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## Sajhedari Bikaas Project

*Partnership for Local Development*

# Quarterly Conflict Assessment

(August 2015/January 2016)

*A perception assessment of conflicts, tensions and insecurity in Sajhedari Bikaas project districts in Nepal's Far West and Mid-West regions*



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*Assessment conducted by Saferworld for the Sajhedari Bikaas Project  
(Under Contract no. AID-367-C-13-00003)*

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# A perception assessment of conflicts, tensions and insecurity in Sajhedari Bikaas project districts in Nepal's Far West and Mid-West regions

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## Introduction

**This report summarises key findings covering the period between August 2015 and January 2016 from the final assessment in a series of conflict assessments carried out by Saferworld under the USAID Sajhedari Bikaas project.**

The project, which is carried out by Pact Inc. and funded by USAID, aims to improve the ability of targeted communities, in six districts of the Far West and Mid-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 understanding of the conflict environment, and to enable it to identify and react to changes in the context, a series of conflict assessments were carried out by Saferworld during the first half of the project. The assessments were conducted on a quarterly basis in six districts of Nepal: Kailali and Kanchanpur (Far West); and Banke, Bardiya, Dang and Surkhet (Mid-West). Rather than providing a repeated full analysis of the conflict situation in the districts, they focus on changes that occurred since the previous assessment (in this case, since December 2014 - February 2015 when the sixth conflict assessment was conducted) and are intended to provide an understanding of developments and trends over time. Where issues highlighted by respondents are relevant to a better understanding of the general situation and longer-term developments in the target districts, these have been mentioned.

For this final conflict assessment, 117 key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with representatives from the administration, security and justice service providers, civil society, business community, journalists, political actors and others well-placed to comment on conflict and security dynamics, mainly at the district and regional levels. Twenty-four (24) focus group discussions (FGDs) were also held with representatives from local communities and youth, mainly at the Village Development Committee (VDC) level (see Annex 1, Methodology). 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 on January 8-23, 2016, after the Constitution of Nepal was already finalised and promulgated on September 20, 2015. Based on previous assessment findings, it was anticipated that the promulgation of the new Constitution would result in some level of increased political and identity-based tensions at the district-level, which was evident by the events that took place just before the Constitution was promulgated and continued thereafter. The data collection was, however, not affected by the protests and blockade imposed along the Indo-Nepal border (more details of which can be found on the district-based findings in the report below).

An executive summary at the start of the report outlines key findings from the districts, highlighting the main commonalities and differences between the locations researched. This is followed by district-specific chapters that cover key issues and developments, focusing on the past year with specific emphasis from August 2015 – January 2016. The report concludes with some recommendations for Sajhedari Bikaas and USAID 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

AIM	Alliance for Independent Madhesh
BNP	Bardiya National Park
CA	Constituent Assembly
CFUG	Community Forest User Group
CPN-M	Communist Party of Nepal – Maoists
CPN-UML	Communist Party of Nepal – Unified Marxist Leninist
DDC	District Development Committee
FGD	Focus group discussion
FSW	Female Sex Worker
GMR	Grandi Mallikarjuna Rao
KII	Key informant interview
I/ NGO	International/ Non- Government Organisation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRTs	Participatory Research Techniques
RCA	Rapid Conflict Assessment
RPPN	Rastriya Prajantantra Party Nepal
SB	Sajhedari Bikaas
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SGM	Sexual and Gender Minorities
TJSC	Tharu Joint Struggle Committee
UCPN(M)	United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist)
UDMF	United Democratic Madhesi Front
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAW	Violence against women
VDC	Village Development Committee



## Executive summary of findings

Over the course of the assessments conducted for the Sajhedari Bikaas project between February 2013 and January 2016, respondents perceived a reduction in caste-based discrimination and increase in educational and employment opportunities for women. At the same time, identity-based tensions are perceived to have increased, as have rates of some forms of Sexual & Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and suicide.

Over the six month period examined for this assessment, the most notable development was the promulgation of Nepal's Constitution on 20 September 2015, followed by a series of protests and a blockade across the Terai, which increased ethnic identity-based political tensions in all six SB districts. Rape and sexual harassment continue to remain key SGBV concerns. Reported rates of domestic violence, prostitution (especially in Surkhet), and suicide (particularly in Bardiya) have increased over the assessment period. In other areas not many significant changes were observed during this assessment in the program districts compared to the previous period.

### Key Findings:

#### *Political Tension, conflict and/or violence*

Since the initial rapid conflict assessment conducted in February 2013, there were quite a few positive developments in terms of political and identity-based issues, such as the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal, which was thought by many respondents to have included more socially inclusive provisions than the previous constitution. However, political trends from all districts show that the drivers of conflict continue to remain unaddressed, particularly those around identity. For example, political tensions related to ethnic identity issues sparked in all districts during the six months prior to this assessment. Violence led to the deaths of 9 people in Kailali, 3 in Surkhet and 1 in Bardiya.

While the constitution was positively welcomed by many respondents, those respondents were not very familiar with the content of its provisions. Some level of apprehension was expressed across the districts about how effectively and inclusively the constitution will be implemented and the extent the political will exists to coordinate to achieve this.

#### *Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

In line with the increased aforementioned identity-based political tensions, the federalism debate on a multi-ethnic state vs. a single-identity state was still a sensitive issue for many respondents, particularly men. Beyond political identities, caste-based discrimination reportedly reduced compared to the previous assessment - even more so when compared to the Rapid Conflict Assessment. A majority of community-level respondents also perceived Christian proselytization as an increasing concern over the course of the assessments, contributing to social divisions due to the convert's sudden religious intolerance (including



towards socio-cultural activities). Similar to previous research reports, a majority of the converts were from Tharu, Dalit and Hill Janajati communities.

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

While crime rates have fluctuated over the past three years during the course of these assessments, youth unemployment and poverty have consistently been raised as key ‘push’ factors for many male youth encouraging them to join criminal groups and/or become involved in criminal activities. Over the past three assessments, respondents have reported concerns over organized criminal gangs in their communities. Respondents perceive that criminal activities increased significantly in Kanchanpur, including murder, suicide, rape, and trafficking of both drugs and humans, the latter of which often involved close family relatives. Over the course of these assessments drug-related crimes- particularly trafficking, abuse, and petty theft- were continually reported.

### *Other security-related incidents, including SGBV*

Between the Rapid Conflict Assessment in February 2013 and this Final Conflict Assessment, SGBV continues to be a major security concern of respondents. In all six districts cases of SGBV, particularly including rape and sexual harassment, continue to be reported. In previous assessments high rates of prostitution were reported in Dang, Banke, and Kanchanpur districts; this assessment found reporting of this issue to have notably increased in Surkhet district as well. Sex trafficking was previously reported in Banke, Bardiya, Kanchanpur, and Kailali, with Kanchanpur and Bardiya cited as a frequently used transit points. Cases of domestic violence continue to be driven largely by alcohol-related violence. Structural gender-based discrimination, such as forced sex-selective abortions in Bardiya, *chhaupadi* practices in the Far Western districts, polygamy, and dowry-related cases were also still reported. Reported suicide rates increased beyond that of the previous period- with 77 cases reported in Bardiya alone- perceived as the highest at any point over the course of the assessments.

### *Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Resource-based tensions were mostly related to natural resources such as community forests, sand and stones, and access to rivers. These cases were reported less in Surkhet and Banke during the Final Conflict Assessment than they previously were. 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. Additionally 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.

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

The lack of employment opportunities was identified as a major contributing cause to increasing migration rates among the local youth. Even when some local jobs (especially agriculture) were available, youth preferred to migrate abroad, even for more menial jobs. No

notable changes on migration and its social impact were identified between the fifth quarterly conflict assessment report and the current one. On the domestic front, livelihood and skills development based on market-economies along with facilitation of employment were seen as key means of ensuring youth engagement.

Across the assessments, opinions on the role of youth have varied. In this assessment, 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 an inability to find employment. That being said, there was also wide acknowledgement of youth as change agents within communities in the two most recent assessments.

## *District findings*

### **BANKE**

#### *Political tensions, conflict and/or violence*

Political tensions were not explicitly recorded in Banke in the previous assessment<sup>1</sup>. They were expressed during this research; however, opinions varied about their intensity. Tensions revolved around the Constitution promulgation and its text. Protests in Banke were mainly led by United Democratic Madhesi Front (UDMF) and Tharu Joint Struggle Committee (TJSC). Terai-based political actors were primarily dissatisfied with the delineation of federal provinces, citizenship provisions and parliamentary constituencies.<sup>2</sup> These provisions were deemed as discriminatory and thought to encourage inequality amongst the Terai-based political actors who were also supported by some Hill-based political actors, such as those belonging to the Rastriya Jana Morcha party (Chitra B. KC faction). A key cause for political dissent over the constitution was reportedly the backtracking of other political actors such as the Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML), Unified Communist Party of Nepal(Maoist) (UCPN(M)), Nepali Congress (NC) and Rastriya Prajatantra Party Nepal (RPPN) from upholding the 4-point agreement that was signed during the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Terai-based political actors expressed their political resentment towards CPN-UML, RPPN and UCPN(M) as having

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<sup>1</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

<sup>2</sup> 2 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016 ; KII with journalist, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Banke, 18/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Banke, 19/01/2016. For more information on the causes and concerns of Madhesh-based protests, please read Human Rights Watch report - "Like we are not Nepali": Protest and Police crackdown in the Terai Region of Nepal, October 16, 2015

<sup>3</sup> 3 separate KIIs with political actors, male, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016

betrayed the 4-point agenda and, therefore, encouraging the historical practice of discriminating against the Madhesi and Tharu communities.<sup>4</sup>

However, beyond a few political actors, journalists<sup>5</sup> and some civil society representatives<sup>6</sup>, this view was not held by a majority of community members<sup>7</sup> and other district-level key informants<sup>8</sup>. At the community level, both women and men from all age groups reportedly were compelled to participate in the political protests carried out by TJSC for fear of consequences which ranged from monetary fines (Nrs.500 – 1,000 per person) to physical punishment.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, almost all respondents felt that compared to other Terai districts affected by the UDMF protests, Banke was not as highly affected. A number of reasons were cited by various respondents, which ranged from Banke's comparatively lower Madhesi population, high levels of illiteracy and lack of political awareness among the majority of the Tharu population, perceived political and economic stronghold in the district held by the Hill-origin population and their political representatives, and no historical animosity between Madhesi and Pahadi communities. As such, the Constitution promulgation and its text was the most hotly debated political issue in the last six months in Banke, with both men and women belonging to different castes, and ethnic and religious groups discussing it frequently.<sup>10</sup> More than half of the total respondents expressed satisfaction with the constitution and were optimistic that it would establish peace and stability by addressing poverty, unemployment, and gender-based inequalities. However, the majority of them also raised concerns about the effective implementation of the Constitution and the absence of political will and coordination required. This was thought to be the next big political challenge and one that would require concerted efforts from all political actors and government authorities. Many respondents had limited knowledge about the constitutional provisions, especially at the community level, thinking that the new key provisions mainly focused on the increment of women's representation at the parliamentary level and allowing citizenship to be accessed through a Nepali mother.<sup>11</sup>

At the local level, women continue to face obstacles to being elected and receiving support from male community members, especially at the VDC-level elections. For example, in

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<sup>4</sup> 3 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016

<sup>5</sup> KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016;

<sup>6</sup> KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016

<sup>7</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Banke, 18/01/2016; FGD with community members, women, Banke, 19/01/2016

<sup>8</sup> KII with security provider, man, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 17/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Banke, 17/01/2016

<sup>9</sup> 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Banke, 19/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Banke, 18/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Banke, 18/01/2016

<sup>10</sup> KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; 2 separate FGD with youth groups, women and men, Banke, 18/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Banke, 19/01/2016

<sup>11</sup> FGD with community members, women and men, Banke, 19/01/2016; FGD with youth group, women and men, Banke, 18/01/2016

Titihiriya VDC, a woman was not supported by other male community members to participate as a candidate for a VDC- level election. Those community members boycotted her candidacy by refusing to be present at the VDC Council meetings, which led to her withdrawing her candidacy.<sup>12</sup> Such examples show that gender-based discrimination within political processes continues to challenge women's political participation and leadership.

### *Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

The majority of respondents in Banke felt that there are simmering tensions on identity-based issues, which are mainly linked to the political issues stated above, i.e., dissatisfaction about the new constitutional provisions expressed by the Madhesi and Tharu communities and political actors. While the level of violence in Banke district was comparatively much lower than that witnessed in Kailali, Surkhet and Bardiya over the past six months, tensions related to one's ethnic and religious identity were apparent. There were several protests organised by UDMF and TJMSC during this period in which the community members from Banke villages participated.<sup>13</sup> These findings correlate with the previous assessment findings, wherein it was discussed that the lack of recognition of the needs and concerns of marginalised communities would result in increased tensions. On a positive note, caste-based discrimination was thought to be a decreasing social practice; very few cases of discrimination continue to get reported. One reported example, however, was in Baijapur, where a Dalit family living amidst community members belonging to other caste groups had reportedly been facing caste-based discrimination from a few Brahmin families, especially when they were confronted while using community resources, such as the mill and water tap.<sup>14</sup>

Religious tensions, on the other hand, seem to have remained unchanged for many respondents<sup>15</sup>. While people acknowledged that there have been tensions in the past, especially Hindu-Muslim tensions, most of them did not feel that this issue would spark up again, reiterating the effectiveness of the inter-religious committee that was reported in the Rapid Conflict Assessment<sup>16</sup>. However, some respondents reported a surge of Christian conversion within the communities, increasing from levels reported during the previous assessments<sup>17</sup>. Additionally, while there is no religiously-based violence at present, such as physical altercations and retaliations, low-lying tensions between Hindu and Muslim communities came to light during a group discussion in a village<sup>18</sup> when a few Hindu

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<sup>12</sup> KII with community member, woman, Banke, 19/01/2016

<sup>13</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Banke, 18/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with community members, woman and man, Banke, 18/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Banke, 19/01/2016

<sup>14</sup> FGD with youth group, women, Banke, 18/01/2016

<sup>15</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Banke, 18/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, female, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Banke, 17/01/2016

<sup>16</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Rapid Conflict Assessment, July, 2013

<sup>17</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015; USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Fourth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August, 2014

<sup>18</sup> FGD with community members, women, Banke, 19/01/2016

respondents expressed their resentments towards Muslim respondents. The resentments mostly stemmed from a lack of understanding of the differing religious and cultural practices and were triggered by non-threatening stimuli, such as Muslim community members' unwillingness to purchase a calendar that showed pictures of pig farming or the Muslim communities' non-willingness to purchase meat from the local butcher. The Muslim communities had, on their part, never clarified their consumption of halal meat and the reasons behind the practice, among other points, which contributed to growing animosity between the community members. Such tensions need to be addressed as much of it is caused by misunderstandings between the different religious communities and can be resolved through dialogue and mutual understanding.

