



The Coherence Programme: PROJECT BRIEF

March 2019

Adanchuli Gaunpalika (rural municipality) office. Photo credit: Coherence Field Team

Background

Nepal is in the initial process of federalisation. The 2015 Constitution of Nepal established a federal form of governance consisting of three orders of government – Federal, State/Provincial (Pradesh) and Local (Palika). Each order has exclusive powers in some areas and concurrent powers in others, and they are expected to work together through the principles of cooperation, coordination and coexistence.

The 2017 elections that followed the new Constitution put in place elected governments in all three orders. Subsequent legislation together with guidelines, templates and instruments, has been designed to empower and capacitate the new Palikas and Pradesh governments to establish processes of democratic local governance. Similarly, the Constitution and subsequent legislation set in place arrangements to ensure local governments have the human and financial resources to deliver on their mandates.

In 2015 the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (now the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration - MoFAGA) and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) commissioned a study in Dailekh (Dailekh Mapping Study on Governance and Coherence), which identified the core problem of government and development partners' programmes being implemented in silos – coordinated centrally, but not locally. This had led to an undermining of local governance, duplication, inefficient use of resources and the capture of benefits by a few. With the new Constitution, and transition to the federal system, there is an opportunity to support political coherence and technical coordination in local

governments. Not only is there an opportunity – the new state structure, new systems and procedures that are being put in place in fact require development partners including DFID (and DFID Implementing Partners) to re-think their programme approaches and delivery mechanisms. These have to be adapted to the new structure and systems.

What is the Coherence Programme?

The Coherence Programme is a partnership between MoFAGA, International IDEA (Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) and DFID, in operation between 2017-2019.

Emerging from the new context as well as from the lessons learned from the Dailekh Mapping Study, the Coherence Programme aims to build common understanding of **deliberative democratic local governance** concepts and practice among federal, provincial and local stakeholders.

What do we mean by deliberation?

Deliberation is a **reasoned** process through which public decisions are made **collectively** rather than by a single individual.

It is a **formal** process of reaching a **consensus** on public issues in the best interest of everyone. This contrasts with public decisions that are taken by one person (or a small group of people) which often leave sections of society feeling that decisions, including the allocation of resources i.e. “who gets what”, have not been fairly reached.

The Coherence Programme identified six key elements that characterise good deliberative processes:

- **Formal process:** Deliberative public decision-making is a formal rules-based process, which needs to be both well-managed and fair. The process needs to be chaired, and sometimes facilitated, with an agenda, schedules, codes of conduct and rules for speaking, record and minute-taking and final decision-making procedures (voting) agreed at the onset. *Deliberative decisions are legal and binding.*
- **Collective:** Public decisions should be made in the public interest and for the common good (i.e., the good of society as a whole). However, the elected representatives and their constituents need to see the benefits of working together, of reasoning through problems, and of reaching a consensus on a course of actions¹. *Deliberative decisions are important and beneficial.*
- **Inclusive:** Since many decisions involve trade-offs with winners and losers, any decision where sections of society are missing, is likely to be regarded as less legitimate and unfair. If, for example, wards, women, castes or other stakeholder groups do not have a voice or are not represented in the deliberation, the collective nature of the decision can be challenged. Once decisions have been agreed, they must be communicated to citizens, affected communities and other stakeholders. *Deliberative decisions have legitimacy because those who should be involved have been.*
- **Capable:** Meaningful inclusion assumes a level playing field and that all participants have a roughly similar capacity to engage in a deliberative process. This assessment includes the capability of elected representatives and administrative officials and within these groups of socially marginalised groups such as women, Dalits, youth and others. *Deliberative decisions require meaningful inclusion – there is no point in people being invited who are not listened to or are unable to voice their opinions because of social and cultural barriers.*

- **Reasoned:** Reasoning goes beyond negotiation and just, for example, splitting resources equally between different groups. This requires the elected representatives to sit together and discuss to build a new and common understanding of particular problems or opportunities affecting the Palika – before deciding what to do.
- **Evidence-based:** Such reasoning involves collecting facts and evidence, and listening to different opinions from many sources. Reasoning requires data and studies, information provided by the administration – the managers and providers of services such as Palika Health, Education, Agricultural and other officers as well as direct engagement with communities, interest groups, individual citizens and technical experts. It requires use of data and analysis of information about the Palika (profile), expenditure and performance; policies and experiences of other Palikas; and standards and guidelines prepared by Provincial and Federal Governments. This will not just involve meetings and discussions within the Executive, but with the Administration and, more widely, with those affected or with an interest in the issue. Finally, after consultation and study is complete, the elected representatives must reach their own collective decision – the ultimate goal is for all members to reach consensus. *Deliberative decisions lead to new collective understanding and to new ideas and new priorities.*



