Leave No One Behind

Nepal Civil Society Perspective on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2022

Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Nepal SDGs Forum

(National Secretariat: NGO Federation of Nepal)

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Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

APFSD	Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
BBC	Beyond Beijing Committee
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CGD	Citizen Generated Data
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
ESP	Education Sector Plan
FCHV	Female Community Health Volunteer
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GSBPM	Generic Statistics Business Process Model
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HLPF	High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
ICSC	International Civil Society Centre
INGO	International Non-governmental Organizations
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoHP	Ministry of Health and Population
NER	Net Enrollment Rate
NPC	National Planning Commission
ODA	Official Development Assistance
P4R	Partners for Review
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SSDP	School Sector Development Plan
UN	United Nations
UN DESA	UN Department of Social Affairs
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNSD	United Nations Statistics Division
VNRs	Voluntary National Reviews
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
YAN	Youth Advocacy Nepal

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS REPORT

The United Nations High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) is a forum that meets annually under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). This Forum is the leading United Nations platform on sustainable development and has a central role in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level. A follow-up and review mechanism, Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), are presented annually during the HLPF.

The 2030 Agenda encourages member states to "conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven". Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are expected to serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the HLPF. VNRs are to be voluntary, state-led, undertaken by both developed and developing countries, and shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) presented its first VNR report in 2017 and the second in 2020 at the HLPF. The NPC has a leadership role in institutionalizing a robust monitoring. The contributions of the civil society sector are recognized in both reports. Civil society plays an innovative role in complementing official reports and helps address the agenda of Leave no one behind (LNOB). Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Nepal are committed to supporting, contributing and enabling partnerships with the government to accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs.

The Nepal SDG Forum has continuously played a complementary role and creates engagement platform and implements related initiatives. Since its establishment in 2016, Nepal SDG Forum has consistently facilitated civil society engagement on the SDG implementation, localization and monitoring. This Forum brings the multiple stakeholders to one place and makes necessary recommendations to the government. During the year 2020, what

Nepal had VNR, Nepal SDGs Forum prepared a specific report, CSO's Voluntary National Review and submitted it to the government of Nepal. Furthermore, two CSO representatives joined the HLPF as official delegates. This CSO report 2022 is a part of continuous engagement for SDG review in Nepal.

This report covers the analysis of the current situation in Nepal with a specific focus on the Goal 4: Quality Education, Goal 5: Gender Equality, Goal 15: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals, considering the situation brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The selection of the goals is in consideration of this year's focus at the HLPF. The report also highlights the CSOs' initiatives and brings collective recommendations from CSOs to the government and stakeholders.

COVID-19 Pandemic and SDGs

There were ongoing challenges in achieving SDGs, such as mainstreaming at the subnational level, resource mobilization, data management, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation before COVID-19 emerged. These challenges are not only further piled up with an outbreak of the COVID-19 in Nepal but have also shaken the country's entire health system, education system and economy. From the start of the first lockdown on March 24, 2020, and May 30, 2022, 11,952 people died due to various COVID-19 virus variants.

The pandemic has emerged as an obstacle to achieving the SDGs. It has a multidimensional and complex impact on society. The pandemic has increased inequalities between and within countries, which has many negative implications for vulnerable and marginalized groups and pushes huge masses at risk of being further left behind. It has given rise to new problems and challenges, which have been the immediate priorities. Digital needs increased during the pandemic but simultaneously worsened the digital divide. Efforts and resources are being diverted to the emergency needs, health system

strengthening in an emergency, and purchasing COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19 brought a new situation demanding a response and recovery plan that required the country to put enormous resources into dealing with the multidimensional impacts of the pandemic. It got massive challenges in every sector, demanding a new strategy to return to the normal situation in the country's overall macroeconomic situation. COVID-19 has also demonstrated the critical role of the local governments, which recommends effective bottom-up policies and decision-making processes and strengthening SDG localization.

A necessary revision of the SDGs roadmap is required while considering the adverse impact of the COVID-19 and plan to accelerate the government's effort to achieve SDGs in Nepal. It is also essential to bring the SDGs implementation plan to the same momentum before the COVID-19 era, adapting to the new reality and building back better.

Major Gaps, Challenges and Recommendations to Realize the SDGs

Gaps and Challenges	Recommendations
There is an adverse effect of COVID-19 in achieving a target of SDGs 4: Quality Education; therefore requires an accelerated effort to meet targets. The education system of Nepal is massively controlled by private sector, creating a hierarchy and inaccessibility to quality education for all. In addition, the provincial government's budget allocation in the education sector does not seem to be encouraging. Only the Sudurpashchim Province have allocated a budget of 10.20% for the education sector, while all other provinces' budget has not exceeded 5%. Nepal still needs to make an effort to sensitize the objectives of SDGs by educating and empowering the actors on the local levels.	Fundamentals of inclusive education should be reflected in the design and mplementation of education plans to ensure education for all, closing the disparity brought about by COVID-19. The federal government should take a collaborative approach with the provincial and local governments in designing a framework that could exclusively cater to the particular province's educational needs and reduce hierarchy and inaccessibility to quality education for all. The investment in the education sector needs to be increased, allocating at least 20% to education from the national budget.

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Gaps and Challenges	Recommendations
It is a worrying downward trend seen with the second local level elections. The total number of female elected Mayor/Chair was 18 in 2017, which reached 25 in 2022, it is progressive, but in the case of Deputy Mayor/Vice-chair, it dropped from 700 to 564. The overall impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have adversely affected progress toward gender equality, and violence against women and girls has intensified. Women have played a critical role in response to COVID-19 and the vaccination campaign. Despite the substantial role played by women in the COVID-19 crisis, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions.	It is essential to take immediate action to increase women's representation in leadership. The downward trend in female leadership in local government needs to be corrected in the next election, encouraging more female leaders both as Mayor/Chair and Ward Chair. The COVID-19 crisis has presented an opportunity to re-shape and rebuild systems, laws, policies and institutions to advance gender equality. While developing laws, policies and programs, the distinct impact on women must be addressed. The governments at all levels must collaborate with CSOs and the private sector to prepare effective strategies to control violence against women and promote gender equality and safety.

