



SAJHEDARI BIKAAS ENDLINE EVALUATION: ACCOMPLISHMENTS, CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACOR	Assistant Contracting Officer's Representative
ADR	Alternative dispute resolution
APM	All-Party Mechanism
CBD	Caste-based discrimination
CBO	Community-based organization
CDA	Community development activity
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CDO	Chief District Officer
CeLRRD	Center for Legal Research and Resource Development
CM	Community mediator
CMC	Community mediation center
CMS-N	Community Mediation Society-Nepal
COP	Chief of Party
COR	Contracting Officer's Representative
DADO	District Agriculture Office
DCOP	Deputy Chief of Party
DDC	District Development Committee
DDRC	District Disaster Relief Committee
DGO	Democracy and Governance Office
DLSO	District Livestock Office
DO	Development Objective
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights and Governance
DYN	District youth network
FGD	Focus group discussion
FY	Fiscal Year
GBV	Gender-based violence
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
GoN	Government of Nepal
GONGO	Governance non-governmental organization
ILLP	Inclusive local planning process
INGO	International non-governmental organization
IP	Implementing Partner
IPC	Implementing Partner Committee
IPFC	Integrated Planning Formulation Committee
IRAP	Internal Revenue Assessment and Projection
JC	Judicial Committee
KII	Key informant interview
LDAG	Listeners' Discussion Action Group
LDRMP	Local Disaster Risk Management Plan
LDO	Local Development Officers
LGCDP	Local Governance and Community Development Programme
LGOA	Local Government Operations Act
LGU	Local government unit
LYG	Local youth group
MCPM	Minimum Conditions and Performance Measures
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPR	Nepalese Rupee
PDDP	Periodic District Development Plan
PMC	Project Monitoring Committee
PVDP	Periodic village development plan

RLG	Radio Listeners' Group
RYN	Regional youth network
SB	Sajhedari Bikaas
SM	Social mobilizer
SoW	Scope of Work
SSIP	Small-scale infrastructure project
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	US Dollar
USG	United States Government
VDC	Village Development Committee
VER	Vital Event Registration
VSMC	Village Supervision and Monitoring Committee
WCF	Ward Citizens Forum
WORTH	Women's Economic Growth Group
YI	Youth Initiative

EVALUATION TEAM MEMBERS

Guilain Denoeux, Team Leader and Lead Author

Chhaya Jha, National Team Leader

Mike Keshishian, Governance Adviser, USAID/DCHA/DRG

Prateek Pradhan, National Team Member

Manorama Adhikari, Evaluation Specialist, CAMRIS International/MEL/USAID Nepal

Field Research Associates:

- Sushil BK
- Sarah Subba
- Maya Chhetri
- Pankaj Sharma

Prahlad Ghimire, Data Analyst

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the results of an endline evaluation of Sajhedari Bikaas (Nepali for “Partnership for Local Development”), a USAID-funded, five-year (2013-2017) integrated local development and governance activity implemented by Pact that was extended until May 2018. Sajhedari Bikaas (SB) aims to empower local communities to achieve inclusive and effective local government. It revolves around four inter-related objectives:

1. **Conflict Mitigation:** SB seeks to address the causes and consequences of instability and conflict at the local level, including by developing and institutionalizing community-based mechanisms for conflict mitigation and dispute resolution.
2. **Access to Resources:** SB strives to improve communities’ ability to access resources for development, including by supporting inclusive strategic planning processes and development plans at the community and village levels and by helping CBOs advocate for needed resources.
3. **Inclusive Development:** SB supports the adoption and institutionalization of mechanisms and processes to ensure that local development plans are inclusive and strategic in design; that they feature high levels of transparency and accountability; and that the improvements they produce can be sustained over time.
4. **Effective Local Bodies:** SB aims to increase the ability of existing and new government units to function effectively, particularly with regard to service delivery, facilitating collaboration between local government units and CBOs/CSOs, and increasing communities’ engagement in local government budget and planning processes.

SB has been implemented in six “core districts” and, since the April-May 2015 earthquakes, five “recovery districts.” Four of the six core districts are in the Mid-West and two in the Far-West. All eleven districts are in USAID/Nepal’s “zone of influence” and share many socioeconomic, demographic and geo-spatial features. As of the summer of 2017, \$25 million of SB funds had been disbursed in the core districts and \$7 million in recovery ones (which partially explains why the evaluation prioritized core districts).

The evaluation was driven by two sets of inter-related goals. The first was to capture the major accomplishments and shortcomings of Sajhedari Bikaas (SB); assess the merits and limitations of the specific approaches and interventions carried out in support of its four objectives; pinpoint the main challenges and constraints the project faced; and analyze how, and how effectively, it responded to them. The second objective was to infer from the program’s successes, limitations, and broader experience lessons liable to enhance the effectiveness of future local-governance programming in Nepal.

The evaluation began in June 2017 with a comprehensive review of SB activity documents. It continued through July and August with key informant interviews (KIs) at USAID/Nepal, with senior staff and field directors of Pact, with officials at the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MOFALD), and with senior staff of national-level NGOs upon which Pact relied for implementation. The core of the evaluation consisted of two-and-a-half weeks (August 28-September 13) of intensive fieldwork in three core districts (Surkhet and Banke in the Mid-West, and Kailali in the Far-West) and one recovery district (Dhading, in the Central Development Region). The fieldwork entailed a total of 47 focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 381 persons (63 percent women), 90 KIs involving 125 persons (41 percent women), as well as eight workshops or consultation meetings with a total of 77 persons (55 percent women).

The evaluation determined that seven core activity strengths were critical to SB’s achievements. These strengths were related to activity conceptualization and design, to specific approaches adopted in the field, or to both, and they can be thought of as the “root causes” that made possible the achievements discussed further below.

1. Activity conceptualization and design reflected a solid grasp of the DRG context and its implications for local-governance programming. It adequately approached Nepal as a post-conflict society that needed to address the root causes of past political turbulence and bloodshed, bring formerly excluded and marginalized groups into the mainstream of development, and broaden citizens' involvement in decision-making at the local level. The activity's four core objectives were unusually relevant to those challenges, and design enabled for progress under any of them to contribute to advances in the other three. The design also allowed for flexibility and learning, and the implementer used that latitude very effectively.
2. SB's approach reflected a judicious understanding of the many-sided governance gains that could result from using local planning processes as an entry point for programming. The technical assistance SB provided to make local-planning processes more inclusive, transparent and effective were instrumental to its successes across its four component objectives. Gains included a significantly enhanced understanding at the grassroots level of why accountability matters, the benefits to be generated through it, and how to enhance it through community-based practices and mechanisms; greater accessibility to decision-makers; increased transparency of decision-making processes; human-capacity development and positive changes in social norms as well as individual attitudes and values; a general empowerment of individuals, previously marginalized groups, and communities at large; and a reduction in social friction and in the gap between government and citizens.
3. SB deliberately and effectively endeavored to identify and then harness existing government directives and procedures that were consistent with activity objectives. It was quick to recognize that many of the laws and official guidelines relevant to planning processes or the use of social accountability tools (in particular the 14-step planning process developed by MOFALD) were generally sound and quite consistent with activity goals, but that in practice they often were inoperative. SB understood what could be gained from actuating such mechanisms, and it proceeded to make targeted investments in activating them so as ensure that they would accomplish what they were intended to do. Breathing new life into procedures already provided for under the law greatly facilitated government buy-in and implementation. It proved to be far more effective than trying to set up parallel guidelines or new entities. It was more likely to generate gains that could materialize quickly and could be sustained after activity completion.
4. Focused as it was on empowering previously marginalized groups to claim their rights and a greater share of influence over decision-making at the local level, SB understood that this emphasis on "demand" had to be matched by adequate programmatic attention to strengthening the capacity of local government institutions and processes to respond to it. In both design and implementation, SB deliberately and wisely endeavored to balance support for (demand-generating) sociopolitical empowerment with assistance to relevant capacity development of local government and community institutions as well as local partners. Unlike many other donor-supported activities, which leant far heavily toward the "demand" side of the inclusion challenge, SB understood that an excess of demands might overwhelm the capacity of existing mechanisms and institutions to respond adequately to them.
5. SB's design did justice to the centrality of accountability to prospects for improved local governance. Implementation prioritized the strengthening of accountability mechanisms across activity interventions. That approach, too, was critical element to SB's successes.
6. SB made a real effort at analytical rigor and at translating it into programming. It reflected very deliberately on such issues as what participation and inclusion entail in practice; how to measure them; and how best to address related obstacles in the field. It also was conscientious about monitoring impact and acting on relevant data to adjust priorities and activities.
7. The strong working relationship that developed between the COR and senior IP staff contributed greatly to all of SB's achievements. Each side trusted and at the same time felt supported by the other. The IP appreciated the flexibility extended to it to remain effective in a fluid environment and was empowered by the COR to take calculated risks to explore promising forms of programming. Meanwhile, USAID felt it could count on the IP to be creative and responsive to changing conditions on the ground.

The above strengths in activity design, approaches and implementation made possible SB's achievements. Eight specific areas of success deserve particular recognition.

1. Through its support for inclusive local planning processes and targeted development projects, SB empowered women and members of historically marginalized groups to take part in public audits and hearings, assume leadership positions in their respective communities, and run for local office. Many of these gains occurred through SB's engagement with Ward Citizens Fora/Citizen Awareness Centers (WCF/CACs), Integrated Planning Formulation Committees (IPFCs), and Village Development Committees (VDCs). In its zones of intervention, SB was instrumental in increasing in WCF membership and making them more inclusive of historically marginalized groups. It broadened grassroots interest in WCF proceedings; helped WCF members better understand their role and responsibilities and identity and implement a broad variety of initiatives liable to be particularly useful to their communities; ensured that priority projects were relayed to the relevant VDC and had a strong chance of being approved by it; and familiarized WCF members with local-development planning instruments and approaches, the GoN's targeted budget provisions for excluded groups, and social accountability tools. Evaluation fieldwork confirmed the central role SB played in heightening grassroots interest in local planning processes, disseminating relevant information, providing the technical skills needed, and guaranteeing that budget-related and other provisions to benefit women, children, and historically disadvantaged minorities were activated. SB also was successful in ensuring that women and marginalized groups were adequately represented in IPFCs and had sufficient influence in them, and that these IPFCs served the objectives they were supposed to advance, particularly when it came to doing justice to needs and priorities identified at the settlement level. SB also helped local bodies formulate the "profile" of their respective villages or municipalities, which provided valuable information for five-year Village Development Plans, five-year District Development plans, and annual plans, the development of which SB also directly supported.
2. Because of its emphasis on inclusive and participatory planning processes, and through its training of USAID partners and beneficiaries in them, SB generated strong cross-sectoral benefits. The tool and approaches it used ended up being duplicated in several of USAID/Nepal's other activities. Meanwhile, by facilitating development- and governance-focused mobilization at the grassroots level, SB enhanced communities' ability to address the full assortment of social and economic issues confronting them.
3. SB systematically and effectively promoted the use of social accountability tools as per government guidelines. It familiarized communities with those guidelines, sensitized them to the value of accountability tools, and trained them in how to use relevant instruments. It systematized reliance on public hearings, public audits and social audits in activity-supported projects; secured higher levels of acceptance of public hearings by local officials; and prompted SB beneficiaries to become used to asking officials questions about funding decisions and resource allocation.
4. Largely through its successful leveraging of WCF, WORTH groups, Local Youth Groups (LYGs), and Listeners Discussion and Action Groups (LDAGs), SB enhanced the capacities of women, youth and members of excluded social groups. By organizing training activities, making credit available, and facilitating savings, WORTH groups supported micro-enterprise development in a broad range of areas. They provided valuable skills in meeting facilitation, planning processes, project design and implementation, and the use of social accountability tools; made it much easier for women to access key government services and offices; served as arenas for leadership development and the discussion of issues pertaining to gender equality and inclusive development; conveyed vital information regarding provisions in the planning process meant to empower women and ensure that VDC plans would include projects for women; and provided springboards for women to participate in campaigns against child marriage, gender-based violence and caste-based discrimination. For their part, LYGs provided venues for training in entrepreneurship, evidence-based advocacy, and the use of accountability tools. More generally, they operated as conduits for youth to engage in productive, collaborative endeavors that enhanced their standing in the community and enabled them to gain increased self-esteem while staying out of trouble. Meanwhile,

participants in LDAGs' activities, particularly young women, became more confident about their grasp of social and political issues, and, as a result, more prone to take part in relevant public discussions. Participation in LDAG meetings often acted as a catalyst for involvement in public campaigns or rallies.

5. In addition to reducing social tensions by making the fight against exclusion and marginalization front and center in its programming, SB addressed conflict issues more directly by establishing 115 Community Mediation Centers (CMCs) in the six core districts and 32 others in the recovery districts, and by providing training on win-win dispute resolution processes to 4,172 Community Mediators (CM), 42 percent of whom were women. While the 147 CMCs did not tackle directly identity-based and political conflicts, they reduced the potential for friction among social groups by resolving "low-level" inter-personal disputes. Significantly, 80 percent of all cases registered with CMCs were settled. CMCs provided, for the first time, justice-focused community-based institutions viewed as neutral and credible, and to which individuals felt they now could turn to seek redress for grievances or fair adjudication of disputes. That was particularly significant for members of marginalized groups, who became the main users of these CMCs. By giving citizens, including those previously most excluded, a degree of confidence in the possibility of receiving justice, CMCs enhanced grassroots perceptions of the legitimacy of the political and societal order, and thereby reduced the likelihood of violent conflict. The evaluation revealed broad satisfaction with the service CMCs provided, in terms of both process and outcome, as well as appreciation for the accessibility and proximity of CMCs and for a mediation process that enabled people to work out their differences face-to-face and to come away feeling that the decision had been reached fairly. Critical as well was the impact that mediation training and acting as mediators had on those women and members of marginalized groups who became CMs. Increased public visibility and community recognition, combined with an enhanced feeling of agency, prompted many of these CMs to run for office when local elections were held.
6. SB significantly enhanced the capacities of both its local partners and those governmental service providers with which it engaged. It deliberately and successfully sought to build up its partners' capacities in such areas as financial management, GESI-enhancing practices, and linkages to the media. It also supported MoFALD, VDCs, municipalities, and other government agencies and staff by facilitating the implementation of government guidelines and activities as well as through technical training, computerization support, and assistance to planning processes and public hearings.
7. SB significantly improved access to services for women and the marginalized. In addition to relevant interventions summarized above, it extended vital support for mobile service camps and small-scale infrastructure projects (SSIPs). Between 2015 and 2017, 22 SB-supported mobile service camps benefited a total of 32,897 people. Respondents underscored SB's critical contributions to those camps and considered the latter to have been well-managed, to have met critical needs, and to have improved understanding of good-governance principles. They also pointed to a widespread realization that, without SB's logistical assistance, these camps would have fallen short. Meanwhile, through micro-grants interventions, SB provided vital assistance for projects prioritized by VDCs, but for which they often lacked the necessary resources. These projects typically addressed the needs of youth, women and other marginalized groups. In two fiscal years, SB provided funding and technical assistance for a total of 255 SSIPs. SB-supported Implementing Partner Committees (IPCs) and Partner Monitoring Committees (PMCs) became conduits through which women and members of historically marginalized groups assumed leadership roles; improved their confidence; enhanced their visibility in, and recognition by, the community; and developed new and valuable skills.
8. SB made some headway toward reducing gender-based and ethnic discrimination and shifting corresponding social norms. KIIs and FGDs pointed to a direct connection between some of the opportunities that project interventions made available to women and changing public views of women's roles in the household and the public arena alike.

Side by side with the above achievements, the evaluation also revealed eleven main limitations or shortcomings of the activity.

1. SB's geographic targeting and two-phased approach were problematic. It would have been far preferable for SB to target fewer districts, but engage with more VDCs (ideally all) in them. SB's programming timeline was problematic as well. A five-year activity expected to engage with a total of 115 VDCs, SB was divided into two phases, each extending over a two-and-a-half-year period. The first phase was to target 58 VDCs and the second 57 others. It would have been more effective to work with a smaller number of VDCs, but for the entire five-year period.
2. The evaluation also revealed sustainability issues. Many of the bodies and activities SB supported are not likely to sustain beyond the end of the activity. momentous changes brought about by restructuring compound this problem and threaten to endanger many of the most substantive gains generated by SB's work, including through the WCF, which, like VDCs, legally ceased to exist the moment local elections took place in May and June of 2017. SB could have better prepared WCF members for the new context. It could have taken steps to ensure a greater legacy for its work with them, so as to ensure that the skills in participatory and inclusive planning that WCF members had accumulated would be utilized moving forward. And it could have sought to nudge the new crop of local officials to share information with citizens, solicit their needs and make sure that grassroots priorities would be reflected in the proposed allocation of funds when it came to preparing the budget. LYGs, LDAGs, and mobile camps, too, face a very uncertain future, as they always remained dependent for their operations and viability on the funding, facilitation and other resources SB made available to them. However, some of the behavior changes among key actors might help in perpetuating the gains over a period of time.
3. SB's conflict-mediation work came short in several critical respects. Until late 2017, it seemed that CMCs might not survive, and that the considerable investments SB had made in them and in developing the skills of CMs might not leave much of a legacy as a result; even now, questions remain regarding the CMCs' long-term prospects. During the activity's lifetime, CMCs confronted other challenges that SB struggled to address. Ensuring that people actually would go to CMCs proved to be far more difficult than anticipated. Furthermore, as noted above, CMCs dealt overwhelmingly with personal, low-level disputes, and they almost never addressed the higher-level identity-related and political conflicts that SB's conflict mitigation objective initially was supposed to address.
4. The design did not seek to anticipate on how SB might be affected by major, unanticipated developments beyond its control, but of great relevance to it. Nor did it lay out how the project might respond to the new constraints and opportunities that these events might create. Even more consequential was SB's insufficient planning for the transition to federalism, even after the promulgation of the new constitution in September 2015. SB could have done more to ensure that gains from its considerable investments in WCF, VDCs, CMCs, CMs, planning processes, the use of social accountability tools, mobile service camps, and mobilization through LYGs and LDAGs, to name but a few, would be preserved under the new system, at least to the extent possible.
5. SB's lack of systematic attention to building linkages to Kathmandu-based decision-makers was its single most significant missed opportunity. If the activity had been more proactive in that area, the vast amount of raw data, information, and intimate knowledge of local-level governance issues that it accumulated over several years could have helped shape national-level decision-making on local governance issues, especially as the process of state restructuring moved into full gear. Had SB more systematically engaged with Kathmandu-based GoN officials as devolution of power to the local level began, it also could have increased the odds that some of its critical achievements would leave a greater legacy, and that the skills, capacities and processes it had endeavored to set up or strengthen would continue to be used.
6. While SB's focus on grassroots communities was laudable, one element that did not receive sufficient attention was the need to generate among local government officials a greater understanding of the merits of broad-based inclusion, grassroots participation, accountability and transparency. Such understanding – and, even more importantly, the readiness of local officials to act on it – would have facilitated many activity interventions and compounded the gains they generated.

7. The extent and quality of SB's coordination with other USAID partners and projects was not adequate. The evaluation revealed that coordination across projects, at the level of both USAID and individual activities, was typically insufficient.
8. The fact that municipalities were not included in SB programming was a significant shortcoming, especially in light of continued rural-to-urban migrations and the grave problems that urban centers face when it comes to issues that were the very focus of SB's interventions.
9. The activity was not particularly successful at helping CBOs receive additional resources from both local government and non-government sources.
10. SB may have been unduly constricted by an occasional silo-like approach to programming and by some of the approaches and activities it selected for particular emphasis. Its significant investments in mediation activities, for instance, appear to have distracted the activity from the fact that some grievances or conflict sources do not lend themselves to being resolved through mediation. Insufficient consideration also appears to have been given to the implications of the natural linkages and synergies that existed across activity components and activities. In particular, the design did not make sufficiently explicit the critical contributions of inclusive planning processes to objectives others than that under which interventions related to those processes were formally placed.
11. Programming in recovery districts was insufficiently tailored to the distinctive socioeconomic, demographic and historical/cultural features of those districts. An implicit assumption appears to have been made that in terms of their needs, and the approaches best suited to meet them, targeted recovery districts were not drastically different from the earlier core ones. That assumption may not always have been correct.

The evaluation points to nineteen main recommendations or guidelines for future local-governance programming.

1. Future programming should make a purposeful, deliberate effort to build on SB's achievements.
2. SB's four core objectives remain as relevant as ever, and forthcoming activity design should reflect that fact.
3. In light of the substantive and many gains that inclusive planning processes generated across the activity's four core objectives, they should remain a priority of future local governance programming.
4. Sustainability concerns should be better reflected in the next activity design, which also should include an exit strategy.
5. Especially since the next phase of local-governance programming will unfold in a particularly fluid environment, the next design should include explicit scenario planning.
6. To consolidate early gains and ensure that beneficiaries and partners do not feel abandoned during the activity's lifetime, sustained engagement with them should be prioritized.
7. Continue to emphasize accountability, especially if other donors lean heavily toward capacity building. The next design should feature continued support for public hearings, public audits, social audits, expenditures tracking, and review of projects' implementation to ensure consistency with decisions previously reached through inclusive and participatory processes.
8. Nurture officials' readiness to supply accountability and respond constructively to the demands being expressed. In parallel, programming should foster among citizens, CSOs and CBOs a greater understanding of how to express demands for accountability in a way that will reduce the risk of backlash by officials.
9. Design should reflect explicit attention to integration across activity components and activities, and it should mandate coordination with other USAID projects and partners. If linkages and synergies across activity components are to be maximized, design must give serious consideration to the kinds of approaches and interventions that will increase the likelihood of that taking place. Similarly, the need for coordination among activity partners must be considered during the design phase, not after implementation already has begun.
10. Local and national-level partners should be selected and vetted carefully, and with an eye to complementarity and synergies among them. The strengthening of their capacities should be an objective in its own right. Local partners should be approached as entities that must be

mentored and nurtured, in part to enhance the likelihood that activity gains can be sustained after funding comes to an end.

11. Programming should emphasize investments in small-scale infrastructure and community-improvement projects selected through inclusive processes. Such projects benefit individuals and communities alike not just through their direct impact, but also because of the shifts in attitudes, outlooks and behavior they can cause.
12. Be mindful of the dangers associated with setting up formal structures. If there is no evidence of community demand for such structures, it generally is best not to invest in setting them up. Furthermore, they should be established only if the IP can secure from the authorities a commitment that they will continue to be resourced and be utilized productively to advance local-governance objectives after the activity comes to an end.
13. Identify and harness official guidelines and structures that can support progress toward the activity's core objectives.
14. Invest in individuals and human-capacity development, instead of into institutions that may decay, cease to operate, or become largely anachronistic. Besides, organizations require trained individuals if they are to discharge their functions effectively. The primacy of human capacity is particularly relevant to less institutionalized and rapidly evolving settings, where formal entities may or may not endure, and where the resources put at their disposal may be subject to great variations over time.
15. Consider carefully what local-governance programming can contribute to national-level decision-making on local governance, and activity accordingly. The granular knowledge of the terrain and the extent and quality of raw data and information accumulated by the IP should be leveraged to shape national-level policy-making and debates on local governance. That will be particularly needed in light of the volume and import of the decisions that Kathmandu-based elites will have to make in this sector in the coming years.
16. Seek to expand the role of the private sector in local governance. Programming should aim to address some of the key concerns that private-sector actors have expressed toward the devolution of power, in return for an expanded commitment by the business community to contribute to local development efforts, including through partnerships with government bodies and CBOs.
17. Do not let program activities and approaches become straightjackets. Even methods and interventions that generally yield strong results should not detract from the broader objectives that they are supposed to advance; sometimes, these goals can be pursued more effectively through tools that are not specifically identified in the design.
18. Prioritize information dissemination about the new local-governance system. The diffusion of that knowledge, including via training and orientation of local officials, should reflect the lessons that can be learned from SB's experience. Very deliberate efforts should be deployed to ensure that these lessons contribute to both decision-making by the GoN and the broader national debate about local governance.
19. Design should pay systematic attention to ways in which the odds of a strong, productive working relationship between the COR and the IP can be increased. It should mandate a collaborative process, including by calling for the involvement of the COR in the development of the work plan.

INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an endline evaluation of Sajhedari Bikaas (Nepali for “Partnership for Local Development”), a USAID-funded, five-year (2013-2017) local development and governance activity that was extended until May 2018. The evaluation was driven by two sets of inter-related goals:

1. To capture the major accomplishments and shortcomings of Sajhedari Bikaas (SB); assess the merits and limitations of the specific approaches and interventions carried out in support of its four objectives; pinpoint the main challenges and constraints the project faced; and analyze how, and how effectively, it responded to them.
2. To infer from the activity’s successes, limitations, and broader experience lessons liable to enhance the effectiveness of future local-governance programming in Nepal. The evaluation is predicated on the assumption that while the context for local governance in Nepal is changing rapidly and dramatically, learning and recommendations generated from SB’s experience will remain relevant going forward.¹

The document is divided into four parts that logically build on each other. Part One highlights seven core activity strengths related to design and/or approaches followed in the field, and argues that these qualities were instrumental in making possible activity accomplishments in a broad range of areas. Part Two then explores some of those achievements, providing detailed evidence of them.² Part Three discusses limitations or shortcomings of the activity, identifying the reasons behind them. Part Four infers from the previous three sections recommendations and guidelines for future local-governance programming. It draws attention to “dos and don’ts” for activity design; underlines approaches and interventions that have shown particular promises and underscores potential pitfalls as well as opportunities to which programming should remain alert.

The remainder of this introduction provides background information on the SB activity; elaborates on the evaluation’s objectives and zooms in on the key questions that guided the research and fieldwork; and presents the methodology that was followed, including the limitations inherent in it.

BACKGROUND ON SAJHEDARI BIKAAS

SB, a \$35 million (approximately \$33 million disbursed as of this writing), 5.5 year-project implemented by Pact, is an integrated local governance activity that aims to empower local communities to achieve inclusive and effective local government. The project seeks to enhance the ability of targeted communities to shape their own development; to strengthen the relationship between Nepalis and local officials; and to improve transparency, accountability and responsiveness at the local level. SB unfolded against the backdrop of USAID/Nepal’s Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Objective (DO) 1: “More inclusive and effective governance.”³ It was expected to contribute to DO 1 through complementary gains in governance and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). Specifically, it revolved around the following four, inter-related objectives.

¹ The unfolding, historic changes in local governance in Nepal stem from the promulgation of a new constitution in September 2015; the transition, provided for under that constitution, from a highly centralized, unitary state to a federal system; the ongoing and substantive devolution of power that has taken place in the past two years; the successful completion of all three phases of local elections (in, respectively, May, June and September 2017); the adoption in September 2017 of the local-level governance law (which gives the newly elected local bodies the legal basis for discharging their constitutionally mandated rights and duties); and the elections for assemblies at the other two tiers of government (provincial and national) in November and December 2017.

² There inevitably is some overlap between Parts One and Two, but the former focuses on “structural causes of success” rooted in program design and/or field approaches, while the latter concentrates on, and documents, evidence of impact.

³ The Development Hypothesis for DO1 was: “Investment in Nepal’s peace process, accountable democratic institutions, civic participation and improved governance capacity will result in more effective governance and increased political inclusion.”

Objective A (Conflict Mitigation): *Establish and improve the enabling environment for community development.* Key interventions under this objective include addressing the causes and consequences of instability and conflict at the local level and developing and institutionalizing community-based mechanisms for conflict mitigation and dispute resolution.

Objective B (Access to Resources): *Improve communities' ability to access resources for development.* To achieve this objective, SB supports inclusive strategic planning processes and the establishment of development plans at the community and village levels. It also seeks to help CBOs advocate for needed resources.

Objective C (Inclusive Development): *Improve communities' ability to implement effectively inclusive development projects.* This objective focuses on strengthening the ability of communities to adopt and institutionalize mechanisms that facilitate inclusive management of projects, the transparent administration of funds, oversight of on-going projects, the use of social accountability tools, and sustainability of results. The goal is to ensure that community and village development plans are inclusive and strategic in design; that they feature high levels of transparency and accountability in implementation and following completion; and that the improvements they produce can be sustained over time.

Objective D (Effective Local Bodies): *Increase the ability of existing and new government units to function effectively.* Key interventions under this objective include helping local government officials manage their roles and responsibilities more effectively, particularly in matters that relate to service delivery; facilitating collaboration between local government units and CBOs/CSOs, to make it easier to identify and act on local development priorities; and increasing communities' engagement in local government budget and planning processes.

In order to achieve these objectives, SB has provided technical assistance and limited material and financial support to selected local government bodies so as to build their capacity to identify and implement projects that address community priorities. SB facilitates the development of inclusive annual and periodic (3-5 years) Village Development Committee (VDC)⁴ plans that reflect the demands of the broader community, including historically marginalized populations. Activities are implemented in collaboration with civil society and the Government of Nepal (GON), so as to ensure broad-based participation and buy-in from the design phase through the implementation, operations and maintenance of projects. Distinguishing features of SB's approach to improving local governance thus include its focus on inclusive and participatory processes in the selection, execution, and monitoring of projects; its emphasis on placing communities – and, in particular, historically marginalized populations – at the center of local development efforts; and its attention to issues of accountability, transparency and sustainability.

SB has been implemented in six “core districts” and, since the April-May 2015 earthquakes, five “recovery districts.” Four of the six core districts (Dang, Banke, Bardiya, and Surkhet) are in the Mid-West, and two (Kailali and Kanchanpur) in the Far-West. The five earthquake recovery districts are Gorkha, Lamjung, Dhading, Dolakha and Ramechhap. All eleven districts are in USAID/Nepal's “zone of influence” and share many socioeconomic, demographic and geo-spatial features.⁵ As of the summer of 2017, \$25 million of SB funds had been disbursed in the core districts, and \$7 million in recovery ones (which partially explains why the evaluation prioritized core districts).

EVALUATION OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

⁴ Since many of the interventions undertaken by SB predate the federal restructuring of Nepal, this report uses the term VDC as opposed to *Gaopalika*.

⁵ These 11 districts cover 17.5 percent of Nepal's population, with an average of 52 percent women and 48 percent men. Overall, the breakdown of their population by caste, ethnicity, and geography is as follows: Hill Brahman/Chhetri: 35.3%; Hill Janajati: 22.7%; Terai Janajati/Adibashi: 19.8%; and Hill Dalit: 11.5%. Muslims represent an average of 2.7% of the population of the 11 districts.

As noted above, SB was expected to contribute to DOI through mutually reinforcing gains in governance and GESI. To evaluate the governance impact of SB in both core and recovery districts, the evaluation sought to assess the activity's achievements, limitations and challenges in the following inter-related areas:

- Reducing the gap between government and citizens (especially women, poor and other historically excluded population segments) at the local level.
- Addressing the causes and consequences of conflict in grassroots communities, including through alternative dispute resolution approaches.
- Supporting the adoption of more inclusive and participatory practices, particularly through planning processes that involve members of historically marginalized constituencies and increase their capacity to prioritize demands.
- Strengthening communities' ability to implement effective inclusive development projects.
- Improving accountability and transparency in local governance processes, particularly in matters related to public funds administration and local development oversight projects.
- Helping community-based organizations (CBOs) become more effective in securing resources from both government and non-government sources.
- Increasing the inclination and ability of local government units, CBOs or civil society organizations (CSOs) to collaborate in identifying and implementing local development projects

To gauge SB's GESI impact in both core and recovery districts, the evaluation strove to determine how the activity impacted the lives of women, poor and the excluded⁶ by:

- Increasing employment and other income opportunities available to them.
- Improving their access to health, education, and infrastructure.
- Enhancing their capacity to engage meaningfully, influence and hold accountable local bodies (former VDCs and Municipalities) and other key institutions, including through mechanisms such as Integrated Planning Formulation Committees (IPFCs) and Ward Citizen Forums (WCFs).
- Identifying properly the barriers experienced by women, the poor and the excluded, and then addressing them effectively across the four activity objectives.
- Facilitating positive shifts in discriminatory policies, social practices, attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender discrimination and social exclusion.

