

## An Analysis of Women Representation in Local Election 2022

Sabita Kumari Mallik  
Assistant Professor  
HOD & Coordinator  
Padmakanya Multiple Campus  
Sabitamallik1@gmail.com

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### Abstract

Women's participation in politics has historically been limited in Nepal due to deeply rooted traditional gender roles. Nonetheless, a number of strong women have broken through these expectations to become well-known authorities in their local communities. The incidents demonstrate that merely enacting legislation is insufficient to guarantee women's participation, ongoing oversight is required to guarantee the law's proper application. This study used a mixed research design, liberal and representative political science theory, and a descriptive and analytical approach that proved more effective in the context of the pragmatist philosophy. Women made up 40.95 percent of the elected representatives in the local elections held in 2017. In 2022, there was a marginal improvement as women made up 41.21 percent of all elected representatives. The finding reflects that the elections of 2022 present a wonderful opportunity to further advance women's representation in politics and build on the noteworthy achievements of 2017. This helps political parties run for office in addition to being good for social justice. Particularly those who have worked in local government for the previous four years, many women are keen to progress in their political careers. More women representation in public life seems like a good place to start when it comes to gender equality. As a result, improvement of women representation is seen in local elections. The Election Commission has taken steps to address the concerns expressed about women's participation in the electoral process, but its actions have lagged behind as the parties have taken advantage of loopholes.

Keywords: *Suffrage movement, women representation, local election,*

### Introduction:

The story of women's representation throughout history is intricate and multidimensional, spanning centuries and showing significant cultural and societal variations. In ancient time women were generally kept out of formal political participation and leadership positions in many ancient societies. The fabled Cleopatra of ancient Egypt and a few other female emperors from other cultures, like China and India, were exceptions. Medieval and early modern era's women's participation in leadership positions and governance was severely restricted in the majority of the world. A few notable exceptions are powerful individuals like Queen Isabella I of Spain and

Queen Elizabeth I of England. During 19th Century, throughout the world especially in Europe and North America, feminist movements began to take shape. Women's rights, particularly the ability to vote and take part in political processes, were the focus of these movements. Similarly, in early 20th century women gained the right to vote in a number of nations, including the United States (19th Amendment, 1920) and the United Kingdom (Representation of the People Act, 1918), as a result of the suffrage movement's growing momentum. Women continue to be underrepresented in elected positions. During Mid-20th Century, women's political representation significantly improved in the years following World War II. With the selection of Indira Gandhi as prime minister in 1949, for instance, India became one of the first nations to elect a female head of state. In a similar vein, Sirimavo Bandaranaike of Sri Lanka became the first female head of state in history in 1960.

It has been said that women face more challenges to overcome in order to win elections when they are running against male candidates. Numerous factors, including psychological and sociocultural ones, such as the idea that women are less valuable than men in particular circumstances and the inferiority complex that society imposes on them, are to blame for this. Furthermore, some experts claim that women are less likely than men to run for public office (Kanthak & Woon, 2015). Women are underrepresented in leadership roles in the home and within the power structure when it comes to making important decisions. As a result, there is a belief that they are unable to guide their ward or community, which includes both rural and urban areas.

From the late 20th century to the present, although growth has varied by region, women's representation in politics has risen gradually over the previous few decades. To enhance the representation of women in elected office, numerous nations have instituted policies like reserved seats or quotas. Germany, Chile, New Zealand, and other nations have elected female heads of state or government in recent times. Notwithstanding these developments, obstacles to women's full and equal participation in politics still exist. These obstacles include gender stereotypes, discriminatory practices, and cultural barriers. Through lobbying, legislative changes, and community mobilization, these issues are still being worked on. There is a dearth of worldwide data regarding women in local governance. In this regard, a few notable female leaders who have led their countries well are Indira Gandhi of India, Margaret Thatcher of Britain, Chandrika Kumaratunga of Sri Lanka, Isabel Peron of Argentina, Golda Meir of Israel, Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan, Meghawati Sukarnoputri of Indonesia, Angela Merkel of Germany, and Hillary Clinton, Condoleezza Rice, and Kamala Harris of the United States, Sonia Gandhi of India, Aung Sang Suu Kyi of Myanmar, Sheikh Hasina Wazed and Begum Khaleda Zia of Bangladesh, etc.

