

A REPORT

**Understanding the Policy Environment for
Scaling Farmers' Field Business School in
Nepal**
*A Gender-Focused Context Analysis with Focus
on Local Governance and Sectoral Governance*



Submitted to:

CARE NEPAL, Lalitpur

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ACRONYMS

ADS	Agriculture Development Strategies
AKC	Agriculture Knowledge Centre
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CF	Community Forestry
CPA	Comprehensive Peace Agreement
CSO	Civil Society Organization
FFBS	Farmer Field Business School
FG	Federal Government
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FY	Fiscal Year
GAP	Good Agricultural Practices
GESI	Gender Equity and Social Inclusion
GON	Government of Nepal
Ha	Hector
HF	Health Facility
HHs	Households
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
KII	Key Informant Interview
LG	Local Government
LGOA	Local Government Operation Act
LISA	Local Government Institutional Self-Assessment
LRP	Local Resource Person
MAM	Medium Acute Malnourishment
MOALD	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development
MOFAGA	Ministry of Federal Affair and General Administration
MOHP	Ministry of Health and Population
MOLMAC	Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperative
MSNP	Multi-sectoral Nutrition Plan
NFGF	National Farmer Group Federation
NGO	Non-government Organization
NMF	Nepal Madhesh Foundation
NPR	Nepalese Rupees
NRM	Natural Resource Management
OB	Observation
OCMCM	Office of Chief Minister and Cabinet Minister
PG	Provincial Government
PCGG	Provincial Centre for Good Governance
PMAMP	Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project

PSHEA	Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse
SAM	Severe Acute Malnourishment
SC	Saving and Credit
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SFF	Sall Family Foundation
SHF	Smallholder farmer
SHWF	Smallholder Women Farmer
SMEs	Small and Micro Enterprises
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United nation
UNRCPD	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
VHLSEC	Veterinary Hospital and Livestock Service Expert Centre
VF	Volunteer Farmer
WHO	World Health Organization
Yr.	Year

Executive Summary

The study 'Understanding the Policy Environment for Scaling Farmers' Field Business School (FFBS) in Nepal: A Gender Focused Context Analysis with Focus on Local Governance and Sectoral Governance -Rupantaran- Project' is implemented by National Farmer Group Federation (NFGF) in partnership with CARE Nepal. The objectives of the Rupantaran project are to enhance dignity and self-esteem with livelihood promotion of farmer field business school (FFBS) groups especially landless, women and Dalits, and other marginalized communities.

The main purpose of the study is to carry out a gender-focused context analysis to understand the policy environment, and governance context with a focus on, the local governance and sectoral governance of associated sectors with the FFBS scale-up, specifically agriculture, food security, climate change adaptation, nutrition, and markets.

The location of the study was in all five project municipalities under Siraha and Saptari districts of Madhesh province. The study followed the qualitative research methods and primary data and information collected through purposive research design [focused group discussions (FGDs), key informant interview (KII), and observation (OB)]. The desk study and literature reviews are an integral part of the study and relevant policies, acts, and regulations concerning FFBS were collected and reviewed. The researchers have gone through 12 FGDs (8 FFBS groups and 4 Local Governments) with FFBS groups (Dalit women, Aadibasi Janjati (Tharu-indigenous), Janjati (terai and hill origin), ethnic minority (Muslim) and other castes (Yadav, Koiri, and Sah) and 30 KIIs with different institutions like local government (LG) elected representatives, and officials, the provincial government (PG) and federal government (FG) thematic officers, agriculture cooperatives, civil society organization (CSO)/non-governmental organization (NGO) representatives, financial institution (Agriculture Cooperatives), Agro vet/traders, a person with a disability (PWD) and media people. Altogether 160 participants participated in 12 FGDs, where 130 (81.2%) participants were from FFBS groups, and local government units; and 30 (18.8%) were from different institutions and individuals who participated during the field study. Among them, 100 (62.5%) women, and 60 (37.5%) men participated. There are Dalits 30 (18.7%) and other minorities Muslims 22 (14%) participated in the study. The study was carried out between January 2023 and February 2023.

The project is transforming the knowledge and skills of smallholder women farmers (SHWFs) through the '*Krishak Pathshala*' (Farmer Field Business School) model based on the 'Learning by Doing' approaches at the community level, and beneficiaries are taking the project positively and participating in FFBS model in their respective community.

The study is focused on structure, institutional and governance arrangement, and the main change actors/stakeholders to enable the promotion of the FFBS model and identified the formal and informal institutions and opportunities that support upscaling of the FFBS model. The structural barriers for women and Dalits are found in terms of caste, class, gender, education, land size, and ownership; and the traditional patriarchal mindset is the reason for social injustice. Untouchability, child marriage, gender-based violence (GBV), dowry systems, and domestic violence from their intimate partner are the socially harmful practices that prevail in the study area. Women's contribution to household chores is not recognized in the CARE ECONOMY.

A majority of Dalits are landless. This is the reality that without land property they don't receive

any benefits from the local government or provincial/Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOLMAC) and federal government/Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project (MPAMP) for farm production inputs (seeds, equipment, machinery, irrigation facilities). Since the main source of livelihood is agriculture, they don't have land and work as a sharecropper or are involved in the landowner's farmland for daily wages. Most of the male members from their community usually go to India (Panjab and Haryana states) as agriculture laborers, and a few of them work as masons, carpenters, and unskilled laborers in building construction in the major cities of the country. Whereas the Non-Dalits mostly go for foreign labor/remittance in Gulf Countries and Malaysia.

About 50% of the inhabitants of the study area can't feed their family members from their production around the year, and none of the Dalits households that participated in the field survey can feed their family members for more than three months from their production. The food security concept i.e., availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability into practice are important to the target beneficiaries in the project municipalities. The malnourishment of children (06-59 months) is 14.2% recorded in the health facilities of municipalities. The FFBS women groups have no or little knowledge about the nutritional food consumption to improve the nutritional status of women and young children.

The Project facilitates the formation/reformation of FFBS groups, especially with the landless Dalits in the project Municipalities. Here, Municipalities further facilitated seeking private land from the landowners who intended to provide private (*Raikar*¹) land for 'Contract farming' to FFBS groups. Altogether 291 FFBS groups were formed/reformed by the project and enlisted in the project municipalities. The landless Dalits have around 20-25 group members in each FFBS group. The contract of the land is tenured for 5 years. By January 2023, there were 291 FFBS groups formed/reformed in the five project municipalities. Out of that 10 (3.4%) groups of Bhagawanpur, and Sakhuwanankarkatti municipalities have received the land for 'Contract farming' in a tripartite agreement signed by the respective municipality, landowners, and the landless FFBS groups.

The FFBS groups (Women, and Dalits) are agents of economic empowerment and contribute to the food security and decision-making level of women in society. The project could sufficiently transfer knowledge and skills on improved agriculture practices to the 'Volunteer Farmers' in collaboration with local governments by embedding a market-led farm inputs supply chain for the success of the FFBS model in the project municipalities. The concept of 'Volunteer Farmer' approached by the project can be beneficial for the dissemination and transferring of the agriculture good practices to FFBS groups through 'Demo Plot' learning by doing principles. which follow the Participatory Action Learning for Sustainability (PALS) intervention approaches. It is important to note that the federal, and provincial government agriculture extension and production input supports are being made through the farmer groups, agriculture cooperatives, and private agriculture firms where project-facilitated FFBS groups can enjoy the benefits from government policies and programs.

The project municipalities are found to be relatively weak in GESI, Environment and Disaster

¹ Raikar is the private land recorded in the *MOTH* (land inventory register) on the individual Nepali citizen's name who has the land property in the Land Revenue office.

Management, and Good Governance and Institution i.e., policies, act, and regulation development activities, and service delivery. The project municipalities had not done GESI Audit in FY 2021/2022, that LGs of the project area lack gender-responsive budgets, and generally have not adopted positive discrimination /affirmative action (preferential treatment with the intent of bringing an underrepresented group to a level of equity) approaches in procedure and guidelines. All the project municipalities' Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) have endorsed some of the mandatory policies, acts, and regulations to run the day-to-day office operation, and development works such as Financial working procedures, Local level Users' Group formation and operation, Local Government Planning and Budgeting are prepared and in practice. Bhagwanpur and Sakhuwanankarkatti Rural Municipalities have endorsed one each of the 'Contract Farming Working Procedure 2020'. The rest of the project municipalities are preparing such documents and are at the final stage.

There are federal, provincial, and local government, CSOs, and private sector institutions that have been supporting the agriculture sector and FFBS. The Federal, Provincial, and Local Governments are following Farmer Groups, Agriculture Cooperatives, and Private Agriculture Firm approaches to support the farmers for agricultural promotion, commercialization, and modernization of the agriculture sector. The FFBS model of farmer groups has the opportunity to access government resources that follow farmer groups, agriculture cooperatives, and private agriculture firm approaches in the project municipalities too.

The NFGF network, Dalit network, Nepal Madhesh Foundation (NMF), and the media (printed, and radio/FM) are the potential advocacy institutions to influence the formulation of civic and GESI-focused policies and regulations from government institutions. Where Dalit Network, NMF, and media are the potential advocacy organizations at the local level to stop harmful social practices. CARE can support and influence the upscale and replication of the FFBS model through field-based knowledge documentation and dissemination on a wider scale and through providing advisory services to local governments.

In the stakeholder analysis, Local Governments, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MOALD), and the Madhesh Provincial Government/Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture, and Cooperative (MOLMAC) are the key actors in the formulation of policy, acts, regulations and its implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Likewise, NFGF has worked on Agriculture related issues, and Dalit Networks, NMF, Media (printed and local radio/FM), Market Management Committee (*Haat Bazaar Committee*), and FFBS groups are the influential advocacy organizations to scale up the FFBS model into policy and promote social justice in society.

Major findings

Structure:

- The major challenges and constraints at the structural level are traditional mindsets like discrepancies in the perception of cultural values, power distance (income inequality, the hierarchy of power and authority,), hegemonic cultural assumptions, and patriarchal attitudes like less gender egalitarianism and more traditional gender norms, women have less access to earn income, unequal distribution of land between men and women, women taking on the unrecognized burden of family duties, more constraints in women's life choices (decision-making), and discrimination on gender, caste/ethnicity and other social

inequalities that prevail in the study area

- The majority of the Dalits (*Musahar, Chamar, and Khatbe castes*) of the study area have not *Raikar* (own land) and constructed their dwellings in *Ailani/Parti* (public land) like along the roadside, pond dikes, and river/stream coastal areas. The Dalit community falls under the ‘vicious cycle of poverty that leads to seasonal migration, poor living conditions, social exclusion, and lack of opportunities that arise from unequal access to land
- The majority of inhabitants of the study area’s livelihood source is agriculture, sharecroppers followed wage labor and foreign labor/remittance
- The owner of the land is entitled to the farm production inputs and most of the Dalit community can’t access production inputs from government authorities due to their landless status
- The unequal patterns of land distribution between men (more than 80%) and women (less than 20%) of the survey population lead to a gender-inequality society, and power relations, and that affects women’s ability to convert the benefits of land into improved economic and social well-being. It also influences decision-making in the major sites of power in the household, kin group, community, and state as a whole
- The woman’s working hours (about 15-16 hrs.) are higher in a day as compared to men’s (12-13 hrs.) in municipalities of the study area. Women mostly engaged in household chores, child care, and working on the farm. This work is not recognized as formal work and is referred to as the care economy at the household level. Current government policy contributes to women being deprived of financial recognition which results in a loss of dignity and self-esteem
- The FFBS women and Dalit group members have been gradually empowered through PLAS, ‘Demo Plots’ learning by doing approaches and they have increased their access to productive farm resources from the government authorities to boost their livelihood and raise the voice for social justice to stop the harmful social practices at the community level.

Institutional and Governance Arrangement

- In all project municipalities, as followed the constitutional rights, collaboration, coordination, and co-existence principles they have prepared and endorsed some basic policies, Acts, and regulations from the municipal Legislative Assembly following federal, and provincial governments policies, acts, and regulations to run the day-to-day office administration and development works (Agriculture, Health & Nutrition, Education, Physical infrastructure development) and that facilitate on service delivery
- All project municipalities have formulated sectoral committees such as Economic Development, Social Development, Physical Infrastructure Development, Environment, Forest, Disaster Risk Management, Good Governance, and Institutional Development Committees. However, due to a lack of orientation about their constitutional rights, roles, and responsibilities, those sectoral committees are not strong enough and active to effectively manage and emancipation their respective sectoral governance e.g., Development plans of Forest, Environment, and Disaster Risk Management long and short-term plans, and Gender responsive budgeting
- FFBS groups practice monthly meetings, preparing the meeting minutes, and ‘Volunteer farmers’ share ‘Demo Plot’ learnings that contribute to disseminating field-based

knowledge to group members. However, Volunteer farmers are not well trained and felt difficulty advising their group members to install diverse and nutrient-rich plants in the kitchen garden to supply fresh vegetables for home consumption, and disease, insect, and pest control of vegetable crops to their group members

- The LISA² scores of project municipalities indicate that there is room for improvement in the thematic or sectoral governance area in local government such as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), Environment, Disaster Risk Management, Good Governance, and Institutional Development. Due to weak sectoral governance, the service delivery of the local government is another improvement area of the project municipalities
- The Judicial Work Committee (JWC) is led by the Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chairperson in each municipality, the JWC performance is found satisfactory, and most of the applicants' issues related to the division of land between family members (*Ansha Banda*), land demarcation issues between neighbors (*Sandh Simana Michiko*), and divorce case (*Sambandha Bicchhed*) are settled. But JWC felt difficulties to perform the judicial matter due to a lack of knowledge and orientation about the Civil code, law, regulation, and negotiation skills
- The Federal, and Provincial governments' policies and programs have emphasized executing their agriculture extension services, and farm production inputs distribution through Farmer Group, Agriculture Cooperative, and private agriculture firms. LGs also followed the same approach at the local level, that provision is to open the door and allow the FFBS groups who are registered in the municipality to access the farm resources from different levels of government. However, PMAMP and AKC focused on large-scale agriculture production (Mango, Paddy, and Fisheries block, pocket, zone, and super zone) for commercialization, industrialization, and modernization, then the targeted beneficiaries who are mostly landless, and or nearly landless and they can't get enough support from such projects and programs
- The Madhesh Provincial Parliament endorsed the 'Dalit Empowerment Act 2021' and Regulation 2022 which aims to stop gender and caste-based discrimination, and harmful social practices in the province, it is the cornerstone initiated by the Madhesh province to abolish the gender and caste-based discrimination by making the provision from provincial to municipal level committee to stop social evils
- Two project municipalities (Bhagawanpur, and Sakhuwanankarkatti) out of five endorsed the 'Contract Farming Working Procedure Guidelines 2021' as a legal framework from their Municipal Councils, and rest of three (Dhangadhimai, Rupani, and Agnisair Krishnasharavan) are in the final stage to endorse that Contract Farming Working procedures as a legal framework in their respective municipality
- Two municipalities (Bhagawanpur and Sakhuwanankarkatti) have made a tripartite agreement between the municipality, private land owner, and FFBS group to implement 'Contract farming', and 10 (3.4%) Dalits FFBS Groups including ethnic minorities out of 291 FFBS groups have access to the land, and are implementing improved agriculture practices with 'Demo plots. The rest of other three project municipalities are in the process of finalizing tripartite agreements to allocate the land for 'Contract farming' for

² LISA- Local Government Institutional Self-Assessment web-based system developed by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration. It also creates opportunities for the local governments to self-assess their work, recognize the gaps so that they can address it for better service delivery.

the benefit of Dalits FFBS groups and/or project target beneficiaries

- The studied FFBS groups (Dalits, landless people, and mixed groups) have initiated a monthly Saving/Credit scheme, and some of the FFBS group members have also obtained membership in Agriculture Cooperatives in project municipalities, and this is a good initiation taken by FFBS groups to increase their access to finance to run their small-scale agriculture business
- There are 28 locations of Hat Bazaars (Market days) in 22 wards of project municipalities with 50 Hat *Bazaars* occurring each week to sell and buy farm products and daily consumable goods. Except for Dhangadhimai municipality, the other municipalities have not taken any initiative to explore and manage the *Hat Bazaar*, also an internal source of revenue.

