

Audit Accountability Initiative Webinar 2020

Speech from the Honorable Tanka Mani Sharma Dangal, Auditor General of Nepal

Dear Host and Participants,

Good Evening and Namaste from Kathmandu, Nepal.

1. First of all, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the IBP, the organizer of this event for inviting me as a speaker. I always appreciate IBP's initiatives on budget transparency and accountability. My office, Supreme Audit Office (SAI) of Nepal has also partnered with IBP since couple of years and we are engaged closely with IBP on matters of audit accountability.
2. I would like to congratulate to the IBP team for the Open Budget Survey (OBS) 2019 reports. It was conducted among the 117 countries including Nepal.
3. I would like to appreciate the role played by the IBP in promoting public accountability through engagement of different stakeholders. The IBP is closely working with Supreme Audit Institutions and other stakeholders working in accountability field. The IBP's initiatives on open budget, audit accountability and transparency are quite relevant to the performance of supreme audit institutions. These initiatives of IBP have been effective in implementation of audit recommendation.
4. At this moment, I would like to recall my participation in IBP's Audit Accountability workshop held in 2017 in Washington DC where I had shared some audit cases on enhanced engagement and better communication to have increased impact of audit.
5. Similarly, Deputy Auditor General from my office participated IBP's Audit Accountability workshop held in 2018 in Ghana. A case relating to audit of reconstruction activities carried out by the National Reconstruction Authority of Nepal was shared in workshop.
6. Most recently, we had an opportunity to host IBP's Audit Accountability workshop in Kathmandu Nepal in December 2019. This workshop was participated by more than 30 officials representing SAIs and Civil Societies from different parts of the globe. In this workshop, we had shared audit case relating to mobilization of users' committee in developmental works. This case was jointly studied by SAI Nepal and a CSO named Freedom Forum. Today DAG from my office will present in detail about its present status and CSOs involvement strategies in public Audit.
7. SAI Nepal has practiced citizen participatory performance audits since 2013. In this regard, my office has developed citizen participatory audit directives. There is Audit Advisory Committee comprising dignitaries in different sectors. This committee provides policy inputs to the Auditor General.
8. We are collaborating with national and international organizations working in the field of audit and accountability. The IBP is one of them with which we are closely working together since 2017. We have been collaborating with IBP through MoU Signed in 2018. The OAGN and the Freedom Forum, Nepal are working together in this regard.

9. With the support of the Multi-donor Trust Fund and Global Partnership for Social Accountability, we have conducted participatory audit workshop for more than 300 CSOs' staffs in 6 different places of Nepal. Out of those trained more than 50% are female.
10. We have also developed communication strategy and it has taken other strategic initiatives to streamline the engagement of internal and external stakeholders for greater audit impact (seek advice, tips on fraud or misuse of public funds, complaints or grievances from the citizens.)
11. OAGN makes public, all our reports on the website and also prepare the executive summary. Through the dissemination of Local level audit reports containing audit observations regarding the use of public fund which has increased the access of all stakeholders in the output of the office.
12. We expect cooperation from all stakeholders including the development partners, media, parliamentary committees and all other state and non-state actors to the initiatives taken by OAGN for better and enhanced audit and accountability.
13. At this time, world is suffering from COVID-19. As we know, there are 9.7 million corona virus cases globally. This virus has already claimed a life of 492 thousand. Some 5.3 million infected people have been recovered. [as of 26 June 2020]
14. In Nepal, about 11,162 cases have been found so far and 2,650 people have recovered. There are 26 deaths so far. [as of 26 June 2020]
15. This pandemic has affected all sphere of life; economic, social and human. All sectors of economy have been hard hit. Millions of people have lost their jobs. Millions of students have been deprived from going schools. Businesses are shut down and some of them have turned to bankruptcy.
16. So many governments announced nationwide lockdown to control the virus and prevent health systems from being overawed. This generated an economic crisis with dire societal consequences, affecting the lives and livelihoods of most of the global population, millions of people are at risk of falling into poverty.
17. In Nepal, we have also faced same problems caused by COVID-19. Government of Nepal started lock-down from March 24, 2020 and it is in force until June 14, 2020. Lock-down has not been withdrawn but made some relaxation.
18. During period of lock-down essential services are only allowed to run their businesses/service. Most of other establishments, government or private, are supposed to work remotely. Schools, Colleges, hotels and restaurants are yet to open up.
19. We as SAI of Nepal have also been impacted by this pandemic. We had a plan of submitting our Annual report to the president of Nepal by mid-April 2020. Due to lock-down, we were unable to submit our annual report by stipulated time.
20. Government has provided different incentives and services to the affected people. Different sectors of economy have received stimulus packages announced by the government. In this regard, we as SAIs have greater role to examine whether these incentives and stimulus packages have been effective to achieve intended objectives. We, in Nepal, have constantly monitoring the activities of governments and planning to audit them on priority basis.

21. We as SAIs have a responsibility of auditing government preparedness, overall plans and coordination to deal with any emergency situations. Considering the possibility of dilution of accountability, transparency and integrity during emergency situations, SAIs should always play a critical role through direct communications with government and other implementing agencies as well as through public statements. SAIs should maintain dialogue with stakeholders to strengthen accountability.
22. In this regard we need cooperation from various stakeholders including Civil Society Organizations for the ascertainment of activities carried out and expenses incurred to response the effect of COVID -19, specifically in local level.
23. Most important thing we have learned is that we must get ready for 'greater use of technology' in future. During lock-down period, we run our official businesses using virtual platforms.
24. We are considering to use "Remote auditing" techniques. Nepal Audit Management System is being developed by IT consultants. We are also planning to use Artificial Intelligence and other disruptive technology in our audit.
25. Mobile app is being developed to engage citizens in our audit process. This will enhance two-way communication between SAI and citizens. We implement this audit process in near future as a new model of citizen participatory audit.
26. This is the time of collaboration among all internal and external stakeholders to navigate the risks we face during and after the COVID-19.
27. We are interconnected globally. Our interconnectedness means that if the vulnerable remain at risk, everyone remains at risk.
28. Moreover, I would like to emphasize that this is the situation where we absolutely need strong government involvement and collaboration with all internal and external stakeholders.
29. With this I would like to conclude my remarks. Once again, I would like to express sincere thanks to the IBP for organizing this webinar. Other specific issues will be highlighted by my DAG Ramu Prasad Dotel

Thank you, Namaste!

29th June, 2020