

- A – My communal water source is too far away
- B – Water is not clean or safe to drink
- C – There is not enough water available
- D – Initial water connection fees are too high



VOICES OF NEPAL



“SAMUDAYIK AWAAZ”

Citizen views on WASH in Nepal
Through Interactive Radio and SMS Polls

DEC 2021



dopper.

WASH ALLIANCE
Accelerating WASH

Simavi
Powerful women, healthy societies



सेबक-नेपाल
SEBAC-NEPAL



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PARTNERS INVOLVED



Simavi strives for a world in which all women and girls are socially and economically empowered, and able to pursue their rights to a healthy life free from discrimination, coercion and violence. Simavi is the lead implementing organisation for the WASH SDG sub-programme implemented by WASH Alliance Nepal. The WASH SDG sub-programme in Nepal aims to reach an improved WASH situation for all, thus contributing to the Sustainable Development Goal 6.



TRAC FM transforms radio listeners from passive bystanders to active participants by facilitating informed and interactive debate. Through live radio talk-shows, SMS polls and dedicated software, TRAC FM enables our partners to collect relevant data. Real-time citizen data helps to close information gaps on public service delivery and empowers citizens to become part of crucial conversations about their livelihoods. TRAC FM's 10 years of experience in this field guides partners to set up solid data-driven advocacy campaigns with significant and positive impact on pro-citizen policies.



SEBAC-Nepal is a national level service oriented non-governmental organization (NGO) that works in drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene/Health (WASH), Livelihood & Natural Resources Management, Governance and Peace Building, Disaster Risk Management including Climate Change.



WASH Alliance Nepal, also known as WAI Nepal is a consortium of partners who work together with NGO's, communities, government and businesses on sustainable WASH solutions. At present, partners of WASH Alliance Nepal includes Simavi, ENPHO, Lumanti, CIUD, Geruwa, Biruwa, NFCC and Sahakarmi Samaj. Together, the consortium partners are working on the WASH SDG programme, a five-year Dutch government funded programme that aims to sustainably improve access to, and use of safe drinking water, sanitation and improve hygiene behaviour.



Sahakarmi Samaj (SS) is a Nepali non-governmental organization committed to people-led empowerment. SS has been working in the field of community capacity building and mobilization, organizational development, human right promotion, peace and reconciliation since 1997. SS is currently a part of the WASH Alliance, leading the demand generation pathway for the WASH SDG programme in Nepal.

FUNDED BY



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RADIO PARTNERS

📍 Sindhupalchowk



RADIO SINDHU
105 MHz
नेपालीपन, नेपाली रेडियो

Radio Sindhu



RADIO MELANCHI
107.2 MHz
ऊँटो खाना उँटो आवाज

Radio Melanchi

📍 Banke



Pratibodh FM



Bheri FM



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Samudayik Awaaz (Voices of Nepal) lets citizens of Nepal voice their opinions, concerns and experiences with Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), COVID-19 and Menstrual Health.

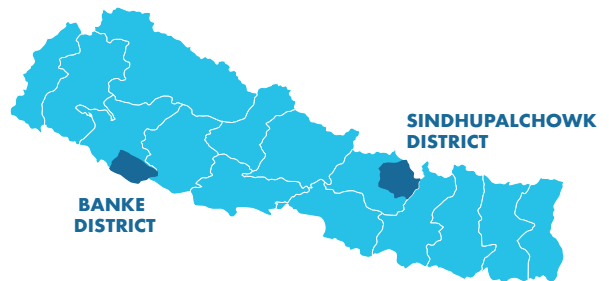
4 radio stations in Nepal called on their listeners to participate in Interactive radio polls facilitated through the TRAC FM software platform. Thousands of listeners responded to the following polls:

- ▶ **What impact is COVID-19 having on your life?**
- ▶ **Who is more conscious on hygiene? Men or Women?**
- ▶ **What is your biggest challenge when getting water for domestic use?**
- ▶ **What is your biggest concern when it comes to toilet within your household?**
- ▶ **What is the biggest challenge in improving menstrual health?**
- ▶ **Who should teach children about menstruation?**

The poll results were discussed during 6 1-hour live radio debates and shared with decision makers at local government level. All poll results are visualised in infographics and shared in this report.

Through data-driven feedback loops, awareness is raised and policy makers become more aware of the views, needs and suggestions brought forward by citizens. The partners working on the Samudayik Awaaz radio campaign ensure that the thousands of voices that collectively make up the content of this report, get heard by the right people.

PROJECT AREAS COVERED



CONTEXT OF BOTH AREAS



SINDHUPALCHOWK DISTRICT

Sindhupalchowk is a district in the north-eastern part of Nepal, bordering China with a hilly-mountainous terrain. Sindhupalchowk has a multi-ethnic population in the highlands of Nepal, with more than 60% of the population belonging to indigenous/janajati groups.¹ Agriculture is the main source of income here with 77% of the population engaged in it (2019). Notably, 66% of the population engaged in agriculture are women. Aside from this, the livelihoods of many communities here are also dependent on subsistence gardening, cash crop farming, wages from formal and informal jobs and livestock keeping. The female literacy rate (51.88%) is 15% lower than the male literacy here (67.97%).

In 2015, an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 severely affected Sindhupalchowk, leading to destruction and loss of many lives, infrastructure and disruption to services. In the aftermath of the earthquake, many CSOs provided support to the citizens of Sindhupalchowk. This has resulted in positive outcomes.



BANKE DISTRICT

Banke lies in the flat Terai plain lands of the rural southern part of Nepal. In this more traditional setting, women are less involved in economic activities than men and are mostly confined to household work and farming. The majority of the population is divided among Hindu (78.49%) and Muslim (18.98%) religion. Whereas on a caste/ethnicity basis, the 3 major groups are Muslim (18.99%), Tharu (15.65%) and Chhetri (14.76%). The human development index of Banke is 0.475 (NPC, 2014)

Nepalgunj city, which lies in Banke district is one of the major commercial hubs of this mid-western region of the country, bordering India in the South. Agriculture (including livestock / poultry), riverbed farming, cottage industries, business and trading are the main economic activities of the district.[2] Among the registered small and cottage industries, majority work in the production sector, followed by the service sector, indicating production and service are the two major areas of employment in Banke. As this district borders India, and Nepal shares an open border with India, many people seek employment opportunities there too.

