

# Participatory Approach for the Conservation of Traditional Settlement of Nepal, Case at Balambu

Bikram Manandhar <sup>a</sup>, Sudarshan Raj Tiwari <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a,b</sup> Department of Architecture, Pulchowk Campus, IOE, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

Corresponding Email: <sup>a</sup> bikram.manandhar@gmail.com, <sup>b</sup> srtiwari@ioe.edu.np

## Abstract

Stakeholder participation and involvement is essential for the sustainable conservation of traditional settlement. Balambu is taken as a case area for the conservation through participatory approach in which involvement and participation of communities in conservation and management were assessed through various focus group discussions, workshops, interviews and house survey methods. Important cultural heritages of Balambu like temples, paatis, ponds, inscriptions and other monuments, community spaces, jatra routes, main streets within the settlement area of Balambu were identified. Mahalaxmi temple, Lichchhavi and Medieval period inscriptions, Ganesh Temple, Tagan Phalcha, Nasa Dya, Muka chhen and Hiti gaa beside Tagan Phalcha are the most important monuments of Balambu area. From the discussions and workshops, many lost heritages like culturally important Phalchas, ponds and traditional wells were identified. With the example of reconstruction work of Mahalaxmi Temple which is under construction, identification of stakeholders, their roles, process, challenges, problems and management is rectified. In spite of conservation awareness being high (67%), locals knowing they are responsible for the conservation (64%), Balambu area losing its traditional characteristics (64%) participation of the community in the conservation work is very low (26%). Maintenance (62%), capital (54%), local coordination (60%) and public awareness (62%) are the major challenge according to the local residents of Balambu. It was recommended that there must be improved management system, local coordination works, involving locals in the conservation projects, transparency in the conservation works and conservation awareness campaign for improving participatory methods for conservation.

## Keywords

Conservation, stakeholder participation, participatory approach, traditional settlement, cultural heritage

## 1. Introduction

Nepalese system has proved to be ineffective in responding to the rapid transformation of cities and societies after the rapid urbanization [1]. Such planning ignored people's traditional cultures and community based growth management [1]. The adaptation of centralized systems, inadequate and ineffective legislation, the disintegration of the traditional communal society, and the demise of the guthi system have led to low community awareness and contributed to the metamorphosis of inner cities and the breakdown of historic religious and cultural frameworks that had been maintained for centuries [1].

Cultural heritage is threatened by the fast urbanization and modernization happening since recent decades [1]. Furthermore, not only World heritage sites, but

relevant national and local heritage is disseminated all over the valley, which has not received enough resources neither careful attention by the responsible institutions and the rest [1].

The mega-earthquake on 25th April 2015 and its subsequent aftershocks caused huge damages to the historic settlements of Nepal. Even today, numerous challenges face reconstruction. Any new construction or repairs should be cost effective and disaster resilient. Conserving cultural properties and traditional townscape is essential in post-earthquake redevelopment: historic settlements have a very different local context than do rural areas in terms of plot size, land ownership, building typology – including building materials – and construction technology.

National government has been following the dictate of

the international organizations in regard to urban conservation, adopting the Euro-centric vision while letting apart its own indigenous systems as guthis in Kathmandu valley, which in fact were already sustainable, by the land nationalization reform and the Guthi Sansthan Act [2]. Nepal has been and still is working with foreign aid to be able to achieve its objectives for development. Promoted from this global level, programs “planned, implemented and owned by communities” appear as an accurate method of implementing projects in the country in the local level [3].

### 2. Rationale

Cultural heritage has been created by people and it has been created for people. Our world is a better place for the richness that cultural heritage brings. Although individual people and their contribution to cultural heritage is important, it is often more appropriate to work with groups of people – or communities – as culture is usually accomplished through collaboration. It can also be more helpful to think in terms of the efforts made by groups of people to the conservation of heritage: communities of place, communities of interest and communities of practice. At heritage places that are considered to be a ‘living’ part of their community, the community’s engagement often brings advantages to both heritage and community alike. Communities contain capacities and assets that outlast political or professional structures and complement specialist knowledge and skills. A people-centered approach harnesses these capacities in order to offer long-term conservation and co-management for the good of the heritage and for the good of the community. Conversely, there are many examples that illustrate the negative impacts that can occur when heritage is divorced from society by an imbalanced management system. Where the relationship between people and heritage has been weakened or broken, a people-centered approach seeks to identify the problems and rectify them. Taking a people-centered approach is not simply a suggestion for increasing participation within a management system. Instead, it is about addressing a core component of heritage management – the people who are connected to heritage – and ensuring that it is an integral element of conserving that heritage.

