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REFLECT

CECI Nepal's Newsletter

**January—April
2020**

CECI Nepal, in solidarity to fight against the worldwide spread of COVID-19, is fully supporting government initiatives to control the spread of the virus. At this moment staff members are working from home staying safe. We respect and thank the efforts made by Front line service providers: doctors, nurses, health workers, police officers, and essential service providers for their tireless job. CECI Nepal has temporarily halted some regular field activities; however, some activities in response to COVID-19 are being carried out.

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR



Dear Friends,

Welcome to the CECI Nepal's Newsletter "REFLECT"!

As the world is fighting with the unprecedented implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, we are facing completely new challenges in almost every sector, including human crisis.

In the context, together with the Government's lockdown notice, we discussed and took measures to manage work from home from 23 March, 2020. We are not stopping work, but adapting work differently as per the emerging situation by setting up a work environment from home. Outside meetings, events, field works and training are postponed or delayed. However, internal meetings and other virtual meetings and support from a distance are happening on a regular basis. All the partner organizations and program team are informed and prepared accordingly.

In this edition, we have presented the brief of our activities before and during the COVID situation and this is possible due to your continued support and encouragement.

As always, I would like to thank all our partners, including the Government of Nepal, Global Affairs Canada (GAC), Abt Associate/USAID, Government of Australia and civil society organizations for their continued cooperation and invaluable work with us.

I would also like to offer sincere thanks to the CECI Nepal staff-members and volunteers for their support in preparing this newsletter. Please enjoy reading newsletter and forward your comments and suggestions, if any, for improvements in future.

Sita Ram Bhatta
Country Director
CECI Nepal

IN RESPONSE OF COVID-19

As the world is going through a pandemic, COVID-19, it has affected almost all the countries in the world infecting more than 6 million people. The situation is rapidly changing with unprecedented impact of it. No one can predict the future and certainty of this pandemic as well. Also in Nepal the situation is getting serious day by day with rapidly increasing numbers of infected people and some casualties.

CECI Nepal's Susasan Project has developed COVID-19 transparency portal (<https://www.susasan.org/covid19>) with the information such as status of those affected by the virus, hospitals to get treatment, pharmacies, quarantine and isolation places in the wards, as well as major activities that have been carried out by the local government to help the general public in the COVID-19 generated crisis. The portal has helped local government to gather, visualize and communicate the action taken against the pandemic by promoting transparency, accountability and citizen-state engagement. This portal is rolled out in 11 local governments of the project area. Whereas beyond the project targeted, other local governments have also adopted this portal and the project is providing necessary technical support as per their request.

Susasan project has also produced five podcasts (<https://www.susasan.org/covid19>) and two different e-posters. Podcasts give mental therapy through psychosocial counselling targeting to housewives, returnee migrants, children and parents, youth and elected representatives which are also being broadcast through local FM radios. The posters create awareness, teach and provides information on how to properly do hand washing and wear masks. Both podcasts and e-banners are widely published through social media and project portal. 12 municipalities and 64 CSOs have been benefited from the Susasan's innovations. They are using information to make aware themselves, family members and community people. Hence, good feedback on innovations has been received from the local government and people, who are literate in digital media.



