Nepal People’s Call for Action
on
Climate Change,
Desertification and Land Degradation,
Universal Health Coverage,
Financing for Development and
The 2030 Agenda/SDGs
Nepal People’s Call for Action on Climate Change, Desertification and Land Degradation, and Universal Health Coverage, Financing for Development and The 2030 Agenda/SDGs

We, representatives of civil society Major Groups and Stakeholders in Nepal, convened the Nepal People’s Forum on Sustainable Development 2019 on 21-22 August 2019 in Kathmandu, with the theme “Accelerating Civil Society Engagement: Realizing the SDGs in Action”. Nepal People’s Forum was a process based event which was collectively initiated by 18 civil society Major Groups and Stakeholders including NGOs/CBOs, Youth, Women and Girls, Children, LGBTIQ, Migrant Workers, Scientific and Technological Community, Cooperatives, Workers and Trade Unions, Indigenous Peoples, Dalits, Madhesi, Farmers, Senior Citizens, Muslims, People Living with Disabilities (PWDs), People Living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA), and Local Authorities. The forum discussed on climate change, desertification, universal health coverage, financing for development and 2030 Agenda/SDGs through people’s perspective and in national context. The selected themes are particularly related with upcoming major UN events, taking place in September 2019.

We are bound together and committed to work in solidarity, and to strengthen the inter-linkages among rights, development and sustainability in relation to SDGs. We demand accountability from our governments, UN member states, and international institutions in the delivery of international commitments, made on these agendas.

Climate Change

The latest IPCC special report on global warming warned that unless the emission reduction targets are substantially strengthened, limiting warming to 1.5°C will remain unachievable. According to the Observed Climate Trend Analysis of Nepal (1971-2014) by Department of Hydrology and
Meteorology, all Nepal maximum temperature trend is significantly positive (0.056°C/yr) and all Nepal annual minimum temperature trend is also positive (0.002°C/yr). As climate change has already started affecting people and their livelihood in Nepal, vulnerable, marginalized and indigenous peoples as well as women are facing impacts of climate change and they are experiencing flood, landslides, glacier melt and intense drought exacerbate socio-economic challenges to life and livelihoods.

Climate change is already becoming an unexpected burden for Nepal as it is impacting the country’s economy. Extreme weather conditions are likely to lead to dire consequences and economic loss, estimated to be equivalent to 1.5 to 2 percent of annual GDP, and reaching to 2 to 3 percent of current GDP by mid-century.

For many, it has become an existential crisis. Impacts of climate change are increasingly being reported each day with extreme weather conditions leading to a number of fatalities and unprecedented impacts to whole communities. This year’s monsoon in Nepal caused massive floods and landslides leading to death of over 110 people and displacement of many others. While climate change has reached a level of planetary emergency, with many countries identifying it as a threat to human existence, government and political parties of Nepal have not been able to adequately respond to climate change.

Various efforts have been made at the global level in order to address global climate crisis, specifically, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and Sustainable Development Goals, among others. Nepal has demonstrated its commitment and solidarity to the global community by signing these important global agreements and also by focusing on their implementation at the national and sub-national level. It is appreciable that various policy initiatives have been taken and institutional arrangements made by Nepal in order to coordinate climate action at the national and sub-national levels. Nepal, which is in course of setting up institutional and policy arrangements for implementing federalism, has now started to contextualize the existing policies on climate change that are to be accomplished as soon as possible.

Although the global community has made various treaties and agreements resulting in formulation of policy and instruments at the national and sub-
national levels, there is a huge gap in achieving the objectives and targets set by such instruments. In this context, we, the concerned civil society Major Groups from Nepal, convened Nepal People’s Forum on Sustainable Development, discussed about the climate crisis and agreed on the following points including our commitments and key asks for the same.

• There is a need of people’s leadership to develop timely response mechanism for addressing the escalating crisis. NGOs, CBOs, CSOs, youths, women, trade unions, peasants, indigenous peoples, people with disability, and LGBTIQ communities working closely with the communities are struggling to support the most climate vulnerable, landless, marginalized, small holder’s communities of Nepal.

• Despite the immense challenges we face, there exists a hope from the fact that people already have indigenous knowledge and practices at the local level. Community led solutions and alternatives such as decentralized community-owned renewable energy, poverty reduction and sustainable initiatives, and agro-ecology contribute to harmonizing nature, guaranteeing human rights for all and building equitable, just and sustainable world. We commit to further strengthen and orient our programmes and interventions to the most vulnerable groups of the communities.

• We people from the most vulnerable community call up developed and industrialized nations to address the planetary crisis with existing real solutions practiced by people in the community, and replicate and scale up the climate action globally. Timely and adequate actions from the developed nations can ameliorate lives of millions of people suffering terrible impacts of climate change.

• We call up the Federal, Provincial and Local Governments of Nepal to initiate necessary policies and programmes in alignment with the spirit of the Constitution of Nepal to address climate change and take adequate steps to mainstream climate change into their annual and periodic planning. We ask all levels of government to engage all the multiple stakeholders and vulnerable and affected communities in designing and implementing these policies and programmes.

• Developed countries have failed to meet their legal and moral
responsibilities in addressing climate change. We call up the developed and industrialized nations to address the planetary crisis with existing real solutions practiced by people in the community, replicate and scale up the climate action globally. This action will contribute to address the root causes of the crisis and help to promote safe and dignified lives for all. Transformative and systemic changes are urgent to ensure this while also ensuring that adequate technical and financial resources and supports are provided to the Least Developed Countries including Nepal which is among the most vulnerable countries due to climate change.

• We appreciate the effort from the Secretary General of United Nations for organizing Climate Action Summit to strengthen global climate actions and push world leaders to raise global and national ambitions. We strongly urge the developed countries and world leaders to put equity and justice to the core of the solutions to climate change. The approaches for solution should encompass not only emission reductions but also financing, technology support and adaptation. Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) from the countries in the Paris agreement will not limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C by the end of the century. The target can only be met if governments take immediate actions in next couple of years to make significant reductions in emissions and increase the national targets more than they had submitted before Paris Climate Agreement.

• In addition, governments must take action now to phase out fossil fuel production subsidies and end public support for fossil fuel exploration. We also urge to ensure appropriate and adequate climate finance to deliver equitably and fairly to enable countries like Nepal to deal with the impacts of climate change, build climate resilient communities and to shift towards low carbon development pathways.

• We call Government of Nepal to declare climate emergency and promote people’s solutions.
Combatting Desertification and Land Degradation

Land degradation and desertification are global issues provoking social, economic and environmental problems which continue to pose serious challenges to the sustainable development of all countries, particularly affected by climate change. The land degradation and desertification, in different parts of the world, caused by soil erosion, floods, landslides, population growth, poor soil management practices, deforestation, insecurity in land tenure, and intrinsic characteristics of fragile soil which have further triggered climate change. Climate change is in turn likely to affect land degradation through rainfall intensity, number of drought events, soil erodibility, vegetative cover, and patterns of land use.

Nepal faces land degradation as one of the major environmental challenges. Main drivers of land degradation in Nepal are conversion of forest land into other uses which is increasing due to overharvesting of forest products, unsustainable firewood and fodder extraction, encroachments, forest fires and overgrazing. In addition, cultivation in marginal lands, unscientific cultivation practices, unmanaged urbanization, improper use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides has led to degradation of agricultural lands. Climate variability, including changes in monsoon pattern, greatly enhances the degradation of land in Nepal.

Global community has identified land degradation as one of the major environment challenges and established United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) to fight against the impact of desertification and land degradation and mitigate the effects of drought.

Nepal ratified the UNCCD on 13 January 1997 and, as a signatory, is committed to achieve land degradation neutrality by 2030 to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil. Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) aims to maintain or enhance land based natural capital and associated ecosystem functions and services i.e. at least no net loss of natural capital. Nepal prepared its LDN target in 2018 and aims to achieve the target as key to improving land, restore ecosystem services and improve livelihoods of the communities which are primarily dependent on agriculture and vulnerable to climate change. We draw attention of concerned national and international authorities to consider following points to address the issues of desertification and land degradation.
• Government of Nepal prepared its LDN target in 2018 in order to combat land degradation. Implementation plan of LDN is the key to LDN target achievement. Civil society organizations should act as watchdog for the implementation of LDN.

• Though Nepal is facing severe land degradation problems due to the impacts of land use change and climate change, it should be prevented from affecting lives of the people. So, awareness raising activities on land degradation and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification has to be conducted.

• Land degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change are now recognized as intertwined threats to multiple dimensions of human security and livelihood. These cannot be addressed individually; but climate change adaptation for instance can help fight land degradation. Therefore, holistic approach is necessary to achieve national needs under Paris Agreement, LDN/UNCCD process, CBD and SDGs.

• Land degradation has multi-sectorial and multi-level impacts. In order to address the diverse nature of impacts, role of concerned sectorial ministries and all tiers of government is important in achieving the LDN targets. So, roles and responsibilities have to be clearly defined for LDN implementation and combating desertification.

