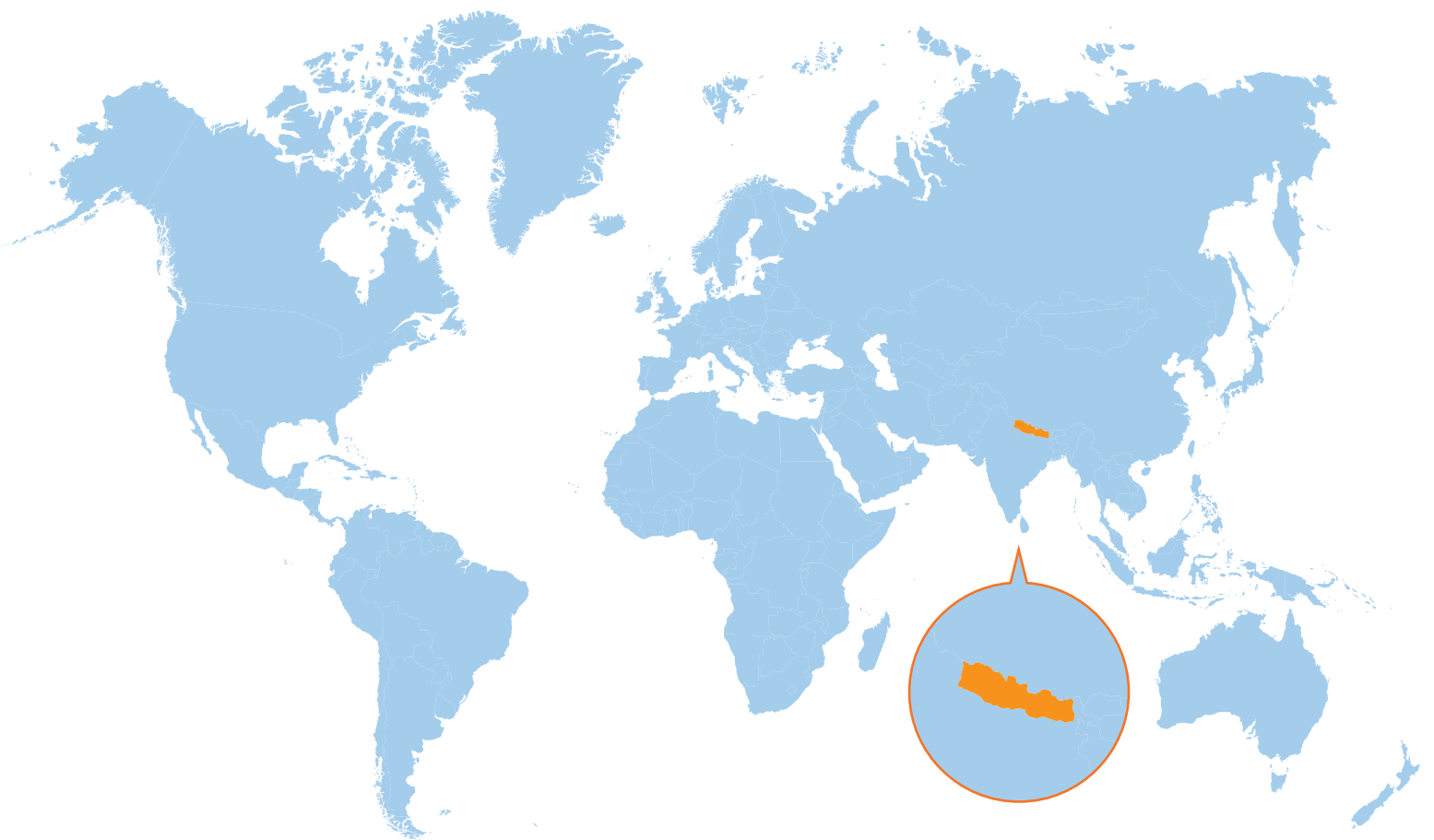


UNV's Experience in Strengthening Volunteer Infrastructure in NEPAL



COUNTRY REPORT





The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme is the UN organisation that promotes volunteerism to support peace and development worldwide.

