

Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project

CS:MAP Newsletter

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Issue 27

Words from the Chief of Party, Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project

It is my immense pleasure in bringing to you yet another issue of the Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project (CS:MAP) monthly newsletter. I hope that this 27th issue will help us reflect upon activities and achievements from the month of December 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 New Year 2020!
Happy reading!

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

CS:MAP Commemorates Anti- Corruption Campaign 2019

CS:MAP’s national and sub-national partners organized anti-corruption campaign in collaboration with other civil society organizations at national, provincial and local level on December 9, 2019 to mark International Anti-Corruption Day.



The weeklong Anti-corruption campaign raised awareness about the anti-corruption policies, international convention against corruption and the national cost of the corruption. Civil Society leaders urged the policy makers, the administrators and the elected leaders for effective implementation of anti-corruption policies, take strong actions against corrupt officials and minimize the rate of corruption ensuring the effective governance.

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence Marked

CS:MAP partners observed the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (GBV) in line with the international theme for 2019 “Orange the World: Generation Equality Stands Against Rape” and national theme “Equity Generation: Unity Against Rape” from November 25-December 10, 2019.

The local and national partners organized various activities like orientation, awareness, advocacy, rally, signature collection, dialogues and discussions

across the project implementation districts. The programs provided an opportunity for raising voice against GBV and violation of fundamental human rights of women and girls to equality, non-discrimination, life with dignity, and demand for justice and solidarity for a just society. It also sought commitment to act against inequalities, stand against injustices, speak up against GBV and exclusion.

Samjhauta Nepal and Media Advocacy Group marked the 16 Days of Activism Campaign in keeping with the spirit of #Ma Bolchhu Campaign by organizing an event which brought together personalities from diverse walks of life. They told their common tales of inequality experienced, exclusion suffered, challenges encountered, and obstacles overcome in their personal and professional realms. Poet, social activist, politician, feminist male, sexual minority, and sex worker shared their experiences of facing biases and barriers as a woman and further based on their work and also for belonging to minority group. Held on December 5, 2019, there were altogether 116 (female 90, male 3, others 3) participants including representatives from different civil society organizations, media, Armed Police Force (APF), Nepal Police, sexual and gender minority groups, academicians, students, and others.



Recommendations on 5th National Human Rights Action Plan Submitted to OPMCM

Dalit NGO Federation (DNF) organized a national level consultation workshop on the draft of 5th National Human Rights Action Plan (NHRAP) on December 02, 2019 in Kathmandu. Joint Secretary at the Prime Minister's Office and Council of Ministers (OPMCM) Koshal Chandra Subedi, who heads the Human Rights and International Treaties Bureau, made a presentation on the process and content of the draft of NHRAP.



Human rights activists, organizations and experts provided suggestions to make the NHRAP more precise, comprehensive and functional. The OPMCM was open to the comments and suggestions provided by the stakeholders and expressed commitments to address the concerns raised.

Following the consultation, a 16-page document with recommendations from the stakeholders on the draft of the 5th NHRAP has been handed over to the Secretary of OPMCM Dilliraj Ghimire, and to the Chairperson of Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee of the Parliament Krishna Bhakta Pokharel. Mr. Pokharel has also expressed

commitment to incorporate the recommendations made by the civil society organizations (CSOs) into their recommendations to the OPMCM as well. A total of 50 representatives from the CSOs participated in the workshop.

Provincial-level Consultations on Universal Periodic Review

Nepal will present its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in November 2020. For this, the Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC), Women Act, and Blue Diamond Society (BDS) carried out eight provincial-level consultations on UPR to prepare civil society reports on key human rights issues in December.