Engaging communities is about strengthening their ability to participate meaningfully in the process of making conservation and management decisions for

themselves and their heritage.

### 3. Problem Statement

16 cultural and heritages sites in the valley are on the verge of extinction [4]. Balambu’s Mahalaxmi temple as well as other heritages situated at the settlement are among the cultural and heritages sites at risk [4]. Sense of unity and belonging within a group and better understanding the previous generations and the history of where we come from is provided by cultural heritages which if extinct will be lost.

There is ambiguity in the roles and responsibility of different actors in the conservation process. In conservation, the local government must play important role in the process getting in front and taking responsibilities to protect social, cultural, economic and environmental aspects of the settlement. Along with the local government public participation is equally important in the sustainable conservation process.

Community groups like guthis are responsible to conserve the cultural values of the society. Coordination between different guthis from the same community is very important for the sustainable conservation of any heritages. Problems between these groups and individuals from the society causes extinction of various rituals that are nearly impossible to revive.

Lack of community participation in the reconstruction process for the settlement public spaces/ open spaces, temples/ shrines, streets, public infrastructures, and so on could have affected the integrity of the traditional values of the settlement.

### 4. Objectives

To develop a conservation plan through participatory approach for the conservation of traditional settlement and its surrounding.

Specific Objectives:

1. To identify and measure the key traditional services, facilities and landmarks such as main streets, jatra routes, monuments, squares and other community spaces within the settlement for the conservation of the cultural landscape.
2. To identify the problems of the settlement leading to the conservation plan

- To study the stakeholders awareness regarding the sustainable conservation of the historically and culturally important settlements.

## 5. RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the participatory methodologies which have arisen from qualitative research approaches which aim to reflect, explore and spread the views, concerns, feelings and experiences of research participants from their own perspectives.

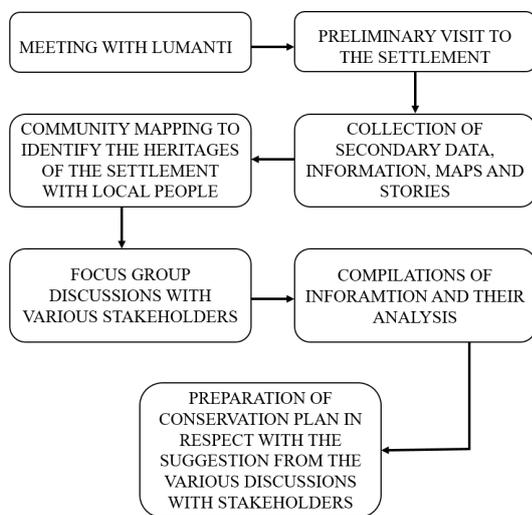


Figure 1: methodology chart

Research Methodology for this thesis includes field visits, personal interviews, focus group discussions and literature reviews. Field visits to the case area site took place. Personal interviews with local experts were also conducted within this period in Balambu. The research is further supplemented with reviews of secondary resources including literature, journals, legislation, newspaper articles and online media. These secondary sources help to create a more concrete understanding of community participation importance in the context of Balambu.

There are two types of research strategies: quantitative research and qualitative research. In this research, a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches will be used to explore, analyze and understand the perceptions of both experts and people who benefits from the conservation of cultural heritage.

## 6. Research Framework

The participatory approach can be implemented through the cooperation among main groups of stakeholders, analysis on their interest, role and function in conservation, and the necessity of involving them into the whole procedure.

For the conservation through the participatory planning methodology various principles were used by conducting numbers of focus group discussions, interviews, workshops and house survey in the traditional settlement area of case area, Balambu.

Table 1: steps for the conservation through participatory methodology [5]

	Principle	Application
1	Initiate	Background research Identifying stakeholders Understanding local context Site investigation Built environment mapping
2	Plan	Community planning to build a common ground Stakeholder analysis
3	Design	Findings from research and discussions problem identifications Preparation of initial conservation plan

## 7. Limitations

The research will be limited in the following points:

- Study will be confined in the core traditional settlement area of the case area.
- Research is based on physical infrastructures and services.
- Intangible heritage conservation are not studied but will be related in the research.