¹ Nepal's officially recognised indigenous populations ("Janajatis") make up around 37% of the population [of Nepal] and comprise 59 groups, each with a distinct language, history and cultural identity. While Janajati communities are very diverse, they have common experiences of social, political, and economic marginalisation and the appropriation of traditional lands and natural resources. [Read report](#)

2.0 GOALS OF THE SAMUDAYIK AWAAZ CAMPAIGN

This report brings together all results of the Samudayik Awaaz campaign. The goal of this collaboration is to:

- ▶ Sensitise Nepalese citizens on various WASH, COVID-19 and MH related topics
- ▶ Spark public debate among Nepalese citizens
- ▶ Collect data on public opinion related to WASH
- ▶ Use data to advocate for effective service delivery and citizen centered policy

Identifying the problem and engaging in dialogue to discuss those issues is the first step towards finding solutions. Through this radio campaign we aim to amplify the voices of our community by reaching the unreached through radio.

PRAGATI BAJRACHARYA
SIMAVI

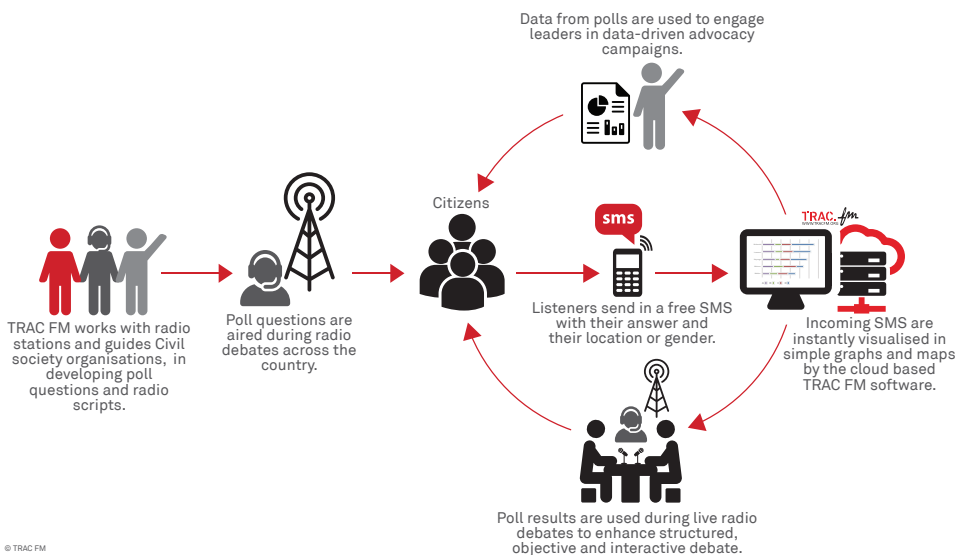
The response from the community of Sindhupalchowk is really surprising. I did not think we would get this many responses!

KUMAR BHATTARAI
SEBAC - NEPAL

I feel like we have been successful in bringing in the voices of our community.

RAJARAM GUPTA
SAHAKARMI SAMAJ - NEPAL

TRAC FM Workflow



3.0 POLL FINDINGS

3.1 POLL QUESTION ONE

What impact is COVID-19 having on your life?

In May 2021 UN sources indicated that Nepal had the highest Covid-transmission rate in the world.² Amid these troubling numbers, the "Samudayik Awaaz" (Voices of Nepal) radio campaign decided that the urgent COVID-19 crisis could not be ignored. In the first interactive radio poll in Nepal the WASH theme was substituted for a program dedicated to the pandemic.



Beyond expectations, 2,292 listeners participated in the very first radio broadcast by sending in a free SMS to answer the radio poll question.

RADIO TALKSHOW

The poll results were discussed during live radio talk shows on Friday the 9th of July 2021 at two popular radio stations. Expert guests were asked to reflect on the results and give further information regarding the COVID-19 crises.

Guest speakers included local health professionals giving the latest updates on the spread of the pandemic and how to prevent getting infected, local leaders in charge of relief efforts and counselors explaining the mental stress that comes with a pandemic and how best to cope with isolation and feelings of anxiety during the crisis.

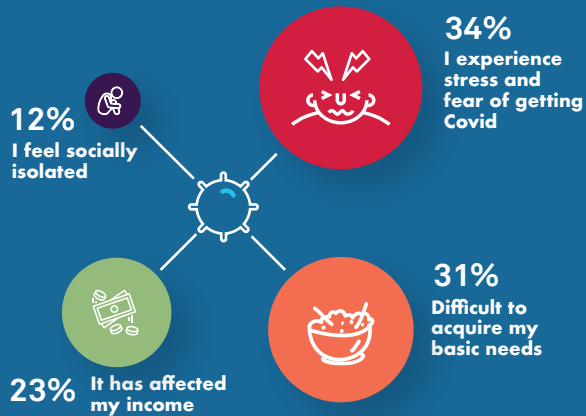
² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZD8brK3PCbE> – BBC video on transmission rates in Nepal