Consultations on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer and asexual (LGBTIQ) issues were held by Women Act and BDS in Kathmandu, Nepalgunj and Surkhet. Consultations on behalf of the Dalit communities were held in three provinces namely Sudurpaschim, Karnali and Province 5 by the DNF. Consultations on key human rights issues were held in Province 3 and Sudurpaschim by INSEC. Five more provincial consultations are

scheduled for January 2020. These consultations were attended by government officials, elected representatives, members of Nepal NGO Coalition on UPR, media, police, representatives from Dalit, women and LGBTIQ+ communities, and general public. At a consultation held in Sudurpaschim province, Arjun Bahadur Thapa, Speaker of Provincial Parliament, expressed his commitment to implement the recommendations of the UPR for the protection and promotion of the human rights of Dalits of his province. Similar commitments have been made in other consultations as well. The findings of these consultations will contribute to making report to be submitted to the UNHRC in March 2020.



Local Government Gears up to Implement Human Rights

Information and Human Right Research Center (IHRC), Human Rights Protection and Legal Service Centre (HRPLSC) and Media for Development and Social Change (FMDC) organized an 'Orientation to Human Rights Standards and Responsibilities' for the elected representatives and government officials on December 30-31, 2019. The objective was to promote implementation of human rights in local level. IHRC conducted the event on December 30 and 31, 2019 in Banke and Bardiya respectively. FMDC organized the orientation on December 30, 2019 in Kailali and HRPLSC on December 31, 2019 in Rukum West.



The participants were orientated on the basic concept, standards and principles of human rights; international human rights instruments, human rights mechanisms, fundamental rights guaranteed under the constitution of Nepal and the roles and responsibilities of the local governments in the protection and promotion of human rights. Mohna Ansari, Member of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was one of the speakers in the event that IHRC organized in Nepalgunj on December 30, 2019. She said that since the local governments are entrusted with the law-making authority, it is their responsibility to frame the laws and policies from the human rights perspective and in line with the constitution.

A total of 67 elected representatives, 53 government officials, 17 civil society representatives and 2 journalists participated in the orientation.

Artists Raise Concern about Shrinking Space for Freedom of Expression

Litterateurs, film directors, producers and representatives from CSOs and journalists reiterated the need of Freedom of Expression at a dialogue on 'Art, Creation and Freedom of Expression' organized by Freedom Forum in collaboration with Nepal Independent Filmmakers Society in Kathmandu on December 25, 2019.

Sanjeeb Ghimire, Program Manager of Freedom Forum said the program was organized to bring all the stakeholders of art and literature together to assess the situation of freedom of art and literature in Nepal. Litterateur Prof. Dr Govinda Raj Bhattarai said that strings are attached with freedom in the country and writers like me do not feel free to express.

Film director Nabin Subba said that artists should have full-fledged freedom of expression. Film makers should enjoy the freedom without any obstruction. He added that even the senior artists are in favor of censorship. The general perception is that freedom of expression is meant for media not for film and other genres, he further said.



Journalist and poet Sangeet Shrota said that constitution is democratic, but actions are not. No dialogue between the government and the artists is a censorship in itself, he added. Manoj Pandit, film maker and director said more action was needed than dialogue. Independent films like 'Greater Nepal', 'Dasdhunga', and 'Badhshala' faced challenges in screening. That was a long battle. Human rights advocate Charan Prasai suggested to seek judicial remedy if freedom of expression is violated. He asked why that had not become the issue of human rights violation.

Speaking on film and media related bills, Chief Executive of Freedom Forum Tara Nath Dahal emphasized on the process of formulation and their enactment. Book registration law has been made, but litterateurs, filmmakers and creative writers have not raised their voices against the intrusion upon its scope, he added.

Legal and Policy Advisor of FHI 360 said that advocacy becomes weak in the absence of internalization of the two aspects of understanding and right enjoyment and state approach limiting the scope. A total of 35 (female 10) representing different sectors participated in the dialogue.

Workshop to Enhance Advocacy Strategies and Skills Organized

Informal Sector Service Center (INSEC) organized a workshop on Civic Engagement in Policy Cycle at different levels of government on December 29 and 30, 2019 in Dhulikhel, Kavrepalanchowk district. The objective was to enhance the strategies and skills of CSOs and their leaders on policy advocacy for their effective engagement in policy-making process.



