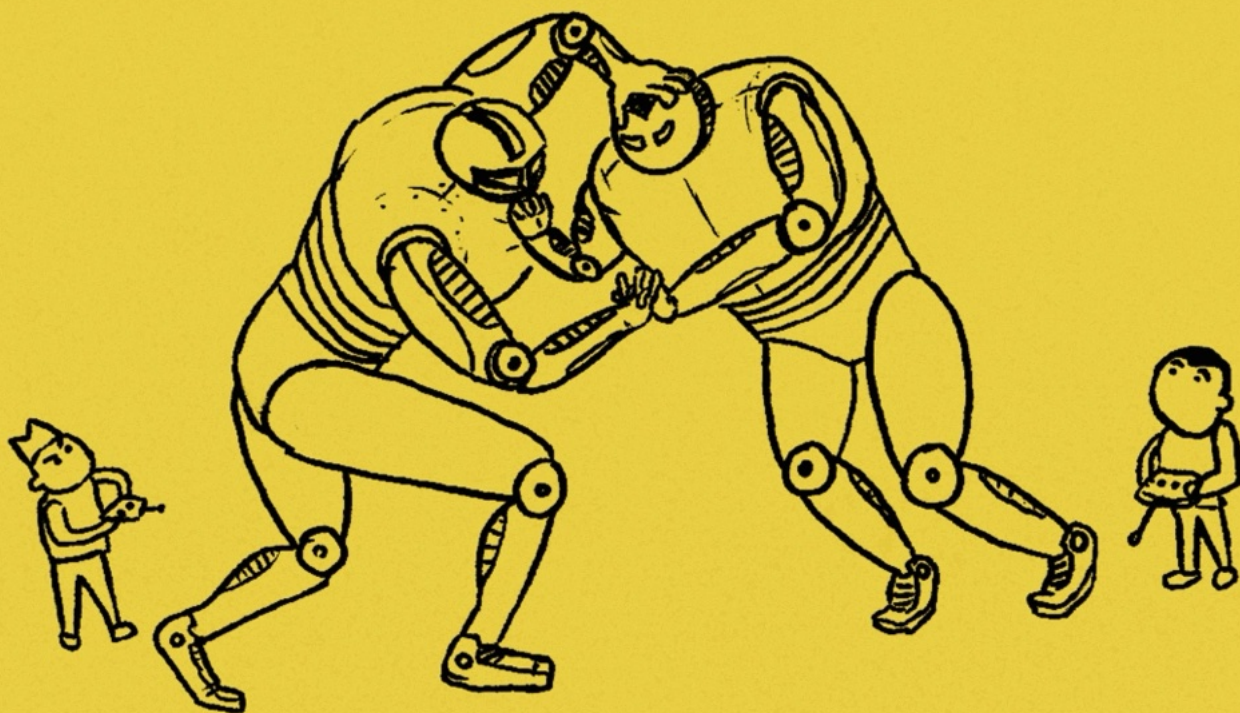


GOVERNANCE WATCH

MEDIA MONITORING REPORT

ISSUE - 07

DECEMBER 2023



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 decipher major conflicts occurring within and beyond the federal structures and systems of Nepal. Through vigilant media monitoring mechanisms, 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 interests are focused. Here is how the methods have defined the major governance areas selected by this report including major indicators and types of events:

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 while attempting to highlight major 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. Following is how the methods have defined the indicators:

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.

Event Types

The methods adopted for this study have segregated the recorded news and events recognizing influence or adoption of violence or nonviolence in strategies as display of resistance, attack or protest. Also, corruption or Commission for Abuse of Authority Investigation (CIAA)-related cases are separately categorized as they majorly signify legal actions or decisions, rather than being an event that is violent or nonviolent in nature. Also, to avoid data duplication, these cases are distinctly recorded.

Event Categories	Definition
Nonviolent events	Governance conflicts where actors display resistance, disagreements, demands, etc. without using physical force or causing harm or damage.
Violent events	Governance conflicts where actors use physical force/ arms or cause harm or damage to display resistance, disagreements, demands, etc.
Commission for Abuse of Authority Investigation (CIAA)- relevant events	Corruption or CIAA related cases are recorded as separate category of events. Such cases are mostly legal concerns that are important determinants of governance conflicts as they display unrest among actors and triggers of such

Media Outlets Monitored:

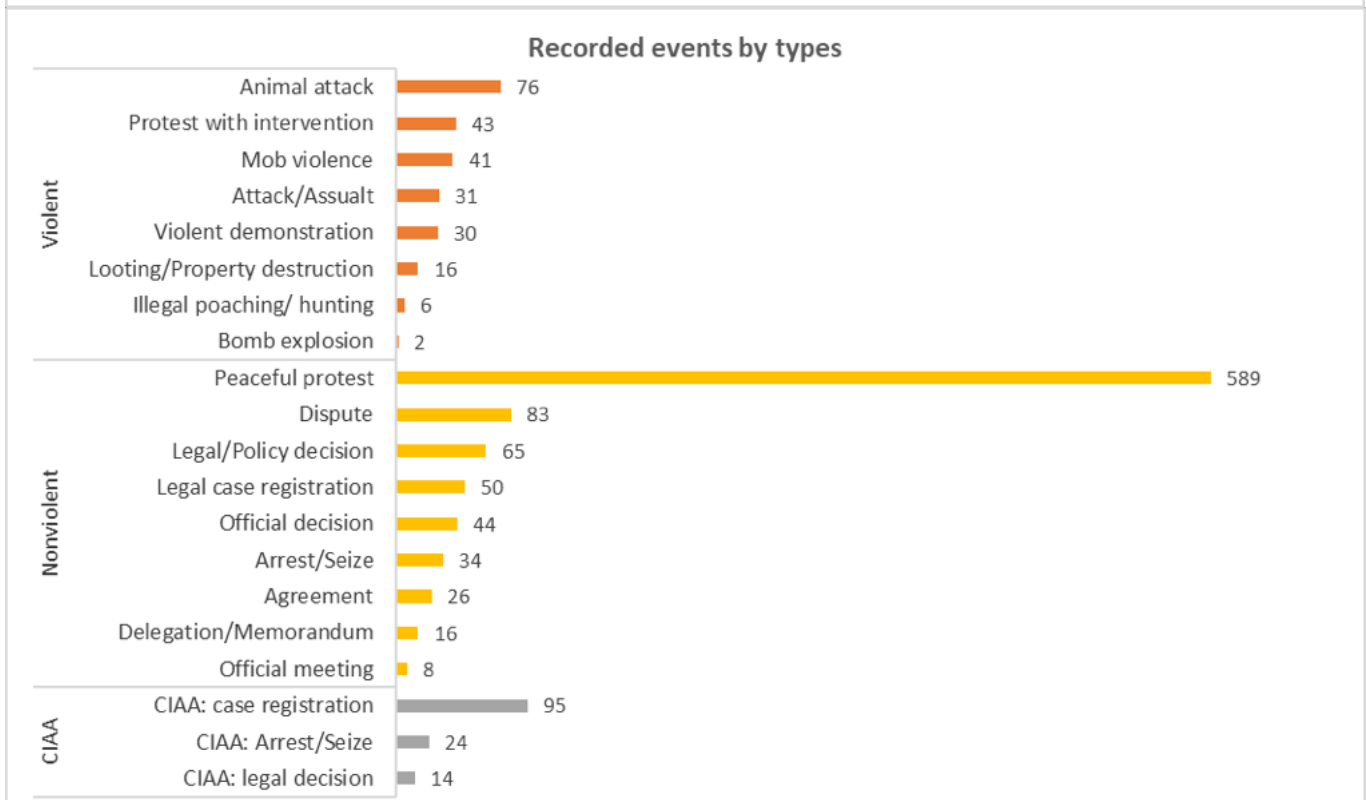
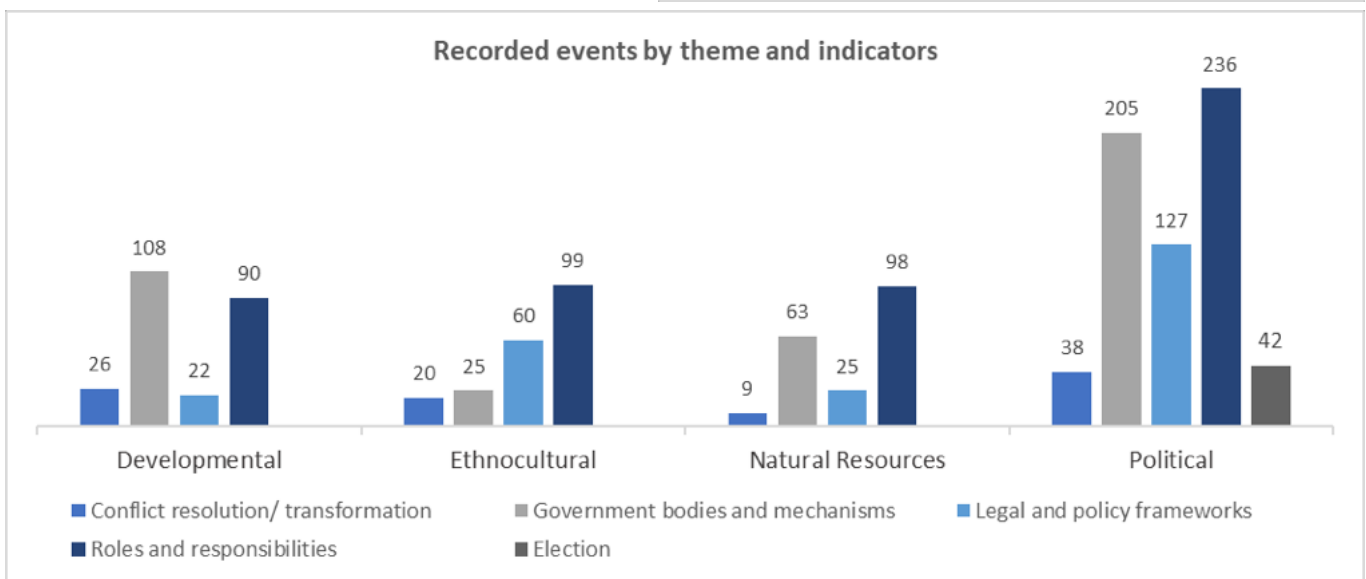
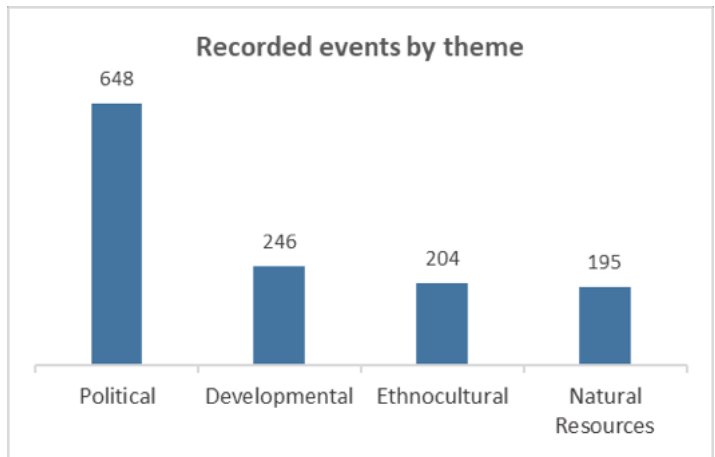
The Kathmandu Post/ Kantipur Daily/ Annapurna Post/ Online Khabar/ SetoPati.

