



Gender Analysis of Nepal's Local Elections - May 2022

Centre for Gender And Politics

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Contributed by

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Note: The data used here in this report is presented in good faith. In case of any discrepancies you find, please consider that the data which lies with the National Election Commission (EC) of Nepal is final and write to us. For winners' data, we considered the latest bulletin released by the EC dated 20th May 2022. It is the latest uploaded by the EC as of writing this report. Also, please note that we ourselves found a few discrepancies between different reports released by the EC and quoted in media sources.

Historical Background

The new constitution that came into effect in 2015 adopted a three-tier system of government focusing on decentralisation.

After its promulgation, Nepal held the second local election for 753 local units in May 2022.

The first local election was held in 2017 and it was significant and historic for women's political representation and the country's own transition into a federal structure.

6

Metropolitan cities

11

Sub-Metropolitan cities

276

Municipalities

460

Rural Municipalities

Legal Framework

Constitutional Provisions: Articles 222 and 223 provision village and municipal assemblies^[1].

A village assembly consists of the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the village executive, ward chairpersons, and four members elected from each ward and members of the village executive elected from Dalit and minority communities.

Similarly, a municipal assembly consists of the mayor and deputy mayor of the municipal executive, ward chairpersons, four members elected from each ward, and members of the municipal executive elected from Dalit or minority communities.

According to the **Local Level Election Act**, two of the ward members elected for each ward must be women, and one of those women must be a Dalit. For a total of 6,743 wards across the country, there will be at least 13,486 women and at least 6,743 will be Dalit women elected.

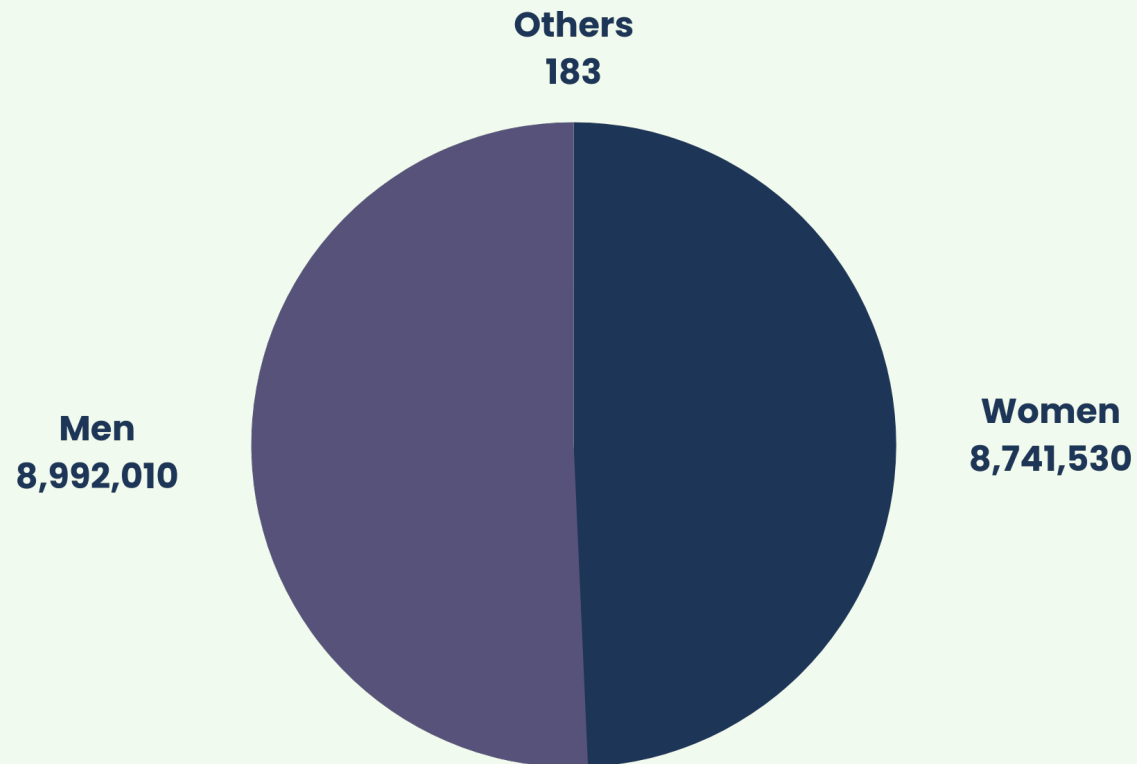
The Election Commission mandates that at least 40.4% of total nominees be women, including a rule mandating that the chief and deputy chief nominations put forth by each political party in each local unit be gender-even. That is, if a political party nominated a man for the mayor's position, a woman had to be nominated for deputy mayor, or vice-versa.

However, in 2022, major political parties formed alliances to contest elections. The Local Level Election Act-2017 has made it mandatory for each political party fielding candidates for both the top positions to ensure that one of them is a woman (mayor/chair and deputy mayor/vice chair). Since, political parties as part of alliance arrangements were field candidates for only one of these positions, they did not adhere to the rule. This has been challenged in Supreme Court and the apex court has not issued any interim order on the matter.^[2]

Voter Registration and Eligibility

As per Article 6 of the Electoral Roll Act, 2017, an eligible voter must be:

- A Nepali citizen;
- At least 18 years old; and
- A permanent resident of the relevant ward



Registered voters = 17,733,723, Source: Election Commission



Image: prabin_ranabhat (Instagram)

Voter Registration and Eligibility (Contd..)



