

JULY-SEPTEMBER 2022



Local Election Observation Report Released

During the May 2022 local elections, SNGP supported the General Election Observation Committee (GEOC)*, observe and report on electoral processes observation covering 32 districts across all seven provinces. In this quarter, GEOC released the final observation report, in coordination with election observation alliances at an event in Kathmandu. Speaking at the event, Hon. Dinesh Kumar Thapaliya, Chief Election Commissioner, appreciated the efforts of GEOC in conducting free and fair elections and promoting transparency in election management. He also made a commitment to implementing the recommendations provided by GEOC to improve enforcement of the election code of conduct.

The event allowed different stakeholders of the elections to discuss the measures to improve compliance toward the election code of conduct. The event participants included representatives of election observation alliances, election observers, media, and other civil society members.



For Increased Women's Candidacy in General Elections

The Subnational Governance Program provided a platform for women leaders and parliamentarians to advocate for a more significant share of women's candidacy under first-past-the-post (FPTP) in the general elections slated for November 20, 2022. The program, in collaboration with the National Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (NFPPD), organized two interactive sessions for women leaders and parliamentarians to share their experiences and raise the various issues they face during elections.

In the first event, they held discussions with women leaders of different political parties on topics including women's candidacy depending upon the senior party leaders' decision and not on their capabilities, distrust in women's ability to win elections, the preconceived notion of proportional representation being just for women leaders, and the costly electoral system.

At the second event, they interacted with the editors of major media about the fundamental role media can play in fostering accountability and accentuating diverse issues to ensure an increase in women's candidacy under FPTP in the upcoming elections. They also sought the support of the media to highlight these issues and create an enabling environment to advance the positive narrative around women's leadership and capability to run in the election.

These events received comprehensive media coverage in [The Kathmandu Post](#), [Annapurna Post](#), [Himal Khabar](#), [Nepalkhabar](#), and [Nepali Times](#).

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 gender equality, disability and social inclusion (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.

STABILITY

Community Mediation

In this quarter, judicial committees at the six partner municipalities - Damak, Bhimeshwar, Waling, Tansen, Birendranagar and Tikapur - helped resolve 61 of the 112 registered interpersonal disputes and served 1,662 beneficiaries. The program promotes Community Mediation to improve access to justice at the local level and promote a culture of peaceful resolution of conflict within communities.

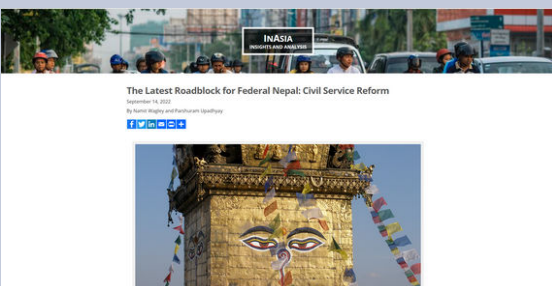
In addition, under Community Mediation, the program conducted the following activities:

- The program partner, Forum for National Building Nepal (FNBN) conducted an eight-day, mandatory basic mediation training in Mithila Municipality for 37 potential community mediators in Mithila Municipality.



- Community Mediation orientations at Bhimeshwar and Mithila Municipalities for the newly elected deputy mayor, judicial committee members, ward chairs, and secretaries. A total of 47 stakeholders participated in the orientations, which aimed to help them better understand the mediation process functioning and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Articles Published in this Quarter



- An [article](#) analyzing the possible impacts of local elections on the future of the federal governance system on the Devpolicy Blog.
- A [blog](#) on civil service reform in the In Asia section of the Foundation website
- An article on Community Mediation in the 'Making Nepal Better' annual edition of The Annapurna Express.



Multi-stakeholder Dialogue

During this quarter, Multi-stakeholder Dialogue program helped address 13 governance-related contestations and facilitated dialogue on more than 40 governance contestations related to local government budget distribution and access to services for the Dalit community, among other issues. This support benefitted around 2,000 local-level stakeholders.

The program also conducted various workshops, as mentioned below, to strengthen the dialogue process:

- In collaboration with Backward Society Education (BASE), the program organized a three-day practice-sharing workshop in Bardiya for the provincial dialogue facilitators of Lumbini. A renowned peacebuilder and dialogue practitioner from South Africa, Mr. Chris Spies, facilitated the workshop. The agenda focused on the visioning and strategizing for facilitators, along with the process and content of the dialogue practices in relation to subnational governance and provincial governance issues.
- SNGP, in partnership with Nepal Forum for Restorative Justice (NFRJ), organized two workshops, one for district Sambad Samuha members of Siraha and Saptari



and one for the Province 1 Sambad Samuha members. The district workshop focused on basic dialogue concepts, the difference between dialogue and mediation, reconciliation, and communication and practices of dialogue in the community, among others. The workshop for Province 1 Sambad Samuha helped the participants understand the role of the provincial dialogue forum in the provincial government, as well as the skills and tools of systemic analysis in dialogue. The participants included provincial members of parliament, local government representatives, political party leaders, journalists, and lawyers.

