



PROCEEDING REPORT ON THE NATIONAL GOVERNANCE SYMPOSIUM

2022

MESSAGE FROM CHIEF SECRETARY

Dear all,

I deeply appreciate all the organizers including the Governance Lab for your creativity and hard work in organizing a 2-day National Governance symposium 2022 titled 'Promoting Innovation in Local Governance for Inclusive Economic Development of Nepal'. The symposium succeeded in bringing together the diverse group of governance practitioners and experts from municipal, provincial and federal level and providing a platform for sharing their knowledge and experiences. The symposium has contributed to enhancing our collective understanding of strengthening municipal economic governance and I am confident that the insights will have a positive impact on our society.



The OPMCM was an organizing government partner of symposium along with the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. The concerned agencies in the Government of Nepal will give due consideration to the outcomes of the symposium in their relevant areas of policy process.

I have fond memories of Mr. Shyam Subedi, a Daayitwa Fellow 2014, conducting an important research on the topic 'Big Neighbours and Nepal's Economic Diplomacy' for IFA when I was serving the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since then, I have appreciated the innovative endeavors of Daayitwa in promoting governance innovations and strengthening economic development.

I am confident that the valuable knowledge, wider networks and shared momentum gained through the symposium will further contribute to promote innovation in local governance in Nepal.

Congratulations and thank you all! My best wishes for your future endeavours!

Sincerely Yours,
Mr. Shanker Das Bairagi
Chief Secretary
Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (OPMCM)



I. INTRODUCTION

A. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SYMPOSIUM

Nepal's federal transition in 2015 is premised on addressing gaps in three core aspects of inclusive development: diversity, devolution and discrimination. The World Bank's Global Governance Indicators suggest that between the years 1996 and 2017, citizen voices rose and civic violence reduced in Nepal. However, the nation's road to inclusive development continues to be riddled with grueling governance challenges, including weak policy implementation, high corruption, non-inclusive policy-making, weak gender sensitivity in government institutions, insufficient public innovation, and high trust deficit among governance actors. Especially in the federal context of Nepal, with increased complexity of interactions among myriad stakeholders at the three administrative levels of the government and increased engagement of technology-enabled non-state actors, unraveling the real governance challenges and innovative opportunities has become an urgent need.

Nepal also features many examples of effective governance innovations that have delivered noteworthy results. The engagement of non-state actors, especially at the municipal level, has been beneficial for public governance system. Additionally, Nepal has much to learn from good governance practices from other parts of the world. In order to disseminate and explore such ideas, Governance Lab, with support from various partners, organized a National Governance Symposium on 13th & 14th October 2022. The Symposium became an intellectually rich and politically unbiased learning platform for celebrating, studying and contextualizing models of innovation and collaboration in public service delivery. 12 municipalities from 6 provinces came together to promulgate their learnings about challenges and opportunities. Over 250 people participated in the two-day event held at the Malla Hotel in Kathmandu.

B. OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the symposium were to:

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

C. PARTNERS

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

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



Government of Nepal
**Office of the Prime Minister and
Council of Ministers**



Government of Nepal
**Ministry of Federal Affairs and General
Administration**



Government of Nepal
**National Planning
Commission**



MuAN
Municipal Association of Nepal

FINANCIAL PARTNERS**KNOWLEDGE PARTNERS**

स्थानीय सरकार सबलीकरण



The Australian Government – The Asia Foundation Partnership in Nepal

**D. STRUCTURE OF THE EVENT**

The National Governance Symposium on ‘Promoting Innovation in Local Governance for Inclusive Economic Development of Nepal’ lasted for two days. During the first day, municipalities from across the country shared their public innovations, associated lessons and scale-up opportunities. During the second day, national stakeholders deliberated on ways to institutionalize learning from the first day and scale up policy impact. Both days were marked with keynotes by luminaries and active discussions between public and non-governmental stakeholders through case sessions, governance dialogues, and knowledge seminars.

In particular, the first day had 5 sessions including the inaugural session and four case sessions. The inaugural session consisted of welcome remarks, special remarks and a keynote. Each case session, led by a knowledge partner, consisted of four types of speakers: a chairperson, three presenters from three municipalities, a facilitator and a discussant. The themes for the Case Sessions are enlisted below.

Case Session I: Adaptive Multi-Stakeholder Management

Case Session II: Public Private Partnership

Case Session III: Green, Resilient and Inclusive Development

Case Session IV: Inclusive Policy Making

Similarly, the second day consisted of an opening session, three keynotes, two panel discussions, a seminar, a keynote panel and a declaration for the collective action at the end. The themes explored by the sessions are enlisted below.

Dialogue Session I: Mobilizing Public Resources for Improved Municipal Governance

Dialogue Session II: Strengthening Citizen Engagement for Improved Municipal Governance

Seminar Session I: Building Gender Sensitivity in Government Institutions

Keynote Panel: Road to Innovation in Local Economic Governance

II. SUMMARY OF THE SESSIONS

DAY 1: LEARNING FROM MUNICIPAL INNOVATIONS

INAUGURAL SESSION

Welcome Remarks

Dr. Pukar Malla, Chairperson, Governance Lab

Recalling the journey of starting Governance Lab in bringing together the community and the government, for policy reforms Dr. Malla said, “A decade ago, we started the public service fellowship program to provide youths the platform to collaborate with the government to conduct policy research and promote evidence based policy making decisions. So far, we have hosted 164 fellows, trained in 30 countries, who have worked with 24 parliamentarians, 7 provinces and 74 government bodies including 42 municipalities with a shared mission of evidence-based policy making for an inclusive and enterprising Nepal.” Citing trust deficit among community and the government as a critical challenge, he said, “Daayitwa Fellowship is a prime example of how collaboration between the government and community leads to an emergence of innovative ideas and stronger governance system in Nepal”.



Furthermore, Dr. Malla highlighted that an important part of the problem is that governance is misunderstood as the state of state affairs. “Not surprisingly, we commonly refer to the phrase ‘good governance’ and using the lens of accountability, blame the government solely for the governance challenges,” he said, adding that governance is really an exercise of formal and informal authority by state and non-state actors to ensure a nation’s progress. Dr. Malla also underscored the need for the application of an additional lens of responsibility while promoting effective governance. According to him, the focus should be on innovations through various forms of communication, coordination and collaboration among government, market and civil society actors in managing social and economic resources to ensure inclusive growth.

Special Remarks

Dr. Andrew Long, Head of Governance, Politics & Services, British Embassy in Nepal

Contextualizing the concept of governance in Nepal, Dr. Long emphasized that more than mere interaction and collaboration, governance is fundamentally a social and political process in itself aiming to meet the ambitions of the constitution and federalism, and of Nepal to graduate from the least developed country. In order to strengthen the governance system, the local and provincial governments should focus on the basics of building the systematic blocks such as deliberative decision making, use of data, robust planning as well as monitoring and evaluation. Focusing on problem solving, building trusted relationships, and coalitions among various stakeholders are keys to effective public service delivery.



