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SAJHEDARI BIKAAS PROGRAM

Sajhedari Bikaas Project
Partnership for Local Development
Local Governance Perception Survey

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Sajhedari Bikaas Project

Partnership for Local Development

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A perception assessment of local governance and community development in Sajhedari Bikaas project districts in Nepal's Far West and Mid-West regions (March-April 2014)

*Assessment conducted by Interdisciplinary Analysts (IDA) for the Project
(UnderContractno.AID-367-C-13-00003)*

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Acronyms

CAC	Citizen Awareness Center
CMC	Community Mediation Center
CBO	Community Based Organization
CDP	Community Development Project
DAT	Data Abstraction Tool
DDC	District Development Committee
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIS	Geographic Information System
GON	Government of Nepal
GPS	Geographic Positioning System
IDA	Interdisciplinary Analysts
INGO	International Non-governmental Organization
KAP	Knowledge Attitude Practice
KII	Key Informant Interview
LGCDP	Local Governance Community Development Program
LDO	Local Development Officer
LSGA	Local Self Governance Act
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
PMP	Performance Management Plan
PPS	Probability Proportional to Size
SOW	Statement of Work
TOR	Terms of Reference
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
WCF	Ward Citizen Forum

Executive Summary

This perception survey was commissioned by Sajhedari Bikaas (SB), which is local governance and community development project supported by USAID. SB commenced from 2012 and is expected to continue until 2017. Its implementation is led by Pact Inc., an INGO, and its partners include several national and local NGOs. SB is being implemented in six districts - Dang, Banke, Bardiya, and Surkhet (Mid-West), and Kailali and Kanchanpur (Far West). The project aims to cover 50 percent of the VDCs in each district, especially those with a low human development index.

The purpose of SB's perceptions surveys is to monitor the demand and supply side of local governance and community development, as well as the status of some of the indicators of SB, and has provisioned for undertaking a perception survey two times every year. The perception survey for the first year was awarded to IDA; this report presents the results of the first of such bi-annual perception survey.

This perception survey consisted of two components – a household survey with a quantitative approach and FGDs and KIIs with a qualitative approach. (The household survey questionnaire is in annex 5, while the FGD and KII checklist is in annex 4).

The main finding of the survey is that the public thinks that local government entities are doing “okay” (“*theekai chha*” in Nepali). However, this assessment is due to poor knowledge and articulation capacity of the communities on the role and responsibilities of the local government entities. The local level civil servants are doing the bare minimum and the public thinks that this is “all right” because the public does not know how it could be done otherwise, since there have been no elected officials (and thus little competition between different articulations) for more than 12 years. Since there is poor demand for effective local governance, the supply of local governance is of mediocre quality. What this suggests, in turn, is that if demands for better local government services could be better articulated, particularly among women and marginalized communities, the quality of local government services could be improved.

Methodology and Procedures

The study comprised of both quantitative and a quantitative approaches.

The qualitative portion was based on Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Altogether, 18 FGDs and 15 KIIs were held with the stakeholders of the six districts. The FGDs and KIIs were undertaken between March 18 and April 5, 2014. A total of 186 participants took part in the FGDs. The average number of participants per FGD was around 10 persons. Of the 18 FGDs, 12 FGDs were held in VDCs and 6 FGDs were held in district headquarters.

The survey comprised of a structured questionnaire, which was administered to a total of 1,201 respondents living in the area, namely in the districts of Kanchanpur, Kailali, Bardiya, Banke, Surkhet, and Dang. VDCs were selected taking into account the fact that SB is being implemented in 58 VDCs of the aforementioned six districts in the first phase (i.e. for the first 2.5 years) and in another 57 VDCs in the second phase (i.e. for the next 2.5 years). The respondents within the VDCs were randomly selected. The sample size for areas in one phase was 600 and for areas in the other

phase it was 601. The margin of error is +/- 4 percent at a 95 percent confidence level. The fieldwork for the survey was undertaken between March 26 and April 10, 2014.

The interviews were administered face-to-face and responses were recorded using mobile phones. A platform known as “Mobenzi” was used to enter and transfer the data. (Mobenzi is a mobile data collection platform developed by a South African company. The same platform was employed to administer Pact’s baseline survey.) After the completion of the fieldwork, data was processed and analyzed using MS-Excel and SPSS.

Limitations

This perception survey i.e., perception survey round 1, focuses on the perception of the people on local governance in general. It does not measure the progress of the indicators of the SB. It is envisaged that perception survey round 2, which will be conducted later on in the year, will focus on the SB indicators.

Demographics

Out of 1,201 sampled respondents, a majority (41 percent) belonged to Tarai/Madheshi Janajati category, followed by Hill Brahmin/Chhetri (31 percent), Hill/Mountain Janajati (8 percent), and Hill Dalit (7 percent). In terms of occupation, over half of respondents (57 percent) reported agriculture as their main occupation, followed by housewife/house-maker (18 percent), student (9 percent), laborer (6 percent), industry/business (4 percent), and service (4 percent). The overwhelming majority of the respondents said they have citizenship certificates (88 percent), and 76 percent had registered their names in the voters’ list. One reason why 11 percent of respondents had not registered for the voters' list despite having citizenship certificates was that many of these respondents were underage (i.e., being 16 or 17 years old but below 18 which is the age for registering in the voters list and thereby becoming eligible to vote). To take part in the survey, respondents were required to be at least 16 years old. An overwhelming majority of the respondents said they are not members of any of the local groups such as Ward Citizen Forum (WCF), Citizen Awareness Center (CAC), Village Development Committee (VDC) council, School Management Committee, mother's groups, youth groups or forest user groups (with the exception of the savings and credit groups, where 29 percent of respondents said they were members).

Main Findings of the perception survey

Overall social, political and economic situation: In response to the question “In general how would you describe your own economic condition?” over half of the respondents said that it is neither good nor bad (59 percent). The proportion saying this about the national economy was 44 percent. The proportion of the respondents who felt that Nepal’s economic situation is good was 28 percent and those who said that their own economic situation is good was 12 percent. In response to the question “How would you rate your current living condition compared to other people living in your community?” fifty percent thought their current living condition is the same as other people living in their community, while 31 percent thought that their living conditions are better, and 18 percent said they are worse. In response to the question “Generally, do you think the country is heading in the right direction, or is it on the wrong track?” majority of the respondents were optimistic about the direction that the country is headed in. Almost twice as many people said the country is moving in the right direction (60 percent) as those who said it is moving in the wrong

direction (32 percent). An even higher proportion reported that their village/city is moving in the right direction (77 versus 60 percent).

Unemployment and political violence: Some 46 percent of respondents said that the economic situation causes them anxiety, followed by 45 percent who attributed anxiety to "unemployment" and "lack of job opportunities" (which were 24 percent and 20 percent respectively). Most of the people were not apprehensive about the possibility of political violence surging in the near future, with 47 percent saying that there is no possibility of political violence surging in the near future. However, about 29 percent thought otherwise.

The individual's role as a citizen: Overall, the level of participation of people in local and national level development activities seems to be low, with the majority of respondents not participating in any such programs. However, the survey has shown that given an opportunity and appropriate environment, people are willing to participate in these developmental activities.

Service delivery: Sixty-seven percent of the people thought that their VDC is effective in encouraging development in their community. Over half of all respondents said that local government is doing very well or fairly well in addressing educational needs (71 percent), in improving basic health services (69 percent), in maintaining roads and bridges (55 percent), and in resolving violent conflict (52 percent). Over two-thirds (67 percent) of the people reported that they had availed themselves of the services of a health service center, followed by public school (56 percent), and VDC office (54 percent) during the past one year. An overwhelming majority said that they had not been forced to pay a bribe, give a gift or do a favor for government officials in order to get the services provided by local government.

Assessment of local government: When asked to assess the performance of the present local government (defined generally without specifying agencies), most respondents assessed it to be good (47 percent) while only a small proportion assessed it to be bad (19 percent). Of the 51 percent of respondents who assessed the performance of the present local government as either very good or good, the main reasons they gave, in order of precedence, were (1) its ability to undertake development activities (2) its ability to maintain law and order (3) its ability to provide access to education (4) its ability to provide health facilities (5) its ability to control crime/kidnapping/extortion/theft.

Participation and implementation of CDPs: The perception survey explored the public's preferences regarding the types of community development projects (CDPs). Over half of respondents (55 percent) said that CDPs related to infrastructure are required for their community, followed by CDPs related to agriculture (43 percent), income generation (38 percent), education (36 percent), health (29 percent), and awareness (22 percent). The survey shows that the most prioritized CDP is that of infrastructure. A majority of respondents reported being fairly satisfied with the way community projects are selected in their VDCs, although an overwhelming majority of respondents (84 percent) reported that they did not participate in any community events that select community development projects in their area. Even though people are not able to influence the decision-making processes related to the identification of CDPs, a majority of the people continue to be of the opinion that CDPs are effective in addressing the needs of the community. Only 10 percent of the respondents participated in the community events that selected CDPs. Although the majority of the respondents said that CDPs are effective in addressing the needs of the community, only 14 percent of the respondents were aware of the CDPs that were implemented in the past year in their

community. From among these 14 percent, the effectiveness of CDPs were explored in terms of transparency, quality, timeliness, participation and maintenance in a scale of 1 and 10. The average rating for the effectiveness of CDPs is 6.4, which is an above-average rating.

Federalism and decentralization: With regard to federalism, a majority of the people (45 percent) reported not having heard about it and only 36 percent reported having heard about it. When the respondents were asked whether Nepal should be a federal state or a unitary state, a majority (60 percent) said “don’t know/cannot say”. Of the respondents who had made up their opinion on the issue, 23 percent said Nepal should be a federal state and 17 percent thought it should be a unitary state. Likewise, a majority of the respondents had not heard of decentralization, with only 22 percent reporting having heard of it. Of that 22 percent, 75 percent said they are either satisfied (35 percent) or somewhat satisfied (40 percent) with the level of decentralization and the service delivery provided by the local authority. A hypothetical question was asked to gauge how people thought about the ideal division of responsibility/authority regarding areas such as national defense, basic education, improving roads, electricity, basic health, security, crime, and border and custom control, between the national/central government, state/provincial government, and the local government. Most respondents thought that it is at the level of national/central government and at the level of local government that these issues can be addressed, and only a small proportion of people thought that these issues should be addressed at the state/province level.

Relationship between communities: Lastly, the survey attempted to measure relationships between various communities in the local areas. The aim of asking this question is to ascertain whether the relationships have deteriorated, improved, or remained the same. The responses obtained could act as an ‘early-warning system’ for disputes before they conflagrate into potential conflicts. In response to the question, the majority of respondents said that most types of relationships between local entities have improved during the past one year. However, a relatively high proportion of respondents cited deteriorating relationships between people who hold different political views (19 percent), and between the well-off i.e., rich and less-well off i.e., poor (13.5 percent).

Findings of FGDs and KIIs

Current working environment: The VDCs and DDCs are providing services that they are required to provide, but in a poor manner. The buildings of these government bodies, particularly those of VDCs, are old, small, and lack modern amenities. There is a dearth of competent human resources and the use of information technology is minimal. There is also a lack of a public-friendly environment at these offices. This situation, coupled with an increased workload due to more citizens availing themselves of VDC and DDC services, means that these bodies are performing their daily operations under pressure and inefficiently.

Planning process: For programs and projects carried out by the local bodies, the decision-making and implementation are supposed to take place through a well-defined 14-step planning process, which seeks to build participatory decision-making into the local government’s implementation procedure. While the process appears participatory, transparent, and rule-bound on paper, there is a lack of meaningful participation in actual life, and in most cases it takes place only for the sake of formality. Although the process involves representatives of all groups, major decisions are usually made by the powerful and the influential.

Coordination of political parties and other organizations with local government bodies: Coordination is rather weak. Local bodies consult with political parties, but more often than not, the parties exert undue influence. Most other domestic and international non-governmental organizations also do not coordinate their activities with each other or with the local bodies, resulting in the duplication of efforts. Community and government support towards local development is also lacking.

Status of women and marginalized groups: The status of women and marginalized groups has improved due to the efforts of various programs targeting them, but still remains low. Their participation in many programs continues to be mere tokenism. Particularly dismal is the situation of the extremely poor and marginalized. Personal and cultural reasons are partly responsible, but ineffective and perfunctory approaches to local governance are mostly to blame for the situation.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

1. Interpreting public perception and the response of interviewees might have to be qualified by an understanding of the general Nepali habit of moderation, saying “*theekai chha*” (it is OK) to general questions by strangers.
2. People seemed more confident about the future of the country (more interviewees felt the country was moving in the right direction) than their own personal prospects. One way of interpreting this seems to be that, given how the proposed new constitution and the Constituent Assembly (CA) have been projected as the ultimate cure for New Nepal’s future well-being and given that the second CA elections had just been held, the mood of the public was more upbeat than in the months before the CA elections.
3. Demand articulation, especially by marginalized groups and women, is low. Even when they are targeted by special provisions, such as 35 percent of the local government spending being earmarked for them, the concerned stakeholders i.e., members of marginalized communities and women, are mostly ignorant of these provisions.
4. In terms of people’s participation (which the survey shows as low), there is a general feeling that on paper, there is participation but in practice, matters are decided by a closed political coterie of big parties. As revealed in FGDs and KIIs forums of participation are places where foregone decisions are announced.
5. Looking at the supply side of local governance, VDC secretaries seem to be delivering the minimum requirements, and the people seem to be OK with it, since they are not aware of (or have not articulated demand for) proper and better local governance.
6. Despite the general perception that the lack of local political representation, accountability and transparency have led to massive corruption at the local level across Nepal, the survey results show not much concern on this front – especially in the eyes of the ordinary people. This can possibly be interpreted as follows: on matters that touch the public directly, e.g. issuing certificates, etc., the local government functionaries fulfill their duties without asking for bribes from the public. What the public does not see, and where much of the corruption takes place, is in the construction and infrastructure end (“*bhitrichalkhel*”).
7. Lack of local political representation (i.e. no local elections for almost seventeen years) has had a detrimental impact on public expectations as well as development discourse in general. Because VDCs are managed by VDC secretary (and not the elected VDC chairman) nominated by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) and were

at one time run by an all-party consensus mechanism, there is no opposition bench and hence no vibrant debate about development choices and alternatives. Indeed, most people are not even aware that there are alternatives or that there are higher ideals against which current levels of services have to be judged. As a result, local bodies meet the minimum of people's expectations regarding administrative matters (such as issuing certificates, etc.), and this is the reason why a large percentage of respondents thought that service delivery at the local level is satisfactory.

Recommendations

1. One way to increase the quality of local governance services is for concerned stakeholders to demand more. At the moment the demand for good local government and community development services is poorly articulated. This is precisely where Sajhedari Bikaas could assist. Since quality services from local government agencies, particularly the VDC, are not demanded by the people – attested to by survey results which show that people think it is OK – there is little incentive on the part of the local civil servants such as the VDC secretary to perform better.
2. It is due to weak or poor articulation on the part of those who need the services the most, women and marginalized communities, that the performance of local government bodies continues to remain lackluster. A well-articulated and persistent demand for better local government and community development services on the part of women and marginalized communities is needed. This could be done, for instance, by disseminating the baseline and perception survey findings through community and FM radio stations (by Equal Access for instance). Likewise, Pact's NGO partners working on governance and women's empowerment could help women and marginalized communities articulate these concerns in forums such as WCF and CAC.
3. Big issues such as "state restructuring" and "federalism" are mostly unknown to the local people; they may have heard about these issues but are in the dark regarding what they are or what they would mean for their livelihoods and wellbeing. Political parties have often sent out contradictory messages and meanings regarding these issues. While more information dissemination on this front is required, it is the absence of local-level, legitimate and responsible political representation that has led to this confusion. People think that between an effective central government and an elected and accountable local government, most of the things they expect from the state can or will be handled. They have not understood the need or scope for state/provincial-level governance units and their boundaries. It may be that these matters can be better debated and firmed up with the presence of elected local bodies, even if interim.
4. People demand agricultural services (this comes second after infrastructure) but no entity seems to be effectively catering to this need. There is also a general impression that health services are good while agriculture services are bad. This perception also has to be interpreted in light of the increase in outmigration and remittance inflows. Because those earning higher incomes from remittances are demanding (and paying for) better health services, this sector has shown up positively. On the other hand, there is a severe shortage of agricultural labor, with the young and able having gone off to the Gulf, Malaysia or Korea. Those that have remained behind, tending to farms and trying to cope with farming difficulties, need better agriculture services. Such services need to be re-thought and re-framed for the constraints currently being faced by subsistence farming communities making a painful transition to market-oriented agriculture.

