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NEPAL'S MAJOR DEVELOPMENT, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC EVENTS INFLUENCING THE UNCT'S WORK

In 2019, the Government of Nepal unveiled its 15th Plan running for 5 years. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) feature prominently in the plan and the 15th Plan is the key document for achieving the ambition of the incumbent Government of Nepal of 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepal'. The 15th Plan lays out ambitious targets to develop the country, including graduating to a Middle-Income Country by 2030 and achieving an average economic growth of 9.4 % per annum with the aim to reach 10.3% at the end of the 15th periodic plan in 2024. The plan has also set a target of reducing absolute poverty from the current level of 18.7% to 13% and multi-dimensional poverty from 28.6% to 14%. While the plan aims to achieve USD 1,600 per capita income by the end of the 15th periodic plan, one of the areas emphasized also includes human capital development. The key sectors expected to contribute in achieving the targets include services, industry, and agriculture. The total estimated budget is USD 92.29 billion, for which the private sector is estimated to contribute 55.6% of required investment, the government is projected to bear 39%, and the 5.4% is estimated to come from the cooperatives.

Nepal has been active in the international forum, hosting a wide range of visitors in the past year, including the President of China and the President of Bangladesh, and recently hosted the Scaling Up Nutrition Global Gathering. Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli has also conducted several state visits, to India, Vietnam and Cambodia. In January 2019, he attended the World Economic Forum in Davos. In 2019, the Nepal's economy grew by an estimated 7.1 per cent, up from 6.7 per cent a year earlier, it was underpinned by a favourable

monsoon leading to a strong harvest, better management of electricity supply, an improvement in service sectors, and an increased tourists' arrivals. Private investment and consumption were the key contributing factors to growth on the demand side. The economy also improved in the World Bank's ranking in Doing Business to 94th from 111th a year earlier, on the back of improved scores in credit, cross-border trading and construction permit sub indicators. Yet, the public investment contracted due to slowdown in post-earthquake reconstruction and delays in national pride projects like Melamchi water supply and Upper Tamakoshi hydroelectric. Inflation averaged 4.6 per cent in 2019, up from an annual average of 4.2 per cent in 2018, reflecting a disruption in delivery channels due to floods and landslides in early July and a delay in food supplies owing to strict tests along the Indo-Nepal border over concern about pesticides. Remittances as a share of GDP stabilized at 27 per cent in this year.

Throughout 2019, Nepal continued the on-going federalization process as laid out in the Constitution promulgated in 2015, which has given rise to both opportunities and challenges on the development front. While efforts have been invested in the federalization process, challenges of institutional capacity and policy harmonization across three layers of governing entities have remained. Governance and development issues seemed to gradually take a centerstage in public discourses in place of competing political themes.

A few important legislations such as the bill on instituting provincial police forces were adopted by the federal parliament this year;

however, other legislative and administrative tasks that are closely linked with the federalization process still remain incomplete. As they work through their second budget cycle, progress by the provincial and local governments have been limited, the delivery being restricted by shortage of administrative and technical staff. In 2019, the UN collaborated with the World Bank, at the request of the Government of Nepal, to carry out the federalism capacity needs assessment of all three levels of the government, focusing on the provincial and local governments. Seven provincial governments and 115 local governments were surveyed during the exercise. The assessment has identified challenges and opportunities in implementing the new federalism as well as the gap between the needs and the capacity of provincial and local governments to manage their assigned service responsibilities under the new system. The capacity of the federal government to manage the intergovernmental system has also been assessed. The assessment is first of its kind after the promulgation of the Constitution in 2015 and going to serve as the baseline with regards to federalism implementation.

Draft legislations introduced by the government in the parliament have been subject of political contention in addition to eliciting public concerns about their propensity to harm the existing democratic space. The proposed media laws, for example, are perceived as inconsistent with the constitutional guarantees of "full freedom of the press" and "freedom of opinion and expression."

Actions of the outlawed Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) – commonly identified as 'Biplab group' – have increased in 2019. In March 2019, after an explosion caused by CPN killed two people in Kathmandu, the Government of Nepal declared a ban on CPN, stripping them of their political party status. Since then, the Government has intensified its control over the group, arresting hundreds of party members including its central leaders. The death of the district in-charge of CPN during an encounter with the police has led to the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal to issue its investigation report, suggesting that he was killed under police custody. The government's informal initiatives to encourage the group to sit for formal dialogue have not been successful. There have been continuous public calls to the government and CPN to overcome the trust deficit and demonstrate flexibility for meaningful dialogue.

The arrest of two high-level political leaders, including the Speaker of the House of Representatives (HoR) on allegations of sexual assault, enabled a public discourse regarding the culture of impunity that marked Nepal's political transition this year. While the arrests, subsequent investigations and due process were widely supported by the public, lack of progress in the investigation of the rape and murder of Nirmala Panta in 2018 and other cases of gender-based violence and violence against women and girls continues to cast a shadow over the state's efforts to improve law enforcement and its commitment to justice.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN THE GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TOWARDS THE UNCT TO THE UN REFORM ENVIRONMENT



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The Government of Nepal has shown its full support for the UN reform, welcoming the reforms towards creating synergy and coherence of the UN system, which adheres to the principle of keeping people at the centre. The reform, which will make the UN more fit-for-purpose, has been publicly commended during the statement by the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the General Assembly in September 2019.

With the reform, the Government of Nepal has reinforced its commitment to achieving the Agenda 2030, which is the commitment and priority of the Government of Nepal and has placed the SDGs at the centre of their 15th Plan. The pledge has enabled the UN to increase its engagement through technical assistance with the Government, resulting in close cooperation with relevant ministries at the working level.

In 2019, the National Planning Commission has scheduled the first UNDAF Steering Committee meeting with the UN for the UNDAF 2018-2022. The UN reported on the progress and achievements on UNDAF outcomes that the UN made in 2018 and discussed with Government counterparts on the challenges and opportunities for supporting the Government of Nepal to achieve the Agenda 2030 through the UNDAF. Compared to previous meetings, the Steering Committee meeting was more strategic and focused, with an emphasis on creating a forum for constructive and productive dialogue.

Besides the points above, at the country-level with the ongoing focus of the Government of Nepal in its transition to federalism, the UN in Nepal has not felt significant changes in the Government's response towards the UNCT in response to the reform environment.



SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS/DONORS RESPONSE TOWARDS THE UNCT TO THE UN REFORM ENVIRONMENT

There has been a keen interest by donors and development partners in the UN Reform. The RC has regularly briefed development partners as a whole – through the International Development Partners Group meetings, as well as in bilateral meetings. There has also been requests for information on implementation of the UN at the country level for Embassies to be able to provide the information to their Headquarters.

The RC and the RCO are increasingly seen as the port-of-call for the entire UN Development System and also as a gateway for accessing the UN System. There has been no decrease in funding – on the contrary there have been approaches by donors looking to fund more joined up approaches by UN agencies.

Some donors have, at the encouragement of the RC, started to regularly ask UN agencies whether the proposed project/ programme is part of the UNDAF as part of the screening process before funding the proposal.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES IN UNCT'S WORK IN RESPONSE TO THE UN REFORM ENVIRONMENT



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Since the launch of the UN reform in January 2019, the UN in Nepal has actively engaged in integrating the reform agenda in UNCT programmes, activities and operational structures. As part of the reform process and the ensuing empowered role of the RC in strengthening accountability within the UNCT and to the host Government, the RC regularly meets with heads of resident agencies to ensure smooth reporting and follow up of pending issues. These regular updates have increased the interaction between the resident agencies and the RC, which facilitates follow-up action where the RC's support is required.

