# I. BACKGROUND

# - The major question: Who might benefit from federalism?

States amend their organisation in the hope that it will bring a change to the better. Also federalism is not introduced as an end in itself. Often federalism is advocated to accommodate different groups within one state. Anyone proposing state reforms will have to answer the question why to conduct What are the expected conreforms. sequences for the functioning of the state? What will be improved, what might get worse, what will it cost? Who will primarily benefit and who might not? When federalism shall be introduced these questions have to be asked-and answered. What will federalism bring for Nepal?

Federalism will not necessarily or automatically benefit all groups of society. Here, we will concentrate on the probable consequences for marginalised groups. Will federalism inhibit marginalisation and thus bring benefits to so-far marginalised groups or might federalism even contribute to further neglect and marginalisation? Do Swiss experiences provide any lessons learned on the fate of marginalised groups?

Let's first take a look at **what groups might benefit** from federalism. Most of all groups that are strongly territorially concentrated are likely to benefit. Federalism institutes different levels of government, the central government and the governments of federal units, all acting directly upon the people. Federalism tends to bring advantage to the group within a federal unit that can win the elections for the relevant political positions.

Based on the federal principle, federal units (cantons, provinces, states, regions) are accorded with a right to **self-rule**, frequently including a right to self-organisation. In the scope of their powers, they can develop and implement their own policies according to their needs and interests, without unnecessary interference by the centre.

Additionally the federal units benefit from special representation at the centre, normally based on representation in a second chamber of parliament (**shared rule**). Therefore they have direct influence on the central decisionmaking and thus have a political avenue for promoting their interests and priorities.

Last but not least, the introduction of federalism presupposes that federal units are accorded with **own resources** so that they can actually assume their powers (see also the forum on Introducing Federalism: Power-sharing, local self-government and electoral systems).

In federations, groups, who are able to fill the relevant political position in the federal unit can thus benefit from self-rule and shared rule as well as improved access to financial resources.

## - Territorially concentrated marginalised groups

Whenever a marginalised group forms a majority in a specific area and this area becomes a federal unit, chances are good that the group can successfully compete for relevant political offices and that federalism will bring them direct benefit. With federalism, formerly marginalised groups can turn into important political players within the federal unit and can receive additional importance at This is also the reason why the centre. marginalised groups frequently advocate federalism: Federalism shall give them the possibility to decide and implement their own policies and to promote the receptiveness of the centre for their concerns

However, even with political control over institutions, federalism might not in all cases benefit these (formerly) marginalised groups. If federal units, inhabited by the marginalised groups, have strongly limited financial capacities and potential and if there are weak mechanism of financial equalisation, the situation of marginalised groups does not necessarily improve.

Federalism can lead to situations in which disadvantaged areas are left on their own. Federalism can contribute to an even stronger gap in development between 'rich' and 'poor' regions. It needs a certain level of solidarity as well as mechanisms for development of the whole country, with a special focus on

backward or disfavoured areas in order to prevent too strong disparities.

# - Dispersed marginalised groups

With the introduction of federalism, territorially concentrated marginalised groups who successfully compete for political positions can hope for a change to the better whenever they have sufficient potential for development. However, what consequences will federalism have for groups that are not territorially concentrated?

Groups that are dispersed and that will not have a dominant position in any of the federal units will not necessarily benefit from federalism. They will be in a **minority position in the federal units**. To some extent it will depend on the political organisation of the federal units in how far these groups are included in the decision-making and whether their rights and interests are protected and taken into account.

Dispersed groups who are **additionally marginalised at the centre** face a double marginalisation. For improving their rights and defending their interests they have to lobby and negotiate with several governments: the central government and the various governments of the federal units. This can render their position even more difficult than in a unitary state.

However, because federalism tends to sensitise political actors for group concerns, it can be argued that marginalised groups benefit indirectly. For instance, nationally dominant groups can turn into minorities at the local level. This can create shared interests and open the doors for new political (ad-hoc) coalitions. The potential indirect positive effects, however, cannot be considered as sufficient protection of marginalised groups.