## 8. Literature Review

### 8.1 Urban Heritage Conservation

Since the beginning of the 20th century, various conceptions of urban heritage and its conservation have succeeded one another [6]. Overall, urban heritage conservation is defined as the conservation and development of public spaces and the monumental heritage of the public domain. In addition, it likely encompasses private property, if the latter is the subject of a heritage conservation process [6].

Research in this field has also shown that several levels of actors are likely to be involved in a heritage

conservation process (HCP), including public authorities, interests groups, and citizens [7]. Existing case studies have also emphasized that, as a heterogeneous social phenomenon, the HCP involves social tensions and conflicts. As a result, HCP is likely to favor certain groups and to exclude others, based on power interaction between the stakeholders [8].

**8.2 Participatory Research Approach**

Participatory research (PR) aims to explore and interpret the views, concerns and experiences of people from their own perspectives and allows them to undertake measures to improve their situations [9].

PR is based on the principles of “participation” and “self-development”. It treats people as “research participants” rather than “research subjects”. It is people-centered in the sense that the process of critical inquiry is informed by and responds to the experiences and needs of people involved [10]. The fundamental principle of participatory research is that it is research with rather than on people. It emphasizes “knowledge for action” and a “bottom up Approach” in contrast to conventional research, which is more “top-down” [11].

**8.3 Participatory approaches in the conservation of cultural heritages**

In order to improve the relationship between heritage and society, it is helpful to think in terms of working with specific groups of people in order to support the development of their capacities so that they are better able to contribute should they want to. The World Heritage Capacity Building Strategy identifies three such target groups as: practitioners, institutions (described below as ‘decision- and policy-makers’), and communities and networks. Each of these groups brings capacities and can gain benefits from their contribution to heritage conservation. Although it is not always easy, there is increasing awareness that people-centered approaches brings recognized benefits to heritage, to those working in the heritage sector and to communities [12].

By promoting community participation in heritage, policy-makers are able to be seen engaging in much broader debates (such as sustainable development), promoting measurable opportunities for community engagement, opening up democratic processes and improving transparency of government [12].

Passive participation, Contractual participation, Consultative participation, Participation among colleagues, Participation limitation, Community self-mobilization are five typology of local participation in conservation.

**Table 2:** *steps for the conservation through participatory methodology* [5]

	Principle	Application
1	Initiate	Mapping stakeholders and their interest
2	Plan	Stakeholders’ coordination and cooperation mechanism Commitment
3	Design	Participation framework in the decision making process Avoid supply demand- driven Eligibility criteria for community groups Community level procurement
4	Implement	Community social capital or cohesion Institutional strength Supportive intermediary implementers Project quality and performance
5	Maintain	Communities commitment Local governments responsibility

**9. Case Area**

**9.1 General Information**

Balambu is an ancient town (0.5 sq. km.) populated by the Newars, the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. Balambu is one of the oldest settlements in the Kathmandu Valley, situated about 12 km west of Kathmandu city, founded between 13th to 18th century [13]. Balambu lies in Chandragiri Municipality, ward no: 12 which previously was Balambu V.D.C. Balambu is connected with Tribhuvan Highway which links Kathmandu to the Western part of Kathmandu valley. Balambu shares boundary with New Naikap and old Naikap at its eastern side, Mahadevsthan and Satungal at its southern side Dahachowk and old Naikap at its northern side and Thankot at its western side. Total area of Balambu ward is 2.6 sq. km. According to the National population census 2011, the total population of Balambu is 7323 and total household number is 1734. Balambu is situated at an altitude of 1361 m.

Due to the presence of many inscriptions from Lichchhavi period, the importance of Balambu seems to be justified. According to the inscriptions found, the exact name of Balambu can be found as “*Bu...ngram*” which is incomplete due to deterioration of inscription [14]. Therefore exact name is still not known. During Malla period, Balambu can be found named as “Bharatyapur”, “Bhrartyapur” according to the medieval inscriptions found [14].

## 9.2 Settlement Pattern

Balambu as per the inscriptions found can be divided into different development phases according to the historical period i.e. ancient, medieval and present [14].