Multi-stakeholder Dialogue for Health Governance

In 2021, the federal government appointed new members to the Koshi Hospital* in the development committee in Biratnagar, Province 1. The existing committee, which had yet to complete its term, filed a court case and was reinstated through an interim order. This led to contestation between the committee and the Ministry of Health under the federal government. This turn of events coincided with the conclusion of the employment services of 260 doctors and medical personnel; the inability to renew these contracts would bring the hospital services to a complete halt. Upon request of the chairman of the committee, Province 1 dialogue forum facilitated a series of dialogues among all the stakeholders, including relevant agencies of the three tiers of government and the representatives of all major political parties in the province. As a result, the contesting stakeholders came to an understanding to renew the contracts of the 260 employees and resume their services. The Province 1 dialogue forum has also used learnings from this case to facilitate dialogue to upgrade district and zonal hospitals (which come under the provincial government) in Dhankuta, Jhapa, and Sunsari.



Photo courtesy: Koshi Hospital website

* The hospital comes under the federal government's control, but the provincial and local governments, including Biratnagar Metropolitan City, have a stake in it, as it is the largest hospital in the province.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY

To continue its support in the economic recovery process, in Phase II, SNGP has identified that evidence-based policy support combined with community engagement in private-sector development and public financial management will lead to better economic and fiscal governance.

Market Linkage Opportunity for Women Entrepreneurs from Partner Municipalities

In this quarter, SNGP provided an opportunity for 16 women entrepreneurs from four partner municipalities to participate in the Sixth International Women's Trade Expo, and Symposium organized in Kathmandu by the Federation of Woman Entrepreneurs Association of Nepal (FWEAN). This provided them with better market and financial linkages to foster economic recovery and growth, considering the multifaceted challenges they face in the post-pandemic scenario. The participants – four each from Damak, Tansen, Birendranagar, and Mithila – are involved in micro and small enterprises. H.E. Felicity Volk, Australian Ambassador to Nepal, attended the inaugural session of the event as a special guest and highlighted the contributions of women entrepreneurs to economic growth.

The expo also included parallel events such as symposiums, workshops, and business-to-business sessions that aimed to equip entrepreneurs with additional knowledge on doing business nationally and internationally.



Scoping Study on Local Economic Development

The program started the scoping study for municipal engagement in the local economic development of the seven partner municipalities. With this study, SNGP aims to generate comprehensive evidence on enterprise development, private sector engagement, and entrepreneurship development programs implemented by the partner municipalities, including those that benefit women and marginalized groups.

During this quarter, the program partner Daayitwa completed the fieldwork in five partner municipalities – Tansen, Waling, Bhimeshwar, Mithila, and Damak.

GEDSI

SNGP Fellowship: Second Cohort of Fellows Selected

In 2021, the program launched the SNGP Fellowship to encourage participation among young women from marginalized communities in governance by building their knowledge of local government through hands-on experience and engagement. As of this quarter, the first cohort of seven young women from the seven partner municipalities completed their one-year program. Out of seven, three fellows are preparing for civil service examinations, while the others are exploring opportunities in the development and research sectors. The program team supported them in preparing their CVs and other application processes and exploring job opportunities in local NGOs and will continue supporting their transition.

Similarly, the program onboarded the second cohort of SNGP fellows during this quarter. The program coordinated with the seven partner municipalities in the application and selection of the fellows. Currently, the fellows are working in various sections of the municipality office, such as the registration section, administrative section, education section, women and children development section of the respective municipalities, and ward offices.



The Foundation Office Enhances Infrastructural Accessibility

The Asia Foundation in Nepal improved the office infrastructure to make it more accessible for people with disabilities. Infrastructure changes include the installation of tac-tiles from the main gate to the office building door entrance to help the mobility of the visually disabled and the installation of a hand railing on the ramp at the main entrance to the office building. Similarly, on the ground floor, a longer ramp with an adjustable height ramp replaced the previous one at the reception area. The first-floor toilet and kitchen now include disabled-friendly counters. The emergency exit staircase of the building now has a metal railing.

The Foundation made these changes as per the recommendations of the physical accessibility audit conducted by Ability Manch*, which the Foundation had contracted in early 2022 to audit its office space.



*Ability Manch is a private company run by experts and professionals who support other organizations and institutions to make them accessible and inclusive.