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Policy Commentary

Agricultural and Natural Resources Policies in Nepal: A Review of Formulation and Implementation Processes and Issues

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Abstract

The government of Nepal has made efforts to formulate and implement the agricultural sector policies since the 1960s. It has formulated dozens of policies and strategies in agriculture, forestry, agro-forestry, climate change, land use, poverty alleviation, irrigation, etc. Some of the policies seem to be targeted to specific groups and communities (poverty alleviation policy), to different sectors and commodities (forest, agriculture, poultry, coffee, etc.), and address international and national concerns and priorities (climate change policy, agrobiodiversity). This study aims to review the implementation of the policy provisions of major agricultural and natural resources policies, explore possible causes for it and suggest measures to effectively implement policy provisions in the future. We have reviewed seven agriculture policies for their provision and implementation and identified some common features and inadequacies. Our recommendations for policy reform include the practice of wider consideration, inter-policy coherence, sufficient institutional framework, periodic policy evaluation, improved accountability, and consideration for national interest.

Keywords: agriculture, policy system, policy provision, reformation

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1. Background

Public policy is a combination of basic decisions, commitments, and actions made by those who hold authority or affect government decisions (MRSC, 2017). In other words, public policy also refers to the rules, regulations, and guidelines formulated by governments to solve problems that have an impact on society and the public. Public policy over the ages has been a major instrument in the hands of governments for bringing about social welfare and the well-being of the people. Through public policy, the government sets out its plans and programs for the people. The policy-making process weighs and balances public values.

Policy formulation is governed by Policy System. It is the overall institutional pattern within which policies are made, involves interrelationships among three elements: public policies, policy stakeholders, and policy environments.

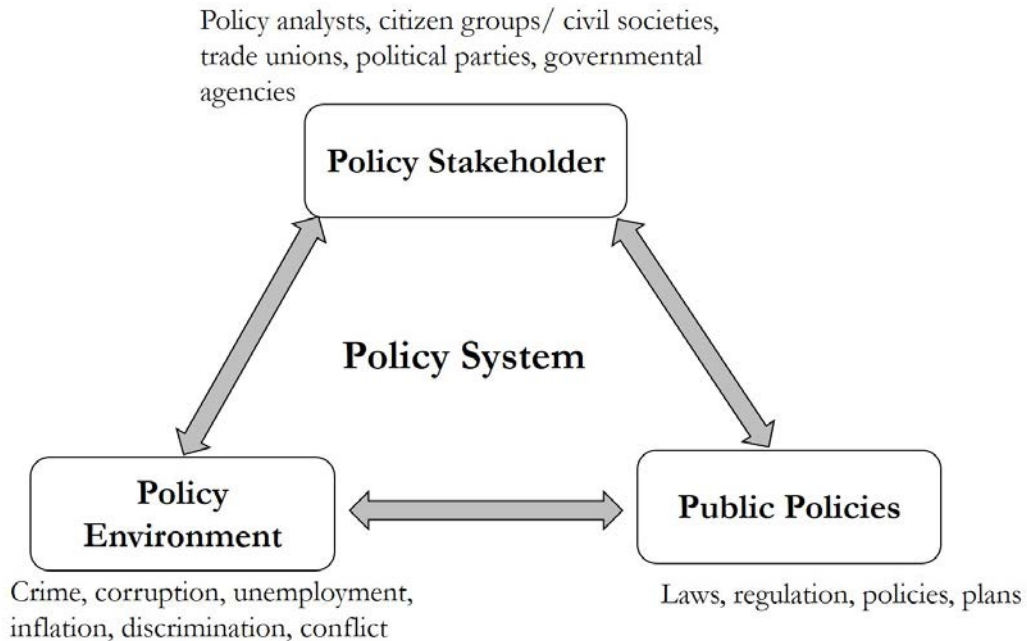


Figure 1. Public Policy System

Policies are formulated through a policy process that engages stakeholders in producing new or revised policies within a particular institutional context. The major stages of policy processes are policy formulation, implementation, and evaluation forming a cyclical pattern with a feedback loop from evaluation to formulation (Miller & McTavish, 2014). The policies are legitimated by the legislature and implemented and evaluated with budgetary provision. An important element of the process is how policy decisions are taken.