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

Similar to the previous assessment<sup>19</sup>, most of the informants believed that the level of crime in the district had increased over the last six months. Drug-related crime was found to be the most reported similar to the previous assessment. Worryingly organized crime was also widely reported during this period. The culture of gang-based organized crime groups was mentioned by many respondents- in particular, the murder of an organised crime gang leader, which took place several months before, was still creating fear among many.<sup>20</sup> The murder allegedly took place in broad daylight and was carried out by a rival gang leader who is currently in jail for the murder. According to some, the perpetrator is strongly linked with a major political party and receives political patronage even within prison. Political protection of such gangs, in addition to the latter's increased drug trafficking, was said to be the key factor encouraging youth to join such crime-based groups.

Additionally, the blockade in the Terai, spurred by agitating UDMF and TJSC party members, made the illegal trafficking of fuel possible.<sup>21</sup> While most of the fuel was transported to other places within Nepal- especially urban areas- people in Banke also felt obliged to purchase fuel at the much higher black market price.<sup>22</sup> Other contraband, such as small, handmade guns from India, was also said to be smuggled into Nepal.<sup>23</sup> While the police were unable to verify this perception among community members, a case of a local man from Bajapur village manufacturing guns was reported by many at the district level.<sup>24</sup> This case was reported in the local newspaper as well when the Central Intelligence Bureau (CIB) and Nepal Police apprehended those involved in the manufacturing. Apparently, the

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<sup>19</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

<sup>20</sup> KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; two separate KIIs with journalists, man and woman, Banke, 15/01/2016 and 16/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Banke, 15/01/2016

<sup>21</sup> KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Surkhet, Banke 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Banke, 18/01/2016

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with local security provider, man, Banke, 18/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Banke, 16/01/2016; FGD with youth group, woman, Banke, 18/01/2016

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

local man with gun-making skills came from a very poor family and was making ends meet for his family and is currently serving time in jail. The consignment was being delivered to two male foreign Muslim nationals whose identity was not revealed by the police authorities.<sup>25</sup> According to community members, the foreign nationals had provided required raw materials including gun powder to the local man in order to receive their consignment of 7-8 guns.<sup>26</sup> Aside from this, the radicalised Terai-based group Alliance for Independent Madhesh (AIM)<sup>27</sup> was reported to have increased their activities in Banke; for instance, some of the group's members were caught by security providers while they were undergoing training in a village within Banke.<sup>28</sup>

### *Other security issues, including SGBV*

Similar to the previous assessment tracker findings, SGBV was seen as being on the rise. While gender-based violence, such as domestic violence and violence against women and girls, is reported extensively, cases of sexual violence against women and girls, such as rape and sexual harassment, particularly in schools and public places, were said to be rampant.<sup>29</sup> There were also reports of sexual violence against boys reported during this period. A minor boy aged 7-years old from a Muslim community was allegedly raped by a young man of the same community. While initially the case reached the police, both families later decided to drop the case and withdraw their complaint for fear of community backlash.<sup>30</sup> In another rape case, a minor Tharu girl was raped in Titihiriya VDC by an elderly male of the same community, wherein the local traditional leaders were called in to mediate and arbitrarily announced that the rape survivor should be paid 80,000 Nepali rupees by the perpetrator without any other form of punishment; the case was not to be reported to the police.<sup>31</sup> In both cases, it is evident that sexual violence continues to be addressed through informal justice mechanisms at the community level and reporting against SGBV remains a challenge for fear of social stigmatisation and community backlash. There was also mention of prostitution in Banke with a few respondents stating that this is on the rise especially in Kohalpur Municipality area and nearby locations.<sup>32</sup> They further stated that it was mostly young

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<sup>25</sup> KII with local security provider, man, Banke, 18/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Banke, 16/01/2016

<sup>26</sup> FGD with youth group, women, Banke, 18/01/2016

<sup>27</sup> AIM is an alliance of Madhesi people, activists, parties and various organisations working for establishing an independent and sovereign Madhesh. Chandra Kant Raut is a Nepali citizen belonging to a Madhesi community who currently leads AIM who was arrested by the Nepali government and charged with treason in 2014. He was acquitted by a Special Court and currently lives in Rajbiraj, under close state surveillance. For more information about his work related to AIM, please read: <http://madhesh.com/aim/manifesto/>.

<sup>28</sup> KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Banke, 15/01/2016

<sup>29</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Banke, 18/01/2016; FGD with youth group, woman, Banke, 18/01/2016

<sup>30</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Banke, 16/01/2016

<sup>31</sup> FGD with community members, woman, Banke, 19/01/2016

<sup>32</sup> KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 17/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Banke, 16/01/2016

women and a few sexual and gender minorities (SGMs) who are engaged. With regard to whether the prostitution is forced or voluntary, most of the respondents felt that while some young women and girls were forced into this, there were also some women who chose this as a lucrative profession, as they were supposedly making more money than their counterparts with similar educational and financial backgrounds. Without police statistics a conclusive understanding remains challenging and further in-depth analysis would require more research.

### *Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Resource-based tensions were much less apparent compared to the previous assessments in Banke. While there were no reported cases of violence in this period, people in Baijapur expressed their concerns about the expansion of Banke National Park (BNP) since it is integrating parts of Baijapur community forest within the larger BNP. The community members felt that this integration will affect them as they would have decreased access to firewood and other forest resources, which could lead to future conflict over the use of resources.<sup>33</sup> Along with these sentiments was a low-lying concern, mainly from a few Tharu communities, that they were not able to profit from the usage of local resources they previously owned, such as small rivers and forests. This was particularly expressed in relation to the District Development Committee (DDC) taking over control of resources and levying taxes on those who wish to extract sand and stones from the rivers and timber from the forests, in comparison to previous times when Tharus - mostly men - would collect taxes.<sup>34</sup>

However, in some cases the DDC taking over the responsibility of oversight and management of local natural resources also mitigated tensions, such as that of Man Kholā (river) tension, which has been an on-going conflict between community members of Titihiriya VDC and the adjoining VDC of Bardiya district over the usage and control of river resources. With the DDC controlling the usage of river resources, this tension is perceived to have been mitigated by the respondents.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, a dispute resulting from the questionable boundary of the community forest in Titihiriya VDC and an adjoining unnamed VDC of Bardiya was resolved after the District Forest Office intervened and demarcated boundaries for the two separate community forest user groups.

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

Similar to the previous assessments, unemployment and subsequent migration to other countries continues to be the single-most concerning factor for youth and their role in

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<sup>33</sup> FGD with community members, women, Banke, 19/01/2016; FGD with community members, men, Banke, 19/01/2016

<sup>34</sup> FGD with community members, men, Banke, 18/01/2016; FGD with community members, men, Banke, 19/01/2016

<sup>35</sup> FGD with community members, men, Banke, 19/01/2016; FGD with community members, women, Banke, 19/01/2016

tensions and/or conflicts.<sup>36</sup> Similar to the previous report findings, youth- especially male youth- are seen to be highly vulnerable to involvement in criminal activities and/or to joining criminal groups.<sup>37</sup> Many young people are also reportedly addicted to drugs and were said to be caught in a vicious cycle of drugs and crime. Respondents felt that youth involved with drugs were either from very poor families or very rich families.<sup>38</sup> More research is required to understand the dynamics of drugs and youth.

However, similar to Surkhet, people felt that youth were also involved in creating awareness due to increased education levels among many youth.<sup>39</sup> One such change attributed to the youth was reduced caste- and gender-based discrimination among community members, particularly in relation to education and work opportunities.

Similar to other surveyed districts, many youth felt that they were not involved in consultations for the constitutional drafting process, nor had many read the Constitution.<sup>40</sup> They had very limited knowledge or a complete lack of understanding of what the Constitution entails. However, they did express their satisfaction over having a Constitution compared to not having one at all and were hopeful that the Constitution would bring more peace and equality to the country. They also expressed their hope that the Constitution would result in more employment opportunities for youth. If these concerns and aspirations are not implemented, the youth felt that it would result in a strong backlash against the state, with chances of violence recurring.

## **SURKHET**

### *Political Tension, conflict and/or violence*

While no significant political tensions were perceived to have taken place in Surkhet previously, the underlying causes and triggers of potential tension were clearly highlighted in the previous assessment,<sup>41</sup> including constitutional issues, such as Surkhet not being named the capital of a federal province and the proposed delineation of state boundaries, which would divided Surkhet and other Mid-West districts into two different federal provinces. These identified causes manifested themselves over the six months prior to this assessment, which led to Surkhet witnessing some levels of political violence, specifically during the Constitution promulgation phase. A majority of respondents noted that there were clashes

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<sup>36</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015; USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Seventh Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

<sup>37</sup> KII with civil society, male, Banke, 15/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with political actor, male, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with male journalist, male, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with journalist, female, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with security provider, male, Banke, 16/01/2016; FGD with community members, men and women, Banke, 19/01/2016; FGD with youth group, men, Banke, 18/01/2016

<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Separate FGD with community members, men and women, Banke, 19/01/2016; Separate FGD with youth groups, men and women, Banke, 18/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Banke, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Banke, 15/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Banke, 17/01/2016

<sup>40</sup> Separate FGD with youth groups, men and women, Banke, 18/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Banke, 15/01/2016

<sup>41</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

during this period demanding Surkhet be made the capital of a federal province and for the proposed federal demarcation not to separate some of the Mid-West districts across different proposed federal provinces.<sup>42</sup> The protests were apparently led by students and lecturers who were supported by local civil society and political parties.<sup>43</sup> Community members reportedly supported the protest and the overall cause to ensure that some of the Mid-west districts not be divided into different provinces.<sup>44</sup> The protest also took a violent turn in urban areas, mainly Birendranagar, which led to the death of three people.<sup>45</sup> However, this form of violence did not ripple down to the villages where community members reported no political violence. Of late, people stated that the tensions were reduced as a result of what was perceived as the government addressing the federal demarcation concern. Additionally, the blockade imposed in the Terai was not thought to have affected Surkhet politically as all respondents felt that there wasn't a significant Madhesi population in Surkhet who felt strongly about the perceived discriminatory constitutional provisions.<sup>46</sup> While many respondents felt that mostly men were involved in the political debates, they also acknowledged that women and youth are increasingly participating in such debates and discussions at all levels.<sup>47</sup>

The constitution was perceived as one of the most discussed topics in the six months prior to the assessment in Surkhet with the majority of respondents feeling positive about the new constitution. While many respondents both at the VDC level<sup>48</sup> and at the district

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<sup>42</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, men and women, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, men and women, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs held with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>43</sup> KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs held with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016

<sup>44</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth group, women and men, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016

<sup>45</sup> KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016

<sup>46</sup> 2 separate FGDs with community members, men and women, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, 13/01/2016

<sup>47</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, men and women, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, men and women, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, 13/01/2016

<sup>48</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, men and women, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, men and women, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Surkhet, 10/01/2016

headquarters<sup>49</sup> had not read the constitution, they felt that the provisions that were being articulated by the media and local civil society members were promising and encouraged more social and economic equality. Unanimously, all respondents felt that increasing the representation of women at all levels of government was highly positive, along with the provision to obtain citizenship from the mother's name. This development was cited frequently by a majority of respondents while discussing their opinion of political parties, which was found to be generally positive. However, almost all the respondents expressed wariness towards the implementation of the constitution and largely attributed the effectiveness of the implementation to political will and coordination, which was said to be key to ensuring peace and stability. While there were no explicit reports of intra-party political tensions, many civil society members and journalists discussed the tensions between various political parties in Surkhet over the control of resources and political decision-making.<sup>50</sup>

### *Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

In terms of ethnic identity, respondents felt that there were no tensions in the district, compared to the districts in the Terai, such as Kailali, Bardiya and Banke.<sup>51</sup> Many also highlighted that the previously reported resentments among the Buddhist community, in relation to the Kakre Vihar issue<sup>52</sup>, was resolved and there were no explicit tensions around it in the six months preceding the assessment. However, a few civil society members<sup>53</sup> and political actors<sup>54</sup> noted that people were increasingly beginning to self-identify along regional lines, i.e. *Karnali rajya* (Karnali Federal Province). While this was not thought to be of an immediate concern in the coming years, respondents felt that it could pose a threat in the future if such sentiments were stoked for political gains. On a positive note, the majority of respondents- especially at the community level- felt that caste-based discrimination had been

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<sup>49</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016

<sup>50</sup> KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, 11/01/2016; 3 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016

<sup>51</sup> 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, men and women, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with security providers, men, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>52</sup> In 2013, the Buddhist community in Surkhet carried out protests against the state demanding the installation of a Buddhist statue in Kakre Vihar forest area, which was declared a protected area by the government. A committee called Kakre Vihar Joint Struggle Committee was formed who spearheaded the protests. More information can be found in the USAID Sajhedari Bikaas First and Second Quarterly Conflict Assessments.