5. Lack of local political representation (i.e. no local elected leaders for more than 12 years) has had a detrimental impact on public expectations as well as development discourse in general. Because local bodies are managed by junior bureaucrats nominated by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) and at one time were run by an all-party consensus mechanism, there was no opposition bench and hence no vibrant debate about development choices and alternatives. Local level elections are an imperative for good local governance and SB in unison with other stakeholders needs to pursue this, while acknowledging that the ultimate decision to hold local elections rests with the government of Nepal.

Table 1 Indicators of Sajhedari Bikaas Project (indicators from the PMP and numeric values determined)

Indicator	Baseline Survey	Perception Survey-1
1. Proportion of projects at VDC level that were budgeted in the previous planning cycle, and that were at the top 5 priority list of Ward Citizen Forums (WCFs)	54.8 %	-
2. Proportion of budgeted VDC projects that were fully implemented/finalized within the previous planning cycle	17.1 %	-
3. Proportion of households that have experienced conflict in the past year that have used peaceful means to solve the conflict	1.3 %	-
4. Proportion of households that have witnessed the use of violence to solve conflict in their community in the past year	18 %	-
5. Proportion of project VDCs that provide a budget in the current financial year that covers the operating costs of the CMC (rental, stipend of mediator, other office costs, transport)	73 %	-
6. Proportion of youths participated in the VDC planning process and involved in youth groups (changed indicator)	6 %	-
7. Proportion of community leaders and local government officials with a good understanding of inclusive participatory planning, including "Do No Harm" and "Safe Effective Development in Conflict" principles	51.6 %	-
8. Proportion of Ward Citizen Forums (WCFs) with GESI strategies in place	19 %	-
9. Proportion of village development plans with a functional sustainability plan that adheres to locally agreed standards	81 %	-

10. Proportion of village development plans that include a community needs mapping	78 %	-
11. Proportion of Ward Citizen Forum members who indicate that they can provide meaningful input to the village development plans	29 %	-
12. Proportion of citizens who feel that the administration of funds in the VDC is transparent	16 %	-
13. Proportion of Ward Citizen Forum members who have knowledge of the expenditure per category of their VDC	6.5 %	-
14. Proportion of community projects that are allocated to women, youth or marginalized groups	20 %	-
15. Proportion of citizens who indicate that they actively participate in the decisions around VDC community development projects	3.6 %	-
16. Percentage improvement in positive citizen views on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VDC service delivery • federalism, decentralization 	56.6 % 9.2 %	-
17. Proportion of Ward Citizen Forums that have tracked their budget allocation	5.8 %	-
18. Percentage improvement in positive citizen views on the effective implementation of community development projects	19 %	-
19. Percentage of target population that views GBV as less acceptable after participating in or being exposed to USG programming	62.8%	-
20. Proportion of village development plans that include a fundraising plan	53 %	-
21. Proportion of village development plans that include a resource outreach plan	24 %	-
22. Amount per capita of yearly revenue from non-MoFALD or local sources (local taxes, income from use of natural resources) raised by VDCs	Rs. 48.9	-

1. Introduction

Sajhedari Bikaas (SB) is a local governance and community development project supported by USAID. It commenced from 2012 and is expected to continue until 2017. Its implementation is led by Pact Inc., an INGO, and its partners include several national and local NGOs. SB is being implemented in six districts - Dang, Banke, Bardiya, and Surkhet (Mid-West), and Kailali and Kanchanpur (Far West). The project aims to cover 50 percent of the VDCs in each district, especially those with a low human development index – 58 VDCs in phase I and 57 VDCs in phase II.

SB aims to improve both the demand and supply side of local governance and development at the local level. It aims to strengthen the ability of target communities, especially women, youth, and disadvantaged groups, to guide the allocation of resources, address tensions, and play an active role in decision-making, planning, and conflict mediation.

In order to achieve this goal, Pact and its partners support the target communities to gain the knowledge, skills, and abilities to plan, fund and manage local development activities the communities have identified in an inclusive and participatory manner. The project also provides access to appropriate community stabilization initiatives, which address the drivers of conflict and establish an enabling environment for community development by supporting local governance groups.

1.1 Project Objectives

Sajhedari Bikaas's approach combines strategic interventions with four key objectives:

- **Objective A:** An enabling environment for community development is established
- **Objective B:** Communities access resources for development
- **Objective C:** Communities implement inclusive development projects effectively
- **Objective D:** Local government units function more effectively

Four key principles guide the project: 1) Social inclusion, inclusive governance, and inclusive local development; 2) Flexibility in program approaches to address the changing socio-political dynamics; 3) Community-based participation; and 4) Promoting local accountability. Under these guiding principles, the program implements the following strategic interventions and approaches:

1. Sustainability through building on existing resources
2. People-to-people peace building
3. Capacity building and skill transfer
4. Focus on women, youth, and marginalized groups
5. Utilization of media, especially local radio stations

Pact works in partnership with two national partners (Youth Initiative and CeLRRd), a media partner (Equal Access), eight local NGOs (LNGO) for governance, and five local NGOs for women's economic empowerment (WORTH). Through capacity building, the NGOs implement activities and promote long-term sustainability by ensuring that their communities can access resources for future development, engage women, youth, and other marginalized groups effectively in the community's work, and assume the responsibility to build a positive future.

1.2 Project Objectives and the Perception Survey

The implementation team led by Pact has developed a detailed Results Framework showing the expected intermediate results and outcomes under each of the aforementioned four project objectives.

To monitor the demand and supply side of local governance and community development, as well as the status of some of the indicators, Sajhedari Bikaas conducts a perception survey every six months. The contract for carrying out the first perception survey was awarded to Interdisciplinary Analysts (IDA). This report presents the main findings of the perception survey.

This perception survey is comprised of two components – a household survey with a quantitative approach and FGDs and KIIs with a qualitative approach.

2. Methodology and Procedures

The study comprised of both quantitative and a quantitative approaches. It included a survey of 1,201 respondents from within the project area, using a quantitative approach, as well as 18 FGDs and 15 KIIs, which used a qualitative approach.

2.1 FGDs and KIIs

The qualitative portion of the study was based on FGDs and KIIs. This section outlines the details of the qualitative technique used and then describes the formulation of the questions. It then provides a description of the field work, including the challenges faced.

2.1.1 Overview

Altogether, 18 FGDs and 15 KIIs were held with stakeholders of the six districts. Although IDA's proposal did not envisage KIIs, they had to be undertaken with some DDC officials who could not participate in the FGDs, either because they were busy or they were not in the district at the time of the field work. A total of 186 participants took part in the 18 FGDs. The average number of participants per FGD was 10.3 persons. Of the 18 FGDs, 12 were VDC-level FGDs and six were district-level FGDs.

2.1.2 Formulation of Checklist

The IDA team undertaking the qualitative portion of the perception survey conducted a desk study and held a number of brainstorming sessions to formulate the questions. Questions were created with a view to fulfil the objectives of the project. Attention was paid to measure the indicators described in the Performance Management Plan (PMP).

The questions were first formulated in English by the IDA team and sent to Pact for review. After receiving comments from Pact, these were revised to incorporate Pact's inputs. These were then sent to USAID for approval. Once USAID had approved the questions, they were translated into Nepali. The Nepali version was used for administering the FGDs in the field.

2.1.3 Field Work

There were two teams to conduct the FGDs. Two teams were formed so that they could work concurrently, thereby reducing the time needed to complete the field work. Team A had one FGD expert, one associate, and one assistant; Team B had one FGD expert, one associate, and two assistants. Each team was responsible for three districts. Assisting the teams in the field was a local resource person - one per district - who helped identify the key stakeholders of each district. Back-stopping the teams were several personnel in Kathmandu - four assistants who were primarily responsible for transcribing and translating the FGDs, which began immediately after each FGD was undertaken.

2.1.4 Challenges and How They Were Resolved

The teams did not face any of the risks – political or climatic – envisaged in the proposal. Work proceeded at a normal pace without anything out of the ordinary. However, there were a few unforeseen challenges:

1. One FGD almost had to be cancelled because of the presence of one stubborn participant. He asserted that he had never heard of Pact or Sajhedari Bikaas and did not provide consent to record the FGD initially. (It was necessary to record each FGD so as to prepare a translated transcript as stated in the contract). It took the team a while to explain why recording was necessary and to convince him that his anonymity would not be breached.
2. Due to time constraints, the VDC secretary had to be relied upon in some cases to put together a team for the FGD. There is a possibility that this could have resulted in a team that was less likely to be critical towards the work of the secretary.
3. In general as well, the teams found that participants were less inclined to open up in the presence of the VDC secretary. This problem was overcome to some extent by directing the probe questions to the more reserved participants so as to encourage them to open up and speak.

2.2 Survey

The survey sought to obtain the perceptions of people living in the districts of Kanchanpur, Kailali, Banke, Bardiya, Surkhet and Dang. A total of 1,201 respondents living in the aforementioned districts were sampled for the interview. A structured survey questionnaire, which sought to address the objectives, was administered face-to-face. The questionnaire had a total of nine sections – (1) respondent's identification (2) overall social, political, and economic situation (3) identification of problems (4) roles as citizen (5) service delivery (6) participation and implementation of CDPs (7) federalism (8) decentralization and local election and (9) relationship between various entities in the local areas.

The field work took place between March 26 and April 10, 2014. Before the field work, a pre-test of the questionnaire and training of the fieldwork personnel took place. During the face-to-face interviews, responses were recorded using mobile phones and a platform known as “Mobenzi” to transfer the data. After the completion of the fieldwork, data were processed and analyzed through MS-Excel and SPSS. The section below describes the approach in more detail.

2.2.1 Sampling

Selection of Districts

The survey was undertaken in the six districts, namely Kanchanpur, Kailali, Banke, Bardiya, Surkhet and Dang. VDCs were selected taking into account the fact that Sajhedari Bikaas activities are being implemented in 58 VDCs of the aforementioned 6 districts in the first phase (i.e. for the first 2.5 years) and the same activities will be implemented in another 57 VDCs in the second phase (i.e. for the next 2.5 years). For sampling purposes, phase I VDCs are labeled as Group 1 and phase II VDCs are labeled as Group 2.

Selection of VDCs

The total population constituted of residents living in the 115 VDCs spread across the six districts. The population size was derived by summing up the population of these 115 VDCs. The VDC was identified as the primary sampling unit. As outlined in the Request for Proposal (RFP), 58 VDCs belong to phase I and 57 VDCs to phase II. All the VDCs in phase I were pooled into 20 clusters and all the VDCs in phase II were pooled into another 19 clusters. One cluster constituted three to four VDCs. For each cluster, the sample size was approximately 50. (The purpose of having three to four VDCs per cluster instead of one VDC per cluster was to ensure the adequate spread of the VDCs). For the survey, 12 out of 20 clusters from phase I and another 12 out of 19 clusters from phase II were selected by employing probability proportional to size (PPS). The primary sampling unit is the cluster. On an average, three VDCs were sampled from one cluster, so altogether 35 VDCs from 12 sampled clusters were selected from phase I and similarly 37 VDCs from 12 sampled clusters were from phase II, thus making a total of 72 VDCs in the sample. The sample size of 50 per cluster was further distributed to three sampled VDCs so that one VDC would have an average sample size of 16.

Selection of Wards

Each VDC in Nepal contains nine Wards. In the survey, since each VDC was allocated an approximate sample size of 16, this number was divided equally between two wards, chosen through the random sampling technique. In other words, each VDC had a sample size of around 16 individuals, eight from each of the two chosen wards. Some VDCs that had a sample size of 15 were divided into sample sizes of eight in one ward and seven in the other ward. Other VDCs that had a sample size of 14 were divided into a sample size of seven in each of the two wards.

Selection of Households

Ten households from the sampled ward were identified by using the random-walk method¹.

¹The starting points for the random-walk method are recognizable locations such as schools, crossroads, chautaras, bazaars, etc. At first, the interviewers walk towards a random direction (using spin-the-bottle technique) from a starting point, counting the number of households at the same time. If the number was less than 22, the interviewers selected the first 11 households on the right hand side of their route. If it was between 23 and 32, the interviewers selected the first household and then selected every third household on the right hand side of the route until they covered 11 households. If the number of households was 33 or more, the interviewers selected the first household and then every fourth household on the right hand side of the route until they covered 11 households.

Selection of Respondents

After the household was identified, one member aged 16 or above was selected for interview through the KISH² method. In this way, a sample of size of 600 was selected for phase I, which was distributed across 35 VDCs (12 clusters) and 74 sample wards. The same was done for phase II working areas. In this way, the 1,201 sample was distributed across 24 clusters, 72 VDCs, and 148 wards (in some VDCs, more than two wards were selected) spread across the six project districts.

The margin of error is +/- 4 percent at a 95 percent confidence level and design effect of 2 at the study area level. The survey does not claim the same level of precision at the district levels³.

2.2.2 Formulation of Questionnaire

The first draft of the questionnaire was submitted by IDA to Pact on January 9, 2014. Two rounds of comments came from Pact to IDA. Incorporating these, the third draft was sent to Pact on January 20, 2014. The questionnaire was then sent to USAID for approval. The feedback from Pact and USAID was received on February 5, 2014. Further work was done and the revised questionnaire was sent to Pact for approval. A meeting was held at IDA between IDA staff and Pact staff on February 24, 2014 to further discuss the questionnaire. After the comments from the meeting, the final draft was prepared by IDA and sent for final approval. IDA received the final approval for the questionnaire on February 28, 2014.

2.2.3 Pretest

On March 19, 2014, after translating the questionnaire into Nepali, a pretest was undertaken so as to ascertain whether or not respondents understood the questions. This was done by six interviewers in Kohalpur VDC, which is relatively accessible from Nepalgunj. The feedback suggested that slight modifications were needed in the choice of options for some questions. Meanwhile, the questionnaire was placed on the Mobenzi platform. On March 20, 2014, using the feedback from the pre-test, slight modifications were made both to the questionnaire and the Mobenzi platform.

2.2.4 Training

The training of field personnel was undertaken between March 21 and March 25, 2014 in Nepalgunj. Three monitors, six supervisors, and 24 enumerators participated in the training. During the first day, the training concentrated on the hard copy of the questionnaire. On the second day, Android phones were distributed to the participants after lunch, and the trainees were asked to go through the questionnaire on the Mobenzi platform. In the evening, the IDA team further streamlined the questionnaire (i.e., the Nepali version on the Mobenzi platform), which entailed

²The KISH method is a random sampling technique in which random numbers are listed. Using this technique, one individual was selected randomly from the list of household members aged 16 years or older.

³Error margin is the range within which the result may vary and still be acceptable; confidence level indicates the probability that the result will fall within that range. The confidence level of 95% means that there are 95 chances in 100 that the sample result represents the true condition of the population within a specified error margin. For instance, if the estimate sample value is Rs. 4,000, confidence level is 95% and error margin is +/- 4%, then the researcher will have 95% confidence that the true value will be no less than Rs. 3,840 and no more than Rs.4,160.

working on redundant options, question orders, word choices, and missed skipping patterns, and rectifying the problems.

On day three, participants conducted mock interviews among themselves and thus further familiarized themselves with the questions and the administration of the questionnaire using the Android mobile phones. On day four, trainees were sent to the field to practice administering the questionnaire. On day five, trainees gave feedback from their field practice, and necessary changes were made both in the hard copy questionnaire and in the mobile platform. At the end of the training, detailed fieldwork planning was undertaken and teams were formed and assigned the districts and VDCs.

2.2.5 Field Work Management

When IDA hired the six supervisors and 24 enumerators from a prior existing roster, one important criterion was that these individuals should have worked with IDA in the baseline survey of Sajhedari Bikaas so that they would already be familiar with conducting interviews through Android mobile phones as well as with and its objectives. (While the baseline survey team was relatively large, with 80+ field personnel, the perception survey field team comprised of 30 individuals, which meant that it was possible to recruit all the individuals from the baseline survey field personnel pool).

Special consideration was given to the caste/ethnic and gender composition of the field team. Nine of the field personnel were Tharu (the Tarai-Janajati ethnic community that makes up a large portion of the population in that part of Nepal) and 19 out of the 30 field personnel were female.

For carrying out the fieldwork, these 30 individuals were grouped into six teams.

The survey field work commenced on March 26, 2014 and continued until April 10, 2014. A total of 1,201 interviews were conducted. The implementation of the survey proceeded relatively smoothly, without any major problems.

In the perception survey, the actual interviews were conducted by the enumerators. During the first day of the work, the enumerators were asked to work on the hard copy questionnaire so that the supervisors would have an opportunity to examine them and assess whether or not they had filled out the form properly. This step allowed the supervisors to provide feedback to the enumerators, and was implemented based on lessons learned during the baseline survey. Only after the supervisors examined the questionnaire was the interview entered into the Android mobile phones. From the second day onwards, the interviews were conducted using the phones.

