

EMPOWERING THE EXCLUDED: NEPAL'S CIVIL SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT REPORT OF SDGs IMPLEMENTATION



CSOs' VNR Report 2024



NGO Federation of Nepal
(Secretariat of Nepal SDGs Forum)

CSOs' VNR Report 2024

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We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the various CSOs, federations, alliances, networks, and coalitions that played a crucial role in gathering data, conducting consultations, and providing invaluable insights and recommendations. Special thanks are due to the NGO Federation of Nepal and the Nepal SDG Forum for their leadership and coordination throughout this process.

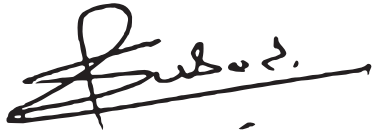
We are deeply grateful to the key stakeholders, including representatives from marginalized and vulnerable populations such as the Dalit community, persons with disabilities, ethnic minority groups (Raji, Mushahar etc), women, youth, Dalit Farmers, Muslim Women Groups, and the LGBTIQ+ community. Your voices and perspectives have been instrumental in ensuring that this report truly reflects the principle of 'Leave No One Behind.'

Our gratitude also goes to the various partner organizations that provided data, analysis, and support. This includes VSO Nepal, World Vision International Nepal, FORUS, Action for Sustainable Development, the Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN), Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN), National Campaign for Education (NCE Nepal) /Education Watch Group, Food-first Information and Action Network Nepal (FIAN), NACG Nepal, Consortium Nepal, Youth Initiative, Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal, and the National Farmers Group Federation. Your contributions have significantly enriched the review process.

We acknowledge the valuable support and facilitation provided by government agencies, particularly the National Planning Commission, as well as the active participation of UN agencies, parliamentarians, media, academia, and researchers. Your collaboration has been essential in fostering a conducive environment for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Subedi', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Ram Prasad Subedi

President

NGO Federation of Nepal

ABBREVIATIONS

BBC:	Beyond Beijing Committee
CCA:	Climate Change Adaptation
CSO:	Civil Society Organization
DRR:	Disaster Risk Reduction
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
INGO:	International Non-Governmental Organization
LGBTIQ+:	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer+
NPC:	National Planning Commission
SDG:	Sustainable Development Goal
VNR:	Voluntary National Review
YAN:	Youth Advocacy Nepal

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Nepal play a critical role in advocating for the rights and needs of marginalized communities. They ensure that grassroots voices are included in the national discourse on sustainable development. This Voluntary National Review (VNR) report, often referred to as the 'spotlight report' or 'citizen's report,' provides an alternative perspective and adds value on Nepal's progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It emphasizes the principle of 'Leave No One Behind' by highlighting the progress, learning, gaps and challenges faced by the most vulnerable populations.

The civil society report complements the government's VNR by offering recommendations and fostering an environment conducive to the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In Nepal, this collaborative effort includes input from various CSOs, federations, alliances, networks, and coalitions. The NGO Federation of Nepal and the Nepal SDGs Forum have been instrumental in facilitating this process through extensive consultations at district, provincial, and national levels.

Despite limited resources, the VNR process has focused on qualitative data, ensuring the inclusion of marginalized voices and promote citizen generated data for informing way forward to achieved SDG targets. Key consultations involved groups representing the Dalit community, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities (Raji, Mushahar etc), women, Muslim Women Groups, Women Farmers, youth, and the LGBTIQ+ community. These efforts were supported by partners such as VSO and the Association of International NGOs in Nepal.

The review targets Eight specific SDGs: No Poverty, Zero Hunger, Quality Education, Gender Equality, Reduced Inequalities, Climate Action, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, and Partnerships for the Goals. It assesses Nepal's progress, identifies challenges, and suggests strategies for advancement. The report highlights areas such as gender equality, climate action, education, and health, pointing out both achievements and ongoing issues.

Notable progress includes some advancements towards increased gender inclusivity in education and government, as well as improvements in educational infrastructure and better access to healthcare. However, many socio-economic structural barriers, including entrenched harmful social norms and practices, remain unaddressed within education. Moreover, there is evidence of corporate capture in the health system, resulting in marginalized groups facing financial barriers to accessing quality healthcare. Furthermore, these groups often do not receive timely consideration from the government in addressing their healthcare needs. However, significant challenges remain, such as caste-based discrimination, inadequate infrastructure for people with disabilities, and insufficient disaster preparedness for vulnerable groups.

The report underscores the need for strengthened government accountability, enhanced public spending on education, and the development of robust data systems to track SDG progress. It also calls for increased inclusivity, particularly for marginalized communities, in decision-making processes. Further, equality based on gender, caste, ethnicity, disability, religion, language, geography, poverty among others need more attention.

This CSO-led review advocates for meaningful partnerships between the state, civil society, and the private sector to achieve the SDGs. It recommends stronger collaboration at the local government level including at sub-national level and emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in driving sustainable development.

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BACKGROUND

Civil Society Organizations play a pivotal role in engaging with grassroots communities, ensuring that the voices of the most marginalized are heard and represented. In the context of the SDGs, the VNR process provides a critical platform to reflect on a country's progress, identify gaps, and address challenges in achieving these goals. The CSOs' report, also known as the 'spotlight report' or 'citizen's report,' is instrumental in ensuring the principle of 'Leave No One Behind' is upheld by highlighting the progress, learning, needs and concerns of marginalized populations.

The civil society report serves several crucial functions. It offers recommendations, complements the government's VNR, and suggests a conducive environment for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda. This collaborative effort supports the government in its national planning and monitoring framework, ensuring a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to development.

In Nepal, this report offers a critical and alternative perspective on the implementation of the SDGs, complementing the official VNR. This independent assessment provides specific insights into areas where the government VNR may lack depth or overlook critical concerns. It highlights nuanced aspects of SDG implementation, such as socio-economic structural issues, harmful social norms, and corporate capture in healthcare and education, which are often not adequately addressed in the official report. This alternative perspective enriches the discourse by offering a more comprehensive view of progress, challenges, and areas requiring urgent attention beyond the government's official assessment. This report is vital in promoting government accountability and ensuring that the development commitments made to citizens are fulfilled, thus contributing significantly to good governance. Civil society acts as a bridge, facilitating the monitoring and review processes of the SDGs at local, provincial, and national levels. The production of the civil society SDG spotlight report has been a collaborative effort, involving a wide array of stakeholders. Various CSOs, federations, alliances, networks, and coalitions contributed their brief reports, analyses, and recommendations. The NGO Federation of Nepal and Nepal SDG Forum (CSO national platform) played a central role in this process. They conducted numerous district and provincial-level consultations, engaging key stakeholders who shared their issues, challenges, and suggestions for advancing the SDGs and the recommendations received from these various consultations are included in the main spotlight report coordinated by Nepal SDG Forum

To gather comprehensive input, the NGO Federation of Nepal mobilized its district branches and provincial committees for several rounds of discussions and consultations. At the central level, a multi-stakeholder CSO conference was organized, facilitated by government agencies, particularly the National Planning Commission, with participation from UN agencies, parliamentarians, INGOs, media, academia, and researchers.

The Government of Nepal has led the development of the 3rd VNR, continuing its practice of reviewing progress against established baselines. Recognizing the value of CSO engagement, the government has actively encouraged and involved civil society in this process. The partnership

between the government and CSOs exemplifies a shared commitment to achieving the SDGs and ensuring that development benefits all segments of society.

Further emphasizing the inclusive nature of this process, the civil society report delves into specific areas such as gender equality, climate action, education, and health, highlighting both achievements and areas needing attention. By doing so, the report not only underscores the importance of CSO involvement in tracking and advocating for progress but also reinforces the necessity of multi-stakeholder engagement in driving sustainable development. This approach ensures that the development agenda is holistic and representative of the diverse needs of the population, fostering an environment where all citizens can thrive to attain quality lives and contribute to the nation's progress.

METHODOLOGY

The collection of information for this CSOs' VNR involved a comprehensive and inclusive approach, engaging a diverse range of stakeholders to ensure a holistic representation of perspectives and issues. Information was collected adopting citizens data generation framework targeting six key groups representing the most marginalized and vulnerable populations in Nepal, including the Dalit community (Dalit NGO Federation), persons with disabilities (National Federation of the Disabled-Nepal (NFD-NEPAL), ethnic minority groups (Raji, Mushahar), women including Muslim Women groups, youth, and the LGBTIQ+ community (Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities Nepal). Additionally, three provincial level consultations were conducted in Madhesh Province, Karnali Province, and Sudurpaschim Province, providing a platform for regional stakeholders to share their unique challenges and perspectives on SDG implementation.

In addition to these consultations, data was gathered from various partner organizations, including VSO, the Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN), Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN), Youth Initiative, Beyond Beijing Committee Nepal (BBC), and the National Farmers Group Federation. These organizations contributed valuable data and analysis based on their specific areas of focus and expertise, enriching the overall review process.

A variety of data collection methods were employed to ensure a comprehensive and accurate collection of information. A thorough desk review of existing literature, reports, and documents related to SDG implementation in Nepal provided a solid foundation of existing knowledge and context. Focus group discussions (FGDs) with representatives from the key groups provided qualitative insights into their specific challenges and experiences, capturing the nuanced perspectives of marginalized populations. Targeted consultations with key thematic groups focused on specific SDG areas such as health, education, gender equality, and climate action, gathering detailed information on sector-specific issues and potential solutions.

