



Youth Webinar Report

**The Role of Stakeholders in Responding to the
Issues of COVID-19**

09 October 2020

**Prepared by:
Electoral Support Project, UNDP**



1. Executive Summary

An eighth and final youth webinar, which is part of a larger youth webinar series, took place on 9 October 2020 to discuss the role of the stakeholders in responding to the issues of COVID-19. Moreover, the webinar also sought to provide recommendations on the ways to address these issues.

The youth webinar was attended by 93 participants, including youth volunteers, representatives from UNDP, government representatives among others. In the webinar, youth volunteers from all seven provinces in Nepal conducted surveys of the people in their community. A total of 82 youth volunteers surveyed a total of 373 respondents from 58 districts for the survey spread across Nepal.

The volunteers asked the survey respondents questions relating to the availability of food stock, their economic transactions in the context of the pandemic and the associated challenges, health and psycho-social counselling, availability of clean drinking water, issues on gender-based violence and domestic violence, their access to information during the COVID-19 and their opinion on the social accountability and transparency in the relief distribution, along with their access to relief materials that were provided by the government and various other agencies to support the testing times.

The questionnaire included questions covering the role of the stakeholders in addressing the main challenges during COVID-19 for the public, including on health and socio-economic issues, coping mechanisms and their main needs. The survey was conducted through KOBO tools.

The webinar helped identify some trends that highlighted the problems that the respondents faced. The majority of the respondents faced difficulties in maintaining a stable source of income in these times, and many also reported difficulties in accessing proper healthcare. Therefore, the ensuing recommendation was to ensure that there are targeted programmes, especially for those in geographically remote locations. These programmes may come from the local or provincial governments, or civil society bodies. The webinar shone light on designing accurate policies that would be implemented, along with a coordinated approach among all stakeholders to tackle this growing crisis. The youth volunteers noted that the youth could be mobilized in awareness raising campaigns at the local level.

The event also had the provision of a quiz on matters related to elections, to sensitize the youths and the attendees on the importance of exercising their right to vote: the poll inquired if the participants of the webinar were aware of the age to contend for local elections, the age to vote, and whether or not they had registered in the voter roll. It was an effective way to engage the youth volunteers on the matter.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background & Rationale

The UNDP Electoral Support Project (ESP) and the Country Office (CO) joined forces in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, the webinar is also a part of the UN75 celebrations, and branded under it. For this webinar, UNDP collaborated with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office as well as the UN Volunteers. A joint analysis from the team concluded that a webinar conducted by and for the youth from across the seven provinces in Nepal would play a key role in informing about the ground realities. These would then also inform the five pillars for socio-economic framework including putting health first, protecting people, economic response and recovery, macro-economic response and multilateral collaboration and social cohesion and community resilience.

The eighth webinar was on the role that the stakeholders are playing to tackle the impact of COVID-19 in

their communities. The webinar saw participation from youth volunteers, government, development actors, journalists. The event started with the organizing team extending a warm welcome to the participants, who informed that the recommendations and findings of the event will inform the future programming for UNDP's work.

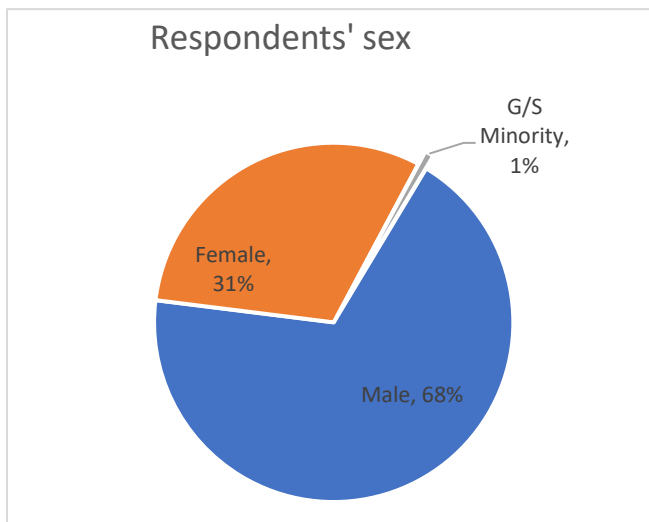
2.2 Objectives

- To bring issues of inclusion to the forefront.
- To engage the youth and capacitate them to get important information in the fight against COVID-19.
- To use the learnings from the youth webinars to inform future UNDP programming.

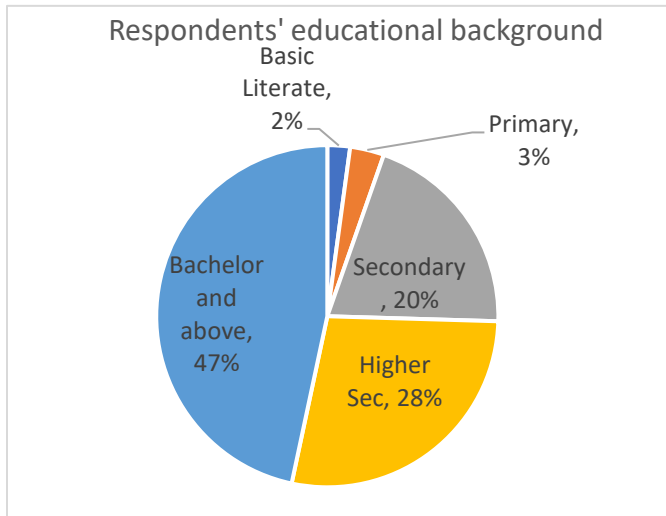
3. Key Findings

The webinar then included a presentation from Mr. Mohammad Shahid Reza, Civic and Voter Education Officer with UNDP's Electoral Support Project. In the presentation, he presented the key findings from the survey conducted across the seven provinces of Nepal, providing a general trend of the responses.

