ANNUAL REPORT
2020-2021

Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) Nepal

STRATEGY

CECI focuses on building the development capacity of local and disadvantaged communities. Its programs and projects support communities in becoming their own drivers for change by focusing on local ownership, empowerment and partnership with local non-government organizations and community-based organizations. Gender equality and social inclusion and good governance are at the core of CECI's capacity building activities.

MISSION

Combat poverty, exclusion and inequality.

VISION

World without poverty that is egalitarian, inclusive and celebrates diversity.

FOCUS AREA

- Women's Economic Empowerment and Rights.
- Women, key actors in adaptation to climate change.
- Resilience of communities to fragile contexts and/or protracted crisis.

ACRONYMS

AVP	Australian Volunteers Program
CECI	Centre for International Studies and Cooperation
CBOs	Community Based Organization
CSC	Community Score Card
LGs	Local Governments
MDTF	Multi Donor Trust Fund
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organization
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SPBF	State Peace-Building Fund
TDOs	Tole Development Organizations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VCP	Volunteer Cooperation Program
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
WMGs	Women and Marginalized Groups

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About Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI)

The Centre for International Studies and Cooperation (CECI) is a non-profit Canadian organization founded in 1958 and registered on November 12, 1968, in Quebec Province of Canada. CECI combats poverty and exclusion by strengthening and empowering disadvantaged communities. The main strengths of CECI include a wide range of management capacity required for a diverse development sector to contribute to poverty reduction.

CECI established its Nepal office on 19 March 1989, and since then, CECI in Nepal has implemented more than 60 development projects that have contributed Nepal to achieve its development goals for the betterment of the people's quality of life. CECI works in Nepal in accordance with Nepal's concurrent policy, guidelines, plan, and priorities. CECI has leveraged its extensive organizational experience to position itself as a key player in Nepal's socioeconomic development sector. CECI in Nepal's programmatic priorities include livelihood, economic empowerment, particularly targeting women and marginalized groups, governance and social accountability. CECI in Nepal has worked with over 1000 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs) and

private sector organizations to enhance their institutional capacity for more effective and efficient program implementation. Over a 32-year period, CECI has received funds from bilateral and multilateral donors to support implementation of projects in Nepal's diverse development sector. CECI in Nepal also mobilizes skilled international and national volunteers with financial support from the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada and the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Volunteers support governmental and local non-governmental organizations to strengthen institutional capacity and contribute to Nepal's socioeconomic development.

Message from the Country Director

It is my pleasure to walk you through the major milestones and key achievements of CECI in Nepal in 2020-2021.