COVID-19 Transparency Portal for Local Governments

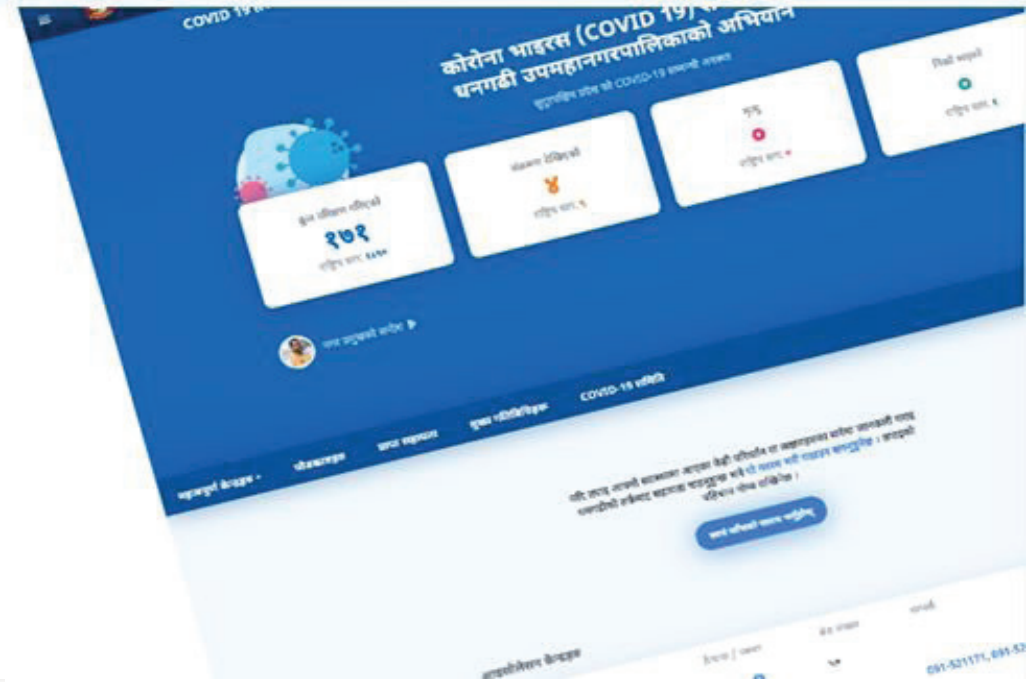
Welcome to COVID-19 portal. Here you will find the status of those affected from the virus, for emergencies information on hospitals and available pharmacies with their address, bed capacities for quarantine and isolation wards, as well as updates on major activities and programs being carried out to address COVID-19 generated crisis in the Local level.

Users can also send their details via the portal if they are showing any signs of symptoms of the virus to get help from their respective local agencies.

In these times of pandemic, this portal for local government aims to promote transparency, accountability and citizen-state engagement.

This tool is being used by 11 municipalities.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| Amargadhi Municipality | Bagmati Rural Municipality |
| Bannigadhi Jayagadh Rural Municipality | Barhabise Municipality |
| Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City | Jaya Prithvi Municipality |
| Kailari Rural Municipality | Konjyosom Rural Municipality |
| Nawadurga Rural Municipality | Sanfebagar Municipality |
| Sunkoshi Rural Municipality | |



www.susasan.org/covid19

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSION

On Feb 20, 2020, CECI Nepal organized a half day round table discussion on “Citizen state engagement in federal governance: Can technological innovations act as catalyst?” The purpose of organizing this round table was to share the experiences of citizen state engagement among the participants that CECI has gained through implementing various governance projects; to identify the gaps or areas that need to be addressed for the promotion of citizen state engagement in federal governance; and to explore the effectiveness and challenges that are presented by using technology as a catalyst. CECI has been working in Nepal to promote public sector accountability, accountability tools for responsive and transparent governance and inclusive governance through constructive and transformational citizen-state engagement and inclusive innovation. Learning from previous projects implemented



by CECI such as World Bank under the State and Peace Building Fund (SPF) and Multi Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) supported CECI as grant managing agency for PRAN project (2010 to 2016) that worked in 45 districts and a sub-grant from USAID/PACT on Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) Project (2015-2016) implemented in 6 districts and CECI’s current Government of Canada funded “Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal-Susasan” project, CECI has been able to exemplify that participatory governance rests on a robust state and active civil society which allows ample amount of civic engagement.

- Reinforcement and facilitation to implement citizen state engagement provisions ensured in the constitution and existing policies;
- Intensive joint effort is needed to make citizens aware about their role, responsibility and engagement opportunities and its significance;
- Citizen centric technological tools need to be innovated to promote their engagement and participation considering capability to access and use;

There was active discussion from the participants representing Government Agencies, Development Partners, Activists and Civil Society Organizations. The discussion brought everyone to a consensus about the need for space for civic engagement and learning and sharing through each-others experiences. The round table was able to generate the following next steps:



Janet Yates, Senior International Development Officer at GAC speaking at the RT



Advocate Dr. Mukti Rijal sharing his experiences

REPLICATION OF TOOLS

IMS in Kritipur



Infrastructure Management System (IMS) designed by CECI's Sustainable Use of Technology for Public Sector Accountability in Nepal- Susasan Project has been able to capture the interest of municipalities outside of project areas and is currently being replicated by other Municipalities as well. Upon hearing about the good impact of IMS system implemented in Dhangadhi Sub Metropolitan City and Sanfebagar Municipality, Kirtipur Municipality showed interest and sought support from CECI to replicate the platform. CECI and its' technological partner Young Innovation worked closely with Mayor Ramesh Maharjan and Deputy Mayor Saraswati Khadka and installed the platform and tools in their system. CECI has also been contacted by other Municipalities showing similar interests to ensure efficient and effective citizen-state engagement, transparency and accountability in their jurisdiction. IMS is a platform specially developed for local government as a robust system to manage infrastructure projects that the local governments carry out each year.