15 LIFE ON LAND

Gaps and Challenges	Recommendations
The COVID-19 pandemic has alerted us that nature is more powerful than humans, and threatening biodiversity ultimately threatens human survival. Inadequate consideration of the environment in development planning and implementation has contributed to environmental challenges, which are increasing. The environmental issues and challenges are associated with ongoing land degradation, depleting forest resources, unplanned urban development, discharge of untreated effluents and disposal of wastes and so forth. The environmental issues are interconnected with other different SDGs, so it is essential to take action immediately to achieve targets in SDG 15, life on land.	Life on land means protecting the earth's ecosystems, sustainable management of forests, and halting land degradation and biodiversity loss. Therefore, large or small, immediate or long term, the interventions should focus on conservation, restoring terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, ending deforestation and restoring degraded forests, conserving mountain ecosystems, protecting biodiversity and natural habitats and fighting against illegal trade and poaching. The right to a clean environment is one of the fundamental human rights defined in the constitution of Nepal. Promoting and internalizing environmental human rights is essential as equal to social, economic and political rights.

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Gaps and Challenges	Recommendations
The COVID-19 pandemic further hits the multilateral and international partnerships that were already shaky. The strengthened global collaboration is a key to achieving the targets of SDGs. International investments and support are needed to ensure innovative technological development, fair trade and market access, especially for developing countries like Nepal. Nepal is the least developed country and is scheduled to upgrade to a developing country by 2026. Accelerating efforts during the transition phase is essential, and support from the global community is vital in this journey. There are challenges in localizing SDGs at the subnational level; a strengthened, effective and accelerated mechanism for localization of the SDGs is essential to achieve SDGs and minimize the disparity among people.	It is essential to increase the absorptive capacity of foreign aid, considering the increased need for allocation to the health sector and going back to the momentum of the pre-COVID-19 situation. Pro-poor and inclusive macro-economic policies must be adopted to ensure no one is left behind. Macroeconomic policies need to be revisited in order to make them coherent with the financing needs of the SDGs. The collaboration within the country as well as at regional and global levels by the government institutions and the non-governmental sector must be further strengthened. The challenges of localizing SDGs at the sub-national level need special attention and a robust monitoring framework.

CONTEXT

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations member states in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests (UN Office for Sustainable Development, 2022).

The SDGs are the result of decades of work by UN member countries and the UN. The Earth Summit in Rio de Janerio, Brazil in June 1992 adopted Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan of action to build a global partnership for sustainable development to improve human lives and protect the environment. The elaboration of eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to reduce extreme poverty by 2015 is the significant declaration unanimously adopted by the Millennium Declaration at the Millennium Summit in September 2000 at UN Headquarters in New York. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, Member States adopted the outcome document "The Future We Want" in which they decided, inter alia, to launch a process to develop a set of SDGs to build upon the MDGs and to establish the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (UN Office for Sustainable Development, 2022).

2015 was a landmark year for multilateralism and international policy shaping, with the adoption of several major agreements and 17 goals under the umbrella of Sustainable Development Goals. In January 2015, the UN General Assembly began the negotiation process on the post-2015 development agenda. The process culminated in the subsequent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, with 17 SDGs at its core, at the UN Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015.

Leave No One Behind

Leaving no one behind is the central transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda, a rights-based framework that represents the unequivocal commitment of all United Nations Member States to eradicate poverty in all its forms, end discrimination and exclusion, and reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities including to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation (United Nations Sustainable Development Group, 2019). Identifying and reaching the LNOB requires disaggregated data and qualitative analysis to determine who is being excluded or discriminated against, how and why, and who is experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and inequalities. It entails identifying unjust, avoidable or extreme disparities in outcomes and opportunities and patterns of discrimination in law, policies and practices. The aim to leave no one behind corrects a severe omission of the Millennium Development Goals: an understanding that focusing on averages when setting development goals can mask serious problems. LNOB is a priority in SDGs as SDGs are not just an expansion of MDGs in terms of several Goals and Targets; it seeks to address issues and challenges faced by marginalized groups. LNOB is both an absolute and a relational concept. Policy-makers must consider absolute and relative deprivations in identifying the target group for intervention and measuring progress.

In the context of Nepal, overall and holistic progress and growth would not be enough and acceptable until 'leave no one behind' is realized at all levels. The marginalized, disadvantaged and vulnerable people and communities must be identified and acknowledged. When focusing the furthest behind, Dalits and the people in

extreme poverty must be considered for all the relevant targets. Children, women, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, senior citizens, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants need to be considered as target populations, and it is essential to make sure that they benefit more from the interventions.

Nepal's engagement with SDGs

Nepal has shown commitment to achieving the SDGs. The SDG Status and Roadmap: 2016-2030 by the NPC illustrates the stages for the implementation of the SDGs, including phases such as 1) identification, 2) instruments, 3) investment, and 4) institutions. The Roadmap also provides the estimates of costing and financial strategy, the overall framework for tracking progress, and the details in each goal and target supported by the monitoring framework. Nepals' engagement and commitment to SDGs are assured by mainstreaming SDGs in the national planning process, the 14th and 15th Plan. The 15th Plan (2019/20–2023/24) is anchored on a long-term development vision reflected in the slogan 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali'. The vision is to eradicate multidimensional poverty, attain the SDGs, reach the level of a middle-income country by 2030, and achieve all round prosperity and happiness by 2043 (National Planning Commission, 2020).

NPC has prepared model planning guidelines for the provincial and local levels and monitoring and evaluation guidelines for the provincial level. The SDG indicators are adapted to Nepal's context adding additional indicators in all goals except goal 14: Life below water. In terms of the data, the classification of indicators by the availability of data are categorized in 3 tiers, tier one (clarity, standard methodology, regularly produced); tier two (clarity, standard methodology, not regularly produced); and tier three (no standard methodology, being developed, no data). Out of the total number of indicators, only 35 per cent were available on a regular periodic basis, 55 per cent were available through surveys, etc., but were not regularly produced, and that no data are currently available for the remaining 10 per cent of indicators (National Planning Commission, 2020).

Institutional Mechanisms

The Government of Nepal has set up several institutional mechanisms to implement the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The National Planning Commission (NPC) is the focal government institution. At the apex level, the Steering Committee for Implementation and Monitoring of the SDGs has been established under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. The SDGs Implementation and Monitoring Committee is under the Steering Committee chaired by the NPC Vice-chair. Members of NPC coordinate seven thematic committees to facilitate the preparation of plans, programmes and budgets and follow up and monitor SDGs activities and programmes at more substantive levels. The committees and specific SDG focuses are 1. Coordination Committee (Goal 17), 2. Economic Development Committee (Goals 8, 10 and 12), 3. Agriculture Development and Drinking Water Committee (Goals 1, 2 and 6), 4. Social Development Committee (Goals 3 and 4), 5. Infrastructure Development Committee (Goals 9 and 11), Energy Development and Climate Change Committee (Goals 7, 13 and 15), and 7. Governance and Gender Empowerment Committee (Goals 5 and 16). Besides, the 14-member parliamentary committee on SDGs and Governance is established to raise awareness concerning the SDGs and promote oversight.