During the Panchayat era in Nepal, women were allotted just three seats in Parliament; after Jana Andolan I in 1990, this number was raised to 5%. Women's representation in the cabinet was appalling, and their share of the political population remained low at 6% until 2007. The local elections that will take place in 2022 offer a critical chance to consolidate these victories. Even though the 2017 elections saw a notable increase in gender inclusion, women still hold a disproportionate number of lower-ranking positions in politics than men. According to Nepal's constitution, a political party must field at least one woman for the positions of mayor and deputy mayor. Almost without exception, political parties in 2017 put forth a male candidate for mayor and a female candidate for deputy mayor. Consequently, there are just 18 out of 753

municipalities with a female mayor. In situations without quotas, women are likewise glaringly underrepresented as ward chairpersons: out of 6,473 ward chairpersons, only 62 are female.

### **Statement of Problem:**

Many female politicians are keen to run for higher office because they have gained significant experience as ward committee members and deputy mayors. 46.6% of the 702 deputy mayors (out of the 753 deputy mayors nationwide) that our research team spoke with in March 2021 indicated that they planned to run for mayor in the next local elections. Forty percent of deputy mayor respondents were unsure, indicating that the percentage of women who would like to run for mayor could be much higher. The local representatives who are female have gained the confidence of their constituents. Citizens' trust in their judicial committee, which is led by the deputy mayor and tasked with resolving disputes, increased to 80.6% in 2020 from 73% in 2018. In contrast, although it has remained high, public trust in male mayors has not increased between 2018 (81.8%) and 2020 (80.6%). The underrepresentation of women in leadership roles can be attributed to both the quota system's design and party nomination practices. In 2017, there were, on average, only 6% female candidates running for mayor and 3.3% female candidates running for ward chair. Will this be different in 2022?

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The general objectives of this study is to identify the women representation in local election. Its specific objective is as given below;

To analyze the ethnic community-wise women representation in local election 2022.

### **Delimitations of the study:**

This study only looks at and analyzes the representation of women from ethnic communities in the local elections of 2022. Not all the facts and data from the 2017 elections are linked, though and totally based on local election.

### **Methodology:**

In political science, mixed research methodology integrates qualitative and quantitative methods to examine political phenomena. This hybrid approach combines the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative methods to give researchers a thorough understanding of intricate political issues. This study took liberal and representative theory of political science along with descriptive and analytical approach that was found to be more successful in light of the philosophy of pragmatism as well as mixed research design which is a dominant approach in political science. The literature review served as the theoretical foundation for the study. The majority of the study's secondary sources were data and reports of Election Commission, books, journals, and articles. In political science, researchers can overcome the drawbacks of utilizing a single approach and produce more comprehensive, nuanced insights into intricate political phenomena by utilizing mixed research methodology. This multidisciplinary approach informs evidence-based policymaking and political analysis while facilitating a deeper understanding of the complex nature of politics.

### **Literature Review:**

According to Wikander et al. (1995), regarding Asia, China gave women the right to vote and run for office in 1949 following Mao Zedong's takeover, while Britain introduced a separate bill in 1931 to recognize women as men and prevent Sri Lankans from engaging in anti-British activities in India. In a similar vein, Pakistan and Japan in 1947, Women were granted the right to vote and run for office in South Korea in 1948, India in 1950, Nepal in 1951, North Korea in 1953, and Bhutan in 1953. Equal rights for men and women were granted after Pakistan broke away from India; however, in 1950, the Indian constitution declared this to be the case. The Interim Government Act of 2007 partially protected women's and men's equality even in Nepal.

These facts do not, however, by themselves imply that women will advance. It is difficult for women to advance from quota-based positions to higher leadership roles, as evidenced by experience from nations with a history of gender quotas in politics. Gender quotas guaranteeing at least 40% of candidates for local elections are in place in Spain. However, researchers discovered that during the next three rounds of elections, women's chances of winning powerful, non-reserved positions like mayor or party leader were not significantly affected by these quotas (Bagues, & Campa).