**Figure 2:** *Balambu settlement area (1975)* [15]

In 1975, it can be observed that the settlement area was confined at the core traditional area of Balambu with no other construction at the road leading to the settlement. But in contrast to 1975 due to the commercial importance of the main road increasing, in 2003 it can be observed that new settlement started to grow along the roadside leading to the settlement as well as along Tribhuwan highway. And few construction can be also seen at the farmland.



**Figure 3:** *Balambu Settlement area (2003)*, Source: *Google Earth*

In 2012, it can be observed that after the main traditional settlement then along the main road, now

the settlement can be found spread at the farmland more and more. It is mainly due to the migration of people to Kathmandu from outside the valley. More and more cultivated land can be found turned into housing plot. A year before 2015 earthquake, the settlement area can be found slowly spread to the cultivated area. No drastic changes can be found. But after the earthquake the area could be found turned into haphazard urban growth area. Various reason resulting in this type of growth where the cultivated land is a major victim.

Houses are closely spaced - built back to back with only a narrow lane between the two buildings. Irrespective to the location and size, the settlement patterns are rather compact which are often fortified with the provision of network of walls and gateways. In Balambu there are four gateways- one each at east, west, north and south direction [13]. Eastern, northern and southern gates only exist at present. There is confirmation of existence of western gate from the discussions with the locals but no confirmation regarding the actual position of the gate.

From the observations and discussions with the local stakeholders it is found that urban growth of traditional settlement area of Balambu can be divided into two phase: 1st phase development- traditional and monumental development and 2nd phase development: effects of urbanizations. 1st phase development is the area developed within the traditional areas whereas 2nd phase development can be seen outside of traditional area which comprises of residential buildings constructed at the previously kitchen garden area of the owners. The traditional settlement area was previously surrounded by boundary wall to define the area of Balambu. This boundary wall is known as “*Dya Pa:kha*”. This boundary wall is a stone masonry with mud mortar.

There are two main streets defined for Balambu. Each on the cardinal directions running from north to south and east to west. Main Street running north to south runs through Lachhi tole and Kumari tole whereas another street running east to west runs through Oppi tole and Baku nani tole.

## 9.3 Community Distribution in Balambu

Traditional settlement area of Balambu is divided into 15 different community areas inside 4 different gates situated at four directions of the settlement which are: Laachhi Tole, Kumari Tole, Pauli or Khichamuga

Tole, Taraun Livi Tole, Hama Nani Tole, Oppi Tole, Dwhakshi Tole, Pasi Nani Tole, Nhyaka Nani Tole, Sinki bahal, Gachhen Tole, Bakunani Tole, Hitigaa Tole, Dyanani Tole and Khadya Tole.

Lachhi tole and Kumari tole is situated at the main street of traditional settlement area of Balambu stretching from north to south. Settlement square, main temple: Mahalaxmi temple, *Dya Chhen*, and other shrines of different deities lies at these two toles which makes it more important amongst other according to the locals. These are the main toles where the main jatra of Balambu is also celebrated.

### 9.4 Heritage in traditional settlement area of Balambu

Various heritage assets of Balambu comprises of temple of Mahalaxmi and Kumari at Kumari tole, Pinga Mahalaxmi temple, Kot ghar of Khadga Jatra, Ganesh temple at Lachhi tole, Namobuddha temple, *Hiti gaa*, *Nasa Dya*, *Tanga Phalcha*, *Muka Chhen*, pond and historical city boundary wall.



Figure 4: Mahalaxmi temple under construction

Mahalaxmi temple at Kumari Tole of Balambu is under construction by the Department of Archaeology of Nepal due to the damage caused by the earthquake. As per local there is a committee that supervise the work of construction of Mahalaxmi Temple. All the funds are given by the government of Nepal. Mahalaxmi Temple is famous for the Kumari Jatra which is carried out at *Mukha Astami*, at Yamari puni, at Kumar Khasti Jatra. Mahalaxmi temple at Kumari tole and Pinga Mahalaxmi tole are related to each other and shares important rituals during Kumari jatra. Kumari Jatra Starts at Mahalaxmi temple at the Kumari tole, where, after the completion of puja

rituals by *Dwa guthi* and *Thakali guthi*, *Kha guthi* starts carrying chariot to 12 different deities situated at Balambu. After the completion of round to 12 deities chariot is carried to Pinga Mahalaxmi temple and rituals are conducted after the completion of rituals at Pinga, chariot is again carried and returned to the Kumari tole. While returning to the Kumari tole the chariot is rested for 5 times until it reaches Kumari tole after this the chariot is carried to different toles of Balambu according to its accessibility.

