

Participation of Youths in Nepali Politics: Practices and Challenges

No. 16 | June 2025

SUMMARY

Although Nepal's federal system considers inclusion as a key aspects, youth representation in politics remains weak. This is evident in the composition of the current House of Representatives (HoR), where the majority of members are aged between 51 and 60 years, while, according to the National Youth Policy 2015, only 12 percent of members fall within the youth age group of 16 to 40 years.

Despite occasional discussions about leadership transition and youth participation in political parties, senior leaders remain reluctant to hand over leadership and create opportunities for the next generation. From the local to the federal level, long-standing power retention has left little room for emerging leaders. Instead, youth are often mobilized for activities such as protests, campaigns, meetings, conferences, and displays of strength, rather than being given meaningful leadership roles.

Due to all these reasons, some young people appear to be drawn toward alternative parties or candidates, while signs of growing frustration and alienation from politics and the existing governance system are also evident among others. It is not a positive indication that political parties—considered the foundation of the democratic system—have failed to make leadership more inclusive. Such regressive practices have not only harmed the political parties themselves but have also indirectly weakened the federal democratic republic as a whole. Therefore, it is essential for major political parties to adopt clear policies to ensure meaningful youth participation through laws and their own party statutes.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 1951 movement against the Rana regime had been successful with the participation of young people. After that, youths have played prominent roles in all social and political movements that have occurred for restoration of democracy. Nepal's National Youth Policy 2015 classifies people aged 16 to 40 years as youths. The proportion of the population of youths to the total population of the country is at 40 percent.¹ According to the Nepali laws, the minimum age requirement for candidacy registration is 21 years for local levels, 25 years for House of Representatives and Province Assembly, and 35 years for National Assembly. The minimum age to be eligible for the selection to Constitutional bodies is 45 years.

Social inclusion is considered an important aspect of the federal system. Thus, youth participation can be considered an important issue in terms of inclusion. While the Constitution of Nepali and laws have mentioned women, Dalit, Indigenous people, Madheshi, and minorities in terms of inclusion clusters, youths have not been mentioned in this context. However, Article 18 of the Constitution has included youths along with backward classes while discussing inclusion, and has stated that special provisions for these groups can be made in accordance with the laws. Similarly, Article 51 which includes policies regarding the country's functioning including provisions for social justice and inclusion which states "to create an atmosphere conducive to the full enjoyment of the political, economic, social and cultural rights, while enhancing the participation of youths in national development, to make their personality

¹ Ministry of Youth and Sports. 2015. National Youth Policy 2015 (in Nepali). Available at <https://www.opmcm.gov.np/wp-content/uploads/npolicy/Youth/national-youth-policy-2015.pdf>; accessed on January 13, 2025.

development, while providing special opportunity in areas including education, health and employment for the empowerment and development of the youths and provide them with appropriate opportunities for the overall development of the State”.²

Some argue that the issue of age in politics could be irrelevant as older individuals can also hold progressive outlook in contrast to younger individuals who might hold conservative perspectives.³ They contend that youth is defined more by outlook rather than age. However, the purpose of this analysis is not to weigh in on which age group is more progressive or forward-thinking. In accordance with the Constitution’s essence of reflecting Nepali society in the country’s structures, this update tries to discuss youth participation from the perspective of social inclusion. This analysis examines the presence of youths in politics by taking young people’s representation in the HoR as an example. Additional, information about youth participation has been collected from political party members and experts. Pre-published materials have also been referenced.

2. AGE-GROUP CLASSIFICATION OF HoR MEMBERS

According to the data from the Election Commission, in the 2022 HoR elections, a total of 2,412 candidates had registered their candidacy for the first-past-the-post (FPTP) system from 165 constituencies. Of the total candidates, 759 (30%) were below the age of 40.⁴ 403 candidates were party-affiliated and 356 were independent candidates.⁵ Only 10 people below the age of 40 managed to win, which is 6.06 percent of the total winners (See Table 1). A total of 23 youths were nominated for the HoR through proportional representation (PR) system, which is 20.91 percent of the total representatives in HoR through proportional system.

