







RESEARCH ON

EFFECTIVE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN SDGs



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Sector Experts

Mr. Lalmani Wagle

Ms. Chhimi Sherpa

Mr. Kiran Sapkota

Mr. Ronish Pandey

Advisory Team

Mr. Ekraj Sigdel

Ms. Shristi KC

Ms. Roshna Subedi

Mr. Saroj Baniya

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WWF Nepal

PO Box: 7660

Baluwatar, Kathmandu, Nepal

T: +977 1 4434820, F: +977 1 4438458 info@wwfnepal.org. www.wwfnepal.org

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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
CEN	Clean Energy Nepal
NYC	Nepal Youth Council
LDC	Least Developed Country
LNOB	Leave No One Behind
NPC	National Planning Commission
NYCA	Nepalese Youth for Climate Action
NYP	National Youth Policy
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals

FOREWORD



When WWF Nepal first established the Eco Club program in 1994, with a national network of Eco Clubs, through the School Environment Conservation Education Network, Nepal (SENSE-Nepal) in Bardia, there was a real need to equip the younger generation with information and innovation-something that has not changed today. With the establishment of its first eco club, followed by The Generation Green program, WWF Nepal embarked on a journey of engaging youth in conservation and creating a base of youth in conservation over the last few decades.

In an effort to better understand the needs and interests of youth in achieving sustainable development goals, the Nepal Youth Council (NYC) conducted a comprehensive survey, with an involvement of over 350 youth representing different parts of the country. This report focuses particularly on environment related SDGs, (SDG-6, SDG-7, SDG-13 and SDG-15), alongside building the capacity of policy makers, legislative parliamentarians, civil society organizations and local government on the same.

The report addresses gaps in policy making, involvement of diverse stakeholders, achievements in SDGs, and challenges faced by youth in the process of being involved and engaged directly in achieving these global and national goals. Based on the questionnaire survey conducted in the National Youth Conference, this report was also able to adequately capture and document the concerns of youth across the country, due to the digital nature of the conference in 2020.

I extend my sincere gratitude to NYC for their effort in developing this informative and analytical report and congratulate them for successfully conducting an inclusive and detailed survey. I am certain that this report will be a useful resource for all tiers of government trying to engage youth in Sustainable Development Goal's localization processes in Nepal.

Ghana S Gurung, PhD

Country Representative

SUMMARY

The research for the "Youth Engagement in Sustainable Development Goals" was conducted between September and October 2020 with an objective to assess the status of youth engagement in the implementation and achievement of the SDGs, particularly SDG 12 - Sustainable consumption and production, SDG 13 - Climate action, and SDG15 - Life on land. The study in based on extensive literature review, surveys, and consultations. The questionnaire and consultations were conducted through a virtual platform. A total of 350 responses were collected from youth of all seven provinces of Nepal. Virtual consultations were also organized with youth and elected representatives of all three tiers of the government (Central, Provincial & Local).

The respondents represent all three geographic regions of Nepal where 50.86% represent the Hill region, 44.86% Terai region and 4.29% represent the Mountain region, with a male female ratio of 52% and female respectively. Out of the total respondents, 22% were found to have very sound knowledge on SDGs, with more than 45% having good knowledge, and 20% having average knowledge on SDGs. 12% of the respondents were however unaware about SDGs. More than 50% of youth have shown interest in being involved in SDG process through their respective fields. However, about 58% believe that they are not being involved in the SDG process by the State despite their capacity.

A majority of the respondents i.e. 91.71% believe that climate change is real and affecting our lives and more than 80% of them strongly believe that environmental problems are arising due to developed countries. Though majority of them agree on this issue of climate change, they have differing views on what the major environmental challenge is. 43.14% responded that deforestation and biodiversity loss is a major environmental challenge while 38.86% of youth consider that climate change and air pollution is a major environmental challenge.