With the launch of CECI's 2020-2025 strategic framework, it has reinforced our over 32 years of commitments to strengthen women's economic empowerment (WEE), support the role of women in adapting to climate change and build the resilience of communities in crisis situations. Our programs in Nepal are designed to achieve meaningful change in people's lives specially women, disadvantaged and marginalized groups. We aim to achieve this through our programs imparting kno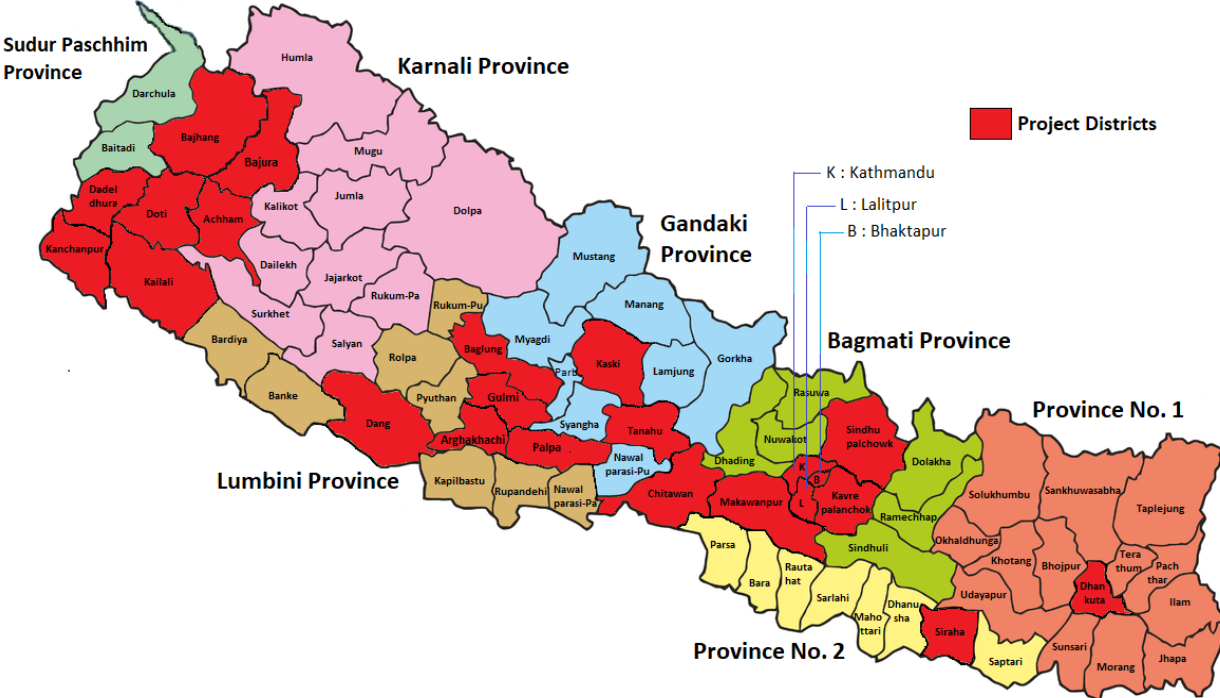wledge, skills and wealth of opportunities for engagement in all levels of government for our stakeholders. In Nepal, CECI has been a longstanding partnership of all major development partners, lending its expertise to support advances on WEE and climate change resilience and actions. We are particularly delighted of our partnership with the private sector and some other international organizations. We also pride ourselves on being one of the few organizations in the country that contributes to strengthen federalism in Nepal creating space for citizen-state-engagement by promoting good governance. As such, we cannot rest on our laurels, but we need to keep delivering on our promises, particularly in light of the renewed MoU of VCP with the Global Affairs Canada.

The COVID-19 pandemic has given us all with new challenges. However, it is in times like these where we realize how much we value and depend on each other. Hence, I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all our donors, Government of Nepal, Social Welfare Council, Global Affairs Canada, Abt Associate, USAID, Government of Australia, private sectors and civil society organizations for their continued cooperation, collaboration and invaluable work with us.

I extend my sincere gratitude to all the CECI staff in Nepal for their continued passion and commitment.

Enjoy reading!

CECI's Project Districts in Nepal (2020-2021)

Sudur Paschhim Province

Karnali Province

Gandaki Province

Bagmati Province

Province No. 1

Lumbini Province

Province No. 2

Project Districts

K : Kathmandu
L : Lalitpur
B : Bhaktapur

GOVERNANCE

Governance is an essential foundation for fostering a democratic system that can be established through constructive participation and engagement of the state and citizens. Thus, CECI has been promoting transparency, accountability and citizen engagement by facilitating and building capacity of government and citizens through its projects and programs. Local governments and citizens have been particularly supported in the adoption and use of various social accountability tools and platforms. In recent years, CECI has blended technological innovations in governance to promote transparency, accountability and responsiveness of public institutions to enhance access of citizens in public information and data. These technological innovations have paved ways and contributed for the establishment of digital governance to improve efficiency and transparency of public service delivery in new federal structures of Nepal.

In this context, recently completed Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal-Susasan project (2017-2021) funded by Global Affairs Canada has significantly aided in the co-creation of technological tools, platforms, and mechanisms which are accepted and adopted by the targeted local governments as well as citizens. Digital literacy classes have also helped to promote digital governance.