Volunteerism can transform the pace and nature of development and it benefits both society at large and the individual volunteer. UNV contributes to peace and development by advocating for volunteerism globally, encouraging partners to integrate volunteerism into development programming, and mobilising volunteers.

UNV is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

UNV, 2014

www.unv.org

In 2013, UNV commissioned a global evaluation on “UNV Contribution to Volunteer Infrastructures”. The evaluation covered national and regional projects aimed at strengthening volunteer infrastructure, partnered and supported by UNV financially and technically.

“UNV’s Experience in Strengthening Volunteer Infrastructure” is a series of knowledge products based on the findings of the evaluation, included in one global and eight country reports (Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Liberia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Peru, Togo and Viet Nam).

This knowledge product shares UNV’s experience with supporting the *National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS)* in Nepal, as a “nested project” within a large UN Joint Programme Fund for the Local Governance and Community Development Programme – Phase I (LGCDP-I). It is based on an evaluative study which included a literature review and a field visit. During the field visit, the evaluation team carried out semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions in Kathmandu and Dolakha District.

OVERVIEW

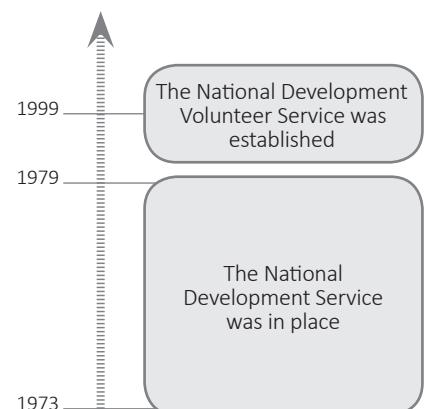
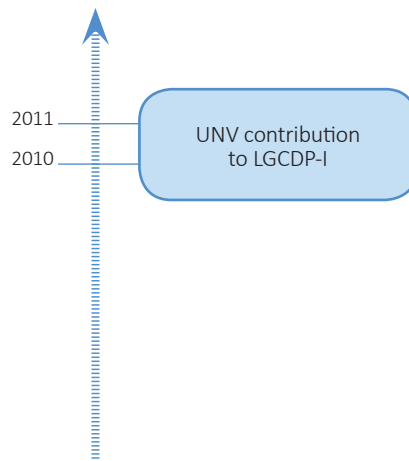
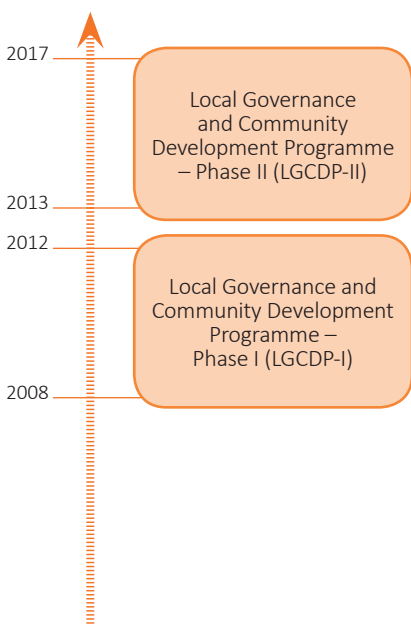
In Nepal, UNV supported the Government-managed **National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS)**, as part of a large UN Joint Programme Fund for the **Local Governance and Community Development Programme – Phase I (LGCDP-I)**. This type of intervention is referred to as a nested project, a project which builds capacity of volunteers and/or volunteer managers in a particular area or sector, as part of a wider (non-UNV) project.



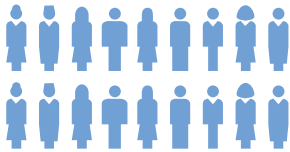
LGCDP-I was a large national programme implemented in all of Nepal's 75 Districts and 58 Municipalities from 2008. In the context of peacebuilding following a decade of civil conflict (1996-2006), the aim of LGCDP-I was to transform local governance. The programme was administered by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), and funded by the Government of Nepal and development partners. A UN Joint Programme fund, to which UNV contributed, was constituted to support the programme.