Workshops on Adaptation of Technological Tools

CECI's Susasan Project's partner Tuki Association organized "Technological Tools Adaptation Workshop" on 17th March 2020. The workshop offered an opportunity to learn about the social accountability technological tools and mechanisms. The Susasan Project has successfully piloted the tools, providing citizens' digital access to municipal policies, regulations and decisions, budget matters, citizen charter and availability of other essential service in Barhabise and Sunkoshi Rural Municipality. After participating, the workshop representative of local government realized the importance of technological tools in public affairs and developed a common understanding to replicate the tools in their respective municipalities. On the occasion, Chairperson of National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal, Hom Narayan Shrestha said "development and adoption of technological tools have become mandatory in making government work transparently and pro-public. The Association is interested in replicating the grievance redressal management tools to manage disputes and provide justice and e-recommendation (e-sifarish) system to make day to day work at ward level more prompt and convenient,"

Sushila Pakhrin, Deputy Mayor of Barhabise Municipality stated that technological



advancement and adoption has made it easier for them to deliver their performance. "We have digitized and disclosed everyday information and data through technological tools. It has opened many avenues for citizens to engage and influence the local governments' decisions". She further stressed that "the judicial management system has gained popularity since it has been useful to manage disputes in local governments".

The Susasan Project is being implemented in Sindhupalchowk, Lalitpur, Achham, Bajhang, Dadeldhura and Kailali Districts of Nepal with the funding from the Government of Canada provided through the Global Affairs Canada and technical assistance of CECI.



Susasan Infrastructure Management System (IMS)

SUSASAN'S ACTIVITIES

CECI's Susasan Project is running in its' third year of project implementation. The project has been engaging women and the marginalized communities in various training programs (Gender Equality and Social Inclusion, leadership development, local lever planning process, policy, use of integrated technology, including mobile applications, governance and accountability mechanism, etc.), workshops and advocacy campaigns. As a result, they have been able to speak up about their need and entitled budgeted at the local level and get access to them improving their quality of life.



A discussion program on the role of right to information (RTI) in Bagmati-1, Lalitpur



Public Expenditure Tracking Survey (PETS) training in Bajhang District



Public Hearing in Amargadhi, Datedl-hura



Community Score Card (CSC) training in school



Leadership training in Barabise, Sindhupalchowk District



Interface meeting in Achham



Awareness rally in Barabise, Sindhupalchowk

EMPOWERING COMMUNITY SUCCESS STORIES



22 members Progressive Self-reliant Saving Group was established in the Sunkoshi Rural Municipality of Sindhupalchowk District with the purpose of providing social work and to work for the economic empowerment of women. However, without knowledge of fund generation at the local

level and fund mobilization, they were members' regular saving. When Susasan Project selected the group as one of the primary CSOs for the project and built their capacity with various trainings, including, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) strategy; Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) on integrated technology assessment and local level planning process; they turned into an active group in the community. They understood open municipal information and data portal, could analyse the municipal budget, policy and plans. They became active in local infrastructural development projects as well as women focused activities. The group successfully lobbied for investment in the agricultural support program. As a result, in the fiscal year 2075/076, the ward office granted NPR 75000 (around \$CAD 900) to the group. The group bought a power tiller, which is being maximum used in the off-season vegetable farming by group members and other villagers. The group charges certain money for using the tiller for the maintenance of it. Now the group has gained popularity in commercial vegetable farming. Other groups in the village are also inspired from their work. Chairperson of Self-reliant Saving Group Bhagawati said, "This success is because of the participation in Susasan activities. Now we can access policies and budget of the Municipality in the mobile".

