

NATIONAL GOVERNANCE SYMPOSIUM 2023

"Governance Innovations for Inclusive Development"

PROCEEDING REPORT

ORGANIZING PARTNERS

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As an initiative of Daayitwa Abhiyaan, Governance Lab continues to move ahead in the journey of bringing together researchers, policy makers and other stakeholders for sustainable development of Nepal. National Governance Symposium (NGS), initiated in 2022 with an aim to bring together national and international policy researchers, advocates and decision makers in a single platform to create a conducive environment for constructive discussions and knowledge sharing.

The theme for NGS 2023 was ***Governance Innovations for Inclusive Development***. It attracted over 350 delegates (136 Female 183 Male) and from different sectors while over 50 plus speakers (27 Female and 28 Male) shared their ideas, research works and opinions on 6 thematic areas. This report includes the outcomes of the sessions covered in the two-day event. We are assured it will give the reader an insight into understanding the relationship between inclusion and prosperity while identifying innovative practices adopted by various stakeholders at national and local level for economic prosperity of Nepal.

Governance Lab takes this opportunity to thank the institutions and individuals who came forward to devote their time and resources that was crucial in successful completion of the symposium. I am thankful to the wonderful team at Daayitwa Abhiyaan for their tireless efforts behind the scenes that made the NGS 2023 a huge success.

Sincerely

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Nisha Onta, PhD
Founder & Executive Director



Faces behind NGS 2023: Daayitwa Abhiyaan Team

I. INTRODUCTION

The 2-day National Governance Symposium (NGS), centered around the theme "Governance Innovations for Inclusive Development," took place in Kathmandu on 12th & 13th December 2023. Around 352 participants, comprising 220 males and 132 females, representing various sectors such as government, media, private sector, civil society, national and international scholars and development agencies attended the two day event. The event was a platform for recognizing, discussing, and adapting innovative governance models, further advancing Nepal's journey toward inclusive development. The symposium emphasized the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration among various stakeholders while challenging the notion that governance is solely the responsibility of the government.

The NGS is an annual event organized by Governance Lab (Govlab) at Daayitwa Abhiyaan. During the last edition of the symposium, the overarching theme was innovation, with representatives from 11 municipalities across six provinces in Nepal showcasing their innovative governance practices. The symposium culminated in the Kathmandu Declaration for Collective Action, a collaborative effort involving 12 mayors, outlining commitments in areas such as inclusion, innovation, local governance, and economic development.

This year, the focus of the symposium was on the theme of inclusion, aligning with the ongoing efforts of Daayitwa Abhiyaan in areas such as accelerating rural women enterprises, engaging youth in policy making, and promoting evidence-based policy making. The symposium featured four government partners including the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, Ministry of Finance, National Planning Commission and the Office of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers and the presence of the MuAN and NARMIN President. Organizing partners included Daayitwa and Nepal Leadership Academy, along with collaborating partners such as Nepali Academics in America, Dignity Initiative, Federation of Women Entrepreneurs Associations Nepal, Inclusion Economics Nepal, Integrated Water Management Institute, NURP, iDE representing a diverse group of national, international, and diaspora organizations united by a common purpose.

Throughout the symposium, a diverse range of topics were explored in six sessions, delving into the social, political, and economic dimensions of inclusion. The first day focused on three target groups: youth, marginalized communities, and women. The second day delved into sectoral topics, including evidence-based policy making, climate governance, and migrant returnee reintegration. Each session was chaired by a government representative, emphasizing the intention to institutionalize the learning in national policies.

II. OBJECTIVES

- Celebrate the local stories of successful models of governance innovations
- Garner policy insights on institutionalizing academic and experiential learning
- Foster synergies among governance stakeholders

III. PARTNERS

The Governance Lab organized the Symposium with support from government, financial, organizing and knowledge partners, which are listed below:

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



**Ministry of Federal Affairs &
General Administration**



Ministry of Finance



National Planning Commission



**Office of the Prime Minister &
Council of Ministers**

ORGANIZING PARTNERS



SESSION PARTNERS



Dignity Initiative



**Federation of Women Entrepreneurs
Association of Nepal (FWEAN)**



Inclusion Economics Nepal



**International Water Management
Institute (IWMI)**



**International Development
Enterprises**



Nepal Academics in America



**The Sudridh - Nepal Urban
Resilience Programme (NURP)**

IV. DAY 1

INAUGURAL SESSION

Welcome Remarks

Dr. Pukar Malla, Chairperson, Governance Lab

Dr. Pukar Malla, in his welcome remarks, emphasized the critical importance of inclusion for Nepal's sustainable development. He presented alarming statistics, such as the mere 1% representation of females among Ward Chairpersons, illustrating the extent of political exclusion. Tragic incidents, like the killing of a Dalit man for inter-caste love, were cited as examples of social exclusion, while the migration of 3000 youth daily, with some facing mortality abroad, highlighted economic exclusion. Dr. Malla presented the mathematical significance of Dalits, youth, and women, constituting 20%, 50%, and 50% of Nepal's population, respectively. He argued that excluding these groups from national priorities would undermine the sustainability of development, irrespective of economic strides or GDP growth. He reiterated the fact that without inclusion, development is not sustainable.



Explaining that many times it is not the policy but the intention and leadership that impede results, Dr. Malla stated that the government alone cannot solve these adaptive challenges related to inclusion. He emphasized the need for strong governance which is possible only with the collaboration among the government, civil society, and the private sector, where each entity utilizes its resources and authority to achieve shared results. According to Dr. Malla, this collaboration will lead to the observance of a virtuous loop of governance and development in action.

Highlighting the objectives of the symposium and building on the past experiences, he urged the participants to utilize the two days of the symposium to understand the complexities of the intersection between inclusion, governance, and development. He called for honest discussions, both within the symposium premises and beyond, to cultivate a shared sense of hope and capacity for realizing inclusive development in Nepal.