2. Context in Nepal

The government of Nepal (GON) has made efforts to develop the agricultural sector and

policies since the 1960s. The GON has formulated dozens of policies and strategies in agriculture, forestry, agro-forestry, climate change, land use, poverty alleviation, irrigation, etc. for economic development, environment conservation, and poverty reduction. Under the agricultural sector, there are policies for different commodities, fertilizer, agri-business promotion, agrobiodiversity conservation, mechanization, rangeland management, etc. Agricultural policy is a critical element in determining the rate and pattern of economic growth and societal welfare. One set of policies such as investment in education, health, public infrastructures (transportation, irrigation) science and technology, trade, etc., have a broad impact on agricultural sector productivity, while other sets of policies affect particular agricultural commodities or techniques of production. These policies provide the framework and action plans necessary to achieve certain public goals and also provide the basis for promoting and enforcing certain rights and obligations to groups and individuals. It is argued that effective institutions with adequate investments can improve the living conditions of smallholder farmers and improve the incomes of the poor (Khanal et al., 2020).

Considering agricultural development as an interactive, integrated, interdependent, and multi-dimensional process, accelerated development of this sector is not possible through fragmented efforts. Therefore, for the performance-oriented growth of this sector, it was realized necessary to integrate the essential elements of agricultural development such as irrigation, technology, agricultural finance, improved seed, fertilizer, extension, physical infrastructures like roads, electrification, storage, agricultural marketing, and post-harvest operations through developing policies and strategies. Productivity drive can be enhanced if the factors of production and productivity are delivered as a package in an appropriate area and combination.

Some of the policies seem to be targeted to specific groups and communities (poverty alleviation policy), to different sectors/commodities (forest, agriculture, poultry, coffee, etc.), and address international/national concerns and priorities (climate change policy, agrobiodiversity). Such targeted policies usually are more effective in achieving the objective, they precisely aim to address needs and tailor the measures to achieve a better result. The policies use various kinds of instruments to achieve the result. Instruments are those economic variables that can be manipulated by policymakers and may include taxes, subsidies, regulations, payments for the delivery of a service, or even direct provision of services and products through the government. Policy instruments provide positive and negative incentives that are intended to affect the behavior of producers and consumers in such a way that the target variables are moving in the desired direction. While targeting has scope to improve the efficiency of agricultural policies, not all the issues can be addressed by a single policy.

This paper aims to review the implementation of the policy provisions of major agricultural and natural resources policies, explore possible causes for it and suggest measures to effectively implement policy provisions in the future.

3. Major Policies and their Implementation Status

3.1 National Agricultural Policy 2004

This Policy was formulated to support the implementation of the Agriculture Perspective Plan (APP) among others. The main objective of the policy is to create an enabling environment for agriculture-led rural development. The policy aimed to divide farmers into two groups – small

and large and aims to provide more resources to the small farmers. The vision of the policy is to bring improvement in the living standard through sustainable agricultural development by transforming the subsistence agricultural system into a commercial and competitive agricultural system. It aims at achieving high and sustainable economic growth through a commercial agricultural system contributing to food security and poverty reduction, increased agricultural production and productivity, making agriculture competitive in regional and world markets with the commercial agricultural system, and conserving, promoting, and utilizing natural resources, environment and bio-diversity. Major policy provisions and their implementation status is summarized in table 1 below.

