

# Participation of Political Parties in Local Governments of Nepal

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## Abstract

*The success and failure of the political economy depend on the structure and function of political parties. The agenda of development in a democratic country is set and met by ruling political parties. Political parties are dynamic forces to mobilize mass for achieving common agendas. Political parties play an effective and efficient role in political socialization of citizens. In Nepal, political parties are mostly capable of creating public awareness about the common concern. Political parties produce both positive and negative impacts on all dimensions of society in Nepal. To analyze the status of political parties in the local governance of Nepal, and to explore their role, strengths and weaknesses in the local development of Nepal, this article is prepared with the title 'Participation of political parties on local level government in Nepal'. It is mainly based on the secondary data of the election commission of Nepal. Information regarding objectives was collected through various search engines by a simple literature review. The status of political parties is found unequal at the local level of government in Nepal. Nepali congress party occupies the first position followed by CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist respectively in second and third positions. Local-level Governments must play effective roles to solve the day-to-day immediate problem of people. The joint efforts of all political parties are mandatory to meet the immediate requirement of local people through the effective mechanism of service delivery. The role and responsibility of political parties are vital to fulfilling gaps between service consumers and providers. Lack of coordination, unhealthy competition, and lack of transparency in political parties are notable issues to address without delay. To meet the common concern of Nepalese people regarding their local issues, joint efforts of all political parties are mandatory.*

**Key words:** party, federal, service delivery, development, province, federalism, local government

## 1. Introduction

A political party is a team of people seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election. (Anthony,1975). In democracy, the struggle between political parties is not a fight for survival, but a competition to serve the people. Political parties play dominant roles in all aspects of social life. Political parties are considered lifeline agencies in modern states. The role of the state is vital to regulate development intervention in both socialism and capitalism. By realizing status, authority, and mass influencing capacity, political parties are more influencing sectors in development. They are voluntary. They exist and operate with particular organizational forms.

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Political parties are significant organs of modern representative democracy. Political parties create a platform for all citizens to act politically. They can create and integrate different interests, visions, and opinions (Hofmeister, 2011). Political parties perform the role of implementers, catalysts, and partners in the field of development. The implementer's role is concerned with mobilizing resources to offer goods and services to needy people. A catalyst role concerned with inspiring people to become change agents in society. The role of a partner reflects working with the government, donors, and the private sector on joint activities (Lewis, 2007).

Problems related to the peace and constitutional processes can be addressed provided that political parties rise above their partisan interests, create common ground based on a national perspective, resolve all constitutional issues and engage in reconciliation (Bhatta, 2012). Political parties perform various roles in the development field such as promoter of local resources, social innovator, mediator of people and government, broadcaster of information, advocate of local people, agent of social change, the catalyst of people participation, developer and implementer of development programs, etc. in Nepal. Political parties have to be the voice of broad sectors of society in order to participate successfully in the election. The appreciative roles of political parties in development activities are catalysts to change, partners of development agencies, and effective implementers of development programs (Hofmeister, W. 2011).

The political system of any country depends on the fact that who is controlling and allocating the resources. In a democratic society, people work together and form political parties to protect their fundamental rights. Political parties are considered voluntary organizations. The prime concern of political parties is to bridge people and government. Political parties, through their agenda, convince people for gaining a majority and holding the ruling power. The majority holding party has the right to form a government (Weiner, 1962). The political parties are the main driver of the country, its policies, and plan for the country. In the case of Nepal, the political parties and their politicians/leaders are playing the musical chair to grab the opportunity in the government only (Cottle et.al, 2017). The culture of cooperation and consensus on fundamental issues of the constitution is an important act of nation-building (Dahal, 2008).

Nepal's political parties are the drivers of the change. They are capable to resolve Nepal's political parties are the drivers of the change. They are capable to resolve grievances related to class, caste, and gender, as well as to other political, economic, social, and cultural challenges facing Nepal (Dahal, 2014). Political parties are voluntary organizations that link the people and their government. The majority party seeks to enact into law a number of different policies and programs. Parties of the opposition are free to criticize the majority party's policy ideas and offer their own proposals. Political parties provide a way for citizens to hold elected party officials accountable for their actions in government.

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**2.1.1.** K. D. (2016). Nepal's unending political instability. Kathmandu: The Diplomat.