Image: prabin_ranabhat (Instagram)

On the elections day, voters with disabilities, pregnant women, persons from LGBTQIA+ community and old people may request priority access, voting assistance.^[1]

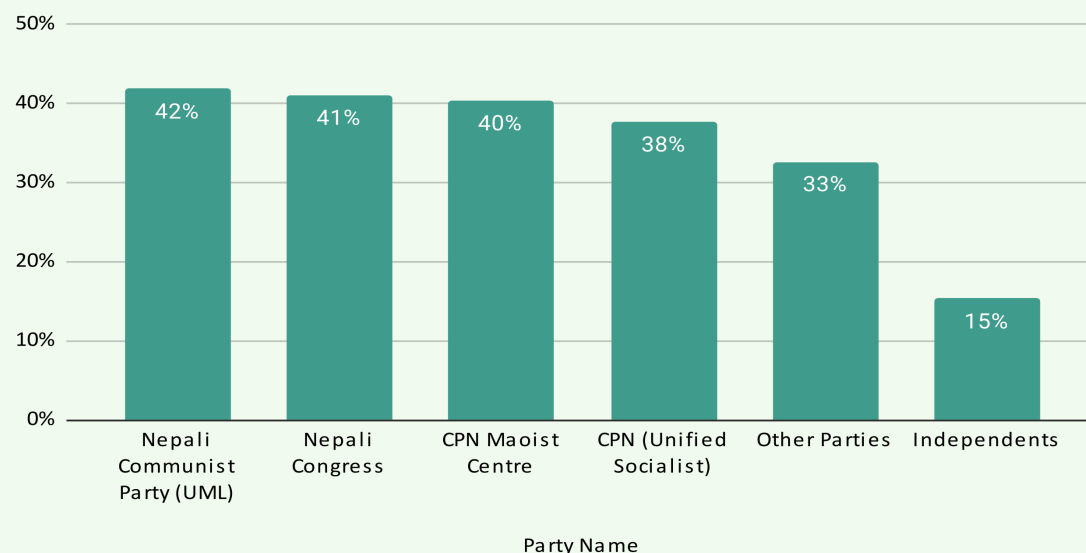
Election Commission views anyone and everyone who does not belong to gender binary as “Others”. This poses a huge problem to voting of the community. Transgender males identify themselves as males and transgender females identify themselves as females. And unless their voter ID says “Others”, they will not be given priority or access and as a result face humiliation in the polling booth lines.

It is also very difficult to change their gender or name in the voter ID. This again affects the LGBTQIA+ community adversely.

Women Candidates – Political Party wise

All major political parties have fielded about 40% women as candidates. Overall, 36% of the total candidates were women.

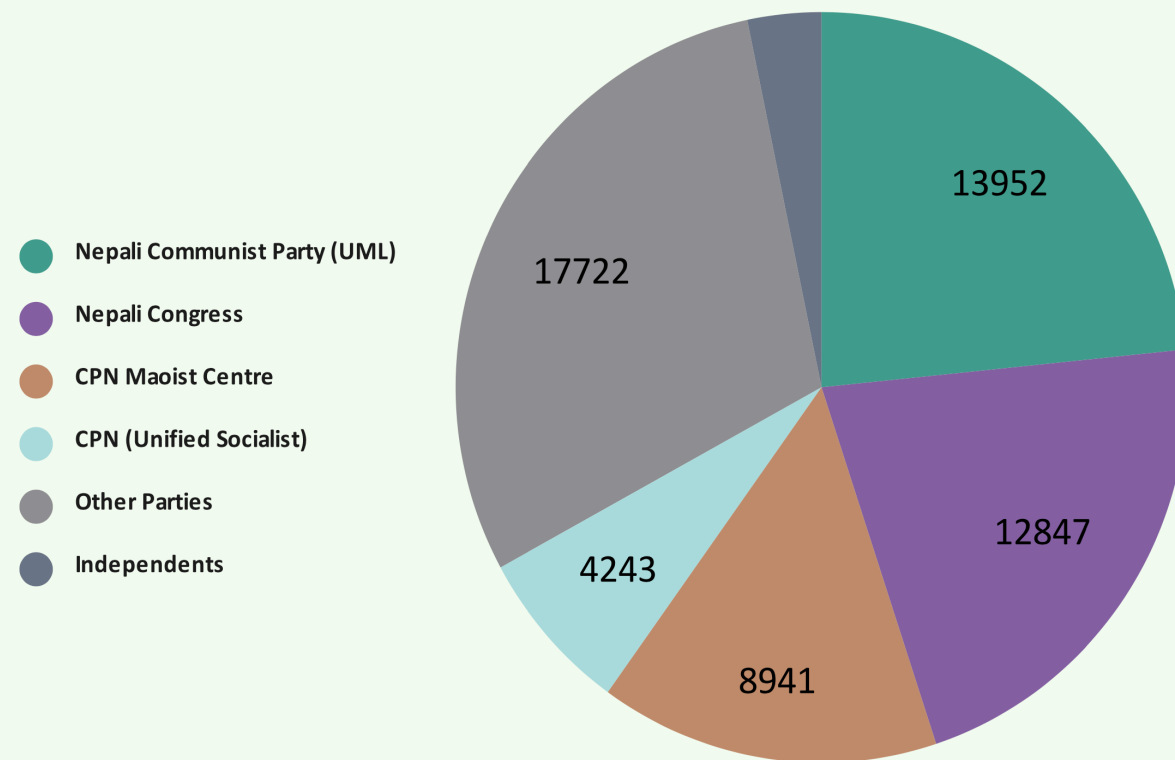
Percentage of Women contestants by political party



Note: The scale of Y-axis here is deliberately kept at 50% for better visibility of the chart.

Only 15% of the those who contested as independents were women.

