

(Issue 05, February-April 2020)

The Subnational Governance Program in Nepal (SNGP) (स्थानीय सरकार सबलीकरण कार्यक्रम) is implemented through a strategic partnership between the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and The Asia Foundation, in coordination with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. SNGP aims to promote an enabling environment for the development of strong, effective, and inclusive sub-national government in Nepal that benefits all.

Model Procedure on Covid-19 Emergency Fund Management

To help subnational governments better respond to the Covid-19 crisis, the program provided a draft procedure on Covid-19 Emergency Fund Management to Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN) and National Association of Rural Municipality in Nepal (NARMIN). Both organizations have shared the draft model member municipalities which will be an important reference for municipalities to help in their fund management and relief distribution.

Similarly, MuAN has initiated collecting information from all member municipalities related to planning and budgeting for upcoming fiscal year 2020-2021 in consultation with Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. The information collected includes the priorities of local government planning for the upcoming fiscal year that extends from policy and programs related to service delivery and resource management and utilization.

Media Response to Covid-19

The Association of Community Radio Broadcasters in Nepal (ACORAB) has been producing live episodes of "Jiban Rakshya" every week (Tuesday and Thursday) to disseminate accurate information to the public on various local government measures on safety and security including mediation and service delivery and its accountability. The program features a live conversation with the citizens where the radio hosts collect the questions from the public through phone conversation and invites relevant experts to discuss specific issues and topics. Episodes can be accessed through: <http://www.cinkhabar.com/podcasts/22> and their Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CommunityInformationNetworkcin/videos/230742251326121/?t=98>

Virtual Discussion Organized with Municipalities on Annual Planning and Implementation

On April 20, 2020, the program organized a virtual discussion amongst mayors, deputy mayors and chief administrative officers from seven partner municipalities to discuss the effects of lockdown on annual plan implementation and next cycle of annual planning. The following are the major points discussed by the local officials:

- The lockdown has affected the implementation of the annual plan which will result to delay in the completion of the activities by the municipalities.
- The municipalities are yet to receive budget ceiling from the federal and province governments. Due to Covid-19 situation, most of the municipalities have not started preparing for the next year's annual plan.

Detail reports are available at www.subnationalgovernance.org

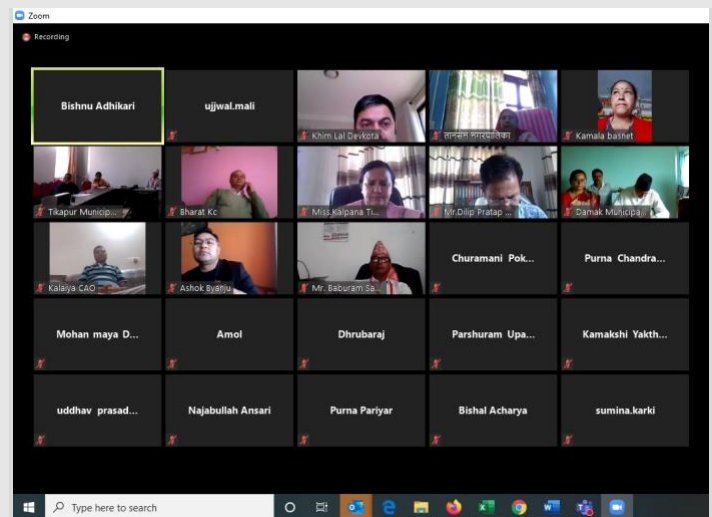


Figure 1: Virtual Discussion among municipal officials of partner municipalities

Municipal Profiles Yield Pertinent Data on Covid-19 Response

The census-based household survey that were part of the municipal profiles has uniquely positioned the program partner, COMMITTED to equip partner municipalities with pertinent data in responding to Covid-19 crisis. As immediate response, COMMITTED has extracted data that can assist municipalities in envisioning relief efforts through identification of households dependent on daily wages (see figure below), with foreign employed family members, families with migrant returnees, families with water taps, those recorded with chronic illnesses, households with senior citizens, etc. Furthermore, municipal IT officers and social mobilizers were provided virtual trainings on data extraction and sorting allowing municipalities to proactively generate crucial data in the midst of the crisis situation.