UNCT has actively promoted the consolidation of back office support through the Operations Management Team (OMT). OMT has so far compiled a "stock take" of OMT activities in the areas of IT, finance, HR and procurement. Some notable examples include extensive progress on the Business Operating Guidelines, Standard Operating Procedures, common services of twenty LTAs with the involvement of nearly all UN agencies, and twelve of twenty agencies residing in the UN House. OMT has also tackled priority issues that affect the wellbeing of the UN staff in Nepal, including developing a common policy on measures to improve air quality for UN personnel in Nepal.

The reform has also facilitated a stronger teamwork among the UNCT, with the renewed commitment by UN agencies for joint programming. The principle of Delivering as One has been fostered through the work of the UNCT, with the implementation of eight joint programmes based on the Sustainable Development Goals undertaken by fourteen contributing agencies. Topics range across the board, from women's empowerment, migration, governance, economic and development policy and agriculture and environment. The total budget of the programmes surpasses

21 million USD, with a wide variety of donors and funding mechanisms. The active engagement of UNCT in joint programming not only indicates the permeation of One UN in the UNCT, but also reflects the interest by the donors for funding joint initiatives of UN agencies.

The strengthened commitment by the UNCT to engage in joint programming also opened up possibilities for the UNCT to work on transversal issues that require multi-sectoral approach. Through various working groups and taskforces, agencies have come together to contribute their comparative advantages to ensure a coherent and comprehensive response to challenges. This has been illustrated by the UN in Nepal's focus on bridging the gap between nutrition and non-communicable diseases. The RC has led the discussion on making issues related to non-communicable diseases an agenda, not only in the health sector, but to be addressed through nutrition and food security sectors.

In line with UN Reform and the Constitution of Nepal, UNCT has been investing efforts in reaching gender parity, both as UNCT and within the individual UN agencies. With several changes in the agency leadership during 2019, UNCT has reached gender parity among Heads of Agencies with 9 females and 10 males.

To further workforce diversity, the UN has undertaken evaluation of its entire workforce within the organization. To enhance its diversity, UN has continued to implement the Joint UN Traineeship Programme, which has provided young people from socially excluded and marginalised groups and communities with a structured 11 months full time Traineeship opportunity in different UN agencies. Established in 2011, the UN in Nepal has continued to successfully run this program, with 7 cohorts and 214 trainees to date.

THREE MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENTS IN DELIVERING TOGETHER FOR THE 2030 AGENDA

MIGRATION

The UN initiated and led Kathmandu Migration Group (KMG) 2016, has transformed to the Migration Group of Nepal (MGN) in 2019. The group includes donors and UN agencies, and it focuses in the area of inter-organizational collaboration on thematic issues for comprehensive policy advice. The overall objective of the MGN is to contribute to safe, orderly, regular and responsible migration that is beneficial for all. Within the framework of the Agenda 2030 and its core principle of “leaving no one behind” - including migrants; the MGN aims to promote the protection of the rights of migrants and the realization of decent work, so that migration can reveal its potential and effectively contribute to sustainable development and economic growth.

The UN in Nepal played a significant role in supporting the National Human Rights Commission of Nepal and Government of Nepal with technical and financial assistance in the organization of an International Conference on the Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers from 12-14 November 2019. The event produced an outcome document in form of Kathmandu Declaration, 2019. The declaration advocates for UN's international benchmarks recommended by the ILO Guidelines for Fair Recruitment and the IOM's International Recruitment Integrity System (IRIS) to make recruitment process an essential first step in the rights protection of the migrant workers.

The UN in Nepal supported the development of Nepal Migration Profile 2019; the overall objective of the profile is to provide relevant

migration data to facilitate effective policy making, ensuring that migration can be successfully mainstreamed into the development plans of Nepal. More specifically, the Migration Profile serves to: map out available migration data sources on diverse migrant categories and their characteristics; provide a comprehensive evidence-based account of the country's migration experience in a single concise document to serve as a planning tool for policy makers and practitioners; and present available statistics on migration stocks and flows in a concise and internationally comparable way. The Profile consists set of recommendations which will be formulated into action plans for implementation of mainstreaming migration into development plans in 2020 and for facilitation in creation of UN Network on Migration. The UN agencies in Nepal incl. the 17 line Ministries and Departments led by the Ministry of Labour Employment and Social Security have contributed in the development of the Nepal Migration Profile 2019.

UN Agencies are jointly working towards promoting fair and ethical international recruitment practice which contributes towards the eradication of forced labour, modern slavery and human-trafficking and for protection of migrants and labour rights. Several capacity building programs and consultation have been organized engaging private sectors (labour recruiters, trainings and orientation Centers), GoN, NGOs and CSOs with an aim to promote international recruitment system including IRIS standard and Corporate Responsibility in Eliminating Slavery and Trafficking (CREST) initiatives for eliminating risks of forced labour and human trafficking in global supply chain.

UN Agencies financed and supported the Rural Enterprises and Remittance Project, also known as SAMRIDDHI Project, led by Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Supplies (MoICS). 14 Migrant Resource Centers (MRCs) in Province 1 and 2 were established with technical assistance to the Government of Nepal to foster safe, humane and orderly migration. The partnership has strengthened the capacity of SAMRIDDHI MRCs in providing services and access to accurate information on migration processes through capacity building program and by inter-linking SAMRIDDHI MRCs to the online Job Portal database. A total of 3833 (3079 male and 754 female) migrants and the communities have received services on pre-departure counselling including assistance on return & reintegration from SAMRIDDHI MRCs.

UN agencies in coordination with the government of Nepal has been able to mainstream migration health in the 15th periodic plan of Nepal and also in the recently approved National Health Policy. The draft of National Strategy for Migration Health is also at its final stage of approval from the Policy Steering Committee. In addition to the mainstreaming migration health in the national policy framework, the UN is also supporting to promote the health and wellbeing of migrants by standardizing pre-departure health assessment and orientation on health. For this the UN supported in revising the health component of pre-departure orientation training curriculum and also some audio video materials which are in the final approval stage from the government for its dissemination and use. Furthermore, the UN has recently completed the ‘research on cross-border health vulnerability study among returnee migrants from India’.

FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION

In 2019, given the high rate of undernourishment and stunting in Nepal, and for the need to assist the Government in achieving SDG 2 in an inclusive manner, the UN in Nepal established the Food Security and Nutrition Task Force. The taskforce brought together the two sectors – food security and nutrition – which were operating separately, after identifying the critical need to utilize a multisectoral approach to the challenge. With more than 80% of the workforce in agriculture filled by women, the UN in Nepal recognized the importance of employing a gender perspective in its work, resulting in the RC taking the lead to engaging UN agencies that work on gender equality and women's empowerment. The multisectoral approach the taskforces employs enabled the UN to work across numerous entities in the Government, including the National Planning Commission and relevant federal ministries such as the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, Ministry of Health and Population and the Ministry of Social Development. The taskforce also works with the Provincial and Municipal governments in nutrition-specific as well as nutrition-sensitive interventions.