<sup>53</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>54</sup> KII with political actors, male, Surkhet, 12/01/2016

decreasing, which they attributed to the role of youth as social change agents.<sup>55</sup> As such, they felt that a growing number of youth do not practice untouchability and do not encourage caste-based discrimination within their homes or the community more broadly.

Religious proselytization was highlighted by many at the community level<sup>56</sup>, as well as at the district level<sup>57</sup>, as a cause of concern, which was not explicitly recorded in the previous assessments. While community members in general felt that it was not a threat to their social harmony and were accepting of all religious practices, some civil society members<sup>58</sup> at the district level felt that the process of Christian proselytization is harmful, particularly as the process was thought to be non-inclusive. An example<sup>59</sup> of such was the establishment of three separate churches where one catered to only Hill Janajatis, one only to the Dalit community and there was apparently one only Bahuns/ Chhetris attended. All these three were within Birendranagar Municipality. While the population of those practising Christianity was thought to be low at present, respondents felt that growth in the future could bring with it tensions as a result of differing religious practices. For example, tensions were apparently noticeable within families where there were some members who had converted to Christianity and some who were still practicing Hinduism—particularly during child naming ceremonies, marriage ceremonies and funeral rituals.<sup>60</sup>

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

While armed group-based tensions were thought to have been reducing in the last couple of years (as reported previously), crime was perceived as a key cause of concern, both at the district<sup>61</sup> and village<sup>62</sup> level. In particular, high levels of illegal alcohol production and sales, drug trafficking and drug abuse, burglary, theft, prostitution and suicide were mentioned as

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<sup>55</sup> 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, man, 10/01/2016; KII with local government authority, man, Surkhet, 09/01/2016

<sup>56</sup> 2 separate FGD with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with community members, woman and man, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; KII with local government authority, Surkhet, 09/01/2016

<sup>57</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with security provider, man Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>58</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>59</sup> The example was provided by a noted male civil society actor in Surkhet belonging to a Hill Janajati community and stated that this was from within the larger Birendranagar Municipality itself where these churches were established.

<sup>60</sup> FGD with community members, women, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>61</sup> KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, 11/2016; 3 separate KIIs with political actors, men, 12/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>62</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet 10/01/2016; 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016

causes of concern by the majority of respondents. The majority felt that such criminal acts were carried out by men- mostly young men. A peculiar case of burglary was mentioned in Dashrathpur by many respondents, in which a group of men dressed in women's clothing were robbing homes.<sup>63</sup> This case was still under investigation at the time of research and the local respondents were unhappy with the lack of progress. Lack of employment was cited as the main cause for young men to get involved in such crimes but when it came to drug abuse, the majority of respondents also believed that young women were also at-risk.<sup>64</sup> Reportedly, the Birendranagar airport and its surrounding area was a frequently used location for drug users, especially at night.<sup>65</sup>

While respondents did not mention the presence of organised crime in the district, they expressed fear of increasing impunity and political interference within criminal investigations as a cause for increasing crime rates.<sup>66</sup> There were speculations about political actors protecting criminal groups which allowed them to continue to operate illegal alcohol production and sales<sup>67</sup>, engage in drug trafficking and theft<sup>68</sup> and monopolise tender bidding processes<sup>69</sup> by threatening and intimidating people.

### *Other security issues, including sexual and gender-based violence*

While cases of domestic violence, particularly the physical and emotional abuse of women, continued to be reported during the six months prior to the assessment, other forms of SGBV such as rape, sexual harassment and prostitution were thought to have escalated.<sup>70</sup> There were quite a few examples of recent rape cases that were narrated at both the district and village level. One such case involved the rape and murder of a 7-year old female minor by two men in Neta VDC<sup>71</sup>; there were other cases of rape of a female minor in Latikoili and Kalyanpur<sup>72</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016

<sup>64</sup> KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>66</sup> KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>67</sup> KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>68</sup> KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>69</sup> KII with local government authority, man, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>70</sup> 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet 13/01/2016

<sup>71</sup> 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016

Yet another harrowing SGBV incident took place in Surkhet, which involved two boys, who without consent, filmed their sexual intercourse with a female minor in Kakrevihar forest area and reportedly shared with other friends via Bluetooth.<sup>73</sup> Coupled with cases of sexual harassment in public spaces, such as on local transportation, public roads, and in schools and colleges, the aforementioned incident had led to the development of fear among the local communities, particularly women and young girls who have to travel outside of their homes in order to complete their household chores and/or for their education.

Prostitution is not recognised as a legal profession in Nepal, although there are social harmful practices that compel women from a specific community<sup>74</sup> to engage in prostitution. Rates of prostitution were reported to be quite high in Surkhet, especially according to security providers<sup>75</sup> and civil society<sup>76</sup>. While prostitution was not mentioned by any community members, respondents at the district level expressed concern over the increase of female sex workers (FSWs).<sup>77</sup> They felt that this trend was increasing and there were mostly young women, some even minor girls, who were involved in this. They were said to be mainly operating along the highways, but also within the city itself. Poverty and lack of education and employment opportunities were cited as key 'push' factors that compel women, both young and old, to take up this profession. However, additional in-depth research was thought to be required by both the police and civil society respondents to better comprehend this situation. Early marriages continued to be reported during this period but these marriages usually involved the consent of the families either before or after the marriage and, therefore, were not reported frequently.

### *Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Respondents were divided over resource-based tensions. While community members in Dashrathpur felt that resource-related tensions had been increasing as a result of animosity over the usage of a community forest and access to the local market<sup>78</sup>, other respondents felt that resource-based tensions had decreased in the six months preceding the assessment<sup>79</sup>. This

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<sup>72</sup> KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016

<sup>73</sup> KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>74</sup> The Badi community living mostly in Surkhet, Kailali, and some in Dang belong to a specific Dalit community who travelled to Nepal from India hundreds of years back. The women were traditionally used as concubines in exchange for land and money by then rich elites. Since then, many felt compelled to resort to prostitution to make ends meet.

<sup>75</sup> KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016

<sup>76</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> 2 separate FGDs with community members, women and men, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with community members, woman and man, Surkhet, 10/01/2016

<sup>79</sup> FGD with youth group, men, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; 3 separate KIIs with political actors, men, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

is a marked difference to the previous assessment<sup>80</sup> wherein respondents felt that resource-related tensions had increased. While the flood victims of 2014 continue to live in dilapidated makeshift huts, there had not been significant protests around compensation during this period. However, this could change in the coming months when the monsoon season begins.

The tensions around the Upper Karnali hydropower project were said to have intermittently resurfaced during this period with a recent attempt to vandalise the Grandhi Mallikarjuna Rao (GMR) Upper Karnali Hydropower Limited office in January 2016, which was claimed by the Baidya faction of the Communist Party of Nepal – Maoists (CPN-M).<sup>81</sup> No significant damage was reported from this incident.

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

Similar to the previous assessments<sup>82</sup>, the main threats for youth remain unchanged, i.e. high rates of unemployment, crime, migration and drug/alcohol abuse. While most male youth are perceived to be at risk of all four, female youth continue to face the challenge of the lack of equal opportunities, including employment along with migration, and high risk of drug abuse. However, youth were also seen as social change agents by many during this research, especially at the community level where respondents felt that youth were the primary agents of change who have contributed to reducing caste-based discrimination.<sup>83</sup> Similar to older community members, most youth expressed contentment and satisfaction towards the new constitution, although many had not read it.<sup>84</sup> While the youth felt that they were not part of the constitution drafting process and neither were they consulted during the process, they nonetheless asserted their satisfaction towards the constitution explaining that it would provide for many development policies and schemes targeting youth- both men and women- in the days to come.

## **BARDIYA**

### *Political-based tensions, conflicts and/ or violence*

The impact of UDMF and TJSC agitation targeting the government in protest of the constitution was felt in Bardiya during the six months preceding this assessment. While the political parties such as CPN-UML, UCPN(M), and RPPN appeared to have amicable relations with each other<sup>85</sup>, there was, a clear divide between these political parties and

<sup>80</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

<sup>81</sup> KII with security provider, man, Surkhet, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Surkhet, 12/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Surkhet, 13/01/2016

<sup>82</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Rapid Conflict Assessment, July, 2013; USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015; USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Seventh Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

<sup>83</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; FGD with community members, women, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with community members, Surkhet, 10/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016

<sup>84</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Surkhet, 09/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Surkhet, 12/01/2016

<sup>85</sup> KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016;

political groups standing for ethnic identity.<sup>86</sup> Reportedly, this was mainly due to the differences over the same issues as highlighted in Banke and Kailali. As a result, there were some organised strikes and protests in Bardiya led by UDMF and TJSC, which also led to the death of a Nepal Police Constable in Mainapokhar.<sup>87</sup> Following the Tikapur incident in Kailali, there was fear that the unrest would spread in Bardiya as well given that the majority of the inhabitants are from the Tharu community. However, the violence subsided after the death of the police constable and thereafter no untoward incidents were reported in the district.<sup>88</sup> Some respondents including security providers mentioned that reduced securitization of their response towards the agitators helped in maintaining overall peace and security in the district after the Mainapokhar incident.<sup>89</sup> This was highlighted in relation to the August 24 incident in Tikapur, Kailali, which subsequently saw a heightened mobilization of security providers in Kailali, as well as other districts across the Eastern and Central Terai. Additionally, security providers further discussed the movement of a Terai-based secessionist group<sup>90</sup>, indicating that there was a threat of political violence in the future as the group was perceived to be currently expanding and was in the process of recruitment and physical training.<sup>91</sup>

While many welcomed the Constitution and viewed it as a monumental achievement in Nepal's stride towards a more inclusive and democratic polity, the majority of Tharu communities in Bardiya reportedly were not satisfied with this constitution.<sup>92</sup> TJSC, in particular, were unhappy with the constitution as they felt that it does not address the demands of the Adivasi Tharus. They previously jointly (along with other Tharu political groups such as Tharu Kalyankari Sabha) proposed a 3-point demand to the government: first, the proposed Province 5 be named as Tharuhat State and should comprise of all districts west of Chitwan all the way to Kanchanpur; second, parliamentary constituencies should be represented proportionally based on population; and third, inclusion of Tharu communities in

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<sup>86</sup> KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>87</sup> KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016;

<sup>88</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, sexual and gender minority, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>89</sup> KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>90</sup> The movement of AIM (Alliance for Independent Madhesh) is led by CK Raut who has been widely covered by the Nepali media. For more details please refer to- <http://madhesh.com/aim/manifesto/>.

<sup>91</sup> KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016;

<sup>92</sup> FGD with youth group, women, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

all federal and central-level administrative structures should be based on the total population percentage.<sup>93</sup> The TJSC leaders felt that unless these demands were fulfilled, Tharus would continue to oppose the constitution. Most of the respondents that welcomed the constitution, however, were mindful of the inherent challenges that lay ahead.<sup>94</sup> In particular, the implementation of the constitution was viewed as a major challenge. Sexual and gender minorities were highly satisfied with the constitutional provisions, because they felt that some of the issues concerning their status had been addressed such as the recognition of their gender by the state as citizens.<sup>95</sup>

### *Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Most of the respondents felt that identity-based tensions had escalated in Bardiya after the protests carried out by UDMF and TJSC. Reportedly, there was a palpable polarization between the Tharu community and Pahadi community after the Tikapur, Kailali incident. Closely linked to political tensions (mentioned above), the trigger for identity-based tensions seemed to have emerged from political differences between UDMF/ TJSC and the political actors leading the government who were part of the finalization of the constitution. This culminated in the Tikapur incident (August 24) in Kailali.<sup>96</sup> According to several Tharu respondents, following the Tikapur incident, there was an enormous amount of fear amongst members of the Tharu community, because they perceived the State (particularly the security forces) would retaliate harshly for the murders of the police officials.<sup>97</sup> That fear, reportedly, played a vital role in preventing the momentum of the TJSC and UDMF movement in Bardiya as many people, especially male Tharu youth, fled to India and other districts to escape the perceived retribution of the State<sup>98</sup>.

A majority of the respondents in Bardiya mentioned the rise of Christianity in the district and its implications on social harmony, which was similarly mentioned to be on the rise in the previous assessment.<sup>99</sup> Reportedly, mostly people from Tharu, Dalit and some Janajati communities were converting. While some cited the economic and educational incentives for

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<sup>93</sup> KII with political actor, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>94</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, men and women, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, sexual and gender minority, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>95</sup> Group KII with civil society, sexual and gender minorities, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>96</sup> KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>97</sup> FGD with youth groups, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, sexual and gender minority, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> FGD with youth groups, women, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, sexual and gender minorities, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016;

the rise in conversion<sup>100</sup>, others mentioned that people who were sick converted in hopes that it would cure their ailments<sup>101</sup>. Irrespective of the motives, however, the majority of the respondents perceived that the conversion was encouraging intolerance towards believers of their previous faith.<sup>102</sup> A case was mentioned by one respondent to highlight the tensions resulting from the recent conversions: “Reportedly a Hindu man on his death-bed had expressed his wish to be cremated as per Hindu rituals and his daughter wanted to fulfil his wish. The sons, who had recently converted to Christianity wanted to bury the dead father. The neighbors witnessed the tussle between the siblings and intervened and compelled the brothers to perform the last rites as per the Hindu tradition. The sons, however, refused to attend the ceremony which was performed by the daughter and they also refused to mourn according to the Hindu tradition. Later the brothers thrashed the sister accusing her of following satanic rituals and trying to deprive them of their Christian faith.”<sup>103</sup> Although there were no reports of outright hostility amongst believers of different faiths at the community level, several respondents portended a confrontation between the Hindus and the Christians as being inevitable in the near future.