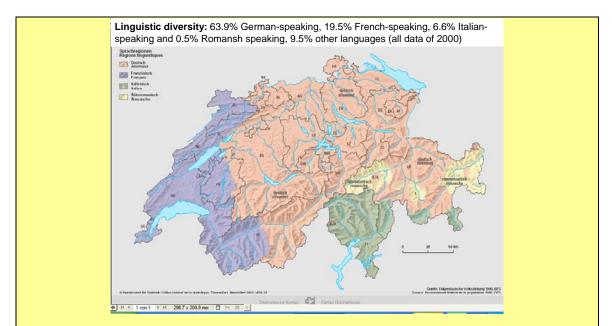
As shown, the introduction of federalism can create new marginalised groups at the level of federal units and can further complicate the situation of nationally marginalised groups, especially, when they are dispersed. This **risk** has to be taken seriously.

**Special mechanisms** are needed to protect and create prospects for marginalised groups. Federalism normally provides mainly territorially anchored power-sharing. Power is shared between the centre and the territorially defined federal units.

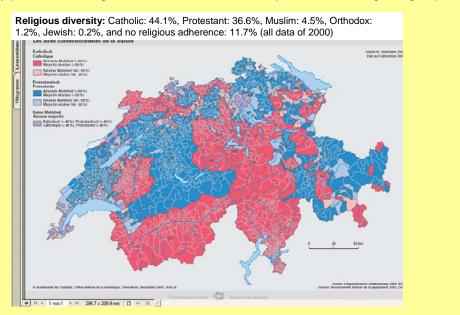
In this paper a look shall be taken at additional complementing protective mechanisms that are not linked to territory but shall benefit the concerned groups. Also in unitary states, such mechanisms can be found. However, in federal states these mechanisms have to be shaped in a way to reflect federal realities.

## Switzerland as an example:

Most groups in Switzerland are **territorially concentrated**. There are cantons with German-, French- respectively Italian-speaking populations. Most cantons are mono-lingual. Only three of 26 cantons are bilingual and one canton is trilingual. The Romansh speaking community is the only one that does not form a majority in any canton.



There are cantons with populations that are predominately catholic and others that are predominately protestant though in certain areas, there is a patchwork of religious groups.



However, even in cantons that are faced with religious and linguistic diversity, at least municipalities are relatively homogeneous. Switzerland managed to accommodate the linguistic and religious diversity on a territorial basis by according the right to self-rule to the cantonal and the municipal level. These territorially concentrated groups can benefit from the three-level federalism in Switzerland. However, they benefit also from other **non-territorial power-sharing mechanisms** that could be of interest for accommodating territorially dispersed marginalised groups. These mechanisms will receive our attention later.

Switzerland has only **limited direct experience** with dispersed groups. ( $\rightarrow$  See also the Forum on Territorial vs. Ethnic and Personal Federalism).

To some extent, **women** can serve as an example for dispersed marginalised groups. Though they form a numerical majority they were disadvantaged for centuries. Switzerland was the last country in Europe to accord equal voting rights to men and women at all state levels. In 1991 the last canton introduced equal suffrage. Even today wage disparities between men and women are high—and increasing. For improving the position of women, Switzerland mainly followed a rights based approach. It can be argued that to some extent the **Romansh-speaking community** turned into a dispersed group. Despite of mechanisms of financial equalisation, difficult living conditions with bleak economic prospects led many Romansh-speaking citizens to leave their villages and move to other parts of Switzerland. Migration turned this already vulnerable group into a dispersed group, increasing their vulnerability. Special recognition and protection were provided for the Romansh-speaking community to give additional protection.

**Immigration** introduced new forms of diversity. For instance, today 4.5 % of the population in Switzerland are Muslims and there are about three times more Albanian-speakers than Romansh speakers living in Switzerland. There are also more Albanian-speakers with Swiss passport than Romansh-speakers. Mainly due to immigration policies, these groups are strongly dispersed. They do not form a majority in any of the cantons or in any of the municipalities of Switzerland. Additionally they are marginalised at the central level. While for instance the Romansh language is recognised as national language, Albanian is not. Switzerland did not yet find adequate mechanisms to integrate new dispersed diversity.

# **II. SPECIFIC ASPECTS**

# - Who shall protect marginalised groups in a federation?

**Thesis 1:** In federations, marginalised groups should be protected at all state levels, the central level and the level of federal units. The federal level should establish enforceable minimal standards that have to be respected by all, including the federal units.

