Community Engagement Capacity Assessment

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PREFACE

To implement projects and initiatives driving social change for communities' benefit, effective community engagement that is contextually appropriate and aligns with international standards, principles, and a wide range of stakeholders with appropriate resources and time frames is crucial. Community engagement, including diverse and usually marginalised, overlooked, and underrepresented voices and empowered them within their community, supports relevant development actors to improve effective, legitimate, and transparent decision-making by ensuring participation, involvement, and celebration in the process that matters to them and creating social capital led to improve outcomes enhanced well-being communities.

In Bangladesh, UNICEF has established long-standing, effective partnerships with government, non-government, civil society organisations, and communities to empower both community and individual to create a shift in individual and collective behaviours systematically and sustainably to achieve critical social outcomes.

Communication for development (C4D)—an array of communication approaches, ranging from policy advocacy and social and community mobilization—is positioned in the new Country Programme (CP) 2022-2026 as an essential cross-cutting element and a change strategy for realizing several of the country programme results. Moreover, the C4D section of UNICEF Bangladesh will provide technical leadership to the country office in facilitating the behaviour and social change for the survival, development, and protection rights of the children in Bangladesh.

To this end, ensuring the quality result of community engagement supported by UNICEF, C4D initiated this study with the objectives of understanding knowledge and skillset and establishing the availability or absence of institutional structures and mechanisms for Community Engagement within the relevant UNICEF counterparts—key government, non-government and civil society organisations.

The study has assessed the institutional capacities of UNICEF and its counterparts in Bangladesh using the qualitative technique and followed the 'Minimum Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement,'—developed by UNICEF through an inter-agency consultation process engaging experts worldwide. Moreover, based on the study's findings, some recommendations for increasing community engagement in the community development process are suggested.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ACD	Association for Community Development
ACLAB	Alliance for Cooperation and Legal Aid Bangladesh
ADAB	Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh
APC	Accelerating Protection for Children
BNNRC	Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee/Building Resources Across Community
BRCS	Bangladesh Red Crescent Society
C4D	Communication for Development
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CC	City Corporation
CHO	Chief Health Officer
CHTDB	Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board
Coast Trust	COAST Foundation Trust
CODEC	Community Development Centre
CS	Civil Surgeon
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DD	Deputy Director
DDFP	Deputy Director Family Planning
DDLG	Deputy Director Local Government
DDPE	Deputy Director, Primary Education
DDPHE	District Department of Public Health
DG	Director-General
DIO	District Information Office
DNCC	Dhaka North City Corporation
DP&SED	District Primary and Secondary Education Department
DPE	Directorate of Primary Education
DPH	Department of Public Health
DS	Deputy Secretary
DSS	Department of Social Service
DWAO	District Women Affairs Office
EE	Executive Engineer
FCDO	Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office
FIVDB	Friends in Village Development Bangladesh
FO	Funding Organisation
GOs	Government Organisations
HDRC	Human Development Research Centre
HO	Health Officer
IA	Institutional Assessment
IF	Islamic Foundation
IPC	Interpersonal Communication
JHU	Johns Hopkins University

KII	Key Informant Interview
LD	Line Director
LHEP	Lifestyle and Health Education Promotion
m-FGD	Mini Focus Group Discussion
m-FGD	Mini Focus Group Discussion
MNCAH	Maternal and New Born Child and Adolescents Health
MNOSUS	Mukti Nari O Shishu Unnayan Sangstha
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoIB	Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
MoLGRD&C	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Co-operatives
MoPME	Ministry of Primary and Mass Education
MoRA	Ministry of Religious Affairs
MoSW	Ministry of Social Welfare
MoWCA	Ministry of Women and Children Affairs
MSCE	Minimum Standards for Community Engagement
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NILG	National Institute of Local Government
NPO	National Programme Officer
NSS	Institution of Public Health and Nutrition
PD	Project Director
PMO	Project Management Specialist
RCC	Rangpur City Corporation
SBCC	Social and Behaviours Change Communication
SBCC	Social and Behaviour Change Communication
SSSCHT	Sustainable Social Services in CHT Project
SUS	Sabalamby Unnayan Samity
UHFPO	Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United National Children Emergency Fund
UNWOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNICEF has been working in Bangladesh since the early 1950s. As an agency with a long tradition UNICEF Bangladesh follows communication for development (C4D) strategies across the sector programmes. C4D of UNICEF utilizes an array of communication approaches ranging from social and community mobilization to policy advocacy for the community's wellbeing in an integrated and coordinated manner.