The study found that while youth are eager to be involved in the SDG process in Nepal, there is lack of clear plans, policies and strategies across all tiers of government, and limited opportunities for effective engagement in the SDG process. It is suggested that youths are to be involved mandatorily in policy and planning formulation of all tiers of governments of Nepal in order to achieve SGD goals.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Sustainable Development Goals were adopted in 2015 as Global Goals by United Nations member states among which Nepal is one. The adoption of the SDGs by the United Nations in 2015 coincided with the promulgation of the new constitution of Nepal. The goals are envisioned to be achieved by 2030. The 17 SDGs are interlinked with each other i.e. achieving one goal directly or indirectly helps achieve the other; highlighting three aspects of sustainability: social, economic, and environmental. Following the principle of 'Leaving no one behind', the country is pursuing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with a strong national commitment as a means for transformative change in the country through its integrated approach (National Planning Commission, 2020).

Institutional framework of SDGs in Nepal

At the apex level, a Steering Committee for the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs has been established under the chairmanship of the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister. The Committee is composed of the Deputy Chairperson, the Foreign Minister, the Finance Minister, Chief Ministers of all Provinces, the Chief Secretary, Presidents of Associations of Rural Municipalities, Municipalities, and District Coordination Committees as Members; and the Member Secretary of the National Planning Commission (NPC) as the Member-Secretary. The Committee provides guidelines to the federal ministries for implementing and mainstreaming the SDGs at provincial and local levels. It also monitors implementation and prepares the status of progress (National Planning Commission, 2017).

The coordination and facilitation of SDG implementation in the provinces are carried out by provincial-levelsteering committees. Seven thematic committees are present, each coordinated by the respective members of the NPC. The NPC has also prepared planning and monitoring guidelines along with a SDG Localization Resource Book. The provincial governments have established their Policy and Planning Commissions, and sensitized on the SDGs. They have also incorporated fundamental principles and goals of the SDGs in their periodic plans. At the local level, peoples' participation has been ensured for sustainable development (National Planning Commission, 2017).

Status of SDGs in Nepal

The SDGs have been aligned into national plans and programs along with national indicators to reflect country-specific aspirations and contexts (National Planning Commission, 2020). The 15th Plan (2019/20 - 2023/24) – a periodic plan of Nepal Government, also aligns and mainstreams the SDGs guided by the slogan 'Prosperous Nepal, Happy Nepali' (National Planning Commission, 2020). With the country aspiring to graduate from a Least Developed Country (LDC) to a middle-income by 2030, SDGs and their achievement are crucial. In the last decade, the country has made considerable progress in social and economic development. However, poverty and vulnerability to climate change have posed significant challenges in meeting the SDG goals. Achievement of SDGs requires equal participation of every stakeholder

in society.

Under SDG 12; sustainable consumption and production, clean energy has the potential for private investment into manufacturing at the same time, creating green jobs for the youth in the country (National Planning Commission, 2017). Likewise, the agriculture sector if carried forward with ambitious but realistic policy decisions can help enhance the existing status of the agricultural sector and related stakeholders.

Regarding SDG 13; Climate Action, the country aims to halve the existing carbon dioxide emission levels by 2030. A climate change adaptation plan has been proposed for adoption across at least 120 Rural Municipalities by 2030. Meanwhile, climate-smart villages are proposed to increase from zero to 170, and climate-smart farming to increase from zero to 500 units. Almost all schools will cover climate change education as well (National Planning Commission, 2017).

Regarding wildlife – SDG 15, the 2030 target is to maintain the share of protected area at atleast 23.3% of the total land area, increase forest under community management from 39% to 42% of the forest area, halt forest loss and degradation, increase mountain ecosystems covered by the protected areas to 70% by 2030, and undertake additional plantation of 5000 hectares each year.

Youth in SDGs

Youth are one of the many stakeholders responsible for implementation of the SDGs as they constitute a majority of the total population in the country. According to the 2011 census, youth (aged 16-40) constitute 40.3% of the total population. With proper utilization of skills, knowledge, and innovation, youth can play a vital role in achieving the 17 SDG goals. Their overall development must therefore be prioritized and mainstreamed in national development (NYP, 2015).