In 2019, Nepal became the host country for Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Global Gathering. The preparation phase, as well as the Global Gathering itself enabled the UN to identify priority nutrition challenges in Nepal and work closely with the Government to increase its commitments. During the preparation phase, UN agencies working on agriculture, nutrition, child protection, gender equality and health came together to discuss nutrition priorities in a holistic way. This enabled the UN in Nepal to consider nutrition from a non-traditional perspective; for example, including non-communicable diseases and obesity as part of the nutrition agenda. The preparations also enabled the UN in Nepal to advocate for the humanitarian-development nexus in the nutrition continuum, which was discussed in depth with international development partners. Based on these discussions, as well as the SUN Global Gathering, the international development partners are more risk informed of the impact of nutrition in development projects, which the UN in Nepal intends to build on for preparedness planning.

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LNOB (HARMFUL PRACTICES)

Based on the results of the 2017 Community Perception Survey, the UNCT recognized harmful practices as a serious barrier to development outcomes, particularly for women and girls. These practices are also barriers to governance and political participation, economic development, education, agricultural development, health and more, ultimately preventing the realization of the 2030 Agenda and the principle of Leaving No One Behind. Therefore, the UNCT established the Harmful Practices Working Group (HPWG) in 2018 to support an informed, coordinated and coherent approach to addressing harmful practices across outcome areas of the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2018-2022.

The HPWG has commissioned and supported a desk review on Harmful Practices (December 2019), and undertaken a perception survey report (December 2019), to address development impacts and root causes of caste-based discrimination, menstrual restrictions including chhaupadi, child marriage, dowry, and witchcraft accusation and persecution. The perception survey was carried out among 4,000 respondents in 16 districts from Province 2, Gandaki Province and Sudur Paschim Province. The report and desk review will be utilized by the UN agencies, development partners, and CSO to understand the impacts of harmful practices and integrate efforts to reduce their effects to support Nepal achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The UNCT in Nepal were interested in working jointly to better understand how these practices impact development progress, as they have implications across a range of development areas (health, education, gender equality, and economic development). The reports were launched with development partners and civil society organisations.

The efforts by the HPWG will feed into piloting of the draft Leaving No One Behind (LNOB) Guide. UNCT Nepal has volunteered to participate in the piloting of the interim draft of the LNOB Guide to provide practical feedback to inform the revision process and subsequent finalization of the LNOB Guide in late 2019. UNCT Nepal has initiated the piloting, hiring national and international experts to assess country situation and to recommend strategies. The experts will review relevant literature, including policies and carry out consultation with concerned stakeholders to provide needed resources to enable UNCT Nepal to implement the guide. UNCT Nepal envisions that this pilot will strengthen the UNCT's support to national response to implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a way that is consistent with the pledge to leave no one behind and reach the furthest behind first.

ADVANCING THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The Government of Nepal has adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a guiding principle for its planning. In the national efforts, the UN in Nepal continues to provide support in advancing the achievement of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). In 2019, UN supported the Government of Nepal to launch the SDG Needs Assessment Costing and Financing Strategy, integrate the SDGs into plans and budgets of local governments, strengthen national statistical system for quality, and enhance technical capacity of national stakeholders.

SDG INTEGRATION IN DEVELOPMENT PLANS OF FEDERAL, PROVINCIAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

This year National Planning Commission (NPC) published and disseminated the "Needs Assessment, Costing and Financing Strategy for Sustainable Development Goals". The report, published and disseminated with the support of the UN, is a follow up to the Nepal's Sustainable Development Goals: Status and Roadmap 2016 – 2030, which was developed and adopted by the NPC in 2017. This report assesses the intervention needs for achieving the SDGs, undertaking the costing to assess investment requirement and to suggest financing strategies for advancing SDGs in Nepal. The report also shows that the average financing gap USD 5 billion per year for the entire period of 2016 to 2030, upon analysis of actual and projected availability of resources.

The UN also provided technical support to the NPC to draft a guidance note for the integration of the SDGs into plans and budgets of the local governments through a consultative process. In Nepal, there is a strong link between the SDGs and the power and responsibilities that the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has allocated to the local governments. Vital public services, including basic and secondary education, primary health care, water supply and sanitation, agriculture, basic infrastructure, and social protection, are now the responsibility of the local governments. Therefore, the guidance note is aimed at providing hands-on tools and guiding resources to local governments to plan and monitor achievement of the SDG indicators that are within their jurisdiction.

With an objective to assess the status of the province in advancing various goals of the SDGs, province 5 prepared and published an SDG baseline report followed by province 1, 2, 3, Gandaki and Karnali whose baseline reports will be available by the end of the year. These reports, prepared with the support from the UN, is a tool for the province to identify and design strategic interventions needed to advance achievement of the SDGs.

Similarly, the Provincial Planning Commission of province 5 formulated its five-year development plan. This SDG-based periodic

plan (2019/20-2023/24) was endorsed by the cabinet and guides the annual plan of the provincial government for the next five years. The technical support provided by the UN to develop this plan was received positively by the Government of Nepal.

In order to build the capacity of the Parliamentary Committee on advancing Sustainable Development and Good Governance, the UN helped establish an SDG Corner in their office. The SDG Corner is aimed at making information on SDGs and other resources available to parliamentarians for their championing of the SDGs. The UN also supported in sensitizing the members of the provincial assemblies and senior provincial government officials on the importance designing and implementing SDG oriented development plans and budgets. Each province has identified 5 SDG champions based on the demonstrated commitment from among the provincial assembly members and built their capacity for their advocacy to integrate SDGs into the plans and budgets of the provinces.

To identify an entry point for their partnership with private sector for financing implementation of the sustainable development goals at local government levels, the Town Development Fund and 15 pilot municipalities are reviewing their services. As a part of this initiative, the opportunities and risks involved in different modalities of public private partnership (PPP) were explored and discussed, based on which the pilot municipalities work for the partnership with private sectors ahead. The UN played a key role to support the local government in facilitating this process.



DATA MANAGEMENT TO MONITOR PROGRESS FOR ACHIEVING THE SDGS

The Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) carried out fieldwork of the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS) with the financial and technical support of the UN. The CBS will have completed and made the preliminary results available by end of the year. The MICS, as a major source of data on children's well-being, will be used as baseline to measure the progress on the SDG targets/indicators related to children's well-being.



The UN provided technical and financial assistance to the CBS to prepare for the Population and Housing Census 2021. As a part of the support from the UN, the CBS finalized a five-year costed-census project document (2019-2023), which will guide the census operation including towards mobilizing technical and financial resources and ensuring the census operation is gender-sensitive and inclusive. UN's support to the census included a census risk analysis and development of mitigation measures, census IT and infrastructure assessment, institutional capacity assessment and technical support plan, support for consultations on census at national and

sub-national levels, CBS's engagement with marginalized groups including LGBTIQI and people with disabilities, and capacity building through SSC.

The CBS integrated the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) module in the Nepal Living Standard Survey (NLSS) 2019 in the technical support of the UN. The integration of the FIES module in the survey is aimed at collecting and engendering data for monitoring the progress in achieving the SDG 2. The Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development and the CBS have been piloting Annual Agriculture Survey (AGRIS) in one of the districts of Province 3 in the support of the UN. The AGRIS will be carried out in all seven provinces after its successful piloting. The survey will be able to collect and engender data to monitor the progress in achieving a few of the SDG targets. Similarly, the UN has supported to the CBS to carry out preparatory activities such as developing detailed project plans and building capacity of the CBS staff in order to conduct the Agriculture Survey 2022.

