

Mainstreaming of Social Protection Agenda in the Political Parties' Election Manifesto in Nepal

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ABSTRACT

Social protection is indispensable for poverty reduction, a dignified life, and a secure future. According to the concept of a socialist public welfare state, it is the responsibility of the state to provide social security to facilitate the lives of weak, disadvantaged, and vulnerable communities and to ensure quality, safe, and protected lives of all citizens. Thus, social protection agenda are intrinsically political in nature. This paper is based on review of manifestos of various political parties in Nepal for the local, provincial, and federal elections. It was noted that the provisions for education, health, infrastructural development, social protection allowances, shelter, rest homes, care centers, and drinking water among other topics, have been covered in the manifestos of the major political parties. However, the social protection provisions are vague and do not exclusively cover the most vulnerable populations, including children, youths, sexual and gender minority children, and people with disabilities. It further proves that social protection allowances and schemes proposed by political parties are heavily skewed toward elderly citizens. The political parties need to be more capacitated, sensitive, committed, and aware of the multiple dimensions of social protection to ensure complete political ownership of the agenda.

1. Introduction

Social protection refers to policies aimed at protecting against the risks and needs associated with unemployment, parental and caring responsibilities, sickness and health, care, disability, old age, housing, and social exclusion in the form of social assistance and

social insurance (WHO, 2015). Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) 1948 guarantees that everyone, “as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international cooperation, and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each state, of the economic,

social, and cultural rights indispensable for his/her dignity and the free development of his/her personality” (UDHR, 1948).

Social protection programmes are essential to promote social justice and equity, provide support to the most vulnerable, unemployed, and destitute citizens who are in social or economic crisis, promote equitable development, assure access to a basic standard of livelihood, promote social stability, and strengthen the social contract by increasing accountability of the government for the protection of all, with a focus on the neediest (Thimmappa et al., 2021). It is important to view social protection as a border framework that enhances human potential and promotes equity. It should strive to address health, education, land, gender, caste, race, and other forms of inequalities through the promotion of people-centered public systems that are universally accessible, equitable, and impactful. It shouldn't be limited to addressing marginal problems through a welfare approach (Drolet, 2020).

The 21st century has witnessed a considerable increase in social protection programmes, especially in developing countries. This rise can be attributed to the increased importance of social protection programmes in political and policy debates, through the establishment of democratic practices. The primary aim of the democratic political process is to aggregate voter preferences. The world has witnessed a considerable surge in investment in social protection programmes for potential voters, to secure the favor. Hence, social protection programmes are significantly shaped by the political process (Barrientos & Pellissery, 2014). Nepal has adopted various social security and protection policies to ensure quality of life of all citizens. It has also made various international commitments including the sustainable development goals for securing social protection rights of the citizens.

Nepal has a long record of social protection measures dating back to early 1950s. However, their importance became clear following the inception of multiparty democracy in 1990. To alleviate poverty and provide basic necessities, notable programmes such as the Small Farmer Development Programme and the Rural Employment Programme were developed. The formation of the National Social Protection Programme, which combined existing programmes under a single roof, was a key milestone in 2008 (Tamang, 2017). In 2017, the administration expanded social protection measures, focusing on marginalised communities and putting in place legal frameworks such as the Social Security Act. Social development has been an important component of Nepal's democratic history (Khadka, 1993). Political parties incorporated social protection into their election manifestos throughout the first democratic period, from 1990 to 2002, pushing for poverty reduction, job development, and basic necessities provision (Acharya, 2003). Civil society and advocacy groups were active in fostering social development by addressing issues like education, healthcare, gender equality, and poverty alleviation (Tamang, 2017). From 1996 to 2006, the Maoist insurgency exposed socioeconomic inequities and sparked debates about social justice and fair development. Following the elections, the emphasis remained on social protection, with parties focused on strengthening social safety nets, healthcare services, education reforms, and targeted poverty alleviation measures (Acharya, 2003).