C4D is working, across all the sector programmes—Education, Child Protection, Health, Nutrition, WASH, Education and Social Protection, and the cross-sectoral programmes of Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD), Adolescent, Urban, Climate Change, Gender and Disability— in collaboration with government and other partners, to ensuring meaningful roles in the process of their wellbeing.

UNICEF wants to assess the knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skillsets of UNICEF staff and programme implementing partners to design, implement, monitor, and evaluate Community Engagement strategies/ interventions and identify gaps and establish the availability or absence of institutional structures and mechanisms for Community Engagement within the relevant UNICEF counterpart Ministries and Department and the opportunities that exist for institutionalizing or strengthening existing mechanisms and structures. To this end, Human Development Research Centre (HDRC) has conducted the study 'Community Engagement Capacity Assessment' with the financial support of UNICEF Bangladesh. We are grateful to UNICEF Bangladesh for entrusting HDRC to carry out the critical assignment.

The enthusiasm of the C4D Manager of UNICEF Bangladesh— Ms Yasmin Khan, towards the assignment is highly appreciated. We are also thankful to all the staff members involved from UNICEF Bangladesh Dhaka and the District level in this assignment.

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Professor Abul Barkat, *PhD*
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Objective and Methodology

The study's objective is to assess the community engagement capacity of UNICEF's programme implementing partners and counterparts for the planning, implementation, and monitoring of community engagement and the approaches and tools these partners employ for community engagement. The study adopted the *'Minimum Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement,'* developed by UNICEF to assess community engagement capacity.

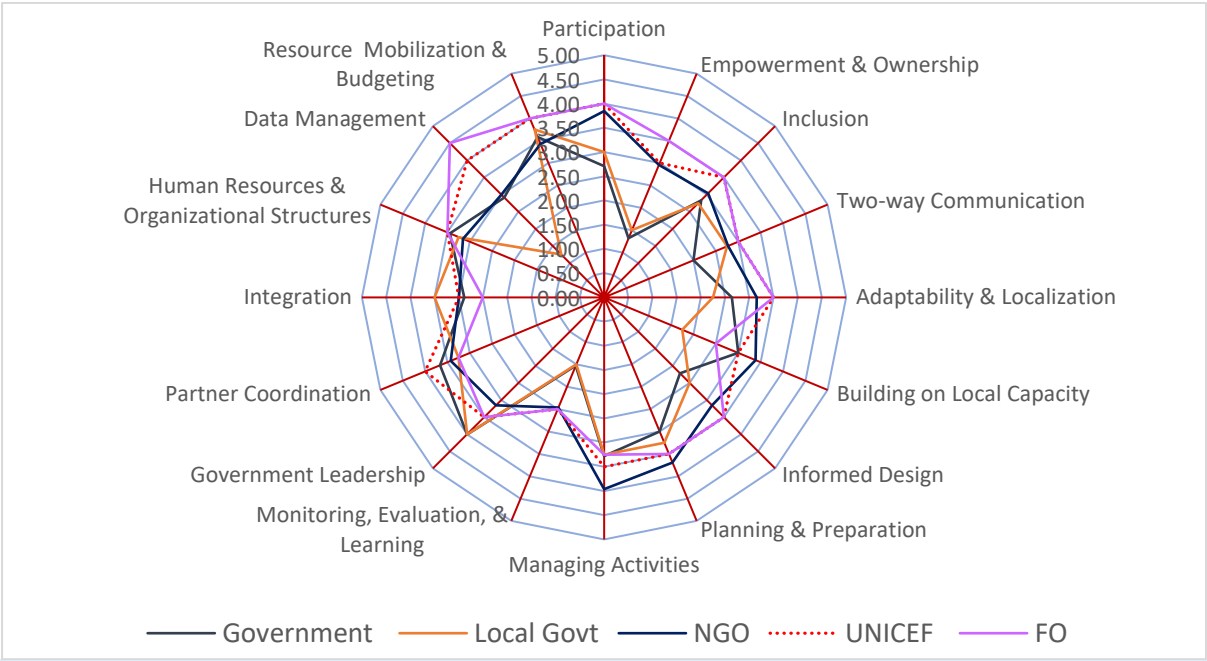
This study collected evidence-based primary information using qualitative techniques like Key Informant Interview (KII) and mini–Focus Group Discussion (m-FGD) to assess the institutional capacities. One of the secondary documents, *'Minimum Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement,'* developed by UNICEF was the essential document for reviewing, internalizing, selecting and adopting the minimum standards and indicators used for this assessment. This study developed a framework which covers a clear direction for data collection methods, techniques, strategies and processes for the assessment.