### 9.5 Distribution of open spaces in traditional settlement in Balambu

Open spaces found in traditional settlement area of Balambu is divided into four categories: square, *Kwatha*, other open spaces like semi private and private, and earthquake damaged building area.

Square consist of large open space for major jatra events and other public activities. Square consists of major heritages like Mahalaxmi temple, *Phalcha*, *Bhajan khala*, *Dya Chhen*, Namobudhha and shrine of other deities. Space of square is mainly used by old age people for sun bath and for gossiping. Other than that its purpose has become parking.

*Bhajan khala* at square invites people to gather around and conduct social as well as religious interaction between larger groups of people. Open areas at the settlements are used by the locals for different cultural events such as *bartbandha*, *janko* as well as marriage reception. *Kwa tha* is located in front of Kotghar. It has stone paved floor. It is used mostly during the jatra time. Other days, it is used as cultural event organizing place and mostly for parking purpose.

### 9.6 Infrastructures in Balambu

Balambu streets have been provided with solar street lights. These lights have been installed at the main street of the Settlement which runs through Kumari tole and Lachhi tole. Other toles are not provided with street lights and have been managed by the individuals of the community.

Till date the traditional drainage system is in use which runs through each tole through the streets. Drainage line are covered with R.C.C. slab for the easy accessibility. Each household still has to go to the public tap for the daily water supply. Each community is facilitated with public tap from the municipality which have reservoir tank at Gurujudhara.

Due to insufficient requirement fulfillment of water supply, locals have also put water tank at two different places, at Sinki Bahal and just outside the northern gate of Balambu. This serves as the reservoir tank for communities but not enough to serve whole settlement.

### 10. Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholders for the participatory approach for the conservation of traditional settlement area of Balambu area can be broadly divided into five regions: Tole, Local, Regional, National and Global regions.

The stakeholders from all these five regions are further sub categorized on the basis of power or influence and interest of the stakeholders that can contribute in the conservation of cultural heritage of Balambu.

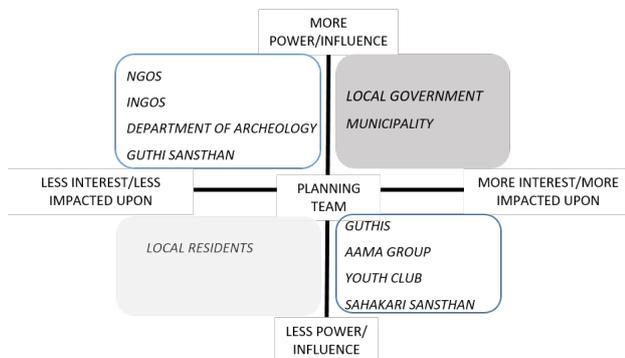


Figure 5: stakeholders power interest diagram

### 11. Findings and Analysis

For the questionnaire survey, response from locals from each tole of Balambu was carried out (Table 3). The analysis is based on their response regarding the conservation through participation.

#### 11.1 Knowledge and Participation in Conservation

Greater percentage of respondents (59.04%) were involved in the cultural groups like guthi. But just oppositely greater number of respondents (63.86%) were not involved in any community groups like Aama Group, Youth club, Tole Sudhar Samiti (Table 5 and Table 4 respectively). 67.47% of the total respondents were aware of the importance of conservation of cultural heritage in Balambu (Table 6). Due to this existence of awareness, the medium of awareness (45.78%) from self-realization were greater from the respondents (Table 7).