Given those objectives, the overarching evaluation questions that drove the fieldwork and provide the focus for this final report revolve around the four key areas of design, implementation, results and sustainability.

Design: To what extent was activity design congruent with the country's core local- and national-level governance challenges when implementation began? How relevant did the design remain in the wake of state restructuring, the new local governance challenges that emerged as a result of it, and the changing national and local political contexts throughout the activity's life? How well did the design reflect the main aspirations and needs of target groups?

⁶ The definition of "excluded" in districts chosen for the evaluation reflected criteria that were both used in Sajhedari documents and consistent with those provided by the International Development Partners Group (Nepal) in its "A Common Framework for Gender Equality & Social Inclusion", GESI Working Group (2017).

Implementation: How well has the activity been implemented overall? What factors external to the activity have influenced implementation? Which activity approaches have revealed themselves to be most effective? In which regards and why? Which ones have yielded more disappointing results? In which regards and why? To what extent did implementation adapt to significant changes in the context? How effectively did it respond to emerging opportunities and to the unanticipated constraints and challenges that presented themselves?

Results: In what ways have SB interventions contributed to substantive progress in terms of more effective local governance and increased political inclusion of citizens in general and historically marginalized groups in particular? In which ways was SB especially successful in the following nine areas, and, conversely, what was disappointing about outcomes in those areas?

- Increasing citizens' involvement in local decision-making in general, and inclusion of marginalized groups in that process in particular.
- Empowering women, the poor and the excluded.
- Enhancing communities' ability to implement development projects.
- Improving accountability of local decision-makers to the public and transparency in the administration of public funds at the local level.
- Reducing the causes and consequences of conflict at the local level.
- Improving perceptions of government effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs and demands of citizens in general, and marginalized constituencies in particular.
- Reducing the gap between state and society at the local level.
- Bringing about positive changes in discriminatory policies, social practices, and norms.
- Contributing to progress in non-DRG sectors.

What could SB have done differently to have greater impact in any of those areas?

Sustainability: To what extent has the activity been implemented to ensure sustainability of gains? What could SB have done differently to generate more sustainable gains?

METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

The work behind this report consisted of four components that built on each other. The first component (June-July 2017) entailed an extensive review of relevant activity documents made available to the team by Pact and USAID/Nepal.⁷ This preliminary work also entailed regular consultations with USAID/Nepal by the team leader and CAMRIS staff, selection of a national team to conduct the fieldwork, and, ultimately, research design submission to USAID in early August 2017, prepared by former CAMRIS senior technical adviser Jonathan Jones, team leader Guilain Denoeux, and national team leader Chhaya Jha.

The second component (late July through early September) began with key informant interviews (KIIs) that the team leader conducted in Kathmandu in late July and early August, while work on the research design was still unfolding. These interviews with senior staff and field directors of Pact as well as USAID personnel particularly familiar with SB were intended to ensure that some early input from the implementing partner and USAID/Nepal would be captured prior to the onset of the fieldwork. These interviews resulted in a preliminary observations report submitted to USAID in

⁷ These documents included the original SOW for SB, the SOW for the evaluation, quarterly and annual SB reports, SB yearly work plans, and a mid-term evaluation report of SB.

early September. By then, the national team leader had conducted additional KIIs in Kathmandu with Pact staff, officials at the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MOFALD), and national-level NGOs upon which Pact relied for key activities.

The third component entailed two weeks (August 28-September 13) of intensive fieldwork in three core districts (Surkhet and Banke in the Mid-West, and Kailali in the Far-West) and one recovery district (Dhading, in the Central Development Region).⁸ That investigation was conducted by the national team, composed of the national team leader, the Governance Adviser from USAID/DCHA/DRG, a national team member, and four field researchers, all of whom were supported by a data analyst. The fieldwork entailed 47 focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 381 persons (63% women), 90 KIIs involving 125 persons (41% women), as well as eight workshops or consultation meetings with a total of 77 persons (55% women).⁹ This effort culminated in a field study document prepared by the national team leader and submitted to the team leader in mid-October, as well as in a field briefing to USAID/Nepal. The fourth component (Nov 2017-Jan 2018) involved the team leader drafting this final report and USAID/Nepal review.

The main limitations of this evaluation are threefold. First, in light of time and resource constraints, and as provided for under the design approved by USAID, a deliberate choice was made not to include a control group. All districts were in SB project areas, and the vast majority of those interviewed were, or had been, stakeholders in SB activities.¹⁰

Second, and again due to time and resource limitations, all areas where fieldwork took place were at a maximum of two hours' drive from district headquarters. Project sites requiring longer travel time were not visited.

Third and perhaps most importantly, the fieldwork took place in the midst of the ongoing devolution of power: after key institutions and mechanisms with which SB had been working (especially the WCFs, the CACs and the CMCs) had been dissolved; as the first two phases of elections (in Provinces 1, 3, 4, 5 and 6) already had taken place and as campaigning for the third phase (to be held on September 18 in Province 2) was under way; shortly after most recently elected local government officials had assumed their new positions, and as the local-level governance law was about to be passed. These changes, related shifts in power relations, and the broader state of flux, confusion and uncertainty associated with the momentous transition from a unitary state to a federal system undoubtedly impacted the perceptions of individuals who had been engaged, or affected by, the different processes which the project had facilitated. That, in turn, is bound to have influenced the dynamics of KIIs and FGDs, and the opinions and assessments respondents volunteered during them.

PART ONE: CORE ACTIVITY STRENGTHS

⁸ The rationale for the selection of these districts was described at some length in the research design and the interested reader may refer to that document.

⁹ Meetings, interviews and/or workshops were conducted at district headquarters as well as at the ward level. Those whose input was sought included Implementing Partner (IP) staff; staff of local government bodies and line agencies (including Local Development Officers, the Chief District Officer in the recovery district, Women Children Officers and Social Development Officers); members of Ward Citizen Fora (WCFs), User Groups (UGs), Women's Economic Growth Groups (WORTH groups), Integrated Plan Formulation Committees (IPFCs), and CSOs/CBOs; members, users or beneficiaries of Citizen Awareness Centers (CACs), Conflict Mediation Centers (CMCs), and Listeners Groups; social mobilizers, community mediators, and former secretaries of VDCs (which had been dissolved by the time the fieldwork took place); and those involved in, or familiar with, small-scale infrastructure projects (SSIPs). In addition, the annual budgets for 2013 and 2016 of the two VDCs of the four targeted districts were reviewed to determine the level of attention paid to addressing the needs of women, the poor and the excluded, as well as corresponding shifts during that time period. For further information on relevant aspects of the methodology used during the field work, the reader may refer to the research design document.

¹⁰ In each district the team visited, it did meet with a few ordinary citizens who were not linked to the project in order to get some sense of what improvements, if any, were experienced by citizens living in the area as a result of project interventions.

Seven core activity strengths, analyzed below, were critical to SB's achievements. These strengths were related to activity conceptualization and design, to specific approaches adopted in the field, or to both, and they can be thought of as the "root causes" that made possible the achievements that Part Two will explore in greater detail.

1.1 RELEVANCE TO DRG CONTEXT

Conceptualization was compelling in that it matched very closely the most critical DRG needs of Nepal -- not just at the local level but nationwide. Those tasked with activity design in 2009-10 demonstrated a solid grasp not just of the most salient DRG challenges to be addressed, but also of how best to tackle them. They correctly diagnosed that:

Nepal is a post-conflict society. If it is to heal and avoid a repetition of past political turbulence and bloodshed, it must address the forces that drove the ten-year long Maoist insurgency.

1. The most salient such force is the long accumulated and ignored grievances of excluded, marginalized groups that now are claiming their rightful place in the public sphere, as well as greater access to, and influence in, decision-making arenas.
2. Local-governance programming must focus on those dynamics. It must identify and implement mechanisms and approaches that will bring formerly excluded constituencies into the mainstream of development. More broadly, it must find ways of broadening citizens' involvement in decision-making at the local level.
3. Programming also must recognize that, ironically, while such inclusion efforts are essential if longstanding social fractures are to be healed, in the short term they may intensify preexisting tensions or generate new conflict. That is because they may be resisted by other groups, unleash grievances that until then had been simmering below the surface, or trigger unanticipated cycles of escalating demands or crises of rising expectations. Consequently, programming's emphasis on inclusion has to be accompanied by due attention as well to conflict-mitigation need,

The activity's four core objectives (conflict mitigation, access to resources, inclusive development, and effective local bodies) reflected those imperatives. They were a good fit for a post-conflict society seeking to address the root causes of prior conflict, bring marginalized communities into the mainstream of development and governance, broaden citizen participation in local decision-making processes, improve transparency and accountability, and fill in glaring gaps in service delivery. Not only was each component well chosen, but all four were consistent with each other and design enabled for progress under any of them to contribute to advances in the other three.

The activity also explicitly allowed for flexibility and learning. Design was specific enough to make it clear to the implementing partner (IP) what needed to be accomplished, but not so prescriptive that it deprived that IP from the freedom needed to make the adjustments required by the situation on the ground. Evidence gathered in the field made it clear that Pact had used that latitude wisely and effectively.

1.2 THE STRATEGIC EMPHASIS ON INCLUSIVE LOCAL PLANNING PROCESSES

SB's approach reflected a well-taken, judicious understanding of the many-sided local-governance gains that could result from using the planning process as an entry point for programming, and the technical assistance the activity provided to facilitate inclusive local-planning processes were instrumental to its successes across its four component objectives. Inclusive planning processes proved particularly effective at making headway toward the following, inter-related goals:

1. Broadening citizens' involvement in local governance.
2. Involving members of historically disadvantaged populations into the process through which communities prioritize their own needs and decide how scarce resources will be allocated to match those priorities.

3. Empowering individuals in general, and members of marginalized groups in particular;
4. Changing the mentality and outlook of entire communities on issues that relate to the rights of citizens, the responsibilities of office holders, and historically disenfranchised constituencies.
5. Bringing about positive shifts in marginalized groups' view of the government and the policy process.
6. Creating mechanisms encouraging both the expectation and the practice of transparency and accountability at the local level.
7. Providing individuals with the skills needed to increase the likelihood that gains in the above areas will be sustained after activity completion.

In short, the benefits of focusing on inclusive planning processes went much beyond inclusion per se, and extended to such different areas as accountability of decision-makers; accessibility to, and transparency of, decision-making processes; skill development; and general empowerment at the levels of individuals, previously marginalized groups, and communities at large.

By way of both background and illustration, the model SB used to implement small-scale infrastructure projects can be summarized as follows.

1. Help the community select a development project using pre-existing government guidelines.¹¹
2. Require that the project include a sustainability plan that lays out how repairs and maintenance will be ensured after completion.
3. Assist the community in choosing from within its ranks an Implementing Partner Committee (IPC) tasked with leading the project. IPCs typically include 11 people. Pact requires that more than half be women and that members of marginalized groups also be included. In the five recovery districts where Pact is active, nearly 60 percent of IPC members for all infrastructure projects have been women. Many of them have served as chair of the committee.
4. Ensure that the work of the IPC will be overseen by a Project Monitoring Committee (PMC), the members of which also are selected by the community.
5. Provide IPC and PMC members with two days of intensive training on both the administrative and technical dimensions of project implementation.¹²
6. Once the project is finished, require that the IPC and PMC hold a public audit, during which they report on their work in front of the entire community and answer any concerns or questions.

This process, which weaves inclusion objectives and the use of social accountability tools, ensures that the main contribution of the project is by no means limited to the physical infrastructure that results from it – e.g., the water tap, community center, crop irrigation or micro-hydro power-system that has been established, or the road that has been repaired. While such “tangibles” can improve people’s daily lives tremendously, their long-term impact may pale in comparison to the broader political, psychological and cultural benefits of the process itself for individual participants and the broader community. In many ways, *the process becomes the main project*, and the physical dimensions of the endeavor (e.g., the improvements to infrastructure generated by it) operate primarily as a means through which more decisive gains are achieved in such areas as inclusion, participation, capacity-building, accountability, and empowerment.

As far as individual participants are concerned, the main benefits of inclusive planning processes include *the sense of agency and self-worth gained by being treated as change agents*, not as assistance “recipients” (or, in the case of recovery districts, as mere “victims”). SB empowers individuals to take the lead in improving their community or in rebuilding their lives in the aftermath of a natural disaster. The activity revealingly refers to target populations not as “beneficiaries,” but as

¹¹ As discussed further below, SB’s systematic reliance on existing, but usually disregarded, government guidelines was critical to its successes as well.

¹² Training on administration include budget management and record keeping, while that aimed at implementation bears on issues that relate to procuring materials, hiring laborers, ensuring that the work conforms to previously agreed plans, and broader quality control mechanisms.

“stakeholders.” That is not just a semantic exercise, since those involved in Pact-supported projects are encouraged to contribute effort, labor, material, land, or small amounts of money, as per their ability. Moreover, precisely because individuals donate time and/or resources to the project, they are far more personally invested in its success and durability and far more likely to insist on guarantees of accountability and transparency than they would be if they thought of themselves as mere “assistance recipients.”

SB’s focus on local planning processes also provided *an entry point for building human capacity*. Through well-targeted training, the activity was successful at increasing citizen skills in key areas. Investments made in developing competence in project design and implementation, mediation, social mobilization, and the use of social accountability tools generated particularly strong returns, as Part Three will document further. For instance, those trained in mediation often developed the aptitudes and confidence that enabled them to assume broader leadership roles in the community. That is important for all community members, but especially for those -- women and members of disadvantaged groups in particular -- who historically were not expected to have a say, let alone play a leadership role, in community affairs. In that regard, for instance, mediation training did not just contribute to the activity’s conflict mitigation objective, but it also fed into its broader inclusive development and governance goals. Similarly, the training of social mobilizers contributed to not just the mobilization of communities behind development projects, but it also fostered these communities’ inclination to demand accountability and monitor progress in that area. Finally, that training also increased the odds of sustainability, since individuals were not just “handed over” physical infrastructure by a contractor, but were provided with the know-how to facilitate maintenance, repairs, and monitoring.

In addition to changing the outlook and improving the skills-set of those who take part in them, inclusive planning processes affect the broader community in other, powerful and lasting ways. One only needs to think, for instance, of what happens when a Dalit woman who served as chair of an IPC stands in front of the community to explain how a project she led unfolded. Certainly, young girls watching the scene -- particularly those from long disadvantaged or discriminated against ethnic and religious minorities -- will infer from it consequential lessons. They will grow up expecting that they, too, can play a leadership role in their village and beyond. The mindset of entire generations may be changed. And while the process alters positively the way the community looks at historically marginalized groups, it also transforms how those groups view the community, the government, and the policy process itself. Long excluded and stigmatized populations that suddenly are provided with an opportunity to shape decisions regarding which projects will be implemented in their community, and how, are likely to experience radical shifts in their understanding of what “the government” and “the policy-making process” actually mean. They are likely to view the former as less alien and the latter as a far more tangible entity. By being given a say in how scarce resources in the communities are allocated, constituencies once relegated to the periphery of society may come to feel that they have not just been brought into the mainstream of development, but that they have become part of what “government” is. In that regard, as Part Three documents, inclusive planning processes played a central role in reducing the gap between government and citizens, a goal that was at the heart of SB.

Development projects carried out through inclusive and participatory methods also promote social harmony (thus contributing to SB’s first activity objective). The potential for intra-community conflict is reduced when individuals who previously might have been divided along identity and other lines work side by side, over a sustained period of time, to create something that is intended to enhance the well-being of the community, and on which they previously agreed, through a deliberative and collaborative process. Meanwhile, the public audits that take place each time a project is completed also set embed in the community the expectation that accountability practices are an integral part of local governance.

More generally, inclusive planning processes provide the communities and individuals who go through them with a genuine, almost intuitive understanding of what concepts such as inclusion, participation, transparency and accountability truly mean. By giving individuals an opportunity to “live” these concepts project after project, SB enabled them to strike roots in the community. That

is no small achievement when one considers how alien these concepts were to daily life in those communities for centuries.

1.3 HARNESSING GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES AND MECHANISMS

SB was quick to recognize that many of the laws and official guidelines relevant to planning processes or the use of social accountability tools (e.g., public hearings, public and social audits, and the reliance on signboards and other means of disseminating information regarding public expenditures) were generally sound and quite consistent with activity goals. For instance, they mandated that local development projects be selected through participatory and inclusive community processes that would involve women and members of traditionally excluded groups. They also provided for specific relevant structures to ensure compliance with those principles or regulations, including the Ward Citizens Forums or Citizen Awareness Centers (WCFs/CACs) and Integrated Planning Formulation Committees (IPFCs) that will be discussed further in Part Three. And they contained provisions for proper monitoring and oversight of projects. SB also recognized, however, that while these mechanisms were formally provided for under the law, they in practice were largely inoperative. Sometimes, even local officials often seemed unaware of them. Having diagnosed that situation, SB understood what could be gained from actuating such mechanisms, and it proceeded to make targeted investments in activating them so as to ensure that they would accomplish what they were intended to do. In particular, as it strove to support more inclusive and participatory local governance, SB seized on the 14-step planning process developed by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD). Relevant guidelines stipulated that MoFALD block grants would fund projects identified at the ward or settlement level through WCFs, and then formally approved through consultative processes by higher-level community and government bodies, the Village Development Committees (VDCs) and District Development Committees (DDCs). As Part Three will discuss in greater detail, SB correctly diagnosed that, in practice, planning processes were insufficiently participatory and inclusive, and that key steps in them were generally disregarded. A particularly weak link in the 14-step chain was the frequent absence of ward/settlement-level consultations, which were crucial to grassroots engagement; instead, political parties and other local elites typically decided which projects should be prioritized. SB moved to rectify that situation and ensure that actual local planning practices would conform to both the letter and the spirit of the official guidelines. It also strove to increase adherence to MoFALD stipulations with regard to the provision that WCF chairs should alternate between men and women year-to-year. That guideline, too, rarely had been followed.

Breathing new life into procedures already provided for under the law greatly facilitated government buy-in and implementation. It no doubt turned out to be a far more effective approach than trying to set up parallel guidelines or new entities. It was more likely to generate gains that could materialize within a relatively short time frame, since the legal and regulatory framework already was in place. As importantly, since the government was “on board” and relevant entities and processes only needed to be pushed into gear, that approach made it more likely that the gains in question could be sustained after activity completion.

1.4 DOING JUSTICE TO THE SUPPLY-SIDE OF THE INCLUSION CHALLENGE

Focused as it was on empowering previously marginalized groups to claim their rights and a greater share of influence over decision-making at the local level, SB understood that this emphasis on “demand” had to be matched by adequate programmatic attention to strengthening the capacity of local government institutions and processes to respond to it. That sensitivity to the supply-side of the inclusion challenge was reflected in both activity design and implementation. SB deliberately and wisely endeavored to balance support for (demand-generating) sociopolitical empowerment with assistance to relevant capacity development of local government and community institutions as well

as local partners.¹³ In sharp contrast, many other donor-supported activities were one-sided -- specifically, most leaned heavily toward the “demand” side of the equation. SB understood the danger that an excess of demands might overwhelm the capacity of existing mechanisms and institutions to respond adequately to them. It wisely recognized that while greater empowerment and inclusion were desirable ends, they also would raise a whole new set of challenges that programming should be positioned to address.

1.5 A JUDICIOUS EMPHASIS ON ACCOUNTABILITY

In both design and implementation, SB reflected a grasp of the centrality of accountability to prospects for improvements across all other dimensions of local governance. The activity prioritized the strengthening of accountability mechanisms across its interventions. As documented in Part Three, it generally was successful in generating significant accountability gains.

1.6 UNDERLYING ANALYTICAL RIGOR

SB made a real effort at analytical rigor and at translating it into programming. For instance, it reflected very deliberately on such issues as what participation and inclusion entail in practice; how to measure them; the nature of the obstacles that stand in the way of progress in those areas; and who needs to receive what types of training in order to address these obstacles and improve overall performance. The activity also was conscientious about monitoring impact and acting on relevant data to adjust priorities and activities. These efforts were critical to its achievements.

1.7 THE COR-IP RELATIONSHIP

One key achievement of SB – and one that made the others possible -- was the strong working relationship that developed between the COR and senior IP staff. Indeed, SB demonstrates what such a positive and productive relationship can accomplish. During interviews conducted in the course of this evaluation, IP staff and the previous COR (through the spring of 2017) gave each other credit for having made the activity’s successes possible. Those interviews made it clear that each side trusted and at the same time felt supported by the other. Both the former and current COR noted they could count on the IP to be creative and responsive to changing conditions on the ground. For its part, the IP expressed gratitude to USAID for having been receptive to its needs and the challenges it had faced, and for having extended to it the flexibility it had needed to remain effective in a fluid environment. When sudden opportunities or challenges presented themselves, or when prior interventions had suggested that planned ones might need some alterations, the IP felt confident it could go to the COR to make its case about needed adjustments.¹⁴ The IP also felt empowered by the COR to take calculated risks to explore promising forms of programming. As documented throughout this document, this reciprocal trust and understanding generated significant programmatic benefits.

PART TWO: ACHIEVEMENTS

Part One pinpointed features of activity design, approaches and implementation that were instrumental in making SB’s accomplishments possible. Part Two now turns to a closer examination of those achievements, zeroing in on evidence of impact.

2.1 INCREASED INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

¹³ As noted elsewhere, SB did not approach local partners merely as organizations meant to help with program implementation. Instead, it deliberately sought to build up their capacity in such areas as financial management, GESI-enhancing practices, and linkages to the media. As a result, while local-partner capacity building was not one of the stated objectives of the program, it became an important part of its legacy.

¹⁴ For instance, after long-delayed local elections finally were held in May and June 2017, SB staff suggested training for newly elected local officials, and the COR proved willing to agree to budget revisions to make it possible to address that important new need.

The fieldwork as well as SB data revealed the significant gains that the activity generated in the areas of inclusion and empowerment, particularly for marginalized populations. Specific evidence of these gains is presented further below, but a broader conclusion from the assessment should be underscored from the onset: over the relatively short span of five years, SB made substantive headway toward the daunting goal of involving groups that had been marginalized for centuries in local decision-making processes. The fact that, through the development projects it supported, SB empowered individual members of those groups to assume leadership positions in their respective communities represents a considerable achievement. The decision of an estimated 1,814 participants in SB activities to take part in the 2017 local elections – and the fact that 609 of them won -- speaks volumes about SB's empowerment effects. To be sure, it is possible that many of those individuals would have run even if they had not been involved previously in SB-supported projects. But 1,814 is an impressive figure, and the fact that many among them were members of historically marginalized groups adds credence to the hypothesis that SB's impact might have been a substantive factor in their decision to seek local office. At the very least, one might see in that figure an indication that the activity was able to target and involve the right type of beneficiaries. It is noteworthy as well that among women who stood in the elections, 45 percent won.

As Part One noted, SB's inclusion-related accomplishments entailed harnessing local planning processes to empower marginalized populations, and doing so by activating frequently disregarded official guidelines, processes and/or institutions. It should be underscored as well that in selecting settlements and VDCs for its interventions, SB systematically prioritized areas that featured higher concentrations of disadvantaged populations and that historically had suffered disproportionately from state neglect. It is revealing that many of the beneficiary groups with which the team met never before had been involved in state-supported development projects or taken part in public audits or hearings,

SB's engagement with Ward Citizens Forums (WCFs), Integrated Planning Formulation Committees (IPFCs), and Village Development Committees (VDCs) illustrate many of the above points and deserves to be examined briefly.

SUPPORT TO WCFs

Prior to 2017, the last local elections in Nepal were held in 2002. The absence of local elections created a huge vacuum of credible political representation at the local level. The so-called "All-Party Mechanism" (APM), a committee of individuals appointed by the local branches of political parties, was established in the mid-2000s, nominally to facilitate local decision-making. That mechanism, however, became the source of such corruption and collusive practices that in late 2011 Nepal's anti-corruption watchdog instructed the government to do away with it. Even though the government promptly complied by issuing directives to that effect, the absence of alternative processes for local decision-making resulted in continued operations by various APMs.

In an effort to address the problems inherent in that situation, MoFALD in 2010 and 2014 issued directives to the effect that, in the absence of elected people's representatives, a Ward Citizen Forum (WCF) should be formed in each ward of a given Village Development Committee (VDC) and Municipality. WCF thus emerged as hybrids between state-sanctioned organizations and CSOs. Each VDC was to have nine WCF, each of which was to consist of 25 members, with proportional representation for the main social and ethnic groups in the ward and at least one-third of the seats set aside for women. The "social mobilisers" of the Local Government and Community Development Program (LGCDP) of MoFALD were to facilitate WCF formation, and then rely on WCFs to foster inclusive and participatory planning processes. As noted earlier, the primary role of WCF was to help the community identify and prioritize projects at the settlement level, using the 14-step planning process, and to ensure that those projects would be relayed to the relevant VDC.

In practice, however, when SB activities were launched in early 2013, there were no WCFs in most VDCs. Where WCFs could be found, they typically existed in name only; they very rarely functioned as they were supposed to do, and in particular there was frequent disregard of MoFALD directives regarding WCF roles, membership composition (particularly with regard to quotas for

members of marginalized groups), leadership rotation (between men and women), and replacement of one-fourth of all WCF members each year. More often than not, people were not even aware of those government directives; instead, APMs continued to play a leading role in decision-making regarding local development projects. The planning process often was a mere formality, and decisions instead were made by a small group of politicians and the VDC secretary.

Against this background, and as noted earlier, one of the main achievements of SB was to breathe new life into WCF and make sure that government guidelines about their composition and operations would be followed. The specific accomplishments of SB in that area can be summarized as follows.

1. SB contributed greatly to an increase in WCF membership and in making WCF more inclusive of historically marginalized groups. This phenomenon was significant considering that in the absence of local elections WCF operated as the main conduits between citizens and government. In 2014, shortly after SB began programming in districts with WCF, membership in those WCF stood at approximately 12,000, but by 2017, largely as a result of efforts by the activity, that figure had risen to nearly 45,000.¹⁵ The percentage of members that were hill Janajati increased considerably as well. As importantly, the number of WCF coordinators in SB project districts jumped from approximately 500 in 2014 to over 1700 in 2017. That was consequential considering the key role those coordinators played in facilitating at both the ward and settlement levels a better understanding of WCF roles and the rules supposed to guide their operations. By 2016, the caste and ethnic background of coordinators had become largely representative of the make-up of the population in any given district.
2. FGDs and interviews of WCF members (across caste, ethnic and gender divides) conducted by the evaluation team made it clear that SB played a key role in the following areas: broadening grassroots interest in WCF proceedings (including by facilitating meetings and discussions during them); helping WCF members better understand their role and responsibilities; enabling them to identify projects that could be particularly useful to their communities; and ensuring that priority projects were relayed to the relevant VDC and had a strong chance of being approved by it. Respondents consistently volunteered to the evaluation team that it often was only after SB's intervention that WCF members understood official directives relevant to local-level planning processes, that WCF members came to feel they truly could affect how resources were allocated, that members from excluded groups felt their voices were being heard, and that their concerns and priorities could be reflected in the local development projects that ultimately would be implemented in their communities. Three-day training sessions organized by SB familiarized WCF members with local-development planning instruments and approaches, the GoN's targeted budget provisions for excluded groups, and social accountability tools. Evaluation fieldwork confirmed the central role SB played in heightening grassroots interest in local planning processes, disseminating relevant information, providing the technical skills needed, and guaranteeing that budget-related and other provisions to benefit women, children, and historically disadvantaged minorities were activated. SB's role was particularly decisive when it came to capturing the priorities and needs of smaller settlements and the populations in them. WCFs were conducting regular meetings and discussing their day- to-day local issues and ways to overcome those issues. They were engaged in ward level planning workshops. LGCDP reports acknowledge that projects such as SB conducted by I/NGOs facilitated WCF members for their involvement, roles and rights for oversight in local governance activities.¹⁶

¹⁵ Figures are drawn from SB Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) data. See [Appendix 6](#) for further data on issues discussed in this paragraph.

¹⁶ LGCDP report, March 2015-2016. http://lgcdp.gov.np/sites/default/files/resource_docs/LGCDP-II-progress-report-July-2015_March-2016.pdf

3. With SB's assistance, WCF also organized events that addressed discriminatory practices, particularly against women (menstruation exclusion, child marriage, polygamy) and members of the lower castes. SB also extended critical support to initiatives aimed at improving sanitation, (e.g., through the construction of toilets), expanding access to drinking water, making repairs to or maintaining roads, irrigation systems, and suspension bridges, and enhancing children enrollment in schools. With SB's assistance, WCF conducted monitoring in schools, provided feedback to health facilities, planned and organized health camps (e.g. on uterine prolapse), informed people about important registration procedures, and supported the Community Mediation Centers (CMCs) to manage conflict at local levels.

Most importantly perhaps, FGDs and KIs conducted by the field evaluation team made it clear that people in SB activity areas felt that interventions had had a long-term impact on expectations and practices at the grassroots level, particularly among women and members of historically marginalized groups. SB programming helped foster an environment in which these traditionally disadvantaged populations now felt more inclined and comfortable participating in discussions and meetings regarding the future of their community, including with regard to the selection and implementation of projects in it. As discussed further in the next session, SB interventions also enabled them to understand the importance of accountability and how to practice it.

ASSISTANCE TO IPFCs

VDC-level Integrated Planning Formulation Committees (IPFCs), too, were provided for under MOFALD guidelines, and, in their case as well, official directives frequently were disregarded. Evaluation fieldwork pointed to SB successes in activating guidelines related to composition and operations of IPFCs (particularly with regard to representation and influence of marginalized groups in them) and, more broadly, in enabling IPFCs to serve the objectives they were supposed to advance.¹⁷

The roles of IPFCs included gathering plans from WCFs, helping those plans find their way to the relevant VDC, and overseeing the process by which plans were modified at the VDC level and then implemented. One key objective of IPFCs was to ensure that whatever reprioritization would occur at the VDC level would continue to do justice to the needs that had been expressed at the WCF level, particularly with regard to historically marginalized groups. Interviews and FGDs conducted during the fieldwork underscored SB's due attention to this priority, as well as its contributions in the following, other areas:

- Ensuring that IPFC meetings would be held monthly and more frequently during the planning period.
- Helping IPFCs hold informed discussions regarding projects selection.
- Facilitating within IPFCs an environment conducive to constructive dialogue and negotiations, particularly among political parties.
- Making sure that IPFC members understood and lived up to their responsibility to be present during public audits and hearings, and that they would respond to issues raised by members of the community.

Former IPFC members interviewed by the team expressed concern that, with the IPFCs now dissolved, and in the absence of a watchdog body capable of picking up their former roles and responsibilities, the quality of local planning processes could be seriously undermined, particularly in the areas of inclusivity, broad-based participation, transparency, and accountability. They observed that, unlike the crop of recently elected local officials, members of IPFCs were not predominantly politicians and/or driven by political agendas, but spokespersons for grassroots communities, who sought to articulate the latter's aspirations and needs, and had been accumulating valuable

¹⁷ IPFCs were chaired by the VDC secretary and comprised the chairs of the School Management Committee and Health Facility Management Committee as well as representatives of political parties, women's group, people with disabilities, and members of other social groups specified in official guidelines.

experience in how to do so effectively. These IPFC respondents also noted that the newly elected officials were not sufficient in numbers to be able to relay the needs of people at the grassroots level, and may not necessarily be inclined or incentivized to do so. One respondent commented that, revealingly, this year's plan had been developed just as used to be the case prior to SB programming: newly elected officials made relevant decisions (including regarding project selection) among themselves, without consulting or engaging with the community at large.

