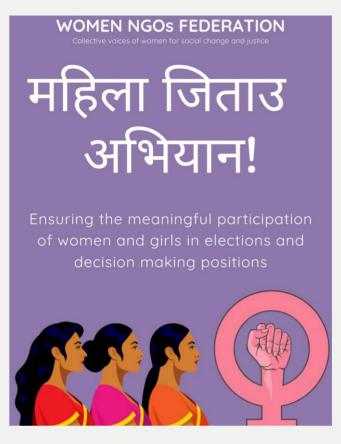
MAHILA JITAU ABHIYAAN

April - May 2022

Introduction

Mahila Jitau Abhiyaan (Let's Elect Women Campaign) is an advocacy campaign that aims to uplift women in politics for the 2022 local level elections. Through mass media campaigns, roundtable discussions, panel sessions and election observation, the program worked to create a network of women candidates, highlight their commitments as candidates, while also ensuring a free and democratic local elections.

This campaign was jointly organized by WNF-Nepal and Sankalpa - Women's Alliance for Peace, Justice and Democracy and supported by Open Society Foundation.



Activities Overview

Activities under this campaign are under three major headings: 1) Consultations, 2) Mass Media Campaign, and 3) Election Observation

Consultations

Mahila Jitau Abhiyaan organized two political consultation programs before and after political parties confirmed their nominations. The aim of these events were to bring gender related issues to the political parties with current and future politicians.

- Roundtable discussion with political leaders (April 22)
- Women Candidates Panel Session (May 2)

Mass Media Campaign

WNF-Nepal conducted a mass media campaign aimed to promote women's representation and participation in the elections. The campaign was conducted through both print and digital media methods including videos/public service announcements, newspapers, and jingles.

Election Observation

In collaboration with Sankalpa - Women's Alliance for Peace, Justice and Democracy, WNF-Nepal mobilized 271 observers for the 2022 elections across 49 districts in Nepal. The aim of election observation is to oversee a free and fair election process. Sankalpa and WNF-Nepal's observer training and questionnaires were conducted and written through a feminist lens to ensure the safety of women and other marginalized groups.

Political Roundtable Discussion

April 22, 2022 Greenwich Hotel, Kupondole



The government of Nepal has secured at least 33% participation of women in politics and ensured one female candidate for mayor and deputy-mayor positions, but in this year's election, two parties have found a loophole to this rule. Two major parties decided to fight local elections in an alliance which has severely deterred the number of women candidates for the 2079 elections.

In reaction to this development WNF-Nepal and Sankalpa presented our position paper to the representatives, highlighting the rules set by the election committee and party actions that are contradictory to the Nepali constitution that guarantees 33% women's proportionate participation in politics during a political roundtable discussion with current party members to understand their party's views on this issue and what more needs to be done in the future to ensure participation of women in politics.

Representatives from different political parties included: Nepal Congress (**Dr. Dila Sangroula Panta** and **Rajendra KC**), UML (**Rachana Khadka**), Rastriya Prachatantra Party (**Meena Subedi** and **Pratik Lohani**), and Janata Samaj Party (**Durga Sob** and **Navaraj Subedi**) on women's involvement in their parties and the upcoming local elections. Local women government representatives (deputy mayors and mayors) from Lalitpur and Kathmandu joined to share their experiences and what they need from their parties.



Women Candidates Panel Session



As part of the Mahila Jitau Abhiyaan, Sankalpa and WNF-Nepal organized a program on May 2nd with the mayoral and deputy mayoral candidates of Kathmandu and Lalitpur Metropolitan City. During the event, our women candidates briefly discussed their commitments and agenda if they get elected, including their support for other fellow candidates.

There were three mayoral candidates in attendance, including the two mayoral candidates from Kathmandu metropolitan city - Sirjana Singh (Nepali Congress) and Samiksha Baskota (Bibeksheel Sajha Party) - along with the mayoral candidate of Tokha Municipality, Rajani Thapa (Nepali Congress).

In addition to mayoral candidates, deputy mayoral candidates also joined the event to speak about their agendas. The deputy mayoral candidates included: Sunita Dongol (CPN-UML), Binita Majhgaiya (Rastriya Prajatantra Party), and Kriti Tuladhar (Bibeksheel Sajha Party) all from Kathmandu, and Swarnima Shakya (Rastriya Prajanantra Party) who represented Lalitpur.

