GOVERNANCE WATCH

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT

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Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal
Media Monitoring Report

Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal (GMC Nepal) is a research initiative led by Kathmandu-based NGO Centre for Social Change (CSC). Using a variety of investigative methods and the latest in qualitative & quantitative research tools, GMC Nepal is dedicated to strengthening the newly established federal democracy and empower its citizens through up-to-date information relating to the status of governance related conflicts and peace in Nepal.

While the first phase of this initiative successfully looked into the governance aspects of the Health, Education, and Migration sectors in Nepal, GMC Nepal Phase-II takes a closer look at the four major mutually non-exclusive arenas of governance conflicts in the Nepali federal context:

a. Natural Resource Conflicts

b. Development Conflicts

c. Ethnocultural Conflicts

d. Political Conflicts

The **'Governance Watch'**, a bi-monthly periodic report represents GMC Nepal's attempt to understand the major conflicts occurring within and beyond the federal structures and systems. Through vigilant media monitoring mechanisms, this report analyzes the changing dynamics of governance related conflicts and elements associated with these conflicts, emphasizing the crucial role of media in reflecting where latest developments and interests are focused. Here is how the methods have defined the major governance areas selected by this report and major indicators it is looking into:

Governance areas	Definition
Natural resource governance	Norms, institutions and processes that determine how power and responsibilities over natural resources and climate are exercised, how decisions are taken, and how citizens (including women, men, youth, Indigenous peoples and local communities) participate in and benefit from the management of natural resources.
Development governance	Governance of social and infrastructure development through appropriate procedures comprising policy formulation, program design, budgetary allocation, and administrative reforms parallel to annual targets and/or short-term, mid-term and long-term goals and objectives set for social and economic development.
Ethnocultural governance	Accountability of authorities and government institutions to ensure rights, opportunities and security of all citizens, especially of historically marginalized and minority groups without imposing violence or discrimination on anyone based on their identity, culture, gender, region, language and ethnicity.
Political governance	Practices of federalism among different tiers/organs of governments and between the government and people.

Major Indicators

The media monitoring methods adopted have assessed the following major indicators to understand the four areas of governance and governance related conflicts:
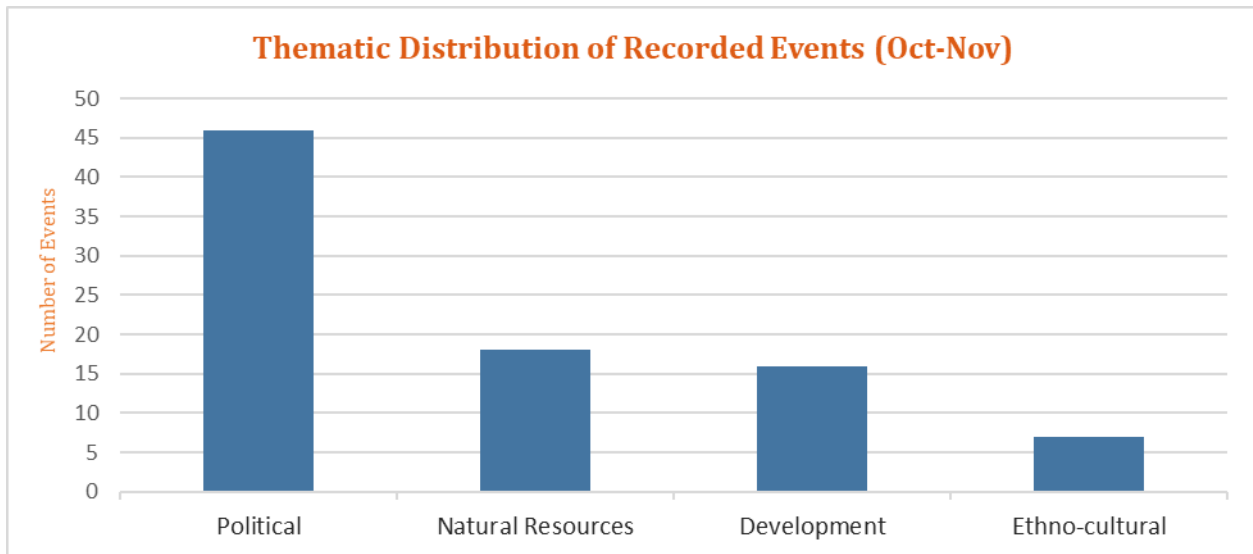
Indicators	Definition
Legal and policy frameworks	Enforcement of laws and regulations, policies and procedures enacted by the legislative bodies in accordance with broader governance and societal reform.
Government bodies and mechanisms	Institutional arrangements of government bodies and autonomous bodies under federal structure and their interaction.
Roles and responsibilities	Power relations and functions of government bodies (both executing and implementing agencies) along with civil society, international bodies, media for fully functional of federal structure, better governance and rule of law.
Conflict resolution/ transformation	Existing mechanisms and provisions dedicated to resolving conflicts, providing access to justice and ensuring participation and representation of marginalized communities and indigenous people.

