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NITI SAMBAD “POLICY DIALOGUE” ACTIVITY

MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

FINAL REPORT

May 2020

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NIITI SAMBAD (“POLICY DIALOGUE”) MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

May 2020

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Automated Directives System
AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
AYON	Association of Youth Organizations Nepal
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CDCS	Country Development Cooperation Strategy
CEPPS	Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening
CPPD	Centre for Public Policy Dialogue
CPN-MC	Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist
CS:MAP	Civil Society: Mutual Accountability Project
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CY	Calendar year
DEO	District Election Office
DO	Development Objective
DRG	Democracy, Human Rights and Governance
ECN	Election Commission of Nepal
EDR-CMS	Election Dispute Resolution Case Management System
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FP	Federal Parliament of Nepal
FPS	Federal Parliament Secretariat
FSFN	Federal Socialist Forum Nepal
FPTP	First Past the Post
FY	Fiscal Year
GD	Group Discussion
GESI	Gender and Social Inclusion
GIS	Geographic Information System (or Services)
GON	Government of Nepal
HOR	House of Representatives
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IEIMS	Integrated Electoral Information Management System
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IP	Implementing Partner
IRI	International Republican Institute
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex
LOE	Level of Effort
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation

MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning
MP	Member of Parliament
NC	Nepali Congress (party)
NCP	Nepal Communist Party
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NDWA	Nepal Disabled Women Association
NEOC	National Election Observation Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NLS	Nepal Law Society
NRA	National Reconstruction Authority
NNDSWO	Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization
NVRF	Nepal Voters' Rights Forum
OPMCM	Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers (also referred to as the Prime Minister's Office, or PMO)
PA	Provincial Assembly
PR	Proportional Representation
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
PWG	Policy Working Group
RJPN	Rastriya Janata Party Nepal
THMs	Town Hall Meetings
SPPELP	Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes
UNDP-ESP	United Nations Development Programme- Electoral Support Project
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Team Members

James Fremming, Evaluation Team Leader
Indu Tuladhar, National Expert (GESI Specialist)
Ajaya Bhadra Khanal, National Expert (Politics and Governance Specialist)
Anamika Pradhan, Research Consultant
Puja Bharati, Research Consultant
Padam Bdr Bk (Sushil), Field Researcher
Sumana Devkota, Field Researcher
Srijana Giri, Field Researcher
Laxmi Thapa, Field Researcher
Nilam Bhandari, Field Researcher

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Kshitiz Shrestha, Evaluation Specialist (Senior Level)
Marc Shapiro, Chief of Party
Manorama Adhikari, Deputy Chief of Party

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ABSTRACT

The design for Niti Sambah (“Policy Dialogue”) identified three interrelated programmatic areas that best addressed Nepal’s political process needs: improving transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in the Federal Parliament (FP) and the respective provincial assemblies (PAs); supporting the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) to institutionalize electoral good practices; and capacitating political parties to function more effectively, inclusively, and responsively. Niti Sambah is at approximate midpoint in its life-of-project, implemented by the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS).

The purpose of this Mid-term Evaluation of Niti Sambah is to (a) determine whether the activity is on track to accomplish its intended goals and objectives, and (b) recommend course corrections if this is not the case and/or if adjustments should be made given Nepal’s state restructuring and political transition. The evaluation is also intended to assess the degree to which there is early evidence of sustainability of project results, and whether the approach appears to be advancing the Mission’s GESI policy.

Niti Sambah activities generally have been well received by counterparts and beneficiaries, and the evaluation team views the activity as on track, but with reservations. Trainings across the board could be longer and more detailed; more FP committees could be engaged, but overall resources appear to have been prudently invested and trusting work relationships have been established or reinforced. Within this context, Niti Sambah has faced notable obstacles in achieving planned results, particularly in the support to policy research and the provincial assemblies, but most of these have been externally based in the country context. Niti Sambah performance vis-à-vis formal targets has been mixed; in addition, the existing group of operable indicators is rather thin, with an emphasis on activity outputs rather than outcomes.

Marginalized communities’ political participation is given high priority in Niti Sambah activities. Relative to the level of need in Nepal among marginalized people for strengthened political voice, however, the scale of these activities is small. “Islands” of effective voice are identifiable in localities where NS has delivered assistance and support.

Some clear Niti Sambah achievements are evident in enhancing capacity of the ECN, but the remaining agenda for electoral reform and sustainable, effective electoral administration is multi-faceted and substantial.

Recommendations include for Niti Sambah to continue its main streams of current intervention, but to build upon experience by responding more assertively to the evolving federal context in Nepal. This includes, for example, increasing emphasis on civic education, assistance to national and provincial legislatures and supporting enhanced effectiveness of the Federal Parliament vis-à-vis delegated legislation. Niti Sambah should also collaborate with USAID in a systematic review of the activity’s performance indicators and sustainability benchmarks. USAID is called upon to join with other development partners in Nepal to scale up critical Niti Sambah interventions to maximize national-level impacts.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION PURPOSE

The purpose of this Mid-term Evaluation of Niti Sambad is to determine whether the activity is on track to accomplish its intended goals and objectives, and recommend course corrections if this is not the case and/or if adjustments should be made given Nepal's state restructuring and political transition. The evaluation also seeks to assess the degree to which there is early evidence of the sustainability of project results, and whether the approach appears to be advancing the Mission's gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) policy. The evaluation examines the effectiveness of approaches and relevance of Niti Sambad's development hypothesis and theory of change. Finally, the evaluation identifies lessons on how effective the project has remained in the changed political context and how it should go ahead in the remaining life of the project.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Since the end of Nepal's civil war in 2006, the country has made substantial progress in constructing a more orderly and inclusive society. The new constitution, adopted in September 2015, paves the way for a decentralized governance structure, which promises relief for the nation's many ethnic communities that have long been politically marginalized. Challenges remain, however, and improving the accountability and responsiveness of political institutions is needed to avert backsliding and a possible return to the political turmoil of the past.

In response to these challenges, USAID/Nepal worked together with the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), comprising the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to design the Niti Sambad ("Policy Dialogue") Activity, which commenced implementation in July 2017. The Niti Sambad design identified three interrelated programmatic areas that best addressed Nepal's needs: improving transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in the Federal Parliament (FP) and the respective provincial assemblies (PAs); supporting the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) to institutionalize good electoral practices; and capacitating political parties to function more effectively, inclusively, and responsively.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

- To what extent is the project on track to reach its intermediate results and overall goal? What are the primary obstacles and enabling factors (e.g., country context, adoption of USAID new strategic initiatives) in achieving intermediate results and the goal (programmatic and operational level)?
- How effective is the project in engaging women, youth, Dalits, and other marginalized groups to contribute to the development of national politics? Have other types of opportunities emerged as a result of the engagement of historically marginalized communities by Niti Sambad partners (NDI, IFES, and IRI)?

- Given the project is at the half-way point, are the current objectives of the project still relevant to Nepal's new federal political development? What new challenges to political development and electoral administration do you see, which are not addressed by the project? Have Niti Sambad partners made adjustments to the project based on the understanding of new challenges emerging?
- As a result of Niti Sambad's support, is the ECN's capacity reaching a point of becoming a credible election body, and is it showing signs of becoming less dependent on future U.S. Government (USG) or other foreign government support? If the ECN is still dependent on USG or other outside resources, do you see the ECN ever reaching a point in the future to become less dependent on donor support?
- Are the sustainability benchmarks of Niti Sambad progressing? If so, how? If not, what adjustments are required to ensure Niti Sambad is on track to meet these benchmarks?

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

EQ1: Is Niti Sambad On Track?

Findings: Niti Sambad is generally on track to achieving expected outcomes, particularly at the level of its five results. This basic finding holds, even though, from a classic performance management perspective, progress toward the Niti Sambad's objectives and results simply cannot clearly be determined, due to weaknesses in Niti Sambad's performance indicators and reporting of progress against performance targets. Some areas of Niti Sambad's work have been halted (e.g., collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister) or delayed (IRI assistance to provincial assemblies) due to local counterparts' initial resistance to receiving assistance or logistical challenges, such as recruitment of senior-level technical staff. This helps to explain the mixed picture vis-à-vis performance targets.

Conclusion: Niti Sambad activities generally have been well received by counterparts and beneficiaries, and the evaluation team views the activity as on track, but with reservations, as noted below. Training sessions across the board could be longer and more detailed; more Federal Parliament of Nepal (FP) committees could be engaged, but overall resources appear to have been prudently invested, and trusting work relationships have been established or reinforced.

Within this context, Niti Sambad has faced notable obstacles in achieving planned results, particularly in support of policy research and the provincial assemblies, but most of these have been externally based in the country context.

Niti Sambad's performance vis-à-vis formal targets has been mixed; additionally, the existing group of operable indicators is rather thin, with an emphasis on activity outputs rather than outcomes.

EQ2: How Effective Is the Project in Engaging Marginalized Groups?

Findings: Niti Sambad has made substantial efforts to increase the representation of citizens from all groups of society, such as women; youth; Dalits; persons with disabilities (PWDs); lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals; Madhesis; Janajatis; and other marginalized groups through partnerships with diverse organizations led by right holders groups. Interviews with Nepali experts, as well as leaders of Niti Sambad CSO partners, validate this overall finding. Likewise, Niti Sambad has supported various thematic forums and policy working groups that are targeted towards youth, women, and marginalized groups. These include, for example, the Youth Policy Forum, the Women's Policy Forum and Policy Working Group, and the Marginalized Groups Policy Forum. At the same time, Niti Sambad faces formidable challenges in the Nepal context, including "participation without power" by women and minorities, the need to more fully address intersectionality, the continued patriarchy in attitudes and practices, and a reduced focus on GESI at ECN.

Conclusion: Marginalized communities' political participation is given high priority in Niti Sambad activities. Members of these communities recognize and appreciate this and find the modes of engaging marginalized groups to be valuable. In addition, the overall portfolio of Niti Sambad activities fits the Nepali context of diversity and inclusion, and Niti Sambad's objectives appear to cohere with aspirations of marginalized populations.

Relative to the level of need in Nepal for marginalized people for a strengthened political voice, however, the scale of these activities is small. "Islands" of effective voice are identifiable in localities where Niti Sambad has delivered assistance and support.

Perspectives from marginalized populations need to be recognized more directly in the legislative agenda shared between Niti Sambad and Parliament.

Finally, building higher levels of quality of Niti Sambad engagement with marginalized populations calls for occasional high-level technical input to strengthen Niti Sambad approaches.

EQ3: Are the Current Objectives of the Project Still Relevant to Nepal's Political Development?

Findings: A substantial amount of evidence and multiple sources of expert opinion point to a risk (and early signs) of democratic backsliding in Nepal. Factors that may facilitate the process of backsliding include changes in the party landscape, the challenge of implementing federalism, the possibility of the ECN making insufficient progress in its democratic reform plans, the effects of influences from China and India, and continued internal social divisions. There are countervailing factors at work, however. Public perceptions about the constitution and democracy and implementation of federalism offer potential counters to backsliding.

Conclusion: Leveraging the mandates for, and public interest in, federalism can offer opportunities for countering anti-democratic trends. Ambitious expansion to voter and civic education, as well as a variety of actions to prevent foreign interference in elections, also are key areas to support democratic sustainability.

EQ4: What is the Status of ECN's Capacity?

Findings: Niti Sambad's assistance during the first half of the activity's period of performance has been effective and broadly appreciated by ECN leadership and staff as well as civil society organizations (CSOs) and local partners. While ECN is capable of continuing as a credible election administration body, the challenges it faces are substantial enough to warrant significant donor assistance for the next several years. ECN is constrained in its budget planning authority, staffing allocations and assignments, law enforcement, the timing of elections, information technology, and the extensiveness of civic and voter education.

Conclusion: Some clear Niti Sambad achievements are evident in enhancing ECN capacity, but the remaining agenda for electoral reform and sustainable, effective electoral administration is multi-faceted and substantial.

Niti Sambad likely cannot provide assistance at the levels ECN seeks and needs. A multi-donor effort may be required to meet these needs more fully.

EQ5: Are the Sustainability Benchmarks of Niti Sambad Progressing?

Findings: The Niti Sambad Sustainability Matrix includes 62 sustainability benchmarks. Each one is associated with a Niti Sambad activity and has one or more of the five Niti Sambad project years associated with its achievement. At the time of the evaluation, Niti Sambad had no documented analysis of the status of progress vis-à-vis the benchmarks. While the evaluation team notes areas of observed sustainability in some Niti Sambad activities (such as assistance to the integrated electoral law), on a more general plane, the activity's sustainability benchmarks do not provide information on this topic.

Conclusion: With direct reference to the formal Niti Sambad sustainability benchmarks (as described in its Sustainability Matrix), there is little to no evidence of progress. The benchmarks are mis-specified to be logically attached to the respective tasks that Niti Sambad engages in; completing a project activity is no guarantee for sustainable results. As we have noted, Niti Sambad plans to review and update its sustainability benchmarks. Pending this review, the design and measurement deficiencies with the benchmarks prohibit analysis of sustainability using the benchmarks as a source.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

For Niti Sambad:

1. Continue with the main streams of intervention and major counterparts and partners that it has been working with up to this point.
2. Discuss with USAID ways in which the project might increase its strategic focus, looking for opportunities to scale up some interventions that appear successful but quite limited in scale. These may include, for example, civic education, assistance to the FP and PAs on coordinative actions in support of federalism, and support to strengthening the FP's role in developing delegated legislation.
3. In collaboration with USAID, carry out a comprehensive review and update of Niti Sambad program performance indicators, with the comments in the evaluation report's Chapter 4 in

mind. Indicators need to cover the full range of Niti Sambad expected results, and performance targets need to be challenging but attainable.

4. Pilot expanded use of local (non-Nepali) languages, targeted to members of more remote communities, in delivery of voter education, civic education and electoral/political awareness programs.
5. Look for further opportunities to support broadened effective participation in political processes surrounding implementation of federalism. Some advancement has been made in this area through Niti Sambad's provincial- level constitutional dialogues in partnership with the FP Law, Justice, and Human Rights Committee, as well as the Supreme Court Bar Association. Further work could include, for example, engaging FP and PA members as well as local observers and activists on policy topics of shared interest.
6. Apply a more focused, strategic approach to political party support. New areas of emphasis could include enhancing civil society and political party linkages, supporting effective voice by marginalized people in parties, enhancing communications between parties and voters through mass communications and social media, and deepening of democratic processes in parties.
7. Before developing mechanisms for tracking progress on Niti Sambad sustainability benchmarks, review and revise the benchmarks themselves for (a) current relevance to Niti Sambad objectives and activities and (b) measurability.

For USAID:

1. In the spirit of maximally leveraging Niti Sambad strategic results, consult with Niti Sambad, other USAID implementing partners and other international development organizations to identify ways in which Niti Sambad achievements could be scaled up so that the impact of interventions might acquire greater national and structural significance. The scaling up may in fact call for more refined targeting of local partners, areas of geographical presence and beneficiary groups.
2. USAID should support Niti Sambad to closely review NS's performance indicators, targets and sustainability benchmarks to ensure they sufficiently capture intended results for the rest of the activity's period of performance.

The full list of recommendations may be found in Chapter Six of the report.

I. EVALUATION PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of this Mid-term Evaluation of Niti Sambad is to determine whether the activity is on track to accomplish its intended goals and objectives, and recommend course corrections if this is not the case and/or if adjustments should be made given Nepal's state restructuring and political transition. The evaluation also seeks to assess the degree to which there is early evidence of the sustainability of project results, and whether the approach appears to be advancing the Mission's gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) policy. The evaluation examines the effectiveness of approaches and relevance of Niti Sambad's development hypothesis and theory of change. Finally, the evaluation identifies lessons on how effective the project has remained in the changed political context and how it should go ahead in the remaining life of the project.

The mid-term evaluation will be primarily for the use of USAID and the CEPPS implementing partner in terms of identifying best practices and lessons learned to guide project implementation. USAID also will use evaluation findings and recommendations to inform future programming decisions.

The evaluation questions (EQs) addressed in this review appear in Table I.

Table I. Evaluation Questions and Sub-Questions

Evaluation Question	Sub-Question(s)
1. To what extent is the project on track to reach its intermediate results and overall goal?	1a. What are the primary obstacles and enabling factors (e.g., country context, adoption of USAID new strategic initiatives) in achieving intermediate results and the goal (programmatic and operational level)?
2. How effective is the project in engaging women, youth, Dalits, and other marginalized groups to contribute to the development of national politics?	2a. Have other types of opportunities emerged as a result of the engagement of historically marginalized communities by Niti Sambad partners (NDI, IFES, and IRI)?
3. Given the project is at the half-way point, are the current objectives of the project still relevant to Nepal's new federal political development?	3a. What are the new challenges to political development and electoral administration, which are not addressed by the project? 3b. Have Niti Sambad partners made adjustments to the project based on the understanding of new challenges emerging?
4. As a result of Niti Sambad's support, is the ECN's capacity reaching a point of becoming a credible election body, and is it showing signs of becoming less dependent on future USG or other foreign government support?	4a. If the ECN is still dependent on USG or other outside resources, what would support the ECN in reaching a point in the future to become less dependent on donor support?
5. Are the sustainability benchmarks of Niti Sambad progressing?	5a. If so, how? 5b. If not, what adjustments are required to ensure Niti Sambad is on track to meet these benchmarks?

Source: Evaluation Statement of Work (See Appendix A).

2. PROJECT BACKGROUND

Since the end of Nepal's civil war in 2006, the country has made substantial progress in constructing a more orderly and inclusive society. The new constitution, adopted in September 2015, paves the way for a decentralized governance structure, which promises relief for the nation's many ethnic communities that have long been marginalized politically. Challenges remain, however, and improving the accountability and responsiveness of political institutions is needed to avert backsliding and a possible return to the political turmoil of the past.

In response to these challenges, USAID/Nepal worked together with the Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS), comprising the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) to design the Niti Sambad ("Policy Dialogue") activity, which commenced implementation in July 2017. The Niti Sambad design identified three interrelated programmatic areas that best addressed Nepal's needs: improving transparency, inclusivity, and accountability in the Federal Parliament (FP) and the respective provincial assemblies (PAs); supporting the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) to institutionalize good electoral practices; and capacitating political parties to function more effectively, inclusively, and responsively.

PROJECT THEORY OF CHANGE AND RESULTS FRAMEWORK

The program was designed under the following overarching theory of change (TOC):

If Nepali electoral institutions institutionalize electoral best practices, *AND* political parties, legislators, and government officials improve and reform internal processes to ensure that all groups, especially women and other marginalized groups, are included in the governance process, *AND* women and other marginalized groups develop a stronger and more organized voice within political parties that can be used to provide feedback to their representatives in the federal parliament and national and local government bodies on decisions that affect their lives, *THEN* greater citizen participation and credible elections will increase the responsiveness of public officials and better enable citizens to hold elected officials accountable. This will be manifested in government policy outcomes that better respond to citizen concerns, political party programs and policies that reflect citizen needs, and increased citizen engagement in electoral and political processes.

The geographic scope for Niti Sambad is country-wide in general; some selected districts are focal areas for civic and voter education delivered by civil society organizations (CSOs). The activity's Results Framework appears in Table 2.

Table 2. Niti Sambad Results Framework

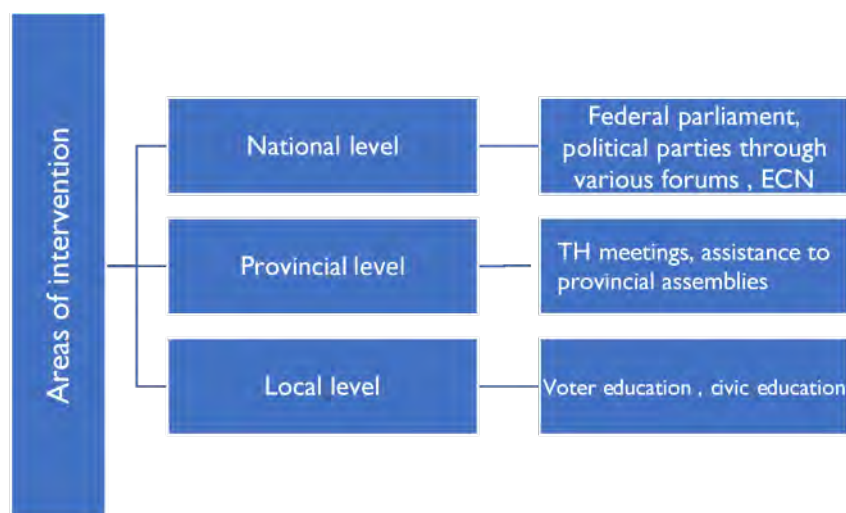
Objective 1: Nepal's political transition process supported to institutionalize a more inclusive, effective, and democratic political governance		
Result 1.1: Nepal's electoral system holds credible elections and is less dependent on donor support to continue carrying out its mandate of allowing citizens to exercise choice to select leaders peacefully and democratically at each level of government	Result 1.2: Members of Parliament and future legislative bodies are capable of improving policy, monitoring implementation, and more effective in national decision-making	Result 1.3: New political processes under the constitution's implementation are transparent and widely communicated within and outside the government
Objective 2: Nepal's political parties function more inclusively and transparently, and are more accountable to and representative of their constituents on national policy issues		
Result 2.1: Political parties adopt more democratic internal structures to enhance their accountability and integrity to Nepali voters in and between elections	Result 2.2: Political parties, including their candidates, articulate better-formed policy positions to enhance voters' opportunities to select and hold accountable their representatives in and between competitive elections	

Key Activities of the Project

At project midpoint, the three Niti Sambad implementing partner organizations have carried out a substantial number of activities, in collaboration with ECN, the legislative institutions, executive agencies, multiple political parties, several academic and civil society local partners, and many hundreds of Nepali counterparts and program participants.

Figure 1 is a graphic summary of the major areas of Niti Sambad's work to date. Note that this graphic is intended only to broadly illustrate Niti Sambad themes or activities, not to provide a comprehensive list. A more detailed list of project activities is provided in Appendix F.

Figure 1: Overview of the Niti Smbad Venues and Illustrative Themes



Source: Evaluation team summary from Niti Smbad project documents.

3. EVALUATION METHODS AND LIMITATIONS

The EQs call upon the evaluation team to apply predominantly qualitative (interview-based) data in answering them. Some quantitative data have been utilized in the analysis of Niti Smbad's performance against formal targets and of some elements of the country context for the program.

To answer the EQs presented in Section I above, the evaluation team collected primary data through key informant interviews (KIs) and group interviews [in formats such as focus group discussions (FGDs) or less structured group meetings]. This qualitative, field-based data was complemented by the review of available secondary data and program documents.

Gathering perceptions from a wide range of stakeholders facilitated informed insight into Niti Smbad's performance, challenges, and opportunities. The evaluation team actively sought multiple sources to provide data to inform responses to each of the respective EQs. This multi-method, multi-sourced approach builds reliability into evaluation findings through triangulation of documented data and perceptions across sources. A systematic and structured approach towards data compilation and analysis ensured that evidence is organized well and used effectively to create the evaluation report.

Appendix B presents a Getting to Answers matrix, outlining the data sources, data collection methods, and data analysis approaches used in addressing each EQ.

Sampling Approach

Table 3 presents a summary of the types and locations of respondents interviewed. The team collected data in five districts in addition to federal-level data collection in Kathmandu. Data collection with sources at the federal level commenced occurred from January 14 to March 6, 2020. Similarly, data collection in the provinces occurred from January 28-29, 2020 in Dhading and from February 2-5, 2020 in Provinces 2 and 7.

Table 3. Regions and Types of Stakeholders Interviewed

Province/ Federal	District	Respondents
Federal	Kathmandu	USAID, members of parliament, secretariat staff of federal parliament, political party policy working groups, party members and leaders, forum participants, beneficiaries, civil society sub-grantees, Niti Sambad staff, think tanks, ECN commissioners and staff, thematic experts
Province 2	Janakpur, Siraha	Provincial Government, District Election Office (DEO), Policy Forum participants, Women Mentorship program, Youth Policy forum participants, beneficiaries [town hall meetings (THMs), civic and voter education]
Bagmati Province	Dhading	Beneficiaries (civic and voter education, social studies teachers)
Sudur Paschim Province	Kailali, Kanchanpur	Government, DEO, Policy Forum participants, Women Mentorship program, Youth Policy forum participants, beneficiaries (THMs, civic and voter education)

Districts were selected to achieve maximal access to a representative variety of Niti Sambad field activities. Table 4 outlines the resulting sample by region and type of interview conducted. A list of interviews and interviewees appears in Appendix C.

Table 4. Data Collection Regions, Types of Interviews and Sample Sizes

Events	Federal	Province 2	Bagmati	Sudur Pachhim	Total
KIIs	38 (40)	6 (7)	0 (0)	8 (7)	52 (54)
FGDs	1 (6)	3 (54)	4 (35)	3 (37)	11 (132)
Group Interviews	12 (38)	3 (7)	1 (3)	2 (4)	18 (52)

Events	Federal	Province 2	Bagmati	Sudur Pachhim	Total
Total	51 (84)	12 (68)	5 (38)	13 (48)	81 (238)

*Note: Figures in parenthesis indicate the total number of participants.
Distribution by sex: male: 114; female: 124 (52% women).*

Data Collection Instruments

To provide structure and uniformity to the qualitative data collection, the evaluation team developed twenty-one interview guides for KIs and group interviews, corresponding to thematic groupings of Niti Sambat program participants and stakeholders. See Appendix E for the tools.

