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**Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project**

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# CS:MAP Newsletter

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

Once again, it is that time when I get to fondly present to you the Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project (CS:MAP) monthly newsletter. I sincerely hope that this seventh issue helps us reflect upon activities and achievements from April, 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 in making future editions even more interesting and fruitful. Happy reading!

Bishnu Sapkota  
Chief of Party, CS:MAP; Country Director, FHI 360 Nepal

**Strengthening the Enabling Environment for Civil Society and Media Organizations in Nepal**

**Advocacy for CSO friendly Integrity Policy**

The *NGO Federation of Nepal* organized a coalition meeting on April 13, 2018 to discuss the effects of the proposed National Integrity Policy 2074 on the working space for civil society organizations. The discussion focused on the rationale and structure of the policy, especially on the 13 provisions under section 9.2.3 directly applicable to NGOs. The meeting decided to submit a ‘concern paper’ to the government to change provisions restricting CSO working environment.

A similar discussion was held within members of the *Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN)* about the provisions in section 9.2.4 of the policy. Facilitated by CS:MAP, the two umbrella entities met on April 20 2018 to discuss collective action, as provisions within the policy implied similar consequences for the operation of NGOs and INGOs in Nepal. This meeting decided to hold periodic meetings, share information, and form a joint task force to initiate advocacy efforts aimed at addressing problematic provisions in the policy.

**Training on Right to Information for Public Information Officers**

*Freedom Forum* conducted a 3-day residential training workshop on Right to Information (RTI) for 21 Public Information Officers

(PIOs) of province 5 in Dang from April 21-23, 2018. The training covered the concept, meaning,



principles, rights and duties of PIOs, importance and utility of RTI, proactive disclosure mandated by law, process of handling information requests, and RTI as a tool for promoting good governance in local governments.

More than 60% of the participants were from local government units while the rest represented the District Administration Office and the District Election Commission from Dang, Rolpa, Banke, Bardiya and Rukum (East) districts. *Freedom Forum* Executive Director – Taranath Dahal, General Secretary – Dharmendra Jha, and *Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ)* Vice-president – Bipul Pokharel facilitated the training.

## Panel Discussion on GESI Prerequisites for the Self-Assessment Toolkit for Media

On April 26, 2018, *Media Advocacy Group (MAG)* and *Samjhauta Nepal* organized a panel discussion to set minimum standards for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) to be incorporated in a 'self-assessment toolkit for media' being developed by the *Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ)*. The panelists included president of FNJ – Govinda Acharya, media expert and former president of FNJ – Dr. Mahendra Bista, president of Madhesh Media – Dr. Rajesh Ahiraj, senior journalist for Nepal television and former vice president of FNJ – Anita Bindu, and senior advocate – Ram Krishna Nirala. Thirty-five participants (17 female) participated in the discussion which led to a list of GESI recommendations to be incorporated by FNJ in the self-assessment toolkit.

Recommendations included the need to consider intersectional and inter-geographical diversity among women and minority groups to ensure no one is left behind; equality, security and special needs of female journalists and those representing marginalized communities; the need for a GESI desk within media organizations to address grievances; and addressing GESI in media content, as outlined in the GESI guideline presented to the Ministry of Information and Communication by former FNJ executive committee. Practical challenges for media organizations, as well as recommendations for introducing mandatory provisions, were discussed as means of effectively addressing GESI concerns. It was also recommended that the implementation of GESI principles could begin from government run media, to set examples for the private sector media to emulate.

## Government Engagement for Effective Public Resource Use and Service Delivery

### Public Hearing as a Problem-Solving Process

IRDC and HURADEC coordinated with respective *gaunpalikas* in Palpa and Dolakha districts to conduct public hearings. The public hearing in *Shailung gaunpalika* in Dolakha came up with a recommendation for conducting periodic public hearings, both at the user committee level and also at the *gaunpalika* level. It focused on drinking water problem in Ward 3, management of junior technical assistants (JTA) for livestock and agriculture programs, timely release of housing installments for earthquake affected households, setting up of the community outreach clinics at the Ward and settlement levels, effective grievance handling mechanisms, and conducting public hearing for all social and infrastructure development activities.