Mr. Ramesh Adhikari, Election, Legislative and Political Processes Specialist, Democracy and Governance Office, USAID Nepal

Questioning public tendencies to only criticize the government for its accountability, Mr. Adhikari stressed on the need for the joint collaboration among state, market and the citizens. "Good governance will be ensured only if the hopes and expectations from the state are synchronized with the duties and responsibilities of the market and the civil society," he said. He also focused on the importance of synergies among the three levels of government in the context of Nepal's federal transition.



Mr. Madhu Marasini, Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers



Secretary Marasini emphasized how decentralization has positively impacted public service delivery in Nepal. He cited the local governments' effective handling of the Covid-19 crisis, despite being relatively new, as a prime example of this success. He explained the concept of 'Gaun gaun ma Singha Durbar' as the idea that every village has an administrative center responsible for identifying and meeting the unique needs of its citizen. Since local governments play a key role in driving economic development, Marasini urged the government to fully utilize its authority and power to mobilize resources and promote social and economic progress. Additionally, he called for the implementation of innovative schemes to promote employment, economic growth, and overall improvement in the quality of life in rural areas.

Keynote Remarks

Mr. Kalyan Shrestha, Former Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Nepal

Hon. Shrestha described how economic development and good governance are impossible without incorporating the needs and concerns of the marginalized, underprivileged and indigenous communities. According to him, until and unless people are able to raise their voices, either to ask what they want or to complain, development will not take place. "This ability comes from a right to recognition. Inclusion is a matter of their rights and state's accountability," he highlighted. Worried about the disparity that accelerates along with development, he urged the local representatives to take inclusive development into account while planning and implementing any agendas. "We talk about figures when it comes to the budget disseminated by the government but we don't care if those figures are contributing to inclusivity," he said. "Size of budget is not inclusion, outcome is," he said, adding that the benefits of the development must be equitably distributed in order to ensure good governance.



CASE SESSIONS

CASE SESSION I: ADAPTIVE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

The Governance Lab implemented the “Leadership for Economic Governance (LEG)” project in Musikot of Gulmi, Tilotamma of Rupandehi and Sunwal of Nawalparasi with the objective to enhance the innovation and leadership capability of municipal governments through multi-stakeholder collaboration in achieving local economic growth targets. The project was supported by the US Embassy and the Lang Center for Civic and Social Responsibility at Swarthmore College and implemented in collaboration with Nepal Leadership Academy and Daayitwa. The project comprised four components: i) forming and orienting 3 Municipal Economic Governance Committees, composed of government, private sector and civil society actors, ii) providing a 6-module policy leadership course to the Committee members, iii) facilitating the Committee to mobilize municipal task forces in executing 100-day Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs) that utilize the module learnings to address local economic growth challenges and iv) sharing knowledge and experience. The representatives from these partner municipalities shared their experiences at local, national and international level during the first case session.

Presentation 1: Tilotamma - Challenges, Achievements and Key Learnings **Mr. Madhav Pokharel, Section Officer, Tilotamma Municipality**



Tilotamma has been struggling with economic and governance challenges. The low production of local goods and fewer employment opportunities is causing an economic crisis whereas the poor coordination among government, private and civil society stakeholders is hindering the delivery of quality government services. Under the LEG project, the municipality’s goal was to promote youth and women entrepreneurship by collaborating with various stakeholders of the society. The municipality applied the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) approach to promote the use of local resources and train 60 youths in handicraft production. As a result, more than 30 youth trainees have now registered their self-enterprises and started selling their handicraft products.

Mobilization of Ward Chairpersons to disseminate the information as well as coordination among elected representatives and bureaucrats enabled the municipality achieve their goal in 100 days. “As simple as it may sound, we realized that a shared commitment and coordination is key to achieving a common goal”, said Mr. Pokharel, Section Officer at Tilotamma municipality. “Government officials have the capacity but remain untapped owing to the lack of a conducive work environment.” he added.

Presentation 2: Sunwal **Ms. Bimala Aryal, Mayor, Sunwal Municipality**

Job shortage in Sunwal is causing young people to migrate abroad. Poor coordination between political representatives and government officials is aggravating the problem. In order to address these economic and governance challenges, the LEG project aimed to increase domestic employment for women by enhancing coordination and commitment among various policy stakeholders in Sunwal municipality. More specifically, Sunwal's goal was to make 66% of 39 women enrolled for training in the 100-day RRI register their enterprises.” To achieve this goal, 39 aspiring women entrepreneurs received orientation about women entrepreneurship and training in tailoring enterprises. 100% of 39 trained women successfully registered their businesses with the municipality, as a consequence of the disciplined process followed by the team to achieve the set target.



The challenge faced during the successful implementation of the project was the time management among political representatives and the bureaucrats. "Even though the Mayor and Deputy Mayor came from different parties, we were able to build trust by meeting frequently and sharing progress and learnings," said Bimala Aryal, the current Mayor of Sunwal municipality, adding that if all required stakeholders are involved from the beginning of a project, it is easier to attain the goals as they are collectively responsible for both positive and negative outcomes of the intervention. Since the RRI model is a new concept, municipalities questioned its legitimacy at the outset. It took a while for the municipality to develop trust in the model. However, towards the end, RRI was applauded and perceived as an effective tool for solving problems since it played a crucial role in supporting the municipality to promote women entrepreneurship.

Presentation 3: Musikot

Mr. Janak Poudel, Section Officer, Musikot Municipality



The RRI task force in Musikot worked to address the youth employment challenge exacerbated by the inefficient land use and low crop production through efficient collaboration among the market, state and the community actors. Their specific goal included: "Among 100 trained youths, 100% of them will have their enterprises registered, out of which 50% will have access to financial loans." The project aimed to boost local entrepreneurship and youth employment by implementing agricultural initiatives, which included training in animal husbandry and crop farming, among other skills. The steering committee and task force members collaborated to achieve this goal successfully, resulting in the creation of 100 young agri-entrepreneurs in just 100 days.

The key to the project's success lay in the involvement of government teams, which enabled them to discuss core problems and arrive at localized solutions. This approach empowered the municipality to achieve ambitious outcomes, utilizing the strengths and resources of the local community. Moreover, the project's success was also due to the engagement of the private sector, who played a critical role in supporting the project's implementation and ensuring its sustainability. Mr. Poudel highlighted this point, emphasizing the importance of public-private partnerships in community development projects.