A Cumulative Snapshot of Recorded News and Events

Media Coverage: June 2022 - November 2023

Starting from month of June 2022 to November 2023, in the past 16 months, a total of 1293 events have been recorded under this media monitoring initiative under GMC Nepal. Below is a numeric snapshot of the observations so far.

Event type	No. of events recorded
Violent	245
Nonviolent	915
CIAA	133
Total Recorded Events	1293



Access detailed analysis of the report here: [Governance Watch Series Archives - GMC Nepal](#)

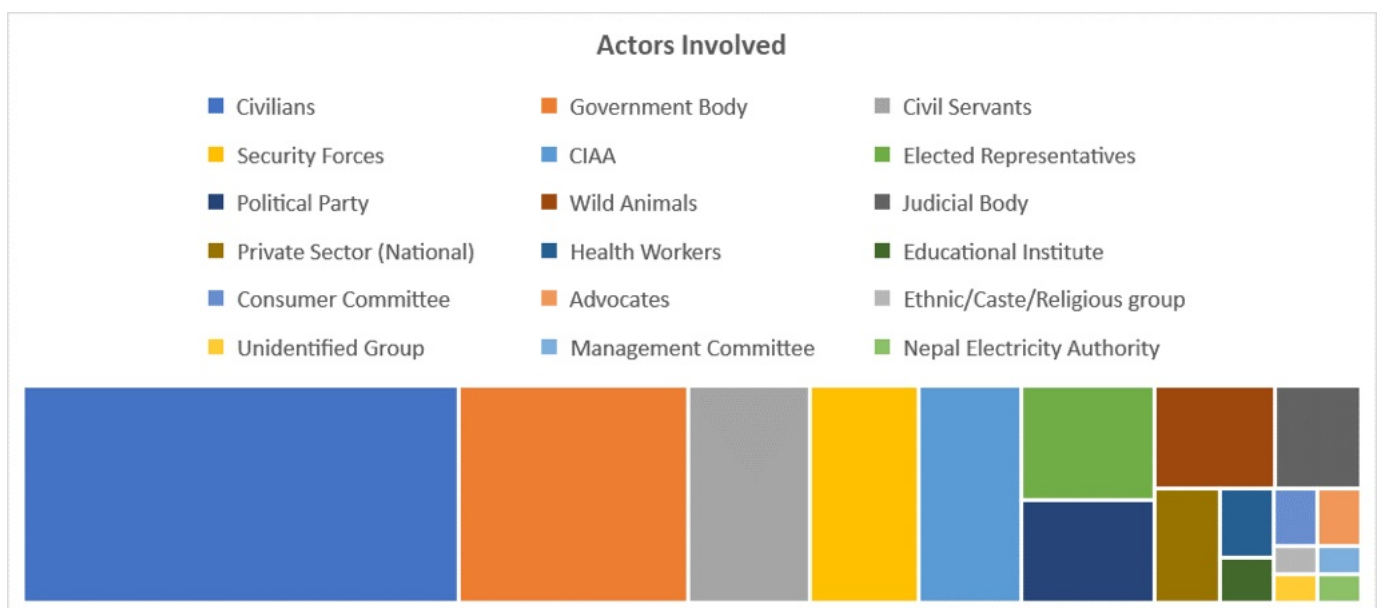
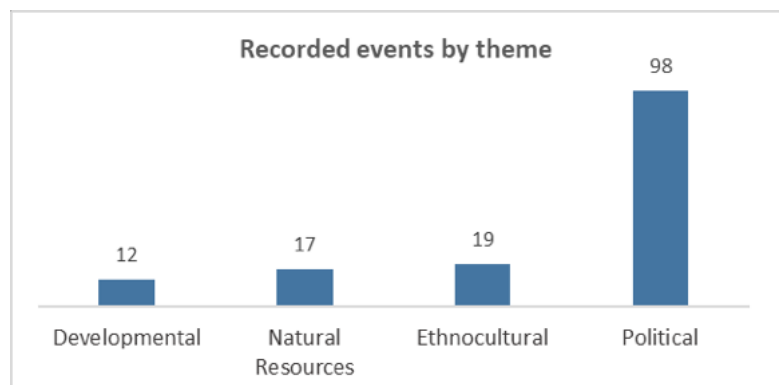
Overview of Recorded Events