Legal and Policy Advisor of FHI 360 facilitating a session on Public Policy Cycle and Civic Engagement (Process and Strategies), presented the coverage and scope of public policy and the standard process and practice of law and policy making in Nepal. He said the core essence of rule is the practice of inclusion of the civic voice and participation of stakeholders and civil society in law making.

The parliamentary process, fulfillment of the international obligations and the constitutional mandate of Nepal are also the key bases to be considered while developing public policies. Reviewing the practice, the opportunities where CSOs and stakeholders can engage and influence policy making process in government domain and parliamentary process at federal level were discussed.

Participants discussed and agreed that civic participation in law-making process at the sub-national government level could not be ensured because of lack of standard procedures for such participation. CSO representatives and activists agreed to engage themselves effectively to ensure the formulation of human rights-friendly laws and policies ensuring CSO enabling environment to strengthen the rule of law and democratic values.

Shobhakar Budhathoki, a civil society leader, facilitated a session on Civil Society Experience in Policy-making Process and Civic Engagement in Planning Process. He spoke about the understanding and the role of CSOs in policy-making process in Nepal. After the presentation, the representatives of CSOs interacted on the strategic priorities of civic engagement in policy making in Nepal.

Bijaya Raj Gautam, Executive Director of INSEC, spoke about the scope of civic engagement in policy making. He emphasized that Nepali CSOs should balance their engagement from local to federal level in policy-making process. Dr. Indira Shrestha, Chairperson of INSEC, said that the workshop was planned and organized by INSEC for enhancing the networking of CSOs for setting the policy advocacy agenda and ensuring proactive engagement in the process. A total of 56 people (female 15 and transgender 4) representing CSOs from the Kathmandu Valley and earthquake-affected districts participated in the workshop.

Civil Society and Media Engagement with Government for Effective Public Resource Use and Service Delivery

Local Governments in Dolakha to Review Policies and their Implementation

District Coordination Committee (DCC) Dolakha and Human Rights Awareness and Development Center (HURADEC) organized an interaction to discuss on the challenges of local-level policy-making process and their implementation as well as to make future action plans on December 11, 2019. The program also aimed to assess the impact of local-level planning process and implementation after the state restructuring.



Dabal Pandey, DCC Chief, said the local governments have implemented two fiscal years' budget and the third year is running. "We organized the discussion to take stock of how the local governments are contributing to 'Happy Nepali and Prosperous Nepal', a development agenda of the nation," he said. The program was held to initiate integrated development of the district, joint commitment on good governance and social justice as well as to review relation among the local governments, he added.

Bharat Bahadur KC, Mayor of Bhimeshwor Municipality, said the program was important to review the best practices and impact of two and half years of local governments and formulate strategy for the remaining years. Rudra Khadka, District President of Nepali Congress Party, emphasized to fulfill the commitments made during the local election.

The participants in the review meeting were chairs, vice chairs, mayors, deputy mayors, chief administrative officers and other representatives from Shailung, Melung, Tamakoshi, Baityeshwor, Gaurishankar, Bigu, Kalinchowk *gaunpalikas* and Jiri and Bhimeshwor municipalities. They had also shared their opinions. The meeting decided to develop a common mechanism to ensure effective implementation of ongoing programs and carry out mid-term evaluation and share the report before by the end of the current fiscal year.

The DCC team informed that all the respective local governments will update the progress including commitments made and challenges faced. Advocacy Advisor of CS:MAP suggested the local governments to carry out mid-term evaluation of the programs they have implemented. He also said that such an initiation can be replicated by other districts of Nepal.