However, there is still a long way to go. CECI believes and anticipates that only collective and affirmative action to integrate open government and civic engagement into overall governance processes can overcome existing gaps, issues, and challenges in the governance sector.

From 2010 to 2016, CECI built its institutional capacity in governance and accountability through the management and implementation of Program for Accountability in Nepal (PRAN) project (World Bank/SPBF and MDTF), where CECI worked on three themes: Public Service Delivery (PSD), Municipal Governance, and Public Financial Management (PFM). With PRAN, CECI supported and facilitated the implementation of diverse social accountability tools at both the demand and supply sides, partnering with over 190 local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) from

45 districts to achieve the expected results of the aforementioned themes. Similarly, Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) Project–2016 (Pact/USAID) was implemented in six districts with the goal of increasing civil society organizations' capacity in participatory planning, budgeting, and tracking of public expenditure in order to provide policy feedback to the concerned authority. Susasan project has also added value on CECI's institutional capacity, particularly in the area of technological integration in governance.

This extensive experience working in the governance sector and collaborative partnership with various stakeholders has provided CECI with a programmatic space for its engagement and has established as an active player in governance and social accountability sectors to continue to contribute towards attainment of SDGs.

Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal-Susasan
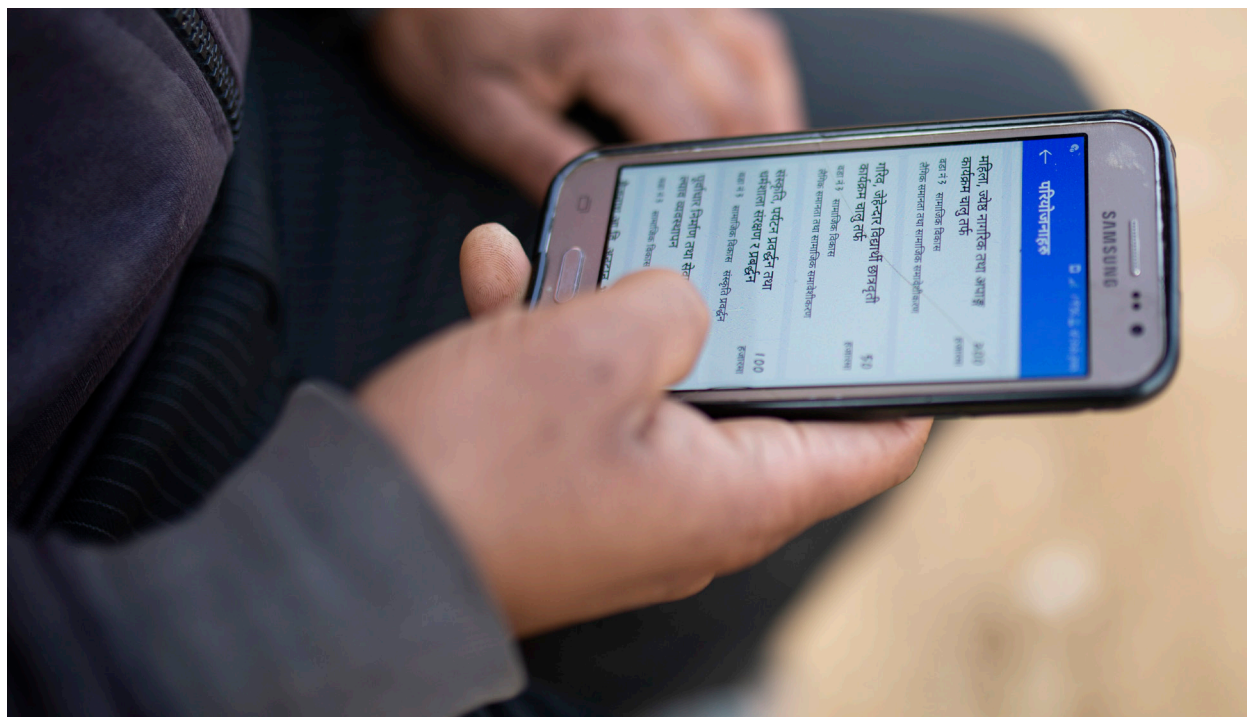
Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal-Susasan is a four-year project implemented by CECI in Nepal with financial support from the Government of Canada provided through Global Affairs Canada (GAC). CECI successfully completed this project in May 2021. The project worked with 12 local governments (1 Sub Metropolitan City, 5 Municipalities and 6 Rural Municipalities) of six districts partnering with local Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Susasan project focused on four main themes: (1) open data; (2) budget transparency; (3) citizen reporting; and (4) grievance reporting. The project's target participants were women and marginalized groups, and it aimed to increase their participation or engagement in democratic processes through the use of integrated technologies, as well as to promote transparency, accountability, and responsiveness of public institutions-local governments. Freedom Forum was the thematic partner and Young Innovations was the technology partner of this project. The project co-created technological tools,

