

## ***Journal of Political Science***

(A Peer-Reviewed, Open Access Journal; JPPS Star Ranked and Indexed in NepJOL)

ISSN 2362-1273 (Print); ISSN 2773-8132 (Online)

Volume 24, February 2024

<http://ejournals.pncampus.edu.np/ejournals/jps/>

### ***Published by***

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# **The Performance of Local Governments in Kaligandaki Rural Municipality of Syangja District, Nepal: An Assessment**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/jps.v24i1.62852>

Submitted 11 Oct. 2023; Reviewed 30 Nov. 2023; Accepted 8 Dec. 2023; Published 15 Feb. 2024

## **Abstract**

Since the establishment of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the Constitution of Nepal 2015 has given the local governments a great deal of power and authority. Consequently, a lot of changes have been noticed in most of the local levels. The present study is about the performance level of local government of Kaligandaki Rural Municipality of Syangja District in Gandaki Province, Nepal. The main issues and objectives that encouraged this study are to identify the types of achievement the local government has made during its tenure from 2017 to 2022, and to explain how it has accomplished the performance. The government has carried out different development activities related to public goodness in the study area. The activities related to passing and enacting laws, and improving education, drinking water, health care, insurance, farming, roads, irrigation, job opportunities and people's increased participation in decision-making level have been successfully implemented. The study demonstrates that the local leaders of this municipality have accomplished their tasks among the grassroots by encompassing inclusive development models. The findings of the study conclude that besides exercising democratic practice and democratic institutionalization, the local government has displays high level of performance regarding local development in this rural municipality, and this performance indicates the significance of empowering local levels in Nepal.

**Keywords:** Federal democratic republic, local government, democratic practice, democratic institutionalization

## The Performance of Local Governments in Kaligandaki Rural Municipality

### Introduction

In a democratic practice, the people's representatives set up the government to establish good political culture. It is believed that these representatives act in accordance with the needs and interests of the people who elected them. In democracy, elections are frequently held believing that they are the tools to select right person in right position. However, this depends on how fairly the elections are conducted. That is why, scholars and policy makers always attempt to hold fair elections.

Democracy is the foundation of good governance. Talking about government and governance, Wolman (1995) briefly states that government is composed of elected representatives, and governance is the process through which elected officials, bureaucrats, members of civil society, and businesspeople deliver goods and services to the people. Democracy always demands good governance for goodness of the citizens. A democracy is a mechanism for governance that gives the people the ability to exercise political power and authority of the head of state, allows for the division of powers amongst governmental branches, and guarantees the preservation of civil freedoms and fundamental rights (Longley, 2021). It is an established norm of democracy that every citizen has the right to be a leader and to exercise all constitutionally guaranteed freedom. Further, a real democracy does not confine power to a single unit but allows all the government units to exercise the power.

Federal system of political practice is one example of division of power. Nepal has recently entered this federal system, decentralizing the political power. The system is new in Nepal, but many nations have practiced this system for decades. Federal system has different levels of governments like federal, provincial, local governments. All these levels try to deliver good governance. Current trends influencing local governance include decentralization, strategic collaborations, and increased attention from abroad to local governance (Sisk, 2001). Recently, the discussion on development has given a key role to good governance. The democracies that have reached the summit of development index and public welfare have employed the principles of good governance. Pointing out the essence of good governance, Ghaus-Pasha (2005) asserts there is a contention that developing nations cannot maintain economic progress or a swift reduction in poverty without a suitable governance framework. As argued by Ghaus-Pasha, good governance has become the pivotal factor for the all-round development of individuals, society and of the nation as a whole.

Today, the political system of a nation can be a global issue. One country's democratic system is minutely watched by other democracies. Therefore, political Changes are globally connected phenomena and have international influence. Globalization is the process through which economic, political, and technological changes have occurred globally since the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s (Sisk, 2001). With the increasing trend of globalization, changes of one place have impacts on the other places and pervade globally, eventually.

In Nepal, restoration of democracy in 1990 gave rise to multiparty political system. The constituent Assembly election in 2008 declared Nepal a Federal Democratic Republic,

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abolishing the 240-year-old monarchy. The promulgation of new constitution in 2015 gave formal shape to federal democratic republic in changing patterns in a new structure with 22 constitutional rights at the local level. The primary issues faced by local democracy are managing the effects of urbanization and globalization, encouraging social peace, promoting efficient service delivery, and creating job opportunities (Sisk, 2001). The major responsibility of the local government is to appropriately address the issues related to public needs and interests.