'Suchana Chautari' Makes People Aware of Local Issues

Institute of Human Rights Communication Nepal (IHRICON) conducted a series of street drama titled '*Suchana Chautari*' (an information sharing platform) at three locations of Bhaktapur and Lalitpur districts. The street drama was performed at Telkot, Nagarkot-6, Changunarayan *gaunpalika*, Bhaktapur on December 20 and Tikabhairav Temple, Tikabhairav-6, Godawari Municipality, Lalitpur and Gyanodaya School, Chaughare-1, Konjyosom *gaunpalika*, Lalitpur on December 21, 2019.

Local people from different walks of life observed and appreciated the drama that featured the local problems and challenges such as child marriage, use of excessive chemicals in farming and weak service delivery at local level. Local representatives, government officials, civil society organization (CSO) leaders, mothers groups, youth groups etc., were also made part of the event so that they could initiate some actions to address challenges like these in their neighborhood.



Efforts were made to address their queries and comments with facts and figures. School children were provided some gifts as appreciation for their dance and singing, performed as part of the event to attract local people. As some parts of the drama were related to children (for example child marriage), they enjoyed the event along with their family members. More than 250 people including boys, girls, men and women participated in each event.

Local Government Commits to Formulate Governance Policy



Community Development Centre (CDC) conducted three *Sajhedari Manch* meetings in Rasuwa and Nuwakot districts in December 2019. The meetings were conducted in Kalika *gaunpalika* in Rasuwa, Likhu and Mygang *gaunpalikas* in Nuwakot districts.

The meetings discussed various issues including the review of previous meetings' decisions and their implementation, findings, gaps and planning. One of the major agenda of Rasuwa and Nuwakot *Sajhedari Manch* meetings was finalizing governance policy that has already been drafted. Both districts' *Sajhedari Manch* meetings realized the need for a governance policy and decided to endorse it from the upcoming Assembly and implement it. The meetings were held with the team of chairperson, vice chairperson, ward chairpersons and people representing different sectors.



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Civic Oversight of Agriculture and DRR in Ghorahi Sub-metropolis Conducted

Rural Women Development Center (RWDC) conducted public service oversight of agriculture of Ghorahi Sub-metropolis through Health, Education, Agriculture and DRR (HEAD) coalition on December 19, 2019. During the oversight, HEAD coalition found that the agriculture sector lacks skilled human resources; fertilizer; agriculture subsidy; agricultural tools and soil test; coordination between the Sub-metropolis and Agricultural Knowledge Center; and need of awareness raising and capacity building programs.



Similarly, the HEAD coalition conducted an oversight of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) of the same Sub-metropolis on December 25, 2019. Executive chief of the Sub-metropolis, department chief, related staff and ward chairperson were present during the oversight. HEAD coalition found that the Sub-metropolis lacks DRR policy and early warning system; stockpiling, emergency plan and also tools for people with disability.

RWDC is preparing the oversight reports which will be shared with the Sub-metropolis, elected bodies and other stakeholders to address the identified gaps. Each public oversight was conducted by selected eight members of HEAD coalition.

Local Governments Pledge to Improve Governance

Information and Human Rights Research Center (IHRC) organized interactions in Gulariya of Bardiya and Nepalgunj of Banke. The interactions focused on developing governance policy. Representatives of all 16 local governments were invited to the interactions to share their views regarding the need to formulate governance policy.



During the interaction in Gulariya on November 26, 2019, Madhuban Municipality; Badhaiyataal *gaunpalika* and Gulariya Municipality made commitments to form/develop governance policy and also asked for technical support from stakeholders, CSOs and experts. They also made commitments to form governance committee in participation of people, media and CSOs.

The interaction held in Nepalgunj on December 22, 2019 invited eight local governments to share their views regarding the formation of governance policy. Nepalgunj Sub-Metropolis; Kohalpur Municipality; Duduwa *gaunpalika*; Khajura *gaunpalika*;



Janaki *gaunpalika*; and Baijnath *gaunpalika* participated in the interaction. Prakash Upadhyya, a civil society leader, highlighted the importance of governance policy to fulfill the commitment of local elected representatives and to enhance the service delivery of the local governments.



