THE SOCIAL & HEALTH EDUCATION PROJECT CLG & SAHAKARMI SAMAJ

Nepal Community Empowerment & Strengthening Local Governance Project (NCESLG) 2018 – 21

Reporting Period *01/01/2021 to 31/12/2021*

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Cover photo Indigenous Rana Tharu Women carrying placards as part of a campaign to advocate for accountable and equitable local government in Beldandi Rural Municipality, Kanchanpur

Contents

Acronyms

CBNOs	Community Based Network Organisations
CBS	Chetana Bikash Samaj
CDGs	Community Development Groups
FEST	Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation
JBS	Jaldeep Bikash Samaj
JJBS	Janajagriti Bikash Samaj
JSBS	Janashakti Bikash Samaj
KSBK	Kanchan Samudik Bikash Samaj
MCs	Main Committees
MEL	Monitoring Evaluation Learning
NCESLG	Nepal Community Empowerment for Strengthening Local Governance
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OCA	Organisational Capacity Assessment
PBS	Punarbas Bikash Samaj
PCD	People Centred Development
RSSBK	Rastriya Samudayok Sanstha Bikasha Kendra
SHEP	The Social and Health Education Project
SS	Sahakarmi Samaj

1. Project Summary

1.1. Summary of the Nature and Scope of the Project

Introduction

In 2021, the third year of the project, COVID was yet again a huge challenge; and yet Sahakarmi & SHEP once again proved the resilience of their approach. They demonstrated that the community infrastructure built up as a result of this programme (and those that preceded it), works effectively, even in the face of a global crisis such as the COVID 19 pandemic.

The Nepal Community Empowerment for Strengthening Local Governance Project (NCESLG) is the embodiment of Irish Aid's Goal 3 for '*Better Governance, Human Rights and Accountability*' and shows the positive knock-on effect this has in terms of social inclusion, health and economic welfare of those who are most marginalised. During the two waves of the pandemic and subsequent long lockdowns enforced by the government, Sahakarmi's CBNOs (Community Based Networking Organisations) became the vital link between local government and the local population, uniquely positioned on the ground to deliver COVID relief, monitoring and awareness raising and to facilitate community meetings and action planning.

In addition, Sahakarmi's staff swiftly adapted to remote working and the use of Zoom facilitated greater interaction with SHEP, ensuring a more robust MEL and Reporting system. Despite the year's challenges all outputs bar two were on target. The team worked exceptionally hard to make up ground and ensure that training and meetings were able to take place between once restrictions eased. Significant learning from the two previous years was taken on board and much new learning took place, which contributed to targets being achieved in the final year.

Capacity Building through an International Learning Partnership: Sahakarmi Samaj & SHEP

Sahakarmi Samaj (SS) - whose name in Neplai means 'Working Together'- and **The Social and Health Education Project (SHEP)** have a long-standing international learning partnership which was established in 2007. This fourth grant cycle from **Irish Aid** was for the three and a half year Nepal Community Empowerment for Strengthening Local Governance Programme (NCESLG 2018 -21).

This report is for the final year – the calendar year 2021. €90,000 per annum was committed by Irish Aid and the matching €38,000 per annum came from Development Fund Norway (DFN).

Figure 1 Monitoring Visit by SHEP staff to Sahakarmi Samaj Office in Kohalpur, December '21

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The partnership between Sahakarmi Samaj (SS) and SHEP is an example of a flourishing international collaboration between two established NGOs, both of whom are carrying out pioneering work in the area of Community Development and Empowerment. Whilst SS operates projects on the ground in Nepal, SHEP's primary role in this project is mentoring and support for **Capacity Building** within SS, particularly in relation to **Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (MEL)** and **Financial & Narrative Reporting.**

Sahakarmi Samaj has been operating in South West Nepal for the past 25 years, becoming a leader in its field for its work enabling very vulnerable communities and marginalised people to improve their lives. Gender equality, social inclusion and human rights are central to their work in Nepal, an ethnically diverse country which is among the poorest countries in South Asia.

SS's work on this programme has led to an upsurge in the participation of women -who now outnumber men as community activists -as well as people from marginalised ethnic groups such as Dalit and Janajati.

Aim & Objectives of Nepal Community Empowerment for Strengthening Local Government (NCESLG)

The Aim of NCESLG was to increase the access of marginalised people to quality government services and resources.

Objectives

1. Work with members of community groups (particularly the marginalised), to claim their rights to government resources and services

2. Work with elected representatives and Municipal officials to practice inclusiveness and accountability towards marginalised people and their families

Over its lifetime, SS's proven methodology '**Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation (FEST)[1]** has enabled the emergence of community groups and their networks across seven districts in Nepal. These are known as: Community Groups (**CGs**), Main Committees (**MCs**) and Community Based Network Organisations (**CBNOs**) (See Figure 2).

NCESLG built on these successful community networks by shifting emphasis on to strengthening the connections between local grassroots organisations and local and provincial governments. As such, it was a direct response by Sahakarmi Samaj to important, recent changes in how the three tiers of government are organised in Nepal at Palika (Municipal), Provincial and National level.
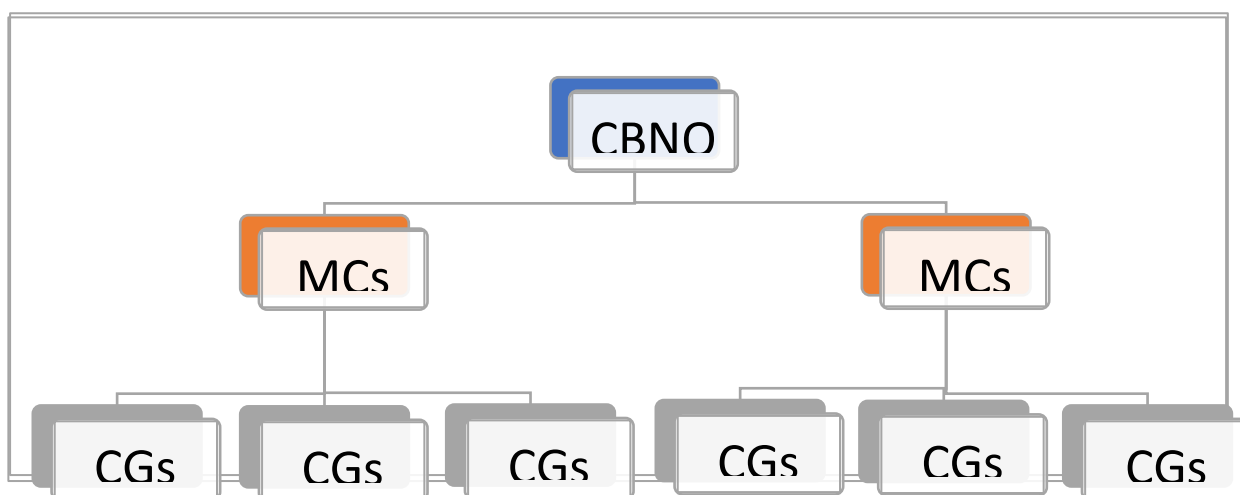

Figure 2 Structure of Grass Roots Community Organisations

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[1] Facilitation for Empowerment & Social Transformation (FEST) is Sahakarmi Samaj's pioneering and proven methodology that has underpinned its work for the past 25 years

Under the new federal system the elected local bodies have considerably greater powers and resources to provide essential services, than they did under the old structure. NCESLG aimed to empower marginalised communities to access these resources and at the same time to establish greater levels of government transparency, accountability and inclusivity. This was achieved through training and an enhanced interface between community members and government officials.
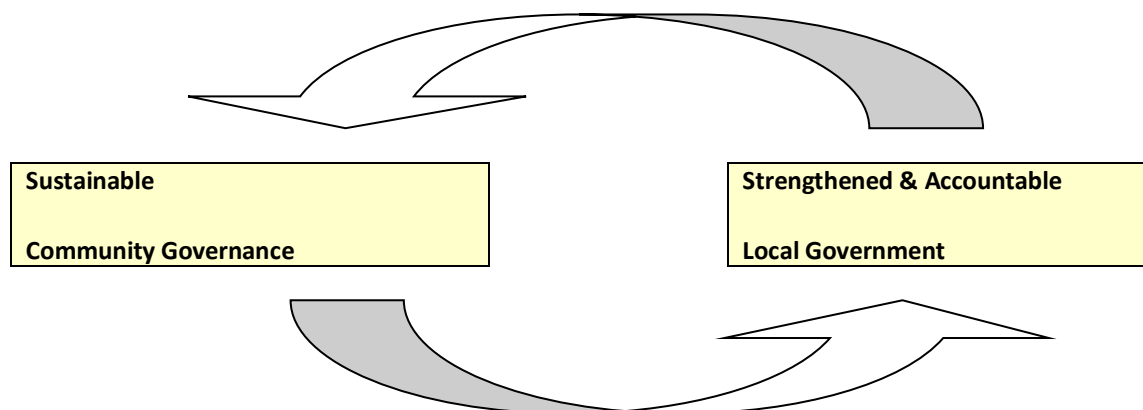

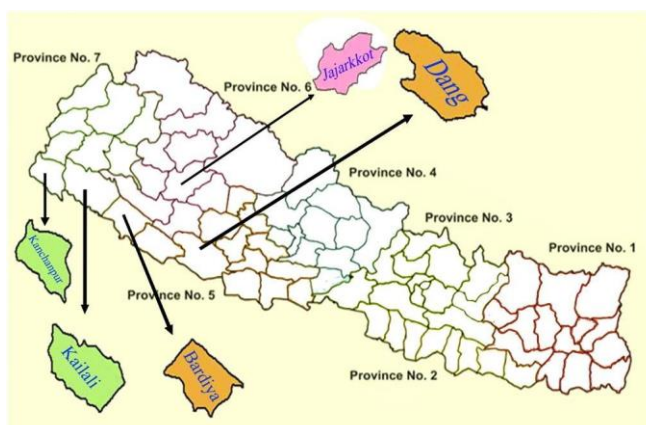*Figure 3 Sustainable Community Governance & Accountable Government*

Figure 4: Map of working areas

The NCESLG project mobilised **10 Community Based Networking Organisations** (emerged from the facilitation of SS) from 5 different target districts: Bardiya, Kanchanpur, Kailali, Jajarkot and Dang, which in turn span three Provinces in South West Nepal: Sudurpashim, Lumbini and Karnali. It also included some training and advocacy work at national level.