The media monitoring methods analyze the above indicators to understand the gaps and challenges existent within the federal governance system. Understanding effectiveness in formation as well as implementation of the indicators is the major focus of this report to derive governance related conflicts and also, relevant opportunities.

Thematic Breakdown
Media Coverage: October 2022 - November 2022

A total of 87 news were analyzed by GMC Nepal in the months of October and November 2022. Of which, a thematic breakdown in the four areas of focus (Natural resources, development, ethnocultural and political governance) is presented as below. Detailed analysis of these events are further illustrated in the ensuing sections.

With the zeal of general elections held on 20th November 2022, majority of the media interest and coverage in the period of last few months heavily focused on the election developments. With over 17 million eligible Nepali voters and their increased political attentiveness to elect 275 members of House of Representatives, news and stories enfolding political sphere and electoral activities surpassed coverage of issues in development, natural resource and ethnocultural governance areas.

Type of Events	No. of Events
Nonviolent	49
Violent	38
Total Recorded Events	87

Also, majority of the events reported were nonviolent ranging from peaceful protests, complaints, to legal case registrations etc. while the violent events included mob protests, wildlife attacks and even bomb explosions among others.
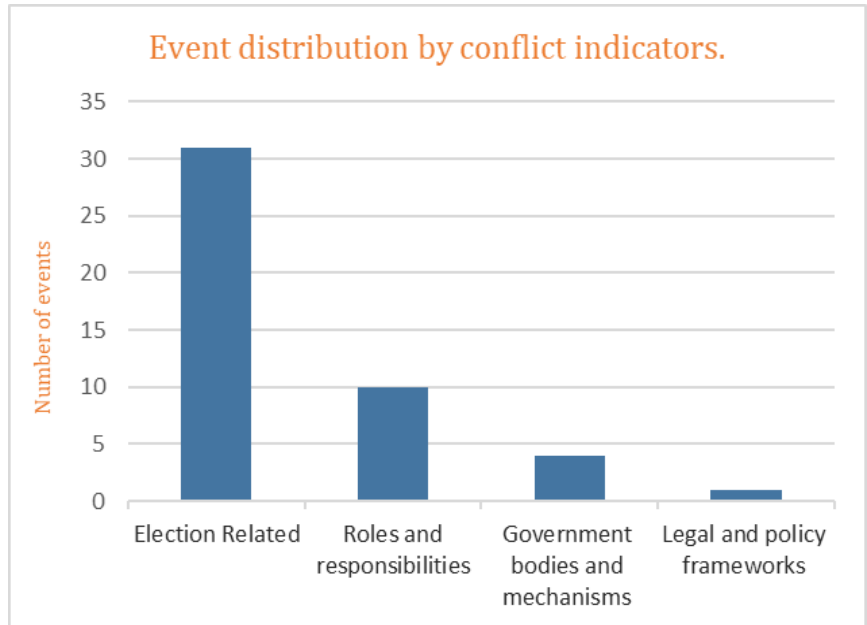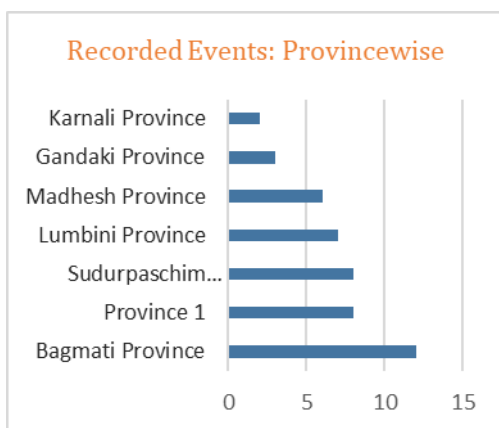
Media Outlets Monitored:

The Kathmandu Post/ Kantipur Daily/ Annapurna Post/ Online Khabar/ SetoPati.

