GOVERNANCE WATCH

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT

ISSUE - 05
AUGUST 2023

Governance
Monitoring
Centre Nepal

Centre for Social Change
सामाजिक परिवर्तन केन्द्र

Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal
Media Monitoring Report

Governance Monitoring Centre Nepal (GMC Nepal) is Centre for Social Change (CSC)'s flagship initiative, functional since 2020. 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:

i. Natural Resources and Climate Conflicts
ii. Development Conflicts
iii. Ethnocultural Conflicts
iv. Political Conflicts

The **'Governance Watch'**, a bi-monthly periodic report represents GMC Nepal's attempt to track and decipher major conflicts occurring within and beyond the federal structures and systems of Nepal.

Through vigilant media monitoring method, this report analyzes the changing dynamics of governance conflicts and elements associated with them, recognizing a crucial role of media in reflecting where latest developments and nation-wide interests are focused. To identify such occurrences at national, provincial, and local levels conflicts, this report fundamentally assesses four indicators- legal and policy frameworks, government bodies and mechanisms, through rigorous monitoring of news and events reported by five national daily newspaper sources- The Kathmandu Post, Kantipur Daily, Annapurna Post, Online Khabar and Seto Pati.
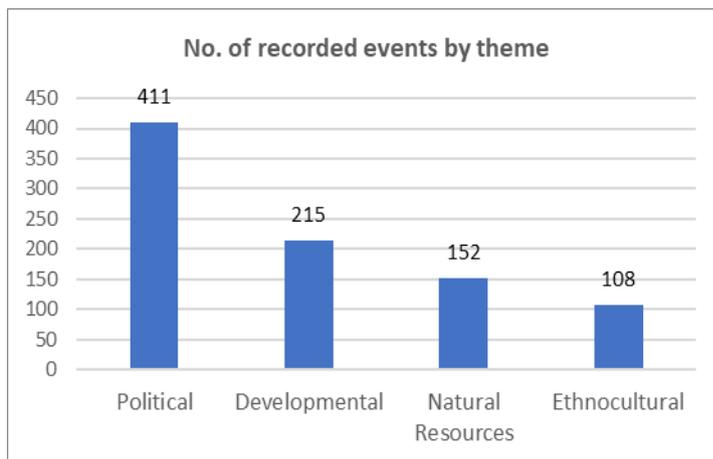
This report thus highlights key governance conflicts observed in the previous two months and a set of recommendations as potential avenues to resolve those conflicts.