Change Agents to Promote the FFBS Model

- MOALD is the main actor which is a responsible authority at the federal level and has the right to formulate farmer-friendly policies, programs, acts, and regulations through the parliament to guide the Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture, and Cooperative at provincial, and local governments units (Economic Development Committee) to look after the agriculture sector/FFBS at the local level
- The Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture, and Cooperatives, which operates at the provincial level, is another prominent institution that supports farmer groups to fulfill the national, and provincial long-term visions, goals, and objectives to ensure the province in food sufficient through the commercialization, modernization, and industrialization of the agriculture sector
- The local government units (municipalities) are the main actors which have the legal authority to form, mobilize, and replicate the FFBS model at the local level in line with the federal, and provincial government agriculture promotion and agriculture extension services disseminate through the Farmer group/FFBS model, agriculture cooperatives, and private firm modality
- NFGF will have the opportunity to develop field-based agriculture knowledge products and advocate for agriculture reform and the FFBS institutionalization process at all three levels of governments
- Dalit Networks which are established in each district, province, and national level are the key advocacy organizations to advocate towards three levels of government to stop untouchability, child marriage, gender, caste, ethnicity, and region-based discrimination, and harmful social practices
- The printed media such as (Bharganugami, Naw Sangram Daily Newspapers in Lahan, Kalyan Post, and Green Madhesh Daily in Rajbiraj, Saptari) based printed media and its networks are the major actors at the district and local level can create mass awareness and dissemination of FFBS good agriculture practices
- The local radio/FM such as (Samagra FM, Sargam FM at Lahan, Bhorukua FM, and Radio CFM in Rajbiraj, Saptari) are the actors/change agents in the district, and local level, and those media can create mass awareness, and dissemination of FFBS approaches even local *Maithili* language and advocate for upscaling and institutionalization of FFBS model
- Nepal Madhesh Foundation (NMF) is a multi-stakeholders forum that is established in Siraha and has worked at district, cluster, and municipality levels in Siraha and Saptari

districts on land issues/disputes. The issues like displacing people forcefully (*Ghar uthibas lagaune*), and other harmful social practices are being settled through the ‘Dialogue process’ following the 4Ps (People, Problem, Process, and Policy) approaches for policy advocacy at the provincial and local level

- Agriculture cooperatives and their network will have the opportunity to upscale the FFBS model by providing loans and can be worked in collaboration with the municipality for the benefit of the FFBS/farmer groups, and upscale learning through cooperative networks
- The FFBS groups themselves as beneficiary groups, and at the same time they can act as rightsholder organizations to contribute to stopping the harmful social practices and upscaling of the FFBS model at the local level through disseminating the agricultural best practices
- CARE has the opportunity to document the FFBS field-based knowledge and can disseminate and upscale those learning in other parts of the country.

The recommendations based on the findings of the study are given in Chapter 4 conclusion and recommendation part for future planning and programming.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Background

CARE is one of the first international organizations to work in Nepal since 1978. During the last 40 years, CARE Nepal has been working with the most vulnerable communities of Nepal to address the issues of poverty and social injustice, along with challenging harmful social practices and building capacities, and empowering the livelihoods of the voiceless people. CARE Nepal works to address systemic and structural causes of poverty and social injustice such as discrimination based on gender, caste, class, economic status, ethnicity, or geography. CARE Nepal aims to ensure that 2.5 million women and girls of Nepal have economic, social, and political power and resilience to overcome poverty and social and economic injustice by 2025. CARE is working to abolish the root causes of poverty and social injustice and promote good governance; that is, the effective, participatory, transparent, equitable, and accountable management of public affairs.

Madhesh Province is one of the most food and nutrition-insecure areas in Nepal. Livelihoods of the landless and smallholder women farmers (SHWF) of Madhesh Province are extremely insecure mainly due to the limited marketable skills, lack of employment opportunities, poor financial literacy, and then lack of technical knowledge, skills, and access to productive resources (land, water, and agriculture production inputs). Those factors have impacted their vulnerability and socio-economic risks and ultimately contributed to their low dietary consumption, nutritional malpractices, and poor and harmful livelihood choices.

1.2 The Project in Brief

Since 2014, CARE's gender equity-focused Farmer Field and Business Schools (FFBS) have tested an innovative, integrated farming model through 28 projects across 17 countries, improving the lives of more than 2.5 million farmers and their families. With the support and partnership of the Sall Family Foundation (SFF), CARE is scaling up the FFBS model. The scale-up project involves four pathways that are seeking to expand the FFBS model which will specifically help women farmers be more productive and promote the adoption of FFBS by host governments. FFBS is a product of the CARE Pathways program and focuses on a learning-by-doing approach, putting farmers at the heart of learning and decision-making around new agricultural techniques.

At present, CARE Nepal's scaling of the model should be based on a sound context analysis of the sectors relevant to FFBS, which comprises agriculture, food security, climate change adaptation, nutrition, gender, and markets. For this purpose, CARE Nepal is running the Farmers Field Business School (FFBS or *Rupantaran*) Project that began in July 2022 in Madhesh Province. The project covers 5 municipalities (Palinkas) namely Bhagwanpur, Sakhuwanankarkatti, Dhangadimai in Siraha, and Rupani and Agnisairkrishnashrvan in Saptari district. The overall objectives of the project are to enhance the living standard of rural and marginalized women and reduce poverty and strengthen gender equality and social inclusion in the community through contract farming following the FFBS model. This study was carried out between January and February 2023, and the qualitative study was conducted in the field during the last week of January 2023.

1.3 Purpose and Objective of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to complete a governance context analysis of local governance and the associated sectors with the FFBS scale-up, specifically agriculture, food security, climate change adaptation, nutrition, and markets. The objectives are to explore, analyze, and use a gender lens to assess:

i) **Broader structures:** historical legacy; allocation and management of funding; corruption and rent-seeking; ideologies, values, and perceptions; sector/thematic area reform in the sectors that FFBS is promoting concerning the local, provincial, and federal government.

ii) **Institutions and governance arrangements:**

- Analysis of the formal and informal institutions regulating the sectors covered in the FFBS model: legal and regulatory frameworks; informal rules and de facto behavior; implementation issues and service delivery; decentralization of the sector/thematic areas
- Analysis of the governance spaces in the sector: assessing spaces for interaction between actors.
- Analysis of policy ecosystems related to the various sectors covered in the FFBS model, mainly at the local level to inform the policy opportunities and to undertake advocacy to adopt the FFBS model with the local governments where FFBS is anticipated to be implemented. The local governments where FFBS is being implemented in the Siraha and Saptari districts (5 municipalities). Additionally, a light touch policy ecosystems analysis will be completed at the provincial and federal levels where CARE Nepal and its partners should engage and influence to further scale the FFBS model.
- Identify the policy spaces to institutionalize, scale, and sustain FFBS practices in the government system.
- Analysis of Nepal government's policy, legislative and institutional context focusing; on gender in agriculture, gender and nutrition, gender and climate change and development policies and strategies, gender mainstreaming in plans, programs, and budget, international commitments and legal provisions relevant for gender equality promotion, and institutional framework for gender equality and women's empowerment.
- Assessment of gender inequalities in agriculture including prevalent gender and social norms on decision-making, negotiation skills, access to services and finance, engagement in economic activities, access to land and income, nutrition, market, food security and nutrition, crop production, and post-harvest, agricultural technology and agribusiness, agriculture extension services, finance and loan, agricultural cooperatives, climate change, and disaster risk management, market access.

The main change agents/stakeholders: Mapping and analysis of the players in the sectors covered by the FFBS model which need to be targeted to scale FFBS within the three levels of government, along with the key alliances and enabling platforms that need to be leveraged to undertake advocacy to sustainably scale the FFBS model. Furthermore, consultants will analyze the influence/interest of stakeholders, the scope of CARE's influence over the stakeholder, and stakeholder influence over the problems. The influence of stakeholders/Decision makers' view of the proposed change.

1.4 Structure of the Report

The context analysis study report comprises an executive summary including major findings and other four chapters. Chapter 1 offers brief background information on CARE's programs, institutions, objectives of the study, and structure of the report. Chapter 2 gives the approach and methodologies undertaken for the study. The major findings of the assessment are offered in Chapter 3, Chapter 4 presents the conclusions, and recommendations of the study.

CHAPTER II: APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

2.1 The Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework is according to the study objectives. Figure 1 shows a three-fold foundation ground: First, households, second, institutions and third, market level and the possible change process are shown by gender equality policy intervention resulting in growth and resilience in the local economy.

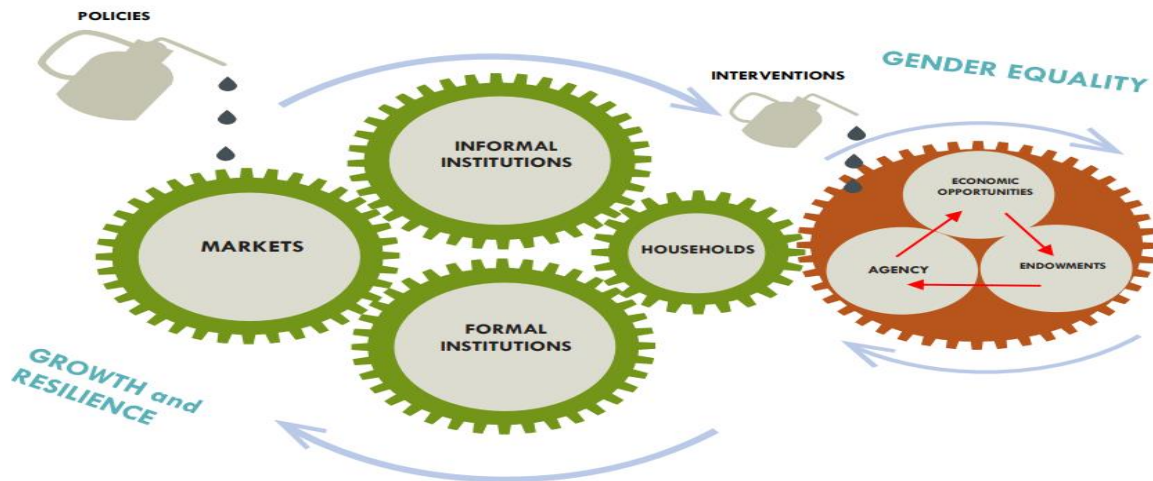


Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the study (adapted from the World Bank, 2016).

Markets and institutions can change in response to external stimuli, which include policy interventions. These three principles lay the foundation for this framework that captures how household members make decisions, how they interact with markets and institutions to influence gender equality outcomes, and the role of policy in determining these interactions and outcomes. The consultants followed the conceptual framework (figure 1) during the study that focused on structure, institutional arrangements, governance, and actor's mapping in the context analysis study, and further issues were identified for the advocacy.

2.2 Research Methods and Tools Used

The context analysis followed a participatory and interactive study approaches that stimulated the active participation of the stakeholders i.e., service providers (local governments, provincial and federal, thematic officials), service receivers [FFBS groups (Women, Dalit, ethnic minorities (Muslim), Agriculture Cooperatives, Private sector (traders and Agro-vets)], a person with a disability (PWD), media and implementing partner. The study followed the qualitative, and purposive research methods for the primary data collection through focused group discussion (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs), field observation with different categories of stakeholders (Annex 1 and 2) i.e., government institutions (LG, PG, FG), FFBS groups, Agriculture Cooperatives, private sector (traders/Agro-vet), media and people with disability (Annex 1 and 2).

The desk study was carried out to review the government policies, acts, and regulations at three levels of government, research articles and study reports related to supporting the agriculture sector particularly the upscaling and sustainability of the FFBS model. Furthermore, FFBS groups and municipalities-related quantitative data were taken from the project office and concerned project municipalities.

2.3 Location of the Study

This study covered all five project municipalities (Bhagawanpur rural municipality, Shakhuanankarkatti rural municipality, and Dhangadhimai municipality in Siraha district; and Rupani and Agnisair Krishnashravan rural municipalities in Saptari district of Madhesh province (Figure 2).

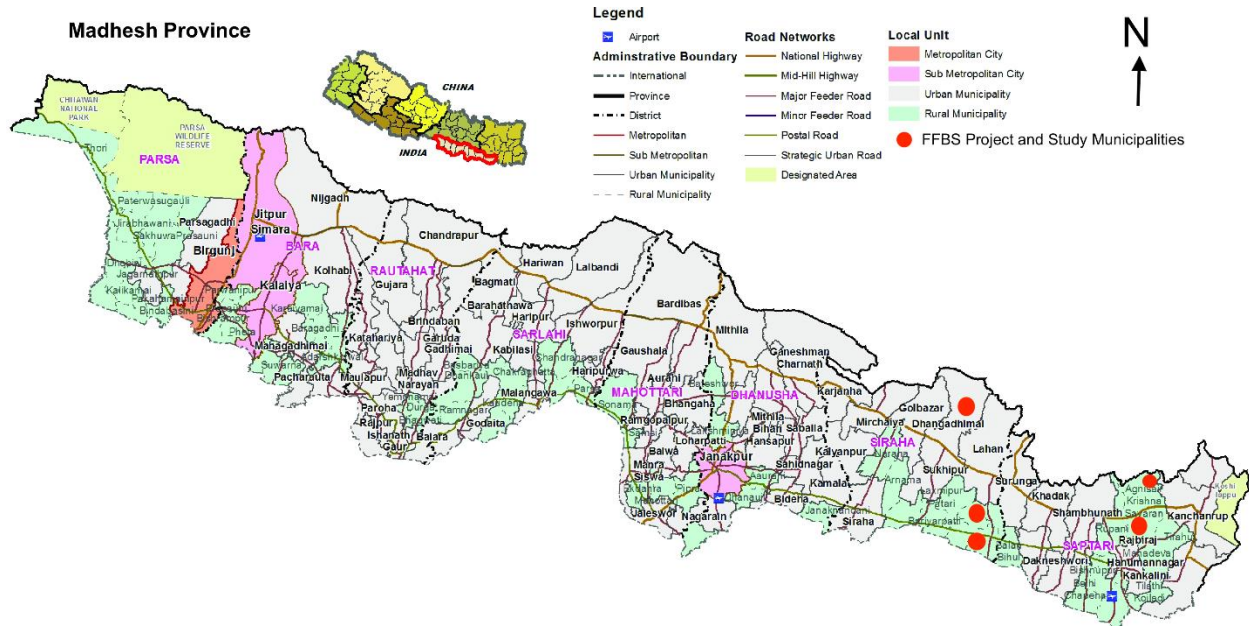


Figure 2: Project and Study Area

2.4 Start-up Meeting with CARE and NFGF Team

The start-up meeting became successful to develop a common understanding of the study, enabling the environment, and contributing to establishing the linkages and coordination with relevant stakeholders like program municipalities, NGO partners, CSOs working in FFBS in the field, and provincial and federal subject matter agencies. The meetings with CARE and CARE USA Global Advocacy officials supported designing the process, provided feedback on the draft to make it more participatory, and helped to give the final shape of the study report.

2.5 The Study Process

The study is broadly divided into three phases and presented in Figure 3 below, and the consultant followed the given process to carry out the study.