Women Contestants by Political Party



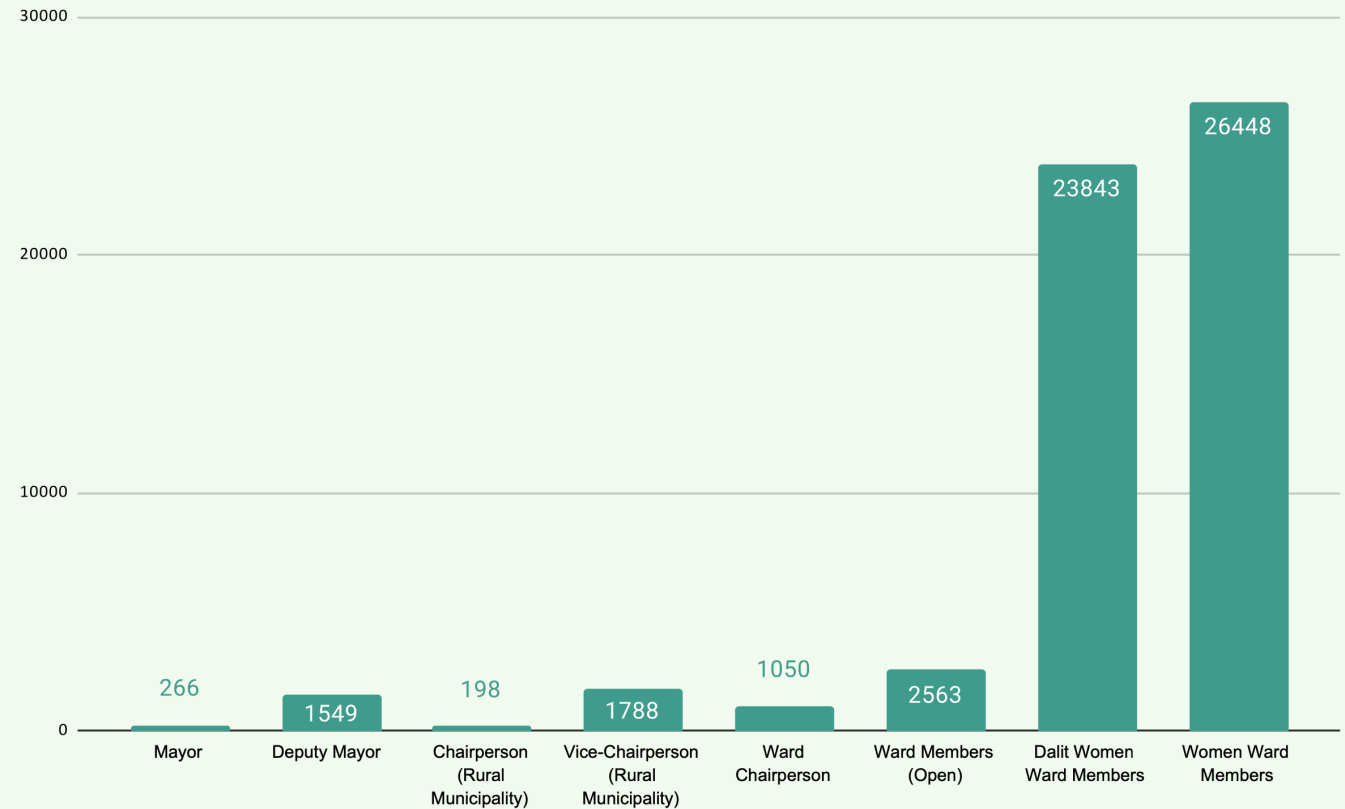
Women Candidates – By Post

The graph shows the number of women contested by post.

Of executive positions, political parties choose to field women more for Deputy Mayor post than for Mayor post.

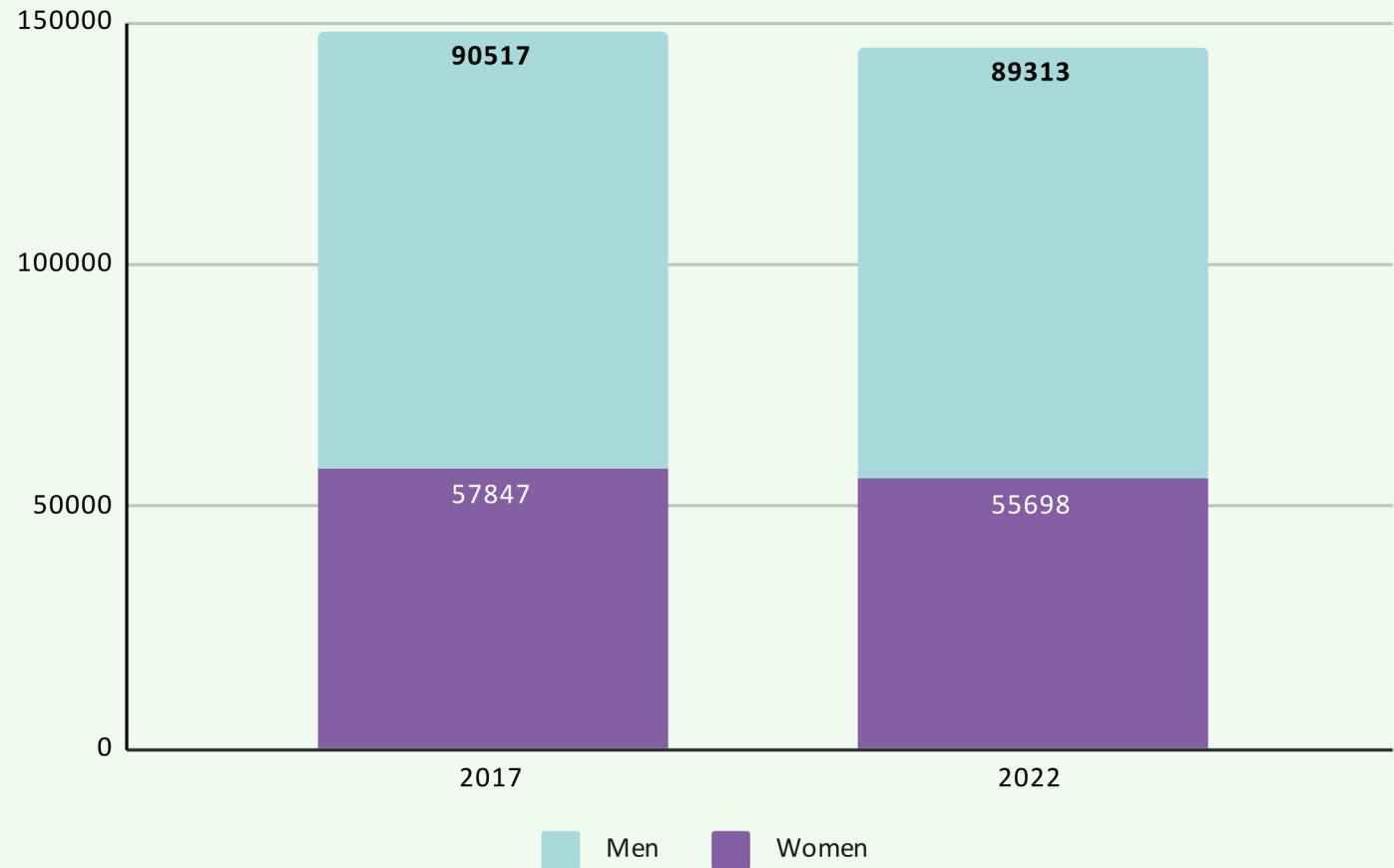
Similarly for rural municipalities, parties field women more for Vice-Chairperson post than for Chairperson post.