Cumulative Snapshot of Recorded News and Events
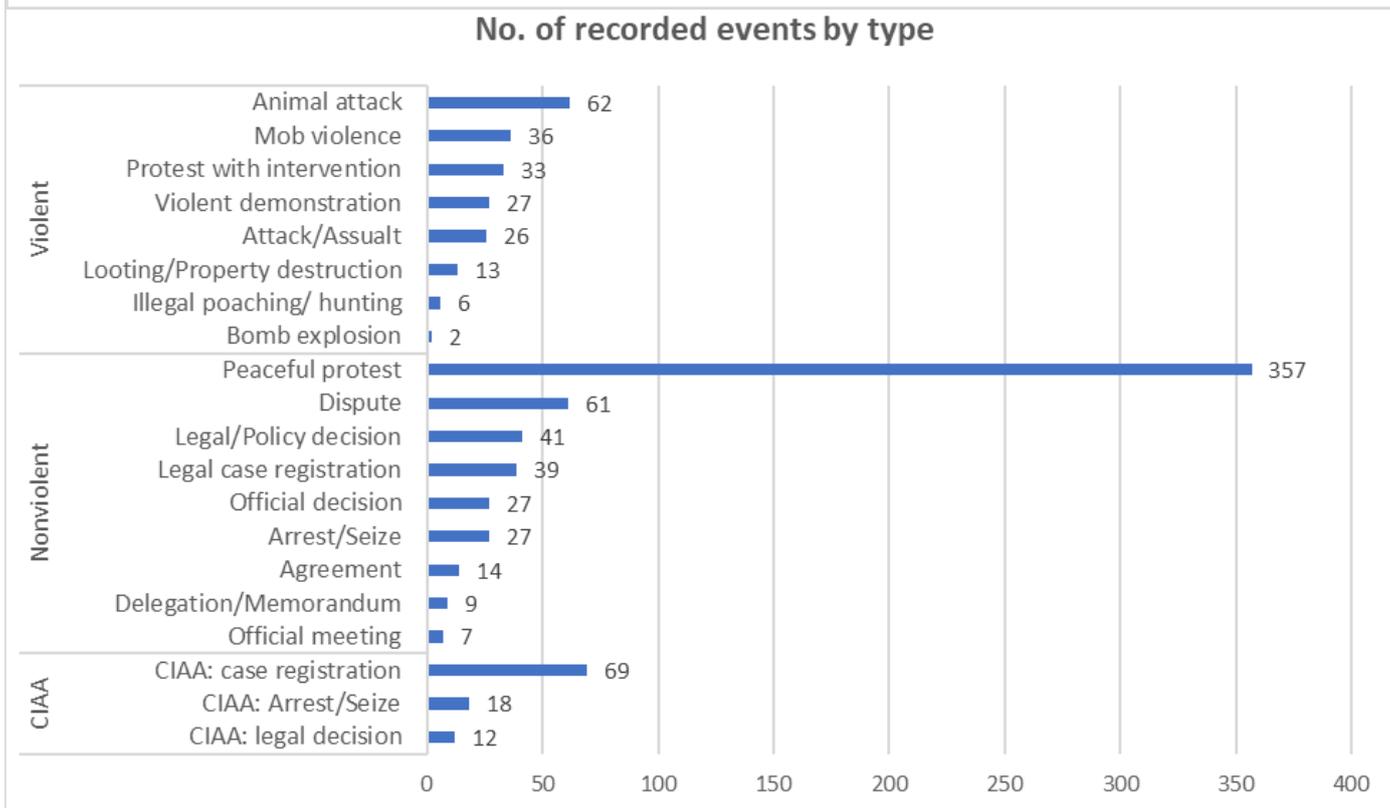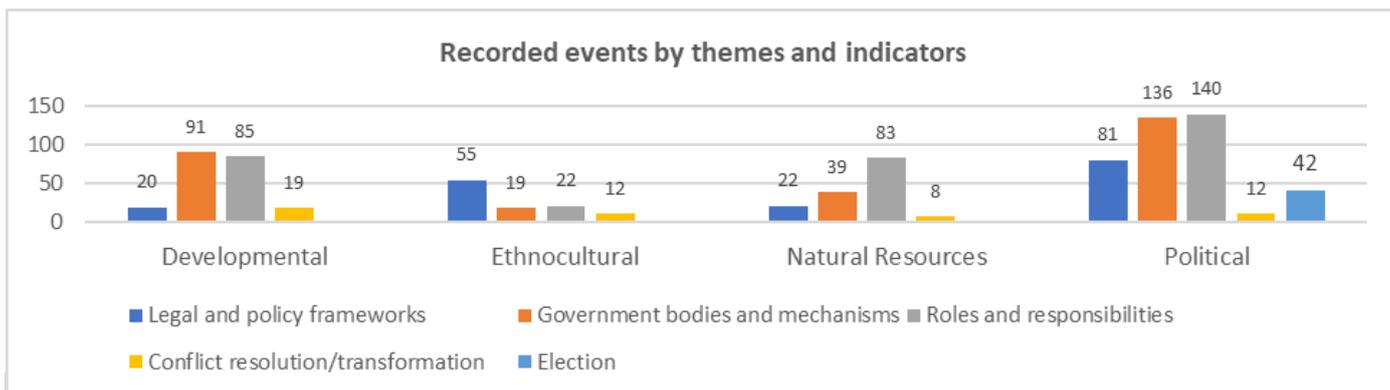## Media Coverage: June 2022 - July 2023

Starting from month of June 2022 to July 2023, in the past 14 months, a total of 886 events have been recorded under this media monitoring initiative by GMC Nepal. Here, is a numeric snapshot of the data gathered so far:

Event Type	Events Recorded
Violent	205
Nonviolent	582
CIAA	99
Total Recorded Events	886

No. of recorded events by theme

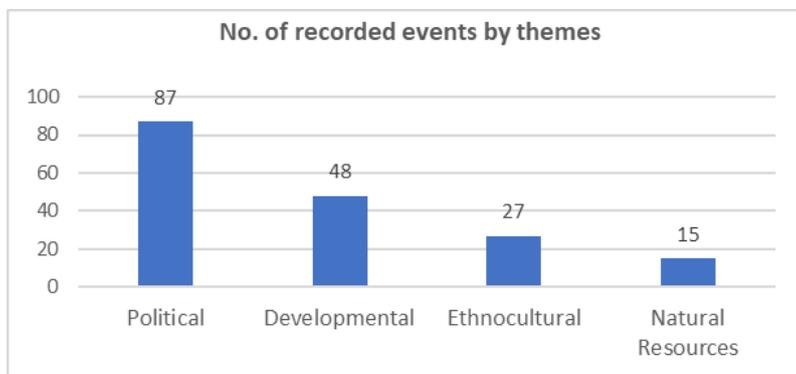*Access detailed analysis of the report here:* *Governance Watch Series Archives - GMC Nepal*

Overview of recorded events (June- July 2023)