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

Similar to the previous assessment, several respondents pointed to the open Nepal-India border as a factor contributing to crime in the district.<sup>104</sup> The open border reportedly facilitated criminals to slip across from either side, commit crimes and flee with ease. Reportedly, due to the imposed blockade, smuggling of fuel was rife in Bardiya during the assessment period and was mostly perceived to be conducted by unemployed male youth because the blockade spurred a huge demand for fuel and cooking gas.<sup>105</sup> The open border was also perceived to be advantageously used by perpetrators involved in human trafficking and smuggling, particularly of animal skins and bones, and timber.<sup>106</sup> According to the statistics provided by the Nepal Police, a total of 40 women and/or girls had gone missing from the district in the last six months out of which only 4 had been found.<sup>107</sup> According to a

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<sup>100</sup> FGD with youth groups, women, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>101</sup> FGD with youth groups, women, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, sexual and gender minorities, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>102</sup> FGD with youth groups, women, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, sexual and gender minorities, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016;

<sup>103</sup> KII with Civil Society representative, Woman, 21/01/2016

<sup>104</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

<sup>105</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>106</sup> KII with community member, woman, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, 22/01/2016

<sup>107</sup> KII with security provider, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

respondent working on trafficking issues<sup>108</sup>, women from Nawalparasi, Gorkha, and Ramechhap were being trafficked through Bardiya; her organization had already rescued 20 women, clearly indicating that women from outside of Bardiya are being trafficked.

While drug abuse among youth was thought to have decreased compared to the previous year, polygamy and early marriage were reported as other major trends in the district.<sup>109</sup> There was speculation that polygamy, extra-marital affairs and early marriage were mostly a result of people's access to social media. Reportedly, social media sites like Facebook and access to mobile phones with internet access were serving as platforms for the opposite sex to meet, as well as facilitating their relationships.<sup>110</sup> However, it is important to note that more focused research would be required to confirm such conclusions.

Although there was no mention of any armed group activity in the district, those subscribing to AIM's ideological beliefs of creating a separate Madhesh state were seen as a potential group that could take up arms in the near future to realize their agenda.<sup>111</sup>

Unemployment and alcohol consumption were also highlighted as major factors compelling people to resort to crime. According to the respondents, a wide range of individuals were committing crimes in the district, from children as young as age 10 to those older than 60.<sup>112</sup> While there were several speculations as to who was mainly engaged in crime and the reasons for it, security providers opined that poverty and lack of employment opportunities in Nepal were the leading 'push factor[s]' for people to become involved in crime while highlighting that there could be a few exceptions of educated people with more access to opportunities but involved in embezzlement and fraud.<sup>113</sup>

### *Other security-related issues including SGBV*

Similar to the findings of the previous assessments<sup>114</sup>, SGBV continues in Bardiya, especially affecting women, girls and sexual and gender minorities. Suicide, rape and domestic violence were the most widely reported issues in Bardiya. Reportedly, cases of suicide had risen in the district. According to statistics provided by the Nepal Police<sup>115</sup>, there were 77 cases of suicide alone in the six months prior to the assessment. Most of those who committed suicide were women from the Tharu and Madhesi communities. The statistics showed that Gulariya, Bagnaha, Bansgadi and Radhapur had the highest incidences of suicide. While the cause of the suicide is not confirmed in all cases, the security providers were of the view that the

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<sup>108</sup> KII with Civil Society representative, Woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>109</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; 2 separate KIIs with security providers, woman and man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>110</sup> KII with Political party representative, Man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>111</sup> KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>112</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>113</sup> KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>114</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Rapid Conflict Assessment, July, 2013; USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

<sup>115</sup> 2 separate KIIs with security providers, woman and man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

suicides were mainly due to extreme levels of poverty, domestic violence and depression.<sup>116</sup> Domestic violence was reported to be prevalent mostly in the Madhesi and Tharu communities. Respondents perceived that it was closely linked with the husbands' alcohol consumption and within the Madhesi community in particular that inadequate dowry was triggering domestic violence.<sup>117</sup> Likewise, a total of 18 rape cases were reported in Bardiya in the six months prior to the assessment.<sup>118</sup> Similar to previous assessments, SGBV reporting is usually undermined by the lack of survivors' willingness to report cases due to fear of social backlash. Most of the cases are settled within the community and mostly by the perpetrator and/or the family of the perpetrator providing financial compensation to the victim. Sexual harassment of young women and girls, as well as sexual and gender minorities, was also said to be rife in the district.<sup>119</sup> Female and gender-minority respondents specifically felt unsafe while walking on the roads during dark hours and were also facing harassment through anonymous phone calls and text messages.

While women, girls and sexual and gender minority groups are in particular affected by sexual harassment and other forms of SGBV, such as rape, almost all respondents felt that the security provisions within Bardiya had improved in the six months prior to the assessment compared to the previous year. Most of them attributed this to the Nepal Police and their willingness to closely work with civil society stakeholders in the district and the communities.<sup>120</sup>

### *Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Most of the respondents perceived that conflicts/tensions over resources had decreased in the six months preceding the assessment. This was in a way corroborated by the statistics provided by the Nepal Police. According to the Nepal Police, no cases regarding contention over resources were reported in recent times.<sup>121</sup> This, however, did not mean that the district was devoid of conflicts over resources. In fact, similar to what was reported in the previous assessment, several respondents mentioned disputes between emancipated bonded laborers – *mukta kamaiyas* -- and Community Forest User Groups over the use of forest resources. Similarly, disputes over the access and use of VDC budgets were reportedly common across the district. Indigenous communities such as the Sonahas, whose livelihood depends on gold panning and fishing, and the Gandharbas, who make a living by making musical instruments such as Sarangi and Madal were reportedly having disputes with the Bardiya National Park authorities, who have placed restrictions on gold panning, fishing, and logging timber in the

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<sup>116</sup> 2 separate KIIs with security providers, woman and man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>117</sup> KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; FGD with community member, men, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>118</sup> KII with security provider, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

<sup>119</sup> FGD with youth groups, women, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; Group KII with civil society, sexual and gender minorities, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>120</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Bardiya 21/01/2016

<sup>121</sup> KII with security provider, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016

national park.<sup>122</sup> There were, however, no reports of large scale violence or confrontations between any groups as a result of the contention over resources.

However, the potential does still exist for a future escalation of contention over resources related to land, trees, jobs and development budget. This is primarily because the majority of the inhabitants of Bardiya are from the Tharu community, who feel aggrieved. As natives of the land, some Tharu communities feel that they are entitled to a larger share of the resources, but feel their access has been restricted by the state and is being enjoyed by other ethnic groups.<sup>123</sup>

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

Similar to the previous assessment, almost all respondents cited unemployment as the most daunting challenge for youth in the district.<sup>124</sup> Due to chronic unemployment and political instability, youth are reportedly frustrated. Lacking gainful opportunities- similar to other districts- youth in Bardiya are also migrating to other countries for employment opportunities. Most of them are reportedly going to various places in India, while others are going to Gulf countries and Malaysia.<sup>125</sup> Of the remaining unemployed youth, many of them are reportedly involved in forms of criminal activity and/or drug abuse; they also reportedly spend their time playing cards and gambling in their local vicinities.<sup>126</sup> Youth are also being mobilized by political parties for political activities such as political rallies.<sup>127</sup>

The majority of the youth respondents expressed satisfaction with the constitution and felt that it addressed their demands.<sup>128</sup> However, they cautioned that the implementation of the constitution was imperative to the real redress of the challenges that many youth continue to face in Nepal- mainly discussing unemployment and the lack of meaningful opportunities within important administrative and political structures. It is also important to note that most of the youth had not read the constitutional text and furthermore some were misinformed about the provisions. One such example was of three female youth inquiring during a group discussion in Magragadi VDC about polygamy being acceptable for men and the new constitution allowing women to also have as many husbands as men have wives.<sup>129</sup> Such misinformation was transferred on a peer-to-peer basis and through informal conversations among friends, neighbors and families.

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<sup>122</sup> KII with journalist, man, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>123</sup> KII with political actor, man, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; FGD with community member, women, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>124</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Rapid Conflict Assessment, July, 2013, USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015

<sup>125</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; FGD with community member, men, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>126</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Bardiya, 22/01/2016; FGD with community member, women, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>127</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth group, women and men, Bardiya, 20/01/2016

<sup>128</sup> 2 separate FGDs with youth groups, women and men, Bardiya, 20/01/2016; Group KII with civil society, sexual and gender minorities, Bardiya, 21/01/2016

<sup>129</sup> FGD with youth groups, women, Bardiya, 20/01/2016

## DANG

### *Political Tension, conflict and/or violence*

Similar to the previous assessment, the majority of the respondents believed that the political tension, conflict and/or violence in the district had declined over the six months preceding the assessment and that the political interactions between various political actors had improved. These respondents pointed to the fewer number of clashes or tensions reported in the media between various major political parties to justify the decline in political tension. There were, however, tensions between the Pahadi and Tharu communities as a result of the Tharuhat protests and the divergent demands of the two communities. While the Tharu community continued to call for the institutionalization of a Tharuhat federal unit, the hill communities were against ethnic provinces and in one way or the other supported the Undivided Far West movement. There was, however, convergence between the Tharus and the non-Tharu communities over their demand to name Dang as the capital of the federal unit. Many respondents mentioned that if Dang was not named the capital of Province 5, then inhabitants of Dang- both Tharu and non-Tharu- would rise up in protest<sup>130</sup>. Reportedly, several senior leaders of all political parties had made assurances to the people of Dang about the district becoming the capital of Province 5<sup>131</sup>. Since other big urban centers like Nepalganj in Banke and Butuwal in Nawalparasi were also reportedly vying to be the state capital, some unrest on capital selection was seen by many as likely in Province 5<sup>132</sup>.

Another topic of discussion in Dang was the promulgation of the Constitution. Most of the respondents had not read the Constitution, although the majority of them welcomed it. According to a member of a smaller political party, the constitution had accommodated the demands of all groups, but not each and every demand of everyone had been incorporated into the constitution.<sup>133</sup> Many were of the view that the constitution had also brought about a clear divide between the Pahadi and Terai communities and they pointed to the protesting Madhesis and the Tharus as examples. At the community level, there was discussion over whether or not the constitution would be implemented and its ramifications. Reportedly, men were discussing the issues related to the constitution more than women. Furthermore, the women who were discussing the constitution were only doing so amongst other women, and did not have these discussions with men<sup>134</sup>.

There was a clear division between respondents over the perception of politicians. While most of the respondents believed that their image remained unchanged in the six months prior to the assessment, others were of the view that the promulgation of the constitution had

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<sup>130</sup> Two separate KIIs with political actors, men, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with a Business community member, man, Dang, 19/01/2016

<sup>131</sup> KII with a political actor, man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with Civil Society, man, Dang, 20/01/2016;

<sup>132</sup> Ibid

<sup>133</sup> KII with a political actor, man, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>134</sup> FGD with community members, women, Dang, 20/01/2016; FGD with youth, women, Dang, 21/01/2016;

restored the people's faith in politics and politicians.<sup>135</sup> The people reaching out to politicians to solve their problems and challenges were cited as examples of trust in their abilities. Many others, however, felt that the acute shortage of essential supplies and the difficulty in their livelihoods were created by the politicians.<sup>136</sup>

Another salient issue that was raised by several respondents was the subversive activities of the Netra Bikram Chand's (Biplav) Maoist faction.<sup>137</sup> Reportedly, the Biplav faction cadres were carrying out military trainings in and around Dang district and other districts adjoining Dang. There were no reported incidents of violence carried out by the faction, but many respondents believed that this faction was readying itself to engage in another insurrection similar to the previous Maoist conflict<sup>138</sup>.

### *Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Most of the informants in Dang believed that identity-based tensions in the district remained unchanged. Many also believed that identity-based relations had improved in recent times. This perception was not in consonance with the perception that existing divisions between the Tharu community and people of hill origin –i.e. the Pahadis—had increased. Several respondents even mentioned that the demands of the Tharus to create a Tharuhat federal unit were the cause of the growing divide amongst the Tharus and the non-Tharus.<sup>139</sup> Some Tharus, on the other hand, expressed their belief that non-conformity by the government and the ruling political parties to their demands to delineate a Tharuhat province is the crux of the problem. Some Pahadi respondents mentioned that the docile and positive image of the Tharus had been critically marred by the Tikapur, Kailali incident.<sup>140</sup> Non-Tharus reportedly viewed Tharus as a criminal and barbaric community due to the brutal manner in which the policemen and an infant were murdered in Tikapur. Likewise, the Pahadi community members blamed the Madhesis for the blockade and the resulting hardships due to the acute shortage of fuel and essential supplies. Some Pahadi respondents even went to the extent of saying that they did not want to even interact with Madhesis and are not keen to buy items from Madhesi vendors.<sup>141</sup> No incidents of confrontation or violence, however, were reported between the two communities. In fact, many of the respondents claimed that Dang was not affected by the unrest, unlike the other districts in the Far West. Respondents mentioned Deukhuri area of the Dang Valley where there was some unrest and that the Tharu community there had prohibited anyone from entering Deukhuri and even shut all the schools

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<sup>135</sup> KII with a political party actor, man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with a community member, Woman, Dang, 20/01/2016; KII with a journalist, man, Dang, 19/01/2016

<sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>137</sup> KII with a political party representative, Man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with security provider, Man, Dang, 20/01/2016; FGD with community members, men, Dang, 20/01/2016;

<sup>138</sup> The previous insurrection refers to the armed insurrection launched by the Maoists in 1996 and ended with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006.