During the perception survey, the supervisors helped with sampling at the ward/cluster level and in planning the day to day activities. The supervisors did not conduct the interviews, but as their designation suggests, were involved in supervising the enumerators.

The perception survey also had a provision for hiring monitors who would check the quality of the survey as they were being conducted, rectify problems if they saw any, and report directly to the survey field coordinator. The three monitors hired by IDA had also participated in the 5-day training. These individuals were familiar with in that they had been involved as supervisors in Knowledge Attitude Practice (KAP) and Data Abstraction Tools (DAT) related activities during the baseline survey. The three monitors were deployed in the field, with each monitor visiting two districts. The monitors' work helped improve the quality of the fieldwork.

The perception survey did not make it mandatory for the respondents to give their written consent because of the experience of the baseline survey (where as high as 25% of the respondents displayed apprehension when asked to sign their names or put their finger print on the consent form). Thus, instead of written consent, oral consent was obtained from the respondents, which involved informing the respondents about the objectives of the survey, and the purpose of data collection. Likewise, the participants were informed that it was their voluntary decision whether or not to participate and they were assured of confidentiality. The respondents were informed that the information and opinions they provided would be valuable for assessing the current status of community development programs and for charting out more effective strategies in the future.

2.2.6 Risks and Challenges Encountered in Field Implementation

Replacement of one ward: One ward had to be replaced because there were no residents in that ward. In Ward 3 of Tauteli Bichawa VDC, which had been sampled, there were no residents because they had been displaced a few years earlier by a flood. This Ward was replaced randomly by another ward of the same VDC – Ward 8 – and interviews were conducted with the residents there.

Security: The only ward where the enumerators had to face security threats was Ward 6 of Mohaniyal VDC in Kailali district. This area is known for its relatively high level of crimes such as robbery, burglary, and rape. The field team therefore had to first inform the security personnel before visiting the Ward.

Travel: The sampled VDCs in the perception survey (in contrast to the baseline survey) were relatively more accessible. The sampling design had, on average, sampled two wards in each VDC. Commuting from one ward to another, however, was difficult because the sampled wards often happened to be located far from one another. For instance, in VDCs such as Bijaura and Lagaamit of Surkhet district, it took enumerators 3 to 4 hours to commute between the various wards of each of these VDCs.

2.2.7 Selection of the Mobenzi Mobile Platform

In the perception survey, as in the baseline survey, face-to-face interviews were conducted and data was entered using Android mobile phones. The Mobenzi platform was used, which functioned both as data entry software (i.e. the questionnaire in the mobile) as well as a means to transfer data to the website instantaneously. Enumerators were asked to record their interviews in the mobile phone based on the verbal responses of respondents.

Mobenzi was used as the survey platform since it is a user-friendly platform and it provides complete support to setup the survey. While the Mobenzi team in South Africa imported the questionnaire into the digital mobile format, fine tuning of the questionnaire after the feedback from the pre-test was done by the IDA team. The IDA team also translated the questionnaire into Nepali using Unicode as the Nepali font and then exported this into the mobile platform.

Advantages of using the Mobenzi platform

Updating of questionnaires: It is possible to change and modify questions in the Mobenzi platform. During and after the training, there were some questions that needed to be added or deleted, or have their branches corrected, all of which was accomplished without difficulty.

Real time results: Another advantage of using this technology is that the interviewers can upload the interview to the server as soon as the interview is completed, along with an accurate recording

of GPS location. This allows for the monitoring of results in real time, as the survey proceeds. Using filter options in the domain and other options such as daily and cumulative numbers of surveys, the team at IDA responsible for monitoring the progress of the survey could assess the status and give directions to the supervisors of the field teams.

Mobility and its use: Yet another advantage of using mobile phones in the field is the flexibility this provides. Enumerators do not have to carry stacks of questionnaires, facilitating their movement. Moreover, enumerators do not have to worry about papers getting lost or damaged, or about how to send the filled-out questionnaires through the courier service. Respondents also seem to be excited about the interviews, since they are curious about how a mobile phone interview works. Also, conducting the interview through the mobile looks less conspicuous than writing things down on paper, and respondents seem to be less apprehensive. Since the skipping patterns are built-in, the enumerators do not have to ponder about them each time they administer an interview.

Challenges of using the Mobenzi platform

Problems in Mobenzi application: A few minor issues were faced by the enumerators during the fieldwork. Six mobile phones (053, 044, 047, 058, 066 and 041) had problems concerning the use of Mobenzi. Problems included blank display while entering data on the survey page, loss of ‘Conduct Survey’ option while updating the survey, and loss of the whole Mobenzi application. The IDA team resolved the problem after checking the box in the ‘Fieldworker’ section in the Mobenzi platform.

Network access: Network access in all locations was not perfect. There were some problems faced by enumerators in sending the completed survey and updating the application due to the unavailability of network. In some locations, enumerators had to wait for two or three days to find locations with network service to send data and update the application. There were three cases where pending data was lost; in these cases, enumerators had to repeat the interview with the concerned respondents.

Charging stations: The mobile phones had to be charged every day, which was a challenge because electricity is not always available in rural areas. In some cases, enumerators had to commute a fairly long distance, wait in a queue, and pay a small fee to charge their phones.

GPS coordinates: Some enumerators were unable to obtain GPS coverage in some locations. It is important to point out that this problem occurred in a few locations only. Clouds, fog or the terrain in the hills can block access to the satellite.

Limitations of the perception survey

This perception survey i.e., perception survey round 1, focuses on the perception of the people on local governance in a general way. It does not measure the progress of the indicators of the SB.

The initial intention had indeed been to measure the progress of the indicators, and draft I of the survey questionnaire that was submitted by IDA to Pact on January 10, 2014, did in fact address these. However, the questionnaire that was finally approved by USAID on February 28, 2014 did not have questions that measured the status of the indicators of SB.

Between January 10 and February 28, 2014 five versions of the survey questionnaire was prepared. Needless to say, IDA does not have the right to design the survey questionnaire in the way it sees

fit. In the exercise of finalizing the questionnaire the need to assess the progress of the indicators was overruled with the suggestion that perception survey round 1 should not repeat questions from the baseline. Without repeating certain questions from the baseline it would not have been possible to measure the progress of the indicators.

Pointing to the fact that the RFP called for undertaking two perception surveys per year, it was agreed that the first round of the perception survey focus on general perceptions, while the second round of the perception survey would concentrate on monitoring the status of the indicators. For this very reason the summary table of the status of indicators gives the values from the baseline survey but none from perception survey 1.

3. Findings and Analysis

3.1 Survey

3.1.1 Overview of demography and variables

This section presents a brief overview of the demographics of the 1,201 respondents and key variables. Districts (Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Surkhet, Kailali, and Kanchanpur), phases (Phase 1 vs. phase 2 VDCs), VDCs’ ranking (high, average, and low performing), age, gender, education, and caste/ethnicity were taken as the independent variables. Each important question has been disaggregated by these independent variables. (Due to space constraints, however, the disaggregated findings are not presented in this report – see annex 6 for the disaggregated findings.)

Of the 1,201 respondents interviewed in the six projects districts, 28 percent belonged to the 16 to 25 age group and roughly the same number were in the 26 to 35 age group. In terms of sex, equal numbers of male and female respondents were included in the sample. In terms of religion, a majority of the respondents were of the Hindu religion (94 percent). Figure 1 offers more details.

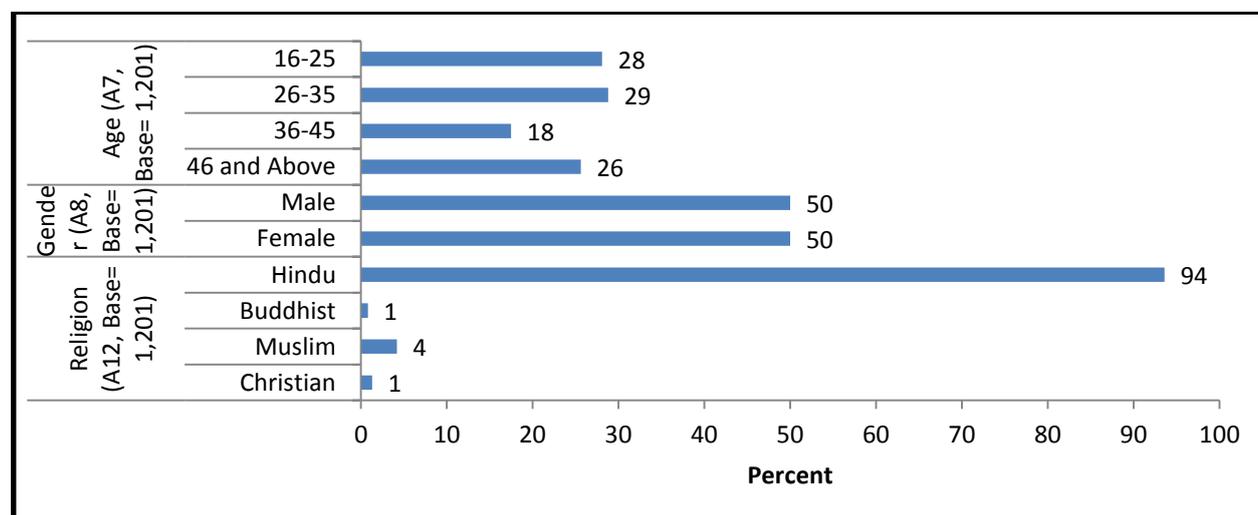


Figure 1 Distribution of sample by age, gender and religion [Base = 1201]⁴

In terms of education, 23 percent of the respondents were illiterate, while 22 percent were literate without attending school. Some 16 percent had completed primary level education, 13 percent had completed the lower secondary level, and 15 percent had completed the secondary level. Further details are shown in Table 1.

In terms of occupation, over half of respondents (57 percent) reported agriculture as their main occupation, followed by housewife/house-maker (18 percent), student (9 percent), laborer (6 percent), industry/business (4 percent), and service (4 percent). These results are summarized in Table 2.

⁴ Three questions had been asked: (1) What is your age in whole years (i.e. whole years completed)? (2) What is your sex? (3) What is your religion?

	Count	Percent
Illiterate	276	23.0
Literate	268	22.3
Primary	192	16.0
Lower Sec	161	13.4
Sec	180	15.0
SLC	25	2.1
Inter	63	5.2
Bachelor & above	36	3.0
Total	1201	100.0

	Count	Percent
Agriculture	684	57.0
Industry/Business	51	4.2
Service	47	3.9
Labor	70	5.8
Student	110	9.2
Housewife/house-maker	216	18.0
Retired	6	.5
Unemployed	6	.5
Other (specify)	11	.9
Total	1201	100.0

Table 2 Distribution of sample by education and occupation⁵

Out of the total sampled respondents, a majority (41 percent) belonged to the Tarai/Madhese Janajati category, followed by Hill Brahmin/Chhetri (31 percent) and Hill/Mountain Janajati (8 percent). The distribution of caste/ethnicity in the sample closely matches that in Project areas, which has been juxtaposed in Table 3.

Caste/Ethnicity	Population (%)	Sample (%)
Hill Brahmin/ Chhetri	35.0	30.7
Hill/ Mountain Janajati	11.8	8.4
Newars	0.6	.2
Hill Dalits	10.9	7.2
Tarai/ Madhesi Brahmins/ Rajputs	5.3	5.6
Tarai/ Madhesi Janajati/Adivasi	33.8	40.7
Tarai / Madhesi other castes	1.7	1.6
Tarai /Madhesi Dalit	1.3	1.8
Caste/Ethnicity Unknown	0.1	3.7
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 3 Distribution of sample by caste/ethnicity [Base = 1201]⁶

An overwhelming majority of the respondents said they have a citizenship card (88 percent), and 12 percent said they do not have one. Of the total respondents, 76 percent had registered their names in the voter list. This can be seen in Figure 2.

⁵ The questions asked were (1) What is your level of education? (2) What is your main occupation?

⁶ The question asked was: What is your caste/ethnicity?

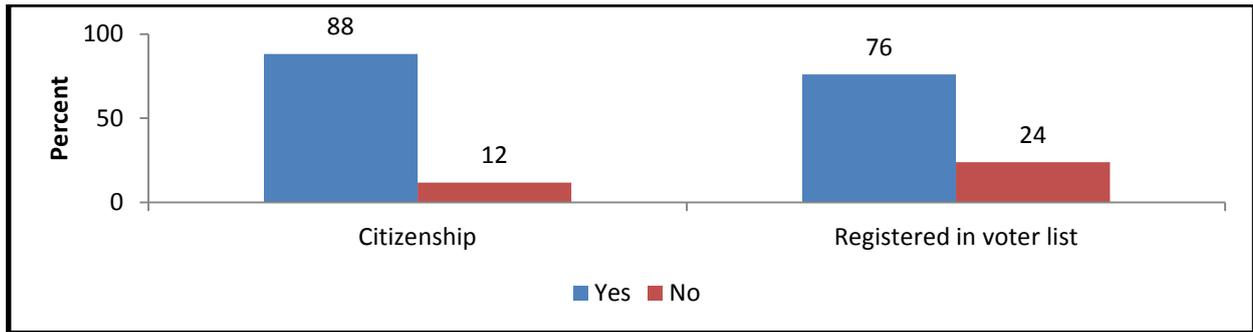


Figure 2 Distribution of sample by citizenship and voter registration status [Base = 1201]⁷

An overwhelming majority of the respondents said they are not the members of any group. Only a small number of people reported being a member of a group, with the exception of saving and credit groups; 29 percent of respondents said they are members of such groups. While four percent reported being members of the WCF, only two percent reported being members of the CAC. Details are shown in Figure 3.

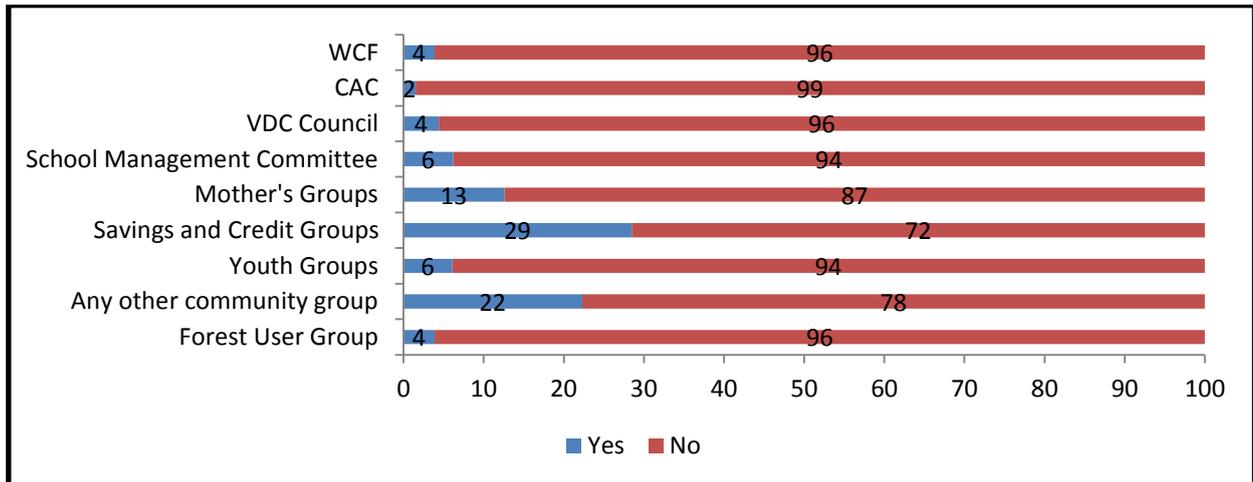


Figure 3 Distribution of sample by membership in community groups [Base = 1201]⁸

The following section discusses the responses to each question. The total number of respondents who responded to each question are shown (as 'base') within brackets. While all of the respondents responded to some questions, not all responded to other questions, especially if these were filter questions⁹.

⁷ The questions asked were: (1) Do you have a citizenship certificate? (2) Are you registered to vote?

⁸ The question asked was: Are you currently a member (over the last one year) of any of the following community groups?

⁹ A filter question is a question that is asked only to the relevant respondents, and not to all the respondents. For instance, the question "If you think the country is moving in the right direction, why do you think so?" is a filter question in that this question is asked only to those who think the country is heading in the right direction. To elaborate further "Generally, do you think the country is heading in the right direction, or is it on the wrong track?" was asked to all respondents and so its base is 1,201. Some 59.9 percent i.e., 719 respondents responded that it is headed in the right

3.1.2 Overall social, political and economic situation

Public opinions on the economic situation and direction of the country and locality

One of the objectives of the survey was to document the respondents' perceptions regarding the overall social, political, and economic situation. This section began by asking the respondents about their own economic situation and then about the economic situation of Nepal as a whole. Over half of the respondents said their own economic situation is neither good nor bad (59 percent), while 43 percent said the same for the national economic situation. The proportion of the respondents who felt that Nepal's economic situation is good was 27 percent and the proportion who said that their own economic situation is good was 12 percent. This indicates that people are more positive about Nepal's economic condition than about their own. Figure 4 offers more details.