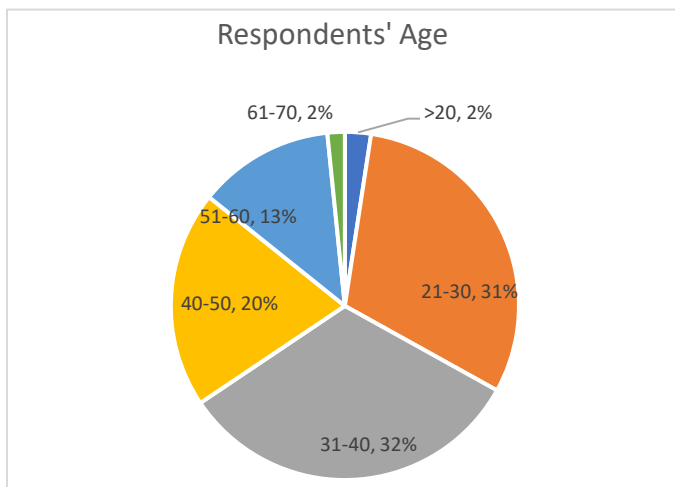
- *Respondents Demography*



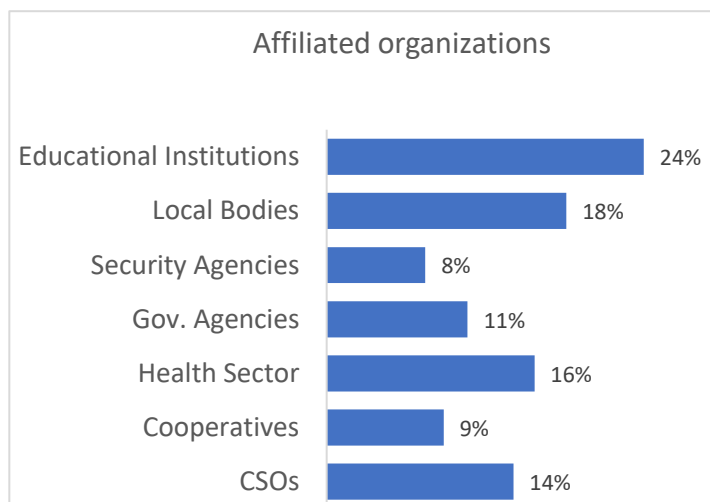
There were a total of 373 respondents for the survey. From among them, 31% identified as woman and 1% as a gender and sexual minority. More details of the gender diversity of the participants are presented in the graph.



The educational background of the respondents of the survey varied. Overall, the majority of the respondents had received Bachelor's degree or higher, which was 47%. This was followed by 28% who had secondary school education. From among the participants, 0% were not literate. The details in terms of educational background is presented in the adjacent graph.

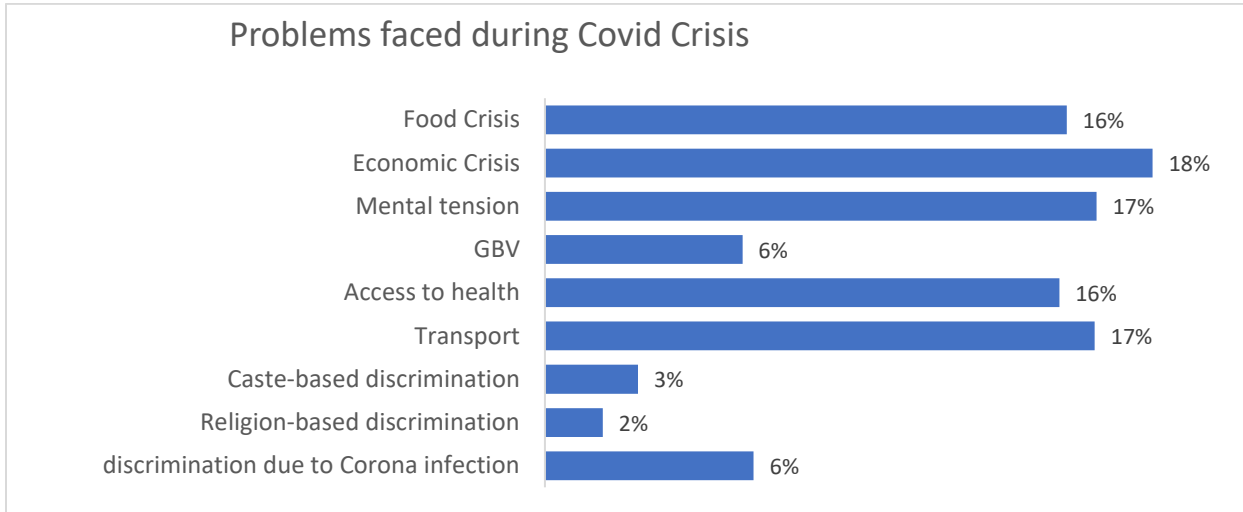


In terms of age, 32% of the respondents, representing the highest number, were between 31-40 years followed by 31% who were between 21-30 years of age. Moreover, none were above 70 years of age. More details on the age of the respondents are presented in the graph.

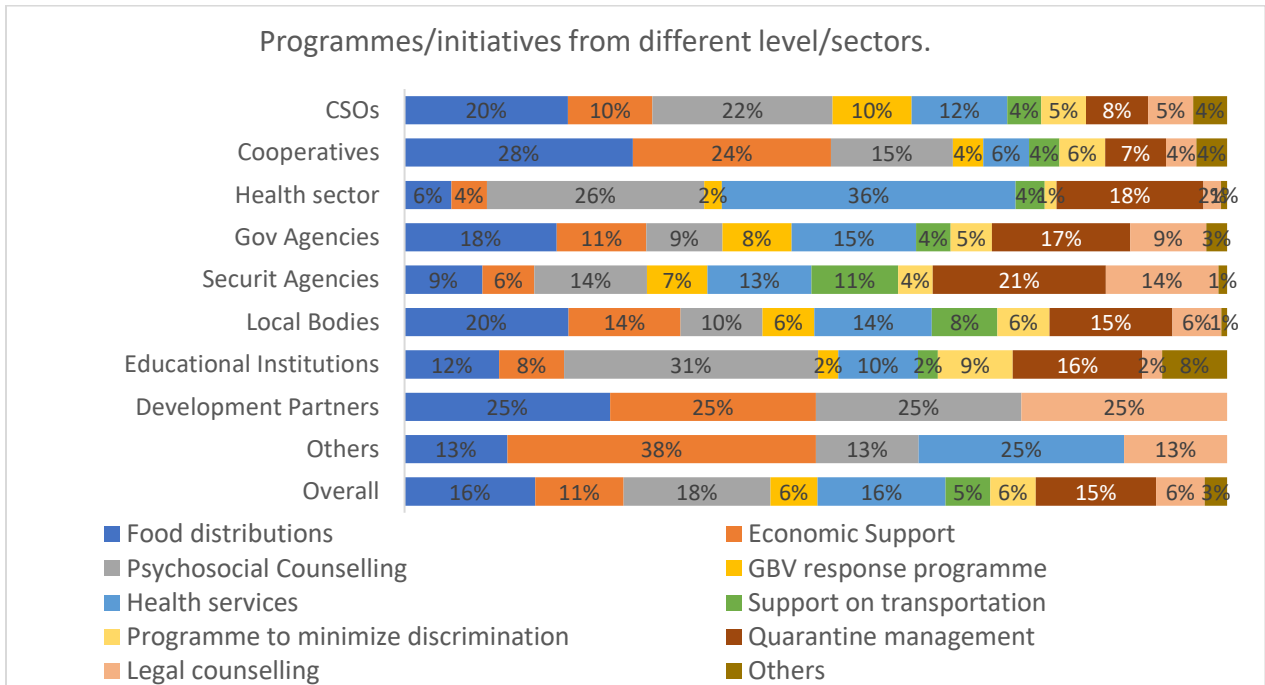


The respondents were asked which sector they were associated with. Majority of them, 24% said they were engaged in the educational sector. Other notable sectors included local level (18%), health (16%). Moreover, 8% were engaged in the security sector. More details are available in the graph.