A local government that deals with issues directly affecting the people in a specific area is the lowest level of a country's government. Such governments are increasingly taking on more responsibilities, resulting in an improved quality of life at the local level (Young & Kaczmarek, 2000). The concept of local government must be the product of the view that the main duty of the representatives is to serve the people in the particular area, but the representatives in the central government cannot access their notice to all outlying parts of the country, thus the need of local leaders for local people. The local government (LG) is a governmental institution that serves a limited geographic area like a city, town, or county and is one of the most reliable institutions for the people who live there (Acharya, 2018). Local governance is regarded as the process of governing in both county and municipality. County government is the term used to describe the public administration of a county, borough, or parish. To put it in another way, it serves as the home-to-home government of the local people. Its primary responsibility is to respond the public for smooth service delivery and general development. The present study is about the local government of Kaligandaki Rural Municipality, in Syangja district of Gandaki Province and its performance during its first tenure after the first election under federal system in Nepal. The study has minutely observed different activities of the government and its relation with the public, and has concluded that it has performed following the spirit of federal system of multiparty democracy.

### **Problem Statement**

Federalism has been formally introduced to Nepal, however, debates on it are still active in the political arena. There are still some political parties strongly demanding the abolishment of this federal system. Pro-federalists argue that federalism has brought desired results but the anti-federalists point out only negative aspects of this political system. In this political scenario, the main problem that this study tries to address is to assess significance of federalism focusing on the performance of the local government in Kali Gandaki Rural Municipality, in Syangja, Nepal. Specifically, the study attempts to find the solutions to the following research questions:

- What types of achievements the local government has made regarding physical development and public well-being? and
- How has the local government performed to implement its plans oriented to all-round development?

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After the introduction of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, three-level governments have been formed. The local levels have been provided with higher degree of power and authority than ever before. The municipal administration has implemented policies that prioritize both infrastructure and social justice in the relevant area. The local bodies have tried to bring public participation in local governance and self-governance to prove a significant accomplishment for their overall social, economic, and cultural development. This study's main objective is to conduct a critical analysis of the Kaligandaki Rural Municipality's governance structure and its performance. Kaligandaki Rural Municipality (KRM) is located in Birgha, Syangja in the Gandaki province. It is one of eleven local administrative units in Syangja.

### **Literature Review**

The concept of local government is not new one. Therefore, literatures are available for review. Available literatures reveal that the system was practiced even in the ancient times. The claim is supported by Makushkin et al. (2016) who states that the local government is an ancient institution with a modern concept and it performs political, economic socio-cultural, and administrative multi-faceted functions. In the context of Nepal, the constitution has provided opportunities for political participation at the local level to guarantee efficient service delivery. It is a self-contained, multipurpose institution that offers a variety of services (The Constitution of Nepal, 2015). The name 'Local Government' is suggestive in the sense that the members of this local body are in close touch with the local public. These representatives are all well familiar with the locals' wants, desire and feelings, and provide services in accordance with their interests and needs. Providing good governance is a major duty of a government. Good governance is the process in which all government institutions act and manage public resources in line of public interests. Rule of law, provision of social service, realization of human rights, participation of public in decision-making process are the focal points of good governance. Local governance refers to a kind of government that is accessible to the general public on a local level (MOFALD, 2017).

The broadest and most well-considered attempt to date on the subcontinent to develop local institutions of democratic, participatory governance involves active citizen participation in local government budgeting and planning (Beetham, 1996). The definition of local governance, which is a more comprehensive term, is the development and implementation of local collective action plans for the provision of goods and services.

Local governments, which are the levels of government closest to the people, are responsible for institutionalizing local governance by promoting democratic values and public participation in decision-making (Acharya, 2018). Acharya focuses on institutionalization of democratic governance that obeys the values of real democracy. The next element that he highlights is the public participation in decision making so that the decisions are made for public well-being. Enhancing local governance is a crucial instrument for ensuring peace, fostering economic growth, increasing administrative effectiveness, and promoting social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Since the early 1990s, corporate governance has become a discipline by itself; yet the concept of

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governance has garnered increasing attention. Governance is the exercise of economic, political, and administrative authority to manage a nation's affairs at all levels. It consists of the frameworks, processes, and tools that let people and groups communicate their preferences, assert their legal rights, carry out their duties, and settle disputes (Bannister & Connolly, 2012). The Board of Directors and executive management, the key components, are in charge of governance. It is an essential part of corporate governance and consists of the leadership and organizational structures and practices to ensure the business upholds and furthers its strategies and objectives (Simonsson & Johnson, 2006, June).

