

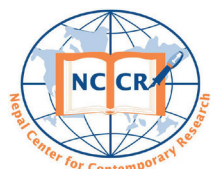
Researching livelihoods and
services affected by conflict

The Drinking Water and Sanitation Programme of Nepal's Local Governance and Community Development Programme

Working Paper 45

Gopikesh Acharya, Bishnu Raj Upreti, Suman Babu Paudel,
Annal Tandukar and Daniel Harris

June 2016



About us

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) aims to generate a stronger evidence base on how people make a living, educate their children, deal with illness and access other basic services in conflict-affected situations (CAS). Providing better access to basic services, social protection and support to livelihoods matters for the human welfare of people affected by conflict, the achievement of development targets such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and international efforts at peace- and state-building.

At the centre of SLRC's research are three core themes, developed over the course of an intensive one-year inception phase:

- State legitimacy: experiences, perceptions and expectations of the state and local governance in conflict-affected situations
- State capacity: building effective states that deliver services and social protection in conflict-affected situations
- Livelihood trajectories and economic activity under conflict

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is the lead organisation. SLRC partners include the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA) in Sri Lanka, Feinstein International Center (FIC, Tufts University), the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) in Pakistan, Disaster Studies of Wageningen University (WUR) in the Netherlands, the Nepal Centre for Contemporary Research (NCCR), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

Acknowledgements

This publication has only been possible with the valuable support and advice received from several intellectual minds and hardworking hands. The authors would like to thank Paul Harvey, Rachel Slater, Emma Merry, Siddhi Manandhar, Rachel Gordon, Martina Santschi and Apshara KC for their support from the very beginning of this study to this final shape. The authors would also like to thank all the respondents participated in KIIs, IDIs and FGDs conducted for this study, it would not have been possible to generate evidence for this study with out their help.

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
Overseas Development Institute
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031
E slrc@odi.org.uk
W www.securelivelihoods.org

SLRC Working Papers present information, analysis and key policy recommendations on issues relating to livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict affected situations.

This and other SLRC reports are available from www.securelivelihoods.org. Funded by UK aid from the UK government, Irish Aid and the EC.

Disclaimer: The views presented in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies or represent the views of Irish Aid, the EC, SLRC or our partners. © SLRC 2016

Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from SLRC Working Papers for their own publications. As copyright holder, SLRC requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication.

Contents

About us	2
Acknowledgements	2
Acronyms	4
1 Introduction and research questions	5
2 Analytical framework, methodology and outline of the study	7
2.1 Analytical framework	7
2.2 Methodology	8
2.3 Outline of the study	9
3 Background and context	10
3.1 Introduction to the LGCDP and the case study focus in Bhalubase (Upper) DWP, Devithane DWP and Bhalubase (Althanabesi) DWP	10
3.2 The study sites	13
4 Findings	15
4.1 LGCDP interventions to strengthen the capacity of local government to provide DWS services	15
4.1.1 The impact of LGCDP on service delivery effectiveness	15
4.1.2 The impact of LGCDP on service delivery inclusiveness	16
4.2 The impact of LGCDP interventions on DWS service delivery, community participation, and perceived changes in local governance and state-society relations	22
4.2.1 Community participation in service delivery under the LGCDP programmes	23
4.2.2 Changes in the community's ability to influence service delivery and accountability in the DWS sectors	23
4.2.3 Changes in the community's ability to influence service delivery and accountability outside the DWS sectors	25
5 Reflection and discussion	26
5.1 Relevance for themes identified in existing literature on LGCDP	26
5.2 Relevance for themes identified in the SLRC review	28
6 Conclusion	30
7 References	32

Acronyms

DDC	District Development Committee
DWMC	Drinking Water Management Committee
DWP	Drinking Water Programme
DWS	Drinking Water and Sanitation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GGD	General Group Discussion
IDI	In-depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGCDP	Local Governance and Community Development Programme
MoLD	Ministry of Local Development
NCCR	Nepal Center for Contemporary Research
RQ	Research Question
SLRC	Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
VDC	Village Development Committee
DDC	District Development Committee

1 Introduction and research questions

The Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) is a six-year research programme being implemented in eight countries.¹ It focuses on improving understanding of access to basic services and livelihoods in conflict-affected contexts, including how services are delivered at the local level, how people perceive the government, and what institutional, individual and system-level capacities are built. In Nepal, the Nepal Center for Contemporary Research (NCCR) has been implementing the SLRC programme through a longitudinal survey and complementary qualitative research. The first round of the longitudinal survey conducted in 2012 generated findings on Drinking Water and Sanitation (DWS) service delivery in Ilam, Bardiya and Rolpa districts (see Map 1). To complement the survey findings (some of which are drawn on below), this piece of qualitative research on DWS services was designed for Ilam district's Ilam Municipality.

Map 1: SLRC Nepal longitudinal survey sites



Source: Upreti et al., (2014)

A decade-long armed conflict between the Maoists and the Government of Nepal (GoN) from 1996-2006 destroyed community networks, caused a breakdown in family and social relations, and restricted development assistance. The state was too weak to deliver basic services, while the 'Maoist insurgents sought to obstruct state-provided basic services in order to distance people from the state' (Acharya et al., 2015). This situation had an impact on livelihoods, invited corruption in national and local-level development, and frustrated community participation in development work, resulting in low levels of development and volunteer work and reflecting a great loss of organisational, system and individual capabilities.

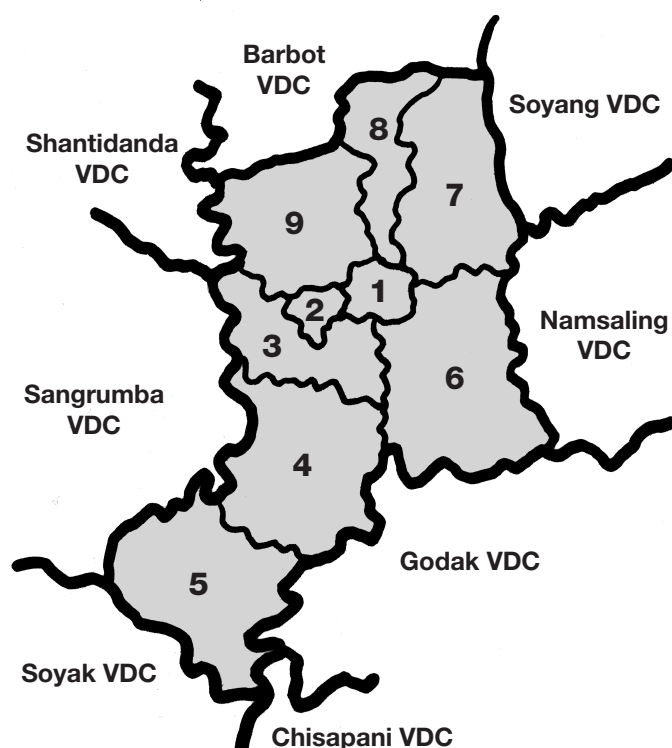
¹ The eight countries are Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

The Maoist insurgency played out mainly in rural areas, where insurgents vandalised or destroyed drinking-water supply systems (dams, pipeline, taps, etc.) in an attempt to prevent the state from providing basic services, thus breaking the connection between state and people and negatively impacting people's perceptions of government performance. Ilam district was not as badly affected as Rolpa and Bardiya districts (the other districts in which SLRC research is being carried out) but the conflict still significantly influenced local governance performance and people's trust in its institutions.

The armed conflict ended in 2006 when the Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) was signed between the Maoists and the GoN. The GoN sought to establish better local governance with more community participation (Acharya et al., 2015) and tried to show its commitment by paving the way for the formation of autonomous local bodies. In the water sector, the District Water Resource Committee (DWRC), the Drinking Water Management Committee (DWMC) and the Drinking Water Users' Committee (DWUC) were introduced.

This study was designed to assess the impact of the Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP) on basic DWS service delivery, local governance and state-society relations in the post-conflict period. Of the 10 LGCDP-supported Drinking Water Programmes (DWPs) in Ilam Municipality, three operating in Wards 4 and 5 were selected for study: the Bhalubase (Upper) DWP, the Devithane DWP and the Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP (see Map 2). Details of these three DWPs are presented in Section 3.

Map 2: Rough map of Ilam Municipality showing wards



Source: <http://www.illamonline.com/ilam-municipality.html>.

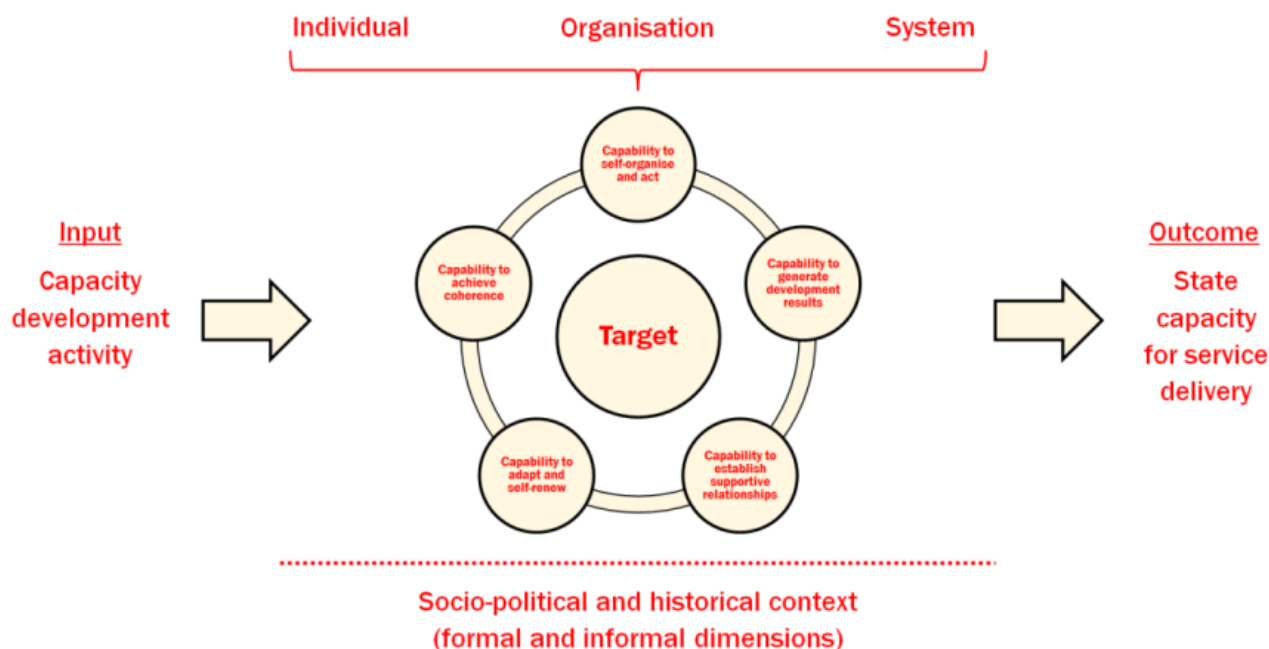
2 Analytical framework, methodology and outline of the study

2.1 Analytical framework

The analytical framework of this study is designed according to the two research questions set for the study: How effective were LGCDP interventions in strengthening the capacity of the local government bodies to provide DWS services to the local people? And how did LGCDP interventions on DWS services influence community participation in local governance and state-society relations at the local level? Addressing the first research question, the study attempts to identify the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the drinking water service. Four different factors are proposed as important features of the analysis: governance barriers, physical access, financial access, and social barriers. Analysis of the second research question uses three simple categories under which data have been coded: (1) community participation in DWS service delivery under the LGCDP programmes, (2) changes in the community's ability to influence DWS service delivery and accountability in water and sanitation sectors, and (3) changes in the community's ability to influence service delivery and accountability outside the DWS sectors.

