Reflective learning of Natural Leaders' self-mobilization on SRHR

A Qualitative Study report

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Social mobilization is an empowering process to raise awareness of and demand for a particular program, to assist in the delivery of resources and services and to strengthen community participation for sustainability and self-reliance. The whole notion of social mobilization is to transform communities into positive vibes and develop transformational leadership within the community. Self-mobilization of Natural Leaders (NLs) and their engagement with community women and adolescent girls to empower them on the issues around Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) is an excellent pathway towards transformational leadership that envisioned by Ipas Nepal.

Self-motivated NLs and their self-mobilization in the communities getting women and girls empowered on SRHR, aware on social norms and traditions, informed choice of family planning services, increased in health service seeking behavior and has increased access to safe abortion ecosystem services ensuring valued social settings and activities. Community engagement through NLs self-mobilization helped Local Governments and Health Facilities improve the efficiency, legitimacy and transparency of their decision making on SRHR interventions and services. It has promoted advocacy and evidence-based social movements. NLs self-mobilization brought community women and adolescent girls in front to exercise their rights and made service providers accountable towards quality SRHR services at local level.

This qualitative study of NLs self-mobilization on SRHR was commissioned by Ipas Nepal and the study work was undertaken in September to November 2021. Due to the COVID-19 context, the resources and timeframe for the study did not permit a larger and more rigorous examination and assessment of the full range of agency building and NLs self-mobilization on SRHR undertaken by Ipas Nepal.

The study arrives at the following main findings:

1. NLs are acting as champions of change on SRHR

NLs with their built agency and inner power are self-motivated and mobilized in the communities to empower women and adolescent girls on SRHR especially on safe abortion ecosystem services. They are organizing community sessions, discussing on sexual and reproductive health related issues and violence cases, providing information about national policies and provisions of SRH, empowering community women and adolescent girls to claim and exercise SRHR and fighting against gender-based violence cases and their denial SRHR issues. These are the very systematic and powerful initiations that NLs taking forward through their self-mobilization. They already have reached more than 10,000 women and girls and empowering them on SRH policy provisions and their pertinent issues. It also has contributed to build the agency and power within of community women and adolescent girls to raise their voices against their denial rights. Based on the discussion with the NLs, women, girls, FCHVs and Health Facilities and their perceptions; NLs along with community women and adolescent girls have succeeded to reduce the unsafe abortion cases in their community, increased the trend

of utilizing family planning contraceptives, Increased the number of safe abortion cases, stopping the child marriage cases etc. NLs are succeeded to change the traditional mind-set of community people where they are taking abortion as *sin* or *evil* and now community women and girls have increasing trend of seeking safe abortion services. NLs are also succeeded to establish them as social power in their society due to their supportive actions and mobilization on SRHR movements so that local governments, health facilities, Community Groups and different program initiatives started inviting NLs as one of the important community entities. It means, NLs are recognized at local level, and this encouraged them to move forward being as champions of change on SRHR.

2. Increased evidence-based advocacy and changes in power relations

NLs are self-motivated on sexual and reproductive health rights and empowering community women and adolescent girls on SRHR especially on safe abortion and family planning services. Their main focuses are to change bad social norms, reduce human rights violations, against GBV and child marriage, effective implementation of SAS policies and improve family power relations. NLs along with women and girls raised their voices in Health Posts and Local Governments to have effective safe abortion services, fulfillment of service provider's position at health posts, approval of safe abortion services in their nearby health posts and also advocacy in Local Government for budget allocation for SRH and safe abortion services. Some of the NLs proactively submitted their demands related to safe abortion services and empowerment of women and girls activities to Local Governments and pushing them for budget allocation. These are the very good initiation of NLs to influence the power holders for their attentions to address community women and adolescent girl's pertinent SRH issues.

With the full of information about safe abortion and family planning services, the trend of unsafe abortion cases reduced from around 60 to 15 (community perception) within one year period. Family relations is also improved, and mothers-in-law are becoming more supportive to the reproductive aged their daughters-in-law regarding using family planning contraceptives and consulting with health facilities during their pregnancy and even support to abort the unwanted pregnancy. It seems there is very good family relations among members as well as changes in power relations.

3. Increased outreach

NLs are self-mobilizing in their communities on safe abortion and family planning services and empowering women and girls on seeking these services so that the life threat due to unsafe abortion is minimized. Community people are seemed more vibrant and conducting social movements on safe abortion and gender transformation. Local Governments are also recognized NLs as one of the excellent means of social mobilization and community empowerment on SRHR. As the effectiveness of NLs self-mobilization, the nearest communities and the Local Governments also requesting NLs to facilitate and support the community people especially to women and girls on their capacity building and awareness on safe abortion and family planning services. Most of

the NLs are facilitating these in their nearby communities with the request of community groups and the local governments. It seemed NLs are well recognized by the communities and the Local Governments and increased their outreach.

4. Five-friend approach of social mobilization and multiplier effects

NLs are making their allies as five friend and transfer the knowledge and skills to them what they have gained from different training and workshops. Also, these five friends are acting as extended NLs. Through the five-friend approach, SRHR and safe abortion service messages are spreading to the communities very quickly, covered the huge population at a time and empowered them on SRHR and safe abortion services. These five friends also facilitated and supported community women and adolescent girls on taking SA services so that the life threats due to unsafe abortion cases has been in reducing trend and safe abortion and family planning service seeking behavior of community people is increasing day by day. One married woman residing in Gumdanda village at Purbakhola did unsafe abortion two times because of inadequate knowledge and information of free safe abortion services at the Health Post (HP) and also the fear of disclosure of her pregnancy and abortion. So, she used to do unsafe abortion time and again. When Ms. Bimala Shrestha (one of five friends of Ms. Dhani Maya Gaha, the Natural Leader of Siluwa) got the information about this in her information discussions, visited her and provided the information about free safe abortion services from health post as well as counseling on use of family planning devices to control the unwanted pregnancy. Now, she is taking Implant and saved her life. This is an excellent example of the achievement of five friend social mobilization approaches adapting in the project.

NLs are also spreading SRHR messages through informal sessions like water fetching period, firewood collection time at forest, leisure time at their house, participating in cultural program, etc. This is found another effective means of information sharing and convinced women and girls on their SRH rights as well as their human rights.

5. Strong relations within family and community

The most significant transformation that NLs have contributed to is the relational change among diverse individuals, families and community groups. This ultimately promotes the trust and harmony in families and the societies. The agency building of NLs and their own level of understanding on the SRHR issues contributed to empower the community women and adolescent girls to start discussion and dialogue with their family members. NLs are also empowered and as per them, they are discussing with their husbands on sexual matters and other SRH issues. The behavior of Mother-in-Laws towards their daughter and daughters-in-law changed in a positive way because of getting true information about SRHR policy and provisions and examples of the implications of GBV, discrimination and unsafe behavior of sexual relations and abortion. Now, the family members and the community people have changed their mind-set regarding abortion and becoming supportive to their subordinates. These are the good symptoms of changing power relations in the families and the communities.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions and interactions with NLs, community women and adolescent girls, FCHVs, champions, health facilities, local government representatives and observations of field level activities, the study came up with the following recommendations:

i. Refresh NLs on reflective learning and action processes: Most of the NLs are found confidence enough to deliver the SRH messages like safe abortion and family planning services, gender and GBV in community sessions. The aim of building greater agency for social transformation could be in practice if the sessions are conducted through reflective learning and action processes. There is need of refresher training to NLs on leadership quality, constituency building, advocacy skills.

ii. Support to implement issue-based campaigns and social movements: NLs are focusing on building SRHR awareness of women and adolescent girls through their mobilization and facilitation which is also most important to have better knowledge on SRHR at first. There is equally important to reflect their awareness into the actions and behaviors that helps to empower them on their issues and encourages them on rights-based movements which make community more empower and accountable service providers towards SRHR services.

iii. Strengthen Five Friends social mobilization approach: The result of five friend social mobilization approach to aware and mobilization communities in safe abortion, family planning services and GBV is found very effective. There is need of expansion of this approach to all program areas to create a momentum on SRHR. Also, documentation of progresses, contributions and efforts in a systematic manner pushes forward the reproductive justice movement.

iii. Strengthen linkages and engagement of NLs in local level planning process: NLs should have better knowledge and understanding of local level planning process. They need to engage with community women and girls and local government representatives to address SRHR needs through budget allocation from the local level.

iv. Promote social accountability: For the effectiveness of program interventions and quality services, there is need of promotion of social accountability like public hearing and public audit, community score-card to ensure downward accountability of service providers. It helps to promote internal governance of community groups and local bodies as well as empowerment of rights holders by exercising their rights and responsibilities.

v. Joint program monitoring: To strengthen the local capacity and ownership in program, joint program monitoring would be the effective and empowering tool at local level. Joint program monitoring and feedback system will help to enhance knowledge and skills of NLs through evidence based on-site coaching and also benefits to increase the effectiveness of the project interventions as well as building mutual accountability of all the stakeholders and sustainability of project interventions through localization process.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAAQ	Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FCHV	Female Community Health Volunteer
FP	Family Planning
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HP	Health Post
NDHS	National Demographic Household Survey
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NL	Natural Leader
RBA	Rights Based Approach
ReFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Technique
RM	Rural Municipality
SA	Safe Abortion
SAS	Safe Abortion Service
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

1. Background

Social mobilization is the process of bringing together allies to raise awareness of and demand for a particular program, to assist in the delivery of resources and services and to strengthen community participation for sustainability and self-reliance. "Allies" include decision- and policy-makers, opinion leaders, NGOs such as professional and religious groups, the media, the private sector, communities and individuals. Social mobilization generates dialogue, negotiation and consensus, engaging a range of players in interrelated and complementary efforts, taking into account the needs of people.