Despite the commitment to reaching the SDGs and introducing various structures and systems, implementation followed by effective monitoring is a consistent challenge. Localization and mainstreaming of the national SDGs at the provincial and local levels is challenging; there is a problem related to the data availability and quality. Lack of data, paucity of appropriately disaggregated relevant data, or lack of up-to-date data impose SDG tracking and monitoring limitations. After spending one-third of the SDGs time frame, Nepal has preliminary baseline reports for two provinces by July 2020. The result of the 2021 population census is on the way to being published; it is expected that the census report will address some SDG data gaps. On the other hand, Citizen Generated Data (CGD) is being used by various CSO actors in different forms; such data are helpful for the

government to supplement official data and reinforce the idea of Leave No One Behind. Government can define the quality of such CGD in the context of Nepal, develop standard guidelines and recognize CGDs produ\ced by CSOs that meet standards.

The context has also changed mainly due to the negative impact of COVID-19. A revision of the SDG road map for Nepal is required to consider a new context. Such modification must concentrate on the practical strategy of reaching 'leave no one behind', a 'mantra' of overall SDGs. The latest census data will also help review the country's progress toward SDGs and can bring a more explicit recommendation for accelerating intervention and resources. It shall also help minimize ongoing challenges of data gap and focus on disaggregated data.

Civil Society as Stakeholders

CSOs can take a variety of functions in implementing the SDGs; they can spur government action through persistent advocacy and autonomous monitoring. CSOs have a strong background in working with and for marginalized groups; therefore can direct support in the implementation of the SDGs. The practical implementation of SDGs requires collaborating with different actors and stakeholders, including CSOs. Awareness, mobilization of the actors and their resources, participation and ownership create synergy and effective ways of promoting LNOB. Streamlining efforts from national to local levels requires localization and integration into development plans along with robust monitoring, evaluation and feedback. This arrangement will support the promotion of ownership of the goals and accountability of all actors for sustainable development, as the state alone cannot reach SDG targets. It is essential for a culturally, economically, and geographically diverse and developing country like Nepal to include different social groups in economic, social and political processes and development.

To ensure effective civil society engagement in the implementation process, it is important that involvement not be of a merely informal nature. Civil society should have formal roles, such as through formal consultations on government implementation plans and measures, representation on mechanisms that oversee implementation efforts and formal channels for participation in accountability processes (Dattler, 2016).

The role of civil society in the implementation of SDGs can be illustrated in the following picture but is not limited, where the function starts from the awareness-raising, followed by planning and monitoring, partnership and collaboration, and advocacy and accountability.

Awareness Raising

Identify priority area

Initiate public awareness campaign about SDGs Agenda among CSOs, relevant stakeholders and the general public

Partnership and collaboration

Identify allies at a national level who can support the advocacy

Activate partnerships beyond usual partners and reach out to researchers, international human rights institutions, academics, economists and other networks

Develop and strengthen partnerships among CSOs and work together with the government

Planning and monitoring

- Ask the government where it is with the implementation process
- Volunteer to be on any reference groups or oversight mechanisms
- Develop a plan to promote and monitor the implementation of the SDGs
- Promote Citizen Generated Data (CGD)

Advocacy and accountability

- Advocate for government to report on progress made in a timely and transparent way
- Conduct own research at the national and community level
- Prepare supplementary reports on progress and make recommendations
- Support the establishment of and take part in accountability mechanisms at national, regional and global levels

Nepal follows a federal democratic system which, in principle and practice, requires an enabling environment for CSOs, to recognize the active role of CSOs and consider them as a pivotal partner to SDG implementation. However, civic space is shrinking, and securing resources and recognition is getting complicated. Despite the ongoing and new challenges, Nepalese CSOs have come together to form the "Nepal SDGs Forum", a common platform to build coordinated civil society efforts to contribute to accelerating the SDGs.

Nepal SDGs Forum

Nepal SDGs Forum was established in 2016 as a common platform of thematic federations and networks, CSOs, I/NGOs, private sector, cooperatives, media, UN agencies, bilateral and multilateral development partners and major groups and stakeholders which aspire to contribute to achieving SDGs. Now, more than 50 federations and alliances and over 500 organizations from across the country are members of this joint forum. Nepal SDGs Forum is the civil society platform recognized by the National Steering Committee, Thematic Committees, and Nepal Government's institutional mechanisms for implementing the SDGs. It comprises organizations which have taken their specific responsibilities as Conveners, Co-Conveners, and Major Groups. In addition to the designated Conveners and Co-conveners for each goal, Nepal SDGs Forum

has formed the civil society Major Groups as well as cross-cutting or thematic areas that include: Youths, Women, People with Disabilities, Senior Citizens, Children, Dalit, Indigenous Communities, LGBTIQ, Farmers, Development Partners, Cooperatives, Media, Trade Unions, Private Sectors, Science and Technology. Nepal SDGs Forum welcomes everyone interested in SDGs to join the open platform.

Nepal SDGs Forum aims to accelerate, localize and contribute to achieving SDGs while guided by the principles of leaving no one behind, shared and sustained prosperity, and increased role and participation of civil society. It closely coordinates with National Planning Commission (NPC) and other state and non-state actors. By working under this Forum, various stakeholders aim to coordinate, collaborate and build synergy in influencing and impacting sustainable development. Although different organizations have their priorities and actions, they come together under this forum to create impact, influence policy, coherence, harmonization and develop a shared understanding and voice at the national and international levels. Not only national civil society organizations (CSOs), many INGOs, development partners and UN agencies have been supporting Nepal SDGs Forum, and some are already in the advisory status of this forum.

NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) facilitates the functioning of the Nepal SDGs Forum at

the central and provincial levels. It has been implementing an intervention in the area of SDGs monitoring and implementation. People's Score Card on SDG monitoring, CSOs' report on SDGs, Global Goals Week, SDGs data partnership, multi–stakeholder dialogues, SDGs localizations are some key interventions that Nepal SDGs Forum has been leading.

SDGs Data Partnership

Introduction

A cross-country peer exchange towards a cross-sector data ecosystem for a strengthened SDG monitoring and review was jointly organized by Partners for Review (P4R), The Danish Institute for Human Rights and International Civil Society Centre (ICSC) in 2020. The representatives from the NGO Federation of Nepal, National Planning Commission (NPC), Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) and National Human Rights Council (NHRC), VSO on behalf of Leave No One Behind (LNOB) consortium, Nepal SDGs Forum, Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN) and Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) took part in the learning exchange initiative. The learning has enabled stakeholders in Nepal to reflect, share and learn about the data ecosystem in SDG monitoring.