At its core, NCESLG is a belief in the significance of Civil Society working with and supporting emerging Federal and Local Government structures, as a way to sustainably support

Nepali civil society. **No other NGO in Nepal is working in this way** and it provides an opportunity to demonstrate, in collaboration with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, the way forward for other parts of Nepal

The Impact of COVID 19 in Nepal and on Sahakarmi Samaj

In 2021 COVID 19 again affected Nepal and the work of Sahakarmi Samaj. The second wave of the infection saw increased fatalities and again exposed the vulnerability of the health system.

In Nepal, from 3rd January 2020 to 13th December 2021, there were 824,535 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 11,557 deaths, reported to WHO. As of 5th December 2021 a total of 19,157,444 vaccine doses have been administered.

 Since Nepal's economic ecosystem is reliant on remittances, tourism, agriculture and imports, the secondary impact of the pandemic has been huge, taking a serious toll on marginalised communities and their capacity to influence the decision making process.

There was an early ease up of lockdown this time around compared to last year resulting in sufficient time for SS to accomplish its targets in the field.

SS worked with local and provincial government to support local preparedness to face the escalating rate of infection and respond to the socio-economic impact of the enduring lockdown on the most vulnerable in society. Similarly, SS along with the CGs and its networks also acted as a watchdog looking out for the possibility of irregularities and corruption amidst the pandemic.

Figure 5. JSBS of Bardiya conducting an awareness campaign against COVID-19 stressing the use of masks, vaccination and check-ups. (15 December 2021)

Although the COVID 19 pandemic has brought about tremendous challenges it has also demonstrated the sustainability and resilience of SS's work, in that many community organisations were able to continue their local work, even in the absence of SS's field staff being able to visit due to lockdown and the work from home/station policy. ZOOM continued to be a vital online tool in 2021,facilitating frequent international meetings and contact between the learning and funding partners.

Figure 6. Zoom Meeting between staff from SS, SHEP, Irish Aid & Independent evaluator (October 4, 2021)

Political Developments in Nepal

With the start of 2021, Nepal witnessed political instability as there were two attempts by the then Prime Minister of the majority party to dissolve the parliament , thus fuelling the existing conflict within and outside political parties. This led to the formation of a coalition government which subsequently led to change in the government at provincial level as well. Currently almost all political parties have held their respective general conventions and local level elections will be held within four months from now.

Minor Incompletion of Proposed Programme

The pandemic caused a necessary shift in priorities for two activities that were due to be implemented by local government. Because of the need to focus on curbing the infection and channelling resources into COVID management local governments were unable to carry-out the following activities, despite their prior commitment:

1. Act. 2.2.3 Ward level/ local government bodies have applied the score card methods
2. Act. 2.3.3 Local government information pocket books produced and distributed

Both these activities are non-budgetary activities from the SS side. However, the SS team is confident that the score card method will be applied by the ward level/local government bodies in future as the method was well taken on by them as a tool for ensuring mutual accountability between service seekers and service providers. Furthermore, the positive outcomes in service delivery and responsiveness from local government means there is better trust and communication between them and the local communities.
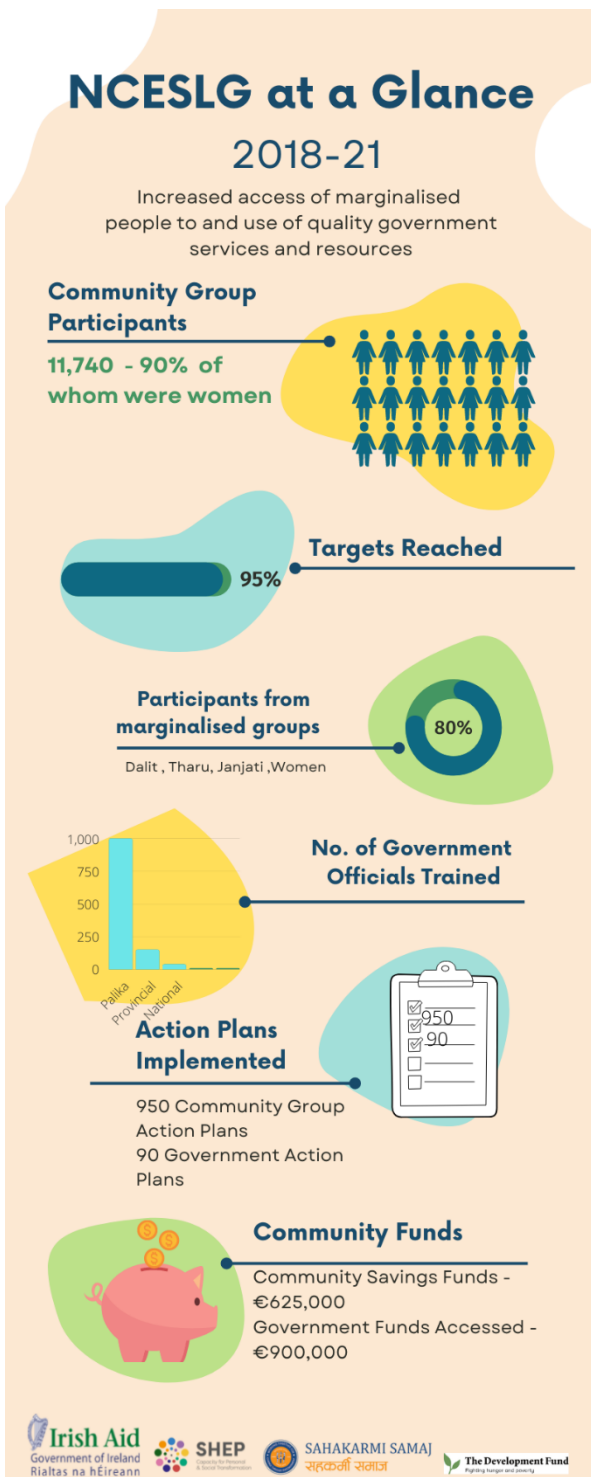Similarly, not producing and distributing local government information pocket books will not have an effect on the local communities in regard to accessing information as there are now proper and adequate information dissemination and distribution mechanisms put in place by the local governments as a result of SS's work with them.

Figure 7 Community Group Meeting

2. Project Progress

2.1 Summary of Progress (since Inception of Project)

NCESLG at a Glance
2018-21

Increased access of marginalised people to and use of quality government services and resources

Community Group Participants

11,740 - 90% of whom were women

Targets Reached
95%

Participants from marginalised groups
80%
Dalit , Tharu, Janjati ,Women

No. of Government Officials Trained
1,000 / 750 / 500 / 250 / 0
Palika / Provincial / National

Action Plans Implemented
950
90
950 Community Group Action Plans
90 Government Action Plans

Community Funds
Community Savings Funds - €625,000
Government Funds Accessed - €900,000

Irish Aid — Government of Ireland — Rialtas na hÉireann   SHEP   SAHAKARMI SAMAJ   The Development Fund — Fighting hunger and poverty

The COVID 19 pandemic had a huge impact on the delivery of the programme but despite this challenge, significant progress was made in the final year of the project.

SHEP and Sahakarmi are delighted by what was achieved particularly considering mobility restrictions and other obstacles caused by the COVID 19 context. Targets were met; some targets were exceeded. This experience has assured SS and SHEP that the programme design was effective and that it has made a difference. The project team put in a strong performance to achieve the proposed targets and indicators.

Throughout 2021 Sahakarmi Samaj continued to work at both government and grassroots level. With the former the emphasis was on strengthening government's focus on capacity building and policy advocacy and with the latter it was on continuing to empower communities to organise and build capacity via the FEST approach as well as engage with local government.

The project aimed to operate at three levels of governance: National, Provincial, and Municipal/Palika (municipality/rural municipality and ward)[2]. Due to the pandemic and ongoing political developments, engagement with local and provincial government was somewhat limited. However, the activities at the Municipality and Ward level activities went ahead largely as planned. The progress of the work is outlined below with reference to the Objectives and Outputs tabled in the Results Framework (Annex 1).

