



Sprinting the Last Mile: Nepal's Sanitation Campaign in the Terai

While tremendous strides towards eliminating open defecation have been made across South Asia, some of the region's most dramatic progress has been achieved in Nepal. Hovering between only 2% and 6% in the 1980s and 1990s, the percentage of people with access to sanitation accelerated to over 99% by mid-2019, according to the Government of Nepal. On 30 September 2019, the Government of Nepal declared the country 'open defecation free' (ODF) and is rapidly scaling-up access to safely-managed sanitation services as the next priority.

The Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) is just one of the sector partners supporting the implementation of Nepal's sanitation campaign – an intensive national push launched in 2011 to achieve a dramatic transformation of the country's sanitation and hygiene practices through a behaviour change approach. WSSCC's Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) Nepal programme, executed by UN-HABITAT,

has concentrated since 2014 on the southern Terai plains, the challenging 'last mile' of Nepal's Sanitation Campaign. Despite the region's daunting socioeconomic challenges, the programme successfully contributed to accelerating sanitation coverage in eight Terai districts from around 13% to near universal coverage in just over four years, according to data from the Government of Nepal.

This issue of 'GSF in Focus' documents the success factors for ending open defecation and accelerating access to improved sanitation and hygiene services in the challenging Terai region. While focusing on the Terai region specifically, many of these lessons are applicable to other regions in Nepal and can be relevant to other countries' sanitation campaigns. While recognizing the unprecedented progress towards ending open defecation, continued focus on transforming social norms is needed to sustain ODF achievements.

Acronyms & Abbreviations

CLTS	Community-led Total Sanitation
D-WASH-CC	District Water Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee
GSF	Global Sanitation Fund
NPR	Nepalese rupee
NHSSC	National Hygiene and Sanitation Steering Committee
ODF	Open Defecation Free
USD	United States Dollar
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDC-WASH-CC	Village Development Committee Water Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene
WSSCC	Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council

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Exchange Rates

This document uses an annual average interbank exchange rate (2018) of 110 NPR/USD. Figures are rounded for simplicity.



THE SANITATION CAMPAIGN IN NEPAL

The recent surge in sanitation coverage began with the formulation of the National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan in 2011. Prior to the development of the Master Plan, sanitation and hygiene was not a priority in government planning and budgeting, there was incoherent targeting of priority areas, and a multitude of different – and often conflicting – implementation approaches were used by sector partners. Sanitation coverage lagged significantly. In 2011, only 37% of the country had access to sanitation facilities, compared to 80.4% with water supply.²

To address these gaps, the National Hygiene and Sanitation Steering Committee (NHSSC) convened key line ministries and sector partners to develop a Master Plan outlining a roadmap for achieving national targets, delineating clear responsibilities, and harmonizing approaches and definitions.

Key elements of the Master Plan:

- Sanitation and hygiene identified as a WASH sector priority, and as a distinct funding area from water supply
- Clear responsibility of local government authorities to lead sanitation and hygiene interventions through multi-sector coordinating committees dedicated for sanitation and hygiene at every level
- An emphasis on promoting and harmonizing non-subsidy, behavior change based interventions, although exceptions are specified for people in vulnerable situations
- Eliminating open defecation was established as the sector's primary objective. It is envisioned that a second post-ODF phase, termed 'Total Sanitation', will subsequently reinforce continued toilet use and handwashing with soap, personal hygiene education, and environmental sanitation (safe handling/treatment of drinking water, solid and liquid waste management, food hygiene and general cleanliness for households and public institutions).

Nepal's ODF definition

Nepal's Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan established a clear definition of open defecation free (ODF) status for the sector:

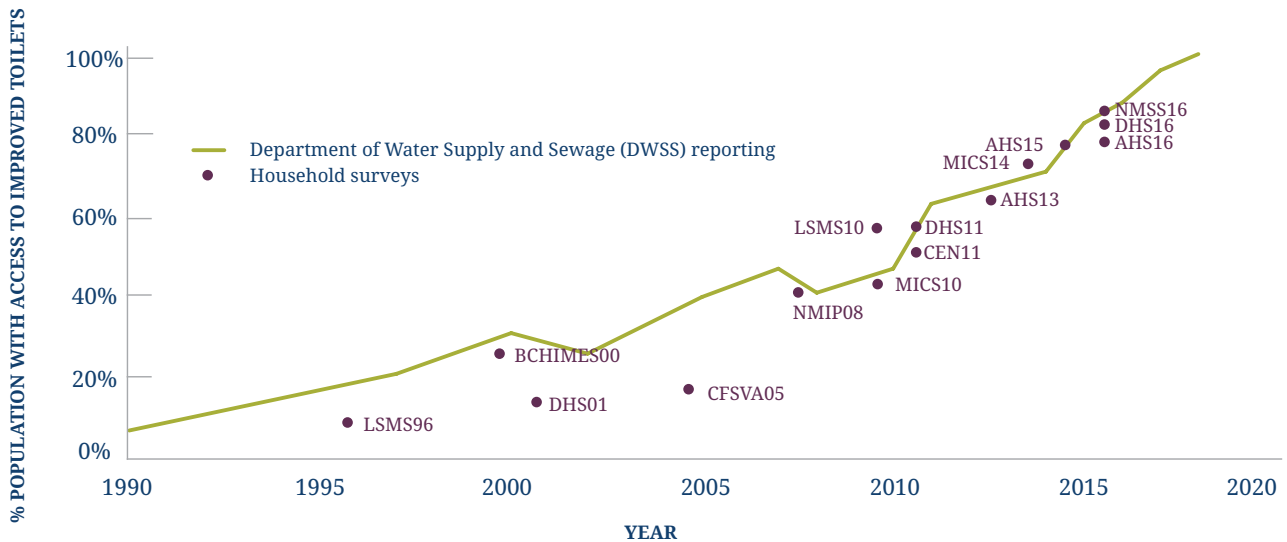
- There is no OD in the designated area at any given time;
 - All households have access to improved sanitation facilities (toilets) with full use, operation and maintenance;
 - All the schools, institutions or offices within the designated areas must have toilet facilities.
- In addition, the following aspects should be encouraged along with ODF declaration process:
- Availability of soap and soap case for handwashing in all households
 - General environmental cleanliness including management of animal, solid and liquid wastes is prevalent in the designated area.

The Master Plan development process and resulting document successfully rallied Nepal's WASH sector around a pragmatic vision and strategy, led by the Government of Nepal and with strong support from external support agencies. It was also successful in attracting international financial support for realizing Nepal's sanitation and hygiene targets – including financing from WSSCC's GSF. Since the inception of the Master Plan, sanitation coverage accelerated by an average of 7% per year (compared with an average of 4% per year over the previous decade), with the Government of Nepal declaring the country ODF in 2019.

