

i-Voting as a Promising Method to Ensure the Voting Rights of Nepali Migrants¹

Khagendra Raj Dhakal, and Isha Mandal²

Nepal Policy Institute

Executive Summary

Millions of Nepalis living and working abroad are currently disenfranchised and cannot exercise their constitutional rights to participate in national and local elections. The constitutional provision has been reiterated by a decision of the Supreme Court that the Government should take immediate action to remedy the situation. And yet, to date, there has been little progress in this regard, and not because the government, or political parties, disagree with the decision but due to lack of strong political will and technical know-how. Overseas voting has been allowed for in numerous countries, and i-Voting has been gaining greater currency and appeal. Technical constraints and security considerations are certainly valid but they can be addressed by developing a National Framework for Verifiable i-Voting for external voting. What is missing is appropriate legislation and political will for an external voting policy for Nepali nationals abroad.

has had on the national economy. These Nepalis abroad contribute substantially to the country's economy (as of 2021, their remittances accounted for 25% of the country's gross domestic product, one of the highest in the world).³

However, even as their economic contribution has been recognized, what has not necessarily been so has been their right to vote in different elections in the country. This is despite the fact that Nepal's Constitution makes specific provisions for this (Article 84 relates to each citizen 18 years of age and over being able to vote in any one constituency).⁴ Relevant legislation on voter registration also makes specific reference to the rights of voters to participate in elections. Finally, the full budget of 2078/2079 (2021/22) also provided for the voting rights of those abroad, including migrant workers.

Yet, regardless of their contributions and Constitutional provisions, as well as decisions from the Supreme Court (see below) Nepalis abroad have not yet been able to exercise their constitutional right when it comes to the ballot box. There are, of course, many constraints, some of which are very valid, but the end result still is that nearly 3.5 million Nepali citizens currently remain disenfranchised.⁵

Introduction

The subject matter of migrants' rights (particularly with respect to those related to the ballot box) has in recent years been highlighted in the public domain in Nepal given the substantial impact their remittances

¹ This Policy Brief benefits from the views expressed by various panelists on this subject at a webinar organized by the Nepal Policy Institute on 19 March 2022 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXv36KD4Glo>); panelists included Hon. Mr. Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Communist Party of Nepal (CPN) (United Marxist Leninist); Hon. Dr. Prakash Sharan Mahat, Nepali Congress; Hon. Dr. Upendra Yadav, Janata Samajwadi Party Nepal, and Hon. Ms. Pampha Bhusal, CPN (Maoist Center). The first three panelists have served in the past as Foreign Ministers in different federal governments in Nepal.

² Chair of the Board of Directors and Management Associate respectively at Nepal Policy Institute. The authors wish to thank Mr. Neel Kantha Uprety and Professor Ila Sharma, former Chief Commissioner and Commissioner respectively of the Election Commission of Nepal for their feedback on an earlier draft of this Policy Brief.

³ This is despite the COVID-19 pandemic, and in spite of the contraction in workers' remittances by 5.8% through mid-February 2022 (Asian Development Bank, 2022).

⁴ However, Article 176, in dealing with the State Legislature, stipulates citizens residing within the territory of the State shall have a right to vote.

⁵ See, for example, Taylor, 2022.

Milestones

Participation of all members of society, including citizens that live abroad, in the political decision-making process is crucial to the legitimacy of democratic political systems. In Nepal, the discussion of enfranchising the hundreds of thousands of migrant workers that live abroad and that hold Nepali citizenship has been one of fits and starts. Two key milestones can be mentioned:

- The 2011 ruling of the Supreme Court in the case of *Purnachandra Poudel v Election Commission* that a citizenship certificate is the only important criterion for being included as a voter; and
- The 2018 Supreme Court verdict which formally mandated the government to ensure migrants' right to vote.