Political Conflicts
Media Coverage: October 2022 - November 2022

The year 2022 was a political milestone for Nepal which marked successful completion of the second local level and general elections since the implementation of federal system in the country. However, practices of federalism are still a challenge with numerous conflicts existing between different tiers/organs of governments and growing public dissent over malpractices at the local levels. Here is a snapshot of the conflicts within and outside political governance as highlighted by five major news portals of Nepal.

Event Type	Percentage
Nonviolent	31%
Violent	69%

Recorded Events: Provincewise

Event distribution by conflict indicators.

According to the media coverage in the month of October and November 2022, disputes between Commission for Investigation of Abuse of Authority (CIAA) and the Special Court were observed where CIAA demanded review of petition on 124 cases acquitted by the Special Court.[1] Most of these cases were relevant to bribery/ embezzlement. Similarly, other disputes were oriented demanding repeal of Act 4(B) of CIAA Act, 2048 (1991), which allegedly institutionalizes corruption in policy decisions.[2] The dispute emphasized that CIAA is devoid of authority to investigate or take any actions regarding any policy decision taken collectively by the Government of Nepal, the Council of Ministers or any of its committees.

Election Related Violence

The media monitoring reflected that two-third of the recorded events were related to general elections. Half of the election-related violence were observed in Sudurpaschim Province and Province 1, which included death of a civilian at Damtha polling station in Tribeni Urban Municipality, Bajura, when police open fired at the unruly crowd.[3] Most of these election-related violence were concentrated between two major political parties; Nepali Congress and CPN (UML). It was also observed that about 60 families among Beldanda, Dollalghat, Bandeutar and Dumrebancy villages at the border of Sindhupalchowk and Kavrepalanchowk, boycotted elections.[4] Their demands mainly included ownership certificates of their lands, which had halted due to border disputes between the two districts.
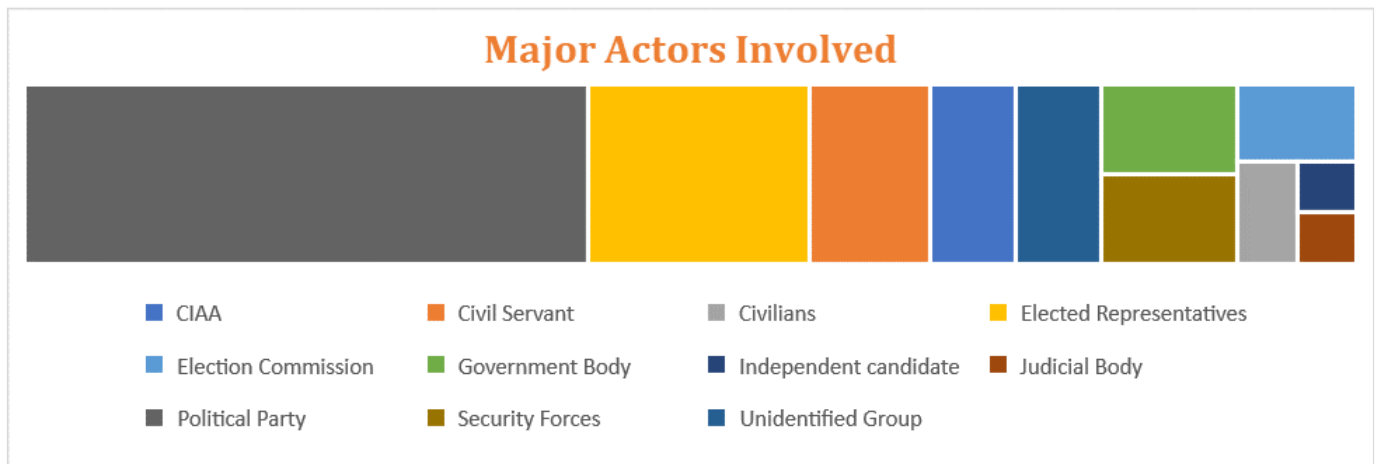
1. Annapurna Post (November 9, 2022). (https://annapurnapost.com/news/authority-against-the-decision-of-the-supreme-court-216590), ekantipur (https://ekantipur.com/news/2022/11/09/166795542940694720.html)

