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Quarterly Conflict Assessment (August 2015)

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Sajhedari Bikaas Project

Partnership for Local Development

Quarterly Conflict Assessment

(August 2015)

Rapid Conflict Assessment Tracker

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(Under Contract no. AID-367-C-13-00003)

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Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment: Rapid Conflict Assessment Tracker

December 2014 to February 2015

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Introduction

This report summarizes key findings from the sixth in a series of conflict assessments, which was carried out by Saferworld during December 2014 - February 2015 under the USAID-funded Sajhedari Bikaas (SB) project.

The project, which is carried out by Pact and funded by USAID, aims to improve the ability of targeted communities in six districts in the Mid- and Far West regions of Nepal to direct local development. It does this by establishing and improving an enabling environment for community development; improving communities' ability to access resources for development; improving communities' ability to effectively implement inclusive development projects; and increasing the ability of existing and new government units to function effectively.

Existing and emerging conflicts are or have the potential to become obstacles to community development, inclusive and accountable decision-making and improved governance. To ensure that the Sajhedari Bikaas project is based on sound analysis of the context and an understanding of the conflict environment, and to enable it to spot and react to changes in the context, a series of quarterly conflict assessments is being carried out by Saferworld during the first half of the project.

The conflict assessments are carried out in six project districts: Banke, Bardiya, Dang and Surkhet (Mid-West) and Kailali and Kanchanpur (Far West). Rather than providing a repeated full analysis of the conflict situation in the districts, this assessment focuses on changes that have occurred since the most recent assessment (in this case, since December 2013 - February 2014 when the second conflict assessment was carried out) and are intended to provide an understanding of developments and trends over time. Issues highlighted by respondents that are relevant to a better understanding of the general situation and longer-term developments in the target districts have been included in the assessment.

For this assessment, 62 key informant interviews (KIIs) were carried out with representatives from the administration, security and justice service providers, civil society, and others well-placed to comment on conflict and security dynamics, mainly at the district and regional level. Twelve group discussions (GDs) were also held with representatives from local communities and youth, mainly at the Village Development Committee (VDC) level[1]. As the findings are based on qualitative research, they reflect the perceptions and opinions of those consulted; many of the findings would benefit from more in-depth analysis, as the assessment was only able to touch upon them rather than exploring these issues in detail. Field research took place between the 13th and 19th of January 2015, a period when the self-imposed deadline of January 22, 2015 to deliver a constitution by the Constituent Assembly (CA) was nearing. Based on previous assessment findings, it was anticipated that the deadline would result in some level of increased political and identity-based tensions at the district-level. The data collection was however not affected by nation-wide and local *bandhs* (shutdowns and/or strikes called by a group or association in order to pressure the local or central government).

An executive summary outlines key findings from the districts, highlighting the main similarities and differences between the locations researched. This is followed by district-specific chapters that cover key issues and developments in the past year. The report concludes with some

[11] See Annex 1 for details on the assessment methodology.

recommendations for Sajhedari Bikaas on key issues and priorities to consider in the upcoming project phases. A list of acronyms can be found at the end of the report. The methodology, final versions of tools, and guiding questions used can be found in the annexes.

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Acronyms

BNP	Bardiya National Park
CA	Constituent Assembly
CFUG	Community Forest Users Group
GD	Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interview
RCA	Rapid Conflict Assessment
RPPN	Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal
SB	Sajhedari Bikaas
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
UCPN (M)	Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAW	Violence against Women
VDC	Village Development Committee

Executive Summary

Not many significant changes from the previous period were observed in the program districts during this assessment. Political tensions more or less remained the same and identity-based tensions continued to exist, especially in the Far West districts. The *Akhanda Sudur Paschim* vs. *Tharuwan* movement[2] was a major concern for many, as people feared that tensions could easily escalate with the slightest trigger. A prominent concern in all districts reported by both male and female respondents was that gender inequalities continue to exist, particularly for women; an example of this was found in Kailali where women were discouraged from obtaining citizenship certificates. An increase in reporting of various forms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) - rape, sex trafficking of women and girls, and domestic violence - was found in all SB districts over the past year.

Key Findings:

- **Political tensions, conflicts and/or violence** – Across the districts participants had differing views about political tensions; while some felt that they had heightened in the last few months due to the constitution drafting issues, many felt that political tensions have in fact declined over the past year. Mostly people reported debates and heated discussions, a few political rallies and a few instances of protests and small-scale violence, but felt that such activities have not and will not lead to an escalation of violence. The overall outlook towards political actors remained unchanged and/or negative (i.e., they were not hopeful about their CA members representing their constituencies and expressed frustration over the unchanged political scenario). In Kailali, Kanchanpur and Banke, people discussed Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal's (RPPN) political rally. Some of them felt that the party had gained increased traction in the past few months as a result of this rally and their on-going activities; however, it is difficult to assume that this would be the case throughout the districts as the research was limited to only a few locations.

- **Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence** – Most of the reported identity-based tensions were connected with political issues, such as the federalism model. The federalism debate on a multi-ethnic state vs. a single-identity state was still a sensitive issue for many respondents, particularly men. Many felt that if the constitution was not able to accommodate the needs and concerns of the marginalized and ethnic groups, simmering tensions would easily escalate to violence. Caste-based discrimination was reported as an on-going social practice, affecting Hill Dalit, Tharu, and a few Janajati communities who were thought to be financially poor, particularly in the Far West districts and Surkhet. A majority of community-level respondents reported Christian conversion and felt this was a concern. Similar to previous research

[2] See the USAID Rapid Conflict Assessment (2013) for more details: The Undivided Far West Movement (*Akhanda Sudur Paschim* vs. *Tharuwan* movement) that occurred in April-June 2012 saw Tharu and non-Tharu (*Pahadi*) groups clash with each other politically as well as socially in many parts of the Far West and in some Mid West districts such as Bardiya and Dang. Kailali and Kanchanpur were most affected during this movement as Kailali was the political base of this movement. Previously, Tharu and some non-Tharu political actors had publicly stated that these two districts would be part of the larger *Tharuwan* federal state; however, when Lekhraj Bhatta of the UCPN (M) stated that the Far West region would not be divided in one of his public political rallies in April 2012, protests against his statement erupted immediately.

reports, a majority of the converts were from Tharu, Dalit and Hill Janajati communities. In addition, it was perceived that such conversions were contributing to social divisions as the newly converted had adopted a negative outlook towards other religions, and isolated themselves from usual socio-cultural activities. While religious conversion and its related tensions have been reported in previous assessments, it is unclear whether it has actually caused community-level friction or has the potential to, given the geographic coverage and limitations of the multiple conflict assessments.

- **Crime and armed-group based tensions, conflicts and/or violence** – Crime was reportedly high in all districts, except in Dang and, according to some, in Kanchanpur, where respondents felt that it had decreased as a result of proactive policing. While many reported robbery, theft and drug smuggling as the main criminal activities, in Bardiya, Kailali, and Kanchanpur, people also discussed human trafficking, especially of young girls and women across the border to India. Armed groups were not considered a threat as most felt that they had declined and there were no reports of armed groups-related activities. People typically accused local male youth as the perpetrators in most cases, citing drug abuse and lack of employment opportunities as key contributors to their involvement in illegal activities.

- **Other security-related incidents, including SGBV** – Rape and sex trafficking of women and girls were key security concerns in all districts. Previously, people had reported sex trafficking taking place in Banke, Bardiya and Kanchanpur; however, during this assessment many community members from Kailali felt that women and girls from their district were being trafficked as well. Suicide was also mentioned as an increasing trend in all six districts. The reasons for this increase are unclear. Some speculate that women may commit suicide because of domestic violence, and men due to frustration over their unemployment and social status. Along with SGBV, violence against women (VAW) in the form of domestic violence was mentioned by the majority of respondents. Reporting of domestic violence particularly by female survivors has continued to increase over the past six months.[3] One key cause identified for this was alcohol-related violence, whereby a husband would consume alcohol and beat his wife. Structural gender-based discrimination, such as forced sex-selective abortions in Bardiya, *Chhaupadi*[4] practice in the Far West districts, polygamy, and dowry-related cases were also reported.

- **Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence** – Unlike previous assessments where resource-based conflicts were often reported as high within all districts, tensions related to resources were reportedly higher in Surkhet and Banke during this assessment. They were mostly related to natural resources such as community forests, sand and stones, and access to rivers. For community-level respondents, tensions continued to revolve mainly around the usage and access of community forests and access to water for irrigation and drinking purposes in all the districts. Aside from this there were reported cases of tensions between private groups that extracted sand and stones for construction purposes, the local government, and the local community settlements.

[3] Anecdotal evidence based on interviews held with men and women from the communities, civil society, as well as the police.

[4] *Chhaupadi* is a tradition practice in western Nepal of banning girls and women to a cow-shed or a separate make-shift shelter outside the house during their menstruation, when they are believed to be impure.

