

WORKING DOCUMENT

SIAS-TCDSE Report
Series 1

VISTA OF RAPTI VALLEY

The planned capital city of Lumbini Province, Nepal

Work Package (0) - City Scoping

MARCH 2023

Introducing risks, informality and disaggregated
groups for Tomorrow's Cities Decision Support
Environment (TCDSE)

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Executive summary

This working report aims to provide baseline information to operate Work Package 1 (WP1) i.e., Future Visioning for the Tomorrow's Cities Decision Support Environment (TCDSE) of Tomorrow's Cities Project, funded by the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) Global Challenge Research Fund (GCRF), in the planned capital city in the Rapti (Deukhuri) Valley of Lumbini Province, Nepal. This report (1) introduces Rapti valley geographically, demographically and socially, (2) assesses local people's perception regarding the new capital city, land pooling and associated challenges, (3) introduces the contexts of migration, marginality, and informality, (4) initiates analysing existing hazards and (5) proposes disaggregated groups for the WP1 i.e., Future Visioning exercise. It is based on the review of Rapti documents and the two visits to the valley in September and December 2022. So, the data, information, and analyses presented in the document are subject to further verification, triangulation, and, perhaps, correction as research progresses there.

Comprising a total 65,705 population and covering around 485 sq. km. of area, the new capital city is composed of all the nine wards of Rapti Rural Municipality (RRM), wards no. 1, 2 and 3 of Gadhawa Rural Municipality (GMP), and wards no. 8 and 9 of Shitganga Municipality (SM). RRM and GRM belong to Dang district and SM belongs to the Arghakhanchi district. Of the total population, indigenous/ethnic communities, mostly Tharu and Magar, comprise 66 percent, followed by 17 percent of Brahmin and Kshetri, 11 percent of Dalit and six percent of other communities. Tharu communities alone comprise around 41 percent of the total population. The poor, marginalised and squatter households are dominant (> 60 percent) in the valley. According to anecdotal information, about 50-65 percent of households own less than five *dhur* (0.0084 ha) of land and 15 percent are landless in the Rapti valley. It means more than 70 percent of households are functionally landless in the Rapti valley. However, the information and data related to poor, marginalized and squatter community need further verification.

We met almost all the chairs of RRM and GRM, and most of them had a positive impression about the new capital city and expressed interest in supporting PIDA to implement its visions and plans. While talking with the disaggregated communities, diverse reflections regarding the new capital city were found depending on individuals' socio-economic and political positionalities. For instance, those households having a large size of land are both excited and doubtful. They are excited because they think the land price will increase in the future so they will earn good money by selling their land to migrants. On the contrary, they have fear about how much land they need to contribute to the land pooling scheme. The communities of Gadhawa, as informed by a Ward Chair, were very much excited and happy about the new city as they believed "the capital city will bring *development* to our village". However, there are two views among Tharu communities. The land pooling coordinator, who is from the Tharu community, said Tharus are happy to contribute their land for the city development. However, a *Pradhan* (i.e., Chief) of Tharu said that those farmers who are fully dependent on agricultural activities, specially from RRM 5, 6, 7 and 8, are skeptical about sharing their land. They are also concerned about the potential high flow of migrants and their influence on their culture and traditions. Importantly, the Chief of PIDA said nobody would be displaced in the capital city.

Although the modality for land pooling has not been decided yet, the phenomenon has presently become one of the widely discussed topics in the Rapti valley, akin to the Fast Track issue of Khokana. As some Ward Chairs also expressed, the distribution of land to meet the land size for the residential buildings (i.e., 12 *dhur* or 0.0203 ha) by taking land from public land and larger landholders is one of the cumbersome tasks for the authorities. The respondents considered the following three as the major challenges. Firstly, making people understand the 60:40 ratio or something similar provision in order to pool the land (i.e., 40 percent of the total land will be used for city development purposes and 60 percent will be returned

to the owner with a land use plan) as it bears the risk of increasing conflict among communities and also between communities and authorities. Secondly, there is a serious concern among many households, especially the rich, whether the pooled land will be distributed as it was in the first place or not. And thirdly, distributing land to the poor, marginalised, squatter and landless households need not only a state-of-art cadastral map but also carefully crafted political decision to materialise the land distribution scheme. In this regard, the CEO of PIDA clarified the squatter households would be provided land from the public land (i.e., *ailani jagga*) but not from the pooled private land.

With the above socio-political challenges to realise an inclusive tomorrow's capital city development, the existence of the risk of hazards is another domain the city authority has to seriously engage with. Broadly, the valley floor [RRM 1 (lowland), 2 - 8 and GRM 1 – 3] is at risk of flood and inundation, while the hilly parts of the city [RRM 1 (upland) & 9 and SM 8 & 9] are vulnerable to landslides. Additionally, earthquakes, fire, lightning & thunderbolts, and soil erosion are the major hazards in the Rapti valley. In addition to these, several seasonal rivers, such as Dolai, Katesh, Khaura, Ghosh, Mandreni, Kharra, Bhulke, and Golarehani affect hundreds of households during monsoon annually. These hazards would undoubtedly increase with the increase in construction activities in the coming days. Thus, having a risk-sensitive land use plan (RSLUP) on par with the city development plan would help the authority to achieve an inclusive and resilient tomorrow's capital city in the Rapti valley.

Disaggregated groups for the TCDSE in Rapti - WP1 i.e., Future Visioning

The following seven social groups are recommended for the purpose of the Work Package 1, Future Visioning exercise for the Tomorrow's Cities Decision Support Environment (TCDSE) in the Rapti valley.

1. Tharu (farmers) – Representing Tharu farmers from wards no. 5, 6, 7 and 8 of RRM
2. Migrants and Marginalised (informality) – Representing migrants, squatter and poor from wards no. 1, 2, 3 and 4 of RRM. Dalit Representative/s will also be included in this group.
3. Magar (hill ethnic people) – Representing Magar farmers from RRM 9 and SM 8 & 9
4. *Pradhans* (the Chief of Tharu) – *Pradhans* lead the *Badghar* system in the Rapti (Deukhuri) valley. *Badghar* is an indigenous institution of Tharu farmers that mainly works on regulating local irrigation practices. The Chief of this institution is usually selected from the rich Tharu households. The institution comprises, in addition to the Chief, *Aghariya* and *Sagharia* (need verification) who act as helpers in regulating water (opening canal/*kulo*, distributing water, fixing damages, and collecting charges and fines, etc.). So, selecting *Pradhans* as a disaggregated group for WP1 means not only having views of Tharu's rich households but also including an indigenous institution in future city planning.
5. Rich households (migrants/business people) – Rich migrant households are living in the Rapti (Deukhuri) valley for generations and most of them are engaged in business activities, perhaps, primarily in construction and real estate activities. So, including them in the WP1, Future Visioning not only represents migrants' perspectives but also business in the future city.
6. Municipalities (authorities) – These are the representatives of the elected members from all three local authorities i.e., RRM, GRM and SM who will not only work on land pooling but also play important roles to stir the PIDA's envisioned city planning in the future.
7. Women (gender and inclusivity) - a separate women group including females from Tharu, Magar, Mukta Kamaiya (women's group), Kumal and other Dalit groups, e.g., Kalash Women Group can represent an envisioned and inclusive tomorrow's city from women's perspective.

Alternatively, while selecting the member of the above-disaggregated groups (from 1 to 6), gender and inclusivity should be ensured. Gender and inclusivity should be a cross-cutting theme in these groups and, female representatives should especially be ensured in all six groups.