



Australian Embassy

Nepal

## Press statement

17 March 2021

***Flourish, the Australian Embassy Women's Summit***

To mark International Women's Day 2021, the Australian Embassy Nepal today hosted *Flourish*, the Australian Embassy Women's Summit in Kathmandu.

The summit brought together elected women representatives, deputy mayors and ward members from local governments across all provinces of Nepal, focussing on the theme of 'Women in leadership – achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world'. The participants, beneficiaries of the Australian Government funded Sub-National Governance and She Leads programs, shared experiences in supporting their local communities to respond to the challenges of COVID-19.

Addressing the event, Australia's Ambassador to Nepal, HE Felicity Volk, highlighted the importance of empowering women in leadership to create stronger and more inclusive communities. She said that COVID-19 had compounded existing economic and other discrimination against women as well as their exposure to gender-based violence. 'Women have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19, but they also have a vital role to play as leaders in global responses to the COVID-19 crisis,' said Ambassador Volk. She commended the contributions of summit participants to the efforts of their governments and communities towards COVID-19 recovery.

The Honourable Dil Kumari Rawal Thapa, Chair of the National Concern and Coordination Committee of the National Assembly said, 'There are challenges to performing the responsibilities for the elected women representatives, but the time has come to show our worth through efficiency and be prepared for the position of mayors and chairpersons in local units in the next elections.'

She said, 'We need to have more women taking leadership positions within political parties.'

Former Member of the Constituent Assembly, the Honourable Mahalaxmi Upadhyay said, 'With joint efforts of women across political parties, we have made significant progress to increase women's representation in the local bodies from five per cent to the current 40 per cent.'

'A key focus for the Australian Embassy is our work to support women in leadership – in politics, business and civil society,' said Ambassador Volk. 'We are pleased to partner with a range of organisations in Nepal to empower women and girls to be leaders in their communities, through improved access to education, sexual and reproductive health services, access to financial services and employment opportunities.'

**Background:**

The Subnational Governance Program, implemented by The Asia Foundation, is supporting Nepal's transition to federalism. The program is building more inclusive and strengthened policies, systems and processes, with a particular focus on the additional pressures caused by COVID-19.

The She Leads program, implemented by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems and in partnership with the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation, is providing capacity building for women elected into government in Nepal.

This capacity building empowers women to advance their electoral and political knowledge, leading to a strengthened engagement in decision-making, policy dialogue and responses to the impacts of COVID-19. The program works with family members and community leaders, including men, to encourage women's political participation, while also supporting political parties to promote women's involvement in political discussions and dialogues at the local level.

For details on these programs, visit [www.dfat.gov.au/geo/nepal/development-assistance/Pages/development-assistance-in-nepal](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/nepal/development-assistance/Pages/development-assistance-in-nepal)

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