

Local Politics and Administrative Capacity for Disaster Response: Insights from a Case Study of Lamjung District in Nepal

*Tikeshwari Joshi
Chandra Pandey
Dil B. Khatri
Bikash Adhikari
Hemant Ojha
Adam Pain*



CCRI case study

**Local Politics and Administrative Capacity for Disaster Response:
Insights from a Case Study of Lamjung District in Nepal**

Tikeshwari Joshi, Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies

Chandra L. Pandey, Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies

Dil B. Khatri, ForestAction Nepal

Bikash Adhikari, ForestAction Nepal

Hemant Ojha, University of New South Wales

Adam Pain, Danish Institute for International Studies

Climate Change and Rural Institutions Research Project



In collaboration with:



Copyright © 2016

Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies

ForestAction Nepal

Published by

Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies

NK Singh Marga, Min Bhawan-34,

Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal

ForestAction Nepal

PO Box 12207, Kathmandu, Nepal

Photos: Tikeshwari Joshi

Design and Layout: Sanjeeb Bir Bajracharya

Suggested Citation:

Joshi T., Pandey C., Khatri D., Adhikari B., Ojha H. and Pain A. 2016. Local Politics and Administrative Capacity for Disaster Response: Insights from a Case Study of Lamjung District in Nepal. CCRI Case Study Report. Southasia Institute of Advance Studies (SIAS) and ForestAction Nepal. Kathmandu

The views expressed in this case study report are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies, ForestAction Nepal and Danish Institute for International Studies.

Acknowledgement

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to officials from District Development Committee (DDC), District Administration Office (DAO), District Forest Office (DFO), and District Soil Conservation Office (DSCO) in Lamjung. We also acknowledge the cooperation of Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal (FECOFUN), Red Cross, Non-governmental organization, political party representatives and journalists from the district. We are also grateful to teams at SIAS and ForestAction for their support and cooperation in conducting this study.

This study was part of a four-country research programme on Climate Change and Rural Institutions (CCRI) funded by the Danish Foreign Ministry and led by Danish Institute of International Studies (DIIS). Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS) and ForestAction Nepal are research partners in Nepal.

Acronyms

APM	All Party Mechanism
CA	Constituent Assembly
CAPA	Community Adaptation Plan of Action
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CC	Climate Change
CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CCRI	Climate Change and Rural Institutions
CDC	Compensation Determination Committee
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CDO	Chief District Officer
CDRC	Central Disaster Relief Committee
CFUGs	Community Forest User Groups
CIAA	Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CPN UML	Communist Party Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist
DCCRECC	District Climate Change and Renewable Energy Coordination Committee
DDC	District Development Committee
DDRC	District Disaster Relief Committee
DDPRP	District Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan
DECP	District Energy and Climate Plan
DEOC	District Emergency Operation Center
DFO	District Forest Office
DFSCC	District Forest Sector Coordination Committee
DSCO	District Soil Conservation Office
DNA	Designated National Authority
DRCC	District Road Coordination Committee
DRILP	Decentralized Rural Infrastructure and Livelihood Programme
EFLG	Environment Friendly Local Governance
ENPRED	Environmental preservation services for Development
FECOFUN	Federation of Community Forest Users, Nepal
FY	Fiscal Year
GLOF	Glacier Lake Outburst Flood
GoN	Government of Nepal
IGA	Income Generation Activity
INGOs	International Non-Governmental Organizations
LAPA	Local Adaptation Plan for Action
LDO	Local Development Officer
LSGA	Local Self Governance Act
MoFALD	Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development
MoLD	Ministry of Local Development

MoSTE	Ministry of Science Technology and Environment
MSFP	Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme
NAPA	National Adaptation Program of Action
NC	Nepali Congress
NEOC	National Emergency Operation Center
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRs	Nepalese Rupees
PABs	Politico Administrative Bodies
PES	Payment for Ecosystem Services
RPP	Rastriya Prajatantra Party
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
VDC	Village Development Committee

Contents

Acknowledgement

Contents

Acronyms

1. Introduction	1
2. Methodology	3
3. Context of Study Site	3
4. PABs in the District: Roles, responsibilities and decision making	5
4.1 APM: Composition, development and transformation	6
4.2 District Road Coordination Committee (DRCC)	12
4.3 District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC)	16
5. Conclusion and Way Forward	19
6. References	22
7. Annexes	23
Annex 1: List of Key Informants	23
Annex 2: Politico-Administrative Bodies (PABs) in Lamjung District	25
Annex 3: List of District based Government Institutions in Lamjung	29
Annex 4: Vulnerability Ranking of Lamjung	30
Annex 5: Estimated budget for the FY 2014/2015 (2071/72)	30

1. Introduction

Nepal has a turbulent political history characterized by relentless political transition. Particularly after the restoration of multi-party democracy in 1990, this situation has aggravated by a decade long Maoist insurgency which began in 1996. With the conclusion of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in November 2006, a way was paved for the Maoists to join the mainstream political process. CPA was a landmark event as it laid the foundation for ushering radical democratic changes in the country. Abolishment of the monarchy and the subsequent declaration of Nepal as the republic state in 2008 have been considered as unprecedented achievements having long term consequences. After having a long political transformation since 1996, the country has endorsed a new constitution in 2015, the implementation of which looks extremely difficult amid the growing political mistrust and acrimony among the major political parties. As a result, operationalizing federalism has become challenging with essential laws and by-laws accommodating federal structure yet to be developed.

The country lacks elected representatives at the various local government bodies. For example Village Development Committee (VDC) and District Development Committee (DDC) are running in the absence of elected authorities for more than a decade since 2002. Government officials have been appointed at the local level to conduct local governance. The prolonged transition that the country is facing has implications for governance system, accountability mechanism and the ability to respond to diverse forms of disaster risks and climate vulnerability. The country is highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change and climate induced disasters because of varied geography (MoE, 2010). A significant population (about 25%) lives below poverty line (< 1.25\$/day), and has less adaptive capacity (MoE 2010).

Various studies show that local institutions help the vulnerable communities, particularly poor and marginal groups in responding to climate change and disasters (Agrawal et. al.2009, Maraseni 2012, Yates J.S. 2012). In this context, the Government of Nepal (GoN) has developed different legal and institutional mechanisms to address climate induced risks. At the district level, DDC-under the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) has established a District Environment Energy and Climate Change Section (DEECCS) for effective co-ordination and consolidation among the actors to address the impact of climate change. Likewise, there is a separate climate change division at the central level under the Ministry of Population and Environment (MoPE) to oversee the issue of climate change. The division also acts as the focal point for United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Similarly, the Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation (MoFSC) has set up a REDD Implementation Cell (RIC) to look into matters of climate change mainly in mitigation aspect through forestry. Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA) with its network throughout the country is working as the apex body in relation to disaster management and formulation of national policies and their implementation in the country.

Having said that, the sectoral co-ordination among line ministries like MoFALD, MoFSC and MoHA at the central level and their functional relations with the DDC hasn't been smooth to jointly tackle climate change and disaster risks. In fact, ambiguous and overlapping institutional modality has often resulted in administrative inefficiency in dealing with climate change and development risks at local level, and building resilience of local people.

In this study we analyze the performance of existing politico-administrative mechanisms to find out whether the prevailing politico-administrative relationships are effective and efficient for responding to disasters and climate risks in the absence of elected authority.

In the absence of an elected authority at local level, All Party Mechanism (APM) including other local Politico Administrative Bodies (PABs)¹ has been playing a bridging role in the functioning of local governance. Therefore, the role of PABs such as District Forest Sector Coordination Committee (DFSCC), District Road Coordination Committee (DRCC), and District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC) seem to be crucial in responding to local developmental and disaster risk.

For this study, we take PABs as the key unit of analysis with four interrelated aspects: power and authority, accountability, representation and knowledge to analyse the meso-level politico administrative process. We focus on how the local PABs interact in relation to understanding and responding to development process, climate change adaptation and climate induced disasters.

Our analysis begins with mapping of PABs in the district working in the field of development, climate change and disaster. We also delve into how local actors exercise power and authority in development planning and execution in the absence of local elected authority and in capturing the views and aspirations of local communities particularly those who are living at risks of climate change. Then we examine the mechanisms related to accountability in adaptation planning and disaster risk reduction and representation of voice of different actors in the politico-administrative sphere. Finally, we also explore the production and use of knowledge at the district level planning and decision-making process. With reference to PABs, we focus specifically on APM and two other PABs namely DRCC and DDRC in the Lamjung district.