However, the southern strip of Terai districts lagged behind. In the final years of Nepal's ODF campaign, the Terai was recognized as the final hurdle to move the campaign forward.

² Government of Nepal. (2011). Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan. Retrieved from: <http://washinschoolsmapping.com/wengine/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Nepal-Government-Sanitation-and-Hygiene-Master-Plan.pdf>

FIGURE 1 Nepal Sanitation Status: 1990 - 2019



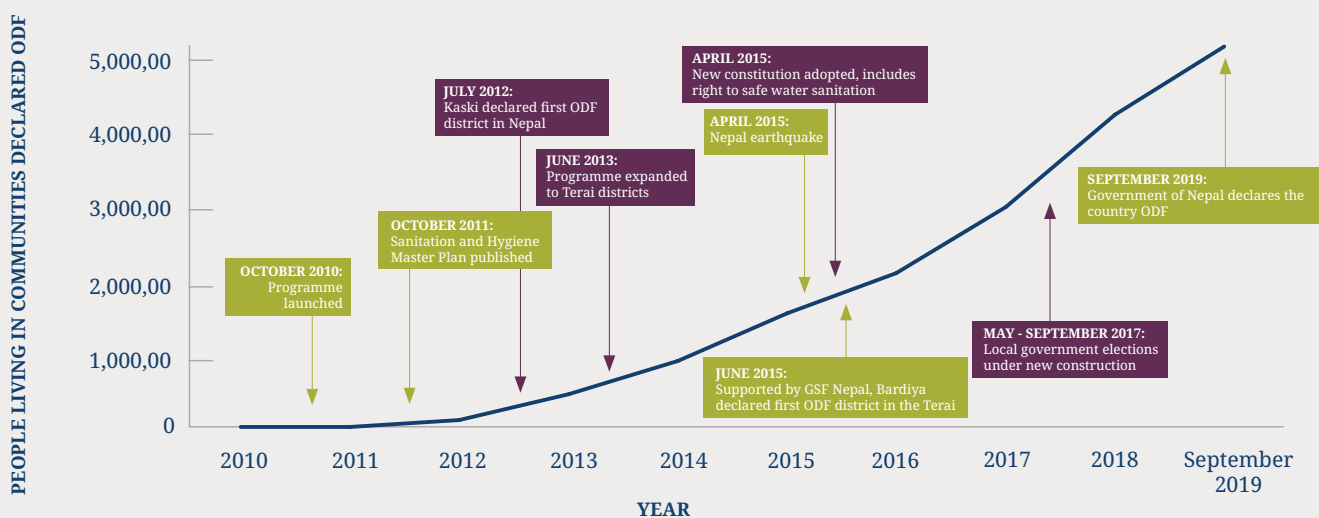
Government of Nepal, December 2018. Adapted by Mark Ellery

The GSF-supported programme in Nepal

The GSF-supported programme in Nepal ('GSF Nepal') was conceived in late 2010 to support the Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan, which was being finalized. The programme's two phases - to ensure first that six million people live in ODF environments and second that they use improved sanitation and hygiene services - received a total commitment of USD 11.4 million from WSSCC. The programme currently covers 19 districts, including 10 in the Terai region, with a focus on behaviour change and strengthening local government capacity and systems.

UN-HABITAT is the Executing Agency of GSF Nepal, and is responsible for overall fund management, technical support and monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Activities on-the-ground are implemented by local NGOs in close coordination with local governments and other partners. The National Sanitation and Hygiene Coordination Committee serves as the Programme Coordinating Mechanism, providing strategic guidance and embedding the GSF programme within the national campaign. At the sub-national level, government-led WASH coordinating committees similarly steer the programme locally.

FIGURE 2 GSF Nepal programme progress: 2010 - 2019



UN-HABITAT Nepal Annual Reports

FIGURE 3 GSF-supported districts in Nepal

THE TERAI CONTEXT

The Terai region is a fertile belt along Nepal's southern border that is home to nearly half the country's population. Communities in the Terai have close economic, social, and cultural ties with their Indian neighbours to the south, with whom they share an open border.

The Terai region was the 'last mile' for the ODF campaign in Nepal. When the National Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan was launched in 2011, only 13%

of the population in the Terai had access to a latrine compared to 62% nationally. Later, while the rest of the country made rapid gains towards ending open defecation, progress in the Terai was stagnant. This was partly due to the challenging context in the Terai, which in turn contributed to a lack of attention during the initial years of the campaign when gaining quick results was a priority.

Challenges in the Terai region

A combination of factors contributed to making the Terai region particularly challenging for the ODF campaign:

- Strong social norms for open defecation and taboos against using toilets
- High levels of poverty and livelihood insecurity, with large segments of the population relying on seasonal farm labour and high-interest loans (often from employers and landlords)
- Challenging land issues, including:
 - Concentration of land ownership, leaving large numbers of landless people unable to build toilets
 - Closely clustered communities with little space
 - Large numbers of people living on public land, often in areas prone to flooding
- Large numbers of marginalized ethnic minorities, 'Dalits' and indigenous groups
- High water tables and periodic flooding
- Absence of men during behaviour change activities due to economic migration (however this may also have positive effects, such as exposure to toilet use and new technologies, and remittances sent back home to fund toilet construction)
- High expectations of subsidies due to their past use, as well as subsidized toilets across the open border in India

The GSF-supported programme in the Terai

Following GSF Nepal's initial success in six hill and mountain districts between 2011 and 2013, the NSHCC asked WSSCC to expand the programme into eight districts of the eastern Terai in 2013 where only 13% of people had access to basic sanitation services (or 'improved toilets', as defined in Nepal).³ The objective of the programme in the Terai was to spearhead a breakthrough in ending open defecation, covering approximately two-thirds of Village Development Committees (VDCs) in target districts.

Other external support agencies (SNV, WaterAid, Plan International, OXFAM, and UNICEF) also increased their support to the region, and within four years, sanitation coverage across the Terai districts accelerated from an average of 13% in 2013 to 99.5% by mid-2019.⁴



Subsidies along the border

Lal Shan lives in what was formally known as Morang district in the eastern Terai region. Lal's house is situated along a country road that forms the border between Nepal and India. The demarcation is indistinguishable, and the opposite house on the Indian side is just a few metres away from Lal's door. Lal and her son have dual citizenship, and they travel across the road to India each day for work and school.

Lal first heard about the issue of sanitation and hygiene from the Swachh Bharat mission in India. When she heard about Nepal's sanitation campaign, she was dismissive: 'I thought: why should I pay when I can get 12,000 Indian rupees (USD 170) for a latrine across the road!'. Facilitators from local NGO 'Good Neighbours Nepal' working with the GSF Nepal programme, frequently followed-up with Lal to change her mind. Now, Lal owns latrines in both Nepal and India. "Government is not going to come and do this for you," she explains, "it's for yourself."

