

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, Sanfegagar, Shahid Lakhani, Shailung, Saruma Rani, Siddhalek, Suryabinayak, Tamakoshi, Tinau, Tribeni, Triveni and Uttargaya

Common Assembly Meeting Organized in Bhaktapur

Institute of Human Rights Communication, Nepal (IHRICON) organized a common assembly (CA) meeting in Changunarayan municipality Ward 6, Bhaktapur on July 30, 2020. The objective was to form the Health, Education, Agriculture and Disaster Risk Reduction (HEAD) sub-committee for effectiveness, document the progress of CA activities, and to discuss current issues related to the HEAD sectors.

Twenty-two participants from various sectors shared their experiences at this meeting that was chaired by the CA Coordinator Shreeram Lamichhane. The discussion prioritized education during the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. They also discussed health insurance, which has not been effective in the Changunarayan municipality. People who had bought health insurance policy, were not getting free medicines as expected, they said.

They also acknowledged the CA's role in getting the municipality to allocate the largest amount of budget to Ward 6 for disaster management, which is about 30 million rupees.

Local Governments Response to COVID-19

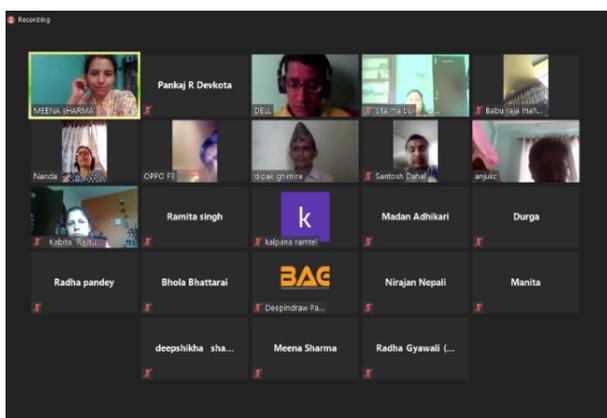
Following the relaxation in lockdown, people have increased their mobility. They have started thronging the market and public places, increasing the chances of transmission of COVID-19 at the community level. Keeping this growing risk in mind, the Ghorahi sub-metropolis has taken the initiation to prevent and control the spread of COVID-19 at the request of, and coordination with CAs, HEAD coalition networks, civil society champions, media, and civil society organizations (CSOs).

The sub-metropolis decided to manage isolation wards and quarantines, purchase masks, sanitizers, raise awareness about COVID-19 through the media, mobilize municipal police to reduce congestion during festivals, and test employees for infection at government and non-government offices, shops, and other crowded offices. A total of 259 people tested negative and there was no new case of infection in the sub-metropolis.

Similarly, the District Administration Office (DAO) Nuwakot has issued prohibition order, except for essential services, for ten days effective from August 8, 2020. The crisis management committee has decided to mobilize the Nepal Army to prevent overcrowding. The decision was taken at a meeting held at the DAO immediately after the spread of COVID-19 at the community level. Currently, all services and activities except for the most essential services have been stalled in the district.

After widespread public pressure from civil society, Bidur municipality has begun the process to purchase polymerase chain reaction (PCR) machine. Trishuli Hospital will receive Rs 4.6 million from the local infrastructure partnership program, Rasuwa to operate a PCR lab.

Interaction Program on Role of Civil Society in Changing Context



On August 13, 2020 Institute of Human Rights Communication Nepal (IHRICON) organized a virtual interaction program on role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the rapidly changing context of COVID-19.

The interaction started with a brief on the CS:MAP project. This was followed by a presentation by Mr. Deepak Prasad Ghimire, a Human Rights Activist and a journalist, on the role of CSOs in the COVID-19 response. The role of CSOs highlighted in this interaction were: amplifying the voices of people, asserting rights, and demanding transparency and accountability. The issues of gender-based violence, arrears in local government, the government role in education, among others, were also discussed.

The event concluded with a decision to draw the attention of the local governments to address the issues, especially those of the marginalized people. The virtual interaction was chaired by Ms. Meena Sharma, Chairperson of IHRICON, and attended by 27 participants from different CSOs of Lalitpur.