The evaluation team conducted a pilot test of the master tool for program beneficiaries with a group of women with disabilities in Kavre who had participated in a Niti Sambat women's empowerment program. In addition to the pilot test, the evaluation team continually customized the ordering and phrasing of interview questions to best fit the experience of interviewees and the key information they might provide. In general, the identified necessary revisions to the master data collection instrument were minor. Since the evaluation scope is quite broad-ranging, customization of questions, and focus on issues relevant to each respondent's knowledge and experience were key elements of all interviews.

Data Analysis

The evaluation team recorded all interviews in writing, with electronic recording of the conversation available for backup reference as needed. At least one, and typically two of the senior researchers on the team, reviewed written detailed notes and made corrections to the notes where appropriate. The team subsequently compiled the data from these detailed notes into EQ data summaries, from which findings (and factual "leads" for possible further investigation) were identified. The senior researchers reviewed and extensively discussed the results from each EQ data summary, developing findings, conclusions, and recommendations from these discussions. The team shared preliminary results with Niti Sambat staff and USAID/Nepal in separate, formal presentations in February 2020. The team has incorporated or accommodated comments received at these sessions into this report.

Limitations and Evaluation of Team Responses

Methodological limitations in this evaluation are related to the use of qualitative data and some points of potential bias (factual errors, which can undermine reliability or validity) in the data.

The sampling approach described above does not, and was not designed to, provide statistically representative data of Niti Sambad program participants or stakeholders. To derive information of this kind would have required an extensive and detailed survey, including the many programmatic and demographic subgroups among program participants. Instead, the focus is on capturing an informative but notional sample of experiences and perspectives that was designed to be representative of Niti Sambad's activities and experiences. A broader, more comprehensive survey may have produced results different from those described in this report. A structured survey would not, however, have produced qualitative information at the level of detail needed for this evaluation. Any social data, qualitative or quantitative, are vulnerable to distortion through bias. Qualitative data can be notably vulnerable in this way, due to its narrative content, so the evaluation team has addressed bias in the ways described below.

Recall bias occurs when respondents provide inaccurate or incomplete recollections of past experiences. This can happen for a variety of reasons, including when informants participate in more than one activity intervention. This was the case occasionally, especially among program participants in the provinces, who at times found it difficult to attribute changes in their attitudes or behaviors (such as feeling more self-confident in public meetings or informing others about how to register for citizenship or vote) to Niti Sambad interventions. To counter recall bias, the evaluation team did its best to “anchor” experience in a certain date or period (for example, 2017 or after). Additionally, interviewers were trained to ask a question again slightly differently to invite richer information in responses.

Response bias, including what is sometimes called “the halo effect,” is the risk that interviewees may have been motivated to provide the evaluation team with responses that would be considered socially desirable or influential in obtaining donor support. The team adhered strictly to “do no harm” principles and made sure not to raise expectations among respondents concerning positive responses. The standard informed consent statement, shared at the beginning of every interview, made it clear that no benefits were expected from participation in the evaluation.

Selection bias is an inherent risk when implementers facilitate the evaluation team’s contact with program participants. This is often the case because it is the implementing organization that holds the list of participants (which tends to serve as the interviewing sample frame) and holds the ability to provide advanced information (or guidance) to program participants about how they would best respond. When advanced information, guidance, or instruction is in play, there can be an interaction between selection bias and the social posturing, as described above in reference to response bias. In the case of the Niti Sambad evaluation, for federal-level interviews, there was little selection necessary; MPs and ECN staff were selected because of the roles they have played in Niti Sambad activities. While references to increased institutional support were often made in these interviews, they were based on detailed description, within the interviews, of the reasons for continued need. Sources were not selected based on their

predilections for continued Niti Sambad or USAID support; in fact, some sources offered in interviews that there was no further need for such support.

Sample selection included sources that have been direct local partners or counterparts with NS (civil society or academic institutions, but also MPs and commissioners or staff at ECN). Sampling for this group was straightforward. For community-level participants or beneficiaries, the evaluation team relied on lists provided by Niti Sambad or Niti Sambad partner organizations. For some of the data collection outside Kathmandu, timing limitations required interviewers to ask the Niti Sambad partner organization's local person of contact to invite individuals we would interview. In these cases, the team specified that they were looking for gender and ethnic diversity among our interviewees. Finally, when practical and feasible, the team sought out interviewees who were familiar with relevant content (such as capacity needs among FP committees or electoral administration issues) but have not interacted with Niti Sambad.

All interviews were recorded both electronically and in writing. The resulting written notes were reviewed and revised as needed by the team leader, one of the specialist consultants on the team, or both, to strengthen the accuracy and reliability of data. By compiling the content of interviews into thematic summaries organized by the evaluation question, the team had the additional opportunity to place individual responses in context vis-à-vis other interviews. This not only helped the team to derive findings from patterns in the data but also allowed the team to consider the quality of the data as it was reviewed.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 EVAL QUESTION 1: IS NITI SAMBAD ON TRACK?

EQ1. To what extent is the project on track to reach its intermediate results and overall goal?

EQ1a. What are the primary obstacles and enabling factors (e.g., country context, adoption of USAID new strategic initiatives) in achieving intermediate results and goals (programmatic and operational level)?

Indicators

Niti Sambad is generally on track to achieving expected outcomes, particularly at the level of its five results.¹ A broad range of stakeholders, at federal and local levels, reported that Niti Sambad is on track, citing key achievements, such as completion of election-law-related THMs in all seven provinces; progress in the multi-level vetting of the prospective integrated electoral law; pre-budget hearings held in all seven provinces with active involvement by the FP Finance Committee; and progress with the voter and civic education, both of which are key to free and fair elections in the future.

This assessment is based on data on the full range of Niti Sambad activities. Note that in this report, the evaluation team does not supply an extensive or comprehensive description of sub-activities, since the key Niti Sambad stakeholders already are familiar with them.² Overall, activities have been well aligned with the Niti Sambad Results Framework and the approaches described in the activity's Project Description and Annual Work Plans. Readers seeking more detailed Niti Sambad program information may consult USAID's Development Experience Clearinghouse (www.dec.usaid.gov) for project documents.

The basic finding that Niti Sambad is on track holds, even though, *from a classic performance management perspective, progress toward Niti Sambad Objectives and Results simply cannot clearly be determined.* There are three reasons for this:

1. In general, measurement of programmatic results in assistance in elections and political processes – especially to parties and legislative institutions – is not straightforward for activities like Niti Sambad.³ Niti Sambad's objectives, notably Objective 1 (“Nepal’s political transition process supported in order to institutionalize a more inclusive, effective, and democratic political governance,”) are ambitiously phrased and offer definitional and operationalization challenges for performance measurement. While well-established secondary sources are available for measures at broader, country or sector levels, there is no authoritative source or method for measuring program-level outcomes in this sphere, and tracing accountable interest for any observed results can be especially difficult.

¹For details on the content of Niti Sambad Results, please refer to the Results Framework described in Chapter 1 above. Three Results logically contribute to Objective 1, while two contribute to Objective 2.

² Niti Sambad activities at midpoint are already numerous. For example, this evaluation's Statement of Work (displayed in Appendix A) lists 27 “key activities” associated with Objective 1 (elections and legislative processes) and 13 for Objective 2 (political parties).

³ For a political scientist's discussion of democracy measurement challenges in cross-national comparisons, see <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/06/23/how-do-you-measure-democracy/>.

2. Niti Sambah's formal performance targets are mostly met or exceeded for the latest available reporting, but the information on Niti Sambah's performance vis-à-vis targets is thin and mixed. With its FY 2019 Annual Report, Niti Sambah provided an appendix with FY 2019 targets and actuals for its Performance Indicator Tracking Table. The evaluation team's analysis of data from this table shows that out of 25 indicators listed, only 13 were used (that is, accompanied by data on actuals for 2019). The remaining twelve were retired or discontinued due to delays in implementation of some tasks (notably relating to policy research support and assistance to provincial assemblies), shifts in program focus, and USAID retirement of some of its PPR indicators. Only one indicator remained in use to track progress under Objective 2 (political parties). Among the indicators in use, the performance targets for 2019 were exceeded for six, met for two, and not met for five.⁴

3. More fundamentally, the Niti Sambah indicators are mostly output-focused (for example, counting the number of individuals trained), offering little insight on advancement toward achieving the five Results or the two Objectives. Qualitative information supplied in Niti Sambah quarterly and annual reports provide useful detail on activities, but this is not sufficient to fill this information gap on activity performance.

Some areas of Niti Sambah's work have been halted (e.g., collaboration with the Office of the Prime Minister) or delayed (IRI assistance to provincial assemblies) due to local counterparts' initial resistance to receiving assistance or logistical challenges, such as recruitment of senior-level technical staff.⁵ This helps to explain the mixed picture vis-à-vis performance targets.

Engagement with the Prime Ministers' Office has been essentially impossible, due to ideological resistance to working with USG institutions.... On the other hand, Niti Sambah has worked well with the President's office.

-A source familiar with the Niti Sambah program

As recognized above, program progress with Niti Sambah is notable, and the activity's formal reporting provides ample (again, predominantly qualitative) detail on achievements. At the same time, the evaluation team has been struck by the distance between what Niti Sambah has done to date and how much more remains as challenges. This gap forms a key theme throughout this findings section of the report; it is present regarding the accomplishments in building ECN capacity versus its continuing needs, for example, as well as the various forms of Niti Sambah partnership with the Federal Parliament in the face of its own substantial capacity needs. The issue of "getting properly to scale" arguably is shared across all Niti Sambah program areas, with perhaps the exception of the relatively small and focused communications assistance to the National Reconstruction Authority (NRA). Sections 4.3 and 4.4 below address this issue regarding the ECN. The subsequent sub-sections briefly outline some particulars of the challenge for the FP and the political parties.

Federal Parliament

FP committees receive very limited financial or logistical support from the executive branch. They require external support to carry out their core functions: research and analysis, conducting oversight of government programs and carrying out outreach activities. Party

⁴ Details on indicators and status for FY 2019 are provide in Appendix J.

⁵ IRI, for example, did not have a Senior Governance Advisor in place until Septmeber 2018, which contributed to delays in Niti Sambah's policy research agenda as well as preparation for assistance to provincial assemblies.

hierarchy and traditional practice weigh against the ability of MPs to challenge the government on budget allocation issues

Public consultation is legally required after a bill is presented in the legislative parliament, but it largely does not happen. Only three bills were taken to the public for consultation (Civil Code, Media Council Bill, and Contempt of Court) by the current parliament. One of these, the Media Council Bill, also was supported by Niti Sambad. Some other bills, such as the integrated electoral law, were taken to the public through Niti Sambad's support.

After the formation of the committee, a partnership was established with NDI, focused on various agenda points. The positive aspect of this partnership is that NDI supported the committee based on the needs identified by committee.

-FP committee chairman

Three bills were taken out to public discussion at the initiative of the parliament by the Federal Parliament Secretariat itself (Civil Code, Media Council, and contempt of Court). But NDI also supported one of those--Media Council Bill (through Nepal Law Society).

More work is needed to address issues of delegated legislation. Experts told the evaluation team that about 50 percent of corruption in Nepal is facilitated by misuse of delegated legislation. Part of the problem is that the bills presented by the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs are typically in a very skeletal form (not fully fleshed out), allowing a great deal of discretion to the bureaucracy in critical stages of legislation and generating challenges regarding parliamentary oversight. This situation reinforces the importance of committee resources and the public consultation issues described above.

Parties

Although the country is federalized, the parties, which are the most powerful institutions after the state, are run in a centralized, unitary manner. Parties are becoming more centralized and less dependent on grassroots organizations for electoral campaigns, and are more dependent on finances and modern media/communication campaigns. This dependence (and its likely associated centralizing effects) suggests that continued active USAID partnership both with ECN and the parties is increasingly critical.

In the long term, all parties will be under pressure to address the demands of marginalized groups who have been included in the party, which will facilitate the process of democratic pluralism.⁶ Constitutional and legal requirements for inclusion are already facilitating this process. Some parties, particularly according to interviewees from Nepali Congress (NC) and the Nepal Communist Party (NCP), are leading ongoing efforts to create more-inclusive internal structures. Other parties (e.g., Rastriya Janata Party Nepal, RJPN) face significant challenges in the democratization of internal party structures and practices in the short term.

⁶ For a recent analysis of democratic pluralism in Nepal, see Blair et al. 2017. *Promoting Democratic Politics in a Transitional Political System. Final Evaluation of USAID/Nepal Strengthening Political Parties, Electoral and Legislative Processes Project*. USAID/Nepal MEL Project. Available at: <https://cpb-us-w2.wpmucdn.com/campuspress.yale.edu/dist/b/405/files/2017/08/Nepal5-HBlairEtAl-NepalSPPELP-FinalReport-Feb17-ztal5p.pdf>.

Enabling Factors

Despite considerable challenges, there also are aspects of Niti Sambad's operations and relationships that support further progress toward the achievement of the activity's expected results. Note that these enabling factors and obstacles generally focus on matters internal to the activities and achievements of Niti Sambad. External factors are addressed in Section 4.3.

A. NDI, in particular, has positive, *historically established relationships* with some committees and chairs, and in general the chairs are appreciative of these partnerships. Demand from the FP committees for further support appears to be increasing.

B. ECN has a *reasonably good record* in recent elections, and current ECN leadership has an ambitious and appropriate agenda for electoral reform and improvements. IFES assistance has made significant headway in forwarding reform of election law, supporting and expanding voter education and civic education, and strengthening ECN management systems. Progress with the integration of the electoral law and the generally positive experience with the 2017 election (and the National Assembly elections in 2020) offer an institutional platform for further enhancement of ECN capability in administering free and fair elections. ECN Commissioners are appointed for five-year terms, so there is relative stability at this level. However, ECN Secretariat staff change notably more often due to civil service rotations or other staffing adjustments, leading to challenges in strategic and operational continuity.⁷

C. Capacity enhancements to date with the ECN and FP offer *an opening for parties* to see internal reforms in their long-range interest. Currently, there is little evidence that the leadership of political parties (especially of the two major ones, NCP and Nepali Congress) are supporting increased internal responsiveness or enhanced policy-making capacity by the FP. On the other hand, as institutions, such as the parliament and the ECN over time exert influence as more independent national institutions, the parties will have the opportunity to change their viewpoints and identify ways to support further strengthening of these institutions as elements of the parties' political strategies. A similar and roughly parallel trend is likely within the parties, as marginalized groups come to play more influential roles in upper-level party decision making. The current pattern of traditional elite dominance cannot last forever.

D. Finally, *Niti Sambad and USAID are generally open to making programmatic and operational adjustments* in response to evolving needs. Both sides have observed this advantage when offering comments on the working relationship with the other. If, for example, Niti Sambad and USAID were to recognize the need for focused support from deeply experienced experts to occasionally inform Niti Sambad strategy and approaches, a practical and effective arrangement is likely to be identified.

In summary, the challenges facing further progress toward the achievement of Niti Sambad Objectives and Results are notable but not overwhelming. Formal performance tracking could be improved; delays in some program areas have held back progress; points of resistance to Niti Sambad assistance are present among members of the governing party; ECN faces substantial roadblocks in building its institutional independence; and technical experience and knowledge could be upgraded in some areas of Niti Sambad's work. At the same time, Niti Sambad working relationships with its broad array of counterparts are generally good; the ECN

⁷ Another challenge at this writing is that there are currently two open Commissioner positions. This has slowed ECN progress in some areas.

has a positive record of accomplishment to work from; windows of opportunity continue to be available with the parties; and both USAID and Niti Sambad have shown the ability to flexibly adapt to changing conditions.

Obstacles

The evaluation team has identified four factors that serve as obstacles to further NS progress in achieving its objective. As we note in the next Section, enabling factors also are present that help offset these challenges.

- A. *The limited capacity of legislative committees:* There is a substantial and widely identified need for capacity improvement in the parliament, including both its members and its key institutions, including the five major thematic committees of the House of Representatives (HoR). Members of committees vary widely in their preparedness for parliamentary processes and requirements; committees enjoy limited financial resources for their operations; committees tend not to have established channels or practices for obtaining citizens' comments on proposed legislation or other public policy matters; and (perhaps most critically) committees are generally lacking in access to basic social, economic, and technical information and analysis to support the legislative process. Similar issues are faced by the provincial assemblies, which typically experience even more constraining resource limitations than at the federal level. These capacity limitations undermine attempts to make MPs and legislative institutions capable of improving policy, monitoring the government's implementation of laws, and more effective participants in national decision-making (Niti Sambad Result 1.2).
- B. *Mostly traditional, unequal structures of decision making and ideological resistance to US-based institutions in the parties:* While the Constitution of Nepal is written to try to ensure participation of marginalized populations (including women) in legislative bodies, policy decision making is deeply influenced by the major political parties and their own structures. As detailed in Section 4.2 below, even with the Constitution in place, there remain significant challenges for members of marginalized groups to effectively be heard within the parties. Reform to address this issue are underway in some major parties, but, at this writing, the tendency for what some interviewees indicated were "older, Brahmin men" to be in charge continues. This serves as a challenge for making Nepal's political parties more inclusive and transparent (Niti Sambad Objective 2). Moreover, centralized decision making in the parties tends to allow for long-held prejudices about donor organizations to be sustained. In the case of Niti Sambad, all three of the implementing partners have encountered resistance or reluctance to participate in the activity's programs; Niti Sambad staff report that this is based on ideological opposition, by the NCP especially, to aspects of United States foreign policy. If the structure of parties were more transparent and equalized, such resistance might be less likely to be encountered.⁸

⁸ The resistance referred to here was noted in separate interviews with Niti Sambad Country Directors and technical staff. Other interview sources from within NCP noted that the party would be expected to be more open to external consultations and assistance once the current stage of organizational consolidation between the pre-existing separate entities of the NCP (the Communist Party of Nepal-Marxist Centre and the Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist) is completed.

- C. Furthermore, sources inside and beyond Niti Sambad have noted the difficulties faced in recent months in collaborating with some MPs and others in the ruling NCP. The public media have featured frequent analyses of statements by leading members in the party expressing concern or opposition to USG strategies or initiatives, especially the Indo-Pacific Strategy and the prospective signing of a partnership agreement with the Millennium Challenge Corporation. While the evaluation team has found that attitudes among NCP members do vary on these issues, this stated opposition has at times translated to resistance, in the FP, and other venues, to Niti Sambad proposals for cooperation or assistance.
- D. *Structural capacity limitations at the ECN:* The ECN suffers under three significant constraints. First, the long-standing practice of frequently rotating civil servants into and out of the ECN weakens its strategic focus and overall operational effectiveness. Second, its limited organizational independence from GON leadership (and governing party leadership) translates to constraints on its capacity to plan its operations for more than a few months in advance, much less to implement a reform-oriented longer-term strategy. Finally, ECN suffers from something of a “feast and famine” cycle in budgeting: At and near the year of an election, it enjoys relatively high levels of funding to support the broad array of ECN activities at such times, while on the “off” years the funding is minimal, constraining ECN capacity for longer range initiatives or deeper investments in human or technical resources.
- E. *Need for stronger technical input in some areas of Niti Sambad’s program delivery:* Some areas of Niti Sambad’s technical operations (e.g., civic and voter education and strategic relationships with civil society) may need stronger, sustained contributions from highly skilled technical experts. A small group of informed interview respondents independently offered this suggestion, not regarding the activity’s formal products but consistently in reference to Niti Sambad’s technical approaches and effectiveness of its communications with some partners

4.2 EVAL QUESTION 2: ENGAGING MARGINALIZED GROUPS

EQ2: How effective is the project in engaging women, youth, Dalits, and other marginalized groups to contribute to the development of national politics?

EQ2a. Have other types of opportunities emerged as a result of the engagement of historically marginalized communities by Niti Sambad partners (NDI, IFES, and IRI)?

Effectiveness

Representation in Various Program Activities and Forums

Niti Sambad has made substantial efforts to increase the representation of citizens from all groups of society, such as women; youth; Dalits; persons with disabilities (PWDs); lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) individuals; Madhesis; Janajatis; and other marginalized groups; through partnerships with diverse organizations led by right holders groups. Interviews with Nepali experts and leaders of Niti Sambad CSO partners validate this overall finding.

Niti Sambad interventions were found to be highly effective in terms of increasing representation of marginalized groups. Some groups are generally more prepared for active engagement than others. LGBTI individuals, for example, are observed by members of other marginalized groups to be especially reluctant to openly participate in activities supported by Niti Sambad, due to the stigma attached to their gender identity and sexual orientation.

On the other hand, the Nepal Disabled Women's Association (NDWA), Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO), Blue Diamond Society, Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON), and Samagra (Holistic Service Development Center) are examples of partner organizations that have successfully worked with NS.

From among these five groups, the evaluation team was able to interview representatives from four, and all of these sources cited the positive support and achievements of Niti Sambad in engaging marginalized populations. AYON, for example, plays a significant role in civil society support to youth; their representatives (located in Kathmandu and beyond) spoke highly of the collaboration they experienced with Niti Sambad.

Eighty to ninety percent of our objectives with Niti Sambad have been met. [These include expanding the ability to exercise the right to vote, raising awareness of democracy and citizens' rights, and increasing political participation.]

-Manager from a CSO supporting rights of marginalized groups

Likewise, Niti Sambad has supported various thematic forums and policy working groups that are targeted towards youth, women, and marginalized groups. These include, for example, the

Youth Policy Forum, the Women's Policy Forum and Policy Working Group, and the Marginalized Groups Policy Forum.

Niti Sambad has provided capacity building through training sessions, workshops, policy analysis, etc. Participants in interviews with the evaluation team have stated that, through Niti Sambad support, they have obtained opportunities to actively participate in forums and awareness-building sessions where their voices have been heard as they identified the most pressing issues concerning them in a variety of areas, such as employment, agriculture, water, education, and access to public facilities, such as voting centers.

THMs, Mayors Network, Women Mayors, Deputy Mayors, and Women's Mentorship Program were also found effective in bringing marginalized people's voices to the forefront and for developing the capacity of deputy mayors (all of them women) in local decision making. This overall finding is based on interviews with participants in town hall meetings and the Mayors Network, as well as women mayors and deputy mayors.

NDI's women's mentoring, which includes political party leaders, appears to have been especially effective; the situation is similar with Deputy Mayors.

-A USAID source familiar with Niti Sambad's activities

The project also has supported voters' education programs and community- and school-based civic/voter education programs, which were effective in bringing marginalized segments of society to the forefront of the political process. Evaluation respondents explicitly stated that they received an opportunity to learn about the voting process, voter registration, the election process, the process of birth registration, and citizenship and its importance. The project also facilitated obtaining legal identity documents. While the evaluation team was unable to collect data sufficient to confirm the key to effectiveness in all situations, from the Niti Sambad documents and interviews with participants and partners it is clear that interventions that leveraged local ambitions and incentives (as in partnership with the NDWA or support to voter education in remote areas) possessed momentum to succeed.

Participation in Policymaking Processes and Parties

Niti Sambad was also found to effectively support the participation of marginalized people through policymaking, particularly in its role, with partner Nepal Law Society (NLS), in developing a draft integrated electoral law that clarifies implementation of constitutional provisions ensuring rights of marginalized people.

As for the political parties, one party focal person (for Nepali Congress) observed that the Niti Sambad program has been very helpful to the party as it has addressed the issues of marginalized and excluded groups. This includes, for example, a more efficacious legislative role for MPs elected through proportional representation (PR), who are often members from

marginalized groups. The NC source said that work with Niti Sambad has been the impetus behind the party's development of an internal policy targeted towards individuals from the Karnali region, Dalits, Madheshis, and women to ensure their representation at all levels.

Challenges

Meaningful Participation

Niti Sambad has made commendable efforts to increase the representation of marginalized people; however, at the same time, the marginalized and individuals advocating for them note that marginalized groups still generally are unable to raise organized and collective voices on issues.

The problem is that if we find any opportunities [in the party] for marginalized people, the leaders choose their relatives rather than grassroots people.

-A MP from one of the parties assisted by Niti Sambad

Representation is evident, but according to multiple interview sources, the marginalized communities appear not to enjoy what might be termed an “effective voice” in actual policy decision making. This included the observation that, for some parties at least, there were still no acceptance and recognition of marginalized voices within party structures and political forums.⁹

Intersectionality

Some interviewees, including experts not directly affiliated with Niti Sambad, noted that the activity has not paid adequate attention to the issues of marginalization *within* such categories, especially those in a status of multiple marginalizations. Niti Sambad generally has treated the constitutionally recognized marginalized groups (such as women and Dalits, Adhibasi, Janajati, Madhesi) as respective homogeneous groups, with a blanket approach rather than recognizing varying interests and needs of people within and across these groups. For instance, the activity has reached out to the Dalit community; however, there is little or no evidence that it has paid substantial attention to the needs and policy priorities of those Dalits who have been facing multiple forms of exclusion due to sex, age, disability, sexual identity, and so forth. The same applies to women with disabilities and other groups, such as Janjatis, Muslims, and Madhesi. Blue Diamond Society is the only organization that focuses on the LGBTI community, whereas other organizations have not moved beyond the binary concept of gender.