Public participation is a key element of democratic society. It focuses on the well-being of the public in different walks of social life. This public participation refers to various areas:

We have participation strategies that have a community or social focus, typically in the context of civil society or when citizens have benefited from government initiatives. The tradition of political participation, on the other hand, has allowed people to participate in traditional political activities like voting, joining political parties, and lobbying. These two traditions are becoming more closely associated with a broader understanding of involvement as citizenship in the context of democratic decentralization. The planning, monitoring, research, education, and action procedures used in each of these strategies may depend on a range of participatory methodologies. (Gaventa & Valderrama, 1999, June).

Local people benefit from public participation in government initiatives. Political participation provides them with chances to choose better candidates. Participation in planning or decision-making level is even more crucial to strengthen democratic decentralization.

Frequent assessment of the quality of governance is important to judge whether the elected body has carried out all necessary tasks, but in our situation, due to the lack of network data, the academics and policy makers are facing a type of challenge in judgmental work:

Comparing and assessing the efficiency of governance networks is a significant challenge for academics and practitioners in network governance and public administration. The lack of network data across space and time limits the study of network performance and effectiveness at the network level, which means it cannot keep up with new ideas and methods in network research. (Yi, 2018)

A corporate performance measurement mechanism must be applied to assess the performance of elected body and its resources. As a result, organizational competitiveness will be aided by the effective governance regime that emerges (Ali & Green, 2012). The more measurement strategies are applied, the better the local government's performance becomes because such performance measurement mechanism provides incentives for the body to work. The function of local government is seen in relation to the general function of government in general. The ability of local government to plan for the delivery of regional public service in accordance with regional tastes and preferences is a distinct advantage. In order to fulfill its expenditure obligations, local governments should be given sufficient local taxing authority rather than being forced to rely solely on grants from the federal

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government, according to a number of views. (Stoker, 1996). It is true that financial issues can hold the local government back in development work, so guarantee of local taxing authority is very important aspect of federal system.

In the decades following World War II, local government restructuring was prevalent throughout Europe. A welfare state perspective, a functional revolution view, and a political perspective are the three major categories of theory that have attempted to explain this phenomenon in a cross-national context. (Brans, 1992). Today the western concept of federalism has pervaded throughout the globe. Even Nepal has also followed most of the tenets of this model.

The Kirat, Lichavi, and Malla dynasties, as well as the present dynasties, have all exercised local governance in Nepal since ancient times. Since Nepal's unification, which began with King Prithvi Narayan Shah, the local administration has followed a modern dynasty model. The Panchayat system, like the Rana dynasty, uses Panchayat for local government. Local governments were established in Nepal during the Panchayat era in 1960, too, but the system was designed with a more centralized approach (Acharya, 2018). In today's concept, the system is different. The executive, legislative, and judicial authorities of the local level are dealt under Articles 214 to 227 of the constitution of Nepal, 2015. The new constitution (2015) has given the local governments more autonomy than the old Constitution of Nepal 1990, which was based on a unitary structure. The village executive or the town executive shall have local executive power, subject to this constitution and applicable laws. The theme of this Constitution is that the local executive power shall be limited to the topics listed in schedules 8 and 9 under local-level competencies (Government of Nepal, 2015). The Local Level Operation Act of 2017 has been enacted, which gives the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of local government more power (MOFALD, 2017). Even the constitution of Nepal 1990 attempted to exercise Local self-government Act, and today's local government is the developed concept of that act, therefore, the previous constitution had formed the foundation of the provision (MoFALD, 1999). The local government operation statute has entrusted the chairperson, vice-chairperson, and ward chairperson with all powers and functions.

Practice of Local government enjoys the benefits of democracy by allowing the sovereign people to fully participate in the governance process through decentralizing and institutionalizing democracy at the grassroots level (Dahal, 2020). As the locals are invited to participate even policy and law-making process, they become excited, feeling that they are counted and involved in such important issue in federal democracy. Dahal (2017) argues that the local people are satisfied with their participation in the law-making process. In democracy people choose candidates to make government, so people's government. The local government is much closer to the common people, so it really appears to be termed as people's government those functions at the local level. Due to its important functions in providing goods and services from the neighborhood administration center, democracy has been practiced from the ground up. The process of shifting authority, accountability, power, and resources from the federal to the regional and municipal levels is known as local governance. Up to now, this federal system has attempted to institutionalize a federal

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democratic republic in Nepal (Kharel, 2019). In Nepal, 753 local bodies have only recently begun to practice the exercise of making local laws for discipline and developing local resources for economic growth. On the basis of the available This study focuses on infrastructure development, the delivery of goods and services, and performance evaluation at the local level.