2. Ekantipur (November 25, 2022). (https://ekantipur.com/news/2022/11/25/166938778372765249.html)

3. The Kathmandu Post (November 20, 2022). (https://kathmandupost.com/sudurpaschim-province/2022/11/20/one-dead-as-police-open-fire-during-clash-at-polling-station-in-bajura)

4. Ekantipur (November 20, 2022). (https://ekantipur.com/pradesh-3/2022/11/22/166907109938899422.html)

Major Actors Involved

Conflicts at Local Units

Local level conflicts as reflected by the media coverage majorly included budget disputes among elected representatives for administrative and development works, especially between the mayor and chairperson.[5] Furthermore, acts of violence were reported in Ghodaghodi Municipality, Kailali when a ward chairperson was involved in the vandalization of Chief Administration Officer (CAO)'s office.[6] On the other hand, nonviolent acts of protest were displayed by civil servants at Lamahi Municipality, Dang, who protested against the work ethics of the CAO, by wearing black ribbons on their arms.[7]

Challenges in Political Governance

a. Lack of monitoring and reform of loopholes in existent policies and acts that promote corruption in policy-decisions.

b. Unresolved border disputes between administrative regions has driven the public to go as far as prohibiting their participation in electoral processes.

c. Conflict between/among elected representatives and bureaucracy has affected local level governance and development activities.

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5. Ekantipur (October 1, 2022). (https://ekantipur.com/pradesh-2/2022/10/01/166458850489873876.html)

6. Online Khabar (November 26, 2022). (https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2022/11/1225067)

7. Annapurna Post (November 27, 2022). (https://epaper.amn.media/annapurnapost-detail/2298#gallery-4)

Natural Resource Conflicts
Media Coverage: October 2022 - November 2022

Under this section, 18 news events were observed which includes coverage of stories and events around use, decision-makings, rights, power and responsibilities over natural resources in Nepal. Moreover, this section especially focuses on governance of water, land, wildlife and forest. Extraction of rocks, sand, minerals and stones are also observed by this report to understand the influence/ impact of government led development activities. Here is a snapshot of the conflicts within and outside governance of natural resources as highlighted by five major news portals of Nepal.
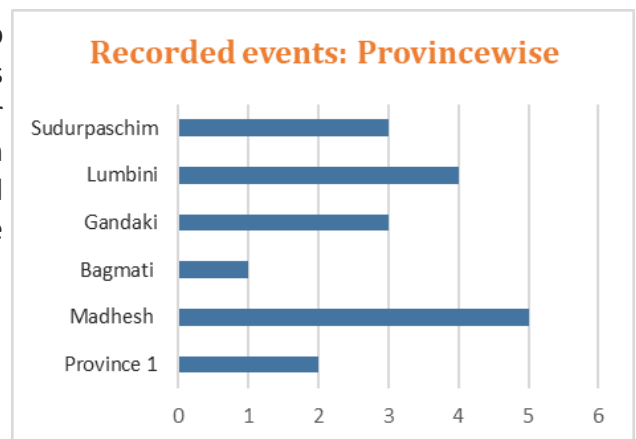
Natural resource governance and conflicts