Recorded events by themes and indicators
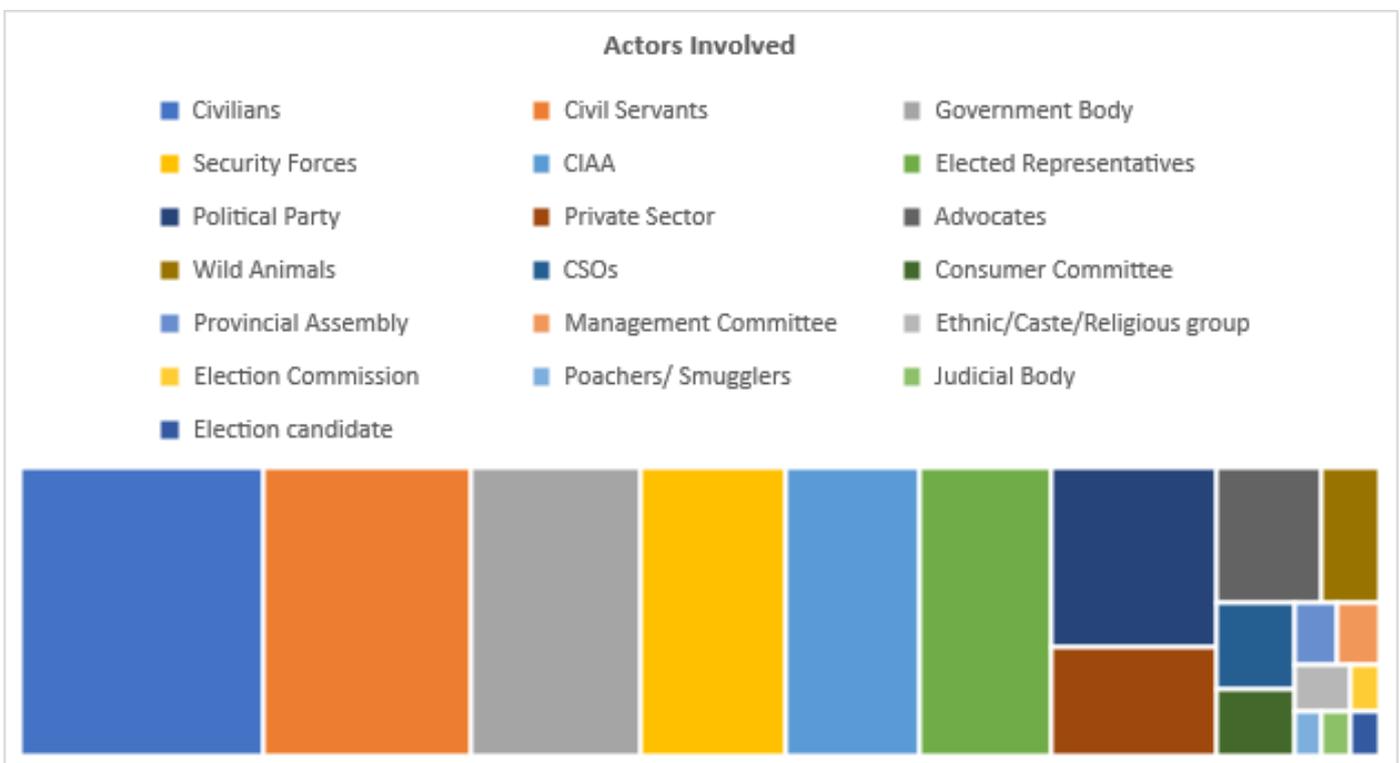

No. of recorded events by type

In this 5th issue of 'Governance Watch' a total of 177 news and events were recorded that displayed governance conflicts in the areas of natural resources, development, ethnocultural and political governance. Consistent with previous recordings, the majority of these conflicts were nonviolent in nature, but it is important to note that the number of violent occurrences (28) are rising in numbers when compared to the previous reporting period, which was 13. Hence, this pattern must be considered to be able to timely address the ongoing civil unrest and peacefully resolve governance issues arising in the four governance areas of this study. Simultaneously, the Commission for Abuse of Authority Investigation (CIAA) related cases are also reportedly higher in number as compared to previous report, suggesting expansion of illicit corrupt activities, especially through political and government actors.