The study also employs the SLRC Research Question (RQ) 2 Analytical Framework (Mallett et al., 2014) which concerns state capacity to (1) achieve coherence, (2) self-organise and act, (3) generate development results, (4) establish supportive relationships, and (5) adapt and self-renew at the individual, organisational and system levels (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Visualised analytical framework for RQ 2 state capacity for service delivery



Source: Mallett et al. (2014)

2.2 Methodology

This study is informed by the findings of the first round of the SLRC longitudinal survey conducted in Ilam, Bardiya and Rolpa districts (see Map 1) in 2012. The survey produced data related to DWS service delivery that complements this qualitative research. To draw together evidence, this study focuses on the DWS programmes as units rather than on the political boundary. By selecting particular DWS programmes as research units, this study generates data on the situation, impacts and capacity at system, organisational and community levels.

In order to assess and understand the impacts of the LGCDP-supported DWS programmes in terms of both service delivery and capacity building, the study uses information gathered from local government officials, service providers, service beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. A number of methods were used to gather qualitative data, including key informant interviews (KIIs), in-depth interviews (IDIs), focus group discussions (FGDs) and general group discussions (GGDs).

The GGDs consisted of relatively informal and unstructured discussions with small groups of people in natural settings including teashops, temples, parks and other public places. The objectives of these discussions were to become familiar with the local context of the DWS service in the district and to identify an initial set of key issues. The utility of this approach is found in the use of natural gatherings that do not require significant amounts of time to organise as well as in its contribution to building rapport. The GGDs were an important tool because the people we met in natural gatherings were from different social backgrounds. Almost all the customers in the teashops were male (from different class and castes). We visited the teashop in the morning and evening – prime times for doing household work, which is mostly done by women. On the other hand, we met mostly women at the temples, which reflects how religion provides women with opportunities for social interaction and time outside the home. This study assumes the above observations in GGDs have significance in the analysis.

KIIs were used to understand various aspects (financial, technical, representational and participatory) of the programmes selected. Altogether, 12 KIIs were conducted among District Development Committee (DDC) or Municipality officials, DWMC members, local leaders and social workers. Information obtained also included an overview of LGCDP investment and support and views on the LGCDP's contribution in developing capacity at the organisational and community level. Further information collected related to the adequacy of LGCDP support, quality assurance, and the structure of the programmes. This study also gathered information on the formation of DWMCs and participation in them (roles of the participants, annual general meetings, planning meetings, decision-making, public hearings, and social audits). KIIs were also useful for exploring DWMCs' responses to people's concerns, the interaction of the DWMC with other community groups (such as mothers' associations, youth clubs, children's clubs, local cooperatives and user groups), and rules for water allocation and distribution. Similarly, formal structures, procedures and roles for community participation in the DWMC and communication, information dissemination and transparency were explored through KIIs. Finally, KIIs also explored the default users (people who receive the DWS service but do not pay charges) and how this arrangement affects service delivery.

Across the three DWPs, 31 IDIs were conducted among community members, including service beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries (those included in the service list but not served), the DWMC Chair and general committee members. Eleven respondents were interviewed in Bhalubase (Upper), 9 in Devithane, and 11 in Bhalubase (Attharabesi). Of the 31, 16 were Brahmin/Chhetri, 7 Dalits and 8 Janjati; 19 were male and 12 female. IDIs with service beneficiaries helped us assess and understand their knowledge of the DWMC (structures, participation, roles and activities), developed capacities (reasons for the perceived strength/weakness), their ability to influence the service provider, and examples and outcomes of interaction with the DWMC and other agencies. IDIs with non-beneficiaries

helped us understand their perceptions of the constraints on accessing services, overload of user charges/administration fees, and social characteristics (class, caste/ethnicity). IDIs with the DWMC Chair and general members explored their views on capacity development, their roles and responsibilities, their ability to influence government through the DWMC, their ability to self-organise and act, and their ability to demand responsiveness and accountability from service providers. Three FGDs were conducted in heterogeneous groups of 6-8 people including male and female participants, service beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in each group.

This study does not reveal the real names of the respondents: it uses the pseudonyms, but the real gender, caste/ethnicity and the DWP are given because their social characteristics and their connections with particular DWP are important. Thus, after the pseudonym comes a respondent number, gender code (F for Female, M for Male), caste/ethnicity code (C for Chhetri, B for Brahmin, D for Dalit and J for Janajati), and DWP code (BA for Bhalubase Attharabesi, BU for Bhalubase-Upper and D for Devithane): for example, Respondent 1/F/C/BA, Respondent 7/M/B/BU, Respondent 11/F/D/BA. In case of the KII respondents, real names are used as the concerned respondents gave permission to use them.

2.3 Outline of the study

This study is presented in six sections. The first section introduces the paper and locates the study within the broader SLRC research agenda. This second section has presented the analytical framework, methodology and outline of the study. The third section provides the background and context of the study, including a brief overview of the three DWPs studied as well as the specific features of the study sites. The fourth section presents the major findings, drawing on both new data and relevant literature. Section 4.1 deals with the issue of effectiveness of LGCDP interventions in strengthening the capacity of the local government to provide DWS services, while Section 4.2 deals with LGCDP interventions' influence on community participation in local governance and state-society relations. The fifth section reflects on the broader relevance of the research findings, first dealing with its relevance for themes identified in the existing literature on the LGCDP, and then discussing the relevance for themes identified in SLRC review. The sixth section concludes the study.

3 Background and context

3.1 Introduction to the LGCDP and the case study focus in Bhalubase (Upper) DWP, Devithane DWP and Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP

As part of its efforts on poverty reduction, community-led development and efficient local service delivery, the GoN seeks to achieve ‘tangible changes’ in local governance (LGCDP, 2008: 07). In this vision, local governance is concerned with managing local development in a way in which local people can participate and lead the development process. Only the process of participatory and inclusive community-led development can enable communities to ‘express their interests and needs, mediate differences, and exercise their rights and obligations at local levels’ (MoLD, 2012: I). According to the LGCDP (2010), though, this is not easy in the Nepali context: ‘it’s hard for people to fully internalise local governance’.

The LGCDP, introduced in 2008 as a collaboration programme between the GoN and its international development partners,² is designed to support local governance and community-led development through the channel of central government. In particular, it seeks to promote accountable, participatory and inclusive access to publicly provided goods and services at the local level. It provides technical support to the local government bodies – DDCs, Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Municipalities – as well as to the Ministry of Local Development³ (MoLD) and other line ministries.

The ministry’s evaluation found that first phase LGCDP created a ‘strong institutional base’ and ‘built capacity through social mobilization and capacity development initiatives’.⁴ It also identified improvement in the LGCDP’s technical support, support in strengthening financial monitoring, support in management of revenue collection, support in building public-private partnerships, encouragement in implementation of minimum conditions, and emphasis on people’s ownership of projects. LGCDP provides development funds to local government bodies for local development and basic service delivery as well as supporting local people’s active engagement with the local government and service providers.⁵ In the case of DWS, the fund was channelled to improve the supply of existing DWPs. In each of the three DWPs studied, funds were spent to strengthen supply through investments in bigger reservoirs, pipeline replacement and maintenance. Details are provided below for each DWP.

Although the LGCDP support was also intended to enable the active and productive participation of community members and to support local capacity building in Nepal, research on its impact is sparse. While ‘interactive participation strives to empower the communities to be the leading decision-makers, planners and implementers’ (Rautanen et al., 2014), it is yet to be established whether the LGCDP has achieved its objectives of strengthening the ability of local governments to support effective service delivery and enabling local community members to take part in development processes and exercise their voice. It is therefore important to explore the ways in which LGCDP has influenced local governance and state-society relations at the local level.

² Major donors include the Asian Development Bank, Danish International Development Agency, Canadian International Development Agency, the UK Department for International Development, the Government of Norway, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Japan International Cooperation Agency, the World Bank and various UN agencies (LGCDP, 2010).

³ The entity executing the LGCDP.

⁴ LGCDP discussion of ‘Outcomes and Outputs’ at <http://lgcdp.gov.np/phase2/?q=node/285>.

⁵ The LGCDP has a number of specific objectives: technical assistance, policy support, developing guidelines and orientation to key stakeholders, capacity building, mainstreaming gender and social inclusion and child/youth inclusion in local governance, strengthening bottom-up planning systems at the local level, community empowerment and local governance processes, monitoring/evaluation, and advocacy and media training.

The first phase of the SLRC longitudinal survey conducted by NCCR in 2012 in Bardiya, Ilam and Rolpa provided a wealth of information about the effectiveness and accessibility of local services and livelihood programmes and documented people's perceptions of local government (see Upreti et al., 2014).

Broadly speaking, Ilam Municipality has not had adequate access to DWS facilities and this has had negative consequences in terms of health, well-being, safety and environment. The lack of adequate water and sanitation facilities has led to health issues such as diarrhoea and cholera outbreaks. The Ilam Municipality Office provides the DWS facility. With the techno-economic support received from the LGCDP through the central government, the Municipality Office owns ten drinking water service programmes in different wards and collects service charges.⁶ Users pay USD 0.49⁷ for 10,000 litres. If any household collects more than 10,000 litres per month, it has to pay USD 0.19 for each additional thousand litres.

In all cases, a DWMC has been established and would like to take over service provision, but members of the DWMC claim the Municipality Office has prevented them from being registered as independent, autonomous and official institutions.

Box 1: Bhalubase (Upper) DWP

The Bhalubase (Upper) DWP covers 62 households. It was allocated USD 909 by the Municipality Office in the first phase LGCDP budget in 2009 (covering 2008-2012). The headwater (or source) for the programme is located in Ward No. 3 and drinking water is supplied to the Golakharka service coverage area in Ward No. 5.

Before the implementation of this DWP, community members reported having to travel half an hour on average to fetch drinking water. The burden of this trip had important social implications, with parents from other areas preferring their daughters not marry boys from Golakharka, where they would have to fetch water from distant sources. We will be discussing these social implications (water-fetching as a female job) later in the analysis.

In 1991, members of the community arranged a public tap in the area bringing water from the Singhabahini DWP through a small pipeline. There used to be long queues and users sometimes got involved in disputes. From 1993 the Government of Japan managed the drinking water service system and the service was slightly improved, but as the population grew, people began to face water scarcity again. In 1997/98, Ilam DDC provided pipes and meters and introduced monthly charges. In 2008, the first phase LGCDP Programme was introduced and budget was allocated and invested by Ilam Municipality Office in the Bhalubase DWP (Upper) in the name of source protection and improved service delivery.

