



Government Framework for Agriculture Service Delivery at the Local Level in Nepal

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Abstract

This paper examines the policy, institutional and legal aspects of agriculture service delivery (ASD) of local government in federal Nepal. The aim of this study is to recommend an appropriate framework for improving ASD unit efficiency in delivering agricultural services to citizens. The paper seeks to answer the question of whether the ASD unit of municipalities facilitates a local government framework while discharging their agriculture services to the citizens. To achieve this, both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data were collected through structured interviews of agriculture service takers using stratified random sampling and were accompanied by participant observations, FGDs and KIIs. Secondary data were obtained from government documents. A convergent parallel mix method research design was adopted, which implied abductive reasoning with pragmatist research philosophy.

The study found that despite poor facilities and structures at the local level, the client experienced extended agricultural service delivery. Local governments are undergoing a transition in harmonizing institutional and legal policies, as evidenced by the differences in service delivery and expertise. The study identified three areas of demand from people with local authorities viz; infrastructure for basic services, quality extension from professional experts, and prioritization of the agriculture sector. Based on the findings, an enhanced ASD framework at the local level is recommended to meet the quality service needs of diversified clients. In this regard, enhanced municipal capacity is crucial.

Keywords: Agriculture service delivery, Clients, Local government framework, Municipality

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1. Introduction

Nepal has a long history of participatory development but a short experience with a fully devolved local government system (Subedi, 2014). The first attempt at decentralization in Nepal started in 1954 through the creation of a panchayat (Dhungel, 2011). Decentralization as the policy was started in the 3rd planning period (1965-70). Decentralization Act, 1982 and Decentralization Regulation (1984) were the first legal bases that institutionalized the decentralization process and practice in Nepal (Subedi, 2014)). In 1999, the Government of Nepal (GoN) enacted Local Self-Government Act, 1999 to empower the local bodies and consolidate the decentralization in policy but in practice, it continued to follow a centralized governance system so the spirit of LSGA was partially implemented (TAF, 2017; DRCN, 2019). After the second people's movement in 2006, the constitution of Nepal 2015 mandated three tiers of governance structures: Federal, provincial and local. Local government now has the authority to have their laws, and fiscal jurisdiction, devise plans and policies, prepare annual budgets and implement them. The devolution in Nepal provided a strong basis for grassroots democracy because it ensured the devolution of power, participatory planning processes, community and private sector involvement, accountability, and public service delivery (TAF, 2017, Dahal et al., 2020). The Constitution of Nepal (2015) embraced the federal structures through exclusive judicial and executive powers and authority. Local governments are responsible for provisions of service delivery including agriculture service delivery (ASD) to the farmers (Acharya, 2018; Chaudhary 2018; Dahal et al., 2020).

According to Kyle and Resnick (2018) low state capacity particularly human resources, budget and infrastructures is frequently blamed for poor service delivery in developing countries. Dahal et al. (2020) argued the number of issues of service provided by LGs: Poor implementation of policies and plans, low investment, weak governance, and lack of effective service delivery mechanism. Bishwakarma (2022) showed that service delivery extensively increased with moderate satisfaction after federalization with limited state capacity. Bhattarai, (2022) and Jaishi et al. (2022 a) argued for huge potentiality in agriculture service delivery through the community and suggested improving fundamental infrastructures to strengthen integrated linkage mechanisms among Agriculture Research Extension and Education (AREE) institutions. It is essential to portray the agriculture service delivery framework so that local representatives and authorities may consider it while they are implementing agriculture service delivery activities (Hagman et al 2002; Balckmore et al. 2015).