According to the media reports monitored, prevalence of undefined, ambiguous and often overlapping roles and responsibilities of government bodies at federal, provincial and local levels serve as major hinderances of peaceful governance. Lack of accountable governing bodies and mechanisms were observed in cases where civilians expected protection or compensation in case of displacements, injuries, damages and deaths caused by wild animal attacks from authorities.[8] However, lack of such designated and responsible bodies and feeble legal and policy frameworks fueled the existing conflicts in natural resource governance. Majority, i.e., 72% of news documented in this segment were reports of wild animal attacks hence, recorded as violent conflicts.
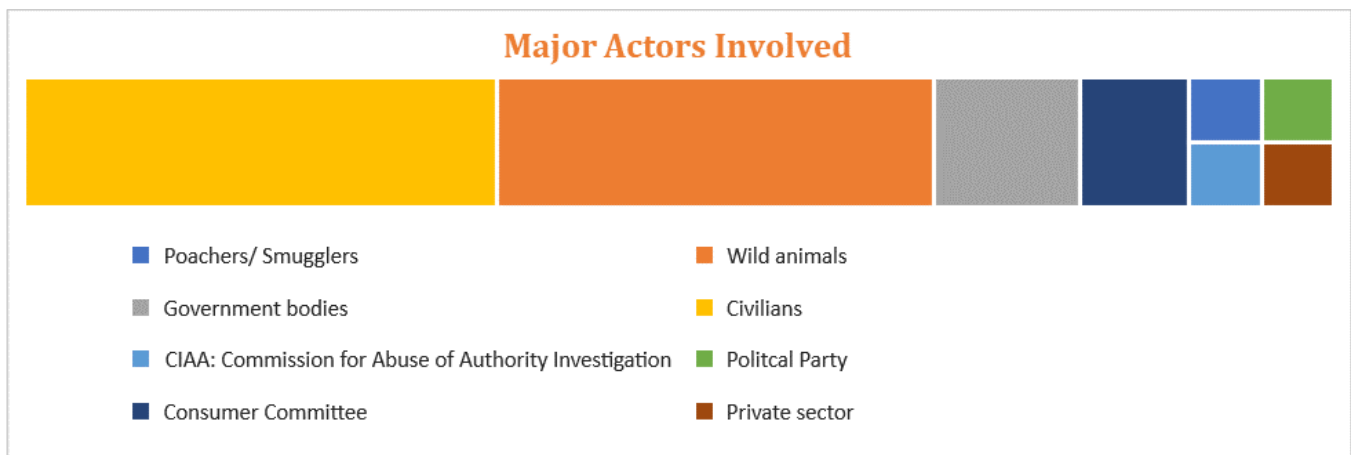
Media coverage by Province

Majority of the media coverage on issues related to natural resources governance and conflicts was observed to be in Madhesh Province due to greater geographical and spatial existence of forest areas in Bara and Parsa districts, home to diverse flora and fauna, hence, greater number of forest and wildlife related cases.

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8. Ekantipur (October 23, 2022) धान जोगाउन मचानको बास- मधेस - कान्तिपुर समाचार (ekantipur.com); Annapurna Post (November 11, 2022) अन्नपूर्ण पोस्ट | Nepal's leading news portal (annapurnapost.com)

Major conflict actors

Major Actors Involved

- Poachers/ Smugglers
- Wild animals
- Government bodies
- Civilians
- CIAA: Commission for Abuse of Authority Investigation
- Politcal Party
- Consumer Committee
- Private sector

Majority of the media stories reported wild animal attacks and its impacts on civilian lives. Such occurrences resulted in displacement of civilians, injuries and also death.[9] At the same time, according to the media reports, encroachment and development activities frequently led to disruption in migration corridors of the wild animals, illegal hunting and poaching. Likewise, government bodies, political party, private sector and consumer committees recorded as actors were closely involved in cases concerning authority over monitoring of extraction of rocks and minerals and illegal logging of timber.

Major challenges in Natural Resource Governance

Some of the major challenges highlighted in the news coverage are as follows:

a. Concerned authorities and conservation efforts need to critically assess and manage the wild animals' migration corridors to avoid human as well as wildlife casualties.

b. Wild animals crossings and migration routes casing India-Nepal border areas must be strategically monitored and protected safeguarding international relations.

c. Relevant authorities need to urgently address the issues of local displacement of civilians caused by threats of wild animal attacks.

d. Roles and responsibilities regarding monitoring of extraction of minerals and rocks from major rivers is a serious concern that needs to be urgently implemented among federal, provincial and local governments.

e. Distinct guidelines need to be properly implemented by responsible authorities in cases of damage, injuries and casualties caused by wild animal attacks.