- *General Findings*



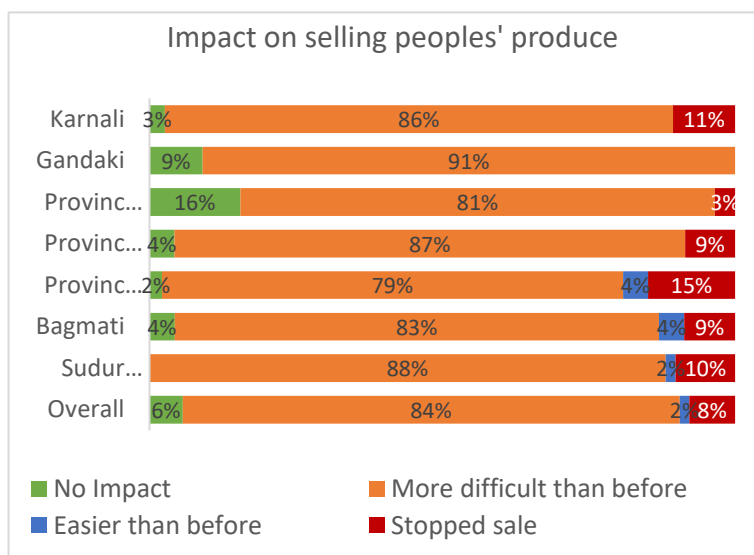
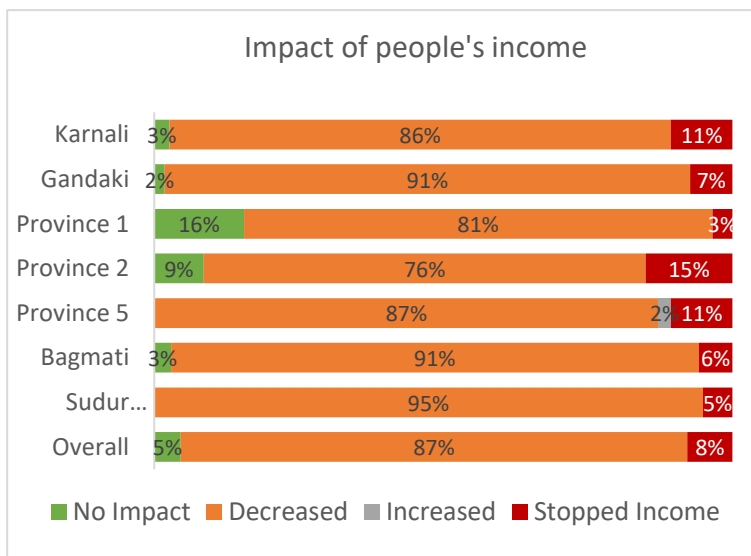
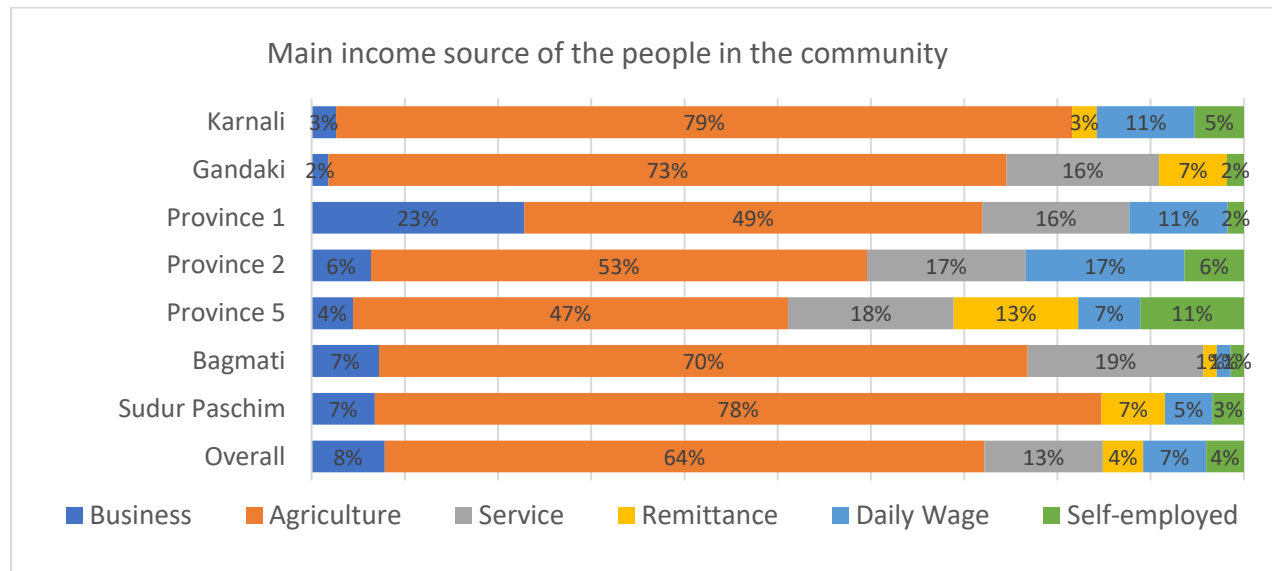
The respondents were asked what kinds of problems their community members encountered in the current context of the pandemic. From their responses, majority of them shared that the community faced economic problems, at 18%. This was followed by problems in commuting and mental stress, both at 17%.