<sup>139</sup> KII with a Journalist, Woman, Dang, 20/01/2016; FGD with Male community members, Men, Dang, 20/01/2016; KII with Government official, Man, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>140</sup> FGD with community members, men, Dang, 20/01/2016; FGD with community members, Women, Dang, 20/01/2016; KII with a political party representative, Man, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>141</sup> KII with a community member, Woman, Dang, 20/01/2016;

in the area to protest against the constitution. Later, however, following the Tikapur incident, the unrest fizzled and everything was back to normal.<sup>142</sup>

Similar to the previous assessment, nearly all respondents mentioned the continued rise in religious conversion. Respondents believed that individuals from impoverished backgrounds were reportedly converting to Christianity. Several respondents mentioned that the draw towards Christianity was that people believed that by converting, their ailments would all be cured.<sup>143</sup> Also, they were drawn towards the fact that everyone within the Christian faith was considered equal. Allegedly, those who had converted to Christianity were highly intolerant of other faiths and refused to acknowledge religious beliefs and practices. The conversion was also resulting in fissures at the family level as well where members of the same family were practicing different faiths.<sup>144</sup> References were also made to the rise of a group that demanded a return to institutionalization of a Hindu State.<sup>145</sup> Neither religious conversions nor the Hindu-led activities, however, had resulted in clashes, nor were there any reports of overt opposition to such activities.

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

Respondents in the district were divided between those who believed that criminal activities had remained unchanged over the six months prior to the assessment and those who believed that they had decreased over the same period. This perception was, however, inconsistent with reference to an increasing number of murders mentioned by several respondents. Apparently, there had been several murders in the district, with unknown motives and perpetrators still unidentified and at large.<sup>146</sup> Reportedly crimes like burglary and robbery occur frequently in Dang; Tulsipur area of Dang was identified by several respondents as the hub for criminal activities.<sup>147</sup>

Although there was no mention of large scale organized crime in the district, respondents mentioned two particular gangs with adversarial relations; however, they were not identified by name during the FGD.<sup>148</sup> Reportedly, the gang members of one group attacked the wife and child of the leader of another gang and fled after the assault. These gangs reportedly have political protection and are involved in bidding for tenders and extorting businesses.<sup>149</sup>

The involvement of youth in crimes was linked to unemployment by several respondents. Youth were also linked to an increase in traffic accidents in Dang. According to statistics provided by the Nepal Police, traffic accidents were cited as the major security challenge in

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<sup>142</sup> KII with a Journalist, Woman, Dang, 20/01/2016; FGD with youth, men, Dang, 21/06/2016; FGD with community members, men, Dang, 20/01/2016;

<sup>143</sup> KII with civil society, Man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with government official, Man, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>144</sup> Ibid

<sup>145</sup> KII with a political actor, man, Dang, 21/01/2016; FGD with community members, men, Dang, 20/01/2016;

<sup>146</sup> KII with a political actor, man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with a community member, woman, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>147</sup> KII with civil society, man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Dang, 20/01/2016; KII with a political party representative, man, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>148</sup> FGD with youth, men, Dang, 21/06/2016

<sup>149</sup> Ibid

the district resulting from speeding and driving under the influence of alcohol.<sup>150</sup> As a result of the blockade and acute shortage of essential supplies, a new type of crime was reportedly flourishing in the district. Theft of fuel from motorbikes was reportedly on the rise. Likewise, black-marketing was on the rise in the district. Respondents also mentioned the rise in fraud cases, which mainly involved monetary transactions.<sup>151</sup> The culprits were reportedly duping others and renege on their earlier made commitments.

Several respondents including the Nepal Police mentioned the rise in cyber-crimes in the district.<sup>152</sup> The Nepal Police admitted that due to limited capacity at the local level to deal with the increasing number of these kinds of cases in the district, cyber-crimes had to be forwarded to Kathmandu for further investigation and legal proceedings.<sup>153</sup> Reportedly, youth were using mobile phones to harass or blackmail others. Likewise, the trend to post nude pictures or sexual videos of female youth on the internet was reportedly on the rise.<sup>154</sup> Two particular cases were widely mentioned by the respondents regarding cyber-crime. The first case involved the beating of a young female teen by other female teens that coercively stripped her and posted the video on the internet. The second case involved a male who had shared a nude picture of a girl using Bluetooth technology.<sup>155</sup> As the criminal use of Bluetooth technology is not explicitly mentioned in existing laws, the culprit was later reportedly released and was not penalized for his action.<sup>156</sup>

#### *Other security issues, including SGBV*

Respondents believed that other security issues, including SGBV, had remained unchanged over the six months prior to the assessment in Dang. Most respondents, however, perceived a rise in cases of rape. Reportedly, gang rapes were becoming more frequent and female minors were becoming the main targets of such assaults. According to a respondent who worked as a health professional at the One Stop Crisis Management Center, most of the perpetrators of rape were found to be under the influence of alcohol.<sup>157</sup> Alcohol was also attributed to a rise in domestic violence in the district.<sup>158</sup> Reportedly, it is the women that are abused by their inebriated husbands. There was also mention of how men too were increasingly becoming victims to domestic violence at the hands of women. Child marriages were reportedly on the rise as well. Divorce and extramarital affairs were also perceived to be on the rise. The rise in child marriages, divorce and extra marital affairs were attributed to the increased communication and connection between individuals as a result of the widespread use of

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<sup>150</sup> KII with a security provider, man, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>151</sup> FGD with youth, Men, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>152</sup> FGD with youth, men, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Dang, 22/01/2016

<sup>153</sup> KII with security provider, man, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>154</sup> FGD with youth, men, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>155</sup> KII with civil society, woman, dang, 20/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>156</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>157</sup> KII with community member, woman, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>158</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Dang, 20/01/2016

mobile phones and social media.<sup>159</sup> Several respondents also perceived that the number of suicide cases had increased. The reason for the increase in suicide rates was not ascertained, although some respondents reported that it was due to domestic violence or failed love affairs.<sup>160</sup>

### *Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Most respondents in the district perceived that resource-based tensions, conflict and/or violence in Dang had remained unchanged in the six months preceding the assessment. Respondents mentioned sporadic cases of illegal logging and extraction of sand and stone.<sup>161</sup> Similar to the previous assessment, issues regarding the pollution caused by the cement factories in Dang, traffic accidents caused by vehicles of the cement factory, and damage to the roads caused by the heavy vehicles also were highlighted as some of the tensions between the communities and the cement factories.<sup>162</sup> There was, however, a case about Sonapur Cement factory that was causing quite a stir in Dang. According to respondents, there were reports in the newspapers about the substandard quality of Sonapur cement, which was resulting in the collapse of structures.<sup>163</sup> Since many of the houses in Dang had reportedly used Sonapur cement, people were jittery over the news. Another incident that was consistently raised by respondents in Dang was the tensions between two bus companies.<sup>164</sup> Reportedly, the company Rapti Yatayat held a monopoly on the vehicular routes originating and ending in Dang. Then, a new company named Kalika Malika Yatayat entered the market and began to ply on the same routes as Rapti Yatayat. This led individuals affiliated with Rapti Yatayat to vandalize buses belonging to Kalika Malika Yatayat. Reportedly, police had to man Kalika Malika Yatayat buses in order for them to be able to operate in Dang.<sup>165</sup>

Other tensions over resources were due to the illegal encroachment of government-owned lands. Reportedly, government-owned land was being usurped by landless people and other individuals. One respondent pointed to the frequent transfers of the LDOs and CDOs of the district as testament to the ongoing contention for resources.<sup>166</sup> Reportedly, there was also contention over local government budgets. Various individuals, political groups and interest groups vie for the budget and tensions do occur as result, but there were no untoward incidents that were reported. The blockade also resulted in an acute shortage of fuel and cooking gas in Dang. There was reportedly intense contention between people to obtain these

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<sup>159</sup> Two separate KIIS with political actors, men, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>160</sup> KII with security provider, man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>161</sup> KII with government authority, man, Dang, 20/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Dang, 22/01/2016;

<sup>162</sup> KII with civil society, man, Dang, 22/01/2016; FGD; FGD with community members, men, Dang, 20/01/2016;

<sup>163</sup> FGD with youth, men, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>164</sup> FGD with youth, men, Dang, 21/01/2016; FGD with community members, men, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>165</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Dang, 20/01/2016; Two separate KIIs with political actors, men, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>166</sup> KII with civil society, man, Dang, 22/01/2016

essential supplies and clashes between individuals or groups were reportedly frequent at the petrol pumps.<sup>167</sup>

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

The majority of the respondents in the district asserted that most of the district's youth were afflicted by unemployment. Chronic unemployment amongst youth was reportedly compelling the youth in the district to go abroad for employment. Respondents felt the trend of foreign employment is rising among youth, which is leading many to quit their academic careers and opt for outbound migration.<sup>168</sup> The Gulf countries, Malaysia, and India are the main destinations for employment. Some youth are also going to Japan and Australia for higher education.

Youth respondents mentioned that interest in politics was declining amongst youth.<sup>169</sup> The youth respondents highlighted the lack of morality amongst youth and lack of proper upbringing as some of the major challenges for the youth. According to several respondents, due to foreign employment, youth were being raised in single parent households, with either one of the parents absent, which reportedly was resulting in youth delinquencies.<sup>170</sup> One youth respondent mentioned that one of the major obstacles for youth was the high expectations of them by their families and society to take on respectable professions like doctors, engineers or bankers, which meant that they did not have an opportunity to pursue their passions if they did not coincide with family and societal expectations. Also, despite potential opportunities to pursue professions like carpenters, tailors or barbers, youth were not interested to pursue these careers but rather were more inclined to go abroad as they perceived that they would earn more money and potentially increased social status at home, even if it meant working in harsher conditions.<sup>171</sup>

None of the youth interviewed in the district had read the constitution, but gave an impression that the constitution was fine to them. Although they had not read the constitution, there was reportedly some level of ownership amongst the youth of the constitution and nationalistic sentiments had been aroused as a result of the constitution's promulgation and the blockade seen by some respondents as being imposed by India.<sup>172</sup> The youth felt that Nepal has the inherent right to promulgate its own constitution and that other countries have no right to interfere in Nepal's internal matters.

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<sup>167</sup> FGD with youth, men, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Dang, 20/01/2016

<sup>168</sup> FGD with youth, men, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>169</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>170</sup> KII with government authority, man, Dang, 20/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Dang, 21/01/2016

<sup>171</sup> Ibid

<sup>172</sup> KII with political actor, man, Dang, 21/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Dang, 20/01/2016

## **KAILALI**

### *Political-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

In the six months prior to the assessment, political-based tensions in Kailali were notable. The political tensions especially between the Tharu Kalyankari Samiti and Undivided Far West movement had significantly increased in this period. The violent activities were observed between Tharuhat and Undivided Far West before the prolongation of the constitution. Undivided Far West protest programs were halted after the prolongation of the constitution, which guaranteed the Far West would remain undivided. Tharuhat felt defeated and subsequently increased their protest activities.<sup>173</sup>

Also during this period the imposed border blockade was perceived to be a result of India's displeasure/ reservation with the newly promulgated constitution.<sup>174</sup> Due to the blockade, anti-India sentiments were palpable in the district. The youth respondents in particular openly expressed their view that India was the crux to every problem endured by Nepal.<sup>175</sup> Beyond that, Kailali experienced a violent incident in Tikapur, in which a mob of Tharu protestors murdered several policemen and an infant. The incident was reported as having dramatically changed the discourse of the Tharuhat movement.<sup>176</sup> The State's perceived aggressive response to the incident tended to paralyze the Tharuhat movement in the district.<sup>177</sup> Furthermore, the Tikapur incident led many Tharu political leaders and also community members to flee the area in what they deemed to be the best way to protect their own lives.<sup>178</sup> Several respondents were of the view that people were losing faith in the political parties because they felt the political leaders simply exploit them to realize their personal and political agenda and seldom deliver on the assurances and promises made to the people.<sup>179</sup> In addition, respondents also perceived that political parties were very partisan as they always provided resources and opportunities to those affiliated only with their party.<sup>180</sup> Most of the respondents in the district had not read the Constitution. Even those who had read it questioned its effective implementation citing a lack of awareness and the complex and dense nature of the document. One respondent pointed to the declaration made by the political parties about the unparalleled and excellent nature of the document and questioned how a document propagated as the best constitution would require amendments within days after its promulgation.<sup>181</sup> Respondents also acknowledged the divide the constitution had brought

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<sup>173</sup> KII with journalist, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 17/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016

<sup>174</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 17/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016; FGD with community member, women, Kailali, 13/01/2016

<sup>175</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Kailali, 13/01/2016

<sup>176</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 17/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016

<sup>177</sup> KII with journalist, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016

<sup>178</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016

<sup>179</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Kailali, 13/01/2016

<sup>180</sup> FGD with community members, woman, Kailali, 13/01/2016

<sup>181</sup> KII with journalist, man, Kailali, 16/01/21016

upon the society and expressed concern over potential conflicts in the future as a result of the document. The main concern was the dissatisfaction of the Madhesis and the Tharus, which had already resulted in significant strife in their district and across the county.