Finally, an online survey using a scorecard approach allowed participants to rate and provide feedback on various aspects of SDG implementation. This method facilitated the collection of

quantitative data and enabled broader participation, including from those unable to attend in-person consultations. This multi-faceted methodology ensured that the CSOs' Voluntary National Review was based on robust and comprehensive data collection, reflecting a thorough and inclusive assessment of Nepal's progress towards the SDGs. This approach highlights both achievements and challenges while ensuring that the voices of marginalized and vulnerable populations are heard, aligning with the principle of 'Leave No One Behind.'

SCOPE OF THE VNR PROCESS

Due to limited resources of CSOs, including time, funding, and human resources, the VNR process could not capture the voices of all representatives of key groups across all geographical areas. Despite these constraints, the report focused primarily on qualitative information and In-depth review of following goals: **Goal 1** - end poverty in all its forms everywhere; **Goal 2** - end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture; **Goal 13** - take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts; **Goal 16** - promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels; and **Goal 17** -strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

To ensuring that the voices of the people were incorporated, in-depth analysis of LNOB principles and agenda in other goals.

The methodology emphasized gathering detailed and nuanced insights from the most marginalized and vulnerable populations, even though it could not comprehensively cover every geographic region. This approach aimed to provide a meaningful and representative assessment of the issues faced by these groups, aligning with the principle of 'Leave No One Behind.'

THE CONTEXT

Nepal's commitment to the SDGs is evident through its integration into national planning frameworks, such as the fifteenth five-year plan, which aligns closely with these global targets. However, the implementation journey is fraught with challenges that require careful consideration. A primary hurdle is the capacity of governmental institutions at all levels. While the NPC and its thematic committees provide strategic oversight, many local governments lack the necessary human resources, technical expertise, and financial capabilities including commitment to translate SDG aspirations into actionable initiatives on the ground. This capacity deficit hampers the effective delivery of services and sustainable development programs, undermining the broader national goals.

Governance and coordination pose another critical challenge. Despite the establishment of coordinating bodies like the SDG Steering Committee led by the Prime Minister and the NPC's Implementation Committees, coordination gaps persist among different government agencies and

levels. Fragmentation in decision-making processes and overlapping responsibilities often lead to inefficiencies and delays in SDG implementation. Strengthening governance frameworks such as strengthening multi-stakeholder coordination and partnership including government, civil society and private sectors to enhance collaboration, streamline responsibilities, and clarify accountability is essential to overcoming these challenges.

Data availability and quality remain significant barriers to effective SDG monitoring and evaluation in Nepal. While efforts have been made to improve statistical capacity, gaps in data collection, analysis, and dissemination persist, particularly at the sub-national level. Inadequate data hinders evidence-based policymaking and resource allocation, making it difficult to accurately assess progress towards SDG targets and prioritize interventions where they are most needed. Government should accept citizen generated data mostly led by civil society organizations as part of data ecosystem. Government and civil society should collaborate in adopting commonly agreed citizen generated data frameworks aligning with global frameworks like Copenhagen Citizen Generated Data Framework.

Inclusive development is another critical area of concern. Despite constitutional provisions promoting equality and inclusion, marginalized and vulnerable populations continue to face barriers in accessing essential services and opportunities. Addressing disparities based on gender, ethnicity, geography, and socio-economic status requires targeted policies and programs that ensure all segments of society benefit equitably from development initiatives. State should be open to replicate several models adapted by CSOs. Enhancing the inclusivity of SDG efforts is crucial to achieving sustainable and equitable outcomes across Nepal.

Environmental sustainability presents a pressing challenge as well. Nepal's natural environment faces threats such as deforestation, land degradation, and climate change impacts. Balancing economic development with environmental conservation requires robust policies and investments in sustainable practices. Integrating environmental considerations into development planning and promoting green technologies are essential steps towards ensuring long-term environmental health and resilience.

Furthermore, while Nepal has made commendable progress in integrating the SDGs into its national agenda, significant challenges remain. Addressing capacity gaps, enhancing governance and coordination mechanisms, improving data quality, promoting inclusive development, and advancing environmental sustainability are critical steps towards achieving the SDGs effectively and inclusively in Nepal. Overcoming these challenges will require sustained commitment, collaboration among stakeholders, and innovative approaches to ensure that no one is left behind in the country's development journey.

This year, the review focused on eight specific SDGs:

Goal 1: No Poverty

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Goal 4: Quality Education

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Goal 10: Reduced Inequality

Goal 13: Climate Action

Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals

This targeted review assesses Nepal's progress, identifies challenges, and outlines strategies for further advancement, demonstrating the country's ongoing commitment to achieving these goals and contributing to global sustainable development.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Nepal has embraced the principle of 'Leaving No One Behind' (LNOB) as central to its commitment to achieving the SDGs. However our learnings from the delivery of nine years of SDGs, delivery of the SDGs failed to hold transformative promise of LNOB. This is due to weak accountability processes and mechanisms of SDGs, unclear SDGs targets and indicators on LNOB at all levels, and weak understanding and inadequate support to materialize LNOB agenda and principle in practice. The 'Leave No One Behind (LNOB)' agenda, especially ensuring the rights of the most marginalised groups, is a key principle and a transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda of sustainable development. Furthermore, challenging discrimination, exclusion, power imbalances & exploitation, tackling poverty and injustice, amplifying power of voiceless, and promoting rights of marginalized groups for just and sustainable society are critical to realise LNOB in practice.

The Constitution of Nepal explicitly guarantees the inclusion of marginalized and backward communities, striving to establish an egalitarian society where all citizens enjoy equal opportunities and rights. Despite these constitutional safeguards, marginalized groups such as rural women, including Muslim women, people with disabilities, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, and Dalits, including Mushahar and Raji communities, continue to encounter significant obstacles in accessing state services and achieving equality.

The current governmental structures often fail to adequately cater to these groups, perpetuating barriers that hinder their full participation in development initiatives and utilization of public services. Addressing these challenges requires robust enforcement of policies aimed at promoting inclusion and equality. State should also strengthen mechanisms of empowerment of marginalized communities so that they are able to ensure their meaningful enagement in decision making at different levels. This entails ensuring effective implementation of laws and regulations, alongside establishing rigorous monitoring mechanisms including rigorous monitoirng mechanisms including citizen led monitoring to track progress and hold institutions accountable.

To enhance inclusivity, targeted strategies are essential. This includes capacity building for government officials to better understand and address the specific needs of marginalized populations, enhancing the accessibility of public services, and fostering greater representation of these groups in decision-making processes. Moreover, establishing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks will be crucial for assessing achievements, identifying gaps, and ensuring that the LNOB principle is effectively integrated into Nepal's development agenda.

The LNOB principle is not just a peripheral concern, but a transformative promise embedded within the 2030 Agenda for SDGs. It challenges entrenched social structures and norms that perpetuate marginalization and exclusion, aiming to reduce inequalities and vulnerabilities across all sectors of society. However, Nepal faces persistent challenges in dismantling these barriers, including harmful social norms and gender inequalities, which continue to impede progress towards inclusive development. Furthermore, there is a notable absence of perspectives from CSOs in this discourse, whose insights and advocacy are crucial for shaping inclusive policies and practices.

While Nepal has taken commendable steps towards integrating LNOB principles into its policies, Nepal is very poor in taking concrete steps and actions towards integrating LNOB principles and agenda into practice. Significant efforts are needed to overcome existing barriers and ensure that marginalized communities benefit equitably from development initiatives. Strengthening partnerships with CSOs and intensifying efforts to challenge discriminatory practices are imperative to realize the full potential of LNOB and achieve sustainable and inclusive development in Nepal.

THE STATUS OF SDGs IMPLEMENTATION SINCE 2020

Nepal has made significant strides in implementing the SDGs since 2020, with notable progress in several key areas. Gender inclusivity has been on the rise in both government and the private sector. Although there have been no specific reports of sexual, verbal, or physical violence against women in certain communities (In Nepal, 27% of women have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their husband/intimate partner. Only 28% of GBV survivors sought help to stop the violence. (Demographic Health Survey, 2022)., Dalit women and girls remain vulnerable to caste-based prejudice. Despite a reduction in overt discrimination, subtle and unreported instances persist, especially in the Terai region, where caste-based biases continue to affect social interactions and access to resources.¹

In the field of education, Nepal has achieved substantial progress towards SDG 4, which focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education. Gender parity has been attained at the primary level and is nearing achievement at the secondary level, underscoring the country's commitment to inclusive education. Infrastructure improvements are evident, with internet access in schools increasing from 3.9% in 2015 to 52.8% in 2022, reflecting a strong national commitment to enhancing educational resources.²

¹ Pradhan, B. (2020). Caste-Based Discrimination in Nepal: A Persistent Challenge. *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies*, 6(2), 34-52.

² Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. (2022). *Educational Statistics of Nepal 2022*. Kathmandu: Ministry

Agriculture remains the primary occupation for both men and women, particularly in the Terai region and among the Muslim community, where men typically control financial resources. Despite this, wage equality is present. The formulation of agriculture and nutrition policies from national to local levels is promising. The introduction of Farmers' Identification and Categorization (FID) based Identity Cards has empowered marginalized farmers to claim rights and subsidies from the government and other programs.³ However, the localization of right to food policies including implementation of FID is limited at local government level.