Over the three years of research engagement, we realized that analyzing APM's currently used de-facto mechanism is significant as it remains to be a key forum for political parties to engage in district planning and decision making. In relation to DDC planning and budget allocation, the main concern is to understand how parties articulate their interest and exercise power in district level decisions particularly on resource allocation. Likewise, analysis of DRCC can be crucial, as it is one of the most prominent PABs at the district level for building road infrastructure.

While analyzing the budget allocation in the DDC, we learned that road extension has received high priority in the district. The DDC budget shows that road is a main development priority of the district and also the most contentious issue in district level development

¹ PABs are defined as formal and informal organisations or processes in which both local political leaders and government officials interact to make and implement decisions

planning. According to the DDC plan 2014, about 37% of the total development budget was allocated for road extension (DDC 2014). We also analyse DDRC, which focuses on mitigation of disasters such as landslide, flood, earthquake, fire etc. among others at district level. Moreover, the role of DDRC has become more prominent since April 2015 earthquake in Nepal.

2. Methodology

This study is a part of the Climate Change and Rural Institutions (CCRI) research project².

This case study is based on fieldwork conducted in Lamjung district in between 2012 to early 2016. The rationale behind the selection of the Lamjung district was that the district as per the Nepal's National Adaptation Plan of Action (NAPA) 2010 was ranked as one of the highly vulnerable district to the impact of climate change. Landslide, Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs), and temperature rise are the major vulnerability assessed in NAPA for the district (see Annex: 4).

For this study, different methods of data collection were used which include key informant interviews, focus group discussion, participant observation and review of archival documents and media content. To collect the empirical information, focus group discussion (FGD) and in-depth interviews based on purposive sampling were conducted. Among the interviewees were the district level local stakeholders who are engaged in decision making in the field of climate change and disaster risk. Meanwhile, Chief District Officer (CDO), Local Development Officer (LDO), District Development Committee (DDC) staffs, chief of the District Forest Office (DFO), chief of the District Soil Conservation Office (DSCO), chief of the District Agricultural Development office (DADO), Chief of the District Technical Office (DTO) were also interrogated to gain their valuable insights into the subject matter being studied in this case. Furthermore, interviews also were conducted with representatives of different political parties, civil society organizations, and non-governmental organizations. The local media representatives were also interviewed (see Annex: 2 for list of interviewees) in the assumption that they speak the voices of the local people particularly poor, marginalized and vulnerable to climate change (Martin and Wilmore, 2010). The information from the transcribed interview records were then coded according to four main themes of the analysis into Microsoft excels spreadsheet.

3. Context of Study Site

Lamjung district is located about 155 kilometers west from Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. The district shares boundary with Gorkha in the east, Kaski in the west, Manang in the north and Tanahu in the south. The district latitude is 28°03'19" to 28°30'38" N and its longitude is 84°11'23" to 84°38'10" E. Lamjung covers an area of 1692 sq.km with an altitude range from 385 m (Duipiple Bagaicha, Ramgha) to 8162 m (Manaslu mountain). The average annual temperature is 14.1-26.7°C and the annual precipitation is 2944.23 mm. Because of large altitudinal variation, Lamjung has great climatic and agro-ecological diversity starting

² CCRI research project is funded by Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) and led by Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) and ForestAction and SIAS are research partners in Nepal. In Nepal, project is working in Dolakha, Lamjung and Rupandehi districts.

from sub-tropical climate and vegetation in the south to tundra/alpine vegetation in higher mountain in the north. Around 80% of the land falls under high hill and mid hill and the rest of the area lies in mountain. Due to mountain terrain with unstable geological structure with 35.2% of the total land having steep slope of more than 20 degrees, the district is at a high risk of landslides.

The total population of the district was 167,724 out of which 75,913 were male and 91811 were female (CBS, 2011). As per the census data, there were a total of 42,079 HHs with an average size of 3.99 in the district. Majority of population comprise ethnic groups (nearly 50%). Among the ethnic groups, Gurung community has the highest population (31.2%). The district is politico administratively divided into 35 VDCs and five municipalities. Similarly, it has 11 clusters (*Ilakas*) and 2 constituencies. The district has altogether twenty-nine government institutions (See Annex: 3).

The district politics played a prominent role in bringing the new constitution at the village as six parliamentarians were elected from the district for the second Constituent Assembly (CA)³ in 2013. Of the total CA representatives elected from the district, only 16% were female although the women constitute 55% of the total population. Likewise, 50% of the representatives were from ethnic group which is 50% of the total district population. The district however was not able to elect a single Dalit representative in CA although their population is 18%.

While analyzing the local context, we found that road construction is in the top priority of the district. Except the two VDCs- Ghermu and Pasgaun, Lamjung has established the road connection with all VDCs within district (DDC 2014). The district has 584 km road connection of which 38 roads with a length of 389 km belongs to main road network and remaining 395 km is basically the rural road (DDC 2014). The estimated DDC budget planned through Infrastructure/Physical Development Committee (46%) followed by Social, Development Committee (35.6%) and then Institutional Resource and Capacity Development Committee (16%) and Economic Development Committee (1.8%). This implies that the Infrastructure/Physical Development Committee has received the highest budget for the district development emphasizing the road as the major component while the DFSCC has been least prioritized receiving only 0.6% of the total budget. It is obvious from this information that forestry sector did not get a priority.

The total estimated budget of the district for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2014/2015 (2071/72) was NRs. 2263.3 million (Annex: 5) which also includes the budget from NGOs (NRs 291.4 million equivalent to 12.87% of the total budget). 80% of the budget is estimated for program and the remaining 20% is for administrative expenses adhering to the government policy of development finance at the local level. As per the provision of Local Self-Governance Act (LSGA) 1999, the budget is planned through different five committees including the Infrastructure/Physical Development Committee (26.5%), Social Development Committee (56.5%), Economic Development Committee (8.2%), District Forest Sector Coordination Committee (4.1%) and Institutional Resource and Capacity Development Committee (4.7%) (DDC- Lamjung, 2014).

³ Constitution Assembly (CA) which was converted into parliament after promulgation of new constitution on 9/20/2015

4. PABs in the District: Roles, responsibilities and decision making

A UNDP study report shows that the politico-administrative interface is fundamental for strengthening institutions and achieving successful development outcomes (UNDP, 2014). This means that there should be harmonious working relationship among and between the bureaucrats and the politicians who are primarily involved in making policies and programs for development and its implementation.

At the district level, such politico-administrative relations can be clearly observed, for example, in the DFSCC the bureaucrat is represented as a member secretary and politically elected official serves as the chair of the committee. In the absence of elected representative, the LDO has been chairing the committee which also includes political leaders from de-facto APM. The DFO chief functions as a member secretary of the committee.

Meanwhile, we found different PABs provisioned in the district. As mentioned earlier, PABs entail formal and informal organisations or processes in which both local political leaders and government officials interact to make and implement the decisions. In the district we found 24 PABs (See Annex: 1) functioning. Among those, 16 were led by the LDO and remaining were headed by the CDO.

While discussing with the key informant at the central level, we realized that compared to other districts, Lamjung is one of the effectively functioning districts in terms of process of development. This has become possible owing to successful politico-administrative interaction at the district.⁴ The district has prepared its second five years periodic development plan (PDDP) (2070/71-2074/75) in 2014. However, because of absence of elected representatives the district has faced the challenge of integrating the PDDP into annual plan. So the district prepared annual plan has no link with PDDP. Further, the government has instructed DDC to prepare the local plans as per the essence of national plan.⁵

Exploring the institutional aspect of development planning and response to climate related risks, we found a visible overlapping and lack of coordination among the role of district based organizations. According to a journalist all government offices except District Administration Office (DAO) distribute goats to the people under income generation activity (IGA) for the poor and disadvantaged people.⁶ While discussing the matter with LDO and DFO of the district, they easily accepted this truth and added that the district education office also distributes goat to the local people under IGA.⁷ Similarly, programme like Hariyo Ban and Multi Stakeholder Forestry Programme ((MSFP) - managed by Environmental Preservation services for Development (ENPRED) and locally implemented by Women Self Help Center) mainly focus on bioengineering, plantation and river-bed cutting control. These programs further prepare and implement Community Adaptation Plan of Action (CAPA) in

⁴ Discussion with ex-secretary of MOFALD, 20th August 2014

⁵ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

⁶ Interview with local journalists of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