Niti Sambad's collaboration with local partners and outreach to marginalized communities is notable, and at times this work exhibits attention to intersectionality. The Niti Sambad program with NDWA, for example, is an intersectional program, working with women with disabilities to empower them to serve as disability advocates. The evaluation team's observation regarding such programs, including the partnership with NDWA groups in rural and marginalized communities (including Dalits, Muslims, and other ethnic/caste minorities) and civic and voter education programs, is that Niti Sambad has indeed achieved the inclusion of a diversity of

⁹ Data supporting findings in this paragraph are derived from interviews with one Central Committee member of one political party, 2 FP MPs, one Provincial Assembly member and two Nepali thematic experts.

marginalized groups. When the evaluation team is discussing intersectionality, however, we are looking for something more than reaching out to disadvantaged groups. Above and beyond this, in a setting such as Nepal, with diverse and at times overlapping social, economic, and political needs, the team finds a continuing need for identifying, recognizing, assessing and taking customized programmatic action in response to intersectionality. This may involve taking extra, focused steps to enhance program responsiveness to people in intersectionality.

It is not uncommon, for example, for women with sight or hearing impairments to participate in NDWA activities. Some of the women with hearing impairments whom we spoke with complained to us that sign-language services are not provided at many of their groups' meetings. Women within this group who are Dalit or Muslim may not be prepared to express this need openly in meetings. There may, of course, be logistical or resource constraints in responding better to identified needs such as these. Still, a more strategic and explicit approach to intersectionality likely would offer stronger field-level support to participants of this kind.

Continuation of Patriarchy

Niti Sambad also could pay more focused attention to the patriarchal nature of politics, political institutions, and traditional social values and norms. One interviewee noted, for example, that "government and political parties are not liberal on female representation. From every aspect, they have conservative mindsets." In the larger picture, men hold the position of power and hold more privileges as leaders of political parties, governmental units, etc.

Niti Sambad clearly has made notable contributions in support of increased women's representation in politics, and female empowerment is forwarded by the project's support of research in campaign finance, legal reform, civil society partnerships, and support to ECN. Due to the pervasive practice in many institutions in Nepal of "participation without power" for women, the issue of patriarchy remains. Female representatives, especially those from marginalized groups, are not given basic respect in the legislatures and, in some cases, are poorly treated by their male colleagues. Patriarchy rests in deep-seated cultural traditions and attitudes, present among women but predominantly among men. This suggests that Niti Sambad programming may benefit from closer attention to opportunities for affecting attitudes, especially among men.

Reduced Focus on GESI Issues at ECN

At the ECN, attention to GESI appears to have waned in recent years. Interviews at ECN and with some IFES staff confirm this observation. Before the commencement of Niti Sambad, IFES provided technical support to ECN in developing a GESI strategy¹⁰ and offered gender training sessions to staff. More recently, Niti Sambad has assisted legal reform in support of broadened inclusion and revisions to the gender inclusion policy. It also has engaged in discussions with ECN on gender-responsive budgeting guidelines. Even with these efforts in place, however, the actual policy space for GESI seems to be shrinking. While the GESI unit at ECN continues from its creation under the previous Chairman, it is now subsumed under a department with a broader mandate, with notably limited staff resources. While it provides routine input to ECN leadership on policy matters, it is not the heart of GESI advocacy it once was. At least part of an explanation for this development is the fact that, currently, there are only three commissioners in place, rather than the legally mandated five. Commissioners' attention, therefore, is divided more thinly among ECN departments; this has slowed progress on ECN activities, including activities of the ECN GESI unit.

Campaign and Party Financing

On the Parliament side, we have serious problems in making our programs more inclusive. The problem is it is very sensitive how [Niti Sambad] determines the design of the activity. For example, if we are organizing training, we want them to have at least one woman as an expert; they say, 'No, no, she is not good enough.' They ask us to come with a draft of a program, but then everyone on their list are male Brahmins above sixty, [a half dozen] in a row.

-A Niti Sambad staff member

Lack of transparency in party and campaign financing hinders electoral participation by women and other marginalized people as candidates. Women politicians, District Election Officers (DEOs) and external expert sources stated that women cannot viably compete for first past the post (FPTP) seats since election campaigns have become expensive, and women have no capacity and resources for that in comparison to men candidates.¹¹ While Niti Sambad has worked with ECN to add transparency to political financing, there is a substantial way to go, as described in section 4.4, below. This circumstance serves as an example of a continuing challenge for ECN that translates into a significant roadblock for women and marginalized populations. Transparent and effective campaign finance law and related enforcement could make an especially notable difference in this context.

Opportunities

While the challenges outlined for improvement in political participation by marginalized groups are considerable, there also are several areas of opportunity, including:

¹⁰ Election Commission of Nepal, *Gender and Inclusion Policy, 2013; Gender and Inclusion Strategy, 2015-2020*, Kathmandu, n.d.

¹¹ A useful analysis of challenges faced by Nepali women in campaign financing is provided in IFES, *The Cost of Representation: A Study of Women's Representation and Political Finance in Nepal* (Arlington, Virginia: IFES, 2020).

- The constitutional and legal framework recognizes at the least the “accommodative” mode of participation by the marginalized (via quotas in legislative institutions, for example), which arguably helps to set the stage for more “transformative” arrangements that would facilitate more effective voice, on a collective level, among those who currently appear to enjoy representation without power. This broader framework is an opportunity to inform program improvement and design.
- International and national commitments by the GON [such as endorsement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including a local target of 50/50 male/female representation at all levels by 2030, and the recognition of social equality as a goal in the GON Five-Year Plan) also serve as platforms for further progress.
- ECN plans to update and revise its GESI policy and strategy soon; this can offer a window for refreshing ECN’s commitment to inclusive approaches in its governance structure, leadership system, policies, and programs.
- While inclusiveness is well integrated generally in Niti Sambad approaches and technical products, there remains room for the activity to more systematically and broadly incorporate issues and concerns of the marginalized in policy briefings and other communications.
- There continues to be a broad willingness and receptiveness among parliamentarians, political parties, and ECN at all levels for technical support from the international community. This includes assistance that focuses on GESI issues.
- The evaluation team sees a need to revise the design of Niti Sambad so that it more squarely addresses manifestations of patriarchal ideology and structures that are the root causes of unequal power relations and discrimination in public and private spheres.
- Women politicians and women’s advocacy groups, but also government officials, such as DEOs, called to the evaluation team’s attention that there is a need to address political violence against women; this need is coupled with the opportunity, under the new constitutional arrangement that mandates broad political participation by women, for MPs and other policymakers to take concrete action to address this problem. Such interventions need to be active at local levels, not just immediately near election time but during inter-election periods, to support sustained awareness and prevention.
- Parties are in the process of reforming their inclusion policies; this serves as an opportunity for Niti Sambad to utilize its networks with the parties (through the Policy Working Groups and the various Policy Forums, for example) to work jointly on progress on inclusion and to reinforce linkages between overall party strengthening and inclusive approaches.
- Finally, assistance to provincial assemblies could be quite fruitful for collaboration on GESI policies and approaches. The evaluation team identified significant legislative progress in this area in Province 2, for example. Sources close to the Provincial

Assembly there noted that representation by marginalized groups in the PA appears to be more progressive, at least for some groups, than in the FP. While the federal House of Representatives is nearly (but not quite) the constitutionally mandated 33 percent women, the Province 2 Assembly is 50 percent women. In addition, the PA features a representation quota for persons with disabilities (PWDs), which is not a feature of the structure at the federal level.

4.3 EVAL QUESTION 3: CURRENT RELEVANCE OF NITI SAMBAD OBJECTIVES

EQ3: Given the project is at the half-way point, are the current objectives of the project still relevant to Nepal's new federal political development?

EQ3a. What new challenges to political development and electoral administration do you see, which are not addressed by the project?

EQ3 seeks answers about the continued relevance of the Niti Sambat's objectives as well as the effectiveness of approaches and the project in the changed context. EQ3 and EQ3a are a bit different from all the others addressed in this evaluation. They are forward-looking, requiring us to analyze trends in the broader political environment and consider their significance for Niti Sambat. To properly address this issue, we combine our responses to EQ3 and EQ3a, since identifying new challenges thus far not addressed, or partially addressed by the activity, helps substantially in addressing the question of contemporary relevance. Challenges on the political and governance landscape are described as areas of risk; they may be considered threats as well as opportunities.

EQ3b, addressed later in this sub-chapter, is a related question regarding Niti Sambat's adaptive management practices, so it calls for a retrospective view of Niti Sambat's operational approaches. We address this question near the end of this chapter.

The Relevance of Niti Sambat Objectives Amid New Challenges

When the Niti Sambat activity design was being finalized in late 2016 and early 2017, Nepal had just adopted a new constitution in September 2015, followed by a process of further democratization and development. A series of elections for the three levels of government were scheduled to occur before January 2018. The newly elected governments and representatives were expected to spearhead the transition to a new federal system, implement the constitution, and address people's aspirations of economic development, democracy, and inclusion.

A significant trend is apparent, however, since the House of Representatives elections of 2017 by way of a *risk of democratic backsliding*: A substantial amount of evidence and multiple sources of expert opinion point to a risk (and early signs) of democratic backsliding in Nepal.¹² Factors

¹² Executive takeover or democratic backsliding refers to a process where a popularly elected party or leader abuses the law-making and rule of law process to encroach upon and dominate other branches of the government—including the legislature and the judiciary—in order to promote partisan interests and maintain political control over any opposition. Research has shown that globally, from 1973 to 2018, there were a total of 197 democratic breakdowns; 88 of them were through executive takeovers by democratically elected incumbents. See Milan W Svobik, "Polarization versus democracy," in *Journal of Democracy*, 2019, 30 (3), pp. 20-32. For a review of backsliding in Nepal, see Biswas Barai, "Democratic Backsliding in Nepal," *The Annapurna Express*, August 30, 2019. <https://theannapurnaexpress.com/news/democratic-backsliding-in-nepal-1863>, Retrieved Mid-term Performance Evaluation of Niti Sambat

We had made a law on forest resources last year but this year the federal level passed a new one. Now we are having to amend ours accordingly.

-A member of a provincial assembly

that may facilitate the process of backsliding include changes in the party landscape, the challenge of implementing federalism, the possibility of the ECN making insufficient progress in its democratic reform plans, the effects of influences from China and India, and continued internal social divisions.¹³

Contextual challenges related to backsliding that the evaluation team finds as unaddressed (substantially if not completely) by Niti Sambad include the following:

Changes in the Political Party Landscape

Nepal's electoral landscape also is showing signs of demographic shifts and possible de-alignment between voters and parties. There have been four major mergers in recent years, including the formation of the Rastriya Janata Party Nepal (RJPN; 2017), and the Samajbadi Party Nepal (May 2019), as well as the merger of the National Democratic Forum with Nepali Congress (October 2017). The most significant, however, was the merger in May 2018 of the two major communist parties (the former Communist Party of Nepal UML and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center) into Nepal Communist Party (NCP), which significantly altered the foundations of political competition by claiming nearly a two-thirds majority in the Federal Parliament (FP). Nepal may not currently function as a “single party-dominant state,” a term that suggests that opposition is routinely ignored and tends to be largely symbolic rather than influential in policymaking, but the behavior of the ruling party in legislative and other settings indicates some trends in this direction.

The Challenge of Federalism (The Role of the Provinces)

The needs of the provinces are different from those of the federal and local governments. The next two years are critical for the success of provinces, and they need extensive support in policymaking and implementation. Until recently, provinces were focused on drafting laws for the creation and operation of the provincial government and assemblies. They have been able to create structures and institutions and operate them. Now they are making a transition to policymaking and service delivery (e.g., health, education, land, forest). Provincial and local governments are required to draft laws that conform to federal laws, however, so there is a pressing need for the federal level to sufficiently and clearly legislate on key issues so that the sub-federal levels may proceed.

The transition to a three-tier federal system is the greatest change under the 2015 constitution, and implementation of the new system is the greatest challenge for Nepali democracy.

-USAID, Nepal Democracy, Human Rights and Governance Assessment (December 2019)

March 28, 2020. For a more theoretical interpretation by academic political scientists, see Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (New York: Crown Publishing, 2019).

¹³ When invited to identify challenges facing elections and political processes in Nepal, five Nepali experts on the national political scene and interview sources from ECN, some of the major political parties, and Niti Sambad civil society partners independently offered observations on various forms of backsliding.

Dispute Resolution

Currently, the resolution of intergovernmental disputes (and even some areas of routine governmental management) are left with insufficient clarity regarding the venue and authority for decision making. High courts and district courts, for example, may benefit from having a constitutional bench in order to reduce the pressure on the Supreme Court.¹⁴ On the administrative side, there currently is no representation of local bodies and provinces in the National Natural Resource and Fiscal Commission (the NNRFC, which manages revenues and distribution of funds to government entities). This likely will be a “hot spot” of federal-nonfederal coordination (and disputes).

Risk of a Downturn in Democratic Reforms in Electoral Administration

There is a danger that ECN could regress in following through on its current ambitious reform agenda (especially regarding GESI, expansion of civic and voter education, devolution of authority to district offices, cooperation with security agencies, CSO participation, monitoring of campaign/party financing and neutrality of deputized officials/returning officers). The future for such reforms remains to be seen (even after the final passage of an integrated election law), but given its tradition of fiscal and subordinate relationship to GON centers of power, there is a basis for concern. On the issue of neutrality of ECN returning officers, according to a judge who has been serving as a returning officer for the last 25 years, in recent elections, there has been an increasing trend of partisan interference in the appointment of judges and deployment of security and bureaucratic personnel during elections. This may not be an issue throughout the country, but the fact that an experienced officer is drawing attention to it suggests that it merits attention.

Alternative External Models to Democratic Pluralism

Niti Sambat is premised on the idea of democratic pluralism, but it may face increased competition from outside Nepal. For example, China’s development model offers centralized control under an economic growth contract with the citizenry, while India’s influence triggers nationalistic sentiment in Nepal, which in turn tends to invite internal pressures for centralized control. China, in particular, appears to be gaining increased access to Nepali democratic institutions and civil society. Although it is not a new phenomenon—other countries, like the US and India, were already enjoying varying levels of such access and influence—China’s penetration offers alternative approaches regarding governance and party organization as well as policy (e.g., regarding freedom of association, cybercrime regulation, and domestic intelligence/surveillance).¹⁵ These approaches are not inherently undemocratic, but they do present risks for democratic pluralism that are currently unaddressed by Niti Sambat.

¹⁴ In October 2019, the Supreme Court cut down on national holidays to ease the pressure of pending cases, which numbered more than 23,000. See Tika R Pradhan, “While the entire country takes a four-day holiday, Nepal’s courts go on a two-week break.” *The Kathmandu Post*, October 3, 2019. See <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/10/03/while-the-entire-country-takes-a-four-day-holiday-nepal-s-courts-go-on-a-two-week-break>.

¹⁵ See Khabarhub, “NCP and CPC Sign Memorandum,” September 24, 2019. <https://english.khabarhub.com/2019/24/46048/> (Retrieved February 24, 2020). Also see Anup Kaphle. 2019. “A blueprint for consolidating power: China exports Xi Jinping Thought to Nepal.” *The Kathmandu Post*, September 25, 2019. <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2019/09/24/a-blueprint-for-consolidating-power-china-exports-xi-jinping-thought-to-nepal> (Retrieved February 24, 2020).

Continued Social and Political Cleavages

Major social divisions (such as social class/caste, religious affiliation, ethnic identity, the role of youth, and nationalistic attitudes) continue to be salient in Nepal, and these offer the potential for partisan manipulation and further polarization. Supporting effective political participation by youth, for example, is a notable challenge related to elections and democracy. Generally, youth exhibit lower voter registration rates than other groups, and many are working abroad. When not working overseas, they tend to be under- or unemployed and frustrated with the government. There also are gaps created by what youth specialists described to the evaluation team as generally limited awareness of civic issues.

Areas of Opportunity

There are countervailing factors at work, however. Public perceptions about the constitution and democracy, and implementation of federalism, offer potential counters to backsliding. According to a recent Niti Sambad survey, for example, about 64 percent of Nepalis believe that democracy is the best possible form of government, with about 35 percent believing there could be other forms that may be equally good or better.¹⁶ Implementation of federalism offers opportunities to reinforce democratic practices and institutions. Dialogues on how federalism will actually work offer opportunities for Niti Sambad (or its follow-on) to help in countering democratic backsliding. Also, even in the face of the several risks described above, the Constitution offers Nepali democracy a highly legitimated platform for the furtherance of participatory democracy.

Finally, as noted recently by Freedom House, a menu of policy actions is available for responding to democratic backsliding (see the text box below). Particularly relevant to the remainder of Niti Sambad's period of performance as well as any follow-on activity are two such opportunities:

- **Expanding and improving civic education:** It is important to educate citizens on how to mark, fold, and submit a ballot. But there is a greater and more profound need (recognized by ECN leadership and many other observers) for helping citizens to understand the Constitution and federalism, their role in influencing public policy, and how

¹⁶International Republican Institute, "National Public Opinion Survey: Nepal." IRI Center for Insights in Survey Research, 2019.
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the rights of all citizens may be fostered. Niti Sambad, CSO partners and the GON all have taken steps toward more broad-based and substantive civic education, especially by engaging school social studies teachers and universities; much more remains to be done.

- **Preventing election interference:** There is prospectively a multi-pronged action agenda in ensuring that Nepali election processes are both politically neutral and accessible to all citizens. This may include countering cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns, preventing improper influence by political parties with civil servants during election periods, and adequately enforcing party and campaign finance laws.¹⁷ Some of these areas have been partially addressed by Niti Sambad's assistance to ECN, but others have not received much attention.

EQ3b. Have Niti Sambad partners made adjustments to the project based on an understanding of the new challenges emerging?

Within the context of recent changes in the Nepali political environment, Niti Sambad has displayed flexibility in responding to evolving program needs. It has been proactive in bringing programming ideas to share with USAID and taking stock on a semi-annual basis. In the words of one observer from USAID technical staff, Niti Sambad “continues to be an important activity; it continues working in an

In its recent “Policy Recommendations for Strengthening Democracy,” Freedom House suggests several actions for democracies in general, including the following that reinforce findings in this chapter and inform consideration of actions to counter democratic backsliding:

Strengthen public support for democratic principles by investing in civic education. To protect freedom domestically and build support for a foreign policy that protects democratic rights and values abroad, it is essential to foster a stronger public understanding of democratic principles, especially among young people.

Increase transparency requirements for foreign state-owned propaganda outlets operating in democratic states. Outlets like Russia’s RT and China’s CGTN spread government-approved narratives without clearly disclosing that they are government financed. Measures to improve transparency could include reporting requirements for media outlets’ spending on paid advertorials (advertisements designed to resemble an independent, objective news articles), ownership structures, and other economic ties to repressive state actors.

Require social media companies to report foreign efforts to spread online disinformation and propaganda.

Address the use of bots (automated accounts pretending to be real people) **on social media.** Bots can be used to distort the online media environment by rapidly spreading false information, fomenting discord, and drowning out independent reporting and factual information.

Prevent election interference. Efforts should include protecting elections from cyberattacks through the use of paper ballots and election audits and improving transparency and oversight of online political advertisements.

Strengthening laws that guard against foreign influence over government officials. Legislative proposals requiring greater transparency about officials’ personal finances and campaign donations, more rigorous standards for the disclosure of conflicts of interest, and the establishment of a clear code of conduct for engagement with foreign officials can help insulate governments from foreign attempts to subvert democratic institutions.

Source: <https://freedomhouse.org/policy-recommendations-strengthening-democracy> (Retrieved March 7, 2020).

¹⁷ Campaign financing appears to be an especially challenging area needing attention. Multiple interview sources stated that money is increasingly driving politics in Nepal. If this trend continues it threatens to undermine the fairness of elections and freedom from foreign influence in elections.

evolving environment.” According to the Niti Sambad implementing partners, USAID, on its side, has been open and responsive in the face of changing circumstances, providing support for well-reasoned program adjustments.

One example of this cooperation in support of adaptive adjustments is the case of the MPs’ constituency outreach program implemented by NDI. NDI and USAID observed that the operational model of single MPs holding a series of meetings in constituencies did not deliver the expected results in citizen participation and policy dialogue with MPs. NDI reported to us that they plan to modify the approach in the future, to emphasize group workshops to facilitate better citizen dialogue with MPs. NDI also wants to work with female PR candidates so that they can have a base from which to contest in FPTP. NDI had to adapt its programming according to unfolding political events, including party mergers, and the calendar of activities.

While some Niti Sambad staff expressed a desire for stronger adaptive management in Niti Sambad, the evaluation team has noted that Niti Sambad does address this need, at least in part. Niti Sambad reports that Niti Sambad has held one reflection and analysis discussion (RAD) among all three country CEPPS partners, in April 2020 (after the evaluation team’s data collection and initial drafting of this report). In addition, some among the three Niti Sambad partners have held their own separate RAD sessions during the life of the project, with each organization’s M&E coordinator leading the discussion. The evaluation team has not conducted an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness or perceived value of the RADs, but Niti Sambad does dedicate time and effort to periodic internal reviews of progress.

In summary, Niti Sambad's objectives remain clearly relevant to the evolving Nepali political landscape. The pressing strategic issue for Niti Sambad and activity stakeholders is the appropriate scope and level of expectation to be placed upon Niti Sambad for addressing the risk of democratic backsliding over the remainder of the project period. Niti Sambad approaches to date may be viewed as helpful and positive contributions in this effort, but it appears more will be necessary within and beyond Niti Sambad to counter the concerning issues and trends identified in this chapter.

4.4 EVAL QUESTION 4: The CAPACITY OF THE ELECTION COMMISSION OF NEPAL

EQ4: As a result of Niti Sambad's support, is the ECN’s capacity reaching a point of becoming a credible election body, and is it showing signs of becoming less dependent on future USG or other foreign government support?

EQ4a. If the ECN is still dependent on USG or other outside resources, do you see the ECN ever reaching a point in the future to become less dependent on donor support?

Niti Sambad’s delivery of assistance to the ECN has been through the work of Niti Sambad partner IFES, which is building upon assistance provided by it (and the Electoral Support Project, UNCP-ESP) from earlier years (The ESP is scheduled to terminate in CY 2020).¹⁸ As

¹⁸ The ESP is funded by the European Union, UK DFID, Danida, Norway, and the UNDP.
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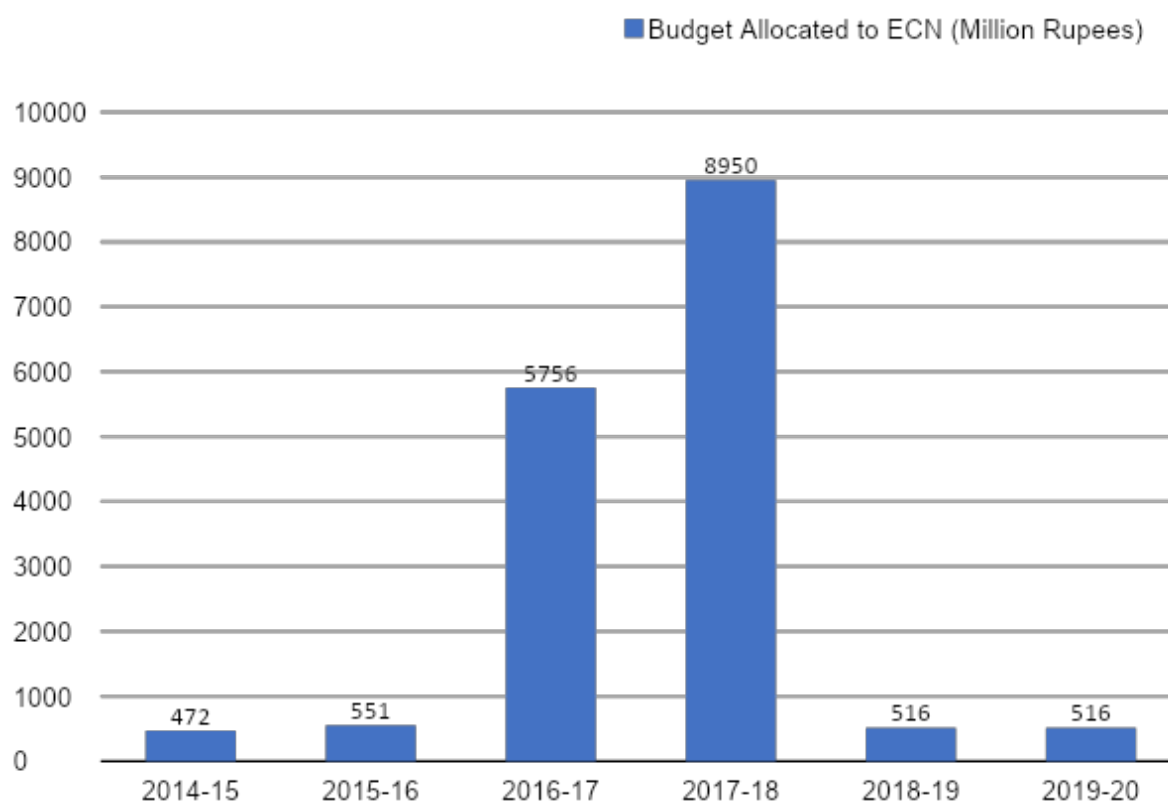
noted in section 4.1 above, IFES's assistance during the first half of Niti Sambat has been effective and broadly appreciated by ECN leadership and staff as well as CSOs and local partners. EQ 4 asks about ECN's credibility as an electoral administration body and its longer-term capacity to continue a path of facilitating free and fair elections in Nepal. We analyze this in terms of ECN-related constraints and opportunities.

The role and contribution of IFES have been good, especially in the field of capacity building of CSOs and the ECN.

- A leader of a CSO active in voters' rights

The evaluation team's "topline" finding for this evaluation question is that while ECN is capable of continuing as a credible election administration body, the challenges it faces are substantial enough to warrant significant donor assistance for the next several years.