The SDGs data partnership project was developed and implemented as an outcome of the peer exchange. The overall approach in this initiative was to enhance the quality and recognition of Citizen Generated Data (CGD). This project involved the intervention to raise awareness of the benefits of CGD, generate data, capacity development of youths and promote national dialogue. Furthermore, it aimed to implement the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD) CGD toolkit and share Nepal's experience at the global level.

Citizen Generated Data (CGD)

CGD is citizens' evidence and voice that allow citizens to take control of their evidence and information and use it to exert influence over institutions, monitor issues that directly affect them, and evidence to claim rights and demand change. CGD is collected from civil society or non-state actors. The primary purpose of CGD is to monitor, demand or drive change on issues affecting citizens or their communities, and not the production of official statistics. The CGD approach promotes marginalized communities to claim their rights, supports the government in ensuring LNOB and pursues social accountability.

Achievements

CGD toolkit	SDG 5 National Conference	SDG 16 National Conference	CGD National Discourse	CGD Taining to Youth	Use of Community Score Card

Citizen Generated Data (CGD) Toolkit

The UNSD has drafted Quality Assurance Toolkit to be used by citizen-generated data producers and is piloted in various countries. The toolkit provides a framework to plan and document the process of data collection, processing, analysis and dissemination. The CGD toolkit for Nepal is produced in a data partnership initiative. When CGD ensures standards, it helps CGD producers better communicate the quality of collected data with the official statistical community, helps increase the role of the civil society, and increases the likelihood of the CGD being used to inform policy actions. It is essential to continue the dialogue and revisit the toolkit to promote the concept and approach of CGD.

Overarching quality management

An element to see whether the organization has an overall quality assurance plan, a quality policy, procedures and organizational structures.

Overcoming underlying systemic and institutional obstacles, (especially because marginalized or intersectionally disadvantaged demographic groups are underrepresented)

Overcoming power imbalances (it is difficult to reach targeted groups, and even though they are included, they may remain overshadowed)

These are the eight phases for official data production, as specified by GSBPM (Generic Statistics Business Process Model). They mostly apply to CGD. For each stage, questions are listed to guide CGD producers in their data production and documentation.

1 Specifying needs	2 Design	3 Build	4 Collect
8 Evaluate	7 Disseminate	6 Analyze	5 Process
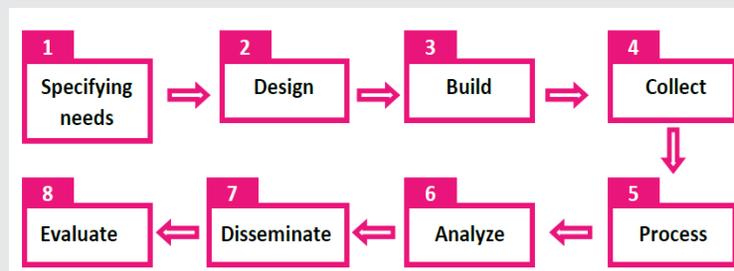
Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs)

Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) form a fundamental part of the 'follow-up and review' framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda encourages countries 'to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels, which are country-led and country-driven', and states that reviews are 'State-led', undertaken by both 'developed and developing countries', and 'shall provide a platform for partnerships, including through the participation of major groups and other relevant stakeholders'. A set of common reporting guidelines and a handbook to prepare the VNRs provided by the UN Department of Social Affairs (UN DESA) seek to support countries in conducting VNRs in line with the guiding principles on the follow-up and review process at all levels. Central to the reviews are the core principles of the 2030 Agenda, such as universality, LNOB, integration, inclusiveness and ownership. The VNRs allow countries to plan appropriate policies, structures and processes, and to revise or introduce new national development plans for achieving the SDGs (Partners for Review, 2021).

Nepal has presented two VNRs until 2022, the first one in 2017 and another in 2020. The second VNR report in year 2020 was disrupted due to COVID-19 pandemic, this disruption was continued for 42 countries that have presented VNR in the year 2021. Undoubtedly, the pandemic has significant implications for sustainable development and has impacted VNR preparations in various ways. The VNR in 2022 at HLPF 2022 will review in-depth Sustainable Development Goals 4 on quality education, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 14 on life below water, Goal 15 on life on land, and Goal 17 on partnerships for the Goals. The Forum will consider the different and particular impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across all SDGs and the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Goals.

Nepal is not a VNR reporting country for the year 2022, but looking at the trend where Nepal has presented 2 VNRs between 5 years from 2015 to 2020, it can be expected that Nepal will share another two to three VNRs by the HLPF of 2030. This speculation can be further supported by the fact that the VNR reporting country every year is more than 43 between 2017 and 2020. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, 42 countries have presented VNR in the year 2021, among them ten countries for the third time. Forty-five countries are presenting VNR in 2022, with two countries presenting for the fourth time. Similarly, 14 countries have shown expression of interest in VNR for 2023 by mid-June 2022, which will increase in the coming days.

This civil society report is aligned with the theme of the HLPF 2022. It has a review and recommendation from the CSOs in Goal

4 on quality education, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 15 on life on land, and Goal 17 on partnerships for the Goals. Impact of the COVID-19 to the SDGs is analyzed to some extent in this report.

Objectives, Methods, Scope and Limitations of the Report

It is expected that the findings and recommendations made in this report are shared among relevant stakeholders in Nepal and the relevant forum in the country and beyond, including the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) and HLPF. The specific objectives of this report are: to

- Develop a joint CSOs' perspective on the progress of SDGs in Nepal;
- Analyze the institutional mechanism, progress, trend and gaps in implementation; and
- Make recommendations for relevant stakeholders

The methodology for preparing the report includes a literature review, multi-stakeholder forum, discussions with relevant stakeholders, a review of an ongoing initiative of the Nepal SDGs Forum, contribution from expert organizations or thematic convenors and co-conveners and dialogues focused under this reporting framework. A participatory approach is followed in content generation and analysis.

While aligning the report to the theme of the HLPF 2022, this report has a review and recommendation only of Goal 4 on quality education, Goal 5 on gender equality, Goal 15 on life on land, and Goal 17 on partnerships for the Goals. The review is done in the qualitative aspect; the report has a quantitative analysis of gaps with data and disaggregation. Meanwhile, where quantitative data is presented, data are mainly of 2019 as the latest progress data for 2022 is not yet available. The new census result with new data may counter some of the arguments provided in this report.

REVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS

Goal 4:

Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Target

4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.

4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.