In the context of Nepal, only three seats in Parliament were set aside for women during the Panchayat era; following Jana Andolan I in 1990, this number was increased to 5%. Women were terribly underrepresented in the cabinet, and until 2007, the percentage of women in politics was only 6% (Lotter, 2017. pp. 97-115). Haug, Aasland, and Dahal (2009) state that "women were denied the right to pass their citizenship to their children" even though democracy was restored and the nation moved toward a more inclusive State after 1990 (pp. 105-136).

Two years after the Rana dynasty ended, in 1953, Sadhanadevi Nepal made history as the country's first democratically elected local representative (Gorkhapatra, September 9, 1953, as cited in "Nepalko nirvachan itihās" by Election Commission, Nepal (2017, p. 157)). Ever since, women in Nepali politics have made very little progress. There were just 1 in 200 female elected representatives in 1992. When women won 21% of local seats in 1997, there were greater advancements. Women's representation increased to nearly 41% of local (municipal and ward level) representatives in Nepal in 2017, the first elections held under the new federal constitution, partly as a result of the reservations. The meaningful participation and representation of regional women-led organizations in national humanitarian decision-making, while collaborating with local government leaders and taking note of their experiences, is intended to bring about the transformation of women (CARE, USA. 2024).

According to the Local Elections Act 2073, at least two of the four members chosen from each ward must be female. This suggests that 6,743 female members in total should be selected. Unfortunately, there is evidence to suggest that Dalit women are underrepresented in certain wards. Merely 1.02% of ward chairs were female, even though 6,620 Dalit women members were elected in the most recent election (Sapkota, 2024, p. 11). An interesting trend emerged in the 2079 local election, a slight divergence from the conventional support bases of the major political parties. Instead, it's an indication of support for the independent candidates and newly established parties who have presented pro-people platforms on anti-corruption, development, and service delivery. Despite being unaffiliated with any political party or official institution, the independent candidates made a significant impact on the election. In the 2079 local election, independent candidates took home 385 seats, including 13 mayor/chairs, 232 ward members, 136

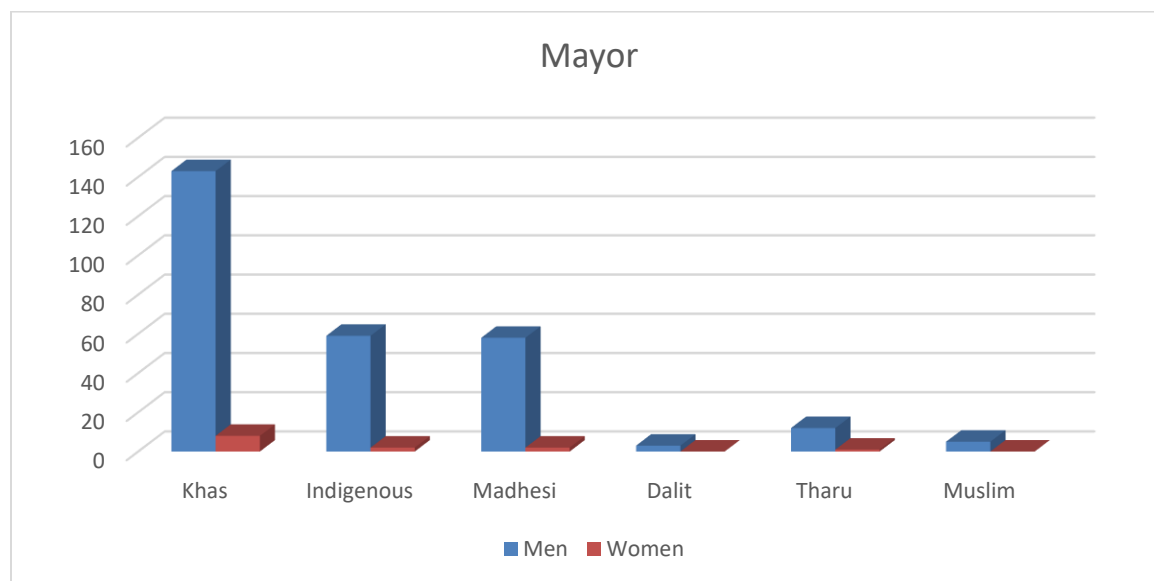
ward chairs, and 4 deputy mayor/chairs. The 2022 EC report states that they received 312,645 votes, or 2.71% of all votes cast (ibid).

