

Assessing the Effects of Political Engagement on Public Service Delivery at the Local Level: A Study of Waling Municipality

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of youth political engagement on public service delivery, using Waling Municipality as a representative case. According to the 2021 national census, youth comprise approximately 40.68 percent of the total population in Nepal. However, data from the 2022 general election reveal that only 26.74 percent of elected ward chairpersons in local governments belong to this demographic, highlighting a disproportionately low representation. Both demand- and supply-side factors contribute to this underrepresentation of youth in local governance. This study analyzes the prevailing electoral dynamics, the institutional selection processes of ward chairpersons, and the subsequent roles and performance of younger leaders. The findings reveal that youth-led wards demonstrate higher levels of structural transparency, a greater inclination toward technological innovation, and increased responsiveness to citizens' needs.

Keywords: youth political engagement, electoral dynamics, local governance, ward chairperson, public service delivery.

Introduction

The constitution desires “to fulfill the aspirations for sustainable peace, good governance, development, and prosperity through the federal democratic republic system of governance” (Constitution of Nepal, 2015). The constitution outlines a federal system comprising federal, provincial, and local level governments and guides the functional responsibilities for each tier of government-federal, provincial, and local levels.

After the promulgation of the constitution, the role of local government has undergone a significant transformation. The shift from a unitary to a federal state has enhanced the role of local government, making it more people-centric, responsive, and accountable. The constitution has provided the authority to the local government to formulate its budget, make decisions, and

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adopt necessary strategies to implement development projects within the national policy framework (Constitution of Nepal, 2015). The present constitution has considerably enhanced the roles of local leaders, particularly the ward chairpersons, in managing public resources for development outcomes and effective public service delivery at the community level.

Local governments are responsible for delivering local public services to citizens. From the ward level, the program formulation process begins. The programs are designed and implemented through ward committees, and the ward committee is chaired by the ward chairperson. All the members of the committee are elected by the people, and they are responsible for administering local public goods (Local Government Operation Act, 2017). Therefore, the ward chairperson has a crucial role in administering local public services to the local people. For this, wards must have sufficient capacity to meet the needs and preferences of their constituents. The capacity of local governments is ensured only when all local governments have competent leaders.

The ward chairperson is a pivotal local government position in Nepal. Elected at the ward level, they are responsible for overseeing administration, local public services, and the implementation of government policies and programs at the grassroots level. Their roles include planning, budgeting, implementing, monitoring projects, and presiding over ward committee meetings (Local Government Operation Act, 2017). The effectiveness of the ward chairpersons affects governance quality, public service delivery, and development outcomes at the ward level.

However, while the youth policy of the government of Nepal advocates for increased political participation of young people, systematic barriers continue to obstruct their participation in local governance. This study explores how youth participation in public offices affects public service outcomes.

According to the United Nations, a person who is aged between 15 and 24 years is considered a youth. In contrast, the National Youth Policy (2015) broadens this definition within the Nepalese sociopolitical context. This policy recognizes youth as persons who are aged between 16 and 40. In the demographic composition of Nepal, youths comprise over 40% of the population. Historically, this group has been heavily involved in socioeconomic transitions and political movements, from the democratic uprisings of the 1950s and 1990s to the resolution of the Maoist insurgency in 2006. However, their representation in elected positions remains comparatively and disproportionately low.

According to the Election Commission Report (2022), only 26.74% of ward chairpersons in Gandaki Province are youths, though they are eligible to vote at 18 and can contest elections from age 21. This underrepresentation contrasts with the expectations of the national youth policy. The World Bank (2016) defines youth engagement as a process that includes the involvement of young people in decision-making processes that are related to or affect their lives. Citizen participation is a tool through which public service officials are made accountable

to citizens. In this sense, political engagement enables communities to voice their needs and identify the problems that they are facing regarding public services. Moreover, citizen participation serves as an oversight mechanism that improves transparency, reduces corruption, and builds public trust in public institutions (World Bank, 2004). Public officials are bound to address problems related to public services; thus, political engagement promotes the efficient delivery of public services.