INFOGRAPHICS

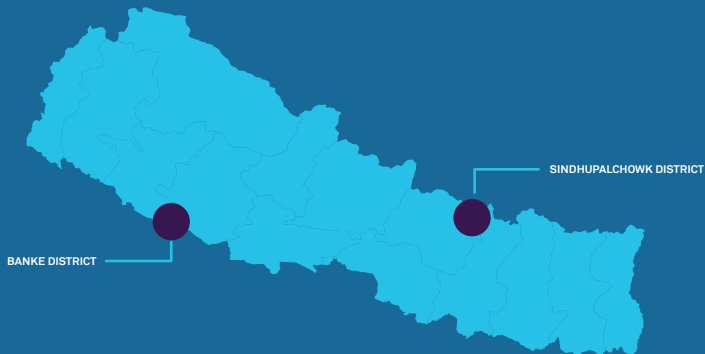
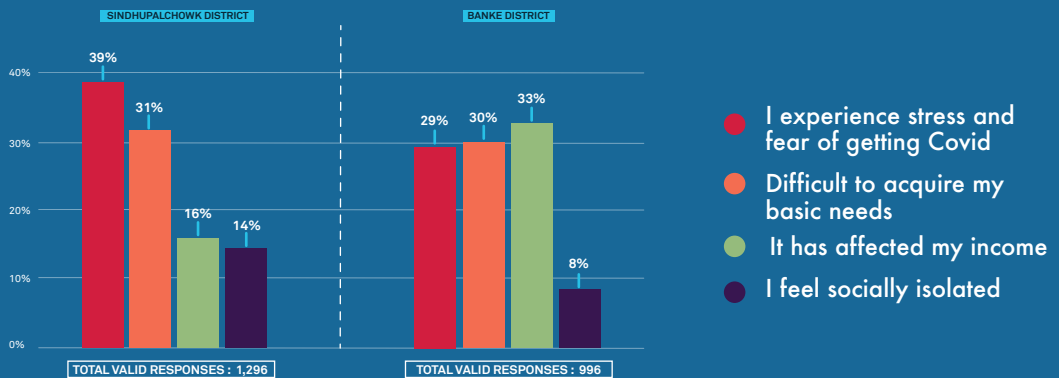
POLL ONE

What impact is COVID-19 having on your life?

TOTAL
RESPONSES :
2,292



Location Data



FURTHER ANALYSIS

After the radio discussions, the Samudayik Awaaz team continued analysis of the data to establish why the results in both locations had different outcomes. For this, experts were approached to reflect on the data.

"It has affected my income"



33%

Banke



16%

Sindhupalchowk

In Banke district (33%) the pandemic has a more profound financial impact on communities than Sindhupalchowk (16%).

- [A] Due to the higher dependency of income from tourism and cross-border work with India, Banke poll results indicate a significantly higher number of respondents indicating the effect on income.
- [B] Sindhupalchowk is a more agrarian region in the mountains in the North bordering Tibet, China and therefore, respondents indicated less impact on income.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Through this report and other information dissemination efforts, the program endeavours to inform policy makers on citizen views. In this regard, the poll results presented here could help shape the sort of support leaders consider to provide to citizens during the COVID-19 crisis or be a start into further inquiry on the needs of citizens in the different locations.



3.2 POLL QUESTION TWO

Who is more conscious about hygiene?

Good hygiene behaviour practices are key to bringing lasting change within the community of Nepal. As provision of WASH facilities and services alone are not sufficient to address hygiene challenges, citizens must first and foremost be able to understand and practice positive hygiene behaviour. This has to come from both male and female members of the community.

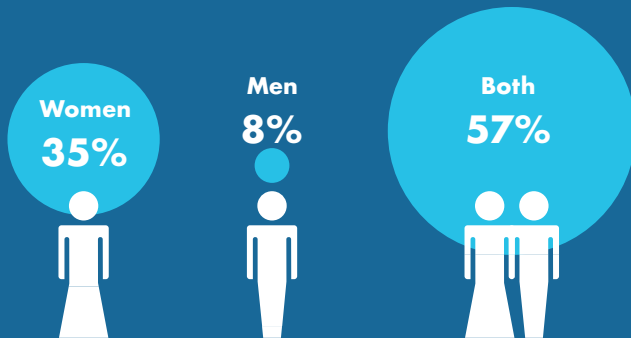
As an exploration of cultural differences, 4 stations in two remote regions of Nepal asked their listeners to respond to the following poll question:

INFOGRAPHICS

POLL TWO

**In your family,
who is more
conscious
about
hygiene?**

TOTAL
RESPONSES :
2,232



Location Data

SINDHUPALCHOWK DISTRICT



TOTAL VALID RESPONSES : 1,733

BANKE DISTRICT



TOTAL VALID RESPONSES : 499



POLL RESULTS

According to 2232 respondents, in both Banke and Sindhupalchowk 'Men' are considered the least conscious about hygiene 6% and 9% respectively.

There is a substantial difference when it comes to the 'equally conscious' option. Only a collective effort will reduce the negative effects of poor hygiene. While Sindhupalchowk has 63% of respondents answering option C (both equally conscious), in Banke only 36% voted for option C. This indicates that in Banke hygiene is considered to be the responsibility of women more than men.

POLL RESULT ANALYSIS

Banke lies in the flat Terai plain lands of the rural southern part of Nepal. In this more traditional setting, women are less involved in economic activities than men and are mostly confined to domestic work and farming. Historical, cultural and religious backgrounds of the region could all be factored in when establishing that women are seen as more conscious and more responsible for hygiene.


Comparing the data of both districts, the community of Sindhupalchowk are considered more modernised and a higher balance in gender roles exists. More research should be done into the cultural differences but it seems clear that any WASH related intervention should take these significant differences into account.

RECOMENDATIONS


Poor hygiene means children are regularly ill and miss school, adults are not able to work to support their families, patients are at risk in healthcare environment, and people's dignity is compromised.

Simavi and its partners improve hygiene behaviour by raising awareness on the adverse health impacts correlated to this. Raising awareness on safe sanitation and hygiene practices leads to demand creation for such services. We believe that the responsibility of hygiene whether at household level or at community level lies on both male and female members of the community.

QUOTES FROM THE RADIO SHOW:

 Historically women were regarded as having the prime responsibility for all household related activities whether it be fetching water and taking care of sanitation and hygiene. This thinking is backward and we need to change it through awareness."

GUEST AT THE RADIO PROGRAM

 I am a teacher in a school and both me and my husband are working professionals. When I come home from work, the responsibility of all household activities like cleaning and washing lies on me. It is often said that this is a womens job. On the other hand, when my husband comes home after work, he does not help me with any household related chores. This is the reality."

CALLER TO THE RADIO PROGRAM IN BANKE (GYANI BASNET)

 To bring in change in these pre-conceived gender roles, we need to become role models ourselves"

MALE RADIO GUEST IN SINDHUPALCHOWK



3.3 POLL QUESTION THREE

Access to clean water is a fundamental human need and water is a key pillar of any WASH program. To get a broad picture on what community members considered the biggest challenge with water, a radio poll was aired asking:

What is your biggest challenge when getting water for domestic use?

