**Field and Interview Note**

Field workers: JS and OC

Interviewee: PP

Note Taker: OC

Note Checked and Edited by: JS

Language of Interview: Nepali/English

Note Transcribed by: OC

Place: ground floor, HKI Meeting Hall; Patandhoka

Time: 10:30-11:30 Pm

Date: 14 August 2014

**Major Highlights:**

* Suhaahara is very massive project which has 7 partners and is implemented in 41 districts in Nepal.
* There was news on national daily newspaper blaming Suaahara team for not doing fair in selecting local NGO.
* USAID has brought ‘Forward Policy’

JS and OC reached to office of Helen Killer International (HKI) at Patan for meeting with Pooja Pandey, DCoP- Suaahara. We informed to receptionist that we are there to meet PP, after listening to us receptionist informed to PP, then she came to see us in a while by then we were sitting on sofa the sofa put in front of the reception for a while. As PP had come out from her office room we greeted her, after exchanging greeting and talked shortly she asked us to move to the meeting hall we then moved to meeting hall. When we all sat comfortably in the meeting hall at the chairs JS introduced OC with PP.

Then JS initiated talk with PP describing shortly about the project. He further explained that, it is a two years project which looks at the role of various intermediary organizations in the entire chain of foreign aid specifically maternal and child health projects in Nepal and Malawi. We have done inception workshop on the month of July and currently we are working on mapping of all projects on maternal and child health particularly since 1990, we are hoping we complete it by this October and then we will pick up 4 projects from the mapping for detail study. While doing detail study we will explore link between two different worlds, donors at the top level to FCHVs, a mother and a child at the bottom.

PP: sounds very interesting.

JS: while exploring further, we will develop better understanding on the roles of intermediary organizations particularly on MCH projects in Nepal and Malawi and broadly in the wider world of foreign aid. Eventually, what sort of value can we add in this sector by involving and accomplishing various tasks from different levels at different point of time?

PP: Suhaahara project has implemented in Nepal since 2012 and it will be completed by 2016. Do you have criteria for the selection of the case study?

JS: projects should explicitly on maternal and child health, projects should be donor funded. We will not look at the projects which major area of focus is in agriculture although it may eventually/indirectly contribute to maternal and child health.

PP: Suhaahara is very massive project has been implementing in 41 districts across the Nepal. She further said, USAID works in two modalities while funding for the projects. It funds to those projects which are very much rigid, targets are already determined, H4L for instance is the one of such kind. It calls ‘contract’. USAID also provides funding for those projects which are very much flexible in results and framework and cooperatively implemented in the community such USAID’s Suhaahara project in Nepal is an example of this kind; it is called projects under the category known as ‘agreement’.

While talking further about Suhaahara project, Request For Applications (RFA) of the project was announced in 2011. As we came to know about the announcement of the proposal, we work on the development of the proposal, basically focusing on what will we do? Where are we going to do it? How are we going to implement all of our plans we mentioned? Altogether, we are 7 partners for this project; Save the Children is the main manager for the project. As this project is focused on maternal child health and nutrition, partners are chosen and given responsibility accordingly.

Save the Children is the awardee of the project, it took nine months to be awarded. Save the Children is lead in the team and Helen Killer International (HKI) is responsible for technical lead of the overall project. Likewise John Hopkins looks at the Behavior Change and Communication John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (JHBSPH) or Center for Communication Programme (CCP) component and JHPIEGO is in charge of the family health. Similarly, Nepal Water for Health (NEWAH) and Nepal Technical Assistant Group (NTAG) are handling training component of the project. All of us are based on the Suhaahara office of the Save the Children which is located outside the airport. Technical aspect at the local level is supported by local NGOs.

Save the Children implements these projects in the 15 districts and HKI does so in 10 districts in the country. Suhaahara project has district based staff as well. This staff is based on District Health Office.

JS: it sounds very complex.

PP: we are aiming to reduce the stunting among children through nutrition at the community by incorporating other aspects of mother and child heath such as IMCI, Family Health, ANC, and PNC as well. Furthermore, by providing training and coaching program at community level so as to integrate nutrition on maternal and child health at the one hand and creating demand on the at the community level on the other. In such context suaahara works on supply from the supply side of the chain as well. The target group the project is pregnant women.

Additionally, suaahara has media component as well which is broadcasted under the program title *bhanchhina aama* (mother tells) on Radio Nepal. It is 45 minutes long radio program in collaboration with an NGO called Equal Access.

Talking more about working partners, Ministry of Health and Population(MoHP) is the focal ministry and it coordinates with Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Urban Planning. Also coordinates at the child health division (CHD) for new technology. Moreover, at the district level, DNFSC and UDCNSC play the role of advisory group which provide suggestions on how to integrate nutrition on maternal and child health?

