



NEPAL PARTICIPATORY ACTION TETWORK (NEPAN)

A REPORT ON

CELEBRATING PARTICIPATION DAY AND NEPAN RETREAT

7-8 April 2023, Trisuli Beach Resort, Dhading, Nepal



Reframing the Concept of Participation

NEPAN Retreat and PARTICIPATION day celebration team:

Organizing Team

Coordinator: Shreeram KC

Member: Toya Gautam

Member: Rupa Basnet

Member: Shanti Thapa

Member: Bholu Bhattra

Member: Mahesh Dev

Member: Cheth Nath Dahal

Member: Jhabindra Bhandari

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2023 April

Introduction

NEPAN was conceptualised in 1994 and was officially established in 1995 and hence the NEPAN Day (April 6th 2023) marks as the 28th NEPAN Anniversary. NEPAN retreat was held on April 7-8 (1 and half day retreat) in Baireni, Dhading in celebration of NEPAN Day. The event was marked with the slogan “Redefining the Concept of Participation”.

Twenty-seven members participated in this event including 10 female and 17 male participants. The participants included former and current executive committee members, veteran members who had served as former chairperson as well new members who joined NEPAN within a couple of years back (Annex 1). Officially NEPAN enjoys supports of about 500 members and about 300 of them are currently active members. NEPAN Retreat 2023 program schedule is included in Annex 2. In nutshell, the event remained full of learning and sharing about the future strategies and operations.

Program

Day 1:

Introduction session: The program started with introduction session that was designed in a very innovative way of introducing the other person rather than yourself. There were a set of question and answers and the partners were selected with lucky draw of the questions and its matching answer (example, one participant received a lucky draw with the text written “Dr. Bishnu Raj Uprety”, and another participant received another lucky draw with the text written ‘Chairperson of Policy Research Institute”, thereby forming a couple of participants for introduction). This way all participants were divided into many pairs of participants and within each pair, they talked to each other and introduced their partners to the group with information such as name, address, work sector, experience, identification, interest and their commitment to NEPAN.

The last session of Day 1 focuses on sharing of each individual’s good initiative for making oneself happier and healthier. A WhatsApp group entitled “NEPAN Retreat Group 2023” was formed for posting photographs and messages.

Day 2, Session 1:

Thematic Session: Reframing the Participation.

In this session, participants were provided with a chart paper and each wrote a statement explaining their commitment and thought (commitment are in the annex-...) about redefining the participation and how to promote NEPAN in participatory development. Those



thought showed strong commitment and desire to promote NEPAN further through strong participation, reform and restructuring of the organization, giving voice to marginalized population, making NEPAN inclusive, bring more power to the organization, facilitation for more participation.

Most common thought about bringing NEPAN forward was through making NEPAN inclusive, having more engagement and giving voice to those lacking access. NEPAN is also thought of as an organization to work in policy, governance and in leadership. Participants also thought that NEPAN should create culture of interaction which could occur through policy discussion and seminar programs. Networking of evaluation and participatory action was also deemed to be a future avenue. Ownership to the organization should come together with leadership and it has been strongly put forward by the participants. NEPAN has also been thought of as a knowledge sharing platform. Participants have also thought of making NEPAN as South Asia's development model network – one of a kind and a truly common network with strong potentiality. Governance has been thought of through strong participation of all. Such participation would bring empowerment. NEPAN has also been critically analyzed as an important organization that has become less relevant and need transformation. Participation through NEPAN should be more meaningful and should have reach at greater level. Participation inspires creativity. NEPAN being a network of people in diverse sectors with rich experience can work together and create strong network.

The words written in the paper were documented through pictures and videos.

List of those words are: Policy, Governance and Leadership;

Day 2 Session 2: Reframing/redefining the concept of Participation

Critical review and reflection of participation with lively discussion, sharing of ideas and brainstorming of how NEPAN be like took place after and during the presentation by Mr. Bhola Bhattarai. The presentation also brought up the factor's participants raised that NEPAN should focus on during first session of the day about their thought and commitment on NEPAN.