4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university.

4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.

4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations.

4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy.

4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development

Nepal has made remarkable progress in achieving the SDGs in the last seven years. Still, the unprecedented effect of the COVID-19 pandemic has hit the socio-economic and educational sphere with the possibility of a setback to the progress of SDGs. According to the Constitution of Nepal 2072 (2015), education is a fundamental right, which states that every citizen has the right to free and compulsory education up to the primary level and free education up to the secondary level. Although the Act Relating to Compulsory and Free Education, 2075 (2018) has been formulated in the ethos of the Constitution of Nepal; the federal government has not been able to formulate the Federal Education Act to date. The effort to achieve SDG4 has been made through the new School Education Sector Plan (SESP) (2021-2030). School Sector Development Plan (SSDP) as a sector plan is phasing out in 2023, and the government has drafted Education Sector Plan (2021-2030).

Progress Assessment and Challenges

In ensuring equitable access to education, Nepal has made impressive achievements. Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in both basic education, grade 1-5 and grade 1-8 experienced a slight increase to 97.1% (96.5% in the previous year) and 93.8% (92.7 in the last year) respectively. Gender parity in education has been maintained. The Gender Parity Index (GPI) for the Net Enrolment Rate (NER) remains unchanged from the previous school year 2018-19 at 0.98

at the lower basic level, 0.98 at the upper basic level, 0.98 at the basic level, 1.01 at the secondary level with grades 9-10, 1.03 at the secondary level with grades 11-12, and 1.01 at the secondary level (Grades 9-12). Girls make up 50.3% of secondary level enrolments, the same as the previous year, but have an increased share of 53.1% of higher secondary enrolments (50.7% in the previous year) and 51.3% of overall secondary (grade 9-12) enrolment (50.4% in the previous year). Also, there has been some improvement in share of Dalit students in grade 11-12 with slight increase to 8.7 % in 2019/20 compared to 7% in 2018/19. Similarly, there has been a gradual increment in enrollment from 22 extremely underprivileged *Janajati* groups in 2019/20 with 50,292 lower basic level classes (up from 49,340 in the previous year), upper basic level classes are 18,983 (up from 18,971 in the previous year), secondary level classes are 9,180 (up from 8,745), and secondary level classes are 3,122 (up from 8,745).

Quality education as an elusive concept has become another key concern in education. The facts demonstrate that the quality in terms of children's achievements seems unsatisfactory. The average learning achievement score for grade V English is 57, Nepali is 66, and Math 55 in 2019. However, Education Review Office (2019) highlights that 32 % of primary level children are unable to read and write numbers and cannot do simple mathematical operations, 40% of them are unable to calculate math problems independently, and only 28 % of the children have sufficient knowledge and skills in maths. Thus, an overwhelming majority (72%) primary-level children are unable to achieve the mathematical knowledge and skills as aimed by the curriculum. Similarly, 20% of primary level children are unable to understand the language, 35% of them have minimum understanding, and 45% of them can sufficiently understand Nepali language and have sufficient language skills.

Gaps in SDG4 Implementation

The data shows that many children do not still have access to formal education or complete the cycle of a particular level of education. Adults who are still illiterate are from the marginalized and deprived communities, including *Dalits,*

Janajatis, and religious minorities. In the lower basic level, the percentage of students from Dalit communities has decreased from 20% to 19.5% in 2019/20, but it has remained constant (15.6%) at upper basic level and has again slightly decreased from 12.5 % in 2018/2019 to 12.3 % in grades 9–10 in the 2019/2020 school year as demonstrated in Flash report 2019/20 of MoEST. Likewise enrollment from *Janajati* community plummeted in 2019/20 compared with 2018/19, with 33.7% in lower basic level (34.3 % in 2018/19), 37.6% in upper basic (37.9% in 2018/19), 37.6% in grade 9-20 39.9% in the previous school year) and 38.1 in grades 11-12 (32.1% in 2018/19).

Limitation to cater to the students with disability is also a concern in Nepal where large number of students drop out as they progress through the grades with overall only 16% enrollment (UNESCO, 2021). This is well reflected in data as it shows that 12,419 (12,546 in the previous school year) upper basic level student and 34,464 (39,820 in the previous school year) students at a lower basic level both reported having disabilities. Similarly, overall gender parity has been maintained. However, it is not evenly distributed among the provinces. There is still less enrollment of girls in upper basic level in Madhesh Province than boys. The National Assessment for Reading and Numeracy 2020 indicates that over 10% of third-grade students could not read a single word correctly (Education Review Office (ERO), 2020). Likewise, approximately 22% of students in lower basic levels are overage, which is a sign of poor student performance and a delayed improvement in the internal efficiency of basic education.

Nepal experienced a digital divide in the education sector due to COVID-19. There was and is a disparity in access to technology for learning across the nation, including unequal access to devices, the internet, TV, and radio. Due to the restricted access to essential services and many families struggling to make ends meet, many children became more vulnerable during school closures. Children with impairments were disproportionately more vulnerable than their peers. Only approximately half of Nepalese schools offer students with

disability with any kind of remote teaching or learning support. The majority of out-of-school children are believed to be children from low-income families, children with disabilities, and children from underprivileged communities. The gap in investment in the education sector has also affected the quality of education as the current allocation of budget (10.95% from the national budget) is far below the government commitment.

Major Challenges and Opportunities

The adoption and implementation of School Sector Development Plan (SSDP), a seven year strategic plan has been a challenging journey but some positive growth also have been noted, which strengthens Nepal's effort to achieve progressive development in the education sector to some extent. Nepal's commitment towards SDGs has been recorded to be in the gradual growth since its adoption in the year 2016. For instance, some indicators like Gross Enrollment Rate (GER) in basic grades, Net Enrollment Rate (NER) in basic grades, female teachers in basic and secondary level, survival rate and completion rate have shown a slow increase.

Despite growth on some of the indicators, other indicators struggle to show any progressive change. As per the record in the flash report 2019-2020, there is only 19% female teacher participation in the secondary and higher secondary level which is alarmingly low (Center for Education and Human Resource Development, 2021). Furthermore, the records also depict a gradual decrease in the gender parity index as SSDP comes to its fifth year. As per the records of the National Campaign for Education (NCE) Nepal, it is evident that the indicators like GER of teachers/ facilitators with required qualifications are not met as per the target in the year 2020/21. The assessment further indicates a disappointing figure where 2.9% of school-age children of grades 1-5 and 6.6% of basic level 1-8 have dropped out of school (National Campaign For Education Nepal (NCE Nepal), 2021). The pandemic has proven to be a strong blow in achieving the targeted educational goals and has severely impacted students of marginalized communities (National Campaign For Education Nepal (NCE Nepal),

2021). The studies were at stake as they faced issues like standstill educational activities, lack of suitable learning resources, inadequate support from the school in terms of alternative learning mediums, unqualified and unskilled teaching faculty, and to top it all, financial hardships.