2. Research Gap and Rationale of the Study

Nepal is in the early stage of institutionalizing local government (Dhungel et al 2011; Kyle and Resnick, 2018; Adhikari, 2021, Shahi and Sthapit, 2022). As per the constitutional provisions, the agriculture organization underwent massive restructuring for the devolution of agriculture extension to the local level (Shrestha, 2022). As a result, the agriculture and livestock section was created over the entire Local government (LG) level responsible for agriculture service delivery. This restructuring and paradigm shift in ASD offered an opportunity for access to agriculture extension services at the local level on one hand and posed challenges to the quality and mechanism of services on other hand. The challenges further emerged from limited human resources and their capacity, reduced institutional mechanisms, low priority and lack of clarity of working modality. Very limited studies have explored ASD in a changed context to conceptualize it (TAF, 2017; Kyle and Resnick 2018; Dahal et al., 2020; Bishwakarma, 2022).

The paper focuses on the institutional arrangement under federal transformation that enable and empower local government to address ASD as per the spirit of the Constitution of Nepal and the Local Government Operation Act, 2017. This paper aims to answer the following specific research questions:

- a. Does the current institutional, legal, and political policy framework enable local governments to fulfil their mandates in ASD?
- b. What components should local government authorities consider strengthening ASD?
- c. What are farmers' preferences for ASD features to meet their needs and aspiration, as per LGOA 2017?

3. Governance, government and local government: Meaning and concept

"Government" and "Governance" are often used interchangeably in dictionaries, referring to the exercise of authority in an organization, institution or state (UNDP, 1997) Government is the name given to the entity exercising that authority. Authority can be most simply defined as legitimate power (Legaspi, 2005). Scholars from various countries have proposed five major propositions of governance as a theory (keeping, 2017). Local government is the doorstep government to the local people and is responsible for undertaking and performing public activities, and possesses a defined area, a population, an organization and also the authority. The main roles of the government include the executive, judicial and legislative functions

(Kharel and Kharel, 2020). According to the service delivery approach, the local government provides an opportunity for political participation, helps to ensure efficient service delivery and expresses a tradition of opposition to an overly centralized government (Asaju, 2010). In this sense, a local government is a relatively autonomous, multi-purpose institution providing a range of services, with a tax-raising capacity, and is controlled through the election of representatives to oversee the work of full-time officials. From the sovereignty perspective, local governments exist as infra-sovereign geographic units found within sovereign nations or quasi-sovereign states.

Dahal et al. (2020) argued that a poor understanding of federalism and weak political commitment of local authorities to accountability and responsibility pose a challenge to effective governance. Kyle and Resnick (2020) identified a gap between farmers' expectations and the authorities' actions related to devolved ASD practices in municipalities. Paudyal (2021) argued that good governance has yet to yield development results and further explored that implementing governance challenges include weak delivery agency capacity, structured deficiencies, poor management systems, corruption, weak fiscal discipline and legal ambiguities.

4. Research Methodology

This research utilized convergent parallel mix methods research design to enable an in-depth exploration of how government framework can work for effective service delivery. Mix methods offer flexibility in designing and combining different types of tools to distil the most informative results for a comprehensive analysis of research problems. Cresswell (2009) believes that the use of mixed methods provides the opportunity for contextualization and generalization from the insight of qualitative and quantitative data, and ease to generalize the valid insights as demonstrated in the three parts of this study. Bhattarai (2015) argued that no single point of view could explain the nature of facts and accepted the multiple realities of agriculture service delivery options. Abductive reasoning was applied as a research approach. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously during the research process and analyzed independently and interpreted the finding together as synthesis as explained by Cresswell and Pablo-Clark (2011). The three parts of the study included:

- a. A total of 21 local governments (ten municipalities and 11 rural municipalities) three each from seven provinces representing Hills and Terai were purposively selected.

- b. Four events of focus group discussions (FGDs) and ten KIIs formed the qualitative results
- c. Two events of participant observation of service delivery units of local government were conducted to witness the service delivery by the researcher.

