

Assessing service delivery, user satisfaction, and local governance dynamics: A comprehensive study in Kirtipur Municipality

Sukdev Rajbanshi*

Abstract

The 2017 local and provincial elections in Nepal marked a pivotal moment, instilling renewed optimism and positivity among the populace. The establishment of seven provinces, 293 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities, was orchestrated to decentralize governance, eliciting expectations for improved efficacy in local service delivery. This study, conducted through field research and utilizing the People Report Card (PRC) methodology in the Kirtipur municipality, investigates the dynamics of service delivery, user satisfaction, and perceptions of local governance. The research results reveal a moderate public perception of local governance, underscoring particular domains that necessitate enhancement to elevate overall satisfaction levels and instill greater confidence among the populace. Authorities are urged to address service-related challenges through targeted interventions, promoting transparency and responsiveness in governance to improve the welfare of the Kirtipur Municipality.

Keywords: Local government, Local governance, Service delivery, User satisfaction, People's experiences, People's perception

1. Introduction

Local governments (LGs) play a crucial role as decentralised institutions, established through various means such as national constitutions or state legislation.

Local Governments

Local Governments serve the dual purpose of resource management and fostering public trust for democratic participation (Shah & Shah, 2006; Mathew & Hooja, 2009; Sikkhane & Reddy, 2011). Elected local representatives operate within defined legal bounds, formulating plans, overseeing governance systems, and ensuring efficient service delivery (Pandeya, 2015). In federal states, LGs constitute the third or fourth layer of government, while in unitary states, they often function at the second or third tier with substantial authority (Zeikate, 2002). Nepal's local governance evolved from a centralised panchayat system to a decentralised structure post-1990, with a subsequent collapse in local service delivery due to corruption and mismanagement (Acharya, 2014; Acharya, 2016). The Federal Democratic Republic, established in 2015, outlined a three-tiered governance system in the constitution, comprising the central government, federal provinces, and local governments (Kelly, 2016). Local governments, including rural and urban municipalities, represent the third tier, closely connected to the populace, with a commitment to

democratic values and efficient public service delivery (Constitution of Nepal, 2015). Following the 2017 local elections and the subsequent empowerment of local government, researchers mark these changing scenarios as curiosity to explore meeting people's expectations as per the new constitution's prescription in annexes 8 & 9.

Research Objective

The research aims to assess the effectiveness of services provided by the local government and gauge user satisfaction with these services. Furthermore, it endeavours to actively explore how the public perceives overall governance at the local level. By examining both the tangible delivery of services and the broader sentiments towards local governance, this study aims to provide comprehensive insights into the dynamics of local government performance and public satisfaction.

2. Methods and Materials

This article is based on primary data gathered through survey methods, utilizing the People Report Card (PRC) as a tool to assess public opinion on local government and service delivery. The survey was completed over a span of 4 weeks, from March 29 to April 28, 2021, employing a quantitative, cross-sectional approach, with the author of this paper providing direction.

This section aims to introduce the constitutional provision of local government in Nepal

Evaluation of performance of local government in terms of governance

* Mr. Rajbanshi is currently working as faculty member at the Central Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University and Texas International College, Kathmandu
Email: rsugdev@gmail.com

The primary service delivery of the local government is in the people's interest, so the study considered their opinions on essential services like drinking water, regional roads, public health, public schools, and waste management as evaluation bases

How the local government runs and delivers the essential services is the question of governance and is subject to assessment regarding public participation, rule of law, transparency, accountability, etc