Media Coverage: October 2023 - November 2023

This 7th issue of 'Governance Watch', encapsulates a total of 146 news and events related to governance conflicts in the areas of natural resources, development, ethnocultural and political governance in Nepal. While the majority of these governance conflicts, i.e., 111 cases were nonviolent in nature, 19 events triggered violent consequences. In consistency with previous reports, 111 nonviolent events when compared to 19 violent occurrences may give the impression that violence in governance conflicts are rare, but these events are detrimental to human security and peaceful governance. More importantly, violent occurrences forewarns that civil resistance and public grievances when left unaddressed for a long period, has the potential of turning into violence. These events thus must be considered to be able to timely address the current civil unrest and peacefully resolve governance issues arising in the four governance areas.

Furthermore, in this reporting period, 16 events were cases registered by Commission for Abuse of Authority Investigation (CIAA) against political and government actors (comprising local, provincial and central levels) involved in illicit and corrupt activities. However, this indication alone is not sufficient to conclude the overall context and consequences of corruption related activities and its relevant actors and areas in Nepal. Further analysis of cases and events from multiple sources are important to corroborate this finding. Lastly, records under this reporting period shows civilians, government and civil servants as the three major actors involved in governance conflicts in the four areas of study. Detailed breakdown of these observations are provided in upcoming sections. Meanwhile, graphical representation of this summary is presented as below:

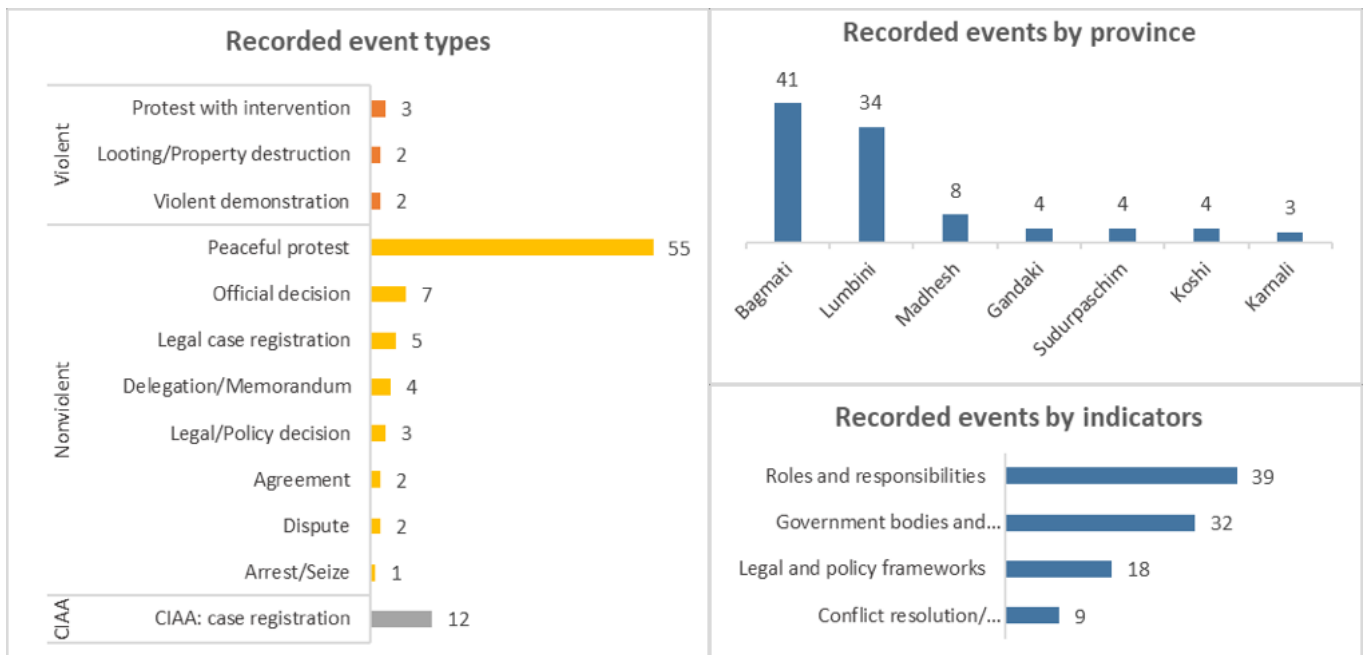
Type of events	No. of events
Violent	19
Nonviolent	111
CIAA	16
Total Recorded Events	146