Primary and secondary information was collected from August-November, 2022 and analysis was conducted simultaneously. Local Government Operation Act 2017, Agriculture Development Strategy (2015-2035) and Schedules 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the Constitution of Nepal, and associated policies and documents were reviewed to contextualize the agriculture service delivery framework.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Nepalese Agriculture Research, Extension and Education System & Service Delivery

Agriculture service delivery refers to the institutional arrangement established by local governments, whether public or private, to provide a range of goods & services, advice, training, education, policies and plans to their citizen (Dahal et al, 2020). The responsible local government is accountable for providing effective and efficient agriculture services to its citizens. In Nepal, the agriculture research, extension and education institutions are the three responsible stakeholders for the agriculture service delivery. The agriculture research function is still in the domain of the central government operated by the NARC. The NARC operates its research function through 12 disciplinary divisions, six cross-cutting divisions, seven directorates, 4 RARS, 13 ARS and 110 outreach sites (NARC, 2010; Gauchan and Paudel, 2012; Timsina et al., 2018; Bhattarai, 2022). The Provincial Government is responsible for the technical backstopping and resource management function which it operates through directorates, laboratories, farms and agriculture business promotion & training centres. The livestock sector has similar functions and functionaries. The functions and functionaries of local government, especially in the agriculture and allied sectors, are operated through the agriculture and livestock sections separately. Approximately 3500 graduates are working in private and public agencies throughout the country (Chaudhary and Pasa, 2015).

Agriculture education in Nepal began in 1957 at the School of Agriculture under the Ministry of Agriculture. It was upgraded in 1968 to the College of Agriculture and was further upgraded again to the Institute of Agriculture and Animal Science (IAAS) which was moved from Kathmandu to Rampur Chitwan. Now, agriculture education operates through 30 affiliated and constituents Agricultures Academic Institutions

(AAIs) scattered across all seven provinces under six universities throughout the country. The total intake capacity of these universities is over 2500 per year. Additionally, more than 13000 mid-level students peruse agriculture education under poly techniques and technical school of CTEVT with three categories: diploma level, TSLC and short training courses. The Ministry of Education also operates technical schools in different streams in grades 9-10 and 11-12 under one municipality on the technical school concept throughout the country. Currently, 450 schools are operating their programs with the support of municipalities, with an intake capacity of 11,250 high school students.

Shrestha (2022) argued that the public extension system is under scrutiny worldwide for its relatively poor performance, and Nepal is no exception. The coverage of extension services is rather poor in terms of geography, with an average of one-fourth of HHs receiving irregular, scattered and trickled extension services (Shrestha and Sanjel, 2018). The number and competencies of front-line extension workers are generally inadequate. This is proven by having a gazette officer in only 12 among 21 municipalities. Blanket approaches to service delivery, supply-driven rather than demand-driven, are mostly adopted and have more production-oriented goals. The agriculture and livestock sections of respective municipalities are responsible for the planning, execution, monitoring & evaluation of agriculture projects and programs, particularly the ASD after the devolution of agriculture to the local government (LGOA, 2017, section 3 & 6).

5.2 Legal framework, power and functions of three tiers of government

Nepal's has historically emphasized local participation and empowerment in its approach to local government rather than creating institutions for service delivery (World Bank, 2014). Over sixty years of sub-national governance reforms have resulted in an administrative framework of local bodies (LGs) consisting of 77 District Coordination Committees (DCCs), 6 metropolitan cities, 11 sub-metropolises city 276 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities. However, the legal framework itself is not advanced unless it is supported by an effective institutional mechanism for service decentralization (Subedi, 2014).

According to Paudyal (2021), Nepal exercises polycentric power where power is to be understood as the basis of interaction for socio-political norms, rules, procedures, accountability and authorities among governing institutions. Yalmanov (2021) considers that the main characteristics of political decisions are the presence of power and a specific purpose.

Since the last sub-national government reform in 2015, the LGs' names indicate that their primary role is 'service delivery', understood as carrying local governments ensuring a mix of inputs for the effective delivery of public services. Twenty-two devolved powers are mentioned as functions of local governments, mostly related to agriculture and allied sector transformation. However, it is also apparent that the authority of the governments is helpless without sufficient agro-technicians, basic infrastructures, facilities, funds and good plans and motivation.