The nation faces economic instability as a result of various factors like Covid-19 pandemic, political instability, insufficient and mismanagement of resources and so forth, which will ultimately have adverse effect upon achieving SDGs. In absence of effective monitoring framework, the education system of Nepal is massively controlled by private actors creating a hierarchy and inaccessibility of quality of education for all (Gellner & Adhikari, 2020). In addition, the provincial government's budget allocation in the education sector does not seem to be encouraging. Only the Sudurpashchim Province have allocated a budget of 10.20% for the education sector, while all other provinces' budget has not exceeded 5% (National Campaign For Education Nepal (NCE Nepal), 2021). Nepal still needs to make an effort to sensitize about the SDG by educating and empowering the actors st the local levels.

Conclusion and Recommendation

- Federal Education Act should be formulated as it is crucial in the distribution of responsibility and effective resource allocation,

- Fundamentals of inclusive education should be reflected in the design and implementation of education plans to ensure education for all, closing the disparity brought by COVID-19,

- The linkage between SDG 4 and other SDGs should be well operationalized and established for effective results,

- The investment in the education sector needs to be increased, allocating at least 20% to education from the national budget,

- The federal government should take a collaborative approach with the provincial and local governments in

designing a framework that could exclusively cater to the particular province's educational needs,

- The government should encourage employment opportunities for the marginalized and deprived communities, which could help bring children and youths of the community inside the educational schemes and programs,

- The government should ensure access to equitable and qualitative education

and lifelong learning for all ensuring the disaster resilient and disable friendly infrastructure,

- Technical and vocational education should be guaranteed, allocating adequate resources and integrating the components of technical and vocational training in the educational curriculum, in particular, secondary and higher education,

Goal 5:

5 GENDER EQUALITY

Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target

5.1　End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere,

5.2　Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation,

5.3　Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation,

5.4　Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate,

5.5　Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life,

5.6　Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences,

Progress Assessment and Challenges

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) baseline of 2015 is 0.49, and the target for 2022 is 0.38; the progress until 2019, 0.476, is minimal compared to the baseline. The GII is a composite measure, reflecting inequality in achievements between women and men in three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market. "Low status restricts women's opportunities and freedom, giving them less interaction with others and fewer opportunities for independent behaviour, restricting the transmission of new knowledge, and damaging their self-esteem and self-expression. It is a particularly important determinant of

two resources for care: mothers physical and mental health, and their autonomy and control over household resources. Low status restricts women's capacity to act on their own and their children's best interests. There is a demonstrated association between women's status and malnutrition in children" (WHO, 2022). Similarly, Nepal has met the target for the gender empowerment index for 2019, 0.62 against the target of 0.6. There is slow progress in wage equality for similar work; 0.66 against the target of 0.72. The ratio of women to men in participation in the labour force was 0.61 against the target of 0.95 for 2019, this progress is slow.

Target 5.5 seeks to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. The improvement in the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments until 2019 is satisfactory, slightly higher than the target. The target set for 2022 can be considered low, 34.4% in both national and provincial parliament, followed by 41% in local government bodies. The local election result shows a downward trend in the women's representation, despite the increase in the total number. The total number of women contesting in 2022 is lesser than 2017; it was 57,847 in 2017 and 55,699 in 2022, a reduction of 3.71%. It is a worrying downward trend seen with the second ever local elections after adopting the new constitution. As of June 23, 2022, where one local unit's result is yet to come out, 14,402 women have been elected in the local election. The total number of elected female Mayor/Chair was 18 in 2017, which reached 25 in 2022, it is progressive, but in the case of Deputy Mayor/ Vice-chair, it dropped from 700 to 564.

Similarly, women's participation in the decision-making level in the private sector target for 2019 was 30.3% and reached 29.6%, which is close to the target. The progress of women in civil service decision-making positions has come to 13.6%, lower than the target of 17%. It is not on track to get the overall mark of 33% by 2030. Another important phenomenon is women's ownership of property (land and house); there is remarkable progress in reaching 33.9 compared to the target of 29.7 for 2019. The awareness of reproductive rights among women in the 15-49 age group is lower than a baseline, 57.5%, compared to 59.5%, while the target for 2019 is 68%.

The overall impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have adversely affected progress toward gender equality, and violence against women and girls has intensified. Job loss, discontinuation of jobs, and temporary or permanent closure of businesses are some of the immediate consequences faced by both men and women. Still, women faced the same problem with the increased responsibility of care work at home. Women have played a critical role in response to COVID-19 as frontline health workers, volunteers, nurses, and so forth. There are many players in Nepal making the COVID-19 vaccination a success. The large number of Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHV), mobilized by the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP), have played a significant role in the vaccination campaign. According to MoHP, there are 51,416 FCHVs in the country. Despite the substantial role played by women in the COVID-19 crisis, they remain underrepresented in leadership positions.

Violence against women remains a crucial challenge; such violence is taking place in various forms in various areas starting from own family by an intimate partner, society, the workplace and so forth. Multiple challenges related to violence against women are observed. That includes living in abusive relationships, facing insufficient income, limited availability and access to formal support services, weak social support from family, acceptance of violence, fear of repercussions and social stigma, and so forth. The violence is deep-rooted in various forms; recently, some cases have been revealed using social media platforms. It is essential to understand that those exposed on social media platforms are just representative cases; there are many other challenges related to violence against women in a society that contributes to widening the gap in gender balance. Opening up such issues requires high confidence and strength.

Discriminatory laws and legal gaps prevent women from enjoying their full human rights; where rules are developed, effective implementation continues to be a significant challenge. One example is the vacant position of Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives since January 20, 2020. This vacant position is for women parliament members, as there is a provision that one member between Speaker and Deputy Speaker must be a woman. Currently, the Speaker of the House of Representatives is male. The position has not been filled for a long time, and no significant discussion has been observed lately.