Political parties can play an important role to end conflict, and misunderstanding, and shaping the roadmap of peace-building for the country. They can utilize their potential in expressing the grievances associated with the insurgency, articulate the people's interests and begin state-building through peace building (Castillejo, 2016). To preserve and protect individual rights and freedoms, a democratic people must work together to shape the government of their choosing through political parties.

There are three tiers of government: federal, provincial, and local. There are 753 local units in Nepal. Among them, there are 293 municipalities and 460 rural municipalities. Altogether there are 6743 wards. Local government is an immediate government of the people. Local government influences the daily activities of people. This study concentrates in finding out the status of political parties and their participation in local governance. The study also focuses on exploring the strength and weaknesses of political parties to run the government at the local level.

## **2. Objectives**

The objectives of the study are: a) to analyze the status of political parties in the local level government of Nepal, and b) to explore the role as well as strengths and weakness of political parties in the local development of Nepal.

## **3. Materials and Methods**

The Election Commission of Nepal is a constitutional body. It has the responsibility to register voter lists, political parties, and candidates. It conducts and monitors fair and valid elections. It also publishes reports of the election outcomes on time in Nepal. There are 753 local units in Nepal. The Nepal government conducted the second election at the local level on 13 may 2022. This study is mainly based on secondary data. Local level election report of the national election commission is the data source of this study. Necessary information was collected through various search engines through a simple literature review. Analysis of data is performed by using tables in a descriptive way.

## **4. Result and Discussion**

### **4.1 Province wise status of political parties in local level election-2079**

Table no 1 reveals that out of 137 local units in province no 1, 69 units were won by the Nepali Congress party followed by CPN-UML 47 local units second position, CPN - Maoist 12 local units in the third position. CPN-united socialist and Janata Samajwadi party won just 2 /2 local units and others won 5 local units in local-level elections in 2079. In terms of the position of mayor and chairperson of the local units, the Nepali congress party became first, CPN-UML became second and CPN-Maoist became the third position in province no 1. By winning more than 50% of local units, the Nepali congress party became the most popular party in province no 1 in the local-level election of 2079.

Table 1: province wise status of political parties in local level election-2079

S N	Political parties →	Nepali Congress	C.P.N. (UML)	C.P.N. (Maoist)	C.P.N. (United Socialists)	Janata Samajwadi Party	Loktantrik Samajwadi party	Others	Total
	← Provinces								
1	Province-1	69	47	12	2	2	0	5	137
	Percentage	50.36 %	34.34 %	8.75 %	1.45 %	1.45 %	0 %	3.65 %	100 %
2	Madhesh province	46	30	9	6	25	14	6	136
	Percentage	33.82 %	22.05 %	6.61 %	4.41 %	18.38 %	10.29 %	4.41 %	100 %
3	Bagmati province	58	26	27	5	0	0	3	119
	Percentage	48.74 %	21.85 %	22.69 %	4.20 %	0 %	0 %	2.52 %	100 %
4	Gandaki province	36	35	11	1	0	0	2	85
	Percentage	42.35 %	41.18 %	12.94 %	1.18 %	0 %	0 %	2.35 %	100 %
5	Lumbini province	48	27	25	0	3	2	4	109
	Percentage	44.05 %	24.77 %	22.93 %	0 %	2.75 %	1.83 %	3.67 %	100 %
6	Karnali Province	32	15	23	4	0	0	5	79
	Percentage	40.5 %	18.99 %	29.11 %	5.06 %	0 %	0 %	6.34 %	100 %
7	Sudur Paschim	40	26	14	2	0	0	6	88
	Percentage	45.45 %	29.54 %	15.9 %	2.3 %	0 %	0 %	6.81 %	100 %
8	Total	329	206	121	20	30	16	31	753
	Percentage	43.69 %	27.36 %	16.07 %	2.66 %	3.99 %	2.12 %	4.11 %	100 %

Source: Election Commission of Nepal

Out of 136 local units in Madhesh Province, 46 units were won by the Nepali congress party followed by CPN-UML 30 local units in the second position, Janata Samajwadi party 25 local units in the third position. Loktantrik Samajwadi party won 14 local units. CPN-Maoist won 9 local units. CPN-united socialist and others won just 6/6 local units in the local level election in 2079. In terms of mayor and chairperson of local units, the Nepali congress party became first, CPN-UML became second and the Janata Samajwadi party became the third position in the Madhesh province. By winning a one-third majority of local units, the Nepali congress party became the most popular party in the Madhesh province in the local-level election in 2079.

