

- 3. The need to target missing groups, such as internal migrants and people living in geographic areas of low turnout to date.** In nearly all the information sessions, participants raised questions about voters who were still missing from the voter registration list.

Carter Center Recommendations: The ECN should target future registration efforts towards areas of low turnout. The ECN should increase its efforts to raise awareness regarding options for internal migrants to register and the Government of Nepal should also

registration process including the Feb. 2011 decision to require citizenship certificates and the Feb. 2012 decision to stay the Ministry of Home Affairs' proposed distribution of citizenship certificates to children of individuals who received certificates in 2007. These sentiments

with the long lines and technical delays experienced in registration. Finally, one participant raised the issue of booth capture in the Constituent Assembly elections and asked whether the new voter list would help solve this problem.

5. Identity Issues

In several sessions, issues related to identity were raised. One person in Janakpur asked why the ECN was asking questions about language and education and how this was relevant to the voter registration process. The same individual noted that he was disappointed that his language was not recognized by the ECN's system. This concern was repeated by another person who said that his language was Magahi, not Maithali, and that the concerns of indigenous groups and "backward" communities were not given enough attention in the process. A third individual said that the voter registration process seemed unable to recognize various identities in the Tarai beyond the Madhesi identity.

Several DEOs mentioned that they appreciated the opportunity to have a forum to discuss the voter registration process with relevant stakeholders. Some suggested that perhaps the ECN could also sponsor such programs in the future in order to raise awareness, increase understanding, receive feedback, and clarify any misperceptions.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Carter Center commends the positive efforts undertaken by the ECN thus far to implement the voter registration process. There are several recommendations that can be drawn from the feedback collected in the recent information sessions, some of which overlap with those already shared in the Carter Center's previous observation reports. The Carter Center encourages the ECN and the Government of Nepal to build on their positive efforts to date and to take further steps to promote greater fairness, access and opportunity for all Nepalis who wish to register. The following recommendations are offered in the spirit of cooperation and respect:

- **The Government of Nepal should consider undertaking a statistically sound survey to document the number of people without citizenship certificates and the reasons why they lack them.** There is currently no reliable data on the number of eligible Nepalis who do not have citizenship certificates. This absence has led to disagreement about the scale of the citizenship certificate issue. It also makes it more difficult to design programs to reach Nepalis who lack these important documents. The Government should undertake or commission a scientific survey to determine the number and locations of people who lack citizenship certificates and document the reasons why.

- **The Government of Nepal should increase its efforts to distribute citizenship certificates**

to 18 eligible Nepalis (14,167 Nepalis) (11,167 on 31 Dec 2008) (18,324 on 31 Aug 2009) (16,465 on 02 Feb 2010) (12,884 on 02 Feb 2011) (11,167 on 02 Feb 2012)

voter registration process who would benefit from increased ECN efforts to raise awareness. Through direct communication and via the media, the ECN can share information about its achievements, challenges, and upcoming phases of the process.

- **The ECN should target future registration efforts towards areas of low turnout.** By analyzing the existing turnout data, the ECN can target its future efforts to people who may have been missed to date. This includes people living in remote areas, people without documents, and poor or marginalized groups who may be less aware of the process.
- **The ECN should continue to be sensitive to identity issues raised by citizens while implementing the voter registration process.** Given the sensitivity of identity issues in Nepal currently, the ECN should continue to seek ways to accommodate citizen concerns and to be inclusive as the process moves forward.
- **Political parties should increase their activities and engagement in the voter registration process.** Participants noted that party activities to encourage their supporters to register have been limited. Increased political party participation can help ensure a successful voter registration process.