Table 1 Major National Agriculture Policy provisions and their implementation status

Policy Provisions	Implementation status	Remarks
Discouraging the transformation of fertile land for non-agricultural uses through adopting scientific land use system.	Although, land use policy has this provision, but it is not implemented, as conversion of agricultural land has not stopped.	Needs strong commitments from local governments and stakeholders
Development and extension of irrigation facilities, agriculture roads, rural electrification and appropriate technologies. Intensive and wider use of available technologies in the areas with irrigation, roads and electrification	Pocket-package strategy of APP implementation considered this provision	Other sectoral Ministries/ Departments did not focus their programs for supporting agril. sector
Special facilities for targeted groups on small irrigation infrastructures like traddle pump, roar pump, sprinkler and drip irrigation, water harvest pond construction etc.	This provision is being implemented by MoFAGA(DoLI), MoALD (DoA) and many (I) NGOs.	Need to form strong coordination mechanism
Utilization of increasing production and income increasing possibilities in the food deficit areas . Development of food storage and mobilization network with the participation of local institution if it has to be supplied from outside areas.	Special programs for increasing local food production of indigenous crops such as Foxtail millet, Barley, Finger millet, Buckwheat, Chino etc) in food and nutrition insecure high hills and hill districts, and focus research in such crops Local comparative advantage has not been fully exploited. Limited storage facilities developed, programs to attain local food self-sufficiency initiated in a limited scale in food deficit areas..	Appropriate technological package has to be developed, effective coordination with NFTC, local bodies and MoALD needed.

Expansion of livestock insurance and gradually initiating the insurance of poultry, selected crops seeds and HVCs.	Expanded in commercial areas in a limited scale, 75% subsidy on insurance premium in order to attract entrepreneurs in agriculture and share the risks.	Yet to be expanded in commercial areas; working procedure to be developed to cover additional crops and commodities
Encourage and support to organic farming (through certification for export)	Supported organic farming (in the form of subsidies and technical backstopping) through annual program and budget (eg. IPM, FFS program). Technical Standard for Prodn & Processing of Organic Products (2007), National Technical Standard for Organic Agriculture System 2008.	Certification in Nepal is not yet institutionalized, integrate with National Trade Integration Strategy for the export of selected organic products

3.2 Agro-business Promotion Policy, 2006

The policy highlights diversification, commercialization, and promotion of the agriculture sector with private sector involvement in commercial farming. It emphasized that the living standard of the farmer would not improve unless the agriculture sector is transformed from subsistence level to commercial farming. The policy aims to reduce poverty by encouraging the production of market-oriented and competitive agro-products. It realizes the need of promoting internal and external markets. This policy was prepared in the spirit of National Agriculture Policy 2061 emphasizing business service centers' establishment for quality agriculture inputs and services. The partnership between the private sector and the Government has been emphasized for the export of quality goods. In the context of Nepal's entry into the WTO, developing the market network is its priority. The policy considers infrastructure development as a cornerstone for commercialization. The policy has envisaged the promotion of a partnership approach between the Government and the private sector. Major provisions and their implementation status is summarized in table 2 below.

Table 2 Some provisions of Agro-business Promotion policy provisions and their implementation status

Policy Provisions	Convergence/Implementation status	Remarks
Establishment and development of Growth center based on geographic, economic, and technical potentiality.	Commercial pockets yet to be developed as growth center. This has not been materialized so far.	Common understanding and cooperation among other supportive ministries to MoALD for developing growth centers
Designation and demarcation of three types of production areas, namely commercial crop and commodity production area; organic and pesticide free production area; and agricultural products export area.	The commercial production in certain commodities and location, organic production of selected commodities (like coffee, orthodox tea, spices) started and export (in limited scale) is taking place.	The demarcation of three types of production area is yet to be implemented.