Who shall protect those dispersed groups that risk marginalisation in a federal state? Is it the task of the groups themselves to fight for their rights and the protection of their interests or is the state obliged to actively protect There are several international them? covenants that oblige states to protect their minorities. Some of these covenants are regional e.g. the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities: others are more inclusive. e.g. UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities as well as the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious or Linguistic Minorities establishes the principle clearly: "States shall protect the existence and the national or ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and shall encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity. States shall adopt appropriate legislative and other measures to achieve those ends" (Article. 1 para 1-2).

On the long run, no democracy, whether federal or unitary, can accept the political marginalisation of any group, on the one hand because this would be opposed to the very idea of inclusive democracy and on the other hand very pragmatically because such marginalised groups can become important opponents or even spoilers of the political process. There can be groups that are marginalised at the centre, and in certain cases, federalism can lead to new or additional marginalisation at the level of federal units. The central government as well various as the governments of federal units act directly upon the people. Therefore they can also contribute to marginalisation as well as to the improvement of the position of marginalised Effective protection of marginagroups. lised groups has to be foreseen at all state levels.

Shall it be left to each state level to establish protection mechanism or shall one state level take a leading role? There are no reliable statistics which level of state tends to be more attentive to minorities and marginalised groups. As experience in several countries show, federal units are not necessarily more hostile or restrictive towards marginalised groups. However, if protection is left entirely to the federal units there tend to be huge discrepancies in rights and protection from unit to unit. One federal unit might introduce far-reaching minority rights as well as opportunities for participation in decisionmaking, others might not.

Therefore, frequently the federal level prescribes **minimal standards** concerning rights, sometimes also concerning the inclusion of marginalised groups in the political processes and state institutions of the federal units. These minimal standards will only bring benefits if they are implemented respectively enforceable, e.g. in federal courts.

#### Switzerland as an example:

The Swiss federation was formed by aggregation ( $\rightarrow$  see the forum on New vs. Historical Federalism; Federalisation by aggregation, Federalisation by de-aggregation). Each canton had already their constitution and their judiciary. The first federal constitution of 1848 did not yet have a systematic Bill of Rights. Only those rights were guaranteed that were seen as specifically important and endangered, e.g. the freedom to conduct and participate in religious services (for Christian denominations), the principle of non-discrimination between citizens from different cantons as well as political rights for all (male) citizens at the central and cantonal level irrespective of the canton of origin. The federal level was supposed to act as guarantor in areas that where deemed especially sensitive. However, the cantons were supposed to act as the main guardian of citizens' rights. Sometimes the cantons were faster in promoting rights than the federal level. In other cases the federal level had to set the standards because some of the cantons were lagging behind and did not by themselves protect certain rights. Voting rights for men and women shall serve as an example. The right for women to vote was first introduced at the cantonal level. The cantons of Vaud and Neuchâtel were the first to introduce equal suffrage in 1959. Step by step, additional cantons introduced voting rights. Finally in 1971, twelve years later than the first canton, the federation introduced equal suffrage for central elections. By 1972, all cantons except for the cantons of Appenzell had introduced equal political rights for men and women. Appenzell Outer Rhodes introduced voting rights in 1989 and finally in 1990 the Federal Court ruled that also the Canton of Appenzell Inner Rhodes had to introduce voting rights for women.

The Swiss Constitution of 1999 contains a well-developed Bill of Rights that is binding for the cantons. Cantonal constitutions also contain Bill of Rights. Some of them are more far-going than the federal Bill of Rights. If the canton violates guarantees of the cantonal or federal constitution, the citizens can address the cantonal courts as well as the Federal Court as court of last resort.

# - How can marginalised groups be reassured and protected?

**Thesis 2:** Marginalised groups can be reassured and protected by giving them special recognition, by providing for mechanisms to foster inclusive governance, as well as by establishing an enforceable Bill of Rights.

Federalism will not stop all forms of Federalism is not the marginalisation. solution to all the challenges a country with a multiethnic society is facing. In the worst case, federalism can even increase marginalisation and complicate the situation for disadvantaged groups. Three types of mechanisms will be regarded that might help to prevent further marginalisation: (1) special recognition of marginalised groups, (2) mechanisms for providing inclusion and representation as well as (3) protection of human and minority rights.

(1) On the first sight, the **recognition** of the different groups, for instance by enumerating them in the constitution does not bring many benefits. On the other hand recognition includes an important political message. It underlines the multiethnic character of society *and* of the state. It clearly establishes that the concerned group forms and shall form part of the state and the nation. Recognition normally also translate into **state policies**, for instance in respect to official languages at the central or at the local level. The recognition of

groups as marginalised or vulnerable can form the basis for mandating state policies that specially protect and promote these groups.