Youth face both supply-side and demand-side obstacles in the governance process. On the supply side, youth candidates are discouraged by high election finances, limited incentives, and political party preferences for seasoned cadres. On the demand side, voter preferences often favor older, established candidates, and voters are frequently influenced by caste-based voting (Banerjee & Pande, 2009). There is also a pervasive perception that youth lack necessary experience. These demand- and supply-side barriers restrict the pool of young leaders, despite the fact that youth are constitutionally and legally eligible (age 21+, Nepali citizenship, voter registration). Consequently, the proposed hypothesis is that educated young ward chairpersons may deliver local public services better and more efficiently.

Literature Review

The Role and Responsibilities of Ward Chairpersons in Local Governance

Ward chairpersons are the elected chiefs of ward offices within local government. Primarily, they are responsible for planning, budgeting, executing, and monitoring development projects within their respective wards. The Local Government Operation Act, 2017, defines the roles, functions, duties, and responsibilities at the ward level. These obligations encompass the formulation, implementation, and monitoring of local plans, data preservation and updates, developmental initiatives, regulatory tasks, and the issuance of recommendations and official certifications. Furthermore, they preside over ward committee meetings, make critical decisions related to ward-level public affairs, and implement government policies at the grassroots level. As frontline public service providers of local government, electing competent, committed, and responsive ward chairpersons is crucial for local citizens. Consequently, the decision-making ability of these chairpersons has direct implications for the quality of service delivery at the local level.

Electoral Dynamics and Selection of Ward Chairpersons

The selection of ward chairpersons is influenced by a combination of formal constitutional and legal eligibility criteria alongside informal social determinants. While age, citizenship, and the absence of a criminal record constitute the foundational legal requirements, actual selection is

heavily shaped by political connections, caste, family legacy, kinship ties, and local prestige in South Asia (Ban & Rao, 2008; Banerjee & Pande, 2009). The constitution and electoral laws explicitly define the necessary qualifications for a ward chairperson. According to these legal frameworks, a candidate contesting a local government election must be a Nepali citizen, have completed 21 years of age, be qualified to vote, have their name registered on the electoral rolls of the specific ward, and not be otherwise disqualified by law.

Despite being constitutionally and legally eligible from the age of 21, young candidates face severe difficulties when participating in the electoral process. Pande (2003) argues that political authority remains concentrated within elite groups in caste-based societies. Such systems create structural disadvantages for marginalized, minority, and lower-caste social groups, thereby discouraging their active political participation. On the other hand, youth candidates rarely receive party nominations or voter support unless they are backed by dominant social groups or influential political patrons. Therefore, aspirants seeking leadership roles face significant barriers that discourage youth leadership in local government and marginalize young people from the core decision-making process.

Education and Leadership Effectiveness

Besley et al. (2011) and Ghosh et al. (2010) demonstrate a strong correlation between a candidate's educational background and their performance in public service delivery. Educated candidates are generally perceived as more capable of handling complex governance-related tasks such as budgeting, meticulous record-keeping, and interdepartmental coordination.

In India, local leaders with secondary-level education have demonstrated a significantly better understanding of administrative procedures compared to their less-educated peers (Ghosh et al., 2010). However, voter preferences do not always favor educated candidates; traditional biases, such as caste affiliations, age seniority, or patriarchal norms, often dominate over educational qualifications during elections (Jha et al., 2020). Furthermore, young graduates frequently face a dilemma between pursuing stable employment or engaging in local politics. Limited opportunities in local job markets and intense pressure to seek foreign employment discourage young, educated individuals from participating in the governance process. At the same time, pressing family obligations act as a barrier preventing them from running for public office (Jha et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the entry of youth into politics can increase civic awareness, especially among their peers, creating a demonstrative effect that enhances democratic participation at the grassroots level (World Bank, 2017). Conversely, several structural barriers continue to squeeze youth participation in the local governance process. On one hand, deep-seated caste and gender norms discourage lower-class and female youth from running for office, while on the other hand, a lack of established political networks discourages them from even aspiring to hold office.