In the interim, there has been some public debate on this matter, evidenced by its inclusion in the election manifestos of selected political parties. And even as all political parties pay lip service to this subject, there has been no implementation of the court verdicts on the ground thus far. After almost four years of a Supreme Court order, the local elections that were just held did not have the participation of roughly 6 million Nepali people abroad who have been deprived of their voting rights.⁶ It is still unclear whether this will be implemented in the upcoming national elections in about a year.

Stances of Political Parties on the Issue

A review of the public declarations of the various political parties in Nepal, including that of their political manifestos used for the provincial and national level elections, show that they have generally not analyzed this issue with the degree of earnestness and seriousness it deserves (see **Appendix 1**). It is not known the extent to which the

issue may have been internally debated and what, if any, intra-party fissures are evident on what the provisions ought to be on migrants' rights, or indeed even how the party is to systemically (i.e., holistically) consider the matter. Certainly, there has not been as much public discussion on this subject as is called for.

Still, a review of their manifestos for the 2017 national (ie, federal) elections shows that on the subject of their views on migrants' rights, political parties can be grouped into three categories:

- Group 1 – those that dwell on the issue of migrants' voting rights in the broader context of foreign employment;
- Group 2 – those that only assert the right of migrant workers to vote; and
- Group 3 – those that do not make any mention of this issue; this alone says a lot about how political parties are tackling this urgent matter.

Of all the major political parties, the Nepali Congress, People's Socialist Party, Nepal (erstwhile Federal Socialist Forum, Nepal), and Rastriya Prajatantra Party have been the most specific in their policy prescriptions on voting rights for migrants. The manifestos of these parties make this clear – (i) **Nepali Congress**: within the next 10 years, legal arrangements and administrative arrangements will be made for Nepali citizens and passport holders who have gone outside Nepal for employment or business to vote in (national) elections from abroad; (ii) **People's Socialist Party, Nepal**: frame relevant laws to allow voting rights at all levels for Nepalis living and working abroad; and (iii) **Rastriya Prajatantra Party**: make provision for voting rights of Nepali citizens living abroad.

The general view is that political parties are not opposed to measures to enable migrants to exercise their right to vote in principle.⁷ In particular, the

⁶ "Sthaniya taha-ko nirwahan-ma karib 65 lakh matdataley bhot haalna napauney" ("Approximately 6.5 million voters will not be able to cast votes in local level elections"); *Baishak* 27, 2079 (10 May 2022), <https://ratopati.com/story/237572/2022/5/10/devkota> (accessed: May 11, 2022)

⁷ Whether or not the provision was specifically incorporated in their manifestos, at the NPI-organized webinar of 19 March 2022 on this subject, senior leaders of four major parties (CPN-UML, NC, PSP Nepal, and CPN (Maoist Center)) reiterated their parties' stance that they were fully

parties that currently form the government (which is led by Nepali Congress) have placed the following markers on this issue:

- (a) Adherence to Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; this alludes to everyone eligible having the right to take part in the process of electing the government of their country, hence all Nepali citizens irrespective of their location must be able to vote.
- (b) Further to the Supreme Court order of 2018, the Election Commission of Nepal is currently working on a draft bill to be presented to the Parliament through the Cabinet (and after legal drafting inputs from the Ministry of Law, Justice, and Parliamentary Affairs are received); this could, for all practical purposes, take a long time, and certainly not in time for the national and provincial elections to take place in November 2022, given also that parliamentary discussions have been disturbed by the main opposition party (CPN-UML).

From Inaction to Using Modern Technology

The current narrative in Nepal around the issue of voting rights of migrants still appears stuck in the basics and machinations of framing appropriate legislation, and paying lip service to the migrant constituency to institute their voting rights. Successive governments and political parties have not demonstrated their willingness to elevate their thinking beyond that to consider, for example, how to make use of existing technology to enable hassle-free voting. Indeed, this appears to be the primary weakness to date since the available technology has yielded results in other jurisdictions in this regard.

