



**SELINUS UNIVERSITY**  
OF SCIENCES AND LITERATURE

**STUDY ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN  
LOCAL-LEVEL PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT, MAJOGMAI RURAL  
MUNICIPALITY, ILAM, NEPAL**

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**A DISSERTATION**

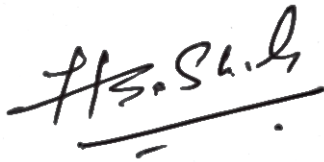
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In Community and Social Development

July 2023

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis entitled "**Study on Community Participation in Local Level Planning for Sustainable Development, Maijogmai Rural Municipality, Ilam, Nepal**" submitted to **Selinus University of Science and Literature**, is entirely my original work. I have prepared this thesis under the guidance and supervision of my supervisor. I have duly acknowledged all ideas and information obtained from various sources during the preparation of this thesis. The findings and results presented in this thesis have not been previously presented or submitted for the award of any other degree or for any other purposes. Furthermore, I confirm that no part of the content of this thesis has been published in any form prior to this submission.



.....

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Date: 15 July 2080

## CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled "**STUDY ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL LEVEL PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN MAIJOGMAI RURAL MUNICIPALITY, ILAM, NEPAL**" submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Community and Social Development to the Department of Arts and Humanities, Selinus University of Science and Literature is a record of original research carried out by **Mr. HIRA BAHADUR GHALE, Id. No: UNISE1015IT**, under my guidance, and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree or diploma. The assistance and help received during the course of this investigation have been acknowledged.

---

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## **CERTIFICATE**

The thesis attached hereto, entitled "**STUDY ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL LEVEL PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, MAIJOGMAI RURAL MUNICIPALITY, ILAM, NEPAL**" prepared and submitted by **Mr. HIRA BAHADUR GHALE** for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Community and Social Development is hereby accepted.

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# TABLE OF CONTENT

DECLARATION .....	I
CERTIFICATE .....	II
CERTIFICATE .....	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	IV
TABLE OF CONTENT .....	IV - IX
ABSTRACT .....	X
<i>CHAPTER 1:</i> .....	<i>1</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i> .....	<i>13</i>
1.1 Background.....	13
1.2 Statement of the Problem .....	15
1.3 Policy and Legal Provisions for Periodic Planning in Nepal .....	17
1.4 Major Research Questions .....	18
1.5 Objectives of the Study.....	19
1.6 Study Process .....	20
1.6.1 Primary Sources:.....	21
1.6.2 Secondary Sources: .....	21
1.7 Limitations of the Study .....	21
1.8 The Structure of the Thesis .....	23
1.8.1 Chapter One: Introduction.....	23
1.8.2 Chapter Two: Literature Review .....	23
1.8.3 Chapter Three: Methodology .....	23
1.8.4 Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings .....	23
1.8.5 Chapter Five: Summary, Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations .....	24
<i>CHAPTER 2:</i> .....	<i>25</i>
<i>LITERATUR REVIEW</i> .....	<i>25</i>
2.1 Theoretical Concepts.....	25
2.2 Definitions of Key Concepts .....	28
2.2.1 Participation .....	28
2.2.3 Community Participation .....	28
2.2.4 Planning .....	29
2.2.5 Sustainable Development.....	30

2.2.6 Local Level Planning.....	33
<b>2.3 Local Government in Nepal.....</b>	<b>34</b>
2.3.1 Local Development Planning in Nepal .....	34
2.3.2 Planning Process for Local Development .....	35
2.3.3 Federal Planning Mechanism in Nepal .....	36
2.3.4 Planning Relationship among Three Tiers of Government .....	37
2.3.5 Local Planning Unit and its Relationships with Other Stakeholders .....	37
<b>2.4 Process of Local Development Planning in Nepal .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Table 1: Subjective committees formed at local level.....	40
Figure 2: Current Seven Steps Annual Planning process in Nepal.....	41
2.4.3 Local Development Plan Formulation Process .....	41
2.4.4 Steps in Local-Level Planning.....	42
<b>2.5 The Role of Community Participation.....</b>	<b>42</b>
Figure 4: Interrelationship of local level plans .....	43
<b>Figure 5: Local level participatory planning process.....</b>	<b>44</b>
3.6 Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).....	44
3.7 Analytical Framework for Strengthening Local Level Planning for Sustainable Development .....	45
<b>CHAPTER 3: .....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>47</b>
3.1 Methodology of Study: .....	47
3.2 Study Area .....	47
3.2.1 Selection of the Study Area.....	47
3.2.2 Introduction of Study Area.....	48
3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure for the Study .....	50
3.3.1 Sampling Method .....	50
3.3.2 Stratified Sampling .....	50
3.3.3 Purposive Sampling .....	51
3.4 Research Design .....	52
3.5 Nature and Sources of Data.....	52
3.6 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection .....	53
3.6.1 Primary Data Collection .....	53
3.6.2 Secondary Data Collection .....	54
4.6.3 Examining existing documents.....	55
4.7 Validity and Reliability.....	56

3.8 Data Analysis.....	57
3.8.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data.....	57
3.8.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data .....	57
3.8.3 Analysis of Available Documents.....	58
4.10 Conclusion.....	58
<b>CHAPTER 4: .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>59</b>
4.1 Introduction .....	59
4.2 Data Analysis and Presentation of Quantitative Survey Conducted (Questionnaire) .....	59
4.2.1 Biographical Details of Respondents (Quantitative Study).....	60
4.2.2 The Development Role of Local Government: Analysis of the Degree of Response .....	62
4.3 Analysis and Presentation of Qualitative Interviews Conducted.....	73
4.3.1 Biographic Profiles of Participants Involved in Interviews and Focus Group Discussions .....	73
4.3.2 The Role of the Local Level in Sustainable Community Development .....	75
4.3.3 Factors Affecting the Role of the Local Level in Development .....	77
4.3.4 The Effectiveness of IRDP Planning .....	80
4.3.5 The Effectiveness of IRDP Implementation .....	81
4.4 Data Analysis and Presentation from Available Documents.....	84
4.4.1 Educational Status .....	85
4.4.2 Economic Status of the Study Area.....	85
4.4.3 Income Status of Families.....	85
4.3.4 Agricultural Productivity .....	86
4.3.5 Interrelationship between Agricultural Productivity and Environment .....	87
4.3.6 Food Security Scenario .....	88
<i>Source: Profile Maijogmai RM .....</i>	<i>88</i>
4.3.7 Information on Domesticated Animals.....	88
4.3.8 Exportable Products of the Study Area.....	89
4.3.9 Situation of the Industries .....	89
4.3.10 Information on the Market and its Distance.....	90
4.5 Transportation and Vehicle Facility.....	91
4.6 Source of Energy and its Utilization .....	91
4.6.1 Source of Light Energy .....	91
4.6.2 Fuel Energy used for Cooking.....	92
4.7 Drinking Water Facility .....	92
4.7.1 Source of Drinking Water.....	92



4.7.2 Drinking Water Projects .....	93
<b>4.8 Health and Sanitation.....</b>	<b>93</b>
4.8.1 Health Services .....	93
4.8.2 Toilet Facilities.....	93
4.8.3 Production of Domestic Waste .....	93
<b>4.9 Gender Situation .....</b>	<b>94</b>
4.9.1 Status of Women.....	94
4.9.2 Women's Involvement in the Social Sector .....	94
4.9.3 Area of Women's Involvement .....	95
4.9.4 Status of Disadvantaged Groups.....	96
<b>4.10 Risk of Social Conflicts.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>5.11 Conclusion:.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5:.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>5.2 Summary.....</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>5.3 Findings .....</b>	<b>99</b>
5.3.1 Findings of the Impacts and Achievements of IRDP .....	100
<i>Source: IRDP performance report of Maijogmai RM .....</i>	<i>101</i>
5.3.2 Findings of (Impacts and Achievements) of IRDP in different thematic sectors .....	104
5.3.3 Perception on Factors Affecting Local Government Role in Sustainable Development .....	110
<b>5.4 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>111</b>
5.4.1 Alignment of plan implementation with plan goals and objectives: .....	112
5.4.2 Gender equality, social justice, and inclusive development: .....	112
5.4.3 Proper management of resources: .....	112
5.4.4 Partnership and participatory development method:.....	112
5.4.5 Poverty reduction and employment: .....	112
5.4.6 Public-private partnerships: .....	113
5.4.7 Human resource development: .....	113
5.4.8 Institutional development, good governance, and decentralization: Efforts .....	113
5.4.9 Environmentally friendly, sustainable, and self-reliant development: .....	113
5.4.10 Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): .....	113
<b>5.5 Recommendation.....</b>	<b>114</b>
5.5.1 Strengthen community participation and ownership: .....	114
5.5.2 Focus on strategic interventions: .....	114

5.5.3 Improve decision-making processes and responsiveness: .....	114
5.5.4 Strengthen institutional capacity and human resource development:.....	115
5.5.5 Foster partnerships and stakeholder commitment: .....	115
5.5.6 Enhance citizen participation and inclusiveness: .....	115
5.5.7 Strengthen partnerships between local government and NGOs: .....	115
5.5.8 Improve monitoring and evaluation processes: .....	115
5.5.9 Promote devolution of power and autonomy:.....	116
5.5.10 Focus on policies for sustainable development: .....	116
5.5.11 Proposed Framework for Improving the Sustainable Community Development Planning and Implementation .....	117
<b>Reference cited .....</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Annexes .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<i>Annex 1. Implementation of projects based on thematic area that were incorporated in the Integrated Development Plan .....</i>	<i>122</i>
<i>Annex 2. Identified project and implementation status of IRDP in selected communities. ....</i>	<i>123</i>
<i>Annex 3. The Usage and usefulness of IRDP (some of the usages quoted by representatives of communities &amp; stakeholders presented below) .....</i>	<i>124</i>
<i>Annex 4. Location Map.....</i>	<i>125</i>
<i>ANNEXURE- 5: QUESTIONNAIRE .....</i>	<i>126</i>
<i>Annex 6. Checklist for Qualitative Information Collection .....</i>	<i>130</i>

## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the role of community participation in local level planning for sustainable development in Maijogmai Rural Municipality, Ilam, Nepal. The study aims to explore the effectiveness of participatory community planning approaches in promoting sustainable development initiatives and improving service delivery at the local level in a decentralized system.

The research is guided by a theoretical framework that emphasizes the importance of community involvement in decision-making processes, ownership of local development initiatives and the empowerment of local governments. It investigates the factors that impact community participation and the challenges faced in planning and implementing sustainable development projects.

The study utilizes a mixed-methods approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Primary data is collected through community surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, while secondary data is obtained from government reports, policies, and publications.

The findings reveal several key points. First, community participation is essential for successful local level planning and implementation of development initiatives. It fosters ownership and ensures that local priorities are considered. However, limitations such as lack of awareness, inadequate information, and negative attitudes hinder full community participation.

Second, the study highlights the significance of integrated development planning as a tool for local governments to align resources with priority objectives. It explores the challenges and opportunities in the planning process and emphasizes the need for improved coordination and capacity building.

Third, the research uncovers the constraints faced by local governments in effectively implementing integrated rural development plans. The slow implementation and limited impact of development projects call for better strategies to address the priority needs of the community.

The study concludes by proposing recommendations to enhance community participation and improve the effectiveness of local level planning for sustainable development. These recommendations include raising awareness, strengthening institutional capacity, promoting inclusive decision-making processes, and adopting a people-centered approach.

Overall, this thesis contributes to the current discourse on the role of community participation in local government and sustainable development. It provides insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by Maijogmai Rural Municipality and offers practical recommendations for improving local planning and implementation. The findings have implications for policymakers, local governments, and communities striving for sustainable development and efficient service delivery.

# CHAPTER 1:

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The implementation of early theories of development, such as modernization and dependency theories, has been a subject of debate for decades due to their failure in bringing meaningful changes to the quality of life in developing countries. These approaches have shown limited contribution to reducing poverty and inequality in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, despite some economic growth (Haynes, 2008; Todaro and Smith, 2008). As a result, there has been a paradigm shift in development thinking.

The concept of development has evolved from a narrow focus on economic growth to a comprehensive approach that addresses multiple dimensions of development. These dimensions include economic development, human (social) development, sustainable development, and territorial (spatial) development. Moreover, the emphasis on development approaches has shifted from traditional centralized top-down systems to more decentralized and people-centered approaches. Some examples of these people-centered development approaches include community development, integrated rural development, participatory development, sustainable development, and capacity building (Theron, 2008).

People-centered development aims to mobilize local resources and transform institutional approaches to promote self-reliant participatory development initiatives at the local level. The overall goal of development should meet the basic needs and priorities of people and improve quality of life of disadvantaged and marginalized groups of the community.

Development is a process where community members come together to collectively address social, economic, environmental, and physical development challenges at the grassroots level. Community development aims at improving quality of life and foster mutual benefit and shared responsibility among community members in a sustainable manner. It helps build community capacity to address issues, seize opportunities, find common ground, and balance competing interests.

Development plans are essential documents that guide to achieve predetermined social and economic objectives through the mobilization of limited resources within a targeted timeframe. Sustainable development requires an appropriate balance between economic, social, physical, and environmental aspects. Participatory planning has become increasingly necessary in this context. Sustainable natural resource management, good governance, and sustainable planning are key elements of sustainable development, and transparency is crucial for proper implementation. Recognizing this, the Government of Nepal initiated a participatory planning approach at the community level with mandatory provision of participatory periodic and annual plans by local bodies (VDCs and DDCs) in Local Self-Governance Act 1998 and regulation 1999. Similarly, following the restructuring of the federal system in Nepal, every local government must formulate an Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP) for local development as per Clause 34 of the Local Government Operation Act 2017.

Community participation, as a bottom-up approach, is an integral part of the planning process to effectively address the needs of the local community. This approach has proven more successful than the top-down approach, which often fails to consider community problems and their effects. Given the present condition of Nepal, where over 30% of the population lives in absolute poverty, environmental concerns have received minimal priority. There exist a vicious cycle between environmental degradation and poverty and if not addressed properly, development efforts go waste. Therefore, the concept of participatory development planning is highly relevant in this context. Development, to be sustainable, plans should address the needs of both present and future generations. In addition, community participation is crucial during all phases viz. need identification, planning, program implementation, and performance monitoring.

Local-level development plans should be formulated in accordance with the Local Governance Operation Act, regulations, procedures, guidelines, and the latest policies of Nepal's federal government. These plans should be developed through a participatory approach incorporating the goals and objectives set by the community. They should aim for sustainable development through the proper management of local resources and other forms of support in a comfortable manner.

Based on the Local Level Act, Wards 3 and 4 in Namsaling village of Maijogmai Rural Municipality, Ilam have formulated the Periodic Village Level Development Plan employing participatory tools and approaches. The aim of this plan was to establish a plan based development

intervention for sustainable development with major objective of upliftment of the economic conditions of communities.

This study focuses on participatory local-level planning for the sustainable development in Maijogmai Rural Municipality, Ilam district. It aims to address various development-related challenges identified by the community, including socio-economic, social, environmental, agricultural, and resource management aspects. The plan prepared at the local level in Ilam, Nepal, has been implemented, and a trend has emerged for conducting development programs through collaboration between the local government and the community itself.

The village-level participatory development planning initiative was initiated and conducted by the Namsaling Village Development Committee (VDC) in Maijogmai Rural Municipality Wards 3 and 4 with technical support from the local Non-Government Organization (NGO) known as Namsaling Community Development Center (NCDC) since 2010. The overarching goal of this planning effort was to develop a participatory approach to sustainable community development planning at the local level, aiming to uplift the community's economy and livelihood.

This study on community participation in local-level planning for sustainable development contributes to supporting and improving the formulation of local-level policies for sustainable community development initiatives.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Despite tremendous support and strategic measures provided by the national government and other concerned agencies, the planning and implementation of local development initiatives, particularly Local Level Plans, remain largely inadequate because of low public participation. Therefore, this study focuses on public participation in local level planning for sustainable development and aims to improve the effectiveness of planning and implementation of Community Development Plans in the study area.

Theoretically, it is assumed that local level governments have the capacity to effectively plan and implement local development initiatives. However, literature shows that achieving developmental mandates by local authorities remains a major challenge due to poor planning and implementation. Most local level governments continue to struggle in achieving their development policy mandates despite supportive measures provided by governments and concerned agencies. Past studies on the

role of local governments in local development have mainly focused on regional, national, and cross-country levels, neglecting the importance of research at the local level. Furthermore, those studies have often relied on secondary sources of data. Therefore, there is a need of research at the local level.

In light of the aforementioned context, this study aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about the role of local government in sustainable development in Nepal. Additionally, the study seeks to generate new insights for improving the effectiveness of local level planning and implementation, which serves as a strategic tool for development in Nepal. Previous studies have primarily focused on analyzing the achievements and challenges of local level plans and developmental local governments, with limited publications on enhancing the effectiveness of local level planning for sustainable development.

Legal provisions such as the Nepal Local Self Governance Act, 1998, and Local Self Governance Regulations, 1999 form the foundation for devolving power to the local level for planning and implementing developmental activities. These provisions strongly promote local level participation and governance. Although these policies have not been fully implemented, many District Development Committees (DDCs) made efforts to implement 5-year periodic plans in their development processes during the period of 2001-2003. Sub-clauses 1, 3, and 5 of Clause 43 of the Local Self Governance Act also direct municipalities and VDCs to incorporate 5-year periodic plans in their developmental activities. Similarly, Clause 66(1) of the Local Self Governance Regulation, 1999 directs VDCs and municipalities to prepare 5-year periodic plans in a participatory manner and implement developmental activities accordingly. However, due to the lack of financial and technical support, many VDCs and municipalities have faced challenges in proper implementation.

During the initial stage, Namsaling Community Development Center (NCDC), a local NGO provided technical support in participatory planning and implementation of model projects prioritized at the community level, as well as in the formulation of participatory periodic sustainable development plans in Namsaling. During formulation of periodic plan, local bodies such as VDCs, DDCs, and other organizations provided necessary support in their respective areas. In addition, districts without a periodic plan have attempted to replicate this approach in their planning process, resulting in a continued and effective strategy.



Similarly, according to the Local Government Act 2017, rural municipalities and municipalities have the authority to develop and implement periodic, annual, strategic, thematic, mid-term, and long-term development plans for the local level under their jurisdiction.

Hence, this research contributes to the understanding of the role of local governments in sustainable development. The findings can contribute to the ongoing debate on service delivery at the local level in Nepal. Furthermore, the study is of critical importance in enhancing our understanding of improving the effectiveness of Integrated Rural Development Plans (IRDPs) as tools for developmental local governments in Nepal. The study will provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners at the local level to consider alternative strategic interventions to improve services and promote sustainable development for the community at large.

### **1.3 Policy and Legal Provisions for Periodic Planning in Nepal**

The Local Governance Act 1999, Division 6, Section 43 (1) outlines the planning process for each Village Development Committee (VDC). It emphasizes the requirement for annual or periodic planning processes for the development of VDCs. Additionally, the Local Governance Regulation 1999, Section 65 (1) in accordance with Section 43 (5) of the Act emphasizes the preparation of five-year periodic plans for each VDC. Furthermore, Section 66 (1) of the Regulation, in accordance with Sub-section 4 of Section 43 of the Act, emphasizes the use of participatory planning approaches. The following topics should be included in the plan as per the Act and the Regulation:

- Geographic, economic, and natural resources within the VDC and their current utilization.
- Production potentials of different sectors based on comparative investments and outcomes.
- Areas inhabited by various indigenous groups and areas of poverty, along with planned development activities for these areas.
- Income-generating and skill-development activities for women and children.
- Areas with higher economic conditions and the planned activities for their operation and maintenance.
- Short-term and long-term development activities in potential sectors, including measures for pollution reduction.
- Plans for local human resource development in the relevant sectors.
- Additionally, the VDCs should prioritize the following projects:

- Productive projects that yield quick results.
- Projects aimed at improving the status of the local population, generating income and employment, and reducing poverty.
- Projects with high participation but low investments.
- Projects implemented using local resources.
- Projects directly benefiting oppressed groups, women, and children.
- Projects contributing to the protection and management of the environment.

According to the Local Government Operational Act 2017, it is specified that the local government should update household-level statistics based on primary and secondary information and statistics collected by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. This will facilitate the formulation of future local level plans based on objective details, ensuring a realistic approach. The availability of objective details will assist local levels and other stakeholders in carrying out development activities. The act also stipulates the preparation of integrated rural development plans at the local level based on data and indicators in the objective description, guiding development works at the local level accordingly.

The Local Level Plan and Budget Formulation Directive, 2017, emphasizes the need for each local level to formulate annual plans and budgets through a participatory process that is result-oriented. Before formulating the plan and budget, a comprehensive assessment of the local level's geographical, social, economic, and infrastructure aspects should be conducted, leading to the preparation of an objective statement.

## **1.4 Major Research Questions**

In qualitative studies, research questions are primarily used to capture and explore meaning rather than test hypotheses (Neuman, 2006). This study adopts a qualitative approach and aims to thoroughly investigate the following broad research question: "How can local government further enhance their effectiveness in community participation in local level planning for sustainable development?" This overarching question focuses on the current role of local government in development and the effectiveness of community participation in local level planning for sustainable development.

To answer this question, the study will employ field observations, discussions with communities, interviews with stakeholders/key informants, and analysis of existing municipal documents. The findings will be grounded in empirical evidence obtained through primarily qualitative case study methods, supplemented by quantitative approaches. The study contributes to the ongoing debate on the role of community participation and its effectiveness in local level planning for sustainable development. In addition, this study will address three specific sub-questions that are closely linked to the main research inquiry:

- "Why and in what situations does the promotion of Integrated Rural Development Plans (IRDP) become more effective in achieving their sustainable development mandates at the local level?" This question aims to support the role of community-level participatory planning in sustainable development, as well as identify key factors and conditions that enhance the effectiveness of local level sustainable development.
- "To what extent and why do local governments differ in their implementation of IRDP?" This question emphasizes the effectiveness of participatory planning and implementation, and explores the key factors and conditions that can improve local level planning and its implementation for sustainable development.
- "Why and in what ways should the existing approach of public participation in local level planning and implementation be further improved to promote effective sustainable development at the local level?" This question seeks to propose necessary strategic interventions and a framework for enhancing the effectiveness of the existing approach to planning and implementation of participatory planning at the local level.

By addressing these research questions, this study aims to provide valuable insights into community participation, local level planning, and sustainable development, contributing to the development of effective strategies and approaches for promoting sustainable development at the local level.

## **1.5 Objectives of the Study**

The development plans are formulated in accordance with the Local Self-Governance Act, Regulation, and Local Governance Operation Act. These plans aim to standardize the planning process and provide clarity on subjects related to sustainable development. The main objective of this study is to enhance the capacity of the community and local government in planning for

sustainable development. Through this process, it is expected that local communities will be able to collectively determine development priorities and effectively allocate funds based on these priorities. Furthermore, the study aims to encourage local governments to incorporate community-level concerns and priorities in the formulation of integrated local level development plans.

To achieve the long-term objectives of the planning process, it is crucial for local communities to have awareness of the development potential of their areas and access to sufficient information to make informed choices regarding development options. Based on this foundation, the study aims to facilitate the formulation of sustainable development plans at the local level and ensure their proper implementation using local resources.

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- To study the effectiveness and proper utilization of the plans prepared at the local level.
- To examine the sustainability of community development activities based on participatory planning and its implementation by the local government.
- To assess the implementation status of the plan based on the Integrated Development periodic plan.
- To analyze the planning skills at the local level and evaluate the capacity for successful plan implementation.
- To investigate the status of ownership of the community development plan at the local level.
- By addressing these objectives, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of effective planning and implementation processes at the local level, and facilitate the improvement of community development practices for sustainable development.

## **1.6 Study Process**

The formulation of the development plan for the village/urban municipality should adhere to participatory, inclusive, and transparent methods and procedures as outlined in the provisions of the Local Self-Government Act 1999 and the Local Government Operation Act 2017. The Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP) has been developed with the full support, involvement, and participation of the local community and stakeholders to ensure the effective and successful implementation and ownership of the development plan. The study process has also followed

participatory methods and procedures. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized in this study.

### **1.6.1 Primary Sources:**

Primary data were collected through community-level surveys. Additionally, meetings and interactions were organized with the Rural Municipality, Wards, and communities to gather primary information. Field visits were conducted in Maijogmai Rural Municipality, specifically in ward 3 and 4 Namsaling, to study the local level plan formulation process, as well as the implementation status and effectiveness of activities.

### **1.6.2 Secondary Sources:**

Secondary resources were utilized in this study to gather additional information. The local level plans and reports published by the Rural Municipality, Wards, government and non-governmental organizations, as well as local and national publications were reviewed. Secondary source documents studied include:

- Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP) of Maijogmai Rural Municipality ward 3 & 4
- Annual plans, policies, and programs of Maijogmai Rural Municipality
- Implementation process of the village development plan
- Half-yearly and annual plan review reports of the Rural Municipality
- Annual progress reports of the Rural Municipality and wards
- Priority schemes of the local level
- Schemes operated by other local organizations and bodies in the village
- Discussions and decisions made by wards
- Local level acts, rules, regulations, and procedures

By utilization of both primary and secondary sources of data, this study aims to gather comprehensive information and insights into the local level planning and implementation processes for sustainable development.

## **1.7 Limitations of the Study**

Every social research is subject to certain limitations. In this study, time and financial constraints have been the main challenges. The research is conducted as part of an academic pursuit for the

fulfillment of the requirements for the PhD degree in Arts in Rural Development. The study has also faced hardships due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted that this study is a micro-level investigation conducted in Majjogmai Rural Municipality, particularly in ward 3 and 4 Namsaling of Ilam District, Nepal. Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations, which are outlined as follows:

- **Methodological Limitation:** This research primarily relies on community meetings, interactions, and surveys using participatory tools and techniques. The reliability of the data collected depends on the memory and perceptions of the local people. There may be other potential methods to quantify the results using modern technologies and software.
- **Result Limitation:** The sample and result analysis are derived from specific populations and communities, which may not be sufficient to draw conclusions for the entire universe. The results may differ if a larger population is included and statistical analysis is applied.
- **Area Limitation:** The research is confined to a specific geographical boundary. Conducting the study in a broader and more diverse geography could yield better result analysis. The generalization of findings from this study may not always be applicable to other geographical areas.
- **Data Analysis and Representation:** The analysis of the study is based on the available information, data, and documents obtained through community surveys and interactions with individuals, communities, wards, and the Rural Municipality. It is important to note that the representation of communities and public participation in discussions may be limited.
- **Findings and Recommendations:** The results, recommendations, and main points of this study are derived from participatory discussions. It is important to consider that the perspectives and inputs obtained through these discussions may shape the conclusions and recommendations of the study.