The presentation brought up for discussion if we should redefine, reframe or reimagine the participation in NEPAN's objective. As a development worker, we may not be fully satisfied with our work and approach for development which has mainly been guided by the vision and mission of donors. Western-led development does not necessarily capture our unique strengths and our context. Therefore, in development work, it is important to customize to our context. The imported development concept may not suit to our context and the sector/need of development activities have been designed as per the vision of international donor community.

Robert Chambers has stated 'putting the last first.' Defining development always by referring to Robert Chambers may not be very progressive. Now we need to redefine it and identify the sectors and need of development for government of Nepal in new context of federalization. In the changed context, the private sector and corporate houses are also involved in development

activities through their community participation. This has been their approach of reaching and influencing the community and creating civic space. These activities are being done as part of corporate social responsibility.

Another question is participation among whom? Participation of marginalized population is questionable.

Reframing the participation - whose participation? The participation model should be rethought and remodeled. After the significant work achievement in community forestry, WASH with PRA and RRA tools and many other sectors previously, we need to redefine the way we model our participation.

Engagement in Development Discourse - The presenter and other members of NEPAN urged the NEPAN members to be a critical thinker. To influence strongly in development arena, NEPAN member should also create intervention in political space, not only in the party politics. This session also brought up discussion on what should NEPAN be working on next? Which work sector NEAN should focus on? For example, environmental degradation; for decreasing inequality, intervention in the system is required. Similarly, our knowledge has not been acknowledged much; knowledge hegemony has been occurring and we should raise our voice on this as well.

Context of NEPAN Strategic Plan - Participants has raised questions about that is the strategy of NEPAN. NEPAN current president clarified that discussed and raised suggestions about what should be NEPAN's strategy relates closely with NEPAN strategy 2023-2027. Next to do is to prepare an Action plan of NEPAN as per the strategy.

Good Governance and accountability – NEPAN should have a strong influence in power politics. NEPAN's political discourse can be a tool for making political influence. There has been examples of turning NGOs into research organizations in Indonesia and other countries. NEPAN members stressed that NEPAN should also be developed as a think tank for policy orientation.

NEPAN member suggested PEEST – on what should NEPAN's strategy be like? It should use PEEST – Political, Environment, Economy, Social and Technological. PEEST covers the areas in which NEPAN can work with strong influence in policy making. NEPAN has done significant work on elderly population. Using Technology will be for reducing time and reducing money through use of indigenous technology.

Another member stressed that in the context of federalization, grass root participation approach has been made mandatory by the constitution of Nepal, 2072. Hence, NEPAN should focus on implementing constitution's spirit of working with provincial and local government in development process through federalization. Therefore, NEPAN's next action plan should focus on working closely with Provincial and Local Government in the implementation of constitution. NEPAN in process of making policy influence, should develop itself as a think tank and should focus its work on governance and accountability.

The discussion also raised the question of redefining NEPAN constitution for productive engagement of productive age people. NEPAN should also review the thematic areas. Is Participation the goal or approach for NEPAN now? This is another important question that we should consider in formulating our new action plan. Government of Nepal has implemented socialist economy and NEPAN should keep that into account in its future work areas.

Robert Chambers has brought the slogan of putting the last first. While working in governance sector, we should be able to identify who that last one?

NEPAN's current president clarified that the NEPAN constitution has stated big vision for the organization and hence its constitution is valid till today. Previously, NEPAN has been a good platform for struggling development workers in sharing their ideas and views towards development work modality and approach. NEPAN has been and in future it should further be strengthened as a knowledge hub. We should strive for how to make participation meaningful. Whose voice counts? in redefining the concept of Robert Chambers, rather than putting the last first, NEPAN can now be the voice for them.

In overall, NEPAN should reevaluate who we are, where we want to go and by what modality? we should now focus on the process. We have the process expertise. For NEPAN, contextualization is important and action plan should be prepared accordingly. NEPAN's membership modality should bring activist. NEPAN should now be working in policy and planning and should now be developed as a policy think tank. NEPAN, with its work, should reach policy maker executive body. In federalization, NEPAN should work with NGOs and CBOs as an implementing partner in all process and bring grass root participation. NEPAN should now bring alpha-generation to its members and bring together veteran and youth development workers.

