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### Evaluating the Practices of Monitoring Mechanism in Local Government

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#### Abstract

This paper seeks to evaluate the existing practices of monitoring system and explore the perception of stakeholders towards the monitoring mechanism of the local government. Additionally, it assesses the strengths and weaknesses of monitoring system of the local government provisioned by the Act (LGOA-2017) in Nepal. The paper applies a descriptive research design, as well as in-depth interviews to justify its findings. Separate questionnaire schedules were used to collect information from both service providers and recipients. Similarly, a tested observation checklist was used to assess the compliance with the current monitoring actions of the study area. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools using the SPSS computing technique. The findings of the study show that local governments have not adequately followed the monitoring practices and processes. However, the elected representatives and the citizens have taken monitoring action as a positive way. It appears that monitoring mechanism has served as a tool for local governance activities and service delivery. Yet, local governments have not prioritized monitoring tools as a governance compliance strategy. It is necessary to institutionalize the monitoring mechanism for effective service delivery.

**Keywords:** Local governance, accountability, monitoring mechanism, accountability, perceptions, institutionalization

#### Introduction

Local Governance involves political and institutional processes belonging to the particular place or areas through which decisions are taken and implemented (Shah, 2006). It is about the rules of collective decision-making in settings where there are a plurality of actors or organizations; where there is no formal control system and relationship between state and citizens (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009). (Chhotray & Stoker, 2009). Local governance

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always focuses on collective decision-making and rational political management, achieved through creative interaction between authorities and local citizens or civil societies, with the goal of improving service delivery to the citizens. The primary aim of local government is to bring public services closer to the citizens in an efficient manner.

Monitoring mechanism is one of the effective tools for local governance accountability. Moreover, monitoring is the continuing function that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives and progress in the use of allocated funds (Kariuki, 2017). The Local Government Operational Act 2017 (LGOA) clearly states that monitoring is required to ensure compliance with local governance practices in Nepal (GoN, 2017). Similarly, the Local Level Plan and Budget Guidelines (2017) provide a sub-committee under the coordination of the deputy head of local government (MOFGA, 2017). The current issue is how effectively the local government monitoring mechanism is operating in the existing local governance process in Nepal.

The constitution of the federal republic of Nepal (2015) establishes three levels of government: federal, provincial, and local (Nepal Law Commission, 2015). They have distinctive, independent and interrelated roles and responsibilities. Local governments, are the third tier of government, and they are considerably closer to the people and communities on the ground (Acharya, 2018a; Acharya, 2018b). Some experts (Dahal, 2021; Subedi and Subedi, 2021) express the local government a “door-to-door government” since the presence and actions of the local government are observed and felt by the people. It is the question of how the door step governments have served their people in practical reality at the local level of Nepal.

The system of local government aims at bringing the government closer to the people (Udayanganie, 2018). There are three types of local governments in Nepal, Rural Municipalities (460 village governments), Municipalities (293 municipal governments), and District Coordination Committees (77 DCC) located above them. The village and municipal entities alike have several exclusive powers, as well as responsibilities that are shared with the central and provincial governments. Furthermore, LGOA-2017 has ensured to delegate the power and responsibility to the local government for well-functioning (Acharya & Upreti, 2017). Chaudhary points out (2019) on his research that most of the local government have not been able to perform its duties effectively yet. In addition, local governments in Nepal have been facing many problems like insufficient laws, inefficient professional staffs, poor infrastructures and clear vision of mobilization of economic

resources. In this backdrop, compliance of local government accountability is a prerequisite for effective local governance and service delivery (Dhungana, 2019).

In the field of local governance and accountability, monitoring mechanism and its proper mobilization is the vital indicator for quality assurance. It is the process that analyzes the effectiveness, service delivery and feedback system of the ongoing project and programs of the service providers (Zall Kusek & Rist, 2004). Therefore, local governments of Nepal have got the multidimensional roles and responsibilities by the constitution and act for local development. In this regards, the study tries to assess the existing practices of monitoring actions of the selected local governments of Kailali district of Nepal.

