

OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2022



STABILITY

Promote intergovernmental cooperation and increase clarity on roles

The program, in collaboration with various implementing partners, works toward bringing clarity on functional and jurisdictional overlaps among the three spheres of government in the new federal governance system in Nepal. Below are two major initiatives and activities of this quarter:

1. Facilitation of Panel Discussion

At the third national convention of the National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal (NARMIN), the SNGP facilitated a panel discussion on fiscal and administrative federalism and intergovernmental coordination amongst the members of the rural municipalities. The discussion aimed to promote intergovernmental cooperation and increase clarity in roles and functions between the three levels of government.

At the convention, the association also felicitated The Asia Foundation for its efforts in strengthening the system and process of accountable and democratic local governance in Nepal. The SNGP supports the association in creating platforms to facilitate intergovernmental coordination, strengthen government systems and processes, and promote learning and sharing of best practices of the local governments.

In addition to electing the new leadership, the convention for the 460 rural municipalities in Nepal also adopted a declaration and roadmap with priority areas and issues for advocacy.



2. Submission of draft Bill on Solid Waste Management

In this quarter, the program partner Nepal Law Society (NLS) submitted the revised draft Bill on Solid Waste Management to Hon. Aman Lal Modi, Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA). The program has provided technical assistance to MoFAGA to draft the Bill.

Community Mediation

The program promotes community mediation to improve access to justice at the local level and promote a culture of peaceful resolution of conflict within communities. The activities under community mediation in this quarter are mentioned below:

- Community mediation orientations for local government representatives – deputy mayor, judicial committee members, ward chairs, and secretaries – of four municipalities (including two SNGP partner municipalities – Birendranagar and Tikapur) and four rural municipalities of Surkhet and Kailali Districts. A total of 162 representatives including 44 women and 67 people from indigenous and marginalized communities participated in the orientation.
- An eight-day basic mediation training in three partner municipalities – Damak, Mithila, and Bhimeshwar. A total of 89 new community mediators trained including 51 women, 39 from indigenous and marginalized communities, and five people with disabilities.
- Two practice-sharing sessions with 81 participants, comprising members of eight judicial committees and mediators from the Surkhet and Kailali Districts. The participants included 37 women, 40 from indigenous and marginalized communities, and two people with disabilities.

SNGP Phase II

The Subnational Governance Program (SNGP) is implemented by The Asia Foundation with funding from the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and in coordination with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA).

After a five-year Phase I (including a one-year Bridging Phase), SNGP Phase II commenced in April 2022 and will continue its support in creating an enabling environment for a stable, effective, and inclusive subnational government in Nepal that addresses the health and economic security of all, including women and marginalized groups. The programmatic approach will include mainstreaming equality and inclusion along with targeted GEDSI efforts.

STABILITY

Multi-stakeholder Dialogue

In this quarter, SNGP's Multi-stakeholder Dialogue program helped address five issues of governance contestations, which ranged from disputes between elected representatives, construction of development projects, and displacement of Dalit squatters, among others. This support benefitted around 2,400 stakeholders from all three tiers of the government.

The program, in collaboration with the program partner [DKA1] Nepal Forum for Restorative Justice (NFRJ), also initiated a three-month-long activity (spread over a series of nine events) to develop seven dialogue resource persons. These resource persons selected from across the country will be serving as trainers, mentors, and facilitators at the provincial level. This initiative is also expected to sustain dialogue resources and skills accessible to subnational governments and local communities.

• Provincial-level Activities

At the provincial level, the dialogue forums, in this quarter, conducted discussions on the enforcement of the election code of conduct (CoC) for the general elections in November. The discussion also focused on advocating inclusivity in the election process. Various provincial-level stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, the Election Commission, [DKA1] and security agencies participated in these interactions.

Similarly, the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue program is facilitating dialogue on a complex intergovernmental dispute over revenue sharing and resource appropriation from Karnali riverine. During this quarter, the program presented the key finding of Lumbini Dialogue Forum's field-level analysis on the issue to the National Natural Resource and Fiscal Commission (NNRFC). The key findings will help the Commission initiate intergovernmental coordination to resolve such natural resources disputes.

HEALTH SECURITY

To continue its support to public health in the post-pandemic recovery in the country, in Phase II SNGP adopts a twofold approach to support health management committees in partner municipalities: supporting policy reform and strengthening institutions.