### **Conceptual Framework of the Study**

The name of the government unit, 'local government', is quite suggestive and refers to the administration unit that is well familiar with local people's real situations. This unit can access to the grassroots more easily than the central government. Therefore, this administration unit can identify the real issues faced by the local people and provide appropriate services. Local government has the capacity to achieve outcomes for grassroots' political movements by creating responsive governance and an enabling environment to promote democratic values and public participation amongst marginal groups in decision-making processes (Acharya & Scott, 2020). Decentralization/devolution, which aims to be more responsive to local needs, improves access to sufficient and pertinent services that are more effectively provided by a local government structure that comprehends the needs of those to be served and effectively utilizes local knowledge and resources (Hope, 2014). Local governments will play an important role in the transition towards fully renewable energy systems. (Sperling & Arler, 2020). Local governments have a crucial role to play as actors promoting decentralization and also leading decentralization for regional economic development (Matsui, 2005).

Overall, Kaligandaki's governance is handled by local administration and is in the process of improving the quality of governance. The government has drafted 33 laws that are fundamental to local development. Additionally, the local government has carried out a variety of activities that are essential for the development of local infrastructures including roads, electricity, and irrigation. Likewise, following the principle of social justice, the government has also provided clean drinking water, good sanitation, and education in the Municipality.

French philosopher and historian Michel Foucault (1926-1984), known for his writings on power and knowledge, argued that knowledge is not neutral, but is produced and used by those in power to maintain control. He also emphasized the importance of understanding the social and historical context in which knowledge is produced. French philosopher Jacques Derrida, known for his work on deconstruction, explored how language and discourse shape our understanding of the world (Rorty, 1977).

### **Methodology**

This study is based on qualitative methods with descriptive and critical logics. Both primary and secondary data have been employed in the study. Out of numerous ways available for primary data collection, data for this study were collected through individual email, face-to-face interviews, and telephonic interviews by employing purposive and convenience sampling techniques. For this study, 25 respondents were chosen from study area, that is,

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Kaligandaki Rural Municipality, including the chairperson of the rural municipality, the ward chairpersons, citizens, intellectuals, and school teachers. These respondents were selected through the use of judgment and purposeful selection approaches. The purpose behind selecting these respondents was to draw authentic information so that no confusion be created for validity. The reliability and validity of the collected data were verified and tested by cross-verifying the collected data with thirteen selected citizens (participatory member of implementation bodies) and intellectuals (lecturers, teachers) from the local campus of Kaligandaki Rural Municipality. The study has covered the period of one complete tenure of the first elected local government, that is, from 20017 to 2022.

Secondary data were obtained from the constitution, legislation, rules and regulations developed by the rural municipality. Different publications like journal articles, and reports also became helpful in collecting secondary data. Ethical norms were strictly followed in maintaining the confidentiality of the informants. The Chairperson of the Kaligandaki Rural Municipality and chairperson of each ward were frequently consulted to obtain relevant information. Interviews with intellectuals and information officers were conducted as part of the research. The fieldwork started on January 2, 2022, and completed on January 25, 2022.

The respondents were interviewed in Nepali language and their responses were also in Nepali, but in this research paper, the researcher has translated the responses into English language. While doing so, attempts have been made to straightforwardly convey the intended meanings of the original expressions without any manipulation.

### **Data Presentation**

The local elected administration has executed various noteworthy projects in the last five years. Following the research questions, the data were collected focusing on the types of achievements the rural Municipality has made during the period starting from 2017 to 2022. The respondents were asked relevant questions regarding the performance level of the municipal council, keeping them at ease. This section presents the achievements made by the local body as part of their performance. A thorough analysis of the data yielded the following categories:

#### ***Improvement in Education Quality***

The municipal government's primary focus seems to have been on education, followed by people's health. The quality of education has been improved as all the schools have used a multidimensional teaching strategy, orientation and practice programs. The local government (LG) has also been able to provide technical education at the Aalamdevi educational institution (B.K. G., personal communication, 24 Jan. 2022). All of the schools in the municipality have easy access to automobiles. The elected Local Government (LG) has been responsible for ensuring that pupils and teachers are transported safely and regularly. It is like a once-in-a-lifetime chance for everyone who is excited to see the next generation to enjoy even better facilities. All of the municipality's educational institutions should be role models (Panday, Y. Personal communication, 10 Jan. 2022).