³ The Master Plan states that the definition of improved toilet is based on the former Joint Monitoring Programme classification (now 'basic services') but suggests "any one of the locally appropriate improved toilet options with permanent structures at least up to the plinth/ floor level for durability and sustainability of the structure" (p. 6). Offset, pour flush latrines with a concrete slab and rings for the pit are commonly accepted as the minimum standard for an 'improved latrine'.

⁴ Government of Nepal

USING THE NATIONAL ROADMAP

The following sections outline success factors in accelerating the elimination of open defecation in the Terai. They derive from a collective effort by many partners who identified effective approaches from Nepal's sanitation campaign and adapted them for use in the Terai region.

Three factors were critical: building and supporting coalitions of local leaders, leveraging local finance, and implementing community-level behaviour change initiatives through local leaders.

1. Building sanitation coalitions

Before the sanitation campaign in the Terai reached the household level, the programme focused on bringing together emerging sanitation champions. These coalitions were critical for enlisting other influential leaders into the campaign, and through their collective clout, pushing sanitation and hygiene as a priority through district, VDC, and ward WASH Coordination Committees.

Under the Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan, WASH Coordination Committees, situated at each administrative level, were responsible for the overall planning, implementation, and monitoring of the sanitation campaign. Coordination Committees

were led by the local government and composed representatives local NGOs and businesses, community organizations, and other local government leaders. Following Nepal's 2018 political transition towards a federal structure, sector partners supporting WASH Coordination Committees in urban and rural municipalities. Local WASH coordinating bodies are not a new idea; these mechanisms exist in many countries. In practice, however, they frequently take a passive, backseat role. What is novel about the approach used in Nepal, and the Terai specifically, was the immediate and intensive emphasis on working with local leaders to transform these mechanisms into buzzing campaign headquarters.

■ **Identifying champions:** During the early phase of the sanitation campaign, implementing partners focused on building a team of strategically-placed leaders in the local government as the foundation of revitalized WASH committees. Two roles were typically crucial to success. One was that of the District Development Committee Chairperson, the head of the local administration, who would be designated as Chair of the D-WASH-CC. The other was the district's Chief of Water Supply and Sanitation, who would be named as Secretary. If at least one of these individuals was a fully engaged sanitation champion, progress tended to accelerate rapidly.

The Sanitation Chairman



Parsuram Chauhlului Jhariu is a local political leader in Saptari district, and one of the Terai's first sanitation coalition builders. Parsuram was first sceptical when he heard about the campaign: "I thought stopping open defecation was impossible in the Terai – the

people here wouldn't listen". Supported by GSF Nepal's implementing partner – Water Environment and Life (WEL) Nepal – Parsuram organized a meeting with prominent local leaders on the urgency of ending open defecation. The most enthusiastic formed the VDC-WASH-CC, which Parsuram united around a common goal: to be the first VDC to declare ODF status in the district and claim the NPR 150,000 (USD 1,600) prize offered by the D-WASH-CC. The committee developed a strategy to end open defecation within two months, which included community visits, negotiations with local brick

factories to pre-finance materials for the ultra-poor, and funding two public toilets at the local market.

After a photo-finish race, the VDC was awarded a second-place prize of NPR 100,000 (USD 900), which it used to repay the brick factories and support marginalized communities to upgrade their toilets. In 2018, Parsuram was elected Mayor of the newly formed municipality and through the 'matching fund mechanism' (see below), the municipality budgeted NPR 5 million (USD 45,500) to declare ODF status first and fund post-ODF sustainability activities.

■ **Mobilizing influencers:** The Terai sanitation campaign advanced quickly by targeting the leaders of prominent local institutions to join local-government-led WASH committees. Generating a movement that can rapidly reach scale would not be possible with only a small number of programme staff. Convincing influential individuals and groups to be part of WASH Coordination Committees and promote the sanitation campaign within their own social networks was one of the most important factors of success in the Terai.

The objective was to embed the campaign’s message in every possible segment of society, delivered by voices people listened to. At the district level, this included heads of local government departments (health, education, and women’s development); local businesses, private donors, and representatives from the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce; heads of public and private schools; and local NGOs, international NGOs, UN agencies, and WASH organizations. At the VDC and ward levels, the main targets were forest users’ groups, teachers and head teachers (principals), female health workers, religious leaders, water user’s groups, and youth and child clubs.

Programme partners, with the support of champions within the local government, initially played the leading role for getting these leaders and organizations on board. One approach was organizing ‘sector triggering’ meetings for all the principal institutions in the district, where the sanitation situation in the district prompts leaders to commit to take action. Once a few champions became heavily involved in the sanitation campaign through the local WASH coordinating committee, they became the main protagonists for ratcheting-up momentum by working in communities and persuading more champions to join the cause.

■ **Use the national roadmap:** One of the key elements which facilitated coalition building was having a clear national roadmap: Nepal’s Sanitation and Hygiene Master Plan. A key activity of the GSF Nepal programme was working with coordinating committees to translate the national strategy into the local context.

This national strategy was important in three major respects. First, the Master Plan signaled to local government officials the high priority placed on sanitation and hygiene at the national level, and that each district’s performance would be scrutinized.⁵ With Terai districts lagging behind the rest of the country, the Master Plan became an advocacy tool for lobbying local leaders to act. Secondly, the Master Plan clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of different actors – government departments, local NGOs, and community organizations. This helped to situate different actors within the broader campaign, breaking down its ambitious scope into

pieces they could contribute to. Thirdly, the Master Plan provided a common language between local government and development partners to set targets, timelines, and implementation principles. The Master Plan’s emphasis on community-driven, no blanket subsidy, collective behaviour change approaches also pushed organizations to harmonize with each other, so their strategies were not working at cross-purposes.

■ **Focus on Coordination Committees:** a unique feature of the sanitation campaign in Nepal, and specifically in the Terai was the emphasis on supporting district, VDC, and ward WASH Coordination Committees. While similar committees exist elsewhere, they often only function as passive bodies.

Achieving momentum involved far more than training workshops. It took intensive and continuous ‘pushing from behind’ from programme partners, often over several months, while continuously emphasizing government leadership. Changing entrenched behaviours also helped. Previously, it was standard practice for development programmes to issue meeting allowances. This reportedly manufactured a ‘meeting economy’ whereby a meeting could become an end in itself. One of the first things the GSF Nepal programme changed was to stop issuing these allowances. While this initially caused some friction, coordination meetings eventually evolved into productive, lively sessions that everybody wanted to attend.