Access to clean water and healthcare has also improved. Households have benefitted from hand pumps, and nearby health posts provide essential medical services. There is a notable preference among women for hospital deliveries, indicating increased awareness of professional medical care benefits. Additionally, skilled birth attendants are available in community health centers, contributing to better maternal health outcomes.⁴

Nepal's commitment to the SDGs is further evidenced by its strategic policy documents, including the 15th Development Plan and the 25-Year Long-Term Vision 2100. The SDG Status and Roadmap 2026-2030 outlines the country's comprehensive approach to sustainable development. SDG 13, which addresses climate action, has seen extensive collaboration among the government, CSOs, and the private sector. CSOs are instrumental in educating communities about climate change, building capacity for climate resilience, and advocating for climate-responsive policies.⁵

Nepal's progress towards achieving SDG 16, which focuses on promoting peace, justice, and strong institutions, has been slow and inconsistent. While federalism has brought opportunities for inclusive governance, overlapping responsibilities, insufficient resources, and inadequate staffing at the provincial and local levels have hindered effective implementation. Despite constitutional guarantees of civil liberties, CSOs face bureaucratic barriers and restrictive measures that limit their advocacy and participation in governance processes. Political instability, corruption, and gaps in data collection further challenge SDG-16 efforts, contributing to stagnation. Additionally, a lack of understanding of SDGs among local officials and resource constraints exacerbate these challenges. Although CSOs are playing a vital role in advocating for accountability and social inclusion, substantial work is needed to address these barriers to meet the 2030 targets for SDG-16.⁶

CSOs have also partnered with the Ministry of Forests and Environment and UN agencies to promote sustainable mountain development. In 2022, a series of dialogues highlighted Nepal's mountain agenda and facilitated knowledge exchange among countries in the Hindu-Kush Himalaya region.

of Education.

³ Agriculture Development Strategy. (2020). Farmers' Identification and Categorization based Identity Card Implementation Report. Kathmandu: Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development.

⁴ Health Sector Strategy. (2020). National Health Sector Strategy Implementation Plan 2020-2025. Kathmandu: Ministry of Health and Population.

⁵ National Planning Commission. (2021). SDG Status and Roadmap 2026-2030. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.

⁶ Khadka, K. (2024). Brief Report on SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institution). Draft report submitted to NGO Federation Nepal.

This initiative aimed to advance sustainable mountain development and address challenges faced by mountain communities.⁷

Development partners have played a crucial role in supporting Nepal's SDG efforts, particularly in promoting social inclusion. Their projects focus on empowering vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities, through social protection schemes, vocational training, and disaster preparedness plans. These efforts ensure meaningful participation of marginalized populations in development processes.⁸

Nepal's CSOs have been pivotal in bridging gaps between policy formulation and on-the-ground implementation of the SDGs. Their grassroots presence allows them to engage directly with communities, providing a platform for marginalized voices, particularly Dalit women and girls, to be heard. CSOs actively monitor and report instances of subtle discrimination that might not be captured in official reports, thereby ensuring that issues like caste-based prejudices are addressed comprehensively. Through targeted advocacy and community programs, they work towards fostering an inclusive environment where every individual can access resources and opportunities equitably. CSOs should be provided more enabling environment for ensuring these unheard voices are heard and counted for people responsive planning and policy reforms.

Furthermore, CSOs have significantly contributed to advancing SDG 4 by complementing government efforts in the education sector. They have initiated various programs to support digital literacy and infrastructure development in schools, particularly in rural areas. By providing training for teachers and educational materials, CSOs help ensure that quality education is accessible to all children, regardless of their socioeconomic background. Their involvement in creating safe learning environments and advocating for child-friendly policies underscores their commitment to achieving inclusive and equitable education in Nepal. Through these concerted efforts, CSOs not only enhance educational outcomes but also empower communities to participate more actively in their own development.

We have also used the people's score card survey online to get the insights of diverse individuals on their experiences on what is working or not in SDGs.

The highest scoring SDGs are:

Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy - 15%

Goal 3: Good Health and Well Being - 13%

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities - 13%, and

Goal 15: Life on Land - 13%

⁷ Mountain Partnership Secretariat. (2022). Sustainable Mountain Development in Nepal: A Year of Dialogue. Rome: FAO.

⁸ UNDP. (2022). Empowering Vulnerable Groups through Social Inclusion Projects in Nepal. New York: United Nations Development Programme.

The lowest scoring SDGs are:

Goal 1: No poverty - 8%

Goal 2: Zero Hunger - 8%, and

Goal 10: Reduces Inequalities - 10%

CHALLENGES AND GAPS IN SDG IMPLEMENTATION

During our field visits across various provinces of Nepal, we observed numerous challenges in implementing the SDGs. These challenges span climate action, social inclusion, infrastructure, disaster preparedness, and governance, significantly impeding the country's progress towards sustainable and inclusive development.

Being disable friendly isn't about the physical infrastructures, it's also about the mentality too.

– A consultation participants from Madhesh Province.

Climate Change and Environmental Degradation: One of the most pressing issues observed during our visits was the impact of rising temperatures on natural resources. Degradation of water, forest, and land resources is evident, posing severe future risks. The effects of climate change are increasingly visible, with immediate action required to address these issues. Despite ongoing efforts in climate action, the frequent climate-induced disasters and epidemics have exacerbated the vulnerabilities of poor and marginalized populations with a deeper differential impact on the vulnerable population like women, Dalits, children's. The existing disaster risk reduction (DRR) and climate change adaptation (CCA) programs are insufficient, highlighting the need for targeted development interventions in these areas.

Social Inclusion and Rights Advocacy:

Throughout our field visits, it was evident that promises from political leaders have not been translated into significant actions for advocating the rights of LGBTQI individuals, people with disabilities, and Dalits. These communities often face poor treatment and lack access to government benefits. The provincial government's plans frequently do not align with local problems, obstructing SDG achievement. The socially excluded section of the society has expressed

"We hear promises from politicians about supporting LGBTQI rights, but nothing substantial has been done," says a respondent, an LGBTQI activist. "Many in our community struggle to access basic government benefits and face discrimination daily. The provincial government's plans often overlook our real issues, making it hard to achieve the SDGs."

A school-teacher and advocate for people with disabilities highlights the challenges in educational infrastructure. "Schools claim to be accessible, but the ramps are more suited for bikes than wheelchairs. Inside, facilities like toilets remain inaccessible, forcing students with disabilities to limit their food and water intake to avoid using them. This shows a severe lack of understanding and inclusivity in our society."

that they still are the least prioritized in any social and economic opportunities and still favoritism to the elites prevalent. There is an urgent need for targeted interventions, increased awareness,

and inclusive policies for these groups. Exclusion from economic opportunities hinders progress towards SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

Social exclusion such as socioeconomic barriers, religious issues, structural issues, identity, dignity, power, indigeneity, internal coloniality of power, knowledge and resources, caste versus nationality, reproduction of inequality, injustice, harmful social norms should be addressed by the government.

Infrastructure and Accessibility: Access to essential facilities such as schools, healthcare centers, markets, and banks remains inadequate and not disability friendly. During our visits to various schools, we observed that ramps were often more suitable for bikes than for individuals with disabilities. Internal facilities, such as toilets, were also inaccessible, forcing students with disabilities to limit their intake of food and water to avoid using unsuitable restrooms. This underscores the need for both physical infrastructure improvements and changes in societal attitudes towards inclusivity. There are also narratives gathered that school age children having disability have limited opportunities for higher studies as their parents still are not open to send them out of town. Effective design modifications are essential to create disability-friendly environments, including providing extra space in classrooms and toilets and establishing separate pathways for wheelchair users. Additionally, there is a need for teacher training to adopt inclusive teaching methods tailored to different types of disabilities.

Disaster Preparedness and Response: The lack of targeted disaster preparedness and response for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and the LGBTQI community, was a recurring theme during our field visits. These groups are often excluded during rescue and relief operations, with no evidence of targeted disaster planning for them. There is also a significant gap in climate-related capacity-building programs for these groups. For instance, many transgender individuals we met use silicone in their bodies, which is affected by environmental temperature changes due to climate change. This underscores the need for specific training and preparedness measures for these vulnerable groups. Likewise, as an integrated approach for Climate and Disaster Resilience mainstreaming, Resilience planning should be prioritized in cross thematic areas like in education system, in health system and so on.

Governance and Institutional Capacity: The transition from a unitary to a federal system of governance has been fraught with challenges. Many laws are yet to be formulated and enacted, and institutional arrangements at all government levels remain incomplete. We observed substantial overlaps, duplications, and ambiguities among government tiers. Although the Nepalese constitution and prevailing laws guarantee freedom of speech and press, there have been numerous allegations of government attempts to threaten journalists and restrict media freedom. The criminalization of normal media activity has led to increased self-censorship among rights activists, including the media. There should be more civil society engagement and promotion of active citizens to raise voice against issues of governance and strengthen citizen led monitoring to hold duty bearers to account. Civil Society Organizations should also strengthen their own mechanisms of internal good governance and inclusive representation.

Challenges and Gaps in the Implementation of SDG 16 in Nepal: The implementation of Goal 16 in Nepal faces significant challenges and gaps, hindering progress toward promoting peaceful, just, and inclusive societies. Political instability, corruption, and weak institutional frameworks undermine governance and erode public trust, preventing meaningful advancement. Additionally, there is a critical lack of understanding among local government officials regarding the SDGs, particularly SDG-16, which limits effective planning and localization. Outdated and insufficient data further impedes monitoring and accountability efforts, making it difficult to assess progress and tailor interventions. Resource constraints, including an estimated NRs 600 billion gap, limit the capacity to implement necessary programs. Coordination challenges at the provincial level, exacerbated by inconsistent regulations and bureaucratic inefficiencies, compound these issues. The CSOs also face regulatory barriers, lack of government support, and difficulties in holding authorities accountable. Without addressing these gaps and challenges, the likelihood of meeting the 2030 targets remains uncertain.

