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NEPAL ANNUAL REPORT 2023

The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war posed various socio-economic challenges for Nepal, with the inflation rate increasing by almost 8%. Corruption also remained rampant, several instances of which were evident throughout the year, including the Lalita Niwas land acquisition case, the fake Bhutanese refugee scam, the gold scandal, and the loan shark dispute. However, these cases are also an indication of the Nepalese government’s anti-corruption efforts. Other political green shoots of hope are young independent leaders coming to the forefront after the 2022 elections.

Accountability Lab Nepal (ALN) has formed various de-kleptification networks across the country and has been promoting youth engagement to strengthen democracy in their communities while supporting governments to enhance fair and equitable governance in their jurisdictions. This year also marks ALN’s 10th year of building integrity through the Integrity Icon campaign.



INTEGRITY ICON

Integrity Icon is a global campaign to find, celebrate, and connect with honest government officials. This year marked the 10th year of Integrity Icon and our efforts to build Integrity in Nepal. Our aim for this year was to; highlight the achievements made over a decade, continue to promote collaboration among alumni, and reflect on strategy.

- Our team has captured how integrity is being institutionalized, with 10 blogs marking the 10th year of building integrity in the public services. The blogs can be accessed [here](#).
- 43 Integrity Icon alumni came together in different thematic groups to discuss sectoral challenges and ways to institutionalize solutions. Alumni meet-ups have also promoted collaboration and provided a support mechanism for Integrity Icons and younger government officials.
- Our team has made amendments to the nomination procedure, selection guidelines, and alumni engagement strategies based on the feedback and learnings over the year.

NUMBERS OF INTEGRITY ICON

466

nominations

7

provinces covered

75

districts covered

OUR WINNERS

The Integrity Icons for 2023 are:

- [Hema Thapa](#), Hospital Nursing Incharge, Narayani Hospital, Birgunj;
- [Neera Adhikari](#), Director, Department of Women and Children;
- [Padma Nath Atreya](#), Horticulture Development Officer, Temperate Horticulture Development Centre, Marfa, Mustang;
- [Pratik Rai](#), Administrative Officer, District Administration Office, Jhapa; and
- [Rabina Maharjan](#), Principal, Manamajju Secondary School, Tarakeshwar, Kathmandu.





Integrity School – Building the next generation of leaders in government:

Integrity School aims to build future leaders who will be the foundation for an accountability ecosystem. The school provides key opportunities for leadership development, learning and mentorship, hands-on training, and powerful networking to amplify the impact of integrity on governance outcomes over time. This year, Integrity Scholars received mentorship and guidance from Icons on how to apply their innovations and overcome the challenges they face in their work.



Integrity Fellowship – Promoting Integrity as an expected behavior within society

10 Fellows have been selected for Integrity Fellowship to engage with ALN's network and government officials. Integrity Fellows launched an initiative called "सदाचारिताका लागि युवा" [Youth for Integrity] to enlighten young people about the importance of integrity and accountability in establishing a governance system that genuinely serves the public. They engaged over 300+ students across different academic institutions in Nepal. Get to know the 10 Integrity Fellows [here](#).



INTEGRITY ICON NETWORK BY THE NUMBERS

5000+

government officials engaged

49

icons

36

integrity scholars

36

integrity fellows



Total Number of Accountapreneurs: 50

Themes they work on

- Governance and Transparency
- Gender
- Public Service Delivery
- Social Inclusion
- Civic Engagement
- Youth Engagement
- Labour Migration
- Financial Literacy

ACCOUNTABILITY INCUBATOR

11 Accountapreneurs from diverse fields were selected for the Incubator 2023 cohort. Some of the diverse range of ideas include disability and education, menstruation, and inclusion in work spaces. We held orientation and on-demand sessions for Accountapreneurs, addressing organization registration, social welfare council processes, communication strategies, and crowdfunding. Read more about them and their ideas [here](#).