Table 3: number of respondents according to tole

S. No.	Community	Number of respondents
1	Khicha muga	5
2	Taraun Livi	5
3	Hama Nani	3
4	Oppi tole	8
5	Dhwakshi tole	6
6	Pasi nani	6
7	Nhyaka nani	7
8	Sinki Bahal	3
9	Ga chhen	7
10	Lachhi tole	9
11	Kumari tole	6
12	Baku nani	6
13	Hiti gaa tole	3
14	Dya Nani	3
15	Khadya tole	6
	TOTAL	83

Table 4: involvement in community group

involvement in community group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
yes	30	36.14
no	53	63.86
total	83	100.00

Table 5: involvement in cultural group

involvement in cultural group	Frequency	Percentage (%)
yes	49	59.04
no	34	40.96
total	83	100.00

Table 6: awareness of conservation

awareness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
yes	56	67.47
no	27	32.53
total	83	100.00

Table 7: medium of awareness

medium of awareness	Frequency	Percentage (%)
self	38	45.78
community	18	21.69
not respond	27	32.53
total	83	67.47

**Table 8:** appreciation towards Balambu

	mean	scale
Cleanliness and improvement of the street	2.3	disagree
open spaces	2.8	agree
community hall for meeting	1.4	strongly disagree
tress for sun shading	1.4	strongly disagree
there is sufficient lighting in the area	2.6	agree
conservation awareness programs	1.3	strongly disagree
monuments	3.2	agree
neighbors	3.2	agree

**Table 9:** awareness of situation

	mean	scale
know people in my neighborhood	3.2	agree
Balambu area is not secure	2.2	disagree
Balambu area has lost its traditional characteristics	3.2	agree
There is good coordination between communities	1.9	disagree
municipality takes conservation of these heritage seriously	2.2	disagree
there is still a lot that can be done to conserve heritages that are left	2.3	disagree
locals are responsible for the conservation of these heritage	3.2	agree

**Table 10:** involvement in different activities

	mean	scale
come to the neighborhood meetings	2.5	agree
joined the neighborhood cultural events	2.8	agree
joined the meetings for the reconstruction of Mahalaxmi Temple at the community	1.9	disagree
am involved in various conservation related groups	1.3	strongly disagree
have talked with conservation activists team for the Balambu area	1	strongly disagree

Strongly agree-4, agree-3, disagree-2, strongly disagree-1 and no comments-0 were taken as the basis of measurement for the agreement level of the respondents regarding the appreciation of Balambu, awareness of situation, involvement in different activities and the challenges for the conservation of cultural heritages of Balambu.

In regard with the appreciation towards Balambu,

major respondents disagree with the cleanliness and improvement of the streets. Respondents were appreciative towards the open spaces available at the settlement. Due to the absence of community hall for meetings for community works as well as cultural works, locals are unaware of its importance. Respondents were appreciative towards the availability of sunlight in their settlement. Respondents were very non- appreciative towards lesser conservation awareness programs than other settlements. Respondents were appreciative toward the temples, *Paatis*, and other monuments and neighbors (Table 8).

Greater number of respondents agree with the fact that Balambu area is losing its traditional characteristics and also agrees that they are responsible for the conservation of Balambu. Greater number of respondents disagree with the good coordination between communities. With rapidly disappearing heritages, greater respondents disagree that there is still a lot that can be done to conserve heritages that are left. (Table 9) Although greater number of respondents agree with the involvement in the cultural or community group of Balambu but during the meetings for the reconstruction of Mahalaxmi Temple, which is the important monument of the settlement, they were not involved. Respondents strongly disagree that anyone from anywhere had ever come to them for conservation talks. (Table 10)

**Table 11:** challenges for conservation

	mean	%	scale
maintenance	3.1	62	agree
capital	2.7	54	agree
politics	2.1	42	disagree
local cordination	3	60	agree
public awareness	3.1	62	agree

**Table 12:** important suggestion for the conservation of cultural heritages of Balambu

suggestions	Frequency	%
conservation awareness	5	6.02
improve management	4	4.82
involvement of locals	29	34.94
local coordination	30	36.14
transparency in conservation works	15	18.07
total	83	100.00

Greater number of respondents agree that maintenance,

capital, local coordination and public awareness are the main challenges for the conservation of traditional settlement area (Table 11). Conservation awareness, improving management, involvement of locals, local coordination and transparency in conservation works were some of the important suggestion for carrying out conservation works in Balambu (Table 12).

## 11.2 Focus group discussions, workshops and interview

To identify and to verify regarding the information received through the discussions is important part of research. For the verification Sagar Shrestha, who conducted the inscription research of Balambu from Lichchhavi to medieval period, was interviewed. Without the verification of the data the information provided cannot be taken as valid.