Social mobilization is a dynamic, participatory process of empowering weak and alienated groups at the individual, community and institutional levels for their sustainable socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political advancement (Social Mobilization Guideline – RVWRMP, 2009). The sustained nature of the outcome – whether in SRHR, livelihoods, literacy or any other realm – brings about change in the existing power structure that mitigates poverty, reduces the risks of social conflict and encourages smooth transitions in the community or society in which the effort takes place. Social mobilization implies organizing people into community level groups, to accomplish specific aims and objectives, according to locally identified needs and desires, and project or program objectives. It is an attempt to harness and build agency i.e. the willingness of local people to help them. Often one of the main social mobilization goals is to mobilize the poor, socially-excluded, marginalized and deprived people (women, Dalits, poor Janajatis and the ultra-poor of any caste/ethnicity), to realize their power and to achieve voice and agency through collective action. 'Good' social mobilization empowers group members through the democratic processes of participatory planning and action, as well as through agency building and benefit-sharing.

After promulgating 2015 Constitution, Nepal is the Federal Democratic Republic Country where Seven Provinces and 753 Local Levels are in its governance structure and implementing in an autonomous way. Due to the poor awareness level of community people especially marginalized women and girls, the status of service seeking behavior on sexual and reproductive health is also poor in the rural context. Women and girls are not aware on their sexual and reproductive health rights and are not taking it as their human rights. So, there is huge need of building awareness on SRHR among community people, women and adolescent girls. Social mobilization would be the greatest means for the awareness building and empowerment of marginalized women and girls on their SRH issues and rights. Social mobilization will also be crucial for building the demand side of local governance and enabling women and girls to have voice and engage with local governments to hold them accountable. Therefore, social mobilization is one of the key pillars for community empowerment in the federal context of Nepal.

The whole notion of social mobilization is to transform communities into positive vibes and develop transformational leadership within the community. Self-mobilization of NLs and their engagement with community women and adolescent girls to empower them on the issues around SRH is an excellent pathway towards transformational leadership. It is

a powerful tool to address inequities through community engagement and grassroots led actions for building movements. Therefore, development of transformational leadership through social mobilization is one of the key approaches of every projects/organizations to aware and empowers community members on their key objectives and issues.

Community engagement is important because it is primarily, part of a dialogue where organizations and communities can make decisions to create social capital. It ensures that community members have access to valued social settings and activities, feel that they are able to contribute meaningfully to those activities, and develop functional capabilities that enable them to participate fully. Community engagement helps governments improve the efficiency, legitimacy and transparency of their decision making. By embracing and encouraging participation, it enables policy makers to make more informed decisions by engaging with, and carefully mapping out the needs, opinions and visions of local communities on issues that matter to them. With an emphasis on collaboration and the promise of influence on decision making, the importance of community engagement is clear as it drives social transformation. It promotes advocacy and evidence-based social movements. Community engagement increases the visibility and understanding of issues and empowers communities to have their say over decisions that affect their lives.

There are different changes agents developed and mobilized by the organizations for social mobilization and transformation. Based on the findings of sustainable abortion ecosystem assessment February 2020, Ipas Nepal has given more attention to the empowerment of women and girls to contribute to their vision "A world where every woman and girl has the right and ability to determine her own sexuality and reproductive health". The key messages of the assessment were as follows.

- Invest in agency building of women and girls with a focus on hard-to-reach poor, vulnerable and marginalized communities, with a high priority on adolescents,
- Work with religious leaders, traditional healers and other religious and cultural institutions who can play a strong role on articulating social norms positively or negatively,
- Engage with broader civil society networks including NGOs, CBOs, media, and women rights organizations for their collective voice on safe abortion and family planning,
- Initiate policy discourse/dialogue at local, provincial and federal level and bring service providers/health workers, civil society representatives, and elected government representatives,
- Involve constitutional commissions such as National Women Commission as part of monitoring of the implementation of Right to Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act as fundamental rights,
- Engage with Health Facility Operational Management Committee (HFOMC) and elected local and provincial governments to take ownership and prioritization of

SAS by policy commitments, allocation of resources in annual plans, expansion of SAS, and by ensuring availability of human resources as service providers, essential drugs and commodities,

- Support local, provincial and federal government to strengthen HMIS, and
- Continue policy advocacy for abortion self-care and availability of second trimester abortion services.

To fulfill these requirements and contribute to their vision, Ipas Nepal envisioned Natural Leaders (NLs) concept and selected them from marginalized strata of the communities coordinating with Local Governments. NLs are the one and are key pillars for social mobilization and transformation on SRHR that IPAS Nepal is envisioned, trained and mobilized for sustainable safe abortion ecosystem.

NLs self-mobilization brought community women and adolescent girls in front to exercise their rights and made service providers accountable towards quality SRH services at local level. Adapting rights-based approaches as program base and advocacy as process, contributed empowering NLs, community women and adolescent girls on transformation and local leadership.

To create enabling environment for operation of community sessions, Natural Leaders could play a crucial part in sensitizing community women, parents, community leaders and local government on issues of women and Girls, and engaging them in social and behavioral change process as well as other activities like dialogues, interactions, advocacy interventions to create accountability and ownership at local level. Ipas Nepal realized that self-mobilization of trained NLs can better implement programs at the community level to transform themselves and others on SRHR issues through their agency building. As they are the frontline people to have direct reach with women and adolescent along with other stakeholders including families, communities and local government, it is crucial that they have skills and attributes to convey right information skillfully and implement programs with quality at local level.

2. Project's vision on self-mobilization of NLs:

The access to sustainable and safe abortion comprises of various factors and actors cutting across the standalone health lens. These actors and factors based on the principle of human rights from the onset of programs, policies, and projects formulate a sustainable ecosystem. The introduction of the human rights-based approach to health aims to realize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (right to health) and other health-related human rights through the interrelated and essential elements of availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality (AAAQ).

To contribute for the sustainable abortion access that can be scaled up, replicated, and sustained mainly at local government levels, Ipas is implementing a project called 'Strengthening the Abortion Ecosystem in Nepal' from 2020- 2021. In this regard, guided

by the Ipas Global Strategic and Programmatic Frameworks towards sustainable safe abortion and Nepal country strategic plan (2018-23), the project aims to attain this through its eight program components/strategies and four cross-cutting components as part of the overarching human rights-based approach (RBA) to safe abortion programming.

Natural Leaders (NLs) are the key catalysts for sustainable safe abortion ecosystem (as shown in the figure). The project plans to identify, develop the agency of the NLs and mobilize them to create an enabling environment, where women and girls can determine their sexual and reproductive health and rights. NLs will also be instrumental to establish SRHR and SAS as an agenda for political decision and social movement for a sustainable safe abortion ecosystem. Therefore, NLs of the project through organized diffusion will reach the community to build their agencies and also amplify the process of advocacy activities at community and local government levels. Despite many efforts from the government and civil society organizations for safe abortion, Nepal has an unsafe abortion rate of 58% (NDHS 2016).