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[2] In Nepalese, Municipalities both urban and rural are referred to as Palikas

Progress on Planned Activities (Objectives & Outputs 1 & 2 as per Annex 1)

Objective 1 of the NCESLG as outlined in the Results Framework is:

Increased awareness, capacity and engagement with local government of 10 Community Based Network Organisations, 64 Management Committees and 515 Community Groups, especially marginalised members, to claim their rights to government services and resources.

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Figure 8. Interaction programme with members of CBNOs on leadership and advocacy strategy

The results of Objective 1 for 2021 were as follows:

Output 1.1 Strengthen Capacity to Lobby & Influence Local Government

 All targets were reached for this output, involving 10 CBNOs and a total of 2959 individuals, who took up orientation and education programmes on local government structures, advocacy and lobbying and leadership and also carried out lobby and advocacy events to influence government. Participants came from 250 different Community Groups for leadership training and events on topics such as: Domestic Violence, Personal Hygiene, Drugs Awareness and COVID, as well as to celebrate International Women's Day. Three quarters of these participants came from marginalised groups: Women, Dalit, Tharu & Janajati.

Figure 9 Chairperson of KSBK handing a proposal to the Social Development Minister of Sudurpaschim Province during his monitoring visit to Beldandi.

Output 1.2 CBNOs have established linkages with new local government structure

Due to COVID 19 the project team actually **surpassed targets in relation to these linkages** as Community Based Network Organisations and Community Groups were in constant communication with the local and provincial government in order to assist them with the proceedings of lockdown such as: awareness raising campaigns, mask production and distribution, monitoring cases and taking account of economic returnees from neighbouring nations. 22 joint meetings were held between CBNOs and local government and government representatives and staff participated in 45 Community Group meetings.

Links were strengthened due to the 10 multi stakeholder meetings and the distribution to 450 government and non-government organisations of the community newsletter "Dehat Ki Chirage" (The Light of the Village). In addition, 300 copies of SS's Annual Report were also distributed to various stakeholders.

Figure 10. The Annual Report of SS

Figure 11. Community newsletter 'Dehat ki Chirag'-" The light of village"

Output 1.3 Community Group members increased knowledge about the new local government structure and how to claim their rights

All these interventions exceeded their target in 2021 and CG members were oriented on the Local Government Act 2074 and on local government structures and procedures, as well as being trained in Leadership, Advocacy and Lobbying. Almost 300 CG members took part, 78% of whom came from the marginalised groups of society.

Figure 12. Score Card conducted at Gauriganga Municipality in the presence of community members and representatives of local government. (5 December 2021)

Objective 2 of the NCESLG as outlined in the Results Framework is:

Local Government Procedures & Working Practices of 7 Rural Municipalities and 75 Ward Levels are socially inclusive and accountable to marginalised individuals and families and their needs.

The targets of Objective 2 were achieved with the exception of two activities which were massively impacted by the COVID crisis due to Lockdown restrictions and the extra pressures on government officials. This also slightly reduced from 90 to 80 the number of local government representatives who were able to participate. That said the progress in relation to government accountability and social inclusion has still been very high and SS's work in this regard has led to greater co-operation between government and local communities in their response to the crisis, as demonstrated by the more equitable COVID relief distribution.

 The results of Output 2 for 2021 were as follows:

Output 2.1 Local Government representatives are aware about People Centred Development

80 government representatives (target 90) were trained in People Centred Development (PCD) and 75% (target 70%)of local governments have since developed socially inclusive action plans, as evidenced by the recent resource allocation process and the participation of communities in different interactions and committees.

Figure. 13 Representatives and staff of Gauriganga Municipality participating in a 'T'[3] exercise during the PCD workshop. (11-12 August 2021)

Output 2.2 Local Government Accountability Mechanism is strengthened

Participation in Accountability training was very high (80 participants from a target of 90) even though local and ward government staff and representatives were unable to participate to the extent that would have been

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[3] 'T' exercise is an exercise where the participant had to arrange different cut size of pieces of paper to make a T alphabet.

possible in normal circumstances. 21 (target 19) Accountability Action Plans were developed and applied, and widespread commitment made to the community scorecard method (CSC).[4]

Output 2.3 Increased Information Sharing by local government with communities including marginalised people

The key progress made here is that the target of developing nineteen Action Plans for Information Documentation and Dissemination was achieved. This means that for 75% of all local government bodies policy information is now published in gazettes and websites and therefore accessible to the general public. All the Palikas have information systems in place and are using multiple modes of communication with citizens e.g. notice boards, citizen charter, Facebook Page, website, direct contact with registered groups.

This has positively impacted 85% of CGs (target 65%) enabling them to keep up to date with information and disseminate it to their marginalised members. Unfortunately, as in year 2, the pandemic meant that the information pocketbooks could not be printed.

Updated Websites of the Local Government of working area of NCESLG project

Welcome to Rajapur Municipality, Office of Municipal Executive, Bardiya | Rajapur Municipality, Office of Municipal Executive, Bardiya
Krishnapur Municipality | Government of Nepal
https://www.punarbasmun.gov.np/en
Bheri Municipality Office | Office of the Municipal Executive, Khalanga, Jajarkot, Karnali Province, Nepal (bherimalikamun.gov.np)
https://www.dangisharanmun.gov.np
https://www.gaurigangamun.gov.np

Box 1. List of updated websites of the Palikas of working areas.

Output 2.4 Central and Provincial government informed about People Centred Development, local government practices, and impacts

All three information sharing meetings went ahead between Sahakarmi Samaj and Provincial Ministries in Karnali, Lumbini and Suduharpashim, as well as the two planned field visits to project districts. A large sharing meeting was held in Dhangadi with other stakeholders and representatives from different I/NGOs, members of provincial assembly, leaders of local government, community leaders and media.

*"We assumed that we were including all the people into the development process but today this workshop has made me realise that we were still lacking in some aspect to reach the poorest and most marginalised groups in terms of bringing their core issues into the decision making process. The workshop has helped us sensitise our thoughts and will lead our actions to be more accountable and just."- **Padam Bahadur Air- Ward Chairperson Gauriganga-10** (PCD workshop– Gauriganga Municipality)*

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[4] The Community Score Card (CSC) is a participatory, community-based monitoring and evaluation tool that enables citizens and representatives/staff of local government to assess the quality of public services such as a health centre, schools, water supply and other services.

Project Work Area (District & Municipality) – with corresponding CBNOs

SN	CBNOs Name	District	Municipality/Rural Municipality(R.M)	Wards	Comments
1.	Jaldeep Bikash Samaj	Bardiya	Rajapur Municipality	4,6,7,8,9.10	Supported
			Geruwa R.M	6	Supported
2	Jansakti Blkash Samaj	Bardiya	Badhayatal R.M	3,4,6,7,8,9	Supported
			Gulariya Municipality	11 & 12	Supported
3.	Chetana Bikash Samaj	Kailali	Kailari R.M	1,2,3,4,5,7,8	Supported
4.	Janjagriti Bikash Samaj	Kanchanpur	Mahakali Municipalty	1-10	Supported
5.	Kanchan Samudaik Bikash Kendra	Kanchanpur	Beldadi R.M	1-5	Supported
			Belauri Municipality	8-9	Supported
6.	Purnbas Bikash Manch	Kanchanpur	Purnbas Municipality	1 to 11	Supported
			Belauri Municipality	1,3	Supported
7	Shreejanshil Samaj	Kanchanpur	Suklaphata Municipality	2,3,4,11,12	Supported
			Krishanpur Municipality	1,2,3	Supported
			Laljhadi R.M	4	Supported
8	Samabeshi Bikash Samaj	Kailali	Gauriganga Municipality	1 to 11	Supported
9	Samridhi Bikash Samaj	Dang	Dangisharan R.M	1to 7	Supported (under DF, Norway co-funding)
10	Bheri Samudayik Bikash Manch	Jajarkot	Bheri Municipality	6 to 12	Supported (under DF, Norway co-funding)

2.2. How the principle of partnership has been applied

The two main examples of how the principle of partnership has been applied are:

i)   this is an international learning partnership between SHEP and Sahakarmi Samaj

ii) the focus of the programme is on supporting a partnership approach between local government and local civil society.

Figure 14. Community Group Meeting attended by government official, SHEP staff and independent evaluator December 2021

2.2.1   How the principle of participation has been applied

This is a highly participative project. Examples include:

- supporting the participation of vulnerable communities using the FEST approach in five districts
- supporting the inclusion of ethnic minority groups in community groups and leadership positions
- supporting participation of local government personnel in capacity building initiatives which will be customized to their needs.

2.2.2   How the principle of sustainability has been applied

The project:

- uses the FEST model to support civil society at local level. This is a tried and tested sustainable model of development work.
- creates awareness and builds capacity at local government level, embedding sustainable change into the system

- has proved how sustainable it is, even in crisis. During the pandemic local government and civil societies partnered to deliver Lockdown measures and relief and carried on their work even when field visits from the main Sahakarmi Samaj team were impossible.