Out of 119 local units in Bagmati province, 58 units were won by the Nepali Congress party followed by CPN-Maoist 27 local units second position, CPN -UML 26 local units in the third position. CPN-united socialist won 5 local units and others won just 3 local units in local-level elections in 2079. In terms of the position of mayor and chairperson of the local units, the Nepali congress party became first, CPN-Maoist became second and

CPN-UML became third position in the Bagmati province. By winning 48.74% of local units, the Nepali congress party became the most popular party in the Bagmati province in the local-level election of 2079.

Out of 85 local units in Gandaki province, 36 units were won by the Nepali Congress party followed by CPN-UML 35 local units second position, CPN -Maoist 11 local units in the third position. CPN-united socialist party won just 1 local unit and others won 2 local units in local-level elections in 2079. In terms of the position of mayor and chairperson of the local units, the Nepali congress party became first, CPN-UML became second and CPN-Maoist became the third position in the Gandaki province. By winning somehow equal of the local units, the Nepali congress party and CPN-UML became the most popular party in the Gandaki province in the local-level election of 2079.

Out of 109 local units in Lumbini province, 48 units were won by the Nepali Congress party followed by CPN-UML 27 local units second position, CPN -Maoist 25 local units in the third position. Janta Samajwadi party won just 3 local units and Loktantrik Samajwadi party won 2 units and others won 4 local units in local-level elections in 2079. In terms of the position of mayor and chairperson of the local units, the Nepali congress party became first, CPN-UML became second and CPN-Maoist became the third position in the Lumbini province. By winning 44 % of the local units, the Nepali congress party became the most popular party in the Lumbini province in the local-level election of 2079.

Out of 79 local units in Karnali province, 32 units were won by the Nepali Congress party followed by CPN-Maoist 23 local units in the second position, CPN -UML 15 local units in the third position. CPN -United Socialistic party won just 4 local units and others won 5 local units in local-level elections in 2079. In terms of the position of mayor and chairperson of the local units, the Nepali congress party became first, CPN-Maoist became second and CPN-UML became the third position in the Karnali province. By winning 40.5 % of the local units, the Nepali congress party became the most popular party in the Karnali province in the local-level election of 2079.

Out of 88 local units in Sudur Paschim province, 40 units were won by the Nepali Congress party followed by CPN-UML 26 local units in the second position, and CPN -Maoist 14 local units in the third position. CPN united socialist party won just 2 local units and others won 6 local units in local-level elections in 2079. In terms of the position of mayor and chairperson of the local units, the Nepali congress party became first, CPN-UML became second and CPN-Maoist became the third position in the Sudur Paschim province. By winning 45 % of the local units, the Nepali congress party became the most popular party in the Sudur Paschim province in the local-level election of 2079.

Table no 1 reveals that out of 753 local units in Nepal, 329 units were won by the Nepali Congress party followed by CPN-UML 206 local units second position, CPN -Maoist 121 local units in the third position. Janata Samajwadi party won just 30 local units. CPN united socialist won 20 local units. Loktantrik Samajwadi party won 16 local units and others won 31 local units in local-level elections in 2079. In terms of the position of mayor and chairperson of the local units, the Nepali congress party became first; CPN-UML

became second; CPN-Maoist became third; Janta Samajwadi party became fourth in position. By winning 43% of local units, the Nepali congress party became the most popular party in the local-level election of 2079.

#### 4.2 Status of Political Parties in Local Government in Terms of Elected Mayor and Deputy-Mayor

It is necessary to develop political ideology and democratic roots within a state, which is an essential method of political development (Akhtar, 2011). Political development and social development are complementary to each other. (Stoke SC,1999). Table no 2 revealed that there are 293 municipalities in Nepal. It means there are 293 posts of mayor and deputy mayor in municipalities in Nepal. Out of 293 posts of mayor, the Nepali congress party won 141 posts followed by CPN-UML 83 posts, CPN-Maoist 25 posts, and others secured 32 posts. By securing 48.2 % of posts of mayor, the Nepali congress party is in the first position followed by CPN-UML (28.30 %) in the second position and CPN-Maoist (8.5%) in the third position. Out of 293 posts of deputy mayor, CPN-UML won 115 posts of deputy mayor, followed by the Nepali congress 110 posts and CPN Maoists 33 posts. Regarding the post of deputy mayor, CPN-UML secured the first position, Nepali congress secured the second position and CPN-Maoist secured the third position.

