



Government of Nepal
 Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration
 Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme

4th Technical Assistance Committee Meeting

June 18, 2021

1. Introduction

The 4th meeting of the Technical Assistance Sub-Committee (TASC) of the Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP) was held under the chair of Mr. Gopi Krishna Khanal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) on 18 June 2021. The main purpose of the meeting was to receive updates on the implementation status of PLGSP Technical Assistance (TA) and to discuss and approve the revised TA Annual Work Plan 2021. The meeting was participated by the representatives of the Joint Financing Agreement (JFA) Development Partners (DPs), UNDP and PLGSP/Programme Coordination Unit (PCU) staff members (list of the participants is given in Annex 2). Considering the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country, the meeting was organized virtually.

2. Opening Remarks

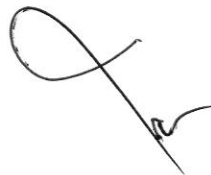
1. The National Programme Manager (NPM) of PLGSP, Chiranjivi Timsina, welcomed all participants, both those in-person and virtually, addressing them by their names.
2. The National Programme Director (NPD) of PLGSP, Gopi Krishna Khanal, welcomed all present in the meeting. He stressed how Covid-19 has created difficulties and impacted the work of PLGSP, and expressed hope for the normalization of the situation soon to allow for expediting of the work.
3. Ms. Cynthia Rowe, DP Chair and FCDO Team Leader, Governance, Political and Services Team, greeted everyone, by saying that she was delighted to participate in the 4th TASC meeting of PLGSP. She thanked the UNDP and PCU teams for organizing the meeting virtually at the time of the pandemic. She mentioned that the virtual meetings organized so far have been very effective. It is an important moment to review the progress on TA, to set up the priorities for the next fiscal year, to discuss the quality and governance issues of the Programme, and to approve the TA workplan. She

elaborated that DPs are happy with the close coordination and dialogue with MoFAGA and UNDP which is helping to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the PLGSP. She agreed that TA is critically important for the successful delivery of the Programme and shared that despite challenges, DPs look forward to full utilization of the TA capacity in the implementation. She suggested that a review of the performance and scope of the TA in the PLGSP mid-term review would be useful to generate lessons learned so far.

4. Mr. Bernardo Cocco, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP greeted everyone and thanked MoFAGA for organizing the meeting. He shared that UNDP always looks forward to discuss opportunities, challenges and needs in relation to the provision of TA. He welcomed the comments from Cynthia to assess the performance of the TA and expressed that such a review would help to support the Programme and TA implementation. He shared an update about the recruitment process, which about to be completed, staff retention and turnover and interim arrangements to bridge the gaps with transition of staff. He further shared that UNDP will provide necessary support to PCU to develop a PLGSP Staff Retention Strategy, and mentioned some of the capacity building initiatives already implemented and highlighted that UNDP will continue to support MoFAGA/PCU in implementing all relevant health and safety measures, as well as alternative modalities for trainings. Procurement of vehicles is also progressing, with expected completion between September – November 2021. Interim arrangements have been put in place in the meantime. PCGGs and PPIUs are now well established and most of the staff are in place. Additionally, the PLGSP baseline study, third-party monitoring, IPF Operational Guidelines and Vertical/Horizontal Accountability Frameworks are under development with TA support. He mentioned the delivery acceleration plan for the next fiscal year and highlighted some of the key activities to be implemented, including GESI LG index, HDI index, PLGSP mid-term review and the capacity development of the TA staff to support the Programme. The delivery has been impacted due to external circumstances including Covid-19, however, UNDP hopes that with the arrangements in place we can achieve the projected targets in close collaboration with MoFAGA and DPs.

3. Decisions

1. The TASC meeting recognized the efforts and decided to approve the TA progress made in January-May 2021
2. The TASC meeting decided to approve the revised 2021 TA Annual Work Plan, in line with ASIP 2021/22
3. The TASC requested PCU to plan a virtual field visit to provide a platform for sharing, dialogue and interaction among representatives from three tiers of governments and



DPs on PLGSP implementation, progress, challenges, opportunities and needs at the provincial and local levels



4. Closing

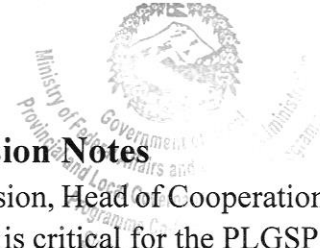
Bernardo Cocco, Deputy Resident Representative, UNDP shared that it had been a good meeting and thanked everyone for all the valuable feedback. He highlighted the needs for the performance assessment of the TA as part of the mid-term review and look at the lessons learned, including with a review of the support from other service providers, such as Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu University, and other affiliations. Second, he highlighted the need to organize more interactions with the province-level staff on substantive understanding of federalism. Finally, he talked about the ministerial level engagement through MoFAGA for discussing the PLGSP importance and delivery.