Uma Thapa, Deputy Mayor of Nepalgunj Sub-metropolis, said that even the people (service recipients) should not go for personal benefits while implementing development activities. She added that governance can only be improved if people themselves are disciplined. She suggested the people to keep an eye on each step of budget formulation and implementation.

Civil Society Reviews Media Bill of Sudurpaschim Province

Media for Development and Social Change (FMDC) and Right to Information (RTI) National Network organized a national-level interaction between Civil Society and Media to discuss on Media Bill drafted by Sudurpaschim Province on December 10, 2019 with financial support from the Internal Affairs Ministry of Sudurpaschim Province.

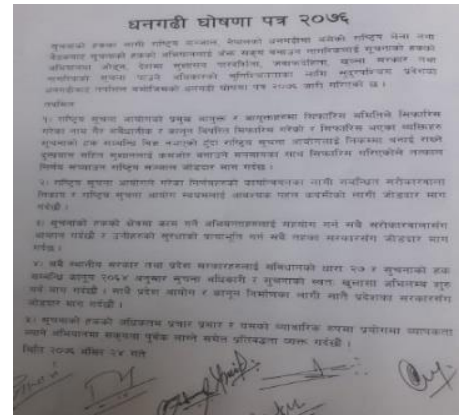


The objective of the interaction was to contribute to enhance understanding and clarity on the role of CSOs on different issues with key stakeholders and create vibrant civil society.

The interaction also helped to build consensus among the CSOs to draw the attention of the government on the issue, to strengthen collaboration and partnerships between local governments and civil society, among each other. RTI

activists from all seven provinces expressed their views on the Media Bill. After the interaction, gathering of RTI activists group issued Dhangadhi Declaration with the focus on RTI campaign to promote governance, accountability, transparency and to contribute to the campaign on open government partnership.

Chaired by RTI National Chair Umid Bagchand, 53 people including Chief Guest Chief Minister of Sudurpaschim Province Trilochan Bhatta, Special Guest Minister for Internal Affairs and Law Prakash Bahadur Singh, province and district level NGO Federation, Federation of Nepali Journalists, Kailali Bar Association, local CSOs, university teachers and public duty bearers took part in the event. The participants pledged to support RTI efforts to promote good governance in the province.



Interaction on Social Security Fund Points out Areas of Improvement

Samjhauta Nepal and Media Advocacy Group organized an interaction on the Social Security Fund (SSF) on December 13, 2019. The main objective was to bring conceptual clarity and understanding on the SSF system and to analyze it critically.

Kapil Mani Gyawali, Executive Director of SSF, made a presentation on the concept of SSF, programs, plans, schemes, strategy, process and benefits. Chartered Accountant Shesh Mani Dahal presented a critical analysis of the SSF and highlighted the gaps. He said it lacked adequate preparation and necessary consultation with stakeholders both public and private sectors.



Absence of broader network given the intent of nation-wide coverage and volume of fund it aimed to handle, failure to consider the emerging context like increasing youth migration, inability to return benefits compared to the contribution, greater tax burden are other gaps, he added.

He said failure to gain public trust, noncoverage of informal sector, putting pressure on banks and others to join the Fund while allowing government employees to continue with the Employees Provident Fund, ineligibility of wife to claim in case of the death of husband if she remarries or has alternative source of income/employment, etc. are some of the key gaps.

Organized in collaboration with the NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN), Kathmandu District Chapter, the program was facilitated by Ram Bhattarai, General Secretary of NFN and participated in by altogether 64 participants (female 24) including representatives from civil society organizations, trade union, Employees Provident Fund and media.

Capacity Building of CSOs and Media

CS:MAP Continues Building the Capacity of ISOs

CS:MAP Capacity Building team conducted three-day refresher training in Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) and Advocacy Readiness Index (ARI) tools to intermediary service organizations (ISOs) on December 29-31, 2019 in Kathmandu.