The Jana Andolan (people's movement) in 2006, as well as the Constituent Assembly process, sought to eliminate social inequities and preserve the rights of marginalised populations. With pledges of comprehensive social security systems and wider coverage, the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections emphasised social safety

(Tamang, 2017). Election campaigns in recent years have emphasised social safety nets, access to healthcare, pension schemes, and support for marginalised people (Tamang, 2017). However, obstacles to developing social assistance systems and addressing socioeconomic disparities remain. Civil society organisations, activists, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have played critical roles in campaigning for social change. Ensuring effective implementation of long-term social protection measures remains a challenge that policymakers and elected officials must address (Acharya & Maharjan, 2021). This paper analyses the commitments to social security expressed in the election manifestos of different parties in Nepal.

2. Methods and Materials

This paper is based on the analysis of the election manifestos of major political parties for the recent election held in year 2022. The election manifestos of the Janata Samajwadi Party, Rastriya Prajatantra Party, Loktantrik Samajwadi Party, Unified Socialist, CPN UML, Maoist Centre, Nepali Congress, and Independent Candidate- Balendra Shah were reviewed and analysed. The analysis aims to assess the extent to which manifestos of the parties contesting in the House of the Representatives and the Provincial Assembly and Local-Level elections reflect the agenda related to social protection in Nepal. The manifestos were obtained through political party's website as well as printed materials disseminated by the political parties during the election campaign. Furthermore, review of the Social Security Act, 2018 has also been conducted to have a better understanding of the legal provisions pertaining to social protection in Nepal.

The agenda related to social protection in the manifestos have been analysed using the content analysis method.

This method of analysis helps to identify a political party's position on incorporating the agenda of social protection as well as the relative emphasis the party places on it. The manifestos of each party were thoroughly looked upon to analyse the social protection agenda mentioned in them.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Legal provisions for the promotion of social protection in Nepal

According to the Constitution of Nepal, 2015, social security, food security and food sovereignty, housing, health education, and the right to employment are established as fundamental rights. The Social Security Act, 2018 has been adopted for the social protection of individuals and families who are at risk of economic and social deprivation. The Social Security Act, 2017 is being implemented for the social security of workers. The fifteenth plan of the country has also reflected the agenda in its goals and objectives (NPC, 2020). The major agenda highlighted in the plan mentions adoption of the policy on equitable distribution of development returns by involving socioeconomically backward communities and areas in the process of overall development through social protection (NPC, 2020).

The theme of social protection has been pursued in a number of International Labour Organisation (ILO) Declarations since the UDHR. The National Planning Commission has endorsed an Integrated Social Protection Framework, to guide the further Social Protection campaign and activities in Nepal (NPC, 2020).

3.2 Major parties and their social protection agenda reflected in the election manifestos

The Nepali Congress Party is one of Nepal's oldest and largest political parties,

having been founded on January 4, 1950. It was essential to the democratic campaign against the autocratic Rana dynasty, which resulted in the advent of democracy in 1951. During the ensuing Panchayat era, the party endured repression but continued to push for democratic rights. The Nepali Congress played a key role in overturning the Panchayat system, establishing multiparty democracy, and participating in several governments in 1990. It was essential in the transition to a federal democratic republic through the Constituent Assembly and the adoption of the new Constitution in 2015. Their political position is center to center left and their ideology is social democracy.

The Maoist party in Nepal, officially known as the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist Center), arose in the 1990s as a reaction to socioeconomic inequities and political discontent. They waged a decade-long armed rebellion known as the People's War in order to establish a communist republic. The battle concluded in 2006 with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which resulted in their inclusion into mainstream politics. They stood in the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, forming a coalition government and establishing Nepal as a federal democratic republic. Their political position is far left and their ideology is Communism.

The Communist Party of Nepal Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN UML) is a prominent political organisation in Nepal that arose from the merger of the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) and the Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist) on January 6, 1991. It was a strong participant in the 1990 pro-democracy movement and developed as a significant political force. Despite internal conflicts during the armed conflict (1996-2006), the party remained devoted to the political process and played

an important role in the peace process, including signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2006. It ran in the 2008 Constituent Assembly elections, becoming the largest party. They are left-wings, and their ideology is Marxism Leninism Communism and People's Multiparty Democracy.