⁶ Bhalubase DWP (Upper), Singhabahini DWP, Sisne DWP, Panchedhara DWP, Devithane DWP, Jordhara DWP, Aitandhara DWP, Bhuwan Singh DWP, Bhalubase DWP (Attharabesi), Kharka Muhan DWP.

⁷ For the convenience of international readers, this study applies conversion of Nepali Rupees (NRs) into United States Dollar (USD). 101.21 NRS is converted equivalent of USD 1 based on the exchange rate of Nepal Rastra Bank from 6 July 2015. The study also uses dates according to the English calendar (i.e. AD).

Box 2: Devithane DWP

The Devithane DWP covers 54 households. It was allocated USD 829.95 from the LGCDP budget in 2009.⁸ The source water is located in Ward No. 3 and the water is supplied to Ward No. 4 (see Map 2).

Before LGCDP support, there was one public tap from which five or six households could fetch drinking water in a day, while other households would have to travel to alternative sources. The tap operated on a 'first come, first served' principle, resulting in inequities in distribution and conflict among service users. The alternative for users was to fetch drinking water from the Jordhara DWP, an hour's journey. For washing clothes and taking baths, community members would go to the Maikhola river, a one-and-a-half hour journey. As usual, females and children were the ones who had to fetch the water.

Today almost all households in the community are provided with drinking water taps, either at their *tole*⁹ or at their premises, and disputes and small-scale conflicts over access have been avoided. The situation is visibly improved, although not entirely satisfactory. People in the city area of Ilam Municipality deposit their domestic waste into an unmanaged drainage system, allowing pollutants to leak into the drinking water source. This problem intensifies during the rainy season.

The main reservoir of Devithane DWP was designed to deliver drinking water through a 32mm pipe. However, in 2009 a 20mm pipe was installed leading local residents to question whether this could adequately fulfil demand. The main pipeline is 40mm in diameter, although in some places it is repaired with 30mm pipe, reducing the overall capacity of the pipeline.

Box 3: Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP

The Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP covers about 100 households, of which 62 have meters installed. The remaining 38 households are partially served. Among these partially served households, in some cases, there are up to five households consuming drinking water through a single tap with meter installed on it. The Municipality Office allocated USD 909 from the LGCDP budget in 2009, which was invested in the DWP.

The source of the drinking water supplied through this programme is located in Ward No. 3, and the water is supplied to Ward No. 5. Previously, the Municipality Office supplied drinking water in this area from the Shinhabahini. At that time, each household had to pay £0.10 each month to the operator. When the Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP was designed, the Shinhabahini DWP was shifted to Ward No. 4. Now drinking water is supplied in the morning between 5am and 8am and each household can collect up to 300 litres.

The planning of airport construction in Ward No. 5 has attracted people, and the increasing flow of migrants and demand for water may pose a challenge. People are therefore exploring alternative sources to complement the existing DWP and to fulfil increasing drinking water demand. As Respondent 1/F/C/BA says, they have been studying and assessing the possibility of bringing water from the *Ghatte Khola* in Shantidada VDC, which is about 3km from Bhanjyang. This source lies in private land, so the community in Bhanjyang have been negotiating with the owner of the land. According to Kishor Karki (a KII Respondent), the resource owner has agreed to the plan. The community has not consulted with any other governmental or non-governmental organisation, but Karki reports there are plans to form a committee and negotiate with the state authority and other social organisations seeking their contribution.

⁸ In the programme design, it was stated that the Municipality Office would invest 60 percent of the overall cost and the consumers themselves would invest the remainder, but consumers have contributed up to 80 percent of the overall expenditure, according to respondents' estimates.

⁹ A *tole* is a small cluster of homes.

Capacity of the main tank is 65,000 litres. The main pipeline of Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP is 40mm is reported by the community to be too small to supply an adequate quantity of water. The quantity of water at source is enough for a 65mm pipe, but it has not been harnessed fully. The 40mm pipeline has only been able to supply half of its capacity because it is old and in poor condition, having previously been installed in Wards No. 3 and 4. It is installed open rather than underground and has numerous leaks and significant rusting. Though there is quality water at source (compared to what users get in their bucket at home), the water gets contaminated on the way to households as ditch/gully/sewerage water enters the pipe via leakage points, requiring users to treat water by boiling and filtering.

The DWMC is a newly formed committee of eight men and three women. The Municipality Office has arranged an operator who operates the service and undertakes repairs (e.g. general maintenance). If additional maintenance is needed, members of the community contribute labour.

3.2 The study sites

Ilam Municipality is located in the Ilam district of Mechi zone, Eastern Development Region.¹⁰ It has nine wards and covers 27 km², of which 3.14 km² is classed as urban (Ilam Municipality Office, 2014). The political boundary of the Municipality in the east is Maikhola, in the west, Puwakhola, in the north, Sarki and Ujelihola, and in the south, Puwamai Khola.

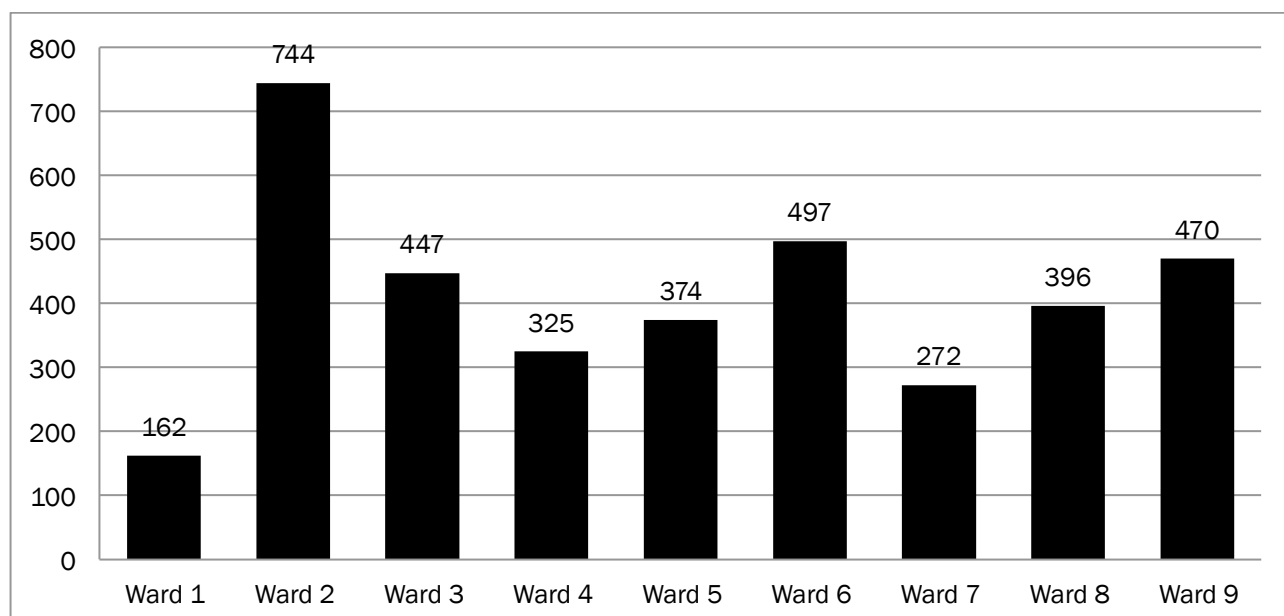
Ilam Municipality is a trade centre famous for tea, ginger, cardamom and *amriso*,¹¹ which are supplied to the terai region and to neighbouring districts such as Paachthar, Terathum and Taplejung.

The population of Ilam Municipality increased from 16,246 in 2001 to 30,000 (18,385 male and 17,615 female) in 2011 (Ilam Municipality Office, 2013). Population growth contributes to an increasing scarcity of drinking water. The provision of water and sanitation for the growing urban population is a major challenge. Traditional sources of drinking water including *mul* and *kuwa* have depleted as the expansion of roads and other modern infrastructures have impacted the natural environment.

¹⁰ The Global Positioning System (GPS) tracker used during the study measures its location as 26°N, 54", 0" and 86°E, 56", 25". The average height is measured 4,100 feet (lowest 1,968.5 feet to highest 5,249.3 feet). Ilam became a municipality in 1958 (or 2015 Bikram Sambat in the Nepali calendar), later in 1962 (2019 BS) it was announced 'Nagar Panchayat'. In 1990 (2047 BS), it was again announced as a 'Municipality'.

¹¹ *Amriso* is a kind of 'broom grass'. Ginger is locally known as *aaduwa* and cardamom is *alaichi*.

Figure 2: Distribution of households by ward



Source: Field data

There are 2,352 taps in Ilam Municipality regulated by the Municipality Office (Ilam Municipality Office, 2014). Most taps are private (2,320), with 13 public taps, 7 community taps and 12 other. The Municipality Office collects a service charge from private taps. The other taps are provided free as a public service.

There are 3,687 households in the Ilam Municipality (the distribution of households is presented in Figure 2). The Ilam Municipality Office (2014) claims the actual demand for drinking water is 937,000 litres a day, while the Municipality Office has been able to supply 862,500 litres per day, meaning over 90 percent of drinking water demand is supposedly met. However, households at higher altitudes are dissatisfied with the irregularity of the drinking water service, while the water supplied to those residing at the average altitude is not adequate to meet both drinking and sanitation needs. With few alternative water resources for bathroom use, garden use, washing and so on, the households have to compromise their sanitation.

As the Ilam Municipality Office opted to promote itself as 'clean-green' city, it began to get support through public campaigns. As a result, open defecation has been discouraged in the municipal area, which has resulted in decreased human-induced water contamination (Ilam Municipality Office, 2014).

Ilam Municipality has a 2.3km sewage system (Ilam Municipality Office, 2014). The roadside drains all drain in to the natural gullies in the area because the topography allows self-drainage and there are no serious flooding issues.

The absence of locally elected political bodies has created a void in service delivery, infrastructural development and other affairs. To harmonise the roles of locally elected political bodies, the MoLD charges the Local Development Officer, Executive Officer and the VDC Secretary with the functions of the absent locally elected political bodies. However, the government strongly advised these government officials (from respective offices) to hold discussions with the local former political representatives and people from various social groups before any local development plan and action. The GoN has adopted a more decentralised approach to local development in the last decade and has given more authority to local institutions, for instance forest users' committees, mothers' associations, irrigation users' committees and drinking water users' committees.

4 Findings

4.1 LGCDP interventions to strengthen the capacity of local government to provide DWS services

Assessing the impact of the LGCDP on DWS service delivery is difficult as there is no specific programme fully funded under the LGCDP. Rather, it provides partial techno-economic support as a complement to broader investments and practices in the sector. Many improvements may be attributable to a range of factors, not just the LGCDP; nevertheless, this study attempts to focus on LGCDP support and assess the outcomes.