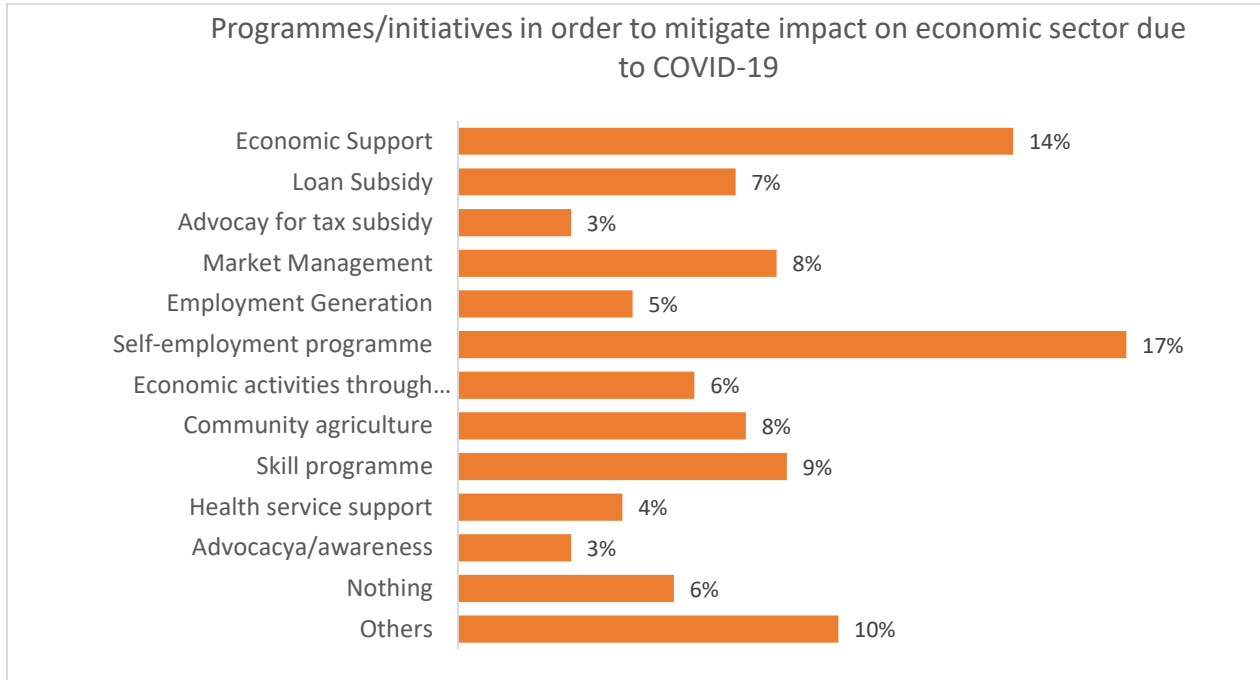
They were also asked what activities their respective organization had conducted to address these problems. Civil society organizations were providing majority of their support on psycho-social counselling at 22%; those in cooperatives on agriculture and animal husbandry provided majority of their support on food security at 28%; those in the health sector on health services at 36%; government bodies on food security

at 18%; security agencies on quarantine management at 21%; local level on food security at 20%; educational institutions on psycho-social counselling at 31%; development partners on food security, economic support, psycho-social counselling, legal consultation, each at 25%; and others on economic support. The data reflected that the most amount of support was provided on psycho-social counselling.

Economic Activities



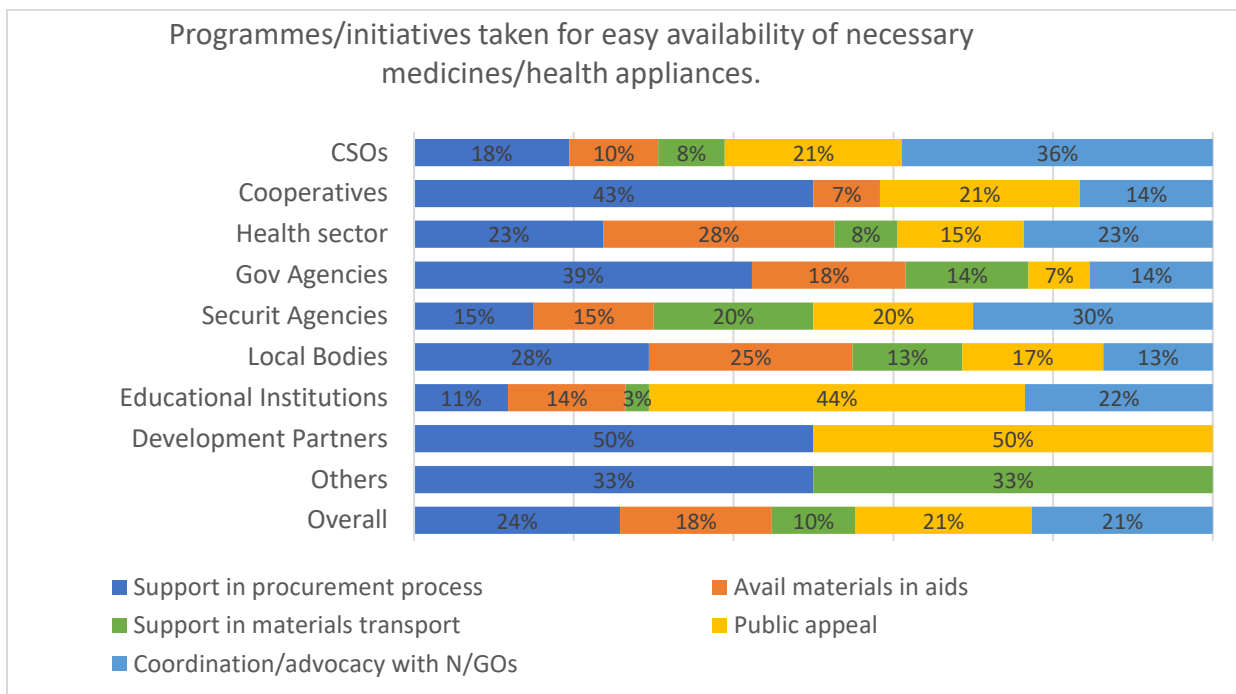
The main income source of the communities of respondents was agriculture, at 64%. They were also asked if the pandemic had impacted the livelihood of the people of their community – 87% said that there had been a reduction in the income of their community members from before. Furthermore, 84% also reported that it had become more difficult for their community members to find a market for their produce in this period. 79% reported that some people in the community had lost their jobs in the current crisis.



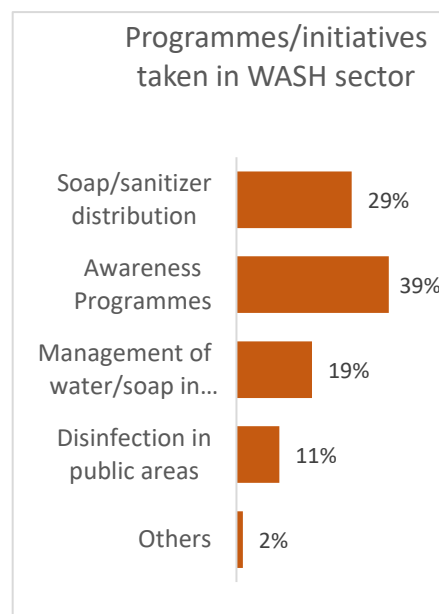
The stakeholders were asked what their respective organizations were doing to address the economic concerns of the people in their community in this time: 17% reported creating income-generating opportunities, 14% said providing economic seed fund whereas 3% also reporting conducting advocacy to ease the tax burden.