The stigma associated with abortion, the agency of the women of reproductive age (self-stigma, legal knowledge lack of bodily autonomy), lack of community (social) support, and non-prioritization at the local planning process are a few aspects that can hinder the safe abortion platform. Also, there are very few like-minded institutions and individuals to collaborate. In this regard, the NLs being the impact group themselves can be the key influencers and role models representative of their respective community/society for the social transformation. They can bridge the gap between the communities and the duty bearers to hold them accountable. They can also absorb more ecosystem actors through their interaction and mobilization.
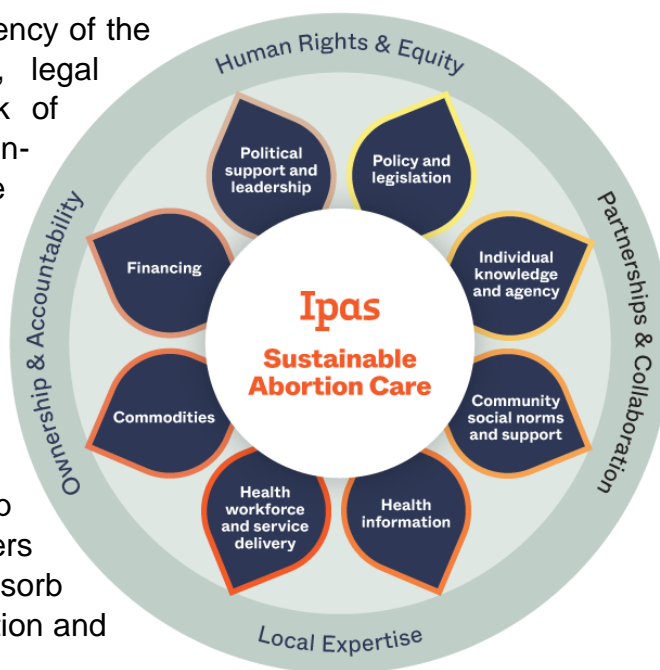
Ipas Sustainable Abortion Ecosystem Framework

Expected engagement of NLs:

- Take a firm position/stand for safe abortion and SRHR from human rights, social justice and CSO lens at the local level
- Play a role as a role model or lead-by-example in promoting safe abortion care and services, and challenging associated stigma and discriminations at the local level

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- Facilitate awareness and motivational sessions in the community, advocate SRHR and overall human rights of women and girls and communities together with Champions
- Support local communities to analyze and understand social norms related to SRHR, particularly SA and stigma associated with this.
- Develop and lead the agency building processes of women and girls and critical mass for SRHR and SAS
- Lead and support inclusive social movements/advocacy initiative for SRHR through empowerment and mobilization of own constituency and critical mass together with the ecosystem actors and Champions
- Seek for men engagement in SA issues (community perception and norms, access to services, local government's support, etc.) and collaborate with men champions to create a positive environment.
- Network, advocate, and influence for responsive governance and accountability of the local level governments for sustainable and improved SAS services
- Represent the voice and issues of women and girls and critical mass on SRHR issues at the decision making and political process levels as well as at the media and community level
- Together with champions, represent issues related to women girls' access to SA in the planning, budgeting, and monitoring process of local governments. Advocate for budget allocation by the local government for the continuation and expansion of SAS.

3. Objectives of the study:

The Natural Leaders have been trained together with the provision of the review and reflections that are done every six months for continuous support on the capacity development of the NLs. The NLs reach out to the women and girls in their community informally and formally at least conducting two community sessions each month.

The NLs and their mobilization have brought about some change in the project sites too which needs to be captured as the "stories of change". The change within the NLs is another aspect that we need to capture through the interaction, structured interview, and observing documents/diary of the NLs. The specific objectives of the study are as follows.

- To observe the process, learning, and outcomes of the community sessions carried out by NLs
- Prepare a detail report with future recommendation from the analysis of the checklist (qualitative as well as quantitative aspects), observation of review and reflection meetings and other documents and data reflecting the internal change and change in power dynamics of the Natural Leaders.

4. Study Methods

Field visits, consultation meetings, interviews and observations in the project sites were conducted during the course of study. The details of the methods applied are as follows.

4.1. Desk/document review

At the initial stage of the study, project level documents related to NLs self-mobilization on SRHR such as Sustainable Ecosystem Approach, key messages from sustainable abortion ecosystem assessment February 2020, concept of NLs their selection and mobilization, role of Natural Leaders, TRAINING OF TRAINER (TOT) MANUAL for NLs for promotion of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) including Safe Abortion Services (SAS), Project presentation, etc. have been reviewed. It helped to understand the organizational stands to develop and engage NLs in their communities to aware and empower community women and adolescent girls on safe abortion and family planning services, social norms and gender transformation, human rights and advocacy as well as coordination mechanism at local level. It will also help to develop checklists to analyze the strengths and improvement areas of NLs on SRHR.

4.2. Finalization of checklists/framework

Based on the documents review, the checklists for interview with NLs and observation on review reflection have been developed for further analysis of NLs strengths as agency building and their engagements and contributions to strengthen health system especially of safe abortion services and facilities at local level as they are the local experts and change agents on SRHR at local level. Also consulting with Ipas Nepal team, finalized the frame work for process documentation of agency building on SRHR through self-mobilization of NLs. The checklists are attached in Annex-1 and 2.

4.3 Field visits and observations

Considering the COVID-19 context short field visits have been done in Lumbini Province from 30 September to 08 October 2021 to interact with NLs, women and adolescent girls participated in community sessions, Health Facilities, Local Government representatives, FCHVs, project developed Champions using the finalized interview checklists. During the period, community sessions were also observed to collect the information that how the NLs self-mobilization contributed in the awareness of community women and adolescent girls on safe abortion and family planning services and also empower them on transforming gender social norms and policy advocacy. Observed and facilitated the virtual training to NLs of Sudurpashchim on 18 November 2021 and inputs from the participants was also incorporated in the report.

NLs review and reflection of their self-mobilization was observed at Arghakhanchi on 02 to 03 October 2021 and also the report reviewed of other project implementing areas have been done which provided the essence and the status of program achievements and impacts that reflected in the major findings and achievements.

4.4. Data analysis and reporting

The convenience sampling was used for data collection from the project areas in Lumbini Province, observed the review and reflection meeting of NLs at Arghakhanchi and virtual interactions with NLs in Sudurpashchim Province.

Data collection process	Location	Number of NLs participated
Physical interview	Palpa, Arghakhanchi and Rolpa	6
Observe review and reflection session	Arghakhanchi	21
Input collection from virtual interaction with NLs	Sudurpashchim Province	14

After field visits and observations, collected data were reviewed, compiled, analyzed and prepared the draft report that shared to Ipas Nepal team for review and inputs. The report has been finalized with the incorporation of inputs and suggestions received from the team.

5. Study Sites

The study sites were program implementing Local Governments of Lumbini and Sudurpaschim Provinces. Due to the COVID-19 context, the physical field visits and interactions were done in Purbakhola RM Palpa, Pandini RM and Bhumikasthan Municipality in Arghakhanchi and Lungri RM in Rolpa districts and collected the information. Virtual review and interactions has been done with the NLs of Sudurpaschim Province and got information of their self-mobilization and achievements in the areas.
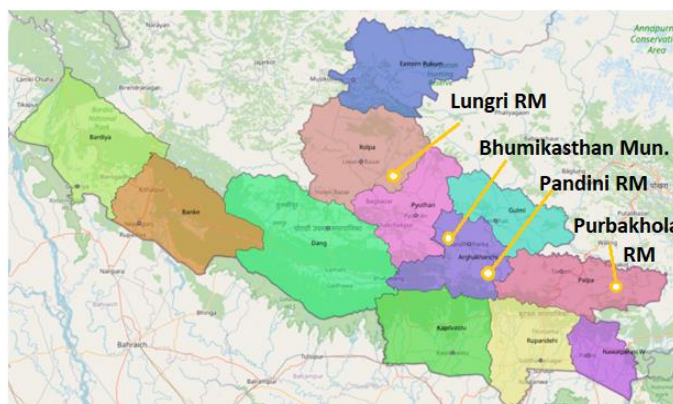
Map of study sites

6. Limitations

This report is prepared based on the review of available documents, observation of review and reflection meetings and reports, interviews with representatives of NLs, impressions of some of the community members and stakeholders regarding social mobilization through NLs and their observation and reflection on changes seen in SRHR behavior of community people especially of women and adolescent girls. Due to the COVID-19

context, the study have only covered a certain sample and therefore the study findings are not entirely representative of the Palika, district or Provincial context.