The result shows partial satisfaction with some facets of public service

In the governance system, the public gave a lowly agreed opinion

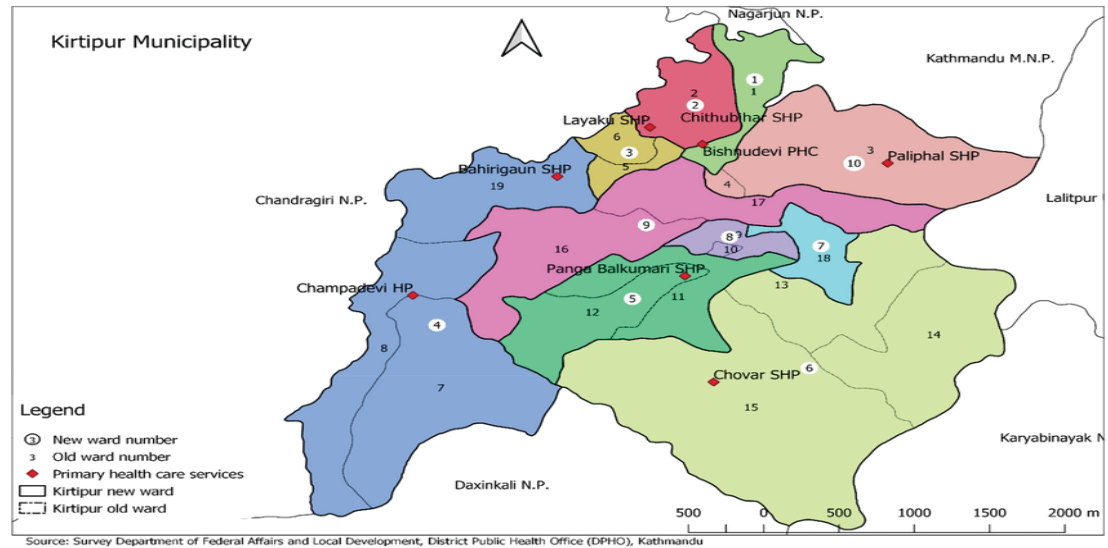


Figure 1: Displaying Kirtipur Municipality with its old and new ward number

Personal meetings with the ward chair and members were organised to understand demographic diversity and identify basic services provided by the local government. Due to vibrant cultural diversity, Kirtipur Municipality Ward 5 was selected for research, facilitating the collection of feedback from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, the active residency in Ward 5 significantly enhances the practicality and depth of the research endeavor. Skilled interviewers actively surveyed 200 households, comprehensively addressing essential local government services

and governance facets. Respondents, averaging 42 years of age and holding a secondary-level education, actively contribute to lending credibility to the results.

3. Results

Status of service delivery and user's satisfaction

Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of service delivery and user feedback in Kirtipur Municipality across various sectors. Analysing the data reveals both areas of satisfaction and notable concerns, offering valuable insights for policy makers and local authorities.

Table 1: Status of services delivery and user satisfaction

Services	Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Remarks
Drinking Water	Regularity	200	2.00	3.00	2.9500	Satisfied
	Quality	200	2.00	3.00	2.5500	Satisfied
	Maintenance	200	2.00	3.00	2.5500	Satisfied
	Sanitation	200	1.00	3.00	2.3900	Unsatisfied
	Response to complaints	200	1.00	3.00	2.6500	Satisfied
Local Road	Quality	200	1.00	3.00	2.4250	Unsatisfied
	Sanitation	200	2.00	3.00	2.5250	Satisfied
	Water logging Maintenance	200	2.00	3.00	2.5250	Satisfied
	Safety	200	2.00	3.00	2.5250	Satisfied
	Response to the complaints	200	1.00	3.00	2.1750	Unsatisfied
Public Health	Infrastructure	200	2.00	3.00	2.2500	Unsatisfied
	Number of health professionals	200	2.00	3.00	2.2500	Unsatisfied
	Sanitation	200	1.00	3.00	1.5000	Unsatisfied
	Behaviour of health professionals	200	3.00	4.00	3.2000	Satisfied
	Response to the complaints	200	3.00	4.00	3.2000	Satisfied
Public School	Infrastructure	200	3.00	3.00	3.0000	Satisfied
	Teacher's Performance	200	3.00	4.00	3.2500	Satisfied
	Sanitary condition of toilets	200	1.00	3.00	1.7750	Unsatisfied
	Extracurricular activities	200	1.00	3.00	2.5000	Satisfied
	Response to the complaints	200	1.00	3.00	1.8750	Unsatisfied

Waste Management	Condition of garbage truck	200	1.00	3.00	2.4450	Unsatisfied
	Waste disposal fee	200	2.00	3.00	2.5450	Satisfied
	Safety of garbage collecting staffs	200	1.00	3.00	2.0700	Unsatisfied
	Garbage collection schedule	200	1.00	2.00	1.3000	Unsatisfied
	Response to the complaints	200	1.00	3.00	2.4450	Unsatisfied

Source: Field survey

Drinking Water

Users exhibit high levels of satisfaction regarding the regularity (mean: 2.95), quality (mean: 2.55), and maintenance (mean: 2.55) of the drinking water supply.