- *Health Facilities and Sanitation*

The respondents were asked about the kind of facilities that were available at the nearest health post. They were asked if the services were available as before, and if they had vaccination services, doctor services, specialist services, COVID-19 testing, health, psycho-social and telephone counselling, therapy were available. From the respondents, 50% said the general services were available as before.



The respondents were asked what their organizations were doing to support the health system in the current times: 21% reported they were advocating for support; 21% reported they were coordinating with government and non-government organizations; 10% also reported supporting in transporting goods.

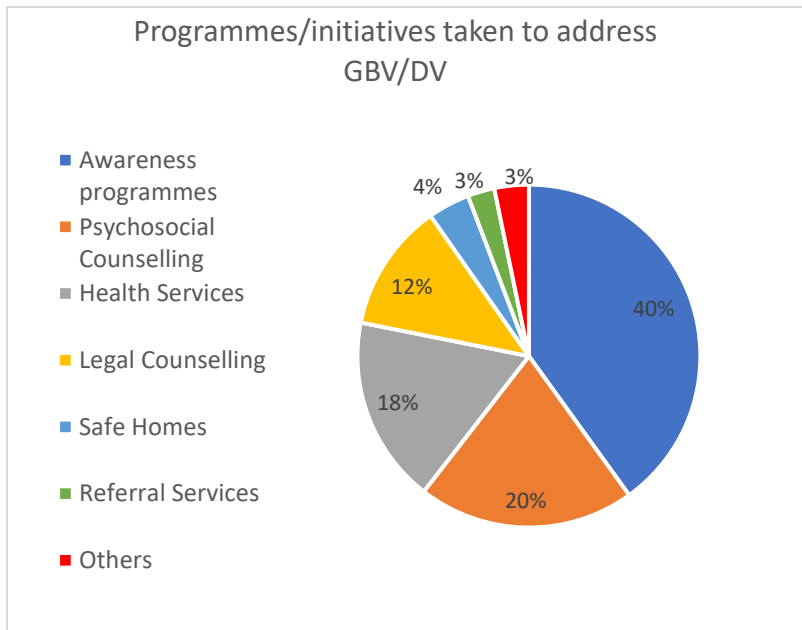


They were also asked what their organizations were going to ensure the health and sanitation of the

community: 39% were conducting awareness campaigns, and 29% were distributing soap/sanitizers. From among the respondents, 60% noted that there were no people with COVID-19 in their community.

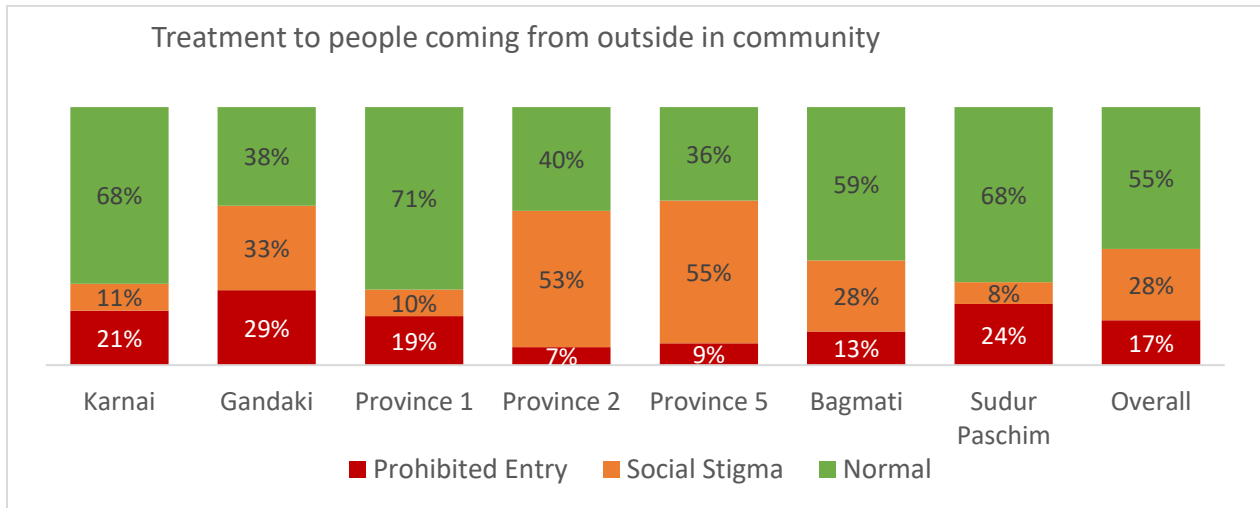
- *Social Protection*

The respondents were also asked what their organizations were doing for the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 at the community level: majority of them were providing support on creating advocacy and awareness on the pandemic, at 21%. This was followed by 17% who were providing health equipment such as personal protective gears and sanitizers.

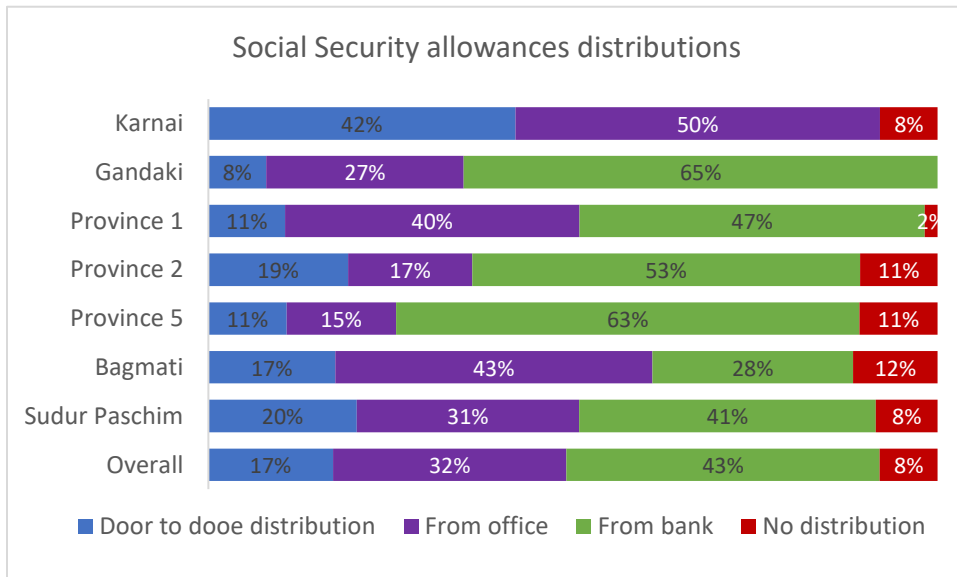


The respondents were asked what kind of programmes their organizations conducted to prevent and respond to domestic or gender-based violence in their communities in the current context: 40% noted awareness related activities, 20% noted psycho-social counselling, and 3% also noted referral services.