• In order to achieve the LDN targets, Nepal should immediately initiate the participatory and inclusive National Action Programme (NAP) on Land Degradation and Desertification formulation process.

• Promotion of sustainable land management and sustainable forest management is necessary to reduce land degradation, maintain land productivity, and reverse the adverse impacts of climate change.

• Building capacity of all stakeholders including government and non-government actors in research, advocacy and negotiation process of UNCCCD is essential.

• The Himalayas, which are considered water tower of Asia, are facing pressure from impacts of climate change. Chure, young mountains key to water supply in Tarai, is faced with the impact of land use change and climate change. Consequently, flat land in the south known as Tarai, food
basket of Nepal facing land fragmentation and extensive degradation in soil health. Special attention should be given to these three different geography which has significant role in the livelihood, economy and security of Nepalese people.

- Nepal has its own experience, traditional knowledge and practices to tackle land degradation. Community forestry, Chure conservation programme, and ecosystem based adaptation are some of the examples of initiatives taken in Nepal. Such practices should be shared and promoted in international platforms.

- Contributions of local communities, including indigenous communities, women, farmers, youth and differently able people to conserve land should be acknowledged.

- Women, children, elderly, poor, differently able, landless, small landholders and marginalized people are most vulnerable to impacts of land degradation. Only an effective participation of the vulnerable groups in process of combating land degradation can address their issues.

- Land use zoning, spatial planning, integrated landscape planning and proper land tenure system can achieve positive adaptation and mitigation outcomes of land degradation and climate change.

- Nepal has been investing large chunk of money to import synthetic fertilizer which is contributing to deteriorating soil health. So, government should invest to promote the manufacture of green/compost manure rather than to import.

- Similar to other developing countries, Nepal is lacking knowledge in desertification and land degradation. Knowledge generation should be the priority for government, CSOs and academia.

- Provisions of environmental impact assessment should be strictly implemented to reduce the impact of development activities on land. Trained and qualified human resources should be engaged in environmental monitoring.
Universal Health Coverage

Universal health coverage (UHC) is one of the targets set by the nations of the world when adopting the SDGs in 2015. UHC means that all people and communities can receive health services they need irrespective of their financial status. These health services include promotional, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health care services. The main objective of UHC is that it enables people from all walks of life to access the services and also ensures that the quality of the services is good enough to improve the health of the people who receive them.

It is reported that half of the world’s population still does not have full coverage of essential health services. Out of these, around 100 million people are forced to extreme poverty because they have to pay for health services out of their pocket expenses. Hence, to address the existing situation and limit their expenses, all the UN member states have agreed to achieve UHC by 2030 by protecting people from financial risks by providing affordable and quality health services. This is expected to reduce the risk of people from plunging into poverty and meeting health related targets.

UHC has a direct impact on people’s health and welfare. As health is an important cross-cutting policy issue, all the member states of UN have been focusing on realizing universal health coverage in their respective countries by addressing the need of providing all of its people with access to affordable and quality health care services. Access to affordable health care services enable people to be free of illnesses and diseases and make them more productive so that they become active contributors to their family and society they live in. Moreover, families can ensure their children go to school and learn. As UHC addresses equity, it promises to provide social protection for health to all individuals.

The civil society Major Groups and Stakeholders of Nepal strongly believe that health is a fundamental human right and hence the State has responsibility to provide quality health services to all without any discrimination. Historically, there had been different initiatives taken at global level. Starting from Alma Ata Declaration in 1978, Health for All by 2000, MDGs and to SDGs, the global efforts of these 37 years have not been able to provide equitable access to health services. Realizing this bare fact, UHC is an area of global concern.
The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights have made commitments to realize people’s right to health.

We believe that “Health” is not only a medical but also a socio-political issue. The root causes of ill health range from patriarchy, caste system, religious fundamentalism, poverty, exploitation and gender discrimination. Hence, we agreed on following points in order to improve “Universal Health Coverage”.

• We demand that all bi-lateral and multinational agencies including WHO be accountable to “People”.

• We call upon all concerned agencies to work collectively towards food sovereignty which is one of the major determinants of good health.

• We denounce the global trend of promoting privatization of health care which is supplemented by Insurance Scheme. This will help in commercialization of health services discriminating poor and marginalized people.

• We are also deeply concerned about the health of “migrant population” which is an outcome of war, conflict and political unrest.

• We are also concerned about the irrational use of digital technology.

• We call for the political commitment from national and international agencies and governments to prioritize universal health in their national plan and policies.

• We call upon governments to strengthen their health system to integrate universal health coverage in their mainstream agenda.

• We call upon governments to ensure that every individual has access to quality health services.

• We urge the governments to minimize the cost of medical expenses so that people from every background receive health services.

• We call upon governments to prioritize policies to increase the affordability and accessibility of medicines at reasonable cost.

• We urge that there should be unbiased financial resource mobilization
to ensure access to universal health coverage and for this we ask international donors’ commitment to provide financial assistance to LDCs.

- We request the governments to address food security so that every individual can have enough food and remain healthy.
- We call upon the governments to address every individual’s right to accessing clean drinking water and proper sanitation.
- We urge the governments to continuously address social disparity issues so that each man and woman does not have to face discrimination and thus enjoy equal rights.
- We believe that unless we address the issues of mental health, disability, and health of senior citizens, UHC will remain far from reality. Hence, we advocate the State to address these issues in equal footing.
- We call upon the civil society to work collectively in strengthening state health services.
- We are concerned about the protection and fulfilment of health rights of LGBTIQ. We are also concerned that while people in one part of the globe are suffering from under nutrition, people in another end are suffering from over nutrition.

**Financing for Development**

Being a Least Developed Country (LDC), Nepal needs a lot of financial resources for its development. Domestic resource mobilization, remittance, private investments, loans, international development cooperation etc. are the major sources of finance so far. But, country is facing several problems regarding financing for development. In fact, illicit financial flow is a major drain on resources and harms the mobilization of domestic resources to achieve people’s social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights and fulfilment of the redistributive needs of society. Commonly known as black money, grey economy or dirty money, their linkages to persistent intersecting inequalities as well as income, wealth, ethnic, age and gender inequalities make illicit financial flows one of the greatest challenges to financing for
development and human rights. Illicit financial flows, on the one hand, limits political freedoms such as the right to vote, information, participation, and access to justice as well as an independent judiciary. It also helps curtail economic rights such as right to decent work and wages. Social rights such as the right to education, health, food, water, sanitation, housing; right to a life of dignity, gender equality; and development agenda including SDGs, poverty, and inequality are other aspects affected badly by such financial flows. In addition, there are disproportionate impacts on women’s rights, due to unequal position of women in society, in developing countries like Nepal where the impact is higher.

We believe that illicit financial flows are generated from financial activities and practices that cause harm or are illegal, and are abusive in their use of instruments and agreements in the international financial and economic system. These include tax abuse, abusive tax incentives, unfair practices of bilateral or multilateral trade treaties, misuse of double tax treaties, odious debt, abusive use of mutual arbitration procedures, harmful tax practices, unjust investment agreements, money laundering, trade mis-invoicing, abusive transfer pricing, illicit money transfers, crime, bribery, illicit drug trade, corruption, and the ‘offshore’ trust industry. Moreover, dependence on foreign direct investment (FDI) and corporate income taxation in mobilizing domestic revenues in countries like Nepal poses a greater risk of tax, trade and investment-related illicit outflows. Capital outflows in the name of treatment and education abroad are other issues, which reduce available domestic capital for investment. The aforementioned statement and examples clearly portray the importance of optimum utilization of the domestic resources at first by curbing all the financial leakages from the country. On top of that, environment for private sector investment is necessary amidst limited public capital expenditure. We civil society Major Groups agreed on the following points in order to improve financing for development in the country.

- Being the least developed country, our capital expenditure also relies on foreign aid and soft loan. In such a scenario, through our budgetary allocation, it is almost impossible to achieve all the goals by 2030. Therefore, international communities’ full fledge support, and official development assistance (ODA) are necessary for achieving SDGs. Donor countries are asked to increase their aid beyond 0.7 percent of their gross
national income – and ensure that Least Developed Countries (LDCs) receive half of it.

- There is an urgent need to curb illicit financial flows (IFFs) for the immediate and progressive realization of human rights and the SDGs, not only in Nepal and South Asia, but also globally.

- Increase the share of private investment. Innovative business environment must be ensured to increase production. The distribution without sustainable production will lead us nowhere so priority should be given in production.

- We need effective financial control mechanism to control leakages of revenues within the country by ensuring good governance in all the government agencies. In doing so, government tax revenues increase as a result of the mobilization of domestic resources in financing for development will also increase.

- According to National Planning Commission estimate, we need 2025 billion rupees each year to achieve all the SDGs but there is 38 percent investment gap. Therefore, the budgetary gap should be reduced and necessary strategies should be adopted by the concerned authorities.

- While private investment is increasing, public investment is in declining order. So, increase in both public and private investment is necessary to achieving the SDG targets within the stipulated timeframe.