Darshan Maya, 42 of Ghumthang, Sindhupalchowk District participated a 3-day training on "Governance and Accountability Mechanism through Integrated Technology". The training provided her the opportunity to learn about the local government's annual programs, including budget, planning, process, policies, decision, including budget allocated to women and to calculate the budget dedicated to her own local area. After that, she established Srijanshil Agriculture Groups in her Tamang Community and put on demand on behalf of her group to fund to the women's development allocated budget for 3-months on Dhaka fabric weaving training. Listening to their demand, the Rural Municipality in collaboration with District Cottage Industry Association, provided trainings for the women including her group's members. Now, they have started their own small-scale business and are self-employed by their own initiative and investment. Darshan Maya is the leader of this success and it was possible due to the project intervention. Nowadays she is frequently visiting municipal and Ward office to keep her concern and to hold the local government to account. She says, "participating in project activities has made me a successful woman. I am really thankful to the Susasan Project. Now my identity has been changed as an entrepreneur and a group leader".





Susasan in Media



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of technological tools and their application at people's l



Mr. Tapraj Joshi is working in CECI as a Citizen Engagement Coordinator for Sajhedari-STF. He has 11 years of working experiences in different organizations, including Youth Action Nepal, UNDP-AVRSCS project, KIRDARC –HRBA project, etc. He has expertise in training, designing and facilitation and participatory and inclusive governance.



New Faces In CECI

CECI recruited six staff members to work for the USAID Nepal funded Sajhedari-Support to Federalism (STF) project. All these staff members joined CECI in February and are based in CECI's regional office in Dhangadhi. Sajhedari-STF is a six year project that has been awarded to Abt Associates as a lead in a consortium with of CECI-Nepal, Urban Institute and Team Consult. The project aims to support the Government of Nepal in the transition from a unitary state to a federation of provinces and enhance citizen participation in and oversight of local governance.

Mr. Yadav Chaudhari Joined CECI Nepal in the position of Citizen Engagement Coordinator. Yadav is from Dang and brings with him five years of working experience in project planning, implementation, supervision, monitoring and evaluation; social mobilization; training facilitation; and participatory and inclusive governance.



Shanti Kmari Magar is working with CECI Nepal as a Citizen Engagement Coordinator. She has over 10 years of work experiences with multiple organizations and brings with her the expertise in the community mobilization; training, facilitation, Gender Equality and Social Inclusion; risk/vulnerability assessment; and monitoring and evaluation. She has previously worked with Loo Niva Child Concern Nepal, JHCCP/ Mass Nepal, Nepal Redcross Society, etc.



Mrs. Jayanti Kumari Ayer started working with CECI Nepal in the capacity of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Officer. She is from Kailali District and has 12 years' work experience in the development sector. She has previously worked with Helpage International, Gramin Samaj, IRDC Nepal-, etc.



Dev Raj Badu, from Kailali District, joined CECI Nepal in the position of Citizen Engagement Coordinator. He has 11 years' work experience in training, facilitation, assessment and capacity building, monitoring and evaluation, organizational management, development and advocacy. He has previously worked with the District Development Committee, NNSWA, and Nawa Asha.

Shiva Raj Budha joined CECI Nepal in the position of Citizen Engagement Coordinator and is based in Bajhang District. Experienced in community mobilization, training, facilitation, GESI, research, analysis, monitoring and evaluation. He brings his knowledge working with both the government and non-government organizations.



UNITERRA COMPLETED ON MARCH 31, 2020.

Uniterra a Canadian Volunteer Cooperation program, jointly managed by CECI and World University Service of Canada (WUSC) was started in 2004, has been successfully completed in March 2020. The program was operated in 12 countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America and Caribbean with the objective of including women and youth in the market system. Uniterra aimed to reach 400,000 people (Direct and Indirect) out of which 60% women and 50% youth. To achieve its objective Uniterra mobilized 188 volunteers in 20 partner organizations working in agro-enterprise, Non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and handicraft sector. The partner organisations included government, association, umbrella organisation, cooperatives and NGOs.

Uniterra contribution to partner's capacity building was significant with 2271 people (67.4% Female) and (32.6% Male) directly trained. Total 769 tools were developed or updated for the partners.



Canada



VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

REFLECTION OF UNITERRA'S SUCCESS

Building of Nepal's great agricultural and handicraft potential, Uniterra worked with local partners to improve the socioeconomic conditions of women and youth, especially in rural areas. Here are stories that illustrate some of the achievements of the Uniterra in Nepal.