Discussions on Health Policy



During this quarter, the program conducted health policy deliberations to clarify the roles and responsibilities of municipal health committees. In the deliberations held in Waling and Tansen, the participants discussed local government health provisions, jurisdictions, and better implementation of health service delivery mandates within their respective communities. The discussion helped the municipalities identify the need for the amendment of the Health Facility Operation and Management Committee (HFOMC) in the Local Health Act. The participants also raised the issue of a data gap in municipal health profiles and local health systems to maintain statistical records (with disaggregated information). They emphasized the importance of data to promote evidence-based planning/budgeting in public health. The mayor and deputy mayor, the chief administrative officer, ward chairs and members, social development committee members, and health section officials took part in the deliberations.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

TLO Mobilization for Citizen Engagement



As part of the program's approach to enhancing citizens' engagement and awareness in the public finance management (PFM) process, SNGP is establishing and strengthening Tole Lane Organizations (TLOs) in Birendranagar and Tikapur. Under the program, TLO mobilization aims* to support local governments in increasing citizens' participation in development activities and ensure inclusive planning and budgeting.

In this quarter, the program with technical support from the program partner Sahakarmi Samaj (SS) conducted a community-level assessment of the current situation of TLOs, political dynamics, potential risks, and opportunities for community engagement activities at the two municipalities. The program also conducted orientations for local government executive committees on approaches, tools, and techniques of the TLO formation and strengthening processes.

* TLO mobilization will also help engage citizens and strengthen citizen-government interactions for inclusive annual planning and budgeting process in public health.

Access to PFM Information Through Mass Media



The program also initiated its engagement with mass media to increase awareness and promote transparency and accountability in the PFM process of the subnational governments. In collaboration with the Association of Community Radio Broadcasters of Nepal (ACORAB), SNGP is producing Hamro Palika (Our Municipality), a radio program covering various issues around PFM. The radio program will feature content from SNGP partner municipalities and will be aired by all community radio stations under ACORAB.

In this quarter, ACORAB organized a two-day workshop to assess the present situation of information dissemination in the municipalities and to develop a common understanding of the concept and topics to be covered by Hamro Palika. Along with the local journalists of seven community radio stations from the partner municipalities, the information officers of the respective municipalities participated in the workshop.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

Strengthening Municipal Budgeting Committees

To create an efficient local government planning and budgeting process, the program is also providing technical assistance to strengthen the municipal budgeting committees. In this quarter, the program identified 35 rural municipalities to scale up this intervention. Seven resource persons, selected locally, will work with the rural municipalities to conduct a baseline assessment, design the interventions, and monitor the progress of the thematic committees. The program, in collaboration with the program partner NARMIN, conducted interactions (virtually) with the resource persons and the rural municipalities to develop the baseline survey questionnaires and checklist.

GEDSI

First Cohort of SNGP Fellows Graduate



The first cohort of SNGP Fellows completed their fellowship this quarter, and the program held a graduation ceremony in November. In 2021, the program launched the fellowship to encourage participation among young women from marginalized communities in governance by building their knowledge of local government through hands-on experience and engagement. The ceremony also included a learning-sharing session for the fellows during which they highlighted their experiences and learnings from the fellowship program. The program also supported the fellows in exploring job opportunities. The fellows from Tansen and Tikapur are now working as Field Officers for the Center for Dalit Women Nepal (CDWN) program under SNGP.

Workshop on Leadership, Power, and Privilege



During this quarter, the program organized a three-day workshop on leadership, power, and privilege for the SNGP Field Coordinators. Ms. Jaya Luitel, a GESI expert on power and leadership, facilitated the workshop where the participants reflected on their identity, inspiration, own leadership style, and their idea of inclusion. The participants discussed ways to shift tokenistic spaces that often undermine women's and marginalized groups' opinions and existence to more valued spaces.

PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Ambassador Volk's visit to Tikapur



In this quarter, Her Excellency Felicity Volk, Australian Ambassador to Nepal, visited Tikapur Municipality along with members of the SNGP team. During the visit, she interacted with the newly elected representatives – the mayor, deputy mayor, and ward chairs. She emphasized the importance of incorporating the needs of vulnerable groups and prioritizing women and marginalized groups in all plans and policies of the municipality. In a separate meeting with Judicial Committee members and community mediators of the municipality, she inquired about the process and formalities of the judicial committee and the committee's position in addressing disputes in the community through mediation. The mediators shared their experiences of working in the community to resolve disputes.

Program Engagement with Partners



The program held two separate workshops with its implementing partners in this quarter. In October, the program conducted a meeting with the implementing partners of Phase II to orient them on the vision and priorities of SNGP Phase II. The event included a group work discussion to explore their projects' contribution to the overall program goals. Representatives of the 19 partner organizations and Ms. Kamakshi Rai Yakthumba, Program Manager, Governance and Global Program, DFAT participated in the event. In December, SNGP conducted an orientation on the different thematic areas of program management with the partner organizations. The workshop focused on monitoring, evaluation, research, and learning (MERL), finance, gender-responsive budgeting, and communications and aimed at bringing a common understanding of compliance and program functioning among the partners. The respective focal person from each of the partner organizations participated in the workshop.