Lastly, records under this reporting period shows civilians, civil servants and government as the top three major actors relevant to governance conflicts in the four areas of study. Events relevant to these three actors display intensity in interactions and continuity of movements, rather than emergence of new demands. Detailed breakdown of these observations are provided in upcoming sections. Meanwhile, graphical representation of this summary is presented as below:
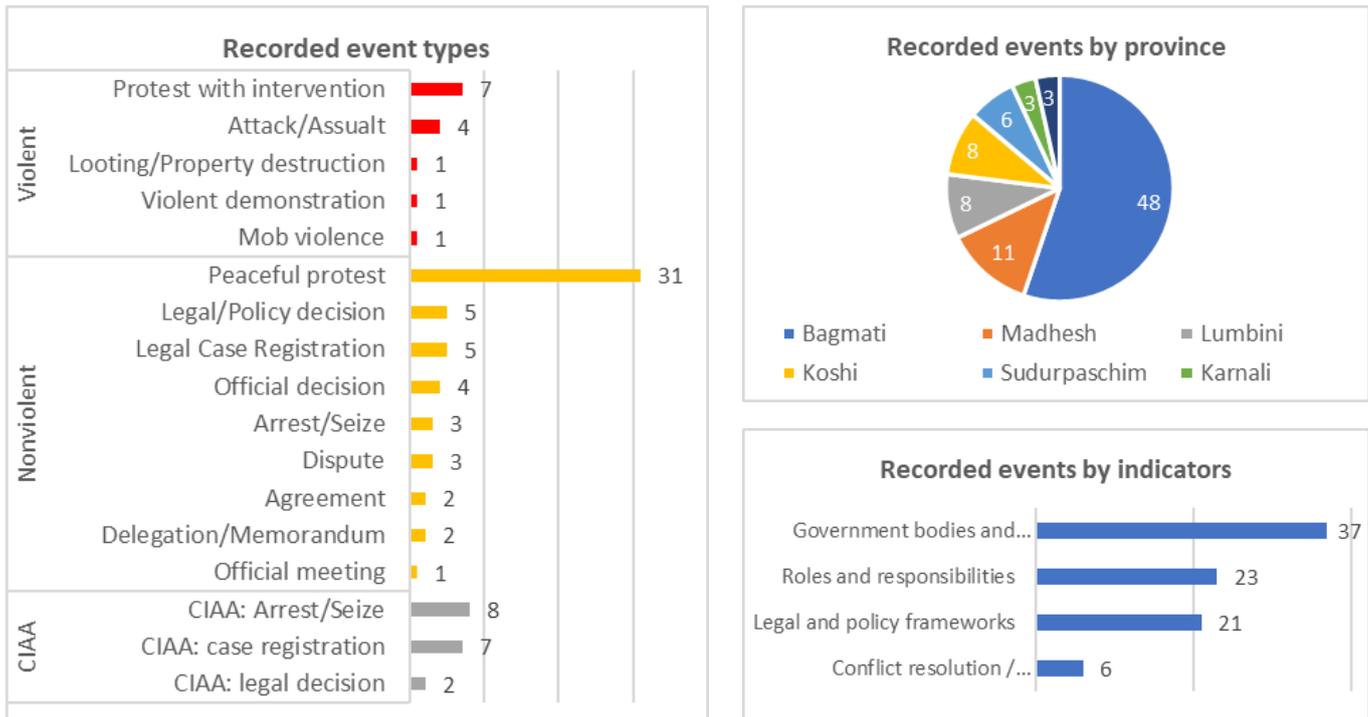

No. of recorded events by themes

Political	Developmental	Ethnocultural	Natural Resources
87	48	27	15

Type of events	No. of events
Violent	28
Nonviolent	113
CIAA	36
Total Recorded Events	177

Actors Involved

- Civilians
- Civil Servants
- Government Body
- Security Forces
- CIAA
- Elected Representatives
- Political Party
- Private Sector
- Advocates
- Wild Animals
- CSOs
- Consumer Committee
- Provincial Assembly
- Management Committee
- Ethnic/Caste/Religious group
- Election Commission
- Poachers/ Smugglers
- Judicial Body
- Election candidate

Note: This report may explain multiple occurrences of the governance conflicts by highlighting only specific news and events. Hence, these conflicts may not be limited to examples specified in this report.