SUPPORT FOR PERIODIC PLANS, ANNUAL PLANS AND LOCAL DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT PLANS

SB helped local bodies formulate the “profile” of their respective villages or municipalities, which provided valuable information for five-year Village Development Plans, five-year District Development plans, and annual plans, the development of which SB also directly supported.¹⁸ In addition, SB assisted with drawing the Local Disaster Risk Management Plans for nine medium-risk VDCs in Dang, Kanchanpur, and Surkhet. These plans pinpointed VDCs’ vulnerabilities, identified resources that could be harnessed to mitigate them, and formulated strategies for lowering the risk of disaster.

SB also endeavored to increase expenditures targeted at women and other disadvantaged groups relative to the non-targeted part of the budgets of VDCs and municipalities. A comparative analysis of VDC Annual Programs for 2013 and 2016 in various districts where SB was active reveals a significant increase of targeted expenditures over time ([Appendix 6](#), Exhibit 3).

2.2 CROSS-SECTORAL BENEFITS

Field interviews of service users, government officials and IP staff pointed to the strong cross-sectoral benefits that the activity generated. In large part, this phenomenon logically flowed from the local planning process having been placed at the very heart of SB: since a broad range of projects across a multiplicity of sectors were considered through that process, SB was bound to generate cross-sectoral gains. For example, a project related to reproductive health or education might come up through the WCF-centered planning process, be identified as a priority by the community, and then be relayed to the relevant VDC for approval. Thus, by virtue of their role in recommending projects to VDCs, WCF (which were a focus of SB’s work) ensured that VDC-approved undertakings in a wide array of sectors would become more likely to reflect grassroots demands and needs. Similarly, by facilitating community mobilization, SB enhanced the ability of communities to address the full assortment of social and economic issues confronting them. Meanwhile, SB-supported radios engaged in health-related programming while local youth groups (LYGs) and district youth networks (DYNs) organized a variety of workshops and public fora on such topics as HIV-AIDS and drinking water, thus heightening public awareness of those issues.

But it may well be through its training of other USAID partners and beneficiaries in inclusive and participatory planning processes that SB made its greatest contributions to multi-sectors gains. It is revealing that other USAID activities went to SB and explicitly sought its advice on how best to make progress toward their objectives by using the development approach SB perfected. That approach ended up being duplicated in several of USAID/Nepal’s other activities.

2.3 STRONGER ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS

During the lifetime of SB, public hearings and public audits of activity-supported projects became common practice, as was also true of monitoring whether expenditures on development projects matched earlier decisions reached through inclusive planning processes. It was a significant achievement for the activity to secure higher levels of acceptance of public hearings by local officials, and, more generally, to make them better disposed toward the very idea of having to account for their actions. There also is evidence to suggest that SB beneficiaries became used to asking

¹⁸ Specifically, SB supported the preparation of 96 village profiles and seven municipal profiles as well as 76 Periodic Village Development Plans and Periodic District Development Plan in three districts (Surkhet, Banke and Kailali district).

questions to VDC officials about, for instance, why a particular project had not been approved, or how exactly local funds were being allocated. For many of those involved, asking such questions reflected a sea change in behavior. It also seems to have made some VDC officials more likely to pause before making funding decisions.

As was true of official provisions regarding the inclusion of marginalized groups in local decision-making processes, when SB began programming there were government guidelines mandating the use of social accountability tools, but these directives, too, generally were disregarded or implemented in a highly flawed or perfunctory manner. Local-government officials lacked the human resources, the time, and/or the inclination to apply these tools more than perfunctorily. During the fieldwork, respondents shared that what at the time passed for public audits or hearings typically involved no actual meetings or discussions, and that the audit or hearing often would be considered completed after signatures had been collected from “attendees” or “participants” who, in fact, had never taken part in anything resembling a genuine audit or hearing. At the grassroots level, there typically was little-to-no understanding of what social accountability tools were supposed to accomplish, why they matter, and how to use them.

SB changed that situation by systematically promoting the use of social accountability tools as per government guidelines. For instance, it ensured that public audits would conform to Public Audit Procedure 2067 (issued in 2010); it required that each micro-project conclude with a public audit, in accordance with the provisions in Resource Mobilization Procedure 2069 (issued in 2012); and it supported social audits in accordance with the Local Body Social Audit procedure 2067. Furthermore, SB did not just mandate or encourage the use of social accountability tools, but it also trained members of the community in how to use them, sensitized members of the community to their value, and familiarized them with relevant official guidelines. Over a period of three years (2015-2017), SB supported a total of 819 public audits, public hearings and social audits ([Appendix 6](#)). Public hearings and public audits of SB-supported projects were built into programming, so as to foster an expectation of such practices. SB also encouraged regular public monitoring of whether expenditures on development projects matched earlier decisions reached through inclusive planning processes. SB supported 92 public hearings (including 12 in recovery districts), 177 public audits (49 in recovery districts), and 20 social audits.

KIs and FGDs conducted under this assessment revealed broad appreciation of SB’s efforts to promote the use of social accountability tools. This gratitude cut across gender lines and included members of Village Supervision and Monitoring Committees (VSMCs), political party representatives, and local officials. Interviews revealed a generalized understanding of the importance of SB’s work in these areas and of how much had been achieved in this regard in relatively little time. Two specific and related accomplishments deserve special mention, and the fieldwork revealed that they were duly noticed by the communities in which SB was active.

First, SB managed to secure higher levels of acceptance of public hearings and audits from local officials. It succeeded in making them more inclined to providing information about projects, and better disposed toward the idea of having to account for their actions. That was no small achievement, particularly in light of the historical culture of impunity found among elites neither used nor predisposed to having to explain their actions to the broader public.

Second, SB beneficiaries became used to asking questions to VDC and other officials – for instance about why a particular project had not been approved or how exactly local funds were being allocated. Such requests reflected a sea change in behavior, and comments collected during the fieldwork suggested that that shift may have made some VDC officials more likely to pause before making funding decisions. The fieldwork also revealed that the use of social accountability tools, and the discussions, exchanges, and new practices they generated, had a broader energizing effect on the communities involved. Accountability advances resulted in participation benefits as well: as communities became better informed about ongoing projects, and as transparency regarding decisions and the use of funds increased, individuals developed a sense of ownership of development efforts and were more likely to actively engage in them.

Implementation of public audits and public hearing after the completion of projects fostered an expectation that such practices should be the norm whenever projects are designed and implemented. As a social mobilizer of LGCDP noted to the field evaluation team, SB accountability-related interventions empowered people to demand information about activities, and at the same time nudged government staff toward accepting that they had to become more forthcoming and transparent about their decisions and activities. As a result, VDCs, too, came under pressure to conduct proper public hearing and audit of all their plans and activities, and when they did not do so it came to be demanded from them.¹⁹ Meanwhile, public hearings and audits witnessed an increase in participation by women and people from historically disadvantaged social groups, such as Dalits and Adibasi/Janajatis.

The fieldwork revealed that the issues most commonly raised during public hearings included: absence of VDC Secretaries (which meant that individuals had to travel to district headquarters to obtain official documentation); failure of a VDC or Municipality to adjust the official number of households living within it so as to reflect actual figures (which resulted in people being deprived of important government services); inadequate response by VDCs to priority needs in the areas of solid waste management, sanitation, access to the power grid, and safe drinking water; significant delays in the release of grant installments for home reconstruction by the National Reconstruction Authority; poor quality control and delays in the completion of development projects; lack of Citizen Information Boards and Citizen's Charters in the VDC/Municipality; and insufficient information regarding budgets and revenues. Meanwhile, issues raised during public audits often revolved around labor wages, transportation and construction costs in excess of those officially provided for, and shortcomings in the quality of completed projects. As for social audits, they led to a number of recommendations to improve service delivery in the areas of health, sanitation, resource mobilization, and transparency.

In addition to public hearings, public audits, and social audits, two other accountability-related tools which SB used effectively were "review meetings" (Sajhedari Chautari) and Village Supervision and Monitoring Committees (VSMCs). During review meetings, which were held every three months, representatives of SB partners presented their work to the community for discussion and feedback. These meetings provided a venue for people to keep informed of ongoing and upcoming projects. They helped identify problems, facilitated collaboration and information flows among stakeholders as well as between them and local officials, and increased transparency regarding the use of funds. Above all, they, too, helped embed accountability and transparency practices in the community.

SB also targeted VSMCs for assistance. When SB began programming, VSMCs were supposed to monitor projects implemented by VDCs, but in most instances they either were inoperative or functioned very poorly. SB revitalized and/or restructured 201 of these VSMCs and trained their staff. That, in turn, sent user groups a powerful message that project monitoring could be expected, and that they should adjust their operations accordingly.

The progress report of LGCDP reported that public hearing, social audits and public audits were regularly implemented by the local bodies.²⁰ WCFs were engaged in civic oversight activities.

2.4 CAPACITIES OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND EXCLUDED GROUPS ENHANCED

¹⁹ VDCs typically conducted two hearings per year, and DDCs three.

²⁰ In the reporting period, 918 VDCs, 148 MuNs and 75 DDCs conducted public hearings while 24 VDCs, 79 MuNs and 56 DDC conducted social audits. Projects in execution were in the process of completion and public audit of such projects were being completed. It was reported that 14% VDC level, 9% Municipality level and 11% DDC level projects had completed the public audit before getting final payment. 300 VDCs, 110 Municipalities and 43 DDCs had published the Income and Expenditure statement on a monthly basis. Likewise, final Audit Report of previous fy 2071/72 was publicized by 916 VDCs, 148 municipalities and 50 DDCs. During the reporting period, 3625 WCFs are engaged in civic oversight activities mainly in public audit, social audit, public hearing and monitoring of local development activities of health posts, primary schools and I/NGOs. LGCDP Report, March 2015-2016, http://lgcdp.gov.np/sites/default/files/resource_docs/LGCDP-II-progress-report-July-2015_March-2016.pdf

SB was effective in its efforts to enhance the capacities of women, youth and members of excluded social groups. Its success in that area was made possible by its leveraging of Ward Citizen Fora (WCF), WORTH groups, Local Youth Groups (LYGs), and Listeners Discussion and Action Groups (LDAGs). The field team met with a number of such groups in SB project areas, and it was struck by the sense of confidence and personal growth that their members appeared to have experienced through the project. As documented below, with generally small amounts of SB funding and facilitation, many of these groups were able to accomplish much good for their respective communities.

As WCF members, women and members of excluded social groups became better informed about the planning process, targeted budgeting, and other government provisions intended to benefit them. They became more skilled at participating in WCF discussions and shaping the decisions made through them, more inclined to advocate on their own behalf, and better able to ensure that annual and periodic plans paid due attention to their needs. Their improved understanding of governance enabled them to seek out services from different agencies and to demand for accountability from them.

SB also used Pact's WORTH program to increase economic opportunities and resources for women from marginalized and socially excluded groups. While Pact operates WORTH in 14 countries (from Columbia to Cambodia and Vietnam to Zambia), it is in Nepal that the program may have had its greatest impact. Pact described WORTH as a program that "brings together groups of poor women and uses a combination of literacy training, community banking, and microbusiness development to help the women help themselves and each other to end poverty ... WORTH strengthens women's social networks and enables them to become activists, entrepreneurs and effective leaders who bring about change in their communities."

SB relied on local NGOs selected through a bidding process to support women to form 25-member WORTH groups, prioritizing inclusion of women from marginalized communities such as Dalits, Janajatis, and Madhesi. WORTH groups organized training activities, provided credit, and facilitated savings with a view to support the establishment or strengthen micro-enterprises in a broad range of areas: tailoring, doll making, mattress making, and turmeric, goat, fishery, poultry, or vegetable farming. Sellers' stands and small grocery stores also were made possible through the activities of these groups. In addition, WORTH groups provided skills in areas like meeting facilitation, planning processes, project design and implementation, and the use of social accountability tools.²¹ By 2016, SB had supported a total of 10,611 women (up from just 2,758 in 2014) in 454 WORTH groups with diverse membership.²² As of 2017, 2,797 WORTH members had run uninterrupted businesses. (See [Appendix 3](#) for information further details of WORTH members and enterprises)

WORTH groups were registered with District Agriculture Offices (DADO) and District Livestock offices (DLSO), which made them part of the government process and enabled them to access associated support and resources. Women who never before approached those offices for resources were encouraged to do so and provided with relevant guidance, and they grew accustomed to doing so. The field team's discussions with members of WORTH groups showed that this SB benefit was particularly appreciated, especially since other groups generally did not provide access to it or build the necessary skills.

²¹ The case of Purna BK, who was interviewed by the field team, is revealing of the personal empowerment and transformations experienced by many who joined WORTH group. Purna, a resident of Panchapuri, in the Surkhet district (Province 6), was married at the age of 15, which prevented her from pursuing her studies beyond eighth grade. After SB was introduced in Surkhet, she joined a WORTH group and received training on planning, accountability and transparency, and facilitation. This prompted her to initiate campaigns against child marriage, caste-based discrimination, and chaupadi (the tradition of social isolation of menstruating women, which in effect turns them into untouchables). Purna conveyed a sense of agency she hardly would have communicated prior to joining the WORTH group, and she expressed her belief that her activities had contributed to making more aware of the need to chaupadi as well as other form of violence against women and/or lower castes. In the local elections of 2017, she was elected as a Ward member and stated her determination to be an effective spokesperson for her community's needs.

²² According to SB sources, the overall membership of those groups was as follows: 34% Terai Janajati; 22% Hill Brahman/Chhetri; 18% Hill Dalit; 11% Hill Janajati; 5% Muslim; and 5% Madhesi Dalit.

In addition, WORTH groups served as arenas for leadership development and for discussion of issues pertaining to women, gender equality and inclusive development. They conveyed vital information regarding the planning process and provisions in it meant to empower women, and helped ensure that VDC plans would include projects for women. They also provided springboards for women to participate in campaigns against child marriage and caste-based discrimination.

KIs and FGDs conducted by the field evaluation team made it clear that by increasing women's economic independence and making it easier for them to access government services, WORTH groups had enhanced the decision-making powers of women, reduced the constraints on their mobility, increased community respect for them, and given a boost to their self-esteem. From that position of greater strength, women became better able to fight against gender-based violence (GBV) and caste-based discrimination (CBD), and better positioned to run and, in many instances, be elected to decision-making positions when local elections were held in 2017. Furthermore, because many of these women also were affiliated with Community Mediation Centers (CMCs), they were able to refer to those CMCs individuals engaged in disputes.

SB also worked with a total of 2,660 youth in the six core districts. It supported 115 active **local youth groups (LYGs)** and six district-based youth networks. LYGs provided venues for training in areas like entrepreneurship, evidence-based advocacy, and the use of accountability tools. That training, in turn, enhanced the quality of LYGs' social work, which included working as volunteers in the community, helping WCF organize ward meetings, and initiating or supporting awareness-raising campaigns in such areas as GBV, CBD, gambling, wasteful spending, or substance abuse. LYGs also contributed to the selection and prioritization of development projects, supported CMCs by bringing to them disputes in the community, and implemented community development activities (CDAs). More generally, they provided conduits for youth to engage in productive, collaborative endeavors that enhanced their standing in the community and enabled them to gain increased self-esteem while staying out of trouble.

SB provided LYGs with small grants (not exceeding NPRs7,000 each, or approximately USD69.00) to conduct CDAs that addressed sanitation needs and issues related to child marriage, education, GBV, natural-resources management, and trafficking. LYGs carried out similar additional voluntary social actions with funds they raised themselves. Social initiatives by LYGs increased from 58 in 2015 to 246 by 2017.

With SB support the youth groups submitted 3,928 plans of which 77 projects²³ were endorsed by village councils. Additionally 1,261 youths from community groups (that SB supported) were able to obtain employment or became self-employed (Year 5 annual report).

Under SB's sponsorship, **Listeners Discussion and Action Groups (LDAGs)**, initially called Radio Listeners' Group, were formed to bring youth together, enable them to familiarize themselves with a broad range of community-relevant issues and discuss them, and build on that enhanced understanding to contribute to targeted CDAs, particularly awareness-raising activities and efforts to shift social norms. KIs and FGDs conducted during the fieldwork suggested that those goals generally were reached and that participating youth did see the merits to them as well as to the broader community of LDAGs-centered activities, even though LDAGs were unable to bring non-listeners into their network. Membership in LDAGs increased from 682 (64% women) in 2014 to 2,490 in 2016 (with 70% women). In 2016, 58 percent of the 125 key positions in LDAGs were filled by women (with almost 10% Dalit women),²⁴ while 38 percent of those positions were held by Terai Janajatis and 26 percent by Brahmin/Chhetris.

Field interviews revealed that LDAGs activities made participants, particularly young women, more confident about their grasp of social and political issues, and, as a result, more prone to take part in

²³ Examples of these projects include trainings on computer, haircutting, motorcycle repair, mobile repair, mushroom farming, house wiring or electrician, proposal writing, youth leadership, youth self-employment, and media anchoring and leadership development

²⁴ There were 44 percent women in such key positions in 2014, including six percent Dalit women.

public discussions of them. Participation in LDAG meetings also often acted as a catalyst for involvement in public campaigns or rallies -- e.g., to beautify the village through street cleaning or tree planting, to encourage registration with relevant government offices (so as to facilitate voting or access to documents and associated benefits), or to mobilize the community against GBV, child marriage, human trafficking, or menstrual exclusion (see [Appendix 7](#) for a summary of social actions undertaken by LDAGs). Many of these social actions included door-to-door campaigns, and some were conducted in coordination with local NGOs, police offices, or other women's and youth groups.

2.5 IMPROVED DISPUTE RESOLUTION MECHANISMS AND REDUCED SOCIAL TENSIONS

As discussed earlier, conflict mitigation was a core objective of SB. The activity aimed to identify and address potential causes of conflict early on, so as to prevent associated tensions from festering and escalating. Since exclusion and marginalization were believed to loom large among the root causes of conflict, SB tried to address them by ensuring that the target group for all interventions were gender and socially inclusive – and in that respect all of SB programming had a conflict mitigation component. But SB also endeavored to address conflict issues more directly, through the establishment of Community Mediation Centers (CMCs).

In cooperation with the Center for Legal Research and Resource Development (CeLRRD), a national-level Nepali NGO that SB selected as its IP for mediation programming, a total of 147 CMCs (115 in the six core districts and 32 in the recovery districts) were set up, and training on win-win dispute resolution processes was provided to 4,172 Community Mediators (CM), 42 percent of whom were women.²⁵ Once a dispute had been registered by the CMC, the process of mediation involved inviting both of the conflicting parties to that CMC, having CMC staff speak with each party separately, and then bringing both parties together so that they could engage on the issue in the presence of three mediators: two chosen by the parties (one each) and the third one selected by the CMC coordinator. The CMs never took sides but were there to facilitate the discussion and enable both parties to come up with an acceptable solution. To enable the community to become more aware of the existence of CMCs and of the benefits involved in resorting to them, social marketing was conducted that involved information dissemination through radio broadcasts, street drama, posters, wall painting, and door-to-door campaigns.

The record shows that CMCs dealt mostly with low-level, inter-personal disputes – for instance among family members (as in the case of domestic violence, tensions created by polygamy, or disputes over inheritance between siblings), between neighbors, or over land boundaries, allegations of theft, or unrepaid loans. In contrast, CMCs did not tackle the higher-level conflicts (e.g., between identity groups or caused by state neglect of marginalized populations) that were the primary intended focus of SB's conflict mitigation objective. Specifically, as of August 2017 over three-quarters of the 16,503 cases registered with CMCs were related to inter-personal conflicts, 13 percent to gender-based violence, and 10 percent to disputes over resources. In sharp contrast, only 86 cases (0.5 percent) pertained to identity-based conflicts and 2 cases to political ones ([Appendix 6](#)). One might view these figures as an indication that SB fell short in its conflict-mediation objective, given the planned original focus on identity-based and political conflicts.

But identity conflicts are extremely difficult to activity against. Furthermore, inter-personal disputes sometimes reflect them, can escalate into them, or may intensify them. Therefore, a case can be made that by addressing inter-personal conflicts, CMCs also reduced the potential for friction among societal groups, and that it did so in the most practical way, which was indirect and partial. One

²⁵ CMCs were established after CMs already had been trained. There were 3,242 CMs in the six core districts and 930 CMs in the five recovery districts (Quarterly Report, SB, July 2017).

should underscore as well the high success rate of CMCs, since 80 percent of all registered cases were settled ([Appendix 6](#)).²⁶

Above all, CMCs provided, for the first time, community-based institutions viewed as neutral and credible, and to which individuals felt they now could turn to seek redress for grievances or fair adjudication of disputes. That was particularly significant for members of marginalized groups, who became the main users of these CMCs. Among all cases that were settled, the highest success rate involved cases in which Hill Dalits and Hill Janajatis were the first disputants ([Appendix 6](#)). CMCs thus generated gains that went far beyond mere “access to justice.” By giving citizens, including those previously most excluded, a degree of confidence in the possibility of receiving justice, CMCs enhanced grassroots perceptions of the very legitimacy of the political and societal order, thereby also reducing the likelihood of violent conflict (the Maoist insurgency was fueled, in large part, by historically marginalized groups’ perception that they could get a fair hearing, let alone justice, under the old order). Overall, the benefits of CMCs spanned societal inclusion, rule of law, conflict prevention, and system legitimacy. The significance of such gains in the context of a post-conflict society still plagued by high levels of contestation, exclusion, and injustice cannot be downplayed.

KIs and FGDs conducted in the field as part of this assessment indicated broad satisfaction with the service CMCs provided, in terms of both process and outcome. The feedback offered by a CMC user in Dahrapur, Surkhet, deserves to be quoted at some length since it was echoed by many others with whom the team spoke:²⁷

"When there was no CMC, we had to go to the police station and endure a lot of insults, but now the service is available near us, and it is free. With the police, we feared we couldn't talk openly, but now we can choose a mediator with whom we feel comfortable. We discuss our problems openly because we know the views we express will remain confidential. The service was provided in a very timely manner: CMC staff called us within a couple of days after we submitted our request. Not having to go to police stations and courts saves us time, energy and money. The whole mediation process was very respectful and dignified. We felt as if our issues mattered and that are given due attention. It is different when we go to the police; there, we often are disrespected and berated. Now we hope there will be a CMC at the ward level that can be accessed easily by poor and excluded people like us, Dalits."

Other respondents expressed similar views. There was much appreciation for the accessibility and proximity of CMCs as service providers and for a mediation process that enabled people to work out their differences face-to-face and to come away feeling that the decision had been reached fairly. Women shared that it was easier to discuss GBV in the CMCs than in courts or at police stations (though CMs also underscored that disputes related to domestic violence typically did not come openly to the CMC, and that they instead required sensitive facilitation and a proactive stance by CMC staff). CMs viewed the CMCs’ biggest achievement as having provided access to justice to constituencies that never before had had such access, or even had envisioned they could have it. CMs also noted the steady growth of trust in mediation processes within the community. In addition, CMCs decreased the conflict-resolution burden on the VDC secretary and courts.

Critical as well was the impact that mediation training and acting as mediators had on women and members of marginalized groups who became CMs. Interviews conducted by the field team showed that these mediators felt that their standing in the community increased markedly as a result of their new role. By their own reckoning, their self-confidence increased as well. Increased public visibility and community recognition, combined with an enhanced feeling of agency, prompted many of these CMs to run for office when local elections were held.

²⁶ The experience of CMs was that small problems such as disagreements between in-laws or over a loan were easier to resolve than land issues, particularly disputes over property and boundary claims, which often proved time consuming and difficult. The most challenging cases were those involving child marriage and domestic abuse.

²⁷ The statement was edited for style. Changes that were made do not alter the general content of the opinions offered.

2.6 IMPROVED CAPACITIES OF GOVERNMENTAL SERVICE PROVIDERS AND LOCAL PARTNERS

As Part One noted, one of the design strengths of SB was its ability to balance demand-oriented programming with interventions aimed at boosting the capacities of service providers. Although SB's work in that regard was primarily with government institutions, its approach to local partners also deserves to be noted here. Specifically, SB did not treat local partners merely as organizations meant to help with activity implementation. Instead, it deliberately sought to build up their capacity in areas like financial management, GESI-enhancing practices, and linkages to the media. As a result, while local-partner capacity building was not one of the stated objectives of the activity, it became an important part of its legacy.

As for strengthening the capacities of governmental service providers, SB supported MoFALD, VDCs and municipalities in various ways. In the course of interviews conducted during the fieldwork, MoFALD's Joint Secretary, but also former Ward and VDC secretaries, expressed gratitude for SB's efforts to support the implementation of government guidelines and activity models, including the 14-steps planning process. MoFALD's Joint Secretary was particularly appreciative of the activity having permitted ministry officials to participate in all SB interventions, go on field visits to SB project sites, and be associated with review and monitoring processes. In addition, SB provided VDCs with technical assistance directed at enabling them to improve their performance in the Minimum Conditions and Performance Measures (MCPM) system, which MoFALD used to set the amount of the annual grants it would provide them. In several cases, particularly in Surkhet, Bardiya and Banke, that assistance generated significant performance improvements ([Appendix 6](#)).

For their part, former VDC secretaries, the executive officers of municipalities, and other local-government respondents thanked SB for having facilitated VDCs' and municipalities' planning process through support for the preparation of village profiles, periodic and annual plans, Internal Revenue Assessment and Projection (IRAP) documents, and Local Disaster Risk Management Plans (LDRMPs); for having delivered critical training to local government staff in such areas as accounting software and vital event registration (VER); and for having provided local bodies with critical equipment (particularly computers, but also printers, photocopy and fax machines, furniture, and solar backup systems; see [Appendix 6](#) for details). SB's computerization support was instrumental to improving data preservation and management, especially in the critical area of registration for critical government services. By supporting public hearings and helping make relevant documents more accessible in the VDC and Ward offices SB also facilitated public access to the information contained in development plans and revenue projection documents.

SB was also deemed to have been effective in the governance-related and more technical training it delivered to an array of local government agencies and staff. At the VDC level, the staff of DLSO and DADO offices were provided with training in GESI and on how to improve service delivery to remote areas, the poor and the excluded. SB also strengthened these offices' capacity to provide services, filling critical GoN gaps ([Appendix 6](#)).

2.7 IMPROVED ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR WOMEN AND THE MARGINALIZED

One of SB's key objectives was to improve service provision, particularly to women and the marginalized. As discussed above, SB pursued this objective by making planning processes more participatory and inclusive; by increasing the advocacy and monitoring skills of populations in project areas; by disseminating information about development projects; by facilitating WORTH groups' registration with DADOs and DLSOs so that they could access the services available to women, the poor and the excluded; by supporting vital registration, to help women and marginalized constituencies secure the documentation needed to qualify for various services; and by strengthening the capacities of governmental service providers. In addition to these previously analyzed interventions, SB extended targeted support for mobile service camps and small-scale

infrastructure projects (SSIPs). A key intent in that regard was to demonstrate how good governance practices could be integrated in service delivery.

SB's support for the GoN's **mobile service camps** rested on the premise that, if they were adequately resourced and organized and managed more effectively, they would provide isolated, impoverished populations living in geographically remote villages and settlements with opportunities to access critical services and information in such areas as reproductive or general health, nutrition, livestock farming, veterinary assistance, and registration. Before SB began programming, these camps were rarely staged due to cost, resources and logistical constraints. When they were offered, they typically came very short in terms of organization, effectiveness, and information dissemination to the most marginalized.

In SB project areas, the activity's assistance to those camps changed that situation. Interviews conducted in the course of this evaluation showed that respondents considered SB-supported service camps to be well managed, to meet critical needs, and to improve understanding of good-governance principles. They also pointed to a widespread realization that, without SB's logistical assistance and efforts to maximize attendance by disseminating relevant information, these camps would have fallen short. Altogether, between 2015 and 2017, 140 mobile service camps benefited a total of 33,468 people (see [Appendix 6](#)). SB worked smoothly with health posts and agriculture and livestock officers to provide valuable services to some of Nepal's most isolated settlements, and it increased significantly the number of beneficiaries per camp (for instance, in one case, SB assistance enabled the same service camp to expand its impact from 300 to 2,100 persons).

Through **micro-grants interventions**, SB also provided assistance for projects prioritized by VDCs, but for which they often lacked the necessary resources. These projects typically addressed the needs of youth, women and other marginalized groups. In two fiscal years (2014-2015 and 2015-2016), SB provided funding and technical assistance for a total of 255 SSIPs ([Appendix 6](#)) that benefited a total of 43,867 households and 146,918 people. The fieldwork pointed to the key roles played in these projects by the Implementing Partner Committees (IPCs) and Partner Monitoring Committees (PMCs), which Part One discussed, and that SB supported through training and technical assistance. IPCs and PMCs did far more than just help with implementation and monitoring. As respondents noted to the field team, they also often provided conduits for women and members of historically marginalized groups to assume leadership roles, which typically had a tremendously empowering effect on those constituencies: it improved their sense of confidence, enhanced their visibility in, and recognition by, the community; provided them with new and valuable skills; and often provided a springboard to other positions.²⁸

The evaluation team met with members of six SSIP groups that had implemented projects ranging from culverts and irrigation to drinking water and road maintenance. Running through the conversations with them was a deep appreciation for the management skills and other learning opportunities that the projects had provided, as well as for the sense of confidence and self-respect that had been fostered in the process. According to respondents, the specific skills that had been developed related to resource management, planning, budget-tracking, procurement, quality control, supervision of labor, team work, and financial transparency. Good governance practices were nurtured through sustainability and maintenance plans, as well as by holding regular management meetings, keeping minutes of key decisions, collecting invoices, and learning how to be accountable for results.

2.8 SMALL POSITIVE SHIFTS IN GENDER NORMS AND SOCIAL RELATIONS

In light of the magnitude and deeply rooted nature of gender-based and ethnic discrimination in Nepal, it would have been unrealistic to expect that SB could have generated more than limited gains in reducing that discrimination and shifting corresponding social norms. But the activity did meet

²⁸ For instance, an interviewee who had served as treasurer for an SSIP project related to culverts became the treasurer for a broader VDC undertaking involving culverts.

that threshold. For instance, interviews and FGDs the team conducted revealed that by facilitating the mobilization of women and their involvement in community-wide planning, decision-making, project implementation and monitoring processes, the activity did not just empower them, including by increasing their bargaining power in the household, but it also generated incipient but noticeable and critically important shifts in the way men view women and their proper role in the public sphere. KIs and FGDs pointed to a direct connection between, on the one hand, some of the opportunities that project interventions made available to women, and, on the other hand, changing public views of women's roles in the household and the public arena alike. By increasing the public visibility of women and their ability to shape decisions on projects that have a direct impact on the well-being of the community, SB contributed to positive alterations in the way power and authority are exercised and in corresponding social norms. For instance, interviews revealed that not only had women become far more comfortable voicing their opinions within the family, but that there now was greater acceptance of those views in the household, including when they entailed a direct or indirect questioning of those expressed by men.

The above notwithstanding, one should emphasize – at a particularly appropriate juncture in this report, which now will turn to an examination of activity gaps and shortcomings – that SB could not devote nearly sufficient attention to addressing deeply rooted social norms that greatly hindered achievements of activity objectives. Even as one readily acknowledges how difficult it is for programming to alter longstanding societal views of gender roles and social relations, one also must recognize that unless mindsets undergo at least some positive changes, programming aimed at empowerment, inclusion and accountability will remain very constrained in terms of what it can achieve. SB could have taken an approach that worked not just with marginalized communities, but also with the broader communities. This is an approach that only minimally got off the ground, due to a prioritization of working with marginalized groups as a first tier effort. SB did make a systematic and generally fruitful effort to improve Dalits' involvement in mainstream public life and influence over community-based decisions. It also tried to shift mindsets through training directed at, and mobilization of, marginalized groups, as well as through targeted radio programs. Yet the evaluation detected little evidence that these interventions resulted in substantive gains – perhaps, in part, because interventions did not address sufficiently directly the norms and attitudes that sustain caste-based discrimination, a clearly longer term efforts are needed in achieving such gains.