72% of the respondents also noted that the community had access to the community police, district courts and pro bono legal services in case there was a need; 28% reported the community did not have access to these.

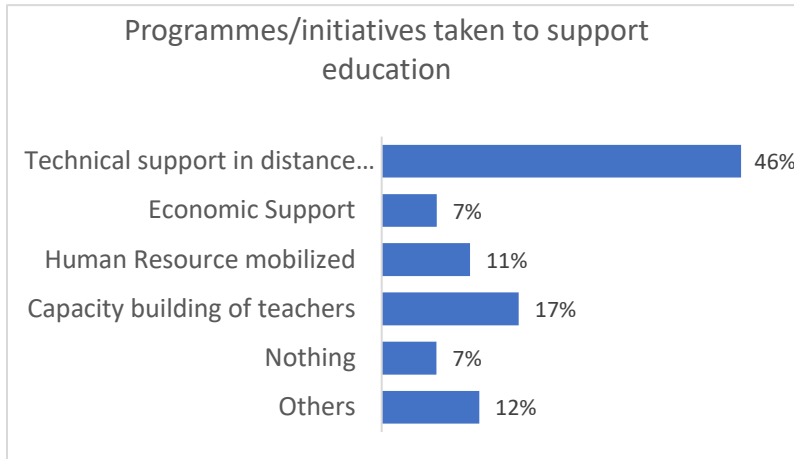


Furthermore, they were also how the people entering the community were being viewed by the locals: 55% reported they were being treated as before and 28% reported the existence of some form of stigma.



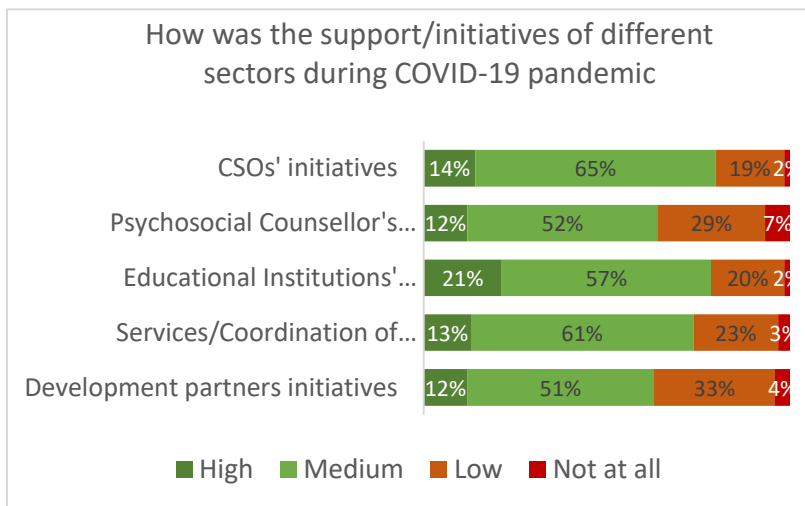
In terms of social security allowance, 43% were receiving it through the banks.

- *Education*



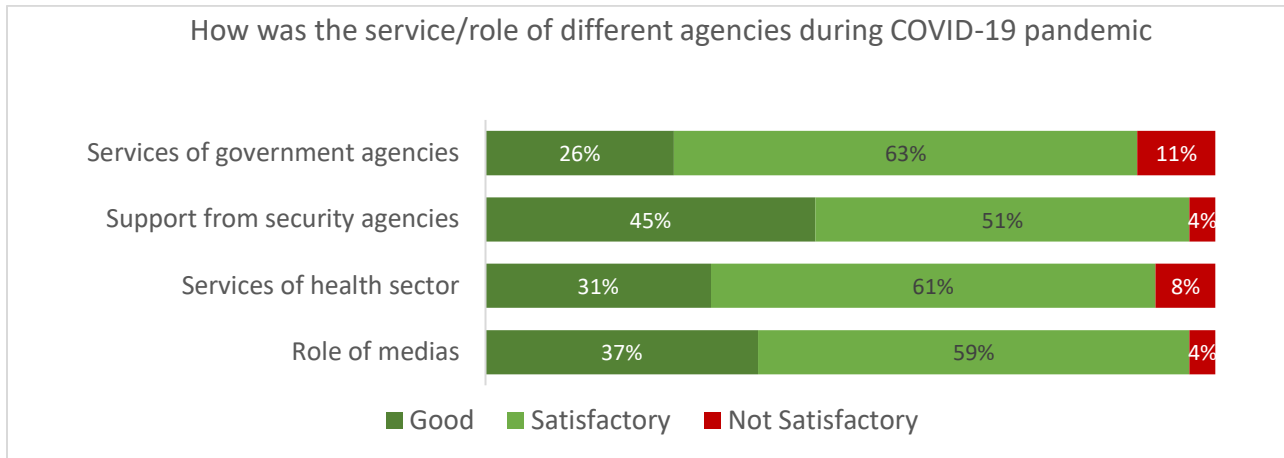
The respondents were also asked what their organizations were doing to re-open the schools. To this, 46% reported supporting distance learning; 17% reported capacitating the teachers and 7% also reported providing economic support.

- *Relief Distribution*

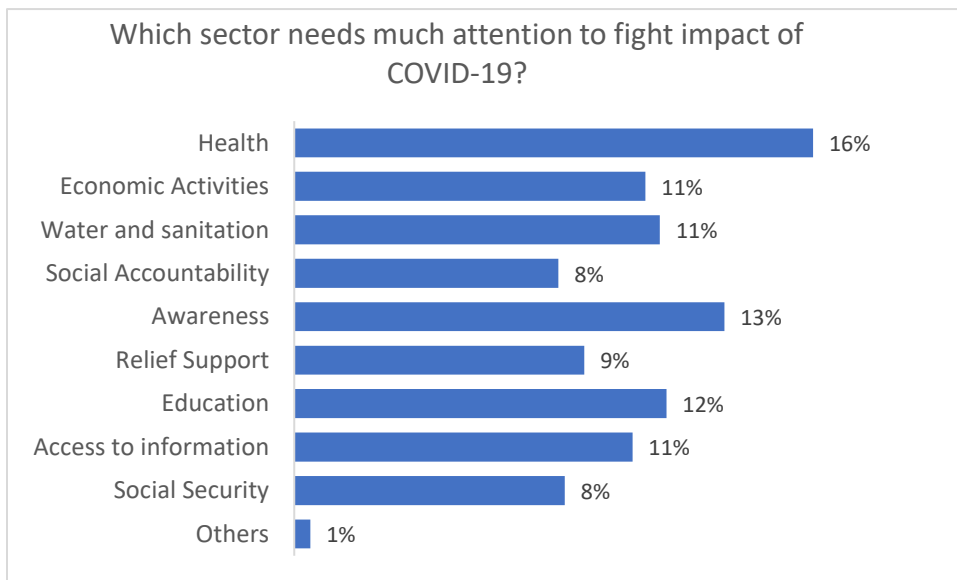


The respondents were asked how effectively the government provided their services relating to the pandemic: 49% reported that it was effective. They were further asked about the role of the various organizations in curbing the spread of the pandemic: From the respondents, 65% of those working in social or civil society organizations said it was average; 52% of those working in supporting psycho-social needs said it was average, 57% of those working in educational institutions said it was average; 61% of those working in cooperatives reported it was average and 51% of those in the development sector said it was average.