² Nepal Law Commission. 2015. Constitution of Nepal. Available at [https://giwmscdnone.gov.np/media/files/Constitution%20of%20Nepal%20\(2nd%20amd.%20English\)_xf33zb3.pdf](https://giwmscdnone.gov.np/media/files/Constitution%20of%20Nepal%20(2nd%20amd.%20English)_xf33zb3.pdf); accessed on January 12, 2025.

³ Himal Press. 2022. There is no Meaning of Age in Politics: Chandra Bhandari (in Nepali). December 3. Available at <https://himalpress.com/2022/12/5832/>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

⁴ The age of the members of HoR discussed here refers to that in 2022’s elections.

⁵ Sharma, Jivan. 2024. Youth Representation in Nepali Politics: Only 11 Representatives Under 40 Years Elected Through FPTP System (in Nepali). *News of Nepal*, August 24. Available at <https://newsfnepal.com/2024/08/28/664554/>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

Table 1: Current (2022-2027) HoR members according to Age-group

Age Group	FPTP System	PR System	Total	Percentage
25-30	3	5	8	2.91
31-40	7	18	25	9.09
41-50	30	38	68	24.73
51-60	68	27	95	34.55
61-70	44	18	62	22.55
71-80	12	4	16	5.82
>81	1	0	1	0.36
Total	165	110	275	100

Source: Election Commission Nepal

According to Table 1, the largest representation in HoR is in the age group from 51 to 60 years (34.55%). Of the total population of Nepal, the proportion of population of 51-60 years age group is 8.05 percent.⁶ 12 percent of the HoR members are below 40 years of age. The youngest member in the HoR elected through the FPTP system is Sobita Gautam from Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP). She was 27 years old when she was elected. The oldest member in HoR is 85 year old Mahendra Ray Yadav. Although Yadav was affiliated with Nepal Samajwadi Party (NSP), he had won the election under Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) [CPN (Maoist Centre)] banner. After Yadav, the oldest HoR members are Chitra Bahadur KC from Rastriya Janamorcha (RJM), Mahanta Thakur from Loktantrik Samajwadi Party (LSP), and Pashupati Shamsheer JBR from Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP). All three were 80 years old when they were elected.

Table 2: Age-wise and party-wise distribution of HoR members

Age Group	JSP Nepal	CPN (Unified Socialist)	CPN (UML)	CPN (Maoist Centre)	Nepali Congress	RPP	RSP
25-30	-	-	-	1	1	2	3
31-40	-	-	7	3	3	2	5
41-50	3	2	16	10	22	-	10
51-60	5	4	35	13	32	1	1
61-70	3	4	19	2	24	6	1
71-80	1	-	1	1	7	3	-
>81	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Total	12	10	78	31	89	14	20

Source: Election Commission Nepal

⁶ National Statistics Office. 2021. National Census 2021 Results. Available at <https://censusnepal.cbs.gov.np/results/np/downloads/census-dataset/>; accessed on January 16, 2025.

Nepali Congress (NC), Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) [CPN (UML)], and CPN (Maoist Centre) emerged as the largest parties in the 2022 elections. Besides these three parties, other parties that won at least ten seats in the HoR were Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP), Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Socialist) [CPN (Unified Socialist)], RPP and RSP. Among all these parties, the largest number of youths were in the HoR from RSP. 8 out of 20 parliamentarians from RSP are under 40 years. A major reason for this can be attributed to RSP being a newly constituted political party in June 2022. Of the total 78 parliamentarians from CPN (UML) 7 were youths, and out of 89 parliamentarians from NC only 4 were youths. 4 of 31 parliamentarians from CPN (Maoist Centre) were youths. Out of 14 parliamentarians from RPP, 4 were youths. There were no parliamentarians from JSP and CPN (Unified Socialist) under 40 years. Table 2 indicates that youth participation is weak in Nepali politics, and that political parties have given lower priority to youth participation.