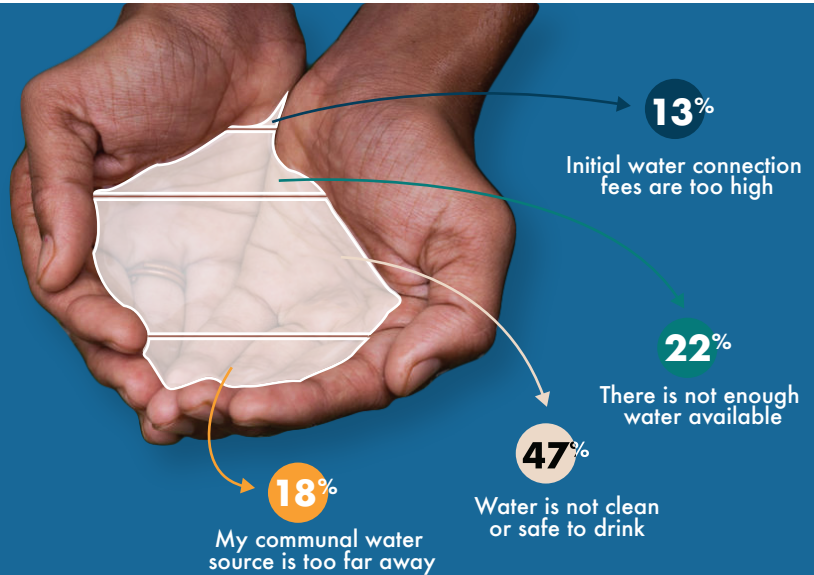
Close to 2,000 listeners took time to respond to the poll question and the poll results paint a clear picture on the biggest problem with water in both regions:

INFOGRAPHICS

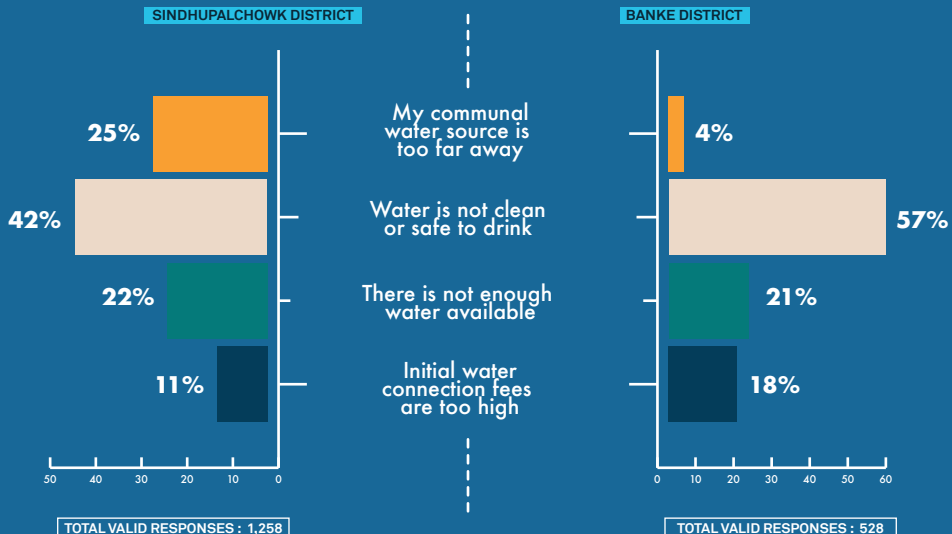
POLL THREE

What is your biggest challenge when getting water for domestic use?

TOTAL
RESPONSES :
1,786



Location Data



This poll question ran in the districts of Banke and Sindhupalchowk in Nepal from July 30th to August 19th 2021



POLL RESULTS ANALYSIS

In Nepal, even though an estimated 80% of the total population has access to drinking water, it is not safe. Water is polluted at source due to contamination of industrial and domestic waste. Similarly, ground water sources are also polluted due to seepage from sewages that lack proper treatment systems.

42% of our participants in Sindhupalchowk and 57% in Banke said access to clean and safe water is their biggest challenge. A recent study found that E.coli is the most common contaminant in water sources. In urban areas 72% of the water is contaminated with E.coli at the sources itself and 82% are contaminated at the point of use. The poll results clearly indicate the need for water treatment both at the point of distribution and again at individual household level to ensure our communities have access to clean drinking water.

