

Technical Advisory Group Meeting

A Technical Advisory Group Meeting (TAG) of the Agriculture Sector Development Programme (ASDP) was held at Hotel Valley View-Surkhet on 16th November 2021. The TAG meeting comprises 41 participants. As usual, the meeting was chaired by the, Secretary, Ministry of Land Management, Agriculture and Cooperative of Karnali Province. Dr. Kishan Lal Bhatta, Taking formal permission from the Respected Secretary, the Joint Secretary/Programme Coordinator of ASDP Mr. Bhoj Raj Sapkota initiated the meeting. The meeting was attended by members and invited members of TAG representing various government stakeholders and ASDP staff.



The overall objective of the TAG meeting was to review the cumulative progress until the first trimester, activity level progress, agreed actions received from aid-memoir of mid-term review mission 2021, and revised program as per agreed actions. Joint Secretary/Programme Coordinator Mr. Bhoj Raj Sapkota shared cumulative progress, agreed actions, and revisions of the programs. He talked about different issues, for instance, investment criteria under value chain development fund (VCDF), its eligibility criteria, revised co-financing to agribusiness and market-oriented public and private infrastructure (Agri-link road, irrigation scheme, collection center). Likewise, access to rural financial services, strengthening of farmer groups, women empowerment, and household nutrition were shared by Mr. Sapkota. Furthermore, he shared about agreed actions and the activities revised after the mid-term review (MTR) mission 2021. While nearing the end of the presentation, Mr. Sapkota shared that the project burn rate against time is gaining momentum, nevertheless, implementation of activity halted during the first quarter waiting for various revisions in target, strategies, and modality from MTR mission before Dashain-Vacation.

Following Mr. Sapkota's presentation, there was a formal discussion with TAG members on different issues like wholesale credit, availability of easy access to credit with a nominal interest rate, the appointment of a technician having specialization on livestock, coordination, trained human resources for long term sustainability, duplication, and ownership of the program.

In response to the TAG members' concern, Mr. Sapkota said that regarding easy loan access to farmers, ASDP would like to sit together with Agriculture Development Bank (ADB) for the solution. He further bolstered that ASDP is strict on documentation and therefore encouraged strong documentation for loans and other related issues. Furthermore, he responded that the ASDP project is equally supportive towards agriculturists having expertise not only in the agriculture sector but also in the livestock sector. As a result, we are looking forward to appointing a new livestock officer (government based) by end of December. Mr. Sapkota bolstered his statement with the fact that "changing simple management practices in daily office business makes a big difference in lung run", hence the feelings of sustainability along with ownership are developed among us and targeted beneficiaries. Regarding issues of collaboration and coordination among government line agencies, Mr. Sapkota said that ASDP was always looking forward

to coordinating and sharing the deliverables with the concerned line organization. As a result, ASDP Management Information System (MIS) with defined username and password was handed over to all concerned government organizations in presence of then Respected Secretary Mr. Rajendra Prasad Mishra on just previous TAG Meeting, said Mr. Sapkota. Likewise, in response to the concern about utilization of trained human resources, he said that ASDP is open and supportive towards it, and if anyone is willing to work as a local resource person, he/she may be supported from Window 1 mechanism.

While the session was nearing its conclusion, Lekbeshi Municipality's Mayor, Mr. Gagan Singh Sunar, expressed appreciation for ASDP's tireless efforts to work in rural areas of Karnali Province; however, there was a moratorium due to the unavoidable covid-19 pandemic. Mr. Sunar further showed serious concern towards duplication of the activity, hence continuous coordination with relevant stakeholders is needed. Finally, the Respected Secretary Dr. Kishan Lal Bhatta said that ASDP has been playing a vital role in the development of the agricultural sector with special prioritization to landless farmers, farmers of ethnic minorities, women, adolescent girls, and youths. He further added that the project should be implemented effectively so that no targeted group is left out. "As the project is carried out over six years, the project is expected to sustainably improve income and food security of low-income farmers and people living in abject poverty", said Dr. Bhatta, as a result, the impression comes to targeted beneficiaries with feelings of ownership and transfer of skills.