Women cooperative meeting in Sunkoshi, Sindhupalchok

platforms and mechanisms with targeted local governments to promote transparency, accountability and citizen state engagement. Furthermore, the project facilitated local governments to develop local level policies and guidelines incorporating the needs and rights of citizens, particularly women and marginalized groups (WMGs).

Population Reached

Indirect 4,76,515

Direct 95,303

65021 (59%) women

69859 (73%) WMGs

69667 (65%) Youth
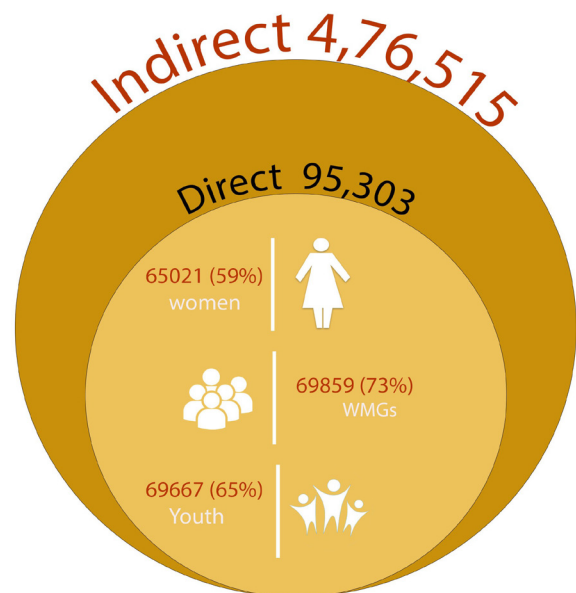
Key Achievements

- The project established 41 physical techno-hubs (12 municipal and 29 community techno-hubs).Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City established additional three community techno-hubs with its own initiation and funds.

- Some Susasan technological tools, platforms, and mechanisms are replicated by 24 other non-targeted local governments.

- Establishment and expansion of community techno-hubs has increased citizens' access to technological tools, platforms, and mechanisms for acquiring public data and information to meet their needs and interface with local governments.

- According to a Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) survey on citizen state engagement and technology interface at the local level, Dalits (43.5% vs. 17%) and Indigenous (37.8% vs. 20%) are more aware of legal provisions in local planning process at the settlement level.

- WMGs are 67% more aware of their right to access information from local governments.

- Public complaints, particularly those lodged by women, have increased from 5% to 72.7%. All of them have advocated for increased citizen engagement at the local level.

- People were made aware of COVID-19 and the possibility of gender-based domestic violence (GBV) during the pandemic and prevention through a radio podcast, an e-poster radio message, and audio and text messages sent to mobile phones.

Member of Saatkanya Cooperative, Bagmati, Lalitpur

Positive Change in School through Community Score Card

Morning Assembly at Prabha Dhamkot Technical and Vocational School in Achham.