Political Governance Conflicts
Media Coverage: June 2023 - July 2023

Figures: Snapshot of recorded events on political conflicts (June-July 2023)
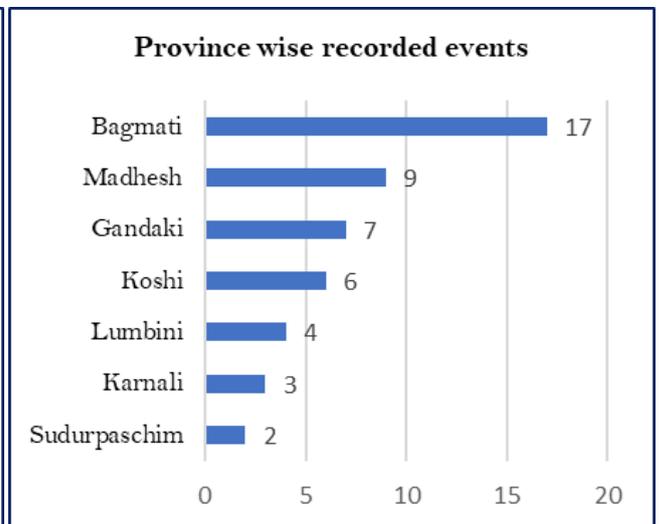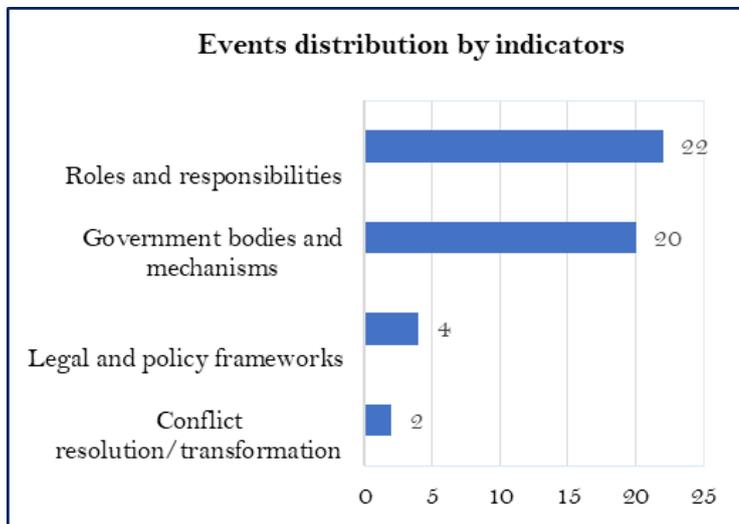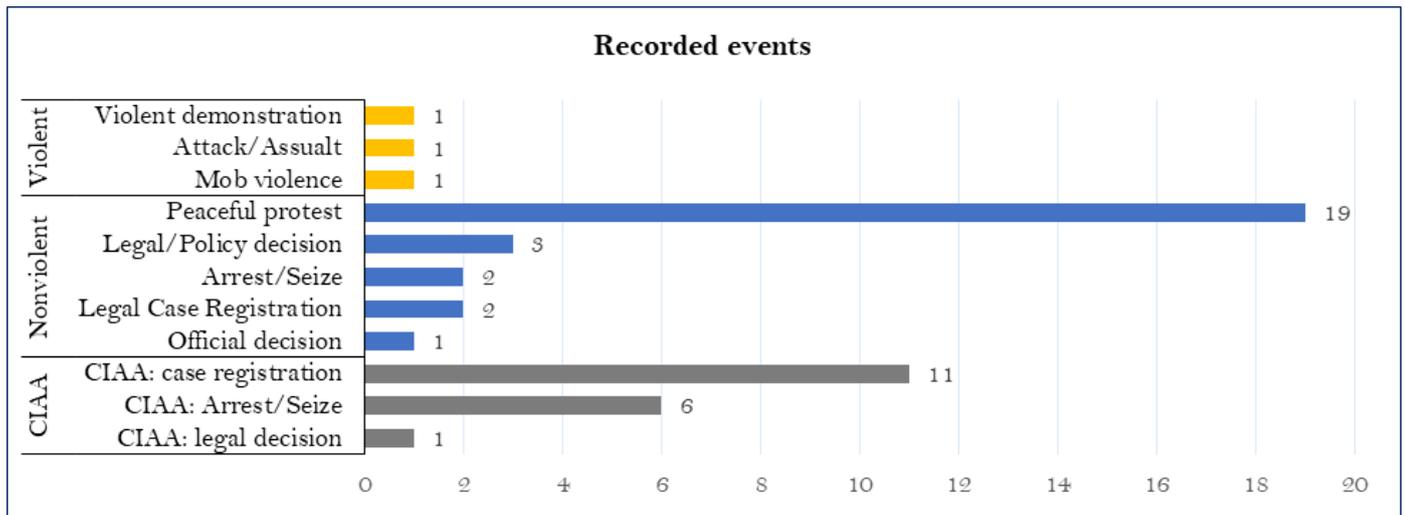
Summary of recorded events

In the period of the past two months, corruption relevant events like irregularities within the Tax Evasion Commission and the Lalita Niwas land scam, casted a heavy shadow on the effectiveness of governance mechanisms. Recurrence of such cases highlights a serious lack of anti-corruption measures that ensure accountability of government and political actors. Alongside, another recurring trend observed within the Nepalese sociopolitical context, is the growing disconnect between government decisions and the expectations of various stakeholder groups. This was manifested in the form of protests, strikes, and demonstrations led by diverse groups including students, medical professionals, public school employees, and political activists. Such expressions of dissent reveal underscores the importance of fostering inclusive decision-making processes that actively involve various sections of society, ensuring that policy formulation resonates with the broader public sentiments.

Additional factors complicating the governance landscapes are localized conflicts, often revolving around issues of resource allocation, administrative center establishment, and land disputes. These disputes emphasize the challenges of local governance and decision-making, as well as the significance of effective conflict resolution mechanisms. Addressing such conflicts requires a nuanced approach that balances the interests of different communities, prevents escalation, and preserves social harmony.