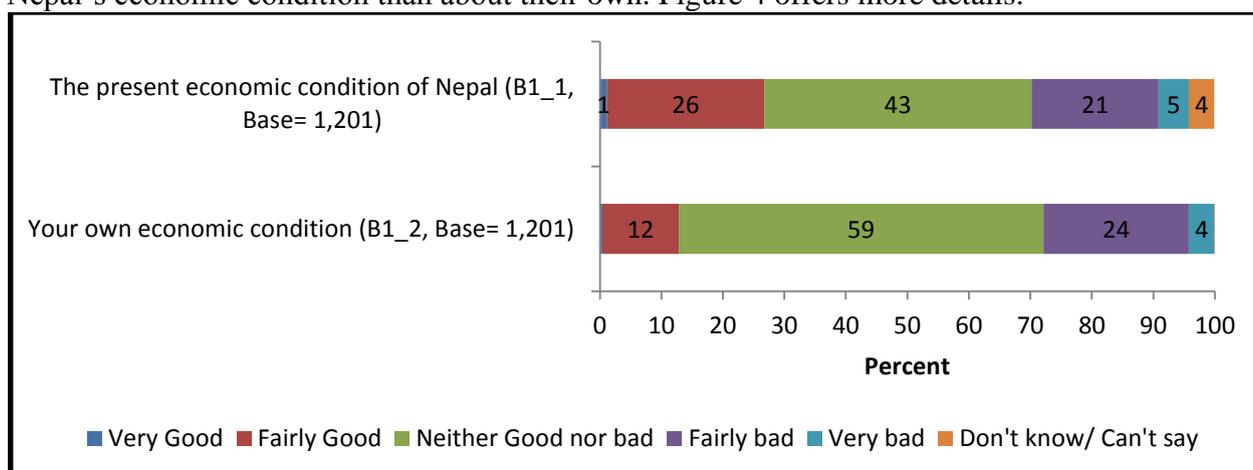


Figure 4 Respondents' perceptions of the economic condition of the country and their own economic condition [Base = 1201]¹⁰

Fifty percent of all respondents thought their current living condition is the same as that of other people living in their community, while 31 percent thought their living condition is better, and 18 percent thought it is worse. This is shown in Figure 5.

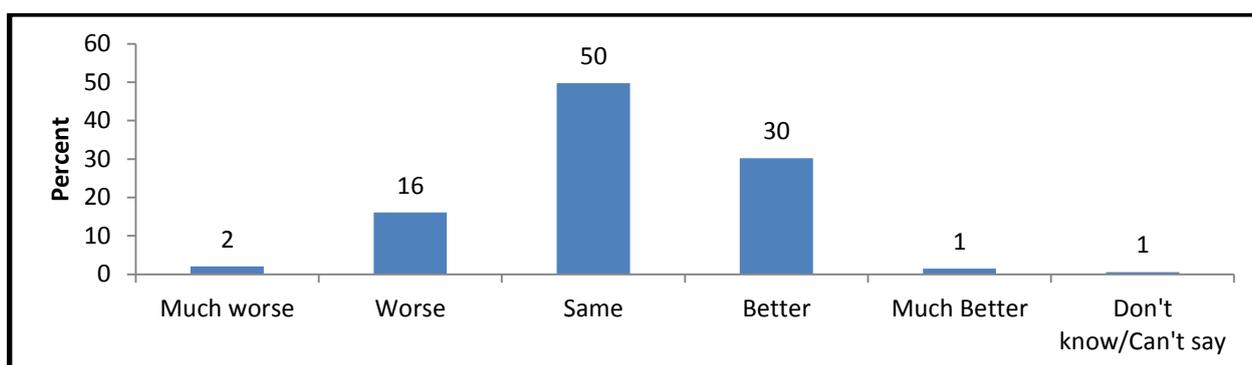


Figure 5 Respondents' ratings of their own current living condition compared to other people living in their community [Base= 1,201]¹¹

direction. The follow up question "If you think the country is moving in the right direction, why do you think so?" (which is a filtered question) is asked only to those 719 respondents. Thus the base for the filtered question is smaller.

¹⁰ The two statements given in the Figure 4 had been read aloud and respondents were asked to specify their choices.

The majority of the respondents were optimistic about the direction that the country is headed in. Almost twice as many people said the country is moving in the right direction (60 percent) as said the country is moving in the wrong direction (32 percent). Among many reasons why people felt the country is headed in the right direction, the most important were the completion of the CA election and development activities moving ahead. The major reasons why people thought the country is heading in the wrong direction were: no movement in constitution drafting, lack of consensus among political parties, and development activities coming to a halt. Figure 6 offers more details.

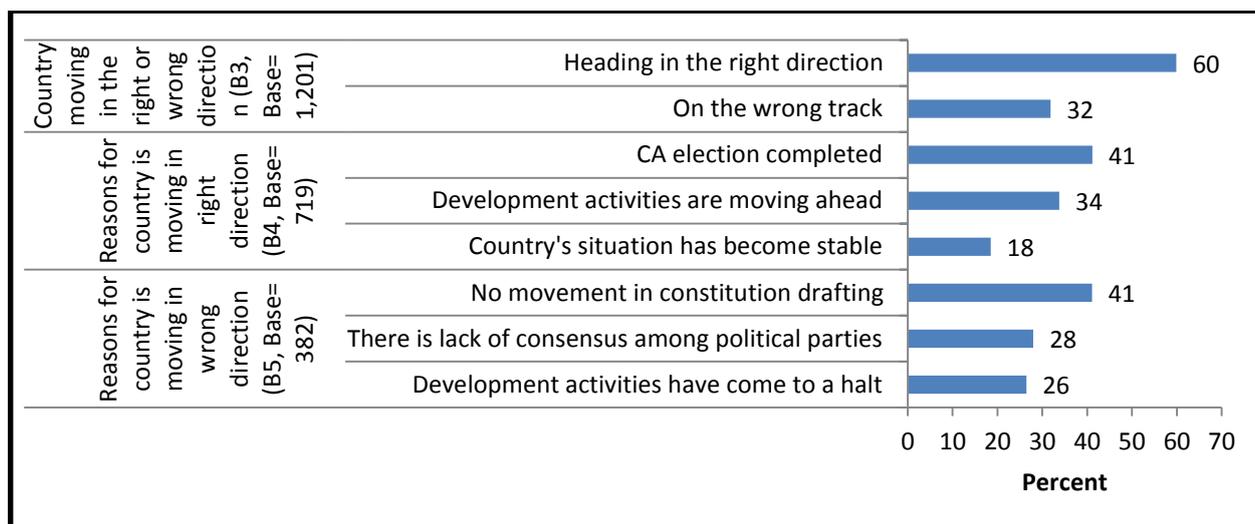


Figure 6 Respondents' opinions about the direction that the country is heading in and their rationale [Base = 1201]¹²

An even higher proportion reported that their village/city is moving in the right direction (77/60 percent). More people in phase-1 VDCs said their village/city is headed in the right direction than in phase-2 VDCs (81 percent vs. 74 percent). As high as 75 percent of all respondents had confidence that things will be better in the coming three or four years in their community as compared to the present. Please refer to Figure 7 for details.

¹¹ The question was: How would you rate your current living condition compared to other people living in your community?

¹² Three questions were asked: (1) Generally do you think the country is heading in the right direction, or is it on the wrong track? (2) If you think the country is moving in the right direction, why do you think so? (3) If you think the country is moving in the wrong direction, why do you think so?

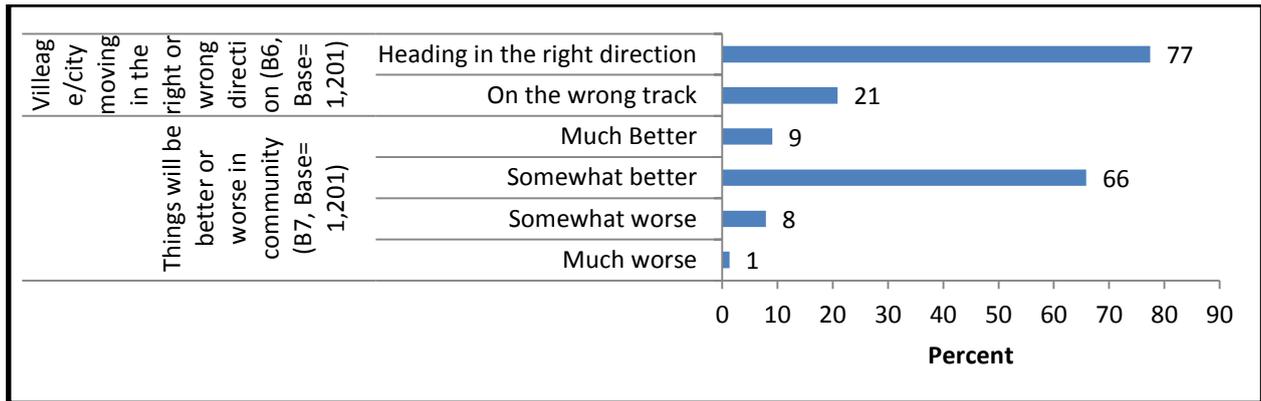


Figure 7 Respondents' opinions about the direction that their village/city is heading in [Base = 1201]¹³

Accessing the media

The perception survey endeavored to find out to what extent the public has access to the media, especially radio, T.V., and newspapers. A little less than one-quarter (23 percent) of respondents said they listen to radio every day, 17 percent said they watch TV every day, and only three percent said they read the newspaper every day. The proportion of the respondents who said they listen to radio a few times a week was 21 percent, while 14 percent said they watch TV a few times a week and eight percent said they read the newspaper a few times a week. However, a substantial proportion of people said they never listen to the radio (44 percent), watch television (about 58 percent), or read the newspaper (72 percent). Figure 8 offers more details.

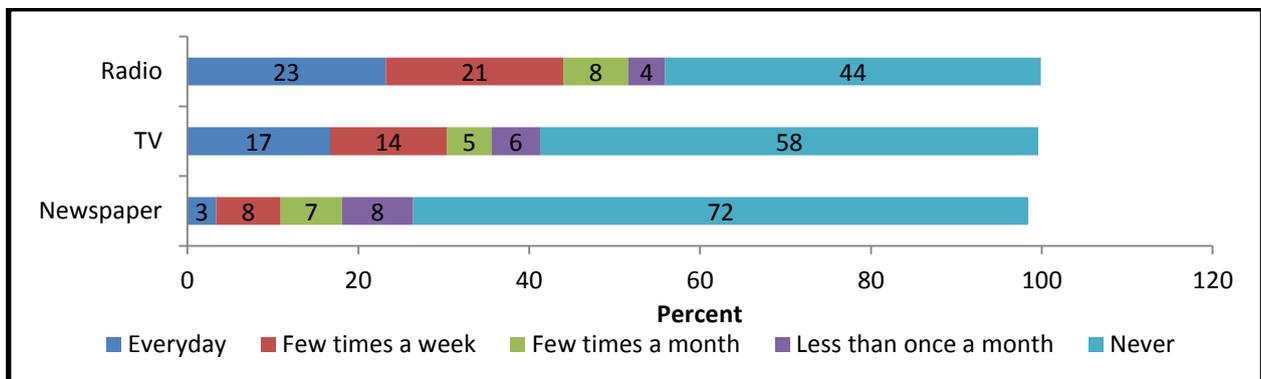


Figure 8 Frequency with which respondents listen to the radio/watch TV/read newspaper [Base = 1201]¹⁴

¹³ Two questions were asked: (1) Now, thinking just about your village/city, do you think the situation is moving in the right direction, or is on the wrong track? (3) Looking to the future, do you think that things will be better or worse in your community three/four years from now?

¹⁴ The question was: How often do you listen to the radio/watch TV/read newspapers. The options were read aloud. The respondents were first asked about the radio and then the TV and finally newspapers.

Public interactions with and trust towards social and government members and entities

Over two thirds of all respondents were of the opinion that sometimes issues concerning local governance seem so complicated that a person like them cannot really understand what is going on at the local level. Around 50 percent of all respondents said they occasionally discuss local government issues when they get together with friends or family, and eight percent said they do so frequently. Please refer to Figure 9 for further details.

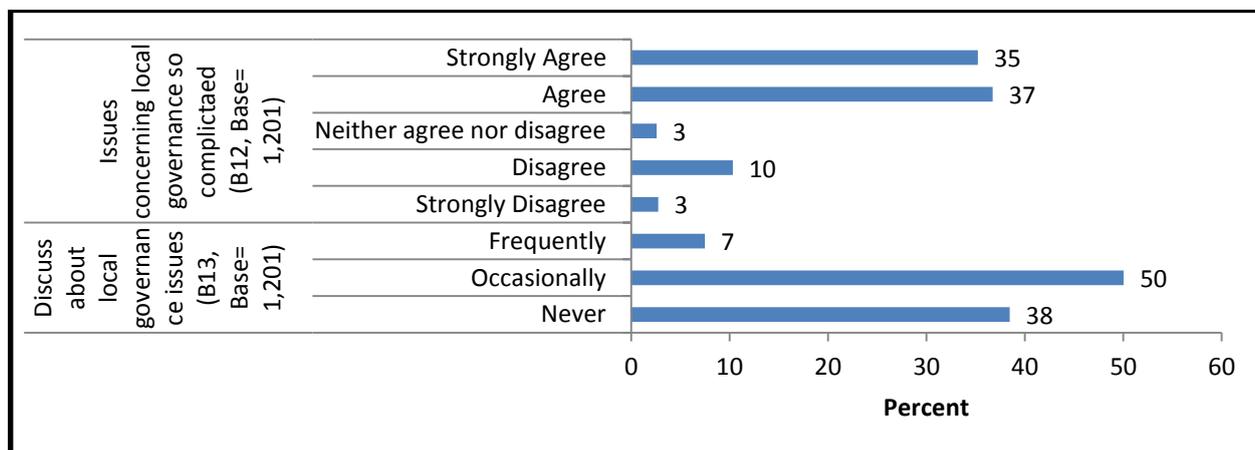


Figure 9 Respondents’ level of agreement with the statement “issues concerning local governance are complicated” and frequency with which they discuss local governance issues with friends or family [Base = 1201]¹⁵

To better understand people’s access to local government entities, the survey asked questions regarding how often respondents had contacted various social and government entities in the past year. In general, a low proportion of respondents reported contacting social and government persons in the past one year. The entities whom the most respondents reported contacting ‘often’ or ‘a few times’ were the VDC secretary (19 percent), other VDC government officers (12 percent), local political party representatives (12 percent), community mediation centers (9 percent), police (8 percent) and WCF members (7 percent). CAC members, district government officers, media representatives, NGOs/INGOs, and religious leaders were contacted less often. The details are presented in Table 4.

	Never	Only once	A few times	Often	DK/CS
WCF members	75.4	5.7	4.8	2.4	11.6
CAC members	81.3	2.7	1.7	1.1	13.2
Local political party representative	74.9	9.4	8.4	3.2	4.2
Police	82.2	7.6	6.2	1.9	2.1
VDC Secretary	60.2	18.3	15.4	3.7	2.4
District Government officers	83.9	6.0	4.7	0.7	4.6
Other VDC government officers	73.3	9.8	10.2	1.9	4.7

¹⁵ The questions asked were: (1) Do you agree or disagree with the following statement “Sometimes issues concerning local governance seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on?” (2) When you get together with your friends or family, would you say you discuss local government issues?

Community mediation centers	70.8	7.9	7.0	1.5	12.8
Media representatives	83.1	3.7	2.9	0.6	9.7
NGOs/INGOs	83.2	3.6	3.6	0.8	8.7
Religious leaders	76.1	4.5	3.4	1.4	14.6

Table 4 Frequency with which respondents contacted local officials and other entities about important problems that affect them or to give them their views in the past year [Base = 1201]¹⁶

Respondents were also asked to rate their level of trust towards various institutions/organizations on a scale from 1 to 4, where 1 represents no trust at all and 4 represents a lot of trust. The answers showed that the highest level of public trust is enjoyed by the media (2.8 points), followed by DDC/VDC (2.7 points), VDC secretary (2.7 points) and community mediation centers (2.6 points). Trust of local political party representatives is relatively low (1.9 points), as is trust of religious leaders (2 points). Please refer to Table 5 for details.