Another important success factor was a common expectation for meaningful collaboration, where partners were held accountable to local government to work as a team. This meant that knowledge and resources were more freely shared, and successes were jointly celebrated. For example, in the Terai campaign, it was common practice for one programme to send its facilitators (‘triggerers’) to reach ODF status in another programme’s target VDC. Strong government leadership, clear roles and responsibilities, a habit of conducting all activities jointly, and a common vision were all essential for building an *esprit de corps* between partners.

Proactive and robust local coordinating committees were essential for enhancing the campaign’s performance. With periodic results-focused review meetings hosting discussions on why some areas were progressing and why others lagged behind, coordination committees became dynamic learning hubs where partners shared effective tactics, gained hands-on experience through field visits, and organized joint training and implementation activities. While friendly competition between partners was an important motivation, under strong government leadership, everyone shared the same goal.

⁵ Before the transition in 2018, local leaders were appointed by their respective line ministries from the central government. This may have been a factor for pushing local government leaders towards prioritizing sanitation and hygiene.

When organizations worked at cross-purposes, Coordination Committees harmonized approaches on issues ranging from collective behaviour change, local financing mechanisms, and hardware subsidies. In Saptari district, for example, the D-WASH-CC was notified that USAID's Suaahara "Good Nutrition" programme was providing fully subsidized toilets to young mothers. Because this disrupted communities where behaviour change activities were implemented, the D-WASH-CC initiated discussions with the Suaahara programme on how they could align. As the Sanitation Campaign already aimed to ensure that everyone (including young mothers) used a basic latrine, the Suaahara

programme agreed to shift their latrine subsidy budget towards water supply, leaving financial support for toilets to existing local government systems.

RIGHT: Members of Sunsari's District Water Supply and Sanitation department staff Lalita Lamsal (left) and Sujata Sakya, former WASH focal person Shushil Kr. Karna (centre), and Division Chief Devnath Singh (seated). In addition to ensuring that partners in the district work together, they also developed and spread innovative behaviour change approaches – such as 'mission ODF' and 'sanitation commandos'.



Nepal's political transition

In 2018, Nepal began the process of political decentralization to align with the 2015 constitution. Recently defunct administrative units used for planning the national sanitation campaign do not easily map onto the new structures. The political transition also included electing formerly appointed political leaders to head provinces and municipalities.

Throughout this document, both old and new administrative units are referenced with respect to the period in which the programme operated.

FIGURE 4

OLD STRUCTURE

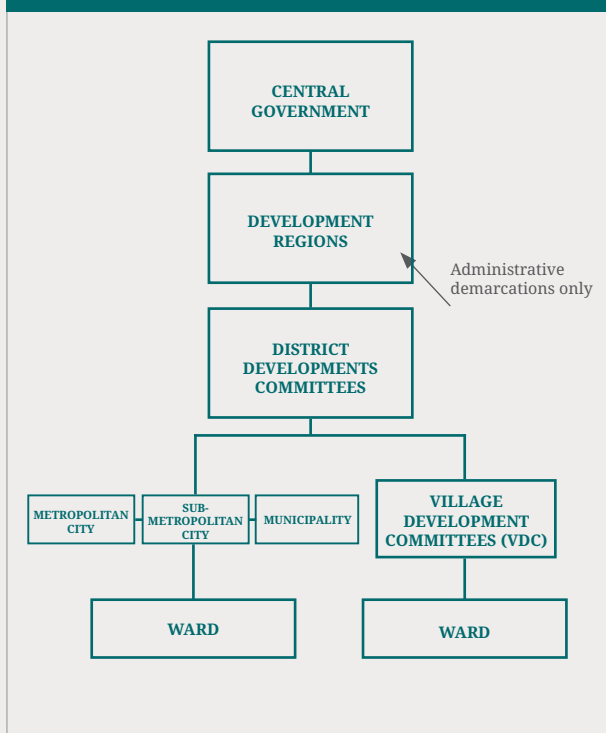
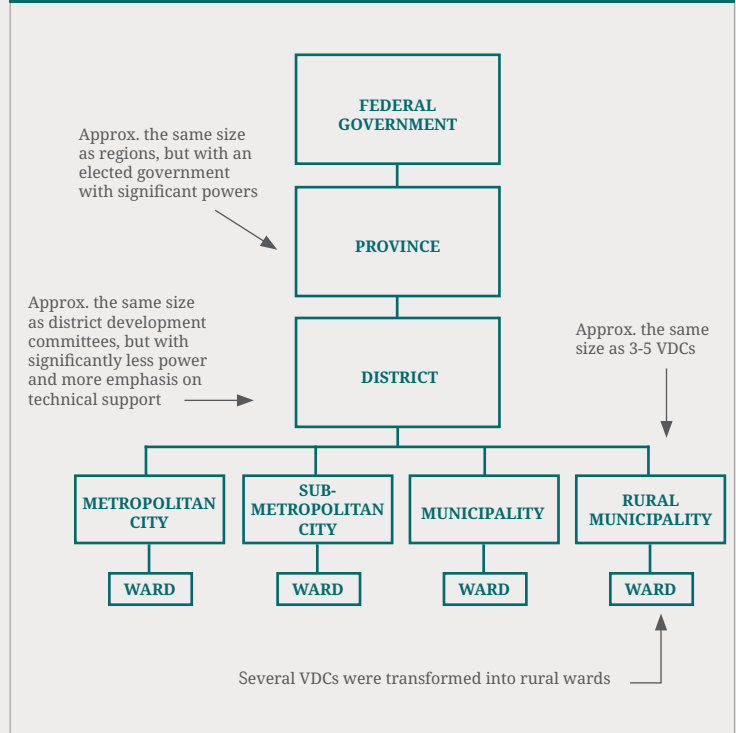


FIGURE 5

NEW STRUCTURE



2. Leveraging local resources: GSF Nepal's match funding mechanism

A unique feature of the GSF programme in Nepal, conceptualized during the programme inception phase, was the matching fund mechanism. The concept was to match allocations from local government budgets into a dedicated sanitation and hygiene revolving fund, allowing for a locally-led sanitation campaign, on top of leveraging an average of USD 100 per household (a total of approximately USD 60 million). The matching fund model leveraged significant local government resources and help set a trend for sustained financing for the sanitation sector.

Close to USD 2 million was leveraged across 726 local governments (VDCs) between 2010 and 2018. Approximately two-thirds of contributions were made by local governments. The matching fund mechanism is considered an important success factor for the programme and was replicated by other development partners supporting the Terai sanitation campaign.

Objectives of the matching fund

- Scale up and accelerate the sanitation campaign under the leadership of the local government
- Strengthen the capacity of local governments to plan, implement, and monitor sanitation and hygiene interventions
- Trigger sustained local government budget allocations towards sanitation and hygiene
- Facilitate financing for post-ODF sustainability interventions by local government authorities

How the matching fund worked

Matching funds were budgeted within the programme based on the total number of local government areas targeted to reach ODF coverage targets. This budget was reflected within the grant agreement with local implementing partners, responsible for ensuring proper fund management. Between USD 1,500 - 2,000 was allocated per local government unit from the programme, which was matched by the local government. For reference, a typical VDC annual budget for infrastructure (including water and sanitation) is approximately NPR 1,500,000 (USD 13,600).