### *Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Following the Tikapur incident, identity-related tensions in the district surged exponentially according to almost all the respondents. Most of the victims of the Tikapur incident were Pahadi and the perpetrators were Tharus. In light of this incident, a distinct divide between the State and Tharus was palpable. While the state was intent on pursuing those complicit in the crime of killing several policemen and an infant, Tharu communities appeared perturbed by the incident because the fear that the State would retaliate against them. Tharu respondents felt that the incident had greatly marred their ethnic identity because now the non-Tharus were viewing Tharus as criminals.<sup>182</sup> According to a respondent, prior to the incident Tharus were viewed more as oppressed and victims of social injustices. Following the Tikapur incident, however, the public outlook towards Tharus changed and they were now being viewed more as suspects and criminals.<sup>183</sup> Although many violent activities had not been seen between the Pahadi community and Tharus, the feeling of hatred had increased significantly; many respondents believe that if an amicable solution will not be found in future, the situation might lead to an ethnic clash.<sup>184</sup>

Another identity issue that fared prominently in Kailali was the issue of proselytization. Reportedly, the majority of the population was Hindu, but respondents perceived there are numerous actors involved in converting Hindus into Christians. Although no untoward incidents were reported due to the increasing proselytization over the course of the assessments, many respondents expressed concern about the increase. A respondent even expressed the view that the tensions between Hindus and Christians will inevitably rise in the near future.<sup>185</sup>

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

Overall crime in the district is perceived to have decreased.<sup>186</sup> Alongside this perception, the majority of the respondents linked crime with youth and unemployment.<sup>187</sup> Respondents believed that due to chronic unemployment in the district, the youth were either migrating to other countries or were resorting to criminal activities. Drug abuse was also linked to

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<sup>182</sup> FGD with community member, man, Kailali, 14/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 17/01/2016

<sup>183</sup> KII with journalist, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 17/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016

<sup>184</sup> KII with journalist, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, 16/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, man, Kailali, 14/01/2016; FGD with community member, men, Kailali, 14/01/2016

<sup>185</sup> KII with government authority, man, Kailali, 14/01/2016

<sup>186</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016

<sup>187</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Kailali, 17/01/2016; FGD with community members, men, Kailali, 14/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with government authority, woman, Kailali, 17/01/2016

unemployment, youth, and crime by the respondents, who believed that drug users were committing crimes to make money to cater to their drug abuse habits.<sup>188</sup>

### *Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Similar to previous assessments, contention over the boundaries and use of community forests were highlighted as one of the main disputes in the district.<sup>189</sup> Reportedly, there are several ongoing disputes between local communities and the District Forest Office over who is entitled to mobilize forest resources.<sup>190</sup> The communities feel they are inherently entitled to utilize forest resources; whereas the District Forest Office claims total jurisdiction over forests. There are also rows that intermittently erupt over the water in the irrigation channels.<sup>191</sup> The tension over access to water for irrigation is generally between neighbors and sometimes the communities are involved. None of the reported resource-based tensions resulted in violence. More protracted challenges concerning the division and the utilization of natural resources may surface in the days ahead.<sup>192</sup> According to a respondent, given that Nepal is headed towards instituting a federal system, questions concerning how the different federal states will divvy up the resources, such as national parks that have cross-cutting boundaries, remain uncertain.<sup>193</sup> Encroachment of Nepali land by India also reportedly occurs frequently along the India-Nepal border.<sup>194</sup>

### *Other security-related issues, including SGBV*

Domestic violence and cases of sexual violence, particularly rape and suicide, are reportedly high in Kailali.<sup>195</sup> Many respondents attributed alcohol consumption as the factor fueling domestic violence and rape. Although there was no concrete reason as to why suicide cases were on the rise, several respondents attributed domestic violence as a reason compelling people to resort to suicide.<sup>196</sup> Cases of child marriage and polygamy are also reportedly prevalent in Kailali. Respondents felt that social media and mobile phones were linking young boys and girls and leading to amorous relationships resulting subsequently in elopements and marriages. According to a respondent, these early marriages are having a negative impact on the girls, because they generally get pregnant at an early age, which

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<sup>188</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Kailali, 17/01/2016; FGD with community member, men, Kailali, 14/01/2016; KII with government authority, woman, Kailali, 17/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016

<sup>189</sup> FGD with youth groups, man, Kailali, 13/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Kailali, 13/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Kailali, 14/01/2016

<sup>190</sup> KII with government authority, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, 13/01/2016

<sup>191</sup> FGD with community member, women, Kailali, 13/01/2016

<sup>192</sup> FGD with community member, women, Kailali, 13/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kailali, 15/01/2016

<sup>193</sup> KII with government authority, man, Kailali, 14/01/2016

<sup>194</sup> KII with a journalist, woman, Kailali, 15/01/2016

<sup>195</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; FGD with community member, women, Kailali, 13/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kailali, 15/01/2016

<sup>196</sup> KII with a journalist, woman, Kailali, 15/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kailali, 14/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kailali, 17/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Kailali, 13/01/2016

affects their health.<sup>197</sup> The girls are also compelled to quit their education in order to raise the child, which in turn affects future career opportunities and subsequent economic progress.

Community members generally approached political actors and local traditional leaders called Bhalmansa<sup>198</sup> in order to resolve local disputes. Likewise, organizations such as CeLLRd, INSEC, WOREC and Maiti Nepal were noted as working in the district to promote people's access to justice and to help the victims of various injustices.<sup>199</sup> However, getting justice remains a major challenge in the district.<sup>200</sup> There is also a tendency to settle criminal cases within the community through mediation. Many of the rape cases are reportedly settled by having the perpetrator pay compensation to the victim.<sup>201</sup> According to one respondent, the police in the district were active in deterring such practices and reportedly announced that anyone settling rape cases in the community would be penalized.<sup>202</sup>

### *Role of youth*

Youth in the district are reportedly frustrated due to the lack of employment opportunities.<sup>203</sup> Even the educated youth reportedly have limited options, of which competing for the limited government vacancies is the main attraction of the youth. As one respondent narrated, the youth are mired in a vicious cycle where employers seek experienced candidates and the majority of the youth right out of academic institutions following their degrees lack sufficient experience.<sup>204</sup> Without employment opportunities, youth are reportedly crossing the border to various parts of India in search of employment.<sup>205</sup> Community respondents even asserted that school attendance amongst male youth has decreased significantly as they are drawn more toward employment opportunities in India.<sup>206</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> KII with a community member, man, Kailali, 14/01/2016; FGD with community member, women, Kailali, 13/01/2016

<sup>198</sup> Bhalmansa is a traditional leader of the Tharu ethnic group, who is nominated by the Tharu communities. He basically takes leadership to maintain traditional values and norms, cultural activities, and social harmony among the Tharu communities.

<sup>199</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016, KII with community member, woman, 13/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kailali, 17/01/2016

<sup>200</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kailali, 17/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Kailali, 14/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kailali, 15/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, 13/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016

<sup>201</sup> KII with government authority, woman, Kailali, 17/01/2016

<sup>202</sup> KII with a journalist, woman, Kailali, 15/01/2016

<sup>203</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kailali, 16/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kailali, 15/01/2016

<sup>204</sup> KII with a journalist, woman, Kailali, 15/01/2016

<sup>205</sup> FGD with community member, men, Kailali, 14/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Kailali, 14/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, 13/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, 14/01/2016

<sup>206</sup> FGD with community members, men, Kailali, 14/01/2016

## KANCHANPUR

### *Political-based tensions/conflicts and violence*

The majority of the respondents in Kanchanpur were of the view that there were no political based tensions/conflicts and violence in the district. Instead, the relationship between the various major political forces in the district was described as harmonious with collaboration among them to address the issues and challenges being faced by the local communities.<sup>207</sup> Reportedly, they have been collaborating to provide solutions to landless people, freed bonded laborers and flood victims.<sup>208</sup> There are, however, some sporadic disputes between the political parties over allocation of resources (mainly local development budgets) and developmental projects implemented by NGOs.<sup>209</sup> Also, youth within the political parties are dissatisfied with the leaders of the older generation and feel exploited by them.<sup>210</sup> Around the time of the promulgation of the constitution, however, many respondents acknowledged that the political climate became somewhat heated with the imposition of the border blockade. Some strikes by groups opposing the constitution, such as Tharuhat, as well as the impact of the Tikapur, Kailali incident were felt in the district.<sup>211</sup> Despite all this, Kanchanpur remained largely peaceful and no incidents of major violence or clashes occurred in the district. The respondents highlighted that, as a result of the Tharus' comparatively reduced access to economic, social, and political power, fewer protest programs were implemented in the district.<sup>212</sup> During this time, there were some activities carried out by the Biplav Maoist faction. Reportedly, they damaged some property and Indian vehicles to oppose the blockade.<sup>213</sup>

Many of the KII respondents in the district appeared to be generally aware of the contents of and/or had selectively read the constitution.<sup>214</sup> Generally, respondents welcomed the promulgation of the constitution and many heaved a sigh of relief that the protracted political

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<sup>207</sup> KII with business community, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>208</sup> KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>209</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; FGD with community member, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>210</sup> FGD with youth, Men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with Civil Society, Man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with Civil Society, Woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>211</sup> KII with political actor, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; FGD with community member, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>212</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>213</sup> KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>214</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with business community, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

process that had taken eight years had come to an end. There was a clear recognition that the constitution had not addressed all the demands of the different ethnic groups, such as re-establishment of a Hindu state and federal demarcation; and that in the days ahead Nepal is still likely to face many challenges, which according to most of the respondents include the implementation of the constitution as the biggest one.<sup>215</sup> Several respondents mentioned that the constitution was flawed, because the demand of the majority of the population – the Hindus, was not accommodated in the constitution.<sup>216</sup> They asserted that since Nepal was comprised of more than 80% Hindus and their demand was to retain the Hindu identity, by not incorporating the demand of the majority, the constitution was incomplete.<sup>217</sup> Respondents also cited the lack of awareness among the general public about the constitution and misinterpretations of the provisions and the tenets as a factor that could incite conflict in the days ahead.<sup>218</sup>

### *Identity-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

Identity-related tensions in Kanchanpur seemed to increase in the wake of the Tikapur, Kailali incident, but the majority of the respondents believed that it had not affected the district to the same extent that it had affected the adjoining Kailali district. The Undivided Far West group and those campaigning for a Tharuhat province persist in their demands. However, no major incident involving these two opposing groups had occurred despite the flare-up in other districts.<sup>219</sup> Many respondents attributed the absence of violence to the understanding and tolerant nature of the Tharus of Kanchanpur.<sup>220</sup> The prevailing harmony was also attributed to the years of harmony that had prevailed before the country decided to set up federal provinces as well as a clear understanding that despite the reconfiguration of the federal boundaries, neighbors would have to be neighbors.<sup>221</sup> Reportedly, the Tharus in Kanchanpur do not want their federal capital to be distant from where they reside, but rather

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<sup>215</sup> KII with business community, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; FGD with community member, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>216</sup> KII with political actor, man, 08/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>217</sup> KII with political actors, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>218</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>219</sup> KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>220</sup> KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016;

<sup>221</sup> KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

want easy access.<sup>222</sup> Another potential reason cited behind the social harmony was the community mediators in the district. Reportedly, a majority of the mediators trained by CeLRRd are from the Tharu community, and they apparently had not involved themselves in agitations and other political activities that could bring about ethnic divisions in the community, wanting instead to work in a way that helps mitigate any potential conflicts.<sup>223</sup> Respondents also noted that unlike other neighboring districts with large number of Tharus, Kanchanpur is distinctly different because the majority of the Tharu community is comprised of Rana Tharus, who reportedly displayed little interest in supporting the Tharuhat cause. Most of the Rana Tharus are weak economically and live in outlying villages rather than urban centers, so even their ability to congregate into a mass and take to the urban centers to demonstrate their support or opposition is curbed by their economic inadequacies.<sup>224</sup> Civil society and INGOs were reported to have played a vital role in promoting peace in the district.<sup>225</sup>

Despite the current prevailing harmony in the district, respondents felt that prospects of renewed tensions between Tharuhat and the Undivided Far West movement could not be completely ruled out.<sup>226</sup> The Tharu community certainly feels aggrieved and feels that their demands have not been incorporated into the constitution. The supporters of the United Far West movement, on the other hand, feel victorious given that their demand was fulfilled. The future course of tension/conflict will remain contingent upon the agendas each group charts out and activities and proclamations each side makes in the days ahead. The majority of political party members held the view that the direction the central leaders of major political parties take will also have an impact on the local conflict dynamics.<sup>227</sup>

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

Respondents felt that criminal activities have increased significantly in the district. In addition to occasional burglaries and murders, suicides, rapes, drug trafficking and human trafficking- especially of women and young girls- were also reported as frequent in Kanchanpur.<sup>228</sup> Many respondents pointed out that mostly close relatives are involved in sexual harassment and sometimes also engage in trafficking of women and children.<sup>229</sup> Given Kanchanpur's geography and the established route, human traffickers use the border crossing

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<sup>222</sup> KII with community member, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>223</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>224</sup> KII with political actor, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>225</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>226</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>227</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>228</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>229</sup> KII with journalist, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

to traffic women and girls into India.<sup>230</sup> Most of those trafficked are reportedly from neighboring hill districts such as Rolpa, Rukum, Arghakhachi and Pyuthan.<sup>231</sup> Respondents cited close proximity with the Nepal-India border as a key contributor to crime. The general perception was that following a crime criminals flee to India with ease.<sup>232</sup> Similar to the previous assessment, many respondents linked crime to unemployment.<sup>233</sup> They also noted that people were resorting to crime due to drug abuse. The prevailing perception was that youth were mainly involved in crime.<sup>234</sup> Political protection to criminals was also cited as a contributor to crime by several respondents.<sup>235</sup>

Reportedly, due to the blockade, smuggling of fuel from across the border was rampant. While some viewed smuggling and black marketing as a crime, there were some that differed. In their view, had the fuel and other essential supplies not been smuggled in, then the entire country would be reeling from an acute shortage of essential supplies, leaving fields barren and people's livelihoods critically impaired.<sup>236</sup> The smuggled goods were reportedly at least providing a respite in a time of national deficiency.

### *Other security-related issues, including SGBV*

Cases of violence against women and SGBV were perceived to be on the rise according to most of the respondents. Rape, domestic violence, and gender-based violence were widely reported by the respondents. The perception that most domestic violence was triggered by the husband's consumption of alcohol was prevalent.<sup>237</sup> Dowry<sup>238</sup> and the *chhaupadi*<sup>239</sup> practice were also cited as violence against women in the VDCs.<sup>240</sup> The respondents also mentioned that the district is a frequently used transit point for trafficking of women and girls to foreign countries. Additionally, respondents also mentioned the encouraging role played by organizations like Maiti Nepal and other women's rights activists against human

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<sup>230</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>231</sup> KII with security provider, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>232</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>233</sup> KII with government authority, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>234</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>235</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; FGD with community members, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>236</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>237</sup> FGD with community members, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>238</sup> Dowry system is practiced especially in the Madhesi community who largely reside in the plains of Nepal. In the system, the bride's family must offer a gift- often money or valuable material items to the bridegroom's family during the marriage ceremony.