### **Discussion and Finding:**

Historically, women's participation in politics in Nepal has been limited due to deeply rooted traditional gender roles. But some strong women have broken through these expectations to become powerful figures in their local communities (CARE, USA. 2024). There is need to improve women's representation in order to uphold the nation's commitment to genuine democracy as well as to the principles of liberty and equality. Studies indicate that women legislators are more likely than men to address women's interests, so better representation will guarantee that women's voices are heard and their issues are fairly recognized. More than just policies are impacted by representation in government; it also serves as a tool for social empowerment. Women approach issues differently than men do because their policies and leadership styles are shaped by the unique challenges and life experiences they face. Enhancing the representation of women's viewpoints in policymaking can reinvigorate and diversify it. Although women's leadership styles are not intrinsically better than men's, some groups may identify more with the unique priorities and characteristics that women bring to the table of discussion. Future generations of women leaders and pioneers are being robbed by the current underrepresentation of women in office, which is also impeding progress in our communities. According to studies, "the presence of highly visible female politicians" encourages young girls and women to get involved in politics and to set goals for themselves. Men also become more involved in politics when there are more female candidates running for office.

The political parties came under fire in 2017 for only fielding female candidates for vice chairman and deputy chairman posts. Parties faced criticism once more in 2022 for forming coalitions and limiting candidacies to men. One of the main criticisms leveled at Dalit women representatives is that the parties only seek out Dalit women to run for office during election seasons. Political parties still have a responsibility to promote women's political participation from the grassroots up and to uphold and even go beyond the constitutionally guaranteed provisions, even though the public and activists can call their attention to the task. Women will always be underrepresented in politics and their participation will remain marginal unless the political parties take the initiative on this issue.

## 1. Mayor



Source: Election Commission

There were 151 participants overall, 143 men and 8 women, who were members of the Khas ethnic group. The Indigenous group comprised 61 participants, of which 59 were men and 2 were women. There were two women and fifty men in the Madhesi group. There were three men and zero women in the Dalit group. Thirteen people, twelve men and one woman, made up the Tharu group. With 5 men and 0 women, there were 5 participants in the Muslim group.