4.1.1 The impact of LGCDP on service delivery effectiveness

Before LGCDP support in the three DWPs, people in the Wards 4 and 5 of Ilam Municipality had to fetch drinking water from locally available unprotected water resources such as naturally emerged *mulis*, rivers and springs. Some of these resources got depleted or dried up. According to Kishor Karki, a KII respondent from the Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP, people were not able to organise to tackle the problem and protect the available resources or make arrangements to fulfil their water-related needs. But, with LGCDP support for protecting water sources and building reservoirs, the community has begun to see an improved drinking water situation. Service provision is now more secure, often accessible from public and private taps, although the water supplied is still untreated, limited and sometimes irregular.

Although there have been important improvements in drinking water service delivery, there is still dissatisfaction among many households regarding the quality and quantity of water they have been consuming. The three DWPs were designed to maximise the capacity of the main pipeline and the capacity of the reservoir, but the politically uncertain environment and the vulnerability of the design and construction process resulted in less capacity in the DWPs than hoped for. Water equal in volume to the amount households receive still overflows from the main source. The old pipelines leak water about one third¹² of their capacity. In the case of Bhalubase (Attharabesi), the level of water source and main tank is at average height, so the main tank cannot store water at capacity. Such vulnerable designs and infrastructure have hampered improvements in supply.

This study does not find evidence of any systematic investigation conducted to maintain and improve the water quality in the three DWPs. Four years ago the quality of water supplied through the Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP was checked and found good to drink, but ‘no such investigation has been done since that’, complained Respondent 1/F/C/BA. There are some examples of the Municipality Office conducting water purification. However, one anecdote from Respondent 7/M/B/BU provides an insight into the Municipality Office’s inability to maintain drinking water quality: ‘Once the Municipality Office provided 3kg of potash to the operator to purify water. The unskilled operator used all 3kg potash at once and it contaminated the drinking water. The Municipality Office did not provide the right knowledge and skills to the operator.’ Likewise, sometimes the Municipality Office provides bleaching powder, but the unskilled operator does not know the purification process and the drinking water gets contaminated (Respondent 11/F/D/BA). Rather than improving the quality of services, such practices constitute a risk to public health and a misuse of state resources.

Perceptions on the quality of drinking water vary based on the respondents’ gender. Of the 19 female IDI respondents, 11 were satisfied with the quality of water they are fetching, while 9 males out of 12

¹² Estimation of Kishor Karki (a key informant).

were found to be satisfied. As women are more likely to fetch and use water in the household, they might be expected to be better able to judge water quality in terms of the cleanliness of the source, leakage points, and the water-borne diseases suffered by family members (mostly children).

Quality issues are not exclusively the result of a lack of government capacity. The actions of local people also contribute to these challenges. For example, the source of Devithane DWP is not protected with wires and walls, which allows easy entry for opportunists. Also, untreated waste produced by city dwellers is deposited directly into an unmanaged drainage system that allows the waste to leak into the drinking water source. Respondent 10/F/B/D says:

Our drinking water source is not protected: opportunistic people wash their clothes and children bath there, and the chemical pollutants (soap) get mixed in the source from where we are supplied water. We sometimes go to source and ask people not to pollute it. But in our absence people forget our request and take the opportunity for their immediate benefit, which is injurious to us.

Ultimately, there is no option but for users to boil and/or filter the available water, as they worry source water contamination is increasing. Respondent 10/F/B/D and some other female respondents were keen to talk about the quality issues of the water. The more users are acquainted with how clean and safe their water is, the more likely they are to purify water at home. Better access to a safe and clean drinking water and sanitation service impacts significantly on social and human development and poverty reduction (ADB, 2010). The problem is not only a technical one, but relates to gender roles and a lack of inclusion with regard to other social characteristics.

About 55 percent of respondents use household-level water treatment to improve drinking water (boiling and filtering). Households without the knowledge, resources or technology for water treatment, consume the drinking water untreated and suffer water-borne diseases. Respondent 21/M/B/BA claims:

During the wet season [rainy season] the water from the tap looks like water from the sewage: we can see insects trapped inside due to which the meter gets blocked and during the monsoon, the tap water is grimy sometimes. We sometime go to observe the water source and clean the source and reservoir but our single attempt has not been enough.

Where problems do arise in relation to the quality or quantity of the DWS service, there is limited capacity to respond and little evidence that this capacity has improved. The operator is overburdened and gets calls from many households to fix problems. In such a situation, as Respondent 21/M/B/BA argues, ‘the operator might answer that he cannot visit the household but could ask the Municipality Office to fix the problem’. This may create disputes between the service operator and the households. Even if some households report their problems in the Municipality Office, there is little chance of having the grievance redressed. Respondent 21/M/B/BA claims that there will be no hearing within six months.

4.1.2 The impact of LGCDP on service delivery inclusiveness

The LGCDP aims for inclusive participation of people with different social characteristics, and this study found no significant evidence of explicit discrimination. However, the extent to which people benefitted from improvements in DWS service delivery did vary in many cases. The range of levels of access reported by respondents paints a picture of substantial inequities in drinking water service delivery in the study area.

At one end of the spectrum, there are some households in the community that are not served or are partially served by the DWS service. The family of Respondent 8/F/B/BA moved to Ward No. 5 some five months ago. They have been residing in a rented flat and like many households in this situation

they do not have their own tap installed and so face difficulties in accessing drinking water. They have been using drinking water from the house-owner's tap, collecting 50 litres of water a day; this is not sufficient for their DWS needs, which compromises their livelihoods. Respondent 8/F/B/BA has not had her personal tap installed because of the stringent criteria (such as land certificate, house map and toilet certificate) set by the Municipality Office, indicating the bureaucratic hurdles to making service delivery inclusive. Households not able to collect more than 100 litres of drinking water a day are in a stressed condition and have to use the available drinking water economically, using saved water to fulfil their sanitation needs. Even 100 litres a day is not adequate in many cases: Respondent 9/F/B/BA collects 150 litres per day, but finds it inadequate for her household. At the other end of the spectrum, the household of Respondent 12/M/B/BU can collect 500 litres water a day, which he says is enough.

Respondent 6/F/J/BA asks, 'in whatever situation they are, are not they the citizens of this state? Should not they access the basic service?' These questions indicate what the community expects from their local government.

This study explores four potential factors contributing to this variation observed in this section.

1. Governance barriers

Evidence drawn from across the municipality indicated at least four governance issues or forms of 'political influence' (Respondent 8/F/B/BA) that impact the inclusivity of service provision in the LGCDP-supported DWPs:

- *Bureaucratic delays:* Some households in the community do not have meters for electricity and drinking water as their house map has not been approved by the Municipality Office. This is mandatory for getting access to the services that the Municipality Office provides in the area. For example, in Bhanjyang (Ward No. 5), there are some households still not able to benefit from either the Bhalubase (Upper) or Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWPs. They have been sharing their neighbours' drinking water. According to the Respondent 3/M/D/BA: 'these households have submitted applications to the Municipality Office requesting taps, but their applications have not been approved yet. Maybe these households have not approved the house map previously, and the Municipality Office does not approve for the service if anyone has not approved house map'. Poor and Dalit households are often less educated and empowered, unaware of the applicable legal provisions, and not in possession of important legal documents. Local governance, in this regard, appears as a barrier with a lot of bureaucratic hurdles and delays.
- *Political influence in budget allocation:* There are disparities in budget allocation across the main city area and other remote areas of the Ilam Municipality. Political appointments in the Municipality Office have also been reported as being responsible for unequal budget distributions among different wards. The allocated budget varies widely from USD 593 to USD 1,284 (Ilam Municipality Office, 2013).
- *Political influence in allocation of water:* Some respondents complained the operator of the DWPs releases water from the reservoirs without checking whether drinking water is equitably distributed or not. The Municipality Office does not monitor whether users are served on the basis of equity, whether the service infrastructure needs maintenance, and whether some influential users have been influencing the service provider. Respondent 2/F/J/BU claims 'there are some influential people influencing the operator to discharge more water in their *tole*'.
- *Unpunished illegal conduct:* Respondent 6/F/J/BA reported (and the study team observed) that some households are consuming drinking water by detaching the pipe from the meter. This type of illegal conduct has not been investigated by the Municipality Office. Respondent 6/F/J/BA reported she had complained about this issue in the Municipality Office twice, but 'the Municipality Office showed reluctance on this issue, and this has encouraged the illegal practice and has contributed in an unequal distribution of drinking water' (Respondent 6/F/J/BA).

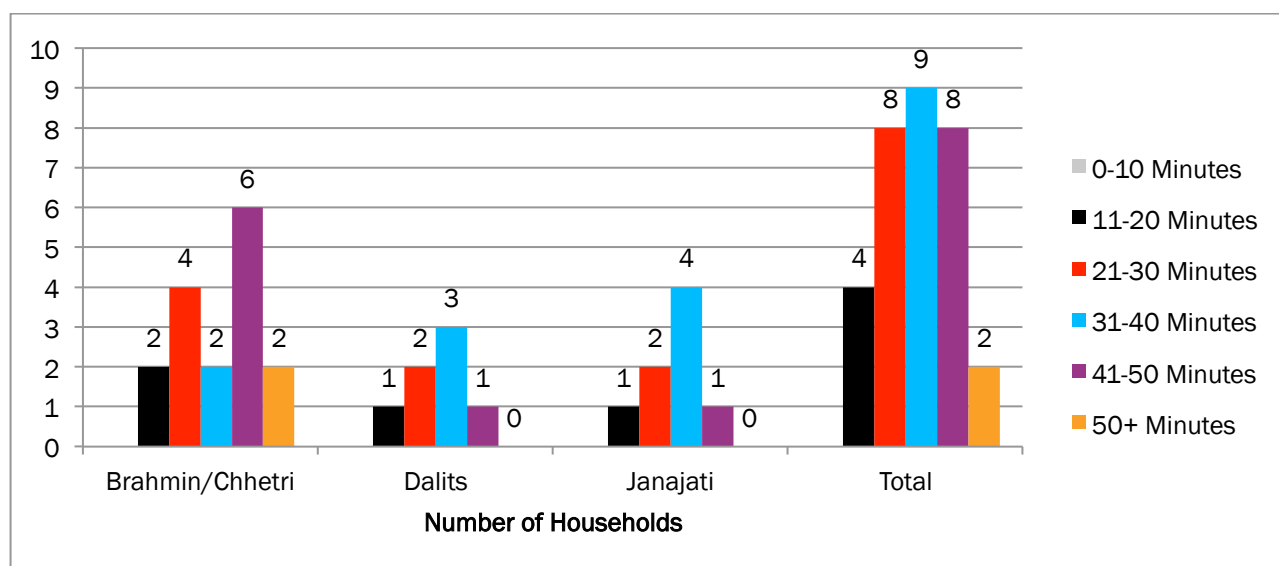
2. Physical access

As well as governance-related inequities, respondents indicated that physical access issues, such as topography, contribute to the variability in peoples' access to adequate drinking water.

Households are dependent on the tap water supplied either at their house or at their *tole*. The main city area (Wards 1, 2 and 3) of the municipality has better drinking water service delivery than the more remote wards (4, 5 and 6). Ward No. 5, Bhanjyang, is just half an hour from the main city area but the local people have been struggling for the adequate DWS facilities. Respondent 2/F/J/BU says: 'To wash clothes and to bath it takes us half an hour to reach the nearest river (Maikhola)'. Ilam Municipality has not been able to harness the nearby the Maikhola for drinking water for reasons of geographical complexity. Households have also not been harvesting rainwater, so there is no alternative but to depend entirely on the available drinking water service and compromise water needs.