Some empirical studies have claimed that accountable practices and effective monitoring mechanism of local governance has supported the effective service delivery to the people (Joshi, 2017; Shahi, 2020). Despite the number of reservations and arguments, the new constitution of Nepal (2015) has provided the 22 exclusive and 15 concurrent powers and responsibilities to the restructured local governments. Nepali society has remained frustrated and dissatisfied at the citizen level, and there is also a lack of honesty in the political and bureaucratic domains, as these attributes have created the extreme risks to capacity development of the local governments (Acharya, 2018a; Nepal Administrative Staff College, 2018).

Theoretically, the mobilization of monitoring mechanisms in local government is to enhance the accountability and sustainability of the local government development activities. Effective monitoring practice always drives the local government towards effective service delivery and accountability (Joshi, 2017). Monitoring committees in local government typically ensure compliance with developmental and administrative activities. The compliance of monitoring committees of local government generally monitors each and every developmental and administrative activities. According to mandatory provisions, a monitoring mechanism should control the quality-of-service delivery and accountability of concerned stakeholders. Whether or not it is actually implemented in local governments, it is a major issue.

Technically, the elected bodies of local level are entitled to execute the governance activities in local government units, but there seems very less citizen engagement activities and it is also observed that there is no significant emphasis on accountability and deliberative decision making practices (Acharya, 2021). Even though the prominent motto of local government restructuring in Nepal to enhance the local people's access to services,

but it seems that local people's meaningful participation in developmental activities is still unsatisfactory (Subedi & Subedi, 2021). Bearing these scenarios and practices in mind, the study aims to address a major research questions:

- To what extent newly restructured local governments adhere to the governance practice of monitoring mechanism?
- What is the perception of elected representatives and service receivers about monitoring action?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in operating the existing monitoring mechanism?