2.2.3   How the principle of capacity building has been applied

There are several dimensions to capacity building in this project:

- Capacity building of Sahakarmi through SHEP support
- continuing to build the capacity of communities
- building capacity of their representative Civil Society Organisations
- building capacity of local government structures to engage with and support civil society organisations.
- building the capacity of Sahakarmi to model this type of approach and to disseminate it.

Figure 15. Participants discussing the 3 questions put forth during the hybrid in person /Zoom multi-stakeholder meeting at Dhangadi (5 December 2021

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3. Analysis of Project Results

3.1   Descriptive analysis of the results achieved as per the agreed Results Framework.

Whilst there is obvious overlap between the two main objectives of NCESLG it is useful to group the results and analysis under two main headings referring to Objective 1 and Objective 2.

Objective 1: Working at Grassroots Community Level (Outputs 1.1, 1.2. 1.3)

Objective 1 is about empowering communities to organise and engage with local government in order to access rights and resources. As a **direct result of the learning from Year 1** and **Year 2** of the NCESLG project, Sahakarmi Samaj put even greater emphasis on resourcing community organisations at all levels to:

- increase the number of meetings with local government (output 1.2)
- strengthen their capacity in Leadership skills & Advocacy (outputs 1.1 & 1.3)
- prepare Action Plans for local development projects and issues (1.1 &1.3)
- orientate & educate on health issues (including COVID) & social inclusion (outputs 1.1 & 1.3)

During this reporting period, Sahakarmi supported **515 Communities Groups (CGs)** across all 5 districts, a total of **3,811 members** (Female: 3,391, Male: 420)*. each representing a separate household.*

Sahakarmi Supported Main Committees & Community Groups (July 2018-December 2021)

District	CBNOs	No of MCs	No. of CGs	Group Members Female	Male	Total
Kanchanpur	Janajagriti Bikash Samaj	19	160	3341	346	3687
	Kanchan Samudayik Bikash Kendra					
	Shreenjanshil Samaj					
	Punarbas Bikash Manch					
Kailali	Chetana Bikash Samaj	13	129	2663	322	2985
	Samaj Bikash Samaj					
Bardiya	Jana Shakti Bikash Samaj	12	84	1549	226	1775
	Jaldeep Bikash Samaj					
Dang	Samridhi Bikash Samaj	7	52	978	156	1134
Jajarkot	Bheri Samaudayik Bikash Manch	13	96	1863	296	2159
Total		64	515	10394	1346	11740

Supporting 'Community Based Network Organisations (CBNOs)

Community-Based Networking Organisations (CBNOs) are important civil society structures which have emerged from the work of Sahakarmi and the FEST[5] approach. They give voice to the members of the community groups they represent and are now a key vehicle for interaction between civil society and the new structures of local government at local and regional level. During this period **all 10 CBNOs were supported**, including the two newly formed CBNOs in Jajarkot and Dang.

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[5] Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation (FEST) is the Development approach that has underpinned Sahakarmi's work for the past 25 years.
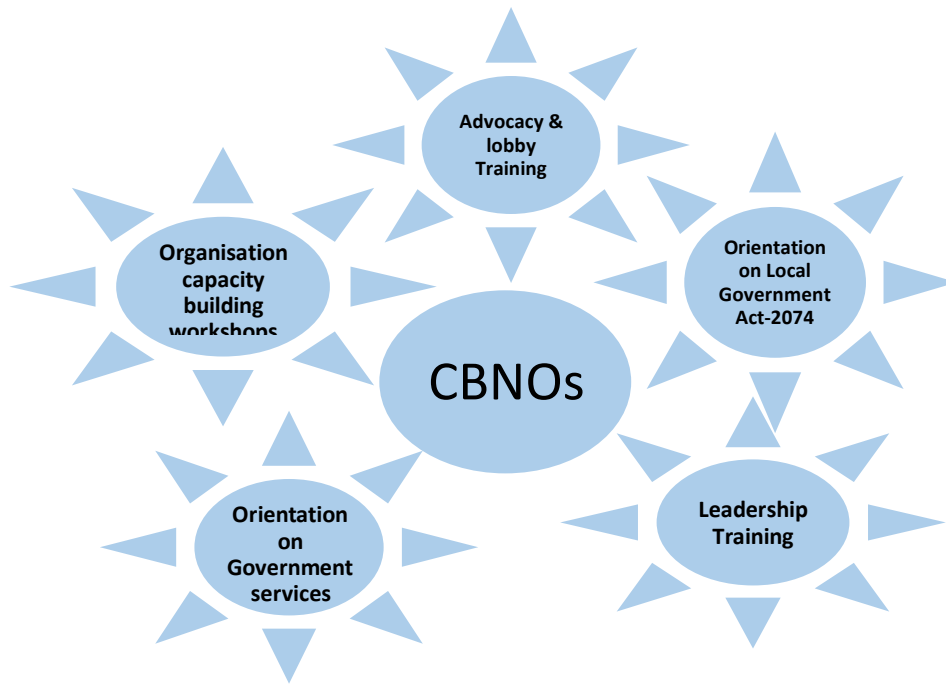
Figure 16. SS's Support to CBNOs 2020

Based on a key aspect of the FEST approach, SS doesn't provide any material or financial resources to communities (CBNOs, MCs and CGs), but facilitates communities to mobilise and optimise the use of local and external resources in order to achieve their goals. This decreases dependency trends by building strong linkages and enabling communities to hold local government to account and identify local resources for sustainable local development.

Core Training Programme Methodology (Outputs 1.1 & 1.3)

In order to strengthen capacity in leadership skills and advocacy, community groups from the 10 CBNOs were provided with on-site ongoing support to their own community facilitators. This up-skilling takes place annually through a series of trainings which have been specially designed by Sahakarmi Samaj as an 'exit strategy' through which communities can take responsibility for their own progress and development.
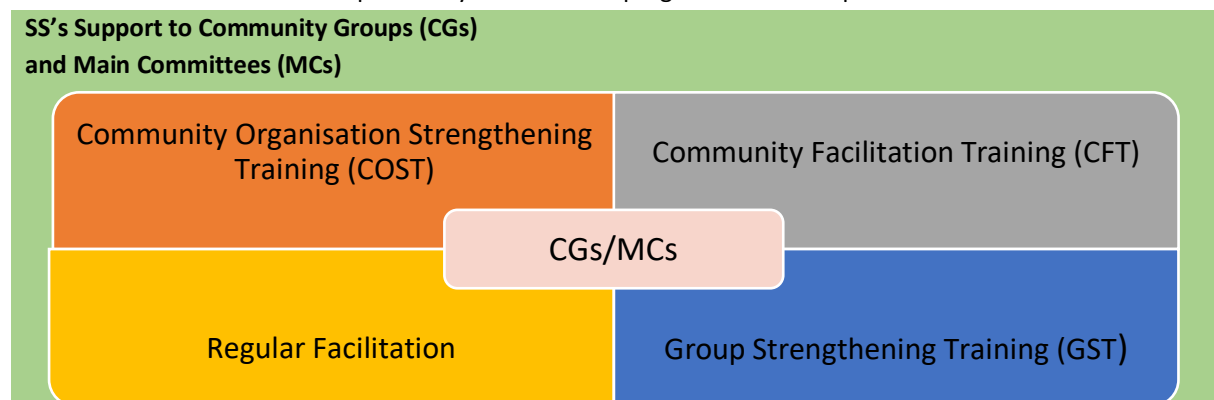

Figure 17 Core Trainings for CGs & MCs

Figure 18. Placards used during a campaign conducted at Beldandi RM (They include: Create Environment for Unity, Reconciliation; Government has to be accountable and responsive towards its citizens; Timely availability of seeds, manures etc.) (21 November 2021)

Analysis of Group Membership (Long Term Outcome 1 and Objectives 1 & 2)

Sahakarmi Samaj's overall aim includes greater social inclusion of marginalised groups and their access to resources. These have been identified specifically as: All women, Dalit people and Janajati people.

In 2021, 78% of participants came from these marginalised communities whilst the remaining 22% came from other communities targeted by the project. Most of the community groups which were formed are being led by women (78%). As regards ethnicity, 50% are led by Janajati and 14% by Dalit.
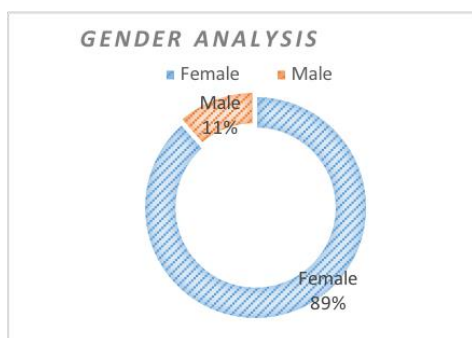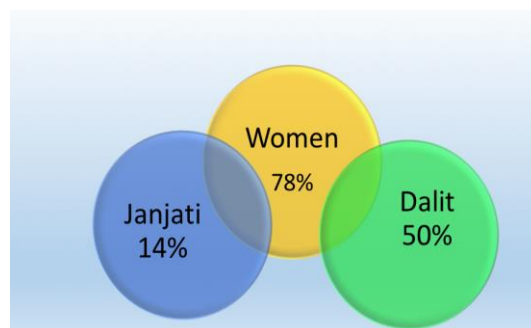

Figure 19. Community Group Members by Gender   *Figure 20. % of Leaders from Marginalised Groups*

The Impact & Results of Sahakarmi Samaj's Community Interventions (Objective 1)

Overall, the project in 2021 has had a very strong impact especially considering the pandemic and its consequences on marginalised members of Community Groups (CGs). Almost all activities went ahead as planned and were on target despite COVID-19 disrupting the local government planning process and preventing members of some CGs from taking part in it directly. In response, many CGs demonstrated their sustainability by putting into practice what they had learned through Sahakarmi Samaj about active citizenship and local democracy and went about organising and planning projects independently.