Caste-Based Discrimination: Despite efforts to curb caste-based discrimination, still it remains in the country. During our visits, we found that the government struggles to provide accurate data on the Dalit population and their poverty levels. Benefits and services intended for Dalits are often taken by non-Dalits, and the National Dalit Commission needs more deliberate efforts ineffective in advocating for Dalit rights. Corruption and a lack of targeted programs exacerbate the struggles faced by the Dalit community, and discrimination largely goes unreported due to systemic barriers and a lack of awareness about their rights.

Economic and Livelihood Challenges for Vulnerable Groups: Members of the LGBTQI community face significant barriers in sustaining livelihoods due to discrimination based on their sexual orientation. This exclusion limits their access to services and employment opportunities, hindering progress toward achieving full and productive employment and decent work, essential for SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). During the COVID-19 pandemic, these groups suffered disproportionately, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support their economic justice and inclusion.

Educational Barriers and Discrimination: Despite high priority for the education of disabled children, discriminatory treatment from peers and teachers is common. Schools we visited often lacked necessary infrastructure and materials to support disabled students. Even when ramps were available, they were frequently inadequate. Internal facilities like toilets were not accessible, reflecting a broader issue that inclusivity goes beyond physical infrastructure. Policies and programs are needed to create a more inclusive educational environment for LGBTQI students. Schools should be better equipped to support LGBTQI students by implementing anti-discrimination policies and providing sensitivity training for teachers and staff. There should be transformation of harmful social norms and practices that creates barriers in accessing quality education by girls, children with Disability and other marginalized children. Gender responsive and accountable school governance should be promoted by strengthening existing mechanisms like Girls Inclusive Education Network.

Health and Well-being: Improvements in access to clean water were observed, with households having hand pumps but still lack the access to clean tap water sources and communities benefiting from nearby health posts. However, health centers need to be more accessible and inclusive. Youth responsive and resilient health services should be promoted. Most women prefer hospital deliveries, indicating awareness of professional medical care benefits, but there is still a need for skilled birth attendants in community health centers to support safe deliveries. Additionally, the healthcare needs of LGBTQI individuals, particularly transgender individuals, require specific attention due to their unique vulnerabilities related to climate change impacts on their bodies.

Education and Skill Development: Limited education beyond grade 10 and scarce skill development opportunities hinder community progress. Fair allocation of training resources is vital for community advancement.

Out of the 36,032 schools in Nepal, 75.9 percent are community schools and only 3% are disability-friendly in those community schools. The net enrolment rate has been increased as per 2019/20 to 2021/22. The net enrolment rate in grade 1-5 has been increased from 97.1 % to 97.4 %, grade 6-8 has been increased from 93.4 % to 94.7 % and grade 9-12 has been increased from 47.6 to 51.2 %⁹.

Unemployment and Economic Stability: High unemployment rates demand targeted skill development initiatives, particularly empowering women through vocational courses like sewing.

Natural Disasters: Vulnerability to floods and heat waves necessitates improved disaster preparedness and response strategies for community safety.

Cultural Practices: The persistent dowry system imposes financial strains on families. Addressing it through education and economic support can alleviate its impact on the community.

Employment: Migration to India for work highlights the dearth of local employment opportunities, requiring focused efforts to create sustainable jobs.

Data Collection and Analysis: One of the primary challenges in implementing the SDGs in Nepal is the lack of adequate data and reliable statistics to inform decision-making processes. The absence of disaggregated data, particularly by gender, caste, ethnicity, and geographic location, hampers the ability to identify and address the specific needs of diverse communities. This gap in data collection and analysis leads to an incomplete understanding of the progress and setbacks in achieving the SDGs, making it difficult to tailor interventions effectively.

Social and Economic Inequalities: Persistent social and economic inequalities significantly hinder the inclusive implementation of the SDGs. Marginalized groups such as Dalits, indigenous peoples, women, and persons with disabilities often face systemic barriers that limit their access to resources and opportunities. These groups continue to experience discrimination and exclusion, which undermines their ability to benefit from development initiatives. Efforts to promote social

⁹ Economic Survey- 2022/23, Government of Nepal, Ministry of Finance, Singh Durbar, Kathmandu, 2023

mobilization and citizen participation need to be intensified to ensure that the voices of these communities are heard, and their rights are upheld.

Accountability and Transparency: There is a need for more robust mechanisms to ensure accountability and transparency in the execution of SDG-related projects. Localization of SDG frameworks with active citizens engagement should be promoted. The lack of effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks further exacerbates the challenge, as it becomes difficult to track progress and make necessary adjustments in real-time. Strengthening these frameworks is crucial to ensure that development efforts are on the right track and that resources are used efficiently.

Financial Constraints and Capacity Building: Financial constraints and limited capacity at both the national and local levels pose significant obstacles to the implementation of the SDGs. Many local governments lack the technical expertise and financial resources required to design and implement sustainable development programs. This is particularly evident in rural and remote areas, where infrastructure and service delivery are often inadequate. Enhancing the capacity of local governments and ensuring sufficient funding is essential for the successful execution of SDG initiatives.

Coordination Among Stakeholders: The coordination between various stakeholders, including government agencies, CSOs, and the private sector, needs to be strengthened to ensure a cohesive approach to achieving the SDGs. Fragmented efforts and lack of collaboration can lead to inefficiencies and duplication of efforts. Establishing effective communication channels and partnerships is vital for leveraging the strengths and resources of all stakeholders involved in the SDG implementation process.

Political Stability and Policy Continuity: The ongoing political instability and frequent changes in government leadership in Nepal further complicate the consistent and effective implementation of the SDGs. Policy continuity is often disrupted, leading to delays and inconsistencies in development efforts. Ensuring political stability and maintaining a long-term vision for sustainable development are critical for achieving the SDGs.

Innovative Approaches: There is a critical need for innovative approaches that can address the complex and interlinked issues of poverty, inequality, and exclusion. Traditional methods have often fallen short, and there is a growing recognition of the need for creative solutions that leverage technology, foster community-driven initiatives, and build resilience against socio-economic and environmental shocks. Encouraging innovation and embracing new methodologies can significantly enhance the impact of SDG-related efforts.

CONCLUSION

The NPC, the apex body of the government, is the focal agency for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs in Nepal. To track progress, identify gaps, and address challenges, the NPC initiated the Voluntary National Review. This review process involves organizing consultation events at both national and provincial levels to gather comprehensive information. Despite these efforts, there are significant challenges in raising awareness and localizing the SDGs, particularly among local government agencies. The Constitution of Nepal, which introduced a federal system envisioning power-sharing between central, state, and local governments, has not yet fully realized the integration of the SDGs at the local level.

While development partners and NGOs have a good understanding of the SDGs, this knowledge has not permeated down to the general populace at the local community level. Many local communities remain unaware of the SDGs and the processes involved in their implementation. This lack of awareness suggests that the principle of "Leaving No One Behind" is being overlooked, which in turn hampers progress towards achieving the SDGs. To address this, there is a pressing need for targeted plans and mechanisms to reach underserved populations, alongside substantial efforts to educate and advocate for the SDGs within local communities.

Despite the collective efforts from CSOs and government agencies towards the SDGs, significant gaps remain in their realization and localization. CSOs, with their grassroots reach and expertise, are essential in bridging these gaps. As Nepal embraces a "bottom-up" approach for growth and development, CSOs can support the government in achieving the 2030 Agenda by fostering meaningful partnerships between the state, civil society, and the private sector. A coordinated platform for CSOs, such as the Nepal SDG Forum, could serve as a valuable space for sharing knowledge and expertise among different stakeholders engaged in the achievement of the SDGs.

In addition to enhancing awareness, CSOs also play a crucial role in addressing systemic issues that impede the implementation of the SDGs. For instance, they advocate for the rights of marginalized groups, including women, Dalits, and indigenous populations, ensuring that development initiatives are inclusive and equitable. CSOs also provide essential services and support in areas such as education, healthcare, and agriculture, directly contributing to the achievement of various SDGs. By focusing on both issue-based and process-based strategies, CSOs help to create a more holistic approach to sustainable development.

Furthermore, the involvement of CSOs in policy advocacy and governance is critical for the successful localization of the SDGs. These organizations work closely with local governments to develop and implement policies that reflect the unique needs and priorities of local communities. They also monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these policies, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement. By fostering a participatory approach to governance, CSOs help to strengthen the capacity of local governments to deliver on the SDGs.

The partnership between the government, CSOs, and the private sector is vital for achieving the SDGs in Nepal. Each stakeholder brings unique strengths and perspectives to the table, and by working together, they can create synergies that drive sustainable development. The establishment of platforms for dialogue and collaboration, such as the Nepal SDG Forum, can facilitate the sharing of best practices, resources, and expertise, ultimately accelerating progress towards the 2030 Agenda.