Table 1: Types of power with three tiers of government in Nepal Constitution, 2015

SN	Types of power	Level of government		
		Federal	Provincial	Local
1	Executive powers ¹	35 (Schedule 5) ²	21 (Schedule 6)	22 (Schedule 8)
2	Concurrent powers ³	2 (Schedule 9)		
3	Residual powers ⁴	Article 58		

According to the Constitution, the legislative power of the local level is vested in the Village Assembly and Municipal Assembly (Jaishi et al. 2022c). Local bodies in Nepal have become more empowered than ever (TAF, 2017; Kharel and Kharel, 2020), with 22 absolute powers, and 15 shared with the province and federal government, enabling them to plan their development activities according to the needs and demands of the people (Kharel and Kharel, 2020). The Nepalese agriculture extension system underwent a structural shift with the top-down to bottom-up plan. However administrative issues resulting from the political shift are yet to be tackled institutionally based on the principle of functional coordination, cooperation and collaboration (Jaishi, et al., 2022c). To make local government-led community-owned initiatives and mechanisms functional and sustainable, functional coordination and collaboration between the various levels of government are necessary.

From the KII, it is found that the local authorities have limited and inadequate knowledge of the powers, functions, duties and responsibilities given in the LGOA

- 1 Executive power is part of government which enforces the laws and has overall responsibilities for the governance of the state.
- 2 Schedule is an appendix to a formal document especially a list, table or inventory in the constitution.
- 3 Concurrent power is the power exercised by the federal or provincial government in the same area among the same group of citizens.
- 4 Residual power is only parliament having the authority to make the law on the subject

2017, and in the Schedules of Nepal's Constitution 2015. Most of them have very generic knowledge and idea in relation to roles responsibilities, functions and duties. The service delivery framework is to be seen from a system perspective and it requires policy to conform with the obligation of the state defined in the policy documents. Paudyal (2021) suggest that local authorities are to be entrusted with the responsibility of agriculture service delivery to the people. So it is suggested to ascertain the capacity of local authorities for all of those matters and issues described in the constitution and LGOA, 2017.

Participants of FGDs were blamed for their lower consultation and interaction during the annual planning process. Paudyal (2021) raises the concern that people's participation and interaction with the concerned stakeholders are essential to make it more accountable, owned, and inclusive governance. Public consultation should be made substantive rather than procedural because public consultation is the key feature of policy-making and implementation (OECD, 2001).

5.3 National and provincial policy framework for agriculture development

Nepal's experiences in the implementation of multiple policies related to agricultural reform suggest that patience and perseverance with uninterrupted commitment over a long period are essential (Upreti and Shivakoti, 2019; Khanal et al., 2020). Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP), Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS), and National Agriculture Policy 2061 (NAP, 2004) remain the main policy documents to date (Upreti and Shivakoti, 2021). All these policies are judged to be sound in design but have suffered greatly in implementation. In many cases, they lacked the supporting legislation and resources for implementation (Chaudhary, 2018). The APP (1995-2015), ADS (2015-2035), and The National Agriculture Policy (2004) is umbrella policy for Nepal, however, require updates and modification in context to the new constitution and LGOA (2017). Some fundamental policies of the agriculture sector requiring further refinement are Agri-business Promotion Policy (2006), Argo-diversity Policy (2007), Agriculture Mechanization Policy (2014), Land Use Policy (2015), and Land Policy 2018. The policies also consider the Gender Equity and Social Inclusion (GESI) mainstreaming strategies (NPC, 2018).

The provincial and local governments shall have mutual coordination for necessary arrangements considering the sharing of available resources through policy instruments as specified in Annex 7 & 9 of the Constitution of Nepal 2015. Further, local authorities and representatives also believed that national, provincial and national policy harmonization is a must with the new policy agenda for ASD reform

in the local context. However, the existing organizational structures, human resources and municipal capacity are neither adequate nor capable to accomplish the task. Some of the authorities of the province and federal department and ministry put their views that federal and provincial government should not involve in the project sanctions and implementation rather than should concentrate on guiding, facilitating, monitoring, and evaluating the agriculture projects and programs at the municipal level. Further structural support to the current mechanism with state capacities is, therefore, required.