The **UNV fund** was used to support NDVS with recruiting and deploying 100 volunteers to assist in the implementation of the LGCDP, to coordinate monitoring and enhance the partnership with NDVS, and to contribute to capacity building and technical infrastructure within the national volunteer service.

NDVS was established in 1999, in the middle period of the civil conflict. In some ways it was seen as an extension of the earlier National Development Service (NDS) which from 1973-79 was implemented by Tribhuvan University in a programme for Masters' degree second year students who had to teach voluntarily in rural schools for one year. Between 1999 and 2012, NDVS placed a total of 8,890 volunteers. Despite this substantial experience, it had not had opportunity to build up systems which would enable it to function as a resource for volunteerism in general, nor as a coordinating mechanism among the wider variety of stakeholders in volunteerism across the country.



IMPLEMENTATION



100
volunteers

The UNV fund was used mainly to support the **National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS)** with recruiting, training and deploying 100 volunteers in 48 District Development Committees and 52 Municipalities across Nepal, to assist in the implementation of the LGCDP-I. These were ‘non-technical’ volunteers recruited as Assistant District Facilitators and Assistant Municipal Facilitators.

Towards the end of LGCDP-I, the fund also contributed to capacity building and technical infrastructure within NDVS. The fund also included the placement of two national UN Volunteers with NDVS for monitoring and coordination of the UNV component of LGCDP-I.

In addition to the volunteer placements, through 2012 UNV provided funds to support:



The establishment of a volunteer resource and information centre, located in NDVS;



The establishment of the first components of the Volunteer Information and Management System database in NDVS;



Regional Consultations to develop and formulate a national policy on volunteerism, led by NDVS and involving a number of stakeholders.



Evaluation study of the UNV component in LGCDP-I at the end of the programme.

PARTNERSHIP MODEL

The *UNV contribution to LGCDP-I* was a complex intervention, in the sense that

1

it was nested within the wider LGCDP programme, funded by the Government of Nepal and development partners and administered by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD), and

2

the volunteer component was also nested within the wider volunteer programme of the National Development Volunteer Service (NDVS).

This UNV initiative was carefully designed to focus UNV’s specialist experience in a way which best supported a critical component of the much larger multi-stakeholder programme.



RELEVANCE

LGCDP was an ambitious programme aimed at transforming Local Governance in the context of peacebuilding. It sought to institute governance reform at the local level by eliciting participation in development planning and monitoring at all levels, but especially by disadvantaged and marginalised groups. UNV's initiative was designed to focus on the organisation's experience to support a critical component of the much larger multi-stakeholder programme, itself a product of a long negotiation and prioritisation by the Government of Nepal and the aligned donors.

RELEVANCE TO NATIONAL PRIORITIES

LGCDP started in 2008 and was administered by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD). It set out to build the local level institutions, enable participation and develop capacity. By instituting user committees for services, public audits and participatory monitoring it also set out dramatically to improve accountability to the local level public and transparency in the expenditure of government funds. All these objectives aimed ultimately to reduce poverty by improving service delivery and equitable access to services at local level.

RELEVANCE TO STAKEHOLDER NEEDS

The component supported by UNV was intended to contribute to the outcome expressed in the wider programme that communities and organisations participate actively in local governance processes. The volunteers, mostly social science graduates, were recruited to work in District Development Committees (DDCs). There is widespread agreement on the fact that the volunteers had made an important contribution to this outcome and to several other aspects of DDC/Municipality functioning.

RELEVANCE TO THE VOLUNTEERS

Volunteer recruitment put an emphasis on inclusion for disadvantaged groups including women, ethnic groups and Dalits.

UNV'S value added



UNV was perceived as having the advantage of being a **respected institution with a long history and experience**. As a UN programme, UNV is also in a position to **take part in UN partnerships** and therefore to strategically **integrate an element of volunteerism into large-scale, priority programmes**. It is also well placed to facilitate collaborations between government and non-government volunteer stakeholders, as it did in the consultation to develop a national volunteering policy. From the volunteers' perspective, the association with UNV attracted respect and co-operation which enabled them to do their jobs more effectively.