- **The role of youth in tensions, conflicts and/or violence –** Respondents were divided over the perceptions towards local youth and their role in the communities. While some of them felt that youth were contributing positively in terms of engaging in local enterprises and participating in local political debates, about two-thirds of the total respondents shared a negative outlook towards the youth, citing their participation in political protests and violence, criminal activities and inability to find employment. One local dynamic that arose in many interviews and discussions while conversing about youth was their likelihood to migrate abroad for employment opportunities. While this was seen as a positive trend by some, many felt that it contributed to an under-developed local economy.

District Findings

Banke

Political Tension, conflict and/or violence

Informants in Banke were divided in their opinions about the political tension/conflict in the district. While close to half believed that the tension had increased in the last six months, the others thought that it was either the same or had decreased.

Irrespective of these varying sentiments, there was a unanimous opinion that the constitution drafting process was the single most discussed political topic in Banke.[5] Reportedly, a large segment of the population was following the political developments related to the constitution. They were most interested in whether the draft would be finished on time, and what sort of constitution would be created. However, several respondents highlighted that they have not seen or heard from their CA members post-election.

There were also some who were actively engaged in advocating to ensure that their interests and agendas were incorporated into the constitution. The informants highlighted feminists, human and child rights activists, and ethnic groups, in particular the *Tharuwan* movement, as some of the actors involved in rights-based advocacy.[6]

The majority of the respondents thought that the public attitude towards the political parties had remained unchanged over the last six months. There were, however, explicit accounts by several informants about how the people felt continually let down by the political parties.[7] They said that the parties had promised them a constitution and political stability, but failed to deliver.

With the deadline of the constitution only days away when the assessment was being conducted, the relative lull that followed the peaceful second CA elections (November 2013) appeared disrupted by the activities of opposition forces. The nationwide *bandh* called by the 30-party alliance was mentioned by most of the informants. While there was no mention of any violence, many expressed concern for the future, stating that violence was more likely if the ruling parties and the opposition couldn't come to a consensus. Another concern people frequently mentioned in the interviews was the growing activities of the pro-Hindu and pro-monarchy forces. Informants said that the pro-Hindu groups had gained more traction (in comparison to a year ago).[8] While some attributed the rise in support to the repeated failures of the political parties, others believed that it was in reaction to religious conversion (mainly to Christianity) taking place around the country.

[5] KII with government authority, male, Banke, 18/01/2015; KII with journalist, female, Banke, 17/01/2015; KII with journalist, male, Banke, 17/01/2015; GD with community members, males and females, Banke, 18/01/2015

[6] KII with NGO worker, male, Banke, 17/01/2015; KII with journalist, female, Banke, 17/01/2015

[7] KII with government authority, male, Banke, 18/01/2015; KII with security provider, male, Banke, 17/01/2015 KII with journalist, male, Banke, 17/01/2015

[8] KII with journalist, male, Banke, 17/01/2015; KII with journalist, female, Banke, 17/01/2015

One informant described the political situation of the country as a "Catch-22."[9] He stated that if the constitution is drafted, there is a risk that it will be criticized, rejected or ignored by the opposition and other detractors.[10] Conversely, if it is not promulgated, there is a risk that the majority of the public will be frustrated with the political parties for their lack of action.

Overall, the informants believed that there was a significant level of frustration, slightly increased from the last assessment, amongst the public and the local level political cadres.

Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

The majority of informants indicated that identity-based tensions had decreased over the course of the last six months in Banke. However, they also indicated that the situation was contingent upon how the federal states would be divided in the future, believing that if the states are demarcated along a single identity line, then tensions would flare up once again. Likewise, there was also clear recognition that if the voices and concerns of the marginalized communities were not accommodated while drafting the constitution and federalizing the states, then that too could spark tensions.

Several informants referred to activities organized by Hindu, Muslim and Sikh groups in Banke, which were unopposed by other religious groups, to illustrate that there was religious harmony and tolerance.[11] Many informants mentioned the rally organized by the Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal (RPPN) in the district. They noticed that the Hindu groups had become more active in the district but that this had not seemed to upset the religious harmony. Many even expressed confidence that if religious tensions were to ensue in the district, the interfaith network, which comprises of religious leaders of all faiths, would be activated to resolve the issue(s).

Some Hindu informants, however, spoke about the rising intolerance demonstrated by those that had converted to Christianity.[12] Reportedly, new Christian converts do not accept anything that is linked to other faiths, including food cooked by members of other faiths. One informant narrated a personal experience when he tried to smear colors on his newly converted friend during the *Holi* festival. According to the informant, his friend refused to accept the colors by stating that he was a Christian and that he did not accept any such practices of other religions. This apparently upset this informant who further explained that such rejections and religiously-based opinions exhibited by new converts seemed superficial to him, given that the convert was previously a Hindu. He also stated that Hindus too were increasingly disdainful of Christians.

Crime and armed group-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Most of the informants believed that the level of crime in the district had increased over the last six months. Drug trafficking and addiction, as well as gang-fights between youth seemed to be on the rise. The porous Nepal-India border, which often lacks security surveillance, is reportedly being exploited by traffickers to move drugs. Marijuana and hashish are taken to India from the hill districts, such as Rolpa and Rukum, while 'brown sugar' and other drugs

[9] "*Nakhau bhaney din vari ko sikar, khau bhaney kancho bau ko anuhar*" - A Nepali idiom which has a similar meaning to the "Catch-22" scenario.
[10] KII with NGO worker, male, Banke, 17/01/2015
[11] KII with NGO worker, male, Banke, 17/01/2015; KII with journalist, male, Banke, 17/01/2015; KII with government authority, male, Banke, 18/01/2015
[12] GD with community members, males and females, Banke, 18/01/2015

are brought in from India. In many cases, women and children from impoverished backgrounds are persuaded to be used as mules by the traffickers to ferry the drugs across the border. If these women and children were apprehended by security officials, most were reportedly unaware of what they were actually ferrying. Several informants reported that the Jayaspur area, close to the Indian border, is the hub of drug trafficking and addiction, and most of the drug users are youth.

While some informants believed that crime had increased, many informants also asserted that the situation was much better than during the conflict period.[13] Unlike before, there was not any activity of armed groups, or cases of extortions and abductions. Informants mentioned that they felt much safer going out at night as the police were much more vigilant and responsive. The improvement in the police services has resulted in more people approaching them for help.

Other security issues, including SGBV

Gender-based violence, domestic violence, and violence against women are reportedly on the rise in the district. The majority of the informants mentioned recent cases where women had been burnt by their in-laws for not bringing a large enough dowry. Allegedly, most of these cases took place in Madhesi and Muslim communities.[14] Polygamy too was reportedly on the rise, with many cases of men re-marrying and bringing home a new spouse, displacing their first spouse. Many of these displaced women are reportedly seeking shelter and services of women's rights organizations like SAATHI. Another increasing trend mentioned was child marriage, due to increased mobile connectivity and love affairs, as well as social peer pressure on parents.[15]

Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Unlike in the previous assessment, the majority of the informants this time mentioned an increase in resource-based tensions in the district. The tensions were mainly between those involved in the extraction of natural resources, such as sand and stones, and the local communities that wanted to preserve these resources. Essentially, the local communities want a larger say over the use of these resources. Another reported tension was between those residing in the periphery of the conservation areas and the authorities. Reportedly, the animals from the conservation areas venture out and destroy their crops and livestock, and at times even threaten their lives. The informants felt that the authorities did not take their concerns seriously; advising that these affected communities should fortify their perimeters instead of providing any compensation or a permanent solution to their woes.

The role of youth in tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Informants immediately brought up the issue of unemployment when asked about the role of youth in conflicts. Reportedly, due to unemployment, many young people are migrating to foreign destinations for better employment opportunities. Those left behind are more vulnerable to a life of crime in the absence of gainful employment opportunities. Young people seem to be more likely to get involved in criminal activities or vices such as drinking,

[13] The reference was, however, clearly to times before the last six month period. Respondents were referring to the conflict times when insecurity was high in the district.
[14] GD with community members, males and females, Banke, 18/01/2015
[15] KII with NGO worker, male, Banke, 17/01/2015

drug addiction and gambling than older age groups. Furthermore, frustration and depression amongst youth was reported as a natural phenomenon resulting from the lack of employment opportunities.

Many of the youth are also involved in politics; however, several informants mentioned that there was an existing inter-generational gap between the young aspiring politicians and those from the older generation. Reportedly, the older politicians are not keen on promoting the younger ones, and as a result, the younger generation is beginning to lose faith in politics and respect for their elders.

Some inspiring contributions of the youth were also highlighted by informants. Alongside the trend of emigrating youth, there is also a reported trend of returning migrants. These returnees are now engaging in businesses and agriculture. Economic growth, as apparent in the rise in the number of department stores, clothing stores, and the availability of off-season fruits and vegetables, was attributed to these returning youth migrants.