Youth Political Participation: Scope and Challenges

Although youth have historically played an important role in driving political change in Nepal, their presence within formal governance structures remains comparatively low. For instance, the 2021 census report of Nepal notes that youth constitute over 40% of the population. However, only 26.74% of ward chairpersons in Gandaki Province are under the age of 40 (ECN Report, 2022). This stark mismatch highlights a persistent gap between demographic strength and actual political representation.

The underrepresentation of youth is driven by both supply-side barriers and demand-side factors. Pande (2003) and Besley (2012) identify key supply-side barriers, including a lack of political awareness, a deficit of political mentoring, and institutional party preferences for older members based on their long-term service to the party. In addition, Besley (2012) argues that elected officials often emerge from households that disproportionately control social capital, except within reserved seats in India, revealing deep structural biases against youth. This is compounded by widespread voter skepticism toward young leaders. Furthermore, the high cost of contesting elections, lack of access to institutional campaign financing, and an absence of influential networks continuously discourage youth from entering the election process.

Youth Leadership and Public Service Delivery

The primary objective of fostering active youth participation in the local governance process is to improve public service delivery at the local level through innovation, responsiveness, and grassroots community engagement. A World Bank study identifies that youth participation in politics tends to raise overall community engagement. Young leaders are more likely to hold public consultations, actively encourage community feedback, and mobilize local volunteer networks (World Bank, 2017). These progressive practices enhance transparency and accountability. Furthermore, youth leadership has the potential to break entrenched patronage networks and loyalty-based politics, turning the institutional focus toward performance-based politics instead.

Moreover, young leaders readily incorporate modern approaches, tools, and technology into the governance process. They frequently encourage the use of digital platforms in administration for record-keeping, communication, and monitoring (Jha et al., 2020). This integration of technology into public administration can significantly reduce bureaucratic red tape and enhance overall transparency in service delivery.

On one hand, it is widely argued that educated leaders incorporate administrative practices that reduce structural inefficiencies in local government, making them highly responsive and

effective in public service delivery. On the other hand, Besley et al. (2012) identify that hyper-costly elections can incentivize corruption, as leaders may feel compelled to allocate public resources to unfairly favor their immediate support bases. Young leaders are by no means exempt from these systemic challenges. Corruption remains a persistent hurdle in local governance practices, where politicians tend to favor their core constituencies. While educated youth might ideally resist these practices, costly election cycles can engulf them nonetheless. This underlying duality highlights an urgent need for comprehensive structural reforms in the local governance process to properly protect and empower young, educated leaders.

Problem Statement

The core problem of this study is the underrepresentation of youth in local governance and its subsequent effect on public service delivery. In Gandaki Province, only 203 of 759 ward chairpersons (26.74%) were elected in 2022 (ECN Report, 2022). This gap is also mirrored in Waling Municipality, where only 28% of ward chairpersons belong to this young demographic. These ward chairpersons are structurally responsible for providing local public services and implementing federal government policies and programs at the grassroots level. However, the Auditor General's Reports (2024) note that local governments frequently face inefficiencies and irregularities in implementing these policies and programs. Thus, a critical problem lies within the mechanism of public service delivery. This raises an important academic question of whether greater youth involvement could significantly enhance service delivery outcomes.

Youth face both supply-side and demand-side obstacles in the governance process. On the supply side, youth candidates are discouraged by high election finances, limited institutional incentives, and political party preferences for seasoned cadres. On the demand side, voter preferences often lean toward older, established candidates, and voters are frequently influenced by caste-based voting (Banerjee & Pande, 2009). There is also a widespread perception that youth lack necessary administrative experience. These demand- and supply-side barriers severely restrict the pool of young leaders, despite the fact that youth are constitutionally and legally eligible (age 21+, Nepali citizenship, voter registration).