RECOMMENDATIONS¹⁰

1. Enhance Inclusivity and Participation

- **Inclusion of Marginalized Communities:** Ensure the active participation of poor and vulnerable groups, including women, children, youth, Dalits, persons with disabilities, and the LGBTIQ+ community, in the planning and implementation of SDGs. Recognize these communities as key stakeholders in achieving the SDGs.
- **Ensuring Rights:** The constitutional provisions promulgated in “The Constitution of Nepal” 2072, on Right to Food, Food Sovereignty and Food Security need to be materialized through formulation of necessary Act, By-laws, Directives and Policies to assure legal implications. Central government should give direction to Ministries and also Inspire to Provincial and local level authorities to follow it in a time frame for national impetus especially on SDG1 and SDG2.
- **Community Awareness Programs:** Implement comprehensive community awareness programs to improve understanding and participation in SDG-related activities at the grassroots level. This includes promoting the principle of ‘Leave No One Behind’ to ensure marginalized voices are heard and represented.
- **Stronger Reporting Mechanisms against harassment and abuse:** Strengthen reporting mechanisms and support systems to combat discrimination and harassment within the community. Invest on addressing challenges of harmful social norms creating barriers in formal reporting of harassment and abuse including gender-based violence.
- **Address Structural Socio-Economic Barriers:** To promote true inclusion and equality, it is imperative to address the multifaceted structural socio-economic barriers that perpetuate stigmatization, marginalization, inequality, and discrimination. Efforts should extend beyond mere participation, considering intersectionality to fully understand and tackle these issues. Policies must recognize the right to equality and inclusion as fundamental, linking them to social justice and the assurance of a dignified life for all individuals.
- **Promote Intersectional Approaches:** Develop and implement policies that incorporate an intersectional approach, recognizing the diverse and overlapping identities that contribute to individuals’ experiences of inequality. This includes addressing gender, caste, ethnicity, disability, and other factors simultaneously to create a more inclusive society.
- **Ensure Legal and Policy Frameworks:** Strengthen legal and policy frameworks to protect the rights of marginalized groups, ensuring that these frameworks are effectively implemented

¹⁰ These recommendations were gathered through various consultations with key thematic groups as well as the separate reports shared by the organizations listed in Annex II

and enforced. Regular monitoring and evaluation should be conducted to assess progress and address any gaps or weaknesses.

2. Improve Quality Public Education and Access

- **Increased Public Spending on Education:** Allocate more resources to education to ensure quality and equitable access for all students. Strengthen the implementation and monitoring of educational policies to address the needs of marginalized populations.
- **Inclusive Educational Infrastructure:** Ensure to Promote inclusive education and safe learning environments for increasing access of quality education to girls, children with disability and other marginalized children belonging to Dalits, LGBTQ+, indigenous communities. Provide teacher training on inclusive teaching methods.
- **Adopt integrated approach:** Integrated and holistic development interventions of health and livelihood along with transformation of harmful social norms required to ensure quality education of girls, children with disability and other marginalized children.

3. Strengthen Local Government Accountability

- **Alignment with SDG Goals:** Ensure that local government policies and programs align with SDG goals and targets, focusing on local needs and priorities. Localize SDG indicators and integrate local plans into national priorities.
- **Robust Monitoring and Reporting Systems:** Develop a robust database system for tracking SDG progress. Encourage local governments to Strengthen citizen generated data and citizen led monitoring mechanisms to accelerate the pace of achieving SDG targets in more equitable manner and regularly report on their SDG outcomes, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- **Policy Localization:** Making appropriate use of provided exclusive jurisdictions, Local Governments need to foster the localization of key policy frameworks on health, education, Livelihoods and Agriculture, Social Sector, Youth etc. which should then work as a foundation for year mark budget and planning process.
- **Improve Leadership and Governance:** Focus on improving leadership, governance, and accountability within systems to ensure the successful implementation of the LNOB (Leave No One Behind) principle. Strengthen institutions to make them more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all citizens, particularly the marginalized.
- **Foster Accountability Mechanisms:** Establish robust accountability mechanisms that ensure transparency and responsiveness in SDG delivery. These mechanisms should facilitate the active participation of civil society organizations (CSOs) and local communities in monitoring and evaluating the implementation of SDG initiatives.

- **Capacity Building:** Invest in capacity-building programs for local governments and institutions to enhance their ability to implement and monitor SDG-related policies and programs effectively. This includes training on inclusive governance practices and the importance of the LNOB principle.

4. Address Social Inclusion and Rights Advocacy

- **Targeted Interventions for Marginalized Groups:** Implement targeted interventions and inclusive policies for LGBTQI individuals, persons with disabilities, and Dalits. Increase awareness and advocacy for their rights to ensure equitable access to opportunities and services. Consolidate government and CSO efforts in empowerment of marginalized communities.
- **Reporting Mechanisms for Violence and Abuse:** Establish better reporting mechanisms for incidents of violence and abuse against marginalized groups. Implement community awareness programs and harmful social norms transformation programs surrounding raising voice and reporting against violence and abuse. Strengthen survivor centered One Stop Crisis Management Center to provide integrated services to survivors. to address and prevent such incidents.

5. Enhance Climate Action and Environmental Sustainability

- **Support for Local Farmers:** Protect local farmers by controlling the import of unsafe agricultural products. Promote the use of indigenous, climate-friendly seeds, skills, tools, and technologies, agroecological practices to enhance agricultural productivity and resilience. State should be accountable for categorization of small farmers and providing more equitable farming assistance to promote resilient and equitable farming.
- **Targeted Disaster and Climate Resilience Preparedness:** Develop targeted disaster and climate resilience preparedness and response plans for vulnerable groups. Ensure that these plans address the specific needs of marginalized populations, including the provision of climate-related capacity-building programs. The emergency response and recovery priorities should put the marginalized community people in first.
- **Protecting tradition farming method:** Climate change effects on agriculture should be controlled, traditional climate friendly local seeds, skills, tools and technologies should be protected
- **Justice based Climate Finance:** Nepal should continuously be entitled to justice based climate financing and deliberate financial resources to recover loss and damages.

6. Strengthen Governance and Institutional Capacity

- **Effective Policy Implementation:** Strengthen the enforcement of policies designed to support marginalized groups. Develop guidelines and frameworks to enhance the capacity of subnational governments in planning, resource allocation, and monitoring of SDGs.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Foster stronger collaboration between government agencies, CSOs, and local communities to promote transparency, accountability, ownership, and sustainability in SDG implementation.

7. Promote Economic and Livelihood Opportunities

- **Economic Inclusion for Vulnerable Groups:** Implement targeted interventions to support the economic justice and inclusion of marginalized groups, particularly the LGBTQI community. Provide vocational training and support schemes to enhance their livelihood opportunities. Encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment among these groups with focus on young peoples' population by providing training, mentorship, and access to financial resources, while supporting initiatives that foster innovation and business development, enabling youth to create their own employment.
- **Support during Crises:** Ensure targeted support for vulnerable groups during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to mitigate their disproportionate suffering and promote economic resilience.
- **Green based (Circular Economy) Livelihoods Opportunities:** Foster and facilitate to introduce and invest in green based small and medium scale entrepreneurship opportunities that strengthen the over all livelihoods of the community, preserves the nature and promotes positive actions towards climate resilience.

8. Enhance Health and Well-being

- **Accessible Healthcare:** Improve the accessibility and quality of health service provide centers and ensure that healthcare needs of marginalized groups, including transgender individuals, are addressed. Increase the availability of skilled birth attendants in community health centers including strengthening health system management capacity of service delivery side
- **Inclusive Health Policies and its localization:** Develop and implement health policies that cater to the unique vulnerabilities of marginalized groups, particularly in the context of climate change impacts. The policies and Health sector strategic plan prepared at national level need further localization at sub national and local levels.

- **Expand coverage of Social Protection:** This should cover to the underserved and vulnerable populations by implementing targeted initiatives in remote and rural areas, focusing on unemployed youth, women, children, LGBTIQ+, Dalits, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- **Investment on youth and adolescent girls' responsive health services:** Additional efforts require to cater special health promotion needs of youth including access to adolescent and reproductive health services and appropriate information.

9. Ensure a Vibrant Civic Space

- Ensuring a vibrant civic space is critical for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16), which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- **Ensure Freedom of Assembly and Association:** Implement and uphold laws that allow peaceful assembly and the formation of associations without undue restrictions and hassle on registration, renew and operation of CSOs.
- **Provide Inclusive Participation on Planning and Implementation:** Recognize CSOs contribution on nation building, provide wider opportunity and access to CSOs on national and sub national planning process as well as implementation of program and public budget.
- **Media and Press Freedom:** Enact and enforce laws that guarantee freedom of speech, press, and information and safeguard digital rights, including freedom from censorship and access to the internet, and digital divide and protect journalists from harassment and violence.
- **Safety Measures and Recognition and Support of Human Rights Defender:** Develop and implement protective measures for human rights defenders, including emergency assistance and relocation programs. Acknowledge the legitimate role of human rights defenders and provide them with resources and support.
- **Protect and Expand Civic Spaces:** Ensure that civic spaces remain open and accessible for CSOs to operate effectively. Governments should protect the rights of CSOs to engage in development activities without undue restrictions.
- **Strengthen CSO Engagement:** Recognize the critical role of CSOs in addressing injustices and inequalities. Foster strong partnerships between CSOs, the government, and other stakeholders to collaboratively define and implement strategies that renew and protect the fundamental rights of all citizens.
- **Ensure Legal Protections for CSOs:** Develop and enforce legal protections that safeguard the operations of CSOs. This includes Strengthening enabling policy environment for collaboration and solidarity amongst CSO and ensuring their right to participate in policy

discussions, advocate for marginalized communities, and hold the government accountable for its commitments to the SDGs in more accelerated manner.

- **Enhance Civic Space and Ensure Participatory Governance:** The government should prioritize creating a participatory governance framework that includes civil society organizations in decision-making processes. By reducing excessive government control and ensuring transparency in policies, CSOs can operate freely and contribute effectively to development. A collaborative approach, as seen during the 2023 Nepal Civil Society Conference, should be institutionalized to enhance accountability, promote SDG-16, and foster an inclusive civic space where marginalized communities have a voice in governance and policy formulation.