3. CHALLENGES FOR YOUTHS IN POLITICS

There have been ongoing debates about leadership transition and youth participation in political parties. Senior leaders have been accused of refusing the transfer of power and not providing opportunities to younger leaders. Young people affiliated to political parties argue that the practice of established leaders holding positions of power for a long period of time has led to lack of space for younger generations of leaders to be in leadership positions. The top leadership have been accused of using young people for protest movements, assemblies, power demonstrations, and strikes, but not providing them with leadership development opportunities.⁷ Despite these challenges, as a significant move, the CPN (UML) secretariat meeting held on September 13, 2024 had created an annual plan to organize a national summit to centralize youth's role in national development.⁸ In 2023, through its 'Mission Grassroot' campaign, CPN (UML) had organized various programs under *Wada Wada: Bhabhi Yuwa Neta* (Future Youth Leaders in Every Wards) and *Aafai Neta: Aafai Pradhan Mantri* (Be

your own leader: Be the Prime Minister) slogans. Through its convention held in October 2023, CPN (UML)'s Gandaki Province Committee had decided to create a quota for young people under 40 years of age by selecting them as representatives from each municipality.⁹ In May 2023, few youth leaders from NC had organized a transformation movement within the party.¹⁰ CPN (Maoist Centre)'s party constitution states that 20 percent of youths need to be included in all party committees.¹¹ These instances illustrate that political parties have tried to consider youth as an important constituency.

Student and youth wings affiliated with political parties are active throughout the country. The stated aim of these organizations is to get young people in politics through leadership development. The youth wing of NC is Nepal Tarun Dal and its student wing is Nepal Student Union (NSU). CPN (UML) has Youth Federation Nepal and All Nepal National Free Students Union (ANNFSU) as its youth wing and student wing respectively. Similarly, CPN (Maoist Centre) has Young Communist League (YCL) as its youth wing and All Nepal National Independent Students' Union (Revolutionary) [ANNFSU (Revolutionary)] as its student wing. While these organizations have thousands of young people, their presence in political party's leadership positions is minimal.

Bibeksheel Sajha Party (BSP) leader Milan Pandey states that various reasons including lack of access to resources and power politics have contributed to a negative perception of politics among young people. Furthermore, Pandey says that political parties have failed to create conducive structures that facilitate younger people to reach and contribute through positions of power.¹² The established political leaders have benefited from their well-established identities, resource access and ability to effectively leverage resources to their advantages. They receive media attention and are widely recognized by citizens, and can use these factors to maintain their power and positions both within

⁷ Bajracharya, Sangam. 2022. Why Youth Involvement in Politics? (in Nepali). *News of Nepal*, January, 14. Available at <https://newsofnepal.com/2022/01/14/464991/>; accessed on January 25, 2025.

⁸ Kantipur. 2024. UML's Annual Work Plan Approved: National Summit for Youths Below 40 To Be Organized (in Nepali). Available at <https://ekantipur.com/news/2024/09/13/annual-action-plan-of-uml-passed-national-summit-of-youth-under-40-years-of-age-00-46.html>; accessed on January 11, 2025.

⁹ Shrestha, Yubaraj. 2023. UML Youth Leaders Say: Individual Factionism will be Defeated (in Nepali). *Setopati*, October 2. Available at <https://www.setopati.com/politics/313072>; accessed on January 20, 2025.

¹⁰ Lokantar. 2023. Congress Youth Leaders Start Transformation Program From Bhairahawa (in Nepali). May 15. Available at <https://lokaantar.com/story/223386/2023/5/15/politics/congress-young-leaders->; accessed on January 12, 2025.

¹¹ Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre). 2021. Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Centre) Interim Constitution 2021 (in Nepali). Available at https://cdn.cpnmc.one/media/Party-Bidhan_final-078-05-13.pdf; accessed on January 20, 2025.