The fixation of successive governments to long lead times to prepare a viable external voting policy is rooted in their continued faith in the traditional method of voting. Such methods, eg, voting through physical presence and by establishing polling centers in embassies and cities around the world, as well as

supportive of the call for enabling the proper exercise of the voting rights of migrants.

sending ballots by post, are very challenging and time consuming from a management perspective.

Nepal's migrant population is spread over more than 100 countries and the physical constraints to cover all of them are daunting. However, with the advent of new technology, Nepal can remedy the situation readily. Technology has changed the way many things are done in society, and there is already an efficient method to mitigate the challenges inherent in the traditional methods of out-of-country voting.

i-Voting as a Promising Method for External Voting

As the discussion revolves around external voting, the central question has become: how can the government better enable Nepali citizens abroad to exercise their constitutional rights to vote in elections? As internet access has reached people even at the grassroots level, the scope for, and appeal of, what is known as i-Voting (Internet-based voting or online voting) has become plainly obvious. There is growing interest in instituting i-Voting measures even as there seems to be some confusion between i-Voting and e-Voting (or Electronic Voting). The difference between these two is significant:

- i-Voting refers to a system that allows voters to participate in an election from any device connected to the internet (either through an app or online portal) from their home anywhere in the world. i-Voting is software-based for which digital security systems are used and polling centers are not required. It allows the electorate to cast their votes from anywhere in the world as long as they have access to a smart device connected to the internet even without the physical presence of an election administrator.
- e-Voting is just a technique to vote through the machine instead of voting on a paper ballot. Ballots are presented on a computer/machine screen, where voters make their choices and cast their ballot but the physical presence of the electorate is still required in the polling centers as in the traditional paper ballot voting.⁸

⁸ In fact, e-Voting could be useful for internal voting within the country for the security and efficiency in counting as it is taking weeks to count votes in the present scenario.

Instituting i-Voting provisions means elections can be conducted without any administrative costs in creating physical polling centers. Other advantages of i-Voting include increased voter turnout, access to underrepresented populations, adherence to high-security standards, and reaffirmation of the right to participate freely in elections.

The security aspects of i-Voting merit some discussion. Legally secure online elections are the most important call of the day inasmuch as i-Voting is concerned. Sound electoral principles demand that elections are conducted, *inter alia*, freely, directly, securely, and secretly. After all, acceptance of election results stems from the confidence the electorate has that the election process has adhered to these principles.

The security of the voting arrangement takes into account issues such as access rights, data protection and backups, system stability, and secure voter authentication. The voting software also has to be free of technical faults and not susceptible to malwares that could impair its functional reliability and security. Data encryption is also key to ensure secure online voting since it prevents ballots from being manipulated in transmission over the internet.

It is based on these considerations, and the need to ensure that measures are absolutely fail-safe, that a National Framework for Verifiable i-Voting (NFViV) should be developed. The proposed framework should articulate the security standards, government role, and legal accountability. This could address the concerns raised by political parties and others in Nepal as to why there has been a fair bit of foot-dragging on instituting i-Voting such that migrants may also participate in the elections.

Once the legal provisions are sorted out, there is then a need to work on giving effect to the legal provisions, which will revolve around what administrative arrangements can be put in place such that issues such as voting security can be guaranteed by creating a NFViV.

One promising approach is cryptographic end-to-end verifiable Internet voting (EVIV)⁹ which is embedded with a mechanism that can detect and protect against vote manipulations both at the client platform and at the election server side. Voters can use personal or public computer/device for EVIV at their ease.¹⁰ A recent study by the U.S. Vote Foundation has also recommended EVIV as a suitable approach for i-Voting.¹¹

The Government is of the view that there would be nothing worse than finally enabling migrants to cast their vote but that the security of the voting process could not be ascertained. That would do untold damage to the entire process, and must be avoided at all costs.¹² Just as Nepal has allowed banking and shopping online, i-Voting is a natural use of modern technology with far greater advantages than risks. As migrant workers are appreciated for sending remittances using i-Banking, they can cast their votes through i-Voting using a similar technology.