After going over their agendas and commitments if elected, the event held an open floor session that gave the opportunity for other women chairpersons to share their experiences and for interested parties to ask questions. There was also an emotional moment in which a ward chairperson shared how overwhelmed she is by the support that she has received from women in politics and this event in particular because it was something that she had not received even from her family when she entered politics. In support of the ward chairperson and the women candidates, all parties showed their commitment to the Mahila Jitau Abhiyaan campaign and uplifting women, not only during this election period, but always.

Women Candidates Panel Session: Photos



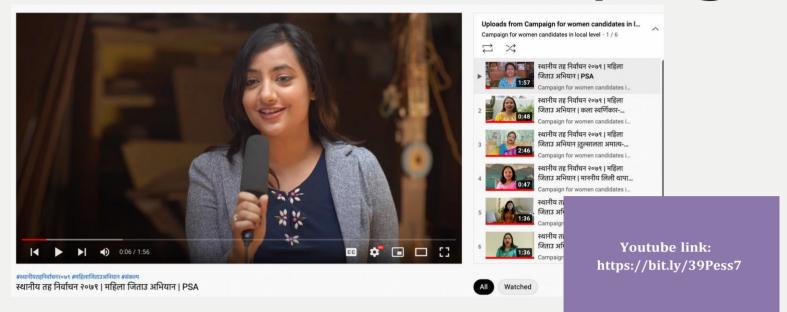








Mass Media Campaign



WNF-Nepal and member organization South Asian Women in Media (SAWM) conducted a media campaign through print and digital media to advocate for the election of women candidates in the local elections. Through public service announcements, short videos and media outreach on social media, WNF-Nepal and Sankalpa updated their Facebook and YouTube followers with the state of women nominations, candidates, and encouraged them to vote for women. Using social media as a platform for advocacy, WNF-Nepal saw a post engagement increase of 464% and reached 7,881 people over the election campaigning month.







Election Observation

As a human right in a democratic state, election observation aims to ensure political fairness during elections. In this regard, WNF-Nepal and Sankalpa prioritized women observers for the 2022 election period to help ensure that no other political loopholes are taken advantage of that can undermine a woman and other minority's right to vote. Through the election observation program, Sankalpa worked to build a network of gender and disability sensitive women and men to assess Nepali's right to vote and participate in the democratic process in a free, fair and safe environment.

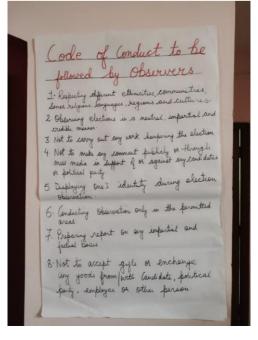
Sankalpa - Women's Alliance for Peace, Justice and Democracy is a diverse group of women's organizations that works to build a peaceful, equitable and democratic Nepal where women play a decisive and powerful role in governance and politics. With a focus on women's rights and women's political power, Sankalpa has worked in all levels of past elections for political advocacy and election observation. Because of this, they received approval to field observers for this election year as well. In collaboration with all of its member organizations as well as WNF-Nepal's member organizations, we mobilized 271 observers in 49 districts of Nepal.

This year, the Election Commission started a new, digital system to upload and approve observers for the 2079 elections. With any new technology, there were many hurdles that the WNF-Nepal and Sankalpa team faced, along with the other observation organizations such as NEOC and GEOC. Due to these unforeseen issues, the team was not able to upload as many observers to the observation system as intended. Additionally, because of the time restraint in uploading observations, WNF-Nepal fielded a group of volunteers to help with the process. The highest number of observers were located in Bagmati province and the lowest number in Province 1. As a women's rights organization, the majority of the observers that Sankalpa recruited were female, with only 31 of the observers being male (11%). The questionnaires that we developed were also created through a feminist lens, prioritizing the safety of women and other disadvantaged groups.

Observation Hub







Observation Orientation





May 8, 2022 Alpha Beta House, New Baneshwor

In-person orientation for observers from Kathmandu, Lalitpur, Bhaktapur and Kavrepalanchowk





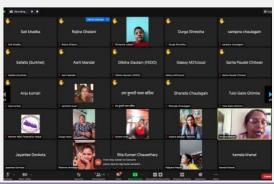
85 observers attended the full day orientation at Alpha Beta house. The morning started with welcome speeches and special addresses by **Dr. Sashi Adhikary** - president, WNF-Nepal, **Honorable Dinesh Thapaliy**a - Chief Election Commissioner - Election Commission of Nepal, **Mr. Pradip Pokharel** - Chairperson, Election Observation Committee, **Mr. Kapil Shrestha** - Chairpersion, National Election Observation Committee, **Mr. Krishna Man Pradhan** - General Secretary, General Election Observation Committee and **Mr. Bijaya Raj Gautam** - Executive Director, Informal Sector Service Sector. The program was moderated by Kala Swarnakar - General Secretary, Sankalpa. In the afternoon, the training session was led by **Mr. Yagya Bhattarai** - Joint Secretary, Election Commission who covered the election and observer code of conducts and **Shobha Basnet** - Senior Vice-President, Sankalpa and General Secretary, WNF-Nepal, who reviewed WNF-Nepal and Sankalpa's questionnaire.