7. Agency building: Principle and Practices of empowerment

Empowerment is a process of building capability of an individual and the groups. Empowerment is defined broadly as the expansion of assets and capabilities of powerless people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control, and hold accountable the institutions that affect their lives. This broad conception can be further grounded in feminist theory as the expansion in women's ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them. Agency (power within/to), operationalized in reference to resources (power to/over), and made visible in its resulting beneficial/valued achievements. Agency is exercised, in this conception of empowerment, in opposition to a prior condition of subordination in important (strategic) arenas of life.
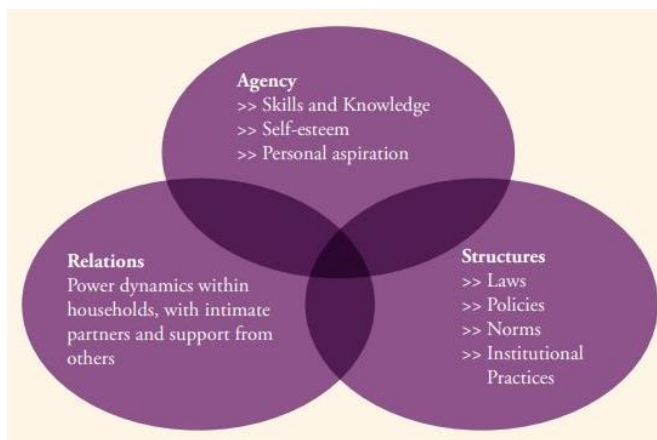
Adapted from: A Common Framework for Gender Equality and Social Inclusion[1]

So, empowerment is importantly tied to impact on the structural underpinnings of women's subordinate status and well-being. With this principle of power and social change, empowerment should be conceived of as both process and outcome that comprises three dimensions—agency, structure, and relations. These three dimensions are intimately related, structuring and influencing one another as the triangle graphic shown here implies. We understand impact on women's empowerment, in other words, to be reflected in three inter- connecting aspects of social change.

The first, driven by the actor-centered notion of "agency," is in the aspirations, resources, actions and achievements of women themselves. Every woman has agency, every woman analyses, decides, and acts without any external influence. Sometimes woman does so in ways that challenge gendered power inequities; sometimes, in ways that reinforce them. Empowerment involves a journey through which poor and marginalized women increasingly use their agency to expand their options and challenge inequities.

The second is in the broader social structures that condition women's choices and chances. Structures include routines, patterns of relationships and interaction, and conventions that lead to taken-for- granted behavior; institutions that establish agreed-

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[1] https://www.np.undp.org/content/nepal/en/home/library/gender-equality-and-social-inclusion/common-framework-for-GESI.html

upon meanings, accepted ("normal") forms of domination (who "naturally" has power over what or whom), and agreed criteria for legitimizing the social order.

And the third is in the character of the social relationships through which women negotiate their needs and rights with other social actors, including men. Both agency and structure are mediated through relationships between and among social actors while, at the same time, forms and patterns of relationships are deeply influenced – frequently in hidden ways – by agency and structure.

Analyzing the NLs self-mobilization on SRHR, the project has contributed lots to enhance the capacity building of NLs and empower them to engage with community especially with women and adolescent girls on their pertinent issues of access to safe abortion and family planning services, transformation of gender roles, changes in traditional mind-set towards SRHR and increase local coordination. NLs with their own inner capacity and strengthened their agency demonstrated the role model of SRHR in their communities. They also challenged the social power relations by their collective voices and actions resulting increase availability and accessibility of SRH services at local level as well as changed in mind-set of local communities on acceptability of safe abortion and family planning interventions and services.

The whole essence of NLs self-mobilization is to realize and demonstrate the power within. It is related to a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge; it includes an ability to recognize individual differences while respecting others. Power within involves people having a sense of their own capacity and self-worth. Power within allows people to recognize their "power to" and "power with", and believe they can make a difference.

Through the community sessions and self-mobilization of NLs, the project wanted to nurture power with, power to and power within, not operating from a position of power-over. So, the project has given priority to build the agency level of NLs and expecting to changes the negative socio-cultural aspects regarding SRH services and interventions in their families and the community women and adolescent girls through their self-mobilization and exercise of power within. The project has provided its efforts to enhance the agency level of NLs and equip them to build and exercise their power within.

Date/Time	Capacity building events
NOVEMBER 2020	5-days basic training to NLs on different aspects of SRHR contributing knowledge enhancement, confidence building, facilitation skill improvement, positive attitude, policy influence and building social cohesion.
EVERY MONTH	NLs self-mobilization (community/Palika exposure)
FEBRUARY-MARCH 2021	1st Review and Reflection (palika and district)
APRIL-JUNE 2021	Virtual follow up with NLs and their follow-up with Community and HF during COVID
JUNE 2021	COVID Response support
JULY-AUGUST 2021	2nd Review and Reflection and shared their achievements and learned from others which also helped enhancing their knowledge and skills
MARCH-JULY 2021	Men and Boys as allies for NLs (their partner and their allies) trained
OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 2021	Virtual Review and reflection

To tackle the human rights issues and agendas, there should be inner-self, courage, commitments and confidence developed in NLs which motivates, and encourages them to mobilize on their pertinent issues and raise the collective voices and actions against their denial rights. The above capacity building events helped NLs to sharpen their knowledge and skills on SRHR that directly contributed to exercise their power within which they demonstrated in the actions. In overall, agency development is crucial for transformational leadership and advocacy.

8. Major Achievements and Findings

Based on the field observation and interaction with NLs, women and adolescent girls participated in community sessions, FCHVs, Champions, Health Facility members and Local Government representatives regarding the agency building of NLs and the outcomes of their self-mobilization on SRHR, the following are the major achievements and findings.

8.1 Level of changes and transformation

The SRHR generally emerges out of a process of breaking down isolation, polarization, division, prejudice and stereotypes among diversified groups. The strong relationships are necessary pre-requisites for SRHR. Personal and relational dimensions offer changes at individual, interpersonal, and community levels, with a more immediate and local space whereas structural and cultural dimensions involve processes that affect institutions at wider social, political, or economic levels which are broader and longer term.
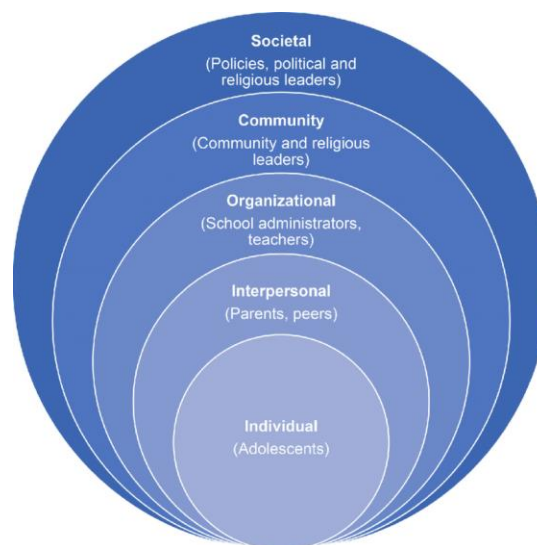
Adapted from Chandra Mouli et al. (2018). DOI: 10.9745/GHSP-D-17-00285

So, the level changes in agency building of NLs on SRHR are analyzed using the attached empowerment framework and tried to highlight the major outcomes and efforts towards social transformation.

8.1.1 Agency/Personal

The most significant changes reported by NLs and the reflection from the community people on agency building of NLs and their self-mobilization on empowering community women and adolescent girls towards SRHR found more positive. During field discussion, many respondents, especially people directly involved in

> **Box-1:** *Knowledge is important but only knowledge couldn't do anything if the person don't have skill and capability of delivering that knowledge appropriately to target communities. Training on SRHR was the breakthrough event of my life that helped me to further understand myself in a deeper way, to enhance my leadership quality as well as to identify and analyze community real context. In addition, this increases my skill to communicate and facilitate with powerless and voiceless groups within communities. Now, at this stage of my life, I am fully confident that I will be a good facilitator,*

community sessions said that NLs self-mobilization on community sessions have directly transformed their personal attitude and behaviors of understanding issues and their

reactions against denial rights. More specifically, NLs have gained SRH knowledge and facilitate communities to exercise the SRH rights. There are some significant examples and changes seen in the communities where Natural Leaders are the champions of these changes.

i) Engagement with women and girls

NLs are facilitating the community sessions focusing on safe abortion services, family planning, gender-based violence and gender transformation. Principally these sessions are expecting to go through ReFLECT modality which aims to empower community people on their pertinent issues specially SRHR and exercise their rights.

> *Box-3: There is no safe abortion service in our HP. We need 24-hour services and the experienced service provider at local level. The people who have enough money can go to Butwal or Kathmandu for their treatment but we, who are poor and not having enough money what can we do? Dead? – Mustafa Khatun, participants of community session, Pandini.*

Based on the field observation, NLs are delivering the contents in community sessions very perfectly that means they have good understanding and knowledge of SRHR. Community people in one hand gained knowledge on government services like safe abortion, family planning and other their pertinent issues and in other hand they are empowered and started claiming their rights.