The Government and all political parties have also at various times said it is not likely that i-Voting will be in place by the end of 2022; 2027 is a more likely time frame for i-Voting to be a reality in the country.¹³ For the millions of migrants still waiting for an opportunity to exercise their constitutional rights, waiting another five years is too late and indicates the government and political leadership is not giving due priority to a robust external voting policy, instead limiting it to mere lip service.

⁹ This system was deployed in the first governmental election in the city of Takoma Park, Maryland (USA) in 2009 and 2011 (Essex, 2016).

¹⁰ Joaquim, et al, 2013.

¹¹ Dzeduszycka-Suinat, et al, 2015.

¹² The experiences of the United States in the 2020 elections and the (unproven yet constantly stated) charges of voter fraud must be borne in mind in this regard.

¹³ A discussion on this matter among the political leaders of the major political parties of Nepal organized recently by NPI (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tXv36KD4Glo>) indicates that there is knowledge gap on the opportunities that modern technology such as i-Voting offers.

While i-Voting has already been the main method of conducting elections in countries like Estonia, Nepal can get technical help from these countries and also make use of already available approaches such as EVIV. This way, Nepali migrant workers may be able to get opportunities to vote in the upcoming national elections in November this year. It is ironic that in a democracy remittances get greater prominence than the individuals who send them. Unlike in the Philippines, for example, where Overseas Filipino Workers are actively courted (see case study below), in Nepal there is lack of competition among political parties to pursue this goal of implementing external voting rights. There is also the absence of active lobbying from the diaspora communities.¹⁴

Many observers within Nepal have clearly articulated that each and every citizen of Nepal who is eligible to become a voter has a right to be registered and be included in the voter list in case he/she has missed the registration. This will enable citizens abroad to be included in the voter list using their nationally recognized documentation, such as a passport.

To enable all citizens living abroad to exercise this right, the i-Voting method is deemed to be the most suitable as it is easily implementable and ensures absence voting and pre-voting in the electioneering process. The motto of i-Voting can be stated as “voting globally (using the internet) and counting locally (in the country)”. To bring this about will require continued dialogue among all stakeholders in a spirit of mutual understanding.

¹⁴ Puri, 2014. Senior political figures in government, constitutional bodies, and elsewhere have echoed this sentiment about active lobbying by the diaspora community.

¹⁵ This case study draws from, among others, Michelle Abad (<https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/overseas-voting-begins-2022-philippine-polls/>, April 10, 2022; accessed: May 10, 2022)

¹⁶ Indeed, it is notable that even in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, remittances to the country were \$29.9 billion in 2020 and \$31.4 billion in 2021 (source: <https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Philippines-modern-day-heroes-sent-record-remittances-last-year>). Little wonder, then, that the migrants are billed as ‘modern-day heroes’ for their contribution to the national economy.

Case Study of Philippines¹⁵

It is instructive to see how this issue is played out in a country where migrants’ issues are also substantive and where their remittances contribute substantially to the economy. Probably among all such countries, the Philippines stands out as a particularly relevant case study. The share of remittances to the national economy may not be as substantial as that in Nepal but still sizable (approximately 10% of GDP).¹⁶ The matter of the Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs), and their rights with respect to the state of affairs in the Philippines is championed by all political parties as well as the government.¹⁷

The recently concluded national elections in the country brought out the centrality of those outside the country being able to exercise their right to vote in the elections. Under Republic Act No. 9189 as amended by Republic Act No. 10590, all citizens of the Philippines abroad, who are not disqualified by law, and who are registered overseas voters¹⁸ can vote in national and local elections.

Over 1.6 million Filipinos were registered to vote overseas (a drop for the first time since overseas elections began in 2004, thanks largely to the returnees due to COVID-19). They voted either by going to the post office or sending the ballots to the embassy in the country. Some consular offices even allowed voters to pick up and drop off their ballots at the posts.