Methodology

Within the framework of the qualitative research paradigm, this study adopts an ethnographic approach to capture the lived experiences of young ward chairpersons in Waling Municipality. It explores the dynamics of youth political engagement and its impact on public service delivery. The choice of a qualitative approach aims to capture personal experiences and sociopolitical interactions within Waling Municipality. Focusing on the selected case of ward chairpersons, youth engagement in the local governance process is analyzed within a federal

context. This study aims to present young ward chairpersons' subjective experiences in attaining their leadership positions.

The study is based on qualitative interviews with ward chairpersons of Waling Municipality to collect their direct insights and perspectives. The experiences of these participants provide valuable information on the challenges of participating in the political process, as well as potential ways to resolve the barriers encountered in becoming a ward chairperson and delivering public services.

In this study, the participants were selected by using a purposive sampling method to ensure balanced representation from three main categories: young ward chairpersons (aged 21-40), senior ward chairpersons (above 40), and local citizens who are the direct recipients of these public services.

Results and Discussions

An Outline of Youth Ward Chairpersons in Waling Municipality

Among the six youth ward chairpersons interviewed, three were between the ages of 20 and 40 and held at least a bachelor's degree, while three were above 40. These young leaders have translated their desire to reform inefficient governance systems into action, driven by personal experiences with unemployment and poor service delivery. Unlike older candidates who operate primarily as long-standing cadres of a political party, these youth leaders often entered politics through grassroots activism or independent campaigns, rather than through deep-rooted party affiliations.

The selection of ward chairpersons is governed by the Constitution of Nepal 2015 and relevant electoral laws. Each ward within a rural municipality (Gaunpalika) or municipality (Nagarpalika) elects its own ward chairperson and four ward members. Out of the four ward members, at least two must be women, and one of these women must belong to the Dalit community. The ward chairperson and the four ward members are elected through a direct election using the first-past-the-post system. All residents of the ward who are 18 years of age and registered on the voters' list are eligible to vote. To be eligible for the position of ward chairperson, a candidate must be a citizen of Nepal, be at least 21 years old, and be registered on the voter list of that specific ward. The ward chairperson is elected to office for a term of five years from the date of the election, and there is no constitutional restriction on the number of terms they can serve.

The selection of a ward chairperson is determined by a combination of legal eligibility criteria, the education level of the candidate, community dynamics, and the political ambitions of the individual candidate. These interrelated factors and processes heavily influence the final

electoral outcome. First, the candidate must meet the foundational legal criteria; for reserved seats, these criteria are inherently influenced by the candidate's social position. Second, the education level of a ward chairperson significantly influences the candidate selection process. Basely (2012) identifies that educated people are more likely to be chosen for public posts. Third, community dynamics play a pivotal role in the selection of a ward chairperson. Because ward chairpersons may prioritize their immediate neighborhoods when deciding on development projects, voters often select a candidate who is close to them in terms of neighborhood proximity, caste, and ethnicity. Fourth, the personal desire of ward chairpersons to hold political office drives their engagement; Basley (2012) notes that most local leaders are interested in pursuing further political careers, which directly influences their motivation for running for political office.

In Gandaki Province, the data on elected ward chairpersons shows that youth representation in local government remains discouraging. Around 40.68 percent of the total population in Nepal consists of young people (census report, 2022). However, the data reveals that only 26.74 percent of ward chairpersons are young (aged 21 to 40) among those who contested in the local-level election of 2022. In Waling Municipality, a higher percentage of younger ward chairpersons were elected compared to the overall average of Gandaki Province and the national baseline.

The following table presents the distribution of candidates who contested for the chair, vice-chair, and ward chairperson positions in Gandaki Province, categorized by age group.