Bardiya

Political-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Similar to other districts and previous assessments, political issues were mostly found to be related to the constitution drafting process, in particular around the issue of federalism. While some respondents felt that political tensions had decreased in the past six months, most reported that there was no change or tensions had slightly increased.[16] Respondents also spoke about transitional justice issues, mentioning that grievances related to conflict, such as compensation, are yet to be addressed and relief efforts have not reached conflict victims. The transitional justice process was thought to be politicized, as respondents felt that political actors favor people who support of their party. In general, people's outlook on the political parties was mixed; for some it remained unchanged, but for the majority of community-level respondents their attitude to the politicians worsened as a result of their failure to reach political consensus and promulgate the constitution. Negative views were especially prevalent towards CA members, as they are considered to have failed in delivering the promises they made to their constituencies during the elections.[17]

Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Most of the respondents felt that identity-based tensions had remained unchanged in Bardiya, while some felt that those specific tensions had increased.[18] Those who indicated that they had remained unchanged attributed this stasis to the decreasing tensions between Tharu and non-Tharu communities. However, others felt that discrimination against the Tharu and Dalit communities continued to exist. Respondents at the district-level highlighted that there was

[16] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Bardiya, 18/01/2015;

[17] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015

[18] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Bardiya, 19/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Bardiya, 19/01/2015; KII with security provider, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015

an increase in activities related to the *Mukta Kamaiyas*[19] and their resettlement issues, as well as the landless population. These findings were also reported in previous assessments[20] and again, the majority of the respondents believed that whilst nothing violent was taking place at the moment, should a triggering event[21] occur, existing tensions would likely flare up. Tensions between Muslim and non-Muslim communities were not discussed in this assessment, as people felt that it had not been a significant issue over the past six months. However, almost all of the respondents were unanimous in recognizing the existing discriminatory practices against Tharus and Dalits, such as not allowing them to use the same water sources, some families not allowing them to enter their kitchen or serve them food/ beverage in dishes separate from those that others are served on. While some respondents felt that their situation had improved, as there were fewer protests compared to a year ago,[22] many continued to report that the ethnicity and caste-based discrimination still led to identity-based tensions. This could lead to future tensions as backlash to the *Tharuhat* movement, gains more momentum in the form of *Akhanda Madhya Paschim*,[23] borrowed from the *Akhanda Sudur Paschim* movement from the Far West region.[24]

A few respondents also perceived that the spread of Christianity had increased, pointing out that the number of Christian churches had risen in Bardiya, particularly at the VDC level – for example, it was mentioned that within one Ward in Dhadhawar VDC two new churches were established in the past six months.[25] Similar to other district findings, it seems to be mostly people from Tharu, Dalit and some from Janajati communities, who are converting/ being converted. Community members also reported that conversion was causing friction between family members.[26]

Crime and armed group-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

The majority of the community-level respondents felt that crime, mostly consisting of robbery, theft, and SGBV, had increased in the last six months.[27] However, armed groups and their activities were thought to be negligible as there was not any reporting of armed group activities in the past six months. It was mostly small weapons, such as *khukuris* and other knives, that were reportedly used to carry out crimes, such as robbery and theft, but there was no mention of armed weapons or ammunition for any reported crimes. Similar to other districts, it was mostly young men who were said to be the perpetrators of crimes of robbery, theft, rape, and drugs smuggling. People also mentioned that the open Nepal-India border was

[19] *Kamaiya* was a traditional system of bonded laborers in Nepal wherein people from Tharu communities were used as laborers by mostly Hill Brahmin and Chhetri communities. The Government of Nepal abolished this system in 2000 and those that were freed were termed as *Mukta Kamaiyas* or freed bonded-laborers.
[20] USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Second Quarterly Conflict Assessment carried out by Saferworld in December - February 2014
[21] Identity-based political events and/or actions such as political speech, pamphleteering along identity and ethnicity lines were mentioned as events that could cause tensions to escalate given the current situation.
[22] KII with government authority, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015; KII with private sector, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015
[23] KII with civil society, male, Bardiya, 18/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Bardiya, 19/01/2015
[24] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015; Two separate KIIs with civil society, females, Bardiya, 19/01/2015; Three separate KIIs with civil society, males, Bardiya, 19/01/2015
[25] GD with youth, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015
[26] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015
[27] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015

a contributing factor to crimes, such as trafficking of drugs and women, and timber smuggling. Respondents felt that it was unemployment that was fuelling the youth to get involved in criminal activity, and that if they had better employment options, they would contribute positively towards local peace and security. A few district-level respondents also highlighted that there were criminal youth groups, employed in the private sector, who were involved in obstructing the tender-bidding process, and would use violence against any private bidders bidding for the same tender as their employers.[28] This was mainly linked with private sector processes as the notion was that youth groups who were already engaged in criminal activities were contracted by some of the local private sector entrepreneurs to use intimidation and other forms of violence such as threats to deter a potential private bidder from entering a tender application or to encourage them to withdraw their tender application.

Other security-related issues including SGBV

As reported in previous assessments, SGBV continues to be widespread in Bardiya, especially affecting women and young girls. Rape and domestic violence were widely reported within communities;[29] suicide as a result of such violence was considered a growing security concern by communities and district-level respondents.[30] Domestic violence was reported to be prevalent in most of the Tharu communities and respondents perceived that it was closely linked with alcohol consumption by husbands. It was unclear if such speculation came from district-based statistics or from specific cases within their locality. According to police statistics, there was an increased level of suicide over the past six months within Tharu communities; however, police records indicate that the number of reported cases remain only a handful.[31] Respondents at the community level also highlighted tensions between villages that lived close to the Nepal-India border – they felt that land encroachment was taking place from the Indian side, but this claim was difficult to verify with the local government authorities.

Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Parts of Bardiya are within the Bardiya National Park (BNP) and as a result, since the Rapid Conflict Assessment,[32] respondents have continued to highlight tensions and disputes between local communities and BNP authorities, as well as local government authorities. For example, community respondents said that there were some issues that were outside the jurisdiction of their local VDC office; the only way to seek justice was to take the case to court. However courts are at the higher, district-level, where respondents felt rulings are always in favor of the BNP.[33] The BNP was also found to have disputes with community forest user groups (CFUGs) over the use of forest-related resources such as timber and firewood. Tensions continued to exist for *Mukta Kamaiyas* and the landless population, as their grievances remained unaddressed by the local authorities. These people were forced to live in makeshift huts, resulting in tensions between them and local communities over use of

[28] KII with civil society, male, Bardiya, 19/01/2015; KII with business community, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015
[29] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015
[30] KII with security provider, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015; KII with government authority, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Bardiya, 19/01/2015
[31] KII with security provider, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015; KII with government authority, male, Bardiya, 20/01.2015
[32] USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Rapid Conflict Assessment carried out by Saferworld in February – April 2013,
[33] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015

local resources, such as water, firewood and cultivable land.[34] The recent floods in Bardiya (Fall 2014) seemed to have aggravated the existing tensions, with disputes about ownership of fallen trees, and who could use them for firewood or timber purposes.[35]

Role of youth

Most of the youth were said to be migrating (seasonally or for longer periods) to countries such as India (seasonal), Gulf countries, Malaysia, and Israel for employment opportunities. Some of them were also said to be travelling to Nepalgunj, Banke on a daily basis for work. Unemployment was still cited as a major challenge for youth and respondents felt that young people turned to "anti-social behavior"[36] as a result of idleness and lack of education, which subsequently resulted in unemployment and/or lack of willingness to find employment. This reportedly often meant that they were taking drugs, or were involved in smuggling contraband, such as drugs, timber, sand, and stone to India.[37] However, a few respondents did also note that some youth were involved in social activities (sports, music, etc.) through various youth clubs, and were involved in community-based organizations working on community development and contributing to overall peace.

Dang

Political Tension, conflict and/or violence

In contrast to the previous conflict assessment, two thirds of the interviewed informants believed that the political tension, conflict and/or violence in the district had declined over the last six months. Most attributed this decline to the absence of tensions or clashes between various political parties and to fewer *bandhs*. A topic of great interest of the people of Dang was the promulgation of the constitution. At the community level, there was discussion over whether or not the constitution would be promulgated and the possible implications of the promulgation. Reportedly, men are discussing the issues related to constitution more than women. Furthermore, women who are discussing the constitution are only doing so amongst other women, and don't have these discussions with men.

Several informants, however, did mention a *bandh* that was recently called by the 30-party alliance, which almost resulted in violent clashes between the organizers enforcing the *bandh* and those opposing it. Reportedly, the group opposing the *bandh* comprised of members of the business community and local youth. The police played a vital role in averting a clash between the two sides. Later, the two sides negotiated and called off the *bandh* earlier than planned.[38] Several informants highlighted the fact that the case was settled without any violence, and claimed that the political situation in the district must, therefore, be harmonious.

[34] GD with youth, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015; 2 separate KIIs with civil society, males, Bardiya, 19/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Bardiya, 19/01/2015

[35] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 18/01/2015; KII with local government authority, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015

[36] Anti-social behavior constitutes drug abuse, smoking, increased consumption of alcohol, teasing girls and women, forming youth gangs, playing cards and not searching for employment.

[37] GD with community members, males and females, Bardiya, 17/01/2015; KII with security provider, male, Bardiya, 20/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Bardiya, 19/01/2015

[38] The *bandh* had been scheduled for 8am-5pm. However, after the negotiation, it was called off at 1pm.

Informants were divided over how the public perceived politicians. While about 60 percent believed the perception remained the same as six months ago, the rest thought that politicians were viewed negatively by the public. The negative perception mainly stemmed from the politicians' inability to deliver the constitution and the perennial power struggle amongst the major political forces.

Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Most of the informants in Dang believed that identity-based tensions in the district had decreased. They thought that identity-based relations had remained the same or even improved. There were, however, several references to religious conversion, with some level of apprehension. A few informants said that Christian missionaries were persuading people by providing false hopes and assurances, and then converting them into Christianity.[39] References were also made to the "chariot rally"[40] organized by the RPPN, who were demanding that Nepal be declared a Hindu State. Neither religious conversions nor the Hindu-led activities, however, resulted in clashes and, in general, there were no reports of any overt opposition to such activities.

The issue of federalism was reportedly not as divisive as before either. People attributed these changes to the fact that the major political parties both at the national and local level were no longer bringing up the issues of federalism as they had done previously.

Crime and armed group-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Unlike the previous assessment, most informants believed that criminal activities had decreased over the past six months. This perceived decrease in criminal activities was mostly attributed to more responsive policing. Motorbike thefts, however, were reportedly on the rise in the district. Furthermore, cases of drug smuggling (mainly marijuana and hashish) and using women as carriers has continued. These drugs are reportedly brought in from adjoining hill districts, such as Rolpa and Rukum. Sporadic cases of suicides, rape, and robbery were mentioned by informants. Reportedly, youth are most involved in criminal activities and their involvement was attributed to the lack of gainful employment opportunities in Dang.

Other security issues, including SGBV

Most of the informants believed that other security issues, including SGBV, had worsened over the past six months in Dang. Most informants mentioned the rise in rape cases. They reported these impressions are based on what they have heard, read, or watched in the news and possibly rumors. There is, however, uncertainty over whether the actual number of rapes had increased or whether the reporting had increased. Domestic violence and VAW were also reportedly rife in Dang. Female victims of gender-based violence are increasingly opting to travel to foreign destinations in order to escape the abuse in their households. These women are helped to migrate by civil society organizations, which reportedly come to rescue and assist these victims. Another notable comment was about the increasing willingness of victims to reach out to the police for assistance, due to the support of these civil society organizations. In addition to the support received from these organizations, the overall

[39] KII with civil society, female, Dang, 14/01/2015; KII with journalist, male, Dang, 14/01/2015;

[40] A ten-day long rally (24th Dec 2014 -2nd Jan 2015) was organized by RPPN. The rally commenced from the eastern most zone, Mechi, and ended in the western most zone of Mahakali. The east-west rally was organized to demand for the re-return of Nepal from a secular to a Hindu State.

impression shared by respondents was that the police are more responsive compared to previous years.

Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Informants were divided over the issue of resource-based tensions, conflict and/or violence in Dang. While a little less than half of the respondents in Dang believed that the tensions had increased over the last six months, the others thought that they had either remained the same or decreased. Those that believed that the tensions had surged highlighted the present tensions between local communities and cement factories in Dang, which reportedly extract natural resources and pollute the local environment. Illegal logging and extraction of sand and stone in Dang was also reportedly on the rise. Several informants also mentioned tensions over water resource management between riverside communities (up- and down-stream) in Dang, and also between members of the same community over use of water for irrigation purposes. There were, however, no reports of clashes or violence resulting from the mentioned tensions or conflicts over resources.

The role of youth in tensions, conflicts and/or violence

There is a perception amongst inhabitants of Dang that the youth in the district are increasingly going abroad either for higher education and/or employment. While only a handful of youth manage to go abroad to pursue higher education, most youth, due to lack of employment opportunities in Dang, are compelled to migrate to various foreign destinations in the Gulf or to India.

Youth are also affiliated with political parties and are engaged in their parties' political activities. The recent *bandh* was highlighted by a few informants as an example of how the youth are involved in political activities; some were involved in enforcing the *bandh*, while others were protesting against it. Youth were also noted as engaged in mediating between the *bandh* enforcers and the opposition.[41]

Youth are also perceived to be linked with crime, drug abuse, and idleness. While several informants mentioned how youth were engaged in criminal activities (e.g., robbery, theft, and drug abuse), others also mentioned that many youth could often be seen congregating in local vicinities chit-chatting, loitering around aimlessly and playing cards or *carom-board*.[42]

Informants also highlighted cases of youth forming youth networks in the district and engaging in productive activities. A few informants claimed that Dang was the only district where a District Development Committee had initiated and facilitated the formation of a district-level youth network and provided a physical space for the network. There is also a youth forum.[43] Youth are reportedly interested in local economic development, by generating income through livestock farming and other small businesses.

[41] KII with civil society, female, Dang, 14/01/2015; KII with government authority, male, Dang, 14/01/2015
[42] Carom is a popular board game in South-Asia.
[43] Various informants mentioned of the existence of "*yuwa sanjal*" (youth network) which is supported by the District Development Office and engaged in youth empowerment activities. NGOs are also reportedly working with this forum in youth empowerment issues.

Surkhet

Political Tension, conflict and/or violence

Most of the informants in Surkhet believed that the level of political tension had remained unchanged over the last six months; while some thought it had increased and others thought it had decreased. Despite this variance in perceptions, there were no explicit reports of political tensions or clashes between any of the political parties. Instead, there was mention of collaboration between various political forces dispensing relief to the flood-affected victims in the district.[44]

The promulgation of the constitution was considered a main concern for the people of Surkhet, according to most respondents. Activities were organized by various groups to pressure the CA members to deliver the constitution on time. There was, however, great concern over the possibility of protests and *bandhs* that could be organized by various political groups in support of or against the issues related to the constitution drafting process. Several informants indicated that 'Biplav'-led CPN Maoist, a breakaway faction of the UCPN (M), was potentially a more aggressive and destabilizing element in the near future.[45]

A majority of the informants also indicated that the public opinion of political parties had remained unchanged over the last six months. Some respondents believed that, given the positive contribution political parties had made in the recent relief and rehabilitation of flood victims, they were viewed in a positive light.[46] Others believed that people remained neither supportive/excited nor unsupportive/frustrated with political parties. They pointed to the fact that neither was there any overt support in terms of proclamations or activities for the parties and nor were there any protests or opposition voiced against them.[47]

Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Informants were evenly divided over their opinion about identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence in the district. While some asserted that it had increased over the last six months, others believed that it had remained the same or decreased. Most informants highlighted the fact that Surkhet was a district inhabited by many ethnic and religious groups and there were no reports of tensions between any of them. One informant asserted that identity-related activities were ongoing in the district, including the RPPN campaigning for the reinstatement of a Hindu State with a constitutional monarchy, or Dalit movements that called for more political rights and inclusivity.[48] Such activities reportedly were being carried out unopposed by other groups.

There was, however, a certain scenario highlighted by informants that they believed could stoke tensions in the future. If new federal units are set up, then Surkhet residents wanted to

[44] A major flood during the monsoon season (during the month of August 2014) had displaced a few thousand people in Surkhet District and rendered them homeless. Available at - http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/MDRNP007EPoA_DREF.pdf

[45] KII with security provider, male, Surkhet, 14/01/2015; KII with journalist, male, Surkhet, 14/01/2015

[46] KII with government authority, male, Surkhet, 14/01/2015; KII with journalist, male, Surkhet, 14/01/2015

[47] KII with government authority, male, Surkhet, 16/01/2015; GD with community members, males and females, Surkhet, 15/01/2015

[48] KII with educator, male, Surkhet, 16/01/2015

retain Surkhet as the headquarters of the new federal unit. If that changed, then informants believed that it could ignite tensions.[49]

Crime and armed group-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

The perceptions about crime in the district were almost equally divided between those who believed that criminal activities had increased in the last six months and those who believed that they had remained the same or decreased. Cases of sporadic burglary, robbery, suicide, drug trafficking and abuse were reported, as well as children being used to burglarize homes in the urban areas of Surkhet (particularly Birendranagar). Several informants, however, said that there was an absence of organized crime in the district.

There was a new trend reported in the district, whereby middle-aged women were being duped by persons posing as religious teachers/leaders (gurus). Many informants brought up how some middle-aged Hindu women in the district were becoming disciples of gurus.[50] These women were allegedly being both sexually and financially exploited by these gurus. An example told by several informants involved one such guru who demanded money from one of the women disciples; she willingly complied and handed over a hefty amount to the guru.[51] Later, this woman apparently committed suicide after tensions erupted in her family over the disbursement of the hefty sum to the fraud.

Other security issues, including sexual and gender-based violence

While half of the informants believed that other security issues including cases of domestic violence, SGBV, and VAW had increased in the last six months, the other half believed that the situation remained the same as before. While most cases involved female victims, one informant indicated that young boys and men in the district were becoming increasingly vulnerable to SGBV as well.[52] Reportedly, young boys (11-19) residing in school dorms and other non-affiliated hostels were becoming victims of sexual abuse, but such cases are seldom reported due to fear of stigmatization. It was perceived that older boys living in the hostel were abusing the younger boys. Also, migrant male workers are reportedly being physically and mentally abused by their wives, who, informants reported, in most cases, were in extra-marital affairs.

Several informants also stated that cases of child marriages in the district had surged.[53] The reason they were hardly reported to the authorities was that they were often done with the consent of the families.