Below are specific examples of the impact on communities of Sahakarmi's NCESLG project in 2021**,** covering four areas**:** Access to Resources, Social Inclusion, Financial Independence, and Capacity Building.

Access to Resources & Income Generation

Increasing numbers of community groups started to demand greater support and resources from the local government and provincial government. Groups from Kailali, Kanchanpur and Bardiya succeeded in gaining access to substantial resources from local and provincial government. A total of NPR. 5710,000 (€ 41,679) was accessed by community groups from Provincial and Local government and other stakeholders.
Community Groups submitted their own locally generated project plan proposals to local government on topics including:

- Income generation activities for women and marginalised people
- Agriculture: e.g., cold storage for preservation of produce; spice industry; seeds
- Adult Literacy classes

Social Inclusion of Marginalised Groups & Education

CGs focused on 'Strengthening Togetherness' between people from different castes, ethnic groups, age groups, cultural beliefs, particularly in the wake of the pandemic. Frequent and regular meetings were held, and activities included:

- COVID awareness campaigns, relief distribution and taking account of returnees from neighbouring countries,
- Campaigning and advocacy on social harmony, inclusion, right to education and health,
- Education & Awareness on social issues, taboos, stereotypes such as: untouchability and social isolation of marginalised members, Chaupadhi (isolation of menstruating women), child marriage & superstitious practices (e.g. witchcraft)

These counter-active informative sessions strengthened communities' overall sense of knowledge and power and their enthusiasm for promoting social harmony**,** and also led to a significant decrease in commonly felt feelings of helplessness and victimisation.

Increased Financial Independence & Local Development through Community Saving

515 Community Groups covered by the project were able to decrease their dependency on external financial institutions and money lenders by collectively saving NPR 85,753,308 (€622,826). The bulk of this has been put towards income generation projects - supporting 321 members during the pandemic - and local development works such as:

- Farming (mushroom; seasonal and non-seasonal vegetable)
- Livestock farming
- Helping Individuals increase their income levels
- Cleaning of roads, houses, temples

- Sanitation: drains, drinking water
- Repair and maintenance of : electricity poles, roads, canal, meeting house
- Tree planting and collective paddy harvesting

Groups experiencing difficulties were trained in fund management along with regular support provided by facilitators from Sahakarmi.

Two CBNOs (KSBK & JJBS) connected with the TCP Global Fund[6] and were each able to acquire €3,558 for income generation activities. Similarly, three CBNOs (CBS, SBS, Sirjanshil Samaj) were supported with a revolving fund of €2,119 each. This fund was raised by SHEP as a COVID relief fund to support marginalised members of the communities who were hit hard by the impact of COVID.

Capacity Building & Action Planning

Throughout the year, SS focused on capacity building of CGs in order to increase their skills, confidence and knowledge of how to seek local resources. A total of 437 facilitation sessions took place with participation of 6,555 CG members (Female: 5,750; Male: 805). Most resulted in an Action Plan, 97% of which have already been implemented, directly benefiting 5,760 households.

The Action Plans focused on:
- Health Promotion: COVID-19 preventive measures; health and sanitation; alcoholism
- Social & cultural issues: gender-based discrimination; polygamy; addressing the concerns of marginalised members
- Socio - economic issues: group savings, basic life necessities, lack of income generating opportunities.
- Advocacy and lobby visits to local government

Objective 2: Working at Government Level (Outputs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4)

Objective 2 is about bridging the gap between government and the people through capacity building at local, municipal, provincial and national levels of government.

In 2021 Sahakarmi Samaj facilitated meetings and trained government officials and representatives at all levels. The goal was to help them to become more accountable, transparent and socially inclusive in their working practices and thus better equipped to work in partnership with local communities and marginalised people.

Figure 21 Interaction with local government accountability mechanism, Beldandi Rural Municipality (July 2021)

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[6] TCP Global Fund is provided by the TCP Global a non-profit organisation with a dual mission: 1) provide affordable loans to impoverished entrepreneurs and 2) establish a steady revenue stream for grassroots organisations working effectively to serve marginalised communities.

Capacity Building through Training at Ward & Municipality Level (Outputs 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)

240 government elected representatives and government officials (F: 66, M: 174) as well as other agencies and NGOs, took part in Sahakarmi's three major types of capacity building training:

- People Centred Development Workshops
- Training on Accountability Mechanism (including Action Planning & Scorecard Method)
- Training on Documentation and Dissemination of Information

Promoting Engagement between Civil Society and Government at Provincial & National Level (Output 2.4)

- 3 out of 3 information sharing meetings were held between Sahakarmi Samaj and provincial government representatives in Karnali, Lumbini & Suduharpism Province
- 2 out of 2 annual field visits to project areas by relevant Provincial Ministry
- Multi stakeholder meeting planned in Kathmandu was conducted in Dhangadi to share information about SS's approach and its contribution towards institutionalisation of governance at all the three tiers of government.

Impact & Results of Sahakarmi's Work at Government Level (Objective 2)

- ➢ All Palikas have committed to creating enough space for civic engagement in the planning and decision-making processes

- ➢ 22 joint meetings (Kanchanpur: 7, Kailali:7, Bardiya:5) were held between local government, CBNOs and other local stakeholders resulting in direct dialogue between these development actors.

- ➢ 19 action plans for accountability were developed by local government bodies

- ➢ 12 Palikas of Kanchanpur, Kailali, Badriya, Dang and Jajarkot appointed an Information Officer to ensure effective deliverance of citizens' right to information

- ➢ All the 12 Palikas have established a Citizen Charter and a Complaint Box to collect grievances

- ➢ All the Palikas have websites and social media handles to disseminate information regarding the services and resources available to the general public

- ➢ Bheri Municipality of Jajarkot extended their collaboration with Sahakarmi with the support of NPR. 2.5 Million.

- ➢ Elected public representatives participated in 77 Community Groups' (CGs) regular meetings in their respective localities.

➢ Local government supported 57 different community initiatives for income generation, agriculture and health

Anchala Chaudhary
Deputy Mayor
Gauriganga Municipality,
Kailali

"I was a part of a People Centred Development workshop organised by Sahakarmi Samaj. I feel the workshop was meaningful and significantly contributed to building a common understanding on the development process among the representatives and staff of our municipality. The workshop has sensitised us to be pro-public and tailor a development process that is people centred where no one is left behind and special attention is given to those who are far from mainstream governance.
I have come across many community groups emerged through SS's facilitation that have been capacitated and organised. This has led to good relations between citizens and representatives of local government through regular dialogue and interaction."

3.2   Higher level analysis of trends and emerging long-term results.

Long Term Outcome 1: Community social inclusion and respect for all marginalised individuals and family members

Under LT 1.1: The high number of people from marginalised communities who are now in a leadership position reflects the fact that social inclusion enhanced during the year. Similarly, an understanding of social inclusion significantly increased among the members of communities. Community Groups (CGs) in particular put emphasis on accepting people of different caste, religion and gender and started to sit, eat and work together. Discrimination based on caste significantly decreased and learning and sharing culture within the community developed. Members from marginalised families are now being recognized, valued and listened to in their communities. All this has promoted social harmony and resulted in an increased sense of self-respect, and decreased feelings of helplessness and victimisation amongst marginalised people.

Under LT 1.2: The ratio of women holding decision making positions has increased and the membership of community groups as per caste and ethnicity is: 47% Janajati (includes Tharu and other ethnic minority groups); 20% Dalit, and 33% Brahmin/Kshetri.

Community Group Members According to Caste

Dalit 20%
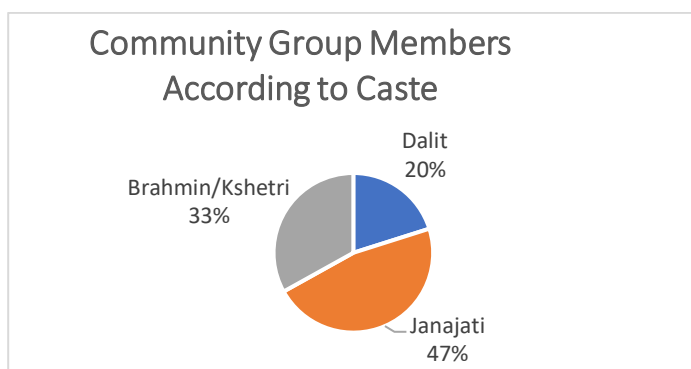Brahmin/Kshetri 33%
Janajati 47%

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Figure 22. Members from different CGs belonging to KSBK CBNO and of diverse ethnicity come together to participate in an advocacy campaign. (21 November, 2021)

Under LT 1.3: Both Dalits and Tharus (the indigenous community of inner Terai) who were once mistreated and undermined, have now gained respect and acceptance and are now considered an integral part of the wider community. Through discussions and interactions during Community Group meetings, the issues of discrimination, untouchability and other issues of unfairness have been identified and action plans carried out to minimize them. People from diverse castes and ethnic backgrounds sit together and discuss common issues on a regular basis which fosters social harmony among Dalits/Tharus and non-Dalit communities. For example, a celebration of Teej in Rana Tharu community was attended by people from all different ethnic backgrounds with Dalits and non-Dalits celebrating with hand in hand dancing, singing and eating cuisine prepared by Rana Tharus.