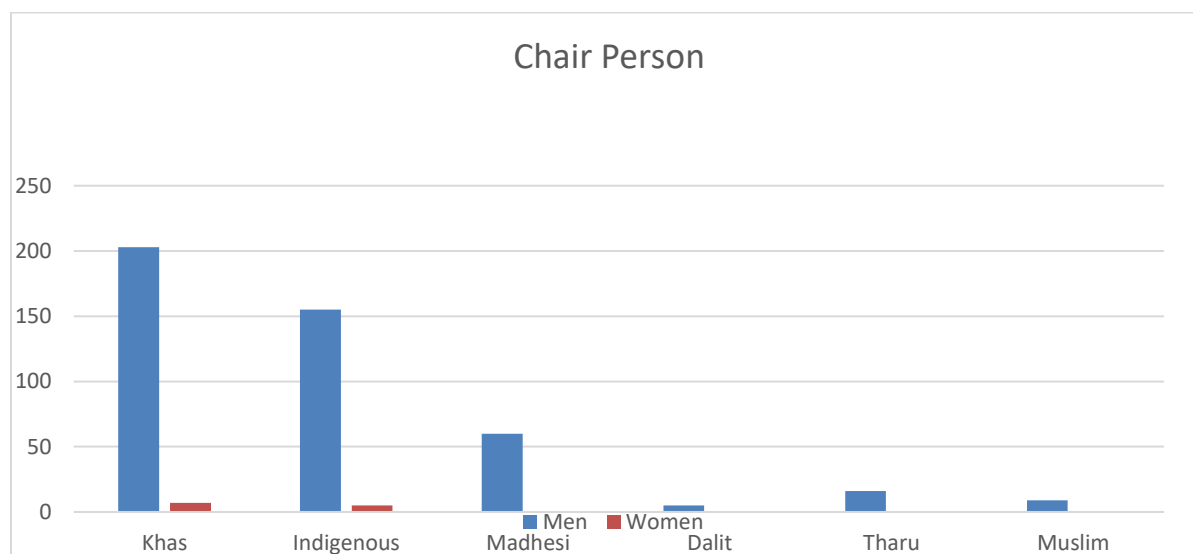
## 2. Deputy Mayor

	Men	Women	Total
Khas	37	102	139
Indigenous	10	48	58
Madhesi	6	44	50
Dalit	2	5	7
Tharu	2	26	28
Muslim	3	8	11
Total	60	233	293

Source: Election Commission

The data in the table shows how deputy mayors are distributed by gender and ethnicity within a specific region. There are 293 deputy mayors in the region overall, 60 of whom are men and 233 of whom are women. With 37 men and 102 women, or 139, belonging to the Khas ethnic group, the table further divides the deputy mayors by ethnicity and demonstrates that this group makes up the majority of deputy mayors. There are 10 men and 48 women in the Indigenous group, making a total of 58. There are six men and forty-four women in the Madhesi group. Seven people make up the Dalit group—two men and five women. There are two men and twenty-six women in the Tharu group. The Muslim group comprises 3 men and 8 women.

### 3. Chair Person



Source: Election Commission

The distribution of chairpersons in scientific research papers according to gender and ethnic group is shown in the table. The table indicates that 448 men and 12 women make up the total of 460 chairpersons. The data is further subdivided by ethnic group, with 203 men and 7 women, or 210 total, belonging to the Khas ethnic group, which comprises the majority of chairpersons. Following with 155 men and 5 women, for a total of 160, is the Indigenous group. There are 60 male chairpersons from the Madhesi group, compared to 5 from the Dalit and 16 from the Tharu groups. There are nine men who chair the Muslim group.

### 4. Vice - Chair Person

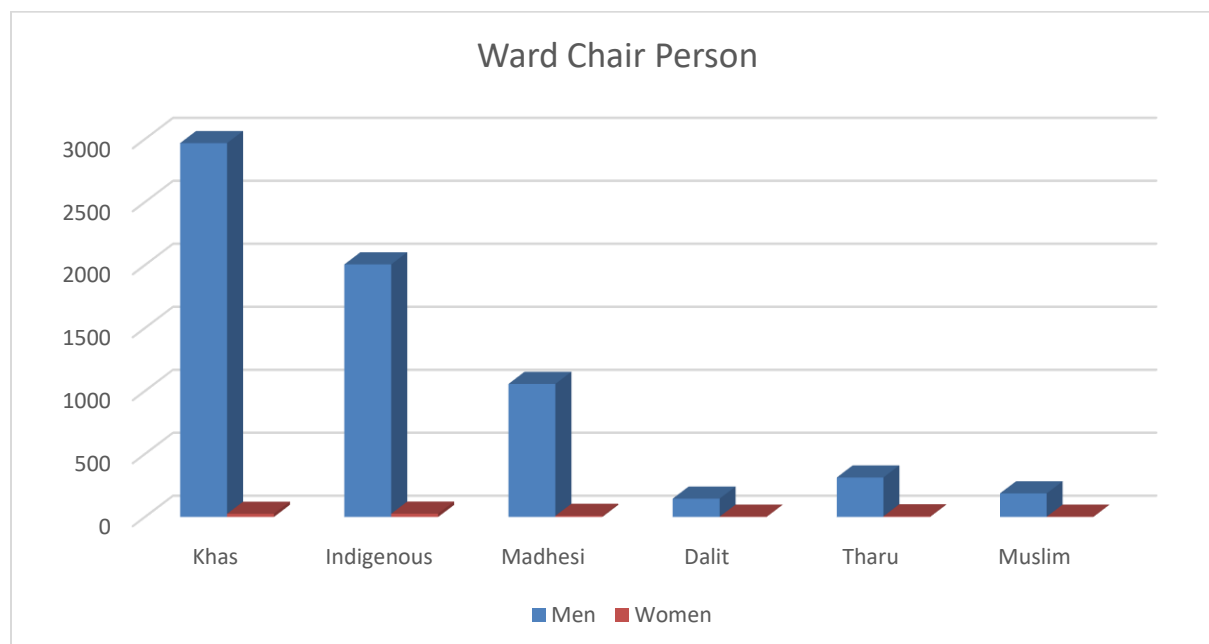
	Men	Women	Total
Khas	66	145	211
Indigenous	58	101	159
Madhesi	1	59	60