Cynthia Rowe, DP chair and FCDO Team Leader, Governance and Service Delivery Team thanked everyone for their participation and shared that the meeting had been constructive and covered a lot of ground. She concluded by asking for follow up on the requested tasks.

Dr. Gopi Khanal, NPD, committed to be in frequent touch with all DPs and requested all stakeholders for their urgent support on finalizing the IPF Policy Framework and Operational Guideline.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gopi Khanal", is written over a horizontal line.

A stylized handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Cynthia Rowe, is written on the page.



Annex-1: Presentation and Discussion Notes

1. Ms. Silvana Hogg, Deputy Head of Mission, Head of Cooperation, Embassy of Switzerland shared that the contribution of TA staff is critical for the PLGSP delivery. She pointed out that from their interactions with some of the TA staff in the field, there is a need to further reflect on their roles as they are not just pure technical staff. She emphasized the need for all TA staff to fully understand the spirit of PLGSP, the reform elements of their technical support and how this contributes to the federalism process. She requested UNDP to organize such trainings and orientations for the TA staff in a similar line.
2. Mr. Chiranjivi Timsina, PLGSP NPM, shared the agenda as follows:
 - I. Review of the 3rd TASC meeting decisions
 - II. Presentation of the TA Progress Report (January – May 2021)
 - III. Presentation and endorsement of revised 2021 TA Annual Work Plan
 - IV. Summary of Decisions
 - V. AOB
 - VI. Closing remarks
3. Mr. Chiranjivi Timsina, PLGSP NPM, provided the following updates on the 3rd TASC meeting decisions:
 - Approved the progress and financial report, June-December 2020 - No further action required;
 - Endorsed the revised TA Annual Work Plan (TA AWP) 2020 - No further action required;
 - Endorsed the TA AWP for 2021, after addressing the inputs from the DPs - Inputs from DPs addressed;
 - Advised PCU to establish a platform by inviting all DPs to continue with coordination meetings on a quarterly basis to brief each other on who is doing what and to discuss about the ongoing challenges and opportunities in the area of sub-national governance - DP mapping in progress and Coordination Platform with all DPs at federal and provincial levels to be established once mapping exercise is completed, tentatively by end of July 2021;
 - Requested PLGSP/UNDP to work together in order to align the TA AWP with the PLGSP ASIP and to revise the payment schedule - TA AWP has been aligned with ASIP and payments schedule has been revised in line with JFA.
4. Mr. Timsina elaborated further on the TA Progress Report (January – May 2021):
 - Ongoing Recruitments and Interim Arrangements;
 - Capacity Development and Knowledge Enhancement;
 - Procurement of Vehicles;
 - Implementation of 2021 TA AWP: Milestones and Achievements



- GESI mainstreaming in TA
- Financial Progress (January-May 2021)

5. Mr. Timsina continued with the presentation of the implementation status on GESI and financial aspect of PLGSP 2020/21, as follows:

GESI in recruitments:

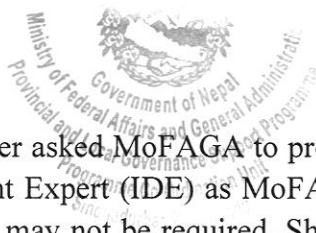
% of women in total	: 28
% of women in senior positions (SB 4 and above)	: 32
% of women in team leader positions (PPIU and PCGG)	: 36
% of minority groups including women (PG-I and PG-II)	: 49

- Draft GESI Strategy for the PLGSP implementation has been prepared and first round of feedback received from DPs. The draft GESI Strategy will be revised in line with the feedback and shared with DPs for review;
- GESI dedicated sessions in the team building workshop;
- Incorporation of GESI perspectives in the different guidelines (i.e. IPF guideline) and study reports (i.e. Covid-19 responses by all levels of government);
- Discussion is ongoing to revise the existing GESI training manual in line with the new strategy;
- Planning to provide intensive GESI training (GESI ToT) to PLGSP staff and GESI focal points of provincial governments at federal level and organize subsequent trainings in all provinces.