- Broaden the scope and definition of illicit financial flows by including legally ambiguous yet abusive tax practices such as avoidance, dodging, and evasion. In this regard, there is a need to include definitions of Illicit Financial Flows concerning indicators and targets under SDG 16 and 17, particularly for targets 16.4, 16.5, 16.7 and 17.1 since there is no internationally agreed definition of IFFs in these relevant targets and indicators. The UN needs to establish structures to define IFFs and necessary actions, in leadership of developing countries and acknowledging their experiences and concerns.

- Ensure that regional and national bodies such as United Nations Economic Commissions, national human rights commissions, and independent watchdogs, and institutions monitoring SDGs investigate
and monitor illicit financial flows and provide recommendations to stop any financial flows deemed harmful, illegal or illicit.

- All countries need to conduct spillover analysis of their corporate tax regime, tax treaties, and tax incentives among other elements of their international tax regime to ensure that they do not cause harm in terms of achieving SDGs and ensuring the enjoyment of human rights of citizens in other countries, as well as limiting the scope of other states in fulfilling their duties towards these and other international frameworks.

- It is necessary to substantially increase the space for collecting progressive taxes and other revenue through levying taxes on wealth and property transactions and assets, accompanied by fiscal justice measures on the expenditure side that fulfils the obligation of States to mobilize the maximum available resources for the realization of SDGs and human rights obligations, and especially economic and social rights, backed by concrete and prioritized resource mobilization plans.

- All revenue systems that collect taxes should be socially just. So, revenue mobilization should be focused on those with greater capacity to contribute while ensuring that tax systems are designed with the goal of gender equality and that they take into account and are responsive to the way tax policies can affect women’s disproportionate burden of unpaid care work.

- Greater efforts must be made at the global level to refine comparable data on tax abuse for example with gender-disaggregated data that shows the gender biases of certain tax systems and the gendered impact of tax abuses.

- Restore the integrity of democratic institutions through transparency reforms including public registries of all beneficiaries and direct owners of all companies and trusts (listed or private), and ensuring that all medium and large companies publish a country-wise reports of their financial and tax operations.

- No jurisdiction should enact ring-fenced capital gains tax, or corporate taxation regimes to create artificial financial services centers that ensue a fierce race to the bottom and encourage untaxed and undeclared non-resident and private assets that end up as illicit financial flows.
• Tax incentives and exemptions should be provided on the basis of economic policy, and should be provided in accountable and transparent manner to minimize preferential treatment and abusive practices through constant monitoring of activities and are subjected to a human rights assessment and a spillover analysis. Governments should also endeavour to exclude susceptible firms and sectors from being given tax-related concessions.

The 2030 Agenda/SDGs

The 2030 Agenda/Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the UN in September 2015 is very important for LDCs like Nepal. Even though 17 Goals and 169 targets are ambitious, they are progressive and human rights friendly and we believe they can transform our world, if we want to translate the goals into actions.

We appreciate that Nepal has already completed preparatory works for implementation of SDGs. National Planning Commission of Nepal came up with SDGs Status and Road Map (2016-2030); it has identified 479 national indicators and set milestones and targets to achieve by the end of 2030. We welcome formation of high level institutions at national level, mainstreaming SDGs in 15th National Development Plan (2019/20-2023/24) and codifying national budgets. Needs Assessment, Costing and Financing Strategy for SDGs tried to analyse needs of finance and its gaps. Nepal participated in Voluntary National Review (VNR) process in 2017. Government, UN agencies and civil society actors are involved in increasing awareness on SDGs. Recent laws formulated by the federal government to implement fundamental rights are instrumental to achieving SDGs.

Though different initiatives are going on in achieving SDGs; limited resources, capacity, technology and innovations are becoming barriers in realizing the SDGs. Identifying goal-specific programmes and cross-cutting interventions, and their implementation and monitoring are other challenges. Remittance-based economy, slow pace of development, increasing multiple inequalities, adverse impacts of climate change, natural disasters, environmental degradations, regional imbalance of development, poor public service delivery, lack of political accountability, rampant corruption and poor
governance are major challenges to achieving SDGs. Inadequate partnership of development actors, lack of awareness about the SDGs at local level and shrinking civic spaces are also the challenges.

Leave No One Behind, which is the core principle of the 2030 agenda, has not been fully internalized in public policies, plans and budgets. Older people, women and girls, LGBTIQ, Dalits, Madhesi, marginalized indigenous peoples, Muslims, people living in remote areas, people living with disability, victims of conflict and disasters, people with chronic diseases, and the poor people are still deprived. Despite having majority government, the country is not able to attract new investments. Process of localizing SDGs is not satisfactory. Business as usual, impunity, caste system, patriarchy, negative influence of neo-liberalization, and trade imbalance are deep-rooted systemic barriers for inclusive and just development in the country. Country has failed to establish disaggregated database system. There will be 5.45 million US dollar (Rs. 585 billion) financial gap every year to achieve SDGs. Policies, laws and programming are being formulated, but the process is not inclusive, open and participatory. Pace of development is slow, uneven, not inclusive and not environment friendly. Similarly, regional and global progress report of SDGs demonstrates that the progress of SDGs at regional and global levels are not satisfactory. The most urgent area for action is climate change, the impacts of which will be catastrophic and irreversible. Therefore, we agreed to the following actions in order to achieve the SDGs.

• We call upon all development actors including governments to own SDGs, fulfil their national and international commitments and demonstrate their actions in achieving SDGs. We affirm, there should be strong linkage between SDG roadmap, national plans and annual programme and budgets. We urge governments at all levels to include peace, human rights, environment and climate change education in the education system. Conflict sensitive development and maximizing inclusivity are essential to achieve sustained peace in the country.

• We call upon the Government to develop an inclusive macro-economic development framework and implement self-reliant development programmes to reduce all forms of poverty, inequalities and dependencies. We call upon all the actors to mobilize their resources to the poor, women, Dalits, PWDs, minorities and remote areas.
• We urge the government and parliament members to make better policies, laws and regulation to implement the provisions of the constitution in real sense and show their full commitment to Leave No One Behind principle. Governments must ensure meaningful participation of all rights holders in policy and legislative process at all levels, with a focus on the most marginalized. Governments and its agencies should be accountable for full-fledged implementation of the policies, laws, development plans and budgets.

• Rapid, sustainable and employment oriented economic growth; ensuring access to affordable and quality education and health services; building resilient settlements and cities; increasing productivity and production; ensuring adequate social protection; ensuring rule of law and access to justice; sustainable utilization of natural resources; tourism development; and people centric governance are the key actions to achieve SDGs in the country. We urge that heavy reform is necessary in planning and budgeting system and there should be strong monitoring and budget tracking system of development projects.

• We believe SDGs cannot be achieved without contributions of local and regional governments. We call upon the governments to give priority to localization of SDGs, and enhance capacities to mainstream SDGs in local and regional development policy and planning process. Local governments are kindly asked to develop partnership with all local actors including CSOs and business sector. We draw attention of all the local stakeholders for better implementation of SDGs.

• We call upon all the development actors to overcome the structural causes and systemic barriers of poverty, inequality and underdevelopment such as social, economic and political exclusions; gender inequality; corruption; poor governance; and lack of implementation of policies, plans and budgets.

• We call upon all the actors and governments to ensure at least 50 percent participation of women in political parties, parliaments and executive bodies. Further, make sure the adequate representation of women in courts and law enforcement bodies.

• We urge all the development actors to ensure gender equality and social
inclusion (GESI) in their policies and in the process of implementation, monitoring and evaluation. We ask all the actors to pay attention to intersectionality within the major groups.

- We urge the Government to take maximum advantage from the economic development of two neighbouring countries, maintain balanced relationship with them and take benefits from regional inter-governmental institutions. We urge the government to improve development diplomacy and promote multilateralism.

- It is the responsibility of governments to protect their people, and ensure resilient and sustainable development. We call upon Government and international communities to increase investment in preparedness and preventive measures to check the loss and damages from natural disasters and protect the victims from right based approach. We urge all the industrialized countries to support solve the problems created by global warming and climate change and fulfil their international commitments. Further, we call upon two neighbouring countries India and China to reduce emission of GHGs. On the other hand, we call upon communities and development actors to protect environment, biodiversity and start culture of living in harmony with nature. We want to draw the attention of all international development actors to be serious on climate actions and environment related goals (Goal 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15).

- We believe the Government is main responsible actor to achieving SDGs’ national targets, but we urge to break the silos and build culture of partnership. We urge institutional mechanisms to be proactive and more functional. We urge government to build functional partnership with civil society Major Groups, private sector, international communities, and province and local governments and clarify their roles. We urge governments to establish inclusive institutional mechanisms at all levels ensuring representation of eighteen major groups including youth, women, Dalits, indigenous senior citizens, PWDs, farmers, and workers, identified by Nepal People’s Forum on Sustainable Development.

- We urge the government to improve enabling environment for the civil society actors, academic society, think tanks, business society, media and international development partners. We ask province and local governments to establish mechanisms to institutionalize the SDGs
in their territories. We urge the Government to become a member of Open Government Partnership and to strengthen constitutional bodies especially National Human Rights Commission, Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority and other anti-corruption bodies. We urge civil society Major Groups and stakeholders to be more united, vibrant and innovative and strengthen their watchdog roles and hold the government and other actors accountable.