Development of infrastructure (business service centres, markets and collection points, and rural roads and electricity) for post-harvest, marketing and processing.	Collection centers in nearby production pockets developed where there is road facility.	Devt of infrastructures for climate resilient agri-business need to be accelerated, other ministries should consider these aspects
Proposes for 75% tax redemption in the import of machineries and equipments (thresher, sprinkler, harvester, chilling van, cooling vat, milk processor etc) for 10 years.	Some provisions are reflected in annual budget speech (for selected machineries and equipment)	MoALD pursue this matter with MoF before the annual budget preparation.
Avail the rangeland on long term lease with the coordination of concerned authorities for livestock raising in the high hills.	Also mentioned in Rangeland Policy 2012, not implemented yet.	Need a coordinated effort with MoFE and MoFAGA, Local govts.
Encourage the plantation of NTFPs in the public and other lands based on potentialities.	The community forestry and leasehold forestry groups have started NTFPs plantation but in a limited area.	MoFE, MoALD and MoFAGA, provincial government's need to work together.
Proposes for 25% rebate on electricity cost for cold and frozen storage, cold chain, cold chamber and chilling vat and animal slaughterhouses for pvt entrepr. for 10 yrs from the date of establishment.	Limited implementation (for selected enterprise) through annual budget speech	MoALD and FNCCI pursue this matter with MoF before the annual budget.
Promote agro-business by providing certification services for organically produced agril commodities for export.	Technical Standard for Production and Processing of Organic Products and the MoALD s providing required services to the exporters.	The National Organic Certification Authority has not been established. Financial support for organic certification provisioned in budget speech.
Development of system for insurance of commercial crop production, livestock, markets, and agro-industries	The insurance system for livestock and other commercial crops/ commodities initiated with upto 75 percent subsidy on premium (announced in annual budget speech)	Guidelines already prepared by MoALD.

3.3 Climate Change Policy, 2011, first amend. 2019

In order to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, and get the maximum benefit

from the climate change convention, CC policy was formulated. The vision of this policy is to save from the adverse impact of climate change considering climate justice, human development, and maintenance of prosperity through the adoption of the concept of environmental and sustainable development. It considered the importance of the sectors that are vulnerable to climate change and planned to enhance the climate adaptation and resilience capacity of local communities for optimum utilization of natural resources and their efficient management, adopt the low carbon development path by making socio-economic development climate change friendly and resilient, and develop institutional framework for its effective implementation. Major policy provisions and their implementation status is summarized in table 3 below.

Table 3 Some provisions of Climate Change Policy and their implementation status

Policy Provisions	Implementation status	Remarks
Climate adaptation, disaster and risk reduction	Different projects are in operation to address NAPA priorities and vulnerabilities such as NCCSP, BCBRN, ASHA etc.	Introduced CC budget code in 2013 to channel Climate finance and track public expenditure, DPs supporting GoN to mainstream DRR into devt planning at national and local levels.
Low carbon development and climate resilience	Draft of NLCED strategy formulated, Climate resilient development planning tools developed, renewable and alternative energy technologies promoted/expanded, REDD strategy prepared (and involved in carbon trade)	Devt and adoption of Low methane emission agricultural technologies
Access to financial resources and utilization	Establishment of Climate change fund and Climate change center are yet to be materialized. Managed the funds available from different sources on climate change, CDM institutionalized and functional.	80% climate finance to be allocated to support local level activities
Capacity building, peoples' participation and empowerment	LAPAs prepared through a participatory and inclusive process and implemented at local level by govt, NGOs and CBOs.	
Technology development, transfer and utilization	NRREP channeling funds through NREF for transfer of renewable energy technologies, Scaling up Renewable Energy Program , NARC conducting agricultural adaptation and resilient building technologies.	Many institutions involved for sectoral technologies development and transfer, a central level mechanism needed to identify gaps and need of the technologies and build synergies.

Establishment of CC Fund and CC Center for implementing programs related to CC adaptation and resilience, and developing and utilizing technologies	This has not been established yet
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3.4 Irrigation Policy, 2014

The vision of this policy is to avail sustainable and reliable year-round irrigation facilities to all the agricultural lands so as to contribute to agricultural productivity. This is important in the context of meeting the objectives of increasing agricultural production and reduction of poverty. The policy emphasizes implementing reservoir-based and inter-basin water transfer types of water sector strategy development and integrated water resources management. Further, it aims round the year irrigation facility through effective management of existing water resources; develop the institutional capacity of water users for sustainable management of existing systems; and enhance knowledge, skills, and institutional working capability of technical human resources, water users, and NGOs relating to the development of irrigation sector. The policy provisions related to other organizations and their implementation status are presented in table 4 below.

