

Learning Brief: The Sustainable Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (SuWASH) Project



WaterAid/Mani Karmacharya

Community members digging the trench to lay the main pipeline in Birtadeurali, Chaurideurali Rural Municipality, Kavre

Introduction

- ## SuWASH Project Outcomes
- Improved access to safe and adequate WASH services of marginalised and people in vulnerable situations through safe and resilient WASH facilities.
 - Marginalised and people in vulnerable situations take actions and hold duty bearers accountable for access to improved WASH services.
 - Equitable WASH is prioritised in policies, plans and budgets at national and local levels and delivered and sustained WASH services.
 - Duty bearers promote sector integration for access to improved and inclusive WASH services in schools and healthcare institutions in targeted Rural Municipalities.

Sustainable Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (SuWASH) project was implemented in the hard to reach areas of Kalikot and Jumla in Karnali region, and the earthquake-affected areas of Kavre in Nepal, since 2017. The project was implemented by our local partners Karnali Integrated Rural Development Research Centre (KIRDARC) in Karnali and Centre for Implemented Urban Development (CIUD) in Kavre- who have years of experience in community empowerment and supporting WASH facilities in those districts.

Grounded by the principals of human rights, SuWASH project's main objective was to reach the unreached and vulnerable people with resilient WASH services to fulfill their Rights to Water and Sanitation (RTWS) as enshrined in the constitution of Nepal.

The central feature of the project was the shift in the attitude with which people approach the state or other service providers regarding their responsibility to fulfil their claims to provide basic services of water, sanitation and hygiene.

The project worked both with communities and local governments across multiple tiers to strengthen a state-citizen dialogue and action. The project also promoted innovative and resilient technologies that sustain under better planning, financing and management by local authorities and the community.

The project was implemented in the particularly sensitive context of Nepal's newly formed federal structure, which saw the rural municipalities (RMs) become the key local government body responsible for WASH service delivery, but with limited knowledge and resources.

This brief presents the key learnings of the SuWASH project from the three years of experience on the ground. Embedding Human rights based approach (HRBA) to the typical service delivery model gave us valuable lessons in terms of ensuring right to water and sanitation in the sector and beyond.

A. An experience of embedding HRBA

To embed HRBA, special attention was given to orient the rights holders and duty bearers on the Rights to Water and Sanitation and build the foundation mechanisms for claim and response embedded in local governance systems.

Building the foundation of Rights to Water and Sanitation

A rigorous participatory process was adopted to engage the partners to develop the content for the training manual on Rights to Water and Sanitation. It aimed to raise awareness and empower the unreached and vulnerable communities to demand for improved services of water and sanitation as well as address the issues of the local governments being more accountable.

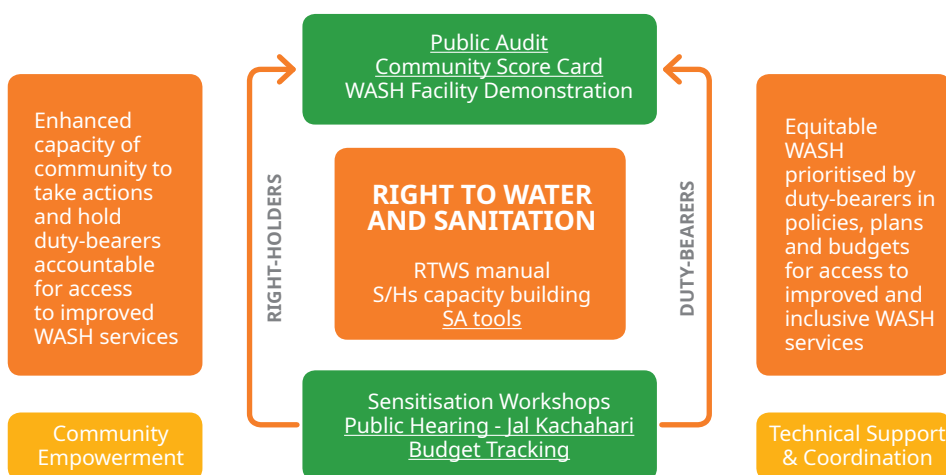
Master of Trainers of Training (MTOT) was provided to 27 staff from partner organisations. The package was cascaded to the community members, Water and Sanitation User's Committees (WSUCs)¹, municipality officials and other relevant stakeholders.