RADIO TALKSHOW

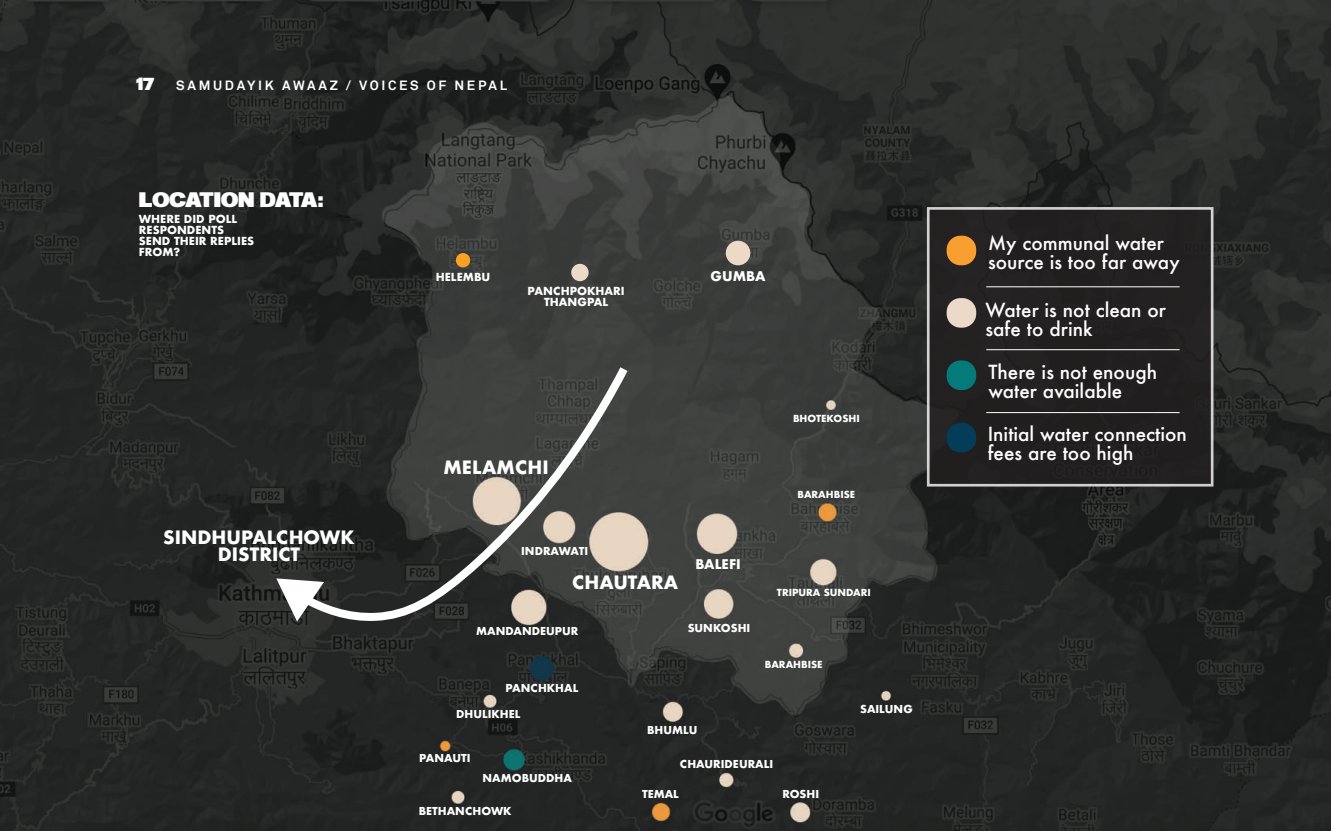
Representatives of Smart Paani were invited to talk about water purification to improve the water quality for consumption. Smart Paani is raising awareness on the need for regular water testing. They continuously lobby the local government about the prevalent water and sanitation issues to put pressure on them to take action. Budget advocacy is another important advocacy strategy to ensure sufficient allocation of financial resources to address the challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A complex bureaucracy with insufficient monitoring and learning structures seem to undermine proper and clean water provision. Policies, strategies, monitoring and implementation mechanisms fail. The overall federal government structure is responsible for water and sanitation facilities in rural and urban areas through the Department of Water Sanitation and Sewerage (DWSS). However, on the ground level, the prime responsibility of ensuring safe drinking water quality lies on the Water Users Committees (WUCs) and the local government.

Without clear management structures that integrate the different water departments and control quality, there is a lack of oversight and water quality deteriorates. An overhaul of management structures and bottom-up involvement and responsibilities could significantly improve water quality and the quality of life.



LOCATION DATA:WHERE DID POLL
RESPONDENTS
SEND THEIR REPLIES
FROM?**Municipality Data****SINDHUPALCHOWK DISTRICT**Chautara
Sangachowkgadi

11%

20%

42%

27%

Melamchi
Nagarpalika

9%

22%

46%

23%

Balefi
Gaupalika

13%

33%

39%

15%

Mandandeupur
Gaupalika

29%

8%

38%

25%

Indrawati
Gaupalika

2%

29%

39%

30%

Sunkoshi
Gaupalika

2%

19%

48%

31%

My communal water
source is too far awayWater is not clean or
safe to drinkThere is not enough
water availableInitial water connection
fees are too high

QUOTES FROM THE RADIO SHOW:

“A key recurring issue with water supply in Sindhupalchowk is the impact of flooding and earthquake destroying pipelines, and compromising water source protection.”



“Water quality testing guidelines and policies are still in the initial stages of implementation in Sindhupalchowk. Sometimes the water source is too far away to collect samples and bring it to the lab within the allocated time-frame.”



“There are various water filtration methods such as boiling, solar disinfection, chlorination, candle filter, etc that can be adopted on a household level to ensure that the water we are drinking is safe for consumption.”



“The ASHA programme supports the construction of water systems. Protection at the water source prevents water contamination.”



3.4 POLL QUESTION FOUR

The government of Nepal and several NGOs have put significant effort in combating open defecation challenges and have seen remarkable success. Despite these efforts access to safely managed sanitation remains low throughout the country. To get a broad picture on what community members consider the biggest challenge with sanitation, a radio poll was aired asking:

What is your biggest concern when it comes to toilet use within your household?

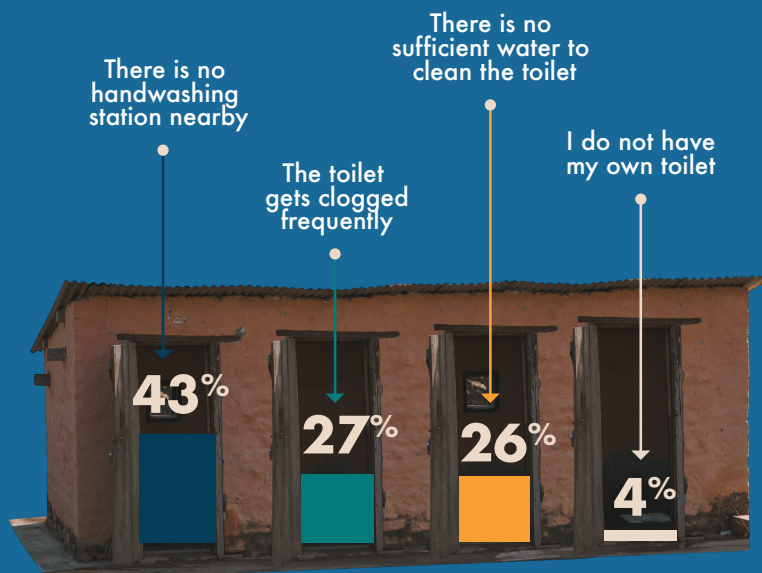
Almost 2000 listeners took time to respond to the poll question. The poll results paint a picture on the biggest problem with Sanitation in both regions:

INFOGRAPHICS

POLL FOUR

What is your biggest concern when it comes to toilet use within your household?

