

Newsletter

March & April 2026

The Third Edition

Across diverse local contexts, the Local Infrastructure Support Programme's (LISP) integrated approach supports the Local Governments (LGs) to strengthen systems, enhance inclusion, and develop capacity of all those involved in implementing the infrastructure projects.

This third edition of the newsletter brings together two stories that reflect these progresses at different levels. From Shanti Pura Damai's journey in Galje, where access to work and skills has opened pathways to dignity and leadership, to Sarumarani Rural Municipality (RM)'s early progress in embedding women's participation into local decision-making processes. These stories highlight LISP's commitment to building infrastructure that is technically sound, socially responsive, and locally owned.

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Community consultation in Sarumarani RM

From Struggle to Strength: Shanti Pura Damai's Story



Ms. Shanti Pura Damai

In Galje, Ward No. 6 of Tilagufa Municipality, Karnali, Ms. Shanti Pura Damai begins her days like many women in Nepal's remote hills—balancing responsibility, resilience, and hope. A permanent resident of the area, Ms. Damai's journey over the past two years has been shaped by opportunity, loss, and an unwavering determination to build a better future for her children.

Her connection with LISP began last fiscal year (FY) 24/ 25, when a development project was implemented in her ward. At the time, Ms. Damai joined the work as a labourer. It was her first experience earning an income through a structured development initiative, and it became a turning point. Through hands-on work, she learned new skills such as stone setting and mortar preparation—skills that were rare among women in her community and entirely new to her own life experience.

The work did more than provide income. It gave her confidence. Encouraged by what she had learned, Ms. Damai aspired to take on a larger role. When LISP launched the Galje–Harichaur Road Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Scheme this fiscal FY 25/ 26 she actively participated in the general assembly convened to form the User's Committee (UC). Her commitment did not go unnoticed. She was selected as a UC member representing the Dalit

community, ensuring that voices like hers were included in project planning and oversight.

Registered in the ward's unemployment list, Ms. Damai now works in a dual role as both a labourer and a UC member. Each day, she utilises the technical skills she acquired the previous year, often guiding and supporting fellow workers. In doing so, she has quietly become a source of knowledge and leadership within the project.

Behind her growing confidence lies a life shaped by hardship. Ms. Damai is a single woman; her husband passed away several years ago, leaving her solely responsible for raising her school-going daughters. With no external support, the income she earned from last year's project played a vital role in covering household expenses and ensuring her children had clothes and necessities. "I remain hopeful that my involvement in this project will provide some financial relief, even if it does not fully address all my challenges," says Ms. Damai.

Just as she hoped for stability, tragedy struck again. Earlier this year, a fire destroyed her home, forcing her family to move into a temporary shelter. Although the municipality provided some immediate assistance, her struggles remain overwhelming balancing daily survival, her children's education, and the daunting challenge of rebuilding a house from scratch.

Yet, even in the face of loss, Ms. Damai remains hopeful. Her continued involvement in the current project offers a measure of financial relief and a sense of purpose. While the work cannot erase her challenges, it gives her the strength to keep moving forward.

Looking ahead, Ms. Damai dreams of more initiatives like this reaching her municipality. For her, development projects are not just about roads or infrastructure, they are pathways to dignity, skill-building, leadership, and opportunity. They open doors for women from marginalized communities to move beyond survival and toward resilience, ensuring a better future for their children. ■

Women's participation in Sarumarani Municipality

LISP integrates Gender Equality, Disability, and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) across its programme cycle, ensuring that infrastructure development is accompanied by deliberate efforts to address social inequality. Through this integrated approach, the programme seeks to create an enabling environment in which women and marginalised populations can participate equally in development processes and decision making.

For LISP, participation is an important propellor of empowerment. The programme places women at the centre of programme implementation and creates multiple opportunities for engagement throughout the project cycle, from planning to construction and operation and maintenance. LISP provides technical assistance through a range of targeted interventions and activities designed to strengthen women's participation in local governance and development processes. In addition, LISP supports inclusive design considerations such as safer work environments and accessible infrastructure features to ensure participation and benefits extend to persons with disabilities and older community members.

Anita Kumal, a UC member from Kaliban lift irrigation states, "Opportunity to have effective participation is equally important to learn and grow. This is how the empowerment happens. If you do not call us in the meeting like this how can we say our needs and believe that our voices are heard. So, participation matters to build confidence and empower us for extended responsibilities to foster gender equality and empowerment."

For many women, participation in community meetings and decision-making meetings comes with restrictions in sharing their ideas, contributing to local knowledge, and influencing decisions that directly affect their lives. The Sarumarani RM, newly selected for LISP implementation in the FY 25/ 26 – is making



Women participation at Sarumarani.

steady progress towards creating a more inclusive and equitable space. The RM established policies, regulations, and guidelines to ensure at least 33% representation of Women in user committees. With LISP’s additional technical assistance, the RM is promoting meaningful participation of women and marginalised populations through community consultations, users committee formation, and workforce diversification during project implementation. Early signs of change are already visible, women’s attendance in planning meetings has increased. In the last FY, the UC included only one female representative in its three major positions—Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. However, in the Ganaha Mulkulo User Committee, two females hold these key positions. Female participation in forming the committee was also relatively higher. In this FY, 21 out of 38 participants were female during the formation of the Ganaha Mulkulo Sinchai User Committee. These efforts aim to ensure that voices are heard, priorities are addressed, and community ownership is strengthened.

UCs reflect more diverse representation, and women workers are taking on roles beyond unskilled labour, contributing knowledge and oversight during implementation. These efforts aim to ensure that voices are heard, priorities are addressed, and community ownership is strengthened.

“If given the opportunity to participate, we can better understand the situation and contribute with greater productivity and impact. I have come to realize that LISP has become an important platform for women like us.”

— Kamitra Kumal, Ganah Irrigation, Ward No. 2, Sarumarani.

The local leadership at the RM also expressed strong support for LISP’s integrated approach. Mr. Jhag Bahadur Bishwakarma, Chairperson of the RM states “Infrastructure development is essential, but equal attention must now be given to social development—education, empowerment, gender equality, and capacity building—to create a resilient future.

LISP’s dual focus on infrastructure and social development offers a balanced perspective. Women’s empowerment is fundamental; without it, sustainable and resilient development cannot be achieved. We look forward to continued engagement and collaboration through this programme.”

LISP’s approach extends beyond the construction of physical infrastructure. The programme focuses on strengthening local government systems to improve service delivery while enhancing institutional capacity to promote inclusive development. LISP aims to embed GEDSI principles not as stand-alone activities, but as standard practice within local governance and infrastructure development processes, laying the foundation for more equitable and resilient communities. ■

LISP is funded by the UK Government and implemented by the Government of Nepal with technical assistance from DT Global UK International Pvt Ltd, in partnership with CARE Nepal.

Use of AI Tools

Copilot AI has been used in preparing this report. All AI assisted content has been thoroughly reviewed, contextualised, and edited for accuracy and relevance to the programme.