Also, in the context of ethnic and political tensions that largely contribute to the intricate fabric of conflicts in Nepal, political party rivalries and tensions resulting from appointments and government policies collectively highlighted lack of robust dialogue, mediation, and negotiation mechanisms. A need for productive discussions among stakeholders was realized as a measure to resolving conflicts, fostering understanding, and promoting collaboration.

Development Governance Conflicts
Media Coverage: June 2023 - July 2023

Recorded events

	Event	Value
Violent	Violent demonstration	1
	Attack/Assualt	1
	Mob violence	1
Nonviolent	Peaceful protest	19
	Legal/Policy decision	3
	Arrest/Seize	2
	Legal Case Registration	2
	Official decision	1
CIAA	CIAA: case registration	11
	CIAA: Arrest/Seize	6
	CIAA: legal decision	1

Events distribution by indicators

Indicator	Value
Roles and responsibilities	22
Government bodies and mechanisms	20
Legal and policy frameworks	4
Conflict resolution/transformation	2

Province wise recorded events

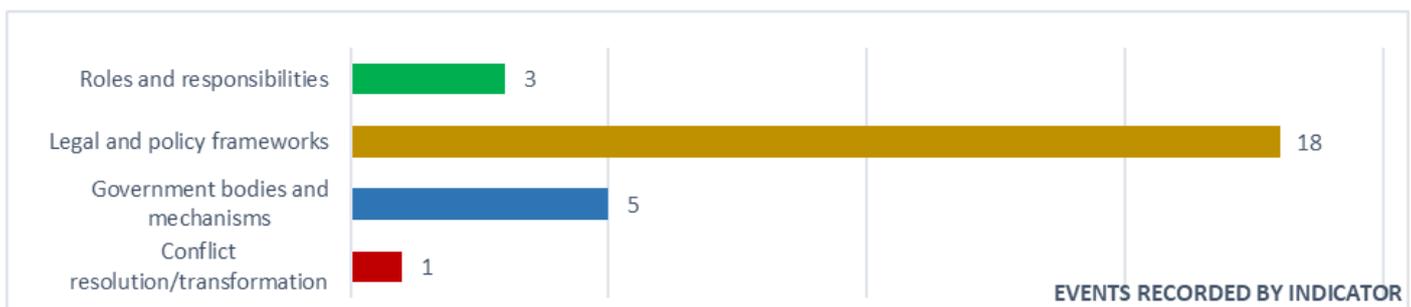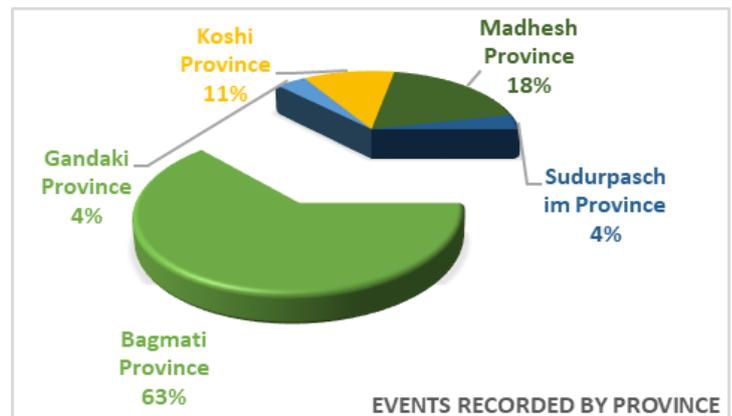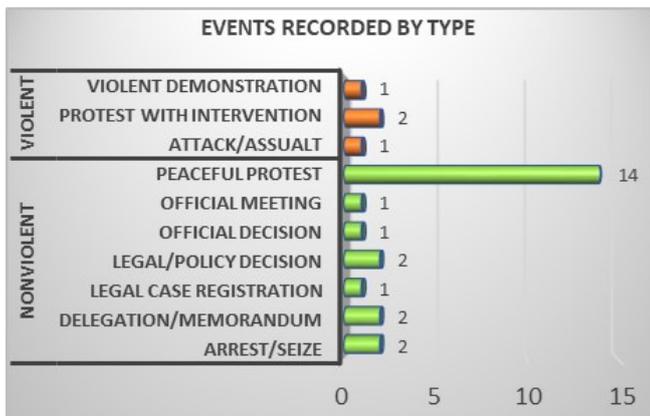| Province	Value
Bagmati	17
Madhesh	9
Gandaki	7
Koshi	6
Lumbini	4
Karnali	3
Sudurpaschim	2

Figures: Snapshot of news coverage on development conflicts (June-July 2023)

Summary of recorded events

GMC Nepal monitored and recorded a total of 48 news events under development governance conflicts in the last two months (June and July 2023). Bagmati province continued to witness high number of development conflicts because of metropolis urban action impacts, waste management issue and gold scam. By critically assessing the collected events, it was observed that general public protest continued to spark because of austerity measures like increase in embezzlement on subsidy provided to farmers, delay in completion of road construction project, mistreatment during demolition drive, and eco-unfriendly construction of hydropower project. In other cases, delayed in payment of the infrastructure project to the constructing companies from the concerned government and lack of accountability and transparency among governing bodies and representatives during public service delivery have also triggered civil unrest. High level officials line ward chairperson, mayor, civil servants and minister were involved in fraud. Likewise, registered news were concentrated on the watch dog role of Commission for Abuse of Authority Investigation (CIAA) and its action to curb down irregularities and corruption by government representative over infrastructural project at local level. Thus, a serious lack of lawful and transparency practice in development projects was recognized.