The objectives of the training were to review the latest status of OCA Institutional Improvement Plan (IIP) and ARI capacity building (CB) plan of all 14 CSOs, equip the ISO team to facilitate the final round of OCA and ARI assessments and prepare the assessments plan to conduct the final round of OCA and ARI assessments.

ISO partners presented the latest status of OCA-IIP and ARI CB plan collected through last round of coaching and mentoring visits to the CSOs and CB team's visits in December 2019. The training reviewed the remaining priorities carefully and discussed on the possible strategies to accomplish those tasks before the final round of the assessments.

Similarly, process, tools, their requirements and qualities of assessment facilitation were discussed. At the end, ISO partners prepared assessment schedules to accomplish by March 15, 2020. The refresher training was facilitated by Capacity Building Manager and Capacity Building Officer of CS:MAP. Project Managers and Capacity Development Specialist from two ISO partners - Nepal National Social Welfare Council (NNSWA) and MITRA Samaj participated in the training.

Systems Leadership Training Organized

CS:MAP organized a three-day training in Systems Leadership in Kathmandu from December 29-31, 2019. The training was aimed at developing systemic leadership skills and knowledge among participants from Okhaldhunga, Ramechhap, Sindhuli, Dolakha, Sindhuplachowk, Kavre and Kathmandu districts.

The participants were trained on concepts of systems leadership, mainstreaming gender and social inclusion (GESI) into development issues, knowledge on advocacy cycle, negotiation and facilitation skills, and role of positive deviants, among others. Participants were engaged in group exercises, simulations and plenary discussions. Experts from FHI 360 Nepal and Equal Access International provided facilitation, made presentations and led different thematic sessions.



Participants said that the training was helpful in developing leadership skills and knowledge in them which they would use in campaigning for different public interest agendas in the districts. Training was instrumental in deepening knowledge on advocacy, GESI, prioritization of challenges, identifying stakeholders, their interests and biases, and were trained in how a system leader should think from multi-dimensional perspectives for improving socio-economic conditions in favor of the marginalized communities.

Thirty-five participants from seven districts representing civil society, *Sajhedari Manch*, Common Assembly, Listening, and Discussion and Action Group (LDAG), among others, participated in the training.

Training in Investigative Reporting for Journalists Held

CS:MAP organized a two-day training on investigative reporting for journalists in Bhaktapur on December 18-19, 2019. The main objectives of the training were to enhance the capacity of the journalists to report on public interest issues, facilitate raising the issues of people with disabilities, sexual minorities, Dalit and women, to improve

coordination and networking with CSOs, and local governments and to deepen the understanding of advocacy and media advocacy.

The participants carried out self-assessment to find out how their stories have been written and how far the stories have impacted at the local level. They said that they have been reporting mainly on health issues, irregularities of elected representatives, infrastructure development, the effects of unplanned development, maternal child health, maternity, problem of drinking water, policy-making process, among others, at the local level.

Kiran Nepal, Editor of Himal weekly, facilitating a session on media advocacy, said the journalists need to report on the local issues so that it helps to bring the problems to the notice of duty bearers which in turn helps to improve public service delivery and public resource use.

Hari Bahadur Thapa, Chief Editor of Annapurna daily, guided the participants on finding the issues of irregularities, nexus between the corrupt people, vulnerability of the elected representatives mostly at the local level, the ever-increasing arrears at the local governments. Advocacy Advisor of CS:MAP provided tips for reporting on evidence-based advocacy and the possible sources of news reporting focusing on the local issues. He also encouraged the journalists to build networks with CSOs and governments and other stakeholders.

Development Communication Manager of CS:MAP oriented the journalists to develop success stories by providing them tips. He also spoke about the importance of follow-up news and encouraged the journalists for it. The facilitators suggested the journalists to be watchful on local governance and policy formation for which the local CSOs could support them. The participants committed to raise issues for advocacy and to improve coordination and communication. A total of 26 journalists from 20 districts participated in the training.

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