KEYNOTE REMARKS

Dr. Mukta Singh Lama-Tamang, Faculty, Central Department of Anthropology, TU

The Keynote Speaker of the event, Dr. Mukta Singh Lama Tamang, Central Department of Anthropology, TU, took the stage to address the dynamics of evidence-based policymaking in fostering inclusive development by discussing the crucial role of solid evidence and data in ensuring policy effectiveness for catering to the population's diverse needs. Dr. Lama Tamang explained three key aspects of inclusion: Representation, Redistribution, and Recognition/Respect. He highlighted the significance of including diverse groups in decision-making to consider everyone's viewpoints. Additionally, he stressed the need for fair sharing of resources and opportunities to tackle inequality. Lastly, he emphasized respecting and recognizing the unique identities and cultures of all individuals. To support these ideas, he presented facts, such as the Inclusion Index by Gender & Caste/Ethnicity, revealing key patterns.



For instance, men had an overall inclusion score of 60, while women scored 39. Notably, women consistently scored lower than men across all groups, with variations in the gap among different groups. The statistics highlighted the challenges, including Madhesi Dalit women having the lowest inclusion scores at 6%, and Muslim women as the second lowest at 16%. There's no doubt that inclusion is essential for leading a dignified and free life, following Amartya Sen's capability approach, particularly in terms of inclusion. With ample data in hand, let's discuss how we can progress and enhance further, focusing on effective utilization of this data in promoting inclusivity.

SPECIAL REMARKS

i) Ms. Rita Thapa, Feminist Activist, Founder, Tewa and Nagarik Aawaz



Sharing her insights gathered from interactions with women parliamentarians, Ms. Thapa highlighted a concerning trend: despite having representation and participation, women are often excluded from decision-making roles. The centralized authority predominantly held by men deprives women of crucial decision-making powers, resulting in systemic injustice. Ms. Thapa emphasized the urgent need for women to be actively involved in formulating rules, strategic planning, and the effective execution of policies. While acknowledging the well-meaning intentions, Ms. Thapa noted a noticeable misalignment between intentions and actions. She emphasized the importance of fostering an inclusive environment where women have equal opportunities to contribute and lead. Ms. Thapa's advocacy extended beyond political spheres to recognizing and valuing the invaluable contributions of women engaged in unpaid care work within households. By advocating for gender equity and recognizing the essential role of women in unpaid care work, Ms. Thapa aimed to create a society that acknowledges and respects women's contributions in this often overlooked domain. Her efforts were driven by a vision of a more equitable society that values and empowers women in all aspects of life.

ii) Mr. Bhim Prasad Dhungana, Mayor, Neelakantha Municipality and President, Municipality Association of Nepal

In 2072, when the constitution was promulgated, political leaders made false promises to citizens leading to widespread dissatisfaction. Despite this, the constitution itself, despite the disappointment, stands as one of the better ones. In terms of rights allocation, local governments have been granted 22, provinces 21, and the federal government 35. The pressing question that arises is: Have we genuinely been able to exercise these rights freely? It is crucial not to undermine the rights of local governments. Posing critical questions, he directly addressed women activists, inquiring why they hadn't spoken out against the political alliance. There is a call for timely vocalization when necessary. The Election Commission is currently formulating a policy; this is a pivotal moment to translate political inclusion into reality. As a participant in NGS 2022 and NGS 2023, he urges the organizers to come up with concrete next steps following this symposium and commits to the collaboration from him.



iii) Dr. Baikuntha Aryal, Chief Secretary, Government of Nepal



The chief guest, Dr. Baikuntha Aryal, stressed the urgent need to 'engender' Nepal's macroeconomic framework, expressing a strong commitment to genuine inclusivity. He underscored the often overlooked contributions of women, urging for their true recognition. Dr. Aryal called for an all-encompassing approach that includes different perspectives and essential efforts of women to create a more inclusive economic landscape. He emphasized the necessity of changing mindsets, starting within ourselves. Addressing collaboration and confusion among the three levels of government, Dr. Aryal shared recent efforts by OPMCM through the national coordination committee to unite provincial secretaries and representatives of MUAN/Narmin. The aim is to discuss common rights, tasks, and strategies with a readiness to revise as needed. This would help them come with a concrete plan.

Dr. Aryal urged organizers to share insights with the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM), National Planning Commission (NPC), Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MOFAGA), and Ministry of Finance (MOF) for policy-making reference. He suggested incorporating these learnings into the NPC's 16th-year plan. He requested the organizers to share solutions and a way forward, and not just the problems, focusing on the "what," "why," and especially the "how."



SESSION I

CULTIVATING INNOVATION: NURTURING YOUTH-GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION FOR EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY DECISIONS

The session opened with remarks from Mr. Sushant Vaidik, who is the Economic Advisor at the Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers in Lumbini Province. He stressed the crucial role of youth in driving evidence-based policy-making, advocating for their energy and determination. He pointed out the need for recognition and collaboration between private and government sectors for effective policy initiatives. He also encouraged youths to engage in research, and pilot programs, and to maximize available opportunities. Additionally, he made a call for the active involvement of youths in policy discussions by the National Planning Commission.



Mr. Sushant Vaidik

The panel was moderated by Ms. Prakriti Bashyal, Program Coordinator of Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. Dr. Sohan Sha, who is a former DNPPF fellow, represented the voice of youth currently engaged in informing policy from his position as a member at the Policy and Planning Commission of Madhesh Province. Dr. Kiran Rupakhetee represented the voice of a policy maker, and government representative while Dr. Prativa Pandey, who is the founder of Catalyst Technologies and the co-founder of Daayitwa, came with her willingness to create platforms for youth to collaborate with the government. Dr. Amina Singh, adjunct faculty at Kathmandu University represented the Nepalese academic landscape.

The panel began with the consensus that youths possess innovative ideas and skills required to address the challenges we are facing currently effectively. Their involvement in the policy-making process can streamline the government's work processes, leveraging their innovation and expertise. An alternate platform for youth to contribute to the policy-making process to promote EBPD was discussed. For this to happen, a collective of like-minded people with a shared vision working together outside but alongside the government was discussed. Dr. Pandey cited examples from her experience, where independently functioning research alliances have made direct or indirect contributions to the country's research landscape. She emphasized the importance of decentralizing resources from the government.