⁷ Interview with bureaucrats of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

which soil erosion control and watershed management are the top priority. Duplication of work is evident as DSCO staffs are furious with the project staffs who never consult them while preparing the CAPAs. NGOs were often found provoking the community leaders to go to DSCO for additional funding for implementing CAPAs.⁸ “Without additional budget it is difficult for us to implement the CAPA”, the DSCO staff added. When asked about the effectiveness of development programme in the district, the DDC official said that there is clear overlapping in the scope of work among gov’t and non-gov’t agencies.⁹ In the same way due to the limited capacity of the DDC, effective coordination among the institutions working in the district has become problematic. One of the district level political leaders (LP1) regarding the agencies working in the district opined that there is no need to keep all line agencies belonging to 26 ministries in the district.¹⁰ Further suggesting that 4-5 line agencies would be sufficient to conduct development activities and deliver substantial outcome in the district.¹¹

4.1 APM: Composition, development and transformation

In the country, All Party Mechanism (APM) was formally introduced in 2009 to fill the vacuum of elected government at the local level, which was later dissolved in 2012. The APM members comprised of the representatives of the major political parties based on the vote that received in the national election. In fact, APM intended to include wide range of political actors in the decision-making and consensus building process. In the absence of elected authorities at the local level, the LDO has been operating and managing the DDC. The government through its executive decision in 2009 established an APM to advise government officials both at the VDC and DDC levels planning and decision making process. The then-Ministry of Local Development (MoLD) legally endorsed APM in 2009 based on LSGA 1999 (MoLD 2009).

The APM came under the scrutiny of the Commission for the Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) in 2012. Plagued by controversies over decision-making, corruption and favoritism in planning and local level decision-making, the MoFALD had dissolved the APM in early 2012 on the CIAA’s recommendation. The dissolution of the APM resulted in added responsibilities to the DDC, particularly on the LDO (MoFALD 2012). Earlier study reveals that APM position holders and government officials worked together to plan, decide and disburse budgets (Ojha et. al. 2015). Even after the dissolution of the formal APM, in most cases, the political parties have been practicing a de-facto APM (*Sarba Daliya Baithak*) in making decisions and planning process in the district.

Political parties and their leaders in Lamjung are not far from adopting the de-facto APM in the district. Five political parties are representing the de-facto APM in the district. There is a high handedness of three major political parties- Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML), and Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist-center) in the planning process of the district as well as in other decision making forums. In addition

⁸ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

⁹ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

¹⁰ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

¹¹ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

to this, Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) and Communist Party of Nepal - Maoist also play their part in the de-facto APM.

As reported by one of the INGOs staff working at the district, the practice of de-facto APM from very micro level governance (ward committee) to the district level is pervasive.¹² This shows that the political parties always enjoy being at the helm of power despite the institution of APM has been declared null and void. Although local political parties' representatives are involved in decision-making and planning, there is no formal mechanism to hold them accountable. One of the political party leaders (LP2) said, "We have weak authority to influence the bureaucracy".¹³ In this regard, the LDO said that he usually conducts discussion with politicians, however takes final decision himself, because, politicians are not legally authorized to make decision.¹⁴ There is a general perception at policy level that the LDO needs to be skillful in negotiation because he/she has to make decision after listening to the political leaders.¹⁵

According to one of INGOs staff experience, sometimes the role of political parties and their unified voice expedite the development process and the planning but if the political parties are at loggerheads on any development agenda, it creates difficulty not only for the GoN staffs but also for the project to mobilize the fund, and implement the development plan.¹⁶

The LSGA has an overarching objective of promoting decentralized government structures and ensuring representation of all social groups and classes in the development process at the local level. However, in this study, the central question of representation of poor and marginalized people in the planning and decision making is how the politics of representation practice in the district and how different parties are claiming their stake to exercise more authority and expand their sphere of influence. While investigating upon this issue, we particularly focused on how the voice of socially and economically disadvantaged groups living under risk is represented in planning and decision making process and how local political leaders have contributed to empower them to raise their voices. Amid this scenario, we observed various mechanisms established at different administrative level of VDC and Municipality.

In the VDC/ Municipality, each ward comprises of Ward Citizen Forum (WCF) and Citizen Awareness Center (CAC) as per Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) since 2009. These two mechanisms are provisioned under the then MoLD in accordance with the 14-step planning process. While WCFs and CACs have advisory function, they are expected to mainstream the voices of general people into planning process, provide suggestions and monitor projects in order to increase government accountability. They are also expected to transform power structure and develop economic policies that favor disadvantaged groups (DAGs) including women, people with disabilities and the poor. WCFs should have representatives from different social groups—with specific requirements for Dalit and female representation—but bars any government employees or

¹² Interview with CARE staff of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

¹³ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

¹⁴ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

¹⁵ Discussion with ex-secretary of MOFALD, 20th August 2014

¹⁶ Interview with CARE staff of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

those holding a political post from being a member. On the other hand, CACs are explicitly for DAGs who are traditionally excluded from public forums. Disadvantaged people can attend meeting once in every 15 days for two hours to identify, analyze and act upon issues that directly affect their lives.

However, in the district, such forums are politically controlled and, the decisive position like that of chair, treasurer and secretary is under the firm grip of political parties. According to a journalist reporting for the district, though such forums have been created to provide deliberative space for the poor and marginalized people to represent voice in the local government planning process, they are merely working as pseudo political bodies to cater the vested interests of politicians.¹⁷ He further added that those forums are used as a tool to endorse the plans agreed in political negotiation and final project selection.¹⁸

Similarly, regarding the functioning modality of WCF in the district, chairperson of district chapter NGO federation argued that there is no understanding of WCF at the community level. Most of the office bearer of the WCF mainly belongs to rural area live in market center or in the district headquarter. These office bearers of WCF who has pertinent information about the planning process work at their own convenience leaving behind the need of local people.¹⁹

Citing an example of yak and sheep herders a journalist elaborated that they hardly participate in the planning meetings and there are no other mechanisms to get themselves heard. Journalists sometimes expressed their concern through reporting but that would not be enough to get the attention of the policy makers.

The planning steps are systematically followed to endorse the budget allocation and distribution of activities among the political parties. In the cluster level (*Ilaka*) planning workshop, the authors got an opportunity to observe how the major decisions were pre-decided and presented in the workshop for endorsement. Representatives of CAC of VDCs were invited in the meeting but they did not participate in the discussion. Moreover in one incident, while the officer was announcing the development activities planned earlier this fiscal year, a member of the WCF expressed his ignorance about the plan and raised questions about it. This implies that the decisive authorities who are market centered dominate the decision making of development plans. When this issue was put before the chairperson of NGO federation, he said that leaders and DDC staff come up with pre-decided plans in the planning based interactions and the meetings are used only as an instrument to legitimize such plans.²⁰

The planning officer at the DDC in most cases lacks the technical expertise in prioritization and allocation of budget.²¹ During the study, we found that even though the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has introduced the climate budget code, the DDC didn't allocate budget for

¹⁷ Interview with local journalist of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

¹⁸ Interview with local journalist of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

¹⁹ Interview with chairperson of district chapter NGO federation of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

²⁰ Interview with chairperson of district chapter NGO federation of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

²¹ Interview with bureaucrats of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

the climate change adaptation. The LDO of the district confirmed that no climate change related activities have been planned in the district.²²

Regarding the allocation of budget, one of the CARE staff opined that, during the planning process, political leaders are keen to get resources for the specific road projects because it helps them to connect with the local community who considers such effort as an important development endeavor. However, the problem of road is during constructions, which are constructed in haphazard way using dozer in the fragile mountains which is the result of the limited technical knowledge of the road construction.²³

Most of the respondents agreed that such haphazard infrastructure development resulted in environmental catastrophe like triggering landslide affecting poor people residing in the region particularly during monsoon.

DDC planning and budgets allocation are on the basis of negotiation among the political party leaders. In most of the cases, it has been observed that bureaucrats are highly influenced by politicians. This study found that the political leaders influence the different planning and decision making process of the district forge consensus based on their interest often overlooking the local needs and demand. The development plans are allocated as per the power sharing agreement popularly known as “*Daliya Bhagbanda*”. District level officials who have legal authority were also found to be dictated by the local politics. Distribution of budget is guided by the powerful political leaders in the district without paying attention to the local aspirations. Likewise, the planning of line agencies is affected by respective departments and ministries. For example, it is learned that the MoFSC organizes regional planning workshop at all development regions inviting its line agencies from districts, region and center. The local staffs work hard in preparing good plans but often their plans do not get due attention and adequate budget to address the local needs citing budget constraint as a reason. This indicates that district officials are more accountable to the centre rather than to the grassroots’ people.