Except for the ward member posts reserved for women and Dalit women, political parties are hesitant to field women as Ward Chairpersons and for unreserved Ward Member posts.



Women Candidates – 2017 vs 2022

Number of women contesting in 2022 is lesser than that of 2017, which is a worrying downward trend seen with the second ever local elections happening after adoption of the new constitution.



Barriers for Women Candidates

Although there are close to 60,000 women contestants in this local election, most of them were fielded in ward member positions reserved for Women and Dalit women.

There were two dominant **narratives** on why women did not obtain candidacy for higher offices.

- They lack the capacity
- There aren't enough women who commit to take on leadership roles

“

“Neither the parties nor the Election Commission took initiative to ensure that women are fielded in at least one of the two positions,”

- Renu Chand, a leader from the CPN (Maoist Centre) told [*The Kathmandu Post*](#)



San Maya Gurung, Vice-Chairperson, Barpak Sulikot Rural Municipality

Image: Online Khabar

Barriers for Women Candidates (Contd...)

After Effects of the Political Alliances: Party alliances have backed leaders other than those who had been loyal to the party or people who have gained local level leadership experience. This calls for an unfair competition between aspiring local leaders (majorly affecting women and those from marginalised communities) and people the party has chosen (oftentimes men with political connections)^[1]

This election, because of alliances, parties did not put up women candidates for the leadership posts, as the rule of fielding at least one woman for Chief/ Deputy Chief is not applicable if the party is contesting just one of those seats.

“

“Men dominate political parties and always want to stake their claim when it comes to power position. Plus this year, due to the coalition, the representation has been even low. When the number of female candidates was low, the representation going down is normal,”

- Usha Malla Pathak, a senior lawyer told [Online Khabar](#)

Barriers for Women Candidates (Contd...)

Internal Party Barriers : Within parties, women have lesser chances of being selected as candidates due to vague selection criteria descriptions from central authorities, male-dominant selection committees and other informalities of the selection process as a whole.

The Selection Committee- A Male Dominated Process: Political parties organized local committees that work to select candidates for the local elections. These committees were predominantly male and sought subjective traits, namely: loyalty to the party, sacrifice, dedication, trustworthiness, popularity, charisma, and contributions.^[1]

Vague Party Instructions and the Effects of Informality: The informality in the traits as mentioned above give space for implicit and/or outright gender biases as seen in this election as well as the one in 2017. For one, it creates a system which tends to cater to an accumulated number of men who have been politically recognized in the past, over women who may have significant but not as visible contributions. Certain characteristics like charisma and suitability also partake to gender stereotypes in which women appear 'weaker' or less knowledgeable.



Some of the major political parties and alliances that contested Local Elections May 2022 are led by these men. Image: ReviewNepal

1. 'Beyond "Capacity": Gendered Election Processes, Networks, Informality in Local Governments in Nepal', Asia Foundation, dated 11th May 2022

Women in Leadership: Elected

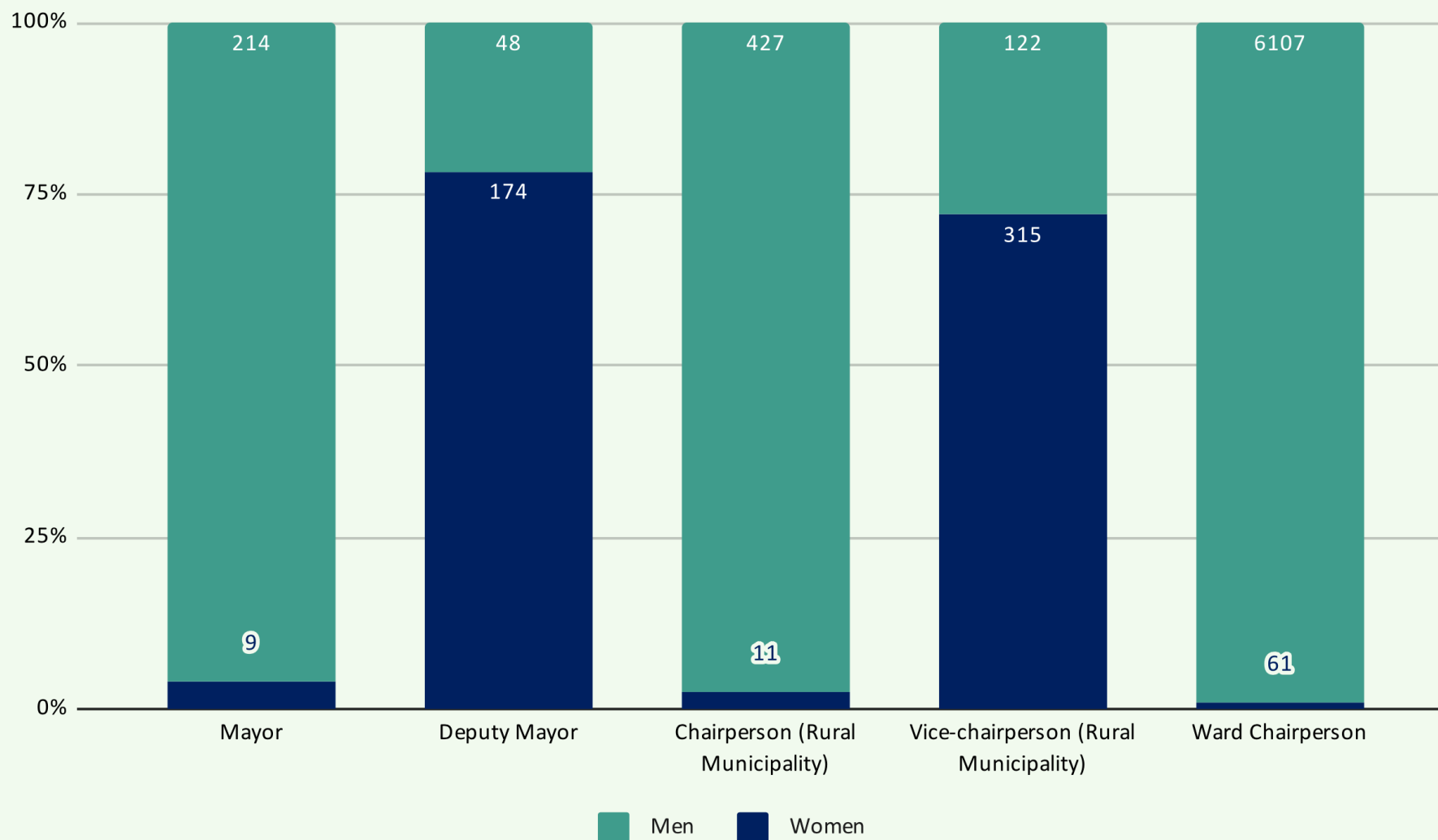
4% women among Mayors of Metropolitans and Municipalities.