Another important aspect that was discussed was inclusion. Panelists emphasized the need to dissect the definition of youth and ensure that youth coming from different intersections of class, caste, gender, and region have access to platforms that allow youth voices to have access to such platforms. The audience raised the points on topics of building the government's trust in youth and the need to incite hope and create an environment for young people who are leaving the country at an alarming rate to return to Nepal.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Youths for evidence based policies: The need for evidence-based policy in Nepal, especially in the context of implementation of the federal system of governance. The consensus among panelists emphasized that youth play a pivotal role in driving evidence-based policies. Their energy, determination, and innovative thinking are crucial for effective policy formulation, advocacy, and implementation. Active youth involvement is crucial for effective service delivery across different sectors.

Nurturing local talent: Lack of opportunities and lack of trust in youth emerged as challenges for youth and often led talented youths to seek opportunities abroad. Establishing platforms for pitching ideas, training programs, and funding initiatives is essential for engaging and retaining youth in the country. It is important to connect youths with existing platforms that are primarily created for them like the National Youth Council, District Youth Committee, and Youth Clubs etc.

Diversity for inclusive innovation: Panelists highlighted the significance of addressing regional disparities and gender inequalities for inclusive development. The involvement of youth from diverse economic, social, and cultural backgrounds who have varied intersectional experiences is a bridge to offer innovative solutions to these complex, multidimensional problems. Thus, inclusion should be a priority in all areas of youth participation and development.

Partnerships: The discussions underscored the need for a concerted effort between government bodies, educational institutions, and private sectors to create an environment where youths feel valued, engaged, and motivated to contribute to the development of their nation. The role of institutions like Daayitwa through its initiatives like the Daayitwa Nepal Public Policy Fellowship in empowering and engaging youth was emphasized.

Reforms, Connectivity and Skills: Educational reforms, including curriculum revisions, and the creation of more platforms within universities to connect youth with the government were deemed necessary. Capacity building of youth through skill and leadership development was recognized as crucial to nurturing capable leaders.

Understanding the root cause of youth migration: There was a focused discussion on understanding why youths migrate. Factors such as peer and family pressure, work culture, and aspirations were identified. Identifying these reasons is key to creating an environment that attracts and retains talents within the country.

CHAIRPERSON REMARKS

Mr. Ek Narayan Aryal, Secretary, Office of Prime Minister and Council of Ministers

The session concluded with remarks from Mr. Ek Narayan Aryal, Secretary at the Office of Prime Ministers and Council of Ministers, who highlighted the underutilization of inclusive policies. He outlined plans to collaborate with institutions like Daayitwa to make platforms for youth voices more accessible. He urged youth to engage with the government, emphasizing its importance for effective service delivery. He noted that implementable policies require youth engagement and encouraged the expansion of initiatives across all levels of government. Mr. Aryal emphasized citizens' role as overseers, stressing the importance of holding the government accountable. He committed to supporting such platforms provided by CSOs for youth from his end.



"I recognize the challenges in fully making the most of inclusive policies. To find better solutions, I envision collaborations with institutions like Daayitwa at OPMCM for a more effective and comprehensive approach." - Ek Narayan Aryal

"When we say youth as a whole, we need to dissect the true representation of this term. We need to ensure that all factions of youths from all intersections are considered when using the term youth." - Dr. Amina Singh



"In my journey, I encountered substantial challenges in gathering relevant data for research purposes. However, by persistently seeking alternative sources, collaborating with peers, and utilizing technological tools, I overcame these obstacles, emphasizing the importance of resourcefulness and adaptability in problem-solving." - Dr. Sohan Sha

"The alternative of government is government itself, so, we need to make reforms to ensure that it is inclusive." - Dr. Kiran Rupakhetee



"Government is not a bunch of individuals alone, it is rather their capacity, attitude and behavior, as well as people's equitable access to services, that holistically make a system, which in turn results in governance." - Dr. Pratiba Pandey



SESSION II

BREAKING BARRIERS: MOVING BEYOND REPRESENTATION TO DIGNITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION

The session commenced with Mr. JB Bishwokarma from Dignity Initiative delivering opening remarks. He highlighted the challenges faced by marginalized communities from centuries, emphasizing their neglect by state mechanisms and political parties. These issues were underscored by the guise of so-called "progressive policies" and an inequitable Proportional Representation system within political parties. The session moderated by Kailash Rai, a social science researcher had Ms. Mohana Ansari, Former Commissioner of the Nepal Human Rights Commission, Dr. Bal Krishna Mabuhang, an Associate Professor at Tribhuvan University, Ms. Sudha Regmi Pant, a section officer from MoFAGA as panelists while Mr. Suman Raj Aryal, the Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen chaired the panel discussion.



Mr. JB Bishwokarma

The panelists highlighted lingering issues post-federalism, questioning our intent and narrative towards genuine inclusion concerns while advocating for a progressive approach to Women's Leadership and social justice on dynamic development. They advocated for democracy as a means for effective governance suited to Nepal's diverse community. Dr. Mabuhang emphasized the significance of constitutional amendments and policy reforms as tools for inclusion, not gestures of "mercy", to ensure the involvement of every community in decision-making processes. The panel also discussed the government's policies and programs aimed at reaching out to the marginalized and backward communities in Nepal. The need for a collaborative effort between the government and various partners to identify the loopholes in existing policies and collectively develop effective solutions to address these challenges was identified.

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- **Persistent Injustice:** This session has highlighted the oppression and discrimination the dominated communities have been facing for centuries. Also the fact that the powerful groups have become more dominating over time.
- **Need for improved inclusion:** There is a significant need to enhance our intention and behavior towards inclusion. Also, the reality of representation in various commissions and state mechanisms needs a strict questioning, especially where token representation is prevalent.
- **Emphasis on Justice and Inclusive Development:** Justice should be a focal point alongside progressive development. It is crucial to accommodate all 142 ethnic groups and respect their right of self determination.

- **Inclusive and Respectful Federalism:** In order to achieve inclusive and respectful federalism, especially crucial for a diverse nation like Nepal, it is imperative for a new federal state to draw lessons from countries like India that have successfully preserved their diverse cultures.
- **Constitutional Amendments and Policy reforms:** Existing constitutional provisions and policy exhibit the evidence of discrimination and lack of inclusivity towards certain marginalized communities. Despite the label of "progressive", a thorough and deep analysis exposes substantial loopholes present in different facets within our constitution. There is a need for proper discourse on constitutional remedies and policy reforms backed by unbiased data and evidence. Simultaneously, responsible authorities should develop sensitization towards elements of inclusivity.
- **Collaborative Efforts:** In order to identify shortcomings and propose effective solutions, it is essential for the government to engage in collaborative efforts with various partners, necessitating a unified approach.