• We urge the federal government to build strong governance, coordination and cooperation system and practices among the ministries and build up cooperative partnership with local and province governments and end the confusions and misunderstanding with province governments in terms of delegation of power, authorities and resources. We believe effective localization of SDGs and roles of local governments are vital to achieve SDGs in the country. We urge governments to make their delivery more effective and people-cantered.

• We urge federal, province and local governments to strengthen their statistical system to generate disaggregated, up to date, reliable and accessible database system to monitor the progress of SDGs in the country. We call upon the government, UN Agencies and CSOs to establish a single data portal related to SDGs.

• We urge Governments to establish inclusive, participatory and robust monitoring system for effective implementation in three-tier governments and track the progress of SDGs in the country. We urge the parliaments, related parliamentary committees, National Human Rights Commission and other constitutional bodies and media to contribute to achieving SDGs.

• We urge the federal government to make the Voluntary National Review (VNR) process more open, transparent, inclusive and participatory. We need to give adequate time for VNR process. Also, we call upon local governments and province governments to practice voluntary reviews.

• We call upon UN to reform HLPF and regional forums and develop them as accountable mechanisms rather limiting to sharing the country progresses and experiences. We suggest making better use of regional forums such as Asia Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development;
focusing on interlinkages between goals; and ministerial declarations that capture the discussions of the annual forum and identify follow-up action. The second phase of SDGs implementation must show quality as well as seriousness in addressing the obstacles to achieving the SDGs. In addition to Goal 17, we urge the UN to review Goal 16 every year because it is driver, enabler and accelerator of all other goals.

• We urge the Governments to improve tax system, ensure progressive tax policies and expand domestic resource mobilization. OECD countries are urged to fulfil their commitments to provide 0.7 percent of GNI for developing countries and provide more resources to fulfil financial gaps to achieve national targets. Money being spent in the name of modernizing nuclear arsenals should be used to help end poverty, protect the climate, build global peace and achieve SDGs. We urge international community to end growing tensions between trade and investment regimes and human rights obligations, between tax avoidance and illicit financial flows and the vital role of public finance to massive relief for governance failures at the national and global levels. Similarly, we ask the UN to guarantee the trouble-free and equitable access of Nepal, as an LDC and LLDC, to international financial resources, development cooperation, trade and transit facility.

• We call upon UN and all the member states for renewed commitment and accelerated action to deliver the SDGs in time. A rights-based approach to sustainable development is an obligation of all member states, grounded in legally binding international human rights framework. International community should address the new threats to SDG implementation in line with its mandate to identify emerging issues, such as climate change, a reduced pace of economic growth, the threat of a further decline in the economy, and the “double-edged” sword of new technologies.

• Urgent actions are required to accelerate SDG implementation and accountability. Governments must tackle structural barriers, such as patriarchy, caste system, militarism, neoliberal capitalism, fundamentalism, authoritarianism, and climate change, and ensure that efforts benefit those who are systematically excluded.
Nepalese Youth Call for Action
on
Climate Change, Desertification and Land Degradation, and Universal
Health Coverage,
Financing for Development and The 2030 Agenda/SDGs

Preamble
We, Youth representatives of Nepal convened the Youth Forum on 21 August as the part of Nepal People’s Forum on Sustainable Development 2019 on 21-22 August 2019 at Kathmandu, Nepal. The forum had the theme “Accelerating Civil Society Engagement: Realizing SDGs in Action”. Nepal People’s Forum was a process based event where youth forum discussed on young people’s perspectives to climate change, desertification, universal health coverage, financing for development and 2030 Agenda/SDGs. The selected themes are particularly directly related with upcoming major UN events, taking place in September 2019.

We have gathered here to call for sustainable solutions, through this call to action, to empower young people and guarantee our inclusiveness by Accelerating and encouraging youth engagement in the country using an intersectional, non-discriminatory and participatory approach. These approaches also consist of building youth leadership and empowerment, addressing gender inequality, upholding human rights and providing unrestricted access to health, education, information and technology in a way that benefits young people - especially young girls, persons of diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions, and sexual characteristics (LGBTIQ); persons with all forms of disabilities; indigenous and religious minorities youth; young individuals from marginalized groups such as migrants and refugees.

This call to action echoes our voice, our concerns and our demands which we discussed over Youth Forum of Nepal Peoples Forum on Sustainable Development 2019. While we acknowledge that there have been some developments by our country Nepal in the Asia and the Pacific to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the recommendations presented in this call address the key gaps that leave out young people from the overall
progress and neglects their needs. We first thank for opening the space for voices of Youth CSOs to express our interest and concerns regarding young people, children and adolescents who are vulnerable in Nepal. In Nepal we are now getting the benefit of demographic evident by having the highest number of youth in the country, and proper attention on youth economic, social and political rights at national, province and local levels, which will be impactful to achieve 2030 agenda. We reiterate the need for a more ambitious roadmap to be jointly developed over the next few years and to elevate the ambition of the Sustainable Development Goals.

**Climate Change**

The United Nations System recognizes the key role of youth in tackling climate change and works closely with youth-led and youth-focused organizations around the world through the United Nations Joint Framework Initiative on Children, Youth and Climate Change (Joint Framework Initiative). Nepal is among the countries in the world that are most vulnerable to climate change. Effective resource mobilization is key aspect if the negative impacts of environmental degradation on livelihoods are to be minimized. Youth population in Nepal includes 54.5 percent of female and 15 percent of male population (Nepal census, 2011). According to data compiled by the Department of Foreign Employment, a total of 95,193 Nepalese left the country for overseas jobs from mid-July to mid-October in 2016, in which most of them were youths. Employment for young people is a critical vehicle for social, socio-economic and political inclusion. By investing in climate smart agriculture and clean energy technology, and by attracting young people in these enterprises, there is an opportunity to address the multiple challenges of youth unemployment, poverty and climate change. Young people have an increased level of awareness on many social and environmental problems of the world along with the willingness as well as potential to tackle these problems, and to take our societies towards a low-carbon and climate resilient future. The youths of today have a unique stake in the global dialogue on climate change – within the lifetime of this generation Earth’s climate will cease to be what it is known to be. The increasing severity of climate change and the increasing frequency of extreme weather
events will exacerbate the existing vulnerabilities of young people. It’s the youth of today who will be there 30 years later to face the dreadful impacts of climate change.

Youths account for nearly 40 percent of the world’s population. Youths are indispensable agents in driving forward the discourse and initiatives of climate action in the wider global community. Without global youth engagement, it is impossible to achieve the targets in climate action as well as the Paris Agreement and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). To address the impacts of existing climate crisis, various initiatives have been put forward. Nepal has formulated several relevant national plans and strategies like Climate Change Policy, National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), Local Adaptation Plans for Action (LAPA), Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCs) among others. Also, various institutional set up have been created to coordinate climate action at the national and sub- National levels. Nepal has ratified United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change- (UNFCCC), Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the agenda of Sustainable Development Goals, 2030 including others. The Government has created Climate Change Division in the Ministry of Forests and Environment to address climate change issues in Nepal. Activities on climate change mitigation and adaptation are being implemented in a coordinated manner and on a priority basis to increase resilience of vulnerable and risk prone communities. A climate change budget of NRs 350.67 billion was allocated for the fiscal year 2018/19 (UNDP, 2019). Sajha Yatayat, a public transportation cooperative making a joint investment of NRs. 450 million with Kathmandu and Lalitpur metropolitan cities and province government to introduce electric buses in the Kathmandu Valley.

The issues of climate change have now become the most critical concern of the modern world with climate change being widely regarded as the biggest threat to human civilization. Youths are now in the forefront of the global climate movement actively leading the discussions and influencing policies demanding climate actions. Nepal has suffered a loss of 2-3 percent of its GDP in agriculture and water resource management as a result of climate change. On the contrary, the country is required to spend an additional 1.5-2 percent of GDP on climate change. The major challenge to Nepal in climate change mitigation lies in the lack of political will for the effective transformation of policies into actions. Political leadership should mainstream climate change
issues in their agendas. Also, the engagement of youths in climate related planning and institutions through consultative process are still inadequate. The lack of access of youths in climate related issues and technologies are a major concern. There is a need for greater and ineffective coordination among youths, government agencies and CSOs in climate change issues. It is high time for Nepal’s young researchers, activists and youth movements to unite to take concrete, strategic and coordinated actions for influencing national policies and grassroots level climate movements in Nepal.

Call for Action

• We demand a platform for meaningful and inclusive participation of youths in planning and decision-making process in the context of climate change. Also, the government should ensure significant engagement of youths in achieving the targets of SDGs, the Paris Agreement as well as other commitments of the environmental conventions that Nepal is a party.

• At least 10 percent seats should be given for youths (below 29 years of age) in the policy making for Climate change.

• We urge the government to set up a dedicated fund for research grant in order to further engage young researchers in the field of climate change. Youths should be trained on climate smart technologies and provided with incentives to engage in research and green enterprises.