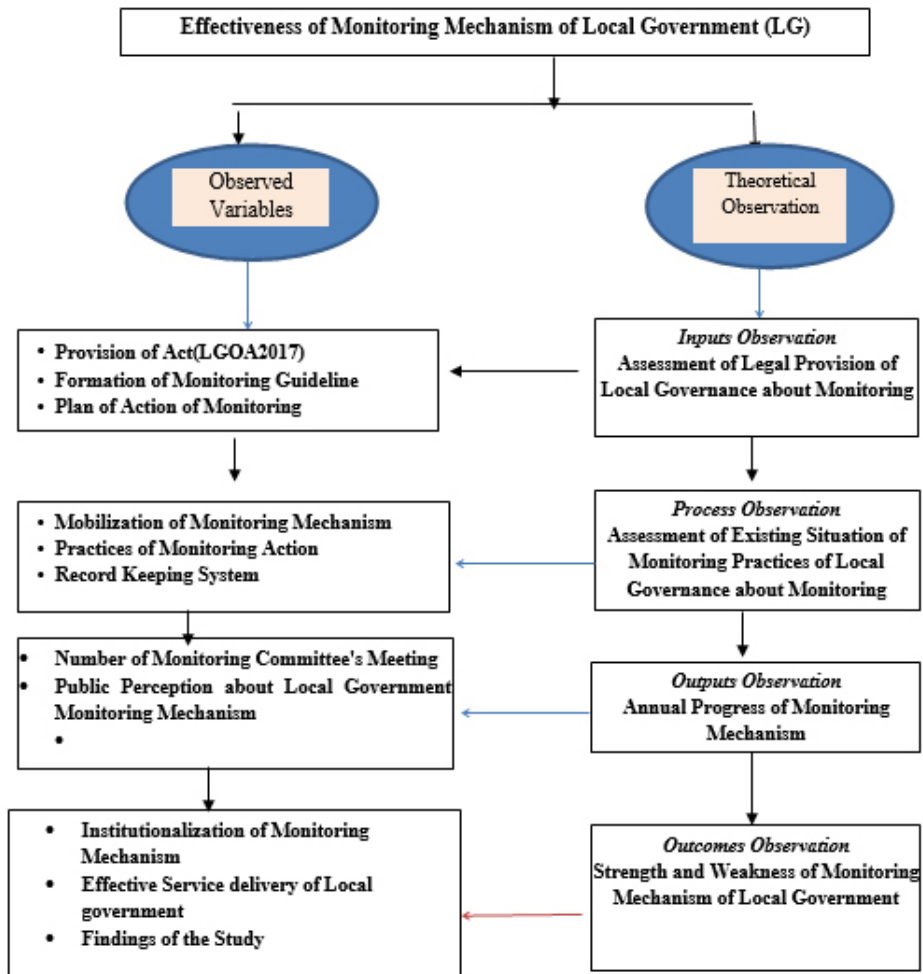
## **Methods and Materials**

This study is based on a descriptive research design with a mixed methods (Creswell, 2012). In order to answer the research question, it has tried to assess the existing situation of the monitoring system in local governments. Among thirteen local governments of Kailali district, four local units were purposely selected as the core sample. Accordingly, data and information collected with the help of the Interview Schedule (IS) and Observation Check List (OCL). Likewise, the in-depth interview was conducted with key information for the qualitative information. Structured and unstructured questions were asked for drawing information. Additionally, secondary sources of information were collected from concerned local government's offices. The research included 16 elected representatives from the service provider side, 40 citizens as respondents, and four key informants.

As per the objectives of the study, the information related to the strength and weaknesses of the monitoring mechanism was collected with the help of SWOT analysis during the key informant interview and observation check list. The findings and analysis are framed in triangulation in accordance with mixed method of social science methodology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2017). The perception of respondents was analyzed with the help of Likert scale methods. The SPSS computing technique has used for analyzing data: mean value and standard deviation( $\sigma$ ). The study's interpretation is framed in the Indian model of program theory (Jacobs et al., 2010), which incorporates the conceptual framework of the organization's activities, which are: inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. The research supposes the local government monitoring system is taken as a regular program or not. The conceptual framework is shown in figure 1.

**Fig-1**

The conceptual framework of the study



Note. The conceptual framework is adopted Indian model of program theory(Jacobs et al., 2010).

## Results and Discussion

The study is particularly focuses on four local levels of Kailali district, including Lamki-Chuha and Bhajani municipalities, as well as Janaki and Joshipur rural municipalities. These four local governments are located in the eastern part of the district, which varies from north south adjoining each other. Among them Lamki-Cuha municipality has a relatively larger geographical area and population size. Likewise, Joshipur rural municipality has a lower geographical area and population size in comparison to the other three local levels (CBS, *Far Western Review, Volume-1, Issue-1, June 2023, 122-142*

2011). Table 1 provides a brief overview of these four local levels in Kailali.

**Table 1**

*Brief Information of the Four Local Governments of Kailali District*

Description	Lamki-Chuha Municipality	Janaki Rural Municipality	Joshiपुर Rural Municipality	Bhajani Municipality
Total Geographical Area	224.57 Sq. km	107.27 Sq. km	65.57 Sq.km	176.25 Sq.km
Total Population	1,02,380	64,812	36,459	56,302
Male	51,820	32,845	17,834	28,452
Female	50,543	31,965	18,625	27,850
Total No. of Household	18,409	11,527	6,392	10,293
Household size	5.56	5.62	5.70	5.46
Total No .of Wards	10	9	7	9
Number of Health Service center	4	6	5	8
Source	Profile,2076 B.S.	Profile,2077 B.S.	CBS,2068 B.S.	Profile,2075 B.S.

*Note.* The data were collected by the concern authority on the during the observation time.

The table presents the brief demographic, geographic, and administrative information for the four local levels of Kailali district. Among them, Lamki-Chuha municipality is the largest in terms of population, geography and number of wards, while Joshipur rural municipality is the smallest in all these indicators. Although Bhajani municipality has eight health service centers, which is more than Lakmi-Chuha. This indicates that Lamki-Chuha has a comparatively low number of health service centers.

### **Legal Jurisdiction of Monitoring Procedures in LGs**

The constitution of Nepal (2015) has clearly provisioned the third tier of government as a local government under the federal system in Nepal. The constitution mentions the list of concurrent powers of federal, provincial, and local governments in schedule nine. Likewise, the twenty-two exclusive power of local government are mentioned in schedule eight. For the first time in Nepal, the local government has gained constitutional rights. As local governments have gained authority and status, it is their responsibility to provide better service to the local people. According to the spirit of the constitution, the government of Nepal has implemented an umbrella act (LGOA-17) for all local level (753) effective operations.