Ethnocultural Governance Conflicts
Media Coverage: June 2023 - July 2023

Figures: Snapshot of news coverage on natural resource governance conflicts (June-July 2023)
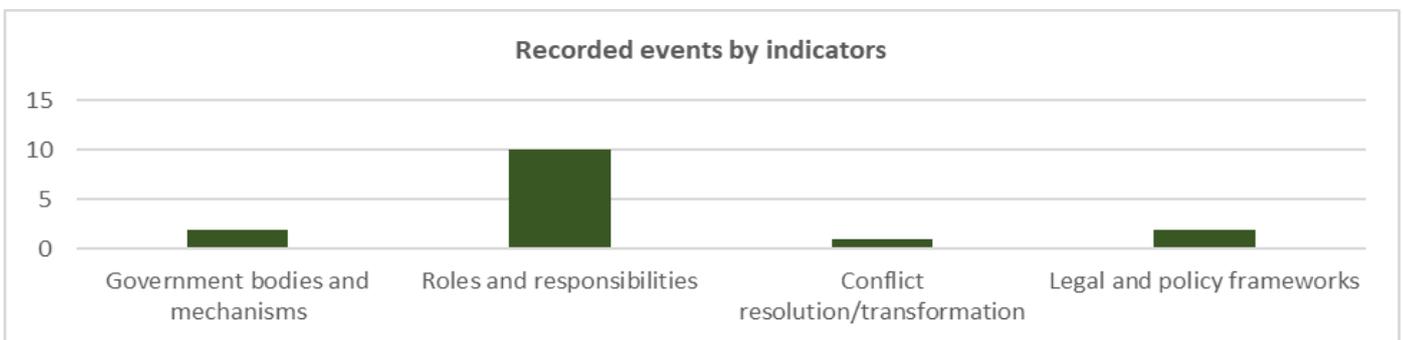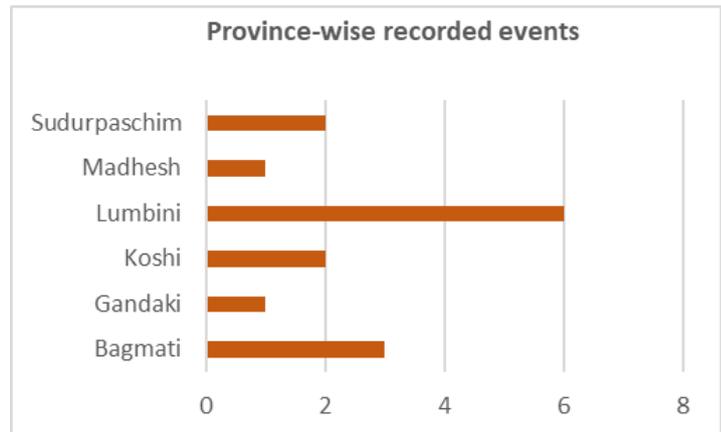
Summary of events recorded

In the last two months, 27 events were recorded under ethnocultural governance conflict. Over this monitoring period, the Citizenship Act emerged as a focal point for ethno-cultural tensions within the nation. On May 31, President Ramchandra Poudel gave his approval to the Citizenship Bill, which had been approved by the Parliament during the previous term of the House of Representatives. This endorsement sharply divided the population, with some expressing support for the Act while others vehemently opposed it. In the wake of this approval, widespread protests erupted against the Citizenship Act, claiming it contradicts the nation's best interests. Subsequently, a legal petition was submitted to the Supreme Court challenging the validity of the Citizenship Act and in response, the Supreme Court issued a short-term interim order, instructing the government to refrain from the immediate implementation of the amended Citizenship Act. However, this Supreme Court directive triggered a wave of protests across the country in various forms, ranging from attempted self-immolation to organized protests in front of the Supreme Court premises, which resulted in the detention of several individuals. Stateless youths have also taken to the streets to voice their concerns, and there have been protests marked by torchlight processions, showcasing the depth of public sentiment on this matter.

