

# GOVERNANCE

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## Women Equality in Nepal: What Nepal Must Do Beyond Women's Day?

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Photo By Kantipur

As we prepare to celebrate International Women's Day on 8th March, Nepal finds itself at a crossroads in the fight for gender equality. While many women are breaking barriers and achieving unconventional success, persistent cases of violence and discrimination continue to hold us back as a society. The tragic deaths of [Rinku Sada](#) and [Prakriti Lamsal](#) this year served as a reminder of the long road ahead in ensuring women's safety and equality. Sada, a survivor of sexual violence, was found dead just days after her assault, while Lamsal, who endured prolonged harassment in India, took her own life after being ignored by authorities. Their stories highlight the failure of institutions meant to protect women and the persistent vulnerabilities they face despite legal safeguards. Nepal has enacted laws to combat gender-based violence, but inconsistent enforcement leaves many women exposed to exploitation and abuse.

Women continue to face significant barriers across various sectors, including politics, entrepreneurship, and sports, due to deep-rooted biases and systemic patriarchy. While the constitutional mandate of at least 33% female representation in all government positions, and 40% in local government, has increased numerical inclusion, it has not translated into real influence. Women are often confined to secondary roles and excluded from key decision-making processes. Among Nepal's 753 local units, only 25 women hold positions as mayors or chairpersons, while 568 serve as deputy mayors/deputy chairpersons—raising critical questions about what is holding them back. They are assigned positions with minimal authority, treating representation as a mere formality rather than a means of genuine empowerment.

Moreover, while women's literacy rates have risen significantly, from 57.4% in 2011 to 69.4% as per the 2021 National Census, this progress has not translated into economic independence. Women continue to face gender pay gaps, job discrimination, and a disproportionate share of unpaid labor. At the heart of these challenges lies a deeply ingrained patriarchal society that dictates women's roles and limits their choices. Cultural expectations often pressure women to prioritize family responsibilities over career ambitions, making the fight for gender equality not just a legal issue but a cultural one—requiring collective effort to bring lasting change.

This year, as the world observes International Women's Day under the theme "Accelerating Gender Equality," Nepal must critically assess both its achievements and the road ahead. The laws and policies are essential, but they alone cannot undo centuries of gender-based inequities. It requires raising collective awareness, shifting societal mindsets, and creating tangible pathways for women's meaningful inclusion. True gender equality requires more than just numerical representation—it demands real authority, influence, and the dismantling of structures that perpetuate exclusion.

Read More: [Kantipur](#)

In celebration of International Women's Day, explore Online Khabar's list of 50 Influential Women who are breaking barriers and making remarkable success in their fields.

[Read more here](#)

### Governance issues of the week

**1 Industrial sector's GDP contribution declining:** Nepal's Industrial sector has witnessed a steady decline over the past decade, with its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) dropping from 6.20% in FY 2014/15 to 4.87% in FY 2023/24. Six out of 18 industrial sectors have reported negative growth in the first quarter of this fiscal year. Key issues causing the decline include a decline in manufacturing output, reduced credit flow to industries, and unfavorable government policies.

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**2 Corruption Verdict Against Former Nepal Telecom Authority Chiefs:** Nepal's Special Court has found Nepal Telecommunication Authority (NTA) Chairmen, Digambar Jha and Purushottam Khanal guilty of corruption regarding the Mobile Device Management System (MDMS) procurement irregularities. Other accused NTA employees in the case were acquitted in the verdict delivered by a panel led by Judge Tek Narayan Kunwar. The case was filed in December 2024, citing procurement mismanagement worth NPR 919.8 million.

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**3 US deportations cause fear in mid-west parents:** A large number of youths from Rukum East and Rukum West have paid substantial amounts to traffickers to reach the United States illegally. However, now with stricter immigration policies in place, parents fear their children may be deported, leaving families in financial distress. One family accumulated debts exceeding NPR 30 million to send their three children to the US, only for two to be deported upon arrival. Another individual paid NPR 7.5 million to send his daughter, who has been stranded in Mexico for three months. Read More: [The Kathmandu Post](#)

**4 NEA Director questioned over trunk lines due collection:** Nepal Electric Authority has made consistent attempts to collect overdue payments from industries for dedicated and trunk lines, but with no success following constant government intervention. The Ministry of Energy has constantly issued clarification notices in the past months, and has actively obstructed NEA's directives of dues collection. Now, NEA's Managing Director has been accused of failing to recover the dues in a new clarification notice issued by the cabinet of ministers.

Read More: [NayaPatrika](#)

**5 Gaps in Nepal's Statistical System Perpetuate Inequality:** Nepal's statistical framework has significant gaps, inconsistencies, and political manipulation, which hinder evidence based policymaking and inclusive governance. The state's reluctance to generate and disclose disaggregated data, particularly concerning caste, ethnicity, gender, and marginalized communities obstructs targeted policy interventions. The lack of comprehensive statistics does more than weaken advocacy efforts for marginalized groups but also enables tokenistic policies that lack long-term impact. Rectifying these fundamental gaps, Nepal's aspirations to achieve inclusive and equitable democracy remain rhetorical.

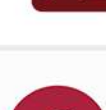
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**6 Allegations against Health Minister on Secretary selection:** The Ministry of Health and Population has promoted Dr. Bikash Devkota to the Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Population bypassing Dr. Sangeeta Mishra, who was the top recommended candidate by the Public Service Commission. Lawmakers have accused the health minister of discrimination, citing gender and regional biases and sought for his resignation. Minister Paudel, however, has denied allegations asserting that the decision was made by the cabinet.

Read More: [The Himalayan Times](#)

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