For observers outside of the four districts mentioned, WNF-Nepal held an online orientation over zoom on May 11 which was attended by 137 observers across 7 provinces. The session was recorded for those that could not attend either sessions and was led by Shobha Basnet.

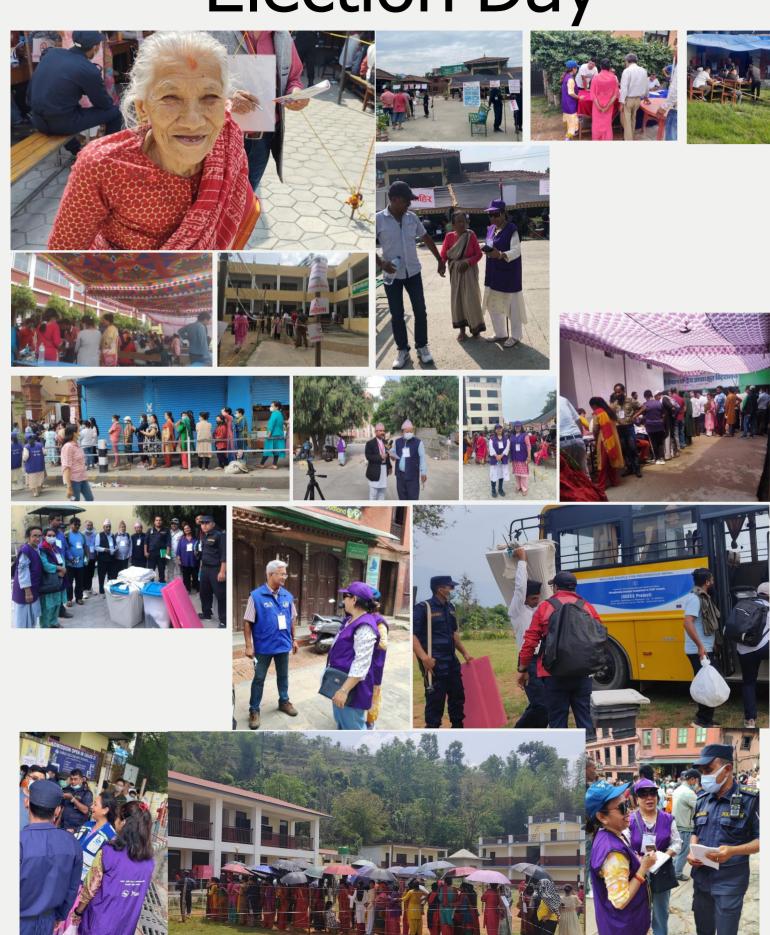
May 11, 2022

Online, zoom orientation for observers from 45 other districts





Election Day



REPORT DISSEMINATION

18TH JULY, 2022 HOTEL HIMALAYA, KUPONDOLE



ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT LAUNCH AND REVIEW WORKSHOP

The program focused on sharing the findings, and recommendations based on the reports of NEOC, Sankalpa and WNF. The program was held in the presence of Honorable Dinesh Kumar Thapalia- Chief of Election Commission of Nepal (ECN) as the Chief Guest. Special Guests included: Honorable Dr. Janaki Kumari Tuladhar, Honorable Shagun Shumsher J.B. Rana of Election Commission of Nepal (ECN); Honorable Kamala Parajuli - Chairperson of National Women Commission (NWC); and Honorable Lily Thapa - Member of National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

Ms. Shobha Basnet (Vice-President, Sankalpa and General Secretary, WNF-Nepal) and Devika Timilsina (General Secretary, NEOC) presented the findings and recommendations of the election observation gender-sensitive from perspective. The chief and special guests then addressed the issues raised by the report and shared their perspectives and reactions to the presentations.





Then, the floor was opened for questions raised by audience members which focused on issues such as caste analysis, observer criteria, and the lack of protection of observers by the ECN. Honorable Dinesh Thapaliya then responded to many of the recommendations as well as the questions proposed by the audience members.