PART THREE: LIMITATIONS AND SHORTCOMINGS

3.1 SUBOPTIMAL GEOGRAPHIC TARGETING AND A PROBLEMATIC TWO-PHASED APPROACH

Pact's senior staff emphasized that it would have been far preferable for SB to target fewer districts, but engage with more VDCs (ideally all) in them. That was for two reasons. First, by providing assistance to some VDCs but not to others, in a given district, SB was faced by complaints from those VDCs that felt excluded from the activity's benefits. Second, working intensively in a given district by reaching out to all or most VDCs in it likely would have increased government buy-in and improved coordination with government officials and entities. The reason is simple: the fewer INGOs or IPs government staff and agencies had to deal with in a given district, and the more they could rely on a given INGO or contractor to work with the vast majority of VDCs in that district, the more inclined they were to cooperate with that INGO or contractor. Although the geographic focus was made in consultation with numerous stakeholders, including MoFALD, USAID, Pact and local governments, concentrated geographic targeting by an IP increases the likelihood of government commitment to working closely with it, while the scattering of interventions across geographic areas has the opposite effect.

SB's activity timeline was problematic as well. A five-year activity expected to engage with a total of 115 VDCs, SB was divided into two phases, each extending over a two-and-a-half-year period. The first phase was to target 58 VDCs and the second 57 others. This was in response to the government's request that all VDCs in a district needed to be covered. That approach proved

suboptimal. During interviews, SB staff unanimously noted that, in their view, it would have been more effective to engage a smaller number of VDCs, but for the entire five-year period. They believed that the overall impact would have been greater for two reasons. There was a mismatch between the timeframe model and the interventions envisioned.

First, it predictably took some time for the initial Phase One activities to gain traction. By the time these activities finally gathered momentum, SB had to pivot to Phase Two and focus its attention on another 57 VDCs. As a result, the activity was forced to “pull the plug” on Phase One activities far too early. That short timeframe turned out to be even more problematic considering the challenging and ambitious nature of the activity’s core objectives, which included engaging in local decision-making communities that have been marginalized for centuries, and equipping their members (most of them illiterate) with the skills necessary to be active and effective participants in relevant processes. The compressed period for interventions did not provide sufficient time for a deep internalization of the new attitudes and skills that SB was seeking to impart, and it reduced opportunities for the sustained “hand-holding” required for such internalization to occur.

Second, the original design did not provide for some form of continued support to Phase One beneficiaries during Phase Two. From a sustainability perspective, that approach was flawed.

To the implementer’s credit, and to that of the COR who gave it the required flexibility, during Phase Two Pact did manage to extend some assistance to VDCs that had been targeted during Phase One. But that was an adjustment not provided for under the original plan, and for which no budget allocation had been made.

3.2 SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

As Part Two documented, SB generally was effective in strengthening or establishing bodies such as WCF, CMCs, youth groups, and LDAGs; in supporting mobile service camps; and in encouraging and facilitating the use of accountability tools. The bodies are not likely to exist as such in transition to new federal structures but the behavioral changes may sustain if any.²⁹ In that regard, the momentous and sudden changes brought about by restructuring threaten to endanger many of the most substantive gains generated by SB’s work in the past five years. It remains true that SB’s interventions significantly increased the planning and monitoring skills of individuals and grassroots communities, their broader civic-engagement readiness and capacities, as well as their sense of agency, and that the relevant transformations were particularly noticeable among the historically most marginalized segments of the population. It also is true that such substantive gains should endure, at least for a while. Nonetheless, if they are to be maintained beyond the next five years, and if Nepal is to build on them, the new policies, institutional structures and processes that will be put in place during that period will have to provide an environment conducive to maximizing the opportunities that a more engaged citizenry can make to helping the country address its developmental challenges. As of this writing, whether or not that will happen remains a question mark. What is sure is that skills that are not practiced tend to erode over time, as can the understanding of their value.

WCF (and VDCs) legally ceased to exist the moment local elections took place in May and June of 2017. They now have been superseded by ward councils, which comprise the elected representatives of the lowest level of government in Nepal. Once ward councils were elected, disbanding WCFs seemed like a logical move. After all, since the population at long last had been able to choose local representatives, what was the point of “government-sanctioned CSOs” such as the WCFs? Most analysts agreed that WCF should not continue to exist in their past capacity, as they might amount to a parallel system of governance. Unfortunately, it does not appear that ward councils or any other bodies are willing and ready to perform the critical function previously discharged by WCF.

²⁹ This evaluation was at the immediate end of the project and hence was not be able to assess the behavioral/capacities that can only be measured years after a project.

The field team met with members of ten former WCFs. The mood among them was one of confusion and disappointment: they did not know whether there might be a role for them in Nepal's new system of local governance, and, if so, what it might be; they complained that while the newly elected mayors and ward chairs had reached out to them eagerly while campaigning, they for the most part had not been in contact with them since taking office; and they bemoaned that the planning process this year had involved no consultations at the settlement level. For their part, the vast majority of the recently-elected local government officials interviewed by the team confirmed that they had not engaged with former WCF members. One new ward chair even expressed displeasure when he learned that the team had met with members of the former WCF, as he seemed to feel that that had undermined him as the elected official of that area.

The fact that newly elected officials are not reaching out to former WCF members and that the latter, in turn, are not being proactive and have failed to contact officials on their own volition points to a sustainability issue. Some former WCF members told the team that they were waiting to be contacted by the new mayors and ward councils. Others said that they wanted a letter from the new local authorities conveying some form of official authority or status onto them. The point is that in the absence of SB facilitation, and since the 2017 Executive Order establishing the functions of the local government does not even mention WCF, the latter find themselves in a state of legal and political limbo. They are defunct institutions desperately in search of a role that does not appear to be on the horizon.

At the very least, SB could have better prepared WCF members to understand the new context. It could have identified for them opportunities to make the case that the skills in participatory and inclusive planning that they had accumulated should not be lost. And it could have them to put pressure on the new crop of local officials to share information with citizens, solicit their needs and make sure that their priorities would be reflected in the proposed allocation of funds when it came to preparing the budget.

Youth groups and LDAGs, too, face a very uncertain future as their tangible community accomplishments, and even their ability to meet, always remained dependent on continued SB funding and on the activity making other resources available to them (e.g., regular meetings with social mobilizers for youth groups). Meetings with the field team in Banke, Nepalgunj, and Dhading revealed that some FM stations, (that with SB support, had recruited community reporters to feed into coverage aimed at LDAGs) recently applied to local government bodies for funds, but it seemed unlikely that relevant funding would materialize and make up for the loss of SB assistance. Few youth groups appeared to have made any efforts to access replacement resources in anticipation of the end of SB assistance.

Lack of sustainability was also a critical shortcoming of SB's work with **CMCs**, as discussed at greater length in the broader CMC-related subsection below. Of all the local entities SB supported, only **WORTH groups** appeared to have a higher likelihood of survival. That is, in part, because of the savings and revenues from micro-businesses' activities into which these groups can tap, and in part because by being linked to government agriculture and livestock offices (DADOs and DLSOs), they benefit from government support. Even then, while WORTH groups may survive, the kind of integrated growth that they were experiencing under SB is sure to be reduced, since many inputs previously provided through SB assistance (e.g., information conveyed via radio programs, access to government-resources persons, opportunities to benefit from regular discussions of different topics, and active involvement in planning processes and campaigns) no longer will be available to them. Survival of CMC is also associated with new local governments in transition which may evolve with different arrangements for CMC related activities.

The future of effective **mobile service camps** is a question mark as well. Without the facilitation and financial support SB provided, district-based and local government bodies once again may be unable to deliver on the necessary preparation and dissemination of information that are required for those camps to be well-organized, provide good-quality services, and reach out to the most marginalized. One district livestock officer interviewed by the team stated that part of DLSOs' budgets that previously were devoted to mobile camps now would be going to municipalities, and

that as a result DLSOs would no longer be able to fund those camps. Another official at a health post noted that while his staff had provided the labor for camps, SB had funded them fully, and that in the absence of SB financial support, those camps would no longer be offered. Other officials interviewed by the team thought that moving forward the problem would have less to do with a lack of resources per se than with an inability or unwillingness of municipalities to prioritize service camps in light of the other pressures and demands they would face.

As Part Two documented, one of SB's most notable successes entailed working with WCF, VDCs, and other entities to ensure that accountability tools such as public audits, social audits, information boards, and public hearings would be used in a systematic manner during infrastructure and other community-improvement projects. Unfortunately, many local government officials interviewed by the team observed that, moving forward, they might not have at their disposal the human and financial resources, or the time, required to implement such tools effectively (many of them may lack the inclination as well). While other officials expressed a readiness to use these tools, even they noted that they did not know how to do so, and that they would need assistance in this regard.

3.3 CMCS-RELATED CHALLENGES

As Part Two documented, the 147 SB-supported CMCs generated significant benefits. They were instrumental in giving citizens, particularly members of marginalized groups, greater confidence that they could receive justice. They addressed an estimated 15,000 cases during the lifetime of the project, and resolved approximately 14,000 of those. They were easier to access and more reliable to users than the courts. They provided a valuable and free service to thousands who otherwise would not have been able to see the dispute in which they were engaged addressed, and for who going through Nepal's formal judicial system was not an option (because they lacked confidence in it, or did not have the resources or know-how to access it).

These achievements notwithstanding, SB's conflict-mediation work came short in several critical respects. The first and most important one reflects the broader sustainability issue discussed above. When the fieldwork for this evaluation took place, there was much apprehension that the considerable investments SB had made in CMCs and in developing the skills of community mediators (CMs) might not leave much of a legacy because the future of CMCs themselves seemed very precarious at best. Even during the year that preceded the transition to federalism, the number of cases going to CMCs had declined markedly, reflecting a grassroots awareness that CMCs might not survive, and that local government units (LGUs) might not allocate the resources necessary to their continued functioning. Newly elected local representatives' lack of understanding of how CMCs might relate to the Judicial Committees (JCs) also contributed to that situation in the months that followed the local elections. Some of these worries now have been alleviated, since the Local Government Operations Act (LOGA) of September 2017 provides for a role for CMCs under the Judicial Committees. During the latest planning process, 60 LGUs in SB's original six core districts approved a total of NRs6,111,729 for CMCs, while in the recovery districts four LGUs allocated between NRs10,000 and NRs100,000 each for CMCs operations. These LGUs' budgets contributed to CMC management, sustainability, administrative costs, capacity building, and social marketing.

These favorable recent developments notwithstanding, sustainability of CMCs remains a concern.

CMCs staff and community mediators with whom the team met seemed at a loss about the future of community mediation in general, particularly given the lack of relevant information and the lack of clarity of the relevant legal framework prevailing at the time. The Local Government Operations Act (LOGA) ratified by Nepal's legislature on September 19, 2017 defines the powers of the judicial committees (JCs) for which Article 217 of the 2015 constitution provides at both the municipality and rural municipality (village) levels, and in its final version it mentions CMCs as one of the primary means of settling disputes at the local level. That is very reassuring considering that the municipal officials with whom the team had met had been at best unclear about whether there might be a role for the former CMCs in the new system. While some of them had indicated a readiness to use CMCs, they did not know how the latter would be funded. Some had explicitly stated that there no

longer was a role for the CMCs. Advocacy by mediation actors and SB partner CeLRRD played a key role in ensuring a role for CMCs and CMs in the new system.

As for the CMs who were trained through SB, some of them fortunately have been linked to the Community Mediation Society-Nepal (CMS-N), an umbrella organization that aims to raise awareness of community mediation at the grassroots, district and national levels, and that helps CMs exchange information with, and support each other. But the CMS-N itself struggles to access sufficient funds, without which it cannot provide work for CMs. Thus, there is a real risk that the human capacity in community mediation that SB developed may be unused and decay over time.

The continued uncertainty that surrounds the future of the community-mediation capacity that SB built points to one of the activity's greatest shortcomings: the apparent failure to recognize (or to act on such a recognition) that structures or processes established by an IP are sustainable only if the government and/or the community have demonstrated the ability and willingness to maintain them and pay their staff after the activity ends. As of mid-2017, SB had secured no such prior commitment from local government bodies in locations where it had set up CMCs. Equally troubling was the initial failure to understand that if the demand for a particular structure is not particularly strong (even if there is a real need for what that entity is supposed to deliver, in this case justice), then the demand in question will have to be nurtured. Efforts will have to be deployed to demonstrate to community members that they can benefit from the structure that has been set up, with no guarantee of strong results. CMCs seem to have been established under the assumption that once structures are created, people will use them (i.e., that demand simply adjusts to supply) – a notion that, in this case as in others, proved inaccurate. By the same token, SB could have been more strategic and proactive early on about the future of community mediation and the CMs in whose skills it had invested so heavily. Thankfully, through effective lobbying, SB partners in late 2017 were able to alter the draft local government legislation to ensure a future, at least temporarily, for CMCs and thus to increase the odds that community mediation and CMs will not be a casualty of the transition to federalism. SB now has secured a commitment from all 115 VDCs in the core districts, and as a result relevant LGUs have signed “CMC handover” documents with CeLRRd. In almost all related locations, VDCs have committed to office space for CMCs.

CMCs confronted other challenges that SB struggled to address. To begin with, ensuring that people actually would go to CMCs proved to be far more difficult than anticipated. Individuals sometimes felt that if they were to turn to these new, unknown entities, the privacy of their complaints might not be respected (hence SB's social marketing efforts to explain what community mediation entails). The identity of the senior staff in a given CMC also could be an obstacle. For instance, higher-caste personnel could deter potential lower-caste users. Finally, as documented earlier, the CMCs dealt overwhelmingly with personal, low-level disputes, and they almost never addressed the higher-level identity-related and political conflicts that had contributed so much to the violence that Nepal had experienced between 1996 and 2006, and that SB's conflict mitigation objective initially was supposed to address.

3.4 ABSENCE OF SCENARIOS- AND TRANSITION-TO-FEDERALISM PLANNING

The design reflected no effort to anticipate how SB might be affected by consequential developments beyond its control, but of great relevance to it. Nor did it lay out how the project might respond to the new constraints and opportunities that these changes might create. As it turned out, that shortcoming was not as damaging to the activity as it might have been, thanks to the flexibility and responsiveness that the IP demonstrated in the field. But it was a limitation nonetheless, and a less nimble and creative implementer might have needed more guidance on how to adjust to significant shifts in the environment.

More consequential was SB's insufficient planning for the transition to federalism, even after the promulgation of the new constitution in September 2015. It is true that during the Annual Planning Meeting that followed the adoption of the new constitution, SB brought constitutional expert Bipin

Adhikary, Election Commissioner Ila Sharma, legal expert Kashiraj Gautam, accountability expert Kedar Khadka, and local planning and institutions experts Guru Subedi and Arun Regmi) to enrich SB's work plan. SB also introduced "policy notes" and policy discussions to take stock of inform its programming in light of the drastic changes that were unfolding in Nepal's local-government system. Still, even after it became clear that local elections would result in the disbanding of WCF and VDCs and in the establishment of a new local-governance structure built around mayors and ward councils, SB made no sustained, systematic effort to ensure that gains from its considerable investments in WCF, CMCs and CMs, planning processes, the use of social accountability tools, mobile service camps, and mobilization through youth groups and LDAGs, to name but a few, would be preserved under the new system, at least to the extent possible. Efforts could have been made to identify potential entry points in the new structures through which the skills and capacities developed through SB programming might be used and enable earlier gains to be sustained. Similarly, adequate planning might have made it possible for WCF and their members to continue in an informal or advisory role. The team also was struck by the fact that its discussions with IP staff and partners did not suggest that SB even came up with a plan – or even engaged in relevant brainstorming -- to maximize the legacy left by its efforts following local elections and the broader transition to a federal system. Even as one wants to "cut SB some slack" given the confusion and uncertainty that surrounded the transition to federalism, one also must acknowledge that the activity could have been more proactive in this area.

3.5 INSUFFICIENT ENGAGEMENT WITH NATIONAL-LEVEL DECISION-MAKERS ABSENCE OF SCENARIOS- AND TRANSITION-TO-FEDERALISM PLANNING

During interviews with the evaluation team, senior IP staff themselves described the activity's lack of systematic attention to building linkages to Kathmandu-based decision-makers as SB's single most significant missed opportunity. If the activity had been more proactive in that area, the vast amount of raw data (including perception surveys), information, deep knowledge of local-level governance issues, and intimate familiarity with the field that it accumulated over several years could have helped shape national-level decision-making on local governance issues, especially as the process of state restructuring moved into full gear (by that time, SB already had three years of experience behind it). Particularly since Pact was the only donor organization headquartered in the field (Nepalgunj), and considering the strong relationship it otherwise established with key GoN counterparts and mechanisms (MoFALD, LGCDP), a more deliberate, forceful, and sustained outreach to decision-makers in Kathmandu might have enabled the activity to have real impact on the legal and regulatory framework for state restructuring. More generally, SB had much expertise to contribute to the complex process of devolving power to local bodies, and its know-how should have made it a more critical resources to the GoN as the latter planned and began to implement the transition to federalism.

Had SB more systematically engaged with Kathmandu-based GoN as the country moved toward devolving power to the local level, the activity also could have increased the odds that some of its critical achievements would leave a greater legacy, and that the skills, capacities and processes it had endeavored to set up or strengthen would continue to be used. For instance, it is unfortunate that despite the mid-term evaluation recommendation to advance more robustly central-level policy engagement, SB senior staff held no meetings with MoFALD and other relevant GoN entities to provide evidence of the utility of settlement-level community mediation in improving access to justice for women and the marginalized. SB also could have drafted policy briefs to try to shape the legal and regulatory framework prepared by MoFALD in such a way as to take advantage of what had been learned through SB activities, for instance with regard to inclusive planning processes or the use of accountability tools. All this would have been made easier if there had been a steering committee linking the project to relevant GoN ministries. The absence of such an entity was both unusual and unfortunate for a project of this sort, and it was all the more striking given that SB was one of the few USAID activities for which an MOU was signed with MoFALD.

3.6 INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION TO INCREASING THE GON'S COMMITMENT TO CORE ACTIVITY OBJECTIVES

SB's primary focus was on grassroots communities: how to reduce conflict within them and enhance the readiness of their various component groups to work together toward shared development objectives; how to boost their capacities to access resources and both plan and implement inclusive development projects; and how to improve their ability to ensure accountability of government officials and transparency in the use of local funds. To the extent that SB focused on "government," it was primarily through Objective D, which was cast in terms of strengthening the ability of existing and new government units to function effectively.

In retrospect, one element that did not receive sufficient attention was the need to generate among local government officials a greater understanding of the merits of broad-based inclusion, grassroots participation, accountability and transparency. That understanding – and, even more importantly, the readiness of local officials to act on it – is a dimension of "government capacity" that may be very different from more familiar ones, such as those that affect service delivery, but it is equally vital. The "culture of government" and the values, outlook, and expectations that guide government officials should be approached as dimensions of government capacity that are legitimate targets for programming. Whether or not government officials truly have absorbed the value of accountable, participatory, inclusive and transparent governance will go a long way toward facilitating the task of communities as they struggle toward the same goal. Interventions that seek to boost communities' capacities in those areas will have greater impact if they are supported by programming that aims to create supportive, related shifts in government officials' outlooks.

3.7 INADEQUATE COORDINATION WITH OTHER USAID PARTNERS

Meetings with other USAID projects' partners (e.g. Suaahara, Baliyo Ghar) revealed insufficient coordination across projects, both at the USAID level and at that of each project. In Dhading, for instance, the different USAID-funded projects had just initiated regular meetings when the fieldwork for this evaluation took place. Even then, these meetings usually were restricted to sharing information about ongoing activities. Where the same NGO was the IP for several USAID projects, as in Surkhet, synergies were greater (for instance, Suaahara staff in Surkhet provided orientation to WORTH members on nutrition for both mother and child). In Dhangadi, the headquarter of the Kailali district, where USAID supported 13 active projects, partners held monthly meetings with each other and conducted a number of activities with each other's beneficiaries – but they were doing so at their own initiative, since that type of coordination had not been mandated by USAID. In the future, there should be a more deliberate effort to encourage and facilitate across projects the kind of coordination that can improve service-delivery to citizens. Insufficient coordination is a gap that USAID should address moving forward.

3.8 LACK OF FOCUS ON MUNICIPALITIES

The fact that municipalities were not included in programming was a significant shortcoming, especially in light of continued rural-to-urban migrations and the grave problems that urban centers face when it comes to issues that were a focus of SB interventions: inclusion of historically marginalized groups, accountability of decision-makers, transparency in funding allocations, and government effectiveness, responsiveness, and accessibility to citizens. The next phase of USAID local governance programming should pay greater attention to urban governance.

3.9 FALLING SHORT ON HELPING CBOS RAISE RESOURCES

Under Objective B, SB aimed to help CBOs receive additional resources from both local government and non-government sources. The activity was not particularly successful at that endeavor. The primary reason for that failing – there was a paucity of resources to be tapped in the first place -- was largely beyond its control, but that factor easily could have been anticipated when the activity was conceived, and yet the design included no clear strategy to deal with it.

With regard to their ability to raise revenues from non-government sources, CBOs were constrained by the weakly developed sense of social responsibility that exists in the Nepalese private sector. But that, too, was well known at project start, and SB lacked a clear approach and associated set of interventions for reaching out to the private sector and expanding its ability to contribute to local governance.

As for improving the ability of CBOs to receive more financial support from local government, that effort was bound to confront the structural hurdle that a vast array of groups and constituencies used to turn to VDCs to secure a share of these bodies' already limited resources. Even though it was well known that VDCs already were faced with many demands that they could not satisfy, the design included no clear strategy for CBOs to take that situation into account as they strove to increase their share of local-government resources.

As a result of state restructuring, the resources available to local-government bodies will increase sharply in the coming years. In that respect, the skills that SB helped nourish in the civil-society sector could be used to lobby ward officials and other local- and district-based government entities for resources, but only if an effective strategy is designed and deployed toward that objective, and if it is supported by key stakeholders, including donors.

3.10 THE COSTS OF SILO-LIKE APPROACH TO ACTIVITIES

SB may have been unduly constricted by an occasional silo-like approach to activities and by some of the specific approaches and activities it selected for particular emphasis. SB's significant investments in mediation activities, for instance, appear to have distracted the activity from the fact that some grievances or conflict sources do not lend themselves to being resolved through mediation. Seeking to address them through such mechanisms may prove futile at best, and potentially counter-productive. In that respect, SB may not have been sensitive enough to the general principle that particular activities or sets of activities (e.g., ADR, mediation) should not be confused with the broader objective(s) that they are supposed to advance (e.g., conflict mitigation).

This problem was related to an occasional lack of consideration to the implications of the natural linkages and synergies that seemed to exist across activity components and activities. For instance, inclusive planning processes were directly relevant to Objectives A, B and C; consequently, by formally placing activities expected to encourage or support those processes under Objective C ("Inclusive Development"), their vital contributions to Objective A ("Conflict Mitigation") and B ("Access to Resources") might not have received the level of attention they deserved. One should note that this was not so much an implementation issue as one that stemmed from what was both a strength and a limitation of the design. The strength, discussed extensively earlier, was the focus on inclusive planning processes, which were bound to have positive effects across several activity objectives. The limitation was that the design did not make sufficiently explicit the critical contributions of inclusive planning processes to objectives others than that under which interventions related to those processes were formally placed.

Similarly, by bringing all interventions designed to mitigate conflict under Objective A, the crucial contributions of those conflict-mitigation activities to improving communities' capacity for inclusive development (Objective C) and ability to access resources (Objective B) might not have received the level of analytical and programmatic attention they deserved.

3.11 INSUFFICIENT TAILORING OF ACTIVITIES IN RECOVERY DISTRICTS

Implementation of activities in the targeted earthquake-affected districts was relatively slow. It took almost a year for those interventions to be in full swing, due to predictable logistical challenges and because it took time for negotiations with district officials to result in an agreement on which VDCs would be included in activities. Of the initially targeted six districts, one had to be dropped, in part because the early work in it failed to gain traction, and in part because not all the resources initially

allocated for activities in recovery districts materialized. Once activities finally got under way in the remaining five districts, they generated substantive positive results.

That being said, the approach for, and content of, activities in recovery districts were largely the same as those in the original core districts. Albeit the packages were scaled down as per relevancy to the need of recovery districts, there existed quite a scope of customization of the selected interventions tailoring to the need of a specific recovery district. One may question whether that was the right strategy, or whether in its methods and focus programming should have been adjusted to reflect the distinguishing socioeconomic, demographic, and historical/cultural features of those new districts. An implicit assumption appears to have been made that in terms of their needs, and the approaches best suited to meet them, targeted recovery districts were not drastically different from the earlier core ones. That assumption may not have been correct, or may have called for significant caveats. In retrospect, at least two related questions might have warranted more systematic attention: What is markedly different about earthquake-affected districts? And how should those differences affect the content of, and approaches for, programming?

SUMMARY TABLE OF EVALUATION FINDINGS:

Key Area	Evaluation Questions	Answers Generated by Evaluation
Design	Q1. To what extent was activity design relevant to the country's core local- and national-level governance challenges when implementation began?	A1. Activity conceptualization was unusually strong and matched closely the most critical DRG needs of Nepal, not just at the local level but nationwide as well. It reflected a solid grasp of the DRG context and its implications for local-governance activities. The activity's four core objectives were directly relevant to the challenges faced by Nepal as a post-conflict society confronting the imperatives of inclusion of historically marginalized groups and more extensive and substantive grassroots participation in local-level decision-making. SB's approach reflected a well-taken, judicious understanding of the many-sided local-governance gains that could result from using the planning process as an entry point for programming. Design demonstrated awareness that the activity's demand-oriented emphasis on empowering previously marginalized groups had to be matched by adequate programmatic attention to strengthening the capacity of local government institutions and processes to respond to the demands being expressed. Design showed a grasp of the centrality of accountability to prospects for improvements across all other dimensions of local governance. It adequately prioritized the strengthening of accountability mechanisms across activity interventions. Design reflected a genuine effort at analytical rigor and at translating it into programming.
	Q2. How well did the design reflect the aspirations and needs of target groups?	A2. Design wisely focused on identifying an implementing mechanism and approaches liable to bring formerly excluded constituencies into the mainstream of development. In line with the demands and needs of target groups, it explicitly sought to find ways of increasing, institutionalizing and making more substantive those groups' involvement in decision-making and project implementation processes at the local level. It also sensibly strove to increase the capacities of excluded groups, women and youth and to improve their access to vital services.
	Q3. How relevant did the design remain in the wake of state restructuring, the new local-governance	A3. State restructuring entailed such drastic changes in local-governance institutions and processes that it was bound to undermine the relevance of some aspects of activity design, especially through the demise of local bodies

	challenges that emerged as a result of it, and the changing national and local political contexts throughout the activity's life?	and institutions with which SB had been designed to engage (e.g., WCF, CACs, VDCs, IPFCs). Nonetheless, what stands out is the continued striking relevance of SB's four core objectives and its emphasis on inclusive planning processes in the post-state restructuring era.
Implementation	Q4. How well has the activity been implemented overall?	A4. Overall, SB was an unusually well-implemented activity. The IP used effectively the opportunities the design provided for flexible and innovative programming as well as learning. It reflected deliberately and thoughtfully on such issues as what participation and inclusion entail in practice, how to measure them, and how best to address obstacles in the field. It also was conscientious about monitoring impact and acting on relevant data to adjust priorities and activities. The strong working relationship that developed between the COR and senior IP staff contributed greatly to all of SB's achievements.
	Q5. Which activity approaches have revealed themselves to be most effective? In which regards and why?	A5. The reliance on local planning processes as an entry point for programming toward the four core objectives proved particularly effective. The efforts deployed to make those processes more inclusive, transparent and participatory generated significant DRG and cross-sectoral gains. Relevant tools and approaches ended up being duplicated in several of USAID/Nepal's other activities and enhanced communities' ability to address the full assortment of social and economic issues confronting them. DRG gains included a significantly enhanced understanding at the grassroots level of why accountability matters and how to enhance it through community-based practices; increased transparency of decision-making processes; human-capacity development and positive changes in social norms as well as individual attitudes and values; a general empowerment of individuals, previously marginalized groups, and communities at large; and a reduction in social friction and in the gap between government and citizens. The effort to identify official guidelines and mechanisms consistent with activity objectives, but generally inoperative, and then to activate them so as to make progress toward those objectives proved very effective. Reliance on the 14-step planning process developed by MoFALD was an especially productive endeavor. Breathing new life into procedures already provided for under the law greatly facilitated government buy-in and implementation. It proved to be far more effective than trying to set up parallel guidelines or new entities. It was more likely to generate gains that could materialize quickly and could be sustained after activity completion.

	Q6. Which activity approaches have yielded more disappointing results? In which regards and why?	A6. SB may have been unduly constricted by an occasional silo-like approach to programming and by some of the approaches and activities it selected for particular emphasis. Its significant investments in mediation activities, for instance may have distracted the activity from the fact that some grievances or conflict sources do not lend themselves to being resolved through mediation. Insufficient consideration also was given to the implications of the natural linkages and synergies that existed across activity components and activities.
	Q7. To what extent did implementation adapt to significant changes in the context? How effectively did it respond to emerging opportunities and to the unanticipated constraints and challenges that presented themselves?	A7. The IP made the most of the flexibility extended to it to remain effective in a fluid environment and to take calculated risks to explore promising forms of programming.
Results	Q8. In which ways was SB particularly successful in the following nine areas: a) increasing citizens' involvement in local decision-making and, in particular, the inclusion of marginalized groups in that process; b) empowering women, the poor and the excluded; c) enhancing communities' ability to implement development projects; d) improving accountability of local decision-makers and transparency in the administration of public funds at the local level; e) reducing the causes and consequences of conflict at the local level; f) improving perceptions of government effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs and demands of citizens in general and marginalized constituencies in particular; g) reducing the gap between state and society at the local level; h) bringing about positive changes in discriminatory social practices and norms;	A8. SB generated gains in all those areas, though predictably the scope of those gains varied from one area to another. Many of these gains occurred through SB's engagement with WCF, CACs, IPFCs, and VDCs or through its successful leveraging of WORTH groups, YGs, and LDAGs. Investments in familiarizing target populations with the use of social accountability tools, budget provisions for excluded groups, and local-development planning instruments and approaches generally paid off. Evidence of impact included members of targeted groups assuming leadership positions in their respective communities; significantly heightened grassroots interest in project planning and implementation as well as public affairs more generally; and a greater public profile for many marginalized women, including through the involvement of some of them in campaigns against child marriage, gender-based violence and caste-based discrimination. SB helped reduced social tensions both indirectly, through its fight against exclusion and marginalization, and more directly by establishing CMCs and training CMs. CMCs were effective in reducing low-level inter-personal disputes (80 percent of cases registered with them were settled) and in increasing confidence in the possibility of receiving justice, particularly among members of historically marginalized groups. SB significantly improved access to services for women and the marginalized, both through previously mentioned interventions and by extending vital support for mobile service camps and SSIPs. It also made some headway toward reducing gender-based and ethnic discrimination and shifting corresponding social norms.

	and i) contributing to progress in non-DRG sectors?	
	Q9. What was disappointing about outcomes in the above nine areas?	A9. SB's conflict-mediation work came short in several critical respects. CMCs dealt overwhelmingly with personal, low-level disputes, and they almost never addressed the higher-level identity-related and political conflicts that SB's conflict mitigation objective initially was supposed to address. Ensuring that people actually would go to CMCs also proved to be far more difficult than anticipated. Finally, until late 2017, it seemed that CMCs as such might not survive in transition to federalism, and that the considerable investments SB had made in them and in developing the skills of CMs might not leave much of a legacy as a result. The activity failed to harness the vast amount of raw data, information, and intimate knowledge of local-level governance issues that it accumulated over several years in an effort to shape national-level decision-making on local-governance issues. It was not particularly successful at helping CBOs receive additional resources from both local government and non-government sources.
	Q10. What could SB have done differently to have greater impact?	A10. SB's geographic targeting and two-phased approach seems to have diluted the potential impact the activity could have created. It would have been far preferable for SB to target fewer districts, but engage with more VDCs (ideally all) in them, and to work with VDCs for the entire five-year period. The activity could have prioritized sustained engagement with beneficiaries and partners so as to consolidate early gains and prevent those beneficiaries and partners from feeling abandoned in the course of the activity's lifetime. SB's lack of systematic attention to building linkages to Kathmandu-based decision-makers was its single most significant missed opportunity. Had SB more systematically engaged with them as devolution of power to the local level began, it could have had a very beneficial impact on federalization-related decisions made in the capital and increased the odds that some of its critical achievements would leave a greater legacy. SB should have tried to generate among local government officials a greater understanding of the merits of broad-based inclusion, grassroots participation, accountability and transparency. That might have facilitated many activity interventions and compounded the gains they generated. SB could have been more thorough in its planning for the transition to federalism, particularly after the promulgation of the new constitution in September 2015.

