



Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA)
Provincial and Local Governance Support Programme (PLGSP)

8th Technical Assistance Sub-Committee (TASC) Meeting Minute

Meeting Date: 06 July 2023

Meeting chaired by: Mr Balaram Rijyal, Joint Secretary and National Program Director

Meeting Convener: Mr Bhupendra Sapkota, Undersecretary and National Program Manager

Participation: Representatives from GoN agencies, PLGSP JFADPs, UNDP and PCU team

Venue: Program Coordination Unit premise

Decisions:

1. TASC noted progress against the previous (7th) meeting decisions.
2. TASC noted the current TA financial position and progress report.
3. TASC approved the TA AWP 16 July 2023 to 15 July 2024 with a budget of US\$ 2,815,455.48 (including output wise allocation) and TA revised work plan for January to December 2023 US\$ 2,631,761.51 and endorsed it for acceptance at NSC.
4. TASC noted the current TA staffing vacancies and approved recruitment as presented.
5. TASC noted the draft stakeholder engagement plan that will be discussed in Reprogramming Working Group (RWG) once the consultants are onboard.
6. TASC approved the proposal to convert existing **Coordination and Monitoring Specialist (SB5 Peg II)** position to two positions **i) Coordination and Planning Specialist (SB5 Peg I) and ii) Monitoring and Reporting Specialist (SB5 Peg I)**
7. TASC sought additional clarification on the proposal to upgrade existing position of **IT and e-governance Expert from SB 4 Peg II to SB 5 Peg I** to decide it further.

Annex-1 Discussion

1. Chairing and opening Remarks by NPD:

Upon chairing the meeting, NPD Mr Balram Rijyal highlighted that TASC is a crucial forum to discuss TA affairs in detail and thus such kind of seating helps TA management to support PLGSP delivery as TA remained an asset for PLGSP specially when PLGs lacking capacities to implement Nepal's federalism. NPD has also highlighted that TA final evaluation team has been mobilized and expected support from all TASC members. He also informed that UNDP is in the contracting process of consultants for stakeholder engagement process to inform PLGSP re-programming. NPD also informed that procurement of consultants for structural review of TA positions and structures is in challenges of low application. He also updated that all staff are informed about the continuation of all TA staff contract for transition year and UNDP is in process to fulfil the vacant positions. He also informed on the first ever National Coordination Council (NCC) meeting held recently which is a good start for us working to strengthen federalism in Nepal. NPD highlighted an immediate need to start working on the re-programming of PLGSP. NPD invited all to discuss it more on the RWG meeting including to onboard a team of experts to this effect.

2. NPM presented below updates

- Review of the decisions of 7th TASC meeting held on 02 July that were already actioned.
- Brief highlights on the TA annual progress report 2022 as the report has been shared with all.
- TA work plan (16 July 2023 to 15 July 2024 with a budget of US\$ 2,815,455.48 (including output wise allocation) and TA revised work plan for January to December 2023 US\$ 2,631,761.51
- TA fund status- approx. US\$ 7,028,374.36 expenditure (as of May 2023) out of US\$ 10,000,000.00 with a balance of US\$ 3,971,625.64 of which US\$ 2,815,455.48 is planned for 2023/24 with an unplanned fund of US\$ 1,156,170.16.
- TA Audit 2023 which has advised to insure office assets (computers, tables and similar items) which is already actioned.
- TA staff- of total 109 positions, 20 are vacant which are in recruitment process (advert made with a closing date on 10 July).
- Summary management response to two TPM recommendations (response shared to TASC members separately)
- TA final evaluation (three-member team and its mobilization); status of procurement of onboarding two consultants for stakeholder engagement process that are being contracted this week; stakeholder engagement tentative timeline of completion by mide September, low applications (only one) for the consultant of structural review of TA positions and its structures.
- Proposal on PCU position restructuring:
 - Convert Coordination and Monitoring Specialist (SB 5 Peg II) position into two separate specialist positions at (Coordination and Planning Specialist and Monitoring & Reporting Specialist- both SB 5 Peg I) owing to the workload as well as more focus required in reporting areas.
 - Upgrade of existing IT and e-governance position (SB 4 Peg II to SB5 Peg I) with additional work in data management and supporting in PLGSP knowledge management area.

3. Remarks from TASC Participants

The development partners appreciated the TA progress and sharing of the meeting documents timely.

Foreign Common-wealth Development Office echoed with the NPD that TASC is a crucial forum to discuss TA affairs and opined that NPD's recognition of the issues and concerns of stakeholder engagement and focus to re-programming is very important. FCDO reiterated that political coordination between Federal and PLGs is critical to advance federalism to make a sound re-programmed PLGSP reviewing the four years of its implementation and towards ensuring PLGSP ownerships at PLGs. It emphasized TA should play critical role in the process and expect to have strong engagement in TA evaluation, stakeholder engagement that will guide TA restructuring for future. FCDO also wanted to have TA team diverse including gender balance in current positions and those are in recruitment process.