The study has generated findings based on indicators adopted from the minimum quality standards for community engagement. This study also explored the practice, knowledge and procedure that the government, NGO, UNICEF, and the funding organisations follow for community engagement. Furthermore, this study explored the limitations, gaps, and challenges organisations face in establishing a successful community engagement.

Community Engagement Capacity Status: Key Findings

The following figure presents the position of the institutions in terms of their achievement measured based on the indicators set under community engagement standards.

Community engagement capacity status of UNICEF Bangladesh and its counterparts



1= Beginning, 2= Start-up, 3= Developing, 4= Expansion, 5= Sustainability

The government generally executes community engagement activities with its leadership within the sectoral programmes and allocates budgets for the activities. There is minimal community participation during the programme designing phase; however, government agencies engage the community forums and groups during program implementation. The government authorities attempt to identify and include the vulnerable, disadvantaged and marginalized groups with the help of the local government representatives and community workers. Community development programmes have minimal systems and platforms for giving and receiving clear and appropriate information through two-way communication pathways with the community and stakeholders. Also, there is limited scope to identify and assess community people's skills, capacity, and resources to include in the community's development programmes.

Government use national and sub-national level data for designing the programmes. However, provisions are inadequate to collect and analyse data for adaptation and localization of the initiatives. The government has a monitoring and evaluation system. The field-level implementers and programme officials usually execute the system through follow-up, field observation, data collection and reporting mechanisms. However, there is hardly any evidence of community involvement in the process.

The local government bodies are entrusted with many functions and responsibilities relating to community welfare and development. The local government has community participation platforms to maintain two-way communication like forums, group meetings, courtyard meetings, public hearings, and interpersonal communication. The community people can provide and share their knowledge, opinion and feedback through the forums. The local government representatives like mayors, councillors, chairman and members are involved in the platform's planning and management activities. In leadership roles, local government representatives generally monitor and supervise the programme activities in collaboration with the implementing partners and relevant stakeholders. However, the community's involvement in the monitoring and supervision mechanism is remarkably weak.

NGOs have programme-wise community engagement guidelines aligned with the donors' strategies. NGOs and CSOs develop programme proposals with specific goals, objectives, and activities to get approval from funding organisations. Moreover, they also consult with the local community leaders, government officials and relevant stakeholders about proposed programme objectives, goals, and activities. Most NGOs and CSOs conduct participatory surveys and social mapping with the community and relevant stakeholders to finalise their action plan before executing the programme activities. Involving the community, they start implementing the programme activities at the field level.

Almost all the NGOs and CSOs have initiatives to identify vulnerable and underprivileged groups through open discussion, PRA and social mapping with the community. NGOs also engage marginal and disadvantaged people in their target area in groups (known as 'group formation') for programme implementation. However, there is little participation in programme designing, monitoring and evaluation. Also, the community rarely has access to monitoring and evaluation findings. The programme implementation strategy adopts two-way communication to some extent through community networks and social media platforms. Discussions indicate that the overall programme budget for community participation may require greater attention as there is little undertaking to formulate a sustainable plan to empower and build ownership of the community. Most NGOs have their own data management plan.