The UN has also initiated a technical assistance to the Ministry of Women, Children, and Senior Citizen (MoWCSC) and the CBS to carry out the Violence against Women (VAW) Prevalence Survey. As a part of the initiative, the UN supported the MoWCSC and the CBS to participate in the first phase of kNOWVAWdata training course. The kNOWVAWdata is a four-week course for professionals seeking to build their skills in measuring the prevalence of VAW offered by University of Melbourne in partnership with UNFPA, ANROWS and the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).



IMPLEMENTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND UNIVERSAL UN NORMS IN NEPAL

To advance the human rights mandate of the UN, UNCT, under the leadership of the RC, has been advocating for the protection and promotion of human rights in Nepal. Nepal is a signatory to seven out of nine core international human rights treaties and continued to serve on the Human Rights Council through 2019. As Nepal prepares to undergo the Universal Periodic Review in November 2020, UNCT has begun a discussion to prepare a UNCT compiled report to UPR, and if requested, will work with the Government on the review.

While Nepal was not reviewed by any human rights treaty bodies in 2019, the UN in Nepal followed up with the Government on Nepal on the recommendations made during three treaty body reviews (CERD, CEDAW, CRPD) in 2018, and supported the Global Alliance on National Human Rights Institutions for the accreditation of the National Human Rights Commission on Nepal in March 2019.

Transitional Justice has been at the centre of UN's advocacy for accountability for human rights violations and abuses that occurred during Nepal's internal conflict. The UN in Nepal engages with the Government to promote truth, justice, reparations and guarantees of non-recurrence from a victim-centric perspective. To do so, UN coordinates frequently with conflict victims, human rights organizations and development partners.

In 2019, Special Procedures mandate holders issued and made

public two communications, one on transitional justice and another on the amendment of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Act. The letters provided valuable guidance to the Government, civil society and the UN. UNCT advocated for the response and implementation of the recommendations included in four communications from the Special Procedures sent during 2018. UNCT has also continued advocating for the Government to accept and facilitate Special Procedures mandate holders' visit to Nepal. While there were two visits by the Special Rapporteurs in 2018, no visits were conducted in 2019 despite the eleven outstanding country visit requests, including the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, whose visit has been accepted by the Government in 2017; however, the visit dates remain unconfirmed.

UNCT has also worked closely with the development partners to address concerns related to human rights. In January 2019, together with nine diplomatic missions in Nepal, UN issued a press statement urging the Government of Nepal to move forward with a comprehensive and credible transitional justice process. The statement was made in relation to the expiration of the mandates of the two transitional justice commissions. It also encouraged the Government to undertake broad-based and meaningful consultations with conflict victims, civil society and wider stakeholders in implementing the transitional justice process. Further, in October 2019, in light of the increasing



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incidents of violence against women, and the wide-spread absence of accountability for perpetrators, six embassies and the UN in Nepal issued a statement expressing concerns and reminding the Government of Nepal of its obligations under international law to ensure access to justice for victims using a victim-centric approach and send a zero-tolerance message to combat gender-based violence.

The capacity of humanitarian actors on implementing more gender responsive humanitarian action was increased through the support of the UN agencies in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA). The 'Gender in Humanitarian Action Workshop' developed in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender in Humanitarian Action Handbook aimed to equip humanitarian actors with the right knowledge and skills to address humanitarian response through a gender-responsive lens. It provided a platform to diverse groups (women with disabilities, women from ethnic and caste-based groups such as Dalit women groups, and individuals from LGBTIQ communities) to call for inclusion in humanitarian actions. With this more GESI responsive contingency plans will be

prepared. MoHA and Ministry of Women, Children and Senior Citizen have requested the roll-out the training at the Provincial and local levels.

Earlier this year, the Government of Nepal expressed its commitment to finalize the National Action Plan (NAP) for Women, Peace and Security (Phase-II) under the aegis of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA). Following extensive consultations between MOHA and the UN agencies, a plan has been developed for NAP Phase-II consultations and finalizations process. The NAP is significant as it focuses on issues not adequately addressed in the first phase, such as concerns and priorities of survivors of the conflict-related sexual violence, disappeared families, difficulties faced by former women combatants in reintegration, children born out of rape, survivors with disability. The NAP working group are currently undertaking NAP consultations across all seven provinces, inviting victims groups, government officials, media, CSOs, security sector, the Municipal Association of Nepal, among other stakeholders, to solicit recommendations on the activities and implementation mechanism for the plan

On technical assistance, in 2019, UN in Nepal has undertaken analyses of 17 laws passed and amended in 2018 that relate to fundamental rights, for their compliance with international human rights laws and principles. The laws were reviewed comprehensively by relevant UN agencies in Nepal. Analyses have been conducted for the following Acts: the Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act, Right to Food Act, Compulsory and Free Education Act, Child Act, Social Security Act, Public Health Service Act, Right to Employment Act, Right to Housing Act, Consumer Protection Act, Protection of Environment Act, Land Act, Personal Privacy Act, Caste-Based Discrimination and Untouchability (Offences and Punishment) Act, Act Relating to the Right of Person Having Disability, Crime Victim Protection Act, Public Security Act and the Criminal Offences (Sentencing and Execution) Act. The analyses will be shared with the Government as part of UN's technical assistance activities. In September 2019, the Government of Nepal officially requested UN's Evidence, Policy and Innovation Unit support to draft the Right Food and Food Sovereignty Act. UN agencies will provide technical support and inputs in the process to amicably accommodate the existing architectures of agriculture, food security and nutrition in the institutional set-up of Right to Food and Food Sovereignty by-laws in order to streamline/integrate food security and nutrition. This will facilitate the achievement of programme/policy coherence at operational level.

In September 2019, UN launched the Multi Country Study on Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants from Nepal, in partnership with the Government of Nepal. The study is part of the UN's global project – GLO.ACT – to address trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants. The primary objectives of this study are to: (i) understand the realities and challenges associated with smuggling of migrants from Nepal, primarily to the United States, and Europe; (ii) inform about migrant-smuggling legal frameworks and policies and other measures at the national level, and (iii) foster international cooperation. The report also seeks to examine the nature of human trafficking and smuggling of Nepalese migrants to South Africa and to East Africa, mainly Kenya.

Further, in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of Discriminations against women (CEDAW), the relevant international standards and norms in crime prevention and criminal justice, as well as the Regional Programme for South Asia 2018-2021, the UN is conducting a study of the situation of women in the Nepali criminal justice system. The objective of the study is to understand the realities that women face when dealing with the criminal justice system, focusing on victims of gender-based violence, women in conflict with the law and women as actors and professionals in the criminal justice.



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COOPERATING WITH UN PEACEKEEPING, PEACE BUILDING, POLITICAL AND HUMANITARIAN ACTORS

The UN in Nepal continues to provide support to the Government of Nepal on disaster preparedness, response and recovery. On preparedness, in 2019, the UN undertook two emergency response preparedness processes, producing contingency plans to enable effective and coordinated response to earthquake and monsoon-related humanitarian needs. The earthquake preparedness utilized innovative approaches capitalizing on the interface between the scientific and humanitarian communities: The UN in Nepal strengthened their partnership with Durham University, UK to model 90 different earthquake scenarios so that planning can be undertaken against multiple impact scenarios at the same time. This enhanced focus on data preparedness, based on effective use of secondary-data and led by the UN, was also echoed in the monsoon planning.

The UN supported the Government of Nepal to participate in international coordination and information sharing fora on disaster preparedness and response. In 2019, the key platforms were the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) and the Regional Consultative Group on Civil-Military Coordination (RCG). In particular, lessons from the 2015 earthquake were brought to the international community via the GPDRR. Key recommendations from the Nepal Army-led disaster simulation, the Disaster Response and Exchange, and the Nepal Army's approach to disaster response more broadly, were shared at the RCG, supported by the UN.