Table 5 Respondents' level of trust of various institutions/ organizations on a scale of 1 to 4 [Base = 1201]¹⁷

Institution/organizations	Base	Mean
The recently formed Constituent Assembly (CA II)	1,111	2.3
The recently formed national government	1,093	2.3
District government agencies(VDC/DDC)	1,150	2.7
Media	1,052	2.8
Local political party representative	1,149	1.9
Police	1,169	2.5
VDC Secretary	1,160	2.7
District Government officers	1,009	2.4
Other VDC government officers	1,063	2.4
Community mediation centers	913	2.6
Media representatives	975	2.5
NGOs/INGOs	895	2.4
Religious leaders	906	2.0

3.1.3 Identification of problems

One of the objectives of the survey was to delve into the problems identified by the people, and this was done at various levels. The first question asked respondents about the factors that cause them anxiety at the personal level. Some 46 percent said that the economic situation causes them anxiety, followed by 45 percent who attributed anxiety to "unemployment" and "lack of job opportunities" (which were 24 percent and 20 percent respectively).

¹⁶ The question was: During the past one year, how often have you contacted any of the following persons about some important problems that affect you or to give them your views?

¹⁷ The scale for this question was between 1 and 4, where 1 meant no trust at all and 4 meant complete trust.

Over half (51 percent) of all respondents felt that government should be the responsible entity to solve the problems. Some 12 percent said community members should be responsible, followed by national political leaders (10 percent) and VDC (9 percent). Figure 10 offers more details.

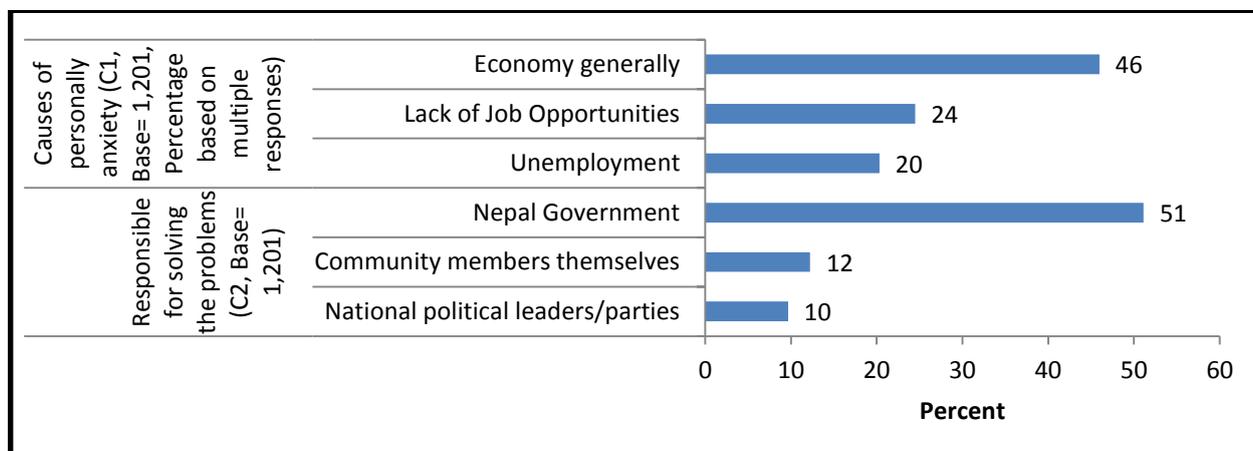


Figure 10 Problems causing respondents anxiety and entities they said were responsible for solving them [Base = 1201]¹⁸

Most of the people were not apprehensive about the possibility of political violence surging in the near future, with 47 percent saying that there is no possibility of political violence surging in the near future. However, about 29 percent thought there is a possibility of political violence surging in the near future. This 29 percent was asked a follow-up question, as a response to which 78 percent said they are either very worried or somewhat worried about it. Figure 12 offers more details.

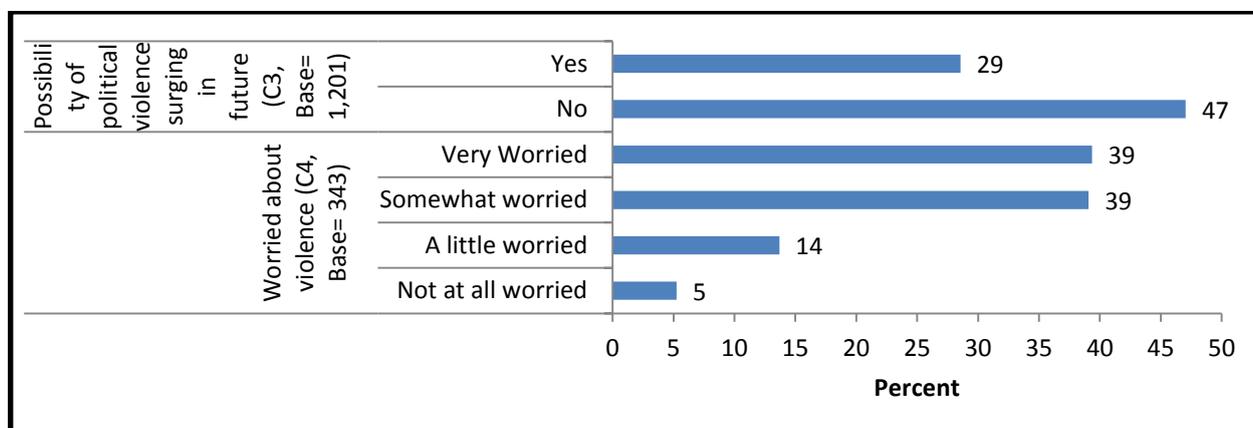


Figure 11 Respondents' opinions regarding the possibility of political violence surging in the near future, and degree of related anxiety [Base = 1201]¹⁹

¹⁸ Two questions were asked: (1) What causes you anxiety personally? (2) Who do you feel is most responsible for solving the problems you just named?

¹⁹ Two questions were asked: (1) Do you think there is the possibility of political violence surging in the near future? (2) How worried are you that there will be new, wide-spread violence in the next 12 months?

3.1.4 The individual's role as a citizen

Another objective was to assess the individual's role as a citizen. Respondents were asked questions with the aim to measure their involvement and participation in local and national level activities. The first question asked was if the respondents attended meetings of a ward citizen forum (WCF). In response, 74.6 percent said no and 15.2 percent said yes. Of the 15.2 percent of the respondents who said yes, 64.5 percent said they attended meetings only once or twice, while 16.9 percent and 18.6 percent reported that they attended meetings several times and often, respectively. Of the respondents who said they don't attend meetings, an overwhelming 92.6 percent replied that they would attend meetings if they got a chance and only 7.4 percent said that they would never attend those meetings.

Regarding citizen awareness center (CAC) participation, 82.7 percent of respondents replied that they had never attended its meetings and only 5.4 percent said that they had attended its meetings. Of the few respondents who had attended CAC meetings, 64.6 percent said they had only attended these meetings once or twice, while 20 percent and 15.4 percent replied they had attended meetings several times and often, respectively. Of the respondents who said they hadn't attended these meetings, 93.4 percent replied that they would if they got a chance and only 6.6 percent of respondents said they would never attend these meetings. This is summarized in the Table 6.

Table 6 Frequency with which respondents carried out various actions as citizens in the past year [Base 1201]²⁰

	Have you...?		If yes, how often?			If no, would you attend if had chance?	
	Yes	No	Often	Several times	Once or twice	Yes	No
Attended meetings of a community improvement committee called WCF.	15.2	74.6	64.5	16.9	18.6	92.6	7.4
Attended meetings of a community awareness center called CAC.	5.4	82.7	Of 64.6	20.0	15.4	93.4	6.6
Attended meetings of a political party or political organization	24.3	72.8	62.3	23.3	14.4	83.1	16.9
Refused to pay a tax or fee to government	2.3	94.8	46.4	10.7	42.9	15.8	84.2
Attended a demonstration or protest march (including a <i>bandh</i>)	12.3	86.8	78.4	14.9	6.8	49.5	50.5
Tried to help to solve a problem in your community or in your neighborhood	65.8	33.5	48.7	27.5	23.8	93.0	7.0
Visited the district headquarter to meet with the VDC secretary	12.7	85.1	69.9	19.0	11.1	82.7	17.3
Attended public hearing of VDC projects	13.2	81.8	75.3	9.5	15.2	92.7	7.3
Attended social audit of VDC projects	4.0	84.4	64.6	20.8	14.6	87.2	12.8
Attended public audits of VDC projects	3.3	83.9	52.5	25.0	22.5	86.8	13.2

²⁰ The following statement was read out: Here is a list of actions that people sometime do as a citizen. For each of these, please tell me whether you, personally have done any of these during the past one year.

Attended meetings on VDC planning process	9.2	82.8	72.7	11.8	15.5	92.8	7.2
Attended M&E meetings on VDC projects	3.7	85.1	54.5	18.2	27.3	88.5	11.5

Overall, the level of participation among people in local and national level activities seems to be low, with the majority of respondents not participating in any of the programs above. However, the survey has shown that given a chance and the appropriate environment, people are willing to participate in these development activities. Moreover, a majority of people are prepared to pay taxes and are willing to solve problems that arise in their community.

3.1.5 Service Delivery

Attitude of people towards local government:

One of the key objectives of the perception survey is to document and measure people’s attitudes towards and interactions with local government, including local service delivery agencies. The section of the survey dealing with this subject began with people’s attitudes towards VDCs. Most respondents thought that the VDC is effective in encouraging development in their community, with over two thirds(67 percent) of all respondents saying the VDC is either effective or somewhat effective in encouraging development. This proportion is relatively less for the DDC (52 percent). Less than half (45 percent) of all respondents said that government officials in their district work together well or somewhat well to plan and implement development projects. This is summarized in Figure 12.

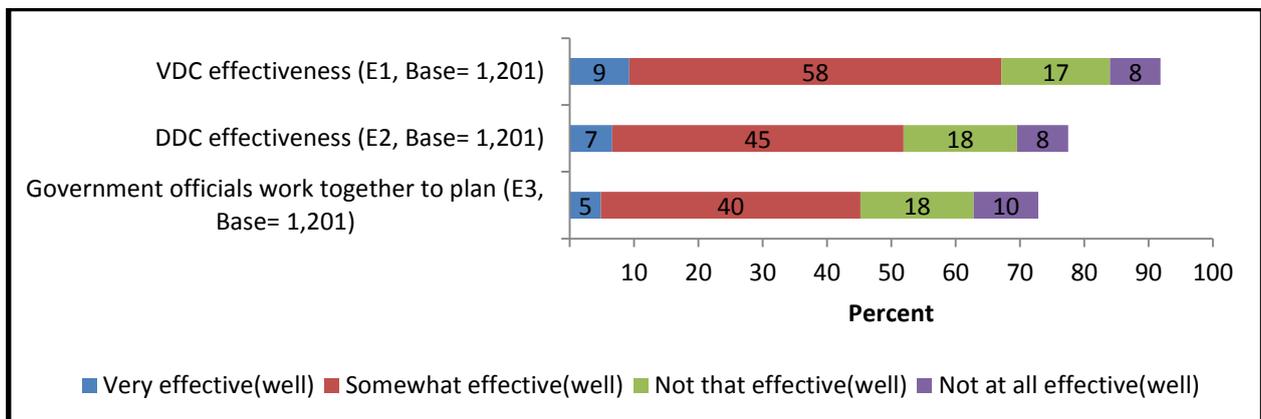


Figure 12 Respondents’ perceptions of the effectiveness of VDCs and DDCs in encouraging development and the ability of government officials in working together to plan and implement development projects[Base = 1201]²¹

The perception survey asked various questions pertaining to service delivery to explore the public’s attitude, experience, and practices of existing service delivery at the local level. Over half of all respondents said that local government is doing very well or fairly well in addressing educational needs (71 percent), in improving basic health service (69 percent), in maintaining roads and bridges

²¹ Three questions had been asked: (1) Thinking about your Village Development Committee (VDC), how effective would you say it is in encouraging development in your community? (2) Now, thinking about your District Development Committee, how effective would you say it is in encouraging development in the District as a whole? (3) Changing the topic now, to what extent do you feel that government officials in your district are able to work together to plan and implement development projects?

(55 percent), and in resolving violent conflict (52 percent). A significantly lower number of respondents said that local government is doing very well or fairly well in creating job opportunities (15 percent), maintaining local market prices (17 percent), and providing a reliable supply of electricity (24 percent). The details are shown in Table 7.

Table 7 Degree to which respondents felt local government is handling various matters well or badly [Base = 1,201]²²

	Very badly	Fairly badly	Fairly well	Very well	DK/CS
Improving basic health services	4.4	19.8	64.9	4.2	6.6
Addressing educational needs	3.5	17.0	68.2	3.2	8.1
Allocating budget for community development	6.0	22.5	44.1	1.6	25.7
Creating job opportunities	22.9	48.5	14.8	.2	13.5
Providing water and sanitation services	13.7	40.3	35.8	3.3	6.9
Fighting corruption	10.9	40.1	23.9	1.7	23.2
Maintaining roads and bridges	10.8	30.7	51.7	3.2	3.6
Reducing crime	7.6	30.5	46.0	2.8	12.9
Providing reliable supply of electricity	28.6	40.8	22.8	1.0	6.7
Resolving violent conflict between communities/groups	4.4	26.3	49.5	2.2	17.6
Involving inclusive community members in the planning process	5.9	28.2	41.1	4.2	20.6
Maintaining local market prices	14.2	53.5	15.3	1.5	15.3

Over two thirds (67 percent) of the people reported that they had availed themselves of services from a health service center, followed by public school (56 percent), and VDC office (54 percent) during the past one year. Relatively few respondents said they had received services from an agriculture service center (23 percent) or livestock service center (19 percent) during the past one year. This is summarized in Table 8. A reason that a relatively high proportion of people had not availed themselves of the services of agriculture and livestock service centers could be that these centers are generally located in district headquarters and not in the VDCs. Another reason could be that these centers are not providing services as per the demand of the people.

Table 8 Proportion of respondents receiving services from various government service providers in the past one year [Base = 1201]²³

Service providers	Received services	Did not receive services
Agriculture Service Center	23.4	76.6
Livestock Service Center	19.1	80.9
Health Post (or services)	67.4	32.6

²² The questions asked were: How well or badly would you say the local government is handling the following matters?

²³ The questions asked were: Have you availed of the services of the following entities during the past one year?

Public School	56.2	43.8
VDC office	53.8	46.2

Irrespective of whether or not they had received services from the VDC or DDC in the past one year, all the respondents were asked to explore their own satisfaction level regarding the services that they had received from the VDC or DDC. The findings are summarized in Figure 13.

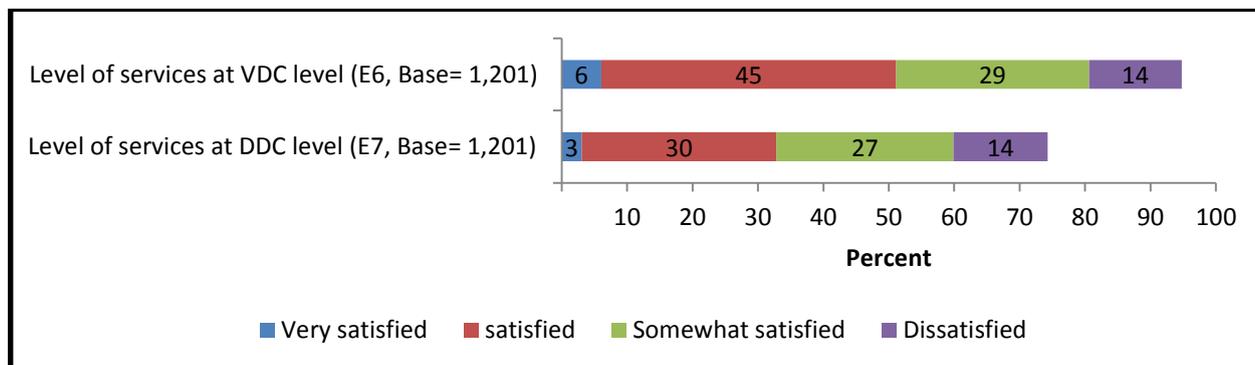


Figure 13 Level of satisfaction of respondents regarding services provided by the VDC and DDC [Base 1201]²⁴

Experiences of service delivery at the local level

The perception survey also generated data on the experiences of respondents (either their own or their family members) regarding local services delivery. Obtaining an identity document such as a birth certificate, citizenship recommendation, license, passport, or record of land sale from local government appeared to be easy, with 60 percent of respondents saying it is very easy or easy to obtain such documents. Around 75 percent of respondents said that getting medical treatment at the health posts/hospital is easy or very easy, while 77 percent reported that getting school services/education for children is either very easy or easy. Fewer respondents said that getting agriculture extension service (36 percent) and getting social security services (such as adult pension, widow’s pension, single women’s pension, and disabled person’s pension) are either very easy or easy, as compared to other services. The details are depicted in Table 9.