<sup>239</sup> *Chhaupadi* is a social tradition in the western part of [Nepal](#), which prohibits a Hindu woman from participating in normal family activities during her [menstruation](#) period, at which time she is considered [impure](#). The women are kept out of the house and have to live in an animal shed.

<sup>240</sup> FGD with youth groups, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

trafficking.<sup>241</sup> Reportedly, there was also a rise in the number of suicide, divorce and polygamy cases in the district. Although there was no clear pattern or reason behind the rise in suicide cases, most of the suicide victims were reportedly women.<sup>242</sup> Interestingly, several respondents mentioned that males were increasingly becoming victims of GBV and domestic violence. According to a respondent who had been working with victims of SGBV, male victims rarely sought assistance due to the fear of their social status being tarnished.<sup>243</sup> There were, however, some positive highlights in this domain as well. There was a perception that *Chhaupadi* was gradually decreasing in Kanchanpur.<sup>244</sup> Similarly, the discrimination against lower castes and Dalits was perceived to have declined in comparison to stricter practices of the past.

Several impediments were outlined by respondents that served as barriers against victims' access to justice. The victim's impoverished and ignorant background usually served as a major impediment, because the victim was reportedly unaware of the available recourse.<sup>245</sup> Interference by influential and powerful members of society, particularly prominent political leaders, in favor of the perpetrator was also identified by respondents as a factor that dampens the victim's access to justice.<sup>246</sup> Furthermore, economic dependency, poor family background, absence of legal documents like marriage and citizenship certificates, and social status have also served as barriers in accessing justice for the victims.<sup>247</sup> The tendency of the community to mediate cases of SGBV also served as a barrier.<sup>248</sup> Reportedly, even the security providers in most instances pressure the complicit party and the victim to mediate instead of taking further legal action against the perpetrator.<sup>249</sup> The protracted justice process and lack of sustained support to the victim by their own family, society, and the state also reportedly prevents the victim from engaging in the formal legal process.

### *Resource-based tensions, conflicts and/or violence*

There were no major resource-based tensions, conflicts, or violence reported in Kanchanpur; respondents were of the view that resource-based conflict remained unchanged in the six months prior to the assessment. There were, however, sporadic cases of timber smuggling and also animal parts smuggling occurring in the district. The timber from community forests

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<sup>241</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with security provider, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>242</sup> KII with security provider, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>243</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>244</sup> FGD with youth groups, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>245</sup> FGD with community member, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>246</sup> *ibid*

<sup>247</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, 10/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; FGD with community members, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>248</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>249</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; FGD with community members, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

is reportedly being felled and smuggled.<sup>250</sup> The deforestation reportedly is resulting in floods and landslides, to which the communities are falling victim. There was reportedly some tension over relief support between actual natural disaster victims and those pretending to be victims.<sup>251</sup>

Similar to the previous assessment, land encroachment by Indian communities along the Indo-Nepal border appeared to be a major concern in Kanchanpur.<sup>252</sup> Allegedly, the Indian side frequently shifts the border pillars and encroaches on Nepali land.<sup>253</sup> This reportedly results in tensions between the communities on both sides of the border, but has not yet resulted in any major tension or violence. The respondents, however, expressed their helplessness and frustration and scorned the government's apathy and ignorance regarding this issue.<sup>254</sup> Alongside the border encroachment, respondents also mentioned the harassment meted out by Indian security forces to returning Nepali migrants at the border checkpoints and Nepali women living along the border areas.<sup>255</sup>

### *The role of youth in tensions/ conflicts and/or violence*

Respondents felt that youth were devoid of employment opportunities other than going abroad.<sup>256</sup> As a result of unemployment, many youth were reportedly also resorting to drug abuse and the number of youth drug abusers was perceived to be high.<sup>257</sup> Even the educated youth felt they had no opportunities in their respective fields of study, so they too were frustrated and were reportedly going to foreign destinations seeking employment opportunities. Most of the youth in the district reportedly travel to India for seasonal work, while a smaller numbers go to Malaysia and other Gulf countries.<sup>258</sup>

There was, however, little interest amongst youth to do menial labor in their respective vicinities or work in fields for agricultural production.<sup>259</sup> Rather, the draw to go abroad and do whatever work they can lay their hands on was reportedly more attractive for the youth.

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<sup>250</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, woman, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>251</sup> FGD with community members, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>252</sup> KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>253</sup> KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>254</sup> KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

<sup>255</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with civil society, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>256</sup> KII with business community, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016

<sup>257</sup> KII with civil society, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>258</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with journalist, woman, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with journalist, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016

<sup>259</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with community member, man, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016

Several respondents seemed aware of the provision of the right to employment in the constitution, but all questioned how it would be implemented when there was such an acute shortage of employment opportunities across the country.<sup>260</sup> The same respondents believed that if employment opportunities were made available to youth, they would greatly benefit from it and the nation as a whole could reap the benefits of having the working youth in the country.

There is reportedly a distinct divide between the older generation and the youth. The youth viewed the older generation as not understanding the youth's sentiments and needs, while the older generation viewed the youth as idle, unemployed, and drug users not engaged in productive activity.<sup>261</sup> Reportedly, society was becoming such that there is very little interaction between these generations. Communication between the grandparents or parents and their youth offspring were dwindling, because the youth were spending more time on social media and other activities and displaying very little interest in communicating with or learning from the older generation.<sup>262</sup>

Youth respondents in the district felt that youth were being exploited by political parties.<sup>263</sup> In the absence of proper opportunities, the youth reportedly become affiliated to a political party. The political party, however, reportedly only uses these youth to implement their specific agendas and the youth really do not benefit from their engagement in political agendas.

## **Conclusion**

The assessments conducted within the framework of USAID Sajhedari Bikaas reveal several positive developments reported in terms of political and identity-based issues, such as a reducing trend of caste-based discrimination and the promulgation of the Constitution of Nepal, which was thought by many respondents to include more socially inclusive provisions than the interim constitution. However, political trends from the assessments, including the first Rapid Conflict Assessment conducted in February 2013 indicated that the drivers of conflict continue to remain unaddressed, particularly those around identity. For example, political tensions related to ethnic identity issues occurred in all districts during the six months prior to the assessment. Violence led to the deaths of 9 people in Kailali, 3 in Surkhet and 1 in Bardiya. Mainly led by TJSC and UDMF, the Far and Mid-West districts have a

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<sup>260</sup> KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016;

<sup>261</sup> KII with civil society, Woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; KII with journalist, Man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 08/01/2016; KII with political actor, man, Kanchanpur, 11/01/2016; KII with community member, woman, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; FGD with youth groups, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>262</sup> FGD with youth groups, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016

<sup>263</sup> FGD with youth groups, men, Kanchanpur, 10/01/2016; FGD with community member, women, Kanchanpur, 09/01/2016



significant Tharu population, which feels that it was dealt with insincerely by the major political parties for not abiding by the initial 4-point agreement that was signed during the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Similar sentiments were reported in the Rapid Conflict Assessment when the first CA had dissolved and the second CA elections were being discussed. While there have been positive developments such as the second CA elections that occurred in November 2013 (accompanied by limited incidents of violence) and the drafting of the Constitution in the months preceding the September 20, 2015 promulgation, political issues linked with ethnic and religious identities have not been resolved in the Sajhedari Bikaas districts. These sentiments continue to linger among the TJSC and UDMF political parties and their sympathisers, which could result in tensions in the near future.

While the constitution was positively welcomed by many respondents, all of the respondents expressed some level of apprehension about the effective implementation of the constitution. While it is important not to downplay the fact that there is finally a constitution in Nepal, respondents highlighted that the stakeholders involved in delivering the provisions should ensure that the implementation is effective and inclusive. This illustrates the lack of faith and trust many respondents have of political parties and actors- a point reported in all of the assessments. Respondents expressed positivity towards political actors on occasions when there were positive developments, such as the second CA elections which were perceived as occurring without much violence, compared to preceding elections and the promulgation of the new constitution. However, on other occasions respondents expressed a lack of political faith, such as during the dissolution of the first CA without the delivery of a constitution or the second CA's lack of progress drafting the constitution even with the deadline extension. Overall, even with the promulgation of Nepal's Constitution respondents continued to express wariness over the political actors' ability to effectively and inclusively implement constitutional provisions.

SGBV continues to remain a key security challenge in most of the districts and has been continually reported as the most concerning safety issue. Particularly there are various cases of sexual violence such as rape, sexual harassment, and even prostitution (increased reporting in the Final Conflict Assessment) that were seen as the main risks. Suicide and domestic violence were also seen as public security concerns; suicide in particular was perceived to be quickly increasing, with 77 cases in Bardiya alone reported in the Final Conflict Assessment, which was said by the Nepal Police to have worryingly increased. With increasing suicide rates and reporting of domestic violence, especially against women, it is important that USAID and the Sajhedari Bikaas project continue to focus on programming that addresses these issues as requested by the majority of the respondents during this research. While crime rates have fluctuated over the past three years during the course of these assessments, drug-related crimes, such as drug trafficking, abuse, and petty theft, continue to be reported in all the assessments. The mention of organised crime particularly with the formation of gang-based groups, mostly comprising of male youth have also been reported in several assessments including the final conflict assessment, the seventh and the sixth assessments.

Youth unemployment and poverty have continuously been raised as key 'push' factors for many male youth, encouraging them to join criminal groups and/or become involved in



criminal activities. The lack of employment opportunities was also seen as a major contributing cause to increasing migration rates among the local youth, particularly to countries such as India, Gulf countries, Israel, Malaysia and Korea. The trend has had a negative impact on the communities as local youth now tend to aspire to travel abroad for work opportunities paying large sums of money rather than look for existing local opportunities. Many of the findings on migration and its social impact can be found on the fifth quarterly conflict assessment report, with no notable changes between those assessment findings and the current one. As such, livelihood and skills development based on market-economies along with facilitation of employment were seen as key means of ensuring youth engagement and such development policies require more progress and augmentation to attract local youth, both male and female. Youth were seen both positively and negatively by respondents; however, there was wide acknowledgement of youth as change agents within communities, which shows that youth are capable of achieving positive changes and are willing to be involved in wider peace and development processes. While the previous assessments such as the Rapid Conflict Assessment and the First assessment showed that communities in general held a negative outlook towards the youth- mainly male youth- the later assessments including the Seventh and the Final Conflict Assessment showed that communities have begun to acknowledge the contribution of the youth towards development as well. This acknowledgement mainly is attributed to increased levels of education among youth compared to the previous generation; increased social awareness among youth, which was seen as contributing to reducing caste-based discrimination; and more women and men youth earning incomes and providing for their families.

Overall, there were improvements on some caste-based issues and increased gender equality in terms of increasing educational and employment opportunities for women and girls. However, other trends are still concerning and require additional monitoring throughout the next phase of Sajhedari Bikaas. Particularly, trends around identity-based issues, related to wider political processes and public security issues that the research shows need to be thoroughly examined for the purposes of more informed and effective programming, as highlighted in the preceding chapters. Additionally, other security-related issues, including SGBV, suicide and migration-related trends require more in-depth research as they are often not comprehensively reported in the quarterly trackers. Similar to the fifth assessment, which was able to focus extensively on the social impacts of migration, it is important that SB looks at exploring concerning trends within SGBV and suicide.

## ***Recommendations***

### **Commission focused research on suicidal trends and the drivers of suicide**

Throughout all the six districts, the perceived rise in suicide rates fared prominently in KIIs and FGDs. There is still insufficient evidence to support why there is a significant rise in the suicide rates. Security providers as well as the communities repeatedly highlighted the need



to explore this phenomenon more in-depth. Since increasing suicide rates were reported as a major threat afflicting the communities across the six districts, it would be propitious for Sajhedari Bikaas to explore more about the drivers of suicide as such cases could potentially impact or be addressed by community mediation cases and/or other project components. Such an exploration would be seminal and would contribute immensely to comprehending some of the complex psychological, social and economic dimensions of this scourge that is currently gripping Nepali society. With 77 cases of suicide reported in Bardiya alone within a 6 month period, it has surfaced as a key concern for people from most districts. It is important to develop coordination with other USAID partners that work on psychosocial components through referral linkages.

### **Skill-based training for youth**

The reported underlying causes of rampant foreign migration, youth political manipulation, and youth involvement in criminal activities are unemployment. The linkage between various forms of violence and unrest with increasing unemployment has negative implications for society, resulting in a threat to community security and social harmony. An assessment is very essential to understand the needs and demands of the local youth to pursue different skills development trainings, potentially providing alternatives that are more attractive to the youth than migration. Furthermore, the assessment will also help to determine different skills based training focusing in particular locations, which also fulfil local market needs.

### **Conduct periodic security situational analysis**

The lack of adequate security analysis led to violent conflict in Kailali district despite a large presence of security providers. Although the situation is not violent following the Kailali incident, the potential for increased political tensions remains, making it important for security providers to be alert to mitigate future potential violent activities in the districts. Thus, it is very important, where possible, to build capacity of local authorities to regularly engage in context analysis and to respond accordingly (via both policy and implementation) to prevent any violent activities that may undermine the district security situation. Furthermore, although the Sajhedari Bikaas project does not specifically focus on early warning and early response activities, periodic security situational analysis are recommended in order to continue to stay abreast of the frequently changing context and to plan accordingly for the effective implementation of project activities and mitigate potential security risks to the staff, in the event violent activities may occur.

### **Organize trust building activities**

The recent unrest in the surveyed districts was attributed to the division of several ethnic groups living within the communities. Although respondents did not report any violent conflict between different ethnic groups, many indicated that the potential remains due to the increasing distrust among them. As the SB project is very much community-focused, it is recommended to organize a series of context-specific interaction activities to bring together different ethnic groups for dialogue, thereby helping to mitigate distrust. These activities



could not only help to reduce the ongoing tensions, but also potentially strengthen social inclusion in local governance processes.