While supporting the Government in preparedness and response, the UN continues to capacitate a fully-Government-led and managed disaster preparedness and response system. In 2019, work on preparing Government social protection systems to deliver cash in emergencies commenced. The vision for a scalable social protection system was underpinned by a renewed focus on coordination among the UN family on the use of cash in emergencies. In addition to cash, the UN supported Government in repositioning humanitarian supplies and with additional logistics support. The UN also assisted the Government to prepare locally appropriate disaster preparedness and response plans in a newly federalized context. These are not all in place nor operational as yet and challenges remain in coordination across all tiers of Government.

With the technical assistance of the UN, preparedness and response readiness for emergencies has been scaled up in the sectoral ministries in 2019. The UN is providing its technical and financial support continuously to Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) for operationalization of Health Emergency Operation Centres (HEOC) at the federal level. This includes the implementation of WHO Hospital Safety Index (HSI) assessment, piloting HSI+ app (web and mobile based), WHO Emergency Care System Assessment, development of Learning Resource Package, and organization of simulation exercises. Support was also extended to the provinces to establish provincial level HEOCs in remaining three (Province 2, 3 and 5). The development of Disaster Preparedness and Response Plan (DPRP) along with Outbreak Management Plan (OMP) of all 25 designated hub hospitals of the MoHP has been completed.

In 2019, the UN agencies, as cluster co-leads supported their Government counterparts, to respond to the small-scale windstorm in March/April 2019 and localized flooding during the monsoon season. No formal request for international assistance was received. However, as recommended by the Federal Government, the UN supported sub-national authorities on a localized basis, with food assistance and other relief items as required.

In order to ensure better accountability to affected populations, during the monsoon, the UN undertook a feedback process in affected communities to better understand the suitability of relief assistance. This was implemented by an interactive voice recognition telephone survey and built on prior work undertaken by the inter-agency Common Feedback Project following the 2015 earthquake and 2017 flooding. Plans are in place to scale-up this process via face-to-face surveys in affected communities in future.

UN recovery assistance in 2019, continued to focus on building back better following the 2015 earthquake. Lessons in recovery from the 2017 flooding in relation to supporting Government systems for preparedness and response were also taken forward including via support to early warning systems, improved information management and Government-led preparedness and response plans.



HIGHLIGHTS ON KEY CHALLENGES OF JOINED UP WORK

The federalization of the country has devolved some of the powers and responsibility to provincial and local governments. While this allows for much greater local accountability, mobilization of financial and technical resources has been a challenge. The Constitution of Nepal recognizes the important role of provincial and local governments in delivering public services and basic levels of Nepal's development agenda. These governments are now responsible for delivering many of the public services and the development of infrastructure that are directly relevant to advancing the achievement of the SDGs. The new roles have also granted the local governments authority to prepare and implement their own plans and budgets in the areas authorized by the constitution. But as the provincial and local governments are relatively new institutions in Nepal, they have limitations in terms of scale, capacity and experiences to guide their planning and budgeting processes towards decisions that neatly line up with national, sectoral or provincial development ambitions to meet the SDGs.

The Needs Assessment, Costing and Financing Strategy for Sustainable Development Goals, which was carried out by the National Planning Commission (NPC), with the technical support of the UN, has identified that Nepal will have an average financing

gap of USD 5 billion per year for the entire time frame of the 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development. Nepal scores first position among the South Asian countries in terms of mobilization of tax revenue to GDP ratio, but its lack of capacity to diversify and expand its revenue base and rectify loopholes for tax leakages have disabled the country to meet its revenue target and have sustainable base for the domestic resource mobilization. The tax revenue trend demonstrates that Nepal faces shortfalls in financing the SDGs even after mobilization of tax revenue at its higher capacity levels.

The government's limited execution of the capital expenditure also has impacted the joint work in delivering the SDGs. In FY 2019, execution of the capital expenditures by the government is 75.9 per cent, which is less than that of FY2018 at 81.0 per cent. A large portion of the capital budget was spent in the last three months, which means an impact on the due diligence and quality of the development work. The capital expenditure of the government in the nine months remained at around 35 per cent and surged to the 75.9 per cent by the end of FY2019. Long-standing challenges tied to project readiness, procurement processes and project management derail the smooth implementation, affecting budget execution and limiting public investment.



IMPACT AND RESULTS OF JOINED UP APPROACHES OF THE UNCT



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UN in Nepal has been active in developing and implementing joint programmes across the board based on the SDGs and human rights. In 2019, UNCT operated a total of eight joint programmes and developed and secured funding for one new programme. Participation is wide across the agencies, with fourteen agencies contributing. Topics range from women's empowerment, migration, governance, economic and development policy, agriculture and environment and emergency preparedness. The total budget of the programmes surpasses USD 21 million, with a wide variety of donors and funding mechanisms.

UNCT has been proactively providing support and technical assistance to the Government of Nepal in its efforts to transition to federalism. Nepal began its federalization process in 2018, with much focus being invested in localization of governance and services to the provincial and local governments. To facilitate the transition and to ensure smooth coordination and cooperation between the three levels of the Government, the Government of Nepal approved the Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP). While the Government of Nepal is the implementing agency for the programme, UN has offered to provide technical assistance support to the implementation of PLGSP. UNCT employs a bottom-up approach to respond to the needs on the ground by utilizing the agencies active at the provincial level to be the focal points and are relied upon its specific expertise to support the UN delivering commitments in the proposal. In addition, with an unprecedented number of female elected representatives, there has been efforts underway to ensure that they have the support needed to undertake their duties. There have been trainings on Gender and Social Inclusion at the national and provincial levels. The UN has together with the World Bank conducted a federalism capacity needs assessment, which is currently awaiting approval by the Government for distribution.

Further on gender, in October 2019, UNCT in Nepal was one of the first countries to test the new guidelines for the gender score card and has actively been involved in the gender scorecard tracking and implementation. The final Gender Scorecard Report will be released by December 2019, placing Nepal as a leader internationally in terms of progress. The analysis is grounded in human rights, gender equality and social inclusion. UNCT has also jointly conducted Gender in Communications training (the first time this training has been provided in the region), sessions on Gender Equality & Social Inclusion (GESI) in recruitment and HR and Gender in Humanitarian Action trainings. These are all parts of the Gender Score Card Action Plan adopted by the UNCT. Highlights of the gender scorecards include 4 indicators, including Gender-related UNDAF Indicators and Leadership, where the UNCT exceeded requirements as well as 7 indicators, including Joint Programmes, where the UNCT met the requirements.

On International Women's Day in March 2019, the UN Gender Theme Group and the Staff Association published 'Responding to Domestic Violence: A Resource Guide for UN Personnel in Nepal'. Since its induction, the resource guide is now a part of the UNDSS induction package and has been disseminated to all PEP-Kit custodians. To continue the progress made, a workshop for all urgent response and referral focal points will be organized to take place in early 2020.

The UN in Nepal has been proactive in supporting the development of the Gender Equality Marker (GEM) and Human Rights Marker (HRM). While awaiting the final guidelines, we have reached out to UN teams in Bangkok, Tanzania, Fiji, Geneva, Kenya and Papua New Guinea and provided feedback to HQ, including clarification on what is needed from the country level and a proposed timeline. The Gender Theme Group reviewed the Joint Workplans GEM earlier this year and will implement the both guidance documents when finalized in 2020. Further, the UNCT's Prevention of Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Working Group remains at the forefront on addressing PSEA in the region. Throughout 2019, the group met regularly with representation from 16 resident agencies. As of November 2019, letters have been sent to all implementing partners, outlining the UN's policies on PSEA. A workshop on PSEA and Sexual Harassment will take place in December 2019.