Figure 2: GON Budget Allocated to ECN



ECN Constraints

ECN Independence: Despite its independent status constitutionally, in practice the ECN is neither independent nor autonomous.¹⁹ Critically, under current law and government practice, it has limited effective input to its year-by-year resource levels. As indicated in Figure 2,

¹⁹ The ACE Electoral Knowledge Network refers to "structural" and "behavioral" independence of electoral management bodies. The most widely used understanding of independence is structural, in which the electoral body is free of strictures from the executive branch of government, based on constitutional mandate. Behavioral independence means that an electoral body enjoys freedom of decisions and action, regardless of what may be said in a constitution. In the case of the ECN, the evaluation team views its independence as quite limited, in structural as well as behavioral aspects. See ACE, "EMB Independence and the Mid-term Performance Evaluation of Niti Sambat"

displaying data on budgets allocated to the ECN, the budget was far higher in and near the major election year of 2017 relative to other recent years. Its funding is inadequate in non-election years to meet the needs to sustain effective electoral administration when election periods come. Such activities include improvements to technology and software (such as the IEIMS, the Integrated Electoral Information Management System) as well as voter and civic education programs.

In addition, the routine GON practice of frequent staff turnover, particularly at senior levels, undermines ECN independence from the executive branch as well as continuity of both policy and practice at the ECN, as well as the sustainability of Niti Sambad's assistance. Particularly given the challenges of democratic backsliding noted in Section 4.3 above, staff turnover and budget volatility combine to substantially inhibit the ECN's capacity to ensure effective and legitimate democratic elections in the future.

Timing of elections: ECN lacks the ability to act, when needed, more as a referee and not merely as a facilitator in electoral competitions. One aspect of this is ECN's lack of control over when elections are held. The Nepali system is parliamentary, but the ECN can get "played" by parties and politicians who can benefit by calling elections so abruptly (close to the actual voting day) so that ECN (and competing parties) are caught off guard.

In Nepal the concept of electoral democracy is not actually practiced. The main motive of political parties is to win elections; therefore, the election process is becoming more corrupted.

-An expert familiar with ECN strategy and activities

According to one interview source, during his or her 12-year tenure at ECN, 12 ECN Secretaries were transferred. Members of the Commission have told us there is need for "major reform" regarding staff transfers.

Also, during one of the team's interviews with ECN staff, one of the senior-level participants noted in passing that he was scheduled to transfer out of ECN at the end of the month.

Law enforcement: Another aspect of the referee's role is the enforcement of electoral and party laws. These laws are intended to regulate such matters as party behavior near and at the electoral date, the cordoning of voting centers and security in place at the centers, use of children in campaign events, and party and campaign financing. Multiple interview sources, within and beyond the ECN, noted that ECN (including its election officer in the districts) lacks the regulatory platform and political weight to enforce electoral law, particularly in remote areas, effectively.

I have a mixed reaction regarding conformance to the code of conduct by political parties. At the time of an election (during the action period), ECN contacts all the top leaders of the political parties and receives their commitment to follow the code of conduct. But in the field, the scenario is different and all the political parties, including government, try to violate code of conduct . . . Generally, the parties in government will not follow the code of conduct, but opposition parties follow it as they have no resources [to do otherwise].

-A senior member of the ECN staff

"Origin of Independent Election Commissions," <http://aceproject.org/electoral-advice/archive/questions/replies/156664001>, retrieved March 29, 2020.

Information technology (IT): While progress has been made with IT systems to support key ECN functions, much remains to be done. If the venue for vote counting is changed so that counting takes place at voting centers, for example (as Niti Sambad has advised), this will call for information systems capable of quickly and accurately recording votes, tabulating them and making the results available transparently and securely. Some sources (including more than one at ECN) favor the use of electronic voting machines to help meet this and other needs, but political observers and voters in many countries are aware of the security and accuracy risks associated with such machines. Regardless of how this issue may be resolved in Nepal, the ECN experience to date with IT is encouraging but still mixed. The party and campaign data system, for example, has called for considerable effort and is functional, but an ECN source noted that the system is not a “silver bullet” that will address all issues related to campaign financing. In addition, the source told the team that as of February 2020, the financing data from the 2017 election had still not been entered completely into the system.²⁰ This suggests some limitations may be present in (a) the quality of data in the system and (b) the broader capability of ECN to effectively and efficiently use a primary data system without more substantial ramp-up and maintenance support. Based on this information, the evaluation team finds that the ECN campaign financing data system needs review in regard to the accuracy of the data it contains and the utility of the database as a tool in enforcing campaign finance law.

Voter and civic education: Keeping voters informed of how to register for, and vote in, elections, and educating citizens on the rationale and impact of voting, and more broadly of participating in democratic institutions, is a key element in building sustainability into democratic elections, and ECN holds responsibility for forwarding voter and civic education. These activities clearly help to empower voters and legitimize ECN. Properly scaling up both of these, but especially civic education, is a challenge, however. Voter education efforts have been delivering awareness building in schools, and a similar program has been implemented through “Election and Democracy” sessions in cooperation with the DEOs. However, the coverage is limited, reaching only a tiny fraction of prospective voters.²¹

IFES clearly has delivered results, but is this sufficient? If voter education covers 2 percent of voters, where are we?

-A USAID/Nepal staff member

Individuals from a variety of backgrounds (civil society, local government, and ECN) have reported to the evaluation team that there is a growing demand for civic education. Those who have delivered voter education have noted that, while the voter education content is useful, it leaves participants curious and eager to learn more about how they might select the best candidate in an election, interact with the government, and express their interests and concerns to elected officials. Promising initiatives in civic education have been carried out with Niti Sambad support in secondary schools (Grades 9-10) and at the university level. However, again,

²⁰ Niti Sambad noted that data entry has been completed in 76 (out of 77) districts. ECN will analyze the data and produce a campaign finance report on the 2017 elections. Niti Sambad and ECN plan to review the system after the report has been finished.

²¹ In its most recent annual report, Niti Sambad notes that 371,235 individuals received civic education via the project in FY 2019. This represents only those reached through voter education subawards. It is not inclusive of ECN’s voter education reach. These also only represent the people that Niti Sambad and its local partners interacted directly with (person to person). Many more were reached indirectly or were exposed to mass media voter education that Niti Sambad was not able to accurately track in the M&E data. For context, the total number of registered voters in Nepal (as of June 20, 2018) was 12,200,000. See <http://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/151/> (retrieved May 3, 2020).

scaling up, while maintaining acceptable quality in content and pedagogy, remains a challenge. ECN has reported it has plans to engage local governments to help in civic and voter education, but these plans were too preliminary during the evaluation team's data collection to allow further analysis of the prospects.

Finally, as noted in Section 4.2, GESI-related efforts at ECN appear to have deteriorated. This is a concern since an electoral administration body should be at the forefront of ensuring constitutionally guaranteed rights of marginalized populations.

ECN Opportunities

Success with the three-tiered 2017 elections, as well as the 2020 National Assembly election, are foundations for legitimacy and improved agency at ECN. The 2017 elections were not perfect, but they showed that a critical election could be held in a reasonably transparent and a fair way. One sign of the optimistic yet mixed picture is the turnout level and extent of invalid ballots in the most recent general election. In the 2017 FPTP elections, for example, about 68.7 percent of registered voters cast their ballots; about 5.2 percent of the total votes cast were invalid.²² This is a high level of turnout, but the percentage of invalid ballots also is high.

The integrated election law: ECN, Niti Sambad, and partners are making real progress in consolidating the election laws. As of this writing, the draft integrated election law includes reforms to increase the independence of the ECN, and address the timing of elections to allow the ECN to set the election date. It also calls for stronger campaign finance reporting regulations. Observers expect that FP will consider the integrated election bill during the summer of 2020 or the session following.

The integrated election law is expected to address the challenge of *campaign financing*, but the extent to which this will be addressed adequately remains to be seen. As we have noted, current modes and levels of campaign financing appear to elicit inequality in access to campaign resources, discourage prospective candidates (perhaps especially among women and marginalized groups), and (according to informed interview sources) deliver a chilling effect to prospective candidates who otherwise might run for office. To the extent that the integrated election law, as passed, empowers ECN to clarify and strengthen effective enforcement of campaign financing laws that can address these issues, the Commission is faced with a major opportunity for improvement in the equality and transparency of democratic elections.

While content and scale can be improved, the delivery of *voter and civic education* is an important step forward. Some groups, especially those located in remote areas, have noted that use of voter and civic education in local languages is still needed. But other participants told the evaluation team that the use of local languages and pictorial information, education, and communication (IEC) materials were very helpful to them in learning how to vote and understanding the electoral process.

²²ECN Election Result Book from the 2017 elections:

<http://www.election.gov.np/ecn/uploads/userfiles/ElectionResultBook/HoR2074.pdf>. Some research suggests that instead of indicating an uninformed or insufficiently trained electorate, invalid ballots may reflect a political environment that offers voters little effective choice in the form of clear and attractive alternatives. See F. Ugglä, "Incompetence, alienation, or calculation? Explaining levels of invalid ballots and extra-parliamentary votes." *Comparative Political Studies*, Vol. 4, Issue 8 (2008): 1141-1164.

Finally, the Supreme Court has called upon ECN to implement *out-of-country voting* for Nepalis residing overseas. Online voting is one of the options the ECN is considering for out-of-country voting, but the Commission is still in the early stages of assessing the viability of this option. The technical approach for addressing this mandate remains to be identified and implemented. Regardless of the approach developed in response to this mandate, it nevertheless pushes equality of access to elections to a next step and could facilitate consideration of a more broad-based application of online voting.

Question: If you had to choose 1 or 2 things that are most important for ECN and relevant to donor assistance, what would these be? Answer: *“Massive civic and voter education and capacity building of CSOs for civic and voter education.”*

-A senior member of ECN staff

The Future of ECN Sustainability

Clearly, the ECN can become less dependent on donor support, but the concern of the evaluation team is that the challenges or opportunities may not be addressed if donor support were to be reduced. The ECN is unlikely to simply “wither away” if donor support were to be substantially diminished; as this report has suggested, ECN is a facilitator of elections and, therefore, serves as a legitimization instrument of the state (no matter who may be in charge of the state). This suggests that as an institution, ECN will indeed continue, regardless of its sources of financial or technical support. However, the need for development partner support for the next three to five years is significant and critical.²³

Given the current state of affairs, elections can be held by ECN and the government without external support, but in order to maintain the quality of elections there is scope and space for external support. We are not in a position to say when ECN will become sustainable, as there is no full government ownership of this process.

-A senior member of ECN staff

Until some essential next steps in electoral capacity (in the areas of challenge and opportunity identified above) are achieved, an exit plan is not constructive. Within five years or so (for example, by close of a follow-on to Niti Sambad), a coherent and realistic plan for a substantial reduction in donor support could be developed, with leading input from ECN.

4.5 EVAL QUESTION 5: NITI SAMBAD SUSTAINABILITY BENCHMARKS

EQ5: Are the sustainability benchmarks of Niti Sambad progressing?

EQ5a: If so, how?

EQ5b: If not, what adjustments are required to ensure that Niti Sambad is on track to meet these benchmarks?

Before exploring the Niti Sambad sustainability benchmarks and related aspects of Niti Sambad sustainability efforts, it would be useful to clarify what is meant by sustainability in this context.

²³ For details on ECN challenges, see the paragraphs above, as well as sections 4.2 and 4.3.

USAID ADS 201 states that it is “the ability of a local system to produce desired outcomes over time. Programs contribute to sustainability when they strengthen the system’s ability to produce valued results and to be both resilient and adaptive in the face of changing circumstances.”²⁴ For this evaluation, then, sustainability engages a broad range of changes in local counterpart institutions and individuals, well beyond the readiness of one or more interventions to be continued with only local financial support.

The Sustainability Benchmarks

Niti Sambad’s sustainability benchmarks are documented in the activity’s Sustainability Matrix, the most recent available version of which is provided on pages 53-57 of the Niti Sambad *MEL Plan* (February 2019). The Matrix includes 62 sustainability benchmarks. Each one is associated with a Niti Sambad activity and has one or more of the five Niti Sambad project years associated with its achievement.

At the time of the evaluation, Niti Sambad had no documented analysis of the status of progress vis-à-vis the benchmarks. The Niti Sambad FY2020 *Annual Plan* states that Niti Sambad plans to develop tracking mechanisms for sustainability metrics and a template for partner reporting on these metrics. These will be particularly helpful steps in monitoring Niti Sambad’s expectations regarding the sustainability of program results. The illustrative issues described in Table 4 suggest, however, that before Niti Sambad proceeds with arranging for tracking mechanisms for the benchmarks, it would benefit from reviewing the continued relevance of the benchmarks themselves to Niti Sambad activities and the readiness of the benchmarks for measurement.

Table 5. The Niti Sambad Sustainability Matrix: Some Issues²⁵

Benchmark (Identified by NS Activity)	Period Identified	Comment
1.1.1.1: Adaptable training manuals on voter education and registration enable ECN to conduct future training programs for election staff	Year 5	Would the provision of training manuals in itself enable ECN to conduct the training sessions? What else might be needed?
1.1.1.4: ECN sensitized on the needs of women and marginalized groups in the electoral process	Year 2	Sensitization usually involves formal training and perhaps awareness-building exercises. To what extent would we know that such sensitization has delivered something of lasting effect?
1.1.2.3: Tracking system for political finance and abuse of state resources enables ECN to monitor and enforce regulations on politicians and political parties	Year 2	The goal of the tracking system would be for ECN to enforce the applicable regulations. To what extent would the establishment of a tracking system actually enable ECN to carry out such enforcement?
1.2.1.3: Increased communication between participating MPs and their constituents and increased use of constituent input to push issues and concerns both with	Years 2-5	It is not clear how this benchmark differs from a Niti Sambad sub-result. The benchmark may need to be supported by a statement explaining how, or under what circumstances, the increased communication and increased use of citizen input delivers a sustainable outcome.

²⁴ USAID, *ADS Chapter 201, Program Cycle Operational Policy*, partial revision, December 23, 2019, p. 158.

²⁵ The issues in this table are presented for illustrative purposes only and are not intended as a comprehensive analysis of the Niti Sambad sustainability benchmarks.

Benchmark (Identified by NS Activity)	Period Identified	Comment
local representatives and with the national government, as well as specific legislation		
1.2.2.5: Relationships between national and sub-national legislative parliaments (LPs), political stakeholders, think tanks, and research institutions are strengthened through policy research forums	Years 2-5	Establishing the forums would not necessarily be the same as strengthening (sustainable) relationships. How will the relationship-strengthening be measured?
1.3.1.2: Increased engagement between NRA staff and citizens in earthquake-affected districts on key issues	Years 3-5	How will increased engagement (for sustainability) be measured?
2.1.10: Mentorship program starts functioning without oversight from CEPDS/NDI	Year 3	A program component operating without the necessity of oversight from the assisting Niti Sambad partner can be a useful sign of sustainability. Some measure of the quality or effectiveness of the independent functioning would be informative.

Source: Niti Sambad, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Plan (February 2019, columns 1, 2) and evaluation team analysis (column 3).

Some of the benchmarks in the Sustainability Matrix represent the idea that getting good habits started with local counterparts helps to establish a foundation for longer-term continuance of such habits. An example is supporting MPs to allocate constituency development funds in accord with commitments they have made to local forums, instead of allocating these resources traditionally with privileged insiders in mind. There is good development thinking in such an approach. There also is a risk in that it can be difficult to know the difference between long-term and sudden changes in behavior.

Another approach, evident in some of the Niti Sambad benchmarks, is to monitor when program-assisted groups conduct outcome-oriented activities increasingly on their own without Niti Sambad's support. This also is a constructive way of tracking progress toward sustainability. To the extent that there is evidence of the institutionalization of independently driven actions pointed toward Niti Sambad's results or objectives, there is some assurance that sustainability could hold over time.

Finally, the matrix would benefit from a more concerted approach to the sustainability of GESI-related results. Included in the matrix are benchmarks for Activities 1.1.1.4, addressing ECN sensitization on needs of marginalized groups, and 2.1.4, dealing with parties' capacity to develop policies in a more inclusive and participatory manner. As noted in Table 4, sensitization activities in themselves carry no guarantee of lasting impact. Additionally, to track increased inclusivity and participation in party processes, measurement criteria will need to be identified and applied in Niti Sambad's sustainability tracking.

Signs of Sustainability

Given the identified need for Niti Sambad to consider and update the benchmarks, the evaluation team has elected not to attempt a "line by line" review of the status of each benchmark; instead, the team offers a more qualitative view of Niti Sambad's status on

sustainability. With political parties, progress has been made in raising awareness of participative approaches and policy effectiveness with some members of the parties Niti Sambad has worked with. Challenges remain in some instances: top leaders have been known to use Niti Sambad's support to benefit their supporters or to strengthen their factional base. Such practices are unlikely to foster longer-term sustainability of intended results.

Niti Sambad has helped our capacity building to a certain extent. The question is to what extent these practices have been institutionalized. That depends on the party, and in that sense [our party] is weak. At the individual levels there is capacity, but the party has not institutionalized it.

-An MP from a Niti Sambad-assisted party

With the ECN, the assistance with integration of electoral law portends to offer lasting, constructive impact on election administration, with secondary incentive effects on parties and political candidates. Some modest beginnings on voter and civic education, as well as IT support in key areas, all forward sustainability, but on a somewhat fragile basis (see section 4.4 above for details). With the FP, inroads have clearly been made in furthering the institutional strength of parliament, and enhancing knowledge and awareness of MPs and staff do forward sustainability of Niti Sambad results, but there remains a notable distance to go before sustainable Niti Sambad results in the legislative sphere can be recognized.

More broadly, the steps to sustainability include building awareness and mobilizing financial and human resources, in various ways and forms. Sustainability of Niti Sambad's results depends on long-term capacity and commitment of (a) government institutions, (b) parties, and (c) partner civil society organizations.

On the parts of government and parties, ultimately, it is a matter of supporting political will in favor of supporting more democratized processes and structures. For CSOs, the challenges are especially difficult. In the end, improvements in institutional capacity in CSOs – financially, in leadership capability, accountability, transparency, and program effectiveness -- takes some level of sustained external support in these areas, in combination with committed CSO leadership and a supportive government policy environment for CSOs.

Building Sustainability Takes Time

I hope that even though the current [FP committee] chairpersons may no longer remain chairpersons, they could still have other roles. An awareness of the process would remain. I think this is going to be a generational process.

-Someone close to Niti Sambad's work with Parliament committees

If we want to make democracy long lasting and effective, we need to work for a long time and donors also need to think in such a way.

-Leader of a CSO active in voter education

5. CONCLUSIONS

EQ 1. To what extent is the project on track to reach its intermediate results and overall goal? What are the primary obstacles and enabling factors (e.g., country context, adoption of USAID new strategic initiatives) in achieving intermediate results and goals (programmatic and operational level)?

Niti Sambad's activities generally have been well received by counterparts and beneficiaries, and the evaluation team views the activity as on track, but with reservations, as noted below. Training sessions across the board could be longer and more detailed; more FP committees could be engaged, but overall resources appear to have been prudently invested, and trusting work relationships have been established or reinforced.

Within this context, Niti Sambad has faced notable obstacles in achieving planned results, particularly in support of policy research and the provincial assemblies, but most of these have been based externally in the country context. Some beneficiaries and observers have noted occasional limitations of technical knowledge or skill among Niti Sambad in-country staff.

These limitations appear not to be structural deficiencies in implementation, but rather areas in which Niti Sambad staff may not have sufficient experience or training to address them adequately. This includes strategic (rather than tactical or logistical) partnering with civil society organizations, and fully engaging local interests or concerns into activities held in the provinces.

Niti Sambad's performance vis-à-vis formal targets has been mixed. Moreover, the existing group of operable indicators is rather thin, with an emphasis on activity outputs rather than outcomes. No performance indicators are used to track progress on the two Niti Sambad Objectives, and only one indicator is used to track progress at any level under Objective 2 (which captures results of assistance to the political parties). This places limitations on available information regarding the extent to which the activity is reaching its intermediate results and its two higher-level objectives.

Leveraging opportunities as they arise, can lead to a “shotgun” approach to interventions, with relatively isolated spots of progress in a larger environment of pressing need. Given the evolving federal environment for political activity, the last half of Niti Sambad may be an appropriate period for more focus on a select group of counterparts to forward key Niti Sambad results intended to support the effective implementation of federalism.

EQ 2. How effective is the project in engaging women, youth, Dalits, and other marginalized groups to contribute to the development of national politics? Have other types of opportunities emerged as a result of the engagement of historically marginalized communities by Niti Sambad partners (NDI, IFES, and IRI)?

Marginalized communities' political participation is given high priority in Niti Sambad's activities. Members of these communities recognize and appreciate this and find the modes of engaging marginalized groups to be valuable. Additionally, the overall portfolio of Niti Sambad activities fits the Nepali context of diversity and inclusion, and Niti Sambad's objectives appear to cohere with aspirations of marginalized populations.

Relative to the level of need in Nepal for marginalized people for strengthened political voice, however, the scale of these activities is small. “Islands” of effective voice are identifiable in localities where Niti Sambad has delivered assistance and support.

Community engagement events, such as THMs, generally have been received well, but they can benefit from more community-level input, including that from marginalized populations.

Regarding Niti Sambad more broadly, relatively accessible people have been approached by Niti Sambad’s activities, but those with more severe marginalization (e.g., with severe physical disabilities) have by and large not been reached.

In addition, diversity *within* categories of Niti Sambad’s marginalized program participants (intersectionality) could be addressed more assertively. Women with disabilities, and women of this group who may be Dalit or Muslim, are an example of groups with multiple marginalities. Niti Sambad does have an active program (“Power to Persuade”) with NDWA, that focuses on leadership and advocacy needs of women with disabilities, but as noted above, the evaluation team found that the intersectionality present in this group is more challenging than has been addressed thus far. Such groups likely would benefit from programming that is more customized to their diverse needs.

Finally, building higher levels of quality of Niti Sambad engagement with marginalized populations calls for occasional high-level technical input to strengthen Niti Sambad’s approaches.

EQ 3. Given the project is at the half-way point, are the current objectives of the project still relevant to Nepal’s new federal political development? What new challenges to political development and electoral administration do you see, which are not addressed by the project? Have Niti Sambad partners made adjustments to the project base on understanding of new challenges emerging?

Overall, the broader Niti Sambad objectives are still relevant in the changing context and given emergent challenges. Niti Sambad has made some programming adjustments in response to changing circumstances, but gaps remain vis-à-vis some major challenges that lie ahead in electoral administration, intraparty inclusiveness, and implementation of federalism.

Adequately addressing observed and possible future democratic backsliding in Nepal lies outside the scope of Niti Sambad or its follow-on since this “heavy lift” would likely require strategic collaboration with other USAID activities or other development partners.

Reform in the parties is especially important. If reform in elections (including campaign financing) or in the effectiveness of federal and provincial legislative bodies were to be accomplished without notable progress with issues of transparency and inclusiveness within the political parties, the reforms might not be sufficient to counter overall democratic backsliding toward more authoritarian modes of political decision making.

In the short term (approximately two years), more tangible results are likely in relation to elections and legislative bodies. The democratization of political parties, however, is a longer-term process.

EQ 4. As a result of Niti Sambad's support, is the ECN's capacity reaching a point of becoming a credible election body, and is it showing signs of becoming less dependent on future USG or other foreign government support? If the ECN is still dependent on USG and other outside resources, do you see the ECN ever reaching a point in the future to become less dependent on donor support?

Some clear Niti Sambad achievements are evident in enhancing ECN capacity, but the remaining agenda for electoral reform and sustainable, effective electoral administration is multi-faceted and substantial.

Niti Sambad likely cannot provide assistance at the levels ECN seeks and needs. A multi-donor effort may be needed to meet these needs more fully.

EQ 5. Are the sustainability benchmarks of Niti Sambad progressing? If so, how? If not, what adjustments are required to ensure Niti Sambad is on track to meet those benchmarks?

With direct reference to the formal Niti Sambad sustainability benchmarks (as described in its Sustainability Matrix), there is little to no evidence of progress. The benchmarks are misspecified to be logically attached to the respective tasks that Niti Sambad engages in; completing a project activity is no guarantee for sustainable results. As we have noted, Niti Sambad plans to review and update its sustainability benchmarks. Pending this review, the design and measurement deficiencies with the benchmarks prohibit analysis of sustainability using the benchmarks as a source.

Beyond the benchmarks, the evaluation team observed signs of sustainability of results in some areas, such as assistance with the electoral law and advocacy and leadership training sessions with a variety of beneficiary groups. One notable factor shared in all of these cases is that Niti Sambad's efforts have built upon earlier successes achieved by USAID activities that preceded Niti Sambad. ECN had built sustainability into its work, with USAID help, for years previous, and many of the civil society and advocacy groups Niti Sambad has worked with were partners in earlier, similar projects. This suggests that sustainable results are built upon mature, longer-term relationships (a principle generally familiar to development professionals).

Steps to the sustainability of Niti Sambad program results, as in other sustainability promotion efforts, likely would include building local awareness and mobilizing financial and human resources. For government institutions and parties, sustainability depends heavily on local political will in supporting more democratized processes and structures. For CSOs, the challenges are especially difficult. In the end, institutional capacity improvement takes some level of external support, committed CSO leadership, and a supportive government policy environment for CSOs.