Prabha Dhamkot Technical and Vocational School, located in Sanfebagar Municipality's Ward No. 3, of Achham District experienced issues in terms of quality teaching-learning. Some underlying issues were absenteeism, disrespect for deadlines, shortage of drinking water, and insufficient lab and sports equipment and musical instruments among others. Susasan introduced one of its social accountability tool 'Community Score Card' (CSC). CSC is an ongoing participatory tool for assessment, preparation, tracking, and evaluation that brings the right holder (service user) and the duty-bearer (service provider) together to collectively analyze

issues underlying service delivery problems and find a common way to solve those issues.

During CSC implementation, students, parents, teachers, and members of the management committee were invited and available school resources, teaching practices, and extracurricular activities were jointly evaluated. A Joint Action Plan was hence prepared which provided guidelines on how to improve quality of education in the school. A Monitoring Committee was formed to oversee the implementation of action plan. The Monitoring Committee shared their opinions on the current condition of

the school and suggested ways on how the situation can be improved. The committee also developed a collaborative action plan to address the most pressing issues. The school installed complaint boxes where students and teachers can drop off complaints and suggestions. These boxes are opened every Friday and addressed by a complaint hearing committee. The practice of scorecard increased students' awareness of school resources and the gaps between them and the school. Guided by the Joint Action Plan and everyone's commitment, the school has witnessed significant positive changes within short time. The new and enabling environment for both students and teachers has improved education delivery, student enrollment, academic performance, and extracurricular activities.

Students dropping complains into the complain box.

"We never knew how to manage the school system with our own available resources. Now, we have seen and experienced several improvements in the school as a result of practice of Community Score Card. Students are happier, teachers are teaching more effectively, and all of this has contributed to our school's improved educational system. On behalf of Prabha Dhamkot Technical and Vocational School, we express our sincere gratitude to the entire team of Susasan".

School Principal, Mr. Jograj Kunwar

Strong Determination is the Key to Success

Padma Maya Timalsina, Chairperson of Bhumesthan Agriculture Group, was inspired to work to improve women's economic status in her community after participating in one of Susasan's leadership trainings. Through the training, she learned about the policies, plans and budget of local government which are allocated for local development programs She also learned to use technological tools to demand information from municipality on local planning and budgeting. Following the training, Padma Maya demanded budget for the construction of a community building with the ward office. After many tedious follow-ups, she finally received NPR 500,000. Unfortunately, just as they were about to begin construction of the building, she got

into a major accident which compelled her to be hospitalized for six months, followed by six months of bed rest.

Since the construction work was put on hold, local people decided to use the building construction budget for other projects. Upon knowing this, Padma Maya immediately objected to the decision and despite her physical suffering, she immediately invited group members and local people and made a firm decision to begin the building construction. Her dedication and courage has garnered community support in her efforts to reach out to the municipal budget. She could also get an additional budget to complete the building. Under her guidance, the group

Group meeting

members were able to receive equipment and seeds supports from the Ward office to start commercial vegetable and animal farming. Now in a single season, each member of the Bhumeshwori Agriculture group sells potatoes worth at least NPR 100,000.

Communicty building

"Previously, I was not aware about how much budget was allocated to the municipality and the ward office. But now, after participating Susasan's training, I am familiar with local government's planning and budgeting which I regularly monitor on mobile apps. Now I believe that if you have a strong will, physical disability is not a hindrance. This confidence I got from the Susasan project."

Padma Maya Timalsina, Saubisi Ward no. 9, Barabise Municipality, Sindhupalchowk District, Age: 46.

Sajhedari-Support to Federalism

Sajhedari-Support to Federalism project is supported by USAID. The project aims to provide primarily technical assistance to the Government of Nepal in transitioning from a unitary state to a federation of provinces with more effective, accountable, responsive, and inclusive local governance.

The project is implemented by Abt Associates in partnership with Urban Institute, Team Consult and CECI. The project contributes to USAID's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS).