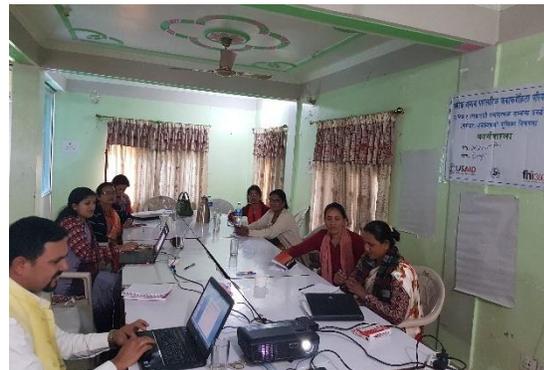
HRPLSC conducted orientations for executive committee members and local government officials for *Triveni*

*gaunpalika*, Rukum (West), *Triveni gaunpalika* Rolpa, and for all ten local units in Salyan. The orientations highlighted the utility of social accountability (SA) tools in governance promotion, effective use of public resources and public services delivery. As a result, HRPLSC has been able to sign a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with *Triveni gaunpalika* Rukum (West) to conduct public hearings in all Wards, with the necessary technical support from HRPLSC. The *Triveni gaunpalika* Rolpa selected *Radio Sunchhari* Rolpa as its consultant and asked HRPLSC for technical support. All *gaunpalikas* in Salyan have developed action plans to conduct public hearing in all Wards at fixed dates and venues. With the plan coming into implementation, HRPLSC provided technical support to conduct public hearing in *Bangad Kupinde gaunpalika*.



## Orientation to Local Government Units for Effective Citizen Engagement

*Sanjeevani Nepal* organized a day-long workshop to support the Deputy Mayors/ Vice Chairpersons of Dadeldhura in better understanding their roles to promote citizen-government engagement in Dadeldhura. Two Deputy Mayors, three Vice Chairpersons and one Judicial Committee Member (all female) from six local government units were present at the workshop held on April 26, 2018. The workshop was helpful in providing clarity to Deputy Mayors/ Vice chairpersons with regard to their roles as the Chair of Judicial Committees, to coordinate with CSOs more constructively, and to enhance their role in planning, budget preparation and project monitoring. The event provided an opportunity for participants to share learning and practice among each other with a closed Facebook page initiated as a platform regular sharing and interaction. The program was useful to have wider understanding on the role of Deputy Mayor/Vice President and the event initiated a Facebook groups "Deputy Mayor's Club" as a regular sharing and interaction platform.



## Supporting Local Government for Citizen-Government Interface

*Samudayik Sarathi* signed a MOU with the *Panauti* municipality to facilitate its program "*Janata Sanga Amanesamane*" (Face to Face with Citizens) in all its 12 Wards. A series of interactions aimed at facilitating citizen-government interface began from April 15, 2018. The municipality shared the plan and progress of the



current fiscal year for each Ward and collected feedback and public expectations for the next year. The program helped in identifying the strength and areas for improvement in the municipality's annual plan and program. This program helped in creating a way for increasing people's participation in planning and implementation and in improving public trust.

## Opening up Local Government using ICTs

CS:MAP ISO partner *Kathmandu Living Labs* (KLL) supported *Neelakantha* municipality to develop an open government web portal and a mobile application named '*Mero Neelakantha Mero Mobile*'. The portal and the mobile application were launched at a program chaired by the Mayor with the Secretary at the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) as the chief guest. 'We are proud to be the first amongst 753 municipalities to launch an app with such features. We will be prouder if the remaining 752 municipalities find it useful too. That would be a gift from *Neelakantha* municipality', said mayor Bhim Prasad Dhungana. Chief guest Dinesh Thapaliya commented, "It is impossible to realize development without using ICTs in our new methods." He also requested that this app be developed further in collaboration with MoFAGA in a bid to make it useful and uniform for all municipalities in Nepal. Following the launch, CS:MAP is in discussion with MoFAGA administration and technical team for expanding the use of this app.