Discussant Remarks

Ms. Binda Magar, Policy Advisor (Governance) and Assistant Resident Representative (Programme)

Ms. Magar shared that the local government guidelines for economic development have been prepared and will be distributed to 753 municipalities. She also shared about the innovative partnership fund set up to address the needs of local governments, and that the coordination and implementation would be carried out by the provincial government. She emphasized the importance of regular learning and sharing during the coordination process, with a focus on women entrepreneurs and marginalized groups.



Chairperson Remarks

Mr. Trilochan Pokharel, Senior Director of Studies, Nepal Administrative Staff College

“The theme of this symposium has brought two important elements—innovation and development – into discussion,” said Mr. Trilochan Pokharel, Chairperson for the Session. “At this point we have two choices, either accept the gaps and shortcomings in the policy and governance system of Nepal and give up in despair or we have to step forward in some way,” he said. The responsibility, according to Mr. Pokharel, largely falls upon the local governments, who need to learn, unlearn and innovate to improve their performance.

They need to recognize, reinvent and reassert their already credible titles and responsibilities. He also highlighted that resource crunch is not always a problem rather the absorption and utilization capacity is. “The local municipalities have enough resources to bring economic reforms. The stakeholders need to come together to identify the needs and mobilize the resources properly,” he added.



CASE SESSION II: PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP

The Economic Policy Incubator (EPI), launched in February 2016, works as a facilitator to bridge the gap among government, civil society, and the private sector. It helps build an understanding of policy problems, provides inputs on policy alternatives, and supports the planning and prioritization of initiatives. In particular, it provides technical expertise to the local and provincial sector in the field of public financial management. It has supported the government in preparing a medium-term expenditure framework and five-year plan of Nepal among others. EPI, which is currently working in Madhesh, Karnali, and Lumbini provinces, intends to contribute to creating a favorable environment for community participation and private sector involvement in the region. Three of their partner municipalities: Tansen, Tilotamma and Waling, attended the symposium to share their experiences in promoting public-private partnership.

Presentation 1: Tansen

Mr. Durga Bahadur Thapa, Senior Officer, Tansen Municipality



Tansen recently initiated an intervention to improve waste management practices to reduce, reuse and recycle the waste generated. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to mobilize investments for these initiatives. Another challenge is the difficulty in opening a landfill site for garbage disposal due to public critique. To mitigate this issue, a waste management project is being implemented to recycle and manage biodegradable wastes so that they don't end up in the landfill. On the policy level, there are many challenges such as negotiating with the private sector and the lack of experts at the local level, which has hindered the projects from moving forward. The procurement process and financial analysis also pose challenges because the risks of investments in these long-term projects are high.

Despite these challenges, it has been learned that if an investment-friendly environment is created, comprehensive plans can be implemented. With institutional will, support can be received from partner organizations. Additionally, the projects will be sustainable if they are reviewed and moved forward with the help of experts. To ensure the success of PPP projects, they should be carried forward only after ensuring the letter of intent along with land management and budget allocation agreements with the government agencies and stakeholders.

Presentation 2: Tilottama**Mr. Madhav Pokharel, Section Officer, Tilottama Municipality**

The municipality has taken steps to improve the community's waste management system by procuring the necessary mechanisms and infrastructure for garbage disposal. This includes the development and management of essential infrastructure for waste management. However, the indicators to identify priorities for the PPP model remain unclear. The political parties involved in the project have never carried out a similar project. Local investors and the private sector have little trust and political clout to take existing projects to newer heights. These projects have the potential for greater returns, however need proper execution and long term investment to function satisfactorily.

Without the public and private sectors collaborating the project will be difficult to implement. Political commitment is crucial as the majority of actors must use cooperation for development which would bring about improved livelihoods. PPP initiatives are a relatively new concept at the local level; proper coordination and discussion needs to be carried out before implementation and during execution of projects. Proper orientation programs on laws and policies regarding PPP for the local representatives and administration must be organized. Streamlined communication strategies prioritize initiatives under the PPP model and help actors unfamiliar with the system understand the importance and needs of the model.

Presentation 3: Waling**Mr. Rajan Bhattarai, Chief Administrative Officer, Waling Municipality**

The government has designated Waling as one of its Smart Cities for development, but successful execution will require proper research and support from the National Planning Commission (NPC). At the policy level, the municipality has already established the Public-Private Partnership Act 2075 and Draft Public-Private Partnership Regulations 2079. On the project front, a variety of initiatives - ranging from small to large - have been identified, such as the Surkawadi land pooling project, local industrial management project, and Marsyankot paragliding project. The municipality has already begun collaborating with the private sector on waste management and other similar projects.

However, challenges remain, such as the lack of common understanding among stakeholders and the need for support from the federal Ministry of Urban Development. Mr. Bhattarai urges the federal government to provide investment for significant PPP projects, establish a local unit for designing and developing local projects, and requests the private sector to prioritize infrastructure and services in municipal development.

Discussant Remarks**Ms. Sirjana Ale, Economist, Nepal Urban Resilience Project, BEK-FCDO**

There is a lack of collaboration and competent human resources, making it difficult to properly implement PPP at the local level. Accountability, support, and trust are crucial for PPP success. Investment summits are a good opportunity to build awareness and momentum. One obstacle is how to categorize and differentiate projects. A suggestion is to use a BOOT model (build, own, operate, transfer) with proper criteria for each project and a hybrid funding model including development partners and challenge funds to mitigate risks and attract the private sector.



Chairperson Remarks

Dr. Kewal Bhandari, Secretary, National Planning Commission



Closing the session, the Secretary highlighted the significance of knowledge sharing among the municipalities, education and transport sectors as priority areas and the role of project readiness filtering to effectively mainstream public private partnership in Nepal.

Experiences have proved that PPPs have enabled governments to benefit from the expertise of the private sector, however, a number of PPP hurdles remain proper prioritization of the work, duplication among government initiatives, inadequate project planning process, low trust in the private sector, weak procurement system, and poor implementation of the projects. It is important for the local government to reflect on the past five years and use those experiences to inform their decisions moving forward.

By analyzing both the successes and failures of the previous administration, the new government should identify areas for improvement and build upon the progress that has been made. He concluded, "The focus of all three levels of government should be on graduation of Nepal from the least developed country status, which is only possible through the collaboration of government with community, CSOs, and the private sector."



CASE SESSION III: GREEN, RESILIENT AND INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT (GRID)

The Sudridh - Nepal Urban Resilience Programme (NURP) - works with Nepal's national, provincial and municipal governments to support green, resilient, and inclusive urban development. It aims to enhance urban resilience by supporting inclusive economic growth, improving urban planning for green development, and increasing the effectiveness of institutions to support green investments. NURP is currently providing technical assistance to Butwal, Janakpurdham and Pokhara municipalities.