Dalit	0	6	6
Tharu	0	17	17
Muslim	0	7	7
Total	125	335	460

Source: Election commission

The distribution of Vice Chair Persons across various demographic groups specifically, those classified by gender and ethnicity is shown in the accompanying table. 125 men and 335 women make up the total of 460 Vice Chairpersons, according to the data. The distribution by ethnic group is further broken down in the table. Of the Vice Chairpersons, 211 belong to the Khas ethnic group, while 159 are from the Indigenous group. There are 60 representatives from the Madhesi group and 6 from the Dalit and 17 from the Tharu groups. The Muslim group is represented by seven people.

## 5. Ward Chair Person



Source: Election Commission

The data in the table shows how various ethnic groups are distributed among men and women in a particular population. According to the table, Khas people make up the largest ethnic group among men with 2968 members, followed by Indigenous people with 2005 members. With 25 members, Khas is also the largest group among women, followed by Indigenous with 26 members. The ethnic group of Khas comprises 2993 members, making it the largest group in terms of population overall. The distribution of other ethnic groups among men and women, including the Madhesi, Dalit, Tharu, and Muslim groups, is also displayed in the table. There are



6743 people in the population overall, including the total number of members in each ethnic group.

### **Findings:**

The ability and expertise of elected female representatives to address the issues varies. There is no denying the elected women representatives' evident excitement and optimism about playing a significant role in Nepal's changing political systems. It's necessary to temper optimism with a sober assessment of the difficulties and tasks at hand. It is necessary to create the necessary infrastructure and supportive conditions for women to hold leadership positions in local governance within Nepal's federal system. However, in general, women face a variety of challenges, so it's critical to create a supportive, gender-neutral environment that allows them to effectively and meaningfully participate in governance and other activities (The Asia Foundation, 2018). For liberal democracies to function, women must be represented in positions of political leadership. Still, there is a persistent gender disparity in political participation worldwide. Political leadership is commonly interpreted as the engagement of individuals in diverse political endeavors with the aim of acquiring, preserving, managing, and demonstrating power.

This information shed light on how various genders and ethnic groups are represented in leadership roles throughout the area. It demonstrates that women outnumber men in deputy mayor roles, with the Khas and Indigenous groups having the highest representation of any ethnic group. The information could be utilized to examine the inclusivity and diversity of leadership positions in the area and to spot any potential gender or ethnicity-based inequalities. The distribution of participants reveals a notable gender gap overall, with a significantly higher number of men than women. To encourage more equitable representation in leadership roles and to better understand the factors influencing the distribution of deputy mayors, more research could be done. The table clearly shows that there is a large gender gap in the distribution of chairpersons, with men predominating in all ethnic groups. The aforementioned data underscores the necessity of additional investigation and remedial measures to tackle gender disparities in leadership positions in scientific research. The table clearly shows that there is a gender difference among Vice Chairpersons, with women making up a higher percentage of the total than men. The data also emphasizes how underrepresented some ethnic groups are in leadership roles, including Muslims and Dalits.