¹⁷ This is best demonstrated by the recent establishment of a Department of Migrant Workers (DMW) headed by a senior official to oversee all issues related to OFWs. The DMW will be the lead agency to implement policies, plans and programs aimed at promoting the protection, welfare, speedy resolution of problems and effective reintegration of OFWs returning to the Philippines (<https://www.pna.gov.ph/articles/1165329>; accessed: May 29, 2022).

¹⁸ Even those who are qualified citizens but who are not registered overseas voters may file their applications for registration at the nearest Philippines embassy or consulate or other registration center authorized by the Commission on Elections. Capture of their biometric information enables them to have the relevant information on record permanently.

Despite these extensive arrangements for overseas voting, groups that champion the rights of OFWs alleged a lack of active engagement of embassies and consulates for this election. Another area of concern was the paucity of funding set aside; the government budget for overseas elections this time was PhP 111.9 million, half of the budget in 2007. Yet other concerns have had to do with the limited number of diplomatic posts where qualified voters can register.

Still, there is no denying that Filipino migrant workers have an opportunity to, and do indeed, exercise their constitutional right to vote in national elections, and thus feel empowered that they have contributed to the democratic process in the country.

This case shows the strong will of political leadership in the Philippines in implementing external voting policies even at a time when there were no modern technologies. It has been conducting elections for migrant workers by establishing physical polling centers in different parts of the world which involves massive costs. Time and technology have offered the opportunity to Nepal to adopt the i-Voting system without much administrative costs and constraints. What is missing is the political will.

A Nuanced Perspective

This particular issue of lack of political will has to be nuanced, however. While it is convenient to speak of such absence, it should also be noted that one of the main reasons why the Supreme Court order has not been able to be implemented to date also has to do with a confluence of several other variables:

- (a) In general, the political parties are not necessarily averse to voting rights for those outside Nepal, especially when it comes to Federal elections. However, some may have reservations as far as local elections are concerned. In the past,

occasional reservation has been expressed about the Parties' hesitation on the lines of undue influence that might be exercised by the diasporic wings of different political parties.

- (b) The loss of interest on the issue by government, media, civil society, and indeed the broader diaspora community during the non-election period is an important nuanced point to note.
- (c) It is precisely in this period that the Election Commission of Nepal will be able to push through such an initiative, for which it needs ample budgetary cover. In the absence of that, which has tended to be the norm, it is hamstrung in terms of what it can do. Having said that, the ECN should work on the preparedness urgently, first by writing the legislation and then choosing the best method of external voting, which this Policy Brief argues is i-Voting. As such, the upcoming debate should be on the national framework of i-Voting with suitable verifiable technology to tackle possible voting fraud rather than wasting time and resources on the conventional method of voting, feasibility studies, piloting, etc.¹⁹
- (d) The non-homogeneity of the diaspora community itself is also an issue. Those Nepali nationals in this group that live in western developed countries, and who wish permanent residence status and citizenships of the host countries, may find external voting provisions relevant only if they acquire dual citizenship. It is those toiling in the Gulf and in countries such as Malaysia, Korea, and India who have a greater stake back home and would like to vote.

Conclusion

The issue of the rights of migrants to exercise their constitutional right to participate in the elections of

¹⁹ In 2012, a high-level team from the ECN, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Labor visited Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates to study the feasibility of voter registration and voting by Nepali workers in the region. During the visit, Saudi Arabia and Qatar agreed to support voter registration and voting arrangements. But no concrete action was taken despite that in 2014 the ECN,

based on the field study, recommended that at least a pilot could begin on overseas voting in these countries (Bhadra Sharma. "Nepali workers abroad still unable to vote." 2017. <https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/nepali-workers-abroad-still-unable-to-vote/> (accessed: June 6, 2022).

the country will (should) not die down easily. If democracy is to be practiced effectively in Nepal then the disenfranchisement currently evident must be adequately addressed. Due to the emergence of new technologies (as evident in i-Voting), the administrative part for conducting elections for out of country populations has been made substantially easier, and the government should seek to implement this with urgency. It is thus incumbent on the Government, and other political parties as well, to work tirelessly to ensure that the relevant legislation is tabled in Parliament at the earliest, that relevant administrative and bureaucratic measures are instituted in parallel, and that, most importantly, the NFViV is created at the earliest to protect voter privacy and stem vote manipulation.