Recommendation

- Women are underrepresented in

leadership positions, and their rights and priorities are often not explicitly addressed. Therefore it is essential to take immediate action to increase women's representation in leadership,

- The COVID-19 crisis has presented an opportunity to re-shape and rebuild systems, laws, policies and institutions to advance gender equality. While developing laws, policies and programs, the distinct impact on women must be addressed,

- Unequal power relations between men and women and unequal distribution of resources should be abandoned,

- Meaningful participation at all levels of the government must be ensured; this includes the local, provincial and federal governments. There is a massive disbalance between male and female leaders in leadership positions such as Mayor/Chair, Deputy Mayor/Vice-chair and Ward Chairs. An increased number of women in leadership positions must be ensured at the election nomination phase. Capacity building of women representatives is essential to translate representation to empowerment,

- Gender-disaggregated data made available by the Election Commission, Nepal does not even acknowledge the presence of LGBTIQ+ community, although they are legally registered as

voters under the "Others" category,

- The contributions performed by women in household care work should be counted and valued, and promote equal pay for equal jobs,

- The incidents of domestic violence, violence against women and girls, sexual violence and child marriage have increased during COVID-19. The governments at all levels require to coordinate and work in partnership with CSOs and private sectors to prepare effective strategies to control these incidents and promote women's gender equality and safety,

- Female labour migration should be safe, dignified and manageable in all cycles of migration,

- The rights of women working in the informal sector should be protected, ensuring adequate social security,

- It is important to continue implementing the intervention in the area of gender-based violence and harmful social practices together with the enforcement of laws enacted by the parliament,

- Gender disaggregated data should be systematically collected, processed and used as a verification means for a progress report on government programs and overall progress on SDGs,

Goal 15:

Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Target

15.1 By 2020, ensure the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial and inland freshwater ecosystems and their services, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains and drylands, in line with obligations under international agreements,

15.2 By 2020, promote the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally,

15.3 By 2030, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world,

15.4 By 2030, ensure the conservation of mountain ecosystems, including their biodiversity, in order to enhance their capacity to provide benefits that are essential for sustainable development,

15.5 Take urgent and significant action to reduce the degradation of natural habitats, halt the loss of biodiversity and, by 2020, protect and prevent the extinction of threatened species,

15.6 Promote fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources and promote appropriate access to such resources, as internationally agreed,

15.7 Take urgent action to end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products,

15.8 By 2020, introduce measures to prevent the introduction and significantly reduce the impact of invasive alien species on land and water ecosystems and control or eradicate the priority species,

15.9 By 2020, integrate ecosystem and biodiversity values into national and local planning, development processes, poverty reduction strategies and accounts,

Progress Assessment and Challenges

"Unsustainable exploitation and use of terrestrial resources have been chiefly responsible for the damage and dislocation of the ecosystem through deforestation, biodiversity loss, and degradation of land and the environment. A healthy ecosystem is the condition for enhanced productivity of agriculture and forests, a regulated hydrological regime, sustainable watersheds, thriving biodiversity and wildlife, reduced risks of natural disasters and a natural resilience to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change" (National Planning Commission, 2020). The

conservation, restoration, and sustainable use of terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems are vital concerns for Nepal as 44.7% of the total land in Nepal is forest, protected areas of 23.4% and nearly 43% of forests are under community management. The government has recognized vulnerable ecosystems such as Chure which remain threatened due to encroachment and degradation. "The Chure Region, foothills of the Himalayas, spreads across east-west parallel to the high Mountains covering 12.8 % of Nepal. The Chure Region mostly remained forested till 1950s, but with the human population increment, deforestation in Chure forest is occurring in an unprecedented rate. Majority (76%) of the

forest areas of the Chure Region falls outside the protected areas. Chure provides habitat for various rare and globally threatened species" (President Chure-Terai Madhesh Conservation Development Board and National Trust for Nature Consrvation, 2021).

The forest area as a proportion of total land area in 2019 remains the same as the 47.7% baseline. Forest under community-based management (per cent of total dense forest areas) has reached 42.7%, higher than the target set for 2019, 39.8%. The progress in a protected area (including forest, in per cent of total land area) remain stable, the target for 2019 is 23.3, and progress is 23.4. More action is required to meet the target in forest density (average number of trees per hectare) as the progress of 430 is lower than the target of 487 for 2019, and an even higher target of 645 is set for 2030.

The COVID-19 pandemic has alerted us that nature is more powerful than humans, and threatening biodiversity ultimately threatens human survival. Inadequate consideration of the environment in development planning and implementation has contributed to environmental challenges, which are on the increasing trend. The environmental issues and challenges are associated with ongoing land degradation, depleting forest resources, unplanned urban development, discharge of untreated effluents and disposal of wastes and so forth. The environmental issues are interconnected with other different SDGs, so it is essential to take action immediately and in a long run to achieve targets in SDG 15, life on land.

Recommendation

- The success of multilevel governance and coherent SDG implementation can be fostered, for instance, by effectively integrating the SDGs into the mandates of responsible institutions and promoting cross-sector collaboration at all levels. It requires adjusting institutional structures, aligning decision-making procedures, and setting up mechanisms supporting the SDGs' cross-cutting and integrative nature.

- It is necessary to realize that life and livelihood can be secured if a healthy environment exists. Nature-based products must be promoted to reduce poverty, create healthy lives, and improve local communities' lives.

- The growing population needs food, and securing food with limited land is challenging. The knowledge of community-based biodiversity management, including registering farmers' indigenous varieties, participatory plant breeding, and community seed banks, are some successful initiatives contributing to agrobiodiversity conservation. Such initiatives require promotion and scale-up.

- Life on land means protecting the earth's ecosystems, sustainable management of forests, and halting land degradation and biodiversity loss. Therefore, large or small, immediate or long term, the interventions should focus on conservation, restoring terrestrial and freshwater ecosystems, ending deforestation and restoring degraded forests, conserving mountain ecosystems, protecting biodiversity and natural habitats and fighting against illegal trade and poaching.

- A significant shift in the pattern of use of clean energy is required. It includes the changes in cooking style at the household level to promote the use of hydroelectricity in transportation and large industry. While promoting hydroelectricity, the entire country can reduce imported fuel consumption. The growing demand for environment-friendly energy sources, hydroelectricity, can be eventually fulfilled by the production from Nepal.

- Generally, the women, the poor, and the disadvantaged contribute to forest and

biodiversity conservation, but their share of the benefits remains disproportionate. Mechanisms need to evolve for the benefits to be inclusively and equitably shared.

- The right to a clean environment is one of the fundamental human rights defined in the constitution of Nepal. It explains, "(1) every citizen shall have the right to live in a clean and healthy environment, (2) the victim shall have the right to obtain compensation, in accordance with law, for any injury caused from environmental pollution or degradation". The promotion of environmental human rights is essential as equal to social, economic and political human rights.