The matching funds were deposited in a dedicated account managed by local government authorities, in accordance with a tripartite agreement involving the D-WASH-CC, V-WASH-CC, and the local implementing partner. This agreement governed the operation of the fund matching mechanism: conditions for payments, guidelines on fund utilization, and responsibilities and accountabilities of parties. VDCs were also required to have a sanitation and hygiene action plan or strategy in place to receive match funding. Local governments were then responsible for budgeting annual allocations to the sanitation fund from block

grants from the Ministry of Local Development. The tripartite agreement allowed local governments to decide how funds in the sanitation account would be used but stipulated some principles and guidelines. Local governments were encouraged to fund behaviour change and local advocacy activities, but with scope for hardware subsidies for households identified as extremely vulnerable or marginalized. Implementing partners monitored and reported to GSF Nepal's executing agency how the funds were spent.

Previously, the full matching fund disbursement was made to dedicated local government sanitation and hygiene accounts once VDC local governments deposited the matching amount and 90% of households had access to basic sanitation. This system was improved during the Terai sanitation campaign. Under this revised system, matching funds were disbursed in two stages: 50% to support the 'last mile' push to eliminate open defecation, and 50% after the VDC is declared ODF through the national verification process. The intention was to encourage planning for the second phase of Nepal's Sanitation Master Plan (post-ODF) by ensuring sustained financing.

Results

The matching fund mechanism evolved into a critical tool for mobilizing local public financing for the sanitation campaign and is regarded as a key contribution to the national WASH sector by the GSF Nepal programme. Since 2013, approximately 75% of all VDC contributions to the sanitation campaign across the programme were from VDCs in Terai districts. The matching fund model has since been replicated by other development partners supporting the sanitation campaign in the Terai, namely SNV and the World Bank-supported Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Fund Development Board (Fund Board). Due to the shift in how funds are disbursed, municipalities are currently planning and implementing post-ODF interventions financed through the dedicated sanitation and hygiene fund accounts.

Funds leveraged

In total, VDCs contributed approximately USD 2 million to the matching fund compared to USD 1.3 million from the GSF programme in Nepal. This represents nearly 50% more locally-leveraged public finance than the stipulated 1:1 commitment.

To date, 83% of cumulative contributions from GSF Nepal were matched by local governments across all programme areas. However, there were large variations between different areas. VDCs participating in the first phase of the programme matched GSF Nepal's contributions on a strictly 1:1 basis. But VDCs participating in the second phase of the programme, largely in the Terai region, contributed up to 2.5 times the amount disbursed by the GSF Nepal programme. This difference can be attributed, in part, to the alteration in the phasing of disbursements, which avoided the full matching fund sum to be spent at once (eg. on ODF celebrations) and helped encourage local governments to plan for spending during the post-ODF phase.

FIGURE 6 Share of contributions to the matching fund mechanism

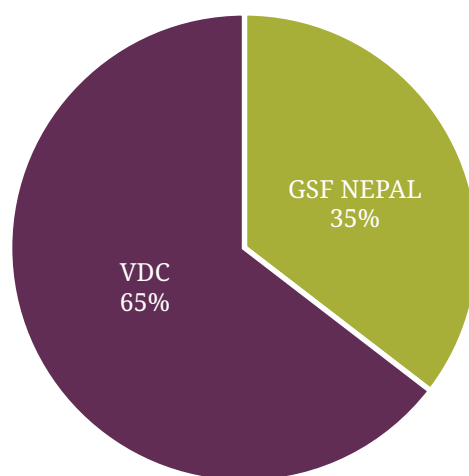
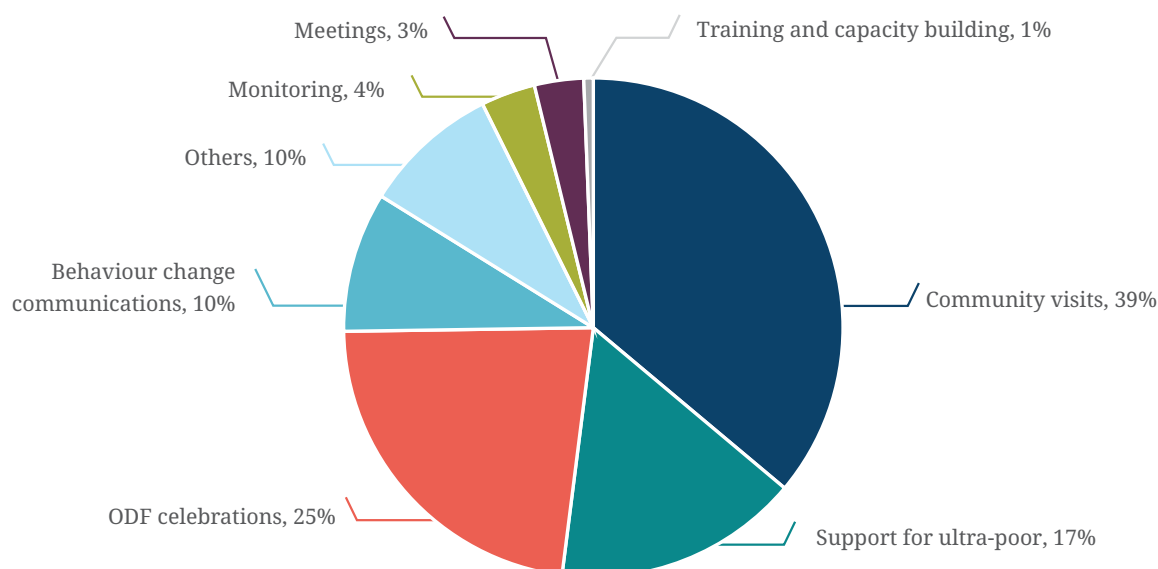


FIGURE 7 Breakdown of matching fund expenditure from sample VDCs



Fund utilization

An assessment carried out by the programme in 2018 indicated that close to two thirds of matching funds were spent on behaviour change based activities.⁶ Most of this amount (39%) was spent on community-based interventions, including door-to-door visits, mobilizing local leaders and organizations, and honouring outstanding community champions for their contributions to the sanitation campaign (see below). The remainder was spent on general behaviour change communications, such as billboards and murals, street dramas, song competitions, video shows, cultural

programmes, and using vehicles with music and loudspeakers to deliver messages encouraging better sanitation and hygiene behaviour.