EFFECTIVENESS



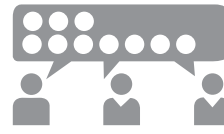
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The placement of volunteers was intended to contribute to the programme outcome on communities and organisations participating actively in local governance processes. LGCDP-I was seen as effective in this, establishing 31,200 Ward Citizen Forums and more than 3,500 Citizen Awareness Centres.



CAPACITY BUILDING

The volunteers, in their positions of Assistant District Facilitators and Assistant Municipal Facilitators, played a direct role in the training and capacity building of a total of 3,786 social mobilizers, who were employed by Local Service Providers and were responsible for building and sustaining these local level bodies.



ENHANCED CAPACITY

Volunteers also contributed to the skills pool and to capacity within the District Development Committee offices; some brought and transferred skills such as report and project proposal writing or knowledge in geographic information systems.



MANAGING COMPLEXITY

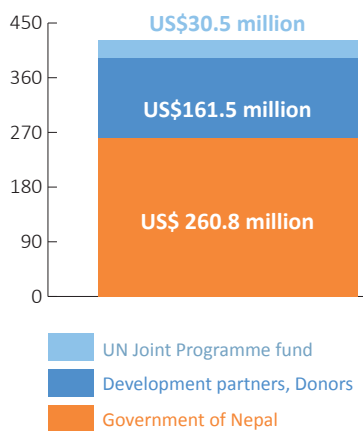
Several partnerships were involved in the initiative, including with UNDP and MoFALD, but especially with NDVS where a positive and fruitful relationship was established, with substantial productive communication. Given the complex context, at times the lines of accountability for the volunteers were complicated, and the responsibility considerable.

EFFICIENCY

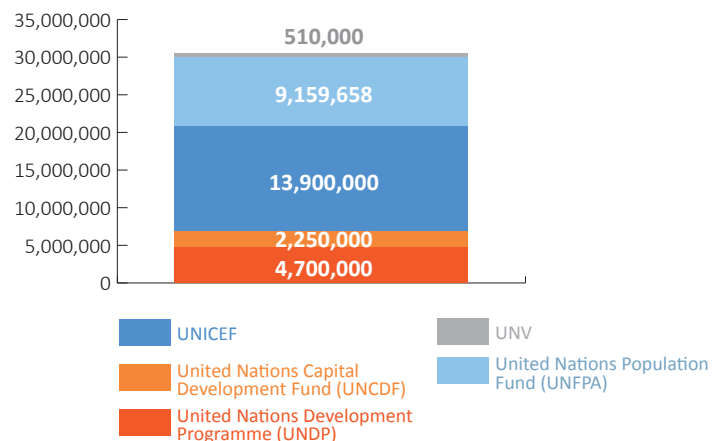
UNV's relatively modest contribution to the LGCDP-I was seen to have played a significant role in supporting progress towards the outcome that communities and organisations participate in local governance processes. Financially, the contribution represented 1.7% of the UN Joint Programme (UNJP) contribution, and 0.12 % of the overall LGCDP budget.

In that sense, it represents *good value for money* in the context of a multi-million dollar programme with national coverage.

Total budget LGCDP:
US\$422.3 million



Contributions to the UN Joint Programme fund
Total: 30,519,658



The *cost per person* of NDVS volunteers supported by UNV was *higher* than regular NDVS volunteers. At the same time, at district level, UNV-supported NDVS volunteers were also seen as playing a significantly different and *more effective role* than the equivalent non-technical volunteers deployed by NDVS without UNV support.