Another important aspect NEPAN should focus on is to bring private sector engagement and bring media advocacy in NEPAN's work. There are numerous examples that banks and financial institutions are engaged in providing financial services jointly with international development assistance. Likewise, agro -based industries and agrovets are joining hands with development partners in extending goods and services in the communities. NEPAN members also admitted that NEPAN members have strong capacity and experience in diverse sectors of development and policy planning, however, NEPAN secretariat is weak as we work as a loose forum. NEPAN constitution is not outdated and we can still work on new government priority and new context of federalization with same NEPAN constitution.

Major indicative activities presenter had been addressed in the discussion and it has been incorporated in this report.

Risk, Assumptions and Challenges:

Since NEPAN is a network, it does not have dedicated staff to work on its agendas. Existing challenges include time constraint of members, redefining of the approach, resource constraints and its mobilization, CSO and partnership mobilization. Policy localization is lacking. NEPAN can work on that through capacity building, creating enabling environment and mindset, federalization and NEPAN's contribution as stated in its strategy. Transparency and accountability in governance working with local government are some of the challenges.

Hours of volunteering commitment is required to bring vision and commitment into action through behavioral approach. NEPAN members also emphasized that we should have giving approach to make volunteerism successful. NEPAN executive committee also clarified that NEPAN has a website and online journal publication. Technology should be used for communication among and outside of NEPAN members. NEPAN can collaborate with private sectors through their corporate social responsibility.

NEPAN members agreed that NEPAN should focus on evidence-based research. Formalization of bringing research input through thematic experts could be more useful and for this keeping a roster of experts and keeping the roster updated is important.

NEPAN also invited all the retreat participants to send a paragraph to a one page about how NEPAN should be thought of in coming future with critical analysis. The deadline to submit this work has been set to 8 May 2023.

Day 2 Session 3:

Current practice and challenges of Participatory approach in Nepal's policy formulation - Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti

Dr. Bishnu Raj Upreti presented on 10 interrelated findings from the policy formulation process and its hurdles in Nepal based on the research conducted while serving as a Chief Executive Director at Policy Research Institute, Government think tank. Following are the 10 interrelated findings:

- 1) Policies are not evidence based – In Nepal, evidence-based research and its policy implication is lacking in process of policy formulation. During policy formulation, international dimension is not analyzed; interrelation of one policy to other is not analyzed and usually entanglement of policies is observed and appropriate coordination among different implementing agencies (line ministries) is not achieved.
- 2) Policy formulation process is not correct: During the policy formulation at national level, concerned stakeholder participation does not take place and hence the true process is not followed and hence the essence of deep-rooted problem is not addressed in the policy. Policy formulation and its required preparation takes a long time in other countries in comparison to that of Nepal. Participatory intervention is lacking in Nepal and one policy has been found to have not aligned with 38 other existing policies.

- 3) Coordination – Policy that has not been aligned with other policies
 In Nepal, policy is formulated by bureaucrats whereas the act is formulated in parliament. This itself is not coordinated well. For policy formulation process, resource, human capacity, monitoring and evaluation is required. Also, efficient brainstorming sessions should be required and its discussion should reach the parliamentarian. Political agenda should be closely tied up with policies that are brought; political agenda and policy should not be taken as two separate priorities.
- 4) Policy is regarded as not necessary for implementation – good policy should be the one that gets implemented. However, in Nepal, policies are formulated but not always implemented. People should be accountable in policy formulation and its implementation.
- 5) Inter-ministry coordination – during the policy formulation process, inter-ministry meetings are not held effectively. Ministry is a means for policy implementation and hence coordination among ministries is important.
- 6) Structural requirement for Policy implementation - baseline assessment is required for policy formulation and this information should be provided as an input for parliamentarian. Policy, regulation and process all should be aligned together.
- 7) No long-term commitment of bureaucrats – since the placement of Secretary of a given ministry keeps changing, accountability for a given policy is lacking. Also, institutional memory is lacking for any policy formulation and information processing during research becomes the hurdle for it.
- 8) M & E is lacking – no feedback on the existing policy exists. Also, the policy becomes obsolete in current context.
- 9) Geopolitical and interrelated interest is not observed –
- 10) Parliament’s approach of policy formulation should be reformulated.