The foundation of this new system lies on a triad of transparency, mutual accountability and citizen

participation in municipal affairs. Using the 'Talk to the Mayor' feature in the digital platform, citizens of

*Neelakantha* can directly contact the Mayor's office with their social media account. Furthermore, the website and the mobile app enable citizens to access information on municipal services, their procedures, required documents, estimated time of completion and tariffs, by simply browsing through the web portal or mobile application. This information can also be accessed offline using the mobile app. To maintain transparency, the municipality has opened its entire budget under the new account headings prescribed by the office of the Auditor General. The system is user friendly, enabling general people to view important information such as government offices as well as schools, hospitals on an interactive map. The citizens of *Neelakantha* can now track

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It is impossible to realize development without using ICTs in our new methods

Dinesh Thapaliya, Secretary, MoFAGA

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projects being undertaken by Ward offices and the municipality in their areas from proposal to procurement to construction to completion. These projects can also be viewed on an interactive map. The platform also gives

access to interact with municipality officials directly on their cell phones and emails and access to vital municipal statistics such as its demography, income distribution, literacy, etc.

### Public Expenditure Tracking (PET) of Community Learning Center Accomplished

HURADEC, in conjunction with Social Accountability Network Nepal, conducted a PET of *Makadam Durganadi* Community Learning Center in *Khadadevi gaunpalika* – 6 in Ramechhap

district. The tracking explored the process and status of expenditure and provided suggestions for improvement. It revealed that the



District Education Office had a budget of NRs. 210,670 consisting of the current fiscal year allocation and surplus from previous year, and the amounts paid for salary of staff, community facilitator, educational materials, stationery, newspaper, audit fees, adult education etc. The findings shared on April 10 2018, highlighted that the community learning center was not as effective as it could be due to ongoing absence of designated facilitator, even while being remunerated on a continual basis. The meeting decided to seek resignation from the facilitator and begin the process for recruitment of a new facilitator. Participants also raised an important question related to governance over the learning center being controlled by a family.

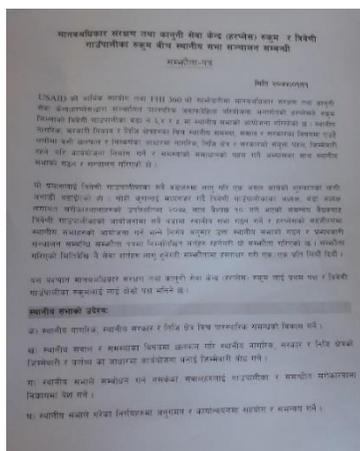
### Citizens Stand Ready to Contribute in Local Planning Process

With the commencement of the local level planning process in April, CS:MAP CSO partners conducted orientations for citizens to encourage their effective participation in the process. In April, such orientations were held in 18 districts, namely Dang, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Gorkha, Okhaldhunga, Ramechhap, Kanchanpur, Surkhet, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Doti, Achham, Dhading, Makwanpur, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Kathmandu and Dadelhdhura. The orientations focused on the need and ways to ensure the participation of Dalit, Janajati, women, disabled and marginalized communities in the planning process. Participants learnt about provisions in the Local Governance Operation Act and in the Constitution of Nepal that supported inclusion and participation. They also learnt about citizens' rights and responsibilities and expressed commitment for ensuring the participation of marginalized and disadvantaged communities in local development.



### Triveni Gaunpalika Replicates Common Assembly

HRPLSC signed a MOU with *Triveni gaunpalika* (Rukum-West) to implement Common Assembly (CA) in all 10 Wards in the district. The learning and the success stories from CA meetings in Wards 3, 4 and 5 of the *gaunpalika* for an accountable governance system, encouraged the *gaunpalika* chairperson to replicate these structures in other Wards. A joint coordination meeting was organized by HRPLSC on April 23, 2018 with the executive committee



members, and the health, education and agriculture officers of *Triveni gaunpalika*. This meeting helped participants understand the use of SA tools, CA methodology and its major achievements. As a result, the coordination meeting decided that the *gaunpalika* will form CA in all remaining seven Wards and hold quarterly meetings with technical support from HRPLSC. Similarly, HRPLSC has also been able to convince the *Triveni gaunpalika* in Rolpa for the replication of CA within seven Wards, with its technical support. HRPLSC has also signed a MOU with *Triveni gaunpalika* Rolpa for the same.

### Citizen Charter as a SA tool – A Case from a Local Health Post

A Common Assembly meeting held in February at the *Shahid Lakhan gaunpalika* – 7 of Gorkha district had discussed problems faced by locals due to the lack of a citizen-friendly Citizen Charter at the *Bungkot* Public Health Post. They had also asked for the list of essential medicines to be displayed at the health post to be done in the Nepali language. After SOCH Nepal conducted an orientation on the use of SA tools for the CA members and local government officers, they were successful in advocating for the local health post to install a user-friendly Citizen Charter and to display the list of medicines in the Nepali language. A beneficiary – *Urmila Ranamagar*, said that it is now easy to understand and seek services at the health post by reading the Citizen Charter and the list of medicines. The Ward chairperson has thanked CS:MAP for helping identify issues to improve public service delivery.