Despite these limitations, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the local level planning and implementation processes for sustainable development.

## **1.8 The Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is organized into five chapters, each addressing different aspects of the study. The structure of the thesis is as follows:

### **1.8.1 Chapter One: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the key elements of the study, including the background, statement of the problem, policy and legal provisions of planning in Nepal, major research questions, objectives of the study, study process, and limitations of the study. The overall structure of the thesis is also outlined in this chapter.

### **1.8.2 Chapter Two: Literature Review**

In this chapter, the role of local governments in development is explored. It begins with a conceptual overview of integrated development planning, followed by an examination of the key concepts related to community participation in sustainable development planning and the role of local government. The chapter also analyzes the local development planning process in Nepal and the role of local level governance. Besides, it examines the experiences of community-level developmental local governments. Finally, the chapter discusses the planning process and implementation of local level development, focusing on the framework for enhancing the development role of local level governance in Nepal.

### **1.8.3 Chapter Three: Methodology**

This chapter focuses on the research methodology employed in the study. It clarifies various aspects, such as the approach adopted for the study, background information about the study area, population and sampling techniques, data collection methods, data analysis procedures, considerations of validity and reliability, and ethical considerations.

### **1.8.4 Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Presentation of Findings**

Chapter Four presents the empirical findings derived from the survey research conducted in Majjogmai Rural Municipality, particularly in ward 3 and 4 of Namasaling, Ilam, Nepal. The research methodology involved the use of questionnaires, individual interviews, group discussions, and document analysis. Questionnaires were administered to various stakeholders,

including local level representatives, ward committees, and staff. Individual interviews were conducted with private sector representatives, political leaders, community-based organizations, NGOs, users, communities, and municipal representatives. Group discussions primarily involved the ward committee. The document analysis focused on the sustainability of development activities, their benefits in the long run, and the socio-economic impact assessment of these development efforts. The findings are analyzed and interpreted in detail.

### **1.8.5 Chapter Five: Summary, Findings, Conclusion, and Recommendations**

The final chapter of the thesis provides a conclusive summary of the study and presents the key findings. It identifies necessary strategic interventions to address the research questions posed in the study. Recommendations are provided, specifically addressing challenges that affect the sustainable development role of local governments in decentralized systems. These recommendations are also based on the challenges and constraints realised in the preparation, planning, and implementation of Integrated Rural Development Plans at the local level. Furthermore, this chapter proposes a framework for effective planning and implementation of Integrated Rural Development Plans in the local level.



## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **LITERATUR REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Theoretical Concepts**

This chapter focuses on the theoretical framework that underpins the sustainable development role of local governments in decentralized systems. Specifically, it examines the factors that influence the sustainable development role of local governments in decentralized governance systems. The chapter provides a broad analysis of the sustainable development role of local governments, with a particular emphasis on local participation and the provision of basic services.

The concept of local level development planning was introduced in Nepal in 1998 through the Local Governance and Community Development Program (LGCDP) to facilitate the planning process. This process aimed to promote participatory planning and shift the focus towards a people-centered approach to planning. It also aimed to achieve balanced development across physical, social, economic, and environmental dimensions for sustainable development. Integrated development planning was adopted in 1998 as a local planning tool in Nepal to facilitate the implementation of socio-economic policies at the local level. This tool was further institutionalized through various legal and policy documents, including the Local Self-Government Act of 1999. A strategic tool for realizing the development agenda of local governments in Nepal is the integrated development planning approach, as outlined in the Local Government Act of 2017. The Integrated Rural/Urban Municipal Development Plan serves as a strategic tool at the local level, guiding the planning and implementation of development initiatives.

Integrated development planning is described by the Local Government as a participatory approach that integrates sectoral plans focused on economic, social, institutional, environmental, and fiscal strategies. It aims to allocate scarce resources effectively between sectors, geographical areas, and population groups, with the objective of achieving sustainable growth, equity, and empowerment of the poor and marginalized.

Studies have shown limited public participation in Integrated Rural Development Plans, attributed to factors such as lack of awareness, information, and skills for public participation, population diversity, and negative attitudes (Government of Nepal, 2017).

Regarding the implementation of Integrated Rural Development Plans, studies indicate that the implementation of programs and projects has been largely inadequate. The slow implementation of these plans has had limited impact on the lives of beneficiaries and lacks sustainability (NPC, 2016).

Literature also reveals that development plans have often failed to address the priority needs of targeted beneficiary communities, particularly in rural areas. This failure has resulted in protests by communities dissatisfied with the slow pace of service delivery.

In Nepal, many local governments still face vulnerabilities in terms of functionality, socio-economic conditions, service delivery, resource mobilization, and ownership. Existing support measures from the national and provincial levels have been insufficient to address the challenges faced by local governments in fulfilling their developmental mandates.

This study aims to explore the role of the local level in sustainable development and assess its effectiveness in planning and implementing Integrated Rural Development Plans in Maijogmai Rural Municipality, specifically in wards 3 and 4 of Namsaling, Ilam. The study aims to contribute to the ongoing debate about the role of local governments in development, particularly in terms of service delivery. Additionally, it seeks to improve the effectiveness of local level planning and implementation as a means of achieving sustainable development in Nepal.

This chapter begins by providing background information on the research topic. It then presents the problem statement, research questions, and study objectives. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the significance of the study, definition of key terms, and an outline of the thesis structure. Finally, concluding remarks are provided.

The overall focus of the study is to enhance the effectiveness of participatory community development planning and implementation of development plans, thereby strengthening the sustainable development role of the local level in the study area.

From a theoretical perspective, it is assumed that development-oriented decentralization empowers local governments to effectively plan and implement local development initiatives. However,

literature indicates that local governments continue to face challenges in achieving their developmental mandates due to issues related to planning and implementation (NPC, 2018). In the case of Maijogmai Rural Municipality, Ilam, most wards have struggled to achieve sustainable development goals through the participatory planning process.

Different researchers from various parts of the globe have conducted studies on the role of local governments in local development, particularly focusing on the challenges in planning and implementation. However, it appears that the unit of analysis in these studies was insufficient, as most of them were conducted at regional, national, or cross-country levels rather than at the local level. Additionally, the methodology of these studies relied heavily on secondary sources of data. Consequently, some researchers argue that further research should be conducted specifically at the local level.

With the establishment of democracy in Nepal, the Constitution of Nepal 2072 BS introduced provisions for state restructuring, granting direct governance rights to the local people. As a result, the previous structure of local bodies has undergone changes, and empowered Rural Municipalities and Municipalities have been established as local governments. Currently, there are 753 Rural Municipalities and Municipalities across Nepal. In order to support the development process of these local governments following the local elections, there is a policy requirement for the formulation of an Integrated Development Plan.

Accordingly, Rural/Urban Municipalities have been preparing Integrated Rural/Urban Development Plans (IRDPs) as fundamental documents for formulating annual, periodic, and strategic plans. These IRDPs are developed through a participatory planning process in accordance with the Local Government Operation Act. They involve the coordination and involvement of multiple stakeholders, including executive members, elected representatives, RM office staff, ward office staff, political parties, intellectuals, social workers/leaders, NGOs, and CBOs, as mandated by Acts, Rules, and Guidelines related to plan formulation. The plan is formulated based on the goals and strategies outlined in the integrated plan, aiding in the selection and prioritization of development plans for fiscal years.

As per the policy provisions and guidelines of the Government of Nepal, Rural Municipalities prepare a five-year IRDP that includes provisions for mid-term review and evaluation of plan implementation. This assessment evaluates the status of plan implementation and provides a

detailed analysis of participatory planning, weaknesses in policy, local level capacity, and the sustainability of development activities.

The objective of this study is to analyze participatory planning at the local level and assess the implementation status based on the plan, identify policy weaknesses, evaluate local level capacities, and assess the sustainability of development activities. It serves as a comprehensive examination of the planning and implementation aspects within Rural Municipalities.

## **2.2 Definitions of Key Concepts**

For the sake of clarity, the following definitions of key terms are presented, as their meanings might vary when applied in different contexts or disciplines:

### **2.2.1 Participation**

Participation is a broad concept that holds different meanings for different individuals. However, all definitions share the common aspect of community involvement in decision-making processes within their own society. Participation is often referred to as community participation, which can be defined based on various factors such as geographic location, norms, and interests.

### **2.2.3 Community Participation**

Community participation is an integral part of the "people-centered" approach. It is facilitated through various legal provisions, with many countries' constitutions providing a framework for empowering both local governments and citizens. Mechanisms such as Ward Committees, local groups, Toles, and self-help groups provide the structure for citizen participation. Local government institutions have a highly participatory nature due to their close interface with local communities. Community participation enables ownership of local development initiatives, contributing to the successful implementation of sustainable development projects. Meaningful participation requires institutional capacity within local governments to meet the aspirations of local communities. Community participation aims to involve citizens in various local government functions, including need identification, priority setting, budgeting provisions, activity implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. It allows citizens to participate in the decision-making process on local issues. Community participation is also referred to as public participation and involves the involvement of people in decision-making processes related to planning,

implementation, and monitoring of political, administrative, or other decisions that directly or indirectly affect them.

The concept of community participation has become an established development strategy, promoting more equitable and sustainable development targeted at poor and vulnerable communities in developing countries. In Nepal, with the promulgation of the Constitution in 2015, local governing bodies have been granted new judicial, legislative, and executive powers, emphasizing urban planning and effective service delivery. The Local Government Operation Act of 2017 promotes cooperation, coexistence, and coordination between the federal, provincial, and local levels, aiming to deliver efficient and quality services by ensuring people's participation, accountability, and transparency. These changing dynamics present significant opportunities and challenges in demanding effective public services and policies, reevaluating the concept of citizen participation, and strengthening public accountability in shaping social policy and improving public services for sustainable development. Citizen participation in local development projects is influenced by various internal and external factors that play a crucial role in determining the extent of participation within an uneven context. Participation should always involve planning with people, implementation with people, and sharing the benefits with people. Therefore, it is important to understand the factors that impact community participation from the community's perspective, as this knowledge is vital for local governments, policymakers, and citizens themselves. This study aims to explore the internal factors that are critical to consider during community participation in local level planning for sustainable development projects.

#### **2.2.4 Planning**

Planning is the foundational and essential function of management. It is the process of designing future plans of action to be followed and is often synonymous with "looking ahead." Planning involves the creation of objectives, policies, procedures, and strategies. Local level planning is a process that focuses on resolving local-level problems and issues. Its priorities include the overall welfare of the people and the development of the local area.

##### ***2.2.4.1 Development Planning***

The concept of development planning emerged in the late 1980s, and governmental agencies around the world have since defined and utilized planning techniques to achieve their development objectives. Different types of development planning models have been established and

implemented under various approaches by these government agencies. This section critically analyzes the early conceptions and contemporary approaches to development planning in order to clarify the meaning of "development planning" in the context of this study.

#### ***2.2.4.2 Traditional Perspectives of Development Planning***

One of the early conceptions of development planning was the blueprint approach, which emphasized the creation of a detailed fixed master plan as a guideline for utilizing and managing scarce land resources to accelerate growth. This approach involved three logical steps:

- First, the existing situations were surveyed, and relevant information on settlement characteristics and economic trends were assessed.
- Secondly, the surveyed data was analyzed to predetermine necessary actions to address problems.
- Thirdly, a fixed plan was finalized, incorporating major remedial actions for implementation.

However, this approach had a negative impact on community empowerment as it undermined the importance of participation in planning processes. Critics argue that the approach neglected the priority needs of the community, leaving community members out of the decision-making process. This resulted in the disempowerment of communities and focused primarily on the physical and spatial aspects of planning, such as land utilization and management.

It is essential to recognize that development planning should prioritize improving the quality of life for individuals rather than solely focusing on service provision or economic growth.

Another traditional conception of development planning was the systematic approach, based on the idea of systems thinking where phenomena are viewed as complex interacting systems. However, the systematic approach tended to overlook the complexity of human behavior and the difficulty in understanding it.

#### **2.2.5 Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development is the principle that human societies must meet their needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The concept was officially defined for the first time in the Brundtland Report in 1987.

Specifically, sustainable development involves organizing society in a way that considers present and future imperatives, such as environmental preservation, equitable social and economic development, and the responsible use of natural resources.

Achieving sustainable development is a complex social process that requires making decisions about the rights and needs of present and future generations. It involves balancing priorities at local, national, and global levels. Integration of social, economic, and environmental objectives is necessary where possible, while trade-offs may be required when these objectives are incompatible.

This entails changing institutional and individual roles and responsibilities to foster sustainable development through new patterns of behavior. Decision-making and action must incorporate a multidisciplinary approach, considering the analysis of social, economic, and environmental dimensions and their interactions. Effective coordination among different authorities responsible for various sectors is crucial. Additionally, comprehensive educational efforts are needed to demonstrate the complexities of developmental and environmental issues and promote sustainable responses.

**Box 1:** Sustainable Development Requires a Strategic, Participatory Approach. Sustainable development is guided by four essential goals that must be met:

**A. Meeting the needs of future generations through present decisions:**

Achieving sustainability relies on the actions taken by various groups, with impacts spanning generations. Today's generation must be motivated to ensure a sustainable future. This involves gathering diverse perspectives and sufficient information to develop and compare complex scenarios, considering uncertainties, employing a mix of policy, market, and other incentives, and adopting an adaptive approach that emphasizes continuous improvement. Social preferences, norms, and economic and environmental conditions change over time, and adaptation is necessary.

**B. Balancing social, economic, and environmental objectives:**

This requires applying social, economic, and environmental sciences alongside people-centered approaches that incorporate local knowledge, ideas, and values.

**C. Managing natural systems within their limits:**

Recognizing the multiple values of natural systems (economic, social, environmental), reconciling diverse facts, opinions, and needs concerning these systems, establishing appropriate policy and economic signals for sustainable management, and ensuring the rights, responsibilities, powers, skills, technology, and capacity necessary for effective management.

**D. Focusing on development, not just growth:**

This involves preserving long-term quality, coordinating development across all sectors and institutions, rather than prioritizing growth in limited areas, and fostering a policy and economic climate conducive to long-term investments, while applying the precautionary principle.

**Achieving these goals requires two fundamental approaches:**

**STRATEGY:** Making strategic choices regarding objectives and targets, and adopting an adaptive approach for their implementation and review. This entails envisioning the desired outcome, taking one step at a time along the path, and having the ability to course-correct if necessary.

**PARTICIPATION:** Embracing an intersectoral and integrative approach that emphasizes dialogue and incorporates diverse perspectives. Mutual cooperation is key to defining the vision and staying on the right path.



### **2.2.6 Local Level Planning**

Local level planning refers to the planning process at the community level, often associated with a bottom-up approach. It involves the development of each local area based on the optimal utilization of its natural, human, and institutional resources, with the primary objective of improving the socio-economic conditions of the local population. The underlying premise is to create development activities that expand opportunities for individuals, social groups, and geographically organized communities, mobilizing their capabilities and resources for the collective benefit in social, economic, and political terms.

The justification for local level planning arises from the recognition that the conventional top-down approach to development planning has led to a disparity between aspirations and achievements. In this approach, the participation of local people in identifying their own problems and determining suitable practices is often constrained by institutional limitations. In Nepal, top-down planning has been widely practiced in recent decades, with limited devolution of planning responsibilities to local government institutions. Local level planning gains importance as local institution being a self-sustaining unit, possess untapped human and natural resources.

One of the advantages of local level planning is that plans are prepared after a comprehensive study of public demands, local situations, ideas, and resources. The process necessitates the establishment of functional community organizations to ensure popular participation in both the formulation and implementation of planning processes. These organizations bring together various functional groups within the community, such as women's groups, youth groups, farmer groups, religious groups, cultural organizations, and occupational groups. Establishing a close relationship between the village and the local government is crucial for effective local level planning.

Under a participatory framework, all spatially structured units are organized for planning purposes. The village serves as the smallest unit of local level planning and represents planning at the grassroots level. Local level planning aims to mobilize village talents and engage the community in participatory action. It involves micro-planning with community involvement, empowering villagers to identify specific problems, brainstorm solutions, and mobilize resources, including funds, materials, and manpower for implementation.

## **2.3 Local Government in Nepal**

Local government refers to public institutions at the small geographic level, such as villages, cities, towns, or counties, which are the closest and most trusted organizations for local citizens.

In Nepal, the provision of local government is defined in the constitution, outlining their major responsibilities to deliver specified services within delineated territories. In developing countries, local government serves a dual purpose. Firstly, it plays a key role in fund allocation, functional responsibilities, and recruitment of personnel to provide services. Secondly, it fosters high levels of public trust by involving citizens in democratic exercises, identifying public needs, and ensuring accountability.

These institutional units exercise legislative, executive, and judicial powers over the smallest administrative and political areas, aiming to balance national interests. Local government structures involve elected representatives who act within delegated or devolved powers from higher levels of government. They have the authority to formulate local public policies and strategies, oversee administrative officers, establish local governance systems, and exercise powers and functions for effective service delivery.

Alongside the establishment of democracy in Nepal, the Constitution of Nepal 2072 BS has provided local people with direct governance rights. The previous local body structure has been revised, resulting in the establishment of empowered Rural Municipalities and Municipalities as local governments (local level). Currently, there are 753 active local level governments in Nepal, including Metropolitan, Sub-Metropolitan, Municipality, and Rural Municipality.

### **2.3.1 Local Development Planning in Nepal**

Local governments are increasingly recognized as agents of people-centered development due to their proximity to the local community. In Nepal, the government has promoted development-oriented decentralization to enhance the role of local government in sustainable development. Various policies and legal frameworks emphasize that local governments should focus on social, economic, and environmental development by engaging communities and community-based organizations.

However, the challenge lies in ensuring the sustainability of development initiatives and their benefits for the wider community. The Local Self-Governance Act 1999, along with regulations,

guidelines, and government policies, has established the formulation of village level plans through a participatory approach. These plans aim to uplift communities from their present conditions towards sustainable development by effectively managing resources and providing necessary support.

The Local Self-Governance Act, 1999, mandates Village Development Committees and District Development Committees to prepare district development plans that encompass all aspects of the village and district. Annual programs are also required to be formulated and implemented through a participatory approach. The purpose is to institutionalize development processes at the local level.

Integrated Rural Development Plans (IRDPs), also known as local level plans, are formulated based on policy provisions and government guidelines. They serve as basic documents for the formulation of annual, periodic, and strategic plans at the local level. The Local Government Operation Act encourages the participatory planning process for the preparation of IRDPs, which span a five-year period.

An integrated development planning approach is considered a strategic tool to realize the development agenda of local governments in Nepal. The Integrated Rural/Urban Municipal Development Plan serves as a municipal strategic tool guiding all planning and implementation at the local level. It facilitates the design and implementation of development initiatives by local governments.

### **2.3.2 Planning Process for Local Development**

Planning is an essential path to improving the economic condition of a country. It involves organized, conscious, and continuous efforts to select the best available alternatives to achieve specific goals. In Nepal, development planning began in 1956 after the Rana Regime was dismantled, marking a turning point in the country's economic development. However, after more than five decades of planned development, Nepal's progress has been slower than expected, raising concerns about the effectiveness of the country's planning system and institutions.

The roles of the three tiers of government in public service delivery have become a topic of open and vigorous debate. Three-dimensional planning aims to integrate the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of territorial strategies to ensure sustainable development outcomes.

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 established a three-tier federal structure, defining the roles and responsibilities of each tier. It is essential to establish linkages between the National Planning Commission (NPC) and all tiers of government during the development planning and implementation process.

### **2.3.3 Federal Planning Mechanism in Nepal**

The three layers of planning mechanism exist with well-defined roles, responsibilities, scope of work, and procedures. The National Planning Commission (NPC) formulates development policies and plans, focusing on long-term vision and balanced and sustainable development for rapid economic progress in Nepal. The NPC serves as the apex advisory body of the government, formulating national visions, periodic plans, and development policies.

A provincial planning commission shares responsibilities with the federal government and the local level. The Provincial Planning Commission (PPC) focuses on preparing province-level plan policies and endorses the national development goals set by the NPC. The PPC ensures careful consideration of distinctive and shared functions, roles, and responsibilities of each tier of government in preparing provincial-level policies and plans.

The Local Government Operation Act 2017 defines the functions, roles, and responsibilities of the local level in line with the Constitution of Nepal's specifications. The local level is responsible for preparing mid/short-term, periodic plans and local development strategies to systematically implement their functions and roles. The local level plays a significant role in functionalizing the entire planning and development process by formulating local level development plans, allocating resources to priority sectors, facilitating project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

Therefore, the local level establishes a Local Planning Unit to undertake constitutionally delegated functions, roles, and responsibilities, formulating local level periodic plans and short/mid-term development strategies. This unit is guided by the Revenue Projection and Budget Ceiling Determination Committee and the Budget and Program Formulation Committee, as outlined in the Local Government Operation Act, 2017.

The Local Level is responsible for delivering services to the local people. The Local Planning Unit collects baseline information for service delivery and infrastructure development, adhering to NPC and PPC guidelines. The planning mechanism of the federal Nepal is illustrated in the chart below.

### **2.3.4 Planning Relationship among Three Tiers of Government**

Guidelines ensure that decentralized development plans are well linked to the overall national development strategic direction and sector development goals. These guidelines also aim to establish synergies and linkages within and between agencies in the local government planning framework. The federal government, provincial government, and local level have distinct and shared functions, roles, and responsibilities. Each tier formulates national, provincial, and local level plans within their respective jurisdictions. Planning entities focus on independent and shared functions, roles, and responsibilities of the respective governments. A sound relationship and coordination between planning entities and governments are crucial in preparing, coordinating/facilitating, and monitoring and evaluating long-term, short-term, periodic, and annual plans.

### **2.3.5 Local Planning Unit and its Relationships with Other Stakeholders**

A standardized planning tool developed by the NPC is used by local planning units for uniform monitoring and evaluation of plans and projects. The local planning unit plays a vital role in sustainable self-operating planning, ensuring smooth implementation and handover of projects to the authorities.

The local planning unit holds greater responsibilities for service delivery accountability, as they are directly connected to local people and end-users. It must follow the guidelines from superior planning entities, submit reports to the local governing council, and share them with superior offices.

It is responsible for the protection, maintenance, and coordination of various projects and programs within their boundary. It must maintain an inventory of assets and provide records to the Provincial Government and Federal Government. Baseline data collected at the local level should be analyzed, compiled, and stored in archives. This data should be shared with federal and provincial governments.

Local levels should involve local service users and stakeholders in the formulation of project plans, establishing networks and web interfaces that include all wards.

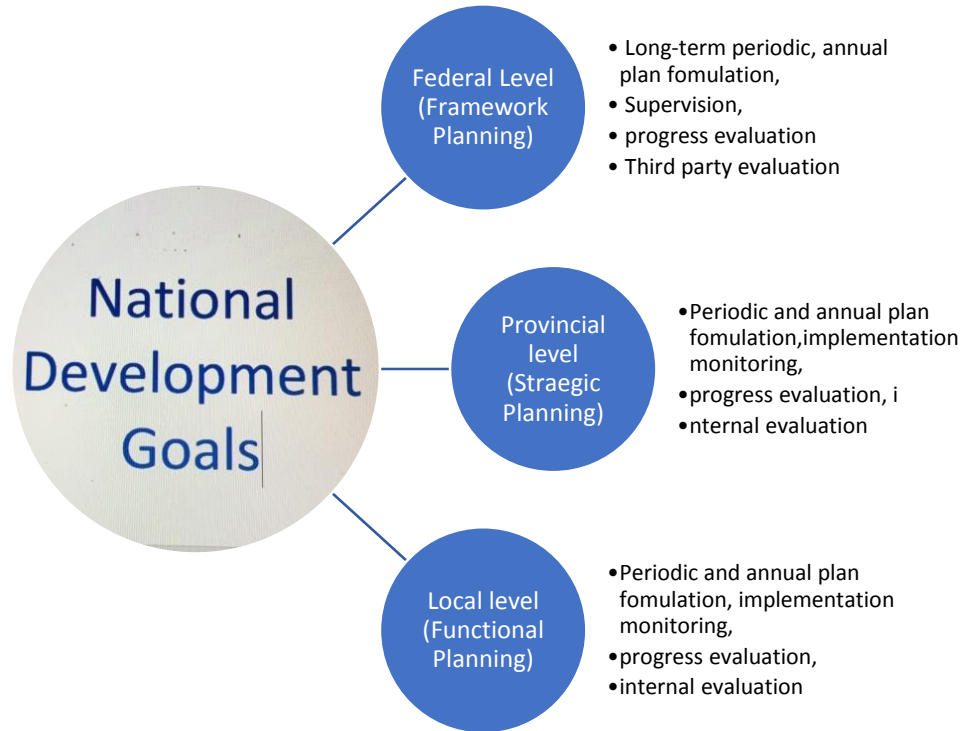
During the planning process, each tier of government must consult government ministries and departments, unit offices, and other development stakeholders within their jurisdictions. The relationships can be explained as follows:

**Central Level:** The National Planning Commission coordinates and consults with the National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission (NNRFC), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), other federal ministries and departments, national-level NGOs, International Development Partners (through the Ministry of Finance), and other relevant stakeholders involved in the planning process. Effective coordination with these entities is crucial for formulating plans under shared responsibilities.

**Province Level:** The Provincial Planning Commission, in coordination with the Province Ministry of Economic Affairs and Planning, consults with other province ministries and departments, province-level semi-governmental organizations, District Coordination Committees within the province, neighboring Provincial Governments, province-level NGOs, individual experts, and other development stakeholders in the formulation of plans.