Presentation 1: Butwal**Mr. Tek Raj Panthi, Chief Administrative Officer, Butwal Metropolitan City**

The metropolitan city has several aims, including long-term use of land, establishment of public parks and the preparation of disaster risk reduction measures. However, there are also challenges such as a lack of periodic plans, river encroachment that has caused natural calamities, and a high risk associated with landslides. Epidemics like Covid19 and dengue have also hindered the desired achievement. To address these issues, the city has established disaster management committees in all the wards. It has also prepared guidelines for environment conservation and development at the local level alongside localizing the guidelines regarding GRID developed by the provincial government. The city is also working towards decreasing the carbon emission, collaborating with organizations for the roadside plantation and collecting the fee to solve the drainage water problem.

**Presentation 2: Janakpur****Ms. Jamuna Bhujel, Ward Secretary, Janakpur Sub-Metropolitan City**

Janakpur has been actively working to protect and promote religious shrines in order to establish the sub-metropolitan city as a hub for religious and cultural tourism. The city is rich in Mithila art and has benefited from the GRID program. The municipality has been supporting women artists by forming the Mithila Art Association, linking entrepreneurs with the Janakpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and connecting with other relevant stakeholders to provide networking and economic opportunities. The collaboration among various stakeholders is yielding productive results. Programs and policies such as the Local Government Operation Act, Janakpur Heritage Volunteer Bureau Guidelines, and building standards guidelines under the GRID program have been created through a participatory approach to ensure good governance.

The municipality has internalized the concept of GRID in their ongoing programs, however, as the municipal leaders are new to GRID, it is taking time for proper planning and implementation. There is a need for guidelines for local, provincial and state governments on collaborating effectively.



Presentation 3: Pokhara

Mr. Dhana Raj Acharya, Mayor, Pokhara Metropolitan City



NURP has supported the study and design of a Pokhara cycle route connecting Pokhara's main lakes as an opportunity to promote sustainable tourism and local economic growth along the route. Pokhara has been involved in making a fellowship program for youths based on green projects. Additionally, as a national vision to guide long-term green growth and build resilience to climate and other shocks, Pokhara has envisioned going digital. Mr. Acharya mentioned, "11% people in Pokhara are below poverty line. We are trying to identify them towards the planning of inclusive and sustainable development." Pokhara is trying to revive the settlement "chautaras" that were lost to urbanization. He also provided a grim picture of how everyone is focused on terrace farming but keeping their lands barren. The city has implemented a few innovative plans and programs, such as sustainable tree plantation, where every household is required to plant at least two trees.

Knowledge about agriculture is made accessible through apps for all related stakeholders, and business promotion centers have been established to promote entrepreneurship. They have also made a list of unemployed people to identify the kind of roles that can be assigned to them. Mr. Acharya also urged the federal government to amend the vague laws, reduce the duplication of various acts and come up with ways to treat rural municipalities and metropolitan cities differently.

Commentator Remarks

Ms. Shilshila Acharya, Director, Avni Ventures

Ms. Acharya, a climate activist, suggested that local governments play a key role in creating green cities. She emphasizes the importance of revising housing codes to promote environmentally friendly homes and promoting self-sufficiency and digitalization. She also called for increased opportunities for youth and addressing gender equality in decision making. She also highlighted the importance of prioritizing sustainable tourism over mass tourism.



Chairperson Remarks

Dr. Baikuntha Aryal, Ministry of communications, Information and Technology



"Local levels need to utilize existing incentive structures in the fiscal space that comes with the adoption of the GRID approach," said Mr. Aryal. He also urged projects like Sudridh to focus on fitting their structural recommendations into actual actions on the ground. 'Let jargon be translated into practice and let reports come out from their shelves.' Focusing on the concept of co-learning, he said "What your adjacent municipality does affect your municipality so the collaborative approach to development is the most sustainable way."

CASE SESSION IV: INCLUSIVE POLICY MAKING



The Sub-National Governance Program (SNGP) at 'The Asia Foundation' aims to create inclusive policies at the local level to foster economic growth. Many programs at the local level suffer from a lack of policies and regulations, as well as a lack of long-term vision and planning, which have hindered the process of economic development. SNGP is a program that aims to empower local governments and make them more inclusive of citizens, so that they can better serve the community. It aims to shift decision-making power closer to the people, and make the government more responsive to the needs of the community. It aims to shift decision-making power closer to the people, and make the government more responsive to the needs of the community. The project is working towards making local governments self-reliant by developing an inclusive policy in all seven provinces. Three partner municipalities of the SNGP, Bhimeshwar, Birendranagar and Tikapur, presented at this session.

Presentation 1: Birendranagar

Mr. Narahari Tiwari, Chief Administrative Officer, Birendranagar Municipality

The Birendranagar Municipality is working towards becoming a sub-metropolitan city by achieving the target of 2.7 crore income in collaboration with private sectors like FNCCI and co-operatives. The municipality has put in place around 100 rules and acts related to economic growth and inclusion and now aims to implement these projects. They are focused on increasing production and promoting entrepreneurship, specifically for women-led and small organizations. Additionally, the municipality is working to promote local organic products such as allo and medicinal herbs. To increase employment, they have allocated a budget of 1 crore and created different zones for various products, with a focus on income-generating activities. The local government is also providing training programs such as rickshaw driving, beauty salon training, and security guard training.



They are also focused on fishing and fruit production in the southern part of the region, as well as generating employment through tourism destinations like Bulbule Taal. Despite having enough laws and human resources, the Birendranagar Municipality lacks a proper periodic plan which is essential to effectively and efficiently utilize its resources and achieve its goals. The municipality also faces additional challenges such as managing a large mobile population and street families, which are estimated at almost 1.5 lakhs. To address this, the municipality has created nine centers to manage these numbers, but it expects support from the provincial government. The municipality also recognizes the need to improve its road infrastructure to improve market access. This is important to not only support the local businesses but also to attract more investment and economic growth. "The problem is not with the lack of resources, but with the attitude towards mobilizing them," remarked Mr. Tiwari.

Presentation 2: Tikapur

Mr. Mangal Bahadur Shahi, Chief Administrative Officer, Tikapur Municipality

In Tikapur, TAF has supported policy-making in the field of annual budgeting and economic development for the next 5 years. Tikapur is famous for bananas and betbaas. In order to create a self-reliant economy, Tikapur aims to expand commercial banana production by manufacturing and promoting the business of banana chips and wine. Lastly, by promoting tourism activities, Tikapur is also trying to generate employment opportunities in the tourism sector. While the municipality is working towards economic reforms through its innovative approaches, the challenges lie in designing a long term vision for the municipality that caters to the marginalized and vulnerable communities as well. Tikapur is facing several issues such as migration, low-skill labor, and limited access to value-chain based markets. However, there are also opportunities for growth in areas such as group agriculture farming, agro-tourism, cottage and small industries based on indigenous knowledge (bananas, betel leaves), and a large youth population.

