

COPING WITH A 'NEW NORMAL' DURING COVID-19

'... country is encountering huge spread of the virus; influx of migrant workers are reaching every corner of the country posing difficulty to control the transmittal; health workers are increasingly affected and people are requested to stay at home isolation as hospitals are running out of its capacity... .' These are the news, media has been feeding the people almost every day.

A total of 1,21,745 people have already been infected by the corona virus as of October 16, 2020 and the trend is increasing. To contain the pandemic, Government of Nepal has announced a second round of weeklong lockdown (prohibitory orders) in the capital city Kathmandu effective from August 20. The first lockdown was imposed nationwide for more than three months which observed an unprecedented break in personal life, social norms and economic undertakings of the entire country. COVID-19 posed a threat to every sphere of our lives. To be mentally healthy and strong was one of the biggest challenges.

At the outset, it was distressful living in the pandemic situation amidst fear everywhere. Again, as time heals everything, life started coping with a 'New Normal' trying to turn crisis into an opportunity. This pandemic changed our course of life, modality of work and propelled us to think of alternatives.

Alternatives are adopted in the office operation as well. JICA Nepal resumed operation after months-long lockdown applying every possible precautionary measures. Largely, work resumed in virtual modality. Virtual platforms like teams, zooms, skypes became a part of work culture in the New Normal.

Utilizing the virtual tools, JICA Nepal staffs have created the virtual program group in which every issues and updates of the project are shared; and together we discuss for further action with counterparts when necessary. Virtual modality of work has eased the coordination and communication problem to some extent, particularly in having a multi-stakeholders' meeting as such. However, it also has limitation when thorough discussion and tough negotiation is required to reach the conclusion.

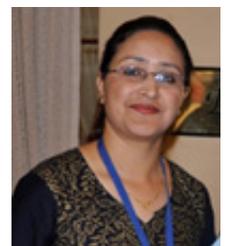
In this 'New Normal,' we are trying to realize the project management by following the PDCA cycle through virtual interventions, although it is a big challenge. While 'Do' element is mostly affected as most of activities at site have been halted; other interventions of planning, monitoring and discussion for future intervention is regularly going on internally as well as among the counterparts via virtual communication. Similarly, ongoing project activities are being adjusted with the current need. For instance, apart from following the standard precautionary measures, JICA supported Water Supply Management Improvement Project (WASMIP) aligned its activities with the current pandemic need by purchasing and distributing the disinfectant to the needful water utilities in order to ensure delivery of safe water to their service area

including quarantine and isolation centers of the COVID 19 patients. Likewise, several projects are being re-programmed to meet the new challenges.

While coping with the 'New Normal,' we have to think of future pathways from the lesson learned. One of the learning from the development perspective is that the crisis posed a huge question on our 'preparedness' in coping with any kind of disaster including the present pandemic. This health crisis has revealed the need and gap of the current health care system as well as compelled us to re-think on effectiveness of the development initiatives in building a resilient community, which is also related with broader JICA's development vision of 'human security'. Hence, preparedness and management of any kind of potential disaster should be the main motto of the upcoming development interventions.



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WASMIP COVID 19-RESPONSE



JICA Funded Project WASMIP II (Water Supply Management Improvement Project-II) provided disinfection materials like bleaching powder (total 14.15 metric tons) as an immediate Covid-19 response to 63 Water User & Sanitation Committees (WUSCs) in various project sites in the most affected 12 districts viz. Jhapa, Morang, Bara, Dhanusa, Sarlahi, Sindupalchowk, Ramechhap, Lamgunj, Nawalparashi, Bardiya, Dang, Rupendehi .

This support was identified by one of the quick surveys conducted by the Project to know the issues and concerns of the water utilities in the current pandemic scenario. The available bleaching powder was mostly utilized by the health sector for disinfection of affected areas which created shortage of bleaching powder for water utilities. Hence, for ensuring safe and consistent supply of water which is one of most crucial preventive measures for self-protection in the current pandemic, the immediate support was provided.

CENTRAL BUREAU OF STATISTICS PUBLISHES YET ANOTHER REPORT ON SALARIES AND WAGES FROM THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC CENSUS 2018

The Central Bureau of Statistics has published another report on salaries and wages of persons engaged in the entities throughout Nepal on September 14, 2020. The first ever National Economic Census 2018 was conducted with the technical support from Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). This covered all fixed and movable establishments that existed in Nepal at the reference date of the census operation that was April 14, 2018. As per the census data, there were 900,924 entities¹ in Nepal where 3,115,112 persons were engaged.