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L. Adhikari asserted that on the basis of an intellectual assessment of the constructive works of Kaligandaki Rural Municipality, the elected government's support and favorable response to improving the quality of education in local schools and colleges resulted in infrastructure grants as well as the appointment of teachers for modernization and English medium instruction (Personal communication, 15 January 2022). P. Panday fully accepted that the work was excellent (Personal communication, 15 January 2022). LG has organized various orientation and training programs to prepare community school teachers for English medium instruction. Similarly, local course materials have been developed and distributed to schools free of cost (Khatri, K., personal communication, 22 January 2022). For classroom purpose, local textbooks have been prepared and supplied to all schools. Talking about the concerns of local legislators on improvement in education quality and public interest, especially in government schools, G. Panday elaborates his vision:

If local textbooks are included in the curriculum, they cover the history, culture, tourism, politics, natural resources, religious sites, and other important features of the municipality and our children become more knowledgeable about our local resources. It helps them develop the feeling of belongingness with their locality. And to ensure the public faith in government schools, all the government employees and teachers' children must now attend government schools as per the LG's decision. (Personal communication, January 23, 2022).

Endorsing Pandey's view, T.B. Rana further focuses on the view to attend public schools, "All the government schools are open to the general public" (personal correspondence, January 25, 2022). It is a successful initiative for improving the quality of public/government schools. The local people were found to be interested in advancing the English medium teaching approach to improve the English standard of their children. Following this public interest, the government has initiated its moves for English medium classes.

### ***Improvement in Public Health***

Regarding public health, a lot has been done in this rural municipality. The local executive body has conducted sanitation programs time and over again. Besides formal health education provided by local schools, college and health centres, the locals have been given health education informally, too. The elected body moved steps forward to improved health care once it got elected. "As a result, a 15-bed Kaligandaki Hospital was established immediately after the elected body started its tenure, and is currently in full operation" (Panday, R., personal communication, 10 Jan. 2022). The whole eligible population of this small town has received free health insurance. People are actively involved in the planning and execution of these projects.

### ***Health Insurance***

The local government's most notable and critical achievement is that it has provided free health insurance for all residents of this Rural Municipality, (Bhattarai, K., personal communication, 4 January 2022). She expressed her great pleased to this people-oriented program and asserted everybody enjoyed it at the local level. Among the 753 local

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governments in Nepal, this municipality could be the first one to uniquely introduce this program. Residents of this small area are now conscious about their health. Thapa, L. found this development in public health to be a gratifying achievement (personal communication, 5 Jan. 2022). Rural people, in general do not have a lot of resources for their survival. They are barely scraping by and are having difficulty making ends meet. However, in this municipality, elected authorities have prioritized citizens' health and education. "It is in fact a program of a socialist state but our local government has implemented this program. I wonder whether it's socialist state or one of Nepal's local governments" (Gaha, H., personal communication, 20 Jan. 2022).

### ***Drinking Water***

The fourth goal of the local government was to provide clean drinking water. The election slogan was "clean drinking water- one tap for each home." One of the residents of the rural municipality Mr. Gurung said, " It is satisfying that the executive body has completed more than 75% of the 'one tap for each home' slogan, and now the drinking water is safe for everyone" (personal correspondence, 22 January 2022). Almost every house has a clean drinking water tap. This is the outcome of LG's overarching goal to ensure that every household in this rural municipality has access to safe drinking water. As clean drinking water is a crucial component of the public health, the local government, being responsible, has provided safe drinking water for the residents keeping it in high priority (Panday, C., personal correspondence, 10 January 2022). According to the municipality's Chairperson, the local government has followed the election manifesto. Representatives attempt to meet people's desires by bringing them closer to the ward center (Aale, R.B., personal communication, 22 Jan. 2022). The problem of drinking water has been overcome with a tap for almost every household. The elected government seems to have been committed about the people's wants and interests.

### ***Roads and Irrigation***

Infrastructure for road connectivity has been the third focus of the local government of Kaligandaki RM. Major attention has been given to ward-to-ward and ward-to-municipality office road connectivity. Similarly, access to each ward and residential area, too, is under top priority of the municipality. The Rural Municipality replied positively to all of the intellectuals who enquired about this issue (Bhattarai, B., personal communication, 12 Jan. 2022). Lifting water for irrigation has also been completed successfully.

### ***Electronic Attendance and Event Registration***

In course of interview, the chairperson of the Municipality, Thapa said, "The computerized attendance system has been introduced by the Kaligandaki Rural Municipality to run its governance system. The electronic system is used to track the attendance of all officials and all school teachers and employees" (Personal communication, 2 Jan. 2022). It is a scientific attendance system, and is relevant in the current context.

Personal events were found to be registered using the web system. The chairperson of the municipality looked satisfied with the achievements and articulated that it assisted in the

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maintenance of the scientific record system and could connect to Nepal's central record system. He added that residents had been receiving services such as birth, marriage, death, and migration registration through the ward office using electronic registration device. Similarly, the paper work related to citizenship certificate, passports, land registration, recommendations, and so on were all done on every working day (Personal communication, 2 Jan. 2022). All these activities were seen usual in each ward office and rural municipality office. The citizen's charters hung in front of each ward office and rural municipality office display the local government's commitment to the quality of the services to be provided by the office.