In April 2021, the Janata Samajwadi Party (JSP) of Nepal was founded by merging of two major political organisations, the Rastriya Janata Party Nepal (RJPN) and the Samajwadi Party Nepal (SPN). The RJPN supported the Madhesi community, which was predominantly based in the southern plains, whereas the SPN pushed for socialist values and social justice. The merger attempted to strengthen resistance to the ruling Nepal Communist Party (NCP) at the time by consolidating the representation of marginalised groups. The JSP intended to address the Madhesi people's problems while also promoting socialist ideology inside Nepal's political environment. They are Centre-left to left-wing, and their ideology is democratic socialism minority rights.

The Communist Party of Nepal Unified Socialist was officially registered on 18 August 2021 which adheres to Marxist-Leninist philosophy. The doctrine of the party is founded on the concepts of socialism, communism, and Marxism-Leninism. It emphasises the construction of a classless society in which the working class collectively owns and controls the means of production.

The Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP) is a political party created on May 25, 2006, by the merger of two parties with similar names. The RPP promotes constitutional monarchy and Hindu nationalism, with a focus on preserving Nepal's Hindu character. It has run in several elections, primarily appealing to conservative and nationalist parts of the public. The party's programme has evolved throughout time to

encompass themes such as federalism, national security, and cultural preservation. They are Centre-right to right-wing, and their ideology is Constitutional monarchism, Economic liberalism and Hindutva.

The Loktantrik Samajwadi Party, Nepal is a political party created on March 6, 2018 by the merging of the Samajwadi Party, Nepal and the Loktantrik Shakti Party. The

Table 1: Election manifestos of various political parties during the local level elections.

S.N.	Political Party	Social protection issues reflected in the political manifesto	
		Cash distribution related	Service delivery related
1.	Nepali Congress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The state will continue to guarantee the minimum basis of livelihoods such as education, health, and social security for the expansion of the freedom of all Nepali citizens. In the vision of broad development and economic strength, Nepal will be an enterprise-friendly, middle-income equitable country in the next decade, where extreme poverty will be limited to a single digit. In order to build a dynamic and equitable society, the establishment of an integrated system including health, nutrition, education, and social security that is accessible to all is necessary. Now the traditional slogan of 'providing quality service' is not enough. The effective role of the state, skilled manpower, sustainable financial assurance, and community adoption will be part of the methodology we adopt. The local government of the people who practice self-governance democratically, using the rights given by the constitution, sets a clear roadmap in the areas of development, infrastructure development, education, health governance, social security, etc. To provide protection and social security of children without parents (single or double orphans), Free reproductive health education for young women Five thousand maternity allowance Free Immunisation and Nutrition Schedule Child care center and lunch Employed learning Health insurance for all citizens and free insurance for senior citizens above 65 years of age, disabled and underprivileged Arrangements to reduce out-of-pocket expenditure on health care Provision of contribution-based pension for all workers through social security fund Provident fund and gratuity guarantee for all workers and provision of 50 per cent contribution from the government in case of self-employment run by single women and disabled citizens. Free health insurance for all senior citizens above 65 years of age Senior Citizen Allowance for Senior Citizens above 65 years of age Senior citizen medical expenses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By increasing the knowledge, skills, and abilities of citizens, raising their standard of living, and ultimately bringing happiness and hope to their faces, progress will be achieved only through common efforts. Therefore, the most important thing to pay attention to when discussing the economic policy and development of Nepal is the construction of our social infrastructure. The construction of quality education, health, social security, and infrastructure that stimulates the overall ability and creativity of citizens is not only a constitutional and moral obligation, without such citizens the prosperity of the country is not possible. Since only competent and creative citizens have the ability to contribute to nation-building, the Nepali Congress Party aims to make significant progress in the field of social infrastructure in the next decade. In the same way, physical infrastructure is indispensable to get the maximum contribution of such productive and creative citizens. People with all types of disabilities will be brought under social security and more personal assistants will be provided to people with disabilities who need constant assistance. Provisions have been made for the proper protection of such disabled persons in the absence of parents or guardians. Free health insurance will be provided to severely disabled and disabled people. Youth skill and attitude development Honorable employment for all young men and women Conducting Self-Employment Programme Maternal and newborn home health services Provision of free shelter and nutrition for homeless poor pregnant women Free institutional delivery services Guaranteeing freedom of reproductive choice Free pregnancy test Providing space for different cremations according to civil community and religion Funeral expenses Making arrangements to include informal and self-employed workers in contribution-based social security schemes. Home health care for senior citizens Development of thinking, questioning, and learning education system from bookish education system
2.	CPN UML	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reimbursing the minimum wage of workers, working in agriculture, industry, and service sectors in the contribution-based social security system, using labor-intensive technology to create maximum employment in the construction sector, whether formal or informal in nature, Implementation of constitutional rights of women including education, health, employment, and social protection, Providing home allowance to disabled senior citizens, Failure to register, regulate and monitor organisations involved in the field of social services. Collaborating with charitable organisations in the field of humanitarian aid, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A welfare state should be built through the provision of equitable distribution of benefits and permanent social security. All kinds of economic, social, cultural, and gender differences should be eliminated and a participatory system should be developed. To advance special programmes for the protection and development of endangered, marginalised, religious, and gender minorities, vulnerable castes, and families, Effective implementation and monitoring of life-cycle-based social protection from childhood to old age, Conducting a campaign to collect and support the needs of senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and the helpless, providing home-based health check-up services for them.

