

Newsletter

July 2026

The Fifth 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 fifth edition of the newsletter shares two stories about road and trail upgradation investments that have made meaningful differences by improving connectivity and access. In Tansen the upgrading of the Damkada–Gothubo Road made travel safer and more accessible for nearly 1,000 students, including 28 of those with visual impairments. Meanwhile, in Shey Phoksundo Rural Municipality, Dolpa, improvements to the Sumdo–Chepka trail have strengthened an important route for communities, traders, mules and visitors to Shey Phoksundo lake.

In this newsletter

- **Improving Access through Rural Road Upgrades in Tansen - pg 2**
- **Improving Connectivity Along the Sumdo-Chepka trail in Shey Phoksundo - pg 4**



Road project implemented by LISP provides access to students to the Damkada Secondary School

More than a Road, a Path to Education, Accessibility, and Dignity

For nearly 1,000 students, including 28 with visual impairments, the 370-metre Damkada–Gothubo Road in Tansen, Palpa, was more than an unpaved track—it was a daily obstacle to reaching school safely. Dust during the dry season and mud during the monsoon made the journey difficult and, at times, dangerous, particularly for students with visual impairments who had to navigate an uneven and unpredictable surface. Today, that same road has become a pathway to education, accessibility, and dignity, making daily travel safer and more convenient for students, teachers, and the wider community.

Located in Ward No. 9 of Tansen Municipality, Damkada Secondary School is an important educational institution serving students from surrounding communities and is one of the few schools in the area providing education for students with visual impairments. As the district headquarters of Palpa, Tansen is an important hub for administration, education, health services, and tourism. Its unique combination of historical significance, natural beauty, and cultural diversity makes it one of Nepal’s most prominent hill municipalities. However, Ward No. 9 remains largely rural, with scattered settlements and limited infrastructure development. Although basic infrastructure is available, upgrading the road network has long been a priority to improve mobility, support local livelihoods, and -



Children going to school using the Damkada - Dothubo road



Pedestrian using the road upgraded by LISP in front of the Damkada Secondary School

-strengthen access to essential services. The Damkada–Gothubo Road provides access to the school, ward office, health post, livestock and agriculture development service center, community playground and around 100 households. Prior to the project, the unpaved road became dusty in the dry season and muddy during the monsoon, creating difficulties for residents, students, teachers, and especially visually impaired community members who relied on a safe and easily navigable route.

In the fiscal year 2024/25, Tansen Municipality prioritised the Damkada – Gothubo Road upgradation project, allocating a total budget of NPR 4,815,938 with NPR 3,378,004 in co-financing from LISP. Although the improved section is relatively short, its impact has been significant. As Ward Chairperson Mr. Rajesh Aryal noted, “The road may be short, but it is more than just infrastructure; it is a pathway to education, accessibility, and dignity. This improvement has made daily travel safer and easier.”

Sarthak Parajuli, a Grade 10 student with visual impairment at the Damakada Secondary School, has experienced this transformation firsthand. Having grown up in the area and attended this school since childhood, he clearly remembers the difficulties of the old road. He shared, “In the past, I stumbled over rocks, tree roots, and potholes and was always worried about falling. I had to walk very carefully, and it took much longer to reach school. Now I can walk confidently with my cane without the constant fear of tripping or losing my balance. -

-The road is much safer, smoother, and easier to navigate. I now travel independently with greater confidence and can even move around after dark without the anxiety I once felt.”

Similarly, Kamal Panthi, a Grade 12 student, highlighted the positive changes brought by the road improvement. “Before the road was upgraded, dust and mud were part of our daily lives. Walking to and from school was often difficult and uncomfortable, especially during the rainy season. Now, the road is clean, safe, and easy to walk on. Travelling to school has become much more convenient, and activities such as our morning yoga sessions are far more enjoyable. This improvement has made a real difference to our daily routine and learning environment.”

The road improvement has also been welcomed by school staff, who witnessed the challenges students faced for many years. Gyanshwor Basyal, a local resident and school staff member, reflected on the changes he has observed during his 21 years at the school: “I have been working at this school for the past 21 years and have witnessed the challenges our students faced every day. The road had many potholes, and during the rainy season, floodwater would flow across it, making it difficult and sometimes dangerous to cross. We often had to carry younger students through the flooded sections, and they would arrive at school with their uniforms covered in mud. Today, thanks to the improved road, our students can travel safely and comfortably.”

The benefits of the upgraded road extend beyond students and school staff. It has also improved mobility and independence for visually impaired teachers and community members. Bindu Neupane, a teacher with visual impairment, explained: “Life is much easier now. As a visually impaired person, I had to be extremely cautious with every step. Today I can move around with much greater confidence and without fear.” She further added, “It is also easier to give directions and describe locations to other visually impaired friends because the route is now clear, smooth, and easier to navigate.”

Nearby households have also experienced significant improvements in their daily lives. Janaki Devkota, a health worker who lives along the road, shared: “We are truly happy since the road was upgraded. Before, our houses were constantly covered in dust during the dry season. It was difficult to dry clothes outside because of the dust. During the monsoon, mud spread across our yards, and even stepping outside was a challenge. Now our surroundings are cleaner, safer, and more comfortable.”