### *Making Laws*

Kaligandaki Rural Municipality has passed and enacted thirty-three laws in the period of five years and is now heading for an all-inclusive rural development program by maintaining discipline among the public and the council members. The law has aroused the public support in this area. Nepal's constitution 2015 declares the country to be a federal democratic republic, and in practice, individuals and legislators at the local level use constitutional rights. The people were granted 22 constitutional rights under the constitution 2015. As a result, the LG has been a powerful unit and has attempted to institutionalize democracy at the grassroots level, and consequently, the common people have been encouraged to Leadership development process. As the rural municipality assembly collects ideas and skills from the common people for drafting laws, it is one of highest achievements of the federal democratic republic. The laws that the rural municipality has passed and enacted during its five-year tenure are as follows:

**Table 1**

### *Laws Passed and Enacted in Kaligandaki Rural Municipality in a Period of Five Years*

SN	Description	Years	Numbers	Remarks
1	Acts	2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	9	
2	Regulations	2017, 2018, 2019	4	
3	Code of Conduct	2018	2	
4	Karyasuchi (agenda)	2019	1	
5	Procedural laws	2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021	17	
	Total		33	

Source: Kaligandaki Rural Municipality Office, 2022

As displayed in table 1, this Municipality has approved 33 legislations in just five years. Among them 9 are acts including the Education Act of 2017, the Cooperative Act of 2017, the Immigration Act of 2017, the Financial Procedural Act of 2017, the Agricultural Professional Act of 2017, the Agricultural Act of 2019, and the FM Radio Act of 2019. Likewise, 4 regulations have been enacted and these include Gaupalika Karyasampadan Regulatios (Rural Municipality performance) 2017, Gaupalika Job Description Regulation 2017, and Decision and Certification Regulation 2017. In addition, 17 Procedural Procedural laws covering meeting procedures, governance, environmental protection,

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development, Kaligandaki Hospital 2021, traditional health care system, land reform, insurance, etc. had been passed and enacted by 2021. Likewise, 2 codes of conduct and one karyasuchi (agenda) were also in operation already. These laws were passed to safeguard the residents of this municipality. The rules and regulations have assisted the government with proper service delivery as well as the overall growth at the local level.

### **Modernization in Farming and Related Service**

Following the election of the local government in 2017, farming sector also received prime attention. Seeds, fertilizers, local products and related services started being distributed through the ward offices. Initially, there was a scarcity of public officials. However, the municipality managed it satisfactorily later. "We have executed the election manifesto and completed all development operations related to new farming methods," said Thapa, the chairperson of the Rural Municipality (personal communication, 25 Jan. 2022).

The municipality seems to have encouraged the local people to be involved in modern improved farming methods and in the production of new products to generate cash flow. Consequently, the local residents have started participating in the cultivation of Dragon fruit and varieties of flowers to generate daily income. The government's priority to improved farming methods has significantly encouraged for farmers. Besides agriculture grants, farmers were given seedlings, tunnels and tractors motivate them for improved farming method. Furthermore, buffalos, cows, fowels, and cattle were also distributed at the local level (Rana, T., personal communication, 7 Jan. 2022).

### ***Encouragement for Job Opportunities***

The local government seems to have been adhered to address the issue of unemployment. Every year, the LG provided encouragement programs like training and orientation for more than 100 persons in preparation for the Public Service Commission and the Teacher Service Commission. "If the LG's goal is met, 90 percent of teachers will be in their competition", (Ghale, D., personal communication, 7 Jan. 2022). This program was popular among the locals.

### ***People's Participation in Planning***

The local people are legally and practically sovereign after the election of the constitutional assembly. These sovereign people who are well familiar with issues related to their society naturally feel entitled to be stakeholders in making plans and decisions. The local representatives of this rural municipality were found to encourage local people to take part in making plans and decisions. Chutara, S. acknowledged that they had tried to incorporate as many people as possible in their planning so far (personal communication, 25 Jan. 2022). At every Tole assembly and ward assembly, people selected their representatives and reported them their needs based on priority for planning (Dhital, 2018). People also seemed to be more involved in putting their strategy into action.