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

Political Governance Conflicts

Media Coverage: October 2023 - November 2023



Figures: Snapshot of recorded events on political conflicts (October-November 2023)

Summary of Recorded Events

During this reporting period, a significant majority of the recorded events under political governance were characterized by nonviolent occurrences. Bagmati province stood out during this period, experiencing the highest number of political events as the political landscape in Nepal unraveled into a complex tapestry of conflicts, particularly within the framework of the federal governance system.

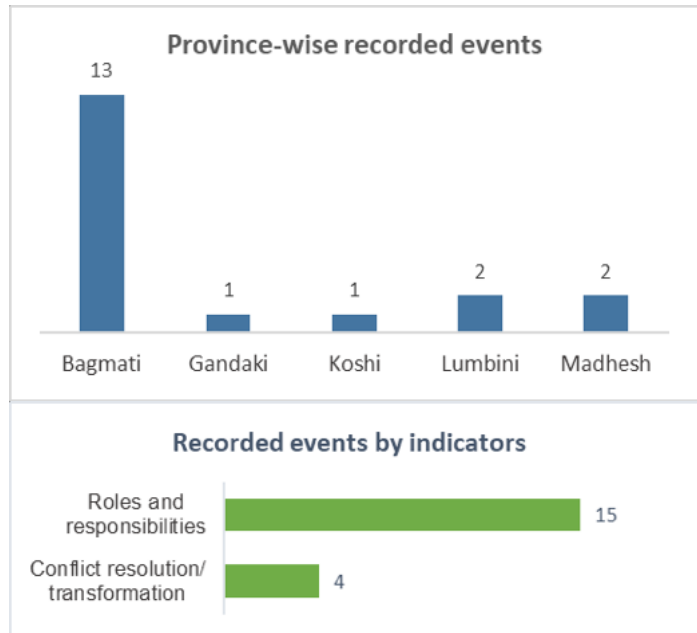
At the provincial level, Chief Minister Saroj Kumar Yadav issued an [ultimatum](#) concerning the adjustment of the police force, highlighting ongoing struggles in fully realizing provincial powers, exposing broader issues of power distribution and coordination between the federal and provincial governments. Furthermore, local governance disputes highlighted conflict between Chief Administrative Officer and the Mayor of [Butwal Sub-metropolitan](#) over alleged undue influence and favoritism in governance processes. This local-level discord illustrates the emerging intricacies and power struggles as local governments exercise authority within the federal structure. Alongside, the [Federation of Gandaki District Coordination Committees](#) emphasized the immediate enforcement of Section 95 of the Local Government Operation Act, drawing attention to the need for coordination with the Central Government, Provincial Government Offices in Gandaki Province, and District Coordination Committees. Concerns were raised about the lack of laws related to coordination and balanced development by the provincial government, prompting the Federation to advocate for the formulation of necessary policies and guidelines for District Coordination Committees.

The conflicts in Nepal during this period were diverse, encompassing issues from corruption cases to student protests and social media regulation. The banning of TikTok and the ensuing protests exemplify the delicate balance required in addressing concerns about social harmony while safeguarding freedom of expression. The involvement of the Supreme Court through multiple writ petitions and its pursuit of clarifications on matters such as providing amnesty underscores the crucial role of the judiciary in upholding constitutional rights and resolving governance issues. Overall, these events highlight that effectively addressing these challenges will be crucial for Nepal to achieve stable and effective governance within its federal structure.