S.N.	Political Party	Social protection issues reflected in the political manifesto	
		Cash distribution related	Service delivery related
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making birth registration compulsory. No child should be left in a state of statelessness. Declaring the school as a zone of peace, • Preventing children from getting involved in drugs. • Industrialising through public, private, and cooperative means, increasing production, creating employment, alleviating poverty and building a self-reliant economy, and protecting the rights of workers through social security programmes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making public structures disability-friendly, easily providing basic services for disabled people, • To implement the constitutional provisions regarding the rights of Dalits, • End child labor, ensuring that no child stays out of school, arranging children's clubs, youth clubs, and children's gardens for the development of the creative abilities of children. • Collaborate with various non-governmental organisations and social and religious organisations for the rescue and rehabilitation of vulnerable, orphaned, street-dependent, mentally challenged, sexually abused, and abused children. Declaring the municipalities free of street children, declaring child-friendly municipalities, • To establish a meeting center for senior citizens in every ward. • To transfer their experience and knowledge to the new generation.
3.	Maoist Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperatives in every society and house-to-house employment will be arranged. • Basic healthcare will be free. • 110 medicines will be distributed free of charge to make basic health services free. • The school will provide free education up to class 12. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For modernisation of agriculture, proper management of land, proper arrangement of irrigation, mechanisation, and commercialisation of agriculture, creation of cooperative organisations and groups of small and medium farmers, and value addition chain with large-scale production will be emphasised.
4.	Unified Socialist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The number one priority of the local government budget will be health care. • A 'Child Protection Fund' will be established in every municipality to provide assistance in the sustenance, protection, and education of children who have lost their parents. • In addition to conducting adolescent public awareness programmes at local levels, arrangements will be made to provide health counseling to female students, and sanitary pads will be distributed free of charge. • In order to put an end to the situation where the production is wasted without getting a price by maintaining the support price for the farmers' production, a certain limit will be set and if the market price is lower than that, the municipality will purchase it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treatments except for complex surgeries will be provided free of charge by local hospitals. • Government schools will provide free education while maintaining a high quality of education up to the secondary level. • In order to eliminate caste discrimination, a social and cultural reform campaign will be conducted in each ward. • "Baal Syahar Kendra" will be established in every society keeping in mind the concept of responsibility of the society for children. • A systematic plan will be made and implemented to reunite street children with their parents and reintegrate them into their families, protect children without parents, and enable them to go to school.
5.	Janata Samajwadi Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the issues of social justice and security programmes feasible in practice. • A welfare state with social security • Making inclusion more tangible, reservation in population ratio, special social security, and social justice will be highly prioritised. • Health insurance will be provided to citizens of all levels of municipalities within five years. • Child clubs will be formed in every society. • Education and health services for children below 15 years will be free. • Each year, 50 people from each ward will be provided with employment and production-related training for 500 youth in the municipality. Arrangements will be made for 50 people who are good entrepreneurs to go abroad for training. • Free health services will be provided to senior citizens above 65 years. • If women want to start a productive and employment-generating venture, they will be given a loan of up to Nepalese Rupees (NPR) 1 crore for 10 years with only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The tools of good governance such as the citizen's charter, grievance book, complaint register, social survey, and public hearings will be implemented effectively. Social security allowances will be provided in an accurate and accessible manner. Zero tolerance for corruption will be maintained. If government employees and political leaders commit corruption, legal action will be taken immediately if found guilty. • All workers in the formal and informal sectors will be freed from social and economic risks and the social security campaign will be facilitated to lead a dignified life and build a secure future. • Education up to the secondary school level will be made practical, free, and qualitative. • Special education (disabled education) will be expanded. Education will be provided in the mother tongue at basic level. • A hostel-building campaign will be started within the school for students whose homes and schools are more than an hour away.