### Common Assembly Contributes to Quality of Education in Public Schools

Locals in *Kapan - Budhanikantha* municipality had lost faith in public schools due to poor quality of public education. Even parents from relatively poor economic background were sending their children to private schools, despite the high fees. Public school were criticized for teachers not coming on time or staying in school during duty hours, not preparing lesson plans, and not providing a child-friendly environment. The CA formed and facilitated by SOCH Nepal discussed in January 2018 why public schools were not being able to attract students despite spending more per student than private schools,



with the Ward chairperson. In April, the Ward office organized a month-long Montessori-method teaching-learning training for the teachers of public schools in the Ward. The training has raised hopes among parents for a better-quality education for their children. The CA members have also succeeded in making teachers accountable to come to school on time and spend time at school during duty hours.

## Capacity Building of CSOs and Media

### Investigative Journalism Training and Press Freedom

In April 2018, Equal Access organized two five-day trainings for journalists on Investigative Journalism as a means of carrying out public service oversight. Forty-one journalists (15 Female) from the print, online, radio and television media were trained on skills to carry out in-depth investigation and reporting on issues concerned with the oversight of public service delivery and related to public policy advocacy. The importance of journalistic ethics in reporting safely was a key part of the training and examples from CS:MAP sectoral priority areas of HEAD were incorporated to provide practical



and pragmatic utilization of investigative journalism. Post-training, the trainees mentioned how they were able to write with simplicity, clarity and accuracy. A session in the training explained how participants were expected to integrate their reporting to coordinate with and support sub-national CSOs in their oversight and advocacy efforts. Participants also expressed willingness to post experiences during and beyond training on CS:MAP's sharing and learning portal, *MeroReport*. Trainees have already started to post articles on *MeroReport* – a very encouraging development.

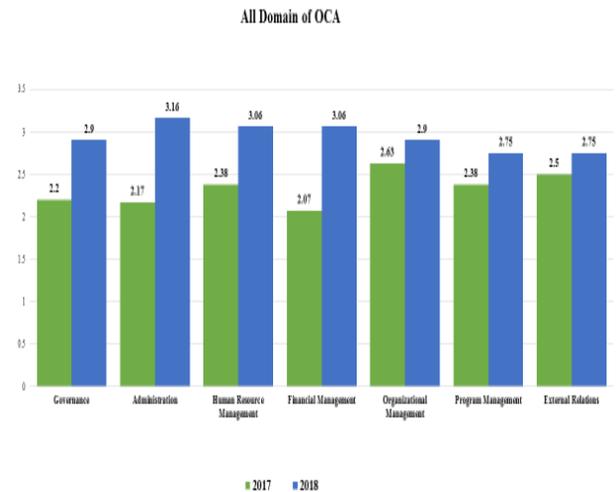
## Accessing CSOs institutional Capacity through OCA

RWDC conducted its second year Organization Capacity Assessment (OCA) on April 17- 20, 2018. The OCA was facilitated by NNSWA. A total of 14 participants (8 female) including the executive board, senior management and project staff



participated in the assessment. The OCA assessment analyzed organizational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to increase organizational capacity for sustainability and improved governance. The OCA score of RWDC had improved from that of last year. As a result, RWDC has initiated good practices like physical verification, general assembly process, updated book of general assembly members, financial coding, personnel file updating, identifying of local and national stakeholders, documenting of staff recruitment process, pursuing financial sustainability, reviewing organization structure and job descriptions and responsibilities of board members, and determining annual organizational budget.

Apart from this, MITRA Samaj, NNSWA and NEPAN also conducted OCAs for IRDS Gulmi, IRDC Kapilvastu, IHRC Banke, FMDC Kailali, DEC Chitwan and IHRICON, HURADEC and Sundar Nepal in a similar manner.



## Welcome

CS:MAP wishes to announce and welcome its new Governance Advisor, Pranav Bhattarai, who joined the team starting May 2018. He will be reaching out to each one of CS:MAP partners with a view of supporting our efforts at improving local governance and advancing public interest.

### Editorial team

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