The challenges to be addressed include risk-bearing in innovative businesses, access to markets and capital, and a lack of technical skills. The city is working to address these challenges while also leveraging the opportunities to drive economic growth and inclusion.



Presentation 3: Bhimeshwar

Mr. Ishwor Narayan Manandhar, Mayor, Bhimeshwar Municipality



Bhimeshwar has given special emphasis to tourism. It aims to promote tourism by preserving cultural heritage, historic monuments and sites. The municipality has also allocated funds for identification of adventure tourism products and destinations. Additionally, the municipality is focused on infrastructure development, including building an airport, for overall development of Bhimeshwar Municipality. A feasibility study for the airport was conducted so that people here have easy access to the federal capital. The municipality began planning for the airport after considering the growing number of tourists visiting the district, increased mobility of people due to under-construction hydropower projects, and the poor condition of the single road connecting the area to Kathmandu, the capital city.

Local government schemes and interventions to promote animal rearing and agriculture is also the top priority. Such effort will contribute to increasing potential production and entrepreneurship. However, the challenges lie in the lack of common understanding among the public and private sectors.



Discussant Remarks

Dr. Kalpana Khanal, Senior Research Fellow, Policy Research Institute



After the implementation of the new constitution, fiscal federalism arrived as a means of transferring resources from the central to local level. However, representation is not happening in accordance with the constitution and policymaking does not include marginalized groups. Without this representation, it is uncertain how the conversation of inclusivity will progress. To address this, steps should be taken to empower and increase representation of women in local communities. "Intersectionality is critically important to ensure GESI is truly captured in local planning and governance", said Dr. Khanal. While conducting research on programs that train entrepreneurs, it was found that many were left incomplete and became unsustainable, primarily due to a lack of localization. Instead of trying to tackle many issues at once, it would be more effective to group them into different areas and address them accordingly.

Lack of data in the central government makes it difficult to assess the status of all groups in terms of number and economic status. Empowerment should not be limited to one privileged group, but should include women from all groups. It is also important to identify those people who will be affected by the government's infrastructural development programs and to mitigate any issues they may face. Inclusiveness should be a key consideration when deciding the distribution of resources and long-term empowerment should be the goal, rather than short-term vision.

Chairperson Remarks

Dr. Toya Narayan Gyawali, Secretary, Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies

Federalism shifted the power and resources from central to local level. While the aim of the constitution is inclusive resource distribution, it is merely on paper. The incomplete data about the status of different groups in terms of population, economic status, hinders the ability to distribute resources fairly among all groups of people. "For inclusive economic growth, coherent actions across the policy cycle, from design and implementation to evaluation is required," said Dr. Gyawali, "Participatory mechanisms promote an inclusive policy making process."



DAY 2: SCALING UP MUNICIPAL GOVERNANCE INNOVATIONS

KEYNOTE REMARKS II

Dr. Swarnim Wagle, Chairperson, Institute of Integrated Development Studies



Dr. Swarnim Wagle delivered the opening keynote for the second day. He argued that federalism has not been given a fair chance since its constitutionalizing in 2015 due to the heavily divided public and political opinion over its adoption. The failure to create an environment for federalism to flourish was reflected in the performance of local governments. He spoke about the importance of implementing truly innovative financing and citizens feedback mechanisms, also highlighting the need for digitization to increase local governance efficiency.

He added that engaging local citizens and promoting financial literacy are paramount for ensuring accountability, transparency, and overall good governance. "We don't need to look very far for knowledge or learn from experiences. We can focus on things homegrown and from each other", Dr. Wagle concluded.

Dialogue Session I: Mobilizing Public Resources for Improved Municipal Governance

The dialogue session moderated by Mr. Prateek Pradhan, the Editor in Chief at Baahrakhari Media, brought into focus the crucial need for clear communication and cooperation among various levels of government to effectively mobilize public resources. The session highlighted the significance of Joint service arrangements, whereby different levels of government can synergize their resources and expertise to provide services or achieve specific goals, resulting in enhanced service delivery and cost-effectiveness. However, to reap the full benefits of such arrangements, a clear understanding of each party's roles and responsibilities, as well as establishing transparent lines of communication and cooperation, are essential to avoid duplication of services and reduce administrative costs.

Hon. Asta Laxmi Shakya, Former Chief Minister, Bagmati Province Government

The coordination and monitoring of national development plans prepared by provinces fall under the responsibility of the National Planning Commission (NPC). However, due to inadequate oversight by the NPC, there were issues with the plans submitted by provinces, particularly regarding the sources of budget and expenditure. Local governments must prioritize the immediate needs of their municipality during the allocation of resources to ensure that urgent issues are addressed promptly. This requires careful planning and decision-making to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of resource utilization. NPC can assist by providing guidance and support, offering insights into best practices and technical expertise to develop effective plans that align with community needs.



Dr. Govinda Pokharel, Former Vice Chairperson, National Planning Commission

The Resource Mobilization Framework is a provision in the constitution that allows for the collection and use of resources at the local level. However, in practice, there may be limitations in the ability of local governments to effectively mobilize resources. One solution could be to establish a system for resource mobilization that involves the participation of local politicians, experts, and the community. This system should aim to increase the ability to mobilize resources while minimizing conflicts with the public by providing training to the team on how to innovatively generate and mobilize public resources. A good learning example is of Manohara Rural Municipality, which collects around 50 crores of the revenue from the raw materials required for the construction. The local government's recent approach of copying the federal government's institutional structure has been misguided, as it has led to the creation of political institutions rather than economic ones that drive economic growth.



The municipality should focus on becoming self-reliant by developing innovative ways to generate and mobilize resources, rather than relying heavily on other levels of government. To achieve this, a shift in culture and perception is necessary. The municipal government should focus on developing new, innovative ways to generate more revenues by producing entrepreneurs and income generation activities.

Mr. Bhim Prasad Dhungana, Chairperson, Municipality Association of Nepal and Mayor, Nilkantha Municipality



The confusion or uncertainty regarding the allocation of budget and responsibilities between the province and local government, specifically municipalities, still persists. This is due to a lack of clear guidelines or laws outlining the specific responsibilities of each level of government, or a lack of communication and cooperation among the different levels of government. The local government should be provided with enough budget if they are the ones implementing the plans. For example, the authority for home rental tax is granted to the provincial government while it should have been provided to the local government. NPC can play a pivotal role in clearing confusion and uncertainty regarding the allocation of budget and responsibilities among different levels of government.

