



NDI-Nepal
Increasing Citizen Participation in Political and Electoral Processes by
Strengthening Political Parties and Civil Society

Report On
Karnali Capacity Building Program

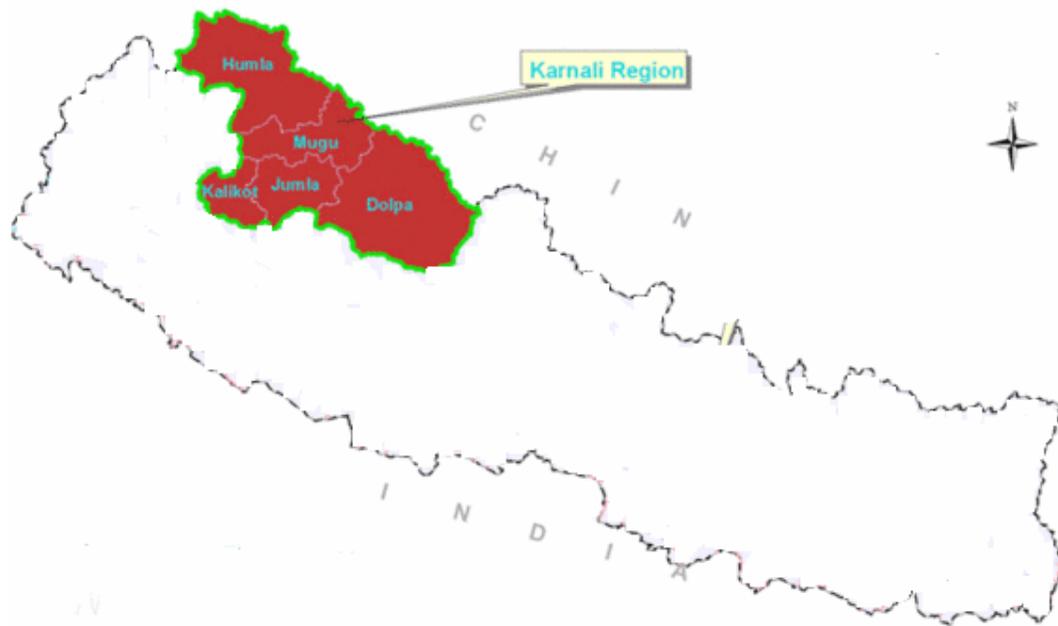
Karnali Capacity Building Program:

It has been the aspiration of the Nepalese citizens to create a new Constitution that addresses the country's particular geography and rich cultural history especially in terms of ethnic and linguistic diversity. However, there has been little discussion about how it would function and few concrete efforts to maximize public input into the Constituent Assembly (CA) process which has further lead to misunderstanding and uncertainty, especially at the local level.

To address this lack of knowledge, the Institute proposed to:

1. Conduct a series of capacity building leadership workshops for civil society organizations (CSOs), political party activists and media representatives on ways to inform isolated communities about minority rights and participatory techniques on the constituent assembly elections.
2. Work with civil media representatives, in isolated areas addressing the role of women, Dalits and other minorities within the CA process and Nepal's transition.

Karnali, one of 14 zones of Nepal in the northwestern mountainous region, is also the most remote region and is yet inaccessible by road. The Institute, on the basis of its geographical isolation, diversity and strong Maoist presence selected Western Karnali to conduct the proposed activities.



The Institute, with funding from the United States Agency for International Development (through the CEPPS consortium), began a program in Karnali zone in February 2007 to work with civil society organizations to organize outreach efforts in isolated areas regarding issues addressing the needs of women, Dalits, and other minorities and their role within the constituent assembly process and Nepal's political transition

Program Activities:

From February 7 to 10, 2007, NDI staff traveled to the regional center of Nepalgunj, to identify civil society organizations (CSOs) active in the Karnali region, locate workshop venues, make arrangements for the accommodation of staff, and to prepare for the "Capacity Building Training" program scheduled for March, which would bring together representatives of the selected organizations and prepare them to organize events in headquarters of the five Karnali districts. NDI met with more than a dozen civil society groups and international organizations working in the region.