Article 35(4),

The constitution of Nepal, 2015

Every citizen has the right to access clean drinking water and sanitation.

Figure 1: The process of embedding HRBA in SuWASH



¹ A kind of community-based organization formed by the consumers themselves.

The RM chairpersons, vice-chairs, the chief executive officers and Ward chairpersons/members were engaged to understand and give emphasis on their role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as committed by Nepal.

At the community level, the growing awareness on Rights to Water and Sanitation has empowered unreached and under-served communities, including women, Dalits and/or indigenous people comprising mainly of Dalit and women, to discuss their everyday water problems with the local authorities, claim their rights as required and seek accountability.



Jal Kachahari: A local participatory platform where people, including those who do not have access to services such as water and sanitation can share their views and raise concerns to the local government. It also provides an opportunity for people and communities to engage in and contribute to local planning processes enabling prioritisation of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene. This platform has played a role in creating space for people, local government and stakeholders to raise concerns, discuss/dialogue and agree actions to enable and ensure peoples' rights to water and sanitation. The space enabled to raise awareness and confidence among the women and marginalized, who once thought they were voiceless and powerless.



RM Palata Pal Bahadur Bam, from ward no-7 raised his concern at the Jal kachahari, *"Hupigad Dudhdana Parauti Water Supply Scheme (WSS) was started 40 years ago but it's still incomplete. We have contributed in both cash and kind for the construction of WSS, but we are yet to quench our thirst for safe drinking water"*.

"On behalf of the Hima RM, I ensure that every household has a tap connection in the next three years and allocate the budget accordingly to solve the water issues"

–Raja Bahadur Shahi, RM Chair, Hima.

Choosing the social accountability tool

Realising rights require a theoretical understanding through specific actions and tools by both rights holders and duty bearers, embedded in the local systems.

The project introduced social accountability tools like Jal Kachhari (public audit), vulnerable capacity assessment (VCA), community score card, and citizen's report card. WSUCs were capacitated to conduct these activities on a regular basis. It helped to monitor WASH services and contributed in creating an enabling environment for regular feedback and dialogues between rights holders and duty bearers.

The social accountability tools like Jal Kachahari and community scorecards have been instrumental in informing the community people about the WASH budget plan and expenditure of their municipality, as well as increase their understanding of programme quality and monitoring.

A local traditional healer raises water issues during Jalkachahari, Palata-9, Kalikot district.



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Community score cards:

Community scorecards are designed to promote Rights to Water and Sanitation and cover all of its elements - availability, accessibility, affordability, quality, acceptability and non-discrimination. Community scorecard is a participatory method to provide constructive feedback to the duty bearers or service providers based on the participatory evaluation of available services and facilities. It is used to measure the situation of rights to water and sanitation through assessing the state of public water and sanitation facilities, following which the RM and community work together to prepare an action plan to improve the existing WASH situation.



“Previously priority was not given to the scores provided in the community scorecard. But while reviewing the scores, we realized our roles and responsibilities in making our water supply scheme sustainable. In coming days, we will focus on the target and work as per the action plan prepared”

- Narendra Nath Yogi, Secretary, Jogibada DWSS, Hima-3. (Review and follow up of CSC in Jogibada Scheme ,15 Nov 2019)

Users, committee members, FCHVs, teachers and local representatives after reviewing the Community Score Card session in Khaldhunga DWSS, Hima 6



WaterAid/KIRDARC Nepal

Making the rights real

Sensitization activities on Rights to Water and Sanitation significantly increased prioritization and financing in WASH in Palanta, Hima and Chaurideurali RMs. The table below illustrates the budget allocation in WASH sector of three RMs.

As a commitment made in Jal Kachahari, the budget allocation in WASH sector of Palanta and Hima RM significantly increased. The RM declared and committed budget allocation in WASH since FY 2017-18, which in previous years were in negligible percentage.

Chaurideurali RM also allocated significant amount for WASH sector and asked for support from WaterAid's partners on technical issues. Along with increasing allocation, Jal Kachahari also increased financial transparency and the quality of delivery of the service providers; and ensured completion of targets on time.