Hon. Balananda Poudel, Chairperson, National Natural Resource and Fiscal Commission

It is important for local governments to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of their governing unit, development unit, and service unit. The governing unit is responsible for making policy decisions and providing oversight for the municipality. The development unit is responsible for planning and implementing programs and projects to promote economic and social development. The service unit is responsible for providing services to the community, such as public works and utilities, public safety, and other essential services. One way to properly mobilize the resources is the use of joint service arrangements, where different levels of government can combine their resources and expertise to provide specific services or achieve specific goals.



Such arrangements can be cost-effective, as they can help to avoid duplication of services and reduce administrative costs. It can be a useful tool for local governments to enhance their service delivery and achieve their goals, but it is important to have a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each party, and to establish clear lines of communication and cooperation.

Commentator Remarks

Ms. Smriti Sharma, Head of Public Sector Engagement and New Initiatives, Nepal Infrastructure Bank



Most of the budget gets frozen because the municipalities are not able to mobilize it using innovative mechanisms. The four key reasons being weak resource planning among three levels of government, inadequate support from provincial government to local level, the municipal government's inefficiency in collaborating with the private sectors and weak local capability in utilizing resources. Local governments should involve the private sector right from the beginning of planning and executing the budget so that the latter can guide them properly.

Furthermore, municipal resources can be both internal and external. Local governments should come up with innovative ideas to generate and mobilize its internal resources such as streamlining the tax, investing it in employment generation and service oriented activities.

Municipal governments should analyze the risk mitigation factors to secure the external resources. It is of utmost importance for all the stakeholders to have a common vision. "We need to stop the blame game and execute our responsibilities productively," Ms. Sharma concluded. .

KEYNOTE REMARKS III

Building Gender Sensitivity in Government Institutions

Prof. Soledad Prillaman, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Stanford University

Prof. Prillaman shared global perspectives on the reason behind existing gender disparity in politics. According to her, researchers have derived two reasons behind the differences. Firstly, there is little demand for women in public office. The second explanation is that there is a little supply of women contesting office. Limited supply is either because women do not put themselves forward because of the constraints of time or because of the way that institutions allocate tickets. In the global context, researchers have actively found that 82% of women candidates actively opt out of politics. This can be attributed to the scarcity of financial and knowledge resources, as well as limited networking opportunities. According to Prillaman's research, women are more likely to have few political connections, despite the recent upsurge in formal social networks aimed at empowering women financially and encouraging them to engage in politics.



"If we work on these two aspects, we could see a rise in the representation of women in politics," she said, underscoring how it is equally important to ensure that women's representation is recognized widely and perceived as important. "Speaking of Nepal, there has been a decline in the number of women representing politics in recent years," she said. "However, the presence of women across political institutions is very important to create a conducive GESI-friendly environment in politics."

Seminar Session

The seminar, moderated by Dr. Nisha Onta, executive director and Dr. Dhruva Bhandari, research fellow at Governance Lab focused on the exclusion of women and marginalized social groups from Nepal's mainstream politics and society, and the urgent need for a plan to address this issue. The seminar explores the lack of support and resources for women's leadership, the importance of involving the bureaucracy and educating leaders on gender sensitivity, and the need to challenge the perception of politics as a male-dominated domain.

Dr. Binda Pandey, Politician and Author of 'Women in Nepali Politics'

Leadership of women representatives is largely ignored across bureaucratic, political, and community circles. Dr. Pandey emphasized that, to strengthen gender sensitivity in government institutions, political leaders should actively involve and engage the bureaucracy in decision-making and implementation processes. According to Dr. Pandey, "The first thing we need to focus on is instilling the economic and social values of gender sensitivity among leaders. This includes educating them on the importance of understanding and addressing the different needs, rights, and interests of women and men, as well as non-binary individuals and changing their attitudes. We have always focused on empowering women, but now we should shift our focus to empowering leaders in positions.



So far, we have focused on changing the 'pranali' (system) rather than the 'prawriti' (attitude)." When discussing the challenges faced by women in defending gender leadership within the central committee, she mentioned that achieving 33% representation in the committee was a significant task. "The decision-making process was often hindered and ultimately controlled by a group of dominant persons who were male." This highlights the lack of support and recognition for women's leadership within the committee and the tendency for men to dominate decision-making processes. Additionally, it indicates a lack of systems and resources in place to support women's participation and representation in leadership roles.

Dr. Sucheta Pyakurel, Director, Center for Governance, Institute of Integrated Development Studies

In her presentation, Dr. Pyakurel stressed on four focus areas that policy making process should pay close attention to. "First, we need to change the narrative of public and private spheres. Public spheres are often considered to be masculine, hence the depiction that women don't belong to the politics need to be changed," she said. "The second focus area is the study of state-women interface, how the state is treating women needs to be identified, and a study on how to negate public patriarchy is also important. The third area that needs attention is the experiences of women as participants in politics. The fourth area is the engagement of civil society in women's movements."



Dr. Bipin Adhikari, Professor of Law, Kathmandu University School of Law

The most pressing issue facing Nepal in its recent history has arguably been the exclusion of women and various social groups from the mainstream of state and society. "The story of their marginalization in all spheres of public life—social, political, economic, and cultural—has been the dominant feature of the political discourse in the country for over two decades," said Dr. Bipin Adhikari. At the same time, various legislative devices have been introduced over the years to ensure that previously excluded groups are brought into the mainstream of the Nepali polity and society. "If we were to strictly adhere to the constitution, we would be able to implement GESI sensitivity within institutions," he said. "Currently, we lack a plan to tackle this issue.

For instance, the Election Commission could play a crucial role in holding parties accountable for not nominating enough female candidates, however, we are not putting enough pressure on them. We must adopt a human rights approach when implementing GESI at local level projects. This should not be a one-time effort, but rather a continuous effort."

Commentator Remarks**Ms. Bimala Aryal, Mayor, Sunwal Municipality**

The Mayor agreed to everyone's idea that the immediate need is to change the perspective of the people working in and with the government in order to incorporate gender sensitivity in government institutions. She shared the efforts made by her municipality, stating that the Sunwal Municipality has been declared as the first child-friendly municipality in the country and they are now working towards creating a safe space for women. To achieve this, they have established a women cell committee in all the wards. The municipality is also working towards empowering women by producing women entrepreneurs. They are doing this by providing them with training and access to the market.

KEYNOTE REMARKS IV**Prof. Ben Berger, Associate Professor of Political Science and Executive Director, Lang Center for Civic & Social Responsibility, Swarthmore College**

According to Professor Berger, federalism is a system to look up to as it provides equal opportunities for people from different areas. "During the 1830's era, townships were treated as local governments. At the time, local governments were given significant power and involved high citizen engagement," he said. Although a choice theorist would argue that such engagements stemmed from a selfish point of view where the individual involved would reap benefits, specifically political benefits along with local benefits. However, despite the existence of such systems, when we look at municipal elections, the voter turnout is below 20% of the voting population in the United States of America. This trend is pertinent as active voters are involved heavily in national and international politics.