Niti Smbad plans to develop tracking mechanisms for sustainability metrics and a template for partner reporting in FY 2020. The benchmarks need review and updating, however, before the tracking and reporting proceed.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

A. For Niti Sambad:

1. Continue with the main streams of intervention and major counterparts and partners that it has been working with up to this point.
2. Discuss with USAID ways in which the project might increase its strategic focus, looking for opportunities to scale up some interventions that appear successful but quite limited in scale. These may include, for example, civic education, assistance to the FP and PAs on coordinative actions in support of federalism, and support to strengthening the FP's role in developing delegated legislation.
3. In collaboration with USAID, carry out a comprehensive review and update of Niti Sambad program performance indicators, with the comments in the evaluation report's Chapter 4 in mind. Indicators need to cover the full range of Niti Sambad's expected results, and performance targets need to be challenging but attainable.
4. Consider a more substantial investment in accessing technical expertise (local or international) in some specialized areas, such as the effective engagement of persons with multiple marginalized statuses.
5. Place more effort on addressing intersectionality in targeting of beneficiaries.
6. Build upon the upcoming integrated election law to help strengthen GESI in ECN. Work with ECN and FP (including the State Affairs and Governance Committee, which oversees ECN) to support a) representation of women and other marginalized populations on the commission itself; and (b) more assertive oversight of ECN with regard to its recognition of the continued needs of marginalized populations in issues, such as voter and civic education, overseas voting, and campaign financing.
7. Mainstream a GESI perspective in various Niti Sambad-supported policy briefing papers and legal reviews. This means that products, such as policy briefing papers, should be encouraged to feature, not just women or minorities as topics, but should address structures and systems that perpetuate inequality or discrimination. Tokenism needs to be avoided.
8. Pilot expanded use of local (non-Nepali) languages, targeted to members of more remote communities, in delivery of voter education, civic education, and electoral/political awareness programs.
9. Invest in working on political violence against women pre-, during, and post-election and strengthen the capacity of ECN in monitoring political financing and political violence against women and other marginalized people.
10. Use existing Niti Sambad strength to more assertively communicate analysis and information about policies (e.g., analysis done for THMs) to the general public, above and beyond THMs and PWGs to strengthen democratic dialogue overall.
11. Look for further opportunities to support broadened effective participation in political processes surrounding the implementation of federalism. Some advancement has been made in this area through Niti Sambad's provincial-level constitutional dialogues in partnership with the FP Law, Justice, and Human Rights Committee, as well as the Supreme Court Bar Association. Further work could include, for example, engaging FP and PA members as well as local observers and activists on policy topics of shared interest.
12. Apply a more focused, strategic approach to political party support. New areas of emphasis could include enhancing civil society and political party linkages, supporting effective voice by marginalized people in parties, enhancing communications between

parties and voters through mass communications and social media, and deepening of democratic processes in parties.

13. Similarly, using the positive Niti Sambad working relationship with ECN, collaborate with ECN to build stronger quality assurance into its data systems, including especially the campaign finance system.
14. Before developing mechanisms for tracking progress on Niti Sambad sustainability benchmarks, review and revise the benchmarks themselves for (a) current relevance to Niti Sambad's objectives and activities and (b) measurability.

B. For USAID:

1. In the spirit of maximally leveraging Niti Sambad's strategic results, consult with Niti Sambad, other USAID implementing partners, and other international development organizations to identify ways in which Niti Sambad achievements could be scaled up so that the impact of interventions might acquire greater national and structural significance. The scaling up may call for more refined targeting of local partners, areas of geographical presence, and beneficiary groups.
2. USAID should work with Niti Sambad: USAID should support Niti Sambad to closely review Niti Sambad's performance indicators, targets, and sustainability benchmarks to ensure they sufficiently capture intended results for the rest of the activity's period of performance.

APPENDIX A: EVALUATION STATEMENT OF WORK (SOW)

Mid-Term Evaluation for USAID/Nepal Niti Sambad “Policy Dialogue” STATEMENT OF WORK (SOW)

Niti Sambad Identification Data

Project Title: Niti Sambad “Policy Dialogue”

Award No: AID-367-LA-17-00001

Life of Project: July 24, 2017 - July 22, 2022.

Implementing partner: Consortium for Elections and Political Processes Strengthening (CEPPS)

Project Funding: \$20,000,000

Agreement Officer’s Representative: Ramesh Adhikari

Alternate Agreement Officer’s Representative: Stephan Guertin

BACKGROUND:

Since the end of Nepal’s civil war in 2006, the country has made substantial progress in constructing a more orderly and inclusive society. The new constitution, adopted in September 2015, paves the way for a decentralized governance structure, which promises relief for the nation’s many ethnic communities that have long been politically marginalized. Challenges remain, however, and increasing the accountability and responsiveness of the country’s political institutions is needed to avert backsliding and a return to the political turmoil of the past.

With federal and provincial elections scheduled to take place before January 2018 and the constitutionally mandated transition to federalism was underway, Nepal’s political institutions were to be tested on their ability to decentralize and increase their responsiveness to the public. The Consortium for Elections and Political Process Strengthening (CEPPS) - consisting of the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the National Democratic Institute, and the International Republican Institute - has identified three interrelated programmatic areas that best address Nepal’s current needs: improving governance systems to increase transparency, inclusivity, and accountability with the Legislative Parliament (LP); supporting the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) to institutionalize electoral best practices; and empowering political parties to function more effectively, inclusively, and efficiently. Program activities were to support greater transparency and commitment to accountability for government agencies.

Project Objectives:

The five-year Niti Sambat project is designed to advance a more democratic, prosperous, and resilient Nepal by strengthening inclusion and participation in political processes. This program will support democratic institutions, strengthen inclusion into political processes, and harness political competition as an effective vehicle through which citizens can democratically choose their leaders who will, in turn, set a policy agenda responsive to the needs of the public.

The two principal objectives of the program include:

Objective 1: Nepal's political transition process supported in order to institutionalize a more inclusive, effective, and democratic political governance.

Objective 2: Nepal's political parties function more inclusively and transparently, and are more accountable to and representative of their constituents on national policy issues

The program was designed under the following overarching **theory of change** (TOC):

IF Nepali electoral institutions institutionalize electoral best practices, *AND* political parties, legislators, and government officials improve and reform internal processes to ensure that all groups, especially women and other marginalized groups, are included in the governance process, *AND* women and other marginalized groups develop a stronger and more organized voice within political parties that can be used to provide feedback to their representatives in the federal parliament, and national and local government bodies on decisions that affect their lives, *THEN* greater citizen participation and credible elections will increase the responsiveness of public officials and better enable citizens to hold elected officials accountable. This will be manifested in government policy outcomes that better respond to citizen concerns, political party programs and policies that reflect citizen needs, and increased citizen engagement in electoral and political processes.

The geographic scope for Niti Sambat is countrywide in general, and some selected districts for CSO led component of civic and voter education.

Results Framework:

Objective 1: Nepal's political transition process supported in order to institutionalize a more inclusive, effective, and democratic political governance		
Result 1.1: Nepal's electoral system holds credible elections and is less dependent on donor support to continue carrying out its mandate of allowing citizens to exercise choice to select leaders peacefully and democratically at each level of government	Result 1.2: Members of parliament and future legislative bodies are capable of improving policy, monitoring implementation, and more effective in national decision-making.	Result 1.3: New political processes under the constitution's implementation are transparent and widely communicated within and outside the government
Objective 2: Nepal's political parties function more inclusively and transparently, and are more accountable to and representative of their constituents on national policy issues		
Result 2.1: Political parties adopt more democratic internal structures to enhance their accountability and integrity to Nepali voters in and between elections	Result 2.2: Political parties, including their candidates, articulate better-formed policy positions to enhance voters' opportunities to select and hold accountable their representatives in and between competitive elections	

Key Activities of the Project:

Objective 1:

- Design and implement inclusive civic and voter education campaigns.
- Conduct an assessment of the ECN's voter list system.
- Provide technical guidance on out-of-country and absentee/advance voting.
- Improve the gender responsiveness of the ECN.
- Conduct leadership training for persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen the electoral legal framework.
- Improve the institutional capacity of the ECN.
- Assess and develop recommendations on political finance and abuse of state resources.
- Develop election dispute resolution procedures.
- Conduct post-election assessments to identify lessons learned.
- Conduct post-election town hall meetings.
- Solicit citizen input through town hall meetings and public policy forums.
- Support parliamentary monitoring of elected representatives.
- Improve constituent relations.

- Organize orientation for new federal-level MPs.
- Consult on the policy formulation process.
- Provide legislative research and policy analysis trainings.
- Support the development of a policy research board.
- Conduct policy research forums.
- Organize targeted policy studies.
- Provide technical assistance to parliamentary committees.
- Conduct an assessment of the parliament secretariat.
- Develop an orientation curriculum and platform for newly elected sub-national officials.
- Conduct dialogues on federal governance to solidify peer-to-peer networks.
- Develop a unified and inclusive communications strategy and media policy (PMO, NRA, MOIC).
- Develop an ECN media policy.
- Conduct citizen outreach.

Objective 2

- Engage senior party leadership in the Niti Sambahad program.
- Develop national-level policy working groups and provincial focal persons.
- Assess party policy development capacity.
- Establish a women's policy forum.
- Conduct an assessment of violence against women in political parties.
- Conduct candidate training for women and other marginalized groups.
- Organize policy debates between candidates or elected officials.
- Organize post-election orientation for women and other marginalized group office holders at the local level.
- Establish a women in politics mentorship program.
- Analyze current political party laws.
- Support PWG in policy development.
- Conduct focus group research.

Technical Approach of the Project:

CEPPS' approach to the Niti Sambahad program recognizes the complex and fragile political environment in Nepal and builds upon the partners' decades of experience working in the country and USAID's identified principles of engagement. The program scope and interrelated nature of activities and objectives will require close coordination among CEPPS partners. The Niti Sambahad program incorporates cross-cutting approaches and priorities, such as flexibility of program design, research, and the inclusion of women and other marginalized groups.

Flexibility of Program Design: Building on its experience in Nepal, CEPPS has designed the Niti Sambahad program to be flexible, allowing it to quickly respond to any changes in the political and security environment. CEPPS has outlined its proposed activities based on immediate priorities and the current operating environment. Using evaluations and public opinion research—and in consultation with USAID—CEPPS will reevaluate the operating environment and the functioning and receptivity of its institutional partners during the work plan process each year. For example, should provincial and/or federal level elections be delayed or do not take place during a work plan period, CEPPS/NDI would increase its focus on political parties to ensure they have realistic, responsive and feasible policy platforms. CEPPS/NDI would assist parties to build their capacity to develop outreach messages and increase membership and support bases.

On the parliamentary level, activities would focus on increasing support for: the review and analysis of new legislation; parliamentary committee oversight of laws passed; constituency outreach; and town hall meetings. CEPPS/NDI's support to the NRA and PMO will not be affected by election delays and will remain focused on enhancing the streamlining of government communication.

In addition, as outlined in the MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning) Plan, CEPPS commits to collaborating, learning, and adapting (CLA) as a strategic priority for the Consortium. This will be accomplished by using analysis of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) data to identify trends, lessons learned, and best practices to inform programmatic approaches. CEPPS' approach to CLA will include engagement with stakeholders, including the ECN, elected officials, government agencies, and political parties, to ensure that the program adapts its approaches as conditions on the ground merit to meet program objectives or respond to emerging opportunities.

Research: As part of the *Niti Sambad* program, CEPPS will carry out approximately three coordinated national public opinion surveys, three rounds of focus group discussions, and one impact evaluation in consultation with USAID. CEPPS/IRI will oversee the national public opinion surveys which will provide a snapshot of public opinion on a range of subjects, such as the perceptions of government institutions and political parties, regional disparities in unemployment, economic priorities, participation in public life, political reform, and the electoral process. Results and analysis will be presented to elected leaders, political parties, the ECN, and other project beneficiaries to inform the development of reform policies responsive to citizen priorities. Results and analysis will inform CEPPS activities under both project objectives. For example, national surveys might be used to develop standardized questions that cover national policy issues to be answered by parliamentary candidates during candidate debates. As a complement to the public opinion surveys, CEPPS/NDI will organize three rounds of focus group discussions centered on public opinion surveys. Public opinion research is an invaluable tool that provides broad and representative quantitative information about what citizens think, and the focus groups will provide insight into citizens' behaviors and thought processes. Lastly, CEPPS will work with the National Opinion Research Council (NORC), USAID/Nepal and USAID/Washington, to conduct an impact evaluation assessing the effect of candidate debates for parliament and local representatives (a) on the accountability of elected officials to their constituencies in the use of constituency development funds, and (b) on citizen's knowledge of and abilities to distinguish political parties' platforms and to vote for the party most aligned with their priorities.

Inclusion: CEPPS activities under *Niti Sambad* will prioritize the engagement of women, youth, minorities, and persons with disabilities, particularly in leadership and decision-making positions. CEPPS also is committed to ensuring all its programming and activities engage a gender-equitable and representative group of participants.

Gender Integration: Equitable representation of women in politics helps develop more inclusive political and social benefits, including greater responsiveness to citizen needs, economic progress, increased cooperation across party and ethnic lines, and more sustainable peace. While the GoN has implemented quotas and other gender-sensitive policies, traditional views of women continue to stifle their political participation. CEPPS' gender-sensitive, inclusive

approach in Nepal is designed to help overcome the barriers to women's political participation that exist at the socio-cultural, institutional, and individual levels. Past examples of this approach include: work with the Inter-Party Women's Alliance, the multiparty women's wings working committees, and women MPs; support to women's civil society organizations (CSOs) on an advocacy campaign for 33 percent women's representation in the LP; and programming with a local CSO to analyze and report on how women have fared in the earthquake reconstruction process. CEPPS will respond to these barriers to advance women's inclusion in politics and decision making with targeted activities, in addition to including women and mainstreaming gender in all program components.

Youth: Young women and men in Nepal are often excluded from leadership roles in political parties and in elected bodies because of social traditions and the hierarchical nature of politics in Nepal. Youth are typically engaged in parties only when senior leaders need human resources to mobilize members for rallies or for specific election-related activities. CEPPS will ensure equitable inclusion of young women and men in program activities and will prioritize support to youth through targeted skills-building activities. CEPPS partners will also provide support to senior leaders to highlight the work of the young party and parliamentary leaders to demonstrate their capacity and form new working relationships that can further engage young women and men in decision-making processes.

Ethnic-Sensitive Inclusion: To enable increased access to the political system for ethnic minorities, including Dalits, Janajatis, Muslims, and Madheshis, CEPPS will support the ECN to conduct outreach to ethnic minorities and will conduct targeted civic and voter education programs using materials in a variety of ethnic languages.

Disability-Sensitive Inclusion: Persons with disabilities in Nepal have little protection under the law and are frequently barred from access to political and electoral spheres due to discriminatory practices, exclusionary regulations, and social stigma. Therefore, CEPPS will work with disabled people's organizations (DPOs) to increase access of persons with disabilities to the political process through civic education and advocacy with the ECN and through the inclusion of persons with disabilities within other program activities.

EVALUATION PURPOSE AND USE:

The purpose of this Mid-term Evaluation of the Niti Sambahad is to determine whether the activity is on track to accomplish its intended goals and objectives, and recommend course corrections if this is not the case and/or if adjustments should be made given Nepal's state restructuring and political transition. The evaluation will also assess the degree to which there is early evidence of the sustainability of project results, and whether the approach appears to be advancing the Mission's GESI policy. This evaluation will examine the effectiveness of approaches and relevance of project developmental hypothesis and theory of change. The evaluation will also draw lessons on how effective the project has remained in the changed political context and how should it go ahead in the remaining life of the project.

The mid-term evaluation will be primarily for the use of USAID and the CEPPS Implementing Partner in terms of identifying best practices and lessons learned to guide project implementation. USAID will also use evaluation findings and recommendations to inform future programming decisions.

EVALUATION QUESTIONS:

1. To what extent is the project on track to reach its intermediate results and overall goal? What are the primary obstacles and enabling factors (e.g., country context, adoption of USAID new strategic initiatives) in achieving intermediate results and goals (programmatic and operational level)?
2. How effective is the project in engaging Women, Youth, Dalits, and other marginalized groups to contribute to the development of national politics? Have other types of opportunities emerged as a result of the engagement of historically marginalized communities by Niti Sambad partners (NDI, IFES, and IRI)?
3. Given the project is at the half-way point, are the current objectives of the project still relevant to Nepal's new federal political development? What new challenges to political development and electoral administration do you see, which are not addressed by the project? Have Niti Sambad partners made adjustments to the project based on the understanding of new challenges emerging?
4. As a result of Niti Sambad's support, is the ECN's capacity reaching a point of becoming a credible election body and is showing signs of becoming less dependent on future USG or other foreign government support? If the ECN is still dependent on USG and other outside resources, do you see the ECN ever reaching a point in the future to become less dependent on donor support?
5. Are the sustainability benchmarks of Niti Sambad progressing? If so, how? If not, what adjustments are required to ensure Niti Sambad is on track to meet these benchmarks?

EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY:

The evaluation will mainly rely on qualitative data but also on quantitative data to some extent. A detailed evaluation design will be developed by the evaluation team building on the methodology illustrated here:

Evaluation Question	Illustrative Methodology
1) To what extent is the project on track to reach its intermediate results and overall goal? What are the primary obstacles and enabling factors (e.g., country context, adoption of USAID new strategic initiatives) in achieving intermediate results and goals (programmatic and operational level)?	Project M&E data, MEL plan, FGDs etc. Comparative analysis of plan vs progress.
2) How effective is the project in engaging Women, Youth, Dalits, and other marginalized groups to contribute to the development of national politics? Have other types of opportunities emerged as a result of the engagement of historically marginalized communities by Niti Sambad partners (NDI, IFES, and IRI)?	FGDs, KIs, etc. Descriptive analysis.

3) Given the project is at the half-way point, are the current objectives of the project still relevant to Nepal's new federal political development? What new challenges to political development and electoral administration do you see, which are not addressed by the project? Have Niti Sambad partners made adjustments to the project based on the understanding of new challenges emerging?	FGD, KII, project records, etc. Descriptive and comparative analysis.
4) As a result of Niti Sambad's support, is the ECN's capacity reaching a point of becoming a credible election body and is showing signs of becoming less dependent on future USG or other foreign government support? If the ECN is still dependent on USG and other outside resources, do you see the ECN ever reaching a point in the future to become less dependent on donor support?	FGDs, mini-workshop, KIIs, etc. Descriptive analysis.
5) Are the sustainability benchmarks of Niti Sambad progressing? If so, how? If not, what adjustments are required to ensure Niti Sambad is on track to meet these benchmarks?	Project M&E data, sustainability plan. FGD, mini-workshop, etc. Comparative analysis.

TIMELINE FOR EVALUATION:

The following is a tentative timeline for the evaluation tasks; the detailed timeline will be developed by the evaluation team as part of finalizing the evaluation plan. The evaluation is expected to start fieldwork in January 2020 and the final report submitted by March 2020. Debrief with preliminary findings is expected by February 2020.

Main Activities (time to be updated)	9/19	10/19	11/19	12/19	1/20	2/20	3/20
Drafting SoW (Mission)	x						
Finalization of SOW (Mission and MEL)		x					
Drafting of evaluation design (MEL)		x	x				
Finalize the evaluation design (Mission and MEL)			x	x			
Recruitment and onboarding of TL and national experts		x	x				
Review of secondary data, reports, any other relevant materials for drafting the design and tools							
Recruitment of field researchers							

Drafts of the data collection tools							
Finalization of data collection tools							
Orientation and mock on the tools							
Mobilization and data collection field work							
Data collation, compilation, coding, analysis, report writing							
Debrief on the preliminary findings to USAID & IP						x	
Submission of draft report to USAID						x	
Comments from USAID							x
Submission of final report to USAID							x

DELIVERABLES:

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

1. An in-briefing with USAID/Nepal upon the Team Leader's arrival at MEL Office, Nepal.
2. An evaluation design containing the proposed evaluation outline; the evaluation methodology, implementation schedule and deliverables; to be delivered in November 2019.
3. A set of data collection instruments; and fieldwork schedule, to be delivered in December 2019 after receiving USAID/Nepal's feedback on evaluation design
4. A presentation to USAID (and another to senior Niti Sambad management) of the preliminary findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the evaluation, to be delivered in February 2019, immediately after fieldwork (team leader to be present)
5. A draft evaluation report of not more than 25 pages in length, single-spaced in TNR 12-point font, excluding appendices, with an executive summary of not more than 3 pp. in length, in the month of February 2019
6. A final evaluation report of not more than 25 pages in length, single-spaced in TNR 12-point font, excluding es, with an executive summary of not more than 3 pages in length, within two weeks of receipt of consolidated comments in electronic format from USAID.
7. A final presentation by MEL for USAID/stakeholders after the evaluation report is finalized.

EVALUATION TEAM:

The evaluation team should be composed of experts comprising a range of skills directly relevant to the purpose of the PFMSP mid-term evaluation. USAID proposes the following

composition, although it relies on the Team Leader and MEL to make a final recommendation on the composition to fit the task:

Team Leader: The Team Leader has demonstrated leadership and team management skills. S/he should have a postgraduate degree in a related field, with at least 10 years of experience leading and/or evaluating development activities for USAID or other donor agencies, preferably with some experience in Asia. S/he has broad technical experience of the political and electoral process, challenges, and evolution of the political system in developing countries. S/he has specific knowledge of Democracy, Human Rights and Governance (DRG) transition, and has profound analytical experience, which equips her/him to conduct high-quality and in-depth analysis on the improvement of governance in political parties, processes, and electoral systems. The ideal candidate will have excellent oral and written communication skills in English; writing samples from recent evaluations or reports, and three professional references, will be requested.

Democracy and Governance Expert (National Team Leader): The expert must have extensive experience in political and electoral system reform, preferably working with USAID or other donor agencies or government of Nepal. A Nepali citizen, the expert must have a minimum of a master's degree in a relevant subject area and at least 7 years' of experience as a member of an evaluation team. Experience leading or serving as a senior technical expert in political and/or electoral reforms work is required. The ideal candidate will have excellent oral and written communication skills in English; writing samples, and three professional references, will be requested.

GESI expert (National Team Member): Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) expert must have a minimum of master's degree in social science or relevant subject area and at least 5 years of experience as a member of an evaluation team. The GESI expert must have extensive knowledge about the GESI issues, especially in the political and electoral system in Nepal. GESI expert will work with the evaluation team to develop an evaluation methodology to assess how the project has addressed the GESI issues as outlined in the contract and work plans. The ideal candidate will have excellent oral and written communication skills in English; writing samples, and three professional references, will be requested.

Enumerators/Field Researchers: The team will include Nepali Field Researchers with a master's degree or equivalent with least three years of research/evaluation/assessment focused field experience working in the development sector with a focus on democracy and governance activities. The researchers will be selected considering their gender, social background, and language prevalent in the proposed sample districts.

KEY DOCUMENTS FOR REVIEW

- Project Document
- Annual Work Plans
- Project M&E plan, sustainability plan
- Progress Reports (Annual, quarterly)
- Quality assessment reports
- Thematic reports

KEY STAKEHOLDERS TO BE CONSULTED

- People participating and benefiting from the project
- Political party leaders
- Parliamentarians
- Election commission, NRA, MOIC
- Implementing partners, collaborating partners/intermediaries, sub-partners, and USAID-funded projects operating locally
- Other relevant donors
- USAID/Nepal staff

EVALUATION REPORT OUTLINE:

The following page numbers should serve as approximate guidelines with a maximum page count of 25 pages.

- I. Executive Summary (Max 3 pp.)
- II. Evaluation Purpose and Questions (max 1 pp.)
- III. Project Background (max 1 pp.)
- IV. Evaluation Methods and Limitations (max 3 pp.)
- V. Findings by each evaluation questions (max 20 pp.)
- VI. Conclusions (max 2 pp.)
- VII. Recommendations (3 pp.)

Appendices:

- A. Evaluation Statement of Work (SOW)
- B. List of documents Reviewed
- C. List of Persons and Organizations Met
- D. Data Collection Instruments (e.g., Interview guides, questionnaires, formats)
- E. Description of Data Utilized in the Evaluation
- F. Disclosure of Any Conflicts of Interest
- G. Unresolved Issues from Evaluation Review
- H. Statement of Differences [only if applicable]
- I. Raw data

SOW Appendix I: Additional evaluation questions for reference

Overall

How effective is the Coordination among CEPPS implementing partners (NDI, IFES & IRI) and between CEPPS and other DRG implementers in Nepal and how the efficiency of the LCP model for managing communications and ensuring accountability among CEPPS implementing partners?

Questions for Political Parties and Legislative Processes

1. How and to what extent are Nepal's political parties inclusive, transparent, accountable to, and representative of their constituents on national policy issues? How and to what extent do parties, including their candidates, articulate better-informed policy positions?
2. How and to what extent are political parties' internal structures democratic? Do the structures in place help enhance parties' accountability and integrity to Nepali voters in and between elections?
3. How have parliamentarians/committees changed practices or introduced structures to improve oversight, representation, and legislation? Are NDI's programmatic efforts relevant and effective?
4. To what extent the Federal Parliament Secretariat and Policy Research Bodies work together to create synergy effects to develop informed policies and legislation?

Questions for Electoral Process

1. How has ECN's capacity improved to administer a credible electoral process?
2. How has the legal/regulatory framework for elections been strengthened in ECN?
3. To what extent has the project made citizens better engaged, more aware of laws, and more responsive voters? Has the project increased the number of registered and active (meaning, they voted in most recent elections) voters?

Question for NRA

1. How has the NRA's capacity improved to communication capacity? Are NDI's programmatic efforts relevant and effective to NRA?