78% women among Deputy Mayors.

3% women among Chairpersons of Rural Municipalities.

72% women among Vice-Chairpersons.

1% women among Ward Chairpersons.

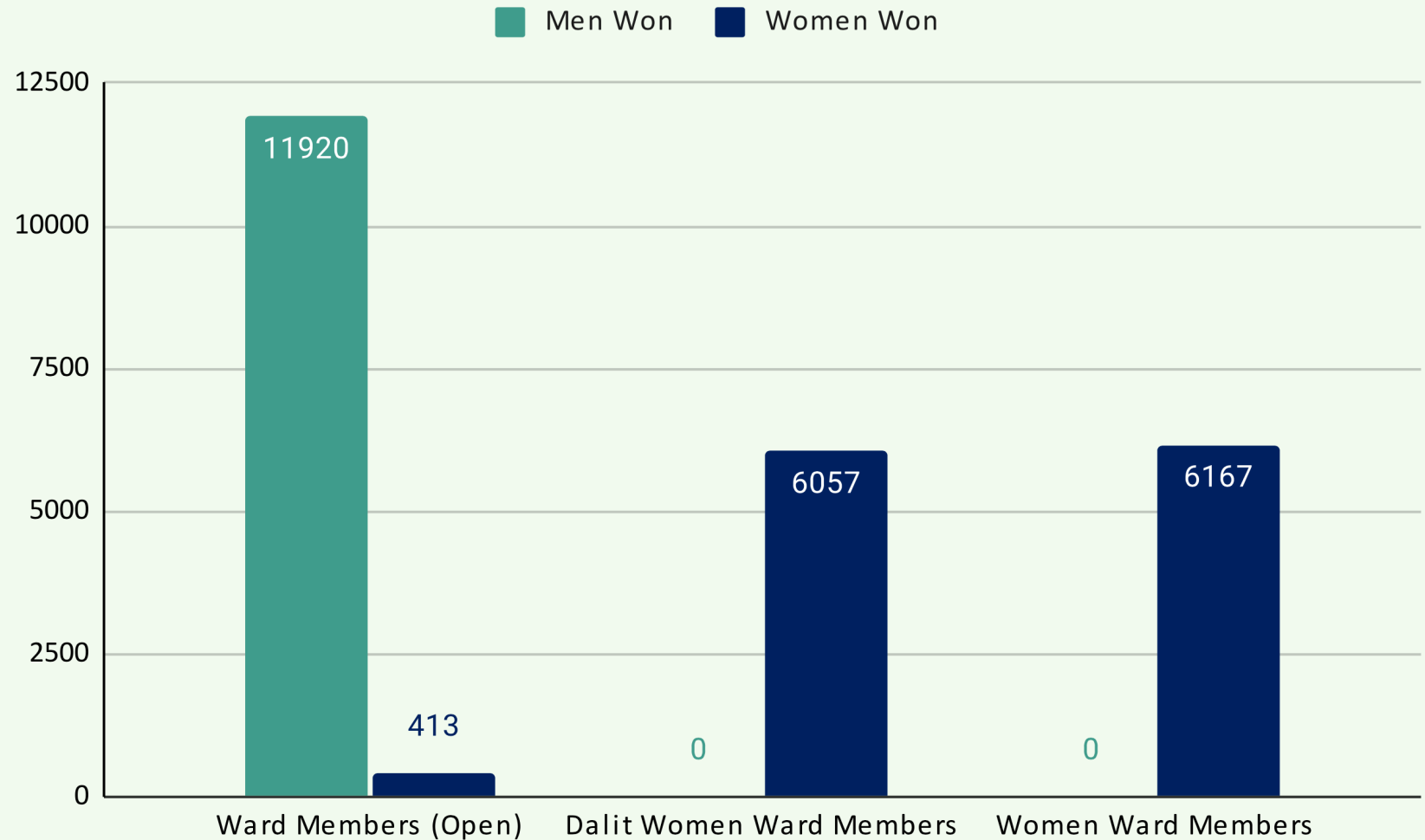


Women as Ward Members: Elected

3% women elected for unreserved Ward Member posts.

This chart clearly shows that women are being fielded majorly for the two posts that are reserved for women at the Ward level.

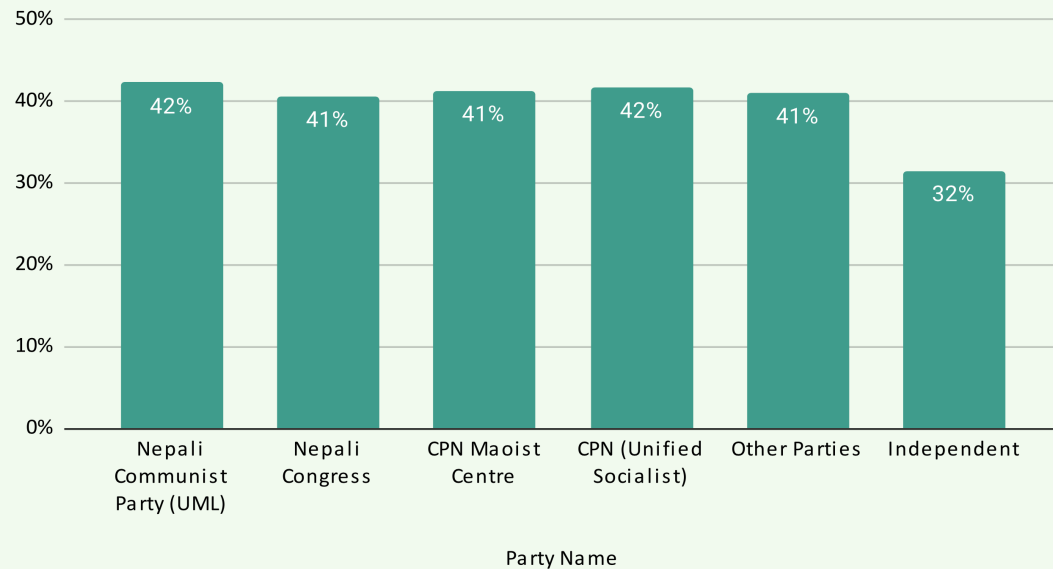
Of 5 Ward Member positions (including Ward Chairperson), one seat is reserved for women and one seat is reserved for Dalit Women. Therefore, 2 seats of the ward are reserved for women.