Policy research institute has produced two documents with detailing information, process and resource requirement and structure to follow for formulating evidence-based policy making process. Modality should be changed after federalization. And NEPAN should be reformulated as a think tank as a learning from these hurdles remaining and to address some of the gap that exist in Nepal’s policy formulation.

Knowledge generation exists through 1) research, 2) societal knowledge (indigenous knowledge), 3) Bureaucratic knowledge, 4) Social wisdom (through people’s opinion) and 5) Political vision.

As a learning from existing gap in research in Nepal for policy formulation process, Nepal government needs many think tanks and NEPAN can be one among them. NEPAN can build research agenda, collaborate among researchers and guide research students who are getting their masters and PhDs. NEPAN should have close tie with federal government to influence and lobby for policy through evidence-based policy making and NEPAN should work in cooperation with provincial and local governments.

NEPAN member’s commitment: Video recording of each individual members’ commitment to NEPAN has also been recorded with 1-minute video for each member. Such commitment represented member’s willingness to contribute in journal publication, editing, article contribution, team building and communication commitment, facilitation in capacity building program and in research and writing. There was also commitment to contribute being in executive committee member in upcoming general council. NEPAN will produce the one-minute video and share with its members and networks.

Social Audit: presentation of financial spending was presented by current treasurer Ms. Rupa Basnet as follows:

Financial Details (NPR)	
Hotel/accommodation	76,275
Bus Services	20,000
Stationeries/banners and water	5,071
Total expenses for retreat	101,346
Collection from Members:	37,600
Trust fund contribution out of collected from retreat participants	8,600
NEPAN contribution for retreat	72,346

Closing Remarks from NEPAN president:

NEPAN is currently facing a major challenge in terms of members mobilization. However, opportunity exists in policy advocacy but is not evidence-based. Packaging is challenging. This is where civil societies can work together and make a huge difference. Policy preparation and implementation gap that exists can be vital area to work for NEPAN.

NEPAN has been thought of as developing as a Think Tank from the very beginning of its establishment. Therefore, with this retreat participation, NEPAN has been more emphasized to transform itself as participatory Think Tank.

Experience is rich among NEPAN members; however, the time constraint exists with all of them. Value addition to NEPAN has been a challenge. Bringing new members to NEPAN and bring new action plan in next AGM in September 2023 has been agreed as a commitment for NEPAN. President Dr Anoj Chhetri also thanked former presidents, current executive team, team of volunteers and presenters of the retreat program. President thanked and welcome new volunteers as well.

Game: A game was played between two group of people that showed strength of communicating strategically, symbolically and properly along group of people and its implication in achieving the goals time and resource efficiently.

Evaluation of the retreat program: Lastly, an online evaluation was held focusing on management, technical session and management of the retreat program. The evaluation

was facilitated and designed by Mr. Basan Shrestha. The response options to objective questions were rated from 1=Satisfied to 3=Dissatisfied. The evaluation findings showed that more than 85 percent participants expressed satisfaction on all three aspects of the retreat program and 100% willingness to participate another such event in future. Detailed evaluation report is included in Annex 3. The evaluation report is available online also in the link:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1M1lMwSLYJIFa2_gdenYjniSA1vf1jHggDWQQvusVVLc/edit?usp=sharing

Annex 1: List of Participants

NEPAN Retreat and Sahabhagita Diwas Celebration 2079 BS.