The economic census collected information on average monthly salaries and wages from the entities with paid employees. There were 219,303 entities with paid employees in Nepal and the number of paid employees were 1,709,101. The annual salaries and wages came out to be Rs. 421 billion.

Looking at the annual salaries and wages by industry, "Manufacturing" such as tea factories and brick factories was the largest section with Rs. 86 billion accounting for 20.3% followed by "Education" such as schools, universities with Rs. 68 billion (16.3%) and "Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles"

as shops, supermarkets and department stores was Rs. 66 billion (15.6%).

In Nepal, almost 80% of the entities with paid employees were registered. The annual salaries and wages of "Registered" entities were Rs. 406 billion accounting for 96.4% of the total. On the other hand, those of "Not registered" entities were 15 billion (3.5%) only. It means most of salaries and wages are paid by registered entities.

Nepal had 36,172 entities with paid employees and female managers; and their annual salaries and wages accounted for 8.5% of the total. Looking at the annual salaries and wages of entities with female managers by industry, "Financial and insurance activities" was the largest section with Rs. 7.2 billion accounting for 20.1%, followed by "Education" accounting Rs. 6.8 billion (19.0%), "Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles" accounting 4.1 billion (11.5%).

Looking at the annual salaries and wages by district, Kathmandu, the capital was the largest district with Rs. 141 billion accounting for 33.4%. Lalitpur was Rs. 32 billion (7.6%), Morang

was Rs. 21 billion (5.0%), Rupandehi was Rs. 18.5 billion (4.38%), Kaski was Rs. 18.3 billion (4.35%). There were big differences between three districts in Kathmandu Valley and other districts. This is because many head offices and entities with paid employees are located in Kathmandu Valley. All financial statements are managed by head office. Therefore, for example, even if big factories are being operated in Morang, their financial data are counted in Kathmandu if their head offices are located in Kathmandu. On the other hand, Rukum East was the smallest district with Rs. 100 million accounting for 0.02%, Manang was 103 million (0.02%); Rasuwa was 173 million (0.04%).

Central Bureau of Statistics also published the national profile no 2 from NEC 2018 which contains key statistical tables generated from cross tabulation between industry and size of person engaged for some specific characteristics.

Details of these reports are now available in the official website of Central Bureau of Statistics.

For more information, please see the Central Bureau of Statistics website; <https://cbs.gov.np/economic-census/>

¹An entity manages its accounting record which includes an account book, an income statement, etc. An entity consists of a single-unit establishment or a head office only. It means branches are excluded.

JICA NEPAL HANDOVER COVID-19 RESPONSE RELIEF IN SINDHUPALCHOWK AND GORKHA



JICA Nepal handed over COVID-19 response relief items to Chautara Sangachowkgadhi Municipality and Helambu Rural Municipality in Sindhupalchowk and Palungtar Municipality and Barpak Sulikot Rural Municipality in Gorkha, four of the pilot local governments supported under its Technical Cooperation Project (TCP) "The Project on Participatory Rural Recovery" (PPRR).

Chief Representative of JICA Nepal Ms. Yumiko Asakuma handed over emergency relief materials, such as food (rice, lentils, cooking oil), PPE (personal protection equipment), gloves, masks and sanitizers, VTM (Viral transport medium, for swabs) and bedding sets (mattresses, pillows, and bed sheets etc.) to mayors and representatives of municipalities during the first and second week of August.

Currently, Palungtar Municipality and Barpak Sulikot Rural Municipality are operating 4 quarantine facilities respectively, catering to between 40 - 70 people in isolation at any point in time. Chautara Municipality has 2 facilities and Helambu Rural Municipality has one, with about 50 people accommodated.

The emergency relief materials were provided as part of the project's support to strengthen the capacities of local governments and communities not only for building back better from the 2015 earthquake but also for enhancing community resilience against various kinds of disasters including the ongoing global pandemic.

Presented below is the list of items which were provided to the municipalities;

Chautara Sangachowkgadhi
Food items: (Rice 1,200kg, Lentil 225kg, Oil 225ltr)
PPE set: 100
Sanitation kit: 200, Sanitary Pad: 50, Mask: 650, VTM: 100
Bedding item: 105

Helambu:
PPE set: 100
Mask: 650
VTM: 100
Bedding item: 150

Palungtar:
PPE set: 100
Mask: 750, Sanitizer: 850
Bedding set: 25
Bedding item: 375

BarpakSulikot:
Food item: (Rice 4,306kg, Lentil 1,064kg, Oil 320ltr)
PPE set: 150
Bedding set: 25, Bedding item: 280
Mask: 750, Sanitizer: 432, VTM: 100



JICA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF NEPAL (JAAN) HOSTS ONLINE SEMINAR ON COVID-19 AND ITS IMPACT ON NEPAL

JICA Alumni Association of Nepal (JAAN) hosted an online seminar on the impact of COVID-19 and measures to tackle it on April 30, 2020.