Financial Progress (in million): The total budget for the year 2021 as per the original plan was USD 3,688,702.39, against which total expenditure in the period of January-May 2021 is USD 810,701.8 (22%). As compared to previous years, TA delivery during 2021 is expected to be high as a majority of TA staff are now in place and vehicle procurement processes are expected to be completed by November 2021. To ensure timely delivery, PCU jointly with UNDP will regularly review progress of TA activities and track related expenses in order to ensure good financial progress in line with the agreed plan.

6. Plenary Discussion

Ms. Cynthia Rowe acknowledged UNDP's efforts to complete the recruitment processes in the difficult circumstances and to make the recruitments more inclusive. She appreciated the inclusion of disaggregated information and asked to continue updating the status regularly. She mentioned that TA staff turnover is a concern, and that it would be helpful to have a strategy in place to with concrete measures to further motivate staff, outline the performance appraisal system and improve retention. She requested MoFAGA to coordinate with provincial level senior officials to ensure that TA staff are provided support and enabling working environments at the PPIUs and PCGGs. She noted that the recruitment of IPF Experts was supposed to start only after finalization of the IPF Operational Guideline and requested



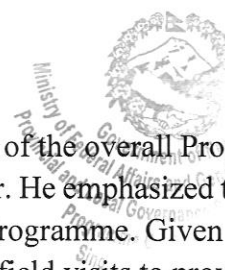
MoFAGA to adhere to this. She further asked MoFAGA to provide information on the need to hire the Infrastructure Development Expert (IDE) as MoFAGA had shared in a previous meeting that these full-time positions may not be required. She asked UNDP to provide the latest status on the recruitment of DP Coordinator and the view from UNDP to involve the DPs in the process. She reiterated the importance of having a comprehensive safeguarding policy in place, including protection against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and other risks such as related to Covid-19 and effects of natural disasters.

Ms. Silvana Hogg requested to share further details regarding the support provided in the drafting of federal and provincial level civil service laws and the study report on Covid-19 responses by all levels of governments as this activity has been completed according to the progress report. She further suggested to organize virtual exchanges with field level colleagues to ensure better communication and regular updates.

Mr. Egbert Pos, mentioned that the UNTA financial delivery till the second quarter has remained low and is a cause of concern for overall PLGSP delivery. He shared that it would be useful to discuss to what extent the work plan of 2021 is still realistic, including related to procurement targets. He further said that the payment schedule between MoFAGA and UNDP TA has been revised in line with the JFA clauses and highlighted to ensure in the future that payments and disbursement will be based on half yearly forecasts and subject to approval of programme results and progress reports. He echoed Silvana's point to ensure timely sharing of reports and documents (products) with DPs, and to also make these available to a wider set of stakeholders for transparency and use these to inform and engage with DPs strategically for the direction of the Programme. He emphasized to upload all reports and products commissioned by PLGSP in the website so that these are accessible for all. He requested PCU/UNDP to prioritize and promote transparency and sharing of different activities, to enhance the communication policy package of PLGSP, update the website more regularly and look at different information management systems, including CMIS, BIPAD and others that are being set up through PLGSP and other stakeholders to avoid duplication. He finally emphasized on having more communication and coordination with a wider set of stakeholders that are working in the domain of supporting sub-national governments and highlighted proactive meeting to be organized by PCU, including to present the ASIP 2021/22 once finalized. Furthermore, he shared that in relation to the PLGSP mid-term review, it would be useful to include a section on lessons learned so far, including on engagement with for example Kathmandu University and other associated programmes and projects, such as International IDEA/Coherence.

Mr. Chiranjivi Timsina, continued with the presentation and shared a summary of the revised 2021 TA annual work plan.

Mr. Raj Kumar Dhungana, Senior Governance Advisor, Royal Norwegian Embassy greeted everyone and shared that DPs do not have any specific requirements or objections for approval of the TA annual work plan and budget, provided that the plan is fully aligned with the approved PLGSP ASIP 2021/2022. He mentioned the DPs are ready to discuss essential adjustments to be made in the TA plan as and when required, and within the agreed budget.



He mentioned that delivery improvement of the overall Programme, with support from TA, is of key importance for the next Fiscal Year. He emphasized that the TA should be fully utilized to increase the pace and delivery of the Programme. Given the current Covid-19 situation, he suggested for PLGSP to organize virtual field visits to provide an opportunity to engage with PPIUs, PCGGs and LGs.