(2) It is furthermore possible to guarantee special **inclusion and representation** for groups, especially for marginalised groups at central level and at the level of federal units,

- by providing proportional or special representation and input in **Parliament**, for instance by applying a proportional electoral system, if necessary with reserved seats, special supra-territorial constituencies for marginalised groups, special interethnic commissions as well as special consultation and decision-making procedures,
- by providing for an inclusive executive for instance by promoting the formation of multi-ethnic grand coalition governments,
- by providing for a representative administration
- as well as a **judiciary** that in its composition mirrors the whole society.

representation Integration and should increase the legitimacy of political decisions, so that decisions have an overall legitimacy and are additionally perceived as legitimate by the different concerned groups. In other words, special inclusion and representation should prevent the tyranny of the majority; however it shall equally not introduce the tyranny of the minority or the continuous unsolvable confrontation of groups. Inclusion and representation shall aim at establishing a system that generates changing coalitions and viable compromises.

For promoting the inclusion and representation of marginalised groups within federal units the federal constitution can establish mandatory principles for the political organisation of federal units that guarantee adequate representation and participation of all segments of the population, including marginalised groups. Federal units have their own legislature as well as executive and in many federal countries also their own judiciary. Therefore inclusion and representation of marginalised groups can be promoted in respect to all branches of sub-national government similarly as for the national government.

However, the **weakening of the influence of the majority of the federal unit** due to the guaranteed representation of other groups can lead to frustrations and jeopardize the loyalty of that majority to the federal system. The tensions will probably be even greater if the majority of the federal unit is a minority at the national level, perhaps even a group that has been marginalised by the centre in the past, and perceives its influence weakened unjustly. Special attention has to be given to create a viable power-balance that is acceptable to the majority and the minorities.

(3) Already before, some generally applicable standards and an enforceable **Bill of Rights** were mentioned. Human and minority rights as individual or collective rights form the basis for protecting marginalised groups as well as the individual. Amongst others these rights can include

- the right to freely choose to be treated or not to be treated as member of a specific group,
- the principle of non-discrimination and the right to protection by the state against discriminative acts,
- the right to non-assimilation,
- religious freedom,
- the right to assembly,
- the right to use the own language in private and in public, the right to the name in the own language and script,
- the right to use group symbols,
- the right to education in the own language with a culture sensitive curricula or the right to own private or public schools as well as
- the right to cross-border relations with kin groups.

Normally the centre functions as guardian of human and minority rights, protected by independent and impartial courts. Ombudsmen and similar institutions at the central and local level can further help protect the rights of marginalised groups and individuals.

### Switzerland as an example:

Switzerland's language policy and especially its policy in respect to the Romansh language and the Romansh speaking community can serve as an example for protecting and reassuring vulnerable groups.

(1) Switzerland distinguishes between national and official languages. **Recognition** as national language as such, does not bring any concrete benefits; however, it has high symbolic value. Until 1938, the Swiss constitution recognised the German, French and Italian language as national languages of Switzerland. In 1938 the constitution was amended to also give this status to Romansh. This recognition was the first step towards the further promotion of this language. In the first years after 1938, Romansh was national language however not official language at the federal level. In the beginning of the 1990s the Constitution was again amended to provide the Romansh language with the status of official language at the federal level. However, the status of the Romansh language is not exactly the same as for the other three official languages. E.g. only the most important legal text are translated into all four languages, ordinary laws without special relevance to the Romansh speaking community are published in German, French and Italian only. However, Romansh-speaking citizens can address the federal administration in Romansh and will also receive an answer in this language. Thus Romansh is only slightly disfavoured. As counterbalance to this disfavoured status the Constitution provides that smaller linguistic groups (Romansh and Italian) can be especially

promoted. Based on this provision, the canton of Grison for instance foresees lower thresholds for recognising Romansh as official language on the municipal level than for other languages.

The cantons can decide on the cantonal official languages. However, the federal constitution gives some guidelines: For preserving the harmony between linguistic groups, the cantons shall take into account the indigenous linguistic minorities.