> *Box-2: Previously, I don't have any knowledge about safe abortion, gender and power dynamics but heard little bit about family planning services. After selecting as NL, I got an opportunity to participate in the basic training on SRHR and then only I have somehow knowledge about SRH interventions and the services. At the initial period of community session, I had lots of fear because I couldn't have that experience of facilitation by sitting in front of the senior women. I also was nervous at that time to deliver the messages of safe abortion and family planning which community women and the family members perceived it as very sensitive issue and not allowed to talk around. Some of the elite men and even women charged to NL that their daughters and daughters-in-law become bad if they participate in this kind of discussions in community sessions. I was facing multiple challenges such as a member of deprived and marginalized Dalit community which are structurally discriminated and also a so-called Dalit woman suffering from poverty and social injustice who wanted to change the power relations in the families and the communities. I had consulted with IPAS district team regarding this issue and also discussed with supportive women and men in the community for their help. I received encouragements and support from them which enhanced my confidence level and inner power to move forward. I have also read the national policies and the provisions regarding SRHR. With these strengths, I have facilitated community sessions becoming myself stronger with knowledge and information that helped to change the traditional mind-set of community women and men and the SRH service providers towards dalit women as well as the engagement of NLs on SRHR interventions. Now, I can speak out loudly and become a champion of change in the community. – Jharana Sunar, NL Pandini RM, Arghakhanchi.*

As per discussion with NL, participants of community sessions, health facilities, FCHVs and local government representatives; service seeking behavior of reproductive aged women and adolescent girls have been increased mainly uses of family planning contraceptives and safe abortion services.

Before there were much more traditional practices of unsafe abortion in the communities like use a kind of herbs, pushing a thin stick into the ovary, very tightly tying the clothes in and around lower stomach, etc to abort the fetus which affects losses of life, high bleedings and complications. It was around 50-60 per year before but after NLs mobilization and discussion in community sessions, the trend of unsafe abortion is reduced to 10-15 now as well as use of family planning devices is increased significantly (community expression). It shows that community people are getting information about government policies on SRHR and available services and empowered on decision making and influence family members.

Box-5: *At the initial stage of the discussion on safe abortion services in the community sessions, some of the participants and their family members were aggressive and charged to Natural Leaders as they are talking unnecessary things which will negatively affects their daughters and daughters-in-law. With the information provided by the NLs on safe abortion services, policy provisions, implications of unsafe abortion cases with examples and availability of family planning contraceptives at community and Health Facility as well as highlighting the human rights issues, later on the attitude of those community members has been changed and they are becoming supportive (Kamala Pulami and Bhagawati Shrestha, FCHVs of Siluwa).*

Case - 1: *A couple residing in Lungri-2, Sirpa had three daughters and also had pregnancy due to son preference. They had visited Health Facility for pregnancy check up but the hidden interest of the husband was identifying the sex of the fetus. When he heard about the girl child to be birth again then he back home and starting beating his wife who is pregnant going to birth newborn. The woman was getting injured and had white fluid discharged which will be the serious problem during the pregnancy. There was no any mistake of the woman but all the charges of giving birth of baby girl were to the woman. One day, the husband again beat her wife and then leaves from the house with an adolescent girl with whom he wanted to marry.*

The NL and the community after receiving this information visited the pregnant woman and suggested her to go for police case because her husband did multiple violence – one is polygamy and another is child marriage. She had registered the child marriage case at police office and then police started investigations. Due to the weakness and the effect of beating and torture, the woman gave the child birth during the seven month period of her pregnancy. Fortunately it was son. Due to the pressure of local community who aware and empower from community sessions and the Natural Leader, the child marriage as well as polygamy was stopped. Local Police suggested for the reconciliation and improve the relation between husband and wife. Now, the husband returned home and takes care of his wife who gave birth of baby boy. Both are now happy and healthy. This was the impact of the actions of empowered community and mobilization of committed Natural Leader.

> **Box-6:** *Dahakot Health Post, Bajura is the authorized service center to provide safe abortion services since 2016 but community women and adolescent girls couldn't visit there for SA information the services. Before the NLs self-mobilization in the area, only 10-12 women received safe abortion services from the health post during three years period. After NLs self-mobilization and awareness building of community women on safe abortion, 12 to 25 women openly receiving safe aborting services from this health post in a month who have unwanted pregnancy and also the rate of family planning contraceptive users are increased. As per health post information, adolescent girls are also receiving safe abortion services from the health post. This awareness and accessible services of safe abortion at health post reduced the suicide cases at local level (Nisha Rokaya, NL Gaumul RM, Bajura).*

ii) Advocacy and change in power relations

Advocacy is a process that involves a series of actions conducted by organized citizens in order to transform power relations. The purpose of advocacy is to achieve specific policy changes, program changes, or allocation of resources that benefit the population involved in this process. Women and adolescent girls participating in community sessions started raising voices against bad social norms and traditional practices of their communities as well as claiming their rights as per policy provisions. These initiatives and collective actions also helped in changing power relations in the families and the communities.

> **Box-7:** *After involvement in community sessions and getting information about the safe abortion services, family planning and gender, the participants are now empowered and talking and raising their voices on basic services facilities, against the malpractices of the communities and started to claim their SRH rights. They also visited Ward Offices and asked for budget for SRH interventions which is good in influencing policy makers and also claiming their rights. So, conduction of these community sessions on SRHR by mobilizing Natural Leaders are found very effective and requested IPAS to continue these initiatives in collaboration with RM - Ritman Shrestha, Ward Member of Purbakhola RM,*

The NLs and the participants of community sessions are visiting Health Post (HP) to provide quality services of safe abortion maintaining privacy and confidentiality. In some of the HPs there is position vacant for safe abortion service provider in Health Post so the participants discussed in their community sessions and doing advocacy to Local Government and HP to fulfill the

position immediately which is one of the good initiations of NLs and communities regarding claiming their rights and quality services.

Case - 2: *Mrs. Tina Khatun (name changed) and her family decided to marry her daughter Rupa Khatun (name changed) at the age of 19. Rupa Khatun is not interested and accepted this marriage but not able to reject because of family pressure. While discussing the issue of child marriage at community session, it was shared and known that Tina Khatun decided child marriage of her daughter. Tina was also the participants of community session. Najma Khatun, the NL shared the national policy regarding marriage age and also she shared the punishment provision for child marriage cases. Najma Khatun also discussed with Tina Khatun, Rupa Khatun and the family members and threatened them about police case and punishment. Later on Tina Khatun postponed the marriage for one year. Rupa Khatun with tear in her eyes expressed her gratitude to Najma Khatun for understanding her situation and saving her life. Najma Khatun is also very satisfied and happy with this success and said that this success encouraged me to move ahead against bad traditions exists in Muslim community.*

> *Box-8:* *Mr. Kamal Paudel Ward Chairperson of Sitganga Municipality, Arghakhanchi was not aware on SRHR before and not accepting the request to allocate the budget for SRHR issues especially family planning and safe abortion services. Project has involved him in series of meetings, discussions, request to attend in community sessions and tried to convince him on the real community situation of SRH. With these engagements, he realized that SRH issues are the human rights issues. He also realized that this abortion is not a desire but is done by person in difficult situation. Now, he started to visit the communities and aware them on taking SRH services. He also committed for allocating the adequate budget for SRHR in his ward from the Municipality at any cost.*

Case - 3: *Based on the discussion in community sessions and issue raised, Ms. Najma Khatun- the Natural Leader of Pandini called Ward Chairperson to attend in community session and discuss with the participants on their issues related to policy and local government. Mr. Mini Raj Aatreya, Ward Chairperson came to the session. Community participants raised their development issues like drinking water facility, Rural Municipality's policy and plan to end child marriage and women empowerment activities. The Ward Chairperson expressed his happiness calling him in the session and raising these collective voices after the community session. He has committed to include the community problems in local level planning and support to resolve those problems. There are traditional practices of child marriage in Muslim and Kumal community. Government policy is not allowed to do child marriage and Rural Municipality is also taken it as human rights issue and given high priority to aware community people and end child marriage from the area. These kinds of community sessions are highly important to educate marginalized community people who have such traditional thinking and practices. Natural Leaders are doing excellent job in the communities to aware women and girls as well as other community people on national policies and the implications of child marriage that will definitely support to end this human rights violation. There are also high restrictions*

in mobility of Muslim women to go outside from their house, participate in the meetings, etc. He said that he found these community sessions helped in empowering those Muslim community women on their basic rights and started to improve and strengthen social cohesion and service utilization. Rural Municipality and the Ward will be always with the community people in this regard. At the end he again expressed his happiness to be a part of the movement and requested to support local government to implement the national policies effectively to end such traditional bad social norms and human rights violation issues.

iii) Outreach

Community people are seen more vibrant after Natural Leaders facilitating the community sessions. They are using formal and informal groups and sessions to deliver SRHR messages and services. Traditional mind-set and attitude of community people regarding social norms, so long practices, attitudes towards daughters-in-law and family relations is in changing trend towards positive. Service seeking behavior of community women and adolescent girls on using family planning contraceptives and safe abortion is also increased. The effects of these changes in the program areas, the neighboring communities also requesting NLs to visit their area and support them on such facilitation so that their community women and adolescent girls also will have better knowledge and understanding on safe abortion and family planning services. Some of the NLs started providing facilitation support to neighboring communities and Municipalities and increased their outreach.