• We demand transparency in the disbursement of 80 percent budget that is allocated for the local levels as guided by Climate Change Policy of Nepal.

• We urge for the mandatory inclusion of frontline communities and marginalized voices in climate change negotiation and decision processes, both nationally and internationally.

• We strongly demand for a strong political commitment for the implementation of the terms of the Paris Agreement.

• There should be the development, implementation and maintenance of effective climate change awareness programmes for youths working at diverse sectors, government officials and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

• National Youth Council (NYC) should be sensitized in climate related
issues, activities and planning.

- There should be the provision of skilled environmental officer in each local government body to co-ordinate and safeguard environmental concerns in developmental activities.
- We demand media sensitization on climate change adaptation and mitigation approaches.
- We demand that the government to prioritize the promotion of clean energy for climate change mitigation. Also, we urge to carry developmental activities in minimum possible loss of forest and the proper access of EIA/IEE.
- There should be the engagement of youths in climate induced disasters risk management.
- Youths should be given responsibility in the monitoring and implementation of developmental activities to ensure climate justice.
- Government should elect Action for Climate Empowerment (ACE) National Focal Point of Nepal to ensure effective implementation of ACE in national scenario. Climate change in present academic curriculum is not sufficient and we demand training of teachers on climate change.

**Desertification and Land Degradation**

The land is the foundation of our societies and our primary partner for sustaining life on Earth. Depletion and erosion of fertile soil decrease the overall health of the land and land degradation leading to desertification. Desertification is a land degradation process where primarily water scarcity causes the land to lose moisture and fertile ecosystem required for the vegetation to grow. It starts as a small patch of land to huge hectares of unusable and infertile land which alarms food security and even bigger humanitarian crisis like mass migration, housing, and water scarcity. Every continent on the planet except Antarctica is vulnerable to desertification. This is the problem of our modern times and challenges that we must win for survival for our and future generations. The global dimension weighs desertification on social, economic, and on environmental grounds and we cannot turn a blind eye to this problem. Although Nepalese topography is vastly fertile, most of the Himalayan region is in the risk of desertification.
and cold deserts are habitual symptoms that affect most places here. Dolpa, Manang, Mustang, Upper Mustang, etc. are some of the areas in prime danger of desertification followed by many districts in the Himalayan belt as well as other parts of Terai where severe droughts have been reported. The climate is changing and the population is growing. It’s about time we start protecting land and combat desertification first hand.

When the trees and land cover that binds the soil is removed then it sets the tone for desertification. Deforestation is the primary cause of desertification followed by the scarcity of water bodies. Deforestation upsets hydrological cycle, increases flash floods, sedimentation and promotes soil erosion. The rising temperature invokes drought in dry seasons and drought destroys biomass of that region indiscriminately. It ultimately transforms that fertile soil into arid and desert at last. People destroy the land for settlement and cultivation purposes. The land where houses are built is locked and no vegetation will ever grow there. That is a waste of productive land and destruction of good soil. The overgrazing by cattle and overuse of land plus using the harmful chemical to increase production affects the health of the soil. Acidification, alkalinity, and siltation make matter worse for land as well. Mining, improper waste management leading to landfill and industrial pollution also degrade the overall health of the soil. Land grabbing is a big social issue infesting the good morale of people around the world to live freely on their land and protection of those land. Slope farming practice without terrace farming is a natural breeding ground for soil erosion. We have a finite number of fertile soil and losing more than it develops at a natural rate. The protection of soil is the way towards combating desertification.

The natural desertification is a slow process but many accelerators like deforestation, overuse of land, misuse of water bodies, rising global temperature, changing the climate, increasing population, etc. causes the rapid desertification process. It affects the agricultural sector the most and our country is not developing prominently from an agricultural innovation point of view. An effective model to combat desertification is categorized into three sections.

a) **Containment of the desert growth**: The containment of the desert and sand flow is important for the fight against desertification. The sand from desert entering fertile soil area dries the water and nutrients and sets the tone for arid landscape. By using different methodology like polylactic acid sand
barriers and natural tree barriers we can stop the growth of the desert. This has to be done effectively to stop the flow of sand indiscriminately.

**b) Revitalization of the desert:** Once we have contained the growth of the desert, we need to focus on revitalizing the desert areas. Natural conversion of sand into fertile is hard to obtain. A Chinese research team has developed a special kind of paste when mixed with soil and water turns into a soil that can support vegetation. The technology uses similar specialties of the cell wall of the cell to hold water nutrients in the sand’s nanoparticles. The technology is tested and proved in China’s fight against desertification. The availability of similar technologies around the world is almost nonexistent. The Nepalese government should spend more on Research and Development (R&D) in the fields of science and technology to adopt and invent similar machinery to combat desertification. The sprawling growth of vegetation in the desert could lead to other financial aspects.

**c) Revenue generation:** After the vegetation starts to grow in the desert region, local farmers can grow cash crops and fruits in that region to increase their agricultural yield. This helps to fight against food scarcity and helps to restore hydrological bodies as well in that region. The people can turn that desert area into tourist destinations for revenue generations too after its rehabilitation. The aspect of combating desertification can prosper better solutions if measures are correct and promptly initiated to protect the fertile land.

**Some Challenges and Gaps**

**a) Overlapping Power, Authority and Jurisdiction:** The National political structure is new and decentralization of power is vague practice to predict the desired outcome. There is no clear demarcation regarding the power, authority, and jurisdiction among the different levels of the government regarding agriculture and its development. The protection of environmental health is an issue that ministries don’t work in accordance as per the emergency need for its protection. Desertification is not addressed as a matter of prime importance and policies suitable for combating desertification is lesser in existence and fewer in implementation.

**b) Deforestation:** We consume a greater part of biomass like woods, plants, bio-gas and living animals for survival. Increased population forces us to use more of those resources. The natural recycle rate of those resources are
smaller than their consumption. While fighting for more resources, we end up clearing a huge amount of forest areas making it vulnerable for flash floods, soil erosion, and sedimentation. Deforestation accelerates the rapid transformation of fertile land into arid land. And ultimately into huge strips of deserts. The balance between need and demand are hard to reach when government indiscriminately make policies without proper researches.

c) **Malicious Farming Practices**: Use of harmful chemicals on the land for increased agricultural yield is a major factor contributing to the degradation of soil quality. The slope farming where the land is uncovered with a natural cover like plant bodies is vulnerable to soil erosions, sedimentation, and siltation. The overuse of chemicals increases acidification and alkalinity of land. Overusing of land beyond its natural capacity destroys land quality.

d) **Impractical Urban Planning**: The political instability in the breeding grounds for haphazard town planning. The land mafia and their land-grabbing practices left many good parts of fertile land transformed into big buildings. The city hence build was haphazardly made without any afterthoughts regarding environmental aspect. The land beneath the constructed models are forever locked and their productivity is lost. The underground water sources dry up when the excavation of water is rapid than its recharge rate. Lack of proper water treatment plant leads to wastage of water potential.

e) **Lack of proper Waste Management System and Industrial Pollutions**: There is dire need of a proper waste management system in the densely populated areas as well as rural communities in Nepal. The city pollutes nearby stream with its sewer treatment. The aqua life of that water is destroyed and it cannot provide nutrients for plants to grow. The industrial waste is hard to segregate and it will be harder for land to purify it naturally. The spread of harmful chemicals in streams also affect the good health of fertile soils nearby. The physical waste like plastic and electric waste that end up in landfill will degrade soil quality nearby drastically.

f) **Lack of categorical identification of threat to special communities**: The government should dispense its resources to identify the threat of desertification in different topography and communities living there. The lack of major threatened communities, we are unable to converge our effort to combat it.

g) **Lack of proper research data while making policies**: The research conducted to identify indicators of desertification are rare and data taken are...
measured factoring bigger density date in macroscopic level don’t provide the full picture. The microscopic and detailed research about adequate land topography of Nepal is unavailable and thus made policies are ineffective.

**h) Exclusion of Youth during policy formation:** The government should include youth and value their perspective while drafting legislation about environmental protection. Exclusion of youth demotivates them to further invest their career in the agricultural field. The government may distribute subsidies, but there are no proper knowledge and tools to fulfill the agricultural dream of the nation.

**i) Lack of effort from private sectors:** The private sector should heavily think about preserving nature and protecting it by respecting their raw materials and pollutions. Their collaboration for the protection of the environment in the society cannot be neglected.

**Call for Action**

- The government should focus on defining the roles and responsibilities of governmental bodies and a clear path for radical programmes to kindle. Decentralized power with the proper flow of authority and skilled policymakers can contribute more to fight against desertification. Identification of desertification as of prime importance can be a beginning of greater change.

- The control of deforestation can give us a greater edge at winning the fight against desertification. Afforestation can stop flash floods, sedimentations, siltation, and soil erosions. The government should establish and maintain more community forest to fulfill the needs of the general population and maintain a healthy forest in other protected places. National mass tree plantation programmes can bring youths together and achieve the goal of afforestation.