Radio Dialogue on COVID-19 Impact and Mitigation Measures in Dolakha

On August 15, 2020 HURADEC Nepal organized a radio dialogue on COVID-19 impact and its mitigation measures in Dolakha. HURADEC Nepal convened the event in collaboration with Radio Shailung Community FM and discussed local governments' effort against COVID-19 crisis. Dolakha DCC chairperson Dabal Pandey, Health Chief Bipul

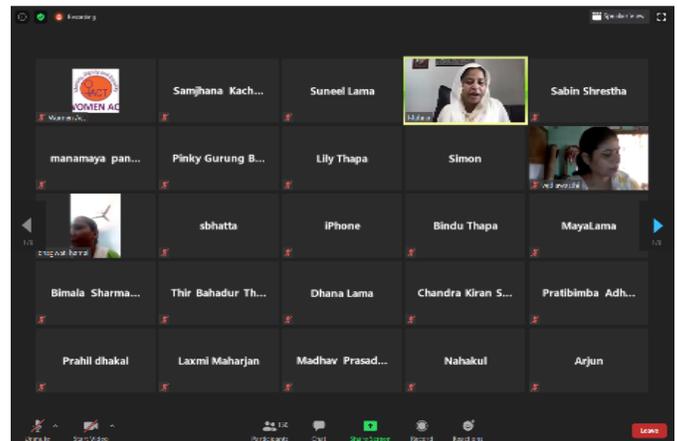
Kumar Jha, Dolakha Chamber of Commerce and Industries Chairperson Indra Bahadur Shrestha and civil society leader Krishna Bahadur Basnet discussed the COVID-19 situation, its impact, and the response plan in the district. Civil society representatives urged the stakeholders to increase COVID-19 testing at community level, improve the standard of quarantine centers, and disclose local government's expenditure incurred through public hearing. Similarly, business leader Shrestha shared about their support to local governments in response against COVID-19. In the program, DCC Chairperson also shared about the emergency lockdown in the district for a week to counter further spread of COVID-19. Radio Shailung Community FM broadcast the dialogue program live.

Webinar on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the time of COVID-19 Held

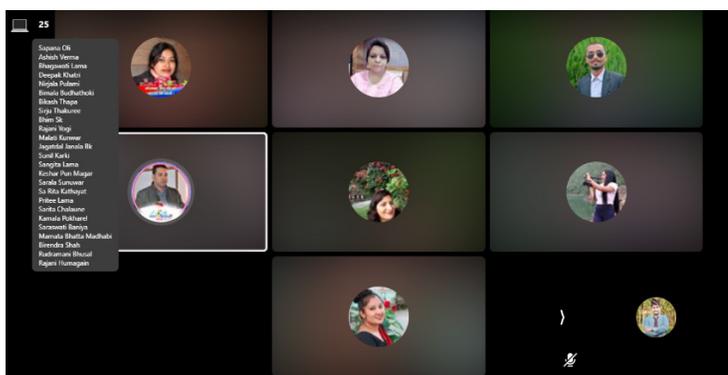
Women Act, in collaboration with other organizations, organized a two-day virtual conference on *Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Challenges and Measures to Equality, Participation and Inclusion of Women and Girls in the Context of COVID-19*, on August 13-14, 2020. There were four panel discussions involving government representatives, members of National Human Rights Commission and National Planning Commission, sexual and gender minority rights activists, women's rights activists and advocates, as panelists.

In the first panel discussion on "Impact of COVID-19 on Human Rights and Access to Justice for Women," panelists spoke about the reproductive health and socio-economic impact on women, their human rights challenges, and problems in accessing justice. They also discussed plans, programs and initiatives of the Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens on combating gender-based violence during the COVID-19 pandemic. The need to deliver justice at home and introduce measures to advance the agenda of women's human rights and empowerment was particularly emphasized. The second panel discussion focused on 'gender-responsive approach to health emergency and disaster management and response in the context of COVID-19'. Similarly, the first session of the second day focused on 'women's economic empowerment in the time of COVID-19', where issues and opportunities for women's equal access to financial resources, employment, entrepreneurship and livelihood, among others, were discussed. The last session focused on the challenges and way forward in relation to menstrual hygiene management.

There were altogether 200 participants on the first day and more than 280 participants on the second day.



Virtual Meeting with Community Reporters



On August 10 2020, Equal Access International (EAI) conducted an online virtual meeting with 21 community reporters (CRs) via Messenger Room - an online meeting platform. The meeting was useful to be updated on the CR's regular activities, achievements, learning and challenges. The meeting encouraged CRs to follow-up with Listening Discussion and Action Group (LDAG) facilitators and members, and to ensure continued listening to and discussion on the *Sajha Boli* and *Saathi Sanga Manka Kura* radio program content and Public service announcements (PSAs). The CRs were encouraged to motivate LDAG facilitators and members to provide regular feedback to these content, and participate and promote the *Mero*

Palika Mero Chaso (SMS MyVoice) campaign. The team also discussed about the CRs' regular contribution to *MeroReport* especially in health, education, agriculture, disaster risk reduction, youth, and women related issues. The CRs informed about challenges such as difficulty in collecting voices over the telephone and consent-taking on audio, videos and photographs. They expressed their commitment to coordinate with their respective Civil Society Organization (CSOs) partners to resume LDAG meetings, only after prudently assessing the current COVID-19 situation in their localities.

