

Report on the study visit to Nepal from 30th September to 14th October 2013.

A study visit to Nepal was organized by the Department of Local Governance (DLG) for a period of two weeks (30th September to 14th October 2013) The following officials comprised the team of officials to participate for the study programme:

1. Mr. Rinzin Penjore, Chief Programme Officer, DLG
2. Mr. Tashi Dorji, Environment Analyst, UNDP/UNEP PEI, Bhutan
3. Mr. Tshering Chophel, Sr. Programme Officer, DLG
4. Mr. Rinchen Dorji, Gewog Administrative Officer, Tareythang Gewog, Sarpang
5. Ms. Tashi Dema, Gewog Administrative Officer, Sergithang Gewog, Tsirang
6. Mr. Melam Zangpo, Sr. Programme Officer, DLG

The study visit had two distinct **OBJECTIVES**:

- a. To look at the key concerns and practices related to Environment, Climate Change, Poverty (ECP) and other cross-cutting themes being taken up by various organizations and agencies (both government and non-government) in Nepal in the form of mainstreaming into the plans, policies, programmes, projects and activities, etc, and
- b. To look at the governance aspects related to citizens engagement and social accountability in local governance, in terms of social accountability, transparency and public participation procedures and mechanisms.

The study programme was conceived and designed in regard to these two issues being considered with special significance for Bhutan. In regard to the first objective - mainstreaming gender, environment, climate change, disaster and poverty issues into the national plans and policies at all levels and process of development is being considered as a strategy to achieve the overall development goal of the 11th Five-Year Plan: *Self-reliant and inclusive green social-economic development*. To coordinate the GECDP mainstreaming activities, a multi-sectoral Mainstreaming Reference Group (MRG) has been long established and many concrete activities have been implemented by this group in terms of mainstreaming GECDP concerns especially into new policies and five-year development plans. Many such activities are also laid out in a new multi-donor programme that is currently awaiting government approval. With three of the officials participating in this study programme being members of MRG, the programme was also aimed at capacity building of the MRG.

The second objective of the study programme was aimed at studying mechanisms to strengthen citizens' engagement and social accountability in local governance. This objective has a particular reference to one of the ongoing projects with the department implemented with financial support of the Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation (HSI) – *Support for Local Governance*. One of the key principles adopted for the project is to try to build some mechanisms on

furthering the citizens' engagement in local governance. This is being pushed through small activities, to start with such as introducing the concept, getting into a dialogue with field implementers as to what could be done, learning from other country cases and trying to partner with local and central players.

To reiterate the objective in a nutshell, it was aimed at gaining exposure and learning from some of the projects implemented in Nepal to strengthen and enhance local livelihood security in the areas of poverty alleviation, climate change adaptation, inclusive and green development approaches, and social accountability in pursuing good governance.

Therefore, the visit to various organizations, especially the following, has given deep insight and opportunity to learn and exchange ideas for the participants:

1. ICIMOD (International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development) office
2. ICIMOD Knowledge Park
3. Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
4. HSI-Nepal
5. PEI (Poverty Environment Initiative)-Nepal, UNDP Nepal Country Office
6. PEI forestry and greening project site at Jogimara, Dhading
7. Multi-Sectoral Forestry Programme (MSFP) at Kapilvastu
8. Lalitpur Waste Management Programme

Out of the many things the team has seen and learnt from interactions with different stakeholders and project site visits, the following are some of the key learnings the team would like to emphasize:

i. From the **ICIMOD** office and the field visit to its Knowledge Park:

- ✚ Learnt the scenario of how mountains affect the livelihood of the people living in the (Hindukush Himalayan -HKH) mountains, i.e. to a population of not less than 1.3 billion living downstream.
- ✚ Got some insights into what kinds of strategic programmes could be adopted to tackle poverty issues in these mountain areas.
- ✚ Realized the critical need for linking science, policy and practice while considering implementation of different climate-change, environment and poverty activities.
- ✚ Governance – is the critical link in the success of various plans, policies, programmes and projects. e.g. social/community auditing and M&E is a key component.
- ✚ Need for carrying out the ecosystem assessment and valuation using participatory approaches, payment for ecosystem services, etc.