**Local Level:** The Local Planning Unit, in close coordination with the Resource Projection and Budget Limit Determination Committee and the Budget and Program Formulation Committee, consults with the relevant sections/units of the local level, the local-level offices of the Federal Government (FG) and Provincial Government (PG), neighboring Local Levels, NGOs, consumer groups, cooperatives, and other community-based organizations and intellectuals to prepare the local-level plan.

Figure 1



## 2.4 Process of Local Development Planning in Nepal

The process of local development planning in Nepal, under the federal democratic republican state, is a relatively new practice and lacks extensive empirical experience. Local development planning (LDP) is a participatory process where local beneficiaries organize themselves to identify their needs, prioritize problems and issues, develop objectives, and set strategies and policies. They actively participate in the implementation phase, monitor progress, and evaluate the outcomes of their plans. All development stakeholders working at the local level have the opportunity to be involved in the process of local development planning, resource mobilization, and service delivery in collaboration with the relevant local bodies.

Local development planning is a technique, process, and means to achieve pre-determined goals and objectives set by the central planning authority. To facilitate the formulation of local development plans, various subjective committees are formed to cover specific areas of focus. These committees are established to streamline the planning process and ensure comprehensive consideration of different aspects related to local development.

**Table 1: Subjective committees formed at local level**

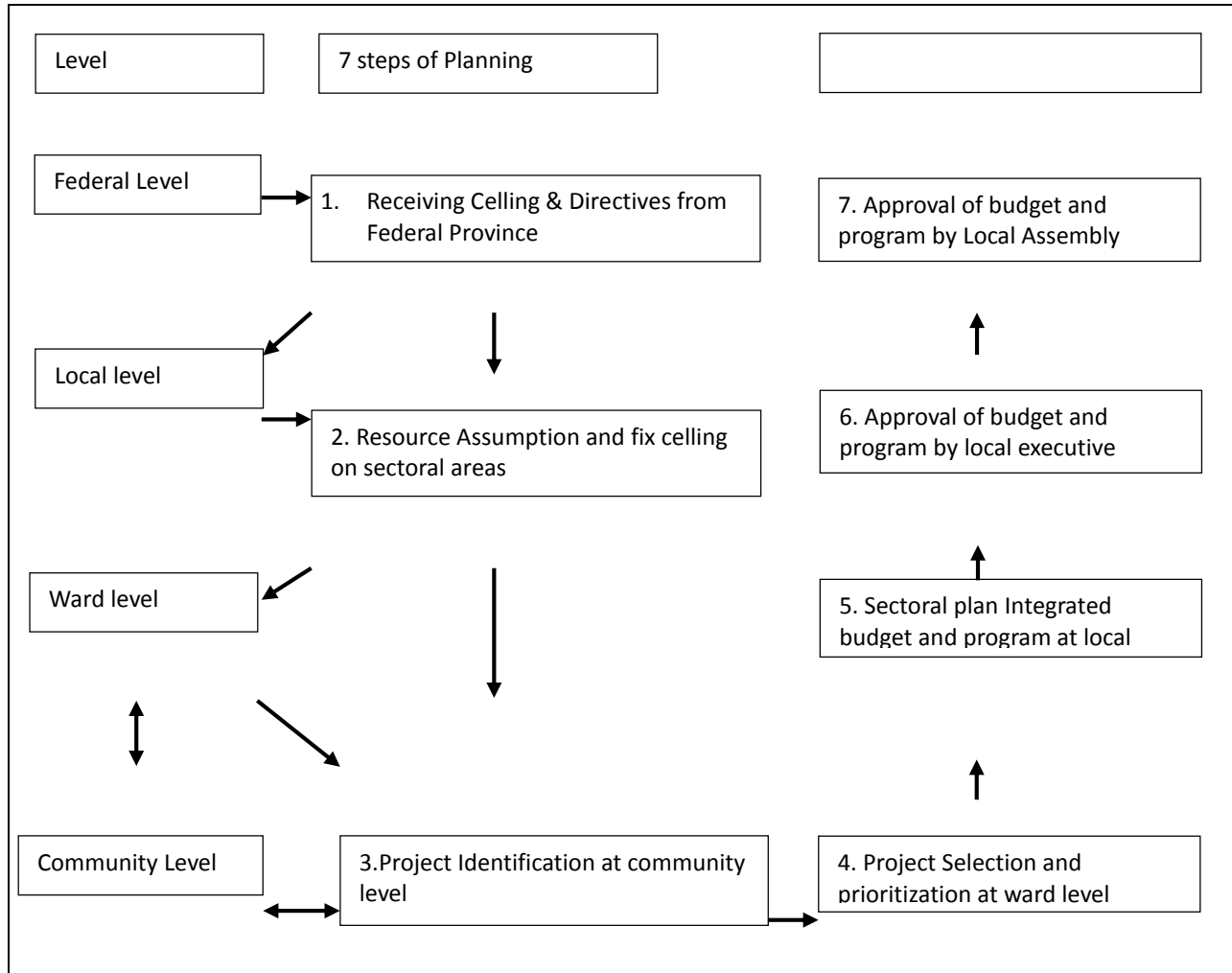
S.N.	Subjective Committee	Committee Related Sub-sector
1.	Economic Development	Agriculture, industry, commerce and trade, tourism, cooperative and financial sector.
2.	Social Development	Education, health, drinking water and sanitation, culture, gender equality and social inclusion.
3.	Infrastructure Development	Road and bridge, suspension bridge, irrigation, building and urban development, energy, micro hydro-power, alternative energy and communication
4.	Forest, Environment and Disaster Management	Forest and land conservation, watershed conservation, environmental conservation, climate change, drainage management, disaster management etc.
5.	Institutional Development and Good Governance	Human resource development, institutional capacity development, determining the criteria for service delivery, use of electric communication in service delivery mechanism, fund mobilization, financial discipline, accounting and internal control, final accounting and other.

Thus, the formulation of the local development plan should incorporate a comprehensive framework that addresses the holistic and balanced development of various sectors in the local economy, including primary (agriculture), secondary (industry), and tertiary (service), as well as the dimensions of local development such as social, cultural, economic, political, environmental, human, and physical aspects. The Local Government Operation Act, enacted in 2017, introduced a decentralized planning process that starts at the settlement level and progresses through the Rural Municipality (RM), Municipality (M), and District Coordination Committee (DCC), culminating at the national level. All local bodies are required to prepare short-term, medium-term, long-term, periodic, and strategic plans.

The Local Government Operation Act (2017) outlines a bottom-up planning process for local bodies at each level, beginning at the settlement level. This process, commonly known as the 8-step planning process, emphasizes the active involvement and participation of the community, government, and civil society stakeholders. The planning cycle follows a time-bound approach and consists of eight stages.



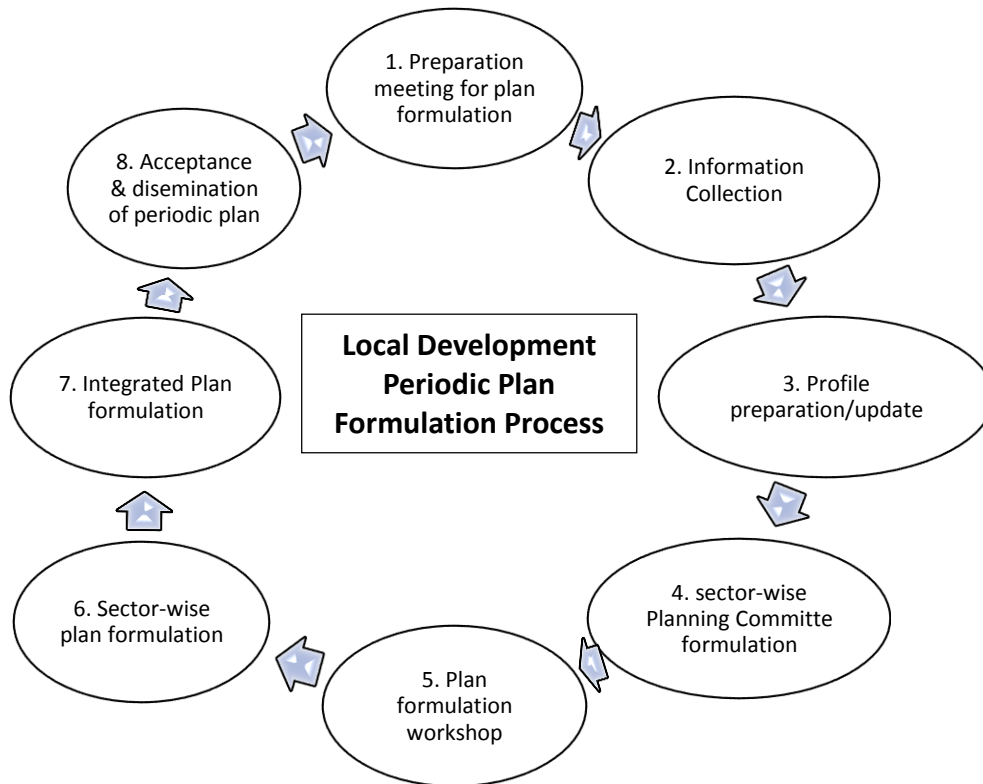
**Figure 2: Current Seven Steps Annual Planning process in Nepal**



### 2.4.3 Local Development Plan Formulation Process

The local development plan formulation process consists of eight stages and is initiated in the month of August, concluding by the 1st of January. The Chairperson and Mayor of the Rural Municipality and Municipality, respectively, play a leading role in the entire process. Local governance encompasses a set of institutions and mechanisms that govern the planning, implementation, maintenance, evaluation, and monitoring of local affairs, ultimately impacting the local population. It provides a structured framework for determining and implementing public choices and decisions at the local level. When developing a periodic plan, local governments must adhere to the aforementioned eight stages.

Figure 3: Local Development Plan Formulation process



Source: Local Level Plan Formulation Direction, 2075

#### 2.4.4 Steps in Local-Level Planning

Local governments are responsible for preparing and implementing their annual plans, as well as periodic plans, mid-term expenditure frameworks, and sectoral strategies within their jurisdiction for local development.

#### 2.5 The Role of Community Participation

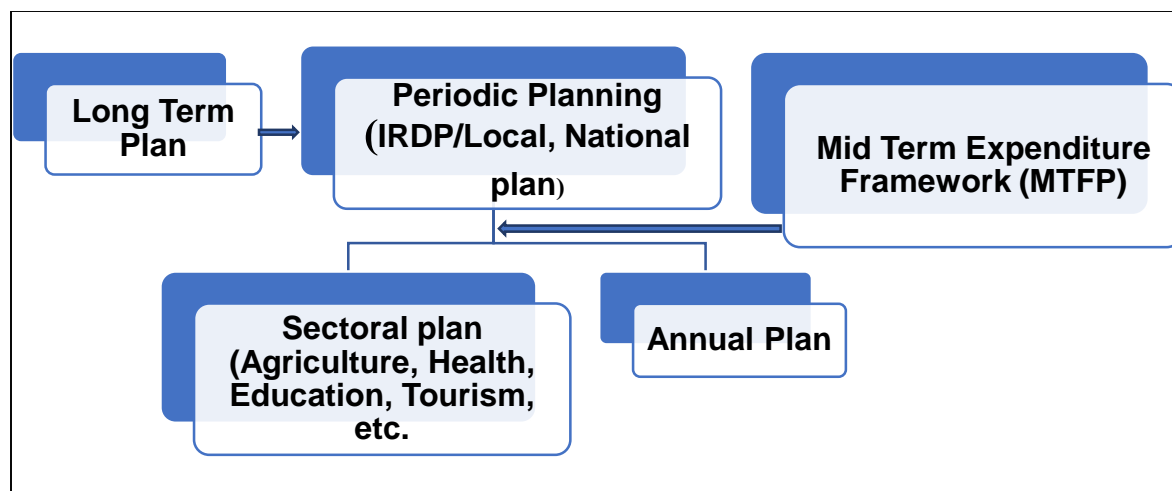
The assumption that community participation is crucial for sustainable development in the local-level planning approach is based on its potential to empower local governments and enhance local participation. However, empirical evidence from different regions of the world has shown mixed results, leading to ongoing debates on the relationship between the community development approach and local participation in development processes.

Some researchers argue that the local-based planning process has positively contributed to improving the participation of grassroots communities in development planning and

implementation. For instance, Heller et al. (2007) conducted a study in Kerala, India, using stratified sampling techniques and found that the local-based planning process significantly increased local involvement in decision-making processes and budget allocations. Marginalized and excluded groups, including women and minority communities, also benefited from the process.

Similarly, Blair (2000) conducted a cross-country study in six countries and found that decentralization of power and resources encouraged community participation and representation at the local level, bringing new elements such as women and minorities into local politics and decision-making.

**Figure 4: Interrelationship of local level plans**

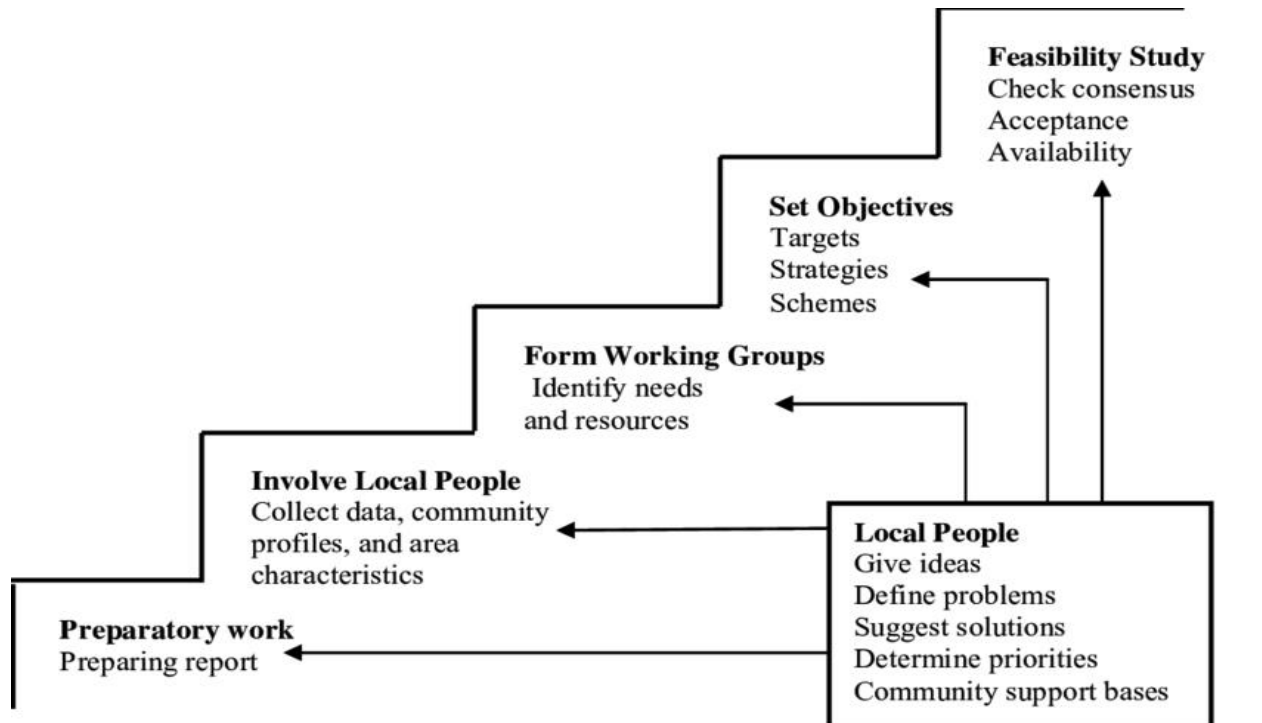


However, it is important to consider both urban and rural areas in the comprehensive planning process to encourage participation at all levels, as highlighted by Sanni's (2010) study on local development in South Western Nigeria. The study found that processes perceived as reducing marginalization provided opportunities for disadvantaged groups to have a greater say in local affairs.

To promote broad-based involvement in local development, new structures and systems need to be established, fostering active participation, idea sharing, and ownership of development programs and projects by disadvantaged groups. The depth, quality, and process of involvement serve as key indicators to measure comprehensive local participation.

Decentralization with the aim of devolving political power to the local level can also increase grassroots participation in matters that affect their lives. Assessing the effectiveness of the process can be done by considering variables such as the focus and clarity of the approach for local participation.

Figure 5: Local level participatory planning process



### 3.6 Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Sustainable development has been a global agenda for the past 25 years, with the United Nations establishing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as a foundation for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The UN conferences held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 and the UN General Assembly in September 2014 laid the groundwork for SDGs, which were officially agreed upon in the September 2015 UNGA. As a member of the UN, Nepal is committed to this global initiative.

There is a strong correlation between the rights enshrined in Nepal's constitution of 2015 and the laws at the local level with the SDGs. The provision of essential public services and the investment

required for these services are the responsibilities of the local level. These responsibilities encompass areas such as basic and secondary education, primary healthcare, access to clean drinking water and sanitation, agriculture, basic infrastructure, and social inclusion and protection.

The National Planning Commission (NPC) of Nepal has been incorporating the SDGs since the fourteenth plan by aligning them with the country's economic, social, and environmental context. In the fifteenth plan, the NPC has further internalized and identified the SDGs to ensure their fulfillment and implementation.

Since the fiscal year 2017/18, priority has been given to the inclusion of indicators and programs/projects in the medium-term expenditure framework that support the achievement of SDGs. The medium-term expenditure framework is designed to align budgetary policies and programs with the SDGs, and the coding system ensures compatibility between the program and SDGs in the annual budget program.

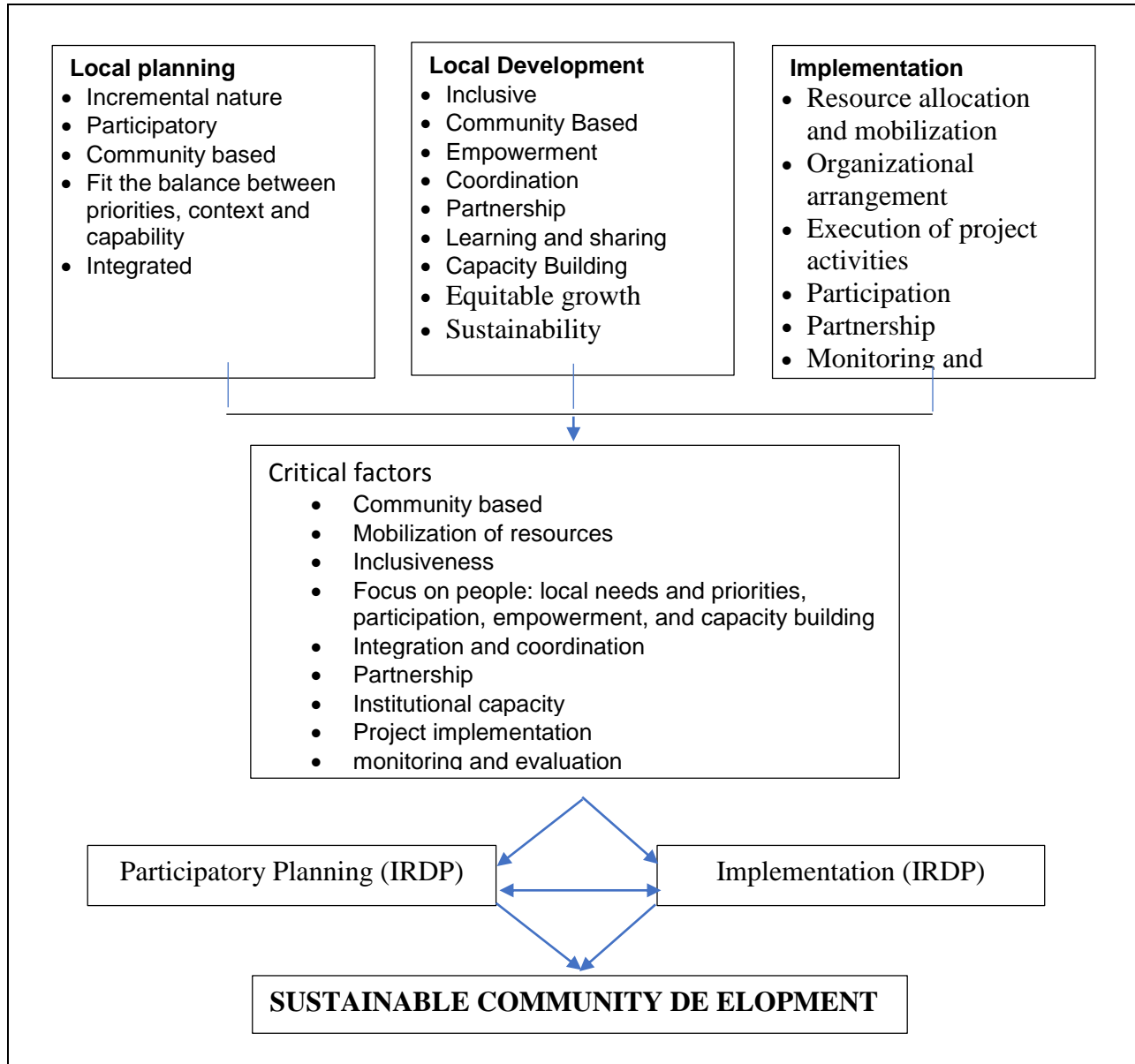
At the local level, the goals of sustainable development should be grouped according to different thematic committees within the local level planning framework. The activities of committees focused on economic, social, infrastructure, environmental protection, institutional development, and governance contribute to the localization of SDGs.

### **3.7 Analytical Framework for Strengthening Local Level Planning for Sustainable Development**

As discussed in this chapter, the effectiveness of local government in promoting sustainable community development is influenced by several key factors. The framework presented below outlines these factors and conditions necessary for effective participatory planning at the local level for sustainable development.

This framework represents the critical factors and conditions identified from the preceding discussion. These concepts have informed the data collection and analysis in this research, specifically focusing on participatory planning at the local level for sustainable development.

Figure 6: Participatory Sustainable Community Development Planning & Implementation



Source: Own framework, 2022

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Methodology of Study:**

The study on participatory planning at the local level for sustainable development utilizes both primary and secondary data sources to assess a set of indicators that will be monitored in the coming years as the government progresses. The primary data was collected through quantitative and qualitative methods, including surveys, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews conducted over a one-year period from 2021 to 2022. The study locations presented in Annex 4.

The research methodology encompasses key components such as the selection of survey locations (study population and sample), data collection methods, and data analysis techniques.

Participatory approach was employed in community appraisal, data collection, and discussions. The use of participatory processes allowed for gathering information and data through discussions with the local community. Community-level planning was developed and implemented at the local level. Therefore, the study adopted participatory approaches using social accountability tools and techniques. The public participation in local level planning for sustainable community development, considering social, economic, and environmental perspectives was focused during study.

The successful implementation of sustainable development requires the participation of both the community and local government throughout the planning process. Therefore, this study incorporated various participatory methodologies to ensure community participation in local level planning for sustainable development. The following methodologies, steps, and processes were utilized in the study:

#### **3.2 Study Area**

##### **3.2.1 Selection of the Study Area**

The study area, Maijogmai Rural Municipality, is one of the 10 municipalities in Ilam District, Nepal. It is divided into six wards and encompasses several villages. Geographically, Maijogmai

RM is situated in the eastern part of Ilam and Nepal. For this study, Maijogmai Rural Municipality, specifically ward 3 & 4 (Namsaling village), was purposively selected to evaluate the consequences, effectiveness, and relevancy of participatory planning in local level for sustainable development in that specific area.

Maijogmai Rural Municipality, ward 3 & 4 Namsaling, is responsible for the preparation and implementation of the local level development periodic plan. The planning approach identifies the community's needs at the grassroots level and utilizes participatory tools and techniques to facilitate the development of participatory plans. The municipality collaborates with the local community to implement activities with the goal of sustainability.

### **3.2.2 Introduction of Study Area**

The study area, Namsaling village, is located in ward 3 and 4 of Maijogmai Rural Municipality (RM), Ilam District, Koshi Province, Eastern Nepal. Ilam, the district headquarters, is situated approximately 600 km east of Kathmandu. Namsaling is located in the eastern part of Ilam district.

The study area is slightly lower in elevation and wider compared to other wards of Maijogmai RM. Shukrabare, a small market-place, serves as the economic, administrative, and political center of the area. The study area consists of evergreen conifers in the far north, while tropical vegetation can be found in the southernmost areas. Farming is the way of life of people and the cash crops such as cardamom, ginger, potatoes, chillies, broom-grass, fruits, and dairy products are the main sources of income for the majority of the inhabitants. Challenges for the physical development of the study area include essential infrastructure in terms of transportation, health services and facilities, higher education, agriculture, environmental concerns, natural calamities, floods, and erosion.

#### **3.2.2.1 Geographical Condition**

The study area is located 15 km east of the district headquarters, Ilam Bazaar. It is bordered by Nayabazaar ward 1 to the east, Jogmai Khola to the southeast, Mai Khola to the west, and Soyang Khola to the north. The study area lies between 26° 53' 45" to 26°57'34" North Latitude and 87°57'03" to 88°01'54" East Longitude, with an elevation ranging from 500 to 2020 meters above Mean Sea Level. It falls within the warm temperate zone with diverse altitudinal ranges. The



temperature ranges from 2° C during winter to 35° C during summer, with an average annual rainfall of 375 cm.

### 3.2.2.2 Demographic Situation

Social, economic, and demographic information/data were obtained from secondary sources. The population size of Namsaling is as follows. The population structure has been surveyed at different times.

#### A. Size of households & population

The total number of households and population in Maijogmai Rural Municipality and the study area (ward 3 & 4) are as follows:

**Table 1: Population and household information of RM and study area**

S.N	Population Information	Household	Male	Female	Total	Average Family size
1	Total Population of Maijogmai RM	4677	10377	10667	21044	4.4
2	Total population of the study area	1403	3015	3197	6212	4.4

*Source: Maijogmai RM Profile 2017*

#### B. Population by Ethnic Group in the Study Area

The study area exhibits a high level of ethnic diversity, with 18 major ethnic groups residing in the region. The majority of the population consists of the Brahmin, Chhetri, Rai, Limbu, Dewan, Magar, and other communities. Ward 4 is predominantly inhabited by Brahmins, Chhetris, Limbus, Tamangs, while Ward 3 is populated by Yalmus. Additionally, there are 8 households with a population of 38 from the aboriginal Lepcha community (Indigenous ethnic group on the verge of extinction). The Dalit community, including Bishwakarma, Darji, and Sharki, is dispersed throughout the area. The distribution of ethnic communities in each ward is provided below.