Table 4 Some provisions of Irrigation Policy and their implementation status

Policy Provisions	Implementation status	Remarks
Preparation of master plan at the national and district level considering integrated development and management of river watershed in order to address challenges of irrigation sector	It will take some time to implement.	Coordinate with MOEWRI, MOSTE, MOFE and provincial agri and forest related agencies.
The GoN will declare irrigation available area as “irrigated area” and should get permission from the government for non-agricultural uses.	Not yet initiated.	Needs to be harmonized with Land use policy and collaboration needed with Local Govts and administration
Based on the differences in geography and topography, consideration will be given for optimum utilization of technology, structure and water sources and studies will be carried out in this respect.	Some programs are ongoing: small and micro irrigation implemented by DOLIDAR and DOA, medium and large scales by the DOI. These are subsidized	STW program in Terai, micro and small irrigation in the hills and terai ongoing. Needs to have a coordination mechanism at the grass root level to avoid the duplication and optimize the potentiality.

	and supported by the government.	Infrastructure devt, water utilization and efficiency mentioned in ADS.
Supplementary irrigation development through rain water harvesting, reservoir development and conservation and utilization of ground water resources	There are ongoing schemes for rainwater harvesting in rainfed areas and groundwater in Terai.	These schemes need to be scaled up and business plan need to be developed in cooperation with MoALD, provincial ministries and local govts.
Implementation of climate risk and disaster risk management programs and adaptation and mitigation programs to address climate change impacts	Peoples' embankment program to control the river and protect from floods (implemented by DOWRI)	Coordinate with MoHA, DCCs and President Chure Conservation Committee (MoFE), local govt. Harmonize with Local Infra. Devt. Policy (2004).
Working policy: Environment Protection and water quality management:	This consideration is valid from the local users' perspective but adopted in limited areas.	
Public hearing, social auditing and minimization of adverse impacts from the irrigation project development.		Need to promote these measures also from transparency, accountability, and integrity.
Conservation of ponds, wetlands, springs available at the local level while developing irrigation schemes.	This is not considered while developing irrigation infrastructures; need to coordinate with local govt./authorities.	DOI need to collaborate with DOA to make coordination mechanism effective and avail the water as per the reqt of the crops.
Each irrigation office will collaborate and manage irrigation with Priority package program of Dept of Agriculture where the water users are active and can provide year round irrigation	A working mechanism at the Director General level exist between DOI and DOA. The delivery is not as expected.	

3.5 National Land Use Policy, 2015

This policy was formulated considering the growing concerns about the increasing fragmentation of fertile land and unplanned urbanization. The vision of this policy is to make optimum use of available Land and Land Resources (LLRs) in pursuit of sustainable social, economic, and ecological developments and prosperity of the country as well. This aims at ensuring the optimum use of land and control land fragmentation, helping establish a link between agricultural with industrial sectors. Land use policy 2015 of Nepal included classification of land in the number of zones (11 categories) based on suitability, preparation of federal land-use plan with priority for protection of agricultural land by land consolidation, and commercial farming. It also includes subsidizing tax for agricultural land to promote sustainable agriculture.

Major policy provisions and their implementation status is summarized in table 5 below.

Table 5 Some provisions of national Land Use Policy and their implementation status

Policy Provisions	Implementation status	Remarks
Land use zoning – Land will be classified into 11 different land use zones Working Policy: Encourage to grow agriculture crops in lands having potential/existing irrigation facility while considering soil conservation in the hills.	Land Act 8 th amendment (2019) (in collaboration with other concerned Ministries) focused on the implementation part of the land use plan.	Effective coordination and communication among relevant govts and agencies needed
Land Use Plan Prepare and use of Land Use Plan at different levels Ensure development works implemented in accordance with land use plan Working policy:	Classification of land based on utilization started	Need to establish a separate institution for implementation.
Prepare and implement land use plan at different governmental levels i.e. center, district, municipality level Include productivity, environmental conservation, social and economic development, and poverty alleviation considerations in land use plans	Land use guidelines revised	Need to collaborate with province and local levels and concerned ministries.