(2) Switzerland also foresees the **representation of different language groups in political institutions**. Proportional and cantonal representation in parliament also leads to the representation of different language groups. Because the Romansh speaking community forms less than 1% of the population, representation in Parliament remains limited. However, since 2008, one member of the seven-member executive and the chancellor (comparable to a secretary general of the government) are from the Romansh-speaking area of Switzerland. The law provides additionally for the proportional representation of linguistic groups in the administration. Also for the composition of the federal judiciary the equitable representation of language groups is taken into account.

In political institutions at the federal level the members of the political institution have the right to use the official language of their choice for communication. As a general rule everyone speaks his or her language and the counterparts are expected to understand. Only in the lower house of parliament simultaneous translation is provided. Proposals can only be put on the agenda of parliament if they are presented in German, Italian and French. All decisions and communication of parliament are published at least in the three languages.

(3) In addition, the Constitution guarantees the **freedom of languages**. At the same time however the cantons are mandated to respect the territorial distribution of indigenous languages. This provision was introduced as a protective mechanism that shall help to keep the status quo of language distribution. This restriction shall mainly protect the smaller linguistic groups. Internal migration, for instance by German-speakers, should not lead to linguistic assimilation of smaller groups. Based on this so-called territoriality principle, cantons prescribed that instruction in schools is provided in the language that is traditionally spoken in the area, thus forcing new residents to assimilate. The territoriality principle can be in contradiction with the freedom of languages. In cases of conflict the court is applying a balancing approach.

# - How can protective mechanisms be implemented?

**Thesis 3:** The implementation of protective mechanisms can meet resistance. The probable resistance to implementation should be considered as early as possible. The constitution and legislation can outline general principles as well as concrete measures and safe-guards to promote implementation.

**Protective mechanisms are only as good as their implementation.** Rights and freedoms only bring full benefit if they can be enforced. An independent judiciary with the power of constitutional review can ensure the enforcement of constitutional rights and freedoms. Though the challenge to render the judiciary truly independent should not be underestimated, here emphasis will be given to the challenge of implementation. The topic of the judiciary in federal countries might be taken up in another forum.

In general, **implementation** can be achieved easiest if the policy finds broad acceptance. However, very often, the introduction of power-sharing mechanisms, including mechanisms to improve inclusiveness and representation, meets resistance. These power-sharing mechanisms provide a share of power that current power-holders might prefer to keep. In order to avoid resistance, it is important to think about implementation and political implications early on.

Let's take the question of ensuring equitable representation in the administration as an example. According to this principle the composition of the administration on all levels and in all areas shall reflect the composition of the respective population. Marginalised groups are often underrepresented in state policy of equitable institutions. А representation can increase the trust in the administration as well as render it more efficient.

However, policies of equitable representation in the administration can provoke **resistance** for instance by those who fear to lose their job because their group is over-represented. Resistance can also be based on arguments that there are not enough qualified candidates for positions in the administration, sometimes out of concern for the professionalism of the administration, sometimes as a disguise for general mistrust against members of that specific group. What can be mechanisms to promote implementation in such a situation?

If the policy shall receive special importance it can be introduced on the level of the The constitutional provision constitution. could even include the duty to set aside budgetary means for implementing this policy. Introduction on the level of the constitution tends to increase the pressure on the governments successive to actually implement the policy. Legislation can include the general principles, concrete measures and measurable targets, as well as control mechanisms and incentive schemes. Government strategies and annual plans can further concretise the implementation process.

- General principles can for instance include the guarantee that existing staff will not be laid off for the implementation of equitable representation but that qualified candidates from underrepresented groups will be given priority for filling vacant positions.
- The promotion of candidates from underrepresented groups might require a

review of civil service legislation and rule books, including a review of required qualifications. The promotion of candidates from under-represented groups need not be based on a lowering of standards. In many cases, for instance knowledge of local (minority) languages as required qualification for certain positions tends to promote the employment of underrepresented minorities.

- Concrete measures can include the introduction of special training programmes for underrepresented groups in order to increase the number of qualified candidates.
- Targets and time lines can be set for the whole administration, every ministry and administrative unit as well as every level in the hierarchy. The administration as well as public enterprises can be obliged to create annual plans in order to achieve these targets.
- A monitoring system with a transparent and regular reporting, for instance to parliament, can further foster accountability and can help in keeping the topic on the political agenda.
- Reporting requires the availability of data, which might require a revision of the relevant laws on state statistics.
- Special institutions, e.g. an ombudsman, can weigh over the implementation, give recommendations, e.g. propose targets, and receive complaints.