Highlights

- Pooja successfully conducted an open event, “Beyond the Blood: From Whispers to Roar,” to encourage open discussion around menstruation. The event was a beautiful amalgamation of art and activism, which covered the results of inequalities brought about by menstruation and the need for open and bold discussion around such topics. Pooja was also featured in WOW magazine.
- Sajani launched her e-platform Economics Hub Nepal, a learning platform to provide economic/finance-related knowledge and connect those passionate about the sector.
- Manish created and is piloting an anti-corruption curriculum for schools and has reached out to five. He is in the process of testing and applying it to more schools and using learnings and feedback to further improve the curriculum.
- Saurav launched crowdfunding for his initiative promoting equal education, focusing primarily on visually impaired students.
- Richa was selected for HackCorruption and is working with the team to build her “Support my School” initiative, which works to improve feedback mechanisms in Nepal’s public schools.



OPEN DATA HACKATHON

The Open Data Hackathon is a platform for youth seeking to promote the culture of Open Data to enhance accountability. It is an open program for data activists, media representatives, civil society, and academia to use their skills and knowledge to use open data and create solutions that address societal issues in Nepal.



IMPACT BY NUMBERS

10

teams

45

attendees

5

issues highlighted

5

local mentors



COMMUNITY-LED ADVOCACY

Countering kleptocracy through de-kleptification networks

Nepal is not immune to kleptocracy. Countering Kleptocracy is a dialogue series to bring the change makers within and outside government together to discuss Nepal's kleptocratic nexus, its impacts, and possible de-kleptification measures. It brought anti-corruption leaders from civil society, media, and government together to brainstorm ideas and foster collaborations to generate new discourses for systemic change.

Read more about the Kleptocracy dialogues [here](#).

Here are some Op-eds published by our team in the process:

[Kleptocracy in Nepal: Democratisation of corruption](#) published in Farsight.

[यस्तो छ लुटतन्त्रको अभ्यास र त्यस विरुद्धको लडाई](#) published in Ukaalo.

IMPACT BY NUMBERS

4

provinces

300+

participants

64%

men

35%

women

1%

trans women



Impact

Targeting local government's budget formulation period, CFAs provided key recommendations to their local unit to increase youth participation and ensure youth voices are heard.

Local governments have committed to addressing some of the recommendations provided by the CFAs who kept track of commitments made and supported local units through feedback when necessary.

Some of the commitments are already being implemented, such as in Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City which has begun collaborating with ALN on the Local Representatives with Youth initiative.



Youth Power in Strengthening Democracy

The program aims to foster youth inclusion and participation in democratic processes by providing them with the skills, tools, and spaces to participate in policy development and decision-making at all levels of government.

Through the Civic Action Teams (CivActs), our Community Frontline Activists (CFAs) and the youth volunteers at a community level have created momentum around youth engagement and participation in local decision-making. They have reached out to the community, media, government officials, CSOs, and others. Based on these consultations and the data collected, the team produced infographics on the theme of "Youth Participation" for the local units (Here is a sample infographic)

Similarly, through the Youth Engagement in Democracy (YD) fellowship, young people have discussed matters that concern them. The fellowship provided knowledge, a peer learning platform, and ways to amplify these voices through media products. Read more about the 14 fellows who have been selected and produced the Youth Take Over Series Podcasts.

Together with youth activists, ALN is enhancing youth participation to improve awareness and hold sub-national governments accountable for effective S4D processes.

IMPACT BY NUMBERS

5

provinces

1000+

youth

100+

government
representatives



Impact

- Butwal sub-metropolitan city has budgeted for the following as suggested in our earlier policy papers and PPDs
 - Collaboration with private companies to use small vehicles to manage traffic congestion and incentivize parking spaces with commercial complexes.
 - Constituting a body to conduct dialogue with the private sector for revenue collection, adjusting house rent for business purposes, and solving business-related problems.
 - Dialogue with the private sector on the PPP-laden projects.

- Pokhara Metropolitan City has collaborated with ALN and formed an informal Public-Private Dialogue Forum for the public and private sector to jointly discuss the solutions to their challenges.

Strengthening federal democracy by improving governance and enabling markets

The overall objective of the project is to improve understanding of the importance of public-private collaborations between state and non-state actors through dialogues and civic engagement. The aim is to enhance collaboration between the public and private sectors for improved local development.

Green accountability

ALN is working on creating a systematic way for people to have a voice and role in the climate decisions that most impact their lives.

