

APRIL-JUNE 2022



## Local Election 2022

The local elections in Nepal took place on May 13, 2022. The program provided technical assistance to the Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) to strengthen coordination among all spheres of government to support free, fair, transparent, and peaceful elections. The program collaborated with General Election Observation Committee (GEOC)\* for election observations in three stages – pre, during, and post-elections. The committee deployed 409 observers, including 369 local level observers, in 32 districts. The observers monitored and collected data and conducted surveys among local political parties, election officers, candidates, voters, security personnel, experts, and media personnel to understand better the state of election management and situations at the polling centers. After the elections, GEOC, in coordination with other election observation alliances, prepared a joint observation report for the ECN. The top-line observations included a higher rate of invalid votes, lack of effective voter education, unregulated election campaign finance, a decline in women's participation, disregard of the code of conduct (CoC), and lack of action against those.



Similarly, the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue program under SNGP also facilitated a series of interactions with local and provincial stakeholders in 19 districts to gain commitments for implementing CoC. The interactive sessions aimed at minimizing the occurrence of electoral violence and ensuring peaceful and fair elections by building trust and shared responsibility across the political aisles.



In the local election, nine Dalit women representatives (DWRs) who are part of the SNGP mentorship won+; 13 out of 21 had got candidacy from their parties to contest the local elections. Two from Tikapur got elected to the District Coordination Committee, two from Birendranagar, two from Damak, and one from Waling got elected to the Municipal Executive Committee. Further, Dialogue Forum members and facilitators got elected to the following key posts: mayors in Biratnagar and Janakpur, chairperson in Janaki Rural Municipality, and deputy mayor in Bedkot Municipality.

## SNGP Phase II

The Subnational Governance Program (SNGP) is implemented by The Asia Foundation with funding from the Australian Government, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and in coordination with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MOFAGA).

After a five-year Phase I (including a one-year Bridging Phase), SNGP Phase II commenced in April 2022 and will continue its support in creating an enabling environment for a stable, effective, and inclusive subnational government in Nepal that addresses the health and economic security of all, including women and marginalized groups. The programmatic approach will include mainstreaming equality and inclusion along with targeted GEDSI efforts.

\*GEOC is an alliance of 10 organizations and has been involved in the observation of two Constituent Assembly elections, three general elections, and two local elections before participating in local elections in 2022. It is a nonpolitical organization and includes intellectuals, legal experts, former government officials, social activists, human rights activists, professors, and senior journalists.

+ See GEDSI section for more

## STABILITY

### Orientation Workshops for the Newly Elected Representatives

Two partner municipalities, Waling and Birendranagar, organized orientation workshops for the newly elected representatives of the May local elections. The program collaborated with the Ministry of Federal Affairs and General Administration (MoFAGA) and Nepal Law Society (NLS) to organize the orientation workshops, which included topics such as roles and responsibilities of elected representatives, constitutional literacy, local law drafting, budgeting, and planning processes, revenue generation and monitoring, and accountability of local governments.

A total of 215 elected representatives (40.4 percent women, 13.4 percent Dalits, 28.3 percent Janjatis, and other ethnic communities), more than 90 in each municipality, took part in the workshops. Legal and governance experts and officials from MoFAGA and provincial ministries facilitated the workshops; SNGP helped develop the orientation manual in coordination with the ministry and the two municipalities.



The program also provided technical assistance to the Provincial and Local Government Support Program (PLGSP) to scale up the orientation in three provinces – Bagmati, Karnali, and Gandaki. The program provided logistical support to build an integrated orientation material and helped facilitate the sessions for the newly elected mayor/ chairperson and deputy mayor/ vice-chairperson of all the local governments in the three provinces.

### Multi-stakeholder Dialogue Program



- The program conducted a three-day workshop for the capacity enhancement of dialogue facilitators. The workshop helped the 20 participants develop a shared understanding of key steps towards facilitating dialogues to resolve conflict, peacebuilding, and providing access to justice. The participants gained practical skills in conflict analysis and management, steps towards peacebuilding, and effective communications.
- The program also renewed five provincial dialogue forums (Sambad Samuha) and 15 district-level dialogue forums to strengthen the facilitation of dispute solutions on governance-related contestations

### Human Rights in Natural Resource Management

The program, in collaboration with National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the National Natural Resources and Fiscal Commission (NNRFC), organized a policy deliberation on 'Resource Management in Federal System from Human Rights Perspective' on June 6. The event marked World Environment Day 2022 and aimed to bring shared understanding among the stakeholders on the human rights perspective in addressing issues related to natural resource management. Mr. Dil Raj Khanal, Legal Advisor at the Federation of Community Forestry Users Nepal (FECOFUN), presented a theme paper highlighting the natural resources management at the three tiers of the government, the various provisions enlisted in the Constitution, and the challenges in managing resources from environmental and human rights perspectives.