CHAIRPERSON REMARKS

Mr. Suman Raj Aryal, Secretary, Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizens

The Chairperson of the session, Mr. Suman Raj Aryal, the Secretary of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen, concluded the session by raising thought-provoking questions about identity definitions and advocating for the fundamental right to live with dignity. He further explored the necessity for mainstreaming approaches, emphasized equity management, and underscored the crucial role of research in achieving genuine inclusion. Mr. Aryal affirmed the government's dedication to backing policies with concrete data and evidence, stressing on the need to identify specific target groups within minority populations for effective initiatives.



"Inclusivity is a key engine of growth" – Mr. Suman Raj Aryal

"There is an ethical crisis with the development paradigm itself." – Dr. Balkrishna Mabuhang



"Khas Arya have been occupying the larger space in the election, thus have larger representation. Although the new federalism was brought in to ensure inclusion in state mechanism, the representation of Dalit and other communities have declined over time." – JB Biswokarma

"It's not like the Government is not working for inclusion, but rather other partners should come forward to work with the government to identify the loopholes." – Ms. Sudha Regmi Pant



"Inclusion is not about dividing but an emotive movement about using existing resources and opportunities to bring justice. It is an emotional thing for basic needs." Ms. Mohna Ansari

SESSION III

BUILDING BRIDGES: MAKING A CASE FOR NATIONAL WOMEN ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT POLICY

The session began with a contextual overview, exploring the current status of women entrepreneurs, the challenges they face, and the innovative strategies they employ. Sahina Shrestha from Nepali Times facilitated the discussion, using videos featuring entrepreneurs from Daayitwa Nepal's rural women entrepreneurship acceleration program. These videos laid the foundation, highlighting the need for a comprehensive policy to address the identified needs, challenges, solutions, and the pathway to achieving success in women's entrepreneurship.



The panel discussion moderated by Ms. Sama Thapa had Ms. Shova Gyawali, Chairperson of FWEAN, Ms. Ava Shrestha Karn, Joint Secretary, Dr. Neelam Dhungana from NRB as panelists while Ms. Radhika Aryal chaired the panel discussion. The panelists emphasized the vital need for a comprehensive National Women's Enterprise Development Policy (NWEDP) to consolidate scattered provisions into a unified strategy.



In the absence of a streamlined policy, they pointed out that budget allocations and ongoing programs lack visible impact. Ms. Gyawali also highlighted the necessity for a collaborative Women Enterprise Development Fund to ensure targeted fund utilization pointing out the global shift where 85% of small businesses are led by women. Ms. Shrestha suggested the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supplies take the lead in formulating the NWEDP.

They also focused on the need for women's access to finance and markets. They highlighted existing provisions in the Industrial Policy 2076, including subsidized loans initiated by NRB under the Ministry of Finance's directive. Acknowledging challenges, she mentioned potential misappropriation of subsidies and assured NRB's commitment to investigate. Dr. Dhungana also addressed the issue of policy implementation, pointing out collateral-based loans' barriers for many women and the lack of awareness among marginalized groups about available government policy benefits.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Need for National Women Enterprise Development Policy (NWEDP) in Nepal : The unanimous view supports the idea of a policy that goes beyond individual programs, ensuring effective implementation and providing a systematic framework for promoting women's entrepreneurship. The call for an NWEDP reflects the recognition of the need for a cohesive, evidence-based approach to drive meaningful and sustainable change in the landscape of women's enterprise in Nepal.

Components of NWEDP: NWEDP should comprise strategies for access to finance, business-friendly policies, skill development policy, technology policy, need-based implementation, compulsory entrepreneurship training at the school level, and infrastructure development policy.

Ownership of NWEDP : The Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supplies should take a lead in formulation and implementation of NWEDP. Similarly, the Ministry of Women, Children & Social Welfare could be involved in lobbying to create an environment conducive to the policy formulation, gender auditing, advocacy and coordination during implementation.

Bureaucratic ecosystem for NWEDP implementation : For an effective bureaucratic ecosystem in NWEDP implementation, two crucial elements are highlighted. Firstly, policies must be grounded in evidence and research, ensuring a solid foundation for decision-making. Secondly, a strong commitment from both policymakers and the public is essential for impactful implementation, emphasizing the need for dedication and collaboration to achieve meaningful results.

Access to finance for Women Entrepreneurship : Highlighting the critical aspect of women's access to finance and markets, the discussion referred to existing provisions in the Industrial Policy 2076, including subsidized loans initiated by relevant authorities. The need to scrutinize potential misappropriation of subsidies stressed the importance of ensuring the effective and transparent allocation of financial resources.

CHAIRPERSON REMARKS

Ms. Radhika Aryal, Principal Secretary, OCMCM, Lumbini Province



Ms. Radhika Aryal

Ms. Aryal supported the idea of a comprehensive policy discussed by the panelists and pledged to promote it further. She stressed the importance of prioritizing women's enterprise at all government levels and highlighted the need for a detailed and personalized approach to address women-specific issues in Nepal. Aryal discussed women's businesses across different government levels, advocating for an approach that caters to the varied needs of unskilled, skilled, and knowledgeable women. She proposed a careful strategy to tackle specific problems and emphasized the significance of a comprehensive policy with inputs from civil society and investors. Aryal called for immediate action, stressing the importance of sensitivity in women's enterprise development and insisting that training and skills development should directly lead to meaningful employment or occupation.



