

Terms of Reference (ToR)
Project Sustainability Assessment and Action Planning
Lahan Eye and Ear Care System (LEECS) – Project P00196

Summary

Project Title: Lahan Eye and Ear Care System (LEECS)

Project Number: P00196

Implementing Partner: Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh (NNJS)

Project Duration: January 2023 – December 2027

Evaluation Type: Sustainability Assessment and Action Planning

Commissioning Organization: NNJS / LEECS (Eastern Regional Eye Care Program)

Methodology: Mixed method (document review, quantitative data analysis, stakeholder consultations, field validation)

Duration of Assignment: 10 working days

2. Background

The Lahan Eye and Ear Care System (LEECS), formerly known as the Eastern Regional Eye Care Programme (EREC-P), represents a long-standing collaboration between Nepal Netra Jyoti Sangh (NNJS) and CBM, with over 40 years of partnership. The system comprises two high-volume tertiary eye hospitals—Sagarmatha Chaudhary Eye Hospital (SCEH) with 450 beds and Biratnagar Eye Hospital (BEH) with 500 beds—along with a network of 42 Eye Care Centers (ECCs) across Koshi and Madhesh Provinces. CBM Global has been jointly working with LEECS since its establishment. The partnership is currently laid with a joint project of inclusive eye and ear health. The project delivers a comprehensive range of services, including preventive, promotive, curative, and rehabilitative eye and ear care, with community outreach activities such as door-to-door services, school screenings, and eye camps. It also focuses on strengthening care services and building the capacity of health personnel. Project has reached multiple thousands of diverse population groups running through 3 years of its inception in current phase. This sustainability assessment of the project aims to evaluate the extent to which these achievements can be sustained beyond the project period and to develop a practical and actionable sustainability plan.

Sustainability of LEECS: Evolution, Current Status and Future Opportunities

CBM has been supporting and contributing to the development of the Lahan Eye and Ear Care System (LEECS) since 1983. From the very beginning, the Founder Director envisioned

sustainability as a core principle of the project, recognizing that long-term access to quality eye care would require systems that could progressively generate and mobilize resources beyond external donor support.

Over the years, several strategies have been introduced to strengthen the financial and operational sustainability of the hospitals. A **differential service-fee mechanism** was established, whereby patients who can afford to pay contribute a nominal fee, while those who cannot afford services receive them free of charge or with appropriate subsidies. This cross-subsidy approach has enabled the hospitals to generate resources from patients who are able to pay while maintaining access to services for poor and marginalized populations. Revenue-generating services such as **optical, pharmacy, laboratory and other ancillary services** have further contributed to the financial sustainability of the hospitals.

The project has also explored innovative, long-term income-generating approaches. In earlier years, the Founder Director and his team planted **mango, litchi and other trees** within available hospital land with the intention of generating future income. Subsequently, the hospitals introduced a **multi-tier pricing system**, through which revenue from paying patients helps subsidize services for patients from economically disadvantaged groups. These mechanisms demonstrate the project's longstanding commitment to balancing financial sustainability with equity and access.

Infrastructure development has also been guided by sustainability considerations. CBM has historically supported the construction of hospital infrastructure, procurement of equipment and strengthening of essential services. The hospitals have developed infrastructure that emphasizes **durability and low maintenance costs**. Joint procurement of equipment and supplies across facilities has helped achieve economies of scale and reduce purchasing costs. At present, CBM continues to support the hospitals in strengthening sub-specialty services through the provision of appropriate equipment, particularly in response to the increasing burden of **glaucoma, retinal diseases and other complex eye conditions**.

Both base hospitals have progressively developed the capacity to cover their **day-to-day operational costs through internally generated resources**, demonstrating a high level of financial sustainability at the hospital level. However, sustainability remains more challenging for the **42 Primary Eye and Ear Care Centers (PEECCs)** established in remote areas. These centers serve populations where affordability, geography and access remain significant barriers. Their recurrent operational costs are therefore largely supported by the respective base hospitals. This creates an important sustainability consideration for the future, particularly as community-based services expand and the demand for decentralized eye and ear care increases.

Human Resource Sustainability

Human resource development has been another important pillar of sustainability. Since the early stages of the project, the hospitals have invested in a wide range of **training and capacity-building programmes**. This long-term investment has contributed to the availability of trained

ophthalmic and support personnel not only within LEECS but also across other eye hospitals and institutions in Nepal creating a lasting institutional and national-level contribution beyond the direct implementation period of individual projects.

Environmental Sustainability

Environmental sustainability has also been incorporated into the development and operation of the hospitals. From the beginning, the project has promoted **environmentally responsible hospital practices**, including infrastructure designed to minimize maintenance and energy requirements, limited use of air conditioning, appropriate waste management, and standardized treatment protocols that support efficient use of resources. These approaches have contributed to the development of hospitals that are not only financially sustainable but also more environmentally responsible and resilient.

Emerging Eye Health Needs and Sustainability Challenges

The catchment areas of the two base hospitals extend across **Koshi and Madhesh Provinces**, covering a large and diverse population with significant unmet eye-health needs. At the same time, the demand for eye-care services is expected to increase substantially due to demographic, epidemiological and environmental changes.