FY	Heading	Palata RM	Hima RM	Chaurideurali RM
FY 2017/18	Total Budget of RM (NPR)	167,985,000	99,075,000	120,057,000
	Allocation for WASH (NPR)	11,000,000	8,000,000	13,321,550
	%age allocation in WASH	7%	8%	11%
FY 2018/19	Total Budget of RM (NPR)	128,903,264	126,520,000	138,675,000
	Allocation for WASH (NPR)	43,700,000	5,750,000	24,890,496
	%age allocation in WASH	34%	5%	18%
FY 2019/20	Total Budget of RM (NPR)	592,159,861	80,000,000	124,629,000
	Allocation for WASH (NPR)	128,134,000	7,800,000	41,250,000
	%age allocation in WASH	22%	10%	33%



B. Resilient WASH services

Demonstration of low cost resilient and sustainable water supply scheme has ensured access to improved and clean water in the hard to reach areas. In order to cope with the problem of non-functional water supply schemes (68.4% partially functional and 3.5% defunct schemes - Baseline report 2017, WaterAid Nepal) which inferred for substantial technical and financial inputs to run the water schemes smoothly.

The project has demonstrated appropriate resilient technologies and processes suitable for particular communities to ensure sustainable WASH mainly gravity flow and lifting.

With geographical variation, the project has brought both the lens of equity and resilience into a common approach. In Jumla and Kalikot, existing inequalities and deprivations of marginalized people/individuals in WASH were put at the centre while embracing WASH resilience communities alongside. Meanwhile, in Kavre, the communities vulnerable to disasters were a centre focus mainly to incorporate disaster risk reduction components, address vulnerabilities, and target marginalized communities in the earthquake-affected districts.

Reservoir Tank, Khaldunga Water Supply Scheme, Hima-7, Jumla district.





"Availability of water at my doorstep feels like a miracle and I can utilize my time more effectively. Now, I have started my kitchen garden, which was difficult earlier due to water scarcity and also rear cattle. These days I sell vegetables and earn some money."

- Guptamaya Gautam, 65 years, Pokhari Danda, Chaurideurali RM

"As a WSUC chair, I was worried about the operation and maintenance of the structure and its sustainability. After we expressed our worries to KIRDARC, we were provided trainings on post construction management mainly focusing on managing the drinking water system and tariff collection."

- Buchho Adhikari, WSUC Chair, Khaldhunga Drinking Water Supply System, Hima RM



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C. Integration of WASH in School

Gyanu Man Lama, 36, connecting the water metre to one of the tapstands in Birtadeurali, Chaurideurali RM, Kavre district

Water supply communities were equipped with basic plumbing training, establishment of maintenance fund and linkage with concerned duty bearers including legal registration of WSUCs to ensure the sustainability of the water supply scheme.

In addition to these, community sensitization for hygiene behavior change to sustain the ODF movement was a win-win situation. Kavre, where majority of the toilets were demolished by the earthquake 2015, was able to regain the momentum in declaring the district Open Defecation Free (ODF) in 2018. Likewise, in Jumla and Kalikot, slippage of toilet use has been reduced to a great extent, even though the district was declared ODF a while back and communities have moved from basic to improved sanitation services. Basically, the working modality in Kavre district was from the recovery perspective, focusing more on WASH resilience while in Jumla and Kalikot equity was under prime consideration. The project supported minority groups, marginalized and vulnerable people have access to WASH services.

The project contributed in the construction of 23 water supply schemes, which includes 21 gravity flow schemes and 2 water pump lifting schemes. 9,706 users benefitted with improved water services.

Integration of WASH in School is a pathway to healthier schools and better performing children to achieve children's rights to WASH, improving school environments, and raising greater understanding of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) practices. The project was framed around promoting healthy and comprehensive approach to inclusive WASH by improving facilities, awareness on menstrual hygiene and institutional accountability. 17 schools were designed and constructed with child, girl and disability friendly (CGD) infrastructures benefitting 3,145 students.

In the community level, WaterAid Nepal's hygiene behaviour model was a successful, well adopted and practiced approach. Regardless, fruitful intervention, at school level, the basic orientations around hygiene mainly on menstruation was the only key focus leaving behind other key hygiene behaviours. Therefore, the need to assess and understand hygiene behaviour practices and their determinants in schools were also necessary to be informed by designing hygiene promotion package and behaviour change strategy at the school level for different age groups.