An integrated National Women Enterprise Development Strategy is crucial. However, we should also emphasize on the execution of the already existing policy provisions. - Ms. Radhika Aryal

An integrated National Women Enterprise Development Policy is crucial. However, we should also emphasize on the execution of the already existing policy provisions. - Dr. Neelam Dhungana



"Though the status of women has changed, our journey seeks the transformative leap – the moment when the caterpillar becomes a butterfly."- Ava Shrestha Karna

Goods produced at the national, state and local level by women entrepreneurs need to be brought together through a business-friendly policy for framework and guidance. - Shova Gyawali



CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Chandra Ghimire, Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal

In his closing statement, Mr. Chandra Ghimire, Former Secretary of the Government of Nepal, expressed his desire for future symposium discussions to be rooted in research. He highlighted the potential impact of LDC graduation on women and SMEs, questioning whether a thorough cost-benefit analysis had been conducted. He identified administrative reforms as a barrier to effective policy implementation, emphasizing the need for governance reform during times of crisis. He advocated for the usage of lateral entry opportunities for young people, viewing them as catalysts for innovation within government structures. Additionally, he envisioned youth empowerment through startup initiatives, seeing them as vehicles for meaningful change. Finally, he concluded by sharing the importance of cultivating hope within communities, particularly through initiatives focused on inspiring youths to stay in Nepal and contribute to its progress.



Honorable Indira Rana Magar, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives

Honorable Indira Rana Magar, Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives, shared her vision for a fair and inclusive society, particularly focusing on the well-being of children, youth, and marginalized communities. She expressed optimism about initiatives aimed at fostering inclusivity and justice for all. She emphasized the importance of including everyone in development efforts, including children, youth, and women. She highlighted that governance goes beyond just the government—it also involves private businesses, community groups, and organizations working for human rights. She urged the government to support these efforts.

Additionally, she raised concerns about the pervasive influence of politics in various sectors, which can weaken institutions. She stressed the need for strong and independent institutions that are not controlled by political parties. She emphasized the importance of having a robust system that protects the rights and interests of all citizens. Furthermore, she called on politicians to remember their responsibility to represent the people, not just their political parties. She encouraged collaboration with private sectors to further support inclusive development efforts.

V. DAY 2

OPENING SESSION

Mr. Susit Dhakal, Executive Director, Daayitwa

Daayitwa's Executive Director, Susit Dhakal, initiated the second day by emphasizing the critical role of inclusion in achieving sustainable development. He took the opportunity to shed light on Daayitwa's commitment to fostering inclusion, outlining the organization's efforts in various sectors such as social, economic, and political inclusion since its establishment in 2013. By referencing specific initiatives like the Rural Enterprise Accelerator Program (REAP) and the Daayitwa Nepal Public Service Fellowship (DNPSF), Dhakal highlighted the tangible ways in which Daayitwa has been actively working towards creating a more inclusive and sustainable future. His remarks set the tone for the day's discussions, emphasizing the organization's dedication to addressing inclusion challenges across multiple dimensions for the betterment of society and the broader goals of sustainable development.



Mr. Susit Dhakal

KEYNOTE REMARKS

Professor Rohini Pande, Director of the Economic Growth Center and Faculty Director of Inclusion Economics, Yale University



Prof. Rohini Pande

Prof. Rohini Pande, Director of the Economic Growth Center and Faculty Director of Inclusion Economics at Yale University set a context with her presentation on "Understanding Political Inclusion: An Evidence-Based Approach." She talked through findings from Inclusion Economics Nepal's research on political inclusion in Nepal – specifically focusing on the challenges and opportunities faced in the context of combating underrepresentation through the use of gender quotas. In Nepal, following the 10-year people's war, constitutionally mandated quotas were introduced in the newly drafted constitution of 2015. Despite candidate-level quotas introduced at the municipality- and ward-level that increased women's participation, progress in leadership positions was limited.

Prof. Pande talked about findings from the research team's experiment with female ward members of Nepal. 50% of ward members elected in 2017 were contacted over the phone and provided with information of gender composition of party committees and women's electability in higher positions. After the 2022 elections, outcomes were measured. It was seen that the experiment successfully increased women's aspiration for ward chair position, but limited impact was seen in their candidacy or election. This demonstrates a leaky pipeline where party committees act as early gatekeepers, not giving tickets to women. The evidence thus shows that mandating political inclusion may not be by itself sufficient since parties find ways to circumvent inclusion. Moreover, quotas may be failing for non-electoral institutions – quotas can be put on local elections, but party membership/committees cannot be mandated in the same way.

SPECIAL REMARKS

Ms. Laxmi Devi Pandey, Chairperson, Hupsekot Rural Municipality and Chairperson, National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal



Ms. Laxmi Devi Pandey

Likewise, Laxmi Pandey building on her experience as a mayor and a chairperson of Narmin shared valuable insights. “In 2017, we were on the right track with women holding 41% of the representation in elections. However, it’s disheartening to note that by 2022, that number has dropped to 37%. Despite the constitution emphasizing the need for inclusion, it seems we’re moving in the opposite direction. It’s not only a political concern; we must also consider financial and administrative inclusion. It’s high time we shift our focus to a development mindset. For example—while we have been constructing structures for education and health, have we given enough thought to the experts and facilities essential for effective services?” She emphasized that political parties need to recognize the strength of women politicians and understand the losses incurred from alliances.

She further quoted “The local government is here to support provincial and federal counterparts and seeks support in return. Without collaboration, we won’t be able to achieve what the constitution aims to provide. Our local government plays a crucial role in fostering inclusivity, and I am optimistic about positive changes in the 2027 election. It’s not the constitution falling short; it’s us not fully committing to its ideals. It’s time for all of us to take responsibility and work together for inclusive development.”

SESSION IV

USING LARGE-SCALE DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS TO UNDERSTAND GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES AND INFORM POLICY-MAKING

Ms. Medha Joshi and Chandra Sharma, Senior Research Managers at the Governance Lab, shared findings from their extensive research focusing on governance, inclusion, and response strategies in Nepal. Utilizing diverse data sources such as big data, real-time surveys, and experiments, their work aims to develop evidence on policy impact and foster a local research ecosystem.

COVID-19 Impact on Local Governments: The COVID-19 pandemic posed significant challenges to Nepal’s newly decentralized local governments, emphasizing the need for coordinated efforts across different levels of government.

Local Government Surveys: Four rounds of phone surveys conducted between June 2020 and January 2022 provided valuable insights into the response of mayors, deputy mayors, and chief administrative officers across municipalities.