Their attention is passively vested in higher levels of governance, leaving local politics to only a select few who have the time to remain interested. The only way to change this narrative is to engage citizens in policy dialogues and political discussions of the local government. Only a local government with a stronger citizen engagement can successfully work towards economic and governance reform.



Dialogue Session II: Strengthening Citizen Engagement for Improved Municipal Governance

The panelists at the panel discussion moderated by Mr. Kiran Chapagain, Executive Director at Nepal Policy Institute argued that increased civil engagement ensures inclusiveness and representation of voices in liberal democracy that the Nepali constitution talks about. The speakers noted how the aspiring government representatives and politicians behave as if it is only important to engage with citizens during the election and largely ignore the same once the votes are in. However, according to the speakers, civic engagement is supposed to be a continuous process, and the local representatives should be accessible by the people at all times. When discussing how the cultural and gender dynamics, political context affects citizen engagement, a panelist portrayed the scenario of women being ignored during the decision making processes.

Ms. Mohna Ansari, Human Rights Activist and Former Commissioner, National Human Rights Commission



After the transition to federalism, citizens have great expectations from the local government. When it comes to civic engagement, the current tendency is for the government to engage with citizens only during elections. However, civic engagement should be viewed as a continuous process. It's important to go to citizens' houses for service delivery and listen to their concerns. With regards to the slow transition into federalism, it is difficult to predict for how long Nepal will continue to face challenges. During the insurgency, there was a Mediation Project for civic engagement which served as a good model. The local government can use it as a learning tool to improve civic engagement in the future.

It is important to address the needs of citizens at the bottom, particularly in regards to issues such as climate change. For example, farmers are often the most affected by climate change, so it is our job to ensure that they have access to the resources they need, such as water, compost, and manure, and that they have bargaining power in the market for these resources.

Additionally, when we think about farmers, the image of a man often comes to mind, however, many have observed that men have left villages for foreign employment, leaving women and elderly people to take care of the farms and markets. There was a time when public auditing was popular, but now it has been ignored. It is important to ensure that the government is held accountable through public audit and that the needs of all citizens, particularly those at the bottom, are being met.

Mr. Hari Bahadur Thapa, Author and Journalist

When it comes to policy making decisions in parliament, even the entire group of 601 people don't get to vote, let alone the general public. Even when there are civic engagement programs in place, only those who are in the party and have flattering things to say are prioritized, while those who dare to speak out and criticize are left behind. The focus is only on those who vote for their party. Civic engagement has been misused in many ways. Women in Terai have complained that the Ward Officer and Chairperson do not even invite them to the decision-making process and only come to collect biometrics with compensation.



Dr. Gopi Khanal, Principal Secretary, Office of the Chief Minister and Council of Ministers, Karnali Province Government



The constitution of Nepal includes provisions that promote and protect civic engagement. There are two types of ways locals can get involved in civic engagement programs. The first is through youth clubs, women's groups, and similar grassroots organizations. The second is through programs established by the government. It is important for the government to ensure that civic engagement programs are inclusive and accessible to all members of the community, regardless of their socio-economic status, gender, or other factors. This will lead to more sustainable and equitable development outcomes. "Citizens always have the capacity to contribute, the only question is whether our structures have given them the space to support and utilize their capacity.

It is more about providing opportunities than it is about assessing capabilities. When citizens are given the opportunity to participate and engage with the government, their willingness to cooperate and contribute becomes apparent. It's important to create a system that encourages and enables citizens to participate in the decision-making process and to contribute to the development of their community", he said.

Commentator Remarks

Dr. Keshav Acharya, Governance Advisor (Local Governance and Capacity Development), German Development Cooperation



The problem of weak civic engagement is that the political system is often captured, making it difficult for citizens to get involved. The needs and concerns of citizens are not reflected in the electoral process, this is often referred to as "chaurya tantra" in Nepal. It is important for government and political leaders to be held accountable to their citizens and to create a political system that allows for active participation and engagement of citizens. This can be achieved by implementing mechanisms for transparency, public participation and accountability at all levels of governance, and by ensuring that the voices and concerns of citizens are taken into account in policy-making and decision-making processes.

Mr. Narayan Adhikari, Co-Founder and Nepal Country Lead, Accountability Lab

To ensure that citizens are able to participate fully in the decision-making processes of their government, it is important to create structures that give them access to information and opportunities for engagement. Technology can be a powerful tool for engaging citizens, such as through online forums and social media platforms. Governments should embrace technology to make it easier for citizens to participate in decision-making processes.



Closing Keynote Panel: Road to Innovation in Local Economic Governance

The panel moderated by Mr. Rupesh Shrestha, Editor in Chief, Galaxy 4K Television consisted of 10 local political representatives from 10 municipalities across 6 provinces of Nepal. The panel was guided by various questions that included topics such as the nature and effectiveness of past, current and future economic programs and plans that impact the local citizens.



Tansen: Most people in Tansen are involved in agriculture as the majority of the wards are rural. Development in Tansen is difficult unless there is growth in both agriculture in rural areas and tourism in urban areas. In addition to focusing on the development of agriculture and tourism, Tansen is also making efforts to empower women and women-led small enterprises by cooperating with INGOs and NGOs. The community is also moving towards promoting youth self-employment as a means of economic development.

Waling: In order to achieve sustainable development, Waling has implemented several initiatives, including providing subsidized loans and depositing 2 crore in Nepal Bank Limited as a fund for further assistance. Additionally, to promote economic growth and inclusiveness, Waling has set aside 1 crore for loans to support innovative enterprises. To support innovators and entrepreneurs, Waling has established centers with 40 mentors to provide training, economic assistance, and accounting education, with the goal of reducing the number of young people leaving the country. So far, 1033 entrepreneurs have been created in Waling, with 80% being women. Additionally, women in risky situations are provided with timely funding to support their economic involvement. A previous survey shows an increase in women's inclusiveness as a result of these efforts.

Sunwal: Sunwal is actively promoting agriculture and decreasing import by collaborating with donor organizations in utilizing barren lands (after soil testing) to become self-sufficient. In order to drive economic growth, Sunwal is focusing on the idea of "one-person one business" and planning various training programs to support this initiative. Another project, "Ek Ban Ek Batika" is also underway, which aims to plant crops that will promote economic activity. The community is also planning to start Bel forestation in community forests, with the goal of making it a profitable enterprise that can be exported both domestically and internationally.