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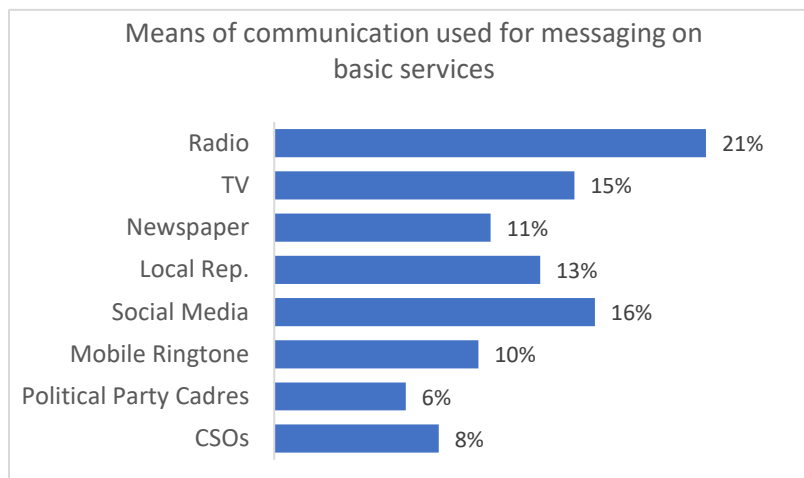


They were also asked about the service and role of the different agencies during the pandemic: 26% noted good support from the government agencies; 45% noted good support from the security agencies; 31% noted good support from the health sector; and 37% noted good role of the media.

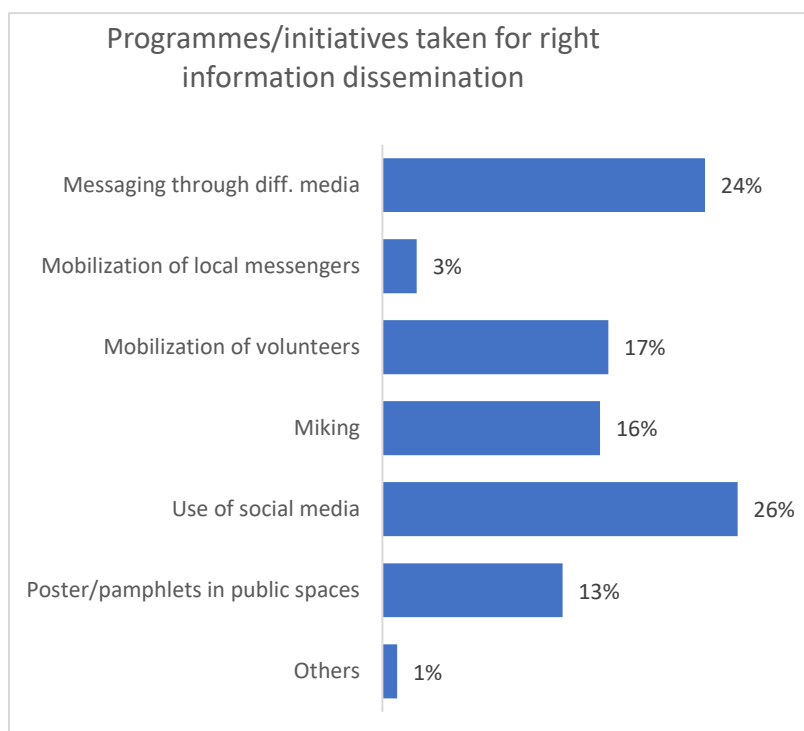


When asked which sectors needed to be paid attention to to mitigate the effects of the virus, majority (16%) reported needed to focus on the health sector.

- *Access to information*



The respondents were also asked how their community was receiving information on the basic services available during the COVID-19 period. To this, the majority (21%) said the radio. Other popular choices included the television (15%), social media (16%). They were also asked how the role of the various media houses were in providing information on the pandemic – 59% reported it was satisfactory. More details are presented on the graph.



The respondents were also inquired about their role in disseminating correct information about the pandemic. To this, 26% noted using social media to disseminate information; 24% noted using various means of communication to disseminate information. They were further asked if the information was senior citizen-friendly, persons with disabilities friendly, gender and sexual minorities friendly, women-friendly and available in local languages. 24% noted that the information they disseminated were senior citizen friendly, 23% noted it was women-friendly and 23% also noted it was available in local languages. Only 12% noted that it was gender and sexual minority friendly.

4. Observations from the field

- The pandemic has caused economic problems and loss of employment.
- Maternal and child health care providers have shown a lower quality of service than before. However, there are more community awareness programmes.
- Because of a lack of proper coordination between the local governments and organizations, relief and livelihood programmes have not reached the target communities.

- In the pandemic, classes such as online alternative education have not been accessible to students in remote regions, education has been disrupted, and there has not been adequate coordination between educational institutions and the concerned government agencies to facilitate this.
- Radio was identified as an effective means to disseminate information on the pandemic at the community level.
- Even though there was effort to distribute social security benefits, they have been interrupted.
- The role and scope of development partners for the prevention and mitigation of the pandemic has been minimal and the role of security agencies in service delivery has been satisfactory.

5. Best Practices/Lessons Learned

Province 1:

- The efforts of the local government in Province 1 to tackle the impact of this pandemic is commendable.
- They have implemented the lockdown and distributed relief materials.
- The stakeholders are conducting various programmes: like awareness raising through social media and traditional media. These programmes emphasize how to stay safe from the virus.
- There are hoarding boards to raise awareness. Isolation centres and quarantine facilities have also been managed. Those in quarantine are provided with nutritious food.
- There is a mobile van that conducts PCR testing in suspected areas in Province 1, which has been appreciated.
- The Koshi Zonal Hospital is providing ambulance services to COVID-19 positive patients.
- Some schools are conducting online classes to continue the education.
- The security forces have stopped social gathering and ensure people comply with the requirement to wear masks and gloves. They also impose curfews sometimes to minimize the spread of the virus.
- There are advocacy activities that seek to provide extra allowance for the front liners: ambulance drivers, security who are working during these times.
- The health sector is working really well in Province 1. Besides this, the civil society is also playing a prominent role in relief distribution.
- There is effective border management for returnee migrants from India, and holding centres have also been arranged for them.
- The community organizations have been playing an active role in supporting the relief-distribution during these times.