NLs are using some of informal spaces like water tap, grass cutting areas, forest, cultivation fields, and cultural sessions for their entry points to deliver the safe abortion and family planning messages and also aware community women and adolescent girls on gender social norms and power relations at their house and the communities. Due to the power dynamics of their houses and the communities, most of the women and adolescent girls couldn't speak out their SRH problems and issues in community sessions but they comfortably shared those problems and issues with NLs in these informal sessions which helped to understand and dig-out the community situations and identify the way outs.

Case- 4: With the result of community sessions and empowerment of community members on SRHR at Siluwa, the neighboring community of Rampur Municipality ward # 9 with the support from the Municipality requested Ms. Dhani Maya Gaha to facilitate the session on SRHR at their community. The session was organized by Andhakar Mukti Women Saving and Credit Group, Rampur. After the session, one of the participants visited NL and shared about her problem. She already had two children (son and daughter) but again getting pregnant which was not of her interest. She did abortion in Local Medical because of the fear of disclosure of her pregnancy and abortion. Unfortunately, she was suffering from bleeding problem due to abortion and it was already

3 months. Her health was deteriorating day by day and getting very weak but she was not able to share this to others. When NL getting this information from her, at first she shared the real information about the safe abortion services at Health Post and maintaining confidentiality and then suggested to go to the hospital for further treatment. With this suggestion from NL, she went to Palpa Mission Hospital, did adequate treatment and back to home. Now, she is getting better and waiting for the complete recovery. She expressed her gratitude to NL for building confidence and saving her life.

Case- 5: *An adolescent girl residence of Lungri RM-2 was in deep love with the adolescent boy during reading in class 9. They also had sexual relations since a period. The boy previously committed her that they will get marriage so there will be no any problems if anything happen. The girl convinced and doing regular sexual relations with him. Later on she was getting pregnant because of unsafe sexual relations. She had informed her pregnancy to the boy and proposed for marriage but the boy denied. She was suffering with this and going depression. She also left the school. Day by day the boy was started maintaining distance and getting out of contact with her.*

Hari Maya Giri said that one day, she along with psychosocial counselor visited her village for orientation program on SRHR and sent their mobile number to the communities if they need any support on safe abortion and other SRHR issues. Hari Maya received phone call from the girl and known about the case details. Immediately, NL along with psychosocial counselor

> ***Box-9:*** *Previously we have only discussed on family planning and immunization related matters in Health Mother Group meeting but now with the support of Natural Leader, we have discussing on safe abortion policy provisions and services in addition to FP resulting the number of FP users increased and the reproductive health condition of women improved as well as getting empowered (FCHVs' impression).*

visited her and provided counseling support as well as information about the availability of safe abortion services. As information received, the girl went to the authorized Health Post and did safe abortion. Now, her health condition is good and completely recovered. She is very happy and expressed her happiness with NL and also thanking to us for saving her life. Now, she rejoined school and continue her study.

iv) Coordination and multiplier effect

NLs are facilitating the sessions coordinating with FCHVs, Health Facilities, Local Governments and other relevant stakeholders and also called them as per community issues and needs. These community sessions are the local level plate forms where service providers and the stakeholders taken it to share the information about services, discussions on the problems and issues, conduct joint actions like day celebrations, saving credit functions, local level planning forum, etc. Especially different sectoral offices of Local Government like health facilities, agriculture, livestock, women children and senior citizen using these forums to inform their planned activities. With the coordination effort, community people have increased receiving support and services from the service

providers. The numbers of Family planning users are increasing significantly that directly contributing to stop the unsafe abortion.

As per the social mobilization strategy oriented by the project, NLs have made their five friends as constituency on awareness building and social mobilization in a wider range. When NLs got updates on SRHR, they always share that to the friends so that the same messages could deliver to the women and adolescent girls in their communities. Five friend approaches for social mobilization bringing multiplier effects on SRHR in the program areas.

Box-9: One married woman residing in Gumdanda village at Purbakhola did unsafe abortion two times because of inadequate knowledge and information of free safe abortion services at the Health Post (HP) and also the fear of disclosure of her pregnancy and abortion. So, she used to do unsafe abortion time and again. When Ms. Bimala Shrestha (one of five friends of Ms. Dhani Maya Gaha, the Natural Leader of Siluwa) got the information about this in her information discussions, visited her and provided the information about free safe abortion services from health post as well as counseling on use of family planning devices to control the unwanted pregnancy. Now, she is taking Implant and saved her life.

v) Promote social accountability

NLs and the participants of community sessions at local level started discussion on local level planning and budget allocation. They have visited Ward Offices and asked how much budget has been allocating to them or their pertinent issues like SRH interventions. Mr. Ritman Shrestha, Ward Member of Purbakhola RM said that local government broadly allocated the

Box-10: It is great achievement of Muslim community Natural Leader that she is able to gather Muslim community women in community sessions, aware and empower them on SRHR issues and services, facilitate to use family planning contraceptives and safe abortion services. Now, Muslim community women are started to use FP contraceptives even they are not saying it openly – Ms. Pabitra Bhattarai, Champion of Pandini.

budget for health interventions but not explicitly breakdown to the SRH activities. NLs and community people asked the details and raised their voices to have clear figure of budget to address their SRH issues so that as a Ward Member he realized that there is need of making clear breakdown of the sector budget and publicize the details for transparency. It helped to promote internal governance of community groups and local bodies as well as empowerment of rights holders by exercising their rights and responsibilities.

vi) Champions of change

NLs have gained SRHR knowledge through training and review sessions and also have enhanced facilitation skills which they performed in community sessions. They are the frontline actors who supported and encouraged community women and adolescent girls to raise their SRH issues and facilitated the issue-based collective actions against traditional bad social norms and power relations. NLs are also engaging in problem

resolution at local level. They have increased decision-making capacity at HHs and community level and also able to discuss openly with their husband regarding sexual relations. During this entire period, most of the NLs are seen as role model and champions of change.

8.1.2 Relational

Perhaps the most obvious transformation that NL has contributed to is the relational change among diverse individuals and groups. Discussion and dialogue promotes in developing practices of cooperation, mutual respect, collective actions and collaborative decision making which can be positive relational changes. This ultimately promotes the trust and harmony in families and the societies.

NLs are found more aware and confidence on their task. Their own level of understanding, analyzing the situation, empathetic listening and inner-power is found increased and contributed to empower the community women and adolescent girls to start discussion and dialogue with their family members. NLs are also empowered and as per them, they are discussing with their husbands on sexual matters and other SRH issues. As a result of participating in the community sessions, getting information about SRHR policy and provisions, and discussions, the behavior of Mother-in-Laws towards their daughter and daughter-in-laws changed in a positive way. Their traditional mind-set have been changed and becoming supportive to their subordinates. NLs along with community participants especially women and adolescent girls are also found open, positive and supportive in SRHR movement. They have engaged duty bearers like health facilities and local governments and tried to make them accountable towards marginalized communities. These are the good symptoms of changing power relations in the families and the communities.

8.1.3 Structural

The structural dimension aims at changing, structures, systems and institutions beyond the individual level. It aims transformation of root causes of traditional mind-set and behavior of community people especially elites, Mother-in-Laws and power holders on safe abortion and family planning services. The achievements from mobilization of NLs and community sessions in mitigating gender-based violence and knowledge on gender transformation supported directly addressing gender inequality, social discrimination and, deprivation. NLs are now engaging and holding key decision-making positions in different community groups like Saving Credit Groups, Micro Finance Institutions, Women Cooperatives, Health Mother Groups, Agriculture Groups, Adolescent Girls Groups, Dialogue Networks, Graduate Forums, GBV Control Groups, etc.