During the week CARE Nepal approached NDI and expressed a desire to replicate the program in nine inaccessible Far- and Mid-western districts, on the condition that NDI provide its staff with training and master copies of resource materials. An agreement was reached so that NDI and CARE trainings would take place simultaneously, minimizing NDI expenses.

Capacity Building Event in Nepalgunj:

From March 21 to 27, 2007, the Institute organized a seven day training program, "Capacity Building Event in the Context of Constituent Assembly Elections," in Nepalgunj. Representatives from 13 civil society organizations from the five districts in the Karnali zone – Humla, Jumla, Mugu, Dolpa and Kalikot – participated in the training program. The main objective of the program was to increase and strengthen the ability of politically marginalized groups to advocate for their concerns in the context of the constituent assembly election process. Through this program NDI also sought to work at the grass root level and facilitate efforts to inform isolated communities about minority rights and participatory techniques in the CA process.

CARE Nepal organized and paid for a parallel program for 18 CSO representatives and CARE staff from the nine Far-and Mid-Western and Western districts of Achham, Bajura, Bajhang, Baitadi, Doti, Dadeldhura, Darchula, Gorkha and Pyuthan. NDI provided trainers, facilitators, and resource materials to the participants, allowing the program to reach an additional nine districts with no further commitment from the Institute. CARE Nepal planned to replicate the program at the district and village level, following the NDI methodology.

Designing and Developing Posters on Constituent Assembly Process (IEC Materials)

In preparation for the district level programs, NDI designed and developed voter education posters to assist individuals at the district and village level understand the CA process. The posters were tailored specifically for individuals in the Karnali region, who are excluded from most national civic education programs. The posters answered the most frequently asked questions on the electoral process and also served as pictorial narratives to explain the CA process to people where illiteracy is rampant and visual aid often bridges the gap between understanding and ignorance. Altogether 30,000 posters and the 5,000 booklets (4,000 Nepali and 1,000 English copies) entitled, "Tatashta Tarka/Arguments on Democracy," were printed. The posters covered the following questions:

- What do you understand about the term "constitution?"
- What do you understand about the term "constituent assembly?"
- Why are constituent assembly elections important?

- What is the difference between constituent assembly elections and parliamentary elections?
- What is the difference between “first past the post” and proportionate elections?
- Why do you think constituent assembly elections are important for women?

Though the posters were initially printed for distribution in Karnali, the political parties and other organizations working on voter education also found them useful in their efforts to inform and educate people about the constituent assembly election. Below is a break down of the number of posters distributed to partners, donors and the international community along with the distribution pattern of the booklet “Arguments on Democracy.”

Organization	Program	No of posters Distributed	No of booklets Distributed
NDI-Nepal	Karnali – Capacity Building Program in the Context of Constituent Assembly Elections	27,000	1,000
UNDP, Constitution Advisory Support Unit	Making a new Constitution: Civic Education Day	50	100
Dalit Human Rights Organization	Civic Education	6	100
Federation of Community Forest Users Nepal	Training on Constituent Assembly: Kapilvastu	720	100
Kathmandu School of Law	Constituent Awareness Fair		100
Political parties	Party internal trainings	780	600
Support Nepal	Program on Madhesh issue	210	400
Equal Access	Radio Reporters’ National Training		300
GEFONT	Internal training		150
SAPPROS/CEAPRED (Farmers’ Association)	Event on CA	120	200

District Level Capacity building Event:

Following the capacity building training program, the 13 civil society representatives acted as master trainers and organized three, two-day events, in their respective districts from April 25 to May 12, 2007. Below is a list of the CSO partners from all the five districts.

