Equal Access International

Ram Sharan Sedhai, Development Communication Manager, CS:MAP, FHI 360 Nepal

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For Further Information Contact:

Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project (CS:MAP) | FHI 360 Nepal

GPO Box 8830, Gopal Bhawan, Anamika Galli, Baluwatar, Kathmandu, Nepal

Tel: 977.1.4437173 | Fax: 977.1.4117475

Web: <https://www.fhi360.org/countries/nepal>