Khanal et al. (2020) stated that legislative provisions have been made to achieve agriculture transformation through four kinds of policies in Nepal: Land tenure-distribution; agriculture service infrastructures; agriculture production and food quality standard. Article 231 (2) of the Constitution of Nepal, provisioned the inter-governmental relationship among three tiers, between federal-provincial and provincial-local. At the national level, there are a large number of general and sector-specific public policies have been formulated (55 policies, 5 strategies, 28 acts, 11 regulations, 39 directives, 3 guidelines, and 44 procedural documents) and their implementation. Accordingly, the provincial government can have endorsed the agriculture policies, rules, guidelines and norms in the execution of agriculture and allied sector in the entire or part of the province. So far, 90 provincial agriculture policies, rules and regulations formulated by the seven provincial governments are listed below.

Table 2: Number of agriculture policies documents endorsed by province level

Province	Koshi	Madhesh	Bagmati	Gandaki	Lumbini	Karnali	Sudur Paschim
Number	12	11	12	4	12	28	11

Source: Alliance for Agriculture and Food, 2022

Rijal and Upreti (2022) opined that multilevel policy-making and implementation have been the constitutional mandate of three levels of government. To respond to the specific needs, situation and context maintaining coherence and smooth implementation, customized policy-making capacity requires to be developed particularly at the province and local levels. Accordingly, several institutional changes in pluralistic agricultural extension approaches need to be adopted to improve the adequacy and efficiency of agriculture and extension policies (Upreti and Shivakoti, 2019). Emerging private sector including financial institutions,

development agencies, cooperatives, entrepreneurs, and agro-traders’ engagement in the sector is imperative.

5.4 Agriculture service delivery framework at the municipality level

In generic terms, public service delivery is the main state responsibility (Paudyal, 2021). According to Shah (2005), the legitimacy of the government can be established when the state is capable of delivering the fundamental services by the free or paid government that can express its legal presence. According to Hagman et al. (2002), the meaning of any service system has to be understood within and across the three sub-systems of demand and supply. These three components are an integral part of the service delivery framework: Organizing and facilitating the demand, responding to the demand and supporting the response. All three components need to function effectively to create a service delivery system. The basis of the agriculture service delivery framework is the simple fact the service providers need to follow the supply and demand chain (Blackmore, et al., 2015; Bishwakarma, 2022).

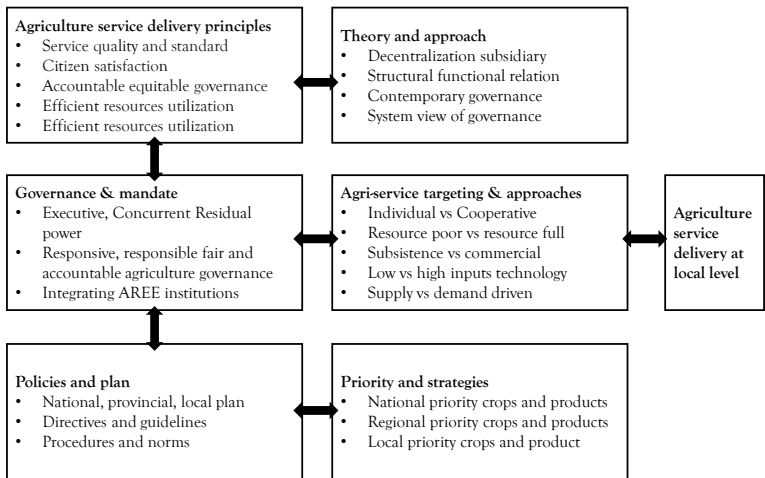


Figure 1: Agriculture service delivery (ASD) framework at local level

The study framework support to study of the subject under study, which will attempt to ensure an appropriate, complete, rigorous, fair, and unbiased analysis (Shahi and Sthapit, 2022). Each category of components is split into further sub categories to characterize service service delivery. It supports the evaluation of the ASD guidelines, funds & budget, and human resources.

