



Quarterly Newsletter Phase II April-June 2023

Research and Learnings

Inclusion in Post Federal Nepal: Finding from Local Election



Research presentation on Inclusion in Post Federal Nepal: Finding from Local Election

The program, in partnership with Governance Lab, completed research on gender and caste inclusivity in the 2022 local election process. Titled 'Inclusion in Post Federal Nepal: Finding from Local Election,' the research looked into the nomination composition of three national political parties – Nepali Congress, CPN-UML, and CPN- Maoist Center.

The research shows that the general understanding that representatives from marginalized communities can only contest for reserved seats while others have exclusive rights over other positions is hampering inclusion in the process. The research also highlights important wins for inclusion and the information gap between voters and political elites.

The program also organized a dissemination event for political party members, research organizations, and think tanks working in political inclusion, academics, development partners, civil society, and independent researchers, where discussion highlighted the importance of inclusion for stable federal governance and, to tap in unrealized talent and competence.

PEA on Data Governance at the Local Level



The PEA provided evidence that data is rarely and poorly utilized in local planning. The program aimed to engage key government stakeholders, international agencies, the private sector, and civil society organizations (CSOs) to discuss the factors contributing to data underutilization and their respective roles in improving data usage. Hosted in partnership with the Foundation for Development Management, the event also provided a co-learning space for the participants. The PEA states that to establish the practice of using data and evidence at the local level, effective transfer of institutional memory is important.

This quarter, the program shared the key findings of the political-economic analysis (PEA) on data governance at the local level with the stakeholders amidst an event.

D4D

The Data for Development program in Nepal (D4D), which aims to strengthen data and information ecosystems in the provincial and local spheres, is implemented by The Asia Foundation in partnership with Development Initiatives with funding from UKaid. In Phase II, the program supports government and non-government stakeholders who have the knowledge and capabilities to demand, produce, and use data for evidence-based decision-making that addresses local development challenges. Through this, the D4D program works to strengthen a functional, inclusive, and locally led data ecosystem in Nepal.

Women In Data and Tech

Tech2Empower

This quarter, D4D and the Women’s Alliance for Knowledge Exchange (WAKE) organized the Tech2Empower Challenge to create collaboration opportunities for international mentors and the data community in Nepal, including the Women in Data Steering Committee. Such international exposure and support to local women-led organizations has contributed to strengthening and making Nepal’s overall data ecosystem inclusive. The multi-day event included the following initiatives



Kathmandu University students after participating in the Career Day

- The initiation of a five-week mentorship program where 22 women advisors from 14 different tech companies in Silicon Valley collaborated with six women-led social enterprises in Nepal. The event provided a platform for the mentors and mentees to get to know each other and set goals for the mentorship. They worked together on the selected projects at respective mentees’ workspaces. The mentors offered their expertise and guidance so that the mentees could finish their desired projects.
- The first-ever only-for-women event of Kathmandu University (KU) which included 11 workshops on contemporary issues and important skills such as data analysis, developing a pitch deck, developing an effective communications plan, proposal writing, and more. Sixty-one students participated in the daylong event organized by WAKE with support from the KU Computer Club; the Women in Data Steering Committee helped the two collaborate for the event.

Conversing and Connecting: Women in Tech

The program also organized ‘Conversing and Connecting: Women in Tech’ an event to connect the 22 women tech experts of Tech2Empower to the larger women in the data community in Nepal.

There was a panel discussion on the challenges and possibilities for women in data and tech. Moderated by Country Representative of the Foundation, Meghan Nalbo, the panel included Member of Parliament, Hon. Sumana Shrestha, US Ambassador to Nepal, H.E Dean Thompson, Director of Governance at USAID, Dr. Andrew Long, and CEO/ Co-founder of blockchain and tech companies, Rumeen Singh.

Hon. Shrestha, while sharing her efforts for equity in technology, said, “When we talk about technology and advancement, it is so important to consider the context of caste, class, geography, and other socioeconomic realities in Nepal.”



While the impact of this program lies in the details of the effect of mentorship and guidance to the mentees, there are two notable and direct impacts of the project. Women Leaders in Technology (WLiT), a mentee enterprise, and member of the D4D Women in Data Steering Committee, is being listed on Google’s list of women-led enterprises. Google employees will collect funds for WLiT, and Google will match the collected funds. This was possible as their mentor, an employee of Google, was inspired by their work and decided to support them.

Similarly, Smart Cheli, who worked with four Tech2Empower mentors to develop a pitch deck for their initiatives, got selected as one of the finalists to compete for the Entrepreneurship Economic Forum in Paris.



Meghan Nalbo, Country Representative, The Asia Foundation moderating a panel discussion

Events

Digital Nepal Conclave 2023



D4D Project Director presenting on Data Literacy Capacity at Subnational Governments during Digital Nepal Conclave 2023

In June, the program supported the two-day Digital Nepal Conclave 2023. The conclave is an initiative to foster innovation, collaboration, and knowledge sharing to help shape Nepal as a digitally empowered country. On the second day of the conclave, D4D Project Director Sajana Maharjan Amatya made a presentation on the data literacy capacity at the provincial and local levels. She focused on the knowledge among the bureaucrats and elected representatives of the three partner municipalities. Organized by ICT Foundation Nepal, the conclave brought together industry leaders, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and experts to discuss the progress, opportunities, and challenges in Nepal's digital landscape.

Training women in Artificial Intelligence



Participants at the Annual Nepal AI School 2023

The program supported 12 young women to participate in the Annual Nepal AI School 2023 organized by Nepal Applied Mathematics and Informatics Institute for Research. The event aimed to provide students and professionals with the prerequisite fundamentals required to start a career in Artificial Intelligence. A total of 155 participants (42 women) attended the program. In addition, the program team and selected partner organizations also attended separate orientation sessions with the three participants from the Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street, UK.

Engagement with Government

Connecting Open Nepal Community with the MoEST

The program facilitated a discussion between the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the Open Data Community on integrating the concept of open science into the new Science, Technology, and Innovation bill, which is currently in the drafting phase. Based on the discussion, the Open Data community has submitted the provisions pertaining to open science for the ministry's consideration.

Statistical Compendium Book Launch

The National Statistics Office launched Nepal's National Statistical System: A Collection of Thematic Articles in July. The compendium includes 30 articles covering topics such as Nepal's statistical system, Statistics Act 2079, administrative records and their use, data integration, open data, and gender data, among others. The program supported the development of the book targeted toward sectorial agencies, academia, journalists, policymakers, and planners.



Compendium Book Launch by representatives of GoN and D4D