A local politician (LP1) has shared his experience about how bureaucrats are influenced by politics. He said, “The bureaucrats are affiliated with trade union based on their political convictions, and such unions act as a sister organization of the political parties. I blindly believe and support likeminded bureaucrats of the trade union close to my party”.²⁴ Nevertheless, the LDO who is the head of local planning process does not like to take any risks of making new plan as per local needs. The LDO was found to have been living under fear of being early transferred elsewhere if he/ she dared to challenge the consent of the political parties. The district office lacks the authority to hire and fire the contractors based on their performance. The LP1 has shared his experience about how district level contractor work and how they are connected with bureaucrats due to their vested interests. Referring to an instance of negligence and violation of contract, he said, “An agreement pertaining to two bridges was signed on the same day between DDC and two contractors. One contractor completed the given contract in time while the other did not even start his work as per the

²² Interview with bureaucrats of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

²³ Interview with CARE staff of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

²⁴ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

contract provisions”. He further added that even in such lapse, the LDO doesn’t have authority to cancel the contract of the one who did not accomplish the stipulated task.²⁵ While talking with the LDO regarding the issue, he said that he is not in a position to exercise control over this malpractice.²⁶

The central question in relation to accountability is - how and to what extent decision makers (parties, government organizations and NGOs) are answerable to the general public in the district especially to the poor and vulnerable communities. While arguing about who is more accountable either political parties or bureaucrats, most of the bureaucrats along with the LDO stated that the political parties should be accountable to the people as they are doing the politics for people. Interestingly, the political leaders argue that the bureaucrats should be more accountable as they are the authorized authority in the present context of the lack of elected body at the local level. Talking to the bureaucrats, we noted that they were afraid of the CIAA to discharge their duties. Following remark of the LDO offer an insight regarding this matter: “We are conferred with authority and resource, but equally blamed for corruption by CIAA. We don’t know at what time the CIAA comes and takes us under its custody with growing instances of public complaints. More often than not, there is a chance of falling prey to the conspiracy being hatched against even genuine officers which makes us frightened”.²⁷

On the other hand, government organizations including DDC are accountable to central level agencies (departments or ministries) and there is limited horizontal accountability. A local leader (LP2) resented that the CDO is accountable to Home Minister rather than the local people.²⁸ While exploring about the situation, the LDO elaborated that district level institutions e.g. Forest, agriculture need to make plan according to their ministry. If there were local elected body, he/she makes space him/herself for his/her role and responsibility and do bargaining for activities because of local/authorized and responsible person. But the bureaucrats are not responsible for that.²⁹ Adding to the statement of the LDO, a DFO official who coordinates DFSCC as a member secretary further said, “I don’t make any change during implementation of centrally managed activities because I don’t want to take the risk of arrears (*Beruju*) including the fear of CIAA. If there was DDC chairperson and people suggest him/her to make change, he/she could definitely make change”.³⁰ Likewise, DSCO official admitted that while making plan, at first they follow the departmental directives indicating the upward accountability.³¹ This has implication in terms of effectiveness of development outcomes and serving the local interest.

Question about accountability of NGOs working in the district has also been raised. The activities of NGOs are found to have been designed and conducted as per the framework of donors (Khatri et al. 2015). Political representatives and journalists have publicly refuted the NGOs for their accountability towards donors and focus on merely producing good reports. However, they are less accountable to the district or local level government.

²⁵ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

²⁶ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

²⁷ Interview with bureaucrats of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

²⁸ Interview with political leader of lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

²⁹ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

³⁰ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

³¹ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

To enhance the effectiveness of NGOs in the district, LP1 suggested that NGOs should work in close coordination with VDCs by integrating their budget into the local planning.³² Most of the respondents said that NGOs prepare very attractive reports with photo but the reality is different as the intended beneficiaries aren't adequately addressed.

Furthermore, as per our local consultation, most of the projects working in the district mainly focuses on “software types of activities”- meaning awareness, workshop, seminar, and training part, however, we have realized that unless one emphasizes hardware (implementation) types of activities like income generation, adaptation support, and any other tangible benefits, the resilience of community cannot be enhanced. To minimize the number of trainings and workshops which have often become redundant, the LDO has vowed to control such activities through the planned DDC council. LDO further shared his plan to regulate the NGO work and establish close coordination with DDC and VDCs”.³³ But the local political leader (LP2) has alleged that NGOs and INGOs are working in the district based on their own interest without assessing the need of the community.³⁴ He further added that some of the INGOs in the district have been working for 15-20 years, but they have been not focused on development but on promoting religious thought and political ideology in the district.³⁵ It can be inferred from the above that neither the local leaders nor the bureaucrats were happy with the work of NGOs and INGOs in the district signaling a huge gap between NGOs and relevant GoN agencies. Furthermore, it was also found that less effective monitoring mechanism to monitor the I/NGOs.

While exploring the source of knowledge, it primarily diffused through different workshops and trainings organized by I/NGOs. One of the leaders (LP2) asserted that much knowledge and information is imparted by these institutions and it would be more effective if it come through government sector.³⁶ Moreover, we found specific sources of knowledge on which government, NGO and political parties rely. Political party representatives depend more on their own party line in terms of knowledge for setting development vision. Government officials think that the legitimate source of knowledge comes from central level authorities i.e. department or ministry mostly in the form of directives, circulars or government publications. For NGOs, primary source of knowledge is donor's frame, project document which is developed at central level and consultancy reports commissioned under the project framing.

District level strategic plan which comes from different sectoral line agencies are normally developed based on the national policy and guideline, but lack the need of local people. For example, the district has prepared District Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan, District Road Master Plan, District Tourism Master Plan, District Energy and Climate Plan (DECP). According to the LDO such plans are developed under the leadership of line ministries and are an important means of knowledge for the district organizations.³⁷

³² Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

³³ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

³⁴ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

³⁵ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

³⁶ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

³⁷ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

Inter organizational platforms and meetings also act as forum to disseminate and acquire knowledge. There is provision of monthly meeting where the chief district officer (CDO) invites all district level chief officials of GoN institutions for discussion and share the progress of development activities, challenges and lesson learned, and hence contribute to build knowledge through cross-learning. The CDO of the district said that such discussions play crucial role in coordination, cooperation and sharing the knowledge among the district line agencies.³⁸

4.2 District Road Coordination Committee (DRCC)

Over the research period we realized that analyzing of District Road Coordination Committee (DRCC) is crucial, as it is one of the most prominent PABs at the district level. A review of the DDC budget shows that the highest percentage of the budget (37% for the FY 2014/2015) was allocated for the construction of road and bridge in the district. Based on this statistical information, we can say that road and bridge are the most prioritized activities of the DDC.

We analyzed how various actors of DRCC exercise power and authority in road planning and plan implementation. Then we examined the mechanisms related to accountability and representation of voices of different actors. Finally, we also explored sources of knowledge and its use in relation to road construction process.

In Lamjung, the DRCC was initiated by the DDC based on the provision of Agricultural and Local Road Implementation Guidelines 2006. As per the information provided by a local leader (LP1), during the Maoist insurgency, the physical construction activities had come to a grinding halt. After 2006, local people were very excited for the development activities including the road extension. In fact, the long stalled development resumed after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2006. Leaders feel that they are appreciated when they can lead the infrastructure development efforts in the district. The extension of road is considered as a symbol of development and means of influence and power.³⁹

As provisioned by the Agricultural and Rural Road Implementation Guidelines, 2006, DRCC has played a facilitating role to prepare the District Transport Master Plan (DTMP), 2013. The DDC is the executing authority of DRCC, which is responsible for coordinating and monitoring all the activities undertaken in the district for constructing roads. In the absence of local elected government in the district, DRCC is chaired by LDO and District Technical Officer (DTO) acts as a member secretary. Moreover, the committee is composed of representatives from major political parties in the district as APM, chamber of commerce and industry. Negating the provision of guideline, the committee has not adhered to the practice of ensuring the participation of the marginalized people (Dalit). Nevertheless, the committee is represented by a woman member representing a political party and belonging to ethnic community. Based on the need, other district line agencies can participate in the DRCC meeting as invitees. For example, while reviewing the meeting minute of DRCC dated 11/03/2015 (2072/07/17), in addition to LDO, political party members and DTO, the meeting was participated by planning officer and program officer of the DDC, the Decentralized Rural

³⁸ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

³⁹ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

Infrastructure and Livelihood Project –Additional Financing (DRILP-AF) staff and chief of the District Forest Office (DFO) as invitee. The meeting was called to discuss the issue on the consequences of Tarkughat-Pyarjung-Bhanjyang Road (21.66 km) under DRILP-AF on forest conservation.