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9. Ekantipur (October 22, 2022) एउटा सुषुप्त द्वन्द्व- समाचार - कान्तिपुर समाचार (ekantipur.com)
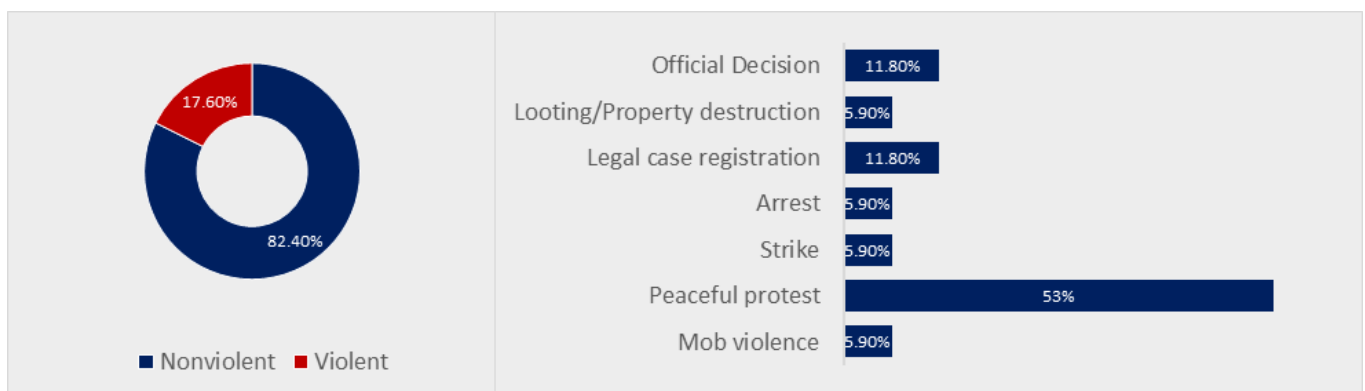
Development Conflicts
Media Coverage: October 2022 - November 2022

As federal Nepal enchants for economic growth and prosperity, there is increasing demand for healthy infrastructure development in all three geographical belts of Nepal- the hills, the plains and mountains. However, the practice of inclusive and sustainable infrastructure development is sporadic due to impoverished performance of development governance in Nepal which comprises of the systems, structures bodies and processes relevant to development activities. Such circumstances in the development field are increasing potentials for conflicts in Nepal.
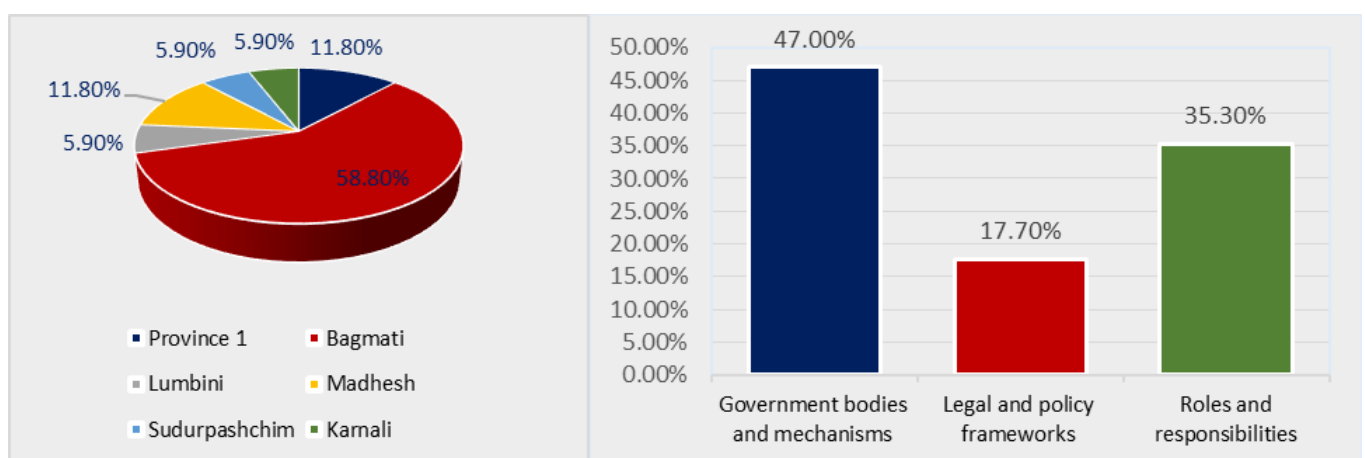
17 media events relevant to such conflict triggers were recorded that has helped understand the bigger picture of development related conflicts in Nepal. Here is a snapshot of elements related to development governance and conflicts as reported by five major news portals of Nepal.

Development governance and conflicts

As shown by the graph, out of total news monitored in last two months (October-November), 82.40% of the conflicts were nonviolent in nature whereas 17.60% involved violence. Categorizing the nature of development conflicts, peaceful protest is higher around 53% which mainly demonstrates that affected communities protested for infrastructure demands like road maintenance and management rather than removal of squatters' settlement.[10]

Media coverage by province and major indicators

10.Online Khabar (November 17, 2022). बागमती नदी किनारका सुकुम्बासी आन्दोलित. https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2022/11/1219211

Concentration of news coverage on development conflicts was observed higher in Bagmati province (58.80%) as compared to other provinces because of actions taken by the newly elected Mayor of Kathmandu Metropolitan City over the illegal infrastructures constructed in public properties. Among the news coverage, most of the conflicts were associated to government bodies and their mechanisms (47%) followed by roles and responsibilities of government bodies accounting 35.3%. Even fewer news coverage was on development related legal and policy frameworks.