D. WASH Inequalities: Participatory Action Research

The current national data shows that about 88% of Nepal's population has access to basic water supply, but there is scant data on the remaining 12%. Without accurate information on who the excluded populations are, where they reside and why they are excluded, WASH plans and investment remain poorly targeted and incapable of addressing inequalities effectively.

Participatory Action Research (PAR) was therefore initiated under SuWASH to help local municipalities better identify and target unserved populations in local WASH plans and budgets.

Any RM could use the PAR during their planning process to ensure they identify and target the unserved population. The process involves a step-by-step participatory exercises and consultations to initially identify unserved groups, then collect data using various tools and methods such as problem tree/solution tree

analysis, identification of key actors through Venn diagrams, SWOT analysis and capacity assessment of RM/ wards. This is triangulated with data obtained from water and sanitation mapping and focus group discussions.

The participatory method also provided accurate data collected by the community itself. The structured, consultative and community-led approach to understand WASH inequalities can be replicated by other RMs looking to improve their WASH planning and budgeting.

The experiences of PAR shared by WaterAid Nepal in the sector was recently included as prominent components of WASH Plan preparation led by the Ministry of Water Supply (MoWS), Department of Water Supply and Sewerage Management (DWSSM).

PAR process

- Participatory consultation meeting and priority ranking at RM/Ward to identify unserved communities/ individuals
- Ward-level analysis to identify which communities do not have services (not only WASH)
- Pairwise ranking tool to prioritise programming needs through facilitation and discussions
- Participatory tools such as social mapping to identify communities/households



Women and children que up to fill water in Banjada community, Raduneta-2, Palata, Kalikot



WaterAid/Sanoj Tulachan



Hygiene Session
in Mulkhola
Dlaitbasti,
Palata-9, Kalikot

WaterAid/ KIRDARC Nepal

E. Hygiene mainstreaming: Behaviour Centered Design (BCD) approach



Changing hygiene behaviour is often shelved, with water and sanitation taking precedence both in terms of clearly defined government mandates, as well as tangible service technologies and delivery systems that lend themselves more easily to project-based interventions. However, SuWASH adopted hygiene behaviour change as the core component to improve health, well-being and dignity of communities.

Total Sanitation linked to hygiene behaviour change was a key area where coordinated effort led to changed behavior in the community. Total sanitation is the government's new mandate after attaining ODF and the activities under SuWASH were inclined towards achieving the indicators of total sanitation, linked directly to key hygiene behaviours of WaterAid.

Hygiene Behaviour Change through BCD!

Creative hygiene promotion materials such as mirror, wall stickers, and dangles were effective in reinforcing the campaign's messages while doing usual household chores. For example, dangles were designed to be placed in a way that would separate the kitchen and cattle space, as the formative research showed the majority of household kept cattle next to the kitchen. Follow-up household visits showed very few households had cattle inside their house next to their kitchen. Women expressed that the dangles looked good and also reminded them to practice the behaviour they learnt at the hygiene sessions.

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Based on the Behaviour Centered Design approach, the project conducted a structured assessment to understand the target behavior, population and gaps in their practice, followed by a small formative research to understand the behavioural determinants, motives, barriers and socio-cultural variability among the targeted population. This also helped prioritise six key behaviours: food hygiene, water treatment, use of toilet, handwashing at critical times, menstrual hygiene management and environmental sanitation.

The final campaign “Clean Family, Happy Family”, encouraged people to attend all the six hygiene sessions and practice all key hygiene behaviours for an inspirational “Ideal family”. The hygiene promotion intervention package was developed through a creative process and included a mix of simple-to-use promotion and demonstration aids, games, story-telling, handwashing rituals, competitions, commitment-making and certification for mothers/guardians who completed the programme. Interactive hygiene sessions and monthly household visits also contributed towards improving knowledge on hygiene related behaviours and transcribing it into practice.

Hygiene assessment study (WaterAid Nepal) reflects that, 60.4% of permanent handwashing stations in the project area have been constructed after hygiene promotion. Handwashing as one of the crucial behaviours were found to be well adopted. From the assessment, it was observed that 87.8% people wash their hands after defecation. In terms of availability and use of sanitation facility, it is almost cent percent (99.7%).