**Table 2: Ward wise population by ethnic group of study area**

Ward No.	Brahamin/ Cheetri	Rai	Limbu	Dewan	Magar	Tamang	Gurung	Bishwakarma	Darji	Sarki	Yalnu	Vujel/ Khawas	Newar	Sherpa	Lepcha	Sanyasi	Marbadi	Ghale	Total
3	902	250	81	64	147	90	-	195	42	96	289	11	282	52	38	-	1	78	2628
4	1095	461	562	531	72	327	31	317	90	9	-	52	95	-	-	8	-	19	3484
Total	2022	631	643	595	219	417	31	492	132	105	289	63	377	52	38	8	1	97	6212

*Source: Maijogmai RM Profile 2017*

### 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure for the Study

#### 3.3.1 Sampling Method

Sampling procedures and sample size are crucial aspects of research. The quality of research depends on the adequacy of these factors (Bless et al., 2013). Considering the constraints of time and resources, the following sampling procedure was adopted in this study.

Since the study area represents a mid-hill area community with similar socio-economic status, the Simple Random Sampling technique was employed. This involved selecting entire villages to ensure similarity and better representation of respondents. Out of the total 26 communities, 8 communities (33 percent) were randomly chosen for the community survey, and 27 individuals representing different communities were included in the key informant interviews, achieving a 33 percent sample.

#### 3.3.2 Stratified Sampling

Stratified sampling was used to select local communities for the study. The population was classified into two strata: performing weak and performing well. The study focused on eight local communities (Manchok, Ghumane, Gairigaun, Maidangaun, Dhandegaun, Mijarogan, Gupti, and Nepladanda).

From the weak performing stratum, four communities (Manchok, Nepaldanda, Ghumaune, and Gupti) were randomly selected. From the performing well stratum, Gairigaun, Maidangaun, Mijargaun, and Dhandegaun were selected for the study.

Prior permission was obtained from the Rural Municipality (RM) to conduct the field survey.

### **3.3.3 Purposive Sampling**

Purposive sampling was used to identify respondents from the selected local communities and wards. According to Babbie (2010), purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on knowledge of the population, its elements, and the study's purpose. In qualitative research, key informants with rich information are of utmost importance, so the researcher purposively selected individuals based on specific criteria to gain deeper knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon (Bless et al., 2013).

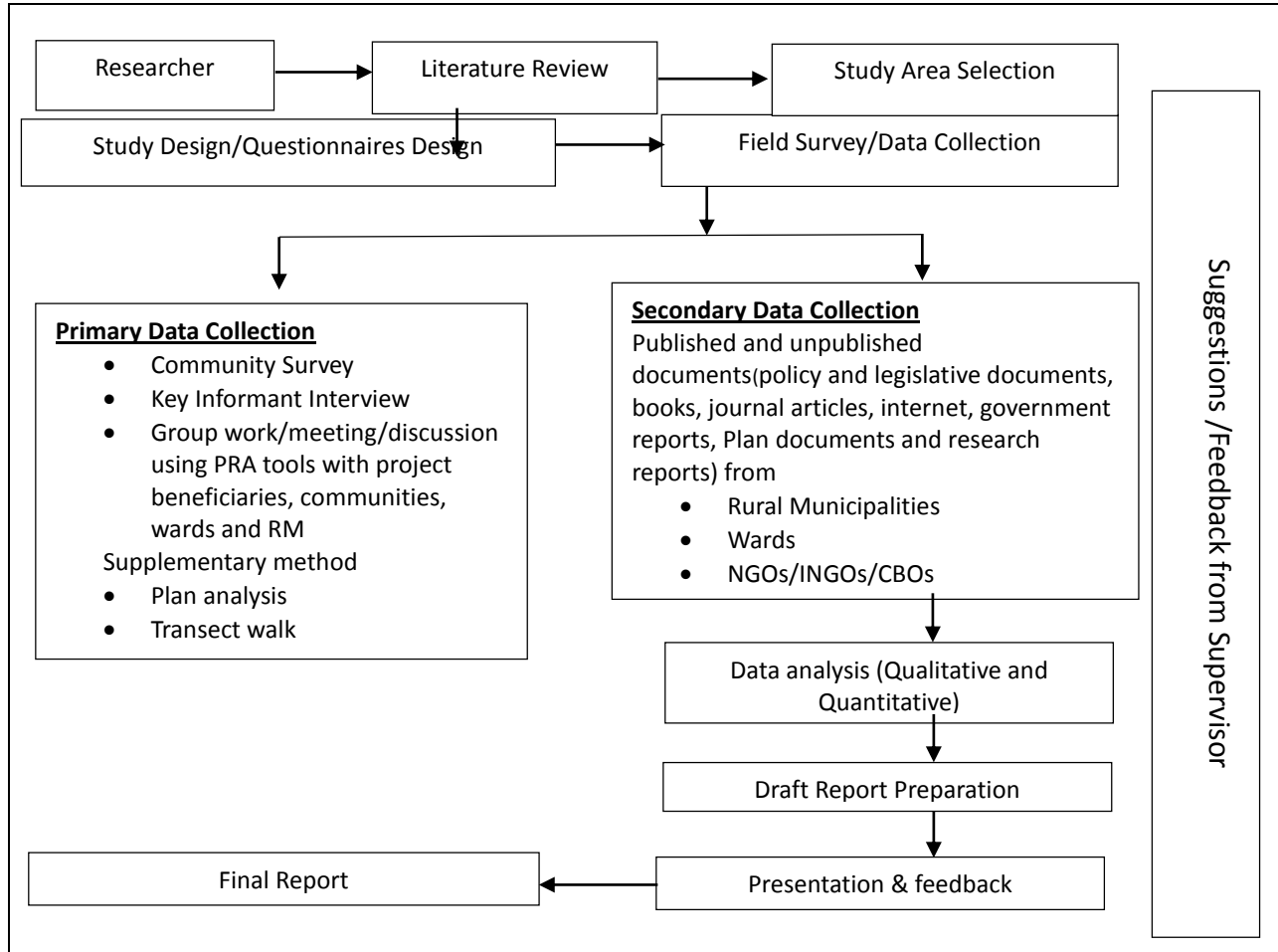
This study focused on respondents who had a better understanding of local level planning and the implementation of sustainable development initiatives. Participants included various stakeholders involved in Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP) at the Rural Municipality (RM) and ward level, such as IRDP representatives and coordinators, community leaders, ward committee members, NGO representatives, and users.

A total of 49 respondents participated in the field study, which included questionnaires, individual interviews, and group discussions. However, the study actually covered only 27 respondents from wards 3 and 4 of the local communities. The selection of respondents was done in close collaboration and consultation with the concerned community in the ward/RM.

### 3.4 Research Design

The exploratory and descriptive research design was used for the study (figure 7).

Figure 7: Research Design



### 3.5 Nature and Sources of Data

Both primary and secondary data relevant to the study were collected from survey and existing literatures. The primary data was gathered through individual questionnaires, key informant interviews, group discussions, official discussions, field observations, and participatory tools and techniques. Secondary data was obtained from records of the Rural Municipality (RM) profile, periodic plans, reports, published and unpublished booklets and research, as well as relevant journals related to the study.

## **3.6 Tools and Techniques of Data Collection**

For this research, both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods were employed using primary and secondary data sources. Primary data collection involved participatory tools and techniques, such as community surveys, key informant interviews, group discussions, official discussions, field observations, and participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques. Checklists, interview guides, and questionnaires were prepared for the collection of primary data. Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process.

The study utilized various sources of primary data, including RM and ward offices, community-based organizations (CBOs)/NGOs, ward committees, users' committees, and community leaders.

### **3.6.1 Primary Data Collection**

#### ***3.6.1.1 Survey***

A total of 49 key informants from the study area were selected using a simple random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was developed and used to collect data. The questionnaire was filled out by the respondents, including RM officers, ward representatives, NGOs, community leaders, and representatives of community and community-based organizations. Similarly, another structured questionnaire was designed to address the research questions and was filled out by respondents who were generally literate.

#### ***3.6.1.2 Key Informant Interviews***

Key informant interviews were conducted to gather time-series data on the impacts of participatory planning and the status of plan implementation. Key informants were individuals who had been involved in the planning process and were responsible for community development in the study area. They were identified in consultation with the RM, community leaders, wards, and villages, and were interviewed using a checklist. The interviews were conducted using an interview guide, which included open-ended questions to encourage active interaction and discussion. Follow-up questions were asked to gain further clarity on specific issues related to the study. Key informants included RM and ward officers, coordinators, community leaders, user community representatives, and NGOs. A total of four individual interviews were conducted with RM and ward officers and coordinators.

### ***3.6.1.3 Group Discussions***

Three focus group discussions were conducted with a total of 38 participants, who were purposively selected from different wards and communities. The participants included ward committee members representing various wards. The discussions aimed to facilitate in-depth interactions and perspectives from different wards. Participants were given the opportunity to introduce themselves, and active and lively participation was encouraged, including input from those who were initially more reserved.

An interview guide was used during the group discussions to ensure data consistency and facilitate analysis. The guide was designed based on the study's analytical framework and included open-ended questions to encourage discussion. Follow-up questions were asked to gain further insights into the study's themes and topics.

### ***3.6.1.4 Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) Tools***

Participatory assessment was conducted using PRA approaches. Tools such as historical timelines, time trend of development, work calendars, and implementation status mapping were utilized based on participant recall and participatory mapping exercises. These tools aimed to capture the qualitative and quantitative impacts of participatory planning and implementation. The participatory assessment tools were applied during group activities involving 49 participants, focusing on the timeline, work calendar, and mapping of plan implementation status.

### ***3.6.1.5 Transect Walks***

Transect walks involved walking through the study area with local community members to observe, ask questions, listen, and discuss various aspects such as implemented projects, beneficiaries, problems, and opportunities. Direct observation and simultaneous discussions during the transect walks helped gather information on the status of participatory plan implementation and support provided by the RM and other stakeholders.

## **3.6.2 Secondary Data Collection**

Secondary data referred to both quantitative and qualitative data generated through systematic reviews through documentary analysis as well as results from large scale data set such as the national census or detail HH survey (Namsaling VDC, 2010). The secondary data for research can

be obtained from a wide variety of literature including journals, books, government policy documents, research reports and internet sources.

Secondary data necessary to fulfill the objectives of the study were collected from publication of various stakeholders, RM, wards, relevant literature, libraries etc. Furthermore, essential information was collected from related websites and journals.

#### **4.6.3 Examining existing documents**

Examining secondary data is very crucial because it requires critical analysis and interpretation to gain new ideas and insights from already available sources of information. The use of existing documents has two major advantages. It provides the basis for in-depth understanding of the context of the study. Additionally, the use of available sources contributes for the interpretation of the data collected through empirical methods (Simon, 2009).

Smith (2008) states that secondary data or existing documents are complimentary and should be used in combination with other methods of data collection and analysis. This suggests that the use of multiple sources and techniques of data gathering and analysis enhances the validity of secondary data.

This study made use of the existing secondary data sources that have relevance to answer the research questions. It is very crucial to be selective in the identification of relevant materials for any study (Simon, 2009). Accordingly, the following types of documents were included in this study:

- Village Profile and Sustainable Development plan of Namsaling VDC 2010
- Profile of Mai Jogmai Rural Municipality 2017
- Self-government act 1998 and regulation 1999
- RM plan documents, strategic documents, ward plans and annual reports;
- Various policy and legislative documents including the new Constitution of Maijogmai RM, white papers, national and provincial development plans and strategic documents;
- Local Government Act 2017
- Survey reports, in particular the Namsaling ward 3,4 socio-economic impact assessment of integrated development planning of 2010 produced by the Namsaling Community Development Center;

- Official reports of census data of SSA (2010);
- Various research articles in journals and conference proceedings, Books
- Masters dissertation and PhD thesis produced by students in different universities; and
- Online sources of information.

These sources of information were critically analysed in order to understand the context community participation in local level planning for sustainable developmental and its implementation.

#### **4.7 Validity and Reliability**

Validity refers to the extent to which an instrument provides information that is related to the commonly accepted meaning of a particular concept (Babbie and Mouton, 2001). Qualitative field research measurements are often considered to have greater validity (Babbie, 2010).

To ensure validity, this study employed various strategies, including:

- a) Pilot testing of the field instruments (questionnaire and interview guide) with 2 participants to assess their validity. Feedback from the pilot tests was used to make necessary adjustments to the instruments. Prior to the fieldwork, visits were made to the wards and arrangements were discussed with the concerned officers.
- b) Triangulation was used by comparing different types of data (quantitative and qualitative) and different data collection methods (questionnaire, interview, and document analysis). This study collected data from various sources, including RM and ward officers, CBOs/NGOs, ward committees, users, and community leaders.
- c) Comparisons were made with findings from other researchers to strengthen the validity of the research.
- d) Quotations from transcripts of interviews and group discussions were used as evidence to support the validity of the findings.

Reliability is another important aspect of field research (Silverman, 2006). To address reliability, this research employed the following strategies:

- a) Regular checking of filled-in questionnaires and field notes of interviews and group discussions to minimize mistakes.



- b) Use of coding and cross-checking methods to ensure consistency in codes and categories (themes) across all cases. Any unanticipated codes and categories were appropriately addressed.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

The data collected through questionnaires, interviews, and secondary documents were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data were categorized and variables were formulated for analysis. Logical interpretation of the data was conducted, and simple tables, charts, and graphs were used to present the information. Microsoft Excel worksheets were utilized for data analysis.

#### **3.8.1 Analysis of Quantitative Data**

Quantitative analysis in this study involved assessing respondents' attitudes using a five-point scale questionnaire to obtain differentiated answers (e.g., strongly agree, disagree, undecided, agree, and strongly agree). The following steps were followed for the quantitative data analysis:

- First, the filled-in questionnaires were reviewed by the researcher for quality and completeness.
- Next, the raw data were coded and processed using Excel. Pre-coding of quantitative data was done on the questionnaire to minimize issues during data analysis.
- Finally, analysis techniques such as cross-tabulations, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed. These tools were chosen based on the nature of the study. Quantitative analysis primarily served to support or complement the qualitative findings, as this study predominantly followed a qualitative case study approach.

#### **3.8.2 Analysis of Qualitative Data**

Qualitative data analysis involved analyzing the transcripts of individual and focus group interviews. The analysis process included inductive coding, categorization, concept mapping, and theme generation to derive findings and gain an overall understanding. Interpretation of the data involved methods such as reflective thinking, lateral thinking, and considering different perspectives.

The qualitative data analysis procedure in this study followed several stages as outlined by Creswell (1998) to analyze and interpret the qualitative data.

### **3.8.3 Analysis of Available Documents**

Analysis of secondary documents in this study referred to the examination of survey reports, particularly the Maijogmai RM survey 2018 and Namsaling survey 2010, census reports, annual and periodic plan documents of the RM and wards, NGO reports, and RM annual reports. These documents contained data on the implementation of plans related to service provisions at the community level.

The study summarized the implementation of plans and their connection to community service provisions in the study areas. The information obtained included the level of services in the wards, which was further analyzed through cross-comparisons to identify patterns in the data. Comparative tables were used to present the findings.

### **4.10 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the research methodology employed in this study. It covered various aspects including the research approach, study area, socio-economic information, sampling, data collection, data analysis, validity, and reliability. The chapter also highlighted the major sources of data and the field instruments used for collecting primary data. The next chapter will focus on the analysis and interpretation of the key findings derived from the collected data.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

As discussed in the previous chapter, this research was conducted in Maijogmai Rural Municipality wards 3 & 4 in Namsaling. Existing literature indicates that many rural municipalities and municipalities in Nepal have struggled with inadequate planning and implementation of service delivery initiatives. Government reports have also highlighted the insufficient performance of local levels in Nepal regarding their planning and implementation of sustainable development initiatives.

The aim of this research was to assess how local levels can enhance their effectiveness in planning and implementing sustainable development initiatives in Nepal. The study primarily adopted a qualitative case study approach, supplemented by quantitative assessments to support the qualitative findings. Stratified and purposive sampling techniques were employed to select the local government and participants for the study, respectively. Data was collected through various methods, including questionnaires, individual interviews, group discussions, and analysis of available documents. The study engaged 49 representatives from Maijogmai Rural Municipality in the two selected wards of Namsaling.

This chapter presents the key findings derived from the study, shedding light on the performance and potential improvements in the planning and implementation of sustainable development initiatives at the local level.

#### **4.2 Data Analysis and Presentation of Quantitative Survey Conducted (Questionnaire)**

This subsection presents the findings obtained from the analysis of the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire. It is organized as follows:

#### **4.2.1 Biographical Details of Respondents (Quantitative Study)**

As mentioned in the methodology chapter, a total of 49 respondents participated in filling out the questionnaire for this study. This section provides background information on the respondents, including their gender, age, educational level, position, and experiences.

The analysis was conducted using cross-tabulation, frequencies, and percentages where applicable (Table 4.1). Additionally, the respondents were categorized into two groups: those from local communities performing well and those from vulnerable communities, as described in the methodology section of this study.

Gender is an important demographic characteristic to describe the composition of the sample population. Out of the total 49 respondents, 69% were male and 31% were female. This indicates a majority of male respondents, highlighting the need for gender-balanced representation of plan stakeholders at the local level.

In terms of age, the respondents were categorized as follows: 20-40 years (20.41%), 41-60 years (61%), and above 60 years (18.36%) (Table 4.1). The majority of IRDP stakeholders fall within the age range of 41-60 years, suggesting the potential for further capacity development in terms of new ideas and approaches to planning and management.

Education is another important demographic characteristic to understand the educational background of the sample population. Out of the 49 respondents, 6 (12.2%) had completed primary education, 3 (6.1%) had completed secondary education (SLC), 19 (38.8%) had obtained a certificate, 11 (22.4%) had completed a diploma, and 10 (20.4%) held a master's degree (Table 4.1). The educational level of the respondents indicates that the highest proportion has qualifications ranging from certificate level to diploma and above.

The positions of the respondents are crucial for understanding their roles in the planning and implementation of the plan. Out of the 49 respondents, 27 (55.10%) were community leaders and users, 9 (18.3%) were RM officers/workers and elected representatives, and 13% were representatives from local organizations and NGOs directly involved in the planning process (Table 4.1). These stakeholders play significant roles in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation, consultation, community mobilization, communication, and facilitation of IRDPs at the local level.

Overall, the biographical details of the respondents provide valuable insights into their demographic characteristics, highlighting the need for gender balance and the potential for capacity development in the planning and implementation processes. The positions of the respondents demonstrate the diverse roles they play in driving sustainable development initiatives at the local level.

Table 4.1 Summary of biographic details of respondents (quantitative study) (N=49)

S.No.	Profile	Frequency	%
<b>1</b>	Gender		
	Male	34	69%
	Female	15	31%
<b>2</b>	Age		
	Youth <40	10	20.41%
	<60	30	61.22%
	Above 60	9	18.36%
<b>3</b>	Caste group		
	Bramin	25	51%
	Janjati	20	41%
	Dalit	4	8%
<b>4</b>	Education		
	Literate	6	12.2%
	SLC	3	6.1%
	Certificate	19	38.8%
	Diploma	11	22.4%
	Master	10	20.4%
<b>5</b>	Representative		
	Community Leader/Users	27	55.10%
	Local Gov.	9	18.37%
	Local Organizations Go/NGOs	13	26.53%

Source: own survey, 2021;

## 4.2.2 The Development Role of Local Government: Analysis of the Degree of Response

In this study, an analysis of the degree of response was conducted to assess the level of agreement or disagreement with specific statements by comparing the percentages for each statement.

### 4.2.2.1 Community Participation in Planning

Table 4.2 presents the degree of response of the responses related to promoting the local government's role in community participation in development planning. The construct "the role in community participation" comprised eight statements.

The table provides the percentages of respondents who strongly disagree, disagree, are undecided, agree, and strongly agree with each statement.

Table 4.2 Degree of response related to community participation (n=49)

S.No	Items	Percentages				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Statement B1	8.2	40.8	28.6	20.4	2.0
2	Statement B2	0.0	8.2	8.2	69.4	14.3
3	Statement B3	0.0	8.2	12.2	73.5	6.1
4	Statement B4	0.0	44.9	8.2	44.9	2.0
5	Statement B5	4.1	26.5	20.4	34.7	14.3
6	Statement B6	2.0	36.7	24.5	32.7	4.1
7	Statement B7	4.1	10.2	16.3	14.3	55.1
8	Statement B8	12.2	40.8	8.2	20.4	18.4

The table provides the percentages of respondents who strongly disagree, disagree, are undecided, agree, and strongly agree with each statement. The analysis of the responses reveals the following findings:

**Statement B1:** Community participation is low in terms of making inputs in planning and budgeting processes. Table 4.2 indicates that 20.4% of the respondents agreed with the above statement, while 2% strongly agreed, 18.6% were undecided, 40.8% agreed, and 8.2% strongly

disagreed. The majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This finding suggests that despite the policy and legislative provisions for local participation in planning and budgeting, there is still room for improvement. However, the significant proportion of respondents who did not confirm the statement may indicate some progress in local participation, such as the establishment of structures, mechanisms, and consultative meetings.

**Statement B2:** The non-functionality of the ward committee is affecting community involvement in determining development needs and priorities. Table 4.2 shows that 69.4% of respondents agreed with the above statement, including 8.2% who strongly agreed. Additionally, 5% were undecided, while 28% either disagreed or strongly disagreed. According to the findings, the majority of respondents confirm the statement, suggesting that weaknesses in the ward committee affect community involvement.

**Statement B3:** Exclusion of some groups (e.g., women, disabled) is affecting community involvement. Table 4.2 indicates that about 73.5% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement, while only 12.2% were undecided, and 8.2% disagreed. The large proportion of respondents who agreed with the statement may suggest that the exclusion of disadvantaged and marginalized groups affects the level of community participation in the local planning process. However, the respondents who did not support or were undecided about the statement may also suggest that efforts are being made to encourage the participation of special groups in sustainable community development.

**Statement B4:** Participation of Community-Based organizations/Local NGOs is affecting community involvement in determining development needs and priorities.

Table 4.2 shows that 44.9% of respondents disagreed, 8.2% were undecided, 44.9% agreed, and 2% strongly agreed with the above statement. The equal proportions of respondents who agreed and disagreed with the statement may suggest that the participation of Community-Based organizations/Local NGOs does not have a significant effect on community involvement in determining development needs and priorities. The few respondents who strongly agreed with this statement may support the level of community participation in the local planning process.

**Statement B5:** The limited capacity of the Rural Municipality is affecting community involvement in determining development needs and priorities. Table 4.2 indicates that only 26.7% of respondents disagreed, 4.1% strongly disagreed, 20% were undecided, 34.7% agreed, and 14.3%

strongly agreed with the above statement. The largest proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, indicating that the limited capacity of the Rural Municipality may affect the level of community participation in the local planning processes.

**Statement B6:** Less ownership of development programs or projects by the community is affecting the development role of the Rural Municipality. According to the responses in Table 4.2, 36.7% of the respondents disagreed, 2% strongly disagreed, 24.5% were undecided, 32.7% agreed, and 4.1% strongly agreed with the above statement. The high proportion of respondents who disagreed and agreed equally with the statement may imply that the ownership of development programs or projects by the community could critically affect the level of community participation in the local planning process.

**Statement B7:** Active involvement of community participation in decision-making on planning, implementation, and monitoring is necessary for sustainable community development. Table 4.2 indicates that 55.1% of respondents strongly disagreed, 14.3% disagreed, 16.3% were undecided, 10.2% agreed, and 41% strongly agreed with the above statement. The largest proportion of respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, suggesting that there is a high proportion of respondents who believe that active involvement of the community is necessary for sustainable development in the local planning process.

**Statement B8:** The lack of meaningful participation of the poor is affecting local poverty reduction efforts. The response in Table 4.2 shows that only 40.8% of respondents disagreed, 12.2% strongly disagreed, 8.2% were undecided, 20.4% agreed, and 18.4% strongly agreed with the above statement. It is apparent that a continuous trend emerges from statements B1 and B8. The large proportion of respondents who support the statement implies that the lack of meaningful participation of the poor may affect the local poverty reduction efforts of the rural municipalities.

These findings provide insights into the respondents' perspectives on community participation in planning and the development role of the local government. They highlight areas where improvements are needed to enhance community involvement and address challenges in the local planning process.



#### 4.2.2.2 The IRDP Preparation Process

Table 4.3 presents the degree of response related to the preparation process of the IRDP. The construct "preparation process of IRDP" consisted of six statements, listed as follows:

Table 4.3 Degree of response related to preparation of IRDP (n=49)

S.No	Items	Percentages %				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Statement C1	0.00	46.9	18.4	0.00	34.7
2	Statement C2	10.2	16.3	14.3	42.9	16.3
3	Statement C3	6.1	30.6	16.3	22.4	24.5
4	Statement C4	20.4	32.7	24.5	20.4	2.0
5	Statement C5	0.00	12.2	16.3	22.4	49.0
6	Statement C6	0.00	32.7	10.2	42.9	14.3

**Statement C1:** The IRDP process is very complex, and RM/wards can hardly understand and implement it. Table 4.3 indicates that 46.9% of respondents disagreed, 18.4% were undecided, and 34.7% strongly agreed with the above statement. The relatively high proportion of respondents who disagreed is positive, but the 34.7% who strongly agreed may suggest that there is complexity and a need for further improvement in the existing planning process.

**Statement C2:** There is difficulty in the identification of intended beneficiaries for programs and projects within the RM/ward. The findings in Table 4.3 show that 10.2% of respondents strongly disagreed, 16.3% disagreed, 15.3% were undecided, 42.9% agreed, and 16.3% strongly agreed with the above statement. Based on the findings, it can be argued that the majority of respondents confirm the statement, indicating that the identification of beneficiaries is difficult at the local level, which may affect the implementation of adequate services for sustainable development.