Normally, DRCC meeting is held at least twice a year but can be called several times on need basis. Expressing his views about such meetings, one of the leaders (LP4) said, “Organizing such multiple meetings with the representation of political parties is worthless because the committee does not have authority to make agreement with the contractor.”⁴⁰ Contract is awarded by the LDO in close coordination with the DTO. This has multiple governance implications in the area of transparency, accountability, and legal system. “The LDO can invite us anytime if s/he faces any local grievances and disputes between communities and where s/he feels the political involvement can resolve the problem. We participate in the meeting to facilitate the decision making of LDO, if otherwise; he would have been in trouble”, added LP4. Adding the follow up, LP4 said, “We know the local context, and expectation of locals, since we have the social network, we can facilitate the decision and influence the decision making process”.⁴¹ LP4 added that in the DRCC meeting, political parties play an influential role in the decision making because the bureaucrats lack local knowledge, local network and local development need.⁴² Investigating on the issue of whether a political party member also have an influence during the implementation phase of the decision, we got pertinent information from a local party leader (LP5) who shared an incident in which the political parties and users committee pressurized the technician for using machine to connect Bhujung VDC in Besisahar- Bhujung road. Actually the road which was funded by GIZ was called a green road, and it was expected that the road construction would consider ecological aspects. During the construction of the road the locals were unable to break the big rock that appeared as an obstacle in the road line. People were worried how to connect Bhujung (one of the remote VDCs in Lamjung) with Besisahar. It was impossible to break the rock only with manual effort. So the technicians were compelled to use machineries and sophisticated equipment causing ecological damage.⁴³ This implies that political parties influence not only during the decision making process, but also during the construction phase of the road.

Regarding the accountability of bureaucrats in DRCC, the political leader (LP4) said the bureaucrats work for the salary. They (bureaucrats) have authority to make decision and implement the development activities including road but they don't take ownership (we feelings) in the decision made because they get transferred at any time.⁴⁴ Normally one can remain in the position in one district for a maximum period of 2 years. This implies that the bureaucrats are usually not accountable towards the local issues of development including the road sustainability, and embedded consequences.

⁴⁰ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁴¹ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁴² Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁴³ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁴⁴ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

This further implies that neither the political parties whose priority is to connect the particular community with road network are accountable to the negative consequences of the road activity, nor the bureaucrats, who only consider a programmatic expense which is linked with their fiscal progress target (more than 80% progress should be ensured).

The DTO chief, who is the member secretary of the DRCC, claimed that there is maximum duplication of work in the road activities. He explained that the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) goes to the same road where the Department of Road (DoR) has invested e.g. Besisahar ring road. He stated that during annual planning process, DTMP is never considered. “DRCC does not have a say on the decision made centrally”.⁴⁵ Study shows that generally roads are extended based on the interest of local politics which rarely consider the environmental risks and community at need of road (Ojha et al. 2015).

Delving into the remedial measures to combat the negative consequences of road construction in the district, we observed that this issue was the major agenda of discussion during the DRCC meeting. The political leaders regard decision making and implementation as different things. In the meeting an agenda was normally discussed and after some time it was decided, but the problem was during the implementation due to budget constraints. Implementation of decision whatsoever decided in the DRCC, had a budget implication.

LP5 and DTO chief said there is no provision of drainage system or soil conservation mechanism while opening the road track. LP5 added that because of the limited budget, they cannot think about the drainage system, during opening the track. However, they consider the issue of soil conservation during rehabilitation but it becomes too late by this time as heavy rainfall destroys the recently opened track.⁴⁶ LP5 further said, “Normally our road construction activity starts in April/May with the formation of road users committee and lasts until the end of the fiscal year (June/July). Another thing, our fiscal year also starts in wrong time”.⁴⁷ LP2 had also the similar voice regarding the budget transformation system from central and starting the construction activities with the formation of road users committee in May/June. LP2 further claimed such unscientific system is one of the disturbing factors in the effective development of the district.⁴⁸

Regarding the effective development, Red Cross representative said, “There is a need to think about the mitigation approach of negative consequences of road construction somewhere during development but it is lacking during planning process. But we can’t ignore the political mechanism in the development and basic need of local people.⁴⁹ He added that because of the short-term benefits, and quick impact type development activities e.g. village road network constructed without drainage system and extended not only to connect village, but also to individual household despite the steep terrain, such roads are functioning only for six months, and rest six months the chances of landslide has increased. VDC allocate NRS 100, 000 to 200,000 for road maintenance every year and accordingly is expensed for the

⁴⁵ Interview with bureaucrats of Lamjung, 8th Jan 2016

⁴⁶ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁴⁷ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁴⁸ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

⁴⁹ Interview with Red Cross representative of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

maintenance of the road, which however doesn't function more than six months of the maintenance".⁵⁰

When we discussed this matter with the local leaders, they seemed unhappy about the development approach being adopted in the district. A leader (LP1) said, "We don't have the practice of doing the activities in a planned way. There are dozers in every village in the name of road construction."⁵¹ Use of dozer in most cases has resulted in landslide during monsoon with heavy rain." This indicates that sustainable planning and quality infrastructure are always questionable. Faulty road design and use of heavy equipment has been increasingly realized as a major impediment in the district level development, which has negative impact on environment including resource degradation, soil erosion triggering landslide and flashfloods in the fragile mountain (Pain et al. 2015).

The LP5 who was also the chair of the road users committee in 2009 for Gauda-Dudhpokhari (12 km) with budget allocation of NRs 50 lakh shared her experience about the consequences of track opening in the wrong time with limited budget and without drainage system. She opined that the users themselves need to be sensitive about the consequences of road construction. The contractor and technicians are not bothered about the consequences.⁵² She further added that there is lack of knowledge about the possible adverse effects of the haphazard road construction activities in the district.⁵³ Such haphazard activities are the driver of soil erosion and landslide.

At the same time, DRILP- engineer asserted that contrary to other mountainous districts where blasting is normally used for opening the road track, it has not been used so far in Lamjung. He elaborated that blasting loosens the soil structure and creates a lot of damage to the road side landscape.⁵⁴

Generally, the PAB makes the decision regarding selection of road projects and recommend to the district council. The DRCC meeting is usually called before district council meeting. During the DRCC meeting the local road plans which are collected through the bottom-up planning process are discussed. Based on the needs and demands of the local communities, the specific road project is selected and recommended accordingly to the district council. Explaining it further, LP1 added, "First we prioritize the remote area. Last year we planned to connect Bichaur VDC with Besisahar but because of limited budget it was not successful."⁵⁵

This PAB does also play a crucial role in mitigation of emerging disputes, disagreements and conflict during the course of road construction. DRILP staff recalled an incident of dispute and PAB's active role in mitigating the dispute. She said that there was disagreement among the people in Tarkughat of Tarkughat-Pyarjung-Bhanjyang Road (21.66 km). The road was in upgrading phase under DRILP-AF. The beneficiaries of the road network are the people living in three VDCs- Tarkughat, Pyarjung and Bhanjyang. It was initially difficult to resolve

⁵⁰ Interview with Red Cross representative of Lamjung, 3rd Feb 2015

⁵¹ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 2nd Feb 2015

⁵² Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁵³ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁵⁴ Interview with DRILP staff of Lamjung, 10th Jan 2016

⁵⁵ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 10th Jan 2016

the dispute at the project site. Later the DRCC meeting was called to resolve the issue in the presence of CDO who chairs the Compensation Determination Committee (CDC). The meeting decided to provide compensation to the eight household owners who belong to poor family (< 1.25\$/day) and whose more than 10% of land was used for the road construction.⁵⁶

In the district, local roads are constructed through the road users committee. Describing the situation of the representation of local people in the road users committee, a local leader (LP4) and member of DRCC said, “Normally there is representation of all political parties in the users committee. If only one party represents the committee, dispute might emerge and the problem of trust deficit will loom large during the implementation phase.⁵⁷ We have made provision to represent the users committees by members of major political parties, so that there can be check and balance and conflict won’t ensue”.⁵⁸ But contrary to the provision of MoFALD circular issued in 2009, the users committee often lacks the representation of marginalized people whose voices are rarely heard during the planning process.

4.3 District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC)

In the district, DDRC which acts as a PAB is functioning as per the provision of the Natural Calamity (Relief) Act, 1982 - a milestone legal instrument for disaster management in the country. The committee is chaired by the CDO in which the LDO acts as a member secretary. Likewise, the DDRC consists of representatives from the government line agencies, security forces, political party and civil society/NGOs working in the district including local media person.