Further, qualitative findings from the field visits show people have adopted many of the key behaviours. This was triangulated with household observation and monitoring increase in awareness levels in the community. Community people were found practicing safe water storage, where they covered

drinking water with a lid. Toilets were also found to be clean with availability of cleaning materials. Handwashing practice has noticeably increased. Many women have started kitchen gardens where they use wastewater to grow green vegetables. They were also found to be conscious in maintaining menstrual hygiene.



Delivering some, influencing the rest

SuWASH's demonstration of the Behaviour Centered Design Approach for improved hygiene behaviour was well appreciated by Palata RM, and they have now extended the campaign to the wards beyond project areas with technical support from WAN to equip Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) to run the campaign.

51 year old tending to her vegetables in her small kitchen garden, in Birtadeurali, Chaurideurali Rural Municipality, Kavre



Lessons Learned

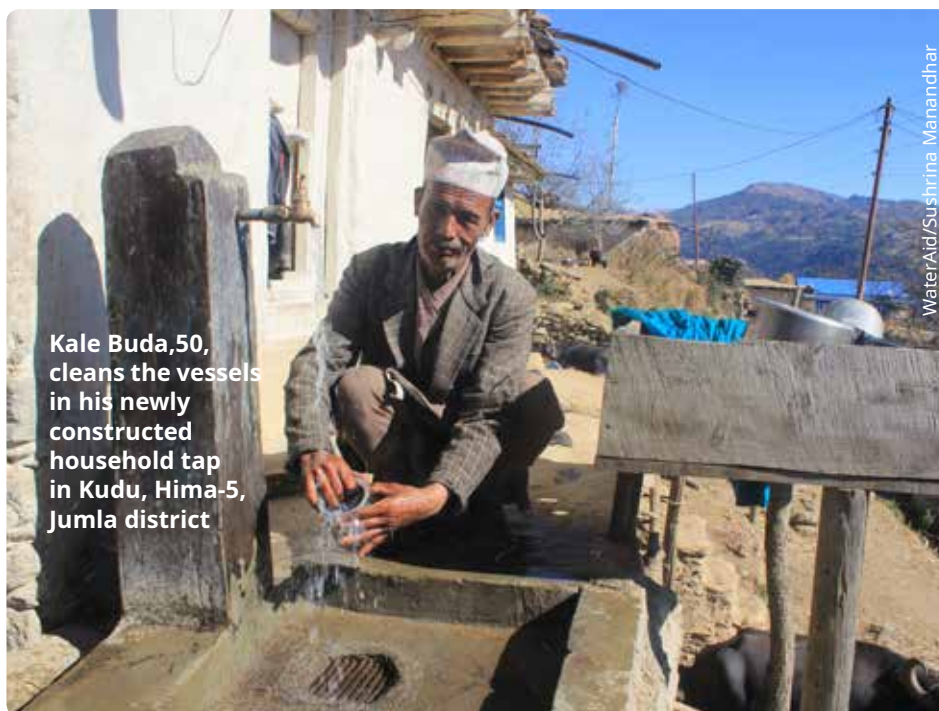
Linking SuWASH project to local and national targets

The project's work was within the broader context of Nepal's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to its national commitment to '*one house one tap*', developed in line with the SDGs. This motivated the RMs to engage constructively with the project, since it was visibly aligned with their mandate and interests.

Providing technical support on inclusive WASH has fostered and strengthened the relationship with government entities to implement programmes to reach the most unreached and vulnerable, establishing the value of SuWASH and WAN's involvement from the RM's perspective.

The federal and the local governments are in dire need of technical support to localize the national and provincial program, plan and set targets according to their current status to achieve Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) within 2030. In this perspective, development organizations need to focus on strengthening the capacity of the local government and support them to formulate the local level procedure, guidelines, etc. While working with the local governments, similar effort was implied; following which Palata RM developed the procedure and guideline to provide strategic guidance in WASH in School, Disaster Risk Reduction and WSUC Management. SuWASH project sensitized the community and empowered them on WASH issues so that they can claim their Rights to Water and Sanitation and also make the duty-bearers accountable.