SN	Name		Email
1	Dr. Anoj Chhetri	Chair, NEPAN	anoj.chhetri@gmail.com
2	Rupa Basnet	EC Member	Basnet_rupa@yahoo.com
3	Bal Krishna Sharma	EC Member	sbalkrishna@gmail.com
4	Herina Joshi	EC Member	uemsherina@gmail.com
5	Dr. Narendra Thaguna	EC Member	drthagunna@gmail.com
6	Lal Bahadur Oli	EC Member	lal_39@yahoo.com
7	Ashwin Pudasaini	Life Member	ashbin.pudasaini@nepalbank.com.np ashbinkumar@yahoo.com
8	Bishnu Raj Upreti	Life Member	bishnu.upreti@gmail.com
9	Rojee Joshi	Life Member	rojee.joshi@gmail.com
10	Yamuna Ghale	Life Member	yamunaghale@gmail.com
11			
12	Fatik Thapa	Life Member	fatik.thapa@gmail.com
13	Chhing Lamu Sherpa	Life Member	chhinglamus@gmail.com
14	Shreeram KC	Life Member	kc.shreeram@gmail.com
15	Dal Bahadur GC	Life Member	gc_dal@hotmail.com
16	Durga Bahadur Chhetri	Member	durgaoli2020@gmail.com
17	Milan Adhikari	Member	milan.adhikary@gmail.com
18	Anita Pandey Pant	Member	anita.pandeypant@gmail.com
19	Menuka Karki	Member	menuka.karki@gmail.com menuka.karkia@gmail.com
20	Pranab Bhattra	Member	pbhattra2001@gmail.com
21	Dr. Januka Neupane	Member	januka78n@gmail.com
22	Bhola Bhattarai	Member	nafannepal8@gmail.com
23	Babin Nepali	Member	babinashim@gmail.com
24	Basan Shrestha	Member	basanshrestha70@gmail.com
25	Shanshila Sharma	Member	mediahousesnic@gmail.com
26	Pukar Timilsina	Journalist	pukartimalsina@gmail.com

Annex2: Program Schedule

Nepal Participatory Action Network (NEPAN)

Participation Day celebration and Retreat 2023

Venue: Trishuli Beach Resort, Baireni, Dhading

Date and Time	Programme	Remarks
First Day: 7th April 2023, Friday.		
2:15	Gathering at NEPAN	
2:30	Depart to Kalanki	Team
3:00	Departure from Kalanki to Destination	Inter dialogue
5:00	Check in at Resort Tea/coffee/refreshment	Resort
5:30 to 7:00	Gathering at hall: First session: Welcome, Introduction, and overview of NEPAN)	Shreeram and Team
7:00-8:00	Networking, social gathering and zero hour, Members' sharing in the group.	Rupa
8:00	Dinner	
9:00	Fun activity	Team
10:00	Good night	
Second day, 8th April 2023, Saturday		
6:00 – 6:45	Morning walk and stretching on fresh air	Team
7:30 – 8:15	Photo session with members commitment to promote participatory development (Celebration- NEPAN Day- Sahabhagita Diwas)	Team
8:15 – 9:00	Breakfast	
9:15 -11:30	Second Session: Re-define people's participation in the changing context of Nepal	Bhola Bhattraï
11:30 to 11:45	Tea break	
11:45 12:30	Session: The current practices, challenges of participatory approach in Nepal's policy formulation/development (presentation and Q and A)	Dr. Bishnu Raj Uprety, former chair of PRI, Nepal
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch	
13:30 -14:00	Team Building Exercise	Shreeram KC
14:00 -15:00	NEPAN: where is our future? How can we sustain and become more relevant? Open discourse and commitment.	NEPAN Chair President and EC members
15:00	Closing and Checkout	Shreeram and Anoj
	Evaluation of the event	Basan Shrestha
15:15	Hi- tea	
15 30	Return to Kathmandu	Team

Annex 3: Report of online Evaluation of NEPAN Retreat 2023

Evaluation of NEPAN Sahabhogita Day Celebration and Retreat 2023

Introduction

Evaluation of an integral part of the programming cycle to help decision and planning. NEPAN organized the **Sahabhogita Day Celebration and Retreat 2023** event from 7 to 8 April 2023 at Trishuli Beach Resort, Baireni, Galchhi Rural Municipality, Dhading, Bagmati Province. An online evaluation of the event was conducted at the end of the second day.

The objective of the evaluation was to reflect how effectively the NEPAN Sahabhogita Day Celebration and Retreat 2023 event was conducted, and take stock of learning. The findings will help decision and planning.

Process of Evaluation

An online evaluation tool was developed using Google Form. The tool consisted of nine questions (objective and subjective) focusing at:

- Management
- Participation
- Technical Sessions
- Takeaway
- Future Event

The online tool link was shared with the participants through email with a brief instruction. Afterwards, the participants responded online using mobile phone, laptop or table as convenient. The participants were reminded to select one response option in objective questions (1=satisfied to 3=Disatisfied) and respond to subjective questions using key words or phrases. They were reminded to respond only once as multiple submissions would deviate the findings.

A total of 24 responses were received. Google form auto-visualized the quantitative responses in charts and listed qualitative responses. The charts were copied and used for reporting findings.