During the reporting period, the UN interagency task team on ending child marriage was formed with the objective of strengthening and catalyze the overall coordination, performance, and monitoring of the ending child, early and forced marriage (CEFM). UN agencies' work on ending child marriage in Nepal during 2019 included the implementation of the global programme on ending child marriage, where it reached approximately 4,000 girls with the "Rupantaran" life skills package. Throughout the year, over 2,000 individuals were engaged in dialogues on ending child marriage, which continues to be a significant issue in Nepal.

In support of SDG 16.9, the UN in Nepal has continued to advocate for people who do not have birth certificates and legal registration. The Government of Nepal is aiming to issue birth certificates to all children by 2030.

Further, UN agencies have been working together since 2016 on comprehensive sexuality education and safe learning environment in five districts. The impact of the programme can be seen as enrollment of girls is increasing



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and dropout rate is decreasing in those districts. The project activities have already seen good replication by the local governments such as construction of separate toilet for girls, and availability of sanitary pads in schools.

With 6,500 Bhutanese refugees still remaining in Nepal, UN agencies have jointly advocated for greater access for Bhutanese refugees to public services, with particular attention to refugee children, to ensure the refugees have a sustainable solution while they await voluntary repatriation. Through the advocacy, UN has been able to facilitate inclusion of 100% of the school-aged Bhutanese refugee children to be enrolled in primary education in 2019 and have made significant headway in expanding refugees' access to government-run health facilities.

In 2019, UN agencies contributed to expanding the immunization coverage in Nepal, including by assisting the development of the National Immunization Supply Action Plan to improve coverage and equity. Employing the comparative advantage of each agency, UNCT has maintained a high coverage of immunization, particularly with due consideration to improving the rights and access of women and children to vaccines. On 26 July 2019, the WHO South East-Asia Regional office (WHO-SEARO) declared that Nepal has achieved control of Hepatitis B infection through vaccination. This declaration was based on the data, which showed that, for many consecutive years, over 90% of infants have been immunized with three doses of Hepatitis B containing vaccine, resulting in Hepatitis B prevalence among Nepalese children of less than one per cent. This sustained success in routine immunization has been possible because of close coordination between MOHP, the UN and partners like Gavi, CDC, CDC, Rotary and others. UN agencies also provided technical assistance to develop the national communication and social mobilization strategy for routine immunization, which has contributed to improving the demand for vaccines. The UN continues to support midwifery education towards promoting safe motherhood and reproductive health. Through the federalization process, UN agencies continued to provide technical assistance to support the federal, provincial and local governments in building their capacities to deliver health services in the most vulnerable locations and communities.

The UN also worked closely together to accelerate the implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and together with other agencies commemorated Road Safety Day.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEW PARTNERSHIPS

In an effort to strengthen in-country partnerships, UN Women has signed two letters of collaboration with partner agencies. On 29 August, UN Women Nepal and ILO signed a Joint Statement on Interagency Collaboration to further advance the implementation of the UN Women and ILO Global Memorandum of Understanding signed in Geneva in 2011. The two agencies have agreed on eight priority areas of collaboration in support of the Government of Nepal: reducing gender gaps in the labour market; reducing gender pay gaps and occupational segregation; preventing gender-based violence at work (including sexual harassment); promoting family friendly policies at the workplace; ensuring social protection is gender responsive; supporting safe and orderly labour migration; strengthening women's leadership and voice in trade unions and in tripartite institutions; and strengthening evidence base on employment, social protection, rights at work, reducing and redistributing unpaid care work. The Joint Statement covers the UNDAF 2018-2022 period.

On 25 September, UN Women Nepal and UNDP Nepal signed a Joint Statement on Interagency Collaboration to strengthen their partnerships in furthering the agenda of gender equality and women's empowerment across the development-humanitarian continuum. The two agencies have agreed on 12 priority areas of collaboration: Strengthening legal and policy reforms to advance gender equality; advancing inclusive and gender responsive governance, human rights and access to justice including support to provincial and local governments; transforming gender discriminatory norms and eliminating harmful practices; gender-based violence prevention and response; fostering voice, agency and engagement of civil society through support to broadened civic space, particularly guaranteeing space for youth from vulnerable communities including persons with disabilities and sexual minorities; ensuring women's political participation, representation and leadership, including in elections and across the three levels of government; advancing women's leadership in peacekeeping and conflict prevention including the implementation of National Action Plan (Phase II) on UNSCR 1325 and 1820; strengthening gender equality and social inclusion in crises/post crises response and early recovery; mobilizing the private sector to advance gender equality; accelerating women's economic empowerment; strengthening the evidence base for implementation and monitoring of SDG localization; and experimenting, innovating and scaling up for the acceleration of SDG 5, 10, 11 and 16 with the UNDP Accelerator Lab.



UNHCR has continued to strengthen its collaboration with the local government to enhance inclusion of refugees in education, health, social protection and livelihood activities.

In 2019, UNICEF entered into a new strategic partnership with Christoffel-Blindenmission Christian Blind Mission (CBM) for providing technical assistance for disability-inclusive WASH in Schools.

UNICEF and UNESCO have agreed to develop a joint Term of Reference to provide support to ensure that the Education Management Information System (EMIS) remains functional during the transitional phase under federalization. UNICEF's support was provided under our Data Must Speak initiative, and UNESCO's support was provided under their NSDES (National Strategy for Development of Education Statistic).

UNICEF and ILO are jointly working on increasing access to universal social protection to promote human capital development with emphasis on poor, vulnerable and marginalized groups in line with SDG 1, 8 and 10.

UNDP and UNESCO jointly mobilized their resources, with support from EU and the Capacity Development for Education (CapED) programme, to build the capacity of over 450 stakeholders from Community Learning Centers (CLCs) based in 38 districts. The programme contributed towards improved engagement in voter and civic education, as part of lifelong learning process.

UNDP and UNESCO, with support of the EU, jointly organised the World Press Freedom Day on 3 May 2019 and delivered a strong message to the stakeholders for strengthening the press freedom for strong democracy and sustainable development. The two agencies designed and implemented training and interaction programmes for women journalists to strengthen their capacity to do electoral journalism. The programme was successful to establish cooperation between 200 women journalists and women politicians to work towards bridging the gender gap in politics and media. The programme was implemented in October and November 2019 in Kathmandu, Janakpur, Surkhet and Butwal.

In 2019, UNCDF began collaborating with UNDP to prepare a national private sector financing strategy that will guide private sector entities to secure access to financing from the Green Climate Fund's Private Sector Facility (PSF). This collaboration will feed into GCF readiness assistance being delivered to the Government of Nepal. The strategy will outline pathways of engagement of and with accredited entities (international) and direct access entities. A policy

brief on investment opportunities and potential pipelines for GCF investment opportunity on productive will be drafted based on the financing strategy. The brief will provide a broad articulation on the productive sectors, its link with the investment criteria and the private sector facility. The brief will address key challenges on private sector financing from GCF particularly on policy gaps.

WHO has been working with the INF hospital – Green Pastures Hospital at Pokhara as part of the United Nations Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRDP) joint UN project to establish a model for “one stop rehabilitation center,” which would also serve as a learning center for the Nepal.