CECI is leading Objective Three Citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) in targeted geographic areas, including the historically marginalized, actively participating in local decision-making and oversight while also supporting other themes to integrate demand side governance initiatives into the broader framework of inclusive governance.
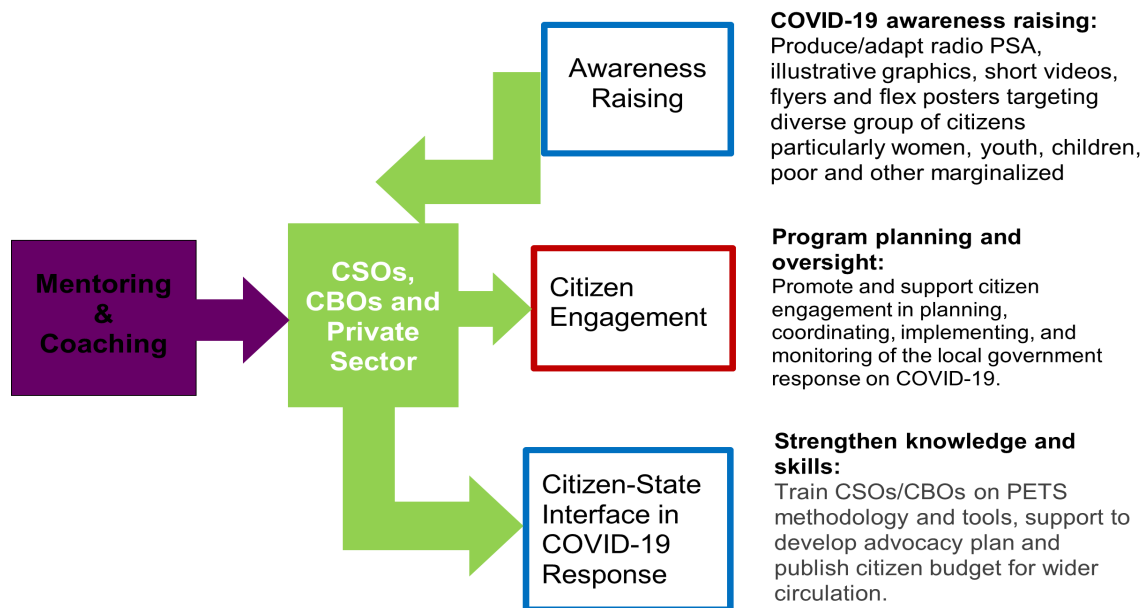
Sajhedari supports ten municipalities of five districts which includes Bajhang, Doti, Kailali, and Kanchanpur in Sudurpaschim Province and Dang in Lumbini Province.

Webinar Meeting GESI policy feedback

Key Highlights of Major Activities in 2020-2021

- Provided grant support to community-based organizations (CBOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), media, federations of CSOs/NGOs (non-governmental organizations), and private sector firms under the Challenge Fund Grant Implementation to implement local level activities in strengthening local COVID-19 response efforts. This initiative reached to 2,650 targeted people including 48.86% women.
- Provided mentoring services to grant recipients for effective implementation of social accountability tools and mechanisms to regularize essential public services during COVID emergency.

- Completed two series of Governance Lab using e-learning platform to support to enhance capacity of CBOs, CSOs and community managed entities in public expenditure tracking at local level. This platform has been upgraded under the name of SAJHEDARI e-CHAUTARI.
- Continued to support CSOs and CBOs in building their capacity in participatory social accountability tools and mechanisms.
- Webinar on Participatory Process on GESI Policy Formulation was convened with 62 representatives from diverse CSOs and GESI Focal Persons of respective municipalities to seek

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Mentoring
&
Coaching
   →
CSOs,
CBOs and
Private
Sector
   →  Awareness Raising
   →  Citizen Engagement
   →  Citizen-State Interface in COVID-19 Response
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COVID-19 awareness raising: Produce/adapt radio PSA, illustrative graphics, short videos, flyers and flex posters targeting diverse group of citizens particularly women, youth, children, poor and other marginalized

Program planning and oversight: Promote and support citizen engagement in planning, coordinating, implementing, and monitoring of the local government response on COVID-19.

Strengthen knowledge and skills: Train CSOs/CBOs on PETS methodology and tools, support to develop advocacy plan and publish citizen budget for wider circulation.

their understanding and feedback on Municipalities' GESI policies.