Table 1: Candidates in Gandaki Province by their age group

Age Group	Chair	Vice-chair	Ward Chairperson
20-40	113	139	796
40-60	272	184	1534
60 above	59	18	306
Total Candidates	444	341	2636
Total Seats	85	85	759

Source: ECN Report, 2022

The election results are presented in Table 2, which illustrates the distribution of successful candidates elected in Gandaki Province across different age groups for the positions of chair, vice-chair, and ward chairperson.

Table 2: Elected candidates in Gandaki Province by their age group in percentage

Age Group	Chair	Vice-chair	Ward Chairperson
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20-40	16.47	42.35	26.75
40-60	74.12	57.65	66.40
60 above	9.41	0	6.85
Total	100	100	100

Source: ECN Report, 2022

The election data discussed above demonstrate a clear dominance of middle-aged leaders within Gandaki Province. In ward chairperson positions, the 40–60 age group dominates two-thirds of the total seats. This trend strongly suggests that voters tend to prefer experienced, middle-aged candidates during elections. However, youth leaders still maintain a significant presence at the ward level, which signifies that voters are increasingly placing their trust in them for supportive and grassroots leadership roles.

Focusing on the successful candidates within the specific study area, Table 3 presents the age-wise distribution of elected representatives in Waling Municipality.

Table 3: Elected candidates in Walling Municipality by their age group

Age Group	Chair	Vice-chair	Ward Chairperson
20-40			4 (28.58%)
40-60	1	1	8 (57.14%)
60 above			2 (14.28%)
		Total Wards	14 (100%)

Source: ECN Report, 2022

The data from Gandaki Province show that 796 youth (aged 20–40) contested for ward chairperson positions and only 203 were elected, which represents 26.74% of success in the election process. It shows that youth are participating in the election process. However, on the other hand, it also highlights that youth face systemic barriers to being elected as ward chairpersons in local elections. In Waling Municipality, the result is better than the provincial average. Out of 14 ward chairpersons, 4 were elected, which is 28.6% success. The findings show that youth are willing to participate in elections; however, the electoral process is challenging for youth to be elected.

The challenges come from party nomination practices, voter perceptions, and structural biases. Therefore, this representational gap should be addressed through policy reforms, and the reform process should focus on equitable access to the party nomination process, election financing, and raising political awareness. Motivations and Entry Barriers to Becoming a Ward Chairperson In the decision to run for ward chairperson, a candidate aspires for a political career, driven by the desire to influence others and gain power, potential financial benefits, a

commitment to community service, and the pursuit of social status. Regarding motivations for seeking election, a ward chairperson from a rural ward shared that, "I entered politics inspired by my grandfather's legacy and motivated by the support of my family and friends after finishing my master's degree." Similarly, another ward chairperson who comes from an urban ward reflected that, "I stayed in Nepal to see whether youth are mobilized as local guides for change, rather than going abroad like many of my peers." Moreover, the discussions with the ward chairpersons show that becoming a ward chairperson is driven by four main reasons. First, career opportunities in politics drive individuals toward the position of ward chairperson. It opens the doors to higher political offices, such as becoming a district leader or a provincial or federal legislator. In conversations with ward committee members, this study finds that they express a desire to run for political office in the future.

Second, while serving as a ward chairperson, respondents say that the ward chairperson has a significant influence within their community. For instance, they can shape local policies and development projects which, in turn, can enhance their status and power among the ward residents. The political influence is beneficial in increasing their supporters. Third, the candidate for ward chairperson is driven by a desire to serve their community and contribute to its development. Being a ward chairperson allows them to implement local development projects that can improve the quality of local people's lives. One of the young chairpersons said that he received peer encouragement, felt frustration with older politicians, and had an urge to modernize administrative processes. That's why he entered the election process. And, lastly, holding the position of ward chairperson provides social recognition from society that elevates an individual's social status within the community. It often gives due respect and recognition to ordinary people. On the other hand, people often say that young people do not do anything; they only comment. "I wanted to challenge the perception that youth can't lead," said a 30-year-old chairperson in this regard. The factors driving youths who do not participate in local-level governments mainly focus on two factors: the supply-side factor is candidate type, and the demand-side factor is voter preferences and behavior. The supply-side factor includes the barriers to election for young people and the lack of incentives to contest in elections. On the other hand, the demand-side factor includes voter preferences and voters' knowledge about the candidates. These factors can be outlined in four reasons:

First, there are significant levels of youth voters who do not participate in the election process. This is a barrier to being elected. It is because youth leaders are not elected in elections. Since there is a small number of youths in villages, there are youths who want to run in the election but are restricted from running. If there are no hindrances to running in an election, they do not choose to run. However, gender and caste quotas have played an important role in increasing representation in local governments in Nepal. Pande (2003) argues that "greater representation translates into policy gains for minority groups, female leaders invest more in public goods that matter for women, and low caste politicians increase spending on welfare programs for low

caste groups". Hence, increasing the political participation of women and low-income groups improves public services that matter to them. She further argues that minority leaders prioritize the policy preferences of minority groups. However, it is also argued that gender and caste quotas prevent candidates with higher education from running in elections.

Second, there is a lack of incentives to contest in elections. Salary and other allowances are very low in local government offices. Young people have far more lucrative jobs available in local and foreign markets. However, many people think that there are illicit returns to office. One ward chairperson said that his friend is not interested in the election. The simple reason is that he would need to engage in illicit activities for the benefit of many senior leaders and junior partners because they helped him in the election. In turn, he needs to fulfill their demands, and to make money, he needs to misappropriate public funds or resources. Third, party leaders are biased toward young leaders. Senior leaders have said that young people are inexperienced and voters do not prefer them.

Therefore, young leaders face political bias in party nominations unless they have political backup or family influence. One ward chairperson said that he got his nomination due to his father's contribution to the party. Banerjee and Pande's (2009) study shows that there is a question of why voters do not choose young, educated people in their voting decisions. It is most probable that young candidates do not choose to run for election due to political party preferences, and they have very little knowledge about their society and social issues to resolve. They will make quick decisions without considering social situations. On the other hand, caste-based voting phenomena also play an important role in elections. And, lastly, voters have little knowledge about the young candidates. It shows that even when voters care about candidate quality, higher quality candidates do not enjoy an electoral advantage, and they may not choose to run in elections. Voters generally respond to the candidates selected by political leaders. However, information about the candidates matters. A young ward chairperson described the age-based skepticism during the nomination phase: "Because of my age, some party seniors argued it wasn't my turn yet." They said that voters don't know about you. In the election, every voter needs to know about you. The candidate needs to be familiar to their voters.

This illustrates generational barriers within political parties. Youth Leadership and Innovation in Service Delivery Increasing the involvement of youth in the local governance process can significantly improve the efficiency of public service delivery. Innovative approaches, better community engagement, and the reduction of bureaucratic barriers contribute to increasing effectiveness in public service delivery. These factors contribute to a governance system that is more effective and responsive, and able to meet the needs of the community.

First, young leaders may introduce creative and innovative ideas for public service delivery. All youth ward chairpersons are familiar with digital tools and they are encouraged to use digital tools in delivering public services. One ward chairperson said that he promotes the use of

Google Sheets to monitor attendance and Viber groups for sharing information and addressing grievances. Familiarity with modern practices and digital technology can result in a more effective method of service delivery. Using digital tools in the administrative process can improve the overall effectiveness of public services.

Second, the presence of youth in the role of ward chairperson reflects the needs and aspirations of youth constituencies. This connection enables a stronger tie with the community and ensures that public services are relevant and effective in meeting the needs of the community. One of the ward chairpersons said that he is organizing monthly meetings and progress reports on ward budgets. These practices help him to track budget expenditure for the appropriate projects and allocate the budget to meet the needs of the community.