The district with the facilitation of DDRC has prepared district disaster preparedness and response plan (DDPRP) as an important part of DDRC core functions. Similarly, other tasks of the DDRC involve establishing coordination among local authorities regarding the disaster based works, providing information to the regional disaster relief committee about natural disaster relief works and monitoring and supporting the work being conducted by the local communities in this regard. In addition, implementing the directives from central disaster relief committee (CDRC) is the prime responsibility of the CDO who chairs the DDRC in the district. Proper management of dead human bodies, providing cash and other assistance to affected population, information collection, dissemination and assessment of the situations among others fall under its key activities of DDRC. For emergency response DDRC deploys the search and rescue teams immediately to provide report about the situation of disaster activities to National Emergency Operation Center (NEOC)⁵⁹ at MoHA through District Emergency Operation Center (DEOC) which was established in the district in 2014.⁶⁰ As stated by the CDO, he generally calls the DDRC meeting annually to update DDPR plan with

⁵⁶ Interview with DRILP staff of Lamjung, 8th Jan 2016

⁵⁷ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁵⁸ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

⁵⁹ NEOC was established on 17th December 2010, by the Ministry of Home Affairs and is operated under the Planning and Special Services Division

⁶⁰ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 8th Jan 2016

pertinent information of the disaster context in the district.⁶¹ Against this backdrop, we found that the importance of DDRC was realized particularly after the April earthquake last year.

DDPR plan, 2014, has identified landslide, flood, heavy rain, drought, fire, hail storm, epidemic, earthquake and GLOF as major disasters in the district. The district is considered one of the disaster-prone districts. According to a DADO official, the district has a long history of landslide and people from landslide prone VDCs like Taghring and Gauda were resettled in Kawasoti area of Nawalparasi and Bardiya district in 1970s.⁶² It is clear from the above discussion that the district has not only become vulnerable to landslide recently (MoE, 2010) but also has a long history of vulnerability to landslide. Bhoje, Upallo Chipla, Banjhakhet, Ghermu, and Bansar are some of the landslide prone VDCs which have long history of landslide in the district (DDPR plan, 2014). Controlling such landslides has historically remained daunting and often beyond the capacity of existing institutional structures (Pain et al. 2015).

Due to mountain terrain with unstable geological structure and having 35.2% of the total land with steep slope of more than 20 degrees, the Lamjung district is at a high risk of landslides. According to an analysis of the District Energy and Climate Plan (DECP) considering the landslide events occurring in between 1971 to 2011, the frequency of landslides in the district has drastically increased since 1995. Such landslides also took many lives since its beginning. Over the past four decades, landslide has caused 37 human deaths, 7 injuries destroying 186 houses and leaving 84 people affected. Similarly, landslide occurrence was noted the highest in the year 2001 when it repeated 17 times (ERI 2014).

We got an opportunity to observe the function of DDRC in the district in the aftermath of the April 2015 earthquake. After the unprecedented disaster, the DDRC meeting was called by the CDO and then the frequency of the meeting has constantly increased. Particularly after 25 April 2015, the meeting was held twice a day (morning and evening) for initial two months which later started taking place once a month. However, the CDO could call the DDRC meeting any time as per the need.⁶³ The meeting minute of the DDRC shows that the political party members, different line agencies such as DADO, DFO, DSCO, DTO, district education office, district livestock service office, women and children office, including representatives of security forces (Nepal army, Armed police force, Nepal Police), Red Cross and other I/NGOs (CARE, Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Danish Red Cross, World Vision, Rural Community Development Center (RCDC) etc.), and media representatives participate in DDRC meetings. The LDO said that they used to invite the NGOs regularly in the meeting as they have invested a lot of money in the field of post-earthquake disaster management. For instance, the LWF has given zinc sheet to around 2,000 households (HHs). Also CARE Nepal and other NGOs have provided the relief materials. World Vision has distributed 2 bundles of zinc sheet each to 1,000 HHs. If we convert that in monetary value, then it is a huge amount. So they are invited to represent the DDRC interactions.⁶⁴ More often than not, the DDRC meeting concludes without any way forward as the CDO himself and other

⁶¹ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 4th Feb 2015

⁶² Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 28th Sep 2012

⁶³ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 8th Jan 2016

⁶⁴ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 24th Nov 2015

sectoral officials have to wait for the central level decision. For example, DSCO had to follow the direction from its department along with direction of CDO in the district. Often, the CDO asks the members of DDRC to come with budget commitment for the immediate and long term relief in case of disaster. However the bureaucratic system does not allow any relief budget immediately to be transferred to the district level line agencies. The DSCO official said, “The department from center is yet to release the budget after earthquake which is the main cause of the inability to accomplish the field monitoring in landslide prone areas. We are fed up attending the DDRC meeting number of times”, added the DSCO official.⁶⁵ DDRC assigned the DSCO to monitor the landslide.⁶⁶ This means that despite the authority of CDO as the chair of DDRC, other bureaucrats representing different line ministry could not able to follow the instruction of CDO as they have limited authority and are more accountable towards the line ministries and their instructions. Such dual instruction and limited decision making power conferred to district level line agencies is often a hindrance to cater the local needs and aspirations.

According to a journalist, members of political parties including the district parliamentarians and the officials of government line agencies who are involved in series of DDRC meeting have not been able to influence the central level to induce change in the decision criteria for the crisis hit district.⁶⁷ As per the central provision, the criterion for declaring crisis-hit district is human casualties more than 10 persons. It overlooks the infrastructural damage including the damage of the houses. In case of Lamjung, only 5 people were killed by the earthquake but there was huge damage of private houses.⁶⁸ In order to get more relief materials, the district should be in the list of crisis hit district under the central government system. Local leaders said that at least six VDCs which were equally damaged as the highly affected 14 districts should be declared crisis hit VDCs so that people in these VDCs can get more compensation benefits. A local newspaper named “*Lamjung Darpan*” once carried the news relating to the existing criteria of declaring the most affected districts calling for reviewing the existing provisions. The news clearly mentioned that it was impractical to exclude Lamjung from the crisis-hit districts.

While reviewing the local newspaper and DDRC meeting minute, we came to know that the overall leadership and responsibility for relief distribution in the district was shouldered by DDRC. In other words, “one door policy” was in practice. With the vertical accountability and weak financial/budgeting mechanism of the government, I/NGOs were dominant in relief distribution. Some INGOs had taken the opportunity for promoting their religious activities along with the relief distribution work.⁶⁹ In addition to this, despite the allocation of VDCs

⁶⁵ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 24th May 2015

⁶⁶ DDRC meeting minute 18th May 2015

⁶⁷ Interview with local journalist of Lamjung, 24th May 2015

⁶⁸ April 25, 2015 earth quake took the lives of 5 people leaving 40 people injured in Lamjung. While counting the damage of property belonging to government in the district, a total of 85 houses were destroyed among them 39 were fully destroyed and the rest 48 were partially destroyed. Similarly, 7958 private houses were fully destroyed and 6420 partially destroyed. Bichaur, Ilampokhari, Dudhpokhari, Gauda, Kolki and Pyarjung are the most affected VDCs in Lamjung; however the district itself is one of the moderately affected districts by earth quake.

⁶⁹ Lamjung Darpan 15th May 2015

for specific I/NGOs, they were found elsewhere to show their presence, which DDRC particularly political parties did not want to have.⁷⁰

According to a CARE staff, political party leaders who represent the DDRC meeting sometimes become bias during immediate relief distribution though they have been playing significant role in the post disaster including monitoring in field.⁷¹

We observed that there was no any preparedness to respond to the disaster in the district. As informed by the LDO, there were no any tarpaulins for the immediate relief with the DDRC.⁷² According to local media person, DEOC at District Administration Office (DAO) should function round the clock to communicate with NEOC but it was shut down on the very day of earthquake.⁷³ But after that day in other consecutive days of the earthquake, DEOC is 24 hours in communication with NEOC at central level.⁷⁴

In the crisis scenario, it was realized that political parties have to develop consensus to make quick decision. Otherwise the local people might not be benefitted from the resources. Citing an instance of the problem of consensus, the LDO said that according to the DDRC meeting decision, Danish Red Cross was supposed to provide NRs 15,000 to the partially damaged HHs by earthquake to each 700HHs of its working VDCs in addition to totally damaged HHs. At that time one of the political parties objected the decision made as the then chair of the Red Cross -district chapter belonged to other party. He added that they were not able to make decision to distribute NRs 15,000 in that case. He said, “Such type of problem comes if political parties have different views on channelizing the fund. Later, two bundles of zinc sheets were provided to those partially affected HHs too.”⁷⁵ Explaining this situation further, one of the political party leaders (LP4) said that such problem has resulted in obstruction of decision implementing process ultimately adding woes to the suffering of local communities who have not been able to obtain benefits due to political conflict or disputes.⁷⁶ In such a case the role of the CDO as a chair was also found ineffective in operationalizing the decisions made. Since the CDO did not want any confrontation with any political parties, which also signals his poor accountability to the public as he didn’t take stand on his own decision and ultimately loosed the money came for local suffered community.