Tole (settlement) consultation in Ward 3, Adanchuli Gaunpalika, Humla district, Karnali Province. Photo credit: Coherence Field Team

¹ Note the Model Rules for Village Executive (Work performance) rules 2074 indicate decisions should be made by consensus, unless it cannot be reached, in which case 'a majority, including the Chairperson, shall be deemed the decision of the meeting'.

What Does Coherence Do?

To deliver on its purpose, the Coherence Programme is set up with four inter-linked and inter-dependent areas of work that operate at different levels and with different stakeholders, and that complement each other and feed each other with information/knowledge and lessons:

1. **Understanding the emergent federal system:** The Programme has mapped what has been provided in the Constitution, in major laws defining the federal system, and in model laws, rules, procedures, directives and guidelines prepared by MoFAGA – what we refer to as ‘the Givens’.

This analysis has been shared formally and informally, to support the building of a wider understanding among stakeholders, particularly development partners, of the emerging system and structures and their implications.

The results of this analysis are captured in different products, like briefing papers and a glossary of terms and concepts. The Programme has facilitated and will continue to facilitate a series of dialogues focussed on key issues in federal systems. The Programme believes in engaging with decision-makers and others to ensure that understanding and experience are widely shared.

2. **Translating ‘the Givens’ into accessible resource materials:** The analysis of the ‘Givens’ has also informed the design of other elements of the Coherence Programme – importantly the resource materials for local government, using accessible and practical language to explain the systems and processes for deliberative democracy.

3. **Piloting support to processes of democratic local governance:** The Programme is piloting the use of the resource materials to support democratic local governance in Karnali Province (in 6 Palikas) through a mentoring process. The approach to mentoring as support to local governments in Nepal is also new and experimental. The training of mentors is based on the resource materials and includes facilitation and other skills.

4. **Building development partner coherence and response to the federal system:** The Programme has worked with the DFID Nepal portfolio through

a series of workshops, meetings and critical challenge to support DFID programmes to a) understand the new federal context and b) transition towards a more coherent approach that supports the new federal system. Also, workshops have been held with other development partners to build shared understanding of the new political contexts. A collaborative relationship with GIZ has been established around the development and testing of resource materials and processes that the Coherence Programme leads.

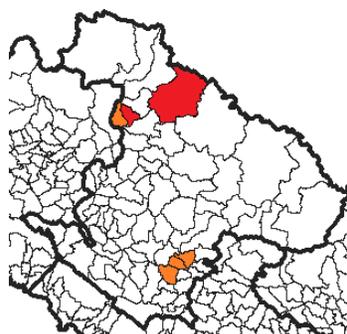
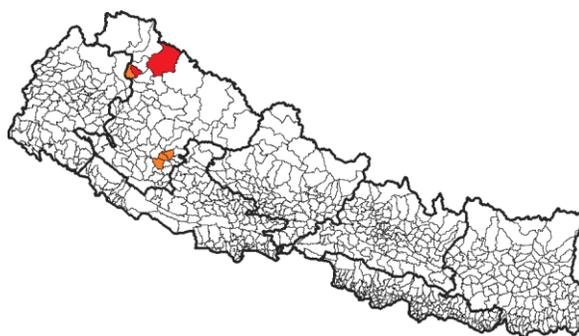
FOR MORE INFORMATION

For information about the Coherence Programme please contact International IDEA Nepal:

Phanindra Adhikary: P.Adhikary@idea.int

Alexandra Walcher: A.Walcher@idea.int

*International IDEA Nepal
Srinivas House, Ward no.4
Embassy Marg, Baluwatar
Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel/Fax: +977 1 4432846, 4435972
www.idea.int*



Map of Coherence pilot Palikas in Karnali Province:

- Pilot Palikas 2018/19 (red), in Humla
- New pilot Palikas added 2019 (orange), in Humla, West Rukum, Salyan