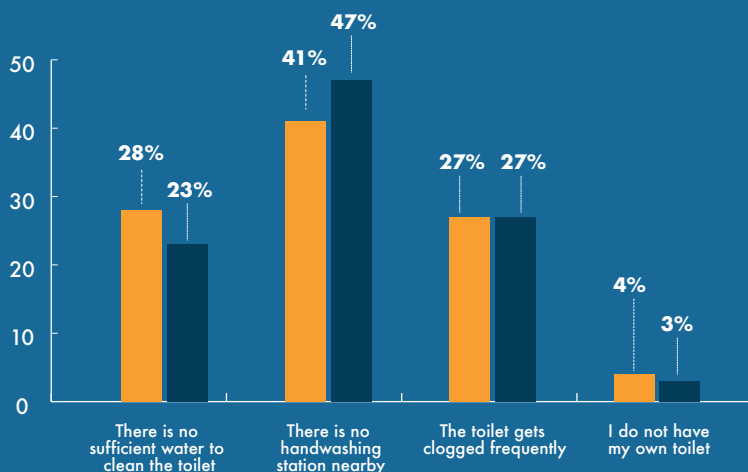
TOTAL
RESPONSES :
1,786



Location Data

SINDHUPALCHOWK DISTRICT
TOTAL VALID RESPONSES : 1,258

BANKE DISTRICT
TOTAL VALID RESPONSES : 528



This poll question ran in the districts of Banke and Sindhupalchowk in Nepal from August 19th to September 9th 2021



POLL RESULTS ANALYSIS

In **Banke**, 47% responded that “there is no hand washing station nearby” their toilet. The Open Defecation Free (ODF) campaign of 2019 heavily emphasized the requirement of one toilet per household to promote a paradigm shift from unhealthy practice of open defecation to systematic and safe use of toilets in every household. To sustain this campaign, a follow-up of this initiative should be to ensure each of these toilets also have a hand-washing facility.

While the Government of Nepal is committed and working in collaboration with WASH stakeholders to achieve the target of 100% sanitation access at household level, functioning toilets is still an issue to sustain the achievement of ODF in Banke. Many still rely on onsite sanitation systems such as pit latrines and septic tanks. These onsite systems need regular emptying to prevent toilets from getting clogged due to the accumulation of faecal sludge (FS). In our poll, 27% of the respondents said toilet clogging is a problem they frequently face. Fecal sludge management is a pressing issue not only in Banke but throughout Nepal. As of October, 2021 there were only 5 Fecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSMTP) in Nepal, none of which are in Banke.

The poll results in **Sindhupalchowk** are similar to that of Banke. Sanitation related problems such as the lack of hand-washing facilities, shortage of water and toilets getting clogged are common here too, to a similar degree. Therefore the radio talkshow focused on the importance of handwashing for general hygiene purposes and to prevent further spread of the COVID-19 virus. The masterplan from the government on sanitation and hygiene on a national level was also discussed and the fact that in the whole area there are no service providers for desludging/ fecal sludge management; these providers have to come all the way from the capital Kathmandu.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a follow-up of the ODF campaign, and to progress up the sanitation ladder, handwashing facilities, septic tank models and many such improvements need to be encouraged to reach Safely Managed Sanitation levels.

Through the WASH SDG programme, Simavi and the in-country partners have been lobbying and providing technical assistance for the construction of a Fecal Sludge Treatment Plant in Kohalpur Municipality, Banke. A detailed project report (DPR) with estimates on the budget, system specifications, site allocation and operation model has been finalised with the support of the municipality. The successful completion of this treatment plant will ensure that the communities of Banke will have access to safe faecal sludge disposal and treatment facilities. The site will be linked to existing entrepreneurs who provide desludging services.

Future construction of toilet and sanitation services should also ensure that this infrastructure can withstand the impact of climate change.

QUOTES FROM THE RADIO SHOW:



"I don't have a toilet in my house right now. I had one before but after the landslide destroyed it, we have not rebuilt it. We are around 10 households in my village without toilets. At that time, we were in a disaster crisis situation and did not rebuild it. But now because there are frequent landslides, we did not rebuild the toilet at all.

LAXMI BIKA - BARABISE MUNICIPALITY



"Not having proper hand washing facilities, access to water, can lead to diseases such as salmonella, diarrhea, respiratory infections and hand-food-and-mouth related disease. Apart from this, eye related disease can also be caused as we may touch our face, eyes and mouth with infected hands.

DR. RAM CHAULAGAIN - PRIMARY HEALTH CARE CENTER, INDRAWATI MUNICIPALITY



3.5
POLL QUESTION FIVE

Menstrual health and hygiene management is about empowering women and girls to manage their menstruation in a hygienic, safe and dignified way. It is important that we overcome the barriers that come in the way of achieving this goal.

What is the biggest challenge in improving menstrual health?

Almost 1700 listeners took time to respond to the poll question and the poll results paint a clear picture on the biggest problem with Menstrual Health in both regions:

POLL FIVE

What is the biggest challenge in improving menstrual health?