Chhaupadi is reportedly rampant in Surkhet. Feminists and human rights activists are condemning this exclusionary practice as a violation of women's and human rights, and are campaigning against it since the practice is putting women at risk. During *chhaupadi*, women are most vulnerable to sexual abuse, as well as attacks from animals and insects.

[49] KII with educator, male, Surkhet, 16/01/2015; KII with security provider, male, Surkhet, 14/01/2015
[50] These gurus were called *Baba*. While some women were following these *Babas* with the knowledge and consent of their family members, others were doing it secretly.
[51] KII with educator, male, Surkhet, 16/01/2015; KII with journalist, male, Surkhet, 14/01/2015; KII with journalist, female, Surkhet, 14/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Surkhet, 16/01/2015
[52] KII with lawyer, female, Surkhet, 14/01/2015
[53] KII with Journalist, male, Surkhet, 14/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Surkhet, 16/01/2015; GD with community members, males and females, Surkhet, 15/01/2015

Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Unlike in the previous assessment, more than half of the informants believed that resource-based tensions had increased in Surkhet. Informants mentioned sporadic timber smuggling, and sand and stone extraction, which fuelled tensions between the local communities and those extracting these resources, who were generally seen as non-local. The major tension, however, is amongst victims of the recent floods (Fall 2014) themselves, as well as between victims and authorities. Reportedly, there were severely-affected flood victims who were displaced after losing their homes and land due to the floods and are living in make-shift shelters. Other victims were only partially affected. Tensions arose over the identification of the severely-affected flood victims and subsequent receipt of relief and rehabilitation support from the state. Both partially-affected and severely-affected victims claim to be victimized by the floods and lay claim to support from the state. The other tension lies between the state authorities and the flood victims who are encroaching on conserved forest areas. The forest authorities want to keep these victims out of the conserved forest areas, while the victims feel entitled to that space following their loss.

The role of youth in tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Unemployment, crime, migration, and drug/alcohol abuse are the four main issues linked to youth in Surkhet. Although these issues may appear disparate, the informants maintain that they are very much interlinked.[54] Chronic unemployment in the district is pushing youth to turn to crime. In the absence of gainful opportunities, youth get frustrated. Those who are able to, opt for migration; while those who cannot migrate are reportedly more likely to resort to crime and indulge in drug abuse. The societal tendency to view youth as immature and inexperienced is reportedly creating further barriers for the youth.[55] Although youth are interested in entrepreneurial activities, their enthusiasm is dampened by the lack of support systems in place for them, such as banking loans or government policies.

Kanchanpur

Political-based tensions/conflicts and violence

Similar to previous assessments, a key topic of political debates and discussions in Kanchanpur was the drafting of the constitution. However, the majority of informants reported that there haven't been any significant changes in terms of political causes or frictions that would have had an impact on local peace and security. Respondents highlighted that central-level political debates and discussions affected local dynamics. Most felt that local political actors would act upon decisions and debates that their central-level political members had made. Most of the community-level respondents expressed that they have an increased awareness of political issues and are less likely to be influenced by political parties to participate in potentially violent protests and rallies, compared to 2011/2012. They showed a lack of faith in their political leaders; they felt the political leaders were unable to deliver on their promises.[56] However, it was unclear from their responses whether, if presented with an opportunity, they would or would not participate in a political rally or protest organized by a party they support. Youth community members expressed frustration towards political parties

[54] GD with youth group, males and females, Surkhet, 15/01/2015; KII with lawyer, female, Surkhet, 14/01/2015
[55] KII with educator, male, Surkhet, 16/01/2015
[56] GD with community members, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015

and were unhappy with the government's inability to create employment opportunities. They felt that this, in turn, pushes young men and women to migrate abroad, and those that are left behind either get into criminal activities or are used by political parties.[57] However, some KII respondents held a more positive outlook towards political actors, and felt that at the local level they have been able to resolve disputes, political and others, in a non-violent manner.[58] They also highlighted that political tensions were due to disagreements between political parties about federalism, and that political consensus would lead to long-term peace.

Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Similar to other districts, respondents reported that identity-related tensions in Kanchanpur had decreased in general compared to the previous year. However, the majority of them expressed that federalism was inextricably linked with identity-based issues and discussions around federalism and the constitution would inevitably lead to tensions. In particular, respondents felt tensions were high between supporters of the *Akhanda Sudur Paschim* movement and supporters of the *Tharuhat* movement. A Facebook page for *Akhanda Sudur Paschim* was mentioned by some respondents as evidence of the growing tensions, as the nature of discussions and increasing number of members on the page reflect the polarized views of locals.[59] Similar to political tensions, most respondents felt that local dynamics are affected by central-level political discussions on federalism. Some KII respondents also discussed a recent rally organized by RPPN, which was a nation-wide political program.[60] In particular, people spoke about the use of a cow statue during the rally to reflect the party's stance on pro-Hinduism. The statue was left in Kanchanpur as the rally ended there, which led to discussions on what to do with the statue afterwards. This was perceived as a potential trigger for ethnic tensions.[61]

In contrast, many respondents also noted the increase in the spread of Christianity, thinking that it would lead to tensions in the future. One recent local example was of two local girls who had gone missing, one of whom was having a relationship with a local Christian pastor. Other community members began cautioning those who had converted to Christianity that this could happen to their female family members as well.[62] However, this account has not been verified by the security providers, as the case was still under investigation at the time of data collection.

Community members and a few KII respondents also highlighted the existing challenges around caste-based discrimination; they felt that such discrimination had been contributing to identity-based tensions. Reportedly, Tharu and Dalit communities, in particular, are facing

[57] GD with youth, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015

[58] Two separate KIIs with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015; KII with government authority, male, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015

[59] KII with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 14/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015

[60] RPPN organized their 'Mechi - Mahakali chariot procession' with the objective to cover all five development regions of Nepal and to revive Nepal as a Hindu state whilst calling out for national harmony. It was a 10-day long political procession where a statue of a cow was used to project the image and objective of the party's political and identity-based stance.

[61] KII with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 14/01/2015; KII with civil society male, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015

[62] KII with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015

discrimination based on caste and ethnicity, and some of the respondents suggested that this was the reason why they were choosing to convert to Christianity.[63]

Crime and armed groups-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Criminal activities were mostly reported as remaining unchanged in the past six months. However, community members and some KII respondents thought drug trafficking and abuse have increased. VDC-level community members mentioned that they reach out to community police for their local security provisions.[64] The majority of respondents cited close proximity with the Nepal-India border as a key factor in trafficking of drugs, timber and human trafficking, especially of women and young girls. Most of the community members and KII respondents felt that it was young men who were most involved in such crimes. While they also argued that lack of employment opportunities and political mobilization[65] was forcing them to criminal activities, some of the young community members themselves felt that often young men were used by organized criminal groups to carry out such activities, and in many cases they receive political protection for their cooperation.[66]

Other security-related issues, including SGBV

Similar to other districts and the previous assessments, violence against women and SGBV was statically reported widely in the district by all respondents. Cases of domestic violence, rape and sex trafficking of women and girls were frequently mentioned.[67] Cases of GBV linked to identity were also mentioned. One example provided was a case involving a Tharu woman, who was repeatedly raped for three years by her employer, a Hill Brahmin man. She approached a local NGO for support only after she became pregnant. However, not much could be done, as the alleged perpetrator sent her to India, where she was reportedly raped again. She has since returned to Nepal and is staying in a shelter-home run by an NGO that works on the rescue and rehabilitation of women who have been trafficked.[68] Community members and a few KII respondents highlighted that the alleged practice of witch-craft was seen as another SGBV issue, along with *Chhaupadi*.

Unemployment along with the resulting labor migration, especially among youth, was highlighted as a major concern. Migration was cited as a cause for increasing the vulnerability of women to SGBV, particularly of sexual harassment and domestic violence, while male family members were abroad for longer periods of time. Suicide was also mentioned as a trend that was increasing, similar to previous assessments, but the causes of this reported trend is still unclear.[69] While there was speculation that some suicides resulted from domestic violence and caste-based discrimination against Dalit and Tharu communities, it is still unclear as to why the overall suicide rate may be increasing. Overall, community

[63] GD with community members, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015
[64] GD with community members, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015
[65] KII with regional-level civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015
[66] GD with youth, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015
[67] Two separate KIIs with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 14/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 17/01/2015; GD with community members, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015
[68] KII with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015
[69] KII with security provider, male, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015

respondents felt that the current security situation has improved and they attributed this to the presence of community police in their local VDCs.[70]

Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Similar to previous assessment findings, most of the tensions around resources were linked with disputes between CFUGs and the local communities. Community respondents claimed that the user groups were engaged in trafficking timber from the forests. The same community respondents were also unhappy with the strict rules the CFUGs enforced on the usage of community-owned forests.[71] They also discussed land disputes between villages that were close to the Nepal-India border, highlighting land encroachment from Indian communities as a cause for concern.