In contrast, there is notable dissatisfaction with sanitation (mean: 2.39). However, the local government's responsiveness to complaints garners a positive rating (mean: 2.65).

Local Road

The quality of roads emerges as a significant concern, with a mean rating of 2.43, indicating dissatisfaction among users. Conversely, users express satisfaction with sanitation, water logging maintenance, and safety (mean: 2.53 for each), but they report dissatisfaction with the response to road-related complaints (mean: 2.18).

Public Health

Public health facilities receive mixed reviews, with dissatisfaction noted in infrastructure, number of health professionals, and sanitation (mean ratings of 2.25 and 1.50, respectively).

However, users report satisfaction with the behaviour of health professionals and the response to complaints (mean: 3.20 for both).

Public School

Users are generally satisfied with the public school's infrastructure (mean: 3.00) and teacher performance (mean: 3.25). However, there are concerns regarding the sanitary

condition of toilets and the response to the complaints (mean ratings of 1.78 and 1.88, respectively).

Waste Management

Concerns are raised regarding the condition of the garbage truck, the safety of garbage collection staff, the garbage collection schedule, and the response to complaints, as indicated by mean ratings below 2.55. However, users demonstrate satisfaction with the waste disposal fee (mean: 2.55), as reported in international journals.

In conclusion, although there is general satisfaction in specific service domains such as electricity supply and drinking water, substantial challenges persist in road quality, public health infrastructure, school facilities, and waste management. These findings emphasize the necessity for focused interventions and enhancements in particular sectors to improve overall service delivery and user satisfaction within the Kirtipur Municipality.

3.1 Governance status and people's perception

3.1.1 Governance status

Table 2 provides a detailed analysis of the local governance status in Kirtipur Municipality, covering aspects such as community participation, transparency, and rule of law, efficiency, and accountability.

Participation

Public meetings on the municipal budget witness a 32% attendance rate, while public hearings, excluding the budget, have a lower 62.5% participation rate. Local council sessions demonstrate robust involvement at 97%, indicating active community engagement. However, NGO activities exhibit a 42.5% participation rate, suggesting areas for increased community involvement. Municipal assembly sessions show significant participation at 96%, and unpaid communal activities have a notable 72.5% rate, reflecting diverse community engagement.

Transparency

There is widespread consensus regarding the transparency of local development planning, public procurement information, and service delivery. However, local budgeting and municipal council approvals receive neutral mean ratings, indicating a varied perception of transparency. Disagreement is observed regarding the transparency of the public tendering procedure, highlighting areas for enhancement in Kirtipur Municipality's local governance.

Table 2: Status of local governance in Kirtipur Municipality

	Indicators	N	No		Yes	
			F	%	F	%
Participation	Public meetings on municipal budget	200	136	68	64	32
	Public hearing other than on budget	200	75	37.5	125	62.5
	Local council sessions	200	194	97	6	3
	NGO activities other than on meetings	200	115	57.5	85	42.5
	Municipal assembly sessions	200	192	96	8	4
	Unpaid communal activities	200	55	27.5	145	72.5
Transparency	Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Remarks
	Local development planning	200	2.00	4.00	3.7900	Agree
	Local budgeting	200	2.00	4.00	2.7900	Neutral
	Municipal council approvals	200	2.00	4.00	2.7900	Neutral
	Public procurement information	200	2.00	4.00	3.7900	Agree
	Service delivery & implementation	200	2.00	4.00	3.7900	Agree
	Public tendering procedure	200	2.00	3.00	2.0500	Disagree
Rule of Law	Indicators	N	No		Yes	
			F	%	F	%
	Paid to Mayor/Deputy Mayor	200	195	97.5	5	2.5
	Paid to ward chairman	200	189	94.5	11	5.5
	Paid to ward members	200	198	99	102	1
Paid to public servants	200	169	84.5	31	15.5	
Rule of Law	Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Remarks
	Practiced in property rights issues	200	2.00	4.00	3.20	Often
	Practiced in administrative decisions	200	2.00	4.00	2.60	Often
Practiced in granting public tenders	200	2.00	4.00	2.60	Often	
Efficiency	Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Remarks
	Utilization of local resources	200	1.00	3.00	2.35	Neutral
	Projects and services are time bound	200	1.00	3.00	2.51	Disagree
	Budget allocation and execution	200	1.00	3.00	2.53	Disagree
Adoption of technology	200	1.00	3.00	2.78	Disagree	
Account-ability	Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Remarks
	Land registration	200	1.00	4.00	2.4000	Rarely
	Building permission	200	1.00	4.00	2.4250	Rarely
	Commercial licensing	200	1.00	4.00	2.4250	Rarely
	Tax payment	200	1.00	4.00	2.4000	Rarely
	Notary services	200	1.00	4.00	2.4250	Rarely
	Public tenders	200	1.00	3.00	2.2650	Rarely
	Birth certification	200	1.00	4.00	2.4250	Rarely
	Petitions and other complaints	200	1.00	4.00	2.4000	Rarely