Policies and initiatives aiming at promoting inclusivity and equality in decision-making processes can benefit from the knowledge provided here, which is essential for understanding the current state of diversity and representation within leadership roles. The representation of various ethnic groups in the population can be examined using this data to spot any discrepancies or potential trends. A fantastic opportunity to further advance women's representation in politics and build on the significant accomplishments of 2017 exists with the elections of 2022. Not only is this beneficial for social justice, but it also helps political parties run for office. Many women are eager to advance in their political careers, especially those who have worked in local government for the past four years. Their constituents have faith in them, and that faith is escalating. All of this indicates that they are likely to win over a large number of voters. In 2022, the parties most likely to succeed are those who keep an eye on these crucial trends.

The women, who come from a variety of experiences and backgrounds, have broken through social norms to become powerful figures in local government in Nepal. In addition to advancing gender-sensitive disaster management and humanitarian relief, their steadfast dedication, wide range of experiences, and dynamic leadership have made a substantial contribution to women's empowerment at the grassroots level (CARE, USA. 2024). The political parties have a significant role to play in improving the representation of women in the upcoming local elections. Parties must first establish a climate that increases the likelihood that women will be nominated for mayor and ward chair positions. Remarkably few women were included on the nomination list for these roles in 2017. It is imperative that parties remove obstacles faced by female candidates during the nomination process in order to increase the number of female nominees for these leadership positions if they hope to see real progress toward gender inclusion.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation:**

More female representation in public life seems like a good place to start when it comes to gender equality. Critics of the meaningful participation of Nepali female representatives ought to acknowledge that achieving gender equality necessitates dismantling centuries-old patriarchy and other barriers that have prevented Nepali women from participating in public life. It requires time. The female representatives from Nepal will need some time to become adept at using their political influence. A record number of Nepali women were elected to public office in the country's most recent local elections. The shift to federalism in Nepal guarantees significantly more significant local and regional political representation. However, the goal of having 50% of women in the legislature was not accomplished in either election.

Furthermore, political parties in 2017 fielded a sizable number of female candidates for deputy positions in order to comply with the legal requirements. In contrast, in 2022, one political party fielded a single candidate for mayor/chief and deputy positions who might be of either gender as a result of the political parties forming coalitions. As a result, there were significantly fewer female candidates and more male candidates received tickets. The nominations demonstrate this, according to Election Commission data, 3077 women were nominated as deputy chiefs in 2022, compared to 3593 women in 2017. Additionally, even though it is required that every ward level have one Dalit woman member, only 176 units in 2017 and 123 units in 2022, respectively, fielded Dalit women candidates.

The alarm about political parties taking advantage of legal loopholes to defraud women of nominations and positions offered has been raised by women's rights activists and legal experts. A small number of female leaders and cadres have also spoken out against their party's unwillingness to allow women to run for office. The election data from the 2017 local elections, emphasizes just how crucial party internal selection procedures which involve selecting a candidate for a race from a list of nominees are in deciding who represents a local constituency in Nepal. There must be significant improvements in inclusion considering the importance of the candidate selection process, by encouraging members of the selection committee to be more accepting of female nominees and restructuring the committee to give women more representation.

More importantly, political parties should make sure that women's voices are not underrepresented in selection committee composition and structure. The overwhelming male preponderance of candidates for mayor and ward chair positions in 2017 may have resulted from

the dearth of female representation on selection committees, where women made up only 8% of members on average. The Political Party Act of 2017 requires party committees at all levels to have at least one-third female representation, so it is highly likely that the gender makeup of these committees will improve in favor of women in the upcoming local elections. However, it's crucial to remember that making sure that more women are represented on these committees may not be the only step toward ensuring that women's voices are heard and taken meaningful action on. For instance, when party officials in high-ranking positions (such as chairperson or secretary), who are typically men, become the ultimate decision-makers when it comes to selection, female opinions may be disregarded. Therefore, it is essential to implement changes that strengthen the voices of women on these committees.

### **Recommendation:**

The internal selection committees of the parties must decide whether to give candidate tickets to women. If women are included in the internal selection processes of the parties, this is far more likely to occur. This entails putting them forward to be members of committees that choose candidates, particularly for key roles.

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