Role of youth

As noted in previous assessment findings, youth were largely perceived as actors contributing to tensions, as they were reportedly involved in criminal activities. However, many also felt that a constant challenge for youth was the lack of employment opportunities, which was forcing them to go abroad for work and/or get involved in criminal activities.[72] Some of the respondents also highlighted that youth have been engaged in positive activities, such as joining local youth clubs and contributing to the overall development of their communities.[73] Political mobilization of youth was seen as one of the biggest limitations to their development, as most of the respondents perceived that they were being mobilized to carry out violent activities on behalf of political parties.

Kailali

Political-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Similar to the previous assessments, political tensions were mostly linked with CA-related issues. Within the constitution drafting process, the majority of respondents highlighted federalism as the main debate present in the local political discussions, specifically the *Akhanda Sudur Paschim* movement. Some respondents also discussed the perceived lack of development, linking it to the political actors' failure to fulfil their promises and address grievances underlying the conflict.[74] While political tensions seemed to have decreased compared to the previous year, the outlook on political actors was found to be increasingly negative. The overall sentiment was that people have no faith in political parties, or their leaders, to deliver development and long-term peace. At the community level, respondents felt discouraged to even discuss political issues, doubting their political representatives.[75] Women's political participation was also questioned by respondents, as they claimed that it

[70] GD with community members, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015
[71] GD with community members, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015
[72] GD with community members, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Kanchanpur, 15/01/2015
[73] GD with community members, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kanchanpur, 16/01/2015
[74] KII with private sector, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015
[75] GD with community members, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015

was relatively passive, and most of their involvement was related to demanding equal laws for women, such as citizenship rights.[76] While this is a very important aspect of political rights, respondents did not feel that it was related to one's overall political involvement, which shows existing gendered notions about political practices and participation. Some respondents also mentioned Biplav, the former UCPN (M) party leader, who recently separated from the party and formed a separate left-wing group that has been actively recruiting and training youth, and organizing public political speeches.[77] Respondents felt that his influence on the youth could lead to an escalation of political violence in the coming months.

Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

While the *Akhanda Sudur Paschim* tension was still an issue that was discussed by most respondents, some felt that ethnicity-based tensions also persist; however, they have decreased compared to the previous year. In particular, they discussed the backlash to the *Tharuwan* movement, which started the *Akhanda Sudur Paschim* movement and has gained increased popularity among Hill communities – mainly among the Brahmin, Chhetri and Thakuri communities of the Far West region. Using social media as a platform to disseminate their political messages, the *Akhanda* movement has gained more supporters.[78] Local respondents also mentioned the Kailali *Mahotsav* (festival) has been boycotted by Tharu communities for the past 2 – 3 years, which was highlighted as evidence of existing identity-based tensions. In addition to ethnicity-based tensions, regional unity was perceived to have gained popularity within Kailali as a result of the *Akhanda* movement mentioned above. Respondents perceived that people from Far West hill districts are more likely to be accepted as senior-ranking government officials than those from other communities. It was also perceived that government officials from a different development region of Nepal had relatively more difficulty being accepted by the broader community and stakeholders in Kailali as a result of Far West unity.[79] Caste-based discrimination, particularly against the Dalit and Tharu communities, was found to be significant in Kailali, as the majority of respondents mentioned this, including government authorities,[80] civil society,[81] and local communities.[82] It was unclear whether this had increased from the previous assessment, but was perceived to be persistent.

Crime and armed groups-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

The overall response was that crime had decreased and there was less insecurity compared to last year. This was directly linked to the absence of armed groups and the increased presence of security providers in the communities.[83] However, cases of robbery and theft were still

[76] KII with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015
[77] KII with civil society, male, Kailali17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; Regional-level KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 19/01/2015
[78] KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; Regional KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 19/01/2015;
[79] KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/01/2015
[80] KII with government authority, male, Kailali, 19/01/2015; KII with security provider, male, Kailali, 19/01/2015
[81] Two separate KII with civil society, women, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/01/2015
[82] GD with youth, men and women, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with community members, men and women, Kailali, 18/01/2015
[83] GD with community members, men and women, Kailali, 18/01/2015

reported and, similar to the previous assessments,[84] drug trafficking and drug abuse are still concerns, along with the trafficking of women and girls to India.[85] Male youth were mostly discussed as being involved in such crimes, particularly those relating to drugs and theft, while women and girls, especially Tharu women, were reportedly vulnerable to sex trafficking across the border.[86] Often, women were taken to India with the promise of a job, particularly as maids or salesgirls, or were lured into marriage, and then were reportedly sold into brothels in India or taken abroad to a third country to be sold again. Only a few respondents reported cases of human trafficking specifically for the organ trade, which was again reportedly taking place in India, but this was difficult to verify.[87]

Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence

Similar to previous assessments, community forests were highlighted as the main disputed resource in the district.[88] Tensions between CFUGs and local communities continued to exist, mostly concerning the user groups' strict usage policy, and local communities' perception that the user groups were involved in timber smuggling. Water-based disputes were also mentioned, particularly as a shortage of clean drinking water led to tensions between villages and neighbors over access to a water source and its usage.[89] Tensions around the landless population and *Mukta Kamaiyas* were reported to be insufficiently addressed, which has been causing people to create settlements in restricted areas. This has led to protests and minor clashes between government authorities and the landless population and in some cases the *Mukta Kamaiya* population as well.

Other security-related issues, including SGBV

Domestic violence and cases of sexual violence particularly against women and girls were thought to be high in Kailali.[90] Community-level respondents discussed that cases of polygamy, domestic violence against women and girls, and gender inequalities continued to exist.[91] In Pahalmanpur VDC, more than 150 women did not have citizenship, as a result of their husband's unwillingness to cooperate since they feared the women would work outside of the home in the public sphere, illustrating existing gender inequalities. Sexual violence, particularly rape, gang-rape and sex trafficking of young women and girls, was found to be prevalent in the district over the past six months.[92] Similar to previous assessments, migration

[84] USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Rapid Conflict Assessment, February 2013 – April 2013, carried out by Saferworld; USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Second Conflict Assessment, February 2014, carried out by Saferworld

[85] KII with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; KII with security provider, male, Kailali, 19/01/2015

[86] KII with private sector, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with community members, men and women, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[87] KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[88] GD with community members, men and women, Kailali, 18/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with government authority, male, Kailali, 18.01.2015

[89] GD with community members, men and women, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with youth, men and women, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[90] KII with private sector, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with community members, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[91] GD with community members, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[92] KII with private sector, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; Two separate KIIs with civil society, men, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015;

was a cause for concern, as respondents said that many youth travelled abroad for employment opportunities, which left mostly women, the elderly and children in the villages.[93] This was not viewed positively, as respondents felt that it caused a shortage of local human resources to carry out agricultural farming and hindered the pace of the local economy. This was also seen to have caused vulnerabilities for women and young girls, as often long-term absence of male household members created opportunities for others to target women and girls for rape and/or sexual harassment.

Often, community members approached political actors in order to resolve local disputes[94], as they felt that the existing justice delivery was either too time-consuming or too expensive. Often even when cases have been registered with the police, political actors, upon request from the disputants, would interfere with investigations to facilitate the process in favor of the disputant.[95]

Role of youth

In general, community members expressed a negative view of youth.[96] Community-level youth respondents felt that often they are used by political actors to participate in violent political protests and activities. They are contacted by the parties mainly for engaging in such activities without much interaction about other opportunities or engagements. Unemployment was a major concern for youth, and this was said to have contributed to their joining political protests and their migration abroad. Youth also shared that they are not interested in the agricultural sector, as they do not find it attractive or lucrative for their modern lifestyles. This encourages them to look for work in countries such as India, Gulf countries, Malaysia, Israel, and Korea. While youth, especially men, continue to deal with the district-level perception that they are involved in criminal activities, many of them feel that the government has not been able to provide them with adequate opportunities and/or enhance their skills to help them find suitable employment.[97]

Regional-level KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 19/01/2015; GD with community members, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[93] KII with private sector, female, Kailali, 17/01/2015; KII with civil society, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; KII with government authority, male, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with community members, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[94] Examples of local disputes that were reported were territorial, financial, criminal disputes such as robbery and theft, and domestic violence.

[95] GD with community members, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[96] GD with community members, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015; GD with youth, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015

[97] GD with youth, males and females, Kailali, 18/01/2015

Conclusion

Overall findings suggest that political tensions have decreased in the six SB districts, as a result of decreased political activities led by political parties. These political parties were found to be more active in the previous assessment, presumably since the November 2013 CA elections had just concluded. However, most of the respondents admitted that they had diminished hope and faith towards the political actors' ability to deliver a constitution, and to carry out broader development activities that were outlined in their election campaigns. Political debates were found to be losing steam, and identity-based tensions seemed to have decreased in two locations namely Surkhet and Banke but persisted in Kailali, Kanchanpur, Dang and Bardiya. Most of these tensions were linked to ethnic and caste-based discrimination rooted in existing social structures such as the continued discriminatory practices towards, in particular, the Dalit and Tharu communities. This includes, for example, not allowing the Dalit communities to use the same water source and/or enter Hindu temple premises. In the Far West districts, tensions between *Akhanda* movement supporters and *Tharuwan* supporters continue to exist, even though there was no reported violence. It was mostly men who were said to be active in these political and identity-based discussions and debates, and women's participation was thought to be limited.