Source: Field survey

Rule of Law

The study uncovers alarming practices, with respondents citing instances of payments to the mayor or deputy mayor, ward chairman, ward members, and public servants, hinting at potential corruption issues. Furthermore, the frequent occurrences of irregularities in property rights, administrative decisions, and the allocation of public tenders highlight inconsistencies in adhering to legal norms within the municipality.

Efficiency

A neutral position is observed concerning the utilization of local resources, implying the potential for enhancing resource optimization. Disagreement regarding the time-bound nature of projects, budget allocation, and execution underscores potential challenges in ensuring timely project completion and efficient budget management. Furthermore, disagreement in the adoption of technology highlights challenges in integrating technology for improved governance effectiveness, as discussed in international academic journals.

Accountability

Mean ratings indicating infrequent occurrences in land registration, building permissions, tax payments, and related services suggest a potential lack of emphasizes consistent and accountable practices. The term “rarely” emphasizes its sporadic nature, highlighting areas that require enhancements in transparency and responsiveness.

The data presents a nuanced portrayal of local governance within Kirtipur Municipality. While some aspects demonstrate robust participation, others warrant scrutiny, including public hearings, NGO activities, budgeting transparency, and issues pertaining to the rule of law, efficiency, and accountability. These findings underscore the necessity for focused interventions aimed at improving governance effectiveness.

People’s perception of governance

The data in Table 3 suggests a moderate people’s perception of local governance in Kirtipur Municipality.

Table 3: Perception of governance

Indicators	N	Min	Max	Mean	Remarks
Participation	200	2.00	3.00	2.4500	Weak
Transparency	200	2.00	3.00	2.5000	Average
Rule of law	200	2.00	3.00	2.5500	Average
Efficiency	200	2.00	3.00	2.5000	Average
Accountability	200	2.00	3.00	2.5000	Average

Source: Field survey March 29 to April 28, 2021

Across indicators, participation is perceived as weak (mean: 2.4500), while transparency, rule of law, efficiency, and accountability are considered average (mean: 2.5000). This indicates a moderate level of satisfaction and confidence in the overall governance performance. The terms “weak” and “average” in the remarks highlight the need for potential improvements in certain aspects to enhance people’s perception of local governance in Kirtipur Municipality.

4. Discussion

4.1 Status of service delivery and user’s satisfaction

Drinking Water

Kirtipur Municipality highlights the significance of improving water quality, service dependability, and reaction to complaints in relation to the provision of drinking water. These priorities are in line with the conclusions drawn from a research

carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina and published in CMcNeil, M., Herzog, A. & Cosic (2009). As in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kirtipur has high levels of satisfaction with several components of the drinking water supply, although there are noticeable differences in satisfaction across various locations and economic classes. In order to provide improved water services for everyone, both regions acknowledge the need for changes, especially in low-income and rural areas (CMcNeil, M., Herzog, A. & Cosic, 2009).

Local Road

Kirtipur Municipality’s local road services indicate a need for increased response, maintenance, and cleanliness of roads, particularly in rural regions. While Kirtipur residents are satisfied with cleanliness, water logging maintenance, and safety, there is significant discontent with road condition and complaint response. This is consistent

with the findings of the comprehensive Citizen Review of Service Delivery and Local Governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which indicate a shared need for greater improvements in local road services throughout these areas (CMcNeil, M., Herzog, A., & Cosic, 2009).