NLs are also using formal and informal groups and approaches to deliver SRH messages to the communities. They have enforceability of rights, access to services and actions to make service providers accountable.

8.1.4 Cultural

The cultural dimensions include the initiatives that address deep seated culture, traditions, norms, values and beliefs. Through NLs mobilization and community sessions, they have been able to inculcate highest level of transformation in the mindset of people with a strong belief that power relation can be transformed in a constructive way and the culture of discrimination and violence should be abolished from the minds and hearts of the community people and the power holders. They have practically followed this through their collective actions and somehow succeeded in breaking the culture of silence against bad social norms and violations.

> *Box-11: There is need of more awareness on GBV and violence against women because community women are suppressed on these problems. Community women are knowingly or unknowingly accepting these violence cases easily to their life due to their traditional mind set regarding their fear about prestige down of their family if disclosures – Tila Kumari Kumal, FCHV, Pandini*

### In a Nutshell: What Really Changed from NL's agency building and mobilization?

- Organizing and mobilizing community people on SRHR
- Breaking the culture of silence, raising their voices against violence and developing question culture.
- Promotion of experience sharing and empathy.
- Restoration of confidence and positivity and overcoming negative feelings
- Building normal healthy relations with individuals, family members and the community groups.
- Recovering women and adolescent girls from trauma and psychosocial problems happening by unwanted pregnancy due to unsafe sexual relations and fear of disclosures.
- Overcoming problems by coming up with collective joint actions.
- Promoting accountability and evidence based advocacy.
- Building constituency on SRHR.
- Building community aware on safe abortion and family planning services and its utilization.
- Saving women and adolescent girls life.
- Being a role model and champions of change in the communities challenging power relations.

9. Recommendations

Overall, the study found that the human rights-based approach of social mobilization at program areas of Ipas Nepal was effective. Natural Leaders are playing vital role in empowering community women and adolescent girls on SRHR especially safe abortion and family planning services at local level. NLs and the empowered citizens are now started questioning within themselves, their families, communities and service centers regarding women's human rights which seen good foundations for challenging power relations and changing traditions and mindset of the communities. Despite of these achievements, there are some areas for further improvement in future course of actions.

i. Refresh NLs on reflective learning and actions processes:

NLs are found good enough to deliver the contents like safe abortion and family planning services, gender and GBV in community sessions. Their facilitation skills are improved and the level of confidence is also found strong. The aim of building greater agency for social transformation could be in place and practice if the sessions are conducting in reflective learning and action processes. There is need of refreshing NLs on the below operational frame for reflective learning and actions so that they can have advance level of skills of critical awareness and authentic dialogue which can bring a momentum on SRHR.
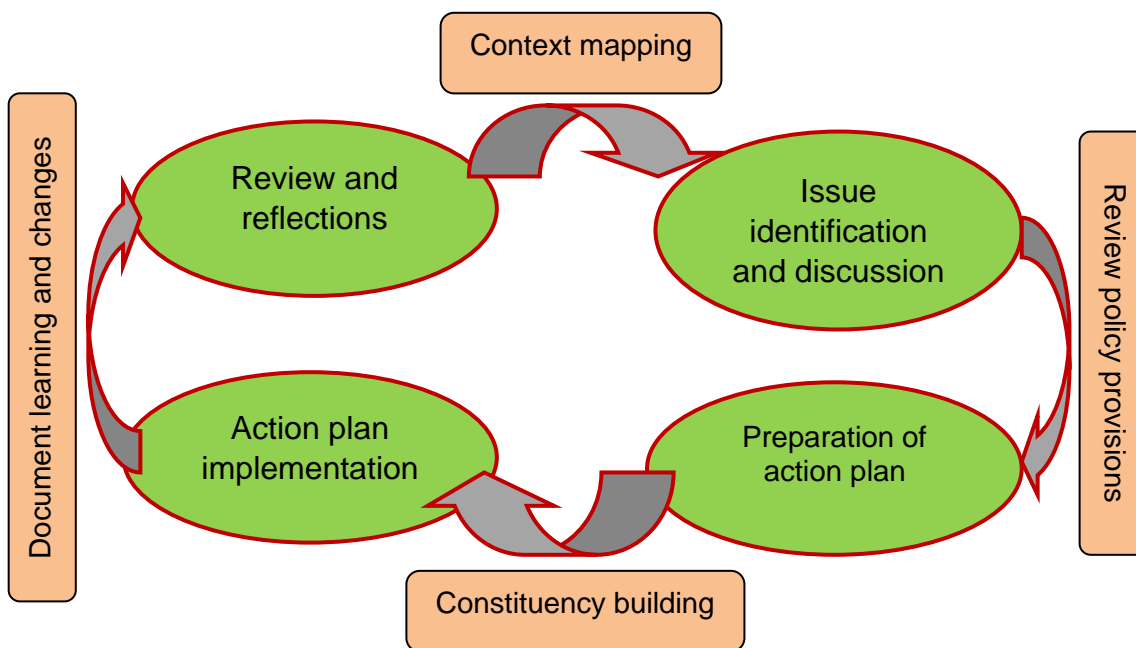
Framework for Reflective Learning

ii. Support to implement issue-based campaigns and social movements:

NLs are focusing on building SRHR awareness of women and adolescent girls during the period through their mobilization and facilitation which is also most important to have better knowledge on SRHR at first. There is equally important to reflect their awareness

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into the actions and behaviors that helps to empower them on their issues and encourages them on rights-based movements. SRHR is the women's human rights so claiming and exercising these rights by women and adolescent girls will be as expected level when they will have reflective knowledge and practices. Based on the field observations, women and adolescent girls participating in community sessions are getting SRHR information and knowledge adequately whereas support is needed to implement collective social actions they identified resulting to make community more empower and accountable service providers towards SRHR services.

iii. Strengthen Five Friends social mobilization approach:

The result of five friend social mobilization approach to aware and mobilization communities in safe abortion and family planning services and GBV is found very effective. There is need of expansion of this approach to all program areas to create a momentum on SRHR. Also need of collecting their progresses, contributions and efforts in a systematic way that encourages them to move on rights movement as well as project will have broader information and achievements of the interventions.

iii. Strengthen linkages and engagement of NLs in local level planning process:

Local government has very good planning system at ground level which starts from tole or cluster level. The NLs are also working their actions in community and village level. Through NLs self-mobilization and facilitation in community sessions about the 7-step planning process of the government to identify, represent, and streamline SRHR issues in local level planning that support to increase their access to local development mainstreaming to address their needs and expectations. It is the major expected engagement/roles of NLs but in reality it is not found fully applied in the ground level. So, at first NLs should have adequate knowledge of 7-step planning process and then strengthened linkages and engagements in local planning process to address the SRHR needs of community women and adolescent girls. This will be an important aspect of the sustainability of efforts after ownership of local government and the continuation of allocation of budget for safe abortion, family planning and the empowerment activities from the local level.

iv. Promote social accountability:

NLs and the participants of community sessions at local level can establish a system through which citizens' capability and understanding will be developed to use social accountability mechanisms like public audit, community score-card, and public hearing to ensure downward accountability of service providers. It helps to promote internal governance of community groups and local bodies as well as empowerment of rights holders by exercising their rights and responsibilities. With the support from NLs and also their actions and experiences, community groups will practice and facilitate social accountability practices like public hearing and public auditing of development activities at local level and community score card to strengthen the SRH service system.

v. Joint program monitoring:

Project has provided one event of training to NLs and then mobilizes them to facilitate communities on SRHR awareness. Based on the discussion with NLs, they have expressed their expectations to have more joint field visits and provided on-site coaching and feedbacks to them. Joint program monitoring and feedback system will help to enhance knowledge and skills of NLs through evidence based on-site coaching and also benefits to increase the effectiveness of the project interventions.

Joint program monitoring by project team, SRHR service providers and local government representatives will also be crucial for building mutual accountability of all the stakeholders and sustainability of project interventions through localization process as well as it will help to expand and replicate the project's best practices and learning to the wider level.

vi. Program sustainability:

Organizing and mobilizing community people especially women and adolescent girls in community sessions and providing information about national policy and provisions on SRHR found very effective and community people are informed on it. Through the empowerment of community women and their constituency, there has been started the emergence of critical issues and mass which can lead rights-based collective actions and movements. The aim of the project is to transform communities on SRHR through agency building of NLs, women and adolescent girls and their critical engagement through social actions on service availability, accessibility, acceptability, and quality.