S.N.	Political Party	Social protection issues reflected in the political manifesto	
		Cash distribution related	Service delivery related
		five percent interest rate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A special residential home will be constructed for elderly citizens who are single, helpless, or neglected by their families.
6.	Rastriya Prajatantra Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free sanitary pad distribution in schools • Clean drinking water in schools • Free and compulsory health insurance for all citizens • NPR 3000 monthly for three months for maternity services and women with low income • Free treatment for people with Sickle cell anemia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of marginalised families within six months of winning the election • Free education till class 12 • Monthly health allowance for people with Cancer, brain and spinal cord tumors • Campaigns against drug addiction for students
7.	Loktantrik Samajwadi Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly regular checkups for senior citizens • Free education up to class 12 • Primary education in mother tongue • NPR 5100 for maternity and child care • Compulsory insurance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home service-based regular immunisation for children • Senior citizen, disability and women allowance will be increased along with other facilities • Unemployment allowance, health allowance, maternity allowance and funeral and marriage allowance will be provided to people in need.

party describes itself as socialist, democratic, and inclusive, with a focus on advocating for the rights of marginalised and underprivileged communities. The Nepalese Samajwadi Party, founded in 2004, sought to promote social justice and equality, but the Loktantrik Shakti Party, founded in 2017, prioritised the Madhesi community's interests and regional autonomy. With its socialist and inclusive programme, the LSPN has actively engaged in several elections and sought to address social, economic, and political challenges since their merger.

Rastriya Swatantra Party, was formed in 16 June, 2022. The party supports constitutional socialism, participatory democracy, progressivism and political freedom. The party is centre-left, centrist and centre-right.

In the 2022 local-level election, some independent candidates fought for mayoral candidate throughout various Local Governments like Balendra Shah, for the Kathmandu Metropolitan City, Ganesh Thapa for the Pokhara Metropolitan City, Gopal Hamal for Dhangadhi Sub-metropolitan city, Tara Prasad Pandey for Bannigadi Jayagad rural municipality, Harka Raj Sampang Rai for Dharan Sub-metropolitan city and so on. Independent candidates won mayor in Kathmandu Metropolitan City,

Dharan Sub-Metropolitan City, Dhangadhi Sub-Metropolitan City and Janakpur Sub-Metropolitan City.