**Statement C3:** The low level of meaningful participation of the community in decision-making processes is affecting the implementation of the IRDP. The response in Table 4.3 shows that 30.6% of respondents disagreed, 6.1% strongly disagreed, 16.3% were undecided, 22.4% agreed, and 24.5% strongly agreed with the above statement. The large proportion of respondents who agreed

or strongly agreed with the statement implies that the lack of meaningful community participation may affect the implementation of the IRDP.

**Statement C4:** There is a concern regarding whether the IRDP reflects the proper needs and priorities of the most vulnerable groups in communities. The finding in Table 4.3 shows that 20.4% of respondents strongly disagreed, 32.7% disagreed, 24.5% were undecided, 22.4% agreed, and 2% strongly agreed with the above statement. Based on the finding, it can be argued that the large proportion of respondents disagreed with the statement. This means that the local level plan may affect the proper needs and priorities of the most vulnerable groups in the community. The large proportion of respondents who did not support the statement implies that the lack of proper community participation may affect the implementation and priority of the IRDP.

**Statement C5:** The IRDP preparation process needs further strengthening for proper implementation. The response in Table 4.3 indicates that only 12.2% of respondents either disagreed or strongly agreed, 16.3% were undecided, 20.4% agreed, and 49% strongly agreed with the above statement. The relatively high proportion of respondents who strongly agreed may suggest that there is no need for further strengthening of the existing IRDP preparation process for proper implementation.

**Statement C6:** The inadequate targeting of disadvantaged groups in communities is affecting the implementation of the IRDP. The response in Table 4.3 shows that only 32.7% of respondents disagreed, 10.2% were undecided, 42.9% agreed, and 14.4% strongly agreed with the above statement. The highest proportion of respondents supported the statement. The finding may indicate that the local government should further take into consideration the issues and concerns of the most vulnerable groups in communities, including women, disabled individuals, the elderly, the unemployed, and young people.

#### ***4.2.2.3 The Implementation of IRDP***

Rural Municipality/wards are obligated to prepare a comprehensive plan of their development agenda using an integrated development planning approach. The following analysis provides the degree of responses, percentages in relation to the effectiveness in planning IRDPs at the local level (Table 4.4). The construct 'the effectiveness in the implementation of IRDPs' consisted of 12 statements, listed as follows:

Table 4.4: Degree of response related to the implementation of IRDP (n=49)

S.No	Items	Percentages				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Statement C7	0.00	18.4	16.3	49.0	16.3
2	Statement C8	8.2	38.8	26.5	26.5	0.00
3	Statement C9	6.1	35.7	2.0	36.7	18.4
4	Statement C10	2.0	22.4	4.1	53.1	18.4
7	Statement C11	24.5	40.8	6.1	22.4	6.1
8	Statement C12	0.00	65.3	16.3	14.3	4.1
9	Statement C13	0.00	6.1	10.2	30.6	53.1
10	Statement C14	4.1	10.2	4.1	65.3	16.3
11	Statement C15	6.1	8.2	10.2	69.4	6.1
12	Statement C16	6.1	6.1	6.1	73.5	8.2
13	Statement C17	4.1	6.1	16.3	55.1	18.4

**Statement C7:** Strong cooperation among stakeholders and the RM/ward for the implementation of IRDPs. Table 4.4 indicates that 49% of respondents agreed, 16.3% strongly agreed, 16.3% were undecided, and 18.4% disagreed with the above statement. The finding indicates that a large proportion of respondents support the statement, suggesting that limited cooperation among line agencies and municipalities would affect the effective implementation of IRDPs at the local level.

**Statement C8:** Programs and projects have been inadequate, slow, and had a limited impact on the lives of beneficiaries. The analysis in Table 4.4 shows that 8.2% of respondents strongly disagreed, 38.8% disagreed, 26.5% were undecided, and 26.5% agreed with the above statement. The relatively high proportion of undecided respondents may suggest that these respondents were unsure about the implementation of IRDP projects due to their limited involvement during project execution. Furthermore, a large proportion of respondents confirmed the statement, indicating that inadequate implementation of IRDP projects remains a challenge at the local level.

**Statement C9:** Lack of local resources is affecting the implementation of IRDPs. According to Table 4.4, only 35.7% of respondents disagreed, 6.1% strongly disagreed, 2% were undecided,

36.7% agreed, and 18.4% strongly agreed with the above statement. The results indicate that the majority of respondents support the statement, suggesting that IRDP implementation requires local resources. The inadequate availability of local resources would affect the effective implementation of IRDP projects at the local level.

**Statement C10:** RM/wards and stakeholders implement activities as per the plan. The analysis in Table 4.4 shows that 2% of respondents either strongly disagreed, 22.4% disagreed, 4% were undecided, and 71.5% either agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. The finding shows that a large proportion of respondents support the statement, indicating that rural municipalities and other stakeholders implement activities as per the plan. The RM plays a role in creating a positive environment for plan implementation.

**Statement C11:** While implementing the IRDP, community participation is low in development activities. The analysis in Table 4.4 shows that 24.5% of respondents strongly disagreed, 40.8% disagreed, 6.1% were undecided, 22.4% agreed, and 6.1% strongly agreed with the above statement. It seems that most of the respondents did not support the statement, suggesting that community participation is favorable in the implementation of the IRDP.

**Statement C12:** While implementing the IRDP, local-level stakeholders do not participate and support. Table 4.4 shows that only 65.3% of respondents disagreed, 16.3% were undecided, 14.3% agreed, and 4.1% strongly agreed with the above statement. The finding shows that the majority of respondents supported the statement, indicating that local-level stakeholders, including the private sector and NGOs/CBOs, are committed and supportive of the IRDP implementation.

**Statement C13:** Local community contribution is effective in sustainable community development activities. The analysis in Table 4.4 shows that 6.1% of respondents disagreed, 10.2% were undecided, and 80.7% either agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. This finding indicates that the highest proportion of respondents supported the statement, suggesting that local communities are performing well in terms of providing local contributions in the study area.

**Statement C14:** IRDP helped in the development of local leadership. The analysis in Table 4.4 shows that 4.1% of respondents strongly disagreed, 10.2% disagreed, 4.1% were undecided, and 81.6% either agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. This finding indicates that the highest proportion of respondents supported the statement in the study area, suggesting that the IRDP fully supports the development of local leadership.

**Statement C15:** IRDP increased local partnerships for the implementation of priority projects. The analysis in Table 4.4 shows that 6.1% of respondents strongly disagreed, 8.8% disagreed, 10.2% were undecided, and 85.7% either agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. This finding indicates that the highest proportion of respondents supported the statement in the study area, suggesting that the IRDP increases local partnerships for the implementation of priority projects for sustainable community development.

**Statement C16:** IRDP has enhanced the capacity of human resources and local institutions. According to the analysis in Table 4.4, 12.2% of respondents either strongly disagreed or disagreed, 6.1% were undecided, and 81.7% either agreed or strongly agreed with the above statement. The result shows that a significant proportion of respondents supported the statement, suggesting that the IRDP has enhanced the capacity of human resources and local institutions. The findings are also supported by interviews and group discussions.

**Statement C17:** IRDP has contributed to the development of performance capacity for service delivery at the local level. The finding in Table 4.4 shows that only 4.1% of respondents strongly disagreed, 6.1% disagreed, 16.3% were undecided, 55.1% agreed, and 18.4% strongly agreed with the above statement. Based on the finding, it can be argued that a large proportion of respondents confirmed the statement, indicating that the performance capacity at the local level may have increased for the provision of adequate services to the community.

#### ***2.2.2.4 Impact of IRDP on Thematic Areas***

Regarding the impact of IRDP on thematic areas, the following Table 4.5 presents the degree of response, percentages of the responses. The construct 'impact of IRDP on thematic area' consisted of seven statements, listed as follows:

Table 4.5: Degree of response related to the Impact on thematic area of IRDP (n=49)

S.No	Items	Percentages				
		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Statement C18	0.00	10.2	8.2	75.5	6.1
2	Statement C19	0.00	10.2	12.2	71.4	6.1
3	Statement C20	0.00	12.2	8.2	71.4	8.2
4	Statement C21	4.1	8.2	13.3	67.3	6.1
5	Statement C22	0.00	4.1	12.2	69.4	14.3
6	Statement C23	0.00	8.2	14.3	65.3	12.2
7	Statement C24	0.00	6.1	12.2	69.4	12.2
8	Statement C25	0.00	6.1	18.4	65.3	10.2
9	Statement C26	0.00	10.2	12.2	71.4	6.1

**Statement C18:** The IRDP has contributed in the area of promoting good governance.

Table 4.5 shows that only 10.2% of respondents disagreed, 8.2% were undecided, 75.5% agreed, and 6.1% strongly agreed with the above statement. The finding indicates that a large proportion of respondents support the statement, suggesting that the IRDP effectively contributes to promoting good governance at the local level.

**Statement C19:** The IRDP has contributed in the area of infrastructure development sector. The analysis in Table 4.5 shows that 10.2% of respondents disagreed, 12.2% were undecided, 71.4% agreed, and 6.1% strongly agreed with the above statement. The large proportion of respondents confirm the statement, meaning that the effective implementation of IRDP projects highly contributes to the area of infrastructure development sector.

**Statement C20:** The IRDP has contributed in the area of social development sector. The analysis in Table 4.5 shows that 12.2% of respondents disagreed, 8.2% were undecided, 71.4% agreed, and 8.2% strongly agreed with the above statement. The large proportion of respondents confirm the statement, meaning that the effective implementation of IRDP projects highly contributes to the area of social development sector.

**Statement C21:** The IRDP has contributed in the area of economic sector. The analysis in Table 4.5 shows that 8.2% of respondents disagreed, 13.3% were undecided, 67.3% agreed, and 6.1% strongly agreed with the above statement. The large proportion of respondents confirm the statement, meaning that the effective implementation of IRDP projects highly contributes to the area of economic development sector.

**Statement C22:** The IRDP has contributed in the area of environment and natural resource management. The analysis in Table 4.5 shows that 4.1% of respondents disagreed, 12.2% were undecided, 69.4% agreed, and 6.1% strongly agreed with the above statement. This finding indicates that the highest proportion of respondents support the statement, suggesting that the local level is performing well in terms of environment and natural resource development. Additionally, a significant proportion of respondents supported the statement, indicating that the IRDP is a good tool for sustainable community development.

**Statement C23:** Projects have been identified and prioritized from the concept and perspective of sustainable development. The analysis in Table 4.5 shows that only 8.2% of respondents disagreed, 14.3% were undecided, 65.3% agreed, and 12.2% strongly agreed with the above statement. The result shows that the majority of respondents support the statement, indicating that the local level plays a role in identifying and prioritizing development projects from the perspective of sustainable development. However, the results from interviews and group discussions indicated that projects are implemented with the concept of sustainable development.

**Statement C24:** The IRDP has had a positive impact in the field of policy making. The analysis in Table 4.5 shows that 6.1% of respondents disagreed, 12.2% were undecided, 69.4% agreed, and 12.2% strongly agreed with the above statement. The large proportion of respondents confirm the statement, indicating that the IRDP has a positive impact and contributes to policy making in the field.

**Statement C25:** The IRDP has contributed to leadership development in the gender and inclusion sector. The analysis in Table 4.5 shows that only 6.1% of respondents disagreed, 18.4% were undecided, 65.3% agreed, and 10.2% strongly agreed with the above statement. The highest proportion of respondents supported the statement. The finding may indicate that the local level takes into consideration the issues and concerns of the most vulnerable groups in community development. This may include women, disabled individuals, the elderly, unemployed individuals,

and young people. The RM should ensure that these groups continue to benefit from the IRDP services at the local level.

**Statement C26:** The IRDP has contributed in the area of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The finding in Table 4.5 shows that only 10.2% of respondents disagreed, 12.2% were undecided, 71.4% agreed, and 6.1% strongly agreed with the above statement. Based on the finding, it can be argued that a large proportion of respondents confirm the statement. This means that the contribution of the IRDP at the local level is positive towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### 4.2.2.5 Implementation Status of IRDP and Contribution to SDGs

Regarding the impact of IRDP on implementation status and its contribution to SDGs, the following Table 4.6 presents the degree of responses. Based on the findings, it can be argued that a large proportion of respondents confirm the statement. This indicates that the contribution of IRDP at the local level is positive towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The IRDP's contribution to SDGs includes common ground, inclusion, and sectoral development, listed as follows:

Table 4.6: IRDP Contribution to SDGs

S.No	Contribution	Respondent Rank (%)			
		Very good	Good	Normal	Nothing
<b>1.</b>	<b>Common Ground</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>72.3%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>6.2%</b>
1.1	Contributed to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the SDGs	18.42%	69.4%	12.2%	0
1.2	Contributing to sustainable development and employment-oriented economic development	14.3	67%	10.2%	8.2%
1.3	Contribute to areas of local level priority or comparative advantage	12.2%	79.6%	4.1%	4.1%
1.4	Conditions of participation (planning, implementation)	18.3%	73.5%	8.2%	0
<b>2</b>	<b>Condition of Inclusion</b>	<b>11.5%</b>	<b>72.4%</b>	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>0</b>
2.1	Contribution to regional integration	4.1%	81.6%	14.3%	0
2.2	Contribution to social integration and gender mainstreaming	9.3%	73.5%	15.2%	0
<b>3</b>	<b>Sectoral Development</b>	<b>14.68%</b>	<b>72.26%</b>	<b>7.47%</b>	<b>5.5%</b>
3.1	Economic Development sector	18.4%	65.3%	12.2%	4.1%
3.2	Social development sector	12.2%	75.5%	6.1%	6.1%



3.3	Infrastructure dev sector	16.3%	73.5%	6.1%	4.1%
3.4	Environment, climate change and DRR	12.2%	75.5%	6.1%	6.1%
3.5	Institutional dev sector	14.3%	71.4%	8.2%	6.1%

The comparative analysis of the overall attitudes of respondents related to common ground, inclusion, and sectoral development indicates that a significant proportion, more than 72% of respondents, tend to support the view that contributing to SDGs is a good effort made by the local level plan. The details are shown in Table 4.6. at the contribution of the IRDP at the local level is positive towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### 4.3 Analysis and Presentation of Qualitative Interviews Conducted

This subsection presents the findings on the current situation of the local government's role in sustainable development in the study areas. As indicated in the methodology section, this study primarily utilizes qualitative methods. Specifically, the results of the analysis of qualitative data, reflecting the perceptions of the participants, are presented in textual form using their own words and ideas. The subsection is organized as follows:

Firstly, subsection 4.3.1 provides the biographic profiles of the respondents who were involved in interviews and group discussions.

Secondly, it presents the findings on the local government's role in sustainable community development and the key factors that affect the local government's role in development under subsections 4.3.2 and 4.3.3.

Finally, the subsection presents the results on the effectiveness in planning and implementation of IRDPs at the local level under subsections 4.3.4 and 4.3.5.

#### 4.3.1 Biographic Profiles of Participants Involved in Interviews and Focus Group

##### Discussions

Bernard (2013) argues that in qualitative interviews, a limited number of respondents, around 10-15 knowledgeable individuals, are sufficient to understand their experiences and contexts. In this study, as indicated in the methodology chapter, a total of 38 participants (including 3 focus groups) took part in the field interviews and discussions.

Out of the total 38 participants, approximately 25 (62.5%) were male, and 15 (37.5%) were female. The findings indicate a gender imbalance within IRDP stakeholders, with a majority of male respondents.

Regarding the participants' education level, 5 (13%) held Master's degrees, 8 (21%) had diplomas, 10 (26%) completed certificate programs, 8 (21%) completed SLC (School Leaving Certificate), and the remaining 7 (18%) were literate. The result shows that significant proportion of respondents held diploma-level qualifications or higher.

In terms of the participants' positions, around 27 (58%) were community representatives, such as community leaders, users, CBOs (Community-Based Organizations), and private sector representatives. Meanwhile, 11 (29%) were Rural Municipality representatives and workers, including elected members, planning officers, and CDWs (Community Development Workers). Additionally, 5 (13%) participants were representatives from local NGOs. The findings indicate that the majority of the participants were from community groups. Table 4.7 provides a summary of the biographic details of the qualitative respondents:

**Table 4.7 Summary of biographic details of respondents (qualitative study) (N=38)**

S.No.	Profile	Frequency	%
1	Gender		
1.1	Male	24	63.2%
1.2	Female	14	36.8%
2	Education		
2.1	Literate	7	18%
2.2	SLC	8	21%
2.3	Certificate	10	26%
2.4	Diploma	8	21%
2.5	Master	5	13%
3	Representative		
3.1	Community Leader/Users	22	58%
3.2	Local Gov.	11	29%
3.3	Local Organizations Go/NGOs	5	13%

### **4.3.2 The Role of the Local Level in Sustainable Community Development**

The study revealed that the provision of basic services to the beneficiaries for sustainable development at the local level was considered satisfactory compared to previous years. During the field interviews and group discussions, community respondents expressed their satisfaction with the current level of services in their locality. They mentioned that their local government provided feedback to the communities regarding services and infrastructure. Respondents expressed their views as follows:

"We receive services in our communities, but there are issues with the ward committee. Some road construction projects have been completed, but they are not properly maintained. Similarly, electricity has been installed, but there are problems with regular power supply."

According to the respondents, their views were primarily related to the following concerns: a) Poor condition of road infrastructure, b) Drinking water scarcity in the community, especially during the dry season due to a lack of water sources, and c) Unreliable electricity supply.

Other community respondents also emphasized the need for further decentralization of services and infrastructure to the cluster level. Despite the provision of services and completion of infrastructure projects by the local government, the overall contribution was deemed unsatisfactory for sustainability. They expressed their sentiments as follows:

"The role of the Rural Municipality is to provide services, but the contribution so far is not fully satisfactory. Many projects, such as electrification, road construction, drinking water projects, school buildings, and sports grounds, have not been completed on time."

The respondents identified specific issues: a) Insufficient drinking water supply, b) Damaged infrastructure (pipelines and tanks) due to individual actions, and c) Unreliable household electricity.

Based on the findings, sustainable community development has made progress despite the challenges faced by local residents. However, some participants commented that the local government's performance is inadequate, citing high unemployment rates, limited projects, and a lack of local initiatives. One respondent stated why they believe their Rural Municipality performs inadequately in sustainable development:

"The problem is that the community does not take ownership of the initiatives. They establish cooperatives and expect the Rural Municipality to run the business, resulting in the failure of most ventures."

Another respondent added that rural areas face challenges in business development, such as the lack of proper policies by the Rural Municipality for sustainability.

During the interviews and group discussions, community respondents revealed that sustainable community development initiatives were affected by several factors, including: a) Low implementation of government policies, b) Poor quality of agricultural production, c) Limited ownership of initiatives by the community, d) Insufficient focus on the green economy, e) Inadequate implementation of acts to support entrepreneurship and small businesses, and f) Inadequate linkages between initiatives and public and private institutions.

Similarly, respondents from various wards pointed out that sustainable community development initiatives were hampered by limited partnerships among various development institutions, including public, private, and NGOs. This included the inadequate role of the private sector in creating job opportunities and the limited involvement of CBOs in assisting those in need.

However, a few participants expressed the view that the Rural Municipality is contributing to sustainable development initiatives. One respondent explained why they believe the local level plays a significant role in such initiatives:

"The community benefits from the successful completion of projects, as they generate jobs and income. They also acquire skills after the construction of infrastructure. In some cases, they even receive certificates, such as plumbing certificates after water projects."

The results also indicate that despite efforts to promote public participation in local development, the level and quality of community participation remain areas of concern for sustainable development at the local level. Respondents mentioned the quality and extent of community participation as follows:

"Communities participate by providing their views and suggestions regarding their needs during IRDP meetings..."

"There is a lack of adequate consultation."

### **4.3.3 Factors Affecting the Role of the Local Level in Development**

Various factors and conditions can influence the effectiveness of local authorities in development, and these can vary depending on the context of a given local situation. This section presents the findings from field interviews and group discussions regarding the perspectives of respondents on factors and conditions that can impact the development role of the local level, such as decision making, institutional capacity, stakeholder commitment, responsiveness, and inclusiveness, as indicated in the annex.

#### ***4.3.3.1 Decision Making***

Local government legislation stipulates the autonomy of the local level in making decisions for developmental affairs within their area of jurisdiction. However, respondents from wards and communities have indicated that municipalities have power over financial management, and it is not easy to access the ward and community for developmental work. Another challenge is the delay in decision making due to critical issues between politicians and administrators.

Respondents from wards also expressed concerns about the inconsistency of decisions made by administrators and politicians. They mentioned that such delays in decision making hinder the activities of small businesses.

#### ***4.3.3.2 Institutional Capacity***

As Dale (2004:8) noted, "weak institutional foundations, organizational deficiencies, and poor management have substantially reduced the effectiveness and sustainability of development work." This implies that the institutional capacity of the local level determines the effectiveness and sustainability of services and local development initiatives.

Respondents from Rural Municipalities and wards highlighted inadequate resources (human and financial) and limited understanding of the Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP) as critical issues related to institutional capacity, which in turn affect the development initiatives of the local level. Specifically, inadequate resources and limited understanding of the IRDP have a negative impact on the implementation and supervision of IRDP service delivery and development projects for sustainable development.

Community respondents also mentioned impediments to institutional capacity, such as a shortage of human and financial resources. These weaknesses manifest in the form of poor audit reports,

weak political oversight, insufficient capacity of elected representatives, demoralized and unskilled staff, and inadequate budgets. One respondent stated, "Community Development Workers (CDWs), being close to the community, should attend IRDP forums to become aware of what is going on. This empowers us."

#### *4.3.3.3 Stakeholder Commitment*

Stakeholder commitment is crucial for effective local development. Local government legislations stipulate the involvement of communities, community-based organizations, and relevant stakeholders in promoting participatory local development in Nepal. Rural Municipalities employ IRDP forums, ward committees, community leaders, local radio stations, and newspapers to mobilize various stakeholders for IRDP consultations.

For example, the Maijogmai Rural Municipality has made efforts to strengthen its partnership with IRDP stakeholders by including new partners such as higher education institutions, farmers, and community leaders in its consultative meetings. However, the Rural Municipality faces challenges concerning stakeholder commitment, including:

Some community groups do not attend IRDP consultations properly despite invitations sent by the municipality through newspaper advertisements, radio stations, and pamphlets.

Even though the municipality engages communities in IRDP consultations, there is a lack of ownership of projects at the Rural Municipality level (e.g., road construction and buildings).

The roles of stakeholders are not clearly defined, and there is inadequate collaboration between NGOs and the private sector to support communities.

There is insufficient commitment from the Rural Municipality and wards. One group during the discussion stated, "The municipality makes promises during IRDP consultative meetings, but they do not fulfill their commitments. These 'empty promises' create conflicts with communities."

Wards also face constraints regarding stakeholder commitment, including a dependency mentality among communities expecting the Rural Municipality to run initiatives and the limited role of community-based organizations due to a lack of support.

#### *4.3.3.4 Responsiveness to Local Needs*

Decentralization has been motivated by the need to improve the performance of local government authorities, including enhancing their capacities to extract local revenue, deliver development services, and respond to local preferences (Bratton, 2011:516). This implies that local authorities in decentralized systems of governance are expected to address the socio-economic needs of communities.

In the context of Nepal, since 1998, the democratic government has decentralized power, responsibilities, and resources to new systems of developmental local government with the aim of empowering local government to meet the needs of citizens.

Respondents from Rural Municipalities revealed that most of the needs of the people are captured in IRDP documents; however, the challenge lies in the performance of the Rural Municipality. This is reflected in inadequate services and project failures. For instance, respondents mentioned that the quality of roads is poor and not up to standard, and there are delays in completing road projects within specified timeframes.

Community respondents also expressed frustration with the poor response to their needs. They commented that people are invited to provide inputs during the annual IRDP review, but the municipality fails to address the issues and concerns raised by the people.

#### *4.3.3.5 Inclusion in Decision Making*

One of the factors that influence the effectiveness of local government in development is the inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in local development affairs. According to Heller et al. (2007), it is crucial to include disadvantaged and marginalized groups, such as women and minorities, in local development processes.

Respondents from wards indicated that the Rural Municipality focuses on the concerns of disadvantaged groups, such as unemployed youth, women, and the elderly. The Rural Municipality arranges separate meetings for these groups during IRDP meetings, and formal invitations are sent to them.

However, respondents also highlighted the following challenges in inclusion and broader involvement at the grassroots level: community involvement in need identification but not in the planning stage, inadequate community participation in the implementation of Sustainable

Development Program (SDP) projects due to inadequate consultation, and the need to involve everyone in consultations, including special-needs groups.

Other respondents from wards/community emphasized that the Rural Municipality should address the gap in timely communication of information. They also indicated that community leaders should actively participate in the drafting of the SDP.

#### **4.3.4 The Effectiveness of IRDP Planning**

In this section, the effectiveness of the planning process for Integrated Rural Development Programs (IRDPs) is examined, specifically in terms of whether the process is community-based and focused on the people.

##### ***4.3.4.1 Community-Based Planning***

It is evident that the planning approach for local development should adopt a community-based and bottom-up system. As mentioned by Dale (2004), "The additional and more specific knowledge that local residents have about their own environment, and related ideas about development work, may often enhance the effects and sustainability of such work." Therefore, it is important for development planners to consider the significance of the perceptions and ideas of local people.

Respondents from Rural Municipalities indicated that their respective municipalities have adopted a planning approach that involves community, ward, and Rural Municipality levels to identify the needs and priorities of wards. However, participants also expressed the need for further decentralization of the planning process to the village level, where each village can have its own needs and priorities. They suggested that resource mobilization and budgeting should take place at the ward level.

On the other hand, respondents from communities revealed that their Rural Municipality currently does not have ward-level planning, but rather planning at the Rural Municipality level. One respondent stated, "Let the IRDP be formulated from the grassroots, not from the Rural Municipality." Therefore, it is important for the Rural Municipality to focus on initiating ward-level planning to provide a platform for communities to share their needs and priorities.



#### ***4.3.4.2 Focus on People***

As stipulated in local government legislation, IRDPs at the local level must reflect the real needs and priorities of the people and bring about transformation in sustainable community development to empower beneficiary communities. The concern is whether the consecutive IRDPs produced by Rural Municipalities truly reflect the needs and priorities of the people and whether the significant investment in IRDPs has had an impact on empowering communities.