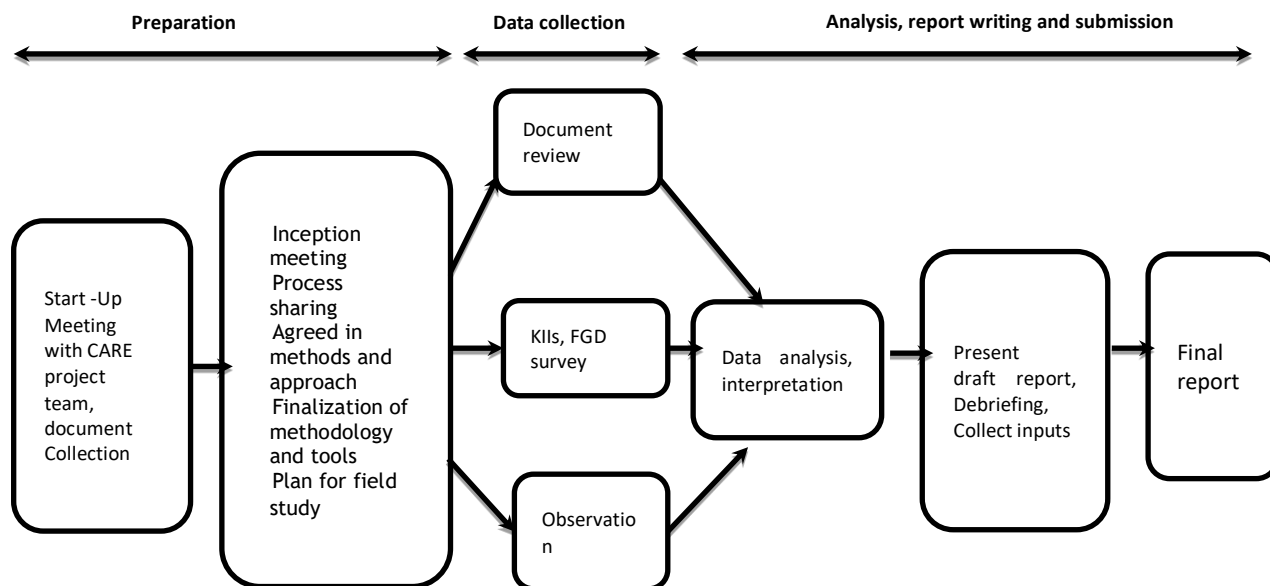


Figure 3: Process followed by the study

2.6 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The consultant analyzed the qualitative data following thematic/content analysis, and the results were interpreted in topic and subtopics in the reports, and the secondary numerical data from different sources were collected, analyzed, and presented in the report. The findings are presented in Tables and graphs in the report. The field observations/cases are illustrated in a box in the text.

2.7 Ethical Consideration

This study team is complying with CARE and NGO partners' ethical policies and norms about safeguarding, child protection, Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation, and Abuse (PSHEA), zero tolerance, do not harm policy, and GESI policy. Informed consent was taken from the participants, assuring confidentiality and anonymity of the information collected. The study team is sensitive to the social, cultural, and religious dynamics of the population and has taken proactive efforts to create safe spaces for participants and vulnerable groups, especially women, and marginalized communities to share information freely and safely without the presence of judgment, shame, or risk of harm. Considering the COVID-19 situation, researchers in this study followed the government of Nepal/Ministry of Health and Population (GON/MOHP), and World health organization (WHO) safety protocols during the field study.

CHAPTER III: MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This chapter presents the findings of the Gender focused Context analysis of the policy environment and governance aspects (local governance and sectoral governance) for Farmers' Field Business School (FFBS). This mainly assessed and explored the findings in broader aspects related to i) Structure ii) Institutional arrangements and governance, and iii) Main change agents/stakeholders to upscale the FFBS model.

3.1 Structure

3.1.1 The Socio-Economic Characteristics

Nepal is a traditionally patriarchal society. According to the Manusmriti³ women should not have independent status, and a similar perception is also driven by community-based organizations (CBOs) (e.g., Dalit women, Adivasi/Janjati/, Mixed farmer groups) in the study areas. Different research on social stratification suggested that the Nepalese socio-economic structure is founded on four pillars; that are gender, caste, class, and regionality.

The respondents primarily consist of project participants (CBOs-women, men, mixed, and Dalit groups), local government elected representatives (Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Ward Chairperson, Dalit woman member, and Officers), provincial and federal government officers, CSO/NGO representatives, and staff, private sector (Agriculture Cooperatives, and Agro-vet/traders), a person with disabilities (PWD), and media personnel. Altogether 160 [100 (62.5% women and 60 (37.5% men)] participated during the field survey. Out of the 130 (81.3%) were from 12 FGDs and the rest of 30 (18.7%) participated through the KIIs (Annex 1 and 2).

As shown in Figure 4, the participants of the survey, participated by caste and ethnicity, where 44

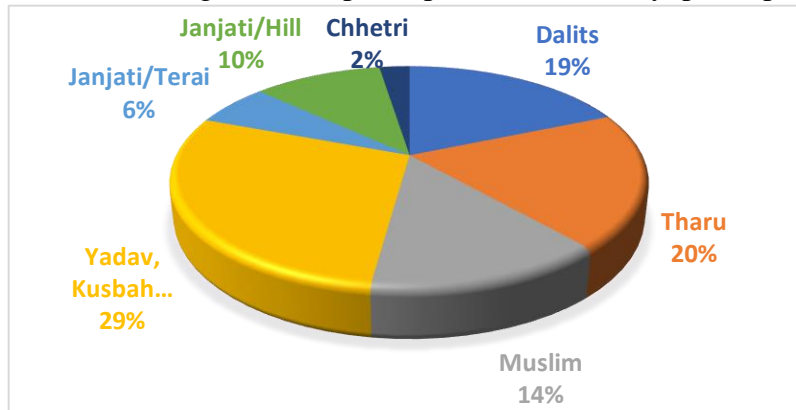


Figure 4: Distribution of Respondents by Caste/Ethnicity

(29%) participated from Yadav, Kushbah, and Sah caste groups followed by 32 (20%) from Tharu (Indigenous), 29 (18%) Dalits (*Mushar, Chamar, and Khatbe caste*) and least 4 (2%) from Chhetri respectively.

In the government institutions (LG, PG, and FG) in the survey area *Yadav, Kushbah, and Sah* remain at a higher level than the other caste and ethnicity. Some *Tharu* (Indigenous) are government employees and

elected representatives in their local governments.

Janajati (Hills) FFBS group representatives are generally found on the northern side of the East-East Highway (*Lok Marga*) in Terai. Very few women from *Yadav and Tharu* communities are holding Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chairperson positions, women members, and Dalit members are elected as municipality representatives through the mandatory policy provision of the Government of Nepal (GON) to be represented in local government 'Executives' and 'Council member' in the

³ The *Manusmriti* (Sanskrit) also known as the *Mānava-Dharmaśāstra* or Laws of Manu, is one of the many legal texts and constitution among the many *Dharmaśāstras* of Hinduism.

project municipalities.

Dalits Groups (*Chamar and Musahar*) participants experience this discrimination prominently in their communities. According to the participants of the study, women and excluded castes generally don't get an opportunity to share their ideas in social gatherings. The village elites such as *Sahu, Malik, Mahajan, and Jamindar* mainly dominated decision-making processes. The dowry system is found to be a prevalent malpractice in society.

The issues like untouchability and child marriage are other socially harmful practices prevalent in the study area. Youths are found abusing drugs and suffering from alcoholism, and women of the Dalits community suffer from domestic violence in the study area. Almost no Dalit participants (*Mushar, Chamar, and Khatbe*) were found to own land formally.

Ownership of land in the agrarian society is vital for prestige and dignity as well as for a source of livelihood, which was noted by the survey participants in the study area. Women and girls in the Terai also face different layers of exclusion based on gender, caste, ethnicity, class, region, and language-based social relations (Bennett et al., 2008).

The income inequality that causes unequal distribution of wages between males and females contributes to gender inequality in society which ultimately increases poverty. For example, female laborers receive 13 Kg paddy as their wages whereas males receive 15 Kg for their daily wages. In monetary value, it is reported that males get Rs. 500 and females get Rs. 400 per day in the same kind of labor. Male partners generally go to India and work as agricultural laborers, and in urban areas of Nepal mostly Chitwan, Pokhara, and Kathmandu work as masons. The municipality representatives said, 'About one-third of households in their municipalities cannot produce enough food on their land because either they have access to a small area of land or they are working in *Bataiya* (sharecropper), and/or are landless'.

Besides, females that participate in the care economy in their households don't receive economic recognition for their labor. The study analyzed the working hours of women and men who exercised 'who does what' during the field survey. The study found that women worked about 15-16 hrs. in a day whereas men worked for about 12-13 hrs. in the study area.

BOX 1: While we went to public service providers, and to *Malik's* (The owner) house for necessary services and work, most of the time service providers, and *Malik* ordered us to do such and such works (house yard cleaning, disposal of waste, etc.) as Dalits, we did not know it as harassment but it is opposite to our self-esteem and freedom. Now, FFBS group meetings made us know about the injustice leveled at us. Slowly and gradually the group effort enabled us to oppose such social behavior because there's always strength in the group.

- A Dalit woman in FGDs, Bhagawanpur-3, Siraha

The triple role of women has been found (i.e., productive, reproductive, and social responsibilities) and women's care work is the fourth role found in the study area, which is not an exception from other parts of the country. During the study, it is found that the male partners generally don't share the household chores, childcare, and kitchen work. This may be because of patriarchal values, norms, and male dominating mindset prevailing in society.

The *Muluki Ain* (Legal Code) of 1854 of Nepal was amended in 1963 for the first time and has

been amended more than twelve times which is ultimately replaced by the National Civil Code 2017 by following the new constitution of the Federal Republic of Nepal⁴. Constitutionally, Nepal abolished all forms of discrimination in the country.

The cooperation increase among the FFBS group members is the Social Capital accumulated in project areas through FFBS model implementation. FFBS group members live in the community, speak the same language, grow up in the same culture, and use expressions that are appropriate for their environment, and that develops confidence and motivates them to work for their community which gives them self-satisfaction.

3.1.2 Land Acquisition and Management for FFBS

The history of land tenure in Nepal is very old and conceptually based on Hindu culture. The land is still considered wealth and the prime indicator of social prestige (Acharya, 2008). The land is not only the main source of livelihood, but it is also a traditional sentiment that gives dignity and self-actualization in Nepalese society and most significantly impacts agriculture. Most of the customary land tenure(s) had been abolished since 1951, and after that, there was an improvement in the land tenure system. Then, private ownership of land goes into the *Raikar* (Private) in which land taxes are payable to the government and are listed in the official records (*Moth*). This distinguishes *Raikar* from the other forms of land tenure, for example, *Birta*, *Guthi*, and *Kipat* which do not necessarily pay taxes and for the most part was not listed in official records. At present, Nepal recognizes two land tenure types: ownership, and leasehold. Landowners have rights to exclusivity and use of their land. Landowners can freely transfer their land and pass the land by inheritance. On the contrary, leasehold tenure doesn't allow the owner to pass the land inheritance, only having rights according to the agreements.

Historically land ownership is male-dominated and at present 80% of *Raikar* land remains owned by a male. In recent days, the ownership of land is gradually increasing due to the GON land registration policy. About 25% revenue discount is found while women were buying and selling land property. This policy shows positive results that support increasing land access and the rights of women. According to the Census of Nepal, 2021, the land ownership distribution between males and females is unequal in which 77% of males and the remaining 23% of females have land ownership. This type of inequality is prevalent in the study area and higher than the national average.

According to Guerena & Wegerif (2019), land can be a major engine of shared prosperity or one of the most pervasive drivers of inequality. Not only in Nepal but around the world, there is a clear male bias in land rights. With few exceptions, women have access to less land than men and to land of lesser quality. Land inequality sits at the heart of other forms of inequality. It is fundamentally related and often central to broader inequalities, such as wealth inequality, political inequality, social inequality, gender inequality, environmental inequality, and spatial inequality, in particular in agrarian societies.⁵ As discussed with FFBS groups in the project municipalities, most of the *Yadav*, *Kusbah*, *Sah*, *Janjati/Hill origin and Adivasi/Janjati (Tharu)*, have some amount of their land (ranging from 0.06 to 0.66 ha.) The Madhesi Dalits (*Chamar*, *Musahar*, and *Khatbe caste*) of the study participants are found not having their land. Dalits (*Musahar*, *Chamar*,

⁴ Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, Kathmandu, 2017

⁵ <https://www.landcoalition.org/en/uneven-ground/report-and-papers/>

Khatbe, etc.) constructed their small dwellings on *Ailani/Parti*⁶ land, not in the *Raikar* (Private).

Land ownership is the lowest among Madheshi Dalits and Muslims (Gurung et al., 2020). During the study, it is found that less than 20% of women participants have landed in their name (female's name). According to the USAID Country Profile (2022), only 19.7% of Nepali women own their land. The households who own their farmland, a few sharecroppers (*Bataiya farming*),⁷ and FFBS groups mostly grow the crops in rainfed conditions. The farmers are very much worried about not getting the cost of cultivation and a decline in crop yield is observed due to the lack of moisture in the cropping land.

While discussing the opportunities and driving forces to uplift the economic condition of landless Dalits and the poor, the local government elected representatives and agriculture technicians in the project municipalities noted that the agriculture sector provided income and employment opportunities to the local communities. Thus, the utilization of constitutional power and improvement in the agriculture sector provides livelihood options to low-income people in their area.

Altogether about 291 FFBS groups (Dalit women, Adibasi/Janjati, Muslim, men, and mixed) are formed/reformed by the project. The project municipalities have made the provision of land to the land-less Dalit groups on a 'Contract farming' system by developing the 'Contract Farming Promotion Working Procedure 2020'. This procedure is legally relying on the federal government policy of leasehold farming.

At present, some of the landless Dalits and nearly landless (people having only house-built areas) group members benefit from the contract farming system. Out of 291 FFBS groups, 10 (3.4%) Dalits Women groups of FFBS of Bhagwanpur, and Sakhuanankarkatti municipalities have been allocated the private land by the tripartite agreements (Agreement signed by the municipality, landowner, FFBS group), and FFBS project as an eyewitness to execute 'Contract farming' provision made for five years. The rest of the other three municipalities are in process of land acquisition for the allocation of landless Dalits FFBS groups. The land size of the contract farming ranges from 0.66 ha -2.6 ha⁸. and each group member allocated 0.04 -0.07 ha. from the contracted farmland (Table 1).

It is difficult to get farmland for contract farming in the project municipalities. The present land acquisition approach for contract farming on private land has an agreement for 5 years. The land owners are reluctant to give the land for 'Contract farming' because the tenant may occupy their land for a longer term than the given time frame. The municipality has the right to search, identify, and keep inventory on the utilization of public lands such as riverbank land (*Nadee Ukas*), *riverbed farming*, *Parti/Aailani* (Public land) in the community, and public schools and temples land in long-term (20-25 Yrs.) farming contracts.

⁶ Ailani/Parti land is public land, and not registered on the individual name, but since long-time back people occupied and used as an individual property. They don't pay the tax and do not have the rights of that land to mortgage in banks to get the loan.

⁷ The crop cultivators have the rights of 50% production of crop yields, and 50% goes to the landowner. But all the production cost has to be paid by the crop cultivator.

⁸ 1 ha. equivalent 10,000 M² of land.