3.3 Major social protection agenda reflected in the manifestos of the election of the House of Representatives and the Provincial Assembly

The major agenda reflected by some of the political parties in the manifestos of the election of the House of the Representatives and Provincial Assembly have been written below:

The Nepali Congress, which has secured the highest seats in the parliament has aimed at extending social security from “womb to grief”, meaning they will be ensuring social security from the birth till death. Expanding the scope of social security and building a welfare state through the system of permanent social security has been mentioned in the Manifesto of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML). The People's Socialist Party has emphasised that reservation in population ratio and special social security are given high priority while making inclusiveness a reality. It is mentioned in the commitment letter that the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist Center) has adopted a policy of a strong social security system for citizens of

Table 2: Social protection issues in election manifestos of political parties

S/N	Name of the political party	Social protection issues included in the Manifesto	
		Cash distribution related	Service delivery related
1.	Nepali Congress (General election)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An integrated social protection from infancy till death has been envisioned through the provision of the National Identity Smart card. • Invest 10 per cent of the total budget for social protection provisions • NPR 5000 allowances to new mothers • Senior citizen allowance to all adults above 65 years • Free health checks up of all citizens above 73 years • Contribution based pension through social protection fund to all the labors • NPR 10000 allowance for conduction of cremation to all the economically destitute citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freedom in reproductive health rights with free SRH education and services for adolescents • Free delivery services, door-to-door services for new mothers and infants • Free vaccination and nutrition package. • Special assistance in higher education for Dalit and destitute students • Health insurance for everyone • Skill based education and dignified employment for all youths • Child care center and day meal • 100 days employment for the poor
2.	Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist–Leninist); Gandaki Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For the infrastructural development, more than 1500 houses were constructed for the identified destitute and endangered communities under the citizen residence programmes. • Under the social sector, support small business holders during the COVID-19 pandemic through business life protection funds. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need-based and merit-based scholarships for students • Identification of unemployed families, and employment schemes for such families; one employment per family will be ensured. • Free Technical education and skill-based training to 5000 destitute, helpless, sexual, and gender minorities, and linking them with employment • Senior Citizens Service center, child care center, and children's park at all the wards
3.	CPN UML (Koshi Province)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of rest homes for senior citizens, and create opportunities for studying, entertainment and sports • Free and door-to-door health services for senior citizens and helpless people • Create a discrimination free province on the basis of caste, religion, language, culture and geography • Free health checks up for people with disabilities and victims of various conflicts • Provide minimum standard salary to the laborers, policy for promoting equality in the remuneration • Free health insurance of the laborers and farmers, guarantee their social protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased investment in tourism, agricultural and physical infrastructure development for poverty alleviation and creation of employment opportunities • Scholarships for Dalit, poor, minorities, conflict affected and backward communities for higher and technical education • Legal and policy provisions to end all forms of discrimination and violence against women, Dalit, and children • Make the government services disable friendly • Protection of helpless children and provide guardianship • Construction of children's park • Construction of residential homes for the helpless citizens and victims of violence • Provide identity card to the families of martyrs' and victims of civil wars to recognise and support them • Implement girls' empowerment programmes for making the child marriage free province campaign successful • Policy formation for promotion and utilisation of skills, experience, knowledge and skills of the senior citizens

S/N	Name of the political party	Social protection issues included in the Manifesto	
		Cash distribution related	Service delivery related
4.	National Democratic Party (Rastriya Prajatantra Party)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solve the problems of squatters • Provisions of tax exemption for the health institutions, schools, and training centers established collectively by the citizens with disabilities, and marginalised communities • At least one disability rehabilitation center in all the parliamentary constituencies of Nepal • Strict law enforcement against all forms of discrimination and untouchability • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social protection has been recognised as the sustainable National Goal and National Strategy • Prioritisation of the women's empowerment programmes and programmes for ending violence against women, the dowry system, and child marriage • Provisions of care and medical treatments for the widow and widower, physically and mentally helpless and senior citizens • Care centers for education, health and care of the helpless and orphan children • Free transportation and religious tours for the senior citizens • Formation of inclusive policies for ensuring employment, health services, free education and social integration of the Sexual and Gender Minorities
5.	People's Socialist Party, Nepal (General election)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior citizens allowance, single woman allowance, endangered community allowance, maternity transport expenses given during hospital delivery to be increased in time. • Establishing senior citizen care centers and conducting special welfare programmes • Conducting maternal and child health insurance programmes to protect the lives of mothers and babies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free health treatment and religious tourism for senior citizens, • Strictly control human trafficking by making it punishable, provide education, health, social security and employment to every disabled person • To introduce programmes to modernise the traditional skills of minority, marginalised and endangered communities. • Providing free maternity services and maternal and child health for women. • Women have the right to reproduce and children have the right to their own identity and name • To provide nutrition, basic health and social security to every child