Gov-HER-Nance: Climate, Gender and Accountability

Building on the [learning](#) of our Gov-HER-Nance initiative, we worked with a group of [women leaders](#) from Pokhara Metropolitan City to advocate for urgent climate actions with the government and concerned stakeholders. This work is a part of Green Accountability – creating a systematic way for people to have a voice and role in the climate decisions that most impact their lives.

2022 was about executing the program, and here are some outcomes that have been published this year.

- Read more about Gov-HER-Nance [here](#)
- Find the five films [here](#)
- Listen to a podcast [here](#)



KNOWLEDGE AND RESOURCE PRODUCTION

ALN focuses on knowledge and resource production through research, media mining, and evidence-based dialogues.

Research-based evidence for policy reforms

This year our focus has been on three major issues; building a narrative/framework for conceptualizing and defining “just” recovery of the returnee migrants in regard to crises such as the pandemic, exploring how accountability and local governance are influenced by various networks of individuals at the community level, and strengthening gender and social inclusion in local decision-making.

Demanding a ‘Just Recovery’ from Below: The Role of Grassroots Accountability Activism in Safeguarding Labour Migrants' Rights in the Pandemic Era:

Using the COVID-19 disaster as a site of political possibility, the research draws on the perspectives and experiences of labor migrants, youth activists, and volunteers. This is to understand the potential of grassroots activism in challenging intersecting inequalities facing labor migrants in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis in Nepal. The political possibilities and challenges of youth-led, bottom-up activism are being investigated regarding its ability to construct alternative narratives of care and justice and forge newer alliances to hold the state accountable to the voices of returnee Nepali migrants.

Highlight/Impacts

- The team presented the paper titled Disaster as a Catalyst for Injustice: Experiences of Nepali Migrant Workers during COVID-19 during the [Annual Kathmandu Conference on the Nepal and Himalaya](#).

Policy Research: The aftermath of “aafno manchhe” in local governance

Our team produced policy research and policy briefs on the theme of Good Governance and Local Development, focusing on the Local Government Operations Act 2074 and the Tole Development Organization (Formation and Operation) Procedure. The research delved deep into the dynamics of local governance, emphasizing the influence of close-knit network. This network is not a straightforward connection but rather a complex and entangled network of people, connected by different factors each having their power/influence and having a significant role to play on corruption or accountability issues.

Strengthening Women's Participation in Local Decision-Making eLearning module

The ALN team, in collaboration with GIZ, MUAN, and NARMIN supported the content development of the eLearning module on Strengthening Women's Participation in Local Decision-Making. The module is publicly available in the Atingi-an eLearning platform and targets local units to help them mainstream gender issues. The module includes interactive elements including case stories, videos, and reflective exercises. It can be accessed in both [English](#) and [Nepali](#).

Multi-Dimensional Approaches for Policy Advocacy

Along with the research and the community engagement practices, we are also opting for and creating several platforms where we continue discussion and dialogue and reach the larger community, especially among the netizens.

Governance Weekly: A weekly update on the current governance issues in Nepal through media mining. We published the 100th issue of Governance Weekly in 2023. They're shared with our email networks and through our social media platforms reaching 10,000+ individuals.

Podcasts: The Accountabilitea podcast is ALN's effort to discuss contemporary issues through the lenses of inclusion, diversity, accountability, and open government. We feature experts as our guests and thoroughly examine and delve deeper into concerning issues. We have produced 19 podcasts so far spanning a wide range of topics and areas such as democracy, migrant rights, inclusion, elections, and more with 25,000+ listens in total.

Policy Park: A fortnightly conversation series on public policy, strengthening institutions, and governance led by practitioners, thinkers, and policymakers. So far we have completed 43 episodes with 5000+ direct reach and 20,000+ indirect reach.