¹² Pandey, Milan. 2017. Youth Intervention in Politics (in Nepali). *Kantipur*, October 8. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/opinion/2017/10/08/20171008070215.html>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

the parties and government. It also makes their involvement in politics easier and contributes to their election victory.

Democratic politics always have alternatives and no leader can stay in power for a long period of time. The leaders of youth wings of the political parties say that their parties leaders have been reluctant to provide opportunities to younger leaders. They emphasize the need for parties to adopt policies that introduce age limits in their party constitutions and assign responsibility accordingly to combat this problem. A former member of HoR and former President of ANNFSU Nabina Lama said that senior leaders have been reluctant in handing over responsibilities to younger leaders and younger leaders have also failed to play an active and interventionary role in taking leadership responsibilities. She states that it is necessary for parties to create policies that introduce age limit and encourage youth participation in every level of party structure.¹³ Similarly, Mahesh Dutta Bhatta, acting president of Tarun Dal, Baitadi mentioned that as there is increasingly negative sentiment towards politics among younger generations, it was important to bring capable youths to leadership positions. He further stated that the practice of parties choosing candidates on the basis of the length of party affiliation was also a barrier for youth participation in politics.¹⁴

Ranju Darshana, General Secretary of BSP, emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities to youths not just to address their needs but also to prepare capable and foresighted leaders. She says, “The political parties primarily focus on experience and contribution for leadership positions. However, the parties have failed to create effective programs that target the development of young people.” She further said that parties give candidacies to very few young people, and use it as an excuse to get out of the responsibility of training them.¹⁵ She mentioned that her own party had not been able to introduce effective programs targeted at youths.

According to Professor Krishna Khanal “whenever the issue of youth leadership comes up in the context of Nepali politics, leaders who are above the age of 70 feel threatened and take it as an attempt to replace them.” Khanal further argues that even when parties like NC have mandated two-term limits in their party’s constitution, in practice capable young leaders’ have no actual impact on the parties’ decision making.¹⁶ The individuals who were

young and active during earlier political movements still have their grip on power even though they have aged. When individuals are unwilling to hand over leadership positions and continue to dominate politics, it negatively impacts the development of democracy in the long run. Some analysts argue that such people should hand over their positions themselves.¹⁷ One of the reasons for growing disinterest in politics among the younger populace is the lack of representation of younger generation politicians. The political parties need to be aware of this situation.

4. PERMANENT LEADERSHIP IN POWER AND AUTHORITY

NC President Sher Bahadur Deuba started his six decade long political career through NSU. He became the Student Union’s Central President in 1971 and became the party’s central committee member in 1991. He has held the position of Prime Minister for five terms and the position of the party President twice. He is still in the party’s leadership position, and is circling the country’s top leadership position.¹⁸ Based on the alternative power-sharing agreement between NC and CPN (UML), Deuba is preparing to be the country’s Prime Minister for the sixth time.¹⁹ NC constitution states that there is a two-term limit for the position of party President in all levels.²⁰

There have been continued debates about party leadership transition within NC. The party’s General Secretary Gagan Thapa, who has been vocal about changing guards in the party, had registered his candidacy against Deuba for the position of parliamentary party leader in 2022. Although Thapa was defeated, leaders within NC had expressed that it sent a positive message regarding leadership transition and party transformation.²¹

¹⁷ Kantipur. 2023. Age Limit in Politics (in Nepali). September 1. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/opinion/2023/09/01/169352900710011476.html>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

¹⁸ Onlinekhabar. 2021. Prime Minister For The Fifth Time in Six-decade long Political Career (in Nepali). July 13. Available at <https://www.onlinekhabar.com/2021/07/983150/पाँचौँ-पटक-प्रधानमन्त्री>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

¹⁹ Anmol, BP. 2024. How Will The Three-decade Long Cooperation Between CPN (UML) and Nepali Congress Look Like This Time? (in Nepali). Ukaalo, July 15. Available at <https://www.ukaalo.com/news/20240715-congress-uml-joint-government-journey/18724>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

²⁰ Nepali Congress. 2021. Nepali Congress Constitution (With Amendments)-10th Amendment 14/12/2021 (in Nepali). Available at <https://nepalicongress.org/single/party-constitution/nepali-congress-constitution-10th-amendment>; accessed on January 15, 2025.