Just under one-fifth of the matching fund amount was spent on hardware support for households identified as ultra-poor or extremely marginalized. Costs under this category included the manufacture of rings, pipes, and pans, which people who are identified as being disadvantaged can purchase at a subsidized rate (or at zero cost) from the local government (see above).

⁶ The assessment involved a random sample of 56 VDCs (out of a total of 726 VDCs in the programme). To ensure the sample was representative, VDCs with the largest and smallest matching fund disbursements were sampled from every programme district. The sample included 46 VDCs from districts in the Terai region – 82% of the total.

Influence on sustained financing

In addition to local resource leveraging for the ODF campaign, the matching fund mechanism has significant potential to stimulate sustained public financing for sanitation and hygiene. With a separate budget line for sanitation and hygiene established, several VDCs are reportedly contributing to the dedicated account for 'Total Sanitation' activities. Implementing partners have since worked with newly-formed municipalities on re-establishing sanitation accounts for the next phase of the campaign. Another major achievement was shifting financing away from blanket subsidies and more towards behaviour change strategies.

Unfortunately, much of the data on post-ODF funding for sanitation and hygiene was lost during the 2018 federal transition. More robust evidence is therefore needed to assess the linkage between local matching fund mechanisms and sustained future financing. Given its demonstrated potential, matching fund models have potential to increase local resource leveraging and ownership of sanitation and hygiene programmes significantly (especially when in the context of a national campaign).

Matching funds in Morang district

Gayananda Sardar is the Chair of Ward No. 9 in the former district of Morang, located in the far east of the Terai belt. When the GSF Nepal programme started in Gayananda's ward in 2017, most of the population was practising open defecation. Gayananda explains that setting up the matching fund mechanism was a big boost to financing the local sanitation campaign. The ward's (formerly the VDC's) contribution for the ODF push increased from NPR 100,000 (USD 900) to NPR 2,000,000 (USD 18,200).

Overseen by the Ward-WASH-CC, which Gayananda chairs, the matching funds were spent on intensive behaviour change campaigns in communities ('mission ODF') and providing 400 of the poorest households in the ward with materials for building toilets. Most of the people receiving support were reportedly from marginalized Dalit communities.

Gayananda also explained how the matching funds helped to prompt other ward leaders recognize the importance of sanitation and hygiene in annual budgets and workplans. The ward recently set a two-year post-ODF budget of 2,000,000 NPR (USD 18,200) focusing on sustainability – although Gayananda noted that this is likely to increase.



3. 'Local led Total Sanitation': accelerating sanitation to scale

The heart of Nepal's sanitation campaign is rooted in a burgeoning movement of local facilitators, champions, and leaders moving from door-to-door to change sanitation and hygiene behaviour and to support those usually left behind. The approach is known as 'Local Led Total Sanitation' in Nepal, based on the same principles and methodology as the well-known 'Community-led Total Sanitation' (CLTS) approach, but with additional emphasis on the role played by influential organizations, groups, and social networks.

Rolling out the campaign

Many sanitation and hygiene programmes involve trained staff members from local NGOs or governments visiting communities and facilitating collective behaviour change activities, such as 'triggering' meetings or household visits. Instead, Nepal's sanitation campaign focused on leveraging a growing army of local champions, insiders, and influencers to implement activities. Who these facilitators were, and how they were organized, was a critical success factor for accelerating the depth and breadth of the campaign.

- **Triggerers:** facilitators who worked with communities are commonly referred to as 'triggerers' in Nepal. Like many programmes, triggerers were recruited by implementing partners in a competitive process, similar to any other staff position, with the exception that they must have lived in the communities in which they worked. This insider knowledge and initial trust with the community are critical qualities for triggerers, and one of the keys for rapidly changing sanitation and hygiene behaviour.

Once on board with the programme, triggerers were trained on behaviour change approaches (including the familiar stages of CLTS) and were paid a small stipend for their work in their communities. In the GSF Nepal programme, triggerers were assigned to a VDC, but didn't visit every household by themselves. They were supported by VDC volunteers – many of whom were dedicated to sanitation and hygiene promotion – as well as a variety of community groups represented in ward and VDC WASH-CCs. This allowed for door-to-door campaigns to take place in each community almost every day. The intensity of the sanitation campaign in the Terai produced

exponential growth in sanitation coverage, which was only possible due to a mass leveraging of human resources at the local government and community level.

- **Area coordinators:** A successful model first piloted in the Terai region was the introduction of Area Coordinators (ACs). ACs are experienced former triggerers with a demonstrated ability to achieve results and coordinate with local partners who are promoted to coordinate the activities of five to six other triggerers in the same area. This tier of local management helped organize the campaign to operate at a larger scale and facilitated greater coordination between triggerers and other partners (by redirecting their focus to a difficult area or campaign event, for example). The AC also played a pivotal role in reforming and strengthening VDC-WASH-CC by enlisting prominent community groups to join the campaign.



ABOVE: Triggerer Arjun Kumar (left) and Area Coordinator Godawari Biswash (Right) from Sunsari District

■ **Raising an army of champions:** The bulk of programme activities were implemented through a network of volunteers from community groups – not triggerers alone. In the Terai region, ‘forest users’ groups’ were an effective vehicle for rapidly extending the reach of the campaign.⁷ Religious leaders were also extremely effective for triggering, especially in the Terai where approximately 20% of the population is Muslim. Teachers and head teachers, local politicians, female health volunteers, police officers, and youth clubs all played important roles for accelerating the depth and breadth of

the sanitation campaign to communities and households – coordinated locally through the VDC-WASH-CC. The large number of people taking part in the campaign permitted an intensive door-to-door behaviour change campaign, rather than relying on the first ‘mass triggering’ meeting. Ensuring every household was visited by somebody rooted in the community made it less likely that vulnerable people were overlooked.⁸

Community sanitation champions



The sanitation campaign in the Terai was driven by enthusiastic community volunteers who pushed their neighbours to end open defecation, constructed toilets and lent a helping hand to households in difficult situations. Srawan Chaudhary is an example of one of these emerging community champions (known elsewhere as ‘natural leaders’). When Srawan’s community was triggered, he volunteered to lead a

four to five person team to work with local triggerers during door-to-door visits to promote better sanitation behaviours in his village. Srawan also ordered bricks from a local factory and delivered aggregate with his tractor, allowing poor households access to the materials they needed to build their own toilets.

⁷ Forest users’ groups are community committees that were established in the early 1990s throughout Nepal to manage forest resources in a decentralized and participatory manner.