According to Respondent 4/M/B/BA, households in Ward No. 5 Bhanjyang – service beneficiaries of Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP – used to fetch drinking water from the Bhalubase (Upper) DWP and sometimes got involved in disputes with the local users. Otherwise they fetched water from an alternative source, 'spending about an hour just to fetch one *gagri*¹³ of water' (Respondent 4/M/B/BA). Now they access drinking water from the Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP. Still, they are not satisfied with the available drinking water. Whenever the service is halted (mostly in the dry season), people need to walk anything from a few minutes to more than an hour (Respondent 6/F/J/BA) to fetch drinking water from an alternative source. The proportion of Brahmin/Chhetri who walk '0-10 minutes' to fetch water from the alternative source is significantly smaller than the proportion of Dalits and Janajati because the latter groups live in more marginal land (further from the bazaar and resources than Brahmin/Chhetri). Figure 3 describes the time taken to reach alternative source for drinking water by caste/ethnicity.

Figure 3: Time taken to reach the alternative source for drinking water, by caste/ethnicity



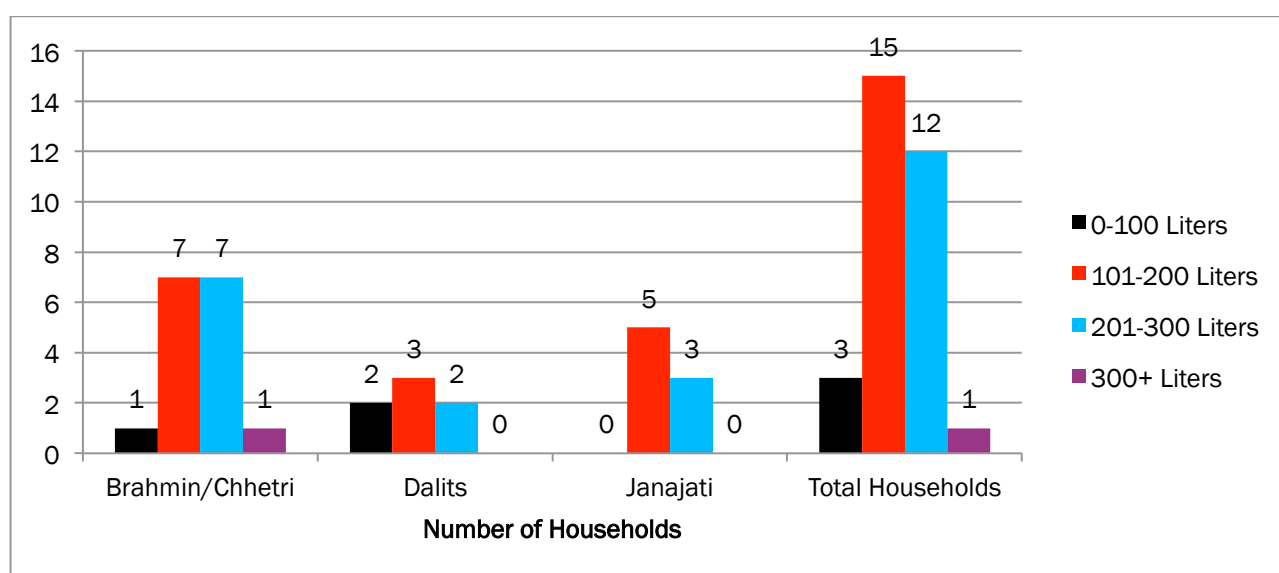
The drinking water supply sometimes gets disrupted because of mud deposits in the main tank, and sometimes the main pipeline leaks. In such situations, the users themselves have to go to clean the reservoir and repair the main pipeline. The main pipelines of all three DWPs are above the ground, so the pipelines are broken everywhere. Where there are joints in the main pipelines, some are 30mm and

¹³ A traditional metal water vessel, also known as *gagro*, which is generally used in collecting and fetching drinking water from the source to the household.

some are 20mm, resulting in an uneven supply. Supplying all the water available at source through bigger main pipelines would address the current scarcity of drinking water in the study area.

Drinking water distribution is not technically sound, with ‘the distributing valves and sockets are connected unscientifically’ (Respondent 2/F/J/BU). The down-side connection discharges water in greater volume, while the up-side connection discharges less. This is one of the main factors behind the unequal distribution of drinking water. Figure 4 shows the quantity of water households receive each day by caste/ethnicity. ‘The locally influential people influence the operator to connect their pipelines from the downside of the main pipeline’, says Respondent 2/F/J/BU. Households residing in the arid higher-altitude parts of the study area are not as well served either. The households at higher altitudes tend to be relatively poorer than the households at lower altitudes and therefore cannot invest a huge amount in service provision. The main reason behind their poverty is the low value of land at higher altitudes and the associated low crop yields, which contribute to insecure livelihoods. This challenge remains as the Municipality Office is not able to invest sufficiently to extend the drinking water service in the higher altitude.

Figure 4: Quantity of drinking water received per day, by caste/ethnicity



3. Financial access

In practice, local users have proved to be crucial for financial investments made in support of improved DWS service delivery in LGCDP-supported DWPs. Households have been paying both formal and informal payments for tap/pipeline installation from the main line to their household. Each household using the Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP contributed USD 2.96 (initially) as the LGCDP funding was not enough to complete the DWP. The Municipality Office also collected charges for installing taps (USD 2.96), meters (USD 5.92), pipes to the main pipeline (USD 19.76), and elbows and sockets (USD 3.95). Respondent 1/F/C/BA remembers and calculates the overall individual expenditure for tap installation at her household: ‘in total, it was USD 35.60 as financial investment’ and as they also had to contribute labour for about seven days (an approximate value of USD 1.97 each day, which is about USD 13.79 over 7 days), so their total investment was about USD 49.39 (Respondent 1/F/C/BA). This study reveals that there were no households that did not pay for the water supply. Even relatively poor households paid for the supply and contributed labour because drinking water supply was one of their most fundamental needs. The study does not explore how the poor households manage to pay, but we are aware they owe money to informal local money-lenders and cooperatives.

The Municipality Office takes action against those who do not pay monthly charges for a long time. Initially the Meter Reader informs the households of their non-payment and provides an initial warning that if they continue not to pay, the service provider will not supply water to them. Attempts to explore outcomes in such cases revealed little evidence that the Municipality Office does ever stop water supply, suggesting that the provision is not fully and strictly implemented. The same respondent suggested rural people contribute more labour than urban people, including for repairs, but are charged the same by the Municipal Office, thereby generating resentment where rural consumers feel they have been doing extra work for their drinking water services.

Households in the study area have been paying USD 0.98 to USD 1.48 (USD 1.23 on average) to the Municipality Office per month. The payment amount varies according to the water supplied and measured. Users report the service charge system and measurement of collected water as less effective because meters are damaged or missing or because meter readers do not read the meters. The household of Respondent 2/F/J/BU is able to collect 150 litres a day and drinking water is supplied for an hour per day. Her household pays USD 1.28 a month on average. She is sometimes fined USD 0.24 by the Municipality Office for late payment. Respondent 7/M/B/BU claims 200 litres is not adequate for his household of six members. He says he would be ready to pay more tax for a better service, 'but, why can I not do so? This simply proves the programmes and policies implemented here are not scientific and these do not fit the current politico-economy of the country'. His expectation sheds light on the fact that some people in the study area wish to pay more and receive a better service, and expect more responsive and accountable local governance as well. Figures 5 and 6 show perceptions on service charge by caste/ethnicity and gender-wise.

Figure 5: Perceptions of the service charge for drinking water, by caste/ethnicity

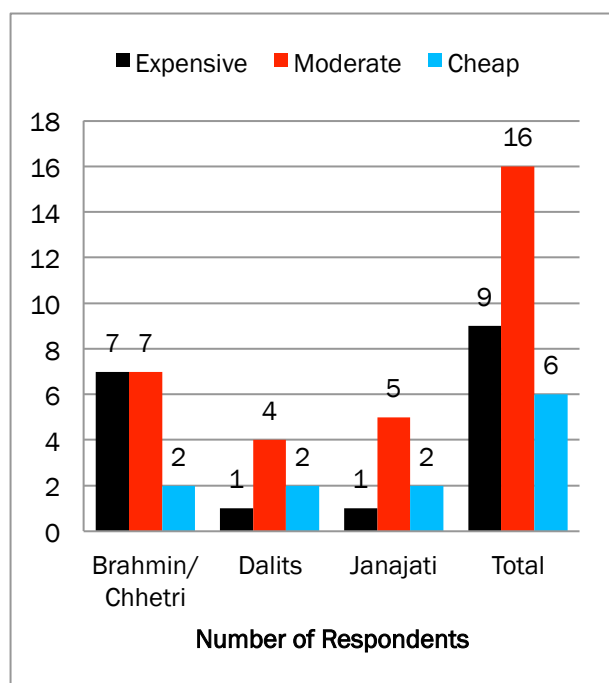
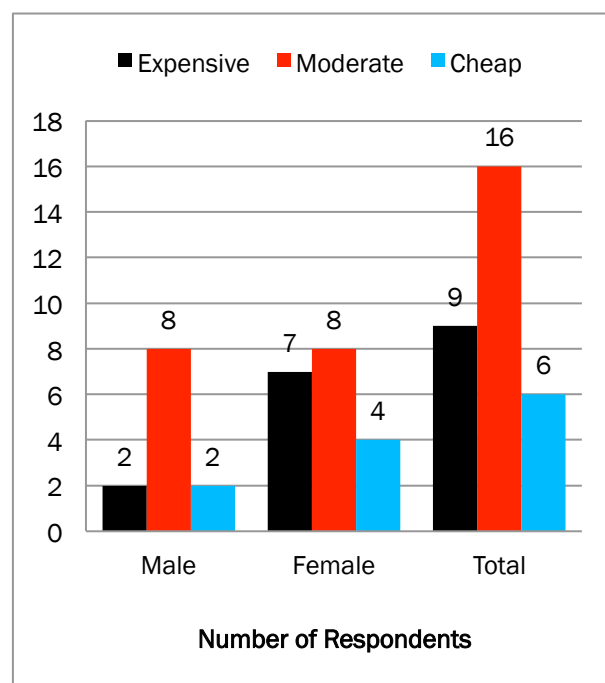


Figure 6: Perceptions of the service charge for drinking water, by gender



The data shows that slightly more than half of the respondents perceive that the charge they have been paying for the drinking water service is 'moderate'. But the perception of male and female on the service charge varies looking at the proportion of males and females deeming their water 'expensive'. Two out of 12 IDI male respondents said the service charge is 'expensive', while 7 out of 19 IDI female respondents did so. Possible reasons for this difference in perception could be that (a) females are

comparatively low-paid and (b) they better know the unfulfilled water needs of the household and may thus perceive they are paying too much for such a limited service.