Another persistent and significant ethno-cultural concern observed is violence against women. This spectrum of violence encompasses cases where elected representatives implicated in acts of sexual violence and assault, to the tragic instance of an elected representative losing her life due to a physical assault inflicted by her husband. Furthermore, notable protests denouncing the unjust treatment of Dalits, deliberate arson of their residence and the expression of discriminatory remarks by elected officials deeply wounded the sentiments of the public. Consequently, these incidents sparked demonstrations calling for justice on behalf of the survivor who had experienced caste-based discrimination and demanding decisive measures against those perpetuating such discriminatory practices.

Natural Resources Governance Conflicts
Media Coverage: June 2023 - July 2023

No. of recorded sub-events	
CIAA	**1**
CIAA: case registration	1
Nonviolent	**7**
Arrest/Seize	2
Legal/Policy decision	1
Official decision	2
Peaceful protest	2
Violent	**7**
Animal attack	6
Violent demonstration	1
Grand Total	**15**

Figures: Snapshot of news coverage on natural resource governance conflicts (June-July 2023)

Summary of events recorded

In the months of June and July 2023, a total of 15 news and events were recorded that were relevant to Natural resource governance conflict. As compared to previous issues of 'Governance Watch', this marks the least coverage of news and events related to natural resource governance in Nepal. Among these, occurrences of human-wildlife conflicts were consistent to the news and events from previous recording periods. Especially wild animal attacks, resulting in severe injuries and loss of lives. Simultaneously, two incidences of illegal wildlife trades were also recorded during this monitoring period. The recurring of such incidents highlight a major gap in effective and timely response from government authorities in favor of both wild animals and humans. Strengthened conservation efforts and effective crisis response mechanisms that clearly emphasize the distinct roles of local, provincial and national tiers continue to be the need of the current times. Furthermore, the recorded events in June and July essentially highlight public demands for preservation of Sirsiya river located in Birgunj. These demonstrations were initiated in the previous reporting period and continues to display frustrations of local citizens against pollution and encroachment mainly caused by private industries.

Nonetheless, on a positive note, government authorities were keen in preservation of natural resources and precautionary interventions to protect lives and livelihoods of the local citizens. For example, the high court of Pokhara issued an interim order restraining any kind of personal or institutional construction work within the four forts of Phewa Lake emphasizing its preservation. Also, the District Disaster management Committee in Palpa has prohibited the extraction of river products form June 1st to middle of August to prevent disasters during the rainy season. This initiative was taken by prioritizing safety of civilian lives and access of transport pathways. Although rarer in numbers, such cases highlight that some government led efforts are consistent towards protection and wellbeing of local lives and local resources but inadequate.

Key Recommendations

From the 177 events recorded in the months of June and July 2023, some major factors were identified that have evidently triggered governance conflict in the four areas focused by the study. As potential responses to address these ongoing conflicts, following recommendations are derived as way forward-

Political governance

- Transparent and accountable governance processes, coupled with fair and unbiased investigations related to corruption cases must be instilled to manage resources, deliver services, and to restore public trust and confidence in the federal governance system.

- Regular consultations with civil society organizations, marginalized communities, and local leaders must be ensured to highlight policies that reflect the needs and aspirations of the people.

- Collaboration with international organizations, NGOs, and development partners to share best practices, technical expertise, and resources for strengthening governance, conflict resolution, and accountability mechanisms can be a beneficial practice for all three tiers of government. Such collective endeavors must be promoted to achieve peaceful and effective governance.

Development governance

- Interventions to measure the potential weighted average cost of the development project at the time of project designing to reduce under financing and delayed payment must be emphasized.

- The development conflicts highlight a need to strengthen the contractual obligations to monitor and regulate the performance of the contracting companies during execution and operation of development projects.

- Civic participation and culture of transparency must be strengthened to control corruption and irregularities by government representatives.

Ethnocultural governance

- Conflicts surrounding the Citizenship Act emphasizes careful consideration of civilians impacted by this law. The government's guarantee that all eligible individuals attain citizenship, while preventing any loopholes that might enable the acquisition of counterfeit citizenship.

- Stricter consequences must be imposed on government authorities for their engagement in propagating violence against women and for endorsing discriminatory actions.

- The renaming of Province 1 as "Koshi" stands as a notable example of conflict resolution, achieved through negotiations between the Koshi state government and the Joint Struggle Committee. Such approaches to conflict resolution and transformation shows resolution techniques should be tailored to individual cases and not extended to generalization of cases.

Natural resources governance

- Records of wildlife attacks and illegal wildlife trades are consistent with preceding reports. Hence, distinct guidelines and strict law must be enforced by responsible authorities to adequately address the existing human-nature conflict and promote human-nature symbiosis.

- Strict compliance of environmental laws and policies must be ensured to prohibit damage or exploitation of natural resources and needs to be urgently addressed among federal, provincial and local governments.

- Government must ensure effective crisis coping mechanisms and protocols to timely address the plights of civilians affected and displaced by natural disasters or climate emergencies, upholding national and local level policies relevant to disaster risk reduction.

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.

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