Discussions provided new information for few of the attending members as well. As the discussion topics were kept same, new information from one group discussion is transferred to another group discussion for the verification as well as providing new information. Therefore these discussions and workshops became more informative as well as awareness campaign.

According to the local residents and ward member, Bhimlal Maharjan, there is no any data regarding the traditional settlement area of Balambu. There has been no data collection regarding the cultural heritage of Balambu till date from the municipality. Due to the fact that Balambu is one of the historically important settlements of Nepal, municipality has not conducted not even a single survey regarding the conservation works. There is also no separate building bye laws for the traditional settlements in Chadragiri municipality. “*Jheegu Balambu*”, facebook page, opened by a local resident, has tried to list the heritage present at Balambu.

Mahalaxmi temple at Kumari tole is under reconstruction phase which has been supported by Department of Archeology (DoA) both financially as well as technically. Rest of the monuments are waiting for their turn. Ganesh temple has also been granted of budget from municipality for the reconstruction under the technical supervision of DoA, says Bhimlal Maharjan.

During reconstruction of these monuments, according to the locals, no approval and support from either municipality or DoA was taken. Reconstruction of

monuments was conducted without preserving its original form and characteristics. Due to the fact that the reconstruction did not follow the DoA norms, Kot ghar which is also incompletely reconstructed, it was not supported by DoA neither financially nor technically. It is now been financially supported only by municipality.

For the reconstruction of Mahalaxmi temple, Sanjay Maharjan, Treasurer, *Mahalaxmi Purnanirman Samiti*, says different meetings were conducted between different political parties, locals, at ward and at municipalilty also for the steps to be carried out. Initially *Mahalaxmi Purnanirman Samiti* was established from the discussions and from that day this Samiti was given full responsibility. Sanjay adds locals, political parties were only attending meetings but only few showed commitment. Those few created the group.

As Mahalaxmi temple is the important monument of Balambu settlement area, at every steps locals were involved regarding any decision making, says Sanjay Maharjan. According to Sanjay reconstruction process for Mahalaxmi temple is as transparent as glass due to the direct and indirect involvement of all residents of Balambu. But the opposing thing is that people during focus group discussion did not totally agree with this. According to Purshottom Maharjan, President of *Nawasamaj Nirman Samiti*, the meetings called by Purnanirman Samiti is a good thing but during the consultation phase with DoA (technical teams) locals were not involved. Even presently, construction of Mahalaxmi temple is undergoing but beside the fact it is being reconstructed no documents are shown to the locals till date regarding how the construction will be undertaken. There is a debate regarding the role of the locals during the reconstruction process.

Municipality and DoA are responsible for the financial and technical support only, unless there is coordination between the locals, the conservation of cultural heritage will be at risk like reconstruction of Mahalaxmi temple.

The political influence is also making the process difficult says Rajendra Shrestha, Member of *Balambu Shrestha Samuha*. The lack of coordination and unity among the locals is one of the major factors of losing their own identity. Many traditional Phalchas or Paatis have lost their existence like *Haran Phalcha* in front of Ganesh temple, *Chiran Phalcha* at Kumari Tole.

Focus group discussion with workshop gave the information about the lost ponds, stone water spout, *Kuwas* and traditional well of Balambu. The negligence and the encroachment of land by the locals is the main reason of losing their existence.

Municipality is taking responsibility and have already separated budget for the maintenance of the streets and open spaces, according to Bhimlal Maharjan. Streets are brick paved but are not maintained. Locals are sitting passively without maintaining and waiting for municipality.

### 11.3 Problem Identification

From the discussions with the various groups of stakeholders of Balambu, the problems were identified based on four aspects: Natural Environment, Built Environment, Infrastructures and Socio-Economic and Cultural Environment which are as follows:

- **Natural Environment:** Cultivated land around Balambu are rapidly converting into planning for building construction, wastes are being disposed at water source, traditional *Kuwa* behind School is not in used due to construction of toilet area for school, traditional Pond being encroached by the locals, traditional wells are being covered.
- **Built Environment:** Lack of use of open spaces available by the locals, used mostly by elders for sunbathing and interaction, no maintenance of open spaces by any authority, reconstruction of Mahalaxmi temple from the assistance from Archaeological Department has not been implemented well, Birbinayak and Ganesh temple are still not reconstructed, Lost characteristics of most of the traditional phalchas during reconstruction, need of reconstruction of Tagan Phalcha which is the most used phalcha by elders for gathering, important inscriptions can be found without any attention for preservation and conservation.
- **Infrastructures:** No provision of public restroom in or around the settlement, important streets like Laachhi has not been maintained from the date of installation creating difficulty in circulation, drainage system at the main street is not constructed well, streetlights have been installed in only main streets at Lachhi tole and Kumari tole, no pipelines to the individual households are provided, only few

locals spend money for the collection of wastes through private collectors, no proper waste management system by locals or municipality.

- **Social, Economic and cultural environment:** Number of people involving in jatras and other cultural activities is decreasing, except major jatras including Kumari jatra, many cultural activities are lost or are in the verge of extinction, many of the important musical instruments have already extinct due to discontinuation, existence of guthi system is in danger due to the financial condition according to the guthi members, passive participation of community groups in conservation sectors.

### 11.4 Initial Conservation Plan

After the identification of the problems through discussions with the various groups of stakeholders, the initial conservation plan for Balambu is carried out. Based on the four aspects: Natural Environment, Built Environment, Infrastructures and Social, Cultural and Economic Environment various projects are planned for the conservation of Balambu.

- **Natural Environment:** Plantation at the banks of three kholas surrounding the settlements, proposing guidelines for the construction activity, identifying and preserving the guthi plots which are still there in ropanis of land, recreational area along the kholas, traditional wells and *kuwas* improvement for reuse for reducing water demand, proposing thorough research on the encroachment of traditional pond, cleaning programs of other water bodies present at Balambu.
- **Built Environment:** Detail documentation of important temples like Ganesh temple and Birbinayak temple for the future renovation, Detail Documentation of Tagha phalcha, Muka Chhen, Nasa Dya for future renovation or reconstruction, creating programs that can make open spaces more vibrant, Promoting the authentic form for reconstruction of the monuments, solving the problem that has blocked the construction process of Kot ghar through coordination between locals and the municipality, forming committee including the locals and local government for the maintenance of the monuments, organizing meetings for discussing the importance of

various Paatis like Chiran Phalcha and Haran Phalcha and others that are in ruins.

- **Infrastructures:** Proposal of public toilet according to the conservation guidelines, forming supervision team including locals for the installation of stone pavement that has been already funded by the municipality, committee formation for the maintenance of streets, encouraging underground wiring and cabling, waste collecting place to be identified without disturbing the surrounding environment, organizing meetings between municipality, locals and private waste collectors for the waste management, Solar street lights to be installed to every toles of the settlment.
- **Social,Economic and cultural environment:** training programs regarding the hospitality, traditional music instruments and management skills to the locals and local community groups, establishment of community hall at the convenient place for all the stakeholders, developing Kot ghar as the information center of Balambu, community based development works such as community restaurants like Lahana at Kirtipur for the economic development.

## 12. Conclusion

Despite financial and technical support from the various organizations like Department of Archeology, Nepal and Chandragiri Municipality in the conservation projects, the participation and the involvement of the local community and community groups are very low. There is need of conservation awareness program for the local residents more efficiently, more involvement of locals in the conservation work as the important decision making actors, improving the conservation management system through the coordination between the helping organizations and the local authority. In any conservation works to be conducted inside any traditional settlement area the transparency of the conservation works regarding the planning, construction both financially as well as technically are necessary.

The participatory approach in a correct way if applied, it can facilitate cooperation and support among the local communities. With their important part in the conservation, various NGOs and government agencies

must take part financially as well as technically and in the improvement of the management of the whole process.

## 13. Recommendations

There are some recommendations for the conservation of traditional area through participatory approach:

- To identify the stakeholders that can play important roles in the conservation through the community group discussions.
- To coordinate with community groups and local government for the identification of problems from the grass root level.
- To understand communities, regular meetings with the stakeholders must be carried out and the development that the stakeholders accepts must be identified
- To identify the pros and cons of conservation works that had been already conducted at the settlement with the coordination of local government and community groups.
- To take suggestions from the experts based on developed programs continuously.
- To choose the human resource for the conservation works carefully
- To ensure the transparent, sustainable and community based programs

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