"The regular allowances provided by Federal government for health care of senior citizens, marginalized groups, Dalits, and women are the indicators of development initiatives. The

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local government systematically distributes these allowances among the target groups. Road has a lot to offer in terms of connectivity, between public residences and municipal office buildings, educational structures and hospital. The municipal council has been able to bring this connectivity, an example of good governance” (Rana, N., personal communication, 23 Jan. 2022). The locals seem to be satisfied with welfare activities of the local government of the study area. To report the people’s genuine issues to the authority, people’s participation in social, political, economic, and socio-cultural activities on a local level is the most significant phenomenon. Because of such people’s participation in various social and political sectors, democracy has started to be institutionalized from the ground up. Similarly, people become stronger and more empowered as a result of their involvement in lawmaking and policymaking, which aids in the development of leadership at the local level (Gyawali, 2018).

It is a new trend in local government that local elected officials are now involved in making, implementing, and evaluating laws in participation with common people. It encourages excellent practice for institutionalizing republics from the ground up. Similar to this, local governments have made it easy for their residents to access their centers for the delivery of goods and services. Through public participation, locals provide the groundwork for local government. As a result, the local populace and representations develop deep ties with them. It is a noteworthy accomplishment for democracy.

### ***Miscellaneous Development Projects***

Besides the activities targeting development as discussed above, various other development projects have been accomplished. A playground has been constructed in each ward realizing that children and youths need adequate physical activities to maintain their sound health. The elected government constructed this important infrastructure to address the people's needs. The new local government also constructed and innovated some resources such as the Rural Municipality office, ward offices, and school buildings among others. Social security allowances are distributed to eligible people by reaching their homes if they are unable to get to the ward offices (Rana, N.B., personal communication, 19 Jan. 2022). In spite of such achievements made by the local government, there are still several complex issues to be addressed at the local level, including social, economic, political, and cultural progress (Sumai, Y., personal communication, 11 Jan. 2022).

### **Discussion**

The present research was initiated with the two major research questions: what the achievements made by the local government were, and how they were achieved. On the whole, the objective was to explore the level of performance of the elected body of the study area. The analyses of the information obtained from interviews and correspondences have clearly answered the questions. As this is the first research done in the study area on this issue, no previous literature is available. Therefore, the research lacks comparative analysis. However, the literatures in the related issues from other areas have helped to carry out the study more conveniently.

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Regarding the first research question, the local government of Kaligandaki Rural Municipality seems to have made remarkable achievements during the period covered by this study. The inventory includes the following items: adequate improvement in education quality, health care, farming methods, transportation, and public participation in policy making level. Similarly, the municipality has provided clean drinking water for all the families following its election pledge “Clean drinking water: one tap for each home”. Even more remarkable achievement that the municipality has made is the free health insurance to all the people in the rural municipality. The list of achievement also includes the local body’s initiations to address the problem of unemployment by providing training and orientation programs for educated people to prepare them for the examinations of different commissions. Further, the municipality has also given adequate attention to entertainment for the local public like play grounds in each ward. The chairperson of this rural municipality seems to be enthusiastic and committed to do more for the local people. Thapa expressed his vision:

We still have to manage higher investments to provide more in educational institutions and teacher training programs. Locally developed curriculum and texts are essential for students to make them pragmatic and independent so that they can contribute to development of the nation. Residents of this municipality are entitled to free health insurance as well as access to a hospital for medical treatment. Our commitment to provide one water tap per family has almost come to its completion stage. We are now heading to the mission for the further development of roads and bridges for those in need. (Personal communication, 2 Jan. 2022).

While carrying out all developmental activities, the local government seems to have encouraged the public to take part in each activity. During the field visits, it could be observed that public participation in the developmental activities was enthusiastic. Everybody was ready to contribute their labour to development activities. However, the major source for these developmental activities was the government funds. During field study, it was found that 90% of the total budget of Rs. 496826031 had been used up in development works (Kaligandaki Budget, 2077/78). It should be rated as outstanding accomplishment. The local government has strictly followed the provisions of the Nepali Constitution while carrying out all of their constitutional duties locally. Notably, Nepal's constitution protects 22 rights in addition to other concurrent rights and supports grassroots leaders at the local level.

Despite a dearth of experts and lack of clear-cut federal laws, the results show that local levels have produced the majority of significant laws, work practices, guidelines, rules, and standards. Since most of their legal documents had been published in the national gazette, they were already enforceable. Initiatives for regional development had suffered as a result of the federal and provincial governments' delays or stalling of the drafting of numerous crucial laws. It has had some impact upon the executive body of this rural municipality.

It was noticed that the elected representatives’ enthusiasm was hampered to some extent due to their lack in experience and specialized knowledge, despite their best efforts to act more

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appropriately toward the people. The elected members seem to have been responsible to the well-being of citizens in their communities and have striven to increase public participation in different decision-making process and social work. For quality improvement and long-term development, people seem to have been involved in planning, implementing, supervising, and monitoring. Ward offices seem to have been functioning as people's representatives in this sense, answering to the people. They strive to provide the general public with high-quality, impartial, and efficient goods and services.