Goal 17:

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development

Target

Finance

17.1 Strengthen domestic resource mobilization, including through international support to developing countries, to improve domestic capacity for tax and other revenue collection,

17.2 Developed countries to implement fully their official development assistance commitments, including the commitment by many developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance (ODA/GNI) to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries; ODA providers are encouraged to consider setting a target to provide at least 0.20 per cent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries,

17.3 Mobilize additional financial resources for developing countries from multiple sources,

17.4 Assist developing countries in attaining long-term debt sustainability through coordinated policies aimed at fostering debt financing, debt relief and debt restructuring, as appropriate, and address the external debt of highly indebted poor countries to reduce debt distress,

17.5 Adopt and implement investment promotion regimes for least developed countries,

Technology

17.6 Enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and access to science, technology and innovation and enhance knowledge-sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms, in particular at the United Nations level, and through a global technology facilitation mechanism,

17.7 Promote the development, transfer, dissemination and diffusion of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries on favourable terms, including on concessional and preferential terms, as mutually agreed,

17.8   Fully operationalize the technology bank and science, technology and innovation capacity-building mechanism for least developed countries by 2017 and enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology

Capacity-building

17.9   Enhance international support for implementing effective and targeted capacity-building in developing countries to support national plans to implement all the Sustainable Development Goals, including through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation,

Trade

17.10   Promote a universal, rules-based, open, non-discriminatory and equitable multilateral trading system under the World Trade Organization, including through the conclusion of negotiations under its Doha Development Agenda,

17.11   Significantly increase the exports of developing countries, in particular with a view to doubling the least developed countries' share of global exports by 2020,

17.12   Realize timely implementation of duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries, consistent with World Trade Organization decisions, including by ensuring that preferential rules of origin applicable to imports from least developed countries are transparent and simple, and contribute to facilitating market access,

Systemic issues
Policy and institutional coherence

17.13   Enhance global macroeconomic stability, including through policy coordination and policy coherence,

17.14   Enhance policy coherence for sustainable development,

17.15   Respect each country's policy space and leadership to establish and implement policies for poverty eradication and sustainable development

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

17.16   Enhance the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development, complemented by multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilize and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources, to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals in all countries, in particular developing countries,

17.16   Encourage and promote effective public, public-private and civil society partnerships, building on the experience and resourcing strategies of partnerships

17.18   By 2020, enhance capacity-building support to developing countries, including for least developed countries and small island developing States, to increase significantly the availability of high-quality, timely and reliable data disaggregated by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics relevant in national contexts,

17.19   By 2030, build on existing initiatives to develop measurements of progress on sustainable development that complement gross domestic product, and support statistical capacity-building in developing countries

Progress Assessment and Challenges

The strengthened global partnership is a key to achieving the targets of SDGs. International investments and support are needed to ensure innovative technological development, fair trade and market access, especially for developing countries. Nepal is the least developed country and is scheduled to upgrade to a developing country by 2026. Accelerating efforts during the transition phase is essential, and support from the global community is vital in this journey.

Total government revenue as a proportion of GDP is 24.8% which is better than expected for 2019, i.e. 22%. The proportion of the budget funded by domestic taxes has decreased to 73.9% in 2019, which is lower than the base year value, 76%. The target of 2019, 77.1%, is not met. Similarly, official development assistance as a proportion of the total domestic budget target is also not met, reaching 11.2% in 2019 than the target of 15.8%. The volume of remittances (in $) as a proportion of total GDP reached 25.4 in 2019 compared to the target of 30.7. The remittances inflow in the country was high during the COVID-19 pandemic, as shown in the Economic Survey of 2020-21, which is not consistent after country is settling from the COVID-19 in late 2021 and 2022. The outstanding debt to GDP ratio is satisfactory, 30.3% in 2019, higher than the target 28.8%.

The COVID-19 pandemic further hits the multilateral and international partnerships that were already shaky. The UNCTAD World Investment Report 2022 shows that FDI inflows in Nepal decreased by 31.62%, from USD 185 million in 2019 to USD 126.5 million in 2020. The FDI in 2021 has reached USD 196 million, which is higher than in 2019. On the Official Development Assistance (ODA), "disbursements in Nepal in 2019/20 increased by 26.9% compared to the previous year, jumping from 1,578.5 million USD to 2,002.8 million USD. However, the contribution of ODA in the national budget has declined to 23.3% from the level of 24.7% in 2018/19. Conversely, INGO contributions have notably decreased, from 215.3 million USD in 2018/19 to 131.8 million USD in 2019/20" (Government of Nepal, Ministry of Finance, 2021). Notably, 512.9 million USD out of the total 2,002.8 million USD ODA disbursed in Nepal in 2019/20 was paid specifically for COVID-19 response and recovery. The support comes from mostly new projects designed for pandemic context, only 48.6 million USD reallocated from existing projects.

Recommendations

- It is essential to increase the absorptive capacity of foreign aid, considering the increased, need for allocation to the health sector and going back to the momentum of the pre-COVID-19 situation.

- The trade deficit is a chronic issue in Nepal; export capacity is required to expand exportable trade diversification.

- A foreign direct investment-friendly environment must be created with policies to transfer technology and enhance domestic capacity.

- In the long run, the dependence on

remittance needs to be minimized with accelerated employment and income generation programs in the country.

- Pro-poor and inclusive macro-economic policies must be adopted to ensure no one is left behind. Macroeconomic policies need to be revisited in order to make them coherent with the financing needs of the SDGs.

- Although the government has policy provisions for the SDGs, subnational level implementation aspects have challenges. A strengthened, effective and accelerated mechanism for localization of the SDGs is essential.

- It is required to strengthen the partnership at various levels. The collaboration within the country as well as at regional and global levels by the government institutions and the non-governmental sector must be further strengthened.

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Nepal SDGs Forum

Conveners

Goals	Convener
Goal 1: No Poverty	Rural Reconstruction Nepal (RRN)
Goal 2: Zero Hunger	FIAN Nepal
Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being	Resource Centre for Primary Health Care (RECPHEC)
Goal 4: Quality Education	NCE Nepal
Goal 5: Gender Equality	Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal
Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users Nepal (FEDWASUN)
Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	Clean Energy Nepal
Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	National Federation of the Disabled – Nepal
Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	National Federation of Irrigation Water User's Association, Nepal
Goal 10: Reduced Inequality	Dalit NGO Federation
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	National Society for Earthquake Technology–Nepal (NSET)
Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights–Nepal
Goal 13: Climate Action	KIRDARC Nepal
Goal 15: Life on Land	Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN)
Goal 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN) COCAP (Co-convener)
Goal 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal	NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN)

Advisors, major groups and other details of Nepal SDGs Forum are available at: nepalsdgforum.org

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