3.6 Forest Policy, 2015

The vision of this policy is to contribute to local and national prosperity through the sustainable management of forests, biodiversity, and watersheds. It aims to identify the forests that have the potentiality of increasing production and productivity for sustainable management.

The working policies under integrated management of watershed areas for increasing land productivity through protecting land and water include development and transfer of technology on low-cost soil and watershed protection and agroforestry system through action research and implementation of soil conservation program by harmonizing between forest and agricultural system for contributing to food production and food security are mentioned. Similarly, its provisions to create green employment and value addition by involving the private sector in forest development and expansion through forest enterprise promotion, product diversification; marketing; implement the mitigation and adaptation approaches for the negative impacts of climate change; and capacitate the management for good governance, inclusion, and social justice promotion in the forestry sector.

For the implementation of these provisions, these provisions have to be harmonized and make consistent with other sectoral and cross-cutting policies such as agriculture, industry,

trade/industry, poverty alleviation, climate change, etc. The implementation has not taken momentum as restructuring of the agricultural and forestry-related organization took place at different levels which created confusion about the roles and responsibilities. Hence, there needs role clarity and effective coordination to be maintained from the planning stage to implementation among three tiers of governments and multi-stakeholders involved in agriculture, forestry, and research and extension.

3.7 National Agroforestry Policy, 2019

This policy aims to contribute to national prosperity through the development, expansion, and commercialization of the agroforestry system. The objectives are to increase the production of agricultural, livestock, and forest products by increasing the productivity of the land and multipurpose use of the land; to conserve the environment and biological diversity by reducing pressure over the forest, to maintain quality, and to develop climate resilience ecosystem; to create opportunities for livelihood, employment and income generation along with food security of the local communities by widely promoting agroforestry; to contribute to the economy through commercialization and facilitation of investment opportunities in agroforestry, and to conduct study, research, and capacity enhancement in agroforestry subjects. Further, for its implementation, it demands to promote synergies with other policies such as agriculture, forestry, climate change, science and technology, climate change poverty alleviation, biodiversity, and many more. Further, this also requires to develop an institutional mechanism/framework at different tiers for coordination, communication, and collaboration.

4. Why do our agricultural and natural resource policies fail to deliver targeted outcomes?

As many policies have failed to get implemented and failed to generate desired policy outcomes even if they are implemented, the same applies to policies related to Agriculture and Natural Resources. It is well known that policy is a process that involves different actors, at the center of which are issues of power, social relations, and political influence. It is now widely accepted that policy reform for sustainable development is not achieved by adding more new public policies to the already impressive rosters, in the name of rural development and sustainable agriculture, forestry, or natural resources management. It is very important to know the governance in terms of the structures and processes that determine how policy is formulated and implemented. Weak governance within and between the governments, the private sector, and local communities results in bad policy or bad policy implementation, which in turn affects peoples' livelihood and the health of the natural resources. Moreover, policymaking is the result of a bargaining process among actors, who frequently have diverse and even opposing preferences and interests. The bargaining power of those actors differs, derived from a variety of sources such as the existing formal rules, informal norms, their ability to represent and mobilize other groups in society, or their control over resources (World Bank, 2017). The gap between policy on paper and implementation, in reality, seems to be one of the most serious challenges for development in the country. Let us look at the general features or tendencies in policy formulation and implementation in Nepal.

4.1 Consideration of only ideal situation

A traditional approach is usually adopted, where possible states of the world are listed, given the set of possible choices, assigning a probability to each state, and calculating an expected outcome by considering costs and benefits. This works well in situations, where the choices are well-known and where uncertainty can be quantified as risk. However, public policy often takes place in complex domains where it is not possible to conceive of all the possible states of the world, much less to quantify probabilities and costs or benefits. This often leads to unintended consequences or failure in policy implementation. As per Muller (2020), the features of the public policies are - non-linear and emergent, do not settle in equilibria and hard to predict, evolve and coevolve, subject to cognitive biases, and they suffer from reactivity. Usually, the policy makers have the tendency to underestimate the complexity and challenge inherent in the process of policy making.