Long Term Outcome 2: Inclusive and responsive local government action provides marginalised people with meaningful participation, citizens rights and just resource allocation.

Under LT 2.1: Frequent coordination and collaboration with the local government by the Community Groups and Sahakarmi increased the participation of Community Group members in the local government planning process this year (*Due to the pandemic, the planning process did not take place as usual, but the community groups were encouraged by the local and provincial government to propose plans and make requests for their needs to be heard*). *67% of these requests came from Marginalised Communities* (Dalits, Tharu, Janajatis).

Under LT 2.2: 43% of the funds released by local and provincial government were for income generation support, 42% for agriculture support, 15% for Health and Education and the remaining for other purposes (e.g., Construction and Awareness campaign). All the beneficiaries were community group members with a particular focus on marginalised members.

Under LT 2.3: Palikas started to put in place mechanisms to listen to people in the community and they recognise the positive changes that the Community Groups have brought about in their communities. The wards and Palikas now welcome the general public to their offices to listen to their requests and are happy

to provide finances where they can. They now seek the participation of local people in the Local Planning Processes and have begun to invite Community Group representatives to interaction meetings.

3.3 How the results are contributing towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Long term outcome 1 has contributed towards four Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 1(No Poverty) ,SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) & SDG 17 (Partnership for the Goals)

Long Term outcome 2 has contributed towards two Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 1, SDG 10 & SDG 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions)

3.4 The specific contribution of the project to results within the context of shifts in government policy and/or the work of other actors.

This NCESLG project represents a timely response to the new government structures introduced at local level.

The Government of Nepal passed its 15th 5-Year Plan (2077-2080 BS) which sets out eight major long-term strategies, two of which are relevant to the project:

- *Poverty Alleviation and building a just society with social and economic equality*

- *Strengthening public services, balancing provincial relationship and promoting national unity*

The Government is supported by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, the European Union (EU), the Government of Norway, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the United Nations to implement the Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP). This aims to build institutional, organisational and individual capacity at all levels of government, with a special focus on provincial and local level in order to promote local development and enhance economic prosperity.

This NCESLG project directly supports this national policy position.

3.5 Evidence of improved capacity within implementing partner organisations.

In Sahakarmi, the improved capacity can be seen in the following ways: increased capacity for results based management; increased capacity to design evaluation strategy; development of new policies (e.g., procurement and anti-corruption); and the website is updated along with regular newsfeeds on social media (Facebook).

In addition, Sahakarmi's capacity is now at a high level and its reputation in Nepal is growing as it has been successfully leading the consortium of local and international NGOs funded by the EU.

Examples of Sahakarmi's capacity building work with their local partners include:

- Organisational Capacity Strengthening: All the existing 10 CBNOs (Baridya: 2; Kanchnapur: 4; Kailali-2; Dang:1; & Jajarkot:1) have now reviewed bi-law and other policies and formulated new policies that were not in place.

- Human Resource Capacity Strengthening: The CBNOs now have their own staff and these staff were supported throughout the reporting period by Sahakarmi. Sahakarmi conducted workshops to support capacity of the staff and also conducted Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) to support them during the year. The Organisational Facilitators (OF) conduct the OCA which assesses the status of CBNO and MCs and CGs affiliated to the CBNO. The MCs and CGs are categorized as per their performance and prioritized accordingly for support in the future.

- Monitoring and Evaluation Capacity Built: M&E officer took an M&E online course conducted by Future Generation University in Virginia, USA, which has helped improve monitoring and evaluation of the project.

3.6 Information on any capacity gaps noted within implementing partner organisations

- An Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) was conducted in Sahakarmi and the main capacity gap now is the inclusion of more women in the senior management team. SS is actively seeking ways of overcoming the difficulty of recruiting and retaining senior female staff in a regional area.
- Although CBNOs have a high level of engagement with local government they still need more strengthening on policy advocacy strategies and tools and to get accustomed to such tools to support their initiatives at a higher level.

3.7 Examples of information sharing.

Information sharing by the CBNOs is done through the following means:

- Monthly meetings are conducted in Community Groups, Main Committees and CBNOs. Information that needs to be shared is shared within these meetings. It is two-way process: CBNO via MC via Community Groups and ii) Community Groups via MC via CBNO. CBNOs now prepare annual reports and present them during their general assembly. They also now submit their annual report to the relevant local government.
- The national federation of CBNOs- Rastriya Samudayok Sanstha Bikasha Kendra (RSSBK) conducted a national level meeting at Kohalpur (30 December, 2021) to share their learnings and experiences along with the latest developments among CBNOs. Similarly, RSSBK raised concerns about various community issues at provincial and national level.

3.8 Examples of community participation.

Sahakarmi believes in collective action and its FEST approach focuses on encouraging the formation of participation in Community Groups and networking organisations (Main Committees & CBNOs). These groups and networking organisations are the forum for enabling marginalised people to advance their interests by engaging in collective action to increase access to resources and to influence local government planning processes, so that they can identify the best way to access local resources for their own sustainability.

11,740 members (Female: 10,394, Male: 1,346) in the working communities engaged in community groups formed in 5 districts. 89% are female and 78% are from marginalised communities. 95% of the women are in key decision-making position in the community groups.

Out of 437 session facilitated, 392 sessions resulted in an Action Plan. Almost all of these (97%) have already been implemented, directly benefiting 5,760 households.

As it is fundamental to the FEST approach, 409 CODE[7] facilitation workshops were organised on various generative themes like: COVID-19, Government services process, Polygamy, gender-based discrimination,

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[7] CODE may be a play, a mime, a role-play, a picture, a photo, a puppet show, a story, a song, a game, somebody's personal history, a field visit ...anything which brings the problem into sharp focus. The code does not provide any answers. In the course of group discussion, the facilitator steers the group through the 6 steps of problem analysis described by Freire

alcoholism, diarrhoea, health and sanitation, livelihood, lack of income generation, difficulties in access to marketplace and school due to road etc.

Many of the Action Plans were based on volunteerism by the community using local resources. For example, JSBS and JBS of Bardiya collaborated with stakeholders such as: local police, health units, and members of communities to run campaigns on awareness about the use of masks and timely vaccination. This initiative helped curb the spread of virus infection in the community.

Despite the pandemic and subsequent local context, 67% of direct demands for needs and resources to local and provincial government came from marginalised communities enabling them access to a total fund of NPR. 5710000 (€ 41,679). This was used to support income generation activities for economic recovery post pandemic

3.9 Data collection processes carried out during the reporting period

The following are the key elements of data collection processes by Sahakarmi staff:

- Identification of Key Informant Interviewers (KIIs) from government sector. Enumerators were selected from the CBNOs facilitators; they were trained and cleared about what was really needed.
- Focus Group Discussion – with all CBNOs
- Attendance sheets, training reports, meeting minutes.
- Photography and film
- Observation was also used as a tool during data collection process.
- Secondary Data was also reviewed when collecting government information.
- The Impact Assessment survey – a sample of 100 people (10 from each CBNO) were asked about the impact of the project on their lives
- Project review workshop with field staff at end of project December 2021

3.10 Reflections on the data collection process
The data collection systems are improving year on year. The COVID 19 Pandemic during the first 6 months made the collection of data a bit challenging. However, all the data was well collected and analysed. An impact assessment questionnaire sent to a sample group of 100 people (10 from each CBNO) also gave important feedback. It indicated that participating in the community groups had led to positive change for people by improving their confidence to approach government and speak in public and improving their family income, health and children's education (see Annex 9 for Questionnaire responses and results).

4. Lesson Learning

4.1 Summary of Lessons Learned

Considering the national context of Corona virus, the lockdown for six-months and the political situation, there has been a lot of learning in this reporting period.

- **Regular interaction and networking of CBNOs is crucial**: the project engages with 10 CBNOs from 5 districts and it was evident that regular interaction and networking of these community based organisations was beneficial for them as it provided a platform for learning and sharing and replication of best practices. This is further forged through their affiliation to the local government / CBNO initiative Rastriya Samudayok Sanstha Bikasha Kendra (RSSBK).

- **Updating and continued learning of Community Facilitators:** Mentoring and capacity building of the facilitators is vital for effective implementation of the FEST approach along with enhancing their knowledge and expertise in particular thematic issues, such as local governance, Human Rights and citizen participation in the context of related project.

- **Collaboration for matching fund** is crucial as it can enable us to expand and replicate our approach to broader communities. In the implementation of the NCESLG project, Development Fund Norway has joined as the collaborating partner providing a matching fund (30%) which has made is possible for us to implement the FEST approach in Dang. This also enhances the coherence of the project by better coordination and harmonisation of efforts with other development partners. However, special consideration should be taken while approaching any funder for collaboration in regard to the coherence, compatibility and complementarity.