The clause 78 (LGOA -2017) indicates the need to maintain the internal monitoring and accountability mechanism of local government. Local governments could adopt further acts, guidelines, and procedures for effective monitoring mechanisms. The Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MOFAGA) has issued the Local Level Annual Plan and Budget Formation Guideline 2074 B.S. (MOFAGA, 2017) for uniformity and effective planning and monitoring procedures of local level government. Likewise, the ward monitoring committee has been established under the coordination of the ward chairperson of a respected ward of local government. The major role of the monitoring and supervision committee is to ensure the quality of projects, programs, and service delivery within the local government and enhance accountability. Additionally, there is a provision for the local government to formulate its own procedures to make the monitoring work more effective. On the basis of the jurisdiction of monitoring duties of local governments, this study aims to examine the monitoring mechanisms of four local governments within Kailali district.

### **Monitoring Actions**

Monitoring is the continuous process that uses systematic collection of data on specified indicators to provide management and the main stakeholders of an ongoing development intervention with indications of the extent of progress and achievement of objectives, as well as progress in the use of allocated funds (Kariuki & Reddy, 2017). As a result, Nepal's Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MOFAGA) has issued guidelines to local governments for the establishment of a monitoring mechanism. The aim of the guidelines is to maintain the quality and cost-effectiveness of the services and develop the feedback mechanism for the development activities of the local government. Conceptually, effective monitoring practices are to enhance the accountability of the local government. Likewise, the practices of accountability are also considered to support the effective service delivery of the local government.

The study examines the mobilization process and output of the monitoring mechanisms and the compliance of four local governments in Kailali district on the basis of the act and guidelines.

It is observed that all four local governments have formed the monitoring committee as per the guidelines, under the coordination of the deputy head of the local government representative. The structure of the monitoring mechanism is formed by the local government. The fifteen different variables of the monitoring mechanism related to input, process, and output are based on the guidelines of the local government (2017) was observed. A well-tested, 15-indicator based observation check list was filled. The status of compliance in monitoring procedures of four local governments on different fifteen

indicators as shown in table 2.

**Table 2**

*Compliance of Monitoring Procedures of Local Governments in Different Indicators*

S.N	Procedures of Monitoring Mechanism \ Indicators	LCM	JRM	JPRM	BM
1	The monitoring committee was formed as per the guidelines (2074)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2	Procedures or guidelines for monitoring mechanism is separately formed	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
3	The meaning of Monitoring is defined	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
4	Civil society members participated in the monitoring committee	No	No	No	No
5	Meetings of the Monitoring Committee are held regularly	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
6	Keeping properly the record of monitoring activities	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
7	Report of the Monitoring Committee to be reviewed in the meeting	Yes	Yes	No	No
8	The recommendations of the report of the monitoring committee are presented in the meeting of the executive committee every two months	No	No	No	No
9	The individual members of monitoring committee fill out the certain format during the monitoring process.	No	No	No	No
10	Monitoring of both infrastructure and promotional activities	No	Yes	No	Yes
11	Monitoring report or recommendation of monitoring committee is mandatory for the last installment of any project	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
12	Technical monitoring of physical infrastructure of the projects is also done together with monitoring committee.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
13	Physical infrastructure projects are monitored at least twice during the project (after operation and after completion).	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes



14	The shortcomings observed from the monitoring have been directed and followed by the concerned parties	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
15	Annual action plan of the monitoring committee is made	No	No	No	No
	Status of monitoring compliance of LGs	Y=8 N=7	Y=10 N=5	Y=9 N=6	Y=8 N=7

*Note.* LCM=Lamki-Chuha Municipality, JRM=Janaki Rural Municipality, JPRM= Joshipur Rural Municipality, BM= Bhajani Municipality, Yes= Completed, No= Not completed. This pre-tested observation check-list were use in data collection.

The table shows that the two local governments, LCM and BM, have coexistence in a similar status. They have accomplished eight indicators among fifteen. Whereas JRM has executed ten indicators and JPRM implemented nine indicators only. All four local governments do not seem to have complied with the key indicators of monitoring that need to be addressed, such as the annual plan of the monitoring committee, regular meetings, and review of aggregate monitoring reports, as well as citizen participation in the monitoring process. It is revealed that the newly restructured local government's monitoring mechanism does not place priority on the core system that the federal government has provisioned. The prominent stakeholders of the monitoring mechanism of the local government are unknown about those procedures of the monitoring mechanism, although it was observed that the monitoring committee was unknowingly doing its business of monitoring procedures only for the final payment of the infrastructural projects.