4.2 Influence of interest groups

Interest Groups are associations of individuals or organisations that on the basis of one or more shared concerns, attempt to influence public policy in their favour usually by lobbying members of the government. Interest groups seek to exert influence or pressure on government officials by various ways on key decision making issues in order to have policies that favour their members. There may be wide varieties of interests in agriculture, natural resources including land and forestry, trade and industry and climate governance etc. Interest Groups have been very visible putting pressure on centers of policy making either in the legislative or the executive body. They lobby with these bodies and advocate the policy provisions in their favor. Interest groups exert influence on the policy process from the stage of policy initiation, formulation to implementation. The positive aspect is that these groups help bring government closer to the people by making available to policy makers vital information that could improve their outcome of public policy (Akhakpe, 2014). An example can be cited in terms of influence of interest groups for the eighth amendment of the Land Act. This allowed the industries to relocate in any parts of the country by amending the provision of Land Act. The industries that were enjoying the land ceiling (by relaxing the provisions for industry) can now sell their valuable land and buy cheaper land in other parts of the country. This is against the spirit of land reform as they occupied land for operating industry and planning to sell or use for other purposes (than initially stated).

4.3 Putting all what you have learnt or heard

Most often, the policy makers or participants/stakeholders try to express and ask to document all the information what they have learnt or heard in the policy or considering their interest (without accounting others' concerns) in the policy making process. This sometimes undermines the ground reality, and needs and aspirations of the beneficiaries, to whom we intend to make policy. Thus, it tends to have inconsistencies and sometime overlap with other strategies and policies. In addition, there is tendency among experts, bureaucrats or even among politicians, that their views are "correct" and should be put in place. The policy making is a context specific, but often the policy makers borrow policy provisions from elsewhere in a national policy document which may not be feasible to implement as conditions may differ. This, though, gives a beauty to the policy document, but lacks practicality for implementation.

The stakeholders/participants sometimes become reactive and formulate policies in response to an existing situation or a problem rather than on need-basis. Due to this tendency of formulating isolated policies, many policies and their provisions are in contradiction with each other and are shelved without any likelihood of implementation.

4.4 Political instability and implementation

Nepal has adopted many policies that are in line with the national needs and international agreements, but their implementation has been very weak. There is a rich set of documented policies for almost all sectors, but they have not been put into practice. Many a times, policy implementation depends on the individuals and therefore any change in the government usually leads to changes in, how a policy is interpreted and implemented. Nepal has undergone frequent changes in Government administration and the transfer of staff which has meant that institutional memory in the government is very limited. This has often hampered proper implementation of policies. Some of the policies (such as National land policy 2019 and Land use Policy 2015), though are considered important, but could not be implemented because that were not supported by any legislation, and Government instability primarily hindered discussions or passing of laws that would back up the implementation of those policies.

4.5 Undermining inclusion in policy formulation

One major/basic source of policy formulation is to consider the voice of the concerned stakeholders and needy groups. Inclusive processes are important to give all segments of society access to government decision making in order to better reflect their needs and aspirations, both in policy making and in service delivery. The inclusive processes increase awareness across the policy cycle and help to orient institutions in support of inclusive outcomes (Gent, 2017). Often, the process is supply-driven, inadequate consultation at different levels for securing commitment and consensus from stakeholders and failure to specify appropriate implementation arrangements, often leads to a failure on implementation of policies. But often, a very complicated framework is devised which could not owned by institutions and stakeholders at different levels leading to poor or no implementation.