Third, with knowledge of modern practices and technology, youth leaders are more inclined to challenge bureaucratic barriers. The willingness to reform bureaucratic barriers aims to make public service delivery efficient and to create a more responsive governance process.

Finally, youth ward chairpersons are easily approachable and responsive. One respondent praised the youth ward chairperson and said that he is approachable, transparent, and responsive to their voters. Unlike before, where they needed to request but officials were inaccessible. Citizen feedback is positive about their young leaders.

Key Findings and Policy Recommendations

The key findings of the study can be presented in the following points to increase youth representation at the local level and improve local public service delivery outcomes. First, it is essential to improve political training programs for young individuals who are aspiring to hold public offices. It helps young aspirants to gain knowledge about governance laws, public administration, budgeting, local planning, and implementing programs. Second, it is necessary to encourage youth to run for public offices. This can be achieved through financial assistance or establishing funds to support elected youth representatives. Third, reforms in internal party practices are necessary to promote internal democracy within political parties. Internal democratic practices within political parties can help to reduce nepotism and favoritism in candidate selection while ensuring transparency in the nomination process. Fourth, technology-friendly institutions and inclusive governance need to be established to improve the quality of service delivery. Digital tools should be used in planning, monitoring, and citizen feedback mechanisms to promote effective service delivery, along with promoting the use of digital platforms for receiving ends.

Finally, it is essential to broaden civic education and political awareness beyond the confines of family, educational institutions, and universities. The awareness campaign highlights the

advantage of youth leadership in community decision-making and in the local governance process.

Conclusions

This study examined the role of youth leadership in improving public service delivery in Waling Municipality, Nepal. The findings indicate that, despite a significant youth population, their representation in elected local positions, particularly as ward chairpersons, is low. In wards where young leaders are elected, they introduced innovative practices, performed better, enhanced transparency, and were more responsive toward their constituencies. Using digital technology in the administrative process helps to overcome bureaucratic hurdles and enhances public service delivery mechanisms. Moreover, institutional and socio-cultural barriers, such as political biases within the parties, voter preferences, and insufficient incentives for young candidates, continue to discourage young people from active participation in the political process. However, the young leaders who are elected to public offices are demonstrating their ability to deliver public services efficiently and effectively. Policy Recommendations Based on the above key findings, the following policy recommendations are proposed to increase the political representation of youth in local government and enhance the effectiveness of local public service delivery.

First, it is essential to develop a targeted political training program for youth aspirants. Developing the skills and capacity of young individuals who are interested in governance responsibilities and local leadership roles is essential. Collaboration with universities and training institutions can help build policy literacy and prepare individuals for political roles with knowledge and skills on governance laws, public administration, budgeting, local planning, and program implementation.

Second, encouraging the participation of youth in local government through incentive programs, such as financial support or training programs, can motivate young candidates for local government positions. Political parties and local governments should establish mentorship programs for young elected officials, providing financial assistance and grants.

Third, reforming internal practices within political parties is necessary. By promoting internal democracy and transparency within political parties, fairness in the candidate selection process can be ensured. On the other hand, implementing merit-based selection and nomination criteria can value the leadership potential of youth aspirants. Reducing barriers in the selection process can facilitate free and fair access within political parties for young candidates.

Fourth, it is necessary to restructure public institutions to be inclusive and technology-friendly. Using digital tools in ward offices can help to minimize bureaucratic delays and improve service

quality. Digital tools should be used in planning, monitoring, and citizen feedback systems, and facilitate people to use digital platforms in providing and receiving public services.

Expanding civic education and political awareness is essential from the family and community levels to the curricula of schools and universities. Civic education enhances political awareness that emphasizes the value of youth leadership in local governance. The awareness campaign should focus on the benefits of youth leadership in local governance.

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