⁸ House, S., Ferron, S., & Cavill, S. with Tiberhien, J.E. (2017a). Scoping and Diagnosis of the Global Sanitation Fund’s Approach to Equality and Non-Discrimination. Geneva: WSSCC. Retrieved from <http://wsscc.org/resources-feed/scoping-diagnosis-global-sanitation-funds-approach-equality-non-discrimination/>

Supporting people in vulnerable situations

Inequality is one of the most daunting challenges in the Terai, where segments of the population are confronted with multiple layers of disadvantage. Factors such as dependence on low wage and infrequent seasonal farm labour, insecure land rights and ethnic marginalization combine to generate cycles of vulnerability. A major focus of the Terai sanitation campaign was supporting people who may be the most disadvantaged by providing them with access to improved facilities.

- **Planning for the long term:** An important factor for addressing equity in Nepal's sanitation campaign was not only aiming for every household to own and use an improved latrine, but also planning and budgeting for the post-ODF 'total sanitation' phase. Extending the time horizon of the intervention, accompanied by dedicated financing from the matching fund mechanism (above), expanded the opportunity for triggerers to identify equity gaps and find solutions with communities and local governments.

- **Local triggerers:** Rather than relying solely on volunteers, hiring local triggerers to work in the same communities in which they live allowed for more consistent support for households that may be disadvantaged. Recruiting a diverse group of triggerers – including women and people with diverse ethnic backgrounds – was effective for raising the confidence and voice of people normally considered disadvantaged.

- **Community support:** A strong focus on mobilizing existing community institutions not only accelerated collective behaviour change, but also leveraged existing community support networks to identify and assist people who may be unable to afford and build a latrine on their own. For example, forest users' groups frequently provided timber for poorer households to construct toilet superstructures.

Lords of the Rings: Morang's volunteer masons



The acceleration of the sanitation campaign in the Terai prompted a flurry of entrepreneurship to take advantage of the demand generated for latrine components. Local governments played an important role in helping these enterprises get started. While most of these enterprises across the Terai are short-term and profit driven, a unique group emerged in Morang district. Bhola Shah, Janale Shah, Kati Lal Posswan, and Mohommad Rahemcen – all farmers by trade – formed a volunteer mason group to support the sanitation campaign. The local government provided

NPR 400,000 (USD 5,600) to get production of rings and slabs started, and they all put in an additional 30,000 NPR (USD 232) to cover additional costs. To households identified as ultra-poor, they sold full toilet packages - 4 rings, pipes, covers, siphons, and a ceramic pan - for about a third of the normal cost of NPR 4,200 (USD 38). The association isn't interested in making money. As Bhola explained, "We'll just gain our initial money back from the VDC. We're only interested in ending open defecation as soon as possible."

- **Targeted subsidies:** One of the barriers to accessing basic sanitation facilities in the Terai was minimum latrine standards. Zero or low-cost pit toilets are not considered viable; the sanitation and hygiene Master Plan specifies off-set pour flush toilets fitted with concrete slabs, ceramic pans, and four to five concrete rings – a significant cost for many poor households.

Nepal's sanitation and hygiene Master Plan acknowledges the equity gap in accessing decent toilets, and although the Sanitation Campaign emphasizes collective behaviour change, it also acknowledges that poor households may be supported through 'locally appropriate support mechanisms.'⁹ Targeted hardware subsidies (officially referred to as targeted support) were used during the Terai sanitation campaign to address this affordability gap. Subsidies were financed and managed by VDC-WASH-CCs, with approximately 17% of matching funds leveraged spent on hardware support for ultra-poor households.

Methodologies for identifying ultra-poor households and disseminating subsidies varied between VDCs. Due to high expectations for subsidies in the Terai region, and in an effort to minimize potential behaviour change disruption, subsidies were not discussed during the mass-triggering event or subsequent follow-up visits. When approximately 80% latrine coverage is reached, the VDC-WASH-CC checked the economic status of the remaining households to see if they're eligible for hardware support. The list is approved by the D-WASH-CC (sometimes validated by community groups). Identified households then retrieve the rings, pipes, pan, and slab from the VDC headquarters from local masons – either given directly or purchased at a discount.

While targeted subsidies played an important role in extending access to basic sanitation for the poorest in the Terai, their use was sometimes controversial – particularly given the high expectations for subsidies in the Terai region.

Equity challenges

- There are **no common criteria to identify ultra-poor households**. While Nepal's Sanitation Master Plan provides some proxy indicators for identifying ultra-poor households, at the local level, the process was sometimes based on subjective impressions by VDC staff.
- **Intense pressure** was often put on vulnerable people by community members and facilitators, sometimes for years, to build a toilet at their own expense when they were probably entitled to a subsidy, which sometimes caused extreme stress. This was because facilitators felt it was necessary to delay informing communities on available support for the poorest to prevent conflicts and delays from those who can afford toilets but wanted to wait to get a subsidy.
- **'Sanitation cards'** were introduced as an incentive system for people to build toilets. A red card indicated the household has no toilet, a blue

indicated a standard toilet, and green indicated a biogas toilet. In some areas, a red card meant that social entitlements (eg. social security, schooling, and even citizenship) were withheld. While reported as effective, the DWSS determined that this practice infringed on people's rights and issued a memo to stop this practice. However, this instruction was slow to filter down to the district and VDC level.

- It is common practice among farm labourers in the Terai to take out **high-interest short-term loans** – often from their landlords – to bridge the gap between planting and harvesting seasons. These loans can carry an interest rate as high as 50% and use core household assets – such as livestock – as collateral. These loans were sometimes used for construction during the sanitation campaign. In a few cases, some vulnerable people defaulted on these loans and lost land, livestock, or other core economic assets.

⁹ Access to toilets is extremely poor among the landless, ultra-poor, squatters, slum dwellers and people in remote areas. For ensuring their access to toilet facilities, locally appropriate support mechanisms will be introduced through the decision of the district, VDC and municipality level coordination committees. By ensuring community contribution, the amount of support (e.g. revolving fund, community reward, material support, etc.) can be flexible for those specially targeted groups. In such areas locally appropriate low-cost technological options could be emphasized.

- The Terai plains are where rivers and streams from the Himalayas form together and flow southwards into the Indian Ocean. The region is therefore prone to **frequent and devastating flooding**, which is expected to become more volatile due to climate change.¹⁰ Those most affected by flooding live on public land next to rivers. These communities are often among the poorest and, without recognized property rights, can have difficulty accessing public assistance when their homes are flooded. Some of these communities, however, have emerged as leaders (see photo right).
- While masons set up ad-hoc enterprises throughout the Terai Sanitation Campaign to supply sanitation hardware, there are **few accessible design options** marketed for people with disabilities or mobility limitations.
- **Sanitation at the workplace** was often overlooked during the Sanitation Campaign – especially in the Terai region, where large numbers of people work in tea plantations and brick factories. Sanitation facilities in these workplaces are often poorly maintained, and workers – including child labourers – defecate in the open.