Whilst crime rates seemed to have remained largely unchanged in terms of non-alarming trends, trafficking of contraband such as drugs and timber continued to exist along the border areas, along with a sustained trend of sex trafficking of women and young girls. Existing gender inequalities continued to emerge in discussions, especially while discussing citizenship rights. In parts of Kailali, women did not have access to their citizenship rights and were discouraged by their husbands to seek citizenship certificates. Most of the male community members were found to support the gendered practice of barring women to earn an income outside of the home. SGBV was reported as the main concern with many respondents discussing rape cases, trafficking of women and girls, sexual harassment, and domestic violence against women in all six districts.

Similarly, resource-related tensions largely remained the same as in previous assessments, with community forest-related disputes frequently being mentioned. However, in Surkhet and Bardiya, community members also discussed the damage caused by seasonal floods, and expressed resentment towards the government authorities for their lack of concern over the issue. Similar to previous assessments, tensions around unemployment and migration to Gulf countries, India, Malaysia, Korea, Israel etc. remained the same, as people felt that the government was unable to foster a favorable environment for economic progress and/or create employment opportunities for locals. It was felt that the potential of youth to positively contribute to Nepal's broader peace and development was insufficiently utilized, resulting in youth being attracted towards earning an income through illegal means, or leaving the country for better opportunities abroad.

Recommendations

This conflict assessment intends to tracks changes on conflict trends identified during the Rapid Conflict Assessment (RCA) and the following First and Second Conflict Assessments. It reports on changes that have since occurred (i.e., from the USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Second Conflict Assessment of February 2014). While most of the recommendations outlined in those reports remain relevant, a few additional issues have been outlined below based on the most recent findings.

Engage men and boys in VAW and SGBV awareness raising and prevention initiatives
This was mentioned in the previous report of February 2014 and continues to remain highly relevant at present, as findings show that SGBV and domestic violence continue to exist and have been increasingly reported in all districts. While there are many initiatives that are working on this issue, it is important to include men and boys in such initiatives as they are often perceived to be excluded from existing interventions. Interventions need to be designed to include both boys and girls and start at younger age, when gendered attitudes and behaviours tend to be shaped, in order to prevent future SGBV and VAW.

Explore innovative approaches to attract youth, both men and women, to involve them in local development
While youth have been engaging in local development, and there are many youth clubs at the VDC-level, an absence of better employment opportunities coupled with an increasing trend for migration has led many youth to leave their communities. This has led to deeply-rooted negative perceptions towards the youth and their contributions to society. SB should explore further ways to address the current unemployment and migration trends through innovative approaches that allow youth to actively engage in local development for a sustained period of time and improve the perceptions of them within their own communities. Use of social media and technology was often cited by the youth respondents as a way to increase their interest. Audio-visual materials and tools could be another means to attract youth participation and involve them in planning and implementation.

Engage in meaningful and positive discussions around federalism and governance with local communities
Identity-based tensions continued to exist and most of them were linked with the constitution drafting process and creation of federal states. While central-level political decisions and debates often shape local discussions and tensions, local communities do not have a platform to share their views and their needs. As SB continues its work on local governance, it would be useful to create awareness around federalism and governance, and how federalism would shape local governance mechanisms, should it come into existence. While the federalism model is still a contentious issue politically, it would be worthwhile to engage with local communities around discussions on the concept, best practices, challenges, and opportunities of a federal governance mechanism.

Increase awareness-raising initiatives to reduce and/or minimize caste-based discrimination
Caste- and ethnicity-based discrimination, particularly against the Dalit and Tharu communities, has continued to exist since the RCA. While the government has already officially outlawed such discriminatory practices, they are deeply rooted in socio-cultural

values and norms, and are, therefore, still prevalent in most of the SB districts, particularly the Kailali, Kanchanpur and Surkhet. It is not sufficient to only target these vulnerable communities in awareness-raising; instead, interventions must reach out to broader communities and get their buy-in in order to increase the uptake of the awareness-raising messages and prevent future discrimination. This also reflects the need to adopt a conflict-sensitive lens while promoting the rights of the vulnerable groups, and those that enjoy a relatively powerful status must also be included to ensure that they do not feel threatened by such efforts.

Annex 1: Methodology

For this conflict assessment, Saferworld proposed a methodology that was built upon proven methodologies and tools (used previously) for the RCA, the first quarterly conflict assessment and the second conflict assessment carried out in the framework of the USAID Sajhedari Bikaas project, and other contexts, and tailored to the specific requirements of the project. The assessment sought to follow up on trends identified in the RCA and the subsequent first and second conflict assessments, all conducted by Saferworld. The trends identified included political-based tensions/conflicts/violence; identity-based tensions/conflicts/violence; crime and armed groups-based tensions/conflicts/violence; resource-based tensions/conflicts/ violence; and other security-related issues including sexual and gender-based violence and the role of youth.

In order to collect the required data a mixed methodology was used:

Phase One – **Desk Research** – to inform and complement the assessment, Saferworld sought to review other sources of information, particularly those that track incidences of tensions, conflicts or insecurity, at the national and local levels, wherever applicable.

Phase Two – **Participatory Consultations and Research** – Adopting a Participatory Rural Appraisal approach, Saferworld utilized tools that were crucial to ensure that the research is as participatory as possible given the various social and cultural factors that could be obstacles. This phase took place at the headquarters of the six districts. Saferworld aimed to seek Village Development Committee (VDC) and municipality-specific information as much as possible. The principal research methods that were used in this phase emphasized gathering the perspectives of key stakeholders and informants who had a good understanding of the conflict at the national and district levels, including in the specific VDCs, and the linkages between them; as well as community perspectives, including those of specific sub-groups who are either marginalized or specifically relevant in the conflict and security context. A strong focus was placed on getting the views of youth, both women and men. Participatory Research Techniques were applied, which include the following:

> **District-level key informant interviews (KIIs)** – KIIs are considered the core category of interviews to provide district specific information, qualitative and quantitative data on perceptions on conflict, community safety and security issues. Moreover, they serve to provide crucial information to determine structural and proximate causes of tensions, conflict, insecurity and violence, actors involved, and an initial assessment of ongoing initiatives and stakeholders working on those matters. KIIs allow information to be elicited from target respondents who are strategically placed to speak on the relevant issues. The KIIs were designed to probe certain issues in detail that were of special interest to the purposes of this assessment, based on their responses to the quantitative questions (e.g. conflict/security trends, actors and responses, and individual and community priorities on conflict and insecurity). Semi-structured interview guideline questions were developed based on the questions designed for the RCA, and the questions were specifically tailored to suit specific interviews. The qualitative questions were integrated with few quantitative questions to track and quantify changes in the districts.

Approximately eight to ten KIIs were conducted in each of the six target districts. Interviewees were selected to represent a cross-section of administration, security and justice service providers, civil society and others well placed to comment on conflict and security dynamics, and the sample included target respondents who were best-placed to provide a deeper understanding of views and priorities in terms of conflict, community safety, security, and the debates around local-level elections. To the extent possible, the respondent sample aimed to accommodate a balanced representation of men and women.

Group Discussions (GDs): GDs with community representatives with a specific focus on the inclusion of youth took place in all the six target districts. GDs sought to provide qualitative data on public perceptions of conflict, community safety and security issues, and to identify the security needs of different groups and priority areas of intervention that could guide the project implementation. They also endeavored to identify key reasons for conflict, tensions and insecurity, actors and trends, as well as geographic differences within the districts/regions. GD guideline questions were developed by Saferworld in consultation with Pact, building upon the questions used for the RCA and the previously carried out conflict assessments to ensure consistency.

Two GDs were conducted in each of the six research locations. One with community members for which participants were selected to represent a cross section of Nepalis on the basis of both demographic statistics (e.g. caste, ethnicity, gender, age, socio-economic position, location) and occupation. The GD sample included participants from different VDCs/municipalities within the district to provide a deeper understanding of their views and perceptions. The second GD focused specifically on youth. The research sought to identify gender-specific perceptions and needs. The sample size of each GD was approximately six to eight participants.

Regional-level KIIs – Four KIIs were conducted in the regional headquarters of the Far-West and Mid-West Nepal.

S. N.	**Key informant Interviews (KIIs) at the regional level**	**Quantity**
1	INGO Regional offices - Mid & Far West	1
2	NGOs (regional offices/representatives) - Mid & Far West	3
	Total	**4**

District-level KIIs – A total of eight to ten KIIs was conducted at the district level, including respondents from different categories.

S.N.	**Key informant interviews (KIIs) at**	**Quantity**

	the district level	
1	Security provider	6
2	Business community (male/female)	6
3	Journalist/ media representative (male/female)	12
4	Civil society (male)	15
5	Civil society (female)	8
6	Local government authority	11
	Total	**58**

Group discussions – A total of 12 group discussions (two per district) was carried out. In each district, one GD included men and women youth only, the other comprised community members in general (not age-specific) from both sexes.