Table 2: Status of Political Parties in Local Government in Terms of Mayor and Deputy-Mayor

S. N.	Political Parties	Mayor	Percentage	Deputy-Mayor	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1	Nepali Congress	141	48.20 %	110	37.50 %	251	42.80 %
2	C.P.N. (UML)	83	28.30 %	115	39.20 %	198	33.80 %
3	C.P.N. (Maoist)	25	8.50 %	33	11.30 %	58	10 %
4	C.P.N. (United Socialists)	12	4.10 %	-	-	12	2.50 %
5	Janata Samajwadi Party	-	-	12	4.10 %	12	2.50 %
6	Others	32	10.90 %	23	7.90 %	55	9.40 %
7	Total	293	100 %	293	100 %	586	100%

Source: Election Commission of Nepal

#### 4.3 Status of Political Parties in Local Government in Terms of Chairperson and Deputy-Chairperson

Table no 3 revealed that there are 460 rural municipalities in Nepal. It means there are 460 posts of chairmen and deputy chairpersons in rural municipalities in Nepal. Out of 460 posts of a chairperson, the Nepali congress party won 188 posts followed by CPN-UML 123 posts, CPN-Maoist 96 posts, the Janta Samajwadi party won 21 posts, and others secured 32 posts. By securing 40.86 % of posts of the chairperson, the Nepali congress party is in the first position followed by CPN-UML (26.75 %) in the second position and CPN-Maoist (20.86%) in the third position. Out of 293 posts of deputy chairperson, the Nepali congress won 190 posts of deputy mayor, followed by CPN-UML 126 posts and

CPN Maoists 95 posts. Regarding the post of deputy mayor, the Nepali congress secured the first position, CPN-UML secured the second position and CPN-Maoist secured the third position.

Table 3: Status of political parties in local government in terms of Chairperson and Deputy-Chair person

S N	Political parties	Chairperson	Percentage	Deputy- Chairperson	Percentage	Total	Percentage
1	Nepali Congress	188	40.86 %	190	41.30 %	378	41.08 %
2	C.P.N. (UML)	123	26.75 %	126	27.40 %	249	27.06%
3	C.P.N. (Maoist)	96	20.86 %	95	20.65 %	191	20.76 %
4	Janata Samajwadi Party	21	4.58 %	19	4.13%	40	4.34 %
5	Others	32	6.95	30	6.52%	62	6.76 %
6	Total	460	100 %	460	100 %	920	100%

Source: Election Commission of Nepal

#### 4.4 Status of political parties in local government in terms of ward Chairperson and female members

There is a strong connection between political parties, the political system, and the public (La Palombara 1963). Table no 4 revealed that altogether there are 6743 wards in Nepal. In each ward, there is the provision of one ward chairperson. The ward chairperson has authoritative power in their respective ward. The candidates of the Nepali congress party won 2668 posts of ward chairperson. The candidates of CPN-UML, CPN-Maoist, and Janata Samajwadi party won 2137, 1053, and 295 respectively in the post of ward chairperson. Regarding the post of ward chairperson, the Nepali congress party secured the first position, CPN-UML is in the second position, CPN-Maoist is in the third position and Janata Samajwadi party is in the fourth position.

Table 4: Status of Political Parties In Local Government in Terms of Ward Chairperson and Female Members

SN	Political parties	Ward Chairperson	%	Female member	%
1	Nepali Congress	2668	40.86 %	2609	41.30 %
2	C.P.N. (UML)	2137	26.75 %	2352	27.40 %
3	C.P.N. (Maoist)	1053	20.86 %	963	20.65 %
4	Janata Samajwadi Party	295	4.58 %	299	4.13%
5	Others	590	6.95	519	6.52%
6	Total	6743	100 %	6743	100 %

Source: Election Commission of Nepal

Table no 4 revealed that there is a provision for one female member to be elected in each ward. Altogether there are 6743 posts for female members all over the country. The female member has a vital role in their respective ward. According to the final result of the local level election -2079, The candidates of the Nepali congress party won 2609 posts of female members. The candidates of CPN-UML, CPN-Maoist, and Janata Samajwadi party won 2352, 963, and 299 respectively in the post of female candidates. Regarding the post of the female member, the Nepali congress party secured the first position, CPN-UML is

in the second position, CPN-Maoist is in the third position and Janata Samajwadi party is in the fourth position.