Women Elected – Political Party wise

All major political parties now have about 40% women elected among total winners from respective parties however, they are fielded and elected for lower positions as shown earlier. Overall, 41.21% of the total elected are women.

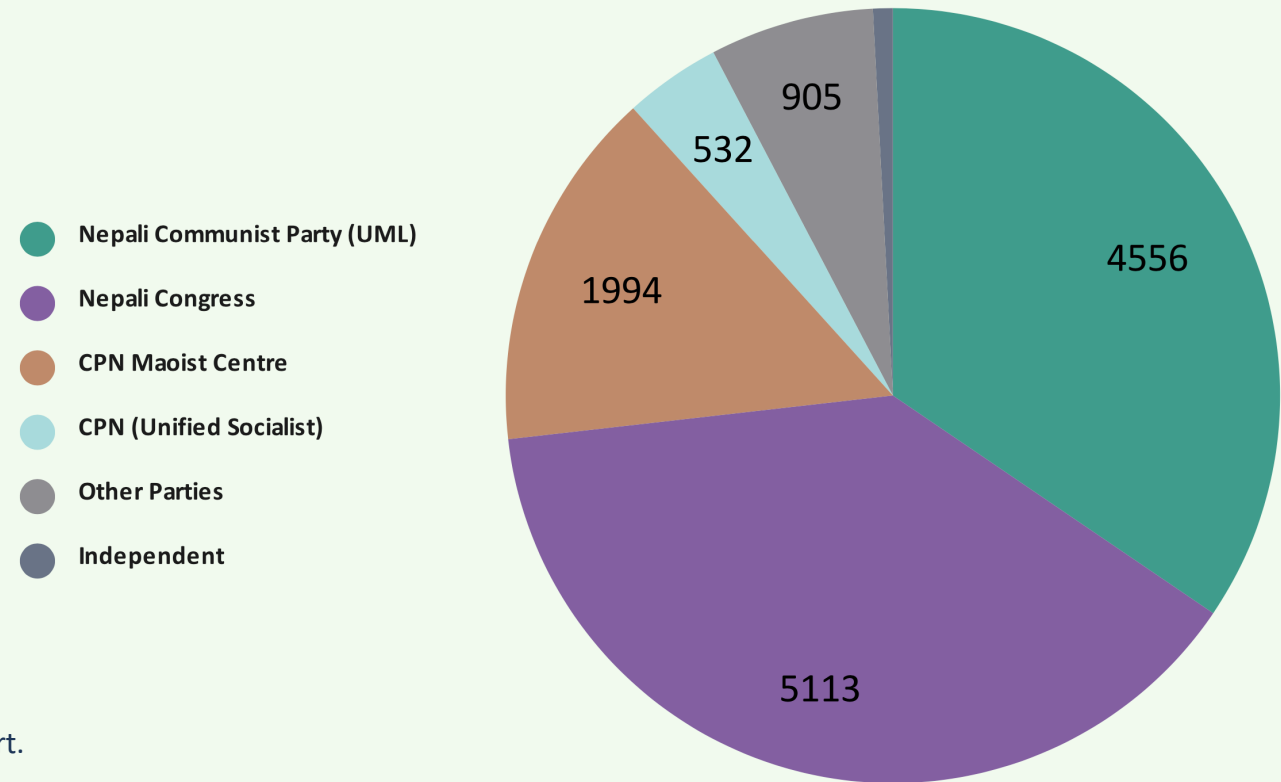
Percentage of Women Elected by political party



Note: The scale of Y-axis here is deliberately kept at 50% for better visibility of the chart.

Of all independents who won the election, 32% are women.

Women Winners by Political Party



Women Elected – 2017 vs 2022

The data we analysed is from the latest [Bulletin](#) dated 20th May 2022, released by the Election Commission.

As per this bulletin, 41.21% women are among the total elected in 2022 vs. 40.9% in 2017.

As per the news article by [Himal Khabar](#), 14,402 women got elected in 2022 vs 14352 in 2017.

By both statistics, even though there is a downward trend of women contestants in 2022 local elections, the final number of women who got elected seems to be marginally higher than that of 2017 elections.

This clearly indicates the higher winnability displayed by the women candidates in the 2022 local elections.

Women in Leadership - Some Notable wins

Sunita Dangol

Deputy Mayor of Kathmandu: Dangol, who initially ran as an independent candidate, won her deputy mayor election by securing a solid 68,612 votes, higher vote margin than the Mayoral candidate. Dangol has explicitly stated women's rights agendas focusing on equal pay and women's physical security in her campaign.



Image: MyRepublica

Mina Lama

Mayor of Hetauda: Mina Kumari Lama is the first indigenous woman to be elected as a mayor in Hetauda. She plans on continuing her development efforts that she initiated as the deputy mayor. Some of her political agendas include making Hetauda a city that encompasses women and children's rights wholly, as well as establishing a maternity, and senior citizen hospital.



Image: The Himalayan Times

Kaushalya Devi

Mayor of Ishanath: Kaushalya devi won the position of a mayor in her constituency with a margin of 975 votes against her opponent. Devi won after electoral staffs had caused an error after which party officers from various parties padlocked the counting site.



Image: eKantipur

Renu Dahal

Mayor of Bharatpur: Renu Dahal was re-elected as the mayor of Bharatpur after defeating her opponent with more than 12,000 votes. During her previous term, Dahal put an emphasis on women's healthcare.