While exploring about the knowledge of disaster in the district, as mentioned earlier the district has prepared district disaster preparedness and response plan, which is updated annually, is considered only a source of knowledge.

5. Conclusion and Way Forward

Drawing the case from Lamjung, the study shows that in the absence of local elected authority, the politico-administrative capacity of the districts is weak to enhance adaptive

⁷⁰ Lamjung Darpan 15th May 2015

⁷¹ Interview with CARE staff of Lamjung, 25th May 2015

⁷² Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 24th Nov 2015

⁷³ Interview with local journalist of Lamjung, 24th May 2015

⁷⁴ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 8th Jan 2016

⁷⁵ Interview with bureaucrat of Lamjung, 24th Nov 2015

⁷⁶ Interview with political leader of Lamjung, 9th Jan 2016

capacity to the escalating risks to climate change. The analysis of APM and two other PABs- DRCC and DDRC as the key unit of analysis with four interrelated aspects: authority, accountability, representation, and knowledge shows that there is lack of clarity in terms of responsibility and accountability of the government agencies for making development-planning decisions and responding to climate risks and disasters at the district level. Political parties' continuous involvement in planning and decision making process is to legitimize the decision making process and to capture local knowledge, local needs, and sentiments for local development. But political parties don't have any formal decision-making authority because they are not democratically elected. In this context, the bureaucrats exercise the authority as chair of the PABs. However the bureaucrats, who have formal authority to make decisions, don't embrace local sentiments and local needs while executing decisions. We found that the voices of poor, women and marginalized people are rarely represented in the planning process although fourteen steps planning process of government of Nepal is already well established.

The study demonstrate that the blame game between politicians and bureaucrats have often resulted in delayed decision making and in some cases untimely implementation affecting the communities who are supposed to be benefitted from decisions of responding to climate risks, disasters and development needs. Analyzing the working approaches of the district level institutions, their decision making and implementation modality, it can be concluded that there is a lack of synergy, coordination and trust among the meso-level institutions to address adaptation deficits for meeting the expectation of local community. District level institutions can play crucial role in integrating the disaster management activities with planning and implementation, however, the weak capacity of the local institutions and the widening gap between central line agencies and their local implementation partners often affect the development planning and adaptation responses.

Overlapping activities of different line agencies and NGOs also indicates that there is a strong need for restructuring the existing district level institutions in terms of role, authority and systematic planning. The development and adaptation activities planned through their own mechanisms need to be mainstreamed into the regular development and adaptation planning process. A central level synergy mechanism for an integrated approach of adaptation planning and programme implementation among the MoFALD, MoPE, MoFSC and MoHA at the central level has become urgent. The sectoral agencies need to establish a clear functional relation with the DDC to address the issues of climate risks and disasters. Existing unclear institutional modality has resulted into inefficiency and waste while dealing with climate and disaster issues at local level directly affecting the resilience building of local people. This research has clearly indicated that the prolonged transition has serious negative implications for inclusive and democratic governance system including the accountability and authority mechanism. There is a strong need of effective accountability mechanism to enhance the ability of meso-level PABs to respond to diverse forms of disaster risks and climate vulnerability.

6. References

- Agrawal, A., Perrin, N., Chhatre, A., Benson, C. and Kononen, M. 2009. Climate Policy Processes, Local Institutions, and Adaptation Actions: Mechanisms of Translation and Influence. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- CBS. 2012. National population and housing census, 2011. Central Bureau of Statistics, Kathmandu.
- DDRC. 2014. District Disaster Preparedness and Responses Plan, District Disaster Relief Committee, Lamjung.
- DDRC. 2015. DDRC meeting minute. District Administration Office (DAO), Lamjung. 26 May.
- ERI. 2014. District Energy and Climate Plan (DECP), Lamjung. Environmental Resources Institute (ERI) Kathmandu
- Khatri, D.B., Joshi, T. Adhikari, B. and Pain A. 2015. Climate change project in Lamjung: A case of USAID funded Hariyo Ban project
- Lamjung Darpan. 2015. *Lamjunglai Sankatgrasta Chhetra Narakhnu Abyabahari*. 1 May 2015.1.
- Lamjung Darpan. 2015. *Rahat Bitaranma Gairsarkari Sansthako Manpari*. 15 May 2015. 4.
- Martin K. and Wilmore M., 2010. Local voices on community radio: a study of 'Our Lumbini' in Nepal. *Development in Practice*, 20 (7), pp. 866-878. DOI 10.1080/09614524.2010.508104
- MoE. 2010. National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), 2010. Ministry of Environment. Kathmandu, Nepal
- MoFALD. 2012. Sthaniya Nikaya Sanchalan Sambandhi Nirdeshika. Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD). 4 Jan, 2012.
- MoLD. 2009. Sthaniya Nikaya Sarba Daliya Samyantra Sanchalan Karyabidhi. Ministry of Local Development.
- Maraseni, T. N. 2012. Climate change, poverty and livelihoods: adaptation practices by rural mountain communities in Nepal. *Environmental Science & Policy* 21: 24-34.
- Ojha, H., Adhikari B., Gurung, N. Khatri, D. B. Dhungana, H., and Dhungana S. 2015. The Production of Landslides Risks and Local Responses: A Case Study of Dhamilikuwa, Lamjung District of Nepal
- Pain A., Khatri D., Ojha H., Adhikari B., Joshi T., Dhungana H., and Gurung N. 2015. Responding to Landslides in Nepal. *ForestAction Policy Brief No. 38*. July 2015
- UNDP. 2014. The Politics-Bureaucracy Interface in Developing Countries: Characteristics, Determinants, and Impact on Reform. UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence
- Yates, J.S. 2012. Uneven interventions and the scalar politics of governing livelihood adaptation in rural Nepal. *Global Environmental Change*, 22: 537-546

7. Annexes

Annex 1: List of Key Informants

S. No	Interviewed Date	Individual	Position, Affiliation
1	28/09/2012	Divakar Maskey	District Soil Conservation Office (DISCO)
2	28/09/2012	Meghendra Pokharel	District Development Committee
3	28/09/2012	Kishor Pant	District Agriculture Development Office (DADO)
4	30/09/2012	Suklalal Yadav	District Forest Office
5	14/03/ 2013	Bishnu Datt Gautam	LDO/ DDC
6	14/03/ 2013	Baburam Bhandari	CDO/DAO
7	14/03/ 2013	Anand Raj Adhikari	DSCO
8	02/02/2015	Sandeep Sharma	CARE/Hariyo Ban
9	02/02/2015	Dhananjaya Dawadi	CPN- UML, Chair
10	02/02/2015	Mahesh Adhikari	AEPC, DDC
11	02/02/2015	Mahesh Dhungana	Chief, District soil conservation office (DSCO)
12	03/02/2015	Krishna Prasad Koirala	President ,Nepali Congress
13	03/02/2015	Yubraj Shrestha,	Radio Marsyangdi, Himal Khabar Patrika
14	03/02/2015	Nabin Raj Kuikel,	President- Federation of Journalist-Lamjung,
15	03/02/2015	Bhai Raj Khadka	Red Cross
16	04/02/2015	Krishna Prasad Shrestha	NGO Federation
17	04/02/2015	Mekh Bahadur Bhandari	CPN- Maoist
18	04/02/2015	Shrawan Kumar Timilsina	CDO
19	04/02/2015	Bishnu Prasad Sharma	LDO
20	04/02/2015	Achyut Pudasaini	DSP
21	04/02/2015	Chandra Man Dangol	DFO
22	23/05/2015	Shravan Kumar Timilsina	CDO, District Administration Office
23	23/05/2015	Tirtha Bahadur Adhikari	Assistant CDO
24	23/05/2015	Tej Sunuwar	World Vision(WV)
25	23/05/2015	Dal Bahadur BK	CARE
26	23/05/2015	Birkha Bahadur Pun	CARE
27	24/05/2015	Bhai Raj Khadka	Red Cross(RC)
28	24/05/2015	Santosh Neupane	DDC
29	24/05/2015	Mahesh Dhungana	DSCO