APPENDIX B: GETTING TO ANSWERS MATRIX

Evaluation Question/ Sub-question	Type of Question	Data Source (S)	Methods/Tools/ Sampling Approach (If Needed)	Data Analysis
I. To what extent is the project on track to reach its intermediate results and overall goal?	• Descriptive; Interpretive	• NS M&E data (in formal reports as well as selected internal data as may be relevant) • Niti Samabad (NS) MEL Plan • NS staff and leadership; USAID and Political Section technical staff; informed staff from other USAID partners and other donor organizations	• Document review • KIIs and FGDs with individuals informed about NS plans and progress • Sample within and beyond NS staff and leadership	• Comparative analysis of plan versus documented progress • Content analysis of data from KIIs and FGDs • Notional comparison of NS with progress by similar activities in other locales
IA. What are the primary obstacles and enabling factors (e.g., country context, adoption of USAID new strategic initiatives) in achieving intermediate results and goals (programmatic and operational level)?	• Descriptive; may call for some interpretation based on data received	• NS formal reporting • Other NS documentation (e.g., assessments, etc.) • NS staff and leadership	• Document review • KIIs and FGDs	• Narrative description of (a) obstacles and (b) enabling factors vis-à-vis intermediate results and goals
2. How effective is the project in engaging Women, Youth, Dalits, and other marginalized groups to contribute to the development of national politics?	• Descriptive; interpretive	• NS and USAID documents • NS, USAID and partner staff • (provisional): a small sample of members of these groups who have participated in NS events or initiatives	• Document review • KIIs and FGDs	• Content analysis • Basic descriptive statistics • Trend analysis if data is unavailable

Evaluation Question/ Sub-question	Type of Question	Data Source (S)	Methods/Tools/ Sampling Approach (If Needed)	Data Analysis
2A. Have other types of opportunities emerged as a result of the engagement of historically marginalized communities by Niti Sambad partners (NDI, IFES, and IRI)?	Descriptive	• NS and USAID documents • NS, USAID, and partner staff	• Document review • KIIs and FGDs	• Content analysis
3. Given the project is at the half-way point, are the current objectives of the project still relevant to Nepal's new federal political development?	• Interpretive • Descriptive	• NS and USAID documents • Key informants at NS and USAID, and with other stakeholders • Documents providing information on country context	• KIIs and FGDs • Document review	• Context analysis • Comparative analysis of data collection with information on the country context and on future challenges
3A. What new challenges to political development and electoral administration do you see, which are not addressed by the project?	• Descriptive • Interpretive	• NS and USAID documents • Key informants at NS and USAID, and with other stakeholders • Documents providing information on country context	• KIIs and FGDs • Document review	• Context analysis • Comparative analysis of data collection with information on the country context and on future challenges

Evaluation Question/ Sub-question	Type of Question	Data Source (S)	Methods/Tools/ Sampling Approach (If Needed)	Data Analysis
3B. Have Niti Sambad partners made adjustments to the project based on the understanding of new challenges emerging	• Descriptive	• NS and USAID documents • Key informants at NS and USAID, and with other stakeholders	• KIIs and FGDs • Document review	• Content analysis • Interpretation of the factors behind the program adjustments
4. As a result of Niti Sambad's support, is the ECN's capacity reaching a point of becoming a credible election body, and is it showing signs of becoming less dependent on future USG or other foreign government support?	• Descriptive • Interpretive	• NS, USAID, and ECN documents • Individuals who are knowledgeable about recent developments in ECN capacity	• Document review • KIIs and FGDs	• Content analysis • As needed, a comparison of content from various sources
4A. If the ECN is still dependent on USG and other outside resources, do you see the ECN ever reaching a point in the future to become less dependent on donor support?	• Interpretive	• NS, USAID, and ECN documents • Individuals who are knowledgeable about recent developments in ECN capacity	• Document review • KIIs and FGDs	• Content analysis • Trend analysis

Evaluation Question/ Sub-question	Type of Question	Data Source (S)	Methods/Tools/ Sampling Approach (If Needed)	Data Analysis
5. Are the sustainability benchmarks of Niti Sarnad progressing? If so, how? If not, what adjustments are required to ensure Niti Sarnad is on track to meet these benchmarks?	• Descriptive • Interpretive	• NS, USAID, and ECN documents • Individuals who are knowledgeable about issues surrounding NS sustainability	• Document review • KIs and FGDs	• Descriptive statistics • Content analysis of documents and interviews

APPENDIX C: LIST OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

U.S. Government Documents

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Election Commission of Nepal, *"Gender and Inclusion Policy, 2013; Gender and Inclusion Strategy", 2015-2020*. Kathmandu: Election Commission of Nepal. n.d.

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Uggla, Frederick. "Incompetence, Alienation or Calculation? Explaining Levels of Invalid Ballots and Extra-Parliamentary Votes." *Comparative Political Studies*, 41 (2008): 1141-1164.

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IFES, Staffan Darnolf, Senior Global Electoral Operations, and Administration Advisor, Electoral Needs Assessment: The Election Commission of Nepal, March 2019.

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Niti Sambad, Policy Dialogue, Annual Workplan (Year III), October 2019-September 2020.

Niti Sambad, Workplan and PMP Annexes, Quarter 4, FY 2017.

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Nepal Niti Sambad, Workplan FY2020.

IFES, Assessing the Effectiveness of Community-Level Voter Education Programs: Nepal 2017 House of Representatives and State Assembly Elections, January 2018

IFES, Following the Money, Campaign Expense Monitoring during the House of Representatives Election, 2017.

IFES, National Federation of Disabled Nepal (NFD-N), Disability Election Access Monitoring report, 2018.

IFES, Nepal Voters Rights Forum (NVRF), Participation of Marginalized people in HOR SA Election, March 2019.

IFES, Nepal Disabled Women Association (NDWA), Political Participation of Women with Disabilities, May 2019.

Other Documents

Accountability Lab, Nepal: Open Government Partnership Readiness Assessment, September 2017.

David Black, Revitalizing Democracy Assistance to Counter threats to Democratization, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Policy Paper, 7 November 2019

Freedom House Assessment of Nepal, summary narrative report on the status of freedom in Nepal, 20 www.freedomhouse.org/report/countries-world-freedom-2019.

International Center for Not-For-Profit Law, Summary Legal Analysis, Nepal's Social Organization Act, 2019; www.icnl.org.

IFES, *The Cost of Representation: A Study of Women's Representation and Political Finance in Nepal*, January 2020.

Anup Kaphle, "A blueprint for consolidating power: China exports Xi Jinping Thought to Nepal." *The Kathmandu Post*, September 25, 2019.

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Neel Kantha Uprety, *Political Corruption: An Incurable Disease for Democracy and Political Stability* [publication date not given].

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World Justice Project, *Rule of Law Index*, 2019.

APPENDIX D: LIST OF PERSONS AND ORGANIZATIONS MET

S. N.	Date (All 2020)	Organization/ Group	Venue	Interviewee(s)	Type of Interview
Federal					
1	13 January	National Democratic Institute (NDI)	NDI office, Kathmandu	Deborah Healy, NDI Country Director	KII
2	14 January	NDI	NDI office, Kathmandu	Neha Shrestha, Pravas, Bidushi Dhungel, leaders of NDI technical staff	GD
3	14 January	NDI	NDI office, Kathmandu	Binny Subba, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, NDI	KII
4	14 January	International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES)	IFES office, Kathmandu	Ian Smith, IFES Country Director	KII
5	15 January	IFES	IFES office, Kathmandu	Binod Ojha, Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist, IFES	KII
6	15 January	IFES	IFES office, Kathmandu	Radhika Regmi, Samhida Malla, Leaders of IFES technical team	GD
7	16 January	Former Elections Commissioner and Elections expert	Coffee Shop, Kathmandu	Bhoj Raj Pokharel	KII
8	17 January	Former member of Constituent Assembly and expert	Restaurant, Kathmandu	Kim Lal Devkota	KII
9	17 January	Member of Upper House	Singha Durbar	Radheshyam Adhikari	KII
10	17 January	Context expert	Café, Patan	Jagdish Chandra Pokharel	KII
11	19 January	Federal Parliament (FP): Finance Committee	Singha Durbar	Krishna Prasad Dahal	KII
12	19 January	Dalit and marginalized community	Restaurant, Kathmandu	Dr. Yam Bahadur Kisan	KII
13	20 January	Election Commission of Nepal (ECN)	ECN offices	Chief Election Commissioner Dinesh Thapaliya, Narendra Dahal	GD
14	20 January	ECN	ECN offices	Election Commissioner Ishwori Prasad Paudyal	KII
15	20 January	FP: Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee	Singha Durbar	MP Krishna Bhakta Pokharel	KII
16	21 January	Interdisciplinary Analysts (IDA)	Offices of IDA, Kathmandu	Sudhindra Sharma, context expert	KII

17	21 January	Member of Parliament (MP), Nepali Congress Party (NC)	Singha Durbar	Puspa Bhusal	KII
18	22 January	Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON)	CAMRIS offices, Kathmandu	Khimanada Devkota, Executive Board Member; Niraj Bag, General Secretary; Anil Upadhyay (Advocate), Director of Program	GD
19	22 January	Nepal National Dalit Social Welfare Organization (NNDSWO)	CAMRIS offices, Kathmandu	Suresh Bishwokarma, Program Manager	KII
20	22 January	Election Observation Committee Nepal (NEOC)	CAMRIS offices, Kathmandu	Stella Tamang, Vice Chair	KII
21	22 January	Holistic Development Service Centre (SAMAGRA)	CAMRIS offices, Kathmandu	Dr. Prem Raj Dhungel, Program Manager/Executive Director	KII
22	22 January	Nepal Law Society (NLS)	NLS offices, Kathmandu	Tirtha Man Shakya, NLS; Krishna Man Pradhan, NLS; Khagendra Puri, MP, National Assembly; Ramesh Lekhak, NC; Khimlal Devkota, MP, Nepal Communist Party (NCP); Ganesh Man Pradhan, NLS	FGD
23	22 January	Nepal Disabled Women's Association (NDWA)	CAMRIS offices, Kathmandu	Meena Paudel; Samjhana Ghimire	GD
24	23 January	Nepal Voters' Rights Forum (NVRF)	CAMRIS offices, Kathmandu	Bhakta Bishwakarma, Chair	KII
25	23 January	MP, National Assembly: Rastriya Janata Party of Nepal (RJPN)	Singha Durbar	Brikesh Chandra Lal	KII
26	23 January	Former Chief Elections Commissioner	Residence, Kathmandu	Ayodhi Yadav	KII
27	23 January	MP	Residence, Kathmandu	Tham Maya Thapa	KII
28	23 January	National Reconstruction Authority (NRA)	Offices of Kathmandu Press, Kathmandu	Kosmos Bisworkarma	KII
29	24 January	Youth Champions (AYON beneficiaries)	Restaurant, Kathmandu	Shanti Tamang; Khimananda Devkota; Bhanu Bhakta Pandey; Susmita Shrestha; Bikal Rai	FGD

30	24 January	FP: State Affairs and Governance Committee	Singha Durbar	Shashi Shrestha, Chair	KII
31	24 January	FP: Delegated Management and Government Assurance Committee	Singha Durbar	Ram Narayan Bidari	KII
32	24 January	Youth Council	Offices of the Youth Council, Bhaktapur	Madav Dhungel, Vice President	KII
33	26 January	ECN	ECN Offices, Kantipath	Raj Kumar Shrestha (Joint Secretary); Ganga Bahadur Kharel (Under Secretary); Mukesh Regmi (Under Secretary); IT and Legal Units	GD
34	27 January	USAID Democracy and Governance Team	USAID Offices	Ramesh Adhikari, Elections, Legislative and Political Processes Specialist; Angelina Allen-Mpyisi, Director, Democracy and Governance Office; Bishwas Rana, Program Development Specialist (Monitoring and Evaluation); and Stephan Guertin, DG Specialist	GD
36	27 January	Economic and Political Section, US Embassy	USAID Offices	Rjee Kattel, Political Specialist	KII
37	30 January	Kathmandu School of Law (KSL)	KSL offices, Bhaktapur	Yubraj Sangroula, Executive Director	KII
38	30 January	NEC, GESI Unit	ECN Offices	Namrata Chudal	KII
39	30 January	Central member and focal point for NDI and IRI, Samajbadi Party	Café, Kathmandu	Arjun Thapa; Pawan Roy	GD
40	30 January	NCP leader	Residence, Kathmandu	Jhalanath Kanak	KII
41	31 January	USAID	Restaurant, Kathmandu	Manju Tuladhar, GESI Expert	KII
42	31 January	Constitutional law expert	Restaurant, Kathmandu	Bipin Adhikari	KII
43	1 February	Nepali Congress	Singha Durbar	Bimalendra Nidhi	KII
44	3 February	FP: Development and Technology Committee	Singha Durbar	Kalyani Kumari Khadka	KII

45	3 February	Electoral Working Group	Café, Kathmandu	Sajana Maharjan (FHI 360), Buddhi Karki (IIDEA International), Vincent DaCruz (EU/UNDP ESP)	GD
46	3 February	Nepal Television and mentor for Women's Mentorship Program	Restaurant, Kathmandu	Aarti Chataut, Deputy General Manager and Gender Analyst	KII
47	4 February	FP: National Assembly	Singha Durbar	Ganesh Prasad Timilsina, Chair	KII
48	5 February	The Asia Foundation	TAF Offices, Kathmandu	Megan Nalbo, Country Director	KII
49	6 February	CEPPS/IRI Nepal	IRI Offices	Sunil Casuba, Acting Governance Adviser Prema Thapa, Program Manager Rosina Sitaula, Deputy Program Manager	GD
49	10 February	USAID	CAMRIS offices, Kathmandu	Ramesh Adhikar, Stephan Guertin	GD
50	24 Feb	Women's Policy Forum	Restaurant, Kathmandu	Renu Chand (NCP), Dina Lama (SP), Ganga Laxmi Awal (NC)	GD
51	6 March	Federal Parliament Secretariat	Parliamentary Secretariat offices, Baneshwor	Manohar Prasad Bhattarai, General Secretary, FPS	KII
Province 2: Janakpur and Siraha					
1	3 February	Women's Policy Forum	Residence, Janakpur	Bindu Thakur, Member of Women's Wing, RJPN	KII
2	4 February	Youth Policy Forum and Marginalized Policy Forum	Hotel, Janakpur	Ashok Yadav, Youth Wing Member; Ajay Kumar Raut, Youth Wing Member (RJPN)	GD
3	4 February	Nepal Mayors Network	Janakpur Municipality offices	Lal Kishor Sah, Mayor (RJPN)	KII
4	4 February	Policy Working Group	Hotel, Janakpur	Dr. Savita Jha, National Member; Pashputi Yadav, District Chair (Dhanusha); Rakesh Jha (Siraha)	GD
5	4 February	Women Deputy Mayor and Vice Chair	Hotel, Janakpur	Anita Kumari Shah, Dep. Mayor (NCP); Tara Basnet Lama, Dep. Mayor (NCP)	GD
6	4 February	Town Hall Meeting (THM) participants	NLS offices, Janakpur	Biman Mishra; Devendra Thakur; Murali Kishore; Rani Sharma Tiwari; Shyam Sundar Shashi; Rekha Kumari Jha; Suvadhra Ali; Sujit Kumar Jha; Parmeshore	FGD

				Sada; Jagnath Yadav; Sabita San	
7	4 February	ECN	District Election Office	Puspa Kumari Jha (Dhanusha); Indira Yadav (Siraha)	GD
8	4 February	ECN Returning Officer	District Court offices, Janakpur	Dhurba Prasad Sapkota (District Court Judge)	KII
9	4 February	Chief Attorney	Chief Attorney's office, Janakpur	Dharmendra Jha	KII
10	4 February	Secretary, Ministry of Social Development	Secretary's Office, Janakpur	Bharat Mani Subedi	KII
11	4 February	Samagra beneficiaries	Community hall, Siraha	Ramila Devi Dada; Rekha Devi Ram; Babita Devi Ram; Sujanwati Ram; Inswati Ram; Bimala Devi Ram; Marahana Devi Ram; Nainkumari Das; Phulo Devi Das; Naino Devi Ram; Nitu Devi Das; Phulo Devi Mahato; Lalita Devi; Panchi Sada; Rampari Devi Ram; Anita Devi Ram; Dulari Devi Das; Laxman Devi Das; Shaymo Devi Das; Rakha Devi Das; Nisha Sada; Pinki Paswan; Haliya Devi Ram	FGD
12	4 February	NVRF beneficiaries	Restaurant, Siraha	Babita Paswan; Shalendra Sah; Ram Babu Singh; Jayram Bisworkarm; Barislal Mochi; Pramod Saday; Rani Paswan; Ganga Adhikari; Rinkh Das; Sunil Kumar Sah; Durga Pariyar; Mohan Paswan; Thakiya Paswan; Manju Paswan; Sumitra Paswan; Rani Paswas	FGD
Province 3: Dhading					
1	28 January	Samagara beneficiaries	Gajuri, Dhading	Nangal Rai; Budhiman; Sita; Kanch Rai; Kabita; Uwjali Rai; Chanamati; Bunala; Binda; Shanti Rai; Rammaya; Rudra Koirala	FGD
2	28 January	Nepal Disabled Women Association (NDWA) beneficiaries	Hotel, Dhading	Puja Dawadi; Yamkumari; Aphasara Shrestha; Nisha; Samjha Adhikari; Kalpana Shrestha	FGD

3	28 January	Social studies teachers	Hotel, Dhading	Keshab Shrestha; Balkrishna Lamsal; Sitaram Mahat; Krishna Kumar Shrestha; Janardan Nepal	FGD
4	29 January	NVRF beneficiaries	Hotel, Dhading	Sitaram Adhikari; Beg Bahadur Sunar; Bimala Dhakal	FGD
Province 3: Kavre					
1	21 January (data collection pre-test)	NDWA members	Bahira School, Kavre	Krishna Nakarmi; Aayusha Thapa; Sabina Dhital; Tulasha Karki; Swostika Thapa; Sarmila Manandhar; Lila Bajagain; Ram Maya Suwal; Pampha Prkoti;;Rampiyari Pote; Subasana Shrestha	FGD
Province 7: Kailali and Kanchanpur					
1	2 February	Women Policy Forum	Kanchanpur	Ramita Deuba, Member of Women Wings, NCP	KII
2	2 February	Youth Policy Forum & Marginalized Policy Forum	Kailali	Adarsha Malla, Youth Wing Member, NC; and Rita Chaudhary, Marginalized Forum Member	GD
3	2 February	ECN	District Election Office	Prem Bhatta, DEO	KII
4	2 February	NLS	NLS Office	Nagendra Shah, Civic Initiative Center	KII
5	3 February	Nepal Mayors Network	Hotel, Kailali	Nirpa Odd (NC)	Kii
6	3 February	Women's Mentorship Program	Hotel, Kailali	Goma Acharya, Member of Women's Wing (NC)	KII
7	3 February	THM participants	Hotel, Kailali	Narendra Shah; Lal Bahadur Shahi; Nirmala Rijal; Gaya Prasad Kushum; Jahari Lal Chaudhary; Poonam Sijapti; Puspa Bhatta; Suvash Chandra Upadhaya; Nepal Chaudhary; Renu Shrestha; Kulananda Upadhaya; Luv Kumar Shrestha; Kanhaiya Rana	FGD
8	3 February	Provincial Assembly Secretary	Hotel, Kailali	Ram Shingh Dhami	KII
9	3 February	PA: Legislative Committee Chair	Hotel, Kailali	Nepalu Chaudhary	KII
10	4 February	NDWA, Civic and voter education for women with disabilities	Kanchanpur	Pasupati Bhatt; Khema Sapkota; Basanti Kalauni; Lalita Bhatt; Laxmi Bhatt; Anita Chaudhary; Puja Parth; Savita Mahato;	FGD

				Jharana Singh; Anita Dhungana	
11	4 February	NNDSWO, civic and voter education	Hotel, Kailali	Bahadur Tholi; Sakar Bahadur Buda; Moti Noor; Jhupuri Bhur; Ganga Nepali; Lali Nepali; Jhaju Kajada; Nirmala Koli; Dhoi Kami; Laxmi BK; Nirmala Parki; Babulal Nepali; Chakra BK; Ganesh BK; Laxmi Nepali	FGD
12	4 February	ECN Returning Officer and Senior Superintendent of Police	Hotel, Kailali	Jayananda Paneru; Sudeep Giri	GD
13	5 February	Policy Working Group	Hotel, Dhangadaj	Rajaram Chaudhary	KII

APPENDIX E: DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

E1. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CITIZEN BENEFICIARIES

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Citizen Beneficiaries

(Individuals who have participated in NS training, awareness building or policy dialogue sessions)

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, Inc., an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved with or knowledgeable about Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Introductory

1. Have you taken part in any Niti Sambah activity (conducted by IFES, IRI, or NDI) regarding voter or civic education, or interaction with politicians and elected representatives? If so, what activity or activities? When and where did it take place? *(Based on the response to this question, proceed to one or more of the sections below. Make sure to record all Niti Sambah training sessions or events the respondent has participated in, not just one).*
2. What were some of the things that IRI, NDI, or IFES did that were particularly interesting or valuable for you? Why is that?
3. In your view, what was the quality of the training or other session? (Probe: excellent/good/not good.) Why do you say that?

4. Is there anything that IRI, NDI, or IFES could do, regarding these events or training sessions, to improve them? Why do you say that?
5. Are you able to give an example of how you have used the training or awareness-building you received? (If yes, could you please describe that for us?) (If no, why not?) What happened as follow-through from this training or awareness building?
6. What political activities (for example, communicating with a MP) have you been engaged in, before this training or awareness building? After?
7. What kinds of training sessions or awareness-building sessions would you like IFES, IRI, or NDI to offer in the future? Why?

II. Town-hall Meetings and Forums

8. Have you taken part in town-hall meetings or policy forums/deliberations supported by Niti Sambad? [If yes: Which one was that? When did it take place?]
9. How useful have you found these meetings for your own interests or needs (very useful/somewhat/not at all)? Are there ways they could be made more useful?
10. To what extent do you think there was open participation by all groups at this meeting?
11. Do you know anything about any follow-through or outcomes from the meeting? [If yes, can you give us some detail about this?]

III. ECN/Voter and Civic Education

12. To what extent has the voter education or civic education delivered to you by IFES been useful for your participation in elections? (A great deal/a moderate amount/not at all) Why is that?
 13. Could you please briefly tell us about the content of the voter or civic education you participated in? Was it relevant to your current needs as a citizen?
- [If there is time, ask the following questions.]***

IV. Context/Relevance

14. What kinds of challenges do you face in making elected representatives accountable and taking part in policy discussions?
15. What kinds of challenges do you face in taking part in political processes and making elections more meaningful?
16. What opportunities are available for making things better?

E2. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ELECTORAL WORKING GROUP

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Electoral Working Group (Group Interview)

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by IFES, IRI, and NDI. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah -- how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are familiar with Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved with or knowledgeable about Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand Niti Sambah program results, and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation. As the moderator of our discussion, I'll encourage everyone to speak and to treat the views of others respectfully. We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

J. Introductory

1. How long have you been participating in the EWG, and what organization do you represent?
2. Could you briefly summarize the objectives and activities of the Working Group? (Probe: What are the major areas or issues the EWG has addressing?)

II. Is Niti Sambah Assistance on Track?

3. In what ways has the EWG provided added value so far? (Probe: Could you provide an example of how working group members have collaborated?)
4. What have been the major contributions of Niti Sambah (IFES) to strengthened capacity at ECN?

III. Engagement with Marginalized Groups

5. To what extent have social inclusion issues have been addressed by ECN in voters' education and election monitoring practices? Is there any such mechanism that ensures inclusivity?

[Probe: engagement of marginalized groups, Dalits, PWD, youths, women (intersectionality); the role of Niti Sambad]

IV. Are Current Objectives Still Relevant? Any New Challenges That Have Not Been Addressed? Have Adjustments Been Made to New Challenges?

6. From your experience, what would you say are the major challenges facing ECN in:

- Conducting free and fair elections?
- Effectively monitoring of the Code of Conduct?
- Mobilizing adequate funding for electoral administration?
- Monitoring of campaign financing?
- Overseas voters?
- Addressing other issues?
- What factors, events or efforts (including Niti Sambad) have enabled or supported progress in these areas?
- What new challenges have emerged in the changed institutional and political context? Are there opportunities that might be leveraged?

V. ECN Capacity

7. Does ECN hold sufficient capacity (financial, human, technical, political) to meet Nepal's needs for electoral administration? Why do you say so?

8. What are the key things that need to get done for ECN to make substantial progress in improving its capacity?

VI. Progress Towards Sustainability

9. If donor assistance were not to be present, for example, after 2022, would ECN have the capacity to sustain progress towards its objectives with their own resources? Why or why not?

VII. Suggestions/Recommendations

10. Are there ways in which the working group might be made more effective in supporting shared objectives? (Probe: For example, in joint advocacy with ECN and GON for inclusive & integrated electoral laws)

11. Do you have any specific advice or recommendations to the "Niti Sambad" program or the donor community regarding future support to electoral administration in Nepal? (Probe: approach, strategies, operations)

E3. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR IFES

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION **Interview Guide for IPs (IFES)**

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved / knowledgeable about Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Introductory

1. We understand that IFES's major areas of work in Niti Sambah include _____. Is this correct? Are there other activities I haven't mentioned? (If yes: Could you tell us briefly about those?)