10. Foster International Cooperation and Support

- **Negotiation for International Support:** Advocate strongly for privileges and preferential treatments in trade, technology transfer, foreign direct investment, debt cancellation, and development cooperation in line with international agreements and declarations.
- **Strengthen CSO Engagement in the LDC Graduation Process:** To ensure that Nepal's transition from a Least Developed Country (LDC) status is both equitable and sustainable, it is crucial to actively involve CSOs in the graduation process. Given the country's multidimensional poverty and exclusion, CSOs should be engaged to highlight ground realities and advocate for the needs of marginalized communities. This involvement includes participating in comprehensive assessments of socio-economic conditions, contributing to policy discussions, and monitoring the implementation of graduation strategies. By facilitating CSO participation, the government can ensure that the LDC graduation is inclusive, addresses the vulnerabilities of all population segments, and aligns with sustainable development goals.
- **Global Advocacy:** Leverage international forums to highlight the unique challenges faced by Nepal in achieving the SDGs and garner global support for sustainable development initiatives.

11. Build Stronger Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships

- **Common Platform for CSOs:** Establish a common platform like the Nepal SDG Forum to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among different stakeholders engaged in SDG achievement. Promote meaningful partnerships between the state, civil society, and the private sector.
- **Engagement with Local Institutions:** Strengthen partnerships with local government bodies and institutions to address the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups, ensuring a holistic and inclusive approach to sustainable development.

- **Strengthen Legal Clarity and Coordination Among Federal, Provincial, and Local Governments:** To address the regulatory uncertainties caused by Nepal's transition to a federal structure, the government should establish a clear and harmonized legal framework for CSOs. This would ensure consistency in policies across different levels of government, reduce bureaucratic hurdles, and protect the constitutional right to freedom of association. A synchronized legal approach would also prevent local authorities from imposing arbitrary taxes and registration requirements on CSOs, thereby fostering an enabling environment for civic engagement.

12. Leveraging Indigeneity and Local Strengths

- **Promote Indigenous Knowledge and Practices:** Recognize and integrate indigenous knowledge, skills, wisdom, and technologies into the development process. Empower indigenous and local communities by supporting their initiatives and ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes.
- **Support Local Initiatives:** Encourage and support local initiatives that utilize traditional knowledge and practices to address contemporary challenges. This includes providing financial and technical assistance to community-led projects that align with SDG goals.
- **Foster Community Empowerment:** Implement programs that empower local and indigenous communities, enhancing their capacity to respond to multiple crises. This empowerment should include education, resource provision, and the facilitation of community-driven development.

13. Human Rights & Social Justice Practices

- Quality and dignified life of people as basic minimum and basic services as fundamental human rights.
- Social inclusion and gender to be treated as right of people and linked to social justice agenda.
- Decolonization of power, leaderships, resources, and knowledge.
- Indigeneity – empower indigenous community and promote indigenous wisdom, knowledge, skills and technology, and climate justice with perspective from indigenous and marginalized people.
- Accountability – strong accountability with clear processes, mechanisms and adequate resources, link it to social justice, consider it as a core part of any programming, and citizen holding duty bearers accountable for transformative change in the life of marginalized people.

- Promoting active citizenship by addressing harmful social norms, tackling unequal power relations, and enabling marginalized groups to demand quality services, entitlements, and rights.
- System strengthening by supporting governance and administrative structures, mechanisms, and policies that ensure the rights and entitlements of marginalized communities.
- Intersectionality in development response and adaptation of intersectional feminist leadership principles.
- Application of multi-dimensional, human right-based and gender equality approaches, ensuring individual and institutional resilience in fragile, conflict and humanitarian contexts, and diverse and innovative solutions to respond to complex and structural issues faced by marginalized groups and communities.
- Volunteering for development and solidarity, youth power, and power of marginalized people challenging marginalization and exclusion.
- Technology innovation for addressing marginalization with users' perspective from marginalized people, but not as divider or bottle neck to the intersectional development response.

ANNEX I

Nepal SDGs Forum

(Convener and Co-Convener Organizations)

Goals	Convener Organizations /Focal Organizations
GOAL 1: No Poverty	Leave No One Behind (LNOB) Consortium/Rural Reconstruction of Nepal (RRN)
GOAL 2: Zero Hunger	Food First Information and Action Network (FIAN)and All Nepal Peasants' Federation (ANFA)
GOAL 3: Good Health and Well-being	Right Here Right Now (RHRN) Platform/ Resource Centre For Primary Health Care
GOAL 4: Quality Education	National Campaign on Education (NCE) Nepal/ Education Watch Group
GOAL 5: Gender Equality	Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) / Alliance Against Trafficking In Woman And Children In Nepal (AATWIN)
GOAL 6: Clean Water and Sanitation	Federation of Drinking Water and Sanitation Users Nepal (FEDWASUN)
GOAL 7: Affordable and Clean Energy	National Association of Community Electricity Users-Nepal, (NACEUN) and Clean Energy Nepal (CEN)
GOAL 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth	National Federation of the Disabled- Nepal (NFDN)/ Blind Youth Association Nepal (BYAN)
GOAL 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	National Federation of Irrigation Water User's Association, Nepal (NFIWUAN)
GOAL 10: Reduced Inequality	Dalit NGO Federation (DNF), Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO)
GOAL 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	National Society for Earthquake Technology - Nepal (NSET), Disaster Preparedness Network-Nepal (DPNet)
GOAL 12: Responsible Consumption and Production	Forum for Protection of Consumer Rights, Nepal Social Entrepreneurship Forum (NSEF), B+HR Network
GOAL 13: Climate Action	Climate Action Network (CAN)), Karnali Integrated Rural Development & Research Center (KIRDRC)
GOAL 14: Life under Water	Mountain Partnership
GOAL 15: Life on Land	Federation of community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN) and Association of Family Forest Owners, Nepal (AFFON)
GOAL 16: Peace and Justice Strong Institutions	NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN)/ Human Rights Alliance/GoGo Foundation/ RTI Federation/Freedom Forum/ Justice and Rights Institute Nepal (JuRI-Nepal) and INSEC
GOAL 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal	NGO Federation of Nepal (NFN)/ Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN)
Major Group and Stakeholders	
1. Senior Citizen	National Senior Citizen Federation (NASCIF)/ Aging Nepal
2. LGBTIQ	Blue Diamond Society/ Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities Nepal, (FSGMN)

3. Children	Children as Zones of Peace National Campaign (CZOP) / Consortium of organization working for Child participation (CONSORTIUM-Nepal)
4. Youth	Youth Advocacy Nepal /Association of Youth Organization of Nepal (AYON)//Youth NGO Federation of Nepal/ Youth Initiative/ Yuwalaya/ Youth SDGs Network
5. Media	Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ)/Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Nepal (ACORAB),
6. Farmers	All Nepal Peasants' Federation (ANFA)/ National Farmers Group Federation(NFGF) / Rights Food Network/ FIAN
7. Women	Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC)/ Alliance Against Trafficking In Woman And Children In Nepal (AATWIN)/ Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD)
8. Indigenous	Nepal Federation of Indigenous Nationalities (NEFIN)/ National Indigenous Women's Federation (NIWF)
9. Madhesi	Nepal Madhesh Foundation (NEMAF)
10. Dalit	Dalit NGO Federation/National Dalit Network/Samata Foundation/ Feminist Dalit Organization (FEDO)/ Dalit Welfare Organization (DWO)
11. Muslim	Nepal Muslim Women Welfare Society (NMWWS)
12. Cooperatives	National Cooperative Federation of Nepal/ Nepal Federation of Savings and Credit Cooperative Unions Ltd. (NEFSCUN)
13. Local Authorities	Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN)/National Association of Rural Municipalities in Nepal (NARMIN)
14. Workers and Trade Union	General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GFONT)
15. Business and Industry	Federation of Nepalese Chamber of Commerce & Industries (FNCCI) and National Social Entrepreneurship Forum (NSEF), Fair Trade

ANNEX II

LIST OF ORGANIZATIONS CONSULTED AND INFORMATION GATHERED

- Association of International NGOs in Nepal (AIN)
- Beyond Beijing Committee
- CONSORTIUM Nepal
- Dalit NGO Federation
- Education Watch Group Nepal/NCE Nepal
- Federation of Sexual and Gender Minorities – Nepal
- Food-first Information and Action Network (FIAN) Nepal
- National Farmers Group Federation
- National Federation of the Disabled Nepal
- VSO Nepal
- Youth Advocacy Nepal
- Youth Initiative

ANNEX III

Summary Report of Citizen's Voices for Leaving No One Behind by VSO Nepal

The Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) are member state led but they offer a country wide review of progress on implementing the SDGs at national and sub-national levels and are also a vital part of the global process to review progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The VNRs aim to promote the exchange of experiences, identify challenges, and highlight successes to accelerate SDG implementation, which must be open, inclusive, participatory and transparent. VNRs emphasize citizen voices and participation and **Leave No One Behind (LNOB)** principle and agenda for ensuring that marginalized and vulnerable communities are included in the delivery of SDGs.

Nepal conducted Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) of SDG progress in 2017 and 2020. In 2024, the country has prepared its third VNR report, which was also presented at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) in July 2024. This mid-point review of SDGs implementation holds strategic importance for the Government of Nepal (GoN) and civil society organizations (CSOs) as it is aimed to address unfinished agendas and develop a future roadmap.

To complement the national VNR process and outcome, VSO engaged with vulnerable and marginalized communities, including Muslim women, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities, **Dalit** farmers, and the Raji and Musahar communities in Bara and Rautahat district of Madhesh and in Surkhet district of Karnali Provinces. A comprehensive report amplifying citizens' voices has been prepared to complement the civil society 'Spotlight Report.' Additionally, VSO, on behalf of the 'Leave No One Behind' consortium, submitted the key findings to the National Planning Commission, requesting to include key findings and recommendations in the government's report.

VSO's 2024 VNR initiative gathered and amplified the voices of marginalized and vulnerable communities, such as women, youth, persons with disabilities, and Dalits, ensuring their concerns are included in Nepal's national report.