Table 1: The status of contracted land area and allotment to FFBS group members in Siraha district

Name of FFBS	Contract land area of FFBS group (ha.)	No. of Farmer in Group	The area allocated at an individual (ha)	Caste/ethnicity of Group member (Female group)
Ma Bhagawati Dalit Women Group, Bhagawanpur -3,	1.0	21	0.04	Chamar, Musahar, Muslim
Ma Bauki Devi Women Farmer Group, Sakuwanankarkatti-2	1.26	19	0.06	Musahar
Malaxmi Farmer Group, Sakuwanankartti -3	0.66	10	0.666	Musahar
Arati Women Farmer Group, Sakuwanankartti -3	1.6	24	0.06	Musahar
Balan Dalit Farmer Group, Sakuwanankartti -4	0.66	10	0.06	Musahar
Dalit Farmer Group, Bhagwanpur-1	2.6	40	0.06	Musahar
Maa Bhagwati Women Farmer Group, Bhagawanpur-5	1.2	17	0.07	Musahar
Binabhadri Baba Women Farmer Group, Bhagawanpur-5	1.2	19	0.06	Musahar
Mata Saguri Women farmer group, Bhagawanpur-3	1.6	25	0.06	Musahar
Bina Bhadri Women farmer group, Bhagawanpur-3	2.6	25	0.06	Musahar

Source: Field Survey, January 2023.

The people from the Dalits community build their small *Kachha Ghar* (houses constructed from mud, bamboo, thatch/paddy, and straw) nearby the roadside generally *Aailani/Parti* (Public land), and most of them are occupied less than 0.03 ha. by each family of Dalits. Some of the Dalits are sharecroppers and the majority of women worked on *Sau/Mahajan* (Village elites' land) on a daily wage for their survival.

BOX 2: I worked for the last 20 years in others' land because we have been landless since ancient times. We don't have land. I lost my productive life to other farmland. At present, the FFBS project opened my eyes to the Dalit community (*Musahar*). We obtained a piece of land in contract farming with the support of the municipality; we grow vegetable and cereal crops on that land and we feed nutritious food to our children, they are healthy enough and can feed my family members for more than six months from our production.

-A FGD Dalit Women (Musahar) participant, Shakuwanankarktti-2, Siraha.

It is appreciated by FFBS groups and other stakeholders at the local level. Public land farming is an alternative approach for landless people and can grow perennial tree crops along with annual crops (Agro-forestry system) for the long-term benefits both for the landowner and FFBS/Farmer groups.

3.1.3 Prospects and Challenges for FFBS Upscaling

The Constitution of Nepal 2015 has transferred the political, administrative, and economic authority from the central to the provincial level and granted substantial autonomy at the local level. The local government is based on subsidiarity principles, which devolve power, functions, and services to the lowest governmental tier subject to economies of scale and capacity. Thus, local governments are governing units that bring citizens and governments closer to the new structure and encourage all actors to participate, deliberate and develop solutions to pressing social, economic, and community development issues (Ghosh, 2020). To ensure representation from all genders, religions, castes, and ethnic groups, the government of Nepal adopted a mixed system that involved both direct elections and nominations. A significant number of women joined politics during various ethnic movements after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). The Madheshi community women generally follow '*Ghumto Pratha*' (Cover the face and head from Muslim) to politics - the activities associated with the governance of a country or in decision-making platform form.

The Madhesh province, its vision focuses on agriculture and food sufficiency. The local municipality (Dhangadhimai, Bhagwanpur, Rupani) gives high priority to the agriculture sector. So, while municipal vision emphasizes the agriculture sector, ultimately FFBS is connected and gets priority as an agriculture extension system (farmer to farmer) in their respective municipalities. The study team visited different locations such as the Chure foothills in the north, Bhabar, the middle part of Terai, and southern up to Indian border, all communities, political parties, and social institutions are positive and appreciated the FFBS model which facilitates women and Dalits economic and social empowerment process. It is found that two municipalities (Bhagalpur and Sakhuwanankarkatti) have endorsed the 'Contract Farming Promotion Working Procedure, 2020'. The remaining three municipalities of the project area are found to be in the final stage for endorsement. It is also found that all elected representatives from the national, regional, and local political parties from Madhesh province are found to support the FFBS model in the project municipalities. This is the prospect for upscaling the FFBS model that the all-political parties are in the common consensus for the upliftment of the livelihood of the landless people and agreed upon the leasehold farming, too. Another opportunity could be the availability of public land on the edge of the rivers in all project municipalities.

While discussing with the FFBS groups (Janjati, Adivasi, Dalits, and Muslims), they noted some of the barriers that demotivated farmers not only to growing crops but other social malpractices, too. The untouchability, and dowry system are some of them. Those identified barriers are lack of agricultural land for Dalits (*Musahar, Chamar, Khabe*), limited or no access to irrigation water, poor quality of seeds, high incidence crop disease, insects and pests, lack of markets, lack of credits, low social status of farm-work, fear of production risks due to extreme climatic factors (e.g., low/high rainfall, droughts, and cold wave, etc.) and lack of technical skills.

This study concludes that there are minimal political barriers in comparison to the social and economic barriers (i.e., landlessness) in the study area. The lack of an irrigation facility in the acquired land may lead to frustration for the FFBS groups. The identification and distribution of the land to the actual landless people is another challenge.

Box 3: An elected Women Dalit Ward member said that mostly men are engaged in economic activities (mason, carpentry, Rickshaw-three tire bicycle puller, etc.) and women are engaged in household chores, child caretaker, and that does not count as productive work due that traditional mindset and don't count by the government policy about care economy. Further, she added that there is a patriarchal mindset, and no one would like to listen to women. Due to traditional attitudes even elected women are not recognized and didn't get an identity in practice such problems are not at the community but also observed at the national level.

- A KII Dalit woman (Chamar) participant, Bhagwanpur municipality, Siraha

3.2 Governance

3.2.1 Governance from Policy Perspectives

The Constitution of Nepal (2015), The 15th five-year Plan (2019/020-2023/024) of Nepal, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) road map (2015-2030), The Agriculture Strategy (2015-2035) of Nepal, the Local Government Operation Act (2017) and other relevant federal government policies and programs that guide national priorities for the development of agriculture and livestock sectoral interventions as shown in Table 2. The 15th five-year plan sets targets for advancing Nepal from a least developed country to a middle-income country (USD 4,100/per capita income) by achieving the SDGs in 2030, and to a high-income country (USD 12,100/per capita income) in 2044.

The 15th five-year plan also has a target of increasing food-secure households from 48.2% to 80% by 2023 and increasing economic growth from 6.8% in 2019 to 10.5% in 2044. Different authorities of the GON have policies related to agriculture and land use that are pro-poor, GESI-sensitive and promise to promote commercial agriculture through the optimal use of land, water, and energy in connection to programs targeted at smallholder, leasehold farming, women farmers, and youths. Those policies and plans directly support the smallholder women farmers and landless, Dalit, and ethnic minorities (Table 2). In this regard, the policies related to FFBS in three-tier governments (Federal, Provincial, and Local) have been analyzed.



Table 2 depicts policies, acts, strategies, and programs of the federal government that directly support, promote, and scale up the agriculture sector focusing on women, Dalits, and tenant farmers through farmer groups, agriculture cooperatives, and agriculture firms/enterprises. The consultants discussed with the service providers who represent as federal government agriculture sector program i.e., Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project (PMAMP) project support

unit (PSU) officers at Dhangadhi, Siraha, they said that PMAMP is the largest existing project under the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MOALD).

Table 2: Overview Federal Level Policies for Agriculture, Pro-poor, Youth, and GESI

S.N	Policy/Act/Regulation	Provision-made production and productivity and the agriculture sector	Equity, Inclusion, and Gender
1	Constitution of Nepal 2015	Part 4, Directive Principles, Policies and Obligations of the State, (e) Policies relating to agriculture and land reforms (3): to make land management and commercialization, industrialization, diversification and modernization of agriculture, by pursuing land-use policies to enhance agriculture products and productivity, while protecting and promoting the rights and interests of the farmers (36) Right relating to food (3) Every citizen shall have the right to food sovereignty following the law.	The Constitution ensures equal rights to all Nepali citizens and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of origin, religion, race, caste, tribe, sex, physical condition, disability, health, matrimonial status, pregnancy, economic status, language or geographical region, ideology, or any other identity.
2	UN SDG (2016-2030)	Goal 1: End Poverty in all its forms everywhere Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture and Goal 8: Sustainable Economic Growth.	Goal 5: Achieve Gender Equality and empower all women and girls Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, and provide access to justice for all
3	FG 15 th Five-Year Plan (2019-2023)	Vision: Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali”. Strategy 4: To increase production and productivity	Strategy 6: To build a society with socio-economic equality and poverty alleviation -Programs regarding the building of a safe, civilized, and equitable society

4	FG Agriculture Development Strategy (ADS)(2015-2035)	Vision: a self-reliant, sustainable, competitive, and inclusive agricultural sector that drives economic growth and contributes to improved livelihoods and food and nutrition security. Strategy 4: To increase production and productivity The leading stakeholders: farmers, cooperatives, and private sector	Landless or near landless will benefit from the ADS measures related to targeted food and nutrition programs; gender and social/geographic inclusion; access to forestry products; and growth of small and medium enterprises.
5	National Land Policy 2018, Ministry of Land Reform, Cooperatives, and Poverty Reduction (MoLRCPR)	Commercial agriculture and Cooperative based Farming Leasing public lands to landless and disadvantaged groups (DAG) for commercial agriculture	Pro-poor focused (smallholder and tenant farmers and women's groups) for collective farming with access to irrigation and agriculture inputs
6	Agri Mechanization Policy 2014, MoALD	Promote equipment and technologies for agriculture, including solar energy	Environment and women-friendly equipment; collateral-free or low-interest rate loan for smallholder and women farmers
7	Youth in Agriculture Program Operation Guideline 2019 (MoALD)	Commercial agriculture (crops, vegetables, animal husbandry, horticulture, fisheries)	50% subsidy targeted at youth (18-45 years old)
8	National Poverty Reduction Policy 2019	It aims to reduce the economic poverty rate to 5% by 2030 and to make Nepal poverty free by 2044.	Aims to reduce poverty, create employment for the poor, women, and marginalized groups, end discrimination against women and people with disabilities, and enhance the roles of cooperatives for small-scale enterprises pro-women, the poor, Dalits, and returning migrants.
9	The National Gender Policy (NGP)2021	Aim to guide federal, provincial, and local governments in integrating gender in their policies, plans, acts, strategies, programs, and activities.	The overall goal of the NGP is to end all forms of gender discrimination, violence, and inequality and to ensure equal opportunity, access, and benefit for people of all genders in all sectors and development.

10	Prime Minister Agriculture Modernization Project (PMAMP) (2016 to 2025) and AKC (MOALD)	Aims to address the needs of the farming community and other related stakeholders (such as service providers, farming entrepreneurs, rural youths, etc.)	50-85% subsidy provision on seeds, farm equipment, shallow tube well, and agricultural machinery to Farmer Groups (Women and men), and Agriculture cooperatives
11	Local Government Operation Act 2017/MOFAGA	Provided legal rights to Local policy, plan, standard, guideline, implementation plan, and monitoring including capacity building and development of Agriculture and animal husbandry, agro-products management, animal health, and cooperatives by local-level development projects	Focus on target groups (women, Dalits, and ethnic minorities)

Source: Federal Government Policies and Programs.

The project has four components; i) Small commercial agriculture production center (pocket) development program, ii) Commercial agriculture production center (block) development program, iii) Commercial agriculture production and processing center (zone) development program, and iv) Large commercial agriculture production and industrial center (super zone) development.

The zones and super zone development programs are being implemented by 75 Project Support Units (PSU) across the country. It also aims to address the needs of the farming community and other related stakeholders (such as service providers, farming entrepreneurs, rural youths, agricultural sector officials, agri-service agencies, etc.). It has been supported in Mango, Paddy, and Fisheries commercial agriculture production and processing in Siraha and Saptari districts where all project municipalities are under all three zone and super zone programs. They are working with Farmer groups, Agriculture cooperatives, and private agriculture firms. While researchers discussed with Ekata Women Farmer Group, Dhangadhimai municipality, Musarniya, they benefited under the Mango pocket development program and received technical inputs and agriculture equipment (Sprayers) at a 50% subsidy from PMAMP.

Similarly, the Ministry of Health and Population is implementing the multi-sectoral nutrition Plan (MSNP-II) to improve maternal, adolescent, and child nutrition throughout Nepal. Another supporting program is the President Chure-Terai Madhesh Conservation Area Program aiming to conserve the natural resources of the Churiya Hills/ Shiwalik region through sustainable management and promotional ecological services under the Ministry of Forest and Environment (MOFE). Community Forestry (CF) program is the regular government program implemented by MOFE through Division Forest Office (DFO) in the adjacent communities to the Churiya and Bhabar forests under the project municipalities (Dhangadimai, Rupani, and Agnisair Krishnasavan).

The Madhesh Province is the traditional ‘Rice Bowl’ of Nepal, agriculture benefits from the largest area (393,582 ha) and highest proportion (74%) of irrigated land of any province; favorable climatic zones that produce up to three harvests per year (Sharma, 2020). Madhesh province's first five-year plan (2020/21-2024/25) and its long-term goal is to increase agricultural productivity and production.

The Office of the Chief Minister and Cabinet Ministers (OCMCM) office is strengthening the capacity of local government representatives, and employees through the Provincial Centre for Good Governance (PCGG) for the promotion of good governance and service delivery from provincial and local governments (LGs).

The Madhesh provincial government's vision, goals, and policy support for the FFBS model is given in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Overview of Provincial level policy and Institution to Support the FFBS Model

SN	Policy/Act/Regulation	Provision-made production and productivity and the agriculture sector	Equity, Inclusion, and Gender
1	Madhesh Province First Five-Year Plan (FY 2020/21-2024/2025)	The main targets of the 1 st five-year plan are increasing agricultural productivity and production.	Inclusive Growth
2	Nepal provincial planning Baseline and Recommendations for Province 2 (2020)	The vision is to attain sustainable prosperity through land reform, modernization, and commercialization of agriculture.	Drive inclusive economic development through industry lead innovation; consolidate and expand agricultural productivity
3	OCMCM/PCGG	Enhance the capacity of elected, nominated representatives of PG and LGs employees to promote good governance and deliver effective service delivery	Good governance, GESI, and environmental focus

The federal government PMAMP’s pocket and block development programs are being implemented by the provincial Ministry of Land Reform, Agriculture, and Co-operatives (MOLMAC) through the Agriculture Knowledge Centre (AKC) at the district and local government level which supported improved crop seeds, farm equipment, machinery, and irrigation facilities to farmer groups, and agriculture cooperatives, and that support can be enjoyed by the farmer groups, FFBS groups, and Agriculture cooperatives of project municipalities learned from AKCs officials.

Similarly, CARE Nepal has gained valuable experience from Climate Resilient Leasehold Farming Practice from its project named SAMARTHYA: Promoting Inclusive Governance and Resilience for the Right to Food project which supports climate-vulnerable and marginalized landless, land-poor, and women farmers in Madhesh province, especially in the Siraha district. Table 3 depicts policies, acts, strategies, and programs of provincial government agriculture extension entities that directly support, promote, and scale up the agriculture sector and FFBS in the project municipalities. The consultants discussed with the service providers (PMAMP, AKC, and VHLSEC) who shared the process of service delivery systems and timelines. But respective project

municipalities' agriculture sector officials and project field staff are not well informed and aware of the process and timelines to harness the possible support from provincial and federal government authorities who are providing technical support, and farm inputs to Farmer Groups/FFBS. Table 4 presents an overview of the constitutional rights of the project municipalities and the legal framework related to FFBS groups.