Ethnocultural Governance Conflicts

Media Coverage: October 2023 - November 2023

Type of events	No. of events
Violent	1
Protest with intervention	1
Nonviolent	18
Arrest/Seize	1
Legal/Policy decision	2
Official decision	3
Peaceful protest	12
Total Recorded Events	19



Figures: Snapshot of recorded events on ethnocultural conflicts (October-November 2023)

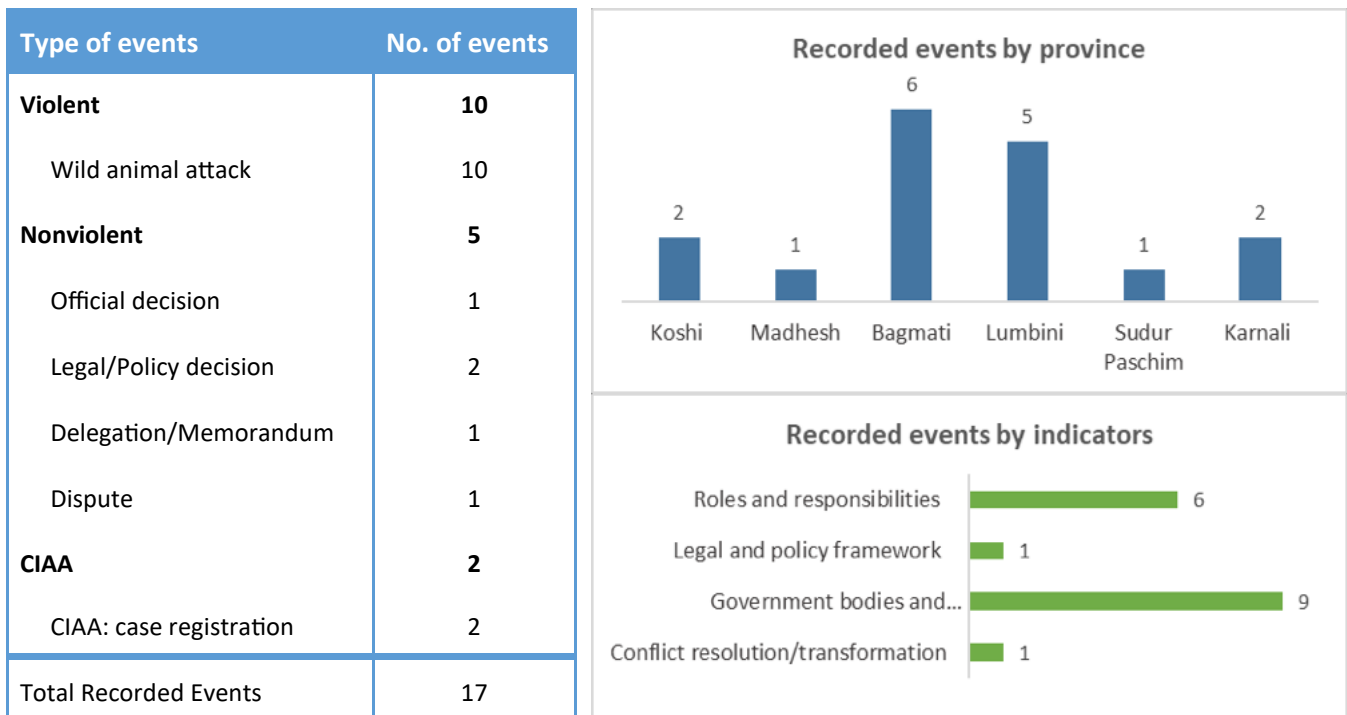
Summary of Recorded Events

In the months of October and November 2023, a total of 19 ethnocultural governance related events were meticulously documented, comprising 7 non-violent and 12 violent incidents. Within this timeframe, the focal points of governance challenges in the ethnocultural context predominantly revolved around issues of justice. Continuing the narrative from the preceding bi-monthly report, a paramount concern remains the sluggishly ongoing case of Aarti Sah who was discovered lifeless in her own home on May 21, 2023. This incident has sparked a persistent demand for justice, with Aarti Sah's grieving family and concerned relatives fervently advocating for judicious impartiality. Commencing their protest on June 16, 2023, at Maitighar, the rallying cry for justice echoed and endured this demand. Yet, a notable development in the Aarti Sah case has been the issuance of bail by the Janakpur High Court to Aarti's husband, Moti Babu, and father-in-law, Madan Mohan Shah, both of whom were in custody pending trial. The court rationalized this decision by citing a perceived lack of evidence in the complaint filed by Aarti's family. Despite these legal proceedings, the family members have persisted in their peaceful protest at Maitighar. Regrettably, the peaceful demonstration was disrupted when security forces intervened, leading to the detention of Aarti Shah's family members. This unwarranted interference adds a concerning dimension to the ongoing struggle for justice in Sah's case.