Respondents, particularly community leaders, indicated that IRDPs address the concerns of the people, such as employing disabled individuals, providing access to markets for agricultural activities, and addressing the lack of funding for enterprise development. However, the implementation of these concerns remains a challenge, as some projects are not aligned with the needs and priorities of the local people.

Respondents from Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) expressed dissatisfaction with community empowerment, highlighting issues such as a lack of skills transfer and low levels of participation in projects. They emphasized the need for skills development at the community level, including financial management, project management, farming skills, and business skills. They also emphasized the importance of empowering the community and ensuring community ownership of infrastructure.

Other respondents from the ward level expressed doubts about IRDPs reflecting the views, needs, and aspirations of the people, as the majority of the population is not involved in the preparation and planning stages. They also believed that the priorities identified by the local level are not aligned with the concerns of the people and fail to address them effectively. One respondent commented, "The community provides input, but the IRDP never works according to the priority." The respondents emphasized the importance of empowering the local people through projects, including skills development and involvement in monitoring and tendering processes.

#### **4.3.5 The Effectiveness of IRDP Implementation**

The implementation of Integrated Rural Development Programs (IRDPs) plays a crucial role in achieving sustainable development at the local level in Nepal. This section focuses on the perspectives of respondents regarding the effectiveness of IRDP implementation, specifically in

terms of mobilizing local resources, integration and coordination, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

#### *4.3.5.1 Mobilization of Local Resources*

The mobilization of locally available resources is considered crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of IRDP implementation (NPC, 2012). These resources include in-kind contributions of materials, voluntary labor, skills, and indigenous knowledge within the community. The mobilization of such resources can foster a sense of ownership and confidence in development initiatives.

Respondents from Rural Municipalities acknowledged the need to mobilize locally available resources, including project labor and involvement of the private sector for resource mobilization. They identified several challenges in this regard, including limited resources within the Rural Municipality, inadequate community engagement in project implementation, and limited access to funds for development initiatives.

Respondents from NGOs also highlighted challenges related to mobilizing locally available resources. They noted that the Rural Municipality did not pay adequate attention to utilizing resources within the community, and there was a prevalent mentality of dependency or entitlement among community members.

#### *4.3.5.2 Integration and Coordination*

Integration and coordination are key aspects of an effective integrated development planning process. This includes coordination among different sectoral departments, alignment with provincial and national policies and programs, and collaboration with various stakeholders to achieve the stated objectives.

Respondents from Rural Municipalities emphasized the need to strengthen the relationship between the Rural Municipality and the community based on the principle of cooperation. They identified challenges in achieving integration, such as Rural Municipalities formulating policies but failing to implement the projects they proposed, difficulties in garnering support from all wards and stakeholders for project alignment, limited collaboration between sectoral committees and wards, and the need to strengthen the relationship between wards and the community to ensure efficient plan utilization.

Respondents from NGOs also highlighted issues related to integration and coordination. They mentioned poor alignment of resources, duplication of events and activities, weak interaction between the Rural Municipality and government agencies, the need for active involvement of all government agencies in the process, instances where departments did not consult the IRDP, insufficient integration of services, and inadequate cooperation between the Rural Municipality and government agencies in supporting the private sector.

#### ***4.3.5.3 Project Implementation***

Project implementation involves translating broad policy goals and objectives into specific projects or programs of action. In Nepal's local level planning context, the focus is on implementation-oriented projects to achieve the development policy mandates of the Rural Municipality.

Respondents from Rural Municipalities indicated that they use an annual plan that outlines project milestones for the year. However, they acknowledged both successful and failed projects. Some community members have raised complaints to the Rural Municipality regarding non-implemented projects or projects that were canceled. Challenges contributing to poor implementation of planned projects include delays, limited benefits, insufficient community involvement in project implementation, and a lack of capacity among project user committees.

Respondents from wards also expressed concerns about inadequate project implementation and a lack of sustainability. They identified issues such as underperforming project user committees, inadequate project oversight, slow project implementation, and insufficient consultation with ward committees.

#### ***4.3.5.4 Monitoring and Evaluation***

Monitoring and evaluation are important tools for ensuring the effectiveness of development plans at the local level. Monitoring is an ongoing process that ensures the smooth implementation of a plan, while evaluation involves a specific examination of a project, whether completed or ongoing, at a particular stage. Proper monitoring and evaluation enhance the performance of local authorities.

Respondents from communities expressed dissatisfaction with the current practice of monitoring and evaluation in IRDPs at the local level. They highlighted deficiencies such as the Rural

Municipality directly supervising project implementation without proper documentation, lack of capacity in the monitoring team, inadequate handover of projects with all stakeholders, the need for community and political leaders to be part of the monitoring committee, consideration of external perspectives in annual IRDP reviews, and the responsibility of the IRDP team for driving the monitoring and evaluation process. They also mentioned that ward committee meetings occur on a monthly basis for development initiatives, and the committee submits reports to the Rural Municipality's monitoring team but does not receive sufficient feedback, creating an information gap.

Respondents from wards also identified challenges related to monitoring and evaluation procedures. These included a lack of technical capacity and resources to follow up on projects, low community attendance at annual IRDP reviews, inadequate involvement of ward committees in monitoring, insufficient supervision of technical aspects of projects by trained project steering committees, the need for the business sector to participate in monitoring and evaluation, and a lack of Rural Municipality participation in monitoring and evaluating community-based organizations.

#### **4.4 Data Analysis and Presentation from Available Documents**

This section presents the findings based on the analysis of available data from detailed surveys, RM/ward profiles, documents, and annual performance reports. The objective is to assess the level of implementation of participatory plans related to basic service provision for sustainable community development across different categories of RMs.

The findings indicate that local levels are actively involved in various aspects of sustainable community development, including education, road construction, agriculture production, health and sanitation, and renewable energy for beneficiary households. Local NGOs have also made significant efforts in improving access to water services, environmental conservation, and healthcare.

One notable achievement is the provision of health and sanitation services to beneficiary households, including source protection, drinking facilities, education, and environmental initiatives. The effective implementation of planned projects related to service delivery is expected to positively impact the quality of life for people and the physical environment.

#### **4.4.1 Educational Status**

In the study area, there is one higher secondary school, three private schools, eight primary schools, one lower secondary school, and one child development center. The total literacy rate in the study area is 88.09%, with a female literacy rate of 83.99% and a male literacy rate of 92.02%. These figures indicate a good educational status in the study area, which is a positive indication for sustainable development.

#### **4.4.2 Economic Status of the Study Area**

The economic status of the community is based on the findings from an economic survey conducted for detailed economic analysis. Agriculture was found to be the mainstay of the local economy, with 94.9% of the population engaged in agriculture and deriving income from agricultural products and animal husbandry. Cash crops such as ginger, broom grass, cardamom, potatoes, and dairy products also contribute significantly to the local economy. Although the upper areas of the study area are suitable for tea cultivation, major efforts in this regard have not been made yet. Additionally, people in the community earn their livelihoods through businesses and employment opportunities within and outside the country, such as India, Malaysia, and Saudi Arabia. However, concerns have been raised about the youth leaving the country for employment, posing challenges to the local economy.

#### **4.4.3 Income Status of Families**

The annual income of households in the study area is divided into six categories for analysis. According to the ward profile data from 2074, approximately 48.21% of families have an annual income of 100,000 Nepalese Rupees. Additionally, 42.59% of households fall into the middle-income category, earning between 100,000 and 150,000 Rupees annually. Only 9.2% of households have a high level of income, exceeding 150,000 Rupees. These figures suggest that the economic condition of approximately half of the families is satisfactory for sustainability. Ward-wise details of the income status are presented in the following table.

**Table 3: Annual income of the family**

Ward No.	<100 thousand	100-150 thousand	150 – 200 thousand	200-300 thousand	>300 thousand	Total Households
3	239	172	76	33	20	540
4	379	205	93	47	18	742
Total	618	377	169	80	38	1282

*Source: Profile Maijogmai RM*

#### **4.3.4 Agricultural Productivity**

Agriculture is the primary occupation in the study area, with 94.92% of the total population involved in farming. Approximately 50.26% of the land is utilized for agricultural purposes. The main cereal crops grown include rice, corn, wheat, and millet. However, due to inadequate irrigation, only 36% of farmers are able to cultivate rice. Well-irrigated areas can produce up to three cycles of rice per year, while rainfed conditions limit production to two cycles. Cash crops, such as ginger, broomgrass, and cardamom, play a significant role in the agricultural sector. Vegetables are grown for both household consumption and commercial purposes. Fruit production is concentrated in the lower and central parts of the study area. Factors such as insufficient fertilizers, seeds, and disease outbreaks hamper agricultural productivity in the region.

##### **4.3.4.1 Cereal Crop Production**

The agricultural sector in the study area exhibits diversity due to geographical and climatic variations. The watershed area in the southeastern part of Namsaling is highly suitable for rice cultivation, considering factors such as temperature, water availability, and land structure. Rice, corn, millet, and wheat are the main cereal crops grown in the region.

##### **4.3.4.2 Cash Crop Production**

Cash crops, including potatoes, ginger, broomgrass, tea, cardamom, milk, and vegetables, are major agricultural products in the study area. These crops are marketed through local businessmen. However, farmers still rely on the Indian market for marketing their agricultural products. The lack of agro based industries and processing mechanisms at the local level hinders the commercialization of cash crops. Tea leaves produced in Namsaling are processed in local and private industries in other RMs like Suryodaya, and some are used for preparing homemade

orthodox tea. Milk and dairy products are delivered to nearby market of Jhapa district and also exported to Indian market through local milk collection centers and private dairies.

#### 4.3.4.3 Fruit Production

Fruits are primarily consumed domestically, but they are also supplied for commercial purposes. However, fruit production has not been commercialized to the same extent as cash crops. Mandarin is commercially grown in Ward No. 4, while other areas do not engage in large-scale mandarin farming. Fruits produced in the study area include mandarin, mangoes, bananas, guava, and plum.

#### 4.3.4.4 Cropping Pattern

The shift in agricultural systems has resulted in changes to the cropping pattern in the study area. The introduction of seasonal/off-season vegetable farming and the cultivation of new cash crops have influenced the cropping pattern. Production of traditional food crops has decreased, while cash crop farming and the division of productive land for cereal crops highlight potential food insecurity in Namsaling in the future. The cropping pattern is significantly influenced by the topographical and climatic diversity of the area. The cropping patterns prevalent in Namsaling can be found as per the table below.

**Table 4: Cropping pattern of the study area**

Up lands/ <i>Bari</i>	Low land/ <i>Khet</i>
Maize-Millet-Potato	Rice-Wheat-Rice
Maize/Ginger-Vegetables(winter)	Rice-Maize
Ginger-Mustard	Rice(Rainy season)-Rice(Winter)
Maize-Vegetables-Vegetables	Ginger-Maize
Maize-Mustard-Vegetables	Rice-Wheat
Vegetables-Vegetables-Vegetables	Rice-Vegetables-Rice
Maize	Rice-Potato-Rice

#### 4.3.5 Interrelationship between Agricultural Productivity and Environment

Changes in the agricultural system and cropping patterns have directly impacted natural resource utilization, technical methods, and modernization. While there may have been short-term increases in productivity, excessive and unregulated use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, due to a lack of knowledge and awareness about their side effects, have had long-term negative effects on

agricultural production. The adoption of new agricultural techniques under the guise of modernization is not beneficial for long-term agricultural productivity and environmental conservation. However, the recent introduction of organic and sustainable farming practices by the private sector has had positive effects in this regard. The initiation of environmentally friendly agricultural systems and sustainable farming practices through agro cooperatives suggests a positive impact on the environment and future agricultural products.

#### 4.3.6 Food Security Scenario

The food security scenario of the study area is analyzed by examining dependency on food in five sectors. Only internal food crop production is considered to assess the food security status, although the food production pattern varies across different parts of the study area. Rice, corn, lentils, oil, and other food items are imported from the Terai region if the crops produced in Namsaling are insufficient. Families that cannot sustain themselves solely through their own production rely on income from cash crops to acquire food. Overall, only 41.4% of households are considered food secure, indicating that they can depend on their own food production for more than nine months. The following table describes the food security scenario of the study area.

**Table 5: Food Security Scenario of the Study Area**

Ward No.	Sufficient	9-12 Months	6-9 Months	3-6 Months	<3 months	Total Households
3	246	164	71	40	19	540
4	285	287	106	56	8	742
<b>Total</b>	531	451	177	96	27	1282
<b>Percentage</b>	41.40%	35.20%	13.80%	7.50%	2.10%	100%

*Source: Profile Maijogmai RM*

#### 4.3.7 Information on Domesticated Animals

In the study area, people engage in animal rearing for various purposes such as milk production, meat production, manure production, agricultural support, and transportation. The main domesticated animals in the area include cows, buffaloes, oxen, pigs, goats, hens, ducks, and pigeons. Both cows and buffaloes are reared for milk production, but due to factors such as milk production, food requirements, and income from calves, most people prefer cows over buffaloes. Oxen are domesticated to provide support in farming activities, while goats, pigs, chickens, and



sheep are raised for meat production. Horses are reared specifically for transportation purposes. The details of the domesticated animals in the study area are presented in the following table.

**Table 6: Detail of the Domesticated Animal on the Study Area.**

Ward No.	Cow	Ox	Buffalo	Sheep	Goat	Pig	Horse	Chicken	Duck	Pigeon
3	1029	346	143	17	1362	190	35	3268	62	159
4	1204	822	291	-	1993	499	43	4032	25	237
<b>Total</b>	<b>2233</b>	<b>1168</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3355</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>7300</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>396</b>

*Source: Profile Maijogmai RM*

#### 4.3.8 Exportable Products of the Study Area

The study area in Namsaling exports various agricultural products, animal products, and natural resources to outside markets. However, the lack of continuous transportation availability poses a challenge in accessing proper markets for local products. The table below provides information on the products and their respective resources that are exported from the study area.

**Table 7: Exportable products of the study area**

Name of the Products	Source
Ginger	Agriculture
Broom	Agriculture
Cardamom	Agriculture
Fruits	Agriculture
Tea	Agriculture
Wood/ Wooden Log	Nature
Medicinal Plants	Nature
Milk/ Milk Products	Animal products
Alive Animals & Birds	Animal products

#### 4.3.9 Situation of the Industries

The study area in Namsaling has a limited number of industries. These industries are primarily small-scale and are based on the processing of local agricultural products. Examples of such industries include milk dairies, cheese production centers, grinding mills, as well as a brick ciln.

However, many agricultural products such as ginger, broom, cardamom, etc., are exported as raw form without undergoing any processing. The table below provides details of the industries available in the study area.

**Table8: Situation of the industries**

Small or Household Industries						
Ward No.	Name of the Industry	Products	Income	Current Status	Employee	
					Male	Female
3	Ashwa Dairy Enterprise	Butter, churpi	8000	Closed	1	-
3	Adhikari Dairy Enterprise	Butter, churpi	300000	Operating	1	1
3	Dairy	Butter, churpi	400000	Operating	1	-
3	Grinding Mill	Rice, Flour, Oil	200000	Operating	2	1
3	Yeti Chesse Private Ltd.	Cheese, Butter	500000	Operating	4	1
3	Water Mill	Maize Flour, Wheat Flour	50000	Operating	1	-
4	Bhattarai Dairy Enterprise	Butter, churpi	500000	Operating	1	-
4	Rachana Dairy Edterprise	Butter, churpi	400000	Operating	1	-
4	Sanjel Dairy Enterprise	Butter, churpi	400000	Operating	1	-
4	Dairy	Butter, churpi	100000	Operating	2	1
4	Rice Mill	Rice, Flour	28000	Operating	1	-
4	Dairy	Butter, churpi	200000	Operating	2	-
3	Rice Mill	-	-	Operating	1	-
4	Grinding Mill	Rice, Maize, Wheat	25000	Operating	1	-
4	Dairy	Butter, churpi	45000	Operating	2	-
4	Brick Ciln	Brick	150000	Operating	4	-

#### 4.3.10 Information on the Market and its Distance

The local market in the study area is Sukrabare Bazaar, located in Ward No. 3. It is approximately one hour away from all the communities in the study area. Additionally, the residents have access to markets in Fikkal, Tinghare, Jaubari, Godak, Nayabazaar, and Ilam Municipality. Some products are even sold and purchased at the household level. The development of this system can be credited to local small businessmen and organized groups within the community. With the availability of transportation during the dry season, trade relationships have been established directly with the nearby Jhapa district. The Mechi highway serves as a reliable market alternative.

## 4.5 Transportation and Vehicle Facility

The transportation facility in the study area is gradually improving due to the direct access of motor roads connecting the study area with Fikkal, Godak, Ilam Municipality, and other nearby areas during the dry season. Various vehicles such as pickups, jeeps, mini trucks, and tractors are used for business purposes and provide transportation services. During the rainy season, walking trails and the use of horses and porters are the preferred alternatives for traveling and for import-export activities.

There are three trail road systems currently under construction, which will connect Namsaling with neighboring Rural Municipalities and Municipalities. The construction of branch rural road networks that link different wards is also underway, with active participation from local consumer committees. There is a strong need to improve the quality of roads, construct drainage systems, and gravel the roads. The description of the roads in the study area is provided below:

**Table 9: Description of the road network of the Namsaling**

Road Details				
Ward No.	Name of the Road	Benefited Wards	Benefited Households	Length (km)
1	Fikkal Arubote-Namsaling Road	RM	3000	27
2	Lepchan Danda Damare Road Construction	3	60	3
2	Hattitar Sungure Road under construction	3	-	-
3	Gupti-Sukrabare	3	1000	4
4	Namsaling-Ilam Road	4	800	3
4	Charbarpipal Puchchar Gaun Road	4	300	7
4	Charbarpipal Okharbote Road	4	400	5
5	Arubote-Premajung- Namsaling-Ilam Road	3, 4	150	2
8	Namsaling-Godak Road	RM	4000	4
9	Earthen Road	RM	800	-

## 4.6 Source of Energy and its Utilization

### 4.6.1 Source of Light Energy

Although there is an electricity facility provided by the Nepal Electricity Corporation in the study area, some households still lack access to the service. According to the survey, 91% of the total

households consume electricity as a source of light, while 9% of families use solar power and kerosene. Additionally, some households are practicing solar energy as an alternative resource.

#### 4.6.2 Fuel Energy used for Cooking

According to the RM profile (2074), which is based on the information from the local government, 96.5% of families in the study area use wood as a fuel for cooking and preparing animal feed, while 4.6% have connected to biogas and 1.2% have started using liquefied petroleum gas (LPG).

Most people in the study area use Improved Cook Stoves (ICS) for cooking. Around 98% of households have ICS promoted by the Alternative Energy Promotion Center (AEPC). Improved cook stoves, particularly mud-brick ICS with and without a chimney, are simple, inexpensive, and widely used technologies designed to improve the combustion efficiency of biomass and reduce exposure to indoor air pollution. The benefits of ICS include increased thermal efficiency, conservation of forests by reducing fuelwood consumption, reduction in women's drudgery, reduction in indoor air pollution and associated health disorders, and prevention of fire hazards (AEPC).

#### 4.7 Drinking Water Facility

##### 4.7.1 Source of Drinking Water

The survey report found that almost all households (92.9%) have access to drinking water facilities. Half of the total households (47.5%) consume drinking water from public taps, followed by households that use water from private taps brought into the house through a pipeline (45.5%), and only 7.1% of households depend on natural sources for drinking water. The data indicates that overall drinking water services are satisfactory in the study area.

**Table 10: The proportion of households with access to water services/sources**

Wards	Total HHs	With access		Without access	
		HH	%	HH	%
3	540	531	98.33	9	1.67
4	742	660	88.9	82	11.1

<b>Total</b>	1282	1191	92.9	91	7.1
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*Source: Ward profile*

#### **4.7.2 Drinking Water Projects**

There are a total of 30 small and medium Drinking Water Systems (DWS) that provide services in the wards. These projects are managed by the community. However, the increasing human settlement in the area is causing the drinking water service to become insufficient. It is necessary to launch new projects and maintain and repair the existing DWS to ensure access to water for all residents.

### **4.8 Health and Sanitation**

#### **4.8.1 Health Services**

There is a well-established health post in the study area with government support, which provides a range of health services to the community. Previously, people had to travel to other places for medical treatment, but now they can access healthcare locally. Currently, the health post has 1 Assistant Health Worker and 4 staff members. However, there are some weaknesses in the present health service, including insufficient medical supplies and inadequate emergency services. Additionally, local NGOs conduct various health clinics, and there is a weekly Women's Health Clinic service in collaboration with the Nepal Family Planning Organization. According to the household survey conducted in 2075 BS, 75.82% of households first seek primary health services at the health institution.

#### **4.8.2 Toilet Facilities**

The household survey data shows that 99.7% of households have safe water seal latrines in their houses. The local government has declared the study area as an open defecation-free zone. However, there are still 0.3% of households that do not have latrines. The government has promoted the construction of safe sanitary latrines. The improved health and sanitation condition has led to Namsaling being declared an open defecation-free area and a total sanitation-free zone.

#### **4.8.3 Production of Domestic Waste**

The data on domestic waste was collected by classifying it into two categories: degradable and non-degradable waste. Domestic waste is not well managed in the study area, and there is a

tendency to throw waste in fields. However, the community has initiated the practice of proper disposal of both degradable and non-degradable waste. There is a designated area for waste disposal in the Shukrabare bazaar area. It is necessary to find alternative places for reusable waste and establish safe locations for waste disposal. Ward-level waste management practices have been initiated, and two types of dustbins have been distributed to all households in the study area.

## **4.9 Gender Situation**

### **4.9.1 Status of Women**

The socio-economic status of women in Namsaling reflects the nationwide situation of women's inequality. Despite comprising 48.72% of the total population, only 44.75% of women are literate. Women from disadvantaged and illiterate families face challenges in accessing equal opportunities for education. Even educated women in the study area are often limited to household and field work, with limited opportunities in other spheres of work. Gender inequality is prevalent in areas of politics, economics, social affairs, and administration. Women's participation in elections is often formal and limited. However, the local government is making efforts to promote gender equality and provide equal opportunities for sustainable development.

### **4.9.2 Women's Involvement in the Social Sector**

Women in the study area actively participate in social organizations alongside their domestic work. They hold various responsibilities in government and non-governmental organizations in the area, contributing to the development of women's leadership. According to the survey, 42.2% of households have women involved in the social sector. The table below provides a ward-wise breakdown of women's involvement in the social sector.

**Table 11: Ward-wise breakdown of women's involvement in the social sector.**

Ward No.	Involved	Not involved	Total HHs
3	217	323	540
4	324	418	742
<b>Total</b>	541	741	1282
<b>Percentage</b>	42.20%	57.80%	100%

The data above demonstrates the significant involvement of women in various sectors beyond domestic work. Many women are involved in government offices, corporations, private companies, and other social sectors, contributing to community development.

#### 4.9.3 Area of Women's Involvement

The above data has justified the involvement of women in different sectors besides domestic work. A significant number of women are found to be involved in government offices, finance, NGOs, CBOs, corporations, private companies, and other social sectors. The table below describes the area of involvement of women in detail.

**Table 12: Description on area of Women Involvement**

Ward No.	Government Service	Finance	NGO	CBO	Corporation	Private Company	Other	Total
3	-	59	4	203	1	-	9	276
4	1	91	12	300	-	1	-	405
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>503</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>681</b>

The consultation was conducted with key stakeholders, including the local communities, field staff, representatives from the local government, and the beneficiary community in the wards, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the research design.

#### **4.9.4 Status of Disadvantaged Groups**

A portion of the inhabitants in the study area belong to disadvantaged groups. These groups are considered socially and economically backward due to various reasons, such as superstitions. One of the rare ethnic groups in Nepal, the Lepcha community, also resides in this area and is considered indigenous. They have cultural connections with Lepchas from Panchakanya, Fikkal, and Sikkim (India). The Lepcha community makes up 0.68% (44) of the population and is concentrated in wards 3 and 4. Only two individuals from this community are found to be involved in education. However, the population of Lepchas in the area is gradually diminishing due to migration and inter-caste marriages. Additionally, the Kami group comprises 6.93% of the population, the Damai group comprises 1.66%, and the Sarki group comprises 1.33%. The Damai, Sarki, and Kami communities are concentrated in wards 3 and 4. It is crucial to include all ethnic groups for the sustainable development of the society.

#### **4.10 Risk of Social Conflicts**

There is a low risk of significant social conflicts in the study area. Despite the diversity in ethnicity, culture, and religion, people have a high level of tolerance towards each other. Differences in views regarding the utilization of natural resources are addressed and resolved at the community level. The area is home to various ethnic communities with different religions and cultures, yet they help, support, and respect each other. In case of any minor conflicts or issues arising in the society, there is a tradition of resolving them at the community level through the involvement of respected and wise individuals. The establishment of traditional social relationships, such as marriage and friendship, further contributes to maintaining social cooperation. Therefore, Namsaling is considered secure from the risk of social conflicts.

#### **5.11 Conclusion:**

This chapter presented the key findings of the study, which encompassed both quantitative and qualitative analysis as well as an examination of available documents. The performance of the local level in sustainable community development was found to be satisfactory, with positive impacts on the quality of life for the people in the study area. However, there were concerns regarding the promotion of community participation in local development, as limited decision-making power at the ward level, institutional capacity, stakeholder commitment, and responsiveness to local needs and priorities were identified as issues.



The effectiveness of planning was evident in the adoption of community-based and bottom-up approaches, but there were doubts regarding whether the plans truly reflected the views and aspirations of the grassroots level. The implementation of Integrated Rural Development Plans (IRDPs) faced delays and challenges, including inadequate mobilization of local resources, lack of integration and coordination, and weak monitoring and evaluation. These issues not only affected the significance of IRDPs as local tools but also hindered the empowerment of the people. In conclusion, while there were positive aspects in the local level's performance in sustainable community development, there is a need to address the identified issues and improve community participation, resource mobilization, integration and coordination, and monitoring and evaluation to ensure effective implementation of development plans and empower the local communities.