All this requires resources, which successive governments have not necessarily fronted up with; technical know-how, which presumably is available; and political will; the latter appears to be the weakest link in this process.

(Editor's note: this Policy Brief picks up from the previous one (<https://nepalpolicyinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/PB3.pdf>) that initiated discussions on this issue, and also looked into international good practices on overseas voting. NPI is engaged in informing policy makers and other stakeholders on the possibilities of i-Voting, and reiterates its willingness to extend further assistance to the government, as may be requested).

References

- Abad, M. 2022. "Overseas voting begins for 2022 Philippine elections." April 10, The Rappler <https://www.rappler.com/nation/elections/overseas-voting-begins-2022-philippine-polls/>
- Asian Development Bank. 2022. *Nepal: Macroeconomic Update*. Vol. 10, No. 1, April 2022. Kathmandu: ADB.
- Baubock, R. 2005. "Expansive Citizenship – Voting Beyond Territory and Membership" *Political Science and Politics*, 38(4), pp. 683-689.
- Collyer, M., 2014. "Geography of extra-territorial citizenship: Explanations of external voting." *Migration Studies*, 2(1), pp. 55-72.
- Dhakal, K. R., and Mandal, I. 2022. External Voting Rights for Nepalis Abroad: Reflections from International Practices. NPI Policy Brief Issue 3. <https://nepalpolicyinstitute.org/external-voting-rights-for-nepalis-abroad-reflections-from-international-practices/>
- Dzieduszycka-Suinat, S., et al. 2015. The future of voting: end-to-end verifiable internet voting-specification and feasibility study. *US Vote Foundation*, pp.30-38.
- Essex, A. 2016. Internet voting in Canada: a cyber security perspective. *Brief submitted to the House of Commons Special Committee on Electoral Reform* <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Content/Committee/421/ERRE/Brief/BR8610535/br-external/EssexAleksander-e.pdf>
- Joaquim, R., et al. 2013. "EVIV: An end-to-end verifiable Internet voting system." *Computers & Security*, 32, pp. 170-191.
- Harries, D. 2020. "I-Voting: What can the US learn from Estonia's online elections?" CGTN. 10 November <https://newseu.cgtn.com/news/2020-11-07/I-voting-What-can-the-U-S-learn-from-Estonia-s-online-elections--VcTflh3pdu/index.html>
- International IDEA. 2018. Out-of-Country Voting for Migrants and Refugees: Dilemmas and Best Practices <https://www.idea.int/news-media/news/out-country-voting-migrants-and-refugees-dilemmas-and-best-practices>
- Mandal, C. 2018. "SC orders govt to ensure migrants' right to vote," The Kathmandu Post, March 23 <https://kathmandupost.com/national/2018/03/23/sc-orders-govt-to-ensure-migrants-right-to-vote>
- Ministry of Finance. 2021. *Public Announcement of Income-Expenditure Details of Fiscal Year 2021/22*. Kathmandu: Government of Nepal.
- Puri, Y. 2014. *Adoption of Absentee Voting System*. Doctoral Dissertation, KDI School.
- Taylor, M. 2022. "Disenfranchised – millions of Nepalis have no voting rights." *The Record*, March 21 <https://www.recordnepal.com/disenfranchised-%E2%80%93-millions-of-nepalis-have-no-voting-rights>
- United Nations. 1948. *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. New York: United Nations.