Listening, Discussion and Action Groups (LDAGs) celebrated International Youth Day 2020

International Youth Day (12 August 2020) was celebrated this year with the slogan "Youth Engagement with Global Action" virtually at various national and international platforms. National Youth Council and many youth-led organizations in Nepal marked the International Youth Day by organizing various Webinars and innovative activities in Nepal. Young people discussed their potential role and opportunities for engagement in COVID-19 prevention. In CS:MAP districts, LDAGs celebrated the day by organizing different activities.



Tree Plantation by LDAG

Mahadev LDAG of Kailali contributed in local infrastructure maintenance by burying the potholes on 500 meters section of the Mahendra Highway. They also planted 150 plants of 10 different species in *Hariyalai* Community Forest (<https://meroreport.net/blog/a-l-22>).

Likewise, all 3 LDAGs in Achham district, in coordination with the RTI Network and Municipality Level Youth Network, organized an interaction program (<https://bit.ly/2CCHkns>). They discussed about the major safety precautions required to control the spread COVID-19 infection and the role of youth, local government and stakeholders in COVID-19 responses.

Trained journalists in COVID-19 reporting

CS:MAP-trained journalists published more than 30 articles from August 1-15, 2020. They covered COVID-19 related issues, mostly those related to post-lockdown challenges, increasing number of COVID-19 infected cases, challenges faced by hospitals in treatment due to the lack of medical equipment such as ventilators (<https://bit.ly/3iGU5g1>), and strict measures adopted by the local governments to control the rising number of cases (<https://bit.ly/31QVg5F>). The journalists also covered issues such as the impact of COVID-19 on livelihood, on the tourism sector, revenue collection, and on schools. These articles were published in national and sub-national media outlets such as Annapurna post, Nagarik Daily, Rajdhani daily and different online news portals including on the *MeroReport* platform. A news report prepared by one of the journalists about the existing situation of COVID-19 in Bardiya district was featured in Corona Care, a segment in Nepal Television (NTV) News on August 10 2020 (<https://bit.ly/322vJqx>)

'Mero Palika Mero Chaso' – SMS MyVoice (SMV) campaign encouraging youth participation in COVID-19 response

The SMV campaign, through its Facebook page *Ma Khaandina* and Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system, has motivated youth in various parts of the country to share their contribution to the COVID-19 response in their communities. Two video messages were sent by the youth from Okhaldhunga (<https://bit.ly/321IJMS>) and Kanchanpur (<https://bit.ly/3aDA917>) districts through the Facebook page of the campaign. In these videos, the youth groups have shared how they promote awareness for prevention of COVID-19; and how they have collaborated with their local level government in quarantine management.

Radio programs on COVID-19 issues

A central version of the *Sajha Boli* radio program in the call-in format, was broadcast on August 15 2020. It included queries of listeners from Okhaldhunga, Sindhupalchok, Daddeldhura, Sindhuli, Doti and Nuwakot districts on home quarantine and home isolation. Infectious disease specialist, Dr. Anup Subedi, and Spokesperson for the Ministry of Health and Population, Dr. Jageshwar Gautam addressed the audience questions. Audience queries were also posted on the social media page of *Sajha Boli*.

The local version of the *Sajha Boli* produced by subnational radio station partners, focused on the effects of COVID-19 on agriculture and informed the listeners about what precautions should be taken while working in the field, availability of fertilizers, and the role of civil society and the mass media in this context. The programs produced in the magazine format incorporated interviews from farmers, local level representatives, and agronomists, who spoke about the impact of COVID-19 on the agricultural sector.

Likewise, Saathi Sanga Maanka Kura (SSMK) radio program broadcast on August 8 highlighted about the important role of local level representatives in addressing the increasing cases of mental health issues among adolescents and youths during the time of pandemic. The radio program included an interview with local level representatives and psychologists regarding the same issue. The SSMK team also hosted live session in their Facebook page where they discussed with the youths about their opinion on the issue.

Public Service Announcement (PSA) about misinformation and fake news

From August 1 onwards, EAI along with other radio partners produced and broadcast a PSA on safety precautions to be taken for COVID-19 prevention while using public transportation. The PSA called upon listeners to use masks and sanitizers, and ensure safe distancing while traveling in public transportation. Produced in 10 different languages, these PSAs were broadcast 390 times daily by the radio partners, and were also shared through the social media platforms of CS:MAP (<https://bit.ly/2FxnOK9>).

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.