Table 9 Degree of difficulty experienced by respondents in obtaining various government services [Base = 1201]²⁵

	Very difficult	Difficult	Very easy	Easy	Never tried	DK/CS
An identity document (such as birth certificate, citizenship recommendation, license, passport, land sale record)	6.5	22.2	11.4	49.0	6.7	4.2
Social security services (adult	3.2	11.7	7.4	30.6	37.3	9.8

²⁴ Two questions were asked: (1) Overall, how satisfied were you with the level of services given to you at VDC level? (2) Overall, how satisfied were you with the level of services given to you at DDC level?

²⁵ The question asked was: Based on your experience, how easy or difficult is it for you or your family members, to obtain the following services from the local government?

pension, widow's pension, single women's pension, disabled pension)						
Help from the police	1.8	12.9	8.9	39.6	30.9	5.9
Medical treatment at the health posts/hospitals	3.0	15.4	9.7	65.1	5.0	1.8
Agriculture extension services	4.8	21.3	3.7	32.6	26.5	11.1
School services/education for children	1.3	8.2	13.9	62.8	9.7	4.2

Experiences of corruption at the local level

An overwhelming majority of respondents said that they have not been forced to pay a bribe or give a gift or do a favor for government officials in order to get the services provided by local government. Summarized in table 10 below, while “not experienced” means they had not had to avail of the services, “never” means they availed of the services but did not experience corruption.

	Not experienced	Never	Once or twice	A few times	Often	DK/CS
Get a document or a permit	44.1	43.2	4.2	1.0	0.4	7.1
Get social welfare	50.6	40.4	0.8	0.3	0.1	7.7
Get water or sanitation services	47.9	46.0	0.6	0.1	0.0	5.5
Get treatment at a local health clinic or hospital	30.6	64.6	1.0	0.2	0.2	3.2
Avoid a problem with the police, like passing a checkpoint	53.2	37.3	2.8	0.7	0.5	5.5
Get a place in a school for a child	34.0	60.5	0.6	0.2	0.2	4.5

Table 10 Frequency with which respondents were forced to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor for government officials to obtain various services in the past year [Base = 1201]²⁶

Assessment of local government

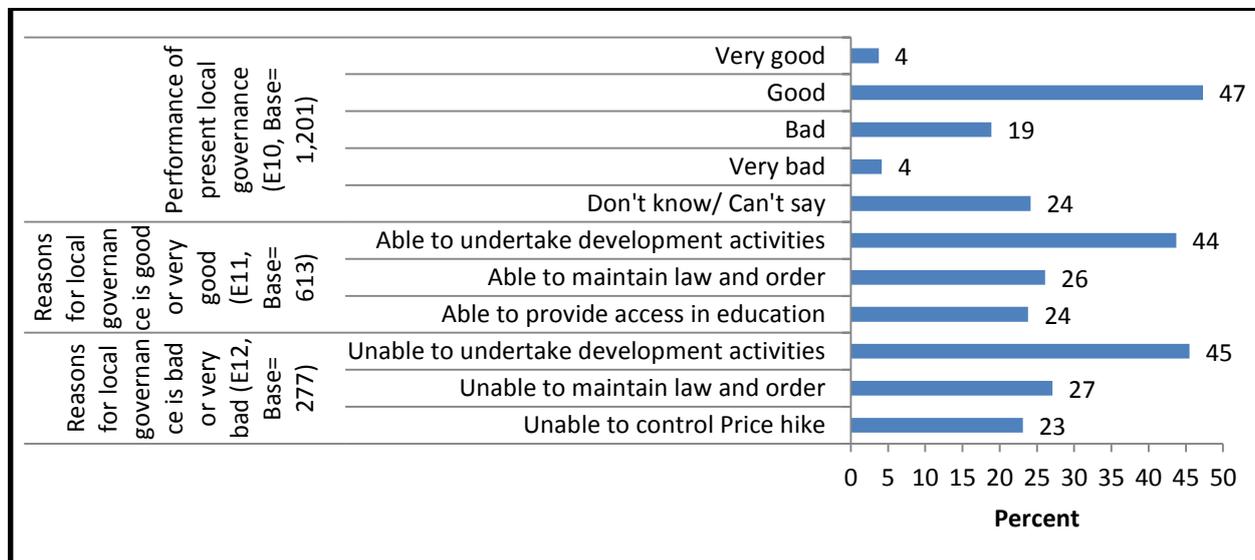
When asked to assess the performance of the present local government, most assessed it to be good or very good (51 percent) while a substantive number assessed it to be bad or very bad (23 percent). Of the 51 percent of respondents who assessed performance of the present local government as either very good or good, the main reasons why they thought so, in order of precedence, were (1) its ability to undertake development activities (2) its ability to maintain law and order (3) its ability to provide access to education (4) its ability to provide health facilities (5) its ability to control crime/kidnapping/extortion/theft.

Of the 23 percent of respondents who assessed the performance of the present local government as either very bad or bad, the main reasons why they thought so, in order of precedence, were (1) its inability to undertake development activities (2) its inability to maintain law and order (3) its

²⁶ The question asked was: In the past year, how often, if ever, were you forced to pay a bribe, give a gift, or do a favor for government officials in order to do the following? The activities mentioned in Table 10 were then specified.

inability to control corruption and (4) its inability to control price hikes. Figure 14 offers more details.

Figure 14 Respondents' ratings of the performance of present local governance and their rationale [Base = 1201]²⁷



Impact of various entities on development activities

With regard to development activities at the local level, the survey sought to identify the organizations and other entities that have had an influential impact (either positive or negative). Around three quarters (76 percent) of respondents thought that the VDCs have had an influential impact (very much or somewhat), followed by police (71 percent), user groups (61 percent), CBOs/CSOs (58 percent), the media (58 percent), the CMC (54 percent), and the DDC (53 percent). The detailed findings are illustrated in Table 11.

Table 11 Respondents' ratings of the degree of influence/ impact of various organizations and entities on local level development activities [Base = 1201]²⁸

Entities	Very influential	Somewhat influential	Not much influential	Not at all influential	DK/CS
Local political parties	2.6	38.2	15.2	32.9	11.2
Religious leaders	2.4	24.5	9.9	34.2	28.9
NGOs	2.9	42.9	8.2	22.8	23.1
INGOs	2.8	39.3	9.2	21.9	26.7
CBOs/CSOs	6.1	52.3	10.0	13.9	17.7

²⁷ Three questions were asked: (1) Generally speaking, how do you assess the performance of the present local government? (2) If you think, the performance of the present local government is very good or good, could you mention three reasons why you think so? (3) If you think the performance of the present local government is bad or very bad, could you mention two reasons why you think so?

²⁸ The question was: I'm going to read a list of people and organizations that may impact development in your community. Please indicate to what extent they have a positive or negative influence in your community.

WCFs	3.1	33.8	8.6	16.5	38.0
CACs	1.7	26.6	10.6	17.5	43.5
DDC	5.2	47.5	9.4	16.1	21.7
Media	7.6	49.9	10.0	11.1	21.4
Police	6.6	64.4	9.9	11.7	7.2
Private business sector	3.8	36.3	14.0	25.6	20.2
Youth groups	2.8	37.7	9.8	27.1	22.6
Community Mediator Centers	4.1	49.8	7.5	11.2	27.3
Central Government	3.5	43.5	10.4	21.1	21.4
VDC	10.4	65.6	8.1	10.2	5.7
User Groups	7.1	53.7	8.6	10.7	20.0

It is noteworthy here that the question was about organizations whose impacts were influential, rather than positive or negative.

3.1.6 *Participation and implementation of CDPs*

A major objective of the Project is to encourage local citizens to actively participate in the decisions surrounding community development projects and local government activities.

Views on CDPs:

The perception survey explored the public’s preferences regarding types of CDPs. Over half of respondents (55 percent) said that CDPs related to infrastructure are required for their community, followed by CDPs related to agriculture (43 percent), income generation (38 percent), education (36 percent), health (29 percent), and awareness (22 percent). The survey shows that the most prioritized CDP is that of infrastructure.

The majority of respondents said they are fairly satisfied with the way community projects are selected in their VDCs, with three percent saying they are very satisfied and 51 percent saying they are fairly satisfied. Around 33 percent said that they are not satisfied with the way the CDPs are selected. An overwhelming majority of respondents (84 percent) reported that they did not participate in any community events to select community development projects in their area. It comes as a surprise that people report satisfaction even without participating in the decision making process. Figure 15 offers more details.

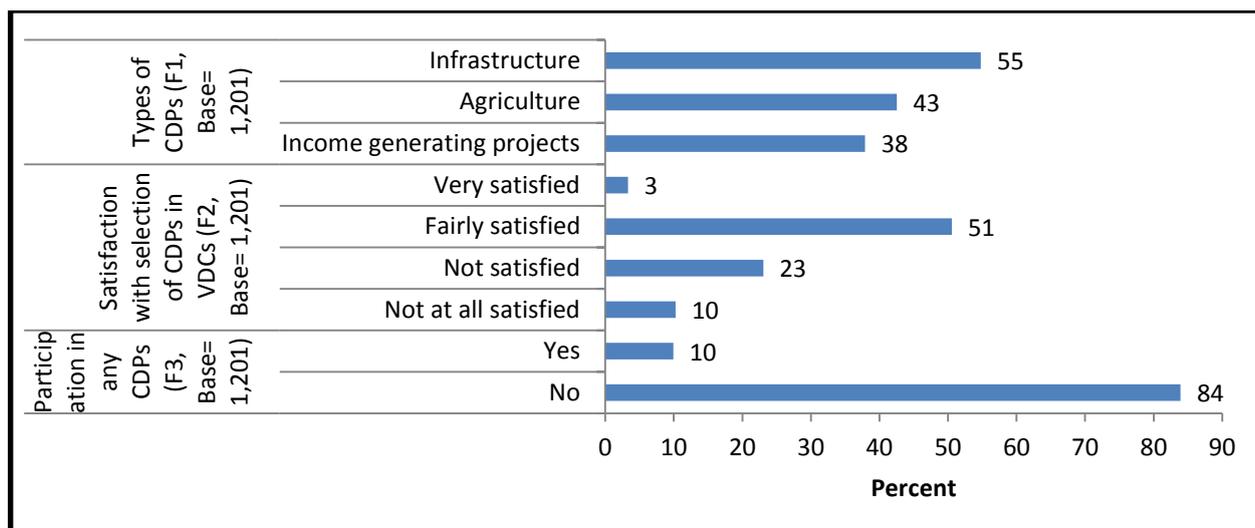


Figure 15 Respondents' preferences for types of CDPs to be implemented in their communities, level of satisfaction with CDP selection, and participation in CDP selection processes [Base = 1201]²⁹

The respondents were asked to rate the influence that they feel they have to direct development projects on a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 means no influence at all and 10 means great influence. The mean rating for this question was 5.2 points.

Participation in the selection process of CDPs:

The perception survey examined the information people receive and their involvement in the selection process of the community development projects. Table 12 summarizes this information. The findings reveal that although people are interested in these affairs (77 percent), they feel that they are generally not informed/invited (56 percent). Many feel that they do not know how the CDPs are selected (61 percent) and that they come to know about it only once approved (70 percent). Likewise as high as 64 percent think that there are only a few people in the VDCs who determine the CDPs.

Table 12 Respondents' level of agreement with various statements regarding the selection of the CDPs [Base = 1201]³⁰

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	DK/CS
I am generally informed/invited in the meetings that select CDPs	13.7	25.1	31.5	24.3	5.3
I am generally not interested in these affairs	4.0	15.8	48.1	28.9	3.2

²⁹ Three questions were asked: (1) In your opinion, which types of CDPs will help improve your community? (2) Overall, how satisfied are you with the way community development projects are selected in the VDCs? (3) In the past year, have you participated in any community events that selected community development projects?

³⁰ Enumerator's prompt: Now I am going to read out a number of statements regarding the selection of the CDPs. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree on these statements.

Although we attend these meetings, we don't know how the CDPs are selected	24.0	37.1	20.0	9.9	8.9
We know about the CDPs only once approved.	27.7	42.5	14.7	4.6	10.3
There was no meeting, that I know of, for the selection of the CDPs	11.0	21.5	29.7	10.4	27.3
There are only a few people in the VDCs who determine the CDPs	32.4	31.7	12.5	5.4	17.8

When asked how effective CDPs are in addressing the needs of their community, irrespective of whether or not they were informed about or participated in the CDP meetings, 32 percent of respondents said they are very effective and another 32 percent said they are effective. What this implies is that even though people are not able to influence the decision-making processes related to the identification of CDPs, the majority continue to believe that CDPs are effective in addressing the needs of the community.

Participation in the implementation of CDPs:

One of the objectives of Sajhedari Bikaas is to increase the level of participation in the implementation process of the CDPs at the local level. In this regard, the perception survey attempted to capture data on people's participation in the implementation of CDPs. The study shows that the level of participation in the implementation process is low. The only response that registered a fairly high "strongly agree" and "agree" option is "In the past year, I attended one of the public hearings of CDPs". The details are summarized in Table 13.

Statements	Strongly agree	agree	disagree	Strongly disagree	DK/CS
In the past year, I was a member of a User Group that implemented at least one CDP.	4.4	7.0	44.3	39.0	5.3
In the past year, I was a member of a Monitoring committee that monitored the implementation of the CDP.	1.9	2.7	45.0	43.1	7.2
In the past year, I attended one of the public hearings on the CDPs	24.0	37.1	20.0	9.9	8.9
In the past year, I attended one of the social audit on the CDPs	1.7	3.7	43.7	41.0	9.6
In the past year, I attended one of the public audit of the CDPs	1.2	2.9	43.2	42.1	10.4

Table 13 Respondents' level of agreement with various statements regarding the implementation of CDPs [Base = 1201]³¹

The survey asked the following question: "Do you know of CDPs that were implemented in the past one year in your community?" In response, only 14 percent said 'yes,' whereas a large majority

³¹ The question was: Now I am going to read out a number of statements regarding the implementation of the CDPs. Please indicate whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree on these statements.

(74%) said ‘no.’ Those who said ‘Yes’ were asked to rate the effectiveness of the CDPs on a scale of 1 to 10. The responses are shown in Table 14.

	Count	Mean
Transparency	171	6.2
Quality	171	6.2
Timeliness	171	6.2
Participation	171	7.3
Maintenance	171	6.2

Table 14 Respondents’ ratings of CDPs according to different characteristics, on a scale from 1-10 [Base = 1201]³²

One area that can be improved is the number of CDP events that people are invited to. Table 12 offers some ideas regarding this.

3.1.7 Federalism

One of the objectives of the perception survey is to document the trends and attitudes towards federalism in the target districts by conducting the baseline, mid-line and end-line surveys. In the perceptions survey, a series of questions pertaining to federalism was asked as well. With regard to federalism, 45 percent of respondents reported not having heard about it and only 36 percent reported having heard about it. The proportion of respondents in this survey who had heard about federalism was significantly lower than in other national opinion polls conducted by IDA in the past. (The proportion of those who had heard about federalism was 60 percent and 64 percent in national polls conducted by IDA in September 2013 and March 2014, respectively.)

Similar responses were recorded about state restructuring. Approximately 45 percent of respondents said they had not heard about state restructuring, while some 32 percent said they had. When asked about their level of support or opposition to the restructuring of Nepal's regions or districts into states/provinces, the majority of people (60 percent) said ‘don't know/cannot say’. Figure 16 offers more details.

³² Enumerator’s prompt: How would you rate the effectiveness of the CDPs on a scale of 1-10?

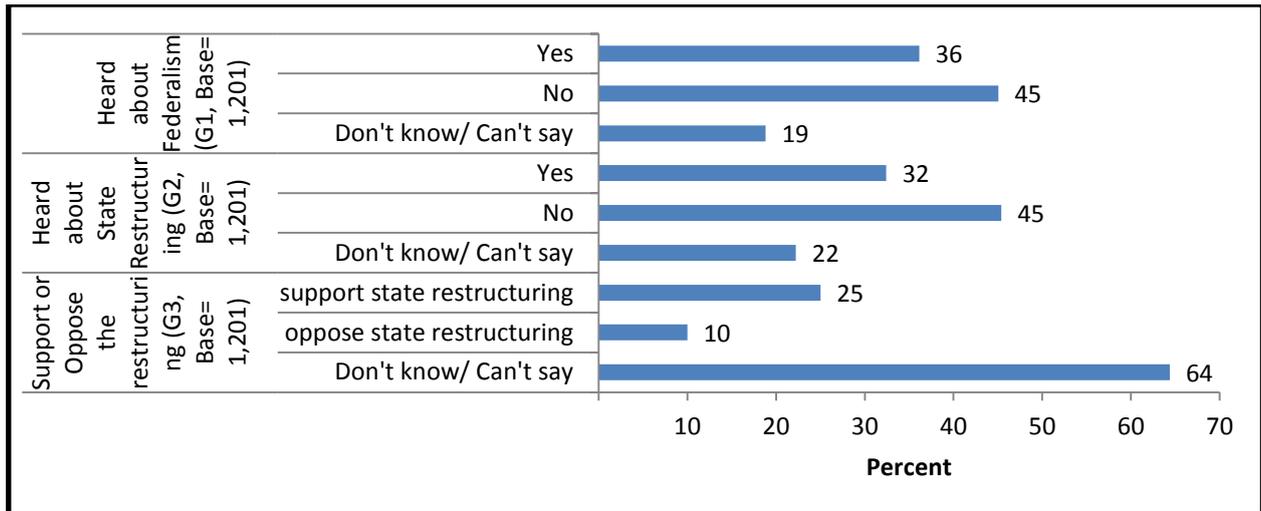


Figure 16 Respondents' acquaintance with and attitudes towards federalism and state restructuring [Base = 1201]³³

When the respondents were asked whether Nepal should be a federal state or a unitary state, a majority (60 percent) said 'don't know/ cannot say', while 23 percent said Nepal should be a federal state and 17 percent said it should be a unitary state. Figure 17 depicts these findings.