Image: Renu Dahal's Facebook

Insights on Men's Allyship

There were a very few instances of displaying allyship by men during this local elections except where few men have campaigned and actively supported their women colleagues from the same party.

Gagan Thapa from Nepali Congress in support of her colleague and Kathmandu Mayoral contestant Shrijana Shrestha, called on the public to vote for her as she has potential to 'transform the metropolitan' (*Makalu Khabar*).

Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda": During one of the rallies, he said, "there is historical evidence that where women have led, progress have been felt and seen. Men have led for long but could achieve very less. Therefore, let's give women candidates chance," he said ([Khabarhub](#)) but only spoke of such while defending his daughter, Renu Dahal ([The Diplomat](#)).

Sher Bahadur Deuba, the Prime Minister of Nepal addressed rallies in support of Renu Dahal and Shrijana Shrestha, wife of a senior party colleague.

Violence Against Women

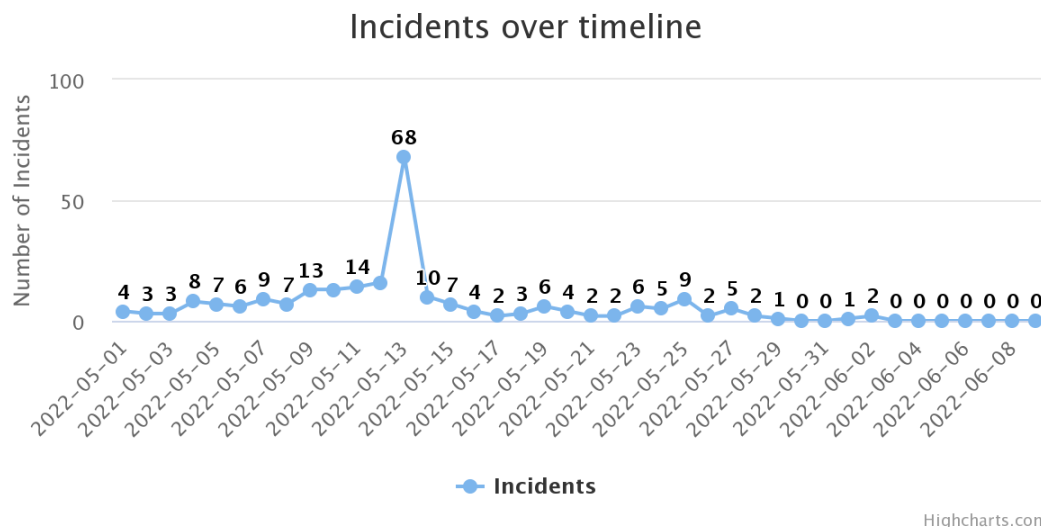
In the run up to the elections, on the polling day and post elections, there were some reported instances of gendered violence and abuse, threatening the safety of women in politics.

National Women' Commission has taken note of a few incidents and wrote to Election Commission to take action and make arrangements to control such incidents on the polling day.

In Chaujahari municipality-3 (Rukum Paschim district), during the election campaign, women were met with indecent remarks and misbehaviour. Some male cadres of other political parties barged into their houses at night around 9 PM and manhandled and injured them. (*MyRepublica*)

Keshav Sthapit, Mayor Candidate for Kathmandu who has sexual harassment allegations against him in the past, has resorted to insulting a woman in a public rally threatening to ruin her image by alleging that she is a prostitute.

In Shivaraj Municipality of Kapilvastu district in Lumbini, a woman voter was beaten by Rastriya Prajatantra Party's ward chairperson candidate for allegedly not voting in their favour. (*Nepal Monitor*)



Analysis from Nepal Monitor shows spike in poll violence on the day of polling (May 13, 2022). Global evidence suggests that such poll violence discourages women and gender minorities to come out and vote.

Lessons Learnt

1

Political parties remain the primary vehicle for women to enter politics although few wins registered by independents has surprised.

2

Lack of gender sensitisation among men in politics leads to not fielding women candidates by the parties/ alliances dominated by them.

3

There is still a long way to go in acknowledging LGBTQIA+ community and their political participation and representation in Nepalese politics.

4

Winnability among women candidates in this local body elections seem to be higher because the number of women who won is marginally higher than 2017 local polls although the number of women contestants were lesser than 2017.

5

There is huge potential for strengthening of institutions such as the Election Commission in encouraging gender equality and upholding the quota requirements in the spirit of constitution.

Recommendations

1

Election Commission should undertake necessary steps to make available, the accurate and gender disaggregated data - political party-wise, post-wise, Province-wise, Ward-wise, Municipality-wise.

2

The laws must be enacted to make sure Political parties' leadership and committees that decide on candidates include women.

3

Gender-disaggregated data made available by the National Election Commission does not even acknowledge the presence of LGBTQIA+ community although they are legally registered as voters under "Others" category.

4

Support from civil society should begin from pre-election times to aid women candidates in organizing and collecting political, social and financial networks.

5

Civil society organisations and International NGOs working in Nepal may initiate training programmes for the women who got elected in this election, so the incumbent women are re-elected next time.

6

Criteria for selecting candidates should also emphasize on political qualifications and experience in regards to the post rather than mainly focusing on subjective traits like likeability and sacrifice.

Authors



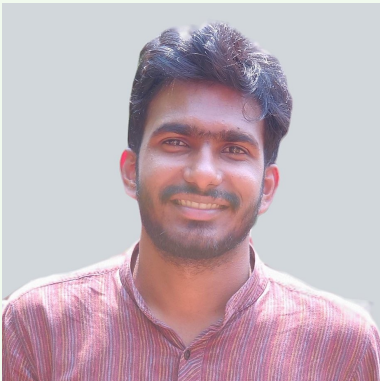
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Prasiddhi is the Nepal Country Representative at Centre for Gender And Politics (CGAP). She is a recent graduate in Political Science from SciencesPo, Paris, where she specialised in Asian politics. She is most interested in topics surrounding gender, social justice, and conflict and security.