Public Health

Kirtipur Municipality emphasizes the value of addressing issues related to infrastructure, accessibility to healthcare professionals, cleanliness, and cost when it comes to public health, which is consistent with study findings from Bosnia and Herzegovina (CMcNeil, M., Herzog, A. & Cosic, 2009). Although consumers of Kirtipur give public health services mixed assessments, Bosnia and Herzegovina highlights the need to remove private doctor cost barriers and raise satisfaction levels, particularly in locations with higher population densities and smaller revenue streams.

Public School

Kirtipur Municipality is aware that public education has to be improved in terms of quality. Although most Kirtipur users are satisfied with the facilities and instruction of public schools, there are issues with hygienic practices and the handling of complaints. In a similar vein, Bosnia and Herzegovina reports good overall ratings for its basic education services but admits that there is still room for improvement, especially in some municipalities and areas (CMcNeil, M., Herzog, A. & Cosic, S, 2009).

Waste Management

Finally, there are issues with waste management services in both areas, especially with regard to crew safety, irregular collection, and handling complaints. Although Kirtipur residents are happy with the cost of disposing of their

waste, issues with garbage truck maintenance and collection times continue to be raised. Comparable to this, Bosnia and Herzegovina emphasise the need for better garbage collection services, particularly in underdeveloped and rural communities. They stress the need of resolving these issues in order to enhance public satisfaction and lessen their negative effects on the environment (CMcNeil, , 2009).

4.2 Governance Status and People's Perception

In Kirtipur Municipality, there is a noticeable level of community involvement in unpaid

communal activities (72.5%), municipal assembly sessions (96%), and local council meetings (97% participation rate). Lower attendance at public hearings about the municipal budget (32%) and NGO operations (42.5%), however, suggests that community involvement may be raised. Though views on municipal budgeting and public procurement openness differ, transparency in local development planning and service delivery is largely agreed upon. The uneven implementation of legal standards and payments to public officials are two concerns about the rule of law.

Along with resolving accountability difficulties in land registration, building approvals, tax payments, and associated services, efforts to increase resource utilisation efficiency and utilise technology for governance objectives are advised. There is broad consensus about the openness of service delivery, public procurement information, and municipal development planning. Local budgeting and municipal council approvals, on the other hand, receive neutral mean ratings, suggesting a mixed perception of transparency in line with the results of a study carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which found that between 40% and 43% of respondents were unsure of the value of particular government information (CMcNeil, M., Herzog, A. & Cosic, S, 2009).

Conventional means of communication, such as neighbourhood radio and physical bulletin boards, are important information sources. With the exception of the budget, the study done in the Kirtipur municipality reveals decreased participation rates in several government functions, such as public hearings, which is consistent with the findings of the study carried out in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The people of Kirtipur have difficulties related to regulatory load, since many in Bosnia and Herzegovina believe that government regulations—building licences and land registration in particular—are unduly onerous.

Concerning practices are revealed in Kirtipur municipality, with respondents mentioning payments to the mayor/deputy mayor, ward chairman, ward members, and public servants, indicating potential issues related to corruption. “Often” practices in property rights, administrative decisions, and granting public tenders highlight variability in applying legal norms within the municipality aligning with the findings of the study conducted in Bosnia and Herzegovina (CMcNeil, Herzog, & Cosic, 2009). To sum

up, people of Kirtipur has moderate perception towards local governance, with weak participation but average ratings for transparency, rule of law, efficiency, and accountability.

5. Conclusion

In summary, this study presents a thorough evaluation of service delivery and governance within Kirtipur Municipality, focusing on user satisfaction and public perceptions. The findings indicate general satisfaction among users with services such as drinking water, electricity, and public

schools, although concerns arise regarding road conditions, healthcare facilities, and waste management. Moreover, the governance analysis reveals a spectrum of participation levels, transparency, adherence to legal frameworks, operational efficiency, and accountability. Of particular note are concerns surrounding informal payments and sporadic adherence to legal standards, highlighting potential governance challenges. The study concludes with a nuanced perspective on public perceptions of local governance, stressing the necessity for targeted improvements to bolster overall satisfaction and confidence among residents. Recommendations include addressing specific service-related issues and fostering transparency and responsiveness in governance practices to enhance the quality of life within Kirtipur Municipality.

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