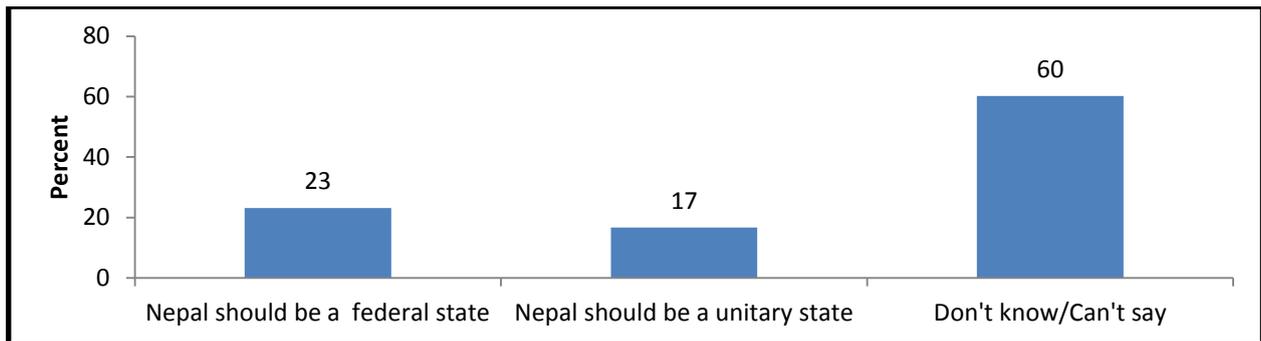


Figure 17 Respondents' opinions on federalism [Base = 1201]³⁴

3.1.8 Decentralization and local elections

The perception survey also aims to document the trends and attitudes of people in its working areas towards decentralization. A series of questions pertaining to decentralization was asked in the perception survey to measure these trends and attitudes. A majority of the respondents had not heard of decentralization, with only 22 percent reporting that they had heard of it. Of this 22 percent, some 3 percent said they are very satisfied with the level of decentralization and the service delivery provided by the local authority, while 35 percent said they were satisfied and 40 percent said they were somewhat satisfied. An overwhelming majority, 79 percent, were unable to explore their anticipation with the implementation of decentralization, which is reasonable given the high

³³ Three questions were asked: (1) Have you heard of, or read about federalism in Nepal? (2) Have you heard or, or read about state restructuring in Nepal? (3) To what extent do you support or oppose the restructuring of Nepal's regions or districts into states/provinces?

³⁴ The question was: Do you think Nepal should be a federal state or a unitary state?

proportion of people who have not even heard about decentralization. Figure 18 summarizes these findings.

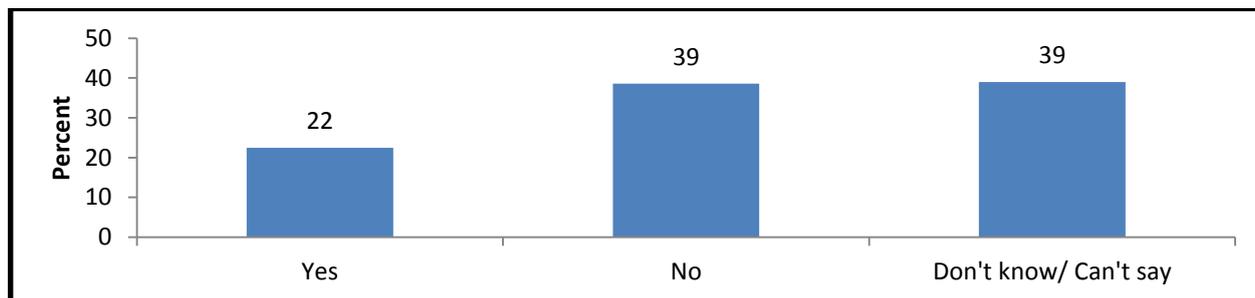


Figure 18 Respondents' acquaintance with and attitudes towards decentralization [Base = 1201]³⁵

When asked “How much do you think the resources at the VDC/local level are decentralized?” 78 percent said ‘don't know/can't say,’ while 16 percent said that resources at the VDC/local level are very decentralized, decentralized to a large extent, or somewhat decentralized. When respondents were asked if they thought better implementation of decentralization will help in enhanced service delivery at the local level, 75 percent said ‘don't know/ can't say,’ while 12 percent said it will help a lot or somewhat. Please refer to Figure 19 for more details.

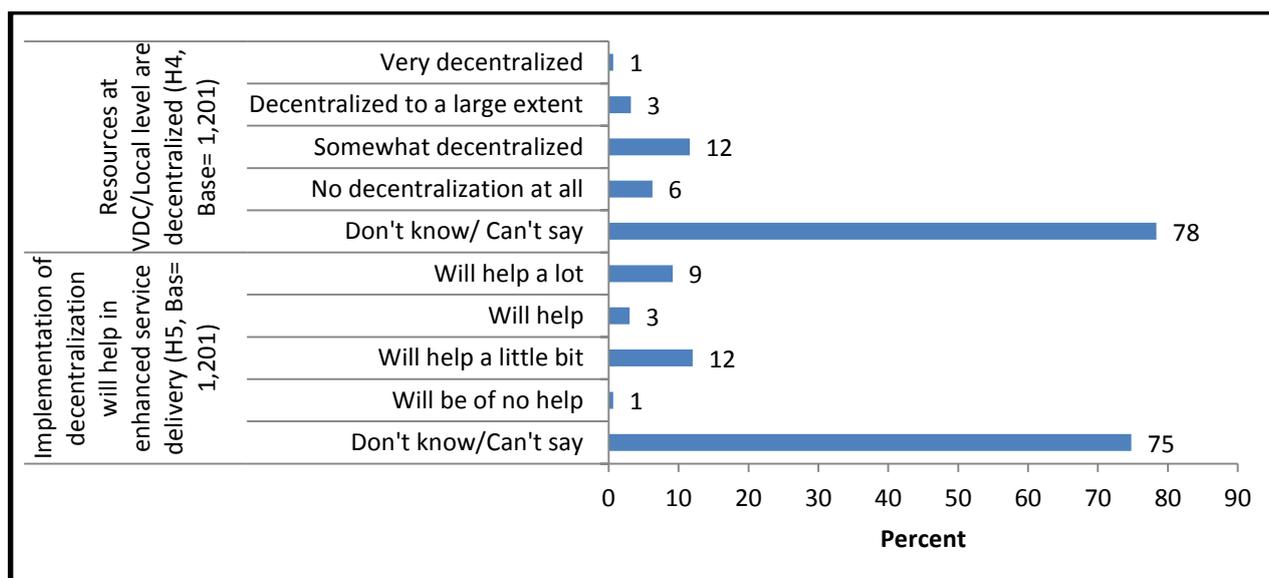


Figure 19 Respondents' perceptions of the level of decentralization of resources and importance of decentralization for service delivery [Base = 1201]³⁶

³⁵ The question was: Have you heard of decentralization?

³⁶ Two questions were asked: How much do you think the resources at VDC/ local level are decentralized? Do you think better implementation of decentralization will help in enhanced service delivery at local level?

Perceptions on granting power or authorities to new states created under the constitution

A hypothetical question-exercise was used to gauge the opinion of the public regarding the granting of power or authority to the new states created under the constitution. Respondents were asked to state their level of support or opposition towards various statements on issues and dimensions of federalism. A majority of respondents were of the opinion that the new states created under the constitution should have the power to tax citizens of the state, with 51 percent strongly supporting or somewhat supporting this, to create independent laws (76 percent), regulate local business (74 percent), control education (78 percent), create their own police force (50 percent), and conduct independent development projects (70 percent). The detailed responses are summarized in Table 15. *Table 15 Respondents’ level of support or opposition regarding the granting of various powers or authorities to the new states created under the constitution [Base = 1,201]³⁷*

Power/ authority	Strong support	Somewhat support	Somewhat oppose	Strongly oppose	DK/CS
Tax citizens of the state	26.6	24.7	10.7	23.6	14.4
Create independent laws	44.7	31.1	3.6	5.9	14.7
Regulate local business	40.5	33.4	4.7	4.2	17.2
Control education	46.5	31.6	3.3	4.3	14.2
Create own police force	21.9	27.6	10.4	14.5	25.6
Conduct independent development project	38.8	31.1	3.5	4.6	22.0

Another set of hypothetical questions was asked to gauge how people thought about the division of responsibility/authority between the national/central government, state/provincial government and the local government. Respondents were asked how responsibility/ authority for national defense, basic education, improving roads, electricity/load shedding, basic healthcare, crime/security, and border and custom control should be divided between the three levels of government. The survey suggests that the population believes that these issues can be best addressed at the level of national/central government and at the level of local government. Most respondents (55 percent) said that the issue of national defense can best be addressed by national/central government, while 49 percent said so for electricity, 40 percent said so for crime/security, and 48 percent said so for border and custom control. In terms of issues that can best be addressed by local government, many respondents highlighted basic education (38 percent), improving roads (44 percent), and basic health care (43 percent). Only a small proportion said that these issues should be addressed at the level of the state/province. Table 16 offers more details.

Table 16 Respondents’ opinions on which level of government (National/Central, State/Province, or local) can best address various issues [, Base = 1201]³⁸

Issue	National/Central	State/Province	Local	DK/CS
National defense	55.4	6.4	17.2	21.1
Basic education	36.0	6.5	38.0	19.5

³⁷ The question was: Now, for each of the following, please tell me whether you would support or oppose granting the power or authority to the new states created under the constitution. (If SUPPORT/OPPOSE specify if STRONGLY or SOMEWHAT)

³⁸ Enumerator’s prompt: Thinking about the future, what level of government – National/Central, State/Province, or local – can best address the following issues?

Improving roads	34.8	5.4	44.4	15.4
Electricity/load shedding	49.1	5.9	25.7	19.2
Basic health care	33.8	6.4	42.9	16.9
Crime/Security	39.7	7.2	34.9	18.2
Border and custom control	47.8	8.5	21.6	22.0

3.1.9 Relationships between communities

Lastly, the survey attempted to measure relationships between various entities in the local areas. The aim of asking this question is to ascertain whether the relationships have deteriorated, have improved or remained the same. The responses obtained could act as an ‘early-warning system’ for disputes before they conflagrate into potential conflicts.

The majority of people said that many types of relationships have improved during the past one year. They said relationships had improved between members of the same household (63 percent), between members of the same caste/ethnic group (68 percent), between men and women in general (79 percent), between various caste/ethnic groups (75 percent), between religious groups (61 percent) between rich and poor (56 percent), between educated and uneducated groups (67 percent), between high-caste and low-caste groups (75 percent). Though not a majority, a high proportion say that the relationship between people who hold different political views (36 percent), and between communities and VDC-level government officials (43 percent) have improved during the past one year. However, significant numbers of respondents cited deterioration of relationships between people who hold different political views (19 percent), and between the well-off (i.e., rich) and less-well off (i.e., poor) (13.5 percent). Table 17 summarizes this.

Table 17 Respondents’ perceptions of changes in relationships between various local individuals and communities during the past year [Base = 1201]³⁹

Type of relationship	Same	improved	deteriorated	NA	DK/CS
Between members of same household	33.4	62.6	3.7	0.1	.2
Between members of same caste/ethnic groups	28.6	67.8	3.7	0.0	.0
Between men and women in general	16.1	78.6	5.2	0.0	.1
Between various caste/ethnic groups living in the area	17.8	74.9	5.2	0.2	1.7
Between various religious groups residing in the area	21.7	60.3	5.4	4.3	8.2
Between people of Tharu origin and Madhesi-origin living in the area	11.2	27.6	2.7	45.3	12.7
Between people of hill origin and Madhesi-origin living in the area	10.7	25.6	2.8	44.6	15.7

³⁹ The question was: We want to ask you a few questions about the relationship between various people and communities in the area you live in. Compared to last year, would you say the relationship is same, has improved, or has deteriorated among the following?

Between those relatively well-off(rich) and those less well-off (poor)	29.1	56.0	13.5	0.8	0.7
Between those who hold different political views	25.4	36.0	19.0	1.6	18.1
Between educated and uneducated people	21.2	67.5	9.1	0.2	1.9
Between people of so called high caste and so called low caste in the area	15.2	75.4	5.7	0.9	2.7
Between communities and VDC-level government agencies/officials	19.7	42.5	4.4	1.1	32.4
Between communities and district-level government agencies/officials	19.3	28.6	3.3	1.6	47.0
Between communities and national-level government agencies/officials	17.7	22.1	5.0	2.5	52.7

3.2 FGDs& KIIs

This section discusses the findings of the stakeholders’ perceptions from the FGDs and KIIs. The researchers also make an attempt to analyze the findings. The findings are organized according to the following topics: (1) the current working environment (2) planning processes (in VDCs and DDCs) (3) coordination of political parties with local government bodies and (4) the situation of marginalized groups and women.

3.2.1 Current working environment

The Village Development Committees (VDCs) and District Development Committees (DDCs) are fulfilling their mandates, i.e. providing services that they are required to provide, but in a poor manner. Things are well and good on paper, but far from so in practice. There was not a single FGD or KII that conveyed an overwhelmingly positive view regarding the service delivery of these bodies. Even the officials with a vested interest in judging the current service delivery favorably qualified their responses or couched them in ambiguous language. For example, the VDC Secretary and the officials of the DDC maintained that although they were working according to the government guidelines and doing their best, there were plenty of shortcomings and room for improvement. They attributed the shortcomings primarily to a lack of resources – both material and human – and rarely acknowledged the deep-rooted problems in their working mechanisms. Even when they did, they somehow blamed the shortcomings on the general socio-political conditions and inadequate resources. Lack of timely and efficient monitoring of projects and their documentation, for example, was generally attributed to a dearth of officials. “If I go to the villages to monitor the projects, there will not be anyone to manage the office”, said one DDC officer. Deep-rooted problems of these bodies were articulated in a more forthcoming way by other respondents, mostly at the district-level FGDs. There is no denying that the lack of resources is hindering smooth operation of the VDCs and DDCs to some extent, but to assign the primary blame to this factor is to pass the buck.

Most VDC offices that the FGD teams visited have their own buildings (although some do not and have to rent); however, the buildings are old, small, dilapidated and unsecured. There is hardly enough space for conducting daily operations, let alone for holding meetings and seminars. The

buildings are not disabled-friendly and lack modern amenities. The need for such amenities, however, is slowly entering into the consciousness of officials and the general population alike. One official said, “Earlier, the issues of disabled people had not come to the fore. We were not considerate towards these issues until recently, but now we are slowly trying to incorporate these issues in our planning process.” The toilets in the VDC offices are generally in a squalid condition, limiting their use to emergency situations only.

Especially in VDCs, but also in DDCs to some extent, there is a severe shortage of competent human resources, particularly technical staff members. This is partly because vacancies have not been filled and partly because there are no positions. Use of information technology is minimal – some offices don’t even have computers, while others have computers but lack internet connections or relevant software. Staff members have been trained on various computer programs and software, but the opportunity to use the knowledge is lacking. One FGD participant said, “We need software. Software would make the documentation and retrieval of the relevant data easier and less time consuming. Even in the present age of technological advancement, we use carbon paper to make copies of the letters.” One VDC secretary argued that his office had not purchased computers for fear of theft, since there was no compound wall to secure the office periphery. Another DDC official ascribed his lack of specialization in a particular field to the miscellaneous assortment of trainings he had received and seminars he had attended. This overall situation, coupled with an increased workload due to more citizens availing themselves of VDC and DDC services, means that these bodies are performing their daily operations under pressure and inefficiently. Such a state of affairs may partly explain the service seekers’ dissatisfaction with service delivery. There is a lack of a public-friendly environment at the VDC and DDC offices. For example, an illiterate service seeker from a remote area without any connection is likely to have a difficult time navigating the red tape to obtain something as routine as a birth-certificate. “Even something as simple as ‘Namaste, how can I help you?’ to someone who enters the VDC or DDC office would make a big difference” said an FGD participant. Needless to say, those who know the officials – especially higher level officials - of the VDCs or DDCs will not have much trouble getting their job done and will find the service delivery rather prompt and efficient.