The National Youth Policy, 2072 (2015), prioritizes the mobilization of youth in Environmental Protection, Global Climate Change, and Sustainable Development, by building their capacity, providing scholarships, provision of technical skills through technical educational institutes, thereby enhancing their participation. Similarly, the Climate Change Policy (2019), includes components that prioritize the encouragement of youth in pursuing studies and research related to climate change. It also highlights building capacity of youth and mobilizing them to raise awareness about climate change. In the meantime, it also states that transparency and accountability of the active participation of people will be ensured while conducting climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction programs. Climate-friendly knowledge, skills, and practices will be incorporated into formal, non-formal and educational curricula as well.

1.2. Rationale of the study

Very few studies have been conducted on youth engagement in the achievement of SDGs. As such, policies are eventually affected by the lack of proper research and data. How aware are youth of their role and responsibilities regarding SDGs, what are the obstacles, and what kind of support do they expect from the government? Such questions are yet to be answered. In light of this, the study aims to fill the research gap prevalent in the country which is home to 40.3% of youths. Moreover, the research will identify the status of youth participation, contribution, and understanding of the SDGs. The findings could be effective in preparing

policies that can further engage youth in the achievement of SDGs which plays a vital role in the overall development of the country.

1.3 Objectives

a) General objective

 To study the status of youth engagement in the implementation and achievement of the SDGs, particularly SDG goal 12 - Sustainable consumption and production, 13 -Climate action, and 15 - Life on land.

b) **Specific objective**s

- Evaluate knowledge and understanding of SDGs among Nepalese youth aged 16–40.
- Determine ways in which youth can contribute to the implementation and achievement of the SDGs.

METHODOLOGICAL & LIMITATIONS

2.1 Data Collection

The study relied on a questionnaire survey and multiple stakeholder consultations. It was designed by Nepal Youth Council, Clean Energy Nepal, WWF Nepal, and Nepalese Youth for Climate Action. The survey was uploaded on the web and was widely circulated across the country to reach the widest possible youth population in Nepal. The survey consisted of multiple-choice questions along with gender, age, geographical location. Altogether 350 responses from all provinces were collected, an amount sufficient to draw conclusions and identify certain trends, which are illustrated in the section below. The survey remained open for a month until it was officially closed on the 19th of October 2020).

Virtual stakeholder consultations were also conducted with representatives from the local, provincial, and national levels. The key questions that were asked the representatives were:

- 1. The concept of "Leaving No One Behind" is the core of SDGs. How can governments incorporate youth, which is more than 40% of the population, in the SDGs process?
- 2. Environmental conservation is a key component of SDGs. In this context, how can we ensure that governments are not/will not compromise the environmental component while achieving development targets?
- 3. What are your expectations from youth in achieving the SDG targets?

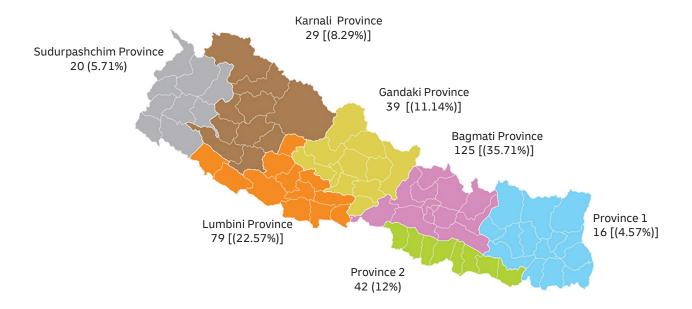
There were however some limitations to the methodology, for instance since the responses were taken virtually, youth having no internet access were not able to respond to the survey.

RESULTS

3.1 General Overview

The results presented below were gathered through the online questionnaire as well as consultations with youth representatives and the elected representatives of the Federal House of Representatives, National Assembly, Provincial Assembly, and Mayor and Deputy Mayor of different Municipalities and Rural Municipalities. 350 youth from all over the country participated in the study wherein 35% of the response was received from Bagmati Province and 22.6% response from Lumbini Province. The least response received was from Province 1, i.e. 4.5% only.