UNICEF generally urges their implementing partners to identify and engage the disadvantaged, vulnerable, discriminated, marginal, and social minority groups. Reasonably, all the programmes adopt community-based approaches, including community concerns, beliefs, networks, groups, media, and social structures. Through its implementing partners, UNICEF has managed and developed multiple channels for two-way communication (face-to-face communication, social media platforms,

phone calls, and meeting with the communities). Through these communication channels, the community can share their opinion and feedback. The implementing partners, collaboratively with Community groups, community leaders, local government representatives, and relevant government authorities, execute the community development programme.

Almost all the programmes are designed following international standards for human rights and humanitarian response. Most implementing partners attempt to integrate the community needs to the maximum possible extent within the available programme resource. Programmes generally develop monitoring, evaluation, and learning plans followed by the programme design, while community mobilizers, community workers, and people are involved. However, the monitoring findings are hardly shared with the community people. Sometimes, the results are shared in the monthly or coordination meeting with the partners and community.

Funding organisations have community engagement policies or guidelines. They allocate funds and provide technical support to the implementing partners. The partners implement the programmes according to the approved programme design and implementation plan. The programme implementation plan involves community leaders, religious leaders, and relevant sub-national and local government authorities for executing community engagement activities. Funding organisations also supervise the programme activities in collaboration with implementing partners and the stakeholders.

Recommendations Towards Enhancement of Community Engagement Capacity by "Minimum Standards for Community Engagement"

Participations

- A complete policy and guidelines for community engagement for the development programmes must be formulated. Funding organisations could assist the government in this regard.
- All the implementing organisations should follow the guidelines for community participation, which might be ensured by regular meetings, direction, monitoring, and capacity development.

Empowerment & Ownership

- A strategy for a sustainable community engagement plan by assessing community resources, skills, capacities, and local network and ensure decision capacity and role need to be developed. Funding organisations *can assist* the implementing partners by providing direction and technical support.

Inclusion

- Develop an elaborate plan and process for mapping disadvantaged, discriminated, deprived, vulnerable, underrepresented, and marginalised social groups and their inclusion with representation in the program. Funding organisations can assist in developing the guideline for the process with technical support.

Two-way Communication

- All the implement partners should develop user-friendly tools and pathways for two-way communication to receive feedback and exchange information and knowledge need to be developed.

Adaptability and Localisation

- Structured pathways and guidelines to investigate the communities' concerns, beliefs, skills, resources, networks, media, and other social structures aligned with community-based approaches and models should be formulated through participatory analyses of the local context during the programme designing phase.

Building on local capacity

- To build community engagement into their development, implementing agencies should formulate a process and procedures to identify and incorporate skills and capacities of the community, as well as resources and local institutions with programmes by the implementing agencies.

Informed Design

- Implementing agencies should consider the contextual analysis of local context, culture, and risk-factor through collecting local and national data to ensure the informed design of the community engagement.

Planning and Preparation

- Implementing agencies should prepare a guideline to initiate a participatory process for identifying key community groups and individual leaders for planning and preparing the action plan involving the community and sharing the plan with the community.

Managing Activities

- To develop a structured community action plan detailing the roles and responsibilities of the community and actors, local government, government officials and other stakeholders by the implementing agencies. Government, local government and other implementing agencies should allocate an adequate budget for community mobilisers and provide necessary capacity development training to mobilisers and frontline workers to ensure community engagement.

Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning

- Al the implementing agencies should formulate guidelines, methods and tools for monitoring, evaluation and learning and ensure the necessary but non-burdensome involvement of the community in the process of data collection and analyses. The government should include communities in the monitoring, evaluation and learning process by developing a participatory monitoring and evaluation mechanism for development programmes.

Government leadership

- Government should formulate guidelines on how it will take responsibility to respect and fulfil and protect the rights of the people.