- Enabled citizens and CSOs to participate in annual planning process at settlement, ward, and municipality levels through virtual consultation meetings among LGs, CSOs, Tole Development Organizations (TDOs), and community-based organizations (CBOs).
- The project initiated common discussion forum at ward and settlement level
- Aligning with GoN's 7 steps planning process, Facilitated 55 settlement-level planning process events across 16 wards creating opportunity for inclusive participation of 1263 people to engage in local planning process.
- Initiated radio campaign by developing

MOU handover

and broadcasting 45 radio spots through local FMs featuring local officials and civil society representatives to reinforce the importance of citizen in planning process. The radio campaign aligned with each phase of the seven-step planning process and reached nearly 500,000 people.

Leadership training

WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT (WEE)

CECI's development projects address women-specific Issues and prioritize gender equality, economic empowerment for women, and a commitment to combat all forms of gender-based discrimination. The goal of the ADB-supported Micro-Credit Initiative was to assist women's groups in achieving economic empowerment. The Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) project, funded by USAID, promoted rural women's participation in agribusiness and microenterprise development through its literacy component, which assisted women in identifying business promotion, skill development opportunities, and access to finance.

The Sahakarya project, funded by the Government of Canada, created opportunities for women's economic development through agriculture and community health development. The Multi Stakeholder Forestry Project of CECI recognized women's economic empowerment as an essential component of achieving equitable and sustainable development. The project assisted women and marginalized communities in the Mid and Far Western Regions in developing resilient livelihoods, developing entrepreneurial skills, and establishing market links by expanding their roles in forest management.

CECI also managed the grant-making component of the World Bank's Program for Accountability in Nepal (PRAN) with some set criteria for selecting civil society organizations as a grantee who are led by women or Dalits.

Similarly, Punarnirman project funded by the Government of Canada, assisted in increasing women's confidence in the establishment of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and gender equality for earthquake victims and low-income families.

Susasan, a project funded by the Canadian government, helped to promote inclusive governance by developing Gender Equality and Social Inclusion policies for its implementing partners and community-based organizations. The project enhanced the capacity of women and marginalized groups, primarily by raising social accountability awareness through the use of integrated technologies.

CECI's two on-going volunteer cooperation programs, VCP and AVP, have emphasized increasing women's capacity and power, raising awareness of unequal power relations between men and women, transforming discriminatory social norms, increasing women's participation in economic decisions, access to/control over market resources and opportunities, job creation and business development, and ensuring equal participation.
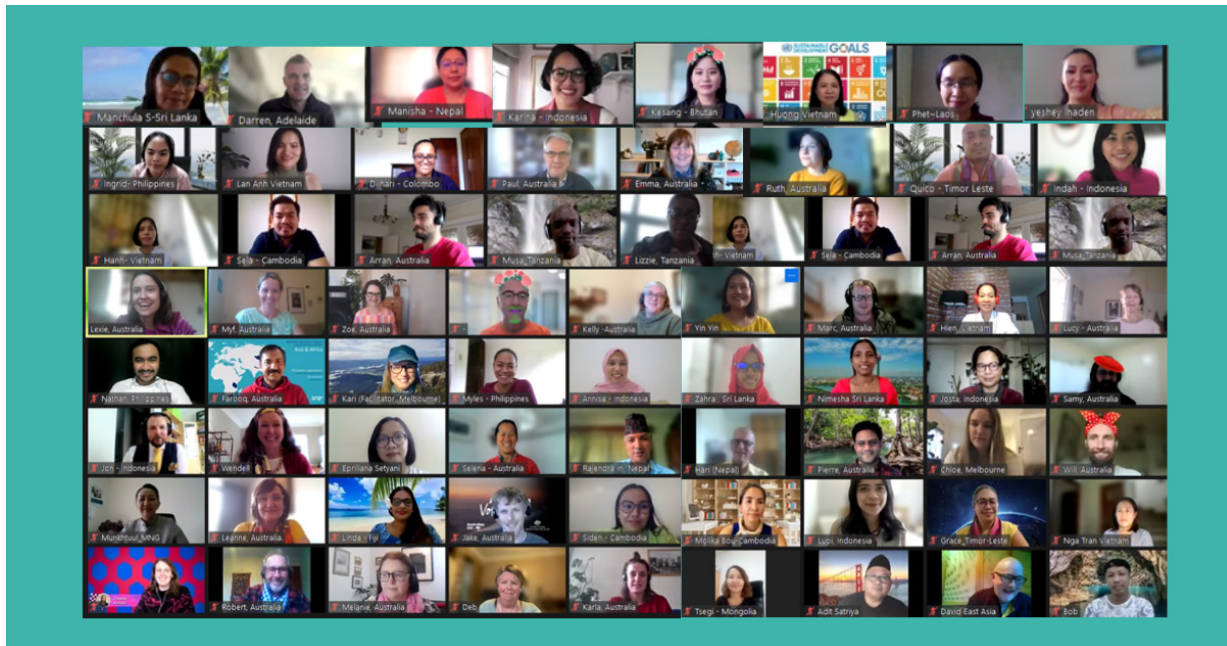
Volunteer Cooperation Program