ABOVE: Riverine communities in Saptari district were among the first to end open defecation. Led by women members of their sanitation committees, these communities are now focusing on improving solid waste management, water hygiene, and menstrual hygiene.

- **Targeting landlords:** one of the most challenging and fundamental barriers to sanitation are unsecure land rights. In the Terai belt, the poorest seasonal farm labourers – typically from marginalized caste or indigenous groups – live in cramped conditions on their landlord's property, and usually do not

have the physical space or permission to build a latrine. Landlords were therefore a major target of the sanitation campaign in the Terai, where VDC political leaders and implementing partner staff convinced them to allow tenants to build toilets on their land.

¹⁰ Wheeling, K. (2017, August). How Climate Change Contributed to Massive Floods in South Asia. Pacific Standard. Retrieved from: <https://psmag.com/environment/how-climate-change-contributed-to-massive-floods-in-south-asia>

Triggering Landlords



ABOVE: NAVAYAU PRASAD



ABOVE: KAMAL VISHOR SINGH

Land ownership is among one of the most politically contentious issues in the Terai. It is also one of the major barriers to realizing the right to sanitation, as many rural households in the Terai have neither the available land nor the permission to construct toilets. Success in the Terai region depended on convincing landlords like Navayau Prasad Singh on the importance of stopping open defecation. Navayau owns approximately 3 hectares (8 acres) of rice paddies where four families live and work on his land as farm labourers. From radio programmes and loudspeakers passing by his home, he first heard about the campaign to end open defecation and decided to build a toilet for his family. However, he was initially reluctant to allow more construction on his land.

The Ward Chair, Kamal Vishor Singh visited Navayau to trigger him. Navayau explains that “I was convinced that giving little bit of land for my tenants to construct a toilet is good for everyone. If they continued to shit in cultivated land, it’s not good. It will get into our food and water, and insects will come and destroy my crop.” Kamal has visited 3 other landlords similarly to convince them to allocate small plots of land for toilets. Acknowledging there are several other landlords that need to be convinced, he says “We’re planning on bringing seven landlords to a triggering meeting with the Ward WASH Coordination Committee to persuade them to allocate some land for their tenants.”

Equity in Schools



ABOVE: ACHAR LAL SINGH



ABOVE: BISHESWER PRASUD SINGH

Schools (and other public institutions) were an important focus of the Terai campaign. While schools played a role in sanitation and hygiene behaviour change, most of the campaign’s focus was placed on supporting school administrators to improve sanitation and hygiene conditions for students.

Achar Lal Singh, a Head Teacher in Morang district, recalled that before the sanitation campaign, his school of 171 students had only two toilets available in one block. “These were not enough. There were really long lines, especially for girls. They would go outside instead – which was also very uncomfortable”. The school Management Committee – which includes representatives from parents, elected ward representatives, and school staff – played a critical

role in mobilizing resources for a new latrine block. Local farmer, land owner, and committee chairman, Bisheswer Prasud Singh, explains that they submitted a funding request for a separate facility for girls. When the sanitation and once the sanitation campaign was in full swing, the District Education Officer approved 600,000 NPR (USD 5400) for the upgrade.

The sanitation campaign in the Terai pushed the school to integrate sanitation and hygiene into their daily routines, including practicing handwashing before lessons in the morning. While Achar and Bisheswer have big plans to create a model WASH school, they acknowledge there's still a long way to go "around 20% of our students still don't have toilets – mostly from communities living on public land."

REFLECTIONS AND NEXT STEPS FOR NEPAL'S SANITATION CAMPAIGN

After all 77 districts certified and declared ODF, the sector is gearing up towards the next phase of the national sanitation campaign. Achieving universal access to safely managed services demands a new focus on ensuring the needs of 'to read: that the needs of communities and households who are often forgotten are addressed are prioritized.

- **Total Sanitation:** Nepal's Total Sanitation Guidelines, published in 2017, outlines a broad suite of activities to transform communities into certified 'Clean and Hygienic Areas', followed by ongoing efforts led by WASH coordinating committees to maintain this status. Activities featured in the guidelines include reviewing the status of ODF areas, sustaining toilet and promoting handwashing with soap use through behaviour change campaigns, improving the quality and accessibility of public facilities, food hygiene, mensural hygiene management, household cleanliness, fecal sludge management (with sewerage access specifically identified), household water supply, and others.

Given this wide scope, what should be given priority? What would the sequence of activities look like, and who should be involved? There is a strong need to engrain social norms for toilet use and handwashing with soap, and for expanding locally appropriate fecal sludge management focusing on decentralized and affordable on-site solutions. A critical step involves strengthening the regulatory capacity of local governments and engagement with the private sector to ensure that waste is safely emptied, transported, disposed, and treated.

- **Leaving no one behind:** While Nepal's sanitation campaign has nearly ended open defecation, continued support is needed for those usually left behind to attain a higher level of service. This is especially critical in the Terai, where socio-economic inequalities are deeply ingrained. Expanding access to safely managed sanitation services should prioritize marginalized communities and ultra-poor households and consider low-cost decentralized options. With an increase in fecal sludge management services, the safety and rights of sanitation workers (including those operating in the informal sector) should be promoted. Finally, further attention is required in ensuring toilets in schools, health centres, and other public places safer, cleaner, and more accessible. This should directly involve the voices of women, girls, and people who may be disadvantaged.

- **Climate change resilience:** Nepal is expected to experience an increase in frequency and severity of disasters linked to climate change, including cyclones, landslides, avalanches, droughts, and floods. The Terai is especially vulnerable to flooding following extreme rainfall: during the 2017 monsoon season, floods displaced 20,900 families and killed an estimated 160 people.¹¹

11 United Nations Office of the Resident Coordinator (2017). Nepal Flood 2017: Office of the Resident Coordinator Situation Report No. 9. Retrieved from <https://nepal.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Nepal%20Flood%20Sitrep%2022%20Sept.pdf>

WSSCC'S GLOBAL SANITATION FUND

Investing in behaviour change to combat the sanitation and hygiene crisis

WSSCC's Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) invests in behaviour change activities that enable large numbers of people in developing countries to improve their sanitation and adopt good hygiene practices. Established in 2008 WSSCC's GSF is dedicated to sanitation and hygiene. The GSF supports national programmes that are community-based and government-supported. Across these countries, a diverse network of stakeholders, including households, local governments, community-based organizations, NGOs, academic institutions and local entrepreneurs, form vibrant sanitation and hygiene movements. Together, they help create the

conditions for tens of millions of people to live in open defecation free environments and access adequate toilets and handwashing facilities.

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15, Chemin Louis-Dunant
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

T +41(0) 22 560 81 81
E wsscc@wsscc.org



@WSSCCouncil



sanitationforall



WatSanCollabCouncil

www.wsscc.org