Resource Allocation Disparities:



Ms. Medha Joshi

The surveys revealed a stark mismatch in the allocation of COVID-19 funds across local governments, with higher caseload municipalities tending to have lower per capita funds. This misallocation persisted throughout the pandemic, highlighting the need for targeted support to vulnerable areas.

COVID-Related Activities: Districts with higher caseloads engaged in fewer COVID-related activities on average, indicating challenges in addressing the pandemic's impact effectively.

Implications for Policy: The findings suggest that local governments faced challenges in fulfilling their mandate during the pandemic, with implications for future policy and action. There is a need to address gaps in climate risk reduction efforts and understand citizens' perceptions for effective policy design.

After their presentations, Mr. Trilochan Pokharel, Senior Director at Nepal Administrative Staff College, offered insightful commentary. He highlighted the often overlooked aspect of applying research data, emphasizing that it's crucial that the research brings answers to things that we don't know. He advocated for deriving future scenarios from research findings and stressed that lessons learned from the COVID crisis should inform our approach to research relevance. Mr. Pokharel pointed out the necessity for thorough analysis, bridging the gap between research and policy, and fostering ongoing discourse. He underscored the importance of research as a continuous, forward-looking process, akin to a laboratory endeavor, and emphasized the need for a futuristic outlook.

Dr. Bhisma Bhusal, Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Home Affairs, questioned the relative importance of budget allocation versus leadership quality in addressing crises like COVID-19 at the local level. He emphasized the need to localize terms and highlighted challenges in data usage and accessibility. Dr. Bhusal shared his experiences, emphasizing the importance of data sharing to avoid duplication of research efforts, drawing from his experiences dealing with coordination issues between institutions.



Mr. Chandra Sharma



Mr. Trilochan Pokharel



Dr. Bhisma Bhusal



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Political Inclusion Challenges in Nepal: Despite mandated quotas, progress in women's leadership positions remains limited due to the "leaky pipeline" issue, where party committees act as gatekeepers.

Big Data for Informed Governance: Emphasizes the potential of big data in understanding governance challenges and informing policy-making. Effective communication of research ideas and cautious usage of government datasets are essential for bridging the gap between research findings and policy formulation.

Research Ideas for Accurate Policy Formulation: Incorporating contextual research methodologies, such as using local languages for surveys, is crucial for accurate data collection and analysis to inform policy decisions.

Promoting Transparent Sharing of Government Data: Advocates for transparent sharing of government data for independent research to enhance local governance. Access to reliable data is essential for informed policy formulation and implementation.



"Let's strive to reach the goals of having atleast 100 women mayor in the next local election"- Ms. Laxmi Pandey

"Let's harness the power of big data and evidence-based research as catalysts for achieving political inclusion. Together, let's pave the way for a more inclusive political landscape." Prof. Rohini Pandey



"Research embodies a continuous, forward-thinking process, akin to a laboratory endeavor. It requires a futuristic outlook." - Mr. Trilochan Pokharel

"It's imperative for the government to ensure accessibility of its data." - Dr. Bhisma Bhusal



"I advocate for the integration of local languages in surveys." - Mr. Binod Prakash Singh

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Binod Prakash Singh, Secretary, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration



Mr. Binod Prakash Singh

In his closing remarks, Mr. Binod Prakash Singh, Secretary at the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration, emphasized the importance of research conducted at IEN, highlighting the value it brings. He advocated for the incorporation of contextual research methodologies, emphasizing the inclusion of local languages in surveys to ensure comprehensive understanding. Furthermore, Mr. Singh underscored the necessity for research in Nepal to transcend beyond infrastructure development, stressing its role in addressing broader governance challenges. He called for transparent sharing of government data to facilitate independent research, particularly emphasizing its potential to enhance local governance. Additionally, he assured that the government is committed to sharing research data, fostering collaboration and furthering the research ecosystem.

SESSION V

INCLUSIVE CLIMATE GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

In her opening remarks, Dr. Manohara Khadka shared her experience and learning from her recent attendance at COP28 and emphasized the urgency of addressing climate change on a local and global scale, as well as the importance of inclusion, teamwork, efficient governance, and the application of research and innovation to the development of policies and actions. To establish comprehensive and effective climate governance, coordinated actions across diverse stakeholders are called for, and the importance of representation—especially for disadvantaged groups was emphasized.



A wide range of topics were discussed at the panel discussion, including local projects, worldwide activism, governance issues, and educational inputs. The need for inclusive climate governance, better coordination, and customized, localized solutions were common themes. The main points of advice were budget allocation that was specifically targeted, improved research, and financial openness. The preference for adaptation over mitigation is appropriate given Nepal's unique climatic conditions. The panel discussion gave a thorough review of the issues and offered workable solutions for efficient climate governance in Nepal.

The panelists advocated substantial changes in education policies and curricula to address climate change challenges. While acknowledging progress in integrating climate-related subjects, they stressed the need for broader reforms, including the inclusion of climate-focused courses in core curricula and regular intervention to ensure that inclusivity is at the core of every program.

Mayor Kalpana Katuwal discussed Barathawa Municipality's multifaceted approach to climate change, emphasizing the importance of local-level policy discussions, community-centric awareness programs, and technology integration in agriculture. Despite resource constraints, the municipality has undertaken initiatives for green space protection and water conservation. She emphasized the necessity for comprehensive research, local solutions, and enhanced collaboration between local and provincial governments.

They also emphasized the essential stages of climate change: Adaptation, Mitigation, and Disaster, and highlighted the challenges arising from a lack of coordination among government tiers. Dr. Pokharel advocated for a clearer division of roles, transparency in climate financing, and a contextual understanding of climate change's intersection with political power and the economy. The panelists proposed recommendations, including transparency in climate financing, local problem identification, and comprehensive adoption of a Local Adaptation Plan of Action (LAPA).



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Localized Solutions: The panelists emphasized the importance of tailoring solutions to address the diverse impacts of climate change at the local level. Implementation of actions should be specifically focused on the unique contexts of local communities.

Coordination and Collaboration: Coordination is needed not only among governmental bodies but also between local and provincial governments, fostering collaboration between civil societies, private sectors, and government bodies. There is a necessity for clear identification of roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder.