Mr. Egbert Pos shared about the importance of the risks and mitigation strategy and that this could be a dimension where the TA provider to step up and they are ready on time. For example, Covid-19 contingency planning should be in place and implemented accordingly. He further shared about the need for regular monitoring and evaluation. He highlighted that we are now two years into the Programme and are yet to complete key monitoring and evaluation aspects, such as baseline report and third party monitoring.

Mr. Tek Tamata, mentioned that the shortlisting process for the Federal Governance Specialist cum DP Coordinator has been completed and that the written tests are to be completed within one month. Further, an orientation has been provided to all TA staff on safeguarding, GESI, and harassment, exploitation and abuse policy and all TA staff have signed the policy. On delivery, he shared that MoFAGA/PCU jointly with UNDP has prepared a delivery acceleration plan to regularly track progress and ensure relevant follow-up through dedicated meetings. Finally, he shared that discussions are ongoing to prepare a staff retention policy. A first draft outline has been developed and UNDP HR will provide the necessary support required to finalize this.

Mr. Bernardo Cocco, added that UNDP is working on ensuring that the PLGSP management and DPs can participate as observers during the interviews for the Federal Governance Specialist cum DP Coordinator position.

7. Response on Comments

Mr. Chandra Kanta Sharma Paudel, Monitoring and Coordination Specialist, PLGSP, shared that the TA AWP is completely aligned with PLGSP ASIP 2021/22. With regard to the Infrastructure Development Experts, he shared that it has earlier been discussed that the full-time positions may not be required, but that no final decision was made. The need for these positions has now been realized, and hence the recruitment process has been initiated. He further mentioned that the reports requested by DPs during the meeting will be shared. He mentioned that different systems have been put in place to improve transparency, including SuTRA and the Fiduciary Risk Reduction Action Plan (FRRAP). The baseline and third-party monitoring are in the process of completion and will be shared soon. He elaborated that coordination and inclusion of more stakeholders and a wider DP network will be strengthened through planning meetings right after the ASIP finalization. He thanked all participants for their valuable inputs.

Mr. Chiranjivi Timsina, National Programme Manager (NPM) shared that the recruitment for the Infrastructure Development Expert positions was initiated as the need has become evident. These Experts will support PCGGs to implement activities such as support to development of

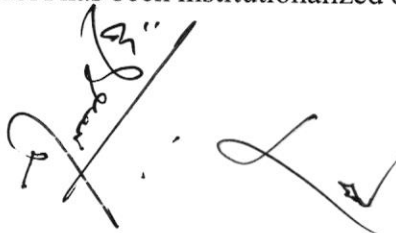
LG infrastructure development policies and guidelines. Their contribution and support to capacity development initiatives organized by the PCGGs will be crucial given the large emphasis and substantial budget allocations for infrastructure development among local governments. He further shared that these positions have been included in the Programme Document as part of the PCGG structure. Regarding the IPF Experts, he shared that if the positions are advertised after the guidelines are finalized, implementation will be further delayed. MoFAGA/PCU will ensure to organize necessary orientations/trainings once the IPFEs are hired, and, if needed, revise the Terms of References in line with the finalized framework/guidelines.

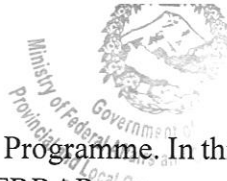
Mr. Egbert Pos shared that given the complexity and delays in the IPF design, it was a good decision to delay the recruitment. DPs would like to reiterate that the recruitments should not be concluded before the IPF Framework/Guideline is finalized and agreed as it would be useful to allow opportunity to slightly tweak the final Terms of References before recruitment is concluded.

Mr. Gopi Krishna Khanal, thanked the participants for the valuable feedback and thanked UNDP for its TA support. He mentioned that TA staff are the cornerstone of the PLGSP and that the management of PLGSP is constantly in touch with PPIUs and PCGGs officials regarding the optimum utilization of the TA staff. Efforts have also been made to train them and this will continue in order to further strengthen the capacity. He highlighted the mid-term review as a crucial planned activity in the coming Fiscal Year to review and possibly revise the Programme based on emerging needs. He shared that the communication strategy feedback is well received and that it is important to communicate our efforts in the best ways. Because of the lack of the federal civil service law, the local levels have not been able to recruit the required staff and have adopted temporary measures. He hoped for this issue to be resolved soon which would contribute to more rapid implementation of the Programme as there have not been enough civil staff at the provincial and local levels. He also highlighted the importance of GESI and HDI index to identify and assess the situation and performance of LGs.