Following Figure (1) ASD framework is characterized by six components: Theory and principles, agriculture service delivery principles, governance & constitutional power & mandate, targeting & approaches, policies & plan, and priority &

strategies. The Framework captures most aspects of governance outcomes ie improving the ASD framework to be developed in their respective municipality. In any event, there can be little disagreement that one cannot get on measuring ASD quality without first defining and defending an appropriate framework that measures ASD. These aspects are also emphasized by ADS 2015-2035 and many of the policies of Nepal.

5.5 Basic facilities and infrastructure of the service delivery at the municipality

From participants' observation conducted in study municipalities, it is found that the Agriculture Development Section have limited physical facilities and infrastructures. Almost all municipalities are lacking lab equipment for basic laboratory services, well-spaced laboratory rooms, equipped training halls, ICT equipment, advisory kits, demonstration models, specimen, demonstration sites and library facilities. Most of the service delivery units were found congested office space, lacking advisory & counselling rooms, and audio-visual devices. Similar kinds of observations (Dahal et al., 2020; Bishwakarma, 2022). Kharel and Kharel (2020) argued that the local government have the problem of appropriate size budget, administrative capacity and visionary leadership.

The trend of budget allocation to local government is increasing trend (Kharel and Kharel, 2020) still the volume of budget in the agriculture sector is under priority. During the KII, local authorities also agreed with these facts and municipal publications verified the budget trends that, the economic sectorial budget to the other three sectors found lower. Comparative budget allocation data of sampled municipalities in four sectors, viz. economic, infrastructures, social, governance and administration showed that only 6.17 percent of the total budget has been dispersed in agriculture and the allied sector as compared to 44.53 percent in infrastructure, 29.72 percent in social services, 8.25 percent in governance and 11.13 percent in the administration sector. The average budget of studied municipalities for three years (FY 2019/20-22/23) was found 10.14 M/year. This proved that still the agriculture sector is an under-investment priority and this is the possible reason behind the lacking all the facilities and infrastructures of ASD in the municipality.

Farmers' perceptions towards ASD were analyzed from 12 statements using a Likert-type scale (structured interview, n=210). The mean score below and higher than 2.5 were split to map the positive and negative perceptions of the constructs. The mean score value showed that 6 statements indicated a positive response and 6 statements showed a negative response towards ASD.

Table 3: People's Perception of the Basic Infrastructures and Process of Agriculture Service Delivery in the Municipalities

SN	Construct	Mean score
1	The LG has addressed the farmer's needs and demands at the local level	2.03
2	The agriculture section in our municipality has a well-structured agriculture service delivery unit	2.00
3	Basic laboratories services of the agriculture section are satisfactory	1.00
4	The LG have well-equipped training services and resources	2.00
5	Basic laboratory services are regular and as per the demand of local people	1.24
6	The agriculture sectorial plan has been prepared and implemented as per the strategic plan	1.06

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The average mean score (1.55) of the constructs related to basic services provision, infrastructures and sectorial plan indicated a negative perception. Side by side (Mean score 3.35) people also felt the agriculture service has been increased after the devolution of agriculture to the municipalities. Particularly, the incentives, equipment support and farm subsidies have been motivating the farmers. Similar kinds of results were also found in the research conducted by (Bishwakarma, 2022).