JS: had you included all these things you mentioned, in the initial proposal?

PP: USAID supported to put and implemented at the district level also all of the VDCs of the district. As we are quite a lot people are involving in the project from different organizations, one of the first thing we were struggling was how to build common understanding among us. It took us one and half years to organize our first meeting with involvement of all the stakeholders, working partners and donors and implementers.

JS: where does meeting take place?

PP: meeting takes place at MoHP and DG hosts it. She further told we also cooperate with other projects like ‘Feed the Future’ and ‘Sunaula Hazar Din. Ministry does not conceptualize program at the local level.

JS: how did you go about it?

PP: to understand local realities and dynamics we had organized series of workshops in various rounds in partnership with Ministry of Local Development. Our earlier experience of working in AAMA project (this Aama project is different to that of the Aama project funded by DFID on safe motherhood) also helped a lot to move ahead. So to move ahead we began to start working from easy tasks.

JS: how does such decision to implement action is taken?

PP: there is core team which looks after overall package of the project at the one hand and there is sub team which handle the specific aspect of the project for instance BCC, issues on food and nutrition. We implement decision on context specific basis.

JS: that is really interesting, how do you make sure that all small things come together?

PP: we see the impacts of the programmmes at first whether programmes have impact in an expected pathways or not. We then finalized whether all the things we wanted to cover at beginning are covered or not. We are second year of the project we are on the ways. She further told that we work on the basis of log frame. Additionally, we conduct household survey to generate information on the participation rate of mothers in the Suhaahara program, whether programme has making progress or not? And go for the evaluation of the project.

JS: to make things happen; how informal relationship contributes in happening formal relationship?

PP: politics plays an important role in such situation; she gave an example of one incident form Nuwakot district. An NGO was not selected for working with us in Suhaahara project as a local partner. Latter we came to know that a person associated with this NGO is politically powerful. Due to his power it took us six months to enter into the district for implementing project. I agree it matters a lot.

JS: how do you balance all these diverse interest group of people at the community?

PP: we do extensive consultation with every stakeholder; we invite people covering every sector of the society to inform about project to them prior to the implementation of the project at the community level. Additionally we do exposure visit to the district as well. Meanwhile, in the process of selecting NGO for local partner, we did not select one NGO as we came to know that is more politically inclined because of this event, an NGO file a case against Suhaahara project, blaming that there was not fair in the process of selecting partner NGO and there was news published on national daily newspaper about it. In many organizations staffs spend half of their time in managing relationships with various stakeholders.

JS: how do you retain your staff?

PP: HKI has quite amazing track record regarding to retention. I think person looks job satisfaction after certain level of working career even our partner NGOs are appreciating our working environment.

JS: would you retain staff differently in this joint project than that of previous ones?

PP we sort out issues at the very beginning and go for the phase wise implementation for instance we work at essence of nutrition and hygiene package at the first stage and then move to the next one. She further added we need to be more strategic.

JS: did you work with same numbers of partner organizations earlier as well?

PP: we did earlier but this time we worked with the bigger consortium, one thing I have realized is there is question on who will take the credit of the entire work? She further told it is an organizational tension but at the staff level there is no tension at all. As we are working in such a wider level, it has provided us immense opportunity for learning as well as has allowed us to develop our ideas regarding integration.

PP: added especially as there are a lot of INGOs there is sense of competition as well, we did competition in few times applying for the same project. In project called CCP were assign to do monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the works done by all INGOs. Our findings revealed that hardly any INGO was able to meet the criteria. We also saw the capacity of NGO in the same district where we had seen the quality of the work of INGOs.

JS: you had seen the work of both?

PP: I personally do not think that we need NGOs to implement the projects because they are very much politically inclined they could bring disaster in the society. That does not mean all of them are fit in the same category. There are several national NGOs who are excellent.

USAID has brought ‘forward policy’ which encourage to work with local NGOs and enhance their capacities and skills. She added, unless NGOs themselves do not come with their own idea they has to struggle for their sustainable existence. How could they be sustained only on overhead cost of the projects?

She further explained relationship, politics, implementation; capacity enhancement should go hand in hand. It depends on the people. All the old staffs of the Suhaahara project gone now and we would work differently.

JS: once any project is over, all the contractors will leave the very project and begin to work in the next one, for instance NHSSP was there as a project managed by RTI, when it is over all the contractors are gone to work on different one.

PP: added, contractors are for providing technical support to the government, when government feels the necessary of contractors for supporting in technical aspect of any project, government then government will get help from contractors.

With this discussion we concluded the talk and we left HKI office by thanking to PP.