Inclusive Climate Governance: There was a unanimous agreement on the need for inclusive climate governance. The panel emphasized on encompassing diverse perspectives, particularly those of underrepresented groups and minority populations. Recognition of the necessity for developing specialized policies based on the unique needs of different communities and groups was also highlighted.

Transparency in Climate Financing: The panelists emphasized the importance of transparency in climate financing. Ensuring the effective and appropriate utilization of funds allocated for climate change projects.

CLOSING REMARKS

Dr. Sindhu Prasad Dhungana, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Forest and Environment

Dr. Sindhu Prasad Dhungana, Joint Secretary of the Ministry of Forest and Environment chaired the session and gave his concluding remarks. In his address, he emphasized the importance of evidence-based research on the effects of climate change and the need for corresponding action. He advocated for a strategic approach, urging that all initiatives prioritize climate considerations, distinguishing between mitigation, adaptation, and neutralization efforts.



Dr. Sindhu Prasad Dhungana

Dr. Dhungana further highlighted that the local-level government must be supported by the provincial and federal levels of government for the effective implementation of climate action. This support and trust are essential, and without it, the need for urgent climate action cannot be met. Furthermore, he emphasized that climate finance is necessary, but long administrative processes often hinder the application of such finance. In addition to the above, Dr. Dhungana stressed the importance of gender inclusion in climate action. He suggested that workshops for both male and female participants can be conducted to enhance inclusivity in this regard.



“There is a need for collaboration between federal, provincial, and local level governments along with sectors that are actively engaged in climate actions so that multidimensional perspective comes into consideration.”- Dr. Manohara Khadka, Country Representative, IWMI

“The academic sector can be a source of evidence generation required for the proper planning and development of policy. Along with that it can help build capacity, increase awareness and skills required”- Prof. Vishnu Prasad Pandey, Water Expert, Department of Civil Engineering, Institute of Engineering



“The integration of the 3C Principle—Coordination, Cooperation, and Coexistence—into Nepal's governance framework is crucial. Simultaneously, fostering a solution-driven mentality is imperative to enhance the effectiveness of governance practices.”- Dr. Bharat Kumar Pokharel, Chairperson, GREAT International

“Ensuring easy access to climate finance is imperative for local-level governments dealing with climate change issues. Implementing bilateral climate finance could be one of the most effective approaches, particularly for a country like Nepal.”- Dr. Sindhu Prasad Dhungana, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Forest and Environment



SESSION VI

REBUILDING HOPE: REINTEGRATING MIGRANT RETURNEES IN DOMESTIC EMPLOYMENT IN NEPAL

Ms. Juna Mathema, Chairperson of Startup and Innovation Forum at the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Ms. Sadikshya Bhattarai, Research Coordinator at the Centre for the Study of Labour and Mobility, shed light on the challenges and strategies for reintegrating migrant returnees into domestic employment. The discussion was enriched by insights from Mr. Saroj Guragain from the Rural Enterprises and Remittances Project (Samriddhi) at the Ministry of Industry, Commerce, and Supplies, Ms. Madhushika Lansakara, Team Leader of the Reintegration of Returnee Migrant Workers (ReMi) Project at Helvetas, and Ms. Manju Gurung, Co-founder of Pourakhi Nepal. The session was chaired by Mr. Kewal Bhandari, the Secretary at the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security. The session was led by Ms. Salina Bhattarai, Senior Governance, Research and Partnership Coordinator at GovLab.



Ms. Juna Mathema



Ms. Sadikshya Bhattarai

The presenters discussed the multifaceted challenges faced by returning migrants, emphasizing the necessity for comprehensive policies and support systems addressing economic, social, and gender-specific needs. They highlighted the need for comprehensive reintegration addressing economic, social, and psycho-social aspects. Policy attention post-COVID-19 returnee spikes is crucial. Challenges include access to finance, skills mismatch in Nepal's job market, and inadequate information dissemination. Ms. Mathema stressed the importance of understanding returnees' willingness and preparedness. Proposed solutions encompassed in-depth research, mental health support, and government-led awareness campaigns. Recognition of migrants as national heroes was advocated for societal respect.

Manju Gurung focused on the social stigma faced by women returnees and the gender-blind policies hindering their reintegration. She advocated for skill recognition, gender-sensitive programs, and a multi-sectoral approach to address diverse needs.

Madhushika Lansakara emphasized the need to diversify income options and manage existing debts, steering away from perpetuating debt cycles. She highlighted the intricate and diverse nature of returnees' experiences, advocating against a one-size-fits-all strategy.

Saroj Guragain discussed ongoing efforts in developing information-sharing software and referenced successful programs. He stressed the necessity of nuanced approaches tailored to factors like gender, age, skills, and financial status for effective reintegration.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Nuanced Approach: Efforts toward reintegration must move beyond standardized solutions, acknowledging the diverse and intricate factors impacting returnees. Gender, age, skills, and financial status play pivotal roles in tailoring effective programs to meet the varied needs and circumstances of individuals.

Information Access and Program Invisibility: The provision of information emerged as a fundamental requirement for returning migrants and their families. Bridging the gap in knowledge and facilitating access to resources are fundamental aspects necessary to facilitate a successful reintegration process. Limited awareness about existing government programs exacerbates challenges in accessing crucial reintegration assistance.

Debt Management: Addressing the considerable debts accumulated by migrants is of utmost importance. Providing support in managing these financial burdens is essential to break the cycle of perpetual indebtedness that impedes progress.

Financial Entanglements: The reliance on remittances for loan repayments imposes severe financial strains, hindering the ability of returning migrants to invest in local ventures or personal development.

Skill Relevance and Utilization: The acquired expertise abroad often mismatches Nepal's technological landscape, limiting effective contribution to the domestic workforce. Facilitating the economy to leverage the skills of returning migrants has become a primary focus. Expanding income sources and investment avenues to harness their expertise is critical for their successful reintegration.

Sustainability: Highlighting the need for sustainable reintegration endeavors is crucial. Establishing enduring support mechanisms and programs is vital for ensuring long-term success and well-being, extending beyond the initial phases of reintegration.