He clarified that due to the development of various training modules related to building codes, urban planning, infrastructure development and many other related technical works at the local level, PLGSP decided to proceed with the recruitment of Infrastructure Development Experts, as per the provision in the Programme Document. He shared that given the strong emphasis on local infrastructure development among LGs, the support provided by the Infrastructure Development Experts will be crucial in improving quality, efficiency and accountability related to infrastructure development at the local level. While this recruitment has been up for discussion in a previous TASC meeting, no formal decision has been taken to not recruit for these positions.

Regarding the IPF guideline, he commented that PLGSP/PCU is very clear about IPF guideline and its implementation and requested DPs to provide the necessary support for its timely finalization and implementation as there are high expectations about the IPF from the local level. He stressed that LISA has been institutionalized on a permanent basis and that this





is one of the major achievements of the Programme. In this regard, he thanked his predecessor for all the hard work done. The local FRRAP assessment tools have been approved and the responsibility has been assigned to District Coordination Committee. With this, from the coming fiscal year, the level of fiscal governance and fiduciary risks can be better measured and improved. He shared that MoFAGA will prioritize implementation of the 'Digital Nepal' policy and that a new 'Policy Lab' is being planned at the Ministry.

In conclusion, he expressed hope that the coming fiscal year will be more effective and urged for continued good coordination and cooperation with all stakeholders for the success of the Programme. He highlighted that LDTA restructuring will be one of the major activities of the next year, together with improved cooperation and coordination among the three tiers of governments. He concluded by thanking all participants for their feedback and shared that it would be addressed to the extent possible.

8. AoB

Cynthia Rowe, added that it would be important to organize a ministerial-level meeting to discuss the Programme and its progress. She requested MoFAGA and UNDP to further explore how to take this forward.

Raj Kumar Dhungana, asked about the possibility of organizing a virtual field visit to promote interaction between PCU, PPIUs, PCGGs, LGs, DPs and other key stakeholders.

Annex-2: List of the participants

S.N.	Name of the participant	Designation	Organization
1	Dr. Gopi K. Khanal	Joint Secretary/National programme Director	MoFAGA/PLGSP
2	Mr. Chiranjivi Timsina	Under Secretary/National Programme Manager	MoFAGA/PLGSP
3	Ms. Cynthia Rowe	Head of Governance, Political and Services	FCDO/British Embassy
4	Mr. Egbert Pos	Governance Advisor and Deputy Team Leader for GPST	FCDO/British Embassy
5	Mr. Madhu Bishwakarma	Gov. Advisor	FCDO/British Embassy
6	Ms. Shailee Manandhar	Senior Programme Manager	FCDO/British Embassy
7	Ms. Preeti Das	Program Officer	FCDO/British Embassy
8	Mr. Rajkumar Dhungana	Governance Advisor	Royal Norwegian Embassy
9	Ms. Silvana Hogg	Head of Cooperation/ Deputy Head of Mission	SDC
10	Ms. Shradha Rayamajhi	National Programme Officer	SDC
11	Mr. Kilian Hocquart	Attaché, Cooperation	European Union
12	Mr. Bernardo Cocco	Deputy Resident Representative	UNDP
13	Mr. Tek Tamata	Portfolio Specialist	UNDP
14	Mr. Anders Magnusson	Programme Specialist	UNDP
15	Mr. Krishna Bhattarai	TA coordinator	UNDP
16	Mr. Khum Raj Punjali	Advisor, Government Relations	UNDP
17	Mr. Hari P. Guragain	Administrative Officer	MoFAGA/PLGSP
18	Mr. Chandra Kanta Sharma Poudel	Coordination and Monitoring Specialist	PLGSP
19	Ms. Kirti Thapa	GESI Specialist	PLGSP
20	Mr. Baburam Shrestha	PFM Specialist	PLGSP
21	Ms. Dixita Silwal	HR and Liaison Specialist	PLGSP
22	Mr. Nagesh Badu	IT & e-Gov Specialist	PLGSP
23	Mr. Surendra Bhandari	Admin and Finance Officer	PLGSP
24	Ms. Sakun Shrestha	Program Associate	PLGSP