### **Increase awareness-raising activities on the constitution and federalism**

Identity-based tensions continued to exist, most of which were linked to select provisions of the constitution and the subsequent creation of new federal provinces. While central-level political decisions and debates often shape local discussions and tensions, local communities do not always feel they have a platform to share and feed their views and needs up into the central level. Most of the people in the local communities were unaware of the tenets in the constitution and were making their own interpretations, which in turn arguably fuelled misconceptions. As the SB project continues its work on local governance, additional awareness-raising is recommended around issues of federalism and governance, and how federalism would shape local governance mechanisms, once it comes into effect. While the federalism model is still a contentious issue politically, engaging with local communities in order to discuss the concept, best practices, challenges, and opportunities of a federal governance mechanism could create greater awareness, understanding, and openness. Raising awareness about what is actually contained within the constitutional provisions and federalism is the best recourse for negating misconceptions and misinterpretations and mitigating future conflicts over these issues.

### **Explore the use of social media and technology for integration within programming**

Across all six districts, the use of social media and technology was on the rise. Many informants felt that violence and crime, including SGBV, had also increased through the use of social media and technology. While these were largely speculations, it is worthwhile to note that this has been stated frequently during the past few assessments, including the third assessment<sup>264</sup>. Taking sensitivities into account, the positive use of social media and technology for awareness-raising could be adopted by the SB project, which could include informing beneficiaries of the legal provisions of sexual harassment in cyber space and in public places. Additionally, it could also serve a wider purpose, such as increased access to the constitution through mobile application software. Further research on the current trends of social media in Nepal, its implications, and the future potential should be explored to inform future programming.

### **Address SGBV concerns by integrating awareness-raising activities and referral services within the Sajhedari Bikaas project**

SGBV has continued to remain a key safety concern since the Rapid Conflict Assessment in all six districts of the SB project since July 2013, especially for women and girls. Various forms of sexual violence, such as rape and harassment, were frequently reported. Prostitution specifically was raised as a concerning issue in Dang previously, but has now been

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<sup>264</sup> The third USAID Sajhedari Bikaas assessment focused on 'Public Perceptions of among male youth towards sexual harassment' which was carried out by Saferworld and published May 2014.



prominently mentioned in Surkhet and Banke as well. Although prostitution is reportedly being practiced, it is not a legalised profession in Nepal. Furthermore, there are hundreds of women and girls from Nepal that are trafficked to India and other parts of the world and forced into prostitution. While respondents highlighted that women and girls in these districts have been forced into this trade or also chosen it voluntarily, it remains a SGBV concern, particularly given that it is an illegal trade in Nepal. As such, USAID and the SB project should coordinate with other USAID partners that work specifically on these issues in order to ensure that the vulnerabilities that women and girls continue to face are reduced. Furthermore, referral mechanisms, which include the development of referral pathway guidance to address SGBV, should be created within the project to enable Sajhedari Bikaas service providers to help survivors of sexual violence who may approach them.

### **Adopt gender-sensitive and conflict-sensitive approaches while dealing with SGBV**

There were a few cases of SGBV that came to light during this research, such as rape, that were reported as mediated within the community or by the families; this was also analysed in previous assessment reports. SGBV is often underreported in all six districts and continues to remain a challenge for both the survivors and service providers. A key cause as outlined in this report and other assessment reports<sup>265</sup> before this shows that survivors of SGBV are often met with social backlash and ostracisation for reporting cases. Furthermore, most women and girls are economically dependent upon other family members who are usually not supportive of reporting such cases for fear of bringing shame to their families. As such, it is important that the SB project ensures that any case that comes to the Community Mediation Centres or to other Sajhedari Bikaas implementers are dealt with sensitively and have developed appropriate referral mechanisms within their working approach. While the Sajhedari Bikaas project has already developed a mediators' manual on how to deal with GBV, it is important to reflect on the manual and what has been practiced to ensure that the issue of access to justice and gender power dynamics are addressed in a conflict-sensitive manner.

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<sup>265</sup> USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Rapid Conflict Assessment, July, 2013; USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Third Quarterly Conflict Assessment; USAID Sajhedari Bikaas Sixth Quarterly Conflict Assessment, August 2015



## Annex: Methodology

For the final conflict assessment, Saferworld proposed a methodology built upon proven methodologies and tools (used previously) for the Rapid Conflict Assessment (RCA), and the first, second, and sixth quarterly conflict assessments carried out within the framework of the USAID Sajhedari Bikaas project, and other contexts, and were tailored to the specific requirements of the project. The assessment followed up on trends identified in the RCA and the subsequent first, second, and sixth conflict assessments- all four conducted by Saferworld. The trends identified political-based tensions/conflicts/violence; identity-based tensions/conflicts/ violence; crime and armed groups based tensions/ conflicts/ violence; resource-based tensions/ conflicts/ violence; other security-related issues including sexual and gender-based violence and the role of youth. Additionally, as the promulgation of the new Constitution was met with opposition and in some Sajhedari districts there were violent altercations, this assessment sought to expand its scope in order to delve into perceptions of the new Constitution and the proposed federal structure. Additionally, it also attempts to explore the root causes of the unrest in the Terai, and proposed actions (from the research) to resolve and prevent violent outbreaks, which could include bringing differing political parties closer together.

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

**Phase 1 – Desk Research:** To inform and complement the assessment Saferworld reviewed other sources of information, particularly those that tracked incidents of tensions, conflicts or insecurity, at the national and local levels.

**Phase 2 – Participatory Consultations and Research:** Adopting a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, Saferworld employed tools that are crucial to ensure that the research was as participatory as possible given the various social and cultural factors that could become obstacles. This phase took place at the headquarters level in the six districts. Saferworld also sought Village Development Committee (VDC) and Municipality-specific information, specifically during the focus group discussions. The principal research methods that were used in this phase emphasises the gathering of perspectives from key stakeholders and informants who have 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 obtaining the views of youth, both women and men. Participatory Research Techniques (PRTs) was applied, which includes 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 of conflict, community safety and security, and the new constitution and proposed federal structure. Moreover, KIIs provided crucial information to determine structural and proximate causes of tensions, conflict, insecurity and violence, actors involved, and an initial assessment of on-going initiatives and stakeholders working on those matters. KIIs allowed 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 expanded to address the current shifting contextual changes in Nepal related to the promulgation of the Constitution. 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, wherever possible.

Approximately 19-20 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, media, political actors and others well placed to comment on conflict and security dynamics. The sample included target respondents who could provide a deeper understanding of views and priorities in terms of conflict, community safety, security, the new constitution, the proposed federal structure, and related governance processes including the local- and provincial-level elections. To the extent possible, the respondent sample accommodated a balanced representation of men and women.

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

4 FGDs were conducted in each of the six research districts. Two 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 FGD sample, wherever possible, included participants from different Wards/VDCs/municipalities within the district to provide a deeper understanding of their views and perceptions. Additionally, two FGDs focused specifically on youth, the participants of which were based on the same criteria as stated above. The research sought to identify gender-specific perceptions and needs for youth groups. The sample size of each FGD was approximately 6-8 participants.

**Regional-level KII:** Two 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	NGOs (regional offices/representatives) - Mid & Far West	2

**District-level KIIs:** A total of 19-20 KIIs were conducted at the district level, including respondents from different categories.

S.N.	Key informant interviews (KIIs) at the district level	Quantity
1	Security and justice provider	12
2	Business community	6
3	Journalist/ media representative (male/female)	13
4	Civil society (male)	10
5	Civil society (female)	11
6	Civil society (Sexual and gender minority)	2
6	Local government authority	13
7	Political party leaders	25
8	Community members (male and female)	23
	<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>

**Focus Group discussions:** A total of 24 focus group discussions were carried out- four per district. In each district, 2 focus group discussion included youth, separate for male and female, the other two comprised community members in general, separate for male and female.

S.N.	Group discussions (GDs)	Quantity
1	Men Community members (31-50)	6
2	Women Community members (31-50)	6
3	Women Youth group (18-30)	6
4	Men Youth Group (18 – 30)	6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

### *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. This is of the utmost importance given the sensitivities around the data collection for this assessment in light of the very sensitive subjects that have repeatedly sparked violent incidents across the Terai over the last two months. Thus, Saferworld applied the principle of conflict sensitivity throughout the methodology design, data collection, analysis and write-up. To do that, Saferworld has been, for example, transparent about the purpose of the research; involved respondents and researchers in a way that did not put them at risk; selected and designed questions in a way that would not further increase tensions, fuel stereotypes, etc.; and ensured 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 aimed 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 prioritize 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 identified



and employed a limited number of tools that are designed to extract good information on specific issues where appropriate.

### *Research Guiding Questions*

The following were the proposed guiding questions that were used during the field research. The specific questions asked during the FGDs and KIIs were a representative cross-section of the guiding questions and were tailored based on the dynamics of the group and the answers respondents provide.

#### **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)? Do political party representatives at the local level communicate the ground realities to the central level? And if yes, what happens as a result of that upward communication? Are central leaders responsive?
11. **Constitution related** – What are your views on the recent constitution promulgation process? Have you had a chance to read (or otherwise learn about) the constitution?



What do you know about it? If you have had a chance to read/learn about it, are you satisfied with the constitutional provisions?

12. **Constitution related** – Has the constitution been able to integrate your demands? If yes/no, how? (probe for specific examples)
13. **Constitution related** – Have there been any differences within your community because of the constitution and its provisions? If yes, what are those differences and why?
14. **Constitution related** – What do you think will these differences lead to? (probe for potential/ existing conflict dynamics regarding the constitution)
15. **Constitution related** – Who do you think are the main actors that are involved in the constitution promulgation process and in the unrest surrounding the constitution in this district? Why?

#### **Identity-based tensions/conflicts/ violence:**

16. 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?
17. Who are the main actors involved in such debates?
18. Why are these actors involved?
19. Has this led to tensions or clashes? Why? (Probe: What are the differences about?)
20. In the last six months how have these tensions changed?
  - b) Significantly increased b) increased c) remained unchanged d) reduced e) significantly reduced, f) I don't know
21. 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.)
22. How have these tensions affected the communities and what could be the implications for the future?
23. What is or could be the role of youth in such debates and events (or upcoming events)?
24. How are the tensions addressed? (Note: Find out specific cases for case studies)
25. In your opinion, is the process of addressing such tensions inclusive? (Probe: are voices of youth, women, and members of marginalised 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.)



26. Can you elaborate on existing local capacities for peace? (Probe: are there actors who are supporting peace? Who are they? How are they contributing?)
27. How, if at all, has the promulgation of the constitution affected the way people identify themselves?
28. Do you think that the identity-based demands of your district/ community have been addressed within the current constitution? How? Why (if yes/no)?
29. If it has not been addressed - What do you think are the main causes for the constitution not being able to address the demands and who are the main actors that are preventing this from happening?
30. Who are the main actors who you think have played a key role in addressing your identity-based demands?
31. Given the current tensions and violence, what do you think will this lead to? Who would be the main actors involved in taking this further? (Probe on actors, gender, ethnicity, caste, etc. Probe on how current tensions compare to similar previous tensions and steps taken at that time.)

**Criminal and armed groups based tensions/conflict/ violence:**

32. What are the key issues, in terms of crime/ criminal activities in the area? (Probe: organised crime, drug trafficking, human trafficking and new trends or dynamics of it, thefts, robbery, abduction, killing, tender process, white collar crime.)
33. 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)
34. 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
35. Why is there a change in the level of crime (if there is any change)? If not, why not?
36. Where do these crimes take place? Can you elaborate on the location? (Probe: please check if they have specific names of VDCs, ward #, etc.)
37. 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 are statistics related to this available at the district police office]

38. Has there been a change in the nature and trend of crime after the constitution was promulgated? If yes, how and why? Who are the main actors involved?
39. What do you think this will lead to?
40. How has crime impacted the overall situation in the district?
41. What is the state's response and what has been the result?
42. Is there any community response mechanism to curb crime? If there are any, can you please elaborate? (*Neighbourhood watch type mechanisms, increase in private security providers??*)

**Resource-based tensions/conflicts/ violence:**

43. 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, etc. \*\*To the interviewer - The tensions could arise from distribution of resources and also result from competition between several interest groups trying to secure government funds/projects*].
44. How do local planning processes address any resource-based tensions?
45. Who are the main actors involved in this?
46. Where do these types of tensions occur mostly? Why?
47. 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
48. What is role of youth in such tensions?
49. Are there any border-related tensions in the district? (Applicable for all districts except Surkhet)
50. How have these tensions been addressed and who is involved?
51. What is the unemployment situation in the district?
52. How are the unemployed coping with life? What sort of activities are they involved in?

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

53. What is your perception about the Rule of Law in this district?
54. Who would you go to in order to seek justice?
55. 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)



56. Are there any challenges in approaching formal and/or informal justice mechanisms, such as the courts, CMCs, and security providers? (Probe – what sort of barriers exist?)
57. 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
58. What is the scale of SGBV reporting in the district? (Note: Explain the distinction between VAW and SGBV)
59. Are there any other outstanding security related issues that you may want to talk about?

**For youth-related issues:**

60. What are the youth most interested in and what are they usually engaged in?
61. What is putting youth at risk?
62. Who are the vulnerable groups within the youth category?
63. How does the community deal with difficult youth?
64. Do youth have problems that they might not be able to solve on their own; and what kind of support they would need?
65. What do youth think about their role and acceptance in society?
66. How do youth think about their relationships with VDC secretary; security providers; service providers; justice mechanisms?
67. How do the generational gaps between youth and other age groups manifest itself? What could be the reasons behind it?
68. How has the recent constitution promulgation and the unrest affected youth and their daily activities? (probe on specific ethnicity, gender, caste and religion)
69. Do you think the constitution has addressed the demands and aspirations of the youth? How? (Probe on examples)



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