Gender Disparities and Government Approach: Women migrants encounter unique challenges, including increased vulnerability to abuse and misconduct. They often face difficulties reintegrating into society due to stigma and limited support mechanisms. Additionally, the government, in response to these challenges, has resorted to discouraging women migrants through imposed bans rather than actively seeking bilateral and comprehensive solutions to address their issues. This approach has resulted in limitations rather than effective support measures for women facing difficulties during migration and upon return, further exacerbating their challenges in seeking successful reintegration. Recognizing and actively resolving these challenges are essential for their successful reintegration into society.

Psychosocial Vulnerabilities and Support Extension: Particularly affecting women and informal workers, heightened vulnerabilities stem from abuse, exploitation, and traumatic experiences abroad, significantly impacting their mental health and societal reintegration upon return. It's crucial to extend support not only to the returning migrants but also to those left behind, including spouses, children, and the elderly. Offering comprehensive assistance to these individuals left at home is imperative to address the ripple effects of migration, ensuring their well-being, and facilitating a more holistic reintegration process for returning migrants.

Formal versus Informal Migrants: The disparity between formal and informal workers results in varying support levels, legal complexities, and considerable challenges in accessing services upon their return. Informal migrant workers, despite being more vulnerable, are prevalent within migration channels. It's critical for the government to acknowledge the substantial presence of informal workers, as nearly half of the migrants engage in informal migration channels. This recognition is pivotal in formulating inclusive policies and support systems that cater to the unique needs and vulnerabilities of this significant demographic, ensuring equitable assistance and protection for all migrant workers.

CLOSING REMARKS**Mr. Kewal Bhandari, Secretary, Ministry of Labor, Employment and Social Security**

Mr. Kewal Bhandari, Secretary of the Ministry of Labor, Employment, and Social Security, expressed gratitude for the valuable insights and findings presented. He affirmed a commitment to consider the research findings seriously, including initiatives such as offering psychosocial support and ensuring respect for migrants, among other crucial aspects.



"Psycho-social support such as counseling, child support for single parents, school sensitization programs, gender sensitization programs, skill development training and entrepreneurship-building must also be extended to those "left behind" such as spouse, children, and elderly". - Juna Mathema

"Recognizing the prevalence of vulnerable informal workers in migration is pivotal. Government acknowledgment drives inclusive policies, ensuring fair support for all migrant workers". - Sadikshya Bhattarai



"Reintegrating women demands a redefined approach addressing gender-specific needs and recognizing domestic labor skills. A multi-sectoral strategy is crucial, particularly for women with disabilities, ensuring comprehensive support and acknowledgment. - Manju Gurung

"Migrants are courageous, capable, and curious people. They deserve to be treated with dignity and respect." - Madhushika Lansakara



"We need programs that consider the nuances of returnees' experiences." - Saroj Guragain

KEYNOTE PANEL

THE ROAD TO INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN FEDERAL NEPAL

During the Keynote Panel of National Governance Symposium 2023 moderated by Rupesh Shrestha, Mr. Khom Raj Koirala, Joint Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers focused on the roles and responsibilities of the Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers, emphasizing their role in coordinating, facilitating, and harmonizing efforts to address inclusivity inside and outside the government. Additionally, he gave his remarks on the importance of effective budget allocation and the need for aggregated data collection for better harmonization within the state mechanism.



Mr. Khom Raj Koirala



Ms. Sushila Shahi

Ms. Sushila Shahi, Mayor, Lamki Chuha Municipality emphasized the significance of language inclusivity, women's financial, social and economic empowerment along with an overview of awareness initiatives in Lamki Chuha Municipality. She also stressed on the need of Health Insurance and ban on child marriage in different marginalized communities. She expressed anticipation for the outcomes and progress expected after 18 months of dedicated efforts in the municipality.

Mr. Manoj Kumar Sah, Mayor, Janakpur Metropolitan City, provided an overview of the progress of Janakpur Sub-Metropolitan City, emphasizing their commitment to transparency as a means of addressing inclusivity in development. He also highlighted the importance of inclusivity in local government-operated schools and the formulation of building codes.



Mr. Manoj Kumar Sah



Ms. Sabitra Devi Aryal

Ms. Sabitra Devi Aryal, Deputy Mayor, Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City, discussed investments made in Butwal Sub-Metropolitan City to promote women's financial independence and language inclusivity, emphasizing awareness to encourage local employment. Additionally, she stressed the importance of narrowing the gap between the rich and poor and highlighted the creation of a safe space or forum where individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together for discussions.

Ms. Sangita Subedi, Deputy Mayor of Kohalpur Municipality, discussed measures taken to combat corruption through transparency, including prompt sharing of information publicly. Furthermore, she addressed issues like eliminating nepotism-based quotas, adopting an open ad system for equal opportunities, and placing a focus on reducing excessive spending on events whenever feasible.



Ms. Sangita Subedi



CLOSING SESSION

Dr. Ram Prasad Ghimire, Secretary, Ministry of Finance

In his closing remarks, Dr. Ram Prasad Ghimire, Secretary of the Ministry of Finance highlighted the critical importance of evidence-based policies in advancing governance innovations for inclusive development in Nepal, with a focus on ensuring the meaningful participation of all in decision-making processes. He committed to support the organizers help scale up the findings from this symposium.



Dr. Ram Prasad Ghimire

Mr. Krishna Gyawali, Former Secretary and Senior Governance Advisor, Daayitwa Abhiyaan

Mr. Krishna Gyawali, Former Secretary and senior Governance Advisor at Daayitwa Abhiyaan, emphasized the need for inclusion beyond the quota system and highlighted that addressing existing structural inequality requires intervention from the state, encompassing civil society and the market.



Mr. Krishna Gyawali



Dr. Nisha Onta

VOTE OF THANKS

Dr. Nisha Onta, Founder and Executive Director, Governance Lab

The National Governance Symposium concluded with Dr. Nisha Onta, Executive Director of GovLab, affirming the commitment to ongoing discussions in collaboration with stakeholders through research and policy dialogue. She invited everyone to join the Daayitwa Abhiyaan, extending an open invitation for collective participation in the initiative.

Photo Gallery



Photo Gallery



Photo Gallery





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Sanepa - 3, Lalitpur, Nepal
+977-01-5455739
contact@govlab.com.np
www.govlab.com.np