The whole aim of the project is to aware community women and adolescent girls and emerge the critical mass on SRHR issues and their critical engagement through evidence based collective actions for the transformation of gender social norms and power relations.

NLs which are trained on SRHR, national policies, rights-based approach, gender transformation and power dynamics and their self-mobilization to transfer such knowledge to the communities especially to women and adolescent girls for their empowerment. Now, some of the positive changes in SRH service seeking behavior and practices seen in the communities but changes in behavior and attitude are the time taking process. So, the external support for this process is requiring for some time. Therefore, Project should consider on it and support for the retention of self-mobilization of NLs in the areas.

The framework generated from the study findings can help to move on it for the sustainability of project interventions and achievements through agency building of NLs and their self-mobilization to empower community women and adolescent girls.
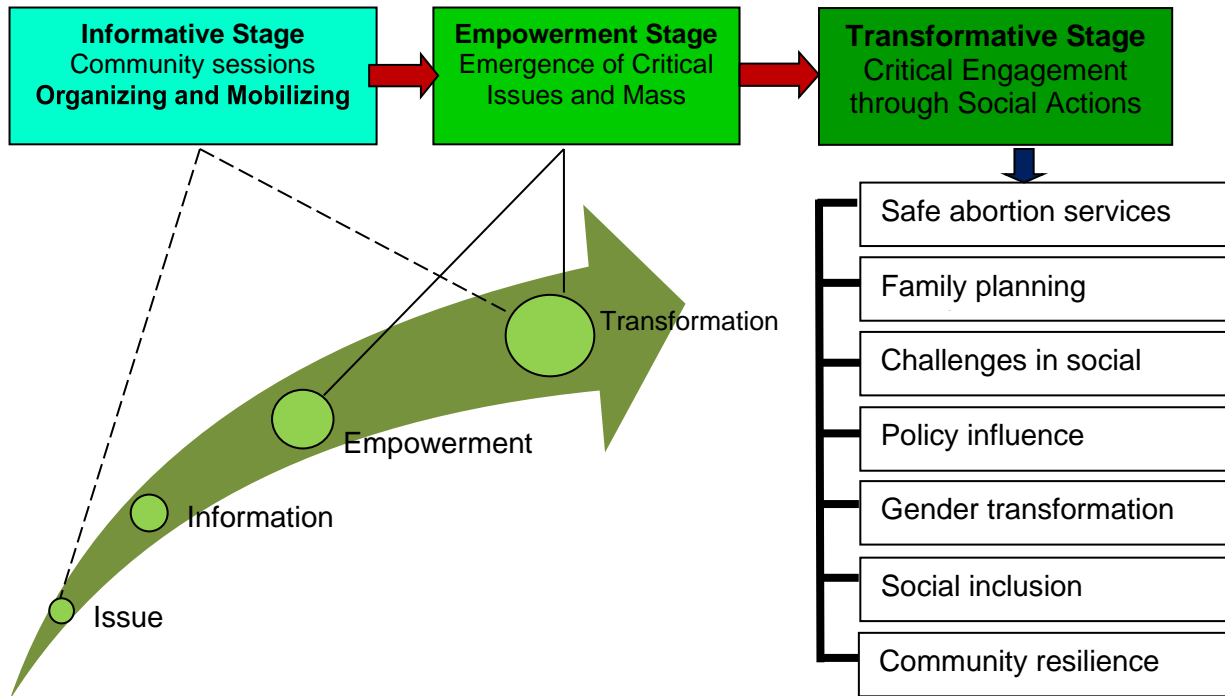
Framework for Natural Leaders' Mobilization on SRHR

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Various project documents and strategies of Ipas Nepal

Annex-1: Checklist for interview with NLs

Agency Level/Individual Level (Power, Self-confidence, Decision-making capacity, time utilization)

- Please give your introduction.
- How you select as NL? What process? Who selected?
- Did you receive any training? From where?
- Are you involved in important /financial decisions at home?
- Who holds the money at home?
- Do your family members listen to you and your suggestions?
- Do you have SRHR and GBV related information and knowledge? Please share. From where you receive this information?
- Have you share this information to others? How many people received this information?
- Has there been any change in sharing of the reproductive task? If yes, what were the constraining stereotypes and social norms you have been able to question to bring this change?
- Do you get enough time for your leisure? Does that make you happy? (question on the happiness quotient)
- Have there been more learning opportunities for you than earlier?
- How do you all eat food? Is it mostly together with family members or at the last?
- What are the noticeable changes in your family after your role as NL?
- What are the noticeable changes in your communities?
- On a scale of 1-10 where would you place yourself in terms of your self-confidence with SRHR and specially to addressing/questioning the root causes -gender inequality, power imbalance, and social norms?
- Any case stories? Can you share?
- Where is the safe abortion service center in your community?
- Did any person received SA services in your community? What was your role on it?
- How community perceive on safe abortion?
- What are women human right?
- SRHR is women's human rights. Do you agree?
- What do you think about your capacity building? Any knowledge and skills you want to build yourself for this role?

Community Level

- Are you involved in any community groups? What are they?
- Are there any restrictions from your family to go to the meetings?
- How often are you invited to the community groups as a facilitator?
- How have people started perceiving you in the community?
- How big is your group today? (your allies)
- Are men and boys outside of your households also receptive to you and your ideas?
- When you meet informally, do you see any change in how people perceive you earlier and today?
- Do you have chances to discuss on SRHR in your groups?

- What kind of information about safe abortion do the group members have? How they perceived?
- Do the communities have taken any initiation for SAS? Advocacy?
- How the community men and boys perceive you?
- Do you involve in any community development activities? Planning, implementation, monitoring, etc.
- Have you raised voices against miss-conduct and gender based violence cases?
- Any changes after your voices?
- What kind of initiations you have taken for SRHR advocacy?
- What is the status of unsafe abortion in your community? Is any changes occurs after your self-mobilization.
- Have you write any case stories about those changes?

Effectiveness of SRH Services

- What kind of health service centers in your community? Health Post, PHC, Hospital?
- How far are those service centers? Distance, accessibility.
- How effective the services? Especially of SRH services.
- Do you have taken any initiation with HFOMC for effective SAS at your health service centers? Staff management, services, medicines, logistics, etc.
- Do you and your community visit Local Governments for effective SRH and SA Services?
- Is your Local Government allocated budget for SAS?
- Have you seen any changes in Health Service Centers after your self-mobilization? Policy changes, management level changes, service effectiveness, flow of community women and girls to receive services.
- In your opinion, how do you think champions perceive you? (superior, inferior, or as allies)
- How effective have champions been as your allies?
- Has your engagement in the public and political sphere increased than before?
- Is there any change in the attitude of Palika representatives and health facilities towards you? Do they look for your opinion?

Future prospects

- What you want to see on SRH and SAS in your community after two years?
- What you think the three major issues which we need to raise and address on SAS?
- What could be the social position of NLs after two years?
- Do you think any support needed for you and your role?

Annex-2: Review and Reflection observation checklist

Selection process of NLs

- How you select as NL? What process was adapted? Who selected?
- What were the selection criteria?
- Why you select? Why not others?
- What were the reactions from communities after your selection?

Tree Analysis

i. Roots of Inputs

- What are the investments or inputs contributed by the project to develop NL?
- What kinds of training and workshop organized for capacity building of NLs?

ii. Fruits of Achievements

- What are the achievements seen after NLs self-mobilization?
- NLs self-confidence level or agency level changes?
- Changes in family level relations, power exercise, etc/
- Community level changes
- Changes seen in community groups.
- Changes seen in health service centers
- Social movements against discrimination, GBV, bad social norms and changes.
- Changes in Local Governments policies and procedures.

iii. Flowers of Learning

- Major learning from NLs self-mobilization
- Learning from Champions coordination and support during NLs self-mobilization on SAS.

iv. Nodes of Challenges

- Major problems and challenges seen during NLs self-mobilization (Individual, Structural, Policy level)

Reflecting the past

- What are the major achievements or successes of NLs self-mobilization? What are the major reasons? What were the influencing factors?
- What were the motivational parts?
- What is your experience about being NL and mobilization in the communities?
- You are working in the communities, in which actions do you give high priority as NL?
- What learning do you have during this one year period of acting as NL?
- What are the major actions you notice in other NLs presentation/sharing?
- What you think is necessary to mobilize NLs in coming days?

Designing the Future

- What you want to see on SRH and SAS in your community after two years?

- What you think the three major issues which we need to raise and address on SAS?
- What could be the social position of NLs after two years?
- Do you think any support needed for you and your role?