II. Is Niti Sambah Assistance on Track?

2. The Intermediate Result assigned to IFES is _____, is that right?
3. What is the status of progress towards achieving this IR? (Are there lessons learned so far? Is there anything that you would do differently? What have been the key successes so far? What have been the major challenges?)
4. What gaps still exist in the legal framework for elections? What are the prospects for addressing them?

5. In what ways has IFES supported media and civil society in the effective oversight of parties and election-related processes before, during, and after elections?
6. In what ways has IFES collaborated with other IPs and similar donor-funded projects to support stronger election administration?
7. How receptive and cooperative has ECN been to engage with IFES in achieving Niti Sambad's intended results? Why do you say so? Can you give an example?
8. How would you describe the extent of collaboration and communications among IFES, NDI, and IRI? How about the quality of this collaboration? And the effectiveness? Do you see any challenges (operational and programmatic) in collaboration going forward?
9. How would you describe the approach Niti Sambad takes in monitoring its performance as an activity?
 - a. To what extent have you found the monitoring system relevant to your work?
 - b. Are there ways in which it might be improved?
 - c. Are there examples of how IFES has used information or products from its MEL system to adaptively manage the activity?

III. Engagement with Marginalized Groups

10. To what extent have voter education and election monitoring practices been inclusive of marginalized groups? Is there any such mechanism that ensures inclusivity? What particular interventions have IFES used to support inclusivity?

IV. Are Current Objectives Still Relevant? Any New Challenges That Have Not Been Addressed? Have Adjustments Been Made to New Challenges?

11. Are the Niti Sambad objectives (intermediate and lower-level results) still relevant to the current Nepal context? Are there new challenges that need to be addressed? How might this be done?
12. How has research (from CEPPS or other sources; surveys, FGDs, evaluations) been used? Which of these products and activities has added the most value? Why? Are there issues or themes that would especially benefit from research in the future?
13. Do you have any examples of how Niti Sambad may have needed to adaptively manage its work in response to changing circumstances in the Nepal country environment? In general, do you think Niti Sambad's management structures and procedures are sufficiently flexible in responding to the evolving conditions in Nepal?

V. ECN Capacity

14. Do you think ECN currently is capable, technically and financially, of effectively supporting the Code of Conduct before, during, and post-election? (If yes, can you give us an example? If no, what more needs to be done to enhance the capacity? Are there plans for taking these actions?)
15. Do you think that without donor support, ECN would be able to function effectively? Why or why not?
16. Based on your experience, what would be the key preferred areas of collaboration with ECN beyond the close of Niti Sambad? Why?

VI. Progress Toward Sustainability

17. What extent has IFES been supporting the institutionalization of knowledge and systems regarding voter education, voter lists, voter registration, out of country voting, and monitoring of the implementation of election code of conduct and election financing? Are there particular areas in which this has been successful? Where has it been met with challenges? Why?
18. How is the project progressing in terms of the sustainability of results? (Probe: If not, what adjustments are necessary? Are there any particular challenges, issues, or enabling factors that have affected progress towards sustainability?)

VII. Suggestions/Recommendations

19. What would you do differently if you had an opportunity to redesign the project? Are there new challenges that have arisen since Niti Sambad got started? Are these challenges being adequately addressed?
20. Do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations to Niti Sambad regarding how the program might be improved? (Probe: operational approach, strategy, adaptation.) Suggestions for USAID or the USG?

E4. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR IRI

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION Interview Guide for IPs (IRI)

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity being implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved / knowledgeable about Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand and contribute to the improvement of Niti Sambah, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Introductory

I. Is Niti Sambah Assistance on Track?

1. As we understand, the Niti Sambah Result(s) assigned to IRI is (are): _____. How would you describe the status of progress towards achieving this result? Are there lessons learned so far? Is there anything that you would do differently?
2. Looking at the federal parliament: To what extent do you think party leaders and parliamentarians have been able to make progress within the parties and in parliament for improving national policies and decision-making processes? Why do you say so? Do you have an example or two? What are the key opportunities and challenges facing further improvement at the federal level?

3. Similarly, to what extent have party leaders and parliamentarians at the provincial level been able to improve policies and decision-making processes? Why do you say so? Do you have any examples? What would you say are the key opportunities and challenges facing further improvement at the provincial level?
4. How would you characterize Niti Sambad's work to support constituency outreach by parliamentarians? What has been accomplished so far? What challenges and opportunities need to be addressed in the future?
5. Niti Sambad has created several groups/forums. Among them, which are more proactive and effective? Why? (Probe: What would be the preferred approach for making others more proactive)?
6. How would you describe the approach Niti Sambad takes in monitoring its performance as an activity?
 - a. To what extent have you found the monitoring system relevant to your work?
 - b. Are there ways in which it might be improved?
 - a. Are there examples of how you have used information or products from your MEL system to adaptively manage the activity?
7. How would you characterize the collaboration and coordination among the three Niti Sambad partners (IFES, IRI, and NDI) thus far? Do you see any issues (operational or strategic) in collaboration within the CEPPS Consortium? Are there any new opportunities for collaboration that have emerged from Niti Sambad's experience so far?
8. To what extent is Niti Sambad collaborating with other IPs or similar efforts supported by other donors? In what ways? With what results? Are there opportunities for further collaboration?

II. Engagement with Marginalized Groups

9. In what ways has Niti Sambad contributed to the creation or enhancement of opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged communities (Specifically: Youth, Dalits, PWD, Madheshi, women, and others) in political institutions, including parties? (Probe intersectionality) Is it making a difference? What factors or events have enabled this progress? What obstacles have been faced? What obstacles remain?

III. Are current objectives still relevant? Any New Challenges that have not been addressed? Have adjustments been made to new challenges?

10. Are the Niti Sambad objectives (intermediate and lower-level results) still relevant to the current Nepal context? Are there new challenges that need to be addressed? How might this be done?
11. How has research (from CEPPS or other sources; surveys, FGDs, evaluations) been used? Which of these products and activities has added the most value? Why? Are there issues or themes that would especially benefit from research in the future?
12. Do you have any examples of how Niti Sambad may have needed to adaptively manage its work in response to changing circumstances in the Nepal country environment? In general, do you think Niti Sambad's management structures and procedures are sufficiently flexible in responding to evolving conditions in Nepal?

IV. Progress Towards Sustainability

- I3. How is the project progressing in terms of the sustainability of results? (Probe: If not, what adjustments are necessary? Are there any particular challenges, issues, or enabling factors that have affected progress towards sustainability?)

V. Suggestions/Recommendations

- I4. What would you do differently if you had an opportunity to redesign the project? Are there new challenges that have arisen since Niti Sambad got started? Are these challenges being adequately addressed?
- I5. Do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations to Niti Sambad regarding how the program might be improved? (Probe: operational approach, strategy, adaptation)
- I6. Suggestions for USAID or the USG?

E5. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NDI

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION Interview Guide for IPs (NDI)

Thank you for being willing to talk with us today. Your participation in our evaluation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion.

For our report, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and other stakeholders. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

Feel free to ask questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the Niti Samba results, and to improve the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation. We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Introductory

I. Is Niti Samba Assistance on Track?

1. As we understand, the Niti Samba Result(s) assigned to NDI are: _____. What is the status of progress towards achieving this IR? Are there lessons learned so far? Is there anything that you would do differently? What has worked especially well? What explains this?
2. The project has created several groups or forums. Among them, which are more proactive and effective, and why? (Probe: What would be the approach to make others more proactive)?
3. What have been the key achievements, so far, of the constituency outreach activities? Can you give an example? What have been the factors that have enabled success to date? What challenges remain?
4. How would you describe the approach Niti Samba takes in monitoring its performance as an activity?
 - a. To what extent have you found the monitoring system relevant to your work?
 - b. Are there ways in which it might be improved?
 - c. Are there examples of how you have used information or products from your MEL system to manage the activity adaptively?

5. How would you describe the extent of collaboration and communications among IFES, NDI, and IRI? How about the quality of this collaboration? And the effectiveness? Do you see any challenges (operational and programmatic)?

II. Engagement with Marginalized Groups

6. In what ways has NDI contributed to the creation or enhancement of opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged communities, youths, Dalits, PWD, Madheshi, women, and others in national politics and political parties? (Probe multiple levels of marginality. Is it making a difference? What factors or events have enabled this progress? What obstacles have been faced? What obstacles remain?)

III. Are current objectives still relevant? Any new challenges that have not been addressed? Have adjustments been made to new challenges?

7. Are the Niti Sambad objectives (intermediate and lower-level results) still relevant to the current Nepal context? Are there new challenges that need to be addressed? How might this be done?
8. In what ways has research (such as surveys, focus groups, or assessments) been used to inform NDI's strategy or approach in Niti Sambad? Were these activities useful? Could you please give an example?
9. Now that we are at about the middle of the Niti Sambad implementation, have there been any situations in which NDI has made programmatic or operational adaptations to changing circumstances? Could you give us an example?

IV. Progress Towards Sustainability

10. How is the project progressing in terms of the sustainability of results? (Probe: If not well, what adjustments may be necessary to meet expectations? Any particular challenges, issues, or enabling factors that have affected progress supporting sustainability?)

V. Suggestions/Recommendations

11. What would you do differently if you had an opportunity to redesign the project?
12. Do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations to USAID, Niti Sambad, or other stakeholders regarding how the Niti Sambad program might be improved? (Probe: adjustments, adaptation, approach, strategies.)

E6. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Social Studies Teachers

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity being implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved with or knowledgeable about Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation. We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Introductory

1. Did you participate in the IFES intervention on civic education training to teachers?
(If yes: Can you tell us when that was?)
2. How useful was this training for your work as a teacher? (Very useful/somewhat/not at all)
Why?
3. Could you briefly tell us about the content of the civic education component that mainstreamed in the curriculum of social studies in school education? How well have students responded to this content?
4. Are there any challenges that you have been facing to deliver this curriculum in the classroom? (If yes, please tell us briefly about those challenges.)
5. In order to address those challenges that you have mentioned, tell us how you think these challenges can be addressed?
6. Do you see any roles of provincial and local level government in strengthening civic education at the school level? If yes, how might this take place?

7. Do you have any other suggestions for how young people might better be educated about how government works and their role in influencing government?

E7. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Civil Society Partner Organizations

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity being implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved/knowledgeable about Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be confidential—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Introductory

1. How long have you been with your organization?
2. Please tell us about your position, background, and responsibilities in the organization?
3. Could you please describe for us what your organization's work with Niti Sambah (IFES/IRI/NDI) was? What was the activity called? When did it take place? What was your organization's role?

II. Is Niti Sambah Assistance on Track?

4. Overall, to what extent do you think the work you have done with Niti Sambah has been effective in meeting its objectives? (A great deal/a moderate amount/not at all) Why do you say this?

5. Could Niti Sambad have done something more or differently to better support this work you did with them? (If yes: Can you tell us more about that?)
6. On the side of your own organization, is there anything you might have done more effectively? (If yes: What is that?)
7. What have been the most important challenges or constraints in the work you have done with Niti Sambad? Are there ways in which these challenges or constraints might be better addressed in the future?
8. Are there particular opportunities in this work need to be better addressed in the future? (If yes: Could you please describe these for us?)
9. Are you aware of the cooperation and collaboration between IFES, IRI, and NDI in implementing Niti Sambad? *(If no, skip to the next question. If yes: How would you describe the extent of collaboration and communications among IFES, NDI, and IRI? How about the quality of this collaboration? And the effectiveness? Do you see any challenges (operational and programmatic) in collaboration going forward? Are there ways in which the collaboration might be improved?*

III. Engagement with Marginalized Groups

10. To what extent have voter education and election monitoring practices been inclusive of marginalized groups? Is there any such mechanism that ensures inclusivity? To your knowledge, what particular interventions have IFES used to support inclusivity?

IV. Are current objectives still relevant? Any new challenges that have not been addressed? Have adjustments been made to new challenges?

11. Are the Niti Sambad objectives (addressing elections, political parties, and parliaments) still relevant to the current Nepal context? Are there new challenges that need to be addressed? How might this be done?

V. ECN Capacity *(include these questions only if the respondent's organization work in election-related activities)*

12. Do you think ECN currently is capable, technically and financially, of effectively supporting the Code of Conduct before, during, and post-election? (If yes: Can you give us an example? If no: What more needs to be done to enhance the capacity? Are there plans for taking these actions?)
13. Do you think that ECN would be able to function effectively without donor support? Why or why not?
14. Based on your experience, what would be the key preferred areas of collaboration with ECN in the period beyond the scheduled close of Niti Sambad in 2022? Why?

VI. Progress Toward Sustainability

- I 5. How is the work you have done with Niti Sambad progressing in terms of the sustainability of results? (Probe: What adjustments are necessary? Are there any particular challenges, issues, or enabling factors that have affected progress towards sustainability?)

VII. Suggestions/Recommendations

- I 6. If you had an opportunity to redesign the work you have done with Niti Sambad, what would you do differently? Are there new challenges that have arisen since Niti Sambad got started? Are these challenges being adequately addressed?
- I 7. Do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations to Niti Sambad regarding how the program might be improved? (Probe: operational approach, strategy, adaptation)
Suggestions for USAID or the USG?

E8. INTERVIEW GUID FOR OTHER INTERNATIONAL DONORS

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Other International Donors

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambat Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambat to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambat about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you may have knowledge of Niti Sambat and its work. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in or knowledgeable about Niti Sambat.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion.

For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambat. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be confidential—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy. You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand Niti Sambat and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I.COORDINATION/COLLABORATION

1. How aware are you of the USAID funded Niti Sambat program here in Nepal? How do you know about these programs and implementers? *[Filter or emphasize questions below base on the response here.]*
2. Are there any areas where your work overlaps or intersects with that of NDI, IRI, and IFES?
3. How would you describe the coordination that has taken place between your organization and these organizations in the implementation of Niti Sambat and other activities in the sector? (Probe: extensiveness/intensity; effectiveness/productivity)
4. Have there been any challenges in coordinating with these organizations? If so, how have these challenges been addressed?

II. NITI SAMBAD EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE TO DATE

5. Niti Sambad's primary expected results address the democratic effectiveness of parliaments at federal and provincial levels, ECN, and political parties. Based on your knowledge and experience, how would you characterize Niti Sambad's effectiveness in supporting progress in these areas? Can you give examples of accomplishments so far?
6. What constraints would you say Niti Sambad faces in its work? How are they being addressed? Are there any opportunities (strategically or operationally) that are being missed?

III. ENGAGEMENT WITH MARGINALIZED GROUPS

7. In what ways has Niti Sambad contributed to the creation or enhancement of opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged communities (Specifically: Youth, Dalits, PWD, Madheshi, women, and others) in political institutions, including parties? (Probe intersectionality) Is it making a difference? What factors or events have enabled this progress? What obstacles have been faced? What obstacles remain?

IV. SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations to Niti Sambad regarding how the program might be improved? (Probe: operational approach, strategy, adaptation)
9. Suggestions for USAID or the USG?

E9. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ELECTION EXPERTS

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Expert (Election)

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in, or knowledgeable about, Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Could you please summarize for us, briefly, your level of familiarity with the elections system in Nepal, and how you obtained this expertise?
2. Are you familiar with Niti Sambah, implemented by NDI, IFES, and IRI? (If yes: What do you know about this project? Do you have any point of view about how effective this project has been so far?)
3. Generally speaking, how do you see the capacity of ECN in the post constitution era to meet the aspirations of the federal structure? (Probe: Why do you say so? Look for comments on voter education, the voter list, voter registration campaigns, out-of-country voting, monitoring the Code of Conduct, and campaign financing.)
4. In what ways has the legal/regulatory framework for elections been strengthened in ECN in the federal context?
5. Do you think these legal/regulatory frameworks are inclusive? Why or why not?

6. To what extent do you see the ECN as having institutionalized the knowledge and systems regarding voter education, voter list, registration campaign, out of country voting, and monitoring of the implementation of election code of conduct and election financing? If not, what are the challenges in putting in place these systems and institutional knowledge?
7. What kinds of new challenges or issues are emerging related to election administration? What kinds of reforms are necessary to address these challenges?
8. Are there ways in which ECN might more effectively collaborate with governments, parties, and donors to improve the electoral system?
9. Is the donor community adequately responding to the level and kinds of assistance needs Nepal has regarding its electoral system? In what ways might donors respond better?
10. Recognizing what you've told us so far, do you have recommendations for Niti Sambad or USAID regarding assistance to improve the electoral system? *(If needed, ask for the rationale for recommendations.)*

E10. INTERVIEW GUID FOR USAID GESI EXPERT

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION **Interview Guide for USAID GESI Expert**

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in, or knowledgeable about, Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Introductory

1. Can you briefly describe how USAID Nepal has been working to mainstream GESI in all programs/projects of USAID? (approach, strategy, and intervention)
2. What is your impression of political parties and legislatures with regards to improving laws and policies related to GESI and implement those in practice?

II. Is NITI Sambah's assistance on track?

3. What is your overall impression about how well Niti Sambah has been doing so far for addressing GESI issues in political parties, ECN, and parliamentary process?

- Political parties' and ECN's policy frameworks.

- Party structures and the ECN structure.
- Space for raising voice and influence in decision making within parties and national decision making.
- Meaningful participation in political processes.
- Opportunities and obstacles .
- How well has Niti Sambad responded to opportunities and obstacles.

III. Engagement with Marginalized Groups

4. Do you think overall project interventions can provide space for marginalized groups (women, Dalit, PWD, Indigenous groups, Madheshi, etc.) in its program activities and process? If yes, give an example. If no, then what needs to be improved in the project?
5. Do you think NS has been able to acknowledge intersectionality in its project implementation process adequately? If yes, please explain.

IV. Are current objectives still relevant

6. In the changing federal context, is the project strategy and implementation related to GESI still relevant to the evolving situation in Nepal? Are there any changes that need to be made? Should NS focus on any particular issue related to GESI?

V. ECN capacity

7. Are Niti Sambad's activities for building ECN's capacity for addressing GESI effective? If yes, please give some examples. If not, why not, and how can the project has to address the GESI issue?

VI. Progress towards sustainability

8. How is the project progressing in terms of sustainability? (Probe: If not, what adjustments may be necessary to meet sustainability expectations? Any particular challenges, issues, or enabling factors that have affected progress toward sustainability?)

VII. Suggestions and recommendations

9. Do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations to USAID, Niti Sambad, or other stakeholders regarding how the Niti Sambad program might improve GESI? (Probe: adjustments, adaptation, approach, strategies)

E II. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ECN LEADERSHIP AND STAFF

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for ECN

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in, or knowledgeable about, Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Introductory

1. How long have you been with the ECN?
2. Please tell us about your position, background, and responsibilities in the IEC and electoral administration?
3. Have you yourself been working with IFES directly? (If yes: For how long?)
4. Could you briefly summarize for us the assistance IFES been contributing to ECN? (Probe: technical assistance, system strengthening, and institutionalizing. Look for examples.)
5. To what extent do you see the ECN as having institutionalized the knowledge and systems regarding voter education, voter list, registration campaign, out of country voting, and monitoring of the implementation of election code of conduct and election financing? If there has not been enough progress, what are the challenges to putting in place these systems and institutional knowledge?

6. What else should be considered in order to enhance the sustainability and local ownership of your work with IFES?
7. In what areas is donor support currently required for ECN to function effectively? For how much longer will this be needed, in your estimation?
8. Does ECN have plans to partner with CSOs if donor support were to be reduced?
9. Are there any technical areas of ECN's work to which ECN and IFES might have given more attention? Why is that?
10. What gaps still exist in the legal framework for elections? Why are these present at this stage?
11. What is the status of the legal/regulatory framework to improve inclusivity in elections? Are there gaps that currently need to be addressed?
12. To what extent are disability rights issues currently addressed in the electoral process? (A great deal/a moderate amount/not really at all). What needs to be done further?
13. How effective is ECN in monitoring and enforcing the Code of Conduct, including campaign finance and other related policies? What are the major obstacles?
14. How effective is ECN in resolving election disputes? Does it have tracking systems to support this?
15. How effective would you say the media and civil society are in the oversight of parties and processes before, during, and after elections? What are the constraints or issues in making this oversight more effective?
16. Based on your experience, how relevant are IFES interventions are in the current context? Are any adjustments necessary, if so in what areas? Why do you say so?
17. How effective have you found IFES assistance so far? How well is the program achieving its objectives with ECN?
18. Are there improvements that could be made in IFES's work with ECN? (If yes: What needs to be done? Why is that?)
19. To what extent has IFES helped to male citizens better engaged, more aware of laws, and more responsive voters? Has the project increased the number of registered and active (meaning, they voted in most recent elections) voters?
20. Broadly speaking, how would you describe ECN collaboration with international donors? Are there areas that could use improvement?
21. Any other recommendation to improve program interventions? (Probe: strategies, approach, issues, etc.)

E12. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EXPERTS ON POLITICAL PARTIES AND PARLIAMENT

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Expert (Political Parties & Parliamentary Democracy)

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in, or knowledgeable about, Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. As an expert, please explain the status of political parties: How and to what extent are Nepal's political parties inclusive, transparent, accountable to and representative of their constituents on national policy issues?
2. How and to what extent are political parties' internal structures democratic?
3. How do you see the role of political parties in the current context to improve the quality of laws and policies?
4. Do you think party leaders and legislatures are raising voices within party and in parliament for improving policy? Please explain.
5. Do you think they have (political parties' leaders and parliamentarians) influence national decision making? If yes, explain? If not, what are the challenges?

6. Do you think parliamentarian can play their role as a parliamentarian independently within and outside parliament to influence decision making, legislative reform, and other parliamentary oversight work?
7. What are the enabling factors? What are the challenges? Inter- and intra-party governance?
8. What are the major challenges of political parties and parliament to be credible institutions?
9. How parliamentarian's capacity can be improved?
10. How do you see the donor's support in political parties and parliamentary secretariat to enhance their capacity?
11. What kinds of new challenges/conflicts related to election/politics are emerging? What types of reforms are necessary to address these challenges? What are the most significant changes in Nepal's political context that donors need to be aware of?
12. Do you think donor's support is effective and relevant at present context? If not, then how do donors have to improve their intervention? Any specific feedback or recommendations for donors as well as parliamentary secretariat?

E13. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Political Parties

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in, or knowledgeable about, Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion.

For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy. You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

I. Introductory

1. How have you (party) been working with NDI in the past two years? If yes, what are the major activities?
2. In what way did NDI/IRI programs contribute to your party? What are the examples of successful contributions?
3. How have NDI/IRI programs helped make your party more transparent and accountable to your constituents?
4. How have the NDI/IRI programs helped your party get closer to the people and discuss national policy issues in and between elections? Does your party engage in the participatory policy development process?
5. What is your party doing to make your policies and platforms more receptive to the needs and concerns of citizens?

6. Does your party engage with professional bodies to utilize public opinion research in decision-making? If so, how?
7. What changes in your internal structures have taken place as a result of NDI/IRI support? How has NDI/IRI programs helped make your party more inclusive?
8. How did NDI/IRI programs contribute to the role, opportunities, and voices of marginalized groups (including youth, women, and Dalits) in national politics?
9. How are women and youth candidates (engaged/assisted by CEPPS) contributing to policy-making, internal democracy, transparent party structures, and outreach?
10. Do you think your party is inclusive and practices democratic norms and values? Give some examples? If not, why? (Probe: What should be done?)

II. Is NITI Sambad's assistance on track?

11. What are the reasons behind your political party working with NDI/IRI?
12. Is NDI/IRI program relevant to your party? (Probe: What needs to be changed to make the program more relevant/useful for your party?)
13. How have changes in the political context, including federalization, affected the relevance of NDI's support?
14. Can the participatory policy development process be sustainable? What are the key obstacles to making this sustainable?
15. What aspects of the party's functioning will be affected if there's no NDI support?
16. Any recommendations for NDI?
17. How long have you been with your party?
18. Please tell us about your position, background, and responsibilities in the party?

III.EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE

19. In your experience, how effective do you think NDI/IRI has been in implementing programs improving the ability of groups of politically active citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) to:
 - a. Participate in the electoral process?
 - b. Build grassroots demand?
 - c. Effectively advocate for a new legal framework for elections?
 - d. Why have you been more effective or less effective?
20. In your experience, how effective do you think IRI has been in implementing activities and in strengthening political parties and alliances? Are candidates able to articulate, organize, and implement clear political alternatives effectively at the national and sub-national levels? Why?
 - a. Were there any IRI activities that were particularly useful to you?
 - b. Were there any IRI activities that were less useful?
 - c. Do your party members frequently draw on the knowledge they gained from working with IRI

21. In your experience, how effective do you think IRI has been in implementing activities encouraging issue-based campaigns informed by public opinion research, and the completion of nationwide pre-election and exit polls? Why?
22. In your experience, how effective do you think IFES, IRI, and NDI have been in implementing activities strengthening the development of more democratic and open political processes and the participation of candidates, activists, monitors, and voters in elections? Why? [PROGRAM GOAL]
23. In your experience, do you think the implementation of some IRI activities was particularly effective or ineffective? What made the implementation of these particular activities more or less effective?
24. In your experience, how has the IRI program adapted to changes in the environment in which they work? [follow up – How about changes in the: political context, USG context, public activism, civil society community]

IV. SUSTAINABILITY

25. What IRI interventions do you think are more likely to be sustainable over time? What makes them more sustainable?
26. What IRI interventions do you think are less likely to be sustainable over time? What makes them less sustainable?
27. What should be considered to enhance sustainability and local ownership?