Partner Coordination

- Implementing partners should formulate/follow strategies of partner coordination at national and local levels. This strategy should include sharing data and information with stakeholders for better coordination.

Integration

- Government should integrate multimodal community platforms and channels with all sectoral programmes and develop a cross-cutting approach and techniques which will cover all sectors and programs at the national and local level

Human resources and organisational structure

- Implementing agencies need to formulate clear and consistent management and supervisory system, staffing within development programmes in line with community engagement standards, and organisational human resource policy should include the mandate to ensure adequate staff, volunteers, and frontline workers.

Data Management

- Funding organisations should support the implementing partners with technical assistance for data collection, analysis and management and to build the platform to collect and analyse social data on language mapping, living conditions, religious, cultural practices, and trusted channels of communication at the local level.

Resource Mobilisation and budgeting

- There should be a separate sector and activity-wise resource mobilisation and budget policy for the community engagement activities. Implementing agencies should formulate an independent resource mobilisation and budgeting plan, especially for community engagement activities based on financial and non-financial support to the staff and community mobiliser, capacity building of the communities, community engagement activities and communications.
- The funding organisations should support the implementing partners to develop resource mobilisation and budgeting policy for community engagement activities

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 COMMUNITY, COMMUNICATION, AND DEVELOPMENT

Community is above household relevance and a minimum social unity—a social network of interaction, interchange, and interdependency. To build social resources in many areas such as health, education, economy, culture, and others, the community can input unequal distributions of authority, access, and power over decision-making. ''Community'' comprises stakeholders, interest groups, and citizen groups in a place, practice, or affiliation with an identity.

Community engagement is the meaningful efforts of the community people in community development—what affects their wellbeing—in collaboration with the other stakeholders. Community engagement refers to exchanging information, knowledge, ideas, and resources between the communities and other stakeholders involved in the community development process and activities and designing, decision-making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities and governance. Through this process, rights bearers share their expertise, services, and other resources with the community to help and guide the communities' efforts. Community engagement includes individuals, groups, associations, and formal and informal networks that share common interests.

Development communication involves creating mechanisms to broaden public access to information on reforms, strengthening clients' ability to listen to their constituencies and negotiate with stakeholders; empowering grassroots organisations to achieve a more participatory process; and undertaking communication activities that are grounded in research.[2]

Communication for Development (C4D) and Social and Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC), used interchangeably, is defined in UNICEF as *an evidence-based process that is an integral part of programmes and utilises a mix of communication tools, channels and approaches to facilitate dialogue, participation and engagement with children, families, communities, networks for positive social and behaviour change in both development and humanitarian contexts.* [3]

C4D is one of the most empowering ways of improving health, nutrition, and other critical social outcomes for children and their families.[4] C4D aims to empower both community and individual over time to create a necessary shift in individual and collective behaviours systematically and sustainably. As an agency with a long tradition in development communication, UNICEF utilises an array of communication approaches, from policy advocacy, and social and community mobilisation to interpersonal communication to achieve behaviour and social change for the enhanced wellbeing of children.[5]

Community engagement is a foundational action for working with traditional, community, civil society, government, and opinion groups and leaders; and expanding collective or group roles in addressing the issues that affect their lives. Community engagement empowers social groups and networks, builds upon local strengths and capacities, and improves local participation, ownership, adaptation

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[2] Development Support Communication: A Strategy for Conflict https://crutech.edu.ng/pdf/JMCL/JMCL%20Vol.6%20No.2/JMCL%206205.pdf

[3] UNICEF 2017 Report on Communication for Development (C4D). https://www.unicef.org/media/47781/file/UNICEF_2017_Report_on_Communication_for_Development_C4D.pdf

[4] Safe Place programme | SOJOURNERS CARE NETWORK. https://www.sojournerscare.net/category/generation-now/safe-place-programme/

[5] STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION - World Health Organization. https://www.who.int/immunization/hpv/communicate/strategic_communication_for_behaviour_and_social_change_unicef_rosa_2005.pdf

and communication. Through community engagement principles and strategies, all stakeholders access processes for assessing, analysing, planning, leading, implementing, monitoring and evaluating actions, programmes and policies that promote survival, development, protection and participation.[6] The quality and results of community engagement interventions supported by UNICEF directly correlate to the capacity of its implementing partners and the approaches and tools they follow.