		The extent and quality of SB's coordination with other USAID partners and projects was inadequate. Municipalities should have been included in programming, especially in light of continued rural-to-urban migrations and the grave problems that urban centers face when it comes to issues that were the very focus of SB's interventions. Programming in recovery districts could have been better tailored to the distinctive socioeconomic, demographic and historical/cultural features of those districts.
Sustainability	Q11. To what extent has the activity been implemented to ensure sustainability of gains?	A11. SB deliberately and successfully sought to build up its partners' capacities in such areas as financial management, GESI-enhancing practices, and linkages to the media. By facilitating the implementation of government guidelines and activities, as well as through technical training, computerization support, and assistance to public processes and public hearings, it also enhanced the capacities of key government agencies and staff. The skills and learning developed thereby can be tapped to enhance the quality of local governance in the post-restructuring era. The evaluation did reveal sustainability gaps. Many of the bodies and activities SB supported are not likely to exist as such in transition to new federal structures SB seems to have invested less in preparing the ground for sustenance of its gains and achievements in the changed governance context. However, some of the behavior changes among the actors might sustain.
	Q12. What could SB have done differently to generate more sustainable gains?	A12. SB could have better prepared WCF members for the post-federalization context. It could have taken steps to ensure a greater legacy for its work with them, so as to ensure that the skills in participatory and inclusive planning that WCF members had accumulated would be utilized moving forward. And it could have sought to nudge the new crop of local officials to share information with citizens, solicit their needs and make sure that grassroots priorities would be reflected in the proposed allocation of funds when it came to preparing the budget. SB could have done more to increase the likelihood that gains from its considerable investments in WCF, VDCs, CMCs, CMs, planning processes, the use of social accountability tools, mobile service camps, and mobilization through LYGs and LDAGs would be preserved under the new system.

PART FOUR: RECOMMENDATIONS AND GUIDELINES FOR FUTURE LOCAL- GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES

4.1 BUILD ON SB'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN A DELIBERATE, SYSTEMATIC MANNER

While recognizing that the context for local-governance activities in Nepal is changing rapidly and in significant ways, it is important that, in both design and implementation, future activities make a purposeful effort to build on SB's achievements. For instance, even though many of the entities that SB engaged no longer exist (e.g., WCFs, CMCs, VDCs), and while others (e.g., youth groups, LDAGs) may not survive, the valuable work SB accomplished with them should not be lost. The same recommendation applies to processes (especially those related to inclusion, accountability, and community mediation) that SB endeavored to establish or strengthen.

4.2 RECOGNIZE THE CONTINUED RELEVANCE OF SB'S FOUR CORE OBJECTIVES

As Part One discussed, not only was SB's original design one of the activity's greatest strengths, but, remarkably, eight years after the activity was originally conceived, and despite the rapidly changing local governance context in Nepal, SB's four core objectives remain as relevant as ever. Forthcoming activity design should reflect that fact.

4.3 CONTINUE TO SUPPORT INCLUSIVE PLANNING PROCESSES

As Part Two documented, SB's work on inclusive and participatory planning processes was particularly productive and generated gains across several areas:

Conflict mitigation. Since many local-level disputes are largely about resource allocation, planning processes that are viewed as participatory and inclusive – and, therefore, as meaningful and legitimate – can be effective tools for conflict prevention and mitigation. They also reduce the potential for conflicts stemming from feeling insufficiently consulted on community matters, as well as from the perception by some groups that their needs and voices are not reflected in decisions that affect them directly and in important ways.

1. *Inclusion of previously marginalized groups* in decision-making processes and *increased ability of those groups to secure access to resources.*
2. *Increased social cohesion.* By being exposed to the needs of community members outside one's own circle, and, ultimately, by having to compromise over how scarce resources will be allocated, inclusive planning processes perform an important integrative social function. They can help bridge divides and build consensus on how the community as a whole prioritizes its needs. They promote a sense of belonging to that community, since they enable individuals to feel that they have a voice on community-related matters.
3. *Stronger individual skills* of community members in areas related to project planning and project implementation. Through inclusive planning processes, individuals also develop problem-solving orientations and skills that facilitate sustainability of gains across the full range of USAID projects.
4. *Enhanced accountability, responsiveness and effectiveness of government.* By helping the community come together, and by strengthening the individual skills of its members, inclusive planning processes also increase the readiness and capacity of the community to demand accountability from decision-makers, and to exercise effective oversight over local finances. In the process, they also enhance prospects for greater government effectiveness.

In light of these varied and substantial benefits in critical areas, inclusive planning processes should remain a priority of future local governance activities.

4.4 SUSTAINABILITY CONCERNS SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN ACTIVITY DESIGN, WHICH ALSO SHOULD INCLUDE AN EXIT STRATEGY

Part Three's discussion of SB's sustainability shortcomings illustrated the importance of that guideline. It is important that attention be paid to sustainability of activity gains as they relate not just to entities, but to individuals as well. Activity design should address explicitly how individuals who have received training and accumulated valuable experience (for instance in the use of social accountability tools or in community mediation) through activity interventions will maintain these skills and ensure that they are retained in the community, both through relevant community practices and by being transmitted to other individuals. Activity design should identify from the outset those components it expects to be sustainable, and those for which sustainability may be less critical to achieving activity objectives.

4.5 DESIGN SHOULD INCLUDE SCENARIO PLANNING

The next phase of local-governance activities will unfold in a particularly fluid environment marked by a high level of confusion, policy uncertainty and contradictions, and at best non-linear progress that will include numerous setbacks and unanticipated developments. Against that backdrop, it is critical that the next design include explicit scenario planning. An effort should be made to a) identify a limited range of scenarios that would have a consequential impact on the country in general, and at the local level in particular; and b) outline how activities would be adjusted accordingly. Scenarios might pay particular attention to how smoothly the devolution of power to the local level unfolds; the specific challenges that that process might encounter; opportunities that may present themselves; how critical national-level political developments might impact the new local-governance system; and natural disasters (given Nepal's high propensity for them).

4.6 PRIORITIZE SUSTAINED ENGAGEMENT WITH PARTNERS AND BENEFICIARIES

As Part discussed, it would have been preferable for SB to operate in fewer districts, but to engage with all VDCs in each of them. That approach would have reduced perceptions of unfair treatment and discrimination among VDCs and created more incentives for government officials and entities to cooperate with the IP. Similarly, working with fewer partners and beneficiaries, but over a longer period of time, increases the odds that activity gains will be sustained after funding comes to an end. These findings' implications should be reflected in the design of the next activity. For instance, if that design divides implementation into several phases, each of which involves working with different beneficiaries or constituencies, some allocation should be built into the budget to enable some form of continued engagement with early-phase(s)-beneficiaries and partners during subsequent phases of activities. That approach may be necessary to consolidate early gains and ensure that beneficiaries and partners do not feel abandoned during the activity's lifetime.

4.7 CONTINUE TO EMPHASIZE ACCOUNTABILITY, ESPECIALLY IF OTHER DONORS LEAN HEAVILY TOWARD CAPACITY BUILDING

As Nepal undergoes state restructuring, official GoN documents have little to say about the institutions, mechanisms and processes that will be put in place to foster accountability in the new system. For their part, donors seem inclined to orient their activities toward capacity-building interventions for the new institutions being established, particularly on issues of service delivery. USAID should make sure that SB's preoccupation with accountability, a critical component of the activity that generated strong results, is not lost in the next phase of local-governance activities.

The next design should strike the right balance between capacity building and accountability; it might want to err on the side of the latter if evidence accumulates that the bulk of donor funding will be in

the direction of the former, particularly since progress on accountability is necessary to ensure that returns on capacity-building investments materialize. The accountability-centered interventions that took place during SB remain generally relevant, though they might need to be re-tooled to reflect the new local-governance set-up. The next design should feature continued support for public hearings, public audits, expenditures tracking, and, more generally, activities that systematically encourage citizens to raise questions about such issues as why some development projects were approved and others turned down, or why implementation of some projects does not appear to be consistent with decisions previously reached through inclusive and participatory processes.

4.8 NURTURE OFFICIALS' READINESS TO SUPPLY ACCOUNTABILITY

Enhancing accountability requires encouraging not just grassroots demands for it, but also the readiness of government officials to supply it and respond constructively to the demands being expressed. This recommendation might be rephrased as: "Work not just with accountability demanders, but also with potential accountability suppliers." Meaningful progress toward accountability will not materialize if government officials resist that process and seek to obstruct it. Activities that only seek to nurture bottom-up demands for accountability may prove not just ineffective, but counterproductive as well. If newly elected officials are confronted with a sudden and sharp increase in the volume and intensity of demands for accountability originating from a multiplicity of sources, they may feel threatened and be more inclined to try to squash these demands than to seek to accommodate them. Such a backlash would be particularly detrimental as it would occur in the early phase of state restructuring, when the nature of state-society interactions at the local level is likely to be formative and decisive in terms of shaping future patterns in this area.

It is critical, therefore, that future local governance programming include activities that nurture among government officials a greater readiness to support accountability mechanisms, to accept the occasionally negative feedback that they will receive as a result of those mechanisms, and to respond to that feedback in a constructive manner. That requires no less than trying to change the mindset of these "accountability-demands recipients" so that they look at the accountability demands directed at them not as a threat, but as a regular, expected component of state-society interaction.

In parallel, activities should foster among citizens, CSOs and CBOs a greater understanding of how to express demands for accountability in a way that will reduce the risk of backlash by officials. Attention should be paid to how to prioritize among demands; how to regulate their flow through proper coordination among accountability demanders; and how demands should be cast and presented in order to increase the odds of a positive, constructive response by officials. Accountability demanders have to be sensitive to the risk involved in constantly hammering local government officials over the head with a steady, unregulated stream of demands that have not been prioritized and are not conveyed effectively. Demands should be expressed incrementally; those demands that are both more pressing and achievable should be prioritized, and others left out; the volume and sensitivity of demands can be ratcheted up once trust between local officials and citizens has increased, and the former have developed a more positive mindset on accountability issues.

One should note that the same logic applies to other sensitive and complex local-governance issues, such as inclusion. In that area as well, progress will be more likely if the activity does not just seek to stimulate demand, but also strives to encourage gradual, positive shifts in the attitudes and outlooks of decision-makers, while providing technical assistance that enhances their ability to respond to the demands being expressed. Programing should not merely try to push for the inclusion of historically marginalized groups in decision-making arenas in the face of resistance by reluctant officials; it also should help those officials broaden their understanding of "who belongs at the table." Important as it is for activities to help members of marginalized groups develop the skills and confidence needed to participate in processes and arenas from which they traditionally have been excluded, it is no less critical that some interventions focus on increasing officials' understanding of why that process of inclusion is, in fact, a desirable and vital development objective.

4.9 EMPHASIZE INTEGRATION AND COORDINATION IN DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

Design should reflect explicit attention to integration across activity components and activities as well as to related coordination among partners. To address some of the shortcomings Part Three discussed, more systematic attention also will need to be paid to coordination with other USAID projects and USAID partners under them.

If, as was the case with SB, the next activity is to amount to more than the sum of its various components, then these components will have to be logically inter-connected, so that interventions under any of them almost inevitably generate gains under others as well. But that is not enough. It also is critical that the design make integration a priority, and that it be explicit about the nature of the concrete interventions that will make such integration materialize.

Consider, for instance, three potential activity objectives: 1) inclusion of historically marginalized groups in local decision-making processes; 2) reduction of conflict within and between communities; and 3) strengthening of the capacity of local-government units. These three goals should be approached as distinct, but not separate, and activities under each of them should not be designed in a silo-like fashion, as if they were intended to be relevant only to the activity component under which they have been placed. Instead, under each activity component, anticipated activities should identify interventions that will facilitate progress under the other two components as well. If linkages and synergies across activity component are to be maximized, design must give serious and explicit consideration to the kinds of approaches and interventions that will increase the likelihood of that taking place.

The need for such cross-fertilization, let alone how it would be pursued, was not clearly articulated in the original statement of work for SB. Future local-governance contracting should mandate that offerors explain how they will make linkages across activity components a priority.

To its credit, SB was quick to recognize after the first few years of programming that it needed to be more systematic about the need for integration across its various intervention areas. How it came to that conclusion and acted on it provides in itself a set of lessons or guidelines for future activities, and it thus is discussed briefly below, building on the analysis Part Three already provided.

To begin with, SB concluded that the social capital generated through Women's economic growth (WORTH) groups and local youth groups (LYGs) could be leveraged more effectively to deepen the engagement of communities in local planning and social accountability processes. It was clear, for instance, that LYGs could engage in such activities as door-to-door campaigns, literature drops, or street-based activities in order to increase public awareness of local planning processes and their importance, or that they and WORTH groups could be relied upon to reach out to marginalized constituencies.

SB also sought to identify WORTH group members who also were members of WCF. Building on the logical assumption that women already empowered by WORTH groups were well positioned to emerge as leaders within WCF, SB endeavored to develop the capacities of these women. That strategy generated strong grains with regard to promoting women to leadership roles in their communities and inspiring others to follow in their path. Similarly, SB realized, albeit too late, that media-centered programming, which initially was approached too much as a stand-alone endeavor, could be harnessed both to support outreach initiatives related to local planning and to publicize the work of various local and national-level projects partners. In the future, more early attention will have to be paid to such leveraging efforts.

The need for coordination among activity partners also must be considered during the activity design phase, not after implementation already has begun. SB has relied on three national partners for its activities in, respectively, media, youth and mediation. These partners had their own approaches, priorities and activities, and, initially at least, the level of cooperation and coordination among them was insufficient (it improved later on). If the next activity is to be a truly integrated one, and if

activities under each objective are to feed into, and reinforce, the impact of interventions carried out under other objectives, formal mechanisms must be in place to ensure the required level of cooperation and coordination among partners. Design should address this issue. For instance, requiring regular district-level meetings among partners may facilitate synchronization and synergies across their portfolios. The same recommendation applies to the need for coordination between the local-governance activity and other USAID-funded projects and their partners.

4.10 SELECT LOCAL- AND NATIONAL-LEVEL PARTNERS CAREFULLY AND MAKE THE STRENGTHENING OF THEIR CAPACITIES A PRIORITY

Because local- and national-level partners are critical to activity success, they must be selected carefully and with an eye to complementarity and synergies among them. The ability of local-level partners to contribute to activity objectives is largely a function of the extent to which they are embedded in the community, understand it, enjoy its trust, and can help the contractor gain access to it, credibility with it, and, therefore, traction for its programming. Partner selection should reflect those criteria. One has to take for granted that, in other areas, the capacity of CBOs and local NGOs is likely to be quite limited. In contrast, national-level NGOs may display a stronger set of skills and capacities, but their understanding of local communities may be more restricted, as may be their ability to adjust their work across project sites to reflect those communities' idiosyncratic features. Local CBOs and national-level NGOs should be chosen with those considerations in mind and with an eye to both compatibility and complementarity among them.

All partners should be vetted carefully, though the vetting process should not be so lengthy and cumbersome that opportunities for timely interventions are missed, potential partners and the broader community become impatient with the IP, and resentment sets in. Resourcefulness, creativity, adaptability, and responsiveness (to the implementer's needs as well as to changes in the context) should be given particular weight in the selection process. Activity design should reflect an understanding that it takes both time and effort for national-level NGOs to develop a better sense of the local communities in which they are asked to undertake activities.

Finally, strengthening the capacity of local partners should be an objective in its own right. Local partners should not be approached merely as organizations expected to help with implementation, but as entities that should be mentored and nurtured with an eye to their ability to contribute to sustainability of activity gains after funding comes to an end.

4.11 INVEST IN SMALL-SCALE INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITY-IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS SELECTED THROUGH INCLUSIVE PROCESSES

Such projects benefit greatly individuals and communities alike not just because of their tangible impact, but also because of the shifts in attitudes, outlooks and behavior they can cause. When individuals, particularly from among traditionally excluded groups, are granted a role in the selection and implementation of development projects, that involvement can trigger momentous changes in perceptions (e.g., of the government, of the community, and of oneself). Being given an opportunity to be heard, to help shape how the community prioritizes its own needs, and to feel that one truly has become a decision-maker can be tremendously empowering. It boosts self-confidence and often results in much higher senses of self-worth, agency and efficacy. Such personal transformations, in turn, have powerful and beneficial ramifications on local governance. They turn subjects into citizens, improve social cohesion, and reduce the alienation and frustration that can cause violent conflicts. For those reasons, small-scale infrastructure and other community-improvements projects should be encouraged, provided they entail the kinds of inclusive, participatory processes discussed earlier, and without which the attitudinal and behavioral shifts mentioned above are unlikely to materialize.

4.12 BE MINDFUL OF THE DANGERS ASSOCIATED WITH SETTING UP FORMAL STRUCTURES

Part Three's discussion of CMCs underscored those risks. If there is no evidence of community demand for particular structures, it generally is best not to invest in setting them up. Furthermore, before establishing any such structures, the IP should secure from the authorities a commitment that they will continue to be resourced after the activity comes to an end. From the outset, there also should be a broader, clear understanding of what will happen to these structures, and in particular who will take over responsibility for their operations, after the end of the activity.

4.13 IDENTIFY AND HARNESS OFFICIAL GUIDELINES AND GOVERNMENT-SANCTIONED SYSTEMS SUPPORTIVE OF THE ACTIVITY'S CORE OBJECTIVES

SB's experience demonstrates the merits of that approach. The next wave of activities should be very sensitive to this important lesson learned, particularly as it relates to the use of social accountability tools and inclusive planning processes. Taking advantage of government-sanctioned structures and systems is generally much easier and far more effective than setting up new structures or advocating for new regulations: it requires fewer resources; government buy-in by definition already exists; and, in part for that reason as well, that approach makes it more likely that gains will be sustained after the activity ends.

4.14 INVEST IN INDIVIDUALS AND HUMAN-CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

When designing local-governance interventions in a transition environment, investing in people generally is wiser than pouring resources into institutions that may decay, cease to operate, or become largely anachronistic. Besides, organizations require trained individuals if they are to discharge their functions effectively. The primacy of human capacity is particularly relevant to less institutionalized and more fluid settings, where formal entities may or may not endure, and where the resources put at their disposal may be subject to great variations over time. In contrast, even in such contexts, individuals remain, and the governance-relevant skills, or lack thereof, that they bring to the table typically end up being decisive in how much governance-related progress takes place, and how performant attendant structures are.

That certainly is true in Nepal's new local governance context: the structures currently being put in place may or may not prove viable, and may or may not continue to be resourced; older local-governance entities and mechanisms that appear to be pushed aside might be reinvigorated later on; unanticipated developments may point to the need for new structures toward which resources will be diverted; and, more generally, the trajectory that the process of devolution of power will follow remains a question mark. In this type of rapidly evolving environment, developing human capacity increases the odds that knowledge will be retained in the community. And, for reasons highlighted throughout this document, skills that relate to inclusive planning processes, mediation, project implementation and monitoring, and the use of social accountability tools are particularly worthwhile investments, especially as they can be leveraged to enable recipients to play broader leadership roles in their respective communities.

4.15 CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHAT LOCAL-LEVEL GOVERNANCE ACTIVITIES CAN CONTRIBUTE TO NATIONAL-LEVEL DECISION-MAKING ON LOCAL GOVERNANCE, AND PROGRAM ACCORDINGLY

As Part Three discussed, while SB was generally successful at creating higher level of social cohesion and integration within communities, it failed to link those communities and their leaders to policy-makers at the national and provincial levels. The next activity should avoid that shortcoming. The granular knowledge of the terrain and the extent and quality of raw data and information accumulated by the IP should be leveraged to shape national-level policy-making and debates on local governance. That is particularly true in light of the volume and import of the decisions that Kathmandu-based elites will have to make in this sector in the coming years. An activity such as SB, and its staff, has much to contribute to those decisions. But if that contribution is to materialize, the mechanisms needed to make it possible must be built into activity design.

4.16 ENGAGE THE PRIVATE SECTOR IN A DELIBERATE AND SYSTEMATIC FASHION

The next activity should feature a set of interventions specifically intended to expand the role of the private sector in local governance. Local-level partnerships between government bodies, CBOs and businesses should be encouraged, while media programming should include activities aimed at amplifying the impact of success stories in this area. The private sector provides a source of financial and other assets that has remained largely untapped for local-governance purposes. That situation needs to be rectified. For reasons discussed in the July 2017 DRG assessment update, Nepal's business community is generally apprehensive about how it will be affected by the devolution of power to the local level. Local-governance activities should address these concerns, including by supporting mechanisms designed to prevent predation by local government bodies, in return for an expanded commitment by the business community to become a full-fledged partner in local development efforts.

4.17 DO NOT LET ACTIVITIES AND APPROACHES BECOME STRAIGHTJACKETS

Activities and approaches are only means to an end, and they should not become overly constraining – including to the point where they detract from progress toward core objectives. As discussed earlier, SB at times may have been too confined by some of its own activities and approaches. Its significant investments in mediation, for instance, may not have been suited to addressing certain conflicts and grievances. Even approaches and interventions that generally yield strong results should not detract from the broader objectives that they are supposed to advance; sometimes, these goals can be pursued more effectively through tools that are not specifically identified in the design. Consequently, future statements of work for local-governance activities should avoid excessive prescription. One of the strengths of the SB statement of work was that its core objectives were phrased so as to give the contractor the flexibility to think creatively about how the higher-level goals could be implemented given the realities on the ground. To its credit, Pact was able to take advantage of that opportunity. It is important that a future statement of work be precise enough about what is expected from the contractor, but not so rigid and overly detailed that it deprive the implementer from the flexibility required for success. In order to avoid having to resort to contract modifications (and the delays, missed opportunities, and uncertainties in activities that they would create), it is important that statements of work remain worded in such a way as to empower contractors to integrate into their work the shifts in approaches, interventions, and specific geographic foci that may be required by changes in the political, regulatory and institutional environment.

4.18 PRIORITIZE INFORMATION DISSEMINATION ABOUT THE NEW LOCAL-GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Uncertainty and confusion – including about the roles, prerogatives and responsibilities of various units and stakeholders – are bound to remain distinguishing features of Nepal's local-governance system in the coming years. USAID and the IP selected for the next phase of local-governance activities should ensure that citizens and officials alike can navigate that evolving system in ways that respect its spirit as well as its constitutional and other legal and regulatory foundations. USAID should encourage the consultations, dialogue, coordination, and information flows needed to make that possible. Information dissemination, orientation of local officials, and training should reflect the lessons that this document highlighted regarding what can be learned from SB's experience as far as approaches to inclusive and effective local governance are concerned. A strong, very deliberate effort should be made to ensure that these lessons contribute to both decision-making by the GoN and the broader national debate about local governance. Oral consultations and meetings, as well as short written briefs on selected aspects of local governance, should be planned to contribute to this process. The scheduling of these efforts -- and the ability to deliver the relevant oral and written products in a timely manner -- will shape the impact they may have.

4.19 DESIGN SHOULD ENCOURAGE A CLOSE WORKING RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COR AND THE IP

As Part Two noted, the strong working relationship between the COR and the contractor was a critical asset to SB and a key factor behind its successes. But there was nothing inevitable about this positive outcome. Consequently, in the future, design should pay systematic attention to ways in which the odds of a strong working relationship between the COR and the IP can be increased. For instance, design should mandate a collaborative process, including by calling for the involvement of the COR in the development of the work plan.

APPENDIX I: SCOPE OF WORK

Endline Evaluation for USAID/Nepal

Sajhedari Bikaas: Partnership for Local Development

Introduction

Sajhedari Identification Data
Project Title: Sajhedari Bikaas
Contract No: AID-367-C-13-00003
Life of Project: December 2012 – May 2018
Implementing partner: Pact, Inc.
Project Funding: \$35,069,500
Contract Officer's Representative: Meghan Nalbo

This statement of work (SOW) is for an endline evaluation for USAID Nepal's Sajhedari Bikaas (Partnership for Local Development) project implemented by Pact, Inc. USAID/Nepal seeks the services of a qualified, international organization or individual with expertise in monitoring and evaluating development projects to conduct an endline evaluation (May-June 2017) for USAID/Nepal's Sajhedari project implemented by Pact, Inc.

Sajhedari's aim is to improve local governance in Nepal through four principal objectives: 1) Establish and improve the enabling environment for community development; 2) Improve communities' ability to access resources for development; 3) Improve communities' ability to effectively implement inclusive development projects; and 4) Increase the ability of existing and new government units to function effectively.

This evaluation will focus on activities implemented during the life of the Contract (December 2012 – May 2017) to synthesize evidence for results to date to better understand the extent to which USAID's development hypothesis/es were validated or not through the course of the project, document lessons learned, and provide recommendations for planning any future development activities in the area of local governance. Specifically, the evaluation will consider the following lines of inquiry: a) Governance Systems and Ownership Impact, b) Peace Impact, c) Intra-project Complementarity and GESI Impact, and d) Cross-Sectoral Impacts. The contractor will be conversant on local governance, Gender and Social Inclusion (GESI), and sustainability to provide additional context to the questions being raised.

Project Background

Nepal's local government bodies – District and Village Development Committees and Municipalities – are the main contact points for most Nepalis to interact with and seek services from their government. Despite the lack of local elections, these bodies remain functional and continue to be responsible for the provision of basic government services. As the Government of Nepal (GON) moves towards state restructuring, and continues to decentralize critical government functions to sub-national units, the U.S. Government supports Nepal in achieving a peaceful transition.

USAID's Partnership for Local Development (Sajhedari) is a five-and-a-half-year \$35 million project, which aims to strengthen the relationship between Nepalis and their government officials, and to improve transparency, accountability, and responsiveness at the local level. Sajhedari is implemented in six districts in the Mid- and Far-West – Dang, Banke, Bardiya and Surkhet (Mid-West), and Kailali and Kanchanpur (Far-West) – and five earthquake recovery districts³⁰ - Gorkha, Lamjung, Dhading, Dolakha, and Ramechhap - all of them are in the USAID/Nepal's CDCS priority "zone of influence"³¹ and share many common socio-economic, demographic and geo-spatial features. Sajhedari's scope was planned to include 50% of the Village Development Committees (VDCs) in each district, phased with the first 25% targeted in project years 2 and 3, and the second 25% commencing in year 3. The remaining 50% of the VDCs were included at a minimal level in the project activities as per a request of the GON beginning in Year 3 (2014-15).

Sajhedari contributes to improve the demand by civil society on the supply of governance and development, and strengthens the ability of target communities - and therein especially women, youth and historically marginalized people - to guide the allocation of resources, address local conflicts, and play an active role in decision-making, and planning at the local level. In order to achieve this goal, Sajhedari and its partners support target communities to gain knowledge, skills and abilities to plan, fund and manage local development activities which communities have identified in an inclusive and participatory manner. The project also provides access to appropriate community stabilization initiatives, which address the drivers of conflict and establish an enabling environment for community development by supporting local governance actors.

Sajhedari was designed in the aftermath of the signing of Nepal's comprehensive peace agreement (2006) and served as a follow-on of Office of Transition Initiative (OTI) programming. The intention of the first objective of the project was to support Nepal's transition from a post-conflict context to one of longer-term peacebuilding. The Sajhedari project; however, was only awarded in 2012, after the completion of the Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Assessment of Nepal. The Mission believes that Sajhedari fundamentally supports the core DRG challenge(s) identified in the Assessment, and incorporates the lessons learned from two prior USAID projects – the Nepal Transition Initiative and the Nepal Government Citizen Partnership Project. It also compliments the work of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MOFALD) and other donor activities.

Sajhedari's four key objectives are as follows:

Objective A (Conflict Mitigation) - Establish and improve the enabling environment for community development. Strengthening community stabilization, conflict mitigation, and dispute resolution at the local level are key interventions for this objective.

³⁰ Note that the project expanded to earthquake affected districts after the April 2015 7.8 magnitude earthquake. Project implementation began only after the September 2015 contract modification.

³¹ The following twenty focus districts outlined in the FY 2014-2018 USAID/Nepal CDCS include: Kapilvastu, Palpa, Arghakanchi, Gulmi, Dang, Salyan, Pyuthan, Rukum, Rolpa, Banke, Bardiya, Surkhet, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Kailali, Doti, Achham, Kanchanpur, Dadeldhura and Baitadi. After the 2015 earthquake, USAID expanded its geographic focus to the following 14 districts: Okhaldhunga, Ramechhap, Dolakha, Sindhuli, Sindhupalchowk, Kavrepalanchowk, Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha and Makwanpur. In total, these 34 districts are understood as our strategy's "zone of influence."

Objective B (Access to Resources) - Improve communities' ability to access resources for development. To achieve this objective, Sajhedari supports communities develop strategic plans that prioritize their needs and facilitates better access to resources.

Objective C (Inclusive Development) - Improve communities' ability to effectively implement inclusive development projects. This objective focuses on developing community skills in inclusive planning processes so that village development plans are more strategic, transparent and equitable.

Objective D (Effective Local Bodies) - Increase the ability of existing and new government units to function effectively. Supporting local governments in targeted areas to assume their new roles, promote good governance in management, increase accountability to citizens, and enhance service delivery are key interventions to meet this objective.

In order to achieve these objectives, Sajhedari provides technical assistance and limited material and financial support to targeted local government bodies, building their capacity to identify and implement projects that address community priorities. Sajhedari facilitates the development of inclusive annual and periodic (3-5 years) VDC plans that reflect the demands of the broader community, including historically marginalized populations. Project-supported activities are built on the principle of sustainability and implemented in collaboration with civil society and the GON to ensure broad-based participation from implementation to operations and maintenance.

Project implementation approach

Sajhedari is implemented by Pact, Inc. and consists of three implementation modalities: (1) Technical assistance from Pact, Inc., USAID's primary partner; (2) A grants sub-activity to district and local-level Nepali organizations; and (3) Sub-contracts to local and international organizations to provide specific services and support. Pact's technical assistance focuses on building the capacity of local organizations and government bodies to function more independently and effectively.

The grants sub-activity within Sajhedari is a major mechanism of support to community development efforts by providing an opportunity to exercise skills learned through capacity building technical assistance. Sajhedari's sub-contracts complement locally available community development resources and allow for ongoing planning, monitoring, and evaluation.

The Evaluation: Purpose, Audience & Use

Purpose

This external evaluation will come at the 4.5 year mark of the Sajhedari project (a year before the project's end), and focuses on activities implemented during the life of the Contract (December 2012 - May 2017). The evaluation will assess the priority themes and principles of the project, and will generate learning to best adapt and make strategic decisions towards achieving Mission objectives. The endline evaluation's overall purpose is to synthesize evidence for results over the course of the past 4.5 years; understand the extent to which USAID's development hypothesis/es were validated or not through the course of the project, document lessons learned; and provide recommendations for planning any future development activities in the area of local governance.