Two commentators, Honorable Balram KC, former justice of the Supreme Court, and Advocate Prakash Mani Sharma, shared their observations on the presentations. A total of 108 participants (30.5 percent women, 69.5 percent men) including local representatives, environment and human rights activists, students, lawyers, and policymakers attended the event. The event served as a platform for two constitutional bodies to initiate dialogue on natural resource management – an issue that requires intergovernmental coordination to function effectively.



### Clarifying Roles in Solid Waste Management



Photo Courtesy: Google

In this quarter, SNGP, with support from the program partner NLS, provided technical assistance to MoFAGA for the drafting of the Bill on solid waste management. After several rounds of consultation with experts, the ministry prepared the initial draft that clarifies the roles of the three tiers of government to strengthen intergovernmental coordination in waste management.

Further, the ministry has initiated discussions with provincial and local governments to amend the existing solid waste management law by revisiting the provisions that integrate clear roles and responsibilities of federal, provincial, and local levels in solid waste management (collection, minimization, recycling, segregation, and processing). This exercise is expected to provide a platform for the stakeholders at all three tiers of government to deliberate on the gaps and required provisions to clarify their roles and responsibilities in solid waste management.

## GEDSI

The program will continue to use a dual-track approach to achieve the gender equality, disability, and social inclusion (GEDSI) outcome. The approach includes integrating inclusion across all activities in each outcome area and targeting specific activities to support inclusive governance at partner municipalities.

### Radhika Highlights Women's Leadership in Local Governance

In the last quarter of the Bridging Phase, SNGP supported the Municipal Association of Nepal (MuAN) to produce a short film on the importance of women's leadership and the inclusive budgeting/planning process in local governance. The short film titled Radhika, released on May 13 on MuAN's YouTube, has garnered more than 600 thousand views. Radhika highlights the need for a participatory approach and integration of GEDSI in municipal processes. During the board meeting of MuAN, local government representatives shared that the film raised their awareness on the process of local governments' functioning and reflected the status of women's leadership and power structure in local governments. SNGP co-funded the production of the short film with GIZ.



### Dissemination Campaign for Policy note on Gender and Election



This quarter, the program undertook a dissemination campaign for the Policy Note – Beyond Capacity: Gendered Election Processes, Networks, and Informality in Local Governments in Nepal, published during the Bridging Phase. The team presented the findings of the policy note during three high-level meetings organized by the Swiss Embassy, the British Embassy, and the Australian Embassy on April 27, May 3, and June 30, 2022, respectively. These meetings took place before the local elections and helped draw the development community's attention toward the gendered election and candidate selection process. The representatives who participated in these discussions shared that the Policy Note findings helped them raise this issue in different high-level bilateral meetings.

The Policy Note raises two distinct but interrelated inquiries. The first seeks to understand the over-representation of men in local political offices by examining recruitment and selection by political parties. The second examines how informality shapes formal institutions. Research by the Centre for Gender and Politics, South Asia, titled Gender Analysis of Nepal's Local Elections May 2022, referenced the policy note to provide a qualitative analysis of the data it collected on the local elections.

### Vision for the Second Tenure

Five of the nine Dalit women who won in the local elections share their vision for the second tenure as elected representatives at the ward level of the local government.

#### Ms. Dilu B.K, Tikapur



Ms. B.K supported people from the Dalit community in understanding the process of acquiring the citizenship certificate. She is a member of the District Coordination Committee.

"I want to work toward encouraging Dalit women to understand local government functioning and processes."

#### Ms. Sita B.K, Waling



She advocated for free health insurance for the poor, which was introduced by the municipality. She's also the Municipal Executive Member of Waling.

"My focus now is on evaluating how the training participants utilize their learned skills. We had provided tailoring training to Dalit women; I want to help them manage loans to buy sewing machines so they can use their skill in income generating activities."

#### Ms. Kamala Basnet Khati, Damak



Ms. Khati played a major role in bringing the issues faced by Dalit women in the municipality to the forefront.

"My focus is to implement the targeted programs for the Dalit community successfully. I want to hold training on entrepreneurship in coordination with the municipality."

#### Ms. Tuls Devi B.K, Tikapur



"While there are many initiatives I want to work on, my focus is on organizing free eye camp for the elderly population of the entire municipality and not just my ward".

Ms. B.K worked for the welfare of her community and credits the SNGP mentorship program for building her confidence and capacity to pursue such initiatives.

#### Ms. Khyam Kumari Pariyar, Damak



"My focus is to work for poverty alleviation and increase women's access to information. I also want to conduct activities to build women's skills in public speaking, minute writing, and informing women about acts and policies."

Ms. Pariyar worked toward building the capacity of Dalit women after she herself attended various training under the SNGP mentorship program.