At the federal level, there was an opportunity to support the government to draft Water and Sanitation Bill, soon after the Bill was



Kale Buda, 50, cleans the vessels in his newly constructed household tap in Kudu, Hima-5, Jumla district

WaterAid/Susirina Manandhar

One House One Tap Initiative

To align with the SDG 6 target of universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water, the government of Nepal initiated the *one house one tap* initiative through the 14th Periodic Plan to provide safely managed drinking water. The *one house one tap* initiative places a water facility at the doorstep of every house irrespective of caste and ethnicity, removing discriminations and notions of untouchability. It also shifts responsibility to individual households, reducing overuse of water and improving maintenance from a greater sense of ownership. While the initiative is still in its early stages, it has led to a greater acceptance and ownership of SuWASH among the local governments. Many have committed in public WASH forums like Jal Kachahari to address and prioritise the agenda of *one house one tap* with budget allocation.

endorsed by the parliament through our advocacy work and technical support. The government of Nepal had issued a number of Acts and regulations to manage and regulate water supply in the country. Now the government is in the process of drafting a new Act on Water and Sanitation merging several Acts, such as- Drinking Water Management Board Act, Drinking Water Tariff Determination Commission Act, Nepal Drinking Water Corporation Act and Water Tax Act. The government had invited limited civil society organizations including WaterAid Nepal to provide feedback on the draft Bill.

In addition, it was essential to support provincial and local level governments to develop regulations related to water and sanitation in their constituencies. The Bill does not address the sanitation rights adequately, in comparison to the water rights, so there is a need to emphasize right to sanitation in legal measures in the future.

Building relationships with the local government

The project built in a series of lobby meetings to clarify project objectives and plans, build transparency and set up accountability with the RMs during the start of the project. Sensitization and building credibility



allows synchronisation of the project plan with the activity and budget plan of the RM, which was important in executing the water supply schemes. Furthermore; project design need to consider the local level planning process as guided by Local Government Operation Act, to align it as per the local context and process. However, the challenges still remain, for instance at the operational level due to differences in the fiscal years, as the RMs have been implementing WASH projects in credit with vendors. This adds to the understanding of how local governments operate and regularly co-ordinate with local authorities.

Embedding hygiene in local practices and systems

The creative hygiene campaign designed according to BCD principles was rolled out in a holistic manner, which involved interactive sessions and household monitoring visits by hygiene promoters to reinforce the campaign's messages and check approval. The visits also provided an opportunity to make suggestions to the households on how they could do better, and provide cost-effective solutions for management of waste water, use of dish drying racks, improved stove with chimneys.

Moreover, health facility staff were engaged in delivering the hygiene sessions, thus linking up the campaign to existing resources and manpower at the community level, to motivate the Female Community Health Volunteers (FCHVs) as well as provide technical and monitoring support. Additionally, ward representatives have also taken up delivery of the hygiene package, which added value to scale up and sustain the hygiene behaviour change beyond SuWASH working areas and included communities other than those targeted in Hima RM. This shows potential for partner organisations to lobby with the local government to allocate hygiene activities and mobilize FCHVs to conduct the sessions, to embed the campaign in the local systems within and beyond SuWASH project areas.



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However, there are challenges to ensure the quality of the hygiene promotion sessions. During community visits, some women were not aware or they were confused regarding the concept of 'ideal family' at the heart of the campaign. Therefore, there is a need to clarify the concept of 'ideal family' and recognise those families practicing the six key behaviours in the campaign. To formalize the process, photographs of the ideal families were placed in junction shops, certificates were distributed by ward members/ chairperson and household visits by other families were also conducted. This was a call for more social mobilisers to be trained as hygiene promoters to engage the communities effectively.

Conclusion

A programmatic approach guided by the principals of human rights was designed and implemented in the SuWASH project. The project made the rights holders and duty bearers aware of their rights and responsibilities and trained them on social accountability tools since accountability is the key to the fulfillment of the rights. The project also supported in providing and enhancing technical capacity of both the rights holders and duty bearers so that sustainable services could be ensured. In addition, the project sought to bring all the stakeholders together to promote WASH related rights, foster partnership among them and make an enabling environment for WASH promotion.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

WaterAid Nepal wishes to extend their gratitude to all those, who in one way or the other have contributed their efforts and support to make this endeavor a reality. To, **WaterAid SuWASH project team and partners - KIRDARC, CIUD, FEDWASUN, NGO Federation** for their valuable contribution. **Mr. Sanoj Tulachan** and **Ms. Supriya Rana** for preparing the content. **Ms. Shahrukh Mirza**, for her direction and guidance and **Ms. Shivani Chemjong** for her editorial and designing support.