## CHAPTER 5:

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the present study. It begins with a summary in section 5.2, highlighting the key aspects and major findings of the study. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 present the findings derived from the conclusions of the study. Section 5.5 offers recommendations based on the findings and conclusions.

#### 5.2 Summary

As mentioned in Chapter One, the main focus of this study is community participation in local-level planning for sustainable development. Studies have indicated that achieving sustainable development objectives at the local level remains a challenge, particularly in terms of participatory planning and implementation. Literature suggests that many local governments have performed inadequately in planning and implementing sustainable development initiatives. Government reports have also revealed that a majority of local governments in Nepal have not effectively fulfilled their responsibilities in this regard.

The Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP) serves as a multi-disciplinary plan based on local characteristics and possibilities. This plan outlines strategies, identifies priority areas, and establishes long-term objectives to guide sustainable development at the local level. Through this process, local development partners and stakeholders have identified the basis for effective mobilization and coordination.

Local government leadership is crucial for effective planning. According to the Local Self-Governance Act 1998 and its regulation 1999, every local authority must prepare a participatory periodic plan for their development. The Local Government Management Act 2017 stipulates that every local government should formulate an IRDP for a minimum of five years, with an annual plan based on this framework. Periodic planning at the local level is essential for identifying development needs, determining programs, allocating resources, instilling confidence, and promoting equitable development. The IRDP serves as a common document for sustainable

community development, guiding the implementation of various programs and ensuring collaboration among service providers and recipients. The respect and implementation of the IRDP by the rural municipality and stakeholders are crucial for effective development programs. The evaluation of the overall situation is analyzed based on the goals and objectives set by the local authority in the IRDP.

The aim of this study was to assess how local authorities can enhance their participatory planning and implementation of development initiatives to promote sustainable development. The specific objectives of the study included the following:

- Assessing the role and responsibilities of local government in achieving sustainable development policy mandates. This objective involved examining the role of local government in sustainable development, the implementation status of participatory plans, and the contribution towards sustainable development goals. It also considered the key factors and conditions that affect these sustainable development roles.
- Examining the extent of implementation of participatory sustainable development plans at the local level. This objective involved evaluating the effectiveness of the IRDP and identifying various factors that influence planning and implementation.
- Identifying necessary strategic interventions and proposing a framework to enhance the effectiveness of the existing approach to preparing sustainable development plans and implementing participatory plans at the local level.

The study primarily employed a qualitative case study approach, supplemented by quantitative assessments. The research was conducted in Maijogmai RM Wards 3 and 4, involving approximately 49 representatives from the RM, wards, NGOs, and the community. The study obtained approval from all relevant authorities.

The following sections describe the key findings of the study in alignment with the research objectives.

### **5.3 Findings**

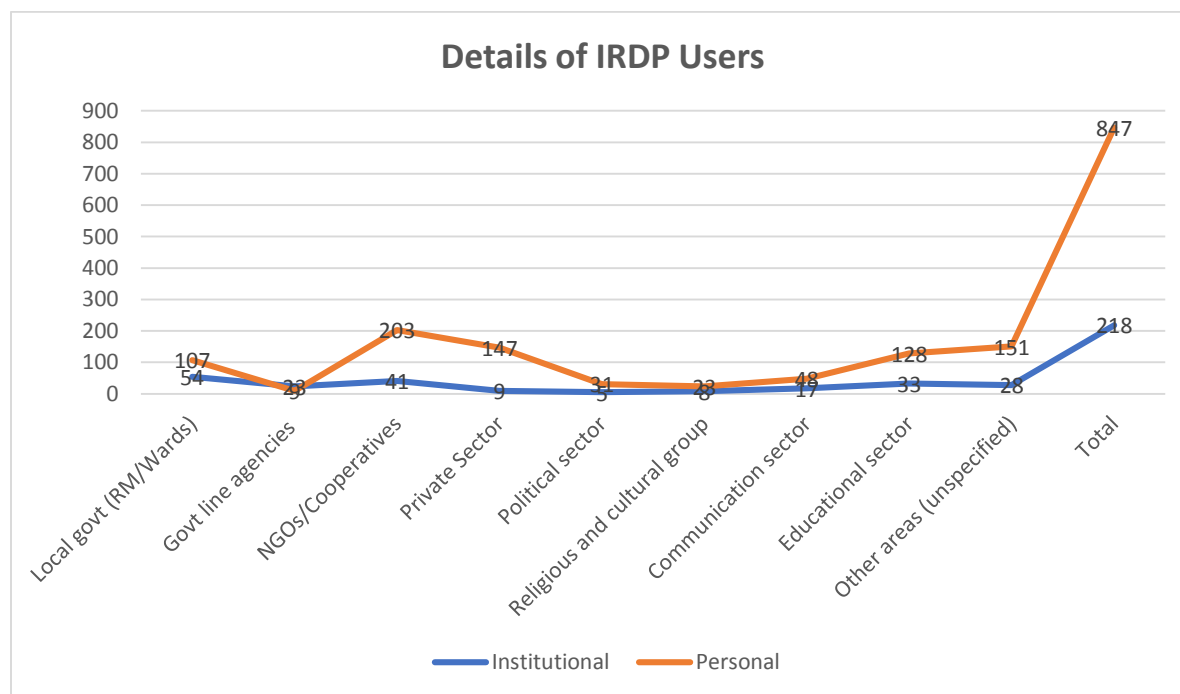
The findings from primary and secondary information, interviews, and group discussions indicate that there are various factors and conditions that influence the achievements of participatory planning in the study area. The study found that the Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP)

has played an effective role in local development and has yielded positive results. The key findings are as follows:

### 5.3.1 Findings of the Impacts and Achievements of IRDP

#### 5.3.1.1 Increase in community's access to local information

The findings indicate that the participatory plan, which includes comprehensive baseline information on social, economic, educational, cultural, and natural resources, has been highly informative for various stakeholders, including local government agencies, NGOs, the private sector, political parties, and others. The information has also been beneficial for researchers, teachers, and students. Over the past few years, the usage of the IRDP in Maijogmai RM, Namsaling 3 & 4 wards has been remarkable. It has served as a valuable resource for all. According to RM and ward records, 80% of individuals (847) and 20% of institutions (218) have utilized the IRDP. Users of this information have reported saving up to 75% of time and resources compared to their past experiences in gathering necessary information. Therefore, the IRDP has proven to be a reliable source for local-level information gathering. The usage of the IRDP in Namsaling over the past few years is presented in the graph/table below:

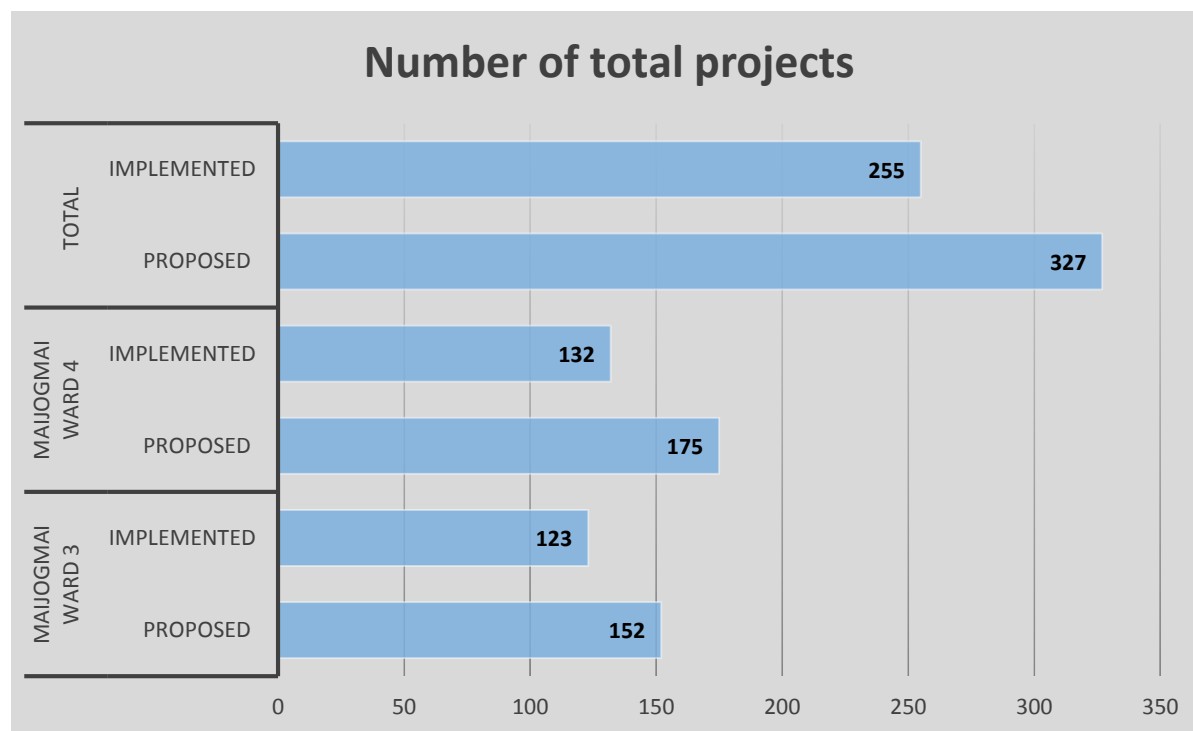


Source: Maijogmai Ward 3

### 5.3.1.2 Increase in the level of community participation in development activities

The respondents indicated that at the community level, local stakeholders have started actively participating in discussions, analysis, and planning of activities for future implementation. The IRDP has provided an opportunity and platform for mainstreaming local youths, women, and other socially excluded groups in development activities.

According to the performance report of Maijogmai Rural Municipality, out of the total of 327 projects included in the integrated rural development plan, 255 projects (77.9%) have been successfully implemented. The Rural Municipality has invested and mobilized over 40 million in financial resources for these projects, and approximately 40% of the resources have been contributed locally. It is important to note that project implementation varies depending on factors such as geographical conditions, the financial capacity of the community, and the level of awareness.



*Source: IRDP performance report of Maijogmai RM*

The findings indicate that local stakeholders such as political activists, local government staff, community leaders, and development workers have recognized the importance and benefits of planned development. They have actively participated in the formulation of the participatory plan,

with IRDP playing a central role in this process. Compared to traditional development planning approaches, this process has proven to be more effective. It involves direct participation from the local level and the involvement of technical experts from various fields, such as environment and forestry, agriculture, institutional development, and socio-economic aspects, in project analysis and feasibility. This inclusive approach not only addresses local needs but also contributes to overall development and supports sustainable community development. Therefore, the support provided by the IRDP in the development planning process is essential.

#### *5.3.1.3 Beginning of Planned Development Process*

Based on the findings from primary and secondary information, it is evident that local stakeholders, including political activists, local government staff, community leaders, and development workers, recognize the importance and benefits of planned development. They have actively participated in the process and have emphasized the central role of the Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP). In comparison to traditional development planning approaches, this participatory process has proven to be much more effective.

The formulation of the IRDP involves direct participation from the local level, as well as the involvement of technical experts from local organizations in various fields such as environment and forest, agriculture, institutional development, and socio-economic aspects. These experts contribute to the analysis and feasibility assessment of projects. By incorporating local needs and leveraging expertise, this approach not only addresses immediate community requirements but also supports overall development and fosters sustainable community growth. Therefore, the support provided by the IRDP is crucial in the context of development planning.

This participatory and inclusive process enables local stakeholders to take ownership of the development initiatives and ensures that the plans align with the specific needs and aspirations of the community. It enhances the effectiveness of the development interventions, promotes sustainable practices, and facilitates the successful implementation of the IRDP.

Overall, the beginning of the planned development process in Maijogmai Rural Municipality demonstrates the value and significance of participatory planning approaches, highlighting the pivotal role of the IRDP in guiding and supporting sustainable community development.

#### ***5.3.1.4 Development of local leadership***

The findings reveal that local people are actively involved in every step of the planning process, from project identification to implementation, management, and monitoring. This active participation has led to the gradual development of their leadership abilities. The IRDP has also facilitated the establishment of various community development organizations under the leadership of local people who have developed their leadership skills during the planning process. Efforts have been made to ensure gender equality throughout the planning process, with an equal number of men and women mobilized. This has provided a platform for educated local women to develop their skills and leadership abilities.

#### ***5.3.1.5 Increased partnership with local government for the implementation of prioritized projects***

The IRDP has fostered partnerships between various development stakeholders and local governments, creating a common platform for collaboration and investment in projects that address daily needs such as renewable energy promotion, drinking water, school construction, health and sanitation, toilet construction, sustainable agriculture promotion, forest management, and climate change.

#### ***5.3.1.6 Sustainability of Projects***

The IRDP includes multi-year project plans that consider resource management, providing a basis for project sustainability and continuity. By analyzing projects from the perspective of sustainability and resource availability, the IRDP has prevented the continuation of projects with complexities and uncertainties. Approximately 75% of the projects included in the plan have been successfully executed, as they were carefully analyzed in terms of sustainability and resource availability.

#### ***5.3.1.7 Capacity enhancement of the local government***

The IRDP has significantly contributed to building the capacity of the local government, enabling them to effectively carry out their responsibilities. It has facilitated progress at the local level, where previous efforts may not have achieved desired developmental outcomes. The local level plan serves as a foundation for implementing local governance acts, regulations, and distributing local development grants. Its importance has been recognized by government institutions and

organizations, leading to its replication in different parts of Nepal through programs like the Participatory District Development Program, Local Governance Program, and Local Governance and Community Development Program. The planned development approach is now being considered at the central level, highlighting the significance of periodic planning.

In summary, the IRDP has brought about increased community participation, enhanced local leadership, strengthened partnerships, promoted project sustainability, and improved the capacity of the local government. Its impact has been acknowledged at various levels, and it has proven to be a valuable tool for local development and governance.

### **5.3.2 Findings of (Impacts and Achievements) of IRDP in different thematic sectors**

#### ***5.3.1.1 Contribution in the promotion of good governance***

The findings reveal that the IRDP has made a significant contribution to promoting good governance at the local level. The following key points highlight its impact:

- The IRDP ensures the inclusion of voices from all sections of the community, promoting leadership and good governance. Unlike traditional approaches where influential individuals dominate the decision-making process, the IRDP incorporates the perspectives of marginalized groups, fostering inclusivity and representation.
- The selection of projects in the IRDP follows a bottom-up approach, prioritizing local needs and promoting ownership, transparency, and accountability. This approach minimizes political interference, nepotism, and discrimination based on power and access, leading to more effective allocation and utilization of resources.
- The IRDP serves as an authoritative framework for resolving conflicts that may arise during the planning and resource allocation process. Local government staff and political parties report a high success rate (80%) in resolving conflicts through the periodic plan.
- The IRDP has successfully shifted the focus from the wants of influential leaders to the actual needs of the community. It acts as a tool to prioritize the needs of marginalized groups and minimize individual advantages, contributing to a more equitable distribution of resources.
- The IRDP promotes transparency in the allocation and division of resources, ensuring that the process is fair and accountable.



Overall, the IRDP has played a crucial role in promoting good governance by fostering inclusivity, transparency, accountability, and equitable resource allocation in the local development process.

### ***5.3.2.2 Contribution to socio-economic development***

The study findings indicate that the IRDP has made a significant contribution to socio-economic development at the local level. The following key points highlight its impact:

- Collaborative efforts for proportional development: The IRDP focuses on overall community development rather than concentrating resources in specific areas. It ensures the inclusion of marginalized voices, minimizing disparities and promoting equitable development across the community.
- Broadening the mindset for community development: The IRDP has helped broaden the mindset of individuals, encouraging them to envision the development of the entire community rather than just their respective areas. People from different caste groups, languages, classes, and occupations have actively participated in the planning process, fostering a sense of social responsibility and promoting inclusive and equitable development.
- Identification of projects for productive sectors: The IRDP identifies projects in areas that contribute to income generation, such as increasing agricultural and cash crop production, promoting entrepreneurship, and other productive sectors. This targeted approach helps to enhance socio-economic opportunities and uplift the overall well-being of the community.

Overall, the IRDP's focus on collaborative efforts, community-wide development, and targeted projects in productive sectors has positively contributed to socio-economic development at the local level. It has fostered inclusivity, equity, and opportunities for economic growth within the community.

### ***5.3.2.3 Identification and prioritization of projects based on sustainable development approach***

The findings reveal that the IRDP follows a sustainable development approach, with active participation from the local community. The involvement of stakeholders is crucial for proper natural resource management, promotion of good governance, and the long-term sustainability of

projects. During the process of project identification and prioritization, the local community considers several important aspects, including:

- **Social and cultural acceptability:** Projects that align with the social and cultural values of the community are prioritized, ensuring their acceptance and support.
- **Partnership for successful implementation:** Projects that can be effectively implemented in collaboration with local users committees, cooperatives, clubs, groups, NGOs, or other institutions are given priority. This partnership approach enhances the likelihood of project success.
- **Technical feasibility and utilization of local human resources:** Projects that are technically feasible and make efficient use of local human resources are preferred, promoting local expertise and skills.
- **Financial feasibility and resource management:** Projects that are financially viable and have easily manageable resources are prioritized, ensuring their sustainable implementation.
- **Environmental sustainability and conservation:** Projects that are environmentally sustainable and contribute to the conservation and promotion of natural resources are given emphasis, ensuring long-term environmental well-being.
- **Benefit for the maximum number of people, including marginalized groups:** Projects that aim to benefit a wide range of people, particularly marginalized groups, are prioritized, promoting inclusivity and equity.
- **Consensus among political parties:** Projects that receive agreement and support from all political parties are prioritized, ensuring a unified approach to development.

By considering these aspects, the IRDP ensures that the identified and prioritized projects are in line with sustainable development principles and have the necessary support for successful implementation and long-term impact.

#### *5.3.2.4 Impact in new areas of partnership*

The IRDP has had a significant impact on establishing partnerships with various local, regional, national, and international organizations. These partnerships have expanded the scope of collaboration in different areas of development. The IRDP acts as a catalyst for initiating partnerships and has facilitated the following outcomes:

- **Recognition as a mother project:** The IRDP has been acknowledged as a flagship project that has paved the way for partnerships with organizations working in diverse areas such as biodiversity conservation, sustainable agriculture promotion, renewable energy, participatory initiatives, public toilet construction, drinking water supply, and climate change. It has created new opportunities for collaboration and partnership in these areas.
- **Collaboration with capacity-building organizations:** Partnerships have been formed with organizations that have expertise in capacity development activities for local organizations. Examples of such organizations include NCDC, Sungava, USAIS, UNICEF, Karuna Foundation, WWF, and others. These partnerships have contributed to the strengthening of local capacities and the implementation of effective development initiatives.
- **Project selection based on resource availability:** The selection and prioritization of projects in the IRDP consider the availability of resources. This approach encourages local efforts for project implementation, resulting in increased partnership opportunities and engagement in new areas of development.

The IRDP has played a pivotal role in establishing partnerships and fostering collaborations with various stakeholders, enabling the expansion of development efforts beyond the local level. These partnerships have enhanced the collective impact of development initiatives and have opened up new avenues for collaboration in different sectors.

#### *5.3.2.5 Contribution towards gender equality and leadership development*

The IRDP has made significant contributions towards promoting gender equality and leadership development within the local community. The findings from interviews and group discussions highlighted the following contributions:

- **Inclusive participation:** During the initial stages of data collection, efforts were made to ensure equal representation of all marginalized sections of the community. Priority was given to incorporate the voices and perspectives of women and other marginalized groups in all stages of development.
- **Incorporation of gender-related activities:** The work plan developed as part of the IRDP includes various activities aimed at promoting gender equality and social inclusion. Issues

such as domestic violence, maternal care, women's rights, income generation, and skill development have been integrated into the work plan.

- **Strengthening local government roles:** The local government plays a crucial role in planning and implementing projects, allocating budgets, and accessing external funding sources. The IRDP has provided opportunities to expand investment areas specifically targeted towards gender and leadership development.
- **Analysis of social and cultural aspects:** During the development of the IRDP, formal and informal social and cultural aspects are carefully analyzed. This analysis provides important insights into gender relations and disparities, allowing for measures to be taken to minimize these disparities and promote a more balanced distribution of opportunities and responsibilities.

The IRDP has played a significant role in promoting gender equality and empowering women within the local community. It has created opportunities for inclusive participation, addressed gender-related issues, and strengthened the role of the local government in advancing gender equality and leadership development.

#### *5.3.2.6 Contribution in environment and natural resource management*

The IRDP has made significant contributions to the management of the environment and natural resources within the local community. The findings from interviews and group discussions highlighted the following contributions:

- **Awareness generation:** The IRDP has served as a platform for raising awareness about environmental conservation and sustainable development. It has helped in disseminating information and educating the community about various environmental issues and their importance.
- **Addressing emerging issues:** The IRDP has recognized and addressed emerging environmental issues such as biodiversity conservation and climate change. Strategies and action plans related to these issues have been incorporated into the IRDP.
- **Support for environmental projects:** The IRDP has provided a foundation for implementing various sustainable environmental management projects. Projects related to climate adaptation, renewable energy promotion, drinking water source protection,

community-based biodiversity conservation, and alternative livelihood promotion for biodiversity conservation have been initiated as part of the IRDP.

- **Skillful resource mobilization:** During the planning process, data on flora, fauna, and energy sources are collected and utilized in a skillful manner to ensure the maintenance of environmental balance. The community is made aware of the importance of preserving these resources.
- **Compliance with legal provisions:** The planning process of the IRDP adheres to relevant legal provisions, policies, and regulations related to environmental conservation. Acts such as the Environment Conservation Act 1997, Environment Conservation Regulation 1998, Environment Planning Directive 1998, and other directives pertaining to environmental impact assessment are considered during the planning process.

The Plan has played a vital role in promoting environmental awareness, addressing environmental challenges, and ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources within the local community. It has provided a framework for implementing projects that contribute to environmental conservation and sustainable development.

#### *5.3.2.7 Implementation status of IRDP and contribution to SDGs*

The findings from interviews and group discussions revealed various factors and conditions that support the IRDP's contribution to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the study area. The following areas highlight the contribution of the IRDP in relation to the SDGs:

- **Process of integrating SDGs into the periodic plan:** The IRDP in Namsaling has incorporated sustainable development as a central focus during the planning process. Stakeholders such as local government officials, cooperatives, NGOs, civil society organizations, and the private sector have actively discussed and incorporated sustainable development goals into the plan. However, not all the indicators of the SDG targets are currently captured in the plan. There is a need to further integrate SDGs into subsequent plans and align budget allocations with the SDG areas. The implementation of SDGs requires a strategy for localization at the local level.
- **Capacity of local government for SDG localization:** The election of local governments in 2017 has provided a critical foundation for the implementation of SDGs at the local level. These elected representatives are responsible for ensuring public accountability and

driving the implementation of SDGs. However, there is still a need for national support to reinforce the commitment and resource availability of local governments. Capacity assessments based on credible frameworks can help identify and address capacity gaps, particularly in institutional, physical, instrumental, information technology, and human resource aspects.

- **SDG partnerships:** The government has formed partnerships with non-state actors, including the private sector, cooperative societies, NGOs, civil society organizations, trade unions, and the media, to implement the SDGs. Various organizations and forums have been established to promote dialogue, trainings, and consultations on the SDGs. These partnerships have shown encouraging progress in terms of SDG implementation. However, there is a need to further incorporate the SDGs into the planning process at the local level.

The IRDP has played a crucial role in promoting sustainable development and contributing to the SDGs. Integration of the SDGs into the planning process, capacity development at the local government level, and partnerships with various stakeholders are key factors in ensuring the effective implementation of the SDGs and the localization of their targets.

### **5.3.3 Perception on Factors Affecting Local Government Role in Sustainable Development**

The findings from interviews and group discussions revealed various factors and conditions that affect the role of local government in sustainable development. These factors include decision-making power, institutional capacity, stakeholder commitment, responsiveness, and inclusiveness.

The following points highlight the perceptions on these factors:

- **Decision-making power:** The findings indicate that local governments have decision-making power in accessing project finances and implementing interventions within their jurisdiction. However, delays in decision-making processes due to conflicts between politicians and administrators, as well as inconsistencies in decisions, have been identified as challenges.
- **Institutional capacity:** Inadequate human and financial capacity, as well as a limited understanding of planning processes, have been identified as critical issues related to institutional capacity. This affects the implementation of sustainable development initiatives at the local level. Poor audit reports, weak political oversight, demoralized and

unskilled staff, and inadequate budgets have been mentioned as indicators of these challenges.

- **Stakeholder commitment:** Efforts have been made by local governments to strengthen stakeholder commitment through partnerships with group leaders, farmers, and community leaders in consultative meetings. However, the findings indicate that stakeholder commitment is sometimes low due to limited participation from certain groups/communities and a lack of ownership of projects.
- **Responsiveness to local needs:** The findings reveal that most of the needs of the people are captured in planning documents. However, the challenge lies in the low level of financial support provided by local governments for implementation. This results in inadequate services and a lack of initiatives or projects. Additionally, while people are invited to provide inputs during annual planning reviews, the issues and concerns raised by the people are not always addressed by the local government. As a result, many activities are implemented by other supporting organizations initiated by community leaders rather than the local government.
- **Inclusiveness:** Efforts have been made by local governments to address the concerns of disadvantaged groups such as unemployed youth, women, the elderly, and disabled individuals. However, challenges in inclusion and wider involvement at the grassroots level have been identified. These include limited involvement of the community in strategic planning and budgeting, inadequate community participation in the implementation of planned projects due to insufficient consultation, and the need to include all groups, including those with special needs, in the consultation process.

Overall, the perception on these factors indicates the challenges faced by local governments in effectively fulfilling their role in sustainable development. Addressing these factors is crucial for enhancing the effectiveness and impact of local government initiatives in promoting sustainable development at the local level.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The findings indicate that the study area has effectively played its role in sustainable community development through the Integrated Rural Development Plan (IRDP). The conclusions drawn from the findings are as follows:

#### **5.4.1 Alignment of plan implementation with plan goals and objectives:**

The efforts made in the implementation of the IRDP have been aligned with the long-term goals and objectives of sustainable development. The plan has aimed to improve social, economic, infrastructure, institutional, and environmental conditions in Maijogmai Rural Municipality through participatory and inclusive development.