30	24/05/2015	Meghendra Pokharel	DDC
31	24/05/2015	Surya Kumari BK	FECOFUN
32	24/05/2015	Nabin Kuikel	Journalist
33	25/05/2015	Sabitri Adhikari	Women Self Help Center
34	25/05/2015	Sandip Sharma	CARE/HB
35	08/01/2016	Kapil Dahal	CARE/HB
36	08/01/2016	Ujjwol Ghimire	Sub-engineer, DRILP
37	08/01/2016	Sarala Adhikari	Social Mobilizer, DRILP
38	08/01/2016	Khagendra Dahal	Engineer, Chief- DTO
39	08/01/2016	Mr. Sunar	Acting Assistant CDO
40	08/01/2016	Dipendra Pokhrel	DEOC
41	09/01/2016	Anand Ghimire	Secretary, Nepali Congress
42	09/01/2016	Satimaya Tamang	Member, CPN-Maoist
43	10/01/2016	Dhananjaya Dawadi	CPN- UML, Chair
44	10/01/2016	Ashok Shah	Engineer, DRILP
45	10/01/2016	Jagat Tamang	Red Cross

Annex 2: Politico-Administrative Bodies (PABs) in Lamjung District

S. No	Name of PABs	Initiated by	Representation (membership)	Specific role
1	PES Technical Committee	Hariyoban/CA RE Nepal-Payment for Sediment Retention(PSR)	Lead agency-DDC and members -DSCO, DFO, DADO and Chambers of Commerce	PES Project Development, Implementation and Financial Management, Monitoring, Reporting and Verification, Mediation/Conflict Resolution
2	District Disaster Relief Committee (DDRC)	Disaster management framework based on the Natural Calamity Relief Act (1982)	Chaired by CDO and member secretary LDO, sectoral government line agencies, major political party representatives and NGO sector as member	Formulate the district level disaster preparedness and response plan, assigns roles to partners and stakeholders at the field level and coordinates relief and response activities, monitors the situation, and asks the central relief committee for assistance
3	District forest sector coordination committee (DFSCC)	Based on LSGA 1999 and Guideline issued by MoFSC 2068	Chaired by LDO and Chief of the District Forest Office-member secretary and member major political party representatives, representative from Municipality, chair of district federation of the VDC, entrepreneur nominated from forest based enterprise by chamber of commerce, representative from each forest user group, representative (maximum 2)	coordinate forest sector planning, implementation and monitoring in the district

			from NGOs working with forest/environment/biodiversity, Representative from DAG-member, chief of the DSCO	
4	District Water Resources Committee	Based on the Water Resource Regulation 1993 (2050 BS) which is also confirmed by the Drinking Water Regulation 1998 (2055 BS)	Lead by CDO, member secretary LDO and members District Agriculture Development Office, District Drinking Water Office, District Forest Office, District Irrigation Office, District Development Committee, Electricity Office	Issue licences for the use of water resources
5	Economic Development Committee		Chaired by LDO, District Livestock Service Office-member secretary, Representatives from thematic office, political party and NGOs are the member	Coordination during planning and budgeting
6	Social Development Committee		Chaired by LDO, District Public Health Office-member secretary, Representatives from thematic office, political party and NGOs are the members	Coordination during planning and budgeting
7	Infrastructure/physical Development Committee		Chaired by LDO, District Technical Office-member secretary, Representatives from thematic office, political party and NGOs are the members	Coordination during planning and budgeting
8	Institutional Resource and Capacity Development Committee		Chaired by LDO, Representatives from thematic office, representatives from political party and NGOs are the members	Coordination during planning and budgeting
9	District Climate Change and Renewable Energy Coordination Committee (DCCRECC)		Chair by LDO	Coordinates to operationalise Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs) in the districts

10	District Census Coordination Committees		Chair by CDO	Coordinates for census in the district
11	Integrated Planning Formulations Committee (IPFC)		Chair by LDO	
12	District Children welfare Committee		Chair by CDO	
13	District Nutrition and Food Security Coordination Committee (DNFSCC)		Chair by LDO, District Health Officer/District Public Health Officer Co-chair Line Agencies (Agriculture, Livestock, Education, Drinking Water) Members- Women development Office, Municipality, District Chamber of Commerce and Industry, District NGO Federation, representative from development partners and I/NGOs working at district	
14	District-WASH-Coordination Committee		Chair by LDO	
15	District Level Land Use Implementing Committee	District Level Land Use Implementing Committee is formed by 6th Land use council meeting held on 2064/11/13	Chair by LDO, member CDO, DFO, DSCO, DADO, Chief, Urban Planning division Office Member, Chief, District Irrigation Office, Land Revenue Office, District Land Reform Office, Survey Office	
16	District Transport Infrastructure Coordination Committee		Chair by LDO and the members are representatives from different transport related sectors in the district, representatives from political parties	responsible for the planning of activities and the approval of DTMPs
17	Disrict Road Coordination Committee(DRCC)	Agricultural and Rural Road Implementation Guidelines, 2007 (2063)	Chair by LDO and member secretary- DTO	Coordinates for planning Road subprojects

18	Thematic Plan Formulation Committee		Chair by LDO	
19	District Education Committee		Chair by LDO	Coordinates on Education sector.
20	District Peace and Security Committee		Chair by CDO	Coordinates for the peace and security of the district
21	District Coordination Committee		Chair by CDO and member secretary LDO, chief of the district line agencies and security forces- members	Coordination, cooperation and conflict resolution in the district among the sectoral agencies including security forces
22	Grievance Redress Committee		chair by CDO	
24	Land Acquisition and Compensation Fixation Committee (LACFC)	as per Land Acquisition Act 2034	chair by CDO	determination of compensation rate and implementation of compensation taking into consideration replacement value of the properties as guided by the resettlement plan and the use of community valuation methods

Annex 3: List of District based Government Institutions in Lamjung

S.NO.	GoN Institutions	S.No.	GoN Institutions
1	Lamjung District Court	16	District Treasury Office
2	District Administration office	17	District Women and Children Office
3	District Development Committee Office	18	District Agriculture Development Office
4	Nepal Army, Pashupati Prasad Gan	19	District Post Office
5	District Police Office	20	Western Regional Irrigation Division Office
6	National Investigation, District Office	21	Drinking Water and Sanitation Division Office
7	Nepal Armed Police force, district Office	22	District Government Lawyers' Office
8	District Forest Office	23	District Election Office
9	District Soil Conservation Office	24	District Cottage and Small Industries Office
10	District Land Revenue Office	25	District Ayurved Health Center
11	District Public Health Office	26	District Karagar Office
12	District Education Office	27	Local Peace Committee Office
13	District Livestock Service Office	28	Nepal Telecom
14	District Survey Office	29	Lamjung SMARAK and Durbar Care Office
15	District Technical Office		

Annex 4: Vulnerability Ranking of Lamjung

S.No.	Vulnerability	Ranking	S.No.	Vulnerability	Ranking
1	Landslide	Very High	4	Ecological	Low
2	Rainfall/Temperature	Very High	5	Drought	Very low
3	GLOF (Glacier Lake Outburst Flood)	High	6	Flood	Very low
Overall				Very High	

Source: MoE 2010

Annex 5: Estimated budget for the FY 2014/2015 (2071/72)

Development Committees in the district	Estimated Budget (NRs) in million					
	District(including district line agencies and NGOs)				DDC alone	
	Program (Capital)	Administrative	Total	%	Total	%
Infrastructure/physical Development Committee	563.19	37.43	600.63	26.5	160.22	46
Social Development Committee	1151.69	128.53	1280.23	56.5	123.59	35.6
Economic Development Committee	124.26	60.89	185.16	8.2	6.30	1.8
District forest sector coordination committee	64.22	26.92	91.14	4.1	2.00	0.6
Institutional Resource and Capacity Development Committee	47.67	58.52	106.19	4.7	55.40	16
Total	1951.05	312.31	2263.36	100	347.52	100
	80.42%	19.58%				

Source: DDC, Lamjung, 2014



Published by:



**Southasia Institute of
Advanced Studies**

Baneshwor, Kathmandu, Nepal
T: +977-1-4469801
E: sias-info@sias-southasia.org
www.sias-southasia.org



ForestAction Nepal

Bagdol, Lalitpur, Nepal
T: +977-1-5001362/5001144/6200069
E: fa@forestaction.org
www.forestaction.org

In collaboration with:



Danish Institute for International Studies

Copenhagen, Denmark
www.diis.dk