- ✚ What are the next steps, e.g. the need to focus more on awareness programmes and capacity building of key stakeholders at all levels of the government and community, etc.
- ✚ The lessons from REDD+ (Reduce Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation) initiative through pilot implementation by involving community in establishing monitoring, report and verification mechanisms at the local level including setting up a pilot Forest Carbon Trust Fund to reward local communities for forest conservation is worth replicating in the community forestry programmes in Bhutan.
- ✚ Regional cooperation is critical for climate change adaptation programmes.
- ✚ What are the critical areas for collaborative action research (e.g. capacity development, knowledge sharing, piloting of the initiative, etc.)
- ✚ Impressive flood information sharing system being established. Technology in place to measure the depth of rivers and send the information to the hydromet department and ICIMOD simultaneously.
- ✚ Participation of women in agriculture and pastoralism in the mountains and in business enterprises. For instance, the majority of labour force for a briquette production enterprise is women. So, efforts should be made toward encouraging more employment of women in such economic activities and also find out how could government support such programmes.
- ✚ Rainwater harvesting techniques, mushroom plantations, sloping agriculture land technology (SALT) – through rainwater seepage management and hedge row plantations, briquette production methods and use of improvised and energy efficient stoves for cooking and heating, natural cold storage facility for vegetables and fruits (called Naya Cool Chamber), kitchen garden methods, use of solar equipment for drying of edibles, pit composting techniques, Vermitech composting (i.e. using earthworms), biogas plants.

ii. From the **MoFALD** (Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development)

- ✚ The ministry has an Environment Management Division for the purpose of environment policies and plans, and driving key initiatives on integrating pro-poor environment for the local government. It plays an important role in complementing efforts of environmental agencies because of its strategic roles and responsibilities in spearheading local development. The presenter (Mr. Chakri Pani Sharma, Under Secretary, MoFALD) mentioned that such mainstreaming efforts by the LD agencies are an effort towards bringing different government agencies and development partners together, and avoid duplication and overlapping of development interventions at the local level.
- ✚ MoFALD is well positioned to coordinate environmental issues at the local level based on the policy frameworks that are in place, such as the Local Self Governance Act 1999 & Regulation 1999 that authorize local bodies to manage natural resources of their respective areas; EPA 1996 and regulations 1997 that empowers MLD to approve ToR of initial environmental examination and IEE report; Climate Change Policy, NAPA and

LAPA (national & local adaptation plan of action). The institutional framework includes – environment mgt. section in the MoFALD; energy, environment and climate change coordination units at the District Development Committee (DDC); and municipality environment management units.

- ✚ The ministry has initiated what they term it as “Environment-friendly Local Governance” (EFLG). The objective is to mainstream environmental consideration, including climate change and disaster risk management criteria, into local development planning processes through reforming local governance, which is guided by the motto of “A Green Nepal: Happy Nepal” (MoFALD, EFLG conceptual framework, 2013). This is based on the principle of creating ‘positive competition’, subsidiary, polluters pay, etc. This is very impressive in that environmental management will be judged at the lowest unit i.e. household level by attaching indicators to various livelihood components such as natural capital, financial, social, physical and human capital. To institutionalize the concept, government will integrate environmental consideration into the existing 14-step integrated planning, monitoring and reporting structure from central to settlement level for local bodies. To ensure synergies amongst various sectoral ministries, and link local plans with central level activities, the framework recommends instituting an apex level EFLG central direction committee through the leadership of the planning commission, and the establishment of a central implementation coordination committee led by MoFALD. The concept will apply a “volunteer incentive based approach’ to encourage every household to adopt and push for environmentally friendly households, settlements, village and districts. And to trigger the process, environmentally friendly households, settlements, Village Development Committees/Wards and District Development Committees will be acknowledged by provisioning special arrangements such as discounts on taxes, infrastructure support, special facilities for official work, attaching various colored tags, and availing hoarding boards.
- ✚ Two levels of EFLG indicators are designed – advanced and basic for VDCs, DDCs and municipality. Environmentally friendly certificates and logos will be awarded to concerned households, settlements, wards, villages, municipalities and districts based on the level of indicators achieved
- ✚ EFLG framework has been submitted to the cabinet for consideration at the moment, and the PEI focal officer in the MoFALD (Mr. Ek Raj Sigdel) has conveyed that the EFLG framework was now approved by the cabinet
- ✚ Key activities undertaken include; PEI, Environment Impact Assessment, social and environmental safeguard measures, institutional strengthening, disaster risk management, climate change, solid waste management, etc.
- ✚ Citizens Awareness Centre, Ward Citizen Forum and Social Mobilizers seem to play a critical role in citizens’ engagement and holding the public officials or power holders to account for their action/non-action. These forums are not government-run, but they are

largely loose sort of forums to engage youth, women and poor sections of the society to make their voice heard and also to provide inputs for policy formulation. It was learnt that it is very important to recognize and acknowledge the role of community forums and associations and support their activities to strengthen and deepen citizens' engagement and social accountability in effective service delivery.