²¹ Neupane, Kulchandra. 2022. Gagan’s Strong Intervention in Leadership (in Nepali). Kantipur, December 22. Available at <https://>

¹³ Interview with Lama on January 9, 2025.

¹⁴ Interview with Bhatta on January 9, 2025.

¹⁵ Interview with Darshana on January 16, 2025.

¹⁶ Khanal, Krishna. 2021. The Question of Youth Leadership in Nepali Politics (in Nepali). *Naya Patrika*, July 4. Available at <https://www.nayapatrikadaily.com/news-details/118613/2023-07-05>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

The current Prime Minister and Chairperson of CPN (UML) Party Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli (KP Oli) first entered government in 1994 when he was appointed the Home Minister. Since then he has become the Prime Minister four times and party Chairperson twice. At present, Oli is leading both the government and his party.²² The CPN (UML)'s tenth General Party Convention organized in 2021 had fixed an age limit of 70 in the party constitution.²³ Such an age limit had been fixed to provide opportunities to young leaders. However, in June 2023, Oli had decided to remove the age limit. Oli justified the decision stating that capable leaders over 70 had to step back from politics and that it had caused difficulties in assigning responsibilities for party leaders who had joined CPN (UML) from other parties.²⁴ However, Oli had been criticized for the decision since he had crossed 70 years of age, he had removed the age limit to continue his stay in power. He had been 70 years old when he had been elected during the 2022 elections. Furthermore, CPN (UML)'s Central Committee meeting held on November 26, 2021 had voided the provisions of a two-term limit for an executive position.²⁵

CPN (Maoist Centre)'s Chairperson Pushpa Kamal Dahal has also been Prime Minister thrice and has been the party Chairperson since its establishment. Few leaders from the party had accused Dahal of refusing to hand over leadership and running the party through unilateral decisions. During the standing committee meeting held on August 10, 2024 the party's Deputy General Secretary Janardan Sharma had proposed Dahal to be the party's patron and hand over the party's leadership to younger generation leaders.²⁶ The disagreements between Sharma and Dahal that had erupted after the meeting had only been solved after the Central Committee meeting on January 7, 2025. With Dahal

ekantipur.com/news/2022/12/22/167167434478845916.html; accessed on January 12, 2025.

²² Parajuli, Rama. 2024. K.P Sharma Oli: From Jail to Being Prime Minister for Fourth Time (in Nepali). BBC Nepal, July 14. Available at <https://www.bbc.com/nepali/articles/cxr2p405l9eo>; accessed on January 9, 2025.

²³ CPN (UML). 2021. First Constitutional Convention and Tenth National General Convention, With Amendments (in Nepali). Available at [https://system.cpnul.org/parse-image/623?hash=\\$2y\\$10\\$Qfm9j7XveTvU.2l2HqQ83eZk4/Pj0zjoslcngvipSO6mMlChDBYgu](https://system.cpnul.org/parse-image/623?hash=$2y$10$Qfm9j7XveTvU.2l2HqQ83eZk4/Pj0zjoslcngvipSO6mMlChDBYgu); accessed on January 12, 2025.

²⁴ Kantipur. 2023. We Removed the 70 Year Age-limit Due to Its Lack of Usefulness: Oli. June 17. Available at <https://ekantipur.com/news/2023/06/17/168700013119798218.html>; accessed on January 11, 2025.

²⁵ Nepal Press. 2021. CPN (UML) Voids Provision That Place Term-Limit (in Nepali). November 26. Available at <https://www.nepalpress.com/2021/11/26/126395/>; accessed on January 18, 2025.