### **Perception of Elected Representatives (ERs) towards Monitoring Mechanisms**

In order to understand the attitude of the elected representatives towards the monitoring work, four questions which is related to monitoring practice were asked. In particular, the question of how the monitoring work has contributed to development activities. Similarly, what would be the contribution of monitoring action to increase the quality of the project and transparency and accountability? Likewise, the perception of the technical capacity of the monitoring committee and the role and responsibilities of the monitoring mechanism were collected. The responses provided by the elected representatives are summarized in the table below, presenting the descriptive statistics value of the minimum, maximum, and mean values for each response on the Likert scale.

**Table 3***The Perception of Elected Representatives Towards Monitoring Action*

Statements	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean Value	Std. Deviation
A. The quality of development projects and programs has been enhanced by the operation of the monitoring mechanism of the local government.	2	5	4.25	.775
B. The monitoring work has increased the transparency and accountability of development projects and programs.	2	5	4.25	.775
C. The technical capacity to make the monitoring committee effective has to be increased.	1	5	4.06	1.289
D. The monitoring committee has not been able to fulfill its responsibilities.	2	5	2.81	1.109

*Note.* The perception of respondent were measure in the Likert scale (Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Don't know=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5).

Table 3 indicates the statistical calculation of the respondent's perception. Four questions were asked of the respondents, with five options for answers. The respondent had to choose one option from the five alternatives in each question, and the value of the option was determined from 1 to 5. The majority of respondents (three out of four) have given more than four scores. It means that the monitoring action has increased the effectiveness of the development activities. They also expressed that to some extent transparency and accountability have been enhanced by the monitoring action. On the other hand, emphasis should be laid on enhancing the technical capacity of the monitoring committee. As far as the question of whether the monitoring committee has not been able to fulfill its responsibilities, they disagree with this statement. The claim of the elected representatives who are in the monitoring committee is that it has performed its work as per its responsibility. However, according to the monitoring guidelines for the monitoring action, the major activities were not followed by the local governments, as revealed by the observation checklist. At the time of the key informant interview, a responsible elected leader of JRM had noted that:

*There are so many projects in our rural municipalities because the number of projects increases due to the participation of all people and all areas. Thus, it's quite*

*difficult to go on a monitor for their times, but we have tried our best to reach the sites at least once. We have kept monitoring as a priority because it determines the quality of projects. That is why we have tightened the monitoring tasks. To make monitoring more effective and to know the details of any project, it is found that using the Nepali language while preparing an estimate is preferable. It is quite a lot of difficulty for the consumers, such as when the estimate is written in English. The next and most important thing is that the members of the monitoring committee must have a minimum technical knowledge of projects, estimates, and protocols. (Janaki Rural Municipality 1, Durgauli, July 17th, 2021).*

The above assertion reveals that the key elected representative is gradually taking the significance of monitoring as the compliance of social accountability. But there are challenges in monitoring action for its effective implementation. However, there is no provision for citizen engagement in the monitoring mechanism which can make the concerned stakeholders more responsible towards their obligations. Likewise, the efforts of the empowerment of the monitoring committee have not been oriented as per the responsibility of it. In the same way, an executive member of JPRM has expressed the view that:

*Our municipality has not framed its Monitoring Guidelines and Annual Work Plan on its own. We make an oral consensus about the plan to be monitored in the informal meeting and execute it accordingly. In particular, we monitor the physical infrastructure projects, and monitoring is mandatory for final payment of the project. The ward is also responsible for monitoring action. However, we are unable to involve other stakeholders in the process. We are still unable to operate within the system. Though there is a provision to submit the monitoring report to the municipality executive every two months, we have been unable to do this till date. Additionally, we lack knowledge about monitoring, which has caused a severe problem in result-based systematic monitoring. We always face the problem of technical knowledge, for which we have to depend on technicians (Joshiipur Rural Municipality-2, July 20, 2021).*

Those two statements indicate that elected leaders are eager to obligate the compliance monitoring action as per the regulation. In the beginning, newly elected representatives had a lack of apprehending their roles and responsibilities, as well as a shortage of technical personnel and the unavailability of proper orientation and training. The four years of practical experience and public feedback make representatives gradually aware of the local governance system, particularly the monitoring action.