WOMEN-LED COOPERATIVES

Women-led cooperatives in Nepal often struggle with systemic gender-based discrimination that prevents them from developing their activities. To help overcome some of the barriers they are facing, U3 partnered with the Women Entrepreneur Consumer Cooperative Ltd. (WECCSL), a women-led cooperative aiming to strengthen other women run cooperatives and develop their membership. But although WECCSL is a big organization, with 65,000 women members, it was missing some capacity to fulfill its mission. Uniterra volunteers supported WECCSL in developing strategic and business plans, and trained 106 of its members in financial management, marketing and information and communication technology. The Uniterra Program also supported WECCSL to establish provincial committees, improve networking and service delivery, and market effective microorganisms and organic fertilizer. 263 members also had the opportunity to learn about new laws regulating cooperatives in Nepal. Through this support, WECCSL has transformed into an active and vibrant organization providing constant support to its members.

HANDICRAFT

Handicrafts are one of the major sources of foreign revenue in Nepal, and the Government has made this sector a priority for the country's products to become highly competitive. As a result, many new entrepreneurs have been emerging in this sector to engage in international trade. This trend has significantly increased competition for women traditionally involved in the sector, as they often lack the knowledge and skills to meet international market requirements and market their products effectively. Through its partnership with the Women's Skill Development Organization (WSDO), an ecofriendly Fair Trade organization, Uniterra sought to provide training in design and marketing of handicrafts that would benefit some of the most marginalized women in Nepal. Established 40 years ago, WSDO works with vulnerable women, most of who have no education, suffer from health issues and gender based violence, and just live in difficult circumstances. In addition to providing technical training to more than 30 marginalized women, Uniterra volunteers also facilitated the creation of linkages with the international market for close to 600 women producers.



JOB FARE : CREATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

With financial and technical support from Uniterra and other stakeholders Balaju School of Technology and Engineering (BSET) organized a Job Fair on Jan 28-29, 2020 at its own premises in Balaju, Kathmandu. The objective of the job fair was to bring in the industry recruiters and job seekers on the same platform where they get hired spontaneously. This job fair helped in creating the opportunities for 1500 technical and vocational training graduates in engineering, sanitation and automobile industry and 30 employers. 50 students/graduates were offered job on the spot.



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC RIGHT

Women, girls and other marginalized groups are particularly affected by poverty and exclusion, which results in profound inequalities in all spheres of society: household responsibilities, education, economic opportunities, and participation in decision making bodies, to just name a few. To help address this situation, Uniterra partnered with Prerana, a National level NGO working to secure and enhance human rights for women, the poor, people with disabilities, and other marginalized groups in multiple districts of the country. Uniterra volunteers supported Prerana to carry out its mission through technical training, development of organizational strategies, promotional materials, and networking with international donors to secure new funding. In partnership with Helvetas Nepal, a Swiss development organization, Uniterra also implemented a women entrepreneurship development project in Sarlahi to support Prerana's beneficiaries. The project aims to support 110 women from marginalized and deprived communities to become entrepreneurs.



Volunteering Experience: As a Speech Pathologist in Nepal

Source: Australian Volunteers Program, please visit: www.australianvolunteers.com

Australian volunteer Athena Chan worked as a speech pathologist at the Tribhuvan University Teaching Hospital (TUTH) in Kathmandu, Nepal. She helped to establish a swallowing service and clinic, to build the capacity of the local speech pathologists, raise awareness of speech pathology (SP) in the healthcare community, and contribute to enhancing service delivery and improving patient outcomes at TUTH.

Athena says:

Volunteering has the power to touch the lives of people you meet, and to challenge and broaden your world view. For me, this is something that has interested me since high school. Whether it was because I wanted to experience living and working with people from culturally diverse backgrounds, or because I had the desire to share skills and knowledge to make a positive impact on the lives of others, these factors led me to both pursue SP and ultimately to volunteer internationally.

On adjusting to life in Kathmandu I have been through the usual peaks and troughs of living and working in a developing country. Not speaking the language makes it difficult to truly comprehend this intricate cultural web. Apart from being an outsider, some professional challenges have included:

- Adjusting to a health care system with poor communication procedures, shortage of healthcare professionals and a strong emphasis on fast-paced healthcare.
- Working with limited resources and having

to find creative solutions to problems. For example, introducing the International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative and attempting to source financially viable thickening powder alternatives that the local population could purchase.