Respondents report that the Municipality Office collected payments for meter and pipeline installation, but the users themselves had to install them. The minimum service charge is mandatory even if someone does not receive water. For example, four households that were displaced by the construction of the airport have continued paying the fees three to four years after having removed the water meter. 'There is no way out' says Respondent 21/M/B/BA. Some households in the Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP are deprived of the service because they are poor and cannot afford the cost of pipeline and the monthly fees. They have no alternative but to fetch water from a distant source, which may mean spending an hour on the return journey.

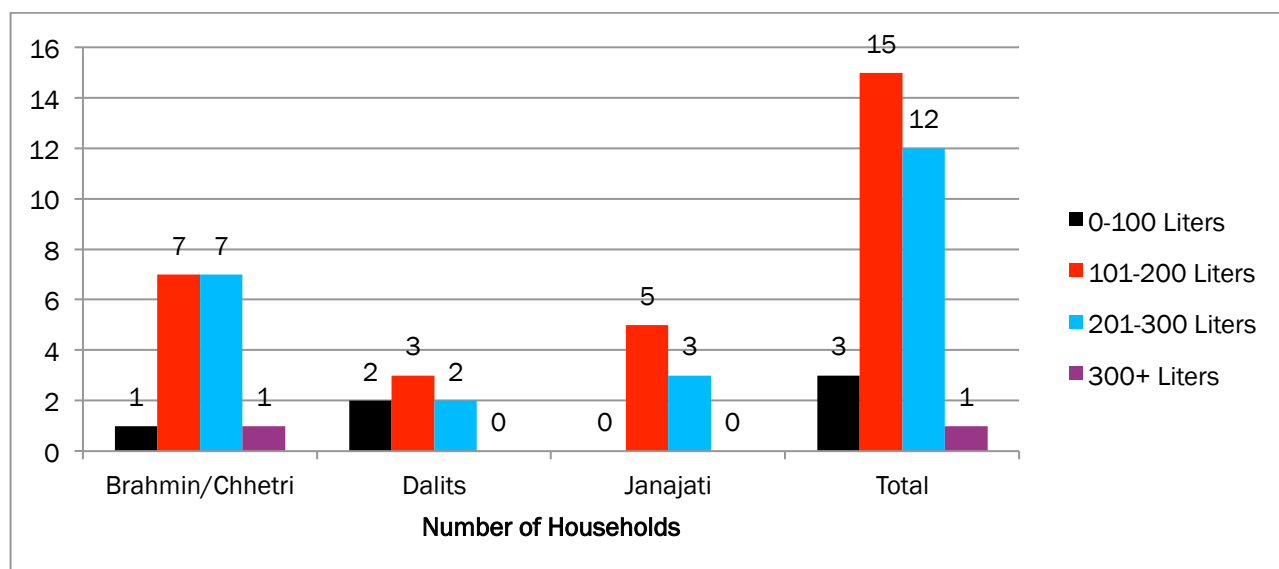
Kishor Karki, a key informant and user of Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP, claims that people have gone several times to the Municipality Office asking for the main pipeline to be replaced but each time they were told there was no budget available for replacing pipelines. Karki thinks the local authorities should allocate the budget received from the central government to the DWMC directly; budgets get divided, diluted by administrative costs and misused if channelled through the local government bodies. Respondent 1/F/C/BA thinks that if there was an authentic local institution of users, then central government could work through it and reduce administrative costs.

4. Social barriers

Women in Nepal bear many households burdens related to DWS service delivery, including fetching water, washing their family's clothes, working in the fields and cooking food for their family members. There are a small number of households in the community that are not served or only partially provided with drinking water services because they are female-headed. Such households (which tend to be smaller in size and relatively poor) in the study sites had no members available for the scheduled labour contribution in the construction period. These households indicated they would cope by accessing water via a neighbouring house and would pay some share of the total charges to the household with whom they share water. The Municipality Office has developed no policy to ensure service coverage for such households. Much therefore depends on the nature of a household's relationship with their neighbours, which appeared to be good in the cases encountered by the research team.

In terms of caste and ethnicity, this study did not find any direct discrimination in service distribution (see Figure 7 for distribution of water based on caste/ethnicity). Disparities in drinking water service distribution tend to be related to geographical complexity (rugged terrain) more than caste discrimination, although most Dalits live in the higher areas where it is more technologically and economically challenging for providers to extend services.

Figure 7: Distribution of drinking water per day, by caste/ethnicity



Source: Field data

Households in the higher parts of the study area have been found to have either limited or no access to drinking water at their household or premises. Similarly, some households in the lower belt of the study area are deprived of the drinking water service because of limited water resources and poor infrastructure, although they have easier access to alternative sources such as *muls*, springs and rivers than those that reside at higher altitudes.

4.2 The impact of LGCDP interventions on DWS service delivery, community participation, and perceived changes in local governance and state-society relations

The first phase of the LGCDP programme was concerned with local governance and community development. People's increasing expectations around accessing an efficient and effective drinking water service and having a say in decision-making and governance seem to have been at least partially met. This section reviews the evidence from respondents regarding the relationship between DWS service delivery and their engagement with local governance.

Before LGCDP support, the three DWPs in this study were locally managed and ineffective. As the LGCDP channelled support and investment through the Municipality Office, service provision improved to some degree. LGCDP support has been mostly used in strengthening local governance structures by building the capacities of district officers, technical officers, engineers and social mobilisers. Service delivery organisations and the efforts made to improve their performance are intended to have a positive effect on the legitimacy of the service delivery agent and the state.

The LGCDP has been assisting the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development 'to introduce best practices in local governance in accordance with other relevant legislation and policies' (LGCDP, 2013). However, this study finds that the knowledge is not transferred to local governance and the community organisations.

The remainder of this section reflects on three aspects of local governance: community participation in service delivery under the LGCDP programmes; changes in the community's ability to influence service delivery and accountability in DWS sectors; and changes in the community's ability to influence service delivery and accountability outside the DWS sectors.

4.2.1 Community participation in service delivery under the LGCDP programmes

The evidence points both to significant willingness on the part of communities to participate in service delivery and limitations on their ability to do so effectively. Two forms of participation emerge as particularly relevant: contributions of labour and money, and participation in management structures.

As indicated in the sections above, people engage in the delivery of services through paying money: respondents estimates vary here, but communities may account for more than 40 percent of DWP financing. Contributions of labour are significant. In the construction period for Devithane DWP, each household contributed labour for five days (or were charged USD 1.97 a day if they could not work). Even since completion people have contributed their labour when needed. In the absence of schedules and as the Municipality Office is not able to monitor and maintain the water quality properly, 'people in all three DWPs go to clean the main reservoirs 5-6 times a year' (Respondent 4/M/B/BA). Such participation is not limited to homeowners: Respondent 8/F/B/BA claims that 'though we are residing in rented flat, we have been contributing in repair and maintenance of the service system in need.' The Municipality Office, however, seems unable to address the genuine demands of people like her, who are newly migrated to the study site, and who are willing to participate in, contribute to, pay for and receive the service. The Municipality Office is still unable to solve the cases like this and promote inclusive service delivery, which would encourage people to contribute to and be ready to pay for the service.

In this sense, participation and inclusiveness are not just about the numbers of people involved but about the inclusion of different voices of different social characteristics, often linked to an idea of equitable and just sharing of resources. Including and valuing the voices of women, Dalits and other marginalised communities would give meaning to equal participation.

A number of mechanisms have been proposed to extend participation from contributions of resources to more substantive engagement in management and decision-making processes. Previously, there were some local mobilisers appointed at Ward level who would establish Ward Public Forums and Public Awareness Centres. But, as Respondent 21/M/B/BA argues, 'such Forums and Centres were not able to work effectively because their decisions were not implemented by the Municipality Office'. People therefore gradually stopped participating.

Further, where participatory institutions have operated, there are concerns over the extent to which participation of marginalised groups is substantive. For example, although some respondents noted 'women too are speaking about their concerns in public' (Respondent 9/F/B/BA), women's participation is generally reported to be low in debates, public hearings, planning, and decision-making related to DWS, with female respondents concerned that their presence is tokenistic. Respondent 8/F/B/BA says, 'I sometimes have participated in the meetings informally organised by DWMC. But the female representatives are represented just for the sake of representation. Their role and responsibility is not valued. They are represented just like dummies.' As observed during the fieldwork for this study, this appears to be applicable in the case of Dalit participants' representation as well. Almost all such representatives of identified groups with specific social characteristics end up taking positions based on political party interests rather than representing the interests of the gender and social groups to which they belong.

4.2.2 Changes in the community's ability to influence service delivery and accountability in the DWS sectors

In the case of all three DWPs, ownership continues to lie with the Municipality Office. Public perceptions of government performance in this regard are commonly negative, with 'people in the arid wards' found to 'have a more negative perception of the government' (Respondent 13/F/J/D and Respondent 7/M/B/BU). Another respondent (Respondent 3/M/D/BA) says:

I have seen that there are some households (5 to 6 in number) in the remote and arid wards of the municipality. I often have heard from these people that the Municipality Office has been prejudiced towards them. I observe they have negative perceptions of the state. But, personally, I would prefer to say, the Municipality Office is unable to invest technologically and economically to supply water to their households, because extending service to that area is costlier to the Municipality Office.

There were some respondents (Respondents 4/M/B/BA, 21/M/B/BA, and 18/F/B/D) who argued that an adequate presence of government bodies in the community and their transparent engagement with local people is a necessary part of the local governance of service provision, but that this has been lacking in this case. Respondent 18/F/B/D says that ‘the state (referring to local government) is not properly responding the needs of the local people; they do not share ideas genuinely with the local people. In a way, there is a great gulf between the state and people. This results in a trust deficit’. This inability to create an environment of trust – taken together with performance issues relating to the ability of the Municipality Office to fulfil its responsibilities with respect to ensuring drinking water quality, investing in necessary repairs and monitoring illegal practices – can lead community members to conclude that the Municipality Office ‘has been collecting the service charge and just enjoying the collected revenue,’ says Respondent 31/F/D/BU.

Numerous respondents echoed the complaint that the Municipality Office is reluctant to manage the DWPs and only collects its monthly fees. These respondents suggested the Municipality Office needs to be accountable for DWS service delivery or it should hand over the ownership of the DWPs to the relevant DWMC. Some respondents feel their DWMC is strong enough to handle the service programme (e.g. Respondent 14/M/B/D), suggesting that if ownership were transferred to DWMC, people would feel the programme is their own and would be willing to contribute more, which would help in making the service programme better. Yet, as noted above, other respondents suggest that although DWMCs have made a significant contribution to DWPs, they lack capabilities to self-organise and act. The local government has not provided capacity building, technical or managerial skills training to the DWMCs in the studied area. ‘Until and unless some extensive skills training is provided and managerial capacity is built, the DWMCs cannot handle the DWP’, argues Respondent 2/F/J/BU.

Issues arising in relation to a transition to DWMC management are discussed in greater detail in Section 5.1 below, but it is necessary here to briefly review those factors cited by respondents as constraining the community’s ability to hold the Municipality Office accountable for better service provision. In this respect, numerous respondents in this study pointed to a poor relationship between the Municipality Office and the community. Specifically, respondents accused the Municipality Office of failing to consult with citizens before taking decisions and failing to disseminate information to the public. For example, last year the Bhanjyang Municipality Office conducted a public hearing programme in a remote ward but, allegedly, did not inform people so that they would not have to answer questions. According to Respondent 6/F/J/BA, ‘the Municipality Office does not provide information about the budget allocation and overall expenditure’. This ‘tick-box’ approach to public engagement does not help in maintaining transparency or capacitating the community.