## Perception of Citizens towards Monitoring Mechanisms

After the observation of the service provider's (supply side) perception of monitoring action, the notion of the monitoring mechanism from the public (demand side) was also assembled to make the study more effective. The questions asked of the local representatives were exactly the same as those asked to the public. Questions were about the role of monitoring action in development activities, transparency and accountability. Similarly, an inquiry was made regarding the assessment of the technical capacity of the monitoring committee and their abilities to perform their duties efficiently. The findings of the public opinions are presented in the table below, showing the minimum, maximum, and average values on the Likert scale.

**Table 4**

### *The Perception of Consumers Towards Monitoring Action*

Statements	Minimum Score	Maximum Score	Mean Value	Std. Deviation
A. The quality of development projects and programs has been enhanced by the operation of the monitoring mechanism of the local government.	2	5	4.07	.474
B. The monitoring work has increased the transparency and accountability of development projects and programs.	2	5	4.07	.474
C. The technical capacity of the monitoring committee seems effective.	1	4	1.95	.597
D. The monitoring committee has not been able to fulfill its responsibilities.	2	5	3.30	1.043

*Note.* The perception of consumers towards monitoring action measure in the Likert scale (Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Don't know=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5).

The table 4 indicates the statistical calculation of citizens' perceptions. The respondents were given a score of a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 5. Among three out of four options, most of the respondents have given a higher score to the monitoring actions that show the development activities might have increased their effectiveness. To some extent, the monitoring task seems to have increased transparency and accountability. At the same time, emphasis needs to be laid upon enhancing the technical capacities of the monitoring committee. As far as the question on fulfilling their responsibilities, most of the respondents seemed unaware of this mechanism. The overall analysis shows that the monitoring action has increased the quality of development activities and it has also enhanced the transparency and accountability of the stakeholders of local governments.

The data discloses that monitoring action can increase the quality and accountability of the stakeholders as perceived by the citizens of a concerned municipalities. Likewise, the technical capacity of the monitoring committee needs to be enhanced as per the requirements. Moreover, the study also tried to comprehend the views of citizens about the action of monitoring work of their local government. Upon the query, how do the citizens perceive the overall monitoring system of the local government? A. Barghar (Community Head Man) of Bhajani Municipality, as the key informant states:

*All the monitoring action performed by the local level representatives seems to be a mere formality. The monitoring committee neither visits the site on time nor monitors the activities systematically in line with the rules. It is performed only upon final payment of the projects. Two years ago, I was also chair of the construction committee for a project (the construction of an embankment in the Kandra River). They did not monitor it properly. We requested the authorities to come to the site and monitor the quality of the work, but they did not. The local authorities have to monitor every project and program at least three times before its completion and handover. Otherwise, monitoring for the sake of monitoring does not make any difference. (Bhajani Municipality-5, July 20, 2021)*

The above assertion shows that the monitoring mechanism of the local government has not been properly functioning as the regular obligation of local governance. Serviceholder citizens are dissatisfied with the irresponsible ways of monitoring action. Most citizens have suggested that the monitoring mechanism should be effective for the quality

of service delivery and cost-effective of development activities. Similarly, one of the key informant interviewees of the Lamki-Chuha has expressed his view as:

*The monitoring action by local level authorities is very effective. Working as the chair of Jestha Nagarik Milan Kendra and Community Building program, I observed that this project was monitored systematically three times. Sometimes, it was uninformed and suddenly monitored by the committee. This regular monitoring from local authorities helped us to work not only faster but also with standard provisions. We got a chance to improve our faults and weaknesses. Now, we are happy and satisfied that the work we accomplished meets the standard of the estimates and technicalities (Lamkichuha Municipality-3 July 24, 2021).*

The main beneficiaries of the services of the local government are the local citizens. Therefore, the satisfaction of the local service recipients is the barometer of the effectiveness of local governance and service delivery. As far as the participation of citizens in the monitoring process was not found in the practices of the four observed local levels, A citizen was asked about information about local government development activities. The response of the citizens was found to be 17 percent of the respondents who get information on the basis of cost board, while 77 percent said they would get information from a public audit on infrastructure projects, and the remaining 5 percent did not know any information about the project.