Table 4: People's Perception of the Agriculture Service Delivery at the Municipalities

SN	Construct	Mean score
1	There is a positive relationship between local government service and the adoption of agricultural technology	3.01
2	The local government has programmes in place to promote and ensure agriculture development in the municipal area	3.06
3	The local government has tried for extended agriculture service delivery	3.36
4	The agriculture section fully engages in the agriculture program implementation in local government	3.20

SN	Construct	Mean score
5	There is a positive relationship between local government/extension activities and the prosperity of farmers	4.01
6	Advisory services provided by LG units are satisfactory and effective	3.56

Source: Field Survey, 2022

5.6 People's Expectations and key features of Agriculture Service Delivery

The features of ASD were discussed in the FGDs session keeping in mind what people are expecting from their local authorities. Each of the respondents was asked to state features and indicators of successful ASD they are expecting in the coming five years to come. These features of agriculture service delivery are the components stated in the service delivery framework (Figure 1). The participants of FGDs raised their expectations and concerns in seven dimensions: Targeting the clients, service accessibility, consistency of service, service quality, service delivery approach, service delivery models and service providers (Table 5). The participants also suggested desired service delivery features. Most of the participants blamed scattered and trickled service, low quality per se, non-consistence, irregular, limited and blank approached services. Respondents also showed their concerns to have community-owned, farmers group-focused, sector-wide, transparent and demand-driven, integrated, output-based agriculture service in days to come.

Table 5: Previous and expected agriculture service delivery features at the local level

Indicators	Previous service delivery features	Expected service delivery features
Target identification	Blanket approach, biased, uneven	Performance-based, sector-wide
Accessibility of services	Limited & scattered, irregular	Supply meets demand
Consistency of service	Nonexistent among providers	Existent with alternatives
Service quality	Low and not monitored	High and transparent
Delivery approach	Top-down, supply-driven	Demand-driven, transparent

Indicators	Previous service delivery features	Expected service delivery features
Delivery model	Scattered and trickled services	Integrated and bundled services
Service providers	Service center, project, program	Community own, private sectors

Source: (FGD, 2022)

5.7 Improving agriculture governance: Participatory strategy setting

In the FGD, the pairwise ranking was deployed to rank the issues related to agriculture governance. It was found that poor practice of participatory strategy setting is the most important aspect of governance to be improved in the municipality. FGD was focused to answer what are the issues to be improved agriculture governance in the municipalities. Most of the respondents felt that the poor practice of participatory strategy setting, poor territorial listening with rural proofing practice, inadequate capacity of local authorities, mismatched targeting, and ideology-based issues are the five major issues of agriculture service delivery and agriculture governance.

Table 6: Issues of agriculture governance in municipalities by rank

Particular	PSS	TLRPP	MMT	IBI	ICLA	Total score	Issues by rank
PSS	–	1	1	1	1	4	1 st
TLRPP	0	–	1	1	1	3	2 nd
MMT	0	0	–	0	1	1	4 th
ICLA	0	0	1	–	1	2	3 rd
IBI	0	0	0	0	–	0	4 th

PSS= Participatory strategy setting. TLRPP= Territorial listening & rural proofing practice, MMT= Mismatched targeting, ICLA=Inadequate capacity of local authorities, IBI=Ideology-based issues

Similar kinds of observations were also found by Bishwakarma (2022); Dahal (2020); Paudyal (2021). In the words of Chaudhary (2018), municipalities and their structural mechanism entail the devolution of power and the service delivery can only be effective and sustainable only when agriculture governance is improved and it is possible through truthful interaction among the people, authorities and representatives.

Governance, is one of the four components of ADS framework of the ADS (2015-35), without strengthening governance, ASD is impossible to improve (MoAD, 2014). ADS identified four elements of governance: Accountability, participation, forecasting ability and transparency.

The importance of integration at the institution at the local level is highlighted in the word of Shah (2006) because municipalities represent the multi-centre, multi-level and multi-order of the system. Strengthening horizontal and vertical linkage among the AREE institutions as strategic actions suggested in ADS to improve agriculture governance (MoAD, 2014). From the KII, it is found that the integration among the AREE institution is very poor even not in priority. Possible reasons behind this may be that staff are concentrated on their already heavy load of mandated annual activities.