- **There is significant buy-In by Local Government**: The vibrant engagement of local government authorities and CBNOs during the pandemic indicates how the former values the role of the latter in organising the communities and how they are integral part of development. As a result, there is an increased number of interactions and local government participation in the meetings of community groups and CBNOs. Local Government personnel are taking greater ownership and collaborating with community groups. All of this is helping community groups to gain access to government resources. It is evident how regular dialogue and interaction between Local Government structures and Civil Society structures (Community Groups. Main Committees and especially CBNOs) is helping improve the sustainability of Community Groups through the creation and availability of funds and resources for community use.

- **Supporting CBNOs with advocacy strategy and lobby tactics is crucial:** CBNOs need a planned advocacy and lobby strategy as well as tools and tactics to influence local and provincial government. They require conceptual clarity and knowledge about the power structure to be able to prepare their strategy accordingly. In 2021, Sahakarmi trained 263 members of community groups in a basic knowledge of advocacy and lobby. Further training and support is required to assist marginalised communities to organise themselves.

- **More engagement with men is still needed:**

The project is directly engaging with women more than men: out of the total members, 89% are women. This is good in the sense of promoting women, but stronger participation by men would be helpful. Due to economic conditions, many male members of the communities work in India and in the Gulf States and because of this the number of male residents in the communities is on the low side and tends to be younger and older men. What is more, traditional roles in society mean that women are more available to participate in community organisation. Men's involvement is needed, particularly to implement Action Plans which focus on infrastructure construction and need heavy work inputs.

One positive noticeable trend is that male economic migrants who returned home due to COVID are finding greater income generating opportunities - due to the projects started by women – and this is encouraging them to stay and become more involved themselves. Men are also benefitting directly from women's participation through improved economic and social conditions in the household and

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are seeing the value of the CGs. It is hoped these factors will have a knock-on effect on men's civic engagement over time.

4.2   Highlight the most significant lesson captured

The most significant lesson captured during the project is that even more consideration should be given to the question of how to scale up the social and political engagement of marginalised people, whilst balancing this with the time consuming demands imposed on them by their day to day survival and economic needs.

4.3 Unintended consequences of the project

The unintended consequence of the project is related to the unexpected arrival of a pandemic and how resilient the project work has been despite this and despite a long period of lock down. The focus of the programme has been on the interface between local communities and new local government structures: this past year has shown how the support provided has enabled communities to act together in the face of great crisis and to demonstrate their emerging capacity to engage with local government. The pandemic has been an unexpected sustainability test and the approach of the programme stands up well.

A second unintended consequence has been the way that CGs and CBNOs have applied their new found advocacy and lobbying skills to acquire a substantial amount of resources from Provincial government. This represents a significant leap forward given that the main focus of this aspect of the programme was on engagement at local rather than provincial government level.

4.4. The most significant challenge.

The most significant challenge was the lockdown enforced by the government to curb the infection of the virus. There were three aspects to this:

I.   As the previous year, corona virus was a major challenge faced by the project. The lockdown enforced by the government made it difficult to implement the field activities in the first 6 months.

II.   A key challenge with the local government was the intra and inter political party conflict and political uncertainty that developed as a result of the dissolution of parliament. What is more, all the political parties were busy conducting their respective party's general conventions which made it harder for them to find time to engage with the project.

III. Mobilisation of CBNO board members– who are all volunteers - was an issue due to time constraints placed on them by their personal and professional priorities. It is a challenge to get them involved in additional project activities.

4.5   Outline any barriers to sustainability.

The key barrier to sustainability is that this process of civil society supporting local government (to support sustainable local development) will take considerable time. One or two years is not enough. In many cases the engagement (awareness raising, training capacity building, and the creation of new spaces/structures) will need to last a number of years to be fully embedded and sustained.

4.6. How the learning is being incorporated into the ongoing implementation of the project

The Annual workshop review (December 2021) on the effectiveness of the project over the period of 3 years – including indings from the eternal Evaluation - supported the incorporation of important learning from the project cycle into the design of the next project proposal.

At the Partnership level – we are putting greater emphasis on project monitoring and strengthening communication between SHEP and Sahakarmi. The pandemic prompted the partners to meet more frequently than previous years via Zoom. A total of 9 ZOOM meetings were held between SHEP and SS and some these meetings were attended by representatives from Irish Aid. We are continuing this more regular mode of communication and value the exchange of constructive feedback and suggestions regarding programme related procedures and financial updates.

In Sahakarmi- Following the learning and experience from implementing the project over the project period, there needs to be further efforts made towards engaging at a higher level with the State government and building on the progress made with the provincial government. Similarly, SS has emphasised the need to always plan a contingency for the on-gong COVID context and other exceptional events, for example those caused by Climate Change or political disruption.

At community level - we will encourage Community Groups, Main Committees and CBNOs to build on the rapport built with the local government and further engage with provincial government.

At CBNO level – we will put greater emphasis on mentoring, facilitation and coaching to the members of the CBNOs to strengthen their capacity in leadership skills to improve advocacy and lobbying for access on government resources. We will also emphasise supporting and facilitating CBNOs to align their strategic plans with the government's development plan. We will put more emphasis on supporting CBNOs to identify possible areas for further collaboration and coordination with Local Government. We also believe it is important to scale up community organising and mobilisation of advocacy policy at all three tiers of government.

4.7. Initiatives for information sharing/sharing lessons with a wider audience.

In this project extra time and effort was been put into sharing the lessons with a wider audience. Dissemination of the FEST model to a wider audience was a key objective. Multi stakeholder meetings were held , journal articles published and findings and feedback from multi-stakeholders was shared at the Social Audit and AGM of Sahakarmi Samaj. Best practices, challenges and the way forward in terms of institutionalising the federal system were shared during the event.

4.8. Planned or undertaken audits, evaluations or formal reviews.
The annual audit takes place during August and September of every year. as a mandatory compliance of SS. During 2021 as planned an independent evaluation was carried out by Dr Amina Singh of Kathmandu University. Similarly, internal monitoring and evaluation was more frequent than in year 2. The Organisational Facilitators conducted quarterly monitoring in the field and the Centre Officer conducted semi-annual monitoring and evaluation visits. The planned quarterly M&E visits were affected by the lockdown. As a result of the learning from year 2, greater emphasis was given to gathering qualitative data such as case studies and an impact assessment survey.

4.9. Examples of complaints and feedback processes. Reference the number of complaints received.

An example of a feedback process in Sahakarmi is the use of end of course/training evaluation forms. These are collected and processed, and any changes are made accordingly.

With regard to complaints, most are received informally e.g. people approach staff who are visiting the community, or visit Sahakarmi's office in search of assistance or resolution to their problems or grievances. Likewise, there is an official website and a social media handle to put complaints and suggestions. Sahakarmi is also working to put in place a more formalised system of soliciting, receiving, processing and responding to the feedback and complaints it receives. These systems will provide a safe, non-threatening and easily accessible mechanism that enables even the most powerless to make a suggestion or complaint.

Current policies that support complaint and feedback collection include: an Anti-corruption Policy and a Whistle Blowing policy. SS has placed a complaint box in the executive team office, Kohalpur. In this reporting period, no complaint was received.

Both SHEP and Sahakarmi Samaj have worked to strengthen accountability systems. Improved policies and procedures have been in place now from the start of this project to support enhanced accountability. In general the system has worked well throughout the project cycle. All the CBNOs supported by Sahakarmi have formulated organisational operational and governance policies and systematised their transparency and accountability. Further engagement took place with the CBNOs to internalise and institutionalise these systems and policies. This was the identified issue and learning of Year 1 and Year 2 and has been successfully addressed in the final year.

Figure 22. Interaction meeting on FEST and Community Governance. (14 September, 2021, Kohalpur)

5. Governance and Organisational Updates

5.1 How the Irish office has influenced project delivery?

The SHEP team has supported project delivery in the following ways:

- Technical support, especially in the area of improving monitoring & evaluation processes in line with the recommendations of the Feedback from Year 2 Report
- Support for planning of the programme for the lockdown period
- Capacity Building, especially in the areas of financial reporting with more regular liaison around periodic reporting.
- Monitoring Visit December 2021 – including project review, relationship building, stakeholder and partnership meetings
- Capacity Building around Narrative Reporting & Project Design: this was a particular focus of the monitoring visit in December 2021.
- Capacity Building in the area of results-based management system
- Capacity Building for funding applications and dissemination of project achievement to international audience (collaborative writing and editing of journal article)

These supports were provided throughout the project period through communications and regular online meetings.The International Learning Partnership Co-Ordinator - who is the primary liaison person with the Sahakarmi team - conducted a very successful monitoring visit in December 2021. It was planned originally to conduct a monitoring visit in late 2020/early 2021 but this had to be postponed due to the Pandemic.

5.2 Significant changes/developments at organisational level

In SHEP, there have been some significant developments at organisational level. The organisation developed a new strategic plan, as well as a modernisation plan supported by the Perry & Sandy Massie Foundation. Towards the end of 2022 we agreed the taking over of the delivery of the Ag Eisteacht Training Programme

Sahakarmi has completed the building of an in-house training centre that has a capacity to accommodate about 50 participants at a time. This was a long dreamed of project which has finally become a reality. The project is part of the sustainability plan for Sahakarmi as an organisation.