4.6 Politics shaping policies

Some countries seem capable of sustaining policies over time, while in other countries, policies are frequently reversed or changed due to change in political and economic conditions. That may provide incentives for politicians and policy makers to deviate from established goal-oriented policies and formulate the new ones. It is considered desirable to adapt policies to changing economic and political conditions and to formulate new ones or revise the existing policies. However, governments sometimes abuse the discretion to adapt policies by adopting opportunistic, one-sided policies that are closer to their own preferences or those of narrow constituencies. And, when the conditions are changed, the politicians make overly optimistic expectations and start a policy process. Usually, the politicians tend not to be held accountable for the outcomes of their policy initiatives - in the event of failure, the likelihood is that that they will have moved on or moved out. They may be easily attracted to the prospect of short-term results. This can lead to the pushing through of policies as quickly as possible, rather than getting involved in the messy, prolonged, and frustrating details of how things might work out

in practice (Hudson et al., 2019). In general, there is evidence to suggest that the political will necessary to drive long-term policy-making tends to dissipate over time (Norris and McCrae, 2013). Hence, the policy-makers including politicians are more likely to get credit for legislation that is passed than for implementation problems that have been avoided.

4.7 Governance system

Policies formulated at national level may face the challenge of ensuring some degree of consistency in delivery at subnational level, a process that is especially fraught where the subnational level has some separate degree of political authority (Norris et al. 2014). Sausman et al. (2016) mentioned the concept of “local universality” to describe the process whereby general rules, products, or guidelines are customized to fit into local contexts and enacted within practices. In Nepal, the policy making process was more centralized (top-down) and controlled before the federalism. Even now, the hangover persist and the provincial and local governments are reluctant to adopt the policies formulated by the federal government because sometimes they argue that they were not involved in the process. In addition, the policy provisions were put in place without proper assessment of the human resources capacity institutions at different levels and financial resources requirement. That also resulted in poor accountability, ownership, and implementation.

5. Way Forward

The lapses in the existing policy process and policy provisions and poor implementation discussed above suggest for some considerations to improve the exiting process and orientation, which can be as follows:

a) Wider Consideration: When developing policies and strategies, wider consultations have to be made with stakeholders at different levels to identify their needs and aspirations and ways to address them. This may reflect the reality on the ground. The consultation will ensure that every stakeholder understands the importance of policies, own it, and facilitate their implementation effectively.

b) Inter-policy Coherence: As many policies have some common themes and provisions, it is necessary to assess policy coherence from national to sub-national to local levels (vertically) and across line ministries and sectors (horizontally) to promote synergies and minimize trade-offs. This will be useful to identify the common areas of focus or cross-cutting themes (and approaches adopted) while also improving tracking of the results and/or progress, identification of potential implementation partners, the actors involved, and maximizing local resources.

c) Sufficient Institutional Framework: Policy development should be backed by a strong institutional framework for its implementation. Many times policies are formulated without assessing the existing institutions and their capacity at different levels. Different governance systems have to be developed at federal, provincial, and local levels for collaboration and coordination required for its effective implementation. In addition, the capacity of the implementers should also be enhanced through education and training. The policy provisions should also be communicated to all the stakeholders timely at all levels.

d) Periodic Policy Evaluation: Once policies are developed and implemented, these are hardly assessed/evaluated in terms of their effectiveness and outcome. The research on several

aspects of policies is essential to provide feedback to the implementers and other stakeholders so that the overall policy process (from agenda-setting to implementation) can be improved.

e) Increased Accountability: There is a tendency of policy implementors especially that of bureaucracy to start a new policy with the change in the political condition such as the change in government, without proper consideration of what was done before. Of course, corrections can be made in the ongoing policies based on their merits/evaluation, but a vacuum should not be created at once. The policymakers and implementers should be accountable for creating institutional memory and carry on further even in the context of change in government.

f) Consideration for National Interest: The policy-making process is not devoid of the influence of interest groups or unofficial government. Different groups lobby and advocate for their interest to be reflected in the policy provisions. Some groups seek benefits for very specific segments of society while others work for broader causes. In this context, the policy-making process should consider the national interest and welfare of the people at the center while developing any policy.

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