- The government should focus on introducing fierce regulations regarding pesticide distribution and production. The land quality check should be mandatory and dispense educational classes to restore proper health of the soil. Terrace farming can prevent soil erosion keeping soil nutrients intact. Farmers should respect the natural plantation cycle to maintain nutrients of the soil.

- The government should search for better ideas to house a larger population and the proper way to feed them. The housing plans should
respect the natural green presence in the modern cities and the proper way to recharge water levels beneath them. Self-sustainable modern cities should be our prime goal. Working with other interagency to address this issue is challenging but doable.

• The human settlement should consider a proper waste management system. Proper waste management system saves water source and nearby land from becoming polluted. The recycled water can be used to drink, water plants, maintain hydrologic water units, etc. while contributing the environmental development goals.

• Researching the most vulnerable places from desertification, we can sanction our larger effort in mitigating it while maintaining the overall help in needed places.

• The good research, data compilation and better environmental studies set the stage for the formation of good policies and accomplishments of those goals easier. The government should spend a hefty amount of its GDP on Research and Development of the agricultural sector. We need sustainable tools to fight modern and fierce problems like desertification. Scholarships and grants to both private and governmental bodies will promote innovations and ideas.

• The governmental bodies should include some effective system of including youth in policy-making like delegating special seat. The voice of youth and their participation is crucial to environmental protection. The government should exploit the potential of youths and direct their energy by respecting their perspective on desertification.

• The government should with INGOs/NGOs, private sectors, individual entities and grassroots organization to reflect a collaborative approach to problem-solving. The coalition parties should respect their working mechanism and promote innovative ideas and inventions.

• We have talked about the alliance of various governments and youths in nation-building and protecting the environment. We have sung from the hymnbook about shared values and bond of friendship, but friendship’s nothing if it’s in name only. It has to be backed by actions and political will. The youth needs government now more than ever before and engagement from civil society should be appreciated by the government on higher standards. People should acknowledge the urgency of the fight
against desertification and the government should be willing to invest in scientific methods to tackle desertification. Fight against desertification is both psychological and scientific warfare. We should work together to fulfill the goal of ‘land degradation neutral world’.

**Universal Health Coverage**

Where someone lives should never determine if they live. Although illness is universal, healthcare isn’t. On the eve of UN high level meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UHC), the need to reflect on how successful Nepal has been in achieving UHC, including participation of young people in UHC, becomes relevant now more than ever.

Universal health coverage based on the WHO constitution of 1948, means that all people and communities can use the promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services they need, of sufficient quality to be effective, while also ensuring that the use of these services does not expose the user to financial hardship. This definition of UHC embodies three related objectives: Equity in access to health services, quality of health services and protection against financial risk. UHC is firmly based on the WHO constitution of 1948 and on the Health for All agenda set by the Alma Ata declaration in 1978. Principle of UHC lies in reaching as widely as possible, and cuts across all of the health-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

When talking about achieving universal health coverage and reaching as widely as possible, young people are the indispensable agents. Young people being the most dynamic segment of the population, it is impossible to achieve UHC without considering the critical role and special needs they possess in continuum of childhood, adolescencethood, youth and adulthood. In a country with 40.3 percent people\textsuperscript{[1]}, and the demographic bonus predicted to exist only for another 50 years, we are at a crossroad where tapping the potential of youth bulge is not only pivotal but also mandatory. Today’s young people will graduate alongside SDGs, and they are the implementers of national and international commitments being done today. Youth behaviors are dynamic, that might increase or prevent health risk behaviors early on life, and so focusing on young people would mean small investments go a long way.

Beyond the different constraints, Nepal has achieved satisfactory public
health service coverage (>85 percent child vaccine coverage, >50 percent skilled birth attendance and significant reduction in communicable diseases). The prioritization of Universal Health Coverage is one of the remarkable outcomes of the 2018/19 health budget of Nepal. The budget increased healthcare expenditure by NPR 24.64 billion (US$ 228 million). Still, the proportion of current health funding is significantly lower than the government’s own target to attain 8 percent of the national budget for health expenditure, and the World Health Organization’s (WHO) recommendation of general government health expenditure of at least 5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). More than 2/3rd of the population depend on out of pocket expenditure. This expenditure is even more burdensome for young people, who have limited access to income source but higher expenditures than other segment of the population. Free health care services are available through different tiers of the health system in Nepal, however the quality of the service is questionable. The people still face challenges such as lack of essential medicines in the health institutions, absence of health workers, lack of information or counselling on free health care services. Reaching the service site is already a challenge for young people due to time and cost related challenges, and when the behavior of the service provider is judgemental or quality of care is questionable, their trust in health system is further curbed.

Young people, often with limited access to resources and information, are further marginalized when it comes to accessing health services. They pose different challenges for the health-care system than children and adults, due to their rapidly evolving physical, intellectual and emotional development. Mortality for those aged 10–19 years is now greater than mortality in children aged 1–10 years. It is important to recognize that even within young people, there is diversity in gender, geography, ethnicity, class, physical ability, etc. and all these have further special needs. For eg: sexual and reproductive health needs of people with disability is not recognized, sexual and gender minorities cannot access health services due to stigma and judgmental behavior of the service providers.

37 percent of girls marry before age 18 in Nepal and 10 percent before they turn 15, keeping them out of Comprehensive Sexuality Education lessons taught at school, and making them vulnerable to multiple sexual and reproductive health problems, ranging from early and unwanted pregnancies,
adolescent child bearing, sexually transmitted infections, maternal mortality. 40 percent of married women aged 15-19 years of age have an unmet need for family planning. Around 60 percent abortions are taking place unsafely, and safe abortion services are further stigmatized for young unmarried females. Menstruation, though being a natural phenomenon, girls and women across Nepal face discrimination for five or more days of their period every month. 19.4 percent of women and girls, half of them in mid and far western part of Nepal, experience Chhaupadi, a social practice of banishing menstruating girls and women to cowshed.

It has been estimated that mental illness attributes to 18 percent of Non-communicable diseases (NCD) and suicide has been noted to be a key public health concern especially among women of reproductive age. NCDs account for 39 percent of the total country’s disease burden, and nearly half of all deaths. Cardiovascular Disease is common in younger age groups than adults. According to the pilot study of national mental health survey, 11.2 percent of adolescents currently had any form of mental disorders. P

Over one-third (36 percent) of children under five are stunted, higher numbers being found in rural areas, poorest households. Overall, 10 percent of children are wasted while 27 percent of children are underweight. On the other end of the spectrum, the number of obese population has increased over the years, from 9 percent in 2006 to 22 percent in 2016. Overall 17 percent of men and women are thin while 22 percent of women and 17 percent of men are obese.

Call for Action

This paper calls on all relevant stakeholders, that include Government bodies such as Ministry of Health and Population, National Youth Council, Ministry of Youth and other bodies to ensure that young people have access to UHC, and relevant development actors such as youth advocates and activists, youth led and serving CSOs, and young people to support the Government in doing so:

• Ensure the fundamental rights to health of every citizen by reaffirming to constitutional commitments and international commitments such as UHC.

• Identify that young people have special needs to achieve UHC. Recognize the diversity of age, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, physical ability, ethnicity, locality, HIV status etc. within young
people. Devise interventions that tackle these special needs so that no young person is left out of health services.

- Promote access to age appropriate comprehensive sexuality education to all the in-school and out of school young people, as entry point to enhancing their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

- Upgrade all the health service centers as youth friendly health service sites, that provides quality, stigma free information and services; and enhance the capacity of the health profession to provide stigma and judgement free abortion and family planning services among others, to all population including people with disability and sexual and gender minorities.

- Recognize that interventions for young people cannot be achieved without meaningful participation of young people themselves. All the policies, plans and activities for young people should not only be youth beneficial but youth responsive.

- Promote innovation in health access through youth friendly interventions such as health, telehealth, mobile clinics, youth information centers etc. so that young people who have limited access to health services are also benefited.

- Recognize that health is dynamic, and so should be the health system. Young people are the most dynamic, and youth is the age of entry for health system. It is important to keep track of changing behaviors among young people so that interventions for prevention is prioritized and the disease burden of emerging and reemerging diseases can be reduced. Devise programmes that build good lifestyle habits such as banning junk food in schools, compulsion in engagement in some sort of physical activity in order to tackle the growing burden of NCD.

- Inadequate and unupdated youth segregated data has hampered evidence based decision making. Strengthen national system to collect and disseminate youth segregated health data and conduct periodic national youth surveys.

- Since out of pocket expenditure is very high in Nepal, the focus of the interventions should be preventive and promotive rather than curative. Since youth is the age of forming health behaviors, investing in young
people for behavior change communication is important.

- Interventions targeted at young people will become a priority only if the national budget on health is increased. Increase the national budget and spending on health to meet the WHO guidelines, through earmarked tax on health deteriorating sales like tobacco and alcohol.