District	CSO Partner/s
1. Dolpa	1. Dolpa Bikash Sangathan Santati
2. Humla	1. Dalit Bikash Parishad 2. Snowland Integrated
3. Jumla	1. Mahila Kalyan Kendra

	2. Surya Samajik Sewa Sangh
4. Kalikot	1. Dalit Utthan Samaj 2. Public Welfare Youth Forum 3. Social Empowerment & Welfare Academy
5. Mugu	1. Dalit Welfare Organization 2. Friendship Nepal 3. KNSAB Nepal

The total number of participants for each event was limited to 50 and those individuals were chosen in a way to ensure that a wide array of political and civil society actors attended the program. The program included participants from different ethnic and indigenous groups in the Karnali region. Women were strongly encouraged to participate and made up approximate 15 percent of the total 756 participants. The training was a success; a participant from Jumla summed it up as, “For a remote region like Karnali, where the people are very poor and illiterate, this training has been timely. We did not have a very clear concept about CA elections and its implications but thanks to the two day training, now we will be able to pass on this knowledge to our other party members”.

District`	Events	Total Participants	Women	Dalits	Unplanned Event
Jumla	3	150	16	12	
Humla	3	156	32	23	
Mugu	3	150	25	34	97 women participants
Kalikot	3	150	50	18	
Dolpa	3	160	31	12	
Total	15	756	154	99	97

The following training modules were covered in the training:

- Understanding Karnali
- What is Democracy?
- Holding Effective Community Meetings
- Understanding Constituent Assembly And Process
- Electoral Systems
- Understanding Issues of Karnali
- Role and Responsibilities of district event participants in VDCs

VDC Level Events:

Trainers who had participated in the district level capacity building event conducted village and community level events in the five Karnali districts. During the events, emphasis was placed on raising the awareness of citizens on topics such as democracy, the constituent assembly process and electoral systems. As a result 14,257 people were trained and 594 events conducted.

VDC	Total Events	Un-planned Events	Participants	Men	Women	Dalits/Indigenous groups
Dolpa	150		2,765	1,761	1,004	1,006
Humla	97	5	4,439	3,148	1,291	2,396
Jumla	63	3	1,249	654	595	274
Kalikot	139		3,221	2,389	866	946
Mugu	145		2,583	1,789	794	1,083

District Training Evaluation:

An evaluation of the district level participants was conducted in all the five districts. A total of 756 participants were asked to answer specific questions relating to the training in terms of levels of awareness, knowledge and relevance of the program. Some of the major findings are summarized below.

- More than 53% of the respondents stated that by participating in the program they wanted to enhance their level of awareness on the CA and electoral process. As responsible citizens they wanted to contribute towards the formation of a new and inclusive constitution.
- Almost 80% of the participants responded that the training was very relevant, especially in context to the present situation. Discussions on topics like the CA and electoral process helped raise their levels of knowledge and awareness. The program was very inclusive and the representation of indigenous groups, CSOs, women and Dalits highlighted the importance of equal representation of all groups and classes of people.
- According to 85% of the participants the program was very useful. The participants acknowledged that discussions on democracy, CA and electoral process and issues of Karnali had provided them the necessary platform to advocate for their concerns in the upcoming CA election.

Suggestion by participants:

A suggestion that came out strongly was to increase the duration of the program. The participants stated that since the training covered important topics like the CA and the electoral process, over which there continues to be much ignorance and confusion, these topics needed to be dealt with at a slower rate so that all the participants could grasp their significance. Another section of the participants suggested that there should be follow up programs to these trainings; the participants also spoke on the acute need of conducting these trainings in all the districts of the country.

VDC Level Questionnaire:

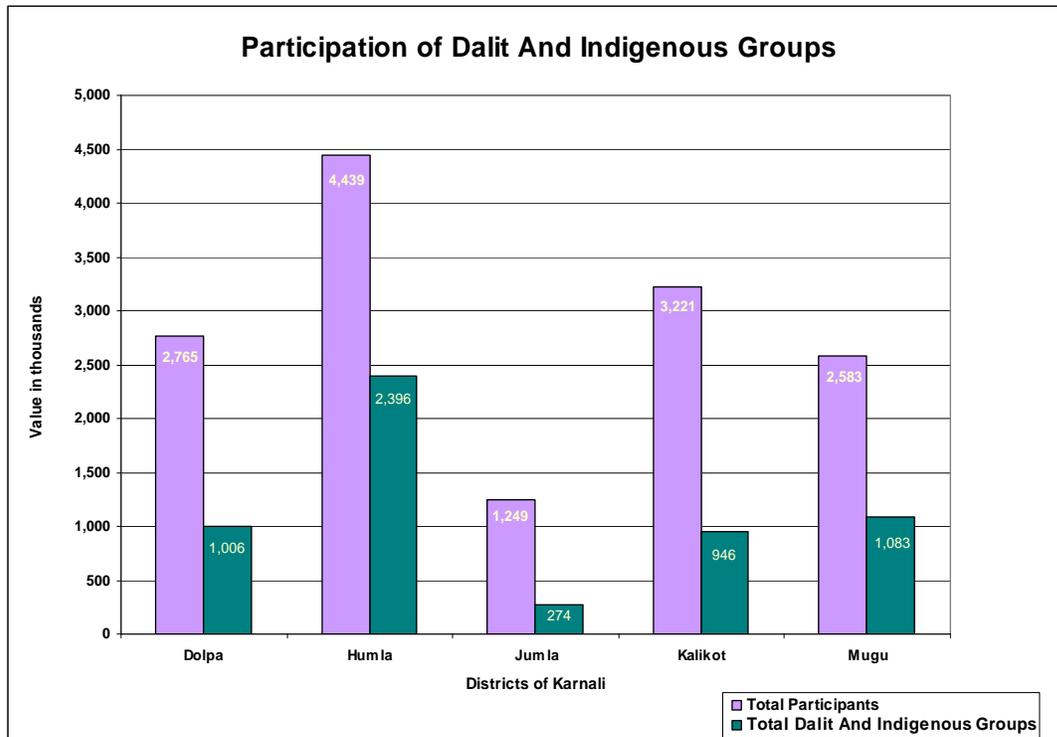
After the conclusion of the VDC level training program, a post evaluation of select CSO partners and constituency level participants was conducted in the two districts of Humla and Jumla. For the CSOs, the questionnaire was based specifically on the participation of marginalized groups, youth and women, the degree of awareness and responsiveness of participants, problems faced and the usefulness of training materials.

- An interesting observation in both the districts was the number of participation of marginalized groups; while in Humla the participation exceeded 50%, in the case of Jumla it was 22%.

- On the degree of levels of awareness on the CA process and electoral system, in Jumla it was reported medium while in the case of Humla poor. However, the CSOs from both these regions have reiterated that the participants had demonstrated remarkable interest in the topics covered and were very receptive to new ideas.
- Majority of the participants found the IEC materials, especially the posters elucidating the CA process very useful; these pictorial narratives enhanced the quality of the training and made learning a fun process. The participants also acknowledged that the IEC materials were far superior in comparison to other such materials distributed over the course of time by other organizations. As a result, political parties have used these posters extensively and the feedback received has been overwhelming.
- In Humla a recurring problem faced by the CSOs was Maoist interference and intimidation. One of the members was beaten and looted by the Maoist.
- A common problem in both the districts was the expectation of monetary remuneration.
- The posters to a large extent made the CA and electoral process much easier to understand, however, some of the participants found it difficult to grasp the true meaning of proportional electoral system.
- In both the districts there was a good representation of political parties, CSOs and the local media.

On the other hand the questionnaire for the participants was simple, based on the participants' recollection of the training event, its impact and the participation of disadvantaged groups.

- The participants reported that the session on the CA and the electoral process had been the most memorable one, mainly as this session had helped clear the misunderstanding and confusion they had on these processes.
- On being questioned on the name and type of electoral system the participants responded correctly.
- In tune to the CSOs the participants also gave very good feedback on the posters; they said that with the aid of this training material they were able to explain the CA process to their friends, family and other villagers.
- As observed by the CSOs, the participants also verified that the representation from the marginalized communities had been good.
- As a consequence of the training program, the degree of awareness according to the participants had increased from Medium to Fair in Jumla and from Poor to Medium in Humla.