Royal Norwegian Embassy noted a welcoming messaging from PCU of the TA staff contract continuation during transition as transition year is always a challenging time to retain staff. It also inquired stakeholder engagement process would have budget implication as it observed low allocation for this in the workplan.

Swiss Embassy updated of its recent three visits to the provinces and its acquaintance with the status including the challenges amid which PLGSP is being implemented where TA could play crucial role in coordination. It also advised in holding policy camps including for civil service act. It also advised to organize international visit only after re-programming as the focus for now is on re-programming.

European Union observed low flexibility on TA work plan as TA would need more budget for re-programming related activities in this transition year. It also advised to think of an exit plan on how TA's work could be handed over to government officials.

UNDP reiterated that federalism is not going to take place over night as countries have years of experiences in it because of which we will need to keep rationale expectation in Nepal as well. It also informed that staff turnover is concerning, and TA evaluation will inform more insights where it will also inform on PCU/PPIUS/PCGGs efficiencies. It reminded that TA is under government owned NIM modality where UNDP welcomes to the opportunity to convert it to direct implementation modality if any. It also thanked DPs observation on flexibility of the TA budget which could be revised as appropriate and also informed that the timeline for stakeholder engagement and re-programming will be finalized together with the GoN, consultants and DPs.

Other GoN ministry representatives opined that PLGSP has achieved a lot despite slow start and COVID-19 pandemic where TA has played a crucial role. They also put the observation that DPs funding to PLGSP are also implementing similar parallel programs that are giving wrong message. They also suggested to rethink on the TA structure for better PLG ownerships as well as the program delivery modalities from orientation to real capacity building activities. They also advised to review the functionality of the institutional mechanisms provisioned and use of the documents supported

to LGs by PLGSP (demand vs supply issue). They also advised to review the overlapping of functions of TA structures especially PPIUs and PCGGs.

4. Closing Remarks by NPD:

NPD thanked all the participants for constructive comments and assured all these will be taken due care as appropriate. He also thanked UNDP for its commitment in providing TA service which is also a notion of devotion.

Annex-2: List of Participants

Date: 06 July 2023

Venue: DCC Meeting Hall

S.N.	Name	Designation	Organization	Signature
1	Mr. Balaram Rijyal	Joint Secretary/National programme Director	MoFAGA/PLGSP	
2	Mr. Bhupendra Sapkota	Under Secretary/National Programme Manager	MoFAGA/PLGSP	
3	Mr. Bernardo Cocco	Acting Resident Representative	UNDP	
4	Ms. Binda Magar	Governance Advisor ARR(Programme)	UNDP	
5	Mr. Tek Tamata	Portfolio Manager	UNDP	
6	Mr. Ian Macdougall	Federal Governance Specialist & Development Partner Co-Ordinator	UNDP	
7	Mr. Padam Bhusal	Program Coordination and Quality Assurance Analyst	UNDP	
8	Mr. Nibedan Baidya	Operations Manager	UNDP	
9	Ms. Pushpa Tualdhar	Portfolio Associate	UNDP	
10	Ms Kaluwa Vergamota	Programme Manager	European Union	
11	Mr. Egbert Pos	Governance Advisor and Deputy Team Leader for GPST	FCDO/British Embassy	
12	Mr. Madhu Bishwakarma	Governance Advisor	FCDO/British Embassy	
13	Ms. Smita Bajracharya	Programme Manager	British Embassy Kathmandu	

14	Ms. Kristine Storholt	Head of Cooperation	Norwegian Embassy	
15	Ms. Shradha Rayamajhi	Governance Advisor	Norwegian Embassy	
16	Mr. Namit Wagley	State Building Advisor	SDC	
17	Mr. Mitthias Meier	Head of cooperation	SDC	
18	Mr. Prahlad Kumar Karki	Under Secretary	MoFAGA	
19	Mr. Reshamlal Kandel	Under Secretary	MoFAGA	
20	Mr. Janak Raj Sharma	Under Secretary	MoFAGA	
21	Mr. Mahendra Kumar Sapkota	Under Secretary	MoFAGA	
22	Mr. Rajesh Gautam	Under Secretary	MoFAGA	
23	Mr. Kanchan Basnet	Under Secretary	MoF	
24	Mr. Ramesh Pd. Shiwakoti	PFM Expert	FCGO	
25	Dilli Adhikari	Account Officer	FCGO	
26	Mr. Baburam Shrestha	PFM Specialist	PLGSP	
27	Mr. Anuj Ghimire	Administrative Officer	PLGSP	
28	Mr Sudarshan Poudel	Account Officer	PLGSP	
29	Mr. Nagesh Badu	IT & E- Governance Specialist	PLGSP	
30	Mr. Surendra Bhandari	Finance Officer	PLGSP	
31	Ms. Sakun Shrestha	Programme Associate	PLGSP	