**Financing For Development**

National Planning Commission in its report for financing the SDGs report that the entire fund required during the whole of SDG period would be Rs. 2,025 billons per year which is about 48 percent of the GDP in average. Moreover, the public sector is expected to contribute up to 55 percent of the total investment in SDG with the highest proportion going to poverty alleviation. Financing gaps have been recognized in many goals such as no poverty and infrastructure development. The average financing gap is calculated by the NPC at Rs. 585 billion per year from 2016 to 2030. Even as such, investment gap/need per year in average in Transport, Industry and ICT remains at 30.3 percent, Education 15 percent and poverty at 7.5 percent, climate change 1.2 percent.

**Call For Action**

- Need to align the fiscal policy with the national and overall SDGs for its achievement. Unless a feasible and rational alignment is made, achieving SDGs become challenging. Further, the commitments that have been made by National Planning Commission as well as other governmental agencies in financing the SDGs need to be brought into action.

- Financing for a sectoral area, e.g.: poverty requires interest subsidy for credit to small and medium enterprises expected to generate jobs and employment, area-based targeted infrastructure and social mobilization activities, prevention and mitigation of disasters that could trigger poverty and social protection (social insurance, social assistance, labor market supports, and employment-related cash transfers) for 80 percent of the population by 2030. However, as we can notice the interventions are interlinked to overall SDG goals.

- Private sector needs to work towards value creation and addition to benefit the larger sections of the society. Need for investment in value
addition activities helps in job creation for youths and enterprise development. There seems to be a need to have a shift from corporate social responsibility to ‘value addition’.

• Domestic tax avoidance and evasion need to be brought into check. Awareness programmes, education, outreach can help in voluntary compliance.

• Even though tax system in Nepal include progressive taxation in income as well as VAT system, the revenue has to be channeled effectively and efficiently towards targeted development agendas.

• Government needs to take into account the inequalities, including gender inequalities, in fiscal policy and public financial management. The progressive system of taxation and tracking expenditures are important steps in recognizing the goals.

• Propriety audit should be brought into use effectively. Public money should not be utilized for the benefit of a particular person or section of a community and should not be more than the occasion would demand. Should consider public interest, financial discipline and expenditures need to be justified against the reasonable expenditure heads.

• Local governments need to be encouraged to mobilize higher levels of resources to finance the SDGs. In doing so, new avenues of revenue generation need to be identified and strengthened. Own source revenue (OSR) need to be increased through increasing capacity in effective revenue administration system, revisiting tax rates and revising them, improving local tax collecting systems and exploring alternative avenues of OSR.

• Role of co-operatives to be recognized and are to be encouraged in channeling their savings towards investment in SDGs and indirectly helping achieve SDG goals through women empowerment, enhancing livelihood strategies, encouraging income generating activities.

• Various models of Public Private Partnership need to be encouraged such as BOOT (Build-Operate-Own-Transfer) in order to achieve the development goals in an alternative manner with the investment of private sectors.

• Even though the current budget (fiscal policy) advocates for equal pay for equal jobs and revision in minimum wage which are important for
achieving SDGs, but without increment in production and effective and efficient utilization of factors of production, wage increment would not be a long-term solution. In such a case, we call upon the federal, provincial and local governments to have plans for enhancing local, provincial and national production keeping in mind the concept of sustainable development (Equity, Environment and Economy). Shifting to less energy-intensive industries, clean fuel and technology can reduce carbon-intensive production.

• Honesty, transparency, fairness and integrity at all levels of tax administration as proposed and promised by the fiscal policy need to be adhered to. Governments at all levels should be called into accountability. Stewardship needs to be given due prominence.

• Nepal needs to look for options such as debt swaps for climate change mitigation and adaptation. Such a scenario would help reduce the debt risks help debt management for financial management towards development. Further, we call on developed and OECD nations to assist in investing into such funds and helping debt swaps recognizing the Right Based Approach to Development for countries like Nepal.

• We call on the government to strengthen its efforts on attracting and increasing FDI and to invest on such sectors which are challenging for sustainable development along with emphasis on sustainable production and consumption patterns. Further, there would be important policy revisions to make Nepal an investment friendly country.

• Local governments need to encourage willingness to pay (User payment) in part of sourcing own revenue for financing development. It would further help in claiming ownership. Community forest is a good example, handing over resources to the local community for sustainable use. Even though capital infrastructures need to be made by the Central or provincial government, at least expenditures required for maintenance and upgradation or repair need to be financed by local governments. The annual cost for the management of community forestry is estimated to be about Rs 119,000 for each community forest user’s group. Of the total costs, about 64 percent is shared by forest user’s group households in the form of labor. The donor contributed about 16 percent, and the Government shared about 13 percent of the total costs (Bhattarai 2011).
• One of the best feasible areas of revenue generation is identifying and developing areas of tourism in local sectors.

• Many youths are now interested towards entrepreneurship which will ultimately help achieve development goals from empowerment, to providing employment opportunities, raising livelihood standards. But, there must be a favorable investment environment as well as providing access to establish such sole proprietorship firms, the firms need to be made aware of taking proper care of the natural environment.

• Currently, Nepal allocates 4.52 percent of the total budget to the directly climate-related projects, which is about 2.3 percent of the GDP of the year. The cost estimates show that average annual investment required for climate change adaptation and mitigation would be Rs 21.1 billion for 2016-19, increasing to Rs 33.2 billion for 2026-30.

• We call on the signatories of Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing For Development to stand true to the commitments they have made regarding how effectively financing can be done through various ways – domestic public resources, domestic and international private business and finance, international development cooperation, international trade as an engine for development, debt and debt sustainability, addressing systemic issues and science, technology, innovation and capacity building. We call on the developed countries to achieve the target of 0.7 percent of ODA/GNI to least developed countries.

The 2030 Agenda/SDGs

It is without question that the Millennium development goals set by the UN were successful, but by their completion in 2015, there was still much to be done. As a result, an agreement was made to continue the development through the SDGs over a period of 15 years, with 17 global goals and 169 targets. These new targets may be ambitious, but youth believes their progressive nature will create momentum for human rights and - most importantly, can be used to bring about change. The SDGs can be our tool to transform our societies into peaceful, inclusive and just places, where equality and sustainability prevail. In short, the Nepal all of us in this room wish to create.
Nepal has taken many important steps in order to implement the SDGs. As we all know, the status of SDGs in Nepal were identified by the National Planning Commission of Nepal, who established 489 national indicators and targets. The SDGs have been continuously mainstreamed in National governments through the 15th National Development plan. Initiatives like these are necessary, but government must also bring new laws into existence. We believe this is a vital step of the implementation of the SDGs. Initiatives by groups like women and girls, marginalized people, indigenous people, people with disabilities are also important factors. Not to mention youth’s own initiatives in Nepal.

But, despite the efforts made, the Nepalese government acknowledges that challenges remain in order to achieve the SDGs by the end of 2030. The absence of available data makes it difficult to know what to prioritize. Policies prevent impoverished communities from growing, slowing down development and increasing inequality. The impacts of climate change will continue to affect the way we live with more recurring natural disasters and imbalance of development. Improvement in Governance system must be made as corruption, political accountability and lack of awareness of the SDGs at local level are obstacles for the development of the SDGs. We believe “If you do not know your rights, improving your life can be a challenge”.

Everyone cannot do everything, but youth believes that everyone can do something. Youth aims to create, observe and review the progress of the SDGs while holding our government accountable. Young people should take an active part in this. We believe young people can act as:

Communicators by raising their voices and act as a force for change in their communities. Youth have an opportunity to affect their future by influencing their local stakeholders. This opportunity could also be seen as a responsibility towards coming generations to make the world a better place - something we all should try to do.

Critical thinkers through questioning the status quo and challenging societal norms and expectations. Progress is brought about by innovation and creativity and these are qualities that we believe thrive among youth. Critical thinking enables young people to make informed decisions about their lives and helps them make better choices.

Leaders after all, we are the future leaders, whether you like it or not! But
we can also strive to be leaders in our youth. Through exercising active citizenship, we can make the SDGs progress more rapidly. There is strength in numbers and by becoming allies, we can become a force to be reckoned. We encourage youth to form teams where they feel comfortable to act, develop and lead in order to make the world a better place.

Call for action

- Constant revision of Comprehensive Sexuality Education curriculum in coordination with organization and stakeholders including young people from diverse backgrounds (young people with diverse sexual orientation and gender identities, children and young people living with HIV and young people with disabilities). Develop proper monitoring framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education and incorporate it into the government’s existing school monitoring framework.

- Ensure quality, stigma-free youth-friendly safe abortion services through progressive regulations and directives on safe abortion both at the federal and provincial level with emphasis on strengthening youth-friendly component along with regular monitoring and evaluation of service providers.

- Government should ensure the meaningful participation of young people as one of the crucial stakeholders in policy formulation and amendment. Young peoples' contribution in the process should be valued and their tokenistic participation should be discouraged.

- Gender mainstreaming in the government programmes is vital to ensure gender equality at all levels of society. Therefore, we urge the government to implement these processes.

- We urge the government to focus on skills development of young people and to ensure decent work and career opportunities. Government should monitor employment trends to ensure employment availability and avoid mismatches on skills.

- We call on the Government to develop frameworks and implement initiatives to reduce poverty and inequality, improve the tax system, and expand the domestic resource mobilization.