### **Strength and Weakness of Monitoring Mechanism**

The second important purpose of the research was to gather information on the strengths and weaknesses of the local government monitoring mechanism. On fulfill this objective, the study tried to collect the responses of major stakeholders, elected representatives, and consumers with the help of SWOT analysis. During the interview schedule, the respondents were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of the monitoring actions of their respective local governments. The respondents have expressed the ideas. Those respondents' ideas are categorized separately (Elected Representatives & Consumers) and presented as follows in the table below.

**Table 5***Response of Respondents towards Strength and Weakness of Monitoring Action in LG*

<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality enhancement of the project and program</li> <li>• Timely completion of the work</li> <li>• Direct observation of a technician working on an infrastructure project</li> <li>• An opportunity to improve the mistakes of the project and program</li> <li>• The monitoring task will aid in the transparency of the work.</li> <li>• Compliance with the project requirements and quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of timely monitoring action.</li> <li>• Lack of institutionalization of the monitoring press</li> <li>• Lack of a record keeping system</li> <li>• The attitude of partiality and self-interest of the monitoring committee</li> <li>• Lack of an effective monitoring process</li> <li>• The municipality does not want to transfer power and responsibility to the ward level.</li> <li>• It is not necessary to assign political blame.</li> <li>• A problem has been seen in the final installment of the project due to the lack of a timely recommendation from the monitoring committee.</li> <li>• The monitoring committee does not give the proper time for monitoring action.</li> <li>• Lack of technical manpower in the monitoring committee</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Challenges</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direct connection to the locals</li> <li>• People's problems are simple to comprehend.</li> <li>• Opportunities to make the sustainable development project more sustainable</li> <li>• Opportunities to improve the quality of service delivery</li> <li>• Opportunities to lead the development activities</li> <li>• Feedback for the coming days</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual monitoring (municipal and ward level)</li> <li>• Possibility of escalation of conflict</li> <li>• The monitoring committee does not allocate adequate time for action.</li> <li>• The members of the monitoring committee have a lack of technical knowledge.</li> <li>• It is difficult to operate the project according to the prescribed form of project.</li> </ul>

*Note.* SWOT analysis was conducted during the interview schedule and key informant interview.

The table 5 presents the response of the elected representatives towards monitoring activities and their strengths and weaknesses. Basically, the responses were derived from sixteen representatives of four local governments, like the mayor and deputy mayor of the municipality, the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the rural municipality, and the ward chairperson and chief executive officers. On the question the strengths of the monitoring, all the elected representatives were found to have a positive attitude towards the monitoring, in which it was found that the monitoring mentioned aspects like increasing the quality of the project, improving the shortcomings, maintaining transparency, and increasing the

responsibility and accountability of the stakeholders. Similarly, among the weak points of the monitoring action, they raised issues such as lack of orientation to the monitoring committee, lack of timely monitoring action, lack of institutional development of the monitoring system, non-transfer of monitoring powers to the ward office by the municipality, political allegations during monitoring, and lack of technical manpower. However, if monitoring is used as an opportunity, it can be a means of direct contact with the people, a foundation for sustainable development, and a means of direct feedback from consumers. After all, there is a challenge to implementing it by giving priority to fair monitoring and effective implementation of the monitoring mechanism.

Likewise, the study tried to collect the opinions of consumers or citizens about the strength and weaknesses of monitoring activities of their local government. The views of 40 respondents (consumers) were collected at a rate of 10 in each of the four local governments studied. The ideas given by them are again categorized in the table below.

### Theoretical Underpinning

The study tries to frame the interpretation and variables of the monitoring mechanism underpinning the *program theory*. The program theory incorporates the conceptual framework of the activities of the organization. Whether the whole monitoring process supposed as the program those are inputs, processes, outputs, and outcomes. A program theory is a model of how an intervention, such as a project, a program, a strategy, an initiative, or a policy, contributes to the results and finally to the intended or observed outcomes. A program theory ideally has two components: a theory of change and a theory of action (Funnell & Rogers, 2011). As far as the study has tried to assess the overall activities of the monitoring action of local government in the perspective of the program, Whether the local government took the monitoring jurisdiction as part of the scheduled program or not, the overall monitoring actions seek to frame the theory of action. The table below indicates the local government's monitoring action as the program.