This evaluation will assess the priority themes and principles of the project, as well as generate learning to best adapt and make strategic decisions towards achieving Mission objectives. The evaluation team will also need to consider the operating environment, project methodology, and the escalation of activities when assessing opportunities and threats. The focus of the evaluation is defined by the evaluation questions below.

Audience

The main audience of this evaluation report will be USAID/Nepal's Front Office, Office of Acquisitions, Program Office, and the Democracy and Governance Office. USAID/Nepal may also

share the report and/or relevant sections/findings/recommendations with USAID/Washington's Asia Bureau and Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) Bureau, as well as other DO Teams and State Department colleagues. An executive summary and recommendations will be provided to the GON's Local Government and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) counterparts and related donor group.

Intended Use

The Mission intends to use the evaluation findings to better understand what is working most effectively over what has yielded fewer outcome-level results to date, and how the project is contributing to the governance landscape of Nepal, against the backdrop of USAID/Nepal's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Objective (DO) 1: More Inclusive and Effective Governance.³²

Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions will guide the final evaluation process. In answering these questions the evaluation team will use the evaluation criteria of relevancy, effectiveness, and sustainability.

In the process of answering the below questions, USAID welcomes identification of any under achievements to document important development learning from those. USAID recognizes that even the best designed and implemented activities and interventions often meet unexpected hurdles, challenges, and contexts. This evaluation intends to document those as part of the Mission's learning and knowledge management to apply to present and future activities.

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Background information
Relevancy	1) To what extent is Sajhedari's theory of change validated within the context of Nepal in improving the ability of targeted communities to better direct local development?	
Effectiveness	2) To what degree and how has the project contributed to bridge the gap between citizen capacity to demand services and government to provide them as identified in the DRG Assessment? ● How has the Sajhedari affected the relationship between duty bearers and rights holder (particularly in the context of a vacuum in locally elected officials)? ● To what extent did the deliberations between both sides	Governance Systems and Ownership Impact - USAID designed Sajhedari long-before the completion of the 2012 Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance (DRG) Assessment of Nepal. However, the project was awarded in December 2012 (after the DRG Assessment was completed) and the Mission believes that implementation of Sajhedari fundamentally supports the core DRG challenge(s) identified in the Assessment.

³² Development hypothesis of DO 1: Investment in Nepal's peace process, accountable democratic institutions, civic participation and improved governance capacity will result in more effective governance and increased political inclusion.

	enhance planning, service delivery, and knowledge management on development programs? To what extent can these changes be attributed to support provided under Sajhedari?	
Effectiveness	3) To what extent and what ways has Sajhedari supported its focus communities in the transition from post-conflict to peacebuilding and inclusive development in Nepal? ● To what extent has Sajhedari ensured participation and leadership of women, youth and people from marginalized communities in these processes? ● What, if any, adaptive management tools were used to produce successful results in Nepal's highly volatile context over the life of the project?	<i>Peacebuilding Impact</i> - The intention of the first objective of Sajhedari was to support Nepal's transition from a post-conflict context to one of longer-term peacebuilding. USAID expect the inquiry into with the question to build on existing academic research related to post-conflict transition and the measurement thereof
Effectiveness	4) In what way have the women's empowerment, youth, the media, community mediation components contributed to improving communities' ability to access resources and implement inclusive development projects? ● In what way and to what extent have marginalized communities been involved in the community development processes? ● To what extent the interventions within these met the priorities of involvement of marginalized communities?	<i>Intra-project Complementarity and GESI Impact</i> - A repeated theme in the design and early implementation of Sajhedari was aiming for a sum that was greater than its parts. With many distinct components of the project and the concerted effort to link those more robustly through the process of implementation.
Sustainability	5) To what degree and how has the project promoted a constructive and sustainable dialogue between the local government/bodies and community members - particularly the marginalized – in addressing drivers of conflict and	<i>Cross-Sectoral Impacts</i> - USAID/Nepal prioritized integrated governance into its five-year strategy and the associated learning agenda. Sajhedari played an important role in both of those efforts (as documented in the USAID/Washington integration report

	establishing an enabling environment for community development? ● To what extent and how has Sajhedari promoted and/or strengthened local bodies/mechanisms in coordinating cross-sectoral outcomes (e.g. local bodies with health, education, agriculture, natural resources management, etc.)? ● Which were successful approaches in this? Which did not work well? Why? ● How has the Sajhedari enabled the GON to continue various components Sajhedari has been implementing?	and the CAMRIS-conducted integrated governance data harvesting report).
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Evaluation Design and Methodology

The Sajhedari endline evaluation will employ a mixed methodology and will rely on a number of sources and techniques to answer the evaluation questions. The evaluation will heavily rely on existing quantitative data for collecting and analyzing the information required to assess the evaluation objectives and questions. Using the project's survey data, the evaluation will apply a control group comparison method to see the component-wise changes in Sajhedari VDCs and control VDCs. Where control group data are not available, conditions before and after the intervention may be analyzed on Sajhedari VDCs for attributable changes. USAID acknowledges that the survey data show very little difference in the perception of control and project respondents over the life of the project.

The qualitative methodology will include key informant interviews, as well as site visits and team planning meetings. Collection of primary data must emphasize a participatory approach with stakeholders and direct beneficiaries. Semi-structured interviews with focus groups and key informants can be interspersed for flexibility and efficiency. Roundtables and short workshops might also be appropriate for assessment and learning with USAID staff, implementing partners, NGOs, relevant donors and the Government of Nepal. Additionally, the evaluation team will select sites and activities, independently of Sajhedari's implementing partner, for participant observations of ongoing activities and interactions if any.

The evaluation team must present its evaluation design and methodology to the technical team of USAID/Nepal Democracy and Governance Office (DGO) and Program Office. Members of the Mission wide Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Team (IMET) may also be involved in finalizing the methodology. The presentation shall focus on what methodology the evaluation team thinks most suitable to complete the task.

For each evaluation question, the type, source, and method of data collection will be outlined in a design matrix. The **key documents** for review include:

- Sajhedari project documents, work plans, performance monitoring plan (PMP), annual and semi-annual reports
- Sajhedari assessments/survey reports and datasets, and other related technical documents

and studies made available by the DG Team.

The **key Stakeholders** to be consulted include:

- Local communities
 - Donors, government counterparts, political parties, similar projects and civil society representatives.
- Pact, Equal Access, Youth Initiative, CeLRRd and other key organizations.

Data Analysis Methods

Data analysis is anticipated to include first a stand-alone desk review of existing quantitative data, project documents, and international data/research on the subject matter. This part of the evaluation is to be conducted by the team leader and presented to USAID and the broader evaluation team prior to the start of in-country data collection, and later, triangulated with qualitative data.

The Nepali local team members may be engaged in supporting the data mining from other local governance projects operating in Nepal (e.g., DFID-funded, SDC-funded, GON-funded programming data). Included in this desk review should be an analysis of broader human development data sets to inform the context in which the project was operating.

USAID expects a firm triangulation of data to understand how the changes in perception support findings against the evaluation questions. This includes analysis of the project's local perception surveys conducted under the project to understand how the changes in perception support findings against the questions below. USAID notes that much of the perception data between control and project respondents differs very little over the life of the project.

Prior to the start of in-country data collection, the evaluation team must develop and present, for USAID review and approval; a data analysis plan that details how stakeholder interviews will be transcribed and analyzed; what procedures will be used to analyze qualitative data from key stakeholder interviews; and how the evaluation will weigh and integrate qualitative data from these sources with quantitative data from project monitoring records to reach conclusions.

Evaluation Team

The evaluation team will consist of four professionals (at least one female) with expertise in democracy and governance, as well as relevant experience and knowledge related to local governance, gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), post-conflict environments, development sustainability, youth, and multi-sectoral development programming/integration. Any real or potential conflicts of interest should be presented upfront and/or avoided.

Team Leader: The Team Leader must have a minimum of master's degree, Ph.D. is preferable, in the areas of political science or social science or a related subject area. The Team Leader must have demonstrated leadership and team management skills. The Team Leader must have at least 10 years of relevant experience in activity design, monitoring and evaluation. He/she must have broad technical experience with the function and operation of local governance, development sustainability, and gender equality and social inclusion. The Team Leader must have extensive analytical experience, which equips him/her to conduct high-quality and in-depth analysis of the political situation, preferably with specific knowledge of the critical issues in Nepal. Knowledge of Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) transition literature would be useful. The team leader is anticipated to split time during the field data collection in order to devote time to a separate (but parallel) task within USAID Democracy and Governance portfolio. Should the second task overlap, a detailed plan in this time split should be presented to USAID prior to the start of any of the below deliverables.

Local Governance Expert (expat): The team will rely on a USAID/Washington-based local governance expert (expat) who has extensive comparative knowledge in local governance activities globally. The individual will have recent in-country experience to understand the very dynamic local environment of local governance activities.

National Evaluation Team Member: The national evaluation team member must have at least a master degree, Ph.D. is preferable, in the area of political/social science or a related subject area. He/she must have at least 5 years of experience in design, monitoring and evaluation of democracy and governance projects. The national team member must have broad technical experience with the function and operation of local governance, development sustainability, including specific and extensive knowledge on Nepal. He/she must be able to conduct interviews and discussions in Nepali and English.

GESI Expert: The GESI expert must have at least a master degree, Ph.D. is preferable, in the areas of social sciences. He/she must have at least 5 years of experience in design, monitoring and evaluation of democracy and governance related projects, with a focus on gender and social inclusion. The GESI expert must have broad technical experience with the function and operation of gender equality and social inclusion, GESI assessment tools and approaches including specific and extensive knowledge on Nepal. He/she is expected to have a good knowledge of local governance and development sustainability. He/she must be able to conduct interviews and discussions in Nepali and English.

Evaluation Timeline

The timeline for this evaluation is between May and September 2017 (note that some flexibility in timing of in-country research may be required dependent on the holding of local elections on May 14 TBC). The following is a tentative schedule for the evaluation tasks. A detailed timeline will be developed during team planning meeting and as part of finalizing the evaluation plan.

Timeline	Task	Task	Task
Weeks 1 & 2 Dates:.....(TBD)	Conduct desk review/gather extant data and conduct analysis Hold conference/Skype calls with USAID/Nepal team	Establish interview guides, developing team protocol and responsibilities	Conduct interviews with relevant POCs in Washington DC (as needed)
Week 3 Dates:.....(TBD)	Conduct an in-briefing with and a team planning meeting with USAID and IPs	Provide a briefing to the Mission on desk review findings and implications regarding evaluation questions	Finalize methodology in consultation with DGO team, members of the Mission wide Integrated Monitoring and Evaluation Team (IMET) project IPs, and MEL staff.
Weeks 4 & 5 Dates:.....(TBD)	Collect evaluation data in Kathmandu and outside at the project districts and sites	Hold a listening session with beneficiaries and stakeholders in Nepalgunj	Present preliminary findings, conclusions and recommendations to USAID/Nepal Mission

Weeks 6 & 7 Dates:.....(TBD) (Note: feedback from Mission Dates:.....(TBD))	Data analysis & triangulation	Analyze data, submit First Draft Evaluation Report	
Week 8 Dates:.....(TBD)	Incorporate Mission feedback into draft report	Submit final evaluation report	

DELIVERABLES

The following is a set of evaluation deliverables, with the expected timing of each adhering to the above Evaluation Timeline.

1. Desk Review & Presentation of findings: The evaluation team is expected to hold a briefing with USAID after completing analysis of secondary data and provide a presentation of findings and their implications on the evaluation questions, including potential challenges and emerging opportunities.

2. Preparation of Protocols & Guidelines: To make the field time as efficient as possible, preparation (prior to the arrival of the team leader and the local governance expert to Nepal) must include completing a majority of the documentation review and analysis of secondary data, establishing interview guides, developing team protocol and responsibilities, and establishing the evaluation schedule.

3. Discussion of plan and design: An in-briefing with USAID/Nepal upon team's arrival in Nepal for the following:

- Providing evaluation team initial background on the activity and context;
- Reviewing evaluation questions and USAID needs for the evaluation;
- Reviewing the evaluation timeline along with deliverables
- Reviewing data collection plans and tools with USAID;
- Reviewing and clarifying any logistical and administrative procedures for the assignment;
- Developing a preliminary draft outline of the team's report.

4. Evaluation Design: Following the discussions of plan and design with the Mission, the evaluation team will start work on the evaluation design. The evaluation team must submit an evaluation design ([Appendix 2](#)). The evaluation design will include: (1) Background and Project Description including Project Theory of Change; (2) Key Evaluation Questions; (3) Methodology (including data collection methods, sampling, and data analysis) (4) a detailed evaluation design matrix that links the Evaluation Questions in the SOW to data sources, methods, and the data analysis plan; (5) draft questionnaires and other data collection

instruments or their main features; (6) the list of potential interviewees and sites to be visited and proposed selection criteria and/or sampling plan (must include calculations and/or a justification of sample size, plans as to how the sampling frame will be developed, and the sampling methodology, where applicable); (7) Evaluation work plan including the anticipated schedule and logistical arrangements and a list of the members of the evaluation team, delineated by roles and responsibilities; (8) known limitations to the evaluation design; and (9) a dissemination plan.

5. Presentation of Preliminary Findings from the Field: The evaluation team is expected to hold a presentation in person/by virtual conferencing software to discuss preliminary findings and recommendations based on fieldwork. This presentation will be scheduled as agreed upon during the in-briefing. Presentations will be carried out two times (within USAID and outside) as required.

6. Draft Evaluation Report: Submission of a draft evaluation report that adheres to USAID reporting guidelines and Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report (see below).

7. Final Evaluation Report: Submission of a final evaluation report within 10 working days of receipt of consolidated comments in electronic format from USAID. A Comments Matrix should also be included with a list of comments from USAID and responses from the evaluation team addressing each comment. All the quantitative data collected as part of this evaluation must be submitted as CSV files to Data Development Library with PII removed as required by [ADS 579](#). The Final approved evaluation report must be submitted both in MS Word and pdf format, and also be submitted to [the Development Experience Clearing House \(DEC\)](#). The raw data and records, both quantitative and qualitative (e.g. interview transcripts, survey responses etc.) in electronic form collected by the evaluation team must be submitted to USAID separately from the report. All instruments used for collecting data during the evaluation included as an appendix in the evaluation report ([Appendix 7](#)).

Reporting Guidelines

USAID/Nepal requires that the team review USAID's *Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report*, which can be accessed online at:

<http://transition.usaid.gov/evaluation/USAIDEvaluationPolicy.pdf>

The evaluation final report should include an executive summary; background of the local context and the strategies/projects/activities being evaluated; the evaluation purpose and main evaluation questions; the methodology or methodologies; the limitations to the evaluation; findings, conclusions, and recommendations. For more detail, see "How-To Note: Preparing Evaluation Reports" and **ADS 201, USAID Evaluation Report Requirements**. An optional evaluation report [template](#) is available in the Evaluation Toolkit. At a minimum the evaluation report must include the following sections:

- Acronyms
- Executive Summary
- Evaluation Purpose and Evaluation Questions
- Project [or Activity] Background
- Evaluation Methods and Limitations
- Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

- Annexes
 - Annex I: Evaluation Statement of Work

- Annex II: Evaluation Methods and Limitations
- Annex III: Data Collection Instruments
- Annex IV: Sources of Information
- Annex V: Disclosure of Any Conflicts of Interest
- Annex VI: Statement of Differences [only if applicable]
- Annex VII: Raw data

The template can be amended based on the suggestion by the evaluation team.

The final report must be clear and grammatically correct to be accepted by USAID/Nepal. The report format must be 12-point type font should be used throughout the body of the report, with page margins 1" top/bottom and left/right. The report should not exceed 30 pages, excluding references and annexes.

Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report

Per **ADS 201** maa, **Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report**, draft and final evaluation reports will be evaluated against the following criteria to ensure the quality of the evaluation report.

- Evaluation reports should represent a thoughtful, well-researched, and well-organized effort to objectively evaluate the strategy, project, or activity.
- Evaluation reports should be readily understood and should identify key points clearly, distinctly, and succinctly.
- The Executive Summary of an evaluation report should present a concise and accurate statement of the most critical elements of the report.
- Evaluation reports should adequately address all evaluation questions included in the SOW, or the evaluation questions subsequently revised and documented in consultation and agreement with USAID.
- Evaluation methodology should be explained in detail and sources of information properly identified.
- Limitations to the evaluation should be adequately disclosed in the report, with particular attention to the limitations associated with the evaluation methodology (selection bias, recall bias, unobservable differences between comparator groups, etc.).
- Evaluation findings should be presented as analyzed facts, evidence, and data and not based on anecdotes, hearsay, or simply the compilation of people's opinions.
- Findings and conclusions should be specific, concise, and supported by strong quantitative or qualitative evidence.
- If evaluation findings assess person-level outcomes or impact, they should also be separately assessed for both males and females.
- If recommendations are included, they should be supported by a specific set of findings and should be action-oriented, practical, and specific.

LOGISTICS AND USAID PARTICIPATION

The evaluation team is responsible for managing all logistics required for completing the evaluation. This includes but is not limited to arranging for transportation, meeting venues and appointments for meetings. Pact or its subcontractor staff may assist in organizing meetings. USAID/Nepal will provide key documents and background materials for reading and help arrange the in-briefing and debriefing. Exact participation of USAID/Nepal will be determined after the selection of the consultants, but someone from USAID/Nepal may accompany the contractor in key meetings with senior political leaders, GON officials and with selected stakeholders.

The USAID/Nepal staff will provide contacts for meetings and a list of the suggested site visits for the team to arrange meetings. The Contract Officer's Representative for Sajhedari, will work as the point of contact for this task.

BUDGET

The contractor is expected to submit a proposed budget along with the proposed design. The items in the proposed budget should include consultancy fees, per diem, in-country airfare, vehicle rental, group accident insurance and other direct cost such as stationery, photocopy, utilities/venue rental, etc.

APPENDIX 2: ENDLINE EVALUATION DESIGN

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Exhibit 1: Sajhedari Bikaas – Activity Objectives

Objective A (Conflict Mitigation)- Establish and improve the enabling environment for community development. Strengthening community stabilization, conflict mitigation, and dispute resolution at the local level are key interventions for this objective.

Objective B (Access to Resources) - Improve communities' ability to access resources for development. To achieve this objective, Sajhedari supports communities develop strategic plans that prioritize their needs and facilitates better access to resources.

Objective C (Inclusive Development) - Improve communities' ability to effectively implement inclusive development projects. This objective focuses on developing community skills in inclusive planning processes so that village development plans are more strategic, transparent and equitable.

Objective D (Effective Local Bodies)- Increase the ability of existing and new government units to function effectively. Supporting local governments in targeted areas to assume their new roles, promote good governance in management, increase accountability to citizens, and enhance service are key

Through a contract with Pact, Inc., USAID Nepal is supporting the implementation of the Sajhedari Bikaas (Partnership for Local Development) activity. Sajhedari Bikaas(SB) is a \$35 million, 5.5 year local governance activity that focuses on the objectives presented in **Exhibit 1**.

In order to achieve these objectives, SB provides technical assistance and limited material and financial support to targeted local government bodies, building their capacity to identify and implement projects that address community priorities. SB facilitates the development of inclusive annual and periodic (3-5 years) Village Development Committee (VDC)³³ plans that reflect the demands of the broader community, including historically marginalized populations. Project-supported activities are built on the principle of sustainability and implemented in collaboration with civil society and the Government of Nepal (GON) to ensure broad-based participation from implementation to operations and maintenance.

In addition to direct technical assistance by Pact, SB relies on grants to national-level Nepali Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as to district and local-level ones. It also involves sub-contracts to local as well as international organizations to provide specific services and support.

SB is implemented in six “core districts” and (following the April-May 2015 earthquakes) five “recovery districts.” Four of the six core districts (Dang, Banke, Bardiya, and Surkhet) are in the Mid-West, and two (Kailali and Kanchanpur) in the Far-West. The five earthquake recovery districts are Gorkha, Lamjung, Dhading, Dolakha and Ramechhap. All districts in which SB is active are in USAID/Nepal’s “zone of influence” and share many common socioeconomic, demographic and geo-spatial features.

EVALUATION PURPOSE

In the spring of 2017, USAID/Nepal released a Scope of Work ([Appendix I](#)) for an endline performance evaluation of the SB activity. The overall goal of the evaluation is to assess approaches,

³³Since the program time period under evaluation is before the federal restructuring of Nepal, this report uses the terms of VDC and DDC, rather than Gaopalika and DCC.

interventions, and results carried out in support of the four objectives noted in **Exhibit 1** in order to generate learning and recommendations to inform USAID's future local-governance programming. The evaluation will provide evidence to: a) capture project achievements, and reflect on the factors that made them possible; b) identify project limitations and shortcomings, as well as the challenges that SB encountered and how it endeavored to address them; and c) build on the above to infer lessons that relate to the conceptualization, design, management, and implementation of local-governance programming with a focus on potential pitfalls, opportunities, and suggested good practices to which future programming should remain alert.

The evaluation is predicated on the assumption that while the context for local governance in Nepal is changing rapidly and dramatically, many lessons from SB's experience will remain relevant going forward, and that identifying these lessons and taking them into account has much potential to strengthen future programming in this area.

Framing the Evaluation

CONCEPTUAL AND OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Exhibit 2: USAID DOI Development Hypotheses

DOI Development Hypothesis

Investment in Nepal's peace process, accountable democratic institutions, civic participation and improved governance capacity will result in more effective governance and increased political inclusion.

SB unfolded against the backdrop of USAID/Nepal's Country Development Cooperation Strategy (CDCS) Development Objective (DO) I: "More inclusive and effective governance." The DOI development hypothesis is presented in **Exhibit 2**. SB was expected to contribute to DO I through mutually complementary gains in governance and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI).

To identify the governance impact of SB in both core and recovery districts, the evaluation will assess the program's achievements, limitations and challenges in the following inter-related areas:

- Reducing the gap between citizens (including women, poor and excluded) and government at the local level.
- Addressing the causes and consequences of conflict in grassroots communities.
- Uptake of alternative dispute resolution approaches
- Supporting the adoption of more inclusive and participatory practices, including through planning processes that involve members of historically marginalized constituencies and increase community members' skills with regard to prioritizing demands.
- Strengthening communities' ability to implement effectively inclusive development projects.
- Improving accountability and transparency in local governance processes, particularly on matters related to the administration of public funds and oversight of local development projects.
- Helping community-based organizations (CBOs) become more effective in securing resources from both government and non-government sources.
- Increasing the inclination and ability of local government units, community based organizations (CBOs) or civil society organizations (CSOs) to collaborate in identifying and implementing local development projects.

To identify SB's gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) impact in both core and recovery districts, the evaluation will assess how the program impacted the lives of women, poor and the excluded³⁴ in the following areas:

- Increased access to assets and services (e.g. employment and other income opportunities, improved access to health, education, and infrastructure) due to program interventions with local government as well as through grants.
- Enhanced capacity to engage meaningfully, influence and hold accountable local bodies (former VDC/Municipalities) and other key institutions, mechanisms (such as Integrated Planning Formulation Committees, Ward Citizen Fora) and stakeholders.
- Changing informal and formal policies, mindsets, social practices and gender/caste/ethnicity based norms that perpetuate gender discrimination and social exclusion.

The operational framework for the GESI evaluation will focus on:

- Assessing how GESI contributed to DO I.
- Determining whether the program identified properly the barriers experienced by women, the poor and the excluded, and then addressed them effectively across the four objectives (presented in Exhibit I).
- Identifying those interventions and approaches that were most effective in empowering women, the poor and the excluded, and in facilitating positive shifts in discriminatory policies (formal as well as informal), social practices, norms and attitudes.
- Identifying which sub-sets of targeted populations benefited the most from program interventions, and how/why.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The SOW provided a series of tentative evaluation questions to guide the evaluation process. Based on discussions with the DOI team as well as our own past experience managing evaluations focused on democracy and governance interventions, and in order to reflect as well what has been discussed already in this document, the evaluation team has reframed the questions in **Exhibit 3**. It should be noted that what is presented here are the overarching evaluation questions that will inform the fieldwork and provide the focus of the final report. Detailed interview guides will be developed, tailored to respondent categories. These guides will include specific questions intended to address both governance and GESI aspects; that some of them have been designed specifically to be asked to women, poor and the excluded; and that responses to those questions will be disaggregated by sex/gender and caste/ethnicity.

Exhibit 3::Evaluation Questions	
Key Area	Evaluation Questions
Design	• To what extent was the program's design relevant given a) the country's main challenges in the local-governance are during the period in which the activity was

³⁴ Based on "A Common Framework for Gender Equality & Social Inclusion", GESI Working Group, 2017, published by Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Working Group, International Development Partners Group, Nepal. The definition of who the excluded in program districts are will be drawn from Sajhedari documents and aligned with the list provided in the Common GESI Framework.

	implemented; b) the changing national and local political context throughout that period; and c) the main needs of target groups? • Which aspects of the activity design have been especially effective? How and why? Which ones have been less effective? How and why?
Implementation	• How well has the activity been implemented overall? What factors external to the program have influenced implementation? • Which program approaches have proven most effective? In which regards and why? Which ones have yielded more disappointing results? In which regards and why? • Which specific interventions have proven particularly effective under each of the program's four main components? How and why? Which ones have been more disappointing? How and why? • To what extent did implementation adapt to significant changes in the context? How effectively did it deal with emerging opportunities and with the unanticipated constraints and challenges that presented themselves? • To what extent were the interventions empowering for women, poor and the excluded and for changing discriminatory policies/social norms?
Results	• In what ways have SB interventions contributed to substantive progress in terms of more effective local governance and increased political inclusion of citizens in general and historically marginalized groups in particular? • In what ways was SB especially successful along the following six sets of areas? What was disappointing in terms of outcomes in those areas? ○ Citizens' involvement in local decision-making in general, and inclusion of marginalized groups in that process in particular. ○ Communities' ability to implement development projects. ○ Accountability of local decision-makers to the public and transparency in the administration of public funds at the local level. ○ Reducing the causes and consequences of conflict at the local level. ○ Government effectiveness; government responsiveness to the needs and demands of citizens in general, and marginalized constituencies in particular; and the reduction of the gap between state and society at the local level. ○ Contributing to progress in non-DRG sectors. • Which key barriers and enablers generally have made the difference between successful and disappointing results? • What could SB have done differently to have greater impact?
Sustainability	• To what extent has the activity been implemented to ensure sustainability of gains? • What could SB have done differently to generate more sustainable gains, taking into account ongoing and forthcoming significant changes in the local-governance sector?

Sampling and methodology

SAMPLING STRATEGY

District Selection: The activity was initially implemented in six core districts. An additional six were added in the earthquake affected areas (of which one was dropped fairly soon after due to perceived poor results). Given available resources, data collection for the evaluation will be limited to four districts. The evaluation team used the following sampling criteria to select the districts:

- Accessibility to evaluation team
- Mix of core and earthquake districts (with a priority focus on core districts)

- Presence marginalized communities
- Presence of mixed religious populations
- Intensity of activity interventions

In order to make best use of the time and resources available for this evaluation, three districts will be from the core districts (that is 50% of the all core districts targeted by SB) and one from the earthquake affected ones. The original project design was for the core districts. Recovery districts were additional districts where work started only in 2015 after the earthquake and limited time, compared to core districts, has been spent in these districts by SB. A total of \$25m of SB funds was in the core districts and around \$7m in the recovery districts. Hence the evaluation team has prioritized the coverage of core districts. Given the above criteria the evaluation team selected the four districts as presented in **Exhibit 4**. In the recovery district, the assessment will recognize the difference between a development and a humanitarian program and adapt the analysis accordingly.

Exhibit 4: District Sample		
District	Region	Rationale for Selection
Kailali	Far West	• Core district • Presence of marginalized communities
Kanchanpur	Far West	• Core district • Presence of marginalized communities
Banke	Mid West	• Core district • Presence of marginalized communities • Received especially intense activity interventions • Mixed religious population
Dolakha	Central	• Recovery district • Received especially intense activity interventions • Ease of access for evaluation team

VDC/Municipality Selection: Two VDCs/Municipality (as per the former local government structure) will be selected for field work in core districts based on the following criteria: a) One VDC near district HQ and one further away in a more rural area; b) intensive activities of SB covering different program work streams (e.g. planning with Ward Citizen Fora (WCF), work with Conflict Mediation Centre (CMC) and Women's Economic (WORTH) groups); c) population profile with high presence of excluded communities such as Dalits or disadvantaged ethnic minorities; and) combination of successful and less successful program sites. VDC selection will be finalized based on document review and discussions with SB and the Mission.

Local Group Selection: The selection of local groups (such as Ward Citizen Fora (WCF), Citizen Awareness Centres (CAC), Conflict Mediation Centres (CMC) and WORTH Group) for the focus group discussions will be based on a) availability of the members; b) caste/ethnic composition of group (covering both excluded and the advantaged over the four districts); and c) level of work done by SB with them (over the program period and number of activities). Individuals who received program support and were empowered in different ways (e.g. women/Dalits/ethnic minorities/persons with disability/LGBTI people who ran for elections, or initiated their own successful enterprises, have led different social campaigns or any other successful initiative) would be interviewed.

The local level implementing partners and any relevant local sub-contractors will be interviewed based primarily on the extent of their engagement with the program.

Social mobilizers and community mediators will be selected in each district for participation in the consultation workshop based on their availability, experience with the program, significance of work implemented and caste/ethnic and sex diversity.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the evaluation questions presented in **Exhibit 3**, the evaluation team will collect data through review of secondary documents, semi structured interviews, consultation workshops and focus groups. This methodology builds on existing data and information and uses different tools and techniques (interviews, workshops, FGDs, visual profile) for collecting qualitative evidence. Perceptions of a wide range of stakeholders ensures that biases are addressed and quantitative data and information enables triangulation of evidence. A systematic and structured approach for information compilation and processing ensures that field work evidence is well organized and effectively used for the evaluation report.

A consultative, participatory and inclusive approach will be followed. The team will closely collaborate with the Mission for guidance as needed.

National Level: Data collection in Kathmandu will include semi-structured interviews, consultation meetings, workshops with USAID, SB staff, MOFALD, national level implementing partners and LGCDP donor partners, and the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA).

District Level: Field work is planned in four districts. A six-person team (one national team leader/GESI expert, one national team member and four field researchers), will conduct the field work. The USAID Governance adviser will accompany the study team during the field work. The team will meet project/program staff, staff of local government bodies and line agencies and conduct focus group discussions (FGDs) at the community level with WCFs, CACs, Small Scale Infrastructure Projects (SSIP) user's groups, CMCs, WORTH groups, youth and individuals, as relevant. A district level consultative workshop with social mobilizers, community mediators and CBOs/NGOs, government officials and others working on governance and GESI will be organized for their inputs regarding SB's work and lessons for future local governance programming. Evidence from the field will provide insights on the experiences of a diverse group of stakeholders regarding SB's achievements and challenges.

During field visits, data collection will include:

Consultation meetings/interviews at district headquarters: Interviews and meetings will be held with a Local Development Officer and with the Chief District Officer in the recovery district. Meetings with other government officials, as relevant, and SB staff will also be conducted.

Consultation workshops at district headquarters: Consultation workshops will be organized with the community mobilizers, community mediators and representatives of civil society, identity based organizations, project offices and local government staff such as Social Development Officers, line agency staff, Women Children Development Officers, project staff and other relevant stakeholders

to discuss SB achievements and limitations, and for lessons for future local governance programming. (Refer separate deliverable on field instruments for agenda of consultation workshops).

Focus group discussions (FGD) at ward level: In each former VDC, FGDs will be conducted with at least two Ward Citizen Fora (WCF) in each VDC, ensuring that women and men (comprising of different social groups), are included. FGDs will also be conducted with members of CACs, CMCs, Listeners' Groups and with members of the WORTH group in each VDC. The *gender analysis tool* will be discussed in one FGD per VDC, ensuring coverage of different groups in the four districts. (Refer the separate deliverable on field instruments for interview guide for FGDs).