Appendix 1. Political Party Stances on Migrant Workers

Table 1. Political Party Stance on Migrant Workers (Selected Provisions)		
	Political Party ¹	Stance on Migrant Workers (Selected Provisions)
1	Nepali Congress	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Various policies, programs and legal arrangements will be brought to unite the Nepalis spread all over the world with their motherland by developing the feeling of "Once a Nepali, always a Nepali". Within the next ten years, legal arrangements and administrative arrangements will be made for Nepali citizens and passport holders who have gone outside Nepal for employment or business to vote in (national) elections from abroad. Arrangements will be made to conclude labor-friendly agreements with the destination countries while sending workers for foreign employment. Arrangements will be made to provide low interest rate loans to the workers going for foreign employment. Easy access to information related to foreign employment and fair compensation mechanism will be ensured. Mechanisms for monitoring the excesses in the field of foreign employment, including the Foreign Employment Tribunal, will be decentralized to the local level by ensuring additional resources. In order to protect women from further risks, the process related to women going for foreign employment will be improved and managed. Human rights and labor rights will be mentioned in the labor agreement with the destination country. As provided in the Foreign Employment Act, labor associates will be appointed in the embassies in the country where more than 5,000 Nepali workers are working.
2	Communist Party of Nepal – UML and Maoist Center	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Effective initiatives will be taken to protect the labor (and other rights) of migrant Nepali citizens. Records will be kept safe and organized of those who have gone for foreign employment. Distortions in foreign employment will be strictly controlled. Arrangements will be made to send reserve workers for foreign employment by concluding a labor agreement with the destination country. Necessary arrangements will be made for developing skills through necessary training and coaching for those who go for foreign employment. Skilled manpower supply centers will be established at central, state, and local levels.
3	People's Socialist Party, Nepal (erstwhile Federal Socialist Forum, Nepal)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a desk at the Nepal Embassy in countries where Nepali migrants work Amend relevant laws to control irregularities in foreign employment processes Work towards protecting the rights of migrant workers in the countries they serve in through relevant labor agreements Make provisions for training, safety, etc. for those going for foreign employment Frame relevant laws to allow voting rights at all levels for Nepalis living and working abroad
4	Rastriya Prajatantra Party	Make provisions for voting rights of Nepali citizens living abroad
5	Rastriya Janata Party	No mention in the manifesto
6	Nepal Majdur Kishan Party	No mention in the manifesto
7	Naya Shakti Party, Nepal	No mention in the manifesto
8	Rastriya Janamorcha Party	n/a ²

Source: Manifesto documents of the political parties, for the 2017 national elections.

Notes:

- The parties listed above held at least one seat in Parliament incorporating both proportional and first-past-the-post ballots: Nepali Congress with 63; Communist Party of Nepal with 174 (UML with 121 and Maoist Center with 53); Rastriya Janata Party Nepal with 17; Federal Socialist Forum, Nepal with 16; and 1 seat each for Rastriya Prajantatra Party; Naya Shakti Party, Nepal; Rastriya Janmorcha; and Nepal Workers Peasants Party.
- The Party's manifesto is not in the public domain. NPI made numerous attempts to reach the Party office, as well as access its website and social media, but to no avail.



About Nepal Policy Institute

Nepal Policy Institute (NPI) is an international, independent, and non-partisan policy think-tank and a knowledge platform dedicated to the people-centred and sustainable development of Nepal and Nepali people, including diaspora Nepalis. Our mission is to provide and promote knowledge and public discourse about public policy for the prosperity, peace, and sustainable development of the country and its people anywhere and everywhere.

NPI provides a forum for Nepal origin (as well as other) public policy scholars, researchers, practitioners, experts, and consultants across the globe, in collaboration and partnership with like-minded people and institutions that are working on development issues facing Nepal. This is a borderless organization working with and connecting people in the cloud, land, and the space in between.

We are registered as a not-for-profit, non-party political, non-religious, and non-governmental *Stichting* (Foundation) in The Hague (The Netherlands), and Kathmandu (Nepal).

Contact:

Nepal Policy Institute

The Hague and Kathmandu

E-mail: info@nepalpolicyinstitute.org

Web: nepalpolicyinstitute.org