#### **5.4.2 Gender equality, social justice, and inclusive development:**

The IRDP has incorporated programs and initiatives to promote gender equality and social justice. Special attention has been given to the participation of women and the inclusion of disadvantaged groups. The budget allocation has been made to address the needs of target groups, including marginalized communities and individuals.

#### **5.4.3 Proper management of resources:**

The IRDP has emphasized the proper utilization of available local resources, skills, and technology for overall development. It has sought to achieve geographical and thematic balance, as well as social justice, by utilizing resources from various sources, including government agencies, NGOs, cooperatives, and the private sector.

#### **5.4.4 Partnership and participatory development method:**

The implementation of development programs has been conducted in partnership with various stakeholders, including local government, governmental and non-governmental organizations, private sector, cooperatives, community organizations, and national and international donor organizations. The direct involvement of the local community has been emphasized in the selection and implementation of plans based on their needs, problems, and interests.

#### **5.4.5 Poverty reduction and employment:**

The IRDP has focused on poverty reduction and employment generation by creating opportunities for income generation and self-employment. Programs and initiatives have been initiated to address basic needs, provide access to land ownership, and promote productive labor, particularly for the rural and underprivileged classes.



#### **5.4.6 Public-private partnerships:**

The IRDP has emphasized the collaboration and partnership between the government, private sector, and cooperatives to promote sustainable and profitable development. The capital and resources from cooperatives and the private sector have been included in the local economy, and infrastructure projects have been developed in cooperation with the government. Development programs have been designed to achieve mutual benefits through partnerships with neighboring communities, wards, and rural municipalities.

#### **5.4.7 Human resource development:**

Special attention has been given to the development and mobilization of skilled and qualified human resources to support overall development, social prosperity, employment, and income generation. Efforts have been made to increase access to technical education and training, and returning migrant workers have been mobilized at the local level.

#### **5.4.8 Institutional development, good governance, and decentralization: Efforts**

have been made to ensure systematic, responsive, accountable, transparent, and agile development processes and results through institutional development, good governance practices, and decentralization. Public services, socio-economic infrastructure, and facilities have been delivered to target communities and areas.

#### **5.4.9 Environmentally friendly, sustainable, and self-reliant development:**

The IRDP has given special priority to achieving sustainable development in a self-reliant manner. Local resources, skills, and possibilities have been identified and mobilized to promote sustainable development while minimizing environmental damage. Efforts have also been made to address climate change through community-level planning and adaptation initiatives.

#### **5.4.10 Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

The IRDP has been aligned with the SDGs, which are prioritized at the national and local levels in Nepal. The planning and implementation of the IRDP have effectively addressed the SDGs set by the government.

Based on the theoretical analysis and empirical findings, it can be concluded that the IRDP has played a significant role in achieving sustainable community development in the study area. The

plan has demonstrated positive impacts and achievements in various thematic sectors, contributing to good governance, socio-economic development, sustainable development approaches, partnership building, gender equality, environment and natural resource management, and the localization of SDGs.

## **5.5 Recommendation**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

### **5.5.1 Strengthen community participation and ownership:**

- Encourage the establishment of voluntary community organizations.
- Ensure the proper functionality of ward committees and promote information exchange.
- Include disadvantaged and marginalized groups in the sustainable development process.
- Build institutional capacity and develop a sense of ownership within communities regarding ongoing and completed projects.

### **5.5.2 Focus on strategic interventions:**

- Increase meaningful local participation in the sustainable development process.
- Enhance the institutional capacity of local government.
- Promote partnerships among the public, private, and civil society sectors at the local level.
- Provide local governments with more autonomy over programming and resource allocation.

### **5.5.3 Improve decision-making processes and responsiveness:**

- Clarify the roles of administrators and politicians to address delays and inconsistencies in decision making.
- Separate the authority responsible for quality control in sustainable development.
- Improve financial management, administration, and incentives for key stakeholders.
- Promote improved coordination among stakeholders within the ward and rural municipality.

#### **5.5.4 Strengthen institutional capacity and human resource development:**

- Capacitate officials, political leaders, and ward committees to fulfill their responsibilities.
- Fill vacant positions with skilled and qualified individuals.
- Improve internal controls for efficient management of public finance.
- Enhance skills transfer and knowledge of the community in various aspects of sustainable development.

#### **5.5.5 Foster partnerships and stakeholder commitment:**

- Develop a partnership policy or strategy for effective stakeholder commitment.
- Avoid making empty promises and encourage community groups.
- Ensure ownership of development projects by local people and reduce a sense of entitlement.
- Clarify the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders, including private sectors and community-based organizations.

#### **5.5.6 Enhance citizen participation and inclusiveness:**

- Improve the depth and quality of citizen participation in decision making.
- Review the effectiveness of existing structures and systems for participatory planning and implementation.
- Capture and reflect the real needs and priorities of the community in the annual planning document.
- Emphasize training, mobilization, and active participation of local people in decision making and implementation.

#### **5.5.7 Strengthen partnerships between local government and NGOs:**

- Foster integration and cooperation between rural municipalities and NGOs.
- Strengthen relationships among NGOs and rural municipalities for sustainable development.

#### **5.5.8 Improve monitoring and evaluation processes:**

- Involve all stakeholders, including communities, in the monitoring, review, and evaluation process.

- Build capacity starting from project steering committees.
- Clarify the roles of ward committees, community leaders, private sectors, NGOs, and CBOs in monitoring and evaluation.

#### **5.5.9 Promote devolution of power and autonomy:**

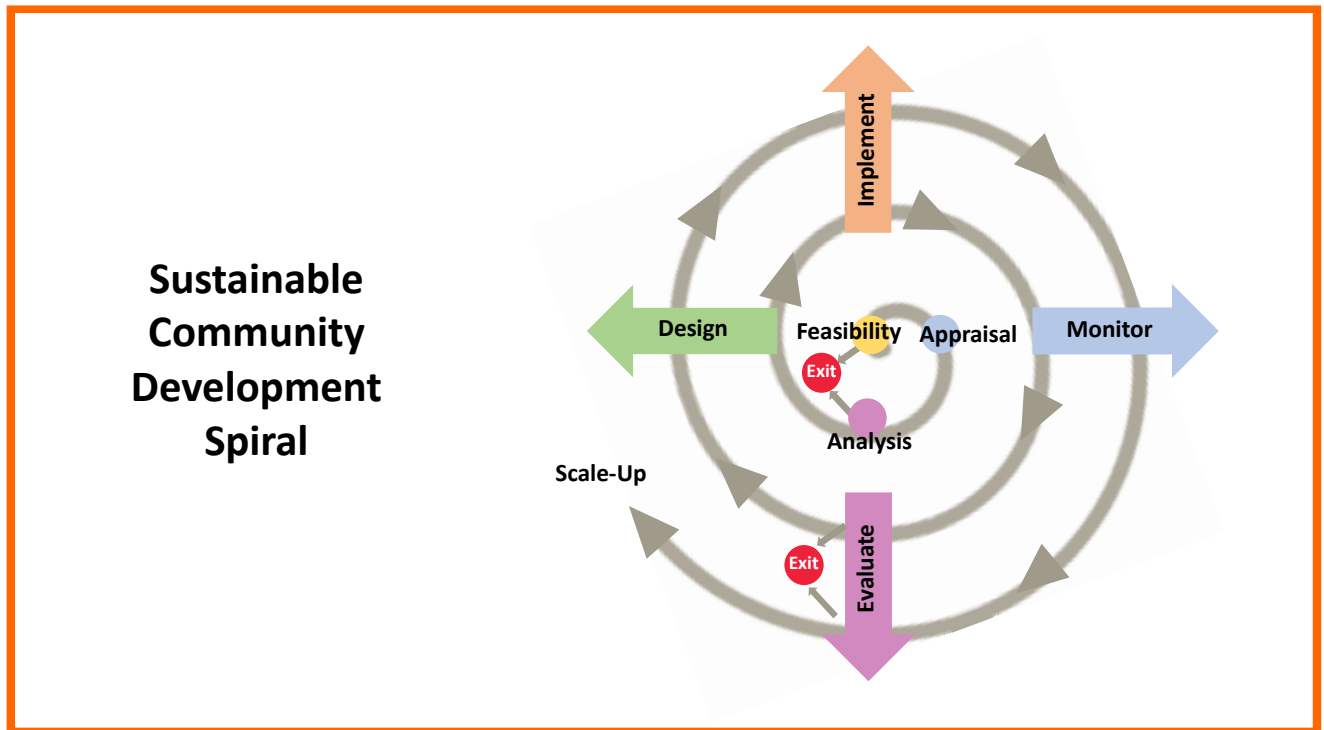
- Devolve more authority and responsibility to local government rather than delegating roles and responsibilities.
- Strengthen the role of local government in achieving their development mandates.

#### **5.5.10 Focus on policies for sustainable development:**

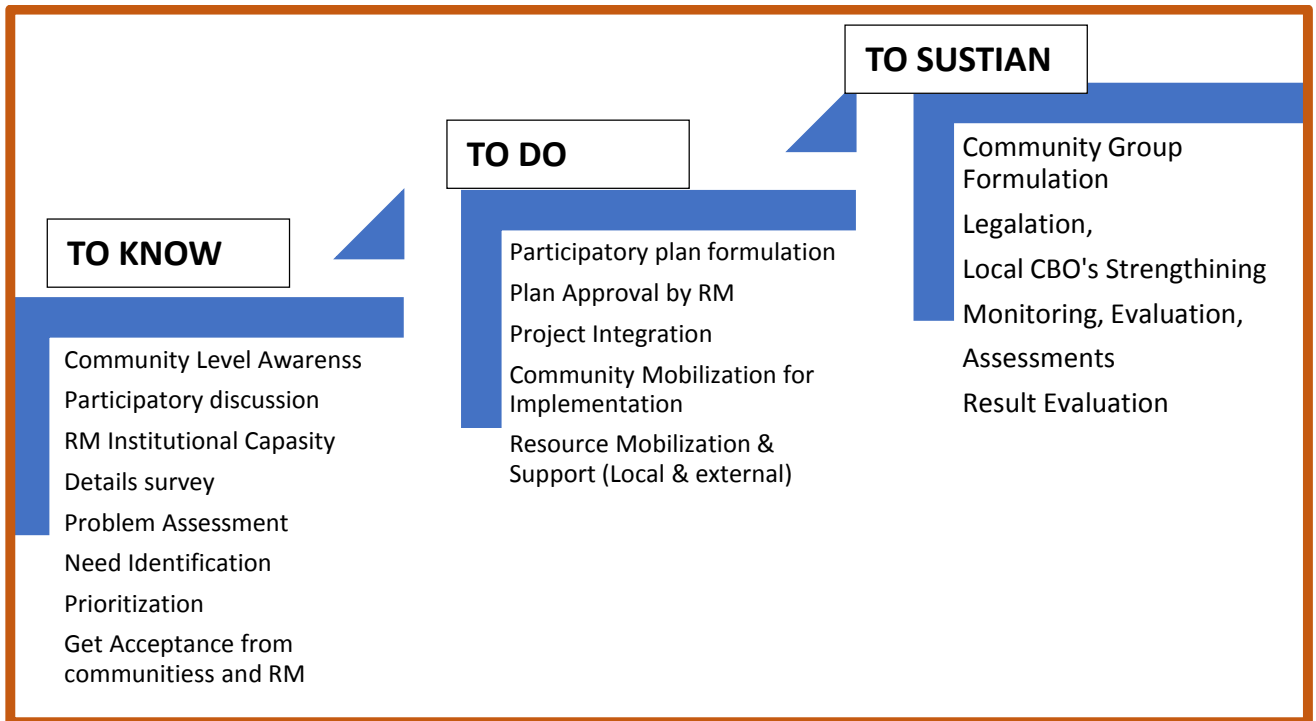
- Reform the regulatory framework to increase awareness and compliance at the local level.
- Support improvements in education and vocational training for capacity building and empowerment.
- Emphasize the localization of SDGs through planning and budgeting at the local level.

By implementing these recommendations, rural municipalities can strengthen their role in sustainable community development and align their efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is important to continuously assess and adapt the strategies to ensure effective and sustainable development outcomes at the local level.

### 5.5.11 Proposed Framework for Improving the Sustainable Community Development Planning and Implementation



### 5.5.12 Proposed Community Development Sustainability Steps



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## Annexes

### ***Annex I. Implementation of projects based on thematic area that were incorporated in the Integrated Development Plan***

S.No.	Sectors	Maijogmai ward 3		Maijogmai ward 4	
		Proposed	Completed	Proposed	Completed
1	Agriculture and animal husbandry	12	10	8	6
2	Transportation	25	19	19	17
3	Communication	3	3	1	1
4	Health and sanitation	6	5	13	11
5	Education and culture	9	9	7	7
6	Water source conservation	50	38	65	39
7	Renewable & alternative energy	6	5	7	6
8	Women and children	4	4	15	13
9	Forest, Environment and Biodiversity	5	5	9	7
10	Tourism, Industry and Employment	10	7	13	11
11	Human resources and Leadership development	3	3	4	3
12	Irrigation	6	5	3	3
13	Promotion of peace, security and good governance	3	2	0	0
14	Institutional development	5	4	3	3
15	Rural Development and public construction	2	2	3	3
16	Social security	3	2	5	2
Number of total projects:		152	123	175	132
Implemented projects in %		77.98%			

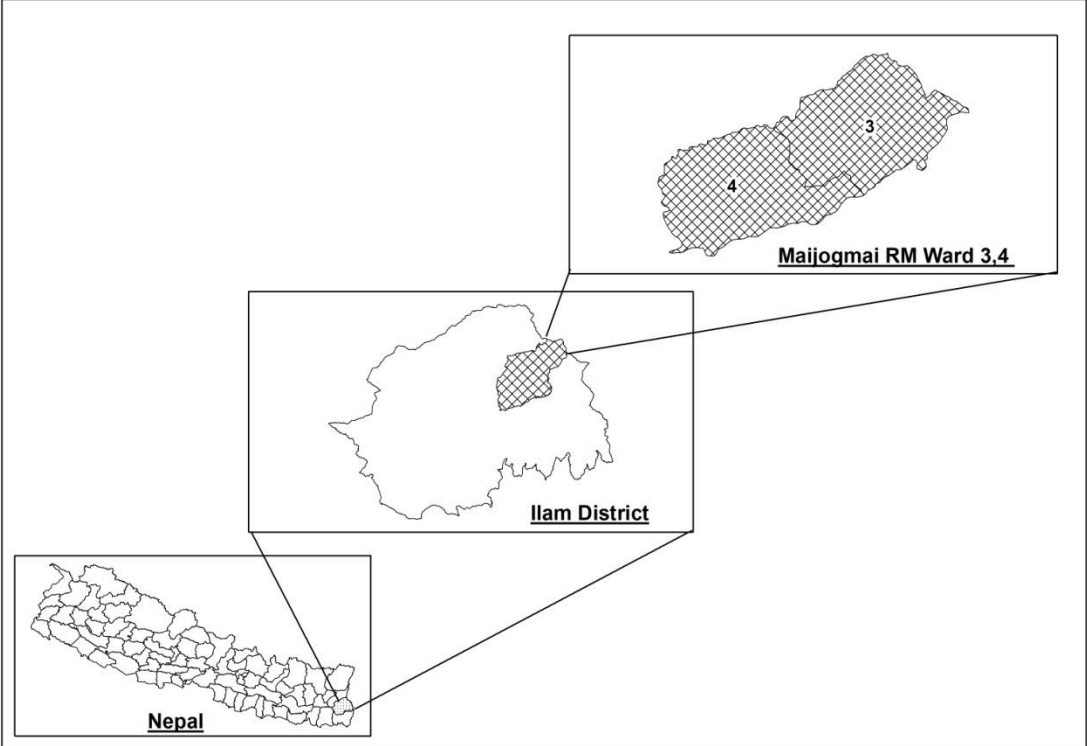
**Annex 2. Identified project and implementation status of IRDP in selected communities.**

S.N	Area (Village)	Number of projects		Project completed (%)
		Proposed	Completed	
1	Manchok	22	14	63.64%
2	Ghumaune	16	10	62.50%
3	Gairigaun	19	17	89.47%
4	Maidangoan	18	16	88.89%
5	Dhandegaun	20	17	85.00%
6	Mijharegaun	15	13	86.67%
7	Gupti	18	12	66.67%
8	Nepaldanda	24	15	62.50%
<b>Total</b>		<b>152</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>75.00%</b>

**Annex 3.** The Usage and usefulness of IRDP (some of the usages quoted by representatives of communities & stakeholders presented below)

Communities	Details of Usage
Ward 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in duplication of plan</li> <li>• Convenience in progress review of VDC and monitoring.</li> <li>• Decrease in conflict</li> <li>• Convenience in investment based on prioritization of project</li> <li>• Helps in completing work in a given time frame</li> <li>• Allocation of budget not only for construction related works but also in awareness generating and skill development activities.</li> <li>• Easy implementation of projects due to proper management and convenience in source/fund generation for added works and other ambitious projects.</li> <li>• It has helped in good governance, conflict minimization, proper resource mobilization, and selection of appropriate projects based on geographical conditions, equal accessibility etc.</li> </ul>
Ward 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on feasibility, it has helped in plan and source management and also helped in coordination.</li> <li>• Since it helps in bringing the voices of the marginalized into the development process, the conflict is minimized and hence the implementation becomes easy and smooth.</li> <li>• It works as a source book in gathering other funding opportunities/ support (external), as the VDCs internal source sometimes is not sufficient for some projects.</li> <li>• Since the plan is developed as per resources available hence only the feasible ones are considered into the plan. It has helped in developing planning process based on the ability and feasibility to implement.</li> <li>• Since it gives an overall picture of the VDC, projects can be selected without any conflict based on the information provided by the plan. Thus it has very high usefulness.</li> </ul>

*Annex 4. Location Map*



## **ANNEXURE- 5: QUESTIONNAIRE**

The attached questionnaire is part of my research for the Doctor of Community and Social Development. The research project is entitled “Study On Community Participation in Local Level Planning for Sustainable Development in Ilam District, Nepal”

It is currently undertaken to assess the perception of stakeholders on Sustainable Community Development Planning. It is hoped that this research will help to improve service delivery and development. The finding will be accessible to the rural Municipality.

*All information will be treated with strict confidentiality.* Hence your participation in this research, especially in completing the attached questionnaire will be appreciated, as the information will have great significance in completing this research project.

Researcher:

Respondent

Signature: -----

Signature: -----

Date: -----

Date: -----

### **Section A: Bibliographical information of respondents**

***Instruction: Please mark the applicable block with an “x”***

Date of interview: \_\_\_\_\_ Code: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Name:

Male       Female

2. Age: .....

3. Caste

Braminchetri       Janjati       Dalit

4. Education

Literate       SLC       Certificate Level

Bachelor level       Master Level

5. Representative

Community/Users       Ward/Municipality       Local Org

### **Section B: The development role of Rural Municipalities**

Listed below are the various aspects for assessing factors that affect the role of RM in development. Please indicate your views by choosing an appropriate answer for each question.

1 = Strongly Disagree      2 = Disagree;      3 = Undecided;      4 = Agree;      5 = Strongly Agree

## Community participation in planning

S.No.	Question	1	2	3	4	5
1	Community participation is low in terms of making inputs in planning and budgeting processes.					
2	Ward committees is affecting community involvement in determining needs and priorities of the community.					
3	Inclusion of some groups (e.g.Ethnic group, women, disabled) is affecting community involvement for planning process.					
4	Participation of Community Based organization/Local NGOs is affecting community involvement in determining development needs and priorities					
5	Limited capacity of the Rural municipality/ward is affecting community involvement in determining development needs and priorities.					
6	Less ownership of development programme by community is affecting the development role of the RM/ward					
7	Active involvement of community participation in decision-making on planning, implementation and monitoring is necessary for sustainable community development					
8	Lack of meaningful participation of the poor is affecting local poverty reduction efforts.					

Legend: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

## Section C: The IRDP Preparation Process

Listed below are the various aspects for assessing the implementation of IRDPs. Please indicate your views by choosing appropriate answers for each question.

### The preparation and planning of IRDP

S.No.	Question	1	2	3	4	5
1	The Planning process is very complex that RM/wards can hardly understand and implement.					
2	There is difficulty in identification of intended beneficiaries for programmes and projects within the RM/ward					
3	Low level of meaningful participation of the community in decision making processes is affecting the implementation of					
4	There is a concern regarding whether planning reflects the proper needs and priorities of the most vulnerable groups in communities.					
5	The plan preparation process needs further strengthening for proper implementation.					

6	Inadequate targeting of disadvantaged groups in communities is affecting the implementation of plan					
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Legend: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

### The implementation of IRDP

S.No.	Question	1	2	3	4	5
1	Strong cooperation among stakeholders and the RM/ward for the implementation of plans.					
2	Programmes and projects have been inadequate, slow, had limited impact on lives of beneficiaries.					
3	Lack of local resources is affecting the implementation of plans.					
4	RM/ wards and stakeholders implement activities as per plan					
5	Low level of community access to local information of RM/wards RM/					
6	The RM/wards have properly used the plan information for the implementation of the community development work					
7	While implementing the plan Community participation is low in development activities					
8	While implementing the plan, local level stakeholders do not participate and support					
9	Local community contribution is effective in community development activities					
10	IRDP helps to develop of local leadership					
11	Partnerships enhanced the implementation of priority					
12	IRDP has enhanced the capacity of human resources and institutions					
13	IRDP has contributed to the development of performance capacity at the local level					

Legend: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree

### Impact of IRDP on thematic areas

1	The plan has contributed in the area of promoting good governance	1	2	3	4	5
2	The plan has contributed in the area of infrastructure development sector					
3	The plan has contributed in the area of social development sector					
4	The plan has contributed in the area of economic sector					
5	The plan has contributed in the area of environment and NRM					
6	Projects have been identified and prioritized from the concept and perspective of sustainable development.					
7	The plan has had a positive impact in the field of policy making.					
8	The plan has contributed to leadership development in the gender and inclusion					
9	The plan has contributed in the area of SDGs					

Legend: 1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Undecided; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree



## Section C: Implementation status of IRDP and contributing in SDGs

Table 4.6: IRDP contributing in SDGs

S.No	Contribution	Respondent Rank (%)			
		Very good	Good	Normal	Nothing
<b>1.</b>	<b>Common Ground</b>				
1.1	Contributed to the achievement of the goals and objectives of the SDGs				
1.2	Contributing to sustainable development and employment-oriented economic development				
1.3	Contribute to areas of local level priority or comparative advantage				
1.4	Conditions of participation (planning, implementation)				
<b>6</b>	<b>Condition of Inclusion</b>				
6.1	Contribution to regional integration				
6.2	Contribution to social integration and gender mainstreaming				
<b>7</b>	<b>Sectoral Development</b>				
7.1	Economic Development sector				
7.2	Social development sector				
7.3	Infrastructure dev sector				
7.4	Environment, climate change and DRR				
7.5	Institutional dev sector				

## **Annex 6. Checklist for Qualitative Information Collection**

### **Qualitative Tools**

Semi-structured Interview (Focus Group Discussion/ group discussion /key informant interview with community people and Wards and RM)

### **Guiding open ended Questions**

#### **a. The relevance of 'Sustainable Development Plans' in Nepal:**

- Compared to other participatory local level planning models currently used in Nepal (e.g., Local Governance and Community Development Programme, 14-step model of the MoFALD), what are the benefits and disadvantages of IRDP?
- What will be the relevance of the IRDP model in the future when local elections are established and local representatives are elected?
- Will the model function in this new context? What are the future threats to the use of the IRDP model at the local and national levels?

#### **b. The impact on development processes:**

- To what degree and in what way do local governmental institutions prioritize and use plans in overall local level planning?
- To what degree do non-governmental organizations working in the communities prioritize plans in their development work?
- To what degree have plans and the planning process contributed to the promotion of social inclusion in development processes at the local level?
- To what degree have plans contributed to the establishment of sustainable development mechanisms in the development initiatives and processes at the local level?
- What impacts has the IRP model had on development processes at the regional and national levels? What challenges exist for the replication of the model at the national level?

#### **c. The capacity building of organizations that have facilitated IRDPs:**

- Do the organizations trained at the local level in IRD planning have sufficient capacity to follow-up on the plans?
- Have these organizations been working independently or with the help of others in replicating the local level planning methodology developed?

- What role, positive and negative, do financial matters play in the replication process?
- What are the organizations' challenges in replicating the IRD planning model?

**d. The impact on individuals within the stakeholder groups: the general population, civil society groups, and the private sector:**

- What has been the impact on individuals from different stakeholder groups who were directly involved in the IRD planning process?
- What changes have these individuals seen in their communities as a result of the IRD planning?
- To what degree do inhabitants who did not directly take part in the IRD plan formulation have knowledge of the IRD plan, and what has been the impact on them?
- To what degree has the presence of the plans increased the knowledge and control of RM inhabitants over the implementation of projects in their community?

**Semi-structured Interview (Key Informant Interview with with RM, Wards, NGOs etc)**

- What is the coordination between your office and the RM to deliver program activities in the project areas?
- What is your opinion of the RM performance?
- How would you assess the relevance of the IRDP interventions in the local level?
- Do you have any suggestions to improve the quality of IRDP in the future?

**Field Observation(Checklist for observation)**

- Working styles of local level
- Performance of RM staff
- Record keeping, reporting, monitoring the system of RM
- Documentation of good practices
- Linkage and coordination with line agencies
- Relationship with stakeholders including journalists, local political leaders etc
- Office management in terms of filling, budgeting, meeting, communication with others and among the staff members etc

- Participation of community people in the meeting, ecological agriculture/organic farming, extension education, market access level of income as compared to previous one etc.
- Agricultural Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources
- Institutional development activities
- Confidence among poor people–women and men towards sustainability of plan project
- Changes in an attitude and behaviour of community people-women and men to make a difference in their lives
- Relationship with RM and d line agencies to get external resources

### **How Change happens Case studies**

- Case studies of good practices in agriculture, community participation in planning, gender and social inclusion, climate change adaptation practices by HHs

### **People Perception Mapping**

- What is your perception towards the IRDP in terms of participation, prioritization of the projects, and implementation