Province wise Distribution of Responses



Ethnicity wise the response was dominated by Bramhin and Chhetri with the ratio at 67.71%, whereas Janajati represented 14%, Madhesi 10.29% and only 3.43% of the respondents represented Dalits. Out of the total respondents more than 71% of the respondents were between the age group of 20-24 and less than three respondents were above 30. The respondents represent all three geographic regions of Nepal where 50.86% represent the Hill region, 44.86% Terai, and 4.29% represent the Mountain region. The survey was distributed with no gender bias, equally targeting male, female and other sexual minorities. However, the rate of response from

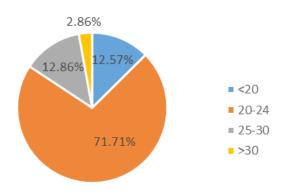


Figure 1 Age distribution of respondents

the young males were slightly higher (52%) than young females (48%). The study was unable to procure responses from other sexual minorities.

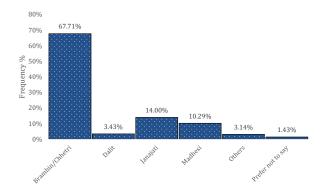


Figure 2 Respondents representing Ethnic groups

Figure 3 Gender wise distribution of respondents

A majority of the respondents (92.86%) were found to be students attending college and universities (age group 20-24), with less than 1% of respondents pursuing studies at the secondary level.

3.2 Understanding of SDGs

The research found that a huge majority of youth respondents (92.86%) have heard about SDGs and that newspapers and online media was the most popular medium (42.29%) to hear about SDGs. Interestingly, only 0.57% of youth heard about SDGs through television. This shows that the use of online media and newspapers will be a very effective approach to sensitize youth about SDGs. In terms of knowledge and

level of understanding on SDGs 88.29 % of youth were found to be knowledgeabkle about SDGs with 22% of youth having very good knowledge and 46.86% of youth have good knowledge of SDGs. Meanwhile 11.71% did not know about SDGs.

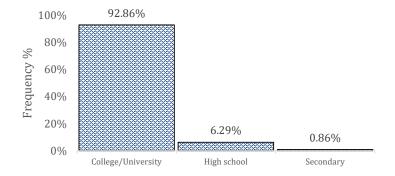


Figure 4 Respondents in Education Wise

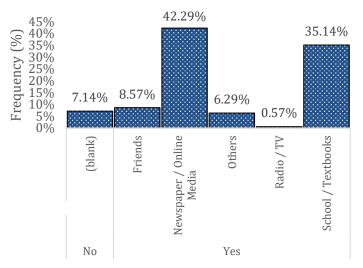


Figure 5 Response of "Do You Heard about SDGs?"

Responsibility of Implementation

The majority of youth think social media (39.43%) can have an influential role in sensitizing youth on SDGs, while 29.43% of youth believed that educational institutions have important roles to let people know about SDGs. The research also found that the Non-Governmental sector is a third priority (11.43%) in terms of disseminating information on SDGs. This clearly indicates that social media, and educational institutions as primary mediums for youth sensitization and capacitating youth in SDGs implementation.

Despite the influential role of social media and educational institutions, the respondents also identified the national government (30.86%) and local governments (23.14%) as responsible for disseminating knowledge about Sustainable Development Goals.

The responses also indicate that youth realize their role and responsibility in achieving the SDGs with 28.57% agreeing on this front.

3.3 Youth Engagement in SDGs Process

51.58% of youth have displayed interest in being involved in the SDG process when they were asked about the perception of youth's engagement in the SDGs process in their respective areas. More than 20% of youth were found to be currently engaged in the SDs implementation process through different organizations while another 9.46% of youth were working in SDGs through their organizations.

Despite interest to engage in the SDG process, a large percentage of youth believe that their role is not taken into account despite their capabilities (57.59%). Whereas, 22.64% of youth

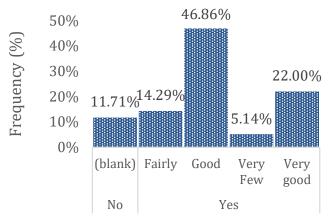


Figure 6 Do You Know about SDGs?

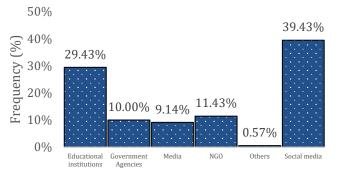


Figure 7 Who is Responsible for SDGs Implementation?