Table 4: Overview of Project municipalities' application of Legal framework to support FFBS and GESI

SN	Policy/Act/Regulation	Provision-made and productivity and the agriculture sector	Equity, Inclusion, and Gender
1	Exercising LGOA 2017	Formed Different thematic Committee i) Economic Development ii) Social Development iii) Physical Infrastructure Development iv) Forest, Environment and Disaster Risk Management and v) Good Governance and Institutional Development	Formed as follows the legal framework, weak in GESI and environmentally friendly principles in development plan work and GESI responsive budgeting at local governance units.
2	Application of Local Government Institutional Self-Assessment (LISA) prepared by MOFAGA	Project municipalities have not regularly performed the LISA exercise.	All project municipalities as followed FY 2021 (Rupani and Agnisair Krishanshravan) and FY 2022 (Dhangadhimai, Bhagwanpur, and Sakhuwanankarkatti) are weak in GESI, Environment/DRR, Cooperation and Coordination, and Service delivery
3	Application of GESI Audit (MOFAGA)	All project municipalities didn't conduct GESI Audit in FY 2022	Weak in GESI principles and following the positive discrimination in local government policy, plan, and GESI responsive budgeting. None of the project municipalities have GESI Focal persons.
4	Project municipalities formulation of policy and legal framework institutionalization of FFBS	'Contract Farming Promotion Working Procedure, 2020' endorsed by Sakhuwanankarkatti and Bhagwanpur municipalities, and rest of other three LG Dhangadhimai, Rupani, and	Prepared the legal framework of FFBS focusing on Women, Dalits, and landless through leasehold/Contract farming.

		Agrisair Krishnashravan are in process of endorsement. Farmers Identity Card Procedure of Contract Farming endorsed by Sakhuwanankarkatti and Bhagwanpur municipalities and the rest of the three municipalities are in process of endorsement.	
5	Project Municipality Annual Plan and Budget FY 2022/023	Project municipality annual plan and budget included the agriculture, health and nutrition, women and Dalits supportive activities and budget	All project municipalities allocated some budget for agriculture, nutrition, and targeted beneficiaries, but weak in GESI responsive budgeting

Project municipalities are exercising their constitutional rights and the municipal assembly formed different committees with developing rules and regulations to make their effective management system. The project and its partners engage themselves in these committees and sub-committees with the role of policy advisor, facilitator, trainer, and mentor. The committee and the sectoral committees formed in the municipalities, first of all, facilitate the policies regarding the FFBS group formation and registration. Meanwhile, the land acquisition process for FFBS would be possible. And these committees for example, the Economic Development Committee can invite the FFBS project partners to the sectoral planning, and market segmentation planning, too. Together, the best practices of FFBS are documented and carried out by formulating the guidelines further.

The federal and provincial governments provide a complementary budget, a conditioned budget to the municipalities for the promotion of the agriculture sector on an annual basis (Table 5). Registered FFBS groups can benefit from upscaling agriculture activities, too.

The municipality officials and elected representatives seem to be unaware of the seven steps annual planning processes: i) pre-planning ii) resource forecasting and budget ceilings iii) selecting the plans from the community level iv) prioritization of the plans at the ward level v) planning the budget and program vi) approval the budget and program by the municipal executive committee vii) endorsement of the budget and program by the municipal assembly.

This situation may be a hindrance to the access of FFBS groups to the planning process. To overcome the constraints in this situation, the project and it's implementing partners can facilitate the effective planning process at the municipal level.

Table 5: Project Municipalities, and Practice of municipal governance

SN	Name of Committee formed	Chairperson/Coordinator	Major function
1	Legislative Assembly	Mayor/Chairperson	Endorse the policies, laws, regulations, annual plan and budget, etc.

2	Local Revenue Advisory Committee	Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chairperson	Prepare internal revenue policy, laws, and bylaws
3	Resource Estimation and Budget Forecast Committee	Mayor/Chairperson	Forecast internal revenue, distribution of revenue, and handover finance from the federal and provincial government and internal loan
4	Budget and Program Planning Committee	Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chairperson	Prepare municipal annual plan and Budget
5	Judicial Work Committee	Deputy Mayor/Vice-Chairperson	Perform judicial work and settle the issues related to land demarcation, gender-based violence, untouchability, labor wages, children and senior citizens and harmful social practices, etc.
6	Municipal Governance Thematic Area Development Committee		
6.1	Economic Development Committee	Ward Chair	Support to preparing Economic Sector (Agriculture, livestock, small irrigation, tourism, industries, etc.) related plan, budget, and draft the economic sector policies, laws, and bylaws including leasehold/Contract farming and FFBS institutionalization process
6.2	Social Development Committee	Ward Chair	Support to prepare Social Development Sector (Education, Health, Nutrition, Sports, Women, Children, Senior Citizens, PWD, etc.) plan, budget, and policy, laws, and bylaws formulation
6.3	Physical Infrastructure Development Committee	Ward Chair	Support preparing Physical Infrastructure Sector (Road, Bridge, Electricity, Building, Communication, etc.) plan, budget, and formulate GESI and environment-friendly policies, laws, and bylaws in the physical infrastructure development sector
6.4	Forestry, Environment, and Disaster Management Committee	Ward Chairperson	Support to prepare Forestry, Environment, Climate Change Adaptation, and Disaster Management Sector plan, budget, policy, laws, and bylaws formulation

6.5	Good Governance and Institutional Development	Ward Chairperson	Support to make transparent, accountable, and responsive municipal governance for effective service delivery and policy, plan formulation, etc.
7	Develop and Endorse Agriculture and Livestock Act	Legislative Assembly	Economic Development Committee/Focal person support to develop 'Contract Farming Promotion Working Procedure 2020' Out of five project municipalities, two municipalities (Bhagwanpur and Sakhuwanankarkatti) endorsed the legal document and the rest of three (Dhangadhi, Rupani, and Agnisair Krishnashravan) are in process of endorsement.

Source: Field survey, January 2023.

3.2.2 Governance at Institutional Arrangements

Constitutionally, municipalities act as local governments in Nepal. There are 77 districts with their district assembly, and 753 local governments (six metropolises, 11 sub-metropolises, 276 municipalities, and 460 rural municipalities). The Constitution of Nepal 2015 (Schedule 8) clearly states 22 authorities to the local government that provides the legislative power to the municipal council to formulate policies, and laws and execute those for the benefit of local people. Besides, schedule 9 states 15 such synchronized powers that can be implemented by all three levels of government (i.e., federal, provincial, and local levels) following the principles of coordination, cooperation, and co-existence.

Nepal's Constitution's schedules 5, 6, and 8 define the rights of federal, provincial, and local governments, while schedules 7 and 9 stipulate the collective functioning between the provincial and the federal government, and across the three levels of government. The National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission (NNRFC) of Nepal have mandated Land use policies to the federal government but land pooling and land zoning must be endorsed by the local government. For this, coordination and linkages between federal, provincial, and local governments are necessary, and the FFBS project is facilitating this regard. Figure 6 illustrates the coordination and interrelation among three types of governments.

The project municipalities' annual plan has given impetus to allocating the budget to the target groups. However, it is found to be more traditional and does not sufficiently address the issues of women, children, adolescents, deprived and excluded groups, and PWD from the 'intersectionality' perspective. According to the local government representative, inter-municipality cooperation is not being noticed at a significant level. The development activities are not seen as required by the inter-municipality coordination.

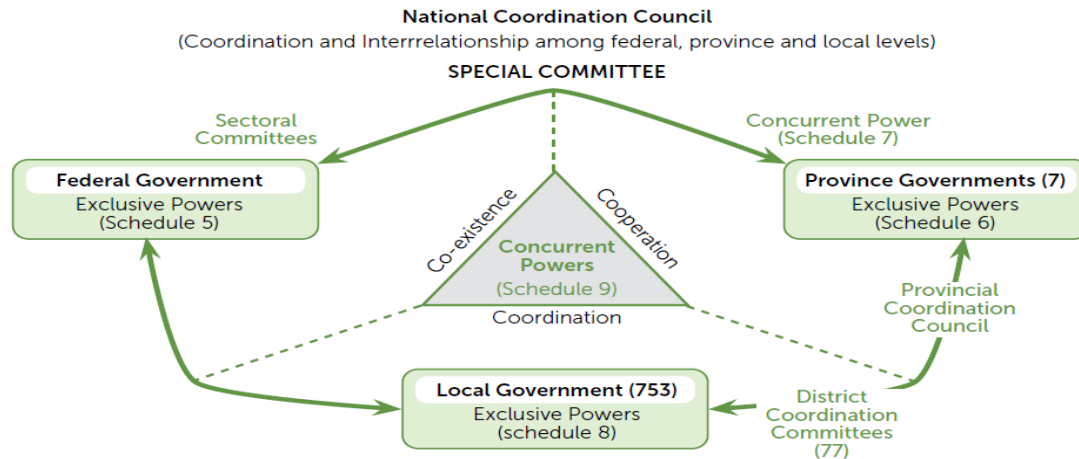


Figure 6: Coordination and Interrelationship among Federal, Provincial, and Local Government (Adapted Manohara et al. 2021).

The project municipalities have exercised their constitutional and legal rights and developed some legal documents that followed the cooperation, coordination, and co-existence principles to run the day-to-day administration of their respective municipality and formulated the annual plan, and guidelines to implement the development works.

There are about 291 (5000-7000 members)/ FFBS Groups (Women, Dalits, Mixed groups) in the five project municipalities. FFBS groups have the practice of monthly meetings on a fixed day and usually, NFGF field staff observe and share their program activities during the monthly meeting. FFBS groups usually collect monthly savings and mobilize the credits among group members. The monthly saving ranges from NPR 20-100/month/member and provides a loan of NPR 2000-5000 to their group members on a demand basis to purchase farm inputs. The FFBS groups maintained the savings/credit records and also maintained the meeting minutes. The monthly meeting and discussions mostly follow practice-action-learning methods i.e., learning by doing and doing by learning. The ‘Volunteer farmers share the learning of ‘Demo plots and learning of the training received from the municipality and FFBS project in the group meeting.

FFBS groups noted that the majority of them felt difficulties preparing the annual audit report. The audit report is mandatory for the FFBS group renewal process in the local government. Most of the FFBS groups haven’t enough money to hire government-registered auditors to prepare the annual audit report. The FFBS groups who are not registered and renewed then those groups seem not to be eligible to access the local government and other government authorities' technical and farm inputs supports.



The governance structure of FFBS groups in the project municipalities seems participatory in terms

of caste/ethnicity but male participation is found relatively low. There is the provision of 20–25 members in a group with the chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary, and treasurer to function the activities. There is no separate executive committee as such. The members are found to raise their voices in the decision-making process slowly at the community level.

While analyzing the participation of respondents from the institutional level, out of 160 respondents, 107 (66.9%) participated from FFBS groups followed by 26 (16.2%) participating from project municipalities, 10 (6.3% from CSO/NGO networks (NFGF), 7 (4.3%) from Agriculture cooperatives and Agro-vet traders, 2 (1.25%) from the media, and 1 (0.63%) PWD were participating respectively (Figure 7).

Agriculture sector staff of project municipalities have said that municipalities have only made some provisions from their funds to the FFBS program e.g., to pay the ‘Contract farming cost’ Local Government Operation Act 2017 (LGOA-2017) was formulated to speed up the local governance process. This aimed to promote cooperation, coexistence, and coordination between the federal, provincial, and local governments; provide efficient and high-quality services by ensuring people’s participation. Similarly, it envisages powers having devolved to the Ward (lowest administrative government structure) at a grass-root level from municipalities and village centers in terms of the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of planning; development work; regulative functions; and certification.

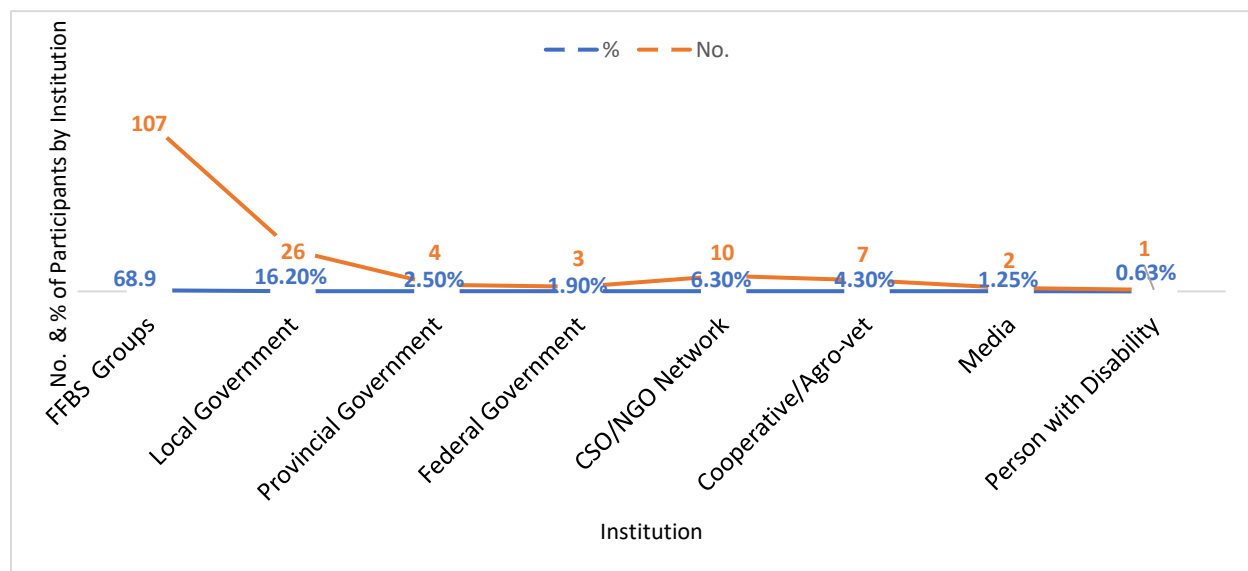


Figure 7: Distribution of Participants by the institution

Furthermore, the LGOA has given the authority to formulate farmer groups/FFBS promotional policies, acts, and regulations for the Municipal Legislative Assembly (MLA).

While discussing with the Deputy Mayors, who is the Chairperson of the ‘Judicial Work Committee’, they noted that most of their time goes to listening to issues related to the encroachment of land demarcation (*Sandh-simana Micheko*) by neighbors, issues of division of land property (*Ansha Banda*) between family members, divorce cases (*Sambandh Bichda*), and some of the gender-based violence and untouchability (*Chhuwachhut*). They shared that they performed the work, but felt difficulties to execute the judicial work because they are not from the law educational background, and lack orientation about the acts, regulation, and negotiation skills.

Service receivers were mostly confused about how to get the appropriate services when they visit the municipality/ward offices because there is no clear signage for the ‘Inquiry/Reception Desk’ and ‘Citizen Charter’ displayed in the office to get the right information. Furthermore, the taxpayers are not aware of the ‘Public Audit’ and ‘Public Hearing’ practices that are organized by the municipality/ward office and service provider public institutions, which speak on the budget allocation, the process followed to implement the activities, and transparency about the expenses. However, all project municipalities have been practicing the electronic governance system in public service delivery but little public information is provided on the municipal website which can’t be accessed by the project beneficiaries due to their low level of education and economic condition. The provision of Information officers has been seen in every project municipality, but targeted beneficiaries have relatively do not have access, to and contact with these information officers.

Local Government Institution Self-Assessment (LISA) is a web-based performance assessment system that is supposed to help local governments to be more transparent and efficient. The LISA Guideline 2020 developed by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MOFAGA) of the Nepal Government envisages a continuous assessment mechanism to improve the overall performance of local governments. Here, the LISA score has been calculated to assess the principles and strategies of effective governance for sustainable development. The Provincial Centre for Good Governance (PCGG) is established and in operation under the Office of the Chief Minister and Cabinet Ministries (OCMCM) in Janakpur for Madhesh Province. LISA assesses the performance and at the same time, PCGG facilitates the capacity enhancement of the representatives and civil servants of Provincial and Local Governments.