Musikot: During these 5 years, the municipality has focused on road construction in all wards. In 10-15 wards, the municipality also formed women's groups and established dairy enterprises, which have further collaborated to form an animal rearing group (Pashupalan Samuha). Women are becoming entrepreneurs as well. The municipality is providing 2 Lakh loan without collateral and 20 Lakh loan with loan collateral. However, some individuals with larger ambitions are unable to open due to bank restrictions. To support farmers, Musikot is also separating budgets for the development of Krishi Upaj Kendra and working to assure the selling of their products.

Pokhara: Pokhara has made a decision to invest 3% in women-led enterprises to empower women and create more opportunities for them. Another priority is to decrease foreign employment and create employment opportunities within the municipality. The municipality's two main priorities are to improve connectivity through road, water and to make it a tourist destination.

Bhimeshwor: The focus moving forward in Bhimeshwor Municipality is to prioritize economic development in urban areas and agriculture and livestock in rural areas.

Tikapur: Adhering to the master plan and undertaking repairs and maintenance will lead to the development of Tikapur. The municipality is also working to generate employment opportunities and promote entrepreneurship by establishing specialized departments. Additionally, the municipality sees potential for growth in areas such as environmental conservation and tourism development.

Nilkantha: Nilkantha municipality is promoting entrepreneurship by offering low-cost funding schemes through the Mayor Udhymshil Karyakram. For example, the municipality provides 2 lakhs to the internally displaced people. It makes the process transparent by asking them to submit a proposal. Additionally, it offers discounted insurance by 90% for livestock and agriculture, and also provides free ambulance services for women.

Birendranagar: The municipality's responsibilities include providing access to clean drinking water and education. Other areas fall under the jurisdiction of the province government. The focus is on reaching the unemployed and underprivileged, by providing training and investment opportunities. The municipality is also working to empower female farmers by providing land on lease and connecting them to markets. The focus is on increasing Timur plantation as a source of long-term income.

Janakpurdham: The municipality has integrated civic engagement in our economic activities by involving the community in various programs. For example, it is engaging 1000 people in the cleaning program, while encouraging community members to participate and take ownership of their local environment. Additionally, social media is being used as an innovative platform for civic engagement to involve citizens in decision-making processes and to keep them informed about the activities.

Kathmandu Declaration for Collective Action

The Symposium concluded with the Kathmandu Declaration for Collective Action which highlighted inclusion, innovation, local governance and economic development as four core commitment areas. Federalism cannot be strengthened without ensuring local governance and inclusive, green and uplifting economic development. Local good governance, inclusion and innovation cannot be guaranteed only through the efforts of the government. All organs of the country – government, private parties and civil society – have a common interest and priorities where they need to collaborate.

1. Federalism in Nepal was primarily envisioned for managing diversity and differences. The current need is to address the implementation challenges continually to strengthen the federal structure. This requires local good governance, inclusive, green, and progressive economic development.
2. Inclusion is a multi-dimensional concept that should be pervasive in all aspects of social life, such as politics, administration, business, academia, society, and family. However, inclusion should not be based on a mathematical ratio but on equality. The socio-economic and political empowerment of neglected and marginalized communities is a crucial tool for inclusion.

3. To ensure equitable inclusion, the law must be strict, adequate, and clear, with provisions devoid of loopholes and doubts. Violations of such actions should be punishable by law.

4. However, a strong legal system alone is not enough, and honest leadership, capable organizational mechanisms, efficient and well-performing administration, aware, critical, and proactive civil society, and vigilant citizens are necessary to give life to the letter of the law.

5. Innovation is essential for inclusive, environment-friendly, and sustainable economic development at the local level. Innovation should not only focus on goals and roadmaps but also working style, skills, processes, management, and behavior. This change can be facilitated through technology, education, training, and skills, but effective use of these tools requires a rationale and the correct mindset. This is the essence of good governance.

6. Local good governance, inclusion, and innovation cannot be guaranteed by the government alone. All organs of the country, including the government, private parties, and civil society, need to collaborate to achieve common interests and priorities. The first step towards collaboration is subject-based reflection-critique and policy dialogue. The National Governance Symposium 2022, organized by the Governance Lab in collaboration with other stakeholders, initiated this process. We express our gratitude to the organizer and commit to implementing the various factual, substantive, and progress-oriented recommendations to improve governance.

Closing Remarks

Krishna Gyawali, Former Secretary, Government of Nepal & Senior Governance Advisor, Daayitwa

Closing the two-day event, Mr. Gyawali, former secretary of the Government of Nepal, shared how the symposium is relevant at this point in time when federalism is in danger. He said, "The discussions from these two days made us realize how local government are leaving no stone unturned to increase economic growth in their municipalities. For the foundation of federalism to be strong, we need to incorporate inclusiveness right from the local level." He also shared how innovation does not always mean changing the face of the system completely, but rather doing things differently. The themes of the symposium were innovation, local governance, economic growth, and inclusiveness. "I think that over the period of two days, we managed to comprehensively discuss all these components." However, he suggested that the organizers work on their time management and requested contingency plans in case of delays.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Collaboration enables stakeholders to pool their resources, knowledge, and expertise to address complex problems and manage shared resources in a way that benefits everyone involved. It also helps to build trust and understanding among stakeholders, which can be crucial in situations where there may be competing interests or conflicting values at play.

PPPs can offer a range of benefits in terms of sharing of risks and responsibilities, long-term contractual arrangements, improved efficiency and innovation, and increased private sector investment. However, it is important to address concerns around transparency and accountability in order to ensure the success of PPPs.

Prioritizing environmental sustainability, resilience, inclusivity, synergy, and collaborative approaches can lead to long-term sustainable development outcomes. By balancing economic growth and development with environmental protection and social equity, this approach aims to promote sustainable development that benefits both present and future generations.

A participatory approach to inclusive policy-making is crucial for ensuring that policies are designed and implemented in a way that promotes social inclusion and addresses the needs of marginalized groups. By engaging a diverse range of stakeholders, fostering collaboration and dialogue, and incorporating multiple perspectives, policymakers can develop more effective and inclusive policies.

Mobilizing public resources for improved municipal governance requires a strategic and coordinated approach that involves effective budgeting, revenue generation, partnerships with other stakeholders, citizen engagement, and capacity building. By mobilizing public resources in these ways, municipal governments can improve their governance and better meet the needs of their citizens.

Civic engagement is not a one-time event or a sporadic activity, but rather a continuous process that involves ongoing participation and dialogue between citizens and their local representatives. It is important for local representatives to be accessible to their constituents at all times, not just during election cycles.

To promote women's leadership and achieve gender equality in politics and governance, it is crucial to address systemic barriers and biases. This includes recognizing and addressing gender bias, providing training and support for women, and promoting work-life balance to alleviate the disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities. By taking these steps, leaders can help create a more inclusive and equitable approach to leadership and ensure that women have the support they need to reach their full potential.

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