Furthermore, implementing curfews in Nepalgunj has been a proactive strategy for conflict resolution. It aims to effectively reduce the potential for religious and community clashes exacerbated by provocative posts on social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, and X. The curfews created a safer environment, fostering harmony and preventing the escalation of tensions caused by inflammatory content. Similarly, the arrest of a religious leader for delivering communal hatred and inciting religious violence was taken as a measure to address and prevent potential conflicts. By this, the authorities aimed to curb the spread of divisive rhetoric that could contribute to societal tensions.

Natural Resources Governance Conflicts

Media Coverage: October 2023 - November 2023



Figures: Snapshot of recorded events on natural resources related conflicts (October-November 2023)

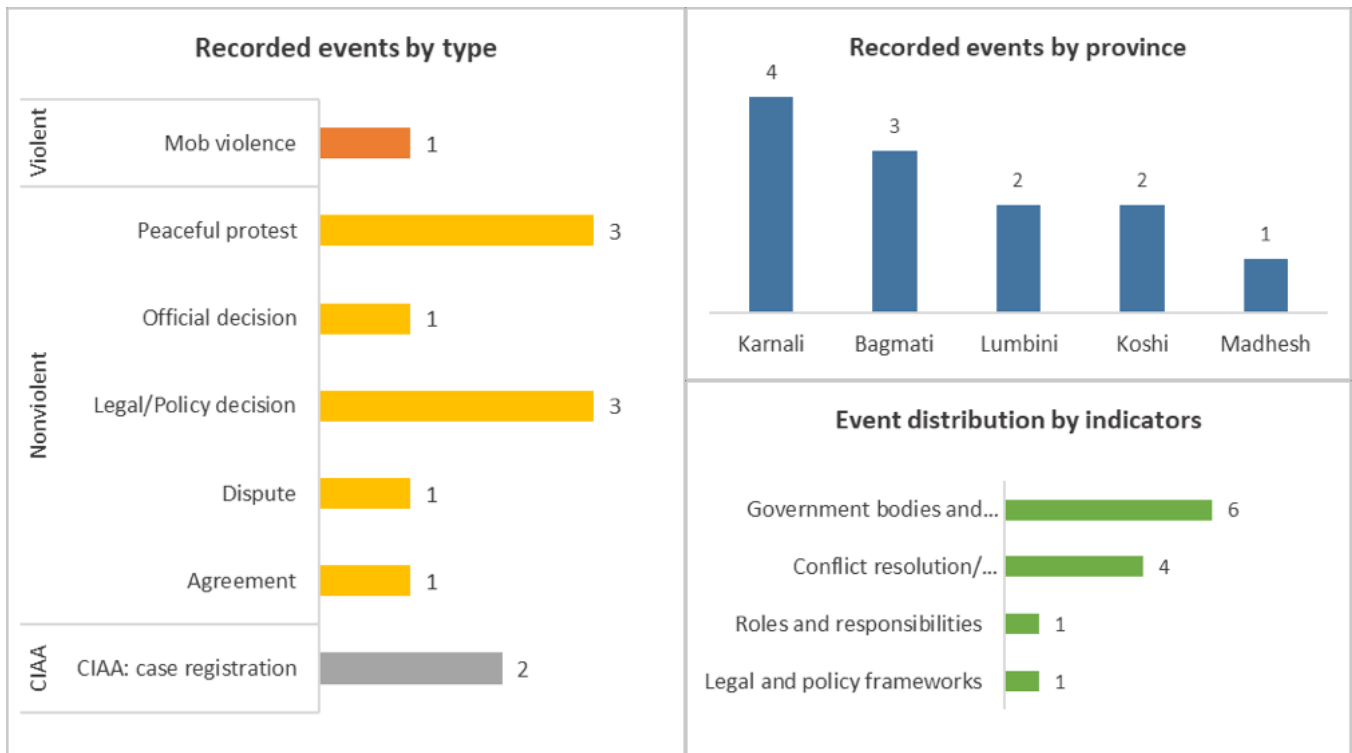
Summary of Recorded Events

During the period of October and November 2023, a total of 17 news and events were recorded that were relevant to Natural resource governance conflicts. In relevance to the previous events recorded under natural resource governance conflicts, this issue shows an upsurge in occurrence of violent events triggered by wild animal attacks. Repeated occurrence and rise in recording of these events yet again highlight a major gap in effective and timely response from government authorities in addressing long withstanding human-nature conflict. This variance was further substantiated by events of illegal timber trade, unlawful wildlife trade and unregulated extraction of river based materials, especially under the involvement of government actors as registered by the CIAA.