Table 6 reveals that all project municipalities are weak in cooperation and coordination between FG, PG, and LG for the formulation of policies and programs. The project municipalities are found to be weak in the Social Inclusion thematic area, they didn’t formulate the required policies related to GESI, and project municipalities are found to be weak in providing social justice on untouchability, social malpractices, discrimination by sex, domestic violence, committee/sub-committee formulation that does not follow the participatory and inclusion principles, they are also weak in providing social protection; ending child marriages, child labor, dowry systems; and do not or limited practice of GESI responsive budget.

Table 6: LISA Score of Project Municipalities (FY 2021, and 2022)

S.N.	Thematic area/No. of Indicators	Municipality/Siraha district (FY 2022)			Municipality/Saptari district (FY 2021)	
		Bhagwanpur	Sakhuwanankatti	Dhangadhimai	Rupani	Agnisairkrishnashravan
1	Governance System (1-9) (9)	84.5	94.4	88.9	83.3	66.7
2	Organization and Administration (10-17) (8)	72.2	100.0	100.0	100.0	62.5
3	Annual Budget and Plan Formulation (18-28) (11)	66.9	77.3	81.8	95.4	50.0
4	Fiscal and Financial Management (29-39) (11)	75.1	90.6	81.8	93.2	63.6
5	Service delivery (40-55) (16)	71.8	90.6	84.4	84.4	50.0

6	Judicial Work Performance (56-62) (7)	79.8	57.1	100	57.1	28.6
7	Physical Infrastructure Development (63-75) (13)	48.8	73.1	69.2	65.4	46.1
8	Social Inclusion (76-85) (10)	58.8	72.5	30.0	49.3	30.0
9	Environment and Disaster Management (86-94) (9)	48.4	39.0	39.0	49.3	100.0
10	Cooperation and Coordination (95-100) (6)	37.3	37.3	0.0	33.6	0.0
	Total average	64.6	71.1	67.5	71.1	49.6

Source: www.lisa.mofaga.gov.np and respective municipalities.

Furthermore, MOFAGA also developed the GESI Audit tool and practiced it in Local Governments to assess the thematic areas of municipalities from a GESI perspective. Due to time limits, the project municipalities do not perform the GESI Audit in 2022 learned from respective project municipalities and PCGG and they lose the opportunity to obtain valuable feedback from the GESI audit.

3.2.3. Governance at Sectoral Level

The project municipalities have been implementing agriculture promotional programs through farmer groups and agriculture cooperatives of municipality programs with the support of the federal, and provincial government, it is owned and supported by the FFBS project, and there are no other I/NGOs found working in the agriculture sector in the project municipalities.

The agriculture promotional activities are launched in coordination with AKC, PMAMP, and NFGF. The project municipalities mostly provided technical support, small irrigation support (shallow tube well), improved agriculture practices related to training, fruit sapling distribution, improved cereal and vegetable seeds distribution, and equipment and machinery support to the Farmer groups and Agriculture Cooperatives. The fruit saplings, cereals, and vegetable seeds were provided with a 50% subsidy, and shallow tube wells had an 85% subsidy to the farmer groups. The project municipalities' program and plan related to agriculture to support the farmer groups and the FFBS model are given in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Project municipalities agricultural promotion program (FY 2022/023)

S.N	Agriculture program	Municipalities				
		Bhagwan pur	Sakhuwan ankarkatti	Dhanga dhimai	Rupani	Agnisair krishnas hravan
1	FFBS group support program	√	√	√	√	√
2	Farmer identity card distribution	√	√	√	√	√
3	Farmer group form/reform	√	√	√	√	√
4	Paddy and Wheat seeds distribution	√				
5	Sugar cane seed stock distribution	√				
6	Vegetable seeds distribution	√			√	

7	Fruit saplings distribution			√		
8	Crop protection training				√	
9	Agriculture equipment and Power tiller distribution	√	√	√	√	√
10	Shallow tube well distribution	√	√	√	√	√
11	Organic vegetable cultivation training			√		√

In the project municipalities, 291 FFBS Groups are having about 6000-7000 members comprising more than 70% women and Dalits. The distribution of FFBS groups in project municipalities is given in Figure 8. The FFBS groups are gradually registered and renewed in their respective municipalities. FFBS project is supporting the project municipalities to distribute the ‘Farmer’s Identity Card’ according to their economic status.

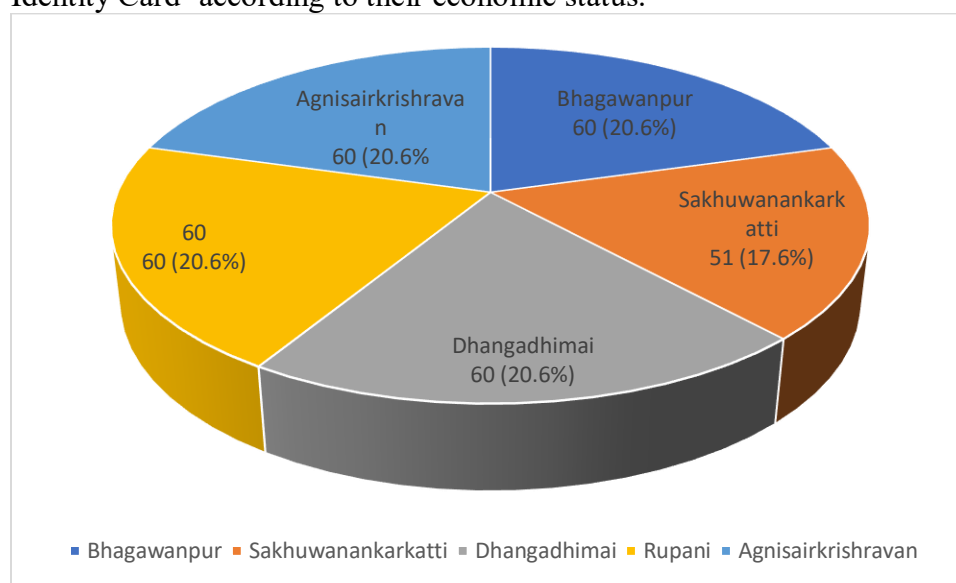


Figure 8: Distribution of FFBS Groups in the Project Municipalities

FFBS group members access finance, especially from their monthly savings/credit scheme, and Agriculture cooperatives borrow the loan for their agriculture business for cereal crop seeds production, vegetable cultivation, fruit farming, and livestock-based business. Table 8 depicts Agriculture Cooperatives saving and credit status derived from the field study.

Food security is affected by poverty, high unemployment, inadequate social protection systems; unequal distribution of productive resources (land, water, credit, technical knowledge; low purchasing power for low-waged workers), and the low productivity of resources. Family size, gender, age, and education levels, together with land ownership, household income, remittance, and improved access to markets and roads seem to be strongly associated with food security (Regmi et al., 2019).

All the above-mentioned characteristics are generally noted by the FFBS groups in their communities during the field survey. About 50-60% of inhabitants of the project municipalities have food sufficiency from their production, and malnourishment of children (06-59 months) is 14.2% recorded in Sakhuanankarkatti municipality.

Table 8: Status of Agriculture Cooperatives fund mobilization

Name of the Cooperative	No. of shareholder	No. of members in MC	Monthly saving (NPR)/member	Total amount mobilized (NPR)
Pokharimata Small Farmer Cooperative, Mahadeba, Portaha, Sakuanankarkatti-2 Siraha	525	9	205	3,00,00,000
Maa Bhawani Agriculture Cooperative, Rupani-5	100	9	100	12,00,000
Rupani Agriculture Cooperative, Rupani-1, Saptari	136	7	100	10,00,000
Amsot Community Agriculture Cooperative, Agisairkrishnasavan - Mahuli	825	9	500	3,96,00,000

Source: Field survey, January 2023.

Normally, post-harvesting is associated with food sovereignty, there is the tendency of following the traditional means of storage *Bhakari and Ghyampo* (made up of Bamboo bins, mud, thatch, and large size of earthen vessels). The post-harvest loss is seen which is also reported because of the insects and pests (weevil, and rat) while storing the cereal crops. The market information system and collective marketing approaches are lacking whereas the ‘middlemen’ are found active in the market. There is a lack of value addition skills for the surplus vegetable products after the post-harvest like pickles making, vegetable drying, and packaging among the FFBS groups are the limitation in the project municipalities.



According to the 15th five-year plan (2019/020-2023/024) of Nepal, the number of households that are secured by the fundamental requirement of food is 48.2%, and food insecurity is 21% in 2019. SDG 2 has set the major targets of ending hunger by 2030 from the world and ensuring access by all people to safe, nutritious, and sufficient food all year round, ending all forms of malnutrition. To achieve that target the municipality's agriculture policy, programs, and plans also need to incline with clear road maps to contribute to national goals and SDGs. But only Bhagwanpur municipality has its periodic plan that makes the provision of sustainable food production systems, use of improved genetic diversity and quality of seeds, with increasing productivity of soil and crop production. FFBS project municipalities are going to expand the market for agriculture products although it is at a slow pace. The market as such is not modernized, it is the continuation of traditional practices like *Haat Bazar* (Market Day). Figure 9 depicts, there are 22 (61.1%) wards out of 36 in project municipalities organized by *Haat Bazar* in 28 different locations with 51 events in a Week. The numbers of *Haat Bazar* are being practiced every week.

These *Haat Bazar* are managed by local farmers, traders, and municipalities that are losing their revenue in this regard. In many cases, the local Market Management Committee, and trade association seem to be regulating *Haat Bazar* in the project areas. Some large-scale traders are found purchasing vegetables, and fruits from the farmer groups on their farmland, and in the *Haat Bazar*. And some of these traders are found sending the products to other *Haat Bazar* and the market center. In the case of Dhangadimai Municipality, it is found that the municipality is initiating to manage the *Haat Bazar* in collaboration with local traders.

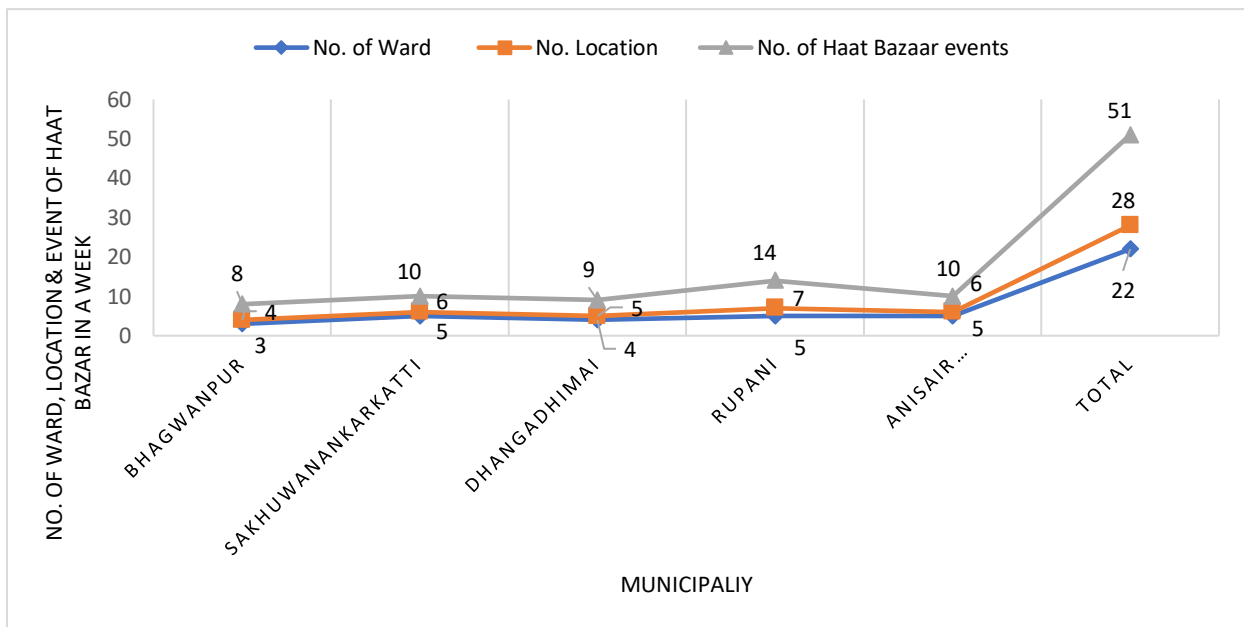


Figure 9: Distribution of Weekly Haat Bazar in Project Municipalities

BOX 4: I am the Chairperson of our group. There are 24 members (17 female and 7 male) from Dalit, Yadav, and Tharu communities. In each season, we cultivate vegetables. I, myself, sold cauliflower at NPR 40/Kg, Broccoli at NPR 50/Kg, green Chili at NPR 80/Kg, and Brinjal at NPR 50/Kg. He earned NPR 20,000 from one Katha of land with his production costs (seeds, manures, labor, irrigation, etc.) NPR 5000/Kattha⁹. I sold those products in the Hat bazaar held each week in my village. The earnings are usually invested in our children’s education, group saving, and crop cultivation. I am very much eager to join the FFBS groups for further support in agricultural activities.

- A KII Informant farmer from Sakhuwanankarkatti-2.

The field study shows that ‘Volunteer Farmers (VFs)’ have low levels of knowledge and skills, regarding nutrition and installation of kitchen/homestead gardening. The study found that there are no Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) from the FFBS Groups. FCHVs are the grass-root level volunteers working directly at the community level especially pregnant, and lactating mothers and young children for community health and nutrition.

⁹ 1 ha equivalent 10,000 M² of land.

BOX 5: The basic agriculture training supported me to grow wheat and garlic vegetable crops using compost in a small ‘Demo Plot’. I’m very happy. But I need more technical knowledge, skills, and techniques in agriculture crop cultivation practices. I don't even know how to control disease, insects, and pests.

-Volunteer Farmer, Bhagwanpur-3, Siraha

At Sakhuwanankarkatti municipality, out of 1,049 under-five children, 149 (14.2%) children were found to have moderate acute malnourishment (MAM) and 4 children (0.38%) (2 boys and 2 girls) had severe acute malnourishment (SAM). Only 50% of pregnant mothers visited Health Posts and they were given iron tablets. It shows that the remaining 50% of women lack awareness about the facilities provided by health services. When we go to the strata of Dalits and Muslim women, there are even lower rates of visiting health facilities.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) provides that all Parties must formulate and implement national or regional programs containing measures to facilitate adequate adaptation to climate change. The croplands, pastures, and forests that occupy 50% of the Earth’s surface are progressively being exposed to threats from increased climatic variability and, in the longer run, to climate change (FAO, 2007).

In course of the study, it is noticed and observed floods, cold waves, drought, fire, and irregular changes in air temperature, in the project area. There is also an increase in the incidence of insect and pest problems in their cereals and vegetable crops. Further, the study participants added that Churiya/Shiwalik range forests' greenery is declining day by day due to the dry-up of water sources and human activities, accelerating soil erosion in the Churiya hills. The study participants observed frequent flood problems at the Balan River coastal area in Bhagwanpur municipality, Siraha.

The Disaster Risk Management Committee (DRMC) of Bhagwanpur Municipality developed long-term and short-term plans for rescue, relief, and recovery as well as a climate change adaptation plan. Bhagwanpur municipality had prepared its five-year-long periodic plan, including Forest, Environment, and DRR thematic area, but remarkable achievement is not observed. The rest of the other project municipalities are not getting serious about developing and implementing their municipal long-term (periodic) and sectoral development plan.

3.2.4. Governance at FFBS Level

There is the practice of monthly saving and credit schemes among FFBS groups (20-25 members in a group). Through these savings and credit schemes group members meet regularly, and continue monthly savings. They can use these savings to make loans to individual members and generally hold monthly group meetings which are also an opportunity to discuss other contemporary issues facing the group members. Some members of the FFBS group are also taking membership in the agriculture cooperative in their respective municipalities, too. The status of the FFBS group's monthly saving/credit is given in Table 9.