every age group and class. Various political parties have mainly raised the issue of social security in their manifestos and commitment letters.

The analysis shows that most of the political parties have addressed the social protection programmes implemented by the Government of Nepal, including social assistance, social insurance, contribution-based social security, labor and employment programmes. They have prioritised the distribution of allowances to senior citizens, poor citizens, disabled and helpless, single women, disabled people, endangered castes, and citizens who cannot take care of themselves, under the assistance programme. The agenda of child nutrition has also been addressed by most of the parties.

Similarly, under the service delivery social security programme, children's free education, free health treatment for all citizens, free accommodation, discount on transport fare, skill-based training, market management, labor and employment reform programmes, scholarship, construction of schools have been highlighted by major political parties. The agenda on health has also been addressed through free health checkups, maternal and child care, medicine for chronic diseases and establishment of hospitals. There are specific provisions for promotion of the livelihood, agriculture, and labor rights to promote economic prosperity in the country. Disability friendly infrastructures and provisions for people with disabilities have also been ensured by two political parties. None of the political parties

have reflected provisions for sexual and gender minorities. All have failed to address the shock-responsive social protection and there is no balance between the provisions of contributory and non-contributory social protection schemes.

4. Conclusion

According to the ILO Recommendation on Income Security (No. 67), 1944, social protection schemes should prevent destitution by restoring, up to a reasonable level, income which is lost by reason of inability to work (including old age) or to obtain remunerative work or by reason of the death of the breadwinner (Guiding Principles, General, §1). Though the cost of social protection is high, the cost of no-social protection is higher, in relation to the elevation of poverty, social distress, inequality, loss of human capital, hindrances in economic development, and so on. Social protection can contribute to poverty alleviation and sustainable development, as well as promote social inclusion and cohesion if its scope is expanded to meet the needs of most disadvantaged and marginalised citizens through relevant, contributory, and cost-effective social protection schemes. It's a crux of healthy social development and human prosperity. It is an investment and a factor in increasing productivity.

Though the major political parties have reflected the general agendas for promoting social protection in Nepal, these provisions are vague. According to ILO, around 70 per cent of the active population is engaged in the informal sectors in Nepal, and the government has been unable to regulate it. They also lack the coverage of comprehensive agenda for adopting effective social protection measures in the country.

Even though different political parties have different political ideology and

approaches, it should be acknowledged that social protection is a universal agenda, which should have a universal approach to make it inclusive, scientific and meaningful. Thus, consolidated recommendations have been provided as follows:

1. Prepare economic and financially affordable social protection schemes and mechanisms
2. Clearly defined strategies and schemes, with a focus on the most vulnerable from multiple spectrums, including children, people, with disabilities, sexual and gender minorities and other most vulnerable groups.
3. Ensure policy-led clarities for adopting comprehensive social protection schemes.
4. Promise for transparency
5. Integration of contribution based and non-contributory social protection schemes to ensure ownership of the beneficiaries, sustainable approach to the programme and increase in living standard of the most vulnerable.
6. Provisions for monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of social protection programmes from state level agencies.
7. Contextual social protection schemes that are flexible as per the context including promotion of shock-responsive social protection.
8. Schemes to promote individual and social potentials and opportunities through social protection programmes.
9. Adopt proactive strategies and policies to prevent and protect the citizens against risks by also promoting socio-economic security.
10. Social security for the informal workers, access to essential goods and services, and promotion of potentials and opportunities.

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