V. LESSONS LEARNED

28. Based on your experience with these programs, what do you think are some key lessons learned that could help IRI and their partners under the current program?
29. Based on your experience with these programs, what do you think are some key lessons learned that could help the USAID Mission in these areas in their future strategy?

We are focused on the effectiveness of programs. We are most interested in how these activities were implemented. We would appreciate it if you can focus your responses on the programs implemented by IFES, IRI, NDI, and their work directly with you and your organization.

30. How long have you been with your party?

31. Please tell us about your position, background, and responsibilities in the party?

32. In your experience, how has the IRI program adapted to changes in the environment in which they work? [follow up – How about changes in the: political context, USG context, public activism, civil society community]

E14. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR KATHMANDU SCHOOL OF LAW

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION Interview Guide for KSL

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambad Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambad to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambad about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambad. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in, or knowledgeable about, Niti Sambad.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambad. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambad so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Please explain your overall program intervention under the project “NITI Sambad” with IRI? (areas of work, objective, strategic approach, key partners)
2. What were/are the key research/assessment that you have been conducting?
3. How was/is research (surveys, FGDs, impact evaluation) used? Was /is it useful?
4. What were/are the key findings of your assessment/research in relation to the overall capacity of Nepalese parliament/secretariat and other issues? (Provincial and federal levels).
5. Please explain how the policy forum has been working/is planning to work?
6. How has it contributed to ensure the inclusive law-making process or enhance voters’ opportunities to select or hold accountable their representatives at the provincial and federal levels?

7. How would a policy forum help to strengthen inclusiveness (respect diversity and intersection) within the law-making process or enhance voters' opportunities to select or hold accountable their representatives at the provincial and federal levels?
8. Is there any mechanism that enables national partners to come together to discuss to identify trends, lessons learned, and best practices? Did it work (respond to changes)? Lessons learned?
9. How is the project collaborating with other national partners of the project to achieve a common goal of the project?
10. Any further recommendations/inputs for improving project intervention?
11. What are your plans for the policy research framework?
12. How are the changing political context and operational environment likely to affect your plan?

E15. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NEPAL LAW SOCIETY

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION Interview Guide for IPs (Nepal Law Society (NLS))

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, Inc., an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity, implemented by **IFES, IRI, and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in, or knowledgeable about, Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far and to contribute to the improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Please explain your overall program intervention under the project “NITI Sambah “with NDI?. (areas of work, objective, strategic approach, key partners)
2. What are the major contributions of NLS to implement the project?
3. How has NLS been supporting party leaders and legislatures to raising voices within party and in parliament for improving inclusive policy? Please explain with tangible examples.
4. What is the key mechanism/forum that has been created to work with political party leaders and parliamentarians to bring the people’s voices in the law-making process?
5. Are these mechanisms/forums are functional or proactive? If not, what are the challenges and how you have been working to address those challenges?

6. How has your project been supporting parliamentary outreach to ensure the inclusivity of the law-making process or enhance voters' opportunities to select or hold accountable their representatives at the provincial and federal levels?
7. How has your project intervention contributed to creating opportunities for the marginalized and disadvantaged communities, youths, Dalits, PWD, women, and others in the federal- and provincial-level law-making process and policies?
(Probe intersectionality.)
8. Is there an opportunity within a project to work with small and new political parties? How have parties been responding towards the project?
9. What are the enabling factors? What are the challenges?
10. Is there any mechanism that enables national partners to come together to discuss to identify trends, lessons learned, and best practices? Did it work (respond to changes)?
Lessons learned?
11. How is the project collaborating with other national partners of the project to achieve a common goal of the project?
12. Do you have any further recommendations/inputs for improving project intervention?

E16. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MEMBERS OF LEGISLATIVE PARLIAMENT

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Legislative Parliament

(Women and Social Committee; Finance Committee; Law, Justice and Human Rights Committee; Legislative Management Committee; Delegated Management and Government Assurance Committee)

Thank you for being willing to talk with us today. Your participation in our evaluation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion.

For our report, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and other stakeholders. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

Feel free to ask questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand Niti Sambad's results, and to improve the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. How have you (LP) been working with NDI (or partners) in the past two years? If yes, what are the major activities?
2. How have the NDI/IRI programs contributed to better policies and legislation?
3. Are NDI's programmatic efforts relevant and effective? If yes, give some examples?
 - How have parliamentarians/committees changed practices or introduced structures to improve oversight, representation, and legislation?
 - How is the Federal Parliament Secretariat/Thematic Committee Secretariat and Policy Research Bodies working together to develop informed policies and legislation?
 - What is the level of capacity of FP Secretariat/ thematic Committee Secretariat? Why do you say this?
 - What are the examples of best practices in the FP Secretariat/ Thematic Committee Secretariat?
 - What has the federal secretariat/ thematic Committee Secretariat done to strengthen sub-national councils? How can the FPS make this function sustainable?
 - Are laws being enacted through informed policy analysis, consultations, and public vetting? What has been the experience so far? Is citizen feedback incorporated into the legislative process? How and how much?

4. What are the different ways in which you interact with your constituents? How often do you engage the public?
5. How do you evaluate NDI/IRI support regarding policy research and dialogue for inclusive lawmaking and oversight? If not, what kind of support is necessary?
6. How can elected representatives make more use of policy research and dialogue for lawmaking and government oversight? How can this become sustainable?
7. Have you taken part in Town Hall Meetings (THMs)? If so, how do you prepare for the THMs?
8. Do you think THMs are useful? If yes, then in what ways? How can THM's be sustained without donor support?
9. Do parliamentary committees have a practice of consulting with experts and supporting them to conduct research, fact findings, policy analysis in particular issues? If not, then why? If yes, can you give an example? (Probe: Do you have resources for these activities)?
10. How do you perceive the need for donor support (NDI/IRI)? Do you think donor support is required for strengthening inclusive law-making process and oversight? If yes, how long? What would be your recommendation for sustaining parliamentary efforts without donor support? Give some examples of your efforts to increase resources for your respective secretariat?
11. Any recommendations to NDI/IRI to improve their program for parliamentary support?
12. Do you have suggestions for USAID on the implementation of Niti Sambad or for the design of future programs to assist the parliamentary process?

E17. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR NRA AND OTHER GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION **Interview Guide for NRA & Other Government Entities**

Note: This guide is targeted to NRA interviewees, but the substance of these questions will serve as a guide for interviews with other government ministries, departments, or agencies.

Thank you for being willing to talk with us today. Your participation in our evaluation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion.

For our report, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and other stakeholders. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

Feel free to ask questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand Niti Sambad's results, and to improve the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. How have you been working with NDI in the past two years? If yes, what are the major activities?
2. How did NRA's communications strategy evolve?
3. What were the reasons behind working with NDI on communications?
4. Were the objectives fulfilled?
5. What are examples of successful activities?
6. Were political processes (for the constitution's implementation) transparent and widely communicated within and outside the government?
7. Did NDI's support contribute to that process? How?
8. Is the support relevant for NRA?
9. What are the lessons learned for future programming?
10. Did the NRA's capacity improve as a result of NDI support?
11. How are you currently communicating/engaging with the public and the media?
12. Has the NRA institutionalized communications practices?
13. Can the NRA carry out transparent communications without donor support?

We are focused on the effectiveness of the program. We are most interested in how these activities were implemented. We would appreciate it if you can focus your responses on the programs implemented by IFES, IRI, NDI, and their work directly with you and your organization.

14. How long have you been with your organization?

15. Please tell us about your position, background, and responsibilities in the organization?

I.EFFECTIVENESS AND RELEVANCE

16. In your experience, how effective do you think NDI/IRI has been in implementing programs improving the ability of groups of politically active citizens and civil society organizations (CSOs) to:

- a. Participate in the electoral process
- b. Build grassroots demand
- c. Effectively advocate for a new legal framework for elections
- d. Why have you been more effective or less effective? (Not for IFES)

17. In your experience, how effective do you think NDI/IRI/IFES has been in implementing programs developing avenues to engage the following groups in the election process and civic engagement? Why?

- a. Women
- b. Youth
- c. The disabled

18. In your experience, how effective do you think IRI has been in implementing activities strengthening political parties and alliances and the ability of candidates to articulate, organize and implement clear political alternatives at the national and sub-national levels? Why?

19. In your experience, how effective do you think IRI has been in implementing activities encouraging issue-based campaigns informed by public opinion research, and the completion of nationwide pre-election and exit polls? Why?

20. In your experience, how effective do you think IRI and NDI have been in implementing activities bolstering public demand for local self-government and candidates' commitment to open and more accountable performance as to future members of parliament? Why?

21. In your experience, how effective do you think NDI, IRI, and IFES have been in implementing activities promoting the transparency and integrity of the election process and building the capacity of the IEC to conduct transparent and credible election processes? Why?

22. In your experience, how effective do you think IFES, IRI, and NDI have been in implementing activities strengthening the development of more democratic and open political processes and the participation of candidates, activists, monitors, and voters in elections? Why? [PROGRAM GOAL]

23. In your experience, do you think the implementation of some NDI, IRI, and IFES activities was particularly effective or ineffective? What made the implementation of these particular activities more or less effective?

24. In your experience, how has the NDI/IRI/IFES program adapted to changes in the environment in which they work? [follow up – How about changes in the: political context, USG context, public activism, civil society community]

II. SUSTAINABILITY

25. What NDI/IRI/IFES interventions do you think are more likely to be sustainable over time?
What makes them more sustainable?
26. What NDI/IRI/IFES interventions do you think are less likely to be sustainable over time?
What makes them less sustainable?
27. What should be considered to enhance sustainability and local ownership?

III. LESSONS LEARNED

28. Based on your experience with these programs, what do you think are some key lessons learned that could help NDI, IRI, the IEC, and their partners under the current program?
29. Based on your experience with these programs, what do you think are some key lessons learned that could help the USAID Mission in these areas in their future strategy?

E18. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR U.S. EMBASSY POLITICAL SECTION

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for US Embassy Political Section

If needed, summarize the evaluation SOW and note the intended length of this interview]
Thank you for being willing to talk with us today. Your participation in our evaluation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion.

For our report, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and other stakeholders. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

Feel free to ask questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the Niti Sambad results, and to improve the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Could you summarize for us what you know about Niti Sambad's objectives and activities?
[Focus on areas of interviewee's knowledge]
2. In what ways does Niti Sambad fit with the USG strategy for Nepal? To what extent is its work relevant to the USG strategy?
3. What are the most significant changes in the Nepal political and institutional context (political and operating environment) that may have a direct impact on Niti Sambad's strategy or implementation? (Probe: Party alignment? Other developments?)
4. To what extent do USG strategic initiatives affect Niti Sambad's strategy or implementation? (Examples: Indo-Pacific Strategy; Self-Reliance, MCC.) Are there any ways in which CEPPS has adapted to these initiatives or issues?
5. To the extent you are aware, could you tell us the areas in which NS has been especially successful so far, and where it has been less successful? (Probe: Why do you say so?)
6. Do you have any suggestions or recommendations for:
 - Improving NS programming or operations through its scheduled closing in 2022;
 - What might the design of a follow-on activity to Niti Sambad feature?

E19. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR USAID/NEPAL STAFF

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION Interview Guide for USAID

[If needed, summarize the evaluation SOW and note intended length of this interview]
Thank you for being willing to talk with us today. Your participation in our evaluation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion.

For our report, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and other stakeholders. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

Feel free to ask questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the Niti Sambad results, and to improve the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. Can you give us an overall impression of how well Niti Sambad has been doing so far? Are there any elements, outcomes, or activities that are particularly outstanding (good or bad)?
2. How would you describe the extent of collaboration and communications among IFES, NDI, and IRI? How about the quality of this collaboration? And the effectiveness? Do you see any challenges (operational and programmatic)?
3. What about collaboration with other USAID IPs? (Probe: extent; quality, effectiveness)
4. And collaboration with activities supported by other donors? (Probe: extent, quality, effectiveness)
5. In what ways has research (such as surveys, focus groups, or assessments) been used to inform strategy or approach in Niti Sambad? Were these activities useful? Could you please give examples?

I. Is Niti Sambad's assistance on track?

6. To what extent has Niti Sambad made progress in its intended Results?
 - Result 1.1 (electoral system): Accomplishments, limitations, enabling and inhibiting factors, also explanations of why progress was this way)
 - R1.2: MPs and Parliament...
 - R1.3: Political processes (transparency, communication)...
 - R2.1: Parties' internal structures...
 - R2.2: Parties' policy positions...

II. Engagement with marginalized groups

7. In what ways has CEPPS contributed to the creation or enhancement of opportunities for marginalized and disadvantaged communities, youths, Dalits, PWD, Madheshi, women, and others in politics and parties? (Probe multiple levels of marginality. Participation in the political process by marginalized groups. Is it making a difference? What factors or events have enabled this progress? What obstacles have been faced? What obstacles remain? How well has CEPPS responded to these obstacles?)

III. Are current objectives still relevant?

8. Has CEPPS carried out any significant adaptations in its program or operations in response to changing circumstances in Nepal? (Probe: Can you give an example or two? How successful or productive have these changes been?)
9. What are the most significant changes in the Nepal political and institutional context (political and operating environment) that may have had a direct impact on Niti Sambad's strategy or implementation? (Probe: Party alignment? Other developments?)
10. To what extent do USG strategic initiatives affect Niti Sambad's strategy or implementation? (Examples: Indo-Pacific Strategy; Self-Reliance, MCC) Are there any ways in which CEPPS has adapted to these initiatives or issues?

IV. ECN capacity

11. Can ECN effectively function without donor support (how might it function after donor support phases out)? (Probe: Why/why not?)
12. How can ECN be more independent financially (any strategies, approaches, modalities, and initiatives)?
13. What external factors, including systemic issues outside the scope of CEPPS, are present to affect the sustainability of ECN?
14. Do you think ECN currently is capable, technically and financially, for the effective monitoring of the code of conduct before, during, and post-election? [If yes: Can you give examples? If no: What more needs to be done to enhance the capacity?]
15. In what ways has Niti Sambad made a difference in building ECN capacity? (Examples) (Probe: Are there ways in which capacity could be better supported in the future?)

V. Progress towards sustainability

16. How is NS progressing in terms of sustainability? (Probe: ECN, parties, parliament, parliamentary institutions. If not well, what adjustments may be necessary? Any particular challenges, issues, or enabling factors that have affected progress supporting sustainability?)

VI. Suggestions and recommendations

17. What would you do differently if you had an opportunity to redesign the project?

18. Do you have any specific suggestions or recommendations to USAID, Niti Sambad, or other stakeholders regarding how the Niti Sambad program might be improved? (Probe: adjustments, adaptation, approach, strategies.)

E20. INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR ECN DISTRICT ELECTION OFFICERS

NITI SAMBAD: MID-TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION Interview Guide for ECN District Election Officers (DEOs)

Thank you for meeting with us. [Introductions] We are from CAMRIS International, an independent firm that is conducting a study for USAID on the Niti Sambah Activity being implemented by **IFES, IRI and NDI**. As part of this work, we are evaluating Niti Sambah to learn more about its progress. Our team will be speaking with many individuals as part of the evaluation. We asked to meet with you because we are looking to understand your experiences with Niti Sambah about how it has or has not helped and how it might be improved. You have been selected for this interview because you are currently participating in, or familiar with, Niti Sambah. In total, our evaluation will involve speaking with other people who are involved in, or knowledgeable about, Niti Sambah.

Your participation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion. For reports we write on this study, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and Niti Sambah. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

You should also feel comfortable asking any questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand the results of Niti Sambah so far, and to contribute to improvement of the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation.

We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. How long have you been serving as a District Election Officer?
2. Please tell us about your position, background, and responsibilities in this role.
3. Have you yourself been working with IFES directly? (If yes: In what way? When? For how long? If no: Are you familiar with the assistance in support of the Code of Conduct from IFES? If no: Close this interview and say “thank you” for this person’s time.)
4. In your experience, to what extent has the assistance from IFES and its local partners (such as civil society groups supporting civic education) been relevant to current needs in the administration of elections? Why do you say so?
5. In your experience, how effective has the IFES assistance been? Has it made a difference? (Very effective/Somewhat/Not at all) Why?
6. Are there any technical areas of your work to which ECN and IFES should be giving more attention? Why is that?
7. How effective is ECN in monitoring and enforcing the Code of Conduct, including campaign finance and other related policies? What are the major obstacles to enforcement being more effective?

8. Are there improvements that could be made in IFES's work with District Election Officers and the people you work with? (If yes: What needs to be done? Why is that?)
9. Any other recommendation to improve program interventions in support of elections? (Probe: strategies, approach, issues, etc.)

E21. INTERVIEW GUID FOR MEMBERS OF PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLIES

NITI SAMBAD: MID TERM PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Interview Guide for Provincial Assemblies

(For chairs of legislative committees, General Secretaries)

Thank you for being willing to talk with us today. Your participation in our evaluation is voluntary, and you are entitled to decline to participate at any point before or during the discussion.

For our report, your answers will be combined with those of other people and presented in a summary format. We will be sharing the report with USAID and other stakeholders. Your comments will not be attached to your name, so your responses will be anonymous—although, we will be taking notes and recording your voice so that we can remember later what you tell us. Any information you provide that might identify you will be kept confidential to the fullest extent under local law and U.S. Government policy.

Feel free to ask questions at any time during the conversation. There is no payment or direct benefit to you for participating in this interview. There are no specific foreseeable benefits associated with participating in this interview. What you tell us will be used to understand Niti Sambat's results, and to improve the program, so we hope you can be honest with us in your responses. We do not foresee any discomfort and risks associated with participation. We expect this will take 1 hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1. We have been asked by USAID to evaluate progress made by a project called Niti Sambat. It is implemented by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). How have you (the Committee or Secretariat) been working with NDI, any of these organizations or their Nepal partners in the past two years? [If yes: go to Q 2. If no: Go to Q 6.]
2. What has been your experience with this project? Was training involved, awareness building, or just meeting to explore possible activities together? When did this take place?
3. Has this work so far been helpful? [If yes: In what way? If no: Why not?]
4. Are there ways in which this program may have already contributed to better policies and legislation? [If yes: Why? If no: go to next question]
5. Are there ways in which this program could be made more useful for strengthening the capacity of this assembly?
6. What are the major challenges the assembly faces for the coming few years? Why do you say that?
7. What tools or activities are currently available for meeting these challenges?
8. What are the different ways in which you interact with your constituents? How often do you engage the public?
9. How can elected representatives make more use of policy research and dialogue for lawmaking and government oversight? How can this become sustainable? Do you have suggestions to USAID on implementation guidance to Niti Sambat, or for the design of future programs to assist the assembly's policy making process?

APPENDIX F: KEY NITI SAMBAD ACTIVITIES AT ACTIVITY MIDPOINT

The list below is taken from a list of key activities, sorted by Niti Sambad's objectives, provided by USAID in the Evaluation Statement of Work. Note that this list offers only a "first-level" of detail; many of the items listed here actually are themselves summaries of multiple events or pathways of Niti Sambad program intervention.

Objective 1

- Design and implement inclusive civic and voter education campaigns.
- Conduct an assessment of the ECN's voter list system.
- Provide technical guidance on out-of-country and absentee/advance voting.
- Improve the gender responsiveness of the ECN.
- Conduct leadership training for persons with disabilities.
- Strengthen the electoral legal framework.
- Improve the institutional capacity of the ECN.
- Assess and develop recommendations on political finance and abuse of state resources.
- Develop election dispute resolution procedures.
- Conduct post-election assessments to identify lessons learned.
- Conduct post-election town hall meetings.
- Solicit citizen input through town hall meetings and public policy forums.
- Support parliamentary monitoring of elected representatives.
- Improve constituent relations.
- Organize orientation for new federal-level MPs.
- Consult on the policy formulation process.
- Provide legislative research and policy analysis trainings.
- Support the development of a policy research board.
- Conduct policy research forums.
- Organize targeted policy studies.
- Provide technical assistance to parliamentary committees.
- Conduct an assessment of the parliament secretariat.
- Develop an orientation curriculum and platform for newly elected sub-national officials.
- Conduct dialogues on federal governance to solidify peer-to-peer networks.
- Develop a unified and inclusive communications strategy and media policy (PMO, NRA, MOIC).
- Develop an ECN media policy.
- Conduct citizen outreach.

Objective 2

- Engage senior party leadership in the Niti Sambad program.
- Develop national-level policy working groups and provincial focal persons.
- Assess party policy development capacity.
- Establish a women's policy forum.
- Conduct an assessment of violence against women in political parties.
- Conduct candidate training for women and other marginalized groups.
- Organize policy debates between candidates or elected officials.

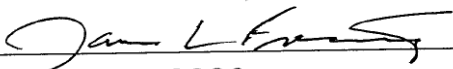
- Organize post-election orientation for women and other marginalized group office holders at the local level.
- Establish a women in politics mentorship program.
- Analyze current political party laws.
- Support PWG in policy development.
- Conduct focus group research.

APPENDIX G: DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Disclosure of Conflict of Interest for USAID Evaluation Team Members

Name	Jim Fremming
Title	Niti Sambad "Policy Dialogue" Activity: Mid-Term Performance Evaluation
Organization	CAMRIS International, Inc.
Evaluation Position?	☒ Team Leader ☐ Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	AID-367-C-15-00001
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	USAID/Nepal's Niti Sambad "Policy Dialogue" Activity
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to: 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.	

I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	
Date	January 27, 2020

Name	Asaya Bhadra Khanal
Title	
Organization	CAMRIS International
Evaluation Position?	☐ Team Leader ☒ Team member
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	AID-367-C-15-00001
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (Include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	Niti Sumbad -
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐ Yes ☒ No
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to: 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct, or is significant though indirect, in the implementing organization(s) whose projects are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant though indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with	

the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Preconceived ideas toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.	
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I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect their information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.

Signature	Asaya Bhadra Khanal
Date	January 7, 2020

DISCLOSURE OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Name	INDU TULADHAR		
Title	"Consultant -National Expert (GESI Specialist)"		
Organization	CAMRIS International, Inc.		
Evaluation Position?	☐ Team Leader	☒ Team member	
Evaluation Award Number (contract or other instrument)	AID-367-C-15-00001		
USAID Project(s) Evaluated (include project name(s), implementer name(s) and award number(s), if applicable)	USAID Nepal's Niti Samroad "Policy Dialogue" Activity		
I have real or potential conflicts of interest to disclose.	☐ Yes ☒ No		
If yes answered above, I disclose the following facts: Real or potential conflicts of interest may include, but are not limited to: 1. Close family member who is an employee of the USAID operating unit managing the project(s) being evaluated or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 2. Financial interest that is direct or is significantly involved in the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated or in the outcome of the evaluation. 3. Current or previous direct or significant through indirect experience with the project(s) being evaluated, including involvement in the project design or previous iterations of the project. 4. Current or previous work experience or seeking employment with the USAID operating unit managing the evaluation or the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 5. Current or previous work experience with an organization that may be seen as an industry competitor with the implementing organization(s) whose project(s) are being evaluated. 6. Perceived bias toward individuals, groups, organizations, or objectives of the particular projects and organizations being evaluated that could bias the evaluation.			
I certify (1) that I have completed this disclosure form fully and to the best of my ability and (2) that I will update this disclosure form promptly if relevant circumstances change. If I gain access to proprietary information of other companies, then I agree to protect that information from unauthorized use or disclosure for as long as it remains proprietary and refrain from using the information for any purpose other than that for which it was furnished.			
Signature			
Date	JANUARY 30, 2020		

APPENDIX H: NITI SAMBAD PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND STATUS VIS-À-VIS TARGETS FOR FY 2019²⁶

Indicator Number and Name	FY 2019 Target	FY 2019 Actual	Exceeded/Met/Not Met Target?
I.1.0.1 Percentage of trained stakeholders demonstrating an increase in knowledge on key electoral processes and procedures	80%	84.8%	Exceeded
I.1.1.1 Number of voter outreach tools and materials developed	4	4	Met
I.1.1.2 Number of individuals receiving voter education through USG-assisted programs (PPR Indicator)	30,000	48,971	Exceeded
I.1.1.3 Number of individuals receiving civic education through USG-assisted programs (PPR Indicator)	250,000	371,235	Exceeded
I.1.2.1 Number of recommendations developed through CEPPS/IFES assessments and technical assistance that address improvement of election processes that are implemented fully or partially by the ECN	10	8	Not Met
I.1.2.2 Number of laws or amendments to ensure credible elections drafted with USG technical assistance (PPR Indicator)	2	1	Not Met
I.1.2.3 Number of election officials trained with USG assistance (PPR Indicator)	400	790	Exceeded
I.2.0.2 Number of National Legislators and National Legislative Staff Attending USG Sponsored training or educational events (PPR Indicator)	100	231	Exceeded
I.2.1.1 Number of public forums in which national legislators and members of the public interact as a result of USG assistance (DR 2.2.1-6) (PPR Indicator, retired)	63	54	Not Met
I.2.1.3: Number of individuals attending CEPPS/NDI sponsored citizen outreach events	2000	2365	Exceeded
I.2.2.1.1 Number of policy research briefings conducted with national and provincial legislators	70	0	Not Met
I.3.3.1: Number of consultations held on Open Government Partnership with CEPPS/NDI assistance	5	2	Not Met
2.1.2 Number of individuals who receive USG-assisted political party training (DR 3.3-1) (PPR Indicator)	3,276	2,124	Not Met
Summary: Target exceeded: 6 indicators; target met: 1 indicator; target not met: 5 indicators.			

²⁶ This table includes only indicators for which actuals are reported in the Niti Samba Annual Report for FY 2019.

U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20523