- ✚ With respect to direct allocation of national financial resources to the local governments, they use an allocation criterion, wherein one of them is the governance criteria. That is, the fund allocation is cut into three pieces and if governance criterion is not fulfilled, the local government concerned could get a lesser share of the budget.

iii. From the **PEI-Nepal**

- ✚ The key PE issues in Nepal are:
 - 25.2% of the population under the poverty;
 - In-country regional economic disparity;
 - Dependence on traditional sources of energy;
 - Loss or degradation of land and biodiversity;
 - Extreme weather events.
- ✚ PEI works at the policy level with the national planning commission; and at the implementation with MoFALD.
- ✚ PEI intervention approach is focused on three specific areas: awareness, integration and piloting.
- ✚ Like in Bhutan's case of revising the Local Development Planning Manual (LDPM) and developing a guideline for mainstreaming ECP in local government plans, the PEI-Nepal has supported revision of VDC/Municipality/DDC-Annual Planning Guidelines and MCPM manuals, EFLG framework, besides knowledge products on environmentally friendly rural roads, sand gravel and stones, etc.
- ✚ At the national level, PEI supported incorporating PE issues in the Three Year Plan (2010-13) and approach paper of the thirteenth three year plan that will commence from 2014; updating Poverty Monitoring Assessment System indicators to incorporate environmental indicators; Climate Public Expenditure and Institutions Review (CPEIR); and the introduction of climate budget code in the annual budget.
- ✚ It was informed that 8% of the total budget allocated to District Development Committees is found to be spent on environment and poverty alleviation activities.
- ✚ The PEI approach in Nepal is found to be well integrated into the existing UNDP supported and multi-donor programmes/projects instead of implementing as a stand-alone project. For instance the support to national planning process was delivered through The UNDP-supported strengthening national planning and monitoring capacity project; and sub-national level activities implemented through the existing multi-donor local governance and community development programme.

iv. From the **MSFP** (Multi-Sectoral Forestry Programme), Kapilvastu

- ✚ This is one of the impressive programmes aimed at reducing poverty and tackling climate change at local level, e.g. through local forest management. The programme aims to contribute to lifting some 1.7 million out of the poverty line and climate vulnerability. This multi-stakeholder programme has set ambitious objectives of halving deforestation rate in the three programme districts besides trying to create jobs (some 80,000 jobs), contribute to GDP and improve forest sector governance.
- ✚ Community vitality or for that matter public participation was quite visible from the number of people that turned up for the meeting with the group. The members were really happy to take the visiting team around for field visits to show their successful activities like the community furniture centre, fishery, greening barren land with plantations, biogas, etc.
- ✚ In terms of governance, the office bearers did seem to have very good facilitation skills. They presented, quite concisely, the whole programme and the activities the MSFP was taking up.
- ✚ Indicators on governance, such as transparency, accountability and public participation, reliability of forest institutions and conflict management, coherence of forest legislation and rule of law, economic efficiency, equity and incentives, gender equality and social inclusion (GSI) action plans etc. are all in place.
- ✚ It was very interesting to note that success of such community based activities took roots in the way management or governance aspects were handled. It was informed that there are clear procedures laid out in the management plans on the planning mechanisms (participatory approaches), inclusive meetings (stakeholder meetings), review meetings, annual general assembly/meeting, budget meetings, and building trust with the community, etc.

v. From the **HSI** (Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation)-Nepal

- ✚ Noted that Government of Nepal has recognized HSI not so much as an international NGO but as one of the development partners. This should have come about given the reach of its support in terms of support to the local governments and the private sector. It has got into five core areas of; 1) Water and Infrastructure, 2) Environment & Climate, 3) Rural economy, 4) Education and skill development, and 5) Governance and peace.
- ✚ On the governance front, HSI provides support to the Village Development Committees (VDCs) in preparation of periodical and annual plans, some sector specific support during planning and so on.
- ✚ Promotes transparency by way of supporting production of brochures related to the village level plans and policies.

- ✚ Supports annual review meetings related to budget and plans said to be usually conducted in the nature of public hearings. It also appeared to be supporting establishment of social accountability mechanisms in governance structures such as social audit, public review, progress reporting, etc. Although these forms of support at the moment did seem to be built around specific projects only, the expected outcome of this is to create an impact on building such mechanisms in the governance structures in the long run.
- ✚ One notable project that HSI is implementing is the CARTA (Citizens Actions for Results, Transparency and Accountability) that provides support for community engagement in the World Bank supported activities. It gave sort of an idea that people were involved to monitor the quality of the project activities through a third-party monitoring system. But given the political sensitivity of such an activity, it was noted as a very challenging role the HSI would have in successfully taking up the project.
- ✚ Another project that was of strategic interest for the team was the COPILA (Community Practice in School for learning Climate Change Adaptation) which is aimed at building resilience of the local population in the working area against the negative impacts of climate change. It was informed that young people, mainly school children of classes 7, 8 and 9, take active role in raising climate awareness through the practical learning exercises of their school curricula. This is being carried out on a pilot basis in some districts.