One of the surprising facts found from a structured interview is that none of the studied municipalities has their strategic and action plan prepared with participatory farmers' consultation. However, in the public forum and interaction the authorities do talk much more than they give priority to the sectorial plan, allocating the budget accordingly and have identified the priority crops and products. In reality, neither the agriculture sectorial plan nor the long-term plan of the agriculture sector found endorsed by the municipality council. The local authorities also agreed that still they have to work on prioritization of crops, products, strategy and so on.

KII with local authorities confirmed that the reasons behind these scenarios are because of the agriculture section running its program with staff inadequacy and insufficient capacity. One example to support the fact is, 9 among 21 municipalities operating their agriculture program with under-gazetted level officials.

6. Conclusion and policy recommendations

In recent years, the responsibilities of service delivery have shifted strategically from the federal to the sub-national government, with the most localized public service providing agriculture and the allied sector. People expect a strengthened ASD based on the principles of self-government and subsidiary governance. Seven policy agendas were found for ASD reform in local government, including performance-based targeting, community-owned public-private providers, output-based support system, demand is driven, integrated and consistent agriculture service.

The paper concludes that ASD at the local level should consider three fundamental strategies: Strengthening agriculture governance, building basic service-providing infrastructures, and managing qualified & sufficient human resources. The most

important output of this paper is the ASD framework. The framework encompasses a broader scope of theory and principles, constitutional power, national and sub-national policy documents, varied service delivery approaches, national provincial and local priorities and targets, modalities, and strategic action priorities.

The ASD framework is based on the simple fact that ASD should follow the supply and demand chain between the service seekers and service providers. Three tiers of agencies must focus on three fundamental roles and responsibilities: Organizing and facilitating the demand, responding to the demand and supporting the demand. To achieve this, harmonized policy instruments and close integration among AREE stakeholders are essential. The following policies and strategies are strongly recommended to improve the agriculture service delivery: Authorities and representatives requires a clear understanding of the components and their dynamic relationships among various components, beneficiaries, service providers, implementer and stakeholders of the ASD framework. Sensitization and capacity-building interventions may be necessary.

- Governance is one of the four components of the ADS (2015-35) framework and is equally significant in local government. Policy instrument for promoting and strengthening agriculture governance is needed.
- To harness these governance efficiencies, vertical as well as a horizontal linkage among various AREE institutions (government, civil society, development partners, private sector) need to be strengthened. AREE integration must be harmonized with policy instruments.
- Agriculture sectors have to be prioritized equally with other sectors of investment with policy instruments, identifying the priority crops and products, and implanting a long-term agriculture plan. Sensitization of the authorities and representatives could help achieve this.
- Three tiers of AREE agencies of three tiers of government must coordinate their efforts to three subsystems of ASD: organizing, facilitating and responding to the supply and demand from a system perspective.

Authors Contribution

Mahesh Jaishi: Conceiving ideas; formulation of overarching research goals and aims; Development or design of methodology; Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal; Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection; Report initial draft/review/ final draft polishing

- Govinda Prasad Sharma: Conceiving ideas; formulation of overarching research goals and aims; Development or design of methodology; Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal; Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection; Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, instrumentation, computing resources
- Purna Bahadur Nepali: Development or design of methodology; Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal; Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, instrumentation, computing resources; Report initial draft/review/ final draft polishing
- Devendra Gauchan: Conceiving ideas; formulation of overarching research goals and aims; Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection; Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, instrumentation, computing resources; Report initial draft/review/ final draft polishing
- Ram Krishna Shrestha: Conceiving ideas; formulation of overarching research goals and aims; Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal; Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, instrumentation, computing resources; Report initial draft/review/ final draft polishing
- Krishna Prasad Timsina: Conceiving ideas; formulation of overarching research goals and aims; Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection; Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, instrumentation, computing resources; Report initial draft/review/ final draft polishing
- Huma Neupane: Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection; Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, instrumentation, computing resources; Report initial draft/review/ final draft polishing

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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