Major conflict actors

Majority of the development governance and conflicts related media coverage showed civilians particularly general public and squatters residing along the Bagmati river corridor were the most actively involved in the conflict. This also included negotiations to address their development demands and concerns against the government bodies, municipal security forces and private sector entities.

Major challenges in Development Governance

Some of the major challenges highlighted in the news coverage are as follows:

a. Lack of effective assessment, feasibility and monitoring of government financed development has significantly hindered quality of infrastructural development.

b. Holistic focus of government authorities on sustainability of infrastructure and it's functioning is seriously deficient.

c. Lack of coordination among the stakeholders and government entities to protect public properties from encroachment.

d. Absence of good governance and real accountability to protect the groups affected from development induced conflicts.

e. Issues of communitarian consensus and politics has hindered the objective of sustainable urban development strategy.
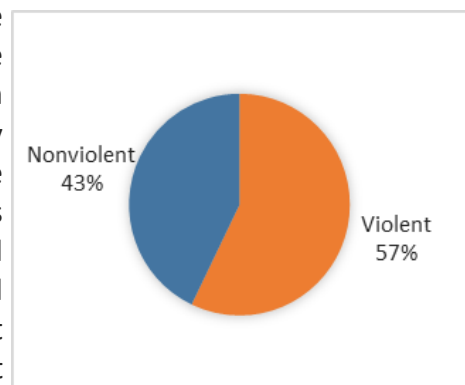
Ethnocultural Conflicts
Media Coverage: October 2022 - November 2022

Conflict is an inevitable and all-pervasive occurrence in societies across the globe.[11] Given this phenomenon, ethnocultural conflicts existent within and beyond federal structures and systems in Nepal, is understood by identifying the involved actors and the triggering issues surrounding gender, religion, language, history and marginalization. Within ethnocultural monitoring, the media focus of this report, fundamentally comprises incidents and grievances exacerbated when governance structures, institutions, and processes favor needs of certain groups and exclude others. A snapshot of media coverage and interests centered around such ethnocultural concerns as reported by five major news portals of Nepal are presented as follows:

Ethnocultural governance and conflicts

Observing the overall scenario of ethnocultural issues covered by the media portals in the month of October and November 2022, the major conflicts raised involved incomprehensive responses from government bodies and lack of capable authorities to effectively operate the already existing mechanisms to protect and enhance the conditions of minority groups in Nepal. The ethnocultural issues according to the reports were largely aggravated by imposed development activities which failed to assess the local context and their needs before staring the development projects. The nonviolent incidents reported were included peaceful protests against government negligence while the violent conflicts comprised of sexual and physical violence and mob aggression.

Major conflict actors and relevant issues

To understand the existing ethnocultural conflicts, it is important to state the involvement of actors and their roles in the corresponding issues. The following table indicates the major actors identified by the media monitoring and the roles they played in the existent issues.

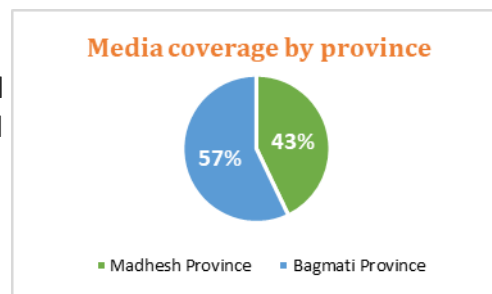| Actors	Issues
Security Forces	Women suffered physical and sexual violence while in police custody[12]
Elected Representative	Ward chairperson committed sexual violence against minor[13] Development work initiated under the local leader's commands resulted in volent demonstrations by local citizens[14]
Civilian	Women were the victims of conflict[15] Senior citizens deprived of basic government services and allowances due to lack of their citizenships[16]
Religious Group	Security forces induced curfew after heated disputes between groups belonging to Hindu and Muslim religions[17]
Ethnic Group	Social harmony disrupted by comedian's alleged use of free speech to perform 'standup comedy' about stereotypes of Newari communities[18]

11.Katz, N. & McNulty, K. (1994). Conflict Resolution. https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/docs/default-source/ektron-files/conflict-resolution-nk.pdf. Accessed on 11th Nov 2022.