Excavating local narrative to ignite global narrative to renew democracy, counter corruption, and promote open governance

- Hackcorruption: ALN hosted the Hackcorruption event in Nepal in collaboration with Accountability Lab, where participants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal actively engaged in identifying tech solutions to combat corruption. 5 groups have been selected as the winners and are provided with the required guidance and mentorship on their idea. See the coverage of [Hackcorruption in Business 360](#).
- Summit for Democracy: ALN is [tracking the progress of S4D](#) in Nepal and supporting youth to localize possible commitments. We are enhancing youth participation to improve awareness and hold sub-national governments accountable for effective S4D processes. We are also monitoring the advancement of S4D commitments to produce a validated data set for evidence-based advocacy. This is in addition to fostering collaboration with diverse networks to develop creative and innovative advocacy approaches for consistent dialogue and engagement.
- Civil Society 7: Ahead of the G7 Summit in Hiroshima, Japan, Civil Society 7 (C7) presented a communique to Japanese President Fumio with policy recommendations to bring positive changes on global issues, including the complete elimination of nuclear weapons before 2045. ALN Country Director Narayan Adhikari was the Working Group coordinator of Open and Resilient Societies and led the group for recommendations.



- Regional collaboration with MJF: ALN is collaborating with the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) in Bangladesh to strengthen youth engagement in democracy through regional collaboration in South Asia. The Nepal team also participated in a learning exchange in Bangladesh. [Here's](#) how we are fostering meaningful regional collaborations.



- ShiftThePower: Accountability Lab co-hosted the “#ShiftThePower: Grappling with the Present, Looking Ahead to the Future” event at Kathmandu with other organizations including GFCF, Tewa, PeaceDirect, and NearNetwork.



- C20: C20 is a platform established in 2013 for civil society organizations to engage with the G20, and it has become increasingly important over time. ALN has been the international Co-Chair of the C20 Anti-Corruption Working Group (ACWG) and a Steering Committee Member of the C20. We have developed a mechanism to track anti-corruption commitments of G20 leaders, which is open for public comment and contribution.



TEAM MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

- Suvechcha Chapagain, our Program Officer, participated in the [Community Engagement Exchange](#) Program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State.
- Shruti Shakya, our Campaign Associate, participated in Ujyalo Foundation's Women's Leadership Fellowship program.
- Bikin Ghimire, our Communication and Product Manager, provided a session on Localizing the SDGs: For Myself, For My Country, For my Nation for "The Good Leadership" program at St. Xaviers College for young students.
- Soni Khanal, our Learning Manager, was a part of the Monitoring and Evaluation Team of the [C7 Summit](#) held in Tokyo, Japan.
- Oshin Maharjan, our Program Associate, is participating in the [US Embassy's Youth Council \[USYC\] 2023](#).
- Prekkshya Bimali, our Program Officer, and Soni Khanal, our Learning Manager, visited Bangladesh for a learning exchange with the [Manusher Jonno Foundation](#), Bangladesh where they got an opportunity to engage extensively with youth-led organizations in Bangladesh.
- Narayan Adhikari, our CEO, and Ashmita Sharma, our Program Manager visited Sri Lanka to share our 10-year experience and attend the Integrity Icon Sri Lanka Award Ceremony.
- Dridhata Silwal, our Program Associate has been selected for UC Davis Nepal Learning Exchange Program 2023, in collaboration with University of California students and Nepal.
- Soni Khanal, our Learning Manager has been selected as a #ShiftThePower fellow by the Global Fund for Community Foundations. Read Soni's experience of #ShiftThePower Summit [here](#).
- Suvechha Chapagain, our Program Officer has been appointed as a member of the advisory board of the YD Project (Youth Democracy Cohort), of the European Union.

OPEN GOV HUB

- Open Co Hub has been hosting community leaders, changemakers, and service-minded people in Nepal. It builds community, supports movements, and spreads services across dividing lines and geographies. Our physical space serves as more than simply a place to hold events; but a testbed for synergies between innovation, service, and human values. We shared our space with Digital Rights Nepal and the National Agribusiness Innovation Centre (NABIC). Open Co Hub hosted a series of events including film screenings, networking, fundraisers etc.
- Some Additional Media Coverages:
 - [Sky High Corruption Caused Nepal's Air Disaster](#)
 - [Narayan Adhikari, CEO of Accountability Lab, sharing experiences of work and life](#)
 - [Towards Open Governance and Civic Participation](#)

BUDGET & STAFF

11

total number of grants

18

core staff

3

consultants

2

provincial coordinators

\$ 427,692.00

total annual budget

25

fellows

75

volunteers

1

international fellow