According to the school principal, the previous unpaved road created serious difficulties for the entire school community. “Every day, two school buses and nearly 40 motorcycles travelled along the unpaved road, generating thick clouds of dust. Students walking to school, teachers, nearby residents, and school buildings were all affected. Classrooms, furniture, and teaching materials were constantly covered in dust, creating an unhealthy and uncomfortable environment that disrupted learning and affected the well-being of students, staff, and the wider community.” Expressing his appreciation for the project, he added, “We are deeply grateful to the Municipality and LISP for making this project a reality. What was once a dusty and muddy road has become a pathway to opportunity, safety, and dignity for our community.”

Although only 370 meters long, the upgraded road has made a substantial difference to the lives of residents. It has improved access to education, healthcare, government services, and community facilities. More importantly, it has enhanced safety, accessibility, and dignity for hundreds of people, including visually impaired students and teachers. ■



Picture of the road upgradation before (left) and after (right)

Trail to the Shey Phoksundo lake made safer for travel



The Sumdo - Chepka upgraded trail

Shey Phoksundo Lake is one of Nepal's well-known trekking destinations, drawing visitors with its mountain scenery and clear turquoise waters. For communities in Dolpa, the route to the lake is also part of daily life. It connects people to services, markets, neighbouring settlements, and the places they depend on throughout the year.

The Sumdo–Chepka trail in Shey Phoksundo Rural Municipality is an important link for the communities of Chepka, Ringmo, Rechi, Pungmo, and nearby settlements. Residents use the trail to reach health posts, schools, markets, and relatives in neighbouring villages. It is also a major trekking route for both local and foreign tourists, and an important trade route where mule caravans carry food, construction materials, and other essential supplies from Dunai and nearby areas to remote villages further into Upper Dolpa.

To make this route safer and easier to use, Shey Phoksundo Rural Municipality, with support from LISP, upgraded 880 m critical section of the Sumdo–Chepka tourism foot trail in the 2024/ 25 fiscal year. The project was implemented with a total budget of NPR 6.6 million, of which 60 percent was contributed by LISP and 40% by the LG.

The improvement activities included widening narrow foot trails, stone masonry on footsteps, constructing river training structures, and bio-engineering works in areas where travellers had previously relied on fragile wooden walkways and exposed trail sections.

In some locations, gabion river training structures replaced wooden log crossings that had long served as informal bridges. These structures now provide a safer and more comfortable passage for residents, mule caravans, and trekkers, while also helping protect riverbanks from erosion. The improved section serves eight settlements – Kagini and Santa in the Thulibheri Municipality and Chepka, Sumduwa, Renshi, Pungmo, Saijol, and Rigmo in the Shey-Phoksundo Rural Municipality. According to the Chairman of Ringmo, an approximate 5,000 local and foreign tourists visit the lake annually, making the trail an important route for both local communities and tourists.

“This trail serves as a lifeline for local settlements, facilitating economic development and enhancing community well-being,” said Nima Lama, Chairperson of Ward No. 8, Shey-Phoksundo Rural Municipality. “The project included gabion river training works, trail widening, the construction of stone masonry steps, and the replacement of unsafe wooden log crossings. These improvements have created a safer, more durable, and resilient route for residents, mule operators, and visitors, ensuring reliable access and supporting sustainable livelihoods.”

The improvements have made a noticeable difference for the people who use the route regularly. Sections that were previously as narrow as 0.9 metres have been widened to -



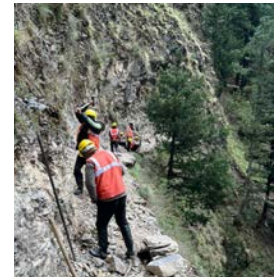
Picture of the Shey Phoksundo lake, the final destination of the trail

around 2.5 metres, making travel safer and easier for pedestrians and pack animals. Stone masonry retaining walls now stabilise vulnerable stretches of the trail, while upgraded steps provide more secure footing in challenging terrain. The gabion river training works provide dual benefits by protecting riverbanks from erosion while also serving as safe walking routes for residents, mule caravans, and trekkers.

For local families, these changes are felt in practical but meaningful ways. Journeys to markets and services are more reliable, supplies can reach remote settlements more steadily, and mule caravans face fewer risks on sections that were previously difficult to navigate. Trekkers travelling to Shey Phoksundo Lake also benefit from a safer and more comfortable route, while continuing to pass through communities whose daily lives are closely connected to the trail.

Chewang Lama, owner of Lama Hotel in Shey-Phoksundo, believes the benefits extend beyond improved mobility. “This project represents a strategic investment in sustainable rural infrastructure, enhancing connectivity for local communities, supporting mule-based transport systems, and promoting eco-tourism,” he said. “At the same time, it helps safeguard the fragile mountain environment and strengthens the long-term resilience of the area.”

The upgraded Sumdo–Chepka trail is a reminder that local infrastructure is not only about improving a route; it is about making everyday movement safer and more dependable for the people who rely on it. For communities in Dolpa, the trail supports work, trade, family visits, access to services, and the movement of essential goods. It also helps ensure that visitors to Shey Phoksundo Lake can experience the area more safely, while the benefits of improved connectivity continue to reach the people who call this remote mountain region home. ■



Pictures from the Sumdo - Chepkatrail upgradation project in Shey Phoksundo Rural Municipality

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.