There were more than 110 participants in this online seminar (webinar) including High Government Officials from the Govt. of Nepal, Embassy of Japan, JICA Nepal, JICA Bhutan, Govt. of Bhutan, JAAB members, journalist, JAAN members and some participants from Japan and UK also.

Presenting his paper, director of Epidemiology and Disease Control Division

under the Department of Health Services, Basudev Pandey, shared the measures adopted by the Nepal government to prevent and contain novel coronavirus pandemic. "I urge one and all not to run after rumors and strictly follow the instructions made by the government at this hour of crisis," he said.

Kiran Rupakheti, a joint secretary at the National Planning Commission said that the commission is currently studying the impact of coronavirus on the country's economic. "The government will take necessary steps to overcome the challenges in the days to come," he said.

Lifetime member of the JAAN and secretary of the government Khagaraj Baral said that Nepal has been able to successfully mitigate the impact of coronavirus as the government enforced required measures on time.

Former secretary of the government and lifetime member of JAAN Narayan Gopal Malego, Yumiko Asakuma, the chief representative for JICA Nepal Office, said the online seminar was productive in terms of providing latest updates on COVID-19.

Ram Chandra Bhusal, the chairperson of JAAN, said that the organization will also hold similar programs in coming days.

GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR THE PROJECT FOR HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT SCHOLARSHIP (JDS)



JDS participants in Japan

JICA extended Grant Assistance of NPR 407 million under the Grant Aid scheme of "The Project for Human Resource Development Strategy (JDS) for FY 2020/2021 on July 08, 2020.

JDS offers 22 scholarships out of which 20 seats are for 2-year Master's degree and 2 seats for 3-year Doctoral program for government officials of Nepal who are engaged in formulating and implementing socio-economic development planning with the objective to resolve development challenges in Nepal. The fellows are also expected to contribute towards enhancing bilateral relations between Japan and their respective countries with the knowledge gained from Japan.

JDS scholarship program started from 2016 in Nepal and 102 government officers from Nepal are enrolled in 9 Japanese universities till date.



JDS participants in Japan

JICA NEPAL SIGNS GRANT ASSISTANCE FOR SSDP

JICA Nepal signed Grant Assistance agreements for the School Sector Development Program (SSDP) on July 23, 2020. Government of Japan extended Grant Assistance of 300 million Japanese yen (approx. NPR 335 million) to the Government of Nepal for the 5th year of the "School Sector Development Program (SSDP)."

Exchange of Notes (E/N) for the assistance were signed and exchanged today between His Excellency Mr. Masamichi Saigo, Ambassador of Japan to Nepal, and Mr. Sishir Kumar Dhungana, Secretary, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of their respective Governments. On the same occasion, the Grant Agreements for the SSDP were signed and exchanged between Mr. Shreekrishna Nepal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Finance, on behalf of the Government of Nepal and Ms. Yumiko Asakuma, Chief Representative of JICA Nepal, on behalf of Japan International Cooperation Agency.

The SSDP started implementation from July 2016 and aims to consolidate gains from previous reform programs and continue crucial reforms needed in the school education sector through the SWAp modality. The overarching mission of the SSDP is to produce the needed human resources to elevate the country's status from a least developed country by 2022 and to reach the goal of achieving the status of the level of the middle-income country by 2030.

Purpose of the SSDP is to improve the equity, quality, efficiency, governance and management of the education sector. SSDP focuses on capacity and knowledge enhancement of both students and teachers by developing relevant teaching and learning methods and materials that ensures quality development. Lately, SSDP also focuses on strengthening school-level disaster management and resilience to develop school as a conflict free zone.

As present education policies and sector plan (SSDP) of Nepal target to meet Sustainable Development Goal 4: "Ensuring inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". It targets to ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality of education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes while adhering to tackling disparities in remote area.

Development of Education sector in Nepal is one of JICA's top priorities and it assures to continue its support to this sector for effective implementation and output. Considering the current situation of COVID-19 and its possible impacts to education sector, the Government of Nepal may explore necessary flexibility and develop a common understanding with all development partners to best utilize the available resources in addressing the emerging needs of the school education.



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YOU & YOUR FAMILY A VERY HAPPY
DASHAIN, TIHAR & CHHAT 2020.



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