- The government should create an enabling environment where partnership among the private sector, major group as well as international development partners can grow. We also call on the civil society to unite
our efforts and together hold the government accountable.

- We call on the Government to implement robust monitoring systems to track and evaluate the progress of SDG and the efficacy of their implementation.

- To reach out the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, effort must be carried out in micro prospective way not in macro-prospective way.

- Along with vertical and horizontal coordination, diagonal integration (i.e. coordination between private sector/ civil society/ NGO) should be carried out.

- The concept of National Data Profile should be implemented into action where all local and provincial data must be kept.
Statement of Women Major Group
A Call for Action
on
Climate Change, Desertification, Universal Health Coverage, Financing for Development & Sustainable Development Goals

The Women’s Major Group (WMG) was created at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where governments recognized ‘Women’ as one of the nine important groups in society for achieving sustainable development. The WMG is an official participant in the United Nations processes on Sustainable Development.

At the eve of the September SDGs Summit 2019, a team conceptualized an event ‘National People Forum for Sustainable Development in Nepal’ and was agreed to organize it on 21-22 August 2019 in the people’s gathering held at the RRN’s hall on 19 July 2019. BBC and Lumanti jointly took the responsibility of organizing women’s major group’s meeting.

Women Major Group recognizes the need for political will, skill and inclusive structure and system in Nepal so as to enable the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) truly benefit the marginalized and systematically excluded people. Hence, we1 call for the action to combat desertification and climate change, address health issues universally, finance for gender equality and implement programmes GESI responsively for achieving SDGs.

First and foremost, it urges to apply multi-stakeholders’ approach by creating an inclusive people forum comprised of all genders from all major groups at all levels to implement SDGs effectively, efficiently and GESI responsively in coordination, cooperation and collaboration of all.

To combat desertification and climate change we ask the following:

• Acknowledge the contribution, knowledge, skills and good practices and paid and unpaid work of indigenous women and other women, the custodian of nature and nurturer and ensure their participation, position, and benefits in climate and de-desertification action;

1 of all ages, living in all areas (plain to mountains), with different abilities, working in different sectors (formal and informal), of various class, castes, creed, ethnicities, indigenous, migrants and refugees, single and unmarried having diverse sexual orientations, gender identities (SOGI)
• Develop and implementation of Gender-responsive, Climate resilience and desertification prevention policies and programme with the inclusive participation of women throughout.

• Capacities of women and girls and mobilize female youth as Climate Change Desertification Prevention Champions at all levels from grass-roots to global level.

• Ensure women’s access and control over natural resources (i.e., water, land and forest) and the benefits derived from the use of these resources in order for protection and promotion and consumption in a sustainable manner.

• Collect, and use of age and gender-disaggregated data to achieve strong gender equality outcomes everywhere.

To addressing health issues universally (Universal Health Coverage) we ask the following:

• Acknowledge the role of women in human health and wellbeing. Women are drivers of health and agents of change, in addition to being consumers of health services. Recognize the women as 70 percent of the health workforce, in delivery of UHC.

• Priorities the health needs of the most marginalized women, girls and SOGI in UHC design and delivery, taking an intersectional, rights-based and life cycle approaches to leaving no one behind (including youth, ethnicity, caste and class, disability, older women and any other marginalized identity according to social context) to ensure continuum of quality care (CQC) throughout their lifetime.

• Implement the commitment in the Astana Declaration 1 to ‘Primary health care and health services that are high quality, safe, comprehensive, integrated, accessible, available and affordable for everyone and everywhere, provided with compassion, respect and dignity by health professionals who are well-trained, skilled, motivated and committed;’ since this will facilitate access for the most marginalized women and girls.

• Adopt a gender transformative approach to the design, delivery and leadership of UHC by ensuring an equal number and their equal
participation in UHC decision making at all levels from grassroots to
global, and
• Endorse the PMNCH Call to Action “Sexual and reproductive health and
rights: An essential element to achieving universal health coverage”.

To financing for gender equality (Financing for Development), we ask the
following:
• Adopt a gender-equitable macroeconomic policy to achieve gender
equality outcomes, create supportive macroeconomic environment
for women, achieve gender-equitable livelihoods that are required for
sustainable development
• Direct public investment at expenditures that reduce women’s care
burden and allow for care to be more equitably shared by the state and
men and women.
• Develop transparent systems to track public allocations for gender
equality and women’s empowerment (SDG 5c)
• Ensure Gender -Transformative Financing for GESI by allocating
sufficient resources to women’s rights groups and WCSOs who work for
transformation of gender discrimination and gender inequality to reach
the unreached girls and women to boost their agency, and to enhance
WCSOs’ capacity and visibility as actors.
• Create gender equality fund and make a Gender-Responsive Budgeting
(GRB) system mandatory at all levels and in all sectors, including CSOs.
Make certain percentage of fund allocation mandatory for women CSOs’
work.
• Capacitate female youth in developing gender-responsive macroeconomic
policy, tax policy, monetary policies so as to increase number of female
professionals in this area.

To implement the 2030 Agenda and SDGs effectively, efficiently and GESI
responsively in cooperation coordination, and collaboration of all, we ask
the following:
• Increase public awareness and cultivate ownership amongst all major
groups/constituencies and stakeholders vertically and horizontally across
the country.
• Form inclusive SDGs implementation mechanisms and platforms securing meaningful and equal participation of women Major Group and all other major groups at all levels by following the multi-stakeholder approach of the Agenda 2030.

• Adopt the intersectional, rights-based approach in SDGs implementation throughout the level to ensure reaching the furthest behind first.

• Build capacity of all including private sector on GESI- responsive implementation of programme in line with the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.

• Include major groups in the government delegation to the UN and other commissions i.e., HLPF and Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).
Organizers of Nepal Peoples’ Forum on Sustainable Development 2019

1. Action Aid Nepal
2. Action Works Nepal
3. Angalo
4. Asia Indigenous International Network
5. Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON)
6. Association for Dalit Women’s Advancement of Nepal
7. Association of District Coordination Committees Nepal (ADCCN)
8. Beyond Beijing Committee
9. Blue Diamond Society
10. Campaign for Human Rights and Social Transformation (CAHURAST)
11. CARE International Nepal
12. Caritas Nepal
13. Clean Energy Nepal
14. Dalit NGOs Federation
15. Dalit Welfare Organization
16. Dalit Youth Alliance
17. Development Exchange Centre Nepal
18. Development Project Service Centre (DEPROSC-Nepal)
19. Dhimal Women Forum
20. Digo Bikas Institute
21. Disaster Management Network Nepal
22. Earth Day Network
23. FOCUS-Nepal
24. Freedom Forum
25. GoGo Foundation
26. Housing Recovery and Reconstruction Platform (HRRP)
27. INHURED International
28. Jagriti Child and Youth Concern Nepal (JCYCN)
29. Joint Trade Union Coordination Centre (JTUCC)
30. Kathmandu University School of Education
31. Lumanti Support Group for Shelter
32. Mahila Atma Nirvarta Kendra (MANK)
33. Mahila Shakti Bikash Kendra Nepal
34. Medecins Du Monde France
35. National Action and Coordinating Group
36. National Association of Community Electricity Users’ Nepal (NACEUN)
37. National Campaign For Sustainable Development-Nepal
38. National Election Observation Committee (NEOC)
39. National Farmer’s Group Federation
40. National Federation of Women Living with HIV and AIDS
41. National Forum for Advocacy Nepal
42. National Human Rights Foundation (HURFON)
43. National Indigenous Disabled Women Association Nepal
44. National Indigenous Women Forum Nepal
45. National Indigenous Women’s Federation (NIWF)
46. Nepal Disabled Women Association (NDWA)
47. Nepal Majhi Women Upliftment Association
48. Nepal Transportation and Development Research Centre
49. Nepalese Youth for Climate Action
50. Network for Development of Indigenous Peoples (NDIP)
51. Option Nepal
52. Resource Centre for Primary Health Care (RECPHEC)
53. Restructuring Nepal
54. SAMATA Foundation
55. Sankalpa
56. SDGs Studio
57. Society for International Law and Public Policy
58. South Asia Dialogues on Ecological Democracy (SADED-Nepal)
59. South Asia Partnership Nepal
60. Sunita Foundation
61. Support Nepal
62. terre des hommes Germany
63. The Resource Nepal
64. Transformation Nepal
65. United Mission to Nepal
66. Visible Impact
67. VSO International Nepal
68. Water Aid Nepal
69. Women Development Society
70. Women For Human Rights Single Women Group
71. Women Youth Empowerment in Social Service and Human Rights
72. World Vision International Nepal
73. Young Women For Change
74. Youth Forum for Human Rights
75. Youth for Environment Education and Development
76. YUWA
Organizers of Nepal Peoples’ Forum on Sustainable Development 2019

Facilitating Organizations (nepalpeoplesforum@gmail.com)

Association of Youth Organizations Nepal (AYON Nepal)
Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC Nepal)
Clean Energy Nepal (CEN)
National Campaign For Sustainable Development-Nepal (NACASUD-Nepal)
Youth For Environment Education and Development (YFEED Foundation)