**Table 6**

*Interrelation of Program Theory to the Monitoring Action of Local Governments*

Components of Programme Theory	Programming of Monitoring	Action of Monitoring Mechanism of Local Governments(Four)
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<b>Inputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Legal Provision</li> <li>-Orientation and capacitate</li> <li>-Plan of Action of Monitoring</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A monitoring committee has been formed (four LGs).</li> <li>-Monitoring guidelines are made (Three out of Four)</li> <li>-All the four local levels have not made an annual monitoring action plan.</li> <li>-Lack of orientation of monitoring committee members</li> </ul>
<b>Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Mobilization of Monitoring Mechanism</li> <li>-Practices of Monitoring Action</li> <li>-Record Keeping System</li> <li>-Participatory process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-As per the field level demand, the monitoring action is made.</li> <li>-The member of the monitoring committee has not followed the formal and certain format during the monitoring action.</li> <li>-Record keeping system is not well managed</li> <li>-Lack of citizen engagement in monitoring mechanisms</li> </ul>
<b>Outputs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Number of Monitoring Committee's Meeting</li> <li>-Public Perception about Local Government Monitoring Mechanism</li> <li>-Compulsory Monitoring provision of Infrastructure and promotional program</li> <li>-Quality improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The meetings of the monitoring committee are irregular. Basically, the frequency of meetings is held at the end of the fiscal year for the recommendation of final payment for the project.</li> <li>-The perception of the citizens is that the monitoring work is not regular and it should be made effective.</li> <li>-The monitoring action is done only for the infrastructure project. Effective monitoring would improve the quality of the development activities.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcomes/ Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Institutionalization of Monitoring Mechanism</li> <li>-Enhance accountability</li> <li>-Effective Service delivery</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Lack of institutionalization of monitoring mechanism</li> <li>-The view of citizens is that, to some extent, monitoring action has raised the accountability of stakeholders.</li> <li>-The study couldn't measure the effective service delivery of the local government.</li> </ul>

*Note.* Theoretical synthesis is adopted on the basis of program theory (Jacobs et al., 2010).

Table 6 shows the monitoring activities of the four local governments in the study area. The activities of the monitoring mechanism are analyzed in relation to program theory. According to the program theory, in order to change social conditions and behavior, the activities must be implemented in a certain way as programming, and only then can the expected change be achieved. The observation of the study revealed that monitoring activities in the input and process stages did not appear to be implemented in practice according to the principles of the program theory.

Lack of definite procedures for monitoring action, an annual plan, and necessary orientation for monitoring officials are major constraints on the monitoring process. Similarly, shortcomings like improper record keeping of monitoring actions, lack of participation of citizens in the monitoring mechanism, and irregular meetings were seen in the monitoring process. On the other hand, monitoring seems to be more of a formality than a means of feedback; it is seen as a formality limited to the payment of the final installment of an infrastructure project. However, citizens have a strong demand for an effective monitoring mechanism of local government. As far as outcomes of the monitoring is concerned, the monitoring work at the local level has not been institutionalized yet. In nutshell, this study concludes that local government does not yet have the priorities for institutionalizing the monitoring mechanism as part of the regular schedule of activities. To ensure the effectiveness of the monitoring mechanism, the local government should prioritize adequate implementations.

## **Conclusions**

Based on the facts and information received by the study, it can be observed that the local government has not been able to follow the monitoring mechanism effectively. The core monitoring indicators do not appear to be followed. Monitoring task has not been institutionalized yet. However, the people's representatives and the citizens have taken the monitoring work in a positive way to increase accountability and transparency. The local government does not seem to consider monitoring as a regular, institutional, and mandatory practice. In addition, the responsible members of the monitoring committee lack technical and practical knowledge regarding the monitoring work. The provisions of the act and guidelines do not appear to have been fully complied with.

It seems necessary to increase the capacity of the monitoring committee and make it effective. Monitoring can be taken as a means of feedback of local government activities which can be effective through managing citizen engagement in monitoring mechanism. If the findings of the study are followed at the policy level of the local government, the monitoring mechanism can be implemented effectively in the coming days. The theoretical perspectives

indicates that monitoring actions enhance the quality and accountability of governance, but if it is not properly applied in practice, it is limited to theory only. At present, it is necessary to make the monitoring mechanism institutionalized and effective for the service delivery of local government. The causal relationship between monitoring activities and the effectiveness of local government development projects is essential for future research in coming days.

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