Again, Respondent 6/F/J/BA says the local level service providers are not accountable: ‘They need to be transparent, keeping information in public view and conducting social audits and public hearings in greater depth, thereby informing all the people in the community’. While this message was clear, it is important to note that this study also finds members of the community rarely take the initiative to become acquainted with relevant procedures.

4.2.3 Changes in the community's ability to influence service delivery and accountability outside the DWS sectors

The LGCDP has contributed to inclusive community participation (regardless of political affiliation) in local development and decision-making processes. Establishing DWMCs (though unofficial) in the study area, the Municipality Office has at least created a platform for local people to share their opinions, learn from the others' ideas and be inspired to get involved in other community organisations (e.g. forest users' groups, irrigation users' groups, mothers' groups, *tole* reformation groups and so on). Respondents suggested that establishing the DWMCs in the study area has indeed contributed to building the community's ability to participate in other such organisations and that this increased ability enables them to influence service delivery and accountability outside the DWS sector as well.

In the study sites, there was some limited indication of this effect, operating through two different channels. First, improvements in DWS themselves could offer some scope for increased involvement in local governance beyond the DWS sector. Specifically, better drinking water service provision could help reduce the time burden on households that need to travel significant distances to access DWS services, thus allowing more time for involvement in different social affairs. Given the distribution of household responsibilities in Nepal, it is likely that these benefits would accrue largely to women. Unfortunately, the level of detail available in the evidence was not sufficient to explore this satisfactorily. Further work on time benefits and engagement in local government, disaggregated by gender and other forms of social difference would be necessary to draw further conclusions.

Second, respondents noted the presence of a demonstration effect in terms of engaging in local government processes. Women's participation in the DWMC has allowed women to organise women-friendly programmes and establish women's organisations. Respondent 6/F/J/BA claims:

These days community peoples' participation in the DWMC has also made them capable on organising community-friendly programmes, such as tole reformation groups. In regard to female participation, I must say, the participation in DWMC has encouraged (at least, I am encouraged) to establish women's organisations in our community. We have formed a mothers' group and cooperative, both of which are for the betterment of females in the community. As the policy of inclusion is implemented at local level, more recently, I have [that] more females are included in forest users groups, school management committees and other social organisations than before.

Respondent 1/F/C/BA, a well-informed woman who is willing to participate in the community meetings, public hearings and DWMC meetings felt her frequent participation had built her capacity to speak in the public, share her knowledge and offer her opinion. Encouragement and empowerment of participation not only contributes in people's well-being, as Routanen et al., (2014) argue, '[it] is another important foundation for future sustainability when the users are expected to maintain and operate, even further fine-tune, improve and extend their water services.'

After seeing female participation in the DWMC and observing women's increased capabilities in public speaking, Respondent 13/F/J/D was impressed and went on to participate actively in the mothers' group and learn to speak more confidently. There were, however, limitations, as she points out: 'My individual capability to self-organise and act has been built, but building individual capability alone does not make a community programme successful. Institutional capability matters a lot.'

5 Reflection and discussion

5.1 Relevance for themes identified in existing literature on LGCDP

The main goal of LGCDP is to contribute to ‘poverty reduction through inclusive, responsive and accountable local governance and participatory community-led development’,¹⁴ where inclusion of local people with different social characteristics and of disadvantaged groups (women, Dalits, Aadibasi/Janajatis, Madhesis, Muslims, etc.) is valued. On the basis of the findings reported above it is possible to reflect on this goal and on other relevant aspects of LGCDP programming. This section begins by reflecting on two key features identified in LGCDP programme documentation as important aspects of the approach: the extent of inclusivity, and the nature of participation as it relates to ‘responsive and accountable local governance.’

In relation to the quality of inclusion, this study finds that in practice the inclusion of people from different social characteristics in the participatory development process is governed primarily by political representation. For instance, if there is an issue of female, Dalit and other marginalised people’s inclusion, the issue gets debated in terms of their political connection with the local political parties. Thus, their inclusion is politicised, overlooking the essence of inclusive and participatory community-led development.

However, it is unfair to say that the LGCDP governance objectives remain completely unfulfilled. Some aspects are perceived to have improved, such as the knowledge and confidence that communities have developed regarding management of the DWPs as a result of their participation. At an organisational level, with LGCDP support the Municipality Office has been able to give more responsibility to some of its staff and provide them with incentives, which has developed administrative capability. At system level, relations between the state and society have improved. These positive changes were visible and suggest that LGCDP objectives have been partially achieved.

The LGCDP focus on inclusive local development through the ‘mobilisation of local resources and use of local skills and technology with the direct involvement of local citizens and community organisations’ (LGCDP, 2008) has been significant. The community contributions of labour to the improvements in the provision of drinking water services are a prime example of this, and reflect a reality in which the provider–user distinction is perhaps less clear than is often presented in discussions of governance and service delivery. It certainly does not appear to be the case that improvements in service provision can be attributed to simple ‘good governance’ improvements in accountability and responsiveness related to ‘demand’ from service users, but rather required significant inputs on their part.

Indeed, despite the progress that has been achieved in improving DWS service delivery in the study area, there continue to be a significant number of drinking-water-related problems in the community and people are not satisfied with the performance of Municipality Office. As the locally elected political body is dysfunctional, the Municipality Office is not held to account, despite users often airing their grievances in forums such as Ward gatherings. Respondent 12/M/B/BU said, the ‘Municipality Office employs staff unnecessarily (because some influential ex-politicians exercise power to recruit people they favour) but does not allocate a development budget for maintenance of service infrastructure’ despite repeated requests, adding ‘they collect fees but do not invest. It is not just’. Such claims are echoed by Respondent 3/M/D/BA: ‘Each year the Municipality Office says there is no budget to allocate for pipeline replacement. It has been three years and we have complained about it continuously ...

¹⁴ See more at <http://lgcdp.gov.np/home/pdf/Planning%20&%20Decision%20Making%20Guidelines%20Submitted%20by%20Man%20%28English%29.pdf>.

Either the officials are corrupt or maybe they are prioritising the other development sectors. It is not transparent to the local people'. The dominant perception is therefore not one of responsive government.

Respondents noted some issues of corruption. For example, Respondent 9/F/B/BA says, 'sometimes, when you pay them, the officials from the Municipality Office do not give you your change'. Although such amounts are small, this contributes to a perception of a degree of corruption. A bigger issue raised by respondents concerns the underlying power and incentive issues preventing more effective direct involvement of community organisations in a context in which all of the LGCDP-supported DWPs are owned by the Municipality Office. Community organisations (DWMCs and users' committees) are not allowed to register, which has blocked their direct involvement in the sector.

In response, numerous respondents indicated a desire for the Municipality Office to form authentic DWMCs at Ward level that could better manage and monitor the DWPs, including tasks such as checking for and repairing leaks, and checking if households have removed water meters from the taps. However, the representatives of the DWMC and the community say that the Municipality Office has been obstructing the establishment of an independent and officially registered DWMC so that it can continue to collect the service charge. Respondent 8/F/B/BA claims that if the DWMC is given ownership of the Bhalubase (Attharabesi) DWP, it can provide an effective drinking water service to the local people. Not being an officially registered autonomous body at present, it cannot collect service charges and so invest in maintaining the service. It is because of the unofficial status of DWMC and the lack of ownership of the DWP, Respondent 8/F/B/BA argues, that people in the community 'do not want to get involved in the improvement of the Municipality Office-owned Bhalubase DWP'.

Some of the respondents think that the ownership should be handed over to the DWMCs to pave the way for its formal registration. At present, 'neither the Municipality Office nor the DWMCs alone seem to be capable of handling the DWPs and providing a better drinking water service to the local people' argues Respondent 14/M/B/D. An effective participatory partnership between the Municipality Office and the community is needed. Most of the respondents said their DWMCs are better able to handle their DWPs than the Municipality Office, (favoured by just one respondent), while nine said neither was capable or they did not know. The reason for this preference might be that people are involved in the activities of DWMCs. People who participate in the DWMCs have become confident about taking responsibility for different social works, which supports the argument that certain kinds of capability (to self-organise and act) at community level have been built.

One of the expected outcomes of LGCDP to 'deliver basic services in an inclusive and equitable manner' (LGCDP, 2008) is partially unfulfilled in the case of drinking water in Ilam Municipality. The over-staffed Municipality Office has not been able to distribute drinking water in an equitable manner. The capacity-building budget provided by central government is misunderstood by the Municipality Office and used for the capacity building of the office alone, including for recruiting staff. The local ex-politicians are also not accountable in this matter, because they themselves bargain for the recruitment of those they favour, while 'equitable service delivery' seems forgotten. In the following paragraphs, the study findings are compared and contrasted with the three components set in the LGCDP programme.

Component 1 of the LGCDP is about citizens' and communities' active engagement in the local government to hold them accountable. In the study area, however, community organisations seem unable to hold local government to account because of the DWMCs' unofficial status, which has resulted in the lack of prioritisation of local needs.

Component 2 of the LGCDP aims for the 'increased capacity of local governments to manage resources and deliver basic services' (LGCDP, 2008), which seems partially fulfilled to the degree that the Municipality Office (with the LGCDP support) has been able to improve the protection and management of the drinking water sources in the municipality, investing LGCDP resources in improved infrastructure.

There remain some significant problems related to the poor engineering of DWP infrastructure, which continue to negatively impact the effectiveness of basic service delivery. For example, the water reservoirs cannot store as much water as expected and the main pipelines are not able to supply the amount of water needed because of design flaws as well as poor repairs. Nevertheless, this indicates the Municipality Office, as a local body of the GoN, has been able to strengthen supply as compared to the situation before LGCDP investments.

Component 3 of LGCDP is about strengthening the ‘policy and national institutional framework for devolution and local self-governance’ (LGCDP, 2008). The existing literature, notably ICAI (2014), finds that through the LGCDP the GoN has ‘successfully introduced’ local representative bodies in the context of a ‘political power vacuum’ by establishing Ward Forums, Citizen Awareness Centres, *Nagarik Manch* (a citizens’ forum) and Social Mobilisers. But the dysfunctional condition of these units has minimised local people’s participation in local decision-making and development.

In terms of ‘risk’ and ‘counter measures’, the GoN’s action plan says: ‘the internal audit system will be strengthened and audit report will be published for transparency’ (LGCDP, 2008). In the study area, audit reports are prepared by the Municipality Office but are not disseminated publically, while a majority of respondents claim that the Municipality Office conducted the public hearing programme secretly in a remote ward last year.

By mainstreaming gender equality and social inclusion in the process of local development, the LGCDP has contributed significantly at the level of representation. The Municipality Office has been encouraged to follow gender equality and social inclusion programmes, which has helped to build social acceptance of women and excluded groups and empower them to assert their leadership by challenging patriarchal mindsets (though this now needs to be translated into more productive participation).