vi. From the **Lalitpur Waste Management** site

- ✚ Note that absence of an elected local government (Mayor) has created inefficiency in the system especially with respect to waste management. The teeming millions generate thousand tons of solid waste every day.
- ✚ The amount of waste could pose serious threat to the health of people. In the past, most landfills are reported to be established near river valleys due to issues of private land. And such a situation could pollute the rivers and could run into millions/billions of rupees for maintenance especially in terms of healthcare of the people.
- ✚ However, serious efforts are being made to tackle the waste management issues by way of doing aggressive awareness campaigns (e.g. involving women's group, school children, informal sectors), capacity building programmes through exposure visits of the municipality staff to developed countries (e.g. Korea), working on ways to improve collection (e.g. 30% of waste collected by private companies), segregation methods, etc.
- ✚ Good to note that Nepal has banned use of plastics around the zoo area where tens of thousands of people visit them. With increased awareness measures adopted by the municipality, there is now an increased awareness on waste disposal by the residents wherein households make it a point to deliver their waste into the waste trucks when it comes for collection.

- ✚ It was noted that some technologies have been adopted to convert waste into energy, such as the electricity. It is called as RDF (refuse derived fuel).
- ✚ The municipality is increasingly encouraging households to segregate waste and has initiated rooftop gardening through composting of organic waste.
- ✚ It was also good to know that a legal basis such as the Waste Management Act has been adopted and this provides as the main tool to enforce regulations related to waste.

vii. From the **PEI** project site at Jogimara, Dhading

- ✚ An interesting concept to practice integrated farming, by converting barren land into a productive forest. Coffee plantations, poultry and livestock (goat, buffalo) rearing, and fishery were being taken up simultaneously.
- ✚ The farm road through this area and another one in a different place were constructed manually through community participation. The team saw how the social mobiliser played an important role in convincing the tribal community to engage in the construction of the farm road. The farm road construction provided employment opportunity for the 'Cheepang' tribal community during the off-farm season. The road was constructed with a minimal damage to the environment using manual tools, and also maintained well indicating a clear ownership of the infrastructure. Any moment the road was not functioning, the community contributed labour to carry out the maintenance works.

Few take-home messages:

- ❖ While not all that the team learnt and saw cannot be implemented, the study visit gave the participants the opportunity to compare things that are also being taken up in Bhutan and see what could be done in addition in different areas of GECDP or governance.
- ❖ The pursuit of GECDP and good governance cannot be done in isolation, i.e. without looking at the success, or for that matter, the failures of other countries. It's only when we see new innovations and creativities other people have adopted that we want to go for change.
- ❖ Such study visit could enhance personal and professional networking and this in turn could be applied in development of plans and policies in the country. For instance, there were very striking examples of where our policies and plans should be focused in relation to climate change.
- ❖ The study visit was an exposure trip that enhanced the education level and knowledge of the participants and hopefully, it would be translated into practice back home.
- ❖ The global challenges on climate change, poverty and other cross-cutting issues continue to get worse and the solutions may only be found in active exchange of ideas, exposure and commitments on the part of both governments and the development partners.
- ❖ The immediate output of the study visit would be its contribution in formulating activities under the new LGSDP project.

Photos from the study visit



Photo 1: At ICIMOD office with Dr. Eklabya Sharma, Director Programme Operations, and other officials.



Photo 2: ICIMOD's Knowledge Park demonstrating charcoal production from unwanted weeds and other biomass.



Photo 3: Briquette production from compressed charcoal, waste materials, saw dust, papers, etc.



Photo 4: Knowledge park demonstrating the availability of various solar technologies.



Photo 5 & 6: The use of community radio as a medium to create awareness on poverty-environmental issues, and keep local communities informed about their development interventions.



Photo 7: MoFALD sharing idea on the concept of Environment Friendly Local Governance

Photo 8: PEI Nepal & Bhutan sharing each other's implementation approach, success and challenges, lessons and way forward.



Photo 9 & 10: Social Mobiliser (the woman in blue sari) play an important role at the local level in convincing communities to ensure environment friendly infrastructures.



Photo 11 & 12: Multi-sectoral Forestry Programme field site at Basantapur community forest user group under Kapilvastu district.



Photo 13 & 14: Integrated livelihood interventions undertaken by the community (fishery, biogas, improved cook stoves, furniture house, etc.)