VSO conducted community-led data collection in Surkhet in **Karnali** and Bara and Rautahat in **Madhesh Provinces** and the study used Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to collect data from marginalized groups, including the Dalit community, persons with disabilities, ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQ+ community. Eight FGDs and six KIIs were conducted in all of the locations of two provinces.

Qualitative and quantitative data were gathered, and challenges related to accessibility, engagement, and accuracy were addressed through strategic planning and collaboration.

The key objectives were to generate evidence, engage multiple stakeholders, and create a platform to ensure that civic voices shape the VNR report, reflecting the needs of marginalized communities. The evidence collected is shared with stakeholders like the National Planning Commission (NPC)

and Nepal SDG Forum to influence the inclusion of these voices in the VNR report.

While VNR 24 primarily focuses on SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16, and 17, VSO's contributions have also covered SDGs 3, 4, 5, and 10.

Key findings

SDG 1: No Poverty: Farming dominates, but financial and decision making control rests with men. LGBTQI and women face health, income, education, entitlement to local jobs, service access barriers and various forms of social exclusion exacerbating viscous poverty cycle. Data indicates high male dominance in land ownership and there are challenges of land ownership transfers. Employment is limited, pushing many to seek work abroad, and corruption hinders local support access. Inequality of wage still exists mainly on the basis of gender.



SDG 2: Zero Hunger: Food insecurity is prevalent, with agricultural income insufficient and with the communities who do not have access to land. Harvests sustain families for only part of the year, particularly affecting vulnerable communities like the Raji community. Adoption and promotion of resilient and agroecological practices among marginalized farmers and linking them with Farmers Identity Card (FID) and social protection schemes would be an approach to build their resilience on food systems. This will entitle landless and small-holder farmers to the social protection and livelihood promotion schemes.



SDG 3: Good Health and Well-being: Challenges include limited healthcare access, low health insurance enrollment, and maternal health barriers for *Dalit* women and youth belonging to marginalized communities due to their poor financial status and also because of their limited social and political leadership spaces. LGBTQI individuals face discrimination in HIV/AIDS treatment and reproductive health services including harassment and discrimination in public places and from peers. Harmful social norms surrounding gender-based violence still prevalent and still lower cases of accessing security, health and justice services indicating additional commitment for promoting survivor centered Open Stop Crisis Management Centers.



SDG 4: Quality Education: Marginalized students, especially girls, children with disability and LGBTQI children, face discrimination in public places and from their peers. While school enrollment is high, infrastructure is lacking, and gender disparities in education remain significant. Only preparing ramps and separate toilets for girls in schools do not make the schools gender and disability responsive.



SDG 5 Gender Equality: Gender wage gaps persist due to patriarchal attitudes. Limited leadership roles for women, *Dalit*, and persons with disabilities are limited, and LGBTQI individuals face widespread social and economic discrimination. There is lack of



agency building support to women and other marginalized community people on their leadership both in CSOs and in government structures.

SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation: Access to clean water (tap water) and sanitation is inconsistent.



While some well off, social and politically stronger communities have safe water, others, like the Raji, face water scarcity and inadequate sanitation facilities. The Menstrual Health Hygiene (MHM) facilities and other child friendly inclusive WASH facilities in public schools and other public institutions needs significant improvement.

SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth: Employment opportunities are scarce, particularly for



Dalit youth and the Raji community, who rely on foreign labor. Discrimination in local job markets further limits opportunities for marginalized groups. The favoritism in selection of teachers and other local jobs persists which is pushing the marginalized community in vulnerability.

SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities: Discrimination based on caste, disability, and sexual orientation



persists in the communities. LGBTQI individuals and persons with disabilities face significant social, economic and political barriers. Persistent efforts required to empower these marginalized communities to enable them to claim their rights, change the mindset of community people who practice such discrimination and hold duty bearers to account adopting citizen led monitoring mechanisms.

SDG 13: Climate Action: Marginalized groups receive minimal climate-related support, with



favoritism in emergency response and other support activities. Women, Children, Persons with Disabilities, ethnic and minority communities and LGBTQI individuals are having more deeper differential effects of climatic and non-climatic disasters, having differential loss of their basic livelihoods highlighting the need for tailored disaster preparedness. Systematic, participatory and inclusive planning on climate and resilience still lacks at various levels.

SDG 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions: Mechanisms that promote mutual accountability



at various levels still lack or dysfunctional. Citizens' engagement in Local Government's annual planning and budgeting cycle is limited. Raji, Badi and Mushahar communities found to be not aware about such participatory processes or are never consulted for such reason. There seems a lack of formal/informal partnership between Local Governments and Local CSOs aimed at strengthening local CSOs.

Likewise, Violence and discrimination against marginalized groups, particularly *Dalit* women and Persons with Disabilities, exist in various forms. LGBTQI individuals face unreported violence due to fear of repercussions, and inclusive decision-making is lacking. CSOs led by these marginalized communities needs to be strengthened with enabling policy and working environments.

SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals: Effective partnerships with local governments and NGOs



are essential. While some communities benefit from enhanced multi-stakeholder partnership in some Local Governments but there are still more communities and local level CSOs where there is high prevalence of minimal cooperation from their local governments and other duty bearers resulting to limiting progress. There is potential for Local Governments and other duty bearers to develop mechanisms to engage local CSOs in volunteering work on social issues including designing and leading community actions in health, education and climate change issues.

Key challenges include limited education beyond grade 10, high unemployment, and a lack of local job opportunities, leading to migration. Vulnerability to natural disasters, the financial strain of the dowry system, and high-interest loans in indigenous communities exacerbate these issues.

Recommendations include improving water management, healthcare services, and education access. Combating corruption is essential to ensure fair access to training, particularly for minority groups. Strengthening mechanisms to address discrimination and supporting agricultural land access and vocational training will help build economic resilience.

Likewise, promoting inclusive education and safe learning environments for increasing access of quality education to girls, children with disability and other marginalized children belonging to Dalits, LGBTQ+, indigenous communities. Invest on community awareness and harmful social norms transformation programs surrounding raising voice and reporting against violence and abuse. Strengthen survivor centered One Stop Crisis Management Center to provide integrated services to survivors.

Promoting state accountability for categorization of small holder farmers and providing more equitable farming assistance to promote resilient and equitable farming.

Strengthen the enabling policy environment for ensuring collaboration and solidarity amongst CSO to activate development movements to achieve SDG targets in more accelerated manner.

Similarly, enabling spaces for civil society organization that facilitate them to design and implement rights-based programming and work together with the marginalized communities for their agency building, creating state-citizen interfaces should be ensured. The periodic plan at federal, provincial and local levels should be more inclined in fulfilling the fundamental rights and CSOs itself has to be more critical and vibrant in terms of amplifying the marginalized citizens voices and increase role of watch dog against all forms of human rights violation, regressive policies, exclusion and financial mismanagement.

ANNEX IV

Nepal Citizens' Report 2024 from Youth Perspectives

Collecting citizens' voices from the grassroots level, **Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN)**, in partnership with Nepal SDG Forum, VSO Nepal, ActionAid Nepal, Youth Initiative, Global Peace Foundation, NAFAN, ROYM, Peace for Dalit Foundation, and other like-minded organizations, prepared the Nepal Citizens' Report 2024 from a youth perspective. The major SDGs covered in the report include SDG 1, specifically addressing social protection issues; SDG 3, focused on sexual and reproductive health rights; SDG 4, focused on technical and vocational education; SDG 5, gender equality; SDG 8, focused on youth employability; SDG 13, climate justice; SDG 16, focused on youth participation; and SDG 17, with a focus on volunteering. The report was submitted to the National Planning Commission (NPC) and other concerned agencies for implementation.

1. Methodology

To gather voices and evidence from stakeholders, a combination of online and offline tools and techniques were employed. The major methods used are detailed below:

1.1 Multi-stakeholder Dialogues

Multi-stakeholder dialogues, one of the tools of CGD, served as a core technique to gather primary information regarding the implementation of specific areas of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) from relevant stakeholders. These dialogues were inclusive, engaging major stakeholders, especially youths from various backgrounds, in a participatory manner. Seven multi-stakeholder dialogues were organized across various parts of Nepal, including Dhulabari, Birgunj, Kathmandu, Hetauda, Nepalgunj, Surkhet, and Bajura. Over 900 stakeholders participated in these dialogues.

1.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) were used to collect detailed information from specific groups of respondents. Number of FGDs were conducted in different regions of Nepal. These discussions involved more than 100 respondents, providing insights into the stakeholders' perspectives and experiences.

1.3 Online Survey

An online survey was employed to gather quantitative data from a broader audience. A structured questionnaire was developed and distributed through social media channels. The online survey attracted participation from over 100 respondents. The survey was posted on various social media platforms to ensure wide dissemination and engagement.

1.4 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were conducted to obtain in-depth information from individuals with extensive knowledge and experience in the relevant areas. Approximately 25 KIIs were conducted. Key informants were chosen based on their expertise and familiarity with the specific areas being investigated.

By employing a combination of multi-stakeholder dialogues, focus group discussions, online surveys, and key informant interviews, a comprehensive and diverse set of data was gathered from stakeholders across various regions of Nepal. This mixed-method approach ensured a thorough understanding of stakeholders' perspectives, experiences, and insights related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

2. Key findings and recommendations

SDG 1: Social Protection



- Establish a centralized coordination body to harmonize, avoid duplication, and streamline all social protection programs across ministries and agencies, ensuring a cohesive and efficient system.
- Expand coverage to underserved and vulnerable populations by implementing targeted initiatives in remote and rural areas, focusing on unemployed youth, women, children, LGBTIQ+, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
- Develop policies and incentives to encourage informal sector workers to participate in contributory social protection schemes, such as offering matching contributions, tax benefits, or simplified registration processes.
- Increase and diversify funding sources by allocating more national budget resources to social protection programs and exploring alternative mechanisms such as social insurance schemes, public-private partnerships, and progressive taxation system.
- Enhance administrative efficiency and capacity by simplifying processes to reduce bureaucratic inefficiencies and expedite service delivery, while investing in training and capacity-building programs for personnel involved in social protection to enhance their skills and effectiveness.
- Integrate existing data systems across various programs to facilitate better monitoring, evaluation, and targeting of social protection initiatives.