-Limited access to clinical support. However, after taking six months to find my feet and feel somewhat settled into the role, I am grateful to have now found a mentor through SPA who I can exchange ideas with and who can help support my professional growth and development.

Of course, with this unique opportunity there have been many highlights, including:

- Collaborating and networking with international colleagues from many different backgrounds. Working cross-culturally has supported the sharing of knowledge and skills, encouraged innovation, and supported our growth professionally and personally. It is rewarding to show our local colleagues the value of inter professional collaboration to improve patient care and outcomes.
- Presenting to healthcare professionals, organizations and associations across Nepal to raise awareness of SP. Advocating for SP internationally has been a great privilege.
- Working closely with ENT colleagues who are graciously teaching me to scope.

At the half-way mark of my assignment, it feels like I have surmounted a hill only to discover the Himalayas towering in the horizon. Speech pathology services in Nepal have a long road ahead to achieve the same professional



standards and network of services we have in Australia. I am hopeful my presence here is the beginning of a longer-term partnership where other volunteers will also be able to contribute now and into the future. I hope together we can grow the awareness and quality of our profession internationally. As my colleague said to me during our first meeting: “If it doesn’t happen in this life time, it will happen in the next life”.



NEWS IN BRIEF

GAC Mission

From February 9 to 21, 2020; Janet Yates, Senior International Development Officer, Governance Partnership for Development, Innovation at the



Global Affairs Canada (GAC), made official visits to Susasan Project districts. She mainly visited Kailali, Achham and Dadeldhura districts. The main purpose of her visit was to monitor Susasan Project's performance and to assess the impact made by the project. During her mission, she visited municipalities and rural municipalities, including Dhangadhi Metropolitan, where she did the inauguration of the Community Techno-Hub of Ward No 17; and observed the contribution made by the project. She had interactions with Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Chair Persons, Vice Chairpersons on citizen-state engagement and the impact of technology, especially project innovation mainstreamed in municipal functioning for effective service delivery and transparency. She also interacted with community people specially, women and marginalized groups about whether they are really gaining access to information from the integrated technological tools or not.



Early Farewell

The pandemic of COVID-19, impacted the closing of Uniterra program too. All the volunteers were supposed to end their contract on 31st of March 2020. However the early departure was made during the second week of March to avoid the risk of volunteers stranded beyond the project period.



Repatriation of Volunteers

Australian Volunteers Program (AVP) repatriated all the Australian Volunteers from Nepal to Australia because of unprecedented impact of COVID-19. Though it's been extremely challenging for volunteers to return home much earlier than expectation, pack up assignment and say goodbye to the partner organization within a short time, the repatriation has been done by the Australian Embassy for their safety and wellbeing. The Australian Volunteers Program has temporarily suspended.

NEWS IN BRIEF

RTI Seminar



CECI/Susasan project's National partner Freedom Forum organized a seminar on Right to Information (RTI) to amplify the voice for implementation of RTI for good governance at local level, where 75 participants, including state assembly members, mayors/chairs, deputy mayors/vice-chair, government officials, information officers and representatives of CSOs, the private sector, universities and media took part.

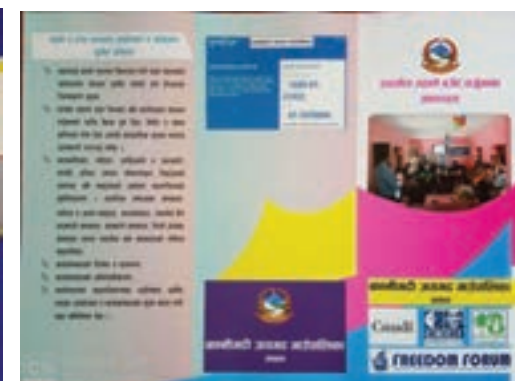


Chiefs and deputy chiefs of different 12 local governments and representatives of CSOs from Sindhupalchowk, Lalitpur, Dhangadhi, Dadeldhura, Achham and Bajhang shared the best practices of governance in their areas. The local government authorities pledged to bring RTI into implementation and promote evidence-based planning and programming at the local level.

New Publications



<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1aU182CSwoWIFKW/MONTVFYXdabUnma3Mo/view?usp=sharing>





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