TOTAL
RESPONSES :
1,669

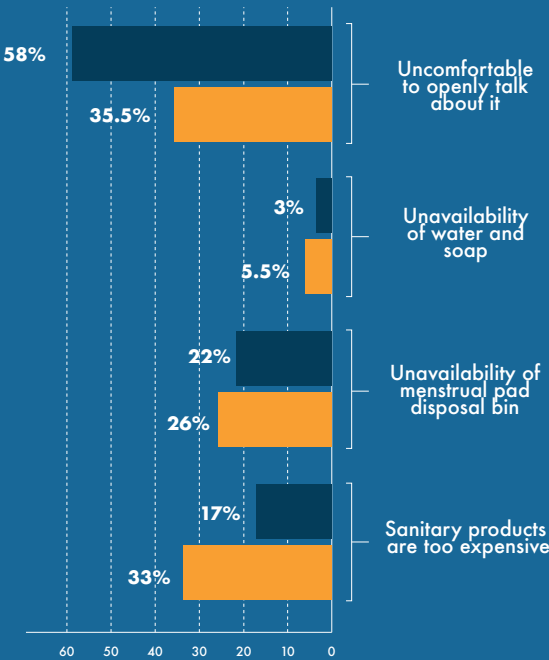
RESPONSES BASED ON LOCATION AND GENDER

MALE FEMALE



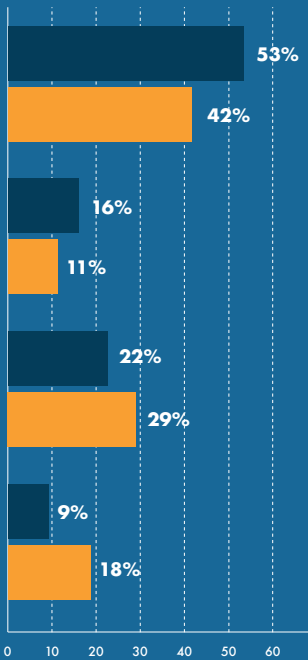
BANKE DISTRICT

TOTAL VALID RESPONSES : 425



SINDHUPALCHOWK DISTRICT

TOTAL VALID RESPONSES : 1,244





POLL RESULTS ANALYSIS

Menstruation is still a taboo topic in Nepal that is not openly discussed. The majority at both districts responded that they find it uncomfortable to talk about Menstrual Health. The poll results also show that both men and women are equally uncomfortable to have discussions around menstruation. The stigma around openly talking about menstruation has resulted in many misconceptions, superstitions and lack of factual, scientifically backed information shared between generations.

Our poll results also show that the unavailability of pad disposal bins in toilets was voted as the second biggest challenge faced by our communities in Banke (24%) and Sindhupalchowk (26%). Lack of proper disposal bins in schools, health care and public toilets may leave people with no choice but to flush pads down the toilet, which will lead to toilet clogging. Additionally, many women and girls attending schools without menstrual hygiene friendly toilets may decide to miss school days altogether, due to the inconvenience. Affordability of sanitary products is a challenge for 26% of the respondents in Banke and 14% of the respondents in Sindhupalchowk. Since 2020, government / community schools in Nepal have been providing free sanitary pads for girls. However, menstruation friendly toilets are not available in all the schools. Reusable or proper disposal options need to be integrated within the school system to allow women and girls to manage their menstrual health in a dignified, healthy way.

Experience Sharing from the radio talk show host on her first menstruation experience



“I got my first period when I was 15 years old. Back then I did not have much knowledge about menstruation. The only information I had, which I received from my mother, was that you bleed during menstruation. From my cousins and sisters I learned that during their time, they had to stay out of the house during menstruation. In my house, we did not have the practice of staying in chhaugoth (a separate makeshift hut for women to stay for the duration of their menstruation).



During my first menstruation, I was told that I am not allowed to drink cows milk – but I had it anyway. And I was told that I am not allowed to look at my father and brother while menstruating. But after just 2 days, I went and spoke to him and even touched him.

Another restriction was not being allowed to enter the worshiping room within the house. Then, as I grew up and moved to the city for higher education, I learned that these restrictions are baseless and the most important thing to do during menstruation is to maintain cleanliness and hygiene of oneself. Since then, even when I went back home I did not follow any of the restrictions imposed. Seeing this attitude and change in my behavior, my mother also became lenient. But because this is a culturally linked practice that has been followed for many years, it was difficult for her to completely accept it.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

The cultural and religious beliefs followed by people regarding menstruation are the biggest barriers in the path of good menstrual hygiene practices. The secrecy and shame around this topic leads to the community not openly talking about it. Many women in Nepal experience restrictions on cooking, worshipping, cultural events, regular activities and eating certain foods. By educating both men and women regarding menstruation, we can overcome these false beliefs and taboos, and be able to talk openly about it. This is why emphasis should be put in educating children (both girls and boys) from a very young age.

QUOTES FROM THE RADIO SHOW:



“Menstruation is an important process in the female anatomy which does not indicate that you are impure but it simply indicates that your body is ready for reproduction. One should not take this natural body process and define it as being impure.

Menstruation is a very taboo subject and initially, students are not comfortable talking about it. I have been running training sessions for school students on menstruation and since then, they have started talking openly about it. During menstruation it is common for boys to tease their female classmates. That is why it is important that male boys are also included in these information sessions and I have been doing that in my sessions.”