- Strengthen the policy and legislative framework by reviewing and harmonizing social protection policies for coherence and consistency, while addressing legislative gaps through the enactment of comprehensive laws to provide a robust foundation, ensuring all programs are backed by a clear legal mandate.

SDG 3: Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR)



- Develop and implement inclusive policies and programs that explicitly address the unique needs of marginalized and vulnerable youth, including persons with disabilities, LGBTIQ individuals, and women, ensuring non-discriminatory access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) services and information.
- Establish and strengthen community-based SRHR services, particularly in rural and remote areas, to overcome barriers related to geographic remoteness and lack of transportation, providing mobile health clinics and outreach programs tailored to the needs of marginalized youth, ensuring their access to a comprehensive range of SRHR services.
- Integrate comprehensive SRHR education into school curricula and community outreach programs, focusing on diverse identities and experiences, and develop age-appropriate, culturally sensitive educational materials addressing topics including consent, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability rights, and reproductive health.
- Launch awareness campaigns engaging community leaders, religious figures, and influential individuals to challenge stigma, discrimination, and social exclusion encountered by marginalized and vulnerable youth accessing SRHR services, promoting acceptance, tolerance, and respect for diversity.
- Create youth-friendly spaces and opportunities for marginalized and vulnerable youth to engage in decision-making processes concerning SRHR policies and programs, enabling access to information, support, advocacy, and peer education activities.

SDG 4: Technical and vocational education



- Develop and implement inclusive TVE policies and programs targeting marginalized youth, such as Dalit, women, LGBTIQ individuals, and persons with disabilities, prioritizing non-

discrimination and equal opportunities, regardless of gender, caste, sexual orientation, or disability.

- Invest in the creation of accessible infrastructure, including facilities, assistive technologies, and support services tailored to accommodate the diverse needs of marginalized youth, particularly persons with disabilities.
- Launch comprehensive awareness campaigns aimed at challenging social stigma, discrimination, and stereotypes associated with technical and vocational education and careers, engaging communities, families, educators, and employers to promote acceptance, respect, and support for marginalized youth pursuing vocational education and training.
- Offer targeted skills development programs and career guidance services tailored to equip marginalized youth with relevant and marketable skills, while strengthening partnerships between technical and vocational education institutions, industries, and employers to ensure alignment of vocational training programs with labor market demands and the provision of pathways to sustainable employment.
- Create opportunities for marginalized youth to actively participate in decision-making processes related to technical and vocational education policies, programs, and implementation, while fostering the development of leadership skills, self-confidence, and self-advocacy among marginalized youth, empowering them to effectively advocate for their rights and interests within the education system and beyond.

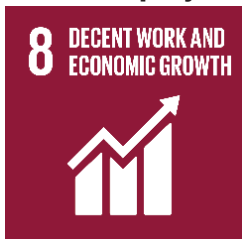
SDG 5: Gender violence and discrimination



- Enforce existing laws and policies on GBV, including the Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act and the National Strategy on Gender-Based Violence, while closing legal loopholes, increasing penalties for perpetrators, and ensuring timely and effective prosecution of GBV cases.
- Challenge discriminatory gender norms through targeted awareness campaigns, education, and community mobilization.
- Promote women's economic empowerment, access to education, and leadership opportunities to combat gender-based discrimination and empower women and girls.
- Increase funding for GBV prevention and response programs, including shelters, counseling services, and legal aid, while establishing comprehensive support systems that address the diverse needs of survivors, including medical, psychosocial, and legal support.

- Foster partnerships between government agencies, civil society organizations, grassroots initiatives, and international stakeholders to coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to GBV, while simultaneously building the capacity of frontline responders, including law enforcement officials, health workers, and social workers, to effectively address GBV.

SDG 8: Youth Employability



- Invest in improving the quality of education at all levels, focusing on practical, job-relevant skills and competencies, while strengthening vocational training programs and technical education to align with labour market demands and equip youth with employable skills.
- Encourage entrepreneurship and self-employment among youth by providing training, mentorship, and access to financial resources, while supporting initiatives that foster innovation and business development, enabling youth to create their own employment.
- Establish job-training programs and apprenticeships that provide practical, hands-on experience to youth, bridging the gap between education and employment, while collaborating with industries and businesses to design training programs that meet their specific needs and enhance youth employability.
- Promote policies and initiatives that stimulate job creation in formal sectors, such as infrastructure development, technology innovation, and investment in key industries, while facilitating public-private partnerships to create a conducive environment for formal employment growth.
- Address gender disparities in employment by promoting equal access to education, training, and employment opportunities for young women, while implement gender-sensitive policies and initiatives that empower women economically and enhance their participation in the labour market.

SDGs 13: Climate Justic and clean air



- Enhance coordination between government agencies to ensure effective implementation of climate change and air pollution policies and strategies at all levels of governance,

while allocating sufficient resources and prioritizing climate justice and equity in national development agendas.

- Empower local communities, particularly marginalized groups, to actively participate in decision-making processes related to climate change adaptation and resilience-building initiatives, while strengthening community-based organizations and networks to advocate for the rights and needs of vulnerable populations.
- Increase financial and technical support for climate change adaptation and mitigation projects in Nepal, with a focus on marginalized communities and vulnerable regions, while fostering partnerships and knowledge-sharing initiatives to leverage resources and expertise for effective climate action.
- Integrate climate change and clean air education and awareness programs into school curricula and community outreach activities, while conducting research and knowledge dissemination activities to enhance understanding of climate change impacts and adaptation strategies, particularly among rural and marginalized populations.
- Encourage private sector engagement in climate-resilient investments and sustainable business practices, while providing incentives for businesses to adopt environmentally friendly technologies and contribute to climate change mitigation efforts.

SDG 16: Youth participation in governance



- Implement extensive awareness campaigns and educational programs to better inform youth about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their national implementation progress through Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs).
- Use digital media, integrate SDG-related content into school curricula, collaborate with youth organizations, and engage in community outreach to widely disseminate information about the SDGs and VNRs.
- Create targeted plans to localize SDG implementation at community, city, and regional levels, ensuring the initiatives are relevant to specific local needs and contexts.
- Establish inclusive platforms and spaces that actively engage youth from diverse backgrounds, including rural areas, ethnic minorities, and disadvantaged groups, in decision-making processes at all levels, while providing support programs, mentorship, and training to build their capacity and confidence to participate effectively.

- Integrate comprehensive civic education and awareness programs into school curricula and community initiatives to enhance youth understanding of democratic principles, citizenship rights, and governance structures, while promoting the importance of youth participation in shaping the future of Nepal through targeted awareness campaigns.
- Take proactive measures to address structural inequalities, socio-economic disparities, and geographical barriers that hinder youth participation, particularly among marginalized groups, while implementing policies and programs aimed at promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities for all young people, regardless of their background.
- Provide support for the development of youth leadership skills and facilitate opportunities for young leaders to assume meaningful roles in decision-making bodies, political parties, civil society organizations, and community initiatives, while fostering a supportive environment that encourages youth to actively engage in shaping the future of their communities.
- Take decisive actions to address gender-based barriers and promote gender equality in youth participation efforts, while empowering young women and girls to challenge social norms and stereotypes, ensuring their full and equal participation in all spheres of public and political life, and creating supportive mechanisms to address discrimination, harassment, and gender-based violence faced by female youth.

SDG 17: Volunteering



- Prioritize capacity-building programs aimed at enhancing the skills, knowledge, and effectiveness of volunteers and organizations involved in SDG implementation, while offering comprehensive training, mentorship, and access to resources to empower them to drive sustainable change effectively.
- Foster partnerships and networks among volunteering organizations, government agencies, businesses, and communities to enhance coordination and resource sharing, while encouraging collaboration through platforms for dialogue, joint initiatives, and knowledge exchange to maximize impact and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Take proactive measures to ensure the inclusivity and representation of marginalized communities in volunteering efforts, while promoting diversity, cultural sensitivity, and accessibility to ensure that volunteering initiatives are inclusive and equitable for all, addressing barriers such as language, access to information, and cultural norms.

- Recognize and appreciate the contributions of volunteers through formal acknowledgment, awards, and incentives, while establishing support mechanisms, including funding opportunities, technical assistance, and networking platforms, to empower volunteers and sustain their engagement in SDG-related activities.
- Develop national volunteer roster and data platform for volunteering.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process undertaken by Youth Advocacy Nepal (YAN) in collaboration with like-minded organizations successfully engaged approximately 900 young stakeholders across various regions of Nepal to assess the status of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through these programs, not only were the current status, challenges, and gaps of the SDGs identified, but young people were also empowered with knowledge about the concept of SDGs and the VNR process. Additionally, these initiatives contributed to enhancing the capacity of youth and strengthening networking, coordination, and collaboration among them. Drawing from the insights gleaned from these endeavors, recommendations have been formulated, targeting relevant agencies, including the government of Nepal, to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. This collective effort underscores the vital role of youth in driving sustainable development and underscores the importance of continued collaboration and action to realize the aspirations of the SDGs.

