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## SAJHEDARI BIKAAS – PARTNERSHIP FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Often Nepali's main point of contact to government is through their local governance bodies. Despite the absence of local elections, District and Village Development Committees and Municipalities provide basic public services. As the Government of Nepal restructures the state under a new constitution and decentralizes critical government functions to sub-national units, USAID's Partnership for Local Development project (Sajhedari Bikaas) strengthens the relationship between Nepalis and local government by improving transparency, accountability, and responsiveness.

Sajhedari Bikaas is a five-year, \$35 million project implemented in 12 districts including six earthquake-affected districts, and complements the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development work. The project incorporates success from two previous USAID projects – the Nepal Transition Initiative and the Nepal Government Citizen Partnership Project.

The primary goal of Sajhedari Bikaas is to improve targeted communities' to direct their own development. The project will facilitate community development workshops and help develop plans that consider the interests of all community members, including historically marginalized populations. They will receive small grants and technical assistance, as well as learn about a range of social accountability tools and auditing practices used by the Government of Nepal. This project ensures the participation of key stakeholders at all stages of decision making, including implementation, operations, maintenance, oversight and evaluation.

## PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Sajhedari Bikaas supports local governance in Nepal through four objectives:

1. Improve an enabling environment for community development while mitigating conflict at the community level by fostering inclusive community-based economic growth and income generation
2. Expand communities' ability to access resources for development through strategic village development plans, service user groups, provision of micro-grants, and social accountability mechanisms
3. Promote the transparent administration of funds, adoption of inclusive management systems, and sustainability in community-level projects
4. Strengthen local government officials through building capacity among new and existing government units and, alongside civil society organizations, assisting local government in identifying community priorities

### Earthquake Recovery

In the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes in April and May 2015, communities in affected districts continue to require significant support in rebuilding damaged or destroyed small-scale infrastructure such as water taps, latrines, roads, trails, schools, and health posts. The Sajhedari Bikaas recovery objective puts communities at the center of reconstruction efforts to ensure local ownership and sustainability of results. Interventions include: 1) facilitation of post-disaster planning; 2) capacity building of District Disaster Relief Committees; 3) rapid roll-out of locally-managed small-scale infrastructure projects and community initiatives; 4) coordination of integrated mobile service camps; 5) citizen oversight, social accountability, and public reporting; and 6) mitigation of grievances and disputes.

## KEY ACTIVITIES

- Community mediation training and incorporation of mediation into local government bodies
- Women's micro-enterprise groups' capacity building and integration into local governance decision-making
- Implementation of community-owned, implemented, and managed micro development projects, engaging Ward Citizen Forums (local governance citizen groups), social mobilizers, and local government bodies in the process
- Facilitation of participatory drafting of strategic Periodic Development Plans with attention to inclusivity
- Coordination of social audits, public hearings, and public audits, and public posting of citizen charters
- Public expenditure tracking exercises and training, particularly investigating gender equality and social inclusion