**NIRMALA TIMISLINA –
RAMA DEVI MADHYAMIK BIDHYALA**



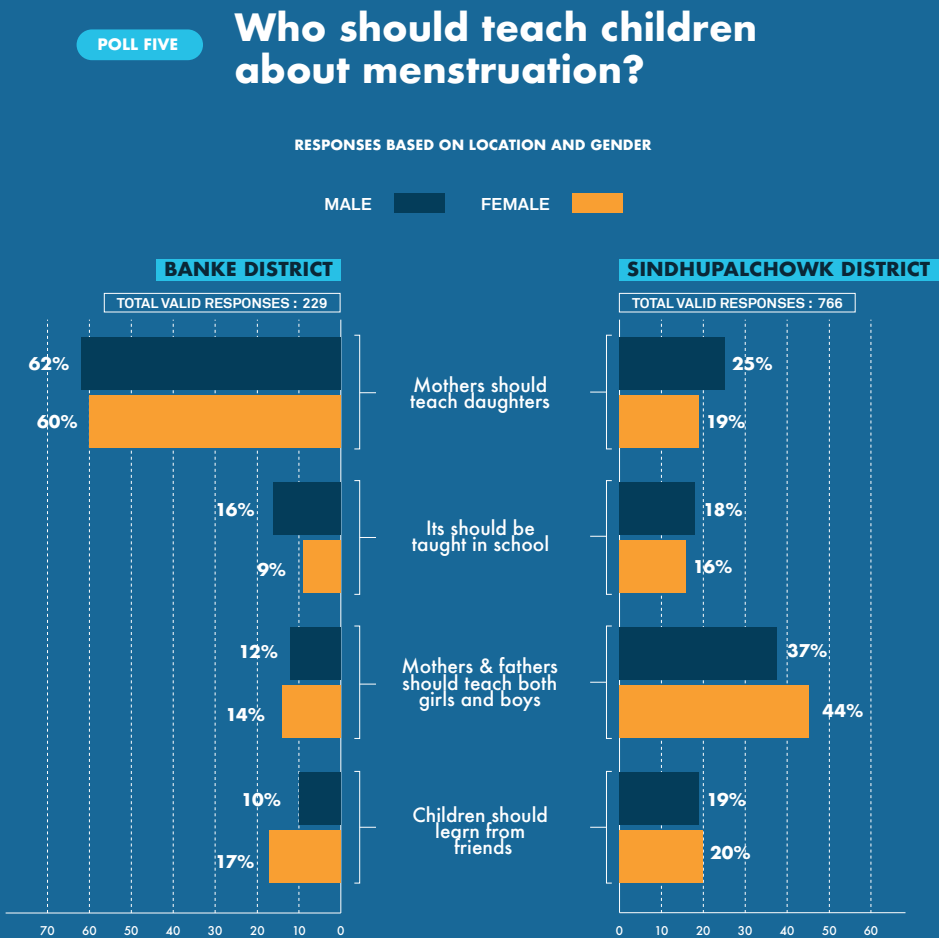
3.6
POLL QUESTION SIX

In Nepal, very few adolescent girls and boys have adequate knowledge about menstruation. Adolescent girls' lack of knowledge contributes to their inability to effectively manage menstrual hygiene. This affects their education, physical health, psychological and emotional well-being, and general quality of life.

Due to a taboo on talking about menstruation (as was identified in poll 5) there is no clear protocol on who should teach children and adolescents about menstruation. To better understand what community members think regarding this issue, 4 radio stations in Nepal asked their listeners:

Who should teach children about menstruation?

Close to a 1000 listeners took time to respond to the poll question. The results show a strikingly different view on the issue in Banke region, compared to those in Sindhupalchowk.



POLL RESULTS ANALYSIS

From the data it becomes clear (again) how different both areas are. The area of Banke in the Terai lowlands overwhelmingly (61%) voted for option A: mothers should teach daughters. In Sindhupalchowk, located in the highlands a majority (41.4%) voted for option C: girls and boys to be educated by both parents. These divergent results can partly be explained by cultural differences between the two districts.

The reluctance by communities in **Banke** to educate boys and men on menstruation leads to a higher percentage of the population feeling uncomfortable to talk about Menstrual Health (MH). This is considered the biggest challenge in MH according to the previous radio poll.

Since the severe earthquakes in 2015, many (I)NGO's have worked in **Sindhupalchowk** to roll out campaigns on WASH and Menstrual Health. They have developed sensitisation programmes to expose taboos and include men in finding solutions to challenges within MH. These programmes contributed to opening up the debate around MH and can lead to bottom-up solutions, transparency and positively impact the lives of women and girls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Both men and women should understand that menstruation is a normal physical process that indicates that a young woman's body is now matured, developed enough to be able to reproduce. Menstruation is an indication that the woman is healthy and not otherwise.

What is most important is to start an inclusive conversation where both men and women are included. It is very important that we talk openly about menstruation. In schools, teachers should talk openly with both male and female students.

Facilities should be available for a women to manage menstrual hygiene. This includes - having a segregated toilet between male and female, having a dustbin in the toilet to safely dispose menstrual products and handwashing facilities near toilets.



QUOTES FROM THE RADIO SHOW:

“As an organisation working in menstruation, our work is to create awareness in the community that there is no scientific proof related to the rumors attached to restrictions such as “being cursed if one enters the temple”. Through social platforms and our programmes, we are continuously advocating for menstrual rights and its safe management practices. But we are not in a position to go and tell them that what you are doing is wrong. Because it is ultimately up to them to understand and decide for themselves, what they are practicing is right or wrong, and the impact these practices are having on their life. In Nepal, the menstrual restrictions vary based on the geographical location as well as the cultural background. While in some areas you are not allowed to have any milk products, in other areas, you are not allowed to have “achaar”, a kind of fermented spicy pickle. These social practices are ingrained in us from our childhood and it is difficult to change practices that have been followed through generations and taught to you since birth.

Even in urban areas, where women are well educated about the process of menstruation, women still avoid going to temples and do not take part in religious/cultural events because the belief that you are impure during menstruation is still very deeply rooted in people. But even not entering the temple is a menstrual restriction they are following despite them saying they don't face any restrictions. Slowly, we are seeing change in the menstrual practices. But behaviour change is a slow process.”

RUBINA CHHANTEL - NFCC

4.0 WAY FORWARD

The results of the poll questions have provided a deeper understanding of the challenges of communities in Banke and Sindhupalchowk. The design of this evidence based radio-campaign, with direct involvement of the public has also increased the decision makers attention towards water and sanitation issues. In addition, the results of the poll will guide Simavi and her partners in defining lobby and advocacy agendas within the programmes. While the ASHA programme in Sindhupalchowk will prioritise the sustainability and rehabilitation of water system infrastructure, the WASH SDG programme in Banke will prioritise system strengthening and accountability from the water user committees and local government. These two programmes will now have a renewed focus on strengthening the ability of local entities to deliver safe drinking water as it was identified as one of the biggest challenges.

Challenges in urban and rural sanitation were also brought forward through the poll results which directly correlates with achieving the SDG target of using Safely Managed Sanitation services. To progress up the JMP ladder, both programmes will need to support the improvement of the entire sanitation chain. This begins with having an improved toilet with a hand-washing facility, running water and soap which are not shared with other households. The next step would be to have proper treatment and disposal systems which may vary based on the context. In Kohalpur-Banke, planning to construct a centralised Faecal Sludge Treatment Plant is already moving ahead. As for Sindhupalchowk, it is now important to create demand and service linkage for desludging within the municipality.

Lastly, challenges towards Menstrual Health need to be addressed through social and behaviour change communication interventions to encourage open conversations around it. These activities are already ongoing within both programmes, but the poll results have put emphasis on the need to continue our efforts. Education and awareness should not only be focused on schools but also community members as parents are a key source of information. In addition to this advocacy on menstrual friendly WASH infrastructure also needs to be included in the respective programmes.

This campaign was a collaboration between Simavi, TRAC FM, SEBAC-Nepal, Sahakarmi Samaj (SS) and WASH Alliance Nepal.

The ultimate goal of this report is to help decision makers listen to the grassroots. The data in this report is comprised by thousands of citizens participation in radio polls.

If you are a WASH professional, please consider and share this report so that the voices of citizens can be taken up in policy making and strategic plans.

**Thank you,
The Samundayik Awaaz Partners**



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