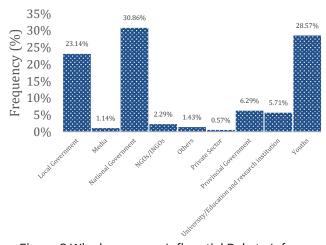


Figure 8 Who has a more Influential Role to Inform Youth about SDGs?

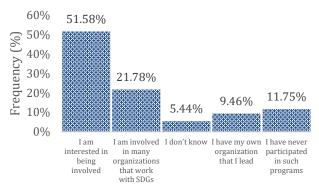


Figure 9 Youth Engagement in the SDGs Process

indicated that they should be capacitated to support their contribution to the SDG implementation process.

It is important to note that it is a huge opportunity for governments and non-governmental organizations to come to know that a large number of youth are not just interested to be engaged, but are

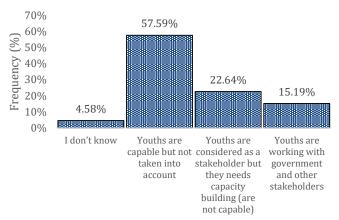


Figure 10 Perception of Youth Engagement In SDGs

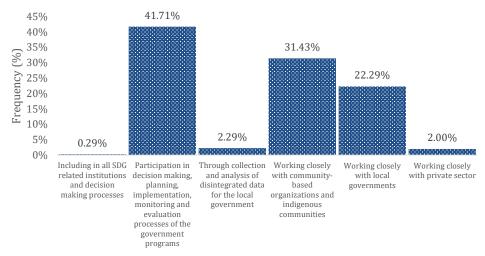


Figure 11 How Youth can Contribute to SDGs

also aware about their responsibility in achieving the SDGs in Nepal. Based on this study more than 95% of youth are ready to take part in the SDG process. As youth represent 40% of the total population of the country, capacity building, effective and strategic engagement of youth are key to achieve the SDGs.

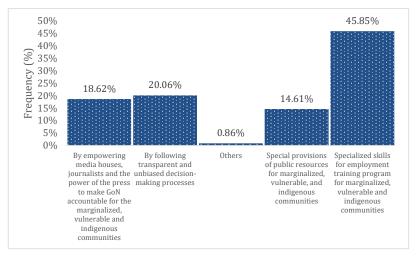
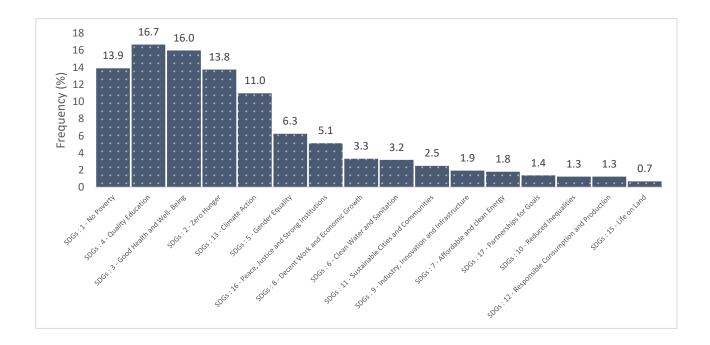


Figure 12 How to Achieve LNOB

According to the research, youth believe that participation in the decision-making process, planning, implementation, as well as monitoring and evaluation of government could support their engagement in SDGs. Most of the respondents (45.85%) believe that governments and other stakeholders should work on specialized skills for employment training for marginalized, vulnerable, and indigenous groups to ensure the core components of SDGs i.e. "Leave No One Behind", is realized. At the same time, youths emphasize the importance of transparent and unbiased decision-making processes and role of media in LNOB by providing space by raising awareness about the SDGs and updating the works of all the stakeholders responsible for executing plans to achieve SGDs.

Regarding 17 SGD Goals, Nepali youth chose SDG4 - quality education as the most important SDG, whereas SDG 13 - climate action, SDG 3 - Good Health and Well Being, SDG 1 & SDG 2 - No Poverty and Zero Hunger form the top five priority SDGs for youth. This is an indication that youth are equally concerned about the threat of climate change, and consider climate action along with poverty eradication, quality education, health and food as key components in the SDGs process.