In the past, women and Dalits group members felt difficulties obtaining the loan from *Sau, Mahajan* (Village elites) and they have usual practices of taking the high-interest rate NPR 5/month (60%/annum). But now they have their monthly group savings and credit scheme and can borrow the loan at a 12% interest rate without collateral. The group members generally borrow the

loan NPR 2000-5000 for growing vegetable crops at a 12% interest rate for 6 months shared by the women group members who have a small amount in their group fund.

Table 9: FFBS Groups' Saving Status Participated in Field Survey

Municipality	Name of FFBS Group	No. of member	Monthly Saving (NPR)	Total saving amount (NPR)
Bhagawanpur-3 and 2, Siraha	Ma Bhagawati Dalit women	21	20	10,000
	Lakshmi Narayan Women Farmer	25	20	40,000
	Baba Bajrangbali	25	25	10,000
	Dibahar Women	15	50	12,000
	Ram Janaki	18	25	22,000
Sakhuwanankar Katti-2, Siraha	Ma Bauki Devi Women Farmer	25	100	60,000
Sakhuwanankar Katti-3, Siraha	Mahadev Baba Farmer	31	100	9,300
Sakhuwanankar Katti-2, Siraha	Janjagaran Woman Farmer	33	100	19,800
Dhangadhimai-9, Siraha	Ekata Women Farmer	22	50	20,000
Rupani-5, Saptari	Al Majira	25	100	6,000
	Ma Janaki farmer	15	100	2500
Agnisair Krishnasavan-6, Saptari	Srijana Janchetana farmer	26	200	225,000
Agnisair Krishnasavan-5, Saptari	Mahuli Farmer	21	100	14,000

Source: Field survey, January 2023.

During the field study, a discussion was held with four Agriculture Cooperative Chairpersons and Cooperative Management Committee members in the project municipalities. Few members of FFBS groups of project municipality/ward have taken the individual level membership of the Agriculture Cooperatives. They regularly deposit their monthly savings. The cooperatives have the provision of providing the loan to the share members up to 75% of their deposited amount at a 14-16% interest rate.

The loan is typically for their agriculture business, cereal crop seeds production, vegetable cultivation, fruit farming, and livestock-based businesses. Table 10 depicts Agriculture Cooperatives saving and credit status. The agriculture cooperatives are not confined to FFBS groups and are based on their constitution-defined criteria and cooperative principles. People in the community can get an Agriculture Cooperative membership, and FFBS members also have the opportunity to join these agriculture cooperatives. The FFBS project can contribute to agriculture cooperatives by capacity enhancement, can provide membership to the landless people, and upscale their financial access.

Amtos Community Agriculture Cooperative, Mahuli provides a loan of NPR 100,000 without collateral in a business and also gives a loan of up to NPR 500,000 on a collateral basis to cooperative members. Pokharimata Small Farmer Cooperative, Sakhuwanankarkatti, and Amtos Community Agriculture Cooperatives have been lending more than NPR 3,00,00,000 to their shareholders in the agriculture-related business.

Table 10: Status of Agriculture Cooperatives fund mobilization

Name of the Cooperative	No. of shareholder	No. of members in EC	Monthly saving (NPR)/member	Total amount (NPR)
Pokharimata Small Farmer Cooperative, Mahadeba, Portaha, Sakuanankarkatti-2 Siraha	525	9	205	3,00,00,000
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Amsot Community Agriculture Cooperative, Agisairkrishnasavan - Mahuli	825	9	500	3,96,00,000

Source: Field survey, January 2023.

3.3 Change Agent

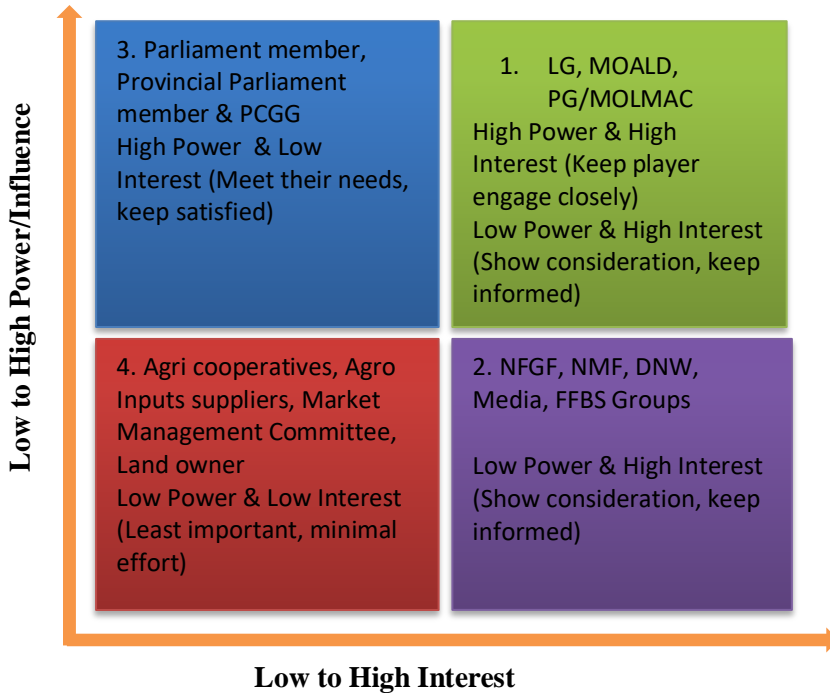
3.3.1 Stakeholder Analysis

In course of the field study, consultants discussed with FFBS groups, local government, the provincial and federal government, and CSO/NGO representatives on the key stakeholder and players as change agents in the sector covered by the FFBS model. First, the ‘brainstorming method’ to identify the stakeholders and later mapping of the stakeholders using the ‘Meta Card’ was conducted to identify and find out the stakeholder power/influence, and interest in institutionalization and upscaling of the FFBS model in the project municipality and beyond. Figure 10 depicts the Stakeholder Analysis of ‘Influence/Power, and Interest’ to upscale and institutionalize the FFBS model (Figure 10). The local governments (Municipalities, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, and Provincial Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperatives (Category 1) have high influence, power, and interest to upscale and institutionalize the FFBS model as an agriculture extension approach. Those government institutions have the legal right to formulate the legal framework for upscaling the institutionalization of FFBS.

The project two municipalities endorsed the legal framework namely ‘Contract Farming Working Procedure, 2020’ from their legislative council. The CSOs/NGOs and media (printed and local Radio/FM) (Category 2) have high interest and low influence/Power, but they are appropriate actors for policy advocacy to institutionalize and upscale the FFBS model.

NFGF (national, provincial, district, and municipal), Dalit Network (from national to municipality level), Nepal Madhesh Foundation (NMF), Media printed (Bhargugami, Nav Sangram Daily published from Lahan, and Naya Patrika National Daily, Kathmandu; Kalyan Post, and Green Madhesh Daily published from Rajbiraj, Saptari) are create mass awareness about the FFBS good practices and advocate for the local level policy support. Similarly, media local radio/FM (Samagra FM, Sargam FM, Lahan, Siraha; Bhorukawa FM, and Radio CFM Rajbiraj, Saptari) are also supportive to create mass awareness and advocate for policy support at the local level.

Furthermore, Parliament members both federal and provincial have high power and low interest



(Category 3) and keep in touch to put the FFBS agenda for policy support. Likewise, the Agriculture cooperatives, Agriculture Input suppliers, Market Management Committee/traders, and landowners (Category 4) have supported FFBS groups to provide financial and farm inputs and product supply chains to contribute to uplifting the economy and livelihoods of the FFBS groups. They have positive support and could be a change agent to upscale the FFBS learning and policy advocacy at the municipal level.

Figure 10: Interest, Power, and Influence Analysis Matrix

The project official and supporting agencies can be developed and act according to their influence and power to upscale and institutionalize the FFBS model. CARE has the opportunity to document the FFBS best practices and disseminate the learning to other parts of the country and the wider level.

BOX 6: We are feeble in front of the authorities because we lack education and social power. We are now able to speak in front of the authorities. This is because of the group activity that we did in our group. And after coming to the group meeting, we knew that there are other stakeholders in the field of Social Justice. I came to know that ‘social justice’ doesn’t come all of a sudden, it is a gradual process. And our problem can be better advocated by other people.

-A Male FGD Participant, Agnisair Krishnasshravan, Saptari.

3.3.2 Power and Polity Dynamics Analysis

The stakeholders are identified, analyzed, and listed in Table 10 with a summary of their interests, and an assessment of their impact (influence and power) on upscale, and institutionalizing the FFBS model. The stakeholders are classified as follows:

- Direct primary stakeholders (Main actors): who are the main beneficiaries of the project (A1-A5)
- Indirect primary stakeholders (Intermediary): are not direct beneficiaries but will be affected by the project (B1-B4)
- Secondary stakeholders (Tertiary): are the remaining parties in the process (C1-C3).

The stakeholders listed in Table 10 have been classified into their comparative importance and influence. This is shown in Table 11 and a pictorial illustration is given in Figure 10, and importance is assessed in terms of their role in achieving the project's outputs and purpose to pursue the support for the FFBS institutionalization process. Influence is judged in terms of the power that they can employ over the project's process and outcome.

Table 10: Stakeholder Matrix with Key Interests, Importance to Influence for FFBS Promotion

Category	Key interests	Importance to project	Influence on project	Participation
A. Primary Direct				
Local Government <i>(Municipal Legislative Assembly- MLA)</i> reviews and endorses Policies, Acts, regulations and multi-year/annual Plans, and Budgets approved and forwarded by the Municipal Executive Committee-MEC) (A1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partners in piloting new systems ▪ Accelerate change within their administration ▪ Meet national and provincial requirements ▪ Allocate budget for Agriculture, livestock, and fisheries for providing the farm production inputs 	High. Will provide the legal framework for the Economic/Agriculture sector to include FFBS Provide the annual plan and budgets Review the annual progress (Physical and financial)	High. will be responsible to develop and execute the legal framework for all development sectors including agriculture/FFBS as given by constitution power Schedule 8	Beneficiaries of successful project implementation. Will be consulted and involved through municipal partnerships
Local Government <i>(Municipal Executive Committee-MEC:</i> responsible for day-to-day administration, development works, review and finalizing the policies, plan, and budget, and approving and forwarding to MLA for endorsement) (A1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Assigned the Economic/Agriculture Development Committee for drafting the policies, acts, and regulations (bills) related to Agriculture, Livestock, and fisheries development including FFBS promotion ▪ Review the draft bills and give the final shape, and approved and forward in MLA for the endorsement ▪ Finalize long-term and Annual plan and budget, approved and forward to MLC for the endorsement 	High. Provide sites (Land leasing/Contracting) for implementation and piloting of FFBS Provide production inputs (land, irrigation, seeds, etc.) and technical support to farmer groups/FFBS	High. Will be responsible for implementation and success of piloting of leasehold/Contract farming	Beneficiaries (FFBS) of successful project implementation. Will be consulted and involved through municipal partnerships

<p>Local Government (Economic /Agriculture Development Committee) Prepare the draft economic/Agriculture development-related policies, acts, and regulations (Bills), need assessment of CBOs/FFBS, and prioritize the activities as follows the LG annual planning process and forward to MEC for review and approval for the execution.) (A1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Support to MEC with drafting the Economic/Agriculture Development related policies, act, guidelines, annual plan, and budget including FFBS ▪ Support to municipal Agriculture sector employees to execute the approved plan and budget including FFBS ▪ Monitor the Agriculture sector development activities and share in MEC meeting 	<p>High. Execute the policies, acts, and regulation of Economic /Agriculture sector policies, act, regulation including FFBS with the support of employees and coordination with concerned stakeholders</p>	<p>High. Will be responsible to execute and monitor the Agriculture/FFBS fieldwork Encourage and motivate FFBS groups for their livelihood promotion through contract farming Suggest MEC replicate and upscale the successful model</p>	<p>Beneficiaries (FFBS) of successful project implementation. Will be consulted and involved through municipal partnerships</p>
<p>MOALD (Federal) & MOLMAC (Provincial) (A2)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure Pro-poor and business-oriented Agriculture sector in LG transformation process ▪ Consolidate structures and systems within the sector ▪ Ensure co-operative governance 	<p>High. Will provide overall leadership and political support for the promotion of the agriculture sector</p>	<p>High. Will influence all aspects of policy</p>	<p>Responsible for overall policy formulation/legal framework</p>
<p>Provincial and Federal level agriculture institutions (AKC, VHLSEC, and PMAMP) (A4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Execute modern agriculture system through farmer groups/cooperatives ▪ Provide technical and production inputs to farmer groups/cooperatives 	<p>High: will provide overall technical leadership and production inputs support/capacity building in coordination with LG</p>	<p>Medium. Will have influence limit to project resources</p>	<p>Responsible to execute the given project activities in collaboration with LG and farmer group/cooperative</p>

Project municipalities CBOs/Farmer Groups/FFBS (Women, Dalits, and Mixed Groups) (A5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate in implementation processes Enjoy benefits from LG and supporting organization 	High. will participate in the pilot projects	Medium. Will utilize input through pilots but not directly impact	Involvement during piloting
A. Primary Indirect				
Provincial project implementing partner executing team (NFGF) (B1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure working relations with LG and CBOs for project execution Facilitate LG (Economic /Agriculture Development Committee) to prepare a draft legal framework and systems Accelerate implementation process Provide capacity building for LG & CBOs Ability to cope with new systems & changing demands 	High. Will provide overall leadership and enabling political support to execute the improved agriculture/FFBS practices	High. Will influence all aspects of policy related to Agriculture/FFBS promotion	Responsible for the overall project Implementation Review and documentation of learning
Dalit networks (national, provincial, and local) levels, Siraha (B1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified the land, and social evils issues including Dalits FFBS groups Create a common plate form with like-minded organizations 	High: Will provide overall leadership of Dalits groups and communities as solidarity to tackle the harmful social practices (untouchability, gender, and caste-based discrimination)	High: Will have to create advocacy/lobbying against harmful social practices and land issues including FFBS groups	Give pressure on the decision-making institution for the benefit of Dalits Communities Utilize the national and local media to aware mass of people

Nepal Madhesh Foundation (Multi-Stakeholder Committee) (5Ps ¹⁰) in Siraha and Saptari Districts (B2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the land issues (Uthibas-compel to leave the dwellers' area) and harmful social practices following the 4Ps process. 	High: Will work and conduct the dialogue/advocacy with national, regional, and local political parties for the resolution of identified issues at the district and cluster level	High: Will create pressure on the concerned government authorities and decision-making level to settle the problems through a dialogue process and take the commitment and do the follow-up	Disseminate the learning through local Radio/FM and printed media (national and local) level
National Farmer Group Federation (NFGF) (B1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represent interests of organized in LG Accelerate Pro-poor business-oriented model (FFBS) program 	High. Will advocate policy (Federal, Provincial, and Local) level to promote the systems and guidelines development	High. Will influence policy levels for systems and guidelines development of agriculture/FFBS model	Consultation on all aspects of Design, piloting, and documentation of learning for policy advocacy
Traders/Agro-vets (Lahan, Rupani and Rajbiraj) (B3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide farm inputs (seeds, equipment, and machinery) to farmer groups 	High. Provide support and coordination for project implementation	Low. Will influence supplies of farm inputs in collaboration with LG	Occasional participation in demand
Agriculture Cooperatives (B4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide loans for agriculture small-scale businesses to their members Support to create a conducive environment for Farmer groups/FFBS lobbying with LG 	High: provide loans for agriculture business Lobbying to formulate pro-poor agriculture promotional guidelines	Low: Will influence to formulate of pro-poor agriculture guidelines from LG	Occasional participation in demand
C. Secondary				

¹⁰ 5 Ps= Problem/profile, People/Victim, Process, Power and Policy/paper.