Writ Petition in the Supreme Court for Better Market Management and Monitoring

On 21 April 2020, the Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights Nepal (FPCR/N) filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court requesting the Court to issue order for government entities on issues related to health and market management during the Covid-19 crisis. FPCR/N has requested the Court to issue six separate orders including: maintaining a fair market system by controlling black marketing, substandard quality, cheating, price hike etc.; ensuring food quality during sales and distribution as relief; and appointing market inspection officers in all provinces and local levels to conduct regular market monitoring.

The court heard the case on 22 April 2020 and issued show cause order in the same date to the government stating to submit the written response within 15 days regarding matters mentioned in the writ petition. Undoubtedly, this action of the court will help in better market management and monitoring in light of the current crisis.

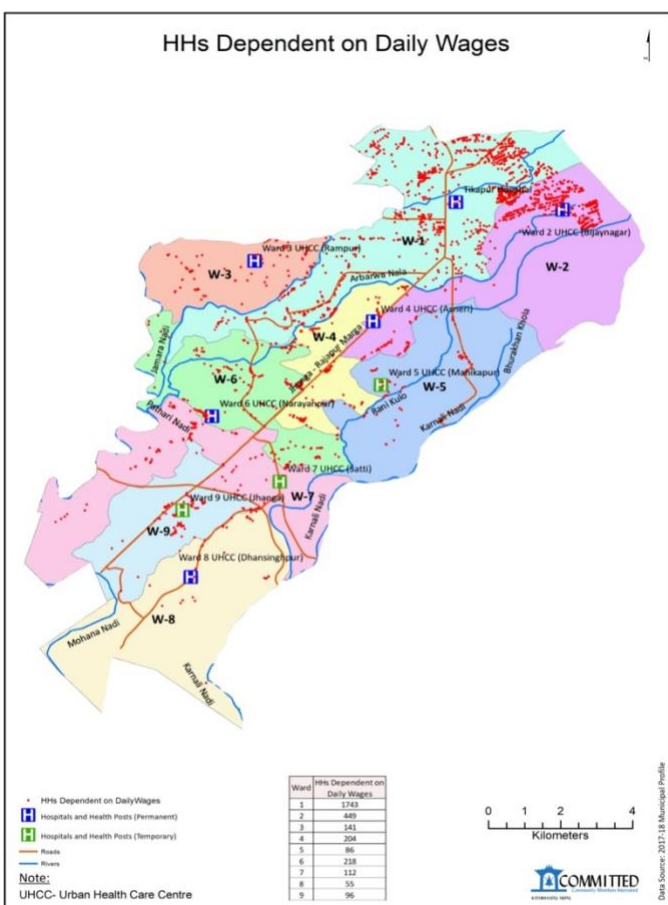


Figure 2: Households dependent on daily wages in Tikapur Municipality

Facilitated Dialogues to Minimize the Impact of the Lockdown

Sambad Samuhas in coordination with respective government stakeholders are helping to minimize lockdown's impact to local citizens by facilitating the availability of essential goods, especially to the most vulnerable and marginalized communities. For example, in Kanchanpur, 265 families of 605 families affected by the Shuklaphanta extension. As residents of Dhakka camp at the same time dependent on daily wage, they have been greatly affected by the lockdown policy. To help address this situation, Sambad Samuha members facilitated a meeting with Laaljhadi Rural Municipality. Records have been collected of the Dhakka-camp daily wage workers and those living below poverty line. As a result of these efforts, the provincial government agreed to supply essentials to the families at the earliest. Similarly, through facilitation of Sambad Samuha Kanchanpur, in coordination with the local administration, 57 Nepalese who are stranded in the Indian border of Mahakali Municipality were sent to their respective destinations.

Sambad Samuhas are also actively working with the local governments to address misinformation on Covid-19 and keep the citizens well-informed about the pandemic.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<https://asiafoundation.org/tag/np-subnational-governance-nepal/>