²⁶ Neupane, Sagar. 2024. Janardan's Written Proposal in Maoist Meeting: Leadership Transition and Making Prachanda Protector. *NepalKhabar*, August 11. Available at <https://nepalkhabar.com/politics/209789-2024-8-11-12-56-6>; accessed on January 11, 2025.

addressing a few points raised by Sharma in the political proposal and promising to address the rest of the comments in party's general convention, the disagreement between them has been cleared.²⁷ The CPN (Maoist Centre) affiliated student wing leadership have also been raising their voice about the need to implement an age limit system within the party. The student wing has implemented an age limit of 32 years for the student union leadership.²⁸

The contributions of Sher Bahadur Deuba, KP Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal to Nepali politics, is quite significant. It must also be acknowledged that there are alternatives available for leadership positions. The practice of the same person occupying the position of power for a long period cannot be said to be democratic. In addition, it also causes lack of opportunities for next generation leaders and sends a negative message to younger generations involved in politics. This causes dissatisfaction and discontent among the younger people. The practice of older generations of politicians laying claim to power is seen not just at the central level, but also at the district and municipal level. It is also important to note that politicians have been elected to these positions following due process. Sher Bahadur Deuba, KP Oli and Pushpa Kamal Dahal have all been elected through party conventions, either unopposed or through winning internal elections. They also got elected to the parliament following due process. However, the problem has been that the leaders have transformed themselves to center of power. Whether or not they occupy the position of power, they have become major players in decision-making related to various issues including budget distribution, and political appointments. In democratic process, there is practice of power handover and providing opportunities to newer faces. Such practice has been lacking in Nepal. As long as the practice of leadership transitions is not put in place, it will be difficult for the younger generation to get opportunities. Thus, for such leadership transitions an amendment in Nepal's law and the party constitution seems necessary.

5. YOUTH INTERVENTION IN POLITICS

Among the long established parties, it appears difficult for younger people to receive candidacies because such

²⁷ Neupane, Sagar. 2024. 'Armistic' Between Prachanda and Janardan at Maoist Centre. *NepalKhabar*, January 7. Available at <https://nepalkhabar.com/politics/223478-2025-1-7-22-36-26>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

²⁸ Shilapatra. 2024. Age-limit in All Nepal (Revolutionary). December 30. Available at <https://shilapatra.com/detail/151292>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

decisions are taken considering individual's contributions to the party and the time period and experience of being affiliated with the party. In the previous election, the trend of young people who were affiliated with parties choosing to forego their party affiliation and get their foothold through alternatives was observed. Such youths choose newly formed parties or independent routes.

There have been multiple examples of young people intervening in politics. In the 2017 local level election, 21 year old Ranju Darshana who was Mayoral candidate of Kathmandu Metropolitan City (KMC), had gained recognition for putting forth her candidacy as a way to challenge the old guard. She stood third during the race with 23,429 votes.²⁹ During the 2022 local level elections, independent candidates such as Balen Shah (32 years) in Mayoral candidate of KMC, and Mayoral candidate Harka Sampang (39 years) of Dharan Sub-metropolitan City, and CPN (UML)'s Deputy Mayoral candidate Sunita Dangol (29 years) of KMC were all elected. Comparatively, more number of young people have been elected at the local levels. One major reason for this is due to lower minimum age requirements- candidacy can be registered at the local level at the age of 21. 41.14 percent of elected representatives at the 2022 local level elections were below the age of 40 years.³⁰

A survey conducted in 2022 had found that 75 percent of youth voters wanted to vote for new and young candidates even if the possibility of such candidates losing existed.³¹ They had stated their dissatisfaction with the current politicians as the reason for choosing to vote for new candidates. *Himalkhabar* had also conducted an online survey among 18 to 35 years in 2022. Among the 415 respondents, 64.1 percent had said that they would vote on the basis of individual candidates background rather than party affiliation. In addition, 78.3 percent of respondents had said that they did not want the incumbent Mayors of Municipalities and Chairpersons of Rural Municipalities to win their re-election.³²

²⁹ Poudel, Prabina. 2022. Ranju Darshana Says: Candidates Should Be Able to Realise Their Mistakes, in Reference to Kathmandu Mayoral Candidates (in Nepali). *Shilapatra*, May 2. Available at <https://shilapatra.com/detail/83813>; accessed on January 10, 2025.