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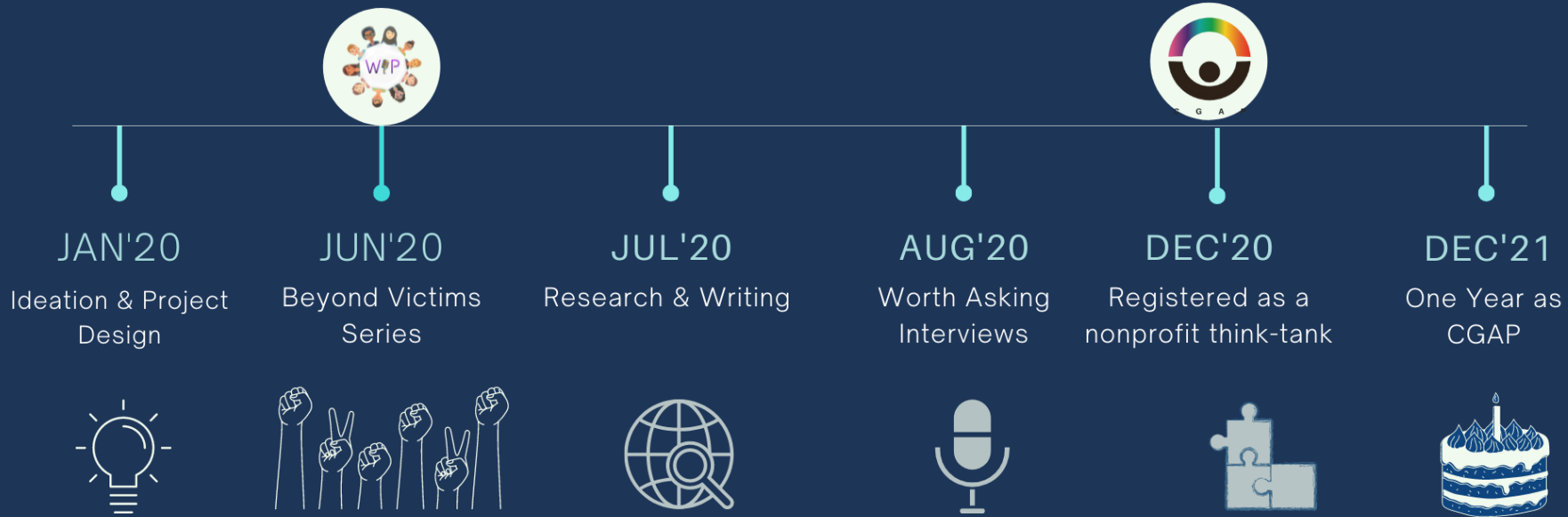
We would like to thank **Ms. Aakriti Ghimire**, Journalist at The Kathmandu Post for her inputs on utilising election data sets that are available with the National Election Commission. We would like to thank **Mr. Simone Galimberti**, Co-founder at Engage, a non-profit based in Kathmandu for his help with the relevant resources and for quoting us in his Opinion Editorial on women in local body elections in [*The Himalayan Times*](#).

We would like to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts of **Ms. Ritisha Gupta** for developing an election dashboard that made our job of analysing the election data easier.

This report is inspired from the work of United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq-UNAMI's recent election analysis work.

About Us

From a volunteer-led initiative to a think-tank



www.cgapsouthasia.org

Why we work?

- Mere 18.93% women in South Asian parliaments
- Zero from non-binary persons community

Who are we?

A registered non-profit think-tank based in India that works on gender and politics in South Asia

How we work ?

- Research
- Awareness
- Capacity building
- Advocacy

Check out our previous work on Nepal

ROLE OF WOMEN IN NEPAL'S PEACEBUILDING

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Natasha Singh

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Mayor of Dipayal Silgadhi Municipality (Doti, Sudurpashchim Pradesh)
Manju Malasi actively managed migrant returnees – facilitating their return by picking up 785 stranded workers from border points, organising a door-to-door campaign of meeting individuals, counselling them, spreading awareness and urging them to stay in isolation, and ensuring their safety and comfort in the quarantine centres in spite of a lack of adequate infrastructure and resources. She also set up employment programmes for the returning youth, endeavouring to engage them in animal husbandry in their hometowns. She started the provision of psycho-social counselling for affected women, by involving mothers' groups, women health workers and volunteers in the Covid-19 response. (Source1&2)

President of Nepal
Bidya Devi Bhandari played an active role in leading her country in times of distress due to Covid-19. In her presidential address to the nation, she urged everyone to stay at home, remain alert, and follow covid-19 protocols. During the lockdown, she announced a relief package for labourers and daily wage earners and donated two months of her salary to the Coronavirus Infection Prevention Control and Treatment Fund. (People's Review, March 25th, 2020 and Nepal24Hours.com, April 3rd, 2020)

Source1: (Gender Equality: Women's Leadership in Covid-19 Report – [asiafoundation.org](https://www.asiafoundation.org), 30th June 2020)
Source2: (The Coronavirus ChAcks Campaign Report, accountabilitylab.org, 13th July, 2020)

WOMEN FOR POLITICS BEYOND VICTIMS
Nepal Edition
'Women are beyond victims, they are change-makers and leaders'

Deputy Mayor of the Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City (Kailali)
Sushila Mishra Bhatta efforts to battle the pandemic have been targeted towards women. In order to understand the needs and situation of the women of her municipality she set up a major data collection centre. Her team set up separate quarantine facilities for women while ensuring their safety and comfort including arranging ambulances for pregnant women. They have also instituted programs to facilitate psychological counselling for women affected by the virus and are currently exploring covid-19 specific programs for elderly women, women with disabilities, victims and survivors of domestic violence. (Source 1)

Deputy Mayor of the Dhulikhel Municipality (Kavrepalanchok)
Bimla Sharma revamped the healthcare centres of her municipality to cater to the pandemic. She launched training programs for healthcare workers, procured medical, sanitising and personal protective equipment for these centres. Gender and disability friendly centres were set up as well and a Covid-19 fund of \$80,000 was used on instituting health facilities, safe houses for victims of domestic violence, awareness raising campaigns and aid. She provided aid and ration to 2400 households and made door to door visits, providing people with basic necessities, including supplies for 95 pregnant women, new mothers and their children. (Source1)

Designed and Curated by Women for Politics (WfP) www.womenforpolitics.com



Check out our Beyond Victims series Nepal edition 2022, where we curated stories of inspiring women leaders from local governance.

[English](#)

[Hindi](#)

[Urdu](#)

Check out our article titled “**Women Voters in Nepal: What do we need to know about women voters?**”

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