A Cooperation Framework between UNCDF, Town Development Fund (TDF) and the European Union (EU) was established through a Letter of Understanding in August 2019. It built on UNCDF's partnership with Town Development Fund (TDF) through a Memorandum of Understanding in 2017 under its global “Municipal Investment Finance (MIF)” initiative, which was followed by a Grant Contract titled “Municipal Finance Capacity Building (MFCB)” with the European Union (EU) represented by the European Commission (EC) in 2018. This Cooperation Framework enables the three entities to simultaneously work in cooperation to enhance the capacity of pilot municipalities to identify and finance sustainable local economic development (LED) projects, improve internal capacity to operationalize non-grant financing mechanisms, and enhance cooperation among municipalities, financial institutions and private sector for blended financing for urban infrastructure investments.

UNICEF established a strategic partnership with the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) which is the representative body of business organizations in the country. It represents the interests of the private sector and is involved in promotion of socio-economic development of Nepal through private sector led economic growth. UNICEF Nepal and FNCCI have agreed to hold a national sanitation industry consultation in December 2019 together with the Ministry of Water Supply and Ministry of Industry. The purpose of the national consultation is to explore the possibility of engaging private sector in sanitation sector to advance sanitation related SDG targets. However, there is a plan to broaden the partnership to other social development areas through formal Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between FNCCI and UNICEF. FNCCI has 112 chambers at district and municipality level, 103 commodity/sectoral association, 961 leading public and private undertakings, and 20 Bi-national Chambers.





RESULTS OF JOINT RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

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Effectively supporting countries to develop strong contingency plans and building national systems that can cope with and respond to crises, requires a coherent and well-coordinated approach from international humanitarian partners. The UN has a unique opportunity in Nepal to develop this national and local disaster management capacity particularly through its cluster co-lead role and bearing in mind the commitment to undertake truly joint preparedness planning in 2020. With this in mind, UN has developed a joint proposal to enable a one-UN approach to emergency preparedness actions. This is designed to enhance coordination, information sharing and analysis within the international humanitarian system, so the UN is well-prepared to respond to an L2 or L3 emergency in support of the Government of Nepal.

Further, in 2019, the UN jointly developed a donor proposal in response to the spike in malnutrition in the Terai region of Nepal during the monsoon. While the proposal ultimately did not result in additional funding, the experience served as a good opportunity to strengthen the UN's joint approach to addressing transversal issues such as nutrition and showcase, to the donors, the UN's efforts to increase joint resource mobilization stemming from the UN reform. The UN has generated a lesson learned document from the monsoon-related flooding response this year and aims to build on the joined-up approach next year when preparing a joint Emergency Response Preparedness Plan for the 2020 monsoon with the Government. In addition, the UN maintained close coordination with development partners throughout the proposal development process. This provided an opportunity to highlight the risks natural disasters pose to their ongoing development interventions and to strengthen the nexus between humanitarian response and development programming.

On HIV and AIDS, joint efforts by the UN, the Government of Nepal and key civil society organizations have enabled an additional investment of USD 2-3 million from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, which will address the service gaps among the key populations. In addition, the UN Joint Team on HIV and AIDS has initiated discussions and plans for the development of funding proposals with the Global Fund as well as the United States Government President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

In addition, UN agencies worked collaboratively to mobilize additional resources for the ongoing project on Rural Women's Economic Empowerment (RWEE). The proposal was successful in obtaining funding from Norway.

Five participating UN agencies, with funding secured from multi-donors trust for the UN Partnership to promote the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNPRPD), continued to work on promoting the rights of persons with disabilities in Nepal through a set of activities as part of their commitment to 'leave no one behind'. The joint programme namely Aawaaz- inclusion for and by persons with disabilities, focused on strengthening data and evidence on persons with disabilities, improving access to services including hospitals, building the capacity of Disabled People's Organization and creating an enabling environment for the policy formulation in Sudurpachhim Province. Good progress has been made towards improving access to information through data collection to guide policy formulation and planning.

The UN assisted CBS Nepal prepared a costed project document for the 2021 Population and Housing Census and has helped mobilize donor interest and financial support for the census. However, a considerable financial gap still exists and efforts to seeking external financial support are ongoing.

INNOVATIONS IN PROGRAMME AND OPERATIONS TO ADDRESS KEY DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

In 2019, the UN in Nepal has increased its efforts to strengthen its engagement with the youth population in Nepal. Youth, ages 16 to 40, as defined by the Government of Nepal, constitutes 40 percent of the country's population and will continue to constitute the dominant demographic until 2035. UN in Nepal understands that today's youth faces multiple challenges from climate change, to unemployment, to multiple forms of inequality, discrimination and exclusion, young people, particularly those belonging to vulnerable or marginalized groups; however, there are equally as many opportunities to reach out and facilitate their participation. During the UN-Day in October 2019, the UN in Nepal employed innovative approach to engage the youth in the dialogue, using free SMS online voting mechanism. The tool was utilized during a panel discussion with influential bloggers and programmers, where the audience of primarily youth population was asked to provide their perception on social issues to enable an interactive and participatory panel discussion.

In addition, since the beginning of 2019, UNCT, in collaboration with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Embassy of Finland and Gender@Work, have been engaged in a co-creation effort to explore alternatives ways to measure the invisible indicators, such as changes in social norms, attitudes and perceptions. This is done by looking at the use of narrative-based methodologies such as Sensemaker for social norm change measurement across the sectors of Country Programme of the Government of Finland including education and WASH. Storytelling is recognised not only as a tool with the potential of measuring social norm change, but that storytelling itself can be an empowering process, providing women and girls with an opportunity to strengthen their voice and agency. This is exemplified by the existing work of UN Women and Government of Finland and the support to StoryKitchen and the Digital Platform, which highlights the power of stories of victims of conflict related sexual violence and how storytelling can be a means of collective healing for survivors.

While Nepal was the first country in the South-East Asia Region to reach the elimination threshold of visceral leishmaniasis (kala-azar) at its implementation level in 2013, its emergence in other districts serves a good lesson to sustain a robust surveillance in order to consolidate gains and revitalize efforts to its elimination. To strengthen surveillance system for Kala-azar, the UN supported Nepal's Epidemiology and Disease Control Division (EDCD) to revamp

its surveillance through innovative Kala-azar tracker system. Since then, kala-azar surveillance in Nepal has improved significantly.

To address the issues on child and adolescent mental health, the UN, in coordination with government and partners, developed training packages to be piloted in the hospital and health facilities. The programme has been owned by the Government, including by the local government. The pilot project revealed that the programme enabled service providers to have better orientation on handling mental health cases and the hospital have marked and managed about 50 mental health cases, including 40 children who have been referred from the municipality for mental health care services. Learning from the pilot project will be used to scale up the work, which includes trainings to female community health workers and teachers. As a next step, the Government has agreed to scale up the trainings to additional 4 hospitals and four municipalities.

In order to prevent unplanned pregnancies and promote maternal health among women and girls who live in remote areas, the UN, in coordination with the government and other partners, has continued to support Visiting Service Providers, who are trained health service providers and successfully reached more than 7,000 women and girls from the most marginalized communities in 2019, expanding their contraceptive choice and reproductive health and rights.