The tool was developed by a few members of NEPAN without much consultation. The evaluation was undertaken within a short time limiting discussion on the views expressed by the participants. Thus, the findings might not have been reflected in the ways the participants expressed.

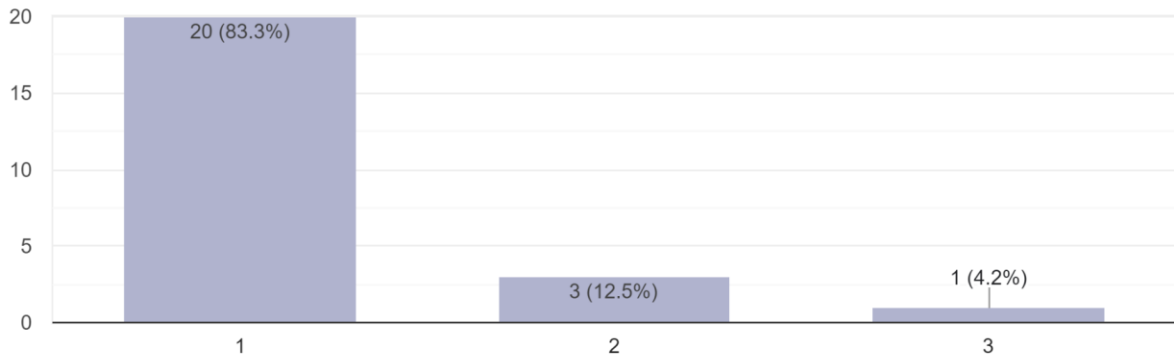
Findings

1. Management

Four-fifths of total respondents were satisfied (rating=1) with the management of the event.

1. Management To what extent are you satisfied with the management of the Sahabgita Day Celebration and NEPAN Retreat 2023?

24 responses



The participants were satisfied with the participation of the attendants, fun activities, food and accommodation.

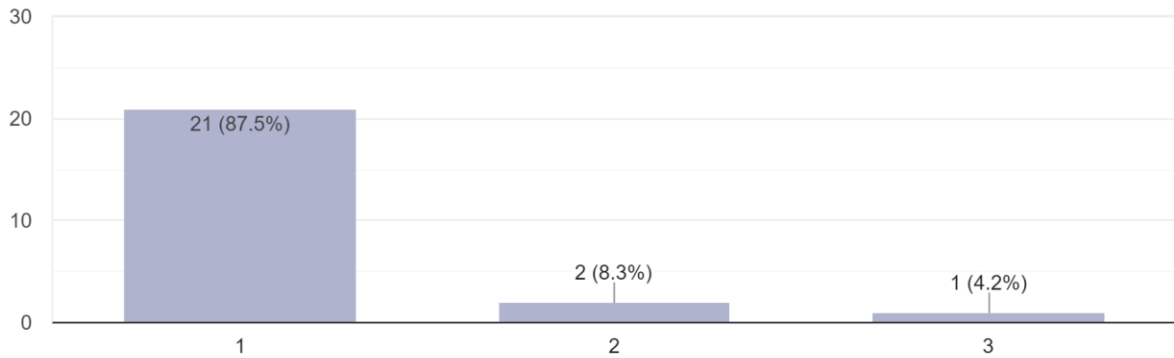


2. Participation

Nine-tenths of total respondents were satisfied (rating=1) with the participation in the events.

3. Participation To what extent are you satisfied with the participation in the Sahabhagita Day Celebration and NEPAN Retreat 2023?

24 responses



The participants were satisfied with the participation of the attendants, fun activities, and commitment of participants attending and volunteering as well as facilitators.