S.N.	Group discussions (GDs)	Quantity
1	Community members (males and females)	6
2	Youth (males and females)	6
	Total	**12**

Research Schedule

The research schedule was as follows:

Phase	Activities	Timeframe
Phase1	Desk research and logistical preparations	From December 22
Phase 2	Data collection in six districts	December 26 – Jan 8, 2015
Phase 3	Analysis of findings and production of first draft Feedback incorporated	Mid-February 2015- End of February 2015

Research team

Three dedicated teams were involved in the research, one team covering two districts.

- Two Saferworld staff members, led on methodology development, training, coordination of data collection, analysis and write up; and quality control;
- Six external local researchers for Phase Two
- Six external local coordinators for coordination of field interviews and discussions from their respective district for Phase Two

Three research teams comprised of a minimum of two members each were involved in the field research. Two Saferworld staff members assumed coordination responsibilities for the field research. They received assistance from a research advisor who supported the development of the methodology, desk research, analysis and report writing, and provided input to data collection for Phase Two and Three. The assessment was supported by senior Saferworld staff in Kathmandu and London, particularly during methodology development, analysis of findings, reviewing the initial draft report, and quality control.

Tentative Report Structure

The report is anticipated to be structured in the following way (however, depending on the district findings changes to the structure might have been required):

1. Introduction (1 page)

- Brief introduction to the *Sajhedari Bikaas* project, its objectives, and the purpose of the conflict assessment;
- Brief summary of methodology used, brief outline of report structure

2. Executive summary of findings (2 pages)

3. Context background (1 page)

4. Research findings (2 page per district), which will discuss the trend analysis from the previous rapid conflict assessment and the following two quarterly conflict assessments.

5. Conclusion and recommendations (approx. 2 pages)

Based on the findings, Saferworld will draw out key themes and will make recommendations on where key priorities and opportunities are seen for the Sajhedari Bikaas project to engage.

6. Annex: The annex will include the final version of the methodology.

Key principles

This research was guided by key principles underlying Saferworld's work:

Conflict and context sensitivity: Saferworld is committed to implementing the principles of conflict sensitivity in its own work, and to support other actors to operate in a manner that is conflict-sensitive. Thus, Saferworld applied the principle of conflict sensitivity throughout the methodology design, data collection, analysis and write-up. To do that, Saferworld was, for example, transparent about the purpose of the research; involved respondents and

researchers in a way that does not put them at risk; selected and designed questions in a way that would not increase tensions, fuel stereotypes, etc.; and ensure confidentiality and anonymity of respondents at all times.

Inclusivity: Inclusivity is fundamental to Saferworld's approach, and the views and perceptions of the most vulnerable groups in society (which often includes women, youth, elderly and minorities) are a key consideration for Saferworld. While there are limitations in terms of how many representatives from vulnerable and marginalized groups can be involved, Saferworld sought to ensure a good understanding of the perceptions and specific concerns of those groups.

Gender balance: The research team talked to both male and female respondents from different age groups, and strived to obtain nuanced viewpoints on the topic. However, the research team may not always have been able to get balanced involvement of male and female respondents, and may also have had to priorities informants who are better informed about the relevant issues, even if fewer respondents from some groups were heard as a result.

Participatory methodology: The diverse views and perceptions of respondents are crucial to getting a good understanding of the current situation, potential developments and opportunities for programming responses. To get this information, participatory tools have proven effective as they are suitable for obtaining rich qualitative data. Saferworld has identified and employed a limited number of tools that are designed to extract good information on specific issues where appropriate.

Annex 2: Guiding Questions

The following were the proposed guiding questions that were used during the field research:

Political tensions/conflicts/ violence:

1. What are the big things happening in terms of political discussions in your district? What do people get passionate/heated about?

2. Who are the main actors involved in such debates?

3. Why are these actors involved?

4. Has this led to tensions or clashes? Why? (Probe: What are the differences about?)

5. In the last six months how have these tensions changed?

   a) Significantly increased b) increased c) remained unchanged d) reduced e) significantly reduced, f) I don't know

6. Where and how frequently have these tensions occurred? Can you elaborate on the location? (Probe: please check if they have specific names of VDCs, ward #, etc.)

7. If the political debates lead to tensions, how is this now or will in the future affect communities? (Probe: Besides political actors, who are affected, and how are they involved?)

8. What is the perception of communities towards political parties?

   a) Improved over the last six months, b) remained the same c) Worsened over the last six months, d) I don't know

9. What is or could be the role of youth wings in such debates and events (or upcoming events)? How does it affect the other youth in the district?

10. How are these tensions addressed? (Probe: Who are the connectors? What are some of the positive examples of peaceful resolution to political tensions)

Identity-based tensions/conflicts/ violence:

11. What are the some of the things happening in terms of identity (Note: Probe on gender, caste/ethnicity, class, religion) discussions in your district? What do people get passionate/heated about?

12. Who are the main actors involved in such debates?

13. Why are these actors involved?

14. Has this led to tensions or clashes? Why? (Probe: What are the differences about?)

15. In the last six months how have these tensions changed?

    a) Significantly increased b) increased c) remained unchanged d) reduced e) significantly reduced, f) I don't know

16. Where and how frequently have these tensions occurred? Can you elaborate on the location? (Probe: please check if they have specific names of VDCs, ward #, etc.)

17. How have these tensions affected the communities and what could be the implications for the future?

18. What is or could be the role of youth in such debates and events (or upcoming events)?

19. How are the tensions addressed? (Note: Find out specific cases for case studies)

20. In your opinion, is the process of addressing such tensions inclusive? (Probe: are voices of youth, women, and members of marginalized communities including caste/ethnicity based groups, religions groups, among others, taken into consideration in such discussions/decisions? If yes, could you elaborate how this is done? If not, what are the implications of not involving such members, does it create more tensions? Please elaborate.)

21. Can you elaborate on existing local capacities for peace? (Probe: are there actors who are supporting peace? Who are they? How are they contributing?)

Criminal and armed groups based tensions/conflict/ violence:

22. What are the key issues, in terms of crime/ criminal activities in the area? (Probe: organized crime, drugs trafficking, human trafficking and new trends or dynamics of it, thefts, robbery, abduction, killing, tender process, white collar crime.)

23. Who are the actors involved in such activity? Who are perpetrators and how are victims in general (Note: no personal details, just ask about age, ethnicity, religious background, political affiliation, etc. Probe – If one specific category of people comes up frequently then inquire why so)

24. In the last six months has the level of crime changed?

    a) Significantly increased b) increased c) remained unchanged d) reduced e) significantly reduced, f) I don't know

25. Why is there a change in the level of crime (if there is any change)? If not, why not?

26. Where do these crimes take place? Can you elaborate on the location? (Probe: please check if they have specific names of VDCs, ward #, etc.)

27. Is there any particular crime/ criminal activity that is taking place more or is new to this area? Are weapons being used? If yes, what kind? Is this new to this area? Please elaborate? [*ask the respondent to provide examples and location*] [**NOTE:** for researcher to see if there is stats related to this available at the district police office]

28. How has crime impacted the overall situation in the district?

29. What is the state's response and what has been the result?

30. Is there any community response mechanism to curb crime? If there are any, can you please elaborate? (*Neighborhood watch type mechanisms, increase in private security providers?)*

Resource-based tensions/conflicts/ violence:

31. Are there any resource related issues, tensions within the area? If yes, why? [Note: *it could be land, forest, river, sand, border issues and urban resources such as schools, drinking water, irrigation, electricity, roads…*]

32. Who are the main actors involved in this?

33. Where do these types of tensions occur mostly? Why?

34. How have the tensions changed over the last six months?

    a) Significantly increased b) increased c) remained unchanged d) reduced e) significantly reduced, f) I don't know

35. What is role of youth in such tensions?

36. Are there any border related tensions in the district? (Applicable for all districts except Surkhet)

37. How have these tensions been addressed and who is involved?

38. What is unemployment situation in the district?

39. How are the unemployed coping with life? What sort of activities are they involved in?

Other security-related tensions/conflicts/ violence incl. SGBV:

40. What is your perception about the Rule of Law in this district?

41. Who would you go to in order to seek justice?

42. What are some of the informal justice mechanisms in the district? How do people access it? (Probe on challenges and barriers and if it is an inclusive process)

43. Are there any challenges in approaching formal and/or informal justice mechanisms, such as the courts and security providers? (Probe – what sort of barriers exist?)

44. How would you assess the response of security providers in the last six months? And why?

    a) Significantly improved b) improved c) remained unchanged d) deteriorated e) significantly deteriorated, f) I don't know

45. What is the scale of SGBV reporting in the district? (Note: Explain the distinction between VAW and SGBV)

46. Are there any other outstanding security related issues that you may want to talk about?

For youth-related issues:

47. What are the youth most interested in and what are they usually engaged in?

48. What is putting youth at risk?

49. Who are the vulnerable groups within the youth category?

50. How does the community deal with difficult youth?

51. Do youth have problems that they might not be able to solve on their own; and what kind of support they would need?

52. What do youth think about their role and acceptance in society?

53. How do youth think about their relationships with VDC secretary; security providers; service providers; justice mechanisms?

54. How do the generational gaps between youth and other age groups manifest itself? What could be the reasons behind it?