Meetings/Interviews at ward level: Meetings and interviews at the ward level will be held with the secretary of the former VDC, members of the Integrated Plan Formulation Committee (IPFC), young women and men, members of different group and other relevant stakeholders engaged with the program. Interviews of selected individuals who have demonstrated initiatives of success due to project interventions, will also be done. Stakeholders who have received support from CMCs will be interviewed too. (Refer the separate deliverable on field instruments for interview guide for key informant interviews).

Review of annual budget of selected VDCs: The annual budgets of 2013 and 2016 of the two VDCs of the four districts visited during the field work will be reviewed to identify what were the activities addressing the needs of women, the poor and the excluded and what percentage of the budget was for this target group. The budget activities will be discussed with relevant people during the field visits to ensure that no misinterpretations are made. A comparative analysis of 2013 and 2016 will provide evidence of shifts in case there were any by 2016 for addressing priorities of women, poor and the excluded.

An overview of the proposed data collection effort for each district is provided in **Exhibit 5**.

Exhibit 5: Overview of Data Collection effort			
Type	N	HQ	VDC 1 and 2
Interviews/ Meetings	40 (approximately)	Local govt officials: CDO, LDO, SDO, DIDC, DTO, WCO; DDRC (Dolakha) Implementing Partners, SB staff	VDC Secretary, IPFC, Supervision & Monitoring Committees, 2 individual achievers, SB staff, LGCDP Social Mobilizers; VDRC (Dolakha)
Workshops	8	1. With Social Mobilizers & Community Mediators; 2. With Local govt officials, CSO/NGOs, project staff	
FGDs	VDCs: 57 (approximately)		WCFs: 4/district, 2 each CMCs, SSIP, CAC, WORTH group and Youth, Radio Listeners group: Dolakha: 4 Infrastructure groups

LIMITATIONS

An anticipated limitation is that only two VDCs per district can be covered and interviews of only a specific number of WCFs, CMCs and individuals can be held due to time and resource constraints. But the team is confident that the sampled numbers will provide sufficient evidence to ensure conclusions can be substantiated. A second limitation could be that with the restructuring of the study sites, the wards of previous VDCs could be under different Gaopalikas which could mean that government staff with program experience may not be available and relevant data may be difficult to find. The evaluation team is also dependent on SB personnel to coordinate the field work. To reduce any selection bias, criteria and standards will be communicated to the field coordinators. It is not possible to interview all the different groups and mechanisms with which SB works. The evaluation team has consciously selected to understand in-depth the ones who have significant linkage with the four objectives of SB.

Data Analysis and Reporting

The Kathmandu level meetings held by the Team Leader will be transcribed and shared before field work starts. At the end of each day of fieldwork, which will begin in the three core districts noted earlier, team members will write down their interview notes and discuss the day's findings with each other. They will exchange impressions and draw each other's attention to noteworthy results as well as challenges or opportunities related to data gathering. The national team leader/GESI expert will coordinate and oversee that process, which will inform subsequent interviews and provide a very preliminary and partial entry into the data analysis process.

Detailed notes (which are clear and understandable) as per the guides need to be prepared for each interview/ consultation/FGD/meeting/workshop completed by the team member/s and submitted to the National Team Leader/GESI Expert for compilation using simple computer software. Transcription from taped conversations and translation from local languages or Nepali to English will need to be managed by responsible team members. Caste/ethnicity and sex profile of each informant will be recorded as per the formats provided. (Refer the separate deliverable on field instruments for the formats).

Upon completion of the fieldwork in the three core districts, the team will regroup in Kathmandu. Over a three-day period, field researchers, the national team member, the USAID Washington representative, and the national team leader/GESI expert will be given an opportunity to make progress toward finalizing their notes.

After the team travels to, and then returns from, the selected recovery district, field researchers, the national team member, and the USAID Washington representative will finalize their notes and turn them over to the national team leader/GESI expert (who will be writing down her own findings).

During that period as well, with logistical assistance from CAMRIS, the national team leader/GESI expert will run a workshop aimed at enabling brainstorming among team members and a more systematic mining of field data. Through a Skype or phone conversation, the national team leader/GESI expert will discuss preliminary field findings with the (expatriate) team leader and the senior CAMRIS headquarter senior monitoring and evaluation technical advisor.

The national team leader/GESI expert then will begin the process of systematically analyzing the findings against the evaluation questions and objectives. Organization and presentation of these findings will be facilitated by a report template developed by the team leader and senior CAMRIS headquarter monitoring and evaluation technical advisor. That template will have been shared beforehand with USAID/Nepal.

During that same period, the national team lead/GESI expert and national local governance expert will brief USAID staff informally to answer questions about noteworthy field findings and challenges. The national team leader/GESI expert will finalize her analysis and turn it over to the (expatriate) team leader and the CAMRIS headquarter senior monitoring and evaluation technical advisor. The

team leader, with assistance from the CAMRIS headquarter senior monitoring and evaluation technical advisor, will craft a draft report to be submitted to USAID/Nepal.

Following receipt of USAID/Nepal's comments, the team leader will incorporate USAID and partner feedback and develop a final evaluation report. That document will include an assessment of data reliability and integrity, and will note any limitations in the data collection and analysis process. Data collection tools will be added as an addendum to the final report.

Evaluation Management

ETHICS

CAMRIS evaluation practice is guided by the American Evaluation Association Guiding Principles for Evaluators.³⁵ All interview and FGD participants will be read an informed consent statement (in the local language) to ensure that they understand that participation in data collection is voluntary. Participants will also be informed that they do not have to answer questions that make them uncomfortable and can halt their participation at any time. Representative quotes from data collection will be used in the report to add context to findings. However, participants will not be identified by name. Protection of research participants is paramount in an evaluation and the evaluation team will minimize any risks associated with participation in data collection activities. Confidentiality procedures will be explained to all participants involved in data collection.

RESEARCH PHASES

The evaluation team envisions a three-phased approach for this study:

Phase 1 –Define: The evaluation team facilitated a series of initial meetings to identify the purpose of the evaluation and how findings, conclusions, and recommendations will be used. As part of the “define and design” process, the team lead traveled to Kathmandu to conduct a series of preliminary interviews with the USAID mission and Pact. As part of this phase, the evaluation team reviewed key activity documents, including work plans, performance monitoring plan (PMP), and activity quarterly and annual reporting.

Phase 2– Design: This evaluation design represents the deliverable of the design process, which includes reframing of the evaluation questions, and development of data collection methodology. The design phase includes submission of draft data collection tools (which are presented in a separate deliverable).

Phase 3 - Conduct: Implementation of the evaluation will include the following key tasks:

- **Review of secondary documents:** Key documents such as SB project documents, work plans, performance monitoring plan (PMP), annual and semi-annual reports, SB assessments/survey reports and datasets, and other related technical documents and studies will be reviewed. Relevant Government documents such as VDC Grant Operational Guidelines, guidelines for different accountability tools and recent restructuring related acts and bills, will be studied. To understand the district context, basic demographic and socio-economic data of the study districts disaggregated by social group and sex (where available) and progress against program objectives will be collected from project staff.
- **Preparation of instruments and team orientation:** The study team will develop the required tools for the investigations and assessments. This will be based on the secondary document review and will ensure that the objectives of the study are achieved and in-depth qualitative analysis can be done. Interview guides for key informant interviews (KIIs), focus groups discussions (FGDs),

³⁵ The American Evaluation Association's Guiding Principles for Evaluators can be found online: <http://www.eval.org/p/cm/ld/fid=51>

guides for consultation workshops and individual interviews and a gender analysis mapping profile will be developed. The study team will be oriented on the use of the different tools.

- Interactions/Consultations in Kathmandu: Semi-structured interviews, consultation meetings, workshops with USAID, SB staff, MOFALD, national level implementing partners and LGCDP donor partners will be conducted, as required.
- Coordination and logistics arrangements for field work: Staff of SB in each study district will coordinate the various planned meetings, interviews, focus group discussions and workshop consultations in both district headquarters and VDC/Municipalities. The National Lead/GESI expert will coordinate with the appointed SB staff to ensure that all preparatory work is completed smoothly. SB will make all arrangements (as far as possible) before the arrival of the evaluation team to the field.
- Field Visit: Field visits will be conducted in three core districts (Kailali, Kanchanpur and Banke) (from Aug 28-Sept 7) and one recovery district (Dolakha from Sept 11-14). Meetings and consultations will be held in the district head-quarters and in the wards of two of the former VDC/Municipality (to be selected based on the sampling criteria described above). The following will be the key activities in the field.
- Information Compilation, Processing and Analysis: All team members who conducted meetings/interviews/consultations/focus group discussions will prepare detailed notes as per the areas of enquiry. Each note will be numbered and organized by a data analyst so that analysis of the information can be done more effectively and references to different pieces of evidence can be tracked with ease. The field level information analysis, including the VDC budget review will be compiled and organized and a document prepared with the analysis.
- Draft Report and finalization: A workshop with team members will be organized to discuss findings and analysis of evidence. An informal debriefing after field work will be done to update USAID on field level findings. A draft report will be prepared by the Team Leader using the field analysis, secondary document review findings and inputs of national level meetings. This will be shared for feedback and the report finalized incorporating relevant comments. (Refer to section 6 on data analysis and reporting for details)

DELIVERABLES

MEL team acknowledges the following key deliverables for this evaluation:

- **Evaluation Design:** The evaluation team will submit evaluation design in advance to implementation of evaluation (which will become an appendix to the Evaluation report).
- **An in-brief with USAID/Nepal to include:**
 - Providing the evaluation team initial background on the program and context;
 - Reviewing evaluation questions and USAID needs for the evaluation;
 - Reviewing the evaluation timeline along with deliverables;
 - Reviewing data collection plans and tools with USAID;
 - Reviewing and clarifying any logistical and administrative procedures for the assignment;
 - Developing a preliminary draft outline of the team's report.
- **Data Collection Instruments:** The evaluation team will submit the data collection instruments to USAID for their review and feedback prior to training the field researchers. The tools will be revised to incorporate Mission's feedback.
- **Presentation of Preliminary Findings from the Field:** The national team leader/GESI expert will present preliminary findings and reflections during an in-person meeting at the mission.

- **Draft Evaluation Report:** Submission of a draft evaluation report that adheres to USAID reporting guidelines and Criteria to Ensure the Quality of the Evaluation Report.
- **Final Evaluation Report:** Submission of a final evaluation report within 10 working days of receipt of consolidated comments in electronic format from USAID. The Final approved evaluation report will be submitted both in MS Word and pdf format, and will be posted to [the Development Experience Clearing House \(DEC\)](#).

TEAM COMPOSITION

The evaluation team will comprise of four professionals including an International Team Leader and a National Team Leader.

Team Leader: The Team Leader has demonstrated leadership and team management skills. He has broad technical experience with the function and operation of local governance, development sustainability, and/or gender equality and social inclusion. He has specific knowledge of Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) transition. He has profound analytical experience, which equips him to conduct high-quality and in-depth analysis of the political situation.

National Team Leader (GESI Expert): For this evaluation, the GESI expert will also serve as a National Team Leader. She has decades of experience in design, monitoring and evaluation of democracy and governance related projects, with a focus on gender equality and social inclusion. She has broad technical experience with the function and operation of gender equality and social inclusion, GESI assessment tools and approaches including specific and extensive knowledge on Nepal. She has good knowledge of local governance and development sustainability.

National Team Member: The national team member has profound knowledge and experience on political/social science. He has broad technical experience with the function and operation of local governance, development sustainability, including specific and extensive knowledge on Nepal particularly on DRG transition.

Data Analyst: The data analyst will support the compilation and processing of all information collected in the field. He will review the annual budget of two years of each study site and provide relevant comparative information for analysis. He will produce required outputs and graphs for the report and provide support for management of all information.

Local Governance Expert (expat): The team will rely on a USAID/Washington-based local governance expert (expat) who has extensive comparative knowledge in local governance programming globally. The individual will have recent in-country experience to understand the very dynamic local environment of local governance programming.

CAMRIS headquarter senior monitoring and evaluation technical advisor: Dr. Jonathan Jones will be responsible for quality control and oversight of the evaluation process. He will advise the evaluation team in the use of qualitative data collection and analysis instruments and methodologies as well as ensure consistency in the quality of reporting.

The experts team will be accompanied by **four field researchers** adept in local governance and GESI issues as well as qualitative evaluation methodology. The researchers will be selected considering their gender, social background and language prevalent in the proposed sample districts.

WORKPLAN AND LOE ESTIMATES

Exhibit 6: LOE Estimate

Position	Key tasks	Level of Effort (in days)
International Team Leader	Study design & management, overall guidance to team, document review, draft and final report, communication with Mission	40
National Team Leader/GESI Expert	Study design, document review, manage and conduct field work, assure quality of field analysis, prepare field analysis document	45
National Team Member	Document review, work closely with Governance expert, provide governance related inputs, conduct field work, prepare field notes, contribute to field analysis document	24
Field Researchers (4)	Conduct field work, prepare field notes, transcribe and translate as required, contribute to field analysis document	100
Data Analyst	Compile and process data and information, prepare output graphs, organise field analysis document	15

APPENDIX 3: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Information for the SB evaluation came from the following sources: Implementing Partner staff; local government bodies and line agency staff (Local Development Officers, Chief District Officers in recovery districts, Women Children Officers, Social Development Officers); Ward Citizen Fora members; User Groups; Women's Economic Growth Groups (WORTH); Integrated Plan Formulation Committees; CSOs/CBOs; Citizen Awareness Center members, users, and beneficiaries; Conflict Mediation Centers; Listeners Groups; Social mobilizers; Community mediators; Former VDC secretaries; and the annual budgets (2013, 2016) of two districts.

Below is the list of people met, with details of FGDs, interviews and workshops/consultative meetings.

Kathmandu

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization
	GoN		
1	Reshmi Raj Pandey	National Program Director and Joint Secretary	LGCDP/MoFALD
2	Gopi Khanal	Joint Secretary (former NPD of LGCDP)	Ministry of Industry (previously LGCDP/MOFALD)

3	Maresh Aryal	Senior Division Officer	Municipality Division, MoFALD
4	Resham Lal Kandel	National Program Manager	LGCDP/MoFALD
5	Bishal Bhardwaj	Under Secretary	Department of Vital Registration, MoFALD
	Sajhedari Bikaas (SB), PACT		
1	Russel P. Pepe	Chief of Party/Country Director	PACT, Sajhedari Bikas Project
2	Basanta Pokharel	Deputy Chief of Party	PACT, Sajhedari Bikas
3	Sudan Siwakoti	Chief of M&E	PACT, Sajhedari Bikas Project
4	Jason Katz	Senior Field Director	PACT, Sajhedari Bikas Project
5	Srijana Chhetri	GESI Manager	PACT, Sajhedari Bikas
	Implementing Partners		
1	Ram Mani Gautam	Sr. Program Manager	CeLRRD
2	Dipendra Prasad Pant.	M&E cum Funders Liaison Chief	CeLRRD
3	Ashim Pandey	Country Manager	Safer World
4	Anurag Acharya		Safer World
5	Nirmal Rijal	Regional Coordinator-Asia	Equal Access
6	Binaya Guragain	Country Director	Equal Access
7	Prakash Lamichhane	Radio Coordinator	Equal Access
8	Laxmi Shrestha	Radio Program Host	Equal Access

District Level: Key Informant Interview

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization
	Kailali		
1	Lok Raj Dhakal	Planning Officer	DADO

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization
2	Puja Kafle	Women Development Officer	WCO Kailali
3	Ashok Deep	Executive Director	NNSW/YAC-NEPAL/HURAS
4	Dhan Pd. Rawat	General Secretary	NNSW/YAC-NEPAL/HURAS
5	Min Bahadur Shahi	Vice Chairperson	NNSW/YAC-NEPAL/HURAS
6	Januka Rawal	Sajhedari Coordinator	Radio Kailali, Sukkhad, Kailali
7	Birendra Shah	Program Coordinator	Radio Kailali, Sukkhad, Kailali
	Surkhet		
1	Tanka Lamichhane	Social Development Officer	District Coordination Committee, Surkhet
2	Dhand Bahadur Khatri	Information Chief	District Information Center (DIDC), Birendranagar, Surkhet
3	Narayan Prasad Neupane	Vet Officer	District livestock Office (DLSO), Birendranagar, Surkhet
4	Yasodha Bhattarai	Governance SM	Dashrathpur VDC Office, Dashrathpur, Surkhet
5	Tikaram Acharya	Executive Director	SAC, Nepal
6	Deepa Basnet		SAC Nepal
7	Bina Bhattarai		Sundar Nepal
8	Sakuntala Subedi		WAM
9	Kalyani Bhattarai		CELLRRD
10	Prakash Kandel	Executive Director	
11	Bhim Bastola		PAHAL Program
12	Madhurani Dhakal	Executive Director	WAM Nepal
13	Chandrama Dhamal	WORTH SM	Dashrathpur VDC Office, Dashrathpur, Surkhet
14	Rita Pariyar		Equal Access
	Banke		

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization
1	Ramesh Kumar Kc	CDO	CDO Office Banke
2	Sharad Poudel	Social Development Officer	District Coordination Office, Banke
3	Hari Pyakurel	Local Development Officer	District Coordination Office, Banke
4	Dharma Lal Rokaya	Executive Officer	ENRUDEC
5	Junu Regmi	M&E	FFN
6	Rajendra Chand	YO	ENRUDEC
7	Pushpanjali Malla	PC	CeLRRD
8	Risaj Khand		Banke UNESCO Club
9	Manoj BK	FO	BUC
10	Suman Bishwakarma	PC	ENRUDEC
11	Hemanta B.K.	Station Manager	Pratiboth FM
12	Dil Bahadur Pariyar	Representative	Dalit NGO Federation, Nepalgunj
13	Bhim Bahadur Nepali	Representative	Dalit NGO Federation, Nepalgunj
14	Pancham Gurung		Banke UNESCO Club
15	Anita Shrestha (Kurmi)	FO	FFN
16	Umesh Kumar Gupta	PC	FFN
17	Budesh Jaiswal		Banke UNESCO Club
	Dhading		
1	Jibalal Bhusal	Local Development Officer	District Coordination Office, Dhading
2	Liladhar Adhikari	Assistant Chief District Officer	District Administration Office, Dhading
3	Binod Aryal	Social Development Officer	District Coordination Office, Dhading
4	Keshav P. Subedi	Child Protection Officer	WDO, Dhading Besi

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization
5	Dr. Binod Yadav	DLSO Incharge	DLSO
6	Damodar Aryal	District Chairperson	NGO Federation, Dhading
7	Laxmi Khakurel Kandel	Acting Chairperson	Action Nepal
8	Kamal Raj Sharma	M&E Head	Action Nepal
9	Shanta Bahadur Bhattarai	Executive Director	Action Nepal
10	Dinesh Duwadi	PC	Action Nepal
11	Diwesh Dawadi		Action Nepal
12	Beg Bahadur BK	District Chairperson	Nepal Rastriya Dalit Samaj Kalyang Sangh, Dhading
13	Arjun BK	SB Field Coordinator	

Key Informant Interview at Local Level

District	Number of persons	Number of persons by caste ethnicity
Kailali	14	DHF: 1, DHM: 1, JTF: 1, JTM: 1, BCHF: 2, BCM: 3, MOBCM: 1
Surkhet	25	DHF: 4, DHM: 4, BCHF: 9, BCHM: 6, BCMM: 1, MF: 1
Banke	22	DHF: 1, DHM: 1, DTM: 1, JHM: 1, JTF: 5, JTM: 6, BCHF: 2, BCHM: 2, BCMM: 2, MOBCF: 1
Dhading	13	DHF: 1, JHF: 3, JHM: 2, BCHF: 3, BCHM: 4

F: Female, M: Male, BCH: BC Hill, BCM: BC Madhesi, DH: Dalit Hill, DT: Dalit Terai, JH: Janajati Hill, JN: Janajati Newar, JT: Janajati Terai, M: Muslim, MOBC: Madhesi Other Backward Class

Focus Group Discussion at Local Level

District	Number of FGD	Type and number of FGD	Number of participants	Number of participants by caste ethnicity
Kailali	14	CMC 3, DNY 1, IPFC 1, LIG 1, SSIP 1, WCF 5, WORTH 2	122	DHF: 1, DHM: 6, JNF: 1, JNM: 1, JTF: 66, JTM: 20, BCHF: 8, BCHM: 19
Surkhet	11	CMC 2, IPFC 1, LIG 2, WCF 4, WORTH 2	103	DHF: 25, DHM: 7, JHF: 10, JHM: 3, JTF: 9, JTM: 3, BCHF: 23, BCHM: 20, MF: 3

District	Number of FGD	Type and number of FGD	Number of participants	Number of participants by caste ethnicity
Banke	14	CMC 1, DNY 1, IPMC 1, IPFC 2, LIG 1, SSIP 2, WCF 3, WORTH 3	103	DHF: 5, DHM: 5, DTF: 2, DTM: 5, JHF: 5, JTF: 20, JTM: 5, BCHF: 12, BCHM: 10, BCMF: 7, BCM: 6, MM: 2, MOBCF: 14, MOBCM: 5
Dhading	7	CMC 2, SSIP 3, SM 1, WCF 2	53	DHF: 8, DHM: 1, JHF: 6, JHM: 6, JNF: 1, JNM: 1, JTF: 5, JTM: 3, BCHF: 10, BCHM: 12

F: Female, M: Male, BCH: BC Hill, BCM: BC Madhesi, DH: Dalit Hill, DT: Dalit Terai, JH: Janajati Hill, JN: Janajati Newar, JT: Janajati Terai, M: Muslim, MOBC: Madhesi Other Backward Class

APPENDIX 4: DETAILS OF WORTH MEMBERS AND ENTERPRISES

4.1 Status of saving and loaning of WORTH groups

Reporting Year	Phase	Total Saving	# of Loan	Total Loan Amount
Banke	Phase-1	6,858,842	2,434	13,687,400
	Phase-2	2,507,118	1,590	7,154,763
	year-2	109,460	57	115,400
Banke Total		9,475,420	4,081	20,957,563
Bardiya	Phase-1	3,220,946	2,917	14,724,009
	Phase-2	2,069,583	1,679	7,045,849
	year-2	156,726	138	177,051
Bardiya Total		5,447,255	4,734	21,946,909
Dang	Phase-1	4,855,442	2,983	11,824,518
	Phase-2	2,676,105	2,867	11,512,285
	year-2	71,712	96	69,514
Dang Total		7,603,259	5,946	23,406,317
Kailali	Phase-1	3,214,512	2,718	8,224,218
	Phase-2	3,622,576	2,455	13,598,429
Kanchanpur	Phase-1	1,860,729	1,261	5,251,278
	Phase-2	1,452,490	930	4,613,278
Kailali & Kanchanpur	year-2	136,055	174	122,224

Kailali & Kanchanpur Total		10,286,362	7,538	31,809,427
Surkhet	Phase-I	3,073,051	4,047	16,769,900
	Phase-2	2,097,532	4,560	7,835,780
	year-2	92,170	168	130,849
Surkhet Total		5,262,753	8,775	24,736,529
Grand Total		38,075,049	31,074	122,856,745

4.2 Economic analysis - total investment Vs total income

Caste/ethnicity	Phase-I		Phase-2		Total (Summary)		
	Total Investment	Total Income	Total Investment	Total Income	Total Investment	Total Income	Total Income %
Hill Brahmin/Chhetri	7,298,327	7,957,495	9,385,010	9,175,410	16,683,337	17,132,905	103%
Hill/Mountain Janajati	1,521,667	2,143,300	5,080,532	4,777,240	6,602,199	6,920,540	105%
Newar			9,000	17,000	9,000	17,000	189%
Hill Dalit	3,529,928	3,930,140	5,163,335	5,804,116	8,693,263	9,734,256	112%
Terai/Madheshi Brahmin/Rajput	65,300	45,500	662,360	936,400	727,660	981,900	135%
Terai Janajati/Adivasi	8,237,969	8,950,355	11,751,111	11,445,087	19,989,080	20,395,442	102%
Terai/Madheshi Other Caste	280,450	238,500	801,050	1,257,900	1,081,500	1,496,400	138%
Terai/Madheshi Dalit	100,500	81,100	1,250,610	2,050,400	1,351,110	2,131,500	158%
Religious Minorities	75,350	96,400	742,200	1,107,100	817,550	1,203,500	147%
Others	96,300	376,400			96,300	376,400	391%
Total	21,205,791	23,819,190	34,845,208	36,570,653	56,050,999	60,389,843	108%
Net Profit	2,613,399		1,725,445		4,338,844		

3.3 Enterprises by type

Types of Enterprises	Phase-I (Year 2014/015)	Phase-2 (Year 2016/017)	% change
Agriculture	115	608	428.70

Animal Husbandry	223	716	221.08
Cottage & Small Industry	19	33	73.68
Doke business	8	3	-62.50
Hotel and fast food	5	17	240.00
Medical Shop		2	-
Others	4	131	3175.00
Poultry Farming	61	321	426.23
Retail and small shop	127	312	145.67
Tailoring	15	47	213.33
Tea & Snacks shop	17	13	-23.53
Total	594	2203	270.88

APPENDIX 5: STATUS OF SB IMPLEMENTED MOBILE SERVICES AS OF JANUARY 2018

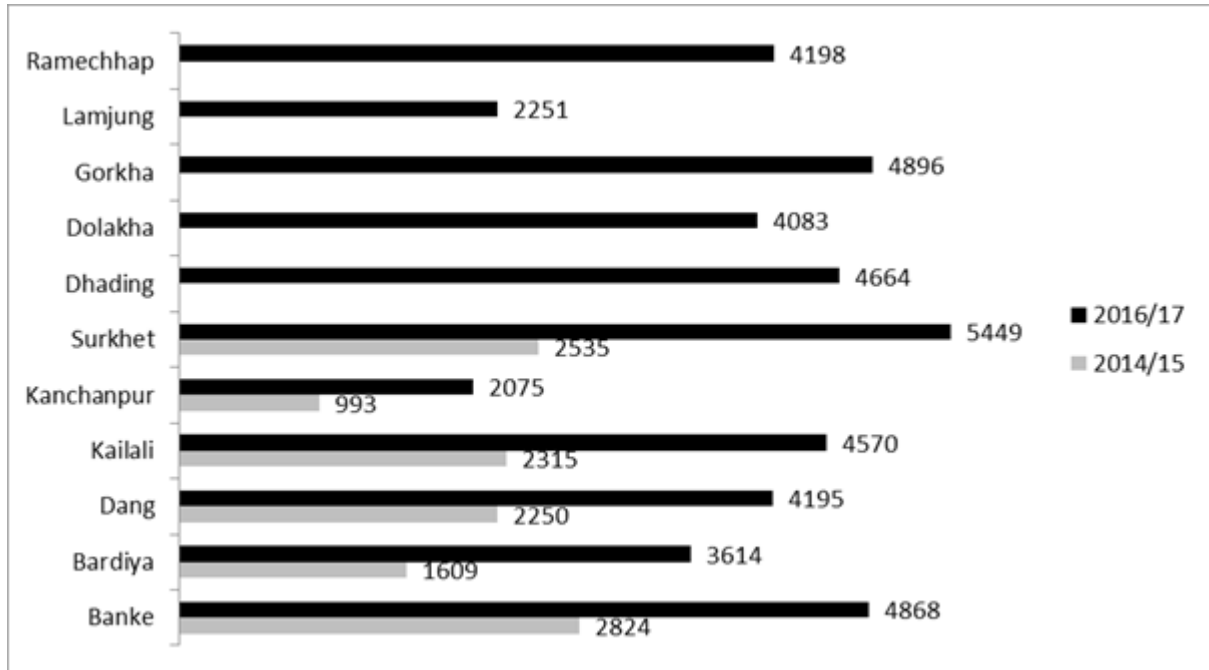
Title of Event	District	# of event	F	M	Total	Hill Brahmin/Chhetri	Hill/Mountain Janajati	Newar	Hill Dalit	Terai/Madheshi Brahmin/Rajput	Terai Janajati/Adivasi	Terai/Madheshi Other Caste	Terai/Madheshi Dalit	Religious Minorities	Others	Total
Integrated Mobile Service Camp	Banke	1	303	253	556	12	2	0	2	0	5	242	97	196	0	556
	Bardiya	3	1361	834	2195	942	172	1	486	0	564	30	0	0	0	2195
	Dhading	1	1220	1078	2298	312	1775	10	201	0	0	0	0	0	0	2298
	Dolakha	1	719	655	1374	300	902	100	69	3	0	0	0	0	0	1374
	Gorkha	3	1464	1419	2883	933	1147	485	313	0	1	1	0	3	0	2883
	Kailali	1	910	814	1724	1182	330	0	212	0	0	0	0	0	0	1724
	Lamjung	1	703	715	1418	688	619	9	98	0	0	0	0	4	0	1418
	Makwanpur	1	418	756	1174	31	1114	2	26	0	0	1	0	0	0	1174
	Surkhet	1	319	523	842	411	60	2	369	0	0	0	0	0	0	842
	Total IMSC	13	7417	7047	14464	4811	6121	609	1776	3	570	274	97	203	0	14464
Sectoral Mobile	Banke	4	478	527	1005	226	67	0	138	38	180	175	76	105	0	1005
	Bardiya	1	300	143	443	136	14	1	48	0	244	0	0	0	0	443

Service Camp	Dang	15	1750	1667	3417	706	850	5	225	5	1523	81	0	22	0	3417
	Dhading	18	1132	666	1798	766	504	240	287	0	0	0	0	1	0	1798
	Dolakha	18	1860	811	2671	989	1341	93	244	4	0	0	0	0	0	2671
	Gorkha	19	1409	1012	2421	1004	603	476	283	0	0	1	0	54	0	2421
	Kailali	18	2743	831	3574	1333	587	0	386	0	1268	0	0	0	0	3574
	Lamjung	18	1232	855	2087	221	1665	19	182	0	0	0	0	0	0	2087
	Makwanpur	4	396	119	515	256	237	2	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	515
	Ramechhap	18	1935	821	2756	1076	1241	204	229	6	0	0	0	0	0	2756
	Surkhet	12	1114	490	1604	903	338	1	359	0	1	0	2	0	0	1604
	Total SMSC	145	14349	7942	22291	7616	7447	1041	2401	53	3216	257	78	182	0	22291
Grand Total		158	21766	14989	36755	12427	13568	1650	4177	56	3786	531	175	385	0	36755

APPENDIX 6: QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

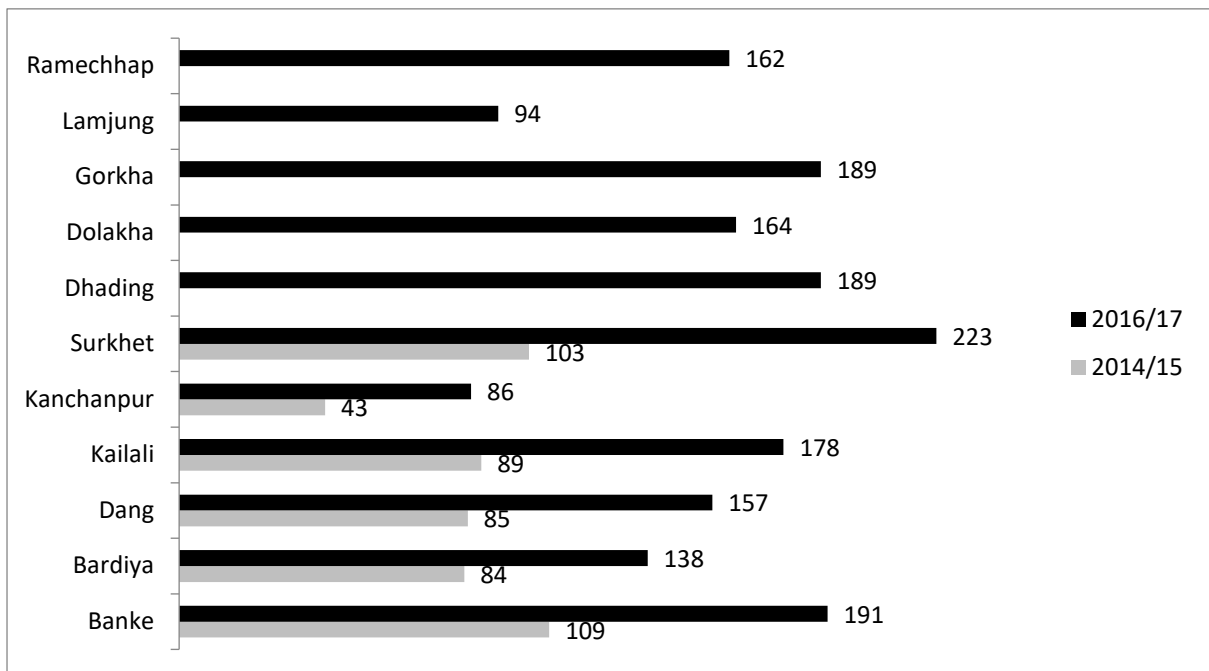
EVIDENCE OF INCREASED INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

Exhibit 1: WCF membership by district and year



Source: Sajhedari Bikaas, Sept 2017

Exhibit 2: WCF Coordinators by district and year



Source: Sajhedari Bikaas, Sept 2017

Exhibit 3: VDC Budgets**A. Titihiriya VDC (Banke)**

Target group	2014-15	Share in annual budget (in %)	2016-17	Share in annual budget (in %)
Women targeted	180,640	8.64	640,000	9.30
Other targeted*	469,640	22.47	2,240,000	32.54
Non-targeted	1,439,720	68.89	4,004,000	58.16
Total	2,090,000	100.00	6,884,000	100.00

Note: *Children, Janajati, Dalit, persons with disabilities, youth, backward class, elder people

B. Babiya Chaur VDC (Banke)

Target group	2014-15	Share in annual budget (in %)	2016-17	Share in annual budget (in %)
Women targeted	276,812	9.07	643,176	9.38
Other targeted*	692,032	22.68	1,607,940	23.45
Non-targeted	2,082,156	68.25	4,604,884	67.17
Total	3,051,000	100.00	6,856,000	100.00

Note: *Children, Dalit, Janajati, HIV affected, persons with disabilities, elder people

C. Hasuliya VDC (Kailali)

Target groups	2015-16	Share in annual budget (in %)	2017-18	Share in annual budget (in %)
Women-targeted#	341,128	3.05	840,000	7.00
Other targeted*	1,193,946	10.68	1,890,000	15.76
Non-targeted	9,642,926	86.27	9,266,000	77.24
Total	11,178,000	100.00	11,996,000	100.00

FY 17/18: #Including budget allocated for single women,

* Children, Adibasi Janajati, individuals with disabilities, Dalit, elder citizen, freed kamaiya

Exhibit 4: Accountability Interventions Supported by SB (2015-2017)

Types of Activities	Year 2015	Year 2016	2017
Public Audit	62	60	104
Public Hearing	42	49	5

Social Audit*	0	2	18
Citizen's Charter	58	30	24
Hoardings	62	110	96
Citizen Score Cards	42	50	5
Grand Total	266	301	252

Exhibit 5: Social Actions by LDAGs

Description	Oct 2015-Sep 2016	Oct 2016-July 2017
Rally (Against GBV/child marriage, menstrual exclusion, supporting vital registration etc.)	1	159
Interaction (Local election/GBV)	5	25
Campaign (Door to door /Street drama)	5	31
Others (Tree plantation, village cleanliness etc)	47	31
Total	58	246

Exhibit 6: Cases Registered in, and Settled by CMCs**CMCs: Registered and Settled Cases, by Type of Case**

Type of Conflict	Number of registered cases	% of registered cases settled
Inter-personal conflict	12,594 (76% of total)	81.55
Gender-based violence	2,167 (13% of total)	76.19
Resource-based conflict	1,646 (10% of total)	76.37
Identity-based conflict	86 (0.5% of total)	63.95
Caste-based conflict	8	87.50
Political conflict	2	100.00
Total	16,503	80.25

Source: Sajhedari Bikaas, August 2017.