In cooperation with UN DESA (Financing for Development Office), the UN has commenced the implementation of a multi-country initiative (Bangladesh, Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda) to assist municipalities meet a required level of basic services, in the most cost-effective manner, through the management of physical assets (land, buildings, infrastructure) for present and future citizens. During 2019, the globally designed diagnostic instrument on municipal asset management was adapted for Nepal, piloted in six municipalities, lessons drawn from the pilots, and training provided to this initial cohort of six municipalities to prepare and implement municipal asset management plans. Through this effort, these UN agencies seek to substantially improve savings and generate additional revenues for municipal development, ensure better-quality assets that lead to better services for citizens, safeguard and preserve natural assets and increase creditworthiness by unlocking the value of assets to secure debt financing.

OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT NATIONAL PARTNERS IN INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT

2020 provides numerous opportunities for the UN in Nepal to strengthen its engagement with the Government of Nepal and other national stakeholders and to enhance their capacity to achieve the SDGs. Next year will mark the 5th year anniversary of the signing of the SDGs, which provides a springboard for the UN in Nepal to galvanize its efforts to highlight the goals that Nepal has made significant progress on, as well as those that require further work, within the framework of leaving no one behind. In addition, preparation for the 75th year anniversary of the establishment of the UN is already underway, with focus on the engagement of both urban and rural youth, including from the marginalized communities.

The Government of Nepal has made the timely collection and analysis of data to inform policy and programme development a priority, particularly in providing valid baseline for the tracking and monitoring the progress on SDGs. To strengthen the data, the Government of Nepal will be undertaking National Population and Housing Census 2021, with the preparation for the census being carried out through next year. UNCT has been actively assisting the Government in the census preparations including in the use new technologies. The census will be the first census to be carried out since the adoption of the SDGs, the promulgation of the new Constitution of Nepal and following federalization of the country, where the role of the provincial and local governments will be critical. Strengthening the capacity of national statistical systems to general accurate, timely and disaggregated population data in compliance with international standards and comparability is a priority area of support. The pilot census is scheduled to be conducted early next year and will test the application of the new technologies as well as commitment to ensuring gender equality and social inclusion of the operation.

The Government of Nepal has also selected 2020 as a year to promote tourism, with the launching of a campaign “Visit Nepal 2020.” The aim of the campaign is to put Nepal on the map for global tourism, with the aim to attract more than two million visitors in one year. In preparation for the campaign, the Government envisions prioritizing various construction and expansion of tourism infrastructure development projects, including international and domestic airports and heritage sites. Infrastructure development projects as well as relevant promotional activities may affect the rights of minority and indigenous populations living in Nepal, where the UNCT may provide assistance. In addition to the direct work with the Nepal Tourism Board undertaken by the UN, many activities that stems from its promotion, including climate change, culture, education, health, and youth engagement, relates closely to the UN's work in advancing the SDGs in Nepal.

In relation to the climate change agenda, Nepal will be hosting several climate change dialogues in the coming year, including the Government's flagship Sagarmatha Dialogue. The Sagarmatha Dialogue aims to host dialogues on contemporary global issues that affect the South Asia region and the Government has announced an international conference to be held in April 2020 on the impact of climate change, with particular emphasis on the mountain agenda. These conferences pave the way for greater UN engagement on the climate adaptation agenda, which is one of the UNDAF priority areas in Nepal.

Federalism has been at the forefront of the UN's work with the Government in Nepal. With the ongoing transition of authority from the federal government to the provincial and local governments, there has been a significant increase in the governmental budget allocated for the capacity development of provincial and local

authorities. This shift has also encouraged the UNCT to consider avenues to provide technical assistance to the Government, which will continue through next year.

In November 2019, Nepal hosted the Scaling Up Nutrition Global Gathering, which brought together SUN Government Focal Points and representatives from the civil society, donors, private sector partners, academia, media, UN and other stakeholders working on the nutrition agenda. Nepal was chosen as a host country for the global conference due to the progress it has made in improving the nutrition data over the past decade and the commitments the Government has made. The SUN Global Gathering provided a timely opportunity for the UN in Nepal to employ a multisectoral approach to nutrition interventions and engage with the development partners to make nutrition a priority development agenda. UN will continue to work closely with the development partners to identify progress and gaps in the existing government plans and strategies to achieve nutrition-sensitive SDGs. As a host for the Global Gathering, Nepal has the responsibility to make progress on the commitments it has made toward the next international conference scheduled in 2020, which may open new entry points for the UN to work with the national partners and strengthen their capacity for implementation. Similarly, the Government of Nepal has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding for the fortification of rice in Nepal, which may open new channels for engagement for UNCT to strengthen national capacity in the related field, raising awareness on the importance of food fortification and advocating for the engagement of the private sector to scale up rice fortification.

Nepal hosted the global flagship event of SheDecides - a global political movement to advance the reproductive rights of girls and women everywhere. The event brought together reproductive rights advocates from around the world and acknowledged the progressive policy environment in Nepal with the adoption of the Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act in 2018. The movement is largely led by young people and Nepal is no exception with strong young leaders advancing the campaign through 2020.

Nepal has committed to the WHO South East Asia regional goal of eliminating measles and rubella transmission by 2023. To accelerate progress towards the elimination goal, Ministry of Health and Population is working with UN agencies in Nepal, with support from Gavi, CDC, Rotary, Lions and other partners, to implement a mass immunization campaign in early 2020 with measles rubella vaccine.

Finally, on human rights, Nepal will be undergoing the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in November 2020, which will provide an opportunity for the country to reflect on the recommendations made during the previous two cycles of UPR and revitalize commitment to achieve the remaining and new recommendations for the next five years. UPR also offers an opportunity for the UN to engage more closely and constructively on human rights issues with the Government of Nepal, through assisting the Government with preparing the State Party's report and submitting the UN's compiled report to UPR.

AREAS OF POTENTIAL CHALLENGES FOR THE UNCT WORK IN NEPAL IN 2020

DISASTER PRONE COUNTRY

Nepal's proneness to disaster poses a huge risk that the development outcomes supported by the UNCT and its development partners can be reversed any time. Nepal is one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world due to its topography and climatic condition. Earthquakes, landslides, floods, fire, thunderbolts are the major causes of disaster events that caused major damaged in the past, weakening the fragile ecosystem of the country. In 2015, an earthquake of major magnitude of 7.8 struck central Nepal, leaving catastrophic impacts across the country. That tremor, plus subsequent aftershocks, left more than 9,000 people dead and nearly 25,000 others injured. Extensive damage was recorded throughout Nepal, particularly in the capital city of Kathmandu. Economic Vulnerability Analysis shows that Nepal exhibits the largest losses due to large exposure at risk and the high level of hazards. As a matter of these phenomena not only cause loss of lives and properties, but also pose severe threats to physical infrastructure and disruption of socioeconomic development. The establishment of the National Disaster Risk Reduction Management Authority remains a key milestone yet to be achieved, but which the UN will collaborate with the moment it comes to life.

ONGOING FEDERALIZATION

The newly established federal structures pose another challenge to the work of UNCT. The provincial and local governments face a human resource deficit, hampering service delivery and development projects. The Government of Nepal concluded the civil servant adjustment process this year, with more civil servants adjusted under the central government. The adjustment reportedly fulfilled only less than half of the projected human resources needs at provincial and local levels.

The local governments continue to face challenges that are outcomes of adequate policy frameworks required to deliver services and to implement development programmes at the local levels. This demonstrates that provincial and local governments face shortage of human resources, which obstructs them from delivering basic public services and infrastructure development projects that are more relevant to the development agenda that UNCT continues to advocate in Nepal. This can have impact in the successful implementation of the technical assistance by the UNCT.



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