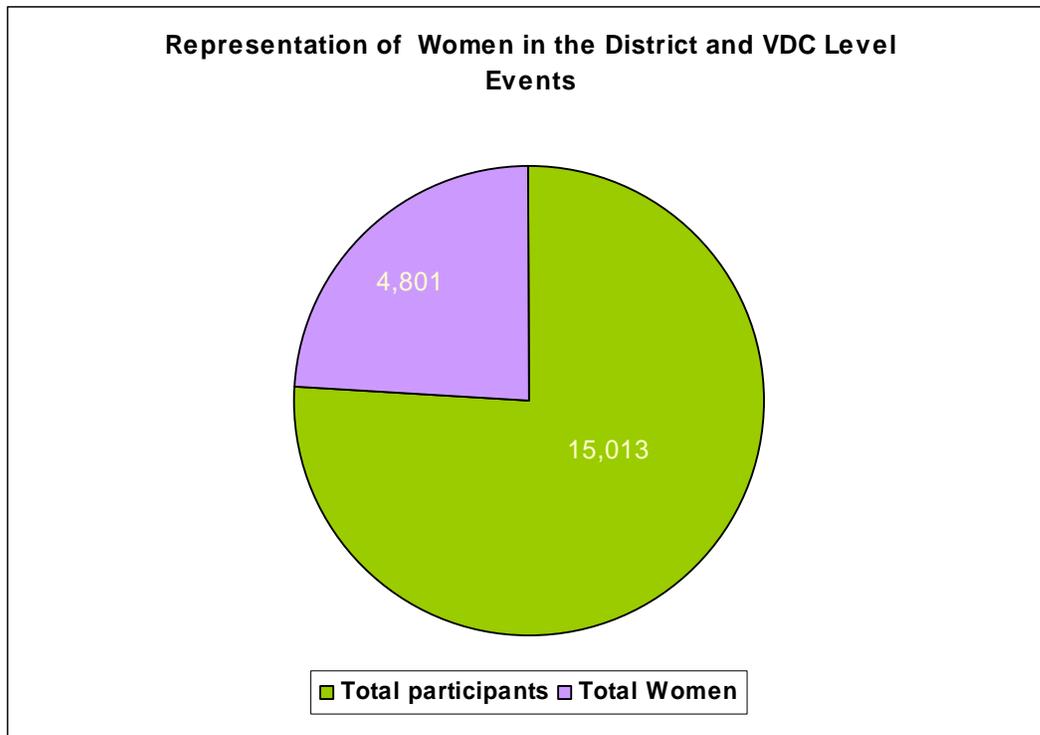


Accomplishments:

As a result of the district and village level trainings a total of 5,804 marginalized¹ groups participated in discussions on democracy, CA and electoral process, increasing their ability to participate in the political process. Eleven CSOs from the five districts successfully conducted 617 events in 123 VDCs in one of Nepal’s most isolated regions.

Following the district and VDC level program a total of 4,801 women were trained on the CA process and electoral system. For an isolated and very backward region like Karnali this is a big step forward in emancipation of women.

¹ Refers to Dalits and Indigenous groups.



As a result of the district level training, Basanti Shahi one of the facilitators and Ragamati Shahi a participant from the Nepali Congress (Humla) were nominated by their party as candidates under the Proportional Representation system

Through a volunteer network of political party and civil society representatives created through the capacity building program, the Institute designed, produced and distributed 28,886 posters on CA and election process to 75% of all VDCs in Karnali.

Success Story:

In a remarkable instance, women leaders from Mugu approached the Institute for additional training on CA and election process. 97 women from different political parties attended a half-day training program which discussed the constituent assembly elections and how individuals can become engaged in the process.

After the success of the Institute's district level training program, CARE Nepal replicated the Karnali program in nine additional districts in the far and mid western region. Eighteen CARE Nepal partners, CSOs and staff members organized capacity building programs for women, Dalits and other marginalized groups.