CECI manages Canadian and Australian volunteer cooperation programs in Nepal. Since the program inception in 1989, more than 700 volunteers have served in Nepal. The Volunteer program aims to strengthen partner organizations' capacity through their skills, experience and knowledge.

Australian Volunteers Program (AVP)

The Australian Volunteers Program is an Australian Government-funded program managed by Australian Volunteer International (AVI) in collaboration with Cardno and the Whitelum Group. The Australian Volunteers Program has programs in 26 countries in the Indo-Pacific region to help them achieve their development goals. CECI is subcontracted to execute the program in Nepal and is responsible for managing the program on the ground, including volunteer placement, logistical support, and assignment monitoring and evaluation.

The AVP connects professional Australians with Nepali organizations to assist them in achieving their objectives by strengthening their capacity and helping them to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The program's main focus is on strengthening capacity through knowledge sharing and exchange. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted heavily on physical movements around the world and it restricted travel from one country to another. As a result, the Australian volunteers were unable to physically support the host organizations in Nepal. However, the Australian Volunteers Program continued to support its Partner Organizations in Nepal through Remote Australian Volunteers based in Australia using Online platforms. Between 2020 and 2021, five Remote Volunteers

supported Partner Organizations in Nepal some of them are:

Vicki Hannam resumed her work at the Disability Research Centre at the Kathmandu University School of Arts as a Remote Volunteer. She was one of the first remote volunteers for the Australian Volunteer Program, continuing to support the team from her home in Australia.

She said, 'I felt that after one year we had just really started to see great changes so it was a no barrier to continue to work remotely. The Disability Research Centre team and I are working on developing mental, physical and emotional health plans for students and staff to help manage the impacts of COVID-19. We are doing this through Online Zoom sessions, and by helping ensure accessibility to hygienic practices, and social and emotional support, that staff and students need during this time.

I'm hoping to help Nepalese hydrogeologists develop their groundwater modelling skills to help improve groundwater management in the Kathmandu Valley

ELLEN KWANTES

The team is a committed group who are working towards a good outcome for tertiary education in Nepal, and my only real surprise to date is that we have been able to conduct Skype and zoom sessions without too much trouble from Internet providers!'

Ellen Kwantes worked with the Kathmandu Valley Water Supply Management Board as a remote volunteer. She helped to build capacity in modeling as a hydro-geologist.

Shane Devereaux supported the Hetauda Sub-Metropolitan City with their information and communications technology from a distance. He helped to organize webinars for local governments on open data in Local government, information and record management. The webinars were attended by the mayors and representatives of five local government bodies (Hetauda sub-metropolitan city, Dhulikhel municipality, Vyas Municipality, Baglung Municipality, and Kirtipur Municipality) in Nepal, as well as a panel of Australian experts.

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