5.2 Relevance for themes identified in the SLRC review

Stakeholder consultations and the literature reviews carried out in 2011 by SLRC indicate there is not enough evidence to assess the effectiveness of international support to strengthen government capacity in politically transitional and fragile situations. Developing local government capacity alone does not translate into capacity development at the individual, organisational and system level. There needs to be cooperation between the local government, community organisations, individuals and other various stakeholders that can ‘capture the multiplicity of actors involved in service delivery and the complex web of institutions, organisations, policies and laws which influence how services are managed in different contexts’ (Mallett et al., 2014).

Based on the five-capability framework (Figure 1, above), this section has attempted to assess the relevance of the LGCDP intervention to the theme of capacity development as a whole and what can be learnt from it. This study finds that women’s representation alone does not translate into active participation. However, women’s representation in community organisations (such as DWMCs) has encouraged them to participate in other community organisations such as the mothers’ group, forest users’ group, *tole* reformation groups and irrigation users’ group, thereby building their capability to self-organise and act. Though the study findings indicate problems in the positions that women hold in the DWMCs, the way they are involved in decision making, and the extent to which their voices are listened to and acted upon, nevertheless there is evidence that their representation in DWMCs has led them to self-organise and act outside the DWS service sectors. This indicates that even a small boost in women’s participation in DWMCs has been productive for self-organisation in other sectors. In the same way, the participation of people of different social characteristics has improved, as has their capability for self-organisation.

The evidence presented above indicates that DWMC members are able to self-organise and act, yet the local socio-political context has prevented the DWMCs from registering officially. With LGCDP support,

the Municipality Office has been able to invest in the 10 different drinking water programmes and its capability to self-organise and act as a service provider has been built. Unprotected water sources have been improved and increasingly protected. The Municipality Office has been able to form informal DWMCs and has been able to organise meetings highlighting the ethics of social inclusion. This shows that the Municipality Office has been able to generate development outcomes.

It does not appear that the Municipality Office, even after receiving support from LGCDP, has been very successful in demonstrating this aspect of capacity. While unofficial DWMCs were formed in each case, the Municipality Office has reportedly not been able to establish supportive relationships with the DWMCs due to conflicts over user fees and with other agencies and formal/informal organisations. However, members of the community have been able to establish meaningful relationships with one another. Interestingly, while the focus of the research was on forums such as the DWMCs, improvements in this dimension of capacity may be most evident in the impact DWMC participation has had in prompting community members to establish supportive relationships in other social organisations (such as mothers' groups, forest users' groups, *tole* reformation groups and irrigation users' groups).

Similarly, LGCDP support appears to have had limited impact on the capability of service providers to adapt and self-renew in a sustainable manner. After receiving the LGCDP support, the current provider, the Municipality Office, did improve the drinking water situation in the municipality, but much of that improvement appears to have come from one-time capital investments in DWS infrastructure. DWP infrastructure is already in need of renovation and repairs, including the main pipelines and reservoirs. Ensuring necessary operations and maintenance over the long term will demand the capability to adapt and self-renew. Here, the findings of this study provide less cause for optimism regarding the capacity of the Municipality Office as a service provider. There remain some serious concerns in the Municipality Office's inability to check all household water meters or to collect the service charge from all the users in a timely manner.

It is also important to discuss the relevance of the findings of this study to the themes identified in other related SLRC reviews. The first-round SLRC baseline survey conducted in Nepal (in Ilam, Bardiya and Rolpa districts) indicates that 'just under 90 percent of respondents felt the water they accessed was clean and safe' (Upreti et al., 2014) – 92.3 percent of households in Ilam. But this study suggests that majority of the households do not know the standard of safe and clean water, even if most assume their water is clean. Most respondents report that there has not been any measurement and quality assurance of their drinking water. This agrees with Upreti et al. (2014) that 'the water ... sources are often not cleaned regularly, so it could be the case that their water is contaminated and unsafe'. Furthermore, the water purifying process in the study area is significantly flawed, as in the case of an untrained DWS Operator who used 3kg of potash at a time in one reservoir, which further degraded the water quality.

One of the core themes of SLRC research is 'state capacity' (Upreti et al., 2014). In this case, the techno-economic support provided by Nepal's international development partners does seem to have contributed to building a more effective state. This study found that LGCDP support resulted in the considerable improvement of service, though problems persist with regard to quantity and quality, and that support from the international development partners has significantly built capacity at individual, organisational and system levels.

6 Conclusion

This qualitative study was implemented in the Ilam Municipality of Ilam district to generate information on the impact of the LGCDP interventions on DWS service delivery and local governance and state-society relations. This section reflects on the major findings and concludes the study.

LGCDP support in the Ilam Municipality for DWS service delivery has generated positive development results, although challenges related to local governance and socio-political context remain. State (municipal) capacity to deliver DWS service has improved considerably with LGCDP support; the Municipality Office has been able to protect the water sources and has been able to strengthen supply. However, there remain challenges related to users' dissatisfaction about the quality and quantity of the DWS service delivered. The service provider has not been able to repair the service infrastructure in time.

Exclusion is the root of much unequal development and un-inclusive service distribution. Gender, caste and ethnicity, geographical location and financial status are the chief determinants of development outcomes related to access to services and representation. When these issues are ignored, development and community capacity building get paralysed. The assessment of the impact of LGCDP on inclusive service delivery shows that important governance barriers exist. Delays in necessary bureaucratic tasks remain, as does political influence over budget allocations, political influence over the allocation of water, and unpunished illegal conduct. Governance-related inequities, concerns about accessing adequate drinking water, and the poor technical and economic capacity of the service provider are other important challenges.

The study also points to challenges related to financial access and social barriers. Economically poorer households from the service coverage area have invested money and contributed labour for DWS service delivery. However, those living at greater distances from water sources are unable to invest enough in drinking water, while the service provider lacks the technical or economic capacity to expand the service to reach them. This indicates that challenges of service delivery inclusiveness in terms of physical and financial access remain. The study does not find any active social discrimination having an impact on access to the DWS service. But, importantly, it shows that women are overburdened with water fetching, which has impacted on their lives, while the poor, newcomers and Dalits are more likely to be disadvantaged.

Regarding community participation, local governance and state-society relations, some improvements are found to have taken place. The formation of DWMCs has enabled local people from diverse socio-political backgrounds to have their say in meetings. Likewise, their participation in DWMCs has also resulted in their increased involvement in other formal/informal organisations. Leaving aside the local governance-related hurdles, corruption and delays, LGCDP support is found to be significant in contributing to improving state-society relations and improving the capacity of the drinking water service provider.

However, the informal status of the DWMCs has limited the community's ability to influence service delivery and accountability. While the LGCDP has contributed to greater levels of community participation, the findings of this study suggest that participation has not been as meaningful and productive as expected. Inclusiveness is overshadowed by local political and bureaucratic hurdles.

Although the LGCDP has provided techno-economic support for the meaningful participation of the community in local development and local governance process, this study suggests that there is an acute lack of adequate, accountable and responsible institutional mechanisms to initiate and monitor the performance of municipal authorities in terms of DWS service provision. People in the community

report that they have been somewhat engaged in the management of the DWP, but there is a lack of source management and waste water management and no effective mechanism to enforce the rules, regulation and guidelines at municipal level. The Municipality Office lacks the institutional arrangements, by-laws and codes of conduct specific to DWS services. At the same time, it has not been able to establish effective coordination and relationships with the line agencies and other national and international development partners.

The Municipality Office also has a poor database system and lacks resource persons and skilled trainers to impart knowledge and skills on DWS services. This study suggests that the Municipality Office needs to monitor the DWPs periodically and evaluate the condition of the water supply. The Municipality Office pays operators stationed at different wards to release water from the tank in a timely way, but they do not observe how much water goes to which lines or taps. Locals do not feel they should maintain the pipes themselves; even for small leaks they hope for support from the Municipality Office.

In relation to capacity building, the findings suggest that capacity building at organisational, individual and system level has improved but still does not satisfy expectations. The capabilities of DWMC members to self-organise and act seem to have improved significantly, which is evident from the frequent demands for the groups' formalisation. Likewise, capabilities to generate development results, to establish supportive relationships, to adapt and self-renew and to achieve coherence are improved compared to the situation before LGCDP support.

7 References

- Acharya, G., Upreti, B.R., Paudel S.B., Tandukar, A. and Harvey, P. (2015) 'The drinking water service and users' perceptions of the state in Rolpa, Nepal.' SLRC Working Paper 35. London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.
- ADB (2010) Overview of gender equality and social inclusion in Nepal. Metro Manila: Asian Development Bank.
- ICAI (2014) 'DFID's approach to anti-corruption and its impact on the poor.' The Independent Commission for Aid Impact. Available at: <http://icai.independent.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/DFIDs-Approach-to-Anti-Corruption-and-its-Impact-on-the-Poor-FINAL.pdf>.
- Ilam Municipality Office (2014) 'Profile of the Ilam Municipality.' Ilam: Ilam Municipality.
- Ilam Municipality Office (2013) 'Profile of the Ilam Municipality.' Ilam: Ilam Municipality.
- LGCDP (2013) Local Governance and Community Development Programme (LGCDP II): Programme Document (FY 2013/014-2016/017). Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, Local Governance and Community Development Programme.
- LGCDP (2010) 'Mass media's role in strengthening local governance.' Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, Local Governance and Community Development Programme. Available at: www.lgcdp.gov.np/home/files/Mass%20Media%27s%20Role%20in%20Strengthening%20Local%20Governance.pdf.
- LGCDP (2008) 'Programme Document 11, July 2008.' Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Local Development, Local Governance and Community Development Programme.
- Mallett, R., Harvey, P. and Slater, R. (2014) 'How to study capacity support to states in fragile and conflict-affected situations: an analytical framework.' London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.
- MoLD (2012) 'Public expenditure & financial accountability and fiduciary risk reduction action plan.' Kathmandu: Government of Nepal, Ministry of Local Development.
- Rautanen, S.L., van Koppen, B. and Wagle, N. (2014) 'Community-driven multiple use water services: Lessons learned by the Rural Village Water Resources Management Project in Nepal.' *Water Alternatives* 7(1): 160-177.
- Upreti B.R., Upreti, P., Hagen-Zanker, J. and Mallett, R. (2014) 'Surveying livelihoods, service delivery and governance: baseline evidence from Nepal.' SLRC Working Paper 13. London: Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium.



SLRC Working Papers present information, analysis and key policy recommendations on issues relating to livelihoods, basic services and social protection in conflict affected situations.

This and other SLRC papers are available from www.securelivelihoods.org.
Funded by UK aid from the UK government, Irish Aid and the EC.

Disclaimer: The views presented in this report are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the UK government's official policies or represent the views of Irish Aid, the EC, SLRC or our partners. © SLRC 2016

Readers are encouraged to quote or reproduce material from SLRC for their own publications. As copyright holder SLRC, requests due acknowledgement

Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium
Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
203 Blackfriars Road
London SE1 8NJ
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)20 3817 0031
F +44 (0)20 7922 0399
E slrc@odi.org.uk
www.securelivelihoods.org
@SLRCtweet