Province 2:

- Quarantining people has helped stop the spread of COVID-19 in this province.
- The coordination between local level and health sector to distribute masks has helped many people receive masks. There are provisions for sanitizers as well.
- The province engages in contact tracing - they keep the data of the movement of the people and also asking for health updates of the people.
- Counselling services are also available at the local level
- The police is helping maintain social distance and facilitating travel in the border regions by ensuring that travellers reach their destination safely.



Bagmati Province:

- A local news reported that only 30% of the school going children (community school and private school) have access to Internet or the technology that supports remote learning.
- Most of the schools in Bagmati province have shifted to e-learning approaches, abiding by the instructions from the Ministry of Education.
- For schools in the rural areas in the province, schools are carrying out two shifts of classes and teaching whilst maintaining social distancing.
- The province is also utilizing the services of teachers to spread awareness on COVID-19 at the grassroots.
- The respondents noted that the people in their community had a difficult time familiarizing themselves with technology, or some did not have the laptops or smartphone to carry out the classes.
- Most of the teachers were taking pay cuts or some were not receiving any payment in the current crisis.

Gandaki Province:

- The provincial govt and local government have coordinated well to implement activities related to curbing the spread of the virus at the community level.
- There are quarantine centres at each of the local levels thanks to effective coordination between the province and local level in Gandaki province.
- The province government started providing a daily allowance of Rs. 200 to the returnees in the province, which has gone a long way in motivating the people to stay in quarantine post-travel.
- The District Administration Offices in the province are also helping – they implemented the lockdown effectively; and also prevented black marketing of essential goods in this period.
- The local government has also played a vital role in distributing relief material as well as generating awareness on the situation.

Lumbini Province:

- The security agencies have been undertaking responsibility for quarantine management, border management especially in places with open border, and managing returnees, managing positive cases and dead body cases in Lumbini province.
- The security forces have utilized their own resources to ensure that the people stranded reach their destination safely.
- The security forces have also set up COVID-19 help desks.
- In the current context, the police formed helped create awareness on mental health issues and suicide prevention.

Karnali Province:

- The civil society bodies did a good job in Karnali province - they disseminated agricultural goods, created awareness through help desks, supported emergency ambulance services, took programmes to the local and remote areas of the province, establishing quarantine centres.
- Karnali province started the system of the help desk first and the learning spread to other provinces.

Sudurpaschim Province:

- The cooperatives are playing an important role to disseminate factual information at the community level.
- The frontlines, including the security personnel at the grassroots, media have been playing an important role in this pandemic and contributing to the country.

6. Recommendations:

- Ensure that other health emergencies are also paid equal importance to.
- Improve the quality of the relief material.
- Make the quarantines friendly for women and people with disabilities. For example, have a helping hand to support these people, who need someone's help in their life.
- Conduct awareness raising in local languages, and ensure there are enough awareness raising materials for all platforms, including the social media.
- Create awareness on the importance of mental health for school students.
- Re-start education by adopting alternative learning methods. At the same time, ensure that alternative learning methods are affordable and accessible. And for those who have resumed their classes, ensure basic health and sanitation materials are in place for the students and teachers. Moreover, guidelines on safe ways to reopen schools should also be issued.
- Ensure smooth communication and coordination between the government bodies, civil society agents and development actors to tackle the impact of this crisis.
- The local government must be strengthened to enhance their capacity to deal with such crises – especially as they are most close to the grounds. Moreover, they should have a record of COVID-19 positive patients in their wards to be able to better respond to their medical needs.
- Work on decentralizing programmes on the pandemic to even the most remote parts of the country.
- Coordinate with multiple agencies to implement the programmes and ensure smoother coordination and proper implementation as well as transparency and accountability in the process.
- Some provinces have been so hard hit by the pandemic that there needs to be policy level engagement to address the myriad issues.
- Proper attention on mental health issues at the community level will also be effective as is much needed. Although many civil society bodies claim to be disseminating services focusing on mental health, there needs to be a proper mechanism to ensure its efficacy.
- Emergency services, such as air-ambulance, must be managed for those with emergency medical conditions and pregnant women.
- Design mental health programmes for the affected people and community.
- Establish proper complaint handling mechanisms to maintain/ ensure transparency and accountability at the local level.
- Create effective safety nets to prevent and respond to the increasing incidents of gender-based and domestic violence.
- The data reflects that there needs to be an increasing attention placed on addressing different forms of discriminations in order to maintain social cohesion and the rule of law.

7. Conclusion

The event was filled with enriching insights from the presenters of the seven provinces as well as the experts for the webinar. All those present lauded the effort of the volunteers who led the webinar. The experts also

shared how they were working to address the myriad issues caused by the pandemic. The presentations underscored that the voices from the people in the informal sector need to be accounted for. The youth can play an important role to support this. For example: the youth can work on awareness raising in the communities, and combined with the civil society, they can advocate for rights of the marginalized and advocate for proper market linkages.

ANNEX

Annex 1: List of Experts and Presenters

Experts: The following expert provided his input in the webinar:

- Subash Khatiwada, President, Association of Community Radio Broadcasters Nepal (ACORAB Nepal)

The expert noted that the presentation of the volunteers was very good and also congratulated the organizers. He explained how ACORAB is a network of community radio that reaches the hardest to reach population. The youth can play a powerful role by holding the duty bearers accountable – and through ACORAB, many youths who are currently working as radio jockeys do get this opportunity to pose important questions to those at the office. Furthermore, he informed how community radios are also helping the education sector by creating tailored content for the Ministry to be disseminated via the radio. At the event, Mr. Khatiwada also presented the volunteers with the opportunity to volunteer for ACORAB to make the voices of those often unheard, heard.

The following volunteers presented the major issues from their provinces:

Province	District	Name of the volunteers
1	Morang	Januka Regmi
2	Sarlahi	Niraj Kumar Mishra
Bagmati	Lalitpur	Rajina Neupane
Gandaki	Nawalpur	Khimananda Devkota
Province 5	Banke	Ojaswi Joshi
Karnali	Dolpa	Saraswoti Shahi
Sudurpashchim	Bajura	Ganesh Dhami