³⁰ Himalkhabar. 2022. 41 Percent Youths Elected at Local Level (in Nepali). July 26. Available at <https://www.himalkhabar.com/news/131371>; accessed on January 12, 2025.

³¹ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Nepal Institute for Policy Research. 2024. Young People, Politics, and Election. Available at <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/nepal/21164.pdf>; accessed on January 15, 2025.

³² Acharya, Silsila. 2022. Young People's Choice in Local Level Election: Candidates? Issues? (in Nepali). *Himalkhabar*, March 24. Available at <https://www.himalkhabar.com/news/128940>; accessed on January 15, 2025.

In 14th General Convention of NC held in 2022, Karina Puri from Sindhupalchowk was the youngest party representative elected at the age of 19 years. She said that instead of providing encouragement and training, older generations of politicians were more likely to discourage younger generations from taking leadership positions. In such situation, she argued that the onus falls on younger generations to take a lead. Puri, who is General Committee member of NC and a Central Committee member of NSU, said, "During the General Convention, when I decided to run for the membership position, many senior leaders tried to discourage me from running for the post by saying that I still had time and should leave this opportunity to senior leaders. However, I felt that it was necessary for youths to be at decision-making level, which is why I continued with my candidacy."³³

In August 2023, RPP had announced an open call to select 20 capable youth leaders under 40 years for central committee membership positions. Through this initiative, RPP aimed to bring youths in leadership positions. In September 2024, after interviewing prospective candidates the party had selected ten men and 10 women for the membership position.³⁴ Sajina Karki who was selected as Secretariat member from this process mentioned that the party had given an opportunity for young and capable members to be involved in politics. She agreed with the prevailing sentiment that young people who wanted to contribute to the country's development had not gotten the opportunities. She stressed that such youths needed to be involved in politics.³⁵ CPN (Unified Socialist)'s Central Committee member Prema Lama also said that the political parties had yet to develop the mentality of giving mainstream leadership to young people.³⁶ Lama mentioned that the parties bringing up age limit as an issue was a positive sign for youth representation.

6. CONCLUSION

Social inclusion is one of the positive aspects of the governance implemented in the Federal Democratic system of Nepal. Therefore, the society's diversity needs to be reflected in the governance system. However, the presence of youths in Nepal's governance structure is limited. One

³³ Interview with Puri on January 18, 2025.

³⁴ Shilapatra. 2024. RPP Has Selected 20 Central Members Under 40 Years (Complete List) (in Nepali). September 17. Available at <https://shilapatra.com/detail/145233>; accessed on January 16, 2025.

³⁵ Interview with Karki on January 17, 2025.

³⁶ Interview with Lama on January 17, 2025.

such example is only 12 percent of HoR being youths while they constitute 40 percent of the population of Nepal.

The current trend shows that the same faces have been repeatedly leading these parties and the governments. From the local level to central level, the people who get opportunities in the parties have been the older generation on the basis of their experience, identity and access to the establishment. Therefore, there has been an increase in attraction towards alternative political pathways among the youths. It is obvious that voters connect to candidates who reflect their mindset. In addition, younger people

have also joined new political parties to get opportunities faster. On the other hand, it has also increased the risk of people creating resentment towards the federal democratic republic that was achieved through a long struggle. The political parties have contributed to the establishment of democracy, and it is necessary for them to encourage social inclusion in their leadership. The political parties need to embrace policies that encourage youth participation. One way to ensure that would be to introduce laws and amend party constitution to set term-limits for leadership positions.



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