3.4 Youth, Environment and Climate Change

The respondents were found to be particularly concerned regarding SDG 15 -Deforestation and Biodiversity loss as well as SDG 13 - Climate Change and SDG - Air Pollution. Among the respondents, 43.14% said that Deforestation and Biodiversity loss are major environmental challenges we are facing. However, despite the environmental challenges, more than 50% youth believe that Nepal's conservation efforts are not sufficient or satisfactory.

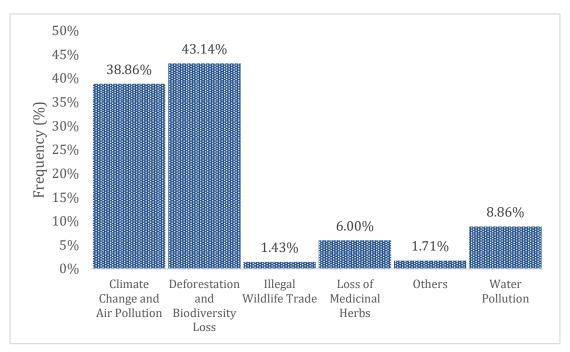


Figure 13 Major Environmental Challenges

Similarly, 38.86% youth believe that climate change and air pollution is a major environmental challenge. Although, it is hard to feel and see the impact of climate change in our daily lives compared to other environmental challenges, nearly 40% youth cited climate change is a major environmental challenge showing the young generation to be more serious about global challenges such as climate change and air pollution. 91.71% of young respondents believe that climate change is real and affecting us. At the same time, more than 80% youth strongly believe that environmental problems are arising due to the developed countries.

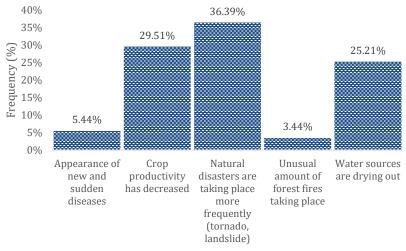


Figure 14 Youth Perception on Climate Change

Youth were also asked about the impacts of climate change in their area. The respondents identified natural disasters (36.39%), crop productivity (29.51%) and water resources (25.21%) as major sectors affected by climate change. Youth believe that cases of tornado, landslides are rising due to the impact of climate change, while crop productivity has decreased. Climate change was also cited as the reason behind other issues such as water sources drying.

Youth not only raised environmental concerns and dissatisfaction on current efforts, but also believed that they could be a part of the solution. 94% of youth (48% agree and 46% fully agree) agreed that environmental problems could be solved by switching to a sustainable lifestyle.

Similarly, 96% of youth agreed (50% fully agreed and 46% agreed) that they are a part of the ecosystem, can make a change to positively impact the environment, as well as committing

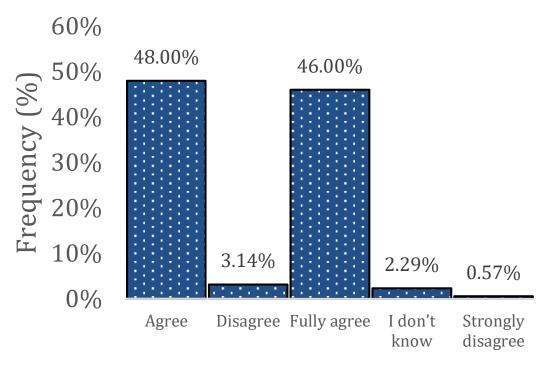


Figure 15 Major Climate Change Impacts

to solve environmental problems. This indicates proactiveness on the part of youth to seek solutions, and as such governments and organizations should consider youth in their environment and climate change related plans and programs.

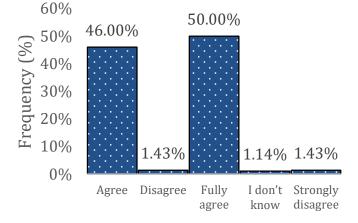


Figure 16 Perception on i am a part of the Eco-System and i can Influence what happens with the Environment

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The study on "Effective Youth Engagement in SDGs" identifies some interesting facts and findings related to the ideas and perceptions of Nepali youth. Proper utilization of the findings of the study will give vital information and guidelines for governmental and non-governmental bodies who are promoting SDGs in Nepal.