On the account of nonviolent events recorded in this period, a legal and policy dispute instigated between Independent Power Producers' Association Nepal (IPPAN) the Ministry of Forest and Environment. According to IPPAN's statement, the Government of Nepal has issued the 'Strategy on Construction and Operation of Physical Infrastructure within the Protected Areas, 065', yet the compliance of strict regulations remain adamant in the regions declared as National Park, Hunting Reserve, Conservation Zone, etc. This policy inconvenience raised by IPPAN, spotlights a lack of policy coherence between government, private interests and conservation and development efforts. As also indicated by the observation of indicators, dependable performances of government institutions and mechanisms continue to be the need of the current times.

Development Governance Conflicts

Media Coverage: October 2023 - November 2023



Figures: Snapshot of recorded events on development related conflicts (October-November 2023)

Summary of Recorded Events

Over the last two months (October and November 2023), GMC Nepal has documented a total of 12 events under development governance conflict. Similar to [previous monitoring period](#), this period also observed the conflict cases related financial irregularities on development assistance. In Karnali province, a protest stemmed from [entrepreneurs' frustrations](#) over outstanding dues for construction materials supplied to public school for building school infrastructures. Likewise, this province also experienced public's protest approach affixing of [image of MP on Sal tree](#) to express discontent about the delayed completion of the road construction. Also, the long-standing dispute between the [Nepal Electricity Authority](#) and the residents of Lapsephedi in Shankharapur Municipality in Bagmati province and [land dispute](#) in Lumbini province showcased poor dialogue and mediation strategies to foster peaceful resolutions between the conflicting parties.

During this monitoring period, the occurrence of conflicts within the realm of development governance underscored low effectiveness and efficiency of government entities/ authorities involved in the development initiatives. As a result, it has amplified root causes of conflicts within the development government landscape. The lack of self-accountability and transparent mechanisms within concerned government bodies/ authorities have further hindered their ability to implement clear guidelines for development projects within the legal and policy settings frameworks.

Key Recommendations

From 146 events recorded between October and November 2023, some key factors were identified that have evidently triggered governance conflict in the four governance areas. As potential responses to address these ongoing conflicts, following recommendations are derived as way forward.

Political governance

- Recurring issues over clarification of power distribution calls for a need to ensure a clear and defined distribution of powers between federal, provincial, and local levels through potential constitutional amendments. This can potentially mitigate jurisdictional disputes and enhance the effectiveness of the federal governance system.
- To strengthen local governance, it is imperative to invest in their capacity-building to empower administrators, officials, and elected representatives. Also, promotion of transparency, accountability, and public participation can help reduce conflicts arising from perceived misconduct or misuse of power.
- Recognizing the long withstanding governance conflicts between political actors, a mediation mechanism for prompt resolution of conflicts between different government levels and within local administrations and political parties is important. This will prevent disruptions in public services and foster a culture of dialogue and collaboration to address governance challenges efficiently.

Ethnocultural governance

- Historically, women have endured persistent oppression and exclusion, challenges that persist in today's society. Despite existing laws, it is crucial for state and government actors to take robust measures to implement these laws effectively. Moreover, expediting legal proceedings is essential to deliver swift justice to survivors and their families.
- Citizens must have the right to peacefully protest against injustices they face. Security forces should respect citizens' right to peaceful assembly and demonstration, refraining from unnecessary intervention. Therefore, interventions should only occur when protesters are causing disruption, posing harm to themselves or others, and impeding the rights of others.
- The escalating number of group clashes highlights a significant disruption in social cohesion. Therefore, the government must actively pursue methods to restore cohesion and preserve harmony in society. Exploring various conflict resolution measures, including open dialogue, becomes imperative to achieve this overarching goal.

Natural resources governance

- Records of wildlife attacks and illegal wildlife trades are consistent with preceding reports. Hence, distinct guidelines to delegate prompt response of authorities in all three tiers of government must be strictly implemented 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. Especially, actions of government representatives need to be strictly monitored to stop their illicit involvement in corruption and illegal activities.
- The various levels of actors in natural resource governance conflicts must strive to achieve policy coherence through immediate coordination. Furthermore, active engagement of citizens in such policy making processes can help ensure that issues of all groups are addressed based on their actual needs.

Developmental governance

- Transparent finance reporting and establishment of financial oversight committee is necessary to decrease the practice of financial irregularities in public institutions, especially in infrastructure development areas.
- Capacity-building initiatives must be increased to empower and strengthen the roles and responsibilities of individuals and organizations involved in development governance conflict.
- The current events highlight a need for regular and strict evaluations of existing mechanisms in development governance to identify areas for improvement in development processes, particularly in the internal control system and operational mechanisms.

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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