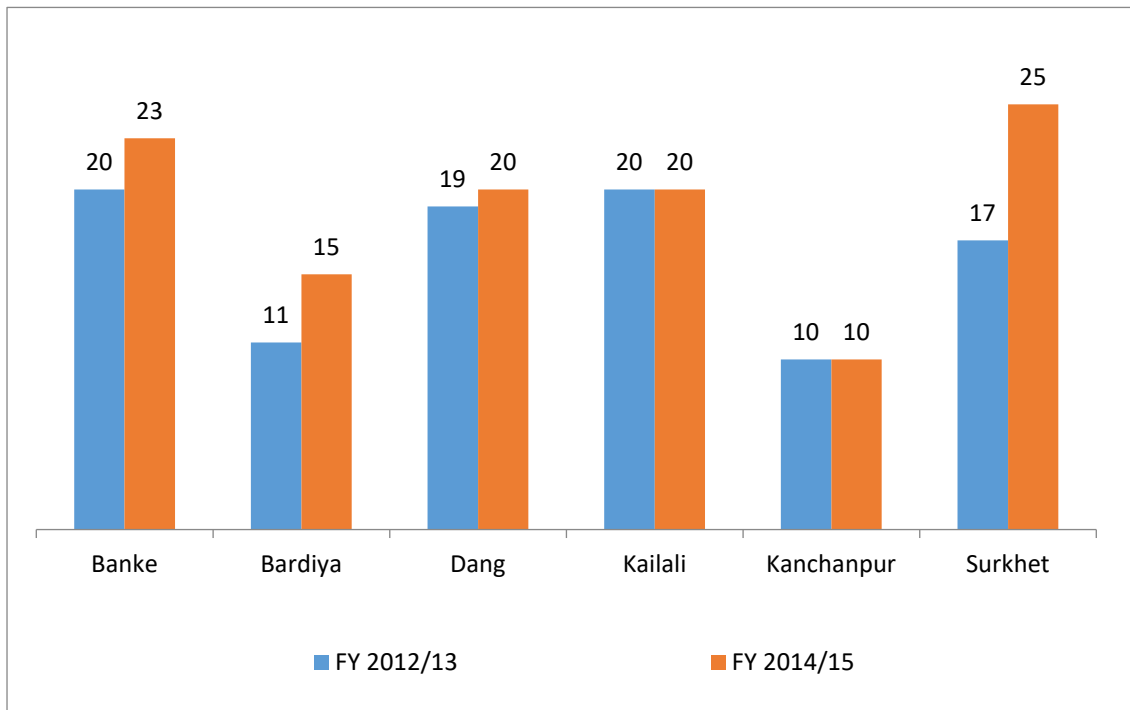
CMCs: Registered and Settled Cases, by Caste or Ethnicity of First Disputants

Caste	Registered Cases	Settled cases	% of registered cases settled
Hill Brahmin/Chhetri	4,422	3,535	79.94
Hill Dalit	2,744	2,294	83.60

Hill/Mountain Janajati	1,291	1,079	83.58
Newar	93	66	70.97
Others	150	122	81.33
Religious Minorities	628	476	75.80
Terai Janajati/Adivasi	4,967	3,983	80.19
Terai Madheshi Brahmin/Rajput	138	85	61.59
Terai/Madheshi Dalit	745	589	79.06
Terai/Madheshi Other Caste	1,310	1,006	76.79
Mixed	15	8	53.33
Total	16,503	13,243	80.25

Source: Sajhedari Bikaas, August 2017.

Exhibit 7: Number Of VDCs That Met Mcpm Performance Standards In Fy 2012-13 And Fy 2014-15



Source: Sajhedari Bikaas, August 2017

Exhibit 8: SB Assistance By Type Of Support And Level Of Beneficiary Units

Type of Support	District	Municipality	VDC
-----------------	----------	--------------	-----

Internal Revenue Assessment and Projection (IRAP)	-	10	90
Village/Municipal Profile	-	7	96
Periodic District Development Plan (PDDP)	4		
Local Disaster Risk Management Plan (LDRMP)			9

Vital Event Registration (VER)	-	Training of 32 regional trainers.
	-	5 district-level training events attended by a total of 112 local entities.
Accounting software	-	23 regional trainers trained in accounting software.
	-	Staff of 159 VDCs trained in accounting software.
	-	59 VDCs provided with fully operationalized software.
Equipment	-	Equipment (computers, printers, photocopy and fax machines, furniture, etc.) provided to 110 local bodies.

Source: Sajhedari Bikaas, August 2017

Exhibit 9: Content of Training to Local-level Units and Staff

Training	Number of Participants: 2014	Number of Participants 2016
Social accountability training to VSMC/MSMC	1845	3756
Social mobilization training to VSMC/MSMC	37	1243
Orientation of IPFC staff on linkage between PVDP and annual plans	0	1252
Other orientation of IPFC staff	0	1726
VER-related training	0	32
VDC accounting software refresher training	0	24
Total	1882	8033

Source: Sajhedari Bikaas, Aug 2017

Exhibit 10: Beneficiaries From Mobile Service Camps By Type And Year

Type	2015	2016	2017	Total
Soil test	171	1068		1239

Integrated camp		10043	3506	13549
Vegetable & soil test		320		320
Reproductive health		1794	1153	2947
Dental Services		621	293	914
Dental & reproductive health			319	319
Eye services		5624	105	5729
Reconstruction grant registration		96		96
Veterinary services		734	661	1395
Disabled persons and senior citizens card distribution		101		101
General health services		2876	2806	5682
Citizenship and senior citizens card distribution; seed distribution			313	313
VER campaigns			293	293
Total	171	23277	9449	32897

Source: Sajhedari Bikaas, August 2017.

APPENDIX 7: DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

The methodology discussed in the design document outlines the different instruments to be used for data collection such as secondary document review, semi-structured interviews, meetings, consultation workshops, focus group discussions and individual success stories along-with a gender analysis tool. The instruments and tools are detailed below with some broad guidance for data collection.

GUIDELINES FOR DATA COLLECTION

At the national level, respondents will include, , (CeLLRD, Equal Access, Youth Initiative) and National Reconstruction Authority (NRA).

The interview guides provided below are guidance for the conversations to be conducted with different stakeholders. These are not questionnaires and hence need to be used flexibly to frame discussions. The conversation can flow differently than what is given below but the study team members will need to probe for more in-depth responses or guide the conversation to make sure that all topics on the outline are covered. The language would have to be Nepali or the local language of the group.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

The key objective of the different conversations is to identify achievements/accomplishments and factors of success, limitations, lessons, for SB's objectives regarding conflict mitigation, access to

resources, inclusive development, effective local bodies and way forward for effective local governance.

National level

These questions are applicable for all interviews at the national level but would need to be specified to the responsibilities of the individual/office being interviewed and adapted to that specific theme (e.g. conflict mitigation, inclusive development, local governance, GESI).

1. What were the key achievements of SB? What contributed to these achievements?
2. What were the key limitations of SB? What caused these limitations?
3. How has the local capacity to resolve conflicts improved/not improved? Provide reasons for your assessment.
4. How successful has been the effort to improve participation in planning processes of women, poor and the excluded? How has it resulted in directing resources towards their priorities?
5. Can you give some examples of how service providers and local government have become more responsive towards citizens, especially women, poor and the excluded?
6. What are the key lessons for each of the themes?

District and Ward (of former VDC/Municipality) level:

Questions to be covered during meetings with Local Government Bodies/Line Agency:

1. What was the support you received from SB?
2. How did it assist you in your work and strengthen your work performance?
3. How were issues prioritised for planning? What was the process followed? How were the community level priorities, especially of women, poor, excluded and youth identified and addressed?
4. Can you give some examples of how you (i.e. the local government) has become more responsive towards citizens, especially women, poor and the excluded?
5. Did the activity help resolve disputes? If yes how? Did the activity enable women, poor and the excluded to have better access to government budget and programs? (provide reasons for your assessment)
6. In the new local government context, what kind of interventions will be most helpful for strengthening local governance and for improving citizen -government partnerships?

Local (district) Implementing partners:

1. What was the focus of your activity in SB? What is your assessment - what was done well, what could be improved (provide reasons)
2. Conflict Mitigation related:
 - i. How effective were the CMCs in resolving the disputes in your community? What increased/decreased effectiveness. Have the disputes re-occurred?
 - ii. What is the process used for resolving disputes? What were the strengths and areas of improvement in the process?

- iii. How well were issues of women, poor and the excluded addressed in the dispute resolution process?
 - iv. How were cases of violence against women dealt with?
 - v. How confident are you that the CMCs will survive and be effective in future? (provide reasons)
3. Local Planning and Accountability related:
- i. How did you facilitate the prioritization of needs by WCFs? What were the strengths and challenges?
 - ii. What processes did you support for WCFs to participate in the planning processes of the VDCs? What were the strengths and challenges of such processes?
 - iii. How have the different social audits, public hearings and public audits helped women, poor and the excluded in understanding better about the funds distributed by the local government? What were the strengths and challenges of using such accountability tools?
 - iv. How have these tools supported local government bodies to become more accountable? What were the strengths and challenges?
4. Recovery Work related:
- i. How were the priorities of the affected populations identified?
 - ii. What measures were adopted to ensure that specific issues of women, poor and the excluded were also addressed in the recovery support?
 - iii. What were the strengths and challenges in working on recovery issues?

Local Project Staff

- 1. What have been the achievements of Sajhedari and what were its limitations?
- 2. What supported you in implementing your work responsibilities and what constrained you?
- 3. How relevant and effective were Sajhedari's activities for addressing the issues of women, poor and the excluded?
- 4. What should be the focus in future for local governance programs?

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Ward Citizen Fora

- 1. What is the support Sajhedari Bikaas has provided you? How has it supported you to prioritize better for the development of women, poor and the excluded in your ward/VDC/Municipality?
- 2. How have you influenced the planning process of your VDC?
- 3. What successes did you achieve? What were your failures?
- 4. What should be done and by whom so that the needs of women, poor and the excluded are addressed by local governments in future?

Conflict Mediation Centres (CMC)

1. How was Sajhedari Bikaas support helpful in your work in resolving disputes? (Follow up q: How was your capacity strengthened by SB? What was most useful and why?)
2. How many disputes have you resolved? Which were easier to resolve, which more difficult and why?
3. How did you resolve the disputes? Who were involved (Follow up question: how inclusive was the process? How empowering was the process for the parties involved?)
4. How did you ensure that these disputes would not occur again?
5. What has to be done so that the needs of women, poor and the excluded are addressed in dispute resolutions in future?

WORTH group:

1. What activities did you undertake under this program?
2. How have these supported your growth and development? in terms of employment, income? in terms of recognition by community, increased role in community level decisions, social status? in your home (e.g. any changes in heavy work burden, limited mobility, limited access to resources, limited role in decision making, discriminatory social practices, practices regarding violence against women)?
3. Have there been any changes in caste/ethnicity based discriminatory practices due to your work through these WORTH groups since Sajhedari started?

SSIP Users Group

1. What activities did you undertake under this program?
2. How have these supported you?
3. What were the achievements and areas of improvement?

Listeners Group

1. What activities did you undertake under this program?
2. How have these supported you?
3. What were the achievements and areas of improvement?

FORMAT FOR FGD NOTES

Ward:

Number of participants: total:

- by caste/ethnicity
- by sex

Themes of Discussion:

- Summary of the findings (as result of consensus among the participants) (disaggregated by caste/ethnicity and sex, where applicable)

- Issues and concerns raised by the participants (disaggregated by caste/ethnicity and sex, where applicable):
- Suggestions made by the participants:
- Observations and impressions:

INFORMATION COMPILATION NOTES

1. Information will be organized by district, by ward (VDC/municipality), and by type of information collected (KII, FGD). Each district and former VDC/municipality will have unique code. KII will be coded as 1, FGDs will be 2 and Workshops 3.
2. Disaggregated information (by caste/ethnicity and by sex) of participants in KII and in FGD will be prepared separately. Each participant either in KII or in FGD will have unique ID.
3. All the questions will have unique identification.
4. Qualitative information will be browsed and responses to a question will be grouped.
5. Required number of tables will be designed in the MS-Access Database. For example, district name, VDC names, KII participants, FGD participants, list of caste/ethnicity. All the tables will be in relationship. For example, VDC name will have relationship with district name; and participants name will have relationship with caste/ethnicity and sex

GUIDE FOR CONSULTATION WORKSHOP IN KATHMANDU

Objectives and Agenda of consultation meeting with SB Personnel and Implementing Partners in Kathmandu (2 hours)

Objective:

- Share documents and other sources of information
- Provide inputs for field work site selection based on identified criteria
- Identify achievements and limitations of SB in achieving the 4 objectives and contributing factors
- Share learning for future local governance activities

Agenda

- Suggestions regarding documents and field work: 30'
- Group work: Achievement/limitations and contributing factors, Presentation and discussion:: 60'
- Plenary discussion: Suggestions for donors, government and civil society for future: 30'

GUIDE FOR CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS AT DISTRICT LEVEL

There will be two consultation workshops per district: a. a joint one with social mobilizers and community mediators; b. one with local government officials, civil society, representative organizations, implementing agencies and SB personnel (15-20 participants). The objective of the workshop with social mobilizers and community mediators would be to discuss in detail with them about their experiences with the program, their achievements and challenges and future steps. The workshop with local government officials, civil society representatives and program personnel will provide insights about the strengths and areas of improvement of SB and recommendations for future local governance activities.

AGENDA OF CONSULTATION WORKSHOPS

Timings will be finalised as per field schedule

Consultation Workshop with Social Mobilizers and Community Mediators

Time	Topic	Methodology
	Tea and registration	
5'	Welcome, Introduction, Objective, Agenda	Plenary
30'	Achievements and Challenges as social mobilizers and community mediators of Sajhedari Bikaas	Group work: Group 1: Social Mobilizers; Group 2: Community Mediators Group 1: What were the key activities that were implemented by social mobilizers? What were the achievements of social mobilizers and what were the challenges? Group 2: What were the key activities that were implemented by community mediators? What were the achievements of community mediators and what were the challenges?
30'		Presentation and discussion
30'	Issues and lessons from Sajhedari Bikaas	Group work: Participants to be grouped depending on the number Group 1: What are the barriers of women, poor and people from excluded groups that Sajhedari Bikaas addressed to enable them to participate in planning processes, resolve disputes and increase income? Group 2: What are the good practices and lessons of Sajhedari Bikaas for addressing local governance, dispute resolution and GESI? Group 3: Based on Sajhedari Bikaas experience, what needs to be done in future for effective local governance by a. Government, b. Donors, c. Civil society
30'		Plenary presentation and discussion
	Closing, Tea and snacks	

Workshop with local government officials, civil society and representative organizations

Time	Topic	Methodology
	Tea and registration	
5'	Welcome, Introduction, Objective, Agenda	Plenary
30'	Impact of Sajhedari Bikaas	Plenary discussion: How well did Sajhedari Bikaas address issues of inclusive planning, dispute resolution, addressing needs of women, poor and the excluded, supporting livelihood options? What factors supported it, what constrained it?
30'	Lessons from Sajhedari Bikaas	Group work: Participants to be grouped into 2:

		Group 1: How has Sajhedari supported local government officials to be more responsive to people's requirements? Group 2: What are the good practices and lessons of Sajhedari Bikaas for addressing local governance and GESI? Group 3: Based on Sajhedari Bikaas experience, what needs to be done in future for effective local governance by a. Government, b. Donors, c. Civil society
30'		Plenary presentation and discussion
	Closing, Tea and snacks	

GUIDE FOR GENDER RELATIONS PROFILE

Visual profiles will be used to facilitate discussion regarding who does the labour, who has access and who has decision making authority regarding selected variables (see below). The shifts after the project on existing gender relations will be intensively discussed.

Training	Participation in local planning
Access to Finance	Access to radio/FM
Access to credit/banks	Participation in accountability mechanisms (e.g. social audit, public hearing, Public Audit)
Enterprise/Income generating work	Household work
Income	Education of children
Participation in committees/ meetings	Violence against women (physical , verbal, emotional abuse)

GENDER RELATIONS PROFILE VARIABLES

1. *Process:* Facilitate a discussion in a group of 10-12 women/men (if possible separately, also social groups separately); ask them to identify a facilitator from within their group, guide them to discuss who does the labor, has access, who makes the final decision, who has some influence on the decisions (as relevant for each topic), then the facilitator from within the group will put the bindi accordingly in the column; the first step is to discuss about the prevalent general practice in their particular ward/VDC/community, then at the end of the discussion, ask if there are caste/ethnic differences, if yes what and then also ask about income differences. *Note: Have sets of three coloured bindis for labour, access and control markings; the size and number of bindis can be used to indicate who does more or less or has more or less control/power.*
2. Ask what shifts have occurred due to the program and note the responses. Probe deeply where there have been changes to identify specific examples and factors leading to such changes
3. In the end guide them to look at the different colors and reflect on who is doing more labor, what kind, who has access to what and who is making the decisions. This leaves them with the points of analysis so that they can themselves reflect on the inequalities, if any in the existing situation. The full discussion should not take more than an hour to an hour and a half.

Gender Relations: Labour (L), Access (A) and Control (C) Profile

Variables	Labour, Access and Control Dimensions	Women	Men
Training (SB related training)	a (access): who gets the training? What training comes to women, what comes to men? c (control): who decides what training should go to whom?		
Access to Finance	a (access): who gets the credit/loan? c (control): who (which family member) decides who should get the credit/loan? c (control): who (which family member) decides about the amount of funds to be taken?		
Access to credit/banks	a (access) who has access to banks; c (control) who decides that you can take loan from bank?		
Enterprise/Income generating work	L (labour) who does the work related with the enterprise/IGA? c (control): who decides about the enterprise/IGA (selection of enterprise/IGA, decisions regarding costing/pricing/raw materials etc);		
Income	c (control): who decides about the income from the enterprise/IGA?		
Participation in committees/ meetings	a (access) who is member of committee/participates in meeting; c (control) who decides about membership/participation in meetings [what position of women/men in committees]		
Participation in local planning	a (access) who participates in local planning processes; c (control) who decides who can participate in the planning processed?		
Access to radio/FM	a (access) who is able to listen to programs from radio and FM? c (control) who decides who should hear what?		
Participation in accountability mechanisms (e.g. social audit, public hearing, Public Audit)	a (access) who has access to such programs? c (control) who decides who can participate in what and when		
Household work	I (labour) who does cleaning, cooking, caring, HH work; c (control) who decides on who should do what work		
Education of children	a (access): who (girl, boy) has access to what kind of educational opportunity; c(control) who decides about education of the children		
Violence against women (physical , verbal, emotional abuse)	c (control) Who is violent against women and girls		

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SAJHEDARI-STAFF**Objective of the guide and how to approach it**

This guide was designed to facilitate semi-structured interviews with Pact's senior and implementing staff, as well as with those at USAID/Nepal who are, or were, most directly involved with the Sajhedari Bikaas activity (including the previous and current COR and the M&E officer).

The questions below are intended to provide the general structure for those interviews and key points to cover during them. It is understood that not all questions can be asked during a single

interview. The guide is not intended to become a straightjacket, and the questions should not interfere with the flow of the conversation or the thought process of the respondents. Thus, for instance, one or more of the questions or follow-up questions below may need to be adjusted to take into consideration the answer that has been given to a previous question. In a few instances, one of the follow-up questions may need to be skipped if the information it is intended to generate already has been obtained.

Suggested wording to explain the context and purpose of the interview (for Sajhedari staff)

“Thank you very much for making time to meet with us and answer our questions about Sajhedari.

The Mission has asked to take a look at the entire life of the project in order to capture a few key elements:

- First, the main achievements of Sajhedari, and the reasons for those achievements.
- Second, the challenges that the project encountered, and how (and how effectively) it addressed those challenges.
- Third, the main limitations or shortcomings of Sajhedari (in other words, where did the project fall short of meeting its objectives, and why?).
- And fourth, the main lessons that can be derived from Sajhedari’s experience, particularly as they relate to the conceptualization, design, and implementation of local-governance activities in Nepal.

The overall objective of the evaluation is to gather evidence to inform USAID’s local- governance activities in Nepal going forward. The goal of our interview with you today is to hear your perspective on achievements and challenges, as well as your advice on how we can make this evaluation useful to you. Your feedback also will help us finalize the design for this evaluation.

With that in mind, we’ll start this interview with a few general questions, and then we’ll move on to more specific ones related to each of the project’s four key objectives. But before we begin, do you have any questions for us?”

I. GENERAL QUESTIONS

Question 1. What do you see as the project’s greatest accomplishments to date? Or, to put it slightly differently, in which areas, or in which main respects, was the project was most successful?

Follow up question: Can you point to specific, tangible evidence of success in the areas you have identified? (What leads you to conclude the project was particularly successful in those areas?)

Question 2. What do you think were the key factors that made possible the successes you have identified?

Follow up question: In accounting for the successes you have identified, what roles did project approach, project management and implementation, and conditions on the ground play? Which of those factors was most critical in your view (design/approach, implementation, or conditions on the ground)?

Question 3: As you know, Sajhedari’s objectives were in four key areas: a) Conflict mitigation; b) Access to resources; c) Inclusive development; and d) Effective local bodies. We will discuss each of these objectives later, but out of those four objectives can you identify already one or two in which you feel Sajhedari ended up being particularly effective?

Follow up question: On what evidence do you base that assessment?

Follow up question: What made Sahjedari more effective in that particular area (or in those two areas)?

Question 4. Overall, which aspects of project design, management, or implementation do you think were most successful, and why?

Question 5. We just discussed some of the main accomplishments of the project, and the factors behind them. I'd like us now to conduct the same analysis with regard to areas in which, in your view, the project came short of achieving one or more of its goals. Can you identify two such areas? Can you provide specific examples or illustrations of shortcomings? And can you speak to the factors, or particular combination of factors, that accounted for them?

So, I am asking you a question with three components: areas or instances in which the project came short; evidence or illustration of such shortcomings or limitations; and the main reasons for them.

Follow up question: Which of those limitations and setbacks can be traced back to factors directly related to Sahjedari (for instance, factors having to do with project design, approach, or implementation), and which ones can be ascribed to factors beyond Sahjedari's control? In both cases, please be as specific as you can regarding the nature of the factors involved, and how they impacted Sahjedari.

Question 6. Of the four key objectives of Sahjedari, which one was most disappointing in terms of results?

Follow up question: On what evidence do you base your conclusion that Sahjedari was least effective in [mention area identified]?

Follow up question: What happened? What went wrong?

[Respondent may need to be pressed on whether the main problems had to do with aspects of project design or conceptualization, project management or implementation, or particular obstacles that emerged]

Question 7. Overall, which aspects of project design, management, or implementation were least successful, and why?

Question 8. Based on your experience with Sahjedari, what should practitioners be particularly mindful of when they are tasked with designing or implementing local-governance support programs for countries with poor or absent formal institutions of governance at the local level?

[Follow up with clarification / elaboration: can you think of particular lessons, guiding principles, and dos or don'ts? Particular approaches or interventions that you would recommend, or that you would advise avoiding? Specific dangers or opportunities to which one should be alert?]

Question 9. Do you have specific evidence of the gains to which Sahjedari contributed in non-DG sectors (such as health and education)?

Follow-up question: Which approaches or interventions were particularly effective in generating such cross-sectoral benefits?

II. QUESTIONS ON OBJECTIVE A (CONFLICT MITIGATION).

I now am going to ask you questions that relate specifically to Sahjedari's conflict mitigation objective (Objective A). I then will do the same for Objectives B, C and D, and then we will wrap up the interview.

Question 1. Which approaches and interventions were most effective in addressing the causes and consequences of conflict at the local level? What specifically made them effective?

Question 2. Which particular types of local development interventions proved particularly effective at addressing the root causes of conflict, or at facilitating local dispute resolution? Why?

Question 3. Which approaches and interventions were least effective with regard to addressing the causes and consequences of conflict at the local level? Why?

Question 4. What were the most serious obstacles that interfered with the project's conflict mitigation efforts? Can you provide specific examples or illustrations?

Question 5. What were the most effective approaches and interventions that Sajhedari developed to help communities resolve or prevent disputes at the local level? What specifically made them effective?

Question 6. How did efforts to involve youth, women, and members of marginalized communities contribute to the conflict mitigation objective? Can you provide specific examples?

Question 7. What were some of the most effective mechanisms that Sajhedari was able to institutionalize to prevent conflict or facilitate dispute resolution at the local level? Which approaches were particularly effective in this regard, and why?

Question 8. Overall, do you think that Sajhedari was relatively more effective at facilitating dispute resolution, or at addressing the root causes of such conflicts?

Follow up question: Can you provide specific examples?

Follow up question: Why was Sajhedari more effective at [end question so as to reflect respondent's answer to Question 8]?

III. QUESTIONS ON OBJECTIVE B (ACCESS TO RESOURCES).

Question 1. What were the most effective approaches and interventions that Sajhedari used to help communities develop more inclusive planning processes? What specifically made those approaches and interventions effective?

Question 2. What were some of the most significant obstacles Sajhedari encountered in its efforts to help communities develop more inclusive planning processes?

Follow-up question: Can you provide specific examples?

Follow-up question: How did Sajhedari try to go around or mitigate those obstacles?

Question 3. How effective overall was Sajhedari in its efforts to help CBOs receive or raise resources from local government and non-government sources?

Follow-up question: Which approaches and interventions were relatively more successful in this area?

Follow-up question: Can you provide specific examples?

Follow-up question: Which obstacles impeded Sajhedari's efforts to help CBOs receive or raise resources from local government and non-government sources?

Follow-up question: How did Sahjedari try to go around or mitigate those obstacles?

IV. QUESTION ON OBJECTIVE C (INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT).

Question 1. How effective overall do you think Sahjedari programming was with regard to increasing transparency of local funds administration?

Follow-up question: What were the most effective and the least effective approaches and interventions in that area, and why?

Follow up question: Can you provide specific examples?

Question 2. How effective do you think Sahjedari programming was with regard to making local-level decision making more inclusive?

Follow-up question: What were the most effective and the least effective approaches and interventions in that area, and why?

Follow up question: Can you provide specific examples

V. QUESTION ON OBJECTIVE D (EFFECTIVE LOCAL BODIES).

Question 1. What were both the main successes and the main limitations or shortcomings of Sajhedari programming with regard to increasing the ability of local officials and local government units to discharge their functions more effectively?

Follow up question: Can you provide specific examples of both achievements and limitations in this area?

Follow-up question: What contributed most to the successes, and what were some of the main reasons for the limitations and shortcomings in this area?

Question 2: How effective overall do you think Sajhedari programming was with regard to increasing collaboration between local government units and CBOs or CSOs in the identification of local development priorities?

Follow-up question: What were the most effective and the least effective approaches and interventions in that area, and why?

Follow up question: Can you provide specific examples of successful collaboration between local government units and CBOs/CSOs?

Question 3. How effective overall do you think Sajhedari programming was with regard to increasing the capacity of communities to engage in local government budgeting and planning processes?

Follow-up question: What were the most effective and the least effective approaches and interventions in that area, and why?

Follow up question: Can you provide specific examples or illustrations of interventions that increased the capacity of communities to engage in local government budgeting and planning processes?

CONCLUDING QUESTIONS

I have two final questions before we conclude this interview and I can thank you for your time, insights, and patience.

Question 1. How effective do you think Sajhedari programming was with regard to ensuring sustainability of the gains made by the project under all four key objectives (conflict mitigation;

improved capacity to access resources; ability of communities to implement inclusive development projects; and capacity of government units to function effectively)?

Follow-up question: Was it more successful at ensuring sustainability under one or more of those objectives? And, if so, why?

Question 2. Is there anything that we have not discussed yet that you think should be emphasized in our assessment of Sajhedari, or our broader effort to infer from Sajhedari's experience lessons for future local governance programming in Nepal?