The increasing prevalence of **myopia**, with projections indicating that approximately half of the world's population could be myopic by 2050, will create a growing demand for refractive and comprehensive eye-care services. The increasing burden of non-communicable diseases such as **diabetes and hypertension** is also contributing to a greater risk of diabetic retinopathy and other vision-threatening conditions. In addition, increasing life expectancy and population ageing are expected to increase the burden of cataract, glaucoma, retinal diseases and other age-related eye conditions.

Climate change and global warming represent another emerging challenge. Changes in environmental conditions can influence the occurrence and severity of several eye conditions and may also affect the accessibility and resilience of health services. These emerging challenges require eye-care systems to become increasingly **preventive, community-oriented, resilient and financially sustainable**.

Despite the availability of eye-care services, many people in Nepal do not routinely seek eye examinations unless they experience significant symptoms or vision loss. Consequently, patients may be present at an advanced stage of disease, when treatment is more complex, costly and, in some cases, unable to reverse the damage already caused. **Early identification and timely treatment can prevent avoidable visual impairment, reduce treatment costs and improve long-term outcomes**. Strengthening community-based screening, referral and awareness therefore remain essential.

Future Sustainability Opportunity

In recent years, CBM support has increasingly focused on community-based programmes designed to address these emerging challenges, including early identification, referral, awareness and access to services among underserved populations. However, the continuation and scale-up of these community interventions may become challenging in the absence of external funding.

This creates an important opportunity for LEECS to undertake a **comprehensive sustainability assessment** of project P00196. The findings can then be used to develop a **time-bound Sustainability Action Plan** that identifies what can be sustained through hospital-generated income, what can be integrated into government and local health systems, what can be supported through partnerships, and where continued external investment will remain necessary.

The future sustainability strategy should therefore aim to preserve the project's core principle of **equitable access to quality eye and ear care**, while progressively reducing dependence on external funding for activities that can be locally financed or integrated into existing systems. A clear sustainability roadmap will enable LEECS and its partners to protect the achievements made over more than four decades while preparing the eye-care system to respond effectively to the growing and changing needs of the population.

3. Objective of the Assignment

Overall Objective

- To analyze project P00196 sustainability status and develop action plan.

Specific Objectives

1. Analyze sustainability of project interventions across **four core domains**:
 - Finance
 - Program/Service Delivery
 - Human Resources
 - Environment/External Factors
2. Analyze each result area using the framework:
 - Result
 - Outcomes & Activities
 - Achievements to date
 - Impact if discontinued

4. Scope of Work

The consultant will review the current project activities, results and strategy and suggest actionable suitability action plan.

The consultant (individual /firm) under direct coordination with LEECS will:

1) Conduct situational analysis

- Review relevant project documents, reports, monitoring data, financial information, policies, strategies, and previous assessments.
- Map all major project results, interventions, and activities requiring sustainability assessment.
- Assess the current level of institutionalization and ownership of each intervention.
- Assess the sustainability of major programme components from institutional, financial, human resource, service delivery, technical, community, government and partnership perspectives.
- Analyze the financial sustainability of the programme, including current costs, funding sources, resource gaps and potential alternative sources of funding.
- Assess the integration and ownership of the programme within government structures, local government and communities.
- Identify and classify programme components as highly sustainable, moderately sustainable, vulnerable to loss of external support, or highly dependent on donor support.

2) Development of actionable action plan

- Prepare a practical action plan with activities and timeline, budget estimation and monitoring indicators.
- Sustainability assessment report covering all identified project result areas.
- Develop practical recommendations and sustainability options for maintaining programme services, quality, access and outcomes.
- Develop a sustainability roadmap for 5 years, including priority actions, responsible stakeholders, timelines and resource requirements.
- Sustainability Scorecard: Clear result wise analysis of the current sustainability status, key gaps, risks and areas requiring continued external support.

5. Deliverables:

1. Inception Report with methodology and timeline
2. Draft and final project sustainability assessment report.
3. Sustainability Scorecard: Result-wise sustainability analysis.
4. Actionable action plan

6. Qualifications of the Consultant/lead

- Master's degree in Community Eye Health, Optometry, Public Health, or a related field.
- Minimum 10 years of project management experience, preferably in eye health.
- At least one prior experience developing a sustainability action plan for an organization or project.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Consultant

- Lead assessment, analysis, and reporting
- Developing tools and facilitate workshop
- Deliver final sustainability plan

LEECS / NNJS

- Logistics and coordination
- Stakeholder linkage
- Provide documents and data
- Support workshop organization

Application process:

Documents required:

TECHNICAL PROPOSAL:

- Company Profile and Updated CV
- Previous consultancy report
- Letter of Intent/ Cover Letter
- Proposal with Methodology

FINANCIAL PROPOSAL

- Company Registration Certificate (if firm/organization)
- VAT/PAN Registration Certificate
- Tax Clearance Certificate of FY 2082/83 (if firm/organization)
- Audit Reports for the last 3 years (if firm/organization)

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