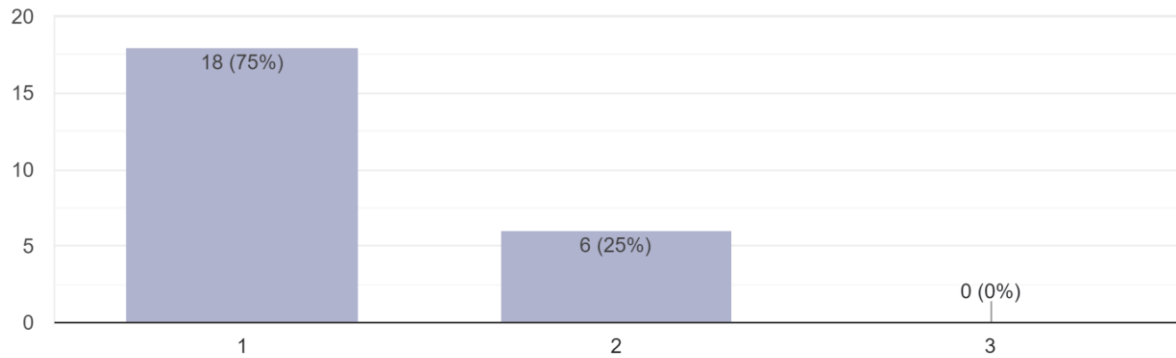


3. Technical Sessions

Three-fourths of total respondents were satisfied (rating=1) with the technical sessions in the events.

5. Technical Sessions To what extent are you satisfied with the technical sessions of the Sahabagita Day Celebration and NEPAN Retreat 2023?

24 responses

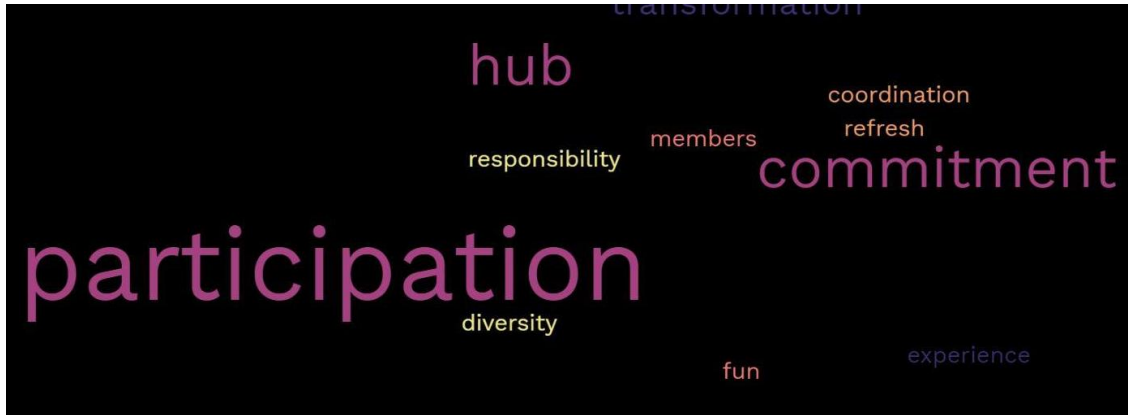


The participants were satisfied with the knowledge they gained from the sessions, and facilitation of the experts. .



4. Takeaway

Attendants showed great participation in the event activities showing their commitments, which indicated that NEPAN could be a hub of knowledge, experience and expertise.

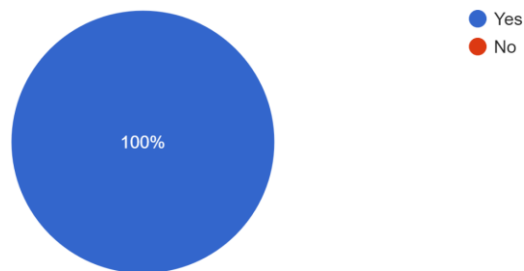


5. Future Event

All respondents had the same voice that such events need to be conducted in future also.

8. Future Event Should NEPAN continue the retreat in coming years?

24 responses



Conclusion

Overall, the event was successful in managing timeliness and active participation of the attendees throughout including technical sessions and fun games. Participants were enthusiastic to hold such events in future as well. The online evaluation demonstrated a good use of mobile friendly technology for designing the survey tool, administering the survey and getting response from the participants. The findings are auto visualized and further analysis can be done as needed. The participants showed keen interest to be part of the evaluation. Such applications and participants’ enthusiasm are potential for evaluations in future.

The evaluation report was prepared by: Basan Shrestha (NEPAN Member)

Few glimpses of NEPAN Retreat and celebrating PARTICIPATION DAY



NEPAN RETREAT and PARTICIPATION DAY CELEBRATION 2023