4.1 SDG Awareness Among Youth

A large proportion of youth; 88.29%, were found to know about and understand SDGs. Only 11.71% of youth were found to be unaware. 46.86% of respondents were found to have good knowledge and 22% to have very good knowledge on SDGs. These youth are huge resources for promoting SDGs in Nepal. Planners and policymakers should take into account that online media and education institutions are the major information sources for sensitizing youth. In light of the findings, the following recommendations are made to improve engagement of youth in the SDGs process and fast track its achievement.

- Since youth cover 40% of the country's total population, it is vital to raise awareness about SDGs among youth and create an inclusive platform for discussion through different media.
- Educational institutions play a key role in cultivating knowledge on SDGs. Inclusion of SDGs in school level textbooks will have valid impacts.
- Without the participation of informed youth, achieving SDGs will be challenging. Youth partnerships in both private and public sectors, as well as local, provincial and national levels are key factors in promoting and achieving national SDG targets.

4.2 Youth in Governance

Youth emphasized the need for participatory and transparent decision making and planning processes. They felt left out despite their capacity to contribute from planning to monitoring stages. In order to achieve "Leave No One Behind", the major promise of the 2030 Agenda of UN, youth should be included in the SDGs process to achieve the SGD goals. Currently, there is no clear understanding or strategy to engage youth in the SDG process nationally or across the three tiers of governments. Listed below are a few recommendations to the identified challenges.

- Promising youth should be identified, promoted and empowered to promote and achieve SDGs.
- Capacity building and multidimensional exposure should be a priority of stakeholders to unlock and leverage youth potential.
- Youth should be actively engaged in policy-making, planning as well as monitoring processes of the local, provincial and national level governance.

4.3 Youth and Environment

As agents of awareness and change, youth showed concern about nature and the extent of environmental problems we face. A majority of respondents understood their responsibilities towards the environment and were ready to contribute or tackle the challenges. Despite this, respondents considered current efforts on conservation to be less participatory. Listed below are a few recommendations to the identified challenges.

- Effective environmental education programs should be incorporated in all education projects to enhancing the knowledge base of youth.
- The state should create a dedicated public forum where youths can express their views and spread messages on environmental concerns.
- Institutionalized youth participation in environmental conservation should be ensured at all levels from grass-root to policy, and executive bodies of the state for successful implementation of SDG plans and policies.

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ANNEX

Annex I: Survey Data

Table 2 Province wise disaggregated data

Row Labels	Bagmati Province	Gandaki Province	Karnali Province	Province 1	Province 2	Lumbini Province	Sudurpashchim Province	Grand Total
Hill	94	32	22	8	1	16	5	178
Female	54	15	7	4	1	9		90
Bramhin/Chhetri	32	12	7	2	1	8		62
Dalit	1	2						3
Janajati	16	1		2		1		20
Madhesi	1							1
Others	3							3
Prefer not to say	1							1
Male	40	17	15	4		7	5	88
Bramhin/Chhetri	35	14	11	2		5	4	71
Dalit			2	1				3
Janajati	3	2		1		1		7
Madhesi	1							1
Others		1	2				1	4
Prefer not to say	1					1		2
Mountain	2	3	5	2			3	15
Female	1		1				1	3
Bramhin/Chhetri	1						1	2
Others			1					1
Male	1	3	4	2			2	12
Bramhin/Chhetri	1	2	2				2	7
Dalit		1						1
Janajati			1	2				3
Others			1					1
Terai	29	4	2	6	41	63	12	157
Female	16	3	1	3	12	32	8	75
Bramhin/Chhetri	15	2	1	3	3	26	5	55
Dalit					1			1
Janajati	1				2	6	3	12
Madhesi					6			6
Others		1						1
Male	13	1	1	3	29	31	4	82
Bramhin/Chhetri	12	1	1	2	5	15	4	40
Dalit					1	3		4
Janajati	1				1	5		7
Madhesi				1	22	5		28
Others						1		1
Prefer not to say						2		2
Grand Total	125	39	29	16	42	79	20	350