#### 4.5 Status of Political Parties in Local Government in Terms of Open Members

Table no 5 revealed that there is a provision for two open members to be elected in each ward. Altogether there are 13486 posts for open members all over the country. The open members have a vital role in their respective wards. According to the final result of the local level election -2079, the candidates of Nepali congress party won 5313 posts of open members. The candidates of CPN-UML, CPN-Maoist, and Janata Samajwadi parties won 4698, 1807, and 598 respectively in the post of open members. Regarding the post of open member, the Nepali congress party secured the first position, CPN-UML is in the second position, CPN-Maoist is in the third position and the Janata Samajwadi party is in the fourth position.

Table 5: Status of political parties in local government in terms of open members

SN	Political parties	Members (open)	%
1	Nepali Congress	5313	39.40%
2	C.P.N. (UML)	4698	34.84 %
3	C.P.N. (Maoist)	1807	13.40 %
4	Janata Samajwadi Party	598	4.43 %
5	Others	1070	7.93 %
6	Total	13486	100 %

Source: Election Commission of Nepal

#### 4.6 Strengths and Weaknesses of Political Parties in Nepal

The strong national government is also a remarkable variable in achieving a perpetual form of development in a state as observed in China because it has the ability to effectively manipulate policies and reinforce obedience among citizens to maintain peace and solidarity among them. (Lee K.Y, 2013). A political party is an organized group of people who share a common political ideology, program, and policy to control the state's power. By drafting public policy, influencing public opinion, and maintaining stability, political parties can create a clear-cut roadmap to achieving the destiny of the nation of the well-being of the people.

The result of the focus group discussion is presented in the following table regarding the strengths and weaknesses of political parties in the context of Nepal.

Table 6: strength and weaknesses of political parties

SN	Strength of political parties	Weakness of political parties
1	Pro public attitude	Focus on quantity rather than quality.
2	Public awareness	Encourage polarization in society.
3	Creation of democratic pluralistic culture.	Corrupted mentality.
4	Safeguard human rights.	Unhealthy competition.
5	Public participation	Politics just gain the vote.

Source: field study 2022



The most commonly identified strength of political parties are: strong grassroots links, a strong people-based agenda, the ability to innovate and adapt, a people-oriented approach to development, a participatory mechanism; commitment to social change, and understanding of the broader social or economic context. The most commonly identified weaknesses of the political parties include limited financial and management expertise, limited institutional capacity, low levels of self-sustainability, lack of inter-party communication, lack of coordination among other institutions; corruption etc.

The weaknesses regarding the civil values of trust, mutual understanding, and willingness to solve the problem should be corrected by the multiparty democracy of Nepal (Kumar & De Zeeuw, 2008 cited in Castillejo, 2016). The human rights situation continues to be unsatisfactory. The mechanisms envisaged in the CPA for dealing with the civil war era in legal terms are disagreements between and rifts within the parties. Demonstrations and strikes are frequent and futile (CSS, 2012).

In the Nepalese context, there is the blame of people for political parties as just focusing on propaganda agenda. Some political parties play a role to deteriorate the harmonious relationship among people of different castes, ethnic groups, gender, religion, and region by initiating hatred against one another. They are blamed as agents of different mafia agencies. Politicians are accused of being misused as the source of income of a particular family under the guise of social service.

(“transitional justice”) have not been implemented. Political discourse is marked by severe

## **5. Conclusion**

The roles of political parties are vital for solving enormous problems in developing countries like Nepal. No one can imagine the modern open society without the existence of political parties. Although political parties are means to form a government, their contribution is meaningful in every corner of a democratic society. Political parties contribute to becoming the voice of the voiceless. They can play a constructive role during the march of development. Political stability ensures development. It is mandatory to ensure political stability for creating a favorable environment to operate development activities. Stable government and good governance offer a good opportunity for development agencies to make joint efforts with government agencies to meet targeted results. There is essential to clarify the jurisdiction of the three tiers of government regarding the scope of development. Three tiers of government should formulate integrated and reinforcing goals and targets of development.

Democratization within political parties is essential for the overall and multifaceted development of local areas of Nepal. To ensure democratization in parties, people’s participation, and leadership’s accountability, transparency, and institutional safeguard are mandatory. Issues-based political activities, healthy competition, and cooperation among political parties for the common agenda of development support in local development in Nepal.

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