IMPACT AND RESULTS



VOLUNTEERS

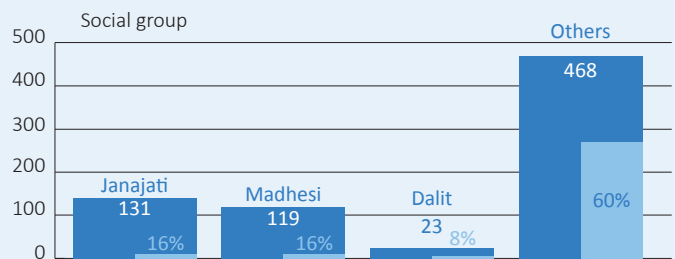
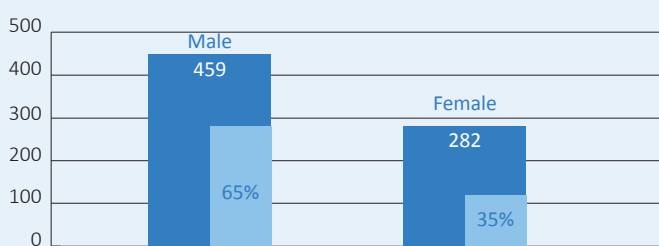
- The initiative offered a highly valued opportunity for young and usually inexperienced, though well-educated, people to gain experience and insight into district level government functioning and governance in general.
- Most volunteers met had gone on to find employment at increasing levels of responsibility.

COMMUNITY BENEFICIARIES

- The increased capacity in human resources at local level as a result of the volunteer presence meant that the benefit here was magnified as well as sustained beyond the lifespan of the project.
- While it is difficult to distinguish the local level changes that are attributable to volunteer work, some have been acknowledged, such as the impact on the work of Social Mobilizers, whose duties were to motivate participation in development planning at community level, and particularly among the most marginalised.

- Capacity building inputs resulted, such as the resource centre, the Volunteer Information Management System (VIMS),
- Improved management practice and tools available, like the database developed for the VIMS.

- A Draft National Policy for Volunteerism has been successfully articulated with UNV support to the consultation process and submitted for review and sanction.



■ LGCDP volunteers ■ volunteers supported by UNV

Source: NDVS 2011

Unexpected result

A different mechanism for volunteer deployment has been envisioned for the UNV component of LGCDP-II, beginning in January 2014. This new proposal places 133 ICT volunteers sourced and recruited directly from the Tribhuvan University at district level for ICT capacity building.

EFFECTIVENESS

The evaluation study found evidence that some results of the volunteer scheme have been sustained, such as the capacity building and the benefits to the volunteers themselves. At the same time, some risks to sustainability remain.

Some key elements of UNV's contribution were evident at the time of the evaluation study, nearly 18 months after the end of the volunteers' contracts. In particular:

Risks to sustainability include:



- The capacity built in the form of Social Mobilizers continues to play a key role in the social and governance change processes at community level.
- The capacity building achieved in Local Service Providers has been significant, sustained and resourceful.
- The volunteer experience has a positive influence on the career paths of the ex-volunteers.

- Potentially undermining the role of NDVS, given the strategy of LGCDP-II to deploy ICT volunteers via Tribhuvan University rather than through the existing national scheme of NDVS.
- Ensuring the continuity of the work done by Local Service Providers and Social Mobilizers after the end of the programme.



The volunteer scheme demonstrated that with good management and a specific job description, non-technical volunteers could bring about very fruitful results. This was an important picture to add to the volunteering landscape. Moreover, emphasising social science skills acknowledges that poverty reduction is not just a technical exercise, but one that involves addressing social inequalities and hierarchies as much as income disparities.

GOOD PRACTICE



Targeting disadvantaged groups

Volunteer recruitment included an emphasis on inclusion of disadvantaged groups including women, ethnic groups and Dalits. Moreover, study informants gave credence to the recruitment process, considering it objective and unbiased.

Placement of non-technical volunteers

The UNV-NDVS volunteer scheme successfully placed 'non-technical' volunteers in a situation in which technical volunteers are given much more credence. Bringing in this profile of actor was a bold step, and a necessary one, given the complexity of social change envisioned by the LGCDP.

UNV is extremely grateful for the outstanding support received from UN Online Volunteers in designing some of the infographics for this knowledge product.