Members of Parliament and Members of the Provincial Legislatures (C1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Successful change in local government system 	Low. Will only provide limited input into project	high. Will only cooperate, can't Intervene	Consulted where necessary
Printed (Bhargugami, Nav Sangram Daily published from Lahan, Siraha; Naya Patrika National Daily, Kathmandu; Kalyan Post, and Green Madhesh Daily published from Rajbiraj, Saptari (C2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disseminate successful innovation/change of LG ▪ Create mass awareness of Pro-poor business oriented/FFBS 	High. Provide mechanisms of support to project executing organizations where relevant	Low. Will only cooperate for advocacy, cannot Intervene	Consulted where necessary. Informed occasional monitoring in the field
Media local radio/FM: Samagra FM, Sargam FM, Lahan, Siraha; Bhorukawa FM, and Radio CFM Rajbiraj, Saptari	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Disseminate successful innovation/change of LG ▪ Create mass awareness of Pro-poor business oriented/FFBS 	High. Provide mechanisms of support to project executing organizations where relevant	Low. Will only cooperate for advocacy, cannot Intervene	Consulted where necessary. Informed occasional monitoring in the field
CBOs/FFBS Groups of the project municipalities(C3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborate with LG for leasing/contracting the land for livelihood support and piloting Cooperate with LG for project implementation 	High. Will participate in the pilot Project and share the learnings	Low. Will provide input through pilots but not directly impact	Participate to observe the piloting/demonstration

<p>Hat Bazaar (Market day) <i>Gulla Byapari</i> (Traders)(C4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborate with agriculture producer groups (FFBS) ▪ Collective marketing approach 	<p>Low: Unorganized and occasionally coordinate with agriculture producer groups at the local level Sometimes they visit LG to put their grievances</p>	<p>Low: Sometimes they visit the producer field No buy-back guarantee Potential for collective marketing of agriculture products</p>	<p>Participate while they need fresh agriculture products at the field level Collect agriculture products from the market day to supplies in large volume</p>
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Source: Field Survey, January 2023

The FFBS project implementing partner and CARE will work in collaboration with Category 1 government institutions that have the legal rights to formulate the legal framework, Category 2 advocacy organization and their network (NFGF, Dalit network, NMF, and media) to advocate and disseminate the best practices of FFBS and policy advocacy and keep in touch and coordination with all four categories of stakeholder considering their importance and interests (Figure 10). Furthermore, Table 11 revealed the stakeholder power and polity and analyzed the stakeholders who are under direct beneficiaries, primary indirect beneficiaries for policy and legal framework development, and endorsement to upscale and institutionalize the FFBS model. Because they have high interest and influence (impact) and have the legal rights to support for FFBS model upscaling and institutionalization process.

Whereas, Primary Indirect category stakeholders are non-government organizations mostly from the CSOs/NGOs and their network, and rightsholder organizations and they have high interest and high influence for the behavior change of FFBS groups, and advocate FFBS model upscaling and institutionalization of FFBS with documentation of evidence for advocacy. Similarly, Secondary institutions like parliamentary members who have low interest and high influence upscale the FFBS model by preparing the legal framework from parliament. Likewise, Media (printed and local radio/FM) and their networks can advocate stopping harmful social practices and upscale the FFBS best practices for the institutionalization process by creating mass awareness and advocacy at the local level.

The Agriculture cooperatives, and their networks, agro-vet/traders, and market management committee have high interest and provide the loan, supplies the farm inputs, and support for marketing the agriculture products. These organizations can advocate the best practices of the FFBS model at the local level and support the upscaling of the FFBS model at the municipality level.

CARE/ FFBS project has the opportunity to document the best practices of the FFBS model and can provide evidence-based advisory services to the local governments and other government institutions (MOALD, MOLMAC) and disseminate the learning on a wider scale.

3.3.3 Enabling Platform and Sustainability of the FFBS Model

There are 51 events in Haat Bazar found in a week in 22 wards and 28 different locations having the selling and buying platform of seasonal vegetables, fruits, paddy, wheat, grocery, agriculture seeds, clothes, and many other daily consumable goods. These events are increasing market access to local producers and consumers. There are new opportunities to capacitate the Bazar Committee and derive them in the line of revenue collection, especially for the local government. This will lead to the sustainability of the FFBS model and increase the economic growth of FFBS group members.

The sectoral committees (governance) in the project municipalities are not found on track of addressing sectoral issues properly. There is a need for capacity enhancement and empowering the sectoral committee (Economic Development, Forestry, Environment and Disaster Management, and Social Development). The FFBS institutionalization is another poignant need found in the study. For this registration, organizational development and linking these FFBS groups to commerce and trades.

The saving and credit program of FFBS can be the ‘action-learning center’ which becomes the enabling factor of the FFBS model. The Networking of the FFBS groups can enhance the community leadership and sustainability of the model by disseminating learning to the members of the society. Here, effective social mobilization can capacitate them to access resources from public institutions. The media mobilization disseminates the best practices to the common and supports the local level policy advocacy, which ultimately upscales the FFFBS model.

Volunteer farmers should be associated with the farm input supply chain and be transformed into entrepreneurs. Women’s equality and empowerment (SDG5) is important for inclusive and sustainable development. The economic empowerment of women also contributes to gaining social power and pursuing their right to a healthy life. This is also the enabling element for upscaling FFBS models. Economic empowerment leads to financial independence.

Some of the high-value crops (HVC) are identified by the Farmer groups/FFBS during the field study, those are onion, garlic, chili, coriander, turmeric, tomato, cauliflower, mango, litchi fruits crops that can be commercialized by providing irrigation facilities in project municipalities. This is another avenue for sustainability. The public land on the edge of the river can be utilized for leasehold following the agroforestry model. The Project municipalities are not completing the agreement with National Land Commission for Land ownership, and land entitlements to the landless people especially the Dalits community. This is the urgent need that support to avail the land properties to landless Dalits and other minorities and that support for upscaling and sustainability of the FFBS model.

This will support environmental conservation and sustainable ecology, too. The mobile application such as ‘Krishi Guru’ can be made accessible to the FFBS groups, this is again the way to upscale the FFBS Model in the community. Furthermore, there is limited use of information, education, and communication (IEC) materials in the project municipalities and there is the scope of the FFBS project to disseminate the FFBS model to the community.

CHAPTER IV: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

4.1 Conclusion

The study 'Understanding the Policy Environment for Scaling Farmers' Field Business School in Nepal: A Gender Focused Context Analysis with Focus on Local Governance and Sectoral Governance' has found that the farmer-to-farmer agriculture extension service executed by NFGF with the financial support of CARE focuses on women, Dalits and smallholder farmers in Siraha and Saptari districts in Madhesh province. The FFBS project is to enhance the dignity and self-esteem with livelihood promotion of FFBS groups especially landless, women, and Dalits.

The study is focused on structure, institutional and governance arrangements, and the main change actors/stakeholders to enable the promotion of the FFBS model and identified the formal and informal institutional barriers from federal to local level policy. The structural barriers for women and Dalits are found in terms of caste, class, gender, and education, and the traditional patriarchal mindset worked for social injustice. The political barrier is minimal but the socio-economic barriers especially untouchability, the dowry system, gender-based violence, and landlessness are found to be poignant. The study found that women don't receive equal wages for similar work and faced domestic violence from their intimate partners. Women's contribution to household chores is not recognized economically. The federal governance system and the strengthened local government could be the prospects to channel the policy to the practice at a grassroots level. All three governments are likely to contribute agriculture extension services, and farm input supply through farmers' groups, agriculture cooperatives, and private agriculture firms. This is the opportunity for the FFBS model upscaling. There are new opportunities to capacitate the Bazar Committee and derive them in the line of revenue collection, especially for the local government. This will lead to the sustainability of the FFBS model.

Most Dalits are landless. Since the main source of their livelihood is agriculture, they don't have land and are working as sharecroppers or involved in landowners' farmland for daily wages. This is the reality that without land property they don't receive any benefits from the local government or other government authorities for the farm production system. FFBS project is found to facilitate the local people for getting leasehold land for agriculture from the municipalities. The NFGF, the implementing partner has been found working closely with municipalities and facilitating the acquisition of agricultural land from landowners to execute the 'Contract farming system' through FFBS groups. The 'contract farming working procedure -2020 could be the impetus for the institutionalization of the FFBS model at the community level. The Project municipalities are not completing the agreement with National Land Commission for Land ownership, and land entitlements to the landless people especially the Dalits community.

The FFBS groups are found not only to be the agent of economic empowerment but as the social agent to transform society and contribute to food security and sovereignty in one aspect and empowering marginalized groups such as women, Dalits, and Muslims in another. The FFBS can be developed as a climate-resilient agent for the green economy. The stakeholders like the Dalit network can work with the Dalit women group to empower themselves.

The project municipalities are found relatively weak in GESI perspectives since they are not found implementing Gender responsive budgeting, they didn't perform the GESI Audit in the last FY 2022 and they have low scores in LISA, especially social inclusion. The elected representatives are not well-oriented on their roles, rights, and responsibilities, and the institutional memories of the local government are found relatively weak. The NFGF network and Dalit network, NMF, media are the potential advocacy institutions to facilitate the policy formulation from government institutions to stop the social harmful practices, and CARE can support and influence the upscaling

and replication of the FFBS model through the field-based knowledge documentation and disseminate in a wider scale. The Provincial Center for Good Governance (PCGG) at the provincial level can help local governments with capacity enhancement at the sectoral level highlighting the essence of the FFBS model such as GESI strengthening, planning process as well as empowering the marginalized people.

The saving and credit program of FFBS can be the ‘action-learning center’ which becomes the enabling factor of the FFBS model. The Networking of the FFBS groups can enhance the community leadership and sustainability of the model by disseminating learning to the members of the society. Here, effective social mobilization can capacitate them to access resources from public institutions. The media mobilization disseminates the best practices to the common and supports the local level policy advocacy, which ultimately upscales the FFFBS model.

4.2 Recommendations

Structure

- FFBS groups, especially Dalit and women groups should be capacitated on cross-cutting issues like Gender and development, Gender mainstreaming, and legal provision against harmful social practices that support women, Dalit empowerment and that contribute to stopping harmful social practices, and patriarchal attitude and behavior at the local level
- Land ownership plays a vital role in the economic, social, and power balance between men and women so it is a need to orient land registration policy for the FFBS groups.
- ‘Contract farming’ should be implemented by preparing public land inventory.
- The subsidies and land distribution to the target beneficiaries should be addressed according to the need-based approach incorporating ‘intersectionality’ perspectives, not in a blanket approach.
- The care economy (The economic recognition of women in household chores) should be incorporated in the formulation of policies, guidelines, and regulations at the federal, provincial, and local government level

Institutional arrangement and governance

- FFBS model needs to link with Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) who are working in all wards/communities in community health and nutrition focused on pregnant, lactating mothers and under-five children
- The FFBS groups can be converted as the ‘agent’ for basic health and child and women nutrition promotion programs in the local community through kitchen gardening installation and nutrient-rich food consumption behavior development.
- The Project municipalities are not completing the agreement with National Land Commission for Land ownership, and land entitlements to the landless people especially the Dalits community. So, there is an urgent need for agreement in municipalities to address the issue of landless people.
- FFBS Annual financial audit report is a mandatory document to register/renew FFBS groups in local government, and other government authorities to make them eligible to get government agriculture extension services, and farm production inputs. Due to financial constraints majority of the FFBS group they are unable to prepare annual audit report from the government auditors, and there is an urgent need to facilitate FFBS to solve their annual audit problems
- The local governments should follow the seven-step participatory annual planning

process to incorporate the voices of the grassroots people and FFBS groups.

- Sectoral committees in the municipalities should be capacitated on the thematic areas, their roles, and responsibilities to promote accountability and deliver effective and efficient public services
- FFBS farmer groups mostly grow cereal and vegetable crops on their farmland and contract farming, which causes the depletion of soil nutrients. So, the project needs to facilitate intercropping, mixed cropping, and relay cropping practices along with legumes crops that support climate resilience and increase soil productivity and crop production
- Most of the FFBS farmer groups lack knowledge and skills about kitchen gardening/homestead gardening and their importance to young children and women's health by supplying low-cost fresh and nutritious food from their kitchen garden throughout the year. So, the project needs to emphasize to promote of diverse nutrient-rich plants production in the kitchen garden and increase the consumption of nutrient-rich food in every meal that reduces malnourishment of under-five children and women
- For the sustainability of the FFBS model, business literacy, saving credit mobilization, and leadership training supports to the FFBS groups should be provided effectively
- The application of the Participatory organizational capacity assessment process (POCAP) and other organizational assessments to FFBS groups is suggested and strengthen the FFBS group capacity based on the assessment benchmarks
- The volunteer farmer selection criteria should be transparent and participatory, and select them in a democratic process
- It is suggested to conduct training for the Volunteers farmers on integrated pest management (IPM), climate-smart agriculture (CSA), and pickles and dry vegetable production of surplus vegetables to protect the post-harvest loss
- The Volunteer Farmers' advisory services should be linked to market-led agriculture input supply chains for the sustainability of FFBS groups, and that can be the motivational/enabler to continue volunteer farmer services in long -the term
- FFBS groups didn't know about the process, eligibility criteria, period and block, pocket, and super zone development programs of the federal government (PMAMP) and provincial government (AKC) at the district and municipality levels and FFBS project need to orient them accordingly
- The project should provide orientation to FFBS groups and establish linkages with federal and provincial government agriculture-related institutions (PMAMP, AKC, VHLSEC) for the benefit of FFBS groups
- The information, and communication access via mobile technology is increasing. In this context, the project can facilitate and orient the FFBS group about the Krishi Guru Apps, Nepal Television, and Nepal Radio Agriculture program broadcasting day and time that will increase to access technical knowledge and skills to improve agriculture production and productivity
- There are no or limited information hoarding boards, wall painting, and other means of information dissemination (IEC) materials about the improved agricultural practices and stopping harmful social behavior in the project municipalities. So, the project needs to prepare such a message and manage it in the local language (*Maithili*) to disseminate

IEC materials in the project area in collaboration with Agro-traders (Agro-vet inputs suppliers) and local governments.

The major Change Agent for Policy Advocacy

- The LGs (Economic Development Committee/Agriculture Development Committee) is the major actor to upscale and institutionalizing the FFBS model and need to orient them to prepare a pro-poor friendly, and gender-inclusive policy following positive discrimination principles while preparing act, bylaws, and guidelines from the municipal legislative committee
- The NFGF networks (at different levels) are the potential advocacy institutions to formulate pro-poor policies with follow positive discrimination principle in the agriculture sector at the central (MOALD), and province level (MOLMAC) with the evidence of FFBS field experiences that will increase the livelihood status of the landless and socially excluded (Dalit groups) and at the same time contribute for achieving the national, and SD goals through the FFBS model
- Nepal Madhesh Foundation (The multi-stakeholder Dialogue Committees) follows the 4Ps (Problem, people, process, and policies) model and generally the interaction/dialogue with national, regional, and local level political parties on land, and harmful social practices can create the policy advocacy at the local level and contribute to stop the social evils and FFBS project can link with NMF for addressing the harmful social practices is the need
- Dalit Networks which are established in each district, province, and national level are the key advocacy organizations to advocate towards three levels of government to stop untouchability, child marriage, gender, caste, ethnicity, and region-based discrimination, and harmful social practices. So, capacity enhancement of this network is the need
- The mobilization of local printed media and local radio/FM (following the Maithili language) will be useful to create mass awareness and disseminate the good agricultural practices demonstrated by the FFBS groups can be useful for dissemination and upscaling knowledge and skills gained by the FFBS model at the local level
- CARE has the scope of preparing experience-based advocacy knowledge documentation that can be disseminated at the national and wider scale to upscale the FFBS model in another part of the country and beyond.

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