1.2 OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of the research is to assess the capacity of UNICEF Programme implementing and potential partners and counterparts (including policymakers, budget planners, researchers, programme planners and implementers) for the planning, implementation and monitoring of community engagement and the approaches and tools that these partners are employing for community engagement currently.

Three key objectives of the assessment are:

- To assess the knowledge, conceptual understanding and skillsets of UNICEF staff and programme implementing partners to design, implement, monitor and evaluate Community Engagement strategies/interventions and identify gaps.
- To establish the availability or absence of institutional structures and mechanisms for Community Engagement within the relevant UNICEF counterpart Ministries and Departments and the opportunities that exist for institutionalising or strengthening existing mechanisms and structures; and
- To generate the report informing the way forward to standardise and institutionalise Community Engagement.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

In order to assess the institutional capacities, information was collected using the qualitative technique, including Key Informant Interview (KII) and mini-Focus Group Discussion (mini-FGD). Primarily, along with the other relevant documents, this study massively reviewed and internalized the *'Minimum Standards and Indicators for Community Engagement'* developed by UNICEF and adopted standards and indicators for this assessment. Moreover, this study developed an assessment framework that provided a clear direction for data collection methods and information analysis against indicators set under each standard. As the study was exploratory and qualitative, it developed a stakeholders mapping with the help of the C4D department of UNICEF Bangladesh to ensure a representative sample which was systematically selected.

The sample comprises 48 officials selected from UNICEF Bangladesh, counterpart government ministry and department, Non-government Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and Funding organisations. Primary data were collected from these officials administering qualitative tools like key informant interviews (KIIs) and mini-Focus Group Discussions (mini-FGDs). Checklists and guidelines for the KII and mini-FGDs were developed.

A total of 39 KIIs and 9 FGDs were conducted with the representative of the Government (National and Sub-national level), Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), Civil Society organisations (CSO), Local Government Institutions, Funding Organisations and UNICEF Bangladesh (Table 1.1). A detailed list of respondents is available in annexe Table-4.

[6] University of Groningen Community engagement and ....
https://research.rug.nl/files/178301524/1_s2.0_S0277953621005785_main.pdf

Table 1.1: Number and institutions

Institution/respondent	*KII*	*mini-FDG*
Government–national level	9	–
Government–sub-national level	12	2
City Corporation	2	–
NGO/CSO	7	6
Funding Organisation	2	–
UNICEF Bangladesh	6	1
Total	39	9

A framework has been developed for the capacity assessment covering unique sets of indicators for different stakeholders (see annexe Table-1). The framework also summarizes the capacity assessment process of community engagement for this study (detailed in Chapter 2). At the study's outset, discussions were held with the C4D officials about the draft questionnaire and discussion guidelines used in information gathering and incorporated suggestions. The key team members conducted all the interviews and discussions to identify, explore, understand the different dimensions and strengthen the findings. The mode of all the interviews and mini-FGD was either virtual or face-to-face.

The audio recording and field notes were turned into transcriptions for information analysis. Primarily, we ordered and categorised all the collected information as per the adopted indicators set under the standards. The analysis explores participants' descriptive phenomena, experiences, and knowledge the study respondents shared and clarified based on their subjective and objective experiences. However, the level of involvement of the participants in community engagement activities was not homogenous and in-depth because of their responsibilities.

This assessment has been done depending on the given information by the NGOs, CSOs, UNICEF, government (national and sub-national) officials, and funding organisations. On the other hand, this study has not engaged any community members or community forums or groups at the time of information collection. It has also not captured any field-level observation for community engagement. In some cases, the study observed a few institutions which do not represent the whole institutional situation. Another limitation is that this study had no scope to assess the field-level situation of community engagement.