5.3 How compliance with best practice in governance has been measured.

SHEP is a signatory to The Wheel's Code of Good Governance and our compliance is reviewed annually.

As every year Sahakarmi has renewed its membership with the district administration office and affiliates with social welfare council as per government compliances and regulations of the Government of Nepal. In 2021, Sahakarmi also completed a financial audit as required by Nepal government.

5.4 Actions undertaken in relation to adaptation to the current regulatory environment in Ireland.

SHEP is a signatory to The Wheel's Code of Good Governance. The main changes in 2021 with regard to regulatory compliance were completing for the first time an annual compliance self-audit for Charity Regulator

5.5 Work carried out to strengthen Monitoring and Evaluation.
- Technical support, especially in the area of improving monitoring & evaluation processes in line with the recommendations of the Feedback from Year 2 Report
- Capacity Building, especially in the areas of results-based management system, including focus on disaggregated data.

- Regular M & E meetings
- SHEP Monitoring Visit to Nepal

5.6 Changes in the composition and/or oversight of the board.

SHEP appointed a new Chairperson (Carrie Shanahan).In SHEP there were no other changes to officers of the board of management during 2021. The 21st General Assembly of Sahakarmi Samaj was held at Surkhet on 21 December 2021.

5.7 Changes in staffing, particularly in relation to senior management and/or staffing of the project.

In SHEP there were no senior management staff changes to staffing. Regarding the International Partnership Abigail Joffe is now employed on a part-time contract basis as the International Learning Partnership Co-Ordinator and works closely with the Sahakarmi team, The SHEP Project Director Jim Sheehan, and SHEP's Finance Manager, Aleksandra Rogulska.

In Sahakarmi there has been no change in the staffing during Year 3 (see details in the table below) with seven full-time staff and three part-time staff working towards attaining the goal of the project. The development work is overseen by The Programme Coordinator who co-ordinates a team of three Organisational Development Facilitators and the Monitoring and Documentation Officer. Supervision and support is by the Executive Director.

NCESLG Programme Team (December 2021)

Staff Member	Position	FT/PT	Comment
Ammar Bahadur Air	Executive Director	(35%)	*Reduced from 50%*
Champha Singh Bhandari	Programme Coordinator	100%	
Sher Bahadur Khatri	Organisational Development Facilitator	100%	
Min Bahadur Kadara	Organisational Development Facilitator	100%	
Kamala Oli	Organisational Development Facilitator	100%	
Pankaj Shahi	Monitoring & Documentation Officer	100%	
Lal Bahadur Malla	Administration and Finance Officer	25%	*Reduced from 40%*
Sunita Thapa	Junior Admin and Finance Officer	100%	
Chinta Lal Acharya	Office Helper	100%	

5.8 Changes to the management of the flow of funds from your organisation to other parts of the organisation and/or to on-granted partners.

From the SHEP Perspective, we have improved our process for the flow of funds to Sahakarmi Samaj. This is overseen by our Finance Manager.

5.9 Changes to policies.

In SHEP no changes were made to our international partnership polices (a review was completed in 2017/8). In 2020 we spent a good deal of time reviewing our Vision and Mission Statements, and our core values statements and in 2021 these new statements are now on the SHEP website. There was no policy change in Sahakarmi Samaj during Year 3.

5.10 Procurement processes

Sahakarmi has updated a robust procurement process with the procurement policy and team in place. This has contributed to transparency and accountability.

5.11 Financial projections for the coming reporting period

As this is the third and final year of this project funding cycle there are no financial projections for the coming year .

5.12 Steps being undertaken to ensure financial stability.

SHEP is a financially stable organisation as it is permanently funded by the HSE though Section 39 funding. SHEP continues to diversify its funding base, securing more funders for its work in Ireland and in 2021 SHEP secured an increased private donation which allowed us to maintain two additional . Additional funding has also come on stream as a result of the new Relationship in Practice project coming under our wing , and a once off additional HSE grant
The pandemic created additional challenges for SHEP during 2021, but we secured significant additional funding from the Irish Government's COVID Stability Fund, which helped to defray loss of revenue and to cover the increased costs of delivering programmes.

Sahakarmi is continuing to diversify its funding base and submitted proposals to various funders during Year 3. Likewise, discussions about how to finance a likely gap in funding in coming years (following the completion of this programme) has already started.

6. Actions Taken in Response to Irish Aid Feedback

This was the third phase of a three-year project that was developed in response to feedback from previous Irish Aid funded projects, feedback from the last independent evaluation (2016), and extensive planning discussions. We look forward to receiving feedback from Irish Aid on this report and incorporating it into our planning for new project design.

6.1   Actions taken or planned in response to feedback from Irish Aid

As set out above, we worked hard during 2021 with Sahakarmi to improve Project Monitoring Systems and there has been very good progress in this regard. Additional supports and meetings were needed during 2021 to achieve this. The pandemic made this work more difficult, but very good progress has been made nonetheless during the year using on-line meetings to do this capacity building work.

6.2   Progress on the **achievement of benchmarks** as set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Benchmarks	Action
Consider the implementation of the project in its organisational risk register and include likely risks and mitigation strategies, particularly in relation to on-granting to partner in country.	We will further update the SHEP risk register in 2022 with a focus on likely risks and mitigation strategies.
Strengthen Results-based Management System, particularly in terms of generation and use of disaggregated data.	Through regular online meetings, quarterly reviews and the December Monitoring Visit we worked with Sahakarmi Samaj on an ongoing basis to strengthen the results based monitoring system.

7. Conclusion

The aim of this three year project has been to increase the access of marginalised people to quality government services and resources, in the context of the newly federalised state of Nepal. This has been done using Sahakarmi Samaj's *Facilitation for Empowerment and Social Transformation* method which places people at the core of their own Development process, equipping them with the knowledge and resources to make collective change happen for themselves.

Reflecting on the project as a whole it is clear that significant progress has been made in regard to this aim, measurable by the consistent reaching of annual targets as outlined in the Results Framework and in this report and also by the qualitative evidence collected in the form of observation of community group and government level activities, conversations with grassroots community group activists, local officials and case studies. All this has been possible even with the unforeseen constraints imposed by the ongoing Covid pandemic and after a difficult start in Year 1 which led to a 6 month no-cost extension of the programme.

The working partnership between SHEP and Sahakarmi has further strengthened over the three years. More frequent meetings on Zoom and closer communication meant that challenges could be addressed as they occurred and capacity has been built, particularly in relation to Monitoring and Evaluation, Narrative Reporting and Financial Management.

Engagement with the project has been high both at grassroots and government level and the numbers speak for themselves : 11,740 community group members participated between 2018 – 21; over 10,000 of these were women, most of whom are now occupying leadership roles and 78% of people involved at community group level were from marginalised groups such as Tharu, Dalit and Janajati. In 2021 eighty government staff and officials were trained in various aspects of people centred development, accountability and information dissemination and as a result accountability systems and Action Plans are in place, strong relationships with the community have been forged and current citizens information is being effectively disseminated across web sites, noticeboards and face to face. At a national and international level the methods and learnings of the project have been shared with numerous stakeholders with a view to replication.

We know that positive change has happened when members of different castes can be observed eating and working together and sharing in decision making and when in 2021 alone 384 Community Group Action Plans have been implemented, directly benefitting almost 6,000 households. Also in 2021, marginalised community members directly accessed funds equivalent to over €41,000 from local and provincial government, which they put towards income generation projects.

The COVID pandemic had the unexpected consequence of proving the resilience of both the programme and the community group infrastructure that exists as a result of Sahakarmi Samaj's facilitation. It also taught us to be flexible and creative – like organising a hybrid stakeholder sharing meeting in Dhangadi– and to plan contingency strategies for 2021 and as we moved into the next phase of project design.

Three years is a short time frame in which to enact an ambitious project such as this and to engender real and lasting change in civil society takes much longer, particularly in a country where the federal democratic structure is so new. What we do know is that even after this short time and within the context of the COVID pandemic NCESLG has made a real difference to people's lives at many levels. It has increased people's participation in society and improved their social and economic conditions by mobilising them as citizens who know their rights. Equally it has enabled many government staff and officials to perform their duties more responsibly, more consciously and more effectively. SHEP and Sahakarmi have gained significant new knowledge and by identifying areas for improvement are now in a good position to plan further interventions that build on the ground work laid down in this project.

Both 2020 and 2021 have been extraordinary, and there has been important organisational learning for both SHEP and Sahakarmi. The challenges of the Pandemic have not gone away and will feed in to our planning for the next round of work. SHEP and Sahakarmi Samaj express our appreciation to Irish Aid for their support for this work and acknowledge also the important role played by Development Fund Norway. This project is an excellent example of international collaboration among different partners to deliver a progressive and innovative project which has improved the lives of very vulnerable and marginalised communities in South West Nepal.

Two short case studies which personalise and demonstrate the impact of the NCESLG project and how it connects with Irish Aid's High-Level Outcomes are available in Annex 11