### Switzerland as an example:

The acceptance of the promotion of proportional representation of the different language communities in the Swiss administration is high. For instance, within the federal administration 98% of the employees approve that there shall be special promotion measures for underrepresented groups. In the public administration 92% of civil servants believe that working in multilingual groups is enriching and 89% of the employees think that positions in the public sector gain attractiveness because of multilingualism. Such high approval rates decisively facilitate implementation. Due to the high support for a multilingual administration it was also not seen as very important to enshrine the principle of equitable or proportional representation in the constitution. Also comprehensive legislation, Switzerland adopted very late. In 2007 Switzerland adopted its first language law. Until then the use of language predominately was based on informal rules. Now Article 20 of the Swiss law on languages indicates that the federal administration shall introduce adequate measures for the representation of all language communities qualitatively and quantitatively.

Equitable representation in the administration is more or less achieved. Nevertheless, Frenchspeaking civil servants are much more sceptic than German-speaking civil servants that the cadres have enough sensibility for language issues (33% French-speaking to 82% Germanspeaking) and they believe that French- and Italian speaking employees have less chances to be promoted to positions with high responsibility (75% French-speaking to 23% Germanspeaking) though statistics do not show a relevant under-representation in cadre positions. The demands to promote candidates from minority language communities and to assure the quality of their employment therefore remain.

In Switzerland an **evaluation of language policy in the administration** took place. Below some measures are listed that were deemed as especially successful. The first percentage states the support of the measure from all employees, the second the support rate of the French-speaking:

- Promotion of young French- and Italian-speaking persons for apprenticeships (96%; 100%)
- Special focus on training and continued education in matters of multilingualism for specific positions, especially higher positions (94%; 100%).
- Continuous information concerning multilingualism (91%; 100%)
- Career development, establishment of a pool of potential leaders with especially taking underrepresented groups into account (91%; 94%)
- Announcement of job positions with explicit indication that the applications from underrepresented groups are especially welcome (90%; 92%)
- Language qualifications, the language knowledge in one other official language are systematically tested, the higher the position the better the language knowledge has to be (85%; 85%) (In Belgium—for an interim period—it is foreseen that language improvements are measured regularly with consequences for salary and position if the necessary level is not achieved in the time foreseen).
- Introduction of monitoring instruments that show the state of implementation (79%; 75%).
- Employment procedure preference for employment of persons from underrepresented groups with equivalent gualifications (78%; 80%).
- Creation of positive incentives (78%; 83%).

# **III.** CONCLUSIONS

The introduction of federalism shall bring a change to the better. Certain marginalised groups might directly benefit from federalism and might be able to overcome marginalisation. However, federalism is no miracle cure and can even have serious negative side effects. There are certain marginalised groups that do not necessarily benefit from federalism: dispersed groups, and federalism might even lead to new marginalised groups at the level of federal units. It needs safe-guards that minorities will be neither marginalised at the centre nor at the level of federal units.

There is a whole number of mechanisms available that can help to undo marginalisation. Some of them have been depicted above. There are also ways how to foster the full implementation of these mechanisms. In the end, all groups have to see a benefit or at least no disadvantage or danger in the state reforms. If the ruling elite has the feeling that they are losing everything, chances that the reforms will succeed and can be sustained are low. If marginalised groups remain marginalised they might one day In order to improve the overall revolt. chances of the reform process, the interests of the whole population and of all groups have to be taken into account as far as possible. A viable power-balance has to be established.

The prospect of inclusive governance and sufficient protection might convince also groups that do not automatically gain from federalism to buy into the state reforms. It might facilitate the agreement on the federal boundaries because with inclusive governance the majority of the federal unit will have to share power with others and thus will not be the sole winner and the minority will not be the perennial loser. In a system of inclusive governance there is less to win by being the majority and there is also less to lose by being a minority. Additionally, the majority of a federal unit might be in a minority position somewhere else, for instance in another federal unit or at the central level. If they form a relative majority within the federal unit the new majority might even be ousted in elections by a coalition of minorities. Thus generally applicable minimum standards for the inclusion and protection of all can also benefit their groups.

Inclusive governance requires a certain amount of respect and trust. Buying into state reforms that do not bring benefits on the first sight requires feeling respected and strong reasons to trust. Recognition can show respect and written guarantees with mechanisms for their implementation are most likely to provide reasons for trust.

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