12.Ekantipur (October 18, 2022). प्रहरी हिरासतभित्र महिलालाई यातना- मधेस - कान्तिपुर समाचार (ekantipur.com)

13.Ekantipur (October 22, 2022). बलात्कार मुद्दामा उजुरी परेपछि वडाध्यक्ष फरार, वडाको काम प्रभावित- मधेस - कान्तिपुर समाचार (ekantipur.com)

Media coverage by Province

Majority of the media coverage on issues related to ethno-cultural governance and conflicts was observed in Madhesh Province and the Bagmati Province.

Major challenges in Ethnocultural Governance

Some of the major challenges highlighted in the news coverage are as follows:

a. The government bodies and institutions need strict accountability and monitoring bodies to ensure they follow the constitutionally set guidelines of protecting the rights and wellbeing of citizens, especially of the minority groups.

b. National as well as local level security forces need to adopt stricter measures to monitor and abort gender-based violence within as well as outside the security forces.

c. Development activities overtaken by local level authorities often disrupt the communal harmony thereby resulting in the emergence of conflict, assessment of the local resources and needs is important for sustainable development.

d. Unclear designation of roles and responsibilities have resulted in senior citizens not being able to get access to citizenship thereby being deprived of government services.

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14. Setopati (October 1, 2022). बांगेमुढाको सामुदायिक भवन भत्काएपछि बालेनको पुत्ला दहन, मसाल जुलुस निकालियो (तस्बिरहरू) :: नवीनबाबु गुरूङ :: Setopati

15. Refer to 6 and 7

16. Ekantipur (November 4, 2022). नागरिकताविहीन आमा-बा- समाचार - कान्तिपुर समाचार (ekantipur.com)

17. Setopati (October 27, 2022) महोत्तरीको भंगाहामा अनिश्चितकालीन कर्फ्यू :: रोहित महतो :: Setopati

18. Setopati (Otober 18, 2022). कमेडियन अपूर्व क्षितिज सिंहलाई फेरि पक्राउ गन्यो प्रहरीले :: सेतोपाटी संवाददाता :: Setopati

Key Recommendations Derived

Observing the 87 recorded news and events, following recommendations are drawn that illuminated the way forward:

1. Major gaps were observed in fulfilment of roles and responsibilities by designated federal bodies. While some cases showed sheer absence of relevant authoritative bodies, others highlighted a strong need for communication and coordination among the already existing government bodies. These prominent issues have hindered effective governance in Nepal. Hence, a crucial need for connecting tools like interparty/intraparty dialogue and cohesion among the federal bodies is realized to enhance their aptitudes in fulfilling their duties efficiently and effectively.

2. Although the majority of the events recorded were nonviolent (49), a sizable number of events (38) were still violent in nature. This calls attention to development and implement of better policies and mechanisms dedicated to not only manage but reduce violence. Such polices are especially necessary to protect the rights and wellbeing of minority and disadvantaged groups and to uplift peaceful governance in Nepal.

3. Another major issue observed amid the existing legal and policy frameworks were its lack in addressing specific parameters and guidelines on federal, provincial and local level governance related conflict management/ resolution/ transformation measures. This lack often resulted in persistence of disputes for a longer period of time and involved interests of multiple actors without specific resolution. Hence, development of efficient legal and policy provisions targeting conflict management/ resolution is necessary for promotion of peaceful governance in Nepal.

About CSC

Centre for Social Change (CSC) is a non-profit making social think-tank based in Kathmandu, Nepal. Since its establishment in 2015, CSC has been actively working to bring positive transformation in the socio-political dynamics of Nepali society through involvements in the fields of research, development practice, education, advocacy, and community mobilization. CSC's current works are focused on issues surround conflict transformation, peacebuilding, democracy and governance, migration, labor and employment, civic space, civil society development, public policy, climate change, and social development.

www.socialchange.org.np
contact@socialchange.org.np
+977-9841370244

Research Advisor
Prakash Bhattarai, PhD

Research Team
Shradha Khadka
Kalpana Rana Magar
Anish Khatri
Susmita Puri
Dibesh Sayami

Report Design
Rahul Roy
Anish Khatri