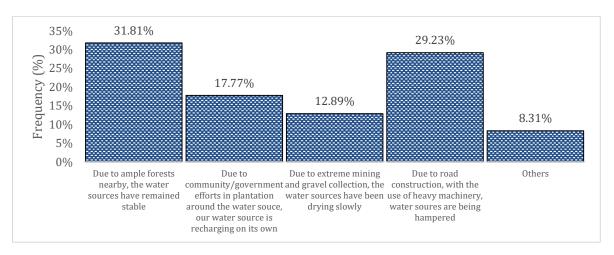


Figure 18 Youth perception on water source in their area

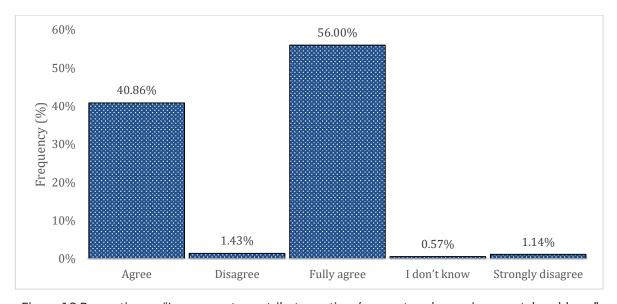


Figure 19 Perception on "I am eager to contribute my time/energy to solve environmental problems"

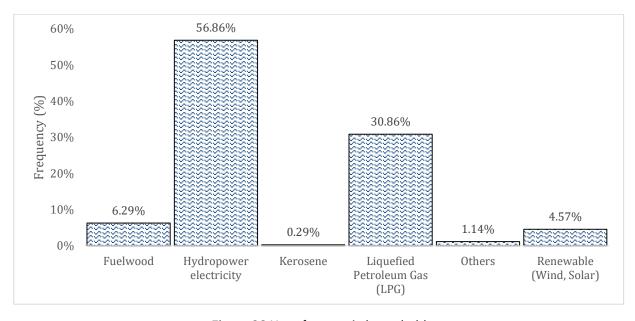
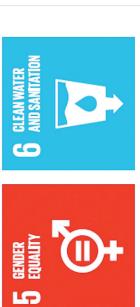


Figure 20 Use of energy in household

Annex II: Questionnaire

- Do you know about SDGs?
- Who do you think plays the most influential role to let the people know about SDGs?
- Which of the following SDGs do you think are most important. (Choose maximum 3 goals)
- Who do you think is most responsible to implement the SDGs goal?
- Have you participated in any program related to SDGs?
- What is the source of drinking water in your house?
- Which type of energy are you using in your house?
- What is your opinion on the following? (Please $\sqrt{\text{one box}}$)
- Nepal is doing well in the conservation of natural resources (Forest, mountains, lakes, and rivers)
- What are the most urgent difficulties/problems that you face in your everyday life?
- What do you think are the most urgent problems in society?
- Which of the following is a major environmental issue for you?
- How do you manage waste in your house?
- Threats to the environment are not my concern.
- Name 3 SDG goals that could effectively contribute towards achieving all the SDGs?
- Developed countries are responsible for the environmental problems of the world.
- Changing our way of living can contribute to solving environmental problems.
- I am a part of the ecosystem and I can influence what happens with the environment.
- I am eager to contribute my time/energy to solve environmental problems.
- How do you perceive the youth's engagement in SDGs implementation in your area?
- How can youth play an important role in implementing SDG 6,7,12,13,15,17 (Clean Water and Sanitation, Affordable and Clean Energy, Responsible Consumption and Production, Climate Access, Life on Land, Partnership for Goals)
- To what extent are you involved in the SDG implementation
- To what extent is your source of water drying out or recharging?
- What are the impacts of climate change in your area?
- Which measure is most effective for the Government and related stakeholders to support youth to take leadership on SDGs?
- How can youth make the Government of Nepal accountable towards achieving the SDG goals, particularly addressing the principle of LNOB (Leave No One Behind)?

































GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING

9