The local-level leaders have made the laws based on people's needs and interests, remaining within the constitutional limits. The people's needs would be well addressed if the institutional needs at the local level were met. Similarly, all local-level institutions will be institutionalized, like Nepal and Nepali federal democratic republics. Finally, Nepal's government will see progressive economic improvement.

In Nepal, the federal system has introduced new administrative structure and practice. It is the introduction of higher level of power granted to local level, and the practice is its legal and pragmatic exercise. It benefits and empowers not only the males and females of elite group but also every member of the underprivileged groups. It is a path of multifaceted development and progress at the local level, so people at the municipal level have full engagement in the legislative process (Dahal, 2021).

The rural municipality of Kaligandaki has made an effort to offer sound administration with high-quality instruction. The locals have been given easy access to management. This municipality has offered health insurance to support the medical needs of the community. The effort is significant, and the community members benefit from it by receiving vital services via health insurance. Road connectivity has made it possible for the ward office, municipality office, and other offices to be easily accessed by people living near and far. In the same vein, they supply each family in the municipality with a clean drinking water tap through the "one house, one tap" program. They have made efforts to involve the public in their planning and development efforts. These are the noteworthy accomplishments of a locally elected government, which aiming to be accountable to the people.

The rural municipality of Kaligandaki has experienced drafting important ordinances for their general growth and sound governance. Following the announcement of Nepal's federal democratic republic, this is a new practice. After nearly 20 years, there was a local election in 2017, and because of constitutional rights, the rural municipality was able to enact over 33 laws in just five years, including acts, regulations, codes of conduct, and procedural rules. They put their laws into practice, give free health insurance to every person, and connect the municipality's offices by road from ward to ward.

As much has to be explored from the indigenous knowledge and ideas in the global south, the indigenous research methodology can have a preference as a new approach. Therefore, it is essential to discover the hidden and unexplored traditional and indigenous knowledge of the wider scientific community.

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### **Conclusion**

Local governments have two functions: one is identifying public needs and the other is delivering day-to-day services to the local people. The present study establishes that Kaligandaki Rural Municipality has tried its best to fulfill both the functions. The municipality seems to be committed in ensuring that the people's needs are satisfied. Its major concerns include education, people's health, and health insurance. The organization has given high priority to infrastructure, particularly road connectivity to ease public transportation followed by agricultural production to generate cash flow. Kaligandaki Rural Municipality seems to have been working hard to provide even better products and services for the local people, and making its possible efforts to encourage other development work. Along with these changes, other noticeable changes like social, political, economic, and cultural growth have taken place after the elected body started functioning in the rural municipality.

People feel to have been more sovereign than ever before, and they have become happier and have enjoyed lives more than in the past. This situation is the outcome of the influence carried about by the new political system, that is, federal system granting more power and authority to the local government. The study shows that the local body was prompt in reacting the public actions. It can be asserted that the local government was responsive to public, an indication of positive move to all round development. Increased public participation in budgeting, planning, evaluating and in every development work is a positive move to provide good governance. This is a contribution of the federal democratic republic. It seems that the nation's attempts to institutionalize the federal democratic republic have been well supported by the local levels.

The elected members in the local government are all well familiar with all the people in that area. Therefore, these representatives have been open and naturally close to the public in identifying their needs and interests, and accordingly they provide them with high-quality goods and services. The study shows these elected representatives have realized that they are in charge of addressing citizens' interests and daily needs and should be true representatives of the people.

The new political practice seems to have been popular among the general populace. People at all levels have easy access to local leaders, who try their best to address legitimate demands of the people. Without visiting the offices of the central government or the federal government, the common people can get their issues addressed from local offices. This must have enhanced the popularity of the federal political system.

Future directions for research, especially in the uncharted (gray) areas are necessary where individuals actively participate in policy-making, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring.

### **Acknowledgements**

*It is almost impossible to carry out any research undertaking without the help of various helping hands. In this study, too, I have received assistance from different scholars and*  
*Journal of Political Science, Vol. 24, February 2024 [20-38]*



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common people. I am thankful to all of them. Dr. Min Pun, Professor in English at P.N. Campus, always encouraged me to do research work. His contribution to editing the article is invaluable. Dr. Prakash Upaddhya, Associate Professor in Sociology at P. N. Campus, generously assisted me in analyzing data. Similarly, Mr. Homa Nath Sharma Paudyal, Lecturer in English at P.N. Campus tirelessly worked in language editing. The respondents from the study area provided me with the valuable data necessary for this research. I sincerely appreciate and gratefully acknowledge the contribution made by all these associates.

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