3.2.2 Planning Processes

The 1999 Local Self Government Act (LSGA) serves as the basis for the local government system in Nepal, but as the local bodies have not had elected representatives since 2002, the central government has been appointing local officials, thereby rendering local bodies an extension of the government under the direction of the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD). An All Party Mechanism for making local decisions was formed in 2008, but it was terminated in 2012 following a CIAA order due to accusations of misuse of local public resources. The LSGA establishes the local bodies’ structure, but grants the bodies the right to form committees for different purposes. In the absence of elected representatives, these committees are chaired by local officials.

The LSGA is an attempt at decentralizing Nepal’s centralized government. It intends to promote people’s participation in decision making processes and governance, decentralization of authority, and accountability of local bodies towards the citizens. For programs and projects carried out by the local bodies, the decision-making and implementation take place through a well-defined 14-step planning process, which seeks to build participatory decision-making into the local government’s

implementation procedure. The DDC and VDC officials are of the view that it is the local people whose voice the 14-step process primarily seeks to ensure.

Hardly anybody in the FGDs or KIIs had any problem with the LSGA in general, or the 14-step process in particular; government officials as well as other respondents agreed that the Act and the process are ‘scientific’ and right. However, it is in the implementation of the Act and the following of the process where the disagreements lie. Whereas most officials said that the process is participatory, transparent and rule-bound, others differed and claimed that it is so only on paper. They argued that there is a lack of meaningful participation and that the process takes place, in most cases, only for the sake of formality. The process involves representatives of all groups, but the decisions are usually made by the powerful and the influential. For instance, the majority of local demands that the VDCs get are for physical infrastructure, particularly roads. This is the case possibly because it is in infrastructure construction that funds can be siphoned off more easily. Many roads are being built haphazardly through undue pressure, and without conducting proper feasibility studies or meeting environmental guidelines. There is indiscriminate use of bulldozers, which has led to the construction of many, but mostly useless and disconnected, rural roads. One DDC official even described the situation as ‘dozer terror’ and said that the VDCs are likely to face environmental issues with serious repercussions, such as the possibility of severe landslides, in the future. Therefore, even though there is a general consensus on the merits of decentralization and LSGA, how they are actually being implemented leaves a lot to be desired. According to one respondent, if the state had properly implemented decentralization, it would not be tangled in the seemingly irreconcilable issue of federalism now. Whether or not that is true may be debatable, but there is little doubt that LSGA is far from achieving what it seeks to achieve. In the words of one participant, “We have a democratic system, but it is dysfunctional because we do not have a democratic attitude.”

3.2.3 Coordination of political parties and other organizations with local government bodies

Most FGD participants and KII respondents were not satisfied with the level of coordination of political parties and other organizations with local government bodies. While there were only a few respondents who clearly stated that the roles of political parties are unsatisfactory, there were many who implied that the roles could be better. Statements such as “We work closely with political parties and they are generally positive, but some political pressure is inevitable” or “Compared to other districts, political parties in our districts are united in their support towards the development of our district” or “Coordination with political parties has been improving” were common. A few respondents were more critical of the roles of political parties and accused them of interfering in the operations of local bodies. While the possibility of excellent coordination between local bodies and political parties in some VDCs cannot be ruled out, the general conclusion is that political parties exert undue influence on the local bodies.

The survey respondents were more forthcoming in their criticism of the lack of proper coordination between the local bodies and other organizations. While most respondents stopped short of criticizing the work of national and international non-governmental organizations – one did say he had had enough of (I) NGOs – they did criticize the way in which these organizations worked. They said that most of these organizations do not coordinate their activities with each other or with the local bodies, resulting in the duplication of efforts. One FGD participant drew an analogy between local development and cooking a vegetable – if there is too much or too little of any one ingredient, the dish is spoilt - and argued that the governmental and non-governmental bodies

should work closely such that there is neither a shortage nor a surplus of the vital ingredients for development. Other respondents accused the VDCs and DDCs of failing to bring (I)NGOs under their umbrella, of not having a master plan for local development and approaching development work haphazardly, and of not having a system of reward and punishment for (I)NGOs. Therefore, while it would be premature to form an opinion on the activities of (I)NGOs based on this study, it is reasonable to conclude that these organizations could serve local needs better if they coordinated properly with the VDCs and DDCs.

Community Support

Community support towards local development was found to be unsatisfactory. Most FGD participants and KII interviewees opined that there is very little local ownership. The spirit of volunteerism seems to be on the decline; quite a few respondents said that voluntary labor is next to non-existent. Local citizens seem to assume that development is the government's or the political parties' responsibility and that their duty as citizens is limited to casting their votes. Due to various awareness initiatives, people's level of awareness has shot up, but mostly as far as their rights are concerned. People are not as aware of their responsibilities as they are of their rights. This has resulted in local demands far in excess of the local bodies' capacity to supply.

People's participation in social audits, public hearings, planning processes, user committees and various other community organizations was found to be low. Some FGD participants expressed the view that people have developed a mentality such that they participate in a program only if they receive something at the end, and blamed the mentality mostly on (I) NGOs with means. Lack of active community participation in local development is at least partly responsible for corruption and immunity at the local level. One participant said:

We must make the political parties aware about the secretary nominating his close friends as the members of the consumer committee and request them to form a new consumer committee again. The budget implementation is not carried out effectively due to the lack of public auditing. Though public hearings are held often, only the members of the consumer committee who are also responsible for utilizing the budget are present during the hearings. Due to this reason, corruption still prevails in the V.D.C.

Similar sentiments were expressed by others. While the process – from planning to implementation to monitoring - looks fair and right on paper, ulterior motives and interests of the powerful and influential skew it in their favor.

Government support

Participants were not very satisfied with the level of the national government's support towards local development either. Whereas some were sympathetic, saying that the national government is itself unstable and weak, others were less so. They said that the immediate problem is that the budget is seldom released on time. This leads to projects being implemented at the last minute. Work is stalled throughout the greater part of the year and commences at a breakneck pace towards the end of the fiscal year, leading to an outcome that is lacking in quality. There have even been cases in which the budgets for particular projects have lapsed because the VDCs could not spend them within a particular timeframe.

The larger problem was the government's inability to hold local level elections. Lack of locally elected representatives was cited time and again by the respondents as the main problem plaguing local governance. Bureaucrats are currently running local governments without much knowledge about the needs and aspirations of the local people. "How can somebody who has been around for just three months understand local issues and needs? Why will they feel the need or desire to be accountable to the people here when they will have a secure job somewhere else no matter how badly they perform?" said one participant. Another said that the development process in the district was "LDO [Local Development Officer] centered". Most participants opined that local elections held periodically are the best means for bringing up a fresh crop of untainted political leadership that will hopefully take sound decisions regarding local development. However, there was one participant who maintained that local elections are not the panacea that they are generally claimed to be and argued that even if new leaders are elected, they are likely to follow in the footsteps of the previous ones unless the age-old culture of centralized governance and hierarchical mindset is overhauled. The next local elections may not solve all the ills of governance in Nepal, but there is little doubt that periodic elections will steadily strengthen democratic practices and improve governance.

3.2.4 Status of women and marginalized groups

Ward Citizen Forums (WCFs) and Citizen Awareness Centers (CACs) supported by the Local Governance Community Development Program (LGCDP) aim to include disadvantaged people, particularly women and marginalized groups in the local decision making process. These initiatives, combined with other campaigns of governmental and non-governmental organizations, have certainly raised the awareness and status of women and marginalized groups to some extent. However, their status and meaningful participation in various programs and processes remains low. Women and marginalized group members are made part of different programs because it is mandatory to have a certain percentage of their members in those programs.

There is still a large portion of the population that the campaigns and initiatives targeting disadvantaged groups have not been able to reach. One FGD participant representing a WCF said that although women and marginalized groups participated in their meetings, the presence of the extremely poor and marginalized was minimal. This section of the population does not even know that there is a VDC or a DDC office, cannot make demands on its own, and is ideally the true beneficiary of programs targeting disadvantaged groups. However, the reality on the ground is different - others are taking advantage of these programs. One official went so far as to say that it was the targeted programs that were misused the most. Statements such as the following were not all that uncommon.

Though a certain amount of budget is allocated for the targeted groups, it is utilized in the construction of roads rather than in the development of those groups. And if a question is raised about this, they say that the people of those groups will use the roads as well.

Some participants assign the blame on the disadvantaged groups themselves. They argue that women and other marginalized group members do not show interest or take initiative for personal development. Others thought cultural factors were at play: in many communities, particularly in the Tarai, women do not step out of the house. Even when some women do show initiative for a task,

they are ridiculed or discouraged – by men but also by other women. "So and so could not do it, how can a woman do it?' - such is our mentality," shared a participant.

One DDC officer was candid in his criticism of his work as well as that of others. "We are only fulfilling our mandates; we have not been able to determine the genuine demands of the truly marginalized and have not yet done genuine work."

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section is an attempt to piece together the larger composite picture that emerges from both the quantitative as well as qualitative approaches. Specific points emerging from each of the two methodologies have been summarized in the respective sections above. This section is about lessons gleaned by IDA and its researchers in the field, with the objective of highlighting potential unforeseen surprises as well as shortcomings in the exercise that can hopefully be corrected in future rounds. Organized into three parts, the first is concerned with peoples' perceptions and the caution that may be needed in interpreting the results. The second is about broader local governance issues, and the third is about recommendations on how the shortcomings in this round of surveys may be surmounted and on what Sajhedari Bikaas as well as Pact can do to help improve local governance.

4.1 Interpreting Peoples' Articulation

- 1 Interpreting public perception and the response of interviewees might have to be qualified by an understanding of the general Nepali habit of moderation, saying "*theekai chha*" (it is OK) to general questions by strangers. Unless matters are exceptionally good or bad, there is a general tendency to not ruffle feathers and give a middle-of-the-road answer.⁴⁰ It requires persistent and probing supplemental questions to elicit underlying grievances.
- 2 People seemed more confident about the future of the country (more interviewees felt the country was moving in the right direction) than their own personal prospects. One way of interpreting this seems to be that, given how the proposed new constitution and the Constituent Assembly (CA) have been projected as the ultimate cure for New Nepal's future well-being and given that the second CA elections had just been held, the mood of the public was more upbeat than in the months before the CA elections. This could change rapidly; the upbeat mood could shift to the negative end of the spectrum if this CA is tardy or again derelict in its duties.
- 3 Demand articulation, especially by marginalized groups and women, is low. Even when they are targeted by special provisions, such as 35 percent of the local government spending being earmarked for them, they are mostly ignorant of these provisions. Hence, they make no demands, and those who are in decision making positions end up spending those earmarked sums on whatever programs they wish. This general and widespread ignorance of the populace regarding their entitlements results in service mediocrity.

⁴⁰ It could also be that respondents do not want to be too critical when interacting with interviewers.

4.2 Governance Issues

1. In terms of people's participation (which the survey shows as low), there is a general feeling that on paper, there is participation but in practice, matters are decided by a closed political coterie of big parties. Forums of participation are places where foregone decisions are announced. Such a coterie also ends up justifying spending money specifically allotted to women and marginalized groups instead to infrastructure and road construction with rationalizations that even women and the marginalized use the roads and are benefitted by them. In reality, such infrastructure work benefits local contractors and dozer owners at the upstream end and bus and truck owners at the downstream end more than those from the deprived communities.
2. Looking at the supply side of local governance, civil servants seem to be delivering the minimum requirements, and the people seem to be OK with it, since they are not aware of (or have not articulated demand for) proper and better local governance. On the basis of the survey response alone and in the absence of alert elected officials, it may not be wise to laud the performance of the civil servants.
3. Despite the general perception that the lack of local political representation and the lack of political checks-and-balances have led to massive corruption at the local level across Nepal, the survey results show not much concern on this front. This can possibly be interpreted as follows: on matters that touch the public directly, e.g. issuing certificates, etc., the local government functionaries fulfill their duties without asking for bribes from the public. What the public does not see, and where much of the corruption takes place, is in the construction and infrastructure end ("*bhitrichalkhel*"). Corruption of real concern for good governance is not so much in everyday transactions like issuing marriage certificates but in awarding construction contracts to petty contractors building roads.

4.3 Recommendations for SB's Future Consideration

- 1 It must be mentioned that the formulation of the questionnaires was not in the hands of IDA, and that the survey and FGDs were conducted more or less simultaneously. A much more meaningful questionnaire with more probing items could be designed if FGDs and KIIs were conducted ahead of the quantitative surveys and the insights from them were then used for designing the questionnaire.
- 2 While quantitative questionnaires are rigid and mechanical, leaving little scope to ferret out grey zones and hidden qualms, FGDs too tend to corral responses to a herd consensus. This was particularly significant when the VDC secretary was present in all the VDC-level FGDs and was sometimes the person issuing the invitations to them. People who have to deal with the secretary for official matters on a day-to-day basis would be reluctant to be critical of him to his face. There was one case of a critical voice, but it turned out that he had shown up on his own and had not been officially invited. In such cases, it is the individual KIIs that would be a more relevant methodology, providing deeper insights.
- 3 Big issues such as "state restructuring" and "federalism" are mostly unknown to the local people; they may have heard about these issues but are in the dark regarding what they are or what they would mean for their livelihoods and wellbeing. Political parties have often sent out contradictory messages and meanings regarding these issues. While more

information dissemination on this front is required, it is the absence of local-level, legitimate and responsible political representation that has led to this confusion. People think that between an effective central government and an elected and accountable local government, most of the things they expect from the state can or will be handled. They have not understood the need or scope for state/provincial-level governance units and their boundaries. It may be that these matters can be better debated and firmed up with the presence of elected local bodies, even if interim.

- 4 People demand agricultural services (this comes second after infrastructure) but no entity seems to be effectively catering to this need. There is also a general impression that health services are good while agriculture services are bad. This perception also has to be interpreted in light of the increase in outmigration and remittance inflows. Because those earning higher incomes from remittances are demanding (and paying for) better health services, this sector has shown up positively. On the other hand, there is a severe shortage of agricultural labor, with the young and able having gone off to the Gulf, Malaysia or Korea. Those that have remained behind, tending to farms and trying to cope with farming difficulties, need better agriculture services. Such services need to be re-thought and re-framed for the constraints currently being faced by subsistence farming communities making a painful transition to market-oriented agriculture.
- 5 Infrastructure for rural market access, i.e. rural roads, goods-carrying ropeways etc., is a priority at all levels of caste, class and profession. However, provisions for good engineering and transparency need to be put in place. Similarly, alternatives and social side effects of infrastructure projects also need to be studied and shared with intended beneficiaries before initiating programs.
- 6 One way to increase the quality of local governance services is for concerned stakeholders to demand more. At the moment the demand for good local government and community development services is poorly articulated. This is where Sajhedari Bikaas could assist. Since quality services from local government agencies, particularly the VDC, are not demanded by the people – attested to by survey results which show that people think it is OK – there is little incentive on the part of the local civil servants such as the VDC secretary to perform better.
- 7 It is due to weak or poor articulation on the part of those who need the services the most, women and marginalized communities, that the performance of local government bodies continues to remain lackluster. A well-articulated and persistent demand for better local government and community development services on the part of women and marginalized communities is needed. This could be done, for instance, by disseminating the baseline and perception survey findings through community and FM radio stations (by Equal Access for instance). Likewise, Pact's NGO partners working on governance and women's empowerment could help women and marginalized communities articulate these concerns in forums such as WCF and CAC.
- 8 Lack of local political representation (i.e. no local elections for almost seventeen years) has had a detrimental impact on public expectations as well as development discourse in general. Because local bodies are managed by junior bureaucrats nominated by the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development (MoFALD) and were at one time run by an all-

party consensus mechanism, there is no opposition bench and hence no vibrant debate about development choices and alternatives. Indeed, most people are not even aware that there are alternatives or that there are higher ideals against which current levels of services have to be judged. As a result, local bodies meet the minimum of people's expectations regarding administrative matters (such as issuing certificates, etc.), and this is the reason why a large percentage of respondents thought that service delivery at the local level is satisfactory. On the other hand, the widely shared view that local bodies have not done much to generate job opportunities gives a hint of this lacuna. Local level elections are an imperative for good local governance and Sajhedari Bikaas in unison with other stakeholders needs to pursue this, while acknowledging that the ultimate decision to hold local elections rests with the government of Nepal.

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